

# INDEPENDENCE DAY



W A T E R H O U S E S Y M B O L I S M N E W S L E T T E R # 6 1

## SPECIAL SYMBOLS

- Eagle conveys height, the father, daring and speed
- Flag conveys victory, self-assertion and victory
- Bed conveys repose, marriage and rest
- Ivy conveys longevity, despondency, dependency and trustfulness

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While working on my latest exhibition at the Cahoon Museum of American Art called "Mighty Ships and Their Journeys to Beyond", I borrowed a print from the Orleans Historic Society called Eagle Wing.

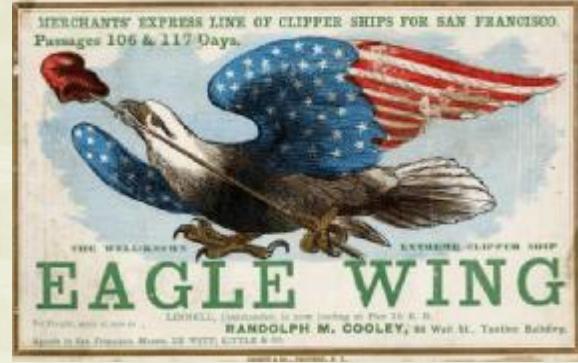
The print is in the collection of the Society because the Captain of the ship, Linnell, was born and raised in Orleans, MA. He commanded the ship for over 5 years and sailed to many exciting ports like Bombay, London and San Francisco. Captain Linnell actually died on board of the ship on its way from New York to San Francisco in a freak accident. His first mate finished the voyage as Captain. He decided that when he arrived in San Francisco he would sell the ship's storage items and was quickly relieved of his duties. The ship itself was later on a voyage from San Francisco to

## EAGLE WING

Bombay and was lost in a storm. The crew and ship were declared lost six months later.

The image to the right is actually a poster of the ship encouraging passengers to book tickets from New York to San Francisco. Notice that the voyage took between 105 and 117 days. Currently, you can fly from Boston to San Francisco in approximately 6 hours.

The eagle, a Fourth of July symbol, conveys height, the



father, daring, speed, heroic nobility, imperial power, fertility, especially male, regeneration, longevity, protection of young, pride, dalliance, gener-

osity, Christ, the spiritual principle in general, prayer, resurrection, and divine message. The wing conveys spirituality, imagination, thought, intelligence, justice, the possibility of spiritual evolution, aspiration, divine mission, victory, healing, and misfortune.

## Jasper Johns' flags

Jasper Johns (born 1930 in Augusta, Georgia) is known for his large and bright American flags like the one seen to the right housed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. The flag conveys victory, self-assertion, thought or ideal, identification and nationalism.

Stars convey the spirit, the forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of evil, destiny, supremacy in a particular area, disintegration, immortality, the soul, guidance (especially spiritual), hope, purity, constancy, and vigilance.



## DEATH OF GENERAL WARREN AT THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL BY JOHN TRUMBULL

What are some of your favorite patriotic paintings? Here is one by John Trumbull who did many during his lifetime. Probably his most famous is a portrait of George Washington before the Battle of Trenton, New Jersey that now hangs at the Yale University Gallery.

Some symbols related to this wonderful painting include flags which convey victory, self-assertion, and nationalism. There are many colors in this work. Let's start with red

which conveys love, virility, courage, anger, war, and divine zeal. White conveys peace, purity, faith and timelessness. Black conveys penitence, death, grief and mourning. Blue conveys the sky, sanctification, sincerity and piety.

Notice the way that the right side of the canvas is very dark and foreboding and the left side is brighter and cheerier. The idea is that because of the American Revolution, life will be better.



## FREEDOM FROM FEAR BY NORMAN ROCKWELL

**Freedom is nothing else but a chance to be better**

Albert Camus

This interesting painting by Norman Rockwell depicts two boys being tucked into bed by their father. The idea is that the mother and father are in control so the two boys are free from fear. Symbols related to this work include the bed, which we saw in a previous newsletters and conveys repose, marriage, rest, childbirth, secrecy, reflection, languishing, a phase of

thought or opinion, dispensation of justice, and luxury. A house conveys tradition, one's life, the feminine aspect of the universe, shelter, security, hospitality, the body, with the roof and attic corresponding to the mind, the basement to the unconscious, the kitchen as a place of transmutation, and the windows and doors as body openings. Notice that the bed is placed in a nook of the room which conveys security as well.



## CHILDE HASSAM'S FLAGS IN THE RAIN

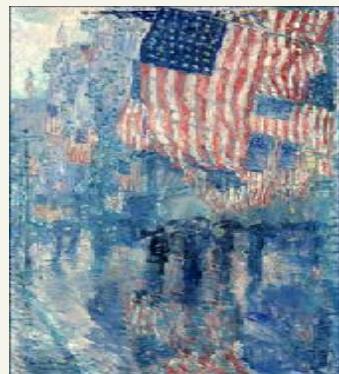
One truly American movement based on French Impressionism is American Impression and the one of the leaders was Childe Hassam.

Hassam was a native to Boston and worked as an engraver of wood blocks be-

fore painting. This painting was painted between 1916 and 1919 and was one of 30 dealing with this theme of a flag draped street and in this case in New York City.

The artist's most striking device here is the projection of flags into the picture from unseen points of anchor be-

yond the frame, covering a quarter of the surface of the painting. In one sense the flags become the surface of the painting, an identity seconded by the tall "hanging" format, which echoes a flag's shape. Notice the way the rain affects the projection of



## C a p t a i n G e o r g e d . W a l l a c e

In preparing for this issue, I thought about many markers that are monuments within themselves and I wanted to share a few with you. There are so many so, if you think of others, please share those with me and I will share them with others in future newsletters, website, etc.

This particular marker was brought to my attention by Bob Price and it is the grave marker for Captain George D. Wallace and resides in York, North Carolina. He was in the Seventh Cav-

alry and died in 1890. He was killed in battle with the Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Notice the flag which conveys patriotism and unity. The swords convey battle and conflict. The United States shield conveys strength and courage. Also, notice the egg and dart motif at the top which conveys life and death. The ivy below conveys longevity, despondency, dependency, trustfulness, wedded love, fidelity, immortality, tenacity, friendship, death, love and ambition.



## E t h a n A l l e n

A well-known name in the annals of American Revolution history is Ethan Allen. He was a very independent soldier who caused problems on both the Americans' and the British sides.

When the Revolutionary War started, he led his militiamen with Benedict Arnold in his most celebrated feat - the May 10, 1775 capture of the lightly defended Fort Ticonderoga. The guns Colonel

Allen and Arnold captured there helped force the British out of Boston.

Ethan Allen then accompanied Benedict Arnold in the expedition to Canada, and was captured in the failed assault on Montreal. He was imprisoned in England until paroled in October 1776. After his formal exchange in May 1778 he received a brevet of Colonel in the Continental Army, but received no

command, and returned to Vermont.

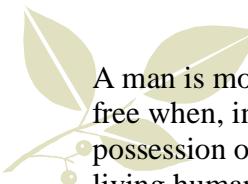


## T h o m a s J e f f e r s o n

I am in the process of reading a book about the Founding Fathers and how folks like Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin were living ordinary lives until the American Revolution forced them to be extraordinary leaders. One example is Thomas Jefferson who was an extraordinary writer among other things. His epitaph on his grave which was written by Jefferson reads "HERE WAS BURIED THOMAS JEFFERSON:

AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE; OF THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM; AND FATHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA". He died on the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and a few hours before John Adams. He is buried at his beloved estate Monticello. He was also the 3rd President of the U.S. (1801-1809).



A man is morally free when, in full possession of his living humanity, he judges the world, and judges other men, with uncompromising sincerity.

George  
Santayana

**What are your ideas  
for future newsletters?**



**W A T E R H O U S E  
S Y M B O L I S M  
N E W S L E T T E R # 6 1**

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The mission of Waterhouse Symbolism is to research and document symbols locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

**NOTES FROM THE EDITOR**

It is very spectacular to live in the village of Sandwich that was founded long before the American Revolution. It was founded in 1639 and the American Revolution happened in 1776. Every day you walk through the town, you can feel that history and sense of place. It is also amazing to live in a house that was built about 40 years after the American Revolution and realize that their thought process of independence is so different than ours today.

Take care,  
Richard Waterhouse

**q u e r y**

portrait of the dead person.

This painting to the right is a posthumous portrait by the presence of the traditional mourning colors of red, white and black, a keepsake book, and the threatening sky.

The fast-fading roses convey the transience of life and the clinging honeysuckle vine the attachment of the living to the dead.

The boy, dressed in his best clothes—the manner in which deceased children were usually attired for burial—stands on the porch of his home holding his hat, as if in the act of departing from his family.



Portrait of a Boy, 1856  
Attributed to James B. Read  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Janet Seapker sent me a great query this month. She was on a tour of an 18th Century historic house in North Carolina and the guide tells the story that red "death booties" were put on a child's corpse and a portrait was painted. Anyone know the story of the "death booties"?

I am familiar with death portraits being done like the one to the right. During the Nineteenth Century it was the custom to ease the grief caused by the loss of family members through mourning rituals, observed during the initial period of death, when the bereaved family would formally view a