



HAWTHORNE  
Fine Art

**GEORGE WALTER DAWSON** (1870-1938)

*Path to the Alps*

Watercolor on paper

22 x 17 ¾ inches

Signed lower right

George Walter Dawson was born in Andover, Massachusetts to Jackson Thornton and Mary (McKenna) Dawson. He attended school at the Massachusetts Normal Art School and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and was the president and founding member of the Philadelphia Water Color Club, and Professor of Drawing and the University of Pennsylvania. An accomplished watercolorist, Dawson was also a member of the Chicago Water Color Club. At a time when watercolor was seen as a lower form of art, the founders of these watercolor clubs were determined to elevate the status of the medium to an art form that held greater significance than simply as sketches or decoration.

*Path to the Alps* is typical of Dawson's watercolor images of gardens and flowers, for which he was best known. *Art and Progress* believed that Dawson.

... almost more than any other painter, translated the poignant charm of the garden, with its blossoming plants and shrubs, its light and shade, its indescribably loveliness. ... The flowers he paints, whether in mass or singly, seem to live. One can fancy them stirred by a breath of wind, fragrant, perishable.<sup>1</sup>

In a public lecture at the University of Pennsylvania, Dawson begins a talk on gardens by saying:

An hour is such a short time to devote to the subject of gardens, a subject that includes all ages, all countries, all people—that deals so intimately with man's needs, aesthetic as well as useful, and nature's gifts.<sup>2</sup>

Dawson literally walks his audience through descriptions of various garden paths with which he is

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- 1 “[Illustration]: An Old New England Cottage Rose. George Walter Dawson,” *Art and Progress* 5, no. 7 (May, 1914).
  - 2 George Walter Dawson, “Gleanings from Old Gardens and from Old Garden Literature,” *University Lectures Delivered by Members of the Faculty in the Free Public Lecture Course*, Volume 3 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1917), 461–480.



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familiar. *Path to the Alps* captures a similar experience of wandering through a garden and happening upon a striking view, composed purposely with pathways, trees, and vines. In this image, the snowy Alps are visible through the trees, while the gateway pillars and the flourishing, orange trumpet vines frame the composition and create an entrance for the viewer's eyes. Dawson skillfully creates gradations in the orange and yellow of the clusters of trumpet-shaped blossoms, carefully weaves the entangled vines against the blue sky, and leads the viewer's eye to the background using highlights and lowlights along the pathway and tree line. The great range of greens and beiges used to differentiate objects and space creates a jewel-like composition that proclaims the brilliance of nature and the pleasure one experiences in such a garden.