



HAWTHORNE Fine Art

AGNES AUGUSTA BARTLETT BROWN (1847–1932)

Agnes Augusta Bartlett Brown (also Bartlet) was born and raised in Newburyport, Massachusetts to Louisa S. and Edmund Bartlett.¹ Her paternal grandfather, William Bartlet, was a prominent Newburyport resident and ship owner. Brown was educated at the Newburyport Female Highschool.

In the summer of 1874, she married artist John Appleton Brown. Prior to their marriage, Agnes was already well-known as an artist in Boston. Her work was included in a sale at Leonard's along with her soon to be husband, and artists including Frank Shapleigh, and Helen M. Knowlton.² Following their marriage the couple traveled to France to study the Barbizon painting of Camille Corot (1796-1875).³

In 1879, Agnes contributed a work entitled *Kitten* to the exhibition of the Boston Art Club and the Boston Society of Architects at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In the same exhibit, her husband exhibited four landscape works.⁴ The couple worked from their studios at 3 Beacon Street⁵ and during the 1880's and 1890's, exhibited their work in a joint exhibition each spring at Doll & Richards Gallery in Boston.⁶

In 1885, the Browns spent the summer sketching abroad.⁷ At the Brown's annual exhibition in 1889, Agnes contributed 14 works including landscapes, floral still lifes, and a portrait of a kitten.⁸ Agnes's patrons included the novelist Sarah Orne Jewett who purchased a work by the artist in 1890. In a letter of thanks, Jewett wrote, "I care very much for your beautiful work, and I wish that I could give you half so much pleasure with mine."⁹

In the 1890's, the Browns spent their winters in New York and returned to New England for the summer months.¹⁰ They spent several summers sketching on the Isle of Shoals. In 1897, they

¹ John J. Currier, *History of Newburyport, Mass 1764-1909* (Newburyport, Mass: The author, 1909) 354.

² "The Fine Arts," *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Fri, Jun 5, 1874, 3.

³ Frederick A. Sharf, *Rediscovered Artists of Essex County (1865-1915)* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1980) 9.

⁴ *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Contemporary Art held under the Direction of The Boston Art Club, The Boston Society of Architects, and The Schools at the Museum* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, Printers, 1879) 24.

⁵ "Art and Artists," *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Sun, Oct 28, 1883, 14.

⁶ "The Fine Arts," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts), Tue, Apr 9, 1889, 8.

⁷ "Table Gossip," *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Sun, Jun 7, 1885, 13.

⁸ "The Fine Arts," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts), Tue, Apr 9, 1889, 8.

⁹ Richard Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters* (Waterville, Me.: Colby College Press, 1956) 48.

¹⁰ *The Holyoke Daily Transcript* (Holyoke, Massachusetts) Thu, Jan 23, 1902, 7.



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spent the summer in the cottage of the late poet, Celia Thaxter.¹¹ They returned in 1900 and spent the summer sketching with artist Childe Hassam.¹²

In 1894, the *Boston Evening Transcript* lauded the Browns annual exhibition and declared, “Mrs. Brown has never made a better exhibition than that of this spring.” Her subjects included landscapes, winter scenes, and a picture of a sleeping kitten in a basket entitled *Contentment*.¹³ In 1896, Agnes was again lauded for her works including *Spring*, *An August Morning*, *Kitten*, and *October*. The *Boston Evening Transcript* said, “Mrs. Brown’s work resembles that of her husband, as is natural enough, and it differs from it, as is inevitable; but it is very good work, and in certain respects it is equal to Mr. Brown’s.”¹⁴

Following the death of her husband in 1902, Agnes returned to live in Newburyport. In 1926, her estate and several nearby properties became a sanctuary for birds with the assistance of a warden.¹⁵ Known for her paintings of flowers, and in particular for her studies of geese and cats,¹⁶ Agnes Augusta Barrett Brown died in 1932.

¹¹ “Table Gossip,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Sun, Aug 29, 1897, 21.

¹² “Table Gossip,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Sun, Aug 12, 1900, 32.

¹³ “The Fine Arts,” *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Mon, Apr 9, 1894, 6.

¹⁴ “The Fine Arts,” *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Sat, Apr 18, 1896, 10.

¹⁵ “Newbury Land Posted As Bird Sanctuary,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts) Mon, Oct 18, 1926, 21.

¹⁶ “Recent Deaths,” *Boston Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts) Mon, Jan 20, 1902, 9.