



PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN QUINCY REED (b. 1841 or 1842, d. 1902)

SITTER: JENNIE OTIS MCNEAR (1857 - 1883)

DATE: 1880-1883

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Jennie Otis McNear was the wife of George Plummer McNear and the mother of the baby, Clara McNear, depicted with Elizabeth Bailey Williams in the portrait displayed above. Jennie's early, tragic death which resulted from the disastrous explosion of the steamship, *Pilot*, was recounted in this excerpt from the *Marin Journal*, published May 31, 1883:

No story could be more sad than that which tells of the early and sudden death of Mrs. George P. McNear... Jennie had been a little more than three years the wife of Mr. George P. McNear, and the day of her burial, last Sunday, was the second anniversary of the birth of their little daughter. She was the very personification of rosy health; in form and feature a model of beauty; the rosy pathway of her life was reflected in her cheerful spirits, and as daughter, wife, and mother, her character seemed perfection. This was the tender daughter, the bride-wife, the clinging mother, her good-bye kiss fresh on the lips of her husband-lover and child, and her feet led by filial affection toward a suffering mother, who was met by the appalling catastrophe to the steamer *Pilot* last Friday.

If you look carefully at this portrait, you can see Jennie is wearing a wedding ring. This allow us to date the portrait between the date of her marriage to George McNear in 1880 and the year of her death in 1883. Seated with her hands resting on a small draped table, Jennie appears calm and reserved. With the exception of her crown braid, she wears her hair down and free-flowing, a style usually reserved for young girls. She blankly stares into the distance with a facial expression that is difficult not to describe as forlorn.