

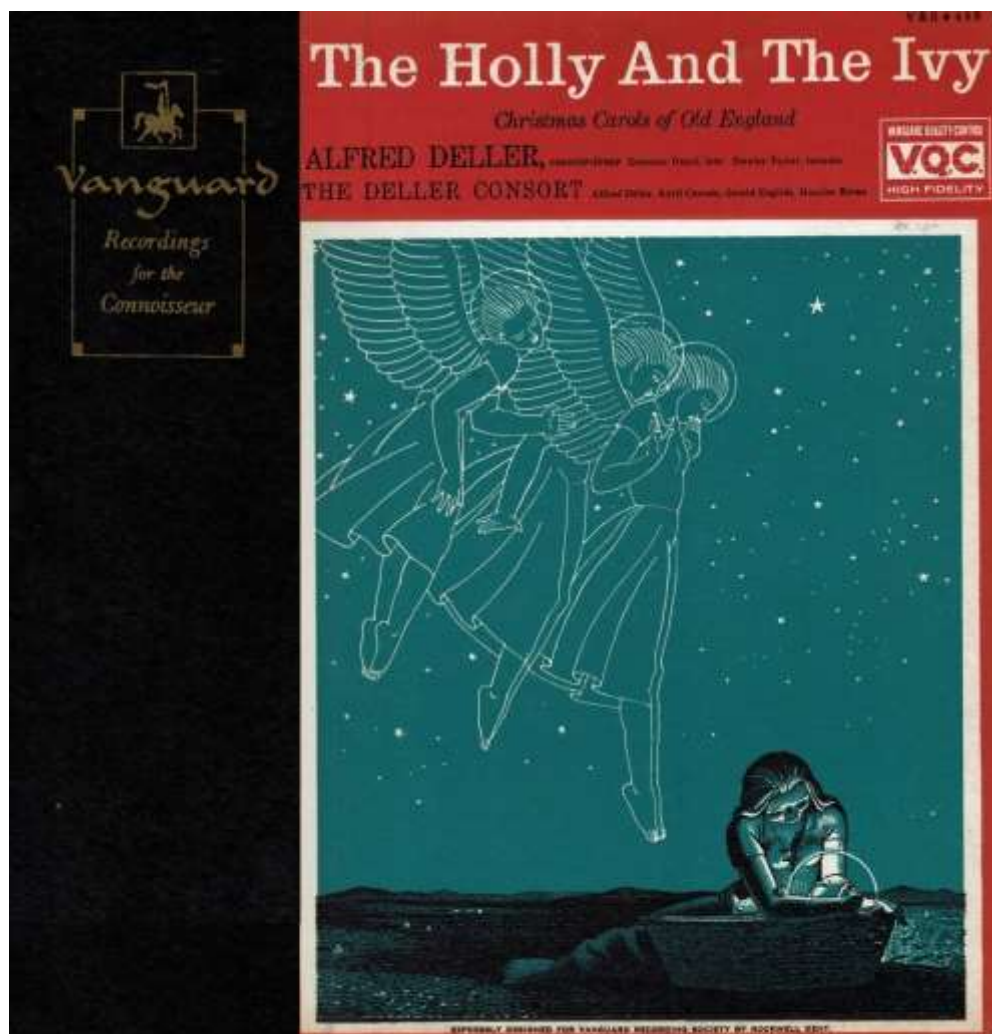
Rockwell Kent Christmas

Merry Christmas to our readers. We hope you enjoy the following examples of Kent's Christmas works

Record Jackets

In the mid-1950s Kent found himself looking for work, since his advertising commissions had dried up and book illustration was dying. He was also untouchable to many companies because of his politics. He had three major patrons during this period - the Virginia industrialist JJ Ryan; Antioch Bookplate Company; and Vanguard Records, through Sidney Finkelstein.

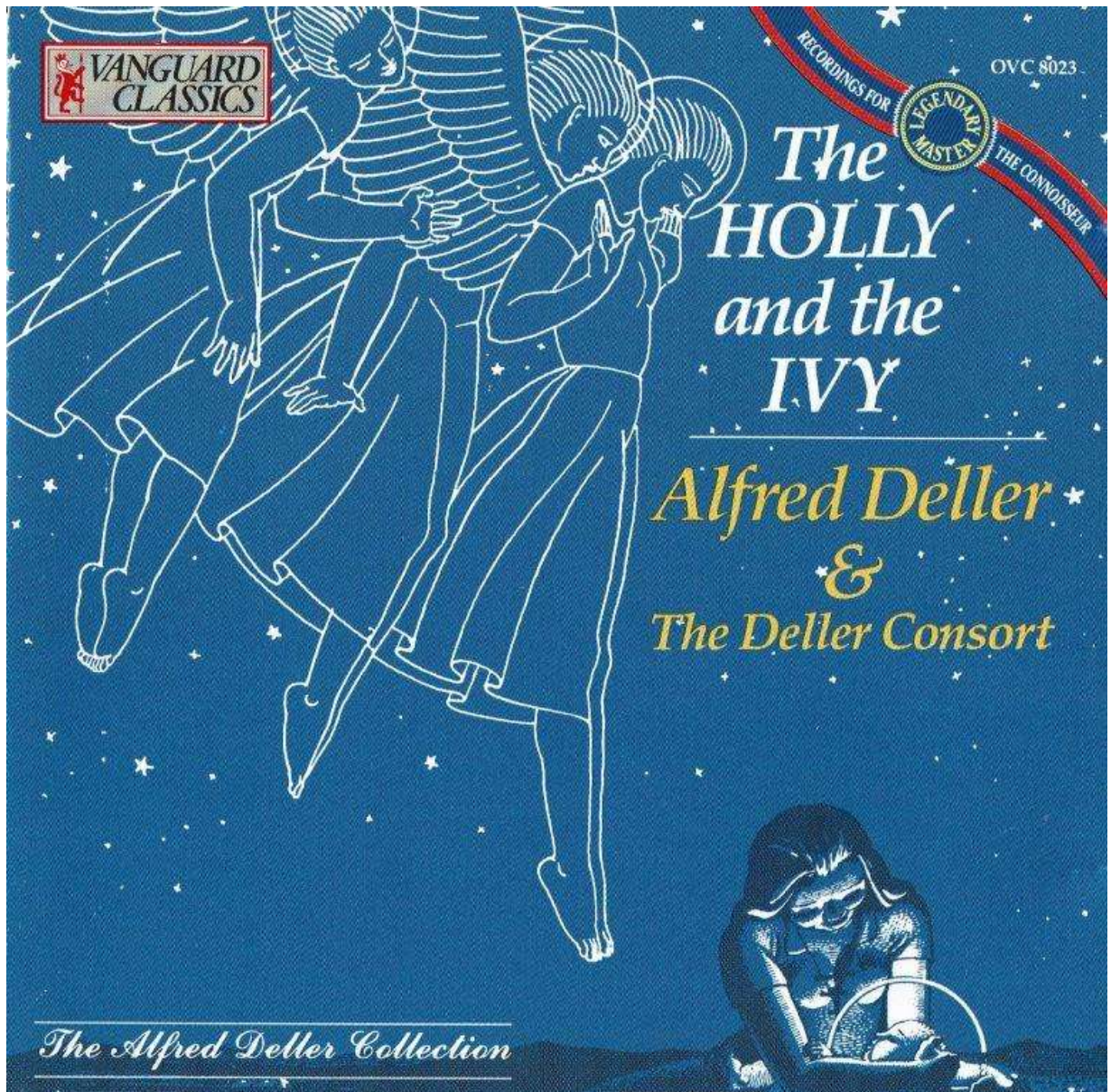
This is the record jacket for "The Holly and the Ivy," English Carols by the Deller Consort. I just love the image, and the recording is good as well. Kent did several record jacket illustrations for Vanguard.



Here is the image by itself:



The album was released in 1991 as a CD. Here is the CD Cover:



Greeting Cards

Our review of Rockwell Kent's Christmas work turns to greeting cards. The essential tool for Kent collectors and researchers in this area is the late Robert Rightmire's "The Greeting Cards of Rockwell Kent," available on Amazon. This is a comprehensive review of Kent's work in this field, with all the known cards illustrated. Some of these cards are very rare, and many of the illustrations are not found anywhere else.

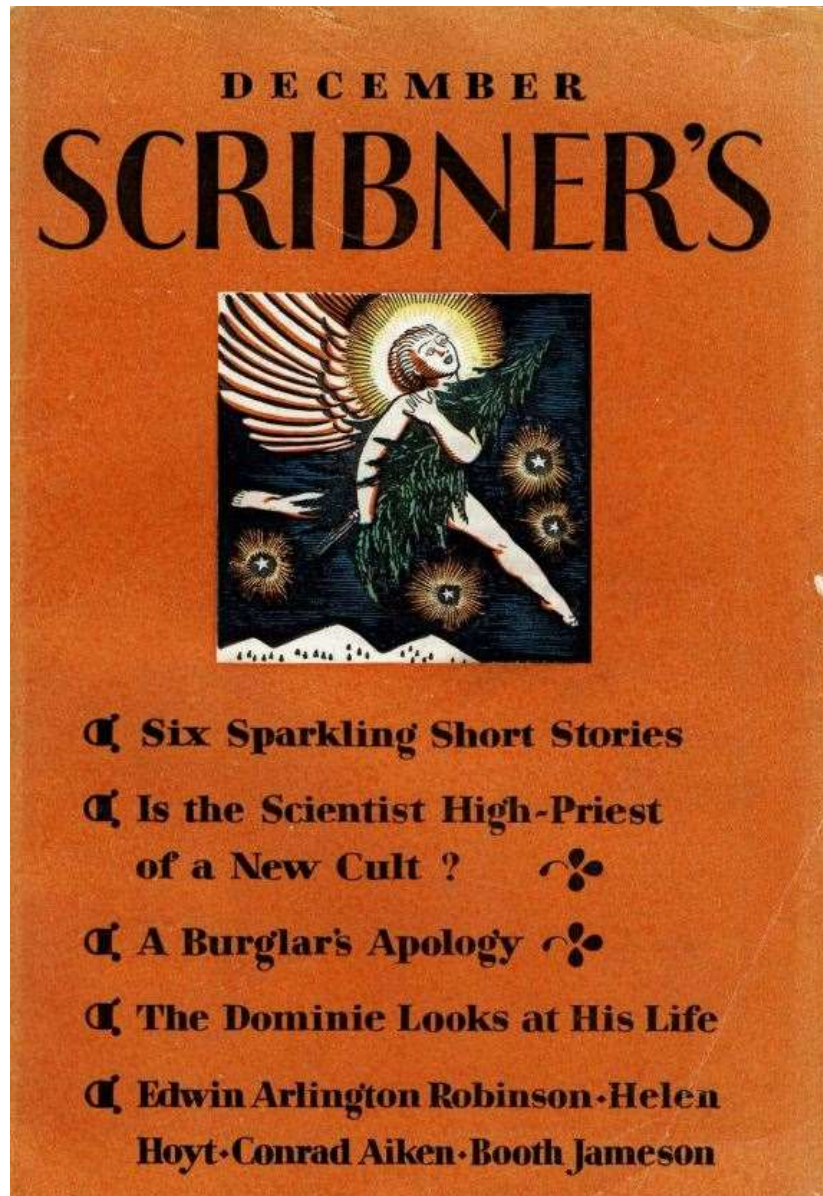
However, here we talk about the American Artists' Group, an organization that Kent did much work for over the years of the 30s and 40s. Two of these cards are illustrated here. They are interesting because we see how Kent took similar design elements, a tall angel lighting a Christmas tree, and changed the impact of the card by adding a helmet and sword to the one that was done during World War II. They are numbers 304 and 329 in the Rightmire book.

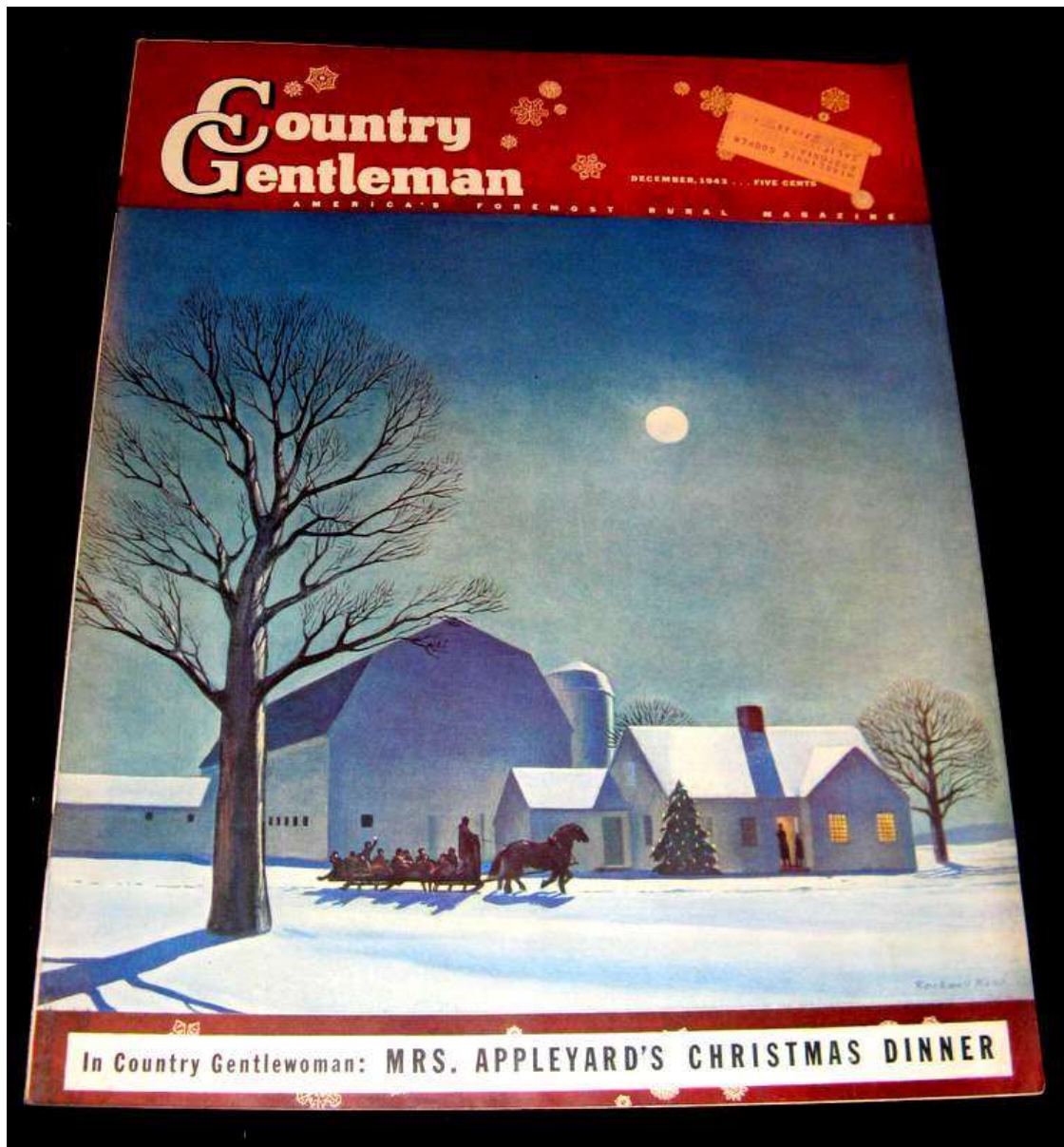




Magazine Covers

We now move to Kent's work in the magazine field. Over the years that his art graced many American publications he did many original Christmas-themed covers. Here are two of them: one from Scribner's in 1928, the second from Country Gentleman in 1943. The Rockwell Kent Forum is preparing an illustrated, comprehensive checklist of Kent's magazine covers.





Advertising art

Rockwell Kent believed commercial art was a necessary evil. He needed the money, but often complained about the work. This conflict is set out in my article, "The Eternal Struggle: Rockwell Kent and Advertising," found under the Articles tab at the Rockwell Kent Forum website. But Kent always did a professional job, and sometimes the result was spectacular.

Here are two examples of his commercial art, with a Winter theme. One is an advertisement for PON (Pride of Newark) Beer, "Christmas in the Country," from the December 16, 1942 issue of the New York Times. The other is called "Peace Within" or "Asgaard Angel," for the Commercial National Bank and Trust Company of New York, from the December 1937 issue of Fortune. Another of my favorite images. I am also showing a bonus preparatory drawing of "Asgaard Angel", though I am not sure if it is in a public or private collection. I wish it was in mine.





BY ROCKWELL KENT, FOR THE COMMERCIAL NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY OF NEW YORK

PEACE WITHIN . . . peace of conscience for you . . . peace of mind for your family. That is the end to be gained through the continuous protection of a trust fund. The Commercial National, ever in the present, will help you to plan wisely the disposition of your Estate . . . and will administer it efficiently for the demands of today, and for those of tomorrow.



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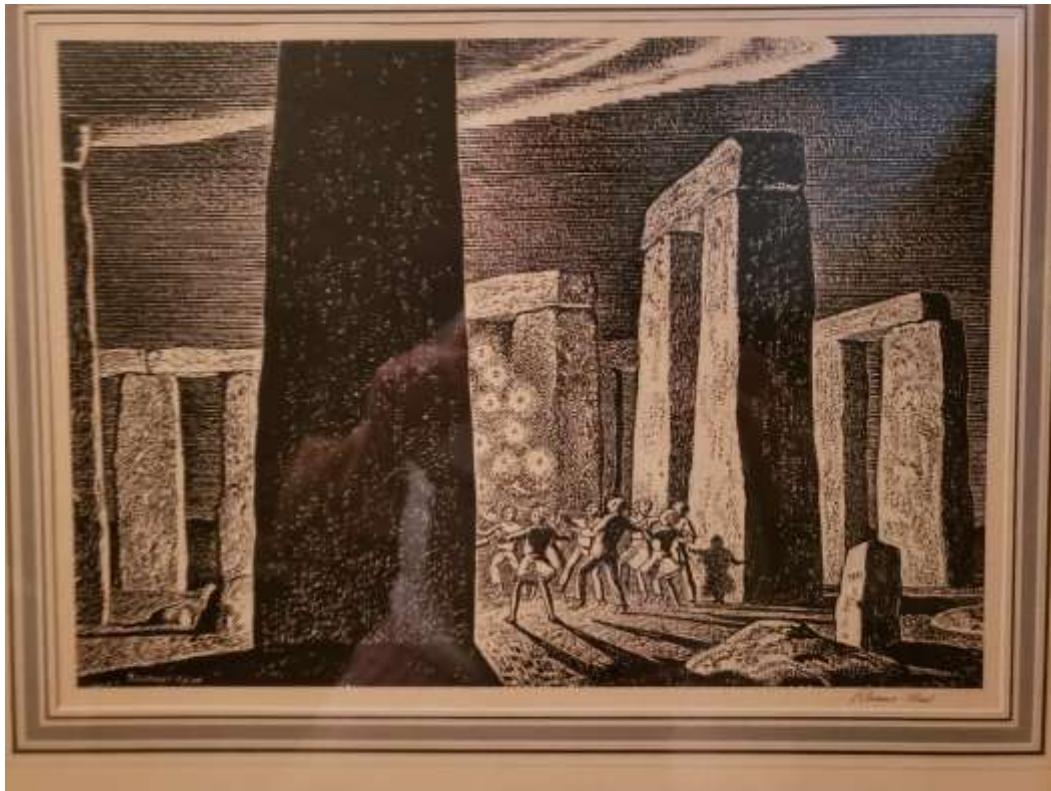
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Personal, Commercial, and Charitable Christmas cards

We have previously talked about Kent's work for the American Artists' Group, but Kent did many other cards, here are three examples. The numbers are from the late Robert Rightmire's, "The Greeting Cards of Rockwell Kent." First, we have a personal card for Katherine Abbott from 1921. (118) Another beautiful image of an angel, though more in human form. I was unable to find a source for the quotation, "Still the Breath Divine does move/And the Breath Divine is Love." It may be based on William Blake, an 18th and 19th Century artist and poet who Kent admired greatly. The quote was used on several other cards. Next is "Stonehenge Christmas," one of several cards and large prints he did on commission for the Rapid Blueprint Company of Los Angeles, circa 1947. (404) Finally, a Christmas card from 1943-4 for Russian War Relief. The design, somewhat unusual, shows the Soviet flag doubling as a lit Christmas tree. (215)





The Christmas Tree, Introduction

This entry, and the one following, will show just a few of Kent's many illustrations of Christmas trees. The first image, from an American Artists' Group card circa 1947 (Rightmire 325), shows a tree being cut down. The second image is from the December 14, 1929 issue of "The Scholastic" magazine, entitled "Bringing In The Christmas Tree."



The SCHOLASTIC



Courtesy of the Weyhe Gallery, New York

BRINGING IN THE CHRISTMAS TREE
From a Drawing by Rockwell Kent

VOLUME 15 - NUMBER 7

DECEMBER 14, 1929

A National Book Guide for Youth :: "Christmas in Alaska," Diary & Drawings by Rockwell Kent
Debate on World Court :: Gamaliel Bradford on General J. E. B. Stuart :: Poems by Wilfred Owen

The Christmas Tree, Conclusion

We end our exploration of Rockwell Kent and Christmas with a couple of his many illustrations showing decorated Christmas trees. The first is the cover for the December 23, 1925 issue of "The Outlook." The second is from a painting Kent did for General Electric that was used on a GE calendar in 1947. As a bonus, here is a preparatory drawing for the painting from the Kent papers at Columbia University. Kent did an earlier painting for GE for their 1946 calendar. Kent had a troubled relationship with GE and discusses this relationship on pages 569-570 of "It's Me O Lord".

