

Minnesota Collects Tour Series

Object List Week 3 – August 5 and 7, 2008

Asian Art

1. Chinese snuff bottles, 18th – 19th c.
2. Chrysanthemum white jade dishes (Mughal style), Ch'ing dynasty, China, 18th c.
3. Vase with *clair de lune* glaze, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 1723 – 35
4. Vase with peach bloom glaze, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 1662 – 1722
5. Vase with celadon glaze, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 18th c.
6. Covered vase, white and brown jadeite, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 18th c.
7. Lotus, pleasure boat and swans white jadeite vases, Ch'ing dynasty, 18th c.
8. Gold presentation boxes, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 1779
9. Chrysanthemum green jadeite plate, Ch'ing dynasty, China, 18th c.
10. Pair of bodhisattvas, Northern Ch'i or Sui dynasties, China, late 6th c.
11. Axe scepter of gray-black jade, Shang dynasty, China, 1766 – 1122 BCE
12. Pair of dancing figures, Han dynasty, China, 206 BCE - 220
13. Bronze vessel in the shape of an owl, Shang dynasty, China, late 14th – 13th c., BCE
14. Bronze lei with inlay, E. Chou dynasty, China, late 4th c. BCE

If time allows:

15. Earthenware bowl with black glaze, Seljuk period, Persia (Iran), 1204 – 1215
16. Lusterware ewer, Seljuk period, Persia (Iran), before 1220
17. Bit and cheek plaques, Luristan, Persia (Iran), 899 – 400 BCE

Alfred Fiske Pillsbury

By bequest

Ancient Chinese jades
Luristan bronzes
Islamic ceramics, Persia (Iran)
Ancient Chinese bronze ritual bronzes
Monochrome Chinese porcelains
Unglazed Chinese tomb figures

Biography¹

Alfred Pillsbury was the son of John Sargent Pillsbury, the co-founder of Pillsbury Mills (actually run by and named after John's nephew, Charles A. Pillsbury) and Governor of Minnesota. Born in 1876, he went to the University of Minnesota, where "he is remembered as one of the first great Minnesota football players." He was team captain for 2 years. Alfred owned the first high-wheeled bicycle in Minneapolis and one of its first 3 automobiles, which used steam locomotion, ran on bicycle wheels and steered with a tiller. He earned a law degree in 1894, then went to work full-time for his dad (as president of the St. Anthony Falls Water Power Company, president of the Union Terminal Elevator Company, and VP of Pillsbury Flour). Yet he found time over the years to serve as director or trustee on the boards of banks, life insurance companies, Twin City Rapid Transit, the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, First Universalist Society, Minneapolis Park Board, and 13 years as trustee with the MIA. He was an avid collector of Chinese art, concentrating on "works of subtle understatement that, at the time, were often overlooked by other Oriental enthusiasts."² But his collecting habits "horrified New York art experts by shipping priceless blue jade items...by regular express without a guard." His entire collection of some 900 objects came to the MIA at his death in 1950.

Alfred and his wife Eleanor lived at 116 22nd Street in Minneapolis, not far from the museum. She was from Boston, the daughter of Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Field. They never had any children.³

Role in Minnesota's Past

Though Alfred had a career as an executive in various Pillsbury concerns, he "never cared much for the family business, devoting his attention instead to art collecting." Having said that, he certainly took his responsibilities to the family estate seriously. In 1898 when a New York syndicate attempted a takeover of the Pillsbury mills, it was Alfred who got the support from shareholders needed to defeat the takeover. But he eventually reduced his role to that of treasurer, freeing him up to pursue his many other interests.

¹ Primarily from "Arthur Fiske Pillsbury, Milling Executive Noted for Collection of China Jade, Bronze," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 3-13-50

² *Their Splendid Legacy: the first 100 Years of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts*, Jeffrey A. Hess, Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, 1985, Ch. 4, Part II

³ "Alfred Pillsbury, Mill Official, Dies," *New York Times*, Mar 13, 1950

Thomas Barlow Walker

Art donated

None by Walker himself. The MIA acquired much of Walker's Chinese jade collection long after his death by purchase from the Walker Foundation. Other objects, including the jade mountain, were gifted (at least partially) by the Foundation.

Biography

Walker was born in 1840 in Ohio, then on the American frontier. When he was nine, his father died on his way to the fields of the California Gold Rush, leaving young Walker to help support his family. He worked at various jobs, including lumberjack and traveling salesman of "grindstones, wooden bowls and wagon spokes."¹ He arrived in St. Paul during the height of the Civil War, and found a job as a surveyor of timber lands. He began buying up timber properties and building sawmills, and in 1882 he organized the Red River Lumber Co., which made his fortune. Almost immediately, he began acquiring art and put together a collection that was both huge and eclectic. It soon filled the facilities of the Art Society, then the public library (which he paid for), then his home. A 1913 biographer of Walker called the gallery at his home "one of the finest art galleries in America or Europe."² He offered it all to the city, but was initially turned down, "mainly because the aldermen did not want to obligate the city to pay for a suitable gallery, aside from the Minneapolis Art Institute. A proposal to build a 'Walker wing' to the Art Institute did not find favor with Mr. Walker...[He] then proceeded to build his own gallery."³ Since he paid for the building and donated the land, the city accepted both the collection and the building. Its location was next door to Walker's own house across the street from St. Mark's church on Hennepin Avenue. It opened in 1927 and eventually became the Walker Art Center, leaving the MIA with nothing. Walker died in 1928.

The MIA got another chance, and almost blew that one, too. In 1987 the Walker Foundation lent most of its Chinese jades, including the jade mountain, to the MIA with the understanding that the MIA would buy them. The museum dragged its feet, and the Foundation began considering a sale elsewhere. Luckily, director Evan Mauer (now retired) took action and finalized the acquisition in 1992.

Role in Minnesota's Past

The first sawmill in the area began operations in 1849 at St. Anthony Falls. During the following decade, the lumber industry boomed. In fact, the term "boom" refers to the barrier (usually of chained logs) stretched across the river to corral the freshly cut logs as they floated downstream. "The lumber industry had two long-term effects on the growth of the City of Minneapolis. First, it provided a great amount of capital in the form of profits, capital which was available for investment in other industries; and secondly, it caused industries related to lumbering to develop and concentrate in Minneapolis. Much

¹ *History of Minneapolis, Gateway to the Northwest*, Marion Daniel Shutter, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1923, Vol. III

² *Ibid.*

³ "T.B. Walker Reached Top in Lumber Industry After Struggles as Poor Youth," *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 29, 1928

of the capital generated by lumbering was used to finance flour milling...as well as related industries, especially railroads.”³⁴ Walker was only one of several who made enormous fortunes in the lumber industry. His fortune made possible the public library, the symphony orchestra, the park system, and of course the Walker Art Center.

⁴ Primarily taken from *City of Lakes: An Illustrated History of Minneapolis*, Joseph Stipanovich, Windsor Publications, 1982

Augustus Leach Searle

By gift

Mughal jades
Gold presentation boxes
Pair of white marble bodhisattvas
Snuff bottles
Some lacquer objects
Ch'ien-Lung jades
Rhinoceros horn cups

Biography¹

Augustus Searle was born in New York in 1863 and arrived in Minnesota in about 1882, 19 years old with a new bride and 50 cents to his name. En route, he'd had a job in a flourmill in Grand Rapids, MI, so with that vast experience behind him, he became a wheat buyer, then a traveling superintendent for an elevator company, then an "executive" for various Canadian grain firms, then a controlling investor in and chief executive of some of them. In 1928 at age 65, he consolidated 4 of them into the Searle Grain Co., operating about 400 grain elevators in western Canada and more in Minnesota. He died in 1955 at age 91.

He and his wife Helen were married in 1882 and had 3 children.⁴ They began collecting after a trip to Beijing in the early 1920s, and their first donation to the MIA was their grouping of Chinese snuff bottles.² Searle's primary focus was 18th c. Chinese decorative arts, and the MIA's collection would be greatly diminished without his contributions. He was an MIA trustee for 24 years. His interest in the arts also led him to become a patron of the Smithsonian Institution.

Role in Minnesota's Past

Searle's ownership of grain elevators made him "one of the Midwest's largest grain dealers" during the early 20th c.³ Without grain elevators to store their grain, Minnesota's farmers would've been unable to make efficient use of railroads for transporting their harvest.⁴ And it was the railroads that enabled farmers to supply large markets at long distances from their farms. Searle's elevators supplied the vital connection between the farmer and the miller that helped Minneapolis's flourmills flourish.

¹ Primarily from "Augustus L. Searle, Leader in Grain Business, Dies at 91," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, Feb. 2, 1955

² *Their Splendid Legacy: the first 100 Years of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts*, Jeffrey A. Hess, Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, 1985, Ch. 4, Part II

³ *The Story of Minnesota's Past*, Rhoda R. Gilman, Minnesota Historical Society, 1989

⁴ *History of Minneapolis, Gateway to the Northwest*, Marion Daniel Shutter, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1923, Vol. II