



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

SAMUEL COLMAN (1832-1920)

Lake George

Oil on board

5 ¾ x 8 ¾ inches

Signed lower right; Inscribed on verso in pencil, "Lake George / S. Colman painter"

Original frame and shadow box

PROVENANCE: Private Collection, Upstate New York

Samuel Colman's *Lake George* combines a New York subject, typical of the Hudson River School, with the brushy impasto technique and limited color palette inspired by French Barbizon painting. His preoccupation with golden light and shadow effects indicates Colman was not a strict adherent of Hudson River School naturalism, but an innovative landscapist with cosmopolitan influences. Colman's early style was influenced by Hudson River School artist Asher B. Durand (1796 - 1886), with whom he studied. However, after encountering the work of George Inness (1825 - 1894), and traveling extensively in Europe during the early 1860s where he was exposed to French Barbizon paintings, Colman's style underwent an important shift toward a more personal, evocative approach.¹ Although he developed an interest in foreign or exotic locations, popular in the late-nineteenth century Gilded-age America, he also continued painting local New York scenes, such as Lake George.

Born in Portland, Maine, Colman moved to New York City at an early age. His father, a publisher of and dealer in fine art books, was instrumental in introducing Colman to many of the leading artists and writers of his day. Colman painted throughout the United States (including in the West) as well as in Canada, Mexico, Europe, and North Africa. He penned two books on art, titled *Nature's Harmonic Unity and Proportional Form*, and was also an etcher, art collector, authority on oriental art and porcelains, and, collaborating with John La Farge and Louis Tiffany, an interior designer.

1 For a discussion of the influence of both French and American Barbizon painting on Colman's work, see Barbara Novak and Annette Blaugrund, eds., *Next to Nature: Landscape Paintings from the National Academy of Design* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 68. Regarding Barbizon painting and its increasing popularity among American painters and patrons, see Wayne Craven, "J. Foxcroft Cole (1837-1892): His Art, and the Introduction of French Painting to America," *American Art Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring, 1981): 51-52; and Carol Troyen, "Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris," *American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn, 1984): 7.



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At the age of eighteen, the young artist had already exhibited at the National Academy of Design and by age twenty-two had become one of its Associates. Colman was also one of the founders and the first president of the American Society of Watercolor Painters. Today, his work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, New York Public Library, and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.²

In 1867, prominent critic Henry Tuckerman wrote that, “to the eye of refined taste, to the quiet lover of nature, there is a peculiar charm in Colman's style which, sooner or later, will be greatly appreciated.”³ Tuckerman was correct—today, Colman, a second-generation Hudson River School painter, is greatly admired for his quiet, sensitive and poetic approach to the depiction of landscape.

2 For a more detailed biography of Samuel Colman see, Wayne Craven, “Samuel Colman (1832–1920): Rediscovered Painter of Far-Away Places,” *American Art Journal* 8, no. 1 (May, 1976): 16-37.
3 Henry Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1867), 560.