



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

KATE W. NEWHALL (1840—1917)
Near Plainfield, NY [In the Gorge], 1881
Oil on canvas
16 x 25 inches
Signed lower left
Signed, dated 1881, and inscribed with title, verso

Catherine White Newhall, more commonly known as Kate W. Newhall, was a prolific oil landscape painter whose subjects range from the mountains and rivers of New England—where she was raised—to the coastal scenes of the San Francisco Bay area, where she resided as an adult.

Newhall was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, and spent her youth in Concord, New Hampshire. After discovering her love of and talent for painting, she enrolled at Cooper Union in New York City in her early twenties, from 1863—64, from where she received a certificate in “Drawing and Painting from Still Life.” In addition to her studies at Cooper Union, she also took classes with three reputable landscape and marine painters: Rufus Wright (1832—1900), Carleton Wiggins (1848—1932), and Mauritz F. H. de Haas (1832—1895). By 1870, she was residing in Brooklyn and had garnered a reputation as a talented landscape painter whose subjects were drawn from the New England countryside. She relocated to Plainfield, New Jersey in 1875, where she remained until 1897, when she travelled with her brother, an itinerant missionary, to California.

Near Plainfield, NY is from Newhall’s residency on the East Coast. It depicts a gorge likely along the Unadilla River, which demarcates the western edge of Plainfield. Newhall depicts the waterway as if the viewer were standing in it, with the river stretching across the majority of the lower canvas. The steep hillsides, rocky shoreline, and dense woods are rendered in careful detail against a blue sky filled with soft white clouds. The sense of quiet calm is enhanced by the stillness of the clear water, which captures the reflection of the nearby trees and rocky cliffs. This scene recalls the paintings of the prominent second generation Hudson River School artist, David Johnson, who painted landscapes in the same area. Johnson specialized in painting gorges and was celebrated for his naturalistic and meticulous rendering of rock formations and foliage.



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David Johnson. *Looking West From Dollar Island*, 1879. Oil on board.¹

Newhall, along with her brother, settled in Berkeley, California after two years of travel throughout the state. She continued to paint landscapes and marine scenes until her death, now drawing her inspiration from the Bay area, as well from excursions to Lake Tahoe. While in Berkeley, she became close friends and sketching partners with the Tonalist painter William Keith (1838—1911) and the architect Leola Coggins (1881—1930). As she had done on the East Coast, Newhall became well known for her talents, and was able to support herself through the sale of her works—a considerable feat for any woman at the time, and one more important for an unmarried woman such as herself. In addition to having her work shown on the walls of various local businesses for sale, she was included in several exhibitions between 1875 and 1908, including at the Brooklyn Art Association (1875), the San Francisco Art Association (1900—01), Golden Gate Park Museum (1902), and the Berkeley Art Association (1908).

Selected Bibliography

Hughes, Edan Milton. *Artists in California: 1786—1940*. Sacramento, CA: Crocker Art Museum Press, 2002.

Kovinick, Phil and Marian Yoshiki-Kovinick. *An Encyclopedia of Women Artists of the American West*. Austin: University of Texas Press, Austin, 1998.

¹ Image courtesy of *askART.com*.