

Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)

The Cotton Picker, ca. 1943

Tempera

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Born in Neosho, Missouri into a family of lawyers and politicians, Thomas Hart Benton became one of his state's most recognized painters. Finding the scenes of the common man most fascinating to paint, Benton was a pioneer of the regionalist art movement focusing on nostalgic settings of the Midwest. Benton painted *Cotton Pickers* based on notes from a visit to Georgia in which he conveyed the dignity of the pickers despite their harsh working conditions. Cotton cultivation was a particular subject of interest to Benton especially in light of rapid industrialization, which permanently changed the American landscape. He received several commissions for murals during his lifetime, including from the Whitney Museum in New York and the Missouri State Capitol.