

Museum Archivist

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Letter from the MAS Chair, Tara Laver

By the time many of you read this, another SAA year will have come and gone with the conclusion of virtual section meetings and the hybrid annual meeting in Washington, D.C. I have been lucky enough to score spots on tours of the Archives of American Art and the Phillips Collection, and I am very much looking forward to visiting these members' shops and learning from them! Furthermore, that is what sections are all about—learning from those who practice our particular flavor of archives and share our common interest and professional investment in archives houses within museums of all types.

I am excited to be coming on as chair of the Section and especially want to thank Immediate Past Chair Jenna Stout, who took over the daunting task of leading the Section in a year of transition. Jenna started the "pop-up" presentations that have proved popular and helped the Section connect more consistently. Thanks also to Janeen Schiff, outgoing newsletter editor, for her dedication to sharing our successes and insightful contributions to steering committee discussions.

A good portion of our virtual business meeting was dedicated to an informal discussion about the future of the Section, discussing topics such as what members see as the Section's role, projects they would like to see us continue, resume, or undertake, ideas for partnering with other sections, impediments to greater member participation in programs and section governance, and topics that would be of interest. We will send out a survey soon to gather more formal feedback, so look for that in your inboxes, but our meeting "chat" showed that members are interested in continuing the pop-up sessions because of limitations on travel. Some would like to see a half-day symposium offered again. Lack of time and bandwidth and unclear requirements for various roles contribute to reduced participation in section activities. Topics for future programming included working with curators, incorporating archival materials into exhibits, digital preservation, donor relations, and advocacy for archives-managed digital preservation repositories within our respective museums. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the discussion.

Besides generally wanting to get a sense of what members were thinking about the Section, the discussion was also crucial as SAA Council undergoes the process of section health assessment. Our Council Liaison Dominique Lusher was unable to join us but sent the following information afterward:

During June, Council Liaisons conducted a brief analysis of their assigned Sections, only noting metrics provided in the [SAA Governance Manual](#). These metrics included whether or not the Section had updated standing rules posted to its microsite, whether the Section held a full steering committee, whether the Section held an annual business meeting, whether the Section held a full-slate election, and if the Section had submitted an annual report. From this information, Council will discuss the next steps of the assessment at the July Annual meeting. Following the Annual Meeting, the Section Health Assessment working group will begin a more qualitative analysis utilizing focus groups and the Section Health Assessment survey results.

At our business meeting, I shared the report from another section meeting at which the Council Liaison said in their update that sections would either be discontinued, merged with another section or become a discussion group/list-serv with no ongoing obligations to elect offices and submit reports. Dominique clarified the decision-making process:

If a section is recommended for a change by its liaison (to discontinue, merge, or become a discussion group), this choice would be a discussion between the liaison and the steering committee first before going to the Section's membership. Once the steering committee and membership have had a chance to come to a conclusion about which change option they would like to pursue, a vote would be put before Council for said change. However, if, between the Steering Committee and the membership, the Section desired to continue as a section, then the Steering Committee would be responsible for coming up with a plan to meet its goals and would have a year to do that work before coming back to Council.

I hope to share more on this topic soon after the annual meeting concludes. However, the process does remind us of the importance of competitive elections, undertaking projects, and maintaining a certain level of activity and engagement. I look forward to working on all of this with our members. Please contact me with any questions, concerns, or ideas at tlaver@nelson-atkins.org.

Tara Laver, CA
Senior Archivist, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM ARCHIVE SECTION

2023 MUSEUM ARCHIVES SECTION BUSINESS MEETING, JULY 10, 2023

The Museum Archive Section hosted its 2023 business meeting as part of ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2023 annual meeting held virtually on July 10, 2023. In addition to the business portion of the meeting, two presentations focusing on the theme of museum archives were presented. Heather McClain & Amy Valentine from the Anchorage Museum presented *Moving Forward: Shifts in the Anchorage Museum Archives to Redefine Relationships* and Tara Laver from the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art presented *Art and Diplomacy at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art during World War II*. The meeting concluded with a discussion on the sections health and the future of the Museum Archives Section.

If you were not able to join, you can read the notes from the meeting on the MAS microsite here:

[2023 Museum Archives Business Meeting Notes from July 10, 2023](#)



MUSEUM ARCHIVES: PRACTICE, ISSUES, AND ADVOCACY

By Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke

Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, Advocacy, edited by Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke, articulates what museum archivists do, the impact of their work, and how they can position the archives as an indispensable hub of knowledge and activity within the museum. Twenty-seven museum archivists provide practical guidance on the day-to-day management of archives and explore strategies for effectively carrying out the museum archives' work.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT *MUSEUM ARCHIVES: PRACTICE, ISSUE, AND ADVOCACY* AND TO SEE A SNEEK PEAK, PLEASE VISIT THIS [LINK!](#)

MEET YOUR FELLOW ARCHIVIST !!

Celia Emmelhainz, National Anthropological Archives at the National Museum of Natural History



My name is Celia Emmelhainz, and I am the new manager for the National Anthropological Archives at the National Museum of Natural History in DC, where I moved after seven years as the anthropology librarian at UC Berkeley.

I started out in college focused on Russian studies in my home state of Ohio, then studied for a master's in anthropology in Texas, where I became curious about what happened to field notebooks after research projects are published. After grad school, I moved to Kazakhstan to work at new university and school libraries there. When I went back to grad school for an MLIS, my graduate advisor connected me to a colleague who was looking at digital data archiving in anthropology—something I've carried along as a parallel interest to working in more traditional library collections...

Since 2013, I have embarked on digital archiving projects in anthropology, so it is exciting to dig into how paper, film, and digital archives can connect with museum collections. As a disciplinary archive housed in a museum, we are looking at how we can help our discipline and our museum plan for the future of the records. These activities include better planning for the full lifecycle of care we commit to archival collections and engaging with indigenous communities and communities affected by gathering human remains in museum collections in the 20th century. If you are working in these areas, I would love to hear from you -- and if you come through DC, I would be happy to walk you around our new exhibition on [Cellphone: Unseen Connections](#).

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THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY ARCHIVES UPDATES SUMMER 2023

By Sally Brazil, Barbara G. Fleischman Associate Chief Librarian, The Frick Collection

The Archives Department and the rest of The Frick Collection staff have begun planning for our return to our original location at Fifth Avenue and East 70th Street. After nearly five years of construction, we will all return to the museum and library in the last quarter of 2024. Archival collections will be returned from offsite, and work areas will be refreshed. Offices and storage have been reimagined, and we look forward to working in our new quarters. The museum has announced the closure of the galleries at our temporary location, Frick Madison, on March 3, 2024. We anticipate that the library will continue to operate for a few months after the March closure, which means we can continue to accommodate archival researchers in person. However, there will be a few months in summer/fall 2024 where all of our attention will be focused on returning our collections and ourselves to 1 East 70th Street, and we will suspend in-person reference work.

The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library Archives received a generous grant from the Leon Levy Foundation to digitize approximately 220 reel-to-reel tapes of lectures delivered at the Frick from 1959-1991. The tapes record noted scholars and curators in the fine arts discussing works of art in Frick's holdings and broader art historical topics. The tapes were sent out for digitization to George Blood Audio in early July and will be made available for on-premises listening soon.

The Archives department recently became the custodians of the [Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America](#), a resource developed by the Frick's Center for the History of Collecting (2007-2021) to point researchers toward primary sources about art collectors and those who helped them form their collections. This summer, we updated the website to bring the information up-to-date and to make the website easier to use. We welcome information from other archives and libraries regarding archival collections not currently reflected in the Directory.

The Archives Department hosted summer intern Lyric Evans-Hunter, a graduate student in the New York University Archives and Public History program.

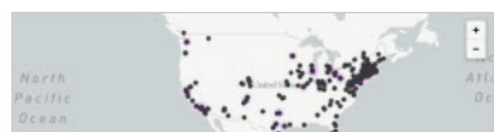
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



“BENJAMIN WIGFALL & COMMUNICATIONS VILLAGE” -- MY INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

By Nuelle R. Johnson, NEH Archives Intern, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The "Benjamin Wigfall & Communications Village" exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, has been in the making for over six years. However, museum interest in him traces back to 1949. Benjamin L. Wigfall was an incredible artist, teacher, and community leader, and I am endlessly grateful to have learned and amplified his story.

In 2016, Dr. Sarah Eckhardt, VMFA Associate Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art, and Linda Holmes, Hampton, Virginia historian, and researcher, set out for New Paltz, New York, to tell the story of African American and Richmond-born artist Wigfall. They recorded interviews with Ben and his wife, Mary Carter Wigfall, which formed the basis of a museum program in February 2017, days before Wigfall passed away. The program was well received, and several community partners from Richmond and New Paltz soon aligned their goals. In addition, VMFA acquired 55 works of art, and Wigfall's daughter and son—Gia Oke-Bello and Gino Wigfall—donated Wigfall's entire archive to the VMFA Library, allowing us to tell a deeper story than we ever could have.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) issued a grant for a nine-month archives intern the year before the exhibition. I was hired to process and catalog the entire Wigfall archive. The holdings contain letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, albums, sketchbooks, woodblocks, etching plates, and so much more from the personal collection of this important artist. Having held only one previous position in an archival setting, I set off to learn the most I could within these nine months.



The first days of my position included lessons regarding sound archival practice and studying the biographical information about Wigfall already held in the VMFA Library. Because Wigfall was a Richmond-born artist, he had a long history with the VMFA to review. I learned that Wigfall was a recipient of 1949 and 1951 VMFA Fellowship awards, which funded his education at Hampton Institute (now University), and that he was privately sponsored by a VMFA patron for his 1952-1953 senior year by an anonymous donor personally interested in his path as an artist, who I learned was John Lee Pratt. This felt personal to me. Wigfall was climbing the ranks in a previously inaccessible field after attending a segregated school in Richmond, where there was no art education until the final semester of his senior year of high school. He was being upheld by people who had faith in him and trusted his talent even though it had not been classically garnered.

So, I learned, I processed, I studied, I wrote. We physically received Wigfall's archive in late October. As I opened it, I felt as if I had opened someone's entire life, and the pressure of that epiphany anchored me. Processing for days at a time, Wigfall's archive began to take shape. I created spreadsheet after spreadsheet to try and fit a whole lifetime into words on a computer. It felt impossible at times, but there were other representations of his story we wanted to tell, and soon the exhibition would become a main priority.

I also had never been involved in exhibition work before. Everything was new, but incredible colleagues guided me through every step. Eckhardt, the exhibition's curator, continuously found time to explain the details to me, from the design layout to artwork selection and exhibition catalog writing. Assistant Archivist Emily Johnson was always there to answer stray questions about archival practice and patiently teach me to use ArchivesSpace to create the Benjamin L. Wigfall Artist Archive finding aid, where our patrons can discover the archive. Senior Archivist Courtney Tkacz guided me through every step, trusting my work with unbelievable confidence and allowing me to get to where I am today at the end of this journey. These people, along with many more, shaped my process.



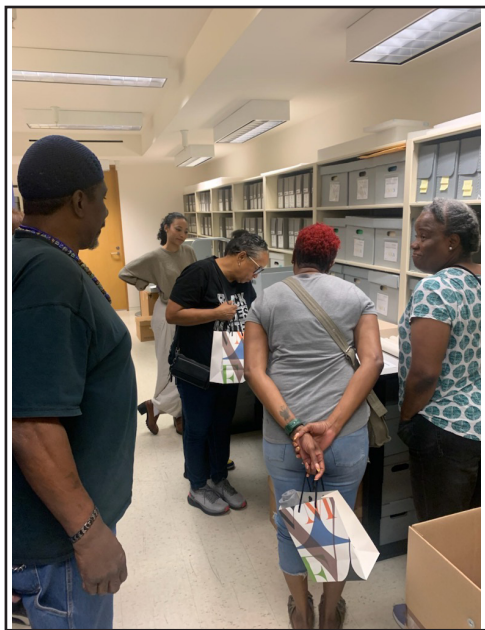
I was soon tasked with writing the Chronology for the exhibition catalog, which I had never done before. I wrote with certain blindness but hoped that the months of processing gave me enough foundation to write a comprehensive timeline of this incredible artist and community leader's life. It was one of the most rewarding projects, exploring his life, finding questions and subsequent answers through careful analysis, and piecing together puzzle parts. It all felt significant, from finding the photo date based on a ceiling pattern to filling gaps in professional documentation with letters from friends and family about important life events. The Chronology went through several rounds of editing by museum colleagues, and in the end, I was able to amplify Wigfall's deserving voice through his archive.



The next major task was cataloging the over 200 items I submitted for digitization in the catalog and exhibition. These items needed to be cataloged in a detailed and accurate manner. We ran into a few bumps because we had to work backward from usual practice since the items needed to be digitized before being numbered with a valid identifier. We used a temporary numbering system, which allowed for quick digitization. However, they had to be renumbered as I began to sort the items into their correct series and assign formal numbers. We spent weeks numbering and renumbering, working to clear any confusion that might arise. Finally, we worked with the Photography department to upload the items into the museum's DAMS Piction, which was eventually made accessible to the public.

Installation of the exhibition came next, and I found myself both excited at the culmination of all our work but also mournful that my experience was soon ending. We spent a week and a half installing, working with other incredible

people from various departments around the museum. We installed 20 cases of archival material—a record number for the museum. This was thanks to Eckhardt and the team's desire to tell Wigfall's story in the most holistic way possible.



The capstone project of my internship was to design an exhibit in the case in the museum's main atrium outside the library. The capstone project of my internship was to design an exhibit in the case in the museum's main atrium outside the library. Eckhardt, Tkacz and I decided on the Theme of "Missing Works," in which I displayed objects that showed works of art whose location is currently unknown and for which we only had a record in the archive. With this task came more research and more planning. I displayed a woodblock titled *Theme* and used a blown-up reproduction of it from a 1955 issue of "Arts Digest" magazine on the back wall of the case. I also displayed sketchbooks, articles, books, and collagraph and zinc plates to tell the story of Wigfall's missing works while drawing interest to the archive and the type of information held.

At the end of internship, new conservation interns joined the VMFA under the same NEH grant, and I could give them a tour and discuss my experience and work; some of them will even be working with materials from the Wigfall archive during their internships. I also met Wigfall's family, showing them all of the processing and cataloging work I did in the archives and hearing their heartwarming and hilarious stories. At the same time, they looked through family photo albums. This experience changed the trajectory of my life, both professionally and generally, and I hope that others will feel and understand Wigfall's influence through the ways I can tell his story during my time at VMFA.



Exhibition view from *Benjamin Wigfall and Communications Village*, 2023

THE HOUGHTON FAMILY PROJECT AT THE CORNING MUSEUM OF GLASS

By Sarah Alender, Project Archivist at the Rakow Research Library, Corning Museum of Glass

The Houghton family name is almost as ubiquitous in Corning, New York, as glass. In fact, without the Houghton family, there might not be a history of glassmaking in Corning at all.

It began with the Union Glass Company of Somerville, Massachusetts, which was founded by Amory Houghton, Sr. (1812-1882). This company later relocated to Brooklyn and was named the Brooklyn Flint Glass Works, which relocated to Corning in 1868 and was renamed the Corning Flint Glass Works. It was incorporated as the Corning Glass Works in 1875, and was headed by generations of Houghton family members, including Amory Houghton, Jr., Alanson B. Houghton (who was ambassador to Germany and Great Britain in the 1920s), and Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., who served as curator of rare books at the Library of Congress in addition to his role as president of the Steuben Glass Works and a co-founder of the Corning Museum of Glass.



Photo 1 caption: Ambassador Alanson B. Houghton (Citation: Amo Houghton Papers, 1860-2020. HFMS 0006. The Rakow Research Library, The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York)

The history of the Houghton family's personal papers is almost as lengthy and complex as the history of the company. Since the Houghton family founded the Corning Glass Works (now Corning, Incorporated) and were involved in running the company up until the late 1990s, they spent over a century depositing their papers into the Corning, Incorporated Archives for safekeeping. However, as Corning, Incorporated grew and took on the shape of a contemporary corporation with a modern department of archives and records management, this became less tenable. Two members of the Houghton family, Rob Houghton and his father Amory Houghton, Jr. (Amo), were instrumental in initiating the process of donating the Houghton family's materials to the Rakow Research Library—a process that took several years due to the volume of material and the question of who actually owned the papers: the company or the Houghton family.



Photo 2 caption: Unprocessed Houghton boxes in the secured stacks at the Rakow.

After the complexities of ownership were sorted out, the papers still had to be transferred to the Rakow Research Library. The first part, consisting of the personal papers of Congressman Amo Houghton and his mother Laura Richardson Houghton, was transferred to the Rakow from the home of Amo Houghton in fall 2021. The second part was transferred to the Rakow from the Corning, Incorporated Archives in the spring of 2022. This second section consisted of the personal papers of almost every descendant of this branch of the Houghton family.

The collections are so large that the Houghton family materials were placed in their own repository. In total, the Houghton family papers comprise 15 separate collections.

Considering the size of the collections (450-550 linear feet), processing, arrangement, and description is expected to take around two years. I've been able to process four small collections so far, and am more than halfway through the Amo Houghton Papers, which should be the largest collection in the Houghton Family Repository. In addition to correspondence, subject files, and photographs from Amo Houghton's nearly 20 years as a U.S. congressman representing the Southern Tier area of New York, the collection includes materials from his tenure as the head of the Corning Glass Works, as well as personal materials from his school days and time in the U.S. Marines, retirement, and involvement in various charities. The collection also features quite an extensive amount of ephemera like campaign signs, hats, posters, decals, and buttons, along with glass objects, awards, and diplomas. The variety of materials in this collection makes it a departure for the Rakow, which typically confines its collecting scope to glass-related materials.



Photo 3 caption: Hats and other ephemera from one of Amo Houghton's Congressional campaigns. (Citation: Amo Houghton Papers, 1860-2020. HFMS 0006. The Rakow Research Library, The Corning Museum of Glass. Corning, New York)



Photo 4 caption: Amo Houghton and his campaign bus, 1986. (Citation: Amo Houghton Papers, 1860-2020. HFMS 0006. The Rakow Research Library, The Corning Museum of Glass. Corning, New York)

The other Houghton collections include correspondence, photos, diaries, albums and scrapbooks, banking records, trusts, estates, ledgers, and wills. The earliest material dates to the 1830s.

One interesting feature of the Houghton family collections that wasn't initially apparent until their arrival at the Rakow was that many of the women in the Houghton family also had personal papers stored in the Corning, Incorporated Archives, but these materials had been somewhat obscured by their locations as series within their husbands', brothers', and sons' collections. Some of the women's collections were simply added to the men's materials during storage and transportation.

The most unexpected thing I've come across while processing these "hidden" collections is the Laura Richardson Houghton Papers. Laura DeKay Richardson Houghton was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1900. She graduated from the Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, and married Amory Houghton (1899-1981) in 1921, the year that he began working at the Corning Glass Works.

Laura's papers initially appeared to encompass only one records carton and one scrapbook, but have since mushroomed into ten records cartons full of correspondence, seven large flat boxes of ephemera, and approximately 35 scrapbooks. I suspect that there are also nine more scrapbooks in our secured stacks that were placed with her husband's papers but were actually

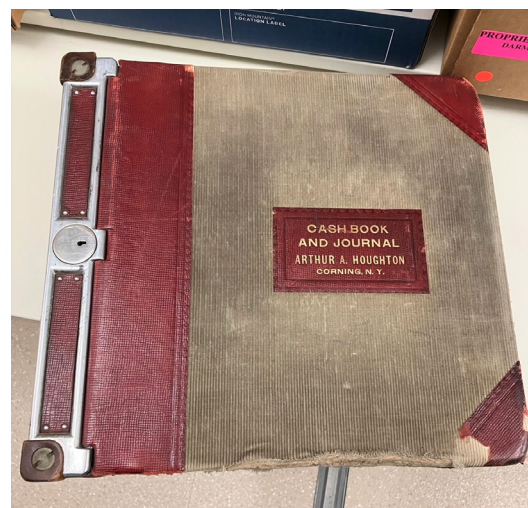


Photo 5 caption: One of several ledgers from Sayles & Evans, the law firm that handled the Houghton family's legal and financial affairs for many years. (Citation: Sayles and Evans Collection on the Houghton Family Legal Materials, Circa 1890-1981. HFMS 0009. The Rakow Research Library, The Corning Museum of Glass. Corning, New York)

assembled by Laura herself, which will make a total of 44 scrapbooks—and I wouldn't be surprised to find more scrapbooks hidden inside other collections that I haven't begun processing yet.



Photo 8 caption: A stack of scrapbooks from the Laura Houghton Papers, which are still largely unprocessed. (Citation: Laura Richardson Houghton Papers, dates unknown. HFMS 0005. The Rakow Research Library, The Corning Museum of Glass. Corning, New York.)

These collections should have immense research value to anyone interested in the Houghton family and the history of the Corning Glass Works. They are also a rich resource on the women in the Houghton family and for anyone studying history or international relations, as many of the Houghtons were ambassadors and politicians during the first half of the 20th century.

I'm anticipating publishing several finding aids in the fall of 2023, and hope that several more will be published next spring so that researchers can gain access to these vast collections and uncover even more of the history of the Houghton family and Corning, New York.

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TRAVELING THE ARCHIVE: DIGITIZING THE TRAVEL SKETCHBOOKS OF FRANCES PRINDLE TAFT

By Madalyn Rehrman, Digitization Intern, Ingalls Library, The Cleveland Museum of Art

As a Digitization Intern at the Ingalls Library and Museum Archives this summer, I have had the great fortune to work with many different objects. Ranging from the Cleveland Museum of Art's Temporary Receipt Books to rare folios that have just recently entered the public domain to archival materials from the Frances Prindle Taft Collection, I have been able to work on increasing access to essential materials.

Taft (1921-2017) was an art historian deeply related to the Cleveland area and the Cleveland Museum of Art. She graduated from Vassar College in 1942, majoring in Zoology and minoring in Art History. In 1942, Taft joined the U.S. Navy during World War II as part of the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES) program. In 1943 she married Seth Chase Taft, grandson of President William Howard Taft. They had four children. Taft taught art history at the Cleveland Institute of Art from 1950 to 2012, and she was part of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Junior Council (which later became the Women's Council) and board of trustees. One of her primary research focused on Pre-Columbian art, and she traveled extensively, taking nineteen trips to Mesoamerica and many other trips throughout her life. She documented these travels in sketchbook journals, taking detailed notes and sketching various locations she visited, often in gorgeous watercolor illustrations.

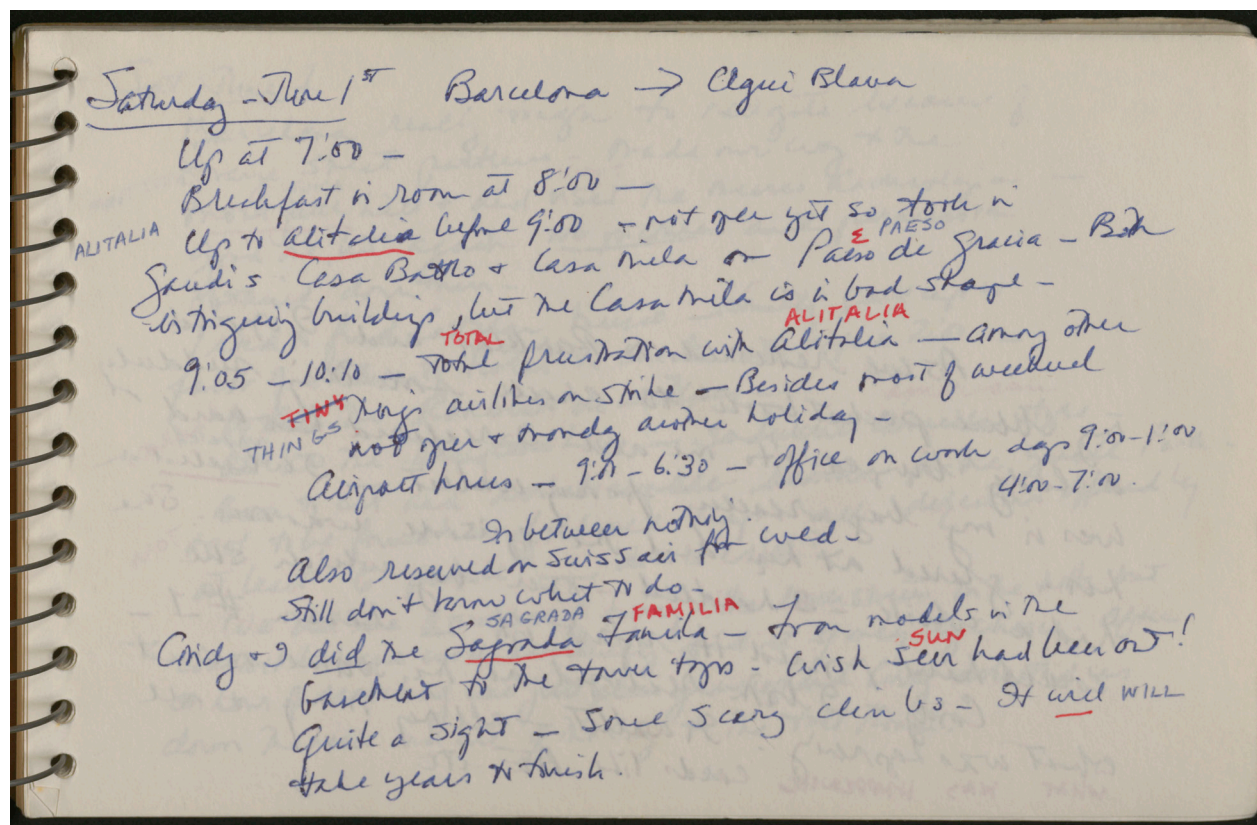


Drawings and Sketches of Peru, Machu Picchu, Tikal, Uxmal, 1972, Frances Prindle Taft Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art Archives.

During my internship, I have been working on digitizing a small selection of Taft's journals. Some of these document trips to Mexico. The sites she visited and her notes and sketches demonstrate her commitment to studying Pre-Columbian art. During her travels to Mexico, she often visited archeological sites and ruins, many of which she drew and wrote about in these journals. Beyond this study, she also wrote about elements of her travels, such as the landscapes and food she enjoyed (or did not enjoy), local culture and people, agriculture, and transportation. Her journals include domestic trips with Seth and their children and trips to Europe, during which Taft visited France, Italy, Spain,

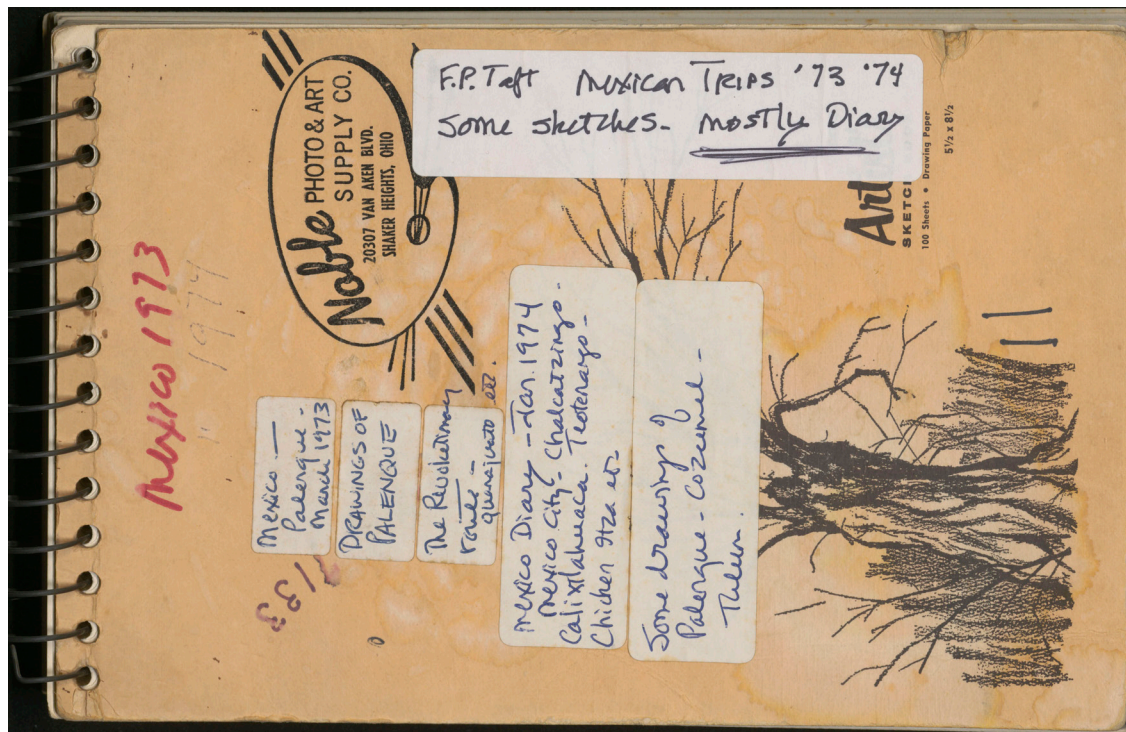
Greece, Switzerland, and Malta. Her drawings of the numerous sites of her travel illustrate the landscapes and architecture that she admired, and her journal entries detail many elements of her trips—prominent among them are her notes on art and architecture.

A notable element of Taft's travel sketchbooks is the mark of editing throughout. The pages in many of her journals contain what can be assumed as later editions to the text—clarification of words and phrases—in the same (though neater) handwriting as the rest of the journal. These marks are typically in a different pen color and stand out on the page, leaving spots of color through the journals (even beyond the watercolor drawings and colorful pens she sometimes used for the main content).



Zurich, Spain, Malta 1974 Travel Journal, 1974, Frances Prindle Taft Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art Archives.

The covers of the journals also frequently include detailed notes on their contents. For example, the journal about her 1973 and 1974 trips to Mexico has six label stickers on its cover. These labels include details about the locations of the journal documents and some of the sketches it contains. From this scrupulous documentation and editing, it is clear that Taft wanted her journals to be readable in the future. Indeed, as a reference or memory for herself. The notes also lend more straightforward readability to her travel notes for those viewing them today.



Mexican Trips '73 '74 Travel Journal, 1973–1974, Frances Prindle Taft Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art Archives.

Digitizing Taft's journals make them accessible to many more people. Now that they are online, anyone from researchers to Taft's family can view them without needing to be in the Ingalls Library. As I have worked on digitization projects this summer, I have seen just how important it is to continue making materials available digitally. Doing so increases their reach beyond the physical space of the building in which they are housed. Taft's journals are available to view in the [Cleveland Museum of Art Archives Digital Collections](#), once again able to travel the world as researchers from all over have the opportunity to view them.

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REPORT ON IMLS GRANT PROJECT: ORGANIZING VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY ARCHIVES AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

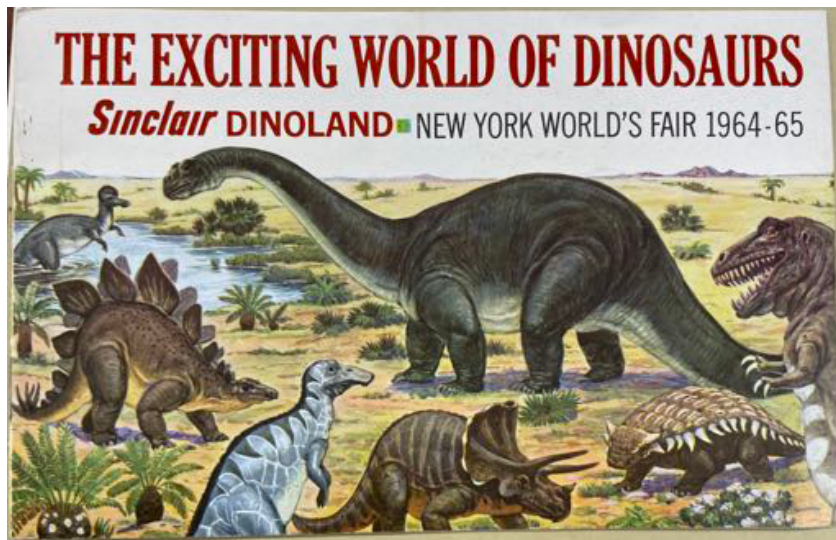
By Ruth E. Hurwitz, Internship, The American Museum of Natural History

My position as an intern in the Vertebrate Paleontology Archives is funded by a three-year IMLS Museums of America grant (IMLS MA-245234-OMS-20: Expanding Access to the American Museum of Natural History Vertebrate Paleontology Archive) to process and broaden access to the materials in the archive. Part of that project includes the organization of papers into collections. In October 2022, Project Archivist Maya Naunton and I began work on the Barnum Brown Papers. Barnum Brown (1873-1963), was, by all accounts, a celebrity paleontologist. He was acknowledged as the greatest dinosaur collector of all time, the father of the dinosaurs,¹ who discovered *Tyrannosaurus rex* in Montana in 1902.¹ Brown was so famous, he was even included on the Divorce Reform League's 1940 list of America's Five Best Husbands, along with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lou Gehrig.² Despite Brown's rumored philandering, a congratulatory telegram from his second wife, Lillian, indicates she took it in good spirit.

Telegram from Lillian Brown to Barnum Brown, March 1, 1940, VPA 114, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 3, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Brown's papers include hundreds of handwritten pages of autobiographical material for a book that never saw fruition. There are photographs, drawings, maps, field notebooks, postcards, articles by him and about him, in addition to reams of material produced by Lillian, who accompanied him on many of the expeditions, and in 1950 published her memoirs, *I Married a Dinosaur*. We now know, thanks to my colleagues' work on the [expedition list](#), that between the years of 1896 and 1953, Brown participated in over 132 expeditions.³

1. AMNH, "Barnum Brown: The Man Who Discovered *Tyrannosaurus rex*," News & Blogs (blog), American Museum of Natural History, April 29, 2011, <https://www.amnh.org/explore/news-blogs/news-posts/barnum-brown-the-man-who-discovered-tyrannosaurus-rex>.
2. Associated Press, "President Listed Among Nation's 5 Best Husbands," Washington Evening Star, 16 Feb. 1940, A7.
3. Abokair, Mandy and Sarah Barlow-Ochshorn. "Our Expedition into Expedition Metadata," Gottesman Research Library News (blog), American Museum of Natural History. August 15, 2022, <https://www.amnh.org/research/research-library/library-news/expedition-metadata-archives>.



Program for Sinclair Oil Corporation exhibit at the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, VPA 114, Series 4, Box 11, Folder 83, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York

As we sorted through Brown's boxes, my eye was caught by a group of cheerful looking dinosaurs on the cover of a booklet about the Sinclair Dinoland exhibit at the 1964 World's Fair. A cursory review of the papers, along with Lowell Dingus and Mark Norell's book, *Barnum Brown, The Man Who Discovered Tyrannosaurus Rex*, revealed that Barnum Brown maintained a side gig as a geologic consultant throughout his career. In addition to government work, such as his 1916 Department of the Interior U. S. Geological Survey project and his 1943-1945 work for the Board of Economic Warfare, he also worked for the Calgary, Osage, Empire, Anglo-American, Clonmel Petroleums, Canada North Continental, and Sinclair Refinery oil companies. In an incredibly dense handwritten document entitled 'Time Sheet,' Brown charts his life's work.

"Time Sheets" written by Barnum Brown, VPA 114, Series 4, Box 8, Folder 67, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

From 1897, all work falls under the AMNH umbrella. Even the 1920 Anglo-American Oil Abyssinia project, known as the Dudley Expedition after sponsor Charles Dudley, Brown's entry reads only, "Abyssinia, reconnaissance work."⁴ While there is no mention of oil there, a 1920 letter from the secretary of the Anglo-American Oil Company discusses Brown's participation in the "concession in which they have an interest," the discovery of petroleum "or indications of same."⁵ The Time Sheet mentions Sinclair expeditions in 1936 and 1940, and, in 1962, Brown writes, "engaged by Sinclair Refining Co. for 1 year as of April 1st as consultant for dinosaurs and their environment. They are preparing for World Fair 1964-65."⁶ This provided the explanation for the friendly dino merchandise.

In fact, the relationship between Sinclair Oil and Barnum Brown predated that. Henry Sinclair was a savvy marketer and clearly saw an opportunity when the famous dinosaur hunter contacted him after visiting Sinclair's dino exhibit at the 1934 Chicago World's Fair.⁷ Brown was also savvy and, by autumn of 1934, had embarked on the American Museum-Sinclair Dinosaur Expedition, a 20,000 mile aerial expedition of Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. As Brown wrote in his 1935 article *Flying for Dinosaurs*, "when the matter was broached to the officers of the Sinclair Refining Company, the proposal fell on receptive ears."⁸ Sinclair not only funded excavation work but supplied a plane and pilot to the tune of \$9,000.⁹



Photograph of plane called "Diplodocus," used in aerial survey, left to right: Barnum Brown, pilot D.A. McIntyre and unknown man, probably a photographer, American Museum-Sinclair Expedition 1934, in "Flying for Dinosaurs" by Barnum Brown, *Natural History*, September 1935, vol. 36, 100.

4. Correspondence from Charles Dudley to Barnum Brown. May 28, 1920, VPA114, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 25, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

5. Correspondence from the secretary of the Anglo-American Oil Company to Barnum Brown, May 27, 1920, VPA114, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 25, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

6. Brown, Barnum, "Time Sheets," VPA 114, Series 4, Box 8, Folder 67, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

7. Dingus, Lowell and Mark Norell. *Barnum Brown: The Man Who Discovered Tyrannosaurus Rex*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 251.

8. Brown, Barnum. "Flying for Dinosaurs." *Natural History*, September 1935, vol. 36,

The photographs from the expedition are stunning, and of the many large format prints in the Brown Papers, 26 are published in *Flying for Dinosaurs*, including the photo above of Brown, the pilot, the cameraman, and their plane, dubbed the *Diplodocus*. In the annual reports for those years, there is also mention of a “short expedition” in 1935, funded partially by Sinclair, and in 1937, a five month long American Museum-Sinclair Expedition to Rock Springs, Wyoming. Sinclair also advertised regularly in the museum’s *Natural History* magazine, so even between Sinclair and the museum, it was a symbiotic relationship. It seems that early on Brown established a system of blurring the lines between commercially funded projects and expeditions with benefits for the museum. In a 1920 letter to William D. Matthew, another AMNH paleontologist, Brown writes that he is flattered by his relationship with the Anglo- American Oil Company, but that he “made it a condition that I may secure specimens for the American Museum and I anticipate results.”¹⁰

Soon Brown was providing and vetting most of Sinclair’s dinosaur-related marketing content. The Barnum Brown Papers include two copies of the second “Sinclair Dinosaur Book,” published in 1938, each with the AMNH seal pressed into its paper cover. This edition includes “A Word of Appreciation to Dr. Barnum Brown, Curator of Fossil Reptiles...for his exhaustive care in helping Sinclair give the American public a scientifically accurate account of an extremely fascinating subject.”¹¹ Starting in 1935, Sinclair issued dinosaur stamp albums and dinosaur stamps. The Barnum Brown Papers contain several versions of the album and sets of stamps, including a 1959 box set, as well as transparencies of all the paintings made for the booklet accompanying the box set. Through Brown, Sinclair was astutely taking ownership of educating the public about dinosaurs while positioning Sinclair Oil as family forward. Gasoline may have been a necessary expense, but Sinclair transformed it into an easily recognizable and positive one with each child receiving a dino stamp for their album when filling up the family car.



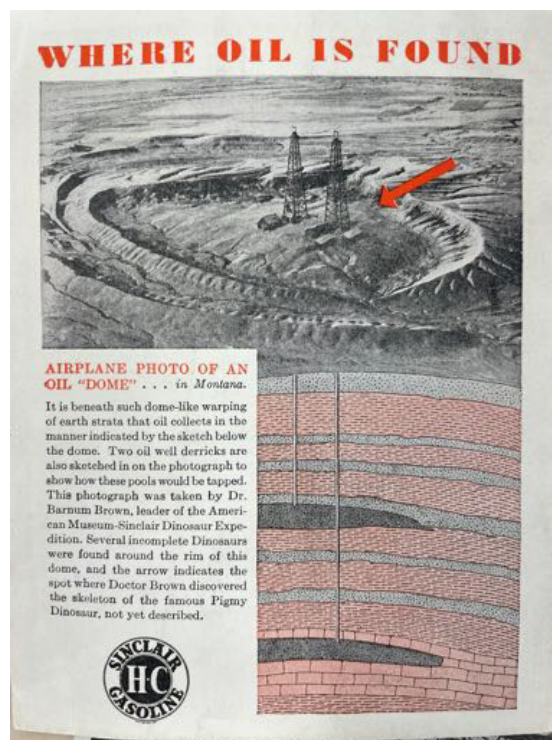
Sinclair Oil Company Stamp Albums. Sinclair Refining Co., Inc., 1935, VPA 114, Series 4, Box 11, Folder 83, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

10. Correspondence from Barnum Brown to William Diller Matthew, May 19, 1920, VPA114, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 25, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

11. Sinclair Dinosaur Stamp Albums, 1938, VPA114, Series 4, Box 11, Folder 83, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

While the collaboration between fossil hunters and fossil fuel may come as something of a surprise to contemporary thinkers, for the first half of the 20th century, dinosaurs and oil were integrally linked in the collective American mind. The Sinclair Oil logo, with its green dinosaur, trademarked in 1930, was the most well-known symbol of this coupling. Sinclair leveraged the public 'dinomania' as a fit expression of the company's corporate ambitions.

As the company marketing materials explained in 1934, "Sinclair uses dinosaurs in its motor oil advertising to impress on your mind the tremendous age of the crude oils from which Sinclair Motor Oils are made."¹² An advertisement from the same year claims that, "It was while dinosaurs roamed the earth that Nature was mellowing and filtering the crude oils which are now refined into Sinclair lubricants." Despite the pleasing notion that plastic toy dinosaurs are actually made of old dinosaur — in that plastic is from oil and oil is from dinosaurs — it is not the case. This popular idea is based on the premise that the world's oil reserves were formed during the Mesozoic era, when dinosaurs lived.¹³ In fact, oil pre-dates dinosaurs. It is generally believed that this misconception was the direct result of the Sinclair Oil logo and its somewhat suggestive advertising materials. By bringing on board the most famous paleontologist in the world as an advisor, Sinclair legitimized its scientific claims, and by 1934, at least, the claims were accurate.



Sinclair Dinosaur Stamp Album No. 2 with Other Ancient Reptiles. Sinclair Refining Company, Inc., 1935. VPA 114, Series 4, Box 11, Folder 83, Barnum Brown Papers, Department of Vertebrate Paleontology Archives, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

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Barnum Brown died in 1963, so did not see Sinclair's "dramatic life-size replicas" at the New York World's Fair. But he is nevertheless acknowledged on the inside cover of "The Exciting World of Dinosaurs," as technical consultant "the late Dr. Barnum Brown, Curator Emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History."¹⁴ There is no question that the 20th century paleontologist-oil company match-up allowed for enormous advances in paleontology, but it also provided site maps for oil drilling. Sinclair even added oil derricks to Brown's aerial photographs to illustrate where to drill. Sinclair also reaped the benefits of their involvement with paleontology and the museum, becoming one of the most successful and easily recognizable oil companies in history. Sinclair's dino has been a 72 foot balloon in the New York Thanksgiving Day Parade on and off since 1963, and in 2022, having weathered the 20th century, Sinclair Oil, still leaning into its dinosaur-adjacent identity, began to be traded in the New York Stock Exchange as DINO.¹⁵

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