

## Varnishing Day at the Norfolk Country Club - 1935



Guy Pène du Bois - *Window at Anticoli* - 1928

In the mid-1700s, artists in London established a tradition of previewing their latest paintings by hosting a **Varnishing Day** to which they invited art patrons, dealers and fellow artists. Ostensibly, these artists would put the finishing touches to their latest works and apply a transparent varnish to preserve the paintings but, in reality, it was an excuse to have a reception and party to celebrate the artists and their work and to, perhaps, sell some of their new paintings. Famed atmospheric marine painter, J.M.W. Turner, became identified with Varnishing Day due to his penchant for dramatic last minute studio entrances, whereupon he made changes to his monumental works while fellow artists and invited guests watched in awe. Varnishing Day, at least in name, is still held every year at the Royal Academy in London (as it has been since 1769) to kick-off their acclaimed summer exhibitions.

Who would have imagined? Eighty years ago, on September 12, 1935, in the depths of the Great Depression, the Norfolk Country Club hosted its own Varnishing Day followed by a largely forgotten four day *Norfolk and Neighborhood* art show in the Clubhouse. (see catalog below) The exhibit was open to the public daily from 10-6 for a \$1.00 entrance fee, and newspaper articles claimed that this exhibit would put Norfolk and the surrounding area 'on the map' of important American art colonies.

Exhibition  
of  
Paintings  
by  
Artists  
from  
NORFOLK AND NEIGHBORHOOD  
at the  
NORFOLK COUNTRY CLUB  
NORFOLK, CONNECTICUT

SEPTEMBER 12 TO 16, 1935, Inclusive



Varnishing Day

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2 to 6 p. m. (d.s.t.)

RECEPTION AND TEA

ADMISSION . . . ONE DOLLAR

The Exhibition will remain open daily from 10 a. m.  
to 6 p. m. (d.s.t.) until September 16, inclusive

LIST OF EXHIBITORS

- |  |  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Bishop's Chapel</li> <li>2 Reflection</li> <li>3 Midsummer Masque</li> <li>4 Studio</li> <li>5 After a Storm, Peggy's Cove</li> <li>6 Gazelles</li> <li>7 The Ice Pond</li> <li>8 Interior at Adullam</li> <li>9 Peconic Bay</li> <li>10 The Terrace</li> <li>11 Sun Flowers and Globe Thistles</li> <li>12 Girl on Horseback</li> <li>13 Haystack Mountain</li> <li>14 Norfolk Studio</li> <li>15 Window in Anticoli</li> <li>16 Old Willows</li> <li>17 Litchfield Road</li> <li>18 Janet and Young Solomon</li> <li>19 The White Bowl</li> <li>20 All-Saints' Day</li> <li>21 Down in the Pasture</li> <li>22 Winter—Dutchess County</li> <li>23 Portrait of William Carrigan</li> <li>24 Road to My House</li> <li>25 Midwinter in Dover</li> <li>26 Falls at Bull's Bridge</li> <li>27 On the Seine</li> <li>28 Roman Peasant</li> <li>29 Jewel Sullivan</li> <li>30 Limestone Quarry</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Theodore Van Soelen</li> <li>Dines Carlsen</li> <li>William L. Carrigan</li> <li>Dines Carlsen</li> <li>Arthur Covey</li> <li>George Baer</li> <li>Harry F. Waltman</li> <li>William McKillop</li> <li>Childe Hassam</li> <li>Esra Winter</li> <li>George Laurence Nelson</li> <li>Esra Winter</li> <li>Ernest Lawson</li> <li>Guy Pene du Bois</li> <li>Guy Pene du Bois</li> <li>Ernest Lawson</li> <li>Guy Pene du Bois</li> <li>Esra Winter</li> <li>Dines Carlsen</li> <li>Elizabeth Hicks</li> <li>G. Glenn Newell</li> <li>Arthur Powell</li> <li>Ellen Emmett Rand</li> <li>Robert Nisbet</li> <li>Arthur Powell</li> <li>Robert Nisbet</li> <li>Harry Gottlieb</li> <li>Yvonne Pene du Bois</li> <li>George Dyer</li> <li>Edward Quintard</li> </ul> |
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LIST OF EXHIBITORS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 Behind the Garage</li> <li>32 Pink Peonies</li> <li>33 Portrait of My Grandfather</li> <li>34 Wassaic</li> <li>35 Winter</li> <li>36 Arab Boy</li> <li>37 Summer's Breath</li> <li>38 Lone Tree</li> <li>39 Indian Girl</li> <li>40 Drummer of San Juan</li> <li>41 Auctioneer</li> <li>42 Campbell's Falls</li> <li>43 Hillside Farm</li> <li>44 Tranquil Day in Winter</li> <li>45 Canaan Valley</li> <li>46 Litchfield Hills (Ornamental)</li> <li>47 Young Girl in Blue</li> <li>48 Quintard and Lawson—Sketch</li> <li>49 Zinnias</li> <li>50 Portrait of Wonky-Wu</li> <li>51 June Bouquet</li> <li>52 American Wing, Metropolitan Museum</li> <li>53 Old Fashioned Flowers</li> <li>54 Cloudy Mountains</li> <li>55 American Wing, Metropolitan Museum</li> <li>56 North Africa</li> <li>57 Group of Bird Prints (hand colored)</li> <li>58 Landscape</li> <li>59 Wood Cuts</li> <li>60 Group of Etchings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helen Rous</li> <li>William L. Carrigan</li> <li>Anne Curtiss</li> <li>Harry Waltman</li> <li>William L. Carrigan</li> <li>George Baer</li> <li>Mary K. Karasick</li> <li>Edward Quintard</li> <li>Anne Curtiss</li> <li>Niles Hogner</li> <li>Arlington Yutzler</li> <li>James S. Hedges</li> <li>Edward Quintard</li> <li>Arthur Powell</li> <li>Ernest Lawson</li> <li>Ernest Lawson</li> <li>Guy Pene du Bois</li> <li>Guy Pene du Bois</li> <li>Helen Rous</li> <li>George Baer</li> <li>Lois Lenski</li> <li>G. L. Nelson</li> <li>Lois Lenski</li> <li>M. S. Goodnow</li> <li>G. L. Nelson</li> <li>Frederic C. Walcott</li> <li>Rex Brasher</li> <li>Wayland Wells Williams</li> <li>Harry D. Cimino</li> <li>Troy Kinney</li> </ul> |
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(Continued on next page)

## LIST OF EXHIBITORS

61	Group of Etchings	Robert Nisbet
62	Etching on Velvet	George Baer
63	Water Color	Harry D. Cimino
64	Winter	Harry Gottlieb
65	Water Color	Frederic C. Walcott
66	Cold Morning	Marjorie S. Goodnow
67	Water Color	Frederic C. Walcott
68	Landscape	Julia Goodwin
69	Water Color	Frederic C. Walcott
70	Hills	Marjorie S. Goodnow
71	Water Color	Harry D. Cimino
72	Red Barn	Mary Carpenter
73	Men Tossing Hay	Mary Carpenter
74	Ghost Flowers	Mary Carpenter
75	Still Life	Florence Kernick
76	Hills of Connecticut	Elizabeth Hicks
77	Dogs	Mary Kunkel
78	Grandma	Florence Kernick
79	Still Life	Elizabeth Roraback
80	Portrait of Father	Mary Kunkel
81	Landscape	Elizabeth Roraback
82	Girl with Doll	Florence Kernick
83	Still Life	Florence Kernick
84	Wall Paper Design	Harry D. Cimino
85	Landscape	Florence Kernick
86	Portrait of Mary Foote	Ellen Emmett Rand
87	Etchings	George B. Case
88	Etchings	George B. Case
89	Willows and Old Bridge	Elizabeth Hicks
90	Group—Peggy's Cove	Lois Lenski

## PATRONS

Mrs. William Hall Walker	Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Carl Reiland
Dr. and Mrs. Edward Quintard	Mr. and Mrs. Edward Waterman
Mr. and Mrs. Robertson Cleveland	Hon. and Mrs. Samuel A. Eddy
Mr. and Mrs. G. Lister Carlisle	Mr. Ernest Lawson
Hon. and Mrs. Robbins B. Stoeckel	Mr. and Mrs. Donald Lowe
Mrs. William J. Matheson	Mr. and Mrs. Allan Hubbard
Mr. and Mrs. James B. Mabon	Mr. and Mrs. Kelly Prentice
Hon. and Mrs. Charles Garside	Mr. and Mrs. Donald J. Warner
Mrs. John Shepard	Mr. and Mrs. S. Winston Childs
Mr. and Mrs. Starling W. Childs	Mr. and Mrs. R. Graham Biglow
Mr. and Mrs. Winfield Shiras	Mr. and Mrs. James S. Hedges
Mr. and Mrs. Carroll J. Post	Mr. and Mrs. William Hazen
Mr. and Mrs. Dennison Dana	Mr. and Mrs. E. Kendall Gillett
Mr. and Mrs. James F. Lawrence	Mrs. George G. Haven
Mr. and Mrs. Abel I. Smith	Miss Edith Scoville
Hon. and Mrs. Phillip Curtiss	Mrs. Henry W. Hodge
Mr. and Mrs. Alfredo S. C. Taylor	Mrs. Anne W. Holmes
Mr. and Mrs. Graham Smith	Mrs. Norman Thompson
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Scoville	Miss Marguerite Gale
Mr. and Mrs. James A. McGraw	Mr. and Mrs. David Goodnow
Mr. and Mrs. Guy Pene duBois	Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Carroll
Mrs. Marjorie Wehner	Miss Marion Rous



It is interesting enough that the NCC staged this significant exhibit but, even more intriguing is how ambitious it was: 90 works of art by 41 artists, many of them well-known and quite successful in the art world of the early decades of the 20th century. The art committee itself was made up of a core of significant American artists of the era.

## ART COMMITTEE

Ernest Lawson	George J. Dyer
Hon. Frederic C. Walcott	Dr. Edward Quintard
Guy Pene du Bois	Ellen Emmett Rand
Ezra Winter	

Several art patrons listed above are familiar Norfolk names, including the Mr. and Mrs.'s: Robbins Stoeckel, Abel I. Smith, Philip Curtiss, G. Lister Carlisle, Starling Childs, S. Winston Childs, James Lawrence, Charles Garside, etc.; and, of course, Norfolk's singular architect, who designed the NCC clubhouse in 1917, **Alfredo S.G. Taylor**.

Many of the prominent artists were New Yorkers who had studios in Connecticut - in Norfolk, Salisbury, Cornwall, Old Lyme, Stonington or Falls Village which, at the time, was a thriving art colony. The exhibit was done in conjunction with the Kent Art Society, founded in 1923, to which several of the painters belonged.

To give a sense of the stature of some of the artists represented at the Norfolk Country Club art exhibit, all of whom evidently were present on Varnishing Day, here are a few biographical sketches and representative art works, some of which were, indeed, on display in the Clubhouse on that September week-end in Norfolk, 80 years ago.

### **Guy Pène du Bois (1884-1958)**

- popular, well-regarded realist painter, art critic and teacher who, along with Edward Hopper, George Bellows and Rockwell Kent, studied under Ashcan School founder, Robert Henri - du Bois was best man at Edward Hopper's wedding and Hopper called du Bois his 'best friend in art' - noted for witty, mocking views of New York Society, depicting the upper classes with a cold eye - 'Window At Anticoli' shown above (#15 in catalog), was on display at the Norfolk exhibit and is now at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Pennsylvania
- below is another striking example of Pène du Bois's mesmerizing work:



Guy Pène du Bois - *Grande Bleue, Nice* - 1930

### Childe Hassam (1859-1935)

- recognized as premier American Impressionist of his time, famous for his pastoral paintings of idyllic seaside scenes and his series of Fifth Avenue flag paintings
- beautiful, golf-themed painting shown below is only Hassam painting to be found with Peconic Bay in title and may or may not be painting that hung at Norfolk show (#9):



Childe Hassam - *Great Peconic Bay, The National* - 1922

### Ernest Lawsen (1873-1939)

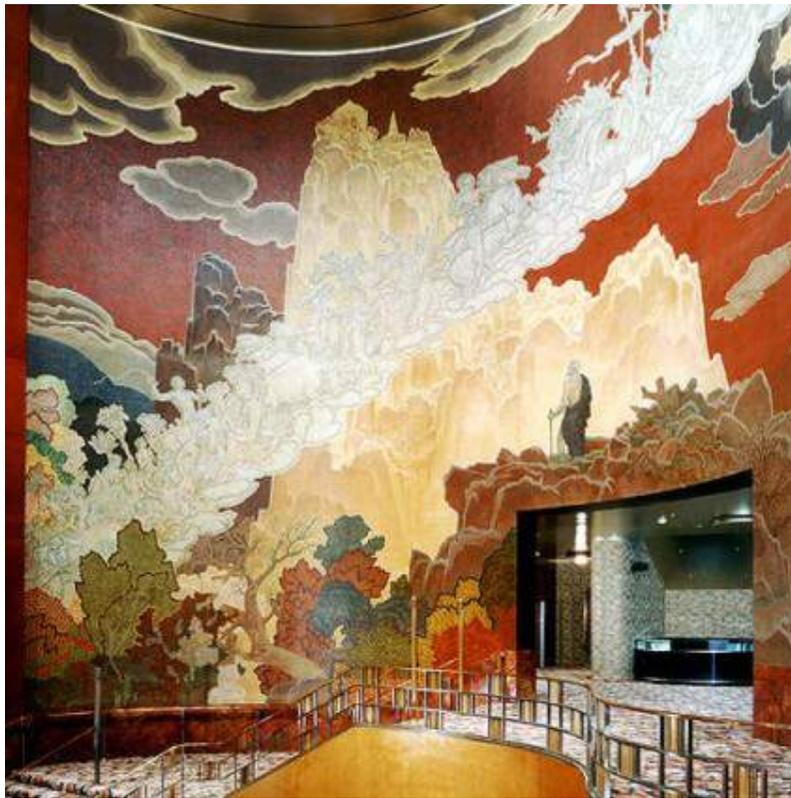
- member of '**The Eight**' which included Ashcan School artists Robert Henri, William Glackens and George Luks who were lionized for their 1908 New York exhibit in which they famously rebelled against Impressionism and academic realism
- spent summers of 1932-1935 at Dr. Edward Quintard's Knolly Brook studio
- destitute and alcoholic, he drowned at Miami Beach in 1939, an apparent suicide
- painting of Haystack Mountain below as shown at Norfolk (#13):



Ernest Lawsen - *Haystack Mountain* - 1932

## **Ezra Winter (1886 -1949)**

- internationally known, American muralist who studied at American Academy in Rome and was obsessed with the fleeting nature of youth and evanescence of beauty - some of his important murals are:
  - *Cunard Building*, 25 Broadway, NYC - 1921
  - *Eastman Theater*, Rochester, NY - 1922
  - *New York Cotton Exchange* - 1924
  - *Bank of Manhattan Trust*, 40 Wall St, NYC - 1928
  - *Fountain of Youth* - Radio City Music Hall, NYC - 1932
  - *Supreme Court* (ceilings), Washington, DC - 1934
  - *Library of Congress*, Washington, DC - 1939
- in 1945, while painting his 7th mural at the Bank of Manhattan, he fell from a scaffold breaking his tailbone after which he could never paint again - in April, 1949 at his home on Undermountain Road in Falls Village, he walked into the woods and killed himself with a shotgun at age 63
- below is Winter's 60-foot tall mural at the top of the staircase in the foyer Radio City Music Hall:



Ezra Winter - *Quest for the Fountain of Youth* - 1932

## **Ellen Emmet Rand (1875-1941)**

- known for portraits of prominent Americans such as Henry James, William Sloane Coffin and Augustus Saint-Gaudens - painted official White House portrait of Franklin Roosevelt - a portrait she did of CT Senator Frederic Walcott hangs in the house his granddaughter, former NCC member Sandy Walcott, and is shown here:



Ellen Emmett Rand - *Portrait of Frederic Walcott*

### **Rex Brasher (1869-1960)**

- pre-eminent wildlife illustrator of the 20th century who determined at age 7 to paint every species of North American bird from life, better than James Audubon, master wildlife illustrator of 19th century - produced 875 watercolors depicting 1200 species of birds, more than twice as many as Audubon, who did 489 species - perfectionist who twice destroyed all his paintings, a total of 700 canvasses - exhaustive work '*Birds and Trees of North America*' contains 90,000 reproductions hand-colored by Brasher which took him 4 years to complete resulting in 100 classic twelve-volume sets



**Arthur Covey (1877-1960)**

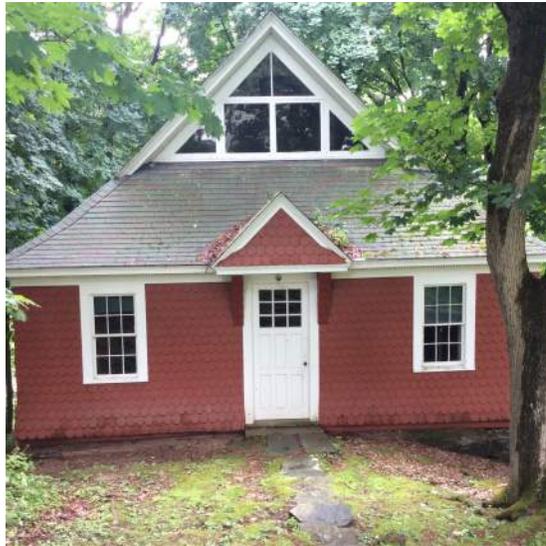
- muralist known for painting industrial workers - three of his 1937 WPA murals of abolitionist John Brown are on display in Torrington, CT central post office



Arthur Covey - *John Brown Mural* - Torrington Post Office -1937

**Dr. Edward Quintard (1867-1936)**

- eminent Columbia University internist who also painted, wrote poetry, was listed in *The Social Register* and lived at 1050 Fifth Avenue - Mark Twain's personal physician, at Twain's side when he died - Quntard summered at Knolly Brook, 106 Greenwoods Road, Norfolk where he nurtured artists who were suffering financially from the effects of the Depression - remodeled a barn behind his house into a studio where Ernest Lawsen, Guy Pene du Bois, Robert Nesbit and others painted and exhibited their work:



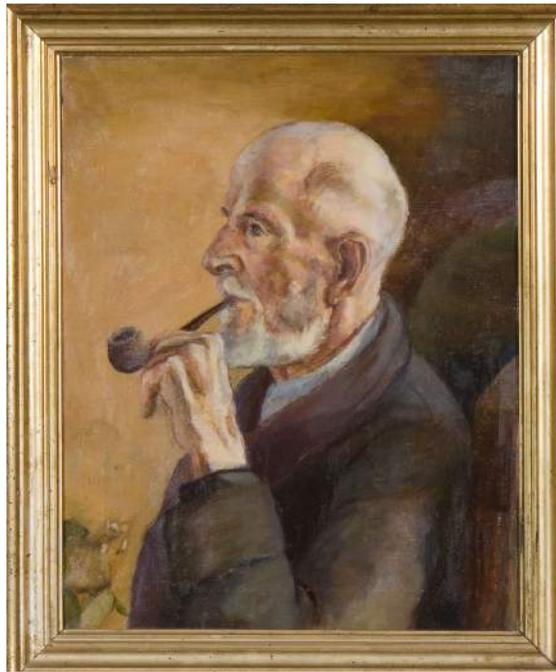
Knolly Brook Studio Today



Mark Twain with Edward Quintard, MD

There were several more highly regarded artists of the time represented at the Norfolk Country Club exhibit, such as **Robert Hogg Nesbitt**, **Dines Carlson**, **Troy Kinney**, **Harry Gottlieb**, and **William Carrigan**, that might well have been featured here but for space considerations. It is well worth the effort to search for and discover their works online, some of which were included in the NCC show. Significantly, several local amateur artists, some of whom were Club members, took the opportunity to show their own art work in the Norfolk CC clubhouse, including:

- Marjorie Goodnow - member of well-known old Norfolk family, George B. Case - legendary Yale baseball player and co-founder of powerful law firm, White and Case and **Ann Curtiss Scoville** - highly-regarded figurative painter and welded steel sculptor, who was 16 at the time and a student of Guy Pène du Bois; one of her paintings at the Norfolk show depicting her grandfather, Everett Curtiss (#33), is shown below (photo courtesy of **Don Perdue**):

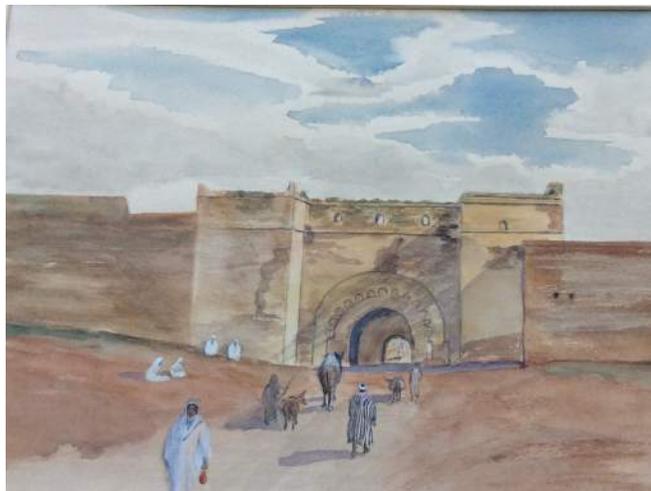


Ann Curtiss - *Portrait of My Grandfather* - 1935

- and notably, there were four watercolors by proud Norfolk resident and erstwhile local celebrity:

**Senator Frederic Walcott (1869-1949)**

- United States Senator from Connecticut - 1929-1935, assistant to Herbert Hoover in WW1  
United States Food Administration - below is one of Senator Walcott's four watercolors at the Norfolk art show:



Frederic Walcott - *North Africa* - 1931

No photographs have been found of the 1935 NCC art exhibit but one's imagination easily quickens with thoughts of the excitement of then NCC members' in anticipation of this very special event - of the stylish 1930s clothes they may have worn on Varnishing Day: Eugenia hats, raked fedoras, tailored Chanel and Schiaparelli suits, double-breasted, herringbone jackets...; the sleek, elongated automobiles they drove; the stimulating conversations they must have had about the economy, the New Deal, the WPA and, of course the state of the art that was on being showcased at the NCC Clubhouse that long-ago September week-end.

It's interesting to note that, by coincidence, famed golf course architect, **A.W. Tillinghast**, who is acknowledged to have designed Norfolk's course in 1928, happened to be in Norfolk on Varnishing Day, Thursday, September 12, inspecting the course for the PGA. While here that day he toured the course with NCC golf pro Wally Martin, recommending a new 6th green and new 7th tee box and also rendering a workable, but never-realized, plan to convert the NCC and adjoining 1897 Norfolk Downs courses into one seamless, impressive 18-hole layout. Tilly was also an antique dealer and patron of the arts who, presumably, would have been delighted by the compelling art show decorating the Clubhouse while, simultaneously, adding a fillip of celebrity to an already exciting, glamorous artistic occasion.

As far as is known, this was the last, and perhaps only, art show ever held at the Norfolk Country Club, at least one of such ambition featuring so many estimable artists. There were no prices listed in the catalog but the paintings most certainly were for sale. Is it possible that paintings purchased in the Clubhouse that week-end in September, 1935 are hanging, to this day, in the homes of some old Norfolk families?

*Michael Kelly*  
*Club Historian*  
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