



Update on the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University

December 2023

Following is an overview of Drexel University's work with the Atwater Kent Collection (AKC) since July 2023.

Collection "Unpacking"

(Background) Drexel planned and completed a collection move from July to November 2022. The entire Collection was packed up and safely moved from the old warehouse to its new storage facilities, located in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts' Hamilton Building. Since the move, the team has spent the time creating new locations and making sure objects are in appropriate areas to maximize the storage space. Items are documented and updated in the database with the new locations. The team continues to sort and move objects/boxes to their best location.

Philanthropic Support, Grant Funding, and In-Kind Contributions

In support of the collection move and the planned exhibitions, Drexel has raised funds from over 20 different individuals and foundations to whom we are very grateful for such generous support and understanding of the importance of this Collection.

Grants received (\$2,210,750 total)

- McLean Contributionship: \$100,000, Atwater Kent Collection Evaluation Project, awarded September 2019
- Colonial Academic Alliance: \$40,000, Using Historical Collections for Civic Engagement and Innovative Teaching and Learning, Innovate/Collaborate Grant, awarded December 2019 (2-year project)
- Richard C. von Hess Foundation: \$95,000, Philadelphia Revealed: An Exhibition of Rarely Seen Objects from The Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University, awarded July 2020
- Syde Hurdus Foundation: \$20,000, for Drexel Museum Leadership graduate students to work with the Atwater Kent Collection, awarded July 2020
- Decorative Arts Trust: \$5,000, for IDEAL Internship for an undergraduate student of color to work with the Collection (summer 2021), awarded February 2021. Funding for the IDEAL internship has been renewed for summer 2022 (see below)
- Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission: \$13,590, Historical & Archival Records Care Grant to digitize African American archival material in the Collection (2-year project), awarded March 2021

- National Endowment for the Humanities: \$350,000, Digitizing the Atwater Kent Museum Collection, Humanities Collections & Reference Resources (3-year project) – awarded April 2021
- Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission: \$4,997, Stewarding Records of the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Historical & Archival Records Care Grants, awarded December 2021 (2-year project).
- Decorative Arts Trust: \$5,000, Year 2 IDEAL Internship (inclusivity, diversity, equity, access, and leadership), awarded January 2022
- Syde Hurdus Foundation: \$20,000, Atwater Kent Collection Programs, awarded July 2022.
- McLean Contributionship: \$121,760, Housing the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University, awarded September 2022
- Pew Charitable Trusts: \$850,000, Opening Access to the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University, awarded June 2023
- Wyncote Foundation: \$50,000, Atwater Kent Collection Exhibitions, awarded summer 2023
- National Archives/NHPRC: \$149,938, Promoting Access to Historical Records in the Atwater Kent Collection (Local History Collection), awarded summer 2023
- Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation: \$25,000, Sharing the Friends Historical Association Collection Online: Quakerism in the Philadelphia Area, awarded summer 2023
- Pew Center for Arts & Heritage: \$360,500, Reshaping Historical Narratives through the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University, awarded fall 2023

Grants pending (\$150,000 total)

- [Resubmission] National Endowment for the Humanities: \$150,000, A Biography of Things: Telling the Expanded Story of Artifacts & Archives in the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University (notification December 2023)

Grants applied for but did NOT receive (\$1,854,341 total)

- Philadelphia Foundation: \$50,000, Collaborative exhibit planning with Independence Seaport Museum, Woodmere Art Museum & National Constitution Center, Innovation Planning Grant (2020)
- National Archives & Records Administration – National Historical Publications & Records Commission: \$100,000, Ensuring Access to the Philadelphia History Museum's Local History Collection, Access to Historical Records: Archival Projects (2020) (Drexel not owning the Collection cited as the main reason for rejection)
- Institute of Museum & Library Services: \$658,000, The Atwater Kent Collection/Drexel Museum Without Walls, National Leadership Grants for Museums (2020)
- Decorative Arts Trust: \$100,000, The Atwater Kent Collection/Drexel Museum Without Walls, Prize for Excellence and Innovation (2020)
- National Endowment for the Humanities: \$250,000, Who Are We to Say?: Citizen-Scholars Unpack Philadelphia's Atwater Kent Collection (collaboration with Drexel Writers Room), Public Humanities Projects (2021)
- [Resubmission] National Endowment for the Humanities: \$249,916, Who Are We to Say?:

Citizen-Scholars Unpack Philadelphia's Atwater Kent Collection (collaboration with Drexel Writers Room), Public Humanities Projects (2022)

- Pennsylvania Abolition Society Fund at the Philadelphia Foundation: \$2,000: Revealing Unknown Treasures: The African American Collections of the Philadelphia History Museum (2022)
- Institute of Museum & Library Services: \$249,982, Outside In: Welcoming the Community into the Atwater Kent Collection through an Intellectually and Visually Engaging, Well-Researched, and Expandable Website, Museums for America (2022) (IMLS ruled Drexel did not meet this program's museum eligibility requirements)
- National Endowment for the Humanities: \$149,000, A Biography of Things: Telling the Expanded Story of Artifacts & Archives in the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel University (2022)
- Stewart Huston Charitable Trust: \$22,500, Friends Historical Association collection (2022)

Philanthropic funds raised to date: \$704,641 (specifically for support of work in the Atwater Kent Collection)

A new endowment fund has been established (with \$2M) to support collections and exhibitions activities and programs. This will provide around \$100,000/year in program support.

In-Kind Contributions

Staff from the following Drexel departments have contributed significant time/resources to work with the Collection:

Lenfest Center for Cultural Partnerships

- Rosalind Remer, Vice Provost & Executive Director
- Derek Gillman, Distinguished Teaching Professor; Executive Director, University Collections and Exhibitions
- Melissa Clemmer, Associate Director, Lenfest Center
- Kelly Hopkins, Finance and Administration
- Tara Tomlin Jurgelewicz, Office & Administration Manager

Legal Counsel

- Timothy Raynor, Associate General Counsel
- Rebecca Lacher, Associate General Counsel
- Ann Loftus, Ballard Spahr

Office of Research & Innovation

- Various staff have provided support/assistance with federal grant applications.

Office of Institutional Advancement

- Brenna McBride, Executive Director, Foundation Relations, has provided support/assistance with private/independent grant applications.

Human Resources

- Keyanah Jones, Human Resources Business Partner, has assisted with hiring, compensation review and separation, for the project.
- Miljenka Sakic, Talent Acquisition Consultant, has assisted with the logistics of hiring and onboarding of staff for the project

Westphal College of Media Arts & Design

- Joseph Larnerd, Assistant Professor, Art History, is collaborating on the Colonial Academic Alliance grant project.
- Paul Runyon, Program Director, Photography, has shared technical expertise and loaned equipment for photography/digitization.

The Drexel Collection

- Lynn Clouser Waddell, Assistant Director, has participated in discussions related to the Collection and potential future collaborative grant applications.

Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection

- Clare Sauro, Curator
- Michael Shepherd, Archivist [Former]
- Monica Stevens-Smyth, Collections Manager
- All three have participated in discussions related to Collections database management and data migration as well as Digital Asset Management plans. Includes a monthly standing meeting with Lynn Clouser Waddell, staff of the Fox Collection, and Stacey Swigart, Director, Atwater Kent Collection

Collection Evaluation

Drexel's evaluation of the Collection has continued while staff also facilitated the move, largely focusing on the Archival Collection. Considerable progress has been made in scanning this portion of the Collection.

Three-dimensional items: To date, Drexel has fully completed the historical review of the 3D objects—34,000+ objects in 42 categories— researching, scoring, and checking the items against the corresponding hard/object files.

Archival items: The evaluation of the Archives continues. The historical review of the Archives (in groups by type, such as bills & receipts, drawings, letters, postcards, posters, prints, trade cards, etc.) includes researching, scoring, and checking the items against the corresponding hard/object files. Approximately 85% of the Archives have been evaluated in 69 categories.

Collection Database & Digitization

Project staff have continued with necessary data cleanup and updates to the PastPerfect collection database, both to improve its accuracy and usability, and in preparation for making the Collection accessible online. On February 14, 2023, the online portal to the collection debuted with 1,212 items in all four database categories (Objects, Photos, Archives, Library).

Related project activities include:

- **Inventory:** A full-scale inventory is being completed post move. Each box/crate/etc. was tracked during the move and subsequent work has required recounts and checking item lists. This is ongoing. The focus this fall has been to complete the inventory with every box being accounted for. Currently the team is in a double-check and verify stage.
- **Object Photos:** Since July 2023, approximately 400 photos have been taken of 3D objects for the evaluation process. These photos are being edited, updated, and uploaded into PastPerfect with the appropriate catalog record.
- **Archive Scans:** Since July 2023, over 800 Archival items, Photographs, and Library materials have been scanned. [Currently library materials include book covers and title pages]
- **Evaluation Data:** With categories reviewed and updated with new and/or additional data, these data updates are being made in PastPerfect, in a variety of evaluation categories. To date, 26 of 45 3D categories have been completed, with updates to object descriptions, source information, materials, and more, as identified in the evaluation process. All other categories are started/in process of updating into the database.
- **PastPerfect Collections Management Database:**
 - **Data “cleanup”:** Ongoing updates are made to the database in every category and most fields in the program. This project is part of daily work related to every aspect of the inventory and evaluation and the addition of metadata, and updated research information. More than 25 million edits have been made to date.
 - **Public Portal to the Collection Database:** The data cleanup, and the addition of photos/scans and added metadata to records provides a foundation that AKC will build upon, in conjunction with the ongoing evaluation project. In February 2023, the online portal was launched with a limited portion of the Collection. Included are the records for the 501 items featured in the Digital Preview (May 31, 2022), as well as the grant-funded project of the Pennsylvania/Philadelphia SPCA materials, among other selected items in the Collection. The plan is to add between 50-100 items to the portal each month (after data cleanup and metadata additions).

- The item numbers in the portal from February – December 15, 2023 are:
 - Archives: 917
 - Library: 68
 - Objects: 2031
 - Photos: 400
 - People: 46 [searchable names/biographies]
 - **Total of 3,716 portal items (not including People biographies)**
- **Exhibits Tab:** The online database provides a structure to feature elements of the summer 2023 exhibit, *Seeing Philadelphia*. Interpretive panel images as well as images of all items in the collection were available online for discovering additional information about items in the exhibit. The exhibition photos of the gallery installation as well as the panels remain available for study.
- **Rehousing/Storage Retrofit Project:** We continue to rehouse objects in new archival boxes as needed. Boxes are renumbered as necessary. Flat file drawer rehousing was completed in September and every drawer was updated and documented with materials as of October during the inventory process. Additional new shelves are expected to be delivered and installed in December that will replace old units.
- **Quaker Collection:** With funding received via a grant, we were able to hire a part-time textile conservation technician to work with our Quaker collection, which is primarily clothing and textiles. They are reviewing each item, rehousing where needed, completing updated condition reviews, and will be photographing and documenting each item. All materials will be reviewed, updated and added to the collection portal by the time the project ends in June 2024. In addition, an online exhibit will feature elements of the process as well as historic information about various materials in the collection.
- **Website:** With the launch of the portal, the Atwater Kent Collection utilized the former Philadelphia History Museum website www.philadelphiahistory.org and implemented a new design with current information on the project. There are three main tabs with information to dig further into the Atwater Kent Collection project: About, Collections, Exhibitions. Through the Collections tab, you can access the Online Portal.

Exhibitions

Seeing Philadelphia opened on July 1, 2023, and featured 2D works depicting Philadelphia over 300 years, including people living, working, playing, and celebrating. This was a collaboration with Writers Room at Drexel, a community outreach program, to enhance the exhibition with contemporary views and responses. The exhibit closed on September 5, 2023. It was located in the Maguire Gallery in the Hamilton Building at PAFA.

Philadelphia Revealed, a larger exhibition, with a variety of 2D and 3D materials will run from July through November 2024. This 8,000 sq. ft exhibition will be thematic in nature, focusing on the development of the Atwater Kent Museum in its almost 80-year history. The exhibit will be housed in the Fisher-Brooks and Maguire Galleries at PAFA in the Hamilton Building. Materials planned for inclusion are a priority for inventory, evaluation and documentation while being reviewed for exhibition. All exhibition objects will be highlighted in the portal when the exhibition opens in 2024.

- Drexel Digital Media: Working with AKC curatorial staff, students in the Digital Media program at Drexel's Westphal College are developing interactive digital exhibits to complement the physical objects in the Philadelphia Revealed exhibition.
- WHYY / First Person Arts: Funded by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, a partnership with WHYY, First Person Arts, and the Atwater Kent Collection at Drexel will result in a series of podcasts tied to individual or groups of objects in the Philadelphia Revealed exhibition that inspire story telling.

Personnel

Between July 1 – December 31, 2023, nine employees are/were employed by the Collection. These include the Evaluation Project Director, Collection Director, Assistant Director, Digital Coordinator, two full-time Collection Coordinators, one part-time Collections Technician (specific grant-funded position through June 2024) and two part-time Gallery Guides (July – September during the Seeing Philadelphia exhibition).

With recent grant funding, new employees will be added in 2024, and will include the addition of a Museum Registrar position funded for three years by the Pew Foundation.