



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

Elmer Ellsworth Garnsey (1862 - 1946)

Shepherdess in a Field, 1899

Oil on canvas

14 x 18 inches

Signed and dated, lower right

Elmer Ellsworth Garnsey was born in 1862 to John C. and Louisa J. (Fenton) Garnsey in Holmdel, New Jersey. He completed his artistic training at the Art Students League and Cooper Union in New York City where he learned the specialty of murals under the tutelage of the notable decorative painters George W. Maynard (1843 – 1923) and Francis Lathrop (1849 – 1909). Garnsey kept a studio in New York City and earned several distinguished mural commissions for prominent civic and private institutions on the East Coast, including the Library of Congress, the Boston Public Library, Memorial Hall at Yale University, Rhode Island State House, the New York Stock Exchange, and the U.S. Custom House in New York City. His esteemed reputation also extended to the Midwest, where he completed murals for the City Art Museum of St. Louis and the Capitol Buildings in Des Moines, Iowa, and Madison, Wisconsin. Most of his murals are painted in a classical style (albeit in vibrant colors) with a focus on allegorical subjects that relate to the function of the space which they inhabit.

Though the style and subject of his mural commissions were largely dictated by their neoclassical architectural settings, Garnsey was allowed a greater degree of freedom for his oil paintings, most of which feature bucolic landscapes painted in a naturalistic style. *Shepherdess in a Field, 1899* epitomizes his personal preference for painting people and animals in rural settings enhanced with brilliant blue skies and vibrant greenery. Here, a young shepherdess cradles a newborn lamb as she tends her flock who graze in the lush surrounding field. The inclusion of the mother sheep, who gazes up at the girl, is reminiscent of his contemporaneous painting *A Village Street in Brittany*, which depicts a mother cow alongside her calf in a French village. In producing *Shepherdess in a Field, 1899*, Garnsey certainly would have been aware of similar scenes by the French academicist, William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825 – 1905), who painted numerous works featuring pastoral shepherdesses in a variety of poses and expressions, which were immensely popular among contemporary American collectors.



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William Adolphe Bouguereau, *The Shepherdess*, 1873



Elmer Ellsworth Garnsey. *A Village Street in Brittany*, 1900. Oil on canvas.¹

¹ Image courtesy of MutualArt.com.



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Garnsey's son, Julian Garnsey (1887 – 1969), was also a painter. Most of his work surrounds the landscape of his home state of California, which the elder Garnsey painted alongside his son during his visits to the west coast.

Garnsey was an active member of the National Society of Mural Painters, Architectural League of New York, and the American Federation of the Arts. He was awarded a bronze medal as one of the designers of the Chicago Worlds Columbian Exhibition in 1893, as well as an honorable mention and silver medal in the 1900 Paris Exposition for his contribution to the United States National Pavilion.