



Emelene Abbey Dunn

(1859-1929)

By Carolyn Swanton

Mount Hope Cemetery has many distinguished artists among its burials, one of them being Emelene Abbey Dunn. Born in Rochester on May 26, 1859, Miss Dunn was the daughter of Samuel and Harriet Newell Dunn. Her brother was Congressman Thomas B. Dunn, and her great-nephew was William D. Conklin, a Dansville, New York historian, who like the rest of this family, was buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Miss Dunn graduated from the Rochester Free Academy and attended Ingham University in LeRoy before going to Florence and Paris to study under established masters of art. After briefly teaching in Canada, she returned to this area to instruct classes at Brockport Normal School. She aided the Prang Company of Boston with their educational art program. For many years, Prang was the recognized leader of art materials and resources in the country.

She was requested to assist at the Connecticut Normal School, where she developed a course which was published to aid teachers in art instruction. For 20 years she maintained an artist studio in New York City, where she established the New York Normal Art School for advanced instruction of teachers and supervisors of art.

Her paintings of oils, watercolors, and pastels were exhibited throughout the northeast, including the Memorial Art Gallery and Edgerton Park Gallery. Although she was best known for her landscapes, she also did a great many portraits. Subjects were drawn from the Orient to the Grand Canyon, although Miss Dunn was also very fond of Rochester and its environs.

During World War I, "Miss Dunn devoted herself so unsparingly to the work of bringing comfort and cheer to American and Allied soldiers that she undermined her health and returned to Rochester somewhat of an invalid." (*Democrat & Chronicle*, February 19, 1929). Here she visited and brought joy to the veterans at the Rochester State Hospital.

"At times during her life, subjected to long ordeals of physical pain, she rose triumphant time and again to carry on her chosen work

"The most cruel of blows came when, long months before her death, physicians advised her to give up painting. ...she could do no more than thumbnail sketches ... and she did, hundreds of them as letter headings and greeting cards." (Preface, *Mediterranean Picture Lands*, p. 16)

She died in her sister's home at 97 Oxford Street on February 17, 1929. Her sister, Mary, compiled many of her watercolors with selections of her writings in a memorial volume, *Mediterranean Picture Lands*, shortly after her death.

(from *New York Sun*)

