

Part IV of V

# Good Fellows: The Walpole Society

by Jeanne Schinto

Photos courtesy the Walpole Society

*"Outsiders are often unclear as to what the Walpole Society actually does. [Member Robert Lincoln McNeil Jr.'s daughter] Vickie recalls as a child telling her grade school class that her father was going to spend time with the Tadpole Society!" The Walpole Society Note Book, 2009/2010, p. 17.*

On an October weekend in 1955, the Walpole Society traveled to Wilmington, Delaware, to visit Winterthur. For more than two decades, this exceptionally exclusive men's club devoted to early Americana had been enjoying it as private guests of its creator and their fellow member, Henry Francis du Pont. In 1951, however, the main house had been opened to all as a museum; the men now had to share it with others.

Certainly, though, they set themselves apart from the hoi polloi in true Walpolean fashion. A 26-year-old student in the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture was charged with guiding a quartet of them through the museum on the Saturday morning of that 1955 visit. As that student, Wendell D. Garrett, recalled decades later, when he himself had long been a member of the club (elected in 1967): "One of them removed a framed rebus off the wall in an alcove, took it over to the window to examine it more closely under sunlight, returned, and rehung it with the words, 'That thing is a fake.' I was speechless and thunderstruck by such lack of respect and deference by guests for their host. Little did I know about Walpoleans."<sup>1</sup>

## What they ate was not recorded, but we know what they drank.

The society was founded in 1910, when the aesthetics of early American furniture, silver, and ceramics were being questioned and even pooh-poohed. Its charter members championed these native-made products. They wrote the first reference books about them. They helped curate the first museum shows and first permanent institutional exhibitions devoted to them. As time went on, however, 17th- and 18th-century Americana, at least that produced in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, no longer needed the Walpoleans as its cheerleading squad. Large city museums were on board, and scores of ordinary citizens were driving around engaged in what had become the mainstream hobby of "antiquing." They were also visiting newly opened historic houses and museums such as Winterthur. And so, while former generations of the clubmen had been renegades in cultivating their taste for Connecticut chests and Boston silver, later ones found themselves in the middle of the mainstream. If anything, it was the new world of American modernism and post-modernism that needed to be studied and better understood.

Still, the society did not budge. They had helped define Americana and, by extension, America itself, but even as those definitions were being rewritten by both cultural and political forces, their aesthetic stance remained exactly as before. The membership also kept doing what it had always done. Being without a clubhouse and peripatetic by choice, they met two or three times a year for weekend trips together to see the collections of like-minded private individuals and public institutions.

The same ordinary Americans who liked going antiquing and visiting historic houses and museums were now also traveling to an increasingly popular kind of educational entertainment called "living history." Walpolean Henry Needham Flynt founded one of these destinations in Deerfield, Massachusetts. An attorney who lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, Flynt had a sizable inheritance and the social network that came with it—as well as a wife, the former Helen Geier, with more of the same. He had been elected to the society in 1951, the year before Old Deerfield (now well known as Historic Deerfield) opened.

Earlier members of the club had viewed collecting American antiques partly as a way to honor their ancestors and preserve what they saw as American values. This was in the face of the cultural challenges presented by the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe coming to American shores. Often the men equated these values with the very furniture and decorative arts in their collections. As Henry Wood Erving wrote to George Dudley Seymour on June 11, 1913, about a circa 1660 Carver chair that Seymour was having restored, "You will have to comport yourself in a singularly upright manner in order to live up to that chair."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Flynt felt that Old Deerfield could inspire exemplary behavior.



Walpoleans in Louisville, Kentucky, 1976. Back row (left to right): Wendell D. Garrett, Herbert A. Claiborne Jr., Mills Bee Lane IV, John Wilmerding, Richard H. Randall Jr., William Bradford Osgood, DeCourcy Eyre McIntosh, Frederick D. Nichols, Henry S. Streeter. Front row (left to right): Frank S. Streeter, Francis L. Berkeley Jr., Clifton Waller Barrett, Andrew Oliver, Lamot du Pont Copeland, Ralph E. Carpenter Jr., Augustus Peabody Loring.

In Flynt's 1952 book *Frontier of Freedom* he wrote that Old Deerfield "demonstrates the calm strength of America today."<sup>3</sup> He felt that this strength was particularly needed in what he called "this tenuous and murky mid-century."<sup>4</sup> The problem this time wasn't immigrants; it was our "ideological conflict with Communism."<sup>5</sup> And our weaponry of choice? In Flynt's words, "Visual truth speaks louder than words in contradicting propaganda. A graphic picture...of American life"—"a specific village street...can be the most eloquent response to the strident falsehoods poisoning the air today."<sup>6</sup>

There's no evidence in the society's records, archived in Winterthur's library, that the Walpoleans took up as a common cause the fighting of the Red threat with antiques and historic preservation. As a group they were more concerned with immediate issues. One was their ongoing issue of an aging membership. During the mid-century period, as before, the members, many of them white-haired and using walking canes, knew they needed to attract younger men. And they did so. Ralph Emerson Carpenter Jr. joined in 1950 at age 41. Vincent Dyckman Andrus was 37 when elected in 1952. William Bradford Osgood got in at age 29 in 1957. Still, youthfulness had to have something else going for it. Carpenter was a collector, historic preservationist, and later a Christie's consultant. Andrus was a curator in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Osgood was a collector of toy soldiers. Toy soldiers? Hmm.

"Bill Osgood is really too young, and should not have been elected when he was," Chauncey Cushing Nash wrote to another club member when J. William Middendorf was under consideration in 1958.<sup>7</sup> Maybe so, but Nash was Osgood's proposer—and Osgood, whose soldiers are now in the Wenham Museum in Wenham, Massachusetts, remained a member in good standing until his death in 2013 at age 85. In fact, for 25 years he had served as the society's treasurer. As for Middendorf, who turned 91 on September 22, 2015, he is the oldest Walpolean and has enriched the society in many ways. Not the least of them was his ability, as secretary of the Navy under Gerald R. Ford, to secure an invitation to society members on July 4, 1976, to go aboard the giant carrier U.S.S. *Forrestal*, where they observed the Bicentennial International Naval Review and Operation Sail 1976 Parade of Sail in New York harbor. And the clubmen do love their special privileges.

A second, immediate issue for them in the mid-century period was their continuing need for well-connected members. What they wanted from them were invitations to private collections; the chance to go behind the scenes at public institutions; and entrees to private clubs where they customarily had their black-tie dinners or other functions on their weekends away. The Century Association in New York City and the Clambake Club of Newport were typical of the exclusive, members-only venues to which they'd had access through Walpolean brethren in the past. They wanted to keep it that way.

Third, the organization was old enough now that they had to consider admitting legacies, but if those legacies came with a good network, all the better. Lamot du Pont Copeland, a great-great-grandson of E.I. du Pont and Henry du Pont's cousin, was elected in 1954. "Mots" or "Motsie," as he was known, developed world-class collections of art and antiques with his wife, Pamela Cunningham Copeland, and they had an appropriately grand house in which to display it all on a 250-acre estate in Wilmington called Mount Cuba. On many counts Copeland's was a worthy election, and after his death, his widow carried on the couple's collecting traditions. Certainly, however, Heathcote Muirson Woolsey got into the club in the same year as Copeland partly because of his relatives. He was the son of one Walpolean, Theodore Salisbury Woolsey of Yale, and the cousin of two others, Judge John Munro Woolsey and William Brownell Goodwin.

Judge Woolsey's particular interest was clocks. Goodwin, an amateur archaeologist, was a proponent of the theory that tenth-century Irishmen explored and even inhabited North America. He spent years studying this idea and produced a book on the subject, as well as one about Leif Ericson.<sup>8</sup> But he also had some good Americana, reflected in the William B. and Mary Arabella Goodwin collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. Composed of items chosen by the museum's staff from the Goodwin estate in 1950, it includes a 1660-90 slat-back armchair, a circa 1680 double chest of drawers probably made on Boston's North Shore, a one-drawer chest inscribed "1691" and initialed "A.K.," and an oak Bible box dated "1694" and initialed "S.S." As for Heathcote Woolsey, his collecting area was mainly seashells, a dubious distinction by any measure. Nor was he a universally acclaimed addition to the club. "One of our good friends in the Walpole [Society] was somewhat upset over the proposed election of Woolsey," one member wrote to another on January 8, 1954, "saying that he knew him very well and that he was a thoroughly nice quiet chap whose main interest, as I recollect, is in butterflies. However, I guess we both have more things to worry about than that."<sup>9</sup>

Then in 1956 the all-out name brand of John Nicholas Brown agreed to join the club. Born to phenomenal wealth, he inherited an equally phenomenal legacy of philanthropic support for the arts, education, and historic preservation—along with a dense web of social linkages. He had ample political ones, too, strengthened while he served as a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel working in Europe during World War II as Special Cultural Advisor for the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program—i.e., a Monuments Man—and later, from 1946 to 1949, as assistant secretary of the U.S. Navy.<sup>10</sup> Records of the society don't show that he used his connections to get them into any particular place—or that he went on trips with them—but



the Walpoleans certainly enjoyed the dinner parties he and his wife, Anne Seddon Kinsolving Brown, gave them in Providence that were inevitably “carried out with...swank and style.”<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps this is the right place to talk about the men’s gustatory habits. They ate well. They also drank well. To be sure, sharing alcohol has always been part of club life in general. So naturally it has been part of Walpole Society life. Regarding member Dwight Blaney and his love of rum, the society’s memorial to him in the *Note Book* said: “Let us thank Heaven that Walpoleans have all and always been believers in its efficacy.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, the club’s self-published collective journal went even further to link spirits with the main ingredients of the society—antiques and friendship. “But who could be a good collector or a good fellow without knowledge of that heartener of conventions and societies?” the *Note Book*’s memorial writer rhetorically asked.<sup>13</sup> But the years after World War II and through the Cold War were particularly alcohol-centric times for the society, just as they were for the country as a whole—when a few martinis made a big red slab of steak taste all the better through a haze of cigarette smoke.

Their interest in liquid refreshments sometimes was factored into decisions about where they went on their weekends. On a trip to Maryland in May 1952, for example, the society was hosted by the South River Club in Anne Arundel County. Also known as the Old South River Club, the social organization, which still exists today, has nothing to do with antiques or arts. It’s just a group, limited to 25 men, that meets a few times a year at its old clapboard clubhouse by the riverside for “feasts” of food, booze, and storytelling. At the time of the Walpole Society’s visit, the club had not entertained any other “outsiders” since 1746.<sup>14</sup>

What they ate was not recorded, but we know what they drank—South River Punch. The recipe was given in the *Note Book* when they returned for another feast some years later. It is made by mixing together three quarts Maryland rye whiskey, one quart Jamaican rum, a half-pint of peach brandy, one pound cut sugar, one pint fresh lemon juice, and one pint water. This is left to stand for two months before it is deemed drinkable.

The Walpoleans also frequently enjoyed Peabody Punch during this period. The recipe was reproduced in the *Note Book* as part of the memorial to member Augustus Peabody Loring, whose ancestor was Joseph Peabody (1757-1844).<sup>15</sup> One of the richest merchants of his day in Salem, Massachusetts, Peabody was the builder-owner of 83 ships that he freighted himself. It was claimed, by family tradition, that he brought the punch recipe back from one of his trips to the West Indies, but Loring said he got it from one of his other prominent ancestors, philanthropist George A. Peabody (1831-1929), his great-uncle. In any case, it calls for copious amounts of Jamaican rum, cognac, and Madeira, along with freshly squeezed lime juice, sugar, guava jelly, and green tea.

Peabody Punch bears a resemblance to another famous drink of the eastern seaboard, Fish House Punch, which the men drank in Philadelphia. Purportedly concocted in 1732 at the venerable Schuylkill Fishing Company of Pennsylvania, it substitutes black tea for the green. Among other things, I can attest from personal experience, the tea keeps you awake, leading you to keep drinking.

Not to slight points farther south, when on a trip to Savannah, the members’ drink of choice at the Oglethorpe Club was the equally famed southern libation Chatham Artillery Punch. To make it, one starts with a mixture of catawba wine, St. Croix rum, Gordon’s gin, Hennessy brandy, Bénédictine, rye whiskey, strong black tea, sugar, the juice of oranges and lemons, and maraschino cherries. That concoction is meant to sit awhile. Then when it is ready to be served, a case of champagne is to

be added to this high-octane brew.

Sometimes the liquor and comestibles threatened to take precedence over the antiques at Walpole Society functions. At an October 1957 lunch at Bertram K. and



On trips to Connecticut in decades past, Walpoleans were inclined to visit the birthplace of Nathan Hale. By the fall of 1985, they were more self-reflexive, instead making stops at the former Hartford home of Henry Wood Erving, an original member, and that of William Hutchinson Putnam, elected in 1943. The Erving house (above) at 821 Prospect Avenue is next door to the residence of a current Walpolean, Jared Ingersoll Edwards. Edwards’s house once belonged to Erving’s brother, William Erving. Both were designed by architect George E. Potter between 1879 and 1882. The Putnam house (below), just a few blocks away, at 1010 Prospect Avenue, was built in 1919. “Putnam’s sons were on hand to greet us,” the *Note Book* scribe wrote. “Looking into the dining room, Lyonel recalled another visit of Walpoleans some forty years earlier. ‘I remember them on their hands and knees, under that dining table, just like those gentlemen are doing now...only you were much larger then!’ he said.”<sup>37</sup> Schinto photos.



Nina Fletcher Little’s house in Brookline, Massachusetts, member Charles F. Montgomery, the Winterthur Museum’s director, commented in his report for the *Note Book* that “Walpoleans were torn between food, drink, and furniture.”<sup>16</sup> And what the members ate and drank at a dinner at Boston’s Ritz Carlton on the same weekend (e.g., boned royal squab Bordighera, cassoulet of oyster crabs, coeur flottant à la Ritz, cocktails, Chateau Lafite Rothschild 1947 (double magnum), Bollinger extra-dry champagne, and cognac, followed by coffee (and cigars) was recorded in the *Note Book* almost as lovingly as the things they had seen at the Littles’ house and elsewhere that afternoon.

On a spring weekend in Greenwich, Connecticut, in 1958, their dinner menu at the Round Hill Club was no less boozy and rich. The printed souvenir lists “Purée de Fois Gras sur Pain Grillé, Aperitifs, Velouté Argenteuil, Sole à la Bonne Femme, Pouilly-Fuissé 1952, Baron d’Agneau de Lait à la Ronde Colline, Chateau Margaux 1953, Salade à la Française, Bombe Ambassade, Panier de Friandises, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin 1947, Café des Princes, Liqueurs.” The menu indicates, if nothing else, that while American antiques had long been embraced by the society, its members still did not think to appreciate American food. Of course, thanks to Julia Child, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and PBS, it would be a long while before any Americans did.

More significant, when the men considered candidates during the mid-century period, there was deliberation

about whether a man’s consumption of spirits was in synch with those of current members. To judge by the society’s archived correspondence, Bert Little was especially inclined to discuss this variable. When Henry Flynt was nominated, Little wrote to Nash that he approved of his election “although he does not bend the elbow as consistently as some!”<sup>17</sup> Of another prospective member, Little wrote to the same correspondent with some concern about the opposite extreme. Little was “fully aware of [the prospect’s] charm and his sense of humor,” having seen him around for years at two other clubs, Union and Harvard. But many times, “far too many times,” he said, “I have seen him too embottled to be really good company—only sort of silly, show-offy, and rather pathetic.”<sup>18</sup> And of a third man, Little wrote, “He has taught himself a lot about American silver, furniture, and glass, and would thoroughly enjoy learning from our meetings as well as the accompaniments of fine food and drink and ‘socializing.’” However, he added, the man’s “tendency to overindulge in alcohol could make him an irritable and grouchy companion on some of the Saturdays or Sundays of our meetings, but perhaps our Walpolean plane would offset this trouble.”<sup>19</sup> (For the record, the second man was nixed while the third was voted in and remained a member at his death 25 years later.)

And it may just be semantics, but I find it telling that in the late 1940s and 1950s Thomas W. Streeter repeatedly referred to the Walpole Society meetings as parties—at least he did in correspondence with fellow member Lawrence C. Wroth. Here

are some examples: April 12, 1947, “The Walpole party conflicts with the 100th anniversary of the Century [Association], but I missed the Walpole party last fall and it is so interesting a group that I want to keep in touch with them.” September 30, 1947, “It sounds like a nice Walpole party, except sometimes I think they plan too much for us.” October 26, 1948, “You missed a very nice party at New Haven...” June 20, 1952, “[The] Walpole party did me a lot of good...” September, n.d., 1952, “I thought the Walpole party was first rate, and one of the best.”<sup>20</sup> One of the few times Streeter used the word “meeting” to describe a Walpole trip—in a letter to non-Walpolean Henry R. Wagner—he mentioned the cocktails in the same sentence.

“These Walpole meetings,” he wrote, “are about the best of any so-called learned societies I know of, for the museums always put on a special show for us, and we have most entertaining lunches, dinners, and the like, with plenty of alcohol.”

Streeter was a rare-book collector and bibliographer extraordinaire. I wrote in Part III about the large number of bibliophiles and librarians elected to the society from about 1935 through the late 1950s.<sup>21</sup> One could make a joke that the bookmen were a bad influence, but that would not be fair. One could be just as easily blame the furniture specialists. After all, a group who customarily assembled for after-after-dinner drinks at the hotel bar wherever the clubmen stayed was dubbed the Charlie Montgomery Society. E.g.: “However, as the Charlie Montgomery Society met every evening in the bar at the Rockingham to further discuss the events, [the bad, uncooked food they had been served] was simply washed away and forgotten.”<sup>22</sup>

Eventually, the bookmen of that generation died off—Clarence S. Brigham in 1963, William A. Jackson in 1964, Thomas W. Streeter in 1965, and Lawrence C. Wroth in 1970. They have since been replaced.<sup>23</sup> But back then, among the electees were men who constituted a new club-within-the-club, smaller than the bookmen’s cadre but just as noteworthy.

The transition began in 1967 with the election of 31-year-old John Wilmerding, who collected fine art. Until that time, the paintings in Walpolean collections





Dwight Blaney's headstone at Boston's Forest Hills Cemetery, with detail of logo.

Charter member Dwight Blaney. The artist and collector designed the Walpole Society logo, which consists of a lamp atop two books, and when he died in 1944, it was engraved on his headstone.

were more or less restricted to early American portraiture. Institutional members stressed the same, including Macgill James, who, elected in 1943, was assistant director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. One exception was Bill Middendorf, who was precociously collecting Frederic E. Church. Now here was Wilmerding, a newly minted Ph.D. who, while still at Harvard, had begun collecting seascapes by an obscure 19th-century American artist then known as Fitz Hugh Lane.<sup>24</sup>

Three years before his election to the society, Wilmerding had published his first book, the first-ever scholarly treatment of Lane. Like Middendorf, he was also collecting Hudson River school artists well ahead of the pack. As Joseph Alsop wrote in *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena*, based on a series of lectures he gave at the National Gallery of Art in 1978, "No self-respecting art collector would have been caught dead with [American 19th-century landscapes] until only a few years ago."<sup>25</sup> Two years later, a groundbreaking exhibit curated by Wilmerding, *American Light: The Luminist Movement: 1850-1875*, would go on view at the museum. So once again a Walpolean was doing a very Walpolean thing, leading the way into a new field of collecting.

Following Wilmerding's election, several more fine arts collectors and art historians were admitted to the club. In addition, the society's weekend trips began to include more fine art venues. In 1973, for example, on the society's first trip to Atlanta, they took in typical sights such as Mimosa Hall, the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. Edward Hansell in Roswell, Georgia. Built 1847, it was still occupied by the sixth generation of the Hansell family. But the men also made sure to take in the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. That was indeed the semblance of progress. After their visit to the High, however, the *Note Book* scribe wrote that, by common consent, "perhaps the most significant item was a pastel of George Washington by [English portrait painter and pastelist] James Sharples, once owned by [Walpole Society cofounder] Luke [Vincent] Lockwood."<sup>26</sup> Apparently, at least for the time being, if they strayed too far from their roots, they found a way quickly to return to them.

That pattern persisted in their choice of trip destinations. In the spring of 1975, for example, the membership debuted New Orleans but in the fall chose to meet in the familiar haunt of Boston. In 1978 the combination was safe Baltimore, then Houston, so far west by Walpolean standards that the *Note Book* scribe quipped it would be compared by some of them "to the expeditions of Lewis and Clark."<sup>27</sup> A single destination could likewise be designed to provide familiarity and novelty at once. Crowning their list of places to visit in Houston was Bayou Bend, former home of Ima Hogg. One of the preeminent female collectors of early Americana, Miss Ima, as she was known, had died three years earlier and donated her entire estate to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The addition of fine arts collectors and art historians continued with the 1970 election of Robert Lincoln McNeil Jr., a Pennsylvanian who, as a member of his family's pharmaceutical company, developed the aspirin alternative Tylenol. Albeit as major a collector of American decorative arts, books, and manuscripts as he was of paintings, McNeil owned works by Eastman

Johnson, Martin Johnson Heade, William Trost Richards, and Thomas Cole, as well as what would previously have been more predictable choices by a Walpolean, i.e., paintings by members of the Peale family, among them a study for *Artist in His Museum* by its patriarch, Charles Willson Peale.

Joining in the same year was Paul Mellon, whose collecting interests were more British than American. He had many other interests besides collecting, however, including thoroughbreds; he resigned quickly, in 1973. Earl Alexander "Rusty" Powell III, at the time a curator at the National Gallery (established by the vast art collections of Mellon's father), joined the club in 1979.<sup>28</sup>

The following year, 1980, the Walpoleans had an enviable Winslow Homer moment. As guests of Charles H. Willauer, a Homer descendant, they visited the former home and studio of the artist. Twelve miles south of Portland, Maine, built on a spit called Prouts Neck, there is a two-story clapboard house where Homer lived and painted for a quarter century. Ascending to his second-floor painting room, as the Walpoleans surely did, one can step onto his "piazza" and see the same dramatic Atlantic views that he saw as he worked. Outdoors, the men may have retraced his steps along the cliff walk, where Homer watched waves exploding against rock ledges then went home to paint masterpieces such as *Weatherbeaten*. Today, after a major restoration by its new owner, the Portland Museum of Art, it is open to the public, but not back then, and one can almost hear the fine arts Walpoleans saying to the tables-and-chairs guys, "Top that!"

In 1983, on yet another visit to Winterthur, the men had one more kind of new experience related to the fine arts. They spent some time with a living artist, Andrew Wyeth. He had invited the men to his nearby home and studio in the Brandywine Valley of southeastern Pennsylvania, for "informal refreshments and the chance to chat" with him and his son Nicholas.<sup>29</sup> Later that same weekend, the artist and his wife, Betsy Wyeth, accompanied the society at member Alfred Elliott Bissell's teahouse in Wilmington. Bissell, a du Pont relative through his wife, Julia, owned Wyeth paintings, but the greater connection may have been Wilmerding, whose interest in the artist has led to several books as well as exhibitions including *The Helga Pictures*.

Then in the spring of 1984 the brethren did something truly bold. They took a trip abroad together—to Venice—and even brought their wives. (Maybe the fine arts and

communing with an artist and an artist's spirit had emboldened them?) Sixteen years earlier, they had taken a weekend trip to Bermuda, and wives had come along. On the Bermuda trip, 17th- and 18th-century houses were opened to them, where they studied Bermudian case pieces and learned of the connections between Bermuda silver and silver made in New York. They also toured historic houses like Verdmont, built circa 1710, and examined its Bermuda high chest of drawers with carved shells

on its knees. They also saw portraits of early Bermudians and two ship models made from salvaged materials and native cedar by the shipwrecked crews of the actual vessels. But the Venice trip, an extended stay across the Atlantic, was different, and does raise a pertinent question—what did Italy have to do with Americana?

"The Walpoleans may have visited Palladio's Italy for the first time as a group...but we have known his architecture, in America, for all our lives," wrote member Frederick D. Nichols, an architecture professor at the University of Virginia who established UVA's department of architectural history. As Nichols, the driving force behind the trip, said of Palladio, all of whose works are the former Venetian Republic, he was "the most influential single architect who ever lived."<sup>30</sup>

Palladianism was brought to America by Peter Harrison, who designed the Redwood Library in Newport in 1749—a building that Walpolean Ralph Carpenter had been instrumental in restoring. Other places with Palladian architecture that the society had seen over the years included Newport's Brick Market, built in 1762; Drayton Hall, on the Ashley River in South Carolina, circa 1742; Mount Airy of Richmond County, Virginia, 1758; Gunston Hall in Fairfax County, Virginia, 1755-59; Mount Vernon, 1740-73; and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, which two Walpoleans had directed, respectively. Then of course there was Monticello and UVA. Nichols, an authority on Thomas Jefferson, said the third U.S. president considered Palladio his master and "followed the precepts of Palladio wherever possible."<sup>31</sup>

Was it time for more architects in the Walpole Society? Two, Jared Ingersoll Edwards and Jaquelin Taylor Robertson, were elected in the year following the trip. In 1987, another paintings collector, Julian Ganz Jr. of Los Angeles, came aboard. Apparently, the mix was finally the right one for true progress. Thereafter, with frequency, the Walpoleans allowed themselves to be exposed to the aesthetics of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Perhaps partly because they wanted to take in Ganz's collection, the clubmen went in the fall of 1987 to southern California, where they couldn't help but see 20th-century architecture even if it wasn't on their itinerary. Doumani House in Venice (this time Venice,



*The Artist Sketching* by John Singer Sargent shows Dwight Blaney on Maine's Ironbound Island, owned by the Blaney family. The 1922 oil on canvas is in the collection of Rhode Island School of Design's Museum of Art.

California), designed by sculptor Robert Graham for Roy and Carol Doumani, was one of their stops. It had been completed only five years earlier. They also visited an early 1920s house by architect Rudolph Schindler, an Austrian émigré who had worked for Frank Lloyd Wright. And since it was L.A., they made a celebrity stop, too, paying a call on actor-comedian-writer-musician Steve Martin, who collects contemporary art.

Drinks in hand they “strolled...amidst Diebenkorns, Hockneys, and de Koonings, a superb O’Keeffe...and a comfortingly familiar Hopper, and pondered over Twombly’s powerful but perplexingly scribbled canvas,” the *Note Book* scribe wrote. “When asked whether he thought Walpoleans were ready for the twentieth century, Osgood observed that many of the abstractions were antiques in their own right, over seventy years old, and that the twenty-first century was just around the corner. Of course we were ready. But a gemlike William Bradford view of an iceberg floating behind the arc of a rainbow, a reminder that Steve Martin, abetted by [member Julian] Ganz, began collecting the Hudson River School, attracted the most attention.”<sup>32</sup> And alas, it’s also true that Herbert Augustine Claiborne Jr. was steadfast in his prejudices. “It’s not the abstract art that bothers me,” he was heard to remark, “it’s the abstract houses. I like things regular.”<sup>33</sup>

And so, perhaps to appease the entire membership, their itineraries were regularly composed of both the old and the new. In Baltimore, for example, they took in the Basilica, designed by Benjamin H.B. Latrobe and built from 1806 to 1821 and then went to the home of Mrs. Arthur U. (Edith) Hooper, whose Marcel Breuer house of 1959 overlooking Lake Roland was decorated with artworks by Alexander Calder, Isamu Noguchi, Paul Klee, Jasper Johns, and Willem de Kooning.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, on the South Shore of Boston, they secured an invitation to the 1647 Duxbury home of Mrs. Charles F. Eaton Jr., widow of the founder of Eaton & Howard Inc., a Boston investment management firm that became the Eaton Vance Corporation. But they also went to Quincy’s 1882 Thomas Crane Library, designed by H.H. Richardson.

“It is interesting to note that when the Society visited Quincy thirty years ago, it did not visit this structure,” wrote the *Note Book* scribe, “but instead confined its attention to the Adams mansion as Richardson had not then come back into style.”<sup>35</sup> These Walpoleans of the late 1980s found plenty to admire at the library: there was not only the architecture but also the stained-glass window by John La Farge and the grounds by Frederick Law Olmsted. And from there they went to see more Richardson examples in North Easton including the town hall and public library.



The Walpole Society has never owned or rented property. There is no headquarters to drive by or take a photo of. There was a moment in 1915, however, when the members were thinking that having a property located somewhere between Boston and New York City might work, and a committee was appointed to look into it. Soon afterward, however, member Norman M. Isham, an architectural historian and antiquarian architect based in Providence, Rhode Island, wrote a multipage memorandum against the whole notion. The major problem with property ownership, in Isham’s view, was dividing the cost of it among members with varying incomes. “It has not mattered...whether a man had a million or a hundred if he knew things,” he said. “But with the buying of property there might be expenses that would burden a potential member and keep him from joining.” For that and other reasons, the idea, although occasionally resurrected through the early 1950s, has now long been dropped. Very often, though, the men have taken advantage of the clubhouses of others, including the one pictured. For decades the building at 77 Mount Vernon Street in Boston has been owned by the Club of Odd Volumes, a private organization for men who love literature, books, and the book arts. A certain subset has belonged (and does belong) to both clubs, and especially in its earliest years, any time the Walpoleans convened in Boston, they would have a dinner or a meeting here. Schinto photo.

In October 1990, the men made their first trip to Chicago, where they saw Glessner House (1886) and Newberry Library (1887) and did a walking tour of the Loop that included a dozen or so landmarks of early modern architecture. They also went out to Oak Park to see the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and his Unity Temple (1907). Even their dinner venues—the Art Deco Woman’s Athletic Club and the 1923 Racquet Club, designed in the classical revival style by Andrew Rebori—conformed to the theme. All went well until Sunday morning. While on tour of Art Institute of Chicago 20 of them got stuck in an elevator for 30 minutes.

Did the men take it as an omen? Did they think they were they being warned about the consequences of cultivating a taste for modernity? Or did they simply see it as just one of the downsides of going to a museum when it isn’t open to the public? Whatever they thought wasn’t addressed in the *Note Book*, and the club pressed on into the future.

The final part of this series is forthcoming in *M.A.D.*

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## A Place Called “Walpoleshire”

*“The gentlemen of the Walpole Society, ‘Walpoleans,’ had departed from the real world and entered a superior fantasy land called ‘Walpoleshire.’” Alfred C. Harrison Jr., The Walpole Society: The Second Fifty Years (2010), p. 1.*

The men like to write tongue-in-cheek in their journal entries for the *Note Book*, and despite their tradition of rotating scribes, the droll and often self-deprecating humor on display is strikingly uniform through the years. Frequently, those scribes use the term “Walpoleshire” in referring to the places the club goes on their weekends together. It has been defined, in *Note Book*, 1977 as “a county of uncertain boundaries but containing the best of American antiquities.”<sup>36</sup> Herein, then, are the places that were briefly Walpoleshire for the mid-century period 1950-1990, based in part on lists of the club’s semiannual trips compiled by Lawrence C. Wroth and William S. Reese, respectively.

- 1950: Washington, D.C.; and Philadelphia.
- 1951: Deerfield, Massachusetts; and Westchester County, New York.
- 1952: Baltimore and Annapolis, Maryland; and Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1953: Boston and Concord, Massachusetts; and Princeton and Morristown, New Jersey.
- 1954: Charlottesville, Virginia; and Boston.
- 1955: Hartford and Farmington, Connecticut; and Winterthur.
- 1956: Charleston, South Carolina; and Philadelphia.
- 1957: Lexington, Kentucky; and Boston.
- 1958: Greenwich, Connecticut; and Shelburne, Vermont.
- 1959: Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 1960: Providence, Rhode Island; and Cooperstown, New York.
- 1961: Boston’s South Shore; and New London, Connecticut.
- 1962: Philadelphia and Winterthur.
- 1963: Washington, D.C.; and Deerfield, Massachusetts.
- 1964: Old Salem, North Carolina; and New York City.
- 1965: Charlottesville, Virginia; and Boston’s North Shore.
- 1966: New Castle County, Delaware, and Winterthur; and Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia.
- 1967: Richmond, Virginia; and Farmington, Wethersfield, and New Haven, Connecticut.
- 1968: Bermuda; and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the southern coast of Maine.
- 1969: Annapolis, Maryland; and Worcester and Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts.
- 1970: Middleburg, Virginia; and Nantucket, Massachusetts.
- 1971: Old Salem, North Carolina; and Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1972: Westmoreland County, Virginia; and Westchester County, New York.
- 1973: Atlanta, Georgia; and New Haven and Litchfield, Connecticut.
- 1974: Wilmington, Delaware; and Hanover, New Hampshire.
- 1975: New Orleans and Boston.
- 1976: Louisville and Shakertown, Kentucky; and Savannah, Georgia.
- 1977: Philadelphia and New York City.
- 1978: Baltimore and Houston.
- 1979: Richmond, Virginia; and the Berkshires, Massachusetts.
- 1980: Washington, D.C.; and Portland, Maine.
- 1981: Natchez, Mississippi; and the Hudson Valley, New York.
- 1982: Annapolis, Maryland; and Essex County, Massachusetts.
- 1983: The Brandywine Valley, Pennsylvania; and Deerfield and Amherst, Massachusetts.
- 1984: Venice, Italy; and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.
- 1985: Cleveland, Ohio; and Hartford, Connecticut.
- 1986: Charlottesville, Virginia; and Providence and Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1987: North Shore of Long Island; and Los Angeles.
- 1988: Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro, North Carolina; and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the southern Maine coast.
- 1989: Williamsburg, Virginia; and Boston and the South Shore.
- 1990: Baltimore and Chicago.



## Endnotes to Part IV

1. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 2003/2004, p. 9.
2. George Dudley Seymour's *Furniture Collection in the Connecticut Historical Society*, Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society (1958), p. 64.
3. Samuel Chamberlain and Henry N. Flynt, *Frontier of Freedom: The Soul and Substance of America Portrayed in one Extraordinary Village, Old Deerfield, Mass<sup>etts</sup>*, New York: Hastings House (1952), p. 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Chauncey Cushing Nash to Irving S. Olds, 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.
8. See William Brownell Goodwin, *The Ruins of Great Ireland in New England*, Boston: Meador Press (1946) and *The Truth about Leif Ericsson and The Greenland Voyages*, Boston: Meador Press (1941).
9. Thomas W. Streeter to Lawrence C. Wroth, in the Thomas Winthrop Streeter papers, American Antiquarian Society (AAS).
10. Two other Walpoleans were Monuments Men: Theodore Sizer and John Marshall Phillips.
11. Thomas W. Streeter papers, AAS. Letter from Streeter to Lawrence C. Wroth, regarding dinner party that Brown gave for the John Carter Brown Associates, June 21, 1949.

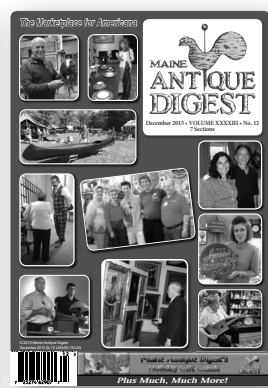
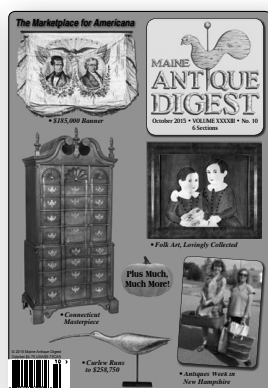
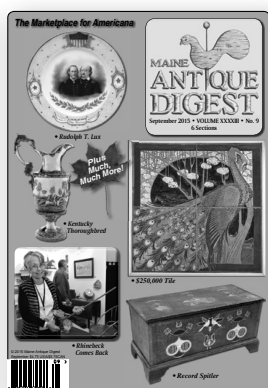
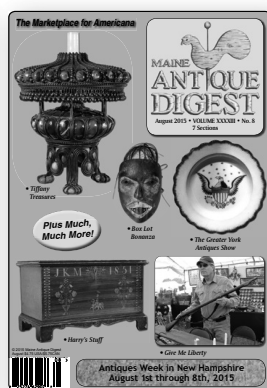
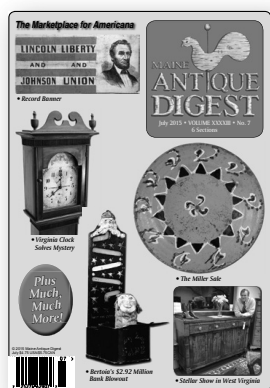
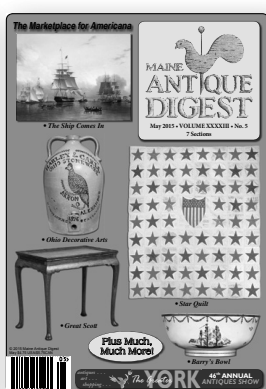
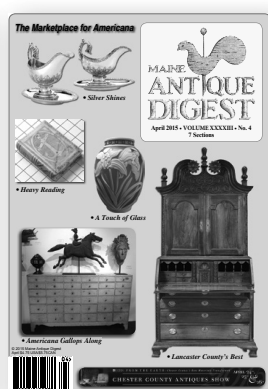
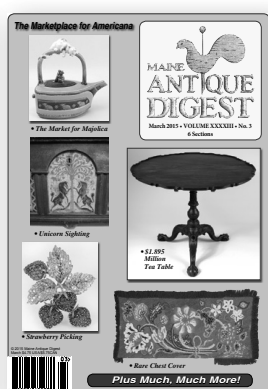
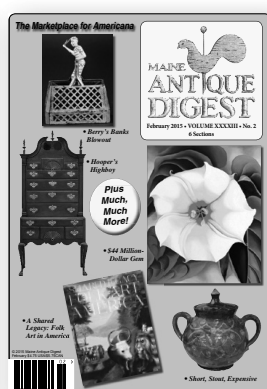
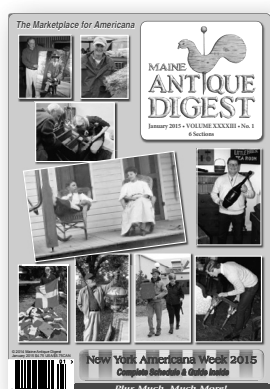
12. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1945, pp. 26-27.
13. Ibid.
14. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1952, pp. 19-20.
15. Elected in 1946, Loring died in 1951. Loring's son, his namesake, joined the club in 1957 and remained a member until his death in 1986.
16. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1957, p. 62.
17. Bertram K. Little to Chauncey Cushing Nash, October 30, 1950. Elizabeth Stillinger has written that Flynt didn't bend the elbow at all, calling him a "teetotaler" in *Historic Deerfield: A Portrait of Early America*, New York: Dutton Studio Books (1992), p. 39.
18. Bertram K. Little to Chauncey Cushing Nash, August 17, 1952.
19. Bertram K. Little to Chauncey Cushing Nash, undated.
20. Thomas W. Streeter papers, AAS.
21. See *M.A.D.*, January 2016, pp. 6-10-B.
22. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1988, p. 15.
23. William S. Reese, elected in 2002, is one. Two others are Robert McCracken Peck (2003), curator of art and artifacts and senior fellow of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University; and the club's most recently elected member, William R. Berkley (2014). In the past, Thomas A. Gray (2008) has been a collector of printed Americana of the South, but he has since given his collection to the library that he and his mother, Anne P. Gray, donated to the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Among the "inactive"

members, Charles Eliot Pierce Jr. (1990) is the former director of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

24. John Wilmerding, *Fitz Hugh Lane 1804-1865 American Marine Painter*, Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute (1964).
25. Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena*, New York: Harper & Row (1982), p. 74.
26. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1973, p. 21.
27. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1978, p. 26.
28. One year after his election, in 1980, Powell became director of the Los Angeles County Museum, a post he held until 1992, when he returned to the National Gallery as its director, his current position.
29. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1983, p. 16.
30. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1984, p. 16.
31. Ibid., p. 20.
32. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1987, p. 20.
33. Ibid., p. 19.
34. Suzanne Stephens, "Going Beyond the Bauhaus," *Architectural Record*, July 2005, Vol. 193, Issue 7, p. 279.
35. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1989, p. 17.
36. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1977, p. 44.
37. The Walpole Society *Note Book*, 1985, p. 17.



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