

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | 14 NOVEMBER 2013  
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## AN ICON OF AMERICAN HISTORY

CIVIL WAR MASTERPIECE BY SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD  
TO BE OFFERED IN CHRISTIE'S DECEMBER SALE OF AMERICAN ART



Sanford Robinson Gifford, *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861*  
oil on canvas, 16 ½ x 30 in.  
Estimate: \$3,000,000-5,000,000

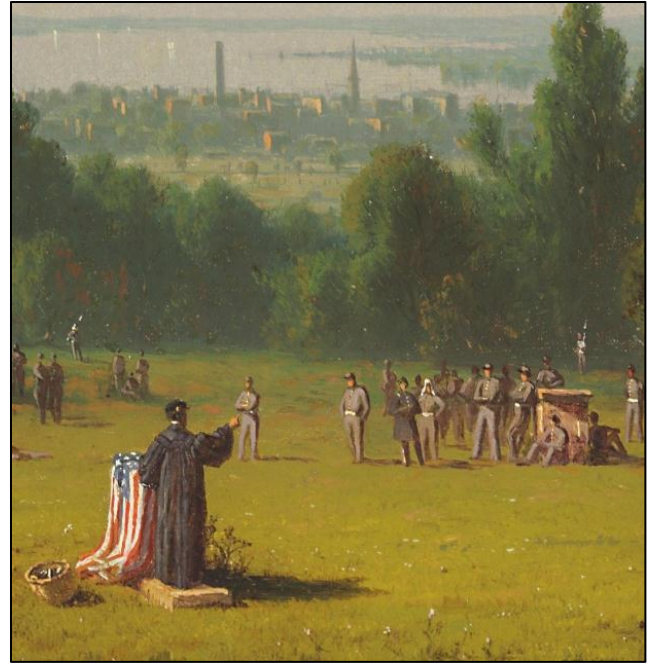
*"It is easy to see that, under the sharp discipline of civil war, the nation is beginning a new life."*

-President Abraham Lincoln | 8 December 1863, Message to Congress

**New York** – Christie's is honored to announce that Sanford Robinson Gifford's *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861* will be among the highlights in the sale of *American Art* on 5 December. Gifford's rare depictions of the American Civil War are particularly noteworthy and poignant as they are based on his firsthand experiences as a Union soldier from his three tours of duty in the spring and summer of 1861, 1862 and 1863, while most artists painted solely via observation. Estimated at \$3-5 million, the work stands to set a new world auction record for the Hudson River School master. **Elizabeth Sterling, Head of American Art at Christie's in New York**, said, "*One of four major large-scale paintings based on Sanford Robinson Gifford's involvement in the War, this work is the most important work by the artist to have ever been offered for sale publicly. Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861 presents a historically accurate account of quotidian military life, as well as a glimpse into Gifford's optimistic outlook on the Civil War and his faith in the Union troops.*"

Born in Greenfield, New York in 1823, Gifford formally studied at Brown University from 1842-1844 and, following his move to New York City, later trained under the tutelage of British watercolorist and drawing-master, John R. Smith. In 1846, he left the confines of the classroom and ventured to the Berkshire Hills and the Catskill Mountains to sketch from nature. This experience transformed his career, leading to his reputation as a first-rank member of the Hudson River School and arguably the father of American Luminism. In 1861, immediately following the Confederate siege on Fort Sumter, Gifford volunteered to join the Union army as a member of the Eighth Company of the Seventh Regiment, New York State National Guard, which was posted to defend Washington, D.C. As such, he was among the first 75,000 soldiers President Abraham Lincoln called to defend the capital.

Despite the demands of being a soldier, Gifford carried a sketchbook with him, capturing small vignettes of military life on his breaks. Indeed, *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861* reflects Gifford's unique and personal observations from inside his regiment through a blended style of masterful landscape and insightful narrative. He presents a sweeping vista of a Sunday ritual in the Seventh Regiment taking place in the outskirts of America's capitol, which can be seen in the middleground of the composition. Gifford employs the Washington monument, which was then in the process of being erected, as the vehicle for the one-point perspective that supplies the painting with unrivaled drama. The land merging into the sky beyond the Potomac River emphasizes the expansiveness of the vista and reinforces the sense of stateliness. Gifford frames the composition with trees and groups of soldiers artfully spaced across the sunlit broad grassy area. Their attention is held by the clergyman at center, whose sermon is directed towards the city of Washington and is being given at a podium decorated with the American flag. In addition to its skillful demonstration of perspective and its spiritual message of hope, the present work is also significant in that it accurately chronicles a traditional military event, down to the color of the soldiers' dress.



Detail of *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment...*

The only example in Gifford's series of four major Civil War pictures that remains in private hands, *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861* has been in the collection of The Union League Club in New York City since 1871. The work has been exhibited at such renowned institutions as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, in addition to having been hung in the Oval Office of the White House while it was on loan there, from the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976 to 1989. The esteemed provenance and overall superb quality of the work make this sale a rare opportunity to acquire an icon of profound historical significance and a symbol of America's past and present glory. In *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861* Gifford points to a new understanding of American identity as conveyed through a picture of quiet solitude, creating a deeply profound work that is a superb representation of his military experience coupled with the artistic, political and social influences of his day.

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Christie's, the world's leading art business, reached a total of £2.4 billion/\$3.68 billion in global auction and private sales in the first six months of 2013. In 2012, global auction and private sales totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion, marking the highest annual revenue ever reached by Christie's. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photography, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with an emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewelry. Global private sales totaled £465 million/\$711 million in the first half year of 2013, an increase of 13% from the same period last year, breaking the sales record of half year private sales for Christie's and the art market for three consecutive years.

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\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.