



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **Mary Earl Wood (1866-1951)**

Mary Woodbury Earl Wood was born in Lowell, Massachusetts to Helen Bruce Corliss and William Daggett Wood. Her father was the proprietor of W.D. Earl Company, a manufacturer of combs. Wood was a descendant of Captain John Ford, who served in the Massachusetts militia during the Revolutionary War. Ford was commended for his bravery at the battle of Bunker Hill and the battle of Boston by General Washington.<sup>1</sup>

A graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Wood studied under Edmund C. Tarbell, Frank W. Benson, and Joseph De Camp. She married Frederick A. Wood in 1896. A graduate of Dartmouth, her husband, received his Ph.D from Columbia in 1894. A pioneer member of the Lowell Literary Society, Dr. Wood was master of the Greenhalge School in Lowell before resigning to work as assistant editor of the *Youth's Companion*.<sup>2</sup>

In 1905, Wood sought contributions of artwork from Boston artists for an exhibition of American oils paintings and watercolors to be held in Lowell. The exhibit was to be held at the local High School as the city did not yet have a public art museum. Many artists, including her instructors, Frank W. Benson and Edmund C. Tarbell agreed to contribute to the exhibit.<sup>3</sup> In 1908, as secretary of the Lowell Art Association, Wood worked with President Joseph E. Nesmith on the décor of the Whistler Memorial House. Following the death of James McNeil Whistler, the Lowell Art Association purchased the artist's birthplace to use as their headquarters as well as a museum.<sup>4</sup>

In 1910, Wood contributed her portrait of Arctic explorer General A.W. Greeley to the 16<sup>th</sup> annual exhibition of American Paintings and Sculptures at the Poland Spring Art Gallery in Maine.<sup>5</sup> She exhibited at Poland Spring again in 1912. In 1913, her portrait of Rev. John M. Green, D.D., founder of Smith College, was presented to the Rogers Hall School in Lowell where Green was a member of the board of trustees. The work was later exhibited in Boston.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Historical Note," *John Ford Papers*, Mss183, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogic Society, 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Rites in Lowell Today for Frederick A. Wood," *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Tue, Jan 6, 1942, 15.

<sup>3</sup> "An Exhibition to be Held in Lowell," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Mon, Mar 13, 1905, 10.

<sup>4</sup> "Whistler House Dedication," *American Art News*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (New York, New York) Dec. 26, 1908, 6.

<sup>5</sup> "The Fine Arts," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Tue, Jun 21, 1910, 11.

<sup>6</sup> "Gallery and Studio Notes," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Wed, Jan 22, 1913, 20.



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The Lowell Art Association flourished under the leadership of Nesmith and Wood following the opening of the Whistler House. In 1915, the association organized an exhibit at the Whistler House with artists born in Lowell or with a personal connection to the city. Wood contributed portraits of General A.W. Greeley and of Miss Betty Eastman.<sup>7</sup> In 1923, Wood was included in the summer exhibition held at the Whistler House.<sup>8</sup>

During her lifetime, Wood had studios in Lowell and in the Fenway Building in Boston. She was a member of the Copley Society and exhibited with the Buffalo Society of Artists and at the Twentieth Century Club. As secretary of the Lowell Art Association, Wood organized many of the exhibitions and lectures held at Whistler House.<sup>9</sup>

Today, her work can be found at the Whistler House Museum of Art, the Lowell Historical Society, Lowell City Hall and the New Hampshire Supreme Court Building in Concord.

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<sup>7</sup> Frederick W. Coburn, *History of Lowell and Its People*, Volume II (New York City: Lewis Historical Publishing Co, 1920) 457-8, 533.

<sup>8</sup> "Lowell, Mass." *The Art News*, Vol. 21, No. 39 (New York, New York) Aug 11, 1923, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick W. Coburn, 533.