

Wallace Nutting

FROM FRONT PAGE

his own marketing, and he was good at it. By way of example, Ivankovich pointed out that Nutting pictures were popular wedding and anniversary gifts, helped, no doubt, by his including the word “honeymoon” in the titles of many of the romantic views, hence *Honeymoon Stroll*, *Honeymoon Blossoms*, and *Honeymoon Drives*.

In the 1920s, looking to boost the sale of his pictures, Nutting embarked on a decade-long project, writing books for what he called his “States Beautiful” series. In all, 10 books were published, eight focusing on states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) and two from his overseas trips (England and Ireland).

Overall, Ivankovich estimated that 85 percent of Nutting’s output featured exterior views, with interior scenes representing 10 percent of his work. The other five percent is classified as “miscellaneous or unusual.” Not surprisingly, the collector added, the latter commanded the highest prices today; the record for a single picture sold at auction is \$9,300 for *Old Mother Hubbard*, which depicts a henhouse with a mother hen and her chicks.

But with the Great Depression, interest in purchasing Nutting’s pictures fell off. Nutting claimed to have sold 5 to 10 million pictures, but “it’s safe to say he sold a million pictures,” Ivankovich suggested. The company continued to falter, and, in 1941, Nutting died; Mariet followed him three years later. An “inconsequential number” of original pictures were sold as late as the 1950s; at about the same time, Nutting’s glass negatives were cleared away and disposed of at a dump.



Above: Wallace Nutting traded his place in the pulpit for a career as a successful photographer. Born in 1861, he came to rue the loss of unspoiled America. Images courtesy of Michael Ivankovich

Fortunately, some of these irreplaceable treasures were retrieved and salvaged.

As time went by, a lot of Nutting pictures were trashed as well. Tastes changed, and because “they were not fine art, a lot of them were thrown out,” Ivankovich said. Others were stored in cold attics or basements, where they froze in the winter and subsequently thawed out in the spring, with the resulting water damage ruining them.

In the second half of the 20th century, however, a new generation of Nutting enthusiasts surfaced, and in 1973, Justine and George Monro organized the Wallace Nutting Collectors Club; at its peak, membership numbered in the hundreds. Although the numbers are no longer that great, the Club is still actively in existence.

Today, what sold a century ago for 50 cents to \$2 (“never more than \$5”) can be picked up for \$25 to \$75 for a “clean blossom scene,” or up to \$150 for something less common. With some 10,000 different and verified titles, there is something for everyone. Just buy what appeals to you, Ivankovich advised, or specialize,

Left: Although dreamy springtime landscapes are the most recognizable of Nutting's picture, many collectors favor more unusual subjects, such as this still life.

Below: A quaint view of the Connecticut countryside. Each Nutting picture was named by him, but signed by the supervisor of his colorists. Because a number of people held this position over the years, the handwriting varies.



Wallace Nutting collectors gather in September

Stand in the very same spot where Wallace Nutting stood to photograph the beauty of New York. Meet with fellow enthusiasts and learn more about the once very popular photographer and his work. And then take home a treasure. The Wallace Nutting Collectors Club will host its annual convention in Corning, N.Y., Sept. 21-22.

Club members from all over the country will converge on the Radisson Hotel Corning and take part in a wide variety of activities, according to Jan Liberatore, president of the club. Among the highlights will be a “traveling museum,” featuring a wide array of Nutting-related wares (hand-colored pictures, books, and furniture) from Liberatore’s collection; a personal (and popular) favorite, *Old New England*

Pictures, one of a dozen leather-bound volumes with 35 hand-colored pictures, will be among the items displayed.

Also on the agenda are presentations by speakers and a “show and tell.” This year, an expanded marketplace for buying, selling, and trading, will offer choice pieces, according to Liberatore; open to the public, this event is designed to please advanced collectors, as well as beginners and the curious, he added.

The Wallace Nutting Collectors Club was formed in 1973 by Justine and George Monro. Over the years, the club has evolved: Beginning with a printed newsletter, the club now hosts a comprehensive website. For more information about Nutting, the club, or the convention, go to www.wallacenutting.org or www.wallacenutting.com.

with possible concentrations that might include images of women or views from a particular locale or state. He warned of reproductions, imported to America in the 1990s and bearing a distinctive “purplish” tint.

While prices have softened and many longtime collectors are thinning out their holdings, Ivankovich believes that a new chapter in the story of Wallace Nutting is waiting to be written. “There has not been a better time in the past 30 years to collect Wallace Nutting,” he said.



Above: Nutting employed many colorists, mainly young women of varying talents, to hand color his photographs. They copied the example of a model picture, mixing watercolors on their own palettes.



Above: Nutting knew how to pull at the heartstrings, and he also understood his market. It has been said that in the early 20th century, the household without a Nutting picture hanging on the wall was an exception to the rule.

Below: An interior view, with a woman doing “womanly things.”

