

Sarg's Sea Monster Returns to Nantucket Island This Summer

The Nantucket Historical Association opens "Tony Sarg: Genius at Play," the first of several exhibits and exciting events planned for the 2024 season.

NANTUCKET, MA, USA, May 21, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In August of 1937, [Nantucket Island](#) was abuzz: a sea monster was swimming in our waters and walking along our shores, leaving huge three-toed prints in the sand. News wires went out, and articles were published across the country speculating about the strange beast. Island fisherman Bill Manville claimed to have seen what he described as a monster more than 100 feet long that the Nantucket Inquirer & Mirror reported "reared its head several times off his starboard bow before turning seaward."



Tony Sarg on a Nantucket Beach with his sea monster. Photo courtesy NHA.

More sightings followed, then word went out that the massive sea monster with huge teeth had washed up on South Beach (Francis Street Beach). Dozens turned out to see this wonderous creature—a sea monster that, like the stories, was full of hot air.

The Nantucket sea monster was the newest of artist and summer resident [Tony Sarg's](#) huge balloons that he created for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. And the sightings, footprints, local news articles were part of an intricately planned and well-executed hoax and publicity stunt.

Sarg was a well-known and accomplished illustrator, puppeteer, designer, animator, cartoonist, and entrepreneur who delighted in sharing wonder, joy, and magic. And he delighted in pranks. Remembered as the "father of modern puppetry in North America," he considered his Macy's

parade balloons to be “upside-down marionettes.” Sarg summered on and took inspiration from Nantucket Island for nearly twenty years.

This May, the [Nantucket Historical Association](#) opens "Tony Sarg: Genius at Play," in their Nantucket Whaling Museum, the first of several exhibits and events planned for the 2024 season.

“Tony Sarg was such an important figure in American culture, and his work, unbeknownst to many, still impacts our arts and entertainment today. He was an especially popular character here on Nantucket, and the NHA is proud to be the home for much of his collection. The idea for such a project began decades ago, and we are grateful to the Norman Rockwell Museum and glad to be working with them, to bring this exciting exhibition to the island,” says Niles Parker, Gosnell Executive Director.

Genius at Play exhibit features Sarg’s original artwork, illustrations, marionettes, animations, books, commercial products, archival photographs, and ephemera from his dynamic life and career, including nearly two hundred objects and images from the NHA’s extensive Tony Sarg Collection. Highlighting Sarg’s tremendous talent and legacy within the fields of puppetry and illustration, the exhibition also reveals how Nantucket’s historic sites and colorful characters came to inspire his work and the many ways that this influential artist gave back to the island he loved.

Exhibition themes explore Sarg’s professional as well as his personal life, from his upbringing in Guatemala and military career in Germany, to his involvement in the artistic circles of London, New York, and Nantucket. These personal vignettes are joined by sections devoted to Sarg’s diverse professional pursuits, from illustration, puppetry, and animation to Macy’s parade balloons, commercial products, children’s books, and architectural projects.

Rumor has it that Morton (the name that Sarg gave to his sea monster) will visit Nantucket again this summer. Watch for hints of the sea monster’s return in the form of giant footprints, his shadow, and his tail appearing around town and at various NHA historic sites.

The NHA is offering a robust slate of activities and public programs centered around the exhibition Tony Sarg: Genius at Play.

The artist’s creative talents will be explored in several NHA Decorative Arts workshops with Sarg-inspired projects, including decoupage under glass and decorative bandboxes with Sarg’s illustrations.

At the Whaling Museum, a free lecture series features talks by scholars and artists, while Sarg-inspired crafts will be offered during July and August in the children’s Discovery Center, as well as regularly scheduled Tony Sarg Storytimes.

More work by Tony Sarg can be viewed this summer in the rich collection of pictorial maps of

Nantucket displayed in the Hadwen House on upper Main Street. And the NHA Research Library on Fair Street will house a special display entitled Playful Pictures: Books and Illustrations by Tony Sarg. This exhibition brings together additional artwork from projects featured in the Tony Sarg: Genius at Play exhibit in the Whaling Museum. It includes works from three of Sarg's most significant published works: Humours of London (1914); Tony Sarg's Book for Children from Six to Sixty (1924), and Tony Sarg's New York (1926). Employing colorful bird's eye views and illustrations that playfully interact with words on the page, the works on view demonstrate Sarg's skills as a visual storyteller. Also included are treasured Tony Sarg books from the NHA's Library Collection, such as Tony Sarg's Book of Animals (1925), Tony Sarg's Book of Tricks (1928), Where is Tommy? (1932), and many others.

Tickets for A Nantucket Night, a special fundraising celebration on August 3 with cocktails, dinner, live music and dancing in a setting inspired by Tony Sarg and his creations, are on sale now at nha.org.

On August 5 from 10 am to 3 pm, the NHA will host a free Sarg Community Day at Children's Beach, with Morton the Sea Monster joining in a fantastical, playful celebration for all that includes a puppet show, Sarg-inspired crafts, and a chance to see a 75-foot recreation of Sarg's Sea Monster, Morton.

"To say we are excited about bringing a recreation of one of Tony's Sarg Thanksgiving Day Parade-sized balloons to the island this summer is an understatement. With our featured exhibition about Tony Sarg this season, our staff has been intentionally weaving Tony Sarg's story-telling into many of our programs and offerings, and a Sarg Community Day will be a great example of that for island and visiting families to enjoy. The essence of Tony Sarg is fun, and that is what this program and this recreated moment from the famous 1937 Nantucket sea serpent landing, will be all about," says Niles Parker, NHA Gosnell Executive Director.

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Insider's Guide to Nantucket

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