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*Archives of American Art*

## **Celebrating 175: Correspondence, Glackens, William, Edith, and Ira, 1909-1947, undated**

Extracted on Apr-18-2024 10:15:13

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JUNE 5, 1948

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and faster than the four-wheel kind? Where are the great wooden  
hoops, rolling and glittering in the afternoon sunshine? Where is the  
diabolo spool, and the little blown ball hopping in its cup of coiled wire?  
One's childhood never seems remote until such things are considered,  
and then one finds that one is the product of a dead era, the age of the  
buttonhook and the panty waist and the Indian penny.

In those days, there were more nurses in the square than now. Stout,  
wrapped against the weather, they sat on the benches in rows, the  
perambulators rocking in front of them like boats tied up to docks. They  
had their own life together, gossiping and discussing and laughing a lot.  
Occasionally, one among them would rise, scanning distances, and a  
great cry, a name or a command, would come ringing from her. To us,  
the nurses were part of the scene, not of the action. They were the  
buttressed background of authority, and only in extremity of refuge. For  
the most part, we kept away from them, pursuing our ruthless,  
independent ways as far as possible from the range of comment.

Though not supposed to cross the continuation of the Avenue alone, we  
often did so to explore the western section of the square, where the old  
Italian men, in their dark coats, stood together - never sat - in cackling,  
contentious groups, like grackles on a newly seeded lawn. Out of their  
pockets, their folded newspapers glared with big, black foreign words.  
We, on our skates, swooped around them, in and out of their flooding  
language, which poured and babbled with a sound of passion and  
outrage. It was always surprising to hear them laugh and know that that  
fierce tongue could be used for telling jokes.

On the benches sat their wives and daughters, cracking pistachio nuts  
and littering the ground with dyed red shells. There was a hearty,  
voluble atmosphere about that side of the park; a lot of eating and  
arguing went on; babies bawled and were comforted by breast or bottle;  
the old women offered counsel in hoarse voices or laughed, showing  
violet gums and token teeth; the old men ranted and deplored. Above it  
all, Alexander Lyman Holley looked out with benevolent bronze eyes,  
and, across the Avenue, Garibaldi, in his pillbox hat and little cape,  
gazed toward his countrymen and drew his sword perpetually above the  
squabbling of children.

We liked our park, although we recognized that, compared to some  
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