



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

Catherine W. Watkins (1861-1947)

Catherine W. Watkins was born in Esquesing, near Hamilton, Ontario to Charles W. Watkins and Harriet Beckwith. The family moved to Detroit, Michigan when Watkins was nine years old.¹ A graduate of the Chicago Institute of Art, Watkins studied and traveled extensively throughout Europe and Asia for many years. She spent a decade studying in Paris and several years in Italy. She studied further under artist Frank Brangwyn in London. During the 1930's Watkins often gave lectures on her travel adventures which included time spent in China.²

Watkin's brother, Dr. Samuel C.G. Watkins was a prominent dentist who made numerous contributions to the field. He received his degree from the Boston Dental College and in 1876 moved to Montclair, NJ where he became the town's first dentist.³ He invented a sectional headrest used on dental chairs as well as the first curved and tufted toothbrush. Dr. Watkins befriended George Inness and other artists in Montclair. He wrote about his relationship with Inness in his book *Reminiscences of Montclair from 1876*. He was Acting President of the American Dental Association (1895), President of the New Jersey State Dental Society (1889) and Chairman of the organizing committee of the World's Columbian Dental Congress. In addition, Dr. Watkins was a member of the Salmagundi Club and a trustee of the Montclair Art Association. He became vice-president of the Art Association in 1917. An avid collector and patron, Dr. Watkin's had a substantial collection of American paintings.⁴

In 1908, Watkin's painting entitled *A Village in Brittany* was exhibited *hors concours* during the 14th annual exhibition of the American Women's Art Association of Paris. Held at the American Art Students' club the show was comprised of work by 55 American painters residing in Paris.⁵ Watkins exhibited with the Women's Art Association again in 1910.⁶ During the same year, she exhibited *After the Rain* at the Paris Salon.⁷ In 1913, Watkins was one of 40 American artists represented at the National Salon. Her work was shown alongside notable artists including Cecilia Beaux, Frederick Carl Frieseke, Alexander Harrison, and Jane Peterson.⁸

¹ "Dr. Watkins, Ill Two Days, Dies at Age of 88," *Montclair Times* (Montclair, New Jersey), Thu, Mar 12, 1942, 1.

² "Artist Describes Some of Adventures in China," *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), Thu, Jan 21, 1937, 14.

³ "Dr. Watkins, Ill Two Days, Dies at Age of 88," *Montclair Times* (Montclair, New Jersey), Thu, Mar 12, 1942, 1.

⁴ "Dr. Watkins, Ill Two Days, Dies at Age of 88," *Montclair Times* (Montclair, New Jersey), Thu, Mar 12, 1942, 6.

⁵ "American Women Artists," *Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, Missouri), Tue, Mar 10, 1908, 8.

⁶ "American Girls in Paris," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (St. Louis, Missouri), Sun, Mar 13, 1910, 59.

⁷ "Pictures by American Artists in the Old Salon in Paris Opening May 1," *The Sun* (New York, NY), Sun, Apr 24, 1910, 39.

⁸ "Forty American Artists Represented at Salon," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), Sun, Apr 13, 1913, 1.



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In 1890, Watkins married Judge Stephen A. Foley in Springfield, Illinois. It was the second marriage for Judge Foley, a wealthy philanthropist, and ended in divorce in 1914.⁹ Watkins moved to Woodstock, New York where she worked during World War I.

In 1921, Watkins traveled to the West Coast and settled in Los Angeles where she lived for many years at 2600 Wilshire Blvd. During the following decade Watkins gave many talks and lectures on her travels. In 1933, she spoke on the topic of “Student Life in Paris” at a meeting of the Japan America Society in the parish house of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Los Angeles.¹⁰ The same year, Watkins spoke during a meeting of the Women’s Canadian Club about her experiences during World War I which “put a sudden end to the studio life.”¹¹ In 1934, Watkins gave a series of lectures during a tour of Southern California.¹²

During her lifetime, Watkins exhibited throughout Europe including in Paris and Madrid.¹³ A member of the National Association of Women Painters & Sculptors and the American Women’s Art Association, Catherine W. Watkins died in Los Angeles, California in 1947.

⁹ “Of Interest to Champaign People,” *Champaign Daily Gazette* (Champaign, Illinois), Thu, Jun 29, 1899, 1.

¹⁰ “Japanese Group to Gather,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), Fri, Apr 7, 1933, 32.

¹¹ “Canadian Club Hears Talk On Life In Paris,” *Los Angeles Record* (Los Angeles, California), Thu, Jan 5, 1933, 4.

¹² “Woman Lecturer Goes Adventuring,” *Los Angeles Evening Post-Record* (Los Angeles, California), Tue, Jun 5, 1934, 8.

¹³ “Artists Describes Some Of Adventures in China,” *San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), Thu, Jan 21, 1937, 14.