



Contacts:

Nancy Shawcross
Curator of Manuscripts
Rare Book & Manuscript Library
Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center
(215) 898-2065
shawcros@pobox.upenn.edu

Megan Schmidgal
Director of Communications
PennDesign
215.898.2539
megands@design.upenn.edu

The University of Pennsylvania Acquires the Vermont Marble Company Archives

PHILADELPHIA, PA (March 25, 2013) - The University of Pennsylvania Libraries and the University of Pennsylvania School of Design announce the acquisition of the Vermont Marble Company Archives. Comprising business records and a stone sample collection, the archives document the firm's activities from its beginning in 1869 as the Sutherland Falls Marble Company to its final years in the 1970s. The purchase has been made possible by the generosity of the B. H. Breslauer Foundation, Lisa Sardegna, and the G. Holmes Perkins Fund. Dr. Bernard H. Breslauer, one of the great antiquarian booksellers of the 20th century, established the Foundation, which provides timely support for the purchase of important primary sources by rare book and manuscript repositories. Lisa Sardegna, GFA'05, serves on the Board of PennDesign. The Perkins Fund was created by G. Holmes Perkins, former Dean of the School of Design and founder of the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, a program of PennDesign.

The University of Pennsylvania looks forward to collaborating with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, which has acquired the Vermont Marble Museum, in Proctor, Vermont, the original home of the Vermont Marble Company. Collaborative projects may range from updated exhibitions and student workshops to educational courses and publications. In addition, a merit-based scholarship will be established for a student from the State of Vermont who wishes to study at Penn's School of Design. Funded in part by Marsha and Martin Hemm, the scholarship may be awarded to students of historic preservation, architecture, or landscape architecture, with preference being given to students of historic preservation.

The Vermont Marble Company was one of a handful of businesses that characterized America's rapid growth in the country's commercial transition to global prominence at the end of the 19th century. Vermont Marble produced the stuff of monumental America from everyday memorials to commercial and domestic palaces to national monuments. As supplier, designer, fabricator, and seller, the company encompassed the very nature of American ingenuity and resourcefulness and quickly became a global competitor in the European-dominated world of building and ornamental stonework. If a country's national heritage is a true reflection of its ethos, then the history of Vermont Marble is in part the history of America.

The business records begin with Redfield Proctor's consolidation of many of the existing smaller stone yards near Rutland, Vermont. Included are correspondence, purchase orders, payrolls, job books, individual project files, drawings (linens, blueprints, pencil sketches, and original

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watercolor designs), photographs, printed trade catalogs with illustrations, and salesmen's kits. The photographic record is particularly complete with thousands of negatives documenting the company's many quarries, stone yards, trimming rooms, construction sites, and finished projects, including the Lincoln Memorial, the National Gallery of Art, the United Nations, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Using the collection, researchers will be able to make critical generalizations about many iconic building statements of the later 20th century, e.g., Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; 1961-63) and the Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza, Albany (Wallace Harrison; 1959-76).

All of these records are further extended and complemented by perhaps the most unusual aspect of the archives—a carefully assembled and cataloged collection of over 1,000 stone reference samples from quarries throughout the world. Few American enterprises have lasted so long and intact, continuing in the tradition of their founders. The result is a distinctive research collection that not only documents the rise of this important company but also American industry in general and specifically how the business of building in America radically changed from the Victorian era to Beaux Arts to post-war modernism. The records will enable scholars and researchers to build interpretation of the development of the urban environment with a perspective previously unavailable on this scale. In addition, there is potential to shed light on architect-client decisions pertaining to particular buildings. Other topics could include 20th-century business practice; the architecture of the Public Works Administration; the place of stone in the history of the City Beautiful movement; and public history and state sponsorship of architecture.

Building on a tradition that began with the University's founding in 1750, the Penn Libraries serve a world-class faculty and the students of Penn's twelve schools. The collections comprise more than seven million volumes, a million of which are in electronic form, over 100,000 journals, and extraordinary rare and unique materials that document the intellectual and cultural experience of civilizations ancient and modern. These resources are organized into fifteen separate libraries that serve the humanities, social and physical sciences, and Penn's programs in medicine, nursing, dentistry, and veterinary science. The Special Collections Center, whose Rare Book & Manuscript Library will house the records of the Vermont Marble Company, offers state-of-the-art, newly designed facilities, including a reading room suite with group studies, the Class of '78 Pavilion (a 140-seat assembly place), the Goldstein Family Gallery, the Vitale Special Collections Digital Media Lab, and several seminar rooms. The Anne & Jerome Fisher Fine Arts Library will make available the Vermont Marble Company's trade catalogs.

Established in 1978 to house the archives of world-renowned architect Louis I. Kahn, PennDesign's Architectural Archives collects, preserves, and makes available for students, scholars, and museums around the world the records of over 300 designers from the 18th century to the present. From buildings and landscapes to infrastructure and cities, its collections provide fundamental insights into the diverse ways that designers conceive and develop their ideas toward a built form. The Architectural Archives, with a facility that includes the Harvey & Irwin Kroiz Gallery, reading and seminar rooms, as well as extensive storage facilities, will house several thousand architectural and shop drawings produced by the Vermont Marble Company, extensive reference drawings sent by architectural firms, and the remarkable stone reference collection.

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