

HERMITAGE FOUNDATION 2001-2002

**MISS LELA M. HINE- AN ORAL HISTORY**

**A Report Submitted to the Board of Trustees  
The Hermitage Foundation**

**Robert R. Hull  
July 10, 1997**

HERMITAGE FOUNDATION 2001-2002

1214 N. Fairwater Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23508  
July 10, 1997

Mr. William S. Hull  
President, The Hermitage Foundation  
North Shore Road  
Norfolk, Virginia

Dear Mr. Hull,

As per your guidance, the attached report titled "Miss Lela M. Hine- An Oral History" has been prepared and is hereby submitted to the Board of Trustees- The Hermitage Foundation.

The report is the oral history of Miss Lela M. Hine, a Foundation Trustee and former Foundation Secretary. Miss Hine was a long time friend of Mrs. Florence Sloane, the Foundation's founder and first president. As such, Miss Hine has been able to provide a first hand knowledge concerning Mrs. Sloane's early activities in the Norfolk art scene, the evolution of the Foundation to its present state, its collections, and other insights into the Foundation's development.

The report is based on a series of personal interviews conducted with Miss Hine, numbering twelve. Throughout the interview process, Miss Hine was most cooperative and attentive. The resulting transcript was reviewed by Miss Hine, her comments incorporated and she has concurred in the final transcript. Supplemental research was conducted at the Hermitage Museum's files. Also, the reference files of news clippings at the Sargent Room, Norfolk Public Library were consulted and proved useful in the report preparation.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Hull

Encl.- Report- Miss Lela Hine - An Oral History

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**MISS LELA M. HINE- AN ORAL HISTORY**

**SECTION I** BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In accordance with guidance received from The Hermitage Foundation Board of Trustees, and with the cooperation of Mr. Phil Morrison, Director Hermitage Museum, an oral history project entitled "Miss Lela M. Hine- An Oral History" was conducted during the period May-July, 1997. For many years, Miss Hine was intimately involved with the Norfolk art scene and with The Hermitage Foundation (THF). In particular, Miss Hine had been a friend and associated of Mrs. Florence Sloane, the Foundation's founder. This association lasted from 1929 until Mrs. Sloane's death in 1953. The purpose of the oral history was to record Miss Hine's recollections of the period in general, and to elicit specific details concerning Mrs. Sloane's numerous activities as well as those of the Foundation's early developmental years.

Miss Lela M. Hine, a director of the Foundation since 1944, and a former Foundation Secretary, is currently retired. Miss Hine, fully receptive to the project, participated in twelve interviews. These interviews averaged about 1 ½ hours each. On several occasions, draft transcripts were personally reviewed by Miss Hine. Acting on her guidance, corrections and/ or amplifying details were made to the transcripts. The final oral history transcript has received Miss Hine's concurrence.

In addition to the interviews with Miss Hine, a records search at the Hermitage Museum was conducted. This research surfaced copies of numerous documents pertaining to the evolution of the Foundation. The included copies of wills, trust agreements, and other significant items. Additional research was conducted at the Sargent Room, Norfolk Public Library. There, news clipping files were reviewed for

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specific details found in this report. The summary of the early Norfolk art movement was drawn from this source.

The report is arranged as follows: This background and introduction is Section I. Section II is a narrative summary derived from the oral history transcript. Tab A is the complete oral history transcript. Tab B is a chronology of key events addressed by the oral history transcript designed to furnish historical perspective. Tab C summarizes 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century events in Norfolk's art scene and early contributions by Mrs. Sloane to Norfolk's cultural life.

The cooperation of all concerned with this project is gratefully acknowledged, particularly that of Miss Lela Hine, a woman of keen insights, quick wit, and indomitable spirit.

**SECTION II** SUMMARY ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT- MISS LELA HINE

Lila Hine, the daughter of a serving U. S. Marine officer first came to the Norfolk area in the mid 1920s. She graduated from Portsmouth's Woodrow Wilson High School in 1927 and made her debut at the Norfolk German Club that same year. She returned to the area in 1929 and has been a resident since.

In 1929, she was luncheon guest of Mrs. Sloane at the Hermitage, her first introduction to both Mrs. Sloane and to the house. At that time, Mrs. Sloane had been an active force in the Norfolk art scene for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Sloane, he a local businessman with interests in local knitting mills, had been long time residents of Norfolk since 1895. In 1907, the Sloanes started construction on a summer house located on the Lafayette River in the Lochhaven section of the city. This eventually became a lager house museum known as the Hermitage.

Mrs. Sloane had been an early member of the Norfolk Society of Arts. In WWI, the Sloanes built a house in Norfolk's Hague neighborhood. Initially used as a serviceman's center, it later became the first center for the display of art works owned by the Norfolk Society of Arts.

In the mid-1920s, Mr. Sloane constructed the Wainwright Building in downtown Norfolk. Prior to its full occupancy, Mrs. Sloane in conjunction with a prominent New York art gallery, and under the auspices of the Norfolk Society of Art, produced an art exhibit featuring contemporary American artists.

As Chairman of the Norfolk Museum's Building Committee, Mrs. Sloane headed the fund raising drive fro the Museum's first building. The Museum first opened to the public in 1933. For her leadership in this endeavor, the Cosmopolitan Club awarded

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Mrs. Sloane its "First Citizen of Norfolk" award and an accompanying Distinguished Service Medal. She also served as the Museum's first Director, a volunteer position.

Mr. Sloane was elected Chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees. The early staff of the Museum were volunteers and Miss Hine had been part of this group since 1931.

By the early 1930's, the Hermitage had attained the basic configuration seen today, although Mrs. Sloane continued to modify and remodel during this period. The furnishings of the house at this time consisted chiefly of those household items, furniture, silver, etc., normally found in a house occupied by people of wealth. However, Mrs. Sloane's interest in arts were also represented in these furnishings. With her two sons, William and E.K., she had spent some time in England. Her two sons were enrolled in Oxford; she maintained an apartment in London. During this period, Mrs. Sloane acquired numerous art objects which subsequently were brought to the Hermitage. These items formed the basis for today's collections.

The original plans for the Norfolk Museum called for a multi-wing edifice. Funding constraints limited the initial building to a single display area. Mrs. Sloane had envisioned a "Sloane" gallery but with only one display area initially, this did not occur. It is possible that the idea of turning the Hermitage into a house museum, where her collections could be displayed, formed at this time.

It was in the mid 1930s that the idea of the Hermitage as a base for the enjoyment of the arts by the public first took concrete shape. In 1937, The Hermitage Foundation was incorporated as a charitable corporation. Over the next few years, a trust to support the Hermitage was founded by Mrs. Sloane, additional items, mainly from New York dealers, were added to the collections and an Auxiliary to the

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Foundation was organized. During this period, Miss Hine was a frequent guest at the Hermitage, and often assisted Mrs. Sloane in the display of the collections. Miss Hine was elected to the Foundation's Board of Trustees in 1944.

Following Mr. Sloane's death in 1940, Mrs. Sloane continued as President of the Foundation adding to the collections and ensuring the use of the property for art classes and lectures. In the early 1950's, Mrs. Sloane suffered a stroke, and died in 1953. She had arranged for her son E.K. to assume the Presidency of the Foundation, which he did until 1973.

During E.K.'s tenure at the Foundation, access by the public was encouraged through a continuance of the docent program. While the buildings and surrounding property were well maintained, no major remodeling efforts were initiated and additions to the collections were limited to donated items.

In 1971, E.K., still living on the property, hired the first full time museum staff. Mr. Phil Morrison was appointed as Museum Director, Miss Lela Hine as registrar (a position she had previously held at the Norfolk Museum), and Mrs. Joann Trotter was named administrative assistant. Mr. Morrison had been involved in the programs at the Norfolk Museum for many years. Miss Hine's primary responsibilities at the Hermitage included ensuring that the collections, with which she had gained familiarity over the years were properly accessioned.

At the time of her arrival as the Hermitage registrar, not all of the items had been accessioned in accordance with normal museum practices. Miss Hine applied her museum experience, personal knowledge of the Hermitage collections, and her insights into Mrs. Sloane's thinking to this task.

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Shortly after E.K. brought the management team to the Hermitage, he vacated the living quarters he had occupied at the Hermitage. This freed up additional space for collection display. In 1973, E.K. relinquished active participation in the Foundation, when Admiral Pierce Chilton USN (Ret) was elected President, The Hermitage Foundation.

TAB A—Transcript of Lela Hine Oral History

TAB B—selected Chronology to Lela Hine Oral History

TAB C—development Of the Arts in Norfolk- A Synopsis to Accompany the Oral History of Miss Lela Hine.

**MISS LELA M. HINE**

**THE GHENT ARMS**

**NORFOLK, VIRGINIA**

**AN ORAL HISTORY**

**SUMMARY**

Miss Lela M. Hine, a Norfolk resident of longstanding, has long been associated with the area's art scene. In particular, she has been associated with the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Science (Chrysler Museum) from its inception. Further, she had been a friend and associate of Mrs. Florence Sloane, founder of The Hermitage Foundation. This latter relationship, and Miss Hine's later formal relationship with the Hermitage Museum, gives her a unique perspective on the early development of both institutions. Miss Hine, was first a volunteer and later the Norfolk Museum's Registrar. From this position, she accepted a similar position with the Hermitage Museum in 1971, fulfilling those responsibilities until retirement. Miss Hine is a past Secretary of The Hermitage Foundation, and continues as a Trustee, a position to which she was elected in 1944.

The below series of questions and answers were based on several personal interviews with Miss Hine. The object of the interviews, and of this oral history, was to draw on Miss Hine's knowledge of both the Norfolk Art scene general, and of Mrs. Sloane's related activities in particular. The sequence gives the appearance that the questions and subsequent answers were provided in a chronological order. That is not the case. The interviews were wide ranging and often reviewed previous discussion

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topics. For clarity and continuity, however, the results are as arrayed below. Both the questions and the answers, in their current format, have been personally reviewed by Miss Hine in concert with the interviewer. Corrections, additions, and deletions were made by Miss Hine during this review. Accordingly, the below is represented as the actual responses provided by Miss Hine to the questions posed.

### **LELA'S EARLY YEARS.**

Q. Lela, tell us something about your early years. Your parents, where they were born, lived, etc.

A. I was born in Washington, D.C.. My father, Oliver Cromwell Hine, had been a Marine volunteer in the Spanish-American War. After the war, he became a lawyer but his father, then a prominent Washington lawyer decided not to have him join the firm. I am not sure of all the reasons. Subsequently, my father was with the U.S. Treasury Department. In Washington, we lived in an apartment building at Massachusetts Ave. and 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW, right across from a church. Later, we moved to Brooklyn, N.Y. where my father worked with the Linotype Company, a position I believe he obtained through my grandfather's influence.

When the U.S. entered W.W.I, my father went to the local Marine Corps recruiting office and with his prior record in the Spanish-American War (I believe he retained some standing in the inactive Marine Corps Reserve, or its equivalent) was accepted to active duty as a member of the Marine Corps' Quartermaster Department, a staff agency within the Marine Corps. He was sent to Charleston, S.C. where he

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established an overseas supply depot, which mainly served the Marine forces then stationed in Haiti, Cuba, and the Virgin Islands. My recollection is that his depot did not support nearby Parris Island, a newly established Marine Base, as they were of a size to have their own staff Quartermaster. My mother and I moved to Charleston with father. After the armistice, my father was relieved by Ed McCawley, took three months leave, and then was transferred to Haiti as the Quartermaster of the Marine Brigade stationed there. He had decided to continue in the Marine Corps as a career officer. In those days, married officers took their families to some overseas posts, and we accompanied father to Haiti. This would have been about 1920. We stayed there until 1922, although in the summer of 1921, mother and I took passage on the USS Henderson, a government transport, for a home visit to our relatives.

Q. You would have been of school age in Haiti. What kind of schooling was available for you and the others?

A. A school for American children had been established in Port au Prince for children of the military men as well as the children of American business men, although I remember one French boy in our classes, there to learn English. As I recall, the curriculum was based on that of a Baltimore company that specialized in home schooling. The school taught classes from kindergarten to grade 8. The school board was composed mainly of officer's wives, one of whom would go to the states annually to recruit teachers. There were two teachers at the school, unmarried, and I think they may have been also looking for a beau. I remember all the teachers as being good ones. The school reminded me of a country school, that is there were often up to three grades in one classroom with each group doing work separately from the others. Also,

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during the summer I attended French classes. The local population really spoke a Creole language but not a pure French. The prisoners in the local jail used to make our desks and chairs. To help support the school though, we had to buy our desks for \$50.00. Then when we left we sold the desk to the next pupil for \$50.00.

Q. After you left Haiti, where did you live next?

A. My father was transferred to Washington where he was stationed at the Marine Corps Headquarters.

Q. After Washington where did you live?

A. From Washington, my father was ordered to the Norfolk Navy Yard in Portsmouth. This was my first time in the area. With his legal training, he became the legal aide to Admiral William Kelly Cole, commanding the Yard. Interestingly, both the Admiral and my father were of approximately the same age, and were particularly compatible. They knew many of the same people. As a result, my parents and the Admiral and his wife also became close friends. We lived in a set of quarters at the Marine Barracks, Portsmouth Yard.

Q. What about your schooling in Portsmouth?

A. I went to school in Portsmouth and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1927. Later that same year I made my debut at the Norfolk German Club.

Q. After Portsmouth, what was your father's next duty station?

A. My father was ordered to the Virgin Islands, to the Marine Barracks there, where he was the Quartermaster of the Post. After only a year there he became ill, and we returned to the states in 1929. Father was sent to the Naval Hospital in Washington, D.C. for treatment, which lasted off and on for nearly a year.

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Q. Did you live in Washington during that year?

A. Not initially. While my mother went to Washington with my father, I stayed for about six weeks with a Navy family at the Navy Base.

Q. Was this at Portsmouth?

A. No, it was at the Norfolk Navy Base. I stayed with Captain and Mrs. Baker that I first met her.

Q. Do you remember what the occasion was?

A. Also staying with the Bakers, was an English girl who I think was probably an English Navy Junior. As I recall, she contacted Mrs. Sloane, who had spent some time in England with her two boys, and the result of that call was an invitation by Mrs. Sloane to lunch. There were eight of us at lunch at Mrs. Sloane's house. This was also my first visit to the Hermitage. (NB. 1929)

Q. So the luncheon was a way to entertain the English visitor as well as other young ladies of Norfolk?

A. You have to remember that Mrs. Sloane had two sons, both eligible bachelors at this time.

Q. After your short stay with the Bakers where did you go?

A. Well, my father was still under treatment at the Naval Hospital in Washington and on several occasions faced a Board of Survey. All this took about a year, and so I eventually joined my mother who was staying with Aunt Sara, my godmother in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Finally, after father was released from the treatment he received in Washington, he was ordered again to the Marine Barracks at Portsmouth. We all

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returned then and lived in quarters at the Portsmouth Navy Yard. He continued to receive treatment, off and on, at the Portsmouth Navy Hospital.

### **MR. AND MRS. SLOANE'S EARLY DAYS IN NORFOLK**

Q. Before we continue with you later experiences with Mrs. Sloane and the Hermitage, could you provide some recollections about Mr. and Mrs. Sloane's earlier days in Norfolk?

A. There are a few things about the Sloanes that I remember hearing from Mrs. Sloane. For example, when Mrs. Sloane was a school girl, she lived in New York City, somewhere near East 19<sup>th</sup> Street as I recall. As you know, she was a rather short person, but as a young girl, also somewhat plump. Her physician had recommended walking as a good exercise for her. On her walks to and from the private school that she attended, she often passed the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was not only an interesting place to visit but also served as a resting place on the walks. I believe it was these frequent visits to the Metropolitan that started her lifelong interest not only in the arts, but also in museums.

Q. What other things can you tell [us] about Mrs. Sloane's background.

A. Well, both she and Mr. Sloane were New York people. Her grandfather was Edwin Wainwright, (NB, Wainwright Building in Norfolk named after him) and according to Mrs. Sloane, he was the last gentleman in New York to wear knee britches. Mrs. Sloane's sister, Mrs. Grace Stiles, lived in New York, and the Sloanes kept an apartment on 19<sup>th</sup> Street near the National Arts Club and Gramercy Park. It had a connecting door to Mrs.

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Sloane's sister's apartment. They preferred to use this apartment for the many trips they took there. It was their pied a terre, so to speak.

Q. What can you tell us of the Sloane's early days in Norfolk?

A. When they first moved here, the Sloanes lived in a hotel on Granby Street.

Q. Was that the Monticello Hotel?

A. No but it was across the street. I believe it was torn down long ago. I want to say it was the Southland Hotel, but I am not positive.

Q. What about their first home?

A. Well, Mr. Sloane was in the textile business and had interests in several knitting mills over South Norfolk. They built a house on a corner not too far from the mills. On another corner, across the street lived Baron Black, who was related to Mister Sloane. I believe a younger cousin on Mr. Sloane's mother's side. Both Mr. Sloane and Mr. Black had business interests in the knitting mills at that time. Baron's father may also have been involved in the business. I believe they specialized in "long johns" and similar undergarments. I am not too sure of the names of the businesses, but I seem to recall that one was called the "Elizabeth Mills" and the other, the Portsmouth Mills."

Q. Were these houses built specially for the Sloanes and Blacks?

A. Yes, they were built by a Mr. Woodsend who was an architect/builder at that time. He also built several houses on the Hague, in Norfolk, which are still standing including one he built for the Lewis's at Mowbray Arch and Pembroke, the one with the white columns. He was the initial builder for the Hermitage. I suspect that Mrs. Sloane learned quite a bit about building and architecture from Mr. Woodsend. She personally supervised the later remodeling and the additions to the Hermitage.

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Q. Did you ever visit the Sloane house in South Norfolk?

A. Not while they lived there, but I had always wanted to see what it looked like. After Mrs. Sloane died, I went over there unannounced. The house, by that time, had been converted into two apartments, one down, one up. My recollection was that the first floor had a large fireplace in the entrance hall. The other feature that comes to mind was a wraparound porch. Also, there was a side portico that served as a passage way for vehicles, i.e. a side entrance. I think the house is still standing.

Q. What was Mr. Sloane like?

A. He was very much the business man, although he seemed to operate "behind the scenes." He supported Mrs. Sloane with her art and museum interests but did not take much of an active interest himself, although he was the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Norfolk Museum.

### **MRS. SLOANE'S LONGDON EXCURSION-EARLY ACQUISITIONS**

Q. I noted that Mrs. Sloane's son E.K. was educated at Oxford. What do you recall of that experience?

A. Mrs. Sloane had decided that her boys, William (the older) and E.K. should receive an education in England. It also gave her a good excuse to go to London. They had previously been tutored while living at the Hermitage, which was more or less in the country during that period. Also, two or three neighborhood children received tutoring with the Sloane boys. During the 1920's, she and the two boys went to England where

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she took a flat. She enrolled the boys in English schools and eventually both boys entered Oxford, William at Christ Church and E.K. at Baliol.

Q. Was Mr. Sloane with her at the time?

A. No. Just Mrs. Sloane and the boys.

Q. I imagine that Mrs. Sloane took advantage of the attractions in London?

A. Yes, she of course visited the museums and art galleries, and enjoyed the shopping in London. I believe at this time that she began to acquire not only room furnishings but also began to acquire art objects. She often mentioned shopping at the Army-Navy store in London. At this time, this was the store specializing in outfitting families who were sent to the colonies. It provided those household items used by the British on overseas assignments. It also served as a store which sold items from the colonies. I believe many of these items, which had been brought back by Britons returning from the colonies were sold on consignment. Many of these objects were, of course, quality pieces from all parts of the world. I believe that Mrs. Sloane also acquired items from London galleries. In any case, many of the items in the Hermitage trace to this period. I might mention at this time, that these items were those used mainly as house furnishings rather than as a conscious nucleus of the collections. She just had a good eye for art works, and used these to furnish the Hermitage.

### **NORFOLK'S EARLY ART SCENE**

Q. How did Mrs. Sloane first get interested in the art scene in Norfolk?

A. At one time, there was a Miss M. (Margaret) Belle Irving, an elementary school teacher and artist, and probably the first art director in the Norfolk Public Schools. She also conducted art classes primarily for the ladies of Norfolk. Mrs. Sloane was a member of Belle Irving's art class. It was here that Mrs. Sloane also met the other young ladies of Norfolk who shared an interest in art.

Q. From these classes then, came the movement to start the Norfolk Society of Arts?

A. Yes, this group was organized with Belle Irving, Mrs. Sloane and others to promote the arts in Norfolk. If Belle Irving had lived, she would probably have been its first Director. As it was, Mrs. Sloane became the Art Chairwoman of the Society.

Q. Do you remember others involved in the art scene at that time?

A. Yes, much earlier, there was Irene Leache and her student Miss Wood. At some point, the two ladies established a school called the Leachewood Seminary. It was located near the old Southland Hotel (NB. Now the Ramada) at Granby and Freemason Street. When Miss Leache and Miss Wood retired, they moved to Europe. Every so often some of the Leachewood girls, former students of the school, would travel to Europe for a visit with their former teachers. Eventually, Miss Leache passed away and left some money to Miss Wood. She used some of this money to acquire some art objects. When Miss Wood eventually returned to Europe, she would occasionally send objects back for the collection. These became the nucleus of the Irene Leache collection at the museum. This collection was relatively small, but Mrs. Sloane often recommended which objects to acquire. (See Tab C for the Leache/Wood story.)

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Q. What were some of the early activities of the Society?

A. From her New York experiences and contacts, Mrs. Sloane knew many of the established, contemporary artists there. Douglas Volk, at the time a well known artist was often a guest of the Sloanes at the Hermitage. She would often recommend to the Society artists to visit and lecture here.

Q. What other events did the Society conduct?

A. Mrs. Sloane helped to organize a major art exhibition here in Norfolk. Mr. Sloane had just built the Wainwright Building and it was not yet completely occupied. Mrs. Sloane arranged for the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City to put on an exhibit in the building's second floor. It took up the entire floor. The Grand Central represented many of the day's well known artists and their works constituted the majority of the works that were on exhibit. Many of the artists also came to Norfolk for the exhibit. The exhibit was a huge success and the crowds so large that the elevators were strained to accommodate all the people.

Q. How did you get involved with the Society of Arts?

A. At the time, Margaret Billosoly and I had a notion to start an art and antiques gallery in Portsmouth. We mentioned this to Mrs. Sloane and the next thing we knew we were members and "volunteers" of the Norfolk Society of Arts.

### **EARLY DAYS OF THE NORFOLK MUSEUM**

Q. Norfolk eventually built an art museum called the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences. What can you tell us about the early beginnings of the Museum?

A. The original Museum building was built with a combination of city support and also Federal funding through PWA (NB. Public Works Administration, a New Deal federal agency established during the depression in the 1930s) and with some support from the Norfolk Society of Arts. The Norfolk Society was represented on the Museum Board and the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees was Mr. Sloane. Mrs. Sloane was also one of the original trustees. I don't think the Museum would have happened without Mrs. Sloane's efforts. (NB. The Norfolk Museum officially opened in March, 1933.)

Q. What do you remember about the early structure, and this collection?

A. Unfortunately, the funding ran short and only one small wing was initially completed. Three wings had been originally proposed. As a result, the ground between the foundation walls for the other wings was covered over. This was done largely by "jailbirds" from the local city jail. They were assigned to fill in the spaces between the foundation walls with dirt, the area to form a garden. The foundation walls were left standing in place. It was during the winter, and cold. Mrs. Sloane noting the discomfort of the prisoners, who by the way were in ball and chain at that time, persuaded Mr. Sloane to donate long johns and other clothing from the mills for the prisoners use. As you know, these foundations were eventually turned into the center court of today.

Q. What about the collections?

A. Since there was now only going to be one gallery, the decision was made not to have any particular collection named. It had been Mrs. Sloane's intent to donate items

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to one of the intended rooms and to name it the Sloane Gallery. Since there was now not enough space, this idea was not carried out. That she could not display her objects in a “named” gallery may have given her the idea to turn the Hermitage into a museum.

Q. What was your involvement with the Museum in these early years?

A. As a member of the Norfolk Society of Arts, along with other members we spent a good bit of volunteer work at the Museum. Mainly, Margaret Bilosoly and myself helped with the display of the items in the gallery. It was her father who donated the original staircase in the Museum.

### **THE HERMITAGE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED**

Q. Construction of the Hermitage began in 1907, and was initially used as a country house by the Sloanes. Then under Mrs. Sloane’s direction, and for several years, it was expanded to essentially its current size. What can you tell us about its evolution as a house museum?

A. Well, as I said before, when the size of the Norfolk Museum was limited due to funding, that may have given Mrs. Sloane the idea to turn her house into a place where she could exhibit her collections. At this time though, her “collections” were really the furnishings in the house, which of course included a number of art works and paintings. They were really the type of items one would find in a well to do household of the time, in which the owners had a definite taste in art and the means to satisfy it.

Q. For a variety of reasons, probably some including tax considerations, the Sloanes established The Hermitage Foundation in the mid 1930s. (NB. On December 30, 1937

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The Hermitage Foundation was incorporated as a charitable corporation. The original corporation consisted of the land around the house, but not the house nor the land within 20 feet of the house.)

Q. I noted in the articles of incorporation for the Foundation that the house and immediately surrounding land was not included. Do you have any idea why this was set up that way?

A. Well, if you do not put the house into the original corporation, that left the owners (Mr. and Mrs. Sloane) the freedom to make any changes or modifications to the house and to its furnishings and collections. In other words, the house and its collections could still be changed without the bother of going through the process required by a corporate owner. In any case, Mrs. Sloane was the prime director (i.e. president) of the corporation.

Q. What other actions did Mrs. Sloane make toward the Foundation?

A. She created a trust whose proceeds would be directed toward the support of The Hermitage Foundation. (NB. On April 6, 1940, Mrs. Sloane created a trust with the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, whose proceeds would go to support the activities of The Hermitage Foundation. Both Mrs. Sloane and the Bank were trustees.)

Q. Do you remember some of the provisions of the trust?

A. She was to administer the property and also live in the house during her lifetime. Later, the trust was modified such that either one or both of her sons could live in the house during their lifetimes, but only if they took a direct role in administering the property. (NB. Copy of 4-6-40 trust and later 10-23-48 modification in 2<sup>nd</sup> floor files at Hermitage.)

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Q. What other activities concerning the property can you recall?

A. Shortly after the war, the house and the land immediately surrounding the house were given to the Foundation. (NB. A Lease/ Agreement dated December 24, 1946 details this transaction. Copy in 2<sup>nd</sup>. Floor offices at Hermitage.)

NB. The Hermitage Museum officially opened to the public on January 1, 1947.

### **THE HERMITAGE COLLECTIONS**

Q. You had previously mentioned that the genesis of the Hermitage collections were really the furnishings and decorations which Mr. and Mrs. Sloane acquired for the house?

A. Yes, they were rather well to do people and with her interest in art, it was natural for her to decorate the house with not only good quality furniture but also with objects of art and paintings that appealed to her taste. Also, I remember particularly the Russian silver which she purchased from Tiffany's brand new.

Q. To what extent did she set out to build up the collections that we see today?

A. Well, first of all except for the items she acquired during her London stay in the 1920s, and those that she acquired later as furnishings and decorations, virtually all of the additional items were bought from dealers.

Q. Can you elaborate on this?

A. Well, in particular there was a Mr. T.C. Lu, a well known Chinese art dealer with shops in New York, Paris, and Shanghai. He catered primarily to museums. Mrs. Sloane bought a considerable number of items from him. Also, I recall that some of the

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tapestries were bought from a dealer who was somewhat of an itinerant, at least he brought the items to Mrs. Sloane in the back of his station wagon.

Q. So, one might say that Mrs. Sloane's collections could be considered in two parts. This first part, were those items acquired as part of the normal but expensive items used to furnish the house, a period lasting into the thirties. Then, after she established the Foundation, were those items acquired from the 1930s until shortly before Mrs. Sloane's sickness and death in 1953?

A. That would be one way of describing them.

Q. What was your involvement with the collections during this period?

A. Well, we were friends, and I often visited Mrs. Sloane. On those occasions, I would sometimes help her to set up displays of her collections. Interestingly enough, the current location and display galleries at the Hermitage closely follow the places where she originally positioned them.

### **THE AUXILIARY**

Q. The Hermitage Auxiliary has been in existence for many years. Did Mrs. Sloane start this, and if so, what were the circumstances?

A. As with everything concerning the Hermitage, Mrs. Sloane initiated the Auxiliary. She was in the habit of asking some of the ladies "my girls" as she called them, from the Lochhaven neighborhood, to help her with various social tasks at the Hermitage such as teas, etc. Eventually, she decided to organize them into a group. Lectures had previously been given at the Hermitage, but on an occasional basis. She wanted the Auxiliary to take over and put the lecture series on a regular and permanent footing.

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One of the early chairpersons of the Auxiliary's lecture committee was Margaret Nelson. She would go to New York and listen to some of the speakers before inviting them down to the Hermitage. The lectures were always on a subject concerning the art world and as a rule there was a specific theme for the season.

Q. Did the Auxiliary furnish docents to the Hermitage?

A. No, the docents were always separate from the Auxiliary. The Auxiliary primarily sponsored the lecture series. They also held about two meetings a year, for social purposes. The Auxiliary membership originally came from the local neighborhood around the Hermitage but in later years members came from Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, and I even remember a mother/daughter pair who came from Smithfield. Membership in the Auxiliary was by invitation. Curators from the Chrysler Museum were usually well represented among the membership.

### **MRS. SLOANE'S LAST YEARS AT THE HERMITAGE**

Q. Mr. Sloane died in 1940. This left Mrs. Sloane as sole "master of the house."

A. Always.

Q. What changes, if any, did Mrs. Sloane make at the Hermitage?

A. Mrs. Sloane continued to collect during this period. In particular, she acquired a number of items from Mr. Lu, but a few years later she became ill. She finally suffered a stroke while introducing a guest speaker at the Hermitage. After the stroke, she never fully recovered but she was not always bed ridden as I remember traveling with her to New York after her stroke. We stayed in their apartment and visited galleries and the

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theatre. Bebe Porestal, a Foundation Trustee, had experienced a similar situation with her own mother. Bebe helped Mrs. Sloane greatly during this time. I believe Mrs. Sloane was ill, off and on for about two years, until she died.

### **E.K. SLOANE BECOMES MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Q. After Mrs. Sloane died, her son E.K. took over as President of the Foundation.

What can you tell of this period?

A. Mrs. Sloane had so arranged the trust to connect her son's continued stay at the Hermitage with his assuming the duties as managing trustee. William, the eldest son, had married by this time and was living in Texas. E.K. was single, and saw fit to continue living in the house. As a result, he was also the managing director.

Q. Can you describe E.K.'s management style as President of the Foundation?

A. E.K. at the same time spent most of his working time downtown managing the Wainwright Building. He did not seem to share his mother's keen interest in the art world. His major functions at the Foundation were to make sure the bills were paid and the budget followed. He also supervised the docents.

Q. What was his policy toward the collection?

A. Basically, he did not have an acquisition policy as did his mother. I think the only additions during his tenure were donated items, and I think these were few and far between.

Q. How would you sum up this period?

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A. As to the collections, they were pretty well established by then, and only a few donated items were added. E.K. maintained the property but there was no remodeling, redecorating or other structural changes of any significance. He continued to hire docents, and he was most attentive to the business end, paying the bills, etc... The Auxiliary continued to function and to present lectures at the house. He also continued to live in the house until the early 1970s.

Q. Didn't he hire you and Phil Morrison?

A. Yes, Phil was the first paid Director at the Foundation. I was hired about the same time. We both came over from the Norfolk Museum where he had been involved in their educational programs. As I recall, E.K. was still living in the house when we came to the Foundation, but he moved out soon thereafter.

Q. What had you been doing at the Museum?

A. I was the registrar at the Norfolk Museum. As such, I was responsible for the accessioning of the Museum's collection.

Q. In other words, you were in charge of documenting and cataloging the Museum's paintings, sculptures and other art items. How did this fit in with your duties at the Foundation?

A. Having visited the Hermitage over many years, and having helped Mrs. Sloane with her collections, displaying them etc., I was very familiar with the collections at the Foundation.

Q. When you arrived at the Foundation were the collections cataloged in accordance with the standards of a museum, such as the Norfolk Museum?

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A. Not really. There was an accession book that had been established but clearly not all the items in the house were in the book.

Q. Can you describe some of your efforts to bring the accession book current?

A. Well, one of the first things that had to be done was to check each item in the house for a number. Although each museum uses their own technique for this, a standard practice in the industry is to assign a number sequence to each item. The sequence would be in three parts. The first number would be the year accessed, the next the sequence with which the item was received in that year, and the third number the part to the set, if applicable. For example the sequence 1996.15.1 would be the number assigned to an item accessed in 1996, the 15<sup>th</sup> item acquired that year, and the first piece, if it was part of a set.

Q. So your work was cut out for you with respect to cataloging the collection?

A. Yes, the first thing was to identify the objects, whether they were in the accession book or not. If not, then I had to assign a number. This often required researching the papers etc. that were left in the house. Mrs. Sloane wasn't much for maintaining the files so there was a lot of work expended just matching up the item with the invoice or bill of sale.

Q. Were the collections pretty much as they are today when you arrived?

A. Yes, as I said previously most of the collections were complete by the early 1950s.

E.K. did not add to them except through the occasional donation. I had been coming to the house from 1929 on and was very familiar with the collections. What needed to be done when Phil and I came over to the Foundation in the early 1970s was to ensure that the collections were recorded in the accession books. While Phil concentrated on

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Museum management and the art classes, I worked primarily to ensure that the collections were properly accessioned. That, and helping to familiarize the docents with the collections, was my primary responsibility while I was at the Foundation.

## **SELECTED CHRONOLOGY TO LELA HINE ORAL HISTORY**

- Sources - Hermitage Museum Files (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor office)
- Subject Files, Sargent Room, Norfolk Public Library
  - Miss Lela Hine Oral History

### **Chronology**

- 1895 Mr. and Mrs. Sloane in Norfolk. Mr. Sloane with interest in knitting mills in South Norfolk/Portsmouth. Initial residence in Norfolk Hotel, later built a house in South Norfolk. He was related to Baron Black.
- 1905 Leache-Wood Alumnae Association founded.
- 1907 Construction starts on Hermitage- C.J. Woodsend Architect/ Builder.
- 1915 Leache-Wood Alumnae Assn. Name changed to Irene Leache art Assn.
- 1916 Douglas Volk, New York portrait painter and frequent guest of Sloanes presents lecture to Irene Leache Art Association. Suggests name change for Association. Renamed the Norfolk Society of Arts. Renamed organization now permits general membership vice only Leache-Wood alumnae.
- 1917 Sloanes built a house at Mowbray Arch and Fairfax Ave. –used as

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- serviceman's center in WWI; 1919 becomes gallery for Norfolk Society of Arts.
- 1925 Wainwright Building completed by Mr. Sloane; named for Mrs. Sloane's grandfather, Edwin; soon becomes offices Seaboard Airline Railroad.
- 1926 Norfolk Society of Arts Art Exhibit held in Wainwright Building. Mrs. Sloane- Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee (Exhibit Sponsor), also a Trustee of Norfolk Society of Arts, Chairman of the Reception Committee, Trustee of the Norfolk Museum (not yet built). Exhibit features 49 paintings by contemporary American artists. Grand Central Gallery in New York mounts exhibit. Mrs. Sloane now appointed as Chairman of the Norfolk Society of Arts Art Committee. Retains this chairmanship until 1947.
- 1931 Miss Lela Hine begins long association with Norfolk Museum, first as volunteer and later in staff position as Museum Registrar.  
Mrs. Sloane becomes Chairman of the Building Committee- Norfolk Museum.
- 1932 Mrs. Sloane founder and charter member of Lochhaven Garden Club.  
For dedication toward the arts in Norfolk and especially her work on the building of the Norfolk Museum, Mrs. Sloane receives Citizen of the Year and Distinguished Service Medal from Cosmopolitan Club. First Woman to receive this award.
- 1933 Norfolk Museum of Art and Science opens doors to the public. Mrs. Sloane serves as volunteer Director of Museum until funds available for paid position. Mr. Sloane serves as Chairman- Board of Trustees.

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- 1937 The Hermitage Foundation (THF) incorporated as Charitable Corporation; Mrs. Sloane President/ Trustee.
- 1940 Mr. Sloane died. Mrs. Sloane created trust to benefit THF. Mrs. Sloane and Guaranty Bank Company of NY, trustees.
- 1944 Miss Lela Hine becomes trustee of The Hermitage Foundation.
- 1946 Mrs. Sloane conveys House and surrounding land to THF- conditions include life residency, continuance as Director THF, and provision for sons to live/work at Hermitage, if desired.
- 1947 Hermitage Museum open to public.
- 1948 THF Trust modified; provides that E.K. Sloane become Director upon Mrs. Sloane's death.
- 1949 THF establishes Memorial Scholarship Fund.  
THF Auxiliary organized.
- 1953 Mrs. Sloane dies following long illness. Leaves to THF "all works and objects of art" to THF. E.K. succeeds as President/ Trustee of THF.
- 1960 Wainwright Building sold to Dr. Martone.
- 1968 William Sloane, Jr., oldest son, dies.
- 1971 Mr. Phil Morrison appointed Museum Director THF, Miss Lela Hine appointed Registrar THF, Mrs. Joann Trotter appointed Administrative Assistant at THF. E.K. relinquishes day to day management THF.
- 1973 Admiral Pierce Chilton becomes President THF.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTS IN NORFOLK**

**A SYNOPSIS TO ACCOMPANY THE ORAL HISTORY OF MISS LELA HINE**

Source: Unpublished 1981 manuscript by Eleanor r. Williamson "Creativity of Women and the Norfolk Society of Arts 1871-1933" Located in the Subject Files, Sargent Room, Norfolk Public Library.

**SYNOPSIS**

Mrs. Florence Sloane was publicly active in the Norfolk arts scene for over four decades until her death in 1953. For nearly the entire time, she was a member, trustee, committee chairman, often all three, of the the Norfolk Society of Arts, and also later, of the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences. For the latter institution, she headed the Building Committee which raised funds for the first wing of the Museum, and when the Museum opened, served as Director until funds were available for paid staff. Her interest and activism in the arts, combined with her organizational leadership, were significant factors in the development of the arts in Norfolk. If Mrs. Sloane's efforts are viewed as part of the Norfolk art scene's historical evolution, then one should examine the beginning of this evolution. This can be traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the dynamic personalities of two other Norfolk women, Irene Kirke Leache and Anna Cogswell Wood.

Both ladies were Virginia born, well educated, and had traveled to Europe. Irene Leache was the senior by about 12 years. In 1871, they arrived in Norfolk and established a "seminary" for ladies called the Wood-Wood Seminary. The school, located at the intersection of Granby and Freemason Streets, offered a liberal arts education to the females of Norfolk, Norfolk Academy then doing the same for the boys.

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As an adjunct to the school, the "Monday Club" was established which was basically an adult group which discussed philosophy, religion, literature, and art. This activity soon attracted the social leaders of Norfolk as regular attendees, many of whom were also alumnae of the school.

By 1891, after operating the school for 20 years, Miss Leache's health began to fail. The school was sold to Miss Agnes West, and both Miss Leache and Miss Wood left for Europe. Her health did not improve significantly although numerous "cures" were attempted. In 1900, she returned to Norfolk, where she died on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Annie Wood, felt the need to establish a memorial to her close friend. In 1901, the Irene Leache Library was established as a means to enhance the cultural life of Norfolk. She enlisted the aid of her former students to fund the memorial and soon it became the repository for numerous works of art. In addition, lectures and concerts were sponsored by the Library.

In 1902, Miss Wood returned to Europe but maintained a close relationship with many former students. At her instigation, the Leache Wood Alumnae Association was formed primarily to encourage the furtherance of the Irene Leache Memorial Library and its activities.

In 1914, Miss Wood returned from Europe. Seeing that the activities of the Alumnae Association and the Irene Leache Memorial Library had not maintained the vigor she had anticipated, she assumed a direct leadership role in both institutions. She proposed to combine the two organizations and accordingly, the Irene Leache Art Association was formed. The purpose of the new organization was "to foster the arts and work toward an art museum in Norfolk." In the next two years, Miss Wood instituted

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prizes for original work in art, poetry, music and drama. In addition, she instituted a lecture program, the forerunner of the Irene Leach Lecture Series, and in 1915 she sponsored an art exhibit with paintings from the Philadelphia Academy of Arts.

In 1916, Mr. Douglas Volk, a noted contemporary artist and frequent guest of the Sloanes, presented an arts lecture in Norfolk. He suggested that the Art Association change its name to reflect a less provincial background. In January 1917, the Association, with Miss Wood's approval, was designated the Norfolk Society of Arts. Since the Norfolk Society had as its mission the promotion of the cultural life of the community, its membership was also open to the community at large. This feature opened membership to citizens such as Mrs. Sloane and others. The old Art Association, following its antecedents as an alumnae group from the Leache-Wood School had limited membership. Now, the Society of Arts could and did draw from a wider pool of citizens and welcomed the membership of Mrs. Sloane and other similarly minded citizens.

The Norfolk Society of Arts, with an expanded mission (to build an art museum for Norfolk) and with its open membership policy soon attracted a number of members, mainly women, who brought additional talent and resources to the Norfolk art scene. Very quickly, Mrs. Sloane entered into a number of leadership roles within the Society. In the mid 1920s, she managed to combine her wide acquaintance with the New York art world with one of her husbands business ventures, the Wainwright Building. The new building, as yet not completely rented, was the venue for a major art exhibit sponsored by the Norfolk Society of Arts. It was Mrs. Sloane's active leadership which made this exhibit possible. Later, serving as the Building Chairman for the proposed

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Norfolk Museum, she led the fund raising drive which eventually led to the building of the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences, the predecessor to the current Chrysler Museum.

Not only the Chrysler Museum, but other arts and music groups in today's Norfolk can trace their genesis to the 1871 arrival of two remarkable and talented ladies, Irene Kirke Leache and Anna Cogswell Wood.