

OF THE

## DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART

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DETROIT, MICHIGAN.

Number 8

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM.

In 1883, a number of public spirited gentlemen guaranteed the expense of an Art Loan Exhibition, which had been suggested by Mr. W. H. Brearley, in the hope that it might ultimately lead to the establishment of a permanent Museum, should circumstances prove favorable.

This exhibition proved eminently successful creating a wide spread interest in the movement.

Through the instrumentality of Mr. Richard Storrs Willis, His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII, was induced to present to the enterprise, with his blessing, a fine picture, representing the marriage of St. Catharine, by an old but unknown master. This, with a painting by F. D. Millet, "The Story of OEnone," which was purchased in part by a popular subscription in connection with the exhibition, and \$1,521.60 in cash, were turned over to the Detroit Museum of Art, as the net results of the enterprise. While the subject of holding the Art Loan was still a matter of discussion, Hon. Thomas W. Palmer, then United States Senator from Michigan, addressed a letter to the committee in charge, in which he stated that he had placed in the hands of Hon. Wm. A. Moore the sum of \$10,000.00 for the purpose of aiding in the purchase of a lot and the erection of a building, provided \$30,000.00

more could be secured for the same purpose.

The following gentlemen followed with a subscription of \$1,000.00 each, the last ten being named under the provision of Hon. Thomas W. Palmer's \$10,000.00 subscription:

R. A. Alger, H. P. Baldwin, Joseph Black, W. H. Brearley, C. H. Buhl, James L. Edson, Charles Endicott, D. M. Ferry, George H. Hammond, John L. Harper, Bela Hubbard, C. B. Hubbard, George V. N. Lothrop, C. R. Mabley, James McMillan, George F. Moore, William A. Moore, Samuel Mumford, C. A. Newcomb, Francis Palms, James E. Scripps, George H. Scripps, Allan Sheldon, M. S. Smith, Frederick Stearns, Mrs. Robert P. Toms, E. W. Voigt, Hiram Walker, E. Chandler Walker, Willis E. Walker, Thomas W. Palmer, Fred E. Farnsworth, Mrs. E. G. Holden, L. T. Ives, Mrs. E. C. Skinner, Mrs. H. H. Crapo Smith, Mrs. J. T. Sterling, Mrs. Morse Stewart, John L. Warren, Mrs. R. Storrs Willis.

Later on the above persons became the original incorporators.

On December 17th, at a meeting at Mr. Lothrop's residence, a committee reported the draft of a bill, which was carefully considered and adopted.

This bill was duly enacted into a law at the ensuing session of the legislature, and received the governor's signature on February 16th, 1885.

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## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM (Continued.)

March 25th, 1885, the following gentlemen were elected the first board of trustees: Messrs. W. H. Brearley, George V. N. Lothrop, Wm. A. Moore, L. T. Ives, Thomas W. Palmer and James E. Scripps. Subsequently, under the provisions of the law under which the institution was incorporated, the mayor, M. H. Chamberlain, appointed as trustees representing the city of Detroit, Messrs. Don M. Dickinson and James McMillan.

The trustees held their first meeting on June 6th, 1885, at which time Hon. Thomas W. Palmer was elected president, James McMillan, vice-president, Fred E. Farnsworth, secretary, and Wm. A. Moore, treasurer. They also, by lot, arranged themselves into four classes with reference to the order of retirement. Messrs. Moore and Dickinson were to serve for one year; Messrs. Scripps and McMillan for two; Messrs. Brearley and Lothrop for three, and Messrs. Ives and Palmer for four years.

On July 21st, the trustees authorized Mr. Brearley to make an effort to increase the fund of \$40,000.00 to \$100,000.00. By an immense amount of work this was accomplished; 1939 pledges were secured, ranging from one cent to over \$10,000.00. Most of these were faithfully paid.

November 7th, 1885, Mr. George H. Scripps presented the large painting by Rembrandt Peale, entitled "The Court of Death." This canvas is of great historic value as an example of early American Art.

The first exhibition held directly under the auspices of the Museum of Art corporation was opened in Merrill Hall, Detroit, on May 29th, 1886, and continued till June 24th. The exhibits embraced 8 pieces of statuary, 224 oil paintings, 70 water colors, 1 painting on porcelain, 1 piece of tapestry, 13 drawings, 40 old engravings, and 35 modern etchings, a total of 392 exhibits.

The total number of paid admissions was 8,987 and of free admissions 5,166. On one day the exhibition was opened free to the public, which will explain the large proportion of free entries. The expenses were \$1,456.65, leaving a net profit of \$354.94, which, with a small addition, was expended in the purchase of what was considered the best American picture exhibited, "The Missing Vessel," by F. K. M. Rehn.

On February 25th, 1887, a small landscape by C. Mergenstein, of Frankfort-on-the-Main, was added to the Museum's collection by bequest of Hon. W. Murphy, late Consul-General at Frankfort.

During the fall of 1887, Mr. George W. Balch purchased in Paris at a cost of over \$1,000.00 and presented to the Museum, 430 autotype reproductions of the more famous pictures of the old masters, found in the principal European galleries—a most interesting and valuable collection, which is constantly consulted by teachers and students.

October 13th, 1886, Henry B. Brown, Sidney D. Miller and Wm. B. Moran, representing a number of citizens, offered the General Brady Homestead, on Jefferson Avenue, valued at \$25,000.00 as a free gift to the Corporation for a Museum site; this generous offer was promptly accepted.

On this ground was erected the first stone fire proof building at a cost of \$56,385.44 which was formally opened to the public on September 1st, 1888, with a collection of modern paintings. This exhibition attracted near-

ly 25,000 visitors, but the expenses were so great, that it resulted in a loss of nearly \$2,000.00.

In November, Mr. John Ward Dunsmore was appointed Director, under whose supervision a second loan exhibition was opened in January, 1889. The following March a collection of plaster casts of antique and Roman statuary which had been purchased abroad and the first instalment of a collection of Korean and Japanese curios and art work loaned by Mr. Frederick Stearns, were exhibited. These together with numerous additions made from time to time by Mr. Stearns have made the Stearns' Collection of Oriental Art one of the most famous in the country.

August 27th, 1888, by the efforts of Mrs. E. C. Skinner and Mrs. H. P. Jenkins, aided by sixty-six other ladies and gentlemen, the painting known as the "Young Artist," by Ellen Baker, was purchased and presented to the Museum.

In October, 1889, the Trustees accepted from Mr. James E. Scripps a collection of eighty pictures, works of old masters, which during the previous four years he had been engaged in collecting. The actual cost of the pictures to Mr. Scripps had been \$70,950.84, not reckoning expenses incurred in their collection. These incidental expenses, of which no account was kept, would probably bring the entire cost up to \$75,000.00. The collection includes several notable pictures, as the large work by Rubens, purchased at the Secretan sale, which alone cost \$23,520.00; The Immaculate Conception of Murillo, which has been valued at \$20,000.00; the Martyrdom of St. Andrew by the same artist, and works by Quintin Matsys, Titian, Guido Reni, Cornelius De Vos, Steenwick, Le Nain, De Vlieger, Claude Lorraine, Cuyp, Rembrandt, Teniers, Jan Steen, Wm. Van de Velde, Peter De Hoogh and Benjamin West, most of them well authenticated works.

Between November 9th and December 7th, an exhibition of thirty-three pictures by Gari Melchers was held, at

the close of which one of the choicest, entitled "The Vespers," which had received the Potter Palmer prize of \$500 at Chicago, was presented to the Museum by the Witenagemote club. It is valued at \$1,500.00

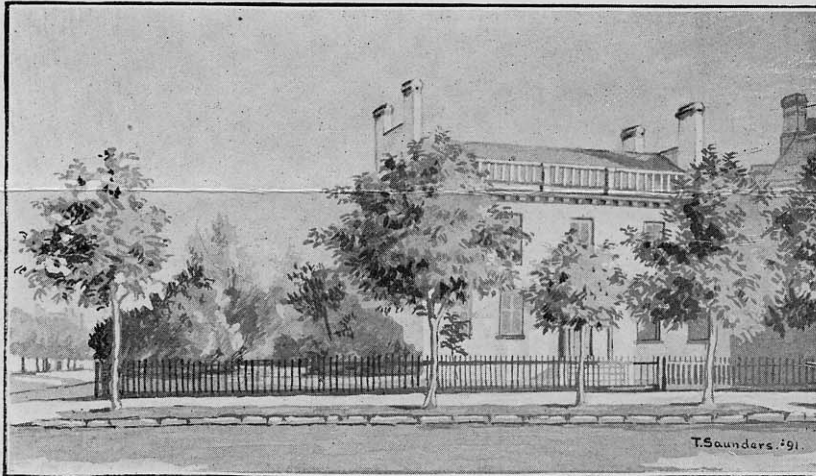
Mrs. Gilbert Hart gave \$100.00. Eight valuable architectural books by Piranesi were received, from Mr. James McMillan. A Turkish costume and dagger were given by Mr. Edward Trowbridge. Through the kindly offices of Mrs. H. H. H. Crapo Smith, Leon Escosura, the Spanish artist, painted and framed at his own expense, a portrait sketch, which he presented to the Museum.

In January, 1891, Mr. A. H. Griffith was appointed acting Director, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. John Ward Dunsmore. The next year Mr. Griffith was made Director.

A large exhibition of American Art was held in June of that year with the idea of making it annual; this one like those of former years proving a great expense, it was the consensus of opinion that several small exhibitions during the year would do more to keep up the general public interest than one large one, hence the annuals were discontinued.

In 1893, the city council made an appropriation of \$5,000.00 toward the maintenance of the Museum on the

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BRADY HOMESTEAD. SITE OF THE DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM (Concluded)

condition that the admission be free at all times.

The necessity for more room becoming most urgent, in January, 1894, the contracts were let for an addition to the building, consisting of an east and west wing, three stories in height with a statuary court in the center. This new addition with the west wing unfinished, costing over \$30,000, raised by popular subscription, was thrown open to the public November 9th, 1894.

The same year the Detroit Scientific Society entered into an arrangement whereby they were to complete the lower west corridor for the purpose of mounting and caring for their collection of natural history.

Through the generosity of Mr. Theo. D. Buhl, who bore the entire expense, the upper corridor of the same wing was completed and is known as the Buhl room in memory of his father, Mr. C. H. Buhl.

During the same year, Mr. James E. Scripps very generously offered to complete at his own expense the west gallery; this offer was promptly accepted and in it was installed permanently the collection of old masters which he had presented to the Museum.

The services of Miss Clara A. Avery, one of the original incorporators, was invaluable. From the beginning her time and means were generously given toward the encouragement and aid of the institution.

In 1897, the city council recognizing the great value of the Museum to the people and pupils of the public schools, unanimously increased the annual appropriation from \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00.

While these annual appropriations had always been freely and generously given by the municipal authorities of Detroit, it was the opinion of all that some state legislation should be made regarding the appropriations in the future. In 1899 an act received the unanimous approval of both houses and was signed by Governor Pingree empowering the common council to appropriate each year a sum not to exceed \$20,000 00

During the year 1893, a series of Sunday afternoon talks was inaugurated by the Director. These at once attained such popularity and attracted such large audiences that they became a feature in subsequent years, of the museum's work. These begin in October and close in May. Recognizing the need of an auditorium in which to hold the assemblies for these, as well as the many other prominent lectures given during the year, and, owing to the great increase in the collections it was thought necessary in 1900, to make another addition to the building, and it was the popular sentiment that the City should not only maintain the museum, but provide the building as well, in which to house the gifts of its generous citizens. A bill was passed in the State Legislature authorizing the City of Detroit to issue bonds to the amount of \$50,000, for the purpose of building an addition. This met the approval of the Board of Estimates and the Common Council of the City, and the appropriation was made.

The bonds were issued in 1904, and ground was broken for the new building in August of that year. This building is now completed and as soon as the material and pictures can be arranged it will be thrown open to the public. This annex, which was dedicated on June 21st,

1905, provides a fine auditorium for lecture purposes, and almost doubles the capacity of the museum, enabling a better classification of material in every department. It also gives two new well lighted picture galleries, and a library and print room, in which to house Mr. Charles L. Freer's recent gift of the Storm Von's Gravesande collection, and many other prints and engravings which have heretofore lacked accommodation.

## THE YEAR'S WORK.

The year just closed has witnessed the accomplishment of great strides in the History of the Detroit Museum of Art. It has been one of unusual activity. The building begun last August has required constant attention and careful thought on the part of both the Trustees and the Director, and since its completion the re-arrangement of the collections, (not yet completed) have required a great amount of labor. It has been an epoch of the realization of the plans of the Trustees so long pending—a realization brought about by the intelligent and kindly co-operation of the government officials of the city with the Board of Trustees.

The interest shown by the people of Detroit of all classes, has probably never been so great. A series of Receptions to eminent sons of Detroit who have achieved

distinction abroad in art, in which the Ladies Auxiliary Committee gave their cordial assistance were very popular and attractive and did much in creating a new interest in the museum and its work.

The exhibitions during the year have been of greater merit than those of former years, among them being some loan collections of unusual excellence. These greatly increased the interest also.

A plan was inaugurated and successfully carried out for establishing an Annual Membership Fund for purchasing pictures by distinguished American Artists. Over one thousand dollars have been contributed and the first purchase will be made this Fall, the subscribers making a choice after whatever plan may seem best.

The five thousand dollar bequest of the Late Wm. C. Yawkey has been paid and forms the nucleus of a picture fund and another gift of ten thousand dollars not yet available makes the Board of Trustees hopeful for future bequests to the museum.

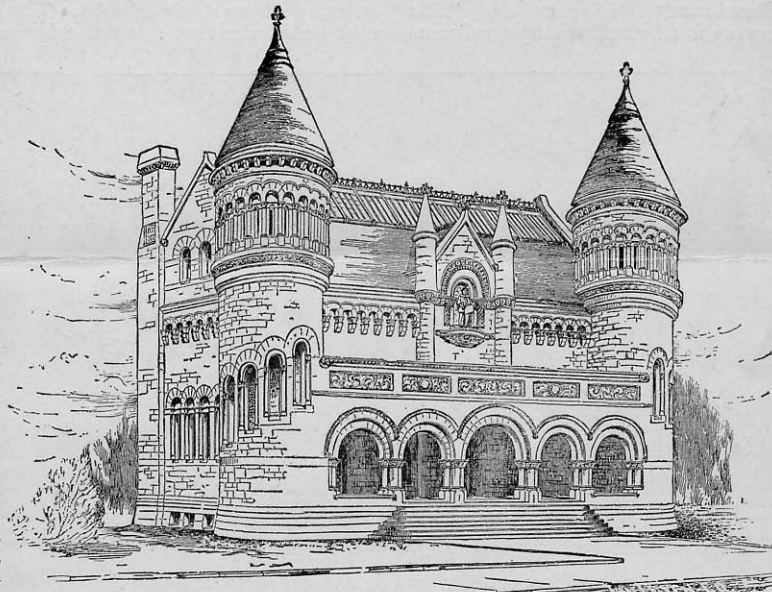
The contributions to the museum collections, on the whole, have been important this year, embracing as they do Mr. Charles L. Freer's magnificent gift of the Storm Von's Gravesande collection of engravings, etchings, drawings and lithographs, and the gift of a painting by T. Scott Dabo who has recently achieved renown in France.

Though the collections in many departments were in a disturbed state owing to building operations, the attendance was about as large as in former years.

The dedication of the new addition and auditorium was a brilliant event attended by a large audience who dwelt with deep interest upon the admirable address of Prof. E. S. Morse of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

With a sense of the important achievements of the year, the Trustees and Incorporators look forward to years of unusual prosperity and progress.

The museum was closed from July 10th to September 1st for the re-arrangement of the collections and for cleaning.



DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART  
JAMES H. HANLON, ARCHT.

FIRST MUSEUM BUILDING.