

INTRODUCTION TO THE GATES ART COLLECTION

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How This Project Began

My interest in the Gates art collection began while researching the biography *Bet-a-Million, The Man History Forgot*. While reviewing local newspapers, I encountered repeated references to artworks once owned by John Warne Gates, some of which had been placed on long-term loan with the Art Institute of Chicago.

There were references to art acquisitions in previous biographies by Warshow (1932) and Wendt & Kogan (1948). These discoveries raised immediate questions: How extensive had this collection been? Where had it gone? And why had no one ever attempted to reconstruct it?

What began as a footnote in a biography quickly became a far larger investigation—one that ultimately revealed the survival of a remarkable Gilded Age collection long believed to be lost.

This project represents the first systematic reconstruction of the Gates art collection. Through photographs, newspapers, museum records, family provenance, and newly discovered works, the collection can now be followed across time.

The Gates art collection was not lost. It traveled.

Editorial Note to the Reader

The Gates art collection was never cataloged as a single entity during John Warne Gates' lifetime. No estate inventory, auction catalog, or gallery list survives. What follows is therefore a reconstruction based on:

- Museum accession records
 - Exhibition bulletins
 - Provenance statements
 - Contemporary newspaper reporting
 - Family-held works
 - Later institutional donations
-

Formation of the Collection

John Warne Gates collected art on a scale rivaling his contemporaries. He acquired paintings through elite European and American dealers, including Brandus Gallery. Works attributed in period accounts to Corot, Meissonier, Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Albrecht Dürer, Gainsborough, and Reynolds appear in the documentary record.

Unlike collectors who centralized their holdings, Gates distributed his collection across multiple residences—Chicago, New York, Port Arthur, Lake Geneva, Sarasota, and a château in France—each functioning as a domestic gallery.

CHAPTER 1

Mansions as Museums — The Minneapolis Residence

Historic interior photographs provide rare visual documentation of how Gates lived with his art. The Port Arthur residence shows paintings hung salon-style, while photographs from the Chicago mansion reveal rooms designed to present art as a marker of status and taste.



Figure 1 – Chicago Mansion residence interior, reception room [cropped]



Figure 2 – Chicago mansion reception room



Figure 3 – Chicago mansion sitting room



Figure 4 – Chicago mansion bedroom



Figure 5 – Chicago mansion dining room

No comprehensive inventory of the Gates art collection ever existed. As a result, scholars remain largely in the dark as to which specific works were housed in Minneapolis versus New York at any given time.

Compounding this uncertainty, the Port Arthur mansion in Texas continued to function as a primary residence, meaning the collection was likely still divided among multiple estates well after 1911.

Before addressing the death of Charles Gilbert Gates, it is essential to visualize the environment in which the Gates art collection reached its most fully realized form.

In March 1913, the sudden death of Charles Gilbert Gates in Cody, Wyoming marked a turning point in the history of the collection. At the time of his death, a substantial portion of the collection had already been transferred to Minneapolis, where it was intended to be installed in his newly constructed residence overlooking the Lake of the Isles.

The mansion itself represented one of the most ambitious private residences of its era. Contemporary accounts place its cost between \$1,000,000 and \$4,000,000, constructed almost entirely of granite and marble. Charles and his wife, Florence, oversaw its construction from a nearby rented cottage.



FIGURE 6 - The north-facing façade of the Gates mansion, overlooking the Lake of the Isles. The upper level featured a loggia connected to the ballroom.



FIGURE 7 -The rear façade of the residence, reflecting the scale and architectural symmetry of the structure.

Newspaper reports confirm that part of the Gates art collection had already arrived in Minneapolis and was being stored at Fourth Avenue and Lake Street. The remainder of the collection remained in New York at the Plaza Hotel, where the family maintained a sixteen-room suite and storage on another floor.

Architectural plans for the Minneapolis residence included a purpose-built gallery and, remarkably, an early air-conditioning system designed specifically to protect the paintings—making it one of the earliest known private homes engineered for art preservation.

Interior Installation of the Collection

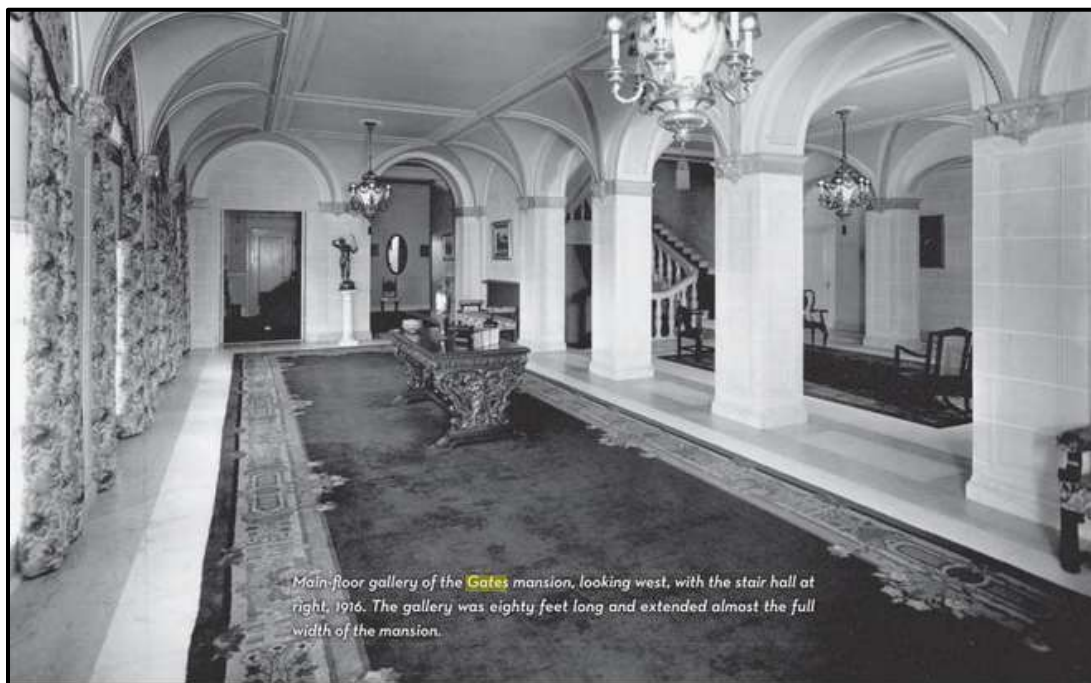


Figure 8-The main floor gallery of the Gates mansion, approximately eighty feet in length.



Figure 9-Main floor gallery looking east. The red carpet was said to extend approximately seventy feet.

These gallery views provide the clearest surviving evidence that the Gates collection had reached a scale requiring formal exhibition space. The length, symmetry, and presentation suggest a deliberate shift from domestic display toward curated installation.



Figure 10-Formal sitting room combining decorative arts and painting.

Beyond the formal gallery, artworks continued to be displayed throughout the residence. The salon and library demonstrate the continuation of salon-style hanging within a more refined and architecturally integrated environment.

Upstairs, the mansion included two master bedroom suites and six guest rooms, all finished with teak floors and marble baths. Contemporary accounts suggest that Charles intended the entire home—including private quarters—to be decorated with artwork.

The top-floor ballroom, measuring seventy-six by thirty-seven feet with a domed ceiling and parquet floors, further emphasizes the scale and ceremonial function of the residence.



Figure 11-Lake of the Isles mansion library with artwork and living area.

Interpretation

The Minneapolis mansion represents the culmination of the Gates art collection as an architectural and cultural statement.

Where the Chicago residence integrated art into domestic life, the Minneapolis mansion was designed to **house, preserve, and present the collection at scale**. The inclusion of a dedicated gallery and environmental controls mark a transition from private collecting to something approaching institutional ambition.

It is within this setting that the Gates collection came closest to becoming a public museum.

CHAPTER 2

Charles Gates' Death and the Unfulfilled Museum

In March 1913, the sudden death of Charles Gilbert Gates in Cody, Wyoming brought the future of the Gates art collection into immediate and public question. His passing occurred at a moment when the collection was already in transition—physically, geographically, and conceptually.

Funeral services were held in New York, where the family maintained its residence at the Plaza Hotel. Charles' body was placed temporarily in the family vault at Woodlawn Cemetery while a permanent mausoleum was under construction.

At the time of his death, the Gates art collection was divided between two locations. A portion had already been shipped to Minneapolis and was being held in storage at Fourth Avenue and Lake Street. The remainder remained in New York at the Plaza Hotel.

This division provides critical evidence of Charles Gates' intention: the relocation of the entire collection to Minneapolis.

Immediate Public Interest

Contemporary reporting from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reveals that public attention quickly centered on the disposition of the collection. The arrival of paintings in Minneapolis—though undisclosed in detail—confirmed that preparations for installation were already underway.

Storage officials refused to disclose the contents of the shipment, but their silence only heightened speculation regarding the importance of the works involved.

A Collection on the Brink of Becoming a Museum

Plans for the Lake of the Isles mansion included a dedicated gallery designed to house the collection. More significantly, the residence incorporated an early form of air-conditioning—an innovation later recognized as one of the first private efforts in the United States to preserve fine art through environmental control.

These features suggest that Charles Gates envisioned something beyond a private residence. The mansion was designed not only to display art, but to preserve it—an essential step toward institutional thinking.

Charles Gates' Stated Intent

A pivotal account comes from E. J. Carpenter, a director of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, who recalled a conversation with Charles Gates in California during the winter of 1912–1913.

According to Carpenter, Charles expressed a desire to donate the collection as a public memorial to his father.

Carpenter subsequently consulted Joseph Breck, assistant director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Breck confirmed the exceptional quality of the collection, describing it as containing “some works of the best masters” and emphasizing that it stood “far above the average private gallery.”

This independent assessment provides one of the strongest contemporary validations of the Gates collection’s significance.

The Museum Proposal

Following Charles’ death, directors of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts prepared to petition both Florence Hopwood Gates and Dellora Baker Gates regarding the future of the collection.

Two potential outcomes were considered:

- Installation of the collection within the Lake of the Isles mansion as a memorial
- Placement of the collection in the newly planned Minneapolis Art Museum

Carpenter ultimately favored the museum option, believing that the collection would serve a broader public purpose.

A Moment That Passed

Despite serious consideration and strong institutional support, the proposed donation never materialized.

The reasons remain unclear, but likely include:

- The suddenness of Charles’ death
- Uncertainty surrounding his estate
- The legal ownership of the collection by Dellora Gates
- The practical challenges of consolidating a geographically dispersed collection

The Historical Significance of 1913

The events of 1913 represent the closest moment in which the Gates art collection might have become a permanent public institution.

Had the donation occurred, the Gates collection would likely stand today alongside the great foundational collections of American museums.

Instead, the collection entered a different phase—one defined by private stewardship, selective loans, and gradual dispersal.

Interpretation

The death of Charles Gilbert Gates did not mark the disappearance of the collection, but rather its transformation.

What had been moving toward institutional permanence was redirected into a more complex path—one shaped by inheritance, personal decisions, and evolving relationships with public institutions.

This moment—poised between private ambition and public legacy—defines the central tension in the history of the Gates art collection.

CHAPTER 3

The Rembrandt Question

Among the most significant works associated with the Gates collection was a painting long identified as *St. Paul Seated at a Writing Table*, attributed during John Warne Gates' lifetime to Rembrandt. This painting occupied a central place within the collection and reflects both the ambition of Gates as a collector and the complexities of attribution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A Work of Importance

Contemporary accounts describe the painting as one of the most valuable works owned by Gates. Its provenance included passage through prominent European collections and major dealers, placing it within the highest tier of the international art market.

At the time of acquisition, the painting was widely regarded as an authentic work by Rembrandt.

Famous Gates Picture May Come Here

Among the famous paintings of the Charles D. Gates art collection, which may come to Minneapolis as the result of the death of the young millionaire, is one that has stirred the art world internationally for 20 years in bitter controversy. Famous to begin with as one of the greatest masterpieces of Rembrandt, it has come through discussion to be one of the best known paintings of the world.

It is entitled "St. Paul Seated at a Writing Table and Meditating." It has been assailed again and again as fraudulent, but has been so successfully defended that now it has the ascendancy among connoisseurs over its nearest rival, a painting of the same subject also reputed as Rembrandt's, hanging in the Imperial gallery at Vienna. Others, too, have been presented as the original but have disappeared before attack, leaving the battle between the Gates picture and the one at Vienna.

The picture was shuffled through many collections before it came into the possession of John W. Gates. He bought it from M. C. D. Borden of New York. Previously it was owned in England by the duke of Somerset, where it first came to notice as a rival of the Vienna picture. Then Agnew & Sons of London owned it in 1880; Sir Charles Robinson, London, in 1892; Charles Sedelmeyer, dealer, Paris, in 1894, and then to Mr. Borden. Mr. Gates bought it very soon after.

The Vienna picture has been in the Imperial collection since 1878 and has been questioned as a copy many times but never seriously earned by the Gates picture. The controversy has never been settled. Experts have lined up on both sides and break into words whenever the famous Rembrandt is mentioned.



Above—Rembrandt's "St. Paul Seated at a Writing Table and Meditating," one of the famous paintings of the Gates collection, which may come to Minneapolis. It has been assailed as a copy, but has authoritative defenders.

Below—The rival of the Gates picture, which hangs in the Imperial gallery at Vienna.

ferred at boarding houses as husband and wife, but his attorney in his argument laid stress on the claim that there had been no attempt on the part of the accused to use the girl for commercial purposes.

Judge Ross held that the defendant had violated the Mann act, as he construed it, if the jury believed beyond a doubt "that one of the purposes he had in mind when he brought this girl into the state of Maryland was to continue relations that had existed between them while together elsewhere. The character of the girl nor her past life are not to be considered in determining the question of the case."

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FROM October 31, 1913 MINNESOTA STAR TRIBUNE: FAMOUS GATES PICTURE MAY COME HERE

Transcription – Rembrandt’s “St. Paul Seated at a Writing Table and Meditating,” one of the famous paintings of the Gates collection, which may come to Minneapolis. It has been assailed as a copy, but has authoritative defenders.

Among the famous paintings of the Charles G. Gates art collection, which may come to Minneapolis as the result of the death of the young millionaire, is one that has stirred the art world intermittently for 20 years in bitter controversy. Famous to begin with as one of the greatest masterpieces of Rembrandt, it has come through discussion to be one of the best-known paintings of the world.

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Contemporary reporting from 1913 confirms that the painting was widely regarded as one of the most important works in the collection. At the time, it had already been the subject of international debate among scholars and collectors.

The painting’s provenance prior to Gates’ ownership was notable. It had passed through several prominent collections, including ownership by the Duke of Somerset in England, followed by sales through Agnew & Sons in London and Charles Sedelmeyer in Paris before being acquired by M. C. D. Borden of New York. Gates purchased the work shortly thereafter.

By the early twentieth century, the painting had become central to a long-standing controversy. It was frequently compared to a rival version held in the Imperial Gallery in Vienna, with experts divided over which represented the original work by Rembrandt.

Unlike lesser disputes, this debate attracted sustained scholarly attention. Advocates for the Gates painting argued that it demonstrated qualities consistent with Rembrandt’s early period, while critics suggested it was the work of a pupil or follower.

Later Reassessment

Subsequent scholarship has generally attributed the Gates painting to Govaert Flinck, a known student of Rembrandt.

This reassignment reflects evolving standards in connoisseurship rather than a dismissal of the painting's historical importance. Works once attributed to major masters were frequently reassessed in light of new research, technical analysis, and comparative study.

Significance to the Gates Collection

Regardless of attribution, the painting's documented history establishes several critical facts:

- It was acquired through major international dealers
- It circulated among elite European collections
- It was considered a work of exceptional importance at the time of purchase
- It was publicly identified as a Rembrandt during Gates' lifetime

The presence of such a work—whether original or attributed—confirms the level at which John Warne Gates was collecting.

Interpretation

The controversy surrounding *St. Paul Seated at a Writing Table* illustrates the broader character of the Gates collection.

It was not merely a collection of decorative works, but one that engaged directly with the highest levels of the international art market, including paintings subject to scholarly debate and attributional complexity.

In this sense, the painting stands as both an object of art historical inquiry and a reflection of Gates' ambition to assemble a collection of global significance.

Transition

The uncertainty surrounding attribution would become a defining feature of the collection's later history.

As works moved through institutions and private hands, identities shifted, records faded, and the collection itself became increasingly difficult to trace.

The next phase of its history would depend not on acquisition, but on stewardship.

CHAPTER 4

Florence Hopwood Gates and the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Loans, Gifts, and the Limits of Institutional Memory

Following the death of Charles Gilbert Gates in 1913, his widow, Florence Hopwood Gates, emerged as the principal intermediary between the Gates family collection and public institutions.

Contemporary newspapers, personal memoirs, and early museum publications indicate that she actively pursued the public exhibition—and in some cases donation—of works inherited from the Gates collection.

Florence's engagement with the Minneapolis Institute of Art occurred during a formative period in the museum's history, prior to the establishment of comprehensive accession systems and standardized collections management practices. As a result, much of the documentation generated during this period survives only in fragmentary form.

Early Exhibitions and Institutional Handling

The most securely documented example of Florence's institutional activity is the exhibition of *Moonlit Canal* by **Frits Thaulow** at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 1915.

Physical evidence preserved on the painting itself—including an early museum inventory label—confirms that the work was received, cataloged, and exhibited by the institution.

Despite this documentation, modern museum records do not retain a corresponding accession or loan file for the painting. This absence reflects the limitations of early twentieth-century recordkeeping rather than the absence of institutional involvement.

During this period, loans and exhibitions were frequently recorded in handwritten ledgers, temporary registers, or departmental files that were not systematically preserved.

The case of *Moonlit Canal* demonstrates that Florence placed works with the museum for public exhibition without necessarily transferring permanent ownership.



Moonlit Canal, Frits Thaulow

Donations and Memoir Evidence

Florence's later memoirs state that she donated "thirteen oil paintings and twenty-eight drawings" to the Minneapolis Institute of Art in the years following Charles Gates' death.

This claim is supported by contemporary reporting and by the appearance of Gates-associated works in early exhibition contexts.

However, corresponding accession records for the full group have not yet been identified. It remains unclear whether these works:

- Entered the collection under alternative donor attributions
- Were reclassified within museum departments
- Were transferred or deaccessioned
- Or were never formally accessioned despite exhibition

MIA records do reflect the donation of at least two works of **Frits Thaulow**, but lack further description or titles.

Such uncertainties are not unusual for gifts and loans made during the museum's early decades, when recordkeeping practices were inconsistent and evolving.

Loans Versus Permanent Gifts

The available evidence suggests that Florence employed a mixed strategy of institutional engagement.

Some works were placed with the museum on a temporary or experimental basis, while others were intended as permanent gifts. In certain cases, works appear to have circulated publicly before being returned to family ownership.

This pattern reflects a deliberate and cautious approach. Rather than dispersing the collection rapidly, Florence appears to have tested institutional relationships, evaluated curatorial response, and retained control over significant works.

Reassessing the Historical Record

The absence of complete modern documentation should not be interpreted as evidence that Florence's contributions were limited or informal.

On the contrary, surviving bulletins, object labels, family records, and memoir testimony collectively demonstrate sustained institutional engagement beginning as early as 1915.

The gaps in the archival record instead highlight the vulnerability of early museum documentation and the challenges inherent in reconstructing collecting histories from this period.

Interpretation

The absence of complete documentation should not be interpreted as absence of activity.

Rather, it reflects the limitations of early museum systems and underscores the importance of physical and contextual evidence in reconstructing the history of the collection.

Florence Hopwood Gates emerges as the first effective steward of the collection in its transition from private ownership to public visibility.

CHAPTER 5

The New Britain Connection and Portrait Rediscoveries

Misidentification, Deaccession, and the Recovery of Identity

As the Gates collection moved through successive generations, portions of it entered institutional collections beyond Minneapolis. Evidence now suggests that artworks associated with the family were also handled by the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut.

This connection is not fully documented in institutional records, but recent discoveries—both archival and physical—strongly indicate that Gates family portraits and related works circulated through the museum during the early twentieth century.

The Salomon Portrait — Misidentified and Sold

One of the first clues emerged through a 2007 auction listing for a portrait by Salomon J. Salomon.

The painting was described simply as:

“Portrait of a gentleman in a suit and tie,” signed and dated 1914.

The listing further noted that the work had been **deaccessioned from the New Britain Museum of American Art** and was sold with a modest estimate of \$75–\$125.



When compared with the widely circulated photographs of Charles Gilbert Gates on the left, the resemblance is striking. The composition, attire, and facial structure strongly suggest that the sitter is Charles Gates himself.

If correct, this represents a significant misidentification:

A documented Gates family portrait, removed from a museum collection and sold into the market as an unidentified subject.

Family Rediscovery — The Crated Portrait

The narrative took an extraordinary turn during the preparation of this manuscript.

Inspired by this research, John R. Collins—a fourth-generation descendant of the Gates family—searched through family holdings and made a remarkable discovery.

He located a portrait of Charles Gates, signed by Salomon, still preserved in its original shipping crate.



Dellora Baker Gates was apparently in the habit of commissioning more than one portrait when it came to the men in her family. This painting is currently on loan with the St. Charles History Museum, courtesy John R. Collins

The crate markings suggest that it may be the very container used to transport the painting from New York to Illinois in 1919, during the redistribution of the Gates estate.

This discovery provides rare physical confirmation of:

- The movement of artworks within the family
- The survival of original packing materials
- The continuity of ownership across generations

The painting is now on loan to the St. Charles History Museum.

The Koppay Portrait of John Warne Gates

A second major rediscovery emerged through genealogical research in 2026: a formal portrait of John Warne Gates attributed to József Árpád Koppay.

Koppay, a Central European portraitist of international reputation, was known for painting aristocrats, industrialists, and political figures. His documented presence in the United States during the early twentieth century aligns with the period in which Gates rose to prominence.

Physical Evidence — Museum Markings

Additional support for the New Britain connection comes from physical evidence found on artworks associated with the Gates family.

In at least one documented case, a painting attributed to József Árpád Koppay bears a stamp on its reverse indicating prior handling by the New Britain Museum of American Art.



The portrait depicts Gates in formal attire, wearing a fur overcoat and holding reading glasses—presenting him not only as an industrialist, but as a figure of intellectual authority.

Auction records indicate that the painting was sold in 2020 at a price significantly below estimate, then resold in 2021 at a substantial premium. Notably, the auction description references a **verso stamp from the New Britain Museum of American Art**, confirming prior institutional handling.

Interpretation

Taken together, these discoveries establish a clear pattern:

- Gates family artworks entered museum collections
- Some were later deaccessioned
- Attribution was occasionally lost or obscured
- Works re-emerged through auctions and private holdings

These findings reinforce a central conclusion of this study:

The Gates art collection was not lost—it was dispersed, misidentified, and redistributed.

Significance

The recovery of these portraits represents more than isolated discoveries. It demonstrates that:

- Important works from the collection remain in circulation
- Provenance can be reconstructed through careful comparison
- Family-held archives remain an essential source of evidence

These cases also highlight the role of private individuals—particularly descendants—in preserving and rediscovering cultural heritage that might otherwise remain unrecognized.

Conclusion

The New Britain connection, combined with the rediscovery of the Salomon and Koppay portraits, provides some of the strongest evidence to date that the Gates collection survives in fragmented but recoverable form.

Each recovered work not only restores a piece of the collection, but strengthens the broader argument that the Gates legacy remains present—waiting to be identified. Under Dellora Norris, a substantial portion of the collection entered the Art Institute of Chicago—where it would be preserved, documented, and ultimately dispersed on a much larger scale.

CHAPTER 6

Dellora A. Norris and the Art Institute of Chicago

Legacy, Stewardship, and Institutional Dispersal

Following the consolidation of the Gates art collection under Dellora Baker Gates and its subsequent transfer to her niece, Dellora Frances Angell—later known as Dellora A. Norris—the collection entered its most significant phase of institutional engagement.

Between 1923 and 1970, Dellora Norris facilitated the loan and eventual donation of a substantial group of European paintings, decorative arts, and textiles to the Art Institute of Chicago.

These works represent the largest verifiable institutional segment of the Gates collection and provide the strongest documented evidence of its scope, quality, and provenance.

The Angell Loan — 1923

Contemporary reporting confirms that seventeen paintings from the collection were placed on loan at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1923 under the name of Robert Francis Angell.

This exhibition introduced a broader public audience to works that had previously remained within private residences. The paintings included examples attributed to major European masters, reflecting the depth and ambition of the original Gates collection.

Descriptions from the period highlight works by:

- Rembrandt (attributed)
- Frans Hals
- Jan Steen
- Meissonier
- Albrecht Dürer
- Andrea Vaccaro
- Delacroix

These accounts confirm that the Gates collection was recognized not merely as extensive, but as exceptional.

From Loan to Gift

Many of the works placed on loan in 1923 remained associated with the Art Institute for decades. In 1970, a substantial portion of these works was formally accessioned as gifts from Dellora A. Norris.

This transition from private ownership to institutional collection represents the most complete transfer of Gates-associated works into a public museum.

The Art Institute's records preserve these works as part of its European painting collection, forming what can be understood as the core institutional legacy of the Gates collection.

The 2026 Institutional Revelation

In preparation for a family visit to the Art Institute of Chicago in 2026, museum representatives provided important clarification regarding the current status of the Norris gifts.

The institution confirmed that:

Many of the original works donated by Dellora Norris are no longer in the museum's collection.

Over time, these works were deaccessioned—sold in accordance with standard museum collection practices—and the proceeds were used to acquire other works.

While such practices are consistent with institutional policies, this revelation has significant implications for the reconstruction of the Gates collection.

Implications for the Gates Collection

This development helps explain a long-standing mystery: Why so few works from a collection of such documented importance remain visible in major institutions today.

The answer lies not in disappearance, but in transformation.

Works originally associated with the Gates collection:

- Entered institutional collections
- Were later deaccessioned
- Were dispersed through the art market
- And now reside in private collections or under new attributions

In this sense, the Gates collection was not preserved intact within a single institution—it was redistributed.

A Case Study in Dispersal

Several works documented within the Gates/Norris lineage have followed this trajectory.

Paintings such as those attributed to Meissonier and Jacquet were:

- Acquired by John Warne Gates through major dealers
- Passed through Dellora Baker Gates to Dellora Norris
- Placed on long-term loan at the Art Institute
- Formally donated
- And later sold at auction in the early twenty-first century

These cases provide clear, traceable examples of how the collection moved from private ownership to institutional care—and ultimately back into the market.

Reframing the Narrative

The role of the Art Institute of Chicago in the history of the Gates collection must therefore be understood in two phases:

Phase I — Preservation and Public Access

The museum served as a steward, preserving and exhibiting major works for several decades.

Phase II — Redistribution through Deaccession

Through sales and acquisitions, the museum transformed the composition of the collection, dispersing original works while integrating their value into new holdings.

Interpretation

Dellora Norris' actions ensured that a significant portion of the Gates collection entered the public sphere.

At the same time, institutional practices ensured that the collection would not remain fixed in place.

The result is a complex legacy:

A collection that was preserved, exhibited, and ultimately dispersed—its presence continuing in altered form across both public and private domains.

The Art Institute of Chicago represents both the greatest point of preservation and the greatest point of dispersal in the history of the Gates art collection.

Through the Norris gifts, the collection achieved its most substantial institutional presence. Through subsequent deaccession, it was redistributed into the broader art world.

This dual role is essential to understanding the true fate of the Gates collection—and reinforces the central conclusion of this study:

The collection was not lost. It was transformed.

CHAPTER 7

Plate Section — The Art Institute of Chicago Core

Works Associated with the Gates-Angell-Norris Collection

The following works represent the largest verifiable group of paintings associated with the Gates collection that entered institutional care through the stewardship of Dellora A. Norris.

Each of these works was either:

- Owned by John Warne Gates
- Transferred through Dellora Baker Gates
- Passed to Dellora Angell Norris
- Loaned to the Art Institute of Chicago (1923)
- And later accessioned (1970)

Several were subsequently deaccessioned and sold, reflecting the evolving nature of institutional collections.

St Charles Chronicle, August 9, 1923

Transcribed: R. F. Angell Collection at Art Institute

*As her friends here know, Dellora Angell Norris was left the famous art collection made over a period of years by Mr. and Mrs. John W. Gates, the later her aunt. Seventeen of this collection have been loaned to the Chicago Art Institute and known as the R. F. Angell Exhibit. **The daughter wished her father, R. F. Angell to have the collection as she is not especially interested in art.** The pictures are roughly estimated as worth a million dollars.*

*The Chicago papers and those of the suburbs have written much about this exhibit and the following is taken from **The Oak Parker**;*

*There are now on view at the **Art Institute** (and will be until September 4th) seventeen remarkable painting from the private collection of R. F. Angell of Chicago, secured for special exhibition at the institute during the summer months. When one may view many wonderful examples of the world's greatest masters, not before exhibited at the Institute. It is quite worthwhile to brave the heat of the summer and tarry a while to study and enjoy them. Many of these paintings were the pride of the late Charles T Yerkes, and were hung in his New York mansion. Yerkes passed in 1905.*

*There is a large canvas by **Jan Steen** (1826-1879) which represents what the title signifies "**Boors Merrymaking.**" Today we should call it a jazz party on a lark, and*

instead of horses there would be autos parked by the roadside. Otherwise, the scene would be much the same, for the appetites today are about what they were three hundred years ago. In Steen's canvas we see a large party gathered before a roadside inn, setting, drinking and making merry with music and dancing. It is the type of painting which the Dutch and English painters delighted to do in their day – rendering domestic scenes close at hand.

Hanging next to the Steen canvas is the famous painting by **Rembrandt**, the “**Resurrection of St. Lazarus.**” It is a small painting perhaps grown a shade darker with the passing of nearly three centuries, but it is still filled with that wonderful luminosity of color for which Rembrandt was famous. The beautiful quality of light which this great master introduced into his work is here shown reflected on the startled spectators, who stare in wide-eyed amazement at the sight of the shrouded figure of the dead Lazarus slowly rising from his bier. The figure and countenance of Lazarus are painted with remarkable skill. The commanding figure of Jesus with arm upraised, stands beside the grave, in semi-light. Evidently the artist's aim was to direct attention not so much to the personality of Jesus as to the supernatural act of his deed, and to accomplish this he threw into strong light the startled faces of the spectators.

There is still another **Rembrandt** in this collection – a much larger canvas entitled “**Meditation of St. Paul.**” The apostle is shown seated with a bound volume of vellum on a desk before him, while in his right hand he holds a quill. The eyes, lost in abstract thought, fully bear out the title of the painting.

The **Isack van Ostade** (1621-1649) canvas which hangs in the center of the south wall, is a magnificent example of this artist's best period, [titled: **Travelers Halting at an Inn**] It depicts a hunting scene where the hunters, with their dogs, have stopped for a moment before a comfortable inn. There is a feeling of fresh, clear atmosphere in this painting which is quite alluring to the lovers of the out-of-doors.

On the west wall there is a rare Durer – **Albrecht Durer** – better known to us perhaps through his etchings. It is a painting of “**Adam and Eve**” in the garden of Eden. Eve holds the apple in her hand and the serpent with the head of a human being, is seen whispering in her ear. In the background are many other human figures and many animals, all dwelling peace. The far horizon of the garden is guarded by a massive wall of rock, thrust up from the ground as though through violence. The coloring seven of these forbidding rock formations is delightful.

In this collection there are two small portraits by **Fran Hals** (1584-1665) which are sure to attract much attention. **One is a boy [playing a violin] and the other is**

a little girl singing. So modern appears the technique of Hals in these fine living portraits that one is led to believe he might be looking at the work of a master today.

From Loan to Gift

Many of these works remained associated with the Art Institute for decades before being formally accessioned as gifts from Dellora Norris in 1970.

This transition marked the most complete transfer of Gates-associated works into a public institution.

Plate Section — Art Institute Works

Gates–Norris Collection (Selected Works)

The following plates represent works documented within the Gates–Norris lineage and associated with the Art Institute of Chicago.



Plate 1 – Albrecht Durer; *Adam and Eve*”



Plate 2 – Franz Hals -*Boy Playing a Violin* (1625-1630)



Plate 3 – Franz Hals – *Girl Singing* (1625)



Plate 4 — Gustave Jean Jacquet, *La Bienvenue*

One of the most fully documented works from the Gates collection. Exhibited at the Paris Salon (1892) and later sold through the Brandus Gallery before acquisition by Gates.



Plate 5 — Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier, *L'Aumone*

Gates purchased Meissonier's "**L'Aumone**," at the Hilton sale in 1900 (NYTimes.com), and research divulged the following provenance at auction. This piece had been on loan to the Art Institute of Chicago since 1923, was formally gifted to the museum in 1970, and later sold at auction in 2007 for approximately \$600,000.



Plate 6 — Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Nymphs Leaving the Bath*
Represents Gates' engagement with Barbizon school painting and his acquisition of major European works.



Plate 7 — Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña, *Education of Cupid*



Plate 8 — Andrea Vaccaro, *The Lamentation*



Plate 9 – Van Rijn – *The Raising of Lazarus* (1630)

The Raising of Lazarus is an oil-on-panel painting previously credited to the Dutch artist Rembrandt, from early in his career; it was probably painted between 1630 and 1632. The work depicts the Raising of Lazarus as told in the Gospel of John, Chapter 11. Van Rijn was a follower of Rembrandt.



Plate 10 — **Attributed to Govaert Flinck, *Saint Paul the Apostle***

Formerly attributed to Rembrandt, this work reflects the evolving scholarship surrounding the collection. Despite the provenance stated in 1913, apparently the debate was settled sometime over the next century, with the Vienna picture recognized as the original and the Gates' picture declared a copy by **Govaert Flinck**, a Dutch artist of the 17th Century.



**Plate 11 — Attributed to Augustus Cordus, *The Fall of Man with Scenes of the Creation*
(1544-1553)**



Plate 12 — Pierre Andrieu, *The Lion Hunt* (1881-1892)



Plate 12 — **Attributed to Francisque Millet, *Classical Landscape
With Two Women and a Man on a Path***



Plate 13 — Style of Isaac van Ostade, *Travelers Halting at an Inn*



Plate 14 Unknown artist from United States (1875-1880)

Wool, cotton, and silk, plain, twill, and satin weaves; some with supplementary pile warps forming cut solid velvet; some self-patterned; some warp dyed; and some printed; pieced; backed with wool, plain weave; printed; cotton batting (87 1/2 x 69 in.)

The following works are representative of how the Norris Fund at the Art Institute continued to support through new acquisitions.



Plate 15 — Ludwig Richter, *The Fountain at Grottaferrata* (1832)

Through prior gift of Mrs. Henry C. Woods; **through prior gift of Dellora A. Norris**; Lacy Armour Fund; through prior gift of Henry Morgen, Ann G. Morgen, Meyer Wasser and Ruth G. Wasser; Louise and Frank Woods Purchase Fund in honor of Mrs. Edward Harris Brewer (2011.123)



Plate 16 — Louis Anquetin, *A Woman at the Élysée Montmartre*



Plate 16 — Paul Gauguin, *Vase in the Form of a Tropical Plant with Bird and Deity*



Plate 17 — William Powell Frith, *The Lovers* (1855)



Plate 18 — Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Army*

Interpretation

Taken together, these works confirm that the Gates collection operated at the highest level of the international art market. Their documented movement—from private acquisition to institutional loan, to accession, and in some cases to deaccession—provides the clearest traceable pathway of the collection's transformation.

This group forms the most concrete foundation for reconstructing the Gates art collection and demonstrates that its legacy continues across both public institutions and private ownership.

CHAPTER 8

Private Collections, Public Display, and the Survival of the Gates Collection

Baker Hotel, Arcada Theater, and the Norris Family Holdings

Following the period of institutional engagement in Chicago, significant portions of the Gates collection remained in private hands—most notably within the Norris family.

Rather than disappearing from view, many of these works continued to be displayed publicly in St. Charles, Illinois, particularly through the influence of Dellora A. Norris and her descendants.

The Baker Hotel Installation — 1928

The installation of paintings from the Gates–Norris collection in the Baker Hotel is documented through contemporary coverage in the *St. Charles Chronicle* and related local sources.

These accounts describe the placement of paintings throughout the hotel’s public spaces following its opening in 1928, establishing the building as a semi-public gallery environment.



This current lobby view is representative of the venue to display art. The stairs on the right lead to the former “Trophy Room” where much of the collection was on display while the second-floor Mezzanine level provided another gallery.

Newspaper accounts and surviving documentation identify several works included in this display, this is a partial list of works transcribed from the St. Charles Chronicle, May 1928:

- “**Wayside Prey**” Bohdan von Kleczyński
- “**Psycho**” Henry O. Walker
- “**Still Life No. 29**” Henry R Rittenger
- “**Gossip at the Fountain**” Alonzo Parag
- “**Venice**” Henry Pember Smith
- “**Portrait**” Abbey Attam
- “**New England Farm House**” Henry Pember Smith
- “**In the Garden**” Filippo Indoni
- “**An Arabian Courtyard**” O. Herreros
- “**A Cavalier**” by Alexis D’Ambrossi

The Baker Hotel installation demonstrates that the collection continued to function as a curated body of work, even outside formal museum settings.

Evidence suggests that many of these artworks remained in place within the Baker Hotel for decades.

Local recollections describe visitors attending social functions and passing through public spaces where paintings were prominently displayed, often without awareness of their origin or significance. These accounts indicate that the artworks became an embedded part of the hotel’s interior environment.

Given their integration into the building’s identity and design, it is likely that a portion of the collection remained in situ rather than being returned to storage or redistributed immediately following installation.

Transfer of Ownership and Dispersal

Following the death of Colonel Edward J. Baker in 1959, ownership of the Baker Hotel passed through his estate to his niece, Dellora A. Norris.

Norris continued to operate the hotel until 1970, at which time she transferred ownership of the building to Lutheran Social Services of Illinois.

In the years that followed, the building entered a period of decline. The financial burden of maintaining the structure led to **the gradual sale of furnishings and artwork** associated with the hotel. These sales occurred prior to the eventual disposition of the building itself through a sealed bid process.

Interpretation

The history of the Baker Hotel provides an important lens through which to understand the dispersal of the Gates collection.

Rather than being formally deaccessioned through a single institutional process, portions of the collection appear to have been gradually redistributed through private sales tied to the changing function and ownership of the building.

This pathway—distinct from museum deaccession—represents a parallel mechanism through which works from the Gates collection entered the broader art market.

Conclusion

The Baker Hotel installation stands as both a moment of preservation and a point of transition.

It preserved the visibility of the collection for several decades, while simultaneously creating the conditions under which artworks could later be dispersed through private sale.

In this way, the hotel serves as a critical link between the Gates collection's private origins and its eventual fragmentation across public and private domains.



New England Homestead-Henry P Smith



Portrait of a Cavalier – D'Ambrossi

These references confirm that the works were not incidental decoration, but part of a recognized and curated group associated with the Gates collection.

Continuity Within the Hotel

Additional context is provided through local recollections and later historical references, which describe paintings remaining in place within the Baker Hotel for decades.

Visitors attending social events frequently encountered these works, though their origin within the Gates collection was not widely understood.

The long-term presence of these paintings suggests that they became integrated into the identity of the building itself, rather than being treated as movable assets.

The Arcada Theater — 1931 Exhibition

A second documented public display of Gates–Norris works occurred in 1931 at the Arcada Theater in St. Charles.

This exhibition is likewise supported by local reporting, including coverage in the *St. Charles Chronicle*, which identifies specific works shown in the theater setting.



A more recent partial view of the Arcada Theater spacious lobby which extended about a half-city block to the actual theater.

This exhibition included notable works such as:

- **“Peace and Plenty” Rudolf Epp**
- **“Planning the Campaign” Charlemont**
- **“The Artist’s Model” Vautier**
- **“Self Confidence” Defregger**
- **“The Hunter’s Tale” Max Gaiser**
- **“Contentment” Henri Burkel**
- **“Begging Alms” Meissonier**

These works remain identifiable within the Gates–Norris lineage and provide further evidence of continuity.

CHAPTER 9

Private Retention — The Norris Family Collection

While selected works entered public view, a substantial portion of the collection remained within the Norris family.

These works were preserved across generations and continue to represent one of the most important surviving segments of the Gates collection.



Seignac - Naughty Child



Rudolf Epp - *Peace and Plenty*



Max Gaiser – *The Hunter's Tale*



Signed Ch Jacques – *unknown title*



John Bond Francisco – *Portrait in Munchen* – 1890



Franz Defregger – *Self Confidence* - 1896



Labeled Seignac



Signed A. Asti

Angelo Asti, 1847-1903



Signed 'Fry' in lower right

Possible Roger Fry – Post-Impressionist

FAMILY HELD PORTRAITS

Charles Gilbert Gates-artist not identified

Currently on display at the Baker Community Building, St. Charles



Charles G. Gates

**WE ARE AWARE OF OTHER WORKS IN THE HANDS OF NORRIS HEIRS AND
THIS LIST WILL BE UPDATED AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.**



John Warne Gates by Soloman J. Soloman

Previously displayed at the Baker Community Building until about 1970

Current location unknown!

These paintings confirm that:

- The collection was never fully dispersed
 - Key works remained in continuous family ownership
 - The artistic range of the collection extended across multiple European schools
-

Documentary Evidence — The 1949 Wedding Photographs

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence for the survival of the collection comes from a 1949 Norris family wedding album.



These photographs clearly show multiple paintings displayed within the Norris residence, many of which correspond stylistically and compositionally to known works associated with the Gates collection.

This visual documentation provides rare confirmation that the collection remained actively displayed in a domestic setting decades after its initial formation.

ST. CHARLES PUBLIC LIBRARY HOLDINGS

In addition to paintings, several sculptural works from the Gates collection have survived and remain identifiable today. We know that Dellora Norris donated at least one oil painting and three sculptures to the St. Charles Public Library.

Rather than allowing the collection to continue dissolving quietly, she had begun the process of formal donation, placing works into public institutions where:

- Provenance would be recorded
- Attribution could evolve
- Conservation would be guaranteed
- The Gates/Angell/Norris legacy would endure



Arthur John Eisley – *I Sent a Letter to My Love* - 1902

Three bronze sculptures from the former Gates collection are currently held by the St. Charles Public Library. All are displayed with plaques noting their status as "On permanent loan from the Dellora Norris Estate." These works represent rare surviving examples of the sculptural portion of the collection. It is not known if the 1928 Baker Hotel art display may have included these pieces.



Le Génie de la Danse avec L'Amour à la Folie (Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, 1875) *Genius of the Dance*



Mathurin Moreau, *Winged Victory*



Signoret-Ledieu - *Nympe de Diane* - 1878

These works are currently held by the St. Charles Public Library on loan from the Norris estate.

Their survival provides an important physical link between the original Gates residences and the present day.

The Protector — A Continuous Presence

Among the most significant surviving objects is the bronze sculpture *The Protector* by H. Peyrol.



H. Peyrol – *The Protector*

Originally installed at the entrance to the Gates Chicago mansion, the sculpture was later relocated to the Norris residence, where it remains.

Few objects can be traced so directly across the full arc of the collection's history—from Gates ownership to present-day survival.

Interpretation

The Baker Hotel and Arcada Theater installations, combined with the Norris family holdings and documentary photographs, demonstrate that the Gates collection did not vanish following its dispersal.

Instead, it continued to exist in multiple forms:

- As public display
 - As private inheritance
 - As institutional holdings
 - As rediscovered works
-

CHAPTER 10

Tracing the Sculptural Legacy of John Warne Gates

From Port Arthur to Woodlawn to the McKinley Memorial

The investigation into the sculptural legacy of John Warne Gates began not within the mausoleum itself, but in Port Arthur, Texas.

Early research into monuments associated with Gates led to the identification of sculptural works in Port Arthur, Texas, a city closely tied to his industrial success with Texaco. These works established an initial framework: Gates had been memorialized not only through architecture and philanthropy, but through figurative sculpture.



**Gates Memorial Library, Port Arthur, Texas
Artist – Douglas Clark (2005)**

This realization prompted a broader inquiry into additional sculptural representations of Gates.

The Gates Mausoleum — Woodlawn Cemetery

While conducting an internet search on the combined subjects of Gates and Bronze Sculptures there was a discovery about the beautiful door guarding the entrance to the Gates Mausoleum.

The next stage of research led to Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York, where the Gates family mausoleum stands as one of the most architecturally significant private memorials of the early twentieth century.



In a 1932 article in American Landscape Architect, the mausoleum is illustrated as the “most impressive in Woodlawn. Text and photo © Douglas Keister “The massive Gates mausoleum is executed in a Classical Revival style with two fluted Ionic columns on the front and sides with a plain entablature and slightly gabled pediment. The mausoleum features a door crafted by Robert Aitken in 1914 depicting a mourning woman draped in cloth.”

“Inside, the mausoleum features two male portrait busts in marble, a combination altar and sarcophagus, a stone table and two stone chairs. The mausoleum’s interior is crafted largely in pink granite. Centermost is a dark-hued stained-glass window.”



A 2016 condition report for the mausoleum identified the bronze entrance doors as the work of **Robert Ingersoll Aitken**, completed in 1914. Aitken's most well-known works are the nine sculptures that adorn the pediment on the **Supreme Court Building** in the U.S. Capital in Washington D.C.

At this stage, the investigation remained focused on the mausoleum as an isolated commission.

Smithsonian Reference — Aitken and the Gates Bust

The research took a significant turn with the discovery of a reference within **Smithsonian** records indicating that **Aitken** had also produced a sculptural bust of John Warne Gates.

This bust was associated not with the mausoleum, but with the **National McKinley Birthplace Memorial** in Niles, Ohio.



The McKinley Birthplace Memorial is home to 40 bronze busts of notable industrialists and politicians who interacted with President McKinley.

John W. Gates, industrialist, had donated \$50k to McKinley's 1896 Presidential Bid and interacted with the museum's founder, Joseph G. Butler, Jr. who had been an industrialist in the Ohio steel business.

Butler had been a childhood friend and schoolmate of McKinley, and had warned McKinley "to be careful out there" the day before his assassination.



Aitken Bust of Gates flanked by images of McKinley

“A SUCCESSFUL AND PROGRESSIVE PIONEER STEEL MAKER ENDOWED WITH INITIATIVE AORESIGHT AND ENERGY”

This finding expanded the scope of inquiry considerably. It established that Gates had been commemorated not only in a private funerary context, but also within a national memorial program alongside major figures of American industry and politics.

The McKinley Memorial — A Broader Context

Further research into the McKinley Memorial revealed a large-scale sculptural program with the principal sculptor for this program was John Massey Rhind, who was responsible for producing 37 of the busts as well as the central statue of McKinley. Only 3 busts were provided by others, noting that Aitken’s authorship of the Gates bust confirmed his working within a coordinated artistic framework.

Convergence of Artists

At this point, the investigation revealed an important overlap; the Woodlawn Cemetery has confirmed the sculptor of the marble busts in the Gates Mausoleum to be the work of Rhind.

- **Aitken** — sculptor of the Gates Mausoleum bronze doors and a Gates bust at the McKinley Memorial
- **Rhind** — principal sculptor of the McKinley Memorial and, as now identified, the sculptor of the marble Gates busts within the mausoleum



Gates Mausoleum interior, 2016 Woodlawn photograph, marble busts by Rhind

John Warne Gates on the left, Charles Gilbert Gates, right

This convergence demonstrates that the same group of sculptors—working within the same time frame—were engaged in both private and public commemorative projects connected to John Warne Gates.

Interpretation

What began as a localized inquiry into individual monuments evolved into the identification of a broader artistic network.

The Gates Mausoleum and the McKinley Memorial are now understood not as separate commemorative efforts, but as interconnected works produced within a shared cultural and artistic context.

Through the combined contributions of Aitken and Rhind, Gates was memorialized in two distinct but related forms:

- As a private individual, through the mausoleum
- As a national figure, through the McKinley Memorial

The tracing of Gates' sculptural legacy—from Port Arthur to Woodlawn to Niles—reveals a coherent narrative of commemoration that extends beyond any single site.

It demonstrates how the memory of John Warne Gates was constructed through a network of artists, institutions, and memorial projects, each contributing to a lasting visual record of his life and influence.

This progression—from local monument to national memorial—mirrors the broader arc of Gates' own career, and reinforces his place among the defining industrial figures of his time.

Transition

This sculptural legacy leads to a final and deeply personal site of preservation—one that brings the story back to St. Charles and to the family itself.

CHAPTER 11

The Final Sanctuary

The Norris Mausoleum and the Preservation of the Gates Legacy

The investigation into the Gates Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery—its architecture, sculpture, and artistic authorship—ultimately leads to a second, more personal site of commemoration.

In St. Charles, Illinois, the mausoleum of Lester and Dellora Norris presents a continuation of the same artistic language: marble construction, bronze door work, and a carefully composed interior space.



Norris Mausoleum exterior bronze door
"The Tree of Life"

At first glance, the structure reflects the same sensibilities seen in the Gates Mausoleum—order, symmetry, and permanence. The presence of a bronze door further reinforces a continuity of design, suggesting that Dellora carried forward not only the memory of John Warne Gates, but also the aesthetic vocabulary of his memorial.

Yet it is within the interior that the true significance of this mausoleum is revealed.



Positioned at the center of the space is a marble sculpture of exceptional quality, illuminated by filtered light through stained glass. The placement is deliberate, transforming the mausoleum from a place of burial into a space of artistic focus and reflection.



The sculpture has been identified as the work of **Cesare Lapini** (1848–1900), a recognized Italian sculptor known for his finely executed allegorical and classical figures.

Unlike many works from the Gates collection that passed through institutions, auctions, and private sales, this sculpture appears to have been retained intentionally.

A Deliberate Act of Preservation

The presence of the Lapini sculpture within the Norris mausoleum suggests more than inheritance—it suggests selection.

Dellora A. Norris, as the inheritor and steward of the Gates collection, had access to a wide range of artworks accumulated over decades. The decision to place this particular work within her final resting place reflects a deeply personal act of preservation.

Rather than allowing the entirety of the collection to disperse, she chose to retain at least one work as part of her own memorial.

In doing so, she removed it from the cycles of exhibition, sale, and reattribution that affected so many other works associated with the collection.

The Mausoleum as Museum

In this context, the Norris mausoleum can be understood as a final transformation of the Gates collection.

- The Chicago mansion presented the collection as lived experience
- The Minneapolis mansion approached the concept of a private museum
- The Baker Hotel and Arcada Theater brought the collection into public view
- The Art Institute of Chicago preserved and later dispersed portions of the collection

The Norris mausoleum represents a final stage:

👉 **The collection as permanent, personal preservation**

Interpretation

The inclusion of the Lapini sculpture establishes a direct and unbroken link between the original Gates collection and its final point of continuity.

While many works were redistributed across institutions and private collections, this sculpture remained fixed—protected within a space designed for permanence.

It stands not only as a work of art, but as a statement.

A statement that part of the collection would endure beyond market forces, beyond institutional change, and beyond historical uncertainty.

Epilogue — A Return to St. Charles

On May 17, 2026, a newly commissioned memorial bust of John Warne Gates will be dedicated at the St. Charles History Museum.

The setting is fitting in ways that reach beyond coincidence. The museum itself occupies a building once known to locals as Bentz Texaco service station—later restored and repurposed in 1999 to serve as a home for the preservation of local history.

It is here, in this familiar place, that the story comes full circle.

For years, the legacy of John Warne Gates existed in fragments—his art collection dispersed, his contributions largely unrecognized within the very community that benefited from his success. Through this work, that history has been traced, reconstructed, and, in part, restored.

Now, with the installation of this memorial bust, Gates returns—physically and symbolically—to St. Charles.

Not as a distant industrial figure, but as a man whose vision helped shape industries, communities, and lives. Among those achievements was his role in the founding of the Texas Oil Company, a venture that would grow into one of the most influential enterprises of its time.



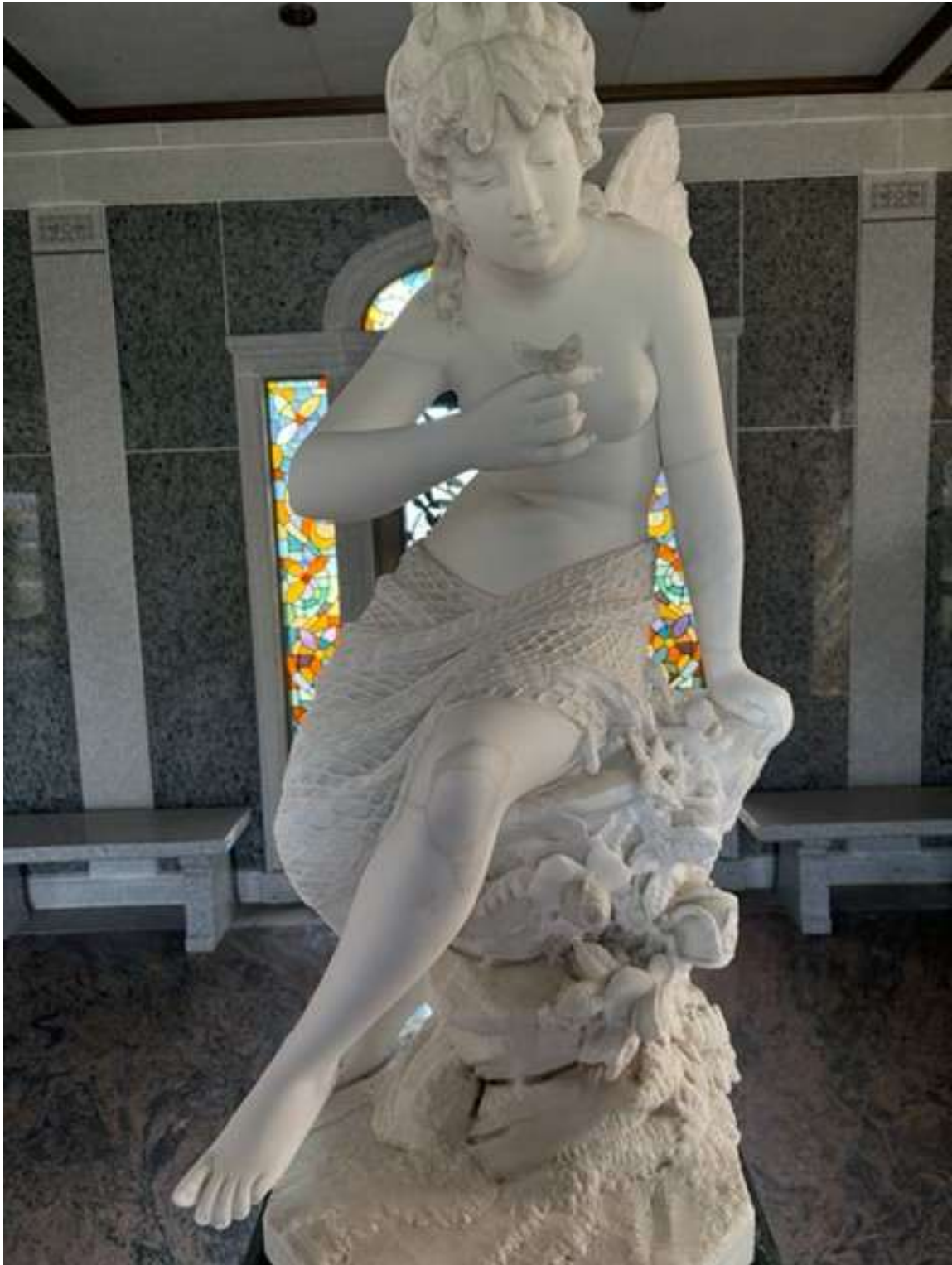
2026 Gates Memorial Bust, artist Lori Betz

This dedication represents more than recognition. It is an act of remembrance—one that reconnects the past to the present, and restores Gates to the narrative of the city he helped influence.

For me, it is also a return to a place long considered a home away from home.

And in that return, the work finds its conclusion.

**The story began with a search for a lost collection.
It ends with the restoration of a legacy.**



A quiet significance in the butterfly resting on her finger.