



# DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

## Clifford W. Ashley Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

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### **Acquisition Information**

Gift of Willard S. Morse; collected by the Library

### **Extent**

1 linear foot

### **Abstract**

The collection includes correspondence, exhibition catalogues, and book and magazine illustrations.

### **Access Restrictions**

Unrestricted

### **Contact Information**

Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives  
Delaware Art Museum  
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Wilmington, DE 19806  
(302) 571-9590  
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### **Preferred Citation**

Clifford W. Ashley Papers, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

### **Related Materials**

Students of Howard Pyle Files

## Biography of Clifford W. Ashley

American painter and illustrator, 1881-1947

Clifford Warren Ashley was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on December 18, 1881, son of Abiel Davis and Caroline Morse Ashley. After graduation from New Bedford High School he went to Boston to study art at the Eric Pape School, which N.C. Wyeth, Sidney Chase, and Ashley's cousin Henry Peck also attended. The four students spent the summer of 1901 in Annisquam, Massachusetts, under George L. Noyes's tutelage. That fall Ashley moved to Wilmington to study with Howard Pyle and occupied a studio at 1305 Franklin Street. He was present at Pyle's fiftieth birthday party in 1903, and spent that summer at Chadds Ford. After 1904 Ashley usually spent winters in Wilmington and summers in New Bedford, when he was not traveling elsewhere. In 1906 he and Peck began to share a studio at 1616 Rodney Street. During much of 1908-09 Ashley was occupied with a business venture, buying mahogany furniture in Jamaica and selling it in Rhode Island. In 1913 he left Wilmington to settle in New Bedford, but he returned in the summer of 1915, staying at Stanley Arthurs's studio. The two artists traveled to California and then came back to Wilmington, where Ashley remained through the spring of 1916. At that time he moved his permanent Massachusetts residence to Fairhaven, near New Bedford. He often returned to Wilmington during the winter and may have rented his Franklin Street studio from Arthurs until as late as 1938. When Ashley married Sarah Rodman Scudder Clark in 1932, he began to renovate a farmhouse he had long owned in Westport, Massachusetts, and the couple moved there. They had two daughters, Phoebe and Jane.

The whaling trade was in its dying days in New Bedford as Ashley grew up, and his spirit seemed tied to those faded days and to the great sea that had sustained them. His work manifests an enormous and abiding love for the marine subjects, which appeared over and over again in his illustrations and paintings. Ashley was also a writer and produced important contributions to the literature on whaling, including the visual feast *Whaleships of New Bedford*, 1929, and a most remarkable tome, *The Ashley Book of Knots*, 1944. This is replete with drawings of whaling scenes and knot-making and contains approximately 3900 different kinds of knots, many invented by Ashley. He had gotten his first lessons in knot-making as a small child from two uncles who were whaling captains, and this hobby became a passion for him.

By 1904 Ashley's illustrations were appearing in important magazines such as *Delineator*, *Leslie's Monthly*, *Success*, and *Collier's*, and many more commissions were to follow. He also spent a good deal of time on his marine paintings and had several exhibitions, including one with Arthurs at the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts in 1934. He also exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy between 1911 and 1922. More recently, in 1973, the Whaling Museum of New Bedford, in conjunction with the Brandywine River Museum, mounted a major show of his works.

Ashley belonged to the Authors' League of America, the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, the Society for Nautical Research of England, the Ship Model Society of England, the New Bedford Port Society, the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, the New York Architectural League, the

Century Association, the Salmagundi Club, the Explorers Club of New York City, the New Bedford Yacht Club, and the St. Botolph Club of Boston. He was a trustee of the Swain Free School of Design in New Bedford. Ashley died on September 18, 1947, at Westport.

Source: Elzea, Rowland and Elizabeth H. Hawkes, eds. *A Small School of Art: The Students of Howard Pyle*. Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1980.

## Scope and Contents Note

The Clifford W. Ashley Papers consist of original correspondence between the Delaware Art Museum and the Whaling Museum of New Bedford, Massachusetts, letters from Ashley to Willard S. Morse, exhibition catalogs, and illustrations from books and magazines. The latter were collected by the Library.

## Description of the Collection

### Box 1

#### Folder

- 1 *American Magazine*
  - Cover illustration, February 1913
  - March 1924
  - Article: Mildred Harrington, "Interesting People," April 1929
- 2 Biographical information
- 3 Book illustrations
  - Whaleships of New Bedford: Sixty plates from drawings by Clifford W. Ashley, with an introduction by Franklin D. Roosevelt*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929.
- 4 *Century Magazine*, 1906-1917
- 5 Christmas cards and invitations
  - Christmas 1921-1924; 1926-1927 (2 copies); 1928 (2 copies); 1929-1930 (2 copies); 1931-1934; 3 no dates; invitation to 1934 party (2 copies)
- 6 *Collier's*, 1912, 1914, 1917
- 7 Correspondence between DAM and the Whaling Museum, 1973-1979

- 8 Correspondence from Ashley to Gertude Brincklé, 1920; Correspondence from Ashley to Willard Morse, 1926-1929
- 9 *Delineator*, 1904
- 10 Exhibitions
- Free Public Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts, "An Exhibition of Paintings and Charcoals by Clifford W. Ashley (1881-1947) from the collections of: Mrs. Stephen C. L. Delano and the Free Public Library," July 15-September 15, 1964
- Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, Wilmington, Delaware, "Exhibition of Paintings: Stanley M. Arthurs, Clifford W. Ashley," December 4-22, 1934 (2 copies)
- The Whaling Museum, May 18-July 9, 1973, "Whalers, Wharves, and Waterways: An Exhibition of Paintings by Clifford W. Ashley"
- The Macbeth Gallery, New York, "The Whalers of New Bedford: Exhibition of Paintings by Clifford W. Ashley," October 31-November 12, 1916
- "Exhibition and Private Sale of Paintings, Marine and Landscape by Clifford W. Ashley, at the Gallery of Doll & Richards, 71 Newbury St., Boston," January 30-February 11, 1914; Messrs. R. C. & N. M. Vose, Boston
- "Exhibition by Clifford W. Ashley consisting principally of Recent Paintings of New Bedford Whalers ..." February 28-March 12, 1921 (invitation)

## **Box 2**

### Folder

- 1 *Hampton's Magazine*, 1911
- 2 *Harper's Monthly*, 1906
- 3 *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1907-1908
- 4 *International Studio*, 1916
- 5 *The Ladies Home Journal*, 1919
- 6 *Leslie's Monthly Magazine*, 1904
- 7 *McClure's*, 1904-1913
- 8 *Metropolitan*, 1912-1913
- 9 *National Cyclopedia*

- 10 Newspaper clippings, 1973
- 11 *Outing*, 1908
- 12 Photographs  
Clifford Ashley in Franklin St. Studio, posing for illustration by Frank Schoonover for "The Last of DuGallie" by Frank H. Spearman in *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 19, 1902 [See also Schoonover, Photos – Models & Illustrations]  
  
Portrait of Ashley  
  
Artwork
- 13 *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1907-1911
- 14 *Scribner's*, 1904-1913
- 15 *Sunday Magazine*, 1907-1914