



HAWTHORNE Fine Art

Edward Lamson Henry (1841–1919)

American genre painter E. L. Henry was born in Charleston, South Carolina, but raised in New York City from the age of seven. He began studying art in his early teens under Walter Mason Oddie (1808–1865), the New York-based landscape painter. In 1858, he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, and in 1860 continued his studies in Paris at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. His teachers at the Académie were two of Switzerland's most celebrated history painters, Joseph Nicolas Robert-Fleury (1797–1890) and Marc-Gabriel-Charles Gleyre (1808–1874), whose rigorous, academic style had a lasting impact on Henry. While in Paris, Henry also studied at the atelier of Jean Joseph Benjamin-Constant (1845–1902), known for his Romantic, Orientalist paintings, and with the Realist painter, Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), whose other students at the time included Claude Monet (1840–1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), Frédéric Bazille (1841–1870), and Alfred Sisley (1839–1899).

Upon his return to the United States in 1862, Henry served as a captain's clerk aboard a Union transport ship in the American Civil War, producing many sketches documenting the non-combat side of soldiering. After the war, he moved into the famed Tenth Street Studio Building in Greenwich Village, working alongside Winslow Homer (1836–1910), Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), and Frederic Church (1826–1900). He began producing paintings from his wartime sketches, most notably, two depictions of Union soldiers infiltrating the Westover Plantation in Virginia, now in the collections of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., and the Century Association, New York. Henry soon gained recognition for his rustic genre scenes and colonial interiors, which vividly evoked an earlier era of American life. Henry's reverence for the past also prompted a series of works documenting historic structures before they were torn down. Conversely, he returned again and again to the subject of the American railroad, an image of the nation's modernization and industrialization.

A member of the American Watercolor Society, the Artists Fund Society, and the Century Association, Henry was elected to the National Academy of Design in 1869, where he exhibited annually for nearly sixty years. He also exhibited at such prestigious institutions as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the Boston Art Club, and the Brooklyn Art Association, and in the major European capitals of Paris and London. His artistic talent won him medals at several Worlds' Fairs, including the New Orleans Exposition of 1885, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901. In the early 1880s, Henry designed a summer house for him and his wife in Cragmoor, New York, incorporating salvaged architectural elements from razed federal-era homes—another example of his preservationist sentiments. He was an early founder of the Cragmoor Artist Colony, which drew such painters as Edward Gay (1837–1928) and George Inness (1825–1894).