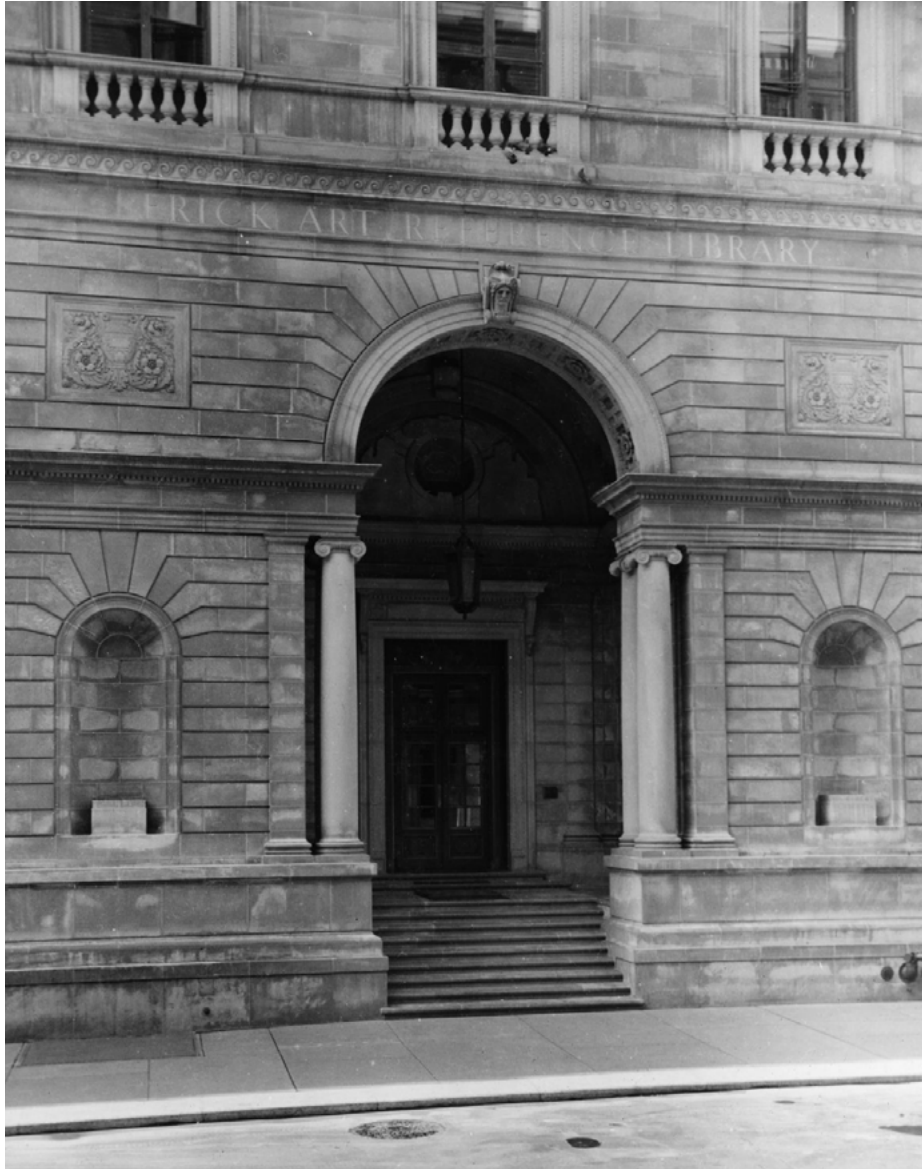


FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY



The Art of

Collecting

An introduction to the founding of the Library by Helen Clay Frick and its early formative years.

Constructing

This section sheds light on collections of black-and-white photographs of the construction of the Library.

Corresponding

This section examines the letters, diaries, and photographs concerning Library administration found in the archives.

Conserving

This section highlights the Library's role during World War II as the meeting place for a committee that created maps used to protect art in Europe.

Hello & Welcome

Hello and welcome to the Frick Art Reference Library, located in heart of New York City at 10 East 71st Street, adjacent to The Frick Collection.

The story of the Library begins in 1920, when Helen Clay Frick set forth to build an institution full of books, auction catalogs, photographs, and archives. The love of Henry Clay Frick, her father, for collecting art prompted her passionate endeavor to gather materials related to art scholarship and to preserve rare documents. How did such a library come into conception, then creation?

Throughout the last 100 years, the Library has grown beyond the original idea that Helen had for creating the institution. Today, it has more than 6,000 visitors a year who use its collections and attends its programs. Stephen J. Bury, Andrew W. Mellon Chief Librarian, is writing a 100 objects book to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Library. The book is currently in the development stage, involving the compilation of and research into distinctive objects from the collections of the Library. Rather than present a list, the book will draw connections among objects through a narrative that presents to the history of the Library and the growth of its collections.

This magazine reviews important events of the founding and early years of the Library, leading up to the middle of the twentieth century. Each section centers on a theme: collecting, constructing, corresponding, and conserving. Authored by three Library Administration interns, it serves as a supplement to the forthcoming 100 objects book by focusing on a few objects that sparked the interest of the interns and engaging with them in a creative manner. The interns throughout the summer of 2019 assembled additional research to this handbook on the complete set of 100 objects.

Written by Suna Cha and Payton Goad

JULY 2019



Reading Room of the Frick Art Reference Library, c. 1935,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

ART OF COLLECTING



Helen Clay Frick, 1908, The Frick Collection/
Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

HELEN CLAY FRICK

Greater New York City Area | 500+ connections |

Affiliations: Frick Art Reference Library, The Frick Collection, The Frick Pittsburgh

Helen Clay Frick (1888–1984) founded the Frick Art Reference Library in 1920. It opened to the public in 1922 before moving to its current building in 1935. As the daughter of Henry Clay Frick, an American industrialist and art collector, Helen developed early on a passion for art and art collecting. Following his death in 1919, her father's will stipulated that the Frick family's mansion be converted to a museum open to the public, "which shall encourage and develop the study of the fine arts, and which shall promote the general knowledge of kindred subjects among the public at large." Expanding upon her father's legacy, Helen had another endeavor in mind: to create a library full of books, auction catalogs, and photographs to aid art scholarship.

Skills & Endorsements

Leadership—endorsed by Robert Witt + 4 others
Art collecting & management
Research
Library administration

Interests

Italian Art
Travel
Arts & Culture
Education

PEOPLE ALSO SEARCH FOR:

SIR ROBERT WITT

London, United Kingdom | 500+ connections |

Affiliations: Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art

Sir Robert Witt (1872–1952) was a British art historian widely acclaimed for his Library of Picture Reproductions (now The Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London). Witt first conceived of the library in his college dorm while a student at Oxford University. His collection of photographs and reproductions of artworks grew from 500 to 300,000 upon marrying his wife, Lady Mary, who shared the same interests and tastes in histories of art and collecting, particularly of the Italian Renaissance. Needing a large space for their collection, the couple used the entire first floor of their very own home at 32 Portman Square in London to house it. Witt's library was a key foundation for inspiring Helen Clay Frick to open a library of the same caliber and scope, if not better, in New York City.



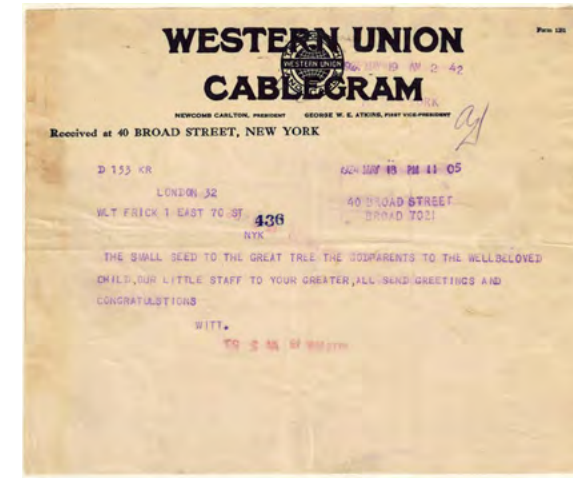
Sir Robert Clermont Witt, 1924, National Portrait
Gallery, London.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP: NEW YORK AND LONDON

Helen Clay Frick was a frequent traveler to Europe, visiting countries such as France, Italy, and Switzerland for both study and leisure. England was no exception. On May 24, 1920, she was introduced to Sir Robert Witt through her friend, Keith Merrill. She was thrilled to see his renowned Library of Picture Reproductions in London.

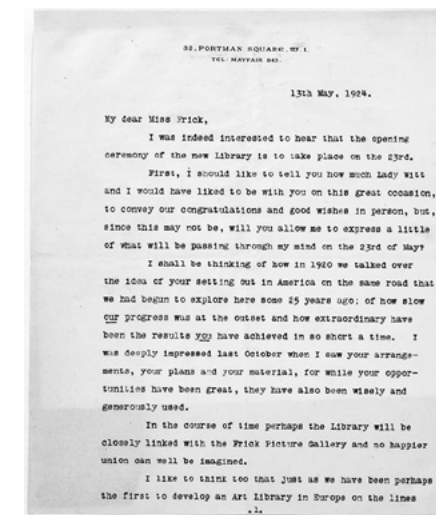
Helen Clay Frick:
May I copy-cat your library?

Sir Robert Witt: Of course you may and shall. Not only that, but I will gladly help you make an even better library than this one of mine.



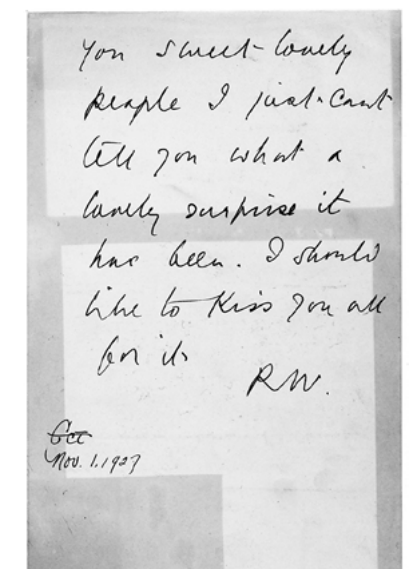
Western Union Cablegram from Sir Robert Witt to Helen Clay Frick, May 18, 1924,
1920–1929 Scrapbook, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Ever since their first meeting, Helen and Sir Robert continued a long-lasting relationship that helped the Frick Art Reference Library come to fruition. Sir Robert and Lady Mary Witt were essential to its conception and founding of it. Beginning as a seed of an idea, the Library grew and developed into a magnificent tree. Sir Robert uses this metaphor to describe his excitement for the Library's potential in a cablegram sent in 1924 after it opened to the public. Named as the godfather of the Library by Helen, Sir Robert affectionately called the Library his "well beloved child." Their correspondence reveals the amount of energy they had undertaken to bring the Library to life.



Letter from Sir Robert Witt to Helen Clay Frick,
May 13, 1924, 1920–1929 Scrapbook, The Frick Collection/
Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Sir Robert addresses Helen in a letter, pictured at left, expressing his inability to attend the opening ceremony of the Library, much to his dismay. He reflects on their first meeting and rudimentary stages, while sharing his delight over how much and how quickly the Library has grown. In a handwritten letter to Library staff, pictured at right, he conveys his utmost affection and praise. It states, "You sweet lovely people I just can't tell you what a lovely surprise it has been. I should like to kiss you all for it."



Handwritten letter from Sir Robert Witt to library staff,
November 1, 1927, 1920–1929 Scrapbook,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

BEGINNINGS

With the support of Sir Robert Witt, Helen Clay Frick launched her life-long mission to create and sustain a library for art scholarship. Upon gathering materials, it was essential to implement an effective way to document and organize the information.

Sir Robert and Lady Mary Witt classified the photographs in their collection by national schools, such as French, Italian, British, Dutch, and Flemish, and then by artists arranged alphabetically. Within each artist's file, works were placed according to the subject, such as religious, mythological, portrait, and landscape. Following this highly systematized way of keeping records, Helen began to work on actualizing her project with the help of art historians, librarians, and scholars.

For instance, Sir Robert undertook the research and acquisition of English materials for the Library. For Italian auction sales, Helen relied on Conte Umberto Gnoli from 1928 to 1932, followed by Cavaliere Mario Sansoni. In addition, Helen consulted two of America's greatest scholars, Edward W. Forbes and Paul Sachs, both of Harvard University. Each of these personal connections would prove invaluable to Helen and her agenda.



Clotilde Brière-Misme Plaque in the Reading Room of the Frick Art Reference Library.

One such figure was not only a scholar who helped gather materials, but also a close correspondent of Helen. Madame Clotilde Brière-Misme, an art historian and librarian in Paris, served as an important representative in France and Holland for collecting books, auction catalogs, and photographs. Her name is inscribed on a plaque on the wall of the Reading Room. It states, "In loving and grateful memory of Clotilde Brière-Misme, whose knowledge and constant help during the first twenty years of the Frick Art Reference Library were responsible for its growth and efficiency."

"The purpose of the library is to file a photographic reproduction of every painting and drawing of ancient and modern times in Europe and the United States to aid all students of art, whether professional or amateur, in scholarly study."

—International Studio, December 1925, p. 168



Title Page, Witt Catalog, 1920. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

One of the earlier acquisitions of the Frick Art Reference Library, this catalog (right) of the painters and draftsmen represented in the Witt Library likely served as a guide for the librarians and staff, as they modeled the Frick's image collection catalog after that of Sir Robert and Lady Mary. The librarians made additions to this catalog, as shown in the red.



Page 70, Witt Catalog, 1920. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



Book stacks in the bowling alley, Frick residence., New York City. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



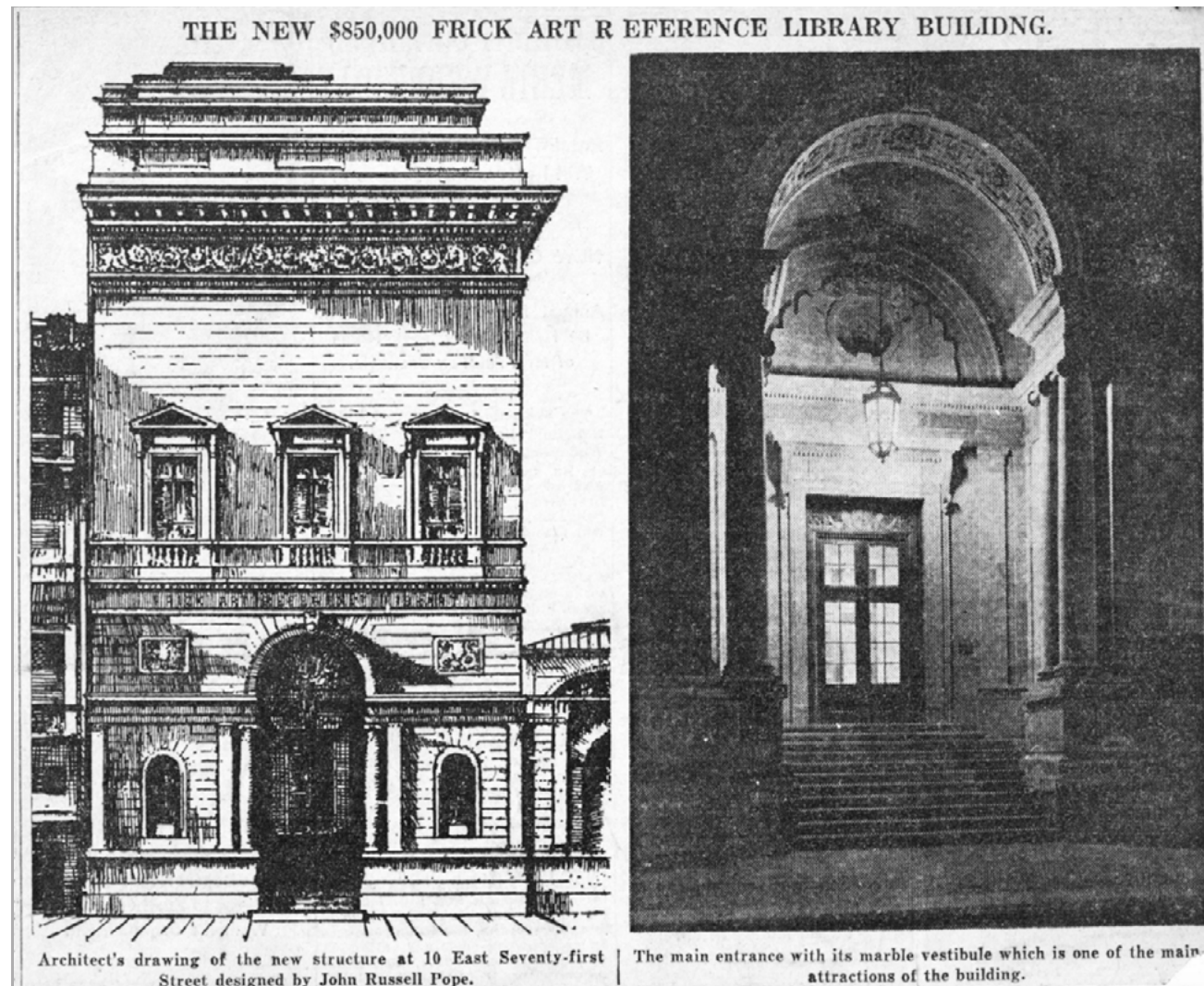
Bowling Alley woodwork, Frick residence, New York City. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

The Library expanded its art research material both temporally and regionally. In a little over a decade since its founding in 1920, the collection grew to 45,000 books and 200,000 photographs. With the suggestion of scholars, the Library also began collecting photographs of illuminated manuscripts and sculpture in addition to drawings and paintings, diversifying in mediums as well. Helen began using the bowling alley and the billiard room of the Frick residence for Library purposes, such as storage for books, offices for the indexing staff, and a photo-mounting machine. The beloved bowling alley, a distinctive feature of the family home used for leisure, would soon prove to be lacking space for the library's growing collections.

The bowling alley, however, would still leave its mark on the legacy of the Library, serving as an inspiration for the interior of the new building: The oak carvings that originally decorated its walls are now installed in the current Reading Room.

ART OF CONSTRUCTING

On October 31, 1931, the conversion of Henry Clay Frick's private residence at 1 East 70th Street in New York City into a public museum began. The construction of a new building for the Frick Art Reference Library became an aspect of this project. Helen Clay Frick established the Library in memory of her father in 1920. Its collections grew significantly during its first few years, requiring a larger building than its previous locations. John Russell Pope was the chosen architect of the Library as well as the of the conversion of the Carrère and Hastings—designed residence into a museum. The new Library building opened its doors to the public on January 14, 1935.



"The New \$850,000 Frick Art Reference Library Building," The New York Times, Sunday, January 6, 1935.

MARC EIDLITZ & SON



Frick Art Reference Library Construction, Marc Eidlitz & Son, 1934, The Frick Collection /Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

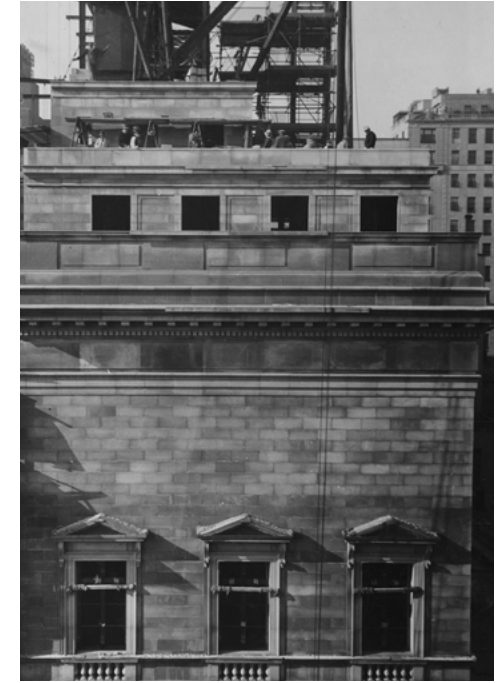
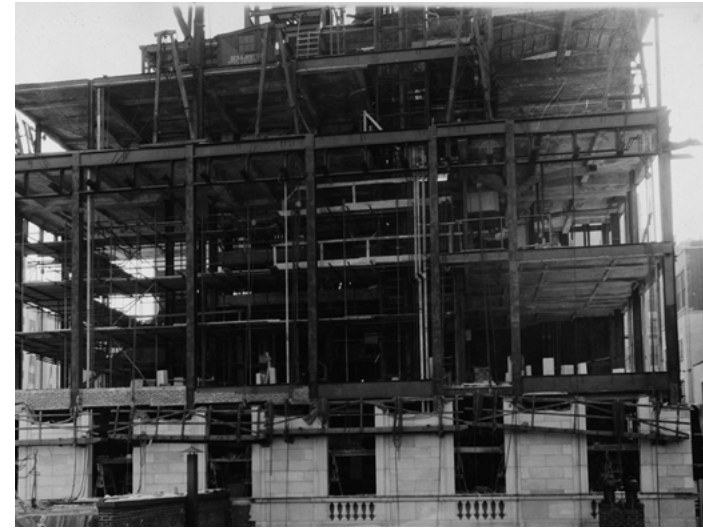
The contractor firm that built the Frick Art Reference Library, Marc Eidlitz & Son, Inc., captured its construction in a series of photographs. Eidlitz was chosen in the spring of 1932 for the expansion of the family mansion into the museum and library building. In a letter from Frederick Mortimer Clapp, Director of The Frick Collection, to architects Mr. Albert Kelsey and Mr. Paul Cret (associated architects in Pennsylvania) on October 30, 1935, Clapp revealed his respect for Eidlitz's work and the great success of his company. He writes, "The complex undertaking was carried out successfully by the Eidlitz's company to the satisfaction of the Chairman of the Committee and of myself, as well as of those trustees deeply interested in the building operation."

ALFRED COOK



Alfred Cook photographed the construction of the Library, seen in these images. He served as a footman for the Frick family from 1930 to 1931. He became an employee of The Frick Collection from 1931 to 1936. Cook's responsibilities at the museum are not completely known. In staff documentation, his job category is listed as "miscellaneous." There are a handful of documents that provide evidence of the work Cook completed. A memorandum report from the Photographic Department from April 1933 reads, "Since the first of the year The Frick Collection has had Mr. Alfred Cook making 'progress photographs' of the work. He has been getting on with the work in a good way, has used one of our outfits for a camera when not in use and has used our work rooms without inconvenience or interruption to us or our work." A letter to Mr. Childs Frick from Director Frederick Mortimer Clapp on December 30, 1935, reads, "Alfred Cook, who was one of the former domestic staff of the house and who since interested himself in photography to the extent of graduating from a well-known school treating that subject as well as practising art ... Alfred has made all the extensive progress photographs of the building program as well as others of architecture and interior detail required." Though not much is known about Cook, his artful eye gave us documentation of the progress of construction for the Library building.

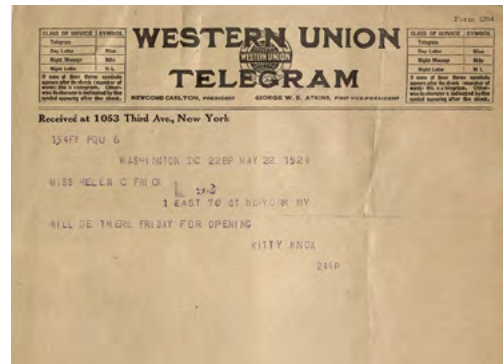
To view additional images from this series, see <https://digitalcollections.frick.org>.



Frick Art Reference Library Construction, Alfred Cook, c. 1933–1935, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

ART OF CORRESPONDING

Topics of the letters in The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives range from the opening of the Frick Art Reference Library to staff members concerns about the safety of lifelong friends during World War II.



Helen Clay Frick Records—Correspondence,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Besides handwritten letters, other modes of communication came in the form of telegrams, a message sent through electrical signals that are fed through a wire. Displayed here is a Western Union Telegram from Katharine “Kitty” Knox, a close friend of Helen Clay Frick, as well as an art historian specializing in early American art. Kitty worked with the Library as a researcher, consultant, and special staff member for more than fifty years. Dated May 22, 1924, the message confirms her attendance for the opening of the Library.

In conjunction with the written items in the archives, visuals such as photographs help put names to the faces of the many women who made the Library possible. Taken in the courtyard of 1 East 70th Street is this black-and-white photograph that portrays fifteen women who comprised the staff in 1924 (right). Aligned in a row, each woman holds onto the shoulders of the person in front of her, and smiles or glances at the camera (except for the first woman, Anna Flichtner-Barretto, who gazes ahead). Annotations below the women indicate their names. Viewing an image such as this evokes a type of nostalgia for the time when the idea of the Library was beginning to turn into a reality.



Frick Art Reference Library Staff in the Courtyard of 1 East 70th Street, 1924,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



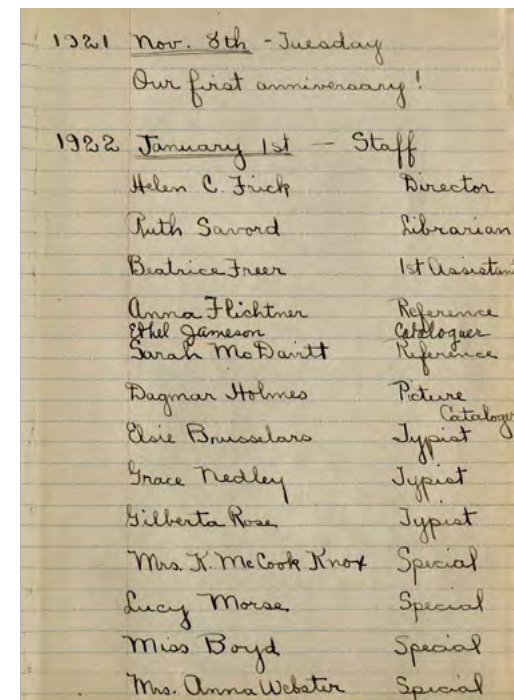
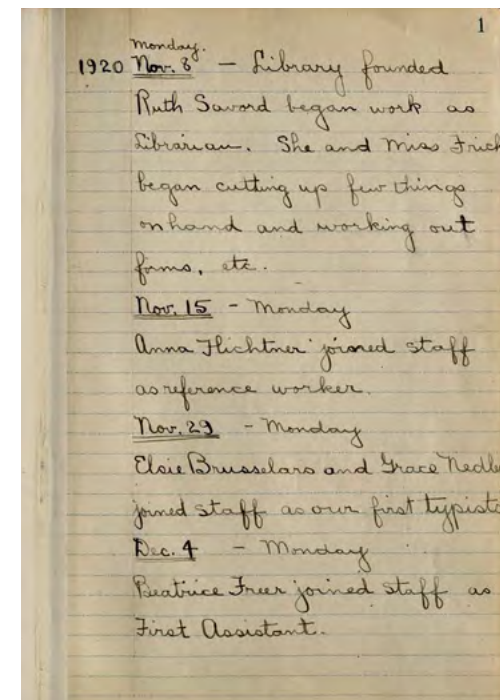
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

On the left is another staff image from the late 1920s to early 1930s. The number of staff members has increased and some of the women from the 1924 photograph can be spotted.

The staff photograph on the right dates from the late 1940s to the early 1950s and was taken on the terrace of the Library.

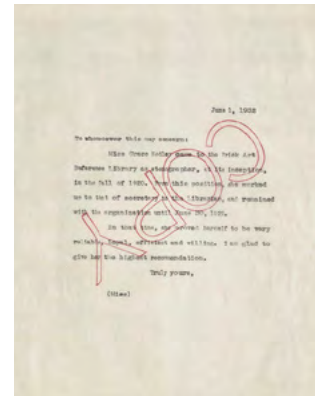
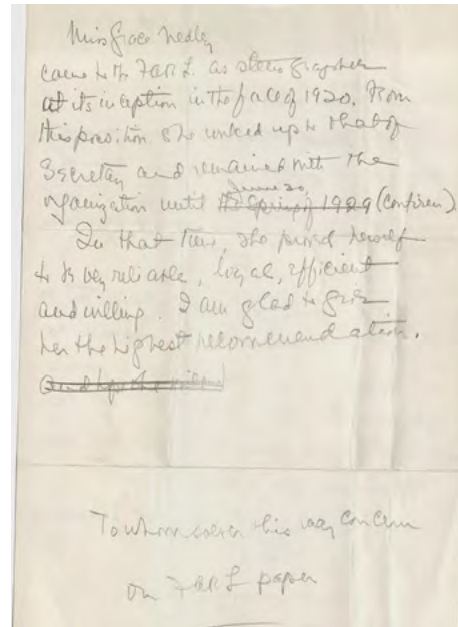


Frick Art Reference Library—Diaries, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Several diary entries from a 1920–22 notebook primarily include names and positions of staff members as well as a few commentaries from the initial years of the Library. Presumably, a secretary or assistant to Helen is the author of these entries. The first entry of this diary regards the foundation of the Library and light work done by Head Librarian Ruth Savord, alongside Helen. The other three entries on this page include staff additions, as does the following second page.

On the third page of the diary is an amusing entry that reads “Our first anniversary!” This is the only entry for 1921 and indicates that the main purpose of this diary was for staff records and relevant dates pertaining to the Library. Following the brief anniversary entry is the complete list of staff members in 1922 and their positions. Starting with the Director, Helen herself, other names include Head Librarian Ruth, Anna Flichtner (woman #1 in 1924 staff photo) in Reference, and Grace Nedley (woman #8 in 1924 staff photo) as a typist. Several names on this list can be found on the staff photograph taken two years after this entry.

Recognizable staff names, such as Grace Nedley, can be found on correspondence letters following the 1922 staff list. Among Helen's letters is a 1932 recommendation she wrote regarding Grace. Scrawled in pencil on paper, Helen states that Grace came to the Library in the fall of 1920 as a stenographer and eventually worked her way up to the position of secretary to the Head Librarian, where she remained until 1929. She writes, "In that time, she proved herself to be very reliable, loyal, efficient and willing. I am glad to give her the highest recommendation."



Helen Clay Frick
Records—Correspondence,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference
Library Archives.

The original handwritten letter by
Helen Clay Frick has been copied
and typed for easy reading,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference
Library Archives.



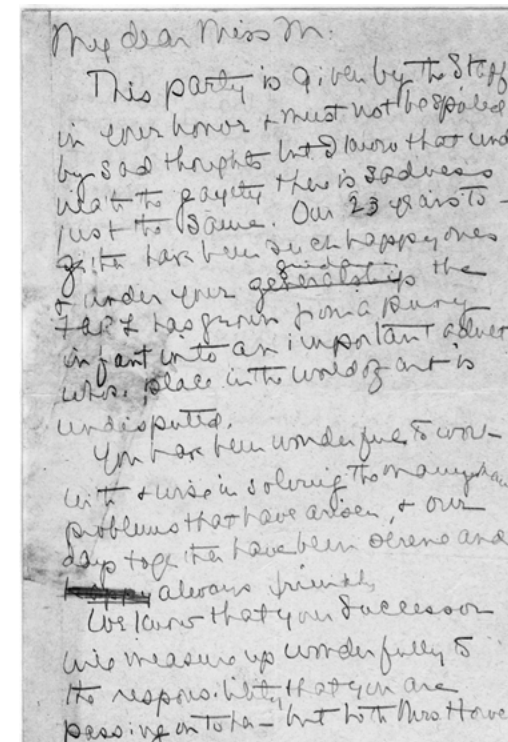
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Among the many women who assisted in turning the Library into what it is today, there are a few vital names to mention, such as Head Librarian, Ethelwyn Manning. She served beginning in 1924 for for more than twenty years. During her term she played a crucial role in several aspects of the Library, such as an expansion, staff growth, and overseeing the Library's participation in the Protection of Cultural Treasures in War Areas (later known as the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Program).

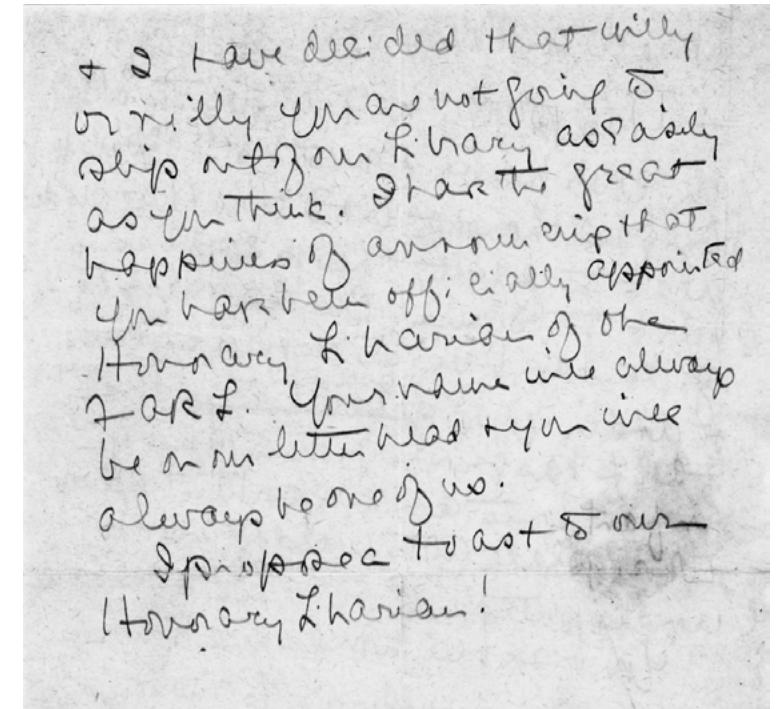
In addition to Ethelwyn, another imperative aid of the Library came from Paris, France. "The very earliest and one of the most important members of the staff of the Frick Art Reference Library was Mlle. Clotilde Misme." Helen required assistance with purchases of books and photographs, which originated with the guidance of her Library's muse, Sir Robert Witt. Eventually, this led to the participation of Clotilde after Sir Robert mentioned his previous work with her while collecting French and Dutch works for his own library. "Thanks to her wide knowledge, her many contacts, her unflinching interest in the Library and devotion to art, the Frick Art Reference Library has grown into the institution it now is... Through Mlle. Misme's own diligence the collection of art sales catalogues in the FARL is one of the greatest in the world," Helen declared concerning Clotilde's fundamental contribution.



The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

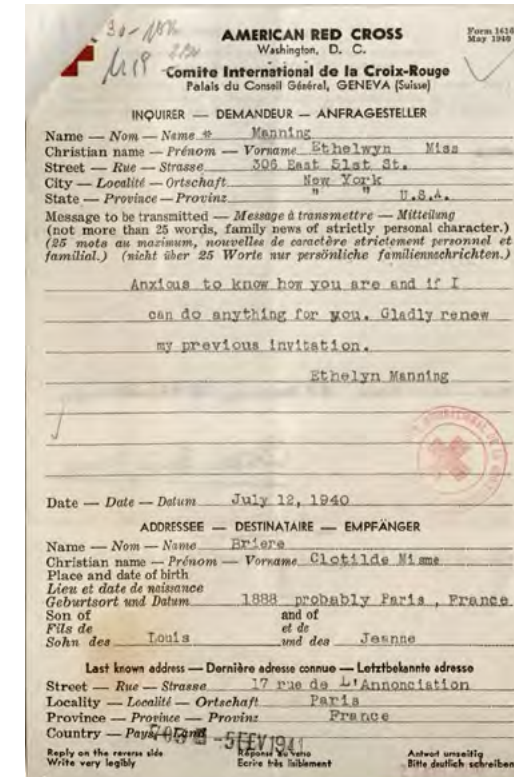


Helen Clay Frick Records—Correspondence,
The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



Ethelwyn eventually stepped down in 1947, and it was during her retirement party that Helen wrote a sentimental speech expressing her gratitude for all she had done throughout her time at the Library: "Under your generalship crossed out to read 'guidance' the FARL has grown from a puny infant into an important adult whose place in the world of art is undisputed." During Manning's tenure, the staff of the Library more than doubled, and it would not be the prestigious institution it is today without her dedicated service.

Like many of the staff members of the Library, Clotilde became a close friend of Helen as well as other women such as Ethelwyn. With the commencement of WWII, both Miss Frick and Ethelwyn worried for their friend in France as soon as they heard the news of the country's invasion in May 1940. Dated July 12, 1940, an American Red Cross letter was sent to check on Clotilde and her safety as well as to provide an offer for safe passage to America if she wished to accept. A response was received quite some time afterward from Clotilde confirming her safety, but also her anguish for her home.



Helen Clay Frick Records—Correspondence, The Frick Collection/
Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

ART OF CONSERVING



Bill Burke and Jane Mull, members of the Committee on the Protection of Cultural Treasures in War Areas at the ACLS, working at the Frick Art Reference Library with Gladys Hamlin, draftsman, on a map of Paris, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.



William Dinsmoor, chairman of the ACLS, comparing a U.S. Air Force photograph taken during a bombing attack to a keyed city map of Pisa and lists of the principal cultural monuments of the city, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

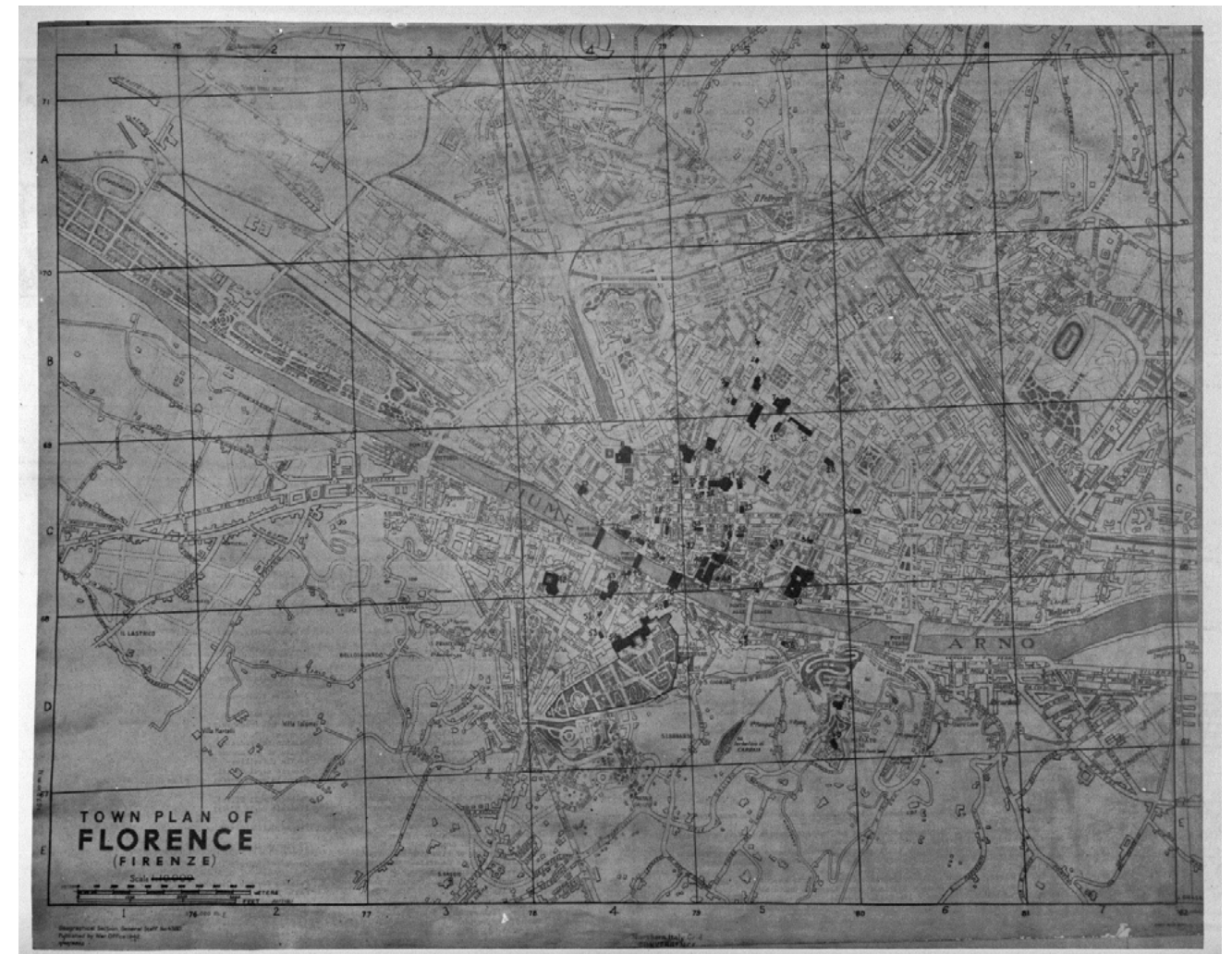
The Frick Art Reference Library played a crucial role in the protection of European art during World War II. In 1943, American architectural historian William B. Dinsmoor founded the Committee on the Protection of Cultural Treasures in War Areas. This group of scholars created maps and lists of important monuments to be spared during Allied bombing raids. It coordinated information from various sources and compiled it into an index for occupied European countries. The Library closed to the public from July 5, 1943, until January 4, 1944, for the staff to focus on map preparation. Ira W. Martin and Thurman Rotan, photographers at the Library, made significant contributions to this process. By using the technique of combining grids with overlaid tracing paper and marking sites that correlated with the main index, they were able to send completed photostats of maps with grids to Allied bomber pilots in war zones. The Dinsmoor Committee produced more than seven hundred maps.

MAPS

This map, for Florence, Italy, is taken from "Section 17: Supplement on Cultural Institutions, Supplementary Atlas on Churches, Museums, Libraries, and other Cultural Institutions in Italy" in the [Civil Affairs Handbook of Italy](#), part of a series of Army Service Forces Manuals. [A copy](#) can be found in the Frick Art Reference Library. It was published January 4, 1944.

The maps were sent to the American airmen on bombing raids overseas along with orders to avoid the cultural sites marked at almost any cost. The creators of the maps used a very specific method, as quoted in a newspaper article in the *Providence Sunday Journal* from January 21, 1945:

"The special maps are made by putting trace paper over a map of a city or district, marking on the tracing paper the shapes and locations of the buildings and summaries of their contents, and then photographing a map, tracing paper and list together. The result is a grayish map on which the sites marked are plain and, by referring to the list, easy to identify."



MEET THE CREATORS



I am Alex Binnie, a recent graduate from the University of Virginia. I majored in history and minored in architecture and am so excited to merge these two fields in my research at the Frick Art Reference Library. I chose to engage with construction photographs and World War II materials to bring my two passions to life in this project.



My name is Payton and I am one-third of the reason this awesome magazine exists! I am a recent graduate of Syracuse University with a dual bachelor's degree in art history and fine arts. I am deeply interested in personal and behind-the-scenes aspects of any type of creation, from notes quickly jotted down to items considered frivolous that are essential today for understanding the past.

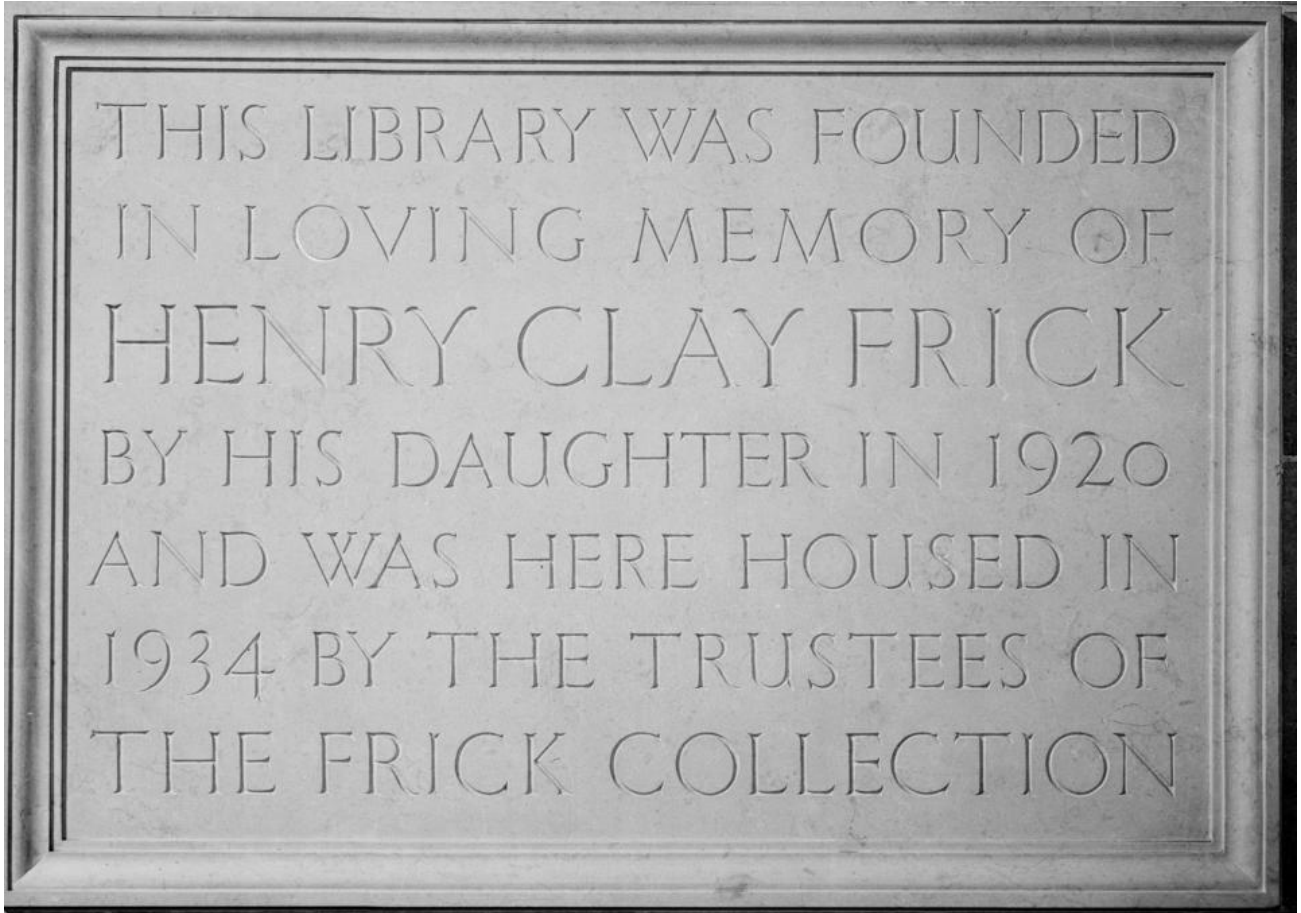


I am Suna Cha, an English and art history major at Georgetown University. For this project, I was particularly fascinated by the transatlantic relationships—between New York and London, Helen and Sir Robert—in the founding years of the Frick Art Reference Library. As an aspiring curator, I hope that weaving these objects into a narrative allows readers to engage more deeply with the Frick's intellectual, artistic, and cultural tradition.



Helen Clay Frick, 1939, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

THANK YOU!



Frick Art Reference Library inscription, 1935