

Private Collections; Public Trusts

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The word “museum” instantly connotes a collection of objects. Such collections may range from fine art and hunting trophies to license plates or Elvis memorabilia. Museums are as diverse as the interests of the people that visit them. Collections, whether they wind up as part of a proper museum or not, are just as diverse. Most of the private collections that are important to history, anthropology, or science eventually find their way to large institutions overseen by a board of trustees and maintained by a budget beyond the limits of a personal bequest that might have originally been part of a donation. The process by which private collections become public trust (or even exhibits) is rarely simple and never clear cut. While the path may be winding and strewn with sometimes debilitating politics, the end result is almost always the same: the collection goes where it can be the most use for the most people. Sometimes this is the desire and plan of the collector in the first place which makes the transition to public trust much easier. Other times original intent, and highly specified wills—both legal and personal—mean the collection takes a more circuitous route towards public display.

This essay will explore the paths of four specific collections from the collectors themselves to their legacy as benefactors of culture and the development of their private acquisitions into a foundation and/or a museum of their own. By following each of these collections I intend to show that collectors and collections share personal similarities and the end result of their collections in the long run are almost always the same regardless of the desire or original intent of the collector. Influences on collections vary greatly by taste, time, culture, and geography with each influencing the political dynamics of the collections.

In the end the personality of the collector has more to do with how their legacy is portrayed than how their collection is maintained. Three of the four examples here, George Gustav Heye, Frank Phillips, and Thomas Gilcrease share a positive and fairly untarnished image

as public benefactors of the past. All are considered ahead of their time and forward thinking stewards of culture—either theirs or others. The other, Dr. Albert Barnes, holds a more contested legacy surrounding the most impressive private art collection ever compiled. What exactly explains Barnes as the odd man out of this collection? The short answer is Barnes vision for his collection was markedly different from the other three. The long answer is much more involved. Much has been written about Heye and Barnes and I will bookend this essay with their works. Since Gilcrease and Phillips are both regional foundations most of the sources come from the foundation presses themselves or from dear friends who have published far from critical biographies. These works focus mainly as advertisements for the museums but I will attempt to place them both within the context of the larger, more thorough records of Heye and Barnes.

### ***The Collectors***

#### *George Gustave Heye*

George Gustav Heye was born in 1874 in New York City. The son of a German immigrant father and an established New York family mother. Heye “lived the normal, semi-sheltered and somewhat pampered life of a child of well-to-do parents of the time when Victorian though and Victorian manners were the rule among people of his class.”<sup>1</sup> The Heye’s “well-to-do” came in part from Carl Heye’s contracts of sale and subsequent tenure as president of the Economy Refining Company to John D. Rockefeller. For the rest of his life the elder Heye

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<sup>1</sup> John Alden Mason. “George G. Heye 1874-1957” *Leaflets of the Museum of the American Indian*. Heye Foundation. New York: Number 6, 1958, 9.

remained in charge of the Foreign Shipping Department of the Standard Oil Company and “had much to do with the early development of the tankship system of transporting petroleum.”<sup>2</sup>

At 18 Heye enrolled in the School of Mines at Columbia University in the recently created course of electrical engineering. He matriculated in 1896 and was employed as an engineer with the White-Crosby company where he worked on assignment all over the country. It was on assignment in Kingman, Arizona that “the collecting bug seized me and I was lost.”<sup>3</sup> The collecting bug came in the form of a Navajo deerskin shirt. “That shirt was the start of my collection” he wrote, “Naturally when I had a shirt I wanted a rattle and moccasins.”<sup>4</sup>

As Heye worked to collect Navajo artifacts in the 1890s he would send them back to his home in New York. As he had “spent more time collecting Navaho costume pieces and trinkets than [he] did superintending roadbeds” he returned to New York to find “quite an accumulation of articles.”<sup>5</sup> Heye’s collecting continued piecemeal through the turn of the century and his move into and out of investment banking, until his first large acquisition in 1903 when he also began to establish a professional relationship with Marshall Saville, American Archaeology professor at Columbia and George Pepper at the American Museum of Natural History.

Saville “saw ‘valuable magpie tendencies’ in Heye and decided they could be nurtured for the support of archaeological and scientific research.”<sup>6</sup> In the following years Heye funded

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<sup>2</sup> Mason. “Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957”, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Mason. “Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957”, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, “Every Last Dishcloth: The Prodigious Collecting of George Gustav Heye” in *Collecting Native America, 1870-1960* ed. Shepard Krech III and Barbara A Hail. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, 1999, 236.

collecting expeditions for Pepper and Saville in Central and South America. Franz Boas approached Heye to purchase pieces of his own private collection in order to fund his ethnological expeditions as well. As Boas attempted to establish Anthropology as a discipline at Columbia he continually tried to maintain Heye as a benefactor to no avail.

In 1904 Heye married and moved his specimens and his wife to a new apartment on Madison Avenue that was too small in just two years. He rented an additional room in the old Knabe building on Fifth Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street in 1906 and three years later yet another room at 10 East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street which doubled to two rooms shortly thereafter. It was this address that became known as the “Heye Museum.”<sup>7</sup>

### *Frank Phillips*

Frank Phillips was born a year before Heye (1873) a world away from New York City. He grew up in a log cabin in Nebraska. While still young drought forced the family to move east to Creston, Iowa where Phillips left school at 14 to become a barber’s apprentice. He apprenticed for eight years before purchasing the barbershop. Banker John Gibson was one of Phillip’s regular customers and was more than a little impressed when Phillips acquired the two other barber shops in Creston. Phillips married Gibson’s daughter Jane and soon went to work at her father’s bank where he managed to earn \$75,000 in commissions.<sup>8</sup>

In 1903, the same year the Heye made his first large artifact acquisition, Phillips followed the oil boom to Bartlesville, Oklahoma. He stayed only a few months but returned in 1904. His

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<sup>7</sup> Mason. “Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957”, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Joe Williams, *Woolaroc*. Frank Phillips Foundation, 1991, 11.

brother L.E. joined him the following year and they began to buy leases, organize oil companies, and drill holes. They lost nearly everything and their final hail Mary well hit producing 250 barrels a day and the next 81 wells all produced. Bankers were initially reluctant to invest in the oil business due to its unpredictability which led to the Phillips brothers to establish the Citizens Bank and Trust. They later bought the “best bank in town and...absorbed two others all under the name of First National.”<sup>9</sup>

Phillips decided to branch out the banks to cover the Midwest. Their plan, backed by Phillips’ father in law, was to establish the main bank in Kansas City. By this time they had sold all their oil leases outside of the Osage nation lands. Due to Osage tribal regulations the Phillips brothers could not sell, they would have to drill or give up the lease. Phillips luck ran true to form and after a sputter of 100 barrels a day from Well 7, Well 8 produced the biggest gusher at that time within the Osage Nation flowing at 1,000 gallons a day. When the well blew wild giant earthen dikes were built to keep the oil from flowing down the hillside. When oil hit \$4 a barrel shortly after the beginning of World War I Phillips along with his brother organized Phillips Petroleum Company. Three years later in 1920 Phillips Petroleum hit the New York Stock Exchange and Phillips opened a two room office “at 114 S Broadway and spent 115 days in New York City and 163 days in Bartlesville.”<sup>10</sup>

New York City was key to obtaining investments, negotiating railroad rates and establishing markets so that is where Phillips worked. According to Joe Williams “he parlayed with the elite of the country and was entertained in the homes of financial magnates like J.P.

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<sup>9</sup> *Woolaroc, 11.*

<sup>10</sup> *Woolaroc, 15.*

Morgan and Charles Schwab.” While in New York Phillips “picked up on cultural appreciation an saw how they [the New York elite]used their wealth, not only for private gain, but for the benefit of the public.” Phillips also became aware of his associates tastes in art, culture, and the west. He attended all the high society functions and was in talks with realtors to establish his own mark on the New York scene “to reciprocate east coast hospitality.”<sup>11</sup>

Phillips’ epiphany came when he realized the burning interest in the west and native American culture that his high class associated possessed. It isn’t mentioned direct but given the circles that Phillips traveled in while in New York he most likely would have visited the Heye Museum or at the very least heard about all the artifacts and excitement regarding the collection. Phillips had worked with the Osage Nation Directly back in Bartlesville and already owned 17,000 acres out there. He chose “the best and most rugged 3,600-acre portion” to build the Frank Phillips Ranch. Once the location was selected “All he need was to build a lodge, import exotic animals, invite some cowboys and Indians for color and entertainment, and bring in his eastern business friends by private railroad cars and return them to the old west.” This was the Phillips equivalent of George Baker, the head of the National City Bank, loaning Frank and Jane his 300-foot yacht on the weekends.<sup>12</sup>

### *Thomas Gilcrease*

Thomas Gilcrease was born in 1890 in Louisiana to a white father and a Creek mother. They moved to Indian territory to settle on the Creek nation land allotment near Twin Mounds

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

until 1904 when the family moved to the Wealaka Mission on the Arkansas River. Gilcrease was entered on the Creek Rolls in 1899 and when the federal allotment of lands in northeast Oklahoma came through he received 160 acres south of the city of Tulsa about 50 miles south of the Phillips Ranch. During the 1905 oil boom the area later called Glenn Pool became “one of the greatest producing oil fields in the history of the United States.”<sup>13</sup> Gilcrease began receiving royalties from his holding at age 15.

By age 18 Gilcrease had wooed and married Belle Harlowe a Bacone College graduate and member of the Osage nation. They originally lived with Gilcrease’s parents in Wealaka until they moved north of Tulsa where Belle gave birth to Thomas Jr in 1908 and the elder Gilcrease began pursuing the oil business in earnest. The oil business took its toll on Gilcrease’s marriage. They eventually moved to California in the early 1920s and the same year that Gilcrease established Gilcrease Oil Company, 1922, the couple separated and eventually divorced in 1924. Following the divorce Gilcrease began a several-month long “Grand Tour” of Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century style.

The grand tour and changing world view influenced Gilcrease greatly. Back in Oklahoma Gilcrease’s fortunes continued to grow and in 1927 he was introduced to Norma Smallwood who had been crowned Miss America in 1926. They were married in 1927 and welcomed a daughter in 1928. Shortly after they traveled to Paris where they rented an apartment on the Rue de Camerons. Within six months Gilcrease has developed a lasting friendship with American scholar Robert Lee Humber. It was with Humber the following year that Gilcrease outlined his

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<sup>13</sup> Randy Ramer. “Early Life of Thomas Gilcrease” in *Thomas Gilcrease* collected essays Gilcrease Museum, University of Tulsa, 2009, 17-20.

plan to “leave his track” and began plans to “establish a Gilcrease Foundation that would fund a museum, a library, and a home for underprivileged children.”<sup>14</sup>

*Dr. Albert Barnes*

Albert Coombs Barnes was born in 1872 in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. His father was a former butcher who had lost an arm in the civil war and was living off his disability pension and a mail carrier salary when Albert was born. Barnes’ mother, Lydia was a devout Methodist from “Pennsylvania German stock” who seemed “serious, respectable, grave women proud of her bright son and ambition for him.” It was his mother that introduced the young Barnes to painting, music, and “Negro camp meetings.” It was through these meetings that Barnes developed a lifelong interest in African American culture. He was, according to Anderson self-expressed “addict to Negro Camp-meetings, baptizings, revivals, and to seeking the company of individual Negroes.”<sup>15</sup>

Lydia Barnes also made sure her son enrolled in Philadelphia Central High School which was “top public secondary schools in the United States.” In addition to a bachelor of science degree, Central provided the occasion for Barnes’ meeting of William Glackens who would later advise Barnes’ art dealings. Albert and a brother, Charles, were the only two Barnes children to survive to adulthood. Charles became a lead worker but “it was Al’s mother’s dream that he

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<sup>14</sup> Kimberly Robline “Thomas Gilcrease and his Pursuit” in *Thomas Gilcrease* collected essays Gilcrease Museum, University of Tulsa, 2009, 41.

<sup>15</sup> John Anderson. *Art Held Hostage: The Battle Over the Barnes Collection*, W.W. Norton and Company, London and New York, 2003, 11-12.

should be a doctor” and in 1889 he matriculated at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School with a small scholarship and at age twenty found himself a doctor of medicine.<sup>16</sup>

The following year Barnes decided he would not pursue a career in practicing medicine. His interest turned to chemistry and after fulfilling a postgraduate academic requirement at a hospital for the insane he returned to the University of Pennsylvania to study chemistry. In 1895 he went to Berlin to study chemistry at the heart of chemical research. He studied diligently in Berlin for a year and a half until his money ran out and he was forced to return to the United States. He booked passage aboard an oil steamer and payed for the journey by working as a deckhand during the voyage.<sup>17</sup>

Once back in Philadelphia Barnes began working as a consulting chemist for the H.K. Mulford Company and as an ad writer for Grey’s Glycerine Tonic. Between the two jobs Barnes was making “close to \$10,000 a year—the equivalent of \$150,000 or more today.” By the turn of the century Barnes was employed solely by H.K. Mulford as both advertising and sale manager. He used this position to convince his employers to send him to Heidelberg in 1900 in order to recruit a top notch German chemist for the company. During his summer in Heidelberg Barnes took refresher chemistry courses and made the acquaintance of Hermann Hille. Hille’s academic pedigree was just what Barnes was searching for, both for the Mulford company and his own personal interests. Hill had worked in pharmacies in London and Nice as well as worked with Wilhem Röntgen who discovered the x-(or Röntgen) rays.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *Art Held Hostage*, 13-14.

<sup>17</sup> Howard Greenfeld. *The Devil and Dr. Barnes: Portrait of an American Art Collector*, Viking, New York, 1987, 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Art Held Hostage*, 14-15.

The two began working on Barnes' plan as soon as they returned to the United States. During the whirlwind return Barnes was introduced to Laura Leggett whom he married less than a year later. Barnes and Hille developed a chemical treatment for gonorrhea and gonorrheal blindness in newborns which they would call Argyrol and by early 1902 and had both quit the firm before ever showing their hand. Barnes medical degree allowed for a ease of entry into European medical establishments not afforded to other pharmacological interests. Such access and Barnes marketing ability combined with Hille's compound meant Argyrol was soon in global demand. As early as Spring of 1903 "the company had cleared close to \$40,000 (about three-quarters of a million dollars today)." The following year more than doubled to \$100,000.<sup>19</sup>

From the outset there were tensions between Barnes and Hille. The two drew up an uneasy five-year contract on April of 1903. Barnes was head of distributing and marketing while Hille was the only man who knew the secret formula to create Argyrol and in the beginning Barnes and Hille was an uneasy joint enterprise. The arrangement came to a head in 1906 and boiled over in 1907 when Barnes brought a Bill of Equity case against Hill in course. The following year the court decided that the company should be dissolved and the entire stock would go to the highest bidder. Hille refused to offer more than half his own savings and Barnes, confident in Argyrol's success offered nearly everything he was worth at the astronomical figure of \$350,000. Not only did Barnes seize control of the entire company, now renamed A.C. Barnes Company, but Hille was forced to continue to make Argyrol and teach Barnes how to make it until the latter was comfortable enough with the process.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Art Held Hostage*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> *Art Held Hostage*, 22-23; Greenfeld, *The Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 20-21.

The A.C. Barnes company reveals much about Barnes approach to education and the human condition. The Argyrol facility was co-ed and integrated. As the 100% authority of the company Barnes oversaw every aspect of the business. The working day was only eight hours and only six of those were dedicated to production. The other two hours were specifically for Barnes' employees to attend roundtable seminar discussions presided over by Barnes. The discussions centered around William James' Pragmatism philosophy but extended later to include the teachings of Bertrand Russell. There was also a lending library available to the employees and the walls of the company were adorned with several large pieces of art one of which was the work of Barnes old Central High friend William Glackens.<sup>21</sup>

This was business as usual for the A.C. Barnes company for years. As the employees worked and discussed philosophy money from the production of Argyrol continued to roll in. Barnes became one of the wealthiest men in the United States and arguably the wealthiest one outside the Progressive Era's largest industries of steel, oil, gas, or banking. In 1911 Barnes reestablished contact with William Glackens who by then had become a successful artist. The following year Barnes commissioned Glackens to purchase art for a collection. Glackens was "given \$20,000 to spend and told to buy what he liked." Glackens returned with Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire and Valley*, Picasso's *Woman with a Cigarette*, Van Gogh's *The Postman*, and a \$1,400 Renoir. In April Barnes began purchasing art himself through Parisian dealer Durand-Ruel. Barnes' New York Purchase of a Monet and a Renoir and Glackens' European haul were the official and professional beginnings of The Barnes Collection.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Art Held Hostage*, 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> *Art Held Hostage*, 24-25.

## *Collections, Museums, Foundations*

### *Heye*

Heye's collection continued to outgrow their residences. In 1908 Heye reached an agreement with the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania to house a large portion of Heye's collection of artifacts "north of Mexico." In addition to Heye's loan he was "elected vice president, a member of the Board of Managers, and president chairman of the committee on the American Section." Heye's old friend Pepper and a new associate Raymon Harrington became staff members.<sup>23</sup>

Work on and in the American Section premiered in February 1910 when three large halls at the University Museum opened to the public. Pepper served as the head curator of the exhibits that displayed the most outstanding specimens of Heye's collection complete with a detailed published guidebook. The collection remained on display until 1917.

During the interim Heye continued to finance, oversee, and participate in archaeological digs. In 1914 work in the Munsee-Delaware cemetery neat Montague, New Jersey resulted in the arrest and fine of Heye and his crew for grave robbing. Heye as overseer was fined \$100 and his workmen each fined \$10. Heye appealed the decision less for the monetary losses and more on the principle worry that "the extent to which this decision might affect future archaeological excavations in the state."<sup>24</sup> Upon successful appeal Heye sent artifacts, including skulls and other remains to Ales Hrdlicka at the Smithsonian with the note that he could deposit the bones in the

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<sup>23</sup> "Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957", 14.

<sup>24</sup> "Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957", 15.

natural history collection there. Heye also sent his paper on the site to Hrdlicka to present at the International Congress of Americanist as he did not wish to appear himself as he was aware of the publicity surrounding the arrest. Either way Heye was now not only financing official anthropological and archaeological expeditions he was participating at the top and serving to expand the knowledge and holdings of the United States *National* museum.<sup>25</sup>

This turn towards the professional coincides with the move to establish his own museum. The collection had already cost Heye his first marriage, but he remarried in 1915 and the couple spent their honeymoon on the Nacoochee Mound excavation in White County, Georgia. The collection had grown to nearly 500,000 pieces and needed more space once again. Early suggestions were to create a Heye wing of the American Museum of Natural History but Heye “would not consent to the integration of his material with that of the museum and the museum could not consider exhibiting a private collection apart from its own galleries.” The same applied to Franz Boas’ urging that the collection come to Columbia as Heye “would not agree to any such division of authority.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1916 Archer Milton Huntington offered Heye prime real estate on Broadway opposite the American Geographical Society to build his own museum. The final papers were signed in May of that year and the cornerstone was put in place “with due ceremonies on November 8 and the offices were ready for occupancy early in August of 1917.” World War I delayed the full occupancy of Heye’s museum and for the duration of the American involvement in the war the

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<sup>25</sup> “Every Last Dishcloth”, 241.

<sup>26</sup> “Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957”, 16.

American Geographical society utilized the first two floors of the building for the creation of maps for the U.S. Navy.<sup>27</sup>

Heye's museum of the American Indian opened to the public in November 1922. Heye was not idle during the war years. He began modeling his museum on similar institutions by creating departments of physical anthropology and in 1918 with the help of Huntington's publication fund "hired Frederick Webb Hodge away from the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution." James Ford established a library which included collections of Marshall Seville and Frederick Hodge in addition to the 73 volume edition of *The Jesuit Relations*, Charles Kingsborough's *Antiquities of Ancient Mexico*, and Huntington's collection of original George Catlin watercolors depicting Indian scenes.<sup>28</sup>

The collection outgrew the new building quickly and Huntington donated a further six acres in the Bronx for an annex that opened in November 1926. This was a proper educational collection and had expounded far beyond the satiation of a "collecting bug." Departments were created within the museum, professionals were hired from other institutions if need be and the entire Heye Foundation and Heye himself continued under full steam until his death in 1956.

### *Phillips*

When Phillips decided to build his ranch to entertain and host business colleagues he went all out. As soon as the thirteen miles of fence was completely he contacted the representative of the Hagenbeck Brothers in Germany. The Hagenbeck family had been in the

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<sup>27</sup> "Georgy G. Heye 1874-1957", 17.

<sup>28</sup> "Every Last Dishcloth", 247.

wild animal business long enough to be considered a dynasty. They supplied many of the world's zoos and were the go to company for exotic game which is what Phillips wanted to have on his ranch more than anything else.

The artifact and art collection came later. The building that houses the collection exhibits was originally the hangar for Phillips' personal airplane. The earliest artifacts arrived at Woolaroc as gifts and as "the lodge overflowed...he put them in the hangar with the *Woolaroc* plane."<sup>29</sup> It was 1929 when Phillips decided to start collecting art. He has seen private art collections in nearly every home he had visited while in New York and he used his business connections to grow his own collection.

In this manner Phillips' collection is quite different from the others discussed here. Little of the vast holdings at Woolaroc was collected by Phillips himself. One of the most famous subsets of the museum at Woolaroc is "the largest private collection of Colt firearms in the world" which was given to the Woolaroc foundation by Phillips' nephew. In the end, Phillips collection and collecting was more about business than passion.

### *Gilcrease*

Gilcrease had decided to have a foundation and museum before he had amassed the collection. He knew he wanted to model his museum on those he had seen in Europe and on the U.S. East Coast. These collections consisted of mostly European art which Gilcrease knew to be a highly competitive market. Such competition "restricted opportunity for Gilcrease to amass a substantial collection, but art of the American West was little sought after."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Woolaroc*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> "Thomas Gilcrease and his Pursuit", 42.

The 1930s were devoted to collecting. When Gilcrease Oil Company opened a subsidiary in Paris on Champs Élysées in 1933 Robert Humber was installed as director. In 1937 Gilcrease moved his company from Tulsa to San Antonio, Texas due to “restrictive Oklahoma business laws.” Gilcrease business suffered little. The same cannot be said for his personal life. His second marriage ended in divorce and his full attention turned to collecting art primarily and his business affairs otherwise.

Gilcrease purchased art and archives piecemeal and as complete sets. Anything he could get his hands on was up for negotiation. He favored the Kennedy Galleries in New York but spend so much time collecting in Europe that he purchased his own airplane. He hired art dealers to scour auctions and estates and became one of the most familiar figures in the art world in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The Thomas Gilcrease Foundation was official founded in 1942. This “first and formal step in the realization of his idea” was the fruition of Gilcrease clear vision for his collection and his “track.” The charter for the foundation is as much a personal manifesto as a guiding principle for the future of the collection. In part its mission is “to establish, maintain, and support any educational, scientific, historical, or literary undertaking by means of collecting, assorting, classifying, and exhibiting antiques, relics, objects, and specimens having scientific, historical, cultural, or educational value of this or past periods...”<sup>31</sup>

The first iteration of the Gilcrease Museum opened in Gilcrease offices in San Antonio in 1943. The bulk of Gilcrease collection was procured in only 12 years of active collecting and as much as could be displayed was transferred from Tulsa to the sixth floor of the old San Antonio

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<sup>31</sup> “Thomas Gilcrease and his Pursuit”, 49.

Casino Club building that Gilcrease had purchases for office space. Gilcrease looked to other established museum builder for inspiration including Henry Huntington (cousin of Archer Huntington) and Andrew Mellon. This emulation and the “restlessness of spirit to do something of permanent value” that led Gilcrease to continue to collect and through the acquisition of complete collections of others his collection increased at an exponential rate. Wartime relaxation of the Oklahoma business laws and the ever growing collection led Gilcrease to leave San Antonio and return to Tulsa where he opened his collection to the public in 1949.

### *Barnes*

Barnes, like Gilcrease was less interested in competing with the classical art collectors. Barnes was not that concerned with collecting classical art. The works that Barnes was after were contemporary early modernist and impressionist art pieces. The collection grew slowly from a few in 1905 and in the beginning was not impressive by art standards. Barnes began more actively collecting in 1910 only to fall victim of the New York dealers selling him what he eventually referred to as “safe” art. The early purchases were Barnes “purchasing what he was shown” which held no works of “innovative, little-known painters.”<sup>32</sup>

Soon after Glackens returned from his art buying expedition Barnes began his own European collecting tours. In 1912 he recounted that “Finally, I did get the message, but I am not sure that it was what Meie-Graeffe wrote, but rather what Cézanne or Van Gogh said in paint”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *The Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *The Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 42.

As Barnes studied art Glackens introduced him to Leo and Gertrude Stein. Through such elite circles Barnes purchases works by Picasso, including several drawings from the artist himself.

The collection continued to grow “at astonishing speed” as Barnes began working with John Dewey to develop rigorous and systematic program for art education. In 1920 Barnes established the Barnes foundation in order to merge his passion for art and education. The foundation, which still bears his name, became the governing body for the collection and Barnes; art school in Merion. The terms of Barnes’ plan were simple, the art was never to be moved, it was not for public display, and was accessed by invitation only. All of which Barnes controlled with an iron hand until his untimely death in an automobile accident in 1951.

### ***Legacies***

#### *Heye*

Heye’s death in 1956 left the Museum of the American Indian with a mere three-million-dollar endowment. A paltry amount barely covered basic operating costs to keep the exhibits up and running. During the next 30 years the Foundation continued to oversee the collection and negotiated with an untold number of donors for both money and space to open or move the collection. The idea to merge with the American Museum of Natural History was entertained, but like the first time never came to fruition.

Finally, in 1989 the Foundation board transferred ownership of the collection to the Smithsonian institution. The Heye collection became the foundational collection for the Museum of the American Indian. As part of the merger of the Heye Collection and the National Museum of Natural History the Smithsonian drafted legislation that would “return human remains and

funerary objects [from the collections] to culturally affiliated American Indian tribes, thus establishing a policy of repatriation.”<sup>34</sup>

This legislation predates the formation of The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and as such is one of the reasons that the Smithsonian is not beholden to NAGPRA requests. In the end it is Heye’s collection and not necessarily Heye’s vision that help define the *national* museum of the American Indian. Clara Sue Kidwell poses the unanswerable question best “What would he [Heye] have thought of the act that transferred his collection to a major public institution, especially since it mandated the return of certain categories of objects to Indian tribes?”<sup>35</sup>

### *Phillips*

Phillips’ lasting legacy is marketed as the preservation of the west that he knew as a child. In reality the Phillips Ranch turned Woolaroc was all about mixing business with pleasure. From its outset Phillips’ lodge was *the* place to conduct business. The museum was more a secondary benefit of the culture that Phillips had immersed himself in while in New York. That is not to say the museum is poorly thought out or just a mere collection of random Americana. What can be said is that Phillips’ estate was at once dedicated to the public as a museum and as a monument to the Osage people.

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<sup>34</sup> “Every Last Dishcloth,” 252.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

If Heye's thoughts on public institutions is unknown, Phillips, in the end, was unquestionable. His own words highlight his own thoughts on how his legacy would continue well past his death in 1950:

“God has been good to me and I am under a great obligation to society. I felt that I can best repay this obligation by dedicating the museum to posterity, which I have already done. The boys and girls of today will be the fathers and mothers of tomorrow, and by so dedicating the museum, I have a feeling of satisfaction that is a pretty good payoff.”<sup>36</sup>

In regards to the game reserve, which was the first collection Phillips constructed, he said in a letter to Osage Chief Fred Lookout upon Phillips adoption into the tribe:

“You have given me a new inspiration in my interest in the Osage country and my game reserve there., and I hope to make it a monument which will last forever as a tribute to your noble tribe of Indians.”<sup>37</sup>

Whatever the intents, which tended to change depending on the audience, the point of fact is that Woolaroc exists as it was completed before Phillips death. Whether this is a testament to Phillips or the people he entrusted to maintain his legacy, the result is the same. Phillips' collection remains on the same grounds where it was established and that is something that all collectors wish of their possessions but rarely ever happens to collections of substantial value.

### *Gilcrease*

Gilcrease had the reverse problem that Phillips faced: he wanted a museum *before* he had enough objects to fill one. The twelve years of breakneck collecting of art, artifacts, and rare letters and documents quickly grew to match Gilcrease's vision. In addition to collecting and purchasing art Gilcrease funded and participated in archaeological excavation all over the

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<sup>36</sup> *Woolaroc*, 103.

<sup>37</sup> *Woolaroc*, 165.

Americas. Gilcrease was an active collector similar to both Heye and Barnes. When the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art opened in Tulsa in 1949 it was one of the largest private collections of anthropological artifacts in the world. Currently it contains nearly 320,000 objects.

Unluckily for Gilcrease, but lucky for his collection, the Korean War and miscalculated oil investments (and Gilcrease's collecting binge) left the Gilcrease Oil Company, and Gilcrease in debt for \$2.25 million in 1954. Gilcrease was adamant that the entire collection remain intact even though his debt could have easily been covered by the sale of a few paintings. Bids came in from Claremore, Oklahoma, the Universities of Oklahoma and Texas as well as the North Carolina Museum of Art where Gilcrease's old friend Humber could see the collection through. This last option was the most likely for Gilcrease to take in 1954.<sup>38</sup>

In the end it was civic minded members of Tulsa that began the process of both stalling the move to North Carolina and attempting to create a bond issue for the city to vote on covering Gilcrease's debt and keeping Gilcrease's collection together and in Tulsa. In August 1954 the city voted in favor of the bond issue and the Gilcrease Institute and collection was saved. Gilcrease devoted any future oil royalties to the repayment of his debt to the city, which was only fully accomplished in 1987.

Gilcrease continued to live in the stone house on the museum grounds until his death in 1962. He also continued to privately fund archaeological excavations which were also bequeathed to the museum after his death. Gary Moore, the assistant director of the Gilcrease Museum summed up Gilcrease final years as well as any philanthropist could wish: "His final

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<sup>38</sup> Gary Moore. "Building a Museum: The Gilcrease Institute," in *Thomas Gilcrease collected essays Gilcrease Museum, University of Tulsa, 2009, 97.*

years were filled with travel and art purchases through his foundation, but, perhaps more importantly, with the satisfaction of knowing his collection remained intact and his legacy secure.”<sup>39</sup>

Gilcrease legacy is secure. The Gilcrease museum exists as it has for decades in Tulsa with more than modest improvements in construction and conservation. A conservation and research center was opened in 2014 and less than a month ago the city of Tulsa approved a \$65 million bond issue to expand the Gilcrease even farther. Gilcrease’s legacy is as secure as any private collector or wealthy philanthropist that has ever wished to leave a mark on the world. Gilcrease wisened to make his lasting track a good one and so far it has held up.

### *Barnes*

The outcome of the Barnes Collection could not be more different than that of the Gilcrease collection. Less than six months after Barnes’ death his vicelike grip on his collection was challenged in court. Harold Wiegand from the Philadelphia *Inquirer* brought the suit to force the Barnes foundation to adopt “‘reasonable rules and regulations’ for admitting the public to the gallery, during specified hours on a reasonable number of specific days throughout the year”<sup>40</sup>

Wiegand’s complaint was that the Foundation enjoyed special tax-exempt privileges and as a tax payer he had a right to partake of the Foundation’s fruits. The courts declared that the Foundation had not operated as tax-exempt and the case was closed. The *Inquirer*’s interest in the Barnes collection never was. The Barnes collection remained under a bushel for another three decades before the battle spilled out of Merion city limits and into Philadelphia.

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<sup>39</sup> “Building a Museum: The Gilcrease Institute, 2009, 97.

<sup>40</sup> *The Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 287.

The details of the battle for the Barnes Collection are far more involved than can be covered here, but the outcome is what I am interested in. After years of decidedly nasty court and internal battles a completely restructured Barnes Foundation board markedly violated every specific instruction Barnes had left for the collection. The public eventually began to see the collection for the importance that Barnes had seen before Cézanne and Renoir became classic household names. Slowly the collection was opened to the public. Then it was taken on a tour to raise money for the foundation which was still inadequate to update the Merion buildings to protect the billion dollars in art.

The final result was the entire collection, kept in situ, was moved Philadelphia and given a brand new building for display. The fact that the collection was kept in tact and installed just as it was at Merion is less than an olive branch for many of those who had attended the Barnes school of art or fought to keep it at Merion. The collection itself outgrew not only Barnes personal animosities but the American Art scene as well. The collection exists as a single artifact not only of early modern art, but a testament to the ability of a man of means and vision. Whether that vision is better served in a bustling city center or a suburban villa locked away just for education is up for debate.

### ***Conclusion***

The biographies of collections are at their heart biographies of their collectors. By following the origins of the men's wealth I have shown how shown that what superficially looks like idiosyncratic organization is in reality a result of time, geography, and personal temperament. Once the collections are consolidated however they invariably outlive their benefactors and the foundations that bear their names become the trusts that maintain and steer

the collector's and the collection's legacies. To see where each have arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century reveals more about the ethics and power of modern display culture (museums) than it does about the men who amassed these collections.

Each of these men used their wealth to fashion a collection of artifacts along self-imposed lines of legacy. The objects themselves matter little when investigating the drive, arrangement, and outcome of the collecting and, in these cases, exhibition processes. The similarities are obvious, all of these men had money and were consciously aware of their own impact on history and culture. They were all contemporaries and operated both their businesses and collecting habits during one of the most prosperous eras of American History. Are they men of their times, or are they independent confirmation of an implicit tendency towards philanthropy if you are a self-made millionaire? Are collections demonstrative of lavish hobbies, intellectual pursuits, or just business?

The answer to those questions say more about our relationship with or understanding of the collectors and the subsequent narratives of their collections than they really do about the individuals themselves. Heye intended his collection to be shared with New York elite and personal friends, Phillips initially build his lodge to conduct New York business in Oklahoma, Gilcrease wanted a museum before he had enough objects to create one, and Barnes vehemently wished his collection be utilized for teaching purposes only. Today, each of these collections can be visited by anyone with a ticket, and tomorrow members of the public will walk by, photograph, and maybe even discuss pieces of each of these collections. Whether planned or not, whether intended or not, the end result for each of these collections is the exact same: each one of these private collections now exists in public trust.

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