



June 6, 1944: “D-Day” A Day the World Should Always Honor



On June 6, 1944, the largest sea borne invasion in history began the 2-month Battle of Normandy. The D-Day invasion began during the night with parachute and glider landings, air and naval attacks, and an amphibious attack in early hours of the morning. Nearly 3 million troops were involved in this operation, which was the first major turn in the Allied advance.

Many brave men and women died on this date, 63 years ago, to restore the freedom we enjoy today. We honor them by remembering. “HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY A COMRADE IN ARMS KNOWN BUT TO GOD,” reads just one of the

9,387 grave markers at the American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy, France.

Last year, many of the nation’s leading newspapers made no mention of the 62nd anniversary of the Normandy Invasion. This stood in sharp contrast to the 50th anniversary, a day on which virtually every world leader, including Presidents Clinton and Bush, gathered at the cliffside memorial to honor those who fought and died in this epic battle to defeat Hitler and the Nazis’ tyranny. It is our hope that this year, the veterans of Normandy will be remembered, for their sacrifice deserves to be honored always.



(Robert M. Edsel Collection)

From the Desk of Robert M. Edsel

A Momentous Event: The United States Honors the Monuments Men

An “idealist” is often described as a person who pursues ideals that conflict with practical considerations. When the first Monuments Officers began their work in 1943, no one could have foreseen the challenges they would confront. Based on the limited support provided to the Monuments Men, it is hard to believe that officials genuinely expected significant achievements from them. However, these idealistic men and women were determined to save the great artistic and cultural treasures of the western world using whatever resources they could employ. With the benefit of more than sixty years of hindsight we can now see clearly the remarkable success of their effort.

When I first learned that the United States had never recognized the Monuments Men, I was determined to see them receive the credit they deserve. Some said, “you are so idealistic; that will never happen.” As we prepare for the June 6th ceremony in our nation’s capital to honor them and celebrate the passage of Resolutions in both the House and Senate, I take great joy in knowing the role we played in helping honor heroes not just of our country, but of civilization.

“Your book that you so thoughtfully sent me is indeed, as you say, a “labor of love.” Carefully researched, edited, and beautifully designed, it will surely become an important document in recording the Hitler era and its immediate aftermath. By contrasting the avarice of the Germans to the even-handed respect the Americans, English and French had for Europe’s cultural heritage, you have given notable credit to the role that the art objects played.”



The United States Honors the Men and Women of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section

“A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also the men it honors, the men it remembers.” - President John F. Kennedy

On May 17th, the Congress of the United States passed a Resolution (H.R. 1585) which for the first time recognizes the service of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (“MFAA”) section during World War II. These 350 or so men and women, from thirteen nations, known by their fellow GIs as “Monuments Men,” in many instances volunteered for service to protect, rescue, and ultimately restitute more than five million cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis during World War II.

This was the first time an army fought a war on the one hand, and attempted to mitigate damage to cultural treasures at the same time. It was also a break with more than 5,000 years of civilization: leaders of the Western Allied Forces effected policies about the looting of cultural treasures during war that essentially announced to the world, ‘to the victors DO NOT belong the spoils — they should be returned to the countries from which they were stolen.’ The Monuments Men and women were the people charged with implementing this revolutionary policy.

Sadly, the Monuments Men as a group were never honored by the United States for their unprecedented work. A handful received individual recognition, but the group as a whole was overlooked by our country.

“This is a great day for art and for all those who endeavored to preserve it from the ravages of war. While recognition has come too late for most of them, may the remaining few and all their families savor the day long overdue but never too late. For all of those in some way connected to the Monuments Men, we owe special thanks to Robert Edsel and all of his associates who made this day possible.”



*Monuments Officers observe the loading of Michelangelo's Bruges Madonna: Lt. Col. Ernest DeWald, Emile Langui, Capt. Stephen Kovalyak, Lt. Craig Hugh Smyth, Dr. Andrew Ritchie, Cdr. George Boas, and Maj. Bancel La Farge.
(photo courtesy of the National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C.)*

In stark contrast, the situation was much different in Europe. Monuments Officers, such as Karol Estreicher from Poland and Rose Valland from France, were highly decorated and regarded as national heroes. European countries also praised American Monuments Men for their work. For example, Capt. Deane Keller received no less than four decorations in Europe. Several were also named Chevalier, Legion of Honor, by France.

Because of the help and support of Congresswoman Kay Granger, who sponsored the Resolution, and co-sponsors Congresswoman Louise Slaughter and Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen, the United States has finally begun to recognize and honor the Monuments Men.

On June 6th, the Senate is expected to pass a similar Resolution honoring the Monuments Men. Many thanks to our Senate sponsors, Senator James Inhofe, Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, and Senator Barbara Boxer.



They Weren't All Men or Americans: "Monuments Woman" Anne Popham Bell

by Robert M. Edsel



(Robert M. Edsel Collection)

We have found our first living woman AND non-American (British) member of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives section. Anne Olivier Popham Bell is on our list of Monuments Men as "Anne Popham," but we had no leads until Patricia Teter, our Provenance Director, received some contact information for her at a restitution conference in London late last year. After following up those leads, we found Mrs. Bell alive and quite well living in Sussex, England. Shortly thereafter, I boarded a plane to London to meet and interview her about her experience as a Monuments Officer after World War II.

Anne Popham was well prepared for work with the "MFA&A" as the British group called it, as she had studied art history at the Courtauld Institute from 1934 to 1937. Her father, A.E. 'Hugh' Popham, was a distinguished authority on Italian drawings and Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, whose collection was transferred for safety to Wales in advance of the German Blitzkrieg on London. Anne Popham's 'war work' began in 1941 when she joined the Ministry of Information as a research assistant, first in the Photographs and then in Publications Divisions, largely concerned with the production of informative book-



(photo courtesy of Anne Popham Bell)

lets on the British war effort published by His Majesty's Stationary Office. In 1945 she transferred to the MFA&A Branch of the Control Commission for Germany where she held the rank of Civilian Officer, Grade 2. In October she was stationed at Bunde, in Westphalia, the Divisional Headquarters where she acted as coordinator to the work of the branch's officers on the ground. The detailed diaries of her daily activities are preserved in the Imperial War Museum in London.

Anne Popham Bell is a charming woman who, like the other Monuments Men I have interviewed, defers all praise for her work and contribution to the MFA&A. She is a distinguished and accomplished member of the arts community. Her love for the arts is so apparent, her desire to preserve history so evident. It was a great pleasure to spend a day with her and get to know this important person and learn her perspective on World War II and the men and women who made up the "Monuments Men."

To read Anne Popham Bell's full biography, please visit our website at:

www.rescuingdavinci.com/HelpSolve/list_mfaa.aspx

"The book is really lovely – beautifully designed and produced – and provides a wealth of photographic documentation which will be revelatory to its readers."



Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art Established

by *Robert M. Edsel*

It's hard to believe: a room full of World War II history buffs never heard of them. Restitution claimants such as Maria Altmann hadn't either. Our government heretofore hadn't honored them. Their unprecedented legacy of preserving artistic and cultural treasures during armed conflict was all but ignored as evidenced by the United States' handling of the aftermath of the looting of the National Museum of Iraq. (In fact, Col. Matthew Bogdanos, who would later so ably lead the group of soldiers investigating the looting of that museum, recently acknowledged to me that he had never heard of them either.)

The "them" is the Monuments Men and women of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section. The legacy they left us is rich with examples of how to protect irreplaceable elements of our civilization from damage and destruction. We can't end war, but we can do a much better job of protecting the greatest creative achievements of man during hostilities. Like all great causes, it is a goal whose achievement is defined by the striving.

To that end, I have founded the **Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art**. Its mission statement and objectives, which are detailed on the following page, ensure that the legacy of the Monu-



Monuments Officer Lt. James Rorimer (with notepad), future director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and three GIs remove looted paintings from the castle at Neuschwanstein. (photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD)

ments Men and women will be put to their fullest and best use.

Hundreds of thousands of works of art and other cultural items stolen during World War II, worth billions of dollars, remain missing. Efforts by museums and many private collectors to fully research and document their holdings from this period vary greatly. In the coming years thousands of works of art and other historic documents will surface as the participants of World War II pass. What will become of these items?

The **Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art** will continue its research into the Monuments Men and their rich history while utilizing that legacy to raise public awareness of the importance of preserving examples of man's greatest creative achievements.

"It is to be hoped that this book will serve, not only as a record of the past, and as a salute to the dedicated men and women of all nations who risked their lives to save Europe's patrimony, but as a reminder of the destruction war brings to the fabric of human life...the destruction and theft of such things, as the framers of the Hague Convention so clearly stated, violates the very soul of a people."



Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art

Mission Statement

To preserve the legacy of the unprecedented and heroic work of the men and women who served in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (“MFAA”) section, known as “Monuments Men,” during World War II, by raising public awareness of the importance of protecting and safeguarding civilization’s most important artistic and cultural treasures from armed conflict.



*Aachen Cathedral, Germany. October 1944.
(Photo Courtesy of the National Archives and
Records Administration, College Park, MD)*

Objectives

1. To identify, locate and honor all those who served in the MFAA section, regardless of nationality, and those who were instrumental in protecting Europe and Russia’s greatest cultural treasures during World War II.
2. To promote and support educational programs in schools and universities in furtherance of the Foundation’s Mission Statement.
3. To identify, honor, and bestow the annual “Monuments Men” Award to individuals and institutions that represent and uphold the principals and ideals of the “Monuments Men” by making an extraordinary contribution to the protection of civilization’s most important artistic and cultural treasures.
4. To facilitate the recovery and restitution of important artistic, cultural, and historic treasures and documents that were stolen during World War II and have yet to be located.
5. Encourage institutions and collectors to comply with the American Association of Museums’ guidelines concerning provenance research during the Nazi era.



The Rape of Europa is Launched! Theatrical Release a Success

The Rape of Europa continues its successful run in San Francisco area theaters, and is now entering its third week. Anita Katz from the *San Francisco Examiner* wrote of the film: “It’s big-screen material in scope and depth, jelling as a multifaceted look at war, greed and resistance as they existed, in primarily an art-world vein, in vile times. It also resonantly demonstrates the significance of art as a representation of a culture’s essence.” Please encourage your friends and family in the Bay Area to see the film. It is truly an experience you don’t want to miss seeing on the big-screen.

As final release dates for other cities become available, we will provide them on the film’s website www.therapeofeuropa.com.

The international premier of the film occurred at the Museum of London last month. It was a wonderful success! We look forward to the film being shown in more international cities, with screenings already scheduled in Cracow, Jerusalem, Budapest, and Argentina.

Behind the Scenes: “Angels”

by *Robert M. Edsel*

Last month I started this column to recognize the many people who have helped us in the telling of this great story and each of its component parts. I pointed out that our success is the sum total of those acts of generosity, expressions of good will, and shared determination to make this story known to all. Too often these essential “angels” are not seen by the public, yet they are no less deserving of praise. Each knows what they’ve done to help us. To all of them, mentioned or not, we say “thank you.” The Monuments Men and their families are eternally appreciative.

This month we would like to thank:

George Wachter, Ted Pillsbury, Talia Katz, Karen Evans, Catherine Knowles, Dan Barron, Nathan Reese, and Christy Fox.

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UPCOMING EVENTS		
BOOK SIGNINGS		
Houston, TX	Barnes & Noble	June 11-12
Valley Forge, PA	Barnes & Noble	June 16
New York, NY	Lotus Club	June 18
SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS		
University of Tennessee		Sept 20
Global Creative Leadership Summit		Sept 23-27
	Rockefeller University, New York City	
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art		Sept 27
THEATRICAL OPENING DATES		
Boston Museum of Fine Arts		May 31- June 15
Oklahoma City Museum of Art		June 21-24
Martha’s Vineyard		June 24- August 12
FILM SCREENINGS		
Sid Jacobson JCC, Greenvale, NY		June 6
Miami Jewish Film Festival		June 7
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art		
	Hartford, CT	June 16
St. Louis		June 25
FOREIGN FILM SCREENINGS		
Krakov Film Festival		June 4
Jerusalem Intl Film Festival		July 5-14
Budapest Jewish Film Festival		Aug 1-4
Argentina Jewish Film Festival		TBA