



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

Edith W. Cook (1839-1902)

Edith W. Cook was born in New Jersey in 1839 to Martha Duncan Walker and Gen. William P. Cook.¹ A graduate of West Point,² Gen. Cook served in the United States Cavalry and was later employed as chief engineer of the Camden and Amboy Railroad, the first rail system in New Jersey.³ Active in politics, Gen. Cook was a prominent member of the Democratic party. He was appointed Major General by the governor of New Jersey in 1862.⁴ Cook's mother was an accomplished author and poet whose work appeared in popular magazines.⁵ She had a special interest in Polish literature and culture. Her translation of Krasinski's *The Undivine Comedy, and other Poems* was published by J.B. Lippincott a year after her death.⁶

A lawyer and politician, Cook's maternal uncle Robert J. Walker served as secretary of state under President Polk.⁷ During the Civil War he wrote articles for the *Continental Monthly*, a political and literary periodical, published by J.R. Gilmore.⁸ Cook's mother was the editor of the publication between 1863 and 1864.⁹

Cook's brother Eugene B. Cook, a Princeton graduate, was a chess expert who authored several books on the subject. He was also a musician and an authority on figure skating.¹⁰ Cook's sister, Lucia G. Pychowska was a writer and amateur botanist.¹¹ The three siblings shared a love of the outdoors and were avid mountain climbers. As members of the Appalachian Mountain Club, they contributed detailed accounts of their excursions in the White Mountains to the club's journal *Appalachia*.

¹ Many contemporary sources use Edith Wilkinson Cook as the artist's full name however I have found no archival sources that confirm this. It is likely that Cook's middle name is Walker after her mother's maiden name.

² "Death of Gen. William Cook," *Monmouth Democrat* (Freehold, New Jersey), Thu, Apr 27, 1865, 2.

³ "Obituary Notes," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Tue, Feb 18, 1902, 9.

⁴ "Death of Gen. William Cook."

⁵ "Death of an Authoress," *The Raleigh Sentinel* (Raleigh, North Carolina), Wed, Sep 23, 1874, 1.

⁶ "Our Book Table," *The New Orleans Bulletin* (New Orleans, Louisiana), Sun, Jul 11, 1875, 3.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ James Grant Wilson, *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1600-1889* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1889) 329.

⁹ James Grant Wilson, *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1600-1889* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1888) 717.

¹⁰ "Gifts Of Pictures from The E.B. Cook Estate," *Stevens Indicator* Volume 32 (Hoboken, NJ: Alumni of Stevens Institute of Technology, 1915) 282.

¹¹ *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club*, Vol, XVIII (New York: Torrey Botanical Club, 1891) 150.



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Residents of Hoboken, New Jersey, the Cooks were friends with the family of Edward A. Stevens and lived a short walk from the Stevens family estate at Castle Point which later became the Stevens Institute of Technology.¹² The Cook family was also friends with artist Jervis McEntee. In his diary dated June 11, 1872, McEntee wrote of visiting the Cooks in Hoboken on his return to New York.¹³ In a letter to McEntee in 1873 Cook's mother wrote, "...when Edith does something very nice in art, I always feel very grateful to you and Mr. Whittredge."¹⁴

In 1864, Cook exhibited *On the Kaaterskill Creek* and *Head of the Catskill Clove from South Mountain* at the 39th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design. An art critic for the *Continental Monthly* said, "the later [painting] is a spirited and truthful representation of a beautiful bit of Catskill scenery. The Hunter and Plattekill Mountains, Haine's Fall, the Clove Road and intervening ravines, the winding woodpath, and burnt trees, are close records of fact, set in a far-away sky and a real atmosphere."¹⁵

In 1868, Cook contributed two works to the 1st Winter Exhibition of the National Academy of Design.¹⁶ In 1871, Cook exhibited a painting entitled *Evening Berlin Falls* with the Ladies' Art Association at Clinton Hall on New York City's Astor Place.¹⁷ The exhibit included work by several notable women artists including Susie Barstow, Mary Kollack, and Sophie M. Tolles.¹⁸ That same year, she contributed a painting entitled *Just Morning, at Cape Ann, Mass* to the 46th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design. A critic for the *New York Herald* said the work was, "too harsh, but faithful, and admirable in local color."¹⁹ In 1873, Cook was one of approximately 30 women artists included in the 48th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy

¹² "Gifts Of Pictures from The E.B. Cook Estate," *Stevens Indicator* Volume 32 (Hoboken, NJ: Alumni of Stevens Institute of Technology, 1915) 282.

¹³ "Jervis McEntee papers, 1796, 1848-1905," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution accessed June 27, 2022, via <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/jervis-mcentee-papers-7251/series-5/box-3-folder-1>.

¹⁴ "Jervis McEntee papers, 1796, 1848-1905," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution accessed June 27, 2022, via <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/jervis-mcentee-papers-7251/series-1/box-1-folder-12>.

¹⁵ "An Hour in the Gallery of the National Academy of Design," *The Continental Monthly*, Vol. 5 (New York: John F. Trow, 1864) 689.

¹⁶ *Catalogue of the First Winter Exhibition of the National Academy of Design (1867-8)* (New York: Sackett & Mackay, 1868) 11, 34.

¹⁷ "Art," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), Sun, Apr 2, 1871, 6.

¹⁸ "Art Notes," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), Thu, Mar 30, 1871, 2.

¹⁹ "Fine Arts," *New York Daily Herald* (New York, New York), Mon, Apr 17, 1871, 3.



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of Design.²⁰ In 1874, she exhibited in the 7th Annual Exhibition of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors at the National Academy.²¹

In addition to painting, Cook was also a writer and poet and made regular contributions to *Catholic World*. In 1886, her poetry was included in *Children's Ballads: From History and Folk Lore*.²²

Edith W. Cook died in 1902. She was 62 years old. Today, her work can be found in Dartmouth's Hood Museum of Art.

²⁰ "Academy of Design—Reception Last Night," *New York Daily Herald* (New York, New York) Tue, Apr 15, 1873, 6.

²¹ *Catalogue of the Seventh Annual Exhibition of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors, Held at the Galleries of the National Academy of Design* (New York: E. Wells Sacket & Bro., 1874) 24.

²² "For the Children," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Michigan), Sat, Nov 6, 1886, 8.