ASHLEY, CLIFFORD WARREN (1881-1947)

 Clifford Ashley was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on December 18, 1881. He studied art in Boston at the Eric Pape School, which N.C. Wyeth, Sidney Chase, and Ashley's cousin Henry Peck also attended. These four also studied under George L. Noyes in Annisquam, Mass., during the summer of 1901. That fall Ashley moved to Wilmington to study with Howard Pyle. After 1904 Ashley usually spent winters in Wilmington and summers in New Bedford, when he was not traveling elsewhere. (It was Ashley's glowing accounts of Howard Pyle that convinced N.C. Wyeth to come to Wilmington to study.)

During 1908-09, Ashley was occupied buying mahogany furniture in Jamaica and selling it in Rhode Island. In 1913 he settled in New Bedford but returned to Wilmington in the summer of 1915. He and Stanley Arthurs traveled to California, then returned to Wilmington, where Ashley remained until the summer of 1916. He moved his permanent residence to Fairhaven, Mass., near New Bedford, often returning to Wilmington during the winter. In 1932, he married Sarah Rodman Scudder Clark and began to renovate a farmhouse he had long owned in Westport, Mass., and the couple moved there. They had two daughters, Phoebe and Jane.

By 1904, Ashley's illustrations were appearing in many important magazines such as Collier's, Success, and Leslie's Monthly, and more commissions were to follow. He also spent a good deal of time on his marine paintings. Brought up on stories of the whaling trade, he spent a great deal of time painting the sea and the New England shore. He exhibited his work several times, including a two-man show with Stanley Arthurs at the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts in 1934. He also exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts between 1911 and 1922.

In later life he wrote books about seafaring, including Yankee Whaler and The Ashley Book of Knots. The latter is filled with drawings of whaling scenes and knotmaking and contains about 3900 different kinds of knots, many invented by Ashley.

Ashley was associated with many clubs and organizations including the Author's League of America, the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, the Explorers Club of New York City, and the New Bedford Yacht Club. He was also a trustee of the Swain Free School of Design in New Bedford. Ashley died on September 18, 1947 at Westport.

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The Battle of LePanto

In 1570 the Ottoman Turks invaded the island of Cyprus, then owned by Venice. The Venetians, weakened by years of fighting the Turks, appealed for help. Possession of Cyprus would allow the Turks to dominate the Mediterranean. So Pope Pius V assembled a fleet of 208 galleys (oared warships) and six galleasses (huge oar-driven ships with 44 guns), from the navies of Venice, Spain, and the Papal States, under the command of Don John of Austria. This fleet met 230 Turkish galleys, under the command of Ali Pasha, off LePanto, Greece, on October 7, 1571. The fight lasted 3 hours. All but 40 of the Turkish galleys were destroyed or captured; the Christians lost only 12 ships. The battle of LePanto was the last great naval engagement in which galleys played a major part, and it was the end
of the Turkish threat to Europe from the sea.
Clifford Warren Ashley
1881-1947

Clifford 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 travelling 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 travelled to California and then came back to Wilmington, where Ashley remained through the spring of 1916. At that time he moved his permanent Massachusetts resident 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.
