



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

WILLIAM LANGSON LATHROP (1859 - 1938)

View of a Path Through a Glade at Dusk

Oil on canvas

25 ¼ x 19 inches

Signed and dated 1889, lower left

American Tonalist and Impressionist painter William Langston Lathrop was a founder of the art colony at New Hope in Bucks County, Pennsylvania—the center of Pennsylvania Impressionism. Born in Warren, Illinois on March 29, 1859, Lathrop was raised on his family's farm in Painesville, Ohio. As soon as he graduated high school, Lathrop traveled to New York City and briefly attended art classes at Cooper Union's Free Night School of Art. After his return to Painesville in 1877, he began sending illustrations to magazine editors in New York, hoping to find employment as an illustrator in the bustling metropolis. He secured a job with *Harper's* magazine and returned to New York. But within a few weeks, Harper's editor Charles Parsons suggested that Lathrop's talents would be better applied towards fine art than illustration.

Following Parson's advice, Lathrop returned to Ohio to focus on painting. He sold his first painting, depicting a neighbor's cows, in 1881. Later that year he returned to New York and began working at the Photoengraving Company, where he met the artist Henry B. Snell, who would become a lifelong friend and member of the art colony in Bucks County. At this time, Lathrop also took classes at the Art Students League with William Merritt Chase. In 1886, Lathrop went abroad to France, Holland, and England. He visited the Louvre and sketched at Barbizon. In England, he met and married Anne Burt.

Upon their return to the United States in 1888, the Lathrops resided at J. Alden Weir's farm in Georgetown, Connecticut. Lathrop continued to earn his living by selling etchings, however, a decline in the etchings market in 1891 prompted him and his wife to return to Painesville, where he took up farming. In 1896, Snell entered six of Lathrop's watercolors in the annual New York Water Club show, one of which was awarded the prestigious Evans Prize. A glowing review in the *New York Times* followed:

W.L. Lathrop, whose absence from recent exhibitions in view of his present showing may only be regretted, is now represented by six examples. All are modest in size, simple in subject, direct in treatment, and thoroughly honest in every way.



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The jury has selected one of these ... for the Evans prize ... but the choice might as well have fallen on any of the other five since all are refined, full of charm and sentiment, and most artistic.¹

Lathrop's successful career was thus launched. He went on to win several more awards over the course of his career, including a gold medal at the Art Club of Philadelphia in 1897, the Webb prize of the Society of American Artists in 1899, a bronze medal at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901, a bronze medal at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, a gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, and a Temple Gold Medal at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1922. He was elected an Associate of the National Academy in 1902 and a full member in 1907.

In 1899, Lathrop and his wife settled in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Other artists soon followed suit, including Edward Redfield, Charles Rosen, and William Ramsey. Lathrop taught art classes in his studio and his wife hosted Sunday afternoon teas in their home, which became a central meeting place in the growing art colony. Unlike his Impressionist peers, Lathrop produced most of his landscapes from memory, allowing natural forms a hazy softness. His compositions were always simple and restrained, often featuring little more than earth, sky, and a lone tree or two. His color palette was likewise restricted and tended towards darker tonalities. After 1920, he beginning working with brighter colors and his Tonalist style gave way to an Impressionist one.

An avid sailor, Lathrop tragically died when his boat, *The Wedge*, sank in a hurricane off Long Island in 1938. Today, Lathrop's paintings are in numerous museum collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Harvard University Art Museums, and the James A. Michener Art Museum in Bucks County, PA.

View of a Path Through a Glade at Dusk is an early work by the artist, executed in 1889, shortly after he returned from Europe. The French Barbizon painters, whose works he had recently encountered, may have been on his mind. The loose brushwork, reduction of forms, and somber palette dominated by deep greens and browns recall the landscapes of Corot and Daubigny. Aside

¹ Quoted in Brian H. Peterson, *Pennsylvania Impressionism* (Doylestown and Philadelphia, PA: James A. Michener Art Museum in association with the University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 148.



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from a patch of glowing, pale yellow sky, the entirety of the composition is made up of verdant grasses and foliage. A narrow path meanders past a singular tree, which serves as the focal point in this intimate, humble landscape. The New York Times reviewer quoted above aptly characterized the virtues of Lathrop's painting, which is indeed "modest," "simple," "direct," and "thoroughly honest in every way."