

The Michael Ivankovich 2008 Value Guide to Wallace Nutting Silhouettes



Wallace Nutting (1861-1941) was a minister-turned-businessman who became extremely well known throughout the early 20th c, primarily through three categories of his work:

1. The millions of hand-colored photographs that he sold between 1900 & 1941
2. The 20+ different books that he authored between 1917 & 1933
3. The thousands of high quality furniture pieces that he reproduced between 1918 & 1941

As a leader within the Colonial Revival Movement Wallace Nutting became so well known that by 1920 hardly an American household was without something carrying the Wallace Nutting name. Nutting's hand-colored photographs were sold primarily to middle class households, his high quality reproduction furniture sold primarily to upper class households, and his books on travel and antique furniture cut across all economic lines. But like all fads, people's tastes change over time and by 1925 Wallace Nutting saw his picture sales declining.



In 1925 while returning from a European trip, Wallace Nutting happened to meet a young man named Ernest John Donnelly. Donnelly, who was traveling alone from his native Ireland, was in search of a new life in America and needed a job. Coincidentally, at this same time, Nutting was looking to hire someone to help him in the day-to-day operations of his business. Although his picture business was running quite smoothly, he was becoming more involved in the many other aspects of his ever-widening business. He was in the middle of writing his 10-volume States Beautiful series, he was beginning work on his 3-volume Furniture Treasury series, his furniture reproduction business was rapidly expanding, as was his research into early American antiques, and many new speaking engagements were coming his way. Nutting needed a reliable person to take over many of his daily office duties and Donnelly seemed to fit the bill. Nutting hired him on the spot.

So in 1925 Ernest John Donnelly began working for Nutting and, as he learned the ropes of the business, he gained the confidence of Wallace Nutting. And as it turned out, in addition to being skilled in bookkeeping and office management skills, Donnelly was a skilled artist as well. It's unknown whether Nutting or Donnelly first suggested the idea but by 1927 Nutting decided to market a series of silhouettes drawn by Ernest John Donnelly. These silhouettes seemed to be a perfect business proposal because not only were silhouettes becoming extremely popular with the American public, they could be machine-produced without the added labor expense associated with hand-coloring photographs.

The silhouette production process was fairly simple. Ernest John Donnelly would draw the original silhouette in pen and ink. Once approved by Wallace Nutting, Donnelly's original pen & ink drawing would then be machine reproduced, with literally several thousand of each silhouette being printed. To further keep costs down these silhouettes were only framed as they were sold to the public or through their dealers. Hence, literally thousands of Silhouettes remained unframed in inventory until finally sold.

Distribution of the Wallace Nutting silhouettes started in 1927 and soon Wallace Nutting was marketing more than 60 different silhouettes which came in 4 distinct categories.

1. Women Silhouettes: These are the most common type of silhouettes and typically involve one woman in a garden or household setting. We are aware of at least 36 different Woman silhouettes and there may even be more.

Sizes: Wallace Nutting Women silhouettes came in 3 distinct sizes. The most common is the small format 3.75x4.25" size. Large format 7x8" silhouettes were the 2nd most common size, while medium format 5x5" silhouettes were the least common size. Although other silhouette sizes are sometimes found, these were typically one of the three primary sizes cut down to fit smaller frames. Women silhouettes were typically framed in a black wooden frame, usually square or rectangular but sometimes in round or oval frames.



Signatures and Markings: Woman silhouettes are typically marked in three ways. Some carry an "EJD" in a circle, some are marked with a "(c)WN", and some carry both markings. All Woman silhouettes carried one of these three markings, unless it was inadvertently cropped in order to fit it into a smaller frame.

Value Guide: Common Woman silhouettes typically sell for \$20-\$50 each. Rarer ones can sometimes bring \$50-\$100 or more, especially from a serious collector trying to complete a collection.

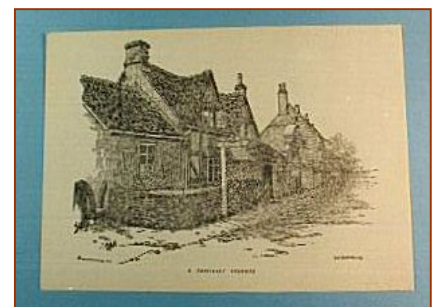


2. Famous Couple Silhouettes: There are fewer Famous Couple silhouettes than Women silhouettes and they were typically sold in pairs, although many pairs have become separated over the years. We are aware of at least 8 different couples, including Abraham & Mary Todd Lincoln, George and Martha Washington, John Alden & Priscilla, James & Dolly Madison, Josiah & Harriet, Lord Byron & Hope, Jubel & Prudence, Thomas & Jane, Peter & Frances, and there may be more.

Sizes: Famous Couple silhouettes came in two sizes, with the small format measuring approximately 2.5x3.25" and the larger format measuring approximately 4x5".

Markings: Many Famous Couple silhouettes are marked with round paper labels, often with the name written onto the label in pen. If the paper backing is missing, often these silhouettes are unmarked.

Value Guide: Famous Couple silhouettes typically sell for \$100-\$200 per pair, with the rarest ones bringing top dollar.



3. Cards and Calendars: This category represents a catch-all category. Silhouette Calendars are the rarest because so many were thrown away after the year-end. Greeting Cards and Mother's Day Cards are usually unframed and blank inside where a message could be written. Unsigned, unused cards are more common than signed cards having a hand written message. In 1927 a silhouette-style card titled AA Somerset Highway@ was issued. Drawn by Donnelly, this as no doubt a result on Nutting's 1925 trip to England and Ireland. The Christmas Card, which features Wallace & Mariet Nutting signing Christmas Cards at candlelight, were actually used by the Nutting's as their 1939 Christmas Card, which was sent to friends and business associates.

Value Guide: Signed cards are quite rare and will command a much higher price than unsigned, never-used cards. These items can bring anywhere from \$25-\$50 unsigned to \$75-\$150+ if signed by Wallace Nutting himself.



4. Foster Brothers Silhouettes Sold By Wallace Nutting: Apparently during the 1930's Wallace Nutting sold a limited assortment of silhouettes that were made by Foster Brothers of Boston, Mass. There is some speculation whether these silhouettes were originally drawn by Ernest John Donnelly, for Foster Brothers, with Nutting's approval, but we're unclear whether this has been definitively proven. Few people really understand what these are and they generally bring in the area of \$5.00-\$10.00 each.



Treenware Frames: The best and rarest silhouette finds of all are those that come framed in a Wallace Nutting Curley Maple Treenware frame. Wallace Nutting's 1930 Furniture Salesman's Catalog, the Wallace Nutting General Catalog, Supreme Edition, pictures more than 500 different furniture styles that Nutting was reproducing and selling in 1930. Included in this catalog are three different styles of curly maple frames, #1: 3 5/8"; #2: 4 3/4"; and #3: 5 5/8". Although rarely found, the frame is actually worth far more than the silhouette and can command anywhere from \$75-\$200 each. And a very few framed silhouettes even include an original Wallace Nutting silhouette Paper Label on the back.

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Newer vs. Original Frames: Why are so many Wallace Nutting silhouettes framed in newer frames? As we discussed earlier, Nutting only framed the silhouettes upon their sale, or he sold them unframed to gift shops or department stores who ultimately framed them for their customers. With Wallace Nutting's death in 1941, and Mrs. Nutting's death in 1944, the entire Nutting estate, including all unsold inventories, were left to Esther Svenson and Ernest John Donnelly. Sometime after 1946 the unsold inventory of unframed silhouettes were sold to persons

unknown. Many unframed silhouettes came back into the marketplace during the late 1970's early 1980's when they were basically peddled along the East Coast to pretty much anyone who was interested in buying them, and many were framed by their new owners. Hence, the newer frames.

Fakes: Here is one word of warning about fake Wallace Nutting silhouettes. Up to now, it hasn't been a major problem and relatively few fakes have appeared on the market. Yet these are so easy to reproduce, even on a common duplicating or copy machine, that I'm amazed that more silhouette reproductions haven't yet appeared. Original Nutting silhouettes have a glossy sheen and are often, but not always, darker around the edges from age. Beware of silhouettes that appear flat in color and depth and always ask yourself "Could this have been reproduced on a photocopier?". Your best defense is to only buy from knowledgeable dealers who guarantee what they sell.



Mr. & Mrs. Sambo: And finally, here is our comment a very questionable silhouette that has appeared on the Internet several times. This silhouette is titled "Mr. & Mrs. Sambo" and carries a full script "Wallace Nutting" signature marking. In our opinion this is a fake for three reasons:

- 1) Wallace Nutting was a Congregational Minister and this caricature figure was unlike anything else he ever did. Why this silhouette is so different than all others that he approved and released?
- 2) None of Nutting's other 60+ silhouettes carries a full signature. Why is this the only one with a full script signature?
- 3) We never saw this silhouette appear in 25+ years of collecting...until eBay came into the picture. You have to ask yourself...Why?

Anyway, with 60+ Wallace Nutting silhouettes available to collect, this can be a fun, inexpensive, and challenging area for collectors.

Wallace Nutting Silhouette Collecting Tips

- Most Wallace Nutting silhouettes date circa 1927.
- Woman silhouettes are signed in three different ways; Famous Couple silhouettes usually have a paper label or are unmarked.
- Some silhouettes are much rarer than others and command a higher prices.
- As a rule of thumb, Famous Couple silhouettes are rarer than Woman silhouettes.
- More silhouettes will be found in newer frames rather than original frames.
- There are nearly 60 different silhouettes available to collect.
- Silhouettes in Treenware Frames are the most desirable Wallace Nutting silhouettes of all.
- Beware...Wallace Nutting silhouettes easy to fake and reproduce.



About the Author

Michael Ivankovich has been involved with Wallace Nutting Pictures, Books & Furniture, and Early 20th c. Hand-Colored Photography, Prints, & Pastels for more than 35 years. Today he is generally considered to be the country's leading authority in these areas and over the past 20 years Michael has authored and published more than ten books in his areas of specialty, including:

- *Early 20th c. Hand-Painted Photography* (2005, Collector Books)
- *Collectors Guide to Wallace Nutting Furniture* (2004, Collector Books)
- *Collectors Guide to Wallace Nutting Pictures* (2001, 1997, Collector Books)
- *Collectors Guide to Earth 20th Century American Prints* (1998, Collector Books)
- *The Price Guide to Wallace Nutting Pictures* (1991, 1989, 1986, 1984, Diamond Press)
- *The Guide to Wallace Nutting-Like Photographers of the Early 20th Century* (1991, Diamond Press)
- *The Guide to Wallace Nutting Furniture* (1990, Diamond Press)
- *The Alphabetical & Numerical Index to Wallace Nutting Pictures* (1988, Diamond Press)

Through his *Diamond Press* subsidiary he has published three additional books in this field including:

- *Wallace Nutting Expansible Catalog*
- *Wallace Nutting: The Great American Idea*
- *Wallace Nutting Windsors: Correct Windsor Furniture*

In 2002 Michael partnered with Carol Gray and Doug Peters in the release of another book:

- *The Hand-Painted Pictures of Charles Henry Sawyer.*

And over the years he has contributed to several other books including

- *William Henry Chandler...The Chandler Way*
- *Official Price Guide to Antiques & Collectibles*

In Michael's younger years nearly 20 years ago he authored the highly acclaimed book *The Strategy of Pitching Slow Pitch Softball*, and also starred in a coaching video with the same title. Both have been recently re-released in electronic format.

A frequent lecturer, Mr. Ivankovich has written articles and columns for most major national trade papers, has appeared on various radio and television programs, and is frequently consulted by antique columnists from throughout the country. His serves as a contributing advisor within his specialty areas to most major Antiques & Collectibles Price Guides including *Schroeders*, *Warman's*, *Antique Trader*, *Kovel's* etc. His *Exploring Early 20th c. Prints* column has appeared in trade papers and auction publications nationwide. He also provides appraisal services in this area.

Mr. Ivankovich is a licensed Auctioneer in Pennsylvania, and has conducted Auctions in 9 other states. He is a member of the *Pennsylvania Auctioneers Association*, and in 2004 was named Pennsylvania's *Auctioneer of the Year*. He has also served as the President and Secretary/Treasurer of the Lehigh Valley Society of Auctioneers.

He is a member of the *Bucks County Antiques Dealers Association* and has served as President of that organization as well.

OTHER NON-WALLACE NUTTING SERVICES: Since 2006 Michael has been working as an Auctioneer and Sales Representative for the *Alderfer Auction Company* in Hatfield, PA. There he specializes in helping clients in transition to dispose of their Antiques, Collectibles, Personal Property, and other assets through one of the finest Auction Houses in the country. For further details on disposing of your items through Alderfer's, you can call Mike at (215)-393-3002.

NEED AN APPRAISAL? Mike has recently earned the designation of *GPPA (Graduate Personal Property Appraiser)* and can provide you with a current Fair Market Value Appraisal on your Wallace Nutting Pictures...or pretty much any else. Call Mike for details.

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**Other Currently Available or Soon-To-Be Released
Michael Ivankovich 2008 Value Guide eBooks**

(See <http://www.wnutting.com/links/refbooks.html> for a completed list of currently available reports)

These are all either currently available for immediate download, or will be made available in the coming months.

- **Wallace Nutting eBooks**
 - Wallace Nutting Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting Books
 - Wallace Nutting Furniture
 - Wallace Nutting Memorabilia
 - Wallace Nutting Silhouettes
 - Wallace Nutting Process, Prints, Pirate Prints, Reproductions & Fakes
 - Wallace Nutting's The Coming Out of Rosa
 - Wallace Nutting Ironwork
 - Wallace Nutting Drexel Furniture
 - Wallace Nutting's Webb House Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Saugus Iron Works (Broadhearth) Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Hazen-Garrison House Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Cutler-Bartlett House Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Wentworth-Gardiner House Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Nuttinghame (Southbury CT) Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting's Nuttingholme (Framingham MA) Pictures
 - (More in preparation)

- **Other Michael Ivankovich eBooks**
 - Collectors Guide to Wallace Nutting Furniture: Identification & Value Guide
 - Wallace Nutting Alphabetical & Numerical Index to Wallace Nutting Pictures
 - Wallace Nutting Expansible Catalog (1912 Picture Catalog)
 - Wallace Nutting General Catalog, Supreme Edition (1930 Furniture Catalog)
 - Wallace Nutting: A Great American Idea (1921 Script Furniture Catalog)
 - Wallace Nutting: Correct Windsor Chairs (1918 Furniture Catalog)
 - (More in preparation)

- **Early 20th c. Hand-Colored Photography eBooks**
 - David Davidson
 - Fred Thompson
 - Charles Sawyer
 - William James Harris
 - H Marshall Gardiner
 - WH Gardiner
 - F Jay Haynes
 - Harry Landis Standley
 - Royal Carlock
 - J Carleton Bicknell
 - EG Barnhill
 - Charles Higgins
 - Portland ME Photographers
 - Florida Hand-Colored Photography
 - (More in Preparation)

- **Early 20th c. Print eBooks**
 - Bessie Pease Gutmann
 - R Atkinson Fox
 - Philip Boileau
 - Maxfield Parrish
 - (More in Preparation)

- **Early 20th c. Pastel eBooks**
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 - Albert Glatthaar
 - Andrew Gunderson
 - (More in Preparation)



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