

Making History at the Bruce Museum

*Museum Volunteers Joan Yankowski and Dorothy Friedman
team up for ongoing archival project*



Bruce Museum volunteers Joan Yankowski (left) and Dorothy Friedman (right) keep up on the latest news about the Museum and help preserve it for posterity.

GREENWICH, CT, August 15, 2019 – The Bruce Museum has been in the news since 1908, when Robert Moffat Bruce conveyed by Deed of Trust to the Town of Greenwich four parcels of property, including his large granite home overlooking Greenwich Harbor. A wealthy textile merchant and prominent local philanthropist, he stipulated that “my dwelling house...be used as a natural history, historical, and art museum for the use and benefit of the public.”

After Robert Bruce’s death the following year, the hilltop mansion served as a venue for the Greenwich Society of Artists, whose members organized the first exhibition of paintings and sculpture in 1912.

Development of the Museum began in 1918 when renovations to the mansion were completed. Dr. Edward F. Bigelow (1860-1938), a prominent naturalist who was appointed the first curator of the Museum in 1912, commissioned another naturalist, Paul Griswold Howes (1893-1984), to build the collections and exhibits.

In the 1920s, Bigelow and Howes began inviting groups of schoolchildren to the Bruce for educational tours, a tradition that continues to this day, in accordance with the Museum’s mission to promote an understanding of art and science to enrich the lives of all people in the communities it serves.



BRUCE MUSEUM
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Press Release

Helping the Bruce keep tabs on how it carries out that continuing mission are volunteers Joan Yankowski and Dorothy Friedman. Together, the two are responsible for compiling the archival record of articles from local newspapers, magazines, and art and science publications from further afield that include references to the Bruce Museum. It's a practice that dates back to 1919, with Joan and Dorothy adding to shelves bursting with volumes full of newspaper clippings and other print ephemera that chronicle the rich and varied history of the Bruce and the exhibitions, collections, education programs, and special events that take place at the Museum throughout each and every year.

"The job Joan and Dorothy do for us here at the Bruce is invaluable," says Registrar Kirsten Reinhardt. "The archival record of the organization has provided answers to collections mysteries and exhibition histories. The amount of information is incredible. It's accessible, and it's permanent."

Collections Manager Timothy J. Walsh routinely uses the Museum's print archive to parse out details of people, objects, and events otherwise forgotten in time. "I cannot overestimate the importance of the work that Joan and Dorothy are doing. Decades into the future, Museum staff and outside researchers will be using their clippings in the same way I do. These physical scraps of paper will outlast any online record of the stories they contain. We so appreciate their enthusiasm for and dedication to this ongoing, essential project."

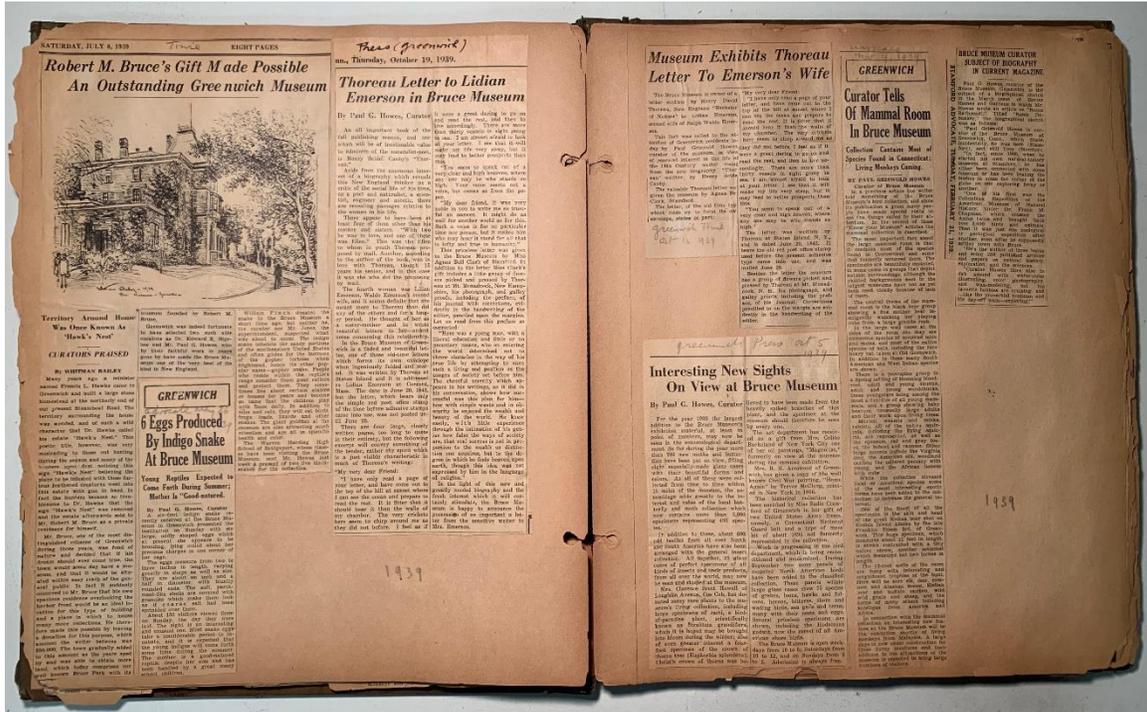
Originally from the Bronx, Joan has lived in Greenwich since 1984. A Museum member since 2001 and an active volunteer for the past several years, Joan spends one morning each week searching through a stack of the latest publications. She then turns her folder of fresh clippings over to Dorothy to paste into an oversize archival portfolio book.

Dorothy has spent a weekday morning volunteering for the Bruce for the past five years, and it would be hard to find a person better suited to the task at hand: After a career spent in the "Mad Men" world of New York advertising, Dorothy worked for more than a decade as a writer and editor for Greenwich Time, covering music, arts, and culture. Looking back through the volumes of archived press clippings, "I've come across some of my own articles on the Bruce," she says. Of her longtime collaboration with Joan, Dorothy adds, "It's a family affair, and it works well. The Bruce is a pleasant place to volunteer -- everyone here is very friendly."

Both Dorothy and Joan have witnessed the Museum's activities and accomplishments over the past several years, and are proud of their role in recording the Museum's growing legacy. Both are excited to be keeping track of the latest news about the Museum's ambitious renovation and expansion project. They are both very excited about New Bruce; "It's going to be wonderful!" says Joan. It will certainly be news worth adding to the Bruce Museum scrapbook.



Pages from the Bruce Museum's print archives, circa 1939



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About the Bruce Museum

The Bruce Museum is a community-based, world-class institution highlighting art and science in more than a dozen changing exhibitions annually. The permanent galleries feature the natural sciences that encompass regional to global perspectives. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and voted the best museum in Fairfield County by area media in recent years, the Bruce plays an integral role in the cultural life of area residents and attracts approximately 70,000 visitors annually, including 24,000 schoolchildren, reaching out to families, seniors, students, and community organizations. Located in a park setting just off I-95, exit 3, at 1 Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut, the Museum is also a 5-minute walk from the Metro-North Greenwich Station. The Bruce Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. For additional information, call the Bruce Museum at 203-869-0376 or visit brucemuseum.org.

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