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REPORT ON CONTINUED OPERATION

OF THE

ALLIS ART LIBRARY

Submitted by
The Allis Art Library
Study Committee

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REPORT ON THE CONTINUED OPERATION
OF THE
CHARLES ALLIS ART LIBRARY

I. INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the mandate given to the Allis Art Library Study Committee on the continued operation of this institution¹, we now submit our report to the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee. In the course of our study we have met regularly, conducted a public hearing, toured the building, reviewed the collection, discussed with many citizens the future of the Allis, and received and studied many communications from interested parties.

Citizen interest in the continued operation of the Allis is apparent. A purported move to close the Allis in 1976 brought petitions signed by 5,000 concerned persons. This interest was reaffirmed by the number of citizen communications received by this Committee, and by the approximately 200 people who attended the September 15, 1977 public hearing.

Its present status prevents the Allis from reaching its full potential. It is disturbing to us that the Library Board of Trustees has never established a committee whose sole responsibility would be the operation of the Allis. A year ago, the Allis was assigned one of the top priorities for elimination from the Library budget. Some claim that, because the Allis is an art museum, it does not belong in the Library system. This is regrettable; many of America's foremost libraries, including Milwaukee's, have extensive art collections. There are many art programs and exhibits sponsored by the Milwaukee Public Library, but the Allis seems to be viewed as a "stepchild".

The City Librarian reports both a steady decrease in staffing for neighborhood libraries and other library services, and a set of priorities mandated by the Common Council, either of which might occasion future cuts in services. The Allis, of course, would become subject to these measures.

The Allis Art Library has evolved from an art reference collection and a children's library, to a museum—community center. If the Allis is to remain under the Library Board, a policy decision affirming its unique character is essential.

The Committee believes that the City of Milwaukee, having accepted this gift from Charles and Sarah Allis, has a moral obligation to maintain it. A separate board of trustees for an institution of this kind is the rule, not the exception, and the Committee believes that the Allis should be served by its own board.

We also suggest the immediate organization of a group of friends and supporters of the Allis who would raise funds from individuals, businesses, and foundations.

A more realistic fee schedule for groups using the Allis should be developed. This could be waived for deserving groups or beginning organizations. We doubt that individual admission fees would be appropriate, in view of the City of Milwaukee's tradition of free access to public facilities. Many low income persons, who presently use the facility might find it difficult to visit the Allis if admission fees were charged. This would also clearly violate the intention of Charles and Sarah Allis in presenting their home and collection to the people of the City of Milwaukee.²

II. CHARLES AND SARAH ALLIS

Charles Allis was an industrialist, philanthropist, civic leader, social reformer and art collector--a man of the highest order in each of these pursuits. His family, particularly his father Edward P. Allis, was among the founders of the City of Milwaukee.

Charles Allis' life began in Milwaukee on May 4, 1853, and ended here while he was County Chairman of Civil Defense, on July 22, 1918. He was considered the man best able to conciliate the various local factions divided by U. S. entry into World War I.

Charles Allis, as an industrialist, foresaw that major industries would and should be seeking national and international markets. In 1901, when he became first president of the newly reorganized Allis Chalmers Company, it was a conglomerate consisting of the original Edward P. Allis Company; the Fraser and Chalmers Company of Chicago, specialists in mining and metallurgical machinery, pumps, and air compressors; the Gates Iron Works of Chicago, manufacturers of rock-crushing, cement, and mining machinery; and the Dickson Manufacturing Company of Scranton, Pa., producers of Corliss Engines and special machinery. Bayrd Still, in his History of Milwaukee wrote:

"In 1905 the Allis-Chalmers Company built the first 'Manhattan Type' Angle Compound Corliss engine, one of 24 units ultimately produced for the New York subway system. The ability of the Western city so to supply the nation's great Atlantic metropolis might be said to mark the coming of age of Milwaukee's industrial economy."

Charles Allis, as an art collector, was a pioneer in collecting fine Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Near Eastern objects of art. Some of his acquisitions are extremely rare and all are first rate. The collection also includes 19th-Century French and American paintings, French bronzes, Renaissance Italian and Dutch bronzes and majolica, 18th-Century French and American furniture, and a fine miscellany of Russian, English, and Viennese objects, as well as antiquities from Greece, Rome, Etruria, Syria, and Phoenicia.

He built the mansion at the corner of North Prospect Avenue and East Royall Place in 1909, especially to house his collections, and with the intent of bequeathing it to his fellow Milwaukeeans. He spent 30 years in amassing and refining his collections and developed faultless taste in judging art.

Charles Allis, as a philanthropist, worked with his mother, Margaret Watson, in developing and supporting for many years the Margaret Allis House on Milwaukee's near South Side where immigrants were helped to adjust to life in a new world. The Allis' also subsidized and helped maintain a camp at Lake Beulah where poor families might vacation at minimal cost. He, his father, and brothers were known as benevolent employers. The Allis Mutual Aid Society matched every dollar saved by employees.

Charles Allis, as a civic leader, was Civil Defense Director during World War I, and his doctors considered that the stresses of that difficult job hastened his death. He was first president of the Milwaukee Art Association, which became the Milwaukee Art Institute, and is now the Milwaukee Art Center. He served on the boards of many important industrial and commercial firms in Milwaukee and other cities.

Charles's widow, Sarah Ball Allis, died in 1945 and willed their mansion and its treasures to the City of Milwaukee. She explained in her testament that her husband wished "our fellow citizens of Milwaukee, the City of his birth and where we spent our lives, to have the benefit of his collection..." and that he "...evolved the plan of bequeathing this collection, with our home and an endowment fund providing for its care and upkeep."²

III. THE HOUSE

The application for the permit to build 1630 East Royall Place is dated February 1, 1909. It identifies the architect as Alexander Chadbourne Eschweiler. Born in Boston, educated at Marquette College and Cornell University, Eschweiler

established his practice in Milwaukee in 1890 and soon became a leading figure on the local architectural scene. During the course of a long and distinguished career, he designed such noteworthy--and disparate--buildings as the Milwaukee-Downer College and Seminary complex on East Hartford Avenue (1890's and later); Elizabeth Black House on North Prospect Avenue (1901); Clement Smith House on North Terrace Avenue (1903); the prototype for the Wadhams Oil Company filling stations (1916); the Wisconsin Telephone Company's headquarters on North Fifth (1905) and North Broadway (1916-30); and the Wisconsin Gas Company's office building on East Wisconsin Avenue (1929-30).

For Charles and Sarah Allis, he planned a spacious, two-and-one-half story residence inspired by English prototypes. (The original drawings survive and are preserved in the Milwaukee Architectural Archives at the Central Library.) Writing in Milwaukee Landmarks, Richard W. E. Perrin calls the home one of Eschweiler's "finest earlier houses" and describes it as follows:

"The exterior of the Allis House is predominantly a mauve-colored Ohio brick, trimmed with Lake Superior sandstone of similar color, and interestingly carved in strategic spots. The interiors are quite lavishly done including such features as Circassian walnut woodwork in the Living Room, embossed and polychromed leather wainscotting in some of the rooms and a very extensive use of fine marbles throughout the house including matched panels in floors and walls of such marbles as Florido Cream, Tavernelle Clair, and Hauteville Fleuri. In the dining room the architect chose Numidian Breche Sanguine marble for the bolection molding and hearth of the fireplace and carried out the wood paneling of this room in crotch-mahogany complimented by tooled leather above the paneling and silver leaf applied to the ceiling panels between the beams."

In recognition of its architectural and historical importance and the significance of the Allis art collection, the building was designated as an

official Milwaukee Landmark in 1972. In 1973 it was photographed for Historic American Buildings Survey archives in the Library of Congress and two years later was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.³

Now almost seventy years old, the Allis House remains structurally sound, and, generally speaking, is in good condition. The exterior has undergone no important alterations over the years, and, fortunately, the same can be said of the principal interiors--foyer, stairhall, library, living room, dining room, and basement-level game room. The attached garage has been remodeled for use as a meeting room; the original grounds were enlarged by the addition of the adjacent lot to the north, which was purchased by the City in 1947.⁴ Both grounds and building have been well maintained, though recent studies have shown that on exterior and interior, the Allis is in need of some exterior and interior repair and renovation.⁵ A portion of the exterior work, most notably tuckpointing, will be carried out in the months ahead, in a project partially financed by a matching-fund grant from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin under the National Register program.

Security in the house is minimal at this time. There is a need for a peripheral and exterior security system to protect both the house and its contents.

IV. THE COLLECTION

The Charles Allis Art Collections (there are a number of groupings as may be seen in the listing below) include more than 800 items gathered from around the world. All are of museum quality and would be valued as such anywhere in the civilized world. Many pieces, especially the oriental porcelains of the quality collected by Charles Allis, are irreplaceable. It should be noted that China has recently forbidden the export of any of its treasures made before 1895.

In the collection, briefly summarized, are:

Chinese porcelains of all the major dynasties, from the Han through the

Tang, Sung, Ming, and Ching--covering 2,100 years of Chinese ceramic art; also, rare bronzes and carved jades, amber, coral, sapphire quartz, crystal, garnet, and East Indian agate.

Antiquities, including examples of Greek, Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian sculpture and pottery (these have been on loan to the Milwaukee Public Museum since 1966); the several exquisite Persian pieces are on display in the Allis.

Korean ceramics and porcelains of the Middle Ages, including several which Asian art experts have remarked are among the finest in the world.

Japanese porcelains and ceramics, carved ivories, lacquerware, bronzes, and ironware inlaid with gold, all antique; among the rarities, although not the most valuable item, is an intricately cast bronze eagle which the Japanese government had cast to commemorate U. S. participation in its World Fair of 1883.

French 19th-Century bronzes and paintings by such leading artists as Barye, Corot, Rousseau, Daubigny, and others (which were much admired by Jean-Loup Bourget, the French Cultural Attaché here, along with the American paintings of the same period, in which he is a specialist); 18th-Century French furniture of the reigns of Louis XIV, XV and XVI; also French clocks of Napoleon's Empire period, crystal hand holders, and a plaster death mask of Napoleon made from the original.

American paintings of the 19th Century by George Inness, Ralph Blakelock and Winslow Homer, to name a selection; American furniture of the same period.

Italian Renaissance miniature sculptures, in the classic mode, by contemporaries of Michelangelo; small bronzes of such quality were rare in that period and are even less accessible to collectors today; also items of Italian Renaissance majolica, including a plate by Master Giorgio of Gubbio, pre-eminent in his field.

Oriental rugs, including one of silk, gold, and silver threads that once adorned the palace of a sultan of Turkey, which has been admired by Near Eastern scholars who have visited here.

Original etchings and engravings, including Rembrandt's etching, "Three Trees", and Dürer's engraving, "Adam and Eve", which are among the greatest prints in the world; and additional works by Rembrandt, Dürer, the great American artist Whistler, the French Meryon, and several others.

Miscellaneous objects, including Viennese, French, English, American, and Russian objects of art in glass, porcelain, bronze, crystal, marble; including Tiffany windows, vases, English silver of the George II period, fine American sterling; two working fountains (one 19th-Century French and the other Italian Renaissance); two Venetian baptismal fonts of the Late Gothic or Early Renaissance periods.

Scientific beauties, reflecting the very American personality of Charles Allis, which include mineral specimens ranging from diamond dust to a large tabletop made from the cross-section of a petrified, agatized tree; Mrs. Allis' "pony" edition of Audubon's Birds of America; and a collection of moth and butterfly paintings by Milwaukee artist Bruno Ertz.

Mr. Allis' collection of medals from the National Medallion Society is exhibited at the Central Library, along with medals purchased since the Allis came into the City's possession, the latter purchased with money from the Allis endowment.

At the present time, Mr. Allis' papers and correspondence also repose in the Milwaukee Public Library.

V. VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

As a cultural resource, the Charles Allis Art Library has local, regional, and national significance. Its importance derives not only from the architectural, historic and artistic merit of the building itself and from the unique and priceless art collection it houses, but also from the changing exhibitions, concerts, lectures, and other programs offered.

Since opening to the public in 1947, the Allis has welcomed visitors from across the United States and from every region of the world. Recent guests have included such celebrities as Penelope Gilliatt, screen writer and film critic for The New Yorker; Alain Robbe-Grillet, novelist and film maker; James Biddle, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and Dr. Clement Conger, Curator of the White House. We are told that Robbe-Grillet particularly admired the Audubon lithographs and that Conger returns to visit the Allis at every opportunity.

The Allis' audience is not limited to the renowned or the wealthy. On the contrary, as was pointed out repeatedly at the Committee's public hearing, this is a truly democratic institution, attracting and serving people from all walks of life and all age groups. The reasons for its broad appeal are many. Important among them is the fact that the Allis collection includes kinds of art objects not found in other local museums and galleries. The set of Barye bronzes is a case in point. The Korean imperial ware is another. Equally significant is the setting in which the paintings, graphics, sculpture, and decorative arts are displayed. Though handsome and luxuriously appointed, the Allis is not grandiose. Rather, it is a small museum, comprising rooms that are intimate and human in scale--and in this, appropriate to the small scale of the objects in the collection.

The building stands at the crossroads of two historic neighborhoods: the former "Gold Coast" section, along Prospect Avenue to the north and South, and the multi-cultural and ethnic Brady Street area to the west. Members of the Brady Street Development Corporation, founded in 1977 to foster stabilization and improvement of the neighborhood, view the Allis as a key supportive element in their efforts. In a letter to the Committee, the group's president, Ron Zanella, also points out that the library acts as a community center for a wide variety of organizations from throughout metropolitan Milwaukee. During 1976-77, groups ranging from the League of Milwaukee Artists, the Milwaukee Music Teachers'

Association and a Haiku Poetry Writers' group, to the Alliance Française, Polanki Cultural Society, Hadassah, and the League of Women Voters have held meetings here. During the same period, the Allis was the scene of more than 400 well-attended concerts, recitals, lectures, and receptions. The Allis has also become a valuable source of esthetic and educational experiences for Milwaukee school children.

Approximately one exhibition a month is presented in the galleries on the second floor. Like the permanent collection, the changing exhibits complement and supplement programs offered by other Milwaukee area galleries and museums, substantially enriching the cultural fabric of the community and expanding the opportunities for individual artists and art organizations, and their members, to display their work. The past year's exhibits included American Plains Indian art, a month of Japanese arts, a showing of "the unknown paintings of Kay Neillsen", a Judy Garland Retrospective (including films and music), and the Morning Glory Craft Fair, which utilized the grounds as well as the building.

Attendance figures attest to the public's interest in the Allis: during 1976 overall attendance came to approximately 32,000. Should further evidence be required, it can be found in the public outcry that followed the announcement a year ago that the Allis' future might be in doubt. The outcry has taken various forms--meetings held, letters written, phone calls made, petitions circulated. The message of all has been clear and unanimous: the Allis Art Library is a great asset, vitally important to us and to the quality of life in our community.

VI. PUBLIC STEWARDSHIP

In all matters pertaining to the Charles Allis Art Library, the Milwaukee Public Library acts for and on behalf of the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, which accepted the devise of real estate and bequest of the art

collection, together with the endowment offered pursuant to the Last Will and Testament of Sarah E. B. Allis, by adoption of Resolution File Number 83877, on June 10, 1946.⁷

The bequest is delineated in Sections IV, V and VI of the Last Will and Testament of Sarah E. B. Allis, drawn February 10, 1942.² It should be noted that the document is detailed, specific, and clear. It is possible to mistake neither Sarah Allis's intent, nor her complete confidence that her executor, Arthur W. Fairchild, with whom the City dealt subsequent to her death on December 20, 1945, understood her intent, and could be relied upon to insure compliance with it by any party accepting the devise and bequest of the house, the collection, and the endowment.

The house was recognized by Sarah Allis as the most appropriate setting for Charles Allis' collection. She shares her husband's assessment of its pleasurable, inspirational, cultural, and educational values. Neither he nor she, without the benefit of the ensuing thirty-five years and the radical disappearance of all but isolated traces of their life style, was in position to intensify the statement of its artistic and historic significance. She does provide separation of the house and premises from the collection and specifies the use of monies realized as a result of the sale of the house, if such separation should become necessary.

The collection and her attitude towards it are likely to be of the greatest importance to the Common Council in its deliberations. The following points should be noted:

- 1) the collection was carefully catalogued; Arthur W. Fairchild was given absolute discretion to designate any item as part of the collection; Fairchild was the only person authorized to separate items from the collection during the period of negotiation with the City, prior to the City's acceptance of the bequest;
- 2) the collection as defined on June 10, 1946, and supplemented by

replacement and necessary display additions (cabinets, equipment, etc.), is the Charles Allis Collection; nothing can be removed from the collection; nothing can be added, except in the supplementary sense described above; there are no provisions in the Will for removal of any part of the collection for display by or in any institution or agency other than the Allis home, or such wing or totally separate area of "The Art Museum of the City of Milwaukee" as Arthur W. Fairchild might designate.

The endowment of \$200,000, its use, and its administration are carefully specified.

The following should be noted:

- 1) the income from the perpetual endowment shall be kept in a separate account for the care and upkeep of the collection, and the house and premises (or substituted buildings or rooms), and for no other purpose;
- 2) no part may be borrowed or used for any other purpose of any connected supervisory body or agency;
- 3) any surplus of income is to be added to and form part of the principal until the principal becomes so large that no such additions are required for the purposes of the care and upkeep of the collection and the house and premises (or substituted buildings or rooms);
- 4) once the Trustee determines that additions to the principal are no longer required, the surplus income is to be contributed to the Milwaukee County Community Fund or--if that Fund no longer exists-- any such other charity or charities operating within the City of Milwaukee as shall be considered by the Trustee to be in special need;
- 5) the Trustee is exempted, in matters of investment and reinvestment, from the laws of Wisconsin or any other State, and is "given the broadest possible powers".

The verbal texture of the Will indicates that Sarah Allis and her advisors

had every confidence that the endowment was sufficient to insure "expert care" for the collection and full compliance with her directive that the collection and its housing "be kept clean and in first class order and repair" (Will, IV, pp. 10-11). There is no provision in the Will for reversion of the gift.²

Finally, it should be noted that the premises were expanded by purchase of a seventy foot (70') vacant parcel adjoining the home premises to the north, after the County Court denied the petition of the City for a construction of the Will of Sarah E. B. Allis as including that parcel. The parcel was purchased for \$7,000 on June 13, 1947 (Document #2720224, Common Council File Number 83877).⁷

Acceptance by the City is primarily documented by Common Council File Number 83877⁷ and a letter dated April 18, 1946 to the Committee on Buildings-Grounds-Bridges, from Assistant City Attorney Omar T. McMahon.⁸ File 83877 contains the record of the adoption on June 10, 1946 of the Resolution accepting the Devise and Bequest of Sarah E. B. Allis. Of particular interest to the Common Council at present are paragraphs (4), (6), and (13).

Paragraph (4) designates the Board of Trustees of the Public Library as the City's agent in administering the Allis Collection and endowment, specifying always the primacy of the terms of the Will.

Paragraph (6) specifies the City's acceptance of Sarah Allis' definition of the integrity of the collection.

Paragraph (13) reserves to the Common Council the right to substitute at any time another city agency in place of the Board of Trustees of the Public Library.

In a very real sense, the crux and cure of the Common Council's immediate problem is contained in Paragraph (15) of the April 18, 1946 letter from Mr. McMahon.⁸ In its entirety it reads:

(15) "The will does not provide expressly or by implication for any automatic reversion of the devise or bequest, but it is presumed that the city will maintain and operate the institution in good

faith and in accordance with the provisions of the will."

The advice of the City Attorney's Office had been sought on February 26, 1946, and the letter of April 18, 1946, including the assumption cited in paragraph (15) above, provided the base for the resolution adopted by the Common Council in June of the same year.

What has been occasionally referred to as the reluctance on the part of the City to accept the devise and bequest of Sarah E. B. Allis, was not that at all. The Director of the Milwaukee Public Museum, W. C. McKern, certified the endowment as sufficient to maintain the Allis as a separate establishment. While indicating that the Museum was neither physically nor philosophically geared to take on the house, collection, and endowment in compliance with the provisions of the Will, McKern was convinced that the Allis would fill for Milwaukee the cultural vacuum related to the fact that "Milwaukee, unlike most large cities, has at present no example of a fine old home preserved as a museum". (Presentation to the Common Council reported in The Milwaukee Journal, April 5, 1946.)⁹

City Librarian Richard E. Krug, agreeing with McKern on all points, announced his intention of urging the Board of the Milwaukee Public Library to ask the Common Council to release to it the Allis home, collection, and endowment for development as an art library on the pattern on the Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts. The impression of reluctance was created by two factors: first, Krug's assertion that the endowment income should be used for special purchases, repairs, etc., and not for regular operation; and secondly, the obstructionist tactics of several Aldermen, taken in secret caucus, to withhold action in the Finance Committee to employ staff necessary for the City to take custody of, and open, the Allis. This latter problem was not created by a reluctance to accept the devise and bequest; it was created by something in the nature of reluctance to consign control of the Allis to the Board of the Public Library and to its executive officer, Richard E. Krug.

The newspaper morgues yield several interesting articles on these matters: The Milwaukee Journal, April 5, 1946, May 7, 1946, May 24, 1946, May 28, 1946 and July 18, 1946, and The Milwaukee Sentinel, May 7, 1946 are among the more relevant and informative.¹⁰ The problems were eventually resolved, however, and the Charles Allis Art Library officially opened to the public on November 9, 1947.

From its opening until 1968, the Charles Allis Art Library was operated by the Milwaukee Public Library as a combined art and children's library. Its narrowly limited program defined its marginal role within the larger system. Staff and budget commitments were modest, and a consistent user public was never developed. In 1959 the Allis was closed for part of the year for lack of patronage, and declining interest continued through the early 1960's.

In 1968 a new philosophy was evinced with the closing of the children's section and inauguration of a new community art center approach to service. Added resources were made available, a public service and art oriented staff was employed, and the galleries were refurbished. The Allis was finally being utilized in the spirit in which it was given.

From that point the Allis grew consistently as Milwaukee's populist art center. Its policy of welcoming the small and struggling in Milwaukee's creative community was of inestimable public relations value, and the diversity of program, level of public service, community esteem and productivity of the Allis during the period 1968-1977 was strikingly out of proportion to the size of its budget.

From its inception, staff and budget have reflected the variations in interest and intent of the Library system and the City. In 1947 the Allis staff was structured with four professionals, headed by a Librarian IV, plus clerical and custodial help. This level has never been achieved. Over the years the staff fluctuated, but dwindled, and by 1957 the Allis was no longer classified as a "neighborhood library". By that time even the children's library was in the hands of sub-professionals, and professionals were assigned there only on a temporary and part-time basis. During the early 1960's, little more than a

custodial role was performed. Maintenance was minimal, security was becoming a serious concern, and attendance was down to a trickle.

Since 1968, in addition to a resurgence in activities and attendance, two significant trends appear. Staffing has been consistent throughout this era, with a professional level director (skilled in the arts and in public relations), a trained assistant, and custodial staff. The stability of this decade has allowed for steady growth in both programs and users. These were the concerns of the Library Board when it originally declared that the Allis was the vehicle to "round out library services in the field of fine arts".

The Committee feels that the Charles Allis Art Library, which has inspired substantial public response to what was perceived as a threat to its characteristic mode of operation, is the creation of not only Charles and Sarah Allis, but also of its director since 1968, under whose expert and creative leadership it has experienced a renaissance that places it in the first rank as an institution used by a highly varied constituency.

The second theme of this decade has been the increasing reliance upon trust income. These funds, visualized for maintenance in the Allis bequest, had been utilized sparingly over the years. They had been reserved exclusively for items of remodeling, refurbishing or repair, and never for operations. In 1965 this policy was reversed when the Council, at the suggestion of the Comptroller and Budget Director, withheld a custodial salary from the Library budget. The Library Board agreed to pay such salary from the trust rather than suffer the potential damage to the building and its contents. This arrangement continues to the present time.

Since 1946 the custodial function has been regularly and efficiently discharged, and there has been at least one full-time worker assigned specifically to the Allis. The original custodians were the Allis' own servants--a couple named Hoenigke--who were succeeded by regular City custodial workers. A crew of two has serviced the building consistently since 1947, with a slight gap in

the early '60's. Large scale maintenance, on the other hand, has been neglected. Almost no significant work was performed during the first twenty years of City ownership, and what repairs have been made since 1968 have been paid for almost exclusively with trust monies.

In 1946, when the City of Milwaukee took possession of the Charles Allis home and assigned it to the Library system, the Library's total budget was \$775,000. That year the Library budgeted approximately \$25,000 for operation of the Allis during 1947. From then until 1968, the combined cost of the art and children's libraries remained constant near the original level. Since 1968, inflation has greatly increased salary costs, while staff size has remained constant. Maintenance and repair costs, aggravated by years of deferred maintenance, have also increased. The Library system as a whole has avoided many of these cost problems by shifting programs and personnel from its budget to the Federated Library budget (a resource not available to the Allis), or to Federal programs.

From 1946 through 1967, it cost the city nearly \$480,000 to operate the facility, while the trust contributed \$65,000 from income. Since 1968 it has cost the city approximately \$420,000, while the trust has paid out \$170,000.

In 1968 a major interior refurbishing was financed wholly from the trust, and a furnace conversion was subsequently paid for from the same source. In 1974-75 major roof and brick work was begun with trust monies. A \$17,500 Federal grant has been approved to continue this effort. Two additional grants of nearly \$20,000 have been applied for, using matching trust dollars. By 1976 the Library's total budget had grown to \$5,697,000 (exclusive of Federated Library and other governmentally supported programs), and the cost of the Allis had risen to \$62,700 (exclusive of trust expenditures).^{11, 13}

All of the readily available and useful materials relating to administration of the endowment are attached to this report, and should the Common Council wish to pursue the study of the management of the endowment further, it is encouraged to do so.^{12, 14}

For its immediate purposes, however, the Common Council might be well advised to desert ledgers and legal definitions for common sense. The following factors are to be noted in the context of "integrity" rather than "legality".

- 1) The Committee is satisfied that the September 26, 1977 Milwaukee Journal article on the handling of the endowment is an accurate, popular account of the endowment situation and should be regarded as such by the Common Council. ¹⁷
- 2) The Committee is concerned that the administration of the endowment has departed too radically from the wording of the Will as interpreted by Assistant City Attorney McMahon (whose interpretation of the Will was the basis for the Common Council's resolution of acceptance), and by Judge Sheridan's direction that an annual accounting of the Trust be rendered. Only in the first two years was such an accounting filed with the Court for the Allis Trust as a separate entity. ^{7, 8, 15}
- 3) The Committee is satisfied that the Library Board was aware of dissatisfaction when it initiated the only additions (totaling \$40,000) made to the principal in thirty-one years (Library Board Proceedings for December 16, 1954; December 27, 1956; February 20, 1957; and July 23, 1959). The cause of this return to the expressed intent of the Will was a taxpayer's request that the entire corpus of all endowments be expended in order to ease tax burdens. It is clear from the Library Board Proceedings cited above that the income of the Allis Trust was neither being expended nor added to the principal and reinvested, according to the terms of the Will. ¹⁶
- 4) The Committee fears that public questions regarding the endowment fund and the City's treatment of gifts and bequests have weakened public trust and may have direct harmful economic and cultural consequences by instilling a lack of confidence in the minds of potential donors. The attention of the Council is especially directed to the letter from

Arthur L. Liebman, dated September 26, 1977, which is attached to this report. ¹⁸

The Committee's concern about the administration of the endowment is not so much a question of how the \$200,000 acquired in 1946, the income from which was not used to defray operating expenses until decades had passed, could be only \$240,000 thirty years later. The real question is how has the Allis trust--Sarah Allis's intention as understood and accepted by the City--been handled?

During the course of the Allis' existence, the Library Board has seemed content to consign as unique a cultural and civic resource as the Allis to whatever pattern of administrative supervision the City Librarian might devise. Despite the non-book special character of the Allis, the related endowment questions, and the Board's position as agent for the Common Council, the Board never saw fit to demonstrate its sense of stewardship by establishing a committee specifically to be active on behalf of the Allis and its public.

Where is the voice within the Milwaukee Public Library and/or its Board commissioned to speak and, if necessary, plead for the Allis to the Common Council, and to the common conscience of a city? Where is the voice within the Public Library and/or its Board commissioned to remind the Common Council and the Mayor of legal and moral obligations accepted in exchange for a museum-quality gift whose contents have so accrued in value that dollar figures are never descriptively used, so that thin security may not be unduly and expertly challenged?

The Committee has not yet heard the public voice that will acknowledge municipal obligation and accept it dutifully, albeit not cheerfully. There is no obligation on the part of the Milwaukee Public Library, its Board, the Common Council and/or the Mayor to appreciate the Allis. However, all are obliged to honor agreements made to both the letter and the spirit of the Last Will and Testament of Sarah E. B. Allis.

VII. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee concludes that the following General Recommendations should be implemented regardless of who operates the Allis Art Library or under what format it is administered. The Committee recommends:

- 1) That the Allis Art Library remain open and operational, without interruption.
- 2) That the Trustee be required, pursuant to the terms of the Will, to periodically examine the endowment and income accounts to determine whether the corpus of the endowment has reached the point at which no further additions are necessary, or whether transfers of funds should be made from the income accounts to the corpus.
- 3) That the collection and building be kept intact, in accord with the expressed preference in the Will.
- 4) That those components of the collection now on loan to other institutions, as well as Mr. Allis' papers and correspondence, be returned to the Allis Art Library immediately.
- 5) That needed repairs to the exterior and interior of the building, and its contents be undertaken.
- 6) That an immediate upgrading of security be undertaken.
- 7) That the future operation be at a higher level of funding for staff, equipment, educational and other programs and Outreach services.
- 8) That operational continuity be maintained through the continued leadership of the present director.
- 9) That the Allis Art Library have its own governing board, as befits an institution of its unique character.
- 10) That there be an appraisal of the building in terms of its architectural, historic, and artistic values.
- 11) That there be a new and accurate appraisal of the Allis art collection by a team of experts in all fields represented in the collection, in view of the fact that the Committee has no confidence in the 1973 appraisal.
- 12) That a major effort be undertaken to increase the principal in the Allis Trust.

VIII. OPERATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

The Committee, in the course of its deliberations, and in consideration of the facts presented to it, concludes that there is clearly only one viable alternative for the future operation and well-being of the Allis Art Library.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

AUTONOMOUS OPERATION AS A CITY DEPARTMENT, WITH A BOARD CONSTITUTED UNDER PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 229, WISCONSIN STATUTES, BUDGETED AS A DEPARTMENT, WITH ALL EXPENSES SHOWN.

The Committee wishes to stress that it is strongly and unanimously committed to this recommendation.

Other alternatives are listed in priority order:

- A) Reassignment to a reconstituted Milwaukee Art Commission, whose primary responsibility would be maintenance and operation of the Allis Art Library.
- B) Reassignment to the Milwaukee Public School System, with a committee of the School Board devoted solely to the operation of the Allis Art Library.
- C) Transfer to Milwaukee County or the State of Wisconsin, with an autonomous board.
- D) Transfer to a public or private non-profit institution or foundation, with a board or committee devoted solely to the operation of the Allis Art Library.
- E) Transfer to Milwaukee Public Museum, with an autonomous board.
- F) Continued operation within the Milwaukee Public Library System, with a heightened priority and semi-autonomous budgeting, and with a committee of the board devoted solely to the operation of the Allis Art Library.

Respectfully submitted,

ALLIS ART LIBRARY STUDY COMMITTEE

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October 3, 1977