

CAPE ANN Museum

Library & Archives

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JAMES T. MCCLELLAN COLLECTION

Creator:	James T. McClellan
Dates:	1819-1977 (bulk of dates 1945-1946, 1976-2003)
Quantity:	2 document boxes; 1 portfolio: briefcase
Acquisition:	Accession #: 2012.116 ; Donated by: John McClellan
Identification:	A82 ; Archive Collection #82
Citation:	[Document Title]. The James McClellan Collection, [Box #, Folder #, Item #], Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives, Gloucester, MA.
Copyright:	Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Librarian/Archivist.
Language:	English
Finding Aid:	Peter Brown, 2012; supervised by Stephanie Buck, Librarian/Archivist; Revised and reprocessed: Amber Wingerson, Curatorial Assistant, 2019

Biographical Note

James T. McClellan was born in Haverhill, MA on June 27, 1910 to Frances Packard McClellan and Percy Webb McClellan as the fourth of six children. Percy Webb McClellan was a relative of Civil War General, George B. McClellan, and Frances Packard McClellan was a painter. McClellan was raised on Orchard Street in Andover, MA and attended Governor Dummer Academy and then M.I.T. Influenced by his mother, McClellan began his career as a painter and studied under Harvey Dunn in New York and Charles Hopkinson in Boston. In the 1930s, McClellan moved to

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Folly Cove on Cape Ann to study sculpture under George Demetrios and later served as Demetrios's studio assistant, becoming an expert wood carver.

McClellan married Anita Curtis McClellan (1917-2012) and the couple had two children. Later, the two separated when Anita was in her 30s and she settled in Paris, where she remained for the rest of her life. Anita was a sculpture in her own right, studying under George Demetrios as well. All of her sculptures were made in bronze.

For decades, McClellan made his living and supported his family selling insurance, building the Annisquam River bridge on Route 128 at Gloucester's Grant Circle, working in boatyards, or restoring antique furniture. During this time, McClellan sculpted in his free time. He became an Ipswich resident in 1947, by the mid-1960s and until the fall of 2004 McClellan was sculpting full-time on commission from his self-built studio in the loft of the barn on his Ipswich property.

Among McClellan's sculpted works are: portraits, reliefs, ships' figureheads, fountains, doors, weathervanes, armillary spheres and sundials, and organ pipe screens. His favorite themes are animals and Greek and Norse mythology. He works in a variety of materials, including woods—ebony, teak, antique mahogany, black walnut, cherry, apple—iron, stone, lead, ceramic, brass, gold leafing, and polychrome. McClellan's work is represented in municipal, corporate and private collections across the country, and has been exhibited at the Prix de Rome Competition, the National Academy of Design, New York, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Addison Gallery, MIT, Artist's Guild, Boston, and Springfield Museum of Fine Art. He was a member of the Copley Society of Boston, Newburyport Art Association, and Rockport Art Association.

For much of his career, McClellan's preferred subjects were creatures from the natural and mythological world—mermaids, phoenixes, griffons, trolls, dolphins, hawks and lions. His interest in Norse mythology is evidenced in the Midgard Serpent, a fabled sea serpent which was so large that it was able to encircle the entire world with its body and still grasp its own tail. As explained by McClellan, "I like mythology because, in your interpretations, you can make up what you want to. I like the idea of different gods for different tasks. It seems a lot less cumbersome than having one god to take care of everything. I'm also a great believer in trolls. They're protectors. When my daughter was little, she was afraid of the woods behind our house because she thought monsters were there. I felt there was a troll there named 'Trollo.' I carved a likeness of him for my daughter so she could see the protector of the woods. She was not afraid anymore."

Beginning in 2000, James McClellan began donating pieces of his sculpture to the Cape Ann Museum, finding the organization and his work to be "a good fit." Today, the Museum is proud to be the repository for McClellan's work.

Scope and Content of the Collection

This is a manuscript and object collection of James T. McClellan (1910-2005). Given to the Library and Archives of the Cape Ann Museum, this collection centers on James T. McClellan's

professional artist life as well as his relationship with his wife, Anita during his time in World War II. It includes paper, photographs, slides, film, metal name plates from awards, and a portfolio. The paper contents range from correspondence to professional biographical information to exhibition ephemera to newspaper clippings. The collection dates from 1819-1977 with bulk dates of 1945-1946 and 1976-2003.

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Series Description

The largest series, Series 1: Correspondence, has two sub series: Sub Series 1: Correspondence with Anita Curtis McClellan (1917-2012) and Sub Series 2: Correspondence to James T. McClellan about his work. The first sub series contains a large number of letters James T. McClellan wrote to his wife, Anita Curtis McClellan, while he was in Japan during World War II. The collection does not include letters from Anita Curtis McClellan to James McClellan are in the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith Collection, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Series 2 contains James T. McClellan's professional materials, which included professional biographical materials, resumes, press releases, and catalog lists of works. Series 3 is a collection newspaper articles and clippings that date from 1971 to 1992 as well as some undated articles.

Series 4 contains exhibition materials and ephemera from 1976 to 2003 as well as some undated materials. This collection includes materials from James T. McClellan's own exhibitions and sculpture as well as exhibition materials from other artists, including Aristides Demetrios. Series 5 has several sketches made by James T. McClellan.

Series 6 contains photography of James T. McClellan's sculpture, includes photographs, slides, and undeveloped film. Series 7 is a collection of three metal plates from awards James T. McClellan won from the Rockport Art Association in 2001.

- I. Correspondence (1819-1977)
- II. Professional Materials (1992, 2002-2003, undated)
- III. Newspaper Articles and Clippings (1971-1992, undated)
- IV. Exhibition materials and ephemera (1976-2003, undated)
- V. Sketches (undated)
- VI. Photography (undated)
- VII. Awards (2001)

Container List

Box 1

- I. Series I: Correspondence (1819-1977)
 - I. Sub Series 1: Correspondence from James T. McClellan to his wife, Anita Curtis McClellan (1945-1946) during his time in World War II, Pacific Theatre
 - I. Correspondence, March 8, 1945 to March 26, 1945
 - II. Correspondence, March 24, 1945 to May 31, 1945
 - III. Correspondence, June 1, 1945 to July 22, 1945
 - IV. Correspondence, July 21, 1945 to September 23, 1945
 - V. Correspondence, October 2, 1945 to October 20, 1945
 - VI. November 2, 1945 to December 25, 1945
 - VII. January 15, 1946 to April 9, 1946

Box 2

- II. Sub Series 2: Correspondence to James T. McClellan about his work, 1979, undated
 - I. Correspondence, 1979, undated
- II. Series II: Professional Materials (1992, 2002-2003, undated)
 - I. Professional Biographical Materials, undated
 - II. Professional Resumes, undated
 - III. Professional Commentary and Quotes, undated
 - IV. Press Releases, 2002-2003
 - V. Catalog Lists of Works, 1992, undated
- III. Series III: Newspaper Articles and Clippings (1971-1992, undated)
 - I. Newspaper articles and clippings, 1971-1992, undated
- IV. Series IV: Exhibition materials and ephemera (1976-2003, undated)
 - I. James T. McClellan exhibition materials and ephemera, 1976, 1990, undated
 - II. Cape Ann Historical Museum exhibition materials and ephemera, 2002-2003
 - III. Sculpture Proposal, 1992
 - IV. Exhibition materials and ephemera of other artists, 1979, 1991, undated
- V. Series V: Sketches (undated)
 - I. Sketches, undated
 - II. Sketches, undated
- VI. Series VI: Photography (undated)
 - I. Photographs, undated
 - II. Slides, undated
 - III. Film, undated
- VII. Series VII: Awards (2001)
 - I. Awards, 2001

Museum Objects

Portfolio: briefcase

Hawk
Gryphon
Eagle
Mermaid
Poseidon
Guardian Lions
Troll
Triton
Locust
Otter
Duck
Angel Gabriel
Ape
Head of Demetrios
Fish
Serving Trays
Flying Goose
Chess Set
Heron
Ship's Figurehead
Armillary Sphere
Sun Dial
Dragon
Midguard Serpent
Bird of Prey
Negroes Head
Frolic Horse
Female Torso
Cormorant
Neptune Horse
Viking
Troll (relief)
Diving Gull
North Shore article 1976
GDT article Nov 1971
North Shore article 1986
Resume