**Wallflowers with Northern Parula, July 2023**

**Amy Pollien**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

The Northern Parula is a small, plump member of the warbler family. They don’t visit feeders and typically stay in the upper forest canopy, flitting around the tips of branches and eating insects. I had no idea we had them on our property until identifying them by song: “a buzzy trill that cuts off sharply at the end” according to Cornell Labs. They depend on Spanish moss, lichen, and reindeer moss to nest so our back yard, full of wet spots and old trees, is ideal. This year we have several nesting pairs.

I raised Siberean Wallflowers from seed in 2022. I don’t have many orange flowers in the garden and their phlox-like four petaled flowers stayed bright and unwilted in the heavy rains we’ve had this spring. Flowers with structure, with obvious support stems and geometry, are much easier to understand and draw so wallflowers are going to be a favorite going forward, I can tell. They are also very popular with my honeybees and the bee moths that visit the garden in July and August.

The moriage teapot is part of a set that belonged to my great grandfather, Louis Harrison Barnard (1857 - 1930). “Moriage” refers to the technique of raised, trailed-slip decoration. It was widely used to decorate all kinds of pottery made in Asia. Louis Harrison was a farmer in Avon, Connecticut and enlisted in WWI. I don’t know how he came by the set but several people left notes that he treasured it and used it every day. The tea pot has survived with the sugar bowl and milk pitcher, and two eggshell thin cups and saucers, for about 150 years of constant use - not a bad record. I use it often myself. Below is a glass daguerreotype of L. H. Barnard taken in 1865 when he was eight years old.

As an aside, my cousins and I were taught the Barnard ancestor’s names as a sort of spoken voice poem: Raymond Harrison, Judah Harrison, Ebeneezer Harrison, Judah Pinney, Deacon Francis Harrison, Sgt Joseph, Joseph Harrison, Francis Harrison, William Harrison, all the way back to William Francis in 1550. I wish we’d learned their spouse’s names as well because they are quite beautiful: Lydia Mercy and Thankful Peck are two of my favorites. Louis Harrison’s wife was Harriet Davis Miller and my mother was named after her.

The green lawn at the base of the painting is composed of plantain and grasses. Broadleaf plantain is considered a weed but especially in a rainy year the leaves are large and vigorous and quite beautiful in their structure. They are featured in Albect Durer’s watercolor titled “A Great Piece of Turf” (German: Das große Rasenstück). I adapted the color palette for the foreground from Durer’s painting as well.