John S. Bradstreet Collection
M/A 1994.10.01-02
Finding aid prepared by Christopher G. Welter, Revised by Marsha Collins

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August 01, 2015
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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## Summary Information

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<th>Repository</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creator - Designer</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>John S. Bradstreet Collection</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>1886-1994</td>
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<td>Extent</td>
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Biography

John Bradstreet was born in Rowley, MA on December 14, 1845. He died in on August 10, 1914 following injuries sustained in a car accident, at age 69.

William Bradford, second governor of Plymouth Colony, was his great grandfather (he landed in America in 1613). Bradstreet attended Putnam Academy in Newburyport, MA before starting to work at Gorham, the silver manufacturer in Rhode Island. On John Bradstreet's arrival in Minneapolis in 1873, the city had about 25,000 residents, was barely 20 years old, and had just recently been connected to Chicago via rail. James J. Hill hadn’t yet built the connection to the Pacific Ocean. Bradstreet chose Minnesota for health reasons, as he had tuberculosis.

For the next 40 years, Bradstreet was an arbiter of good taste, cultivating residential and commercial clients of the elite social strata of the Northwest. Following his death, part of his collection of pictures and art objects and his "office" were willed to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Minneapolis Journal, August 16, 1914). He helped found the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, which opened in 1915. Eighty years later, according to Linda Mack writing in the Star Tribune (6/19/1994), page 8F, the "Institute even de-accessioned his office, which Bradstreet had donated upon his death in 1914."

Civic activities included: • Member: Minneapolis Park Board (Board of Park Commissioners, 1901-1907). With Thomas Lowry, designed “The Parade” which eventually became the Walker Sculpture Garden • Founded first Municipal Arts Commission in Minneapolis • Founder, Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts • Founder, Skylight Club (at outset, secretive, 35 member, invitation only club) (Minneapolis Morning Tribune) • Member, Asiatic Society of London, End of the Earth Club of New York, National Arts Club of New York • A founder of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts in 1883 (which spawned the Mpls Art School and ultimately, MCAD) • Helped found the Minikahda and Lafayette Clubs • Bachelor’s Club, of which he was the first president

Major residential projects include: • Edmund G. Walton House (1893)/ 802 Mount Curve Avenue, Minneapolis • E.J. Phelps / 2323 Park Avenue, Minneapolis • George Daggett House / 40 Groveland Terrace, Minneapolis • Prindle House, Duluth (1905) • Glensheen (Congdon Mansion), Duluth furniture purchased by Michael Conforti for the MIA, per Barbara Flanagan (MPL staff memo 1983 from Burke to Kimbrough). Congdon Mansion’s breakfast room and smoking room done by Bradstreet

Commercial and residential clients include: • S.T. McKnight • Pillsbury family members • W.G. Northrop • W.D. Washburn • T.B. Walker • O. C. Wyman • The Grain Exchange office interiors • State House (Capitol in St. Paul, MN) • Cathedral (St. Paul) • Council Chamber of Minneapolis City Hall • Minneapolis Club, Main Dining Room • Schubert Theatre • Churches • Hotels • Minneapolis’ Grand Opera House

Department stores • Donaldson’s Department Store Tea Room, Gentleman’s Café, Dutch Room, Ivory Room, Gothic Room, Japanese Room, and Silver Grey Room. Milling companies • Peavey & Co. (when Frank Peavey died, Bradstreet was an honorary pall bearer) • Charles E. Lewis & Co. • Watson & Co.
Collection Description

John S. Bradstreet's personal papers include a scrapbook, business correspondence, lecture notes, business advertisements, articles and clippings detailing his career as an interior decorator and furniture designer, and related material.

The scrapbook contains letters, photographs, and ephemera from his work and international travels, particularly to Japan. The photographs are mainly interior and exterior shots of his business, the Craftshouse.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

Revision Description

December 2014

Related Materials

Related Materials

See also this book, which contains a chapter on Bradstreet, in the Special Collections, Minneapolis Collection:


See also, Minneapolis Collection, Subject files, Houses: Dickey, Alfred E.
See also photographs in the Minneapolis Photo Collection.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- John S. Bradstreet & Co. (Minneapolis, Minn.).
- Minneapolis Craftshouse.
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts. -- History

Genre(s)

- Photographs.

Personal Name(s)

- Stickley, Gustav -- History
- Tiffany, Louis Comfort -- History

Subject(s)

- Furniture design.
- Interior decoration.
Collection Inventory

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Scope and Contents note

Includes donor card, a staff memorandum, and correspondence about Bradstreet and/or his personal papers.

Biography

Michael P. Confori

Orientalism on the Upper Mississippi: The Work of John S. Bradstreet

In 1982, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin published Michael P. Conforti's 34 page essay on Bradstreet's career. He explores the childhood in New England, school in Newburyport which was a major port for sailing ships trading in China, the move to Minneapolis for health reasons (Bradstreet had tuberculosis), and his career path in Minnesota over 40 years. Discusses Bradstreet's commercial ventures, business partners, interior and landscape design and decorating businesses, influences from Europe and Moorish design, and his adoption of Japonism. Explores Bradstreet's "salon" approach (in the style of Louis Comfort Tiffany, William Morris, and Frank Lloyd Wright), in which his craftsmen (Scandinavians and Japanese) designed and built interior objects for clients. Conforti also describes the unique technique Bradstreet developed to mimic the Japanese aging of wood, cypress in particular, which created
one-of-a-kind wood sculptures in furniture and wall panels. His furniture is valued by collectors, evidenced by a 2007 sale from Sotheby’s auction house of one of Bradstreet’s dining room suites for $348,000.00.

Includes both a published copy of Michael P. Conforti’s article in Minneapolis Institute of Arts’ "Bulletin" and a photocopy of an edited typescript of same.

Obituary and Memorial 1914-1916 undated and 1904-1994

Scope and Contents note

On 08/11/1914, obituaries of Bradstreet ran in the Minneapolis Morning Tribune and the Minneapolis Journal. Additionally, news coverage about his will and gifts to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is included (from either the Minneapolis Tribune or the Minneapolis Journal) dated August 1914. The Bellman published a tribute on 08/15/1914, and on 08/29/1914 edition published a poem, “The Dear Adventurer,” by Richard Burton in memory of Bradstreet. The Bellman also published a 1/15/1916 piece on the bronze relief portrait honoring Bradstreet’s contributions to Minneapolis, presented to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The Memorial at Minneapolis Institute of Arts was covered by the Minneapolis Journal (1/23/1916). The Minneapolis Morning Tribune published a memorial notice on 8/11/1914. Included is the program for the Memorial presentation at the MIA, and a Minneapolis Journal 1/17/1916 article about the bronze relief. Either the Minneapolis Tribune or the Minneapolis Journal ran a story dated 1/18/1916 about the bronze relief portrait. Includes a mounted photograph of Bradstreet from The Bellman.

Sarah Sik

John Scott Bradstreet: The Minneapolis Crafthouse and the Decorate Arts Revival in the American Northwest
Biography

Sarah Sik's 29 page profile with numerous illustrations (Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2005)). Explores John Bradstreet's youth, including working as an apprentice for Gorham (the high end silver manufacturer in Providence, Rhode Island) before moving to Minneapolis for health reasons. The essay expands on Michael Conforti’s 1984 research, providing additional context about Bradstreet’s professional career in Minneapolis. Sik provides exquisite detail about the jin-di-sugi technique which Bradstreet developed to raise the grain of cypress wood as she located an unpublished interview by a University of Minnesota scholar with a craftsman at the Bradstreet atelier. This process was Bradstreet’s invention, in response to the traditional Japanese method of burying cypress wood for a period of years, referred to as cryptomeria, in order to "raise the grain" of the wood. She also discusses Bradstreet's broad civic activities including co-founding the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts and his founding membership in the Skylark Club.

Source: http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring05/64-spring05/spring05article/301-john-scott-bradstreet-and-the-decorative-arts-revival-in-america

In 2007, Sik researched and wrote Sotheby's catalog note for the sale of the family of Mrs. John Blakeleky dining room suite, which sold for $348,000.00. See: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.pdf.N08331.html/f/76/N08331-76.pdf (NOTE: this article is not in the collection)

Ronald L. M. Ramsay

Scope and Contents note

Author Ronald L. M. Ramsay, an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at North Dakota State University, in Fargo, North Dakota, wrote a profile for Tiller, Volume 1, No. 4, March April 1983, pages 37-48. He describes Bradstreet's early influences, and the burgeoning business which he had as a retailer of others’ furniture, his custom
creations, his unique treatment of cypress wood, and his atelier for the artisans.

**Scope and Contents note**

Articles 1914-1994

Scope and Contents note


St. Paul Winter Carnival invitation February 3, 1886

Scrapbook ca. 1930
**Scope and Contents note**

Donated to the library in 1930 by A.J. Russell, a Minneapolis newspaper columnist; 52 x 32 cm; 19 pages; mixed media. Titled “The Bradstreet Papers: Preserved by Miss Fannie Jacquess Long Associated with Mr. Bradstreet at the Crafthouse, 4th Ave. South at 7th St.” Note that the second “s” in Fannie’s surname has been added in pencil on the facing page. On the 7th page, the caption spells her surname “Jacques.” On the back of a telegram in the scrapbook, Bradstreet spells her surname with one “s.” Handwriting on borders of several photographs does not match the caption handwriting beneath the scrapbook items. It is not clear who created the scrapbook. In City Directories ranging from 1901-1910), Miss Jacquess is referred to as either a bookkeeper or a secretary to Mr. Bradstreet's company, John S. Bradstreet & Co. The spelling of her surname varies, as does the spelling of her first name. Includes programs for both the memorial in January 1916 at the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts and the presentation of the Bradstreet plaque to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; photographs which have been colored; programs and invitations to Bradstreet’s travel lectures on Japan (“Rickshaw Trips in Nippon” and “the Heart of Old Japan”); extensive pictures of both interior and exterior, including Japanese Garden at Craftshouse (many of which are postcards); receipts for purchases in Japan; photographs of sample panels rendered in wood; a poem by Richard Burton, “The Dear Adventurer” dedicated to Bradstreet; a print of Douglas Volk’s “Father Hennepin Discovering the Falls of St. Anthony” dedicated to Bradstreet; Travel Lecturer Burton Holmes photographed in a traditional Korean costume; and a newspaper advertisement for the sale following the fire at the Syndicate building. See Collection's Custodial History Note for additional details re: Fannie.

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**Career**

**Scope and Contents note**

Interior Design: From the start of his career as an employee of Gorham, the Rhode Island silversmith, subsequently moving to Minneapolis in 1873, where he worked his way up to salesman of furniture for Edward Clarke's shop on Hennepin Avenue, and ultimately to purveyor of his own furniture and that of other designers. By 1875, Bradstreet bought out Clarke’s share, and ran his own furniture shop. John Bradstreet's goal emerged: he wished to set the tone for beautiful and purposeful design of interiors
and landscapes in a very young Minneapolis. Not the best businessman, he was looking for a partner when, in 1878, Edmund Phelps, a family friend from New England arrived. They went into business, and moved into the Syndicate Block on the east side of Nicollet between 5th and 6th Streets. By late 1880s, visiting Japan every 2 years, and visiting Europe in the off years to buy furniture, art, statues, panels and other objects.

In his early career, he adhered to design motifs popular in Europe and Africa, but a strong interest in, and nine voyages to, Japan convinced him that the calm restraint and Oriental aesthetics of Japonism was the ultimate in tasteful interior design. Being a businessman, he gave clients what they wanted (including selling Louis Comfort Tiffany and Gustaf Stickley's designs in his Craftshouse) Bradstreet successfully encouraged many of his clients (whose names read like a veritable A list of Twin Cities business and commerce at the start of the 20th century) to embrace his design sensibilities. Two important things must be known about Bradstreet. First, he was way ahead of his peers when he set up an atelier for his Scandinavian and Japanese craftsmen to design, build and create stained glass, furniture, lighting fixtures, wall panels, and whatever else was needed for his residential and commercial clients. Since his death in 1914, he has been compared to Louis Comfort Tiffany, Gustav Stickley, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Second, his experimentation with the jin-di-sugi technique of raising the grain of cypress wood resulted in creation of unique works of wood, including Lotus tables (one of which sold at Christie's auction house in 2009 for $386,500.00) and dining room suites. The Japanese style prescribed burying the wood for years to allow rot and decay to dissolve the softer pulp of the cypress wood. He sped up the process using fire and wire brushes (and possibly acids, though that's not certain), with a markedly similar, and stunningly beautiful result.

See also: His portrait has been restored. Now to restore the memory of John S. Bradstreet: MIA founder, craftsman, and the Twin Cities’ original tastemaker http://new.artsmia.org/stories/his-portrait-has-been-restored-now-to-restore-the-memory-of-john-s-bradstreet-mia-founder-craftsman-and-the-twin-cities-original-tastemaker/

MIA Teaching--Fact #4: The Duluth Living Room http://new.artsmia.org/teaching-the-arts/american-period-rooms/the-duluth-living-room/

Landscape design: Services grew to include landscape gardening, after initial forays into garden design at the Judd House.

Committed to civic development at many levels, Bradstreet held a six-year term (1901-1907) on the Board of Park Commissioners.
Bradstreet proposed to transform an island in Lakes of the Isles into a Japanese Garden. The project was never begun, perhaps in part because Theodore Wirth, who was in charge of the Minneapolis Parks at the time, did not agree with the proposal. Also, St. Paul already had a Japanese Garden at Lake Como.

With Park Commissioner Thomas Lowry, Bradstreet named the park known as The Parade, which was adjacent to the land on which the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden now resides, and just downhill from Lowry's mansion (on what is today the Walker Art Center).


See also Bradstreet's Judd House garden design: http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring_05/articles/sik_23.html and http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring_05/articles/sik_23.html

Furniture Design Influenced by his clientele's taste, and by his own travels, John Bradstreet built his services beyond retailing other manufacturer's products to include custom design of furniture and other design elements (including lighting and stained glass windows) which he and his artisans created for his customers. This started at his business located at 208 South Seventh Street, in about 1900. Known as the Morrison Bigelow House; Bradstreet located his team of carvers, gilders, painters, furniture makers in the building. Emanating William Morris’ Kelmscott Manor, this address also served as his salesroom.

They relocated to 327 South 7th St., bought in 1901, remodeled and opened to the public in 1904. This building was previously known as the Faries House. After extensive updates, this residence functioned as a factory, office, showroom, gallery, concert hall and residence. Ronald L. M. Ramsay, “John Scott Bradstreet and the Minneapolis Craftshouse, Tiller, 1:4, March – April 1983, page 43.

After several trips to Japan, and starting in approximately 1903, he launched the jin-di-sugi technique, to great success. Frank Waterman, Treasurer of John S. Bradstreet and Co., wrote to Mr. S.O. Barnum in Brooklyn, New York, indicating "Mr. Louis Tiffany, (the well-known art connoisseur of New York), recently in speaking of our latest production, an illustration of which we enclose, remarked, "I consider your furniture, as designed and bought out in the Jin-di-Sugi finish, the most unique and artistic treatment of wood yet produced.""

Addendum: In a November 20, 1921 Minneapolis Journal caption to a photograph, it is noted that the grounds of the Craftshouse (photographed in winter) are now the home to the Minneapolis Republican Women's Club, where they have opened the Red Elephant Teashop.
Business advertisements undated

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Mixed materials

Scope and Contents note

Stationery examples include: 1. Consolidated Arts Company, 27 East 21st. Street, New York, NY (a business of Bradstreet's possibly used to sell his work on the east coast, or to import directly to New York from outside of the United States per Michael Conforti, "Minnesota 1900: Art and Life on the Upper Mississippi, 1890-1915"; Newark; University of Delaware Press, p. 77) 2. John Bradstreet and Company 208 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis (includes list of clients, both individuals, and clubs) 3. Bradstreet, Thurber & Co., Minneapolis, Dealers and Importers, Syndicate Block, 2nd Autumnal Exhibition, Oct. 23rd-24th-25th 1884, Furniture and Decorations (sewn; 12 pages; description of home furnishings, noveltie, fabrics, stained glass, and domestic cabinet work; illustrated) 4. John S. Bradstreet & Co. Interior Furnishings and Decorations, Established 1876, 327 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis (unbound: 32 pages; illustrated); includes descriptions of services available.

Promotional photographs include: Carved Table No. 97, Turtle Design, priced at $86.00 Carved Table No. 96 (2 copies), Lotus Design, priced at $65.00

NOTE: a photograph of Burton Holmes, of the travelogue fame, is included in this folder.

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Holmes, Burton -- History
Business correspondence 1903-1905

Scope and Contents note

Three Postcards: 1. A small ship (addressed but not posted to Miss F. M. Jaquess, Minneapolis, c/o The Craftshouse”) 2. New Year's greetings from Harishin in Kobe, Japan addressed to Mr. John S. Bradstreet 3. A picture of a flooded neighborhood (possibly Tokyo?) dated 1910.

Two page letter on blue paper from Frank H. Waterman, treasurer, John S. Bradstreet & Co., dated May 30, 1903, to Mr. S. O. Barnum, in which he conveys, "Mr. Louis Tiffany, (the well-known art connoisseur of New York), recently in speaking of our latest production, an illustration of which we enclose, remarked, "I consider your furniture, as designed and brought out in the Jin-di-Sugi finish, the most unique and artistic treatment of wood yet produced.

Business letterhead and stationery undated

Scope and Contents note

Includes: Negative of brochure cover Negative of one of Bradstreet's crests (a scarab?) Placard from H.W. Rubins Co., announcing his succession as the new owner of John S. Bradstreet & Co., under the new name, H.W. Rubins Co.

As Bradstreet's business evolved, and with each relocation or upgrade, a new name was chosen. They include: 1. John S. Bradstreet, Manufacturer of Artistic Domestic Furniture, Modern Gothic and Other Designs., No. 411 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis. 2. Bradstreet, Thurber & Co., located in the Syndicate Building; a fire destroyed the business in 1893. 3. 619 Nicollet Avenue – where business relocated after the 1893 fire. 4. 208 South Seventh Street, about 1900; (known as the Morrison Bigelow House; Bradstreet located his team of carvers, gilders, painters, furniture
makers in the building); emanating William Morris’ Kelmscott Manor. It was also his salesroom. 5. 327 South 7th St., (bought in 1901, remodeled and opened to the public in 1904; known as the Faries House). This building functioned as a factory, office, showroom, gallery, concert hall and residence.

Craftshouse concert January 11, 1907

Scope and Contents note
The Craftshouse functioned not only as the salesroom and studio, but also as a venue for meetings, including concerts, and clubs (including the Skylark club). Included in this folder is a program for a January 11, 1907 program, featuring Haydn, Bizet, Boccherini, Beethoven, Bach, Chopin, Hollaender and Arditi. John Bradstreet's personal crest (the scarab beetle) is embossed on the cover.

Japanese correspondence undated and 1899

Scope and Contents note
Includes notes from Morishina(?) and Hari-Shin (1899) and an apparent advertisement for the J. Oskei Manufacturer and Dealer of Gifu Lanterns.

Travel and Lecturing

Memorabilia: Bahamas 1907

Scope and Contents note
Bahamas Regatta 1907 badge, and program, "The Ancient Play of the Pied Piper of Hamelin" performed 7 February, 1907. Bradstreet was in Nassau to deliver a travel talk, sponsored by The Queen Victoria Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire. He was introduced by Sir Ormond Malcolm, Chief Justice of Nassau, Bahamas. While there, he socialized with the Governor, Sir William Grey-Wilson and his wife Lady Grey-Wilson and sailed with Lord Bishop and Captain Pursell. During the last 10 years of his life, he was less active in John S. Bradstreet & Co., (according to his obituary) and traveled extensively. This trip to the Bahamas in the winter supports that. See: scrapbook for a letter to Fannie Jaquess from Bradstreet, written about his travel talk and visit to the Bahamas.

Memorabilia: Oriental undated and 1896-1907

Scope and Contents note
Includes: stationery (possibly from Japan): travel jottings and penmanship practice; an invitation to the birthday party of The Emperor hosted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Count Okuma) and Countess Okuma (held 3 November, 1896); and a dinner menu for a ship, with the reverse featuring a map charting the steamer trackes of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line. A Burton Holmes travelog leaflet is included, for the 1906-1907 season in Minneapolis.

Lecture ("The Legend of the Golden Lotus") undated

Scope and Contents note
Typed three page narrative for Mr. Bradstreet's lecture, "The Legend of the Golden Lotus;" single page description (typed and handwritten) of Ashinaga and Tenaga, carved wood figures in the Crafthouse.