*Part I of V*

# Good Fellows: The Walpole Society

**by Jeanne Schinto**
**Photos courtesy the Walpole Society**

*"…an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions."*
*— The definition of club by Dr. Johnson (1755)*

The Walpole Society—have you heard of it? Even longtime antiques aficionados may not know of this über-exclusive club for Americana collectors, curators, scholars, house preservationists, and antiquarian architects. From the society's beginnings in 1910, it has not sought publicity. In fact, it has done the opposite. Nonetheless, a rich archive of its records (correspondence, memoranda, memorabilia, and photographs) has been on permanent deposit at the Winterthur Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, and open to researchers since 1994.[1] Since then, the Walpole Society has continually added to it.

## The Walpole Society – have you heard of it?

In addition, Winterthur and four other institutions—the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts; the New-York Historical Society in Manhattan; the Library Company of Philadelphia; and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville—have full runs of the society's *Note Book*. Issued annually (sometimes biannually)[2] since 1926, the *Note Book* is a kind of collective journal that the society's members write and publish in very limited editions for themselves. Besides these institutions, several others have batches of the *Note Book* series, left to them by former members. In the last few years, the society has also distributed its two-volume self-published history to about 20 libraries beyond the five named above. Indeed, it's all been hiding in plain sight. Yet I seem to be the first researcher outside the society itself to have systematically used these materials.

I learned about the Walpoleans, as they call themselves, more than 20 years ago from a friend who worked for a member.[3] It was about the time I decided to start writing about collectors in general. Published information that hadn't been generated by the society itself was sparse, I discovered. It still is.[4] In 2008, I wrote an essay about one incident in the life of the club that took place in 1946. Published in another magazine, it was based in part on a very limited portion of their records.[5] I wanted to learn and write more about them, however, especially the earliest members, so used the opportunity to take a look not only at the materials at Winterthur but at some individual members' papers in collections at the American Antiquarian Society, Grolier Club, Harvard University, Boston Athenaeum, Peabody Essex Museum, and elsewhere.

**Walpoleans R.T. Haines Halsey (on left) and Philip L. Spalding in 1924 in Dover, Delaware. Halsey has a Kodak folding camera in his hand. (Thanks for the camera identification goes to advanced collector Dan Colucci and Whitey Morange, president of the Photographic Historical Society of New England.) Halsey sold his seat on the New York Stock Exchange that year to devote himself to collecting and curating. Spalding was president of the New England Telephone & Telegraph Company, then a Boston banker. A collector of furniture, clocks (particularly Willards), and early silver—all donated to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—he is credited with having had the idea for the Walpole Society's *Note Book*.**

To be sure, the Walpoleans have evolved as surely as our culture has. In many ways, today's membership configuration is no more like those of past generations than today's U.S. Supreme Court resembles that of 1910 or 1950 or even 1990, although the judges still wear black robes.[6] Yet there are similarities, the most important being that the Walpole Society is an organization whose members have always been and continue to be involved either in publicly interpreting American history or working in or otherwise supporting institutions that do so. For that reason, the club has in its way affected my own non-Walpolean life—and yours. That's perhaps the most compelling reason of all to be interested in them.

Inevitably, what I've chosen to present amounts to an interpretation, a point of view. Still, I hope it is a fair picture. I chose not to seek interviews with current members, even those who may have valid, lengthy institutional memories of the past. It would be inaccurate to characterize the club as secretive, but it is private, as a family is private. Its life goes on. I wanted to respect that fact while exercising my right to explore its publicly available records.

Sifting through group photos of the society in the 1920s and 1930s (ones that show them in business suits or dressed in black tie for dinner, a tradition to which they cleave) most people would start to get an impression of that generation of the Walpole Society before they read another word about them. And they would be mostly right except for one thing. While it's true that early members were virtually all social and political conservatives of their time and place, i.e., the Eastern Seaboard, they were renegades when it came to the one area of their lives that concerns me: collecting.

Most readers will know at least a few of their names. They were the people who wrote the first reference books about American antiques. They organized the first exhibits and created the first period rooms. They're the ones who sparked the birth of the Americana trade. Until then, both here and abroad, the word "antiques" was reserved for European objects. In fact, the society chose its namesake, Horace Walpole (1717-1797), who was a British art historian, antiquarian, and the youngest son of England's first prime minister, because he was the first to take seriously the material culture of his country, just as the Walpoleans were the first to champion our country's furniture, fine arts, and decorative arts at a time when few people assigned any value at all to what was natively made.[7]

To be sure, long before the society was formed, even well before centennial fever, antiquarians were salvaging "relics." As early as 1782 someone possessed the foresight to save the lantern from the steeple of Boston's Old North Church.[8] But that rescuer wasn't an admirer of the lantern's workmanship. Its associative value was what mattered. Meanwhile, pieces of Americana that today are valued at millions of dollars largely for their aesthetics were relegated to cellars, barns, and attics, or given to hired help.

So who exactly has been in the Walpole Society and who is in it today? All the names, past and present, are listed in the *Note Book* each time it is published. The roster isn't long; all told there have been just 146 Walpoleans to date. Boston billionaire Edward Crosby "Ned" Johnson III, chief executive at Fidelity Investments from 1977 to 2014, is a current member. So is H. Richard Dietrich III of Chevy Chase, Maryland, whose Dietrich American Foundation is based in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. His father, H. Richard Dietrich Jr., who donated the famous easy chair of American Revolutionary War General John Cadwalader to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was a member from 1979 until his death in 2007.[9] J. Carter Brown of the Rhode Island Brown family was invited to join the society in 1992, and the former director of the National Gallery of Art remained a member until his death a decade later. Before that, his father, John Nicholas Brown, was in the club, whose membership is never larger than 30 "active" members. One of them has to die, be designated "inactive" (unable to attend meetings), or resign before the election of a replacement.[10] The director of the National Gallery, Earl Alexander "Rusty" Powell III, has been a member for 36 years. A fourth member with a III designation is Joseph Peter Spang III, founding curator of Historic Deerfield and a society member since 1983. In the past there was Samuel Putnam Avery III, an art collector-dealer whose father of the same name was a collector and philanthropist. As for IVs and Vs, there have been one each: the late Mills Bee Lane IV, who restored Savannah houses, and Marshall Field V, the great-great-grandson of the eponymous department-store founder.

**Walpole Society cofounder H. Eugene Bolles, who died in 1910, the year the club was founded.**

Besides the younger Dietrich, elected in 2010 (the society's centennial year), its newest members are private collectors Mark John Kington (also "class of" 2010), Bruce C. Perkins (2011), Max N. Berry (2011), Joseph P. Gromacki (2013), and a professional, Philip M. Zea (2014), president of Historic Deerfield. Morrison H. Heckscher, curator emeritus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's American Wing and a member since 1980, is the club's chairman. Rare book dealer and collector William S. Reese of New Haven, Connecticut, elected in 2002, is its secretary. Reese took over that position from Wendell D. Garrett, a Sotheby's vice president and longtime editor at *The Magazine Antiques*. Garrett was a Walpolean from 1967 until his death in 2012. The editor of the *Note Book* is Alfred C. Harrison Jr., who joined in 1995. Owner of San Francisco's North Point Gallery, Harrison is an authority on California watercolorists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is also the grandson of one of the most notable of past Walpoleans, Henry Francis du Pont.

The list goes on with more opportunities for name-dropping. John Wilmerding has been a member for 48 years. The art historian credited with sparking the phenomenal rise of Fitz Henry Lane is the great-grandson of "Sugar King" Henry O. Havemeyer, whose huge European art collection was bequeathed to the Met. Jonathan L. Fairbanks, elected in 1983, is a Museum of Fine Arts, Boston emeritus curator and now director of the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts. Jules David Prown, elected in 1985, was first director of the Yale Center for British Art (the construction of which he oversaw); an emeritus professor of art history at Yale, he is an authority on John Singleton Copley.

Then there is J. William "Bill" Middendorf II of Little Compton, Rhode Island. Elected in 1958, he is former secretary of the navy (under Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford) and was once ambassador to the Netherlands, the Organization of American States, and the European Communities. He is also a composer and artist. Ironically, when Middendorf was a nominee, Irving S. Olds, a lawyer and former chairman of U.S. Steel, wondered in a letter to Chauncey Cushing Nash, a Boston-based stockbroker, if the 33-year-old might be a bit too youthful and inexperienced to become a member of their club.[11] Maybe so, but at the time he was savvy enough to be collecting the then-scorned landscapes of Frederic E. Church. Having celebrated his 91st birthday on September 22, Middendorf, who still collects American paintings and prints, is the oldest Walpolean and perhaps still "a bit too youthful" in spirit. I have it on good authority that his cell phone ringtone is "Anchors Aweigh."

As for the dead, Henry Wood Erving, coiner of the term Hadley chest, was a charter member, having been invited to join the initial group when it assembled for the first time on January 21, 1910, in Hartford, where Erving was a banker.[12] The one to whom Wallace Nutting dedicated his *Furniture Treasury*, published in 1928,

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Erving began collecting American antiques as a teenager in the horse-and-buggy days. (The dedication says, "To Henry Wood Erving / A student of furniture / for fifty years / whose knowledge is surpassed only / by his cheerfulness / in sharing it.") His first purchase was a flintlock cavalry pistol made in 1833 by Simeon North of Middletown, Connecticut. Out antiquing in the countryside as an adult, he once found a locally made chest in a farmhouse cellar where it was being used as a potato bin and made his small son ride home inside it because there was no other place for him in the carriage. "I am fond of junk," Erving wrote unapologetically in his essay-memoir, *Random Recollections of an Early Collector*.[13]

**Members of the Walpole Society, date unknown, location unknown.**

Thomas Benedict Clarke, a collector of porcelain and fine art who advised J. P. Morgan about his purchases, was in the initial group too. So was Francis Hill Bigelow, an early collector-dealer who in 1906 organized the first American silver exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. When Yale University Art Gallery curator Patricia E. Kane published the biographical dictionary *Colonial Massachusetts Silversmiths and Jewelers* in 1998, she made use of unpublished research by Bigelow and the writings of John Marshall Phillips, first curator of the Garvan collections and a Walpolean from 1941 until his death in 1953 at age 48. If the interviewer got the pun, it wasn't mentioned: Kane told an interviewer that the material was "a gold mine."[14]

Here in alphabetical order is the entire list of original members:

Samuel Putnam Avery III of New York City and Hartford, Connecticut
Edwin AtLee Barber of Philadelphia
Francis Hill Bigelow of Cambridge, Massachusetts
Dwight Blaney of Boston
Hezekiah Eugene Bolles of Boston
Richard Albert Canfield of New York City
Thomas Benedict Clarke of New York City
John Cotton Dana of Newark, New Jersey
Henry Wood Erving of Hartford, Connecticut
Harry Harkness Flagler of New York City
Hollis French of Boston
Henry Watson Kent of New York City
Luke Vincent Lockwood of New York City and Greenwich, Connecticut
George Shepard Palmer of Norwich and New London, Connecticut, and New York City
Arthur Jeffrey Parsons of Washington, D.C.
Albert Hastings Pitkin of Hartford, Connecticut
Charles Adams Platt of New York City
Frederick Bayley Pratt of Brooklyn, New York
Charles Hitchcock Tyler of Boston
Frederick Scott Wait of New York City
Theodore Salisbury Woolsey of New Haven, Connecticut

Lockwood, Bolles, and Kent were the club's cofounders. Each holds an esteemed place in the annals of Americana collecting. Lockwood was a lawyer who practiced in New York City. He and his family were proud to claim that among their own forebears was Englishman Robert Lockwood, who settled in what became Old Greenwich, Connecticut, in 1640.[15] They built a summer house (later it became their year-round residence) in adjacent Riverside. He had been collecting since his days at Trinity College in Hartford, a time when he bought, as he put it, "anything that my allowance permitted."[16] In 1901, when he was only 29, Scribner's published the first volume of his *Colonial Furniture in America*. One of the first reference books on the subject, it has become a standard. In 1914 he established the Brooklyn Museum's Department of Colonial and Early American Furniture, now known as the Department of Decorative Arts. The museum began to collect American furniture with his guidance, starting with a circa 1715 one-drawer Hadley chest that by tradition had descended in the family of Dr. Ezekiel Porter of Wethersfield, Connecticut, from whose descendant the museum acquired it. Lockwood was also the driving force behind establishment of that museum's American Wing, which opened in 1929.

Bolles was a Boston lawyer who by 1909, when he was 71, had amassed a 600-piece American furniture and decorative arts collection and sold it to Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage. By design, Mrs. Sage, the philanthropist-widow of financier and railroad tycoon Russell Sage, immediately gifted it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where eventually it formed the nucleus of the Met's American Wing. Among the numerous humdingers in the Bolles legacy is a 1730-50 Boston-made japanned high chest of drawers. It is pictured on the rear dust-jacket of Morrison Heckscher's *American Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Vol. II, Late Colonial Period: The Queen Anne and Chippendale Styles*, published in 1985. Bolles had bought the chest from the widow of a local furniture mover. When carting the belongings of "some well-to-do family" many years earlier, it had been given to him, Bolles wrote in notes archived at the Met.[17] How valuable might that piece be today? Considering its provenance, the chest is literally not priceable. But in Bolles's hometown on November 7, 2004, Skinner auctioned a similar chest for $1,876,000 (including buyer's premium). Signed "Rob Davis" in script by its japanner and dated precisely 1735-39, the piece not only set a new high for a single lot sold at a Skinner Americana auction, it was the most expensive piece of furniture ever auctioned in New England—and the costliest piece of japanned furniture ever sold anywhere. And its buyer? Walpolean Ned Johnson.

That fact wasn't revealed at the time of the sale but is available to read in the *Note Book*. The group visited Johnson and his wife, Lillie, at their place overlooking the Charles River on Boston's Beacon Hill in 2009, and the designated *Note Book* scribe wrote about seeing the chest.[18]

The transfer of the Bolles collection to the Met would not have happened if not for behind-the-scenes orchestration by the society's third cofounder. Kent was also the one who convinced the museum's board of trustees to have the *Hudson-Fulton Exhibition of American Industrial Arts* of 1909 and then rounded up the lenders (ten of them future Walpoleans). The first ever museum show of American fine and decorative arts was part of the famous celebration of Henry Hudson's 1609 "discovery" of the river that bears his name and of Robert Fulton's securing of a patent for the first commercial paddle steamer in 1809. Until *Hudson-Fulton*, the Met's galleries were customarily filled with European-made objects. Now museum-goers were being asked to accept the radical idea of American-made chairs and chests, tables and desks, glass, ceramics, and textiles on display in a museum setting. And they mostly did.

**Members of the Walpole Society, location unknown, pre 1914. In center, wearing a derby, Richard A. Canfield. The gentleman on far left is believed to be club cofounder Henry Watson Kent.**

The Boston-born Kent was not a private collector. At the time of *Hudson-Fulton*, he was the 43-year-old assistant secretary of the museum's board of trustees, although his path to that position could not have been predicted. When he arrived in New York City in 1884 at age 18, he was looking for a career in what was then an entirely new profession: librarianship. It was being taught in a kind of pilot program at Columbia College's library by Melvil Dewey, inventor of the Dewey Decimal Classification system. (By offering that course, Dewey in essence also invented library school.)

A small-boned man, Kent is said to have had a painfully formal manner and an affected British accent.[19] He never married. Far from well-to-do, when he came to New York City, he lived next door to a brewery in a flat overlooking railroad tracks and ate dinner at a place frequented by brakemen of the New York Central.[20] After Columbia, he went on to become librarian at his secondary school alma mater, Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, Connecticut. Simultaneously, he was first curator of the town's brand new Slater Memorial Museum. He proudly proclaimed of himself that he was "no tuft-hunter," i.e., one who seeks association with persons of high social status. Nonetheless, he met many influential people in Norwich, including future Walpoleans. In 1900 he returned to New York City to become assistant librarian and then librarian of the Grolier Club. Established in 1884, the Grolier has grown to be the preeminent association of bibliophiles in the country. From there, Kent went to the Met where, in addition to the board position, he was appointed the museum's first "Supervisor of Museum Instruction." It was the dawn of that great innovation, the public school field trip, and Kent was at its forefront.[21]

By many accounts including his own, the Walpole Society was solely Kent's brainchild.[22] It was he who presented the idea to the other cofounders at a legendary lunch at the Union Club in Boston, where they had gone to celebrate the newly minted deal with Mrs. Sage that had secured the Bolles collection for the Met. According to lore, each put a dime on the table in symbolic contribution to the club's formation.[23] They also drank a magnum of champagne. The organization was later formally organized in New York City and first assembled in Hartford, arguably the center of the American antiques world from the mid-19th century to the 1920s. Kent was probably the one who wrote the invitation that was mailed to a list of 25 people. Dated January 19, 1910, it was worded this way:

"Your name has been suggested as that of one, who, being eligible for membership, might desire to join a club newly formed in the interest of collectors of all kinds. The association will be called the Walpole Society. Its specific object will be the bringing together once a year at dinner collectors from various sections of the country for mutual admiration, congratulations, commiseration, and advice. Without plans, constitution, or by-laws, it is hoped that such meetings would be productive of helpfulness at least and, perhaps, eventually of some serious work."[24]

The return address was 80 Washington Square, Kent's residence. "It was famous as the first bachelors' apartment house in Manhattan, built by McKim, Mead & White, and famous also as the setting for the opening scene of Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth*," Kent wrote in his autobiography, *What I Am Pleased to Call My Education*, published in 1949 by his old employer, the Grolier.[25]

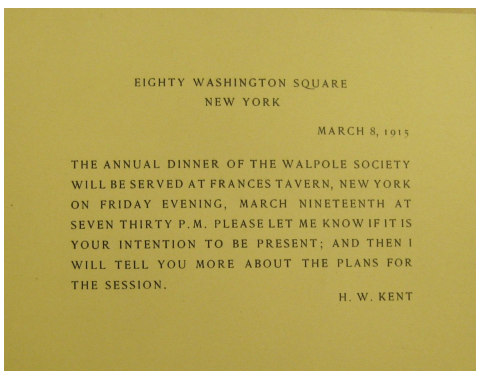
Among those who accepted (only four declined) there were a few quick subtractions. Three were due to the deaths of Bolles, Barber, and Wait, all in 1910. There were also three resignations: John Cotton Dana resigned in 1911, and Samuel Avery and Charles Platt resigned in 1912. Dana was an outspoken and pioneering public librarian; Platt was a busy contemporary architect; Avery was more interested in fine arts than furniture. It may have been that the society simply wasn't the right club for them; the records at Winterthur do not cite their reasons.[26] In any case, the following members were added in that same short period: George Munson Curtis, a silver manufacturer based in Meriden, Connecticut, who published *Early Silver of Connecticut and Its Makers* in 1913; Rhode Islander Norman Morrison Isham, an antiquarian architect and authority on early American houses; and George Parker Winship, first cataloger and librarian of the John Carter Brown Library, then first librarian of Harvard's Widener Library.

Yet another early and important Walpolean was Richard Townley Haines Halsey, known as "R.T." Asked to join the society with the initial group, he at first said yes then sent his regrets. Too busy. Persuaded to reconsider the offer, he joined in 1914.[27] A decade later, Halsey sold his seat on the New York Stock Exchange to devote himself full time to collecting and curating decorative arts.[28] That same year, the Met's American Wing opened. Halsey had designed it. Current member Peter M. Kenny, formerly an American Wing curator, now copresident of the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust, has suggested that if the American Wing could be thought of as a product of the Hollywood film industry, then Robert W. de Forest, who paid for the project, could fit the role of powerful studio mogul; Kent would be the savvy producer; and Halsey, the artistic director.[29]

A perhaps equally impressive list could be made up of those nominated but never elected to the Walpole Society. They are described in the records at the Winterthur Library, which is, incidentally, named for another Walpolean, Joseph Downs, the Winterthur Museum's first curator. On the nomination lists for years was Boies Penrose II, a Philadelphian. President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, he was founder of the Boies Penrose Fund for the collecting of photographs of old Philadelphia. Unfortunately, his namesake, a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, was unpopular in some quarters. As Henry

Wood Erving wrote to a fellow Walpolean on July 2, 1940: "Of course, I don't know [him] but he is the son, or nephew, or godson of a disreputable political boss. I want nothing to do with the name...."[30] For the record, the senator was the collector's uncle.[31]

Erving could not have been the only objector. When the society was founded, the rule was "One objection prevents an election."[32] By the time Penrose was denied, three black balls were required to nix a nominee.[33] And as John Hill Morgan wrote to a fellow member, he believed three to be the right number rather than the proposed two, since "you may be sure of two negative votes against anybody, including the Angel Gabriel."[34] Elected in 1919, Morgan was a professor and curator of American painting at Yale and considered an authority on early American art, most notably of George Washington portraits.



EIGHTY WASHINGTON SQUARE
NEW YORK

MARCH 8, 1915

THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE WALPOLE SOCIETY WILL BE SERVED AT FRANCES TAVERN, NEW YORK ON FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH NINETEENTH AT SEVEN THIRTY P.M. PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF IT IS YOUR INTENTION TO BE PRESENT; AND THEN I WILL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT THE PLANS FOR THE SESSION.

H. W. KENT

**Invitation to members from Henry Watson Kent to a Walpole Society dinner on March 8, 1915, in New York City.**

Henry C. Mercer, creator of the Mercer Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, was another rejectee for reasons I could not determine by reading the records. Ditto Howard Biddulph, a New Jersey banker who collected hourglasses. Same for historian Samuel Eliot Morison. Charles Nagel, director of the Brooklyn Museum and later the first director of the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, seems to have been passed over because some felt there were already too many professionals, as opposed to private collectors, in the group—an issue that still causes discussion among members of the society today.

Walter Muir Whitehill, director of the Boston Athenaeum for 27 years, didn't get in, either. A line from a letter in the archives is vague but emphatic: "He would not be what we want."[35] Norman Isham wrote in a similar tone to cofounder Kent regarding Clarence S. Brigham's nomination, underlining for emphasis: "I object. I do not think Mr. Brigham is one of our kind, or that he will make a good member of the Society."[36] Nonetheless, Brigham, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society from 1908 until his retirement 51 years later, was elected and soon enough was making known his own thoughts on nominees' qualifications. In a letter to Chauncey Cushing Nash that seconded the successful nomination of Henry Needham Flynt, founder of Historic Deerfield, he wrote: "I realize that good fellowship alone should not be a reason for membership. But unless a candidate qualifies as a genial and likable person, this to my mind should rule him out. If we elected members, no matter what their capabilities are, who are not attractive table companions, then this would take away from the chief incentive for members to go to meetings."[37]

The club has struggled with the conundrum since its beginnings, i.e., should the high caliber of a member's collection or the institutional collection over which he presides overcome an objectionable personality? Unpleasant personal qualities were the reason why Maxim Karolik wasn't even nominated for membership. "[W]e never considered Karolik suitable for the Society," Nash wrote on December 15, 1955, to fellow member Theodore Sizer, a Monuments Man turned art history professor at Yale. "He could not get a vote.… His personality is against him." According to Nash, Karolik was alleged to be an unscrupulous dealmaker too.[38]

Nash did concede that Karolik, a Russian émigré who sang opera professionally and married money, had "a remarkable collection, but a great deal of [it] belongs to his wife."[39] Thirty-five years her husband's senior, Martha Catherine Codman Karolik was a member of a Boston shipping and trading family that grew rich during the Federal period and had a strong art collecting tradition. Why then wasn't she invited to join the club? One could compile yet another lengthy list of the many women who exceeded Walpolean collecting and scholarship standards and were bypassed. But bypassed isn't really the right word, since the club has always been limited to men. That means Bertram K. Little was a member, but Nina Fletcher Little wasn't. Dean Fales Jr. was; Martha Gandy Fales wasn't. Anthony W. Wang was; Lulu Wang wasn't.

Given the cultural roots of the men who put the gender barrier into place, its existence is not surprising. Early Walpoleans came straight out of the private social club tradition of the 19th century. Many belonged to several clubs, especially the so-called learned societies, such as the bibliophiles' Grolier and the Club of Odd Volumes, established in 1887 on Boston's Beacon Hill. In those Victorian days and well into the 20th century, most such clubs were segregated by sex.[40] The fact that a few, like both the Walpole Society and Club of Odd Volumes, remain so is surprising, at least to those who don't know the full story of these clubs and their traditions. And while the Walpoleans frequently do invite wives and the widows of deceased members to join them and have discussed going officially co-ed for years, whether to do so remains, like the private vs. professional debate, a divisive and unresolved issue.

"Clubbable" is a word that has been used to describe the kind of members the society is seeking. In 1932 Norman Isham proposed William Davis Miller, a naval officer, historian, and fellow Rhode Islander, by saying in part: "[Miller] is a man of social position and considerable wealth, but entirely modest and unassuming, charming and very clubbable."[41] In 1950, when William Alexander Jackson, founding librarian of Harvard's Houghton Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, proposed the membership of library namesake Arthur Amory Houghton Jr., he wrote that in addition to Houghton's collecting activities, the candidate was "a clubbable man, and one whose independent judgment and keen observations would enliven our meetings."[42] And to propose the election of Frederick Baldwin Adams Jr. in 1962, Jackson wrote, "I wish to testify to his 'clubbability.'"[43] More recently, in 2010, a memorandum on the subject of membership criteria used the term. It was sent to all by the society's membership committee.

Those six committee members were Wilmerding, Heckscher, Reese, Kenny, private collector of 18th-century furniture John Andrew Herdeg of Mendenhall, Pennsylvania, and paintings collector and architect Jared Ingersoll Edwards of Hartford. The document lists the qualifications that membership committees of previous years established for guidance. It includes, along with a candidate's collecting successes, professional achievements, and institutional involvements, his "reputation and 'clubbability.'"[44]

Dr. Johnson is credited with coining the term, along with "unclubbable." (Curiously, he is said to have coined the negative term approximately two decades earlier than the positive one, i.e., 1755-65 as opposed to 1765-85.) As such, it is an old-fashioned Briticism that means more than merely "sociable" or "friendly." Writing of American economist and *New York Times* commentator Paul Krugman in *The Guardian*, a reporter commented of him: "Krugman is not the most clubbable of fellows. In person he's quite offhand, an odd mixture of shy and intensely self-assured, and with his stocky build and salt-and-pepper beard he conveys the impression of a very clever badger, burrowing away in the undergrowth of economic detail, ready to give quite a sharp bite if you get in his way."[45]

**Club cofounder Luke Vincent Lockwood, standing at center. Sitting in the rockers, more Walpoleans. Williamsburg Inn, Williamsburg, Virginia, October 1935.**

I guess one could simply say that a clubbable man knows how to comport himself in and endear himself to a group of the sort that invites him to become a member.

Wilmarth Sheldon "Lefty" Lewis, who was elected a Walpolean in 1951, wrote at length about clubs in his autobiography *One Man's Education*. His affluent California family, both sides of which were originally from Rhode Island, was thoroughly clubbable. At Yale, Lewis had little trouble getting into the clubs of his desire. But during a brief period when he attended public high school in Alameda at the turn of the 20th century (before he transferred to the private Thacher School) he wrote of having difficulty in being accepted. Eventually he did get into a group he had yearned to join, only later to be "dropped" from it, after which he "became afflicted with shyness" and immersed himself in reading and his butterfly and beetle collecting.[46] It was not the first nor the last time a collector used acquisitive hobbies to assuage an emotional hurt.

Collecting itself may lead to other hurts, of course. In a previous volume of Lewis's autobiography, *Collector's Progress*, he related a story that illustrates the perils faced by a collector living in an oblivious, uncaring, non-collector world. "My first collection was of houseflies," he wrote. "It was kept in a discarded cigar box that was thrown out one day without my knowledge or consent. A year later, at the age of six, I collected shells at Santa Cruz, California. This collection was also thrown out without my knowledge or consent. It was thus brought home to me early that one must be on one's guard against non-collectors."[47] And what better way to do that than to band together with other collectors?

"Like-minded" is another phrase applicable to clubmen of all sorts. It has been used, for example, by members of the Iron Circle Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club to tell the story of its origins. The wording on its website says: "Thirteen like minded law enforcement professionals who shared a passion for riding motorcycles, riding together on the open roads, formed a brotherhood of trust and loyalty," and, "From this the ICLEMC was born."[48] Early on, in 1912, the term was written into the Walpoleans' Constitution, and it was retained when it was revised in 1958 and again in 2013.[49] To wit: the right candidate needs to possess "distinction in the collecting of early American objects of the decorative and other arts, attainment through study or experience in the knowledge of these arts, and the social qualifications essential to the well being of a group of like-minded persons."[50]

George Apley, although he didn't use the term himself, would have known a like-minded person when he met one. The title character of John P. Marquand's 1937 novel *The Late George Apley* is an upper-crust Bostonian whose old money came from textiles. A Harvard graduate who belonged to an unnamed collegiate club, he urges his son to try joining the same club when he matriculates with the class of '14:

"I am still quite well known around the Club, you know, and your first object must be to 'make' the Club," the elder tells his junior in a letter written in 1910, at the very moment in the real world when the Walpole Society was formed. "I believe that everything else, even including your studies, should be secondary to this.… I don't know what I should have done in life without the Club. When I leave Boston it is my shield. When I am in Boston it is one of my great diversions. The best people are always in it, the sort that you will understand and like. I once tried to understand a number of other people, but I am not so sure now that it was not a waste of time. Your own sort are the best friends and you will do well not to forget it."[51]

His last point is surely debatable. In any case, some Walpoleans may argue that friendship is the main reason why anyone is invited into or joins their ranks. The colorful charter-member Richard Albert Canfield was a latter-day Steve Wynn ("once the best known gambling resort proprietor in this country," the *New York Times* wrote when he died at age 59 after an accidental fall in 1914), but to his fellow clubmen he was first and foremost a friend. [52]

"It was his friendship which counted above everything else with the men of our little society," Kent wrote in a memorial published in the *Note Book*. "He liked us, and we liked him, and we all liked the same things—the artists and craftsmen of the country and the things they produced—and we never left off talking about them whenever we met; we did not have time to talk about anything else. And what firmer basis can you have for friendship than that?"[53]

So, this Part I is a little of the "Who" of the Walpole Society. In Parts II, III, IV, and V, forthcoming in *M.A.D.*, I'll write more about that as well as the club's "What," "Where," "When," and "Why."

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**Endnotes to Part I**

1. E-mail to the author from E. Richard McKinstry, library director at Winterthur, September 11, 2015. For many years before that, the records were stored, unprocessed, at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, according to an e-mail of September 14, 2015, to the author from Wadsworth curator Eugene R. Gaddis. Before that, especially during the Walpole Society's earliest years, records were scattered and record keeping haphazard.

2. The *Note Book* was biannual from 1991 to 2010; it became an annual again in 2011.

3. That friend, John C. Riely (1945-2011), worked for Wilmarth Sheldon "Lefty" Lewis in the early 1970s as associate research editor of the Horace Walpole project at Yale University and edited several volumes of Walpole's correspondence, published by Yale University Press. Riely also wrote the catalog for *The Age of Horace Walpole in Caricature: An exhibition of Satirical Prints and Drawings from the Collection of W.S. Lewis,* exhibited at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library, October-December 1973. The Walpole Society saw the exhibit on a visit to New Haven in that year.

4. Two exceptions are a brief (six-page) chapter in Elizabeth Stillinger's *The Antiquers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) and sections of *Things American* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) by Jeffrey Trask. Trask's book is a study of the development of art museums in the Progressive Era in which he discusses two Walpoleans in particular, Henry Watson Kent and R.T.H. Halsey, both of whom were associated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Walpoleans themselves have published their own histories over the years, marking their various major anniversaries in slim, chatty, limited-edition volumes. Most recently, in 2012, *The Walpole Society: The Second Fifty Years* by Alfred C. Harrison Jr. was published along with a reprint of Lawrence C. Wroth's *The Walpole Society: Five Decades* (The Walpole Society, 1960). The two-volume set has been distributed to about 20 major American libraries in addition to the five repositories of the *Note Book*. E-mail to the author from William S. Reese, June 30, 2015.

5. Jeanne Schinto, "The Walpole Society Goes to Dinner," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food & Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Fall 2008), pp. 34-45. The article's main focus is Edna Greenwood (1888-1972), who is considered one of our first important collectors of American antiques as well as our country's first significant collector of culinaria, i.e., kitchen stuff. When the Walpoleans went to see the collection at her Time Stone Farm in Marlborough, Massachusetts, she cooked them an 18th-century-style dinner.

6. This timeline of the U.S. Supreme Court (www.supremecourt.gov/about/members.aspx) shows the progression of judges through the decades. I wish there were a comparable one for the Walpole Society. If the club ever decides to have a website, I hope they include something like this.

7. Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Walpole Society: Five Decades* (The Walpole Society, 1960), p. 5. A Google search will bring up the website of the Walpole Society of England (see www.walpolesociety.org.uk). That organization should not be confused with the unrelated, website-less American one that is the subject of this series. Founded in 1911, the British one, which is likewise named for Horace Walpole, promotes the study of the history of British art, and is open to anyone.

8. The lantern is owned by the Concord Museum of Concord, Massachusetts. According to its website (www.concordmuseum.org), "The collector Cummings Davis (1816-1896) acquired this lantern around 1853 with the history that it was 'bought in 1782 by Captain Daniel Brown, of Concord, from the sexton of Christ Church in Boston, and affirmed by the said sexton at the time to have been one of the two lanterns flashed from the belfry of that church by order of Paul Revere on the evening of April 18, 1775.'"

9. The chair sold at Sotheby's on January 31, 1987, for $2.75 million, then a world-record price not only for a piece of American furniture but for any furniture sold at public auction anywhere in the world.

10. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 2013, "Constitution," p. 115. E-mail to the author from William S. Reese, June 30, 2015. As of this writing, Reese said, there are 30 "active" members as well as four "inactive" ones.

11. Irving S. Olds to Chauncey Cushing Nash, August 29, 1958. Records, Walpole Society (U.S.), Call No.: Col. 386, Winterthur Library. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotes from correspondence are from this source.

12. Erving acknowledged that "Hadley chest" was his coinage in a letter to Norman M. Isham, March 22, 1933.

13. For the full text, see "The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Meeting," The Walpole Society *Note Book* 1935, pp. 27-43.

14. Patricia E. Kane, *Colonial Massachusetts Silversmiths and Jewelers: A Biographical Dictionary Based on the Notes of Francis Hill Bigelow and John Marshall Phillips* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1998). For "gold mine" quote, see Owen McNally, "A Bible of American Silversmithing," *Hartford Courant*, February 11, 1996.

15. Jane Lockwood, January 25, 1977, p. 1, Greenwich Library Oral History Project. Jane Lockwood, MD was Vince Lockwood's daughter.

16. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 1934, p. 68.

17. Morrison H. Heckscher, *American Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume II, Late Colonial Period: The Queen Anne and Chippendale Styles* (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 241-44.

18. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 2009/10, pp. 28-29, 31. They also saw a Queen Anne tall-case clock by Peter Stelling of Boston, said to be the only documented piece of American furniture by Stelling; Winslow Homer's oil *Uncle Ned at Home* (perhaps appealing to its owner in part because of the subject's name) and his last known watercolor, *Diamond Shoal*; and a painting by Frank Weston Benson of two children fishing from a dory, similar to one at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston that shows three children fishing from same dory.

19. There were other false notes about Kent. Walpolean Harry Harkness Flagler wrote in a letter of December 1, 1948, to Chauncey Nash that Kent's name was actually Harry but when he arrived at the Met, Robert de Forest, his boss, felt it was not dignified enough for the position, and made him change it to Henry. "I think Kent always regretted this, for in his later years he went back to Harry," Flagler said in that letter.

20. *What I Am Pleased to Call My Education* (New York: The Grolier Club, 1949), p. 20.

21. Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume II, 1905-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), p.164.

22. Kent in *What I Am Pleased to Call My Education:* "I proposed the organization of a society...", p. 161.

23. Henry Wood Erving to Chauncey Cushing Nash, April 3, 1939: "After Bolles and Kent and Lockwood had their memorable meeting—around a small table where each contributed a dime for the formation of a new club—Lockwood telephoned me that same evening and asked me if I was favorable of such an organization."

24. Records, Walpole Society (U.S.), Winterthur Library, Col. 386, Box 1. Yet there is also evidence in the form of correspondence that some invitations went out earlier. R.T.H. Halsey got one in December 1909. Maybe he was on the "A" list.

25. Kent, op. cit., p. 139. See also Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (New York: Scribners, 1905; Collier Books, 1987), p. 7.

26. Kent was asked why members including Dana resigned. In Dana's case he answered, "Mr. Dana is living and flourishing as Director of the Newark Museum." March 17, 1926.

27. He reneged in a February 10, 1910, letter to Henry Watson Kent: "I am so overburdened with requests for information etc. by people that have no call on me that I can find no time for myself and my own attempts at research…."

28. Halsey had a seat from 1891 to 1924.

29. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 2009/2010, p. 44.

30. Henry Wood Erving to Chauncey Cushing Nash, July 2, 1940.

31. See Historical Society of Pennsylvania website, biographical/historical note pertaining to Boies Penrose pictorial Philadelphia collection (www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/p/PenroseV60.html).

32. Dwight Blaney to Norman M. Isham, November 24, 1911.

33. "Election of New Members," Walpole Society memorandum, October 15, 1936, p. 2. Records, Walpole Society (U.S.), Col. 386, Series I, Box 1, Winterthur Library.

34. John Hill Morgan to Henry Watson Kent, October 3, 1934.

35. Chauncey Cushing Nash to Theodore Sizer, December 15, 1955.

36. Norman M. Isham to Henry Watson Kent, October 29, no year.

37. Clarence S. Brigham to Chauncey Cushing Nash, October 23, 1950.

38. Chauncey Cushing Nash to Theodore Sizer, December 15, 1955.

39. Ibid.

40. Deemed unsuitable for the Walpoleans, Walter Muir Whitehill nonetheless "participated in or, more accurately, led nearly every New England cultural institution or society" from his base at the Boston Athenaeum from 1946 until his retirement in 1973 at the age of 78, according to an article by Mary Warnement, head of reference at the Boston Athenaeum. The article, dated March/April 2010, is posted on the Boston Athenaeum website (www.bostonathenaeum.org/library/book-recommendations/athenaeum-authors/walter-muir-whitehill).

41. Norman M. Isham to Philip L. Spalding, April 2, 1932.

42. Records, Walpole Society (U.S.), Winterthur Library, Col. 386, "Nomination for Membership: Arthur Amory Houghton Jr.," February 3, 1950.

43. Ibid., "Nomination for Membership: Frederick Baldwin Adams, Jr.," February 7, 1961.

44. Records, Walpole Society (U.S.), Winterthur Library, Col. 386, Series I, Box 25, "Walpole Society Membership Criteria for Consideration," March 25, 2010, rev. 6/10.

45. Decca Aitkenhead, "Paul Krugman: 'I'm sick of being Cassandra. I'd like to win for once,'" *Guardian*, June 3, 2012. For the full interview, see the newspaper's website (www.theguardian.com/business/2012/jun/03/paul-krugman-cassandra-economist-crisis).

46. Wilmarth S. Lewis, *One Man's Education* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 60.

47. Wilmarth S. Lewis, *Collector's Progress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 3.

48. For more information, see the website (www.ironcirclelemc.org).

49. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 2013, p. 112.

50. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 1935, p. 9.

51. John P. Marquand, *The Late George Apley: A Novel in the Form of a Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937), pp. 216-217.

52. "Richard Canfield Killed by a Fall. Famous Gambler's Skull Fractured When He Stumbled on Subway Steps. Driven out by Jerome. Closed Saratoga Club in 1907. After That Was a Manufacturer, with Home on Madison Avenue," *New York Times,* December 12, 1914.

53. The Walpole Society *Note Book* 1944, p. 35.