

RUSSELL WALLACE KNIGHT

'Russ' Knight was a 'Header'—a Marbleheader. To those who know the inhabitants of that historic rocky peninsula, the term instantly calls to mind certain characteristics—a guttural twang, a unique sense of humor, and a fierce pride of place. Russ possessed all these qualities for he was born and died in his hometown.

Russ could trace his ancestry back to the 1600s in Massachusetts, but he was more apt to tell about one of his forebears who commanded an American privateer in 1775. The American Revolution and Marblehead's part in that momentous event became the driving forces in his life after he retired from his highly successful business career as an industrialist in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He devoted the remainder of his days to local history, collecting historical materials and paintings, and philanthropic endeavors to preserve Marblehead's heritage. Russ kept Marblehead's history alive by editing and writing three books—*Elbridge Gerry's Letter Book*, *The Headers in Life and Legend*, and *In Troubled Waters: The Elusive Schooner Hannah*. He lectured in addition to writing about his community's past and gave many insightful and amusing talks on different topics.

An avid collector of historical materials, Russ gathered a treasure trove of original letters by founding fathers like Elbridge Gerry, John Adams, and Sam Adams. I was the recipient of his generosity when he permitted me to use his private collection for my biographies of Gerry and John Glover. Subsequently he donated his valuable collection of 350 manuscript items to the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Russ's passion for collecting extended to paintings as well. He liked, in particular, works devoted to America's fishing industry, an enterprise in which Marblehead played such a key part as the premier port in all of the thirteen colonies. He gave the major portion of his marine paintings to the Peabody Museum in Salem, where they hang in the Russell W. Knight Department of Maritime Arts and History.

When he discovered there was no mention of Glover's Marblehead regiment in a display at the Washington Crossing Park in Pennsylvania, Russ commissioned a copy of *The Spirit of '76*, the original of which hangs in the Abbot Library in his hometown. He also commissioned a portrait of General John Glover for the park to honor the man whose Marblehead mariners rowed Washington's force across the Delaware in the attack on Trenton. His celebration of this largely unsung hero continued when Russ gave money to maintain the Glover statue that graces the Mall on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. A modest man, Russ rejected the idea of having a plaque bearing his name as donor. Russ combined his philanthropy and historical knowledge to learn more about Glover. His general's uniform had been inherited by a woman in Hawaii who knew of Russ's interest and gave it to him. He had the uniform restored, and in the process, was the first to discover that Glover stood 5'6" and weighed about 160 pounds.

Russ was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in April 1964, and attended a number of meetings. His restless curiosity was evident even in his letter of acceptance. While agreeing to become a member, he raised a research question: what was the meaning of the phrase 'whip the snake,' which he had encountered in reference to the Marblehead militia?

His passion for research was recognized by a circle of historical societies that elected him an officer. He served as a councillor for the Massachusetts Historical Society, vice-president of the Marblehead Historical Society, trustee of the Peabody Museum, and trustee of the Washington Crossing Foundation. In addition, he was made a member of numerous history and literary organizations: the Essex Institute, Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Lawrence Historical Committee, Algonquin Club, Club of Odd Volumes, and Down Town Club of Boston.

Russ died on February 11, 1994, at the age of ninety-one. He is survived by his widow, Martha Tibbetts, a former stage and motion picture actress. Mrs. Knight worked at Columbia Pictures and Warner Brothers, where she played the role of Pat O'Brien's

sweetheart in the film *Ceiling Zero*. After her marriage, she shared Russ's enthusiasm for collecting and gathered important Shaker manuscripts on her own.

I've always been grateful to Russ for his generosity in sharing the historical treasures he found. When I was asked to give a bicentennial lecture at the Essex Institute, I seized the opportunity to show my appreciation and led the audience in three rousing cheers for Russ—a Marbleheader whose self-possession and preference for privacy did not allow for public recognition of his achievements and philanthropies.

George Athan Billias

HALL JAMES PETERSON

Enthusiastic, impetuous, voluble, affectionate, generous, loyal, and courageous—those are personal attributes that characterize Hall James Peterson, who died of cancer on March 6, 1994, at his home, Clamber Hill in Petersham, Massachusetts.

Hall was born on June 4, 1939, in Minneapolis. He was the son of Ernest K. and Isabel E. Hall Peterson and was raised in the Twin Cities and graduated from St. Thomas College in St. Paul. While still a young man, Hall developed an abiding interest in the arts and matters of the mind and was elected to the board of trustees of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Hall and Kate Butler, also of the Twin Cities, were married in 1963. Their family consists of two sons, Temple and Jude, and a daughter, Aimee. As in all things to which he gave his loyalty and love, Hall unstintingly supported each member of his family according to their needs. In 1973 they moved to Petersham, a pleasant country town once well known as a summer resort, in order to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to Aimee at the Clark School for the Deaf in nearby Northampton.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.