



CANDACE WHEELER

*The Art and Enterprise
of American Design, 1875–1900*

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART





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1875–1900

Amelia Peck and Carol Irish

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Director's Foreword

In February and March 1928, twenty-seven pieces of fabric designed by Candace Wheeler were offered as gifts by her daughter, Dora Wheeler Keith, to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Made for the most part in the 1880s, these textiles were then about fifty years old; from the aesthetic vantage point of the modern movement of the 1920s, their designs would have appeared hopelessly old-fashioned. However, thanks to the perceptive eye of the curator of decorative arts Joseph Breck, they were accepted into the Museum's collection. Although Wheeler had died five years earlier and for the most part was a forgotten figure in the design world, Breck knew that these innovative and striking textiles perfectly represented one of the Museum's most important goals as stated in its 1870 charter: to encourage "the application of arts to manufacture."

The phrase, coined to articulate part of the Museum's mission, describes Wheeler's ambition as well. She devoted her long and influential career not only to producing superior handmade and manufactured textiles but also to educating women in many facets of the applied arts so that they would be able to earn a living by designing for industry. In the vital job of bringing art and manufacturing together, Wheeler played a seminal role. Two of her other accomplishments are of equal importance: Wheeler originated a distinctively American style of textile design with imagery based on the sinuous lines of native plants and flowers, and she introduced groundbreaking techniques at every stage of the manufacturing process. The May 1928 issue of the *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* included an article entitled "A Gift of Textiles," in which Wheeler's fabrics were praised for raising "the level of taste in the industrial arts by designs which revealed the harmony to be

achieved by simplicity of form and a proper relation of color and ornament."

As the decades after the initial acquisition of Wheeler's textiles passed, she and her role in history and design receded further and further into the shadows, and the Museum became less focused on educating visitors about the relationship between good design and industrial production. In the American Wing, where the American decorative arts collections were housed, the approach was to concentrate on interpreting the arts of the Colonial and Federal eras; nothing was displayed that had been made after 1825. It was not until 1970, when the Museum presented a notable exhibition called "19th-Century America," that Wheeler's works came to light once again. Struck by the simple yet sophisticated beauty of her textile designs, the curators of that exhibition chose her appliquéd tulip panel to hang in the show. Subsequently, the 1986 exhibition "In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement" featured a number of textiles by Wheeler — making clear that it was time to investigate the accomplishments of this fearless innovator and versatile artist. Our present exhibition displays for the first time one of the Museum's most historically important and visually appealing assemblages of American textiles.

The Museum is grateful to the many institutions and individuals that have lent objects to the exhibition. Special thanks must go to The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, a repository of many examples of Wheeler-designed textiles not represented in our collection, and to Candace Pullman Wheeler, a great-grandniece of Candace Wheeler, who has been most generous not only in lending objects to the exhibition but also in allowing our staff to borrow family letters and documents in her possession.

This exhibition catalogue for “Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875–1900” would not have come into being without generous funding from the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation, Inc., for which we are deeply grateful. We are also indebted to the William Cullen Bryant Fellows for their support of the project.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Amelia Peck, Associate Curator in the Department of American Decorative Arts, who planned the exhibition and, with Carol Irish, Research Assistant, wrote the catalogue.

Philippe de Montebello
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Acknowledgments

The Candace Wheeler exhibition has been longer in the making than most shows. In 1967 Marilyn Johnson, then a research fellow in the American Decorative Arts Department at the Metropolitan Museum, thought about presenting an exhibition of the textile designs of Candace Wheeler. She conducted some research on the subject and even contacted descendants of Wheeler and of her manufacturing collaborators the Cheneys, who subsequently contributed several textiles to the Museum. These new acquisitions built upon a collection of twenty-seven pieces that had been donated by Wheeler's daughter Dora in 1928. While that project did not come to fruition, the idea of a Candace Wheeler show remained with American Decorative Arts curators and was passed on to the next generation. But it was not until 1997 that an exhibition devoted solely to Wheeler was proposed and, in time, approved. My first thanks, for that approval, go to Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum, who is always open to supporting a collection-based exhibition that seems a bit off the beaten track. I am also grateful to Doralynn Pines, Associate Director for Administration, who has been enthusiastic about the show and the catalogue; and Mahrukh Tarapor, Associate Director for Exhibitions, and her assistants Martha Deese and Sian Wetherill, who efficiently dealt with many potentially knotty issues. Linda Sylling, Associate Manager for Operations and Special Exhibitions, has been consistently supportive and helpful. Taylor Miller, Assistant Building Manager, cheerfully fulfilled construction requests. Kerstin Larsen and Jacqueline Conroy of the Development Office, Barbara Livenstein of the Communications Department, and Nina Maruca and Lisa Cain in the Registrar's Office handled matters with complete professionalism. Under the direction of Barbara Bridgers, photography for the catalogue was accomplished in the

Museum's Photograph Studio by Anna-Marie Kellen, Bruce Schwarz, Karin Willis, Wallace Lewis, and Chad Beer. Deanna Cross and Susan Bresnan of the Photograph and Slide Library efficiently unraveled transparency and slide complications. Archivist Jeanie James, as always, was able to answer obscure queries in a split second. Educators Stella Paul and Elizabeth Hammer were instrumental in planning an outstanding Wheeler symposium. Jeff Daly, Jeremiah Gally, and Barbara Weiss of the Design Department played important roles in creating an exhibition that is wonderfully evocative of Wheeler's design aesthetic.

In the Editorial Department, under the leadership of John P. O'Neill, this catalogue was realized with great care. Senior Editor Ruth Kozodoy edited the manuscript with patience, sensitivity, and humor. Bruce Campbell designed a handsome book. Chief Production Manager Peter Antony and Production Manager Megan Arney saw that our vision for the catalogue became a reality, and Robert Weisberg skillfully oversaw the desktop publishing. Elaine Luthy prepared the index. Proofreaders Richard Gallin and Elizabeth Powers did yeoman service.

The conservators at the Metropolitan are second to none; because the objects in the exhibition are of many different mediums, I had the pleasure of working with conservators from almost every department. First of all I thank Conservator of textiles Elena Phipps, whose contributions to the exhibition and catalogue were crucial. In addition to working on the conservation and mounting of the objects and the design of appropriate cases, Elena wrote the book's technical appendix. In the Objects Conservation Department, Rudy Colban, Marinus Manuels, Hermes Knauer, and especially Nancy C. Britton all helped bring back to life the bench

that Wheeler designed for the Woman's Building of the 1893 Exposition. Margaret Lawson, Yana Van Dyke, and Ann Baldwin of Paper Conservation were responsive and ready collaborators. Nora Kennedy of Photograph Conservation and Museum Fellows Adrienne Lundgren and Erin Murphy made the Wheeler family photographs glow once more. Mindell Dubansky, Associate Museum Librarian at the Thomas J. Watson Library, restored the covers of Wheeler's books. Marta Laguardia, Assistant Manager of the Antonio Ratti Textile Center, graciously responded to our many requests to move and view the Wheeler textiles. Two conservators not associated with the Metropolitan Museum, Patsy Orlofsky and Caren Clark of the Textile Conservation Workshop in South Salem, New York, worked on many of the textiles owned by the Mark Twain House and were most helpful.

Curatorial colleagues from other departments around the Museum have been enormously supportive of our efforts: I want to single out in particular Barbara Boehm of Medieval Art, Thomas Campbell of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Connie McPhee of Drawings and Prints, Jeff Rosenheim of Photographs, and Joyce Denney of Asian Art. In the American Wing, Morrison H. Heckscher nurtured this catalogue and exhibition as carefully as he would a project of his own, and Peter Kenny helped keep everything on track. H. Barbara Weinberg offered important insights about American painters of Wheeler's era. I especially want to thank Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen and Carrie Reborá Barratt, my ports in a storm for many years now, who were valuable critical readers of my essay. Colleagues Kevin Avery, Frances Bretter, Frances Safford, Thayer Tolles, Catherine Voorsanger, and Beth Wees added their own expertise to the Wheeler story. American Wing volunteer and horticulturalist Lisa Miller very helpfully identified the flowers in Wheeler's designs. Kim Orcutt, Assistant for Administration, and Noe Kidder, Ellin Rosenzweig, Dana Pilson, and Catherine Scandalis, Administrative Assistants *par excellence*, helped in a multitude of ways. As always, without our terrific departmental technicians, Don Templeton,

Gary Burnett, Sean Farrell, and Rob Davis, the show would never have gone on.

I have been blessed to work with a group of highly intelligent and enthusiastic "associated artists" on the Candace Wheeler book and exhibition. First of all, heartfelt thanks go to Carol Irish, my coauthor and research assistant. I couldn't have asked for a better colleague on this project. Lori Zabar researched and fact-checked, then organized all the photography in the catalogue with efficiency and unflagging good spirits. I also thank former Museum Fellow Carolyn Lane for her many contributions to our research, as well as interns Anna-Maria Canatella, Beth DellaRocco, and Rachel Bonk. Outside the Museum, Jane Curley was extremely generous in sharing her research on Onteora. Historians Barron Lerner of Columbia University and David Jaffee of the City University of New York read the essay in manuscript and gave me invaluable advice.

I want particularly to thank the lenders to the exhibition and colleagues from other institutions who helped with the research for the catalogue. Candace Pullman Wheeler, whose grandmother, Candace Thurber Stevenson, was Candace Wheeler's niece, lent textiles, books, cards, and photographs and allowed us to read the many letters by members of the Thurber and Wheeler families in her possession. Georgia Nash and her cousin Laurie Clement-Lawrason, descendants of Dunham Wheeler, were generous with family scrapbooks and documents. Nathaniel Cheney of the Cheney Brothers family helped me gain a better understanding of his ancestors and their business. Other individual lenders to whom I am grateful include Albert A. Anderson Jr. and Evelyn M. Ellis, Robert S. Burton, Jane Curley, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Reynal, John Rigg, Barrie and Deedee Wigmore, and Graham D. Williford. At the Mark Twain House — the only other museum beside the Metropolitan with significant holdings of Wheeler textiles — Deputy Director Debra Petke, Chief Curator Diane Forsberg, and former Curator Marianne Curling were consistently generous. Thanks for their time and effort on behalf of

the Wheeler project must also go to Katharine Lee Reid, Director, the Cleveland Museum of Art; David Smith, President, the Manchester Historical Society; Deborah D. Waters, Curator of Decorative Arts, the Museum of the City of New York; David B. Dearing, Chief Curator, the National Academy of Design; Ulysses G. Dietz, Curator of Decorative Arts, the Newark Museum; Kimberly Terbush, Associate Registrar, the New-York Historical Society; Paula Baxter, Curator, Art and Architecture Division, the New York Public Library; Martha Richardson, the Richardson-Clarke Gallery; and Hope Alswang, President, and Julie Eldridge Edwards, Assistant Curator, the Shelburne Museum.

When conducting research and gathering images for the catalogue we found colleagues and friends from other institutions always responsive and interested. My thanks go especially to Wilson Faude, Executive Director of the Old State House and pioneering scholar on Candace Wheeler, and in addition to Diane Lyon Drexel, Director of Design, American Silk Mills Corporation; Barbara Adams Hebard, Book Conservator, Library of the Boston Athenaeum; Kristin Martin, Assistant Archivist, the Cleveland Museum of Art; Nancy Finlay, Curator of Graphics, the Connecticut Historical Society; Andrew Spahr, Curator, the Currier Gallery of Art; Helen M.

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Because this is a rare opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary encouragement I have received from long-time friends, I would like to thank Cathy Seibel and Barron Lerner, Hope Alswang and Henry Joyce, and Lisa and Bruce Eaton, who have listened to me talk about Candace Wheeler (as well as other obsessions) for far too many years and have with good grace continued to appear interested. Susan Peck, Patty Peck Nocella, Louis Peck, and Nora Peck have cheered me with good conversation as well as more tangible help at moments when things looked dire. I thank my husband, Michael Altshuler, for his support in innumerable ways and especially his pride in my work. This book is dedicated to my daughters, Anni and Alice.

Amelia Peck

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Candace Wheeler



Fig. 1. Sarony & Company, *Candace Wheeler*, ca. 1870; see catalogue number 4.

Candace Wheeler: A Life in Art and Business

AMELIA PECK

The busy life of Candace Wheeler (1827–1923) spanned nearly a full century in an age of rapid transformation. She compared her early years on her father’s farm to life in Puritan times; she died in jazz-age New York City.¹ At the height of her career, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Wheeler was not just an observer of the changes affecting the lives of American women but was one of the instigators of those changes. Although a feminist, she was not a radical; her leadership grew in large part from the responsibility she felt for women younger and less fortunate than herself and from her vision of how to help them gain financial independence. The product of an era that included a devastating war and successive financial panics, Wheeler viewed economic power, rather than political power, as women’s most immediate need. While she supported the goal of voting rights for women, she was not an activist in that quest, instead turning her energy toward training women to earn their own living.

At first Wheeler worked within the framework of the not-for-profit benevolent organization. Since the earliest years of the nineteenth century there had been an acknowledged place for women in charity work, with efforts focused for the most part on the welfare of society’s weaker members. But Wheeler did not fit the mold of a typical charity lady and in fact reveled in not being a “lady,” with the dilettante status the term implied, at all.² A middle-class woman, she did not have either the financial or the social backing to rise into the high-ranking levels of society that typically spawned charity leaders. Wheeler’s weapons in her struggle to make a difference were artistic talent and a strong social conscience. Her

effectiveness as a leader took strength from her love of art, her friendships with well-known painters and designers, a supportive husband, well-to-do brothers, and her supreme self-confidence and drive. Drawing on these combined resources, she created a substantial career for herself as a designer of textiles and interiors and a teacher, lecturer, and author. In the years between 1877 and 1893, from Wheeler’s first important public venture (founding the Society of Decorative Art) to her last major commission (the interior design of the Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition), she was the acknowledged national expert on all things having to do with decorative textiles and interiors. She remained an articulate part of the design world into her nineties, writing books and articles and an autobiography, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (1918).

In an era that did not always appreciate strong women, Wheeler ambitiously promoted art and design as paying careers for women rather than as hobbies. She was one of the first American women to produce designs for American manufacturers and paved the way for thousands of female designers who followed—some of whom she trained in her woman-run firm, Associated Artists. She was also one of the first women to be well known as an interior decorator, a profession she helped to create.³ Over the course of her long life she produced many beautiful objects and promoted a uniquely American style of textile and wallpaper design, with colors and patterns modeled on American flowers and responding to the qualities of American light. But undoubtedly Candace Wheeler’s most significant accomplishment was that both as an early “career woman” and

as a designer she became a role model for women at the dawn of the twentieth century, inspiring them to demand a place in the workforce as the equals of men.

EARLY YEARS, 1827–44

Candace Thurber was born on March 24, 1827, in the recently (1821) incorporated town of Delhi, New York, the seat of Delaware County.⁴ Located on the northern bank of the Delaware River in a valley west of the Catskill Mountains, Delhi had first been settled in 1785 and by the 1820s boasted two churches, several saw mills, a woolen factory, some other small businesses, and a school. The area was particularly good for dairy farms and was known for its high-quality butter. Candace was the third of eight children born to Abner Gilman Thurber (1797–1860) and Lucy Dunham Thurber (1800–1893), who had married and moved to Delhi from Cooperstown, New York, in 1823 (fig. 2). They had both grown up in Cooperstown. Abner’s parents hailed from New England; his mother, Lois Pickering, was from Salem, Massachusetts, and his father, Dr. Abner Thurber, had come to Salem from Providence, Rhode Island.⁵ Dr. Thurber was a widower and was much older than his sixteen-year-old bride. After moving to Cooperstown, the couple had four boys and one girl, but the doctor

died while the children were still young, leaving Lois to fend for them and herself. She sent the boys to work with local tradesmen — Abner, the eldest, was apprenticed to a hatter — and she herself went into business. Lois “nursed the sick, made dainties for entertainments, sewed fine ‘India mull’ into wedding garments for brides, and linen into shrouds for the dead.”⁶ (Wheeler later wrote of taking great pride in her grandmother’s needleworking and business skills.)⁷ After Abner completed his apprenticeship he married Lucy Dunham and moved to Delhi, bringing his mother and younger sister with him. Lucy had taught school in Cooperstown before her marriage; thus she provided her children with the model of a woman who had worked outside the home, and she may also have inspired Wheeler’s later interest in educating young women.

Abner and Lucy’s children were Lydia Ann (1824–?), Charles Stewart (1826–1888), Candace (1827–1923), Horace (1828–1899), Lucy (1834–1893), Millicent (1837–1838), Abner Dunham (1839–1899), and Francis Beattie (1842–1907) (fig. 3). When Candace was a young child the family lived above the hat shop kept by Abner with the considerable help of his talented wife. Candace’s sister Lucy later recalled, “Mother used to make caps and muffs for the shop, and ‘trim’ hats; that is bind them, and put in linings and leathers and she grew very expert and I have heard father say that his principal source of profit



Fig. 2. *Abner Thurber and Lucy Thurber*, ca. 1840s. Albumen silver prints made in the late 1850s from glass copy negatives of earlier daguerreotypes. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler



Fig. 3. *The Thurber Family*, 1860s. From left: Horace, Candace, Francis, Abner, Lucy (mother), Lydia, Charles, Lucy. Wheeler's father had died in 1860. The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut

was from the caps that mother made.”⁸ Sometime around 1840 Abner decided that “he must get out of the village and on a farm with my brothers Charley and Horace, in order to keep them out of the streets, and to have them learning to be industrious.”⁹ He still kept the shop for a few years but ceased making hats, finding it more profitable to sell ready-made hats from New York City than to manufacture his own. He may also have acted as a middleman in a fur trade business, purchasing skins from trappers and selling them in the city.¹⁰

When the family moved to a farm across the river from Delhi proper, Abner kept more than a dozen cows. Lucy made butter and cheese, which she sold. In her autobiography Wheeler recorded the multiple activities that took place on her parents’ farm:

All sorts of manufactures were accomplished therein — cheese- and butter-making on a somewhat large scale, since it was a dairy farm; candle-making for the family, since even whale-oil was a commodity which need not be purchased; smoking and curing of meats; storage of apples, potatoes, carrots, turnips, and cabbages; apple-paring, stringing, and drying; making of sausages and pressed meats; preserving fruits of all kinds; pickling in numberless

*ways; and finally spinning and weaving cloth for the winter wear of all of us, big and little, and managing the entire outfit of a family. How this was accomplished Heaven only knows.*¹¹

The farmhouse itself, “when father bought it, was old and unpainted, and consisted of a large living room with a recess for a bed, and a big old kitchen back, and two bed rooms — no, one bed room and a large closet off the living room — and the upstairs was only a half story and all in one big room, with a garret on one side. As there were six children of us then, we were crowded.”¹²

Much of what Wheeler later recalled of her early life was colored by her father’s strong religious and political ideals. A deeply religious man, he was given to dreams that he interpreted as visions. The family belonged to the Second Presbyterian Church of Delhi, where Abner served as a deacon. Extremely strict in his interpretation of the gospel, he forbade his children’s participation in many secular pleasures. The books in the house were strictly religious in orientation: “There were Bibles and Bibles, and commentaries and commentaries, but no Shakespeare.”¹³ Abner was also an abolitionist and saw it that the family used no products associated with slave

labor. Homemade maple sugar was substituted for cane sugar, and instead of fabric made from southern cotton the family wore linen, woven by Lucy from flax grown on the farm. Looking back, Candace was convinced that the farm had been a stop on the Underground Railroad.¹⁴

Candace felt constrained by her father's strictures. Because of them, she later wrote, "As a family we did not belong to the period in which we lived. We were actually a hundred years 'behind the times'; . . . We were living in 1825 to 1830 and forward, exactly the life mentally and habitually lived by the men, women, and children of New England in 1725 to 1730 and forward."¹⁵ She described her family life with a mixture of admiration for her parents' activism and resentment that she was made to feel like an outsider within the local community:

Mother manifested all the human and practical virtues, and Father supplied the heavenly fire which sanctified them.

The principles in which their children were reared had the Puritan narrowness belonging to Puritan thought, and, as they were practically applied, they made our lives



Fig. 4. *Candace Wheeler*, ca. early 1840s. Albumen silver print made in the late 1850s from a glass copy negative of an earlier daguerreotype. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

*quite different from those of the rest of the community. The inevitable censure called out by this habit of life was modified by constant and important public activity, and generous, self-denying social help on the part of both Father and Mother. This sense of obligation did not, however, weigh upon our schoolmates, and we were branded in our childhood with the obnoxious virtues of our parents.*¹⁶

But Candace's early life was not entirely grim. After spending time at an "infant school,"¹⁷ where at age six she stitched her first sampler, she attended the Delaware Academy in Delhi (founded 1820), an academic school open to both boys and girls from the community. A surviving catalogue of 1837 from the school lists her older brother Charles, aged eleven, and sister Lydia, aged thirteen, as among the 104 students. Candace herself probably began to attend within the next year or two, when she was eleven or twelve (fig. 4). The catalogue describes the school's educational philosophy as follows: "It is intended that the course of instruction in the several subjects of study which may be pursued, shall be strictly *thorough* and *practical*; embracing, together with the ordinary branches, the Classics, the Mathematics and higher branches of English education. It is designed to qualify the student for admission into College, for the study of a profession, for the duties of Common School instruction, or for the business of active life."¹⁸

The school was coeducational from the beginning. In 1821 it advertised that its female teacher, a Miss Fuller, was prepared to teach the following subjects to girl pupils:

Reading, Writing, Orthography, English, Grammar, Composition, Modern and Ancient Geography, Printing and Drawing Maps, Chronology, Arithmetic, Ancient and Modern History, Rhetorick, Logick, Elements of Natural and Moral Philosophy, and the Philosophy of the Human Mind, and French. Also, in Needle Work, Embroidery, Drawing and Designing for Botanical, Historical, Profile and Landscape Painting, to be executed in water colors, on paper or silk, and Landscapes, chiefly performed in oil colors.

A modern and elegant style of velvet painting, performed by Theorems. A complete knowledge can

*be obtained by ten lessons, and without any previous knowledge of the art of Painting.*¹⁹

Many schools educating young women in the early years of the nineteenth century put a premium on teaching needlework and painting. Although reading, writing, arithmetic, and history were important, decorative products were something girls could bring home as tangible proof that they had been to school. Candace learned practical textile skills such as sewing and weaving from her mother and grandmother, but she probably was introduced at the Delaware Academy to some of the ornamental textile skills she used later in her professional career.

That Abner Thurber clearly believed in educating his girls as well as his boys, a fairly liberal position for the time, suggests that he was not always the distant authoritarian described by Wheeler in her autobiography. He even seems to have acknowledged the parochial nature of the range of books available at home, since he cut poems out of the newspaper for Candace to paste into a scrapbook. Wheeler's daughter Dora later repeated a story her mother had told that actually attributes Wheeler's artistic nature to Abner's teachings:

*Her father used to take her with him every night when he went for the cows and he would say to her — "Candace, you will write a sonnet on what you see at this time, and I will also write a sonnet — and tomorrow night we will come and read our sonnets to each other." Then he would say "Candace — see this dandelion. Don't you think you could draw that?" I never have seen such exquisite and perfect drawings. That was where my mother started in to be the kind of person that she was.*²⁰

This view of Candace as an artistically minded young girl is reiterated in the 1887 memoirs of her sister Lucy, who compared Candace with their older sister, Lydia:

Candace hated house work, but would take care of children or help Mother sew or trim hats — but she was called lazy, and Lyd used to tease her and call her "the poetess." She had a great taste for everything beautiful in nature, and used to draw flowers from nature, which I thought wonderful, and she was very different from Lyd in every

*way. There were two sorts in our family — some of us, especially Lyd and myself — were practical and thrifty and took after the Dunhams — but Cannie was father's own girl, and took from him a dreamy, poetical nature — sweet and loving and appreciative of everything beautiful — and as time has gone on, she has proved that thrift and everything else desirable, were not lacking in her make up, as well, and has made a wonderful woman, and had a wonderful career, while Lyd and myself have only made good wives and housekeepers.*²¹

MARRIAGE, FAMILY LIFE, AND THE ART WORLD OF NEW YORK CITY, 1844–61

In addition to drawing and writing poetry, music and singing were acceptable pastimes, and Candace's involvement in the choir of the Second Presbyterian Church proved an entrée into the lives of the young Presbyterian minister, Shubael Granby Spees, and his wife, Mary Wheeler Spees.²² The Speeses were transplants from New York City; they had married in 1840 and settled in Delhi the next year. Candace and Mary became close friends, and in 1843, when Candace was sixteen, her father allowed her to accompany the Speeses on a visit to New York City. There Mary introduced Candace to her brother, Thomas Mason Wheeler (1818–1895). The two swiftly fell in love and were married in 1844 (fig. 5). As Candace Wheeler later recalled, "There was a brother in the family, ten years my senior and rich in worldly experience; naturally he proved very attractive to my inexperience, and within a year I was his wife."²³ It was to be a long and apparently happy marriage, spanning more than fifty years, although the couple's family circumstances were not always easy; together they faced financial setbacks and personal tragedy.

Tom Wheeler was supportive of his wife's activities and seems to have instilled in her a sense of confidence about her ability to succeed in her various enterprises. Likewise, when Candace Wheeler mentions Tom in her autobiography it is in a consistently positive light. Tom is described as "a clever, progressive man"; when in 1879



Fig. 5. *Candace and Thomas Wheeler*, ca. 1844. Albumen silver print made in the late 1850s from a glass copy negative of an earlier daguerreotype. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

Candace wanted to start a decorating business with Louis C. Tiffany, “wise . . . and broad-minded” Tom supported her in her decision.²⁴ Tom approved of her being a working woman, Wheeler reported telling an old friend; “He says it keeps me busy and makes up to me for not voting.”²⁵ Indeed, Tom seems to have been a supporter of women’s suffrage, and although “keeping busy” may sound like a patronizing appraisal of his wife’s important work, he obviously recognized Candace’s drive.

Tom Wheeler’s personality receives few descriptions, from his wife or others; in 1927 Dora Wheeler Keith remembered of her father, “He could draw like a streak and could write poetry. He was a gay chipper New York fellow.”²⁶ His father, Andrew, had been a merchant who in his youth had been friendly with Peter and William Cooper, members of one of New York City’s leading families.²⁷ Tom attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, as a member of the class of 1838, but left college in 1835, during his sophomore year, to work for the United States government as a surveyor, laying out

roads and canals in Illinois and Indiana.²⁸ Wheeler was quite proud of his advanced education and in her memoirs several times referred to him as a “college man.”

When the two were first married, Wheeler wrote, Tom worked as a “bookkeeper” (also described as a “clerk”) at a commission house.²⁹ He was employed by the firm Robert & Williams, the business of Christopher Robert and Howel L. Williams, commission merchants whose firm was located at 97–99 Water Street in downtown New York. Water Street ran parallel to the docks on the southeast end of Manhattan, and the location of Robert & Williams suggests that it was involved with shipping goods bought and sold on commission. From 1846 to 1855 Tom is listed as a “weigher” at 99 Water Street. A weigher checked the weight and verified the contents of loads of goods, a job somewhat akin to bookkeeping, since Tom probably kept records of the goods the firm was taking in and shipping out. Tom also worked as a surveyor out of his Brooklyn home from 1849 through 1852, perhaps to supplement his income in order to better support his growing family. In 1855 he started his own storage business, Thomas M. Wheeler & Company, at 97 Water Street; it was probably affiliated with Robert & Williams. Wheeler wrote to her brother Abner, “Tom has taken a lot of storage stores at the Atlantic Docks, and they are doing well.”³⁰ In 1864 he moved the business to 104 Front Street, and in the same year Christopher Robert listed himself as a merchant at 97 Water Street with storage at 104 Front Street. Tom’s business dealings with Robert lasted until at least 1865, when the family left New York for an extended trip to Europe.³¹

Tom and Candace Wheeler lived during their early married years at 68 Pike Street in lower Manhattan. In 1849 they moved across the East River to Brooklyn, which was a short ferry ride away from Tom’s place of work.³² According to Candace’s sister Lucy D. Harris, “Tom had prospered and had bought a small brick house on the corner of Hoyt and Pacific Sts. which seemed to me quite palatial then.”³³ Their first child, named Candace Thurber after her mother, was born in 1845; she was followed in 1849 by a son named James Cooper. The birth of James probably necessitated the move to larger quarters in Brooklyn.

The Wheelers entered into friendships, many of them lasting, with a number of the artists and writers who made their homes around New York City. Exactly how they became part of that artistic circle is unclear, but apparently some of the friends who provided them with an entrée were former college classmates of Tom's. In her memoirs Wheeler mentions knowing poet John Godfrey Saxe, who had attended Wesleyan in 1835–36 before transferring to Middlebury College. Another, perhaps more important contact was Thomas Bangs Thorpe, who was at Wesleyan in the years 1833–36. Thorpe, a painter and author, wrote humorous books about “backwoods” life and contributed articles to *Harper's Magazine* and other prominent publications. Although Thorpe had lived in New Orleans between 1836 and 1853 (when he and his family moved to Brooklyn), Tom Wheeler and Thorpe seem to have always remained in touch. Candace was fond of Thorpe, whom she called “one of our first

and most generous and kindly friends He was of the ‘Harper staff,’ clever in many ways, a successful landscape-painter, and a man whose speech was a special gift. He loved painting, but lived by literature, and was a favorite member of the society of painters and writers. Indeed, we owed it to him that we were gradually included in the set of people who did things—that is, who were creators—although we were at that time only appreciators.”³⁴

In addition to meeting artists and writers at parties and dinners in the homes of friends, the Wheelers frequented receptions hosted by artists in their studios. “The first ‘Artists’ Reception’ I remember,” wrote Wheeler, “was held at ‘Dodworth’s,’ for . . . the large dancing-class room in a building next to Grace Church was the most available gathering-place for an assemblage of the kind. I remember the joyful excitement of the first occasion when I met real artists and real poets.”³⁵



Fig. 6. *Nestledown, Jamaica, Long Island*, ca. 1863. Wheeler, holding baby Dunham, sits on the porch step beside Dora; her older daughter Cannie and a friend stand behind. Albumen silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

Dodworth's, a long-established dancing and music academy, was located in the 1850s at 806 Broadway, where it also housed some artists' studios and was the site of group shows and opening night receptions.³⁶ The Wheelers visited dealers' shops as well; Wheeler remembered seeing Rosa Bonheur's colossal *Horse Fair* at Williams, Stevens & Williams in 1857. This firm, which had begun with the manufacture of looking glasses, later branched out into selling artists' supplies, prints, and books, and finally became an important art venue in the 1850s.

Wheeler's interest in creating art herself began at this time, in part because of her admiration for the world of the New York artists. "Our familiarity with painters themselves, with their studios, their work, and their talk of art, was a constant education. Most of them had just returned from their studies abroad, so art old and new was still an enthusiasm with them, and when I came to its study personally I found that the way had been prepared by our companionship with these pleasant friends."³⁷

In the years between 1854 and 1866 Wheeler's relationships with her artist friends deepened, while her family continued to grow, both in size (Lucy Dora was born in 1856, Dunham in 1861) and in affluence. A larger house must have seemed a necessity. The Wheelers imagined moving north of the city to the Hudson River Valley, but through chance connections they found land to build on in Jamaica, Long Island, today a part of the borough of Queens.³⁸ According to an 1861 New York guide

book, Jamaica, "easy of access by the L. I. Railroad [from] South Ferry, which leaves three or four times a day, is an interesting old rural town."³⁹ Tom Wheeler's business was convenient to South Ferry; he had taken the ferry there from Brooklyn for years. So in 1854 the Wheelers built a rambling Gothic Revival board-and-batten cottage in Jamaica, and Wheeler, always eager to romanticize her surroundings with stories and poetic phrases, named it Nestledown (fig. 6). According to her sister Lucy, Wheeler owned Nestledown — "The place

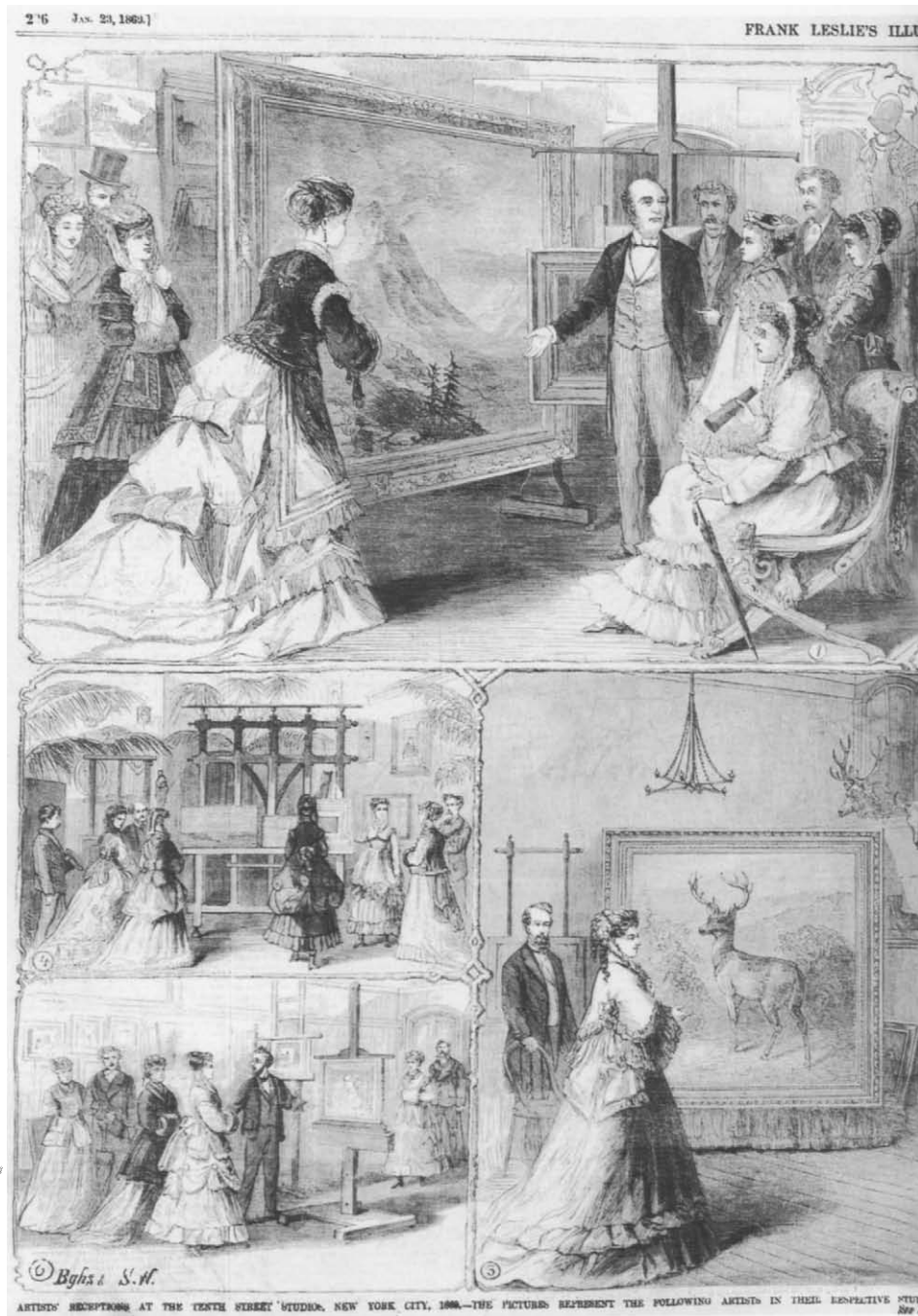


Fig. 7. *Artists' Reception at the Tenth Street Studios*, 1869. Wood engraving from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 23, 1869, pp. 296–97. Museum of the City of New York

was hers, Tom had given her a deed to it” — and over the years continually worked to improve it. “She was essentially progressive, and was not content with building, but like her predecessor of Scripture fame, must continually tear down and build greater, and the house at Jamaica is not now in one particular like the original house.”⁴⁰

The Wheelers’ social life continued unabated at Nestledown. “Our Brooklyn and New York friends loved ‘Nestledown,’ and found ease and joy in it. The men of the ‘Tenth Street Studios’ drifted out on Sundays and

holidays, and shared our breadth of air and space.”⁴¹ When the painter Sanford R. Gifford, a close friend, was stationed in Maryland with the New York Seventh Regiment in 1862, he wrote to the Wheelers,

*How I would like a day at Nestledown just now! I mean a Nestledown day, large like its hospitality. In my experience a Nestledown day begins any time Saturday afternoon, ends reluctantly Monday morning. God bless the spot! How often I think of its generous and hearty hospitality, its cordial welcome and its bright and beaming faces, the genial and congenial friends I have so often met there. . . . And the woods, and the beach, and the fish, and the pond-lilies — I have them all in my memory.*⁴²

The Wheelers’ artist friends of the “Tenth Street Studios,” who in addition to Gifford included such luminaries as Frederic E. Church, Worthington Whittredge, Jervis McEntee, Launt Thompson, and George Boughton, all rented space in an artists’ building at 15 Tenth Street. Designed by Richard Morris Hunt, it included twenty-five studios and a double-height exhibition gallery and was considered the premiere studio site in the city when it opened in 1857 (fig. 7).⁴³ The Wheelers visited their friends there and sometimes bought small works of art. Wheeler recalled, “There were not many picture-buyers among the rich, and, indeed, I think the chief income of the younger painters came from the purchase of small pictures by friends whose incomes had not yet reached colossal proportions. I know we bought them all the way along the ‘fifties’ and ‘sixties’ and ‘seventies’ and ‘eighties,’ a habit which resulted finally in a complete collection of the work of early American painters, a collection of which my son, who has fallen heir to them, is justly proud.”⁴⁴ Other well-known painters with whom the Wheelers were acquainted included Asher B.



ON: 1. BREGIS GIBSON, N.A. 2. M. F. H. DE HAAN, N.A. 3. WM. J. HAYN. 4. MARTIN J. HEADE. 5. JAS. M. HART, N.A. 6. BETHMOU. 7. GUY, N.A. 7. WM. BRADFORD

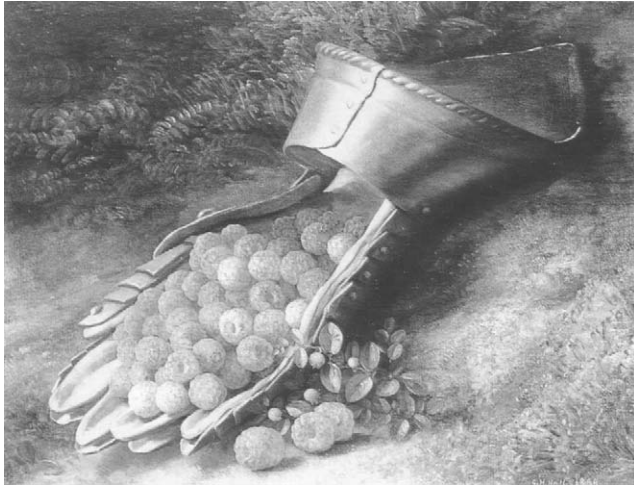


Fig. 8. George Henry Hall, *Raspberries in a Gauntlet*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 11 × 14 in. (28 × 35 cm). Signed lower right: G. H. Hall. Collection of Henry Melville Fuller

Durand, Thomas Cole, John F. Kensett, Albert Bierstadt, and George Inness.

Many of the artists with whom Wheeler associated were members of the group of landscape painters known as the Hudson River school. These painters shared a belief in the importance of studying nature directly. However, after making careful sketches out of doors, they often recomposed their landscapes in the studio—in the tradition of European painters such as Claude Lorraine—into views that expressed the sublime, majestic character of the American wilderness. In the early 1860s a small group of young painters broke away from the Hudson River school, adopting the teachings of the English theorist John Ruskin; they eventually became known as the American Pre-Raphaelites. These artists created small, intimate still lifes and landscapes in which they strove for exact truth to nature.

Sometime in the early 1860s one of Wheeler's artist friends, George Henry Hall, became her first painting teacher. Hall, best known for his detailed and vividly colored fruit and flower still lifes, apparently showed Wheeler how to mix paints and glazes and oversaw her first efforts at oil painting.⁴⁵ A member of the American Pre-Raphaelites, Hall preferred to paint still lifes placed in natural settings rather than on conventional tabletops

(fig. 8).⁴⁶ Wheeler followed his example, producing flower paintings that usually had landscape backgrounds (cat. no. 3). Wheeler learned from her other friends as well. "I got great help from all these friendly artists, and as I had always drawn flowers enthusiastically and successfully, and loved the intricacies and mystery of color, I found myself before long an amateur flower-painter, with pictures accepted and even sold at the Academy exhibitions."⁴⁷ This may be overstating her artistic progress, since the first time Wheeler is recorded as showing a painting—*Vase of Flowers*, at the National Academy of Design—was in the summer of 1871, years after she had begun painting.⁴⁸

In spite of her artistic ambitions, during the years between 1854 and 1866, when she was in her late twenties and thirties, Wheeler's role was primarily that of wife, mother, and homemaker. A passionate gardener lifelong, she looked back later on those years: "Oh! but those were good days! Days when life was rushing so vigorously through our veins, and my husband was busy and happy making money 'in town,' and the children were growing up, and I was planting."⁴⁹ In order to get anything done, she wrote to her brother Abner in 1857, "I shall have to shut myself up, not from people, *they* don't hinder me much—but from growing things, and from the summer skies and wind. . . . I find myself growing ragged and freckled and generally dis-respectable, as a melancholy consequence of my course of conduct."⁵⁰

Wheeler's ongoing relationships with her children, with the exception of her first son, James, were close. Her eldest daughter, Candace (1845–1876), nicknamed Cannie, she described as a "genteel" baby, charming, beautiful, a talented musician, and well-mannered from birth (cat. no. 1). Throughout her short life Cannie seemed to bring her mother great pleasure. In 1866 she married Lewis Atterbury Stimson (1844–1918), the son of a well-connected New York stockbroker, who later became a surgeon of note. The couple had two children.⁵¹

Wheeler's firstborn son, James Cooper (1849–1912), was a rambunctious child from early on, given to mischievous pranks and sudden disappearing acts. This behavior continued through his young adulthood, when



Fig. 9. *Dora Wheeler*, 1866. Albumen silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

he adventured out west and was not heard from for a number of years, much to his mother's dismay. James became a journalist and wrote adventure books. He married and had three children and, perhaps to make amends with his mother, named his firstborn daughter Candace.⁵²

Wheeler's second daughter, Lucy Dora, known as Dora (1856–1940), was the mainstay of her mother's life (fig. 9). The two were so close that at times it is hard to delineate where Candace Wheeler ended and Dora Wheeler began. Dora was the vessel of many of her mother's artistic ambitions, perhaps to the detriment of her own independent adult life. Mother and daughter were to live together on and off for most of their lives, even after Dora's marriage to lawyer Boudinot Keith (1859–1925). After Wheeler's death, Dora was the one who secured her legacy, in part through gifts of her Associated Artists textiles to museums such as the Metropolitan Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art.⁵³

Dunham Wheeler (1861–1938), the youngest child, was also a constant presence in his mother's circle (fig. 10). He shared her interest in art and houses and

became an architect, designing many of the early houses at Onteora, the artists' colony Wheeler founded in 1887. He was also known for the houses he built for wealthy suburbanites in the New York area.⁵⁴ Dunham was involved with Wheeler's Associated Artists from the late 1880s to its demise in 1907. He married Anne Quartley, whose father, a painter named Arthur Quartley, had previously run a house-decorating business in Baltimore (1862–75).⁵⁵ Anne seems to have worked for Associated Artists before her marriage to Dunham and is said to have helped Dunham decorate the interiors of houses he designed.⁵⁶

Wheeler maintained close relations not only with her immediate family but also with most of her brothers and sisters. Although her older sister, Lydia, and older brother, Charles, both settled in the West after their marriages in



Fig. 10. J. U. Stead, *Dunham Wheeler*, late 1870s. Albumen silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

the mid-1840s, Wheeler's younger siblings followed her to New York City. In the early years of Wheeler's marriage her sister Lucy spent long visits with her in New York to help with the babies, and when the Wheelers moved to Brooklyn, Lucy, then aged seventeen, accompanied them and lived there for a number of years. Besides helping Wheeler with the house and children she took music lessons, later taking on students of her own.⁵⁷ In 1856 she was married to lawyer Ossian Howard; the couple eventually settled in Ithaca, New York. Ossian later became addicted to the opium he took to help relieve his asthma and died from the effects of the addiction in 1873. In the fall of 1881 Lucy and her youngest boy, Frank, moved down from Ithaca to stay with the Wheelers, and for about a year during this period Lucy helped Wheeler run the textile workshop of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists.⁵⁸ Lucy remained with the Wheelers until 1883, when she was remarried to George William Harris.

Wheeler's younger brothers, Horace, Abner, and Francis (Frank), also played significant roles in her adult life. In 1857 Horace founded a very successful wholesale grocery business; he was joined by Frank in 1866,⁵⁹ and the business prospered until 1893. Horace left the business in 1884, going west to Idaho to make a second fortune in ranching. Frank, Wheeler's beloved baby brother (fifteen years her junior), was supportive of her activities. He was a cofounder of *Onteora*, the summer artists' colony in the Catskills; in 1883 he had paid for the large tract of land there on which he and Wheeler built cottages, and in 1888 he bought the 458 additional acres upon which *Onteora* would stand. Frank also apparently helped Thomas Wheeler when the Wheeler family finances were in trouble in the 1870s, since from 1874 to 1877 Tom was the publisher of a grocery trade paper issued by a company that Frank owned.⁶⁰ It is also possible that in 1883 Frank and Horace helped Candace fund the purchase of the building where she installed her *Associated Artists*.

Abner Thurber, the middle brother, arrived in New York City at age fourteen and worked for both Thomas Wheeler and his partner Christopher Robert. Although

at one point he was affiliated with his brothers' grocery business, he had a more uneven career than his brothers and was involved with speculation out west. His wife, Annie Ford, remained at home with their children in Brooklyn, where she took in boarders during the vagaries of his career. Wheeler seems to have been particularly close to Annie; much of the correspondence in which she shared the day-to-day aspects of her life was addressed to Annie.⁶¹

THE CIVIL WAR YEARS AND WOMEN'S BENEVOLENT WORK, 1861-65

During the Civil War, when a lottery for the draft was first held in New York City on July 11, 1863, a series of riots occurred that became known as the Draft Riots.⁶² Workers, many of whom were Irish immigrants, angered at being drafted and fearing competition for their jobs from newly emancipated African-Americans, attacked blacks throughout the city, lynching at least thirteen. Tom was away in Washington, D.C., when the fighting broke out, but Wheeler was in the city with her children and servants and witnessed one of the lynchings. The next day she fled to Jamaica, where conditions were not much better. Warned that there would be an attack on her property to capture her African-American servant Joe, she hid him and some of his friends in her house overnight, and the whole household waited, fully armed, for a mob that never materialized. However, a black employee of Tom's was killed by the rioters. The Draft Riots convinced Tom to change his political affiliation from the Democratic to the new Republican Party, since he felt that the New York City Democrats had helped inflame the rioters.⁶³ Yet despite these events, the Civil War years left Wheeler strangely untouched, a fact she later puzzled over. "This period, so happy and prosperous with us, was the years of the beginning and prosecution of the great Civil War. Why we felt the dreadful tragedy, and even the nearness of it so little, I can now hardly understand, except that perhaps we were young and absorbed in the progress of our personal lives, while

it so happened that no one who was very near to us went to the war and never returned. Indeed, it was not until it was over that I was brought into actual connection with any of its lasting effects.”⁶⁴

One of the lasting effects to which Wheeler refers was the drastic change in circumstances experienced by thousands of women during and after the Civil War. Before the war most middle-class American women had been financially dependent on husbands, fathers, or brothers. But the death of more than six hundred thousand soldiers left many women with no means of support and no training in any profession that might enable them to earn a living. Wheeler’s founding of the Society of Decorative Art in 1876 was a direct response to this social transformation.

Wheeler’s later work on behalf of working women might not have been possible without the wartime success of the United States Sanitary Commission, which raised funds and materials for the care of Northern soldiers and was the brainchild of a group of New York women. On April 25, 1861, fifty or sixty women met at the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, an institution founded by America’s first two woman doctors, Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell. The meeting had been called to plan a way to coordinate the war relief activities of the women of New York and to screen and train nurses for Northern military hospitals. To this end the Woman’s Central Association of Relief (WCAR) was founded five days later, on April 30, 1861, before an audience at the Cooper Institute of more than two thousand female supporters and many prominent men active in benevolent organizations. Some of the male officers of the new association were instrumental in setting up the United States Sanitary Commission two months later, and the WCAR was made an auxiliary of the Sanitary Commission in September. The United States Sanitary Commission was directed from Washington, D.C., by men; the WCAR board, based in New York City, was composed of men and women who worked with each other on a completely equal footing.

As a result of the efficiency with which the women of the WCAR carried out their responsibilities, benevolent

organizations in nineteenth-century America underwent an essential change. Before the time of the Civil War women had been involved with charity work, forming institutions to help the sick and the poor and fight for the abolition of slavery, but most of the organizations had been for women alone and had not been run in a businesslike manner. Women had kept their benevolent work separate from men’s and had not aimed for efficiency, believing that their feminine purity and more advanced sense of what was right could, through “moral suasion,” effect a change in society at large. But during the Civil War years, when women performed as equals to men in benevolent work, Americans gained a new perspective about female abilities. Women were not just morally superior; they could also be well organized and enormously competent.⁶⁵ This realization set the stage for the proliferation of women’s charities and businesses that would take place after the Civil War, including Wheeler’s own ventures.

Wheeler recalled working for “‘The Sanitary,’ to which every one contributed money and effort and which made effective the sympathy and contributions of the whole North. It was a wonderfully organized and equipped machine which we supported whole-heartedly, giving of our labor and substance without stint.”⁶⁶ In order to supply money for the Sanitary Commission’s good works, fund-raising fairs were held in many major cities in the North.⁶⁷ Such fairs had traditionally been the province of women; in most cases fairs sold domestic goods, such as items of ladies’ handiwork and food, to raise money for charities that were considered female concerns. In England, as early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, “bazaars” had been held at which societies of middle-class ladies sold goods made by poor cottagers’ wives and daughters for the makers’ benefit. In 1816 a bazaar was established in London’s Soho Square so that destitute women would have a place to sell handmade fancywork. By the late 1820s, fund-raising fairs were being held in the United States; during the 1830s and 1840s, many of them were to support the abolitionist movement. These early fairs can be seen as models for the Society of Decorative Art and especially the Woman’s

Exchange, organizations that Wheeler set up to act as a framework within which women in financial need could sell their homemade products to the public.

As might be expected, the largest of all the fairs mounted in support of the Sanitary Commission was held in New York City. Called the Metropolitan Fair, it was organized for the most part by a “ladies association” of society matrons. It opened in April 1864 in a building erected for the purpose on Seventeenth Street and Sixth Avenue and an auxiliary building at Union Square and Seventeenth Street, and ran for about a month. Any type of item that could be sold was solicited for the fair. Wrote one overwhelmed visitor, “There was something for every one. Toys and confectionery for the children; wonders in worsted for young ladies; cigar-cases, smoking-caps, neckties and collars for the gentlemen; china, glassware, and household furniture that would delight the eyes of a thrifty housewife; ponderous machines; steam engines and cotton gins, for practical manufacturers; ploughs, rakes, hoes, scythes, for farmers; beautiful metallic life-boats, and dear little sailing craft for professional and amateur seamen; books for the literary; and most tempting refreshments for all” (fig. 11).⁶⁸ Other notable displays included an Old Curiosity Shop filled with antiques and bric-a-brac; the exhibit of a group of Native Americans, in a setting made to look like a huge wigwam, in which they performed Indian dances and rituals; and a magnificent picture gallery

displaying hundreds of pictures owned or painted by New Yorkers, which included such showstoppers as Emanuel Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Bierstadt’s *Rocky Mountains*, and Church’s *Niagara* and *Heart of the Andes*. In an extremely early manifestation of interest in the Colonial Revival movement, the fair also featured a Knickerbocker Kitchen decorated with seventeenth-century antiques, complete with ladies in Colonial dress who traced their ancestry to the original

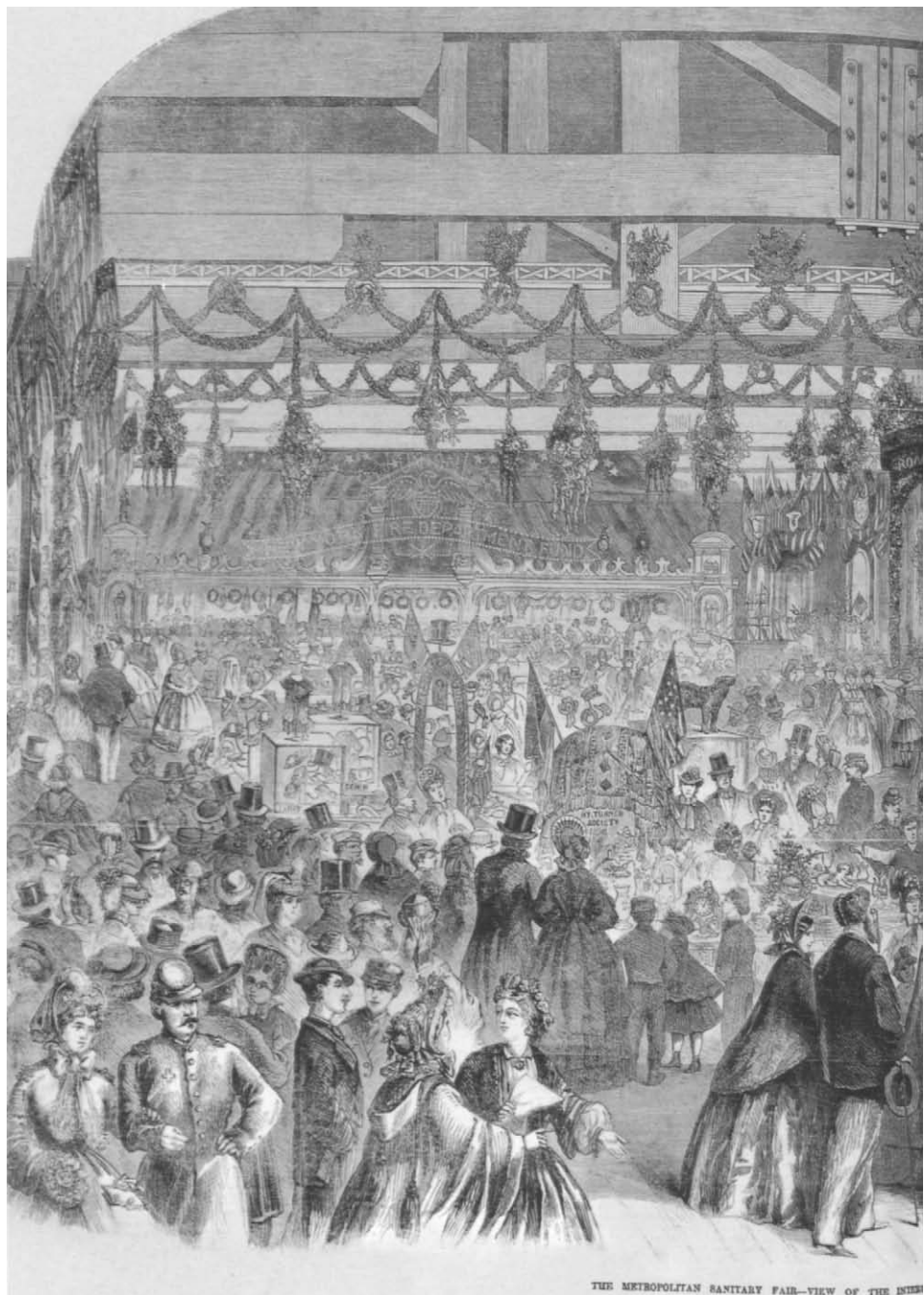


Fig. 11. *The Metropolitan Sanitary Fair—View of the Interior of the Main Building, 1864.* Wood engraving from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, April 16, 1864, pp. 56–57. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

Dutch settlers. It served as one of the fair's two restaurants, offering food purported to be authentic New York Dutch cuisine.⁶⁹

The Metropolitan Fair raised \$1,340,050.37, and the women who were integrally involved in organizing it were given much credit for its tremendous success.⁷⁰ As it was put in one publication, "The triumph is theirs."⁷¹ For Wheeler the Metropolitan Fair was not just a powerful model but, more directly, a future source of personnel to

serve as founding officers of her Society of Decorative Art in 1877. Wheeler later asked two of these acknowledged leaders and organizers, Mrs. David (Caroline Lamson) Lane, the first vice president of the fair, and Mrs. Richard Morris (Catharine Howland) Hunt of the fair's Executive Committee, to serve as officers of her society, and they obliged, becoming its president and vice president.



TRAVELS IN EUROPE, 1865-67
AND 1871-73

The Wheeler family prospered during the period of the war. As they became more affluent they increasingly wanted to participate in New York's social life, and in addition the commute from Nestledown was difficult for Tom in the winter. Therefore, after renting a succession of houses in the city for the winter season, in 1865 Tom bought a house at 49 West Twenty-fifth Street. James and Dora were sent to a Quaker school on Stuyvesant Square, Dora later attending "Miss Haines and Mlle. de Janon's," a finishing school. Cannie, who may also have spent winters at Miss Haines', was sent to Paris in her late teens for a year of study.⁷² Tom became a member (1862-68) of the Century Association, where he could socialize with many of his artist friends. Members of the Sketch Club, an organization in existence since 1829, had founded the Century Association in 1847. One hundred gentlemen "engaged or interested in letters and the fine arts" had been invited to join; forty-two had accepted, and forty-six more had joined during the first year.⁷³ By 1866 the club's membership had grown to five

hundred. During the period that Tom was a member, the Century was located at 109 (then 42) East Fifteenth Street. Wheeler remembered it as “the scene of many fine doings.”⁷⁴

At about the same time Tom became friends with George E. Waring, an agriculturalist and sanitary engineer who worked as drainage engineer on the new Central Park between 1857 and 1861. After the Civil War, Waring became the manager of Ogden Farm in Newport, Rhode Island, where the Wheelers visited him. The effect was a further widening of their artistic circle. In Newport, Wheeler met painters John La Farge and Samuel Colman. “Samuel Colman,” she later wrote, “was an artist by profession, a natural and gifted colorist, and an enthusiastic collector of Oriental textiles. . . . Mr. Colman’s rare collection of weavings of the past and present was the frequent occasion of discussion upon textile art between La Farge and himself. . . . I listened to these talks with interest and enthusiasm and followed them with careful study.”⁷⁵ She did not then know that one day she would be closely associated with Colman in business and that their main competition would come from La Farge.

Soon after the end of the Civil War the entire Wheeler family embarked on an extended tour of Europe. Why this took place and what it implies about the Wheelers’ financial standing are difficult matters to ascertain. Some Americans, among them Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), took trips to Europe and lived there for months or years in order to save money after a financial reversal, since the cost of living was often far less abroad than in America. The second trip the Wheelers took, in the early 1870s, certainly seems related to a setback in Tom’s finances, but this was probably not the case with the first European trip. In 1865 Tom was still running a storage business out of 104 Front Street, and the family was living in the recently purchased house at 49 West Twenty-fifth Street. During the first trip he may have remained in partnership with Christopher Robert, since C. R. Robert Jr. (clearly Robert’s son) apparently took over the running of the storage business for Tom between 1866 and 1868. Another possibility is that Tom had sold the business

to Robert outright. Either way, it is probable that the Wheeler family traveled to Europe in 1865 for pleasure rather than out of financial necessity.⁷⁶ There is evidence, however, that Tom was suffering from some sort of exhaustion or depression. In September 1866, when the family had been in Europe for about a year, Wheeler wrote to her brother Frank, “Tom is so well & happy that it is refreshing to see him — and for the first since we have been away he begins to think of business with interest and pleasure, & talks of coming home in April, so to be on hand early — It is delightful to see him so happy and so like himself, only better than ever, & we are a real ‘happy family’ if ever there was one.”⁷⁷

The Wheelers began their trip in Germany, crossing the Atlantic Ocean in the fall of 1865 on the ship *Deutschland* and disembarking in Bremen. The plan was to leave James and Dora in German boarding schools and travel with Cannie, aged twenty-one, and Dunham, aged four. They spent some of the winter in Bremen, next went to Wiesbaden, where Dora was in school, and then left for Munich to look at art.⁷⁸ There Wheeler for the first time encountered great European paintings; “This was the beginning of my real knowledge of what was back of American art, for the Metropolitan Museum had then hardly begun to gather its treasures.”⁷⁹ From Munich it was on to Venice, where “there were Titians and Titians to be seen,” and from Venice to Rome, where the Wheelers stayed for the winter, taking an apartment on Via del Babuino.⁸⁰ In Rome they socialized with the multinational artistic community, enjoying “all that was best in Roman, English, and American society.”⁸¹ They visited the ancient sites, Wheeler reveling in the fact that her learned husband could translate the Latin inscriptions. As was their habit and pleasure, they visited the studios of artists; Wheeler notes in particular visits to American Neoclassical sculptors Richard S. Greenough, younger brother of the more famous Horatio Greenough, and William Wetmore Story. In the spring of 1866 they left Rome for the eventual goal of Paris, where Cannie was to marry Lewis Stimson in the fall at the American Legation. En route they visited Florence for a month, gathered up the two children from their schools in

Germany, and spent the summer in Montreux, Switzerland. After their wedding in Paris, Cannie and Lewis sailed for New York. Tom brought the rest of the family to Dresden and then left for New York himself. Candace conveyed the children back to their respective schools and, with Dunham, wintered in Dresden on her own.

The winter of 1866–67 marked a turning point in Wheeler’s life, or, more precisely, in her vision of her life. Freed from many of her duties as wife and mother, she began to examine her own interests and ambitions:

As I remember that Dresden winter, it seems to me to mark a departure from a simply personal phase of life, for it was the beginning of preparation for work in the world, for activities which should affect other lives and fortunes than our own. I was shut out by distance from the wonderful friendship and social surroundings of home, and brought face to face with the history and accomplishments of art. I was to learn what the centuries had done in this one direction, and how great a share it had in the interests and activities of the world.⁸²

Wheeler was preparing for a life in art. She found a studio in which to paint, and there she met two young American women who were art students. One of them, Janet Ralston Chase (later Mrs. William S. Hoyt), was to become a lifelong friend who would inspire Wheeler’s experiments with needlewoven tapestries and, much later on, share her retirement in Thomasville, Georgia. During this winter, for the first time in Wheeler’s life, painting and the study of art history were her primary activities. Although the step into work as a full-time art professional was still a decade away, this first, extended stay in Europe laid a firm foundation for her subsequent career.

After this trip Wheeler often spent winters in Europe, probably because the children remained in school there. Then, in 1871, the family made the second prolonged visit. Wheeler, Cannie, Cannie’s husband and two children, Dora, and Dunham all sailed to England in October, while Tom remained behind to oversee an auction of the family’s possessions at Nestledown.⁸³ Wheeler’s sister Lucy described the prologue to these events: “I went to New York and Jamaica to see the Wheelers who

were breaking up their home and going to Europe for several years, and they disposed of nearly all their household furniture, and I bought their Steinway piano, and a sofa and three chairs for the parlor, and a black walnut table, and two hall chairs, and a blue ingrain carpet, and Candace gave me no end of little things which helped greatly to furnish and adorn our house, and they sold me all the things that I bought at a great bargain.”⁸⁴ Nestledown was left unoccupied, and what was still in the house was packed away.⁸⁵

This trip was certainly undertaken because of a financial setback; it seems that Tom had lost his business. In the late 1860s he was running a lighterage business (loading and unloading large ships moored out in the harbor) at 114 Water Street, but after 1869 his name disappeared from the city directories. Not until five years later, in 1874, did he have a job again. The most likely explanation for his change of fortune is a falling-out with Christopher Robert. A letter Wheeler wrote to her mother contains a reference to tension with the Robert family: “I don’t know whether I told you about Mrs. Corning being here, & she is a friend of Cannie’s & was Miss *Robert* formerly, and funny as it seems to me, we see a great deal of her — I don’t know how Tom will fancy it, but so far, without being very rude, I could not avoid seeing a good deal of her.”⁸⁶

Tom joined his family in Zurich shortly after Christmas 1871. Wheeler was not altogether happy in Zurich. She wrote that she intended to put Dora back into the school in Wiesbaden after the New Year, “but whether Tom & I will remain here I do not know — of course it will be just as he fancies, but I would rather go to some german city where I could study painting, for I feel that I shall never have another such a chance — and there are no pictures here & no artists.”⁸⁷ They spent the spring of 1872 in Wiesbaden and were in Paris by the fall, staying at a small hotel on the rue du Bac for the winter. Dora was ill for much of the time.⁸⁸ Tom, it seems, was upset over their prolonged European exile: “I think I shall have hard work to keep Tom here in Europe; he gets very low[?] occasionally, & then thinks it is because he is here, & yet he got so at home just as often & I

expect nothing but I shall have to leave Dora here & start home in some such fit.”⁸⁹ In spite of Tom’s moods, the Wheelers remained socially active wherever they went. At the hotel in Paris they enjoyed the company of the author James Russell Lowell and his wife, Frances, and John Holmes, brother of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and met the novelist George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) and her common-law husband, George Henry Lewes, who were also guests at the hotel.

The Wheelers returned from Europe in June 1873, but Tom’s fortunes remained tenuous for at least the next decade. In the fall of 1873 a major stock market crash all but destroyed the booming postwar economy of New York City (and of the entire country); a partial recovery did not come until 1879. Thousands of businesses declared bankruptcy, and real estate values tumbled. Shipping and warehouse storage, Tom’s former line of work, must have been subject to the ill effects of a shrinking demand for consumer goods. Tom began work in 1874 in an entirely new field as publisher of the *American Grocer*, a trade paper owned by Candace’s brother Frank. In 1877 the family may still have been on uneasy footing, since in that year Frank bought the house on Twenty-fifth Street from them and the Wheelers went to live at 244 Lexington Avenue, perhaps renting an apartment. Although they had actually spent very few winters in the house, Wheeler had mixed feelings about selling it. She wrote to her sister-in-law Annie (Abner’s wife), “Do you know that Frank has bought the 25th St house? I feel really pleased about it, for I shall be glad to go in it once in a while—I was delighted at first but on reflection I do not know as the sentiment I have about the house will be gratified by seeing other peoples lives in it.”⁹⁰

THE CENTENNIAL INTERNATIONAL
EXHIBITION AND THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF
ART NEEDLEWORK, 1876

Wheeler wrote to her sister-in-law in the spring of 1872 that she had “such a dread of coming home now & beginning all over again to make a home.”⁹¹ Once back in

the States she spent much of her time helping her sister Lucy gain a secure financial footing after the death of her husband, Ossian Howard. Together the two women turned Lucy’s large home in Ithaca into a boardinghouse for Cornell students. When Tom began work at the *American Grocer*, Wheeler quickly became involved with the publication, presumably for pay, and drew in other family members. Lucy recalled, “At this time Mr. Wheeler was managing the ‘American Grocer,’ and Can had conceived the plan of issuing a domestic department, which she edited, and she asked me to send recipes, and finally urged me to try and write something for it—and I think I commenced with an article about the Cornell University, and from that I went on with some articles, part truth and part fiction, telling ‘how we built and furnished our new house.’ And then I wrote some Yankee dialect letters, and they were all published and what was of more importance, I earned \$200, by them. Of course nobody else would have paid me for them, but they ans’d her purpose for filling.” It was typical of Wheeler to use her position to benefit family members in need. She also published a story of her own, as well as some of her son James’s “yarns” and Dora’s translations of German stories.⁹²

Even as she was embarking on a career as a writer and editor, Wheeler was distracted by her daughter Cannie’s failing health. Cannie had been troubled by attacks of exhaustion since soon after the birth of her first child, Henry, in 1867. These grew more and more debilitating as the years went on, and eventually she was diagnosed as suffering from Bright’s disease, which today would be described as kidney failure. In the nineteenth century, before the invention of dialysis, there was no treatment for this condition. After years of living as a near-invalid, Cannie died on June 7, 1876. Wheeler wrote to her sister-in-law Annie, “It is all over in life with my darling baby—she passed away this morning, at half past one, & she was glad to go.”⁹³ The loss of Cannie, Wheeler later wrote, “changed my whole attitude toward life and taught me its duties, not only to those I loved, but to all who needed help and comfort.”⁹⁴ With this new sense of duty at the forefront of her mind and perhaps in an attempt to



Fig. 12. *Philadelphia, PA—The Centennial Exposition—View of the Main Building . . .*, 1876. Wood engraving from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 3, 1876, pp. 208–9. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

raise her spirits, Wheeler paid a visit to the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia.

The Centennial Exhibition was a huge undertaking, the largest international fair that had ever been held in the United States (fig. 12). In its mammoth Main Building manufactured products were displayed; there were also Machinery Hall, an art gallery (Memorial Hall), the Agricultural Building, and Horticultural Hall (see cat. no. 5). These large buildings were surrounded by many smaller structures, including the woman's pavilion, the first specifically woman-run exhibit at a world's fair. In a fair catalogue the woman's building was described: "This pavilion was erected by money raised through the exertions of the women of the United States, and is devoted exclusively to the results of women's labor."⁹⁵ It was the precursor of the much grander Woman's

Building that Wheeler would decorate in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Like the London Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851, this international fair featured the most sumptuous goods to be had in most of the countries of the world. Visiting writers praised certain displays as particularly worthy of note and inspiration, citing carved wood furniture and "rich barbaric fabrics" from India, Russian enamels, Austrian crystal, and almost everything in the Japanese booth. The Japanese crafts were regarded as particularly exquisite.

Japan had first been opened to trade with the West by Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1853. When products from Japan began to reach Europe and America, progressive artists and designers were deeply impressed by these simple yet aesthetically sophisticated artworks and

beautifully handcrafted traditional objects. In America, the first major display of Japanese art was at the Philadelphia Centennial, where the works exhibited seemed to exemplify all the principles that design reformers had been attempting to teach the middle-class consumer. One writer opined, “Japan makes exhibits which may be studied with wholesome profit by the artisans of every competing nation.”⁹⁶ The years immediately following the Centennial saw an international boom in all types of objects styled after Japanese originals.

By far the largest amount of display space was allocated to the United States, the host country. The second biggest (although very much smaller) area was given over to the exhibits from Great Britain. Many of the most impressive objects on display were the products of the teachings of British design reformers such as Christopher Dresser, Owen Jones, and Charles Locke Eastlake. All three were associated with the Government School of Design in London, which had been incorporated in 1837 in order to educate designers who could raise the level of British manufactures. In 1857 the school and its collection of decorative arts were moved to the South Kensington area of London, where the school became known as the South Kensington School and the collection was opened as the South Kensington Museum.⁹⁷ (In 1899 a much enlarged collection would be renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum.)

By the mid-nineteenth century certain artists and designers in Great Britain, including those associated with the South Kensington School, had begun to react against the ugliness and shoddy workmanship of factory-made goods in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The Aesthetic movement of the 1870s emphasized the importance of beauty even in everyday things; design reformers maintained that objects uniting the beautiful and the useful could improve the lives, and ultimately the character, of those who owned them (see also the discussion at cat. no. 5). The English Arts and Crafts movement of the same era further stressed the superiority of hand-made works over ones made by machine. Viewing the British exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial, Americans came into contact for the first time with objects designed

according to the precepts of both these movements, and their advanced designs were much admired. One writer explained that “all these British products in this art neighborhood, whether in wood, in glass, in metal, or in pottery, have come to their present range, and into their present lines of development within a half score of years, and largely through the influence of the Kensington School of Art.”⁹⁸ English objects for home decoration, such as pottery by Doulton & Company and decorative tiles by Minton, Hollins & Company, silver crafted by the Elkington firm, and the furniture of Cox & Son, were found particularly attractive and noteworthy, and in general, the English booths had a “homey” feel that appealed to American viewers.⁹⁹

Although Wheeler probably visited many of the fair buildings—her love of growing things would have drawn her to the Horticultural Hall, and many of her artist friends had their recent paintings and sculptures shown in Memorial Hall—the one display she singled out for notice in her autobiography was that of Great Britain’s Royal School of Art Needlework. This booth, only one of hundreds of displays in the main building, stood among all the other exhibits of interior decorations. It seems in fact to have been a tent, made from hangings worked at the school. “A conspicuous feature of the British collection is the magnificent tent, or booth, constructed of purple velvet hangings, and ornamented with a superb collection of specimens of embroidery and needlework. An exquisitely worked scroll over the entrance tells us that this is the pavilion of the ‘Royal School of Art and Needlework.’”¹⁰⁰ *Harper’s Bazar* provided a detailed description:

In the British Department of the Main Building a small space, fifteen feet long by twelve wide, has been fitted up for the display of . . . elaborate and curious specimens of art needle-work . . . with wall-hangings done in very elaborate embroidery, both in appliqué and satin stitch, in floral and arabesque patterns of various colors. . . . On the front entrance is a magnificent portière consisting of two pieces, to represent doors, arranged on swinging rods. These are in panel designs, each one containing a female figure,

with the word Salve on the one, and Vale on the other. Overhead is a border containing three smaller panels, in which are seen the three Destinies—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—spinning the thread of life. Above them, next the ceiling, are four more panels, with as many figures, and underneath the words, “Ars longa—Vita brevis” (Art is long—Life is short). On either side of the door are rich corresponding hangings to complete the set. The design of this exquisite work of decorative art was furnished by Walter Crane, and cost £350.¹⁰¹

The hangings (fig. 13) were made predominately of white sateen embroidered in soft shades of brown and green. The side panels had gold twill grounds. Another object of which many authors took particular note was an embroidered folding screen, also designed by Walter Crane, representing the fable of the vain jackdaw who borrows a peacock’s feathers (see cat. no. 6).

What was this Royal School of Art Needlework that produced such impressive embroideries? The school had been founded in 1872 with a dual purpose: to supply “suitable employment for Gentlewomen” and to restore “Ornamental Needlework to the high place it once held among the decorative arts.”¹⁰² Granted the prefix “Royal” by Queen Victoria in 1875, it was run by a group of aristocratic women. While the president of the organization was Victoria’s daughter Helena, princess of Schleswig-Holstein, the real force behind the school was its vice president, Lady Marian Alford, an acknowledged expert in textiles and needlework and published author on the subject. In one article she offered reasons for the school’s inception: “It was the urgent need for employment for women of education, born ladies, and reduced to poverty by the misfortunes or mistakes of their parents, that suggested this revival of decorative needlework. There was a blank also in the idle occupation of the rich woman who, nauseated with German patterns of Berlin wool-work [realistic subjects embroidered in bright colors with simple stitches], had fallen back . . . to knitting and crochet.”¹⁰³

In order to raise the caliber of needlework above “nauseating” Berlin wool-work (fig. 14), the school hired

some of the best artists of the day, among them Crane and his brother Thomas Crane, William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones, to make patterns for the students and workers to carry out. Some women also designed for the school, although they were not as well known as the male designers were.¹⁰⁴ The school supplied interested buyers with either completely finished works or fabric stamped with designs and accompanied by the appropriate embroidery thread. The school also sold materials—fabrics such as linen, wool serge, and velvet, embroidery threads of crewel wool and silk, and even embroidery needles. By 1880, it had agencies for the sale of its work in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Norwich, Birmingham, and Glasgow; a branch school had been opened in Glasgow; and “a member of the staff has been sent out to take charge of the School of Art-Needlework in Philadelphia.”¹⁰⁵ The organization functioned as both a school and a workshop. Before a woman was admitted as a worker there she had to complete successfully a course of instruction comprising nine lessons of five hours each. In 1882 the prospective worker paid five pounds for this course. Classes were also held for amateurs learning the art of embroidery for their own pleasure, but those classes were not as intensive and cost more.

While the beauty of the embroideries displayed at the Centennial by the Royal School of Art Needlework dazzled journalists, Wheeler’s attention was caught by something else—the idea of a woman-run business that benefited women. In her memoirs she did not even mention the high-style embroidered curtains and hangings, focusing instead on the more day-to-day pieces. “The actual specimens of Kensington work were to my mind very simple and almost inadequate. They were embroidered towels which were used in that day to cover chair-backs and were called ‘tidies.’ . . . There were also table-covers of gray linen, with embroidered borders; one or two composed by no less a person than Walter Crane. It seemed to me a very simple sort of effort to have gained the vogue of a new art, and I saw that it was easily within the compass of almost every woman” (see fig. 15).¹⁰⁶ (Of course it is possible that, looking back in 1918, Wheeler remembered the comparatively minor

works of the Royal School because of her predilection in later life for simple, homespun textiles. In the early years of her career she emulated the Royal School's more elaborate and luxurious designs — see cat. nos. 7, 8).

While still in Philadelphia, Wheeler conceived a plan for an American answer to the Royal School. This organization would provide to the buying public not just needlework but “all articles of feminine manufacture.” She recalled in her memoirs that she “wrote out a little circular to explain my project to friends and helpers” and took it home to New York.¹⁰⁷ What impressed Wheeler about the Royal School of Art Needlework was that it held out hope for “educated” women in “untoward circumstances,” and this particularly struck her because “It had been established to meet exactly the circumstances which existed among people I knew here in New York.”¹⁰⁸ In a letter to her niece many years later she described

herself “jumping at the possibility of work for the army of helpless women of N.Y. who were ashamed to beg & untrained to work.”¹⁰⁹

Wheeler was also in sympathy with what she saw as the artistic goals of the Royal School. The designs popularized by the school had originally sprung from the Arts and Crafts movement in England, which, reacting to mechanization and industrialization and the inferior quality of the resulting products, attempted to revive the traditional hand skills of the preindustrial arts. But the works thus created — among them the flower-based patterns of artists such as Crane and Morris — had also succeeded, Wheeler thought, in cleverly transforming traditional forms into something modern (cat. no. 23). “Happily the revival had been shorn of medievalism. . . . The designs of [the] artists . . . founded always upon forms of growth skilfully chosen and carefully adapted to

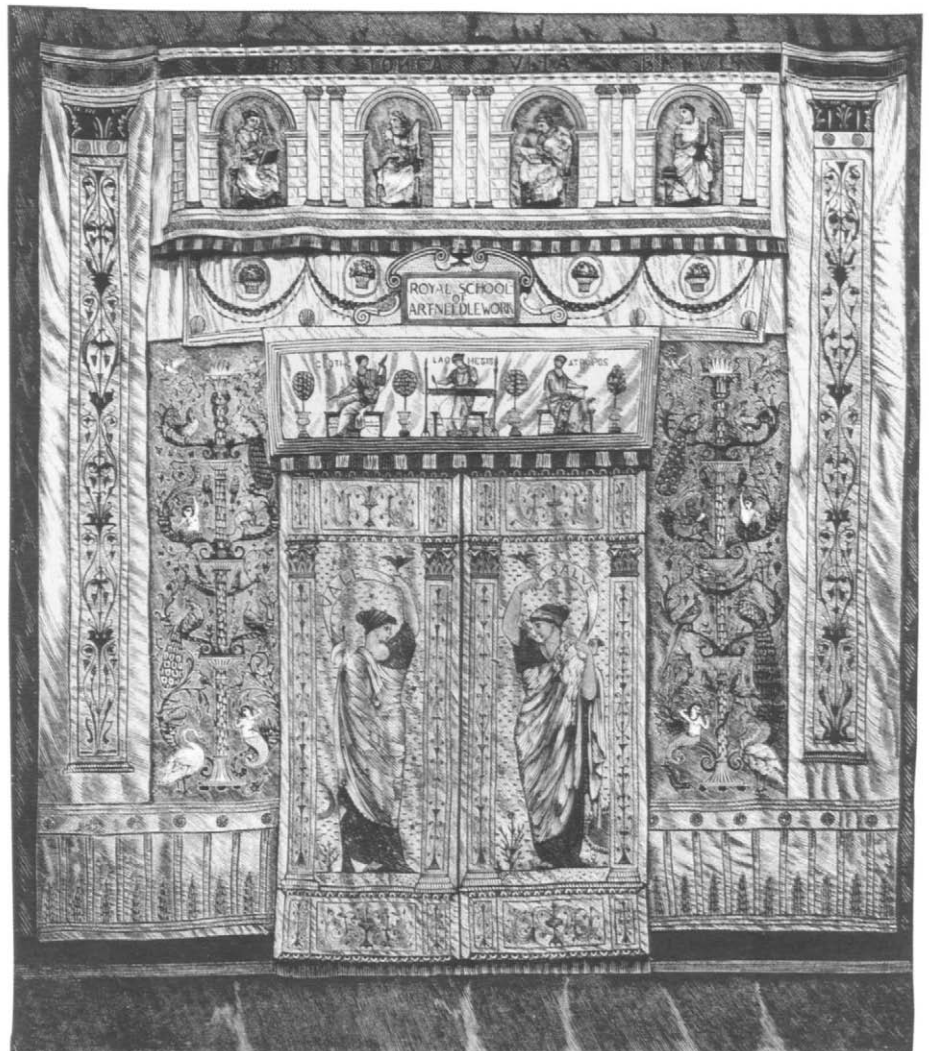


Fig. 13. Royal School of Art Needlework, *Curtain-Door*, ca. 1876. From Walter Smith, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition*, vol. 2, 1876, p. 177. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of John K. Howat

needlework, gave great value to the new revival of embroidery. It all interested me extremely, for it meant the conversion of the common and inalienable heritage of feminine skill in the use of the needle into a means of art-expression and pecuniary profit.”¹¹⁰

While Wheeler saw the art needlework movement as a way to empower women, others viewed institutions like the Royal School of Art Needlework as a way to keep women in their place. Art educator Walter Smith, a recent transplant to the United States from England, thought the objects shown at the Centennial by the Royal School “so satisfactory, and . . . so thoroughly feminine, that we sincerely trust something of the same kind will be attempted in this country. We have a fancy that our lack of art schools and other institutions where women can learn to employ themselves usefully and profitably at work which is in itself interesting and

beautiful, is one of the causes which drives them to so unsex themselves as to seek to engage in men’s affairs. Give our American women the same art facilities as their European sisters, and they will flock to the studios and let the ballot-box alone.”¹¹¹ While Smith was mistaken in believing that more art studios would keep women from agitating for political power, he was right to point out how scarce the opportunities were for women to pursue formal art training. In 1876 only a few schools provided professional training in art of any type to women. One of the most important for the decorative arts was the New York School of Design for Women, founded in 1852, which became part of the Cooper Institute in 1859; it trained women to design for industries such as textiles and printing.

Wheeler certainly never saw the studio as a way to keep women busy and out of men’s affairs. For her,



Fig. 14. Mary Ann Parks Hammond, *Moses in the Bulrushes*, ca. 1860. Wool embroidery on canvas, 39½ in. × 33½ in. (100.3 × 85 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Olive Mason Gunnison, 1962 (62.140)

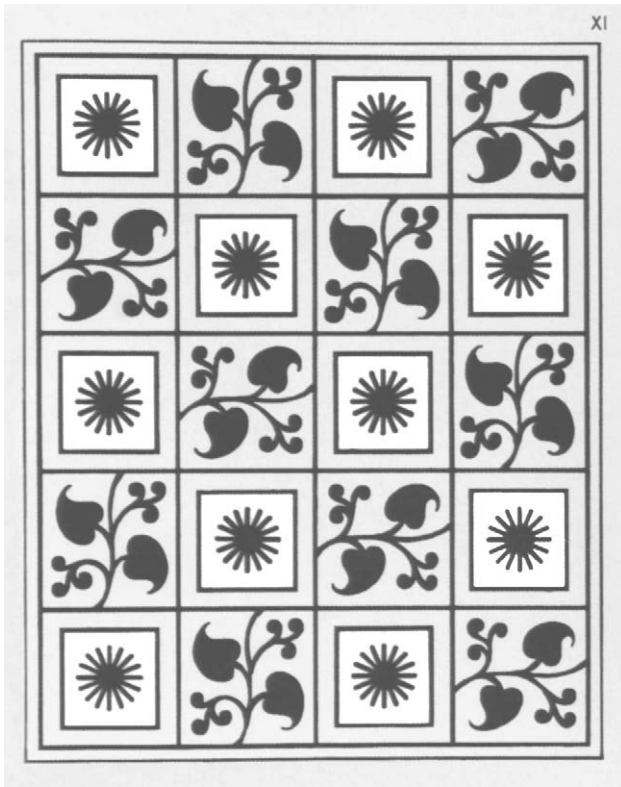


Fig. 15. Thomas Crane, *Outline design for tea-table cloth, to be worked in silk on linen . . .*, ca. 1878. Chromolithograph from M. S. Lockwood and E. Glaister, *Art Embroidery: A Treatise on the Revived Practice of Decorative Needlework*, 1878, pl. XI. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

finding moneymaking employment for women was a serious matter, part of their necessary awakening to “the duty of self-help,” after which the implied next steps would be financial independence from and equality with men. While Wheeler’s previous experience helping others in unfortunate circumstances and her own caretaker nature pointed her in this direction, she was also inspired by the tenor of the times. The 1870s were a period of change in traditional ideas about a woman’s place in society. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a woman had often functioned as her husband’s partner on a farm or in a small business. Wheeler’s mother, Lucy Dunham Thurber, had been typical; she helped her husband produce hats in his shop and contributed to the manufacture of the dairy products on their farm. But in the course of the nineteenth century, American society went from an agrarian-based economy to one that rested on manufacturing. The overwhelming growth of

industry created not only an urban working class but also an entire class of clerks and managers — “white-collar” workers, a true middle class.

The economic changes greatly affected the way women functioned in society and were perhaps most significant for middle-class women. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century a woman like Wheeler was typically living in an urban or suburban setting, taking care of her house and children while her husband went to a job and came home with a weekly paycheck. Then came the Civil War, which left many thousands of women widowed or bereft of the male family members they had depended upon. A few years later, many of the remaining men lost their jobs because of the nationwide depression of 1873. While working-class women found work in domestic service or in factories or shops, and upper-class women were presumably left with the means to provide for their families, middle-class women — whom Wheeler euphemistically termed “educated women” — found themselves in dire circumstances. It was socially unacceptable for them to work in the jobs normally held by their working-class sisters, yet there were no other jobs, except perhaps teaching, to be had. Looking back later, Wheeler explained the dilemma she saw in 1876:

There were so many unhappy and apparently helpless women, dependent upon kin who had their own especial responsibilities and burdens, and these women appealed to me strongly, for I could so easily understand their misery.

Forty years ago there was no outlet for the ability of educated women, and yet there was often a pathetic necessity for remunerative work; added to this was the fact that washing, scrubbing, and the roughest of domestic work were almost the only forms of paid labor among women. . . .

Women of all classes had always been dependent upon the wage-earning capacity of men, and although the strict observance of the custom had become inconvenient and did not fit the times, the sentiment of it remained. But the time was ripe for a change. It was the unwritten law that women should not be wage-earners or salary beneficiaries, but necessity was stronger than the law. In those early days I found myself constantly devising ways to help in individual

*dilemmas, the disposing of small pictures, embroidery, and handwork of various sorts for the benefit of friends or friends of friends who were cramped by untoward circumstances.*¹¹²

THE SOCIETY OF DECORATIVE ART,
THE WOMAN'S EXCHANGE, AND THE
ART INTERCHANGE, 1877-79

Wheeler's plan to found a new kind of benevolent organization was an ambitious one, and she knew that the support of women from the upper echelons of society would be essential to its success. To this end she asked Mrs. David Lane, one of the chief organizers of the Metropolitan Fair, to become involved with her fledgling society. Wheeler later described recruiting Mrs. Lane against strong advice from a friend: "Whatever you do, don't call in Mrs. David Lane? . . . 'She will make it a success, but she will absorb it.' 'She can't absorb its use,' thought I to myself, and the next day I went to see her and unfolded my project."¹¹³ According to Wheeler, Lane was responsible for attracting "all the great names in New York" to help found the organization. The first published list of participants in the new venture included such powerful society women as Mrs. Joseph Choate, Mrs. Cyrus Field, Mrs. Abram Hewitt, Mrs. John Jacob Astor, Mrs. August Belmont, and Mrs. Hamilton Fish.¹¹⁴ Wheeler had probably never crossed paths with these women before being introduced to them by Mrs. Lane. Women like Mrs. Astor not only had names with drawing power but also could easily afford the society's initial hundred-dollar subscription fee, which provided the setting-up funds. It was agreed that Mrs. Lane would become the president, with Wheeler serving as corresponding secretary. The corresponding secretary's duties were "to bring about by correspondence the organization of Auxiliary Societies in other cities and States, and afterward to maintain such correspondence with, and obtain from them such returns as shall be necessary for the furtherance of the objects of the Society."¹¹⁵ Wheeler's goal was to set up associate organizations in every city in the United States. By the end of the society's first

year she had succeeded in forming related societies in Chicago, Saint Louis, Hartford, Detroit, Troy (New York), and Charleston.

Mrs. David Lane, born Caroline E. Lamson, a woman probably somewhat older than Wheeler, was from Boston, where her father, John Lamson, was a merchant in the import business. Her husband had at first gone into business with her father, but eventually the couple and their four children moved to New York, where David Lane continued as an importer and was for many years a prominent member of the Union League Club (fig. 60).¹¹⁶ Mrs. Lane seems to have been particularly skilled at what would today be called public relations. When she heard that the widow of General George Custer was in New York and in need of a paying job to supplement her government pension, Lane suggested hiring her as the society's secretary. Custer, an admired Union hero of the Civil War, had died the previous year in the Seventh Cavalry's infamous and disastrous attack on the Sioux and Cheyenne at Little Big Horn. Elizabeth Bacon Custer (fig. 16), an "educated" woman who had lost her husband in battle and was left with little means of support, epitomized the type of person that the society intended to help. But at first Wheeler was cool to the idea, assuming that Mrs. Custer would not make "a business-like and useful secretary." However, Lane prevailed. As Wheeler put it, "She smiled her wise smile at me, and I could almost hear it murmur, 'Just now her name would be valuable.'" Mrs. Custer was given the job of corresponding with women whose work the society had turned down for sale, and apparently she excelled at this delicate task, handling it with considerable tact. Wheeler grew to admire her, "so fixed in her determination to do something practical for her own needs!," and the two became lifelong friends.¹¹⁷

The first planning meeting for the society took place in Wheeler's home on February 24, 1877. Five people attended. At the second meeting on March 8, attended by seven people, a paper was adopted whose contents were subsequently published as a circular. The circular apparently excited such interest that the next meeting, on March 21, was attended by more than twenty people,



Fig. 16. *Elizabeth B. Custer*, late 1870s. From Candace Wheeler, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life*, 1918, facing p. 172. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

many of whom became officers and members of the board of managers. A constitution and set of by-laws for the new Society of Decorative Art were accepted a week later. This title gave Wheeler pause:

*When the name of the new society was discussed and settled as "The Society of Decorative Art," I felt some misgiving. The name seemed to give undue prominence to an advanced art, a consummation which we should need much time and long effort to compass. However, the thing was done. The new society which was to open the door to honest effort among women was launched, and if it was narrow it was still a door.*¹¹⁸

The first objective of the Society of Decorative Art (SDA) was "to encourage profitable industries among women who possess artistic talent, and to furnish a

standard of excellence and a market for their work."¹¹⁹ This sounds very much like what Wheeler envisioned after visiting the booth of the Royal School of Art Needlework at the Centennial. However, the first known mention of the SDA in the press (May 1877) complained that its focus was much narrower than that of the Royal School: "Its immediate purpose is mainly to establish a bazaar where works of decoration done by women may be exhibited and, if possible, sold. The element of education is not absent from the scheme, but it is not so prominent as we should like to see it."¹²⁰ According to its circular, the SDA planned to offer instruction only in art needlework, although it intended to sell artworks of all types: "Sculptures, Paintings, Wood Carvings, Paintings upon Slate, Porcelain and Pottery, Lacework, Art and Ecclesiastical Needlework, Tapestries and Hangings, and, in short, decorative work of any description, done by women, and of sufficient excellence to meet the recently stimulated demand for such work."

While Wheeler later cited the Royal School of Art Needlework as her sole institutional inspiration for the Society of Decorative Art, she had in fact belonged to an organization called the Ladies' Art Association (LAA) since at least 1871. The goal of this New York City group, founded in 1867, was "the promotion of the interests of women artists," which included providing studio space for members and hiring teachers to train them. Beginning in 1875, in addition to instruction in the fine arts, the Association offered classes in painting on china, wood, silk, and slate and tried to form connections with manufacturers in the art industries.¹²¹ When Wheeler formed the SDA, the officers of the Ladies' Art Association felt that Wheeler had stolen their ideas and usurped some of their public. In July of 1877, Wheeler, still a member of the LAA, suggested to Alice Donlevy, its secretary, that the two organizations might join together in a cooperative relationship and that each member of the LAA could "contribute something to the opening sale of the Society of D. A. . . . which she can do well, & which is not hackneyed."¹²² Not taken with the proposal, Donlevy apparently wrote an article published in a Philadelphia newspaper in which she criticized the SDA; a letter to

her from another LAA member reads in part, “The article you sent in the Philad paper was rather severe on the Decorative Society; what a pity it has set itself in such opposition to the Association, and that it is so narrow in its ideas. I am sure the field of Art is broad enough for both to work in, the one supplementing & completing & helping the other, instead of being rivals.”¹²³ Wheeler left the LAA at about this time, having been dropped from its roster rather than quitting on her own volition.¹²⁴

By June of 1877, as described in the *New York Times*, the educational scope of the SDA had widened beyond a “business-like move in the direction of a head-quarters for sales of decorative art.” Several “artists of experience” had been called in, and the society seemed to be planning “some such school as the South Kensington, or at any rate, the nucleus of some such art school. Teachers in various branches of decorative art are proposed.”¹²⁵

Another significant change had taken place as well: the SDA had decided to accept works made by men. The fear had been that “the presence of women workmen only, tends to depreciate the prices given for the work, even if it [has] no effect on the quality of the work itself. If it be understood that the sales-room is for the work of women only, people will enter it with the fixed determination to pay lower prices.” But if male craftsmen too participated—and, since the items were to be sold anonymously, a buyer would not know whether a male or a female artist was responsible for a work—higher prices (men’s prices) could be charged. To this end the women of the SDA asked “artists of already established reputation,” male or female, to send in contributions “in order to make their exhibition attractive at once.” The plan to sell works made by men was probably short-lived, however. Half a year later the SDA’s constitution, as published in its first annual report, clearly states that “the objects of the Society are the establishment of rooms for the exhibition and sale of woman’s work, the promotion and diffusion of a knowledge of Decorative Art among women, and their training in artistic industries.”¹²⁶

The most significant involvement of men with the SDA was as judges of works submitted for sale. Wheeler later described recruiting a “Committee of Admissions” from

among her “painter” friends, “and these patient men came duly and periodically to criticize our contributions.” It seems that this group of arbiters was actually known as the Committee on Design.¹²⁷ Chaired by lawyer John A. Weeks, it included not only painters but also many of the leading architects and interior decorators of the day.¹²⁸ Wheeler’s eventual business associates, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Samuel Colman, and Lockwood de Forest (cat. nos. 9–11), were members of the committee. So were two of Wheeler’s closest personal associates—her daughter Dora, then only twenty-one, who served as secretary of the committee, and her friend from Dresden days and fellow embroiderer, Janet Chase Hoyt. (Wheeler and Hoyt had recently renewed their friendship after Hoyt sent in to the SDA an original embroidery that was “peculiarly ingenious, making a curious link between the cross-stitch tapestries of the German school and the woven tapestries of France.”¹²⁹ Hoyt’s embroideries inspired the “needlewoven tapestries” that Wheeler’s firm designed in the 1880s.)

The function of the professionals of the Committee on Design seems to have been both to decide which works should be accepted into the salesroom and to create designs for the students and workers of the society to carry out, since “their own amateurish compositions or selections often defeated the acceptance of their work.” This second responsibility paralleled the role of English artists, such as William Morris and Walter Crane, affiliated with the Royal School of Art Needlework. The committee met weekly, as Wheeler wrote, “a little evening club to which half of the members brought an original design every alternate week to be mutually criticized and voted upon, the preferred ones to be given to the society. I joined this club, and had the benefit of their criticisms, a privilege which was to stand me in good stead in coming days.”¹³⁰ Wheeler’s faithful attendance at the meetings, even though she was not an official member of the committee, afforded this apt pupil tutelage from the top American designers of her day and enabled her to make the leap from flower painter to textile designer.

The educational importance for Wheeler of participation in the Committee on Design cannot be underestimated. In the previous years, although it is likely that her

sewing skills were quite good, her eye was probably not very well developed. Looking back in 1887, Wheeler's sister Lucy remembered a young woman who had lots of confidence but little artistic training:

Can thought nothing of attempting to make all sorts of things that she did not know how to do—bonnets, cloaks, shoes, but I do not think she ever tried gloves. When I look at her now and realize what an authority she has grown in matters artistic, I realize that it is a matter of cultivation and growth, for once she was as fond of or at least as unconscious of bad combinations as I was. I remember a piece of bright grass green velvet that she got cheap, and made into a cloak for herself, lining it was a straw colored silk, and she wore a royal purple marino [sic] dress with it, and I thought it was lovely, but I remember Tom telling her that he was ashamed of her in that suit, and how it hurt her feelings.¹³¹

While Wheeler's years of painting under the tutelage of her artist friends undoubtedly taught her something about the subtleties of color and composition, her sessions with the committee must have been her first opportunity (apart from social evenings in Newport with Colman and La Farge) to learn principles of design.

The committee provided Wheeler with something else, equally valuable: personal and professional contacts. One of the stated aims of the SDA was "to endeavor to obtain orders from dealers in China, Cabinet Work, or articles belonging to Household Art throughout the United States."¹³² Wheeler hoped that the design leaders on the committee might help her contact other decorators and dealers; perhaps they would even place orders for decorative articles themselves. By the end of the first year there was a Committee on Orders for Needlework, of which Dora Wheeler was a member. During the society's first year only 75 orders were executed, but this jumped to 1,074 orders in 1878, mostly for stamped work or for prepared pieces ready to be finished. During that year the SDA employed "from five to six women constantly, while there have, at various times, been employed thirty-seven women, to whom have been paid, in the aggregate, the sum of \$1,730.91." By the third year, 1879, it was reported that 4,769 orders were carried out; of

those, 133 were "completed in the work-room from designs belonging to it, or from those furnished by persons giving the orders, among whom have been Messrs. Cottier, Herter, and several architects."¹³³ New York decorators were designing embroidered textiles for their various commissions and employing SDA workers to produce them. Individual artists who showed their work in the salesroom obtained orders as well; for instance, "Clever young Rosina Emmet . . . was doing portrait plaques of children upon china, with more orders than she could fill" (cat. no. 50).¹³⁴

Objects for sale were sent in from all around the country (fig. 17). This was partially due to Wheeler's activity as corresponding secretary. There had been two reasons for forming Societies of Decorative Art in other cities: the first was to provide women throughout the East and Midwest with an opportunity to take classes in the decorative arts, and the second was to have auxiliary committees to "receive and pronounce upon work produced in, or in the vicinity of, such places, and which, if approved by them, may be consigned to the salesrooms in New York."¹³⁵ In the earliest days of the SDA, almost any "artistic" handcrafted item was accepted for sale, with a few restrictions. The society refused to consider examples of the more mechanical crafts such as knit work, wax fruit or flowers, something called "skeletonised leaves," and the dread Berlin wool-work. At first, according to newspaper accounts, "all objects sent are to be received, and sold if possible; but a stamp of the approval of the Society is only affixed to such as have won a favorable verdict from the committee" (fig. 18).¹³⁶ Objects were kept in the salesroom for three months and if unsold at the end of that time were returned to the artist at her expense. When an article was sold, the SDA kept a 10 percent commission. It was not too long before the flood of objects arriving to be sold forced the committee to turn many away.

The salesrooms, which opened in September 1877, were not immediately successful. In late November, according to the *New York Times*,

Either because the work of women is underestimated, owing to a popular prejudice in favor of men, as some people

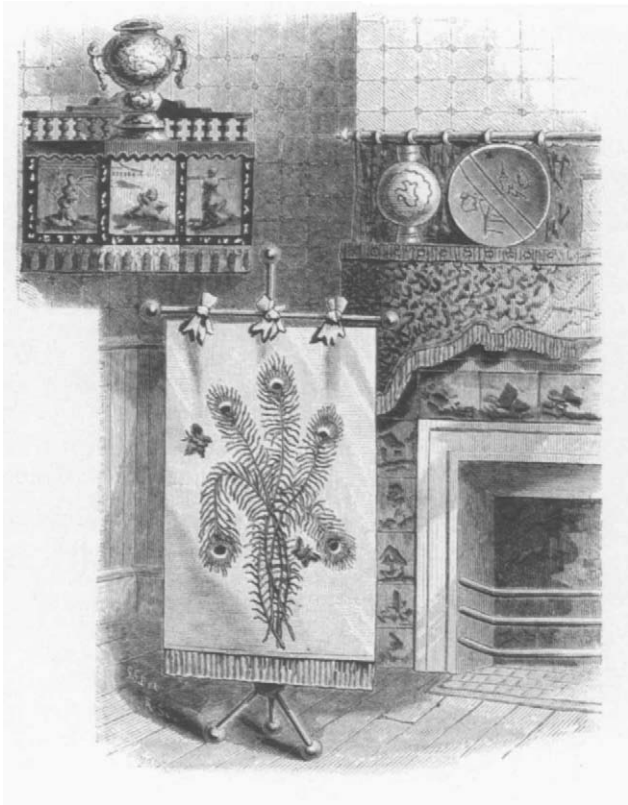


Fig. 17. *View of Objects on Display at the Society of Decorative Art Sales Rooms, 1878.* Wood engraving from *Art Journal* (American ed.), n.s. 4, February 1878, p. 55. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library



Fig. 18. *Society of Decorative Art Medal, 1878.* Wood engraving from *Art Journal* (American ed.), n.s. 4, February 1878, p. 50. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

*maintain, or, as others think, because women can produce such work cheaply owing to their leisure, the low cost of supporting life, and the fact that they are frequently supported in part by male relatives—for one of these reasons, or some other equally vexed, the Decorative Art Society has not been doing a good business. The charity, as far as it is a charity, speaks for itself. The objects heretofore placed on exhibition for sale are in many cases beautiful, and almost always show good taste, but the public does not rush in to buy.*¹³⁷

The society intended to become self-supporting from the 10 percent commission it received on items sold. (A five-dollar membership fee was charged the first year, but it was expected that commissions would soon make it unnecessary.) When it became apparent that things were not selling well, the managers decided to hold a

loan exhibition to benefit the SDA; by charging an entrance fee and selling some of the objects displayed, they hoped to raise enough money to see it through its first year. Again by calling on social connections, a stellar committee was formed to oversee the loan exhibition. William Cullen Bryant, the poet and newspaper editor and one of Wheeler's friends from Long Island, was appointed chairman. Members included Hamilton Fish, John Jacob Astor, Mr. and Mrs. August Belmont, William Vanderbilt, Mrs. Parke Godwin, Mrs. Jonathan Sturges, and Catharine Lorillard Wolfe, among many others. These were some of New York's wealthiest citizens and in many cases were also well-known collectors who, it was hoped, would lend precious works of art that would draw the general public into the exhibition. There were other actual working committees, made up primarily of active SDA members; each committee



NEW YORK CITY.—LADIES OF THE DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY ARRANGING THE LOAN COLLECTION OF OLD LACES AND ARTICLES OF ERICA-BRAC NOW ON EXHIBITION AT THE ACADEMY OF DESIGN.—See Page 266.

Fig. 19. New York City.—*Ladies of the Decorative Art Society Arranging the Loan Collection . . . Now on Exhibition at the Academy of Design, 1877.* Wood engraving from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, December 22, 1877, p. 261. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

was concerned with specific types of work, such as fans and laces or tapestries and embroideries. Wheeler was a member of the five-person supervisory Committee on Management.

The exhibition opened in the galleries of the National Academy of Design on December 3, 1877 (fig. 19). The *New York Times* description makes clear the success of the event, which “as a representative gathering of the cultured and the art-loving people of this City . . . has seldom, if ever, been equaled. The doors of the Academy were thrown open at 8 o’ clock, and from that time until nearly 11, a constant stream of richly dressed ladies and gentlemen in evening costume poured in at the doors and slowly wended its way in a constantly halting current through the narrow saloons.”¹³⁸ On following days the *Times* waxed eloquent about the show itself:

*Entering the rooms of the Art Loan Exhibition in the Academy of Design is like entering the palace of some dusky Eastern Prince or the famous corridor of Sir Walter Scott’s Abbotsford. The most beautiful products of the most beautiful arts charm the eye on every hand. From the blooming and fragrant flowers on the stairways to the flowers of silk and wool, made centuries ago, everything is miraculously wrought and tastefully arranged. The exhibition of paintings is not large, but exquisite; of tapestry, there is probably a larger collection than has ever before been seen in this City, and the laces and embroideries are abundant and beautiful. The articles on exhibition may be classified under the heads of paintings, tapestries, ceramics, laces, embroideries, antique cabinet-work, jewelry, and illuminated manuscripts, though there are many single articles that do not come properly under any of these heads.*¹³⁹

The exhibition of some two thousand objects ran for six weeks and brought much attention to the SDA, assuring its continuance. Almost eight thousand dollars were raised from admissions and the sale of some of the works in the show.

By the end of the society's first full year in existence it had received 6,303 items, of which only 2,765 were accepted for sale. Contributors numbered almost two thousand and came from twenty-five states. The sale of artworks had brought in \$18,416.73, of which 10 percent was kept to support the SDA. Instruction in needlework had been given to 203 people. Classes were also offered in panel and china painting, carving, and tilework (fig. 20). A modest fee was charged for most classes, but some students received free lessons in exchange for the fruits of their labor.¹⁴⁰ Students admitted for free who

successfully completed a prescribed course of lessons might be sent to work as teachers with auxiliary societies in other cities.

During that first year Wheeler seems to have been in the society's workrooms every weekday.¹⁴¹ However, in the course of the following year (1878) she realized that although her brainchild was up and running, it was in a way not completely true to her original vision. As she later wrote,

The Society of Decorative Art was constantly importuned to receive things which were good in their way, but which did not belong in the category of art; and here came in the stumbling-block born of the mixed motives of our organization. Philanthropy and art are not natural sisters, and in the minds of the majority of the members of our board

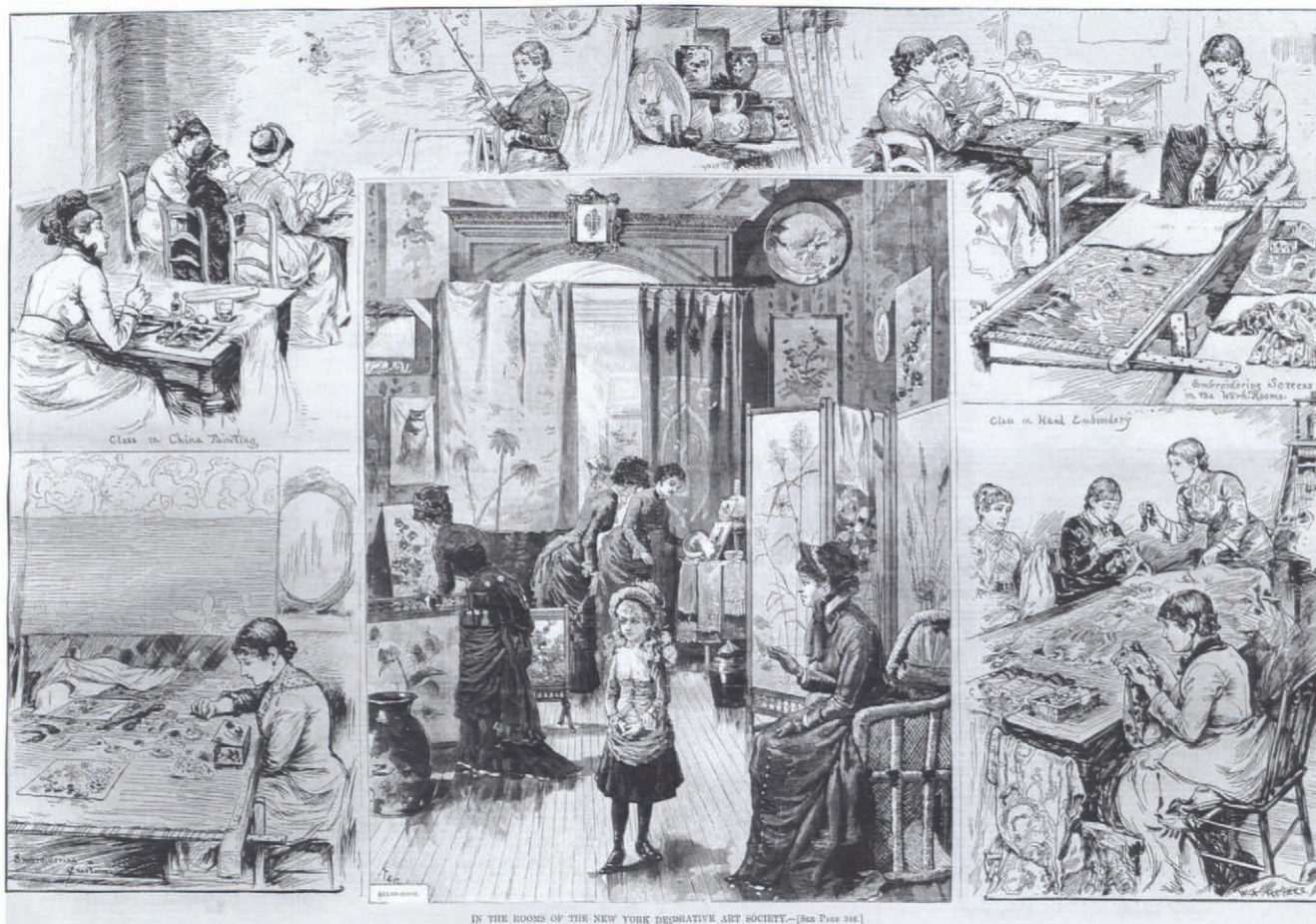


Fig. 20. W. A. Rogers, *In the Rooms of the New York Decorative Art Society*, 1881. Wood engraving from *Harper's Bazar* 14, May 28, 1881, pp. 344–45. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, General Research Division

the art motive predominated; indeed, our constitution clearly committed us to art. . . .

*I had favored from the first a more liberal plan of organization and management. It was not so ambitious, but it seemed to me it would not be incongruous and would be of more general benefit.*¹⁴²

One of the SDA's subscribers, Mrs. William G. Choate (Mary Lyman Atwater Choate), also believed that the society was not serving the constituency it had originally sought to help.¹⁴³ She asked Wheeler to join her in forming a new organization where "a woman can send a pie, if she can make a good one, even though she cannot paint a good picture; or a basket of eggs if she cannot decorate china."¹⁴⁴ Wheeler at first suggested that instead a "department of utility" be added to the SDA, but Mrs. Choate felt that it would not be accepted by the other members and that it would be better to create something entirely new. Wheeler, torn between "philanthropy and art," was faced with a dilemma. Her husband pointed out that she herself had been in a large part responsible for the turn toward art that the society had taken, to which Wheeler replied, "I know it, but I did not limit it. It is as though one side of me were pulling against the other. Why can't I do both?"¹⁴⁵

Although in her autobiography Wheeler presented the question as one of either/or, for a time she *did* do both, continuing to be very active on behalf of the SDA¹⁴⁶ while she embarked on her new project. The first meeting to plan the New York Exchange for Woman's Work, usually called the Woman's Exchange, took place on February 28, 1878. The idea of a salesroom where women could market any type of product was not entirely new; the first "exchange," called the "Ladies' Depository Association," had been founded in Philadelphia in 1833 to aid "educated, refined women" who had had the misfortune of financial reverses that compelled them "to rely upon their own exertions for a support."¹⁴⁷ A second Ladies Depository had been founded in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1856. However, neither of these associations had the scope of the organization envisioned by Choate and Wheeler in 1878.

In some ways the Woman's Exchange mirrored the SDA. The plan was to have a salesroom for work sent in from around the country and also to have orders taken for goods; to form a network of exchanges in other cities; and to collect a 10 percent commission on work sold. However, there were important differences from the SDA. At the Woman's Exchange, not only fancy decorative work but also basic hand-sewn items such as household linens and clothing could be sold, and orders for both food items and needlework were encouraged. Moreover, in keeping with Wheeler's original intention to encourage the principle of self-help for women in difficult financial circumstances, the exchange would accept only items submitted by truly needy women. Any woman wanting to sell her work would have to be vouched for as financially in need by a five-dollar subscriber to the exchange.¹⁴⁸ Work received was to be vetted by the board of managers, who would be "confined by few rules, and allow themselves large latitude in this matter."¹⁴⁹

The planning of the Woman's Exchange moved quickly, probably in part because of Wheeler's experience with the founding of the SDA. After overcoming her initial misgivings she participated enthusiastically. "I went to the first meeting of the new society, and was enrolled as a charter member. We discussed the question of a title and finally settled upon 'The Woman's Exchange,' a name which I had proposed for the 'Decorative Art,' but which had been rejected. I felt as if I had really found my child; up to this time I had been nursing a changeling."¹⁵⁰

Looking back, Wheeler telescoped the timing and probably overdramatized the repercussions of her alliance with the Woman's Exchange. "I had a sorrowful few weeks before I could quite cut loose from my beloved work in the 'Decorative Art.' Every one disapproved of me. I remember the stony glare of Mrs. John Jacob Astor when I tried to explain my defection."¹⁵¹ In fact, Wheeler remained active with the SDA through the rest of the year. The rivalry between the two organizations may not have been as intense as Wheeler implies, but clearly there was some resentment of the new organization, which appears between the lines in this notice in the *Art*

Interchange, a journal then published under the auspices of the SDA:

*It is quite necessary to carefully distinguish between the exact purposes of the Society of Decorative Art and the New York Exchange for Womens' [sic] Work. Both are intended to encourage the arts of women, but differ as to conditions for admission of articles to the salesroom. The Exchange takes everything without reference to any standard of excellence; on the other hand, the Society of Decorative Art maintains a rigid standard of artistic merit, to which all articles must conform. In consequence, contributions are subjected to careful scrutiny before being placed on sale. Both institutions are accomplishing excellent purposes, and neither interferes with the work of the other.*¹⁵²

Despite whatever rivalry existed, when the SDA moved from 4 East Twentieth Street to a larger building at 34 East Nineteenth Street in early May 1878, the Woman's Exchange moved into their old premises. There the Woman's Exchange salesrooms officially opened on May 10, 1878. In the eyes of the public the two organizations were linked, with the Woman's Exchange emerging as "a natural outgrowth" of the Society of Decorative Art.¹⁵³

Over the long term, the Woman's Exchange was more successful than the SDA. It reached a broader constituency and eventually organized itself like a business, producing annual catalogues of the products and services offered to the public. While the exchange never supported itself out of the 10 percent commission charged to sellers, it was never meant to, being a benevolent society; it depended upon subscriptions and donations to continue its good works.¹⁵⁴ A fund-raising circular produced for the tenth anniversary of the Woman's Exchange, in 1888, spelled out its achievement:

The practical experience of ten years has fully demonstrated that such an institution is really needed and that it has been of the greatest advantage to its beneficiaries. This is clearly shown by the extent of its operations, which comprised sales for account of its consignors to an aggregate amount of not less than three hundred and sixty

*thousand dollars (\$360,000), up to the end of 1888, and by the subsequent establishment of not less than thirty-eight "Exchanges" in other cities and towns.*¹⁵⁵

Another noticeable difference between the SDA and the Woman's Exchange can be seen in their boards of managers.¹⁵⁶ For the most part, the women with the Woman's Exchange were not the same type of society ladies as those making up the SDA board and committees. Mary Choate, the founder and the president of the exchange for decades,¹⁵⁷ and her husband, the lawyer William G. Choate, were both members of old New England families; they were socially prominent, but not like the Astors or the Belmonts. Although the 1888 board of managers did include very wealthy women, such as Mrs. Andrew Carnegie and Mrs. Henry Villard, a large percentage of its members were the wives of well-to-do working businessman and bankers, as were Wheeler herself and her sister-in-law Jeannette Thurber, the wife of a wholesale grocer.¹⁵⁸ Wheeler, as she wrote, "did not take an active part in the daily work of the Woman's Exchange, for my time was too fully occupied in other directions," but she remained on the board of managers until at least 1896 and perhaps for years after that. The New York Exchange for Woman's Work still exists.¹⁵⁹

Wheeler's collaboration in the planning of the Woman's Exchange came at a time when she was beginning to find her talents as a textile designer and also overlapped her last full year of activity with the SDA. As chairman of the SDA's Committee on Publication she must have been closely involved with the 1878 start-up of the *Art Interchange*, a fortnightly journal intended to provide "a more direct way of reaching the contributors, and making the methods of the Society more widely known than by correspondence alone."¹⁶⁰ To some extent, the *Art Interchange* can be seen as having naturally evolved from Wheeler's activities as corresponding secretary. What the publishers who proposed the project had in mind, however, was not an SDA journal but rather a magazine on art and decorating that would be affiliated with the SDA. It would include general articles about art, design, and household decoration and would print

designs for needlework, china painting, and other handicrafts that the readers could copy. When the first issue was published on September 18, 1878, addressing itself to both “those directly engaged in art work” and “the general reader,” it proclaimed this goal:

By means of a popular, readable journal, we believe that it is possible both to promote the desire to engage art industries and to cultivate the taste by which their results are measured. Though we do not hope to induce all readers to follow paths of art, we believe that by establishing a combined art and household journal we will advance the various forms of decorative art. . . . The affairs of field and fireside, of the library and the lyceum, topics of a quaint or pleasing nature will all be duly noticed.¹⁶¹

The SDA’s building at 34 East Nineteenth Street appeared on the masthead as the journal’s address.

It is unlikely that many of the women listed on the masthead as supervisors—they included some of the SDA’s most impressive names, such as Mrs. John Jacob Astor, Mrs. Hamilton Fish, Mrs. Abram Hewitt, and Mrs. David Lane—actually did any work on the journal. Two men, Luigi Palma di Cesnola, then secretary of the Metropolitan Museum, and William C. Prime, a noted collector and historian of ceramics, also named on the masthead as supervisors, had been enlisted, along with several other “well-known writers,” to provide articles for the fledgling journal.¹⁶² Wheeler (named as a supervisor) was the only one on the masthead who was a member of the SDA’s Committee on Publication. The ongoing supervision of the journal’s contents, as well as the obligation to furnish “one original paper upon some special branch of work encouraged by the Society”¹⁶³ for each issue, fell to this committee, which provided advice to the publishers, solicited articles, answered readers’ queries, and found artists to provide designs for copying.

Although the *Art Interchange* continued to be published until 1904, its relationship with the SDA lasted only a year. Wheeler’s departure from the SDA in 1879 was perhaps one of the causes of the split; the Committee on Publication may have decided that it would be difficult to continue its supervision without her

leadership. Explaining the decision to sever the connection, the SDA’s third annual report emphasized that “the work of supervising the ART INTERCHANGE was a task of no little responsibility. . . . Meetings were held twice each week by this Committee during the winter, and in the summer, at a time when most Committees were suspended, meetings were held regularly once a week to confer with the publishers.”¹⁶⁴ Although the SDA resigned its supervisory role, many of the 1878 names remained on the masthead for another year, lending their imprimatur to the journal.

Wheeler’s other important job in 1878 had been helping organize the SDA’s second benefit loan exhibition, which ran from October 15 to November 30. The annual report lists Wheeler as chairman of the Special Committee on Exhibit of Society of Decorative Art and as a member, with Tiffany and Colman among others, of a subcommittee concerned with the “reception and arrangement” of the entire exhibition. Wheeler was responsible for putting together a display of the best works made by contributors to the SDA’s salesrooms and attendees of the free classes. The works of the latter were mainly painted plates and vases. Among the notable works by contributors listed in the catalogue were five vases decorated by the renowned ceramic artist M. Louise McLaughlin of Cincinnati; a portrait plaque by the young artist Rosina Emmet; two panels “Embroidered in Imitation of Mediaeval Tapestry” by Janet Chase Hoyt; and a mantel lambrequin by Wheeler herself.¹⁶⁵ This is the first recorded instance of Wheeler’s displaying her own textile work in public. While there is no information on the lambrequin’s appearance, it probably was embroidered with the type of designs popularized by the Royal School of Art Needlework—although Wheeler’s recent education in the SDA’s Committee on Design may have encouraged her to attempt something more innovative.

According to the annual report,

The northwest room was appropriated for the Society’s special exhibit, a much larger space than was filled the year previous. . . . The space at first seemed difficult to fill, as articles were chosen with such care, that only those of special

excellence might be exhibited; but before the close of the exhibition, more articles were sent than could well be placed in the room. . . .

The changes of arrangements made by the sale of articles detracted from the appearance of the room, and made it impossible to maintain a harmonious or even orderly effect, but it was thought better to sacrifice the credit of the exhibition to the interest of the contributor.¹⁶⁶

Could the last sentence be one more indication of the philosophical divide between Wheeler and the other SDA leadership? Wheeler was interested in benefiting the needy contributors at any cost; the other ladies were more interested in the exhibition's having an artistic appearance.

Wheeler resigned from the SDA sometime in 1879 and does not appear as an officer or committee member in the third annual report (January 1, 1880). There are various possible reasons for her departure; the one most often proposed is that in the same year Louis Tiffany decided to start a decorating business and asked her to participate. In her autobiography Wheeler maintains that when the offer came from Tiffany, she had already "formally resigned my 'Society' work, keeping, I was sure, the cordial friendship of Mrs. Lane and many of my co-workers."¹⁶⁷ These continuing friendships may have enabled her to attend selected meetings and in November of 1879 to act as a judge, representing the SDA, for a competition sponsored by the *Art Interchange*.¹⁶⁸ Prizes for the best painted tiles or plates, decorated portieres (doorway hangings), and Christmas cards were awarded by four male judges, including John Taylor Johnston, president of the Metropolitan Museum, and two female judges, Wheeler and Janet Chase Hoyt. (The winners included Rosina Emmet, who won a special twenty-five-dollar prize for a decorated plaque, and Wheeler herself, who won the fifty-dollar first prize for her "Consider the Lillies" portieres [cat. no. 8], which she submitted under the pseudonym Meadow Lily. Rosina Emmet was one of Dora Wheeler's best friends, and the Emmet and Hoyt families were close friends and neighbors, so the judges' choices may not have been completely without prejudice.)

It is clear that Wheeler left her work with the SDA partly over basic differences of approach, but it also seems likely that she felt uncomfortable with the wealthy women of the society. Her background, growing up on a dairy farm in Delhi, New York, had not prepared her to socialize with the Mrs. Astors of the world—even though, as an authentic "Yankee" whose ancestors had been among the early settlers of New England, she possessed a certain social distinction and perhaps in her own eyes a certain moral superiority. The people Wheeler befriended by choice after arriving in New York had a financial and professional status closer to her own. For the most part they were artists and writers who had to work for a living but who constituted an intellectual and artistic elite based on talent. It was these people whom Wheeler admired, and against whom she judged everyone else. A reading of her autobiography suggests that Wheeler inherited her father's judgmental streak; she had distinct views on both the upper and the lower classes. In her opinion, New York's nouveaux riches, epitomized by the "robber barons" of Fifth Avenue, were vulgar and luxury-loving ("luxury" was a pejorative term in her vocabulary). On the other hand, she was not particularly sympathetic to the working class and in one paragraph speaks quite critically of the "peasant crudeness" she sees in the faces of newly arrived immigrants from Ireland and Germany.¹⁶⁹ Throughout her life Wheeler chose to champion middle-class women like herself—especially women forced to find work outside the home because of changing economic and family circumstances.

In keeping with the cultural temper of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Wheeler was a great believer in the redemptive power of art. She thought that living in artistic surroundings could influence people, making for better families and, ultimately, better citizens; or, as she once wrote, "A perfectly furnished house is a crystallization of the culture, the habits, and the tastes of the family, and not only expresses but *makes* character." Perhaps it is fair to say that while Wheeler had rejected her father's belief in evangelical Christianity as the ultimate path to a better life, she retained the fervor of that belief, placing her faith in art.¹⁷⁰ The wealthy women on

the board of the SDA were interested in collecting art as an indicator of their good taste and sophistication. They probably had no conviction that art could change their lives. For Wheeler, her differences with the other board women may finally have seemed so pervasive that she was unwilling to continue working with them.

TIFFANY & WHEELER AND LOUIS C. TIFFANY
& COMPANY, ASSOCIATED ARTISTS, 1879–83

“One day after a meeting of the [SDA] Committee of Admissions,” wrote Wheeler in her autobiography,

Mr. Tiffany told me he had sent in his resignation. “It is all nonsense, this work,” he said. “There is no real bottom to it. You can’t educate people without educational machinery, and there is so much discussion about things of which there is really no question. My wife says she cannot afford to have me so stirred up every Wednesday, but I have been thinking a great deal about decorative work, and I am going into it as a profession. I believe there is more in it than in painting pictures.” . . .

“What kind of decorative work?” I asked.

“Why, various kinds. [Samuel] Colman and [Lockwood] DeForest and I are going to make a combination for interior decoration of all sorts. I shall work out some ideas I have in glass. DeForest is going to India to look up carved woods, and Colman will look after color and textiles. You had better join us. It is the real thing, you know; a business, not a philanthropy or an amateur educational scheme. We are going after the money there is in art, but the art is there, all the same. If your husband will let you, you had better join us and take up embroidery and decorative needlework. There are great possibilities in it.”¹⁷¹

Certainly Wheeler was by then very interested in creating embroideries, but there was another reason that she might have felt compelled to take Tiffany up on his offer. The Wheeler family was still struggling financially. Her sister Lucy recalled that in 1880 “Candace had written urging me to come to New York to live, and offering me a thousand dollars a year to help her in her business,

which she had gradually worked into. The times were hard, and Mr. Wheeler’s property was all in real estate that was being eaten up by taxes, and Mr. Louis Tiffany who was associated with her in her efforts to get the Decorative Art Society in working order had made her a proposal to go into the art decorative business with him.”¹⁷²

Wheeler and Tiffany probably joined forces for the first time in September of 1879, when they began work on the stage curtain for the Madison Square Theatre (cat. no. 15). In her autobiography Wheeler described it as a project of the firm Associated Artists, and she remembered this breakdown of responsibilities among its four participants: “Mr. Tiffany for design and all sorts of ingenious expedients as to method; Mr. Colman casting the deciding vote upon the question of color; Mr. DeForest looking up materials, and I directing the actual execution.”¹⁷³

In actuality, Associated Artists did not exist in 1879 and never existed in quite the way Wheeler said it did. For many years, misconceptions have prevailed about the collaboration of Tiffany, Wheeler, de Forest, and Colman in a decorating firm called “Associated Artists.” This is mainly because of misleading statements in Wheeler’s autobiography, where she attempted to reconstruct events many years after they had taken place. First, her remembered conversation with Tiffany, just quoted, wrongly implies that the four had all decided to work together in one coherent band. Although de Forest and Colman may have ventured opinions on the work for the Madison Square Theatre as it went along, it is not likely that they were very much involved, as both were still active with the SDA at that time — Colman designing portieres for private commissions that were executed in the workroom at the SDA, and de Forest serving as art director of the Needlework Department.¹⁷⁴ Second, Wheeler inaccurately cites the name of the firm (which additionally was not formally incorporated until 1881). Wheeler remembers that right from the start “my three new associates acquiesced in my suggestion that we should be called ‘The Associated Artists’ instead of ‘Louis C. Tiffany Co.,’ which was at first suggested. Of course, it *was* the Louis C. Tiffany Co., but it was equally an association of artists and we agreed to work together under

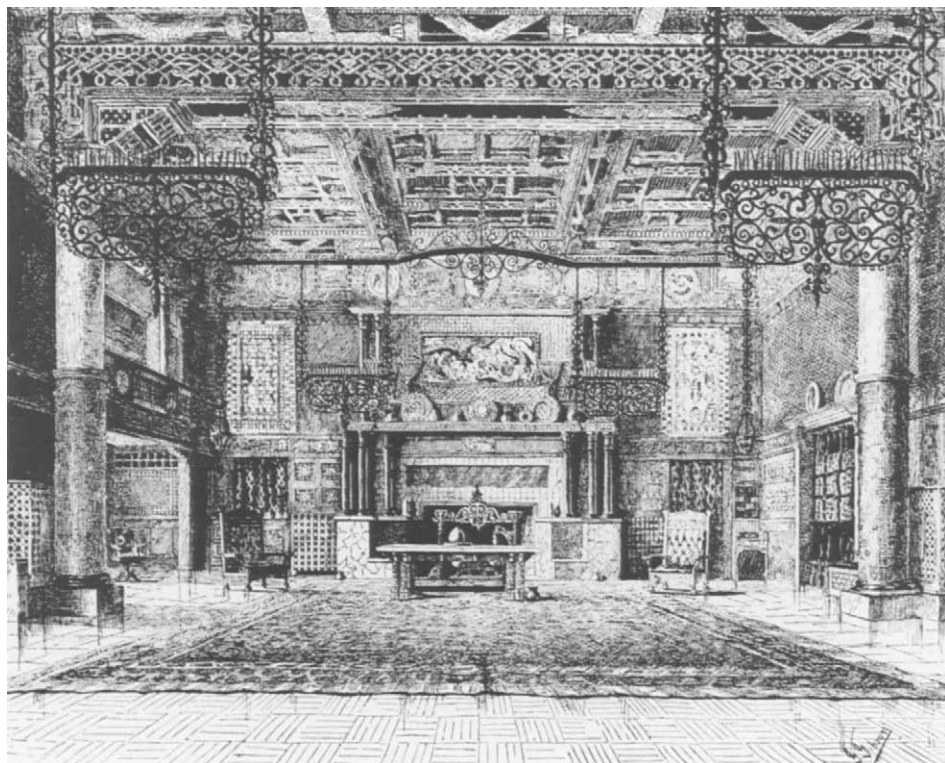


Fig. 21. G. Gibson, *Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory*, New York, 1885. Wood engraving from *Decorator and Furnisher Magazine* 6, May 1885, p. 43

that name.”¹⁷⁵ In fact the business was always known as Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists; it appeared as such in the financial records, in some press accounts, and on the firm’s own stationery. Finally, much confusion has arisen from the fact that Wheeler compressed the activities of three companies—Tiffany & Wheeler (1879–81), Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists (1881–83), and her own business, simply called Associated Artists (1883–1907)—into a single chapter of her autobiography entitled “The Associated Artists.” A more accurate account follows.

In 1878, Tiffany, listed as a “Decorator and Artist” who specialized in embroideries,¹⁷⁶ started a firm known as Louis C. Tiffany, located at 48 East Twenty-sixth Street. Since he intended to provide embroideries to his clients, it seems natural that he soon asked Wheeler for help. Although it is certain that Tiffany and Wheeler were working together in 1879, the first official listing for the firm called Tiffany & Wheeler did not appear until April 20, 1880, when an R. G. Dun & Company credit checker reported, “Mr. Lewis [*sic*] C. Tiffany tells us they will manufacture only fine decorations & embroideries & expect to do considerable business thro’ their very long

& influential circle of friends & acquaintances.” Tiffany & Wheeler was backed financially by Tiffany’s father, Charles L. Tiffany (head of the jewelry firm Tiffany & Company).¹⁷⁷ The fledgling business was located at 335 Fourth Avenue, either in or next door to the building where Colman had his studio.¹⁷⁸ In 1879 Tiffany & Wheeler had begun work decorating the most important rooms in the Fifth Avenue mansion of pharmaceutical manufacturer George Kemp (fig. 22; cat. no. 14). The firm also embarked on a second large project, designing the Veterans’ Room and Library of the Seventh Regiment Armory (fig. 21; cat. no. 18). (The Armory project was completed two years later by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists.)

The SDA’s third annual report (January 1, 1880) describes an arrangement “with Mr. Louis C. Tiffany and Mrs. Candace Wheeler, by which the Society of Decorative Arts becomes the sole agent for the sale of the beautiful embroideries, executed from their designs and under their supervision. There will also shortly be on exhibition and for sale some hangings, combined and arranged by Mr. Samuel Colman, to which especial attention is called.”¹⁷⁹ Samuel Colman, Lockwood de

Forest, Louis Tiffany, and Wheeler had been linked by diverse friendships for some years. Tiffany was a close friend of de Forest's older brother Robert, and Tiffany and Lockwood de Forest had followed similar paths when embarking on their respective painting careers. Tiffany and Colman had known each other since meeting in New York in 1866 and had traveled in Europe together; in 1879 they were designing artistic wallpapers that were produced by the manufacturer Warren, Fuller & Company and also were published in 1881 in a booklet by Clarence Cook, "*What Shall We Do with Our Walls?*" (cat. no. 31). Wheeler knew Colman from her time spent with him in Newport. She knew Tiffany and de Forest through the SDA, and had certainly worked with de Forest's mother, Mrs. Henry G. (Julia Weeks) de Forest, who was on the board of managers.

This congenial foursome, Tiffany, Wheeler, Colman, and de Forest, had probably been meeting and consulting with each other on their various projects for some time. But there is no mention of any official affiliation, beyond Tiffany and Wheeler's, until June 1880, in the *Art Amateur*:

*It is not generally known, we believe, that Messrs. Colman and Tiffany and Mrs. T. M. Wheeler are associated as decorators under the business name of Louis C. Tiffany & Co. We mention the matter here, as we are requested by one of the gentlemen to give credit to the firm for the work just done. The firm is certainly a notable one, and may be termed a strong representative American team, for who among us has better general ideas in regard to interior decoration than Louis C. Tiffany, or more knowledge of rare fabrics and bric-à-brac than Samuel Colman? And who is so accomplished in art needlework or practical in imparting instruction in it as Mrs. T. M. Wheeler?*¹⁸⁰

Although the term "Associated Artists" had not yet appeared, Tiffany's idea for his firm was already in place. He had decided that the field of interior design could benefit from having a variety of artists with different specialties participate together on large projects. He would be the overall visionary, coming up with the general concept for a room; then he would ask those artists he saw fit to each be responsible for the aspect of

the decoration relevant to his or her particular talents.¹⁸¹

The Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, begun in 1879 by Tiffany & Wheeler and completed in 1881 by the expanded firm, was one of the most complicated jobs Tiffany undertook. He enlisted Colman to design the color scheme, Stanford White for the architectural detailing, painters Francis D. Millet and George H. Yewell to create a pictorial frieze high on the walls, and Wheeler to make the portieres and drapes. In addition to conceptualizing the room, Tiffany designed the stained-glass windows, the glass-tiled fireplace, and the carved oak furniture. The final product garnered praise: "The decoration as a whole, is to be justly called one of the most successful attempts ever made to carry out the logical principle of architectural decoration. . . . It is furthermore a proof that 'associated artists' can work together with perfect harmony, contrary to the natural presumption, probably; no part of this work obtrudes itself or obscures any other."¹⁸²

Tiffany's idea of many chefs all contributing their specialties to a single repast was innovative in 1880. Traditionally there had been several different approaches to interior decoration. On rare occasions, the architect of a new mansion might specify the interior finishes and design custom furniture. More typically, individual contractors were hired to provide the separate elements of a room's decoration; a cabinetmaker was responsible for the furniture, while an upholsterer would provide the draperies and furniture covers, a carpet dealer the floor coverings, and a painter the wall finishes. A room so decorated might, understandably, lack unity. For instance, after Tiffany & Wheeler agreed to produce draperies for the Union League Club in October 1880, the firm's Japanese portieres decorated with birds and fish were installed in a Queen Anne-style dining room designed by John La Farge (cat. nos. 19, 20). The interior and the portieres were individually admired by the press, but it was clear to all that they had nothing to do with each other visually.¹⁸³ Another approach to interior design was to have a single decorator—in this period usually a member of a luxury cabinetmaking firm such as Herter Brothers—provide the entire decorating scheme. This



Fig. 22. Mr. George Kemp's Dining-Room, ca. 1883. From [George William Sheldon], *Artistic Houses; Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States*, 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

method made for tasteful rooms in which the furniture was spectacular but the textiles and surface designs (wall coverings, stenciling, etc.) were sometimes unimaginative. Tiffany's system was meant to ensure that every part of an interior would have as much visual impact as every other.

The firm of Tiffany & Wheeler continued in existence until sometime in the late fall of 1880 or perhaps even early 1881. An R. G. Dun credit reporter who visited Tiffany's headquarters on October 1, 1880, was told, "Louis C. Tiffany started three different firms at this location. L. C. Tiffany & Co. Furniture; Tiffany & Wheeler Embroideries; Tiffany & DeForest Decorators. They are now taking stock & in a few days they will probably be merged into a new concern but at present are not pre-

pared to give particulars."¹⁸⁴ It is hard to know exactly when Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, came into being, but in spring 1881 the work of the firm was mentioned in the press.¹⁸⁵ In the Dun ledgers written in June 1881 the firm is listed two different ways. On June 9 it was called L. C. Tiffany & Co. and described as follows: "This business was originally started by Mr. Tiffany & Mrs. Wheeler under style of Tiffany & Wheeler. Since then W. P. Mitchell & Lockwood De Forest have been taken into the business. All artists of some note & each representing different branches." On June 15 the firm was listed for the first time as Louis Tiffany & Co., Associated Artists, with this note: "W. Pringle Mitchell is the Co. [business manager.] The

Embroidery Dept. is under the controll [*sic*] of Mrs. Candace Wheeler. This is an Association of Artists. They design furniture & embellishments for first class dwellings supplying some of the articles.”¹⁸⁶

Thus, by mid-June 1881 there was an Associated Artists, although not the one described by Wheeler and others following her. The actual partners were Tiffany, Wheeler, William Pringle Mitchell, and de Forest. Mitchell, who served as the business manager, was related to Tiffany by marriage, his uncle being the husband of Tiffany’s older sister Annie. If the Dun ledgers can be taken as an accurate source, Colman was never an official member of the firm. Perhaps he chose to continue with his painting and his own decorative projects, stepping in as an “associate” only when Tiffany asked him to. It is also possible that he was not willing or able to contribute monetarily to the initial start-up costs and so was never made a partner. As for de Forest, he left New York on his honeymoon in November 1880, arriving in India in January 1881. There he started his Ahmadabad workshops, from which he eventually exported furniture, woodwork, and other decorative items back to New York for Tiffany’s use (cat. no. 11);¹⁸⁷ he didn’t return until November 1882. Therefore de Forest was involved only from a distance in the decorating work of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. His original collaboration with Tiffany, called Tiffany & de Forest (most likely also formed in 1879), under the auspices of which he imported his Indian wares, remained his greatest concern. It was not dissolved when Tiffany joined his other businesses together in 1881 and remained an active enterprise until May 1, 1883.

That left just Tiffany and Wheeler as the full-time design principals of the firm. It is interesting to observe the part Wheeler played in the firm and how her expertise grew. When Tiffany first asked Wheeler to join him in 1879 it is likely that he saw her primarily as the director of a workshop that would embroider curtains, portieres, and other items, which he intended to design. Her expertise was in actual stitching techniques, not in design. This was clearly her role in the production of the Madison Square Theatre curtain and possibly of the

draperies for the Union League Club and the Veterans’ Room (cat. nos. 15, 18–20). But at some point Wheeler moved from producer to designer. She had been designing works for herself as early as 1878; when did she begin to design for the firm? Journal articles of the period are somewhat vague about attributing designs to Wheeler. The first reference to Wheeler as a designer for Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, comes in the influential book *Woman’s Handiwork in Modern Homes* (1881) by Constance Cary Harrison.¹⁸⁸ Wheeler’s role in the firm is first described ambiguously: “Allied with these associate artists is Mrs. Wheeler. . . . Those who have seen the beautiful drop curtain of the Madison Square Theatre, some of the draperies for the new Union League Club House, or the hangings for the Veterans’ Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, need not be told how far, in her hands, original design in finest needlework has already been carried.”¹⁸⁹ Her hands as maker, or as designer? Probably as a maker; Harrison is very specific when giving credit for design. She later discusses an extensive New York City commission, certainly the George Kemp house (see cat. no. 14). For the drawing room Tiffany designed fawn plush curtains; for the dining room he designed a frieze of appliquéd plush, pictorial velvet wall hangings to surround the fireplace, and curtains decorated with appliquéd velvet fruits in various colors (fig. 22). Wheeler is given specific credit as the designer of one item in the dining room:

*A wall-panel, designed by Mrs. Wheeler, shows a similar [to the fruit curtains] treatment of appliqué. Upon a length of copper-colored velvet the bough of a fruit-laden orange-tree is made, through skilful management of the pile and texture of red-gold and orange plushes, to give actual impressions of light and shadow. The pearly gleam of blossoms lurking behind the leaves is conveyed through embroidery in silk.*¹⁹⁰

Although Wheeler did not design other textiles for the commission, it is likely that she oversaw the construction of all of them. Published in Harrison’s book are color-plates of sophisticated curtain designs by Colman (an experienced textile designer) and Tiffany; Wheeler’s

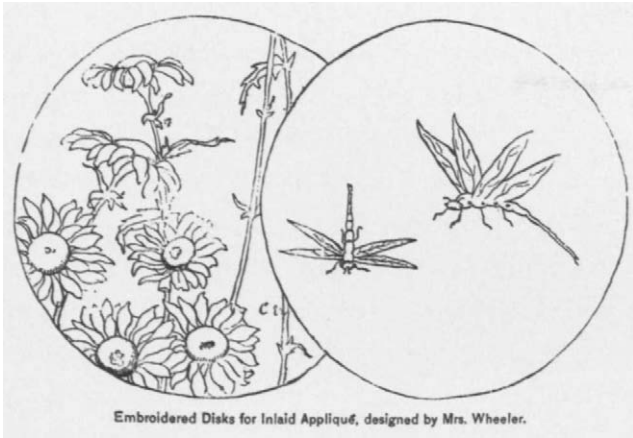


Fig. 23. *Embroidered Disks for Inlaid Appliqué, designed by Mrs. Wheeler, ca. 1881.* From Constance Cary Harrison, *Woman's Handiwork in Modern Homes*, 1881, p. 63. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

work is represented by two linecuts of embroidered disks for inlaid appliqué that bear a striking resemblance to her earlier flower paintings (fig. 23). Harrison also commends Dora Wheeler's figural designs for outline

embroidery, illustrating a panel with a windblown maiden and a bird and a design for a two-panel tea screen (fig. 24).

Harrison's book describes the difficulty that professionals like Tiffany and Wheeler had in obtaining quality fabrics. At first Tiffany had fabrics brought over from Europe, and in 1881 he was importing some India mulls to use as sheer undercurtains, probably through de Forest, who was then in India: "These fabrics, used as scarfs by native dancing-girls, are imported by Mr. Louis Tiffany for sash window-curtains, to accompany draperies from his atelier."¹⁹¹ But in order to fulfill the firm's needs for specialty textiles, as early as 1880 Tiffany began designing fabrics that were then produced by the Cheney Brothers silk mills in South Manchester, Connecticut (cat. no. 73). Harrison describes them: "The *India silks* manufactured for Mr. Louis Tiffany, by a well-known firm in Connecticut, from cocoons imported by themselves, are delightful for lighter draperies. These are chosen by artists in preference to French and Italian silks

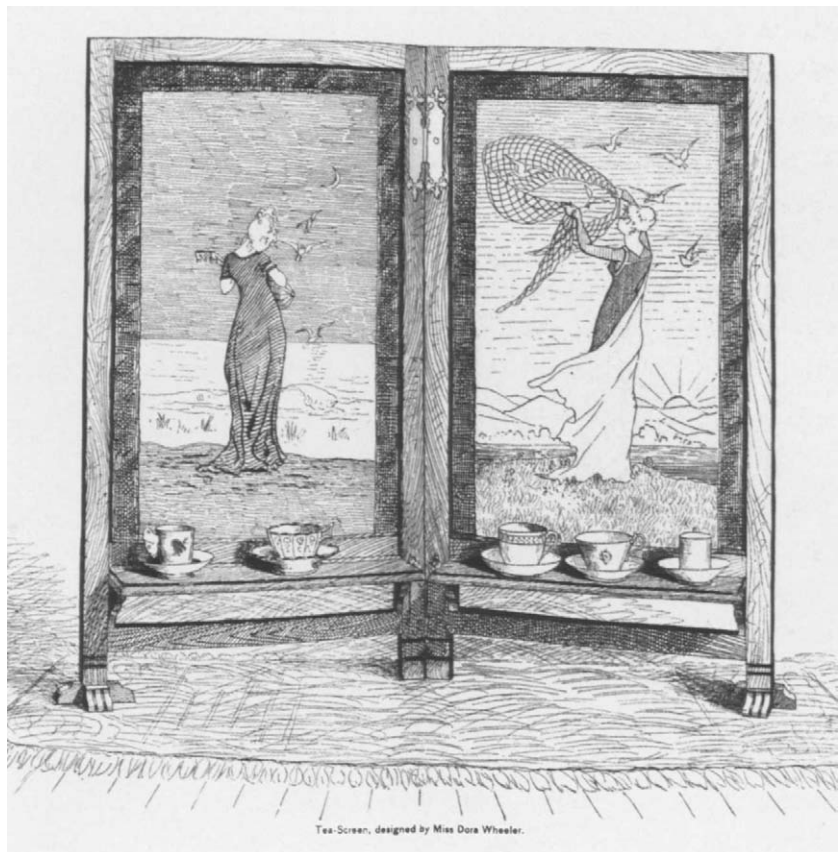


Fig. 24. *Tea-Screen, designed by Miss Dora Wheeler, ca. 1881.* From Constance Cary Harrison, *Woman's Handiwork in Modern Homes*, 1881, before p. 149. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

with all their sheen and stiffness. Some of Mr. Tiffany's designs have a close floriated pattern in a deeper shade of the ground tint. Others have plain grounds in such colors as écru, cream, salmon and Indian red."¹⁹²

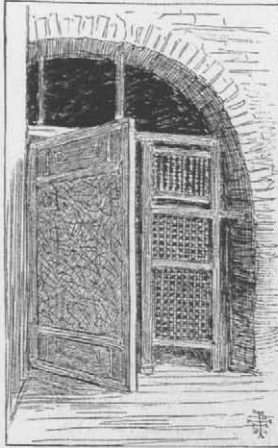
This account calls into question the traditional attribution to Wheeler of a few of those fabrics, based on a claim made by members of her family many years after their manufacture. It seems likely that one of the designs in the Wheeler archives at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and at the Mark Twain House was actually the work of Tiffany. It is the "thistle" pattern, a formal, symmetrical, flat pattern originally produced in blue silk and metallic thread and also in salmon-colored lightweight silk, like the "India silk" described above. The fabric (in blue and metallic) was first made in 1881 for publisher James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s luxury yacht *Namouna*; an engraving from the period shows that it matches the pattern of the molded panels Tiffany designed for the walls of the yacht's main saloon (cat. nos. 16, 17).

According to Wheeler's memoirs, she too began to work with the Cheney silk mills during this period. Her interest in promoting what she called "an American school of design" was apparently shared by Cheney Brothers. Up until this time it had been usual for American mills to copy popular designs from England and continental Europe. Wheeler wrote, "I could not see why American manufactures should be without American characteristics any more than other forms of art. Art applied to manufacture should have its root in its own country. . . . Frank and Knight Cheney . . . had already taken an interest in the subject of national design, and they helped us in most effective ways, making use of native artistic work in their prints and brocades."¹⁹³ It seems that to Wheeler, the ideal American textile designs were those that portrayed native American flowers set out in relatively free, flowing compositions. She rejected the more formal, conventionalized patterns of English designers such as Dresser and Morris, depending instead on the principles of naturalistic composition for flower painting that she had learned from her artist friends two decades before. In Wheeler's designs, Harrison wrote, "a plant rarely has to be twisted or perverted from the

lines of beauty conferred on it by nature. When it is desired to decorate a given surface, the flower or plant chosen is found to be one entirely in harmony with its surroundings. It is placed finally only after consideration of it in all its relations to texture, color, and ultimate purpose."¹⁹⁴ Wheeler also thought that American designs should utilize a color palette different from that of European designs—one stronger and more intense, reflecting the qualities of American light. This idea too grew out of the teachings of the landscape painters she knew well. One contemporary writer observed that while the influence of English colors—described as "antique tints"—"has been great in this country in decorative work . . . it is not, however, to be observed in distinctively American decorative work." American artists used brighter tints in response to the "nervous qualities in our atmosphere" and America's abundant sunshine.¹⁹⁵ The first fabric that can be documented as having been designed by Wheeler and produced with the Cheney silk mills was the two-tone silk canvas that served as the ground fabric for her needlewoven tapestries. It is documented by an invoice addressed to Wheeler from Cheney Brothers dated December 17, 1880, for 88½ yards of 50-inch wide "tapestry" fabric, made up in gold, sapphire, and salmon at \$3 per yard, for a total of \$264.75.¹⁹⁶

It can be concluded that during Wheeler's years with Tiffany her most important role was directing the workshop that made embroidered textiles, primarily from Tiffany's designs. While she may have also been responsible for designing some of the larger pictorial embroideries, her design specialty seems to have been relatively simple floral designs. An illustration of the atelier, published in *Harper's Bazar* (July 23, 1881), shows a very busy establishment (fig. 25). In the multiscene woodcut, the stained-glass workshop is depicted at center; the image

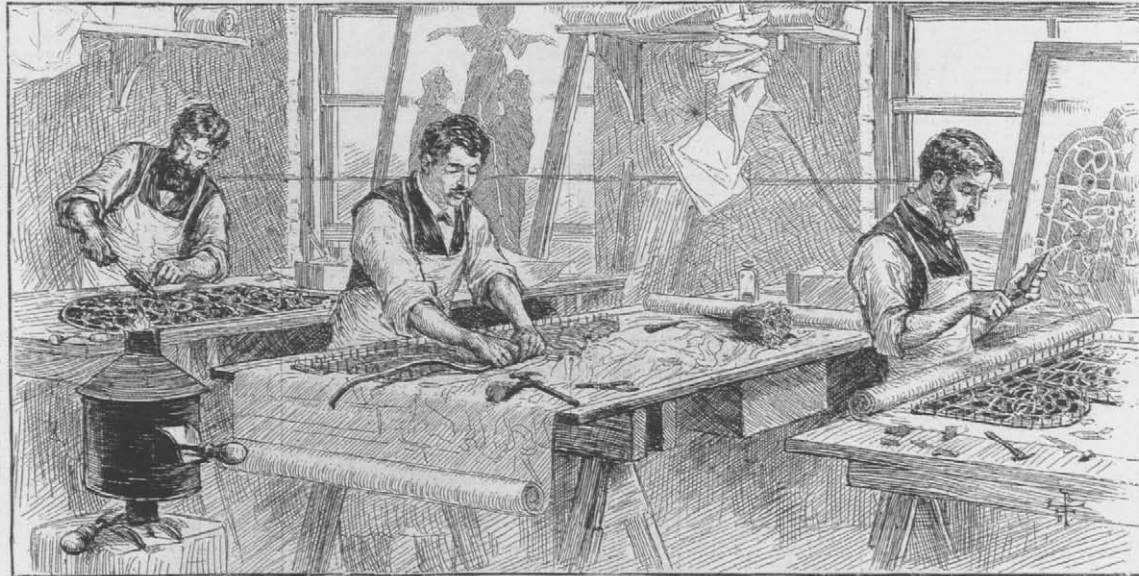
Fig. 25. *Establishment of Louis C. Tiffany & Co. — Associated Artists*, 1881. Wood engraving from *Harper's Bazar* 14, July 23, 1881, p. 473. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, General Research Division



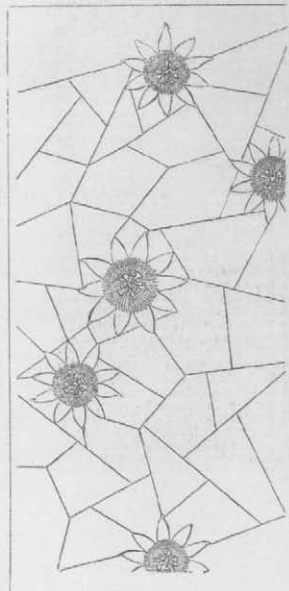
ORIENTAL CORNICE.



EMBROIDERING-ROOM.



STAINED-GLASS WORKERS.



EMBROIDERY DESIGN, BY MRS. CANDACE WHEELER.



STUDIO.



EMBROIDERY DESIGN, BY MRS. CANDACE WHEELER.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LOUIS C. TIFFANY & CO.—ASSOCIATED ARTISTS.—[SEE PAGE 471.]

above it shows Wheeler's workshop, where a group of perhaps twenty women labor over embroidery frames. The bottom section shows a studio where two women are making large-scale figural drawings for murals. Two embroidery designs by Wheeler are also illustrated, on the left a stylized passion flower within a crazed background and on the right a naturalistic wildflower motif that looks very much like the printed patterns her own firm would produce a few years later. The activities of the establishment are described as "color and design as applied to mural decoration; the making and arrangement of tinted and colored glass in mosaics; designs for the decorative use of wood and metals in interior and cabinet work; embroidery and designs for woven and printed fabrics."¹⁹⁷

Wheeler herself published an article in the next issue of *Harper's Bazar* about the embroidery workshop and the methods employed there to achieve the effects sought. Clearly she still had on her mind the concerns that had inspired her establishment of the Society of Decorative Art four years earlier. She wrote about embroidery that was the product of thought and creativity, and through which women could earn an income:

The embroidery produced in the needle-work department of this association can not be said to belong to any particular school. Its processes and results have been accomplished without previously formulated rules. . . .

*Miss Cutler, who was from the first placed at the head of the work-room, . . . had much to learn, but nothing to unlearn, and brought to her responsible position a thorough experience of good plain needle-work, some knowledge of what is known as Kensington-work, an instinct for color, and a quickness and cleverness of expedient which are characteristic of the American girl at her best.*¹⁹⁸

The workroom's first project, the Madison Square Theatre curtain, wrote Wheeler, was "carried through on the ground of simply skillful plain needle-work." It was sewn by women who had never before been "engaged upon artistic embroidery, and almost without exception were women who for the first time actually earned money by their labor."¹⁹⁹

In harmony with Wheeler's goals, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, functioned to some extent as a school. One journalist explained,

*While the association is a business organization, its aims are broader and the outcome is tending to something more important than a few artistically decorated homes. . . . Its varied work demands equally varied resources in the way of design, and many busy hands. The two demands center in what may be called its schools; although one of the distinctions of these schools is that the scholars are paid for their work and for their instruction, which continues until they prove to be of too great pecuniary value for the association to retain their services. At this point they may be said to have graduated, and are able to take their places as independent decorators.*²⁰⁰

Each of Wheeler's students had to master three major tasks, which were, moving from the simplest to the most difficult, copying flowers and foliage from nature, arranging nature studies into compositions for use in decorative artworks, and using color in an artistic manner. Many of the young women who worked for the firm had been recruited from the Cooper Union's art classes for women.²⁰¹ Wheeler recalled that "every girl was in [the firm's design room] because she knew how to draw and had a special faculty for composition. I talked to them twice a week on the spirit as well as the technique of design."²⁰² Wheeler's idea of realizing an American school of design involved "more than mere stitchery, however beautiful. It meant the training of bold strong designers, the teaching of girl art-students how to turn their knowledge in a direction where it was needed, and with a needle instead of a brush to treat textiles with a feeling belonging to pictures."²⁰³

In addition to textile design Wheeler and her students studied techniques of wallpaper design, in preparation for the 1881 international competition sponsored by the wallpaper firm of Warren, Fuller & Company. Much to her delight, Wheeler won the first prize. Two of her other student/workers, Ida F. Clark and Caroline Townsend, won the second and third prizes, and Dora Wheeler won the fourth prize (fig. 26; cat. nos. 32, 35, 39). After these

successes, in 1882, Louis C. Tiffany, Associated Artists, began to offer a formal course in wallpaper design.

The Dun ledger's report for December 9, 1881, stated, "There is no change in the standing of the firm except apparently for the better." The business had expanded, with the embroidery department moving to separate premises.²⁰⁴ According to Wheeler, "the loft became too general a place for our work, and my husband bought a large old-fashioned house on Twenty-third Street, . . . and fashioned it to our requirements." The building at 115 East Twenty-third was purchased on November 1, 1881, for forty thousand dollars (fig. 27). Wheeler's name alone appears on the deed, although the house must have been purchased with Tom's money or with help from her brothers.²⁰⁵ By early 1882, Wheeler, while still a member of Louis C. Tiffany and Company, Associated Artists, was running a semi-independent business out of that location; whether she had bought the building already intending to start her own separate concern is not known. In August 1882 she was employing from forty to fifty women at an average salary of fifteen dollars per week.²⁰⁶ The firm was very busy — decorating the homes of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, Ogden Goelet, William S. Kimball, Hamilton Fish, and Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) (cat. no. 21), among others — and had recently completed the interior of the Church of the Divine Paternity. Wheeler was designing more now and had been joined by her daughter Dora and Dora's friend Rosina Emmet, who were creating needlewoven tapestries with figural designs, some of them intended for the parlor of the Vanderbilt mansion (cat. no. 22).

By the beginning of 1883 it was clear that Wheeler meant to go solo. She wrote to Tiffany on January 28, mainly discussing the Vanderbilt tapestries and sending along the percentage of her payment for the job that she owed to the firm (this is how the partnership functioned financially). She goes on, "I shall be sorry not to have the change in my relations with the Association date from the first of Jan'y, and think it is a disadvantage to me in this way."²⁰⁷ She was concerned about what the final financial settlement would be. While the Dun ledger item of February 20, 1883, notes no change in the structure of the



Fig. 26. *Wall-Papers Manufactured and Imported by Warren, Fuller & Lange* (successor to Warren, Fuller & Company), advertisement in *Art Amateur* 8, December 1882, p. iii. The design is from the frieze on Dora Wheeler's peony wallpaper. Collection of Amelia Peck



Fig. 27. *Associated Artists, 115 East 23d Street*, ca. 1892. From Moses King, ed., *King's Handbook of New York City: An Outline History and Description of the American Metropolis*, 1892, p. 281. Collection of Lori Zabar

business, on April 28, 1883, Wheeler is listed as being on her own for the first time, although somewhat erroneously:

Associated Artists? for[merly]. 115 East 23rd St. This is a branch of the Associated Artists of 333. Fourth Ave. and the business was formerly conducted under style of Louis C. Tiffany & Co., but they have separated some time since and purchases for Embroidery Department are now charged to Mrs. Wheeler who is alone responsible. Claims to have a stock of \$10,000 to \$15,000 and to owe nothing but current bills. She is a sister of H. K. & F. B. Thurber, Whol. Grocers on Reade St. and Mr. F. B. Thurber tells us that she is good for any purchases she is likely to make. That if she should require assistance, which is not likely, that he and his brother would assist her. He also tells us, that her husband is a man of means and we learn outside that she has property of her own, but do not get a definite statement of her worth.²⁰⁸

Wheeler later gave her explanation for the breakup of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists:

After a few years of concerted work I felt that the department of design, embroidery, and textiles had become sufficiently important to be carried on as a separate enterprise. As this was equally true of the department of Indian woodwork, the different members of "The Associated Artists" agreed to resume their own responsibility and manage their own progress. Mr. Colman, who was instinctively a painter, with a love of color which had led him somewhat reluctantly into decoration, retired to secure the leisure and privacy necessary to a painter. I think Mr. Tiffany was rather glad to get rid of us all, for his wonderful experiments in glass iridescence, which were to culminate later in the manufacture of "Favrile glass," meant far more to him at the time than association with other interests.²⁰⁹

It seems likely as well that the financial aspects of the partnership were not working out to Wheeler's satisfaction, making her inclined to control her own business. And it may not be too far-fetched to assume that she was not totally satisfied producing solely custom luxury embroideries that went for the most part to the millionaire class. It remained one of her goals to help the average

women learn about good design and gain access to inexpensive but well-designed home furnishings.

In 1882 Tiffany apparently contracted for one of his most prestigious jobs, decorating a number of rooms at the White House. The project did not begin until 1883, and extant documents cite only Louis C. Tiffany & Company; it seems that Wheeler was not involved.²¹⁰ De Forest also separated from Tiffany at about this time. Tiffany & de Forest was liquidated by May 1, 1883, and de Forest started his own import business soon thereafter (see cat. no. 11). Tiffany continued to take on interior decorating projects, but eventually his work on the Lyceum Theater in New York actually bankrupted his firm. In 1885 Louis C. Tiffany & Company folded and was replaced by the Tiffany Glass Company. However, despite his by then intense focus on the creation of stained glass, Tiffany maintained his interest in interiors, which he continued to design for most of his career.²¹¹

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS, 1883-1907

Wheeler's years working with her first design associates had changed her artistic sensibilities. She was no longer "the dilettante official of a Decorative Art Society, worshipping at the shrine . . . of aesthetic South Kensington," as an 1885 article in the *Art Amateur* explained; now she had design ideas of her own.²¹² And while some interior decoration work would be done by her new firm, the intention was to focus on textile design. During her years working with Tiffany, Wheeler had found the process of designing textiles for manufacture to be a particularly intriguing part of her job. Moreover, it seemed to her "a desirable profession for women and a profitable outlet for their artistic talents."²¹³ Designing textiles and encouraging women in their quest to become self-supporting professional designers and artists would be the two most important activities of Associated Artists, the firm that Wheeler directed beginning in 1883.

Discussing the breakup of the Tiffany firm, Wheeler's friend Constance Cary Harrison wrote in 1884 that while "the department of tapestries and embroideries had

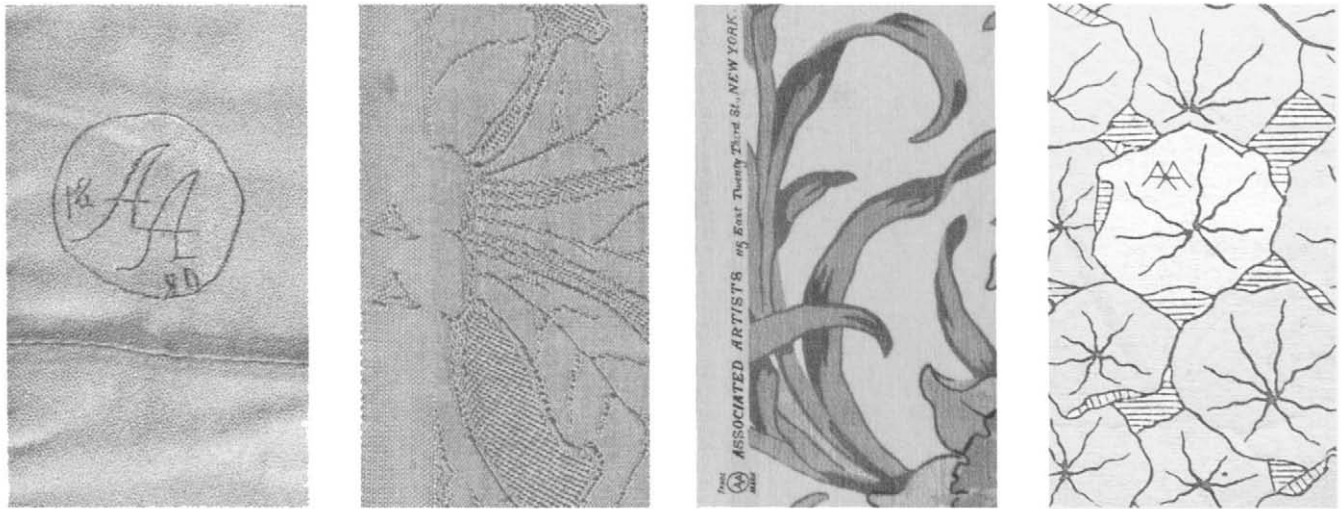


Fig. 28. *Associated Artists marks*. *a*: Detail of velvet and silk table scarf, 1884, showing embroidered mark: 18/AA/84. Museum of the City of New York. *b*: Detail of silk pomegranate textile, 1883–1900, showing woven mark on selvage: AA. See cat. nos. 74–75, n.1. *c*: Detail of cotton velvet daffodil textile, 1883–1900, showing printed mark on selvage: TRADE/AA/MARK/ASSOCIATED ARTISTS 115 East Twenty Third St. NEW YORK. See cat. no. 68. *d*: Detail of cotton nasturtium-leaf textile, 1883–1900, showing printed mark in pattern: AA. See cat. no. 65.

assumed a character of distinct national and commercial importance,” its development was impeded because it was only one part of an association for the “combined forms of decorative work. . . . It was decided, therefore, to detach this department of artistic needle-work, allowing it to convene a new group of artists having taste and gifts especially adapted to its growth.”²¹⁴ In 1913 Wheeler remembered, “After four years [I] felt a call to devote myself to art in a way which would more particularly help women, which I could not do in association — the men of the firm carried on their work separately, but I was allowed to keep the name which I had first suggested for our firm, as I meant to associate women artists with me.”²¹⁵

Soon after the formation of the firm, Clarence Cook, who was well known as an art critic and was the author of a popular home furnishing book, published an article about Wheeler’s Associated Artists. While highly laudatory, it also offers a keen analysis of her motives and qualifications for starting the firm. Wheeler was, first of all, “a large-hearted woman — she wanted to help young girls who desired to be employed in work that they could enjoy, and which at the same time would give them a fair return for their labor.” He goes on, “Mrs. Wheeler’s next qualification for the work she had in hand was a clear business head and an eye steadily fixed on her well-

understood purpose” — the purpose, according to Cook, being to foster a truly American style of art embroidery. Wheeler’s third qualification was “that she herself is an artist, and that it is her love of art and her capacity for it which have incited her to her undertaking. . . . in such an enterprise, the main thing after all must be a love of art.” Cook concludes, “The first new path . . . in embroidery in modern times [has been] pioneered by the taste, the ingenuity, and the indomitable energy of an American woman.”²¹⁶

In September 1883 the first advertisement for Associated Artists appeared, headed by the firm’s new trademark of two overlapping “A’s” within a circle. The trademark is likely to have been designed by either Candace or Dora Wheeler, since both were known to sign their work with similarly linked initials. The “AA” mark, found on many of the firm’s printed textiles, a few of the woven silks, and some embroideries (fig. 28), is an indication that the textile in question dates from 1883 or later.

The original advertisement read:

Associated Artists Textiles.

115 East 23d St

Silk and raw-silk fabrics, woven from original designs, for

friezes, wall hangings, and furniture coverings.
Heavy silk canvasses and sail-cloths, in carefully studied combinations of colour, for portieres, and curtains.
Verona silk, or silk muslin, in soft Eastern dyes, for sash and vestibule curtains.
Soft wool portieres, with design adapted for overwork in embroidery silks, or crewels.
*Rajah and Beyrout silks for light draperies.*²¹⁷

The ad shows that from the beginning the company sold silks that Wheeler designed and that were manufactured by the Cheney mills. The firm also provided, as the SDA had when Wheeler was associated with it, stamped designs for women to embroider at home. These were described in an article about the progress of the decorative arts in America published in a London journal:

*The manufactures of the [Associated Artists] not only include fabrics, but printed stuffs. Special designs for these are furnished, the association agreeing that they shall not be repeated. Some delightful specimens of this sort have been produced, showing that delicate balance between the conventional and real which, as has been said, resembles more nearly Japanese work than any European influence, and yet could not be mistaken for Japanese work.*²¹⁸

Wheeler's three closest associates during the early years of the business were her daughter Dora, Dora's close friend Rosina Emmet, and Ida F. Clark. All three had worked with Wheeler when she was still affiliated with Tiffany. Initially it seems that in addition to designing some of the fabrics and embroideries Wheeler oversaw the entire operation, while the others worked in their own areas of specialization. "Miss Ida F. Clark has direction of the more conventional designing done by the house. . . . The service Miss Clark performs in conventional designing Miss Wheeler and Miss Emmet render to the figure subjects."²¹⁹ "Conventional designing" meant somewhat simplified, repeating pattern designs for fabrics and wallpapers, such as an embroidery design of spider webs and dogwood blossoms by Clark that was illustrated in the same article. Clark also designed a woven fabric for the interior of a railroad car (cat. no. 38)

and a seashell-and-ribbons pattern printed both on cotton velveteen and on plain cotton (cat. nos. 36, 37), and may have been the author of the famous "carp" fabric produced by the firm (cat. nos. 55–57). It is likely that there were others in the firm who designed textiles in addition to these three young women. At times, Associated Artists employed as many as sixty workers. Unfortunately, none of the other designers can be identified, since their names do not appear in the press and the firm's business records have not survived.²²⁰

Dora Wheeler and Rosina Emmet were painters in the midst of their artistic training. By 1883 they had both studied under William Merritt Chase for two years (1879–81) and taken courses at the Art Students League. Soon after Wheeler moved into the Associated Artists building, she built a painting studio there for Dora so that she could pursue a career as a serious portraitist (cat. no. 48). Additionally, at Wheeler's urging both young women participated in various artistic competitions, including the Warren, Fuller & Company wallpaper competition in 1881 and the Louis Prang Christmas card competitions of 1880, 1881, and 1884 (cat. nos. 40–43). They also illustrated children's books (cat. nos. 44, 46). In 1884 they traveled to Paris together to study at the Académie Julian.

Dora and Rosina were the principal designers of the firm's highly acclaimed needlewoven tapestries depicting female figures from literature and mythology (figs. 29, 30; cat. no. 27). To modern eyes these idealized renderings of sprites and spirits, Indian maidens, and characters from books seem excessively saccharine examples of Victoriana. In their day, however, when highly finished Salon pictures on sentimentalized "historical" subjects by French academic painters such as Adolphe Bouguereau were widely admired, they were considered the height of good taste in room decoration.

Part of the tapestries' appeal was the technique by which they were made. Instead of being handwoven on a loom, like tapestries of the past, they were entirely embroidered, using an embroidery stitch that Wheeler had experimented with since 1880 and then patented. The stitch was integral to the effect of the tapestry.



Fig. 29. Dora Wheeler for Associated Artists, *Alice Pyncheon*, 1887. Needlewoven tapestry, 74 × 50½ in. (188 × 128.3 cm). Signed: AA/1887, DW. Photograph courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art



Fig. 30. Rosina Emmet for Associated Artists, *Autumn*, ca. 1884. From *Art Year Book*, New England Institute [Boston], 1884, pl. 120. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library

Whereas in conventional embroidery the silks are stitched so that they lie on the top surface of the ground fabric, here they were passed in and out through the web of the loosely woven silk canvas, making the embroidery seem to be part of the fabric itself (see cat. no. 27). Subtle effects of light and shading were created with the different colored embroidery threads, and the finished product looked much like a painting. The same stitching technique was employed for some of the firm's floral-patterned embroideries, but it was most admired in the figural works.

In December 1883 the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition was held at the Academy of Design to raise funds for the construction of a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, which was soon to arrive as a gift from the

people of France. Wheeler was asked to select the embroideries for the exhibition. She chose five needlewoven tapestries designed by Dora Wheeler, part of a series portraying scantily clad female personifications of the "Winged Moon," the "Spirit of the Flowers," and the like, which had been made for the Cornelius Vanderbilt II house (cat. no. 22). It was the first occasion on which the larger public saw Associated Artists' needlewoven tapestries; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* praised them as "the most decided advance in needle-work known to the century."²²¹ Wheeler also selected two works designed by Ida Clark, a portiere appliquéd and embroidered with jack-in-the-pulpits and an embroidered tapestry, *The Vestals*, after a painting by Hector Leroux. Included as well were at least three of Wheeler's own floral embroidered

portieres; works by her former student/worker Caroline Townsend, who had opened a school in Farmington, Connecticut (see cat. nos. 51–54); and two pieces by her friend Janet Chase Hoyt, including an embroidered tapestry after Kate Greenaway of children dancing around a maypole. Wheeler did bring in works by non-associates, among them several Boston needleworkers and others farther afield. The best known was Mrs. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who was famous for her realistic, exquisitely wrought embroidered landscapes. Still, the exhibit must to a certain extent have served as an advertisement for the work of Associated Artists. Wheeler even showed some examples of yard goods, including a few of the firm's floral silks. One reviewer responded to the display with a burst of nationalism that Wheeler must have appreciated: "Looking at the exquisite textiles, hand-woven on special looms and designed by American manufacturers, cloths of gold, lustrous velvets, brocades, soft-hued woolen fabrics, and silken figured and shot with opalescent tints, that line the walls of the embroidery department with beauty, we find that at no distant day, if we so desire, we shall cease to be dependent upon the looms and needle of the Orient and of Europe for the decoration of our homes."²²²

Textiles produced by Associated Artists ran the gamut from highly luxurious custom embroideries, such as the needlewoven tapestries, to printed cotton denims meant to be used for curtains in modest summer cottages. Woven and printed silks and printed cotton velveteens were in the firm's middle range. Some silks were actually quite moderate in price, since Cheney Brothers had perfected (and was the first American manufacturer to do so) a method of spinning silk thread from imperfect cocoons previously considered waste. Fabrics woven of this "spun" silk tended to have a softer hand and less lustrous appearance than those of traditional "reeled" silk, but they were less expensive and quite durable.²²³ Wheeler had been uncomfortable creating works only for the luxury market; as Constance Cary Harrison put it, "Not satisfied, however, with producing stuffs to exchange for the plentiful shekels of American plutocracy, the artists have wisely carried their experiments into

the region of cheap materials." In addition to the silks, "sold at a very moderate price,"

Chintzes and cottons receive as much care in the design as their expensive brocades, and Kentucky jean or denim has been known to take upon itself the semblance of Oriental drapery for wall or door. . . .

Thus it will be seen that the aesthetic housekeeper ambitious to adorn her room of state, [and] the modest mother of a household who can spare this much and no more for a thing of beauty in her home, . . . need no more look to sources over sea for their material.²²⁴

Although textiles representing perhaps forty designs by Wheeler's firm have survived, a nineteenth-century source notes that in the decade 1884–94, a New York firm of "women house-decorators" – certainly Associated Artists, although not named – "produced more than five hundred designs in silks and cottons which have been manufactured and sold throughout the country."²²⁵

While it seems likely that most purchasers of Associated Artists products were from the New York area, the textile yardage was marketed in at least one other major city. The San Francisco woman-run decorating firm Martin & Ingalsbe advertised in 1886 that it was an agent for Associated Artists in New York.²²⁶ The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that one of the partners, Endora L. Martin, had been "among [the] first and most promising pupils" of Candace Wheeler (perhaps at the SDA or Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists), and that "after a full course with Mrs. Wheeler Miss Martin came here and set up as an interior decorator."²²⁷ In decorating a gallery for an 1885 exhibition, "Lady Artists of California," Martin & Ingalsbe added "pretty pieces of the sheer, delicate Wheeler silks, for ornamenting. The silk is something new, is very fine in texture, and is essentially a woman's work. The designs are executed by Mrs. Wheeler, of New York, and the silk woven to her order. Those lent to the exhibition are the first that have been sent to this state."²²⁸

Interestingly, some of Wheeler's most faithful clients were British, evidence of a turnabout from the era when the Royal School of Art Needlework reigned supreme.

In 1884 the *Art Interchange* reported that although “sending embroidery to London would seem as useless as ‘sending coals to Newcastle,’ yet that is just what our ‘Associated Artists’ have recently been doing; and with good reason, having superiority of design and execution for a justification. Not only have embroideries been sent, but exquisite American silks designed and invented by the same Society, and woven on hand-loom for their special use.”²²⁹ This is confirmed in an item in the *American Silk Journal*, which reported, “Cheney Brothers, at South Manchester, Conn., are weaving silk fabrics from designs furnished by Mrs. Wheeler, of New York, who embroiders for London art firms. The fabrics are said to be exquisite, and such as most people would not believe could be designed or woven in this country. Mrs. [Lillie] Langtry, it is reported, has bought \$2,500 worth of the goods, and will put \$1,000 worth of the purchase into a pair of curtains.”²³⁰ For Langtry, a famous English society beauty and actress, Wheeler designed two sets of portieres, one embroidered with blue vases from which yellow and pink roses cascaded and the other made of a silver-gray brocade, and Dora painted three silk wall-hangings showing cupids at play. Society woman Mrs. Mary (“Patsy”) Cornwallis-West and actress Ellen Terry were also clients. Wheeler wrote that some of her British clients visited Associated Artists in New York; she may have met others on her frequent trips overseas.²³¹ In 1889 Associated Artists participated in an exhibition of American decorative arts held at Johnstone, Norman & Company’s galleries at 67 New Bond Street, London. Apparently the galleries were decorated to resemble the rooms of a richly furnished house, with stained-glass windows by John La Farge, art tiles from J. G. Low & Company, and needle-woven tapestries such as *Minnehaha*, *The Winged Moon*, and *The Birth of Psyche*, all designed by “that interesting Penelope of New-York State, Miss Dora Wheeler.”²³²

From 1883 to the end of the decade, Wheeler’s Associated Artists was a hive of activity (fig. 31). In 1885 the firm dealt with

decoration as using or applied to textile fabrics, including as well all upholstery as the hangings, draperies, tapestry



Fig. 31. *The Designing-Room* of Associated Artists, 1884. Wood engraving from *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 69, August 1884, p. 345. Signed: Wilder. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

*and applied decoration of any part of a room. In the building which they occupy . . . there are large exhibition and salesrooms, the studios or designing rooms, the departments of embroidery, of tassels, fringes, etc., of tapestry, and the curtain department — an entire floor. There are about sixty employes.*²³³

Wheeler remained true to her ambition to teach women marketable skills:

This is an art school as well as a business house. Many women come to them with no other preparatory training than the drawing lessons [that] our public schools afford.

*The best talent is furnished by the Women's Art School of Cooper Union. Aside from such preparation, the Associated Artists furnish the education of their own designers and workers.*²³⁴

This in-house education took some women far, such as Ida F. Clark, one of Wheeler's head designers, who had begun as a lowly embroiderer back in the early days of Wheeler's collaboration with Tiffany.

In 1889 the *Art Amateur* published the text of a lecture Wheeler gave to the "ladies' classes" of Gotham Art Students entitled "Art Study Practically Applied." She encouraged the students to pursue jobs in the applied rather than fine arts, emphasizing that "now, indeed, is the time, while the field is open and bare, for persons of talent, originality and initiative to make their way in the applied arts."²³⁵ Such occasional lectures were not the full extent of Wheeler's teaching; in addition, besides providing hands-on lessons at Associated Artists she taught at decorative art schools, such as the New York Institute of Artist-Artisans, and was on the advisory council of the Woman's Art School of New York at the Cooper Union from 1877 until at least 1909.

Associated Artists occasionally sponsored exhibitions of the work of other women artists, both painters and needleworkers. In December 1886 a show was held of embroidery from the British Isles. It featured a reproduction of the medieval Bayeux tapestry made by the Leek Embroidery Society of Staffordshire, England, and examples of "Kells" flax embroideries produced by the Donegal Cottage Industry, Ireland. Wheeler particularly admired the homespun flax embroideries, which were made for sale by poor Irishwomen.²³⁶ In January 1887, selected works by the painter Anna Lea Merritt were exhibited.²³⁷ Merritt was American-born but made her home in England. She later contributed a mural to the Woman's Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.²³⁸ In November 1887, the tenth anniversary of the founding of the SDA, Associated Artists sponsored an exhibition of the best works from various Societies of Decorative Art around the country, adding a few of their own works to the display.²³⁹

Throughout the 1880s, according to the R. G. Dun credit ledgers, Associated Artists and Wheeler herself appeared to be on firm financial footing. On July 8, 1884, it was reported that the firm "seem[s] to have an increasing bus[iness]." On December 12 the credit investigator interviewed Wheeler and was told "without going into details, 'that the bus[iness] has increased materially & is prosperous.'" In June 1885 "The party in charge states: 'That there is no change except improvement.'" On April 28, 1886, Wheeler was in Europe and her son Dunham answered the investigator's questions, again attesting to the improving fortunes of the business. Interviewed once again on March 20, 1888, he reported on his mother's financial worth "that 40 to 50 [thousand] is a fair estimate of her means. That she owns R[eal] E[state]," including the Associated Artists building. In May 1889 Wheeler had "\$30,000 active capital in this business," and her overall worth was placed at more than \$40,000. In October 1890 her financial situation remained unchanged; the investigator added that Wheeler "is said to be possessed of more than ordinary business tact, & ability, pays well, & is regarded a good risk."²⁴⁰

During what must have been some of the busiest years for Associated Artists, Wheeler struck out on her own to build a reputation as an expert on all matters relating to textiles and interiors. Her impulse was educational; starting in the late 1880s she granted a series of interviews, each on a specific decorative "problem" for which she offered solutions to the reading public. The interviews, published in the *Art Amateur* beginning in February 1887, were written by Mary Gay Humphreys, a columnist for the magazine and a well-known journalist on the decorative arts. The series tackled such subjects as "The Color Scheme of a Room: A Talk with Mrs. T. M. Wheeler, Who States Her Principles on the Subject" (February 1887) and "Mrs. Wheeler on Fitting Up a Seaside Cottage" (May 1887). Nine interviews on the subject of needlework were published between December 1887 and November 1888 under the heading "Embroidery in America." A tenth article from the same series, "Mrs. Wheeler Gives Hints about Darned Lace," appeared in December 1889.²⁴¹

The *Art Amateur* interviews were not the first instance of Wheeler's thoughts on embroidery design being put into print. In 1879 the Society of Decorative Art had begun publishing embroidery designs, with instructions, in *Harper's Bazar*, an arrangement that may have been set up by Wheeler in the last days of her association with the SDA. (On Wheeler's connection to Harper's through her early New York City literary friends, see p. 9 and n. 34.) While these earliest designs are unsigned, several show the undeniable characteristics of Wheeler-composed florals; one, "Prize Design for Baby Blanket—Outline-Work" (August 26, 1882), has all the earmarks of Dora Wheeler's style, including winged cherub heads and a verse in Dora's typical hand-lettering. The SDA continued to provide designs to *Harper's Bazar* for many years.

After Wheeler formed her Associated Artists in 1883, its designs were also published. Between 1883 and 1900 *Harper's Bazar* printed almost one hundred designs by members of Associated Artists, some nineteen under the firm's general authorship but most signed by individual artists in the firm. Wheeler provided about sixty-two embroidery designs, Dora contributed eleven, and Ida Clark was credited with one. Wheeler's designs are usually artistic renditions of a particular flower or plant—emphasizing her favorites, ones that also appeared in her manufactured textiles, such as water lilies, horse-chestnut foliage, and daffodils. Beginning in 1887 she also published twenty articles on needlework, including in 1896 a series of nine articles on the history of embroidery that eventually was incorporated into her book *The Development of Embroidery in America* (1921).²⁴² The attention she received as a result of all these publications assured Wheeler's status as the preeminent authority on embroidery in America.

Associated Artists had developed silk embroidery threads for sale as early as 1884; in 1891 these were advertised in the *Art Amateur* as "Embroidery Silks in Unfading Eastern Dyes" which were "To be had at retail only of the leading Art Stores throughout the country."²⁴³ Activity in this area may later have led Wheeler to a brief connection with the Nonotuck Silk Company, makers of Corticelli brand silk embroidery thread. She served as an editor for

the firm's *Home Needlework Magazine* for a few months in 1899 and contributed an article, "The Art of Embroidery," to the April 1899 number.²⁴⁴

By the late 1880s, Associated Artists was no longer advertising embroideries, previously a major product. An advertisement published in December 1888 makes evident a different aspect of the firm, which apparently was working directly with architects and decorators on custom orders for yard goods. The advertisement reads:

*Damasks woven to order for Architects and Decorators, in Silk and Gold, Silk and Silver, or Silk and Linen Threads. Brocades woven in special colors or combinations. Silk Canvasses, Cotton Canvasses in fine solid colors. Shadow Silks. Heavy Twilled Chintzes in original designs. Blue jeans in bold ETCHED designs, suitable for cottage furniture and hangings. Plain and Printed Silks for draperies, wall hangings, or for personal use, in carefully chosen colors and designs.*²⁴⁵

It appeared in an Architectural League of New York catalogue and was undoubtedly placed by Dunham Wheeler, an active member of the league (fig. 32). His role in the administration of Associated Artists was becoming more important. When Dunham was only twenty-three he had worked as an interior decorator in Chicago, where he was first listed in an 1884 directory as a "house decorator" with offices in the Pullman Building. It is possible that his business served as a midwestern outpost for Associated Artists textiles. By 1886 the Dun ledgers indicate that he was working at the Associated Artists building in New York, although not until 1889 was he listed in New York City directories, as a decorator working at 115 East Twenty-third Street. Very likely it was at Dunham's suggestion that Wheeler began to work directly with other decorators and architects. (Whether outsiders ordered exclusively Associated Artists designs in custom colors or had the option of bringing their own designs to Associated Artists to be developed is unknown.)

Wheeler's confidence in her own writing skills grew during the 1890s. In 1892 she published three articles in a weekly paper, the *Christian Union*: "Interiors of Summer



Fig. 32. J. U. Stead, *Dunham Wheeler*, ca. 1890s. Albumen silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler



Fig. 33. Robinson and Roe, *Dora Wheeler Keith with Elisha and Lois*, ca. 1896–97. Collodian silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

Cottages,” “Furnishing of Country Houses,” and “Country House Interiors.”²⁴⁶ The first articles she wrote on interior decoration, they were precursors to an essay, “The Philosophy of Beauty Applied to House Interiors,” published in *Household Art* (1893), and a decorating manual, *Principles of Home Decoration* (1903).²⁴⁷ The subject of the articles reflects the fact that Associated Artists was doing work on the interiors of houses at Onteora, Wheeler’s summer community; more generally, it indicates that the focus of the firm had changed. It had become more involved with interior decoration, probably largely due to the influence of Dunham Wheeler, and also because the young women who had been Wheeler’s original partners as textile designers had left the business. After Rosina Emmet married Arthur Murray Sherwood in 1887, she seems to have severed her ties with Associated

Artists and concentrated on painting, making a name for herself as a gifted watercolorist. Ida Clark married the Reverend Henry Thomas Hunter in 1890, left Associated Artists, pursued a career in the fine arts, and eventually moved to Europe. In the years following Dora’s marriage in 1890 to lawyer Boudinot Keith, she spent less time helping her mother in the business. She had two children (fig. 33) and seems to have slowed her painting and designing activity for a time (with one notable exception, the mural she painted in 1893 for the ceiling of the New York Library at the Woman’s Building of the Columbian Exposition). Meanwhile, Dunham was not only carrying out his duties as a member of the firm but also, in 1888, had begun working as an architect.²⁴⁸ For Onteora, his mother’s newly founded summer colony in the Catskills, he designed more than a dozen cottages

and other buildings, such as the Bear and Fox Inn. Their interiors needed to be decorated, and Associated Artists took on the job.

ONTEORA, 1883–1923

*In the founding of Onteora we had a distinct and probably impossible plan, which was to establish a community whose ideas of life were the same; to stifle the growth of those hindrances which our Puritan Forefathers called “worldly cares.”*²⁴⁹

In 1887, when Associated Artists was still a very active concern, Wheeler—ever the energetic idealist—embarked on yet another major project, the founding of a summer colony for artists and writers. On a May day a few years before, Wheeler had ventured into the Catskill Mountains with her younger brother Frank and his wife, Jeannette, searching for “a height from which there was a great outlook, yet with a close and rugged surrounding of trees and rocks, where we could build a camp or cabin and live a wild life for a few summer weeks.”²⁵⁰ Frank was at the height of his success as the head partner of a large, prosperous wholesale grocery business. When he and Candace were both struck by a longing to return to the mountains bordering the valley where they had grown up, he had ample funds to finance such a dream. They found their “great outlook” in Tannersville, New York, on a 108-acre farm that Frank bought that same day.

With the help of a local carpenter, Wheeler and Frank designed their dream houses, rustic cottages that were built during the summer of 1883. As a journalist put it some years later, Wheeler was “determined to put in practice certain artistic theories as to the beauty and satisfaction of building one’s home of the simple materials near at hand, employing them with artistic taste and judgment, and that [the Wheelers and the Thurbers] might for a time put away all the tedious formalities and conventions of their urban existence, and live in happy simplicity without sacrificing any of the comforts and refinements.”²⁵¹ Frank’s house was called Lotus Land after

a John Greenleaf Whittier poem, “A Tent on the Beach” (1867), which Wheeler read the day they found their site and that contained the lines, “They rested there, escaped awhile / From cares that wear the life away, / To eat the lotus of the Nile.” Lotus Land was a rather large log structure with two linked pavilions, designed to house Frank, Jeannette, their three children, and household help (fig. 34). Wheeler could not afford the expensive log construction, so her more modest house was made of plain sawed lumber. In typical homage to her beloved American wildflowers she named her small home Pennyroyal, “because of the fragrant purple weed that grew so thickly where we planted the house, and because, as Dora said, [the house] was ‘royal and cost but a penny’”²⁵² (fig. 35). In fact, Frank ended up paying for the materials and construction of Wheeler’s house; later he deeded the land upon which it stood to Dora.

Pennyroyal originally consisted principally of one large room twenty-four feet square (cat. nos. 95–96). In this room, which had a broad corner fireplace, almost all the family activities, including dining, took place. Meals were cooked in an outside kitchen lean-to. A narrow staircase in the corner of the main room “led to the little cubes of space which were literally *bed-rooms*.” Wheeler furnished the house with twig furniture made by local carpenters and “chairs and beds and little bureaus (which had to be small enough to find standing room)” from Baldwin’s, a store in nearby Hunter, New York.²⁵³ On the east wall of the main room Dora painted, directly onto the fresh plaster, portraits of friends and family—Tom Wheeler, her father; Elizabeth (Libby) Custer; Mark Twain; and others. Twain’s portrait is the only one that remains in the house, which still stands.

The two families spent the summers of 1883 to 1886 in quiet enjoyment of their retreat, but in 1887 Candace and Jeanette had a change of heart: “We had begun to feel a longing for continuous human sympathy. The lust of neighborliness infected us. It entered into our minds to buy the mountain, and the farm sloping eastward to which it belonged, and bring some of our friends to build homes and share permanently with us the joys of solitude; not realizing that solitude and society cannot



Fig. 34. *Lotus Land*, ca. 1900. Albumen silver print. Collection of the Onteora Club



Fig. 35. *Pennyroyal*, ca. 1900. Platinum print. Collection of the Onteora Club

Fig. 36. Dunham Wheeler, *The Bear and Fox Inn, Onteora-in-the-Catskills*. Dunham Wheeler Archt. N.Y., ca. 1900. Watercolor, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 16 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (25.7 × 42.2 cm). Collection of the Onteora Club



live together.”²⁵⁴ When the two proposed the scheme to Frank Thurber and Tom Wheeler, somewhat to their surprise the men agreed that it was a good idea. Frank bought the 458-acre Parker farm in January of 1888 and then sold it to a development group he had formed together with Tom, Sam Coykendall (a childhood friend of Frank Thurber’s and the president of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad, which had just finished a branch line to Hunter and Tannersville), and Coykendall’s son-in-law, Henry Martin. Frank ran the company called the Catskill Mountain Camp and Cottage Company; Coykendall and Martin contributed to the financing. Building lots, roads, and trails were quickly laid out, and that summer an inn and the first three cottages in the development were built, all designed by Dunham Wheeler.

The Bear and Fox Inn was a simply massed building with a wide sloping roofline (fig. 36). Wheeler designed the interiors, to which she added “finishing touches which were a carefully thought-out compromise between primitive and civilized needs.” She even designed the uniforms worn by the maids who worked there, appropriately made of her favorite blue denim.²⁵⁵ About the completed inn Wheeler was, as always, a proud mother: “What a pretty rustic thing it was with its long gently curving slope of roof and its swinging sign [painted by

Dora] of the bear and fox walking together in the moonlight! It was Dunham Wheeler’s first architectural work, and its rustic grace of line was a source of pride to us all.”²⁵⁶ Dunham’s three small cottages, which stood near the inn, were named, in true Candace Wheeler fashion, for birds and flowers: Crow-foot, Larkspur, and Wake-Robin (the last perhaps after the book of nature essays of the same name by her friend, naturalist John Burroughs). In the years to come Dunham was responsible for the design of the club’s gate lodge (1892) and about a dozen more cottages. They were mostly built for close family friends and relations, since other families who moved to the spot hired their own architects. While most of Dunham’s cottages were quite modest, some, such as Star Rock, owned by Frank Thurber’s daughter Jeannette and her husband, Washington Connor, were larger and more impressive. Associated Artists designed the rustic interiors of Dunham’s houses (cat. no. 97).

The name of the newly formed community, Onteora, was supposedly the name given to the surrounding mountains by the Delaware Indians and meant “hills of the sky.” The Onteora Club was formed by stockholders of the company in 1889, and from the beginning its challenge was balancing the rustic with the civilized, a casual lifestyle with the strictures of society, the life of the artist with the



Fig. 37. *Mark Twain at Onteora*, ca. 1890. The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut

life of the wealthy businessman. For instance, although the Bear and Fox Inn was pointedly nonluxurious — the dining room had a painted plank floor and denim cloths on the tables, the bedrooms were small and “furnished with the utmost simplicity” — Frank Thurber brought in a French chef so that members of the club could always dine there in style. The earliest cottages were built without kitchens; the owners took all their daily meals at the inn. Wrote Wheeler, “The odor of perfect French cookery did not seem to fight with that of the young Balsamfir trees which sprang from every crevice of the rocks.”²⁵⁷

In 1889 a journalist described the mission of Wheeler’s Onteora as follows:

This summer resort, lying in the heart of the Catskill Mountains, is an experiment quite new in this country, and interesting as marking a fresh departure in both

*thought and practice from the ordinary standards of Americans. It is an effort, and so far a very successful one, to found a summer settlement where people of refinement and cultivation can get away from the vulgar rivalries of wealth and ostentation, which gradually spoil and sophisticate all the simple pleasures of life at the watering-places.*²⁵⁸

It was pointed out that while Onteora offered the natural benefits of camping in the mountains, the club’s various conveniences made it “the embodiment of this happy compromise.”

Although Frank Thurber was officially in charge of the community, the influence of Wheeler, his strong-minded older sister, was enormous. As for Tom Wheeler, he stood back in what seems to have been his typical way and let his wife try to create what she had envisioned. For Candace Wheeler, the most important thing was that those asked to join the club be artistic. Once again — and in this case most strenuously — she rejected the aristocracy of wealth in favor of the cultural elite, people who were, generally speaking, her social and financial equals. Since the club sold building lots only to buyers approved by the founding members, it was largely able

*to keep the members of the club within a class likely to be congenial, and so far the purchasers have been for the most part people distinguished in literature, art, music, or some one of the learned professions. Those who are followers of the Muses are, for the most part, not people of wealth, and they have been especially attracted by this unique summer resort, where the secret has been found of combining simplicity with comfort, and beauty with economy; for ugliness and extravagance are the two outlaws banished from this wood.*²⁵⁹

Women who were professional writers made up a significant number of the residents attracted to Onteora. Some of these, such as art critic Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, editor Jeannette Leonard Gilder, and author Mary Mapes Dodge, were Wheeler’s acquaintances from the New York publishing world. In keeping with Wheeler’s brand of feminism, which glorified the self-sufficient working woman, many of these women were single heads of their own households.²⁶⁰ They were accepted

and admired at Onteora, as might not have been the case in other nineteenth-century summer communities.

Wheeler's sister-in-law Jeannette Meyer Thurber was another Onteoran who had made a name for herself independent of her husband. Intent upon improving music education for aspiring professionals in the United States, she founded the National Conservatory of Music in New York City in 1885 with the backing of wealthy sponsors who included Andrew Carnegie, William K. Vanderbilt, and August Belmont. At the same time she organized the American Opera Company (at one time Wheeler's Associated Artists helped with settings and costumes for the company).²⁶¹ Although the opera company folded after just two years, the National Conservatory of Music, which Jeannette Thurber administered as president for thirty-five years, was a major force in American

music through the 1920s and did not close its doors until 1946. Thurber persuaded the renowned Czech composer Antonín Dvořák to direct the conservatory, which he did from 1892 to 1895. According to numerous sources, it was she who suggested that Dvořák incorporate American folk songs into his compositions, an idea that bore fruit in his famous Ninth Symphony, "From the New World" (1893).²⁶²

Probably the best-known occasional resident of Onteora was Mark Twain, who came to visit the Wheelers a number of times (fig. 37). Other friends and residents included magazine editors Richard Gilder and Laurence Hutton, naturalist John Burroughs, and artists John White Alexander, John F. Weir, and J. Carroll Beckwith (see cat. no. 94). Working during the summer was quite acceptable: "It is a community that works,



Fig. 38. *Children in a pageant at Onteora*, ca. 1890. Platinum print. Collection of the Onteora Club

reads, paints, writes, and studies very earnestly, and does not look upon the summer as a season of complete idleness.”²⁶³ Popular leisure pastimes included hiking, horse-back riding, fishing, and informal (though undoubtedly clever) conversation.

With all these creative personalities in one place, artistic entertainments inevitably became a favorite activity (fig. 38). Wheeler recalled, “We were much given to occasions in these days representing all periods and countries; the old English and German village fairs, many of which I like to remember for their beauty. When a new road around the mountain was finished, its opening was marked by a woodland procession, the like of which might have been seen in Greece or Rome centuries ago.” She theorized, “I think we were always — perhaps unconsciously — trying to resist the encroachment of conventional law at Onteora, and perhaps it was this which gave all our gaieties a tinge of something which belonged to ideal, classical or imaginative periods, and which we added to the contrasts which flavor every day of ordinary life.”²⁶⁴ Wheeler described a ceremony that inaugurated the new studio Dora had built next to Pennyroyal:

*The guests came, everybody came, for in those blessed days there was no discrimination. Every one was a friend. They were seated in semi-darkness in the sweet-smelling new studio. Then through the open door came a small acolyte swinging a censor and scattering oil and wine upon the great altar-like pile of brush within the fireplace. Next came a Priest-of-the-Sun, in flowing robes covered with signs of the Zodiac, and out-stretched hands which blessed the fireless altar. Then followed four beautiful Virgins-of-the-Sun with torches lit from the sunlit candles, and when they knelt and touched the pile, light and flame went roaring up the chimney, while a voice from the shadowed angle chanted an invocation to the sun.*²⁶⁵

While events like this were much in fashion in late-nineteenth-century artistic circles,²⁶⁶ for Wheeler they seemed to have a particular resonance. They were a means of drawing the community together and assuring that all its members had a similar sense of the important things in life, such as the opening of a new painting

studio. It mattered a great deal to Wheeler that “every one was a friend.”

Another noteworthy symbol of the early Onteora community’s artistic nature was “Artist’s Rock.” Wheeler wanted to memorialize her admired friends and mentors among the Hudson River school painters, many of whom had died by the 1890s. She believed that she might never have gone on to discover Onteora if not for her “fond remembrance of the weeks in golden Octobers when we had been asked to join our friends of the Tenth Street Studio building in enjoying the illuminations which the autumn contrived in its passing. It was then that I first felt the glamour of the Catskills.”²⁶⁷ In 1894, high on a hill above the cottages, Wheeler had the names of Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Frederic E. Church, Sanford R. Gifford, Worthington Whittredge, and Jervis McEntee carved into a hollow beneath a rock ledge. She imagined that it might have been the same Catskill ledge made famous by Durand’s painting *Kindred Spirits* (1849; New York Public Library), in which the artist portrayed Thomas Cole and William Cullen Bryant standing high above a rocky gorge.²⁶⁸

To Wheeler’s mind, the community at Onteora began to change for the worse within a decade of its founding. Her friends invited *their* friends to join, some of whom were wealthy people who did not meet Wheeler’s artistic criteria, but as the community grew larger she could no longer exercise total control over who was admitted to the club. Meanwhile Frank Thurber’s grocery business went bankrupt in the financial panic of 1893, forcing him to raise money by selling off some of his land holdings at Onteora²⁶⁹ — and to some extent, Frank’s wealth must have been a part of Wheeler’s power base. When in 1895, after a series of dry summers, residents demanded that a modern piped plumbing system be installed rather than having water brought up the mountain every day by oxcart, Wheeler felt that her Arcadian vision was beginning to fade. That year the Onteora Club was officially incorporated. Its twelve-member board, given the authority to act on behalf of the cottage owners, made its first priority the installation of adequate plumbing, both for immediate comfort and to make the community more

attractive to potential new residents. To Wheeler, whose favorite years at Onteora, 1883–95, were those “when we lived in the very arms and lingered like favored children in the lap of Nature,” this development was an affront. In 1914 she wrote that those who two decades before had demanded plumbing, and later, electricity, were “not strong enough for aerial exercise.” They, “figuratively speaking, lay long in bed and shortened the vigorous days and holy nights to suit their artificial constitutions,” and were “attempting to weld together the wonderful magic of God’s upper air with the luxuries belonging to life lived on lower levels.”²⁷⁰ In 1903 the individuals behind the incorporated Onteora Club bought out the major investors in the old Catskill Mountain Camp and Cottage Company, which was dissolved. Wheeler’s last remaining influence at Onteora was wrested from her hands. Although she continued to summer there, staying at Pennyroyal with Dora for many years and later in Beechnut Cottage, built by Lois, Dora’s daughter, she never felt the same about the place after 1895. For a while she still contributed to community projects, such as the founding of All Souls’ Church (1894–95), which was designed by newcomer George A. Reid, a talented Canadian architect, rather than by Dunham. Although as late as 1906 she helped raise money for the Onteora Library, she admitted,

*I had begun to drink of the cup of bitterness which comes to everybody in associated work, in finding that one can no longer hold to one’s share of it because individual interest will always run counter to associated wants. . . . In our little community the initial idea was soon dissipated by subjection to the fire of commercial methods, and the distinctly personal element remains only in the memory and hearts of individuals.*²⁷¹

Wheeler had worked to create her utopia in “perhaps the most ardent [time] of my life, since it came when the instincts of the normal human being for appropriation and perpetuation were amply fulfilled and the creative element which is our later dower was in full activity.”²⁷² When she witnessed Onteora’s metamorphosis from a rustic artists’ colony to a more conventional summer community for well-to-do New Yorkers, her disappointment

was keen. Today Onteora remains an active summer community, but its residents have no particular connection to the arts. Lotus Land burned down in 1943; Pennyroyal remained in the family until 1980 and is still very much intact.

THE WOMAN’S BUILDING AT THE WORLD’S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, 1892–93

The other important project of that “ardent” time in Wheeler’s life was directing the interior design of the Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Exposition, timed to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America, was intended to be the largest international exhibition ever (cat. no. 87). It was the last major world’s fair of the century held in America; the Beaux Arts architecture and art it showcased remained influential for decades afterward. Although Wheeler’s work and opinions had been published in national journals, until this time she had been an important figure primarily in the New York art world. With her participation in the Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition, her talents gained a nationwide reputation.

The question of what role women would play in the Exposition proved problematic from the start.²⁷³ In 1890 an act of Congress created a separate Board of Lady Managers that was to work under the “guidance” of the all-male Exposition Commission, thus ensuring that women would not participate as the equals of men. Indeed, the Board of Lady Managers was to perform only “such duties as may be prescribed by said Commission.” However, the lady managers were permitted to appoint members to the committees that would award prizes for exhibits produced by women.²⁷⁴ Immediately after the formation of this separate board there was “much unfavorable comment upon the somewhat ridiculous title of the board, and with justice,” since the word “lady” connoted idleness or dilettantism and was entirely inappropriate for an endeavor meant to highlight the achievements of working women. The board’s membership actually included “as many representative

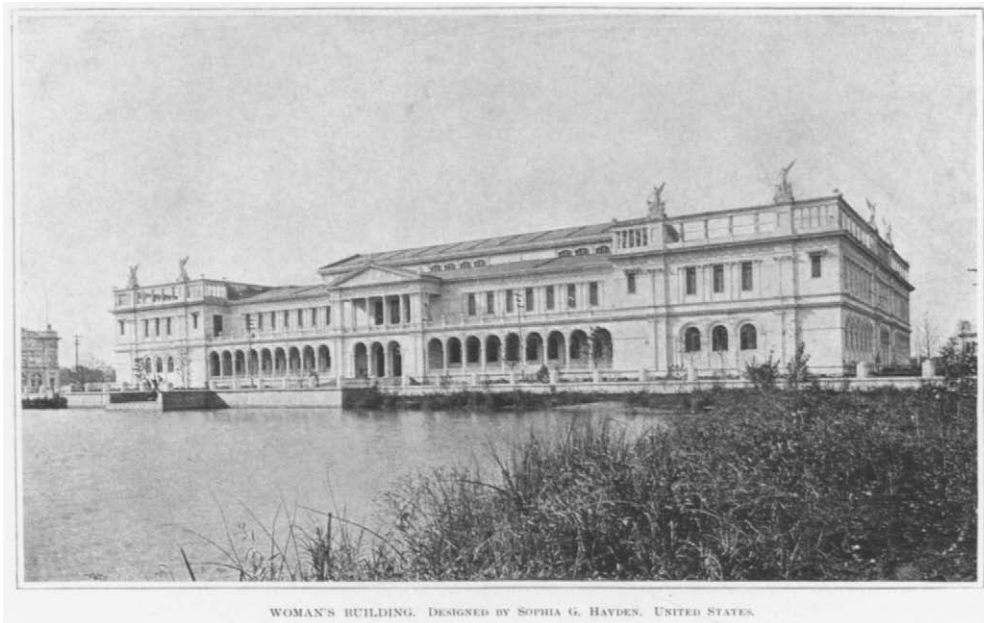


Fig. 39. *Woman's Building*. Designed by Sophia G. Hayden. United States, 1893. From Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (1893), frontispiece. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

workers in the active industries of the country as if it were composed of men.²⁷⁵

The board was under the leadership of Mrs. Bertha M. Honoré Palmer, a Chicago socialite, and consisted of two women from each state or territory, nine others from Chicago, and eight managers at large. Their great achievement was the creation of the Woman's Building (fig. 39), which turned out to be one of the most influential exhibitions at the fair. But before the building was even designed, the women of the board had to resolve the question "whether the work of women at the Fair should be shown separately or in conjunction with the work of men under the general classifications." In other words, should they build a pavilion in which women's work would be segregated, or should the accomplishments of women be shown side by side with the work of men in the Fine Arts Building, the Manufactures Building, the Agricultural Building, and all the others? There were two distinct schools of opinion, according to Mrs. Palmer, "those who favored a separate exhibit believing that the extent and variety of the valuable work done by women would not be appreciated or comprehended unless shown in a building separate from the work of men. On the other hand, the most advanced and radical thinkers felt that the exhibit should not be one of *sex*, but of *merit*, and that women had reached the point where they could

afford to compete side by side with men, with a fair chance of success."²⁷⁶

Struggling with this dilemma, Mrs. Palmer invited the opinions of accomplished working women she knew and respected. One was Wheeler, whom she had met in about 1882 when she commissioned Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, to decorate her Chicago mansion (fig. 71). The other was Sara Tyson Hallowell, an acknowledged expert on French and American painting who was the Palmers' art consultant and agent. In 1890 Hallowell had unsuccessfully sought the directorship of the Art Department of the World's Columbian Exposition, but as a woman she had no real chance.²⁷⁷ Eventually she served as an assistant to the director of the Fine Arts Committee, Halsey D. Ives (director of the Saint Louis Art Museum), and in that capacity organized a well-received loan exhibition of European paintings owned by American collectors. To Wheeler, Hallowell's "judgment in art matters was as unquestioned as law."²⁷⁸ Hallowell was willing to have applied arts made by women exhibited separately, but she thought that isolating the women's fine arts would be a serious mistake:

In an exhibition of painting and sculpture of women, I cannot believe, because of the weak result it must inevitably produce. There are too few fine women artists to warrant

*there [sic] attempting to make a collective exhibition worthy to compete with their brothers . . . and to me such an exhibition would only emphasize their shortcomings. An example such as Mrs. Wheeler could show of woman's work however would be a glory to the sex . . . but no woman artist of ability would I believe be willing to have her work separated from the men's.*²⁷⁹

Wheeler, on the other hand, was a strong supporter of showing all works by women in a Woman's Building.

*My present feeling about the Exposition — is that I should like to have all — and the best that we can do, in the Womans building — You know I have always felt that one great purpose of my work was to prove to women their ability to make conditions & results which were entirely favorable & I should like to emphasize the fact of its accomplishment in the Womans Building.*²⁸⁰



Fig. 40. Section of the Exhibit of Applied Arts, 1893. From *Report of the Board of General Managers of the Exhibit of the State of New York at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1894*, facing p. 186. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

Wheeler's position won out. However, many of the most accomplished woman painters chose to display their works in the Fine Arts Building rather than in the Woman's Building.²⁸¹

The Board of Lady Managers decided to build the Woman's Building to serve as a kind of museum illustrating the progress women had made over the four hundred years since Columbus's discovery of America. The structure contained exhibition areas, a large assembly room where meetings and a women's congress were held, a restaurant, offices for the board, sales rooms, and reception rooms sponsored by New York, California, Ohio, and Kentucky. There were displays of women's work not only from the United States but also from many European countries, Russia, Ceylon, Japan, and other nations. American applied arts were presented in a variety of exhibitions, including a large one devoted to products made by the women of New York State, with textiles and embroideries by Wheeler and Associated Artists (fig. 40).

These contributions represented only a small part of Wheeler's eventual involvement with the Woman's Building, however. In June 1892 she was appointed director of the Bureau of Applied Arts created by the Board of Women Managers of New York State. New York, in part because of Wheeler's efforts, had gained a reputation as the center of the women's applied art movement. But the mission of the woman managers of New York was not only to exhibit the handiwork of New York women but also to "secure a full and complete portrayal of the industrial and social condition of woman and her achievements and capabilities in all the avenues and departments of life."²⁸² Therefore, many exhibits were planned, including a "day nursery exhibit," a "cooking school exhibit," a colonial exhibit, a knitting mills exhibit, and an "Afro-American exhibit." In addition to supervising the applied arts exhibit, Wheeler was asked to take on the responsibility of decorating a library for the Woman's Building, sponsored by New York State, in which the board intended to install a collection of more than 2,500 books by New York women.

In July, a month after Wheeler was appointed to these two positions by the New York board, Mrs. Palmer

wrote to her asking her to become the “Color Director” for the entire Woman’s Building, the term then used for interior decorator. Wheeler was very much interested and responded immediately:

*Yours of 14th asking if I would like to take the position of Color director for the Womans building was received last night, & answered tentatively by telegram this morning. I should like extremely to have charge of the decoration of the interior if I find I can do it satisfactorily both to you & myself, & it is perhaps needless to say that if I decide to undertake it I should put my best powers at the service of the work.*²⁸³

In the same letter Wheeler questioned Palmer on many practical matters, such as what type of workforce she would have for the job, when the building was due to be completed, what part of the overall budget was set aside for interior decoration, and “what salary would my services command?” Wheeler’s autobiography shows her as uncharacteristically hesitant about taking on the job:

I felt that the responsibility outweighed the honor; and again the question was referred to the home court.

“Do you know any one better equipped for the position?” my husband asked.

“Not as a whole, but there may be some one whom I do not know.”

*“You may depend upon it that ‘some one’ has been considered before you were asked,” said he; and that seemed so simple that I accepted it as a decision, and the whole thing was made easy for me.*²⁸⁴

Her admiration for Mrs. Palmer inclined Wheeler to accept the appointment and subsequently helped her get through the difficulties of her new position:

In those Exposition days Mrs. Palmer was easily the most beautiful grown-up woman I have ever seen. . . . Helen of Troy! Cleopatra! Ninon d’Enclos! I doubt if any of them was more actually beautiful than that morning vision which came in a well-appointed carriage, with sleek, well-groomed horses, from the stone house on the lake shore of Chicago . . . and smiled and thought and talked in my

*sight for the space of an hour or more. It was one of the compensations of a day which was often full of anxious effort and worrying experiences.*²⁸⁵

Wheeler’s job as color director was difficult from the start. Because of ongoing political infighting she never received a contract, participating on the strength of her faith in Mrs. Palmer’s word (she wasn’t paid her \$1,500 salary until May 10, 1893, after the job was finished).²⁸⁶ Wrangling over the contract delayed her arrival in Chicago until November 1892, only six months before the planned May opening of the building. She came with a specific salary commitment from the New York Board of Women Managers to design the Library, and despite not having a contract she had also decided to go ahead as color director. While plans needed to be made quickly if the Woman’s Building was to open on time, there were problems and impediments:

*The solutions and decisions of our body of women commissioners, important and authoritative as they seemed when we sat in council, were merely thistledown to the real governors who held the purse-strings and ran the machine. And political policy came in. All sorts of incompetent women were placed upon my staff as helpers through somebody who had influence, and when it was almost impossible to secure the regular payment of my workers I was weighed down with these incompetents.*²⁸⁷

Still, Wheeler plunged in. The most important space she had to decorate was the central Hall of Honor, a room 67½ feet wide and 200 feet long (fig. 81). The walls rose 70 feet to a roof with an arched skylight. In keeping with the classical design of the entire building, Wheeler specified shades of ivory and gold. Just below the ceiling ran a frieze carrying the names of women who had made significant contributions to human history. Among those named were Mrs. Palmer and Sophia Hayden, the architect of the building.

Wheeler’s expertise was required for more than the Hall of Honor’s color scheme and decorative detailing. Murals were needed to fill the large elliptical tympana at either end of the space and the four wide wall panels between

the pillars on the second level. As was her habit, Mrs. Palmer turned to Sara Hallowell and Wheeler, asking them to suggest woman artists who might be willing to undertake the murals. Hallowell brought Palmer into contact with the painters Mary Cassatt and Mary MacMonnies, who were subsequently commissioned to make tympanum murals representing “Modern Woman” and “Primitive Woman,” respectively. Wheeler proposed the artists for the side murals, which were conceived of as unpaid donations to the project. Her daughter Dora Wheeler Keith and Rosina Emmet Sherwood, both formerly head designers for Associated Artists, were asked to paint two of the murals. Dora eventually declined because she was busy working on the ceiling mural for the Library, a paid commission, and at that point Rosina’s younger sister Lydia Field Emmet was asked to make a companion mural to her sister’s (cat. nos. 90, 91). To hang opposite the Emmet sisters’ murals two additional murals were requested, from Amanda Brewster Sewell, a friend of Dora and Rosina, and from Boston artist Lucia Fairchild.²⁸⁸

Part of Wheeler’s job as interior decorator was to sort through all the unsolicited gifts to the Woman’s Building. These miscellaneous architectural elements, sculptures, and other decorative items, which came flooding in from all over the country, needed to be appropriately placed. Ever practical, Wheeler finally sent out a circular, “Suggestions for Donations for the Woman’s Building.” It listed such items as:

1. *Marble seats for the entrance porches and vestibules. Drawings of appropriate styles can be had by application. Tiles and slabs of marble for water closets.*
2. *Leaded glass windows in simple designs.*
3. *Good shaped wood chairs and well-shaped tables to correspond, for committee rooms; for reception rooms, elaborate chairs and small sofas and tables.*
4. *Flags of all nations, in silk or bunting, in four foot lengths, for Assembly Room. These can be made after color designs in printed sheets at bookstores.*²⁸⁹

The requested items may seem very pedestrian — especially the tiles and slabs of marble for the water closets. But they were important for creating a sense of comfort,

a responsibility traditionally assigned to the female sex and one of the goals of those working on the Woman’s Building. One author suggested, “Our building’s highest mission perhaps will be to soothe, to rest, to refresh the great army of sight-seers who march daily through the Fair.”²⁹⁰ Possibly in an attempt to make palatable the fact that women had accomplished this traditionally unfeminine task of construction, the building was almost always described in feminine terms, including by Wheeler. In an article published at the time of the opening she wrote, “But the most peaceably human of all the buildings is the Woman’s Building. It is like a man’s ideal of woman — delicate, dignified, pure, and fair to look upon. . . . There is a feeling of indescribable rest and satisfaction in coming to it day by day.”²⁹¹

While Wheeler was supervising work on the overall design of the building’s interiors, she was simultaneously proceeding on her projects for the New York Board of Women Managers, which was actually paying her for her services. The applied arts exhibit took up a good part of her time. Wheeler formed committees to judge the entries in all the different media, including decorative painting, stained glass, wood carving, pottery, jewelry, metalwork, and four different categories of textiles. Circulars asking for contributions of works for the exhibit were sent throughout the state. Within a few months Wheeler realized that the submissions solicited solely from amateurs were not going to make a pleasing exhibit. “Naturally the first general appeal brought to the bureau from the country districts, and even from New York, occasional articles which were of no artistic merit and others that were well enough for a local exhibition, but were not of sufficient importance to place in a collection for a great exposition.” She decided that “if the exhibit was to be a credit, the choice specimens of work must be requested, perhaps personally sought after, treated as a loan, and the expenses of insurance and transportation paid by the board.”²⁹² Wheeler probably asked certain of the young woman artists whose works were eventually in the exhibit, such as the Emmet sisters, her daughter Dora, and artists working with the Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company, for the items they contributed.



Fig. 41. Section of the Exhibit of the Associated Artists, 1893. From *Report of the Board of General Managers of the Exhibit of the State of New York at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1894*, facing p. 196. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

To allow the judging committees to examine all the items sent in, a preliminary exhibition was held in early March 1893 at the American Art Association Galleries in New York City. A critic for the *New York Times* singled out as particularly noteworthy cartoons for stained glass by Lydia Field Emmet and Mary A. Tillinghast, embroidery designs by Dora Wheeler Keith, and architectural plans produced by the pupils of the School of Applied Design for Women. The author went on to describe the submissions in general:

Other galleries are gorgeous with the stuffs on which women, with deft fingers, have executed decorative schemes, either geometric or floral or with figures, sometimes with pigments or again with the needle. There are framed landscapes, the colors of which are made of silks of different hues; busts and reliefs in colored plaster, elaborate groups



Fig. 42. Section of the Exhibit of Applied Arts, 1893. From *Report of the Board of General Managers of the Exhibit of the State of New York at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1894*, facing p. 190. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

*modeled by women, a very beautiful series of designs for book-covers, chiefly the work of Miss Morse, and splendid examples of gold and silver embroidery in magnificent vestments only used by the Roman Catholic clergy for the grandest functions.*²⁹³

From all of these objects 458 were chosen, packed up, and sent to Chicago. There Wheeler installed them in glass cases in the northeast section of the ground-floor galleries in the Woman's Building. Because of insufficient space, the wallpapers, book covers, and some additional works on paper were displayed in other areas in the building. Works by Associated Artists had at first been conceived of as a separate exhibit, but in the end they were included within the general showing of applied arts (figs. 41, 42).

The New York State board had received a request from the national Board of Lady Managers for aid in decorating

and furnishing the Woman's Building. In response, "New York at once entered into the scheme with an offer to equip the library."²⁹⁴ A committee was formed under the leadership of Mrs. Dean Sage, and the New York Board of General Managers—the men's supervisory board—granted a five-thousand-dollar appropriation for decoration of the room. When it developed that all the spaces on the building's first floor had already been spoken for, "with the advice and aid of Mrs. Wheeler, who was a member of Mrs. Sage's committee, the large west room on the second floor was secured." Additionally, "Mrs. Wheeler consented to assume the direction of the decoration and furnishing, using her time and brain without stint in her labor of love."²⁹⁵ The work Wheeler did on the Library (cat. no. 92) seems to have been a pleasurable experience for her compared with the ongoing struggle of decorating the building at large.

*In spite of all difficulties, my work of preparation of the Woman's Building went steadily on, constantly restrained in its scope by the knowledge that our safety lay in not doing anything unworthy. There was, however, one opportunity for artistic effect in the great room which had been assigned to New York State, and which was to be furnished and used as a library. I felt that both its purpose and place demanded the use of every appropriate means of beauty. This was easy because the New York State Commissioners were responsible for its success or failure, and I was given absolute freedom in its treatment.*²⁹⁶

As might have been expected, the five-thousand-dollar appropriation did not cover the entire cost of furnishing the Library, and many loans were solicited. Duveen Brothers was said to have supplied the elaborately carved chimneypiece, supposedly "a genuine old piece of Renaissance carving in oak" (fig. 79).²⁹⁷ Wheeler provided a boldly patterned woven silk by Associated Artists, which hung in the opening of the chimneypiece where the firebox was meant to be. Some of the pieces of furniture, most likely loans as well, were also in the Renaissance style, and one source reported that the wood paneling above the bookcases was "several centuries old and was found in an ancient monastery in France."²⁹⁸

Wheeler designed a suite of seating furniture for the room; although it was made in a rather stiff rectilinear Arts and Crafts style (with possible references to early Spanish or Portuguese furniture), it complemented the other furnishings. The most dominant feature of the space was the ceiling mural painted by Dora Wheeler Keith (fig. 82), which "recalled that of some old Venetian palace in richness of color and style of composition."²⁹⁹ Despite the presence of all of these potentially disparate elements, at least one author praised the room for its restfulness: "It has the quiet of a well-ordered library, the distinction of simplicity and refinement."³⁰⁰ Wheeler won an award for the design of the Library, which was cited as one of the best interiors of the entire exposition in many of the articles written about the Fair.

Another project that must have taken up some of Wheeler's time during the months before the Woman's

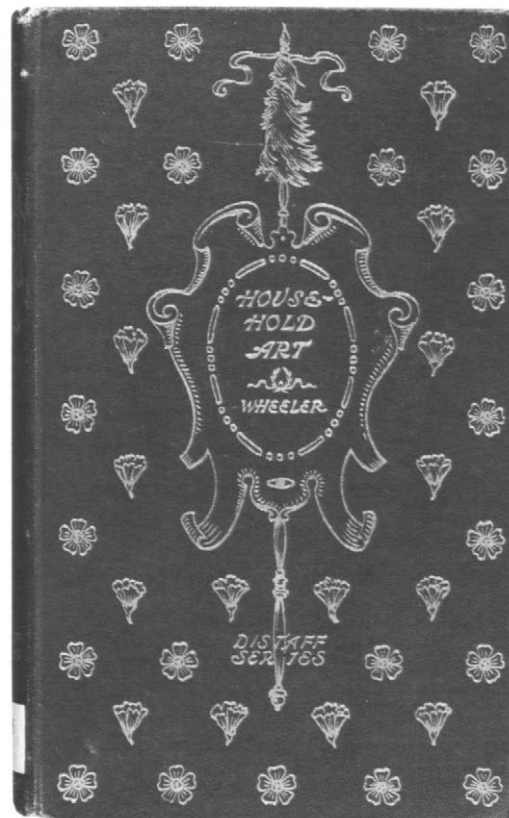


Fig. 43. *Household Art*, edited by Candace Wheeler, 1893. Brown publishers' cloth binding stamped in gold. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Jane E. Andrews Fund, in memory of her husband, William Loring Andrews

Building opened was the preparation of the manuscript for *Household Art* (fig. 43). This small book, for the most part a compilation of earlier articles by various authors on the subject of interior decorating, came into being as part of the literary initiative undertaken by the Committee on Literature, Literary Clubs and the Press of the New York Board of Women Managers. The committee decided that in order to represent the full scope of the achievements of woman writers, articles by female journalists should be included in the Library. After thirty-nine binders of typewritten copies of articles had been gathered, the idea of publishing some of the articles in book form was explored. “Mr. J. Henry Harper at once manifested an interest in the undertaking, and the result was that six little volumes were selected from the folios and published by Harper Brothers, under the title of the Distaff Series.”³⁰¹ The series, aimed at female readers, included *Woman and the Higher Education* edited by Anna C. Brackett, *The Literature of Philanthropy* edited by Frances A. Goodale, *Early Prose and Verse* edited by Alice Morse Earle and Emily Ellsworth Ford, *The Kindergarten* edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Short Stories* edited by Constance Cary Harrison, and *Household Art* edited by Candace Wheeler. Wheeler contributed two essays to the anthology, “The Philosophy of Beauty Applied to House Interiors,” which had in part appeared in the *Christian Union*, and “Decorative and Applied Art,” a previously unpublished paper that had been prepared for delivery at the Columbian Exposition Art Congress.³⁰² The books were typeset and printed by woman workers, and their covers were designed by women. They cost only one dollar each and were available for sale at the Library of the Woman’s Building.³⁰³

When the time came for official judging of entries to the Exposition, Wheeler and her associates made an excellent showing. Associated Artists won awards for a woven color study of two fighting dragons (fig. 63), a gold-embroidered “Japanese” wall hanging, a needlewoven tapestry depicting an Algerian boy, and shadow silks and printed cotton velvets. Dora Wheeler Keith and Anna Lyman, both designers for Associated Artists, received awards as individuals, Keith for her mural on the ceiling of the Library and her needlewoven tapestries

The Birth of Psyche and *Twilight*, and Lyman for a picture panel in needlework and a “tapestry azalia curtain” (figs. 41, 84). Wheeler won an award for her brocades and another for the overall decoration of the Library.³⁰⁴

In spite of the trials that she had undergone as color director of the Woman’s Building, Wheeler later looked back with satisfaction on the triumph of all those involved: “As I go back to the days of the Columbian Exhibition and remember the Woman’s Building as finished and standing in its own beauty beside the great lake, I can see how small were the obstacles compared to the result.”³⁰⁵ Another source of justifiable pride was the display of embroidery at the fair. If not for her idea to found the Society of Decorative Art seventeen years earlier, many of the textile arts that so enriched the Woman’s Building might never have been created. Of the embroidery on view there she wrote,

*At the Columbian Exposition, to which all prominent societies contributed, the perfection of design, color and method, the general level of excellence, was on the highest possible plane. In its line nothing could be better, and it was encouraging to see that it was not amateur work, not a thing to be taken up and laid down according to moods and circumstances, but an educated profession or occupation for women, the acquirement of a knowledge which might develop indefinitely.*³⁰⁶

In a time period that spanned less than two decades, Wheeler had realized her goal. Needlework had become an acknowledged art form, and women were able to support themselves by creating a thing of beauty.

LATER LIFE AND WRITINGS, 1894–1923

*When one is eternally busy and eternally interested, the years just slip along—you don’t notice them.*³⁰⁷

Candace Wheeler, age 93, 1919

When the Woman’s Building opened at the Chicago Exposition, Wheeler was sixty-six years old. The project

that made her famous across the nation would be, ironically, both a triumphant culmination and the end of her important work as a designer. After the fair closed, her life continued much as before. At Associated Artists, still an active business, she was listed in 1894 as president of the firm, Dora as vice-president, and Dunham as treasurer. Tom, who had been the vice-president since 1890, retired in 1893 and was replaced by Dora.

Wheeler continued to design new textiles for the firm, but her style seems to have changed somewhat. She had chosen a silk with a conventionalized pattern of pomegranates to hang in the opening of the chimney-piece at the Library of the Woman's Building, a fabric that was probably intended to evoke textiles from Renaissance Italy or Spain (cat. nos. 74, 75). The description of another new fabric from 1893 reveals that Wheeler was looking at French precedents:

*The true direction for American design at present, Mrs. T. M. Wheeler remarked the other day, lies in using familiar native flower forms upon the lines of classic ornament. In one of the brocades woven, under her supervision, for her firm, The Associated Artists, this idea is carried out very beautifully. In what is called a Louis XV. design, which has the graceful lines and dainty character of the ornament of that period, its detail consists of chrysanthemum leaves and flowers treated simply and naturally. The particular flower to be used should always, as in this instance, be selected for its harmony with the spirit of the ornament chosen.*³⁰⁸

Like many other American designers of the 1890s, a period sometimes called the American Renaissance, Wheeler had fallen under the spell of historicism. The idea of fitting American flowers into a framework of historical ornament is paralleled by similar thoughts expressed in her late writings on interior design. In *Principles of Home Decoration* (1903) she explains that a building's interior decoration must be in keeping with its architectural style, and "we must base our work upon what has already been done, [and] select our decorative forms from appropriate periods."³⁰⁹

Tom Wheeler died in the fall of 1895 at the age of seventy-seven. Candace missed his love and companionship

for the rest of her life. In her autobiography she poignantly summed up their last years together:

So we journeyed on happily together, my mate and I. . . . We were such good friends, such old friends, that our companionship was company. There were summers and summers that we spent at Onteora, breakfasting together in our high, east, off-looking loggia, looking away at the misty distances we were no longer able to travel, and talking over the days when we could and did climb mountains and tread the valleys.

*And then came a time when I could no longer say "We," and I found myself in a lonesome land where no one remembered that I had ever been young, or called me by my given name.*³¹⁰

After Tom's death Wheeler continued to be listed as the president of Associated Artists until 1900; thereafter she appears in directories only at her home address. Thus she probably retired from the business in 1900, and Dora seems to have left the business the same year to pursue her career in painting and illustrating, leaving Dunham to run Associated Artists alone until the business closed in 1907. Although it is not completely clear why the firm discontinued its operations, the most likely explanation is that when Candace Wheeler retired, the vitality of the business went with her. Dunham was more interested in being an architect than in being a textile designer. After 1907 he used the Associated Artists building for his architectural office, then moved out completely in 1911. Dora sold the building in 1926.

Even before she fully retired from Associated Artists, Wheeler found that she had time on her hands. Never one to feel comfortable in such circumstances, she pursued her writing career with even greater enthusiasm. She wrote books and articles of all types, including fiction for both children and adults, and published articles in leading magazines. Some of the pieces were light reading, and the fiction was often melodramatic and filled with "folksy" characters. But many of Wheeler's articles, such as "Decorative Art" in the *Architectural Record* (1895), "Art Education for Women" in the *Outlook* (1897), "The Art of Stitchery" in *House Beautiful* (1899), and

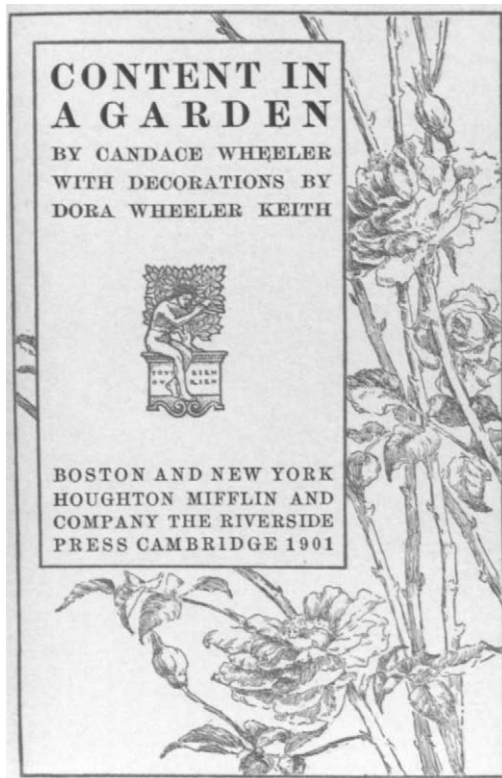


Fig. 44. Dora Wheeler Keith, title page of *Content in a Garden*, by Candace Wheeler, 1901. Letterpress printed. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

“Home Industries and Domestic Manufactures” in the *Outlook* (1899), were pieces of serious writing intended to make her thoughts and opinions known. Some, including several articles about plants and gardening, became starting points for books. A few of Wheeler’s writings went further afield from her expertise; in 1899, for instance, she wrote a profile of her Onteora friend Ruth McEnery Stuart for a series entitled “American Authoresses of the Hour” published in *Harper’s Bazar*. Another article on a seemingly far removed subject that appeared in the 1906 *Outlook* was entitled “The Trained Nurse in Turkey.” A close reading of it reveals, however, that Wheeler was as usual publicizing the efforts of her family; the school in Turkey where these nurses trained had been founded by Thomas Spees Carrington, a great-nephew of Tom Wheeler’s, and Dunham Wheeler was a member of the board.

The first book Wheeler published after *Household Art* (1893) was *Content in a Garden* (1901; fig. 44), which was based on a series of three articles she had published in

the *Atlantic*.³¹¹ This small volume focused on lessons Wheeler had learned from her garden at Onteora, a subject of consuming importance to her, and was illustrated with delicate line drawings by Dora. The book was well received by the critics, who admired Wheeler’s highly personal voice as well as her practical yet artistic gardening advice. Wrote one reviewer, “Those who admire the crisp style and graceful fancies of Candace Wheeler at her best will not be disappointed in this volume,” and the *New York Times* was pleased to find that among the “uncountable” gardening books of the season, “Mrs. Wheeler’s is in some respects altogether the most delightful. The author talks about her flowers in an unpretending way, claiming neither superior knowledge nor superior grace in the management of her garden, but throwing out, nevertheless, suggestions of exquisite arrangements by which the amateur may easily and safely abide.”³¹²

Wheeler’s basic idea was to cultivate a continuously blooming garden that would provide a lively show from June to October. She brought her acute awareness of color to bear on the subject of flowers:

*One can produce the effect of gradation and intensification of color by number of tints instead of breadth of space, just as a painter, within the small circle of his palette, can arrange the infinite gradation which leads from the upper blue through all the clear light green spaces which lie between it and the orange and crimson parallels of a sunset sky; and certainly if he can do this, we can produce within the bounds of a garden wall, in tints of nature’s own manufacture, something akin to the sweep of color made by the painter-hand of nature.*³¹³

Wheeler claimed to have gotten the inspiration for gradations of color in a garden from the floral arrangements displayed in the poet Celia Thaxter’s home in the Isles of Shoals off the coast of New England. The poet’s famous gardens, “where the flowers grew luxuriantly at their own sweet wills, or at the will of the planter, never troubling their heads about agreeing with their neighbors,” did not, however, gain approval from Wheeler, who was dismayed that Thaxter had “so little thought of color effect in her garden.”³¹⁴

Still in some ways the imaginative girl of many decades past, Wheeler enjoyed personifying her flowers and ascribed human traits to each species as if they were characters in a drama. Depending on its particular floricultural tendencies a flower was assigned the attributes of a young girl, a robust woman, or a fragile matron. Wheeler's urge to control her surroundings was discernible behind her flower characters when she made the garden into a parable for the troubles she had experienced within the Onteora community.

In truth, most flowers are sociably inclined, yet if we plant them with something which they detest, one of the two dainty creatures will quietly disappear. Some fine morning its place is empty and we have learned a lesson.

If we of the human race could as quietly divorce ourselves from obnoxious people, — those toward whom instinctive dislike springs in our hearts, — withdrawing ourselves by night, as it were, and taking our seed with us flee unto those whom we could love, what a blessed quietness would fall upon human life! The very peace of heaven would compass us. But, alas, there are houses and lands, and they are immovable.

Perhaps the very peace of heaven will consist in a possibility of finding exactly where we belong, of ranging ourselves with those of like aspirations and enjoyments, choosing our neighborhood with souls which have like interpretations of life's meanings. "Live near what you admire," preaches one of the old English poets, and flowers in the garden seem to repeat the lesson, for both themselves and us.³¹⁵

At about the same time Wheeler retired from Associated Artists, she turned her attention to advancing yet another moneymaking plan for women. Asking "why, in all the length and breadth of America, are there no well-established and prosperous domestic manufactures?" she suggested in an 1899 article published in the *Outlook* that many women, especially those living outside urban areas, could benefit from a national program of in-home industries. The products Wheeler thought had the best possibility for success were handmade rugs, since "of all hand processes weaving is the most generally or widely applicable, and the range of beautiful production possible to the simplest weaving is almost beyond

calculation."³¹⁶ She cited as a model a New Hampshire home industry run by a woman trained at the New York Institute of Artist Artisans, where Wheeler had once taught. In this enterprise local women made "pulled rugs" (a type of hooked rug) in their homes from leftover fabric remnants or rags. The rugs were designed to look like tasteful Oriental carpets and thus represented a meshing of art and utility, one of Wheeler's favorite notions. When completed they were sold as products of a single company. Wheeler had ideas about how to put into action this kind of home industry initiative, suggesting that "every woman's club in the country" form a practical-minded committee on home industries. She predicted that "the productions made under the protection, so to speak, of the club would have an advantage that any commercial business would consider invaluable."³¹⁷

While Wheeler's ideas had a sound basis, and there were probably many women in rural areas interested in finding ways to make extra money, this article caused offense to some. Wheeler gave free expression to her middle-class urban preconceptions, asserting that the wives of poor farmers had no access to money because their singularly tight-fisted husbands spent only on farm emergencies and allowed them no say in decisions on household expenditures. Therefore the farm wife was deprived of "the mental stimulus incident to the management of resources." Additionally, Wheeler warned, "there is often — at least through the winter — partial or complete isolation from neighborly or public interests. . . . That the farmer's wife suffers from this we know, not only from observation, but from the statistics of insane asylums."³¹⁸

In a later issue of the *Outlook*, a farmers' wife from Coats, Kansas, named Eleanor K. Howell replied to Wheeler with an indignant letter to the editor. Wheeler's perception of the lives of farmers' wives was ill-informed, wrote Howell, and Wheeler's idea that home industries were the answer to the hardships farm women faced was backward-looking. Rather than spending time spinning and weaving as their grandmothers had, "What we need is not more work to do, but more time in which to do the work we have to do; we look forward to the time when, by the aid of labor-saving machinery in the house as well as on

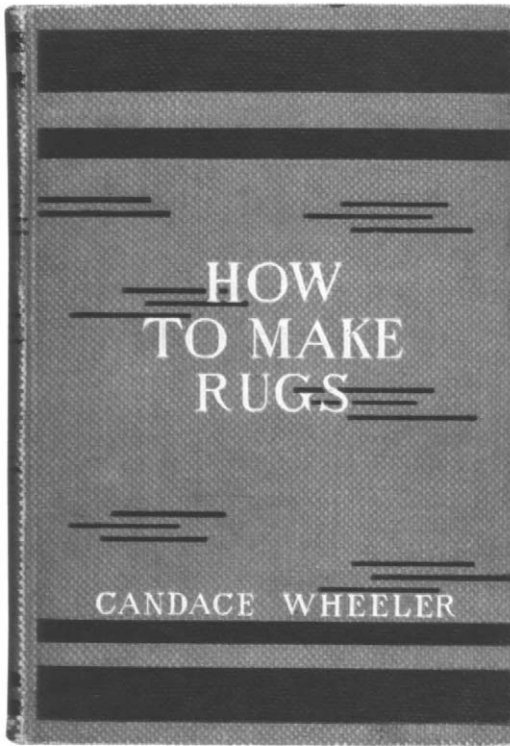


Fig. 45. *How to Make Rugs*, by Candace Wheeler, 1902. Blue-gray publishers' cloth binding stamped in black and white. Collection of Amelia Peck

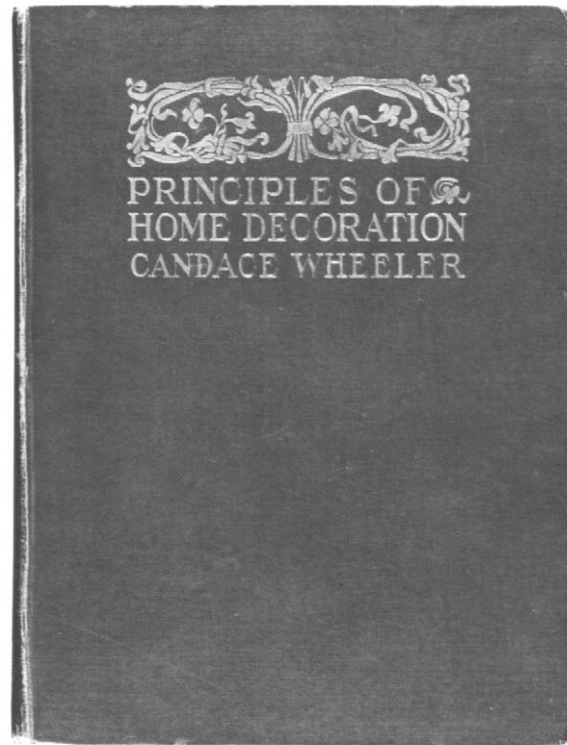


Fig. 46. *Principles of Home Decoration, with Practical Examples*, by Candace Wheeler, 1903. Blue publishers' cloth binding stamped in gold. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Library Fund

the farm, we will be able so to systematize our work that we may have time to keep step intellectually in the world's grand march of improvement with others of our sex."³¹⁹ Wheeler, at age seventy-two, may have been losing touch with contemporary developments; by the turn of the twentieth century, as other career paths opened for women, art manufactures became a less important way for women to enter the nation's economy. Nevertheless, from her initial idea of promoting home industries Wheeler went on to write a book, *How to Make Rugs* (1902; fig. 45), using the *Outlook* article as her preface. The book was, as it proclaimed itself, essentially a "how-to," with chapters on weaving, dying, patterns, and the different types of simple handmade rugs its author recommended for home manufacture. Published in New York by Doubleday, Page & Company, it was popular enough for a second edition to be printed in 1909.

After this success, the same publisher brought out Wheeler's *Principles of Home Decoration* in 1903 (fig. 46),

with a second edition issued in 1908.³²⁰ To the modern reader this book seems disjointed and its plates uninspiring. Most of the photographs show interiors in Wheeler family homes (cat. nos. 95–97) or houses decorated by Wheeler family members. The chapters jump from subject to subject in no apparent order, as in this sequence: "The Law of Appropriateness," "Kitchens," "Colour with Reference to Light," "Walls, Ceilings, and Floors," "Location of the House." The book deals with the entire province of the home, from exterior architecture down to furniture, according to "principles of art" (color theory and the basic rules of architectural design) and the "law of appropriateness," with the goal of best expressing the occupants' individuality. Although it contains very little new material, the book differs somewhat from other home decorating books of the period in being clearly addressed to Wheeler's chosen audience, the solidly middle-class woman. It offers advice on subjects ranging from how to create the illusion of space in a small room to the

best options for saving money when selecting home decorating materials. Wheeler also makes the argument that women should receive training in interior decoration:

A woman feels that the test of her capacity is that her house shall not only be comfortable and attractive, but that it shall be arranged according to the laws of harmony and beauty. It is as much the demand of the hour as that she shall be able to train her children according to the latest and most enlightened theories, or that she shall take part in public and philanthropic movements, or understand and have an opinion on political methods. These are things which are expected of every woman who makes a part of society; and no less is it expected that her house shall be an appropriate and beautiful setting for her personality, a credit to her husband, and an unconscious education for her children.

But it happens that means of education in all of these directions, except that of decoration, are easily available.³²¹

In lieu of this training, she offers her book.

Some of Wheeler's writing is only superficially about interior design; in a chapter that verges on the mystical she describes the properties of color, comparing color harmonies with the melodies of Mozart and Beethoven and emphasizing the impact of color on the emotions of the home-dweller. Even though much of the book reads like personal musings rather than clearly stated advice, the work was well received and even praised for its "suggestive rather than positive" tone.³²² The *New York Times* reviewer appreciated the interiors that could be attained by the average homeowner and pointed out that in many books on "the subject of beautifying dwelling places,"

their paradigms in illustrations and text are drawn from history when genuine decorative art was a monopoly of the wealthy. . . . The volume before us . . . has certain characteristics independent of the general run of these books which are worth noting. To be sure, the author aims high. . . .

But all this does not prevent her from placing herself in the home of the everyday man or woman and telling him or her how, with small means and an appreciation of the beautiful, a humble dwelling place may be turned into an artistically attractive abode. This is the chief value of the book.³²³

The reviewer probably had in mind Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman Jr.'s *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), a book that was extremely popular (and beautifully written) but that offered rooms from grand English country houses and palaces in France as decorating examples to be emulated.

In 1905 Wheeler published a book of children's stories entitled *Doubledarling and the Dream Spinner*.³²⁴ Inspired by Wheeler's relationship with her beloved granddaughter Lois, Dora's child, it contains a series of stories made up by a grandmother (the dream spinner) for her granddaughter Doubledarling. Attractive illustrations by Dora Wheeler Keith accompany the stories; the images of the grandmother are portraits of Wheeler (fig. 47).

According to Wheeler's niece Candace Thurber Stevenson, in 1907, at age eighty, Wheeler developed breast cancer. The disease had killed her younger sister Lucy Harris in 1893; Wheeler's son-in-law Lewis Stimson had been Lucy's surgeon, but the operation came too late, and he could not save her life. Stimson was also



Fig. 47. Dora Wheeler Keith, *Doubledarling and Her Grandmother*, 1905. Chromolithograph frontispiece from *Doubledarling and the Dream Spinner*, by Candace Wheeler, 1905. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

Wheeler's surgeon, this time with more luck, and she made a full recovery. Stevenson described Wheeler's post-operative recovery routine: "Her nurses told me that, in all her waking moments, for two days, she recited poetry without once repeating the same poem."³²⁵

Probably feeling the effects of cold, damp New York winters, Wheeler built Wintergreen, a house in Thomasville, Georgia, in 1909. She found the location through her old friend Janet Chase Hoyt. Hoyt purchased a wooded tract, which she divided with Wheeler, and both women built simple, rustic homes.³²⁶ Hoyt had lived a difficult life since the 1860s, when she and Wheeler first met in Dresden. The man she married, an alcoholic, was unable to hold a job and eventually drank up most of the family fortunes. Hoyt's children were successful, however, and helped her in her later years. She remained artistic, and according to family history she designed her own house in Thomasville. Her granddaughter later described the modest dwelling "on the edge of lovely tall pine woods laced with dogwood blossoms in spring. The main house was tiny with four small bedrooms. . . . The informal garden planted with camellia bushes, Kumquat trees, jasmine and wisteria, ran down to the woods where a path crossed a brook and climbed through tall pines to an open field."³²⁷

As Wheeler described it, Hoyt "had found this enticing patch of woods. Thereupon she invited me to join her in building each of us a winter home and living in it, instead of drifting from one Southern city to another and consorting with other ideals than our own."³²⁸ Like Hoyt, Wheeler decided to design her own house. "To each of us, . . . the designing and building of a house of our own, suitable to the pine woods and the climate, and fitting our very own selves in every wrinkle of our individual natures, was mere play."³²⁹ Wheeler thoroughly enjoyed the project, and after the house was done this woman in her eighties continued to garden vigorously. She tried growing orange and persimmon trees; she found to her delight that the lemon lilies she had transplanted from Nestledown bloomed twice a year in the Georgia climate. From 1909 to 1922 Wheeler spent winters in Georgia, quiet times when she received visits from family

and saw Hoyt and her children but for the most part was occupied with gardening and writing. She still spent springs and falls at Nestledown and summered at Oteora. In her final years she lived with Dora in New York City.

Probably because of growing support for the women's suffrage movement, books and articles about outstanding American women had begun to be published in large numbers in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1893 Wheeler's work on the Woman's Building brought her national recognition. Her role as a contributor to the rise of American textile manufacturing was well known, and her writings kept her ideas in the public arena. For all these reasons, in her later years she was the subject of several articles examining that new phenomenon the "career woman," and her biography was included in a number of volumes.³³⁰

The earliest known biography of Wheeler was published in 1888 in a book by Sarah K. Bolton called *Successful Women*. It is for the most part factually correct, although Wheeler was already in the process of revising the history of Associated Artists, with Tiffany and the other men who were her first associates expunged from the written record. In this early treatment of the theme of the career woman, Bolton stressed the traditionally feminine roles that Wheeler played, highlighting her works of benevolence, and added a final paragraph undoubtedly meant to render the hard-driving business-woman palatable to her readers:

Thus in the prime of her womanhood, Mrs. Wheeler has come to success along the way of noble thought for others, by wise use of her time, by careful development of her own natural tastes and gifts, and by a cheerful courage that of itself presages success. And though it be her daily work to plan, to direct, to govern, to buy and to sell and to estimate carefully and safely, to be a good business woman as well as an artist and a dreamer of dreams of beauty, she has kept her womanly individuality and the greatest charm of woman, loveliness.³³¹

When approached for interviews, Wheeler was for the most part modest about claiming a role in history. In 1895 she answered one such inquiry as follows:

You add to previous goodnesses, to wish to write about me in Munseys Magazine & I would willingly give you any information, but you see I have only done two or three things which are worthwhile—such as for instance applying our best instead of our poorest talents to manufactures—widening the field in every possible way for womens art labors and persuading them to thoroughly prepare themselves for this work. Of course these things, even partially accomplished have had wide & valuable consequences—but that was due to the value in them & not to me.

*If anything I have done would be of use to you, or of interest to the public I shall be glad to answer any questions—but do pray be sure of it before you come to me.*³³²

Despite this self-effacing reply, Wheeler was of course flattered by the attention she continued to receive. She probably enjoyed this flowery tribute, published in 1906 in *Good Housekeeping*, which credited her with opening the field of home decoration to women: “It was a needle threaded with the daring scrap of a dream, flying after a woman’s wit up the chimney and afar over man’s field of decoration to note chiefly what he was *not* doing, that started the school of women decorators in this country, the designing of fabrics, and gave wings to that remarkable beauty movement which is now fluttering on the threshold of the humblest American home.”³³³ In 1919 Wheeler wrote to one of her nieces, “I had to answer some questions to the publisher of an ‘Encyclopedia of Celebrated Women.’ Think of it! It seems I am one—or enough so to go into the Encyclopedia—I am so puffed up by it that I have to pray earnestly to be kept humble!!!!!!”³³⁴ In actuality this request probably concerned an entry on Wheeler for *The Biographical Cyclopaedia of American Women* (1925).³³⁵ Interestingly, as the decades passed her reputation as a designer was superseded by her fame as a writer. In the 1920–21 edition of *Who’s Who in America*, Wheeler is designated solely as an author, although her role as founder of the Society of Decorative Art and of Associated Artists is mentioned.³³⁶

The continued questioning about her life and how she had constructed a career for herself must have made Wheeler think more about her past. The result was two

biographical works, *The Annals of Onteora, 1887–1914* (1914) and *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (1918). The privately printed *Annals of Onteora*, in which Wheeler tried to explain her vision of Onteora and understand why it had, in her eyes, failed, was meant only for family and friends. *Yesterdays in a Busy Life*, however, was intended for a general audience. Apparently Wheeler had been thinking about writing her autobiography for many years. In a revealing letter written to her brother Abner in 1898, when her career was nearing an end, she mused on various subjects, beginning with Abner’s feelings about his own retirement:

I have thought so much of you for the reason that I know just where you stand. The push behind you has ceased—The necessity & the incitement. That is the difference between a man and woman. There is always the woman’s house-work and interests, and the man’s business comes to an end long before he does.

*I have always had a sort of thought in my mind, that when I no longer had any thing to do, I would do something that no one else has done; and that is to write the story of my life. Not the outward life, but the inner life, just what I thought & felt about everything that had ever happened to me. A record of feelings & moods.—I suppose it might sometimes rasp a little on the feelings of those nearest one, but all the same, it would be a curious and interesting thing to do.*³³⁷

While *Yesterdays* is not quite a stream-of-consciousness record of Wheeler’s innermost thoughts and feelings, it is a rather free-flowing autobiography that jumps around chronologically and to some extent from subject to subject. It is interspersed with personal meditations on the ways of the world, some of which are amusing, some simply uninteresting, and some moderately offensive, although clearly consonant with the era in which Wheeler lived. Much of the book has to do with the famous artists and writers she met along her way, and she devoted a full chapter each to Mark Twain and Anders Zorn. By the time Wheeler wrote this book, however, many of the people who lived so vividly in her memories had been largely forgotten by the general public, and *Yesterdays* was not particularly well received by

the critics. Its author's faulty memory was cause for complaint in the *Boston Transcript*: "Many graphic sketches fill the pages of Mrs. Wheeler's book. It is, however, carelessly written and with many inaccuracies of statement that careful re-reading and revision could easily have made right."³³⁸ The critic for the *Dial* was considerably harsher, suggesting that Wheeler had become a "relic" and that the book's "principal fault is that very few of its readers will have the good fortune to be relatives, friends, or contemporaries of the author."

For these reminiscences are of the type whose appeal is restricted: both the general reader and the seeker for daring and highly individualized literature will experience a certain impolite dissatisfaction with the various and exceedingly innocent relics presented to his gaze by this woman whose family, as she herself confesses, was a hundred years behind the times. . . .

Yesterdays is not a human document but a family document: the people we meet in its pages are not human beings but "beautiful souls" (the author's own phrase); altogether, the kind of life to which it introduces us suggests the expression the author uses in speaking of her visits to "the great painters" — "We put on our best clothes and indulged in our best manners, as children do on great occasions."³³⁹

The review seems an accurate summing up of what makes *Yesterdays* a not completely trustworthy document, even though it remains an appealing (if perhaps blurry) window into Wheeler's world and personality. In fact, Wheeler wrote in her first chapter that she was reluctant to be bluntly honest about her life and the people she had known. While a friend had advised her that the book would be a success only if she told "the naked truth," Wheeler objected that "the truth is sometimes disagreeable." She would, she concluded, "certainly try to be truthful, but I confess to a sort of passion for picturesque language and a somewhat eager desire to impress people."³⁴⁰

The Development of Embroidery in America, which appeared in 1921 when Wheeler was ninety-four, was the first book to be published on the history of American embroidery of all types. During the 1920s the Colonial Revival in America was at its height (the Metropolitan

Museum's seminal American Wing opened in 1924). In this period of enormous interest in the history of early American artifacts, Wheeler's book could not have been more timely. No contemporary reviews of it have been found, but it was considered important enough to enter the library of the Metropolitan Museum in 1922.

Although the work is highly personal in nature, its historical sections are largely accurate. Wheeler clearly researched some of her subjects, but certain sections, such as the chapters entitled "Revival of Embroidery, and the Founding of the Society of Decorative Art" and "American Tapestry," were based on her less-than-dependable memories. In the rather fanciful introduction, "The Story of the Needle," Wheeler imagines a time when needles have disappeared from everyday use and can only be found in museums. The surprisingly enlightened first chapter begins the history of American needlework with the embroidery of Native Americans. Wheeler researched this section by visiting the collections at the Smithsonian Institution; her niece Candace Thurber Stevenson recalled accompanying her aging aunt on the trip.³⁴¹ Succeeding chapters proceed chronologically, from "The Crewelwork of Our Puritan Mothers" through the demise of fine handicraft when Berlin woolwork became dominant in the mid-nineteenth century. Thereafter Wheeler picks up the story at the time when her role in the history of American needlework became important, with a chapter on the revival of embroidery that discusses the work of the Royal School of Art Needlework and the founding of the Society of Decorative Art. Much of this and the following chapter on American tapestries go over the same ground that Wheeler covered in *Yesterdays in a Busy Life*, but the illustrations in the American tapestry chapter were new and are now invaluable documents. They include photographs of three of Dora's most famous needlework tapestries, *The Winged Moon* (1883), *Minnehaha Listening to the Waterfall* (1884), and *Aphrodite* (1883), and of a Chinese-style embroidery, *Fighting Dragons* (1885), and an embroidered rendering of Raphael's *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (cat. no. 22; figs. 63, 64, 85). All of these works have since been lost.

As her writings demonstrate, even in her nineties Wheeler remained active and engaged with the issues of her time. In her last known interview, published in *Good Housekeeping* in 1919 when she was ninety-three, she is described as “a handsome, erect-figured woman of gracious manner and striking personality, whose whole bearing suggests the true American ideal of aristocracy, that of heart and mind.”³⁴² A year after the end of the First World War, in which she lost three grandchildren, Wheeler envisioned a new world order in which women would come to the forefront of society as political, economic, and spiritual leaders.

*I see ahead of us an era of righteousness and prosperity such as has never existed before, because for the first time in the world's history women will be working side by side with men, the mature home women bringing the schooling they have had as executives and economists to bear on the advance of real civilization. They will head all charitable societies and all work dealing with the fortunes of women and children. Always the producers of the race, they will now become its conservers, bringing the woman's point of view to bear on every situation. Right now, as the next definite national movement, I want to see women combine on the establishment of a great political university for the study of government, a university where the experiments and mistakes of the nations of all time can be thoroughly analyzed, and thus obviate the possibility of some shallow thinker thrusting a worn-out panacea on the people, taking up time and wasting energy. Integrity and knowledge must form its key-note, and its trained graduates must supplant experimenting politicians all over the nation, in state, county, and town, as well as Federal administration.*³⁴³

At the end of her life (fig. 48), Wheeler was rightly satisfied with what she had achieved: “But why not like my own work, I wonder, if it is the best that is in me and I have not outgrown it? Perhaps that is the most that can be said of what we have done in our past — that we are *satisfied* with it.”³⁴⁴ She had been more productive over a longer period of time than most people are; she had been lucky enough to realize many of her ambitions and to

receive accolades for her achievements in her lifetime. An assessment of her life and career would find little lacking. On a personal level, she maintained a happy marriage and good relationships with family and friends. On a professional level, her career reads like a smooth path from triumph to triumph. This cannot be completely accurate, of course; Wheeler did have setbacks, both financially and personally. But she seems to have embarked upon only one publicized project that failed (a residence hotel exclusively for working women that she proposed creating in 1888 and that for unknown reasons was never realized).³⁴⁵

In old age Wheeler perceptively assessed her strengths and weaknesses. She told her niece, “Our family has one gift, that of bringing together people who can be of use and pleasure to each other.” But asked whether she would do anything differently if she had her life to live over, she replied, “My dear, I wouldn't hate so much.”³⁴⁶ Wheeler



Fig. 48. *Candace Wheeler on the porch at Wintergreen*, ca. 1915. Gelatin silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

was both helped and hindered by her strong sense of herself and of her goals, which was accompanied by a judgmental streak. Initially she charmed people and was enormously effective at bringing them together to create cooperative enterprises, such as the Society of Decorative Art, the Woman's Exchange, and Onteora. However, things always had to be on her terms. When the others involved began to express views that differed from her own she quickly grew impatient, as with the SDA, or angry, as at Onteora. Wheeler recognized this trait in herself; when she left Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, to found her own Associated Artists, she recalled telling a friend, "He [Tom] has given me a house in Twenty-third Street, because I couldn't get on with three partners any better than I did with twenty [the managers of the SDA]. So now I am playing it alone."³⁴⁷ When she became disillusioned with the changes at Onteora, she wrote: "In fact, at the time I had begun to drink of the cup of bitterness which comes to everybody in associated work, in finding that one can no longer hold to one's share of it because individual interest will always run counter to associated wants."³⁴⁸ Atypical in her behavior for a nineteenth-century woman, she always wanted to be in charge and was not willing to act otherwise. Indeed, that strong belief in her own capacity is exactly what brought Wheeler to the position she enjoyed.

How should Wheeler's art be assessed? Were her designs brilliant? Did she contribute to the advancement of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century design? It can be said that textiles by Associated Artists remain unique to this day; readily identifiable in pattern and palette, they are unlike the work of any other designer of the period. The best works — embroideries such as the tulip panel and manufactured textiles such as the waterlily shadow silk and the daffodil-printed velvet — are as good as if not better than most of the designs then coming out of the major studios of England and France. Wheeler's contributions to the progress of nineteenth-century design were many. Firstly, she encouraged a new style of American design, one that was intentionally informal

and that employed a color palette meant to be harmonious with American light and motifs based on American plants. Secondly, she opened the field of American design to women, who brought new aesthetics and feminine ideals to the design of both textiles and interiors. Finally, Wheeler's determination to keep her prices low meant that Associated Artists textiles were widely distributed, bringing well-designed products to her targeted market of middle-class women and altogether to a larger group within the population than was customarily reached by individual designers before the twentieth century.

Wheeler has at various times been claimed as a designer of the Aesthetic movement, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the Colonial Revival. Inasmuch as she was creating textiles and interiors over a period of some twenty-five years, she can be described as all of these. But it seems that she was never a strong proponent of one particular style over another; ever practical, she found elements in each that were useful to her art or her philanthropic goals. It is not too dramatic to assert that Wheeler transcended specific style in her goal to create a peculiarly American design aesthetic.

In the 1920s, as her health began to fail, Wheeler became more dependent upon Dora, living with her in the last years of her life. Another person in the household was a young woman named Hazel (later Mrs. Henry Miles Cutler); she had been engaged to Dora's son Elisha Keith, who was killed in the First World War, and subsequently lived with Dora between 1920 and 1931. Hazel recalled that Wheeler was the center of her daughter's life up until the end: "The world revolved around 'Gran' in Wintergreen New York and Onteora — I can see her now in her lovely clothes and lace cap sitting in her rocker before the fire." Wheeler never lost her drive: "Having been so busy and important I remember how she hated having to lie in bed — you could hear her quietly swearing 'Devil — Devil — Devil!'"³⁴⁹ After what was truly a busy and productive life, Wheeler, aged ninety-six, died on August 5, 1923.

NOTES

1. Wheeler 1918, p. 33.
2. Wheeler emphasized her disapproval of idle “ladies” by quoting the remark of a guest at a luncheon she gave for her friends, “a company of perhaps a dozen authors, editors, writers, artists, and the like. . . ‘Why,’ said she, ‘we are all working-women; *not a lady among us!*’” *Ibid.*, p. 422.
3. Forsslund 1906, pp. 495–96.
4. Much of what has been previously written about Candace Wheeler’s life depends heavily on the autobiography she published in 1918, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (Wheeler 1918). Unfortunately there are many inaccuracies in this account, published when Wheeler, who acknowledged her own tendency to embroider the facts, was ninety-one years old. (Wheeler described herself as “an imaginative and intrepid child” who was often punished “for a tendency to change plain facts into fairy-tale happenings and otherwise varying the monotony of our sternly prescribed lives”; Wheeler 1918, p. 35.) Although the autobiography cannot be discounted and on many subjects remains the only source of information, whenever possible this essay draws on other documents as well.
5. The Pickerings settled in Salem in 1637. Wheeler’s maternal great-grandfather, Obadiah Dunham, was one of the earliest settlers of Otsego County, New York.
6. Wheeler 1918, p. 56.
7. Wheeler refers to her “outspoken pride in the achievements of my needle-loving grandmother.” *Ibid.*, p. 290.
8. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [6].
9. *Ibid.*, p. [4].
10. Wheeler 1918, pp. 20, 61.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
12. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [26].
13. Wheeler 1918, p. 48.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.
17. Wheeler describes her first school experience at the infant school in Wheeler 1921, pp. 48–49.
18. Delaware Academy 1837.
19. Reprinted in “Delaware Academy” 1891.
20. Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), p. 5.
21. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [7].
22. Granby (as he was known) Spees was the sixth pastor of the church; he arrived in 1841 and left in 1844. Flint and Hovemeyer 1956, p. 31.
23. Wheeler 1918, p. 69.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 233.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
26. Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), p. 6.
27. Wheeler 1918, p. 102. Tom and Candace Wheeler maintained the friendship with the next generation of Coopers and named their firstborn son James Cooper Wheeler.
28. Wesleyan University 1911, pp. 617–18.
29. Wheeler 1918, pp. 69, 81.
30. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Abner Thurber, May 31, 1857, Pullman Collection.
31. Various New York and Brooklyn directories, including *Doggett, Trow*, and *Hearnes*, were consulted in order to track Tom Wheeler’s place of business and home residence over the years. In the late 1870s he and Robert were again affiliated in some way, Wheeler acting as a vice president of Robert’s business for two years. The two men may have had joint business ventures throughout Tom’s career, but, unfortunately, the records of both men’s work are incomplete. Dora Wheeler, interviewed in 1927, described her father’s career as “Shipping—he owned docks—dockage and things like that. He was a partner of Christopher Robert. . . . First his head clerk and then his partner.” Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), p. 6.
32. Wheeler 1918, p. 82. Wheeler states, “Our Brooklyn days were from ’44 to ’54 of the nineteenth century.” However, New York City directories locate the family at 68 Pike Street between 1844 and 1849, and Wheeler’s younger sister, Lucy D. Harris, recalled that the couple lived “in Pike Street near Catharine St.” for the first few years of their marriage: L. D. Harris 1887, p. [33].
33. L. D. Harris 1887, pp. [44–45].
34. Wheeler 1918, p. 83. Thorpe’s association with Harper & Brothers most likely opened doors for Wheeler, who later published extensively in *Harper’s Bazar* and *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. A number of her books were published by Harper & Brothers.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
36. Barratt 2000, p. 69.
37. Wheeler 1918, pp. 93–94.
38. The Wheelers’ home, Nestledown, stood in an area of Jamaica that was renamed Hollis in 1885. According to Charles Driscoll, board member and research director of the Queens Historical Society, the house was located on the south side of today’s Liberty Avenue between 186th and 187th Streets. It was demolished in 1932. Telephone conversation with the author, June 27, 2000.
39. *Miller’s New York* 1861, p. 108.
40. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [63]. Apparently Wheeler worked on both the exteriors and the interiors of Nestledown throughout her life. The only known interior view was published in Wheeler’s *Principles of Home Decoration* (1903), and the only description of the interior comes from Sarah K. Bolton’s *Successful Women* (1888). Bolton describes the house as follows: “‘Nestledown,’ a red, roomy cottage in the midst of three hundred acres on Long Island, is a most charming place to visit. It is a home, with its great fireplaces, which artists and poets enjoy; glowing with dainty color. The hall in light Venetian red. . . . The parlor is in brown and gold hues, the frieze, fleur-de-lis on matting. The library in copper and robin’s-egg blue, is rich in books, and pictures, many of them remembrances from authors and artists. The motto of the house is engraved over the mantel: ‘Who lives merrily, he lives mightily; Without’en gladness availeth no treasure.’ The dining-room especially interested me from its wall-paper, for which Mrs. Wheeler received her thousand-dollar prize, the exquisite china on every hand, and her paintings on either side of the sideboard of mullein and cat-tails. Not less inviting were the sleeping-rooms, where the furnishings showed the exquisite taste of mother and daughter.” Bolton 1888, pp. 195–96.
41. Wheeler 1918, p. 112.
42. Letter, Sanford Gifford to the Wheeler family, July 2, 1862, quoted in I. Weiss 1987, pp. 93–94.
43. For its complete history, see Blaugrund 1997.
44. Wheeler 1918, p. 95. The fate of the Wheelers’ collection of paintings remains unknown. Assuming they did descend to Dunham Wheeler, he may have sold them at some point after his mother’s death, when American paintings of the Hudson River school had fallen from favor.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
46. For more on Hall’s style of painting and influences, see Gerdts 1985.
47. Wheeler 1918, p. 113.
48. Wheeler exhibited paintings at the National Academy of Design in 1871, 1874, 1875, 1877, 1879, and 1884. See Naylor 1973, vol. 2, p. 1015.
49. Wheeler 1918, p. 112.
50. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Abner Thurber, May 31, 1857, Pullman Collection.
51. For more on the life of Candace Wheeler Stimson, see Morison 1966, pp. 15–18. Cannie’s son Henry was a renowned lawyer and statesman who served as secretary of war under William Howard Taft, secretary of state under Herbert Hoover, and secretary of war under Franklin D. Roosevelt.
52. Both James Wheeler and his daughter Candace died under mysterious circumstances. Candace, a champion swimmer, was drowned while swimming in a lake in June 1912; three months later, James died while on a trip to Denver to contest the terms of her will. Her fiancé, Otto Meyer, who was to inherit her \$15,000 estate, seems to have been under suspicion in both deaths. See Wheeler (James) obit. 1912.

53. Dora Wheeler Keith presented the Metropolitan Museum with twenty-seven examples of Associated Artists textiles in 1928, five years after her mother's death. In accepting the textiles into the Museum's collection, curator Joseph Breck described the two embroideries among them as "characteristic examples of the work of an artist who played an extremely important part in the renovation of the applied arts in this country in the nineteenth century." See correspondence between Dora Wheeler Keith and Joseph Breck, February, 1928, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives. In 1921 Keith presented the Cleveland Museum of Art with William Merritt Chase's portrait of her, painted in 1883, "in memory of a very warm friendship with Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wade." Jephtha Homer Wade was president of the Cleveland Museum 1920–26; Keith met him in Thomasville, Georgia, where they both wintered. See Milliken 1922 and correspondence between Dora Wheeler Keith, J. H. Wade, and F. Allen Whiting, director of the museum, 1921–22, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives. In 1934 Keith followed that gift with two needlewoven tapestries, one her own 1887 *Alice Pyncheon*, the other the azalea hanging by Anna Lyman that had been displayed in the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Unfortunately, both of these pieces fell into poor repair while at the Cleveland Museum and were destroyed in 1959.
54. Notable commissions include a house for Mr. H. B. Anderson in Great Neck, New York (1898), Fleetwood for Robert V. V. Sewell in Oyster Bay, New York (ca. 1907), and the remodeling of a clubhouse into a home for John D. Rockefeller Sr. in Lakewood, New Jersey (ca. 1901). Dunham Wheeler was originally hired (ca. 1903) to design Kykuit, the Rockefeller home in Pocantico Hills, New York, but he was later replaced by the better-known firm of Delano & Aldrich. According to his obituary, he also designed houses for Clarence M. Roof and Arthur B. Claffin. Wheeler (Dunham) obit. 1938.
55. *Who Was Who in American Art* 1999, vol. 3, pp. 2682–83.
56. Confirmed by descendants of Dunham Wheeler. See also Forslund 1906, p. 496; elsewhere in the article Anne is mistakenly called "the daughter of an artist and the sister of an artist (Arthur Quarterly)." One of the witnesses to Tom Wheeler's will, written in 1894, is an Ada C. Quartley, who gives the Associated Artists building at 115 East 23rd Street as her address.
57. L. D. Harris 1887, pp. [32–33], [44–49], [52–57]; Wheeler 1918, pp. 71–72.
58. L. D. Harris 1887, pp. [139–44].
59. "Thurber, Whyland & Co.," in *New York's Great Industries* 1885, pp. 112–13.
60. "Thurber, Francis Beattie," in *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 1893–1948, vol. 22 (1932), p. 176.
61. These letters are in the Pullman Collection.
62. For more on the Draft Riots, see Bernstein 1990.
63. Wheeler 1918, pp. 154–58.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
65. For a complete overview of the history of women's benevolent organizations in nineteenth-century America, see Ginzberg 1990; for the formation of the WCAR and its influence, see chap. 5.
66. Wheeler 1918, pp. 158–59.
67. For an exhaustive history of the fund-raising fairs in general and some specifics about the Metropolitan Fair, see Gordon 1998. Chapter 3 discusses the various U. S. Sanitary Fairs.
68. "Great New York Fair" 1864, p. 303.
69. "Great Fair" 1864, p. 4.
70. *Metropolitan Fair* 1864b, p. 7.
71. ". . . whatever of glory belongs to the deed, let the crown for it fall upon our women; whatever of grace has been shown in their acts and intentions, let the reward of it be given to the women who have so richly earned it. All that is lovely and of good report, men cheerfully and unanimously accord to the ladies who planned and carried out the great Sanitary Fair." "Metropolitan Fair" 1864a.
72. Wheeler 1918, pp. 96, 134, 155.
73. *Century Yearbook* 1998, p. vii.
74. Wheeler 1918, p. 136.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 144–45.
76. The family's financial health is suggested in a letter dated February 1, 1866, sent to them in Germany by Sanford Gifford, who asks Tom to contribute as much as \$500 toward the purchase of a bronze cast of J. Q. A. Ward's *Indian Hunter* for Central Park. Gifford Papers.
77. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Frank Thurber, September 9, 1866, Pullman Collection.
78. The Wheelers' whereabouts in Europe can be traced through *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (Wheeler 1918) and a few surviving letters that were written to them there from Sanford Gifford, now in the collection of the Archives of American Art. In an interview given in 1927, Dora Wheeler Keith mentioned being at the school in Wiesbaden from the time she was seven until she was seventeen and offered other remembrances of her time there. Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), p. 9.
79. Wheeler 1918, p. 183. Actually, the Metropolitan Museum had not yet begun to gather its treasures; it was founded four years later, in 1870.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 197–98.
83. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Lucy Dunham Thurber, October 23, 1871, Pullman Collection.
84. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [105].
85. The deserted house was broken into in the early spring of 1872, and many of their remaining possessions were stolen. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, March 27, [1872], and April 28, [1872], Pullman Collection.
86. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Lucy Dunham Thurber, December 26 and 27, 1871, Pullman Collection.
87. *Ibid.*
88. First Dora suffered respiratory problems, and later she was bedridden after a bad fall. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, October 8 and 9, 1872, Pullman Collection. See also Wheeler 1918, pp. 203–8.
89. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, March 27, [1872], Pullman Collection.
90. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, September 7, 1877, Pullman Collection.
91. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, March 27, [1872], Pullman Collection.
92. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [119].
93. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Annie Ford Thurber, June 7, 1876, Pullman Collection.
94. Wheeler 1918, p. 209.
95. United States Centennial Commission 1876, p. 79.
96. Mitchell 1876, p. 892.
97. In America in the 1870s and 1880s, there was some confusion between the school of design that was part of the South Kensington Museum and the Royal School of Art Needlework, which was also located in South Kensington. Although two separate organizations, they were both referred to as the "Kensington School" in the American press.
98. Mitchell 1876, p. 896.
99. "It is noticeable to what a large degree the English domesticity of feeling has overlaid and colored all her [England's] artistic work, which has any relation to house decoration.": *ibid.*, p. 895; *Centennial Exhibition* 1877, pp. 21–37, 91–93.
100. McCabe 1876, p. 368.
101. "Art Needle-Work at the Centennial" 1876.
102. Prospectus of the Royal School of Art Needlework, included in Higgin 1880, p. 98.
103. Alfrod 1881, p. 422.
104. Designs for embroidery by Miss Webster, Miss Jekyll, and Miss Mary Herbert, were printed alongside the designs of the well-known male artists in Higgin 1880. Miss Mary Herbert was either a teacher or a student at the school.
105. *Ibid.*, pp. 97–106; quotation from p. 98.
106. Wheeler 1918, p. 212.
107. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.
108. *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10.

109. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Candace Stevenson, undated [March 1913], Pullman Collection.
110. Wheeler 1918, p. 211.
111. Smith 1876, pp. 94–96.
112. Wheeler 1918, pp. 209–10.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
114. Wheeler 1918, p. 215; “Society of Decorative Art” 1877a.
115. Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 66.
116. Lane (David) obit. 1885.
117. Wheeler 1918, pp. 218–19.
118. Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 24; Wheeler 1918, p. 215.
119. Circular of the SDA; reprinted in Wheeler 1918, p. 216, and Wheeler 1921, p. 112.
120. “Society of Decorative Art” 1877b.
121. “Ladies’ Art-Association” 1875. For a good general description of the mission and activities of the Ladies’ Art Association, see Dickinson 1880. The author thanks Barbara Balliet, associate director of Women’s Studies, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, for providing information about Wheeler’s membership in the LAA.
122. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Alice Donlevy, July 5, 1877, Alice H. Donlevy Papers, folder, letters (1875–79), New York Public Library.
123. Letter, L. A. Bradbury to Alice Donlevy, January 23, 1878, Alice H. Donlevy Papers, folder, letters (1870–79), New York Public Library.
124. In an undated note, presumably to Donlevy, Wheeler complained about being forced out. Alice H. Donlevy Papers, folder, letters (1870–79), New York Public Library.
125. “Society of Decorative Art” 1877a.
126. *Ibid.*; Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 63.
127. Wheeler 1918, p. 219. The society’s first annual report lists a “Committee on Admission of Work” under the chairmanship of Mrs. Richard Morris Hunt, wife of the famous architect. However, no one is listed on the committee, whose members, according to the report, were appointed monthly. See Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 7.
128. John A. Weeks was the brother of Julia Weeks de Forest, a member of the board of the SDA, and was the uncle of Lockwood de Forest. The list of committee members also included Russell Sturgis, an architect and critic; Edward C. Moore, chief designer of Tiffany & Company; John La Farge, the artist and decorator; Francis Hopkinson Smith, an artist and mechanical engineer; George F. Babb, an architect; the architect Charles Follen McKim, a founder of McKim, Mead and White; a Mr. Hester (unknown—perhaps a misprint for [Christian] Herter, the cabinetmaker); and Daniel Cottier, a stained-glass designer and decorator. The women on the design committee included Mrs. Helena De Kay Gilder, a painter; Mrs. R. Terry (unknown); and Mrs. Frank Palmer, a painter. See Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 9.
129. Wheeler 1921, p. 115.
130. Wheeler 1918, p. 219.
131. L. D. Harris 1887, pp. [56–57].
132. Wheeler 1921, p. 113.
133. Society of Decorative Art 1879, pp. 19–20; Society of Decorative Art 1880, pp. 14, 26.
134. Wheeler 1918, p. 222.
135. Wheeler 1921, p. 112.
136. “New Idea” 1877. See also “Market for Art-Work” 1877.
137. “Right Chord Struck” 1877.
138. “Loan Exhibition” 1877.
139. “Rare Art Specimens” 1877.
140. “Ladies’ Loan Collection” 1877, p. 258; “Decorative Art Exhibition” 1878. The conditions under which free pupils were accepted were published in the *New York Times*, February 20, 1878, p. 5: “A pupil wishing to enter the free class must be nominated by a subscriber of \$100; but will be entered on the nomination of a \$5 subscriber when a vacancy shall occur. She shall present credentials satisfactory to the Chairman on Classes. She shall bind herself to attend regularly for six lessons, from the hours of 9 A. M. to 3 P. M., allowing 30 minutes for lunch, the pupil giving her work to the society during the period of her lessons. . . . Should the pupil, after six lessons, be found to have decided talent, she shall, at the discretion of the Committee on Needle-work, receive additional instruction, the work executed by her being still the property of the society. The society does not bind itself to furnish work to all who enter the free class; but when orders are received the preference will be given to them, especially those most needy, provided the work can be satisfactorily executed by them.” See “Society of Decorative Art” 1878c.
141. Wheeler 1918, p. 218.
142. *Ibid.*, pp. 223–24.
143. Mrs. William G. Choate was the sister-in-law of Mrs. Joseph H. Choate (Caroline S.), a vice president of the SDA. Wheeler described Mrs. William G. Choate as one of the SDA’s managers, but apparently she was never part of the formal management of the society; Wheeler 1918, p. 224. She is listed as a subscriber in the 1878 annual report; her name does not appear in the 1877 annual report.
144. Wheeler 1918, p. 224.
145. *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 225.
146. In 1878 Wheeler gave up her job as corresponding secretary of the SDA, but she remained a vice president and continued as chairman of the Committee on Publication; in addition she headed the special committee formed to oversee the SDA’s contributions to a second loan exhibition. Society of Decorative Art 1879, pp. 6, 46.
147. Quoted in Salmon 1892, p. 394.
148. S. H. Ward 1886, p. 519.
149. *Ibid.*
150. Wheeler 1918, p. 226. Although Wheeler remembers being a charter member of the Woman’s Exchange, and probably was, an article entitled “An Exchange for Women’s Work?” *New York Daily Tribune*, March 25, 1878, p. 5, does not list her among “the ladies who have been foremost in organizing this charity.”
151. Wheeler 1918, p. 231.
152. *Art Interchange* 1 (October 16, 1878), p. 20.
153. S. H. Ward 1886, p. 519.
154. Catalogue, The New York Exchange for Woman’s Work, 1896, p. 4.
155. Circular, The New York Exchange for Woman’s Work, 1888, unpaginated.
156. The initial, 1878 board of managers cannot be documented; the 1888 circular contains the first known official list of managers. An unofficial listing can be found in “Exchange for Women’s Work” 1878.
157. After founding the Woman’s Exchange, in 1890 Mary Lyman Atwater Choate, who was also a great believer in education for women, went on to found the Rosemary Hall School for girls on one of her family’s properties in Wallingford, Connecticut. In 1896 she and her husband, William, founded the Choate School for boys, also in Wallingford.
158. The Social Register of 1887 (the first year of its publication) seems to confirm social differences between the women on the board of the Society of Decorative Arts and those on the board of the Woman’s Exchange. Of the original officers and committee members of the SDA (1877), more than three-quarters were listed in the first Social Register of 1887. Wheeler was one of only two officers *not* listed in the Social Register. But of the women named in the 1888 report of the Woman’s Exchange, only about a third were listed in the Social Register. Strangely enough, two of the wealthiest women on the board of the Woman’s Exchange in 1888, Mrs. Andrew Carnegie and Mrs. Henry Villard, were not included in the Social Register. Two prominent Jewish women, Mrs. Frederick Nathan and Mrs. Jacob Schiff (neither in the Social Register), were on the board of the Woman’s Exchange; there were no Jewish managers or committee members involved in the Society of Decorative Arts during its early years.
159. Wheeler 1918, p. 230. For a general overview of the Woman’s Exchange movement, see Sander 1998.
160. Society of Decorative Art 1879, p. 22.
161. “Salutatory” 1878. The publishers were Arthur B. Turnure and William Whitlock.
162. “We have the valuable assistance of such well-known writers as Mr. Prime, Mr. Tiffany, Mr. Sturgis, and Gen. di Cesnola, who will afford the best criticisms in matters relating peculiarly to art.” *Ibid.*

163. Society of Decorative Art 1879, p. 22.
164. Society of Decorative Art 1880, p. 23.
165. Society of Decorative Art 1878a, pp. 66–68.
166. Society of Decorative Art 1879, p. 25.
167. Wheeler 1918, p. 233. Mrs. Lane retired from the SDA in the fall of 1879, soon after Wheeler left.
168. *Art Interchange* 3 (November 26, 1879), p. 90; “Art Interchange Competition” 1879; “Decorative Designing” 1879. In May 1880, Wheeler again acted as a judge for an *Art Interchange* competition, this one for name and menu cards, but she was no longer described as representing the SDA. Her fellow judges were Lockwood de Forest and James B. Townsend. See “Art Interchange Prize Design Competition” 1880.
169. For Wheeler at her most xenophobic, see Wheeler 1918, pp. 74–75.
170. Wheeler 1893d, p. 14. In adulthood Wheeler rejected Presbyterianism and her father’s evangelical style of religion. She was interested in Quakerism, although no evidence has been found to confirm that she was a member of any particular meeting. Her younger children attended a Quaker school in New York City for a few years.
171. Wheeler 1918, pp. 231–32. Tiffany did not resign completely from the SDA at that time. In the third annual report (January 1, 1880), he is still listed as an associate manager but is no longer doing any committee work: Society of Decorative Art 1880. De Forest’s name was sometimes spelled (incorrectly) with a capital D.
172. L. D. Harris 1887, p. [139].
173. Wheeler 1918, p. 233.
174. Society of Decorative Art 1880, p. 25.
175. Wheeler 1918, p. 233.
176. “Louis C. Tiffany,” June 18, 1878, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896.
177. “Tiffany and Wheeler,” April 20, 1880, *ibid.*; “Tiffany and Wheeler,” April 21, 1880, *ibid.*, p. 1939.
178. Colman’s studio was at 337 Fourth Avenue, either a second entrance in a large warehouse-type building or a separate building next to 335 Fourth Avenue.
179. Society of Decorative Art 1880, p. 16. It is not known what the agreement between the SDA and Tiffany & Wheeler entailed or how long the arrangement lasted.
180. “Colman and Tiffany Wall-Papers” 1880, p. 12.
181. For more on how the firm Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, functioned, see “Associated Artists” 1881; “Louis C. Tiffany & Co.” 1881.
182. “Seventh Regiment Armory” 1881.
183. “In this room the curtains and the portières are examples by Messrs. Louis C. Tiffany and Co., and though they are marvels of technical skill, are strangely at variance with both the architectural treatment and the decorations, being slavishly Japanese in design and execution.” Oakey 1882, p. 736.
184. “Tiffany & De Forest,” October 1, 1880, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896.
185. In “Art Needlework” 1881, a portiere is mentioned that was “produced by the Associated Artists, from the embroidery rooms of which Mrs. Wheeler is at the head.”
186. “L. C. Tiffany & Co.,” June 9, 1881, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896; “Louis C. Tiffany & Co.,” June 15, 1881, *ibid.*, p. 2100a/14.
187. For more on de Forest’s business and his relationship with Tiffany, see Mayer 2000.
188. Harrison was a friend of Wheeler’s; they first met in the late 1850s or early 1860s. In *Yesterdays*, Wheeler recalls attending a club at Harrison’s house where authors read from their works-in-progress. Wheeler 1918, p. 151.
189. Harrison 1881, pp. 5–6.
190. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
191. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
192. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
193. Wheeler 1918, p. 238. One article about the work of Associated Artists (Harrison 1884, p. 344) notes that Wheeler also collaborated with mills in New Jersey. This is not unlikely since nearby Paterson, New Jersey, was the center of silk production in the late nineteenth century. Another article (Bishop 1885, p. 584) states that three different mills supplied fabrics to Associated Artists, including one in Massachusetts. However, Wheeler never mentions a relationship with any silk manufacturer other than the Cheneyes.
194. Harrison 1884, p. 348. For more on Wheeler’s thoughts about the depiction of flowers in textiles, see Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).
195. Humphreys 1884b, p. 345.
196. Wheeler patented both the stitch she used for needlewoven tapestries (patent no. 268,332, November 28, 1882) and the ground fabric (patent no. 271,174, January 23, 1883). (In the patent for the ground fabric it is noted that Wheeler had patented the fabric in England on March 14, 1882, patent no. 1233.) When, in 1881, Mary Tillinghast, a former employee who later worked as a textile specialist for John La Farge, applied for a patent on a similar stitch, Wheeler sued her for interference, claiming that Tillinghast had stolen the technique from her. The case was dissolved in May 1882 when it was decided that the patent applications were for slightly different stitches. (Tillinghast was later granted patent no. 268,149, November 28, 1882.) The invoice for the tapestry fabric survives because Wheeler used it as an exhibit in her lawsuit, to prove that she had been making needlewoven tapestries since 1880. The records of the lawsuit are in the National Archives; see “Wheeler vs. Tillinghast.”
197. “Louis C. Tiffany & Co.” 1881, p. 471.
198. Wheeler 1881a, p. 503. On Miss Cutler, see n. 220.
199. *Ibid.*
200. “Associated Artists” 1881, p. 415.
201. *Ibid.*
202. Wheeler 1918, p. 239.
203. Bolton 1888, p. 192.
204. “Louis C. Tiffany & Co.,” December 9, 1881, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 2100a/14.
205. Wheeler 1918, p. 237; deed for 115 East 23rd Street, November 1, 1881, New York City Buildings Department, block 879, lot 9, liber 1621, pp. 330–33.
206. “High-Toned House Decoration” 1882.
207. “— The summer work is so little in comparison with the winter, that if I do not begin to pay my percentage to them until May — I fear they will lose all interest in my department & it will end by detaching itself in the fall, because its first six months will not am’t to much — I am aware however that you can judge of the matter as well as I & hope you will settle it.” Although this private correspondence may have been fully understandable only to Wheeler and Tiffany, it has something to do with the amount of money she would have to pay into the partnership before going her own way. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Louis Tiffany, January 28 [1883], Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers, series V, box 25.
208. This entry, dated April 28, 1883, appears twice in the Dun Credit volume, once under the heading of “Louis C. Tiffany & Co.,” and again under “Mrs. Candace Wheeler.” Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, pp. 2100a/14, 1890.
209. Wheeler 1918, p. 256.
210. See Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 97–99; Koch 1966, pp. 45–47; Seale 1992.
211. For more on Tiffany’s later career both in interiors and in glass, see Frelinghuysen 1998.
212. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 38.
213. Wheeler 1918, p. 237.
214. Harrison 1884, p. 343.
215. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Candace Stevenson, undated [March 1913], Pullman Collection.
216. Cook 1884. Cook’s home furnishing book was *The House Beautiful* (1878).
217. Advertisement in *Art Interchange* 11 (September 27, 1883), p. iii.
218. Humphreys 1884b, p. 347.
219. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 38.
220. While no other designers for Associated Artists were cited in the press in the 1880s, the names of a number of women who worked for Wheeler when she was still associated with Tiffany appear in

- records for the patent interference suit she filed against Mary Tillinghast in 1881 (see "Wheeler vs. Tillinghast"). Lina Cutler is referred to as "in charge of the embroidery room," and the following nineteen women are listed as "embroiderers": Miss Abby, Miss Applebury, Mrs. Margaret Austin, Miss Julia Ida Benton, Mrs. Clark, Miss Decker, Mrs. Decker, Mrs. Drinker, Miss Duessel, Miss Henrietta Halsey, Miss Larson, Miss McConnell, Mrs. Parshall, Miss Russell, Miss Ada Spice, Mrs. Tompkins, Miss Wakeman, and Miss Wilkey. Emily H. Harper worked for Wheeler as a "stock-woman." In 1886, Anna Lyman (see cat. no. 93), who eventually designed for Associated Artists, was mentioned in a magazine article as follows: "Mrs. Wheeler has also found a valuable assistant in Miss Lyman, who has special charge of the Tapestry Department of the Associated Artists, and is the chief executant." Koehler 1886, p. 210.
221. Harrison 1884, p. 343.
 222. "Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition" 1884a. See also "Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition" 1884b, pp. 46–47.
 223. Barrows 1880, p. 622.
 224. Harrison 1884, pp. 345–46. Constance Cary Harrison's description of Wheeler's attitude toward "the plentiful shekels of American plutocracy," with its overt anti-Semitic inference, has a discordant ring to today's readers. (The shekel was the coin of biblical Israelites, and a plutocracy is a controlling wealthy class.) Wheeler seems to have shared the casual anti-Semitism that was quite common in her time; stories passed down locally describe her distaste for the Jewish summer settlements that surrounded Onteora, her own community in the Catskills. Still, her professional disdain was probably directed less toward Jews than toward the nouveaux riches in general.
 225. Hubert 1896, pp. 15–16.
 226. Advertisement in San Francisco, Art Students League 1886.
 227. Wait 1895.
 228. "Ladies' Exhibition" 1885. I thank Michael Rosen of San Francisco for calling to my attention Martin & Ingalsbe and for the research materials he shared.
 229. "Embroidery Notes" 1884.
 230. *American Silk Journal* 3 (March 1884), p. 60.
 231. Wheeler 1918, pp. 253–54. Wheeler visited England in 1882, 1886, and 1889. According to her sister Lucy, who accompanied her and Dora on the 1882 trip, "The Wheelers had letters of introduction, and friends among the artists and literary notables, so that they went some into society—they saw all the lovely studios, and met Sir Frederick Leighton, and Burne Jones, and Alma Tadema. . . . Of course Candace was on the alert for anything that would help her in her business." L. D. Harris 1887, p. [146].
 232. "American Art in London" 1889. Penelope, the wife of the Trojan War hero Odysseus, wove at her loom while she waited for his return. See also cat. no. 27.
 233. Bishop 1885, p. 583.
 234. *Ibid.*, pp. 583–84.
 235. "Art Study Practically Applied" 1889, p. 42. The Gotham Art Students, an art school formed in 1881, was located at 17 Bond Street. Its original aim was to educate students who worked during the day, and thus it held night classes.
 236. McBride 1886, p. 97.
 237. "Art Notes" 1887, p. 24.
 238. Merritt's mural, painted for the English delegation, had a title that could describe Wheeler's career: *Three Lines of Feminine Employment—Needlework, Benevolence and Education*.
 239. "Fine Art in Needlework" 1887; "Notes" 1887, pp. 24–25.
 240. "Associated Artists," July 8, 1884, and December 12, 1884, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1890; "Associated Artists—C. Wheeler," June 2, 1885, April 28, 1886, March 20, 1888, May 23, 1889, and October 16, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 2100a/78.
 241. For this series, see Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews).
 242. In later years Harper & Brothers published a number of Wheeler's books, among them *Household Art* (1893), *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (1918), and *The Development of Embroidery in America* (1921). She wrote two short stories for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, "The Horoscope of Two Portraits" (July 1895) and "Antiques" (April 1903). See Wheeler 1895c; Wheeler 1903a.
 243. Advertisement in *Art Amateur* 25 (June 1891), p. 46.
 244. Wheeler 1899b.
 245. Advertisement in Architectural League of New York 1888, unpaginated.
 246. Wheeler 1892a; Wheeler 1892b; Wheeler 1892c.
 247. Wheeler 1893d; Wheeler 1903b.
 248. Although Dunham Wheeler began to work as an architect in 1888, it is not clear whether he ever received a degree in architecture. In all likelihood he learned the craft by working as an apprentice in the office of a senior New York architect. His mother probably used her connections to obtain this placement. For some idea of Dunham Wheeler's decorating work apart from the Onteora houses, see "Art in Home Adornment" 1900, p. 1274.
 249. Wheeler, *The Annals of Onteora, 1887–1914*, privately printed (Wheeler 1914), p. 71. An edited and somewhat changed version of this work appears in Wheeler 1918 as the chapter "Onteora."
 250. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 251. Bisland 1889, p. 516.
 252. Wheeler 1914, pp. 31–32.
 253. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 27.
 254. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 255. *Ibid.*, p. 39; Bisland 1889, p. 519.
 256. Wheeler 1914, pp. 39–40.
 257. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
 258. Bisland 1889, pp. 512–13.
 259. *Ibid.*, p. 514.
 260. For more on the female residents of early Onteora, see Gaillard 1994. According to Jane Curley, an art historian and Onteora resident, during the first decade of the club's existence more than half the cottages were owned by women.
 261. "National Conservatory of Music" 1886.
 262. For more on Jeannette Thurber, see *American National Biography* 1999, vol. 21, pp. 625–26.
 263. Bisland 1889, p. 517.
 264. Wheeler 1914, pp. 49, 55.
 265. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.
 266. Parallels may be noted between Onteora and the artistic community founded in 1885 by the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Cornish, New Hampshire. The Saint-Gaudens circle was famous for performing masques in classical dress. See Dryfhout 1985.
 267. Wheeler 1914, pp. 67–68. In 1900 Wheeler wrote an essay, "The Painters of Yesterday," about the Hudson River school painters she had known. Although it was not published, her family retained a copy. Wheeler 1900b.
 268. Wheeler 1914, pp. 68–69.
 269. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Abner Thurber, September 15, 1898: "Frank has been putting a road through his place and cutting it into lots & has sold quite a bit of it. He seems to have been too hard up to stand it & has pressed his sales immensely—Poor Frank! His life has not 'panned out' as I wish it had." Pullman Collection.
 270. Wheeler 1914, pp. 69–71.
 271. Wheeler 1918, p. 322.
 272. Wheeler 1914, pp. 72–73.
 273. For a complete history of the trials and triumphs of the women who worked on the World's Columbian Exposition, see Weimann 1981.
 274. Quotations from, and discussion of, the act of Congress in Palmer 1893b, p. 11.
 275. White and Igleheart 1893b, p. 443.
 276. Palmer 1893b, p. 11.
 277. Garfinkle 1996, pp. 522–25.
 278. Wheeler 1918, p. 359.
 279. Letter, Sara T. Hollowell to Mrs. Potter Palmer, January 5, 1891, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Board of Lady Managers, box 1, folder 8, Chicago Historical Society.
 280. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Mrs. Potter Palmer, October 2, 1891, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Board of Lady Managers, box 2, folder 3, Chicago Historical Society.

281. When a committee of woman artists from New York State (including Dora Wheeler Keith and Rosina Emmet Sherwood) tried to make a selection of paintings for the Woman's Building, they were apparently hard-pressed to find many good examples because "the best work by women artists in New York had already been contributed to the regular fine art department of the exposition." The paintings they did manage to gather were secondary works. See Ives 1894, pp. 186–87.
282. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
283. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Mrs. Potter Palmer, July 19, 1892, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Board of Lady Managers, box 4, folder 5, Chicago Historical Society.
284. Wheeler 1918, p. 340.
285. *Ibid.*, pp. 361–62.
286. For more on the battles to get Wheeler a contract and a salary, see Weimann 1981, pp. 224–27, 240.
287. Wheeler 1918, p. 342.
288. For a complete history and analysis of the art program of the Woman's Building, see Garfinkle 1996.
289. Quoted in Weimann 1981, p. 228.
290. Elliott 1893b, p. 30.
291. Wheeler 1893b, p. 836.
292. Ives 1894, p. 179.
293. "Women's Art Work" 1893.
294. Ives 1894, p. 170.
295. *Ibid.*
296. Wheeler 1918, pp. 344–45.
297. "Women's Work in the Fine Arts" 1893.
298. L. Monroe 1893, p. 12.
299. Ives 1894, p. 170.
300. L. Monroe 1893, p. 12.
301. Ives 1894, p. 172.
302. Wheeler 1893d; Wheeler 1893a.
303. At the time of the Columbian Exposition Wheeler also compiled a volume of essays and poems by other authors, *Columbia's Emblem, Indian Corn: A Garland of Tributes in Prose and Verse* (Wheeler 1893c), which promoted the idea of making corn the American national plant.
304. The most complete description of the Associated Artists display was found in *Harper's Bazar*:
 "Several tall cases from the Associated Artists of New York, containing panels, wall-hangings, portières, and bedspreads, attract general notice. These elegant pieces of art needle-work range in price from two hundred to seven hundred dollars. A bedspread, Italian Renaissance, is of white faille embroidered in gold-colored silk. Panels in Italian Renaissance [style] have the soft blending of water-colors. A wall-hanging called a color study is clematis on a gray silk, divided into three panels. The flowers are in the softest shades of dull yellow, red, pink, lavender, purple, and light green, giving a harmony of colors that is very beautiful. These hangings resemble painting; the needle carrying its colored threads has moved over the surface like the brush of a painting, giving a picture soft in effect and ingenious in execution. Another color study is a gold-woven silk of bluish-green color with a deep border of green plush. The richest and most beautiful shading is shown here in the embroidery and appliqué design of fighting dragons.
 "The azalea curtain is beautiful, with its great cluster of flowers in the centre, shading from light pink to deep red. An artistic scroll design in gold thread adds to its lustre. A picture panel in needle-woven tapestry shows peacocks in all their gorgeous and changing colors of plumage. The piece called 'Birth of Psyche' has a beautiful border of butterflies. The imperial gold cloth and silk canvas used for these hangings are manufactured for the purpose."
 Dougherty 1893, p. 859.
305. Wheeler 1918, p. 343.
306. Wheeler 1921, p. 119.
307. A. S. Monroe 1919, p. 193.
308. *Art Amateur* 28 (January 1893), p. 66.
309. Wheeler 1903b, p. 4.
310. Wheeler 1918, pp. 423–24.
311. Wheeler 1900a.
312. Wheeler 1901a (review a), p. 57; Wheeler 1901a (review b).
313. Wheeler 1901a, pp. 47–48.
314. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57; see also pp. 58–62.
315. *Ibid.*, pp. 72–74.
316. Wheeler 1899d, pp. 402, 404. Wheeler began a cottage industry for rug weaving at Oteora in about 1900; it continued for a number of years.
317. *Ibid.*, pp. 405, 406.
318. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
319. Howell 1899, p. 986.
320. Some of the material in the book had first been published in Wheeler 1893d. In addition to being sold to the general public, *Principles of Home Decoration* was recommended for use as a textbook on home decoration for eighth graders in Sewall 1906, pp. 665–67, cited in Boris 1986, pp. 87, 217, n. 20.
321. Wheeler 1903b, pp. 11–12.
322. Wheeler 1903b (review a), p. 158.
323. Wheeler 1903b (review b).
324. Wheeler 1905.
325. Stevenson 1966, p. 104.
326. On March 1, 1909, Hoyt bought forty-five acres of land on the eastern edge of Thomasville, next to the Glen Arven Country Club, and deeded a lot within the property to Dora Wheeler Keith, who at that time acted in legal matters for her mother.
327. St. John [n.d.], p. 12. The author wishes to thank Mr. Edwin C. Hoyt Jr. for making information about his grandmother available to the Museum and also thanks Carolyn Lane, Museum Fellow, for making contact with Mr. Hoyt.
328. Wheeler 1918, p. 7.
329. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
330. Bolton 1888, pp. 175–97; Forsslund 1906; Logan 1912, p. 48; *Woman's Who's Who of America* 1914, p. 871; A. S. Monroe 1919; *Who's Who in America* 1920, p. 3031; *Biographical Cyclopaedia of American Women* 1925, pp. 186–90.
331. Bolton 1888, p. 197.
332. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Miss Halstead, November 2, 1895, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, The Winterthur Library, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, 66X145.11.
333. Forsslund 1906, p. 495.
334. Letter, Candace Wheeler to May Thurber Duryee, December 19, 1919, Pullman Collection.
335. *Biographical Cyclopaedia of American Women* 1925, pp. 186–90.
336. *Who's Who in America* 1920, p. 3031.
337. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Abner Thurber, September 15, 1898, Pullman Collection.
338. Wheeler 1918 (review a).
339. Wheeler 1918 (review b).
340. Wheeler 1918, p. 6.
341. Stevenson 1966, p. 103.
342. A. S. Monroe 1919, p. 189.
343. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
344. Wheeler 1918, p. 16.
345. Money to erect the fireproof building, meant to house about one hundred women, was to be raised by subscription. *American Architect and Building News* 23 (May 19, 1888), p. 229.
346. Stevenson 1966, p. 104.
347. Wheeler 1918, p. 147.
348. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
349. Letter, Mrs. Henry Miles Cutler to Madeline Stern, February 22, 1960, Madeline Stern Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Catalogue

I. *Candace T. Wheeler*

1863

Marble, 21½ × 18 × 2 in. (54.6 × 45.7 × 5.1 cm)

Signed and dated at bottom: L. Thompson. Sc. 1863.

The New-York Historical Society, Gift of

Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1940 (1940.859)

Candace Wheeler's firstborn child was named Candace Thurber Wheeler (1845–1876) and nicknamed “Cannie.” This bas-relief portrait of her by Launt Thompson (1833–1894), a family friend and successful sculptor, was done in 1863, when she was a girl of seventeen or eighteen. An acknowledged beauty, Cannie was a gifted singer and pianist and her mother's favorite. Wheeler inculcated in her a love of art, seeing to it that young Cannie was introduced into New York's artistic circles and that she traveled to Europe to study painting. In 1866, at the age of twenty-one, Cannie married Lewis Atterbury Stimson, the son of a well-connected New York stockbroker. Stimson went on to become a highly respected surgeon. The couple had two children, a daughter, Candace (1869–1944), and a son, Henry Lewis Stimson (1867–1950), who grew up to be a statesman serving in five administrations, including as secretary of state under President Hoover and secretary of war under Presidents Taft and Franklin Roosevelt. Not long after Henry's birth Cannie began to suffer from Bright's disease, a kidney ailment, which plunged her into long periods of worsening fatigue and depression until she died nine years later, on June 7, 1876, at the age of thirty-one.

Cannie's death was a major turning point for Wheeler, who once wrote that the loss of her daughter “changed my whole attitude toward life and taught me its duties, not only to those I loved, but to all who needed help and comfort.”¹ It was following the death of her child and her visit shortly thereafter to the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia that Wheeler decided to pursue a career in the decorative arts, and the next year she founded

the Society of Decorative Art, an organization that fostered the artistic development of young women so that they could support themselves with their handicraft (see pp. 27–38).

With its strict profile and idealized features, Thompson's bas-relief of Cannie Wheeler is in the tradition of Neoclassical portraiture. The soft articulation of the hair and the folds of the dress reveals the sculptor's finesse. Thompson had emigrated in 1847 from Ireland to Albany, New York, where he studied with Erastus Dow Palmer. In 1858 he moved to New York, where he was elected an associate of the National Academy of Design in 1859 and a full academician in 1862.² By that time he had become known as an adept sculptor of busts, medallions, bas-reliefs, and ideal heads. He went on in the 1870s to create more ambitious, large-scale sculptures of historical and allegorical figures until alcoholism and mental illness curtailed his productivity in the 1880s and 1890s.

Thompson was one of the circle of Tenth Street Studio artists who became Wheeler's close friends beginning in the 1850s. In her autobiography Wheeler noted that Thompson “did charming medallions of our friends, Sanford Gifford and Jervis McEntee,” which hung in her home for years.³

1. Wheeler 1918, p. 209.

2. “Associates” and “Academicians,” two classes of membership in the academy, were required to be professional artists and residents of New York City or its vicinity. Academicians were limited in number to fifty, and vacancies were filled from the pool of associates. New members of both groups, which included both men and women, were elected annually. See Clark 1954, pp. 16–17, 69.

3. Wheeler 1918, p. 115. For more on Wheeler's Tenth Street Studio friends, see cat. no. 3 and pp. 11–12. On Thompson, see Craven 1984, pp. 237–40; Dimmick, Hassler, and Tolles 1999, p. 166.



2. *Women's Art Class*

1850s

Oil on canvas, 27 × 23 in. (68.6 × 58.4 cm)

Signed bottom left: Loui [illegible]

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Morris K. Jesup Fund, 1999 (1999.143)

Louis Lang (1814–1893), a German-born painter, came to the United States in 1838 and by midcentury had become a recognized figure in the New York art world.¹ His painting of a women's art class depicts neatly attired young ladies learning how to paint, sculpt, and make architectural renderings in an elegantly furnished skylit studio. Copying from plaster casts and from design books, practices illustrated in the painting, were typical methods of artistic instruction in nineteenth-century America. Art classes for women, however, were rare and were even more unusual as the subject of a painting, inviting speculation that the idyllic scene was wholly imagined—perhaps representing an idealized composite of women's art education in which each young woman is shown studying a different aspect of the arts. Questions also arise about who might have commissioned the work—a female patron of one of the few art organizations for women that existed at the time? The two leading artistic institutions in New York that offered instruction for women in the 1850s were the National Academy of Design (founded in 1825), which began holding mixed classes in 1846, and the New York School of Design for Women (founded in 1852).² Lang was an academician of the National Academy and may have been inspired to make this painting by seeing women in classes there, or he may have taught painting classes for women elsewhere.

The subject of formal art education for women was of major concern to Wheeler and at the heart of all of her ventures. She wrote and lectured extensively on the topic throughout her career, asserting that an education in the fine arts was a crucial underpinning for work in the decorative arts: “You ought to seek the instruction of a teacher

who not only knows the practical side of the art, but can impart to you the great fundamental laws which underlie all art. Under such tutelage you will learn the principles which will enable you to make the best use of the knowledge you have gained and the real meaning of the art of design.”³

It is true that an ability to draw and paint was considered an essential “polite accomplishment” for a refined woman of Wheeler's generation and was traditionally taught as part of her girlhood education. However, artistic talent was not generally cultivated past that stage through formal training. When Wheeler began her own painting career in the 1860s, female painters and sculptors rarely exhibited in important venues and were generally excluded from professional art academies. The few who were admitted had been raised in artistic families and trained by male artists in their families.⁴ The organizations that Wheeler helped found, the Society of Decorative Art and Associated Artists, were among the earliest New York institutions to teach women the skills necessary to support themselves as art professionals, although the training they offered was limited mainly to the decorative arts.

1. On Lang, see Edwards 1986, p. 46; *Who Was Who in American Art* 1999, vol. 2, p. 1942.

2. This school was incorporated into the Cooper Institute as the Woman's Art School of New York in 1859. For more on early art and design education for women in America, see Allaback 1998; Pilson 1999.

3. “Study of Design” 1891.

4. For example, the two most successful woman painters of the Peale family, Anna Claypoole Peale (1791–1878) and Sarah Miriam Peale (1800–1885), trained with their father, James Peale. Sarah also studied with her first cousin Rembrandt Peale and her uncle Charles Willson Peale. Still-life painter Evelina Mount (1837–1920) studied with her uncle William Sidney Mount.



3. *Hollyhocks*

1876

Oil on canvas, $22\frac{3}{8} \times 12\frac{7}{8}$ in. (56.8 × 32.7 cm)

(without frame)

Signed and dated bottom left: Candace Wheeler / 1876

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,

Gift of Mrs. William T. Pullman, 1973 (73.10.1)

Wheeler's first activity in the arts was as an amateur painter of flowers, a pastime that she pursued throughout her life. By the time she was designing textiles for Tiffany & Wheeler she had been recognized in the press as "a most admirable flower painter."¹ Wheeler's *Hollyhocks* exemplifies her naturalistic style of painting and demonstrates the extent to which, even before working in the decorative arts, she chose flowers as compositional elements. Without resorting to extreme conventionalization, which she generally condemned, Wheeler sought to capture the essential characteristics of floral forms; this way of looking was especially suited to the design of floral patterns for decorative work. Wheeler advised aspiring designers, before they began formal training, to study and draw flower forms from nature at home:

*Wild or single blossoms are the ones which adapt themselves most readily to the uses of fabric designs. Always begin with simple flowers. Draw carefully and with great fidelity to nature. . . . You should be just as careful to get the exact proportions of a flower as you are if you are drawing from a cast or a model. Do not fear that this extreme care will make your work stiff or finical—the dash and freedom will come later on, for all boldness and freedom of handling are founded on a thorough and minute knowledge of the subject.*²

Wheeler and her husband were acquainted with prominent painters, and when Wheeler began her own study of painting she was able to take advantage of these friendships, observing Frederic E. Church, Sanford Gifford, Albert Bierstadt, and other professional artists at work in their studios (see pp. 10–12). One of Wheeler's artist friends, still-life painter George Henry Hall, became her first painting teacher sometime in the early 1860s. The landscape background of *Hollyhocks* reveals the influence of Hall, who liked to paint vividly colored still lifes of fruit and flowers

in natural outdoor settings (fig. 8). Hall was a member of the American Pre-Raphaelite movement, which derived from the teachings of English critic John Ruskin and stressed artistic renderings of nature "observed" as opposed to nature "composed" or conventionalized. Nature was to be observed by sketching in natural surroundings, a practice that Wheeler regularly preached to her design pupils later on in her career. *Hollyhocks*, with its uncontrived treatment of flowers seen out of doors rather than indoors in a vase, demonstrates Wheeler's awareness of the natural-setting aesthetic for still lifes favored by the American Pre-Raphaelites.³

Apart from the instruction she received from Hall, Wheeler's only formal training was the series of private lessons that she is believed to have taken from a local artist in Dresden in the winter of 1866–67. During the 1870s and 1880s she exhibited periodically at the National Academy of Design in New York, mainly showing floral still lifes rendered in the same style as *Hollyhocks*. Throughout the rest of her life, well into her nineties, Wheeler painted flowers, an activity she saw as closely linked to the other aspects of her career. This was not only because most of the textiles she designed carried images of American flowers but also because she thought flower paintings particularly suitable for domestic interiors:

There is a large and growing field for flower-painting in the life of the present. It is the fashion of the day to create beautiful and luxurious homes, and this fashion, or tendency, encourages every form of art which is peculiarly adapted to the beautifying of interiors. . . .

*A flower picture, in a harmoniously decorated room, connects itself with all the gradations which space and light and shadow may make in its various tones, and emphasizing them in one glowing block of color, calls and rests the sight, as a group of blossoms in a hedge attracts the eye from all the soft monotonies of greens and browns in leaf and stem.*⁴



1. "Associated Artists" 1881, p. 415.
2. "Study of Design" 1891.
3. For more on Hall and the still-life techniques of American Pre-Raphaelite painters, see Gerdtz 1985.
4. Wheeler 1883, unpaginated.



SARONY & COMPANY

4. *Candace Wheeler and
Thomas M. Wheeler*

Ca. 1870

Albumen silver prints, each $6 \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ in. (15.2 × 10.5 cm)

Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

Candace Wheeler and her husband, Thomas, were well established in New York society when these two photographs of them were taken, in about 1870, at the renowned photography studio of Sarony & Company. Its founder, Napoleon Sarony (1821–1896), was at that time the most sought-after and prolific portrait photographer in America. His New York studio was a favorite gathering place for the artistic community; Wheeler frequently visited there to socialize with her artist friends. Sarony, who had been a

draftsman and lithographer before the Civil War, established his first photography studio in New York in 1866, at 630 Broadway. In 1871 he set up shop at Union Square, near what was then the theater district on lower Broadway. A keen businessman, Sarony capitalized on the rapid expansion of the photographic trade in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Photography offered, among other things, a quick and affordable alternative to painted portraits, and Sarony soon found his niche as a specialist in portraiture.

Sarony was most famous for his depictions of stage actors. The post–Civil War era saw the growing popularity of theater throughout America, and in New York the entertainment industry flourished. Sarony photographed nearly every major actor of the period, including Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, and Edwin Booth, as well as many prominent members of New York society — an output of tens of thousands of portraits. A diminutive man, he made the most of his colorful, eccentric personality, dressing in flamboyantly bohemian attire. His contemporaries dubbed him the “Napoleon of Photography” and regarded him as the father of artistic photography in America.¹

Sarony encouraged his sitters to assume more varied poses and more animated expressions than those typically seen in American portrait photographs of the period. He also adopted methods used in high-style portrait painting — the inclusion of painted backgrounds and props — to create images that suggested cultural refinement. The reception

room of his studio was filled floor to ceiling with an odd assortment of paintings, furniture, textiles, and bric-a-brac from all over the world that became elements in his photographs. Sarony’s portrait of Wheeler, for example, is lavishly accessorized, with a tufted velvet side chair draped in an exotic throw standing alongside a ceramic vase displayed on an elegant side table. This liberal use of decorative objects emphasizes her artistic qualities, while the more austere setting of Thomas’s portrait underscores the fact that he was a serious businessman. Sarony chose an arresting full-length composition in the tradition of eighteenth-century English portraiture for Wheeler’s photograph. She turns her head in classic three-quarter profile and leans gracefully against the chair, striking a regal pose that shows off her elegant full-skirted silk dress to best advantage.

1. For more on Sarony and his career in photography, see Bassham 1978.

5. *Poster for the Centennial International Exhibition, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia*

1876

Lithograph by Thomas Hunter Publishers, 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 23 in.
(75.6 × 58.4)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner, 1962 (62.615.1)

The 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, which marked the nation’s hundredth anniversary, was one of the great American cultural events of its era. Coming at a time of mounting consumerism and cosmopolitanism, it set before American audiences the latest industrial, mechanical, scientific, and artistic achievements of the evolving international marketplace. This poster from the exhibition features views of the principal buildings — Memorial Hall (the art gallery), the Main

Building, Agricultural Hall, Machinery Hall, and Horticultural Hall — all situated in neatly groomed fair grounds. Previous international world’s fairs¹ had housed all their exhibits under one roof; the need for multiple buildings in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park reflected the expansion in industrial manufacturing that had occurred over a quarter of a century. Memorial Hall, a focal point of the exhibition built at the staggering cost of \$1.5 million, after the fair became Philadelphia’s first permanent art museum.

More than ten million visitors attended the Centennial International Exhibition. For most of the Americans who made the journey, the fair afforded their first important exposure to foreign arts and cultures.² Of the hundreds of national exhibits, those from Great Britain had the most powerful impact on American viewers. They featured innovative products based on theories of British design reformers whose responses to the new urbanization and industrialization of society had crystallized into the Aesthetic movement. A basic belief of the reformers was that works of art could actively influence and potentially improve people's lives. In the decorative arts, efforts focused on developing a new grammar of ornament that would emphasize the intrinsic visual qualities of objects. By cultivating what they envisioned as a universal language of color, form, pattern, and composition applicable to household decoration, design theorists hoped that "artistic" goods would reach a broader audience of modern home dwellers and perform an important ameliorative social function.³ The displays at the Centennial of furniture, textiles, ceramics, wallpapers, metalwork, and other household items designed according to these principles were essential catalysts in the spread of the Aesthetic and home-decorating movements from England to America, generating new interest in the decorative arts and the role they could play in improving and beautifying the home. Exhibits of high-style and commonplace wares served as object lessons for both consumers and manufacturers, teaching by example how to identify "good taste." Reform-minded British exhibitors hoped that such examples would encourage the demand, among American homeowners especially, for new types of "artistic" wares. In succeeding years that demand did grow, prompting American firms to produce goods in the latest tastes to rival their overseas competitors.

Wheeler's first major undertaking in the decorative arts — the founding of the Society of Decorative Art in New York

and its regional auxiliaries — was inspired in great part by her visit to the Centennial and her viewing of the exhibits from Great Britain (see pp. 21–24). These societies, she later wrote, "were really an outgrowth of the exhibit of painted china and embroidery shown by certain societies of English women at the Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia."⁴ Wheeler was particularly struck by the embroidered textiles displayed by the Royal School of Art Needlework based in South Kensington, London (see cat. no. 6). They featured conventionalized motifs borrowed from medieval, Renaissance, and Japanese art, embroidered in a centuries-old crewelwork stitch then referred to as the "Kensington stitch." Wheeler recalled, "It seemed to me a very simple sort of effort to have gained the vogue of a new art, and I saw that it was easily within the compass of almost every woman."⁵ She set out to educate American women in the art of stitchery by adapting and improving upon the type of work produced by her British counterparts. Indeed, "graduates from the Kensington School were employed as teachers in nearly all of the different societies [founded by Wheeler and her colleagues], and in this way every city became the center of this new-old form of embroidery."⁶

1. The first large-scale modern international exposition was the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851, held in London's Hyde Park in the famous glass structure built by Joseph Paxton. The Crystal Palace Exposition attracted millions of visitors to a six-month display of art and industry and celebrated European culture, emphasizing the achievements of the British industrial revolution. The New York Crystal Palace Exposition, held two years later in 1853–54 at what is now the site of Bryant Park at Forty-second Street, similarly championed the ascendancy of American culture, but it did not attract crowds of comparable size.

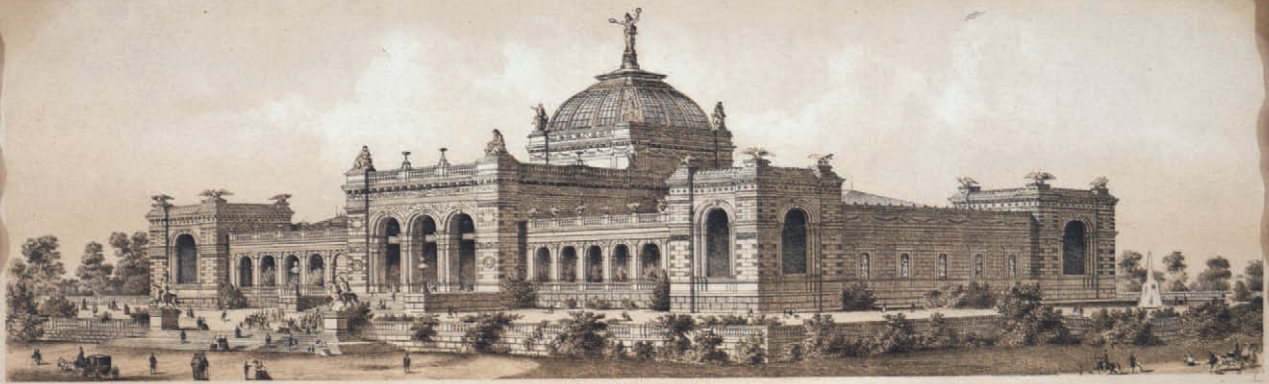
2. For more on the Philadelphia Centennial, see Post 1976; Rydell 1984, pp. 80–143; Davis 1999.

3. For more on the Aesthetic movement in Great Britain and the United States, see Burke et al. 1986.

4. Wheeler 1897, p. 85.

5. Wheeler 1918, p. 212.

6. Wheeler 1921, p. 110. By 1880 there were over thirty branches of the Society of Decorative Art operating in the United States and Canada.



ART GALLERY.



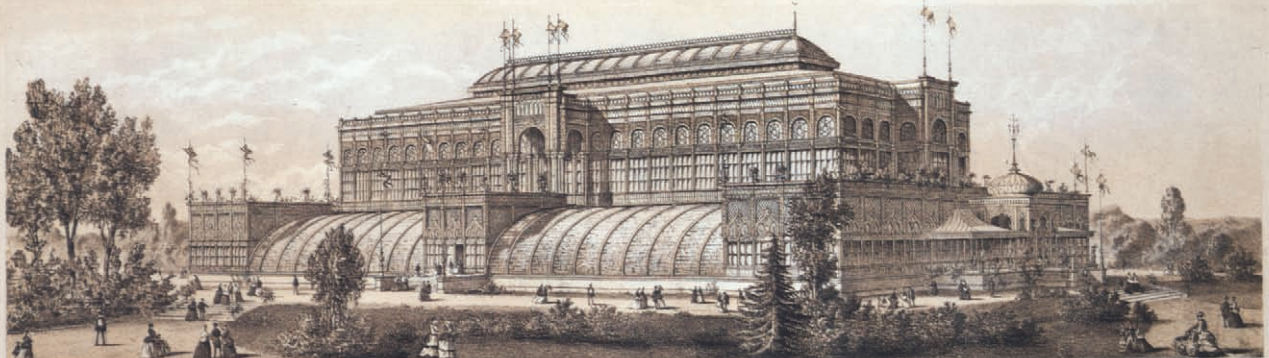
MAIN BUILDING.



AGRICULTURAL HALL.



MACHINERY HALL.



HORTICULTURAL HALL.

DIMENSIONS:

	Length.	Width.	Area.
ART GALLERY	300	510	153,000
MAIN BUILDING	1080	454	491,620
AGRICULTURAL HALL	808	500	404,000
MACHINERY HALL	1402	380	532,760
HORTICULTURAL HALL	300	180	54,000

CENTENNIAL INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.

FAIRMOUNT PARK

1876.

PHILADELPHIA.

6. Peacock screen

Ca. 1876

Adapted from a design by Walter Crane

Wool thread on bast and cotton in ebonized wood
frame, 68 × 92 × 1¼ in. (172.7 × 233.7 × 4.5 cm)

Collection of Barrie and Deedee Wigmore

The peacock embroidery on this three-panel screen was adapted from that on a screen designed by Walter Crane (1845–1915) and made and exhibited by the Royal School of Art Needlework at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. The design typifies the sort of high-style needlework being produced by the Royal School, which was in South Kensington in London. The screen shown at the exhibition (fig. 49) consisted of four panels depicting two peacocks and a jackdaw, a design based on Aesop's fable "The Vain Jackdaw": hoping to fool Jupiter into selecting him as the king of the birds, the vain jackdaw disguised his ugly plumage with colorful peacock feathers until he was exposed for what he was. A reviewer for *Harper's Bazar* admired the craftsmanship that the screen represented: "The design is very effective and striking, and it is exquisitely worked in crewels on a white linen ground, the wood-work being ebonized American walnut, handsomely carved." It was noted further that a duplicate had been ordered for the duke of Westminster for what was then the substantial sum of \$1,100.¹

Evidently the screen shown at the exhibition was so popular that a number of additional versions were subsequently made by the school; the screen seen here seems to be one of them. Although the jackdaw is now absent, two peacocks very similar to those on the exhibition screen remain. The border differs from that of the original as well, featuring sunburstlike motifs instead of a diaper pattern of overlapping scales. This example is of particular interest because portions of the outer edges are incomplete, exposing the initial drawing of the design onto the ground fabric before it was embroidered over in an outline stitch and finally filled in with thread of several colors in various types of stitches.

Works executed from Crane's designs were among the finest exemplars of sophisticated British needlework and set a standard that Wheeler aspired to match. The delicately rendered motifs and subtly shaded stitchery of this screen



Fig. 49. *Fire Screen: Royal School of Art Needlework*, 1876. Wood engraving from Walter Smith, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition*, vol. 2, 1876, p. 249. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of John K. Howat

were very different from the cruder types of needlework being produced in America in the decades leading up to the Centennial, such as Berlin wool-work — in which pre-printed, realistically drawn pictures of animals, flowers, and subjects from literature and the Bible were reproduced on embroidery canvas in brightly colored yarns worked in simple tent stitches or cross-stitches (fig. 14).² The art educator Walter Smith praised the exhibition of the Royal School because "each of the designs here shown is thoroughly artistic, and of a character suited to the work. . . . How much more satisfactory this is than the fashion, not yet out of date, of attempting to copy natural objects in Berlin wool!"³ The school's wares represented the apogee of elegant Aesthetic movement design, featuring such familiar motifs from classical and Japanese sources as peacocks, pomegranates, lilies, palmyra leaves, and carp. Wheeler would use many of the same motifs in her own textile designs of the 1880s and 1890s.



The Royal School of Art Needlework had been organized in London in 1872 under the presidency of Queen Victoria's daughter Helena, princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. Its purpose was dual: to revive hand-needlework, for which English women had been famous during earlier centuries, by operating a school that trained students; and to furnish women with a means of earning a living by serving as a center for the production and sale of "art needlework."⁴ According to Wheeler, "Its primary object was to benefit a class which it called 'decayed gentlewomen.'"⁵ The artistic output of the Royal School was heavily influenced by the ideas and designs of some of the most popular artists of the day who were also design reformers, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Walter Crane, all of whom were commissioned to furnish the school with designs that its students could execute.

The exhibition of textiles by the Royal School at the Philadelphia Centennial was the inspiration for Wheeler's Society of Decorative Art, which she founded in New York in 1877. Wheeler followed the Royal School's model, structuring her society to function both as a school for the instruction of women and as a showroom for the sale of their works (see also pages 27–38).

1. "Art Needle-Work at the Centennial" 1876, p. 650.
2. On Berlin wool-work, see Morris 1962, pp. 19–60, 170–72.
3. Smith 1876, p. 260. On Smith, see cat. no. 7, n. 2.
4. The term "art needlework" as used in the last quarter of the nineteenth century referred to a revival of the art of embroidery through the study of historic exemplars. While a high degree of skill and knowledge was implied, in practice the term was also applied to amateur work that fell short of such elevated standards. Art needlework generally featured more muted colors, a reaction to the simple, sometimes garish brights of Berlin wool-work. The most popular form was crewelwork employing the "Kensington stitch," inspired by seventeenth-century British originals. See Morris 1962, pp. 113–42, 181–92.
5. Wheeler 1918, p. 210.

7. *Madonna-lily pillow cover*

Ca. 1876–77

Wool twill embroidered with wool and silk thread,
silk velvet border, 22 × 22½ in. (55.9 × 57.2 cm)

Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

This embroidered pillow cover was almost certainly designed by Wheeler very early in her career, probably soon after she visited the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Madonna-lily motif stitched on the cover in crewel wools is nearly identical to the design of a curtain border exhibited at the Centennial by the Royal School of Art Needlework in South Kensington (fig. 50). The curtain was featured in *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition* (1876) by Walter Smith, a graduate of the South Kensington School of Design in London and the author of numerous drawing books published in America. Smith praised the curtain's simple repeating pattern as "a beautifully graceful one, copying nature, but treating the subject in such a manner as to be in no way offensive to good taste."¹

Wheeler was clearly attempting to imitate English models such as the curtain border when she began to fashion her own textiles. Many of her early efforts were exercises in simplification and structured patterning, the basic methods of the so-called South Kensington school of design and of Walter Smith's popular system of conventional drawing.² (Later, Wheeler came to regard the system as "false in principle.")³ English precedents also supplied the stitches and fabrics that Wheeler adopted early in her career. The pillow cover, of wool twill embroidered in crewel wool and silk, echoes the textile work of English designer William Morris and his followers, who experimented with various types of crewel embroidery and natural dyes to create textiles of highly studied simplicity (for more on Morris's textiles, see cat. no. 23). Wheeler's use of a tightly sewn crewel stitch on sturdy plain-woven wool cloth reflects her belief that "ornamentation should be as durable as the fabric to which it is applied" and "so close and firm that it will outlast the material."⁴ She would remain faithful to these basic design principles throughout her career, even when creating luxury textiles with sophisticated patterns and techniques for high-style interiors. Pieces like this pillow cover, with its home-

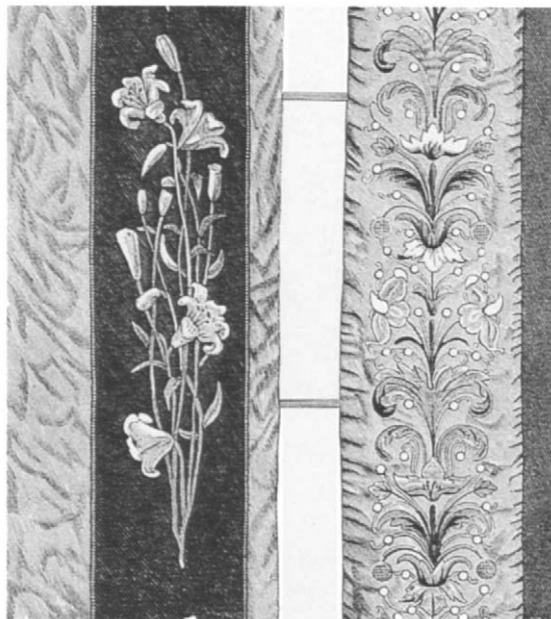


Fig. 50. *Curtain Borders: Royal School of Art Needlework, 1876.* Wood engraving from Walter Smith, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition*, vol. 2, 1876, p. 277. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of John K. Howat

made look, were the building blocks for more ambitious undertakings such as the "Consider the Lillies of the Field" portieres completed two or three years later (cat. no. 8).

Wheeler frequently returned to the theme of lilies, both embroidered and printed (cat. no. 63). In Western art a white lily, particularly the Madonna lily, had long been a symbol of purity and innocence. In Wheeler's day the lily motif was a recurring feature in English Pre-Raphaelite painting and often adorned works of decorative art associated with the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements. English design books by leading tastemakers of the period, such as Lewis F. Day and Walter Crane, featured a variety of lily designs for textiles, wallpapers, and other household items. When Oscar Wilde, the Irish author and eccentric dandy, embraced the lily as his flower of personal preference, it assumed an almost cult status.

1. Smith 1876, p. 278.

2. English-born Walter Smith (1836–1886) emigrated to the United States in 1871 and was best known in America as an art educator and a leading



proponent of the application of art to industry. He devised an elementary curriculum of drawing for use in the Massachusetts public schools that set the standard for art education throughout the Northeast. Based on a drawing technique developed by English designer Christopher Dresser, his method emphasized regular ornament consisting of simple flat geometric forms arranged symmetrically. Wheeler probably saw the highly publicized exhibit of industrial designs based on Smith's system at the Centennial. On Smith's career in America, see Korzenik 1985, pp. 154–65, 194–202, 219–20, 240.

3. "It [Smith's system] takes a flower," Wheeler said in 1887, "— any flower, every flower— picks it to pieces, and makes a 'design' of it, based on some geometrical form, without any regard to its natural growth." She held that many flowers were "sufficiently conventional in form to be introduced into artificial ornamentation" without having to make extreme departures from nature. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).
4. Ibid.

8. “Consider the Lillies of the Field” *portieres*

1879

Cotton embroidered with wool thread and painted,
wool borders, $74\frac{1}{4} \times 44\frac{1}{2}$ in. (188.6 × 113 cm); $73 \times$
 $45\frac{1}{2}$ in. (185.4 × 115.6 cm)

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, Gift
of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.25 A/B)

Portieres, or doorway hangings, hung in pairs, were popular items of home decoration in the second half of the nineteenth century. By disguising or replacing a heavy wooden door they softened the division between rooms, added an elegant touch, and served the practical purpose of keeping out drafts.¹ This pair of portieres embroidered and painted with wild meadow lilies is one of the few surviving pieces designed by Wheeler in the late 1870s, when she was helping direct the Society of Decorative Art. The hangings were awarded a fifty-dollar first prize for best portiere design in a competition in November 1879 sponsored by the *Art Interchange*, a weekly magazine affiliated with the Society of Decorative Art.² Wheeler was one of the magazine’s supervisors in 1878–79 and was, moreover, one of the six judges for this competition. Although she entered the competition anonymously, under the pseudonym Meadow Lily, it seems hardly a coincidence that she was a winner.

The inscription, “Consider the Lillies of the Field,” is from a passage in the Gospel of Matthew (6:28–29) that in the King James Version reads, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (“Lilies” was spelled with a double “l” in early editions.) Wheeler had been rigorously schooled in the Gospels from an early age; in quoting from this verse she seems to have been emphasizing that God-given nature was the inspiration for her artistic endeavors. The verse’s inspirational words of trust in divine providence were a popular theme among many of Wheeler’s English counterparts and in keeping with the imperative of the Arts and Crafts movement to return to preindustrial modes of handicraft and natural standards of beauty.

Stylistically Wheeler’s portieres derive partly from her work as a flower painter and partly from examples of British

needlework. The evenly spaced, conventionally represented lilies and the Gothic script reveal the influence of English design of the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements, particularly the crewelwork of the Royal School of Art Needlework. In designing the portieres, Wheeler may have looked to actual pieces of needlework executed by students of the Royal School that had made their way across the Atlantic to New York. Portieres that had been “sent out from Kensington” to decorate a “country house near New York” were described in an article published in 1878 in the *Art Interchange* (which may have been written by Wheeler herself, who at the time was a member of the magazine’s Publications Committee). They were of “pale *résédas* serge, bordered with brown velvet, and a deep dado of the same,” decorated with “reeds, grasses, and pale-tinted flowers embroidered in crewels, [which] spring out of the dado, and seem to be blown by the wind, so lightly and easily are they sketched.”³ In using very simple outline stitches and loosely painted areas of color on her plain-woven cotton portieres, Wheeler appears to have been aiming for an effect of similar lightness. The *New York Times* commented admiringly that Wheeler’s portieres were “kept very low in tone throughout, being made of materials which show none of the customary brand-newness of furniture stuffs.”⁴ These deliberately modest hangings differed markedly from large-scale embroidered works designed by Wheeler a few years later; those featured densely stitched silken threads or elaborate appliqués of silk velvets, creating the rich, luxurious effects preferred by a wealthy clientele.

1. For a contemporary discussion of how portieres were used in relation to the rest of a room’s decor, see “Portieres” 1878.

2. See *Art Interchange* 3 (November 26, 1879), p. 90; “Portière by Mrs. T. M. Wheeler” 1879.

3. “Portieres” 1878.

4. “Art Interchange Competition” 1879.



9. *Self-Portrait*

Ca. 1870–75

Oil on canvas, 20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.6 cm)

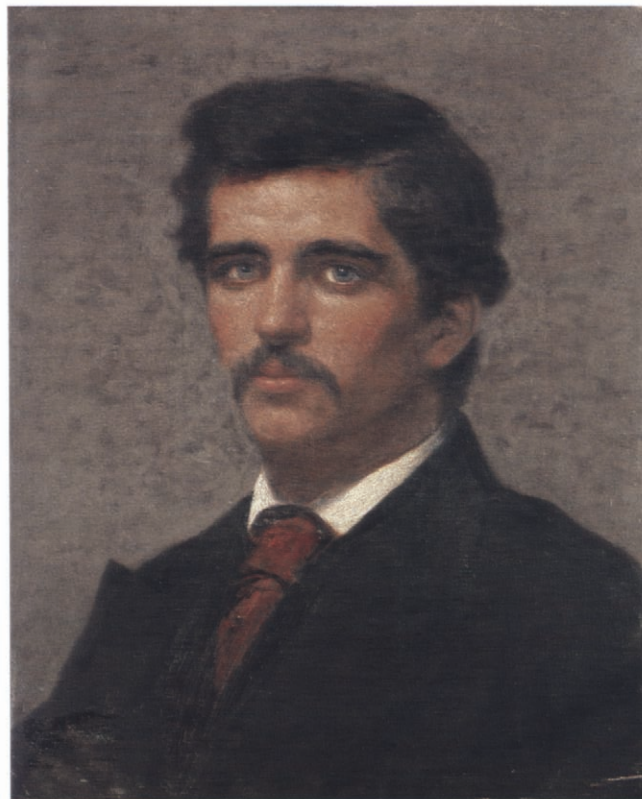
National Academy of Design, New York (1257-P)

This self-portrait by Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) was probably painted about the time he and Wheeler first met. Tiffany was the son of Charles L. Tiffany, who had founded the prominent New York silver and jewelry firm Tiffany & Company. However, the family business held no appeal for Tiffany, who from 1866 to 1879 chose to work primarily as a painter of landscapes and genre scenes. Tiffany formally launched his painting career in 1867, when he exhibited at the National Academy of Design. He became an associate of the academy in 1871 and probably painted this canvas to satisfy its requirement of a portrait for its permanent collection; he became a full academician in 1880.¹

In 1877 Tiffany turned much of his attention to the decorative arts, joining five committees of Wheeler's newly formed Society of Decorative Art (where he also taught a pottery class with painter-designer Lockwood de Forest; see cat. no. 11).² The following year he took up interior decorating as a full-time occupation and formed a business called Louis C. Tiffany.³ Tiffany began by designing the interiors of his studio-home.⁴ The drawing-room decor (fig. 51) typifies his opulent and eclectic approach, mixing exotic Japanese, Moorish, and Indian styles, and employing a variety of media — carved wood, colored and leaded glass, metallic papers, luxurious textiles — all embellished with profuse surface ornament. Tiffany admired “art for art’s sake” principles, which encouraged the creation of richly ornamented interiors for purely aesthetic effect. He was particularly interested in incorporating diverse decorative elements into a carefully unified aesthetic.

Tiffany’s involvement with the Society of Decorative Art gradually waned — he had little interest in its philanthropic and educational efforts — and in 1879 he resigned to explore decoration for profit on a more ambitious scale. Wheeler’s autobiography contains a somewhat apocryphal account in which Tiffany describes his plans for a new business:

“[Samuel] Colman and DeForest and I are going to make a combination for interior decoration of all sorts. I shall work out some ideas I have in glass. DeForest is going to India to



look up carved woods, and Colman will look after color and textiles. You had better join us. It is the real thing, you know; a business, not a philanthropy or an amateur educational scheme. We are going after the money there is in art, but the art is there, all the same. If your husband will let you, you had better join us and take up embroidery and decorative needlework. There are great possibilities in it.”⁵

Tiffany saw those possibilities in the fact that the newly rich in America were amassing extensive art collections, building palatial mansions to house them, and seeking the services of decorators who could furnish them in an appropriately lavish style.

Between 1879 and 1881 Tiffany’s decorating was carried out through three separate firms: Louis C. Tiffany (1878–81), Tiffany & Wheeler (1879–81), and Tiffany & de Forest (ca. 1879–83). In 1881 the first two were merged into Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, known popularly as Associated Artists. Tiffany & de Forest, which supplied exotic

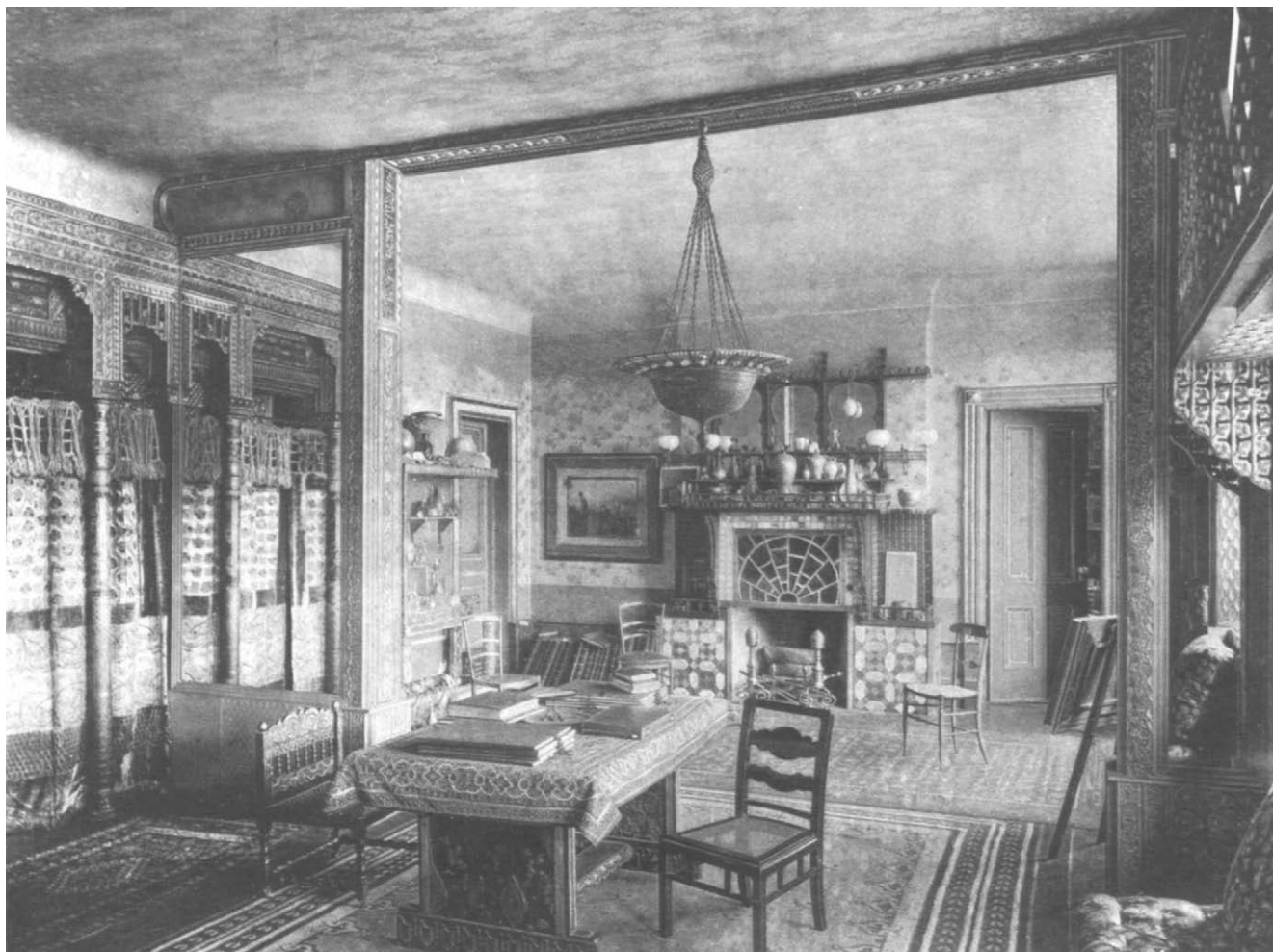


Fig. 51. Mr. Louis C. Tiffany's Drawing-Room, 1883. From [George William Sheldon], *Artistic Houses; Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States*, 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

East Indian and Near Eastern furnishings for Tiffany's decorating projects, remained a separate business until it was dissolved in 1883 (see cat. no. 11). For each interior decorating project undertaken by one of his firms, Tiffany developed the overall concept and himself designed much of the stained glass and some of the furniture, wallpaper, and textiles; he hired others to design all the remaining decorative elements, according to his general plans.⁶ In 1879 Tiffany also designed a number of "artistic" wallpapers for the New York manufacturer J. S. Warren & Company. The following year two of these were published in the firm's small promotional volume *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?* (cat. no. 31).

The Tiffany name was well known in New York's leading social circles, and Tiffany himself was intensely charismatic. This powerful combination of pedigree and personality

facilitated his securing of many important, high-profile commissions. After Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, disbanded in 1883, Tiffany continued the business under the name Louis C. Tiffany & Company until 1885. In that year he organized the Tiffany Glass Company (later Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company, then in 1900 Tiffany Studios), through which he greatly expanded his design and production of works in glass while continuing to produce furniture and design interiors. In the 1890s the firm branched out into metalwork and other household items. In about 1919 Tiffany withdrew from the day-to-day operation of the business, retiring altogether in about 1928.⁷ Tiffany Studios was declared bankrupt in 1932.

1. During the first year after his election an associate was required to present to the academy a portrait of himself, either a self-portrait or

- one done by another artist. An academician was required to present the academy with a specimen of his work. See Clark 1954, pp. 16–17, 69. For more on Tiffany's work as a painter, see Reynolds 1979a; Reynolds 1979b.
2. Society of Decorative Art 1878b, pp. 6–9, 32–33. In 1877 Tiffany was a member of the SDA's committees on House, Library, Instruction, Paintings, and Design.
 3. "Louis C. Tiffany," June 18, 1878, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896. The entry lists Tiffany's home address (see n. 4) as his place of business and describes him as a "Decorator and Artist" specializing in embroideries. Although a subsequent ledger entry mentions "L. C. Tiffany & Co. Furniture" located at 373 Fourth Avenue, this was probably the same firm with a new designated specialty. See "Tiffany &

- De Forest," October 1, 1880, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896. This entry contains what was apparently the first use of the name Louis C. Tiffany & Company.
4. For descriptions of his apartment on the top floor of the famous Bella Apartments at 48 East Twenty-sixth Street, see Moran 1880; Mitchell 1882; Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 1–6.
 5. Wheeler 1918, pp. 231–32.
 6. In addition to collaborating with Wheeler, Colman, and de Forest, Tiffany employed John L. du Fais as director of the firm's architectural department (see "High-Toned House Decoration" 1882) and on occasion brought in other artists (see, e.g., cat. no. 18).
 7. For more on Tiffany's work in interior decoration, see Koch 1966, pp. 5–47; N. Harris 1989; Frelinghuysen 1998, pp. 8–27.

GEORGE HENRY YEWELL

10. *Samuel Colman*

Ca. 1854–62

Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 16 in. (50.2 × 40.6 cm)

National Academy of Design, New York (1470-P)

The American painter and designer Samuel Colman (1832–1920) was a prominent figure in the New York art world during the second half of the nineteenth century. This portrait by the portraitist and genre painter George Henry Yewell (1830–1923)¹ was probably painted about the time that Colman became an associate of the National Academy of Design in 1854 or an academician in 1862. Although Colman began his career as a landscape painter associated with the Hudson River school, his interests quickly extended beyond painting to the decorative arts. He was famous for his extensive collection of Asian and North African artifacts, and he also became known for his designs for wallpapers and embroideries.

Colman and his future design colleagues Louis C. Tiffany, Wheeler, and Lockwood de Forest met in the early 1870s while they were still working as painters. Eventually they came together late in the decade to serve on committees and teach classes at the Society of Decorative Art, which became a regular venue for the display of textiles that each of them had begun to design (Colman seems to have served on a committee only once, in 1877). In 1879 Tiffany recruited Colman to contribute his expertise on color and textiles for various projects undertaken by Tiffany's decorating firms, beginning with the George Kemp house commission (see cat. no. 14). Colman helped promote the work of Tiffany &



Wheeler by organizing an exhibition of its embroideries at the society in 1880.²

Although Colman was never officially listed in the R. G. Dun & Company credit ledgers as a partner in either Tiffany & Wheeler or Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, he assisted Tiffany on a number of those firms' projects. Among them were the Madison Square

Theatre stage curtain, the Veterans' Room and Library of the Seventh Regiment Armory, and the drawing room of the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion (see cat. nos. 15, 18, 22). It is unclear whether Colman planned the color schemes of entire projects from start to finish or played a more limited, advisory role. He seems to have been active in Tiffany's businesses for only a short time; by late 1882 he was living at his new home in Newport, Rhode Island, far from the firm's day-to-day operations. Wheeler observed that Colman "was instinctively a painter, with a love of color which had led him somewhat reluctantly into decoration."³

Nevertheless, Colman excelled in the decorative arts. One of the first areas he explored was "art needlework." Especially influenced by the Japanese textiles and prints that he collected, he often incorporated actual Japanese fabrics or Japanese-inspired motifs into his work. For example, an embroidered portiere executed after Colman's design by workers of the Society of Decorative Art for the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion featured Japanesque motifs of reeds, birds, and iris (fig. 52).⁴ The *Art Interchange* described the piece while it was still being worked on in November 1879:

*The middle space of this charming portière is of light blue (not pale blue) satin, upon which are wrought reeds, iris flowers and aquatic plants, with a few hints in the rear of landscape, water and clouds, sketched after the Japanese method. This embroidery is done by skilled fingers, in crewels, with the most perfect finish attained by patient stitching, the forms afterwards outlined in golden cord. Below the blue comes a broad horizontal band of fawn-colored sateen, with scroll-work of deep blue silk outlined in tent-stitch around appliqué disks of plush in indescribably soft and silvery hues of rose-salmon and deeper fawn. Upon these disks of plush are conventional designs, worked with a daintiness that may well cause the amateur needle-woman to despair, and their irregular outlines indicated by a cord of gold, throwing them into relief. Above the space of blue, lovely birds soar upward in their flight. Dividing the bands are strips of conventional marguerites wrought in gold thread. The lower portion of the drapery is of golden fawn-colored plush, the whole bordered by a scroll-pattern, embroidered upon the same material. The effect of these delicate gradations of gold and brown is delicate in the extreme.*⁵

Colman's highly pictorial treatment of textiles clearly derived from his training as a landscape painter. The motifs that he selected recurred in textiles designed by his colleagues, such as the reeds-and-birds portiere produced by Tiffany & Wheeler for the Union League Club in 1880 and the iris

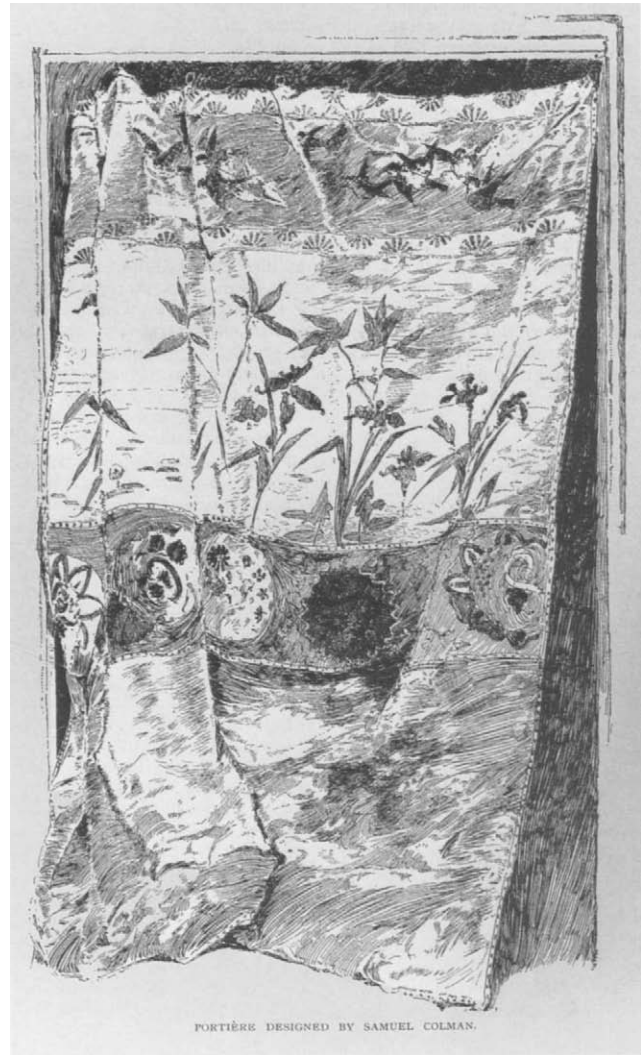


Fig. 52. *Portière Designed by Samuel Colman*, 1880. Wood engraving from *Scribner's Monthly* 22, September 1881, p. 697. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, General Research Division

embroidery designed by Wheeler in 1883 (cat. nos. 20, 24). It is difficult to say whether one designer influenced another; they all shared a common visual vocabulary, especially with regard to "Oriental" imagery.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s Colman moved into artistic endeavors of a more commercial nature. Like Tiffany, in 1879 he designed wallpaper for the New York manufacturer J. S. Warren & Company, which published three of his designs in Clarence Cook's "*What Shall We Do with Our Walls?*" (cat. no. 31). Colman was also a judge in the annual Christmas card design competitions organized by lithographer and publisher Louis Prang (see cat. nos. 40–43).

Colman collaborated with Tiffany once again, in 1889–90, on the decoration of the H. O. Havemeyer mansion at

Sixty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue. He also worked independently on other interior decorating projects, including his own Newport home in 1882 and Hilltop, the H. O. Havemeyer home in Greenwich, Connecticut, in 1889.⁶ Colman's style of interior decorating was similar in many ways to Tiffany's, emphasizing exoticism, profuse surface ornament, and luxurious, varied materials to create an "aesthetic" effect throughout. In a letter written to Colman's wife when Colman died in 1920, Tiffany expressed his feeling of immense debt to his colleague, who, he said, "did more to make me love nature and art than anyone."⁷

1. Yewell studied at the National Academy of Design in 1851–56 and settled in New York in 1862–67 and then again in 1878–99. He became an associate of the academy in 1862 and an academician in 1880. Although he may have painted Colman's portrait in 1854 while still a student, it

seems more likely that he did it in 1862, when he was working as a professional portraitist. Yewell subsequently acted as an agent for Tiffany & de Forest (see cat. no. 11) and was hired by Tiffany & Wheeler to paint the library frieze of the George Kemp house (cat. no. 14), and with Francis D. Millet, the frieze of the Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory (cat. no. 18). For more on Yewell, see *Who Was Who in American Art* 1999, vol. 2, p. 3663.

2. Society of Decorative Art 1880, p. 16.

3. Wheeler 1918, p. 256. On Colman's career as a painter, see Craven 1976.

4. Harrison 1881, p. 164.

5. "Colman's Art Draperies" 1879. One of the finest examples of Colman's textile design, this portiere — now presumed destroyed — was exhibited at the Society of Decorative Art in the spring of 1880 and was widely noted in the press; see, e.g., "Decorative Art Society's Work" 1879; "Promoting the Beautiful" 1880; "Prize Design Embroideries" 1881, p. 443. For other textiles by Colman shown at the society, see "Society of Decorative Art" 1886, p. 5.

6. For the Havemeyer commissions, see Gubanich 1999, pp. 70–75. For Colman's Newport home, see Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 70–74.

7. Letter, Louis C. Tiffany to Mrs. Samuel Colman, April 15, 1920, Colman family archives, cited in Gubanich 1999, p. 65, n. 23.

JAMES WELLS CHAMPNEY

II. *Lockwood de Forest*

Ca. 1891

Oil on canvas, 21 × 17 in. (53.3 × 43.2 cm)

Signed at bottom: J. Wells Champney

Inscribed upper right: L. de Forest

National Academy of Design, New York (334-P)

Like Tiffany, Colman, and Wheeler, Lockwood de Forest (1850–1932), began his career as a painter; his principal mentor was the Hudson River school painter Frederic Edwin Church. Starting in 1872 de Forest exhibited at the National Academy of Design, where he became an associate in 1891 and a full academician in 1898. This portrait of him by James Wells Champney (1843–1903)¹ was perhaps completed about the time that de Forest became an associate and given to the academy for its permanent collection, as required.

While touring Egypt and the Near East in 1875–76, de Forest developed a strong interest in exotic interior furnishings and woodwork and envisioned the possibility of founding an import business.² When he returned to New York he began to cultivate his talents as a decorator and remodeled the interiors of his father's house at 15 West Thirtieth Street, drawing upon what he had seen in his travels. In 1877 de Forest joined Colman and Tiffany on

the Committee on Design of Wheeler's Society of Decorative Art and co-taught with Tiffany classes in "unbaked" pottery for students of the society. After a second trip to Greece and Egypt in 1878, de Forest in 1879 became art director of the society's Needlework Department, where his taste for exoticism shaped much of his work. Persian-style portieres with cusped-arch motifs, stitched by the society's workers after de Forest's designs, were among the wares exhibited in its showrooms.³

In 1879 or 1880 de Forest and Tiffany established an import business called Tiffany & de Forest.⁴ It was agreed that de Forest would travel abroad to procure furnishings, presumably for the commissions undertaken by Tiffany & Wheeler. De Forest, intrigued by the wood carvings he had seen at the Indian Museum in London, visited India in January 1881 and became enthralled with the country's architecture and craft traditions. But in Bombay, he discovered, the

local carvers made mostly crude blackwood imitations of European furniture, and the quality of craftsmanship among the hereditary trade guilds had deteriorated in recent generations.⁵ Eventually he ended up in Ahmadabad, the principal city of the western state of Gujarat, famous for its fifteenth- and sixteenth-century mosques and tombs with their fine teak and sandstone architectural decorations. There de Forest met Dalpatbhai Muggunbhai Hutheesing, a prominent local merchant-banker who commanded a staff of highly skilled wood and brass workers, a Hindu subcaste known as *mistri*, with whom he established the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company (this spelling of the city's name was then usual). The company produced stock elements for interior architecture and furnishings of elaborately carved teakwood and pierced and engraved brass and copper based on traditional Indian exemplars, as well as fully assembled carved teakwood furniture, much of which de Forest designed (see cat. no. 12).⁶ De Forest sent these items back to Tiffany together with relief-carved sandstone panels, textiles, carpets, tiles, metalwork, and jewelry purchased along the way.⁷ Tiffany & de Forest's lavishly decorated New York showroom, which opened to the public in the fall of 1882, resembled an Indian bazaar.

While de Forest was in India in 1881, Tiffany formed another decorating firm, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, a successor to Tiffany & Wheeler. Although de Forest was named as an associate of it in the initial credit ledger issued by R. G. Dun & Company in June 1881, his name never appeared in subsequent entries, and the firm Tiffany & de Forest remained a separate entity despite a plan to merge the two firms.⁸ During the period of his partnership with de Forest, Tiffany incorporated Indian materials into decorative schemes of a number of homes, including those of railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt II (see cat. no. 22), author Mark Twain (cat. no. 21), and elder statesman Hamilton Fish.⁹

De Forest grew increasingly concerned with preserving Indian craft traditions and became frustrated with Tiffany's laissez-faire attitude toward their joint venture. Shortly after de Forest returned to New York in 1882, he and Tiffany signed a contract to dissolve their partnership and close out their joint inventory by May 1883. Subsequently de Forest established a new business under his own name, and in the spring of 1884 he opened a showroom where he continued to sell goods made in the Ahmadabad workshop and obtained on his travels.¹⁰ About 1885 or 1886 he began producing hand-knotted woolen carpets in Ahmadabad; he



eventually turned over that portion of the business to New York carpet dealers W. and J. Sloane. Always striving to disseminate Indian-style designs, he entered into a contract in 1883 with New York wallpaper manufacturer Warren, Fuller & Lange to provide Indian-inspired patterns, which he furnished to the company until about 1887 (see cat. no. 31). A similar arrangement was made in 1884 with the Smith & Anthony Stove Company of Boston for designs for cast-iron fireplace linings.¹¹ Throughout the 1880s and 1890s de Forest also worked independently as an interior designer, decorating his own house at 7 East Tenth Street (1886–88), Frederic Church's home, Olana, in Hudson, New York (1888–89), and a room in the Andrew Carnegie mansion on Fifth Avenue (1898–1901), among others. He continued to supply Indian woodwork and metalwork to Tiffany.

De Forest's passion for Indian art prompted him to write *Indian Domestic Architecture* in 1885, *Indian Architecture and Ornament* in 1887, and *Illustrations of Design* in 1912.¹² He formed an extensive collection of Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Persian decorative art and jewelry, a large portion of which The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired between 1915 and 1919. In 1908 de Forest transferred his contract with the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company to Tiffany's

new firm, Tiffany Studios, turning back to painting and continuing to promote Indian art through his writing.

1. Boston-born James Wells Champney was among the first American Impressionist painters and was best known as a genre painter of rural scenes. He also worked as an illustrator, a sketch artist, an engraver, and a teacher. From 1874 to 1903 he exhibited regularly at the National Academy of Design, of which he became an associate in 1892 but never a full academician. See *Who Was Who in American Art* 1999, vol. 1, p. 611.
2. De Forest's unpublished typescript "Indian Domestic Architecture" (de Forest 1914–19) provides an in-depth account of his three trips to India; he published a book of the same title in 1885 (see n. 12 below).
3. See "Promoting the Beautiful" 1880.
4. "Tiffany & De Forest," October 1, 1880, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896. Tiffany and de Forest had known each other for years. De Forest's father, an attorney, was outside counsel for Tiffany's father's firm, Tiffany & Company, and Tiffany had been friends with de Forest's older brother, Robert Weeks de Forest.
5. See de Forest 1914–19, reel 2733, frame 1118.
6. The most complete record of the company's dealings is contained in the de Forest Papers; see also de Forest 1910; Lewis 1976, pp. 12–32; Mayer 2000. Although de Forest organized and financed the company, paying for tools, materials, and salaries, apparently he was not its legal owner but instead entered into contracts for years at a time with the Hutheesing family, who ran and owned it.
7. Tiffany sold the jewelry at a profit to his father's firm, Tiffany and Company. See Mayer 2000, pp. 113, 121, 126.
8. "L. C. Tiffany & Co.," June 9, 1881, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 1896. The plans to merge Tiffany's various firms are mentioned in the October 1, 1880, credit ledger entry cited in note 4 above.
9. On the Fish house, see Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 2; pt. 1; pp. 94–96.
10. "Lockwood De Forest," November 24, 1883, Dun Credit Ledger, New York, vol. 388, p. 2100a/61. See Mayer 2000, pp. 169–73. A contemporary description of the Seventeenth-street showroom is contained in Coleman 1885.
11. On business agreements between de Forest and these other firms and individuals, see Mayer 2000, pp. 180–84.
12. De Forest 1885; de Forest 1887; de Forest 1912. For a discussion of contemporary criticism of these, see Mayer 2000, pp. 189–92, 195.

LOCKWOOD DE FOREST

12. *Side chair*

Ca. 1885–87

Manufactured by the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company

Teak, cotton upholstery embroidered with silk thread,
32 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (82.2 × 46.4 × 47 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Purchase, The Overbrook Foundation Gift, 1992
(1992.340)

13. *Screen*

Ca. 1898

Manufactured by the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company

Teak, plaited straw, unidentified mixed metals,
65 × 69 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (165.1 × 177.2 × 4.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Priscilla de Forest Williams, 1992 (1992.43)

The side chair and folding screen shown here are two examples of the "exotic" furniture that Lockwood de Forest designed and produced at the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company (1881–ca. 1910) in Gujarat state in western India. The company manufactured carved and turned teakwood furniture, either fully or partially assembled, as well as a wide variety of architectural elements (moldings, lintels, columns, cusped arches, etc.) in teak, and thin pierced and engraved panels in brass and copper. These elements were intended mainly for American architects and designers to use in creating interiors and furniture to their own specifications. They bore intricate patterns based for the most part on architectural ornament in western India dating to the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, or sometimes on works de Forest saw in Cairo and Damascus.¹

For the actual structure and proportions of his furniture, de Forest's designs depended largely on Western models. Pieces like this side chair (cat. no. 12) suggest the impact of English design reformers — particularly Charles Locke Eastlake — who extolled the virtues of uncomplicated and

solidly built rectilinear furniture hearkening back to the medieval era of “honest” handcraftsmanship. De Forest coupled Indian, North African, and Near Eastern vocabularies of ornament with straightforward Elizabethan-style plank construction to arrive at a unique synthesis of diverse cultural elements. (Another reason for his furniture’s structural simplicity is the fact that in India, where people were accustomed to sitting on the ground, wood carvers were not highly skilled in the art of joinery. The marked disparity between complexity of ornament and simplicity of construction evidently appealed to de Forest.) The furniture that emerged from de Forest’s factory was suited to Western usage but designed to look obviously Indian.² This chair’s perforated tracery back and carved frame carry intricate vegetal motifs. Like the other seating furniture de Forest made, it is upholstered with fabric from Ahmadabad, a geometric-patterned and richly embroidered fabric (now much worn) of the type that designers like Tiffany used for exotic effect in Aesthetic-style interiors.³

De Forest manufactured a number of side chairs similar to the one shown, in several versions. This one may have belonged to a suite purchased by Baltimore & Ohio Railroad heiress Mary Elizabeth Garrett for her home in Baltimore. Two surviving chairs from that suite, at present owned by Bryn Mawr College, are numbered 30 and 32 on the frames, an identification system used by the Ahmadabad workshop.⁴ The one in the Metropolitan’s collection is marked 36, suggesting that it belonged to the Garrett suite. Although the chair closely resembles one in photographs of de Forest’s showroom published in his *Indian Domestic Architecture* (fig. 53), it differs in some details, such as the shape of the crest rail.⁵

While many of the items that de Forest sent to New York were sold as stock items, others were custom-made for use in specific interiors designed by Tiffany & Wheeler and then Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. Tiffany and his associates were thus able to incorporate them seamlessly into decorative schemes that were predominantly Aesthetic in taste, such as the George Kemp salon (fig. 54). These interiors were in a style commonly referred to as “Moorish” or “Arabian”; they were loosely based on Near Eastern Islamic art but incorporated widely disparate elements from India, North Africa, and the “Orient” as well. While the Philadelphia Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 had exposed Americans to some of these distant art forms, few concerned themselves with the differences among the various styles. It was sufficient that



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the elaborate floral, arabesque, and geometric motifs of what collectively was called “exotic” art blended so easily with densely patterned Aesthetic ornament.

The combination of Indian carving with the Japanese cup-shaped elements that de Forest used as finials in this folding screen (cat. no. 13) epitomizes the tendency in this period to blur distinctions among far-flung styles. The finials are made of a combination of different colored metals in the *mokume* technique, which imitates wood grain.⁶ The screen stood in the large hall (the living room) of Wawapek in Cold Spring, Long Island, the home of Emily and Robert

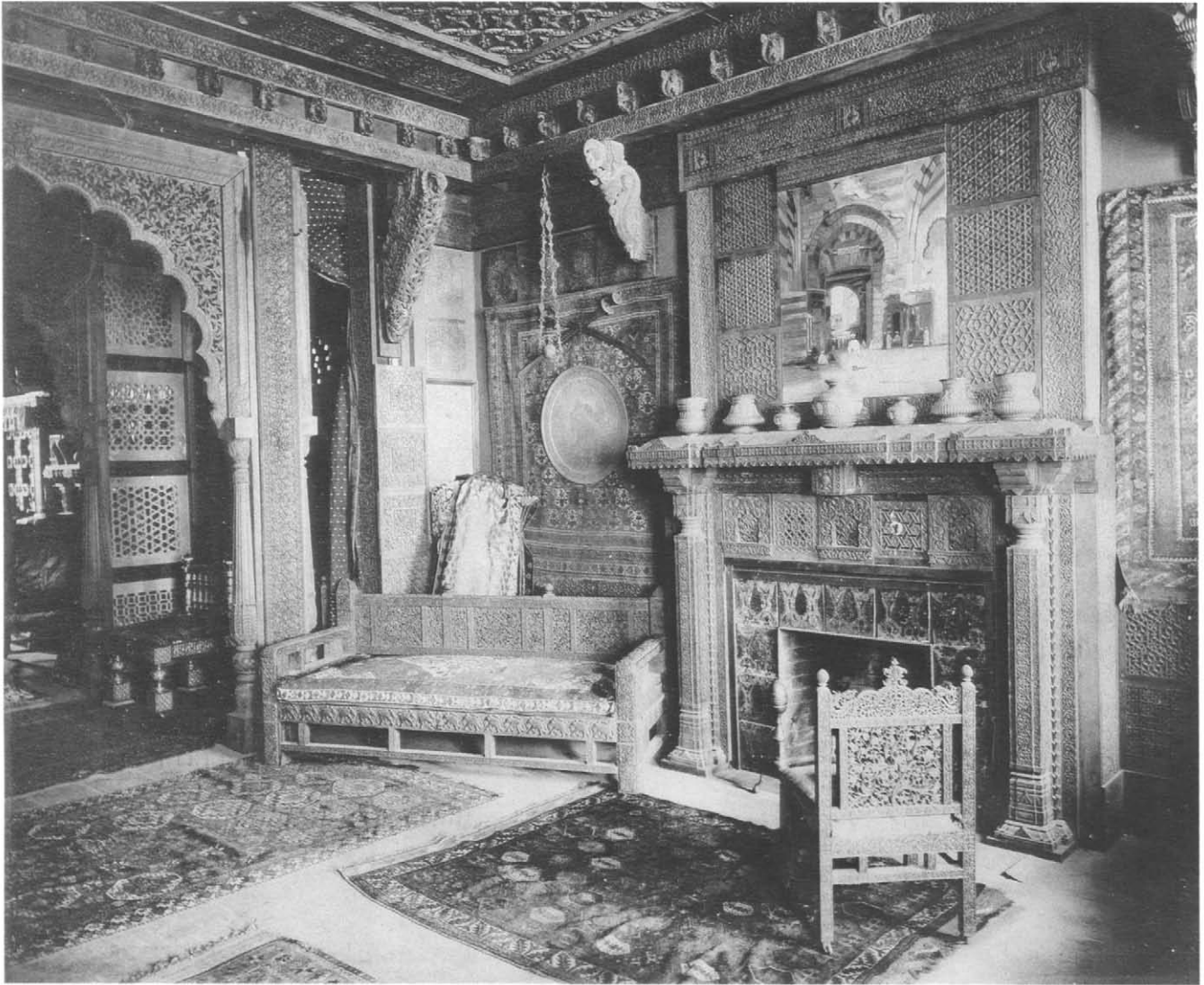


Fig. 53. *Mr. de Forest's Rooms, 9 East 17th St., New York, ca. 1885.* From Lockwood de Forest, *Indian Domestic Architecture*, 1885, pl. xx. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Lathrop Collection

de Forest, and was probably designed specifically for that space. Robert, Lockwood's older brother, was the president of The Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1913 to 1931. Emily's collection of American Indian baskets and pottery was displayed in the hall, and it is probable that the screen's matting, made of plaited grass, was meant to complement that assemblage. The hall also contained other carved teak furniture designed by Lockwood, including a large swing suspended from the ceiling.⁷

The furniture items produced by the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company under de Forest's direction were far superior in quality to the mass-produced furnishings carved by machine-saw that other manufacturers of the period

offered. Hand-carved woodwork was particularly admired by design reformers and their followers, and among entrepreneurs de Forest was almost alone in supporting the highly labor-intensive, costly craftsmanship that was fast disappearing from India. Despite these factors working in his favor, however, the market for his product was mainly limited to those in society's upper crust, who had developed a rarified taste for Aesthetic exoticism, and even then only to the daring. De Forest found that scarcely any of his contemporaries shared to so great a degree his passion for living with Indian art. Pieces like the side chair and screen are rare survivals of a taste that was for most a passing fancy.⁸



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1. Although teak is difficult to carve and to glue, de Forest wrote, it could “be carved with nearly the same minute detail as ivory.” De Forest 1910, p. 238. For information on the founding and work of the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company, see cat. no. 11 and the sources cited there.
2. See Mayer 1996.
3. Apart from its architecture, Ahmadabad was renowned for luxury silks and inexpensive cottons, some of which de Forest sold in Tiffany & de Forest’s showroom and later in his own showroom. On Ahmadabad textiles, see *Indian Textiles* 1980.
4. For a discussion of the two side chairs in the collection of Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania (nos. 367 and 368), and of two similar unmarked examples in other collections, see Mayer 2000, pp. 177, 228–31, 337–38.
5. See de Forest 1885, pls. XIX, XX.

6. In the *mokume* process, thin sheets of different metals such as gold, silver, and copper or various Japanese alloys are laminated, folded, cut through, or bent and then hammered to produce a striated pattern. The technique was used for Japanesque metalwork produced by Tiffany’s father’s firm, Tiffany & Company, beginning in the 1870s; see Safford and Caccavale 1987, p. 816. It is not known whether the finials on this screen are Japanese in origin or manufactured by Tiffany & Company.
7. For more on Wawapek, see Frelinghuysen 2000.
8. One of the few extant interiors to retain its architectural woodwork designed and supplied by de Forest is the second-floor family library of the home of Andrew Carnegie, built 1898–1901 at Fifth Avenue and Ninety-first Street (currently the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum). See Mayer 2000, pp. 239, 282, fig. 69.

14. *Armchair*

Ca. 1880

White holly with inlays of unidentified woods and other materials; modern upholstery, $28\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{3}{4}$ in. (73 × 55.2 × 55.2 cm)

The Newark Museum, Bequest of Susan Dwight Bliss by exchange, Sophronia Anderson Bequest Fund, Felix Fuld Bequest Fund, and Membership Endowment Fund, 1996 (96.87)

Made of white holly with marquetry embellishment of scrolling vines and leaves, this ornately crested armchair from the “Arabian” salon in the home of George Kemp is typical of the “exotic” furnishings Tiffany placed in the interiors he designed. Kemp, a wealthy pharmaceuticals manufacturer, hired Tiffany, probably in the spring of 1879,¹ to decorate the vestibule, main entrance hall, salon (drawing room), dining room, and library of his imposing five-story mansion at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-sixth Street, “one of the most striking dwellings in the city.”² The Kemp residence seems to have been the earliest commission on which Tiffany and Wheeler worked as business partners, and its interiors (completed in the spring of



1881) were probably the first set executed by their firm, Tiffany & Wheeler. Samuel Colman was also involved; at the very least he selected and arranged the porcelain and bric-a-brac in a “secret cabinet” behind a sliding door in the salon.³ Lockwood de Forest likely furnished some of the room’s decorative accessories as well. It appears, therefore, that Tiffany was loosely associated with Wheeler, Colman, and de Forest at least a full year before R. G. Dun & Company first recorded the existence of Tiffany & Wheeler (April 1880).⁴

The decor of the Kemp salon (fig. 54) featured furnishings predominantly of North African, East Indian, and Islamic inspiration, styles at the time variously called “Moresque,” “Moorish,” “Arabic,” “Arabian,” and “Persian.” Three side chairs, the “Moresque” armchair presented here (visible in the lower right-hand corner of fig. 54), and an octagonal center table carried panels of turned latticework

based on the *mashrabiyya*, an ornate wooden window screen found mainly in traditional Egyptian homes. De Forest’s trips to Egypt and the Near East in 1875–76 and 1878 probably provided direct inspiration for the lattice panels and other decorative elements, such as the Islamic interlace on the ceiling, and his purchases may well have supplied the Oriental carpets, ceramic vases, Damascus glazed tiles, and hanging mosque lamps. The import firm of Tiffany & de Forest was founded during this time (see cat. no. 11). Other furnishings of exotic character included a second type of “Moresque” armchair,⁵ a pair of lavishly ornamented side cabinets, an Egyptian-style mother-of-pearl-inlaid octagonal side table, and a grand piano of holly enriched with delicate moldings and mahogany marquetry. Mixed with them was an odd assortment of American or English chairs, tufted settees, and a custom-made music cabinet covered in blue plush.



Fig. 54. *Mr. George Kemp's Salon*, ca. 1883. From [George William Sheldon], *Artistic Houses; Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States*, 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

The two armchairs and perhaps some of the other furnishings in the Kemp salon were probably designed by Tiffany himself and constructed by Louis C. Tiffany & Company (yet another firm that Tiffany established, this one specializing in furniture).⁶ De Forest may have assisted in the design; the rectilinear low armchairs and side chairs and the octagonal center table supported by cusped arches are very similar in form to the teakwood pieces he designed in India beginning in 1881 for production by the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company (see cat. no. 12). The armchairs, with their openwork backs, twist-turned arm supports, densely patterned scrolling motifs, and knob finials also resemble Indo-European furniture made in India, Ceylon, and the Dutch East Indies beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century for export to the West. Tiffany and his colleagues very likely saw contemporary examples of these from British India displayed at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia and in import stores in New York. The leaves and vines with palmate blossoms worked in marquetry inlay on the chair may derive from Indian Mughal embroidered textiles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which often featured similar flowering plant motifs. Samuel Colman's extensive collection of textiles probably served as Tiffany's archive for these ornamental motifs.

The aesthetic of the Kemp salon was one of opulence and lavish patterning. Below a ceiling embellished with Islamic-style gold and silver geometric tracery and a cornice of carved silver corbels ran a mosaic frieze of large interlaced turquoise blue circles filled with silver, gold, and lavender, framed between red and silver bands. The door casings, wainscoting, and floors were of white holly enlivened with multicolored wood parquetry. Delicate pierce-carved wooden panels and patterned stucco panels decorated the walls. The mantel was of a reddish wood with hexagonal inlays of seventeen other woods; the fireplace was lined with opalescent glass of Tiffany's own manufacture as well as imported "Persian" ceramic tiles in blues, greens, reds, and opals. Light diffused through a magnificent opalescent stained-glass bay window and glowed from eight gaslit brass filigree lanterns, then was amplified by its reflection in a latticed and beveled mirror above the fireplace. A large painting by the Austrian artist Ludwig Passini, hanging in an alcove to the left of the fireplace, offered a view of the grand mosque and marketplace in Cairo.⁷

Textiles played a crucial role in the overall sensory experience. Parts of the walls were covered with a luxurious textured plush with an arabesque design of buff, red, and blue,

and the seating furniture was upholstered in olive plush stitched with cream and gold-colored silk floss. Striking a different geographic note, a Japanese floral brocade panel hung above the fireplace mirror, and a wall panel seems to have contained another piece of Japanese fabric with tree branches and cherry blossoms. The bay window was hung with draperies of "golden fawn plush," wrote the household-art writer Constance Cary Harrison, with "a frieze of cloth of gold, crossed by trellis-work of plushes so disposed that light, striking upon the curtains, gives them the effect of being suspended by an illumined net-work from their rods."⁸

Almost all the draperies and hangings in the Kemp house were designed by Tiffany and presumably executed by Wheeler's embroidery department. But Wheeler herself designed an appliquéd wall panel in the dining room, which Harrison described: "Upon a length of copper-colored velvet the bough of a fruit-laden orange-tree is made, through skilful management of the pile and texture of red-gold and orange plushes, to give actual impressions of light and shadow. The pearly gleam of blossoms lurking behind leaves is conveyed through embroidery in silk."⁹ (For a discussion of Wheeler's appliquéd technique, see cat. no. 26.) And another dining room hanging, *Titian's Daughter*, after a Titian painting of a young girl holding a golden dish of fruit — probably also designed by Wheeler — was produced under the supervision of Mary Tillinghast.¹⁰ It was much admired by critics, particularly for the way the tapestry technique imitated the painter's brush, "the stiff, lustrous brocade, the gleaming berries, the ripe, rosy fruit held aloft in the golden disk being all reproduced with wonderful exactness." This work was done in a combination of appliqué and embroidery in a needlewoven tapestry stitch, on special tapestry ground cloth furnished by Cheney Brothers.¹¹

Tiffany & Wheeler was fortunate to have George Kemp as its first client. Ample time was permitted and no expense spared in the creation of a suite of highly sophisticated interiors. The result was counted among "the most beautiful and celebrated homes in the United States."¹² The socially prominent Kemp undoubtedly played a significant role in the securing of further commissions by Tiffany & Wheeler (see cat. nos. 15–20).

1. See letter, Samuel Colman to Louis Comfort Tiffany, August 27, 1879, Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers, showing that work on the Kemp commission was already in progress in the summer of 1879; "Decorative Art News" 1879, p. 94. The bulk of Kemp's fortune was made selling "Florida Water."

2. "Building Intelligence" 1880. The house, designed by the architect Richard Charles Jones and built in 1878–79, no longer stands.

3. Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 55.
4. For a different view of the business arrangements, see Mayer and Lane 2001, pp. 8–10. Also involved in the Kemp commission were painters George H. Yewell and Francis A. Silva; see Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 56.
5. The second armchair from the Kemp salon, which has satinwood inlays and carvings of ginko leaves, still exists and was auctioned at Christie's in 1999. See Christie's, New York, sale cat., November 29, 1999, lot 284.
6. See cat. no. 9, n. 3.
7. This description of the Kemp salon is based on those in Oakey 1882, p. 738; Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 53–56.
8. Harrison 1881, p. 66. While Harrison does not refer to the Kemp interiors by name, her description corresponds with those that do in other contemporary sources.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
10. Tillinghast worked for Wheeler from early February to mid-July 1881, first as general assistant in charge of “artistic fabrics and stuffs” and then as head of the tapestry department. See testimony given by both women, December 23, 1881, and February 24, 1882, in “Wheeler vs. Tillinghast.” For contemporary descriptions of *Titian's Daughter*, see “Art Needlework” 1881; “Tapestry Decorations” 1882.
11. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 40. On Wheeler, Tillinghast, and the needlewoven tapestry technique, see cat. nos. 24, 25.
12. Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 53–56.

15. *Program of the Madison Square Theatre showing stage curtain by Tiffany & Wheeler*

1883

Chromolithograph by the Hatch Lithography Company, 6½ × 5¼ in. (16.5 × 13.3 cm)

Printed on bottom: Inaugurated February 4th 1880.

Madison Square Theatre, View of Interior and Embroidered Curtain

Lent by Robert S. Burton from the collection of the late Daniel M. C. Hopping

Sometime around September 1879 Tiffany & Wheeler secured a commission to furnish draperies and a stage curtain for the Madison Square Theatre at Twenty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. A major renovation of the theater, at a cost of more than eighty thousand dollars, was being spearheaded by producer-director James Steele MacKaye, Tiffany's former schoolmate from the Eagleswood Military Academy in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, where the two had developed an early appreciation for the arts under the tutelage of the tonalist landscape painter George Inness. MacKaye's updated theater, carried out by the architectural firm Kimball & Wisedell, contained numerous technical innovations that enthralled theatergoers. For example, to facilitate scene changes, two stages were stacked one above the other; one could ascend into the fly by elevator, the other could descend into the basement. MacKaye also installed fire-fighting systems that pumped water up from the basement to several hydrants on stage and in the auditorium. Perhaps most enticing was the ventilation system, which operated by passing air through steam radiators in

the winter and over huge blocks of ice in the summer, enabling the theater to remain open year-round.¹

To further lure patrons, MacKaye arranged for the installation of new interior decorations that appealed to the latest taste for exoticism, synthesizing elements of Moorish, Jacobean, and Japanese ornament. According to the *Daily Graphic*, the newly renovated auditorium suggested “the interior of some wealthy artist's studio or that of some ecclesiastical edifice consecrated to the devotions of a wealthy congregation.”² The decor was designed in part by Tiffany & Wheeler, which was responsible for at least the textiles and the color scheme. Others involved included the designer Vincent Stiepevich, who decorated the lobby.³ The proscenium arch framing the stage, described in *Art Journal*, consisted of “carved woods, supported on each side by ornate columns banded with rich embossed belts of old ivory and Japanese green bronze.” Below the arch, the proscenium balcony where the orchestra played was “slightly Moresque in design” and richly “hung with embroidered draperies from designs by Mr. Tiffany.” *Art Journal* expressed satisfaction

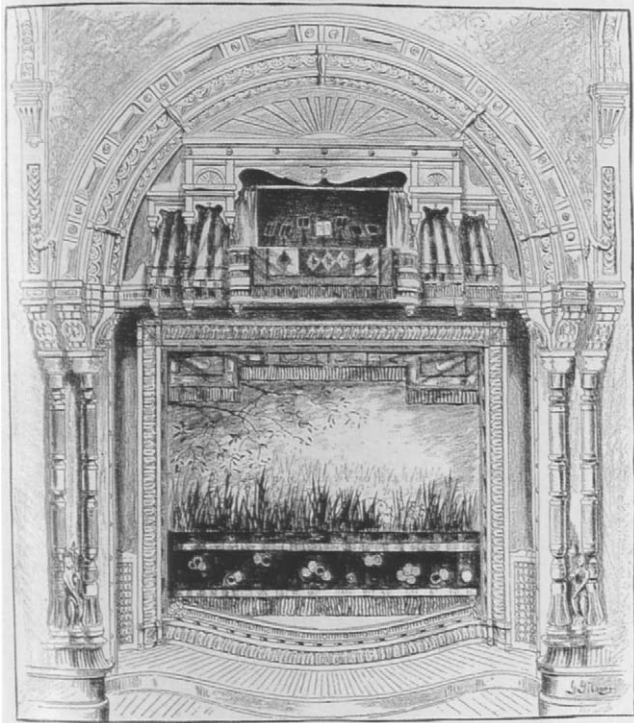


Fig. 55. *Proscenium of the Madison Square Theatre*, 1880. Wood engraving from *Art Journal* (American ed.), n.s. 6, May 1880, p. 139. Signed: G. Gibson. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

that “the draperies and colours of the Madison Square Theatre, instead of falling . . . into the hands of conventional upholsterers, were placed under the direction of Mr. Louis C. Tiffany, the artist, and as a result we have not only something entirely new, but absolutely a revelation in beauty.”⁴

The main focal point of the theater’s auditorium was the stage curtain by Tiffany & Wheeler (see fig. 55), which measured approximately ninety square yards, took nearly six months to complete, and cost the then-considerable sum of three thousand dollars. When the theater opened on February 4, 1880, the *Art Interchange* proclaimed it “the most important piece of art needlework which has been done in the country . . . being the first fruits of a distinctly American school of art needlework.” It depicted a deep blue pool of water with “a line of tangled weedy shore, where meadow grasses, tall, wild red lilies, bold-looking Black-Eyed Susans, daisies, rushes and arrow-heads grow, while above them stretch branches of tulip-tree in flower, and clinging vines, and shadowy boughs lead the eye into a misty background.”⁵ The press reported that Tiffany (who had been trained as a landscape painter) was responsible for

the scenic composition. According to Wheeler, the design was adapted from an embroidered silk picture by Mrs. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a famous needleworker of the period.⁶ Wheeler’s principal job was to develop innovative methods of needlework. She mainly used fabric appliqué, which could be worked more quickly and economically than hand embroidery to fill in areas of color. Looking back on the project later, she explained how the work was done:

*It was really a daring experiment in methods of appliqué, for no stitchery pure and simple was in place in the wide reaches of the picture. So we went on painting a woods interior in materials of all sorts, from tenuous crêpes to solid velvets and plushes. . . . I remember the great delight in marking the difference between oak and birch trees and fitting each with its appropriate effect of color and texture of leaf; and the building of a tall gray-green yucca, with its thick satin leaves and tall white pyramidal groups of velvet blossoms, standing in the very foreground, was as exciting as if it were standing posed for its portrait, and being painted in oils.*⁷

In hindsight, Wheeler thought the curtain “too positive and realistic for tapestry, but it was beautiful and it answered its double purpose of advertising the new theater and the new enterprise [Tiffany & Wheeler].”⁸

As it turned out, MacKaye’s new fire-fighting system was called into service almost immediately. On February 26, a lamplighter who was igniting the gas jets on stage accidentally torched the drop curtain, and while the blaze was soon extinguished, the curtain was destroyed.⁹ On May 1, 1880, a replacement curtain, seen on the program cover (cat. no. 15), was installed. Also designed by Tiffany & Wheeler, it represented an entirely different scene from the first, in accordance with the firm’s policy that each design be original and never repeated. The second curtain illustrated an inlet of a Florida river at low tide and was described in George William Sheldon’s *American Painters* (1881): “The ground of this beautiful production is of satin and velvet; the scene is a tropical American landscape with river, water-plants, flowers, birds, butterflies, and trees. At the bottom courses the deep blue river — which is of velvet, and from which spring the blue-flowered iris and other reeds. . . . All these designs are in plush *appliqué*, and the effects of color produced simply by the direction of the textures of the plush are very curious.”¹⁰ The curtain was embroidered by “twelve young lady pupils of the Cooper Institute Art-Schools,”¹¹ that is, the Woman’s Art School of New York. The new stage curtain enhanced the



15

reputation of Tiffany & Wheeler once again, paving the way for future commissions. Today its whereabouts are unknown, and it is presumed destroyed.

1. See "Madison-Square Theatre" 1880; MacKaye 1927, vol. 1, pp. xlvii–xlviii, 298–301, 340–48, 352–53.
2. "Mackaye's New Theater" 1880.
3. See "Novel Theatre Lobby" 1880. Hughson Hawley, a painter-designer who specialized in cathedral interiors, is named as the designer of the theater's auditorium in Koch 1966, p. 12.
4. "Model Theatre" 1880, pp. 139, 141.

5. "Embroidered Drop Curtain" 1880, p. 37.
6. See Wheeler 1921, p. 125. Fanny Dixwell Holmes, wife of the Supreme Court justice and daughter-in-law of the poet and writer, became famous for her needlework landscapes of the 1870s on. Critics compared her effects to those achieved with brush and pigment.
7. Wheeler 1921, pp. 124–25. Work on the curtain was supervised by a Miss [Lina] Cutler, then head of the firm's embroidery workroom; see Wheeler 1881a, p. 503.
8. Wheeler 1918, p. 234.
9. "Blaze in a Theatre" 1880.
10. Sheldon 1881, pp. 179–80.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 180. See also "Decorative Art News" 1880.

16. *Thistle textile*

Ca. 1881

Probably manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk and metallic thread, $24\frac{1}{2} \times 26\frac{1}{4}$ in. (62.2 × 66.7 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.3)

17. *Thistle textile*

Ca. 1881

Probably manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, $63\frac{1}{4} \times 53$ in. (160.7 × 134.6 cm)

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, Gift of Mrs. Benjamin C. Nash, 1974 (74.34.5)





17 (detail)

In 1880, when shipbuilders began constructing his pleasure yacht, the *Namouna*, *New York Herald* publisher James Gordon Bennett Jr. hired the New York architectural firm McKim, Mead & White to oversee its interior decoration.¹ The architects in turn hired Tiffany and his associates (presumably contracting with Tiffany & Wheeler) to decorate some of the ship's interiors and furnish mantelpiece mosaics, glasswork, and textiles, including thistle-patterned silk damasks like the ones seen here. Work on the interiors probably extended from the summer of 1880 to the spring of 1881.² The *Namouna* cost \$200,000 to build and was one of the most celebrated private yachts in the world. A three-masted steam-engine schooner, it measured 226 feet in length and weighed 845 tons. Its opulently decorated main cabins consisted of a pantry, an armory, nine staterooms, a main saloon (drawing room), and a ladies' saloon.³

The main saloon of the *Namouna* (fig. 56), one of the interiors decorated by Tiffany and his colleagues, was described in *Century Magazine* as follows:

The light is distributed over the apartment from a large, dome-like sky-light of crackle glass. A curtain of rich Indian stuffs can be drawn across, and the light can be further

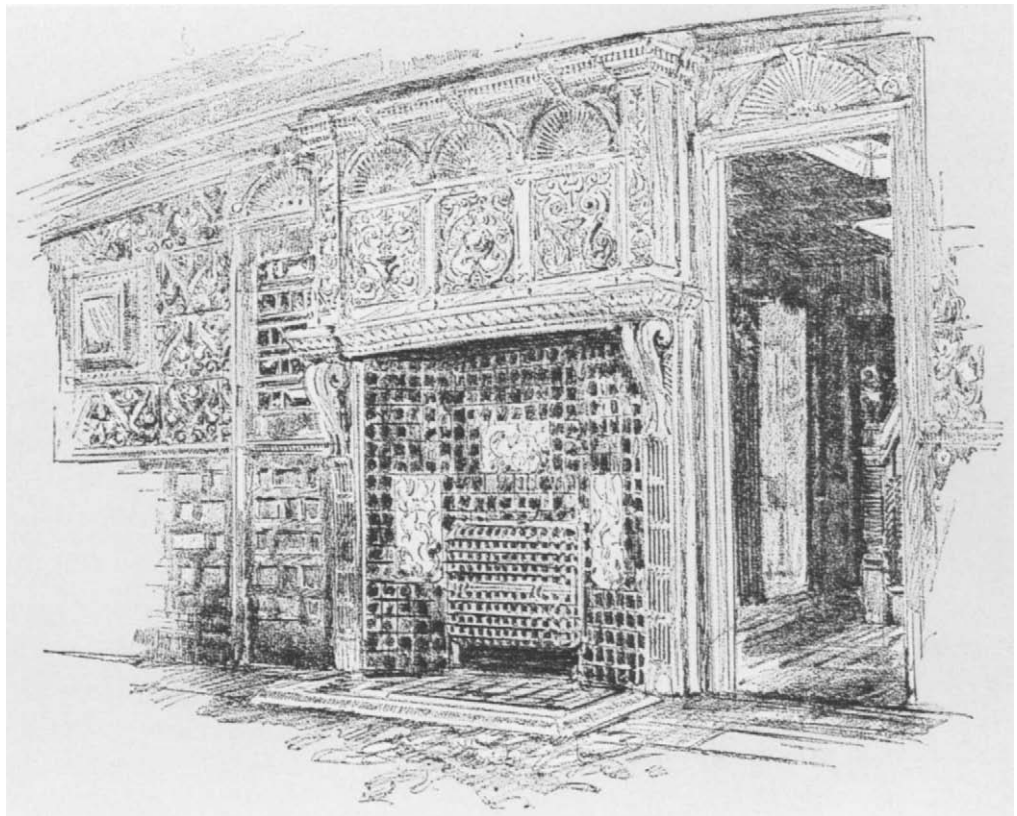


Fig. 56. *The Main Saloon*—
Drawn by C. A. Vanderhoof,
1882. Engraving from
Harper's Weekly, May 6,
1882, p. 276. Collection of
The New-York Historical
Society



Fig. 57. Dora Wheeler for Associated Artists, *The Mermaid*, before 1885. Chromolithograph from *Art Amateur* 12, January 1885, supplement. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library

tempered by a stained-glass slide. Light is also admitted by round port-holes. Exquisite hangings, in which the interwoven thistle is wrought in silk and gold, can be drawn across them and serve to dispel the idea that one is on shipboard. The thistle on these curtains constantly reappears in the decorations of the yacht, and is doubtless a reminiscence of the Scotch origin of her owner.⁴

The “rich Indian stuffs” used for curtains may have been imported by Tiffany & de Forest or, perhaps, manufactured by Cheney Brothers. The thistle hangings that hung across the portholes coordinated with a molded frieze “of a delicate turquoise blue, in square panels, apparently of raised plaster, stamped with thistles of gold leaf.”⁵ Two examples of damask featuring the thistle design of the *Namouna* hangings are seen here in two different colorways, blue and

coral. The coral fabric (cat. no. 17), woven entirely of silk, is probably a later version; the blue fabric (cat. no. 16) has the coloration and weave originally used in the *Namouna*, incorporating metallic threads that create a subtle shimmer effect in the finished fabric (see Appendix). Such unexpected combinations of materials—in this instance, lustrous, supple silk and stiff, shiny, metallic threads—characterize fabrics by Wheeler, who increasingly sought to incorporate the novel effects of blended colors into her textile designs as her career progressed.

Still, it is not known for certain who designed the thistle pattern, which is perhaps more typical of Tiffany’s aesthetic at the time than of Wheeler’s. Wheeler rarely created static, highly regularized diaper patterns such as this, preferring the irregularities of nature. Her floral designs through most of the 1880s were typically undulant and varied by the rendering of individualized blossoms. Moreover, the thistle design is a historically conscious pattern, probably loosely derived from British Jacobean textiles of the first half of the seventeenth century, when thistle motifs were especially popular. Wheeler’s compositions until the early 1890s, however, tended to be based on Japanese patterns and American flower species. Only after that did she begin to experiment with more historically inspired, conventionalized patterns (see, e.g., cat. nos. 74, 75).⁶ The thistle fabric may have been woven by Cheney Brothers (see cat. no. 73), and apparently it remained in production for a number of years; in 1888 Wheeler mentioned using a version of it “in reddish silk and gold.”⁷

Another textile that Wheeler’s embroidery department completed in 1881, presumably for the *Namouna*, was what the *Art Amateur* described as “a hanging for a yacht on blue tapestry cloth, representing a yellow-haired mermaid coquetting with a large fish.”⁸ This work, *The Mermaid*, was made using Wheeler’s innovative needlewoven tapestry technique (see cat. no. 25), which, according to the *Art Amateur*, “permits the blending of colors and the gradations which are the properties chiefly of pigments.”⁹ What may have been a watercolor sketch of the mermaid tapestry was published in the *Art Amateur* in 1885, identified as a design by Dora Wheeler entitled *The Mermaid* (fig. 57).

1. On Bennett, see Seitz 1928.

2. See “Bennett’s New Yacht” 1880; Benjamin 1882, p. 603.

3. The yacht was named after the heroine of an epic poem by Alfred de Musset and a ballet by Édouard Lalo.

4. Benjamin 1882, p. 605.

5. *Ibid.*

6. In 1888 Wheeler told the *Art Amateur* that she considered “the knobs of the thistle . . . sufficiently conventional in form to be introduced

into artificial ornamentation” without having to alter them significantly from the forms found in nature. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).

7. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, III.), p. 99. Mrs. Benjamin C. Nash, donor of the thistle fabric to the Mark Twain House, was Wheeler’s great-granddaughter.

8. According to Wheeler, the *Mermaid* tapestry was made sometime between February and July of 1881, when Mary Tillinghast was overseeing the firm’s production of needlewoven tapestries. See testimony of Candace Wheeler, April 25, 1882, in “Wheeler vs. Tillinghast.”

9. Humphreys 1881b, p. 109.

TIFFANY & WHEELER;
LOUIS C. TIFFANY & COMPANY,
ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

18. *Veterans’ Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, New York*

Ca. 1881

Albumen silver print by Pach Brothers, $10\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{5}{8}$ in.
(25.7 × 34.6 cm)

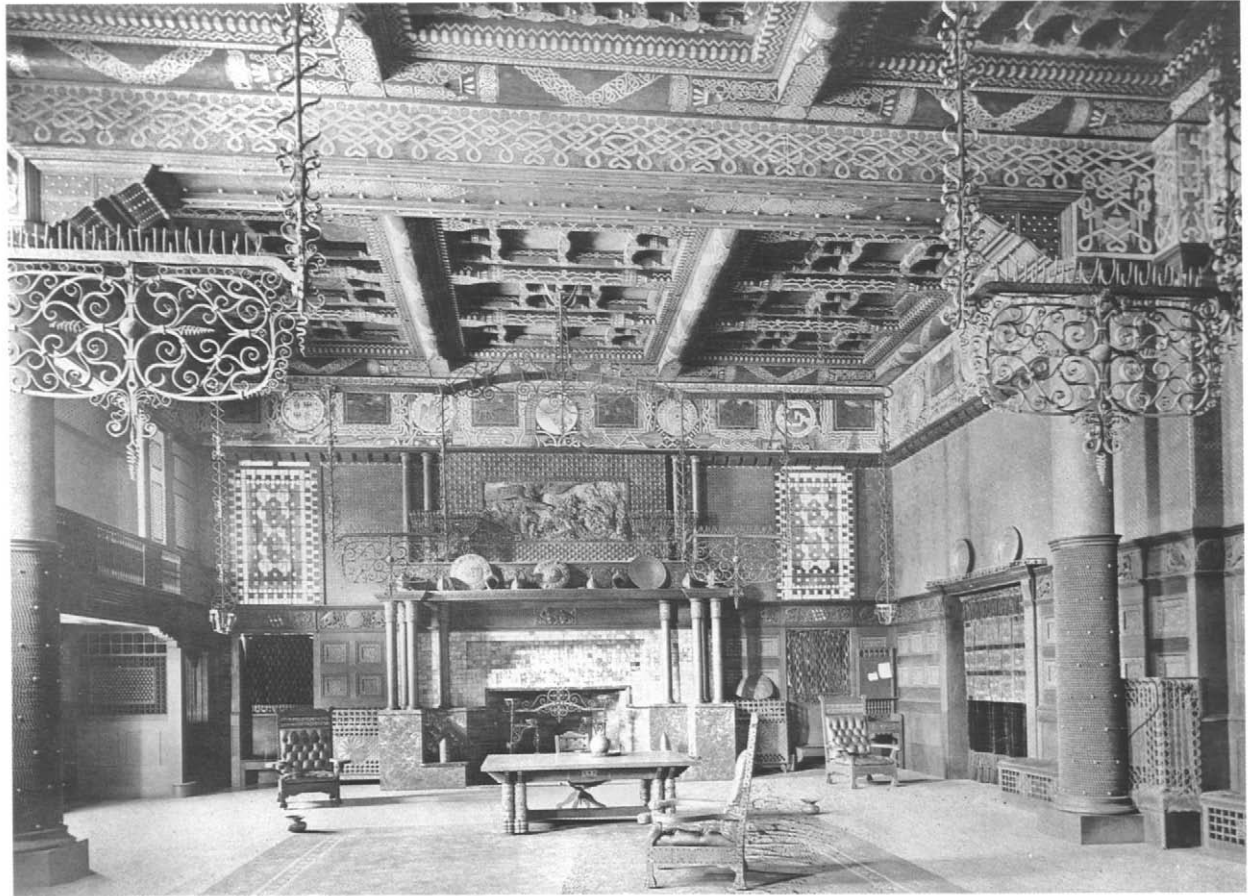
The New-York Historical Society, Seventh Regiment Military Library Collection

Decoration of the nearly 1,600-square-foot Veterans’ Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory, on Park Avenue between Sixty-sixth and Sixty-seventh Streets, was among the most ambitious commissions undertaken by Tiffany and his associates prior to the official formation of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, in 1881.¹ The assignment also included decorating the adjoining Library; presumably the contract was held by Tiffany & Wheeler. Work had begun by early April 1880, when it was first reported that Tiffany was in charge.² Although the armory officially opened to the public on September 30, 1880, the Veterans’ Room was not completed until April 1881, after craftsmen and artists had labored for nearly a year to create its sumptuous decor at a reported cost of twenty-five thousand dollars.³ Tiffany undoubtedly received the commission because a number of his colleagues and clients, including the painter Sanford Gifford, were members of the Seventh Regiment — a volunteer militia unit whose socially prominent membership earned it the nickname “Silk Stocking Regiment.”⁴

Tiffany hired Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White to oversee the installation of architectural features, which included a balustraded balcony with stairs, a fireplace, lattice screens, affixed benches and window seats, double sliding doors, wooden grilles, wainscoting, and other

wood carving. Samuel Colman advised Tiffany on color schemes and Oriental-style features and painted the decorative stenciling. Wheeler supplied elaborately embroidered and appliquéd hangings for the windows and doorways. Francis D. Millet and George H. Yewell painted the high frieze, on which shields and scenes from the history of warfare were represented. Tiffany personally designed the glass-tiled fireplace surround, the stained-glass windows, and the furniture.

The eclectic, extraordinarily opulent interior that emerged from these collective efforts seemed closer to a sultan’s palace than a militia headquarters. As explained in a specially issued pamphlet, “The preponderating styles appear to be the Greek, Moresque and Celtic, with a dash of the Egyptian, the Persian and the Japanese in appropriate places.”⁵ The focal point of the Veterans’ Room was the massive inglenook fireplace embellished with shimmering turquoise blue glass tiles; it was surmounted by a stucco and glass overmantel depicting the struggle between an eagle and a sea dragon and framed in hammered iron. On either side of the fireplace were stained-glass windows by Tiffany that combined chartreuse and opalescent mother-of-pearl colors into abstract geometric patterns. Two pairs of Wheeler’s draperies, of plush embellished with silver embroidery and a network of gilded leather rings emulating coats of mail —



18

Fig. 58 (left). *Portière of Veterans' Room in Seventh Regiment Armory*, ca. 1881. Wood engraving from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 69, August 1884, p. 350. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

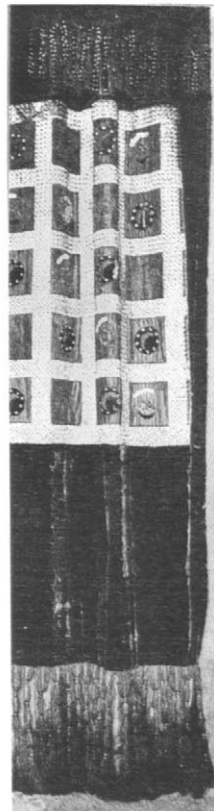
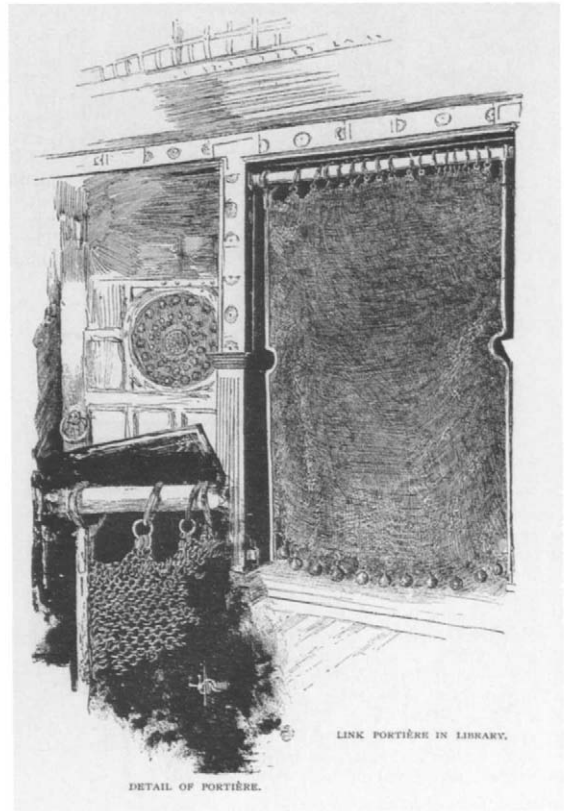


Fig. 59 (right). *Link Portière in Library; Detail of Portière*, ca. 1881. Wood engraving from *Scribner's Monthly* 22, July 1881, p. 377. Collection of The New-York Historical Society



one in “Damascus red,” the other in “antique blue” — hung from the lower sections of the windows.⁶ Enormous iron-work “yoke” chandeliers supplied by Mitchell, Vance & Company were suspended from the timbered ceiling. Oak wainscoting running around the room featured sunken iron plates made to look like rusted armor, edged with silvered bolts. The paneling was surmounted by a band of carving decorated with Celtic scroll motifs of the kind illustrated in Owen Jones’s influential compendium *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856). Trappings of medieval warriors were further evoked by blue-gray metallic wallpaper stenciled in a silver and copper chain-mail pattern. The room’s furnishings consisted of an enormous center table of carved oak and a suite of a dozen oversize armchairs and a number of side chairs placed about the room. The chairs, covered in tufted horsehair and pressed leather trimmed with iron nail heads, had frames carved with foliage, rosettes, and colonettes, echoing the room’s architectural details.⁷

The two doors leading from the Veterans’ Room to the adjoining corridor were hung with Wheeler’s spectacular appliquéd portieres. As described in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, they were of “dull Japanese brocade, bordered with plush representing leopard-skin. Upon the main space of the curtain are worked square appliqués of velvet, each one embodying some design suggesting the days of knight-hood and romantic warfare [fig. 58]. The intermediate spaces of the brocade are covered with overlapping rings of steel, to represent a coat of mail” (as on a portiere for the Library; see fig. 59).⁸ Wheeler’s use of metal buttons from men’s garments and “other objects of utility” for trimmings was noted in several journals and described as an effort to elevate utilitarian objects to a higher, artistic status.⁹ Like the Madison Square Theatre stage curtain (cat. no. 15), these portieres were probably designed by Tiffany, who then delegated the challenge of executing his ideas to Wheeler and her embroidery department. The style of the hangings, with their compartmentalized medieval-inspired motifs and faux animal skin borders, is more in keeping with Tiffany’s taste for exoticism and historicism than with Wheeler’s penchant for naturalism and relatively uncomplicated floral motifs.

The Veterans’ Room and Library are the only interiors decorated by Tiffany & Wheeler to remain substantially intact today (although the textiles have been lost). *Scribner’s*

Monthly suggested that the profusion and eclecticism of its decoration pointed to a failure of leadership:

*The practicability of “associated artists” working together to any striking and vitally organic result remains still a subject of speculation. It is an easy thing to say that the two things are incompatible, but the armory experiment tends negatively to confirm it. Until Mr. Tiffany becomes convinced that the planning of a work of monumental dignity demands more of him . . . than the preparation of a general sketch, the selection of specialists to advise as to the details, as well as to execute them, and the confining of his further effort to a mere harmonizing of possible discords, we may be sure the work of the “Associated Artists” will not differ substantially from this decoration.*¹⁰

There is no indication that such criticism shook Tiffany’s own faith in the effectiveness of his system. Indeed, the Veterans’ Room was applauded for its groundbreaking aesthetic in most publications — including the *New York Times*, where it was asserted, “the room is unique in its appointments and decorations, and is undoubtedly the most magnificent apartment of the kind in this country.”¹¹ Tiffany and his colleagues went on to execute numerous other substantial commissions before parting ways two years later.

1. The Seventh Regiment Armory building was designed by a member of the regiment’s Company K, architect Charles W. Clinton, and was constructed 1879–81.
2. “Seventh’s New Home” 1880.
3. On the opening, see “Veterans Housed Sumptuously” 1881. The cost of the decor was noted in “Trouble in the Seventh” 1888.
4. One member of the regiment’s decorating committee, Edward Kemp, was the brother of George Kemp, whose Fifth Avenue mansion Tiffany & Wheeler was then in the process of decorating (cat. no. 14).
5. *Seventh Regiment Armory* 1885, unpaginated.
6. Wheeler’s window curtains are described in Harrison 1881, p. 6.
7. Except for some of the furniture for the Kemp house (cat. no. 14) and the Veterans’ Room, the furniture designed by Tiffany & Wheeler and its successor, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is little known. The *Art Journal* described a suite made for an unidentified library as “plainly covered with brown silk plush. . . . The ornament, if one chooses to discriminate in that way, is in the studding of the frame with large and small copper nails.” Humphreys 1884b, p. 347.
8. Harrison 1884, p. 350.
9. “Seventh Regiment Armory” 1881; Brownell 1881, p. 379.
10. Brownell 1881, p. 380. Another commentator wrote, “though we can here find many beautiful details, . . . these virtues do not atone for the affectation of rudeness, the multiplicity of unimportant detail, that destroys repose, and gives the whole a theatrical expression”; Oakey 1882, p. 736.
11. “Veterans Housed Sumptuously” 1881.

19. *Fish-and-net portieres*

1880

Wood engraving published in *Century Magazine* 64,

March 1882

Signed: Brennan

20. *Cranes-and-reeds portieres*

1880

Wood engraving published in *Harper's Bazar* 14,

August 6, 1881

Signed: Brennan

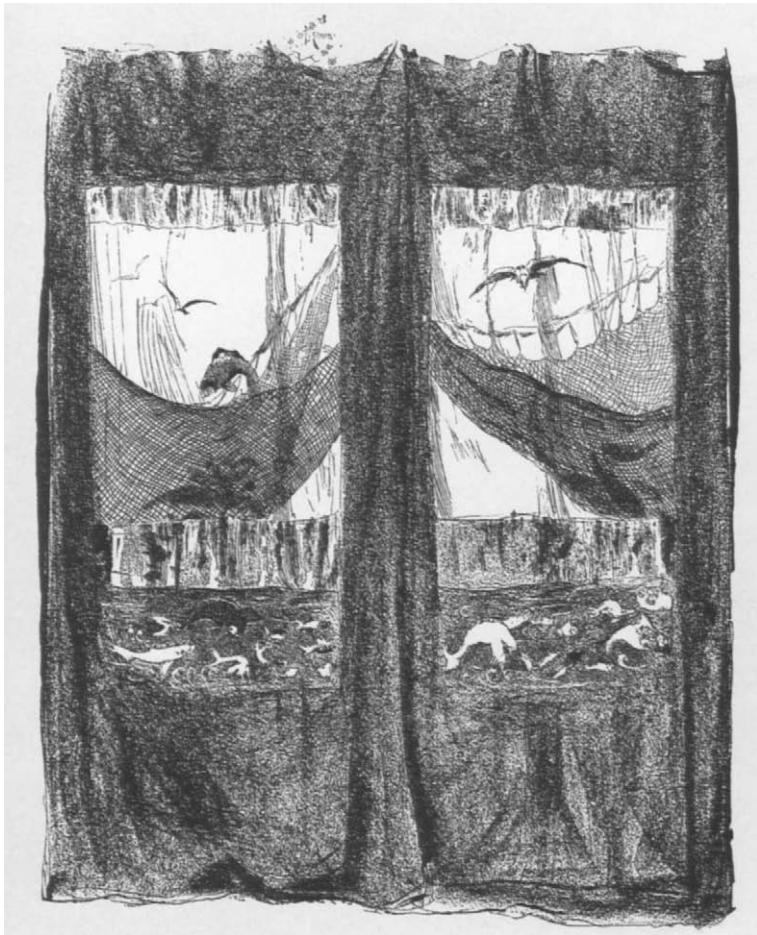
One of the most extensive commissions that Tiffany & Wheeler received was for draperies and portieres at the new building of the Union League Club on Fifth Avenue at Thirty-ninth Street (fig. 60).¹ An "Agreement regarding Draperies &c." for six different rooms in the clubhouse was entered into on October 15, 1880;² the club also made separate arrangements for the firm to decorate the main hall on the first floor and smaller halls on the upper floors and to supply stained-glass windows for the landings of the main staircase. Among the members of the club's design committee was the lawyer Joseph H. Choate, whose wife, Caroline, had helped Wheeler found the Society of Decorative Art; other connections were through Tiffany's father, Charles L. Tiffany, one of the club's founders, and club member George Kemp (see cat. no. 14).

The agreement for the Union League draperies, one of the few Tiffany & Wheeler contracts to survive, gives an idea of the kind of terms typically agreed upon before a major interior decoration project was begun. A deadline of December 10, 1880 — only two months off — was stipulated, and a flat fee of \$3,710 included not just the draperies but "poles, rings, brackets &c. needed to entirely complete the work in an artistic and workmanlike manner." (Wheeler may nevertheless have worked until the official club opening on March 5, 1881.) Most thorough was the "Description of the Work," which specified details of the draperies for every room. For the fourth-floor main dining room there would be "Window Curtains for all windows, to be of plush in some color which harmonizes with the general color of the room. Designs to be diverse and in application

of plush upon plush, subjects to be fruits, or flowers of fruits, or both, and to be used in borders, bands or plaques. Each design is to be original, and not to be used again." In a smaller fourth-floor dining room, draperies were to consist of "raw silk with borders of outlined embroidery set between bands of plush" with "Turkish fringes." Draperies for a dining room on the third floor known as the alcove dining room were ordered in "velvet in antique colors, with discs of embroidery or oriental gold brocade inlet." In their finished state these were described by the *Art Amateur* as made of Wheeler's "new tapestry material, the ground of which is dark green traversed by a cord of blue silk, giving a rich blue-green tone. These are very simple, having only a design in bronze leather carried across the top, forming a border."³ If these drapes were made using Wheeler's specially fabricated tapestry ground cloth, which she developed in



Fig. 60. Joseph Byron and Percy Byron, *The Union League Club*, 1894. Photograph. Museum of the City of New York, The Byron Collection



19



20

collaboration with Cheney Brothers in December 1880 (see cat. no. 24), they represent its first known use. (The first tapestry made using the needlewoven tapestry embroidery *technique* was completed by January 1881; see cat. no. 25.)

For the second-floor picture gallery the contract called for “two portieres of Tapestry, plush borders, hangings to harmonize.” (However, the finished version was apparently made not of tapestry cloth but of “Turcoman cloth . . . treated very simply, but very beautifully, in Japanese decoration applied in olive plush.”)⁴ For a second-floor meeting hall the agreement required merely “suitable draperies around stage opening.”

The most sumptuous and labor-intensive needleworks specified in the contract were portieres for the main dining room on the fourth floor; they do not survive, but their design is clear from a drawing shown here. The portieres were to consist of “material of silk, changing sea-blue to sea green, with embroidered design, of wave forms and outlined and embroidered fish and shell fish. Upper portion to be of

plush with a net work of fine venetian pearl shells. Treatment of design to be in Japanese.” The *Art Amateur* described the completed version: “The field is cloth of gold bordered on each side by a band of olive plush. . . . Below are wide pieces of blue plush, simulating, it is to be inferred, the deep sea.”⁵ The fish depicted were carp based on Japanese designs of the kind frequently illustrated in European and American design books. (Later in Wheeler’s career the carp motif recurred in other textiles produced by her Associated Artists; see cat. nos. 55–57.) The fish-and-net portieres did not hang at the doorway as intended, but instead on either side of a large stained-glass rose window designed by John La Farge that was a major focal point of the room. For the most part the hangings were praised by the press as exemplifying the great strides being made in American “art needlework.” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* complained, however, that “though they are marvels of technical skill, [they] are strangely at variance with both the architectural treatment and the decorations, being

slavishly Japanese in design and execution.”⁶ Indeed, Japanese-inspired designs must have been at odds with the Queen Anne style chosen for much of the club’s interior and exterior architecture.

As an alternative to the fish-and-net version, the contract had proposed a second possible design for portieres in the main dining room: “Embroidery and appliqué upon plush, design of reeds, and reed birds feeding. Upper and lower borders, of swamp mallows.” This version was in fact executed for the adjoining hall (see the drawing illustrated). The *Art Amateur* described it: “The field, as before, is cloth of gold. The border above and below of blue plush is cut out in lattice-work over the gold cloth beneath, making a charming frame to the inclosed work. . . . The colors here are the olives of the foliage and the white and grays of the cranes, which are done in silks, with the gold of the ground and blue of the border, all beautifully harmonizing with the delicate tints which belong to the hall decoration.”⁷ The term “cloth of gold,” used to describe the ground fabric of both pairs of portieres, refers to a cloth incorporating metallic threads that Wheeler designed in collaboration with Cheney Brothers and that was one of her favorite ground fabrics (see cat. no. 26). Although a caption in *Harper’s Bazar* names Wheeler as the designer of the cranes-and-reeds portieres, both they and the fish-and-net portieres may have been designed by Tiffany (*Century Magazine* ascribed the fish-and-net portieres to him). Their Japanese-inspired subject matter and highly pictorial compositions reflect his sensibility for landscape painting rather than Wheeler’s training in flower painting. Wheeler was undoubtedly the technical advisor who selected the methods and materials best suited to the job at hand.

Hired to work on the decoration of the Union League Club were not just Tiffany & Wheeler and John La Farge but also the decorating firm of Cottier & Company, the decorative painter Frank Hill Smith, the sculptor Augustus Saint-

Gaudens, and the muralist Will H. Low. By November 1881 the cost of construction and decoration of the clubhouse was \$445,446.41, at the time one of the largest sums ever spent on such a project.⁸ The initial, generous decorating budget of \$125,000 had likely been exceeded. While joining other publications in faulting the club’s interiors for their lack of unity, the *New York Times* expressed approval that the Union League “has taken the lead before all the other clubs in . . . being the first to encourage American painters in the treatment of decoration on the highest planes of art.”⁹ The clubhouse set new standards of splendor and luxury in the Gilded Age, situating Tiffany & Wheeler at the forefront of American interior design.

1. The Union League Club was founded by a group of Republicans in 1865, to aid the Union cause. According to the *New York Times*, it was “political and progressive” but “not yet a fashionable club,” owing to its Republican spirit of Unionism in a city where “the greater number of people of fashion . . . at the time of its formation had open or ill-concealed sympathies for the Southern States.” “New Palace for a Club” 1881. By moving from Twenty-sixth Street and Madison Avenue, an increasingly commercial district, to a lavish new Fifth Avenue building by Peabody & Stearns and by hiring leading interior designers, its membership was evidently trying to gain respectability among the New York establishment. The Fifth Avenue building was in use from March 1885 until it was torn down in February 1931. The club is currently located at 38 East Thirty-seventh Street. See Irwin, May, and Hotchkiss 1952, pp. 101–9.
2. “Agreement regarding Draperies &c. at the New Union League Club Building,” October 15, 1880, Archives, Union League Club, New York.
3. “Club Dining-Room” 1881.
4. “Draperies of the Union League Club” 1881. Turcoman cloth, similar to plush fabric and made of raw silk at moderate cost, is described in “New Drapery and Carpet Fabric” 1882.
5. “Draperies of the Union League Club” 1881.
6. Oakey 1882, p. 736.
7. “Draperies of the Union League Club” 1881. It is interesting to note that Colman had used a similar Japanesque reeds-and-birds motif on an embroidered portiere (fig. 52) completed in 1880 for the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion (see cat. no. 22). Both Tiffany and Colman may have been inspired by Japanesque designs emanating from London, such as Walter Crane’s “rush and iris” wallpaper design published state-side in the *Art Journal* in 1880. See Carter 1880, p. 8.
8. Irwin, May, and Hotchkiss 1952, p. 105.
9. “New Palace for a Club” 1881.

LOUIS C. TIFFANY & COMPANY,
ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

21. *Front Hall of the Mark Twain House*

1881–82 (modern restoration)

In October 1881, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, entered into an agreement to decorate the Hartford, Connecticut, home of author Samuel L. Clemens (better known as Mark Twain), his wife, Olivia, and their children.¹ Twain hired Louis Tiffany's firm after seeing the Veterans' Room of the Seventh Regiment Armory (cat. no. 18).² In addition, Twain was among Wheeler's closest longtime friends and one of only two individuals to whom she devoted an entire chapter in her autobiography.³ Wheeler

and Twain met in New York sometime in the 1870s and quickly developed a mutual admiration for one another's artistic talents. Over the years Twain and his family often visited the Wheelers at Pennyroyal, their summer home at Onteora in Tannersville, New York, and the Wheelers made periodic visits to the Twains in Hartford. Twain sat for a formal portrait by Dora Wheeler during the winter of 1886.

The work to be done in Twain's home by Tiffany's firm was described in the original letter agreement as the decora-



tion of the ceilings, doors, floors, and woodwork on the first floor (hall, parlor, dining room, and library), and in the upstairs bedroom and halls, for a flat fee of five thousand dollars. Tiffany reserved full artistic license to design the appropriate decor, stipulating that woodwork, paint, paper, and stenciling would be “at our option.”⁴ Nearly all the work was completed by the spring of 1882. Tiffany made minor additions to the decor in 1883, and there is some evidence from correspondence that de Forest and Wheeler, heading their own separate firms after 1883, were involved in further redecorations in 1886–87. Neither the original agreement nor any subsequent documentation makes reference to textiles supplied by either Tiffany’s or Wheeler’s firm, and apparently none were provided.

In selecting color schemes, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, followed many of the principles that Wheeler would later articulate in her writings on home decoration. Each room reflected the basic notion, derived from English decorating manuals, that the decoration of an interior should revolve around its function and lighting. Wheeler advised, for example, that a front hall be designed to “prepare the mind for whatever of inner luxury there may be in the house,” ideally in a strong, deep red that would complement the natural yellows and russets of oiled wood paneling.⁵ In the first-floor hall of the Twain house, seen here, the walls were painted terracotta-red and stenciled in black and silver with patterns resembling American Indian textiles and basketry. To heighten the atmosphere of opulence and exoticism, the preexisting walnut paneling was stenciled in silver so that it appeared to be inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In 1883, to update the fireplace surround in the hall, Twain purchased carved Indian teakwood moldings and pierced brass panels imported by Tiffany & de Forest from the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company (see cat. no. 11).

In the first-floor parlor (visible here through the doorway), Tiffany and his colleagues selected pale salmon pink for the walls and ecru for the woodwork, colors meant to create a sense of femininity and lightness. The walls and ceiling were stenciled in silver leaf patterns based on East Indian designs, perhaps furnished by de Forest. The adjoining dining room at the north end of the house was decorated in a warmer and darker color scheme of red, gold, and brown. This choice reflected Wheeler’s belief that “if [the dining room] has a cold, northern exposure, reds or gold browns are indicated.”⁶ The walls were papered in a heavy, embossed wallpaper patterned with Oriental lilies in gold

on red and with a shiny lacquered finish, very similar in its dense all-over patterning to Wheeler’s textile designs of lilies printed on cotton (cat. no. 63).⁷ Walnut paneling and doors were stenciled with Chinese-inspired motifs, perhaps designed by Samuel Colman, who was an enthusiastic collector of Oriental art. Although it was not part of the original contract, Tiffany redesigned the dining-room fireplace surround, using blue and amber glass tiles, and the window above it, employing blue and amber beveled glass. For the library at the south end of the house, the firm proposed “walls covered with metal leaf & stenciled, ceiling covered with metal leaf and paint.”⁸ In keeping with Wheeler’s assertion that for a library the color scheme “may, and should, be much warmer and stronger than that of a parlor,”⁹ these walls and ceiling were peacock blue stenciled in gold. The stenciling, suggestive of Scotch plaid, complemented the large mantel imported from a castle in Scotland, which anchored the room.

Twain was greatly impressed with the quality of the work performed in his home by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and wrote in a letter some fourteen years later, in 1895, “How ugly, tasteless, repulsive, are all the domestic interiors I have ever seen in Europe compared with the perfect taste of this ground floor, with its delicious dream of harmonious color, & its all-pervading spirit of peace & serenity & deep contentment.”¹⁰

1. The Twain house was built in the wood-frame Stick Style by New York architect Edward Tuckerman Potter in 1874. No contemporary descriptions or photographs of the work done by Associated Artists in 1881–83 are known today; a modern restoration of the interiors was based on the surviving physical evidence. See Faude 1978.
2. Some of the tiles that lined Twain’s fireplace were copied from those in the armory. See Koch 1966, p. 19.
3. See Wheeler 1918, pp. 324–39.
4. Letter agreement, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, to Samuel L. Clemens, October 24, 1881, Mark Twain Papers, University of California at Berkeley. See also Twain 1975, pp. 399–401.
5. Wheeler 1892b, p. 792. Wheeler furnished the same advice in Wheeler 1893d, pp. 19–21.
6. Wheeler 1892b, p. 793. See also Wheeler 1893d, p. 24.
7. This wallpaper was probably designed to mimic gold-leafed embossed leather wallpaper from Japan, the wall covering of choice among wealthy Americans during the Aesthetic era. Less affluent consumers resorted to facsimiles. Today these walls are papered with a modern reproduction of the 1880s design; a fragment of the original paper is in the collection of the Mark Twain House (72.14.6).
8. Letter agreement, Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, to Samuel L. Clemens, October 24, 1881, Mark Twain Papers, University of California at Berkeley.
9. Wheeler 1892a, p. 841. See also Wheeler 1893d, p. 31.
10. Letter, Samuel L. Clemens to Olivia Clemens, March 20, 1895, cited in Twain 1949, p. 312.

DORA WHEELER FOR LOUIS C.
TIFFANY & COMPANY, ASSOCIATED
ARTISTS, AND FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

22. *The Winged Moon*

1883

Ground fabric manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Silk embroidered with silk threads, 101 x 65 in. (256 x
165.1 cm)

Marked: DW [lower left]; AA/1883 [lower right]

Published in Candace Wheeler, *The Development of
Embroidery in America*, 1921

*the wainscoting, which is of maple, are inlaid with classic
designs in metal and glass. . . . The ceiling of this drawing-
room is in mosaics of glass, in small panels. There is a large
panel in the center, about nine feet square, in the middle of
which is a Moorish design, surrounded by a circle of cherubs.
The glass panels of the ceiling are subdivided by demarcations
of woodwork in geometrical designs.*⁶

To decorate his new mansion, constructed by architect George B. Post between 1879 and 1882 at Fifty-seventh Street and Fifth Avenue, railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt II hired two separate teams of interior designers. One, led by John La Farge, was in charge of the dining room and picture gallery;¹ the other, directed by Louis C. Tiffany, was responsible for the drawing room. The contract for the commission was entered into by the spring of 1881 and was probably held by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. As the firm's manager reported, "We inquired what sum could be spent upon it, and were given *carte blanche*, and Mr. Tiffany was, of course, in his element. It is not always that the owner of a house extends such unlimited opportunities to us; usually they specify the limit of their purse, and we do as well as we can for the money."² Tiffany submitted his final plans by late May 1881 and received a reply from Vanderbilt: "I like the plan very much indeed—Please show to Mr. Post as soon as possible so that all building plans will work in together."³ Completed nearly two years later in early 1883, the drawing room cost fifty thousand dollars, then a considerable sum of money.⁴ During much of that time Tiffany and La Farge were also decorating various rooms of the Union League Club (cat. nos. 19, 20), but while those were harshly criticized for their lack of harmony, the press praised the Vanderbilt interiors.⁵

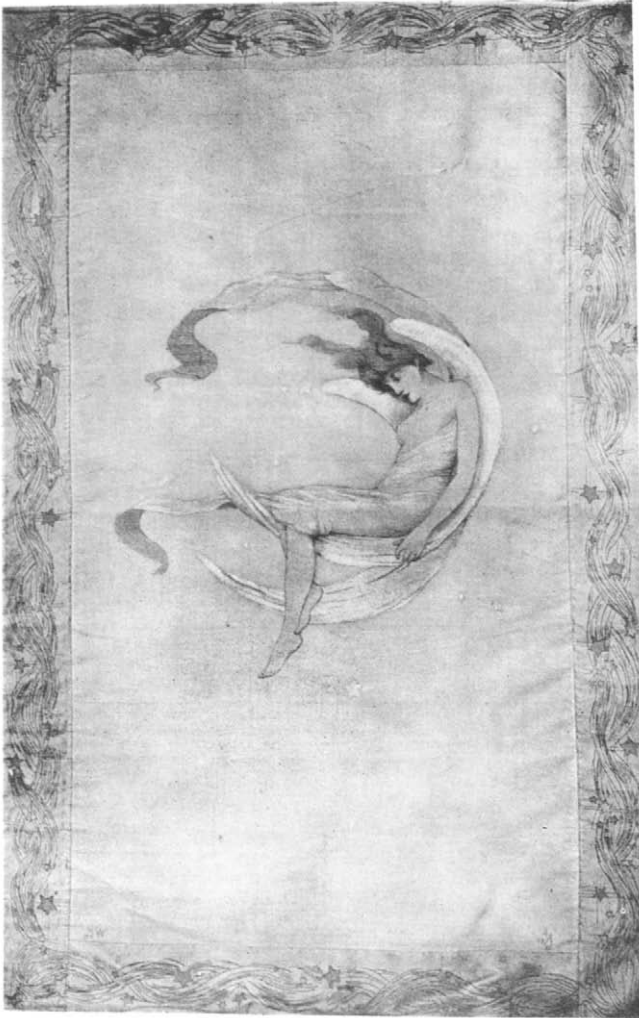
The Vanderbilt drawing room is known only from contemporary descriptions, such as this one in the *Manufacturer and Builder*:

*The treatment is both elaborate and rich to the last degree.
The large folding doors on the south side are balanced on the
north side by a large cabinet mantel in the wall. There are
four pilasters on either side, and these pilasters, together with*

The iridescent ceiling mosaics depicting butterflies, orchids, and other flora and fauna were said to be from the ruins of Thebes, Pompeii, and Cyprus,⁷ but this is likely to have been pure fancy, since Tiffany was by then manufacturing in New York his own glass mosaics imitating ancient works.

Instead of a fireplace, the focal element of the Vanderbilt drawing room, set against the wall, was a fountain of dancing nymphs supporting a large urn. The figures were sculpted in silver in full relief against a background of iridescent glass patterned with butterflies. Water overflowed from the urn into a basin below planted with flowers and trailing vines. A large cabinet hanging above was filled with antique ceramics and rare curios from around the world—perhaps assembled by Samuel Colman, who had similarly stocked the china cabinet of the George Kemp salon in 1880 (see cat. no. 14). The custom-made carpet, said to have been the most expensive of its size ever imported from overseas, was dark blue with a tan, brown, and pink border. Furniture was "elegant, but simple."⁸ Lockwood de Forest apparently assisted with the decor, since he wrote to Tiffany that the Vanderbilts had rejected his suggestion that the furniture be covered in "kincobs" (*kinkhab*, an Indian brocaded fabric woven with gold and silver thread).⁹

Because the Vanderbilt house included a picture gallery, there were no paintings in the drawing room. Instead the walls were hung with eleven needlewoven tapestries designed by Dora Wheeler (1856–1940) and executed by the embroidery department of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and that of Associated Artists, in 1882–83.¹⁰ None are known to survive today. The six most famous, conceived as three pendant pairs, were more than eight feet tall and featured lifesize allegorical female figures: *The Air Spirit*, seated on a bed of clouds releasing a flock of larks, and its



22



Fig. 61. Dora Wheeler for Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and for Associated Artists, *The Birth of Psyche*, ca. 1883. Wood engraving from *Art Journal* (London) 23, November 1884, p. 346. Signed: C. Dietrich. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

companion *The Water Spirit* (also known as *The Spirit of the Sea* or *Undine*), crouching under the crest of a wave while holding out a shell to catch falling pearls; *The Birth of Psyche*, represented by a gossamer-winged figure rising up like curling smoke from a mass of milkweed, and its companion, *The Flower Spirit*, a suspended figure proceeding similarly from a bed of orchids; and *The Full Moon*, a draped female figure, her feet dangling above a lily pond, with outstretched wings suggesting the form of a disk silhouetting her head, and its companion, *The Winged Moon*, a woman with streaming hair in flowing draperies, cradled in a thin crescent formed by her folded wings and floating in a starry sky. It seems that duplicates of a number of the tapestries were

subsequently made to use in publicizing the fine workmanship of Wheeler's own firm, Associated Artists, after she parted ways with Tiffany; it is probably these that were exhibited in the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition at the National Academy of Design in the fall of 1883. Critics were impressed; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* called the tapestries "the most decided advance in needle-work known to the century."¹¹ Replicas traveled to London as well, for an exhibition of American decorative art held at Johnstone, Norman & Company in 1889, and met with similar praise from English critics.¹²

This photograph of *The Winged Moon* (cat. no. 22) was published in Wheeler's *Development of Embroidery in America*

(1921); the engraving of *The Birth of Psyche* appeared in the *Art Journal* in 1884 (fig. 6r).¹³ No illustrations of the other tapestries have been located. These two images suggest that in formulating her designs Dora was strongly influenced by French academic painting. She may also have found models in the decorative arts; *The Winged Moon* has much in common, for example, with tile designs and book illustrations by Walter Crane.

The other five tapestries for the Vanderbilt drawing room were slightly smaller in size and showed groups of figures. They were: *The Graces*, depicting three girls dancing, arms intertwined and wearing jeweled robes of gold, blue, and pink; two pendant panels showing cherubs swinging on ropes and pelting one another with roses; and another pair of panels with cherubs playing a large viol and a harp amid beds of roses.¹⁴ All eleven tapestries shared a palette of pale blues, greens, grays, purples, salmon pinks, yellows, and creams. They were made using Wheeler's special needlewoven-tapestry ground cloth and embroidery stitch (see cat. nos. 24, 25).¹⁵

Candace Wheeler supplied window curtains and an embroidered portiere that complemented her daughter's tapestries for the Vanderbilt drawing room. The pale green satin ground of the portiere was enlivened by diamond-shaped appliqué of a deeper toned green satin in which a yellow tint mingled, creating an "opaline" effect. "Over this," reported *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, "is embroidered a prodigal variety of roses dropping from the stems in their plenitude of bloom and color." These were in tones of pink and yellow and done in *opus plumarium*, or the feather stitch, also known as the South Kensington stitch.¹⁶ Another portiere designed by Colman, featuring a reeds-birds-and-iris motif (see cat. no. 10), is mentioned in contemporary sources as having been made for Vanderbilt's new home,¹⁷ but no known descriptions of the drawing room mention this portiere; it may have hung elsewhere in the mansion. This was perhaps the last interior decorating project on which Tiffany, Wheeler, Colman, and de Forest all collaborated before Wheeler founded her own firm of Associated Artists in 1883.

1. Beginning in about July 1881, La Farge's embroidery department was headed by Mary Tillinghast, who had worked for Tiffany & Wheeler from February to mid-July 1881 on the George Kemp house commission (see cat. no. 14, n. 10). For the dining room of the Cornelius Vanderbilt II house Tillinghast embroidered two extraordinary portieres, *Garland of Fruit and Flowers* and *Aeneas at Carthage*. See Yarnall 1994.

2. Donald G. Mitchell, quoted in "High-Toned House Decoration" 1882.
3. Letter, Cornelius Vanderbilt II to Louis Comfort Tiffany, June 2, 1881, Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers.
4. "Architectural Progress" 1883, p. 390.
5. For example, the Vanderbilt interiors were cited as "the most important example of decorative work yet attempted in this country, in respect both to the scale on which it is employed and to its artistic intentions." Humphreys 1883a, p. 135.
6. "Building Intelligence" 1882.
7. "Architectural Progress" 1883, p. 390.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Letter, Lockwood de Forest to Louis Comfort Tiffany, December 23, 1882, Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers.
10. Although Dora Wheeler's tapestries were executed at least in part by the embroidery department of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, some of the work may have been performed by other enterprises. For example, it was noted in November 1882 that a "Miss [Mary A.] Williamson," manager of the Society of Industrial Arts, was "at present superintending the embroidering of curtains designed by Mr. Louis Tiffany for Mr. Vanderbilt" ("Society of Industrial Arts" 1882b). The Society of Industrial Arts was a commercial affiliate of the School of Industrial Art and Technical Design for Women founded in October 1882 by Florence E. Cory at 251 West Twenty-third Street. The school offered instruction in interior decoration, ceramics, embroidery, carpet and wallpaper design, flower painting, wood engraving, and architecture, while the society produced decorative works and designs on commission, primarily for commercial manufacturers. See *Art Interchange* 9 (November 23, 1882), p. 117; "School of Industrial Arts" 1882; advertisement in *Art Interchange* 11 (September 13, 1883), p. iii; Trapper 1890; "School Without Books" 1895.
11. Harrison 1884, p. 343. A duplicate of *The Winged Moon* traveled to the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition held in 1883 as part of an exhibition of textiles by Associated Artists. The *Studio* commented on its "singularly free and unconventional" design, framed by a border of comets and stars, and found the asking price of 350 dollars justifiable for such an "artistic and unique" design. "Decorative Art at Cincinnati" 1883; Wheeler 1921, p. 138.
12. Press reports of the London exhibition mentioned *The Winged Moon* and *The Birth of Psyche*; see "American Art in London" 1889. The American press noted a favorable reception in London: "Dora Wheeler is the artist whose tapestry designs are receiving so much praise from London critics in the exhibition of American decorative art work in England" (untitled, undated newspaper clipping, ca. July 1889, Collection of Georgia Nash).
13. In the *Art Journal*, *The Birth of Psyche* was misattributed to Candace Wheeler. Images of *The Winged Moon* also appeared in "Associated Artists" 1885, p. 38, and Koehler 1886, p. 212. The latter contains detailed descriptions of *The Winged Moon* and *The Birth of Psyche*. The birth of Psyche was also the subject of a similar tapestry by Rosina Emmet that was illustrated in the *Art Interchange* (December 6, 1883); see "Psyche" 1883.
14. What may have been a design for one of the cherub tapestries, entitled *Loves at Play*, was illustrated in the *Art Amateur*; it depicted stereotypically pudgy nude putti. "Associated Artists" 1885, p. 40.
15. Humphreys 1884b, p. 346; "Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition" 1884b, p. 46.
16. Harrison 1884, pp. 347–48. See also "Associated Artists' Needlework" 1881, p. 13.
17. "Colman's Art Draperies" 1879; "Prize Design Embroideries" 1881, p. 443. Colman was at least minimally involved in the decoration of the Vanderbilt drawing room, since at one point he was called in to offer his expertise as a colorist regarding Wheeler's curtains and portiere. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Louis C. Tiffany, January 28 [1883], Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers, series V, box 25.

23. *Floral embroidery*

Ca. 1875–80

Probably embroidered by Catherine Holiday
Silk and linen embroidered with silk thread,

78 × 46¾ in. (198.1 × 118.7 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Rogers Fund, 1972 (1972.65)

During the 1870s and 1880s, the work of the English artist, designer, and theorist William Morris (1834–1896) significantly influenced textile design in America, and its impact on Candace Wheeler's efforts was considerable. Morris's fabric designs were carried out by both the Royal School of Art Needlework and his own firm, Morris & Company. Highly identifiable in style, his flat, linear, repeating plant patterns adorned one-of-a-kind hand-embroidered pieces like this floral hanging as well as high-quality mass-produced printed and woven fabrics of cotton, wool, and silk. They represented the height of English art decoration and inspired widespread imitation by both professionals and amateurs on either side of the Atlantic. Wheeler and her contemporaries undoubtedly saw examples of Morris's embroidery designs displayed by the Royal School of Art Needlework at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia.

Morris's works were based on specific ideas about what constituted an appropriate form of ornament for a given material and reflected his fundamental belief in the need to reform art as a means of improving society. In the ongoing debate of the period weighing the merits of naturalistic versus stylized ornament, Morris argued for the latter. He deplored the then-popular type of needlework known as Berlin wool-work (fig. 14), regarding its illusionistically shaded pictures, mechanically worked with bright chemical-dyed wools, as entirely devoid of artistic quality. Seeking an aesthetic of purity and elegance, Morris took as his model the medieval designer-craftsman and attempted to revive long-abandoned methods of dyeing, printing, weaving, and embroidering. The hanging seen here is meticulously embroidered in flat long and short (satin and stem) stitches on a silk satin ground and backed with coarse linen. Its design reflects Morris's preference for painstaking craftsmanship as well as for a tightly organized, symmetrical pattern and a subtle, subdued palette obtained with natural

vegetable dyes. (That Wheeler took to heart these Arts and Crafts ideas of quality and restraint is evident in the Madonna-lily pillow cover [cat. no. 7] she produced after attending the Centennial.) Morris's design of curving leafy vines and branches blooming with carnations, peonies, tulips, and several other flowers demonstrates that he was also fascinated by older European, Near Eastern, and Oriental textiles, particularly late-seventeenth-century English crewelwork embroideries, which featured meandering branch and tree motifs.

Morris built his reputation as a textile designer with art needlework, the hand-stitched embroidered wall hangings that he began producing with the assistance of family members in the late 1850s. They were most often figurative works based on literary and historical subjects, like medieval tapestries, and their costliness limited their production to a small number of commissions for a wealthy clientele. Not until the late 1860s did Morris begin experimenting with repeating patterns for more affordable printed fabrics, and these were not produced in any quantity until the early 1880s. His firm's earliest woven fabrics date to the mid-1870s and likewise became commercially viable only in the 1880s. But even these yard goods were relatively expensive, since Morris strove to maintain high quality and achieve innovative effects by employing novel methods of dyeing and weaving.¹

For his embroidery business Morris employed a small band of talented professional needleworkers, all women recruited from local design schools who were capable of executing his intricate designs and formulating their own patterns in accordance with his prescribed aesthetic. In this family firm they worked under the direction first of Morris's wife, Jane Morris; then of his sister-in-law, Bessie Burden, who had taught at the Royal School of Art Needlework; and finally of his daughter, May Morris. Morris himself originated patterns only for important commissions, and even then he often permitted the embroiderer to select the appropriate colors and stitches. The present panel is believed to have been worked by Catherine Holiday, the wife of the painter and stained-glass designer Henry Holiday — one of the most skilled needlewomen of her time, and reputedly Morris's favorite.² Known for her individual style, Holiday produced embroideries that typically





Fig. 62. J. P. Mayall, *L. Alma-Tadema R. A.*, ca. 1884. From F. G. Stephens, *Artists at Home*, 1884, p. 34. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

showed more detailed forms and a richer gradation of colors than those by her colleagues.

To a great extent Wheeler followed Morris's example when she established her own embroidery business. From Morris and other leading British designers came the ambition to strive for the highest possible quality and to revive art forms such as hand embroidery because, she believed, beautiful textiles were essential to the comfort and enjoyment of the home. Wheeler's design preferences soon moved away from Morris's toward more organic, less conventionalized forms; but like Morris, she focused on improving the techniques and aesthetics of textile design and manufacture, studied historical precedents, and hired able women to assist her in both designing and embroidering elaborate figurative and floral wall hangings and portieres. The reputation she achieved paved the way for her partnering with Cheney Brothers and other firms to produce distinguished fabrics and woven cottons and silks with repeating patterns for mass consumption.

Whether Wheeler ever met Morris is not known; she may have during one of the several trips she took to England in the 1880s. She did meet a number of other English artists and designers who directly influenced her development of textiles. Among them was Dutch-born Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912), who was primarily

known as a painter of genre scenes set in ancient times but who also occasionally adapted his talents to the decorative arts, including textiles. (He designed silk hangings and upholstery and a suite of furniture for the music room of the Henry G. Marquand mansion on East Sixty-eighth Street in New York.)³ Alma-Tadema, observed Wheeler, "like most figure-painters, was a color fanatic about textiles." She valued his opinion on her experiments with color and technique and recalled that on one occasion, while visiting his London studio,

I showed him some of the combined color and design experiments which the Cheney silk-manufacturers made for "The Associated Artists" of New York. They were lengths of what we had named "shadow silks," for the design ran constantly into iridescent changes of color, and they appeared in light and shadow where the line of form was plainly visible, or disappeared with every change of light. He was quite as enthusiastic about these new weavings as I could wish. . . . Mr. Tadema's enthusiasm called together the color-loving circle of painters, who showered all sorts of rainbow epithets upon the lady and the weavings.⁴

Wheeler, who considered herself an artist, undoubtedly relished this attention from prominent British painters (and one American expatriate, James McNeill Whistler).

A photograph of Alma-Tadema in his studio (fig. 62) shows a shimmering hanging above the fireplace; could it be a piece of Wheeler's fabric? Wheeler's development of innovative fabrics like her shadow silks occurred largely as a result of her attempts to translate painterly effects of light and shadow into the textile medium (see cat. nos. 79–81, 84–86). In this respect her work often looked very different from that of Morris. He generally eschewed the imitation of other media, while she aimed to evoke a naturalistic effect, disguising the repeating nature of her fabric patterns. Only a few of Wheeler's designs recall Morris's, such as her pomegranate silk (cat. nos. 74, 75), which adapts the sym-

metrical, repeating pattern of an earlier era. From Morris Wheeler inherited ideas of design integrity and a model of production by which she helped set the standard for an American school of art needlework and commercial textile design. From artists like Alma-Tadema she received encouragement to use her painterly eye in the service of textiles.

1. On Morris textiles, see Parry 1983.

2. For a discussion of work by Catherine Holiday, see *ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

3. See Kisluk-Grosheide 1994; Kisluk-Grosheide 2000. An embroidered portiere (1884–85) from the Marquand mansion is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection (1996.330).

4. Wheeler 1918, p. 406.

CANDACE WHEELER
FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

24. *Iris embroidery*

1883

Ground fabric manufactured by Cheney Brothers Silk embroidered with silk and metallic-wrapped cotton threads, metal sequins, and cut-glass beads, 67½ in. × 45 in. (171.5 × 114.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of the family of Mrs. Candace Wheeler,
1928 (28.34.1)

This textile panel lavishly embroidered with iris was among the first major pieces of art needlework that Wheeler designed after she and Tiffany ended their business partnership in early 1883. During Wheeler's association with Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* noted in 1884, her needlework department had "assumed a character of distinct national and commercial importance," but its further development required a concentrated effort not available in an enterprise producing "combined forms of decorative work."¹ Consequently Wheeler established her own, separate firm, devoted exclusively to textile design and embroidering, under the name Associated Artists.

One of the first steps she took to promote her new business was to exhibit embroideries in the Pedestal Fund Art

Loan Exhibition held in December 1883 at the National Academy of Design (see pp. 51–52). Wheeler displayed a number of needlewoven tapestries from the highly publicized series of wall hangings designed by Dora Wheeler for the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion (cat. no. 22) and also embroideries of other types, including this iris panel. Originally it had a border and was the centerpiece of a portiere. Wheeler conceived of these large-scale works as focal points in an interior having the same fine-art status as paintings. "As a rule," she told an interviewer, "there should be but one considerable piece of embroidery in a room, and that should be a work of art. Value would be given to it by its contrast with curtains, pillows or cushions made of stuffs, handsome in themselves, without needlework embellishment of any kind."²

Today the iris panel has faded and deteriorated because of overexposure to the sun. (After its donation to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1928 it was put on permanent display in a naturally lit gallery, where after many years it became light damaged.) When the portiere was exhibited in December 1883 at the Pedestal Fund exhibition in its original, pristine condition, the *Art Interchange* praised the "originality of design and harmonious coloring" and the "beauty of the hand-woven textiles on which they are wrought." It continued with this description:

On a ground of ecru silk canvas, scattered irregularly, and springing from a profusion of lance-like foliage, conventional in coloring and slightly so in arrangement, appear tall iris lilies, embroidered in heavy filosomes [low-gloss silk thread] in soft tones of dull purple fading to dull pink. Here and there dragon-flies, beetles, and butterflies are presented; the spots on the wings and the eyes of the insects, expressed in jewels, emeralds, and rubies, glitter with fine effect. Bordering the portiere, is a broad band of gold braid, embroidered in dull tones of purple and ecru, and set in mediaeval fashion with glass stones, representing topaz and amethysts, caught down by gold threads; the dado, completing the portiere, is a deep border of lustrous velvet of a dull but bloomy old purple.³

The muted greens, golds, and purples suggested a field of iris flowers as they might appear at dawn, while the luxurious effect of the lustrous silk threads, glittering metal sequins, and faceted glass beads must have dazzled viewers.

The conventional all-over design of this embroidery was probably inspired by the way fields of iris are treated in certain Japanese artworks. A number of the fabrics mass-produced by Associated Artists are modeled on Japanese examples, which during the 1880s might be seen in private collections in New York; Japanese patterns were also published in design books (see cat. nos. 55–62, 64, 66, 67). If Wheeler was faithfully following a particular source, that might account for the somewhat static, repetitive design of this work, which is perhaps less interesting than some of her firm's more complex figural tapestry compositions. Insofar as technique is concerned, however, the iris panel is a tour de force of hand embroidery in which close stitches of various colors are employed to produce a subtle shading of the forms. The type of stitch used was called "Kensington" or "feather stitch" (or *opus plumarium*) because embroidered areas resemble the overlapping plumage of a bird.

The ground fabric of the iris panel is an example of Wheeler's specially woven "tapestry cloth," which she invented in collaboration with Cheney Brothers in 1880 while working for Tiffany & Wheeler. Intended mainly to be used for embroidered "needlewoven tapestries" (see

cat. no. 25), it is a loosely woven silk canvas with a double warp (vertical threads) in one color and a double weft, or woof (horizontal threads), in a contrasting shade. Wheeler patented the fabric in 1883; its description in the United States patent papers reads:

A new article of manufacture consisting essentially of a plain woven fabric, canvas or cloth, having a closely-woven back of thick woof-threads and an open or loosely-woven face of thinner woof-threads, with interstices between the face woof-threads adapted to receive ornamental threads without appreciable protrusion, the said back and face woof-threads being held by a double series of crossing or binding warp-threads passing alternately from the face to the back of the fabric, and holding the woof-threads both of the face and back to an intermediate series of straight warp-threads.⁴

Wheeler had discovered her tapestry cloth by accident while searching for a ground fabric that would best accommodate her embroideries. According to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, she had been standing one day by a jacquard loom watching some silk being woven to her order, presumably at Cheney Brothers (see cat. no. 73), when she came across an imperfect, discarded remnant of loosely woven silk canvas; this became the model for her new ground fabric.⁵ Wheeler chose silk canvas primarily because it was impervious to moths, unlike the wool ground fabrics used in traditional European tapestries, the methods of which she was seeking to surpass. However, she did not count on the damaging effects to her delicate silk embroideries of longtime exposure to light.

1. Harrison 1884, p. 343.

2. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).

3. "Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition" 1884a. Another description of the iris portiere is contained in "New Embroideries" 1887.

4. United States Patent Office, "Candace T. Wheeler, of New York, N. Y. Fabric for Needle-Woven Tapestries," Letters Patent No. 271,174, January 23, 1883, National Archives.

5. Harrison 1884, p. 346. The National Archives contains an invoice addressed to Wheeler from Cheney Brothers dated December 17, 1880, for 88 2/8 yards of 50-inch wide "tapestry" fabric in gold, sapphire, and salmon, at \$3.00 per yard, for a total of \$264.75. See testimony of Candace Wheeler, December 23, 1881, Exhibit A, in "Wheeler vs. Tillinghast."



25. *Clouds-and-chrysanthemums embroidery*

Ca. 1883–85

Ground fabric manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Silk embroidered with silk and metallic-wrapped
cotton threads, 108 × 50½ in. (274.3 × 128.3 cm)

Printed on paper tag: AA

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of
Mrs. George (Lucy Wheeler) Riggs, 1960 (60.139.2)

Like the iris and tulip panels (cat. nos. 24, 26), this restrainedly elegant embroidered textile panel is one of the few surviving large-scale works designed by Wheeler's Associated Artists. Its motifs of Chinese-style clouds and chrysanthemums are worked on a silk canvas ground, Wheeler's patented tapestry cloth. The interiors of the clouds are stitched with several shades of pink silk thread in Wheeler's patented needlewoven-tapestry technique. A couching stitch done in gold- and bronze-colored metallic threads was used for the chrysanthemum blossoms and the edges of the clouds. (On the couching stitch, see the Appendix.)

Wheeler developed the needlewoven-tapestry embroidering technique while she was working for Tiffany & Wheeler;¹ she patented it in England in March 1882 and then again in the United States in November 1882. In this technique, embroidery stitches are woven into the silk canvas paralleling the weft, or woof (horizontal threads), and are held in place by the warp (vertical threads). The technical aspects of Wheeler's invention are described in the United States patent papers as follows:

*The object of this invention is to provide a new method of embroidering, by which tapestry or picture effects may be produced; and the invention consists in passing the embroidering-threads under the warp and over the woof of the fabric, thereby covering the woof with the embroidering-threads, whereby the latter will be held in place by the crossing threads of the fabric, thus imitating the surface of the woven fabric, so far as relates to the form of its threads, while producing the color and form of the picture or design.*²

Thus, while the embroidering threads run over the weft threads and under the warp threads, they do not pass all the

way through the ground fabric as in ordinary embroidery (except at the ends, where they are fastened).

At Associated Artists, the designer of an embroidery first supplied a detailed sketch, typically in watercolors. This was then stenciled in ink on the silk canvas ground.³ Lastly the outline of the pattern was filled in, using the patented tapestry technique. In the resulting weaving, as *Harper's New Monthly* marveled, "It is difficult even for a practiced eye to discern how [the needlewoven stitches] have apparently become incorporated with the stuff. The impression gained is that of a vignette, where the atmosphere fades into the ground tint."⁴ Wheeler felt that the visual effects of light and color achieved with embroidery surpassed those of painting. "One of the superior charms of embroidery," she once wrote, is that "it can show not only positive color in beautiful gradations, but reflection as well. The same tint in silk will make of itself, according to the light which falls upon it, the deepest, as well as the lightest shades of its own color, and will even reflect its own upon adjacent tints, so that the whole mass will have a color effect that would be beyond the power of the most skilful painter. The very inequality of surface heightens this effect, bringing actual shadow into play."⁵

The use of orientalizing designs such as those in this clouds-and-chrysanthemums panel is very typical of the Aesthetic idiom, which often mixed Western decorative elements with Eastern motifs to add an element of exoticism and worldly sophistication to household interiors. However, the choice of a Chinese motif was unusual for Wheeler, who tended, at least in the 1880s, to favor motifs drawn from Japanese sources or indigenous American flora. She was intrigued by Oriental embroideries generally:

*I found more of interest in Oriental art from seeing that it was not merely a perfunctory repetition of stitches and patterns, but that there was a sta[u]nch, almost a religious, integrity in doing the thing exactly as it had been done by generations of forefathers, and that the silks and tissues and flosses and threads of gold were the best the world produced. . . . In the face of it, all our beautiful copies of flowers, and growths, and gracious forms of nature seemed almost experimental—the art of growing and changing nations.*⁶

In the design of this embroidery, Chinese forms of ornament are faithfully reproduced, perhaps out of a sense of honor toward another culture's decorative vocabulary. The





Fig. 63. Ida F. Clark for Associated Artists, *Fighting Dragons*, 1885. From Candace Wheeler, *The Development of Embroidery in America*, 1921, facing p. 140. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

composition, in which clouds and chrysanthemums of flowing and varied form are freely scattered across the surface, typifies Wheeler's own personal tendency to avoid angular, mechanically drawn, or rigidly arranged forms. Whether or not Wheeler designed this panel herself, it is likely that she influenced its design. Another Chinese-style silk embroidery entitled *Fighting Dragons* (fig. 63) was authored in 1885 by Ida F. Clark, one of Wheeler's designers at Associated Artists (see cat. nos. 35–38). Embroidered in silk and metallic threads and appliquéd in velvet in tones of blue, green, purple, and gold, it too has an asymmetrical composition made up of undulant forms.⁷

In addition to Chinese-inspired designs Associated Artists produced a number of patterns influenced by Japanese works, reflecting the craze for Japanism in America during the second half of the nineteenth century. Its products included “printed stuffs,” fabric stamped with designs for embroidery “showing that delicate balance between the conventional and real which . . . resembles more nearly Japanese work than any European influence, and yet could not be mistaken for Japanese work.”⁸ Motifs on a number of the firm's printed cottons, cotton velvets, and linens are nearly identical to

Japanese examples reproduced in design books of the period. Wheeler was particularly taken with the naturalistic treatment of flowers in certain Japanese textiles and lamented the tendency among American embroiderers to excessively conventionalize floral subjects. She argued her case passionately to a reporter for the *Art Amateur* in 1887:

*How different it would be if these misguided needlewomen knew how to use their flowers as the Japanese do! A Japanese, for instance, will copy a flower with perfect accuracy, and then he will fit it into a circle, or some other geometrical form to which it may be suited, and the result is sure to be decorative. The flower comes into the composition without forcing, and will retain the freshness and freedom of nature. If our own embroiderers understood how to do this, how valuable their work might be!*⁹

Associated Artists' experimentation with Chinese and Japanese motifs in the 1880s, adapting elements from other traditions to its own special purposes, was part of Wheeler's ongoing effort to create a distinctively American style. Just as she had sought to improve upon the English model of the Royal School of Art Needlework, she aspired to rival the great Eastern textile traditions as well. “As far as art was concerned in our work,” she wrote, “what we tried to do was not to repeat the triumphs of past needlework, but to see how far the best which had been done was applicable to the present.”¹⁰

1. The first example was a portiere entitled *Mephistopheles*, made December 1880–January 1881. Other early works were *Titian's Daughter* (see cat. no. 14, especially n. 10), *The Mermaid* (see cat. nos. 16, 17, especially n. 8), and a panel called *Marguerite*. See testimony of Candace Wheeler, April 25, 1882, “Wheeler vs. Tillinghast.”
2. United States Patent Office, “Candace Wheeler, of Jamaica, New York. Art of Embroidering and Embroidery,” Letters Patent No. 268,332, November 28, 1882, National Archives.
3. The Museum of the City of New York has a matching piece of peach silk canvas stamped with the same design, which has not been embroidered (60.193.3). The donor of it and the embroidered version, Mrs. George C. Riggs (née Lucy Wheeler), was the granddaughter of Candace Wheeler by Candace's son Dunham Wheeler.
4. Harrison 1884, p. 346.
5. Wheeler 1899c, p. 196.
6. Wheeler 1921, p. 141.
7. *Fighting Dragons* was exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. See Dougherty 1893, p. 859. In her *Development of Embroidery in America* (Wheeler 1921, opposite p. 140), Wheeler claimed authorship of the 1885 *Fighting Dragons*. But the work is certainly by Clark, whose very similar portiere of a single-winged dragon was described and illustrated in 1887 in *Harper's Bazaar*: see Wheeler 1887, pp. 832, 834.
8. Humphreys 1884b, p. 347.
9. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).
10. Wheeler 1921, p. 125.

26. *Tulip-appliquéd panel*

Ca. 1883–87

Ground fabric manufactured by Cheney Brothers Silk and metallic cloth appliquéd with silk velvet and embroidered with silk and metallic-wrapped cotton threads, 74 × 50½ in. (188 × 128.3 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of the family of Mrs. Candace Wheeler, 1928
(28.34.2)

Like the embroidered iris panel (cat. no. 24), this appliquéd and embroidered tulip panel was probably made after Wheeler had formed her own textile design firm, Associated Artists. It is one of the few surviving examples of Wheeler's use of the appliquéd technique. The scrolling tulip pattern was in keeping with Wheeler's stated preference for a "flowing" design of the sort used by the "old Venetians" when appliquéd "rich stuffs."¹ The ground fabric, manufactured by Cheney Brothers, was woven with silk and metallic gold-colored threads. Wheeler often used metallic cloth, known as "cloth of gold" or "cloth of silver,"² for the ground fabric of appliquéd pieces because the luminous background it provides contrasts with the softer tones and textures of applied velvets and silks.

Appliquéd is the name given to a technique in which motifs cut from one or several fabrics are stitched or "applied" to a different, ground fabric. It was one of the techniques most commonly used by Wheeler and her staff for large-scale hangings, including the Madison Square Theatre stage curtain (cat. no. 15). Compared with expensive, highly labor-intensive hand embroidery, appliquéd work could be completed relatively quickly at a substantially lower cost. Wheeler told the *Art Amateur* in 1888,

It is particularly suited to our new era of building. In the large rooms in our stately homes, appliquéd is more easily rendered effective than embroidery. Moreover, this is such a busy world, one has so many engagements, that nowadays there is scarcely time for one to do a piece of embroidery really worthy of the name. . . . In fact, though most of our work is appliquéd, it is as artistic as, and it is more effective and can be executed in much less time than embroidery, although it has not its intrinsic value.³

She described the aesthetic qualities of appliquéd:

It involves largely the relation of surfaces in connection with an all-over design, most of the effect being got by color and the contrast of materials. Of course the design is important, but not so important as the color and the relation of surfaces. In the richer fabrics you get through the difference of textures a widely different effect, although using the same colors, from what you would get with less costly materials. Appliqués of velvet or silk, for instance, give the effect of brocaded velvets, and the gold thread used in outlining gives a richness not possible in the woven goods.⁴

Relatively little was being done in Europe with the appliquéd technique, said Wheeler, who intended to make use of it in her broader effort to establish a uniquely American school of needlework.

Wheeler described the appliquéd process. It began with the design being printed or stenciled on a solid width of the silk or velvet fabric that would constitute the individual appliqués. Then the designs were cut out. Next the fabric from which the pattern had been cut was laid on the ground fabric, like a stencil, and the design was outlined on the ground. The cut pieces of appliquéd were then pasted in their proper places on the ground fabric with a paste of flour and water. After drying overnight on a flat table, the entire piece was transferred to an embroidery frame. Appliquéd pieces were then sewn to the ground fabric with a running stitch around the edges. A final, ornamental outline of couching stitches, consisting of several strands of silk secured in place by cross-stitches, followed the edges of the appliqués. Wheeler recommended three lines of couching crossed at alternate intervals to give the appearance of a solid line of embroidery; metallic gold threads added an element of luxury, if the piece would not be laundered.⁵ For her tulip panel Wheeler used appliqués of sage green and pale pink silk velvet, known as "plush" because of its long pile.⁶ The pink velvet of the flowers is edged in pink silk couching, while the green velvet of the stems and leaves is finished in gold metallic couching. The green velvet leaves are embroidered with lines indicating veins, and the centers of the tulip



blossoms are embellished with pink silk filling stitch and French knots. Although probably intended for a portiere, this work is unfinished; the embroidered silk details in the upper tulips were never completed, and a border was never added.

The tulip panel is remarkable not only for its technical artistry but also for its design, specifically the eccentric treatment of the tulip blossoms. Rather than showing them blooming at their height, Wheeler drew the tulips past their prime, with their petals spread wide and about to drop off. These are not the idealized flowers seen, for example, in traditional English crewelwork. Instead they reflect Wheeler's strong penchant for naturalism and her desire to broaden aesthetic canons beyond the uniform and the conventional. Her elaborately constructed pieces,

such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art's tulip and iris panels, were intended to be unique artistic works of significant aesthetic merit and interest.

1. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, IV).
2. The *Art Amateur* likened the pale gold and silver tones to “reflections of the sun and moon in water.” Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, III.), p. 99. For more on metallic textiles by Associated Artists, see cat. nos. 28, 30.
3. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, IV).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. For descriptions of other appliquéd portieres by Associated Artists, see Humphreys 1887.
6. Wheeler typically used silk velvet only for trimmings and appliqués, probably because it was more expensive than other types of velvets. For the firm's mass-produced patterned textiles, she chose cotton velvet and cotton velveteen. (See, e.g., cat. nos. 68–72)

DORA WHEELER
FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

27. *Penelope Unraveling Her Work at Night*

1886

Ground fabric manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Silk embroidered with silk thread, 45 × 68 in.
(114.3 × 172.7 cm)
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont (8.3-24)

Dora Wheeler became famous for her needlewoven tapestries depicting women from art and literature, beginning with the hangings produced for the drawing room of the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion in 1882 (see cat. no. 22). Among the most highly publicized of her compositions was *Penelope Unraveling Her Work at Night*, inspired by Homer's *Odyssey*.¹ It is the only needlewoven tapestry produced by Associated Artists known to survive and a rare example of the hand-embroidery technique that Candace Wheeler patented in 1882 (see cat. no. 25).² The embroidery stitches, best seen in the detail, were woven into the tapestry's ground fabric, a silk canvas manufactured by Cheney Brothers according to a design patented by Wheeler in 1883 (see cat. no. 24). Over the years, the piece has substantially faded and begun to disintegrate, presumably from exposure to light. However, the essential image remains intact.³

The pastel drawing that became the design for the tapestry was done by Dora in 1885 while she was studying at the

Académie Julian in Paris. There it won an award.⁴ Soon thereafter Dora brought her prize-winning drawing back to New York, where it was publicly exhibited and received critical notice.⁵ The picture prompted an anonymous meditation touching on dedication to art and work, a theme that largely defines the lives of both Dora and Candace Wheeler: “I wonder if the world ever knows how much of their own lives and hearts artists put into their work. I fancy there is more in this picture of Penelope than the world has any idea of. . . . One feels as if that desolate, melancholy woman had a living prototype somewhere to-day.”⁶ In a move to capitalize on the positive reception that Dora's portrayal of Penelope had received both abroad and at home, the design was translated into a needlewoven tapestry by the embroiderers at Associated Artists. The painstaking work of many months was not completed until late 1886.⁷

The subject Dora had chosen was an exemplar not only of artistry with textiles but also of fidelity and resourcefulness, traits that she and her mother held dear. Penelope was the faithful wife of Odysseus, the Trojan War hero who subsequently wandered the globe for years, trying to return to their island home of Ithaca. Penelope refused to believe that Odysseus had long since died and devised a plan to keep at bay the many suitors who sought to marry her. She



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promised to choose a spouse from among them once she had finished making the burial shroud of her father-in-law, Laertes, but each night she secretly unraveled her day's weaving. In Dora Wheeler's tapestry rendition, the classically inspired figure of Penelope, statuesque, fair-skinned, and full-breasted in a long simple gown, stands silhouetted against a large wood-framed loom. She unravels the thin threads of her weaving by the light of an ancient hanging lamp whose smoke wafts circuitously into the air. The clear horizontal line of Penelope's outstretched arms is answered by the three pronounced verticals of her torso and the loom in the center, the shroud to the right, and the hanging lamp to the left. The resulting image, strikingly graphic, was tempered by the subtle tonal harmonies of a palette originally consisting of shades of ivory, green, and brown.

Fig. 64. Dora Wheeler for Associated Artists, *Minnehaha Listening to the Waterfall*, 1884. Signed bottom right: DW. From Candace Wheeler, *The Development of Embroidery in America*, facing p. 132. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund



Other needlewoven tapestries by Dora in addition to *Penelope* attracted widespread attention in the mid-1880s, especially four from a series of about a dozen tapestries produced by Associated Artists depicting heroines of American history and literature. One was *Minnehaha Listening to the Waterfall* (ca. 1884; fig. 64), based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha," which hung in the Chicago home of Mr. and Mrs. Potter Palmer.⁸ More than seven feet in height, it showed a young Indian girl in the woods with a deer at her side; a leather-fringed border incorporated motifs drawn from Native American blankets and painted deerskins.⁹ Another slightly smaller tapestry, *Alice Pyncheon* (1887; fig. 29), inspired by Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*, featured a brown-haired maiden hurrying through the driving snow in a gossamer white dress and satin slippers and had a border of metallic silver cloth appliquéd with snowflakes of white plush.¹⁰ The same series included Dora's *Evangeline* (ca. 1885–87), after Longfellow's story of the same title, and *Hester Prynne* (ca. 1885–87), based on Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. No images of these have come to light.¹¹ About *Alice Pyncheon* the *Art Amateur* expressed admiration but ambivalence: "This is a theme for a painter; and however mistaken we may think a needlewoman for selecting it, we cannot but marvel at the artistic feeling that the worker of this panel has contrived to put into it."¹² Indeed, Dora seems to have approached her needlewoven tapestries as if they were paintings, striving for bold compositions and refined modeling of the figures and choosing popular subjects that would attract a broad audience and bring recognition to her and to her mother's firm.

1. At the time the tapestry was also known as *The Spinner*, or *Penelope Raveling Her Web*, or simply *Penelope*.
2. In 1934 Candace Stimson, Candace Wheeler's granddaughter, donated *Penelope* to the Wellesley College Art Museum. See "Penelope" 1934; "American Tapestry" 1936. In 1952 Wellesley sold the tapestry to the Castano Galleries in Boston; soon thereafter it made its way to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which presented it as a gift to the Shelburne Museum in 1955.
3. It is possible that some chemical used to process the canvas's fibers actually added to its fragility. The iris panel (cat. no. 24), embroidered on the same ground fabric, shows similar deterioration, and it has been reported that two needlewoven tapestries in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, *Alice Pyncheon* and a floral tapestry by Anna Lyman (figs. 29, 84), had to be destroyed because of their irreparably fragmented condition.
4. Wheeler 1887, pp. 832, 834. The Académie Julian was one of the leading art schools in Paris and the only one that held classes for women; many Americans went there to study painting in the French academic tradition during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. See Fehrer 1989; Weinberg 1991, pp. 221–62; Weisberg and Becker 1999.
5. The picture of *Penelope* was shown in a group exhibition at an unidentified venue. See untitled, undated newspaper clippings, ca. 1886, Collection of Georgia Nash.



27 (detail)

6. Untitled, undated newspaper clipping, ca. 1886, Collection of Georgia Nash.
7. *Penelope* was shown in exhibitions as an example of the firm's finest work. See, e.g., Architectural League of New York 1889, p. 56, no. 361.
8. Wheeler wrote that Mrs. Palmer had been "attracted by the 'bookishness' of some of the panels of incidents from American literature, and several of them went to beautify the great house on the Lake Shore." Wheeler 1921, p. 139. In 1893 Mrs. Palmer lent the *Minnehaha* tapestry to the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Weimann 1981, p. 416. Also in the Palmer home was Rosina Emmet's *Harvester* tapestry (see cat. no. 50).
9. The tapestry is also mentioned in Bishop 1885, p. 584, and Koehler 1886, pp. 211, 213.
10. Humphreys 1887, p. 20. *Alice Pyncheon* was conceived of as a pendant to Rosina Emmet's *Hilda in the Tower* (see cat. no. 50). Wheeler 1887, p. 834. Dora donated *Alice Pyncheon* to the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1934 (1934.186). It measured 74 × 50½ inches and was signed "AA/1887." According to the museum's records, it became so deteriorated that it had to be destroyed in 1959.
11. Other tapestries by Dora Wheeler that no longer survive include *Venus*, or *Aphrodite* (1887), discussed in Wheeler 1887, pp. 832, 834, and illustrated in Wheeler 1921, opposite p. 134. Noted in Bolton 1888 is *The Peacock Girl* (ca. 1885–87), depicting a young maiden in medieval costume feeding peacocks. According to Bolton, many of these tapestries were exhibited in Paris. See Bolton 1888, pp. 178–79.
12. Humphreys 1887, p. 20.

28. *Copper metallic textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk thread and copper-wrapped cotton thread,

20½ × 17½ in. (52.1 × 44.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.19)

29. *Changeable-color textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 20¾ × 23½ in. (52.7 × 59.7 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.11)

30. *Ribbed metallic textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk thread and metallic-wrapped cotton thread,

20½ × 13½ in. (52.1 × 34.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.18)

These three silk fabrics of various weaves are examples of the innovative textiles that Associated Artists created in collaboration with the Cheney Brothers mill (see cat. no. 73) during the 1880s. However, these samples might have been produced anytime between 1883 and 1900, the years that Wheeler directed Associated Artists. (Most of the machine-produced Wheeler textiles catalogued from this point on have been dated 1883–1900 because there is no documenting evidence for a more precise dating). Probably Wheeler's greatest interest in textile design lay in developing new weaving and embroidering techniques. From her earliest efforts onward she was constantly experimenting with methods of manufacture, striving to create American fabrics that would rival the textiles produced in other nations.

Before the 1880s, it was difficult for American decorators to procure quality fabrics from local textile manufacturers. Because the silks, woolens, and cottons produced by

American mills were mostly inferior copies of popular European examples, discerning Americans tended to import their textiles from overseas. But as they began to seek specialty materials to achieve novel chromatic and textural effects, in keeping with the emerging American Aesthetic taste for exoticism and eclecticism, they found that traditional materials of any origin were inadequate for these new artistic purposes. A reporter explained in 1885:

One of the most serious obstacles that the effort to create American design has had to meet, is the lack of suitable materials to work with. All imported textiles were found to be, in color, texture and pattern, unsuited to the new uses and ideas; and American manufacturers were so much under tutelage to European tastes, that nothing different was to be had from them. It is a fact as lamentable as it is astonishing, that a carpet, wall paper or textile mill in this country rarely has an American designer of patterns and colors. The schemes of color made by the Associated Artists were out of harmony with French, English and American fabrics and embroidery materials. The colors of these were too sharp, strong and cardinal for the blending of tones that was sought.¹





29

At first, in the late 1870s, Tiffany imported fabrics from Europe and India for use in Tiffany & Wheeler's interior commissions. As early as 1880, however, Tiffany was obtaining at least some of his fabrics from Cheney Brothers, including lightweight "India silks" suitable for underdraperies.² Wheeler also began to work with the textile firm about this time. She shared with Frank and Knight Cheney an interest in promoting an American design idiom that would utilize naturalistic patterns and distinctive colors not found in European precedents.³

The first fabric Wheeler developed in collaboration with the Cheney Brothers was "tapestry cloth," the two-toned silk canvas that she invented in 1880 and patented in 1883 and that served as the ground fabric for her needlewoven tapestries (see cat. no. 24). By 1883 Wheeler's Associated Artists was overseeing the production of more than twenty different kinds of fabrics woven to its specifications that were employed for interior design commissions and offered for sale in its showrooms. Advertisements and articles of the period name a broad range of silks, including raw silks, silk canvases, "cloths o' frieze," sail cloths, brocades, damasks, satins, velvets, Verona, Rajah, Surah, Turcoman, "shadow," "pongee," and "opaline" silks, and several varieties of "changeable"



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silk, as discussed below. Cottons included printed chintzes, velveteens, sateens, and denims. The exact nature of many of these fabrics is no longer known.

Luxury fabrics developed by Wheeler and the Cheneyes included metallics, or “cloths of gold and silver,” typically used as ground fabrics for embroidered hangings such as the tulip panel in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (cat. no. 26). The Metropolitan also owns this copper metallic fabric with a tan silk warp and a copper weft (cat. no. 28). The metallic weft yarns are composed of finely cut strips of copper sheeting wound around a red-dyed cotton core. (The striped effect, which is exaggerated in the photography, is unintended and results from variations in the copper yarns.)

Wheeler’s Associated Artists was especially famous for its various types of “changeable” silks, which were woven of threads of two or more colors or different tints of the same color to produce a multitone effect that changed with the light. Perhaps the simplest kind is illustrated here in a piece of silk fabric woven with a black warp and a red weft (cat. no. 29). This type of silk was used mainly for draperies and hangings. The English actress Lillie Langtry, for example, ordered a floral silver-gray brocade portiere “with a lustre changing like an opal” for her boudoir in 1883. A variety of lightweight changeable silk called Beyreuth silk was used for light draperies; in 1884 the London socialite Mrs. Cornwallis West ordered from Associated Artists “a piece of blue-green ‘Beyreuth,’ changeable in lustre, showing at an eighth of an inch interval a gold weft thread, the warp of this silk a delicate green — the weft a pale blue — giving exquisite effects, heightened by the gold weft threads.”⁴ It was probably the same as the ribbed silk fabric illustrated here (cat. no. 30), which is woven of yellow warp threads and blue weft threads interspersed every seven rows with metallic gold wefts. The combination of yellow warps and blue wefts gives the effect of green.⁵

Another fabric introduced by Associated Artists, similar to but distinguishable from changeable silk, was facetiously called Gonzaga or “five aces” silk to indicate that it represented the height of luxury. According to one description, “In this stuff one colour is undershot in a single thread, the upper being in filaments, now whole now subdivided, making an irregular twill. The effect of this is not the mere shifting of tints such as one sees in changeable silk, but also the union of tints in different proportions as they are

blended by the play of light.”⁶ A fourth kind of silk exhibiting changeable color effects was “momie cloth,” in which “the color floats like a bloom above the surface.” Yet another material used for draperies, dubbed “moss stuff,” resembled “the mossy carpet of the depths of the wood, greens broken through with silver and crimson, with now and then a gleam of light athwart the surface.”⁷ Wheeler’s experiments with changeable effects extended to manipulation of the design itself in what were termed “shadow silks,” for which a special weaving technique made the outlines of the pattern appear blurred and indistinct (see cat. nos. 79–81, 84–86).

By the mid-1880s Wheeler’s Associated Artists was using only materials made in the United States, primarily at Cheney Brothers. Wheeler’s accomplishments rested largely on her formulation of novel textiles of the highest quality, which had secured her an extraordinary reputation on both sides of the Atlantic.

*The work is a great advertisement to a mill — such recognition have these fabrics gained, here and in Europe, for fineness, design and beauty. Several European decorators of first rate have sent for samples of them. Foreign artists and designers visiting this country regularly have in their note-book memoranda to see the wonderful new American fabrics at the Associated Artists. . . . Truly, there is nothing on the shelves of dry goods men on either continent to match them; they revive the traditions of the wonderful products of Oriental looms.*⁸

The greatest compliment that Wheeler could be paid was the enthusiastic reception given her textiles by English consumers. She had achieved recognition from the very nation whose textiles had originally inspired her to establish a higher standard for American manufacturers and designers.

1. Bishop 1885, p. 584.

2. Tiffany’s use of imported fabrics and India silks manufactured in America is noted in Harrison 1881, pp. 48, 189.

3. See Wheeler 1918, p. 238.

4. The silks ordered by Lillie Langtry and Mrs. Cornwallis West are discussed in “Embroidery Notes” 1884, along with Rajah, Verona, “shadow,” and Gonzaga silks.

5. The metallic ribbed textile was also used as the ground fabric of an embroidered floral hanging by the firm (cat. no. 93).

6. Humphreys 1884b, p. 346, discussing Gonzaga silks as well as momie silks.

7. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 40, discussing “moss stuff” as well as momie, Gonzaga, Beirut, and Rajah silks. Other useful descriptions of Gonzaga and momie silks are contained in “Art Embroidery Materials” 1882.

8. Bishop 1885, p. 584.

31. *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”*

1881

Published by Warren, Fuller & Company

Chromolithograph on cover, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ in. (24.1 × 18.1 cm)

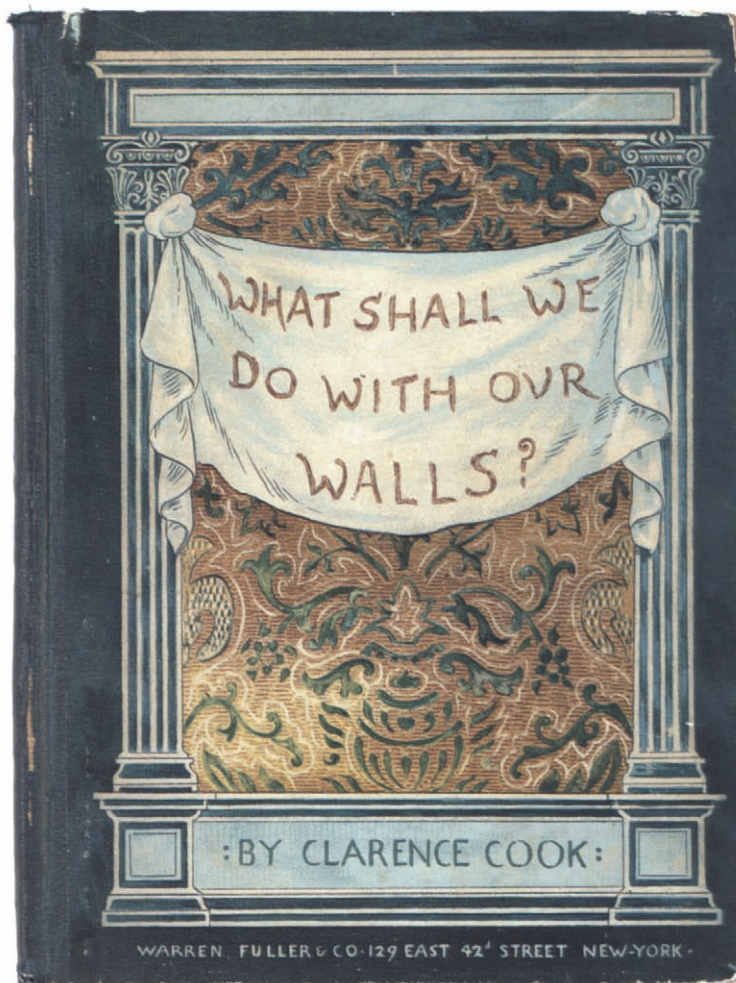
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

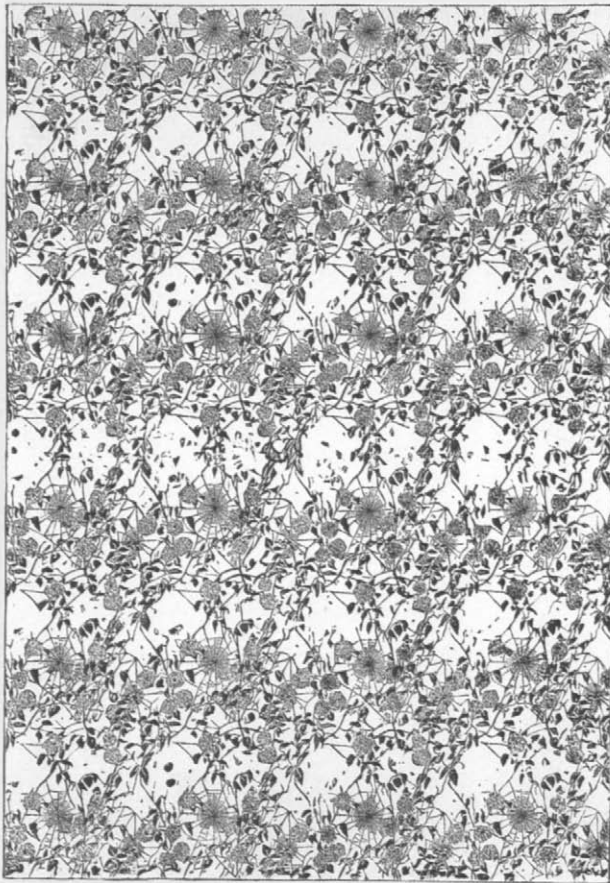
Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1970 (1970.565.178)

In 1880 the New York wallpaper manufacturer Warren, Fuller & Company¹ published a slim promotional volume entitled *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* the cover of which (in an 1881 printing) is seen here. The book was intended as publicity for new “art wallpapers” by leading American artists — including Louis C. Tiffany and Samuel Colman, who had been hired in 1879 by the firm’s immediate predecessor, J. S. Warren & Company, to furnish commercial designs. Warren was one of several American firms following the successful marketing strategy, initially adopted by the London enterprise Jeffrey & Company,² of commissioning prestigious artists to design “aesthetic” patterns. English art wallpapers had become immensely popular in the United States following the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, and English manufacturers had set the market standard for refined, technically sophisticated papers. Americans were competing with the creations of eminent English designers, including Edward William Godwin, William Morris, Walter Crane, William Burges, Bruce J. Talbert, and Christopher Dresser.³

To underscore the artistic merits of its products, J. S. Warren & Company in 1879 commissioned the renowned aesthetic theorist Clarence Cook (1828–1900) to write a brief discourse on the history and modern uses of wallpapers. Art critic for the *New York Daily Tribune* 1864–83, editor of the *Studio* 1884–92, and a founder of the American Pre-Raphaelite movement, Cook was among the most highly regarded tastemakers of his era. He wrote extensively about household art and aesthetic interiors in an effort to elevate consumer tastes, and his book *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (1878) was extremely popular among American audiences.⁴ Therefore, it was a substantial coup for a commercial firm to enlist Cook to promote its products.

Cook’s first edition of *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* contained five colorplates illustrating paper designs, three by Colman and two by Tiffany. Cook reported, “It

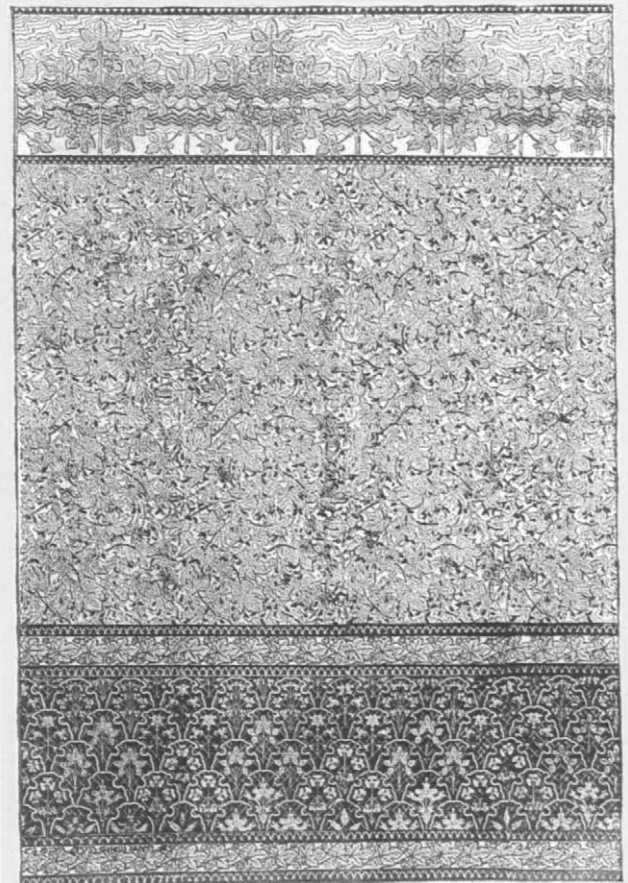




Decoration, designed by Mr. Louis C. Tiffany.

Fig. 65. *Decoration, designed by Mr. Louis C. Tiffany, 1880.* Chromolithograph from Clarence Cook, “*What Shall We Do with Our Walls?*,” 1881, facing p. 18. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lincoln Kirstein (1970.565.178)

was necessary to try a great many experiments before they could feel satisfied to submit anything to the public, and the papers they have designed and which Messrs. Warren, Fuller & Co. have manufactured, are certainly well worth the attention of all persons interested in the growth of the arts of design in this country.”⁵ One Japanesque pattern by Tiffany, of a clematis vine going to seed interwoven with seedpods and cobwebs, was printed in burnished metallic tones on a buff ground (fig. 65). Although the *Art Amateur* thought the “ingenious” design “may be objected to as presenting too decided a pattern, which by repetition becomes tiresome,”⁶ apparently this consideration did not deter decorators from using the paper. For example, it appeared on the



Parlor-Decoration, designed by Mr. Samuel Colman.

Fig. 66. *Parlor-Decoration, designed by Mr. Samuel Colman, 1880.* Chromolithograph from Clarence Cook, “*What Shall We Do With Our Walls?*,” 1881, facing p. 24. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lincoln Kirstein (1970.565.178)

dining-room walls in the home of William G. Dominick, which was illustrated in George Sheldon’s *Artistic Houses* (1883–84).⁷

The second Tiffany pattern, meant for a ceiling paper, featured a dense field of snowflakes reminiscent of Islamic interlace patterns and printed in gold, silver, and dull blue. Opined the *Art Amateur*, “Printed in appropriate colors, the same design, with its multitude of objects so disposed as never to show where they begin or end, gives the effect of abnormal height, and is suggestive of ‘the milky way.’ The absence of particular design in Mr. Tiffany’s ceiling-paper is in strong contrast, our readers will notice, with the set diaper pattern of Mr. Colman’s.” Of Colman’s somewhat

more rigid compositions, one was “a diaper pattern formed by a simple treatment of conventionalized butterfly forms” adapted from a piece of Japanese brocaded silk. The other two more complex designs were tripartite compositions with identical dados of honeysuckle flowers and foliage surmounted by differing motifs in the field and frieze. In one (fig. 66), a field of maple leaves and fruit was printed in gold on a plum-colored ground, and a maple-leaf frieze was superimposed on “golden threads suggestive of the Japanese conventionalized treatment of clouds at sunset.”⁸

Colman’s wallpaper patterns were not produced as originally drawn, and Colman, who felt that his designs had been compromised, wrote to Tiffany, “It made me feel like tearing my hair, as they had changed my work so much; put it all into smooth curves, and insipidity!”⁹ Nevertheless, the resulting wallpapers were a resounding success, garnering extensive press coverage and helping to establish new artistic criteria for the American wallpaper industry.

The positive (and commercially effective) response to its publication led Warren, Fuller to issue second and third editions of the book in 1883 and 1884. The firm further capitalized on its reputation for fine papers by sponsoring an international wallpaper design competition in 1881; the top four prizes were awarded to Candace Wheeler, her daughter Dora, and two of her other employees, Ida F. Clark and Caroline Townsend (see cat. nos. 32, 35, 39). The prize-winning designs were illustrated in the revised editions of “*What Shall We Do with Our Walls?*” and then manufactured exclusively by Warren, Fuller. Throughout the 1880s they were advertised along with designs commissioned from Tiffany, Colman, and Lockwood de Forest; the latter supplied Indian-style designs beginning in 1883, further expanding the company’s ambitious repertoire of art wallpapers.¹⁰ Cook explained Warren, Fuller’s double purpose: “They have invited artists to design them wall-papers that shall have decided artistic qualities, and yet shall be suited to actual needs, and that shall command a place in the market. They want to make a breach in the wall of old ideas and fashions of the past, that hedges us in, and to create some-

thing that shall have an unborrowed, individual look.”¹¹

Despite the stated desire for independence, the designs produced catered to the prevailing late-nineteenth-century taste, conditioned by the Aesthetic idiom, for flat, highly stylized, linear, densely patterned renditions of natural forms.

1. The firm was located at 149 East Forty-second Street. Founded in 1855 as J. S. Warren & Company, it was renamed Warren, Fuller & Company in 1880, and Warren, Fuller & Lange in 1882, and then went by several other names from 1887 until it went out of business in 1901. For more about the company, see “Warren, Fuller and Company” in Voorsanger 1986, p. 480.
2. Jeffrey & Company was among the exhibitors at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. See “Jeffrey and Company” in Voorsanger 1986, pp. 443–44. The latest English wallpaper patterns were frequently illustrated in American periodicals and likely inspired many of the designs by Tiffany and his colleagues. Other American wallpaper manufacturers following the lead of British manufacturers included the Chicago firm of John J. McGrath, which during the 1870s produced wallpapers based on designs by American architects P. B. Wight, Russell Sturgis, and John Wellborn Root.
3. For more about American wallpaper manufacture in the Aesthetic period, see Lynn 1986, pp. 67–83.
4. Among house decorating books it was second only to Charles Locke Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details* (1868). For more on Cook, see J. A. W. Weiss 1976; “Clarence Cook” in Voorsanger 1986, pp. 412–14.
5. Cook 1880, p. 32.
6. “Colman and Tiffany Wall-Papers” 1880, p. 12.
7. See Sheldon 1883–84, vol. 1, pt. 1, opp. p. 71. The room is typical of a Tiffany interior, although its designer is not identified in the publication. Dominick, a broker, was an officer of the Seventh Regiment and may have hired Tiffany after seeing his decoration of the Veterans’ Room of the Armory (see cat. no. 18).
8. “Colman and Tiffany Wall-Papers” 1880, p. 12. See also *Art Amateur* 2 (February 1880), p. 47; H. L. H. Ward 1882.
9. Letter, Samuel Colman to Louis Comfort Tiffany, August 27, 1879, Mitchell-Tiffany Family Papers.
10. From 1880 to mid-1882, Warren, Fuller & Company advertised that its “artistic” wallpapers were designed exclusively for the firm by Colman and Tiffany and offered matching draperies and “The Whole World of Interior Decoration Undertaken.” See, e.g., an advertisement in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, May 27, 1882, p. 224. After the name change in mid-1882, Warren, Fuller & Lange advertised “artistic patterns of our own manufacture, including new India Designs by Lockwood DeForrest [*sic*], in addition to examples by Louis C. Tiffany, Samuel Colman and the \$2000 Prize Exhibition Patterns of Mrs. C. Wheeler, Miss I. F. Clark, and Miss Dora Wheeler.” See, e.g., the advertisement in *Art Amateur* 9 (June 1883), p. iii.
11. Cook 1880, p. 33.

32. *\$1000. Prize Design, by Mrs. C. Wheeler.*

1881

Published in Clarence Cook, *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* 2d ed., 1883

Chromolithograph, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23.8 × 18.1 cm)

The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Art and Architecture Division, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs

in the way of paper and pigments; but of these small matters we were ignorant, and consequently we went bravely to the work of competition, mixing our water-colors with plenty of Chinese white for body, and cutting our drawing-paper to proper lengths for repeats. We sent in four designs at the time and to the place appointed, and forgot about them until we saw a notice of the exhibition of the “Warren & Fuller Competitive Designs” at the American Art Gallery.¹

CANDACE WHEELER

33. *Bees-and-honeycomb wallpaper*

Ca. 1882

Manufactured by Warren, Fuller & Lange

Printed and embossed paper, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 20 in. (24.8 × 50.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Sunworthy Wallcoverings, a Borden Company, 1987 (1987.1074.1)

Competitors, who employed pseudonyms to protect their anonymity, were limited to the use of twelve tints including gold and silver, and were required to furnish a color drawing of a design that included a dado, a field, and a frieze. Recognizing that America lagged behind Europe in cultivating native design talent, Warren, Fuller had opened the competition to both foreign and local competitors, and most of the seventy-odd submissions came from England, Germany, and France. The judges were Christian Herter of the furniture and interior decorating firm Herter Brothers, Edward C. Moore, the chief designer for Tiffany & Company, and the painter Francis Lathrop. In spite of the strong foreign competition, which in many cases displayed superior technical workmanship based on greater experience, the judges awarded all four prizes to American women — more precisely, to woman designers for Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. The top prize of \$1,000 went to Candace Wheeler; the second, of \$500, to Ida F. Clark (see cat. no. 35); the third, of \$300, to Caroline Townsend; and the fourth, of \$200, to Dora Wheeler (see cat. no. 39). According to the *American Architect and Building News*,

CANDACE WHEELER

FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

34. *Bees-and-honeycomb textile*

Ca. 1883

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk and wool, 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (67.9 × 31.1 cm)

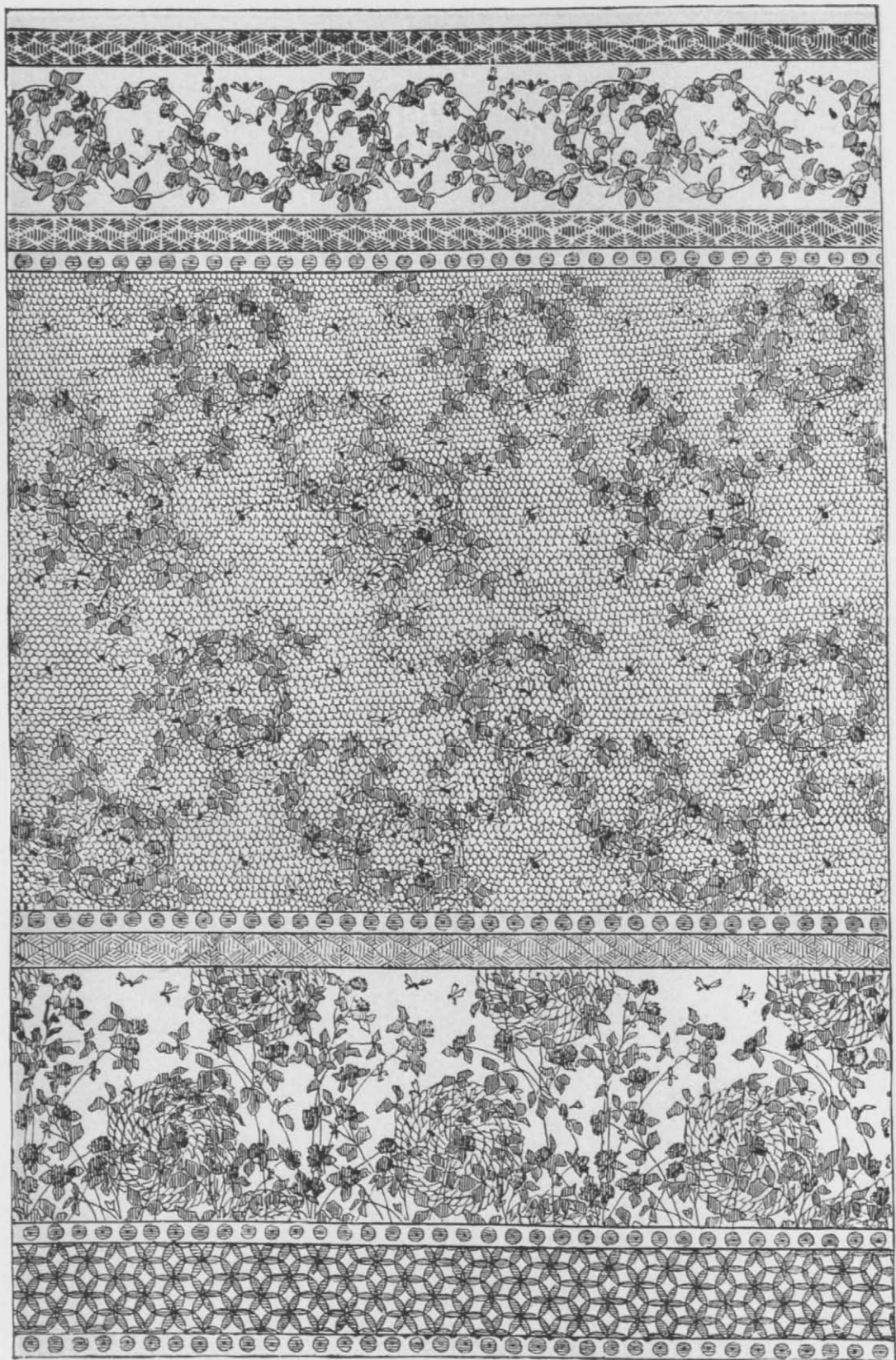
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.4)

The prizes were not offered for good draughtsmanship, or even for workmanlike treatment of the theme. . . . They were offered for new ideas in mural decoration — for new wall-papers, in a word. Originality, if a proper and practicable sort, was therefore the first consideration; and the prize-designs were incomparably more original, fresher, and more unconventional in every way, than were any of the foreign specimens, superior as were some of these last in actual manipulation. . . .

The American designs . . . were evidently done by hands unfamiliar with just this sort of designing, though their good qualities were such as to prove their authors well instructed in

In the fall of 1881 the New York wallpaper manufacturer Warren, Fuller & Company sponsored an international competition for wallpaper designs, hoping to find among the pool of competitors fresh talent to supply the “aesthetic” patterns then in demand. Prize monies in the amount of two thousand dollars were offered for the best four designs. Wheeler decided that she and members of her staff should compete; later she described their preparation for the competition:

This meant new study in adaptation, the use of different mediums, and due regard to the limitations of printing-machines; it also meant, or should have meant, new materials



\$1000. Prize Design, by Mrs. C. Wheeler.



33

the principles of design in general. Especially was this last true, I think, of the element of color.²

It should be noted that Warren, Fuller and its judges undoubtedly recognized a need to stimulate the American wallpaper industry by anointing American designers as the new leaders in the field. Despite the precautions taken to shield the competitors' identities, it seems more than mere coincidence that all four winners were Americans.

Wheeler's prizewinning design of bees, honeycomb, and clover, originally submitted under the pseudonym Honeycomb and exhibited at the American Art Gallery in October 1881, was described as follows:

The field showed a silver ground overlaid with a fine network of gold. Upon this was a design of clover, sprinkled with bees. This pattern was not distributed over the whole surface, but the clover was formed into graceful whorls at intervals, leaving portions of the metallic ground exposed. The tints were gold for the clover-leaves, and brown for the tips, with black and yellow in the bees. In line the plant was not conventionalized. The bottom of the dado showed two bands of gold, with brown clover-heads, and above them a star-shaped pattern. The main portion of the dado had, on a metallic ground, a growth of clover with disks of gold irregularly placed, and swarms of bees against them. The frieze was also of gold, with

a regular row of disks simulating the texture of a bee-hive, and was edged with bands decorated with an hexagonal pattern suggesting, as did the net-work of the field, the cells of the honey-comb. The silver ground of the field was not uniform in tint, but mottled, as it were, so as to avoid monotony. And the clover in the dado was done with natural colors, the dull pink of the blossoms coming in very effectively.³

What critics seemed to admire most about Wheeler's design was its relatively naturalistic treatment of the motifs both in form and in color. The bees, for example, were drawn in perspective throughout, and the clover in the dado was depicted, in a painterly fashion, as if growing wildly, with bees flitting about and pollinating blossoms. Wheeler shunned the use of strong and unnatural colors in favor of more subdued tones that could blend easily into an overall decorating scheme. She patented her original design, which matched the above description, in April 1882.⁴

The version of the design that was actually produced as wallpaper and included in the second edition of *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?*, seen here (cat. no. 32), differed from the prototype in that evenly spaced beehives were substituted for the irregularly placed gold discs in the dado and clover wreaths replaced the beehives in the frieze. Perhaps the changes were in response to published criticisms; one commentator argued, for example, that Wheeler's



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exhibited design was “quite unsuited for ordinary use” because “insects buzzing at one all day assuredly would not contribute to that sense of repose which, as a rule, a good wall-paper should afford.”⁵ Apparently Wheeler approved of the finished wallpaper as manufactured by Warren, Fuller, for she used it in the dining room of Nestledown, her home in Long Island.⁶

The central field of Wheeler’s wallpaper design is quite similar to a sample of upholstery fabric by Wheeler

(cat. no. 34). The fabric was woven as a loom trial to see how the pattern would read both in a combination of silk and wool and in silk alone. One portion has a brownish green wool ground with the design of bees and honeycomb woven in light brown silk; another portion is woven entirely in lavender and light brown silk. Probably the colors were not what the designer intended for the finished version but simply those already on the loom. Contemporary sources indicate that this textile pattern was produced in several colorways, or combinations, including deep blue and brown, throughout the 1880s.⁷ It was noted in 1884 that Wheeler’s wallpaper design was also produced in several different colors and had “undergone some changes, which naturally result when artistic treatment must succumb to commercial necessities.”⁸ A section from the field of one version is illustrated here (cat. no. 33).

The year after the Warren, Fuller & Company competition, Wheeler organized a class in wallpaper design at Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. Potential pupils were required to pass an entrance examination evaluating their aptitude for original design. In the class they were taught how to make freehand drawings of plant forms and turn them into continuous designs suited to perpendicular wall surfaces.⁹ Wheeler capitalized on the immense commercial possibilities that the growing American wallpaper industry held for women designers. Of wallpaper she wrote, “It would be difficult to substitute anything more generally appropriate to interior effects and modern conditions of life, since its range of quality is so wide as to fit all circumstances, and in a certain way to equalize the advantages of money, making beauty possible to those who have little as well as those who have much.”¹⁰

1. Wheeler 1918, p. 239.

2. Van Rensselaer 1881, p. 251. Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer was an art critic and a friend of Wheeler’s; she later spent her summers in Oteora, New York, the summer colony of artists and writers founded by Wheeler in 1887.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

4. United States Patent Office, “Candace Wheeler, of New York, N.Y., Assignor to Warren, Fuller & Co., of Same Place. Design for Wallpaper,” Design No. 12,878, April 11, 1882, National Archives. Unfortunately, only a poor photocopy of the original patented design has been located to date. Wheeler patented another design for wallpaper, with water lilies, in 1887 (see cat. no. 39, n. 1).

5. “Exhibition of Designs” 1881.

6. Wheeler’s dining room at Nestledown is described in Bolton 1888, p. 196.

7. See “Embroidery Notes” 1884.

8. Humphreys 1884b, p. 183.

9. “Art Notes” 1882, p. 63.

10. Wheeler 1895a, p. 706.

35. *\$500. Prize Design, by Miss Ida F. Clark.*

1881

Published in Clarence Cook, *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* 2d ed., 1883

Chromolithograph, $9\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23.8 × 18.1 cm)

The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Art and Architecture Division, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs

IDA F. CLARK FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

36. *Scallop-shells-and-seaweed textile*

Ca. 1883–85

Manufacturer unknown

Cotton, $64\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{4}$ in. (163.8 × 71.8 cm)

Marked in pattern: AA

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.24)

IDA F. CLARK FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

37. *Scallop-shells-and-seaweed curtains*

Ca. 1883–85

Manufacturer unknown

Cotton velveteen, each 82×22 in. (208.3 × 55.9 cm)

Marked in pattern: AA

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Barrie A. and Deedee Wigmore Foundation Gift, 1993 (1993.368.I, 2)

IDA F. CLARK FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

38. *Bell-pattern textile*

Ca. 1884

Probably manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk and wool, $12\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. (31.8 × 24.1 cm)

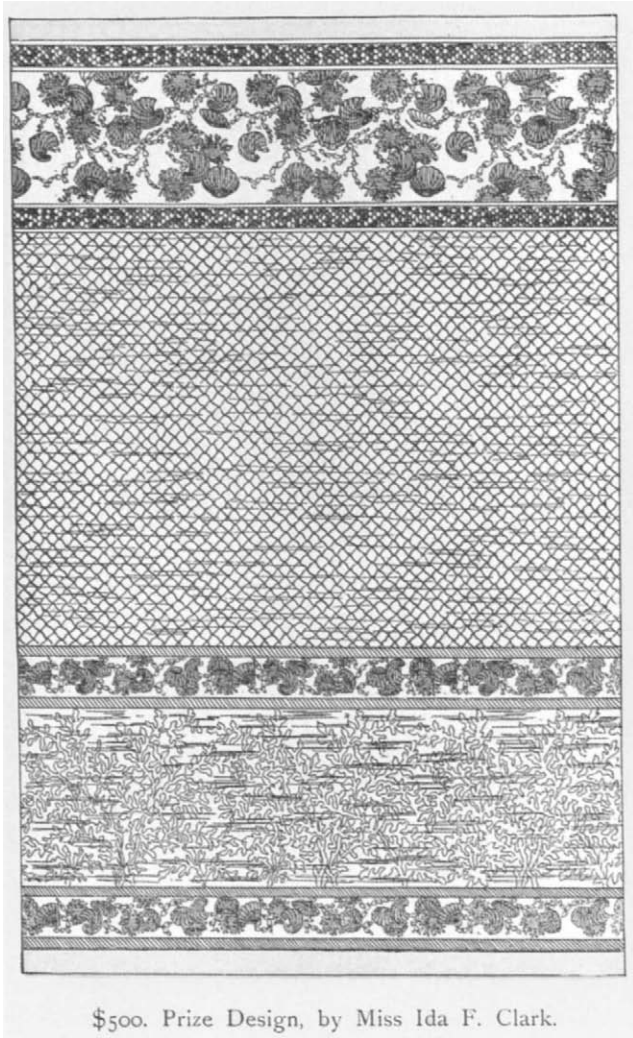
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.21)

Little is known about Ida F. Clark (1858–?), whose wallpaper design of 1881 featuring scallop shells and seaweed is seen here in a modified version (cat. no. 35). She began her career as an embroiderer at Tiffany & Wheeler and Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, then worked as a designer with Wheeler’s Associated Artists. There, according to the *Art Amateur*, she was responsible for “the more conventional designing done by the house.”¹

Two fabrics with the same scallop-shell-and-seaweed motifs as Clark’s wallpaper design (cat. nos. 36, 37) were probably designed by Clark as well. The design may derive from Japanese sources; scallop-shell motifs often appeared in contemporary pattern books of Japanese designs, and the designers of Associated Artists seem to have used such books for other textile patterns.² The trademark of two linked A’s, which appears (very small) in the design, was first used by Wheeler’s Associated Artists in 1883. The two fabrics, one ribbed cotton and the other cotton velveteen, provide a demonstration that the same pattern could be used in different textile weaves to create very different effects.

The few known examples of her work indicate that Clark’s patterns are typically distinguishable from Wheeler’s by their motifs; Clark chose more wide-ranging subjects than did Wheeler, from floral and marine imagery to depictions of locomotive bells, wheels, and smoke. A silk and wool fragment illustrating some of the latter was produced for railroad cars of the Pullman Palace Car Company (cat. no. 38); an 1884 engraving shows the border design, with its wheels wafting smoke (fig. 67). In addition to upholstery fabrics with conventionalized patterns, Clark designed needlewoven tapestries featuring the human figure.³

Clark was first named in print in 1881, when she was awarded a five-hundred-dollar second prize in an international wallpaper design competition sponsored by Warren, Fuller & Company (see cat. nos. 32–34).⁴ Versions of her design (cat. no. 35) and two of the other three winning designs (by Candace and Dora Wheeler) were published in 1883 and 1884 editions of Clarence Cook’s *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* a booklet promoting Warren, Fuller’s art wallpapers. The published designs reflected modifications and simplifications that made them more suitable for commercial production. For example, swimming carp in the dado of Clark’s original design were omitted, and bands of fish scales framing the dado were replaced by bands of scallop shells, perhaps to be more readable at a distance.⁵



\$500. Prize Design, by Miss Ida F. Clark.

35

Clark's original watercolor design, submitted to the judges under the pseudonym Vinna Tappa, was compared with Wheeler's first-prize design (see cat. no. 32) in the *American Architect and Building News* as follows:

*Miss Clark's design was of the same general style in conception, though much more pronounced in motive and color. The field was composed of blue-green tints, laid on in long, irregular dashes. Over this was a net-work of silver, much coarser than that in the first design, and, owing to the greater contrast of color, not so successful in harmony. The dado was the most conspicuous feature, being composed of high growths of seaweed, drawn on a very large scale and interspersed with fish, all against a green background. At the bottom was a gold band with shells. The frieze was gold, and was also decorated with shells.*⁶

Apparently Clark's design was similar to Wheeler's in its use of naturalistic motifs but was not as delicate in its coloration. However, the palettes of all four winners, "schemes which carefully avoided contrasts, making use only of small intervals of colour, were subtler than those of the other entries."⁷ Reviewers uniformly objected to harshly colored wallpapers. Indeed, by the early 1880s, many American critics were beginning to tire of commercial English-style designs, which featured stiff, conventionalized motifs, strongly outlined and filled in with flat, unshaded colors derived from the so-called South Kensington school of design (fig. 68). While the respected English tastemaker Charles Locke Eastlake had asserted that wall decoration should strictly maintain the flatness of the surface it covers, reviewers of this competition favored naturalistic treatments that admitted the illusion of a third dimension, as long as the design was not so pictorial that it detracted from the other elements of a room's decor.

Not every commentator considered the entries by Clark and her associates appropriate for the average household interior, however. The *American Architect and Building News* concluded, for example:

*Such papers as these four are not suitable, of course, for indiscriminate or even for ordinary use. Their color would often be difficult to harmonize with the fittings of a living-room, and they could not do good service as mere agreeable backgrounds whereon pictures or other decorations might be disposed. . . . But for cases where supplementary adornment is not desired, for hotels, or vestibules, or public buildings, these papers will supply not only striking and effective, but truly decorative hangings.*⁸

Reviewers agreed that the winning entries were less technically accomplished than those submitted by foreign designers:

*Each of the good foreign papers was an organic whole, so to speak; the various parts, however diverse in motive and treatment, being well brought together by the numerous carefully treated small bands and intermediate patterns that connected them. In the prize papers, these intermediate passages had been almost entirely neglected. They were far too scanty, and such as did exist were coarse in detail, and gave evidence of having been less interesting to their designers than the bolder portions of the work.*⁹

This was perhaps most true of Clark's entry, which of the patterns by members of Associated Artists was by far the simplest in composition.



36

What American critics seemed to admire most about the prizewinning designs was the balance they struck. The approach was neither extreme conventionalization nor mimetic naturalism, but a decorative interpretation of flora and fauna that looked to nature, applying the principles of the English art critic John Ruskin and his followers. It was this greater naturalism that distinguished the American prize patterns from typical English commercial patterns and their American copies, still all the rage among middle-class



38

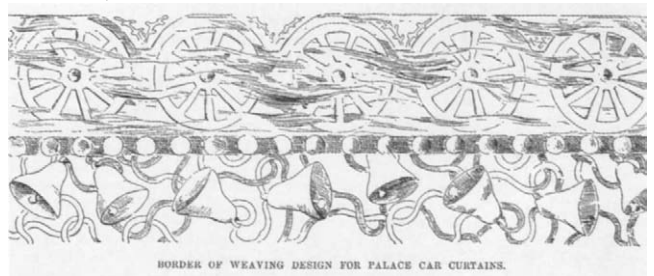


Fig. 67. Ida F. Clark for Associated Artists, *Border of Weaving Design for Palace Car Curtains*, ca. 1884. Wood engraving from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 69, August 1884, p. 344. Collection of The New-York Historical Society

consumers. Here were fresh alternatives that could usher in a new school of American design.

1. "Associated Artists" 1885, p. 38, illustrating a dogwood-and-spiderweb embroidery pattern by Ida Clark.
2. See, for example, Lambert 1878, pl. 31 (illustrating "Coquillages et vagues" [shells and waves]).
3. One frequently mentioned, *The Vestals* (1883), was inspired by the painting *Arena* (ca. 1880) by the French academic painter Louis Hector Leroux. See Humphreys 1884a, p. 124; "Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition" 1884b, p. 46.
4. Warren, Fuller & Company, one of America's leading wallpaper firms in the nineteenth century, was founded in 1855 as J. S. Warren & Company. For more about the company, see "Warren, Fuller and Company" in Voorsanger 1986, p. 480.
5. Three of the original prizewinning designs were patented in April 1882. See United States Patent Office, "Ida F. Clark, of Albany, Assignor to Warren, Fuller & Co., of New York, N.Y. Design for Wall-Paper," Design No. 12,872, April 11, 1882, National Archives. Unfortunately they have since been lost, and only poor black-and-white photocopies of them have been located.
6. Van Rensselaer 1881, p. 252.
7. Humphreys 1884b, p. 183.
8. Van Rensselaer 1881, p. 252.
9. Ibid.



37

DORA WHEELER

39. \$300. *Prize Design, by Miss Dora Wheeler.*

1881

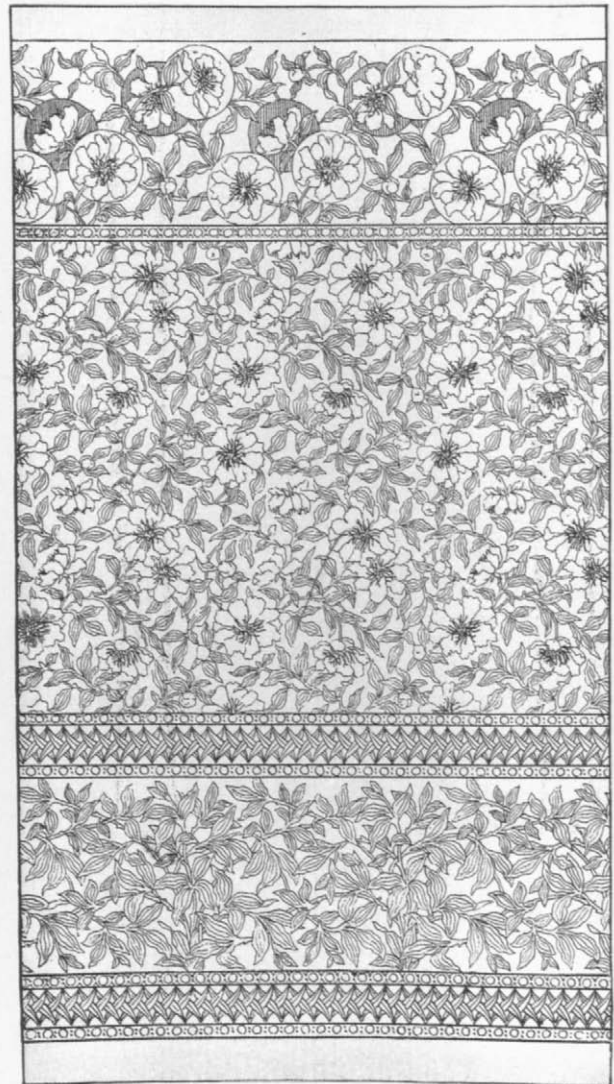
Published in Clarence Cook, *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* 2d ed., 1883

Chromolithograph, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23.8 × 18.1 cm)

The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Art and Architecture Division, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs

This peony wallpaper design, published in the second edition of Clarence Cook’s *“What Shall We Do with Our Walls?”* is based on Dora Wheeler’s entry in an 1881 competition sponsored by Warren, Fuller & Company, where it won fourth prize (see cat. nos. 32–34). The published design is a version that was modified to make it suitable for commercial manufacture, not the hand-painted prototype exhibited in October 1881 and patented in April 1882. Unfortunately the latter work is lost and is known today only through contemporary descriptions and poor facsimiles.¹ The original version, which was submitted under the pseudonym Pink Peony, received this critique in the *American Architect and Building News*:

Miss Wheeler’s paper showed, again, a gold background in the field, against which was a bold pattern of peonies, beautifully colored in white and pink tones. The flowers were single, and treated rather flatly as to form, though not at all conventionalized. The arrangement of lines in this part of the design was exceptionally good, the rather intractable material having been formed into graceful curves. The frieze also was very good – a pink ground with gold disks, against each of which came a peony, the stems of the plant sparsely covering the spaces between. But the dado was a sad falling-off. . . . It was hardly in harmony with the rest, I think, in color, and was trite in motive, showing, on a maroon-colored ground flecked with gold, a pattern formed of the leaves of the plant in question. The most faulty point of this design, however, as of the other prize-winners, was the insufficient working out of minor details. . . . If the fine designing and good color in Miss Wheeler’s field and frieze, for example, had been framed in delicately-wrought borders, and thus both emphasized and connected into a more coherent whole, the beauty of her work would have greatly gained.²



\$300. Prize Design, by Miss Dora Wheeler.

The dado had been significantly altered by the time the design was published: what had been a loosely drawn series of upright stems with large curling leaves against a highly visible maroon ground flecked in gold³ became instead a dense thicket of foliage with only glimpses of the ground beneath. The later version was less painterly, more regularized and linear.

Dora’s original pattern followed nature fairly closely, in accordance with the design approach recommended by the English art critic John Ruskin. In its altered state it moved closer to the products of England’s South Kensington

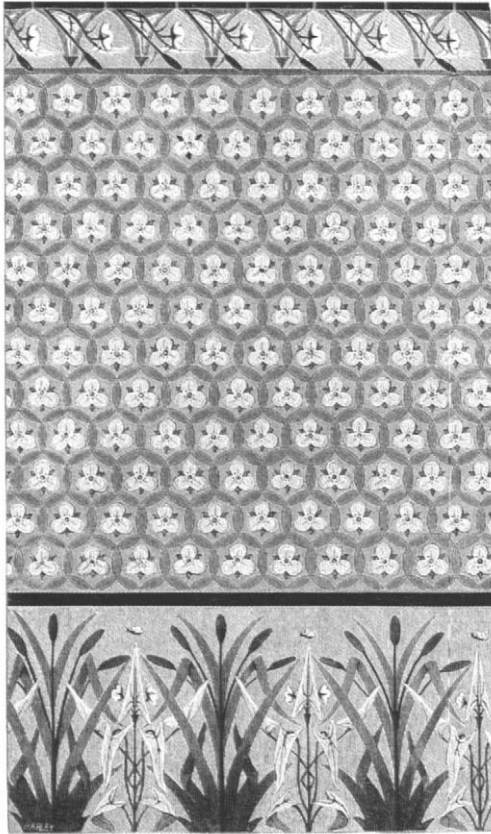


Fig. 68. *Wallpaper design*, ca. 1880. Wood engraving from *Art Journal* (American ed.), n.s. 6, June 1880, p. 9. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

school, which favored flat, strongly outlined forms, but it did not go so far as to have the blossoms lined up in neat rows at plotted intervals on a grid. While the prevailing method of designing for commercially produced papers set by the South Kensington school was to distill natural motifs down to their most abstract ornamental forms (fig. 68), both the artist and the manufacturer of this peony wallpaper allowed for the irregularities of plants growing in the wild. Dora's dense curvilinear design bears a strong and probably more than coincidental resemblance to Samuel Colman's thick honeysuckle-and-maple pattern, published

in the first edition of *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?* in 1880 (fig. 66). Both owe a debt to the wallpaper patterns of English designer William Morris, which in the 1870s and 1880s tended toward "artful" Ruskinian naturalism. Dora's wallpaper treatment also derives in part from nineteenth-century Japanese sources. In its frieze portion, the large gold disks, forming a kind of nimbus for each of the flowers, are highly reminiscent of circular framing devices found in Japanese papers and textiles.

The peony pattern is one of only two known wallpaper designs by Dora. The other was a frieze of swags of floral garlands manufactured in 1891.⁴ Dora may not have particularly enjoyed designing wallpapers, since they generally excluded her favorite subject, the human figure; instead she produced paintings, book illustrations (cat. no. 46b), portraits (cat. no. 48), and designs for needlewoven tapestries (cat. nos. 22, 27).⁵

1. Three of the four original prizewinning designs were patented in April 1882. For what is probably Dora Wheeler's patented design, but mislabeled, see United States Patent Office, "Caroline Townsend, of Albany, Assignor to Warren, Fuller & Co., of New York, N.Y. Design for Wall-Paper," Design No. 12,842, April 4, 1882, National Archives. This design is nearly identical to Dora Wheeler's design published in *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?* In 1887 Candace Wheeler patented a wallpaper design of very similar composition in which the foliage and blossoms were changed to water lilies: see United States Patent Office, "Candace Wheeler, of New York, N.Y., Assignor to Warren, Lange & Co., of Same Place. Design for Wall-Paper," Design No. 17,755, September 27, 1887, National Archives.
2. Van Rensselaer 1881, p. 252. Other critics concurred with Van Rensselaer's criticism of the dado. See, e.g., "Art Notes" 1881, p. 351.
3. The peonies in Dora's original frieze were very similar to a woven silk peony pattern designed by Associated Artists in the 1880s, an example of which is in the collection of the Mark Twain House (72.14.40A). The parallel between the designs suggests that Dora was responsible for some of the firm's mass-produced floral textile patterns as well as being the designer of many of its one-of-a-kind needlewoven tapestries (cat. nos. 22, 27).
4. It was used in the living room of Morven, the Princeton, New Jersey, home of Bayard Stockton, president of the New Jersey Railroad & Canal Company, and his wife. Morven is now the residence of the governor of New Jersey. See Greiff 1989, p. 133.
5. Dora also designed stained glass for the Tiffany Glass Company. See, e.g., "Art Notes" 1886; untitled, undated newspaper clipping, Collection of Georgia Nash.

ROSINA EMMET

40. *First-prize Christmas card with child choristers*

1880

Manufactured by L. Prang & Company
Chromolithograph, 7 × 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (17.8 × 22.2 cm)
Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

DORA WHEELER

41. *Second-prize Christmas card with trumpeting angels*

1881

Manufactured by L. Prang & Company
Chromolithograph with silk fringe, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.
(22.2 × 17.5 cm)
Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

ROSINA EMMET

42. *Fourth-prize Christmas card with mother and child*

1881

Manufactured by L. Prang & Company
Chromolithograph with silk fringe, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
(26 × 15.9 cm)
Collection of Jane Curley

DORA WHEELER

43. *First-prize "Light of the World" Christmas card*

1882

Manufactured by L. Prang & Company
Chromolithograph, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (22.2 × 17.5 cm)
Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

In addition to designing textiles for Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, Dora Wheeler and Rosina Emmet (1854–1948) designed Christmas cards for L. Prang & Company, a Boston lithography firm founded by Louis Prang, a German émigré. Card designing was one artistic endeavor that offered socially respectable employment opportunities for women; traditionally “feminine” skills in drawing and painting, acquired at home or in school, could now be utilized in the expanding field of popular graphic arts. Improved printing techniques, especially full-color lithographic printing (chromolithography), were allowing middle-class Americans to bring art into their homes in the form of large-scale reproductions of paintings and small-scale “album cards.” Even greeting cards were marketed as “artistic,” and hiring artists to design them lent credibility to the claim.

After testing his Christmas cards in the English market in 1874, Prang began marketing them in America in 1875. Printed Christmas greetings had been popular overseas since their first appearance in England in 1843, but they had never caught on in the United States until Prang introduced his vividly colored versions. (He is known, consequently, as the “father” of the American Christmas card.) By the early 1880s Prang was printing more than five million cards annually—brightly colored, lavishly decorated “chromo cards” that set the standard for the industry. They were made at greater expense than most European imports, printed on high-quality paper using as many as thirty colors in a single print to achieve subtle gradations in tone. Many were embossed, varnished, and further embellished with silk cushions, fringes, tassels, and blown-glass sprinkles.¹

As the demand for his cards grew, Prang began to hold competitions soliciting new designs. Although part of the impetus was financial, in addition Prang saw his cards as vehicles of popular art education. Contestants competed anonymously for cash prizes and sometimes received commissions to design additional cards. Prang reserved the right to purchase non-prizewinning designs for publication. The winning cards were published with original verses by popular American poets such as Celia Thaxter printed on the reverse. A total of four competitions were held between 1880 and 1884, each more ambitious than the last.



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The first Prang Christmas card contest was held in June 1880, with entries exhibited at the American Art Gallery, in New York, and the Doll & Richards Gallery, in Boston. Submissions were required to be six by eight inches, painted in oil or watercolors; prizes of one thousand, five hundred, three hundred, and two hundred dollars were offered for the best four designs. Nearly eight hundred entries poured in from all over the United States, mostly from women. According to Wheeler's autobiography, those interested included many artists, who were fascinated by Prang's efforts to perfect the process of reproducing paintings. She recalled, "It was while the two girls, Miss Rosina Emmet and our daughter Dora, were studying in Mr. Chase's studio that the Christmas card became dignified by the attention of artists."² The judges were architect Richard Morris Hunt, Edward C.

Moore (Tiffany & Company's head silver designer), and Samuel Colman. First prize was awarded to Rosina Emmet, for a design of four young choristers singing a hymn while a fifth accompanies them on violin (cat. no. 40).³ The border shows a dark blue starry sky strewn with passionflowers in which an angel proclaiming good tidings appears before a shepherd and his flock. *The Art Amateur*, considering questions of both aesthetics and marketability, opined, "The design is pretty, neatly executed, and shows a high degree of refinement that characterizes all of Miss Emmet's work; but it lacks originality of conception, and, considering its rather ritualistic character, we do not suppose that it will be the most popular of Messrs. Prang's Christmas cards."⁴ On the losing entries, the *New York Times* commented that "many of the pictures were skillful, pleasing, and artistic in



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separate detail, but confused in general design,” piling “picture upon picture. . . . The most successful designs were those which presented the simplest idea in the most simple and direct manner. . . . Another curious feature of the show was the utter ignorance of some of the competitors concerning the purpose of a Christmas card.”⁵ Indeed, many of

the submissions barely gave a hint of the Christmas season, a peculiarity that was also criticized for every succeeding Prang competition.

The success of the first contest led to a second, held at the American Art Gallery in February 1881, with Colman, painter-decorator John La Farge, and architect Stanford



42

White as judges. In an attempt to encourage American designers, only Americans were permitted to compete for the two thousand dollars in prizes. Nearly fifteen hundred entries were received, a record-breaking number. First place went to the New York painter Elihu Vedder, second to Dora Wheeler, third to the New York painter Charles Caryl

Coleman, and fourth to Rosina Emmet. Dora's card of three trumpeting angels with peacock-feather wings sounding glad tidings and Rosina's of a mother embracing her child while standing under the mistletoe are seen here (cat. nos. 41, 42). The statement issued by the judges was far from sophisticated: Dora's design was "commendable by



reason of its suggestion of the symbolism . . . of the feast of Christmas, and for its pleasing decorative effect,” and Rosina’s was “direct and clear in its purpose, and a good type of a simple treatment of a Christmas card.” Dora’s card was faulted by several critics for its subject matter and approach, however. The *Tribune* argued that angels “are always subordinate to something greater, more important than themselves, and in no design that we are acquainted with, not even in those of the sixteenth century Germans, has any amount of trumpet blowing on the part of angels reduced their drapery to inconsequential rags.”⁶

For the third Prang competition, held in November 1881 and again limited to Americans, the plan grew more elaborate. Now there were two groups of prizes, each totaling two thousand dollars — “artists’ prizes,” to be judged by well-known artists and art critics from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, and “public prizes,” to be awarded by the vote of visitors to the exhibition at the American Art Gallery. Interestingly, both groups awarded first prize to Dora Wheeler for her design, *The Light of the World* (cat. no. 43).⁷ The *Art Journal* critiqued the composition as it would a serious painting:

*Her design was at once original and poetic. The Madonna with the Child in her arms appears to a shivering mother with her children under a barren tree, with their feet on the globe. The meaning of the design is fully expressed in the faces, their forlorn figures being especially admirable. The face of the Child is very successful in its expression, while the Madonna, with banged hair, may be considered a nineteenth century conception. The color is extremely happy. Beginning with the cold tones in the lower right-hand corner, it extends through subtle modulations into warm purples, whose sweep outlines a circle of light in which appears the holy vision, and the same delicate tints are repeated in the scrolls of the border.*⁸

Indeed, many art critics regarded Prang’s production of “chromo cards” as a serious artistic endeavor.

Prang took an entirely different approach with the fourth and last competition, which was held in November 1884 at the Reichards Gallery in New York. He commissioned twenty-two leading American artists to design cards and invited them to compete against one another for four artists’ prizes and one popular prize. The competitors included J. Carroll Beckwith, Edward H. Blashfield, Thomas Wilmer

Dewing, Frederick Dielman, Will H. Low, Thomas Moran, J. Alden Weir, C. E. Weldon, Elizabeth B. Humphrey, Dora Wheeler, and Rosina Emmet, the last three being the only women entrants. The judges, New York stationery merchants, were asked to select the five cards most likely to appeal to consumers (the artists’ prizes were won by Weldon, Low, Moran, and Dielman, and the popular prize went to Humphrey). After the competition the exhibition traveled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Art Institute of Chicago, an arrangement that again indicates how seriously the art world regarded Prang’s endeavor.

After Dora and Rosina had participated in the various Prang competitions, Wheeler noted, “we saw much of Mr. Prang, who watched the progress in art of the two girls with great interest.”⁹ He evidently paid attention to Wheeler’s experiments with changeable-colored textiles as well: the *Art Amateur* reported in 1881 that Prang purchased from Wheeler a length of silk printed with an azalea pattern and featuring a “bluish yellow sheen crossed by a horizontal blue line, presenting beautiful changes of color.”¹⁰ Like Wheeler, Prang wanted to promote female artists, and in the early 1880s he employed over one hundred women. The more artistic ones worked as designers, while others were finishers who pasted the cards on satin pillows or added fringe, tassels, and other embellishments. Over the years Prang commissioned work from dozens of women artists, most of whom worked anonymously. Some, like Dora Wheeler and Rosina Emmet, achieved substantial recognition for their designs for chromolithographs.¹¹

1. For more on chromolithography in America, see Marzio 1978.

2. Wheeler 1918, p. 248.

3. The second prize went to a French designer in the employ of Herter Brothers, Alexander Sandier; third to a New York painter-illustrator, Alfred Fredericks; and fourth to Anne Goddard Morse, an artist from Providence, Rhode Island.

4. “Prang Competition” 1880.

5. “Phase of Decorative Art” 1880.

6. “Christmas Cards” 1881; “Christmas Card-Competition” 1881b. For similar criticisms see *Art Interchange* 6 (March 3, 1881), p. 1; “Prang Christmas Card Competition” 1881; untitled, undated newspaper clipping, ca. February 1881, Collection of Georgia Nash.

7. The card was not actually manufactured until 1882. The second and third artists’ prizes went to Elizabeth B. Humphrey and the fourth to Alfred Fredericks. The other popular prizes were won by Walter Satterlee (second), Frederick Dielman (third), and Florence Taber (fourth).

8. “Christmas Card Competition” 1881a, p. 379.

9. Wheeler 1918, p. 250. Rosina, and probably also the other prizewinners, went on to design cards for Prang for Easter and other holidays.

10. “Associated Artists’ Needlework” 1881.

11. For more on Prang, see McClinton 1973.

DORA WHEELER

44. *Cover of "The Prize Painting Book: Good Times," by Candace Wheeler*

1881

Published by White & Stokes

Chromolithograph, 10 × 8½ in. (25.4 × 21.6 cm)

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WALTER CRANE

45. *A fairy with children, two illustrations from "Walter Crane's Painting Book"*

1878 (first publication of plates); this publication ca. 1889

Published by Frederick Warne & Company

Wood engravings, each 6 × 6 in. (15.3 × 15.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harry Brisbane Dick Fund, 1945 (45.19)

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY

46a. *Cover of "My Boy and I; or, On the Road to Slumberland," by Mary D. Brine*

1881

Leather binding, hand painted and blind- and gold-stamped, silk cord, 6⅞ × 11⅞ in. (15.6 × 30.2 cm)

DORA WHEELER

46b. *"Nestling Time," illustration from "My Boy and I; or, On the Road to Slumberland," by Mary D. Brine*

1881

Wood engraving, 6⅞ × 11 in. (15.6 × 27.9 cm)

Published by George W. Harlan

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Frank Peter Stetz Gift, in memory of his mother, Anna Wallace Stetz, and The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1995 (1995.272)

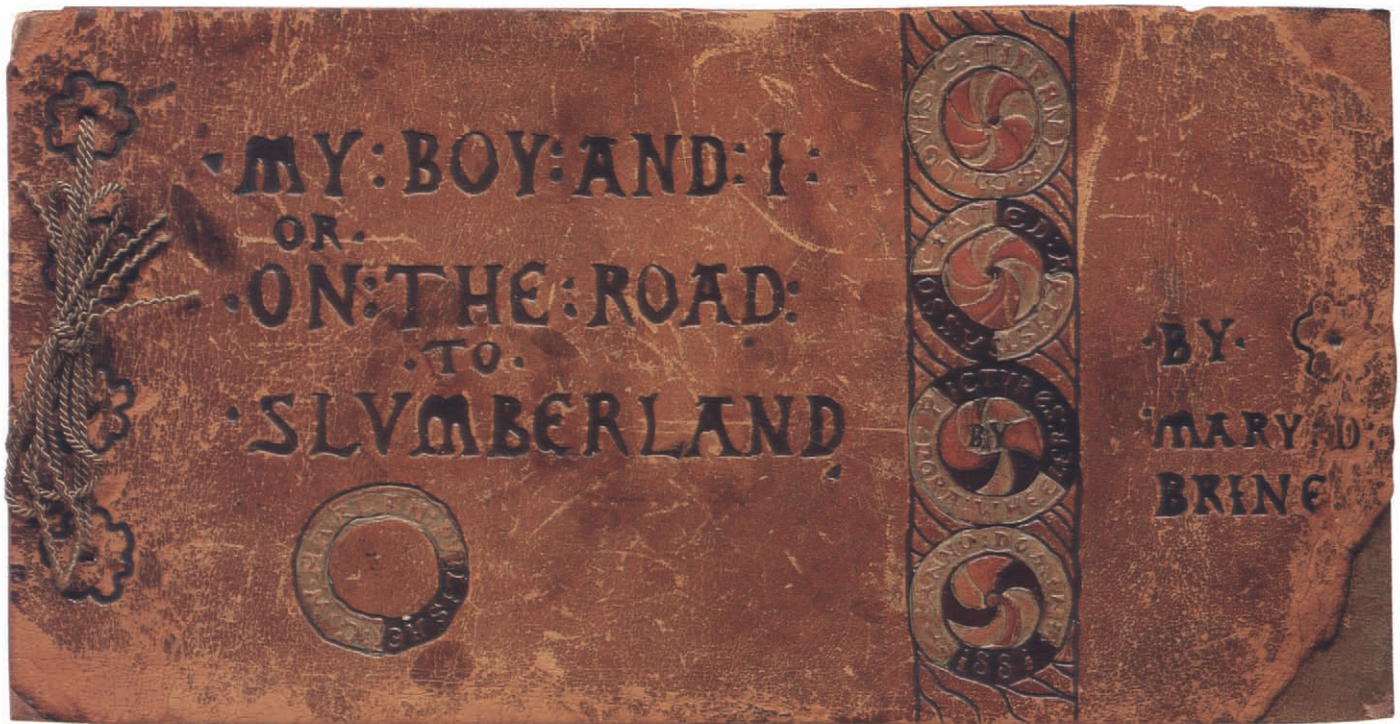




44

Throughout the 1880s Dora Wheeler enjoyed considerable success as a book and magazine illustrator. Book illustration was another profession that offered a middle-class woman acceptable means of earning a living without moving too far outside her clearly defined societal role. The publishing industry was growing rapidly with the advent of new printing processes, and publishers employed

numerous women as authors and illustrators. Technical advances, principally the photographing of artist's work, made possible newly accurate reproductions in a wide variety of media, enhancing the status of illustration for professionally trained artists such as Dora Wheeler, who had been a pupil of William Merritt Chase (see cat. no. 47). *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Scribner's Monthly*, the *Art Amateur*, and



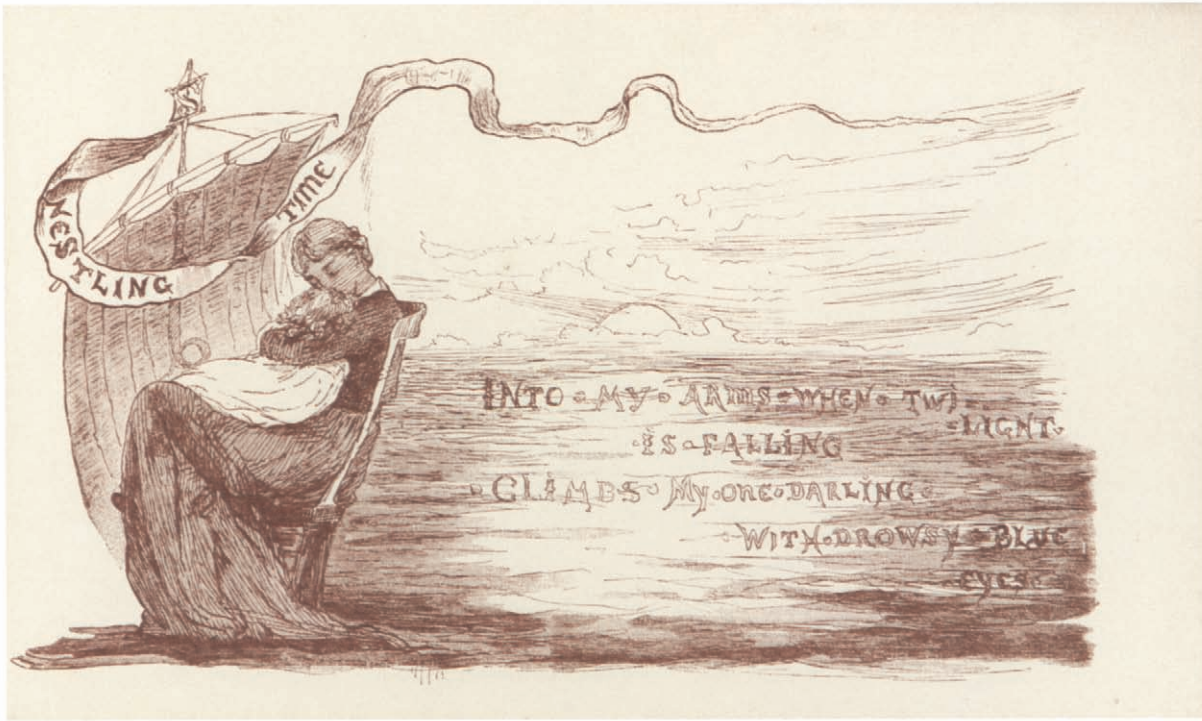
46a

the *American Art Review* were some of the general-interest and art magazines that commissioned original illustrations.¹

Dora illustrated a number of children's books; *The Prize Painting Book: Good Times* (1881), which contained verses written by her mother, Candace, is one such example (cat. no. 44). It was in essence a coloring book, as was explained within, "published with the intention of providing the most attractive material for the fascinating work of painting in water colors, and with the certainty of furnishing amusement and instruction combined, to children and beginners in drawing and color-work." (Moreover, "the publishers, White & Stokes, offer THREE PRIZES for the three books which shall be returned to them colored in the best manner."² Judges for the competition were to be Dora Wheeler, Rosina Emmet, and Caroline Townsend — all of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and all themselves, as the publisher noted, prizewinners in various artistic competitions; see cat. nos. 32–39.) Dora's illustrations, drawn in outline with a view to their being filled in with watercolors, were in some cases paired with a colored version to serve as a model. A few pages were left entirely blank for aspiring young artists to demonstrate their talents by drawing an original design to accompany the text on the opposite page. Competition entries were accepted from children up to sixteen years of age and were due more than a year later, on July 1, 1883,

giving ample time for the books to reach as many children as possible. Prizes were awarded on September 1, 1883.

As White & Stokes expressly stated, pains had been taken to make this book attractive enough to compare favorably with any English "artistic" book for children. One of the leading illustrators of children's books in England at the time was Walter Crane, a versatile artist whose talents extended to textiles, mural painting, stained glass, metalwork, ceramics, and wallpaper, and who exerted a tremendous impact on American designers in the second half of the nineteenth century. "I had always felt," wrote Wheeler, "that Walter Crane was the foremost designer of that group of men who brought England into a prominent place in applied art. . . . His designs stood by themselves in certain qualities of grace and appropriateness."³ Just as Crane's elaborate embroidery designs for the Royal School of Art Needlework (cat. no. 6) served as models for the textile production of Wheeler's Society of Decorative Art, so Dora's delicately rendered and brightly colored images of mothers, children, fairies, and mermaids drew inspiration from those in works such as *Walter Crane's Painting Book* (cat. no. 45), which, like *Good Times*, was a coloring book for children. Both Dora Wheeler and Crane presented idealized images tending toward the sentimental and employing flatness and linearity to decorative effect.⁴ The *Art*



46b

Amateur critiqued Dora's illustrations in *Good Times*: "Some of the pictures are very graceful and pretty. . . . In flat tinting indeed it would be difficult to find better examples than the 'Dainty Little Maid' on page 20, or 'Pretty Polly,' on page 55. The drawing in the book is often very faulty."⁵ Other critics were less harsh, admiring the "sketchy and artistic" and "free and spirited" quality of the drawings.⁶

Dora was commissioned to illustrate other children's books, including *My Boy and I; or, On the Road to Slumberland* (1881), issued for five dollars apiece in a limited first edition by the New York publisher George W. Harlan. The book, with text by children's author Mary D. Brine, and illustrations by Dora, was designed by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. Applying the talent for harmonizing individual elements that he exercised with interior decorating projects to book design as well, Tiffany designed the painted and stamped leather binding with pinwheel motifs (cat. no. 46a). He also oversaw other aspects of the production, including the page design. According to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Brine's poem, in which a mother describes a day in the life of her "golden-haired baby boy" from dawn to "slumberland," was printed in Old English lettering on tinted paper held together with silk skeins, portfolio style, between loose covers of "Russia" leather.⁷ An English reviewer praised "Tiffany's idea to make the

shape, size, and color of the pages so harmonize with the quaint lettering of the text and with the designs in which the text is imbedded that the whole shall be a carrying out of a single artistic purpose."⁸ However, *Harper's* was less than enthusiastic about the artwork—such as Dora's wispy drawn illustration for "Nestling Time," depicting a mother cradling her child by the sea at sunset (cat. no. 46b)—opining that "the illustrations with which it is embellished are quaintly suggestive, but minister rather to the prevalent rage for the odd, the curious, and the fantastic than to the taste for the beautiful."⁹

1. For more on the subject of women illustrators, see Burke 1986, pp. 316–19; Goodman 1987. On women in the graphic arts generally, see Wright 1995.
2. Wheeler 1881b, unpaginated.
3. Wheeler 1918, p. 247.
4. For more on Walter Crane and his influence on American book arts, see Weinstein 1970.
5. Montezuma 1882, p. 25.
6. Untitled, undated newspaper clipping, ca. January 1882, Collection of Georgia Nash.
7. "Editor's Literary Record" 1882, p. 632.
8. Review in the *Mail* (Liverpool), quoted in an advertisement for the book, *Art Amateur* 6 (January 1882), p. v.
9. "Editor's Literary Record" 1882, p. 632. Dora also illustrated two other books by Candace Wheeler (see figs. 44, 47), as well as other works including *A Temperance Souvenir*, compiled by Mrs. G. S. Hoyt (1886); Annie Austin Flint, *Vignettes of Onteora* (1914); and, with Walter Saterlee, *Old Crummels: His Tale and When I Was a Bachelor* (1881).

47. *Miss Dora Wheeler*

1883

Oil on canvas, 62½ × 65¼ in. (158.8 × 165.7 cm)

Signed at bottom: Wm. M. Chase

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs.

Boudinot Keith, in memory of Mr. and Mrs.

J. H. Wade, 1921 (1921.1239)

The painter William Merritt Chase (1849–1916) was a well-established figure in the New York art world at the time this picture was painted. A versatile master of still life, landscape, genre subjects, and portraiture, he was known for his bravura technique and bright, Impressionist palette. Chase also had a long and prestigious teaching career. He taught classes at a number of institutions including the Art Students League and founded the Chase School of Art, later the New York School of Art. His passion for teaching (and need for additional income) had early on led him to the private instruction of pupils at his studio in the Tenth Street Studio building (fig. 7).¹ Among Chase's first students were Dora Wheeler and her friends Rosina Emmet and Lydia Field Emmet. Over the years Chase painted portraits of a number of his female students, including this work, *Miss Dora Wheeler*. Dora was one of Chase's favorite pupils, and he became her lifelong mentor.²

After two courses at the Art Students League, perhaps under Chase's tutelage, Dora studied privately with Chase in his studio from 1879 to 1881. Subsequently, before traveling to Paris in 1884 to study at the Académie Julian,³ she established her own studio in the garret of the building occupied by her mother's firm, Associated Artists, at 115 East Twenty-third Street. The attic space doubled as a salon for weekly receptions attended by artists and writers, and served as the backdrop for Chase's portrait of Dora. "It was ideal in its proportions," wrote Candace, "and when a skylight had been put into the slope of the roof it was all that could be desired; so said Mr. Chase, who came over to paint a full-length of his pupil for foreign exhibition. It hangs in the large 'Nestledown' parlor now after its travels around the world."⁴

Chase's portrait of Dora was not a commissioned work. It was conceived and undertaken as an exhibition piece, with the 1883 European art season in mind.⁵ Without the

constraints imposed by a patron's preferences, Chase was free to contrive a setting that would display his virtuoso brushstroke, refined sense of color, and skill at bringing a personality to life.⁶ In this painting, Dora, wearing a vibrant blue satin dress edged in fur and shiny black patent leather shoes, gazes directly out at the viewer. Her thoughtful expression and relaxed pose — chin resting on her hand and legs outstretched — suggest the confidence and determination of an accomplished career woman. While the palette and technique show the influence of Chase's American colleagues James McNeill Whistler, Alfred Stevens, and John Singer Sargent, in its pose the painting recalls the Spanish painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal's portrait of his daughter Maria Luiso in the Prado, Madrid, which Chase likely saw in his travels.⁷

The artfully composed setting, reflecting Chase's early training as a still-life painter, is filled with objects that convey a sophisticated taste and allude to Dora's work in the decorative arts (see cat. nos. 22, 27, 39). She is seated in an ebonized and turned Elizabethan-revival armchair similar to one Chase used in his own studio.⁸ Beside her, on a Chinese carved ebony taboret, a blue art pottery vase holds a lush bouquet of daffodils. The backdrop, a gold-colored Oriental-style hanging embroidered with a profusion of flowers, dragonflies, and birds, closely resembles the decorative fabric on the wall in Chase's painting *In the Studio* of about 1880 (Brooklyn Museum of Art). At the upper left of the hanging a kitten chases its reflection in a pool of water. By painting Dora before a spectacular piece of art needlework — perhaps produced by Associated Artists — Chase saluted Dora's talent in textile design.

In the years that followed, Dora Wheeler and Chase periodically worked together on projects; for instance, in 1884 they joined Rosina Emmet to create theatrical tableaux at the Madison Square Theatre to raise funds for the pedestal



for the Statue of Liberty,⁹ and in 1891 Dora served on the executive committee of Chase's Summer School of Art in Shinnecock Hills on Long Island.

1. For more on Chase's career, see Bryant 1991; Gallati 1995.
2. For an in-depth discussion of this painting, see Marling 1978.
3. Fehrer 1989, unpaginated. See also Weinberg 1991, pp. 221–62; Weisberg and Becker 1999.
4. Wheeler 1918, p. 253.
5. The painting was first exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1883, where it won an honorable mention, and then traveled to Munich to be shown at the

Internationale Kunstausstellung, where it was awarded a gold medal. In 1884, after first showing in New York at an exhibition of the Society of American Artists, it continued to Chicago to the Art Hall of the Twelfth Annual Inter-State Industrial Exhibition.

6. Chase wrote, "It is the personality that inspires, and which you depict upon the canvas. That is real art; skill in construction we will take for granted. But to make a vivid personality glow, speak, *live* upon the canvas — that is an artist's triumph." Chase 1908, pp. 967–69.
7. Bryant 1991, p. 281, n. 103.
8. A similar chair appears in a photograph of Chase's studio in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York.
9. "Pedestal Fund Performance" 1884.

48. *Boy with a Dog*

Ca. 1881

Oil on canvas, 56 × 30 in. (142.2 × 76.2 cm)

Collection of Graham D. Williford

This charming depiction of a boy with his dog represents one of Dora Wheeler's early forays into figure painting. The subject was her cousin Raymond D. Thurber.¹ The painting is one of the few surviving works that Dora is known to have completed during the principal period of her fine arts education, a two-year tutelage (1879–81) under the painter and art educator William Merritt Chase (see cat. no. 47). Dora's formal art education began in November 1878 at the newly formed Art Students League, where she took classes in portraiture and drawing from life.² In 1879 she arranged to study privately with Chase in his Tenth Street studio; working from a live model was a key component of the instruction she received there. Candace Wheeler, who observed that Chase's female pupils were "taught in the same methods as the men figure-painters,"³ recognized that despite his training at the all-male Munich academy Chase took a decidedly progressive and egalitarian approach to art education.

Chase's standards for his students were high. Dora's reminiscences in a 1927 interview touch on Chase's demanding teaching style and the painting of her *Boy with a Dog*: "He was a one track man. . . . he was an awfully kind little instructor and he was unselfish in his work, and he drove his pupils almost to death. I remember I started in one morning and he would not let me stop until the light was gone. He wanted me to finish it in one painting—it was a child with a dog and when evening came I was nearly dead."⁴

The broad brushwork that characterizes *Boy with a Dog*, particularly in the landscape background and the boy's face and hands, has much to do with the brisk pace of painting that Dora describes. Chase urged his pupils to work swiftly so their pictures would display the unfinished quality that he regarded as fresh and alive, in contrast to the polished look of academic painting. At the time Dora was his pupil he had recently returned from six years of study at the Royal Academy in Munich. There he learned the *alla prima* (all at once) technique, in which deep, rich tones of oil paint, applied in heavy brushstrokes, were rapidly layered, wet on



wet. The technique looked back to that of the old masters such as Velázquez, Rubens, Van Dyck, and Rembrandt. Having mastered the employment of strong colors in a limited palette, the fluid bravura brushstroke, and the use of chiaroscuro (a dramatic play of bright light and deep shadow), he passed these techniques on to his students. All three are evident in Dora's picture. (Later Chase changed to a brighter palette while continuing to instruct his students to apply paint loosely and avoid excessive precision.)

In this early part of his career Chase sometimes expressed his reverence for old master artists and his taste for exotic trappings by painting his models in period costume, as he did with *Boy in a Ruff* (1878; private collection).⁵ His enthusiasm may have contributed to Dora Wheeler's decision to paint her subject dressed in a formal Lord Fauntleroy suit. The idea of depicting the boy with a greyhound—a sporting breed associated with nobility—also draws upon artistic precedents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A photograph (fig. 69) shows Dora in Chase's sumptuous studio, which was modeled after those he had seen in Munich and served as the setting for a number of his paintings. The studio was eclectically decorated with Renaissance- and Elizabethan-style furniture, assorted rugs, statuary, textiles, and a profusion of bric-a-brac to be used as props, as well as copies of old master paintings and original works by

Chase and his students. *Boy with a Dog* is conspicuous in the photograph. Dora is seated in an elaborate Gothic-revival chair next to another of her paintings, *The Sphinx* (location unknown).⁶

The large size of *Boy with a Dog* and its ornate original frame make it likely that it was intended as an exhibition piece. In a diary entry of March 1881, Dora's friend Rosina Emmet discusses works rejected from an exhibition of the Society of American Artists and mentions "Dora's boy with the greyhound."⁷ Dora had shown a portrait in an 1880 exhibition of the society, and it had received a positive review: "Miss Dora Wheeler, a pupil of Mr. Chase, has a truly able, and also a confidently promising, portrait of a feminine subject, set down with vigor and brilliancy."⁸

Figure painting continued to be an important aspect of Dora's oeuvre. One of her most significant projects was a commission in 1886 from Harper & Brothers to paint portraits of prominent American and British literary figures for illustrations in a series of books.⁹ Dora worked on this project until 1890, when she married Boudinot Keith. She completed more than a dozen paintings for the series, among them portraits of the English novelists Sir Walter Besant and Thomas Hardy and the American writers Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Unfortunately, many of the portraits were lost aboard an ocean liner en



Fig. 69. C. C. Cox, *Dora Wheeler in Chase's Studio*, ca. 1881. Albumen silver print. Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

route from London to New York.¹⁰ In 1893 Dora's ability to paint idealized figures was tested on a larger scale when her mother commissioned her to paint a mural for the ceiling of the Library in the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition (cat. no. 92). She was elected an academician of the National Academy of Design in 1906. Dora Wheeler Keith continued to paint, illustrate, and design well into the twentieth century; her illustrations, particularly for children's books, became her best-known work (see cat. nos. 44, 46b; fig. 47).

1. He was the son of Candace Wheeler's brother Abner Thurber and Annie Ford Thurber. Candace Wheeler's niece Candace Thurber Stevenson (1882–1968) wrote in her memoirs, "On the wall behind the Duncan Phyfe sofa [in their home in Brooklyn Heights] hangs the portrait of my younger brother. He wears a black velvet Lord Fauntleroy suit with a wide embroidered collar which he hated for years." Stevenson 1966, p. 9.

2. It is unclear whether Dora's portrait course was taught by Chase or by his colleague J. Carroll Beckwith, who taught "drawing from the antique." By the 1879–80 season, Chase was teaching the portrait classes. Brochures of courses offered by the Art Students League, 1878–80, Archives, Art Students League, New York.

3. Wheeler 1918, p. 259. Wheeler is referring to the study of the figure from life.

4. Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), p. 7.

5. The painting is illustrated in *Art of Imagination* 1989, no. 8.

6. To the right of *Boy with a Dog* is a painting of a young girl by Rosina Emmet. Paintings on the walls include works by Chase. For more on Chase's studio, see Bryant 1991, pp. 66–74. Candace Wheeler offered her own description of the studio; see Wheeler 1918, pp. 243–44.

7. Sedgemere Diary, entry for March 19, 1881, Emmet Family Papers, reel 4754, frame 176.

8. "Art for Artists" 1880, p. 90, discussing the Society of American Artists exhibition (March 17–April 16, 1880), no. 46, *Portrait*.

9. Wheeler (Dora) 1927 (interview), pp. 9–12.

10. Dora subsequently sued the White Star Shipping Company, but she was unsuccessful. Undated newspaper clippings (1886), Collection of Georgia Nash. It does not seem that any of the portraits were ever published, and only a few are known to exist now.

ROSINA EMMET

49. *A young girl, thought to be Jane Emmet*

Ca. 1883–84

Oil on canvas, 30 × 25 in. (76.2 × 63.5 cm)

Signed and dated upper left: Rosina Emmet

188[illegible]

Richardson-Clarke Gallery, Boston

While working in the decorative arts with Candace Wheeler, Rosina Emmet simultaneously pursued her ambition to become a fine artist.¹ She began her formal art education in the fall of 1879 with a portrait class at the Art Students League taught by William Merritt Chase.² Probably about this time she also started studying privately with Chase, along with her friend Dora Wheeler (see cat. nos. 47, 48). Emmet worked with Chase for approximately two years and, like many of his students, even listed his studio at 51 West Tenth Street as her address.³ In her diary she mentioned going to "the Studio" almost daily. Diary entries reveal Emmet's enthusiasm about portraits and the support she received from Chase. For example: "Florence came to

the studio this morning & stood for me in her red Jersey. I never saw anything so splendid to paint. Mr Chase almost danced with delight over her. I made a little sketch and I am going to order a big canvas and paint her as large as life." And again, of a little girl: "I am crazy to paint her. Mr Chase says I must think of nothing else till I do it."⁴ Emmet first displayed her paintings in 1881, exhibiting portraits of young girls that drew a positive critical response at both the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists. In 1884 she enrolled for six months at the Académie Julian in Paris, studies she undertook with her sister Lydia and Dora Wheeler. After that time her painting style showed less of Chase's influence and more from the French academic painters Bouguereau and Robert-Fleury, her instructors at the Académie.

Returning to New York in the summer of 1885, Rosina went on to produce work that reflected her recent study of the figure. She often used family members as sitters. After her marriage to Arthur Sherwood in June 1887 she worked from her home, giving birth to five children over the next



several years but continuing to paint when she could find time. She became well known for her portrayals of children; her talent is exemplified in this early painting thought to be of her youngest sister, Jane Emmet (1873–1961).⁵

The girl stands turned slightly to the side, one hand on her hip, the other holding a bouquet. She looks directly at the viewer with a somewhat wistful, unsmiling expression. A strong light illuminates the figure on one side, while the other is in deep shadow. Emmet’s skillful painting of light and shadow displays some of the technique she learned from Chase: the chiaroscuro dramatizes the textures of the elegant dress with its white-on-white pattern, the folds in the yellow silken sash, and the sheen of the hair. Details, such as the ruffled sleeve and the dimple in the girl’s chin, are masterfully depicted. Against the velvety surface of the brown background drapery, sprigs of daisies and delicate buttercups accentuate the white and yellow of the dress.

Over the years, Emmet gained substantial exposure as a painter. In 1889 she exhibited at the Universal Exposition in Paris, where she won a silver medal. For the Hall of Honor

of the Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago she painted a mural, *The Republic’s Welcome to Her Daughters* (cat. no. 90), commissioned by her colleague and mentor Candace Wheeler.

Emmet balanced a successful career as a painter with her family duties; when her husband suffered financial reversals in 1917, her painting became her family’s chief source of income. Like Wheeler she worked well into her eighties and beyond, accomplishing the difficult double goal of caring for a family and pursuing a career as a professional artist.

1. On Emmet’s career as a painter, see Hoppin 1982; Tappert 1993.
2. “Rosina Emmet” in the membership records for the Art Students League, New York.
3. See Blaugrund 1997, p. 134.
4. Sedgemere Diary, entries for December 15, 1880, and January 16, 1881, Emmet Family Papers, reel 4754, frames 140, 152.
5. A ceramic portrait plaque of Jane painted by Emmet was illustrated opposite p. 111 in the popular design book *Woman’s Handiwork in Modern Homes* (1881) by Constance Cary Harrison (Harrison 1881). Jane Emmet went on to study art as well, traveling to Paris in 1896 and studying with American sculptor Frederick William MacMonnies for a year.



ROSINA EMMET

50. *M. B. Brown*

Ca. 1878–83

Enamel on earthenware, diam. 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (38.4 cm)

Plaque manufactured by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons

Impressed on back: WEDGWOOD

Inscribed on tape on back: M. B. Brown –
by R. E. Sherwood

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Sansbury-Mills Fund, 1991 (1991.25)

Rosina Emmet, one of the principal designers in the embroidery department of Candace Wheeler's Associated Artists, was well known in the early years of her career as a painter of ceramic portrait plaques. This plaque, one of the few surviving examples by Emmet, depicts a young girl, Miss M. B. Brown.¹ Miss Brown, dressed in her best attire, may have posed live for her portrait, or the painting may have been based on a photographic likeness, as was sometimes done. Her clothes and long, loosely styled hair are typical of children's fashions of the 1880s. Emmet included a background of fruit-and-floral patterned wallpaper and wainscoting, a characteristic Aesthetic-style wall treatment.

The portrait is painted in enamels on the glazed surface of a white earthenware blank manufactured by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, Staffordshire, England. For both aesthetic and technical reasons, overglaze painting was sometimes preferable to underglaze painting; it produced clearer, more brilliant colors and did not require the rapid, confident strokes necessary for painting directly on unglazed biscuit clay, which is highly absorbent. In capturing her subject's likeness in three-quarter profile, Emmet relied on traditional methods of easel painters, such as chiaroscuro modeling. The depiction of fine details — of the lacework and floral motifs on the dress, of individual strands of hair — and the delicate rendition of facial features further contribute to the effect of pictorial realism. The approach is firmly rooted in the style of English portrait plaques — Emmet may have seen some on a trip to England in 1876 — and in fact, Emmet's work echoes depictions of children in a variety of English sources.²

In the 1870s and 1880s, before photography became the prevailing mode of faithfully recording human likenesses, portrait plaques were a popular art form that proved very

lucrative for female artists. Typically, a woman graduated to painting portrait plaques after taking lessons in the art of china painting, which became popular in the nineteenth century as an amateur pastime for middle- and upper-class ladies. Less fortunate women or those professionally inclined could earn a modest living painting china for commercial manufacturers or decorative arts societies, or as independent artists working from home or a private studio. One institution that offered classes in china painting was Wheeler's Society of Decorative Art in New York, where pupils initially learned to develop their skill by decorating ceramic tableware with simple floral motifs.³ Portraiture required greater aptitude and was the purview of the most talented and experienced china painters.

Emmet began as an amateur china painter and may have taken lessons in china painting at the Society of Decorative Art. From 1877 to 1879 she was employed there as a permanent member of the staff, specializing in painting portrait plaques of children "with more orders than she could fill."⁴ Regarded as one of the most gifted painters of portrait plaques, she won prizes for her work, such as the first prize in the *Art Interchange* Competition she was awarded in 1879 for the plaque *Charlotte*, a portrait of a woman in her garden harvesting a large squash.⁵ Emmet very likely earned a decent living from painting portrait plaques. According to the *Art Amateur*, china painting was "probably somewhat more remunerative than embroidery. . . . A young lady engaged in this art is known to receive \$100 for each portrait painted on a plaque."⁶ Possibly Emmet was the young lady in question.

Like many artists of the period, Emmet parlayed her artistic skills into a variety of media, some more financially rewarding than others. Throughout much of the 1880s she studied painting, adapting her talent to easel painting and refining her approach to portraiture. Eventually this led to a successful career as a portrait painter in oils and watercolors, with her work being shown in exhibitions of the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists, among others (see cat. no. 49).⁷ Winning prizes in Christmas card design competitions (see cat. nos. 40, 42) brought her occasional work in the growing field of graphic arts as a designer of greeting cards, and she also worked as an illustrator of books.⁸

As a textile designer for Wheeler's Associated Artists, Emmet specialized in designing needlewoven tapestries that portrayed female allegorical figures or women from literature. While none of these are known to survive, at least six major needlewoven tapestries designed by Emmet are

mentioned in period sources: *Psyche* (1883), depicting the birth of the Greek mythological heroine with butterfly wings springing forth from a bed of milkweed; *Hilda in the Tower* (ca. 1884), inspired by Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860), from a series of about a dozen tapestries by Associated Artists drawing on subjects from American history and literature; *Autumn* (ca. 1884; fig. 30), with the biblical heroine Ruth carrying a sheaf of wheat beneath her arm, an image based on the painting *The Harvester* by the French painter Jules Breton; a copy of that work, entitled *The Harvest* (ca. 1885), executed for the Chicago home of Mrs. Potter Palmer (in situ, although only faintly visible,



Fig. 70. Rosina Emmet for Associated Artists, *A Zuni Girl*, ca. 1886. Wood engraving from *Magazine of Art* 9, 1886, p. 209. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library



Fig. 71. *Dining Room, Potter Palmer Residence, Chicago, ca. 1884–85.* Photograph courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, Architecture Photograph Collection, Ryerson & Burnham Libraries

in fig. 71); *The Gleaner* (ca. 1885), based on Breton's painting of the same name, made for Russell Alexander Alger, governor of Michigan; and *A Zuni Girl* (1885; fig. 70), depicting a young Indian girl in a cornfield carrying a large painted pottery bowl on her shoulder, which was based on studies made during a summer's visit to Zuni country in New Mexico.⁹

Emmet's lifesize *Zuni Girl*, 7¼ feet high and 4½ feet wide, was decorated with a richly beaded border incorporating Indian pottery designs and was edged with Indian-style leather fringe.¹⁰ By comparison, Emmet's other tapestries represent more typical subjects treated in the manner of late-nineteenth-century French academic "allegorical" painting. The needlewoven technique itself imitated painting, "with all the subtle blending of shade into shade which distinguishes the work of the brush"¹¹ (see cat. no. 25). Emmet, who by the mid-1880s had visited Paris several times and in 1884–85 had studied there at the Académie Julian, would have been well acquainted with French academic painting.

1. See Harrison 1881, plate opposite p. 111, for a portrait plaque by Emmet of her sister Jane very similar to this one.

2. See discussion *ibid.*

3. When the Society of Decorative Art moved to 34 East Nineteenth Street in 1878, half of the third floor was devoted to china painting. An "Amateur Class" for hobbyists cost \$12 and a "Students' Class" for professionals

cost \$13. Two-and-a-half-hour lessons were given twice weekly for three weeks and were limited to eight or twelve pupils, who learned both underglaze and overglaze methods of painting. A staff of five instructors was initially headed by English ceramist John Bennett, formerly of the Doulton Pottery & Porcelain Company of Lambeth, South London. See advertisement, "Prospectus of Classes in Drawing and China Painting at the Society of Decorative Art," in *Art Interchange* 1 (November 27, 1878), p. iii; "Decorative Art Society" 1878; Society of Decorative Art 1878b; Society of Decorative Art 1879; Society of Decorative Art 1880; "Society of Decorative Art" 1881a, p. 346. For more on china painting, see Brandimarte 1988.

4. Wheeler 1918, p. 222.

5. *Art Interchange* 3 (November 26, 1879), p. 90; "Decorative Designing" 1879; "Prize Decorative Plaque" 1880.

6. "Decorative Art Society's Work" 1879, p. 46.

7. For more on Emmet's career as an easel painter, see Hoppin 1982.

8. These included *Pretty Peggy and Other Ballads* (1881), *Purple and Gold* (1882), and *The Old-Fashioned Fairy Book* (1884).

9. "Psyche" 1883; "Associated Artists" 1885, p. 39 (illustrating *Hilda in the Tower*); *Art Year Book* 1884, unpaginated, pl. 120 (illustrating *Autumn*); "New Embroideries" 1887 (describing *The Harvest*); Koehler 1886, pp. 209, 211 (mentioning *The Gleaner* and *A Zuni Girl*); Bishop 1885, p. 584 (describing *A Zuni Girl*). See also Bolton 1888, p. 179 (mentioning *Hilda in the Tower* and *A Zuni Girl*). *Autumn* may have been part of a series of tapestries representing the four seasons executed for William K. Vanderbilt or Frederick W. Vanderbilt (the two names are mistakenly conflated in the *Art Interchange*). The journal also attributed the series to Dora Wheeler, but no tapestries by Dora representing the four seasons are known. See King 1895, p. 124.

10. In the nineteenth century numerous expeditions were made to New Mexico to study the Zuni Indian tribe, famous for their textiles and pottery. The account of one such expedition, led by Frank Hamilton Cushing and serialized in three articles published in the *Century Magazine* in 1882–83, may have inspired Emmet to visit the tribe.

11. "Associated Artists" 1885, p. 40.

51. *Lily design*

Ca. 1885

Ink on paper, diam. 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (21.9 cm)

Collection of John Rigg

52. *Swimming-carp design*

1885

Watercolor on paper, diam. 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (24.4 cm)

Signed at bottom: CT/'85

Collection of John Rigg

53. *Floral design*

Ca. 1885

Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in. (30.5 × 40.6 cm)

Collection of John Rigg

54. *Lotus-flower design*

Ca. 1885

Watercolor on paper, 18 × 18 in. (45.7 × 45.7 cm)

Collection of John Rigg

Caroline Townsend (1854–1889), whose decorative designs are illustrated here, worked with Wheeler in her embroidery department at Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and for a brief time was one of the principal designers at Wheeler's Associated Artists. Born and raised in a prominent political family in Albany, New York, Townsend left her hometown in 1880 and moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where she taught watercolor and china painting at the local branch of the Society of Decorative Art. The Hartford branch was one of the first auxiliaries modeled after the original Society of Decorative Art in New York founded by Wheeler in 1877. Townsend evidently had some teaching experience before moving to Hartford, since the Board of Managers of the local branch, seeking an instructor, "found [her] to be all that could be desired."¹ Unfortunately, no examples of Townsend's work as a china painter are known, although the two circular

designs seen here (cat. nos. 51, 52) may have been intended as designs for china plates.

Townsend relocated to New York a year later, in 1881. In this vastly more competitive artistic arena she quickly became involved with the main branch of the society, first as an exhibitor of her embroideries and then, from 1883 to 1885, as a member of its design committee. This prestigious committee was responsible for selecting or rejecting works of art submitted for sale in the society's showrooms.

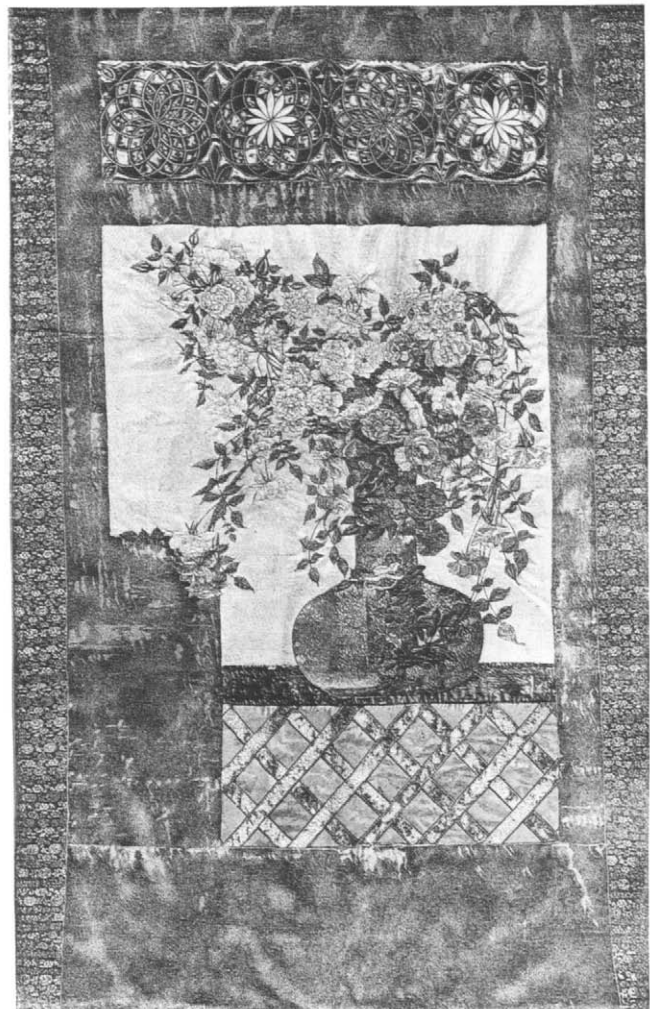


Fig. 72. *First Prize Design for Portière*, by Miss Carrie Townsend, of Albany, New York, 1881. Wood engraving from *Harper's Bazar* 14, July 9, 1881, p. 443. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, General Research Division



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The first critical attention Townsend received in New York was in May 1881, when she won the five-hundred-dollar first prize for the portiere she entered in an embroidery competition held by the society at the American Art Gallery in Madison Square. Some 630 circulars describing the competition had been sent to schools and organizations in every American state and territory, Canada, and various European countries, and nearly three hundred designs on paper and finished pieces of needlework had been received by the society in response. Competitors entered the competition anonymously, using pseudonyms; Yualba was Townsend's. *Harper's Bazar* described her winning entry (fig. 72):

The effect was that of looking through an open window at a magnificent jar of branching roses standing on the ledge. The frame-work of the window is represented by a peculiar and indescribable shade of olive plush. . . . The large jar, from whose mouth the rose branches droop, is cut out of a gold and red Japanese brocade, and is sewed to the cream white satin on which the roses are worked. The roses themselves are exquisitely and lavishly wrought in every shade, from pure white to the rich red of the Jacqueminot and the clear yellow of the Marshal Niel. The curtain is a remarkable piece of needle-work to have been executed in so short a time by a single hand.²

In 1882 the society exhibited three additional portieres by Townsend: two, with designs of roses and poppies in vases,



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were similar to the portiere illustrated here, while a third, a central panel of "cream tapestry stuff," had embroidered masses of lilies sewn in various stitches to create the illusion of depth and a lower portion made of light pink "tapestry cloth"³ — perhaps Wheeler's famous patented needlewoven-tapestry cloth (see cat. no. 24). Lilies were also the motif of a portiere that Townsend exhibited in the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition held in 1883. The portiere consisted of "a width of pale greenish-blue silk serge embroidered with an all-over pattern, composed of white lilies, each set in a circle of its own twisted foliage, and each circle being linked with the next to form a continuous chain of medallions with a lily centre, . . . the leaves and flowers harmonising beautifully with the peculiar blue green of the background."⁴ These lilies enclosed in circles probably closely resembled Townsend's pen-and-ink lily design (cat. no. 51). Her floral designs suggest the influence of English decorative artist William Morris and the Royal School of Art Needlework. An embroidered hanging designed by Morris (cat. no. 23) features a pattern of scrolling leaves and blossoms in pinks, greens, and blues similar to Townsend's lotus-flower design (cat. no. 54). Another, highly stylized floral composition of hers (cat. no. 53) recalls seventeenth-century English crewel work embroideries of the kind revived by the Royal School. The circular organization of a motif appears again in her watercolor design of swimming carp (cat. no. 52). It is similar to two versions of a "Design of Fishes for Outline



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Embroidery” by Townsend, published in the *Art Interchange* in 1884. The designs were to be outlined “in crewel or filoselle in one color” and were “suitable for decorating corners of table covers or scarfs.”⁵

In all probability it was through the exhibition of her textiles at the Society of Decorative Art that Townsend first met Wheeler and began working with her at Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. Wheeler and her staff were responsible for all four of the prizewinning designs in the October 1881 wallpaper competition held by Warren, Fuller & Company (see cat. nos. 32, 35, 39),⁶ in which third prize went to Townsend for a design featuring a thick interlacing growth of cream and silver-colored lilies on an olive ground.⁷

Wheeler recalled that at one time Tiffany had been watching Townsend’s progress as she embroidered “a two-leaved velvet screen of no positive color covered with beautifully wrought roses of all colors.” The masses of roses “were softened into the background by long darning stitches and webs, such as our grandmothers used, when darning was an art, in mending large holes in boys’ stockings.” Tiffany was intrigued by Townsend’s “unscrupulous use of every stitch possible” to replicate painterly effects of color and shading in needlework. When Townsend’s absence one day was explained by her having gone to a watercolor painting class at the National Academy of Design, Wheeler asked Tiffany if he thought such a class would benefit Townsend’s

embroidery. “No,” said he positively. ‘I would rather have her *think* in crewels.’” Wheeler, however, admired Townsend’s unconventional resourcefulness, asserting that “the girl whose mental processes he [Tiffany] wished to curtail went on thinking in very wide circles, for she was one of those to whom *things* are secondary, and only valuable as they can express thought.”⁸ In 1888 Wheeler told the *Art Amateur*, “The best embroiderers I have ever known



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had only art training — Miss Caroline Townsend, for example, whose work gains her such an enviable reputation. In her large flower portières she had great patches of stocking darning used to indicate changes of color. It is not of stitches the artist embroiderer thinks, but of effects.”⁹

That Townsend went on to work for Wheeler’s Associated Artists after Wheeler and Tiffany had parted ways in 1883 is confirmed by a passing reference in an article about Wheeler.¹⁰ In January 1884 another article described the portiere sent by Miss Townsend’s “school at Farmington” (Connecticut) to the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition.¹¹ This was probably a small group of women who came together informally to learn needlework under Townsend’s instruction. By the fall of 1884 Townsend had left the Associated Artists to study painting at the Académie Julian in Paris. Two years later she returned to New York to work independently and continue her training as a painter at the Art Students League. Wheeler ranked Townsend among the leading American women designers, those who in the

last quarter of the nineteenth century had “contributed very largely to the formation of characteristic and progressive needlework art in America.”¹² Townsend’s career was cut short by her early death in 1889, one year after her marriage to Winthrop Scudder.

1. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Managers, October 31, 1879, in Secretary’s Report, 1877–1886, p. 53, Archives of the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut. I am grateful to Carolyn Lane for bringing this report to my attention.
2. “Prize Design Embroideries” 1881, p. 448. For additional descriptions of this and other entries in the competition, see Humphreys 1881a; “Prizes for Decorations” 1881; “Society of Decorative Art” 1881b.
3. Humphreys 1883b.
4. “Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition” 1884a, and see n. 11.
5. “Design of Fishes” 1884.
6. Wheeler 1918, p. 240.
7. See “Art Notes” 1881, p. 351; “Exhibition of Designs” 1881; Van Rensselaer 1881, p. 252.
8. Wheeler 1918, pp. 234–35.
9. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, II.), p. 71.
10. Cook 1884.
11. “Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition” 1884b, p. 46.
12. Wheeler 1921, p. 117.

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

55. *Swimming-carp textile*

1883–1900
 Manufacturer unknown
 Discharge-printed cotton denim, 53 × 18½ in.
 (134.6 × 47 cm)
 The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,
 Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.27)

56. *Swimming-carp table cover*

1883–1900
 Manufacturer unknown
 Printed cotton denim, 36 × 36 in. (91.4 × 91.4 cm)
 The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,
 Gift of Mrs. Benjamin C. Nash, 1973 (73.34.1)

57. *Swimming-carp portiere*

1883–1900
 Ground cloth manufactured by Cheney Brothers
 Silk and metallic cloth, printed and painted, with silk
 velvet border, 83½ × 48½ in. (212.1 × 123.2 cm)
 The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,
 Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.8)

One of Associated Artists’ first designs for a mass-produced textile was the swimming-carp pattern, which was printed on both cotton denim and silk in a variety of colorways. This light blue cotton denim example (cat. no. 55), with the design in white, was made using the discharge-printing method (see below). The green cotton denim table cover with a purple design (cat. no. 56) was made by a conventional dye printing method.

The carp pattern was based on Japanese motifs in which the carp symbolizes courage and endurance because it swims upstream. This motif became especially popular in America



Fig. 73. *Carpes*; *Collection du Musée des Arts Décoratifs*.
 Photolithograph from Théodore Lambert, *Motifs décoratifs
 tirés des pochoirs japonais*, 1878, pl. 13. The Metropolitan
 Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library,
 Rogers Fund

during the later nineteenth century, when Westerners began amassing substantial collections of Japanese art after the opening of Japanese trade to the West in 1854. The art was a source of inspiration for European and American designers, who reinterpreted its motifs for purely aesthetic purposes without regard to their original symbolism. In the United States, Japanese patterns were adapted both from Japanese works in American collections and indirectly from pattern books of Japanese designs. A popular pattern book, Théodore Lambert's *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais* (1878),¹ contains a flat, linear design of the scaly fish amid swirling water (fig. 73) very similar to the design of the Associated Artists fabric.

The *Art Amateur* quoted a lecture given in Birmingham, England, presumably to design students, that extolled the virtues of Japanese fish designs in particular:

It is the intense appreciation of the life and habits of the creature, the result of long and loving study, which gives the



Japanese workman such pre-eminence. . . . So with a fish. It is but few workmen — strictly such — who can copy a fish accurately in side view. But the Japanese workman has so intimate a knowledge of his fish that he depicts him twisting, now turning on his back, so that his two eyes are seen at once; in fact performing all those endless varieties of motion which are so interesting to watch in the aquarium.

American designers, the magazine urged, should devise a new mode of decoration that “while often showing evidence of careful study of Japanese models, no longer slavishly imitates them.”² This was the approach of the Associated Artists designer, who clearly looked to Japanese carp patterns for inspiration but modified them according to her own taste and purposes. The free-flowing linear swirls of water commonly found in Japanese graphic designs have been transformed into neatly drawn concentric circles punctuated here



Fig. 74. *Designing from a Fish*, ca. 1884. Wood engraving from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 69, August 1884, p. 348. Signed: Weldon. Collection of The New-York Historical Society



and there by tiny bubbles, a motif that creates the illusion of depth in an otherwise highly two-dimensional composition. It is not known who at Associated Artists designed the swimming-carp pattern. An illustration published in 1884 in *Harper's* (fig. 74) shows a woman at Associated Artists, considerably younger than Wheeler, making a drawing from the model of a recently caught fish.³ This may have been Ida Clark, who was then in charge of designing the firm's "conventionalized" patterns (see cat. nos. 35–38).

Associated Artists first produced a version of the Japanese carp pattern when Wheeler began experimenting with denim fabrics and indigo dyes in the early 1880s; later she explained that the carp motif was particularly suited to printed denim: "We found it possible to extract its blue in lines of design, and some of our best patterns were devoted to this purpose. One of these, known as 'the fish design,' where large and smaller fish were moving in circling lines of water and globules of spray, was a favorite with architects and decorators."⁴ The "extracting" of blue lines refers to discharge printing, by which a bleaching agent could be used to etch the white design on the dark denim. Sometimes the pattern was further embellished with embroidery, as was often the practice with nineteenth-century Japanese indigo-dyed fabrics.⁵ (For more on discharge-printed denim fabrics, including one with a possibly coordinating nets-and-bubbles pattern, see cat. nos. 58–60.)

Swimming carp were reinterpreted by Associated Artists yet again in an elaborately decorated portiere made of gold metallic cloth (cat. no. 57). After the cloth was printed with the swimming-carp design it was hand painted in oils and finished around the edges with a plush border. The portiere was probably commissioned by a private client for use in a nautical-theme interior, perhaps in a seaside home, a yacht, or a yacht club. The firm's mass-produced denim carp fabric may have been intended for similar locales, since Wheeler and her team sometimes fashioned designs with specific purposes in mind. In practice, however, it was found suitable for urban interiors. The *Art Journal* for 1884 contains an engraving of Louis C. Tiffany's dining room in which an embroidered denim version of the Associated Artists swimming-carp pattern is used, with what appears to be

the firm's nets-and-bubbles pattern, for a decorative frieze above a fireplace inglenook.⁶ Wheeler eloquently praised the effect of the carp design in Star Rock, the summer home of her niece in Onteora in the Catskills, decorated by Associated Artists:

*The prettiest country house dining-room I know is . . . [furnished with] a row of old blue India china plates, arranged in groups of different sizes and running entirely around the room . . . [and] draperies of blue denim in which there is a design, in narrow white outline, of leaping fish, and the widening water-circles and showery drops made by their play. The white lines in the design answer to the white spaces in the decorated china, and the two used together in profusion have an unexpectedly decorative effect.*⁷

Despite the popularity of the swimming-carp motif among architects and decorators, Wheeler and her colleagues at Associated Artists never designed another printed pattern featuring animal motifs of any sort, probably because of Wheeler's overwhelming preference for floral motifs.

1. Other popular books of the period on Japanese art and design included Sir Rutherford Alcock's *Art and Art Industries in Japan* (1878), Thomas Cutler's *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design* (1880), D. H. Moser's *Book of Japanese Ornamentation: Comprising Designs for the Use of Sign Painters, Decorators, Designers, Silversmiths and Many Other Purposes* (1880), Christopher Dresser's *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures* (1882), George Ashdown Audsley's *Ornamental Arts of Japan* (1882–84), and Louis Gonse's *L'Art japonais* (1883). These may have been among the "Japanese illustrated books" in the lending library of the Society of Decorative Art, as noted in its first annual report; Society of Decorative Art 1878b, p. 46.
2. "Japanesque Decoration" 1881, p. 79. The lecturer was J. W. Tonk.
3. Swimming carp were the subject of one of the many designs that Associated Artists published in magazines with instructions on materials, methods, and color. See cat. no. 52 and its n. 5; Wheeler 1918, p. 418.
4. Wheeler 1918, p. 417.
5. The collection of the Mark Twain House contains a number of other pieces of fabric printed with the swimming-carp pattern: 72.14.27 (light blue denim); 72.14.28 (dark blue denim); 72.14.29 (light blue cotton); 72.34.2, 3 (orange silk printed with brown); 73.31.1 (light green and white cotton); and 74.34.3 (golden yellow cotton printed with orange-brown). The Cincinnati Art Museum owns two joined widths of the swirling carp printed on blue denim (1992.159).
6. Humphreys 1884b, pp. 70, 72.
7. Wheeler 1892b, p. 793. A nearly identical description appears in Wheeler 1893d, p. 25, and Wheeler 1903b, pp. 197–98.

58. *Nets-and-bubbles textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Discharge-printed silk and cotton, 31 × 32¼ in.

(78.7 × 81.9 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.10)

*had originated one of the most reliable cotton fabrics in the whole history of manufacture, still existed. This fabric, known as "Kentucky jean," "blue jean," and afterward as "blue denim," came into quite prominent use for the furnishing of yachts and for domestic purposes requiring strength and endurance as well as beauty.*¹

59. *Nets-and-bubbles textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Discharge-printed silk and cotton, 9⅛ × 16⅜ in.

(23.2 × 41.6 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.9)

Recalling the use of denim for workers' overalls on Southern plantations before the Civil War, Wheeler argued in an 1888 interview with the *Art Amateur* that "nothing can be more distinctly American, and I think you will admit, after you have seen how it 'makes up,' that it may be of service to American embroiderers as well as to American artisans."² The sentiment reflected Wheeler's continual efforts to develop an American school of textile design that would make use exclusively of American-made fabrics and locally devised decorative motifs.

The discharge-printed satin fabric with nets and bubbles shown here in two separate colorways, blue (cat. no. 58) and terracotta (cat. no. 59), may have been designed to coordinate with the Associated Artists' swimming-carp fabric (cat. nos. 55, 56). But unlike the all-cotton denim generally used for the carp motif, this fabric is made with a cotton warp and a silk weft, giving it a finer, more supple texture that is better suited to soft draping in an elegant interior than the stiffer, more casual all-cotton denim. Both patterns are highly atypical of furnishing fabrics designed by Associated Artists, which tend to feature floral motifs inspired by both Japanese patterns and American flowers. The nets-and-bubbles motif resembles Japanese designs, such as the one with nets drawn in thin white lines on a dark ground published in a contemporary book of Japanese patterns (fig. 75).

Wheeler later explained in her autobiography that she considered denim particularly suited to this type of linear pattern because it could be discharge printed to produce decorative patterns of fine white lines on a dark ground (on discharge printing, see cat. no. 60). She described how she had been searching for a fabric that would be sturdy enough for the everyday wear and tear in a yacht or country cottage, yet amenable to decorative effects:

I studied home dyeing and weaving, and was greatly pleased to find that the indigo dyes and plantation weaving, which

Ever mindful of the practical requirements of living, Wheeler assured her audience that in the case of denim "you need not be afraid of soiling it, for it will wash; nor of using it roughly on occasion, for it will last forever." Versatility was also important to Wheeler. She noted that denim "works up beautifully with other cotton stuffs. Here, for instance, is a portiere in which it is combined with cotton canvas." Dark blue denim was one of her favorite choices for summer cottages of the modest sort found in her artists' and writers' colony in the Catskills, Onteora, where interiors featured exposed wood beams and simple stained woodwork (as opposed to the palatial "cottages" in more ostentatious resorts like Newport, Rhode Island). "You have no idea how rich these dark blues look with the oil-rubbed woodwork, and salmon or reddish colored walls, of which our architects have grown so fond," Wheeler enthused. In designing portieres she took advantage of the fact that dyed denim is darker on one side than the other, which made it possible for pieces of denim cut into decorative shapes such as leaves or fish to be sewn wrong-side-out onto a larger piece of denim to create a two-tone pattern. Denim was additionally cost-effective because it did not always require a lining. In general, for housewives operating on a tight budget, denim offered a palatable means of cutting corners. "Although it has a great deal of character, it is not a coarse-looking material," said Wheeler; "it will harmonize with much costlier things."³





One well-to-do client who evidently fancied the household use of discharge-printed fabric despite its humble associations was the author Mark Twain, whose home had been decorated in 1881–83 by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists (see cat. no. 21). A pillow covered with Associated Artists’ nets-and-bubbles textile is visible in a 1905 photograph of Twain playing cards with his wife.⁴ Nevertheless, this fabric would not have been Wheeler’s choice for the likes of the Vanderbilts. By the late 1880s she had left her days of decorating lavishly appointed mansions behind, however, and had gone on to embrace with ever greater zeal the ideal of the simple yet artistic American cottage.

1. Wheeler 1918, p. 417.

2. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, III.), p. 99.

3. Ibid.

4. Archives, The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut.

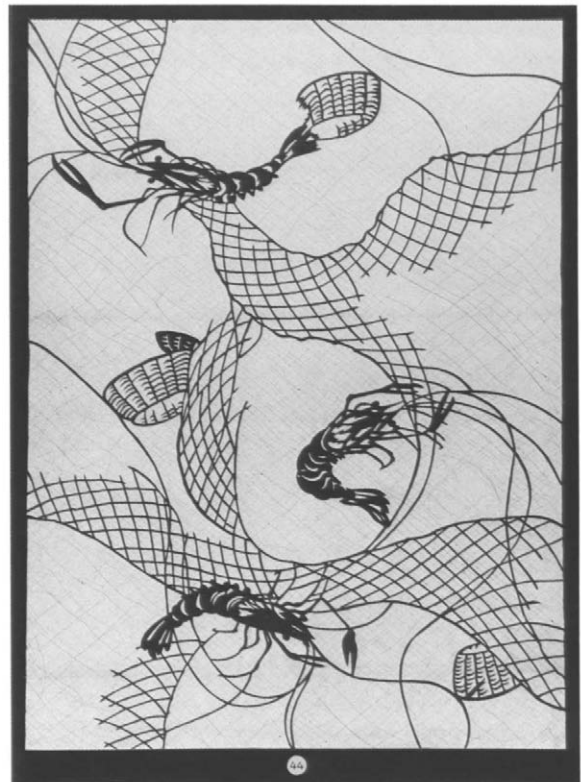


Fig. 75. *Crevettes, filets et paniers* [Crayfish, nets, and baskets]; *Collection Vever*. Photolithograph from Théodore Lambert, *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais*, 1878, pl. 44. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

Opposite: 58 (detail)

60. *Wild-aster textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Discharge-printed cotton denim with silk embroidery,
53 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (136.5 × 69.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Robert L. Isaacson, in memory of
Gustava Harris Nathan, 1989 (1989.65)

UNKNOWN DESIGNER

61. *Conventionalized chrysanthemum textile*

1883–1900

Possibly used by Associated Artists

Manufacturer unknown

Silk, 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (54.6 × 50.2 cm)

Marked on selvage: hh [?] of NY

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.16)

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

62. *Water-pattern textile*

1883–1900

Probably manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 31 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 24 in. (79.4 × 61 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.20)

These textile samples lack documentation from the period, but each of them was probably either designed or used by Associated Artists. The wild-aster sample (cat. no. 60) came into the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art without any connection to Wheeler or her firm. Nevertheless it may be attributable to Associated Artists because of its fabrication of discharge-printed dark blue cotton denim. In this method a fabric dyed a single color, such as natural cotton denim dyed indigo blue, is then printed in a pattern with a paste containing chlorine



60

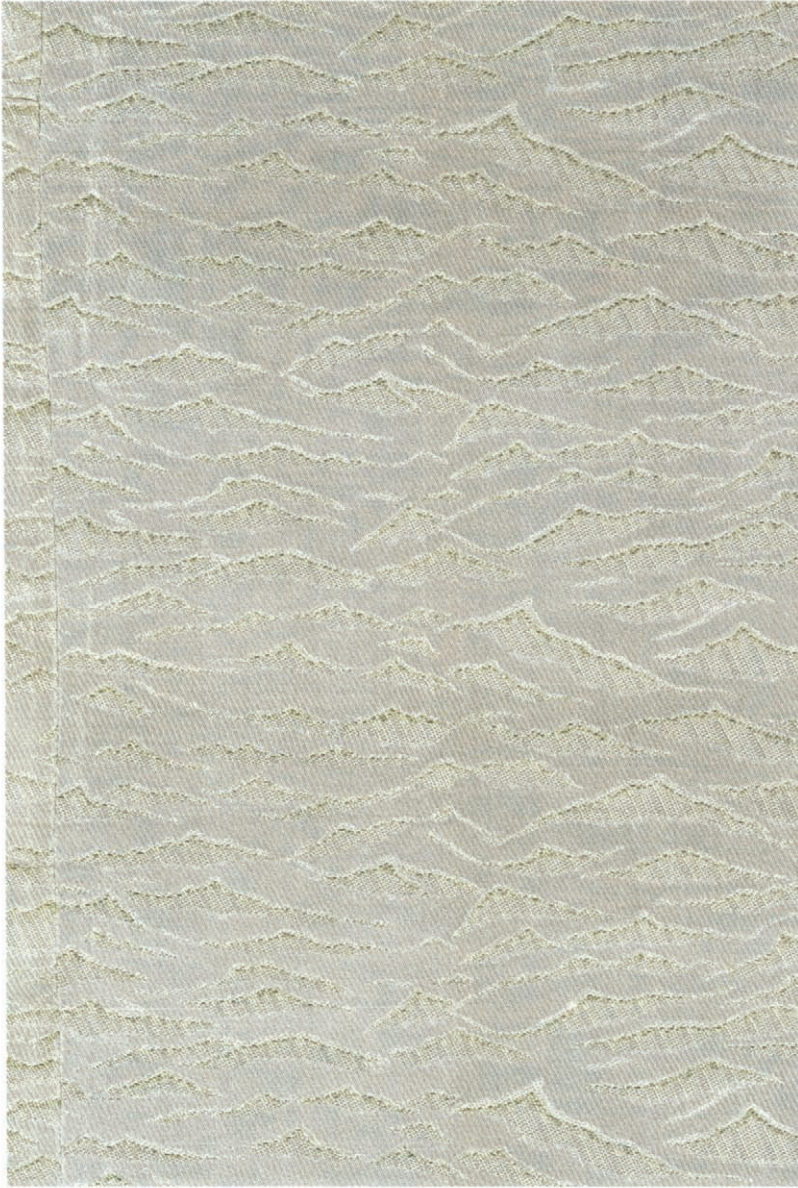


Fig. 76. *Chrysanthemum (conventional)*. Photolithograph from Thomas W. Cutler, *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design*, 1880, pl. 56. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

61

or some other chemical agent that bleaches away the color, leaving the white ground color of the original cloth in the desired areas. Associated Artists was one of the few American firms designing patterns that utilized this technique during the 1880s, when the wild-aster textile was probably first made. Associated Artists also commonly embellished its printed denims with highlights of silk embroidery like those in the centers of the asters. This method was recommended in contemporary books on Japanese design; Thomas Cutler's *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design* (1880) explained that a common Japanese textile process "is to

print a design in white on the material, and to heighten it by embroidering certain parts."¹ Cutler's book was sold in America and recommended in such American art periodicals as the *Art Amateur*, so it is likely that Wheeler owned a 'copy.² Moreover, the aster pattern is Japanese in feel, and Wheeler's early experiments with denim included at least two other motifs inspired by Japanese designs (cat. nos. 55–59). Although the aster does not appear in any fabrics that are documented designs of Associated Artists, its use is consistent with Wheeler's partiality toward floral subjects, especially wildflowers.



62 (detail)

While the wild asters are delicately rendered and varied in shape, consistent with Wheeler's preference for naturalism, the woven chrysanthemum pattern of the silk seen here (cat. no. 61) is highly abstracted. It appears to derive from nineteenth-century Japanese designs of conventionalized chrysanthemums; one such, published in Cutler's *Grammar*, is taken from a Japanese wallpaper sample (fig. 76). On the textile, the blossoms have been reduced to purely geometric, uniform shapes arranged in a tight gridlike composition. Such abstraction is most untypical of textile designs by Associated Artists. Nor does the mark woven into the sel- vage, which seems to read "hh of NY," appear on any fabric

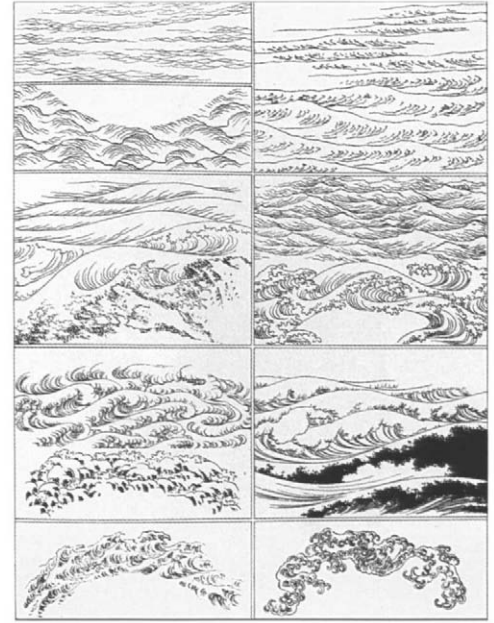


Fig. 77. *Water*. Photolithograph from Thomas W. Cutler, *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design*, 1880, pl. 6. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library

known to have been designed by the firm. Were it not for the fact that the sample is one of a collection of twenty-five donated to the Metropolitan Museum in 1928 by Wheeler's daughter Dora Wheeler Keith, there would be little reason to connect the design with Associated Artists. Most likely the fabric was not designed by the firm at all but was used by its designers for a particular project. It may not even be of American manufacture; its weave is complex and would have been difficult for all but the most highly skilled American manufacturers to produce in the 1880s.

The woven water-pattern fabric (cat. no. 62) was also among the samples donated by Dora Wheeler Keith. It is

the sort of textile that Associated Artists might have designed in the course of experimenting with effects of color, texture, and motif. The lightweight texture is similar to that of documented Associated Artists fabrics. Here too the technique is highly sophisticated. The light blue ground contrasts with the brighter blue-and-green water design, creating a two-tone effect reminiscent of the technical artistry Wheeler sought to achieve in other fabrics, such as her “shadow silks” (cat. nos. 79–81, 84–86). The influence of Japanese sources is apparent as well; the water pattern is almost identical to

several nineteenth-century Japanese patterns published in Cutler’s *Grammar* (fig. 77). Wheeler had great respect for the textile arts of Japan, and fabric samples such as these are consonant with her frequent attempts to incorporate the accomplishments of other traditions into her own American art needlework and textile manufacturing.

1. Cutler 1880, p. 18.

2. “Japanesque Decoration” 1881, p. 79.

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

63. *Daylily textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton, 20¼ × 18⅝ in. (51.4 × 47.3 cm)

Marked in pattern: AA

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,

Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.30)

64. *Japanese maple-leaf textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton, 29⅜ × 8½ (74.6 × 21.6 cm)

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,

Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.3A)

65. *Nasturtium-leaf textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton, 30½ × 34¼ in. (77.5 × 87 cm)

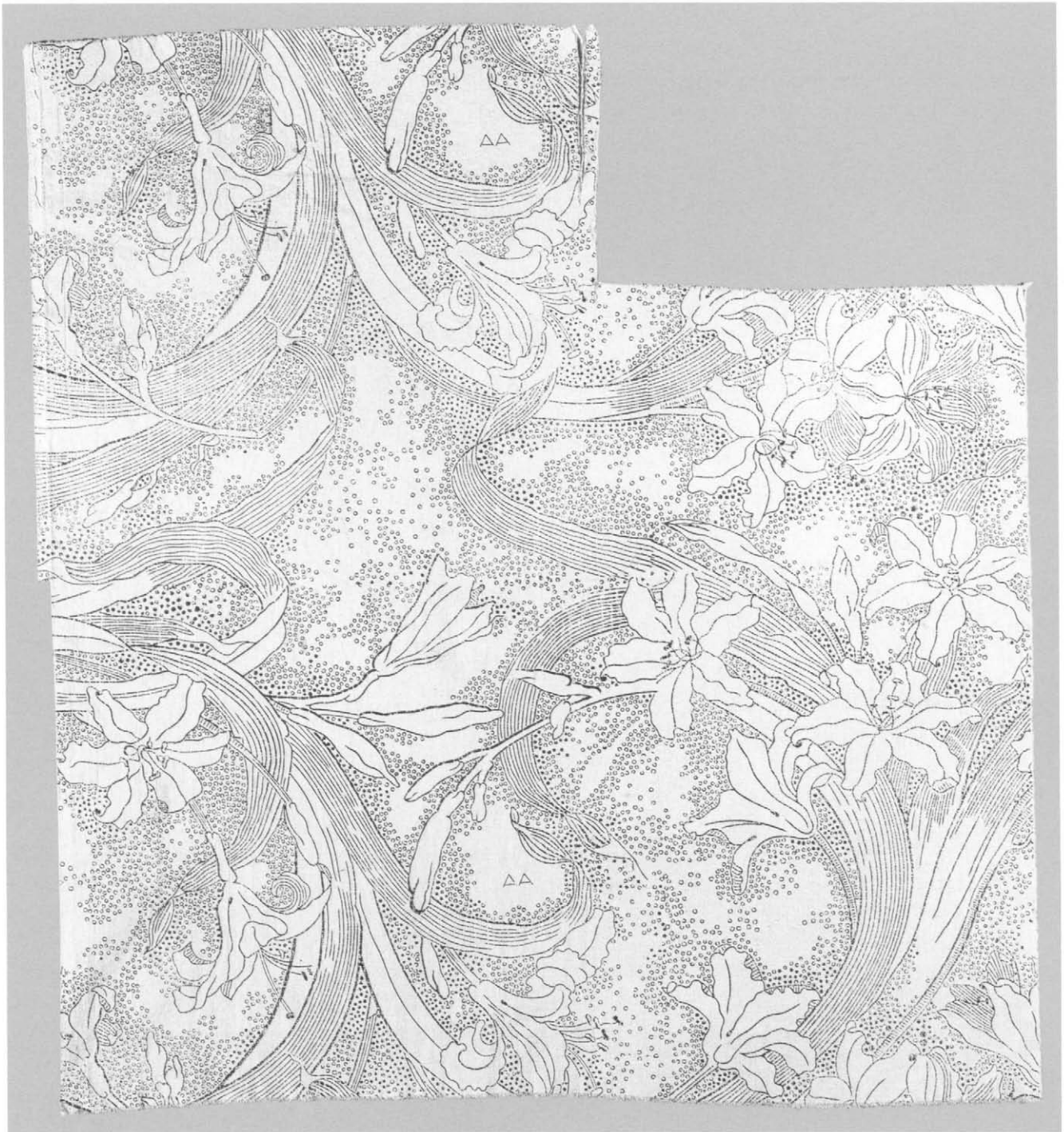
Marked in pattern: AA

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, Gift

of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.23)

The printed plain-woven cottons shown here were designed by Associated Artists as inexpensive furnishing fabrics, suitable for such informally decorated interiors as those of a mountain or seaside cottage. The fabrics are all stylistically similar, with a blue-and-white palette and dense, all-over patterning.

Wheeler counted lilies among her favorite flowers. “My especial friends the lilies,” she wrote in *Content in a Garden* (1901), “are memories by which I test the perfection of some human things and many that belong to the realm of art.” Wheeler’s first known textile design, the hand-painted “Consider the Lillies of the Field” portieres (cat. no. 8), paid homage to the species. Wheeler favored the lemon daylily (cat. no. 67) and “the fragrant white day lily,” which is probably the variety appearing in this printed lily fabric (cat. no. 63).¹ It is one of only a few designs by Wheeler and her staff in which nearly all the surface of the fabric is decorated; here, the spaces between the lilies are filled with a profusion of tiny circles suggesting rain or dewdrops. The details of leaves, petals, buds, and stamens are treated with great care and precision. Although it is not known for certain who at Associated Artists designed the pattern, it is likely that this daylily fabric belongs to Wheeler’s oeuvre, given her passion for the subject.

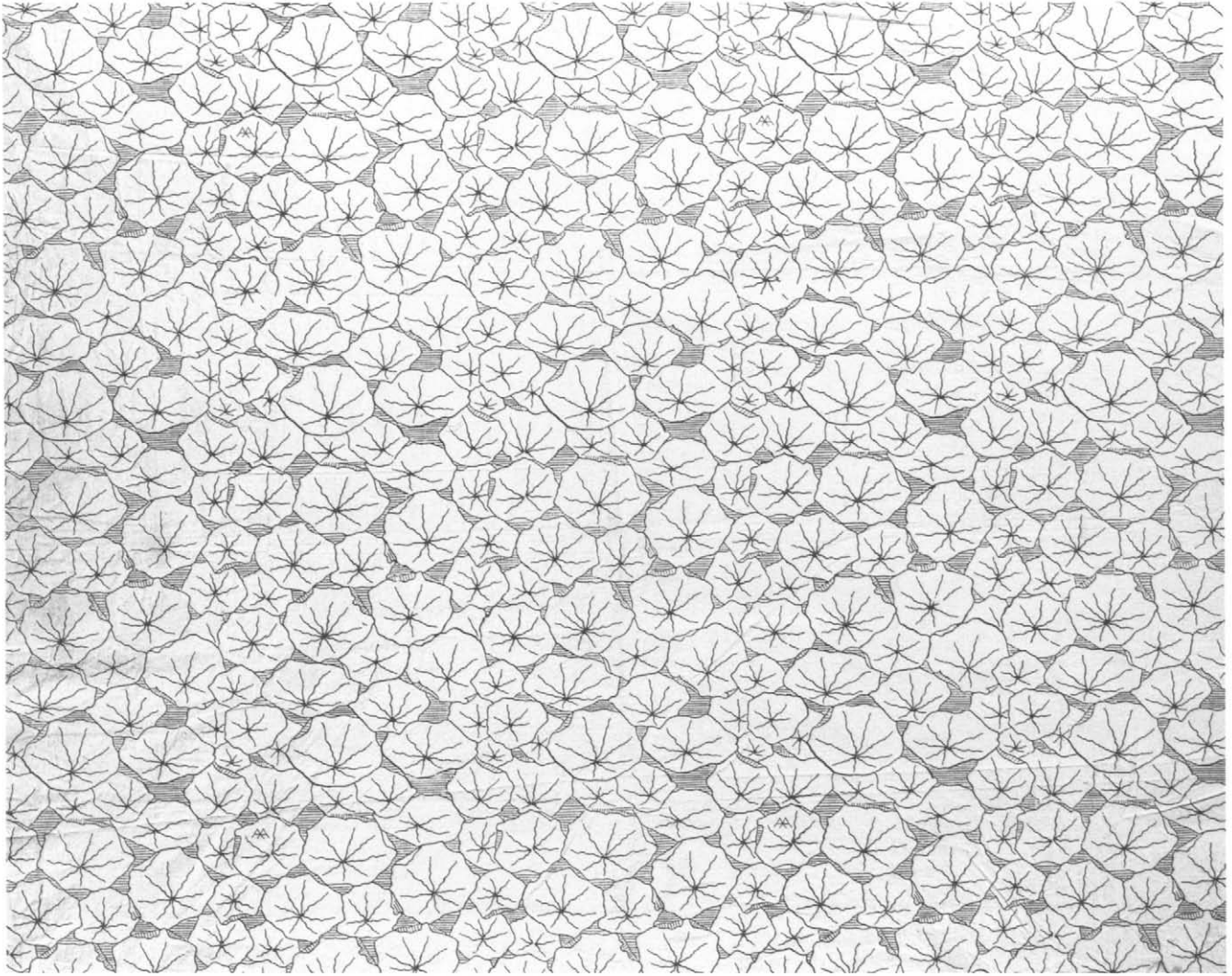




The Japanese maple-leaf pattern (cat. no. 64) undoubtedly derives from Japanese graphic designs. While the daylilies were printed in a single shade of blue, the maple leaves were printed using two shades, dark and light blue. The pattern is printed in light blue; then the same pattern is printed in dark blue, running in the opposite direction. This printing technique gives a sense of depth — the illusion of layers of leaves or of shadows cast by sunlight. (A similar technique was used for the firm’s ivy-patterned cotton velvet, cat. no. 72.) Wheeler was greatly preoccupied with creating illusionistic effects in textiles by a variety of innovative printing and weaving techniques. Although she and her colleagues at Associated Artists could not achieve in printed cottons the subtlety of color, light, and shading that was possible with more complexly woven fabrics, they compensated by using two or more shades of a color to create the impression of three-dimensionality. The *Art Interchange* observed that the effect achieved in shadow silks on which vine sprays were printed “to appear like vines and faint shadows of vines . . . has been attained on fine cotton grounds, and on velvets, plain and embossed, and is especially lovely on the velvet.”²

Like the daylily print, the nasturtium-leaf print (cat. no. 65) is a linear pattern covering the entire surface. The slight overlapping of the disk-shaped leaves, their upturned corners, and the shading of the areas between them with horizontal lines create a vague sense of depth. But in overall effect, the pattern, printed in a single shade of blue, is the flattest and most simplified of the three seen here. The *Art Amateur* grouped it with the firm’s Japanese-style patterns: “In freedom and naturalistic treatment these designs are much more akin to Japanese work than to anything European. Upon one soft, lustrous fabric, for instance, there is a design taken from the nasturtium vine, showing the peculiarities of the natural growth, and quite ignoring the recognized canons of conventional decoration, but of its artistic beauty there can scarcely be two opinions.”³

Wheeler used the fabric to upholster a sofa at Pennyroyal, her country home at Onteora in upstate New York (see cat. no. 95), and evidently considered it ideal for casual summer living. As she did with every flower that appears in designs of her firm, Wheeler attributed very specific characteristics to the nasturtium plant. “There are certain flowers,” she wrote, “that by reason of intensity of color and freedom of growth are hardly compatible with the general congregations of plants, and the nasturtium belongs to this free-growing, assertive, half-lawless kind. . . . If you plant a seed in the bottom crevice of a stone wall, in a month it



65 (detail)

will reach up healthy aromatic stems and climb it, covering it speedily with spreading disks of leaves and trumpeted golden flowers. But it will also overshadow and crowd every plant within its reach.”⁴ Perhaps it was this crowding effect that Wheeler sought to convey in the dense composition of nasturtium leaves.

The nasturtium pattern was printed in three additional colorways, maroon and two shades of brown.⁵ Wheeler may have based these color choices on actual nasturtium flowers. In *Content in a Garden* she describes “a mass of nasturtiums running from pale yellow through all intermediate shades of deep yellow into orange, and from orange into maroon, . . . the whole a color scheme of yellows,

browns, and reds.”⁶ The firm’s daylily and Japanese maple-leaf textiles were probably also printed in multiple colorways.

1. Wheeler 1901a, pp. 149, 200; and for Wheeler’s thoughts on lilies, see pp. 147–49, 156–58, 173, 200. The collection of the Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, contains two additional samples of the fabric (72.14.31 and 32); the darkness of the printing varies.
2. “Embroidery Notes” 1884.
3. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 40.
4. Wheeler 1901a, pp. 42–43.
5. The collection of the Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, contains six additional samples of the nasturtium-printed cotton, one in maroon (72.14.21), one in rust-brown (72.14.19), and four in an orange-brown (72.14.22.A–D).
6. Wheeler 1901a, p. 64.

66. *Poet's-narcissus textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed linen, 28½ × 30 in. (72.4 × 76.2)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.5)

67. *Lemon-daylily textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton, 31⅓ × 9 in. (79.1 × 22.9 cm)

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,

Gift of Mrs. Francis B. Thurber III, 1972 (72.14.13)

These two textiles, along with a number of fabrics designed by Associated Artists, were inspired by Japanese sources and reflect the strong taste for Japanism that swept America during the late nineteenth century, leading to a proliferation of “exotic” Japanesque interiors and household furnishings. The similar compositions, both of blossoms against a crowded background of stems and leaves, bear a strong resemblance to a Japanese iris pattern published in Lambert’s *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais* (fig. 78). While Lambert’s illustration may not have been the actual basis for the narcissus and lemon-daylily designs, it exemplifies the printed source materials on Japanese design that were available to Wheeler and her staff (see also cat. nos. 55–57, n. 1).

The poet’s-narcissus pattern (cat. no. 66) was perhaps also inspired by Wheeler’s own garden at Nestledown, her Jamaica, Long Island, home. Wheeler wrote that she planted a large bed of poet’s narcissus at Nestledown near a “sluggish brook and a ferny swamp.” “It came to me to utilize this place by transplanting into it the army of poet’s narcissus which regularly every spring budded on the lawn in millions. . . . The narcissus sent up its spears of buds dutifully, and when they came to the bursting point, the swampy ground was, and is, every recurring spring, covered with a blanket of creamy white blossoms.”¹ This blanketing effect is captured in the narcissus print. The staggered placement of the plants’ leaves and stems disguises the regularity of the continuously repeating design and creates the illusion of a field of hundreds of flowers, no two alike.





66



Fig 78. *Iris du Japon* [Japanese iris]; *Collection Fayet*. Photolithograph from Théodore Lambert, *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais*, 1878, pl. 39. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund

The poet's-narcissus textile is the only known design by Associated Artists printed on linen. All of the other documented patterns are printed on plain-woven cottons, cotton velvets, cotton velveteens, or silks.²

The lemon-daylily pattern (cat. no. 67) is one of two very different daylily patterns designed by Associated Artists, both probably inspired by Japanese sources and by Wheeler's love of lilies.³ While the firm's blue-and-white daylily pattern (cat. no. 63) was printed without regard for the colors of nature and is flat and linear, the lemon-daylily design was printed in a highly naturalistic palette of greens and yellows, and the flowers are rendered in a painterly fashion. Individualized blossoms and buds of different shapes and sizes — there are more than ten variants — are drawn one in front of the other and intertwined with stems and leaves, creating an impression of depth. Although arranged in a series of narrow vertical rows, the plants themselves are shown much as they grow in their natural

garden setting. Both designs are in accordance with Wheeler's instructions to aspiring designers: "Follow the lead of a plant in studying it. . . . For instance, there are plants that follow a perpendicular growth, like the lily family. You will notice that they never grow in any other way, and when you come to put them into a design, you will know the nature of the plant too well to distort it into fantastic curves; you will preserve its leading characteristics."⁴

The effect of three-dimensionality is further heightened in both the lemon-daylily and the poet's-narcissus textiles by a complex printing process that allows for subtle, realistic coloring. Five different shades of dye — green, yellows, and browns — plus the natural color of the undyed cotton go into the lemon-daylily design, whereas just one shade of blue was used to print the firm's blue-and-white daylily pattern. The poet's-narcissus pattern was also printed in five colors (three tones of green, yellow, and red), on natural undyed linen. The plain-woven linen fabric is made of unevenly spun yarns, creating an irregular surface texture that perhaps was intended to have an unpretentious, "homespun" look.

Both textiles are among the most technically sophisticated of the printed fabrics designed by Associated Artists. Despite their manufacture of simple plain-woven linen or cotton, the complex printing in multiple colors was highly labor-intensive, making them costlier than many of the firm's other fabrics printed with only one or two shades of dye. The resulting effect was of blended colors, emulating the subtle modulations of tones seen in easel painting. These textiles, some of Associated Artists' more "artistic" mass-produced fabrics, well represent Aesthetic design in America.

1. Wheeler 1901a, p. 18.

2. A linen bureau scarf embroidered with daylilies in the collection of the Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut (72.14.33), may be the work of Associated Artists but has not been firmly attributed.

3. The collection of the Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut, contains an additional fragment of the lemon-lilies printed cotton (72.14.11).

4. Wheeler 1901b.

68. *Daffodil textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton velvet, 32½ × 37 in. (82.6 × 94 cm)

Marked on selvage: TRADE AA MARK/

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS 115 East Twenty Third St.
NEW YORKThe Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.25)69. *Daffodil curtain*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton velvet, 84 × 26 in. (213.4 × 66 cm)

Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

70. *Trumpet-vine curtains*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton velveteen, each panel 96 × 58 in.
(243.8 × 147.3 cm)The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(N.A. 2001.4.4–5)71. *Trumpet-vine textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton velveteen, 48 × 9¼ in. (121.9 × 23.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.2)

Associated Artists designed a number of patterns for printed cotton velvets and cotton velveteens, including the daffodil and trumpet-vine designs illustrated here in different colorways. Cotton velvet has a true velvet structure, with a fine, short warp-pile weave. Cotton velveteen has a short, close weft pile cut to imitate the appearance

of true warp-pile velvet, but its surface is slightly less dense or rich than that of velvet. True silk velvet was used by Associated Artists only for edging or appliquéing on large portieres and tapestries; cotton velvet and cotton velveteen were more affordable and durable and were well suited to middle-class homes or informally decorated country retreats. Associated Artists was described as having designed a number of different patterns printed on “cotton plush,” a term probably being used to refer generically to both cotton velvet and cotton velveteen. These fabrics were “printed with remarkably artistic designs . . . drawn from fir-cones and needles, marsh marigolds, trumpet-flowers, thistles, and lilies.”¹ The use of a pile fabric as the ground for a printed pattern was relatively innovative at the time. In such fabrics, the three-dimensional texture and light reflected from the surface of the fabric contribute to the overall decorative effect of the design.

The patterns of daffodils and trumpet vines, with their sinuous, curving stems and leaves, are considerably more in the spirit of the Art Nouveau style than many of the firm’s other designs. A sense of rapid movement pervades these boldly drawn, naturalistic treatments of blossoms in various stages of bloom, twisting and turning in all directions. It is not known who at Associated Artists designed the two patterns or where they were printed, although it seems likely that Wheeler was closely involved in their design and production or, at the least, influential by virtue of her very definite views on flowers.

Wheeler wrote little about the trumpet vines that grew in her gardens, but she had strong opinions about daffodils. She delighted in their bright golden yellow color and distinctive ruffle-edged trumpets. They were among the flowers that Wheeler considered most emblematic of her native floriculture, claiming them as “inalienably ours.” Daffodils, she wrote, were among “the most prolific of flowers,” firmly determined to grow; perhaps their lively swirl on the printed velveteen is meant to convey a sense of this growth and abundance.²

The daffodil-patterned cotton velvet printed in blue on cream (cat. no. 68) is one of twenty-five examples donated to The Metropolitan Museum of Art by Wheeler’s daughter, Dora Wheeler Keith. Its color scheme represents a complete departure from the flower’s true colors, yellows and



ASSOCIATED ARTISTS, 17 East Twenty-Third St., NEW YORK



69



70 (one of a pair)



71 (detail)

greens. In choosing fabric colors, truth to nature was often of minor concern; more important was the fabric's ability to harmonize with other household furnishings and accessories, such as the blue-and-white china patterns so ubiquitous in nineteenth-century American households.

Colors had other important functions; according to Wheeler's *Principles of Home Decoration* (1903), the success of an interior "is almost entirely the result of colour treatment and careful and cultivated selection of accessories." When choosing colors, the deciding factor was the amount of sunlight that a room received during the course of a day. Wheeler recommended that interiors with a southern exposure "be treated with cool, light colours, blues in various shades, water-greens, and silvery tones which will contrast with the positive yellow of sunlight."³ Thus, blue-and-white fabrics would have been used in a bright, sunny room, as also, perhaps, the cotton velveteen with a trumpet vine printed in dark green (cat. no. 71). The daffodil velvet printed in crimsons (cat. no. 69) and the trumpet-vine cotton velveteen printed in golds (cat. no. 70) would have been considered appropriate for a more dimly lit interior. "A north room," wrote Wheeler, "will require warm and bright treatment, warm reds and golden browns, or pure gold colours."⁴

Only a few of the extant fabrics by Associated Artists faithfully reproduce the natural colors of the plant specimens depicted (see, e.g., cat. no. 66). In most of the firm's designs, naturalism is limited to the way the flowers are drawn. When Wheeler first entered the business, her goal was to design fabrics that would be subtler in tone than the harshly colored ones then being produced, tones better suited to her particular vision of the artistically refined middle-class American home. Therefore, when it came time for her to create her own line of fabrics, their muted color schemes were just as important as the decorative patterns they carried.

1. Wheeler 1887-89 (interviews, III.), p. 99.

2. Wheeler 1901a, pp. 19-21, 173.

3. Wheeler 1903b, pp. 34, 75.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 72. The crimson daffodil-patterned velveteen illustrated here is said to be from one of the Wheeler family homes. The textile collection of the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut, contains a daffodil-patterned curtain printed in the same crimson colorway (173.11.3B), as well as two trumpet vine examples printed on cotton in light browns and golden yellows with a wide woven stripe (72.14.26 and 72.14.41).

72. *Ivy textile*

1883–1900

Manufacturer unknown

Printed cotton velvet, 27½ × 29 in. (69.9 × 73.7 cm)

Marked in pattern: AA

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.1)

For Associated Artists' cotton velvet printed with ivy, shown here in a green colorway, an offset roller-printing technique was used to create the illusion of shadows or multiple layers of leaves. Evidently the same printing roller was used to print both shades of the ivy, slightly offset from one another. (The firm's Japanese maple-leaf pattern,

cat. no. 64, is another multilayered design.) The fabric was first printed in pale green to create a layer of ivy in the background and then printed over that in a darker shade of green.¹

The ivy pattern may have been based on English sources, possibly the ivy wallpaper pattern designed by Charles Locke Eastlake and illustrated in his *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* (1868). Wheeler probably had a copy of Eastlake's book, which was first published in America in 1872 and was among the most popular household art publications of the second half of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. The Associated



Artists ivy pattern is among the firm's least innovative interpretations of a plant form, the only original touch being the illusion of depth. The design was a highly palatable one, however, adaptable to any number of interiors, particularly those of summer cottages. Wheeler used the ivy-patterned cotton velvet to upholster furniture in Pennyroyal, her summer cottage at Onteora in Tannersville, New York.

Wheeler was always experimenting with the novel effects of light reflected on the surfaces of her textiles. The design seen here, which perhaps attempts to mimic the effect of sunlight on plants casting shadows on the surface beneath,

paralleled Wheeler's more ambitious "shadow silks" (see cat. nos. 79–81, 84–86), manufactured in collaboration with Cheney Brothers. The silks imitate the blurred effects of reflections on water or of sun and shadows. The Cheney firm specialized in silks, however, and is unlikely to have also manufactured the cotton fabrics designed by Associated Artists; Wheeler probably found another, as yet unidentified, manufacturer to produce these.

1. The collection of the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut, contains an example of the green ivy-patterned velveteen (73.3.4) and also one in blue and yellow (72.14.2).

UNKNOWN ARTIST

73. *View of South Manchester, Connecticut*

1880

Lithograph by O. H. Bailey & Company, Boston,
22 × 28 in. (55.9 × 71.1 cm)

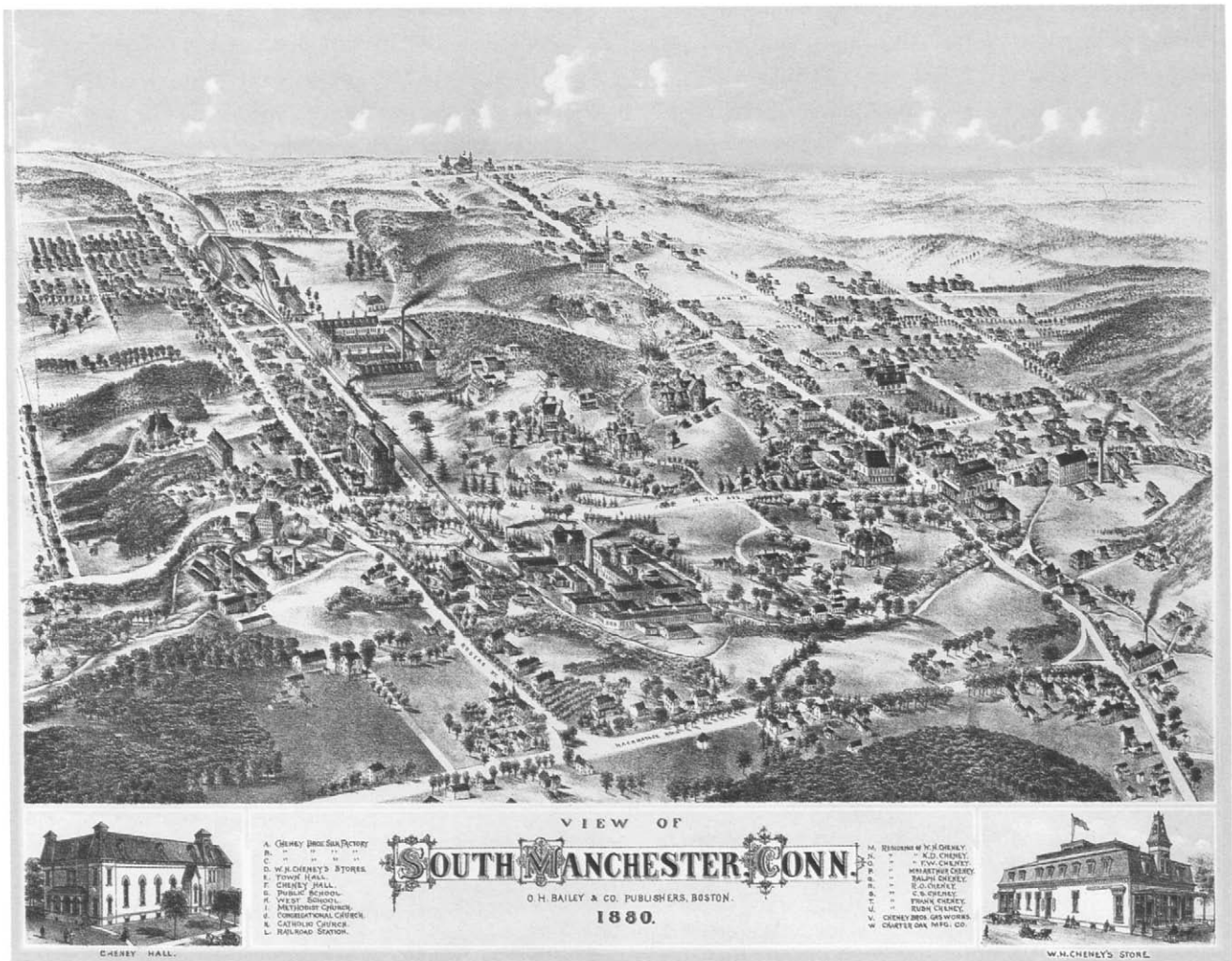
The Manchester Historical Society, Manchester,
Connecticut (1968.81.03)

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Cheney Brothers (1838–1955) of South Manchester and Hartford, Connecticut, had become one of the nation's leading textile manufacturers. Much of the firm's success in the 1880s and 1890s was directly related to its collaboration with Wheeler and other American textile designers on developing new types of fabrics, primarily silks that could compete in quality and quantity with foreign imports. The oldest and at the time the largest silk manufacturing company in the United States, the firm had been founded in 1838 by four brothers from South Manchester, ten miles east of Hartford: Ralph, Ward, Rush, and Frank Cheney. That year they began cultivating the *Morus multicaulis*, an imported Chinese mulberry tree, and silkworms — the two necessities of silk production.¹

In the 1840s the American silk industry collapsed from the combined effects of the depression of 1837, the high costs of labor-intensive sericulture, and a blight in 1844 fatal to most mulberry trees across the country. Cheney Brothers was the only American silk mill to survive the collapse; it did so by redirecting its efforts to the production of silk

spool thread for hand sewing (and later machine sewing), using early power equipment and raw silk imported from China and Japan. The firm patented the first practical power spinning machine for making twisted silk sewing thread in 1847. Until the Cheneys began importing raw silk from the Far East to make thread, Americans had relied on hand-twisted sewing silk, almost all of it from Italy.

Traditionally, silk was obtained by unwinding, or "reeling," the intact filament from a cocoon and twisting several such filaments together, a process carried out on a "throwing" mill. In 1855 Cheney Brothers developed a method of spinning silk from the floss of pierced, imperfect cocoons that typically would have gone to waste. This new product, called "waste silk" or "spun silk," became a new, important branch of the American silk industry and a specialty of the firm, augmenting its production of reeled silks. Since spun-silk fabric was less expensive than reeled-silk fabric, silk was now within the reach of more Americans.² These technical developments enabled the Cheneys to increase their range of products, and by the mid-1860s they were also producing spun-silk yarns and ribbons, handkerchiefs and scarves,



73

grograin silks, broad silks, pongee silks, and serges. In 1854 another brother, Charles (1803–1874), opened additional mills in Hartford with the help of his two sons, Frank W. Cheney (1832–1909) and Knight D. Cheney (1837–1907). With the advent of the Civil War strict tariffs were imposed on imported silk goods in 1861 and 1864, and in the greatly strengthened domestic market that resulted, Cheney Brothers was able to expand its efforts by enlarging its Hartford operation and improving its technical and design expertise.

By 1880 the Cheney family faced stiff competition within the United States, especially from manufacturers in the booming silk center of Paterson, New Jersey. The number of American silk manufacturers, just 67 in 1850, had risen dramatically to 382.³ Cheney Brothers inaugurated its production of silk plushes and velvets using looms imported from Germany and also began manufacturing printed and jacquard-woven

silk upholstery fabrics, which became an important resource for American interior decorators and upholsterers during the Aesthetic period.

By 1885 there were 550 looms and 1,500 workers at the South Manchester mill producing more than \$2,500,000 worth of finished goods annually. At its peak in 1920, South Manchester employed nearly five thousand workers occupying ten silk-mill buildings covering nearly thirty-six acres of floor space, in a thousand-acre landscaped park. This monumental industrial enterprise attracted national attention as a model factory village. Part of the family's success lay in its benevolent outreach to the town of South Manchester, pictured here in an 1880 lithograph with the initial Cheney mill complex in the foreground. The Cheney family supported a library, a school, a fire department, a farm, a store, a grist mill, boarding houses, reservoirs for drinking water, a power

plant for illumination of the mill, and a sewage plant for waste disposal. Cheney Hall, built in 1869 (pictured at the bottom left corner of the lithograph), provided a venue for religious services, entertainment, lectures, and exhibitions and became an unlikely gathering place for high society.⁴

In her autobiography Wheeler recalled that when she began to work with the Cheneys in the early 1880s it was Frank W. and Knight who became her chief partners in industry. They “had already taken an interest in the subject of national design, and they helped us in most effective ways, making use of native artistic work in their prints and brocades. Indeed, we felt always in their production that we were working in concert.”⁵ Frank W. had been director of the South Manchester mills since 1854 and was the dominant figure in the second generation of Cheney Brothers.⁶ The *Studio* discussed Wheeler’s arrangement with the Cheneys to manufacture textiles designed and used exclusively by her Associated Artists:

The firm of Messrs. Cheney . . . offered to Mrs. Wheeler to make experiments under her direction for obtaining the textures and dyes she needed. . . .

The new patterns in weaving which have been produced under Mrs. Wheeler’s direction at the Cheney works, and which we believe are made exclusively for her, are of remarkable beauty and originality, but the dyes, it is to be noted, are an integral part of the design; that is, the textures are invented to be dyed such and such colors, and to be embroidered with patterns suitable to the material. This unity gives to the productions of the studio of the Associated Artists a character of its own, and the aim of the Association is, by a constant reference to the models furnished by nature here at home, and by following the abundant hints which are furnished by our own surroundings and conditions of life, to give the work produced a more and more national character.⁷

Wheeler had been dissatisfied with imported fabrics and with the fact that there were no distinctly American textiles being produced. In her collaboration with the Cheneys, Frank W. would come to New York to consult with her about the fabrics she wished to have made.⁸ The process ultimately led to the establishment of a separate decorative department at the mill. With Cheney Brothers, Wheeler developed numerous technically innovative silks, including her own patented ground fabric for embroidering needle-woven tapestries, known as “tapestry cloth” (see cat. no. 24). The color experiments that she oversaw at the Cheney mill resulted in her famous “shadow silks” (see cat. nos. 79–81, 84–86). Although Cheney Brothers was the principal manufacturer of fabrics designed by her Associated Artists, Wheeler may have enlisted at least two other textile firms in New Jersey and Massachusetts, mentioned in print in 1884 and 1885 but not identified.⁹ Wheeler’s decision to develop and use exclusively American-manufactured materials engendered widespread interest in the creating of alliances between art and industry.

1. For more on the individual Cheneys involved in the family silk business, see Pope 1897; Cheney 1975.
2. Cheney manufactured its first commercially successful spun-silk cloth in 1866. Known as “number four grosgrain silk,” it was coarse in texture but affordable at \$2.50 per yard, and helped fill the great demand among Civil War widows for black mourning fabrics.
3. For a general discussion of the American silk industry in the 1880s, when Wheeler and the Cheneys began working together, see Barrows 1880; “Silk Dress” 1885.
4. For more on the history of Cheney Brothers, see Howland 1872; Manchester 1916; Manchester 1924; Grant 1979.
5. Wheeler 1918, p. 238.
6. Knight Cheney became a director of the firm as well in 1876. Rush Cheney was president 1876–82 and Frank Sr. succeeded him, serving 1882–93.
7. “Notes” 1887, p. 25.
8. Budd 1924, unpaginated.
9. See Harrison 1884, p. 344; Bishop 1885, p. 584.

74. *Pomegranate textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 15 × 21 in. (38.1 × 53.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.8)

75. *Pomegranate textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 34¼ × 27¾ in. (87 × 70.5 cm)

The Mark Twain House Hartford, Connecticut,

Gift of Miss Lucy T. Howard, 1973 (73.3.2)

The pomegranate-patterned damask shown here in two colorways, gold and green, is one of the complex woven silks designed by Associated Artists in collaboration with Cheney Brothers (see cat. no. 73).¹ While the fruits in the design are pomegranates, the large rayed, indented

leaves are not identifiable as pomegranate leaves. They bear some resemblance to oak leaves, but since oak leaves do not grow in palmate (radiating) form, they are perhaps a fantasy composite of indented oak and palmate, smooth-edged horse chestnut.² Each unit of leaves is enclosed by stems branching out from its base, and these configurations, resembling classical heart-shaped palmettes, alternate with trios of pomegranates.

The pomegranate has a long history in Western art as a symbol of fertility and fecundity, based on the many seeds contained in each fruit. It is especially common in fifteenth-century figured velvets of the Italian Renaissance, which feature patterns of pomegranates enclosed by sinuous stems and tendrils and were perhaps the inspiration for the pattern by Associated Artists. The pomegranate was also a favorite motif early in the seventeenth century in Jacobean England, and then again during the Jacobean Revival of the late nineteenth century. Pomegranates figure in a number of English wallpapers of the 1870s and 1880s, including some by Jeffrey & Company, whose papers were illustrated in the





75 (detail)

American press and readily available in the United States.³ Wheeler was not averse to using historical motifs and asserted in *Principles of Home Decoration*, “Nothing is more certain than that there is reason, and good reason, for fidelity in public taste. Popular liking, if continued, is always founded upon certain incontrovertible virtues. . . . Products of the loom must have lasting virtues if they would secure lasting esteem.”⁴ She doubtless welcomed the designing of a pomegranate pattern for Associated Artists as an opportunity to improve upon an idea that had been a staple for centuries in the Western repertoire of textile motifs.

Wheeler’s principles called for avoiding two design extremes: copying plants from nature literally, and conventionalizing them beyond recognition. She sought a middle ground by “choosing natural forms in flowers and plants that are in a sense conventional in nature. The acanthus is an example of such a form. But, without going back to classic ornament, the knobs of the thistle, a species of deeply indented oak leaf, the parsley, the burdock, and the flowers and fruit of the pomegranate are sufficiently conventional in form to be introduced into artificial ornamentation. Again I must qualify all I have said, by admitting

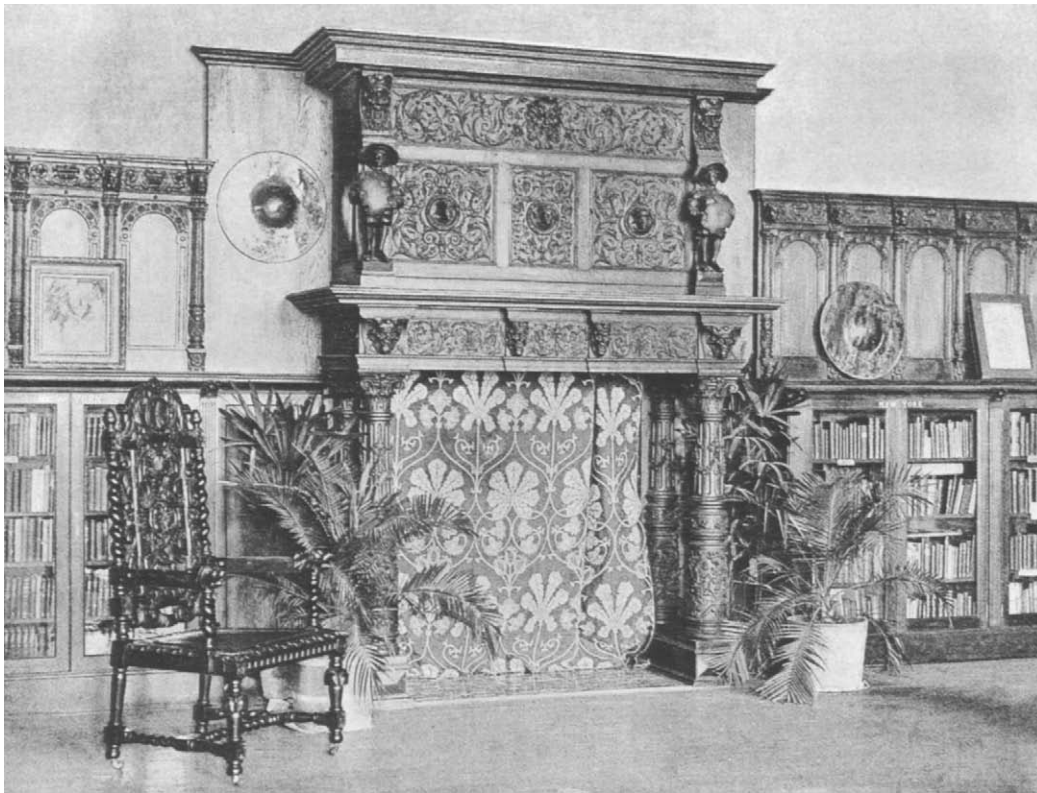


Fig. 79. C. D. Arnold, *A View of the Library in the Woman's Building at the World's Fair, 1893*. From *Art Amateur* 29, August 1893, p. 73. Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut

that everything yields to genius.”⁵ Wheeler and her staff copied the basic forms of indented oak leaves and pomegranates without altering them significantly beyond their natural state, but then arranged those naturalistic forms decoratively by twisting the stems into framing devices and setting out leaves and fruit in a uniform, repeating pattern.

The formalized composition of the pomegranate pattern was later adapted by Associated Artists to a nearly identical oak-leaf design woven in a brocade that is heavier than the damask. This time, trefoil-shaped clusters of blossoms were substituted for the fruit. The fabric was evidently a personal favorite of Wheeler, who used a version of it to upholster seating furniture in the sitting room of her Long Island home, Nestledown,⁶ and, more importantly, chose it for the portieres and the fireplace hanging in the Library she designed for the Woman's Building of the 1893 Columbian Centennial Exposition in Chicago (fig. 79).

The pomegranate pattern, substantially more historical in nature than earlier designs by Associated Artists, signals a change in the firm's aesthetic over time. By 1893 Wheeler was remarking to the *Art Amateur*, “The true direction for

American design at present . . . lies in using familiar native flower forms upon the lines of classic ornament.” She illustrated this trend with a brocade woven under her supervision consisting of a chrysanthemum-patterned “Louis XV. design, which has the graceful lines and dainty character of the ornament of that period.”⁷ Beginning in the late 1880s Wheeler and her staff moved away from Japanese design sources in favor of historical European precedents, reflecting their participation in a historicist art trend known as the American Renaissance.

1. The collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art contains an additional example of the pomegranate-patterned damask, woven in silk and cotton in tones of gold, with “AA” woven into the selvage (28.70.7). The collection of the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut, contains additional pieces in gold (72.14.9) and green (73.3.3).
2. Wheeler herself described it as a pomegranate pattern. See “Pomegranate Design” 1897.
3. See, e.g., Oman and Hamilton 1982, p. 429, fig. 1191.
4. Wheeler 1903b, p. 156.
5. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I).
6. For a photograph, see Wheeler 1903b, opposite p. 168.
7. *Art Amateur* 28 (January 1893), p. 66.

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

76. *Pinecones-and-needles textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 30 × 24½ in. (76.2 × 62.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.6)

POSSIBLY ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

78. *Quince textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 65 × 51 in. (165.1 × 129.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Horace Bushnell Learned, 1974
(Inst. 1974.11)

POSSIBLY ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

77. *Pinecones-and-needles textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Silk, 105½ × 50 in. (268 × 127 cm)

The Mark Twain House, Hartford, Connecticut,
Gift of Mrs. Horace B. Learned, 1971 (71.16.3)

These fabrics patterned with pinecones and needles or quince branches exemplify the type of high-quality, finely textured silk of complex weave designed by Associated Artists in collaboration with Cheney Brothers. For the large-scale pinecones-and-needles fabric (cat. no. 76) two weave structures are combined, twill and plain weave, to create a compound woven textile called lampas. This





77 (detail)

type of work is primarily associated with Asian weaving; perhaps Wheeler and the Cheneys used a sample of Japanese fabric as a model. Fine yarns of reeled silk were used, resulting in an extremely lustrous and delicate fabric texture. The ground is pale yellow and the contrasting pattern in a deeper golden yellow. The fabric with small-scale pinecones and needles (cat. no. 77) is similarly woven, this time in cream on a pale golden yellow ground. But while the larger pattern, on a fabric given to the Metropolitan Museum in 1928 by Dora Wheeler Keith, is relatively loose and flowing, the small pattern is stiffer and more regularized. Its fabric, donated to the Mark Twain House by a member of the Cheney family, is probably later in date and may not even be by Associated Artists, although the Cheney family believed that it was.

In 1888 the *Art Amateur* noted that Associated Artists used a “fir-cones and needles” motif for its printed “cotton plush.”²¹ This was probably the same design as that used for the silk lampas, perhaps with slight variations adapting it to a fabric texture that did not permit the precise detail possible with a complex silk weave. Once Associated Artists adopted a design, it often recycled it in a range of fabrics of different textures and weights to suit various household needs and budgets.

Like the pinecones-and-needles patterns, the quince pattern on a pale golden yellow ground (cat. no. 78) is woven in fine silk yarns in a complex damask weave. This piece too was a gift from the Cheney family and was regarded by them, perhaps inaccurately, as by Associated Artists. Its pattern is more refined and more realistically drawn and shaded than most designs by the firm. The weave structures of all three fabrics are integral to the elegant overall effect of their patterns. The fine textures complement the intricacy of the designs, which could only have been made using the modern technology of the mechanized jacquard loom. Although many of the patterns designed by Associated Artists were treated principally from an artistic viewpoint, with the weave of the fabric being of secondary concern and therefore relatively simple, these silks rely heavily on a sophisticated weaver’s perspective. They would have been among the firm’s costlier fabrics, for use in high-style interiors.²

The motifs both of pinecones and needles and of quince probably derive from Japanese sources. The quince pattern bears a remarkably close resemblance to a Japanese design of *kukis*, an exotic fruit, illustrated in Lambert’s *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais* (fig. 80). Pinecones-and-needles designs were common in Japanese pattern books as well.

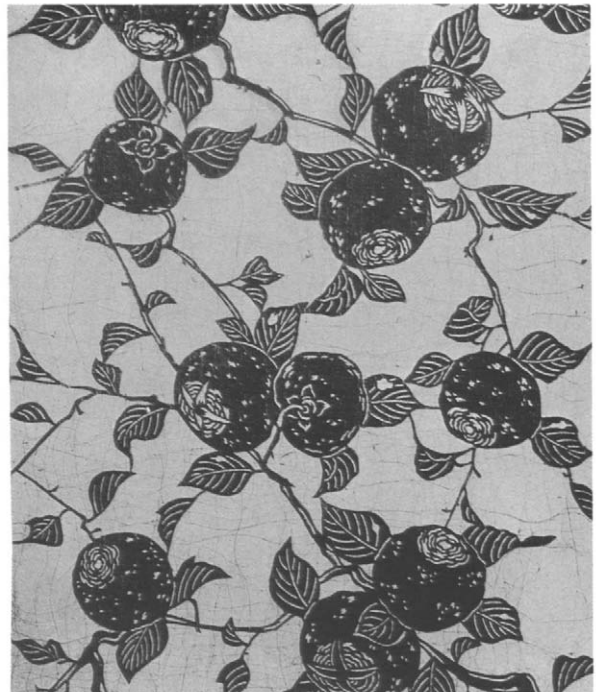


Fig. 80. *Feuillages et fruits* [Foliage and fruit] (*kukis*); *Collection, Vever*. Photolithograph from Théodore Lambert, *Motifs décoratifs tirés des pochoirs japonais*, 1878, pl. 43. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Rogers Fund



78 (detail)

1. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, III.), p. 99.
2. The collection of the Mark Twain House also contains a piece of the large-scale pinecones-and-needles fabric (L73.11.1) and three pieces of the quince-patterned damask (71.16.1, 71.16.2, and 72.2). The examples

of quince fabric in the collections of both The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Mark Twain House were donated by Eileen R. Learned (1907–1995), a descendant of the Cheney family.

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

79. *Water-lily panel*

1883–1900
Manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Warp-printed silk, 62 × 30 in. (157.5 × 76.2 cm)
Collection of Candace Pullman Wheeler

80. *Water-lily textile*

1883–1900
Manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Warp-printed silk, 29 × 25 in. (73.7 × 63.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.15)

81. *Water-lily textile*

1883–1900
Manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Warp-printed silk, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (90.8 × 21.6 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.23)

82. *Water-lily curtain*

1883–1900
Manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Silk, 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 49 in. (201.9 × 124.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Museum Accession (x.447a)

83. *Water-lily textile*

1883–1900
Manufactured by Cheney Brothers
Silk, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. × 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29.2 × 22.2 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Museum Accession (x.447b)





The water-lily pattern seen here appears on several examples of Associated Artists' famous shadow silks (cat. nos. 79–81). To make these silks a special warp-printing technique was employed: the warp (consisting of the vertical threads) was preprinted with the pattern before being woven, and when the weaving occurred, the designs naturally fell slightly out of alignment. The use of a twill weave with its diagonal lines further blurred the printed pattern. These effects, suggesting reflections in water, were heightened by iridescence resulting from the use of contrasting colors of silk for the warp and the weft. A description of a shadow silk in the *Art Amateur* shows that the fabrics elicited a strong response:

In what are termed "shadow silks," the name refers to the nature and use of the design. The ground, for example, of one of these is a thick light-green twilled fabric, showing on the reverse side a red, which also makes itself faintly felt above. The design is from the water-lily, flower and leaf, so drawn as to produce the effect of a shadow in color, a shadow such as the electric light in a park throws on the grass beneath of leaf and spray above, a shadow stirred by the wind, giving a sense of life and motion, with gradations of color instead of light and shade. Nothing that the Associated Artists have done exceeds this in novelty and beauty, or better shows how far the decorative horizon may be extended.¹



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82 (detail)

The water-lily pattern consists of large, veined, disc-shaped leaves, lush full blossoms, and unfolding buds, all growing on vines intertwining with one another in winding curves. The perspective is unusual, since water lilies are typically depicted floating in water with their vines hidden from view below the surface (which is how they were often represented in nineteenth-century Japanese pattern books, where the designers of Associated Artists sometimes looked for inspiration). Perhaps Wheeler modeled the lilies in the design after “a species of gigantic white water lily” that grew in a pond near her home in Jamaica, Long Island. The flower, she wrote, “grew upon a stem the size of a woman’s finger, and held its head as proudly as a queen. The buds were from three to four inches in length, and the flowers



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often eight inches across.”² The use of a water-lily pattern in shadow silk was probably intended to suggest the movement of the flowers as they floated on the water’s surface.

The water-lily pattern was produced in shadow silks in at least three different colorways: pale golden yellow with a pink cast (cat. no. 79), pale green (cat. no. 80), and a true pale golden yellow (cat. no. 81). The pattern was also adapted by Associated Artists for use in conventional silk brocades. It appears in a large silk curtain woven in orange, gold, yellow, and pink (cat. no. 82), and in a smaller sample of the same silk fabric woven in cream, pink, purple, and orange (cat. no. 83).

Like Associated Artists’ other silks, the shadow silks were manufactured by Cheney Brothers. Of the many innovative silks that Wheeler designed in collaboration with the Cheneys, her shadow silks received the most praise and attention. Their changeable effects of light and color were frequently cited as proof of the progress of American silk manufacturing. They also caught the eye of prominent members of the artistic community. Wheeler wrote that William Merritt Chase “had a passion for the beauty of textiles, and when ‘The Associated Artists’ came to their days

of experiments in color he often dropped in to see what had been done that was new to him; and he was never tired of watching the variations of color in some specimen of shadow-silks when every change of position brought out the design of the textile in a new aspect.” Wheeler recalled Chase telling her, “You can do more with silk than we [painters] can with pigments, because it reflects color as well as holds it.” On the other side of the Atlantic, the British painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema was an equally enthusiastic admirer of shadow silks and showed the fabrics to other “color-loving” members of his artistic circle (see cat. no. 24).³

Wheeler’s training as a painter — which made her particularly attentive to matters of color, shading, and perspective — undoubtedly inspired the experiments at Associated Artists that ultimately led to the fabrication of shadow silks. Shadow silks may also have been inspired in part by Japanese art and the fascination it held for Americans during the last half of the nineteenth century. As one journal explained, “The shadow silks represent that play of light, shade and color seen in vines and trees in sunlight — an effect which, with past theories of decoration, would not have been held permissible. To render perspective decorative is a hint we have taken from the Japanese. The shadow silks render not only perspective, but convey through a shimmer of color the sense of tremulous motion.”⁴ The “past theories of decoration” referred to were probably those of the “South Kensington” school, which emphasized highly conventionalized patterns and eschewed illusionistic effects. Although initially impressed by this line of thought, Wheeler was critical of it after her earliest days as a designer. She was wary of excessive realism, but she admired fidelity to nature of the sort found in “the art of the Japanese, in which even the elements — a rain or snow storm, for example — may serve as a decorative motive.”⁵ This is the approach apparent in her shadow silks; when they are viewed from different positions and in different lights, the shapes of the flowers and leaves melt and their colors change as they would in sun and shadow and in reflections on water.

1. “Associated Artists” 1885, p. 40. Although there were many references to Wheeler’s shadow silks in the press, this is the only known contemporary description of how they appeared and were made, apart from a brief mention in the *Art Interchange* in 1884 of fabrics that “show vine sprays so printed on heavy Surah silks as to appear like vines and faint shadows of vines.” “Embroidery Notes” 1884.

2. Wheeler 1901a, pp. 103–4.

3. Wheeler 1918, pp. 246–47, 406–7.

4. “Notable Tapestries” 1893, p. 57.

5. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I).

84. *Clematis textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Warp-printed silk, 34¼ × 29¼ in. (87 × 74.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.17)

85. *Clematis textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Warp-printed silk, 11 × 9¾ in. (27.9 × 24.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Museum Accession (x.449b)

The fabrics seen here — a floral pattern in two different colorways, pale green and yellow — are additional examples of the shadow silks designed by Associated Artists in collaboration with Cheney Brothers. It is not certain what species of flower is represented, but contemporary mentions of designs by Associated Artists of “rayed” and “star-shaped” clematis with “long, slender petals” seem to correspond to this one.¹ The clematis pattern is a highly original design lacking any direct connection to preexisting decorative motifs from England, Japan, or elsewhere. In general, the extremely wide stylistic range of the textiles emerging from Associated Artists (although thematically centered around flowers) suggests that a number of fabric designers were involved simultaneously and that the approach to the design process was flexible and evolving. The design seen here is the most highly abstracted and proto-modernist of the firm’s known textile patterns.

The weaving method using preprinted warps, which brought about the blurred, watery effects of the firm’s shadow silks, was integral to the design of deliberately impressionistic patterns. Of the firm’s three known extant shadow-silk patterns — water lilies (cat. nos. 79–81), apple blossoms (cat. no. 86), and clematis — the clematis motif arguably presents the most perfect marriage of weaving technique and decorative design. The leaves and petals of the flowers appear to fade in and out of sight, as if momentarily obscured by moving sun and shadows. Their outlines are drawn indistinctly and incompletely, melting here and

there into the mottled ground. As light hits the lustrous surface of the fabric, which is woven in a twill weave with a diagonal rib, the image is further transformed. Like the paintings of Claude Monet, whose career was at its height during the 1880s, shadow silks are first and foremost about the visual perception of form and color and the effects of light on that perception.

In fact, it is quite likely that Associated Artists’ designs for shadow silks were directly inspired by French Impressionist paintings. In 1886 a huge exhibition of Impressionist art was brought to New York by the Paris dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in an arrangement with the American Art Association. Numbers of works by Monet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Morisot, and Sisley and were on view.² Critics reviewing the highly publicized show included Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer and Clarence Cook, both of whom Wheeler knew well. As an active member of the New York art world, she almost certainly attended this sensational and important exhibition. Its flickering, atmospheric images of nature conjured in paint on canvas perhaps spurred her to create similar effects with dye and silk.

Shadow silks were one more textile medium for the wider application of Wheeler’s insight, “It is not of stitches the artist embroider thinks, but of effects.”³ In this case, the artist-designer was less concerned with portraying a specific flower species than with capturing the effects of light on blossoms. It is difficult to identify the flower in the pattern because the faithful depiction of its characteristics was of minor concern. The shadow-silk weave was an ideal instrument for the creation of mass-produced textiles that rose to the level of Wheeler’s artistic vision. A viewer of the clematis pattern might easily forget that the design consists of mechanically produced, continuously repeating printed motifs. Indeed, it was undoubtedly a shadow-silk pattern that prompted an English textile maker to raise just that question. “Of one of [Wheeler’s] effects in silk,” the *Art Amateur* reported in 1888, “a celebrated English dyer, who has done most of William Morris’s work, has said that he could not conceive it possible that it should be produced by the means actually employed. It shows like a richly-colored pattern seen through a semi-transparent stuff, and the dyer in question was sure that it was the result of delicate and costly hand-painting, while it was done entirely in the





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ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

86. *Apple-blossom textile*

1883–1900

Manufactured by Cheney Brothers

Warp-printed silk, $12\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$ in. (31.1 × 37.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

Gift of Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 1928 (28.70.12)

This shadow silk with an apple-blossom pattern is unusual for Associated Artists in that stripes provide the organizing framework for the composition. Wheeler and her colleagues rarely arranged their floral motifs in such overtly regimented fashion, preferring to compose them into a loose, meandering network. In those looser patterns, primary objectives of the designer were to disguise the inherently repetitive nature of a mechanically printed pattern and to emphasize pictorial and painterly qualities. In contrast, the ornamental regularity of this apple-blossom pattern stands out. At the same time, however, the naturalistically colored blossoms are clustered somewhat irregularly within each stripe, and their indistinct forms give the impression that they might shift or fade from view at any

loom.”⁴ No greater compliment could have been paid than this one coming from a respected associate of William Morris, whom Wheeler recognized as having been “the great leader” of household decoration for much of the nineteenth century.⁵ Wheeler had set out to manufacture “domestic art” in accordance with the fundamental principles of “fine art” and, in the eyes some of her most esteemed and experienced peers, had succeeded.

1. See Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, VIII.), p. 93. Wheeler depicted different varieties of clematis, some with fewer petals and longer stems than those seen here. See “Clematis Design” 1894. The collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art contains a third sample of the clematis-patterned shadow silk (x.449a), printed in the pale green colorway.
2. On the 1886 Impressionist exhibition, see Gerdtz 1984, pp. 37–40.
3. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, II.), p. 71.
4. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, III.), p. 99.
5. Wheeler 1903b, p. 3.

moment. So too the variegated perimeters of the stripes expand and contract at intervals, counteracting the potentially static quality of the repetitive pattern and introducing instead a strong sense of movement. The impression of changeability is enhanced by the actual play of light on the surface of the fabric when it is moved.

Interestingly, the decorative device of alternating stripes and floral bands is highly reminiscent of eighteenth-century French block-printed cottons. They featured the same awning effect of wide floral-patterned stripes in two or more colors, often in undulating form. The striped apple-blossom pattern designed for Associated Artists may have consciously referred to historical French precedents that used similar weaving techniques. The technique used to make shadow silks derives from an eighteenth-century French method of manufacture also using preprinted warps (vertical yarns) and known as *chiné à la branche*. The watery, blurred patterns produced by the French technique evidently inspired Wheeler to create her own version, in collaboration with Cheney Brothers.



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The apple-blossom pattern is probably among Associated Artists' later textile designs. It likely was designed in the same years as the pomegranate pattern (cat. nos. 74, 75), which derives from fifteenth-century Italian figured velvets. By the early 1890s Wheeler seems to have shifted her focus to historicist designs of this type, including another French-style composition, of chrysanthemum leaves and flowers, constituting what she called a "Louis XV. design."¹ With the apple-blossom pattern Wheeler in a sense came full circle, returning to the historicism of the very first mass-produced textile design on which she collaborated with Tiffany, the 1880 thistle pattern for the yacht *Namouna* (cat. nos. 16, 17). Her growing predilection for western European styles of ornament (replacing the largely Japanese sources that inspired her earlier designs) paralleled the more general

rise of historical revival styles in the 1890s. Wheeler seems to have been searching for designs that possessed timeless artistic merit, regardless of whether they were old or new or from the fifteenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century. In 1903 she wrote in *Principles of Home Decoration* that "in spite of the goodness of much that is new, there is a subtle pleasure in turning over, and even in appropriating, the things that are old." As she aged, Wheeler perhaps looked back upon textiles of other eras with a sense of nostalgia, asserting that "we need only fall back upon the principles of absolute fitness, actual goodness, and real beauty."²

1. *Art Amateur* 28 (January 1893), p. 66.

2. Wheeler 1903b, pp. 179–80, 182.



LYDIA FIELD EMMET

87. *World's Columbian Exposition,
Chicago*

1893

Gouache, watercolor, oil, and pastel on paper,

16¼ × 29 ⅞ in. (41.3 × 74 cm)

The New-York Historical Society,

Gift of Mrs. James Kellum Smith, 1968 (1968.49)

This painting offers a view across the Great Basin at the World's Columbian Exposition, which was held in Chicago in 1893. The artist, Lydia Field Emmet (1866–1952), a designer and an accomplished painter especially known for her portraits, was one of the many female painters who contributed to the decoration of the Woman's Building at the Exposition (cat. no. 91).¹ This picture, for which the artist received one hundred dollars according to her account book, provided a lasting record of the once-in-a-lifetime event.² The fair was named “Columbian” to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus (and would have

opened in 1892 if it had been completed on time). It was conceived of by its organizers as a celebration of mankind's greatest modern achievements in technology, agriculture, and the arts. The fair coincided with America's worst depression since the financial collapse of 1837. Despite that fact, the United States, acting as host to emissaries from dozens of large and small nations around the world, took the opportunity to assert a new position of global leadership as it moved optimistically toward the next century. The Chicago Exposition was one of the largest that had ever been held, attracting some twenty-seven million visitors over a six-month period.

Known as the “White City,” the “Dream City,” and the “City Beautiful,” the Exposition was truly urban in scale. In this it contrasted with the “Centennial City” of the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia (see cat. no. 5), which was closer in feeling to a pleasure park. At the Chicago fair the pastoral virtues of the countryside were

eclipsed by the ideal of metropolitan expansion, which emerged as the new emblem of human and national progress. The densely built grounds suggested an idyllic planned metropolis.³ Buildings were organized around a central court, at the head of which towered Richard Morris Hunt's Administration Building; pavilions that had for themes the basic elements of America's economy — machinery, manufacturing, railroads, agriculture, mining, electricity — clustered around it. Many of the buildings were designed in the palatial Neoclassical Beaux Arts style (which also drew to some extent on Renaissance and Baroque architecture) and on the outside presented an aspect of unity and serenity that masked the energy and diversity of the exhibits within.

The Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building was the largest, spreading like a gigantic department store over forty-four acres. Inside, illuminated by modern electric light, fairgoers could view mock interiors filled with furnishings in up-to-date styles as well as showcases containing silver, ceramics, glassware, textiles, and the latest comforts of domestic life. Many of the goods displayed carried price tags, allowing visitors, in this age of growing consumerism and materialism, to comparison shop. A number of the state pavilions were built in the Colonial Revival style, the purpose being to educate visitors about America's heritage. Impressive exhibits from a host of western European nations and other industrialized countries further broadened the array. Supplementing the miles of displays of material culture were national and international congresses on a wide range of social topics including education, labor, women, and religion; 139 conferences were held during the course of the fair. There were also theatrical, musical, and athletic events. The famous mile-long strip of land known as the Midway Plaisance was the setting for displays sponsored by the Exposition's Department of Ethnology. Peoples of non-Western countries exhibited their native costumes, customs, cuisine, and artifacts, which were viewed as exotic racial curiosities.

The fairgrounds were divided into specialized areas connected by grand canals, bridges, and boulevards, punctuated by a profusion of fountains, lakes, statuary, monuments, colonnades, plazas, and waving flags. In an article for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* entitled "A Dream City," Wheeler recorded her impressions of "a city of palaces set in spaces of emerald, reflected in shining lengths of water which stretch in undulating lines under flat arches of marble bridges, and along banks planted with consummate skill."⁴ Emmet's painting shows the Great Basin and at the

left the Agricultural Building designed by McKim, Mead & White, located on the South Canal. In the distance at the end of the canal is the Obelisk, a reproduction of the monument, called Cleopatra's Needle, that was presented by the khedive of Egypt to the United States and erected in Central Park in 1881.⁵ In the right foreground appears the Columbian Fountain by Frederick MacMonnies, in which the sculpted allegorical figure of Columbia rides on a ship rowed by the Arts and Sciences and steered by Father Time.⁶

Of the woman organizers of the World's Columbian Exposition, Wheeler was among the most important. As director of the New York State Bureau of Applied Arts she was in charge of organizing the state's display of decorative arts (see pp. 65, 67–68) and was responsible for designing the interior of the Library sponsored by New York State and housed in the Woman's Building (cat. no. 92). In the additional capacity of color director of the Woman's Building she was in charge of the interior decoration of its major public spaces and, among other things, commissioned murals from Emmet and other female artists for the Hall of Honor (cat. nos. 88–91). It was perhaps the most serious undertaking of Wheeler's career, and at the time she seemed heady with pride:

Unlike any city which ever existed in substance, this one has been built all at once, by one impulse, at one period, at one stage of knowledge and arts. . . .

The whole thing seems to have sprung into being fully conceived and perfectly planned without progressive development or widening of scope. . . .

One falls into a mood almost of self-gratulation that the world has been vouchsafed one perfect vision which will never suffer from decay, but remain like a translated city, all its premeditated and accidental beauty preserved in the translucent amber of thought and memory.⁷

Twenty-five years later, when Wheeler looked back on the Columbian Exposition in her autobiography, she no longer dwelt on its external manifestations of progress. In the contemplative perspective of old age, it was the gathering of great men and women to address together the spiritual and intellectual aspects of progress that remained in her thought and memory:

The Chicago Exposition was a curious drama of the activities of the world. It might have been one merely of the commercial activities, but it was far more than that. The congresses brought together into one focus the religious beliefs and practices of

every country, and the most advanced knowledge in all the various fields of science, morality, and religion was in fact a focusing of the immaterial forces of progress. The successful bringing together of human bodies was as nothing in comparison with the marshaling of thought forces, and the main power of material profit which had made the whole great drama possible sank into insignificance in sight of what it had evoked.⁸

Perhaps Wheeler had come to terms with the impermanence of her achievement at the Exposition. Just as many of the “white palaces” — wood and iron frames sheathed in plaster — were dismantled after the fair closed on October 29, 1893, so too were the interiors and displays that she had so painstakingly assembled.⁹

1. Lydia Emmet began her formal art education in 1884, when she studied for six months at the Académie Julian in Paris, along with her sister, Rosina Emmet, and Dora Wheeler. After her return to New York she appears to have worked for Associated Artists on a freelance basis. In 1888 she enrolled in courses at the Art Students League, where the

instructor who influenced her most was William Merritt Chase. In addition to painting portraits, she worked as a stained-glass designer for Tiffany Glass Company and as an illustrator of books and magazines to supplement her income. For the 1893 Exposition, in addition to her murals for the Woman’s Building, she was commissioned to design the New York State seal. On Emmet, see Hoppin 1982; Tappert 1993.

2. Account Book of Lydia Field Emmet, 1887–1945, entry for 1894, Emmet Family Papers, reel 4765, frame 1006.

3. However, one exception to this prevailing urban aesthetic was Frederick Law Olmsted’s Wooden Island, a meticulously landscaped park that was the setting for a tea house and other exhibits from Japan.

4. Wheeler 1893b, p. 833.

5. See D’Alton 1993.

6. For more on the 1893 Exposition, see Burg 1976; Badger 1979; Appelbaum 1980.

7. Wheeler 1893b, pp. 833, 834.

8. Wheeler 1918, p. 357.

9. Shortly after the fair’s official closing, the buildings still standing became the haunt of vagrants and unemployed workers suffering in the economic crisis of 1893–94. Lighting fires for warmth and to cook on during one of the coldest winters on record, the squatters slowly destroyed some of the buildings and their interiors. Later a paralyzing strike by workers of the American Railway Union protesting a cut in wages led to violence between federal troops and strikers, during which, on July 5, 1894, arsonists torched what was left of the Great White City. Only a few structures survived the fire, including the Fine Arts Palace, which became Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry.

CHARLES DUDLEY ARNOLD

88. *West from the Café de la Marine, Looking toward the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition*

1893

Platinum print, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (25.7 × 33.7 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives

MADELEINE LEMAIRE

89. *Frontispiece of “Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” edited by Maud Howe Elliott*

1893

Chromolithograph, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (23.5 × 16.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

The planning of the World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 was directed by the all-male Exposition Commission. The directorship of women’s participation was segregated; an official act of Congress created a “Board of Lady Managers,” which, among other things, was authorized to commission a building housing women’s exhibits. This board took the official position that in 1893 women’s achievements beyond the domestic arena were not yet equal to those of men because of the inequality of their opportunity throughout history, as was expounded in a statement by its president, Bertha Honoré Palmer: “There is entire willingness to admit the superiority of men’s achievements along the lines which have lain for centuries almost wholly in their hands, and who have been carefully trained to meet the responsibilities devolving upon them. It was in consequence of the vivid realization



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of this that the Board has with ceaseless vigilance endeavored to secure for women the opportunity to show what they also could do, if given the opening.”¹

Pursuing this line of thought, the Board of Lady Managers, working with its numerous subsidiary boards and committees, created the Woman’s Building. This structure quickly became one of the most admired exhibits at the fair. (The 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia had featured a woman’s building as well, but its exhibits had been comparatively meager and inartistic, and it had failed to generate anything close to the same level of attention.) There was some criticism that having a Woman’s Building at Chicago would promote a separatist vision of the progress of women and make it difficult for women’s achievements to be judged without regard to their sex; most, however, saw the development as a triumph for

the female sex.² The building was planned, designed, and decorated entirely by women. It was filled with exhibits showcasing women’s accomplishments in a great number of industries, trades, professions, sciences, and arts, although many were still in the realm of textiles and domestic objects, which traditionally were women’s work. (For a discussion of the role of women at the fair, see pages 63–65.)

At 388 by 199 feet, the Woman’s Building was one of the smaller buildings in the Exposition, although it cost nearly \$150,000, a sizable sum, to build. It was picturesquely situated on the Lagoon (plied by small launches and gondolas) northwest of the main Exposition buildings, toward the outskirts of the fair (cat. no. 88). Out of thirteen applicants, twenty-three-year-old Sophia G. Hayden (1868–1953) of Boston, one of America’s first female architects, had won the design competition for the Woman’s Building, which



Fig. 81. *Interior, Woman's Building, Central Atrium; World's Columbian Exposition; Chicago, ca. 1893.* Chicago Historical Society

was built in a Neo-Italian Renaissance style according to her plan. The sculpture that filled the pediment over the main entrance and the marble statues above the balustraded cornice representing women's professions were made by Alice L. Rideout of San Francisco. Inside, the central Hall of Honor (fig. 81) extended most of the length of the building. It was flanked on all four sides by two stories of enfilades of outer rooms that contained a model hospital, a model kindergarten, a model kitchen, a "corn palace," an inventions room, a records room, two sales rooms, an assembly hall, three refreshment rooms, four reception rooms, a library commissioned by the New York Board of Women Managers (cat. no. 92), offices for women's committees and the national Board of Lady Managers, and several rest rooms. There were also a number of galleries housing special exhibits devoted to women's work in specific charitable, educational, and reform organizations as well as in various American states and in foreign countries. The more than twenty participating nations included Great Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, Japan, India, and Mexico.

The Board of Lady Managers appointed Wheeler to the post of "Color Director" of the Woman's Building. Her principal responsibility was the interior decoration of the major public spaces of the building, which involved selecting the color schemes, the stenciled friezes, the murals, and the furnishings, among other things. The most important space to be decorated was the two-story, seventy-five-foot-high Hall of Honor meant for the display of paintings and sculptures by leading woman artists (fig. 81). For the room's color scheme Wheeler selected chaste, elegant tones of gold and ivory; their brilliance was enhanced by large amounts of natural light pouring in from the arched glass ceiling above. Six specially commissioned murals, the main attraction of the hall, illustrated the progress of women over the centuries (see cat. nos. 90–91); they hung in the high tympana at either end of the hall and also at the second-floor level, where an open arcade or gallery overlooked the main floor. Above the gallery ran a narrow stenciled cornice, surmounted by a row of rectangular panels inscribed with the names of famous women in history. The cove just below the ceiling carried a broad frieze stenciled in gold

with scrolling acanthus vines designed by Wheeler (it had been stenciled on long rolls of canvas so that it could be salvaged after the Exposition). The north and south ends of the hall each bore a large panel, one inscribed “President, Bertha Palmer 1893,” the other “Sophia G. Hayden 1893.”

The Woman’s Building itself was the subject of numerous publications, among them *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, edited by Maud Howe Elliott, whose mother was the author and women’s suffrage leader Julia Ward Howe. For both Elliott and Wheeler, the Woman’s Building powerfully symbolized the professional achievements of modern women. To underscore this notion, the frontispiece of Elliott’s book shows an allegorical figure epitomizing the new, modern woman (cat. no. 89). It is the work of Madeleine Lemaire (1845–1928), a French painter of flowers, portraits, and genre scenes who was especially known for



her flower paintings. Lemaire won a number of awards and was decorated by the French Legion of Honor in 1906.

Lemaire’s modern woman, at work and no longer confined to her home, stands in front of her latest achievement, the Woman’s Building. She appears intelligent, confident, and accomplished, planting her foot firmly on a stack of books that symbolize the knowledge and skill she has acquired through the ages. Other symbols of achievement surrounding her include architectural plans and a compass, perhaps alluding to her debut in the architectural profession. The new woman’s inroads into the then still traditionally male vocations of literature, sculpture, and painting are signaled by an inkwell and quill pen, a clay model, and the palette and brush she holds. They communicate the fact that the woman of the late nineteenth century was no longer engaged in the fine arts solely at the amateur level. Traditional feminine arts still figure as a large part of her identity, however: china painting is represented by a decorated vase, the textile arts by a spinning wheel and an embroidery frame. In this composite portrait, modern woman retains her femininity: she is attractive, well-dressed, and poised.³

This image of the ideal modern woman as a blend of progressive creativity and traditional femininity is paralleled by Wheeler’s characterization of the Woman’s Building, in her 1893 article “A Dream City,” as “the most peaceably human of all the buildings . . . It is like a man’s ideal of woman — delicate, dignified, pure, and fair to look upon. It has made no bid for popular admiration, and seems an effort only to reach a permitted and sanctioned ideal.” To Wheeler, this architectural vehicle “expresses the ‘just enough’ and ‘not too much’ of woman’s aspirations in this aspiring century.”⁴ In this it was remarkably emblematic of Wheeler’s own proto-feminist approach to pushing the sphere of women’s work beyond the home. Wheeler and her colleagues planning the Woman’s Building recognized that although in their era the primary role of women was within the home, it was possible nevertheless to begin laying the groundwork for a future that would offer their sex a far greater number of options.⁵

1. Palmer 1893a, p. 440. See also Palmer 1891.

2. An in-depth discussion of the issues confronting female artists wishing to exhibit at the fair can be found in Swinth 1995, pp. 218–24.

3. Lemaire’s portrayal of Painting is discussed in Garfinkle 1996, pp. 268–97.

4. Wheeler 1893b, pp. 836, 838.

5. Although the creators of the Woman’s Building had hoped that after the fair closed it would be preserved as a permanent exhibit hall for women’s work, it was destroyed in the fire of July 5, 1894; see cat. no. 87, n. 9.



90

ROSINA EMMET SHERWOOD

90. *The Republic's Welcome to Her Daughters*

1893

Mural in the Hall of Honor, Woman's Building
 Oil on canvas, 12 × 11 ft. (365.8 × 335.3 cm)
 Reproduced in Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*

LYDIA FIELD EMMET

91. *Art, Science, and Literature*

1893

Mural in the Hall of Honor, Woman's Building
 Oil on canvas, 12 × 11 ft. (365.8 × 335.3 cm)
 Reproduced in Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*



91

The most ambitious space in the Woman's Building at the 1893 Exposition was the Hall of Honor, the decoration of which was planned and supervised by Wheeler (see cat. nos. 88, 89). In addition to the works of female artists from around the world exhibited there, this grand double-height space contained six specially commissioned murals whose theme was the progress of women. These hung at the second-story level and were illuminated by natural light coming through the glass ceiling above. The two largest occupied the tympana at the north and south ends of the hall, beneath the arches formed by the coved ceiling. These enormous paintings, each 14 feet high and 58 feet long, presented archetypes: *Primitive*

Woman, by Mary MacMonnies, and *Modern Woman*, by Mary Cassatt. The other, substantially smaller murals, each 12 by 11 feet, portrayed women's roles in history and in the arts and sciences and were situated on the side walls between arches of the arcade. On the west wall hung *Arcadia* by Amanda Brewster Sewell and *Puritan Settlers* (also called *The Women of Plymouth*) by Lucia Fairchild; on the east wall were *The Republic's Welcome to Her Daughters* by Rosina Emmet Sherwood and *Art, Science, and Literature* by her sister Lydia Field Emmet (1866–1952).¹

While the painters of the two tympanum murals had contracts issued by the World's Columbian Commission and were paid for their work, the four side murals were done

without promise of pay, partly because funds were limited and the artists were less well known.² The MacMonnies and Cassatt mural commissions had been secured by Sara Tyson Hallowell, who was art consultant to the president of the Board of Lady Managers in charge of the Woman's Building, Bertha Honoré Palmer.³ The Sherwood, Emmet, Sewell, and Fairchild murals had been commissioned on the recommendation of Wheeler, whose responsibilities as color director extended to advising on the choice of muralists. A photograph taken in 1893 shows the Sewell and Fairchild murals in situ, hanging at the second-story level in the Hall of Honor (fig. 81).

In style and in content the Sherwood and Emmet murals were clearly conceived as companion pieces. They took nearly a year to complete. Perhaps to harmonize with the hall's classical interior architecture, both murals present their subjects in an enclosed setting against a backdrop of columns and drapery. Sherwood's mural, *The Republic's Welcome to Her Daughters* (cat. no. 90), depicts five women who represent the Republic, Motherhood, Music, Sculpture, and Literature. The Republic wears a draped garment resembling ancient classical garb; the others are all in modern dress. Seated in the left foreground, Music strums her guitar. To the right, Motherhood sits with her child, perhaps symbolizing the next generation, who holds the mother's laurel wreath. Large palm leaves at the feet of mother and child may represent victory or self-sacrifice. Thus, the traditional and indispensable role of Motherhood is accorded recognition and respect. In the center of the painting, the Republic stands in profile and holds three laurel wreaths to bestow upon Music, Literature, and Sculpture, sanctioning these more recent, artistic professions for women. Her stance recalls that of another *Republic*, Daniel Chester French's sixty-five-foot gilded statue (1893) located in the Basin also at the Exposition, and that of the Statue of Liberty (1886) sculpted by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi. On the stairs at the left stand Literature, holding a rolled scroll, and, farthest left, Sculpture, dressed in an apron and holding a small plaster model. An 1893 watercolor of Sherwood's mural by the New York painter-illustrator Charles Mente, reproduced in a publication about the fair,⁴ shows (if it is accurate) that Music was dressed in rose, Motherhood in green, her child in yellow, the Republic in white with a red cap, Literature in silver, and Sculpture in rust and ivory. The leafy borders were painted in shades of gold. These clear, bright colors helped make the figures in the murals visible from below.

Emmet's mural, *Art, Science, and Literature*, presents a studio-like gathering of five women in modern dress whose identities are, clockwise from the top left, Music, Sculpture, Painting, Art Needlework, and Knowledge. Music wears an evening gown and plays a violin. A copy of the Hellenistic sculpture *Nike of Samothrace* stands on a pedestal beside her. Sculpture, wearing work clothes and holding a lump of clay in her hand, sculpts a statuette using the figure of Music as her model. Seated on an embroidered stool in the right foreground is Painting, at work on a canvas propped on an easel. She too appears to be taking Music for her subject. In the middle foreground Art Needlework, seated on the floor, reaches for a skein of thread while holding a needle to the canvas she is embroidering. Perhaps she is copying the potted lily before her, a traditional symbol of purity and a common motif in fabrics by Wheeler (cat. nos. 7, 8, 63, 67). This was an unusual subject for an allegorical figure; Emmet may have been honoring the progressive design work of Associated Artists and the importance of organizations like the Society of Decorative Art and the New York Exchange for Woman's Work in providing opportunities for female needleworkers to support themselves. In the left foreground, dressed in the gown and mortarboard of a university graduate, sits Knowledge, resting her chin on her hand in the classic pose signifying thought. As the mural's title makes clear, she represents both Science and Literature. Of all the professions portrayed, science was the only one recently opened to women. Nothing is known of the original color scheme, but it probably was similar to that of the Sherwood mural.

While the MacMonnies, Sewell, and Fairchild murals portrayed the past, when women toiled in the fields and at home to benefit future generations, the Sherwood, Emmet, and Cassatt murals represented the contemporary woman venturing into new realms. Women's artistic efforts, once confined to the home as polite accomplishments, had risen to the level of professional endeavors in the public sphere. The commissioning of these murals offered a rare opportunity for female painters to demonstrate their talents with allegorical figure painting in the traditionally male Beaux Arts academic tradition. Except for Cassatt's mural, which was criticized for its harsh palette and disjointed composition, each received an Exposition medal.⁵

When the fair was over, all six murals were salvaged. They had been painted on canvas so that they could easily be removed and reused. The Sherwood and Emmet murals were purchased for five hundred dollars each by the Board

of Lady Managers; they were intended for a women's museum of art and industry, supported by women's organizations throughout the country, that was to be constructed in Chicago. The museum was never built, however, and the fate of works acquired for it from the Woman's Building is unknown.⁶

1. On all these murals, see Garfinkle 1996, pp. 132–82, 193–214.

2. A special appropriation of \$6,000 was paid for the Cassatt and MacMonnies murals. Dora Wheeler Keith had originally agreed to

paint one of the side murals but on learning that she would not be compensated declined the commission. She was also already committed to paint the ceiling of the Library (see cat. no. 92). After the fair Sherwood and Emmet managed to negotiate the sum of \$500 each, which covered their expenses for the murals. See Garfinkle 1996, pp. 132–34, 184–89, 199, 313–14.

3. Hollowell acted as Palmer's agent in France, negotiating with MacMonnies and Cassatt. See also pp. 64–65 in this catalogue and Garfinkle 1996, pp. 522–25, 542–45.

4. Bancroft 1893.

5. Cassatt's mural was criticized for its color scheme of dark green and blue and for its "erratic" abrupt tripartite composition of three noncontinuous landscapes. See "Women's Work in the Fine Arts" 1893.

6. See Garfinkle 1996, pp. 308–18.

CANDACE WHEELER

92. *Bench from the Library of the Woman's Building*

1893

Manufacturer unknown

Oak and teakwood, modern leather upholstery,

40 × 64 × 26 in. (101.6 × 162.6 × 66 cm)

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Reynal

At one stage in the planning of the Woman's Building at the 1893 Exposition in Chicago, the sum of five thousand dollars was appropriated to the New York State Board of Women Managers to use for the interior decorating and furnishing of a library that would represent the intellectual achievements of womankind. The women managers appointed Wheeler to oversee the decoration of the Library, which was located in a large room on the second floor (fig. 83). For its decor Wheeler chose the Italian Renaissance style, harking back to one of the great eras in the history of art to create a setting of time-tested refinement in which to showcase the accomplishments of the "fairer sex." As for the color scheme, Wheeler wrote, "After seeing the nobility of the room's proportions, and the one great window which seemed to take in all the blue of the sky and the expanse of water which lay under it, I felt that it would be an insult to this dominant color to introduce anything in this sheltered space which would be at war with it; consequently I chose modulations of blue and green for the color treatment."¹ The walls were painted blue-green;

accents of yellow, red, brown, pink, and gold appeared in the room's furnishings and painted decorations.

At each of the two entrances to the Library hung a pair of portieres of blue woven silk with a pattern of large, indented oak leaves and blossoms, one of the custom-made fabrics designed by Associated Artists (see cat. nos. 74, 75).² Wheeler lined the lower portion of the walls with dark oak bookcases, in which were placed more than seven thousand volumes, published between 1587 and 1893, by woman authors of more than twenty-five different nationalities. The carved and inlaid arcaded oak wainscoting above the bookcases reportedly dated from the sixteenth century and came from a monastery in France.³ The focal point of the room was a twelve-foot-high oak mantelpiece on the east wall, said to be an Italian Renaissance piece donated to the Library by Duveen Brothers, the famous New York-based antiquarians.⁴ A journalist described its "richly wrought pillars, fluted, banded and garlanded; its corbels, with grinning masks; its over-mantel, with curious little figures bearing shields, and its panels, with heads in medallions surrounded by graceful arabesques."⁵ Inside the fireplace, instead of a metal screen, was a panel of the oak-leaf fabric used for the portieres (fig. 79). The three large paned and leaded windows on the wall opposite were adorned



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with stained-glass seals, the seal of the State of New York alternating with that of the United States.

The Library's furnishings were sparse. An elaborately carved and turned suite of four chairs and at least one reading table in "old Italian" or Renaissance style, of unknown origin and manufacture, was mixed with a more austere suite of furniture designed by Wheeler in the Arts and Crafts style, consisting of six armchairs and a pair of benches (see above). These are said to have been manufactured by local Chicago furniture firms with the intention of selling the pieces after the fair.⁶ The bench incorporated what may have been stock pieces of carved teakwood from Lockwood de Forest's Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company in India (see cat. nos. 12, 13). Wheeler's suite was originally upholstered in dark green "wash" leather embossed in the upper right-hand corner with "enameled" medallions giving the name and date of the Exposition.⁷ (The bench

seen here has been reupholstered in a modern leather covering.) There were numerous small furnishings and objects, including a freestanding vitrine containing finely bound books, a pair of rotating stands for photographs and newspapers, wooden pedestals supporting marble busts of famous women sculpted by female artists, four chandeliers, a red and blue Turkish carpet, assorted vases filled with flowers, framed portraits and autographs of woman authors and original illustrations from books and magazines by woman illustrators, a pair of hammered brass bosses "artistically colored by a new process" in "rich tones of yellow, brown and green" that hung at either side of the mantelpiece, and some potted palms and ferns.⁸

Painted and plaster-molded decorations adorned the walls and ceiling. Among them were two pairs of 5-by-9-foot wall panels each painted with "figures representing the occupations of women," which flanked the two entrances at the north

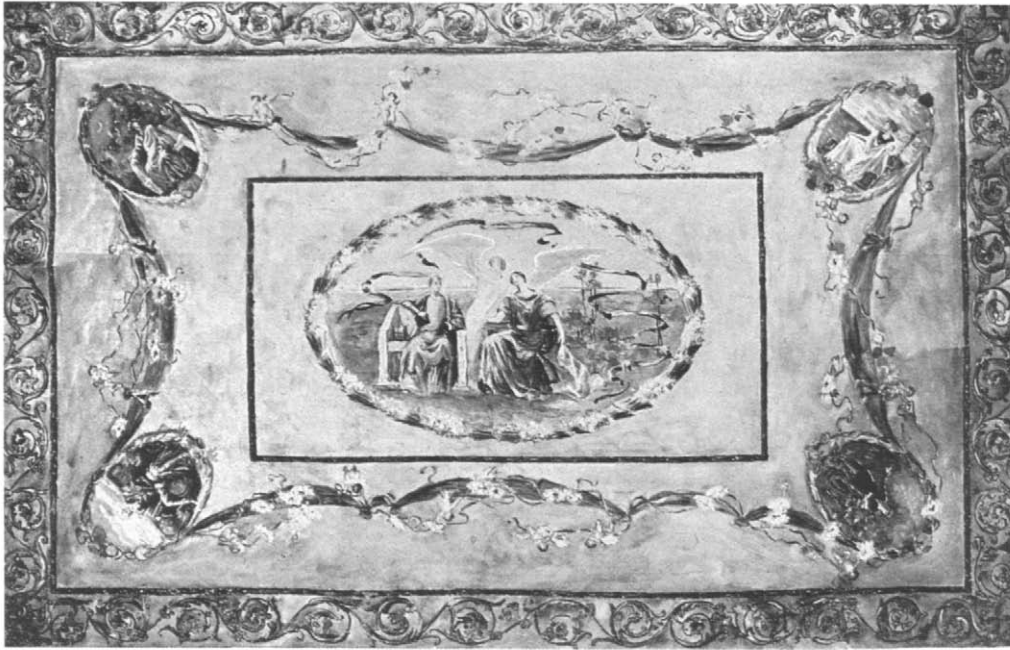


Fig. 82. *Ceiling of Library.* Dora Wheeler Keith. *United States*, 1893. From Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (1893), p. 34. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

and south of the room.⁹ These are not visible, however, in known photographs of the Library, which show the east wall and the two entrances. Other decorations included plaster-molded wall and ceiling friezes designed by Wheeler and a painted ceiling by her daughter, Dora Wheeler Keith. A number of Dora's needlewoven tapestries were included in the New York State applied arts display organized by her mother.

Wheeler explained the evolution of her design:

After my scheme for walls and furniture was completed there remained two great spaces to consider—first the ceiling, an expanse of white which was overpowering in emptiness, and then a height of wall which needed to be lessened by plaster decoration of some sort to bring it within picture reach of the range of carved bookcases which surrounded the entire room. This was sufficiently easy to accomplish, as, given the design, it could be cast and molded in Chicago.¹⁰

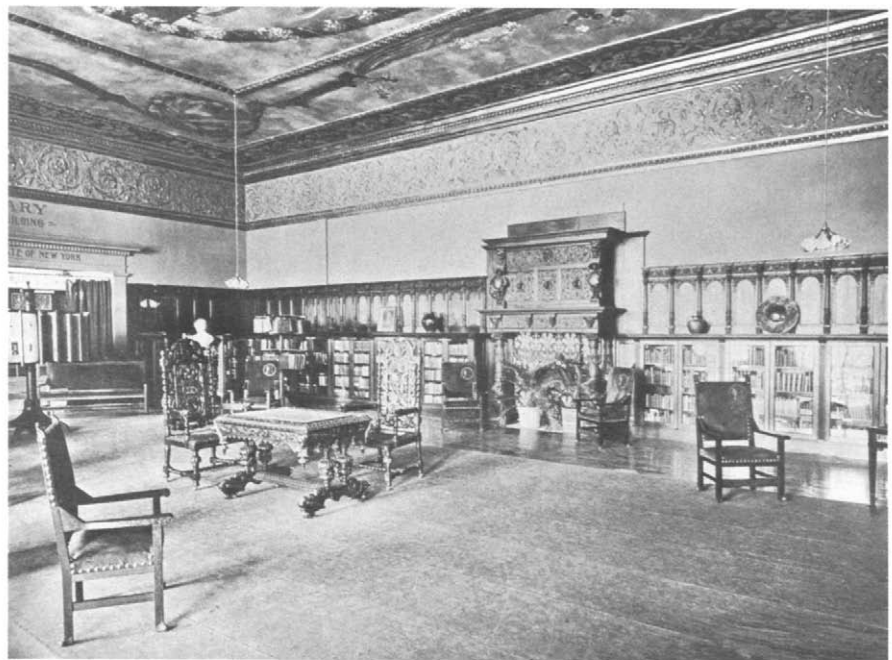


Fig. 83. *New York Room—Woman's Building*, 1893. From James W. Shepp and Daniel B. Shepp, *Shepp's World's Fair Photographed*, 1893, p. 285. Collection of Amelia Peck

Wheeler's plaster-molded wall frieze, just below the ceiling cornice, featured a Neoclassical vine scroll pattern terminating in small, grotesque figures of fauns and cupids, painted green and gilded, and edged at top and bottom by egg-and-dart moldings. A ceiling frieze of the same design formed an outer frame for Dora's decoration. Both friezes were very similar to the one Wheeler designed for the adjoining Hall of Honor (fig. 81). Wheeler described them as "of original design, adapted from the Italian."¹¹

Wheeler had "decided that a painted ceiling was required for the overhead space." It could be painted in New York and mounted by the workmen. Of course it should be by a woman, and "Mrs. Keith undertook to carry this through, with the help of some of her fellow-painters who had worked with her in her study under Mr. Chase and afterward in Paris."¹² These may have been Rosina Emmet Sherwood and Lydia Field Emmet, who painted murals for the Hall of Honor (cat. nos. 90, 91).

Dora's ceiling decoration (fig. 82), painted on a huge piece of canvas and entitled *Science, Imagination, Literature*, was likened to decoration in "some old Venetian palace in richness of color and style of composition."¹³ It measured nearly 37 by 57 feet. The rectangular outermost field contained four corner medallions linked by swagged festoons of twining draperies and flowers, populated by winged cupids. In each of the medallions was an allegorical figure representing one of the principal literary arts: History, a bearded old man propping his leg on a globe; Fiction (or Romance), crowned by a wreath and silhouetted against a moonlit sky; Drama, a woman holding a thyrsus; and Poetry, a young man reciting with a book. (Photographs of the Library, in which the actual ceiling can only partially be seen, show different details in the festoons and medallions, suggesting that the image published and illustrated here was a working sketch.)

The decoration's inner image was of three allegorical figures in a landscape at sunrise. A swirling banner above is inscribed "SCIENCE, IMAGINATION, LITERATURE," and the entire scene is enclosed by an oval wreath of white lilies. At the center the winged figure of Imagination raises her right arm and gazes toward the heavens. On the left the enthroned male figure of Science holds a book and an unidentifiable scientific instrument; unlike Emmet's mural *Art, Science, and Literature* hanging in the Hall of Honor (cat. no. 91), Dora's painting assigns Science to the realm of men. A female figure of Literature sits at the right trailing an unfurled scroll. Because of the library setting, the allegorical

figures relate more specifically to the literary arts than to the theme of modern woman seen in the murals in the Hall of Honor. The Library decoration was the only one in the building to represent men and women in nearly equal numbers, perhaps in a deliberate bid for equal representation in the arts.

The color scheme of Dora's ceiling mural is unknown. It was described by Maud Howe Elliott as "cool, refreshing, and harmonious," and was praised elsewhere as well: the *Critic* opined, "the chief merit of the ceiling lies in its color, which is singularly beautiful in its delicate gradations." A minor criticism was that "she has painted it as for a wall without *plafondement* [perspectival techniques of ceiling painting], and it is consequently difficult to see it rightly."¹⁴ But in general the reception was enthusiastic, as exemplified by the *New York Times's* pronouncement: "There was a time when no woman would ever have dreamed of undertaking a piece of elaborate mural painting. Yet a New-York woman — Mrs. Dora Wheeler Keith — has accomplished results in this field which must astonish even the most enthusiastic believer in woman's capabilities. . . . It is an extraordinary achievement in its line."¹⁵ Dora received an Exposition medal for her painting, and after the fair it was reportedly purchased by the New York State commissioner and installed in the State Capitol Building in Albany, in either the third-floor corridor or the library.¹⁶ This has not been confirmed, however, and today the work's whereabouts are unknown.

The Library was one of the most admired rooms in the Woman's Building. "The entire room in every detail breathes the spirit of the highest development of decorative art," wrote the *New York Times*, and the *Art Amateur* similarly remarked, "The whole effect of the room is reposeful, quiet and cheerful, . . . and must be reckoned among the very best bits of interior decoration in the Fair."¹⁷ Looking back on her work designing the Library, Wheeler concluded, "Altogether I was satisfied. I felt that the women of all America would not be sorry to be women in the face of all that women had done besides living and fulfilling their recognized duties."¹⁸

1. Wheeler 1918, p. 345.

2. The blue color of the portieres is noted in Weimann 1981, p. 372, but without any source reference.

3. L. Monroe 1893, p. 12; "To Care for New-York Women" 1893.

4. Weimann 1981, p. 371.

5. "Interiors at the World's Fair" 1893.

6. Weimann 1981, p. 357; Weimann cites no source for this information.

7. "New-York Women at the Fair" 1893; "Women' Work in the Fine Arts" 1893.
8. "Interiors at the World's Fair" 1893. See also "Women's Work in the Fine Arts" 1893.
9. White and Igleheart 1893, p. 449. See also *World's Columbian Exposition* 1893, p. 163.
10. Wheeler 1918, p. 345.
11. Letter, Candace Wheeler to Bertha Honoré Palmer, October 22, 1893, cited in Garfinkle 1996, pp. 262, 399, n. 265.
12. Wheeler 1918, pp. 345–46. Dora subsequently received other commissions for decorative painting; see King 1895, p. 124.
13. Ives 1894, p. 170. See also "World's Fair Letter" 1893, pp. 268–69.
14. Elliott 1893b, p. 40; L. Monroe 1893, p. 12.
15. "New-York Women at the Fair" 1893.
16. "Small Talk" 1895; "Mrs. Boudinot Keith, 83, Portrait Artist, Is Dead," unidentified newspaper clipping, Collection of Georgia Nash; "Portrait and Decorative Panels by Dora Wheeler Keith," unidentified, ca. 1893, newspaper clipping, Collection of Georgia Nash. Dora also exhibited a much-noted painting, *Daphne's Nymphs*, which hung with the paintings exhibition in the Hall of Honor of the Woman's Building. It depicted five wood nymphs watching Daphne's transformation into a laurel tree. *American Woman* described it as having "grown as familiarly famous as one of [Frederic S.] Church's [*sic*] delicate visions." "Dora Wheeler Keith" 1893.
17. "New-York Women at the Fair" 1893; "Women's Work in the Fine Arts" 1893.
18. Wheeler 1918, p. 346.

ANNA G. LYMAN
FOR ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

93. *Rose-garland embroidery*

1890–1900

Silk and metallic ground fabric embroidered with silk and metallic-wrapped cotton threads, 94 × 48½ in. (238.8 × 123.2 cm)

Museum of the City of New York,
Gift of Mrs. George (Lucy Wheeler) Riggs, 1960
(60.139.1)

This unfinished panel of embroidered silk may have been intended as a hanging of some sort such as a curtain, portiere, or wall panel.¹ The ground is a ribbed silk-metallic fabric of the kind discussed in cat. no. 30. In composition and in details the panel closely resembles a curtain with azaleas embroidered by Anna G. Lyman (dates unknown) that was prominently displayed in the textile exhibit of Wheeler's Associated Artists in the Woman's Building at the 1893 Exposition (figs. 41, 84).² The designs of both embroideries are very reminiscent of French and English rococo carved wood paneling and looking-glass frames of the mid-eighteenth century, which employ intricate vegetal scrolls and exuberant S- and C-shaped curves. The delicate color scheme of this panel, consisting of peach, gold, white, pink, and green, is also characteristically rococo. As far as one can tell from the 1893 photograph, the Lyman curtain was also done in predominantly light tones. In both compositions the elaborately rendered motifs are set against an

empty expanse, giving them room to breathe. There seems little doubt that both embroideries were designed by Lyman.

It has been suggested that the unfinished panel was intended as part of a set of bedroom embroideries known to have been made in 1883 by Associated Artists for the famous London actress Lillie Langtry. However, the Langtry embroideries are described as a set of bed curtains with garlands of roses, a coverlet strewn with loose petals, and a toilet cover edged with scattered roses. These naturalistic arrangements would have differed considerably from the formal design of the panel attributed to Lyman. Moreover, in her book on embroidery Wheeler indicates that she herself originated for Langtry the free-flowing designs of "full-blown, sunset-colored roses" and scattered petals, which were then executed by one of her needleworkers.³

As for Lyman, little is known of her or her work. She evidently trained at the Cooper Union Womans's Art School of New York; her name is listed in its 1877 annual report as the recipient of an "Oil Painting Certificate of the First Grade."⁴ She may have been recruited by Wheeler soon after to work as an embroiderer at Tiffany & Wheeler and then stayed on as a member of the embroidery departments of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, and of Associated Artists. (It is known that Wheeler recruited students from the women's school at Cooper Union.)⁵ In



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1886 Lyman had “special charge of the Tapestry Department of the Associated Artists” and was “the chief executant.”⁶ She was clearly one of the firm’s main tapestry designers as well as a principal embroiderer.

The designs of the two pieces illustrated here differ from most other known embroideries produced by Associated Artists in tending toward the rococo in style, making greater use of linear, nonrepresentational framing devices, and leaving much of the ground fabric unembroidered. A number of the later works produced by Associated Artists refer to historical styles and deviate considerably from the firm’s more characteristic designs. It is clear that Wheeler admired

Lyman’s curtain, since it was featured in the Associated Artists exhibit at the Exposition.

A second work by Lyman exhibited at the Exposition was on an even more ambitious scale. This was the famous Associated Artists needlewoven tapestry entitled *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (fig. 85), which was based on Raphael’s cartoon of the same name of about 1516–19 (British Royal Collection).⁷ Wheeler first saw Raphael’s cartoons in the South Kensington Museum on a trip to London in the summer of 1882. A richly colored, very large work in distemper on paper, this cartoon depicts the story of the miraculous draft of fishes told in the Gospel of Luke (5:1–11). To reward Peter for allowing Jesus to preach from his fishing boat, Jesus bade Peter and his companions lower their nets into the water, and the nets were immediately filled to bursting with fish. By this miraculous act, Jesus made Peter, Andrew, James, and John his disciples and “fishers of men.” Raphael’s cartoon, often reproduced as a

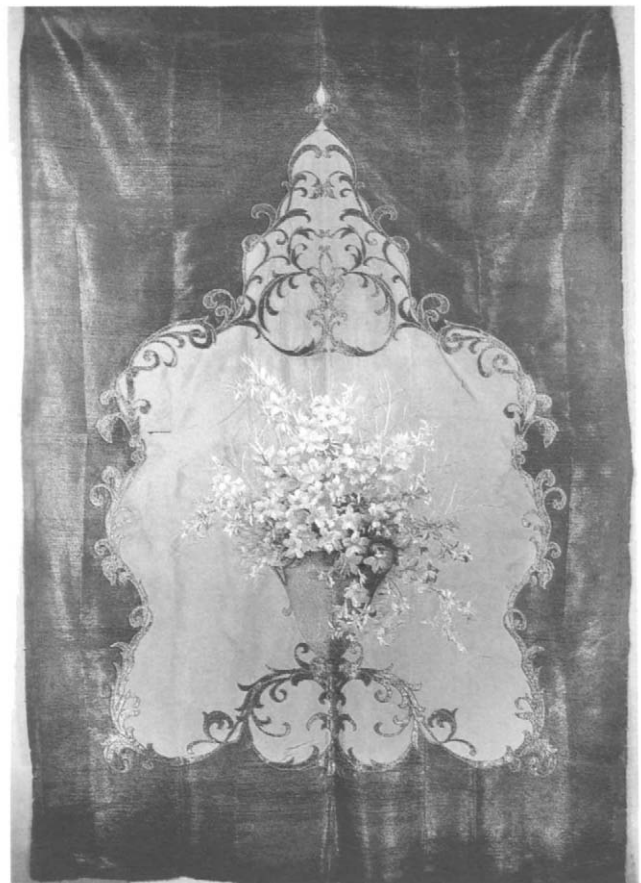


Fig. 84. Anna G. Lyman for Associated Artists, *Azalea Hanging*, 1893. Embroidered cloth, 92 in. x 64 in. (233.7 x 162.6 cm). Photograph courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art



93 (detail)

full-page illustration in nineteenth-century editions of the King James Bible, was a familiar image to American and English audiences.

Apparently there was more than one version of the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* tapestry, since the Lyman tapestry illustrated in Maud Howe Elliott's 1893 book on the Woman's Building⁸ and seen here differs in subtle ways from a nearly identical work published in Wheeler's *Development of Embroidery in America* (1921).⁹ Wheeler described that tapestry as a work of her own design executed in 1883 and the first of her experiments with needlewoven tapestry. This is surely inaccurate, however — especially since in 1891 Wheeler published an article about the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* tapestry by Lyman and made no reference to any version of her own.¹⁰ The narrative she presented in 1921, so many years later, was probably an impressionistic one based on imperfect memories.

Whatever the exact history, Lyman's execution of this tapestry was a technical tour de force. In her 1891 article Wheeler asserted that the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* tapestry "is far the most important work which has ever been accomplished by the process of hand or needle weaving, and is as veritable a copy of the original as if it were painted with brush and pigment, instead of being woven with threads of silk. . . . It is to be hoped that this noble work will eventually find a place either in some cathedral, where it would properly belong, or in a museum, where it might do its natural work of influencing the taste and encouraging the efforts of art workers and art lovers."¹¹ Unfortunately, nothing is known of the present location of any version of the needlewoven tapestry.

1. Mrs. George C. Riggs (née Lucy Wheeler), who gave this piece to the Museum of the City of New York, was the daughter of Dunham Wheeler and the granddaughter of Candace Wheeler.

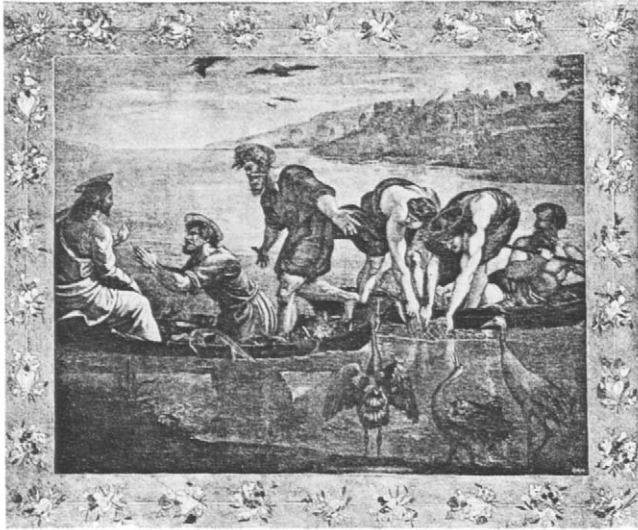


Fig. 85. Anna G. Lyman for Associated Artists, *Tapestry from Raphael's Cartoon, "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,"* ca. 1891. From Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* (1893), p. 148. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library, Gift of Albert TenEyck Gardner

2. A frontal view of the curtain hanging on a curtain rod is illustrated in Elliott 1893a, p. 270.
3. See Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, VIII.), p. 93; Wheeler 1921, pp. 123–24. A description of an embroidered portiere for Langtry's boudoir, probably part of the same set described in those sources, appears in "Embroidery Notes" 1884.
4. Annual Report of the Cooper Union School of Design for Women, 1877, p. 37, Archives, Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York.
5. See Bishop 1885, p. 584.
6. Koehler 1886, p. 210.
7. Beginning in 1516 Raphael designed a series of tapestries depicting the Acts of the Apostles for Pope Leo X. The tapestries were woven in Brussels by Pieter van Aelst after Raphael's cartoons and then hung in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican in Rome. In 1623 Charles, Prince of Wales (later King Charles I), purchased seven of the original cartoons from the manufactory in Brussels and brought them to England. They were eventually installed in South Kensington Museum, London (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). On Raphael's cartoons, see Shearman 1972, pp. 1–20.
8. Lyman is cited as the tapestry's designer both in Elliott 1893b, p. 35, and in "Notable Tapestries" 1893.
9. For instance, the coastline, the fishermen's net, and the birds' plumage are depicted more crisply and with greater detail in the tapestry published by Elliott than in the one published by Wheeler. See Wheeler 1921, pp. 133–36 and ill. opposite p. 130.
10. Wheeler 1891.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

J. CARROLL BECKWITH

94. *View from Artist's Seat*

1896

Oil on canvas, 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (47.6 × 40 cm)

Inscribed lower left: View from / mountain ranch / May 96 / To my friend / Dr. Wood / Carroll Beckwith / / Onteora

Collection of the Onteora Club

This view by J. Carroll Beckwith (1852–1917), painted from a hilltop, shows part of Onteora, the summer community for artists and writers that Wheeler and her younger brother Francis Thurber founded in the Catskill Mountains near the small town of Tannersville, New York, in 1887. They chose an elevated site on Onteora Mountain, affording magnificent views of the mountain ranges beyond and the ravines below; "Onteora," meaning "hills of the sky," derives from a name given to the area by a local Indian tribe.¹ Wheeler wrote of the vista's splendor in 1914,

It was a view of mountain-tops with blue wavering mists lying in the valleys, and sun-struck patches of forest above

them. On the east was a great triangle where Round Top and High Peak—the "cloud maker and cloud breaker" of the Indians, sloped away from each other; the space between filled with a far-off opalescent plane of miles of the Hudson Valley, and beyond them the Berkshires built against the distance in shadowy tints of violet and indigo.²

When they found this idyllic spot in 1883 the Wheelers and the Thurbers built two family cottages, Lotus Land and Pennyroyal (figs. 34, 35). The structures were nestled in a forested area, protected from sun and wind and near open fields ideal for hiking, picnicking, and contemplating the quiet beauty of the surroundings beneath bright blue sunlit skies. It was a perfect place for painters to bring a sketch pad or set up an easel to record plein air landscapes or study wildflowers and other subjects taken directly from nature.

The Wheelers and the Thurbers spent summers from 1883 to 1887 alone on Onteora Mountain, but they began to miss the company of society and wanted to share their scenic oasis with others. Wheeler conceived the idea of establishing a



summer settlement for people of high-minded artistic inclinations that would be preferable to the crowded communities where wealth and ostentation set the standard. This Arcadian vision of an elite group of artists and writers communing in a simple mountain environment officially came into being in 1888, when Francis Thurber bought additional acreage and, along with several other developers, incorporated as the Catskill Mountain Camp and Cottage Company, building three small cottages for friends and family and the Bear and Fox Inn (fig. 36). These were modest structures designed by Wheeler's son, Dunham Wheeler, who in the succeeding decades was responsible for nearly a dozen more Onteora cottages (see cat. no. 97). Wheeler decorated the interiors of these first few dwellings with a

“carefully thought-out compromise between primitive and civilized needs.”³ In 1889 the development group formed the Onteora Club and began selling building lots to individuals approved for admission. Over the next twenty years Onteora flourished, growing to include a library, a church, and more than seventy cottages. Most were designed in a vernacular Stick or Shingle style suitable to the local rugged terrain and incorporating rough-hewn timber and logs, stained shingles, and stone chimneys. (For more on Onteora and the furnishing of its cottages, see pages 57–63 and cat. nos. 95–97.)

The residents of Onteora led an active outdoor life of hiking, horseback riding, and fishing as well as a busy social life in which they hosted informal teas and dinners at their

homes and attended costume parties, poetry readings, plays, and concerts at the Bear and Fox Inn. For the most part life revolved around the club, whose membership, at least in the first decade, was determined mainly on the basis of artistic activity. Wheeler invited friends to come visit for weeks at a time and take part in this novel “experiment in plain living with high thinking.”⁴ Her guests included Mark Twain and his family (Twain’s home had been decorated in 1881–82 by Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists; see cat. no. 21). Other visitors were members of the Cheney family, owners of a silk mill with whom Wheeler routinely collaborated (see cat. no. 73).

J. Carroll Beckwith was an influential instructor at the Art Students League throughout the 1880s and 1890s. He was best known as a portraitist. After a trip in 1891 to Giverny in France, home of Claude Monet, he began to paint plein air figure and landscape sketches. In 1890 Beckwith and his wife began summering regularly in Onteora, where they often had other well-known artists as guests at their cottage, Greylegde. In her autobiography Wheeler described Beckwith as a “kindly, courtly man and skilful draftsman and painter” who instructed pupils “in the great studio which stood at the back of his house . . . the Beckwiths, man and wife, had much to do with *characterizing* Onteora.”⁵ While in Onteora, Beckwith painted portraits of a number of his fellow summer residents, including one of Twain that Wheeler commissioned for the inn.⁶ Beckwith’s small oil study *View from Artist’s Seat*, rendered in an impressionistic tonal manner that he

likened to the later works of the Hudson River school painter George Inness, gives some idea of the picturesque scenery that surrounded the Onteora community.⁷ Beckwith presented the painting to his friend Dr. William Wood, a New York society doctor whose Onteora home is the top-most of the three houses visible.

In 1894 Wheeler designed a scenic walking path around Onteora Mountain featuring trail benches situated at various lookout points along the way so that hikers could rest and enjoy the spectacular views. The most famous of these was a stone bench known as Artist’s Seat, from which Beckwith painted his view of Onteora looking out at the landmark called Star Rock and the Eastkill Valley and through “the gap” across the Hudson River to the Berkshires. Just below Artist’s Seat Wheeler created Artist’s Rock in the hollow of a rock ledge—a stone memorial carved with the names of the Hudson River school painters Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Frederic Church, Sanford R. Gifford, Worthington Whittredge, and Jervis McEntee.⁸

1. On Onteora, see Gaillard 1987; Gaillard 1994.

2. Wheeler 1914, p. 5.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

4. Bisland 1889, p. 519.

5. Wheeler 1918, p. 301, where Wheeler also described the view from his cottage.

6. For a discussion of this portrait, see Franchi and Weber 1999, p. 33.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

8. See Wheeler 1914, pp. 67–69.

CANDACE WHEELER

95. “*Rustic Sofa and Tables in ‘Pennyroyal’*”

1884–1902

Published in Candace Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration, with Practical Examples*, 1903

96. “*Dining-Room in ‘Pennyroyal’*”

1884–1902

Published in Candace Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration, with Practical Examples*, 1903

In 1883 Wheeler built her summer cottage, Pennyroyal, on Onteora Mountain near Tannersville, New York, naming it for “the fragrant purple weed that grew so thickly where we planted the house, and because, as Dora said, it was ‘royal and cost but a penny.’” Pennyroyal and Lotus Land, the house her brother Francis Thurber built that same year, were the original residences of the summer artists’ and writers’ colony known as Onteora that Wheeler founded four years later, in 1887. Pennyroyal (fig. 35) was



95



96

constructed of sawed and squared lumber, which was less costly than the “beautiful symmetrical . . . sweet-smelling” logs Wheeler had originally wanted to use.¹ It was designed for outdoor living, with many windows and a large front porch from which to admire the mountain scenery while reading a book, embroidering, or idly lounging. According to *Cosmopolitan*, “The wide front porch, that looks toward the mountains, is one of the most frequented portions of the house, that the inmates may lose none of the mountains’ dappled beauties of chasing shine and shadow; and here are hung hammocks, and strewn lounging-chairs, a table for five-o’clock tea, books, and long-legged work-baskets running over with feminine belongings.”²

These two photographs taken inside Pennyroyal before 1903 give an idea of the type of “rustic” decor that was characteristic in Onteora’s summer cottages. The ground floor originally consisted of just one large room, 24 by 24 feet, into which “all the various necessities of human habitation were condensed.” A large stone hearth in one corner was the focal point of family gatherings. The main living area in the room’s central space was also for entertaining guests and for eating meals “served from the generous dresser against the north wall of the room.” Cooking was done in an outside kitchen lean-to. One corner of the room, where Wheeler’s son Dunham played with his nephew Henry Lewis Stimson, was nicknamed the Armory and was deemed “sufficient for the masculine development of a future Secretary of War and an Architect.” The opposite corner held the library, “competent — small as it was — for the intellectual wants of the family.” The northeast corner contained a birchwood stairway leading to “little cubes of space which were literally *bed-rooms*.”³ A few years after Pennyroyal was built, the land on which it stood was deeded to Dora, and Pennyroyal became known thereafter as her cottage, although the entire family continued to use it as before.

In their homes the residents of Onteora sought to dispense with the material ostentation of summer communities like Newport, Rhode Island, and Saratoga, New York, but to preserve the basic comforts and aesthetic pleasures of civilization. “Miss Wheeler’s little cabin may warrant description,” *Cosmopolitan* explained, “as being typical of what can be done to combine cheapness and comfort with beauty. . . . Nothing could be prettier, though the means of producing are so cheap and simple.” Pennyroyal was furnished with brown-stained wood furniture made mainly by local carpenters, although Wheeler purchased chairs, beds, and bureaus of finer craftsmanship from a household store

named Baldwin’s in the nearby town of Hunter, New York. The library corner was equipped with built-in shelves, a wall desk, a window seat, and a simple braided rug. The room’s upholstery and window hangings consisted of blue denim, “which, with its reverse sides, dark blue and blue-gray, gives charming results for an almost inappreciable expense.” Much of the wall area was covered with coarse palmetto matting from the West Indies. The east wall was decorated by Dora, who painted portraits of friends and family “or some atmospheric effect that catches her eye from the windows” directly into the fresh plaster, creating a “picture gallery.”⁴

The photograph of a sitting area in the large room (cat. no. 95) shows the modest informality of the decor, with its casual arrangement of paintings by Dora propped on a side table and hanging on the palmetto-matted walls. The walls are embellished with a decorative frieze also by Dora, consisting of scrolls inscribed with mottoes: according to Wheeler’s *Principles of Home Decoration*, “If one wishes to mount a favourite motto or quotation on the walls, where it may give constant suggestion or pleasure — or even be a help to thoughtful and conscientious living — there can be no better fashion than the style of old illuminated missals. Dining-rooms and chimney-pieces are often very appropriately decorated in this way; the words running on scrolls which are half unrolled and half hidden, and showing a conventionalised background of fruit and flowers.”⁵ The two end tables and the sofa in the sitting area were crudely fashioned in “twig” style, a local vernacular type of revealed construction employing small logs for the supporting members and rows of small sticks for decoration, much like Adirondack furniture of the period. Wheeler advised that cottage furniture be “simpler and lighter than in houses intended for constant family living.” The upholstery fabric on the sofa was the cotton printed with nasturtium leaves that Wheeler designed for Associated Artists (cat. no. 65). For summer cottages Wheeler recommended that while “chairs and sofas should be entirely without elaborate upholstery, hangings and cushions can be made of some well-colored cotton or linen material which wind and sun and dampness cannot spoil, and of which the freshness can always be restored by laundrying.”⁶ Behind the sofa fresh-cut wildflowers lined the windowsill, bringing touches of color and natural beauty indoors. The whole arrangement suggests a rustic American version of an English Arts and Crafts-style interior, with its emphasis on handicrafts and truth in materials.

The so-called dining room at Pennyroyal (cat. no. 96) was actually part of the large living space. Above the corner fireplace a simply carved overmantel was lined with pewter plates and brass teakettles; a small braided rag rug lay on the floor before the hearth. The door next to the fireplace carried Dora's large decorative painting of a young woman serving food on a platter. A tall sideboard stood to the right of the door, draped with plain cotton curtains and a fringed valance. Its shelves were filled to capacity with "blue willow" earthenware, a common nineteenth-century ware with a pattern copied from Chinese porcelain that was produced in England and America and became especially popular in middle-class households. The simple furnishings consisted of a spindle-back chair, two small rectangular side tables with turned legs, and a large round dining table, all probably made locally. Nearly every surface was covered with decorative objects of some sort, a natural result of the inhabitants' desire to surround themselves with beautiful things for everyday household use. The well-lived-in interiors of Pennyroyal reflected Wheeler's practical-minded belief that "a house which is to be closed for six or eight months in the year should really, to be consistent, be inexpensively furnished."⁷ They were the antithesis of the museum-like spaces Wheeler and Tiffany had created for their wealthy clientele back in the city.

In 1888 a separate structure was built on the grounds of Pennyroyal to provide a painting studio for Dora. As Wheeler explained, "There was much painting of pictures at Pennyroyal in those early days, and pictures cannot always be painted out of doors. They need the brooding of shadow for their growth. So a studio became a necessity, and like all strong necessities it answered to the call."⁸ The parallelogram-shaped structure measuring 25 by 30 feet was actually larger than the main house. Equipped with a large stone fireplace and simple furnishings, it was "a charming room, where she [Dora] works in the daytime, and where her friends are fond of gathering in the evening around a huge fireplace, in which there is room for half a dozen."⁹

Over the years Pennyroyal remained a refuge from "the turmoil and conventionalities, the rivalries and struggles of life in New York and American cities generally" while providing a comfortable alternative to the hardships and inconveniences of camping out in the wilderness, which was "not

suitable to children and delicate women."¹⁰ For Wheeler, the typical Onteora cottage represented an ideal adaptation of readily available indigenous materials and vernacular craftsmanship to the end of unpretentious beauty and utility. "Indeed," she wrote, "the cottage has the advantage of that most potent ally of beauty — simplicity — a quality which is apt to be conspicuously absent from the schemes of decoration for the palace."¹¹ She argued that naturalistic, or, as she called them, "unconventionalized" patterns — like the simple leaf print she selected for Pennyroyal — were especially suited to mountain cottages:

There are occasions where the literal transfer of natural forms has peculiar appropriateness. In some camps in the Adirondacks, which I visited last summer, I was much impressed by the fitness of the simple decorations I saw. The unconventionality of the designs seemed peculiarly in keeping with the unconventionality of the life there. In simple country houses, too, where ladies make their own embroideries, unconventionalized forms, conflicting with no architectural principle, have a certain graceful appropriateness — at least when they are the outcome of refined taste combined with a knowledge of drawing and color, as well as stitchery.¹²

Wheeler's appreciation for the American mountain cottage paralleled her steadfast preference for fabrics made exclusively by American manufacturers and for decorative patterns based mainly on humble American wildflowers. This patriotic and democratic respect for the domestic, the vernacular, and the indigenous was at the heart of her work. In the course of time and as her career progressed, Wheeler came to prefer cottages to castles and denims to silks.

1. Wheeler 1914, pp. 14, 31–32.

2. Bisland 1889, p. 516.

3. Wheeler 1914, pp. 22–27.

4. Bisland 1889, pp. 516–17; Wheeler 1918, p. 279.

5. Wheeler 1903b, pp. 58–59.

6. Wheeler 1892c, p. 741. Wheeler articulated these same principles in Wheeler 1903b, pp. 58–59, 120–22.

7. Wheeler 1903b, pp. 120–21.

8. Wheeler 1914, p. 57.

9. Bisland 1889, p. 517.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 513.

11. Wheeler 1903b, p. 21.

12. Wheeler 1887–89 (interviews, I.).

97. “*Large Sitting-Room in ‘Star Rock’ Country House*”

Ca. 1890

Published in Candace Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration, with Practical Examples*, 1903

Dunham Wheeler (1861–1938), Candace’s son, was the architect of a number of cottages in the summer artists’ and writers’ colony of Onteora.¹ As a member of Associated Artists, which he joined in 1886 and then managed 1901–7 after his mother retired, he also oversaw the decoration of various cottages in the community. One of these was Star Rock, owned by Wheeler’s niece Jeannette Thurber Connor and her husband Washington Everett Connor; its sitting room is illustrated here. While most Onteora cottages were very simply furnished and were intended to provide an unpretentious living environment, some, like Star Rock, which was decorated in about 1890, were on a more luxurious scale. The interiors of Star Rock, particularly this large sitting room, were essentially rustic versions of the Aesthetic decorative schemes produced by Louis C. Tiffany and Candace Wheeler’s firms between 1879 and 1883 for various wealthy New York clientele (see, e.g., cat. nos. 14, 18). Those metropolitan interiors mixed exotic Japanese, Moorish, and Indian elements with traditional Anglo-American styles and combined carved wood, colored and leaded glass, mixed metals, and luxurious textiles and carpets to create a rich sensory display. At Star Rock Wheeler’s firm took the same general approach, for example juxtaposing a perforated brass hanging mosque lamp from the Near East and simple American-made brass candlesticks and andirons. The type and quantity of the furnishings were modified, however, in accordance with Wheeler’s belief that the arrangement of an interior “must always follow the guiding incidents of class and locality.”² In this instance, the “guiding incidents” were comfortable means and a rustic mountain locale.

True to the English Arts and Crafts ideal of honest materials, the Star Rock sitting room featured exposed beams, a large open brick hearth, naturally colored woodwork, balustrades made of bark-covered birch timbers, and plain wood floors. Associated Artists further played on the theme of simplicity by incorporating distinctly American vernacular elements, such as the wicker rocking chair and stool by

the hearth and the Stick-style armchair just right of the fireplace. The use of these lightweight wicker and wood pieces may have been dictated by practical considerations as well, since they were portable, facilitating a variety of seating arrangements, and were easily cleaned after a long winter collecting dust. Colorful, geometrically patterned rugs and blankets were casually draped over the balcony rails, and the floors were covered with at least half a dozen Oriental rugs both large and small. The two armchairs and two side chairs, none of them matching, are typical of “art furniture” of the 1870s and 1880s, with their square backs, turned or shallow carved straight legs and seat rails, tufted seat cushions, costly floral patterned velvet coverings, and luxurious fringed trimmings. In a wooded mountain setting, Wheeler believed, “Even heavier furniture looks fitting where the house is surrounded with massive tree-growths.”³

Also typical of Aesthetic interior design are the patterned window hangings and portieres, probably made of fabrics produced specially for Associated Artists by Cheney Brothers. The carefully edited assemblage of vases, candlesticks, and chargers on the overmantel shelves is a more restrained display of materialism than the usual installation in lavish Aesthetic interiors of cabinets housing innumerable small objects. Here the intention perhaps was to display only a few objects of genuine aesthetic value to their owners, demonstrating what Wheeler called a “cultivated power of selection.” The whole interior, a synthesis of eclectic elements from disparate parts of the world, was made to appear “undecorated,” as if the inhabitants had simply collected various “evidences of family life” one by one over the years—reflecting Wheeler’s conviction that “a perfect home is never created all at once and by one person.” A decorator “must consult family tastes and idiosyncracies if he has the reverence for individuality which belongs to the true artist,”⁴ and here Associated Artists managed to create an interior that appears highly personal and reflective of its owners’ character.



The Star Rock sitting room was geared toward more informal entertaining and day-to-day living than the city interiors its residents are likely to have occupied during the winter months. Intentionally anti-urban touches reminded visitors that they were in the country, far from the high-style homes of New York. The wicker rocking chair and the Stick-style armchair in particular were pointed allusions to a simpler way of life. The same impulses that prompted Wheeler to found an artistic and literary community that eschewed the pretenses of New York high society likewise dictated the avoidance of excessive material luxury in interiors. The aim, even with the more richly furnished Oteora cottages like Star Rock, was to strike a balance between

household necessity and aesthetic beauty, to distill full-blown urban aestheticism into a relatively straightforward, countrified version of artistic taste.

1. Dunham was also the architect of the Bear and Fox Inn at Oteora (1887). He became a member of the Architectural League of New York in 1888. He practiced until 1912, specializing in private residences in a variety of revival styles, mainly for clients in New York City, Long Island, and New Jersey. Among Dunham Wheeler's more important commissions was the remodeling of the country home of John D. Rockefeller in Lakewood, New Jersey; he designed other residences there as well.
2. Wheeler 1903b, p. 121.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 16, 17.

98. *Candace Wheeler*

1910

Pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 30 × 24 in.

(76.2 × 61 cm)

Signed on bottom: Dora Wheeler Keith / 1910

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Reynal

This pastel portrait of Candace Wheeler at the age of eighty-three was drawn by her daughter Dora Wheeler Keith. Mother and daughter had always enjoyed a close and loving relationship, which extended far beyond the realm of family life to the working world. They collaborated for many years at Associated Artists, where Wheeler was the director and Dora a leading designer.

Dora doubtless drew her mother's portrait with great affection. She took care to bring out Wheeler's piercing blue eyes; they convey the passion and energy that had led to a career aimed at improving the lives of women. Wheeler unsmilingly and matter-of-factly regards her beholder, her tenacity evident in her unflinching gaze. The confident demeanor is that of a woman whose extraordinary achievements included founding or co-founding the Society of Decorative Art (1877–1905), the New York Exchange for Woman's Work (1878–present), Tiffany & Wheeler (1879–81), Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists (1881–83), and her own firm, Associated Artists (1883–1907).

Wheeler's attire is that of a person unconcerned with costly display. She is prettily but not ostentatiously dressed, striking a balance like the one she sought to achieve between beauty and necessity in her textiles and household decoration. The many-colored paisley shawl around her shoulders is a reminder of Wheeler's talent for designing fabrics and the role she played in revolutionizing the American textile industry during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Her collaboration with the Cheney Brothers mill, which led to numerous innovative technical developments and the creation of scores of original patterns, was among her most creative accomplishments. Yet there is an element of softness in the aged Wheeler as portrayed here, accentuated by the pink paisley shawl and white lace collar and cap. This gentleness is a quality not often associated with the younger woman of indomitable professional ambition.

At the time this portrait was painted, Wheeler had been retired from her textile designing business for nearly a

decade. In later years she devoted herself mainly to other passions, writing, gardening, and painting (she continued to paint the studies of her favorite flowers as she had done since the 1860s). Winters were spent at Wintergreen in the warm climate of Thomasville, Georgia, and summers up north at her two homes, Nestledown, on Long Island, and Pennyroyal, in the Catskills. This portrait still hangs in Pennyroyal and was probably made there.

In 1919, Wheeler, aged ninety-three, gave an interview that would be her last. The reporter for *Good Housekeeping* found her at Nestledown “in the shadow of her garden—a handsome, erect-figured woman of gracious manner and striking personality, whose whole bearing suggests the true American ideal of aristocracy, that of heart and mind. She spends her summers in the same house to which her husband brought her seventy-five years and more ago, on Long Island—a low, rambling, weather-toned nest of a house, all loved about with sweet honeysuckle and luscious pink peonies, the whole in the sheltering care of trees that have watched a century's history.” Reflecting on her life's accomplishments, Wheeler spoke of her work in the last few decades of the nineteenth century and the lasting impact she felt it had had on both the lives of American women and the design community.

I opened up a new field, and they flocked in from everywhere, later going back to their homes to become teachers of design or practical designers. Understanding of applied art spread, women developed in it, and today American women lead the world as designers. I run across the work of my students in the most out of the way places. Only recently I admired a pulled rug in the home of a friend and wrote to its maker for a duplicate. A letter came back from a pupil of mine of years ago, telling me she had a very lucrative business with eighteen women constantly employed; she was very happy and prosperous. I always impressed on my students to take what they knew and apply it to everything they saw. It is this principle that has made them successful.

Wheeler was optimistic about the future of twentieth-century women, envisioning a time in the near future when “for the first time in the world's history women will be working side by side with men, the mature home women bringing the schooling they have had as executives and economists to bear on the advance of real civilization. . . . Always the



producers of the race, they will now become its conservers, bringing the woman's point of view to bear on every situation." Wheeler saw herself as having laid the foundation for far greater achievements beyond the household by subsequent generations of women. Still a vibrant and determined

figure, she explained how she was able to keep so well and active: "When one is eternally busy and eternally interested, the years just slip along — you don't notice them."¹

1. A. S. Monroe 1919, pp. 189, 192–93.

Appendix: The Materials and Techniques of Candace Wheeler's Textiles

ELENA PHIPPS

Conservator, Textile Conservation Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The fabrics produced by Candace Wheeler or under her direction are composed of a wide array of materials and utilize numerous techniques; while traditional Old World methods are represented, they are combined with a new aesthetic interest in design, texture, and structural complexity. The physical components, such as the yarns, dyes, and weave structures, complement the design compositions, resulting in the harmonious blending of tactile and visual qualities. The fabrics range from fine silk satins to coarser cotton denims, each with a particular weave or design effect. Some have a “homemade” look, such as the homespun twill fabric used for an embroidered pillow (cat. no. 7), while others maintain the appearance of industrially produced textiles, such as the cotton velvets and velveteens that were subsequently elaborately printed.

The materials Wheeler incorporated into her artistic production included natural fibers of silk, wool, cotton, and linen, as well as man-made products such as various alloyed metals, glass beads, and paper. The silk, which is the predominate material, varies in form and type, ranging from lustrous, highly degummed reeled silks (as in cat. no. 76) to duller, less degummed spun silk of a lower quality (as in cat. no. 82). The yarns of spun silk (called *schappe*), made from silk waste or broken silk cocoons, are sometimes heavy and coarse, at other times thin and fine. Fabric composed of this silk has a flatter appearance overall; it lacks the brilliance and sheen of reeled silk, with its light-reflecting qualities. Wheeler deliberately used these less-expensive spun silk yarns in order to create fabrics that could be afforded by middle-class clients.¹ Mercerized cotton, a material with its own inherent sheen, was also used in place of silk in some fabrics.

In combination with silk and cotton, composite metallic yarns were used extensively, sometimes as accents and at other times throughout the fabric. Some of the “gold” threads, often used for couched embroidery, were made of gilt paper strips wrapped around a core of silk or cotton yarn. They were probably imported from Asia—a source of many influences on Wheeler’s designs as well as of materials. Another metallic yarn, this one with a reddish hue, was made of finely cut strips of copper sheet wound around a

red-dyed cotton core (cat. no. 28). The red core peeks out occasionally through the wrapping and enhances the warm glint of the copper. A different metallic composite yarn has a yellow core, which emphasizes the golden hues of the metal (cat. no. 16). Glass beads and sequins, used sparingly, provide luminescent embellishment and glitter to the embroideries.

Wheeler combined these materials in a variety of ways for her fabrics. Sometimes silk composed the warp and cotton the weft; sometimes the warp was of cotton and the weft of metallic thread and silk. Each specific material was selected for its particular characteristics of color, sheen, weight, and texture, all contributing to the overall look and feel of the resulting fabric. Some of the combinations are surprising, such as the printed denimlike fabric made up of a cotton warp covering a delicate silk weft (cat. nos. 58, 59).² In this fabric one is barely aware of the presence of the silk, yet it enhances the suppleness of the cloth and helps it drape softly and easily (see also p. 52 on “Kentucky” denims). An unexpected contrast found in other fabrics is the mixture of fine, soft silk and hard, lustrous copper or other metals. The metallic threads create a fabric that is cold to the touch; while flexible to a certain degree, the relative rigidity of these examples is in stark contrast to the flexibility and delicacy of the pure silk fabrics. In the beautiful patterned silk-and-metallic thistle fabric (cat. no. 16), these two materials are brilliantly combined in a tour de force of design, technique, and material selection.

Wheeler’s varied fabric designs employed a variety of processes. The primary visual impact of some fabrics was achieved through the creative selection of materials, highlighted by the simple, repetitive use of specialized yarns in the weaving. An example is the ground fabric of the appliquéd tulip panel (cat. no. 26), in which the uninterrupted use of metal-wrapped weft yarns created a metallic surface. In other fabrics, design and texture were achieved by the use of complex woven fabric structures and an appropriate juxtaposition of colors and yarn types. Techniques of surface design such as printing or the application of dye, either before or after the weaving of the cloth, were used—sometimes alone as the primary design method, sometimes in combination

with a textured ground fabric formed by a complex woven structure. Finally, needlework, specifically embroidery and appliqué, was used to create a distinctive visual interplay of color, texture, and design.

The woven fabrics include some with simple structures of plain, twill, and satin weaves that are varied in surface texture through the use of different types of yarns. An elegant green-and-gold fabric, for example (cat. no. 30), is a simple warp-faced plain weave structure interrupted by supplementary wefts of gilt-paper-wrapped yarn (fig. A). While the fabric appears as green, it is in fact composed of a yellow warp and a blue weft that together create the visual perception of green. The pinecones-and-needles fabric (cat. no. 76) combines two structures, plain weave and twill, in a compound lampas weave structure. This type of textile, with a small but complex repeating design produced through a compound weave, was loosely modeled on historical drawloom-woven fabrics. The Wheeler fabrics, however, were adapted to be woven on the mechanized jacquard loom used extensively in American textile production.

Three types of pile weaves are found in Wheeler's textile repertoire. Silk velvet, called plush velvet because of its long pile and woven in a true warp-pile velvet weave, was employed as trimming material and for appliqués (as in cat. no. 26). Fine short-pile cotton velvet, also with a true warp-pile velvet structure, was used for printed designs such as the daffodil and ivy patterns (cat. nos. 68, 72). Cotton velveteen, woven in a weft-pile technique, was used for printed fabrics often meant for curtains (cat. nos. 70, 71); it has a short pile and is slightly less dense or rich in surface than velvet.

In the late nineteenth century a number of innovations were incorporated into dyeing processes, including the adaptation of traditional natural dyes to new methods and the creation of new classes of synthetic colorants. Wheeler fully utilized both types of dyes in her fabrics to create her distinctive color palette. For instance, natural indigo blue appears in her cottons, while bright synthetic green was used in some of the silks.

Color was extremely important to Wheeler's overall aesthetic, and technical features of both the weaving and the dyeing were specifically geared toward achieving her desired palette. The colors of the individual yarns were generally strong in hue and chroma, but these intense color components were visually and technically blended so that in the final fabric a more muted color scheme prevailed. Wheeler described her aesthetic goal of "blended colors" as "vivid and striking notes which play upon a higher key, and still melt as softly into each other as the perfect modulations of the best English art."³

Perhaps the technique that best actualized Wheeler's concept of "blended color" was the warp printing of silk fabrics that she employed in her shadow silks (see cat. nos. 79–81,

84–86). For these textiles the polychrome design was printed onto the warp yarns before they were woven into a cloth. When the weaving occurred, some of the design features naturally fell slightly out of alignment, creating a "watery" effect.⁴ To enhance this effect, two additional technical choices were made. The first was to weave these fabrics in a 4/1 twill structure, with the long warp floats spanning over four wefts, forming pronounced diagonal lines.⁵ The second was to use a weft yarn of a bright — almost gaudy — contrasting color (bright green or yellow in cat. nos. 80, 81). The weft is barely visible, but it catches the light as it peeks out from behind the warp yarns, giving a shimmering fluorescence to the overall fabric. Together these structural features create a visual counterpoint against the printed pattern.

For many of the Wheeler fabrics, a simple description of the color is a difficult task. This is because the viewer's perception of the color depends on the position of the fabric in relation to the light. The play of light across the fabric surfaces and its effect upon the color were ultimately as important for Wheeler as the actual colors of the components of the fabrics. This changeable surface effect occurs in simple woven fabrics such as the warp-printed satins and twills, where the juxtaposition of woven elements — the warps and wefts — creates a color that varies according to the direction or position of the light. The changeable effect is also created in Wheeler's complexly woven fabrics, such as the damasks and lampases. Here the juxtapositions — for example, of the warp and weft faces of the twill structure in the damask — absorb and reflect light in contrasting ways, influencing our visual perception of the resulting color. This dynamic, interactive relationship between the fabric and its components as

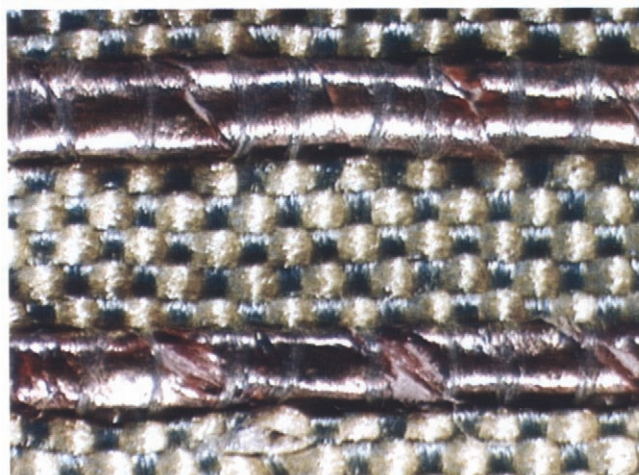


Fig. A. *Ribbed metallic textile* (cat. no. 30), detail, ca. 10x magnification. The fabric, which has a green appearance, is actually composed of a blue warp and a yellow weft, interlacing in plain weave. The metallic yarn is composed of gilt paper wrapped around a core of cotton thread and is used as a supplementary weft.

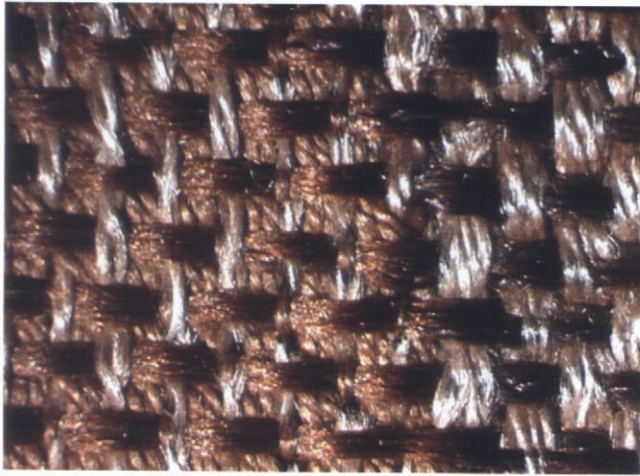


Fig. B. “Penelope” needlewoven tapestry (cat. no. 27), detail, ca. 10x magnification. The golden brown threads compose the woven ground fabric. The white threads—single in some areas, double or quadruple in others—were inserted into the cloth following the path of the warps and wefts. They form the needleworked design.

well as between the fabric and the viewer is a quintessential aspect of Candace Wheeler’s design.

Wheeler applied color to her fabrics using standard methods such as roller printing and block printing. But even with these techniques she chose to develop an additional level of variety and richness. For instance, by printing on cotton velvet or thickly piled velveteen—innovative for the period—she imparted depth and dimensionality to the resulting fabric. Wheeler’s printed designs all have an internal movement: lines swirl, flowers extend themselves on scrolling vines, fish leap into flowing water. Although the patterns are continuously repeating, the viewer is hard-pressed to find the point at which the repeat begins because it is so well masked within the design. While a pattern with a monotonous repeat can be static, these dynamic compositions move and often even flow off the selvaged edges, since the design templates are sometimes larger than the woven width of the cloth.

Of all the patterning mechanisms Wheeler used to embellish fabrics, her embroidery is perhaps the least sophisticated yet also the one truest to her stated intentions. She employed a small repertoire of stitches, primarily laid couching and satin stitches, generally executed in heavy silk yarns. These stitches were used to cover ground fabrics that often themselves provided visual interest in the form of a woven texture. On these typically oversize hangings, metallic yarns, glass beads, and other bright and shiny accents were scattered among the main design elements, providing a little play of sparkle across the surface. Appliqués of fabrics such as plush velvet were stitched onto various types of grounds, often with a couching of metallic and silk thread on top of them. In this use of the couching stitch, the metallic thread was laid down and a silk thread was used to hold it in place; it was the perfect technique by which to emphasize the brilliant sheen of the metal threads.

One special embroidery method was developed for the so-called needlewoven tapestries, such as the Penelope panel (cat. no. 27). The design outlines were first drawn onto the surface of the cloth as a guide (remnants of the black markings are still visible). Then the ground fabric, a compound silk, was embellished through the meticulous insertion of polychrome silk threads following the exact path of the warp and weft interlacements (fig. B). The embroidery threads used as interwoven elements create a subtle shading, thread by thread, with occasional diagonal and clustered diversions from the path. The result is a remarkable graphic image created with threads, quite unlike any of the more traditionally embroidered portieres or hangings.

Wheeler’s distinctive style was embodied in her fabrics, whether woven, drawn, printed, or embroidered. With each type of fabric the materials and techniques used were carefully selected for their particular characteristics. All the technical features—from fiber selection, yarn type, and color to weave structure and patterning device—were expressions of Wheeler’s overall artistic imagination and sense of design. The dynamic interplay in her fabrics between design and technique gave substance to her aesthetic vision and formulated the rich and textured nature of her creative achievement.

1. An unfortunate consequence of the use of these less expensive, flawed silks is the overall deterioration that we can now observe; the fabrics have weakened over time. Many of the silks were also “weighted” with metallic salts (an industrial process to add luster), which has further accelerated their deterioration.
2. In this fabric the design is printed on the weft face of the structure, which would normally be the reverse face of the weave.
3. Wheeler 1921, pp. 108–9.

4. This type of warp printing draws on the European tradition of *chiné à la branche*, used extensively in the eighteenth century. It was originally based on Asian and Indian “ikat” techniques, or resist dyeing, adapted to industrialized textile production methods.
5. A 4/1 twill is an unusual binding structure because of the length of the float. To avoid the pronounced diagonal effect of this binding, a 4-span float would normally be bound in either a “broken twill” or a satin binding structure.

Candace Wheeler: A Chronology

1827

March 24. Candace Thurber is born in Delhi, New York, in Delaware County, to Abner Gilman Thurber (1797–1860) and Lucy Dunham Thurber (1800–1893).

1844

June 28. At the age of seventeen, Candace Thurber marries Thomas Mason Wheeler (1818–1895) and moves to New York City, where she and her husband reside at 68 Pike Street in lower Manhattan.

1845

March 26. The Wheelers' first daughter, Candace Thurber Wheeler (1845–1876), is born.

1849

August 4. The Wheelers' first son, James Cooper Wheeler (1849–1912), is born. The Wheelers move to Brooklyn, where they buy a house at the corner of Hoyt and Pacific Streets. Candace and Thomas begin to make the acquaintance of a number of well-known artists and writers in New York.

1854

The Wheelers buy three hundred acres in Jamaica, Long Island, in what today is the borough of Queens. There they build a Gothic Revival–style house, which they name Nestledown, and move in.

1856

March 12. The Wheelers' second daughter, Lucy Dora Wheeler (1856–1940), is born.

1861

The Wheeler's second son, Dunham Wheeler (1861–1938), is born (exact date unknown).

Early 1860s

Candace Wheeler studies painting with the American Pre-Raphaelite painter George Henry Hall (1825–1913) and also acquires informal art training from other artist friends.

1865–67

1865. After renting a house in Manhattan during the winter social season for a number of years, the Wheelers purchase a second home at 49 West Twenty-fifth Street.

Fall 1865–winter 1867. The Wheelers travel in Europe. Wheeler encounters great European paintings for the first time and socializes in the multinational artistic community. The family lives at different times in Bremen, Wiesbaden, Munich, Venice, Rome, Florence, Montreux, and Paris.

Fall 1866. Wheeler's daughter Candace marries Lewis Atterbury Stimson (1844–1918) in Paris.

Winter 1866–67. Wheeler is on her own with Dunham in Dresden, where she paints in a local studio, possibly taking lessons from a German artist.

1871

Summer. Wheeler exhibits her work as a flower painter for the first time at the National Academy of Design.

October. After a financial setback, the Wheelers auction their household possessions from Nestledown. They travel to London and then to Zurich, where they spend the remainder of the year. Wheeler is a member of the Ladies' Art Association, a New York–based group founded in 1867 to promote the interests of female artists. She remains a member until at least late 1877.

1872–73

Spring 1872. The Wheelers travel to Wiesbaden. By the fall they are in Paris, staying at a small hotel on the rue du Bac, where they remain for nearly a year before returning to New York in June 1873.

1874

Tom serves as publisher of the *American Grocer*, a trade paper, until 1877. Candace becomes editor of its "domestic department."

1876

June 7. Wheeler's older daughter, Candace Thurber Wheeler Stimson, dies of kidney failure.

Summer. Wheeler attends the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, where she views the highly influential exhibit of the Royal School of Art Needlework of South Kensington, London. This inspires her to conceive of a plan to found a similar organization devoted to helping woman artists and artisans earn a living by selling their works.

1877

February 24. Wheeler holds the first planning meeting for her organization.

March 28. Bylaws and a constitution are adopted, and the

Society of Decorative Art (SDA) is officially established. Wheeler serves as vice president, corresponding secretary, chairman of the Committee on Publication, and an unofficial member of the Committee on Design.

September. The SDA opens its salesrooms to the public at 4 East Twentieth Street.

December 3. The SDA's first annual benefit loan exhibition of fine and decorative art opens at the National Academy of Design and runs for six weeks. Wheeler had served on the Committee on Management in charge of organizing the benefit. By the end of this first year of the SDA, Wheeler has helped found related societies in Chicago, Saint Louis, Hartford, Detroit, Troy, and Charleston.

The Wheelers sell their house at 49 West Twenty-fifth Street and move to 244 Lexington Avenue.

Wheeler joins the Advisory Council of the Woman's Art School of New York at the Cooper Union, serving until 1909.

1878

February 28. The initial organizational meeting is held for what becomes the New York Exchange for Woman's Work ("Woman's Exchange"). Wheeler, a cofounder, is appointed to the board of managers, on which she will remain until at least 1896.

May 10. The Woman's Exchange opens its salesrooms, located at 4 East Twentieth Street in the former rooms of the SDA. The SDA has moved to larger quarters at 34 East Nineteenth Street. In this second year of the SDA's operation, Wheeler ceases to act as corresponding secretary.

September 18. The first issue appears of the *Art Interchange*, a fortnightly journal supervised by the SDA until 1879 and published independently thereafter until 1904. As chairman of the Committee on Publication, Wheeler cofounds the journal and serves on its board of supervisors.

October 15–November 30. The second annual SDA benefit loan exhibition is held at the National Academy of Design; the Special Committee that organizes the exhibit of works by members of the SDA is chaired by Wheeler, and she also serves on a subcommittee for preparation and arrangement of the exhibition.

1879

Wheeler resigns from her official duties at the SDA.

November. Wheeler serves as a judge representing the SDA in a design competition sponsored by the *Art Interchange*. Her "Consider the Lillies of the Field" portieres are awarded a \$50 first prize for best portiere design.

Summer. Wheeler has joined Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) in founding the interior decorating firm Tiffany & Wheeler (1879–81) located at 335 Fourth Avenue. Wheeler acts as the partner specializing in textiles.

August. Tiffany & Wheeler has been commissioned to decorate the home of pharmaceutical manufacturer George Kemp at 720 Fifth Avenue. Work on this first residential commission continues until at least April 1881.

September. Tiffany & Wheeler has been hired to produce the stage curtain for the Madison Square Theatre.

1880

Tiffany & Wheeler collaborates with the Cheney Brothers firm in South Manchester, Connecticut, which manufactures some of its textile designs in silk. Samuel Colman organizes an exhibition of embroideries by Tiffany & Wheeler at the SDA.

February 4. Madison Square Theatre opens to the public, with Tiffany & Wheeler's stage curtain completed and installed, but on February 26 the curtain is destroyed by a fire. It is replaced by a second curtain on May 1.

April 20. Tiffany & Wheeler is listed for the first time in the credit ledgers of R. G. Dun & Company.

April. Tiffany & Wheeler has been commissioned to decorate the Veterans' Room and Library of the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue between Sixty-sixth and Sixty-seventh Streets. The armory opens to the public on September 30. However, the firm works until at least April 1881 to finish the job.

Summer. Tiffany & Wheeler has been commissioned to decorate the grand saloon and captain's quarters of James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s steam yacht *Namouna*. The project continues until the spring of 1881.

October 15. Tiffany & Wheeler enters into a contract to decorate the main hall, grand staircase, three dining rooms, a picture gallery, and meeting hall of the Union League Club at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street. Work continues until December 1881.

Late fall. Wheeler invents a new method of stitchery to create what she calls "needle-woven tapestry." With the assistance of Cheney Brothers she invents a silk canvas to serve as the ground fabric; Cheney Brothers sends her the first samples of it on December 17. Wheeler begins work on her first needlewoven tapestry, *Mephistopheles*, which she completes by January 2, 1881.

1881

Late May or earlier. Tiffany & Wheeler merges with L. C. Tiffany & Company Furniture to become Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists. The new firm is commissioned to decorate the drawing room of the Cornelius Vanderbilt II house at 1 West Fifty-seventh Street. The job is not fully completed until January 1883.

Spring. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is hired to redecorate the Church of the Divine Paternity on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-fifth Street. Work is completed by September.

June 15. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is listed for the first time in the R. G. Dun & Company credit ledgers.

July 20. Wheeler and a former employee, Mary Tillinghast, file separate applications for letters of patent for "Needle-Woven Tapestry" with the United States Patent Office. Both claim to be the sole inventor of the stitch used in needlewoven tapestry fabrication.

October 24. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, enters into an agreement to redecorate much of the interior of the Mark Twain house in Hartford, Connecticut. Although most of the work is completed by the spring of 1882, the job is not entirely done until 1883.

October. For her bees-and-honeycomb wallpaper design, Wheeler receives first prize (\$1,000) in the international wallpaper design competition held at the American Art Gallery by Warren, Fuller & Company. Her employees Ida Clark (1858-?) and Caroline Townsend (1854-1889) win second and third prizes (\$500 and \$300); Wheeler's daughter Dora wins fourth prize (\$200).

November 1. Wheeler purchases a building at 115 East Twenty-third Street to house the embroidery department of Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists.

December 2. The United States Patent Office issues a "declaration of interference" stating that Wheeler and Tillinghast have filed competing patent applications for seemingly identical inventions of "Needle-Woven Tapestry."

December 27. Wheeler sues Tillinghast (Patent Interference Case no. 8252, "Candace Wheeler vs. Mary E. Tillinghast") over priority of invention of the stitch used in "Needle-Woven Tapestry."

Winter. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is hired to decorate the William S. Kimball house at 145 Troup Street, Rochester, New York. Work continues throughout 1882. Wheeler authors *The Prize Painting Book Good Times*, a children's book of verse with illustrations by Dora Wheeler. It is meant to be colored in and judged in a coloring competition held by the book's publishers, White & Stokes.

1882

Winter. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is commissioned to decorate the Ogden Goelet house at 608 Fifth Avenue, on the northeast corner at Forty-ninth Street. Work continues until January 1883.

March 14. Wheeler receives an English patent for "Important Improvements in Needlewoven Tapestry and in Fabric Therefor," the needlewoven stitch and ground fabric she invented (Patent no. 1,233).

April 11. Wheeler receives a three-and-one-half-year patent from the United States Patent Office for a "Design for Wall-Paper" featuring her prizewinning bees-and-honeycomb pattern manufactured by Warren, Fuller & Lange (Design no. 12,878).

May 13. The patent interference case "Candace Wheeler vs. Mary E. Tillingast" is dissolved, both parties agreeing that the stitches they invented for making needlewoven tapestry differ in kind from one another.

August. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is decorating the home of Robert Goelet on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-ninth Street and that of Mr. and Mrs. Potter Palmer at 1340 North Lake Shore Drive in Chicago, as well as several unidentified houses in Brooklyn. Wheeler's Associated Artists will supply several needlewoven tapestries to the Palmer home by the time it is completed in 1885.

November 28. Wheeler receives an American patent for "a new and useful Improvement in the Art of Embroidering and Embroidery," the stitch used in her needlewoven tapestries (Letters Patent no. 268,332). Mary Tillinghast also receives a patent for her version of "Needle-Woven Tapestry" (Letters Patent no. 268,149).

Late 1882 or early 1883. Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is hired to decorate the drawing room of the John Taylor Johnston house, 8 Fifth Avenue; the dining room and parlor of the William T. Lusk house, 49 East Thirty-fourth Street; and the drawing room of the Hamilton Fish house, 251 East Seventeenth Street. Work on these various interiors is completed in time for them to be featured in the second volume of George William Sheldon's *Artistic Houses* (1884).

1883

January 23. Wheeler receives a patent from the United States Patent Office for "a new and useful Fabric for Needle-Woven Tapestries," the ground fabric used in her needlewoven tapestries (Letters Patent no. 271,174).

March or early April. Probably at this time the firm Louis C. Tiffany & Company, Associated Artists, is dissolved.

April 28. Wheeler's own firm, also named Associated Artists, is listed for the first time in the R. G. Dun & Company credit ledgers.

May. Francis B. Thurber (Wheeler's younger brother) purchases the 108-acre Thomas Convery farm in the Catskill Mountains near Tannersville, New York, where he builds Lotus Land and Wheeler builds Pennyroyal—the first two cottages of what will become the artists' and writers' colony Onteora.

September. The first advertisement for Wheeler's Associated Artists appears in the press in the *Art Interchange*.

December. Associated Artists participates in the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition held to raise money to build the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. The exhibition is held at the National Academy of Design in New York, where the firm's needlewoven tapestries are displayed in public for the first time.

1884

February. Associated Artists is exporting silk fabrics and embroideries to clients in London.

1886

March. The San Francisco firm Martin & Ingalsbe is acting as West Coast agent for Associated Artists textiles.

1887

September 27. Wheeler receives a three-and-one-half-year patent from the United States Patent Office for a "Design for Wall-Paper" featuring a water-lily pattern manufactured by Warren, Lange & Company (Design no. 17,755).

1888

January. Francis B. Thurber purchases the 458-acre Parker farm in Tannersville and sells it to the Catskill Mountain Camp and Cottage Company to be developed into the cottage community Onteora. Wheeler's son Dunham, by now a member of Associated Artists, designs the Bear and Fox Inn and four cottages (Wake Robin, Crowfoot, Larkspur, and Yarrow.)

July 4. The grand opening of Onteora takes place.

1889

Summer. Associated Artists participates in an exhibition of American decorative arts held at Johnstone, Norman & Company, 67 New Bond Street, London, displaying examples of needlewoven tapestries.

1892

April. Wheeler publishes her first articles on interior decoration in the *Christian Union*.

June. The Board of Woman Managers of New York State for the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition names Wheeler director of the Bureau of Applied Arts. Wheeler is charged with organizing an applied arts exhibit for the state and designing the Library sponsored by New York in the Woman's Building.

July. The Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Exposition names Wheeler color director of the entire Woman's Building.

1893

March 3. A "Preliminary Exhibition" of applied arts organized by Wheeler opens at the American Art Association Galleries in New York; it displays submitted entries, some of which will be chosen for exhibition in the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Wheeler organizes the applied arts exhibit of the State of New York and supervises the decoration of the Woman's Building at the Exposition, including the central Hall of Honor.

Wheeler edits *Household Art*, one of a series of six books containing articles by woman authors published by Harper Brothers as the Distaff Series. *Household Art*, on the subject of interior decorating, contains two articles by Wheeler, "The Philosophy of Beauty Applied to House Interiors" and "Decorative and Applied Art."

Wheeler also edits *Columbia's Emblem, Indian Corn: A Garland of Tributes in Prose and Verse*, a compilation of essays advocating the adoption of corn as America's national emblem.

May. The Exposition opens.

1899

Wheeler edits three issues (January, April, and July) of the *Home Needlework Magazine*, a quarterly periodical devoted to instruction in art needlework, embroidery, and crochet published by the Nonotuck Silk Company, Florence, Massachusetts.

1900

Wheeler retires from active participation in Associated Artists. Dunham Wheeler continues the business until 1907.

1901

Wheeler authors *Content in a Garden* (2d ed. 1904, 3d ed. 1912), a small volume illustrated by her daughter Dora and based on a series of three articles on gardening that Wheeler published in the *Atlantic*.

1902

Wheeler publishes *How to Make Rugs* (2d ed. 1908; 3d ed. 1909), a how-to book discussing weaving, dyeing, patterns, and types of rugs that could be made by women at home as a source of income.

1903

Wheeler publishes *Principles of Home Decoration, with Practical Examples* (2d ed. 1908, 3d ed. 1913), a book offering advice to middle-class women on all aspects of home design, from exterior architecture to interior decoration.

1905

Wheeler authors *Doubledarling and the Dream Spinner*, a children's story about a grandmother and her granddaughter. Illustrated by Dora, it is inspired by Wheeler's own granddaughter Lois, Dora's child.

1907

Wheeler builds a winter home named Wintergreen in Thomasville, Georgia.

Dunham Wheeler liquidates Associated Artists.

1914

Wheeler privately publishes *The Annals of Onteora, 1887-1914*, in which she explains to her intended audience of family and friends what her personal vision of Onteora was and why, in her opinion, the community failed.

1918

Wheeler pens her autobiography, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life*, discussing her life and career and many of the famous artists and writers she knew.

1921

Wheeler publishes *The Development of Embroidery in America*, an account of the history of American needlework and the first book published on the subject.

1923

August 5. Wheeler dies at the age of ninety-six.

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