



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

Mary Lane McMillan (1883-1976)

Mary Lane McMillan was born in 1883 in Ringgold, Georgia to Martha Cordelia Whitman Lane (1858-1940) and Rev. James Garland Lane (1841-1920). An 1862 graduate of Harvard, Rev. Lane served as a pastor in Georgia for five years before moving the family to Tuscumbia, Alabama in 1878. His congregation at Tuscumbia's First Presbyterian Church included the family of notable American Helen Keller (1880-1968). Rev. Lane baptized Helen as an infant and years later would encourage his daughter to sit with her during church services to soothe her.¹ Despite Helen's inability to see or hear the two girls developed a friendship; a testament to Mary's kind, patient, and sensitive nature.

Mary spent her childhood filling sketchbooks and received private art lessons. She attended the National Academy of Design and was awarded the the Suydam bronze medal for her work in the "antiques" class in 1903 and an honorable mention the following year.² In October 1904, at the age of 21, Mary married George L. McMillan, a gifted musician from Missouri.³ They settled in Fort Worth, Texas around 1906 and began teaching at Polytechnic College. George was a professor of piano harmony and composition while Mary was in charge of the art department. Around the same time Mary also began designing covers for various print publications including *Holland's Magazine*, and *The Etude*, a magazine for music enthusiasts⁴.

Mary spent the summer of 1909 studying under Walter Marshall Clute (1870-1915). An American artist and illustrator, Clute held a class for advanced artists at his "quaint and picturesque" villa in Park Ridge, Illinois. When Mary returned to Fort Worth in the fall, she exhibited 40 works comprised of oils, watercolors, and pen and ink, on opening day at Polytechnic College.⁵ The following summer, Mary and George travelled to Liverpool aboard the steamship *Lusitania* to visit art galleries in London and Paris before settling in Italy where Mary studied under American Impressionist William Merritt Chase (1849-1916) at his Florentine villa.⁶

In 1910, Mary began exhibiting regularly with the Fort Worth Art Association at the Carnegie Library. In 1911, Mary and 2 other women exhibited at the library. The critic for *The Fort Worth*

¹ "Artist Given Birthday Surprise", *The Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, Florida) , Sun, Sep 8, 1974, Page 95

² "Schools of the Academy" *The New York Times* (New York, New York) , Sat, May 16, 1903, Page 9

³ "Tuscumbia, Ala.", *Nashville Banner* (Nashville, Tennessee) · Sat, Oct 15, 1904 · Page 5

⁴ "Literature", *The Houston Post* (Houston, Texas), Sun, Oct 28, 1906, Page 30

⁵ "Poly Opens With Many Big Improvements This Season", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (Fort Worth, Texas) Mon, Aug 23, 1909, Page 12

⁶ "Society", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (Fort Worth, Texas), Wed, Jul 6, 1910, Page 4



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Record and Register said, "...As a master of color, [McMillan] seems to be unexcelled. She is as true and masterful in her portrait work as she is in her landscapes, and her versatility with her brush is well demonstrated in the present display. And, contrary to the work of the average artist, it is hard to say wherein she excels..."⁷ Mary's work included a number of paintings completed while in Florence including "An Italian Garden". The painting depicts two young girls at play in the garden beside Chase's villa. Two paintings by Chase of a similar scene titled "The Orangerie, c.1909" and "Orangerie of the Chase Villa in Florence, c. 1910" were likely painted the same summer.

In 1913, The McMillan's moved to New Rochelle, New York and Mary began pursuing a career in illustration while continuing to exhibit her work. A member of the newly formed New Rochelle Art Association, Mary exhibited at the New Rochelle Public Library in 1914.⁸ She illustrated a story in the *Pictorial Review* and her pen and ink drawings appeared in novels by Edna Turpin (1867-1952) and Lucy Furman (1869-1958). In 1914, Mary's "Old Spinning Wheel" included in an exhibition of American Watercolors in Los Angeles was described as "exquisite in tone."⁹ Her illustration titled "A Heavy Weight" appeared on the September 1915 cover of *Judge*, a weekly satirical publication. Regarding the illustration *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram* noted that McMillan was "...rapidly attaining an enviable place in the ranks of American illustrators."¹⁰

In New Rochelle, Mary and George established The McMillan School of Fine Arts with classes held from September to June. During the 1920's and 30's, the school offered a summer session at the McMillan's summer residence in Belgrade Lakes, Maine. The beautiful lake setting provided the perfect backdrop for Mary's art classes and many of her paintings including "*View from Entrance to Vacation School (Belgrade Lakes, Maine)*".

Around 1940, Mary retired from a successful career as a commercial artist and lived briefly in Mariana, Arkansas to be near her mother. Following her mother's death, Mary moved to Eustis, Florida and lived with fellow artist Catherine Stockwell (1885-1983). She devoted her time to sketching and painting and continued to visit Maine each summer during the 1950's where she created elaborate puppet shows for the local children.

⁷ "Art Exhibit is Well Attended...", *The Fort Worth Record and Register* (Fort Worth, Texas), Sun, Dec 10, 1911, Page 12

⁸ "75 Years of Painting the Town", *Daily News* (New York, New York), Sun, Aug 20, 1989, Page 479

⁹ "Selected Water colors", *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), Sun, Aug 23, 1914, Page 32

¹⁰ "New 'Judge' Cover Drawn by Former Ft. Worth Woman" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (Fort Worth, Texas), Sat, Sep 18, 1915, Page 7



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During her lifetime, Mary contributed illustrations to a Campbell's Soup advertisement (1915) and numerous magazines including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, *American Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *McCall's*. A successful teacher, artist and illustrator, Mary died at the age of 93 in Mt. Dora, Florida. She is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Tuscumbia, Alabama.