

Albert Bierstadt

In 1832, when Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) was about two years old, his family moved from Germany to New Bedford, Massachusetts. He returned to Dusseldorf, Germany between 1853 and 1857 to study painting. On his return to the United States, he organized an exhibition in New Bedford of 150 paintings, including works of all the major artists of his day. In December, 1857 the Boston Athenaeum bought one of his works, The Portico of Octavia Rome, thus assuring his career.

Bierstadt always loved mountains, and he visited the White Mountains before he left for Düsseldorf, for his signature appears in the register on top of Mount Washington on August 11, 1852. He returned at various times from 1858 to 1886. Sometime in 1859 or 1860, Bierstadt visited New Hampshire with his brother, Edward, working in the then new medium of photography. He stayed at the Conway House in Conway, listing himself as "A. Bierstadt, New York," on September 13, 1862. He also spent considerable time at the Glen House in 1869 while at work on Emerald Pool, which he considered his finest work.

He exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum from 1859 to 1864, at the Brooklyn Art Association from 1861 to 1879, and at the Boston Art Club from 1873 to 1880. A member of the National Academy of Design from 1860 to 1902, he kept a studio in the 10th Street Studio Building, New York City from 1861 to 1879. He was a member of the Century Association from 1862 to 1902.

Bierstadt became internationally renowned for his beautiful and enormous paintings of the newly accessible American west, and his works found their way into public and private collections at staggeringly high prices for his time. His popularity and wealth rose to tremendous heights only to fade as the interest in the Boston School and impressionism turned public taste away from his highly detailed landscapes suffused with golden light. By 1895 he declared himself bankrupt.

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