

ROBERT HUDSON TANNAHILL PAPERS

1893-1970

4 1/2 linear feet

Box Code: \*TAN 1-7  
Accessioned: January 1980  
and June 1980  
Completed: August 1980  
By Douglas Kohn

The Papers of Robert Hudson Tannahill were placed in the Museum Archives of the Detroit Institute of Arts in January, 1980, by Francis W. Robinson, retired curator and historian of the Museum, via the Archives of American Art. An additional collection of audio-visual records was received by the Museum Archives in June of 1980 from Robinson and Charles H. Elam, retired curator and registrar of the Museum. The papers of Tannahill include personal correspondence, financial and legal records, memorabilia and business correspondence regarding art transactions.

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BIOGRAPHY

Robert Hudson Tannahill (1893-1969) contributed in many ways to the growth and development of the Detroit Institute of Arts in the twentieth century, most significantly as a major benefactor of the museum. At the time of his death, Tannahill had donated or contributed towards the purchase of nearly 500 works of art. His contributions, including cash, amounted to \$550,000, and his bequest to the Museum added 557 more works valued at approximately \$13,000,000. This was in addition to the Tannahill Foundation, which Robert H. Tannahill established in his will to benefit the DIA, the principle of which was valued at \$12,500,000.

Robert Hudson Tannahill also served the museum as Honorary Curator of Amer-

ican Art (appointed in 1927), and as a member of the City of Detroit Arts Commission (1930-1962), of which he served as president during May and June of 1962. Tannahill also was a Trustee of the Founders Society of the Institute from 1931 until his death. He was instrumental in forming the Founders Society auxiliaries Friends of Modern Art and the Associates of the American Wing. Tannahill also helped found the Detroit Artists Market, and supported the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts during its difficult depression years. During his lifetime, Tannahill was associated with numerous Detroit-area cultural organizations.

Tannahill was the son of Robert Blythe Tannahill and Elizabeth Hudson, the sister of Detroit retailer Joseph L. Hudson. Robert H. Tannahill never married, but remained close to his cousins, Eleanor Clay Ford (Mrs. Edsel Ford) and Josephine Clay Kanzler (Mrs. Ernest Kanzler).

Tannahill's personal art interests were varied, yet he exhibited excellent taste and an expert, critical eye in evaluating works of art. He had a particular fondness for Impressionist and post-Impressionist art, as well as American art, African art, French silver, porcelain, and eighteenth-century furniture.

Tannahill was honored by the DIA in 1969 by the creation of the Robert Hudson Tannahill Wing of American Art. Additionally, the Robert Hudson Tannahill Research Library at Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum is named in his honor.

#### SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The most interesting records in this collection are of transactions concerning works of art. The files contain correspondence and invoices from dealers and the DIA, showing the process of personal and institutional art acquisition. Furthermore, the papers include correspondence with other governing members of the Museum, the Arts Commission, and the Trustees of the Founders Society. In many cases, Tannahill's advice was sought regarding art acquisitions. Tannahill's personal life also is rudimentally presented by his papers. In several photo-albums are many images of his childhood, his college days, and his European travels during the 1920's. The personal correspondence illustrates his relationships as an adult, and is supported by the personal business and finance papers.

Additional material of Tannahill's and regarding Tannahill may be found in the DIA Museum Archives Central Files, which maintains a biographical file on Tannahill. Additionally, in the Museum Archives Founders Society - Legal (FSL) Records (Tannahill Series) there is valuable supplementary material. These records originated in the office of the Founders Society attorney, Mr. Alan Joslyn, of Joslyn and Keydel, Detroit, Michigan. Included is correspondence, financial records, extensive probate documents, and lists and thorough descriptions of Tannahill's personal art collection. (See the Guide to the Founders Society Law Office Records, Tannahill Series.) The DIA Museum Library maintains an index of all references to Tannahill which appeared in the DIA Bulletin, of which there are many. The Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection also has a biographical/clippings file on Robert H. Tannahill. The

Archives of American Art contains on microfilm one letter from artist John Marin to Tannahill.

Additional DIA Museum Archives collections which contain periodic and variable material for further Tannahill research are: The Robinson Papers, The Valentiner Papers, The Richardson Papers, The Woods Papers, The Cummings Papers, The Bostick Papers, the Burroughs Papers, and The Modern Art Department Papers (John S. Newberry Papers). Furthermore, the Page Papers and the Founders Society - Donors Records may be of further value to research.

Important Subjects Include:

Art Acquisitions, DIA  
Decorative Arts Curators - Hiring  
Founders Society - Organization and Policy  
Gifts to the DIA  
South Wing - Plans, Installation, Development  
Tannahill - Personal Finances, Personal Art Acquisitions, Biography  
Woods, Willis - Hiring of Director

These and additional subjects are indexed at the end of this guide. Broader subjects and related material are indexed in the Archives Central Index.

Important Correspondents Include:

William Bostick, Executive Secretary of the Founders Society  
John Carroll, Artist  
Hon. Jerome Cavanagh, Mayor of Detroit  
Charles Culver, Artist  
Frederick J. Cummings, Assistant Director of the DIA  
William Day, Trustee  
W. Hawkins Ferry, Patron and Trustee  
Harvey Firestone, Jr., Patron  
Lawrence A. Fleischman  
Paul Grigaut, Curator  
Ernest Kanzler, Patron and Trustee  
Pierre F. Nesi, Art Dealer  
John S. (Jack) Newberry, Curator and Trustee  
Addison Franklin Page, Curator  
E.P. (Ted) Richardson, Director of the DIA  
James H. Rose, Art Dealer  
Willis Woods, Director of the DIA

An index to the location of key correspondents will be found at the end of this guide.

## SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

### Series I, Personal Correspondence, Boxes \*TAN 1-2.

Correspondence of Robert H. Tannahill, arranged A-Z within topics. Topics include: general, foreign, sympathy notes for Josephine Clay Kanzler's death, get-well letters, thank-you notes, and specialty cards, 1934-1969.

### Series II, Personal Writings of Robert H. Tannahill, Box \*TAN 3.

Four plays written by Tannahill, arranged alphabetically by title, 1920-1921 (Two plays are undated). Rough drafts of letters, speeches, and a poem.

### Series III, Personal Identification Documents of Robert H. Tannahill, Box \*TAN 3.

Christmas lists, membership cards, trip itineraries, service papers, passports and wills of Tannahill, arranged by kind, 1918-1969.

### Series IV, Personal Business, Box \*TAN 4.

Financial and legal records including investment, tax and contribution receipts, and papers concerning Tannahill's property. Topically arranged, 1928-1969. (For Art Transaction records and/or DIA Contribution records, see Series V.)

### Series V, DIA and Art Transactions, Boxes \*TAN 4-7.

Includes correspondence with artists, scholars, and the DIA, arranged chronologically. Correspondence with dealers arranged alphabetically. Includes Founders Society and Arts Commission documents of policies, budget, meeting agendas and minutes, and special reports and studies, 1926-1970.

## DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO-VISUAL AND SPECIAL RECORDS

195 photographs and seven photograph albums have been accessioned as AVP 91:714.01-.202. Additionally, four passports, one bound eulogy of Edsel Ford, two resolutions of the City of Detroit, one resolution of the Arts Commission, and two published volumes of The Poetical Works of Robert Tannahill (A great-uncle of Robert Hudson Tannahill) have been accessioned as AVX 91:1.01-.10.

CONTAINER LISTING

\*TAN 1                    Series I: Personal Correspondence, 1934-1969.

1. Personal Correspondence, A-G.
2. Personal Correspondence - Dode Ford.
3. Personal Correspondence - Paul Grigaut.
4. Personal Correspondence, H-Ka.
5. Personal Correspondence, Ke-R.
6. Personal Correspondence - John S. Newberry (Jack).
7. Personal Correspondence - E.P. Richardson (Ted).
8. Personal Correspondence, S-Y.
9. Personal Correspondence, Full Names Unknown.
10. Correspondence - Foreign (In French), C-D.
11. Correspondence - Foreign (In French), E-N.
12. Sympathy Letters for Josephine Clay Kanzler's Death, 1954.

\*TAN 2                    Series I (continued).

1. Correspondence During Illness, March, 1959, A-G.
2. Correspondence During Illness, March, 1959, H-W.
3. Correspondence During Illness, March, 1959, Full Names Unknown.
4. Thank-You Notes - The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, 1964, A-M.
5. Thank-You Notes - The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, 1964, N-Z.
6. Responses to Robert Hudson Tannahill Wing Opening, 1969.
7. Assorted Greeting Cards, 1943-1969.
8. Cards from Gifts of Flowers.

\*TAN 3                    Series II: Personal Writings of Robert H. Tannahill, 1920-1921.

1. Play: "Katie Did," Copyright, June 1921.
2. Play: "Their Dead," Uncopyrighted.
3. Play: "Transplanted," Copyright, August 1920.
4. Play: Untitled, Uncopyrighted.
5. Rough Drafts - Letters, Poems, Speeches.

Series III: Personal Identification Documents of Robert H. Tannahill, 1918-1969.

6. Christmas Card Lists.
7. Christmas Gift Lists, 1949-57, 59-62, 65-67.
8. Christ Church Material, 1943, 59.
9. American Expeditionary Forces, 1918.
10. Articles and Pamphlets of Personal Interest, 1948-66.
11. Dog Papers - Martani, 1942, 63.
12. Henry Ford Hospital - Medical Records and Billings, 1947-69.
13. Membership and Certificate Cards, 1931-60.
14. Trip Schedules, 1927, 40, 50.
15. Trip to Europe in 1925 (Includes Correspondence with his father and his Aunt Josephine Clay Kanzler).

16. Miscellaneous.
17. Wills of Robert H. Tannahill, 1932, 42, 43.

\*TAN 4                    Series IV: Personal Business, 1928-1969.

1. Legal Papers and Correspondence, 1957-59, 62, 64.
2. Tax Papers, 1944-45, 47, 49-50, 67.
3. Correspondence with Investment Firms, 1945-47, 49, 52-53, 56, 58.
4. Notes to Stockholders, 1956-57, 67.
5. Reports of Dividends, 1957-58, 65-67.
6. Investment Records, 1945, 51, 54, 59.
7. Receipts and Invoices for Services and Purchases, 1928-1967 (Not Including Art Acquisitions; for art transactions, see Series V.)
8. Contribution Receipts and Acknowledgements (Not including DIA transactions; for DIA transactions, see Series V.) A-F.
9. Contribution Receipts and Acknowledgements, " , J-M.
10. Contribution Receipts and Acknowledgements, " , N-Y.
11. Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Detroit Zoo Business, 1962-64, 69.
12. Construction at 22 Lee Gate, 1948-49.
13. Tannahill Property at 22 Lee Gate, 1949.
14. Correspondence with Interior Decorator, 1948-50, 57.
15. Business Miscellaneous.

Series V: DIA and Art Transactions, 1926-1970.

16. Correspondence with Artists - John Carroll, 1932-1940.
17. Correspondence with Artists - Charles Culver, 1935-1968.
18. Scholarly and Curatorial Correspondence, 1946-1969.
19. Dealer Transactions - A-B.
20. Dealer Transactions - The Art Exchange, 1949-1968.
21. Dealer Transactions - C-E.
22. Dealer Transactions - The Carlebach Gallery, Inc., 1945-1968.
23. Dealer Transactions - Robert Ensko, Inc., 1937-1966.
24. Dealer Transactions - F-G.
25. Dealer Transactions - H-K.

\*TAN 5                    Series V (continued).

1. Dealer Transactions - L.
2. Dealer Transactions - M-N.
3. Dealer Transactions - Pierre F. Nesi, 1937-1946.
4. Dealer Transactions - P-Se.
5. Dealer Transactions - James H. Rose, 1964-1967.
6. Dealer Transactions - Israel Sack, 1928-1965.
7. Dealer Transactions - Sh-T.
8. Dealer Transactions - V-Z.
9. Dealer Transactions - Thomas D. Williams, 1967-1968.
10. Dealer Transactions - Richard H. Wood, 1967.
11. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1944-45, 47-48.
12. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1949.
13. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1950.
14. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1951.

15. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1952.
16. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1953.
17. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1954.
18. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1955-57, 59.
19. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1960-61, 63.

\*TAN 6                      Series V (continued).

1. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1964.
2. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1965.
3. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1966.
4. DIA Correspondence - Acquisitions, 1967-68.
5. DIA Loan Receipts, 1952-1969.
6. DIA Correspondence - William Bostick, 1950-1966.
7. DIA Correspondence - Frederick J. Cummings, 1964-1968.
8. DIA Correspondence - William Day, 1964-1968.
9. DIA Correspondence - E.P. (Ted) Richardson, 1949-1961.
10. DIA Correspondence - Mayor Cavanagh, 1962, 67.
11. DIA Correspondence, 1941-1958.
12. DIA Correspondence, 1960-1965.
13. DIA Correspondence, 1966-1968.
14. Correspondence - Copies Directed to Tannahill from Cummings, 1965-68.
15. Correspondence - Copies Directed to Tannahill from Woods, 1964-68.
16. Correspondence - Copies Directed to Tannahill.

\*TAN 7                      Series V (continued).

1. Art and DIA Business Correspondence - Outgoing, 1962-1967.
2. Founders Society - Budget and Gift Records, 1958, 64, 66-68.
3. Founders Society - Correspondence to Trustees and Members, 1954-68.
4. Founders Society - Development Proposals (National Council on the Arts, National Foundation on the Arts).
5. Founders Society - Guest Lists, DIA South Wing Dedication, 1965-66.
6. Founders Society - Minutes, Agendas, Summaries of F.S. and Auxiliary Committees, 1953-1968.
7. Founders Society - Policies and Organization of Staff and Trustees, 1963, 66, 68.
8. Arts Commission - Audience Studies, 1967-68.
9. Arts Commission - Audit Report, August 2, 1946.
10. Arts Commission - Budget and Gift Records, 1955, 1968.
11. Arts Commission - The Daily Telegraph (London) Article on Museums Citing the DIA, 1957.
12. Arts Commission - Minutes, Agendas, Summaries, 1944-1966.
13. Arts Commission - Notes Regarding Hiring the Director, 1961 (RHT - Arts Commission President at Hiring).
14. Arts Commission - Policies, 1960-66.
15. Arts Commission - Reports of Other Institutions, 1951, 53, 67-68.
16. Humorous Speech Honoring RHT's Curatorship, 1931 or 1932.
17. "Romantic Art in Britain," Clippings and Memo.
18. Notes of Francis W. Robinson and Others at Death of RHT.

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Ferry, W. Hawkins (Patron) 6/16  
Firestone, Harvey Jr. 6/13, 6/15  
Fleischman, Lawrence A. (Arts Commissioner) 7/1  
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Goodrich, Floyd (Scholar) 4/18  
Grigau, Paul (Curator) 1/1, 1/3, 6/12  
Instituto Nacionales de Bella Artes, Mexico City 6/9  
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Pierrot, George (Patron) 2/6  
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Israel Sack 5/6  
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E. and A. Silberman Galleries, Inc. 5/7  
Stair and Andrew Inc. 5/7  
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Philip Suval, Inc. 5/7  
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B. Westermann Co., Inc 5/8  
E. Weyhe, Inc. 5/8  
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Eakins, "Reclining Nude," DIA Acc. no. 70.147 4/18, 5/3  
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Kokoschka, "Cat," DIA Acc. no. 53.470 5/17  
Mahogany Chairs, c. 1760, DIA Acc. no. 66.400-.401 4/24  
Maillol, "Arrangement for Mountain," DIA Acc. no. 70.293 5/4  
Parry and Musgrave, Silver Ale Jug, DIA Acc. no. 66.16 4/24  
Pater, "Le Bair," DIA Acc. no. 49.463 6/9  
Rouault, "Dancer in Tutu," DIA Acc. no. 69.308 5/4  
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APPENDIX B: LISTING OF ART DEALERS WITH WHICH TRANSACTIONS OCCURED

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Allan Caplan, Inc. 4/21  
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Ralph M. Chait Galleries 4/21  
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The Downtown Gallery 4/21  
Durlacher Bros. 4/21  
Walter R. Engel, Inc. 4/21  
Robert Ensko, Inc. 4/23  
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Gander & White, Inc. 4/24  
Ginsburg & Levy Inc. 4/24  
Alexander Girard 4/24  
Cecil Gordon 4/24  
Harman & Co. Ltd. 4/25  
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