



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

### **James McDougal Hart (1828 -1901)**

A Day in November, 1863

Oil on canvas

10 ½ x 18 inches

Signed and dated 1863, lower left

Inscribed verso: A Day in November/ Painted by James M. Hart. / New York 1863

**Provenance:** Tom Colville, New Haven, CT William Union, Worcester, MA Mr. and Mrs. Craig C. Halvorson, Brookline, MA (acquired from the above January 16, 1982)

Prominent amongst the second generation of Hudson River School painters, James McDougal Hart is known for his refined and intricately crafted pastoral scenes, often featuring grazing cattle. Born in Kilmarnock, Scotland in 1828, Hart immigrated with his family to Albany, New York when he was just two years old. His older brother, William Hart (1823–1894), and younger sister, Julie Hart Beers (1835–1913), also went on to become accomplished landscape painters. James’ future wife, Marie Theresa Gorsuch, was a still life painter, and their three children, Robert Gorsuch Hart, Letitia Bonnet Hart, and Mary Theresa Hart, all grew up to be painters as well.

James Hart began his career, as had William, in a sign and carriage painter’s shop. Unlike his brother, James returned to Europe at the age of twenty-two to receive academic training. He studied briefly in Munich, and for three years with Johann Willhelm Schirmer (1807–1863) at the Düsseldorf Academy, a center of realist pedagogy that was equally influential for fellow Hudson River School painters, Worthington Whittredge (1820–1910), Eastman Johnson (1824–1905), Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), and William Stanley Haseltine (1835–1900).

Returning to the United States in 1853, Hart established his first studio in Albany. A few years later, he settled permanently in New York City, later moving to Brooklyn. In the 1870s, he and his brother opened studios in Keene Valley, New York, in the heart of the Adirondacks. Hart was elected an Associate of the National Academy of Design in 1857 and a full member in 1859, exhibiting his work there consistently over the next forty years, and serving as its Vice President from 1895 to 1899. He also exhibited at the Brooklyn Art Association, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Boston Art Club, the Mechanics Institute in Boston, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Centennial International Exposition of 1876 (the first official World’s Fair in the United States, held in Philadelphia), and the Paris Exposition of 1889.

In 1867, prominent art critic Henry Tuckerman observed that “an exquisite truth and grace [are] characteristic of his [Hart’s] pencil,” and praised his Woods in Autumn as “one of the finest contributions lately made to the list of American successes in this field of art.” Today, Hart’s



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paintings are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Brooklyn Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum; the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; the Corcoran Gallery of Art; the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland; and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, among others.

A Day in November, 1863 is an accomplished essay by Hart which carefully notes his interest in country life. A mother and child ride an ox-drawn wagon of logs while the father steers the way. The artist's lessons in careful draftsmanship are reflected both in smaller details of the scene such as the perspective of the wagon's wheels as well as in the whole shaping of the composition such as the lines of the stone fence and the white steeple spire and village buildings tucked into the nearby hills. The painting was most likely executed in the Catskill region as it is inscribed by the artist with a New York location.