



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **LEMUEL MAYNARD WILES (1826-1905)**

Lemuel Maynard Wiles, the son of farmers and a native of West Perry, New York, displayed an artistic talent at an early age—mainly in the form of sketches. Encouraged by his mother, Wiles decided to pursue a career in teaching at the New York State Normal School in Albany, where he graduated in 1847. Wiles taught briefly in the district schools of Smoky Hollow and Strykersville, as well as the Lyons Union School and the Albany Academy, before opening the Select School for Boys in Buffalo in 1851. Wiles would maintain this teaching position until 1857. It was in 1849, during his early teaching years, that Wiles commenced his formal artistic education under the instruction of the Hudson River School painters William M. Hart (1823-1894) and Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900).

In 1854, Wiles married Rachel Ramsay, and the two settled in the area of Utica, New York. Their son, Irving Ramsay Wiles, was born in 1861. The junior Wiles would follow in the artistic footsteps of his father, becoming a talented painter in his own right. Shortly after Irving's birth, the family decided to move to New York City for the sake of the senior Wiles's career. He rented a studio on Astor place, and quickly gained a foothold in the New York art scene. Within a year, Wiles had exhibited his first painting at the National Academy of Design.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Wiles's reputation grew steadily. He exhibited annually at the Brooklyn Art Association (1865-1881) and at the National Academy of Design (1864-1900), in addition to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Boston Art Club, and the Art Institute of Chicago. For a short time in the early 1860s, Wiles also maintained a studio in Washington, D.C., where he painted portraits of politicians.

After embarking on a painting expedition to the west coast, where he visited Yosemite Valley and Southern California (1873-1874), Wiles accepted a position as the director of the Ingham University art school in LeRoy, New York. The return to an academic schedule allowed Wiles to embark on sketching excursions in the summers, as many of his contemporaries did at this time. Wiles seems to have favored points in Long Island and Maine, and even traveled to London, Rome, and Paris in 1883. By 1884, Wiles was awarded an honorary Master of Arts degree from Ingham University, though he resigned his position as director in 1888.

Together with his family, Wiles returned to his hometown of Perry, New York. Not long after his resignation, in the summer of 1888, Wiles opened a summer art school on Silver Lake, aptly named the “Silver Lake Art School.” For many years after, the family would spend their winters in New York City and their summers on Silver Lake—with the exception of the years 1892-1894, when Wiles traveled to Tennessee in an attempt to establish an art department for



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Vanderbilt University (then the University of Tennessee's Peabody College). After his wife's death in 1896, Wiles continued to paint and spend time often with his adult children, Irving and Gladys. Despite failing health and increasing deafness, Wiles continued to paint until his death in 1905.