

Hilda and Louise Mansfield

by Lynne Belluscio

As I was leaving Elinor Townsend's House with the last of the items that were designated for the Historical Society, I mentioned to Mike Welsh that there was a painting that was not listed on the inventory. It was a watercolor by Louise Mansfield, a graduate of Ingham University and it would be very nice if it could be part of the Historical Society's collection. He agreed.

Some how it rang a bell with me when I read the back of the painting: "Portrait of Hilda Mansfield by her sister Louise. This picture belongs to Ruth M. Keeney. We keep it as long as we desire - Idelia C. Taylor" Hilda Mansfield ... Hilda Mansfield ... Then I remembered, we have another painting of Hilda Mansfield. One that was painted by Ida (Idelia) Taylor. It hangs over the mantle in the children's room.

Painted in 1887, Hilda is two years old and is sitting in a rocking chair with a piece of needlework. I found it interesting that the watercolor painting of Hilda

which was painted by her sister, when Hilda is probably in her twenties, is almost the same pose as the Taylor painting when Hilda was two. Although the Taylor portrait of the two-year-old Hilda is not identified, the Historical Society has a scrapbook with sketches by Ida Taylor and one of the pencil sketches is the Hilda Mansfield painting with her name written in the margin.

Hilda was born in LeRoy on November 29, 1885. Her older sister Louise Buckingham Mansfield was born in 1876. Their parents were Henry Buckingham Mansfield and Hattie Sheldon Mansfield. Hattie Sheldon was raised on a farm on the East Main Road, known as the home of Dr. Graney. She attended Ingham University from 1864 to 1872. She married Henry Mansfield from Brooklyn. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1867 and continued in the Navy as a commander of Coast Survey Cruisers and at the Brooklyn Navy Yard until his retirement



Hilda Mansfield by Ida Taylor - 1887

in 1905. His wife and daughters remained in LeRoy during his naval service and moved to Brooklyn after his assignment to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Louise Mansfield attended Ingham University in 1886 and 1887, although there is no indication that she graduated, she certainly was a talented artist. Her broad quick brush strokes of her work. Paintings by Louise Mansfield include "The Final Furlong", "The Horse Market", "The Cattle Market" and "Nearing the Finish." Three of her paintings recently sold at Christie's in London.

She exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brooklyn Society of Artists. At the turn of the century, her illustrations appeared in *Harper's Magazine* and *House and Garden*. She also illustrated greeting cards and was considered an artist of distinction.

She is included in several listings of America Artists. I found her mentioned in an article about

botanical illustrations. Maud Purdy, noted botanical artist, was documenting irises and produced 40 paintings in 1928, but when other projects demanded her time, Louise Mansfield took over the project. She had studied with impressionist Charles Webster Hawthorne and Robert Henri Sauder of the Ashcan School.

Between 1927 and 1936, Louise painted over 150 irises and they were exhibited at the Century of Progress at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and again in the Garden's on Parade Exhibition Hall at the New York World's Fair in 1939-1940. (I hope to locate a catalogue from that exhibition, which illustrates some of Louise Mansfield's paintings.)

She died in Tappan, New York in August 1970. A memorial service was held on August 26 and her body was returned to LeRoy where she was buried with her parents at Machpelah Cemetery. Although there is a stone with her sister Hilda's name, there is no record of her death or burial.



Hilda Mansfield by Louise Mansfield c. 1920