

From the Archives

Preserving Stout's rich heritage

By Kevin Thorie, University Archivist

Lost art

The University Archives were mainly created to preserve the historical records of the university. These records include such things as yearbooks, committee minutes, publications, correspondence, budget reports, photographs, blueprints, films, oral histories and a host of other materials.

Everyday we are asked such questions as: When did Helen Keller or Maria Von Trapp appear on campus? When was the early childhood major first offered? Or, what clubs did my grandmother belong to when she attended Stout in the 1920s?

Oftentimes, we can find the answers to these requests. There are, however, many questions that we cannot answer.

When I was offered the opportunity to contribute to the *Stout Outlook*, I realized that this was an ideal time to ask for help from the people who have helped create Stout's history. The first question I could use help with is, what happened to the artwork that was once on the Stout campus?

Museum mystery

Art has played an important role at Stout since the university was founded. In 1894, a woman by the name of Kate Murphy was hired by Senator James Huff Stout to be the director of art for the Menomonie Public Schools and the Stout Manual Training School.

During vacations, Murphy was sent to Japan, as well as several major cities in the United States, to acquire sculptures, paintings, tapestries and other objects in order to begin an art museum on the Stout campus. The first mention of this museum, that I can find, is in a 1904 issue of a magazine called *World's Work*. The museum was augmented when Murphy took a year's sabbatical in Europe, where she acquired more artifacts for the collection.

In 1906, the museum was located on the fourth floor of Bowman Hall. Several photos of this museum are in the University Archives.

The following description of the museum is also in the *Memoirs of Mary D. Bradford*, who was a teacher at Stout during the first decade of the last century:

"There were paintings and tapestries, vases and statuary; large, glass wall-cases containing priceless shawls, enclosed floor-cases, filled with fascinating arrays of curios of all sorts—carved ivory from the Orient, choice miniatures, and fans with historic association."

Up until 1913 or so, several other references to the museum are in Stout publications, as well as newspaper articles. Soon after, though, the museum, along with its artifacts, disappeared.

In 1934 the *Stoutonia* mentions another art museum on the second floor of Harvey Hall. A couple of sculptures are described that may have been in the Bowman exhibit, but the new museum consisted mainly of works by Stout students.

What happened to these artifacts remains a mystery. There is absolutely no mention of theft or vandalism. Budgets for the Stout Institute are very detailed, and the artworks are not listed as having been sold or donated. Senator Stout's probate is also very detailed, showing that these objects were not returned to the family. Unless a former Stout student or staff member has any recollection of what happened, the disappearance of these objects may always remain a mystery.



Thomas F. Googerty received both national and international prizes for his artwork such as this lamp and ornamental metal work (above, right). The University Archives hopes alumni will be able to shed some light on the mystery surrounding what happened to artifacts from an art museum housed on the fourth floor of Bowman Hall (below, 1917).



Iron enigma

A similar mystery concerning the works of Thomas F. Googerty exists. Beginning in 1910, Googerty spent seven years at Stout teaching forge work. Born in 1864 in Pontiac, Ill., he began his career as a blacksmith and later went into teaching. Googerty wrote several books on metalworking and received both national and international prizes for his artwork. At the time of his death in 1945, Googerty was described as one of the nation's greatest craftsmen in decorative wrought iron work.

According to the National Ornamental Metal Museum, which recently had an exhibit of his works, Googerty left many of his works of art at the Stout Institute and in the Menomonie area. In addition, bulletins from that period show photos of iron candlesticks, lanterns, table lamps, fences and gates that were created by Googerty and his students. Again, I have not been able to locate any of these artworks.

WPA relics vanished

The artist, or at least the artwork, that most alumni, students and staff are acquainted with is that of Cal Peters. His mural, "Industry, Skill and Honor," has been hanging over the main entrance of Harvey Hall since 1935. Some of his other well-known murals that many are familiar with include "Scene of Lake Menomin," "Perrault's Trading Post" and "French Trappers on the Red Cedar."

Clarence Nicholas (Cal) Peters was born in 1903 in Port Washington, Wis. He studied in Chicago and worked as a freelance artist before coming to the Stout Institute in 1935.

During the Great Depression, Stout acquired many paintings by several artists through the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. Peters, though, was the only artist from the WPA who actually worked on campus. He had a studio in room 29 of the basement of Harvey Hall where he turned out several paintings for the Stout Institute.

After he left Stout, Peters went on to become artist and curator of the Prairie du Chien Museum and later the Los Angeles County Museum. His artwork now hangs in museums stretching from Washington, D.C. to California.

In addition to his murals, Peters painted about a dozen smaller works (averaging 30 inches by 40 inches) and a portrait of President Burton Nelson that are missing. The titles of some of the missing works and their last known locations, as recorded in a 1940 issue of the *Stoutonia*, are:

Home Management House
The Country Church and
Still Life

Tainter Hall

Clouds
Old Oaks and
After The Showers

Bertha Tainter Annex
October and
A Still Life

Lynwood Hall
Green Hills and
The Deserted Shanty

Infirmary
An Autumn Day

Recreation hall
Street in Knapp and an unfinished scene of a sawmill on Wilson Creek



The University Archives

Located in UW-Stout's Library Learning Center, the University Archives mostly houses historically valuable records of the various campus departments and offices. Personal papers of Stout alumni, students, and faculty are also in the collection, as well as the records of Stout organizations. An electronic database allows for name and subject searches of many university publications.

To contact the University Archives:

Telephone: 715-232-2300

Fax: 715-232-1783

E-mail: thoriek@uwstout.edu

Mail: ARC/University Archives
Library Learning Center
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

Explore more online:

Additional photos on this issue's topics are available online at the University Archives' Web site. Go to:

www.uwstout.edu/geninfo/history

Fill in the blanks

If anyone knows anything about any of the missing artwork, we would appreciate an e-mail, letter or phone call. If anyone has any of this missing artwork, we would like to have a photograph of it to store in the archives (we are only interested in solving a mystery—the artworks belong to you).

While I am asking for help, I have a couple of other mysteries I have been trying to solve. Whatever happened to the time capsule that was placed under the Washington Elm in 1931? And does anyone know what happened to the tape recording of John F. Kennedy's speech on campus in 1960?

If you have answers to any of these questions, we would like to hear from you. If you have any questions that we can try to answer, feel free to contact us or drop in for a visit (see sidebar above). The university archives are here to serve Stout's alumni, students and staff.