



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **Nellie Louise Thompson (1861-1950)**

Nellie Louise Thompson was one of five children born in Randolph, Massachusetts to Susan Maria Poole and James Thompson, a grocer. While little known today, Thompson was a well-exhibited and multi-faceted artist best known for her miniatures and sculptures. In addition to her work as a visual artist, Thompson wrote a number of dramatic compositions performed throughout Boston. In 1891, Thompson married Frank D. Alden, a printer, and the couple had two sons.

In 1906, Thompson participated in an exhibition of miniatures at Boston's Twentieth Century Club. The show was lauded by the Boston Globe as "the best exhibition of miniature paintings ever seen" in Boston. Thompson's portrait miniatures were described as "very life-like" and "very rich in color and well-drawn."<sup>1</sup> She exhibited at the Annual Exhibition of Miniatures at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1909<sup>2</sup> and again in 1911.<sup>3</sup> In 1910, Thompson exhibited a watercolor entitled *In the Scotch Highlands* at the American Fine Arts building during the Twenty-First Annual Exhibition of the New York Watercolor Club.<sup>4</sup> The work may have been painted during her travels through England and Scotland in 1896.<sup>5</sup> In 1911, Thompson's work was shown with other Boston artists at the Jordan Marsh Gallery. The Boston Globe once again praised her work stating it was, "well done and worthy of notice."<sup>6</sup>

In 1915, Thompson began to focus on sculpture and was noted for the fountains she designed for prominent estates.<sup>7</sup> She designed her famed "Lotus fountain" for the garden of Mrs. Robert D. Evens in Beverly, Massachusetts. Thompson was the recipient of a MacDowell fellowship and in 1916 spent time at the New Hampshire artist's colony working in a studio designed by American artist Frank Tolles Chamberlain (1873-1961). At MacDowell, Thompson completed an important commission for prominent Bostonian, Mrs. Louis Agassiz Shaw.<sup>8</sup> In 1920,

---

<sup>1</sup> "Best Collection Ever Assembled," The Boston Globe (Boston, Massachusetts), Tue, Dec 4, 1906, Page 5

<sup>2</sup> Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters, *Catalogue of the Eighth Annual Exhibition of Miniatures*, (Philadelphia: The Academy, 1909) p. 18

<sup>3</sup> Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters, *Catalogue of the Tenth Annual Exhibition of Miniatures...*, (Philadelphia: The Academy) p. 18

<sup>4</sup> New York Watercolor Club, *Twenty-First Annual Exhibition of the New York Watercolor Club*, (New York: The New York Watercolor Club, 1910), p. 22

<sup>5</sup> "Table Gossip," The Boston Globe (Boston, Massachusetts), Sun, Sep 20, 1896, Page 21

<sup>6</sup> "Work of Boston Artists," The Boston Globe (Boston, Massachusetts), Tue, May 9, 1911, Page 2

<sup>7</sup> "Picturesque Array Of Things That Reveal Feminine Ingenuity," The Boston Globe (Boston, Massachusetts), Fri, Mar 20, 1925, Page 13

<sup>8</sup> "Table Gossip," The Boston Globe (Boston, Massachusetts), Sun, Oct 1, 1916, Page 67



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

Thompson exhibited a fountain in the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.<sup>9</sup> She exhibited at the academy again the following year.<sup>10</sup>

During the summer of 1923, Thompson exhibited “some interesting sculptures” with the Gloucester Society of Artists and a sculpture entitled “Egypt” with the North Shore Arts Association.<sup>11</sup> In 1925, the Massachusetts League of Women Voters held an exhibition in Boston’s Horticultural Hall highlighting women’s activities and accomplishments. Thompson exhibited several works including a fountain entitled *The Iris*. The work of her students was also included. The students were adults as well as adolescents making it likely that Thomas provided private lessons. In a review for the exhibit the Boston Globe regarded Thompson as a “noted painter and sculptor.”<sup>12</sup> Thompson exhibited *The Iris* again in 1926 with the Gloucester Society of Artists. A critic described the figure of Iris as, “fine in character and well modelled...”<sup>13</sup>

In addition to painting and sculpting Thompson wrote several plays. In 1912, Thompson and fellow sculptress Margaret Sargent (1892-1978) wrote a one-act play titled “An Ideal Head” that was performed at the Vincent Club show in Boston’s Jordan Hall.<sup>14</sup> In 1928, Thompson’s one-act play “Engaged Till 3 O’clock” was performed at an event for the Copley Society held in Recital Hall.<sup>15</sup>

An active member of the Copley Society, Thompson served on several committees. She was also a member of the Professional Women’s Club and of the Boston Art Club where she exhibited in the annual exhibition of 1933.<sup>16</sup>

Nellie Louise (Thompson) Alden died in 1950. She was 89 years old.

---

<sup>9</sup> Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Catalogue of the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition*. (Philadelphia: The Academy, 1920), p. 72

<sup>10</sup> Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Catalogue of the 116<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition*. (Philadelphia: The Academy, 1921), p.72

<sup>11</sup> “Cape Ann Has More Painters Than Fishermen This Year,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Fri, Aug 31, 1923, Page 5

<sup>12</sup> “Picturesque Array Of Things That Reveal Feminine Ingenuity,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Fri, Mar 20, 1925, Page 13

<sup>13</sup> “Painters and Sculptors take possession of Old Gloucester,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Fri, Jul 9, 1926, Page 7

<sup>14</sup> “Table Gossip,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Sun, Mar 24, 1912, Page 54

<sup>15</sup> “Copley Society of Boston Entertains,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Sat, May 5, 1928, Page 12

<sup>16</sup> “Exhibition of Paintings by Boston Art Club Members,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), Mon, Jun 12, 1933, Page 15