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Wallace Nutting
Collectors Club Newsletter
The Official Newsletter of the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club

The President's Message
By Jan K. Liberatore



Dear Fellow WNCC Members,

I don't know about you, but opening this newsletter I feel like a kid at Christmas! Sue Ivankovich and all our contributing members have again put together a great newsletter. Thank you to Sue and all our contributors. We greatly appreciate the many hours that go into this!

Some exciting news for 2015. As many of you already know, we will be having the 2015 WNCC Annual Convention in Glastonbury, CT near Hartford. The big news is that Charles T. Lyle, the Executive Director of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum will be our featured speaker on Saturday morning at the convention. His presentation will be Wallace Nutting: Preservation Pioneer. Wallace Nutting owned the Webb House as part of his Colonial Chain of Houses and called it Hospitality Hall. Mr. Lyle's presentation will be followed by a Saturday afternoon tour of the Webb-Dean-Stevens Museum houses on the historic and beautiful Main Street of Wethersfield, just a few miles away from our convention hotel.

The dates of the convention are the weekend of May 15-16, 2015. We will be staying at the Hilton Garden Inn/Glastonbury, CT. This is the same facility we stayed at several years ago and everyone seemed to agree it was an excellent hotel, a convenient location, and great service.

As you can see, it is shaping up to be another memorable convention, starting off Friday with the Ivankovich annual WNCC convention auction. Saturday morning will bring an expanded Marketplace buy/sell/trade session, the annual club meeting, and some great presentations. Please think seriously about bringing a few things to sell at the Market place. It also looks like it would be a good time to consign to the Ivankovich auction. The convention always brings a large crowd of buyers!

The annual WNCC dinner will cap off our convention Saturday evening and the Hospitality Suite will be open to all members Friday evening through Saturday evening.

I have finalized arrangements with the hotel and you will find information in this newsletter and on our web site, WallaceNutting.org.

Plan your 2015 vacation time to include the weekend of May 15 - 16. We will be emailing a registration packet in March. In the meantime, feel free to make hotel reservations. Be sure to tell them you are with the WNCC Convention for our special rate. We'll see you there!

Best regards,
 Jan
 Jan K. Liberatore, WNCC President
wncenter@aol.com

President Emeritus, George Monro

The Way It Begins by Ron Leavesley

This article was taken from the April 1998 issue of the WNCC Newsletter just as Ron wrote it. Sadly, George passed in 2005. But here it is 17 years later and the Club is still going strong. Wouldn't George & Justine be pleased to see their love and research of Wallace Nutting has continued on with collectors over the years, and even more new friends have been made in the shared interest!



What better way to set the stage for this biography on our President Emeritus, George Monro, than an appropriate Wallace Nutting picture title.

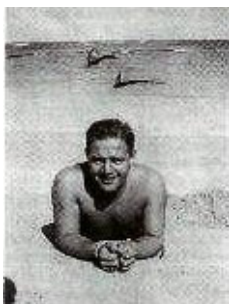
The way it begins is November of 1921, and from there on it is an interesting life highlighted by the founding of the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club with his wife, Justine. Twenty-five years later, the club membership has grown, we know more about Wallace Nutting, and George is still going strong, despite a recent heart bypass operation. Working with Willis White, they are involved in the ongoing project of cataloging Nutting pictures.

George, in reminiscing about Justine and their experiences in becoming Wallace Nutting collectors, said that it really all started by chance... isn't that true for many of us. It seems that when they moved into their home in Kamfe Lake, New Jersey, they found the walls full of nail holes from pictures hung by the previous owner. Needing something to cover all the holes, they started their quest for pictures. Justine happened to have a Nutting that was her mother's... sound familiar, you other collectors. They liked it and that started the quest for more and that is the way it began... they were hooked. The local antique store, Crazy Ladies, was their first source... one Nutting beget two... two beget three, and all of a sudden there were almost 1000 pictures in the house, on the walls, and in boxes. They traveled all over in their search... not a barn sale, antique store, or auction escaped their attention. In the process they made many great long-term friends. As a result of these friendships and the increasing interest in Nuttings, the Collectors Club was formed in 1973, and the first convention was held in June of 1974, with thirty-six ardent collectors attending.



Franklin & Marshall, 1941

We all know George for his involvement with the club, but we know little of the man, since modesty is his hallmark. George's early years were spent in the Glenn Rock and Ridgewood sections of New Jersey. An accomplished high school athlete, he received a football scholarship to Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. In 1941, the basic football formation was the single wing, not the "T". Consequently, George, at 170 pounds, played tailback. He not only ran the ball but also threw passes. As George said, "I was fast then."



Marshall Islands, 1941

In 1943 George graduated from F&M and was immediately recruited by the Marine Corps. Off he went to basic training at Paris Island... and then off to officer's training school. Commissioned a Second Lieutenant, he attained the rank of Captain and was discharged in 1945.

Now for the rest of the story... George, along with two other new lieutenants, was among the initial officers assigned to command units of colored Marines. At that time, according to George, Eleanor Roosevelt was active in seeing that the Marines had colored units, so they were referred to as "Eleanor's Boys". Once the units were formed, they were shipped off to the Marshall Islands in the Pacific theater where they were stationed on Allen Island, servicing an airbase on an adjacent island unit until the war ended in 1945.



George in 1958

Following his discharge in 1945, and a job search like so many other veterans, he began his business career with a small start-up New York publishing company, Hall Publishing. Here George was a jack-of-all-trades and worked his way up in the organization, eventually becoming involved in advertising sales. Now married to Justine, George wanted to avoid the commute to New York. He joined the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, again involved in advertising sales.

George retired in the 70's and since then has really been dedicated to the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club. Until Justine passed away in 1991, they continued their search for Nuttings and were very involved in club activities. George hasn't in any way lost his love for Nuttings. They hang throughout the house, and some are still stashed away in boxes along with other Nutting memorabilia. As George said, "I know it's around here somewhere". We all know that George has a particular fondness for the newsletters, but did you know that he banged it out on a manual typewriter sitting on a board on his lap. As George mused, "My hands were just too big for those word processors and besides that, I am not very mechanical."

George summed it all up, "through our involvement with Nutting and the club, we have met some of the nicest people we have ever known." Enough said!

Doris Mariet Griswold Dahmen
Niece of Mariet Nutting

by Sharon Lacasse



Sharon & Doris at their recent visit

Our visit began almost 15 years ago when we first realized that there was a club member on Cape Cod and that she was actually a relative of Mariet Nutting. Doris Dahmen is Mrs. Nutting's niece. We arranged a visit to her home in West Falmouth and she showed us letters from Wallace Nutting, newspaper articles and a wonderful photo of "Dog-Gone-It" Doris was very welcoming and was eager to talk about her aunt Mariet and how she had such fond memories of her. She treasured every little bit of her collection.

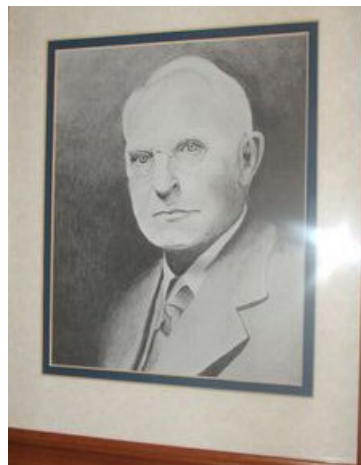
Fifteen years later we visit her again. She is still as spry as before and eagerly welcomes us. She is very humble and cannot believe that someone would have such an interest in meeting with her. She tells again about her love for her Aunt Mariet and shows us an article posted in the Springfield Sunday Union newspaper stating that after Wallace's death her aunt tried to continue the Furniture business as much as possible as long as there was a need for his furniture and that it employed a number of craftsmen who would find it hard to get work elsewhere. Mariet was 88 at the time and stated in the article that she "expected to live a long time as she had so much to do". Doris also showed us an unusual Christmas catalog (see photo) that Wallace Nutting had distributed to market his photographs. On her wall are framed photos of both Mariet and Wallace Nutting.



Doris as a young woman



Photos of Mariet and Wallace that hang on Doris' wall



The matriarch of the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club, Doris Dahmen, born 11/4/15 will be turning 100 soon. Born to Emerson Josiah Griswold and Annie Hepzibah Parker. Her mother Annie was born in England and came to the U.S. at 6 years old. Doris Mariet Griswold was given Mrs. Nutting's first name for her middle. Doris was the oldest of five children, a brother Lewis Gordon Griswold, sister Ruth Marian Griswold, sister Amy Roslyn Griswold and sister Alta Luella Griswold. Her sister Alta is still alive but the others have passed.

Doris grew up in Buckland, MA and went to business school in Springfield at Bay Path College. She still has a letter from Wallace Nutting asking for her typing services. (See photo below) asking, "*Did Doris get a place? Is she good at the typewriter? Does she understand bookkeeping? I must know immediately.*" *Sincerely, Wallace Nutting.*

She remembers Wallace Nutting as being very stern, but nice. And spoke very highly of her aunt Mariet and said she was very kind and loved children. They would come to visit once yearly and would arrive in a Studebaker with the top down. They always had a driver. Doris was about 10 years old at the time and remembers specifically that she was told to be "clean" and mind her manners. Mariet always wrote letters to Doris and kept in touch through college and afterwards. Doris said she always included a little money with her letters to help with expenses. She married Charles Dahmen and they were in the insurance business for many years.

Doris and her husband have one son, Charles Emerson Dahmen who lives in Gloucester, MA, and works for Habitat for Humanity.

Thank you Doris for inviting Kenny and me into your home for a visit. We enjoyed every minute of it!

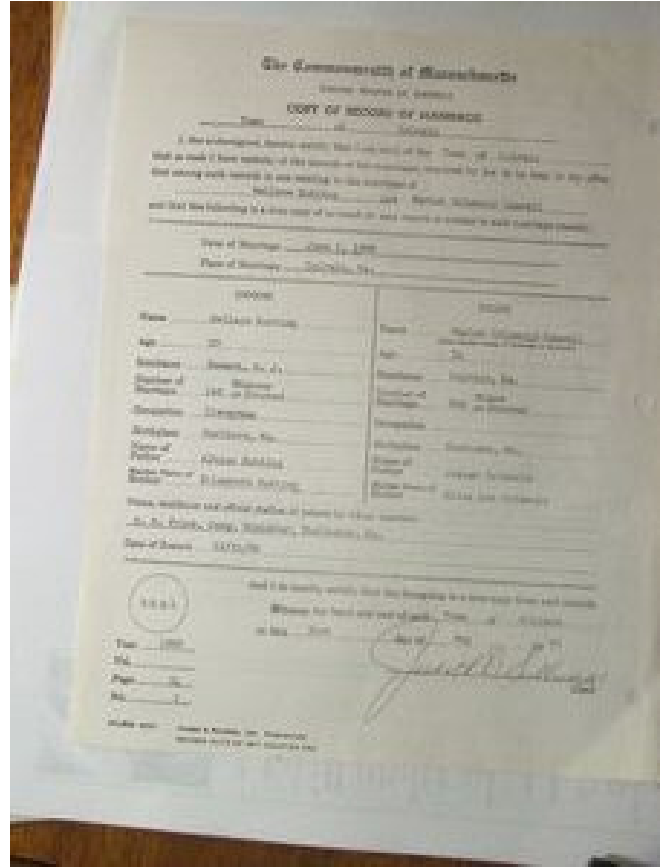
More photos from Doris' collection follow on next pages...



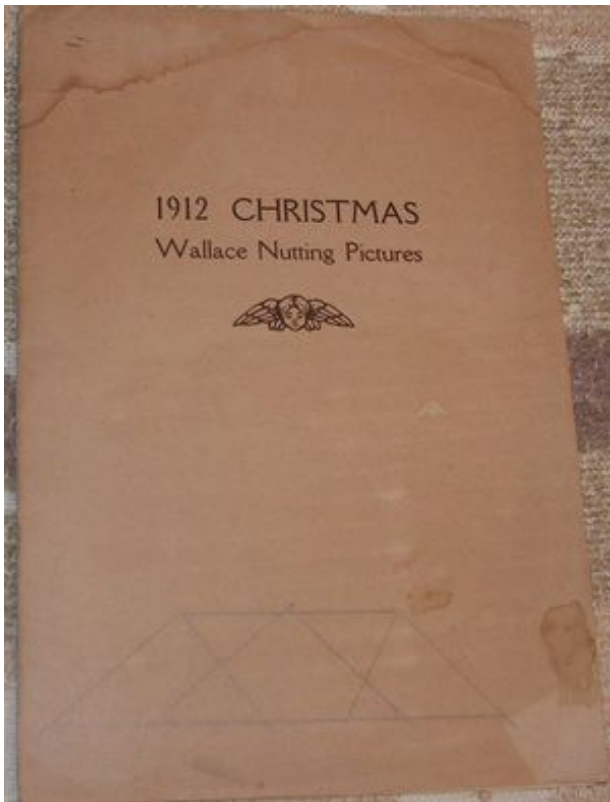
The young Rev. Wallace Nutting



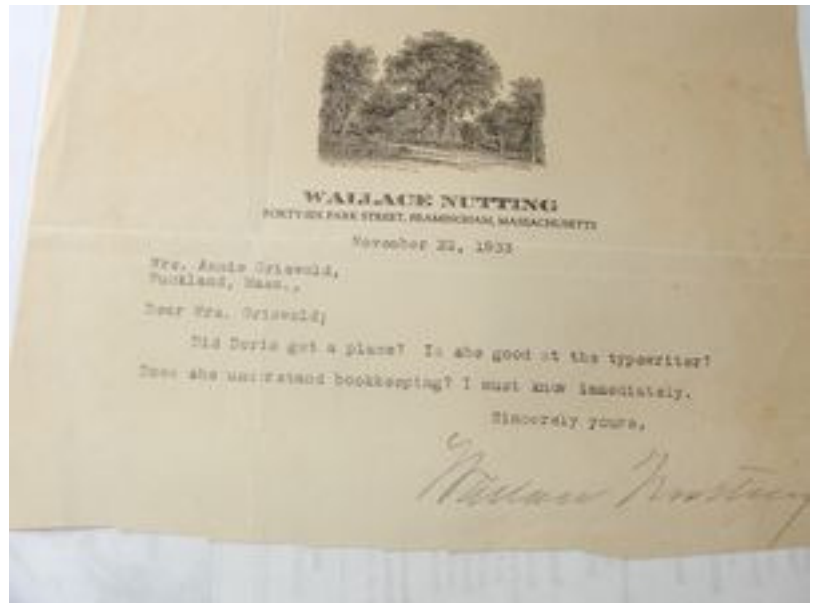
Springfield Sunday Union Article



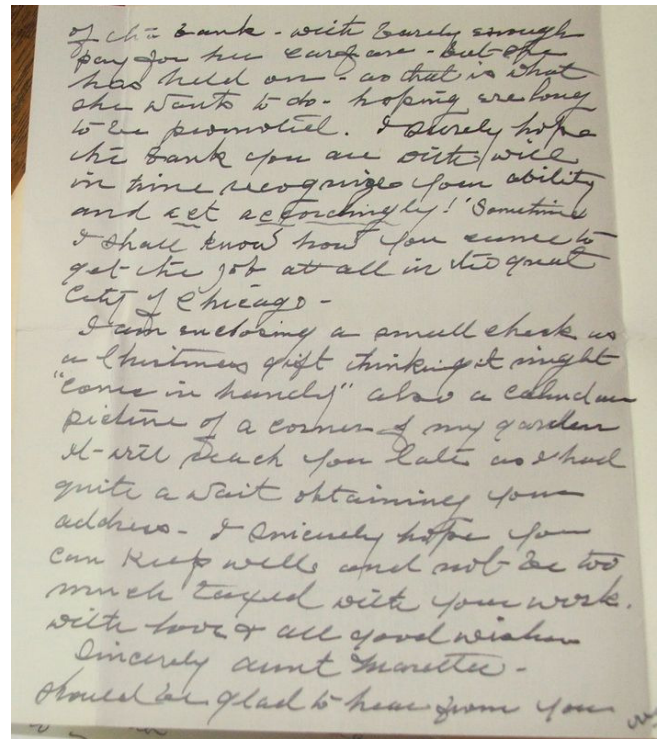
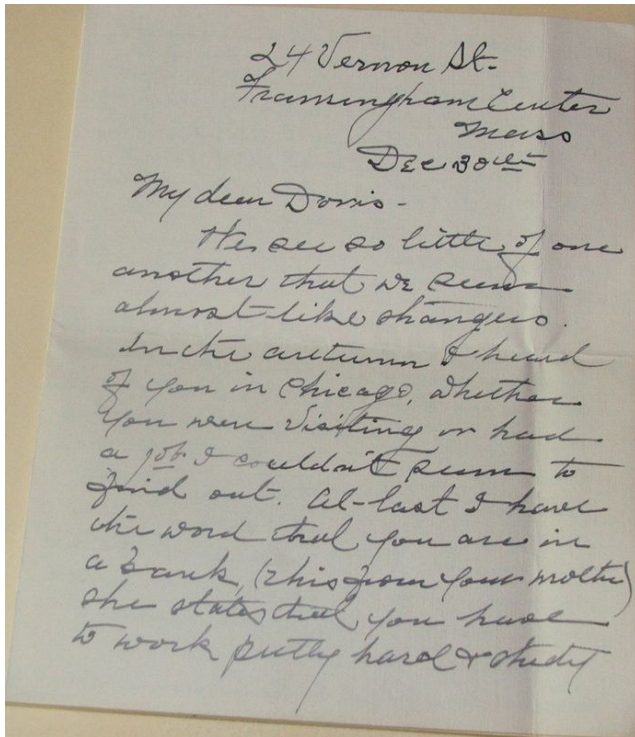
Wallace & Mariet's marriage certificate



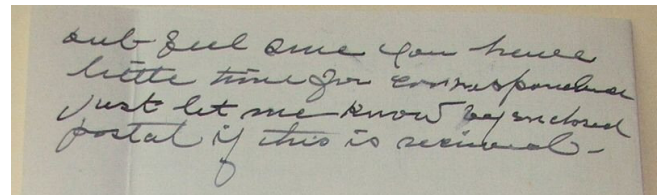
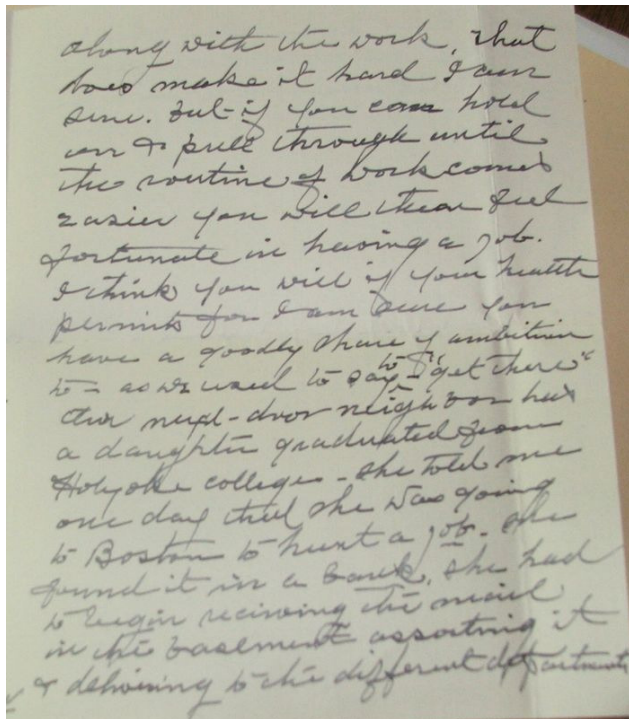
rare Christmas catalog



letter from Wallace to Doris



Hand-written letter from Aunt Mariet to Doris



Sharon pointed out..."Looking at the handwriting, I am wondering if Mariet Nutting wrote all of Wallace Nuttings letters?" Interesting observation since both are very similar!

Editor's interpretation below of Mariet's letter to Doris, with a guess here and there, and gaps where words could not be deciphered.

My dear Doris,
 We see so little of one another that we seem almost like strangers. In the autumn I heard of you in Chicago, whether you were visiting or had a job I couldn't seem to find out. At last I have the word that you are in a bank (this from your mother). She states that you have to work pretty hard & study of the bank with barely enough pay for her carfare - but she has held on - as that is what she wants to do - hoping before long to be promoted. I surely hope the bank you are with will in time recognize your ability and act accordingly! Sometime I shall know how you came to get the job at all in the great city of Chicago.

I am enclosing a small check as a Christmas gift thinking it might "come in handy" also a calendar picture of a corner of my garden....as I had quite a wait obtaining your address. I sincerely hope you can keep well and not be too much taxed with your work.

With love & all good wishes

Sincerely Aunt Marieta (Editor's note: I thought it looked like she added the "a" at the end...perhaps a family nickname of endearment?)

(She continued writing as if a P.S.) Should be glad to hear from you along with the work, that does make it hard I am sure. But if you can hold on to press through until the routine of work comes easier you will then feel fortunate in having a job. I think you will if your health permits for I am sure you have a goodly share of ambition...as we...to say to "get there". Our next-door neighbor has a daughter graduated from Holyoke college - she told me one day that she was going to Boston to hunt a job. She found it in a Bank. She had to begin receiving the mail in the basement assorting it & delivering to the different departments.

But feel sure you have little time for correspondence just let me know by enclosed postal if this is received.

Virginia Crossley (1932-2012)

by Jim Eckert

In February 2013 Sharon and I received a note from Jinny Gonzales, daughter of Virginia Crossley, letting us know that her mother had passed away in October 2012.

This did not come as a big surprise to us, as we had not received our usual Christmas card from her that December.

All collectors have unusual stories about items in our collection and this is one (of many) of our favorites.

To us anyway, Virginia was an unusual Wallace Nutting collector (even more eccentric than the rest of us).

I can find no exact information as to when she actually became a member of the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club, but in her Nutting research materials she had newsletters from George and Justin Monro dating back to the beginning of the WNCC in 1973. When I started printing mailing labels for George to help with Club mailings in 1988 she was on the membership list.

But, as they say, I digress.

Virginia was not what I would call the usual collector. She was a long time Club member that none of the long time members seem to have met. And, she did not appear to have ever attended a WNCC convention or a Michael Ivankovich auction.

We first "met" Virginia in the fall of 1998. At the time we were actively engaged in buying and selling Nutting pictures for our collection. To dispose of duplicates and other unwanted pictures we were accumulating through "package deals" and to raise cash to buy more, we were selling in more than a dozen summer antique shows and flea markets during in Illinois and Michigan. We were actively advertising to buy one picture or entire collections in several antique trade publications.

One evening Virginia called our home and said she had a collection of about a hundred Nutting pictures to sell. I tried to make an appointment to see them right away, as we still had a couple of shows coming up, but she said her husband was not well and she would call us in the spring. I asked her for a list of what she had to sell, so as to get some idea what we would be seeing. She said she would send a list, but never did.

I called her or dropped her a note every few months to let her know we were still interested, but she was always too busy, had health issues, was going to be gone, etc. for us to come to where she lived in Rochester Hills, Michigan (north of Detroit) to see her. After a while we decided she had probably changed her mind about selling her collection, but kept in touch with her from time to time.

Then, "out of the blue", she called on a Monday night in November 2002. Said she was ready to sell and wanted to do so right away.

Sharon and I had just returned from our son's wedding in Hawaii and we had less than two weeks to complete preparations for his wedding reception for our family, friends, and his college "buds". A long antiquing trip was the last thing we had time fit into our schedule. Our show season was over and I was very busy at the bank, but we made arrangements to meet her on Saturday morning of that week (five days from the call).

So, we took off on that Friday afternoon, after work, to make the 400-mile trip, planning to be at her place at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. The trip was a grueling ten-hour drive through the Chicago/Gary corridor, across Michigan, and around Detroit. We arrived at the motel about 2:00 a.m. Saturday, caught a few hours sleep and got up about 8:00 a.m.

I called Virginia to let her know we were in town and would be at her place shortly.

She sounded confused and told me she was just on her way out to get her hair done. We think she had forgotten completely about us coming!

I told her we would get some breakfast and come a little later.

A couple of hours later, after breakfast and her hair appointment, we arrived at her nice condominium. She had only ONE Nutting picture on display! My first thought was that we might have made the long trip for nothing.

She took us to the basement of the condo and there, in boxes, carefully wrapped in 1973 and 1974 *Detroit Free Press* newspapers (with Detroit Tiger box scores featuring Al Kaline, Norm Cash, and Willie Horton), and carefully taped with masking tape were about 125 various Nutting prints, along with 20 other assorted pictures. Most of them still had auction tags on them or lot numbers written in grease pencil on the glass. Apparently she bought them and immediately stored them away. They had clearly never been displayed.



More of a "hoard" than a collection!

Additionally she had several other "collections" of paper dolls, antique toys, and Depression glass, which she gleefully showed to us. From her conversation it was obvious that she had extensively researched her Nutting prints and her other collections.

We figured up what we could pay for the pictures (it was less than we could have paid in the Spring, because we had to hold them in inventory until May) and made a deal. She sold all her prints, except the one she proudly displayed in her living room. We packed the prints back up, loaded our station

wagon, took her to lunch, and headed back to Illinois. We arrived home in time to get a good night's sleep and get to work on Monday.

Most of the pictures we purchased from her were very common subjects and were sold long ago. But, we still have three in our collection, which are among our favorites: *Cetera*, *The Isaac Walton Brook*, and *Lorna Doone*.

We never got to talk to Virginia after that, although for the next ten years we continued to exchange Christmas cards and occasional notes about Club activities.



Examples above of Jim and Sharon's favorite pictures from Virginia's collection: *Lorna Doone* (left) and *The Isaac Walton Brook* (right)

Wallace Nutting: "...Clergyman With a Love of the Beautiful"

...Of himself Nutting said in 1936, "I am under no illusions as to my pictures. I am not an artist and it is most disagreeable to me to be called one. I am a clergyman with a love of the beautiful."

This was taken from the August 1978 issue of the Wooden Nutmeg, Journal of Antiques and Collectibles (Glastonbury, CT) with pink as the title background color!

Buyers Looking for the Best of Nutting Furniture, Photos

***August 18, 2014 Article from Antique Week Magazine
by Don Johnson***



FORT WASHINGTON, Pa - The market for Wallace Nutting furniture and hand-colored photographs parallels much of the antiques industry. Great things draw attention, while common pieces can be a tough sell.

During the May 16 auction conducted by Michael Ivankovich, the top lots were items that are hard to find, led by a no. 918 mahogany block-front chest of drawers that sold for \$4,180 (Prices include the buyer's premium). The Chippendale-style chest had four graduated drawers and bracket feet.

"That was a killer piece", Ivankovich said. "I've sold that for \$10,000 in the past". In a way, that chest summed up the market. Prices have changed, not always for the better. "Nothing's what it used to be", Ivankovich said. That's not to say the interest is gone. "Nutting collectors are still passionate about Wallace Nutting", he noted. However there are fewer buyers. "As my clients have aged, died and moved on, there are not enough younger collectors to take their place".

Because many Nutting buyers have been collecting for years, they have the material that's easiest to find. "The clients who are left have all the common stuff",

Ivankovich said. "The common stuff is soft".

The rarest and best pieces, such as the block-front chest, are easier to sell even though they command more money. Then again, many of those items cost more to start with. "Nutting's furniture business technically peaked in the '30s," Ivankovich noted. "That chest probably cost \$200 to \$300, maybe \$400, in the 1930s. You could buy a house for \$500 back then. Nutting's best-of-the-best pieces were purchased by wealthy people."

Fresh to the market, the chest came out of an estate in Maine. The consignor's father did deliveries for Nutting in the 1930's, and it's possible the chest was payment for those services. From the same estate came another scarce piece made by Nutting, a Chippendale-style mirror with gilded ornamentation. Measuring 39 inches high by 16 inches wide, it sold for \$2,090.

Other top pieces of Nutting furniture in the sale included a petite mahogany slant-front desk having three graduated drawers that sold for \$660. The catalog noted, "We could not find this exact desk in any [Wallace Nutting] Furniture catalog." A no. 168 rush-seat stool in a light maple finish, 22 inches high, also sold for \$660; no. 432 writing-arm Windsor chair, one drawer under the seat, one drawer and one candle slide under the writing arm, partially re-finished, brought \$605; and a child's desk in a light maple finish was \$550. The catalog noted, "This is a rarer piece that we do not recall seeing in any Wallace Nutting Furniture Catalog." A no. 637 maple library table with one drawer, some blemishes but structurally sound, realized \$550; no. 907 pine hanging shelf, with three shelves and a solid backing, light maple finish, 43. inches high by 36 inches wide, older corner repair, nicely refinished, sold for \$440; four no. 392 ladderback side chairs in maple with the original rush seats brought \$275 the set; two no. 492 ladderback armchairs, maple, original rush seats, sold for \$275 the pair; and a no. 17 Windsor candlestand in a dark mahogany finish, some wear, was \$209.

One of the more unusual items was an unsigned Wallace Nutting toddy stirrer made of curly maple. It brought \$220. The catalog noted, "...we originally sold this piece more than 10 years ago, and it is the only such Wallace Nutting item that we are aware of."

The best of Nutting's hand-colored photographs were included in a portfolio, *Up at the Vilas Farm*. Considered to be extremely rare, it sold for \$3960. Circa 1920, the leather-bound portfolio comprised 22 pages of matted Wallace Nutting images taken at the estate of Charles Nathaniel Vilas in Alstead, NH. Vilas was a friend who commissioned Nutting to prepare the portfolio, which consisted of pictures taken inside the home and on the grounds. "It's only the second one we've ever seen," Ivankovich said.

Leading the individual hand-colored images was *The Christmas Welcome Home*, circa 1900 to 1910, that brought \$2,475. The Rhode Island snow scene, 9 inches by 15 inches, included people and a horse-drawn sleigh. "That did surprisingly well," said Ivankovich, who



The Christmas Welcome Home



A Sheffield Basket

1900-1910, depicting a man fishing, a scythe in one hand, Manchester, VT, 20 inches by 16 inches, some damage to the mat, was \$330.

described it as a quadruple rarity. "It had men. It had children. It had snow. And, it had animals. All those entities are valuable to Nutting collectors."

Also of note were a number of Nutting floral still lifes dating to about 1930 to 1935. "Florals are what I would call uncommon, but not rare, as a category. Within that category, there are some that are very hard to find," he said. "Once a collector has a particular picture, in this case a floral, they're out of the market." A *Sheffield Basket*, 13 inches high by 16 inches wide, sold for \$1,100; *Spring Glories*, 16 inches by 13 inches, was \$880; A *Royal Worcester Vase*, 10 inches by 8 inches, oval frame, brought \$770; and *Van Fleet Rose*, taken in the Wentworth-Gardiner House, Portsmouth, N.H., 10 inches by 8 inches, oval frame, was \$715.

Landscapes included *A Lane in Sorrento*, circa 1905 to 1910, an unusual foreign scene, 15 inches by 9 inches at \$522.50; untitled snow scene of *Christmas at Home*, circa 1915 to 1925, 8 inches by 10 inches \$412.50; and *Better than Mowing*, circa

Cataloged as extremely rare, a Colonial interior quad-tych, circa 1915 to 1925, four images in one frame, consisting of *Chintz & Chat*, *A Cold Day*, *A Welcome Task* and *Just Another Sip*, 19 inches by 23 inches, realized \$302.50.

The best of the hand-colored photographs by other artists includes works by Fred Thompson. Circa 1910 to 1920, a close-up of a large sailing schooner, 20 inches by 16 inches, sold for \$412.50, while *Noontime Rest*, cows in a field, circa 1910 to 1920, 14 inches by 17 inches, was \$247.50.

By Charles Sawyer, a landscape with footprints in snow, circa 1930 to 1935, 5 inches by 6 inches, brought \$99, as did an unusual advertising sign having "Sawyer Pictures" hand-painted in gold on a dark green board with an easel back, circa 1920, 4 1/2 inches by 19 1/2 inches.

A Lamson Studios hand-colored photo of the Portland Head Light house, a steamship in the foreground, circa 1900 to 1910, 10 inches by 12 inches, realized \$110; A *Promise of Harvest* by David Davidson, sheep under a blossoming tree, circa 1915 to 1925, 12 inches by 15 inches, brought \$66; and *Desert Verbenas* by Frederick Martin, circa 1915 to 1925, an unusual Southwest desert scene, 7 inches by 11 inches, was \$55.



Tribute to Claude "Red" Billet

Sadly, longtime Club Member and friend, Red Billet passed away in August 2014. His obituary stated he had a "passion for fishing, antiques and hiking"...that he was "an avid collector of old fishing gear, York County (PA) memorabilia, and Wallace Nutting prints. He traveled near and far to auctions and sales year round."



Red, far right, at the 1997 Convention dinner in Manchester, NH

Mark your calendars for the 2015 Convention!

May 15-16th

Hilton Garden Inn

85 Glastonbury Blvd, Glastonbury, CT 06033

(860) 659-1025



\$124.00 Double Occupancy per night plus tax

(mention you are with Wallace Nutting Collectors Club Convention for this group rate)

Agenda details to be announced

(more info on WNCC website <http://www.wallacenutting.org/convention.html> or copy/paste URL into browser)

Friday, May 15th: Michael Ivankovich Auction

Saturday, May 16th: WNCC Convention including:

- Buy, Sell, Trade expanded Marketplace
- Business Meeting
- Presentations
- Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum Tour
- Annual Club Dinner
- Hospitality Suite



Webb-Deane-Stevens Homes in historic Wethersfield, CT

Wallace Nutting's Hospitality Hall

The Webb House

by Jan K. Liberatore



When the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club convenes near Wethersfield, Connecticut on May 16, 2015 the Webb House will be one week shy of celebrating the 234th anniversary of George Washington's stay at this historic house. To know that during a week in May 1781 Washington not only was a guest in this house, but also planned the decisive campaign of Yorktown that ended the Revolutionary War, must have weighed heavily in Nutting's decision to purchase this house. Wallace Nutting added what was known as the Webb-Washington-Welles House to his "collection" of colonial houses on February 9, 1916. It was the last house he purchased for the "Wallace Nutting Chain of Colonial Picture Houses." It may have been the most historic, next to Broadhearth, the Saugus Iron Works.

home. For five days in 1781 Joseph Webb Jr. and his wife Abigail Parlor" that Washington met with French general Comte de Rochambeau to plan the military campaign that led to the victory at Yorktown, Virginia. The American and French forces defeated a large British army at Yorktown, becoming the last major battle of the Revolutionary War, leading to American independence.

The Webb House was built in 1752 by Joseph Webb. When he died in 1761 it was inherited by his son, Joseph Jr. The nickname Hospitality Hall reflected the frequent entertaining done in the hosted General George Washington. It was in the front "Yorktown

The Welles ownership of the house came about 1820 when Judge Martin Welles purchased the home. It stayed in the Welles family until 1913 and in 1914 was bought by a group of local businessmen, intending to turn it into a library. The historic value of the home was well recognized at this time, but the businessmen were unable to finance the intended library for the town. Historians apparently were concerned about the library plan and probably were glad that Wallace Nutting came to the rescue and purchased the property in 1916. It has been widely reported that Nutting invested quite a sum of money into the restoration of Hospitality Hall. The installation of painted murals in the front parlors and hallways by Nutting was the



Washington bedchamber with his uniform coat draped over the chair.

one controversial move he made while renovating the house. As a matter of fact, the murals were eventually painted over and for many years after his ownership ceased, the Nutting connection to the Webb house seems to have been minimized. By 1919 Nutting had sold the house to the Colonial Dames of Connecticut.

The Colonial Dames of Connecticut still own the Webb House and along with the adjacent Deane and Stevens Houses maintain one of the most beautiful historic museums in New England. Located on the quaint Main Street of Wethersfield you can almost picture General George Washington riding up to the gambrel roofed house. The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum now celebrates Wallace Nutting, his ownership, and restoration. The Nutting commissioned murals have become



Southeast Parlor

a focal point of the house and as recently as two years ago the murals in another room were painstakingly uncovered. One of Wallace Nutting's objectives in purchasing the houses in his Chain of Colonial Picture Houses was to use them to "stage" and take pictures for his picture business. The murals certainly made for some of his most colorful and attractive interiors. Examples of pictures taken at Hospitality Hall are Birthday Flowers, A Stately Tea Pouring, A Picture Library, A Sheffield Heirloom, A Trilling Romance, A Grandmother's Highboy, Wig Wag Churning, Doughnut Day, Tea at Webb House, and an exterior view of Hospitality Hall itself.

A visit to the Webb House at the 2015 WNCC Annual Convention will allow club members to stand in the midst of George Washington, Wallace Nutting, historic architecture, and the actual setting for many of the hand-colored pictures that we all have in our collections. Looking forward to seeing you there!



Northeast parlor showing recently revealed murals of historic houses installed by Wallace Nutting in 1916.



Attic with Spinning Wheel and Weaving Equipment

Below is a Nutting photo depicting the Central Hallway of the Webb House. Note the abundance of murals even in the hallway of this historic home.



The Luteful Hour

Wallace Nutting
View of Central Hallway

The Man Who Looked Back and Saw the Future

*excerpted on the following pages from the
September 1986 copy of Yankee Magazine by Edie Clark*

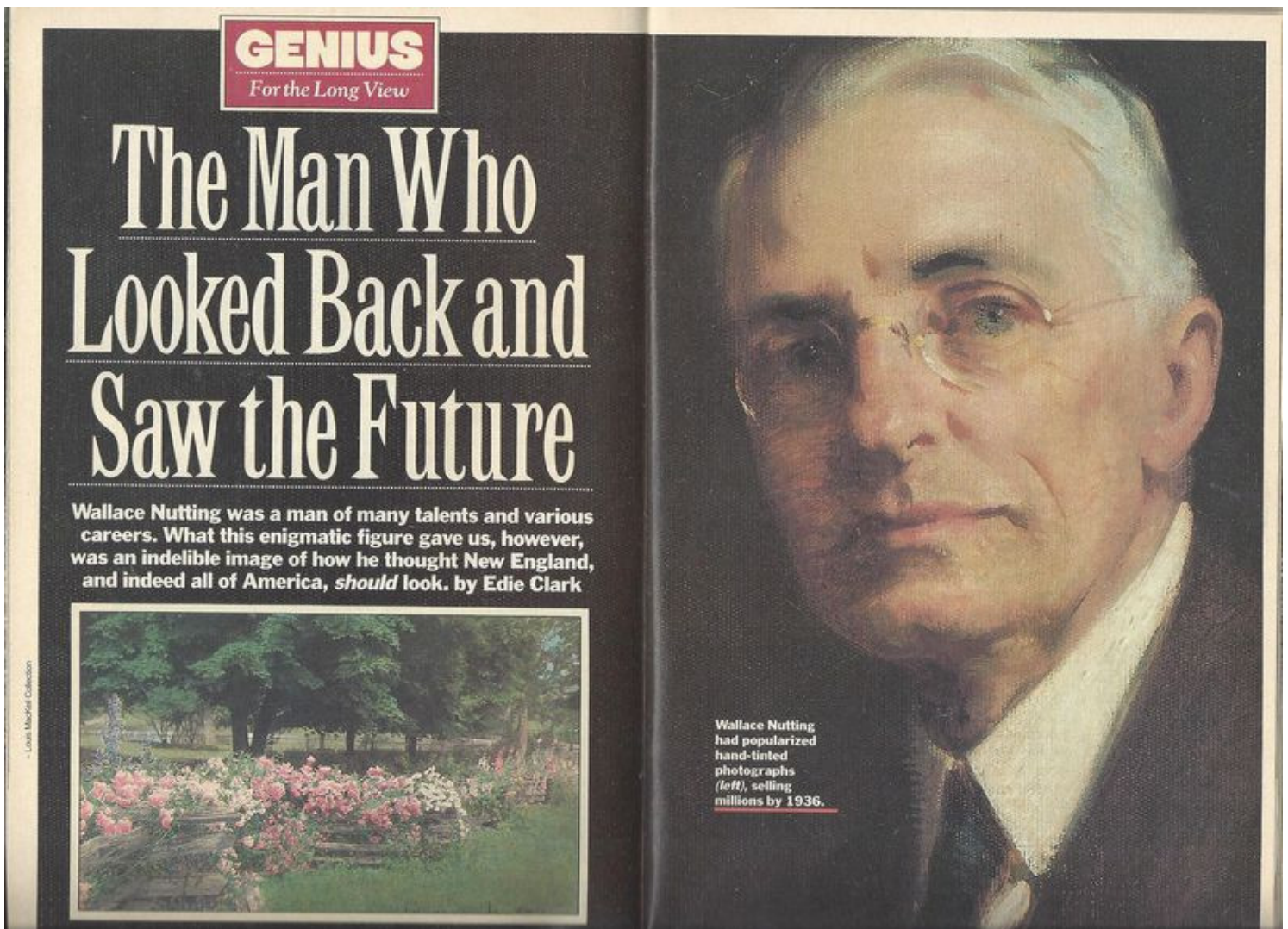
the cover reads:

Special Commemorative Issue

The Genius of New England

Unforgettable Examples of Yankee Ingenuity In All Its Glory!

Editor's Note: I enjoy these older articles about Wallace Nutting. They provide additional snippets of information and of course the author's and contributor's points of view at that time period. Read on for some positive, and some negative opinions...but interesting nonetheless.



THE GENIUS OF NEW ENGLAND



HERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS WHY WALLACE NUTTING, 45 years after his death, is still unable to muster the esteem he desperately sought during his lifetime, but his defenders are growing in numbers, and along with them builds the intrigue surrounding his life.

The idea that it was his vision that substantially (to date indelibly) created the image that most people have of New England cannot be dismissed. The image came not only from his carefully composed photographs of Colonial America, indoors and out, which he hand-tinted and sold by the truckload, but also from his inspired collecting of (as well as near-flawless reproductions of) early American furniture. In addition, there are his books — he wrote volumes of alternately syrupy and inspired texts for would-be New England tourists that held New England up as if it were a morality lesson — and his Colonial Chain of Picture Houses (of which there were five, one in New Hampshire, three in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut), where tourists could come and as much as study the Colonial Ideal. In essence, he made Colonial New England into a religion, complete with bibles and shrines.

The mixture of his art and his ideals has made him a difficult study for those who have been left entrusted with one of these several legacies. A case in point would be the Webb House, a historic house in Wethersfield, Connecticut, which was originally one of Nutting's Colonial Chain.

When establishing the relationship between the Webb House and Wallace Nutting, the house's curator, Douglas Kendall, chooses his words carefully. "Nutting had the place open to the public and he charged a quarter admission. In the front rooms there are murals that Nutting commissioned from mural painters. They are under wallpaper now. They are very Colonial Revival — as with his photographs, the murals were designed to show a colonial era that people like Nutting romantically thought existed. I think that's why in historic preservation circles Nutting is not well thought of. These romantic scenes of the ladies sitting genteelly having a cup of tea or sewing and the hooked rugs weren't at all correct. But it's still the image of colonial society that people have, despite all the efforts of museum people over the last 25 years to change that."

The people at the Webb House have only recently

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"...They are very Colonial Revival - as with his photographs, the murals were designed to show a colonial era that people like Nutting romantically thought existed. I think that's why in historic preservation circles Nutting is not well thought of..."

WALLACE NUTTING: GENIUS FOR THE LONG VIEW

a quote from Justine
Monro, "We took a
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mentioned Nutting
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- Courtesy Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum

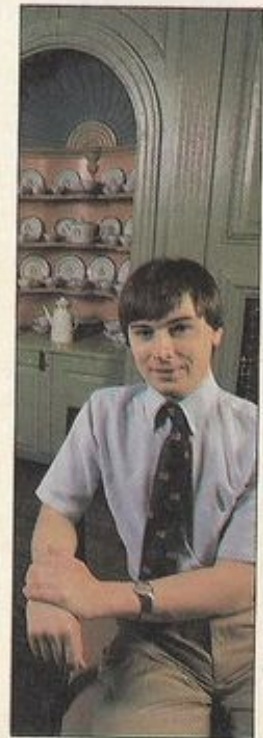


Nutting billed the
Webb House (left) as
"Hospitality Hall,"
charging a quarter
for a tour. Douglas
Kendall (below) is
the present curator.

"rediscovered" Wallace Nutting, a fact that baffles those who revere the man. Ten years ago a group from the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club made a pilgrimage to the Webb House. Many of the Nutting photographs they were collecting had been taken inside this house. "We took a tour of the place, and the people showing us through *never mentioned Nutting once*. In fact you were told not to mention Nutting to them!" says Justine Monro, who along with her husband George runs the club. "I don't know why — because he didn't finish the kitchen right or some dumb thing."

Nutting's ownership of these houses made him, among his several other enterprises, one of this country's earliest historic preservationists, a claim that still disturbs many in those circles. "There are a lot of people here and elsewhere who would just as soon have forgotten that he owned the houses," Kendall continues. "In a sense he was an interior decorator. Nutting had very definite ideas and he allowed those ideas to lead him to change things from the way he found them. He may have thought he was accurate, but he wasn't necessarily."

In one of the front rooms of the Webb House there is an exquisite shell-domed cupboard. The colors — blue and salmon and mustard — have been carefully researched to the original colonial appearance. "I'm sure Nutting would have had a heart attack if he'd seen this," Kendall says. "These bright vivid colors go completely against the grain of the Colonial Revival images of white



- David Wilbeck

THE GENIUS OF NEW ENGLAND



Marietta Griswold (top) and Wallace Nutting were married in 1888. She took over the business when he died in 1941.

painted houses and bare wood and subdued interiors.”

But Kendall realizes that Nutting is not as bad as he’s been made out to be. “It takes a lot of detective work to figure out who did what to the house when,” Kendall says. “Nutting has become something of a scapegoat in this. If you don’t know better, blame it on Nutting.”

Though he left writings that can fill a bookcase as well as a 295-page autobiography (which he published himself at age 75 and titled *Wallace Nutting’s Biography*), it is difficult to piece together his life, his motivations, or even a chronological biography that holds water.

“His *Biography* is a joke,” says Justine Monro. These are the harshest words she has for a man she considers a 20th-century da Vinci. “It’s really a bunch of sermons.”

There are about as many sermons in his writings as there are contradictions in his life. The sermons are there because, up until the age of 43 or so — the dates vary — he was a minister who had served parishes in Maine, where he had been raised, Seattle, St. Paul, Newark, New Jersey, and Providence, Rhode Island. It was while he was in Providence that he suffered a nervous breakdown and resigned. The story that he tells in his *Biography* and that was again encapsulated in his obituary is that in search of peace, he began to take long bicycle rides into the countryside, and on his return his wife would ask what he had seen. He realized that he had been pedaling so furiously that he could not give a report. A camera was suggested, and according to his writings, with a kind of Aha! he discovered his gift for composition. “This faculty,” he wrote, “had been unsuspected till I was forty years old.” And yet, in June of 1898, when he would have been only 36, he wrote an amazingly keen and highly technical (for that period) article on photography for a magazine called *Outlook*. And as early as 1900 his photographs had been featured frequently as center-spreads for such magazines as *Country Life* and *Woman’s Home Companion*. In spite of the fact that he says so, it simply cannot be that he stumbled over his photographic gifts in 1901, the year of his fortieth birthday.

Was he a genius or a fraud? An artist or an entrepreneur? The optical illusion, the sleight of hand, the real and the imagined, the what-is and the what-might-have-been all are the essence of Wallace Nutting, a man who

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WALLACE NUTTING: GENIUS FOR THE LONG VIEW

"...The essence of Wallace Nutting, a man who...grew up poor on a farm in Maine, but who was able to direct the restoration of 17th-and 18th-century houses so properly that he sold one of them to the Metropolitan Museum of Art...a man who employed gardeners and chauffeurs, but who would sit in his office, his hat on and a muffler wrapped around his neck, letting the temperature drop to 55 rather than turn up the heat..."



David Witbeck

could not plane a board but who directed the manufacture of furniture so exact in its detail that experts still have trouble discerning the antique from the Nutting reproduction; a man who considered himself a connoisseur but who lived on fried doughnuts and chocolate milk; a man who could not draw a straight line but who instructed those who could with drill-sergeant precision in the coloring of his photographs; a man who grew up poor on a farm in Maine, but who was able to direct the restoration of 17th- and 18th-century houses so properly that he sold one of them to the Metropolitan Museum of Art; a man who revered the 17th century above all else, but whose manufacturing methods were on the cutting edge of the 20th century; a man who employed gardeners and chauffeurs, but who would sit in his office, his hat on and a muffler wrapped around his neck, letting the temperature plummet to 55 rather than turn up the heat.

Contradictions aside, most of what Wallace Nutting is remembered for — and preaching sermons is not among them — was accomplished after his 45th birthday. In 1904, the same year he suffered a nervous collapse and resigned from the ministry, he opened a photography studio near Fifth Avenue in New York City. One of the colorists who worked for him says (CONTINUED ON PAGE 172)

Curator William Hosley with part of the Nutting Collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum.

There are about as many sermons in his writings as there are contradictions in his life.

THE MAN WHO LOOKED BACK AND SAW THE FUTURE

(continued from page 113)

she recalls that he had a saleswoman who traveled throughout the West selling his photographs. Little is known about this studio — Nutting reduced the experience to a single sentence in his *Biography* — but more is known about Southbury, Connecticut, where he and his wife Marietta moved after a year in the city, and where they lived for six years until they moved to Framingham, where they remained until Nutting's death in 1941.

Many Nutting scholars believe that it was in Southbury that he was most content and was not yet possessed by the unyielding drive and ambition that so strongly marked his later years in Framingham. The first farm they were shown, surrounded as it was by Nutting favorites — apple trees and stone walls — they bought without going inside. They named it Nuttingholme and bought a barnyard full of Holsteins, horses, sheep, and a litter of pigs — all selected for beauty — and Nutting later wrote, "If an animal would not pose for a picture, it was not for us." He planted fields of cabbages and potatoes and planted new apple trees in addition to the old ones. But he learned quickly that he was not a farmer — the huge field of cabbages went unharvested, and some older folks can still recall the stench that hovered over Southbury for weeks afterward. No matter, his photography business was booming, and before long he had swept out the barn and set up tables near the windows for the colorists who worked under his close supervision, using their watercolors to bring life to Nutting's black-and-whites. He instructed them not only in the exact shades and tones to be used, but also told them they were to paint out telephone poles and cars — 20th-century intrusions — and blot the sky with cotton balls to give the picture puffy white clouds.

Dorothy Manville has been researching Nutting's Southbury connections for about 15 years. Dorothy and her husband live in a part of Southbury where develop-

September '86

- Courtesy Framingham Public Library



Nutting liked to photograph nostalgic scenes, like this view of Framingham Center (above), all over New England. Teams of colorists (right) hand-tinted them in his Saugus studio.



- Louis Muckel Collection

ment has been slow to come, and their cattle graze among apple trees that Nutting surely photographed. She can point out many Nutting barnyard scenes along back roads that have barely survived the vertiginous sweep of 20th-century development. Nuttingholme, for instance, is quite recognizable, but it is now the main house at the huge and elite condominium complex called Heritage Village.

Dorothy Manville has interviewed many of the colorists who worked for Nutting at his Southbury studio. "The girls in Framingham did not seem to like him, but that was not my impression from talking to the girls in Southbury. They seemed to like him very much."

As with so many Nutting collectors, Dorothy Manville's interest is in a narrow aspect of the man — his Southbury photo-

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THE MAN WHO LOOKED BACK AND SAW THE FUTURE

(continued)

graphs and his connections with the town. Her interest began when she discovered that her mother-in-law had modeled for Nutting as a small girl. She is also one of Southbury's most dogged town historians and she thinks of Nutting's photographs as part of the record.

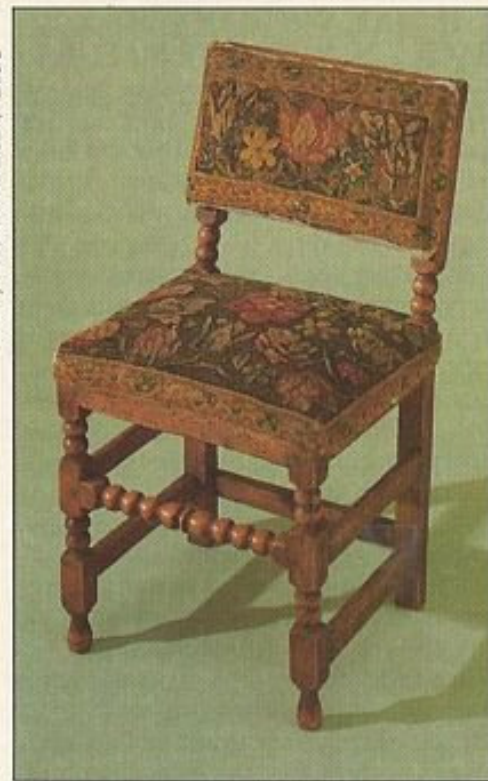
And, like other Nutting Defenders, Dorothy Manville doesn't think it's that important that some people now find his colonial interiors historically inaccurate. "He wanted his pictures to be homey," she says simply.

And as far as preservation goes, there is no question in Dorothy Manville's mind that it was one of his primary contributions. "Do you realize how much of the old homes that man preserved for us?" She mentions, for instance, a picture called "Where Grandma Was Wed." "The house where he took that is gone, but I know where the foundation is. Few people do. But he preserved that architecture and setting forever in the photograph. And the interiors, too. I put on an exhibit of my pictures last June. A man came to look at one that's of a house he now owns. He brought a magnifying glass because he wanted to see how the bannister was originally. Another lady came in saying, 'Where's my house, where's my house?' and I thought she was senile, but it turned out there was a picture in the exhibit taken from the center of Southbury, which is now traffic lights and Reed's department store and the Plaza, but it was looking up the hill, and there was her house. He has preserved things we could never recapture."

The value that Dorothy Manville finds in these photographs, which are quite collectible, is lost on others. "Saccharine, romantic, ahistorical. Nutting's interiors were the worst of what Nutting did. It was a Wallace Nutting reality, but it wasn't a colonial reality," says William Hosley, the curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. If Nutting holds respect in more scholarly

"...And like other Nutting Defenders, Dorothy Manville doesn't think it's that important that some people now find his colonial interiors historically inaccurate. 'He wanted his pictures to be homey,' she says simply..."

"...If Nutting holds respect in more scholarly circles, it is for his documentation of American furniture - his three-volume series Furniture Treasury has been in print continuously since 1928 - and for his collecting, which was astronomical..."



- Courtesy Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford

This late-17th-century "turkeywork" chair is part of the Nutting Collection.

circles, it is for his documentation of American furniture — his three-volume series *Furniture Treasury* has been in print continuously since 1928 — and for his collecting, which was astronomical. Among the many theories that have been raised as to why he established his Colonial Chain of Picture Houses, one holds that he bought them to accommodate all his furniture. Certainly we know that he collected the furniture for the dual purposes of affording samples for his furniture reproduction as well as stage props for his photos.

The Atheneum houses the Wallace Nutting Collection of Pilgrim furniture, the largest and one of the finest collections of 17th-century furniture in this country. Comprising more than 1,000 pieces, the collection was Nutting's own, which he sold in 1924 to J. P. Morgan for \$140,000. Morgan subsequently donated the collection to the Atheneum where it has been ever since, in varying degrees of display

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(continued)

and storage. Last year the Wadsworth unveiled the furniture in a new and permanent exhibit, a stunning and almost unexpected celebration of Nutting and his 17th-century obsession. Here are the truly early American — therefore European in style and appearance — furnishings: court cupboards, early chests, bannister-back chairs, as well as ironwork and an extensive collection of kitchen items. William Hosley, whose first work at the Atheneum as a research assistant involved cataloging the Nutting collection, has become one of Nutting's most scholarly defenders.

"Nutting was a package of stuff that nobody else has been before or since," he says. "When I was getting my master's at Winterthur, people used to make jokes about Nutting. The consensus was that he was sort of a popularizer and perhaps even a fraud — there was that unspoken implication that he was the P. T. Barnum of the antiques world and that with that came a whole package of deception. My professor told me, 'Oh, that Nutting collection — you're going to go up there and you're going to find a lot of problems because he worked his stuff over, he restored everything. You're going to find a lot of fakes and forgeries and things that have been mucked up.' I did find that of course some of that was true, but I went to Boston, the Metropolitan, Sturbridge, Williamsburg, and curiously enough, not surprisingly, it seemed like it was an endemic situation — all the American collections of 17th-century furniture had pieces with replaced parts and re-carved elements and even some fakes. So I began to say well, look, Nutting isn't unique."

During his lifetime Nutting's photography business was by far the most successful of all his enterprises. Though he destroyed his business records before he died, many people maintain that the pictures carried his furniture business, which was never able to make money because of the exacting standards Nutting imposed.

"...He was a New Englander to the core...And as he tried and failed to mingle with the likes of Henry Ford and Henry Francis DuPont, he felt these social constrictions very strongly. 'He certainly was the most aggressive spokesperson for the Colonial Revival movement', Hosely says, 'the most articulate and probably the most knowledgeable in many respects, but because of his manners and his methods and his background, he was never accepted by the upper crust. He was not genteel - Nutting had kind of cowboy, entrepreneurial instincts which were taboo. He was very self reliant, a one-man show' ..."

Hosley believes that in some way the sheer volume and scope of Nutting's work have worked against him in later years. "You assume that anyone who took those schmaltzy photographs couldn't have had the intellectual grasp and depth to be a good collector. I don't think that's fair. I think his collection should be viewed independently of his other activities; it holds up very well by the standards of his time."

If there is a key to Nutting's motivation, Hosley believes it may lie in the times in which he worked and lived. "America had gone, in the course of half a century, from being a nation of a very limited range of ethnics to a proliferation of unassimilated ethnic groups. There was also the overwhelming fear that the industrial revolution had gotten out of control. This whole aspect of preserving America rises up at times like this, even though we are one of the most ethnically tolerant countries on earth. A lot of people have been critical of Wallace Nutting, frankly, and his generation. They say that they were bigots, that they were trying to press the immigrants into a mold. It is a type of elitism, but it may also have been a glue that helped keep the society from bursting apart."

But Nutting, schizoid in his own times, was neither an immigrant nor was he an aristocrat. He was a New Englander to the core, born in Rockbottom, Massachusetts, and brought up in Industry, Maine, towns which plainly speak for his early circumstances. And as he tried and failed to mingle with the likes of Henry Ford and Henry Francis DuPont, he felt these social constrictions very strongly. "He certainly was the most aggressive spokesperson for the Colonial Revival movement," Hosley says, "the most articulate and probably the most knowledgeable in many respects, but because of his manners and his methods and his background, he was never accepted by the upper crust. He was not genteel — Nutting had kind of cowboy, entrepreneurial instincts which were taboo. He was very self-reliant, a one-man show."

Louis MacKeil is another Nutting Defender. He lives not far from another of

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(continued)

Nutting's Colonial Chain houses, the Saugus Iron Works, and he has written a well-respected booklet about Wallace Nutting. Like Dorothy Manville's, his interest in Nutting began from a personal connection. MacKeil is 86 years old and he first remembers Nutting as a picker. "I'd seen him half a dozen times at my grandmother's when I was 11 or 12 years old. She had a clock that Nutting wanted. He kept coming back, a half a dozen times, and she finally sold it to him for \$350. He had a lot of moxie, you know. If he knew you had a chair, he'd rap on the door and want to photograph it, and once he got his foot in the door, you'd have a tough time getting rid of him."

MacKeil is regarded as one of the largest and most knowledgeable collectors of Nutting-iana. He says he has barrels of stuff about Nutting, and indeed his small apartment is crammed with Windsors, clocks, and side chairs, and boxes and boxes of the photographs. The ones in the boxes don't fit on the walls which line up like a solid sheet of Nutting scenes.

MacKeil has researched so far into the fine print of Nutting that he can not only identify Nutting's signature (Nutting only rarely signed his photographs; most of the signatures were made by the colorists who practiced for hours and hours before they were allowed to sign the photographs to Nutting's satisfaction), but he can tell which of the colorists signed which photograph. And he makes it his business to fire off a letter to anyone who doesn't have his facts straight about Nutting. Even so, MacKeil doesn't feel he's come to the end of the Nutting trail. "He remains mysterious. He was a real promoter, but I don't think he was out to make money. I don't think he made that much money! Something else motivated him.

"For instance, the old story that his wife said, 'Why don't you take a picture inside today because it's raining?' I don't think

Lou MacKeil "first remembers Nutting as a picker. 'I'd seen him half a dozen times at my grandmother's when I was about 11 or 12 years old. She had a clock that Nutting wanted. He kept coming back...and she finally sold it to him for \$350. He had a lot of moxie...if he knew you had a chair, he'd rap on the door and want to photograph it, and once he got his foot in the door, you'd have a rough time getting rid of him'..."

she'd have to prod Nutting to take a picture. He'd never be that idle! He took the pictures to advertise his furniture. It makes more sense."

Of all the houses that were restored by Nutting, the Saugus house, built in 1640, is the most appreciative today of Nutting's contribution. MacKeil maintains that if it weren't for Nutting, the house would not be standing today. He works there part-time as a guide and has helped out, by the use of his memory, in the most recent restoration. Saugus Iron Works is now a National Park, and David Kayser is its curator. The furnishings in the house, which was the ironmaster's house, look like something out of a Renaissance painting and are reminiscent of the collection at the Atheneum. They are striking because they do not look like the colonial interiors that Nutting popularized.

"Nutting was the first owner who was preservation-minded," Kayser says as he takes visitors on a tour. "We did not know what the house looked like in the 17th century so, to be safe, we restored the exterior of the house to the Nutting appearance of 1915 because we have photographs and documentation on that. Otherwise, we'd be doing a lot of guesswork. Nutting was one of the first preservationists in America, so keeping his look had value in itself."

Though they have been faithful to Nutting on the outside — they have even retained the asbestos roof that Nutting put on — this "high-style" interior has brought disappointment from the Nutting Defenders. Louis MacKeil recounts, "I had George and Justine Monro up here and I took them into the Saugus house. She was so disgusted that she walked right out again. She had pictured it as it would be in Nutting's pictures."

But a special exhibit is being planned for Nutting lovers at Saugus. There will be a reproduction of his well-known scenario, a picture titled "Affectionately Yours" which Nutting staged in the ironmaster's house. For the event they have commissioned a writing-arm Windsor from Douglas Dimes, a craftsman who specializes in

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(continued)

reproducing Nutting reproductions.

MacKeil responded this way: "When he first told me what he was going to do I said, 'Dave, are you going to have a lady sitting in the chair?' and he said, 'Of course not.' I said 'You're not! How about a mannequin?' He said, 'No,' and I said, 'What's the sense of reproducing a Nutting picture if you're not going to have a *lady* in it?'"

Nutting Defenders cannot be pleased, it would seem. Nutting worked in preservation as if it were an art with plenty of room for his imagination. Even today some feel that his guess was as good as any. One of the most commonly heard arguments is that 17th-century families did not have throw rugs on their floors. Many now say that Nutting included them in all his interiors because his wife made and sold braided and hooked rugs, and this was a good sales pitch. But Louis MacKeil is perplexed by the whole argument. "Everybody tells me they didn't have braided rugs then. Well, who knows? I don't!"

Just the same, the Nutting forces are gaining. Douglas Kendall, at the Webb House, hosted a whole weekend this past June in celebration of the man, and he says

that there are times when he is even tempted to remove the wallpaper in the front rooms and reveal the Nutting murals.

Perhaps William Hosley is right in saying that Nutting accomplished so much in so many different fields that the standards for one spill harmfully over into the other. To this day people are awed by the precision with which his furniture was made, but should they look for historical precision in his photographs? There are aesthetics to be considered. Nutting claims that his pictures were made in the pursuit of beauty, an end for which he preached and preached. Let any one of his books fall open in your hands and your eyes are likely to come to rest on a sermonette, like this paean to nostalgia: "Beauty is the predicate of all lasting things," he wrote in his *Biography*. "The reason beauty lasts is that it is continually moved by an inner spirit to perfect what in retrospect is merely a gross image. The dandelion changes into dandelion fluff and who will not admit the second beauty surpasses the first? Who does not feel when this miniature feathered seed sails off on its hopeful errand, that there is a beauty growing of change?"

It might be said that Nutting had a genius for New England and he sold that image with remarkable thoroughness in an age that preceded the dawn of the me-

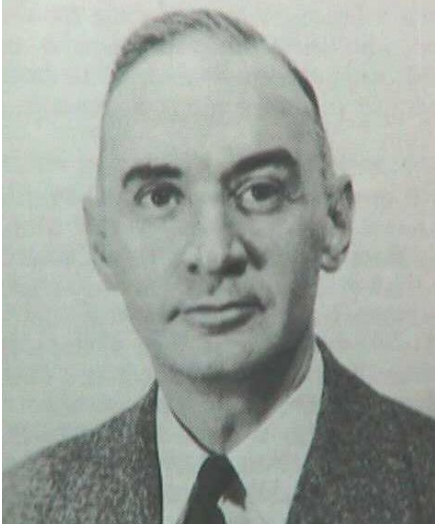
dia. In many ways — in colonial theme museums, in regional magazines, in shops and even shopping malls — the colonial image, the Nutting image of New England, persists. William Hosley defends it this way, "Nutting romanticized rural America and mythologized various aspects of the past, which is neither new nor is it dead. It is very much a balancing and necessary component of a complex and high-tech world. There is no contemporary Nutting. There are institutions instead — there are Sturbridge villages and *Yankee* magazines, but no Nuttings. His gift wasn't so much as a creator as it was as a marketer and promoter of a certain vision. He was no less a genius than Ted Turner — somebody with a phenomenally wide range of interests who seems to be on the cutting edge of all of them, and who can make those interests visible to a wide audience. To the extent that anyone is a genius, Nutting might have been one."

In that genius was a complexity that made Wallace Nutting, the great preacher of colonialism, difficult to understand when he was alive and continues to make him mysterious, a conundrum still to be unraveled. You can read one page of his *Biography* and think him a working fool then read the next and judge him a hopeless dreamer. Though some of the information in the book may have been fudged or exaggerated, the sentiments come from his heart. Nutting lived his contradictions. "A slogan to lengthen the day's work, not to shorten it, is the need. Because work is the only full delight," he wrote Calvinistically. With the volume of work he accomplished in his lifetime, no one could dispute the sincerity of that Nutting maxim. And yet, only a few paragraphs further, there is this swelling of his spirit: "To discover undiscerned beauty is surely a worthy aim as well as a delightful occupation. It is not on mountaintops that the charm of life lies, because we are seldom there. It is in nooks and vales, in odd corners, that life is spent and finds its setting. . . . Blessed are the 20th-century Americans who can find glory in their own apple trees." This he also clearly did. □□

"...To discover undiscerned beauty is surely a worthy aim as well as a delightful occupation. It is not on mountaintops that the charm of life lies, because we are seldom there. It is in nooks and vales, in odd corners, that life is spent and finds its setting...Blessed are the 20th-century Americans who can find glory in their own apples trees..."

Ernest John Donnelly

by Bob Masoner



"NO MAN IS AN ISLAND". Certainly this was true of Wallace Nutting. By his own statement in his biography he attributes considerable credit to his wife, Mariet Griswold Nutting for his success. Esther Svensen, also was a trusted and valued employee, who worked long and hard to make the picture business profitable. Ernest John Donnelly would certainly occupy a key place in this group of supportive players in the life of Wallace Nutting. Nutting described him as a genius in sketching and criticism and accounting.

Who was Ernest John Donnelly? Born on April 2, 1903, in Drumshambo, Ireland, which is located north of Dublin, he was the third child in a family of seven. Two older sisters, next a brother and then three sisters. There is evidence that it was a very close and loving family. Educated in Catholic schools, he was an excellent student. A card from Ardagh and Clonmacnoise Diocese dated 1913, states that Ernest gained first place in the fourth class religious examination at Drumshambo Boys National School, Leitrim County. He then went to St. Mels College, in Longford, an adjoining county. A letter signed by the President of the College states that Ernest was a resident student during the years 1917-1920, and further certifies that he was a boy of excellent character and more than average ability. Since this letter is dated May 28, 1925, it was no doubt intended as a reference letter. A letter dated September 20, 1920 describes Ernest as gentle,

happy and incapable of anything that is not edifying. His abilities go far beyond the average and in some respects are brilliant.

Ernest received no art training. He was born with his artistic ability and a love for drawing from his earlier years. He drew his school master on the blackboard to the delight of his fellow students in the fifth and sixth grades. He was punished (with the cane schoolmasters carried). Needless to say was a good sketch of a very cross, sarcastic tutor. As far as I have been able to determine, Ernest did all of his drawings in black and white.



Following graduation from college, Ernest entered the banking field. He was employed by the Northern Banking Company Limited from January 10, 1921 until April 16, 1924. A letter written by the manager, Sothorn Branch, Dublin, Ireland, describes him as a junior clerk, who was most diligent in the discharge of the various duties attached to his post. The letter continues; "unfortunately, he was compelled, through the death of his father, to sever his connection with the bank to my regret, as I had formed a very high opinion of his character, both from a moral and commercial standpoint". Apparently, as the oldest son, Ernest became the head of the Donnelly family. Information secured indicates that the family business consisted of a series of operations all conducted from one location in Drumshambo,

Ireland. There was a Pub, Restaurant, Variety Store, Telephone Company and Post Office.

It was in 1925 that E.J.D. decided to pursue his banking fortune in United States. Thus he boarded a ship bound for the U.S.A. It was on this ship that he met Wallace Nutting. Supposedly someone introduced Wallace Nutting to Ernest and told him about his bookkeeping and artistic talents. We all know that Wallace Nutting was very astute in recognizing talent in people. Also, he was very persuasive and seemed to get what he wanted. Thus, Ernest became an employee of Wallace Nutting before he reached the U.S.A.



This joining of very diverse personalities and age levels, (Ernest 22 and Wallace 64) proved to be very productive and an enjoyable one.



Ernest was to work for Wallace Nutting until Nutting's death some sixteen years later. The relationship became one of fondness and mutual respect. Ernest brought to the relationship, youth, ambition, wit, and a great sense of humor that added joy to those who came into his company. This certainly contrasted with the somewhat stern, business-like impression created by Wallace Nutting. During poor business times, such as the 1930's, Ernest helped lift Wallace from his moody depressions. As far as I can determine, Ernest's responsibilities at 46 Park Street, Framingham, consisted of office management, bookkeeping, supervising the colorists, and his drawings.

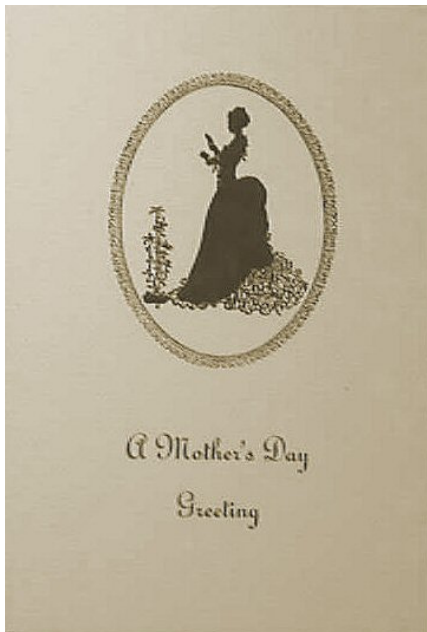
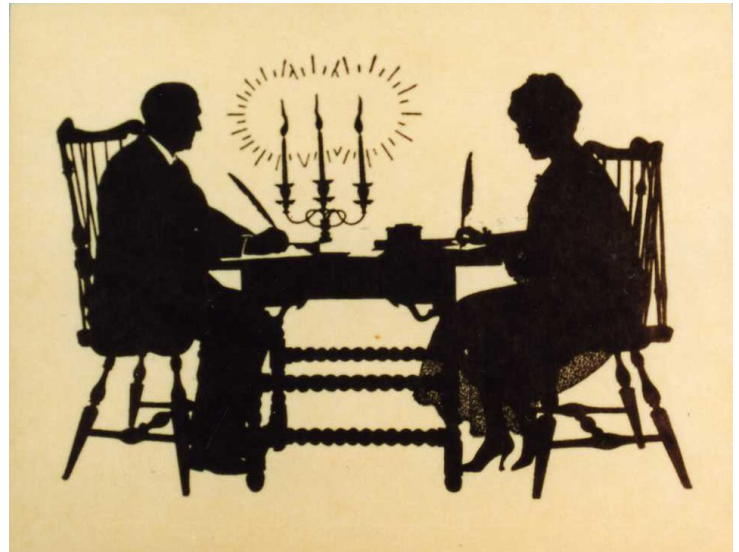
Wallace Nutting left more and more of the office work to Ernest while he supervised the furniture reproductions. Ernest was in charge of all the picture colorists. Since by this time there was a large number of girls, it was not easy to maintain high morale. For example, Fall pictures took

longer to do than others and the girls wanted different pictures to do at different times. However, orders had to be filled and business was good. Since the girls were paid by the picture, the mix of assigned work would influence their pay. Ernest organized little parties for the girls to add fun to the work.

Ernest learned much about antiques from Wallace Nutting. He secured books on antiques, which he studied, and visited the many museums in Boston. Nutting would take Ernest along on his motor trips to secure antiques. Ernest did not object to this, but he complained about not stopping for lunch. Nutting always had a bag of donuts, with cheese, that he would eat in the car.

Ernest continued to draw while employed by Nutting. His work appears in many publications. E.J.D. did the illustrations in the State Series book "VIRGINIA BEAUTIFUL", which was copyrighted in 1930. For some reason, there is no credit given to Donnelly as the illustrator. In fact the frontis-page states, "illustrated by the author with over three hundred pictures of landscapes and dwellings". Close scrutiny will show that there are twenty-four pen and ink drawings by Donnelly used as illustrations.

It was during this same era that the pen-type silhouettes drawn by Donnelly were introduced. There are at least fifty silhouettes depicting famous men and women, i.e. George Washington and Martha and very shapely girls used to show different furniture styles. Other promotions consisted of Mother's Day Cards, Note Cards, and Christmas Cards. Perhaps Donnelly's most extensive work was the illustrations prepared for the "FURNITURE



TREASURY", Volume III. This book, copyrighted in 1933, includes literally hundreds of Donnelly's pen and ink drawings. While employed by Wallace Nutting, Donnelly did illustration work for other people. The following books were illustrated for Arthur Bernon Tourtellot in 1939 and 1941:

"THE HISTORY AND ROMANCE OF THE HORSE", Copyright 1939, by Waverly House, Boston.

"BELOVED NO MORE: THE LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT OF FANNY BURNEY"

"THE RIVERS OF AMERICA - THE CHARLES", Copyright 1941, by Arthur Bernon Tourtellot, Farrer and Rinehart, Inc., New York, Toronto

In 1957 Donnelly illustrated:

"THE AMERICAN CHAIR 1630-1890", Author - Marion Day Iverson, Hasting House Publishers, New York

The acknowledgement pages contain this statement, and I quote: "The drawings in Nutting's FURNITURE TREASURY III have always held me in absorbed enchantment. They are artistic in feeling, yet honest in interpretation and the decorative details are easily observed. Imagine, then, my satisfaction when Mr. Donnelly after reading a portion of the manuscript, agreed to illustrate "THE AMERICAN CHAIR". He is a gentleman of Irish birth and boyhood, but he has acquired an unusual appreciation of American

Craftsmanship. Somehow he carries his love of fine furniture to the

drawing board. To say more about his gifts is quite unnecessary - they are so apparent to anyone who so much as glanced between the covers of this book".
Mary Day Iverson - 8/23/57.

Prior to Wallace Nutting's death on July 19, 1941, Ernest left him and went to New York. After Nutting's death, he returned and along with Esther Svensen, helped Mrs. Nutting maintain the various businesses. When Mrs. Nutting died in August 1944, the picture business was willed to Donnelly and Miss Svensen "with all the plates, stock, and materials...including the good will and use of the name Wallace Nutting...only so long as...one of them shall continue personally to carry on or to control...said business".

This arrangement did not prove satisfactory due to a difference in business philosophy. Esther was very conservative and Ernest was more aggressive. A disagreement developed over continuing with existing purchases or changing to others who were Swedish friends of Esther's. Also, Esther would reduce the amount of frames, colorings, glass and other items connected with the picture business. Then at Christmas and other times, when large orders arrived, sufficient materials were not available to fill them. Esther would have to order more and the delay resulted in cancelled orders.

On January 5, 1946, Donnelly sold his interest in the business to Esther for the sum of \$10,000.00. It was after this that Ernest went to work for Curriers' Incorporated in Boston, Mass. This firm is listed as a Manufacturer's Representative of gift-ware. According to a letter of recommendation, Donnelly was in charge of the Boston office and show-room for two and one-half years. It was to advance himself in the antique furniture field that he left this company.

Ernest, under contract for seven years, entered the antique field as a manager of an antique shop in Philadelphia. He left at the end of his contract, around 1955, and returned to Dublin, Ireland, where he bought antiques and shipped them to Martha Jane's Antique Shop at 1625 Pine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1960, he came to Philadelphia and purchased this twenty year old antique business. He planned a fine retail shop -- it had been wholesale only, but slow business forced him to revert to the previous wholesale operation. He was an indefatigable worker and his business was a great success.

In 1968 he retired and returned to live permanently in Dublin, Ireland. He purchased an 18th century house on famous Fitzpatrick Street and made a second Winterthur out of it with the invaluable collection of antiques he had taken back with him. He continued to buy antiques and ship them to Cooperstown, New York, where the previous owners of Martha Jane's Antiques were living.

His first serious heart attack was in March 1970. From then on his activities were limited. His second attack was massive and came in March 1973, which he did not survive.



***Photo Recap of the
2014 Collectors Club Convention***



...does this look like a fun group or what!!



One of the tables at our annual Sat. evening dinner



Members listen to the Saturday morning presentations



Bill Hamann



President, Jan Liberatore



Joe Duggan



Tieler Niedzwiecki



Joyce & Joren Fishback



Sharon Eckert



Mike Pellegrino



Guided trolley tour of Valley Forge National Park



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Wallace Nutting 1861-1941

From the Newsletter Editor...

Many thanks to Sharon Lacasse, Jim Eckert and Jan Liberatore who provided articles and photos for this issue. And of course thanks always to President, Jan Liberatore, for his newsletter lead-off messages and superb guidance with our Club.

Please help with the continuation of the Club Newsletter by contributing articles, photos, regional auction results, fun information...any and all of the above. It doesn't have to be a lengthy article...we just appreciate your input! If you have some thoughts or suggestions, e-mail or call so I can plan for next year's Edition.

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