MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

Newsletter of the Museum Archives Section

Society of American Archivists

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From The Chair…

I'm sure that most of my colleagues reading this are not aware--or at least have not given much thought to the fact--that there is an Archives of the Museum Archives Section. Like the treasuries of medieval kings, this archives is itinerant; it travels to wherever the current section chair holds court. It actually is more well traveled than I am, having in its comparatively short existence already been to Washington, D.C., Denver, Houston, Boston, and Brooklyn. It arrived in Cleveland sometime in October; an innocuous Paige box swathed in yards of packing tape.

My immediate reaction upon receiving the box was the same I have whenever records are sent to my archives: claustrophobia and a mild case of hyperventilation caused by the already full-to-bursting quality of my stack space. I muttered, "Oh great, just what I need-another box." Upon opening the carton, however, I was pleasantly surprised at how orderly the files were, but how couldn't they be since they were assembled by and for archivists? They were the only records I've ever received that didn't need to be weeded and re- foldered (o.k., I compulsively transferred a small amount of papers from a manila envelope to an acid-free folder, but that was it).

Our records also reminded me that we belong to a very interesting subset of a distinctive profession. In them, we can trace our origins to 1981 as an SAA task force--a very temporary-sounding designation--our subsequent emergence as a roundtable and eventual transition to a section. They show, most eloquently, that we are part of a far- reaching, ongoing effort to make museum records not just a by-product of the growth of a collection but the means by which the social and historical contexts of our institutions can be explored.

It is in this spirit of self-awareness that I report that we soon will begin the long, arduous task of planning a manual for museum archives that will update and supersede the basic manual produced in 1986. A small committee, which I will head as general editor, will meet this spring to pool ideas for the new manual with the goal of submitting a prospectus to the SAA publications board by March 1, 1999. After 15-plus years together as a group, I don't think the timing could be better.

The most effective publication will be the product of a collaborative effort. At the Section meeting in Orlando, you indicated that you want the new publication to be designed primarily for new or non-archivists who are faced with the prospect of initiating an archival program for their institution. Now it's time to get down to brass tacks. What would you like to see? What subjects do you think should be included? How would you like the information to be organized? How can we best gear the manual to museum archivists? Please let me hear from you. You can write, e-mail, fax, or telephone me to share your recommendations and opinions.

As a conclusion to the above ruminations, I would like to thank my predecessor, Deborah Wythe, for the energy, wit, and sheer professional style that she brought to the section during her term as chair. And thanks, Deb, for the advice and guidance that you have so generously given to me. You are, indeed, a tough act to follow.

Ann Marie Przybyla

Cleveland Museum of Art

MUSEUM ARCHIVIST is issued twice a year by the Museum Archives Section of SAA.

News items, letters to the editor, & comments from the archives community are welcome.

Next deadline: June 15, 1999; send submissions to Paula Stewart

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SECTION BUSINESS

Museum Archives Section

Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 4, 1998

10:30 am-12:30 pm

Orlando, FL

Section Officers Present: Chair: Deborah Wythe; Chair-elect: Ann Marie Przybyla; Newsletter Editor: Paula Stewart; Recording Secretary: Laura Graedel

1. Welcome, Introductions, Brief Reports From The Floor

Section Chair Deborah Wythe (Brooklyn Museum of Art) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing the incoming Chair, Ann Marie Przybyla (Cleveland Museum of Art). Attendees then introduced themselves and reported on developments or projects at their institutions.

Next, Deb thanked the following Section members and SAA for helping out with the Section’s newsletter, *Museum Archivist*: Paula Stewart (Amon Carter Museum) for editing, Bart Ryckbosch (Art Institute of Chicago) for mailing, and SAA for covering the postage. Deb also thanked Polly Darnell (Shelburne Museum) for her work as Chair of the committee that reviewed and revised the original "Draft Guidelines for Museum Archives" over the past year. Sarah Demb (Peabody Museum, Harvard University) was recognized for her work as manager of the Museum Archives Listserv. Sarah apologized for the listserv's current "down" status and said that she is working with tech services toward resolving this problem in the near future.

2. Section Projects

Section Newsletter

Paula thanked everyone who submitted pieces to the *Museum Archivist* over the past year and encouraged continued submissions, both long and short, over the next year.

Museum Archives Guidelines

General Discussion and History of Guidelines

First, the group took several minutes to read the draft guidelines provided for them. Deb explained that these guidelines are a revision of draft guidelines written by the Museum Archives Task Force members in 1979 but that had never been approved. Polly, Deb, Mary Elizabeth Ruwell (Pikes Peak Hill Climb Museum), and Paula reviewed these draft guidelines and made recommendations on how best to update them. Deb said that one of the main goals of the Guidelines publication process is to have the guidelines made available through the AAM (American Association of Museums). AAM can then circulate the guidelines to regional museum newsletters. This would assist museum administrators in establishing quality museum archives programs within their institutions.

A discussion as to whether the Guidelines, once published, should be posted on the SAA website followed. Laurie Baty (NHPRC and SAA Publications Board) mentioned that the SAA Publications Board did have some money if the Section wanted the guidelines published in polished brochure form (similar to the recently published brochure re: A Guide to Deeds of Gift).

B. Content Comments

Section 8: Donna Longo DiMichele (Mashantucket Pequot Museum) suggested that the term "records manager" be added to the sentence: "The advice of the archivist should be sought..." following the term "archivist" in case there are two persons responsible for the two separate functions within an institution. Or, if only one person responsible for both functions, such an adjustment would alert museum administrators that records management and archives management are not the same. There was general agreement on this point.

Section 1: Judy Turner (Milwaukee Public Museum) proposed replacing "would" with "could" in the sentence: "A museum's archival records would include…" because some of the records listed in Section 1 are treated as permanently active in some institutions (e.g. object/artifact files that are permanently retained in the registrar's office).

Further discussion regarding Section 1 followed. It was suggested that Part B might simply be removed. There was argument with this suggestion since some archives do house the object accession records. Lorraine Stuart

(Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) suggested changing the wording of Part A, broadening the category of "institutional records" to include object accession files.

Laurie suggested that Section 1 might be clearer to individuals outside the archival profession if it included some of the definitions addressed later in the document (specifically in Sections 7 and 8). She proposed that criteria for permanent retention and the concept of permanently active records of archival value be introduced nearer the beginning of the guidelines. Continuing with the concept of definitions, Ann Marie proposed that definitions of terms that are basic to archivists (e.g. active and inactive) should be included somewhere in the document to assist non-archivists.

Continued discussion re: Section 1: Should electronic records be added to the introductory sentence: "Records are documents in any form..."? Donna commented that it is a losing battle to try to list all the possible formats. The group thought a brief, inclusive compromise could be "[e.g.] visual, textual, electronic." Judy questioned whether it might not be wise to define the term "record," since she has found that a "record" sometimes is perceived as an LP by administrators.

Section 9: Paul Theerman (Smithsonian Institution Archives) would like to have "no greater than 70 degrees F and 50% relative humidity" in Part B substituted for "preferably at 70 degrees..."

There was discussion as to how these guidelines might differ from those of other institutional archival guidelines. If there was not much difference, it was suggested that the document could be broadened to also address other archival communities, thereby allowing the Museum Archives Section to provide a service to fellow archival professionals. Mary Elizabeth responded that it is important for museum archives to have their own guidelines due to the differences in their needs. Ann Marie agreed that rather than broadening the guidelines, we should actually make them more specific to the museum environment (e.g. highlighting unique museum relationships such as between registrar and curator). Donna also agreed with these sentiments, commenting that guidelines intended primarily for resource allocators (i.e. museum administrators should be written for those allocators. Maureen Melton, while feeling that brevity is always a good idea when one is targeting museum administrators, also agreed that specific museum terminology would get administrators' attention. Along this same line, Laurie suggested a good marketing idea would be to include a paragraph at the beginning summarizing why the museum's administration would want to consider the guidelines.

Laurie also made the Section aware of the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators’ proposal intended to identify "best practices" in archives, so the Section could get involved either with input or be able to use the resulting products.

The final suggestion was that reference service (both on- and off-site) be addressed in the guidelines, perhaps in Section 11.

Based on the involved--and in parts unresolved--discussion, it was decided that all the language within the new draft guidelines could not be revised and approved at this Section meeting. The committee will contact the SAA Standards Board, then revise the guidelines again with the Section members' comments in mind, and finally resubmit the second round of revisions for review by the Museum Section members. It was noted that no one responded to the first revision draft printed in the newsletter. It is hoped that more Section members will respond to the next revision by e-mail, telephone, letter, or fax.

Museum Archives Manual

There was discussion as to how best the Section could produce an update to the William Deiss' *Museum Archives: An Introduction* and what the publication should contain.

Maygene Daniels (National Gallery of Art) initially had said she was interested in authoring an update, but she is no longer interested in taking on responsibility for the entire project. Therefore, as chair and general editor, Ann Marie will coordinate the first step and appoint a committee to create a plan and draft chapter outlines (Deb, Ann Marie, Polly, and Sarah). The committee, which represents a variety of museums (art, history, and anthropology and science), will work as a team, drafting the outlines over the course of a weekend meeting this winter. Donna suggested including a representative from an ethnic museum in the aforementioned committee, since such museums have very specific needs (e.g. sensitivity issues).

There was some discussion as to what the Section envisions for the manual: a reader (i.e. group of essays) or a practical guide. Maygene had entertained the idea of a reader; however, the consensus of Section members in attendance at the annual meetings now seems to favor a guide. Section members were encouraged to send issues they want addressed in the manual to Ann Marie. Laurie asked Ann Marie to contact Jackie Dooley (UC Irvine), outgoing Chair of the SAA Publications Board, about the plan to publish an updated manual. Laurie also thought that Maygene should write to Jackie expressing that she would no longer be in charge of the project.

Museum Archives Directory

There was discussion regarding the need for and production of a directory. There was consensus that Section members did want a directory and that it should include both SAA members and non-members. Judy Turner thought her museum's website might be able to host the directory. She could put together a small compilation of names for the next Section newsletter and then have a full directory prepared by the 1999 annual meeting. A mention was made that there still are museums without access to the Internet, so it indeed is important that the directory be available in print as well as in electronic form. Discussion followed regarding what information to include. Judy said she would draft a form with her ideas about what to include and send it to the Section chair for her review. Laurie suggested alerting AVISO about the directory; others disagreed.

3. Session Proposals For 1999 Annual Meeting

Susan Koutsky (National Museum of Women in the Arts) wanted to revise and resubmit a proposal that was not accepted last year. The session, Art in the Archives, would focus on the practical procedures of keeping works of art and policy decision archivists face when encountering works of art in their traditional paper environment. [Editor's note: This session was accepted. See article elsewhere in this newsletter.]

Next, the chair of the 1999 SAA Program Committee who was sitting in on the meeting introduced himself and informed the Section that the emphasis for next year's program will be "contemporary records" (defined primarily as electronic records). One day will be spent on each of the topics “creation,” ”preservation,” and “access and use.”

Luciana Duranti, SAA's new President, wants to include the perspectives of non-archivists and non-U.S. archivists. The question “what date range does ?contemporary’ comprise?” was asked. The issue of document management systems also was brought up. The Section considered how museum archives fit into the concept of "contemporary records.” It was pointed out that many museums do not have the funding to do much with electronic records.

Ann Marie proposed an inter-institutional session addressing the multiple roles that so many archivists play. The session could be comprised of three archivists, each from a different environment (e.g. museum, university, corporation) and would attempt to illustrate how different institutions dictate the types of hats archivists have to juggle (e.g. a museum archivist might have to juggle the registrar's hat and the curator's, in addition to his or her own).

The Section responded favorably to both Susan's and Ann Marie's proposals. Ann Marie informed the group that proposals must be sent to her by October 5, 1998 so she can forward them to the Program Committee by October 9-submission deadline. She assured Section members that an incomplete proposal could be expanded later as long as the draft is in by the deadline. Section members with common interests were encouraged to develop more proposals.

Deb made the general request to the Program Committee Chair that two museum archives-related sessions not be scheduled during the same time block. The Chair said that the committee does what it can to prevent this, but it sometimes happens.

4. Museum Archives Working Groups (Chicago And Orlando)

There was discussion concerning the usefulness of the Section's "working groups" that had met prior to the 1997 annual meeting in Chicago and the 1998 annual meeting in Orlando. The first working group's discussion had been cohesive and focused on the topic of museum records management. The second working group (with fewer attendees) had been more of a "venting"--addressing pressing issues session rather than a focused discussion that built on the previous working group's efforts. A session on the issue of art restitution (reclaiming art seized by the Nazis during WWII) was also included for art museum archivists at the Orlando meeting. While the discussion of the working group in Orlando could have been more directed, it did offer participants a chance to discuss specific questions (e.g. what to do with event mailing lists).

There was mention that some thought the working groups were just for a "select group" of museum archivists. Deb noted that an invitation had been sent to all Section members and posted in the newsletter, so she failed to see how this impression had come about.

Should the Section continue these working groups? Michele Whelk (California Academy of Sciences) asked if the goal of the groups were to create a product, a sort of "white paper" on museum records management. Ann Marie suggested that the working groups be focused on producing a "white paper," with some other time in the conference for general, casual professional discussion.

It was suggested that Fynnette Eaton (Smithsonian Institution Archives) might be a welcome contributor to the next working group discussion since she has recently been involved in a pilot project designed to implement an electronic records policy for one of the Smithsonian offices, parallel to the paper policy within that office. It was decided that the topic for next year's working group's discussion would be documentation strategy; Michele Whelk volunteered to lead the discussion.

[Editor's Note: See Working Group Report elsewhere in this newsletter.]

Laurie suggested that the Museum Archives Section perhaps join with institutions similar to museums (e.g. presidential libraries) for subsequent working group discussions.

Laura H. Graedel

Museum of Science & Industry, Chicago

From the Editor

Congratulations on making it this far. As you can see, the agenda for the Section's annual meeting was quite full. If you never have attended one of these meetings and participated in the discussion, I encourage you to do so. The 1999 annual meeting will be in Pittsburgh. Plan to be there.

Deb Wythe has prepared a report of the working groups that met prior to the 1998 SAA Annual Meeting. The report begins on page 8.

Newsletter readers have a special treat in this issue. The Section sponsored a 1998 annual meeting session entitled DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH: DOCUMENTING THE COLLECTION OF FINE ART. Response to the papers was so great that we asked if we could publish them in the newsletter. All 3 speakers agreed and promptly emailed me their papers, which appear on pages 12-27. I realize that the presentations loose something in the translation (the wonderful accompanying slides, for one) but think you will still enjoy the papers.

If you have presented a paper of interest to the readers, please send it to me.

I'll end with a personal note. I'm still looking for an assistant editor. I promise…it's not hard…just making some telephone calls or sending emails to solicit articles. I even provide the leads.

Sound interesting? Want to try it on a one-issue basis before committing? Call or e-mail me right away; contact information is elsewhere this newsletter.

Paula Stewart

Amon Carter Museum

Section Listserv News

The Museum Archives listserv is back up and running! Anyone wishing to join can subscribe to SAAMUS-LIST by sending a message to . The message in the body of the email should read: subscribe SAAMUS-LIST [your email address]. To post a message to the listserv, send email to .

[Editor’s note: Thanks to Sarah Demb for working so hard to get this up and running!]

Section’s Session Proposal for 1999 Annual Meeting Accepted

The Program Committee accepted the Museum Archives Section’s proposal, “Art in the Archives: Policy and Procedure.” The proposal was put together by Susan Koutsky (National Museum of Women in the Arts) and John Smith (Andy Warhol Museum), who will serve as co-chairs. The session will focus on the practical procedures of keeping works of art as well as the policy decisions archivists may face when they encounter works of art in the traditional paper-based environment. Section member Paula Stewart (Amon Carter Museum) and Ellen Baxter (Carnegie Museum of Art/Andy Warhol Museum) will speak. The session is co-sponsored by the American Institute for Conservation.

NEWS, NOTES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Museum and Library Archives Institute Announced

The second annual Museum and Library Archives Institute, sponsored by Monson free Library and Reading Room Association, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the New England Archivists, and New England Museum Association, will be held at the Monson & Wilbraham Academy, Wilbraham, Massachusetts on June 25-26, 1999.

This Institute consists of two parallel programs: the Introductory and the Special Topic. The Introductory Program is designed for those who have responsibility for museum and library records and special collections but have limited experience in archival methods and procedures. This year’s curriculum includes such topics as collecting, accessioning, appraising, arrangement and description, reference and access, copyright, automation, and preservation planning.

Participants may choose the Special Topic Program. This track provides an opportunity to go beyond the introductory level and focus on a particular archival topic in a comprehensive, in-depth manner. The 1999 topic is an overview of special collection including their development and marketing, use in exhibitions, financial potential, and identification, organization, and preservation of specific formats including photographs, architectural records, artifacts, and other formats.

The Institute will be hosted by the Wilbraham & Monson Academy, a co-educational board and day school for students from the sixth grade through the post graduate year.

The 195 year-old school is located in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, a scenic town in the heart of the Pioneer Valley within a ten-mile radius of Springfield, Massachusetts.

For information contact Theresa Rini Percy, Director, Monson Free Library, 2 High Street, Monson, Massachusetts; telephone: 413-267-3866; fax: 413-267-5496; email: TPercy@cwmars.org.

From a press release

Peabody Museum Archives Announces Movius Papers Project

The Peabody Museum Archives (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University) is pleased to announce that combined monies of $15,000.00 from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the American School of Prehistoric Research, and the Peabody Museum, will support the Hallam L. Movius Papers Processing Project in summer 1999. The project will allow the archives to arrange and describe over 187 linear feet of the esteemed archaeologist's field notes, photographic material, maps, and professional correspondence, which were deposited in the archives during the mid-1980s and have been unavailable for research pending processing. The project will run from June to September 1999.

Sarah Demb

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University

REPORTS

1998 Section Working Groups

For the second year, Section members spent several hours on Wednesday of Annual Meeting week discussing issues of interest. This year, the working group divided its time between two different topics: appraisal of exhibition records and restitution of Holocaust-era looted art. As always, it was stimulating for museum archivists (many of us 'lone arrangers') to spend time working together, as opposed to just listening to presentations in sessions. One important thing that we did learn, however, was that a detailed agenda and strong leadership are necessary for a meeting to produce concrete results. The appraisal discussion was free flowing and interesting but did not have a clear direction. While Kathleen Williams had provided an agenda (see below), the interests of the participants consistently veered into other areas.

1. Appraisal Of Exhibition Records

Agenda:

The following 'talking points' were provided by Kathleen Williams (Smithsonian Archives) and, while not addressed directly by the working group, should provide plentiful food for thought.

Introduction: Include an overview of the importance of the exhibition function in all types of museums. Note the complex circumstances under which modern exhibitions are often planned and exhibited. This list should include, but not be limited to the following: blockbuster exhibitions; multi-museum exhibitions; inter-departmental exhibitions; long-term traveling exhibitions.

Overview of problem: The complexities noted above create certain appraisal "challenges" for archivists. Problems with modern exhibition records (we are not discussing past problems or procedures) include but are not limited to the following: massive bulk/volume of records; variety of material types that document exhibitions (including electronic records); massive record duplication throughout institutions; dispersal of records (within one museum, and among many museums); central vs. decentralized files; copies of secondary literature in "research" files.

Suggested appraisal approaches to modern exhibition records: Have the audience identify and discuss the appraisal approaches and criteria they use in determining the long-term value(s) of exhibition records. Folks should turn to and use any sample exhibition record schedules for this discussion. Have the group discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach as it is discussed. Here are some of the basis approaches that I can think of to include in the discussion:

"You're the boss": creator-determined values, with little or no independent appraisal by the archivist.

"Schellenberg, straight up": evidential and information values assigned to each type of exhibition record by the archivist.

"Building Blocks": documentation strategy (a la Helen Samuels) is used by the archivist to determine which records each office should create and subsequently deposit in the archives.

"What's My Line": functional analysis and appraisal by the archivist. This would entail an analysis of the exhibition function at an institution, what subfunctions and activities each office carries out that need to be retained and what can be tossed.

"Combo Platter": combination of appraisal approaches (e.g. Schellenberg with functional, documentation strategy with functional) used by the archivist.

Conclusions: Each repository has to make its own value judgments on what to retain and what to discard among the wealth of exhibition-related information each creates and maintains. But the discussion today should, at a minimum, assist all archivists in gaining a deeper understanding of the issues involved. Hopefully, it has assisted also in finding common approaches to shared problems regarding exhibition records and, more specifically, it has identified specific types of exhibition records for retention and disposal.

Appraisal of exhibition records: discussion (and a few suggestions or conclusions)

Repetition of records is a major problem for most archivists in the 'Age of the Photocopier.' Even if you keep only one copy in a given file, the same document has probably been cc'd to several other departments. One possible solution is to keep only the master copy in the originating department file and discard other copies sent to a distribution above a specified number of staff members. It would be impossible to cross check all documents to ensure that the original exists, so this approach carries some risk of loss of information.

Exhibitions versus installations: temporary exhibitions generate different types of records than do long-term installations. Installations 'morph,' with small changes being made over the years; the changes may not be documented in a separate file. Conservation reports, object movement records, database entries, and random gallery photographs may be the only documentation of installations. In order to capture installations, we must start to collect documentation in an active way.

Uses of exhibition files: External users include dealers, scholars, and owners who are researching individual objects or working on a scholarly study; internal users may be researching institutional history but may also need very practical information on vendors, colors, mounts or frames and the like. Some records documenting the latter lose value quickly (vendor and supply records, for example); we might consider a rolling retention schedule, which would provide for disposing of certain records after five years, others after seven, and so on.

Confidentiality is a problem in exhibition files that contain lender information; these files may need to be restricted. Restriction levels varied among the institutions represented.

Label text may contain information not otherwise recorded and may document the curatorial approach for an exhibition that did not produce a catalog. The labels themselves, however, may be oversize or present preservation problems (glue, for example), so we may need to reformat to preserve the informational content.

Exhibition publications produce several levels of material: various drafts, edited proofs, and final copies. A policy should be created (and written down) indicating how these will be handled. Some institutions keep all, some none (if the work is actually published), some parts (if a chapter is omitted from the publication, for example).

Do we need more information on an event attached to an exhibition other than that it happened? Are invitation and mailing lists of permanent value? Perhaps these records (which may be voluminous) are candidates for a rolling retention schedule.

Should certain materials by placed in a central reference file for each exhibition (clippings, invitations, flyers, press releases, brochures) so that they can be removed from the many files in which they are duplicated?

How should we handle comment cards or notebooks? Consider making a selection of comments with more substantive content and writing a summary of the rest.

Electronic records are playing a greater part in exhibition documentation and need to be dealt with. Email messages between museum staff and outside consultants may document important topics. CAD systems may be used by the exhibition designers. Interactive exhibition components may be difficult to preserve. Web exhibitions may bypass the physical entirely: should we print out the content? make a CD version? how can we preserve the links?

Visual records of the exhibition may include slide shows and videos as well as interactive stations; all need to be preserved at some level to document how the museum communicated with visitors.

Should object photographs be retained if the object is in the permanent collection and illustrated in the catalog?

Conclusion:

The discussion made it clear that museum archivists are struggling with exhibition records, perhaps our most important, voluminous, and heavily used collections. As we found last year, museum archivists are inclined toward 'micro-appraisal,' looking carefully at individual files and items, rather than selecting entire series to accession or discard. Confronting the problem of dealing with installations was an eye-opener and call to action for several of us, along with the more familiar worry of electronic records.

2. Art Restitution

In response to the growing activity in restitution of Holocaust-era looted assets, the Section invited Greg Bradsher of the National Archives and Records Administration, and two representatives of art restitution service organizations to participate in the working group. Our goal was to learn what each organization was doing and what they will need from our institutions. A report on the meeting and response to it may be found elsewhere in this newsletter; notes on the discussion follow.

Evie T. Joselow (Commission for Art Recovery) described her organization's goal as an effort to reunite lost and stolen art to owners, heirs, or the Jewish community. They are creating a comprehensive database of research and claimant information and are assisting individuals with claims. Many claimants have been through the process before. The Commission, headed by Constance Lowenthal, has a chief of research (Ms. Joselow), claims manager, an assistant librarian, and volunteers and interns. They are concerned with works that have gaps in their provenance: many museums may be the third or fourth recipient. Ms. Joselow called for museums to be forthright when they make connections. Their database will not be open, since the claims are confidential.

Marc Masurowsky reported that the Holocaust Art Restitution Project, founded in September 1997 by Ori Soltes, researches and documents Jewish cultural losses. They are not handling claims, but rather intend to create a comprehensive research tool to document provenance. He called for the art world, which has ignored gaps in provenance, to now be accountable. HARP has lists of dealers and their connections and dealings and are interested in the key people who made movement of art possible. He will send a list to 'red flag' names to the participants [note: not yet received].

The discussion centered around records that may be helpful in the search for provenance, including auction records, exhibition loan records, accession files. A consolidated list of losses was published by the U.S. State Department in 1947-48 and sent to many museum directors and private galleries.

The Art Institute of Chicago has established an 'Acquisition and Provenance Project,' staffed by four part-time people. Bart Ryckbosch circulated copies of a bibliography, forms, and list of red flag names.

Deborah WytheBrooklyn Museum of Art

Editor’s Note: The September issue of Museum Archivist will be a special issue dedicated to restitution of art and artifacts taken during WWII and will include the paper Deb presented at the Holocaust-era Assets Symposium held December 4, 1998 at the National Archives & Records Administration and the Report of the AAMD Task Force on the Spoliation of Art during the Nazi/World War II Era (1933-1945), June 4, 1998. Additional contributions are welcome.

PAPERS

[The following three papers were presented in Session 53 DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH: DOCUMENTING THE COLLECTION OF FINE ART at the 1998 SAA Annual Meeting. Response to these papers was so great that we wanted to share them with our readers.]

William Wilson Corcoran and the Encouragement of the American Genius

In January of 1874, Washington society participated in a major social event: the grand opening of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Its founder, William Wilson Corcoran, was a well-known member of the local elite and that night was the culmination of his dream to bring a gallery devoted to the fine arts to the nation’s capitol. Guests that evening admired the 100 paintings by the finest American and European artists, most of which had been given by the founder as the nucleus of the new institution’s collection. They wandered around the building at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, a building designed by architect James Renwick (and now named for him) and paid their respects to one of Washington’s best known citizens. Mr. Corcoran, 74 years old, held court in the main picture gallery, and greeted his guests, including President Grant and a number of senators and congressmen. The newspapers predicted that the gallery would soon hold its own with the great European museums and sang Mr. Corcoran’s praises as a right-thinking man of culture.

Which certainly would have pleased Mr. Corcoran. Although he had been well-known philanthropist for some time, this institution was, and remains, the only one that bears his name, and was based on his particular tastes in art. At the time of the Gallery’s opening Mr. Corcoran had been collecting art in earnest for thirty years and had amassed a well-respected collection of objects by some of the country’s best known living artists. Mr. Corcoran remained active with the Gallery’s affairs until his death in 1888, rarely missing an opportunity to visit the Gallery. Today I’d like to talk about how the formation of his collection is documented in Mr. Corcoran’s papers at the Library of

Congress and how the material held by the Corcoran Gallery Archives complements and expands on that documentation.

I should probably begin by introducing my guy, who doesn't have quite the name recognition enjoyed by Mr. Frick and Mr. Rockefeller. Born in Georgetown in 1798, William Wilson Corcoran was a prominent 19th century Washington banker and philanthropist. The son of a tanning merchant and mayor of Georgetown, William Wilson Corcoran attended Georgetown College for one year before dropping out to join his two brothers in their dry goods business. His business ventures did not meet with much success and he turned to a career in banking. In 1840, he formed the firm of Corcoran & Riggs, with his partner George Riggs, another Washingtonian. The firm's big break came in 1848 when Corcoran and his partner were offered the chance to sell bonds to finance the Mexican-American War. Although Corcoran had done well for himself up to this time as a financial advisor and provider of banking services to the federal government, the war bonds deal made him very wealthy. Just a few years later in 1854, Corcoran was able to retire from the bank and although he continued to manage the financial affairs of close friends, he devoted a great deal of time to his philanthropic interests.

Although not very well known today, in his own time William Wilson Corcoran had a deserved reputation as a major player in national politics and exerted influence in both Democratic and Whig administrations from the early 1840s to the Civil War. He never held public office himself but was intimately involved in local and national political affairs. Guests at his famous dinner parties included Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Breckinridge, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, John C. Calhoun, and John Tyler.

To date there is no full-length biography of Corcoran that addresses all the aspects of his life: business, personal, and philanthropic. In 1972, Henry Cohen published a book with the rather unwieldy title, *Business and Politics in American from the Age of Jackson to the Civil War: A Career Biography of William Wilson Corcoran*. The book investigates Corcoran's business affairs and includes very little on Corcoran's other activities. There have been a few articles published on Corcoran's art collecting but they have been mainly based on secondary sources.

William Wilson Corcoran's papers were donated to the Library of Congress by his grandson William Corcoran Eustis in 1920. There doesn't seem to have been any discussion of the papers coming to the Corcoran Gallery, which in 1920 had exactly three professional staff members. The collection at the Library occupies 33 linear feet and includes approximately 54,000 items.

The bulk of the items in the collection are contained in the volumes of outgoing correspondence, letterpress copies pasted in 65 volumes that span the years 1845 to 1888. Each individual volume, which generally includes about a year of correspondence, is indexed by correspondent. These 65 indexes have been reproduced by the Library staff and are shelved in the Manuscript Reading Room. Incoming correspondence is not nearly as extensive, comprising 6,400 pages. These letters are indexed in a card catalogue, also located in the Reading Room. The card catalogue, however, is incomplete.

The papers are primarily concerned with Mr. Corcoran's business transactions and his political and social friendships and obligations. The scope and content note for the finding aid to the papers mentions that more than 125 correspondents are listed in the Dictionary of American Biography and certainly the indexes to both the incoming and outgoing correspondence files have names that jump at you: Jefferson Davis, James Buchanan, Daniel Webster, etc. but there artists and dealers are listed in those indexes as well. The indexes for the outgoing correspondence prepared by Corcoran's secretaries do include some subject headings like "pictures" and "statues."

There is no ledger or register listing paintings and sculptures acquired by Mr. Corcoran in his papers at the Library. In 1857, Mr. Corcoran commissioned Charles Lanman, the American landscape painter and writer to produce a catalogue of his collection, but the publication does not include information on the acquisition of those objects. This volume does serve as a way to determine which objects Corcoran acquired before 1857 and which were later purchased.

It seems that the first attempt to document the formation of the collection occurred in the early 1870s, after the works had been transferred to the newly founded Corcoran Gallery of Art. The Gallery's first curator, William MacLeod (who had had a career in the Department of the Treasury as a clerk) compiled what he called a Biography of Paintings that lists the works of art acquired by the Gallery, including the original gift made by Mr. Corcoran. Information included on the nearly paintings in the original gift presumably came from Mr. Corcoran himself. MacLeod's notes on these objects are still the basis for research on Mr. Corcoran's early collection. The Biography was maintained by Corcoran Gallery staff until its use was discontinued in the 1940s when modern museum registration methods took over.

The entry in the Biography for Mr. Corcoran's earliest purchase, of a painting thought at the time to be by the Flemish artist Jan Brueghl, states that Mr. Corcoran purchased the painting from Stephen Decatur. Decatur, who is perhaps as famous for dying in a duel as for his exploits in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812, died in 1820. I have to say that I've always been a little suspicious of this provenance. Corcoran was only 22 when Decatur died, did not have the wealth he would accumulate later on and, if this information is to be believed, there is a gap of more than twenty years before Corcoran's next known art purchase. There are no letters between Decatur and Corcoran in his papers but Mr. Corcoran did have a correspondence with Decatur's widow, Susan Decatur. Corcoran acted as her financial agent but they seem to have been quite close. The Corcoran papers contain a number of playful entreaties from Susan to Mr. Corcoran, asking him to come keep her company if he has nothing else to do. "My dear Mr. Corcoran: If you find yourself *destitute* of amusement this evening, while the belles are at church, I beg you come and listen to some of my lamentations." Later, "I am happy to say that I can take you under my wing to-day, on the way to heaven, and I pray you to call for me at ten o'clock." It seems to me a bit more likely that Corcoran acquired the painting from Susan Decatur at some point in the 1830s, when he was an established businessman and Washington personage, but in the absence of any evidence to support this, we have to rely on Corcoran's word for it.

Corcoran began making major purchases of American and European art in the 1840s, assisted by a number of agents and dealers working on his behalf at home and abroad. His many trips to New York and to Europe often resulted in meeting an artist and commissioning or purchasing a painting or sculpture. In 1850, Daniel Huntington, an American painter wrote to William Wilson Corcoran from New York:

Dear Sir

I regretted not seeing you when last in town. I was at Mesrs Williams & Stevens in a few moments after you left and was told that you had seen Mercy's Dream. I was gratified that you were pleased. I hope you may be induced to buy the pair, for the one of Christiana is the most interesting to many and especially to those who are critical. I know that $3000 is a large sum for two pictures but if you reflect on the close study and arduous labor of many months bestowed on them I do not believe you would be willing to cut down the amount....

Excuse my saying this for it probably of no [interest?] to you. But I am very desirous that the two pictures, which are perhaps the best and certainly the most pleasing I have ever painted should have a place in that collection which are forming...

Huntington even suggested an easy payment plan but ultimately only got half his wish: Corcoran purchased *Mercy's Dream* for $1,500. It seems clear from Huntington's letter that Corcoran's reputation as an important American collector had been well established by 1850. Unfortunately, the outgoing correspondence volume that might have contained a reply from Corcoran is not in the Library's collection.

The painting, first executed by Huntington in the 1840s, illustrates a passage from *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was a favorite of Mr. Corcoran's and was afforded a place of honor as the first painting listed in the 1857 Lanman catalogue. Huntington's appeal to Mr. Corcoran's vanity was one that would be repeated again and again by artists anxious for a place in Mr. Corcoran's collection.

Like many collectors of his day, Corcoran had an interest in history painting and in 1854 purchased Emmanuel Leutze's *Cromwell and Milton*. Leutze, an American working in Dusseldorf, had met Corcoran during the latter's travels in Europe. While on one of these excursions, Corcoran had met another American artist working in Dusseldorf, William D. Washington. In 1854, Corcoran wrote to Washington and said, in part, "Please make my best regards to Mr. Leutze and say the picture gives generous satisfaction. I like all but the figure of Milton which is not at all agreeable. If my speaking so plainly would not please him, do not send this paragraph of my letter...."

In his travels abroad Corcoran was introduced to the great scientist Alexander Humboldt and others in his circle. Corcoran was an admirer of Humboldt and commissioned a woman portrait painter named Emma Richard to paint a portrait of Humboldt. Richard's letters to Corcoran are among the most gushing to be found in the Corcoran Papers. She was enthusiastic about the opportunity to be represented in Corcoran's collection and to help Corcoran pay tribute to Humboldt. Corcoran also commissioned the sculptor Christian Rauch to execute a copy of his bust of Humboldt.

Corcoran had a number of agents working on his behalf in Europe who would write to call his attention to works of art available for purchase but there are also a number of letters in which private individuals wrote to Corcoran to offer works in their own collections. This happened frequently enough for Mr. Corcoran to tell Miss Margaret Meade in 1855: “that my Gallery is full, and were this not the case, it would be out of my power to purchase one tenth of the pictures offered to me under similar circumstances. Much desiring, however, to aid you in disposing of them, I would take an interest in them, should you determine to raffle them.” It would seem that Corcoran’s reputations as a generous philanthropist and an art collector merged in the minds of those who were in financial need and who had works of art at their disposal.

Corcoran may have begun his collecting as a purely personal endeavor but by the middle or late 1850, he was beginning to have bigger ideas. While on trip to Europe in 1855, he had seen the new wings of the Louvre. James Renwick, a celebrated American architect was asked to design a museum to house Corcoran’s collection. Mr. Corcoran’s home on Lafayette Square had already been enlarged to house the growing collection and he began planning for a separate structure.

The site, at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, across from the White House was ideally suited to his notion of forming an important national gallery. While construction was underway, Corcoran temporarily suspended purchasing works of art and concentrated his energies on the new enterprise. The construction had to be halted in April of 1861 because as Corcoran wrote to Renwick: “There is nothing being done at the building, and in the present state of the country, nothing can be done and you will please me therefore, not [to] press the work further until you hear from me.”

The state of the country described was, of course, the Civil War, and Mr. Corcoran found himself on the wrong side of the fence. An active supporter of the “states’ rights,” although not himself a slave owner, Mr. Corcoran found it expedient to decamp to Europe for the duration of the Civil War. He did make an occasional purchase while in Europe during these years but on his return, he turned his attention again to the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

In the spring of 1869, Mr. Corcoran formally established the gallery but did not put himself on the Board of Trustees nor did he make any provisions in the original by-laws for permanent Corcoran family representation. Although his secretary Anthony Hyde who was one of the original Trustees may have represented his interests, Corcoran had no formal voice in Gallery affairs. We do know that he was a frequent visitor to the Gallery and continued to purchase works of art for the collection. Corcoran made his largest gift when the Gallery was founded, but he continued to donate objects, both those that had been in his collection for some time (like *The Veiled Nun* by Guiseppe Croff) and other objects that he purchased and then immediately turned over to the Gallery.

One of the best (but most obscure) sources of information about Mr. Corcoran’s tastes is the series of daily Journals maintained by the Gallery’s first curator, William MacLeod. MacLeod was the one who compiled the Biography of Paintings that includes information on Mr. Corcoran’s original gift. In addition to these rather formal volumes, MacLeod kept a daily account of the comings and goings at the Corcoran. He had a great deal of respect for Mr. Corcoran and it seems he never failed to mention his visits to the Gallery. MacLeod's journals, kept from 1876 to 1884 and for 1886, give a glimpse into the nature of Mr. Corcoran's tastes. MacLeod and Corcoran disagreed although it's very clear that MacLeod would have never told Mr. Corcoran in instances. In the 1870s, Moses Ezekiel, an American sculptor, sent to the MacLeod photos of heroic statues of artists Ezekiel was executing for the gallery's second floor niches. In his journals, MacLeod denounced the figure of Raphael as one of the worst works in sculpture he had ever seen. MacLeod also recorded in his journal that he showed the photos to Mr. Corcoran: "who was *pleased with them*, which is a pity!"

Mr. Corcoran's dealings with the landscape painter Albert Bierstadt provide a glimpse into the way the Gallery administration and Mr. Corcoran occasionally clashed. Bierstadt, who was a shameless self-promoter, was very anxious to be represented in the Corcoran Gallery of Art's collection and clearly understood that Mr. Corcoran exerted some influence. In 1874, Bierstadt made his first attempt to sell a painting to the Corcoran Gallery, which had not yet even opened to the public. The painting, *Mount Adams on the Columbia River, Oregon* was offered by Bierstadt for $5,000 (a bargain basement price compared to the $15,000 Bierstadt insisted it was worth.) He had no luck persuading the trustees to purchase the painting and had to try again in 1877.

This time he sent a painting he called *Mount Corcoran*. MacLeod was deeply suspicious, he thought the painting was *Mt. Adams* reworked. He was close. In fact, *Mount Corcoran* was another painting, one that had been exhibited in New York at the National Academy of Design under the generic title *Mountain Lake* only a few months earlier. The practice of naming mountains was not new to Bierstadt but it was a rather blatantly flattering move on his part. The Gallery trustees were still unmoved by this second example of Bierstadt's work. In a bold move, Bierstadt went to see Mr. Corcoran himself to present his case. Bierstadt wrote to his friend Samuel Ward about his visit and a copy survives in the Corcoran Papers at the Library of Congress: "I think I speak the minds of all when I say that the greatest living painters would take great pride in being represented in the Corcoran institution by the best work they can produce and at a cost far less than to any private person or dealer for they would refer their friends to that gallery as representing their best efforts...I am happy to have named one of our highest mountains after him, the first to catch the morning sunlight the last to say goodnight...You will rejoice to hear that, feeling as I do, upon the subject of the Corcoran Gallery, Mr. Corcoran, its funds being exhausted for the present by late purchases, intimated his intention to present his *namesake* to the Institution and that I most cheerfully assented to such a concession [in price] as all in my craft would gladly make when treating directly with its munificent Founder."

So it seemed that Mr. Corcoran had given in to the pressure and bought the picture for the Gallery. But a few days later, in January of 1878, MacLeod (who had received a copy of the letter from Bierstadt) wrote in his journal: "Letter from Mr. Bierstadt, intimating that the Mt. Corcoran was bought by Mr. Corcoran and expressing his delight that it was to remain here. Showed it to Mr. Corcoran, with a copy of my last letter to Mr. B. and Mr. C. then stated that he *had* bought the picture for $7,000 for his own house, but as

Bierstadt wrote as if he expected it to be placed in the Gallery, he would let it remain here. The *price* is not to mentioned."

In this case, a combination of documents from the Corcoran Archives and the Corcoran Papers at the Library of Congress tells us the story. As the Corcoran Gallery grew in prominence, artists and dealers would often approach one party in the hopes of influencing the other. William Wilson Corcoran would forward letters sent to him by hopeful artists but still had an active role in the development of the collection.

As it now stands, there are obstacles facing those who wish to undertake serious research on William Wilson Corcoran's collection. For instance, the card catalogue to incoming correspondence at the Library of Congress is incomplete and although one could make a list of artists with whom Corcoran had some dealings and check it against the card catalogue, the problems remains that there a number of letters that would not immediately appear to contain art-related information. For instance, Edward Everett and Corcoran exchanged a number of letters over the years of their friendship and one could reasonable assume that this correspondence is largely concerned with financial and political matters. But in one of them, Everett encourages Corcoran to purchase a sculpture by Hiram Powers called *America*. In the same way, the outgoing correspondence index, while occasionally including subject headings for "pictures" and "sculpture," has the response to Miss Margaret Mead's letter file simply under her name.

As for the Corcoran Gallery Archives material, here one might find the task a bit easier. Much of what we know about William Wilson Corcoran's collection comes from the Biography of Paintings compiled and maintained by William MacLeod. Our incoming correspondence registers contain more detailed descriptions of the contents of letters. But the Curator's Journals, which have wonderful glimpses into Mr. Corcoran's tastes, are unindexed. And because many, if not most of the paintings included in William Wilson Corcoran's founding gift were deaccessioned by the Gallery (I was in junior high school at the time and they didn't ask me), the impetus for in-depth research on these objects has disappeared. In looking at the Gallery's accession files for these objects, I found that in most cases there is no mention of the related materials at the Library. Nowhere in the file on *Mercy's Dream* is there a copy or transcription of Huntington's letter to William Wilson Corcoran.

I believe that a thorough search of William Wilson Corcoran's papers would yield information that could greatly benefit those interested in individual objects and those who wish a better understanding of the collector's habits and tastes. Hopefully, someday, I'll have the time to do it myself but in the meantime, I encourage all those who have the patience to give it a try.

I'd like to close with a quote from a Washington newspaper from January of 1874, just before the Corcoran Gallery opened to the public: "Mr. Corcoran has sent to this gallery all the artistic companions of his own mansion and he sits tonight, very probably, in the empty hall where his Coles and Huntingtons, Leutzes and Elliots have beguiled him for twenty years, consoled by the happiest of all solaces, that he is doing good to others."

Marisa Keller

The Corcoran Gallery of Art

The Pursuit of Perfection: Henry Clay Frick and His Collection

I was tempted simply to forget preparing a paper and instead treat you to a steady fifteen minutes of slide views of the superb art collected by Henry Clay Frick over nearly forty years. Instead, you will see a number of slides of masterpieces in The Frick Collection, interspersed with commentary from me on the course Mr. Frick's collecting took and the records researchers can consult today to understand his passionate pursuit.

Henry Clay Frick, who was born in 1849 in West Overton Pennsylvania began collecting art as a young man, very probably prints and sketches although that is speculative. Although he had little formal schooling, he was a man of great intelligence and determination, rising from a position as a clerk in his uncles' general store to partner in the Carnegie Steel Corporation. A self-made man, he became one of the richest men in the world. By 1880, he was a millionaire, and ready to use some of his hard-earned fortune in pursuit of something that gave him immense pleasure, the acquisition of paintings. Mr. Frick's first documented art purchase is of the painting "Landscape with River" by George Hetzel on February 12, 1881. Prior to that, there is evidence of Mr. Frick's early interest in art in an 1871 report from Judge Mellon, the father of Andrew Mellon, on Mr. Frick's application for a loan from the Thomas Mellon and Sons bank "Lands good, ovens well built; manager on job all day, keeps books evenings, may be a little too enthusiastic about pictures but not enough to hurt; knows his business down to the ground; advise making the loan." (Andrew Mellon, Mr. Frick's lifelong friend and business associate is equally well known for his beautiful collection of paintings that form the core of the National Gallery. As Kenneth Warren notes in his book on Henry Clay Frick, *Triumphant Capitalism*, when Mellon's son was asked how his father had learned to judge art, he replied "Clay Frick taught him." (p.377)

Following these early purchases in the 1880s, Mr. Frick gradually bought other paintings. As Dick McIntosh noted in his essay in *Collecting in the Gilded Age*, "This was not the reckless spending of a suddenly rich man – by 1895 Frick had been a millionaire for fifteen years – but rather a demonstration of resolve on the part of a successful industrialist who, in the prime of life, was stepping confidently onto the national scene and indulging a passion. Apart from golf, which he played enthusiastically later in life, collecting art was Frick's only hobby." By the end of his life, he had purchased, although not retained all of them, nearly 250 paintings.

In keeping with the theme of leisure for the conference, I emphasize that although Mr. Frick's pursuit of paintings was tireless and expensive, it was also done as a leisure activity. He and his daughter, Helen Clay Frick, spent much of their free time viewing art, discussing it and documenting it. For months of the year Mr. and Mrs. Frick would travel to Europe with friends and art dealers to examine collections, attend art salons and art auctions and soak up "The Continent." The Fricks filled their homes - Clayton, and later their mansion in New York and their 104 room summer retreat, Eagle Rock in Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts with art, great and small, and decorative objects picked up on trips and through network of dealers and independent agents at Mr. Frick's disposal. As the Fricks moved around seasonally, Mr. Frick had his paintings packed up and moved to accompany them.

Prior to 1891 Mr. Frick bought paintings from a variety of American galleries and European and American agents, primarily based in Pittsburgh and New York. After 1891, M. Knoedler & Co. became Mr. Frick's primary source for paintings and drawings until Mr. Frick's death in 1919, although there are records showing purchases from Arthur Tooth & Co., J.J. Gillespie & Co., Charles Sedelmeyer ,and John Wanamaker. Beginning in 1910 Mr. Frick also conducted business with Duveen Brothers.

From these early beginnings, one can document through archives in New York and Pittsburgh, Mr. Frick's increasing admiration and appetite for fine art, largely for portraits and landscapes. Mr. Frick, while distinguished from other collectors by his ability to always afford the best, and the untiring dedication of dealers to ensuring that the best was offered to him first, participated in collecting trends that were common in America at the time (although he was further distinguished in his pursuit of Old Master paintings). Gabriel Weisberg in *Collecting in the Gilded Age* notes that since Pittsburgh collectors "were in continuous contact with one another, their collecting habits exhibited similar characteristics as they forged their common interest in culture…Starting closer to home, they acquired work by regional artists, then looked to Europe in an effort to obtain works by the best-known foreign artists of their time." Mr. Frick had close business and civic ties with all of Pittsburgh's collectors, who at this time were some of the wealthiest men in the world, including Andrew Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, Charles Lockhart, and Charles Schwab. He also had cordial relations with a number of contemporary European artists, including Frits Thaulow, Emile Friant, Gerome, and in particular Theobald Chartran, who painted a number of portraits of friends and family for Mr. Frick and who even traveled with the Fricks and invited them to his home near Montreux.

Mr. Frick's collecting passion was indulged to the hilt following his resignation from Carnegie Steel in 1900. Although he remained deeply involved in investments, real estate and railroad projects following his acrimonious falling out with his business partners, he increasingly turned his formidable determination and enormous wealth towards acquiring even more beautiful and expensive paintings. In 1901, he acquired his first Vermeer *Girl Interrupted at her Music*, Corot's *Boatman of Mortefontaine* in 1903 and *Lady Peel* by Lawrence in 1904.

He moved his family to New York City in 1902 where they lived at the Sherry Hotel until 1905 when they rented the Vanderbilt mansion at 640 5th Avenue. It is likely that one of the reasons the family rented the place was the large picture gallery available to exhibit the ever-growing collection of paintings. The Fricks lived at the Vanderbilt mansion for nine years, until 1914 when the mansion designed for Mr. Frick by Carrere and Hastings was completed at 1 E. 70th Street.

During the Vanderbilt mansion residency Mr. Frick acquired many beautiful paintings including Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral* in 1908 , El Greco's *Purification of the Temple* in 1909 Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* in 1910, Vermeer's *Officer and Laughing Girl* in 1911, and Holbein's portait of Sir Thomas More in 1912. He bought these from Knoedler or through agents such as Roger Fry.

Mr. Frick was distinguished by his early recognition that the art he collected and housed in his mansions was not simply his to enjoy alone. Even in the rented Vanderbilt mansion, people were allowed, upon written request, to view his paintings. The Frick Collection has letters of application dating to 1917 for permission to view the paintings. He admitted to having been inspired by the Wallace Collection in London, a private collection left to the British nation in 1894. Upon his death in 1919, Mr. Frick bequeathed the New York mansion and his works of art to establish a public gallery of art "for the use and benefit of all persons whomsoever." He left funds for the maintenance of the collection and in "an unusual provision (notes a former Collection director Harry Grier) permitted funds to be used for the continued acquisition of works of art. This provision was the culminating gesture of a collector both adventurous and perfectionist by nature."

It is safe to say that the New York City mansion, now The Frick Collection, houses the finest of Mr. Frick's purchases. He had the wherewithal at this point to spend record sums for beautiful paintings. The new Frick mansion also inspired him to new and extravagant purchases. In 1914, the year the family moved into the mansion, Mr. Frick bought more than a dozen paintings. These included three Goyas, three Whistlers including this one *Miss Rosa Corder*, two large Turners, Degas *Rehearsal*, Manet's *Bullfight*, and Renoir's *Mother and Children*. From 1915 until his death in 1919, Mr. Frick continued to collect paintings although not as many. Several of The Collection's lovely masterpieces came into his possession at this time, including Gains-borough's *Mall in St. James Park*, Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, Van Dyck's *Sir John Suckling* in 1918 as well as Whistler's *Mrs. Leyland*. Along with room panels by Fragonard and Boucher added during this period, Mr. Frick also added to his collection drawings, prints, porcelains, Limoges enamels, and Renaissance bronzes. Many of these objects were formerly in the collection of J.P. Morgan who died in 1913.

While the house in New York was certainly filled with wonderful art, the art was placed in a luxurious setting designed and furnished primarily by Sir Charles Allom of White & Allom with additional work done by Elsie de Wolfe, the noted interior designer. All documentation regarding building and furnishing of the New York home, as well as Mr. Frick's other residences, is in New York and Pittsburgh. Archives in Pittsburgh have made possible the complete restoration of Clayton.

Receipts, photographs, cancelled checks, work orders, memoranda, and correspondence are arranged by locale. In New York, The Frick Collection has been remodeled and refurbished over the years with the assistance of architectural plans, photographs, invoices, inventories, correspondence, and detailed building files documenting the transformation of the mansion into the museum from 1932 to 1935 following the death of Mrs. Frick.

While Mr. Frick pursued his passionate art interests, he made sure that the business end of his art pursuits, located in Pittsburgh, continued to run as efficiently as did his many business and investment ventures. As a consequence, there are few aspects of his collecting activities that are undocumented. Correspondence with dealers and artists, bills of sale and other transaction records are all preserved in Pittsburgh and New York. Mr. Frick's letter books in Pittsburgh document his art collecting as well as other areas of his life and demonstrate the overlapping nature of many of his relationships with his professional peers. Records of the movements, restorations, and other activities concerning the paintings in The Frick Collection were and are meticulously recorded and can be found in The Frick Collection curatorial files, or housed in a vault at The Frick Collection or located in the family archives in Pittsburgh.

Along with these records, there are two volumes, Bill Books 1 and 2, documenting Mr. Frick's painting purchases. The original Bill Book 1 is in Pittsburgh. Bill Book 2 is in New York at the Collection. Both archives have archival copies of the other bill book prepared by the conservator at the Frick Art Reference Library. These bill books contain original purchase slips, correspondence and related information.

Mr. Frick occasionally financed his Knoedler purchases with stock given to the gallery in lieu of cash. He also traded in pictures purchased earlier and had their amounts credited towards subsequent purchases. Alison McQueen notes that between 1890 and 1905 Mr. Frick sold or exchanged no less than 54 works. These returns, while occasionally done at a loss, often realized gains, such as Breton's *The Last Gleanings*, which he purchased in 1895 for $14,000 from Knoedler and returned in 1907 for a $25,000 credit. This is all documented in the Knoedler sales books and correspondence files, as well as in Mr. Frick's Voucher files and other records in Pittsburgh as well as in curatorial files at the Frick Collection.

The importance of Knoedler & Company in assisting Mr. Frick to educate himself and to cultivate his own taste cannot be overestimated. While its current headquarters is next door to The Frick Collection, it has never been too far from Mr. Frick's residence. Evidence at all archives indicates the care and attention lavished on Mr. Frick over the years by Knoedler partners and staff. Roland Knoedler and Charles Carstairs in particular worked with Mr. Frick. Excerpts from letters in Knoedler letter books indicate the depth of the relationship and Mr. Frick's expectations of Knoedler personnel. In 1914, on Mr. Frick's last trip to Europe, Charles Carstairs writes to Roland Knoedler, "I suppose Carl sent you a Marconi that Mr. Frick had bought the Turner ?Cologne' for 150,000, this is to be credited on the note of 200,000 we owe him June 12th next ...Have been constantly busy with HCF. There are a good many important people in town – Mrs. Harriman, Mortimor Schiff, and Ryerson, but unfortunately I seem to be out whenever they call." Later in the year he writes, "I never think it advisable to write Mr. Frick about pictures, as it never seems to sell them to him." In 1913 Carstairs notes "Mr. Frick takes up all my time and I haven't much chance to write." I guess that with Mr. Frick loaning large sums to Knoedler as well as making even larger purchases, he had special claim on their attention.

Additional important information can be found in Pittsburgh at the Frick Art and Historical Center and at the Getty in Los Angeles, which has material from Duveen Brothers. Both collections of material, The Frick Family Archives in Pittsburgh and the archives of Duveen Brothers, formerly at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are less accessible to the public at present. As many of you may know, the archives in Pittsburgh closed last fall. I was fortunate to travel to Pittsburgh in the spring to view the archives and to make recommendations, along with the Frick Art Reference Library's library conservator and the chief librarian, as to the most suitable disposition of the records. We do not know at present what foundation members will decide to do about access to the materials. I am unclear as to the current status of the Duveen archives.

Along with original archives, both of individuals and institutions, there are many published materials addressing the history of collecting, individual collectors, trends in art history, art dealer biographies and reminiscences. In particular, I relied heavily on *Collecting in the Golden Age: Art Patronage in Pittsburgh 1890-1910* edited by Gabriel Weisberg. The Frick Art Reference Library, founded in 1922 by Helen Clay Frick around the corner from the museum with holdings of over 280,000 volumes, including over 70,000 auction sales catalogues, and nearly a million photographs, provided invaluable resources for this paper as well as for many other more impressive efforts.

In short, the richness of Henry Clay Frick's art legacy is matched in the archival records available for the study of the formation of that legacy.

Sally Brazil

The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library

The Politics of Art Collecting: Nelson A. Rockefeller

Introduction

The Rockefeller Archive Center was created in 1974 to bring together the archival collections of the Rockefeller Family and the many philanthropic and educational institutions they have founded, primarily those of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller University, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. At this point the Archive Center, a division of the Rockefeller University, maintains more than 32,000 cubic feet of records, in excess of 500,000 photographs, and more than 2,000 films. Since the first researcher arrived in 1975, more than 3,000 researchers have passed through the doors of Hillcrest.

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers Project is more than halfway through its ten-year lifespan, though it will likely continue beyond the projected end date. The NAR papers comprise more than 3,300 cubic feet of records and document every aspect of this well-known public servant. The quirk to the NAR papers that often makes people shudder is that in this instance I really do sort of work for the Rockefeller family, specifically Mrs. Nelson Rockefeller, who wound up with the ownership of her husband's papers after his death in 1979. The papers live at the RAC and when I work on a series, I then produce a finding aid, which is then submitted to representatives of the NAR estate, who then recommend that Mrs. Rockefeller donate the series to the RAC. We have learned that this process, while it has its potential pitfalls, has yet to result in Mrs. Rockefeller asking for the return of the materials. She has trust in us that we will look after the best interests of the Rockefeller family, which we have attempted to do.

Within the Rockefeller Family Archives is Record Group 4, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Personal, Series C, Art that details Nelson Rockefeller's art collection, from his first purchases in the 1930s through (and in some cases, beyond) his death in 1979. In 1949, engaged in other activities, Rockefeller hired a full-time curator, Carol Uht. She worked for him in this capacity until her death, six months prior to Rockefeller's.

The normal RAC restriction is to close any material that pertains to a living member of the family. With the art series, we were faced with the problem that so much of Rockefeller's art had been given to family members through his life. As a result, with the agreement of Mrs. Rockefeller, we closed any documentation that pertained to works of art given to family members for the duration of Mrs. Rockefeller's life and subsequently for the life of the person involved, should they still be living at Mrs. Rockefeller's death. We also agreed that any material would be reviewed prior to showing it to researchers in the event that the first "processing" of the papers failed to detect sensitive material.

Anyway, what do you think or see when someone says the name of Nelson Rockefeller?

One might imagine a dashing, young Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, a position created by Franklin Roosevelt at Rockefeller's urging, getting off a plane in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August 1942, ready to fight off the Axis scourge that Rockefeller felt was going to plague Latin America.

Nelson was the only governor to be elected to four consecutive four-year terms. First elected in 1958, he served New York State until his resignation in November 1973. In addition to serving one of the largest states in the Union, his position afforded him the opportunity to look toward Washington in 1960, 1964, and 1968. Unfortunately, the closest he got to the Oval Office was second to Gerry Ford, who picked Rockefeller to serve as his vice president after Ford's ascension to the presidency with the resignation of Richard Nixon. Though it was a job Rockefeller, by his own admission, never wanted, Nelson served the country the best he knew how.

Unceremoniously dumped from the ticket by Ford in 1976 for Bob Dole, Rockefeller campaigned for the ticket, and with the inauguration of Jimmy Carter on January 20, 1977, Rockefeller returned to the Rockefeller family home, Kykuit, to live out the rest of his life as a private citizen.

Back at Kykuit, Rockefeller returned to a love that had started his public career so many years earlier. One of his first jobs was the chairman of the junior advisory committee of the Museum of Modern Art, founded by his mother in 1929. With a little more free time on his hands and some "knocking around" money, Rockefeller founded the "Nelson Rockefeller Corporation," a company to help bring great works of art to the "masses." His goal was to have well-known works of art reproduced for anyone so that any American could enjoy the magic of art in their own homes. On January 27, 1979, the day after Rockefeller's death, he was scheduled to hold a press conference about the corporation moving forward with books and catalogs of artworks. When Rockefeller died, he was at work on a book that would be published posthumously as *Masterpieces of Modern Art*, which highlighted many of the works in Rockefeller's collection (which at his death was reported to be worth 33 million dollars).

Nelson Rockefeller was "passionate" about his art. Kitty Carlisle Hart, who served on a commission for the Arts at Rockefeller's urging, related a story about how Rockefeller would be showing a group of people through his basement galleries at Kykuit, stop suddenly, remove a painting from a wall, put it on his back and move it to another wall in the gallery. The art series is rife with memos from Carol to "the Governor" asking for his recommendation as to where he wants something moved to or from.

Art in General

Nelson Rockefeller's love of art was rooted in his family background. By his own admission, his passion for art came from his mother, Abby. Abby's father was Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich, who served in the United States Senate from 1881-1912. While responsible for many important pieces of legislation, including one that resulted in the creation of the Federal Reserve, Senator Aldrich was also responsible for passing legislation to allow works of art enter the United States duty free.

Abby passed on to Nelson most, of all her children, a high regard for art. As I just stated, In 1929, Abby and several of her friends founded the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). A junior advisory committee was formed and Rockefeller was appointed its chairman. In the 1930s, Rockefeller became the treasurer of MoMA, a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and began to collect all types of primitive art. In 1939, Rockefeller became president of the Museum of Modern Art, or "Mother's Museum," as he referred to it.

As a collector, he constantly sought others to share his art with. He frequently showed friends around his New York apartment, which, as was the case with his other homes and offices, boasted original works of art in most of the available spaces.

In order to best show how Rockefeller collected and displayed his art, I have chosen to talk about one "genre" of art, and four specific works of art from his collection.

Primitive Art

Rockefeller truly appreciated "primitive" art. Here is Nelson's youngest son by his first marriage, Michael, in a hut in New Guinea. As many of you may know, Michael disappeared in the fall of 1961 while on an expedition collecting objects from area tribes throughout New Guinea.

In keeping track of Rockefeller's growing primitive art collection, Carol Uht designed a numeric system, in which works were numbered first by geographic region, Section 1, South America, Section 2, Central America, etc., and then by accession number thereafter.

From the beginning, Rockefeller realized that it would be difficult to fight the general perception that "Primitive" art was less worthwhile. Rockefeller felt strongly that the term “primitive art” was demeaning, as so much of the art was more developed than the normal connotation of “primitive.” When in 1956, Rockefeller created the Museum of Primitive Art, with his collection as its foundation, he wanted to name it the “Museum of Indigenous Art,” but thought the name would be lost on the general public. .

The MPA struggled to find an audience during its entire existence. In the 1960s, the MPA folded and, through an agreement brokered by Rockefeller with the Metropolitan, the MPA’s collections were given to the Met.

The art collected by Michael along with the MPA’s collection would later serve as the focal point for a wing named in Michael’s honor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Joan Miro, *Hirondelle Amour*

Joan Miro, a Spanish artist who worked primarily in Paris, first caught Rockefeller’s eye in the early 1930s. This work, painted by Miro in 1933, entitled *Hirondelle Amour*, was installed first in Rockefeller’s apartment on Fifth Avenue in New York City, a rather large apartment, when you consider that *Hirondelle Amour* measures six and a half feet high by eight feet wide. It was also obviously one of Rockefeller’s favorites: as in 1970, he was offered $300,000 for the painting, which he refused and he entertained no further offers.

In 1973 the painting was loaned to MoMA for an exhibition to honor Miro on his 80th birthday. *Hirondelle Amour* was one of many works of art that Rockefeller had promised to donate to MoMA and was labeled as a “Promised Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York.” Unwilling to be without one of his favorite paintings for the duration of the exhibition, Rockefeller asked MoMA to commission Miro to produce a tapestry based on the painting. At the close of the exhibition, the tapestry would be delivered to MoMA and the painting returned to Rockefeller, with the understanding that upon his death the painting would be transferred to the Museum of Modern Art, which would send the tapestry back to Kykuit as its permanent replacement.

Rockefeller however, did not like the tapestry and arranged with MoMA to have a copy of the painting made. At first Miro was not informed, yet once he learned of it, he oversaw its production and had the word “copy” painted in on the lower left. On the back of the painting was inscribed, “This copy has been authorized by Miro for Nelson A. Rockefeller in view of his generosity toward the Museum of Modern Art with regard to the original painting. May 1974.” At Rockefeller’s request, and again without Miro’s knowledge, “copy” was removed, and “replique” was painted in.

The tapestry remained with MoMA and this copy of the painting was hung at Kykuit, where it hangs today in the Music Room.

Jackson Pollack, *No. 12, 1952* (Dimensions: 8' 5½" x 7' 5")

On March 2, 1961, a fire broke out in the Drawing Room of the Executive Mansion of the State of New York. It burned undiscovered until neighbors saw flames and called the firemen. The chimney-like stairs lived up to their name and fire and smoke reached the fire doors of the third floor. Jackson Pollack's painting, *No. 12, 1952*, was hanging in the Second Floor Gallery. At the time of the fire, the painting was worth an estimated $24,000. Restoration costs were estimated at almost $10,000.

Rockefeller enlisted the help of MoMA employees to help direct the restoration process. The files are rife with memoranda and correspondence from conservation experts as they toiled to save this and other works of art damaged. After lining and cleaning of the Pollack, it was discovered that the entire surface had been "cooked." This baking was more severe as it went from bottom to top. Experts felt that the only hope for saving the painting was that if the pigment had not been affected they could try to reconstitute the medium. They were unable to do this and the painting was declared a total loss.

Once the insurance settled with Rockefeller, the painting was "technically no longer" his. Normal circumstances would have dictated that it become the property of his insurance company, yet it allowed Rockefeller to keep it for his personal use.

The painting was never loaned again as it could no longer be represented as a "true Pollack." In the event that a picture of the Pollack was used, Rockefeller asked that any description of the painting carry the caption, "Largely destroyed by fire, 1961."

In all, more than fifty works of art were destroyed or severely damaged in the fire. The Executive Mansion was renovated at a cost of nearly $600,000, of which 10% was personally contributed by Rockefeller.

The painting is now on display as part of the Empire State Collection near the Executive Mansion.

Henry Moore, *Knife Edge*

In a December 22, 1965 memo from Carol to Rockefeller, she described several available works by the sculptor Henry Moore. Nelson wrote on the memo, "Louise [Boyer, one of NAR's assistants] - I am interested in the standing fig. Knife Edge - would you check out for me with Dorothy [Miller - Curator at MoMA]? Thanks, Nels."

The artist was contacted in a May 6, 1966 letter from Dorothy Miller asking for the price of *Knife Edge*. Moore responded that the sculpture would be ready for shipment in the fall at a price of $70,000. Rockefeller agreed.

In the art series there is a rolled tube that contains a large piece of plastic cut to the same size as the base of the sculpture, which could be used to help determine the best location to place the sculpture on the estate, without the difficulties associated with moving an immense sculpture. Even with this template, there were problems.

Rockefeller described what happened one day when trying to move *Knife Edge* around the estate, "My brother David . . . was having a party [with some Chase executives] and I was moving [*Knife Edge*] and you can't move these things except by helicopter because they are too heavy. So this [helicopter] came from one green where he was trying to putt over to the tee where he was then driving off and this almost broke up our family's relationship because he thought it was planned."

Picasso tapestries

On October 15, 1972, an article in the *Washington Star* began, "Times are tough when Nelson Rockefeller, one of the world's richest men, can't afford to buy Picassos." By Nelson's own admission, he stopped buying the originals, "because the prices got out of line."

Rockefeller entered a business arrangement with Picasso wherein the artist would personally oversee the creation of tapestries after Picasso's best-known works. Rockefeller was able to shape some of the decisions as to which tapestries to produce and reap the benefits of adding to his collection "unique" copies of original Picassos.

This tapestry, *The Three Musicians*, is 8' 1½" high x 8' 9¾" wide and was adapted from an existing Picasso work. This practice led to some controversy as the value of the tapestries was challenged, because to some, the tapestries were considered "reproductions." Rockefeller mollified his critics somewhat by arranging for Picasso to authenticate the tapestries by signing them.

The following text was placed on the back of all the tapestries: "The tapestry shown on the reverse was woven by the Atelier J. de la Baum-Durrbach after a cartoon corrected and approved by me. On completion of the weaving I also looked at the finished tapestry and approved its release for sale" and was then signed by Picasso.

This tapestry, *Girl with a Mandolin*, was done in 1974, after one of Nelson's favorite paintings. It was one of the final tapestries woven, also one of the few done after Picasso's death in 1973. In 1971, the atelier suggested the dimensions of the tapestry be 10' x 6' 8", but Rockefeller wanted the tapestry to measure 7' x 4'. Because Rockefeller and the atelier were unable to come to an agreement, the commission was canceled, only to be resurrected after Picasso's death.

When it was finally decided that the tapestry would be woven, it was planned in silk, and Rockefeller paid the atelier more than $30,000. Madame Durrbach had hoped for a little something extra. Carol forwarded her request to Rockefeller who replied, who declined saying, "I think they've done very well off of us over the years." The tapestry was hung in June of 1975 in Gallery 5 of Kykuit where it still hangs and measures 9' 10" x 7' 2".

Conclusion

Rockefeller and Carol devised a way for him to let her know what works of art interested him. She would pass along auction catalogs with pages paper clipped to indicate works she felt he might want. He would mark the catalogs with notations, with "yes" or "no" and indicate how much he was willing to spend for the work.

Joseph Persico, who worked for Rockefeller as a speechwriter, and wrote a biography of Nelson Rockefeller, relates a great story about the way Rockefeller was affected by art. "I watched Nelson function as art collector only once. The walls of the press office in the

State Capitol in Albany were usually hung with Commerce Department posters depicting the joys of the Finger Lakes . . . One January morning they presented something fresh. Frank Litto, an Albany artist, had persuaded Bill Ekhof, an assistant press secretary, to allow him to hang his work in the press office.” The work Persico is describing here is titled *Funeral Caisson* and used actual barn boards to create a farm wagon resembling the one that had carried the coffin of Martin Luther King, Jr. Persico goes on to say “Just before noon, Rockefeller came swooping into the Capitol and passed through the press room, exchanging handshakes . . . He stopped stock-still before the farm wagon. “ What’s this? Who did it?” His eyes blazed. Ekhof described Litto and his work. “An unknown?” Rockefeller seemed to tremble in anticipation. “I would say so,” Ekhof concluded. “Is it for sale?” Ekhof said that he was sure the artist could be persuaded.” Rockefeller ultimately bought the work, had it installed in the Executive Mansion, and when he left the governor’s office, the Litto was given as a gift to the people of New York State.

In his gallery in the basement of Kykuit, or on the grounds of the estate, Rockefeller strived to as he put it “arrange the art of others in nice settings and beautiful places.” He also said, “the really important thing about art is art, not what you say about it.” We are fortunate to have in the Rockefeller family archives, a detailed and personal record of an art collector’s tastes and love of art.

John LeGloahec

Rockefeller Archive Center