



WILLIAM LESTER STEVENS (1888-1969)**A River in Winter**

Signed lower right, "W. Lester Stevens 1921".

oil on canvas

25 x 30 1/8 in. (34 x 39 1/8 x 2 1/4 in.)

1921

9699

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, Massachusetts By descent through the family to the present owner, Santa Barbara, California, circa 1980s

Born in Rockport, Massachusetts, Stevens received his initial art training from Parker Perkins, a local marine painter who charged him fifty cents an hour. He later spent four years at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts School, where he studied under Edmund Tarbell, among others. Although influenced by Tarbell, Stevens' wide range of brushstrokes and impressionist style prevented him from being classified as a "Tarbellist," as many of Tarbell's followers were labeled.

Stevens joined the Army in 1917 and was sent to Europe where he continued to paint and sketch. Upon his return to the United States, he was pleased to discover that Rockport had become a popular haven for artists. Though he was the only native son among them, such well-known painters as Frank Duveneck, Childe Hassam, Leon Kroll and Jonas Lie also recorded the scenery of Rockport, Cape Ann and Gloucester. In 1921, together with fifty other artists, Stevens founded the Rockport Art Association, primarily to plan exhibitions of the work of outstanding area artists.

Throughout the course of his long career, Stevens taught, first in Rockport, then at Boston University (1925-1926) and Princeton (1927-1929). He later gave lessons and held one-man shows in Charlotte and Asheville, North Carolina, where his work was well-received. Southerners particularly enjoyed his views of famous Southern gardens and cities.

Though the Depression years were difficult for both the artist and his family, the 1930s did bring Stevens some measure of commercial and personal success. He did a number of covers for The American Legion Magazine and won prizes in New Haven, Springfield and Rockport. In 1934, he abandoned Rockport to the growing tourist population and moved to Springfield, and then to Conway, Massachusetts, where he remodeled an old farmhouse and constructed a studio which looked north towards Mount Monadnock. Except for summer trips made in the 1960s to Lubec, Maine, Campobello Island and Grand Manan Island, Stevens lived and painted in Conway for the rest of his life.

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