



# Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America

*Jane Allen Petrick*

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**Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America** Jane Allen Petrick  
Named to Kirkus Review's Best Books of 2013!

Named the 2014 Readers' Favorite Bronze Medal Winner for the Non-Fiction - Cultural!

Norman Rockwell's America was not all white. As early as 1936, Rockwell was portraying people of color with empathy and a dignity often denied them at the time. And he created these portraits from live models.

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America unfolds, for the first time, the stories of the Asian, African, and Native Americans who modeled for Norman Rockwell. These people of color, though often hidden in plain sight, are present throughout Rockwell's more than 4000 illustrations. People like the John Lane family, Navajos poignantly depicted in the virtually unknown Norman Rockwell painting, "Glen Canyon Dam." People like Isaac Crawford, a ten year old African-American Boy Scout who helped Norman Rockwell finally integrate the Boy Scout calendar.

In this engrossing and often humorous narrative, Jane Allen Petrick explores what motivated Norman Rockwell to slip people of color "into the picture" in the first place. And in so doing, she persuasively documents the famous illustrator's deep commitment to and pointed portrayals of ethnic tolerance, portrayals that up to now have been, as Norman Rockwell biographer Laura Claridge so clearly put it, "bizarrely neglected".

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America is an eye opener for everyone who loves Norman Rockwell, everyone who hates Norman Rockwell and for all those people in between who never thought much about Norman Rockwell because they believed Norman Rockwell never thought much about them. This book will expand the way you think about Norman Rockwell. And it will deepen the way you think about Norman Rockwell's America.

## Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America Details

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ISBN : 9780989260114

Author : Jane Allen Petrick

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## From Reader Review Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell's America for online ebook

### Arlena says

Title: Hidden In Plain Sight...The Other People In Norman Rockwell's America  
Author: Jane Allen Petrick  
Publisher: Informed Decisions International  
Reviewed By: Arlena Dean  
Rating: 4  
Review:

"Hidden in Plain Sight" by Jane Allen Petrick was a fascinating beautiful story telling of Norman Rockwell's great talent where he covers 'social justice, inequality and the human rights during the 40's and 50's. We will find from the read that this author tells us about how Norman Rockwell's work wit dealing with people used were 'hidden in plain sight.' These 'people of color' were dealt with in depth an social awareness had gone for the most part unnoticed. This is really a interesting biography of how this artist forced a lots of his works on 'non-white children and adult who are his legacy.' This author does a good job at telling us a story of Norman Rockwell's journey and battle that did allow him to paint his visions of American, and even to speaking with these people who modeled for him. I loved how Rockwell's picture 'showed a nation of minorities how to have thanksgiving, raise our children, go to war, live in small towns and look American' and with books that showed his cover art and posters casted by people of color. This research was well researched to get all of this of Norman Rockwell's personal life. This author did a wonderful job illustrating this Artist and giving us a feeling of what was going on at that time. In the end we get a wonderful read that was researched, entertaining, educational and very fascinating read that I would recommend as a good read.

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### Carol says

I have always loved Norman Rockwell for his Saturday Evening Post Covers bur now I love him even more. Hidden in Plain Sight, the Other People in Norman Rockwell's America by Jane Allen Patrick was a well-researched book with illustrations. Jane Allen Patrick had been one of the people depicted in his paintings. She didn't start out with the theme of the book; it just started shining through while she was doing interviews with other Rothwell models. She found out that the painter slipped people of color into his paintings and she explored why he did.

It was not because he wanted to be "right" it was because he was very committed to racial equality. He fought against the statements that his bigoted brother made. He was upset by the editor-in-chief at Saturday Evening Post. George Horace Loriner, the editor did not want include people of color so Norman Rockwell started to sneak them in the paintings. George Lorimar even had some of the submissions destroyed. He put a black Boy Scout in their annual calendar and the boy, Isaac Crawford was the beginning of the integration of the Boy Scouts.

I enjoyed this well researched book and was very glad to learn more about Normal Rockwell's personal life. I highly recommend this book to all who love his paintings.

I received this book as a win from Library Thing and that in no way influenced my thoughts or feelings in this review.

## Teddy says

When Jane Allen Petrick asked me if I wanted to read her book, Hidden In Plain Sight, I knew I had to, after reading the description. You see, I always thought that the great American artist, Norman Rockwell was raciest. I never read anything about him, so my perception came purely from the paintings of his that I saw. The people were always white in them.

It turns out, that I was in the minority with that perception however, in Hidden In Plain Sight, Jane Allen Petrick sets us straight. There are actually quite a few paintings where he address social and civil rights issues. Petrick even writes about the real life African American, Chinese American, and Native American models he used in his paintings. She has had the privilege of meeting some of the models and they shared their stories of meeting and modelling for Norman Rockwell.

So why haven't many of see this other side of Rockwell? Those of you my age and older, may remember some on the Saturday Evening Post magazine's, Norman Rockwell covers. He was under contract to create all those covers for them. They would only allow paintings of wholesome looking white people.

This book is such a gem. I felt like I got to know some of the models along with Petrick. It read more like a memoir than a biography, one that I couldn't put down. I read it in one sitting and was up until the wee hours of the morning. I found it absolutely fascinating. This a book I think all Americans should read. I just hope that Jane allen Petrick writes a follow up. I cannot recommend it highly enough!

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## Shoshanah says

Going into this I knew little of Norman Rockwell. I obviously have seen his Thanksgiving painting and those for Coca-Cola, but knew little about who he actually was. Considering that this isn't actually a biography of him, it's interesting how much I learned reading this. Instead the book highlights the minorities in Norman Rockwell's work, the ones that are present, but often unnoticed.

One item I learned is that Rockwell painted from photographs, which means he'd take pictures of a given person and sketch from the photos. I never really thought about how he would have drawn his pieces, but it does make sense. After all, a photo freezes time so you don't have to worry about the model moving on you. This book is about those models and their stories.

Except it isn't really a biography of them either. Instead it tells the story of how Norman Rockwell, living in a predominately white town in Vermont, was able to find his diverse models. We then hear each one's recollections of modeling and see where they are today.

If I have any complaint about this book, it's the lack of pictures. Each time a piece of artwork was described I wanted to see it, hated that most times there wasn't an image. Of course I understand copyright issues, and I was able to easily search for one online, but think it a perfect world, those pieces should all be in here.

It is interesting how Norman Rockwell's one goal in life seemed to be to do something important, and that he felt he had failed. It really puts things in perspective hearing that someone who made such a difference and was able to capture the essence of America in his work, had no idea the impact he had. It also makes you think how many lives you may be making a difference to, without having any idea.

*Disclosure: I was provided this book through Virtual Author Book Tours. All opinions expressed are my own.*

## Melissa Seng says

Very informative, very well written. I'm a Rockwell fan and never knew a lot of the information in this book. He definitely was not prejudiced. Good book. Enjoyed it.

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## Isi says

Full review on my blog

In Hidden in plain sight, the author takes us to a journey to meet who those “other” people were. Jane Allen Petrick has researched into Rockwell’s paintings and has interviewed his models – the majority of them were kids when they worked for him – who tell us the story of how they ended up being models for the painter and how their experience was (most of the memories include tons of Coca Cola!). I have found interesting that he organized photograph sessions for every painting, asking the models to pose in certain ways that then he would transform into oil paintings.

I know the author’s aim was to show Rockwell’s unknown work to the public, but since this is my first approach to Rockwell’s art, I think this is also a great book to get to know this artist and how he was committed to represent every American person through his paintings.

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## Anna del C. Dye says

Hidden in Plain Sight: The other people in Norman Rockwell 19s America by Jane Allen Petrick is an outstanding book about colored people in the paintings of Norman Rockwell. I thoroughly enjoyed the flow of the research and the words used in this inspiring book. It is a well thought-out book that follows the life and paintings of the great artist.

Jane Allen Petrick had a question in her heart and she did a lot of research to support her findings. This book is the result of her research and is very well written. It is tastefully done and left me with the feeling of great accomplishment.

Petrick 19s book sets out to prove that the all American white artist Norman Rockwell did have colored people in his paintings. In many articles and different stories about the artist, she could find nothing written about the models of color in the paintings. It was like no one could see them or else were afraid to notice them.

Her quest is to prove to the world that Norman Rockwell indeed loved and included colored people in his paintings and it is alright to see them. I believe that she has done that and more. Hidden in Plain Sight is a must have book for all those who love the all American artist 19s paintings. I highly recommend it for the great history lesson and the discoveries you will find in its pages. It will help you see with different eyes and appreciate more the artist and his work. It is a book worth every cent you pay for it.

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## Joyce says

A beautifully written and well researched account of Norman Rockwell's art. Jane Allen Petrick, takes you behind the scenes of Mr. Rockwell's paintings. Yes, many of them are famous and you recognize them right away, while others are not as popular, but each has a story. This book tells of Mr. Rockwell's desire to paint the America that he saw, the true America, the America of many people from many lands. The social issues, the diversity, the political turmoil and life in general. I was fortunate enough to already have a book of Norman Rockwell's art work, so when Ms. Petrick mentioned a particular painting, I was able to see it. I truly enjoyed the stories behind the paintings, not only why Mr. Rockwell decided on a particular painting but how he envisioned it, the diversity of people he chose for it and sometimes the disappointment he received from others about it. It was also interesting to hear the model's side of the story. He was a man of social conscience who wanted to make a difference in this world. It is unfortunate that he never realized what a difference he did make. I received this book as an Early Reviewers copy in exchange for my honest review.

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## David says

Dear Jane,

A month or so ago, I came across an article on Rockwell and Thanksgiving (<https://theamericanscholar.org/home-f...>). I commented on the article, and received a reply that mentioned your book.

I knew Rockwell's social conscience had developed over his lifetime. A painting like "The Problem We All Live With" belies the saccharine stereotype often associated with the Rockwell name.

What I didn't know was the impact Rockwell's willingness to portray African-Americans in his work had on at least some of those folks who modelled for him. While there's no doubt money talks, you make it clear there was a lot more to what happened than that.

Your account of the painting of "Glen Canyon Dam" was compelling. If ever there was a painting that deserved the caption "WTF?", this is it. Similarly, your account of the Pan Am fiasco revealed who Rockwell was all about. To paraphrase Bill Clinton: "It's about the PEOPLE, stupid!"

I was also ignorant of the impact of Rockwell's work on African-American artists. The Orlando Black plate on page 110 caught my attention big-time!

It's interesting that Black was a minister. From memory Henry Ossawa Tanner was the son of a bishop in the AMEC. If there's an inextricable connection between religion and art, it follows that there is a similar connection between art and social justice.

"When I look for me, I find me" got me chuckling. Talk about nailing it! I'm glad to discover I'm not the only one who looks, and gets the pleasure of surprise.

Thank you Jane!

Very best wishes,  
Dave

## Meghan says

This is an extremely interesting treatise on what seems to be the forgotten message of racial integration in Norman Rockwell's pictures. While, like most people, I could easily recall 'The Problem We All Live With', I wasn't really aware of all the other inclusions of people of colour throughout the Norman Rockwell canon. I read the book in one sitting, that's how engaging Dr Allen Petrick's work is.

There are a few things about the book, most of which have already been mentioned by previous reviewers:

(1) Inclusion of more of Rockwell's illustrations would have been highly welcome. I would recommend having a source to access the internet nearby while reading the book so that you can see the pictures as Dr Allen Petrick discusses the background and the models associated to them. I also recommend reading this e-book on a colour device - I read it on a black and white kobo, which made it difficult to appreciate the pictures that were included.

(2) There are some typos, misspelled words, strange indentations, and missing spaces throughout the epub version I read. Another run through with an eagle-eyed copy-editor would probably fix those problems.

(3) One of the first times when Dr Allen Petrick discusses her family rather than the Rockwell models (talking about her father Buddy purchasing buildings) was, to me, a very abrupt transition. It took me a minute to realize that Dr Allen Petrick was now talking about herself rather than something associated with Norman Rockwell directly.

But, overall, this is a book that would be of interest to anyone looking at either Americana artwork or race relations in the United States of America.

I received a free e-book in exchange for an honest review.

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## Mina De Caro (Mina's Bookshelf) says

4.5 star review available on MINA'S BOOKSHELF <http://minadecaro.blogspot.com/2014/0...>

Despite the enormous appeal enjoyed by his works for their reflection of the American culture, Norman Rockwell remains one of the most underappreciated and misunderstood artists of our age. The mid-century division between 'high art' and 'pop culture' didn't serve him well: the elitist idea that the use of popular imagery could not possibly be defined 'art' was still broadly accepted by mainstream artists and serious art critics, that same intelligentsia that dismissed Rockwell's illustrations as burgeois and often kitschy. The general attitude toward a more 'democratic' representation of reality (both in its subjects and means of distribution) was, at that time, heavily marked by disdain, even when it became impossible to ignore Rockwell's incredible talent. His brilliant technique was nothing short of a Salvador Dali, but according to Nabokov, one of his fiercest detractors, it was being put to a banal use.

If you happen to stand on that side of the fence when it comes to Rockwell's art, you may want to consider this iconic artist and his quintessentially American illustrations from a different angle and uncover, beyond the seemingly idealistic and sentimentalized portrayal of everyday life scenarios, a much deeper truth about the man and the artist who brought those images to life. In her well-researched study, Hidden In Plain Sight:

The Other People In Norman Rockwell's America, Jane Allen Petrick argues that, beneath the overly sweet, small-town America iconography, made of grandmas, Santas, and freckled boy scouts, lays a more subtle and socially charged message. Something in between a memoir and an insightful social study, Petrick's biography demonstrates how Rockwell used his art to deliver an ante-litteram message of ethnic tolerance and multiculturalism.

While it is true that the centerpiece of his artistic production focused on everyday life scenarios that served as magazine covers during his five-decade-long collaboration with The Saturday Evening Post, critics have been stubbornly and blatantly overlooking Rockwell's attention to more relevant subjects such as racism, civil rights, war on poverty. It was interesting to learn how his artistic expression was largely limited by his publisher's policy: the magazine covers could show minorities only if portrayed in menial positions. That would explain why a shift in Rockwell's choice of topics coincided with the interruption of his relationship with The Post. A new collaboration with a more progressive magazine (The Look) allowed him to turn his attention to more relevant issues and openly depict his concerns in matter of social justice.

Brief and insightful, Petrick's study documents the neglected truth about one of the most innovative artists of the 20th century.

\*\*\*Review copy graciously offered by the author in return for an unbiased and honest opinion

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### **Chrissy (The Every Free Chance Reader) says**

4.5 stars

Did I enjoy this book: I did.

The descriptions of this novel will tell you that Petrick is telling the previously obscured story of “people of color” in Norman Rockwell’s artwork. But honestly, this book is about so much more. There’s American history, personal stories, and discussions of multi-culturalism (or lack thereof) interwoven throughout the novel.

I learned so much from this story. It’s hard to grasp how important seeing someone who “looks like me” in literature, pop culture, and art is to those of us who have always been represented daily in media representations.

Hidden in Plain Sight is both entertaining and educational. This turns out to be both good and bad as it feels academic – almost textbook-like – at times. And (as is so often the case with non-fiction) the book goes on a little longer than is necessary to make a point.

Would I recommend it: I would; especially to people interested in: art, history, African-American studies, and Norman Rockwell.

Will I read it again: No.

As reviewed by Belinda at Every Free Chance Book Reviews.

(I received a copy of this book for review purposes.)

<http://everyfreechance.com/2014/02/bl...>

## Ellen Messer says

### Hidden in Plain Sight Revealed the Obvious

Never having given Norman Rockwell much attention, I considered him at most an illustrator of a sweet characterization of American ideals: loving families, shared holidays, children at play. This book however offered a new perspective. Jane Petrick shows how Norman Rockwell used his talent to say things he felt about social justice, inequality and the struggle for human rights not only in America, but worldwide. Jane's stories about his work and the people he used as models are engaging, and compelling. She tells about the people hidden in plain sight – people of color who by their inclusion in Norman Rockwell's illustrations have given his work a depth and social awareness that has largely gone unnoticed. I recommend reading Hidden in Plain Sight for a greater understanding of the American experience seen through the brush of an illustrator who stood up to convention and included people who were a part of it, if one realized they were there.

Ellen Messer

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## Cate says

Whether you love the work of Norman Rockwell, hate it or just haven't given it that much thought, after all it pervades most of American life in one way or another, this book is well worth your time to read to gain a new perspective on his work, or allow you to look at it with fresh eyes.

In this short 125 page book, the Author illustrates how the Artist used his talents to give a voice to his feelings about the happenings of the time. Through thoroughly engaging and captivating stories the Author lets the reader into the mind of Mr. Rockwell and experience his feelings about those in society who are 'hidden in plain sight'. This book features a section of those people, those of colour, who he used as models for his work which in turn served to give his illustrations a depth and also a social awareness that many have failed to notice. In compiling this book the Author provides the reader with a greater understanding of America, as seen through the brush strokes of an artist who snubbed his nose at convention and included people in his artwork that were largely overlooked by society as a whole. My only issue about this book was that there were not more illustrations to support the stories contained within its pages; I suspect this may be more due to copyright issues than intentional omission.

I highly recommend it for readers of any age that are interested in the arts or art history and lovers of Norman Rockwell's work. Reading this certainly gave me a new appreciation for the work of Norman Rockwell.

Originally reviewed on: <http://catesbooknuthut.com/2013/11/21...>

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## Ruth Hill says

When I first agreed to read this book, I wasn't too interested in Norman Rockwell--my dad is the Norman Rockwell aficionado in this family. I was intrigued by the book topic due to my affinity for history and multiculturalism. In my mind, Rockwell meant white, small-town America. I was not aware of any other races appearing in his works. The topic alone captivated me.

As I read the author's account, I was flabbergasted. How is it that in this day and age of racial awareness that these particular events are being concealed? We are surrounded by historians who are consistently telling the Caucasian population that we are uninformed in the area of multicultural and female historical events. I dislike it when the powers that be try to rewrite history and/or speak down to the ignorant whites. But this author did exactly the opposite. She did intense research, and I was shocked that these stories seem to be difficult to discover and research. In this age of ready information, how can that be the case?

I salute the author for her amazing historical book, and I have a new appreciation for Norman Rockwell. I doubt I will ever look at him and his work the same way again. He was indeed ahead of his time, and I only wish he could have known what a long-lasting impact he has had. I only wish she could have included more photos of his work since I was not overly familiar with Rockwell's work.

I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not financially compensated, and all opinions are 100 percent mine.

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