



Clifford W. Ashley

Title

Across the Creek at Rising Sun

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1919

Dimensions

42 1/16 × 36 1/8 in. (106.8 × 91.8 cm)

Accession number

73.8

Credit Line

Gift of Mrs. Stephen C. L. Delano (artist's widow), 1973

Web Description

Born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Clifford Ashley was an author, maritime artist, and master knot tyer. He trained at the Eric Pape School of Art in Boston and spent a summer in Annisquam, Massachusetts, before moving to Wilmington, Delaware, in 1901 to study illustration with Howard Pyle. Working under Pyle, he gained commissions from Harper's in 1904 to write and illustrate an article on whaling. By 1913, Ashley was devoting more time to easel painting than illustration in order to thoroughly study the history of whaling and seafaring. Over the next three decades he illustrated numerous articles on related subjects such as "The Sailor and His Knots" (Sea Stories Magazine, 1925), and wrote *The Yankee Whaler* (1926), *Whaleships of New Bedford* (1929), and *The Ashley Book of Knots* (1944), an exhaustive study of more than 3,900 knots. Prior to 1913, Ashley's work showed the influence of Pyle's concept of dramatic realism; after that Ashley adopted the painting techniques of American impressionists as in *Across the Creek at Rising Sun*, a depiction of the DuPont Powder Mill buildings in northern Delaware. While this work is a realistic rendering of the landscape, it shows the artist's exploration of composition, color, and texture. His contrast of sunlight and shadow is balanced throughout the painting, as is his use of complementary colors. Thick brush strokes vary in direction to emphasize texture and distinguish forms. Ashley's techniques succeed in rendering a sun-drenched landscape enlivened by a sense of movement in the trees, water, and shifting clouds.