THE
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

Volume 36       June, 1953       Number 2

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ANTIQUARY

EARL E. MOORE

It has been my pleasure, over the years, to speak to a number of groups on a variety of antiquarian matters. None of them has ever been as eagerly anticipated as this meeting, for I realized, in view of your interests, that your organization and I have perhaps many things in common, and that among them is the mutual desire to collect and preserve books, manuscripts, and objects of many varieties that intrigue us with their antiquity. It is particularly pleasing, therefore, to have this opportunity to reminisce with you about my own personal experiences as an antiquary—experiences and interests fully shared by my wife.

Years ago, I ran across a quotation to the effect that "preserving the health by too strict a regimen is a wearisome malady," and although I had a fair idea then of what was behind the thought, I learned, as the years passed by, the efficacy, in fact the utter importance, of losing one's self in some activity beyond daily work. These activities for me have been principally antiquarian in nature, and, I might add, have provided experiences, friendships, and pleasures that, to me, are immeasurable in their value.

All of us have discovered that there is much more in life than merely following a profession or vocation. There is living proof of this fact in this very gathering. I observe that many of you here are affiliated with numerous worth-while projects in the Pittsburgh community. You contribute your knowledge and know-how to these groups not alone because you recognize the individual importance of these activi-

1 An address delivered at a meeting of The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on April 15, 1953. Mr. Moore is Assistant to the President and Vice President, United States Steel Corporation.
—Ed.
ties, but also because you realize the necessity of outside interests. It has been fairly well demonstrated that if we are to function properly in our "work-a-day" life, which we all agree exacts an immeasurable toll, we must have some interests aside from our work and community duties in which we can lose ourselves and relax.

Of the interests that can afford one the relaxation he needs at the end of a day, the art of collecting—and it is an art—equals, if it does not actually surpass, all of them. The list of items that people are known to collect almost equals in length the list of the individuals themselves. There are, for examples, those who collect pink, copper, gold, yellow and silver luster, oriental rugs, beer steins and buttons, costumes and match covers, canes and old coverlets, Indian relics and postcards, powderhorns and old bonnets, election buttons and shells, garters and guns, keys and skulls, occupational shaving mugs, and thousands of other articles.

One could go on relating incidents about collectors for hours and tell you of John Smith of Peoria who collects old stock certificates, and of Fred Jones of Fond du Lac who collects mustache cups—and at this very moment is in search of left-handed cups, now that his collection numbers in the hundreds. There are others from California to Maine searching for kerosene lamps, newspapers, superstitions, photographs of royal families, photographs of burial places of our presidents, and even bells, ranging from those used on Christmas packages to locomotive bells and cathedral chimes.

From time immemorial there have been collectors. It is recorded that Petronius broke to bits a goblet from which he and Nero commonly drank so that Nero, who had coveted it, might not have the pleasure of using it. Later, incurring Caesar's displeasure over these same possessions, Petronius was put to death. The Medici, whose unsavory reputation is familiar to all of us, were renowned for their collections in such fields as art and literature. And so, for all time and in all walks of life, one finds evidence of the ubiquitous collector.

Many of our industrialists, financiers, and professional men are collectors. All of us know of the Morgan collection and, of course, the Mellon art collection which was bequeathed a number of years ago to the National Gallery of Arts. Ford had numerous interests along this line, and Chrysler, it may interest you to know, collected old penny banks, only one phase of his many-sided interests. The Van Sweringen
sale, held about a decade ago in Cleveland, recalls to mind that while these brothers (Oris P. and Mantis J.) spent a good portion of their time with railroad problems, they also devoted the little leisure they had in getting together a well-balanced collection of antiques.

The story is told about an out-of-town visitor who called on the Van Sweringens in Cleveland. Upon returning home, he was asked by a friend if the Van Sweringens were antique collectors. He replied, "Why I don't think so. They showed me many nice things, but nothing that resembled a collection." And yet the Van Sweringens, among other valuable items, had one entire room called the Dickens room, containing furniture Dickens had used, as well as dishes, pictures, and many of his personal effects. There is dignity attached to collecting, and this story always reminds us that the principal object to keep in mind in acquiring a collection is that one should display his articles in good taste and, of course, artistically.

Considerable justifiable attention has been accorded Dr. Albert C. Barnes who received public notice in one of the popularly priced magazines some years ago regarding his important collection. Dr. Barnes, a Philadelphia millionaire who made his fortune in argyrol, is more than a dilettant in art appreciation; in fact, he is an authority. He was among the first to recognize the work of many moderns, and had in his collection, several years ago, 200 Renoirs, 100 Cezannes, 75 Matisse and 35 Picassos, as well as thousands upon thousands of other art treasures.

It does not follow, as you can see, that one collects along the lines of his profession. We might start with the premise that Lord Kitchener collected blue and white porcelain. On the contrary, one is surprised to learn that he collected butterflies. This oddity is explained when one delves deeper into his personal life and discovers that he was in the works department in India, which afforded him a splendid opportunity to collect some of the rarer species found in that part of the world.

One might expect to find prints of old cathedrals on the walls of an architect's home and portraits of Harvey and Lister in the home of a doctor. One might think that a clergyman would possess editions of rare and old books—but there was Dean Hole who specialized in roses. Certainly one would assume that an operatic manager would possess a collection of portraits of prima donnas, but it so happens that a chancery judge stands foremost in this field. The opera manager, on the other hand, collects delft. Frequently, collection betrays a man's foibles.
J. Pierpont Morgan desired to be an outstanding connoisseur of mosque lamps. He pursued this interest with the same assiduousness he applied to mastering railroad shares.

We know of two doctors: one collects items relating to his profession, such as pestles and mortars, apothecary jars and apothecary chests, while the other collects porcelains, some of the museum variety. Herbert Hoover, an engineer, statesman, and author, has one of the finest collections of K'ang-hsi blue in this country.

But there are numerous other antiquarian matters that one might mention, and perhaps we should turn to some of these for a few moments. Of all the antiquaries of past and present, Horace Walpole must be the acknowledged dean. His collection of furniture, china, glassware, and other items was probably the largest ever gathered by an individual. It is possible that some of us here this evening may possess a piece or so from the Walpole collection, for it was so large that when it was sold in 1842 by an English lord who had inherited the property, it took twenty-seven days to dispose of it at auction. Consider this against the fact that my wife and I have seen such prominent auctions as the Harding sale—that is, the head of the Harding restaurants—the Louis Swift sale, the Studebaker, Simon Strauss, and similar sales handled in as little as two or three days.

There is a little of Walpole in every collector. Just as the sight of an old piece of glassware or a weather-beaten piece of furniture filled him with curious excitement, so it stirs every collector. Perhaps it is the desire to possess beautiful objects; then again it may be a wish to retain a touch of our ancestry that leads us on into the ancient and dusty world of collectors. Again, it may be the same force that motivates this society—to preserve, for the edification of men, that information and those items that can help one to understand the present by a knowledge of the past.

It is difficult for the uninitiated to comprehend the "stick-to-it-ive-ness" that is required to put together a collection such as Walpole's or even one of less importance. We are reminded, in this connection, of a friend of ours who years ago had a Wedgwood season tile given to him. These tiles, as you know, were made by Josiah Wedgwood and are not so readily available now as the more common Wedgwood, Minton, and other tiles. The season tiles were among Wedgwood's early creations and were used in England as standards for milk pitchers.
Wedgwood made a series covering the twelve months of the year and, if we recall correctly, the tile given to our friend represented March. A year or so after he received it, he was traveling in New England and stopped at a service station. While purchasing some cigarettes, he noticed one of these tiles on a desk, apparently being used as a paper weight. He purchased it for a dollar or so—and the quest was on. Since then he has scoured the country in person and by mail, and at last accounts had seven of the tiles.

Just as we have records of collectors of glassware among the Romans, the collecting of china is an old and established field, first coming into prominence very early in England. Queen Mary in 1694 was probably the first well-known collector of china. China collecting became a mania in eighteenth-century England and, of course, has many followers today. Likewise the collecting of pottery received great impetus in England and the attention of most modern collectors centers on the pottery of England, particularly that made in the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth centuries.

A number of our friends have become collectors of view-plates, and there are few more fascinating items for the antiquary. A great share of our history is depicted in these plates. There is a plate in dark blue entitled "The Battle of Bunker Hill," by Ralph Stevenson, which faithfully pictures the battle line-up. Another plate of Stevenson's shows a scene of the "Capitol at Washington." Still another pictures an early New York landmark, the City Hotel, which once filled the entire front of a Broadway block. Scudder's American Museum, where P. T. Barnum first laid the foundation of the fortune he made as a showman, is depicted on another view-plate.

Fully as interesting as the capitol and city hotel are the illustrations of early colleges. The story is told of one Harvard College plate that traveled between town and country for several years as a cover for a butter jar. The housewife who sold it thought she was well paid when she received two dollars, but the same plate is quoted today at fifty dollars. It is interesting to note in this connection that the plates depicting American scenes seem to bring prices considerably in excess of sums realized for English scenes.

We also know of an eighteen-inch platter with a view of the city of Sandusky, Ohio, whose owner now lives in the South. This platter was discovered in a New Jersey attic, covered with dust, and regarded
by its owner as an "ugly old thing" that she was unwilling to have about. She offered it to some relatives, who would not even take it as a gift. And so it remained in the attic until two collectors in the same town got word of the treasure and started out to secure it. One was so sure of his ability to obtain it that he took along a basket in which to carry it home. But he returned empty-handed. The other got the platter for five dollars less—a matter of personality we suppose, for one's personality plays as prominent a role in collecting as it does in almost every other activity in life.

The importance of your society to the history of western Pennsylvania recalls the importance of Enoch Wood to Staffordshire potters. He was the first of that illustrious group of potters, and went into business in England in 1784. By this time, just after the Revolution, the colonists were recovering from their struggles and anxious for more comforts than they hitherto had enjoyed. Enoch Wood was practical enough to seize upon the occasion to turn out quantities of ware that was serviceable, attractive and cheap, and since it was made particularly for the American market, it featured incidents and scenes that appealed to our growing nation.

Rarest of all Wood's plates is the one that commemorates the opening of the Erie Canal, on October 26, 1825. There are three of these plates, showing the aqueducts at Rochester and Little Falls, and the entrance of the canal into the Hudson at Albany. This latter plate has been found to exist in two sizes, a ten-inch soup plate and an eight-inch plate. These plates are not marked, except with the name of the view, but a washbowl is on record with the Albany view, the familiar floral border of Wood, and the impressed mark of E. Wood and Sons. If you have one of these pieces hidden away in the attic, you can congratulate yourself and be proud.

Certainly we would be remiss were we not to mention a subject that no doubt is familiar to many of you—glassmaking in the Pittsburgh district and the upper Ohio valley.

For many years, as you know, glass collectors failed to give recognition to the products of Pittsburgh's early glass firms. Today, however, items still in existence are eagerly sought by collectors. The very early free-blown pieces, with their strong colors, and the Bakewell cut ware, from what has been called the first flint glass factory in America, laid the foundation for Pittsburgh's prominence in glass manufacturing.
The quality of this early production is indicated not only by the pieces that still exist, but also by such facts as the extensive service that was purchased for the White House by Presidents Monroe and Jackson. The White House service included bowls, celerys, salts, vases, and a complete range of decanters, cordials, wines and champagnes. It is interesting to note, also, that this early glass frequently is not clear, but faintly tinged with grey, yellow, amethyst, or blue. This color variation is observed more easily in the free-blown pieces.

Pattern glass molding is generally thought to have been started around 1810, but there is evidence of its having been made at New Geneva about 1800, and certainly as early as 1805, a date that can be substantiated according to Pittsburgh records. We do know that the popular rib molds at Pittsburgh had eight, twelve, and fifteen ribs, and the paneled type of pattern molding is often attributed to Pittsburgh. Again, the heavy ribs of a pillar-molded piece distinguish an authentic Pittsburgh technique. This type of glass has often been called riverboat glass for it was found on every well-appointed flatboat, as well as in hotels, in store windows, and on the sideboard.

Few items are more fascinating to the glass collector than the pictorial whiskey flasks. These bottles were of two general types, those with historical portraits and those with a conventional design. Sometimes they are found in combination, such as the familiar one with a portrait of George Washington on one side and a patriotic design on the other. Pittsburgh produced a pattern of bottle called "Union and Clasped Hands" shortly after the Civil War, and popular events, such as the Gold Rush to Colorado in 1859, caused the designing of such items as the Pike's Peak Traveller. It is generally agreed that the rounded and scrolled flasks are of the first half of the nineteenth century, while the high-shouldered ones, with collared necks, were produced during the second half of the last century. Many colors exist, but vivid blues or violets and amethysts or yellows are exceptional prizes.

The subject of glass has long held a fascination for us. One of the most challenging tasks we have undertaken has been putting together a complete set of pressed Parthenon or so-called Egyptian Pattern Glass. This pattern, according to Kamm and other authorities, was undoubtedly produced at Sandwich, and since we know for a fact that the Minerva Pattern, which has the same characteristic beading, was produced at Sandwich, Egyptian ware undoubtedly came out of the
same factory. We have collected pieces all over the country, many of them found in out of the way places, and our total collection now numbers more than one hundred items, including twelve of the exceedingly rare ten-inch plates.

Perhaps our best examples of glass, not so much for their individual rarity but rather for their continuity, are found in our collection of cruets. We have collected more than five hundred of these little gems, which depict virtually a complete history of glassmaking in America. It is strange how one starts these collections. One day early in 1936, we stopped in a dingy shop in Indianapolis, and saw a very beautiful vinegar cruet, the loveliness of which was enhanced by its particularly unattractive surroundings. We had just broken a vinegar cruet and, thinking at the moment only of its functional value, we bought it. A few minutes later, we stopped in another shop a short way down the street and, noting a cruet that was equally appealing, the thought occurred that a collection of these cruets would be novel; whereupon we bought the second one, which actually was not needed, thereby crossing a bridge that has led to hundreds of miles of searching, each as bright as the last with the anticipation of finding a gem around the next corner. As a collateral interest we never pass up a good glass stopper and this collection now numbers several hundred, all of which to a bottle man are like money in the bank.

It was in this same manner that we became interested in stamp collecting. We started this not through any personal interest, but rather as something we thought would interest our children. In this we were unsuccessful, but in trying to interest them we developed a personal interest, and during twenty years have acquired a collection that in bulk and weight will test the strength of two men.

In passing, I might say that stamp collecting has recorded undoubtedly the highest prices ever paid for favorites so small with the exception of precious stones. I know of one particular instance of a stamp being sold to one of our better known collectors for twenty-four thousand dollars. The ironical thing about it was that the stamp was originally purchased for fifty dollars.

I have heard, although I have no facts concerning the transaction or proof of the price paid, that the highest price ever paid for a single stamp was thirty-five thousand dollars. This appears to be an exorbitant price for such a small piece of paper, but it is common to hear of start-
ling sums having been paid. It might be well to qualify those two instances by mentioning that they are the only two stamps of their kinds and types known to be in existence.

Recently, the American Hobby Federation released the results of a year-long survey conducted among the younger members of more than eight thousand hobby clubs across the nation. The findings revealed that stamp collecting had slipped in two years from first to sixth place. Its successor—collecting seals and labels—had risen from twenty-fourth place to the top position. The Federation, incidentally, believes that this change has its roots in the nation's economy, for they feel that inflation has shrunk the buying power of children's allowances to the place where stamps and albums are not a practical hobby, while, on the other hand, seals and labels are not only plentiful, but also free.

I have hesitated to catalog all the items that are collected in our home—in fact, if my hobbies keep on growing and the house starts overflowing, my wife will probably have to take a furnished room.

One of the most disheartening things in the world to me is a person who finds himself at sixty or seventy without outside interests to which he is anxious to devote an increasing proportion of his time. It is natural, then, that I never allow an opportunity to talk about the broad subject of collecting to pass, and rather than talk about any particular item in our collection, I shall generalize merely to assure you I practice what I preach.

We are particularly interested in our collection of cloisonne, of which we have some four hundred pieces ranging from one and a half inches to twenty-four inches in height. This collection consists of pleasing examples of fine workmanship by Chinese, French, Japanese, and Korean artisans. Aside from this, we have what I must refer to as relatively minor collections of tea caddies, small cast-iron stoves usually cataloged as toy stoves, but which came into being actually as salesmen's samples, paper weights, coffee mills, penny banks, cast-iron toys, powder-horns, John Rogers groups, pitchers, Indian relics, guns, items in copper and brass, trivets, keys, wood carvings, cut glass, sleigh bells, canes and walking sticks, early postcards, early cooking utensils, Sheffield silver, old Wedgwood, Staffordshire, Meissen, Chelsea, Worcester,
Doulton, Coalport, Toby jugs, Mettlach steins and plaques, figurines, bronzes, bottles, rose bowls, and even early sheet music.

Our first adventure in collecting occurred some forty years ago and consisted of a nearly complete run of Beadle's dime novels, as well as the Frank Merriwell series of hair-raising thrillers. From that modest shelf, the location of which was carefully camouflaged in the loft of our woodshed, the array has multiplied in the intervening years. And why did we start a book collection, and why did we persist in collecting books even though their number has become burdensome? This is the reason:

There is in most of us a desire to know the past as intimately as we know the present. Much of the knowledge we have, much of our communion with the past is simply the result of stories that have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Many of the folk songs of our mountain areas and of the west have never appeared in print, but have been passed along from mother to daughter, from father to son. In books, however, the leaders in thought have treated all subjects in a profoundly wise manner from the very first time that man recorded his ideas in writing. We have held communion with our books since the era of the Beadle dime novels and the Horatio Alger thrillers, and there are few evenings before we go to bed, regardless of the time, that we do not go to the library and switch on the light. It is then that we sense the deep and genuine meaning of life that is lost in everyday routine. One's books are not dogmatic or demanding like one's friends. They simply wait your call and, once having been consulted, open up broader and more revealing vistas.

In the words of Clarence Day:

The world of books
Is the most remarkable creation of man
Nothing else that he builds ever lasts
Monuments fall
Nations perish
Civilizations grow old and die out
And after an era of darkness
New races build others
But in the world of books are volumes
That have seen this happen again and again
And yet live on
Still young
Still as fresh as the day they were written
Still telling men’s hearts
Of the hearts of men centuries dead.

Perhaps this is why so many people are collectors of books. The collecting of books, contrary to popular belief, is not an activity limited to the wealthy. One can have in his library a first edition of Dickens for as little as six or seven dollars. Stevenson’s firsts can be had for six to ten dollars. In our own country, Emerson’s English Traits can be purchased for around six dollars, while his book Poems can be had for fifteen dollars.

Book collecting can be just as exciting as one wishes to make it. Some collectors have their agents serving as scouts for certain books, and if these books are not easy to locate, this could in itself border on the exciting once the long-sought-for item shows up. We have secured some of our books through this method; however, to our way of thinking, there are other means that are more intriguing. For instance, some of the auctions we have attended in Chicago and New York have provided rare experiences. But regardless of whether one has the money merely to sit down and write out a check for a first edition, a fore-edge painting, a fine binding or a signed copy or an association item, or an early book of some historical significance, the real joy that comes to most of us is in finding these books in out-of-the-way places. A couple of years ago, while following our custom whenever we find a spare moment of dropping into shops in Pittsburgh, we found a pristine copy of Edward Eggleston’s Hoosier Schoolmaster, a first issue of the first edition with the tinted frontispiece, in a shop on Fifth Avenue. Some time later, in another shop on the same interesting street, while rummaging through a disorderly pile of books on the floor beneath a counter, we discovered Thomas Jefferson’s own copy of a book concerning all that was then known about the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers from their sources to their confluence. We were a little nervous after this discovery, and not wishing to disclose any particular anxiety, we included the book with four or five others and asked the shopkeeper his price for the lot. He picked up one of the lot and hefted it as if
weighing a pound of butter and said, “Well, a book’s a book. A dime apiece—fifty cents for the lot.”

Of course, all antiques or articles of antiquity are not found in well-advertised shops, old furniture and junk shops, attics or basements. Many of our most interesting and cherished items, if you will indulge owner pride, have been obtained at auction sales. Going, going, gone! The voice of the auctioneer is a siren call from the humblest barnyard to the most sumptuous metropolitan galleries, says Alice Winchester, editor of Antiques Magazine. “It proclaims the transfer of ownership, by licensed procedure on a legal basis, of every sort of property from a tin-cup to a palace. It directs an exciting game of buy and sell that can never be matched in a shop.” Experiences at these sales, which include a number of very large estates, go back many years; we are merely mentioning a few incidents to indicate the fascinating grip of such adventure.

Auction-goers, by and large, comprise a group reflecting in the course of a given sale about every type of human reaction and emotion. There are those who attend only to observe and who have no intention to buy however great the bargain. There are those who come to buy and who usually know what they want and what they are buying. Most interesting, perhaps, are those who are beginning as auction-goers, and who wish to get their feet wet, so to speak. These folk quite likely suffer from a highly infectious malady known as “auction fever.” “The symptoms are a green glint in eye,” as one commentator has described it, “a hectic flush on the cheek, and grasping movements of the hands. It attacks the reason and causes acute stimulation of the competitive spirit. After the sale, the victim is likely to suffer from reaction manifested by a severe depression of the spirits and utter deflation of his pocket book.”

Don’t let this description discourage you, however, from sampling this fertile field, and remember all who have had the fun of buying at an auction, at one time or another, also went through the auction-fever phase.

On one of the rare vacations we have had in the last twenty years or so, we learned that an important sale was scheduled to be held at Devlin Lake in Wisconsin, to dispose of the personal effects of the Jones Estate. This particular Jones family had held, during the gay nineties, the dubious honor of being the world’s foremost manufacturers of brass beds. Obviously, this had been a profitable enterprise, and the
effects were so numerous that the sale was scheduled to be held over a period covering ten sessions. We found it to be so inviting that we took in six of the sessions personally. The attendance was better than average since it was advertised that all of the remaining effects of President U. S. Grant would be in the sale including his Navajo rugs, his silk tapestries, his ceremonial swords, and other gifts he had received from various foreign royalties when he made his official trip around the world. The reason for the Grant items in the sale stemmed from the fact that Mr. Jones' brother, who was postmaster-general under President McKinley, had eventually married Nellie Grant Sartoris.

What makes such sales interesting and etches them in one's memory is that during the course of the sale the bidding at times gets a little slow, and with a great volume of items to be sold, an auctioneer who is approaching a relief period may be a little impatient. So it was at this sale and under such circumstance we secured the wedding dress of Nelly Grant Sartoris, who married Algernon Sartoris in the White House in 1874. She is one of the two top-liner brides to be married in the White House, the other being, as most of you know, Alice Roosevelt. Both weddings were high-water marks in the social history of Washington. While there were around two hundred persons attending this particular session of the auction, those who had their eye on the beautiful wedding gown were just a little slow on the draw, so to speak, or the auctioneer was overly tired, and we secured Nelly Grant's gown for the attractive figure of twenty-one dollars. I should say, however, that the auctioneer in knocking down the item to me cried out, "Stolen by Mr. M.," rather than, "Sold to Mr. M.," his usual speech.

Another auction adventure, of the hundreds we have enjoyed, stands out in my mind as descriptive of the breaks that come to those who are patient. This one was at Michigan City, Indiana, and involved the dispersal of the effects of an experienced collector. The sale was a six-session affair, and while it comprised only a third of the estate, yet some 3,500 items were sold. For the purpose only of acquainting you with a most unusual collection, I may add that there were in this sale 450 monk robes which the owner, who had been a world traveler, was in the process of completing. The task had brought together practically every ecclesiastical garb worn by the holy men of almost every country on the face of the globe.

I came to this sale on the third evening session, and while the
place was crowded on the lower floor of the large family residence, I made a hurried reconnaissance of the upper floors and had about concluded there was little to capture my interest. Then, in glancing up as I descended the stairs, I noted hanging on the wall in the stair well a perfectly gorgeous antique pictorial prayer rug of Tabriz origin. The pictorial feature showed three likenesses of the royal lineage with the name of each woven into the design.

Later I asked that the item be “put up,” which courtesy is usually extended, and, fortunately for me, the several antique dealers attending the sale were out on the front porch smoking cigarettes when the Tabriz came up, and we virtually stole it for $62.50. That same evening two dealers offered to outbid each other in giving me a profit yet I rejected $275 from one of them and another offer of $600 the following day.

It was in the Chicago home of a bachelor barrister, whose collection had long before outgrown his nine-room apartment, that we acquired a number of items of real interest. This man had more of a mania for buying than appreciation for the items he bought, although he was well informed as to the quality of his purchases. He had put his collection together with items from every part of the world, and his china, glass, and crystal ware, although large in volume, was still an insignificant part of his total collection. It was at one of these sessions that two original Hogarths, which I have in my possession and prize very highly, came up. They apparently had been overlooked by even the connoisseurs since they were hung in the butler’s pantry. Again, I was a little late in arriving that evening, having been detained at the office, but these items had been bid in for me to my lasting pleasure, by my associate, Mr. Wyndham, who besides being a collector in his own right frequently aids me in preserving anonymity at auction sales. Now there are perhaps less than a dozen known original Hogarths in America, yet the aforementioned choice pair, framed and in almost pristine condition, cost the unbelievably low figure of nineteen dollars.

Every item that this gentleman possessed was disposed of at his three-day sale of six sessions, the sale grossing some $40,000, and he indicated that this was the end of collecting so far as he was concerned. About a month later, while we were attending another auction in Chicago, several pieces of Chelsea were sold, and as the auctioneer closed the sale we were not surprised to hear him mention the name
of the barrister as the purchaser. He was one of those persons who could quit smoking at will, diet, perhaps also at will, forego certain pleasures, but quit collecting—never!

Collecting through this means can be a pleasure for many of us but for some it can become a disease and a mania. We knew a couple in the midwest, whom we shall refer to as Mr. and Mrs. “X,” who never missed any of the major auctions and only a few of the weekly auctions held by the various galleries. This couple had both been married previously to others; however, the present union was reputed to have brought together the lady’s four million dollars and the gentleman’s seven million dollars—a tidy backlog with which to indulge one’s collecting instincts. Madam “X” was an utterly ruthless operator, albeit a pet of the auctioneer fraternity since she paid any price necessary to achieve ownership. However, being rather generally despised by the crowd who could not compete, she usually was forced to pay more than a fair price by one or another customer who would run the bid up and up. This couple bought everything under the sun but frequently concentrated heavily on one particular item. Mr. “X” crossed over about ten years ago, but of course left his possessions behind, and while he had been known during his lifetime as the husband of Mrs. “X,” I came, in ten years of auction-room acquaintance, to be quite interested in him as an individual—as one does in someone who has suffered more than is rightly his share. Mrs. “X” passed on about three years ago and likewise she took no material things with her but left behind a record of inventory that is unique. Her possessions filled her large warehouse, and, indicative of the extent of her queer ideas, she had, for examples, 125 grand pianos, 100 grandfather clocks, 175 fur coats, and dozens and dozens of other items multiplied in similar proportion.

One of my auctioneer friends whom she trusted told me that he had known Madam “X” for twenty years and had been in her large home enough times to know that every piece of furniture in the house was covered all the time with sheets or dust covers and that the rugs, which were several layers deep, were also covered with protecting covers. The trustee of the estate really had a field day of excitement since he unearthed almost a peck of unset diamonds and a large number of wedding presents that had remained unopened since the date of her first marriage. My friend also told me that one of her numerous trunks of somewhat ancient vintage had been cleared of some French finery
and was about to be discarded when someone observed that its depth was not equal to its height. On breaking it up, a false bottom was found, beneath which had been concealed several dozen pieces of fine antique jewelry, many set with diamonds, and some seven thousand dollars in cash. This leads to some interesting conjecture, knowing her buying habits—namely—did Madam “X” hide this fifteen-thousand-dollar hoard and forget about it, or did she buy a trunk that contained it and never know about its secret contents?

Your committee invited me to speak of adventuring and before leaving the late Madam “X” I will mention just one of a half dozen run-ins I personally had with this bewildered female. At one particular sale there was a collection of perhaps fifty old-fashioned lacey valentines that a friend of ours had asked me to purchase for him if it were possible to do so at a reasonable figure. During the course of the bidding, we found ourselves pitted against Mrs. “X.” We knew that our friend would not view it as reasonable if the cost exceeded ten dollars; however, when my bid had reached eight dollars, Mrs. “X,” who was sitting directly behind me, also bidding on the valentines, punched me sharply on the small of my back with her cane. This must have brought out the animal in me for we ran the bidding up to thirty-five dollars, realizing that merely for the pleasure of it, we would personally take care of the difference. Madam “X” promptly jumped the bid to fifty dollars and the item was knocked down by the auctioneer, and for my momentary pleasure I promptly received another brisk punch with the cane.

The adventure side of these remarks would not be complete were I to omit reference to another auction room acquaintance—a maiden lady who at one time was a national tennis champion of the United States. During the ten years or so that I observed her auction-room operation, she spent upward of four hundred thousand dollars, and I am fearful that her pleasure was motivated purely by the desire to possess. This lady distrusted the male of the species and protected her desire to be alone with two Great Danes who roamed the yard of her three-story, 25-room house on the south side of Chicago where she lived in seclusion with a 75-year-old servant. Eventually, this rather frail and timid lady passed to her reward and her possessions were so numerous that the executor concluded to sell the effects at private sale. The disposal required more than two years and grossed in the neighbor-
hood of $258,000. It was supervised by the two nurses who had attended the lady in her last illness. It would have been impossible to have moved the effects in fifty large vans as every room from the basement to the attic was filled to the ceiling and half of the items still carried an auctioneer's tag. To mention a few items, there was a priceless collection of 115 coverlets; a collection of 750 samplers dating back to 1738; 175 oil paintings such as Corots, Rosa Bonheurs, Blakelocks, Constables and Vining Smiths; 75 bronzes, most of which were important; 8 melodeons; 5 pianos, 10 radios; 15,000 books, many of which were high spots in pristine condition; three steel safes full of stamp collections; silver; jewelry; limited editions of etchings piled up three feet high like old newspapers; dozens of packages of bone china dinner plates of the $375-per-dozen variety purchased at Marshall Field's and never opened; and antique furniture and bric-a-brac of every description. There were at least three van loads of the finest china—Dresden, Meissen, Coalport, Worcester, Doulton, Staffordshire, and Royal Vienna.

In an old secretary were thousands of old letters still in their envelopes into some 150 of which paper money had been slipped and forgotten. This hoard totaled some eighteen hundred dollars. The lady's bathroom was furnished in knotty pine beaded ceiling material. Some of the knots were removable and in the space behind several of them were found numerous tobacco sacks containing an important coin collection including several scarce gold items.

How do I know all this? Just that I got a break early in the game. I heard that the lady had crossed over and, knowing her buying habits, I felt sure that her estate would be a collectors' gold mine. So I knocked on the door of the residence and talked my way inside and learned that I was the second outside party to get past the storm doors. Further, since it had been decided no one would be admitted who was not vouched for, I learned the executor's name and arranged to meet him and provide proper references. Once this was done I had the run of the place and shortly thereafter was requested by the executor to act as advisor to the attendants in the matter of pricing in cases where other purchasers sought reductions from the appraisers' figures. It was proper and expedient to the dispersal problem, it being understood that most collectors strive for reductions from any price marking.

This experience was truly a great adventure, since the appraisal firm had done only a cursory job and literally thousands of items were
first handled or discovered by this subscriber. The garage was bigger than most 12-room houses, and among many other things had in it ten automobiles and a fine horse-drawn carriage. Many priceless items were found here in rough storage.

One of the items from this garage gold mine that now delights your speaker is a grand wood carving of two eagles. This is particularly so because much of the history of a given section of the country or even our national history may be found in wood carvings, just as the history of glassmaking in America can be found in a cruet or other glass collection. The Chinese and the Japanese, as well as the Bavarian Germans, have produced outstanding work. Of course, wood carving goes back into antiquity.

A particularly interesting American wood carver was a fellow by the name of Schimmel who lived around the Lancaster-York area of Pennsylvania. Schimmel was a shiftless sort of individual, yet he had a romantic twist. He had a habit of dropping in on the farmers and working perhaps a few days at one house and a few days at another for his keep. In his leisure, as well as when he was housed in the local jail during winter as a vagrant and at his own request, he carved animals, birds, and, occasionally, religious subjects, which he gave to the families as a token of his appreciation. Occasionally he sold a piece. The accumulation in the attics around that section was quite extensive.

About twenty years ago, a certain dealer in that area, whose background is even more interesting than that of Schimmel, picked up two wood carvings by Schimmel about which neither he nor the owner knew anything. He hardly knew how to price the items and sold one of the carvings a few weeks later to a gentleman from Cleveland for five dollars. About a month later, the Clevelander dropped in and purchased the other item, whereupon our dealer friend started a search for more of the carvings and located a half dozen or so, one of which was later sold to Mr. George S. McKearin, the author of various antique books and perhaps the outstanding collector of glass in this country. Through McKearin, an article was written in the New York Times regarding Schimmel and his work, and immediately the rush was on, until even the more ordinary Schimmel carvings were bringing anywhere from fifty to seventy-five dollars. Some of Schimmel's work was noted for its tinting and it has been impossible to determine precisely what process was used. My eagle carving is unmistakably by
Schimmel in that the wings have a peculiar drooping effect which has not been found in any other carvings of eagles before or since, and twice seventy-five dollars will not buy it.

Of course, one of the joys in collecting is in sharing. We have seldom taken a trip anywhere that we did not pick up some item destined ultimately for a gift addition to the collection of some fellow collector of Americana. We also get joy in functioning as scouts. Recently, while on a trip in southern West Virginia, we saw a sewing machine mechanical bank. The price was too much to make it an appropriate gift to a friend of ours who had been looking for this number for several years to round out his collection of a hundred or so mechanical banks. We sent him a wire and he asked us to pick it up for him.

Many of us, especially those of us in the business and professional world, are under considerable tension, and as we have already mentioned, there is nothing as relaxing as losing oneself in his hobby or avocation. Not so long ago, we recognized this tension in a certain friend of ours and advised that he interest himself in some hobby. We had been showing him many items in our collection, and while he was greatly interested in the subject from our standpoint, he did not respond to our suggestion that he take unto himself a hobby. A few moments later, we picked up a hatpin, and while toying with it, suggested that perhaps a collection of hatpins would serve as an outlet. Whereupon we told him of a woman we once knew in Rockford, Illinois, who collected hatpins, and went about this so assiduously that she had gotten together a collection somewhere around five thousand. In fact, she had become so well-known through her search that she was often referred to outside her own community as "Hatpin Hattie."

Still no interest—so we dismissed the subject and went on to something else. A few evenings later, while working in our shop at home, we had cleaned three or four hatpins with a new magic fluid known as dip-away—no commercial intended. In looking for an object into which I might stick the hatpins, we selected an unusually large sponge which I had bought somewhere in a moment of weakness, but which was eighteen inches or so in diameter, by eight or nine inches thick. This proved to be an ideal support and every evening for the next week or so, we added a few pins from a supply of our own, which I had bought here and there thinking that some day I might want to start someone in a new hobby. Now seemed to be that time and we presented them
to our friend with the suggestion that this might serve as a starter for him. He protested that he didn't wish to take the items from us, but we urged him to borrow them and determine for himself that the display would become a conversational piece and soon he would have many helpers in building a worth-while collection. In the end I proved persuasive and he carried away the sponge and the pins. Within three weeks "operations hatpin" was in full swing; many additions of fine quality were gratuitously added by his friends; and the future is bright with promise that our friend will give Hatpin Hattie keen competition in maintaining her crown.

The avocations that we have discussed this evening, whether collecting books or view-plates, penny banks or costumes, are, of course, available to all individuals, regardless of occupation, wealth, or any of the limitations that some people believe to be inherent in acquiring a collection. For example, you may have noticed in one of the local newspapers several Sundays ago two accounts of two Pittsburghers and their separate collections. One of the articles told of a retired employee of one of our local industries and his collection of more than three hundred pocketknives from twenty-five foreign countries.

It seems he began his collection because, as an immigrant from Poland, he had always been impressed with the hobbies of Americans, particularly the stamp collection of a former president. His two sons, furthermore, collected autographed pictures of famous people, his daughter collected figurines, and his wife had begun a collection of dolls. Feeling somewhat out of place in the midst of all this, he hit upon collecting pocketknives, obtaining many of them from friends. In fact, he related in the article that one very obliging friend soaked some new knives in salt brine, since he had been told he was collecting "old knives."

This man's collection has kept him busy for fifteen years and he has gathered so much information on the uses and history of knives that he now finds relaxation and occupation by lecturing on knives to various groups in this area, including in his talks, we might add, a little verse which reads:

To own a good knife
Is like choosing a wife.
If the temper is right,
It's the joy of a life.
The other article described the avocation of another local citizen who collects toy soldiers—a hobby, incidentally, that is enjoyed also by Winston Churchill. Our Pittsburgh collector has acquired some three thousand toy soldiers. His troops represent many nations, including our own Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, and British soldiers from the time of Cromwell until the present.

These are not isolated cases, but are typical of the way individuals from all walks of life are becoming collectors of countless items to help them ease the tensions so prevalent in these times. It is our observation that the need for after-hours relaxation is becoming increasingly important as modern business problems exact more and more of one's mental capacities. We are confronted also with the complexities of our national affairs, our strained international relations, and the demands of community responsibilities.

It has seemed to us that, surrounded by all of this, one needs a variety of hobbies—a variety of personally chosen diversions to turn to at the conclusion of the day's activities. Only in this manner can a person vary his interests to fit the degree of relaxation he needs—turning one evening to his books, if that is the mood that suits him; or perhaps to the pleasures of his stamp collection; or the charm of his cloisonne; or his pressed glass; or his wood shop; or any one of the many items we have discussed. A different form of mental gymnastics is required in handling every different hobby, and when one so varies his interests as to provide a number of outlets, he will not want for a means of repairing the damage wrought by the wear and tear of normal life.

Beyond this, our own business has brought us into close contact with numerous individuals as they approach the time of their retirement from the business world and even after they have been retired for some time. All too frequently we have seen these individuals enter this stage in life with no hobbies, no outside interests at all that could be of value to them in readjusting to the new routine of retirement. Just recently, we assisted an elderly man in obtaining employment. Unfortunately, he, like many others, had entered retirement with absolutely no interests—not even in reading. This fellow brought out that neither he nor his wife of forty-five years of wedded life had too much trouble until he retired. But after retiring, it became apparent he had to keep out of the house as many hours per day as had been his practice when he worked because his wife just would not have him around.
He had no specific interests and did not like the museum emphasis on age, and having no other place to go, he had been walking the streets aimlessly but could no longer do this since his feet had gone back on him.

We saw this man a week after he had put on the work-harness again, and he appeared twenty years younger. I inquired as to his wife and he replied: "I am going to keep on working."

As some of you may know, we recently became associated with a new community project, the Committee on Aging, of the Health and Welfare Federation of Allegheny County. The growing experience which we are gaining through this activity has served to strengthen our already strong belief that hobbies, frequently translated into practical pursuits, can be a major factor in preparing every individual to meet the problems that face the retired person in our society.

We mention this in closing for a particular reason. We like to feel that on occasions such as this, or even during moments of conversation, perhaps some chance remark of ours, some relating of our own interest in a particular activity, may help someone else to find a subject that will so captivate his mind and energies that one more individual will be able to face with confidence that period when each of us must retire from his lifetime activities.

And so, as mentioned earlier, we try never to pass up an opportunity to mention this subject. We realize, of course, that most of you here this evening already have recognized the importance of hobbies and are deeply involved in some pursuit that affords you many fascinating hours of relaxation. It is hoped, however, that our remarks may stimulate your thoughts, to the end that some of you here may uncover numerous practical avocations which we, in turn, could pass along to the older members of our Allegheny County community.