

November 2012

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Diagram of a Drug Abuser

By Giovanni Mejia

“Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.” Tom Hanks’s famous line from the movie *Forest Gump* captures the sense of discovery often experienced by researchers and staff at the National Archives. You never know what you will run across. At the National Archives at San Francisco we often receive inquiries about the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. We usually refer researchers to other, more appropriate institutions for that history, but in 2008, we received an item representative of that time.

In 2008, the National Archives at San Francisco received a black velvet painting titled “Diagram of a Drug Abuser” from the Customs and Border Protection Area Port of San Francisco (formerly the U.S Customs Service). Black velvet paintings were made popular by Edgar Leeteg in Tahiti during the 1930s. Leeteg sold his work to U.S. Navy men, and his work sparked an array of imitators to capture tourist sales. Eventually, black velvet paintings made their way to Mexico where they became a popular art form by the late 1970s.

The piece is part of the Custom House Historical Collection originally developed by Customs staff member Steve Waterson, and is a re-creation of a Public Service Announcement poster distributed by the Advertising Council in the 1970s. How the painting was used is unknown, but in light of the Customs Service’s efforts to reduce demand for drugs and combat drug smuggling, it makes sense for them to have had such a painting.

The U.S. Customs Service (Record Group 36) was responsible for the collection of import tariffs and for the interception and seizure of contraband. After early 20th-century legislation banned the importation of opiates and cocaine and criminalized narcotics possession, the U.S. Customs Service expanded its role to investigate cases involving alcohol and illegal drugs.

By the close of the 1960s, the concern over drug use by young people in the United States became a major issue, prompting President Richard Nixon to launch the War on Drugs in 1969. The U.S. Customs Service worked jointly with the Drug Enforcement Administration (created in 1973) to raise drug abuse awareness and to

combat the growing domestic demand for illegal drugs. Some of the expert advice on how to identify a drug user depicted on the painting includes such telltale signs as “profuse perspiration and body odor = amphetamines” and “redness and watering of eyes = glue sniffing.”

The RG 36 holdings for the San Francisco office also includes records relating to maritime smuggling, the Chinese Exclusion era, merchant vessels, and shipwrecks. What will you find?

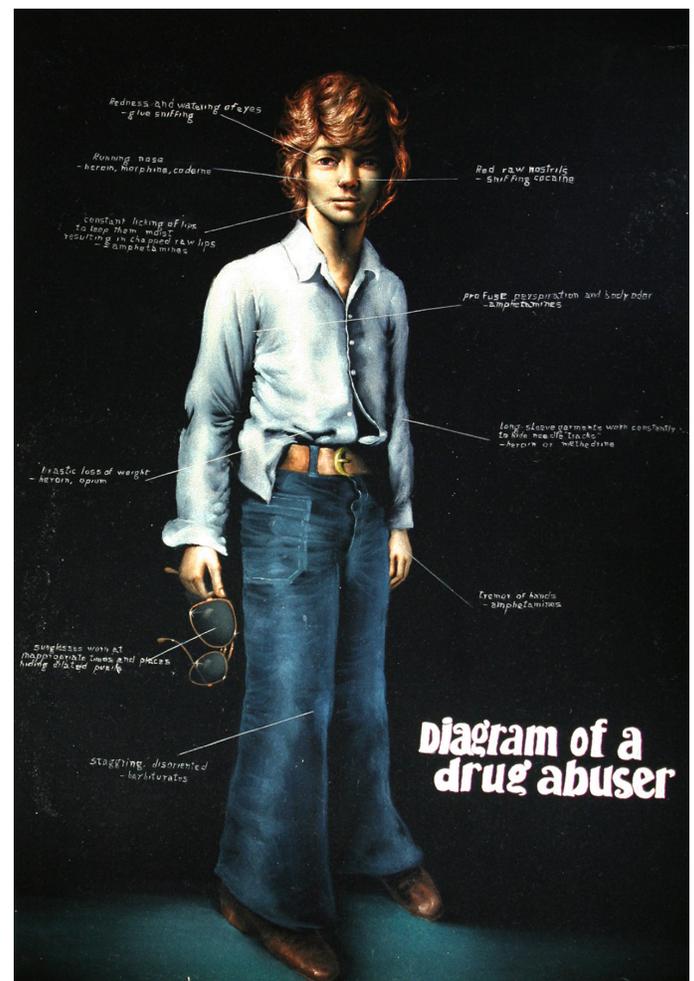


Diagram of a Drug Abuser (framed painting); Records of the U.S. Customs Service, 1849–2007, Record Group 36; San Francisco Customs House.

NARA East Coast November 2012

Lucy Willey at Women-Operated Sawmill at
Turkey Pond, New Hampshire, November 10, 1942
Records of the Forest Service, 1870–2008
Record Group 95
National Archives at Boston



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
					1 Philadelphia, PA First Friday Genealogy Open House Noon Genealogists 215-606-0100	2 Morrow, GA First Friday Freebies: Textual Military Records Noon General Public 866-840-1752	3 New York, NY Open House New York 10 A.M. Open House General Public 866-840-1752
4	5 Morrow, GA Naturalization Ceremony 8:30 A.M. Open House General Public 770-968-2555	6 Waltham, MA America Votes 2 P.M. General Public Workshop 866-406-2379	7	8 Waltham, MA "Prequel to Independence: Who Fired the Shot Heard Round the World" 5 P.M. Workshop K–12 Teachers 866-406-2379	9 New York, NY World's Port Tour and Family Activities 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. General Public 866-840-1752	10	
11	12	13	14 Morrow, GA Home School History 10 A.M. Workshop K–12 Students 770-968-2555	15	16 New York, NY World's Port Tour and Family Activities 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. General Public 866-840-1752	17	
18	19	20	21 Philadelphia, PA Civil War Records and Genealogy Noon Open House Genealogists 215-606-0100	22 Waltham, MA Finding Our Veterans 6 P.M. General Public Lecture 866-406-2379	23	24 New York, NY World's Port Tour and Family Activities 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. General Public 866-840-1752	
25	26 Morrow, GA Naturalization Ceremony 8:30 A.M. Open House General Public 770-968-2555	27	28	29	30 Exhibit: Philadelphia, PA "Documented Rights" Ongoing		

The National Archives at

Boston
866-406-2379
boston.archives@nara.gov

New York City
866-840-1752
newyork.archives@nara.gov

Philadelphia
215-606-0100
philadelphia.archives@nara.gov

Atlanta
770-968-2100
atlanta.archives@nara.gov

NARA Midwest November 2012

Women at a table making Sioux designs, ca. 1936
Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs
Record Group 75
National Archives at Kansas City



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
					1 Fort Worth, TX Genealogical Research in Military Records Noon-1 P.M. Workshop Genealogists 817-831-5620	2 Kansas City, MO Introduction to BIA Records 10 A.M. Workshop Genealogists 816-268-8000	3
Exhibit: Kansas City, MO "Between the Rivers: Steamboating in Iowa and Missouri" Through 4/27/13				Kansas, MO Introduction to the National Archives Regions 3 P.M. Volunteers Lecture 816-268-8000			
4	5 Hutchinson, KS TAH Grant Workshop 10 A.M. K-12 Teachers Workshop 816-268-8000	6 Kansas City, MO Polling Site 6 A.M. General Public 816-268-8000	7	8 Kansas City, MO Accessing Current Military Records: How to Use eVetRecs Noon Genealogists Workshop 816-268-8000	9 Kansas City, MO Introduction to BIA Records 10 A.M. Workshop Genealogists 816-268-8000	10 Chicago, IL Baseball, Brats, and "the Bawdy": Life During the Progressive Era 9:30 A.M. K-12 Teachers Workshop 773-948-9010	
11	12	13	14 Kansas City, MO Remembering 18th- & 19-Century Veterans 9 A.M. Genealogists Workshop 816-268-8000	15 Kansas City, MO Theodore Roosevelt: The Complete American 6:30 P.M. General Public Lecture 816-268-8000	16	17	
18	19	20	21	22	23 Exhibit: Kansas City, MO "School House to White House" Through 2/23/13	24	
25 Exhibit: Chicago, IL "Becoming American: Immigrants, the Federal Courts in Chicago, and the Expansion of Citizenship, 1872-1991" Ongoing	26	27	28	29 Kansas City, MO Ike: The Education of a Soldier Statesman 6:30 P.M. General Public Lecture 816-268-8000	30		

The National Archives at

Chicago
773-948-9001
chicago.archives@nara.gov

Kansas City
816-268-8000
kansascity.archives@nara.gov

St. Louis
314-801-0847
stlpublic.programs@nara.gov

Fort Worth
817-831-5620
ftworth.archives@nara.gov