

**Walter Lofthouse Dean (1854 -1912)**

*Drying Sails, Harbor Cove*, 1908  
signed "Walter L. Dean" lower left  
oil on canvas  
24 ¼" x 30 ¼"

With his arrival to Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1887, Walter Lofthouse Dean was among the first artists to capture on canvas the picturesque realities of the seaport town. It wasn't until the following decade that the community exploded with artistic activity in the warmer months, and served as both a painting ground and a teaching center for artists. Dean, unlike summer visitors such as Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, and Frank Duvenek, stayed and painted in Gloucester late into autumn. His most productive months were those between September and November (1).

Dean's studio in Rocky Neck, one of the largest in the area, offered exceptional views of the ocean and fishing life in the busy harbors to use as inspiration for his paintings (2). His experiences as a fisherman and sailor lend a unique quality to marine and coastal scenes such as *Drying Sails, Harbor Cove*. "It is not only from observation of the outsides of ships that he paints them, but with the absolute knowledge of all the body and soul of the craft ... There is made upon the beholder an impression of the certainty of the artist's knowledge of every rope, every spar, every sail that he paints" (3). *Drying Sails, Harbor Cove* presents a scene of the harbor in repose; empty masts punctuate the upper half of the painting, as their sails have been taken down to dry. The rippling water and clear sky are defined by a damp grayness, but enlivened by soft nuances of sunlit blue and pink. The composition is skewed and firmly anchored to the right hand side of the painting, where the sailboats remain fastened to the wooden docks.

Dean was born in nearby Lowell, Massachusetts and moved to Boston with his parents at a young age. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before enrolling at the Massachusetts State Normal Art School. After a brief period of time in which he taught at Purdue University in Indiana, and then worked at a stable in Texas, he returned to the East Coast to pursue studies in art under Achille Oudinot. A fondness for painting coastal scenery brought the young artist to Brittany, Southern Italy, and England. It was soon after his return from Europe that he arrived in Gloucester, where he passed away in 1912.

Dean was a member of the Boston Art Club, Paint and Clay Club, Copley Society, Salmagundi Club, and several Massachusetts North Shore Art Societies. In addition to the Boston Art Club, he exhibited with the National Academy of Design, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association, and the St. Louis Exposition. One of Dean's paintings entitled *Peace*, by a legislative act approved May 14, 1928, hangs in an office of the House Committee on Naval Affairs.

**Provenance:** From the trade to the gallery.

**Bibliography:**

1. "Artists Who Are Late Stayers Down on Cape Ann," *Boston Daily*, October 27, 1907.
2. Ibid.
3. Critic of a Paint and Clay Club exhibition, Boston, 1900.