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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

This issue of *Newport History* continues the celebration of the Newport Historical Society's one-hundredth year of publishing a journal focused on the history and culture of Newport County. Produced under the title *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society* from 1912 to 1963 in 112 issues, the journal has since 1964 continued under the title *Newport History* for an additional 155 issues, including the present number. The Society is proud to celebrate the centennial year of the journal and looks forward to its second century.

By the time he died on February 4, 1900, George Henry Norman had risen from ordinary beginnings as a student in Newport public schools to considerable wealth and modest fame. Along the way, he became a sort of everyman's Renaissance man. He clerked in local stores before owning one of them (a shoe store). He helped to found the *Newport Daily News* in 1846 before attaining its co-ownership from 1849 to 1856. He next introduced gas plants to Newport, Cuba, and West Point. And then he made his greatest mark on his time by engineering water systems for dozens of cities in the Northeast and Midwest, including the Water Works for Aquidneck Island, begun in 1878. As much as his entrepreneurial ingenuity impacted his own century, he also left his mark on the next century through his family legacy. Among the many contributions of his descendants, the most visible today is the 345-acre Norman Bird Sanctuary in Middletown—created in 1950 by a bequest of the youngest of his nine children, Mabel Norman Cerio (1875-1949).

This issue of *Newport History* is devoted to varied aspects of the Norman family presence in the Newport area.

The lead article brings to life George Henry Norman and his family through the eyes of his late granddaughter, Barbara Norman Jones Cook (1899-1985), known around town by the nickname Kittymouse. Her son, Daniel W. Jones Jr., worked with the Editor to provide a framework for narratives recorded on tape by Kittymouse in 1975.

Daniel W. Jones Jr. entered Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1938. He took a leave of absence from 1940 to 1946 to serve in the U.S. Navy, receiving his B.A. in American History in 1942. After serving from 1947 to 1948 as an assistant to a well-known Chicago theatrical and portrait photographer, Maurice Seymour, he spent three more years as an assistant to the renowned New York fashion and celebrity photographer, Nickolas Muray. From 1952 to 1974, Mr. Jones worked as a Director of Research for NBC Special Projects in New York. He subsequently was the Photographic Archivist at the Peabody Museum of Harvard University (1976-1986). Mr. Jones's own accomplishments as a photographer are evident in some of the reproductions found in his article.

George Henry Norman's personal wealth manifested itself most tangibly in his Belair estate, located on Buena Vista, the former name of part of Old Beach Road.

The Newport Historical Society owns a large number of historic photographs of Belair, including many stereographs by Joshua Appleby Williams of the exterior of the mansion, outbuildings, and grounds. In addition, the archival collection assembled by Mable Norman Cerio and now owned by the Society includes numerous prints made from glass-plate negatives showing the lavishly furnished interior of Belair. Working with the Editor, Jennifer L. Robinson assembled these varied images into a photographic essay on the Belair estate, providing unique visual insights into how the Normans lived.

Jennifer L. Robinson holds a B.S. in Textiles, Fashion Merchandising, and Design from the University of Rhode Island. After graduating in 2009, she took online courses to supplement her interests in the care of museum textiles (Northern States Conservation Center, St. Paul, Minnesota), in architectural history (Oxford University [England] Continuing Education), and in historic preservation (Boston Architectural College). During the summer of 2009, she was a Buchanan/Burnham Intern at the Newport Historical Society, where she helped to curate an eighteenth-century fashion exhibit, *From Homespun to High Fashion*. The following year, she worked as a Visitor Services Associate and Tour Guide for the Society's Museum and Shop at the Brick Market. She currently is a Collections Assistant at the Newport Historical Society, focused mainly on the photograph collection. She also assists researchers, catalogues and rehouses objects, and helps with exhibits, among other collections-related tasks.