

Newsletter of the NORFOLK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2018 – 2019 SEASON

NORFOLK, CONNECTICUT

Stop the Press!

by Barry Webber

It was mid-April 2018, and we had been working all winter on the manuscript for our new book *A Remarkable Legacy: The Photographs of Marie Hartig Kendall*. Even with our extensive collection of Kendall photographs and a few letters written by her son Claude in the 1960's, we still found many gaps in the story. So it was an unexpected pleasure to open an email that read: "Hello, my friend and neighbor is Marie Kendall's granddaughter, and she has some things she would like to donate to your museum." Not knowing that Marie Kendall had a surviving granddaughter, I immediately dialed the telephone number listed in the email. I left a message that I hoped didn't sound too excited, when in fact I could hardly wait to learn what new material might come our way that we would want to include it in the book.

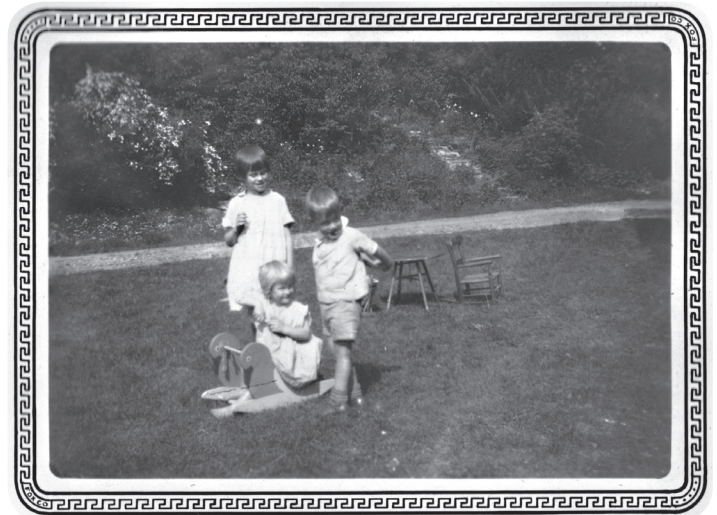
Days passed and there was no return call. Impatient and extremely curious, I wondered if I should call again. When her neighbor, Scott, finally called me back, he told me that Kendall's granddaughter, Margaret Donovan, lived in Maryland and graciously invited me to come visit and take a look at the material. Off I went on May 5, bringing a few items from the Norfolk collection such as Kendall's sewing school instruction notebook and a copy of *Picturing Norfolk: 1758-1958*, which featured many of Kendall's photographs.

When I pulled up in front of the Donovan house and rang the bell, I really felt like I was paying a visit to a long lost relative. By the end of our visit I think the feeling was mutual. Margaret was amazed and touched that we knew so much about her grandmother. She had not visited Norfolk since the late 1930's when she was

a young child, yet had fond memories of the library, Tobey Pond, the babbling mountain streams, and all the summer pleasures Norfolk had to offer.

The collection Margaret offered us was extraordinary. These were the personal items that Kendall had saved and set aside for her daughter Kay (Margaret's mother) to keep for the family. I sat with Margaret for hours looking over photographs and letters, items that she had not looked at for decades. I was spellbound. The majority of the Kendall prints we have in the Historical Society's collection are cardboard mounted photographs. Here were some of the same photographs, unmounted and often with pencil notations in Kendall's hand on

continued on page 3



Alice, Edward, and Margaret Vining visit Grandmother Kendall, June 1929

IN THIS ISSUE

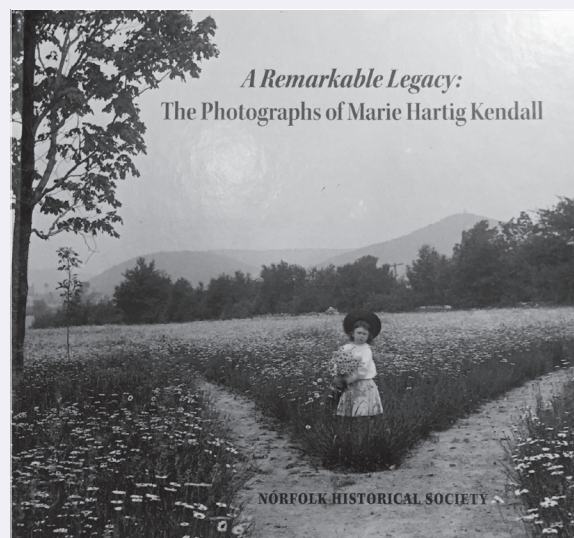
Ongoing Exhibition page 2
NHS Accomplishments. page 3
Paperback Revolution page 4

Finding Treasures page 5
Grants page 6
Calendar of Events page 7

A Remarkable Legacy: The Photographs of Marie Hartig Kendall

The Norfolk Historical Society is pleased to present a study of the life and career of Marie Hartig Kendall, who lived and worked in Norfolk for half a century and left us a detailed map of our town's past. The lavishly illustrated 200-page book will give the reader a glimpse into town life at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The scope of Kendall's work ranges from scenic landscapes, to studio portraits, to whimsical photographs of family pets (chicken included). Photo historian Naomi Rosenblum contributed the book's foreword.

You can purchase the book (\$60) through our website www.norfolkhistoricalsociety.org or stop by the museum or Norfolk Library.



Ongoing Exhibition

An *Extraordinary Legacy: The Photographs of Marie H. Kendall* is now in its second year as our main exhibition with some wonderful new additions. Although we have used our extensive archive of Kendall photographs in previous exhibitions and publications such as *Picturing Norfolk* (2008), it has been one of our goals to feature Kendall and the significant body of work that she produced between 1885 and 1920. This exhibition and the accompanying book are the result of in-depth research on the life and work of this talented photographer.

The exhibition was especially interesting to curate.



With over 3,000 Kendall images in our collection, we began by selecting those photographs that best told her story. The Kendalls arrived in Norfolk in 1884, when Dr. John Kendall was invited to take over the practice of town doctor William W. Welch. With only one photograph of their eldest child Lena, who had been killed in a tragic accident two years earlier, Marie was determined to have pictures of her three surviving children. Norfolk didn't have a resident studio photographer, so she set her mind on teaching herself the art of photography. Family legend tells us she used her sewing skills to raise the money needed to buy her equipment.

With a view camera in hand and a subscription to the *American Amateur Photographer*, Kendall was a quick learner with innate talent, and many of the early family photographs in our collection are featured in the exhibition. In addition, thanks to a grant from the Norfolk Foundation, we completed the digital scanning of Kendall's glass-plate negatives, which allowed us to enlarge some of these key images. In this way, one can get a very close look at Kendall family life, whether the interior of the Kendall drawing room or a family outing to New York's Central Park.

Other photographs on display have their own particular story to tell. Some reflect her process, others her skill at setting a scene, still others her innovative technique. Most give us an intimate look at life in our town at the turn of the 20th century. You won't want to miss Part II of this very special exhibition.



The Journey from 'Good to Great'

It began decades ago when NHS President Cay Fields convinced the Board to move forward with implementing professional museum standards for our organization. The Society was awarded a Museum Assessment Project (MAP) grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which in turn led to the Collections Assessment Project (CAP) in 1993. The results of CAP gave us a clear picture of what needed to be done, mainly a detailed cataloging of all the documents, photographs, and objects in the Society's collection. Ann Havemeyer took on the task over a period of ten years and created a database of all the items in our collection. A staggering 16,080 individual records are now part of the museum catalog. We constantly update as new objects are donated to or purchased by the Society. The ability to search catalog records thematically has been a tremendous help as we develop our award-winning exhibitions (see article on page 8), research projects, and publish books.

The documentation of our collections has allowed the NHS to move to the next phase. A good friend of

the Society, William Hosley, recommended that we apply for a grant offered by the State of CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Designed for small cultural institutions in Connecticut that have received limited state support, the Good to Great grant provides funding for facilities repair, rehabilitation, or expansion, allowing these institutions to develop new means of sharing and telling the stories of our state's rich history and culture in engaging, meaningful, and relevant ways.

Daring to dream big, Executive Director Barry Webber came up with a plan that would bring some new life into the building that serves as a museum for the Society. Built in 1840, the Norfolk Academy was a private school for many years. It was later used as the Town Hall, at which time two jail cells were installed in the basement. At the turn of the century, the building was a popular hostelry known as Miss Cora Brown's boarding house. The property eventually returned to the town and was designated for the Norfolk Historical Society upon its founding in 1960. Renovations at

that time included covering the old walls with pegboard and the ceiling with acoustical tiles and installing florescent lighting, now very much out of date. Webber's plan will address some of these issues.

With the help of our Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Lucy Mookerjee, we submitted a Grant Proposal to the DECD through the State Department for Historic Preservation. Our project is titled Visitor Movement/Museum Intent: Reclaiming Space at the Norfolk Historical Society and we are thrilled that it was accepted for funding. The project will involve creating a new reception area in the Museum; reinterpreting and refreshing the room that has been the "Country Store;" and refurbishing the second floor rooms with improved storage for documents and photographs and a study area for research and programming. Projected costs are \$80,000, 75% of which is covered by the grant. The remaining 25%, our share, has been covered by generous donations from a few patrons and friends. The bulk of the project will begin this fall.

STOP THE PRESS! From page 1

the back. For instance, the child who we thought was a young girl in a field of daisies pictured on the cover of our book was identified as Edmond Peaslee. My visit with Margaret was an experience that anyone interested in town history might only dream about. Twenty-four hours later, I headed back to Norfolk with a car packed with Kendall treasures to share with my co-authors Ann Havemeyer and Robert Dance.

Of course, we had to stop the press and take time to assess this material, which included an additional 50 glass plate negatives and hundreds of pristine prints. In particular, our knowledge of Marie Kendall as a person

was greatly enhanced by a trove of letters written by her daughter Kay. Much of this material was incorporated into the book. With a foreword by renowned photograph historian Naomi Rosenblum, chapters on Kendall's life and place in photography, and the Margaret Donovan story, *A Remarkable Legacy: The Photographs of Marie Hartig Kendall* has become the definitive work on this significant photographer.

Last September, when the book was finally published, we invited Margaret to visit Norfolk for the first time in some 80 years. She found it the same charming place she remembered as a young girl.

Paperback Revolution: How Modern Age Books Changed the Way America Reads

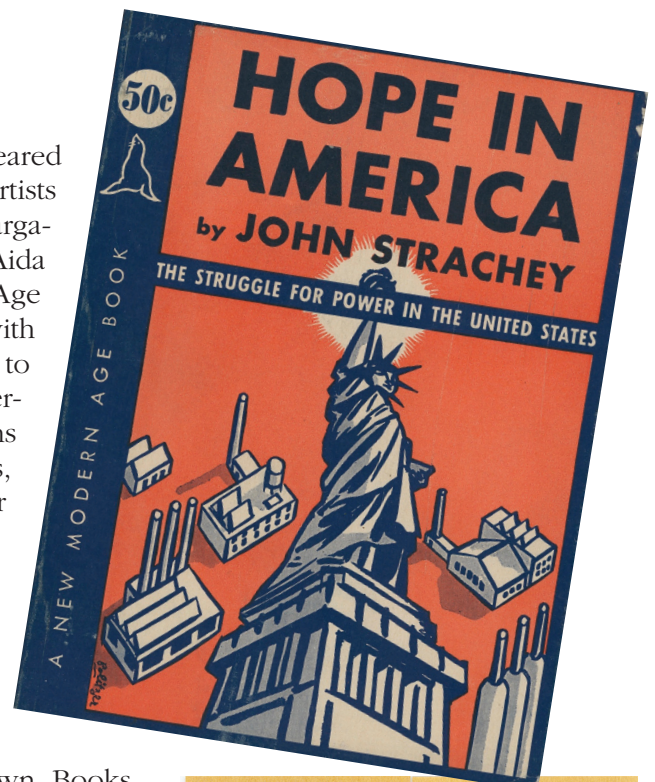
by Lucy Mookerjee

Book historians have described the “Print Revolution” in Early Modern Europe as an evolving “communication shift,” in which Western Europe transitioned from a scribal culture to one of print. ‘Paperback Revolution’ describes a similar communication shift that took place in 20th-century interwar America thanks to 19th-century industrial development. Steam-powered printing presses, pulp mills, automatic type setting, and railroad networks paved the way for improvements in book printing, book-distribution, and production processes, prompting publishers to experiment with the mass-distribution of soft-bound books. The historically overlooked ‘Modern Age Books’ was the first large-scale press to publish paperbacks in the United States. Preceding Simon & Schuster’s paperback imprint ‘Pocket Books’ by two years, Modern Age was founded in 1937 by Norfolk resident Richard S. Childs (Yale ‘32) and Samuel W. Craig (founder of The Literary Guild of America). The press released more than 150 titles before closing its doors in 1942.

The economics of literacy and literary “taste” between the wars is a complex area of study. Childs and Craig invented a successful formula for democratizing reading on the eve of WWII. The Modern Age enterprise combined innovative illustration, printing, and distribution techniques to publish a low-cost list of progressive titles, making particular use of works by Work Projects Administration authors and artists. Books by fiction-writers such as William Saroyan and foreign correspondents like Walter Duranty and

Anna Louise Strong appeared with lively cover art by artists including Lynd Ward, Margaret Bourke-White, and Aida McKenzie. The Modern Age team worked carefully with WPA men and women to produce high-end paperbacks in high-print runs of 50,000 –100,000 copies, which in turn retailed for 25 and 35 cents apiece. By distributing the cost of composition, and ensuring accomplished presswork and good management, it was possible to keep the price of the “product” down. Books were printed at night by union labor on Reader’s Digest printers in Concord, NH. Intriguingly, digest versions of full Modern Age titles first appeared in the radical magazine *Soviet Russia Today* (1932-1951). Modern Age also offered a book club service, which was modeled after Craig’s Literary Guild (a competitor of Book-of-the-Month-Club). The Guild’s editorial director was the influential book critic Carl van Doren, whom Craig had hand-picked for the operation.

The concept of the paperback was not entirely new. In Western Europe—particularly in France and Germany—the idea had been passed along for years, and in the States, Charles Boni’s firm produced 16 paper bound books before succumbing to the Depression. Earlier US outfits, such as Dime Books, or the Little Blue Books published by E. Haldeman-Julius were considered too “low brow,” or “too high tone” to sustain readership. Determined to





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the middle. Books published under his imprint are also NEW books, but they are longer or more profusely illustrated than Blue Seal books and cost a little more—usually 35 cents in paper, 85 cents in cloth.

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Illustrated cover of a Modern Age Book title and the double-sided bookmark and order form

repackage reading “for-entertainment” as “literature-for-the-people,” Modern Age began selling books below magazine prices in drug-stores, newsstands, and department stores. The books were sold at tiered prices under the Three

Seals imprint. Original paperbacks were issued under the Red and Blue Seal imprints at 25 and 35 cents a copy; reprints (previously published books issued in new form) were available under the Gold Seal series and could be ordered in soft or hard cover.

Many contemporary newspapers praised the Modern Age “experiment,” extolling the books’ format, paper, and cover art as “ushering in a new era in American publishing.” With a total profit margin of 10 cents a copy, however, the company’s success depended on an enormous volume of sales, and by 1941 the press was forced to sell

five books for the price of one. At the same time, Modern Age’s revolutionary mission of equipping US citizens with the tools of “good” literature gave way to a particularly American anxiety about the firm being run by Communists. Exactly five years after the first full-page ad for Modern Age appeared (again in *Soviet Russia Today*), Childs announced that Viking had “taken over a large number of Modern Age’s books and author contracts.” The press officially stopped printing in October of 1942.

An original drawing by Lynd Ward from the Richard Childs collection



Finding Treasure: Adding to the NHS Collection

This year we have acquired an unusually large number of interesting and unique Norfolk-related documents and artifacts. Some were donated, and others were purchased by the Society because they were deemed pertinent to our collection as specified by our collections policy. A committee of six NHS Board members serve on the Collections Committee and review items for acquisition.

What makes an artifact pertinent to a museum collection? Provenance is number one: who owned it, and where it was made and by whom, if known. The story behind the artifact is another strong factor. Maintaining and preserving a collection are also parts of the equation. We assess the object’s condition and the potential need for restoration. Archival storage comes with a price tag: climate conditions in our facility, proper boxes and wrapping to keep the item safe, and the physical time it takes to process and document an object are all costs. As you can see, much goes into creating a collection and sometimes that set of circumstances changes with time. Our mission to preserve Norfolk history through our collection of artifacts has been very consistent over the past 50 years.

This spring, the estate of Janice and Carl Gabelmann came on the market. Janice Bruey Gabelmann had been a member of our Board of Directors for decades and was from an old Norfolk farming family. The NHS was successful in buying two very interesting objects at auction: a locally-made egg crate (at right) used for transport on the railroad with a unique fitted interior of wires to hold six dozen eggs; and a simple candle stand that belonged to Esther Hinkley Pendleton, who arrived in Norfolk as a young bride in 1801. The Pendletons

made oak clock faces, so we assumed the table was either made locally or came from Rhode Island where Esther was born. It is a beautiful example of the type of furnishings early Norfolk settlers would have owned. Additional items were acquired at the estate sale. Janice and Carl were collectors, and the trove of Norfolk items ranged from Norfolk-made quilts to Janice’s scrapbooks, which chronicle her years as a local schoolgirl and town events up to the current decade.

It is important to remember that once these items are in our care, they become part of a public collection and are accessible to everyone. Although they may be in archival storage, we are always happy to bring them out by special request. Please consider the Norfolk Historical Museum when you are wondering what to do with your Norfolk-related artifacts.



2018 Grants

NHS was the recipient of two grants last year. The Connecticut Humanities Council awarded us a grant which helped fund the exhibition *An Extraordinary Legacy: The Photographs of Marie H. Kendall*. Funds from the CHC helped to cover the cost of mounting the exhibition, printing services, construction, and graphic design.

A second grant was given to us from the AKC Fund, along with their annual contribution toward general operating expenses. The grant was designated for technology upgrade and equipment to help digitize the collection and make it accessible to a wider audience. We are most grateful to both the CHC and the AKC for these gifts.

Fourth Annual Cake Auction

On the first day of December 2018 the Museum was filled with amazing confections, the enthusiastic auctioneer Betsy Gill, and a wall to wall crowd eager to bid on the delectable holiday treats. Each year our bakers seem to step up their game, and this year was no exception! Luckily we have an equally dedicated and generous group of buyers. This makes for a fun and very successful fundraiser for the Society. A hearty thank you to bakers, bidders, and our auctioneer! 2018 Bakers: Jennie Brown, Carolyn Childs, Walter Godlewski & Pat Godlewski, Barbara Gridley, Kathy Griswold, Betsy Little, Marie Lowe, Hartley & Janet Mead, Alyson Thomson, Caryn Trager, and a cake painting by Turi Rostad. A tremendous thank you to chief organizer Tom Hlas and Paul Madore for their hard work. Be sure to mark your calendar for this year's auction on December 7th.



Above: Susannah Anderson, John DeShazo, and Hartley Mead admire the entries.



At left: Walter Godlewski's Buche de Noël.

Calendar of Events

Now through Sunday,
October 13, 2019

An Extraordinary Legacy: the Photographs of Marie H. Kendall, Saturdays and Sundays, 1–4 pm, at the Museum

Saturday, August 3

Weekend in Norfolk Events:

- Industries Walk with Richard Byrne. Meet at the Museum at 9:45 am for this two-hour walk (10:00–12:00)
- Highlights of the Kendall Exhibition. A Gallery Tour with Barry Webber. Saturday, 1:00 pm.
- Kendall's Village Green, A Walking Tour. Sunday 12:00–12:45. Meet at the Museum.
- Little Red School House open and children's Scavenger Hunt check in, 12:00–3:00 pm. Located at Ashpohtag Road and Bald Mountain Road intersection

Sunday, August 4

Saturday, August 31

Labor Day Weekend Walk. Meet at 10:00 am at the Museum.

October, TBA

Historic House Dinner

Saturday, December 7

5th Annual Cake Auction

Sunday, January 19

Annual Meeting and program at the Norfolk Library

The Norfolk Historical Museum is open Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. June through October and by appointment, 860-542-5761.

MEMBERSHIP FORM



The Norfolk Historical Society cordially invites your support through membership. You will receive our newsletter, free admission to programs such as our popular Walks Through History, and invitations to special events.

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Please visit www.norfolkhistoricalsociety.org to pay online or mail your check payable to:
Norfolk Historical Society, P.O. Box 288, Norfolk, CT 06058

NHS Wins Award of Merit

In May the Connecticut League of History Organizations presented an Award of Merit to the Norfolk Historical Society for our 2017 exhibition Norfolk in the Great War. This is the sixth Award of Merit given to NHS over the last 20 years. Applications come from all over the state, from small and large historical societies and museums. Lengthy narratives and supporting documentation are then reviewed by the Awards Committee. Our project was one of 16 award-winning projects. Others ranged from the restoration of the 17th Connecticut Regiment Memorial Flagpole at Barlow's Knoll in Gettysburg (PA) to the reinterpretation of Old Newgate Prison. The NHS poster restoration and the extensive research done by Ann Havemeyer on the lives of the eight men who died in service were among the exhibition highlights noted in the award presentation.

*Ann Havemeyer and Barry Webber receiving the award from
CHLO President Adrienne Saint-Pierre*



Contributors/Editors:

Robert Dance, Ann Havemeyer, Lucy Mookerjee, Barry Webber

Design Layout: Melinda Belter

The Norfolk Historical Society
13 Village Green
P.O. Box 288
Norfolk, CT 06058-0288