



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

MARY JOSEPHINE WALTERS (1837-1883)

A New York native, Mary Josephine Walters, was born in 1837 to Ruth and William A. Walters, M.D. Her father was employed as a City Inspector from 1841 to 1842 and was later elected Coroner of New York City.¹ Dr. Walters died in 1851 when he was just 43 years old, and Walters was a teenager.² Widowed with six children, Ruth Walters moved the family to Brooklyn. While little is known about Walters' education and formal artistic training, she was noted as the favorite female student of Asher B. Durand in a biography of the esteemed artist written by his son, John Durand.³

Although Walters resided in Brooklyn, her studio was located across the river in Manhattan. She worked steps away from the National Academy of Design in the Y.M.C.A building on 23rd Street. Her studio neighbors included William Hart, David Johnson, Alfred T. Bricher, and John F. Kensett, to name a few.⁴ Walters began exhibiting at the National Academy of Design as early as 1864.⁵ In 1867, Walters was in her studio full of Catskill views hard at work on a brook scene described by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* as, "decidedly pretty and well done."⁶

In 1871, Walters contributed a painting entitled *Chapel Pond, Adirondacks* to the 46th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design. A critic for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* said the painting was, "a careful work, realizing in its earnestness and beauty of detail the truth of a study from nature."⁷ In 1872, at the Pittsburgh Art Gallery Walters exhibited what one critic described as, "a little shadowy picture, full of thought."⁸ The same year, she exhibited her *View of the Ausable River, Adirondacks* with the Brooklyn Art Association⁹ and later at the National Academy.¹⁰

¹ *Catalogue of the alumni, officers and fellows of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Medical Department of Columbia College, in the city of New York, from A.D. 1807 to A.D. 1865* (New York: Baker & Godwin, 1866)

² *The Evening Post* (New York, New York), Mon, Aug 25, 1851, 3.

³ John Durand, *The Life and Times of A.B. Durand* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894) 184.

⁴ "Art Notes," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Thu, Mar 30, 1871, 2.

⁵ Peter Hastings Falk, *Who Was Who in American Art (1564-1975)* (Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1999) 3455.

⁶ "Art Gossip," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Mon, Nov 18, 1867, 2.

⁷ "National Academy of Design," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Thu, Apr 20, 1871, 2.

⁸ "The Art Gallery," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Sat, Apr 13, 1872, 4.

⁹ "Fine Arts," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) Fri, Dec 6, 1872, 3.

¹⁰ "Art Notes," *The Brooklyn Union* (Brooklyn, New York) Thu, Apr 25, 1872, 2.



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While primarily known for her paintings of the Catskill and Adirondack regions, Walters spent summers sketching in northwestern New Jersey.¹¹ In 1873, she contributed a painting entitled *Brascastle* [sic] *Brook* to an exhibition of the Brooklyn Art Association. Located in New Jersey, Brass Castle was a subject favored by Walters. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* stated, “in its finish [the painting] is treated with the freshness of a study from nature. The Tree foliage is painted with rare freedom, and the rocks and running water are also beautifully handled.”¹² Walters also spent time in in the Saddle River Valley sketching woodland and farmyard scenes.¹³

In 1873, Walters was one of thirty women artists included in the 48th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy.¹⁴ In 1877 she was listed among the artists whose work sold during the National Academy’s annual exhibit.¹⁵ In 1881, Walters was included among a list of “prominent” artists including Alfred T. Bricher and J. Francis Murphy whose work was added to an exhibition of watercolors with the Brooklyn Art Association.¹⁶

By 1880, Walters was residing in Ho-Ho-Kus in Bergen County, N.J. with her mother and brother Joseph.¹⁷ She continued to paint and exhibit her work with the American Water Color Society and the National Academy of Design until the end of her life in 1883. She was 46 years old.

During her lifetime, Walters held a membership with the Brooklyn Art Association where she exhibited regularly. She exhibited with the American Watercolor Society and contributed to annual exhibitions at the National Academy of Design between 1864 and 1883. Today her work can be found in the collections of the New York Historical Society and the Birmingham Museum of Art.

¹¹ “Art Notes,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) Thu, Jun 15, 1871, 3.

¹² “Brooklyn Art,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) Wed, Dec 17, 1873, 2.

¹³ “Where Our Artists Summer,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) Sun, Aug 19, 1877, 2.

¹⁴ “Academy of Design—Reception Last Night,” *New York Daily Herald* (New York, New York), Tue, Apr 15, 1873, 6.

¹⁵ “Fine Arts,” *New York Daily Herald* (New York, New York), Sat, May 26, 1877, 4.

¹⁶ “Fine Arts,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Thu, Mar 10, 1881, 1.

¹⁷ 1880 United States Federal Census accessed June 30, 2022 via [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)