



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

EMMA COLLIN (SEARS) MARSH (1871-1960)

Emma Collin (Sears) Marsh was born in Geneva, New York to Mary L. Collin and James Sanford Sears. Her father worked in a plant nursery, which greatly influenced Marsh's own academic and artistic interests in botany and horticulture. Throughout her career, Marsh painted more than 900 watercolors documenting the flora of New York and Florida.

Graduating from the Geneva Classical and Union School in 1890, Marsh moved to New York City to study art at the Pratt Art Institute, though there is no record of her graduation from the program. After leaving school, she lived, worked and traveled between New York and Florida, spending summers at her family home in Geneva and winters in Florida where she taught painting beginning in 1909. Her early subjects included flowers native to New York state, but upon traveling to Florida, she quickly became captivated by the untamed beauty of the state's abundant wildflowers, which hereafter became her primary focus.

Marsh met her future husband, the minister George Marsh, in Florida 1909. They married two years later in 1911 in the artist's hometown before returning to Florida to settle in Mount Dora. George died in 1918 and the couple had no children. Marsh continued to paint, teach and exhibit through her married years and approached her art with a renewed vigor after her husband's death. She began taking painting classes and would continue her artistic education throughout her life through numerous clubs and art associations. Marsh was the founder of several local and regional art clubs including the Mount Dora Art League (1926), the Orlando Florida Art League (1926), the Florida Art Association, Mount Dora (1926) and the Florida Federation of the Arts, Orlando (1927). The Florida Federation of Art was only the second state Federation of Art in the country. Its founding mission was to "assist local clubs throughout the state in promoting art and art appreciation." Marsh exhibited paintings of wildflowers at the first two annual Federation meetings in 1928 and 1929.

Marsh exhibited her work widely throughout her lifetime in both New York and Florida. In addition to more than sixteen regional garden clubs and art associations, Marsh's work has been exhibited in New York City at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History, venues which highlight the artist's penchant for instilling her floral subjects with a skilled blend of scientific accuracy and aesthetic beauty. Indeed, Marsh's academic interest is exemplified through her garden club lectures on wildflowers and the inclusion of botanical information, such as the location, season and month of bloom, in many of her watercolor illustrations.

Emma Collin Sears Marsh died on March 25, 1960 at the age of 88 in Mount Dora, Florida. With an impressive oeuvre of more than 900 stunning floral watercolors, Marsh's works remain appreciated for their beauty, as well as their documentary value as records of species of wildflowers, some of which are now extinct.