

**Alson Skinner Clark (1876 - 1949)**

*At the St. Lawrence*, 1916

unsigned, dated "1916"

oil on panel

10" x 8"

Deborah Epstein Solon notes that Alson Skinner Clark experienced three succinct phases in his career: as a well-known cosmopolitan painter associated with prominent dealers such as William Macbeth in New York and William O'Brien in Chicago, as an artist who witnessed and recorded the building of the Panama Canal in 1915, and as a muralist recovering from World War I in the warm climate of Southern California.

"Nevertheless, throughout his prolific and extensive career, Clark always maintained his devotion to Impressionism – to painting *en plein air* – never abandoning his commitment to his work or his vision"

(1)

Clark has been classified in the history of American art as a California impressionist, although he has been described as "an inveterate wayfarer" who traveled throughout Europe and the United States and did not relocate to Pasadena, California until 1920 (2). He trained at The Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League of New York, The Chase School of Art, and the atelier of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) in Paris. When each semester ended, he returned to his family's summer home on one of the Thousand Islands of Alexandria Bay, New York. The house was built in 1882 and is located on the St. Lawrence River (3). One can only assume that Clark's oil sketch entitled *At the St. Lawrence* was created in the summer of 1916 at this cherished location.

The painting depicts a woman in profile, seated in a rocking chair and looking down at her lap, perhaps in the act of reading a book. The abbreviated brushstrokes of color create a vibrant base to composition. A careful rendering of light and shadow in the woman's face and the chair, in contrast to the untouched panel and highly impressionistic detailing, indicate that this was an unfinished work for the artist. The scene, however, is infused with a soft light and imbued with a sense of tranquility and repose.

**Provenance:** From a private Virginia collection to the gallery.

**Bibliography:**

1. Deborah Epstein Solon, *An American Impressionist: The Art and Life of Alson Skinner Clark* ( ), 15 .
2. Jean Stern, *Artists in Santa Catalina Island Before 1945* (Avalon, CA: The Society for the Advancement of Plein Air Painting, 2005). <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa267c.htm>.
3. Susan W. Smith, "Exhibit in the Making: Alson S. Clark" in *Thousand Islands Life Magazine*, June 2009. <http://www.thousandislandslife.com/BackIssues/Archive/tabid/393/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/262/Exhibit-in-the-Making-ndash-Alson-S-Clark.aspx>.