

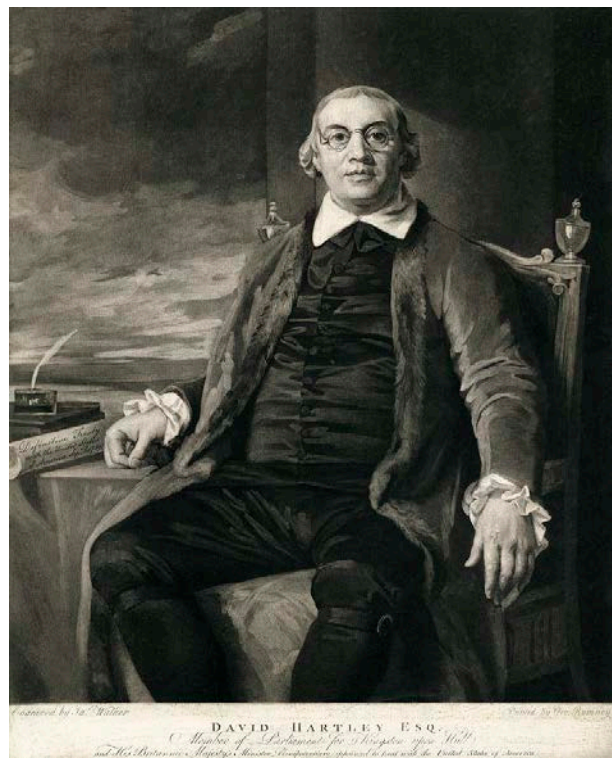
Helen Hartley Jenkins (1860-1934)

Gilded Age Philanthropist/Social Welfare Benefactress



The Future Heiress - circa 1880

Beneficence goes back a long way in the family of Helen Hartley Jenkins, a 1912 charter member of the Norfolk Country Club. Jenkins was descended from David Hartley, the Younger, a member of British Parliament who opposed the war with the United States, was a signatory of the Treaty of Paris (along with his good friend Benjamin Franklin) and the first Member of Parliament to demand the abolition of slavery before the House of Commons in 1776; declaring authoritatively, that “the slave trade is contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man”.



David Hartley, the Younger (1732-1813)

Jenkins' grandfather, Robert Milham Hartley was a social activist and philanthropist who co-founded of the *New York Temperance Society* in 1829 and the *New York Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor* in 1843.

Marcellus Hartley, Jenkins' father, opened the Hartley Settlement House in 1897 at 316 W. 46th St. 'in a very wretched and densely populated section of Manhattan' which, to this day, serves the Hell's Kitchen community, 'enriching their lives and expanding their opportunities'. He also supported the installment of hygienic public baths and financially helped save the floundering *New York Times*, insisting that the newspaper be more accessible to the poor. In 1904, his daughter Helen and his grandson Marcellus Hartley Dodge purchased Hartley Farm in New Jersey as a summer retreat for underprivileged children from the Hartley Settlement House. Hartley descendants, some of whom call Norfolk home, are still actively involved in the Settlement House's charitable missions.

Hartley Settlement House, 413 West 46th St., NYC



Marcellus Hartley was born in New York in 1827 and at seventeen became a clerk in his father's dry goods business in lower Manhattan. At twenty he took a similar job at Francis Tomes & Sons



Marcellus Hartley

Marcellus Hartley (1827-1902)

in Maiden Lane, dealers in fancy hardware and sporting goods, where he specialized in the sale of recreational guns and ammunition.

Seven years later Hartley started his own company Schuyler, Hartley and Graham that, under his leadership, became the largest arms dealer in America. Hartley routinely embarked on months-long journeys to Europe to purchase firearms and ammunition. Back in the United States, he would travel the country selling his goods, making prodigious profits. The firm was financially sound enough to weather the financial panic of 1857; and primed to cash in on the pressing need to arm the Union Army in the Civil War. President Lincoln made Hartley the equivalent of a brigadier general and sent him to Europe tasked with acquiring arms and munitions to outfit the Union Army and also to gather intelligence on Confederate Army arms purchases.

Having prospered from Civil War profiteering, Hartley acquired the Union Metallic Cartridge Co. which pioneered the proliferation of breech-loading rifles that played a significant role in the so-called taming of the Wild West. In 1877, he purchased, at auction, the Remington

Arms Company, exponentially expanding his holdings and making him one of the five wealthiest men in America.

By the first half of the 20th century, Remington Arms had become the largest arms manufacturer in the world occupying 73 acres in Bridgeport, CT and employing over 17,000 workers. In the 1930s, Remington was purchased by Dupont, the world's largest producer of gunpowder. During World War II, this munitions conglomerate supplied the United States with 69% of all the weaponry and firepower used in vanquishing Germany and Japan.



Rendering of Remington Arms Manufacturing Complex, Bridgeport, CT

Marcellus Hartley died in 1902 at age 75, leaving his wife Frances and daughter Helen \$6 million each, the equivalent of nearly \$350 million today (well before the 16th amendment imposed income taxes in 1913). Helen's twin Grace had died suddenly on Easter morning 1896, possibly from heartbreak, only four months after the death of her 11-year old daughter, Emma Hartley Stokes from appendicitis. The twins' older sister, also named Emma, died in 1881 giving birth to Marcellus Hartley's only grandson, Marcellus Hartley Dodge, to whom Marcellus Hartley left over \$60 million.

After her sister's death, Helen Hartley Jenkins raised her nephew Marcellus Hartley Dodge as her own son while his father, Norman White Dodge travelled extensively as head of Phelps Dodge Corporation, a global mining and lumber company.

President of his class at Columbia University, Marcellus Hartley Dodge graduated in 1903 and promptly took over Remington Arms, a task to which he was well suited, building the arms giant into a bigger, even more successful company. A well-liked bon vivant, avid yachtsman and accomplished equestrian Marcy, as he was called, in 1907 married Geraldine Rockefeller, daughter of William Rockefeller, co-founder, with his brother, John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil. To the marriage, Geraldine brought the tidy sum (dowry) of \$101 million dollars that, combined with Marcy's \$60 million, made the illustrious couple by far the wealthiest newlyweds in America.



Marcus Hartley Dodge



Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge

Marcy's aunt, Helen Hartley Jenkins (and her twin Grace) had grown up in luxury in a Manhattan mansion at 232 Madison Avenue at 37th St. and attended private schools. Caring little for social life, Helen was, nevertheless, inured to and steeped in the lavish lifestyle of the Gilded Age and owned several fine homes including a country mansion in New Jersey on a five-mile stretch between Morristown and Madison called the 'Great White Way' or 'Millionaire's Row', where the magnificent houses were comparable to the grand 'cottages' of Newport, RI.



Helen Hartley Jenkins with Daughters, Helen and Grace and nephew Marcellus Hartley Dodge - circa 1896

In 1891, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie leased Scotland's 1604 Cluny Castle and invited his friends Marcellus Hartley and Dr. Frederic Dennis of Norfolk to join them. It was there that Helen Hartley met her future husband, George Walker Jenkins, Yale, class of 1870 and a New Jersey

State Assemblyman from 1883-85. On June 30, 1892, he and Helen were married on the crest of Orange Mountain in Orange, NJ. Helen was 32, pampered by her riches and already very much set in her ways. After the marriage George Jenkins, who was described as very handsome and funny, became VP and a director at Remington Arms and they had two daughters, Helen and Grace. Though big of heart and almost maniacally benevolent, Helen was extremely demanding, imperious, petulant, overbearing and irascible to a fault... and no beauty. Only thirteen years after their romantic mountaintop wedding George and Helen separated. Never having divorced Helen, George Jenkins died in 1922.

The Impassioned Philanthropist

From an early age, Helen Hartley enthusiastically embraced her family's seemingly genetic proclivity for doing good works. Indefatigably, she dedicated her life and much of her time and fortune to multiple worthy institutions and causes, particularly in the fields of public health, mental hygiene, nursing and prison reform.

A comprehensive, but incomplete list of the philanthropic endeavors of Helen Hartley Jenkins:

Columbia University :

- > she donated Hartley Hall dormitory in memory of her father, Marcellus
- > in memory of her daughter Helen, she donated the distinctive wrought iron entrance gates at 116th St. and Broadway at Barnard College
- > endowed and equipped the Marcellus Hartley Physics Laboratory, where her close Norfolk friend, Michael Pupin did many of his major experiments;
- > was a trustee of Columbia's Teacher's College from 1907 to 1934 and with \$200,000 endowed its graduate school of nursing and health;
- > donated \$350,000 in 1910 to build Columbia's Philosophy Hall designed by the firm of McKim, Mead & White;
- > was honored by Columbia with a Masters of Humane Letters in recognition of her humanitarian work.

Philosophy Hall, Columbia University (Postcard)



Not only that, she:

- > was on the board of governors of numerous hospitals and endowed the Marcellus Hartley chair of *Materia Medica* at New York University Medical School;
- > funded the New York Polyclinic hospital on West 50th St. and personally supervised the the housekeeping staff;
- > founded the Manhattanville Nursery at Old Broadway and 131st St. in Harlem to help relieve financially burdened local households;
- > was director of the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital;
- > was director of the Litchfield County Hospital in Winsted, CT.;
- > gave, in memory of her sister, the Grace Hartley Memorial Hospital to Banner Elk, NC, a poor Appalachian town of 1000 people;
- > was a trustee of Yenching University, Beijing, China where a building was named after her
- > funded the School of Nursing which is named after her at Memorial Hospital in Morristown, NJ

Also:

- > championed tenement house reform through the Open Stair Tenement Movement started by Ann Harriman Vanderbilt which promulgated open plan tenements designed by Henry Atterbury Smith allowing for free circulation of light and air to help relieve the unhealthy, congested living conditions of immigrants and the poor in New York. Together with her daughter Helen, she had Smith design a building at 525 West 47th St. called the Hartley Open Stair Tenement which had a health center and lunchroom open to the public;
- > alarmed by the plight of indigent immigrants, she established the Slavonic Immigrant Home on 23rd St. in 1909;
- > was awarded, after WWI, the order of St. Sava from the Serbian Red Cross and a medal from the National Slavonic Society and was decorated for service to Montenegro;
- > was a major benefactor of the Jan Hass Bohemian Presbyterian Church.

And:

- > was Chairman of the New York Committee on Social Hygiene;
- > was on the Executive Committee of the National Prison Association;
- > was a board member of the Mutual Welfare League at Sing Sing prison;
- > often allowed recently released prisoners to stay in the basement of her Madison Avenue mansion until they could get back on their feet;
- > appointed by Governor Al Smith to the Prison Survey Committee which investigated the state's entire prison system;
- > was a proponent of "the application of scientific methods to analyze the criminal mind in and effort to stamp out crime at its roots";
- > was awarded a gold medal by the National Institute of Social Sciences in 1916

Bam, in the Prime of Her Prime



Despite her intrinsically compassionate nature, HHJ was fierce, formidable, intimidating character, a force to be reckoned with. Close friend Virginia Gildersleeve, president of Barnard College, described Jenkins as “something of an *infant terrible*... with huge cabochon rubies on her breast, her fingers glittering with heavy rings, her tongue afire with the energy of her thoughts, she could frighten some people witless... no one ever called her dull.” One of her granddaughters recalled: she was very powerful, very opinionated with a keen mind and addicted to excessive jewelry. Very bossy, she liked whom she liked and was capable of persistent dislikes. That [Bam] (as her friends called her) disliked two people more than all the others, her two sons-in-law, cannot have made her an endearing figure.”

The Jekyll Island Club

In the late-1800s, The Jekyll Island Club was described in Munsey's Magazine as "the most elite, most inaccessible private social club the country has ever known". Founded in 1886 on the Georgia coast well before Florida became a resort destination, Jekyll Island was inhabited, for three winter months of luxurious seclusion, by fifty of America's richest, most fabulous families including the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Morgans, Astors, Pulitzers and Carnegies, representing one sixth of the world's wealth. After visiting Jekyll Island as a guest for years, Jenkins bought Indian Mound Cottage from William Rockefeller and began spending her winters on Jekyll Island with the American aristocracy and her good friend Michael Pupin. After WWII, Jekyll Island went into decline until the 1980s when it was rediscovered and rejuvenated.



Indian Mound Cottage - Jekyll Island, GA

The Jekyll Island Club is now a resort hotel and Indian Mound Cottage is home to the Jekyll Island Historical Society.

The Norfolk Years

In 1898, grieving over the recent deaths of his his daughter Grace, HHJ's twin sister, and his granddaughter Emma, Marcellus Hartley rented a house at the behest of his friend Dr. Frederic Dennis and spent the summer in Norfolk with Helen and her two young daughters. After her father's death, Helen came back to Norfolk in 1903 with her husband and daughters and rented *Airly Beacon* on Laurel Way (now owned by NCC members, **Susan Caughman** and **Gerry Goodrich**) for the summer.

Hillside or The Bungalow

In 1904, having gained her inheritance, Helen Hartley Jenkins (her friends called her Nellie) bought land on a steep hill off Litchfield Road and began planning a stone mansion she would refer to as The Bungalow. Originally, she engaged Henry Hornbostel who had recently designed Michael Pupin's impressive stone mansion on Westside Road. Evidently, Hornbostel dragged his feet. Nellie replaced him in 1908 with Alfredo Taylor who had recently designed three imposing houses on hilltops across Litchfield Road, including *Moss Hill* for his mother-in-law and *Rübly* for himself and his wife, Minna.

HHJ and Michael Pupin had developed a deep admiration for each other (many claim they were romantically involved) and spent much time together in New York, Norfolk and Jekyll Island. Her humanitarian instincts must have been impressed by the brilliant scientist and inventor who had come to America alone and penniless at the age of sixteen only to become successful, famous and wealthy enough to be HHJ's peer. On a motor trip with Pupin through Serbia she was taken by the simple, vernacular stone Morava houses the style of which Pupin had adopted for his own stone house on Westside. For *Hillside* she asked Alfredo to design a Serbian summer home that would accommodate her large collection of Bohemian furniture.

To give Alfredo an idea of what she was she had in mind, HHJ sent him a postcard dated July 8, 1907. To wit:

Fredo,

The fireworks were simply splendid at Rübly last week. I've seen nothing like them. That's how I want you to design my home, as if it exploded right out of the earth.

Best wishes,

Nellie

And explode it did (and does, now owned by NCC members, **Jennie and Bill Brown**). According to Historian Ann Havemeyer, “[Hillside] seems to have grown right out of the steep, rocky hillside known as Sugar Hill at the Summit. Dramatically rising three and a half stories from grade on the north side, the house is anchored to the site by severe granite and rubble-stone walls with tapering buttresses. While the north facade of this large mass belies the notion of a bungalow, the silhouette created by the multiple planes of the expansive and sheltering roof follows the contours of the terrain, and the horizontal bands of windows, balconies, galleries and retaining walls reinforce the sense of a low, earth-hugging mass.” Murals of cows and milk maids painted by noted muralist, William de Leftwich Dodge adorned the outside of the building making it look like a grand balconied, Serbian dacha. De Leftwich Dodge also did 8 murals depicting the life of Ulysses for Pupin’s stone castle but, unfortunately, they are no longer extant.



Early Postcard View of Hillside (or The Bungalow)

Inside *Hillside*, a double-height living room with an exposed timber ceiling and a hooded fireplace evoke a medieval great hall. From a privately printed memorial to Grace Hartley Jenkins Mead, Helen’s daughter wrote, “The bungalow plan was intended to match an informal and simple lifestyle, an idea that might have appealed in theory to Mrs. Jenkins for her country retreat. In practice, as the family recalled, she lived in Norfolk with a sizable entourage (upstairs maid, butler, cook, scullery, ladies maid, nurses and chauffeur).” A railroad spur was built to bring HHJ’s private train from Morristown, NJ directly to her door at *Hillside*.

HHJ made her presence felt immediately in Norfolk. Besides being enthusiastic members of the Norfolk Country Club she, Ellen Battell Stoeckel and Michael Pupin formed the Hartford Corporation, based in Norfolk, simply to “promote the well-being of mankind”. At the time, parts of Norfolk were run down. Several dilapidated factories lined the Blackberry River and many abandoned farms were going to seed. The Hartford Corporation acquired many of these deteriorating properties and either fixed them up or demolished them while acquiring over 1800 acres in town to save from development. Their thinking was in keeping with the then prevailing, popular national beautification movement, the Colonial Revival, in which communities, such as Litchfield, CT, tried to recreate the quintessential, idealized New England village with white clapboard houses and picket fences. In 1922 HHJ gave \$1 million to the Hartford Corporation for research and educational work in the community and contributed significantly to the building of the Royal Arcanum Building and the new Center School in downtown Norfolk.



An Imposing Figure

It must not have been enough that HHJ owned the formidable *Hillside/Bungalow* on Sugar Hill. In 1915 she acquired land from Michael Pupin near his stone castle on Westside Road and commissioned noted architect Ehrick Rossiter (Norfolk Music Shed) to design a fairly modest stone and stucco 'garden house' she called *The Terraces*, where she could host tea parties, read, relax and, perhaps, be closer to Michael Pupin (long-standing rumors of a secret tunnel between Pupin's castle and *Hillside* or *The Terraces* have never been substantiated).

The interior of the house was very much in keeping with Rossiter's colonial revival style except for a magnificent Japanese tea room, facing east, that was bought at auction from the lavish Madison Avenue mansion of art connoisseur and collector Henry Marquand and moved to *The Terraces*. From a 1905 New York Times article: "The interior is carved in the most elaborate way from quebracho wood, one of the hardest of Brazilian trees, almost as hard as coral... in the ceilings and walls English mottoes and words are carved in Oriental puzzlemates or arabesques". Neglect by previous owners has diminished some aspects of the tea room but its aura remains in the original floors, decorative, painted glass windows and, in particular, the distinctive carved ceiling which, incredibly enough, was discovered under a false plaster ceiling. New NCC member, **George Cronin**, who purchased the house and saved it from certain ruin, has recently finished a brilliant restoration of this Ehrick Rossiter jewel.

The Terraces on Westside



A Match Made in Norfolk

In 1905, when HHJ's daughter Grace was 10-years old, she met an 8-year old Norfolk boy named Winter Mead outside the Hillhurst Hotel on Laurel Way. Over the years their friendship developed into a love relationship culminating in an engagement and planning of a romantic country wedding in Norfolk in 1921. Winter Mead had grown up to be a handsome, scholarly, athletic young man right out of the pages of an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Considered the strongest man in his 1919 class at Yale, he was captain of Crew, captain of the wrestling team, president of Phi Beta Kappa and member of Skull and Bones. His oar still hangs at Mory's. Coincidentally, his parents first met at the same Andrew Carnegie castle in Scotland as had Grace's parents, Helen Hartley and George Jenkins. Winter's family was prominent (two of his great uncles were famed sculptor, Larkin Goldsmith Mead and William Rutherford Mead of McKim, Mead and White), but his father, Larkin Mead was a newspaper man and founder of one of the first public relations firms in 1905. Perhaps a bit too déclassé for someone of HHJ's perceived social standing.

Grace and Winter made elaborate wedding plans and sent invitations out to relatives and friends. On the day of the wedding, Grace's mother, HHJ, who obviously disapproved of the union, pretended to have a heart attack and all the guests were sent home. Mortified, the disconsolate couple had to drive into New York to get married in a private ceremony in the rectory of Grace Church at Broadway and 10th St.

**Grace Hartley Jenkins Mead
Wedding Portrait, 1921**



Winter Mead (center) at Yale, 1919



Grace and Winter spent their summers in Norfolk in a house they built in the 1930s on Yale Farm. Grace got up everyday at 4:30am to walk her dogs and cut flowers, living a leisurely life of the mind while presiding over the family's charitable foundations. Winter, an executive at Prudential Life Insurance played golf (known to play 36 holes after lunch running from hole to hole) and fished at Doolittle Lake where, in 1930 they had Alfredo Taylor design an Adirondacks-style rubble stone camp, perhaps the most emblematic camp on Doolittle. Winter died in 1953 at the age of 55 leaving Grace a widow for 38 years until she died in 1991 at the age of 95.

Mead Camp, Doolittle Lake (1930)



As for Grace's philanthropic, domineering mother, Helen Hartley Jenkins suffered a debilitating stroke when she was being carried out of her burning Morristown mansion in 1930 and became incapacitated, an invalid for the last four years of her life. She died on April 24, 1934 at the age of 73 and is interred in the Hartley family mausoleum in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY.

Michael Kelly

The Norfolk Country Club History Project

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