

Local

Congress honors soldiers who saved art during World War II



(Photo Courtesy of Robert Edsel/National Archives)

Four of the 350 Monuments Men recover paintings that were confiscated by the Nazis during World War II.

Kate Winston, The Examiner
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WASHINGTON -

Four of the 12 surviving Monuments Men, a group of Allied soldiers charged with finding and protecting stolen art during World War II, were honored by family, friends and members of Congress on Wednesday, the 63rd anniversary of D-Day.

The Monuments Men, a group of 350 men and women from 13 countries, embarked on a treasure hunt that saved and returned more than 5 million works of art and culture confiscated by the Nazi party, including masterpieces by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Rembrandt.

Harry Ettlinger, 80, a Jew born in Germany, escaped with his family to the United States in 1938, was drafted into the U.S. Army and later retrieved works of art hidden in underground salt mines in Germany.

The Monuments Men set a precedent that should be promoted today, Ettlinger said.

"Let us announce again and again and again, to the people of the world, that their culture will be respected as long as they respect the culture of others," he said.

Charles Parkhurst, 94, a surviving Monuments Man who could not attend Wednesday's ceremony, was a curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington before and after the war, and later became the director of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Robert Edsel, author of "Rescuing Da Vinci" and co-producer of the documentary "The Rape of Europa," promoted a congressional resolution honoring the Monuments Men that passed the House on May 17 and was expected to pass the Senate on Wednesday.

Monuments Man Horace Apgar, 83, said, "I felt that my being here was honoring the almost 400 that aren't."