

Minnesota Collects Tour Series

Object List Week 4 – August 12 and 14, 2008

Decorative Arts and Art of the Americas

1. Vase, Derby Porcelain Factory, England, 1758 – 69
2. Medusa, Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, American, c. 1854
3. “States” platter, John and Ralph Clews, Staffordshire, England, c. 1820
4. Charleston drawing room (Stuart house, Charleston, S.C.), 1772
 - a. Ivory chess set, China, 18th c.
 - b. Folding card table, attr. to John Goddard, Newport, R.I., American, c. 1765
 - c. Harp, Pierre Joseph Cousineau, French, 1780 - 90
5. Chocolate pot, George Garthorne, London, English, 1686
6. Pair of dancers in front of trees, Bow Porcelain Factory, England, c. 1765
7. Tea Service, Paul Revere, Boston, MA, 1792 – 3
8. Dressing table, the Garvan Carver, Philadelphia, PA, 1760 – 80
9. Tankards, John Coney (Boston, 1715 – 20) and Peter Van Dyck (New York, 1720 – 35), American
10. Toilette set, William Fowle, English, 1683
11. Piano, Batley case, British, c. 1878
12. Necklaces, Navajo (Diné), first half 20th c.
13. Concha belts, Navajo (Diné), 1930 – 1960
14. Bracelets, Navajo (Diné), 1950s
15. Buttons, Navajo (Diné), first half 20th c.

Walter C. and Mary C. Briggs

By gift, bequest and through endowment and a charitable trust

Snake jug, Anna pottery (partial funding)

Piano, c. 1865

Sevrès porcelain écuelle (porringer)

Pair of figures, Bow Porcelain

Vase, Derby Porcelain

“States” platter, Staffordshire

Pair of glass celery vases

Bed curtain, c. 1740

Saint-Gaudens, William Evarts Beaman in his Fourth Year

Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, Medusa

Fowle, Toilette service (partial funding)

Biography

Walter and Mary Briggs were siblings, and neither one ever married. Walter was born in 1900, and Mary in 1906. They went to West High School in Minneapolis; Walter went on to Yale, where he studied economics. Mary went to Smith College, and then received a fellowship in violin at Julliard.¹ He followed his father into banking, becoming an assistant Vice President in the Trust Department at Norwest Bank.² She became a concert violinist.³ Their parents owned Victorian furniture, but Walter liked Chippendale. It was, however, out of his price range. Instead he learned woodworking, and eventually created a house full of exquisite, intricate reproduction furniture, some of which he copied from examples at the MIA. He and Mary lived with their parents in the family home they grew up in. Their mother enjoyed collecting antiques, and when she died in 1952, the siblings began making annual trips to Europe, buying porcelains and any other object that would fit into their home décor. Besides giving the MIA many beautiful objects, they provided for income from a charitable trust to come in perpetuity to the museum, a gift valued at over \$1 million.⁴ In their honor, the museum’s third floor period rooms court was renamed the Briggs Gallery. Walter died in 1983, Mary in 1999.

Role in Minnesota’s Past

The Briggses loved art and they loved the MIA. Their gifts were intended to “ensure that future museum visitors will have the same opportunities that they did at the Art Institute. Visitors young and old will continue to visit the Institute to enjoy and learn from its splendid collection for many years to come.”⁴ That kind of generosity and concern for the arts is an absolute necessity in order for our precious artistic heritage to be preserved. The museum has been extremely fortunate to have attracted, as it continues to attract, that intensity of devotion.

¹ Funeral Notice (Briggs, Mary), *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Aug 31, 1999

² Funeral Notice (Briggs, Walter), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, Dec 29, 1983

³ “Art in Our Life: Mary and Walter Briggs,” *Arts Magazine*, April, 1983

⁴ *New Beginnings Campaign* newsletter, Spring 1992

Virginia Doneghy

By bequest

About 875 pieces of Southwest Indian silver

Biography

Virginia Doneghy was an anomaly amongst the many generous benefactors of the museum's collection. She wasn't rich or famous. Born in 1900, she spent 49 years cataloguing rare books for the University of Minnesota.¹ On her way home from a visit to California in the late 1930s, she made a stop in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and fell in love with a Navajo silver necklace. She got "bit by the bug," and so her collection of about 875 pieces of Southwestern silver jewelry began. Then MIA director Samuel Sachs II wrote about her, "Virginia Doneghy was the sort of collector museum directors dream about... We, who never knew of her activities, were confronted with her staggering accomplishment fully grown – a *fait accompli* – and it had all happened in our backyard... Asked once if she had intended to create such a major assemblage of Indian jewelry, she replied: ' Oh no. It just happened. It just grew like Topsy. I couldn't control myself. It was an obsession. I would go out to the Southwest. I knew I didn't need anything more, didn't want anything more. But what I would come back with! It is like drink really. It really is. You see these things and you feel you've got to have them. Why? God only knows. You don't.'"² What makes this collection even more astounding is that Ms. Doneghy had no independent means of getting around in what was pretty wild country (it still is today). She wrote, "I was dependent on public transportation, including the mail buses, and claim I have helped deliver more baby chicks than any other woman tourist."³

Role in Minnesota's Past

Whether consciously or not, Ms. Doneghy was one in a long line of Minnesotans who preserved for us a part of the vanishing culture of the American Indian. She joins people like Seth Eastman, Edward K. Thomas, Thomas W. Wood, and photographers Talmadge Elwell and Benjamin Upton. She herself commented, "My collection has emerged from a world which no longer exists."³ Luckily for us, we can still view at least a part of that world through the jewelry she generously gave the museum.

¹ Obituary, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, Nov. 22, 1981

² *Southwest Indian Silver From the Doneghy Collection*, ed. by Louise Lincoln, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1982, p. 5

³ *Ibid.*, p. 183

James Ford Bell

By gift and through funds

Collection of English and American colonial silver¹

Paul Revere tea set

Charleston period rooms

Garvan carver dressing table`

Chippendale ladderback side chair

Gilt tazza, c. 1575 (partial funding)

Chinese ivory chess set

Folding card table, c. 1750

Dolphin sofa (partial funding)

Savery tilt-top table

Biography

James Ford Bell was born in 1879, son of James Stroud Bell.³ The elder Bell had moved to Minneapolis from Philadelphia to head up one of Minneapolis's earliest and most successful flour milling companies, the Washburn Crosby Company.⁴ After majoring in chemistry at the University of Minnesota, Bell joined that company, and eventually became its president, then chairman of the board. One of his achievements was to help "embark Betty Crocker on her famous career."² Bell had a number of collecting interests, one being early American silver (which he gave to the MIA), another being an extensive book and manuscript collection which now resides at the University of Minnesota. The story of his search for period rooms for the MIA can be found in Christopher Monkhouse's article in the *20th Annual Antiques Show and Sale Catalogue* of 2003. Bell served for many years as a trustee of the MIA, and died in 1961. His children and grandchildren carry on his interest in and patronage of the museum. Ford Bell, for example, has served as an MIA trustee, and was co-chairman of the recent Bring Art to Life capital campaign. There are currently at least 6 Bell family funds with a total of over \$3 million supporting this institution. See below.

Role in Minnesota's Past

In the 1920s the local milling industry declined as it lost business to other milling centers and to a diversified economy. Bell was one of the few with the vision to rely on economies of scale, consolidating milling interests on a national level through a merger of Washburn Crosby with a number of other companies and creating General Mills in 1928. Under his leadership, General Mills went into "diversified fields such as vitamins, industrial chemicals, soybean products... [and] ready-mix cakes."² He also expanded its businesses into home appliances, as well as setting up research laboratories to develop new food products. Without his foresight, Minneapolis would probably not have grown into the city it is today.

Bell Family Funds

James Ford Bell Foundation Endowment for Art Acquisition

James Ford Bell Foundation Fund in honor of Charles H. Bell and Lucy W. Bell

Bell Family Fund for Decorative Arts

Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Bell Fund for Decorative Arts

Ford and Amy Bell Endowment Fund for Decorative Arts

James S. Bell Memorial Fund

¹See *English and American Silver in the Collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts*, Puig, Banister, Ward and McFadden, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1989

²Primarily based on his obituary, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, May 8, 1961

³The James S. Bell Memorial Fund purchased the Paul de Lamerie wine cistern, soup tureen and two-handled cup and cover, among many other objects, for the museum.

⁴General Mills web site, "History of Innovation, Our Milling Roots and Beyond"