

Paul Sample (1896-1974)
“Salute to Vermont” Mural Collection, 1961, 2010
MSB 107

Introduction

This collection contains sketches, photographs, articles, and brochures related to the mural, “Salute to Vermont,” created by artist Paul Sample for the National Life Insurance Company in 1961. The collection is stored in one flat archival box and consumes 1.25 linear feet of shelf space.

Provenance

This collection was assembled by the National Life Insurance Company to document the creation of the mural. It was given to the Vermont Historical Society in 2017 on the occasion of the installation of the mural in the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier.

Biographical Note

Paul Starrett Sample (1896-1974) was a New England regionalist painter active in the middle of the twentieth century. Sample was born in Kentucky and spent his early career in California. In 1938 he returned to his alma mater, Dartmouth College, to become artist in residence. He held that position until 1962. He married Sylvia Howland, whom he had met while recovering from tuberculosis in Saranac Lake, New York, in 1928. Howland was the great-granddaughter of Julius Y. Dewey, founder of National Life Insurance, and the daughter of Fred A. Howland, president of the company, 1916-1937. Sample received many awards for his paintings, which can be found in many of the leading art museums in the country.

Scope and Content

This collection contains sketches, photographs, articles, and brochures related to the creation of a mural, “Salute to Vermont,” by artist Paul Sample for the National Life Insurance Company of Montpelier, Vermont, in 1961. The mural was located in the lobby of the insurance company’s headquarters until late 2016 when it was removed and installed in the Vermont History Museum on the first floor of the Pavilion Building in early 2017.

The mural is 50 feet long and 8 feet high. It depicts many scenes from Vermont history, including several scenes from the history of the insurance company. Two brochures were published by the company explaining the history depicted by the mural. One, published in 1970, was entitled “Heritage of the Hills,” and a second, published in 1990, entitled “Tribute to Vermont.”

The collection contains 38 pencil sketches drawn by Sample as he was developing his ideas for the mural. The collection also contains 37 black and white photographs of Sample working on the mural or of the mural being installed. Several of the photographs were taken by David Pierce Studio. There are also eight color transparencies of women and children looking at

the mural after it was first installed. A small strip of painted canvas, cut from the mural as it was being fitted into place. A photograph of Sample giving a piece of the mural to a construction worker documents this event.

The collection also contains a DVD, recorded in 2010, of Brian Lindner, an employee of National Life, talking about the mural for Springfield Area Public Access Television.

Related Collections

The Vermont Historical Society library collection contains at least two books about the work of Paul Sample. The manuscript collection contains two citations presented to Paul Sample when he received degrees from Dartmouth College in 1936 and 1962 (Misc. 1216). Two copies of a 10" x 34" reproduction of "Salute to Vermont" are in the Picture File (Size B F-AR-Sample, Paul). These are the same images that are in the pamphlets (folders 16 and 17), but not folded and with the text on a separate piece of paper.

Inventory

I. Sketches

- MSB 107:1 8" x 10" pencil sketches by the artist of details for the mural (31 sheets)
12" x 18" pencil sketch of landscape (oversized, at bottom of box)
- 2 Smaller pencil sketches (7 pieces)

II. Photographs

- 3 David Pierce Studio, Sample starting mural (5 images)
- 4 _____, Sample working on mural (2 images)
- 5 _____, mural opening event, includes Sample and Deane C. Davis (3 images)
- 6 _____, mural details (4 images)
- 7 Sample at work, early stages (4 images)
- 8 _____, finishing touches (8 images)
- 9 Installing the mural at National Life (9 images)
- 10 Color photocopies of photographs Paul Sample's studio (6 sheets)
- 11 Black and white negatives
- 12 Color transparencies of the installed mural with women and children looking at it (8 transparencies) and slides of details of the mural with one slide of the National Life in the fall building from a distance (6 slides)

III. Printed materials

- 13 *Contact*, February 1961 and March 1961, containing articles about the mural
- 14 Two mock-ups of a brochure (invitation?) related to the mural
- 15 "Salute to Vermont," program for mural unveiling ceremony, March 5, 1961, (multiple copies) and program for ceremony recognizing "Vermont's Leading Student Mathematicians" with mural on the cover, May 18, 1961
- 16 "Heritage of the Hills," pamphlet about the mural, two versions, one copy each
- 17 "Tribute to Vermont," pamphlet about the mural, two versions, multiple copies

- 18 *Burlington Free Press* article about the mural, March 6, 1961; DVD, Brian Lindner talking about the mural, Springfield Area Public Access Television, Springfield, Vermont, August 2010; and miscellaneous labels from a National Life exhibit about the mural
- 19 1.75" x 15.5" canvas strip of the mural, painted light blue, accompanied by a label, a copy photograph of Sample giving a strip to a worker, and a National Life envelope labeled "Sample of Mural Canvas" (oversized, at bottom of box)

Paul A. Carnahan
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