

American Icons in Newport



Vernon Court

As a nation that uses images to create and reflect itself, where better to unravel our national character than at Newport, Rhode Island's National Museum of American Illustration? The museum, established in 1998 and opened in 2000, houses a vast collection of originals from the period widely considered the Golden Age of American illustration (1870–1965). Created for reproduction in books, newspapers, and magazines, these images include the largest private assemblage of Norman Rockwells, as well works by Maxfield Parrish, J. C. Leyendecker, Jessie Wilcox Smith, among others.



Norman Rockwell (1894–1978), *Willie Takes A Step*, 1935.

New York art dealer Judy Goffman Cutler and her husband Laurence S. Cutler, an architect and author, present original artwork, prints, and memorabilia with artifacts (Rockwell's first paint box), period furnishings, and decorative arts such as Hiram Powers' marble *America* (1859) throughout their house museum, the lavishly appointed Vernon Court. The Gilded

continued on page 46

Summer

Age setting alone is reason enough to visit. A turn-of-the-century, beaux arts mansion on Bellevue Avenue, Vernon Court was designed by Carrère & Hastings (architects for the New York City Public Library and the Fifth Avenue home of Henry Clay Frick). The surrounding gardens were inspired by the pond garden that Henry VIII conceived for Anne Boleyn at Hampton Court.

On view at Vernon Court are icons of American illustrative art. Norman Rockwell's heartwarming scenes advanced the war effort three decades after J. M. Flagg's depiction of Uncle Sam rallied the cause of the First World War. Original N. C. Wyeth illustrations for children's classics include scenes from *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Robin Hood*. The magazine illustrations of women by Howard Chandler Christy ("The Christy Girl") and Charles Dana Gibson ("The Gibson Girl") became the definition of feminine beauty in the early twentieth century.



Howard Chandler Christy (1873–1952), *The Dawn of Victory*, 1933.

The National Museum of American Illustration, Vernon Court, 492 Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI. For information, call 401.851.8949 or visit www.americanillustration.org