

M1949

RECORDS OF THE
MONUMENTS, FINE ARTS, AND ARCHIVES (MFAA) SECTION
OF THE
REPARATIONS AND RESTITUTION BRANCH, OMGUS, 1945–1951

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INTRODUCTION

On the forty-three rolls of this microfilm publication, M1949, are reproduced the records of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) Section of the Reparations and Restitution Branch, Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS]. The MFAA Section transferred Nazi-looted works of art and artifacts from various storage areas and shipped the objects to one of four U.S. central collecting points. In order to research restitution claims, the MFAA officers gathered intelligence reports, interrogation reports, captured documents, and general information regarding German art looting. These records are part of the Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, World War II, Record Group (RG) 260.

BACKGROUND

The basic authority for taking custody of property in Germany was contained in Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) Directive 1067/6, which directed the U.S. Zone Commander to “impound or block” certain specified categories of property, including those of the German Reich; the Nazi Party and affiliated organizations and their prominent members; and absentee owners of non-German nationality, including United Nations and neutral governments and individuals. The American Zone Commander was also required to impound all property that was transferred under duress or through wrongful acts of confiscation, disposition, or spoliation, and to block the relocation of works of art and cultural material of value or importance, regardless of its ownership. When the U.S. Army entered Germany in September 1944, provisions were made for the seizure of all categories of property, including that of the Nazi Party organization.

From November 25, 1944, through October 14, 1945, the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) function was placed in the MFAA Branch of the Reparation, Deliveries and Restitution Division of the U.S. Group Control Council, Germany (USGCC). The seized property was turned over to the custody of the Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS] when it became the successor to the USGCC on October 1, 1945. OMGUS was responsible for administering the U.S. zone of occupation and U.S. sector of Berlin, and for functioning as U.S. element of organizations comprising the Allied Control Authority, the name given to the four-power occupation control system.

On October 15, 1945, the MFAA function was transferred to the MFAA Section of the Restitution Branch, Economic Division (OMGUS). The MFAA Section was responsible for advising the Division Director on policies and procedures regarding restitution of identifiable looted works of art and cultural material to governments of the countries from which they were taken, and for disposing the remainder of unclaimed and unidentifiable material in collecting points and archival depots. The Section was also responsible for developing procedures for the Land Offices of Military Government (OMG) and OMGUS with respect to cooperation with representatives of formerly occupied countries in efforts to recover missing looted works of art and cultural material for which their countries had submitted claims; cooperation with other agencies in the recovery or

identification of works of art wrongfully acquired by U.S. personnel; controlling collecting points and archival depots until they were transferred to German control or the contents were otherwise disposed of; and upon the request of German authorities, rendering assistance to German officials in connection with screening of inventories pertaining to the licensing of German art dealers and the preservation of structures of architectural or historical interest.

Seized works of art eventually came under the control of the Property Division. The Division, established in March 1948, was created as a result of reorganizing OMGUS functions relating to finance, the economy, transport, communications, restitution, reparations, decartelization, and property control into one unit. The primary responsibility of the Property Division was to formulate and implement policies required in the fields of property control, German external assets, internal and external restitution, and reparations. On March 1, 1948, the MFAA Section, along with the Restitution Branch became part of the Property Division, and in June 1948, when the Reparations and Restitution Branches merged, the MFAA Section became one of its sections.

The Reparations and Restitution Branch was responsible for advising the Division Director on all matters concerning reparations and restitution policies and procedures. The MFAA Section, due to the specialized nature of the work involved, had the peculiar status of being an almost autonomous body. Its responsibilities included locating and returning various cultural objects and property to the countries from which they were looted. It was also responsible for drafting and issuing appropriate directives and regulations. By October 31, 1948, all the restitution activities of the MFAA Section, with the exception of unusual individual cases, had been completed. On November 8, 1948, the non-restitution aspects of the MFAA Section were transferred to the Education and Cultural Relations Division.

The transition from military to civilian occupation administration was initiated by the Presidential appointment of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG), who assumed his duties on September 2, 1949. OMGUS organizations were progressively abolished and all functions transferred to HICOG organizations between June and September 1949. Upon the termination of the Property Division on July 1, 1949, the property control functions with respect to the liquidation of claims devolved on the Central German Property Control Agency in Munich. Its directorate was composed of the four Land Civilian Agency Heads in the U.S. zone. The Reparations and Restitution Branch also was dissolved on July 1, 1949. The transition was completed by September 21, 1949, the same day of the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany. OMGUS was formally abolished on December 5, 1949. Most of the OMGUS records, including the records of the Property Division, were retired to an Army record center in Kansas City until they were accessioned into the National Archives in the early 1960s.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The records of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) Section consist of general records of the section chief, records relating to restitution of property, claim

application files, photographs, maps, lists of transfers between zones and central collecting points, declarations and lists of property removed by German armed forces, copies of Offenbach Depot histories, bookplates, library markings, and records relating to historic places and monuments damaged during the war.

The General Records of the Section Chief, 1944–1949 [A1, Entry 472],¹ consist of correspondence, lists, memorandums, reports, messages, minutes of meetings, and other records relating to the activities, functions and personnel of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section, as well as to the policies, personnel, and operations of the collecting centers and depots. The records substantiate the Section's dealings with restitution agencies of other countries; with Jewish groups, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee; and with American archival and library organizations, primarily with the Library of Congress. Also included is a copy of the Section's final report and recommendation of the Committee on Disposition of Nazi Documents and Related materials. The files are arranged by subject.

The second series, Records Pertaining to Restitution, 1945–1948 [A1, Entry 473], is arranged by subject and consists of correspondence, lists, memorandums, cables and other records pertaining to various aspects of the restitution of cultural property. Records include those relating to internal restitution claims, claims procedures, as well as to specific claims from individuals and foreign military representatives.

The third series, Miscellaneous Records, 1945–1949 [A1, Entry 474], is arranged by subject and consists of indexes to publications, directives, military government regulations, organizational charts, lists, soldier guide books to Italian cities, handbooks and other records used by MFAA personnel to locate German wartime ministries and central agencies; European art dealers who were cited on a list in 1945 by the Commission for Protection and Restitution of Cultural Material of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education; and receipts of property transfers from the Munich Central Collecting Point to the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point.

The fourth series, Photographs of Art Works, 1945 [A1, Entry 475], is unarranged and consists of positive photographs of artworks held at the Munich and Wiesbaden Central Collection Points. These photographs are generally captioned with title and artist. Also included are a few photographs of the activity and personnel of the Munich Central Collecting Point.

The fifth series, Records Pertaining to Interzonal Restitution Transfers, 1946–1947 [A1, Entry 476], is arranged by zone and consists of correspondence, cables, and other records pertaining primarily to requests for and the granting of transfer of responsibility for the restitution of cultural property to another zone.

The sixth series, Maps, 1937–1952 [A1, Entry 477], is unarranged and consists of various types of maps used as reference material by the Section. Although most of the maps are

¹ Textual record series designators usually consist of the series title with a date span, the finding aid notation, and the Master Location Register (MLR) entry number, shown here in brackets.

of Europe, primarily Germany, individual maps of the United States, Alaska, and the North Pole are included. Most of the maps were produced by the Geographic Section of the General Staff of the British War Office and United States Army Air Forces.

The seventh series, Administrative Maps, 1945 [A1, Entry 478], is arranged by geographic area and consists of approximately 75 sets of maps depicting various geographic areas of Germany. These maps, prepared by the Planning Coordination staff of the U.S. Group Control Council, were drawn in the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services and lithographed by the agency's Reproduction Branch. The map sets generally contain various maps of the same area, but only detail certain administrative aspects, such as transportation, public health, public safety, legal, labor, and finance.

The eighth series, Cultural Property Claim Applications, 1946–1948 [A1, Entry 479], is arranged by an alphanumeric system that combines the first letter of the country of the applicant and the claim number. This series consists of claim applications for the restitution of looted cultural property submitted by individuals and representatives from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, the United States, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. Correspondence, memorandums, copies of declarations, and other relevant records are included with the applications. The records generally indicate whether the claim was approved, rejected, or dropped. In several instances, the claim applications contain photographs of the artwork that was the subject of the claim. Two searchable indexes (one by name and the other by country) to this series are available on our web site.

The ninth series, Claims of Cultural Property Removed by German Forces, 1946–1948 [A1, Entry 480], is arranged by Land and Berlin Sector and thereunder numerically by declaration number. This entry consists of copies of declarations of property removed from areas occupied by German Forces, extracts of Land and Sector monthly reports regarding the custody and restitution of cultural property, and other records constituting claims for restitution of cultural property based upon the declarations of Germans who removed property from occupied countries. The records generally give an indication as to whether the claim was approved, rejected, or dropped.

The tenth series, Records Pertaining to the Use of Declarations of Property Removed from Areas Occupied by German Forces, 1917–1948 [A1, Entry 481], is arranged by subject and consists of correspondence, copies of declarations of property removed from areas occupied by German forces, lists of declarations and other records relating to the use of the declarations to ascertain the ownership of cultural property, and declarations without action.

The eleventh series, Photographic History of the Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946 [A1, Entry 482], is arranged by subject and consists of an unbound, photographic album of the activities and personnel of the Offenbach Archival Depot from May to November 1946. The album contains 51 pages of photographs, with accompanying text, showing such things as the process by which books were received, stored, and shipped; visiting volunteer workers; and foreign restitution officials.

The twelfth series, Photostatic Copies of Book Plates, ca. 1946 [A1, Entry 483], is arranged by an alpha-numeric classification system. This unbound volume is labeled, “Ex-Libris Found Among Looted Books in the Archival Depot Volume I” and contains approximately 1,000 photostatic copies of bookplates found among books held in the Offenbach Archival Depot. The volume includes indexes, which list the original book owners’ nationalities.

The thirteenth series, Photostatic Copies of Library Markings, ca. 1946 [A1, Entry 484], is arranged by country or region and consists of two unbound volumes containing photostatic copies of library markings found among looted books held by the Offenbach Archival Depot. Volume I contains those for Eastern Europe and Volume II for Western Europe and North and South America.

The fourteenth series, Lists of Property Removed from France During the War, 1939–1945 [A1, Entry 485], is arranged by subject and consists of five volumes (each 8⁵/₈ by 12¹/₈ by 2⁵/₈ inches) containing lists of property removed from France during World War II. The volumes were produced by the French Division des Reparations et Restitution in French, Russian, English and German and contain approximately 600 pages of descriptions of property, often with photographs of individual items. Volume I contains lists of industrial equipment; Volume II, pictures, tapestries and sculptures; Volume III, furniture; Volume IV, gold, silverware and ceramics and curios; and Volume V, means of transportation. These specific volumes were a gift to Col. John H. Allen, Chief of the Restitution Branch.

The fifteenth series, Records Related to Historic Places and Monuments Damaged by War Action, 1946–1947 [A1, Entry 486], is arranged geographically by Land (State) and thereunder alphabetically by town or city. This series consists of photographs, questionnaires, correspondence, memorandums, reports and other records pertaining to the destruction, preservation and restoration of monuments, castles, museums, and other historic places that were damaged by war actions.

The last series, Report of Historical Sites in Frankfurt/Main Damaged by War Action, 1946–1947 [A1, Entry 487], is arranged alphabetically by the name of the historical site. The report includes street location, cultural significance of the site, history of damage to the structure, description of the damage, an estimate of repair, and photographs or sketches of the site before and after the war. The photographs are in numerical order (1–300), indicating that they were part of a single report. All indications as to who wrote the report or to whom the report was intended have been removed.

RELATED RECORDS

Textual Records in the National Archives

GENERAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, RECORD GROUP (RG) 59
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Records Maintained by the Fine Arts and Monuments Adviser, 1945–1961
 (“Ardelia Hall Collection”) (Lot File 62D-4) [A1, Entry 3104A]

RECORDS OF THE AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION AND SALVAGE OF ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN WAR AREAS, 1943–1946, RG 239

RECORDS OF U.S. OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS, WORLD WAR II, RG 260

Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS]

Property Division, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”)

Records of the Munich Central Collecting Point, 1945–1951 [A1, Entries 492–506]

Records of the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945–1952 [A1, Entries 514–523]

National Archives Accessioned Microfilm

RECORDS OF U.S. OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS, WORLD WAR II, RG 260

Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS]

Property Division, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”)

Selected Microfilm Reproductions and Related Records, 1945–1949 [A1, Entry 491]

National Archives Microfilm Publications

M1782, *OSS Art Looting Investigation Unit Reports, 1945–46*

M1940, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Miscellaneous Property Reports, 1945–1948*

M1941, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): OMGUS Headquarters Records, 1938–1951*

M1942, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946–1951*

M1948, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Marburg Central Collecting Point, 1945–1950*

National Archives Publications

Researchers should also consult *Holocaust-Era Assets: A Finding Aid to Records at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland*, compiled by Greg Bradsher (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1999). This finding aid includes information on specific areas within military records, such as War Department and Occupation records, as well as civilian records, such as those of the State Department, that contain information on looted assets.

Additional information concerning the Holocaust may be located on our web site at www.archives.gov.

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² Textual record series designators usually consist of the series title with a date span, the finding aid notation, and the Master Location Register (MLR) entry number, shown here in brackets.

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