

M1921

RECORDS RELATING TO MONUMENTS, MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES,
ARCHIVES, AND FINE ARTS OF THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS BRANCH,
OMGUS, 1946–1949

Barbara Victorino prepared the introductory materials
and arranged these records for microfilming.

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INTRODUCTION

On the 14 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1921, are reproduced records relating to monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and fine arts of the Cultural Affairs Branch, Education and Cultural Relations (ECR) Division, Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS] during the period 1946–1949. These records are part of Records of 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 (1945), 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.

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. 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.

Beginning in September 1948, plans were conceived to transfer the functions of the MFAA Section of the Restitution Branch, Property Division to the ECR Division. The first step was taken in that direction as the ECR Division established an Archives and Libraries Section within the Cultural Affairs Branch. 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 Archives and Libraries Section of the Cultural Affairs Branch, ECR Division. In March 1949, the remaining duties of the MFAA

Section were also transferred to the Cultural Affairs Branch with the establishment of the Museums Section and the Fine Arts Section.

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 were transferred to HICOG organizations between June and September 1949. The functions of the ECR Division of OMGUS passed to the Office of Public Affairs of HICOG. 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 Cultural Affairs Branch, were retired to an Army record center in Kansas City until they were accessioned into the National Archives in the early 1960s.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

Records Relating to Monuments, Museums, Libraries, Archives, and Fine Arts, 1946–1949 [A1, Entry 622],¹ is arranged alphabetically by subject and consists primarily of reports, memorandums, correspondence, questionnaires, photographs, and other records pertaining to the restitution of artworks; investigations of crimes involving art objects; conditions of archives and libraries in the American Zone and their holdings; problems encountered in reopening museums, libraries, and archives; and the exchange of experts and exhibits.

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 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 514–523]

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.

National Archives Microfilm Publications

A3389, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Selected Microfilm Reproductions and Related Records, 1945–1949* [RG 260, 76 rolls]

M1782, *OSS Art Looting Investigation Unit Reports, 1945–46* [RGs 38 and 239, 1 roll]

M1940, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Miscellaneous Property Reports, 1945–1948* [RG 260, 6 rolls]

M1941, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): OMGUS Headquarters Records, 1938–1951* [RG 260, 45 rolls]

M1942, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946–1951* [RG 260, 13 rolls]

M1943, *ERR (Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg) Card File and Related Photographs, 1940–1945* [RG 260, 40 rolls]

M1944, *Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historical Monuments in War Areas (The Roberts Commission), 1943–1946* [RG 239, 187 rolls]

M1947, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945–1952* [RG 260, 117 rolls]

M1948, *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Marburg Central Collecting Point, 1945–1949* [RG 260, 28 rolls]

M1949, *Records of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section (MFAA) of the Reparations and Restitution Branch, OMGUS, 1945–1951* [RG 260, 43 rolls]

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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