



TIMKEN MUSEUM OF ART

HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

The Timken Museum of Art owes its existence to the combined efforts and generosity of two families: the prominent Timken family from Canton, Ohio, and Anne and Amy Putnam who arrived in San Diego with their family in the early 1900s.

HENRY H. TIMKEN

- Henry H. Timken built a home in San Diego in 1887. It still stands today at the corner of First and Laurel.
- Timken exemplified the 19th-century American entrepreneur. He was an immigrant who built a great fortune based on hard work and inventiveness.
- Timken was born on a farm near Bremen, Germany, in 1831. He was only seven years old when his family left Germany for America and settled on a farm in Benton County, Missouri.
- As a teenager, he became an apprentice to a carriage and wagon maker in St. Louis. By the time he was 24, he was operating his own carriage shop. He later joined his father-in-law in a carriage building business in Belleville, Illinois.
- His industrial career was interrupted by the Gold Rush and the Civil War. He searched for gold in Colorado and enlisted in the Army (he was mustered out by the time he was serving as a Captain in the 13th Union Regiment).
- Returning to St. Louis, Timken established his own carriage factory. In 1877, he converted the factory to make the "Timken Buggy Spring" – a device that made a carriage ride smoother.
- Timken's real legacy to industrial America was an invention that helped revolutionize transportation. His invention was a tapered roller bearing. This device helped wagon wheels turn more easily while, at the same time, relieving friction. In 1898 Timken patented his tapered roller bearing and a year later, he established the *Timken Roller Bearing Axle Company* in St. Louis.
- The company grew so quickly that Timken decided to relocate to Canton, Ohio to be near the emerging automotive industry. Construction of the new plant began in 1901.

- By 1923, ninety percent of the country's production of roller bearings came from the Timken plant.
- Timken retired to San Diego in 1887 but retirement was not for him as he soon moved back to St. Louis where he founded the *Timken Carriage Company*. He later returned to San Diego and died here in 1909.

AMELIA TIMKEN BRIDGES

- In 1925, one of Henry H. Timken's daughters, Amelia, who married Mr. Appleton Bridges of Point Loma, underwrote the construction of the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, now the San Diego Museum of Art.
- The Bridges were strong supporters of the San Diego Museum of Art and Amelia Timken Bridges provided money for the director's salary until she passed away in 1940.

THE PUTNAMS

- The Putnam sisters, Anne (1867-1962) and Amy (1874-1958), assumed the role of primary supporters of the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery during the 1940, after Mrs. Bridges death. The sisters provided for the Museum's operating needs and they also anonymously donated to the Museum old master paintings that they had been acquiring.
- Anne and Amy and their sister Irene, who passed away at an early age, were members of a prominent local family that had moved to San Diego from Bennington, Vermont, at the turn of the century.
- Henry Putnam, the sisters' uncle, was still in his teens when he left the east coast to seek his fortune in California. In San Francisco he started the first of his many businesses: selling bottled spring water.
- After he had accrued a small capital, Henry headed back home to Essex, New York. He invested his money from California in a steel rolling mill that, during the Civil War, supplied "ironsides" to the Union's warship *Monitor*.
- In 1862 Henry moved to Bennington, Vermont, where he married a New York City widow who become the mother of his only child, Willie.
- In Bennington Henry patented and developed various types of bottle stoppers, carpet tacks, mop squeezers, wire tops for Putnam preserve jars, machinery for turning-out barbed wire, and the first practical clothes wringer.
- Henry was on his way to becoming a wealthy man. He bought out the town's grist mill, its brick factory, he constructed the town's leading hotel, built and operated an opulent opera house and he become the town's largest employer and holder of real estate.
- At the turn of the century, Henry retired in San Diego and built a large home at Fourth and Maple. Several years later, in 1913, his brother Elbert and his family followed.

- Upon moving to San Diego, Elbert Putnam began building a mansion at the northwest corner Fourth and Walnut. The sisters were past their mid-thirties when the family moved into the mansion.
- Coincidentally, the Timken family also maintained a winter home at Fourth and Walnut (now demolished). It was just across the street from the Putnam mansion, though apparently the two families never met.
- The Putnam sisters settled into their new home and they devoted their life to gardening, music and study. The three sisters were serious scholars. They received a thorough education in Latin, German, the Romance languages, as well as philosophy and history. Their family library housed a collection of 8000 volumes.
- In the summer of 1926 Amy attended Stanford as a graduate student to pursue her interest in Russian. It was Amy who began the collection of Russian icons. *Our Lady of Jerusalem* once hung over the library's fireplace. This icon is one of more than 400 that Amy collected.
- It was by the mid-1920s that the sisters were collecting European old master paintings of distinction. They visited galleries in New York and developed friendships with leading art critics, dealers and scholars from Los Angeles and the East Coast. In 1929 and in 1930 the sisters made extensive trips to the East Coast and to Europe.
- The mid-1930s brought dramatic changes to the sisters' lives. Irene died in 1936 and in 1938 the estate of the sisters' cousin, Willie, was settled.
- Willie was the only son of Henry Putnam. Despite the Depression, he managed to triple the fortune left to him by his father. When he died, he left more than five million dollars, to his cousins, Anne and Amy.
- The two sisters had inherited more than a quarter of a million dollars at the death of their own father in 1927, but now they were able to pursue, even more eagerly, their love of the arts.
- Throughout the forties the sisters continued collecting old master works and giving them anonymously to the San Diego Museum of Art.
- Then in the late forties, SDMA's first director, Reginald Poland, fell out of Amy's favor and the sisters decided to no longer donate artworks to the Museum.
- Instead the sisters' acquisitions were to travel on loan to various museums throughout the country, such as, for example, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

THE PUTNAM FOUNDATION

- In 1950 San Diego attorney Walter Ames took over the sisters' affairs. With the help and counsel of Mr. Ames the sisters established the nonprofit Putnam Foundation, which became the principal beneficiary of their estates.

THE ACQUISITION OF PAINTINGS (1951-1956)

- In accordance with the sisters' wishes, the Putnam Foundation continued to acquire paintings of high quality. From 1951 to 1956 the Foundation purchased a remarkable number of old master paintings.
- In 1951 the Foundation purchased Petrus Christus "Death of the Virgin". The painting is one of only a small number of paintings by the 15th-century Flemish artist. It is also his largest work.
- In 1952 Rembrandt's "St. Bartolomew" and Ruben's "Portrait of a Young Man in Armor" were added to the collection.
- In 1953 the "Portrait of Cooper Penrose" by Jacques-Louis David was acquired.
- In 1954 Jacob Isaacksz van Ruisdael's "A View of Harlem and Bleaching Fields" was added to the collection.
- In 1955 the Foundation acquired Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's "Christ on the Cross", Frans Hals' "Portrait of a Man", Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's "View of Volterra", Jean-Honoré Fragonard's "Blindman's Buff" and François Clouet's "Guy XVII, Comte de Laval".
- In 1956 the Foundation purchased Veronese's "Madonna and Child with St. Elizabeth, the Infant St. John the Baptist, and St. Justina" and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "Parable of the Sower".

THE MUSEUM

- In an effort to secure the Putnam sisters' art for San Diego, Mr. Ames consulted with his client, Henry H. Timken, Jr., and the Timken Foundation's offered to pay a substantial portion of the expenses to build a new art gallery in San Diego.
- The purpose of the new gallery was to allow the return to San Diego of those Putnam paintings on loan to museums in the East.
- With the financial support of the Timken Foundation, the Timken Museum of Art was built. The Museum first opened its doors to the public in October 1965. The Institution was named the Timken Art Gallery because of the very generous contributions the Timken Family had made to the cultural life of San Diego.

THE BUILDING

- The architect of the building was Frank L. Hope who wanted to create a modern building of simple elegance to show the Putnam Foundation paintings to the best advantage.
- The Timken is a solid example of spare modernism. It is built of bronze, glass and travertine marble imported from Italy. It has been erected on a platform so as to offer views from all sides.

- Frank Hope gave great care to all aspects of the design and construction. Full-scale drawings were made of all the bronze architectural details before they were cast.
- The Timken Museum of Art was built against massive protests from those who favored consistency with the architecture of the expositions that took place in San Diego in 1915 and 1935.
- City Leaders favored a historical design and strongly opposed the contemporary theme of the proposed building. However, Mr. Ames maintained what he believed was the best technical and architectural design. Ames threatened the city with taking the collection elsewhere. This is why the modern proposal was approved.
- To make way for Hope's modern building, the *Home Economy Building* by architects Carleton Winslow and Bertram Goodhue was completely demolished.

LATER ACQUISITIONS

- Since 1996 the Timken has been fortunate to have added five important painting to its collection.
- In 1997, the Putnam Foundation acquired Niccolò di Buonaccorso's "Madonna and Child". This panel is a magnificent large-scale altarpiece by the artist who is known primarily for his small-scale altarpieces. The Timken's "Madonna and Child" is one of only a handful of large-scale altarpieces by the artist known to survive.
- In 2002, the Timken added two major still life paintings by American masters to its collection: John Peto's "In he Library" and Raphaele Peale's "Cutlet and Vegetables".
- In 2005, Thomas Moran's landscape of the Roman countryside was donated to the Museum.
- The same year - as part of the anniversary celebration – the Putnam Foundation acquired Sir Anthony van Dyck's striking portrait of Mary Villiers, Lady Herbert of Shurland. With the addition of this beautiful portrait, the Museum can now show important works by the four leading Dutch and Flemish portrait painters of the 17th century: Rembrandt, Rubens, Hals and Van Dyck.

CONSERVATION

- Since its founding in 1965, the Timken has been committed to the preservation and conservation of the artworks in its collection.
- With the assistance of the staff at the Balboa Art Conservation Center the Museum has developed and implemented a comprehensive conservation plan for its artworks.
- The Timken's first large-scale restoration project was a monumental restoration of Petrus Christus' "Death of the Virgin". David Bull, head of painting conservation at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., completed this project in 1993. The restored masterwork was showcased in the exhibition "Petrus Christus: Renaissance Master of Bruges" which was organized for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1994.
- Since then the Timken has undertaken conservation work on numerous of its other paintings. The Museum's Rembrandt has undergone conservation work as well as the Museum's Bruegel.