



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **Charles Augustus Sommer (1829-1894)**

Born in Germany in 1829, Charles Augustus Sommer is known for his paintings of the Catskill and Adirondack regions. While biographical details of Sommer's life are scarce information gleaned from archival sources reveal that Sommer held a studio in New York City at 896 Broadway between 1867 and 1872 and was working as a landscape painter.

Sommer participated in three consecutive Winter Exhibitions held at the National Academy of Design between 1868 and 1870. His work included *Cascade in the Adirondacks*, *Coast of Connecticut*, *Connecticut Shore* and *Tyrol Mountains*.

In 1868, Leed's Art Galleries on Broadway held an exhibition and sale of Sommer's landscapes. Included in the sale were a few landscapes painted by the artist's wife. Sommer's work included scenes such as *Morning at Catskill Clove* and *Cascade in the Adirondacks*. A critic for the New York Daily Herald noted that Sommer's paintings reveal, "...how faithfully he has studied the peculiarities of American scenery."<sup>1</sup>

In November of 1868 the Brooklyn Art Association held a reception at the Academy of Music. Invited guests of the elite and highly anticipated event included General Grant and Admiral Farragut. Sommer's work was shown along with other notable artists including Regis Gignoux (1816-1882). A critic for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle included Sommer and Gignoux on a short list of artists whose work he thought to be remarkable and worthy of inspection. He described a painting by Sommer's as, "...a very striking picture, representing the sun setting over the expanse [sic] of flat country, relieved here and there by trees. The foreground is broken and filled up with boulders, and the middle distance is relieved by the reflection of the light from the sky upon a ridge of high ground. The sky effect is very good, though perhaps slightly too yellow."<sup>2</sup>

Sommer exhibited again at the National Academy for the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition in 1871. The New York Daily Herald said his painting entitled *Evening* was, "full of fine atmospheric effects."<sup>3</sup> In December of the same year, Sommer's work was included in an exhibition of paintings at Goupil's said to be "of the highest order." The exhibition included work by many

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<sup>1</sup> "Art Notes," New York Daily Herald (New York, New York), Tue, Mar 10, 1868, Page 7

<sup>2</sup> "The Art Association," The Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Brooklyn, New York), Mon, Nov 16, 1868, Page 2

<sup>3</sup> "Fine Arts," New York Daily Herald (New York, New York), Mon, Apr 17, 1871, Page 3



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prominent American artists including Martin Johnson Heade, A.T. Bricher, William Hart, James M. Hart, Samuel Colman and William Trost Richards.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Art Notes,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Thu, Dec 14, 1871, Page 3