

Grace C. Whittemore

By Dani Crossley

In the fourth issue of Volume 26 (December 2011) of our newsletter, we ran a story about Catherine Smith Fowler. In the June 24, 1953, issue of the Berwick *Enterprise's* Christie's Column was an article about Grace Conner Whittemore (1876-1963). She was the granddaughter of Catherine Smith Fowler. What an illustrious, talented family they were! Grace is described as a well-known artist and poetess with a recently published book of poetry.

According to the newspaper article: *"Her great-grandfather's farm on the Susquehanna was a grant from William Penn. Her mother's father was Gilbert H. Fowler, of Fowlersville, who was on the first Board of Directors of the First National Bank. Her great-grandfather Samuel H. Smith lived a few miles below Nescopeck, and his home is still standing."*

Grace attended local schools, including the Bloomsburg State Normal School, after which she attended the School of Design for Women at Philadelphia and the Academy of Fine Arts. This led to her teaching drawing in the public schools of Berwick and Bloomsburg from 1905 to 1908. She exhibited water colors and received many awards and is listed in "Who's Who in American Art."

When her eyesight began failing, Grace turned from painting to poetry. What she could now see in her mind's eye was expressed in the form of poetry as portrayed in the above-mentioned book, "August Night Orchestra and Other Poems."

She emphasizes sound over visual description in her title poem from "August Night Orchestra."

*"The stage is set and from a thicket podium
The first clear, vibrant notes of cricket come—
The leader's call
Then soon in shrub and tree and green hedgerows
A myriad tiny fiddlers draw their bows.
Until through all
The air flows a boundless harmony."*

"Braille's Answer" tells her own reaction to fading vision:

*"Within the dark,
No flashing colors pass,
No sunlight mark
Or patterns on the grass.*

*No form of tree
Or delicate line of flower.*



The painting "Haystacks and Hills," by Grace C. Whittemore

*No swinging-free
Red roses in the bower.*

*No fluttering wing
Or butterfly's gay note,
No scarlet ring
Of lilies edge the road.
Now black and gray
Where once the rainbow stood,
No breezes sway
The bluebells in the wood.*

*But in the mind
Now deeper vision glows,
A beauty find
Not fading as the rose.*

*And memory sends
Its store of loveliness,
All this God lends
For our creating to us."*

According to Christie's Column, Grace worked a long time on each poem, rejecting and selecting the right word and the right rhyme. The writer of the column was pleased to claim Mrs. Whittemore as "one of our own."