



The Legacy of Mary Hallock Foote



*The Pretty Girls in the West* Published in *Century's Magazine* in 1889



BETWEEN DAYLIGHT AND DARK.



Illustration of Hester Prynne



DRAWN BY MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.



“THE LETTER OF RESIGNATION.”  
MARY HALLOCK FOOTE, UNITED STATES.  
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“THE WOOD DOVE.”  
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Drawing, *Marian Sewing*, 1883





A FEW MOMENTS' BUSINESS



*"The Child at the Brook-side."* The Scarlet Letter By: Nathaniel Hawthorne.



*Dove so White* from The Skeleton in Armor By: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Women in history can often be found in the foot notes or in passing. Unless they were a Ruler of some land or in the right place at the right time, people seem to forget that our human existence would be invalid without the contributions of the female populous. Women have to constantly prove they have the right to sit at the same table as the men. They leave behind legacies and break throughs. We cannot let their achievements and teachings be forgotten. So, let us shine a light on an extraordinary artist of the Wild West days, Mary Hallock Foote.

Born in 1847 in Milton, New York, Mary Hallock Foote grew up with Quaker parents that pushed her to explore higher education and her creativity (Brown). Foote spent 3 years honing her artistic skills at The Cooper Institute, known as The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art today. "It was while at Cooper that Foote also met Helena de Kay, who became a life-long friend, about whom in 1917 she would write her novel, *Edith Bonham*. Helena de Kay's fiancé was Richard Watson Gilder, the editor of *Scribner's Magazine* and later of the *Century*. Through his admiration of her work, as well as their friendship, Gilder commissioned many of Mary Hallock Foote's illustrations and published her stories" (Richard). Some scholars think that Kay and Foote's relationship was more than just friendship. But even in the letters they wrote to each other, there might be some sub context, but in the Victorian Era it was looked down upon and was not socially acceptable (Brown). I believe what the scholars are inferring has some truth to it. And that would explain some of her choices in subject matter and of her stories. Back on topic, Foote's main choice of medium was drawing for wood block prints for mass production.

In 1876, Foote marries a mining engineer Arthur De Wint Foote and they moved out to the untamed, wild west. While they were out there, Mrs. Foote's notoriety exploded. She created illustrations of a more tamed and peaceful West that contradicts a lot of the news and hysteria that made it back to the East coast. Mrs. Foote would host dinner parties and cultivate the culture and the richness of the West. She wanted the "high society" people to see that there was more out in the country than cowboys and criminals. And she was commissioned left and right, from authors to magazines like *Scribner's* and her own books. At times she was the sole bread winner that kept their family afloat with the unpredictability of the mining environment that Mr. Foote worked in. Eventually Mr. Foote was transferred to Grass Valley, CA and was put in charge of the North Star mining company. They finally were stationed in one place.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Foote's art faded away with time. Some guess that it was caused by the public need for action and excitement and gun fights of the Wild West that Mrs. Foote was not producing. She brought forth a civilized and burgee outlook to the West. It just did not flow with the times anymore. That does not mean her legacy died. She showed us a unique way of life. We see a softer side of the West. Her work will always remind people that just because you see it one way, it does not mean all ways look like that. And I think we need to be reminded of that now more than ever.

Mrs. Foote brought us a unique look into the past. She showed us that women can be part of the shaping of our history. They can be more than mothers. They can strive to enrichen their lives and make the best out of their situation. Art and culture were some of the things that meant most to Mrs. Foote. She leaves behind the soft and peaceful picture of a wild time in our human experience. There are always two sides of every coin, you just have to remember to flip it over to see.

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