

Tannahill, Mary Harvey ^[1]

Tannahill, Mary Harvey

By William S. Powell, 1996

11 Jan. 1863–21 June 1951

Mary Harvey Tannahill, artist, was born at the family home Kinderhook, in [Warren County](#) ^[2], the daughter of Robert and Sallie Jones Sims Tannahill. Her father had business connections in Petersburg, Va., was a major in the [Confederate army](#) ^[3], and in 1865 took his family to New York City, where he was a cotton factor and served as president of the New York Cotton Exchange (1880–82). The family lived at 44 East 65th Street but also had a residence in Englewood, N.J., and a summer home at Lake Mahopac near Peekskill, N.Y. They frequently visited in Warrenton, N.C., and Petersburg, Va. The Tannahill children were educated in private schools. Mary's interest in art was encouraged, and she studied with [J. Alden Weir](#) ^[4], [John Twachtman](#) ^[5], [Henry Siddons Mowbray](#) ^[6], [Kenyon Cox](#) ^[7], and [Arthur Wesley Dow](#) ^[8]. Initially she used watercolors on ivory and came to be recognized as a skilled miniaturist; as such, she joined the Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters. She soon began to work with tempera, oils, woodcuts (or color blocks, as she called them), batik, and embroidery.

Prior to [World War I](#) ^[9] she studied in Europe; in Germany, where the attractive blond, almost six feet tall, was assumed to be English, she was mistreated in public. Returning home, she passed the winters in New York and summers in Provincetown on Cape Cod beginning in 1916. The availability of inexpensive studios, the opportunity to enjoy the company of other artists, and exhibitions by the Provincetown Art Association led her to spend more than thirty summers there.

Over a forty-year period Mary Tannahill's work appeared in numerous exhibitions—the [American](#) ^[10] and New York Water Color Clubs, the [Brooklyn Museum of Art](#) ^[11], Knoedler Galleries, the [American Society of Miniature Painters](#) ^[12], the [Provincetown Art Association](#) ^[13], the [Art Students League](#) ^[14], the Society of Independent Artists, the Peachtree Gallery in Atlanta, the North Carolina Professional Artists' Club, and others. In 1938 the Greenville County, S.C., Museum of Art included works by her in an exhibition entitled "Eight Southern Women," which was also shown by the Gibbes Art Gallery in Charleston. Her works are now held by numerous museums and by members of her family.

She never married and spent her final years in Warrenton, where she was at the time of her death. She was buried in the Old Blandford Church Cemetery, Petersburg.

References:

Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 7 June 1985

James Payne Beckwith, Jr., to William S. Powell, 8 May 1986

Mantle Fieldings, *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers* (1986)

John William Leonard, ed., *Woman's Who's Who of America* (1914)

Gladys G. Lippincott, News Release, "Peachtree Gallery Opens Mary H. Tannahill Retrospective," 22 Apr. 1985

Peachtree Gallery, Atlanta, *Gallery Glimpses 2* (Spring 1985)

Chris Petteys, *Dictionary of Women Artists: An International Dictionary of Women Artists Born before 1900* (1985)

Raleigh News and Observer, 4 Dec. 1931, 19 Dec. 1937

Subjects:

[Artists](#) ^[15]

[Biographies](#) ^[16]

[Women](#) ^[17]

Authors:

[Powell, William S.](#) ^[18]

Origin - location:

[Warren County](#) ^[19]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[20]

1 January 1996 | Powell, William S.

Source URL:<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/tannahill-mary>

Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/tannahill-mary> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/warren> [3] <http://www.civilwarhome.com/confederatearmy.htm> [4] http://americanart.si.edu/search/artist_bio.cfm?ID=5302 [5] <http://www.johnhtwachtman.com/> [6] <http://www.artmagick.com/pictures/artist.aspx?artist=henry-siddons-mowbray> [7] http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/cox_kenyon.html [8] <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/arthur-wesley-dow-1325> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/world-war-i> [10] <http://www.americanwatercolorociety.org/> [11] <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/> [12] <http://www.miniatureartist.com/> [13] <http://www.paam.org/> [14] <http://www.theartstudentsleague.org/> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/artist> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/women> [18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/powell-william-s-0> [19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-2> [20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>