



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

Mary Lord Stevens (1833-1920)

Mary Lord Stevens was born in Batavia, New York in 1833 to Mary G. (Wilson) Lord and Israel S.P. Lord, a physician. That same year the family moved west and settled outside of Chicago in an area known as Head of Big Woods. It was later named Batavia after their hometown in New York by Stevens's maternal grandfather, Isaac Wilson, a judge and former United States Congressman.

In 1853, Stevens married Sylvester S. Stevens of Naperville, Illinois. They had two daughters; the eldest Neally graduated from Vassar and became a renowned concert pianist. In 1889, her husband's employment with the Rock Island Rail Road brought the family to California where they settled in Pasadena. They joined Stevens's father and her brother, Isaac Wilson Lord, a California pioneer who years earlier had established the town of Lordsburg, (later renamed La Verne).

Although little is known of Stevens's artistic training, records show she was actively involved in the art scene soon after the family arrived in Pasadena. In 1892, Stevens was appointed to the art committee of the newly established Woman's World's Fair committee, formed to advance an exhibition highlighting work by or of special interest to women for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago the following year.¹ In 1895, Stevens became a founding member of the Society of Fine Art of Southern California.

Stevens went on to exhibit regularly with the Society in the Chamber of Commerce's galleries and other local establishments. Regarding an 1895 exhibit at Blanchard-Fitzgerald Hall in [Los

¹ "A Woman's World's Fair Association Organized," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Thu, July 7, 1892, p. 7



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Angeles,] the *Los Angeles Times* said: “Mrs. Stevens is equally well known as an artist, and challenges the approval of the public in the large number of pictures which she has placed on Exhibition.”² Describing Stevens’s painting “Oaks on the Baldwin Ranch,” the *Times* said: “In the center of the wide field are old spreading oaks, their rich foliage green through the eternal summer, while in the background rises our magnificent mountain range, “our mother mountains” touched with purple and rosy tints and hinting at majestic vastness.”³

After her husband’s passing in 1895, Stevens continued actively painting the California landscape and its historic missions. In 1910, she collaborated with a local historian in telling the story of the old California missions. Stevens “who has made the study of the missions her avocation for twenty years or more, exhibited her collection of paintings, showing views of twenty odd missions. ... Mrs. Stevens, an artist who paints soul into her work, paints her landscapes as if to interpret a pastoral theme.”⁴

Mary Lord Stevens died at the age of 87 on January 24, 1920.

² “Art and Artists,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Mon, April 8, 1895, p. 6

³ Ibid

⁴ “Forum Club Delights,” *The San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), Sun, March 27, 1910, p. 81