



## **Bingham Sketches, Inc., Records (C4522)**

**Collection Number:** C4522

**Collection Title:** Bingham Sketches, Inc., Records

**Dates:** 1974-1978

**Creator:** Bingham Sketches, Inc.

**Abstract:** Records of a 1970s fundraising campaign to purchase 112 George Caleb Bingham drawings from the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association.

**Collection Size:** 2.15 cubic feet  
(41 folders, 3 card files)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [columbia@shsmo.org](mailto:columbia@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

**Restrictions on Use:** The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Bingham Sketches, Inc.* (C4522); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

**Donor Information:** The records were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Bingham Sketches Incorporated in April 1980 (Accession No. CA2307). An addition was made in March 1982 by Elizabeth Gentry Sayad (Accession No. CA2406).

**Processed by:** Aleksandra Kinlen on January 12, 2023.

### **Historical Note:**

Governor Christopher “Kit” S. Bond (1939-) created the non-partisan not-for-profit Bingham Sketches, Inc., in 1976 to raise the approximately \$1.8 million to purchase a series of 112 figure studies created by artist George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879). The 1840s sketches--inspired by nineteenth-century life along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers and that depict boatmen,

frontier guides, politicians, farmers, and others--were to be sold individually by the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association who had received the pieces in 1868 as a gift from then-Mayor John How (1813-1885). Bingham Sketches, Inc., was able to solicit \$1.3 million in donations and pledges before the deadline of June 30, 1976, which, paired with \$500,000 in legislative appropriations, allowed the artworks to be kept together and in the state.

One major aspect of the campaign was the \$25,000 raised by 50,000 schoolchildren at 300 schools across the state during "Bingham Week." This endeavor, alongside a direct-mailing campaign that collected \$200,000; exhibitions that garnered \$70,000; "Bingham shirts" that raised \$12,000; and other efforts, allowed the drawings to remain in the state. The final deadline for pledge payments was June 30, 1979, after which Bingham Sketches, Inc., was dissolved. The sketches are now overseen by the Bingham Trust, a five-person board consisting of the directors of the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the State Historical Society of Missouri; the chairperson of the Missouri Arts Council; and the governor of Missouri. The works are currently at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

Activities  
Publicity  
Financial  
Card files

**Scope and Content Note:****Activities**

This series documents the organization's activities, outside of the direct-mailing brochures located in the publicity series, which encouraged donations to and knowledge of the effort: i.e., the production of 600 riverman-inspired shirts; a commemorative stamp; oversized exhibition banners; and various events. Of note are materials in f. 8-10 regarding Bingham Week, an event wherein 50,000 schoolchildren from about 300 schools across the state raised more than \$25,000 for the purchase of sketches. Arranged alphabetically by category of material and then chronologically.

**Publicity**

This series covers techniques that the nonprofit used to increase awareness of their campaign, including newspaper and magazine articles, press releases, and television and radio spots. Also in this series are materials surrounding the production, distribution, and results of the fundraising brochure that was sent out in 1976 as well as the public relations teams that assisted the organization. Arranged alphabetically by category of material and then chronologically.

**Financial**

This series includes finance-related papers such as appraisals for select sketches; grant applications for covering operating expenses; lists of those who provided in-kind donations;

solicitations to specific organizations; and a short summary of all money raised. Arranged alphabetically by category of material and then chronologically.

### Card files

This series contains index cards detailing each gift made by individuals or organizations in three categories: donations under \$100, donations or pledges equal to or greater than \$100, and contributions from schools during Bingham Week. The former two sections are arranged alphabetically by person's last name or name of group, with the latter section arranged alphabetically by school location.

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    - f. 7                    Sample, 1976
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- f. 18-29                Publicity
  - f. 18                   Articles and clippings, 1974-1977
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  - f. 24-27               Public relations
    - f. 24                  Gary Ferguson, Inc., 1975-1976
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f. 35	Missouri Committee for the Humanities, 1975-1976
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