



Approaching The Farm (168 Old North Road) from the north

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF HARRIET LANGDON PRUYN RICE (1868-1935):  
SEEING WORTHINGTON THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

### Photography

By the 1890s, when Harriet Rice was in her twenties, photography's acceptance as an artistic medium—primarily dominated by men—was rapidly increasing. This new acceptance was fueled in part by the role it played in documenting the nation's Civil War. More significantly, advances in photographic technique, practice, and the ability to create nearly simultaneous reproduction of images, further promoted its popularity.

In 1888, George Eastman created the Kodak box camera, which inspired the public's fascination with photography and an unprecedented willingness to spend on its pursuit. Harriet used a Kodak box camera for some of her photographs, but most were taken with a large format, tripod-mounted camera. The glass negatives (5"x7") had to be individually loaded and removed for each image. Harriet must have carried them back to Albany by carriage for developing and printing.

Randy Kennedy, Arts Editor from the New York Times, wrote that early American photography "came to document not only the history of the medium but also the history of the industrializing, modernizing world – its progress and its barbarity – as catalogued by the medium in ways that had previously been impossible." Harriet Rice mastered the new art form during this time of rapid advancement. Although it is possible that

she took photographs with more modern or industrialized subject matter when she was not in Worthington, these remarkable photos, given to the Worthington Historical Society, and her insightful and moving journals, now held at The Albany Institute of History and Art, convey a sense of appreciation and delight in life in the rural farming communities of the Hampshire County hill-towns. Her other world in Albany, during the rapidly changing Industrial Age, does not show up in her photographic work. After spending time with her photos and her words, we experience the intelligence, humor, and artistry of a woman who moved in and out of a world quite different from the one she was born into. Over the next 15 years, she took many photographs of Worthington, its residents, their homes, animals, domestic scenes and past-times that reflected her keen interest in Worthington.

## Harriet The Photographer



Daughter of prominent Albany residents, John Van Schaick Lansing Pruyn and Anna Fenn Parker, Harriet Langdon Pruyn Rice was born three years after the end of the Civil War. Her family was one of the powerful Dutch-American families, often referred to as the *Knickerbockers*, that governed Albany and much of New York's Capital Region from its earliest days as a Dutch-led settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

Her father, John V. L. Pruyn, was an attorney, a NY State senator, and a member of the 38<sup>th</sup> US Congress. He filled the seat vacated by political legend Erastus Corning, founder of the New York Central Railroad. Pruyn also served in the 40<sup>th</sup> US Congress through the end of the Civil War and the early years of Reconstruction. Harriet and her sister were schooled at home, an education augmented by extensive travel abroad.

Her mother, Anna, was one of four children born to Harriet Langdon Roberts and Amasa Junius Parker, an attorney, a NY State Supreme Court Judge, a member of the NY State Assembly in 1834, and member of the US Congress from 1837-1839. Also, he was an unsuccessful candidate for NYS Governor. After retiring from private practice, he founded the Albany School of Law in 1851. Ironical, though hardly atypical of Gilded Age dynastic marriages, Harriet's mother's sister, Mary Parker, married the son of Erastus Corning, whose first cousin, Harriet Corning Turner, was the first wife of Harriet's father until her death from tuberculosis in 1859.

Harriet met William Gorham Rice of Worthington, Massachusetts, and married him in Albany on February 10, 1892. William Gorham Rice, Jr. was born later that year.

According to her journals, Harriet, her husband and son enjoyed extended annual stays each year at The Farm, her father-in-law's home in Worthington, though Albany was their primary residence. Harriet moved freely between these two worlds, and while the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Gilded Age were radically transforming Albany and the rest of the nation, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century lingered on in Worthington. Her writings convey her respect, admiration, and affection for this slowly evolving New England farming community where she reveals that she spent many of her happiest days. For her, The Farm was "the ideal place for labor, rest, and growth." And despite an Albany background suffused with politics, lineage, and well-favored economic status, it was Worthington, The Farm, her family, friends, and neighbors that she chose to document in her photos. The starkness, naturalism, and candor of her images are striking and appealing. They engage the viewer directly with the subject.

The Farm became the setting for a literary/photography project she undertook just after the turn of the century. That project, which involved the private re-printing of John Greenleaf Whittier's *Snow-Bound*, is covered in this Exhibit. As shown by her journal entries, photographs, and the *Snow-Bound* printing, The Farm served as a focal point for her and her family until approximately 1927.

## Harriet's Journals

Apart from her stirring images, Harriet's interest in the subjects of her work may also be found in her prolific journals, which she kept yearly. She wrote profusely of her time in Worthington and the joy she derived from the friends and family she found here. After taking the portraits of Sophia Stevens, for instance, Harriet's description of the "thank-you" tea party that Mrs. Stevens gave her in a way that showed the wonderful and complex relationship between the two women.

In addition to her images, she wrote of journeys to and from Worthington. She records numerous holidays and countless days, weeks, and months spent with Rice relatives and townspeople dining, fishing, cooking, and traveling together.

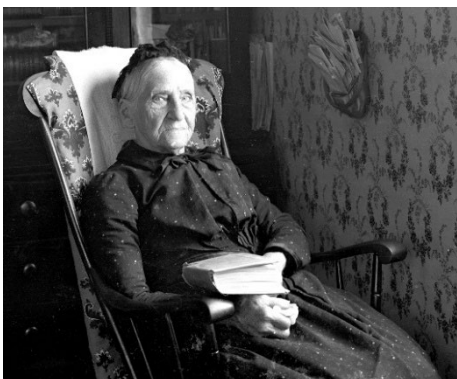
In one passage, she wrote, "...we have called on the Knapps—who spent the evening last week with us—the Bucks, Fred Stevens and the Burrs and have felt that we are becoming better acquainted with some of our finest neighbors—farmers one and all. This is what gives a zest to our life here—to feel we have these good people as friends."

Her memories are warm, cordial, and marked by a profound respect for the townspeople and for the lives they lived. In a passage from her 1903 journal, she wrote the following, an insight possibly gained from her work as a photographer.

"Take time at it, and all the phases of life and of people are abounding in interest. Sit down and chat with them—not counting minutes—and how you grow into harmony with them. It is not wasted time. Life presents variations everywhere. *Our way of living is but one way. It may not be best.*"

In equally moving passages from her journal, she describes the local weather, the scenery, and her extensive travels on a one-horse buckboard or by carriage to Ashfield, Cummington, Williamsburg, and Hinsdale. Little of her life here in Hampshire County escaped description or photographic depiction. Her recollections were invariably enthusiastic and colorful tributes to these communities and their inhabitants.

## Journal Entry—The Tea Party



Sophia Stevens

"One event of our last week in Worthington I must write about more at length - our tea at Mrs. Aaron Stevens. We had been "going to be asked" for over a year, but it had not been brought to pass.

One day I had taken Mrs. Stevens' photograph. When I carried her the result she asked what she could do for me, to express her thanks. I told her if she really wished to know - she could ask us to tea! So to tea we went Thursday the 23rd - Miss Cole came up 2 days before and asked us - also Josephine. "Aunt Sophia" was away but was expected to return in time. We drove down - 3 on a seat in the runabout, about 6 - a perfect October evening - When we lost the sky and reached the valley it seemed

quite dark and the light of our lamps were helpful as we passed along by the stream in the "dark, dark woods". We met Mrs. Buck on our way, driving up alone for her mail, also the Williamsburg Stage and Mrs. Adams following - ever ubiquitous! - in her old buggy. Finally we emerged to the clearing: both Stevens houses were bulging with lights - with lights in every window. How charming a greeting the New England farm-house gives to the traveler, with its undrawn shades, revealing light and warmth, in the darkness! Bless the heavy work of the day, which leaves at nighttime every unnecessary labor undone - and so the blinds or shades are never drawn down to close out the farmhouse's friendly light to shade who pass! I know of no kindlier air of welcome, no matter what lack of comfort lies within. The traveler, after seeing such a glimmer either pauses to ask shelter or passes on - gladdened in spirit.

Later in the evening we had such an instance.

When we drove up to the door, there came shadows across the sitting-room lights and then the front door opened and out came Deacon Eugene with a diffident "good evening" which merged into ease and a cheery smile as we returned his words with fervor. He and William disappeared with the runabout to the barn and Josephine and I walked up to the house door. Here was Mrs. Stevens who had reached home safely the day before, and here she greeted us and had us take off our wraps in the hall. The door closed, we unwrapped ourselves, and then we entered the sitting-room and were asked to "take seats". This we did - and were fairly launched on a genuine New England farmhouse gathering. How delightful and interesting it was! Beyond, through the half-open door were the farm kitchen and dining room. Cullen Stevens, the bachelor son, sat there reading the newspaper \_\_\_\_ he did not know we had come: also near him sat an unknown, who turned out to be Mr. Graves, Mrs. Horace Bartlett's brother, who was 'helping a while at the mill'. Behind the door we could hear Miss Cole getting supper. Soon the 2 men from out-doors joined us, also the 2 from the kitchen, and finally Miss Cole, who said apologetically, "I guess tea's ready." So in we went. Mrs. Stevens sat herself in the middle of one side: she asked William to take one end and Josephine and me to sit either side of him. I believe this is a country custom, to place all the guests together. This brought me on her right. On her left sat the elder son, Eugene. Miss Cole took the other end and next to her came Mr. Graves and then Cullen.

No supper table could have looked more attractive. Before Mrs. Stevens was a silver teapot, cream jug, and sugar basin - also cups and saucers. The cloth and napkins were spotless; and everything to eat - for everything was on the table of course - looked delicious, canned salmon, salad, a dish of delicious stewed apples at each plate, dried beef, and 3 kinds of cake, and hot rolls. As I looked about with pleasure, Mrs. Stevens, in her gentle stately manner, said, "Mr. Rice, will you ask a blessing" and thereupon came a pause and then William, accepting the invitation in the same spirit it was given, said grace - and then we started supper.

We had hardly broken through the silences between the beginnings of conversation in such a gathering when there came a loud knock on the door behind me, and on answering it Miss Cole reported a traveler who asked to see Mrs. Stevens. Miss Cole had thought it must be Mrs. Buck on her nightly stop to get her mail from Williamsburg, and had gathered up the letters to take to her. Mrs. Stevens bade the stranger to enter at once; which he did, and advancing into the bright room, he said, "Which is Mrs. Stevens? I wish to speak to her." Mrs. Stevens being pointed out, he advanced and took his stand directly back of her chair and speaking in a slow clear voice to her back said about this: "We find the next village is 4 miles further on, so we stopped to ask if you would take us in for the night, but judging from your table here, I should guess you were full already." - a pause - "Well, what do you say, Eugene?", asked Mrs. Stevens. "Are you alone, the Deacon asked?" - "No" - "Who's your \_\_\_\_ (passenger?) a lady?" (We thought him on a bridal tour for he wore white gloves.) "No, a man." "Two horses?" "No, one." "All right." And the Deacon arose and motioned to the stranger to follow him - so they disappeared."

## The Rice Family

Colonel William A. Rice (1778-1863) arrived in Worthington in 1803 from Conway, MA, and built his home at 1 Old Post Road at Worthington Corners in 1806. He served valiantly in the War of 1812 and was called the "Ensign of the Northern Frontier." At twenty-five, Colonel Rice married Wealthy Cottrell, daughter of Asa Cottrell and granddaughter of Samuel Clapp, a resident of Worthington prior to its incorporation in 1768. Wealthy was a skilled educator who tutored William Cullen Bryant and also taught Worthington's school-age children. She and the Colonel had eleven children, including William A. Rice, Jr, father of Harriet's husband. Standing in front of his home in 1825, Colonel Rice officially received the Marquis de Lafayette on behalf of the Town when Lafayette was marching triumphantly to Boston to lay the cornerstone for the Bunker Hill Monument.

William A. Rice, Jr. (1820-1906) moved from Worthington to Albany to assist his brother-in-law in running an apothecary business. In Albany, he met and married Hannah Seeley. The couple had three daughters, Josephine Rice Creelman, Katherine McDowell Rice, and Susan Tracy Rice, and one son, William Gorham Rice, who would marry Harriet. In 1883, William A. Rice, Jr. retired and returned to Worthington. He purchased The Farm (168 Old North Road) from Calvin and Amanda Tower in 1896. He dedicated himself to involvement in the Town, planting numerous maple trees in front of the Worthington Historical Society and serving as President of the Library in 1906, the year of his death\*. William's brother, General James Clay Rice, an Adjutant General in the Civil War commissioned by Abraham Lincoln, was formally photographed twice in his Union uniform prior to his heroic death at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. These powerful images, undoubtedly known to Harriet Rice, may have influenced her work as a photographer.

William Gorham Rice, Sr. (1856-1945), Harriet's husband, was the third generation of the family in Worthington. He served as the private Secretary to New York Governors David Hill and Grover Cleveland. He ran for office twice (unsuccessfully), once for Mayor of Albany and once for Lieutenant Governor of New York. He was appointed by Governor Samuel Tilden as paymaster general of the NY National Guard with the rank of Colonel, a title he shared with his grandfather.

William Gorham Rice, Jr. (1892-1979) spent extensive periods of his early years in Worthington. After graduating from Harvard, he enlisted in the Army, was decorated three times for bravery during WWI in France, and received the Croix de Guerre for valiantly defending his troops. He clerked for Justice Louis Brandeis on the US Supreme Court from 1921 through 1922. He next became a law professor at the University of Wisconsin where he was a pioneer in the field of Labor Law, a forerunner in the field of civil liberties, and an advocate for the right of conscientious objection to war. In 1920 he married Rosamund Eliot. They had four children. One of them died in World War II. Of the remaining three we have records of a son, Andrew E. Rice, who was living in Cabin John, MD at the time of his death in 2010. (We are seeking information about his 4 children.) After William's parents sold The Farm in 1927, he and his family continued to visit Worthington at the Rice house at Worthington Corners, home of his aunts, Katherine McDowell Rice and Susan Tracy Rice. In 1945, shortly after his aunts passed away, William sold the Worthington Corners house to Maynard and Dr. Mary Snook. William Gorham Rice, Jr. passed away in 1979.

\*It is interesting to note that William A. Rice, Jr. spoke at the laying of the cornerstone of Worthington's Congregational Church in 1888. The cornerstone and the other foundation block used in building the Church were gifts made to the Church from the quarry located near Corbett Road on The Farm owned by Calvin and Amanda Tower which they then conveyed to William A. Rice, Jr.



## *Snow-Bound*

John Greenleaf Whittier's highly acclaimed poem *Snow-Bound* was originally written in 1866, one year after the Civil War. It was an unparalleled commercial success for Whittier, who was both a New England Quaker and an ardent abolitionist. Greatly loved by a war-torn nation, the poem's New England fireside scenes of kindness and familial unity comforted and re-assured its countless readers. It became a literary salve for the country after Lincoln's death when North/South divisions continued to rage.

Almost forty years after its original publication, during the first few years of the 20th century, Harriet created a series of photographs in and around her Worthington home to illustrate Whittier's poem. She had fifty copies of the long poem privately re-printed in a tooled-leather binding. The edition featured ten full-page platinum photographs of the interior and exterior of the home, grounds, and barn she referred to as The Farm, now 168 Old North Road, Worthington. Her son and husband are in some of the images.

As noted earlier, The Farm was acquired by her father-in-law in 1896 from Calvin and Amanda Tower and, in a gesture that typifies her regard for her Worthington neighbors, Harriet accorded Calvin Tower a distinct honor by including a photo of him as the frontispiece in her republished edition of the poem. As she wrote on the reverse side of the picture,

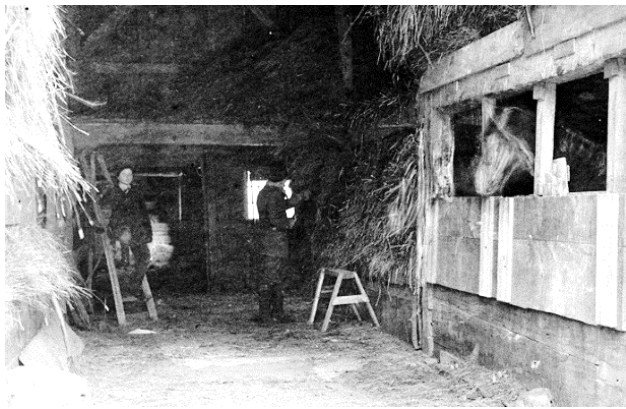
“The original of this was Mr. Calvin Tower who looked so like Whittier that he was just the frontispiece needed. I took it in his old farmhouse which overlooked a superb view of the Southern hills on one of the roads to W. Worthington about 2 1/2 miles from The Farm.”

The Farm passed to her husband, William Gorham Rice, Jr. Although they were often required to be in residence in Albany or Washington, DC, Harriet and William continued to enjoy The Farm with their son until 1927.

On September 23, 1944, one year before the sale of her father-in-law's birthplace (One Old Post Road) to the Snooks, Arthur Capen at The Worthington Library welcomed into the Library's collection one of the original fifty volumes of *Snow-Bound* that Harriet produced. The bound version identifies the included photos as “...having been taken at The Farm, Worthington, MA.” The volume also contains Harriet's inscription: “For Mr. and Mrs. Rice (her in-laws) with the affectionate regards of H.L.P.R. 1905.”

Whittier's *Snow-Bound*, regarded by many as “the Yankee Pastoral,” was written for publication at the request of James Russell Lowell, the Editor of *The National Review*, which soon became the *Atlantic Monthly*. Lowell wrote that the poem “describes scenes and manners which the rapid changes of our national habits will soon have made as remote from us as if foreign or ancient.” Thus, Harriet's straightforward, realistic photographs of her family and friends, taken in and around their home to illustrate *Snow-Bound*, may be her photographic equivalent of the poem – a visual rendering of Whittier's words.

The Poetry Foundation has described Whittier's poem as “his masterpiece, a lovingly imaginative *re-creation* of the good life in rural New England.” We may accord Harriet's photos the same honor but with one critical distinction; her images were not “re-creations.” They were her kin, her home, her friends, all depicted in a place called Worthington, a visual summation of a life and place she revered and loved; a life she knew was fading as modernity's reach was tightening.



“Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,--  
Brought in the wood from out of doors,  
Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
Raked down the herd’s-grass for the cows:  
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn.”

Snow-Bound.

The *Snow-Bound* volume in the Worthington Town Library collection was likely part of a larger gift of Rice memorabilia made to the Library, presumably by various members of the Rice family. The gift included the original glass negatives of the photos on display here today. These items were held in The Rice Room on the Library’s second floor until the negatives were transferred to the Worthington Historical Society in approximately 1988. The receipt of Harriet’s considerable photographic output and the Library’s careful stewardship of her work have enabled us to enjoy them today.

## **List of Photographs with Archival References**

### **Worthington Through a Different Lens**

Approaching The Farm (168 Old North Road) from the north. Oct. 1909. ID=Ph99s

Harriet L. P. Rice (1868-1939) and her son, William G. Rice, Jr. (1892-1979) ID=2021-506

### **Rice Family**

William A Rice (1820-1906), Jr., William G. Rice (1856-1945), and William G. Rice, Jr. ID=Ph101w

William G. Rice, Sr. (1856-1945), married Harriet Langdon Pruyn Rice, 1892. ID=2023-500

### **People of Worthington**

Calvin Tower, Frontispiece for *Snow-Bound*. Harriet wrote that Mr. Tower greatly resembled the author of the poem, *Snow-Bound*. ID=Ph99x

J. W. Leonard, 1900, stone mason and trapper, taken at the kitchen door of The Farm. ID=Ph101bi

Sophia P. Stone Stevens, 1901. Mrs. Stevens (1816-1910) was the wife of Aaron Stevens and the mother of Deacon Eugene and Cullen Stevens. They ran the Stevens hoop mill at Stevensville (near the Worthington/Chesterfield boundary). Harriet wrote in her Journal about taking this photograph and then visiting Mrs. Stevens for tea. ID# 2021-502

Marion Bartlett, in costume. ID=GN120

Alice Bartlett with her cat. 1905. ID=GN119

Augustus J. Allen (1850-1919) and his daughter Hazel Allen (1888-1957). GN127

Sam Knapp in his sitting room in the Knapp Homestead, "en route to Cummington", Oct. 1902. Harriet writes in her Journal that when Mr. Knapp was asked what he thought of the Trusts, he replied with a great roar, "Well, if I was in 'em, I'd say let 'em be!" ID=GN121

Sam Knapp standing in front of his home. Photographer unknown. This home, located on Corbett Rd., was one of Worthington's early dwellings. It was later moved to Martha's Vineyard. ID=Ph102am

Noyes Bartlett in his wood-shop. ID=GN113

Children, Coon District School, Trouble St. (area now in Cummington?). On the blackboard one can see the names of some of the students. When Arthur Capen saw a print from this glass negative in 1973 he could name all of the students. They were his childhood friends. A partial list includes M. Snyder, G. Knapp, R. Skelton (maybe Grace, born 1894), M. Sode (or Cole?). Let us know if you recognize an ancestor among these children! Year ~ 1903? ID=GN123



Lena Osgood and her daughter. ID=GN090

Mrs. Luther Tower and her daughters, Mary and Adella, outside their farmhouse. 1903. Worthington. ID=Ph101h

Cephus Thayer, in his top-hat, at the Town Hall. ID=Ph101k

### ***Snow-Bound***

Long view of The Farm from the south. Thanksgiving 1901. ID=2010-105

Interior of the old barn. The Farm. 1903. with William G. Rice, Jr. and an unidentified man. *Snow-Bound* Series. ID=Ph99q

Snow Falling on The Farm. 1903. *Snow-Bound* Series. ID=Ph99t

The Farm kitchen hearth with the dog, Bull. *Snow-Bound* Series. ID=Ph99z and 2023-502

The Farm, Apple gathering. September, 1900. ID=2010-099

The Farm, Bull (the family dog) at the hollyhock door, waiting to be let in to his master's room. 1902. ID=2010-086

The Farm, William G. Rice, Jr. reading on a sofa in the living room, next to the spinning wheel. *Snow-Bound* Series. ID=Ph99u

The Farm, kitchen hearth. ID=2010-098

The Farm, October 1909. Worthington. Looking south to 168 Old North Rd. *Snow-Bound* Series. ID=Ph99s

The Farm, Three men hauling boulders by Old North Road. ID=2023-503

The Farm, Arthur Johnson working by the barn. ID=Ph99p

The Farm, William G. Rice and his son walking on Old North Rd. between the farmhouse and the barn. 1896 or 1897. Harriet wrote "when first bought before it was painted and added-to." ID=2010-104

The Farm, The road machine on Old North Rd. June, 1904. ID=2010-110

Marion Bartlett on buckboard at apple blossom time, Buck Road (High Fields) near the Stevens' home and mill (1904). ID=Ph99ac