



Inside The *Salmagundi Club* With *Guy A. Wiggins*



By Laura Beach

WEW YORK CITY — Our acquaintance began inauspiciously.

“You probably think I’m dead,” said the voice at the end of the line.

I hesitated. The name was certainly familiar, an auction house staple, in fact. But which Wiggins was this? He of the tranquil meadows and grazing livestock, or the urbane Wiggins, whose intimate Manhattan street scenes seem torn from the pages of *The New Yorker*.

As his father did, Guy A. Wiggins has made a specialty of Manhattan cityscapes.

Page Above: Publicity chairman Ilene Skeen, board chairman Tim Newton and Guy A. Wiggins in the parlor of the Salmagundi Club. Wiggins’s 2014 painting of New York’s Flatiron Building in winter is a recent gift from the artist.

The caller was in fact Guy A. Wiggins, bursting with vitality and inviting me to join him for lunch followed by a tour of New York's Salmagundi Club, one of the nation's oldest arts organizations. Of course, I said yes.

On the appointed day, I pounded on the massive front door of the West Village brownstone that Wiggins shares with his wife of 57 years, Dorothy. There presently appeared a spry, nattily attired man, now 95. He waved me through before returning to the phone conversation he was having with art dealer Jeffrey Cooley, an expert in Old Lyme colony painters, among them my host's father and grandfather, Guy C. Wiggins (1883–1962) and J. Carleton Wiggins (1848–1932).



“Cherry Blossoms in Greenwich Village”
by Guy A. Wiggins,
oil on canvas,
16 by 24 inches.



“Autumn at the Plaza Hotel”
by Guy A. Wiggins,
oil on canvas,
18 by 24 inches.



In 2014, the Salmagundi Club completed extensive renovations of its Upper Galleries. In addition to hosting its own shows there, the club leases the refreshed space to other arts organizations.



The Wiggins enterprise began in the 1860s. Carleton Wiggins trained with landscape painter George Inness, among others, and was exhibiting at the National Academy by the 1870s. In the 1880s, he traveled to France. Heavily influenced by the Barbizon style, he claimed a gold medal at the Paris Salon in 1894. He was elected to the Salmagundi Club in 1883, serving as its president between 1911 and 1913. He died in Old Lyme, Conn., in 1932.

Successful from a young age, Guy C. Wiggins perfected loosely brushed views of town and country. It is frequently snowing in Guy C.'s New York, perhaps because the artist was a seasonal resident or maybe because snow softened Manhattan's angular geometry, making the obdurate metropolis more approachable. The public liked Wiggins's traditional approach. Reviewing the painter's solo show at the Morton Gallery in 1932, *New York Times* critic Edward Alden Jewell observed, "Mr Wiggins has done a good

Guy and Dorothy Wiggins traveled widely before settling permanently in New York.

Portrait of J. Carleton Wiggins by Albert Rosenthal (1863–1939), 1920, oil on canvas, 30 by 35 inches.

deal of experimenting without leaving in the lurch those of us who like their art pleasant and picturesque.”

“We’ve been in this house for 26 years. We bought it before the neighborhood was fashionable,” my host tells me. His accomplished floral still lifes, a genre for which the first two Wiggins were not known, decorate the hall and kitchen. “They’re here because they haven’t sold,” he says too modestly.

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