

INSPIRING GENERATIONS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND DISCOVERY

Highlights from the Collections

The Smithsonian's collections reflect the depth and diversity found in the Institution's mission, vision, and values. These collections also support the Smithsonian's ability to meet the four grand challenges of its strategic plan: understanding and sustaining a biodiverse planet, unlocking the mysteries of the universe, valuing world cultures, and understanding the American experience. The following stories offer but a glimpse into the Smithsonian's vast network of world-class collections.

UNDERSTANDING THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Archives of American Art awarded prestigious Save America's Treasures grant

In March 2010, the Archives of American Art was awarded a prestigious and highly competitive matching grant for \$250,000 from the Federal Save America's Treasures initiative to preserve significant historic properties and collections. The grant provides crucial support for the preservation and digitization of the Archives' oral history collection, one of the oldest, most-consulted, and historically significant oral history collections in the country. Matching funds have been provided by the Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation and The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston.



Archives of American Art Curator Liza Kirwin interviewing ceramicist Tony Natsoulas at his home in Sacramento, California, in August 2004.

The Archives' ever-expanding oral history collection, begun in 1958 with funding from the Ford Foundation, contains nearly 2,000 interviews with artists, collectors, critics, dealers, and others, and is central to a fuller understanding of American art, creativity, and culture. Common themes such as working methods, sources of inspiration, regional affinities, and issues of race, gender, and politics emerge across artistic mediums and generations. Areas of concentration that have yielded fundamental information include the New Deal art programs, Latino art, African American art, pop art, feminism, photorealism, public art commissions, new media, and the art market. Recently, the Archives produced 175 interviews with nationally prominent artists who shaped the field of contemporary craft.

The Archives' oral history collection is deep and broad in scope, and includes interviewees from every state. These interviews, as unique primary sources, are vital evidence of the nation's cultural heritage.

Despite the Archives' effective stewardship, these unique and original sound recordings, totaling over 6,000 hours, face permanent loss due to deterioration, damage, and format obsolescence. Through basic preservation reformatting, further deterioration will be halted. In addition, obvious defects will be removed, sound quality enhanced, and greater access and use of the interviews will be possible. Scheduled to be completed by March 2012, the work funded by the Save America's Treasures grant ensures the preservation of this irreplaceable collection for the benefit of future generations. The newly digitized interviews will also allow the Archives to present audio excerpts on its Web site, as well as explore opportunities for generating revenue from this rich and unique material.

Museum of the American Indian acquisition comments on the Canadian Indian Act



Nadia Myre (Anishinaabe) is a conceptual artist whose works address issues of history, as well as personal identity and experience. For *Indian Act* (2000–03), Myre printed the 56 pages of the 1876 Canadian Indian Act—the legal document that governs the lives of First Nations people—and enlisted over 200 friends and strangers to help her bead over the pages in red and white, obscuring and neutralizing the controversial document's text. Ultimately, some pages are fully beaded while others are only partially covered, leaving portions of the text visible. In 2010, the National Museum of the American Indian purchased five of the 56 works that comprise Myre's *Indian Act*; others are now part of the Canadian Museum and private collections.

Using paper, wool cloth, thread, glass bead, and adhesive tape, *Indian Act* (detail on left) by Anishinaabe artist Nadia Myre obscures and neutralizes the controversial 1876 Canadian Indian Act.

National Postal Museum acquires Ansel Adams's boyhood stamp collection



Among the stamps in Ansel Adams's boyhood collection are a set of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi issue, early U.S. revenues dating from the Adams family business in the Washington Territory, and a selection of 1861–1899 Hawaiian stamps.

The National Postal Museum has acquired the boyhood stamp collection of American photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams. The collection is housed in an 1899 Scott International stamp album and includes a set of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi issue, early U.S. revenues dating from the Adams family business in the Washington Territory, a selection of 1861–1899 Hawaiian stamps, and two pages of local express delivery labels mostly from California and Nevada.

The album has been in the possession of either Ansel Adams or his estate since its formulation, and was donated to the museum by Michael and Jeanne Adams. Written on the inside of the front cover in Ansel Adams's own hand are

the words "Ansel Easton Adams, 129 – 24th Ave San Francisco"; the album also includes "Stamps in Little Ansel's Album," an unattached and undated inventory of the album's contents that was handwritten by his mother.

Born in San Francisco in 1902, Adams first photographed Yosemite National Park in 1916 using a Kodak Brownie camera. Adams went on to become one of the world's most admired photographers. Using large format cameras and black and white film, Adams created timeless images of the Yosemite Valley and many other national parks. A lifelong member of the Sierra Club, Adams was awarded the John Muir Award in 1963 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980. He died in 1984.

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum acquires drawings and models by Ward Bennett

A group of drawings and models by American designer Ward Bennett were recently acquired by Cooper-Hewitt. The acquisition includes a range of drawings documenting various stages of the design and production process for Bennett's flatware, ceramic, and glassware patterns for Sasaki and Supreme Cutlery, dating from approximately 1980–1993, as well as a number of drawings for flatware patterns currently in the museum's collection.

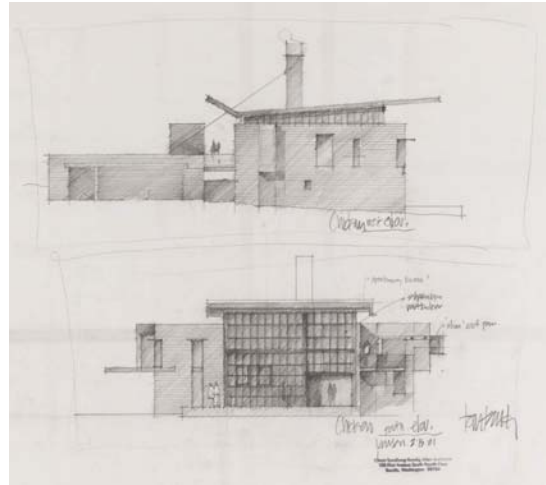
Among the objects acquired are chair models designed for Geiger, which show a simplification of line and the use of bold geometries consistent with Bennett's work in other media. His design process for furniture especially seems to be mostly model-oriented, as no drawings of furniture have yet been found.



The 1991 model *Boullée* by Ward Bennett (1917–2003) is constructed of painted wood, felt, and cardboard.

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum's acquisition documents contemporary architectural direction

Five drawings by contemporary architect Tom Kundig for the Chicken Point Cabin in Haydon Lake, Idaho, were recently acquired by Cooper-Hewitt. This year-round weekend retreat, commissioned by a family with two young children, evidences the personality, general architectural philosophy, and key characteristics of this architect and his work. The elemental, raw building materials of steel, concrete block, and plywood, along with the home's open interior spaces and the upturned roof, are intended to be a seamless extension of the natural setting of the site. In addition to being a superb example of Kundig's architecture, the Chicken Point project exemplifies, and therefore documents, today's fascination with hand-crafted, low-tech design, which is energizing, among others, members of the graphic and product design community.



Design for Chicken Point Cabin, Haydon Lake, Idaho: West and South Elevations (2001), a design for a weekend retreat by American architect Tom Kundig (b. 1954), is intended to be a seamless extension of the building's natural setting.

National Portrait Gallery acquires Brady ambrotype of Confederate officer



This half-plate ambrotype (c. 1858) of John Pelham (1838–1863) by Mathew Brady (1823?–1896) represents a life portrait of a key Confederate military figure.

In the spring of 1861, Alabama-born John Pelham was several weeks away from graduating at West Point when he abruptly left and returned home to join the newly formed Confederate army. Pelham soon landed in Virginia as a lieutenant in the artillery. His military prowess and courage was quickly noticed by cavalry general J.E.B. Stuart, who provided Pelham's battery with horses, transforming it into a "horse artillery." The boyish-looking officer repeatedly demonstrated the effectiveness of this new "mobile arm of the cavalry" at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, winning high praise from his superiors Stuart, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee.

Pelham was mortally wounded in a cavalry engagement at Kelly's Ford, Virginia in March 1863. Indicative of his well-earned fame, cities in Alabama and Georgia are named after him, and several Civil War monuments recall his wartime service. This original portrait has particular relevance to the National Portrait Gallery collection because it represents a life portrait of a key Confederate military figure who was not a general but whose story

continues to resonate today. It is a priority of the Portrait Gallery to be able to represent both sides of this historic conflict as the Civil War sesquicentennial approaches.

National Museum of American History acquires camera-ready comic art drawings

Through the bequest of Joseph Gura Jr. of Chicago, Illinois, the National Museum of American History recently acquired a collection of over 500 pieces of camera-ready comic art (original black ink drawings on illustration board for daily newspaper comic strips), comic strip-related specialty art (original black ink drawings of comic strip characters for personal distribution), and about one half a cubic foot of reference material, including related correspondence and newspaper clippings.

The comic art dates mostly from between 1939 and the early 1960s with a few others prepared before and after those dates and about one third undated.

Some 240 individual comic artists are represented in this collection. Art from some of the more famous and highly valued comic strips or comic cells are represented. The collection includes the works of Wonder Woman (Harry G. Peter), Buck Rogers (Dick Calkins), Dennis the Menace (Hank Ketcham), Peanuts (Charles Schulz), Donald Duck (Al Taliaferro for Walt Disney), Superman (Joe Shuster), Batman (Bob Kane), Little Orphan Annie (Harold Gray), and Dick Tracy (Chester Gould).

The museum's Graphic Arts Collection's previous holdings include some 470 similar camera-ready comic strips/cells and specialty art works. This earlier grouping is similarly extensive in title and artist, for the most part drawings from the 1960s and 1970s. The Gura collection offers the opportunity to represent a larger span of time and increases the depth of the museum's collection.

Comic art offers additional avenues into the history and everyday thinking of the American public, encapsulating the concerns and interests of readers in ways similar to the work of reporters and journalists. Through vivid images, humor, and satire, they address the large and small issues of their time. This new collection will enable the museum to better present and preserve the American experience through the creativity of these artists.



The Flintstones was drawn by Gene Hazelton (1919–2005). Beginning in 1961, Hazelton worked with Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc. to oversee the creation of a comic strip based on the TV show *The Flintstones*. Other comic artists often assisted him with the comic strip, but he wrote and drew the strip himself by the 1970s and until 1988.

Acquisition of *escaramuza* riding outfits strengthens National Museum of American History's Latino costume collection



As part of the ongoing Latino Collection Initiative, the Division of Home and Community Life recently collected two colorful *escaramuza* riding outfits worn by Veronica Lininger of San Antonio, Texas. An *escaramuza* is a Latina equestrian who competes in *charreada*—a fast-paced and highly choreographed sport similar to a rodeo. *Escaramuza* riders wear costumes of unusual beauty embellished with traditional *charrería* elements from their native Mexico. These outfits are very prescriptive and defined in their design, materials, and adornment. Ms. Lininger wore one of the outfits at a regional charro tournament in 2007. The outfit is composed of a traditional sombrero, blouse, rebozo, skirt, boots, and a single spur for riding sidesaddle. The museum documented and photographed Ms. Lininger as she practiced her equestrian routine in an arena on the outskirts of San Antonio. Several days later she completed an oral history in her home and shared photographs and documents of her equestrian achievements.

These acquisitions enhance the Latino Collection Initiative and will support future exhibitions, research, Web projects, and public programs at the museum. Though dress and related accessories are only one aspect of Latino material culture studies, these objects provide extensive ways to present everyday life in American Latino communities.



The colorful *escaramuza* riding skirt (above left) reaches to the midpoint of the boot. Only the left spur (above) is worn by the *escaramuza* rider.

Grant from the Smithsonian Women's Committee supports Portrait Gallery's collection of painted portrait miniatures



In 2010 the National Portrait Gallery received a generous grant of \$7,650 from the Smithsonian Women's Committee (SWC) to complete the conservation of the painted portrait miniatures in its collections. The likenesses conserved with this grant include a recently acquired watercolor on ivory portrait of John Laurens by Charles Willson Peale, and that of Elizabeth DePeyster Peale (the second wife of Peale) by Peale's brother James Peale, a noted painter of miniatures. Also conserved were miniatures of Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), Andrew Jackson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Abraham Lincoln, Gilbert Stuart, and Chief Thundercloud.

The conservation of this recently acquired 1780 ivory portrait of John Laurens by Charles Willson Peale was supported with funds from the Smithsonian Women's Committee.

Grants from the Smithsonian Women's Committee in 2000 and 2008 previously provided for the conservation of miniatures of such figures as Jefferson Davis, John Paul Jones, James Smithson, and Martin Van Buren, as well as for three rare eighteenth-century miniatures by the noted American painter John Singleton Copley. The generosity of the three SWC grants has resulted in the complete conservation and safe storage of the entire miniature collection. In addition, the 2010 grant has allowed curators to complete intensive research on all of the museum's miniatures, which will be available on the Portrait Gallery's publicly accessible database and will support a major installation of 18 to 20 of these fascinating objects in 2011.

VALUING WORLD CULTURES

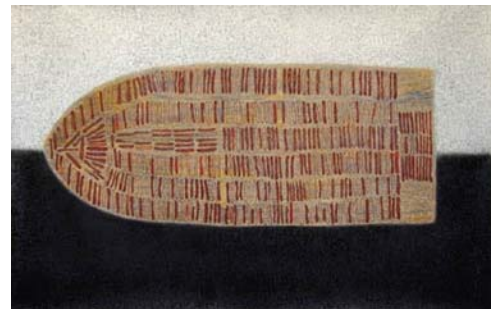
Museum of African Art strengthens its collection of contemporary African art



Three recently acquired works by Victor Ekpuk signal an exciting new direction for this Nigerian-born, American-based artist who has long been of interest for the National Museum of African Art. Ekpuk has built a solid reputation based on paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings that incorporate his own invented script and *nsibidi*, the Nigerian graphic inscription and performative system, to create richly textured works. These one-of-a-kind pastel works by Victor Ekpuk are welcome additions to the museum's strong collection of contemporary works by outstanding African artists.

The artist's exploration of script also enhances the museum's collection of other script-based artworks that illustrate contemporary artists' ongoing engagement with the visual potency and communicative power of inscribed works of art.

Slave Narrative 1, the first in a powerful series exploring the transatlantic slave trade, marks a major shift for the artist. The bullet-shaped central motif of the work draws on well-known 18th-century illustrations of slave ship holds that indicate how to store the largest number of enslaved Africans, the human cargo of this trade. Close examination of Ekpuk's work reveals that the cargo he depicts is not human at all, but rather closely spaced yams, which are typically stacked and stored in rows in the cramped yam houses commonly found in Ekpuk's home region in southeastern Nigeria. Bringing contemporary experience to historical events is nothing new for contemporary artists, but there is something disarming and profound in the connections Ekpuk makes about a life-giving root crop and the tens of millions of lives lost or forever altered due to horrific trade in enslaved Africans.



Composition #3 (2009, above left) and *Slave Narrative #1* (2008, above), pastel on paper works by Nigerian-born artist Victor Ekpuk (b. 1964), enhance the museum's collection of work by contemporary African artists.



Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum acquires signature work by Ingo Maurer

The *Porca Miseria* lamp by Ingo Maurer was recently acquired by the Product Design and Decorative Arts department. It is among the most recognizable and expressive of Ingo Maurer's lighting designs and was a top curatorial pick from the museum's 2007 exhibition *Provoking Magic: Lighting of Ingo Maurer*. This gift, commissioned by Peter Norton in 2000, enhances Cooper-Hewitt's ability to tell the story of this innovative designer, as well as developments in contemporary lighting forms and technologies.

The limited edition white European porcelain, silverware, and metal lamp *Porca Miseria* (1994) by German-born designer Ingo Maurer strengthens the museum's ability to express developments in contemporary lighting.

National Museum of African Art acquires Senegalese artist book

The National Museum of African Art acquired an exceptional artist book by Senegalese artist Abdoulaye Ndoye. *Poetry* signals a new direction for the artist, whose work is recognized for elegant, meticulously designed pages and books filled with invented script. Though still occupied with the visual and communicative power of script, the artist brings a decidedly topographic quality to the pages in *Poetry* through shapes and radiating lines suggestive of land and water masses. The result is a beautiful and powerful three-dimensional sculpture that seems to communicate volumes about the movement of people and ideas over time and space. The subdued hues of the henna-treated pages and the earthy quality of the artist's imagery also suggest the mud-dyed textiles common in neighboring Mali.

Poetry (2009), a 2009 pigment on paper work by Senegalese artist Abdoulaye Ndoye (b. 1951), uses script-based imagery to create an artist's book with topographic qualities.



UNDERSTANDING AND SUSTAINING A BIODIVERSE PLANET

First female brown kiwi chick born at the National Zoological Park

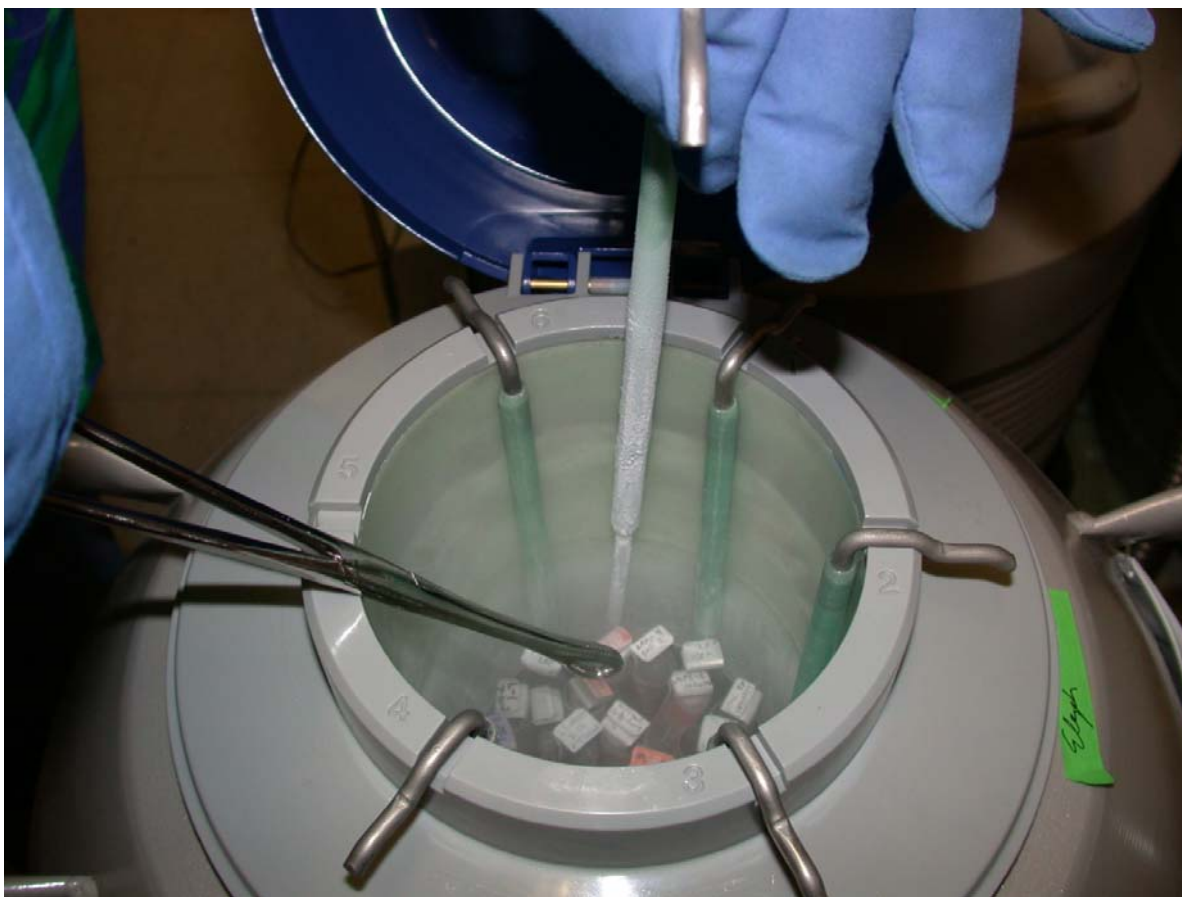
The National Zoo's first female brown kiwi chick (*Apteryx mantelli*) was born March 30, 2010. To mark this historic event, zoo keepers bestowed the honor of naming the chick on one of her countrymen, New Zealand Ambassador to the United States Roy Ferguson. The chick is named Hiri (pronounced "HEE-ree"), which means "important and great" in Māori, New Zealand's official indigenous language. This hatching is a significant milestone for the National Zoo and for the kiwi populations worldwide, as there currently are only 12 female brown kiwi in zoos outside New Zealand.



New Zealand Ambassador Roy Ferguson and John Mataira, consul general for the New Zealand Consulate in Los Angeles, with a brown kiwi at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The National Zoological Park and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute's new science breeding program for kiwis will focus primarily on studying behavior and boosting the population using advances in reproductive technologies.

Pan-Smithsonian Cryo-Initiative developing care and management program for Smithsonian frozen collections

For several decades, Smithsonian scientists have been collecting and storing at ultra-low temperatures samples of DNA, somatic cells, blood products, germ-plasm (sperm and eggs), and embryos, as well as other animal and plant products. When collected, stored, and used appropriately, frozen biomaterials help advance scholarly knowledge, preserve biodiversity, and potentially improve human health. As part of the Pan-Smithsonian Cryo-Initiative, and with support from the Collections Care and Preservation Fund, the Office of the Under Secretary for Science recently commissioned an assessment of frozen biomaterials collections at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. A survey of this nature had never been completed before and was needed to create a baseline for a broad documentation of the status of the frozen collections using consistent evaluation criteria. The assessment found that Smithsonian frozen collections comprise more than 130 freezers and liquid nitrogen tanks and include at least 676,500 to 807,500 frozen samples from more than 17,000 species collected over the past 30 years. The Cryo-Initiative also has supported the opening of, and moving frozen storage to, Pod 3 at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland.



A liquid nitrogen tank at the Center for Species Survival of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute holds some of the more than 1,800 frozen sperm samples from more than 80 endangered animal species.

Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute welcomes birth of scimitar-horned oryx

In April 2010, a female scimitar-horned oryx joined the ranks of endangered animals born this year at the National Zoo's Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The birth of the scimitar-horned oryx, a species now extinct in the wild, marks the first time in more than 13 years that the Front Royal campus has had an oryx birth. The Institute is partnering with the Sahara Conservation Fund, an independent nonprofit organization, and other organizations to establish a master plan for the reintroduction of the oryx to their native home on the Saharan range.



The April 2010 birth of a female scimitar-horned oryx at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute will contribute to efforts to reintroduce scimitar-horned oryx to the Saharan range.

Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute hatches two white-naped crane chicks



The Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia, hatched two rare white-naped crane chicks in May 2010. Using artificial insemination, the Institute has successfully produced nine genetically valuable white-naped crane chicks in the past eight years.

This year's hatches bring the Institute's white-naped crane flock to 12 birds, which is 20 percent of the entire captive flock in North America.

National Museum of Natural History digitizes original specimen catalogs, ledgers, and transaction cards

In 2007, the National Museum of Natural History launched a project—funded in part by the Smithsonian’s Collections and Care Preservation Fund—to digitize original specimen catalogs and ledgers. Such catalogs provide key information on some of the earliest Smithsonian natural history acquisitions. Through this ongoing project, more than 400 ledgers and catalogs documenting collections of fossils, fish, birds, invertebrates, reptiles, and amphibians have been digitized and linked to the museum’s electronic catalog record.

INDEX TO MUSEUM CORRESPONDENCE.		
From to Memphis	Bennett, G.A.	No. 60826
Date:	9-10-1917	Address: 474 N. Flanders, Portland, Oregon.
Subject:	Plane sample of material for exam and report	
Referred to	J.C. Brown 9-17	Answered Nov 13, 1917
10-139		File.

In addition, the museum recently launched Phase II of its Registration Transaction Card Digitization Project. Supported through an award received from the Smithsonian’s Collections Information System Pool Fund, the initiative aims to create a searchable index to the museum’s pre-1970s transaction records. Such records—currently accessible via card indexes—contain details of collection loans, acquisitions, and disposals. Since the mid-1970s, the museum has maintained electronic transaction records, but all records that predate the 1970s were, until now, only available as card indexes. Through this project, researchers and collections managers will have electronic access to all the records detailing the rich history of the museum’s collections. The searchable index, which will include images of the cards, will make it possible to identify relevant transactions even when working remotely. It also will allow staff to analyze how the collections have grown and changed, who has used them, and how they have been used. All of this will help the museum increase the collections’ relevancy for future uses.

Catalogue of Birds in Collection of Messrs. W. M. and S. F. Baird

36.

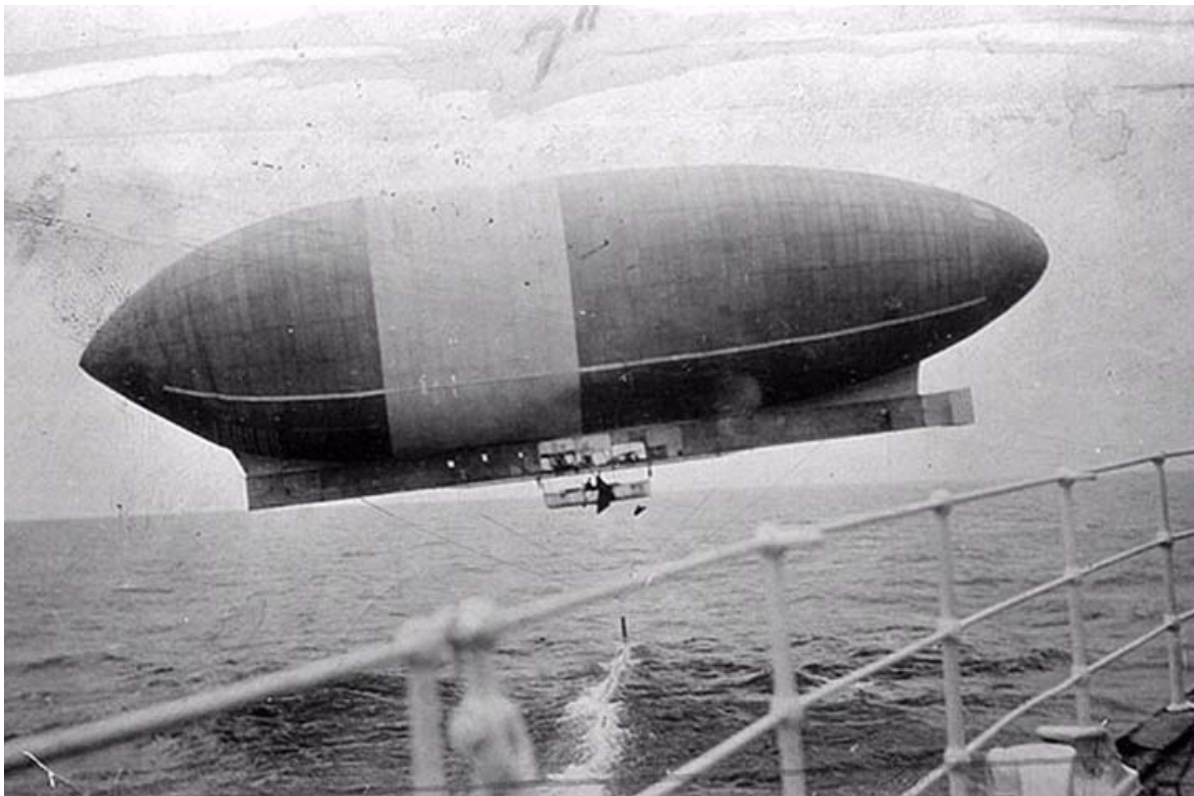
1	Chordeiles Virginianus. Sw.	..	Carlisle, Pa.	April. 1837.
2	Chaetura Pelagica.		"	"
3	Hirundo Bicolor.		"	"
4	H. Rustica.		"	March 16. 1840.
5	H. Riparia.		Pottstown, Pa.	Aug 7. 1840.
6	" Serripennis Aud.		Carlisle, Pa.	April. 1837.
7	Muscicapa Tyrannus.	♂ ♂	"	May 11. 1840.
8	" "	♀	"	" "
9	" Cirnita.	♂	"	May. 1837.
10	" Trailli?		"	April. 1837.
11	" Fusca.		"	Probably to Currier Club Feb 15/1837

Digitized catalogs and ledgers include “Catalogue of Birds in Collection of Messrs. Wm.M. and S.F. Baird” (detail above) and transaction cards, such as a 1917 “Index to Museum Correspondence” (top).

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

National Air and Space Museum acquires historic airship's lifeboat

In June 2010, the National Air and Space Museum acquired the historic lifeboat used on two early attempted crossings of the Atlantic by airships. The earliest attempt was made by the Wellman-Vaniman airship *America* in 1910, and the first wireless message from a powered aircraft was sent from the radio position in the lifeboat. The second attempt was the flight of the *Akron*, the first Goodyear airship, in 1912. The lifeboat will be displayed at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, close to two other historic trans-Atlantic aircraft: the *Double Eagle II* gondola, which carried the first balloonists to Europe, and the *Concorde*, which pioneered supersonic trans-Atlantic travel.



Side view of the airship *America* as seen from the deck of the *SS Trent*, 1910. The lifeboat dangling from the *America* was later used in the *Akron*, Goodyear's first airship.