Bill To Authorize Purchase Of Museum Site Introduced

Legislation which would authorize purchase of the site selected for a National Art Museum has been introduced in the Senate and assigned to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

The park would be designed to illumine the creative forces in American culture, the Senate said.

40 Employees To Be Honored

Staff members who have made distinctive contributions to the work of the Institution will be honored this month at employee awards ceremonies within their divisions.

The members of the Preservation and Restoration Division of the National Air and Space Museum's Department of Exhibitions are part of a group award for exceeding all prior performance records in the restoration of the 1914 French Scoutplane Tricolore, now on display at the museum.

Bradley Ailing, Taylor Named To Stand In

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Another interesting and significant NAFMB "object" is the Union monu­ment USS Tecumseh, sunk by a Confederate­federate mine during the Battle of Mobile Bay, August 5, 1864. Exploratory operations on the vessel are under way by a Navy salvage team, and in July the first artifacts including a 9-foot anchor were brought up.

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Stradivarius 'Finders' Seek Instrument Division's Help

Is there a Stradivarius in your attic? So many people think they have stumbled across one of the valuable violins that the Division of Musical Instruments has to find requests for copies of its study guide. The guide, "Auditing an Instrument for Playing Condition," is available for $1.50.

Inquiries are so frequent because many copies of the famous violins were made, right down to the label. The whereabouts of virtually every genuine Stradivarius is already known, reports John T. Fesperman, curator in charge of the division, so it is very doubtful that any will be stumbled across in attics or junk shops.

Nonetheless, letters come in daily not only about the Stradivarius, but about instruments by Stainer and Amati as well. Some hopeful discoverers are even too enthusiastic to write, and turn up at the Division of Musical Instruments to their original playing condition for study by serious music students.

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To help preserve the instruments and keep them in tune, temperature and humidity in the storage areas are kept at a constant 40% and 40% percent. When a Division floor exhibition and performance gallery opens in about 18 months, it will have the same atmospheric conditions. In fact, the technical problems which had to be solved to obtain this control are the factors which have kept the hall from opening earlier.

The time-consuming job of restoration might mean breaking down a keyboard instrument into its most basic elements, replacing warped boards, filling in cracks, restringing with proper materials, and manufacturing missing parts or duplicating specifications. When all that is completed, the instrument is available for use in the division's concert programs.

Performances, organized by staff members Edward Kohn and Robert Shaddow, are designed to do more than entertain. They aim to educate the audience to the original sounds of an instrument, and to present those sounds on tape. An annual schedule of about eight indoor concerts, two outdoor, and weekly summer Tower Music programs promotes these aims. There is also a yearly seminar on the performance of music of a particular period, using instruments from the collections.

All of the division's instruments are of Western European or American origin, but not all are 'highbows.' A collection of folk instruments contains such diverse items as Appalachian fiddles, a Swiss alphorn, and American bones. For real variety there is a Theremin, a 1930's electronic machine whose pitch and loudness are controlled by hand movements around two antennae. But these and the rare and valuable bass viola da gamba made by Barak Norman in 1718 are not enough, there are still a Sarrusophone, shawm, crumhorn, and more than 200 keyboard instruments to enlighten the serious music student.

SMOKE IN BED?

Home fire extinguishers at a reduced price are being offered by the Office of Safety Management and promote "off-the-job safety." A dry chemical extinguisher may be ordered for $5. Phone 5658 or 5461.

FARRAR GETS TOP TALKING POST

Richard Farrar, by his own admission, has a "big mouth.

And, while it doesn't seem to be the kind of orifice that, in size, would spark a dentist's imagination or, in volume, frighten a disagreeable mother-in-law, it has impressed that group of vocal SI employees who gather regularly on lunch hours and after work to listen to each other talk.

They elected the articulate Mr. Farrar to the top talking post of The Smithsonian Torchlighters, local chapter of the national Toastmasters Clubs. Farrar, a still and motion picture cameraman for SI Photo Services, succeeds Edward Kohl as president of the three-year-old organization.

"Good thought and tongue," philosophizes Mr. Farrar, "provide a true source of enjoyment." It also keeps the 22-member Torchlighters busy. Farrar points out that among other commitments, Torchlighters introduce the narrators for SI's weekly Film Theatre.

New officers elected to a six-month term, in addition to Farrar, include Gary Benson, General Counsel's Office, educational vice president; Robert Elwell, Office of Assistant Secretary, administrative vice president; Lyle Streeter, Buildings Management Department, treasurer; Carroll Lusk, Office of Exhibits, secretary; and Richard Holmeister, Photo Services, sergeant-at-arms. The TORCH asked the 48-year-old Farrar why he got involved in the organization. Said he: "My feeling has always been that the world loses a great deal because of lack of communication.

What else is there to say?
Treasures From Cooper Union Museum

(Continued from page 1)

New York, would be useful in raising the standards of design and execution in the United States and serve as an adjunct to the teaching program of the art school at Cooper Union.

Thus, the Cooper Union Museum combines the best of both worlds: a major assemblage of decorative art materials and a "research laboratory" serving designers and students of design. Its uniqueness lies in the organization of the museum around this philosophy.

In most museums the catalogues and records are by the artist or the particular art medium. In contrast, the cross-index catalogue of the Cooper Union Museum is by "design" or "motif" covering the entire holdings.

The Museum's library contains some 13,000 volumes and nearly 2,000 rare books.

Among the highlights in the Museum's collections are:

Textiles

The woven fabrics are of first importance both in historical scope and quality. The Spanish and early medieval weaves, for the most part gifts of J. P. Morgan, are unequalled anywhere. The late collection surpasses that of any other museum in this country. The embroideries and costume accessories are small, but well-chosen and of extremely high quality.

Drawings

The Old Master and decorative design drawing collection is of excellent quality and because of its size, numbering over 30,000 items, is invaluable toward the study in depth of a particular artist, school or period. The collection comprises works, mostly by Italian and French artists, dating from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century. The American drawings, numbering about 8,000, include over 300 items by Winslow Homer—together with twenty-two of his oils—and nearly 2,000 by the major Hudson River School artist, Frederic Church.

Prints

Although the particular effort has been made to specialize in ornament prints, the museum's holdings of Rembrandt are excelled only by those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Pierpont Morgan Library. The Albrecht Dürer collection exceeds that of the latter. Other large blocks of master prints admirably complement the work of these artists. Supporting these holdings are architectural and ornamental prints that number more than 10,000 items.

Wallpaper

No other American museum supports a special department devoted to wallpaper. The museum's holdings are rivaled only by the Wallpaper Museum in Cassel, Germany. Supplementing this collection is one of more than 100 hat boxes, also constituting an important facet of Americana.
November Sales Exhibit Features Eskimo Creations

From Baker Lake, the only island settlement in an area of 228,000 square miles north of Manitoba, and other equally remote settlements come the scarce and popular Eskimo art objects that make up the November Museum Shops Sales Exhibit. It will run from November 7 through 26 in the rotunda of the Arts and Industries Building. A 20 percent employee discount can be applied to stone carvings, rare whale bones being offered for the first time in the United States, linen and cotton fabrics, and stone, stencil and engraving objects.

Prices were set by the Eskimo Art Committee, an independent group established by the West Baffin Eskimo Coop- erative of which all the artists are members. The group markets its creations through another cooperative, Canadian Arctic Producers, which is headquartered in Ottawa.

Lunchbox Talks Range From TV Show to Europe

Topics ranging from Europe on $4.95 a day to the Star Trek TV series are scheduled for November and December lunchbox seminars sponsored by the National Air and Space Museum.

Employees are invited to bring their lunch to the second floor of the A&I Building Wednesdays at noon and spend an hour in food for thought.

Vacation Preview...

Employees will have a chance to view the glory that was Greece at the Amphitheater of the Zoology faculty of the University of Michigan and friend of the Smithsonian, reveals his views in the following excerpts from a recent speech.

The character of a nation is partially determinable from its national treasures—the paintings of Paris, the Crown Jewels of London, the pathetic scraps of ancient Athens and the strips of half-corroded book pages in Jerusalem in a sense testify to the nature of their countries; a search for beauty or a glorying in the doers and the things that they have managed to devise.

When everyone else has failed him, a man can always turn to his wife. Dr. Gordon H. Gibson did, and as a result, the Anthropology's Restoration and Conservation Laboratory has an effi- cient, enthusiastic worker.

Garnering specimens for exhibit in the newly renovated Hall of the Cultures of Africa and Asia, Dr. Gibson had a Nigerian loom that no one could fix. He turned it over to his wife, Bethune, out-going lady with a number of craft-type hobbies.

Five weeks of work with glue and sawing and weaving fixed the loom. Mrs. Gibson was so successful at that job that Dr. Gibson says her another, a Congolese mat "that looked like a mass of hay. Only a husband could come up with something like that," she says with good-natured resignation. A dental tool, two con- tact lenses for her glasses, and a deal of patience restored the mat's pattern.

In the meantime a group of George Washington University students was hirded to clean off the spot that had accumulated on the collections in the years before air conditioning was installed in the MHN. Mrs. Gibson joined in and spent a clean-up effort on a contract basis. When it was completed, she turned the assignment and clean-up job to full-time one, Civil Serv- ice agreed she was the logical choice to fill it.

Now the lady who used to spend her time in needlework, painting and basket weaving, is occupied with repairing irreplaceable ethnology speci- mens in a sunny, plant-filled lab. With only a year of college chemistry to draw upon, she has managed to devise a new method of cleaning the metallic objects, a half-century old potter, which she will soon publish.

Mrs. Gibson's first principle of clean- ing and repair is "Be very careful not to use anything that might do damage." The second is "Don't fix anything or any substance that cannot be removed easily later on without damage to the object. A better process might be in- vented in the future."

Ironically, Mrs. Gibson's most difficult jobs have been the first two she faced. Another challenge was a chain mail shirt of which nothing remains but a smallless mass of links. She made stainless steel rings herself and figured out how to attach each to the shirt's complex pat- tern of linkages. It was a tedious task, "but it's mostly fun," she says convinc- ingly.

The potentially wearying job of clean- ing and repairing is the most difficult machine that can clean objects from suede and leather garments to glass masks. An air-blasting machine known as an abrasive machine is now more acceptable as fine as talcum powder against a concentric area of the object to be cleaned. Glass beads will even knock the oxides loose from corroded copper with- out disturbing the patina underneath.

Mrs. Gibson restores all types of ob- jects except pottery. That delicate job is undertaken by the National Conservation Lab. A, Andrew Josephs, chief pres- servator. An artist-sculptor who has been with the Smithsonian for over 40 years and was an assistant to the first director, he is responsible for the sets of various races and tribes that line the corridors on the third floor of MNH. He has also designed and built dioramas for the National American Indian hall, including a lively depiction of a buffalo hunt. He has turned his attention to to-ceiling storage closets. Their contents assure that, no matter how brief the con- servation lab's past, it will have a long and busy future.

Smithsonian—America's National Treasury with a vast accumulation of objects, each of which is either an efflorescence of human intellect or an artifact which permits solution of an intellectual problem. But the files, folders and stuffed behemoths are given up with something that slavish: "What are they doing in the collections? They are the raw material for intellectual progress."

Secretaries, for Gibson, has emphasized the point that objects, in and of themselves, permit a kind of knowledge and understanding which is dis- tinct from the one which can conceivably be housed in books alone.

Three hundred years ago Sir Thomas Browne said, "To the Debit of our Race we owe unto God in this the greatest of all our labours, a great share of the arts."

We must add that a debt is also associated with the possession of other more material treasures. This is our national treasury—a sampling of God's smorgas- board. The national treasury shares the attention of both the tax payers and our country. If it is treated in an intellectual way, without the courage to face the unpleasant and the unpleasure of a full scale exhibition, the treas- ury was about and what slums are about—without acknowledgement that the world is to impose thought patterns on us and is not twisted into our thought patterns.

If, on the other hand, there exists courage and wisdom to abandon comfortable thoughts of path, it is a potential materialization of the intellectual treasury.