



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

ALBERT E. DOWNS (1856-1923)

Payne's Home Sweet Home / Exterior [Easthampton, NY], 1877

Oil on board

8 x 10 inches

Signed, dated 1877, and inscribed with title, verso

Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam / Be it ever so humble, there's no
place like home / A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there / Which seek
thro' the world, is ne'er met elsewhere / Home! Home! / Sweet, sweet home! /
There's no place like home / There's no place like home! / An exile from home
splendor dazzles in vain / Oh give me my lowly thatched cottage again / The birds
singing gaily that came at my call / And gave me the peace of mind dearer than
all / Home, home, sweet, sweet home / There's no place like home, there's no
place like home!

—*Home! Sweet Home!* by Howard Payne (1791-1852)

The lithographer and painter Albert E. Downs was born in 1856 in Lowell, Massachusetts. Though he was best known for his landscape lithography—work which often required him to travel throughout the northeast states—Downs would maintain a home and studio in Massachusetts for the remainder of his life. Downs graduated from the Bigelow School in Boston, where he then settled. Though it is unclear when exactly Downs trained as an artist, he most likely did so from 1872 to 1877, in the studio of the American landscape painter George Loring Brown (1814-1889). By the age of twenty-one, Downs was already making a living as an artist and, by 1886, was exhibiting his work. By 1888, Downs was publishing his lithographs in partnership with the cartographer Thaddeus Mortimer Fowler and the artist James B. Moyer.

Though Downs made a living largely as a commercial illustrator and lithographer, he appears to have painted throughout his career; he exhibited his paintings at Plummer Hall (1886) and the South Boston Art Club (1892), among others. At an exhibition of thirty-one of his paintings at William Hatch and Co. in 1898, one contemporary reviewer commented: “His color is frequently pleasing, sweet and transparent, in water and sky”¹

1 “Paintings by Albert Downs,” *Boston Evening Transcript* March 12, 1898.



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Many of Downs's paintings appear to have been marine scenes and seascapes, ranging in subject matter all along the New England coastline. Differing from this subject is *Payne's Home Sweet Home / Exterior*, an early work in Downs's oeuvre. It depicts the East Hampton home of John Howard Payne (1791-1852), the American author and playwright. Payne is more well-remembered for "Home! Sweet Home!," a widely-popular song which he wrote the lyrics for in 1822; the expression is still popular today.

Whether because of the song's popularity, or perhaps because of the home's location—on the picturesque village green of East Hampton—the house was visited and painted by many artists throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Artists such as Childe Hassam (1859–1935) and Mary Nimmo Moran immortalized the old saltbox house in paint and ink, respectively.



Childe Hassam (1859–1935), *The "Home, Sweet Home" Cottage, East Hampton, Long Island*, 1916, Oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg California



Mary Nimmo Moran (1842-1899). *The "Home Sweet Home" of John Howard Payne, East Hampton*, 1885, etching on paper, 16 x 13 inches, Brooklyn Museum

Downs's representation of the house is similarly memorializing. Though just a young man at the start of his artistic career, his hand is confident and the colors are bold; Downs establishes his style and aesthetic in a narrative scene of daily life, just as 'home sweet home' was quickly entering the American lexicon as ubiquitous with the sentimental ideals of the American family.



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The "Home Sweet Home" in East Hampton, N.Y., 2011. Photo by Gordon M. Grant for The New York Times