



# Ernest Lawson's "Hells Gate" Slated for Restoration at SCHS

September 16, 2014

by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

*Hells Gate* by Ernest Lawson (1873-1939) is receiving a makeover, courtesy of the Greater Hudson Heritage Network. The painting, part of Suffolk County Historical Society's collection in Riverhead, and was selected for conservation to restore the painting so contemporary audiences can appreciate the work.

To this end, Suffolk County Historical Society (SCHS) was awarded a \$4,950 conservation grant from the Greater Hudson Heritage Network. The work will be completed by conservator Alexander Katlan of New York City.

"The restoration of this modernist painting will offer our patrons a glimpse into a rarely seen New York and Long Island time and place, as well as the experience of appreciating the work of a great American artist," stated SCHS Reference Librarian Wendy Polhemus-Annibell. "As the only Lawson painting in our collection, this unique piece fills a void in this area of regional artists from this period in our holdings. The restored painting will be the centerpiece for the opening of our newly restored East Wing Gallery."



"Hells Gate" by Ernest Lawson, 1910. Oil on canvas.

*Hells Gate*, circa 1910, was painted on the north shore of Long Island. It depicts the point where the East and Harlem Rivers converge with the Long Island Sound, according to SCHS. Lawson's other Long Island paintings include *The Old Tulip Tree*, *Long Island* and *Red House, Sound Beach*. Lawson's landscapes may be best known for their loosely brushed Impressionist-style canvases that portray light and color, according to SCHS.

Ernest Lawson (1873-1939) is a Canadian-born American Impressionism painter. Sometimes referred to as the founder of the Harlem River School, Lawson was one of [The Eight](#), the realist genre painters which was also called the Ashcan School. Led by [Robert Henri](#), the founding members are Everett Shinn, [John Sloan](#), [Arthur B. Davies](#), Ernest Lawson, [Maurice Prendergast](#), [George Luks](#) and [William J. Glackens](#), whose work is currently exhibited through October 13, 2014 at [The Parrish Art Museum](#) as part of a three-museum traveling exhibition.

In 1897, Lawson's American perspective on en plein aire paintings led [William Merritt Chase](#) to dub Lawson "America's greatest landscape painter", according to SCHS. Lawson's inclusion in the seminal exhibition "The Eight" in 1908 brought recognition to him and other realist painters in New York. It also helped solidify his place in New York and American art history, stated SCHS.

Lawson was born in Nova Scotia. He studied art in Kansas, Santa Clara, New York and France and settled in Washington Heights, NY, in 1898. It was there that Lawson "perfected his delicate use of color", according to SCHS, which art critic James Huneker (circa 1920) described as "a palette of crushed jewels."

*Hells Gate* was a gift from the estate of Kenneth Stellenwerf (1889-1977), the nephew of Marie Louisa Stellenwerf, who was the wife of Thomas Worth. Worth was one of Currier & Ives's most prolific artists and is buried in Bay Shore, NY.

[The Greater Hudson Heritage Network](#) awarded \$104, 000 in conservation treatment grants to 24 organizations in NY State in 2014. Funds are provided to professional conservators to restore objects, artifacts and art which aid in stabilization and conservation so they can become or remain accessible to the public. The objects are part of collections held by New York State museums, historical societies and cultural organizations. The grants are funded in association with the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA).

The 2014 grant recipients for artwork restoration included *George Washington Eastman* by [Philip DeLaszlo](#), 1930, oil on canvas, (George Eastman House, Monroe County); gouache sketch of Green-Wood's Arch by [Richard Upjohn](#), c 1860 (Green-Wood Historic Fund, Kings County); *Williams Reynolds* by an unknown artist, early 20th century, oil on canvas (Long Beach Historical & Preservation Society, Nassau County); *Winter in Berkshire Hills* by [Rockwell Kent](#), 1909, oil on canvas (Yager Museum of Art and Culture at Hartwick College, Otsego County); Garret Decker Hasbrouck by Francesco Anelli, 1840, oil on canvas (Stone Ridge Public Library, Ulster County) and others. For the full list, visit [www.greaterhudson.org](http://www.greaterhudson.org).

**BASIC INFO:** The Suffolk County Historical Society is located at 300 Main Street. Riverhead, NY 11901. [www.suffolkcountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.suffolkcountyhistoricalsociety.org).

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