



Laurence S. & Judy Goffman Cutler

Through February 28, the Nassau County Museum of Art (NCMA) in Roslyn Harbor, N.Y., is showing works by the great American imagist Maxfield Parrish (1870–1966). Judy Goffman Cutler, an authority in the field and the founder of American Illustrators Gallery in New York City, and her husband,

Laurence S. Cutler, chairman and CEO of the National Museum of American Illustration (NMAI) in Newport, R.I., organized the Long Island display, which is drawn from the NMAI's collection. We recently spoke with the Cutlers about Parrish's genius and the NMAI's plans for 2016.



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How did the Long Island show come about?

A Norman Rockwell exhibition from the NMAI collection was a major success at the Nassau County Museum of Art in 2010. It made sense to follow up with a show of works by Maxfield Parrish, who has a particular connection to the Nassau County museum through Edith Wharton. Parrish illustrated her book, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904). Her colleague Ogden Codman Jr designed Bryce House, now the NMCA's home.

What's in the Nassau County show?

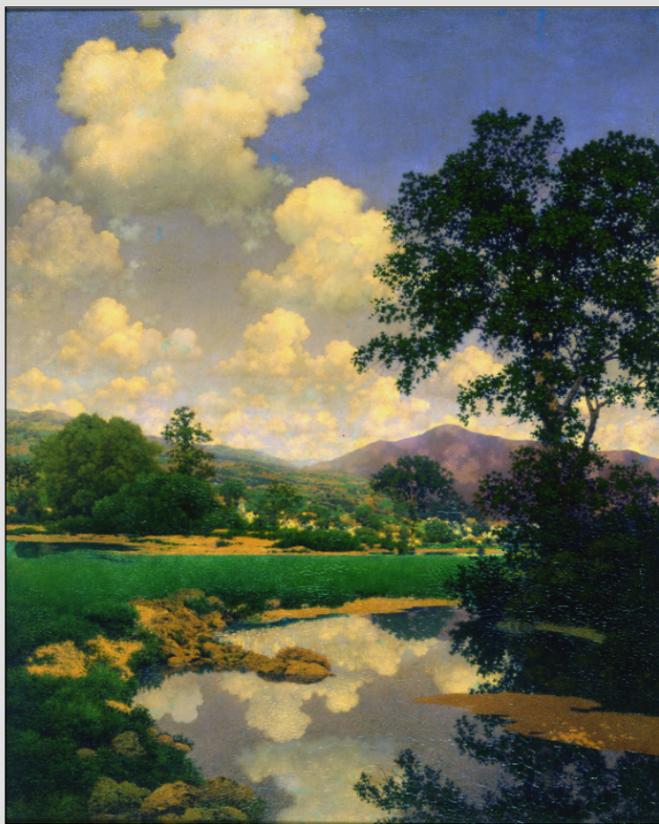
It features 192 paintings, vintage prints and ephemera. We've included original art by Parrish — set designs, book illustrations, paintings for magazine covers, studies and one painting from the famed "Florentine Fete" series, Parrish's largest mural commission. The mural panel is traveling outside the NMAI for the first time.

Can you tell us about "June Skies," illustrated here?

The original "June Skies" and the vintage Brown & Bigelow calendar and print that it inspired are in the Nassau Museum show. General Electric printed its last calendar in 1934, allowing Parrish to begin illustrating for Brown & Bigelow and marking a new freedom in his career. With fewer constraints, Parrish painted lavish landscapes, a subject that always fascinated him. His first Brown & Bigelow calendar, "Peaceful Valley," printed in 1936, was an instant success and sold out the entire line for the first time in the company's history. In all, Parrish painted 50 landscapes for Brown & Bigelow, originally published between 1936 and 1963. His calendars were reprinted for many years afterward with varying titles. These fantastic landscapes representing the pinnacle of Parrish's career left a lasting impression on the public.

Where do you rank Parrish among artists of the Golden Age of American illustration, roughly 1880 to the 1940s?

Among the very best, based on his technical prowess, unique style and universally loved subject matter. Parrish trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and abroad. His father, Stephen M. Parrish, was an accomplished and admired etcher who worked alongside James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Stephen Parrish took his son abroad several times and exposed him to Old Masters works of art in leading European museums. This must have been a great influence on the young artist. Although Maxfield Parrish referred to himself as "the businessman with a brush," collectors and other artists considered him a master artist.



"June Skies (A Perfect Day)" by Maxfield Parrish, 1940, reproduced as a Brown & Bigelow calendar in 1943. Oil on panel, 23 by 18½ inches. National Museum of American Illustration.

How important is NMAI's Parrish collection?

The Parrish paintings are major attractions, as are works by J.C. Leyendecker, Norman Rockwell and so many of the other 150 artist-illustrators in our collection. Some visitors are encountering the work for the first time. Others know the images from reproductions but are awed to discover the large-scale originals housed here.

The NMAI's home, Vernon Court, is spectacular. How did you become its stewards?

When we were searching for the perfect venue to share our American Illustration collection, Vernon Court, which was designed by Carrere and Hastings for the wealthy widow Anna Van Nest Gambrill, filled the bill because we could display Maxfield Parrish's entire "Florentine Fete" series. The Frederick Law Olmsted Park is adjacent. We opened NMAI on July 4, 2000.

What is the NMAI planning for 2016?

We are working on more traveling exhibitions and hosting groups from Asia, Europe, South America and Canada. Here in Newport, we will unveil "Recent Gifts to the NMAI," featuring Pulp detective paintings by Joseph Lombardero, Pulp romance illustrations by Stuart Kaufman and Pulp Westerns by Ralph Crosby Smith. The exhibitions "Norman Rockwell and His Contemporaries" and "Advertising as Art" are continuing. We've planned a benefit auction to help fund NMAI endeavors for July 21, 2016.

If a great Parrish painting came on the market today, what would it bring?

Perhaps \$8 million to \$15 million, depending on its date, subject and style. Parrish's paintings speak for themselves. He was greatly beloved by a wide-ranging audience of art enthusiasts globally during his lifetime and is very much in demand today. Celebrities, museums and Far Eastern collectors are making it a competitive market.

—Laura Beach