

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

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3-YEAR PROJECT BRINGS ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHS TO THE PUBLIC EYE

Hedrich Blessing photography will soon be available to the public thanks to the Donnelley Foundation.

CHICAGO (March 31, 2008) – The Chicago History Museum is working on a very exciting project to catalog and digitize 15,000 of its 250,000 Hedrich Blessing photographs within the Museum’s collection over the next three years. The project would not have been possible without the generous support of a \$90,000 grant from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation. This project will help preserve the collection and make these significant photographs available for public access.

The Hedrich Blessing photograph collection documents the work of one of the finest and most widely recognized architectural photography firms in the world. Hedrich Blessing, a Chicago firm, donated the archive of their first forty years of work (1929-69) to the Museum in 1991. In 1999, they donated an additional ten years of their photography (1970-79) expanding the Museum’s collection. One of the Museum’s prized holdings, the collection contains architectural photographs from A Century of Progress International Exposition, 1933-34; Bertrand Goldberg; Holabird & Roche; Burnham and Root; Anderson, Probst & White; and more. Over 14 different collections will be digitized for this project.

Preliminary work on the project began in 2006, and by March 2007 the Museum had a full-time Imaging Technician dedicated to the project restoring and cataloging anywhere from 20 to 25 images per day. Currently, the Museum has completed the digitization of 2,200 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe images, 225 Frank Lloyd Wright images, and 230 images from the 1933-34 Century of Progress. “The Museum decided to make the images available based on the most requested photographs from our Research Center,” said Museum president Gary T. Johnson. “We are excited and proud to have three amazing collections finished at this point in the restoration process.” Visitors to the Research Center will have access to the newly digitized images as they are completed and cataloged. At this point many of the Mies photographs are available through the Research Center and online, through the Museum’s online Research Catalog, ARCHIE.

The process of digitizing the images is no small task. First, the images are scanned into the computer to make them available via internet and electronic database searching. Second, the images are restored by removing any scratches and dust that may have occurred over the many years of handling. Third, the digitized images are cataloged within

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

ARCHIE, the Museum's electronic online database. Each image is labeled within the database for easy access for individuals to find the images they are looking for by keyword. Fourth, they are posted on ARCHIE for the searching process to begin. "This project is beneficial for a broad range of people including but not limited to students, academic historians, independent scholars, teachers, journalists, publishers, and producers of film, television, and video," said Johnson. The Hedrich Blessing collection is used extensively in publications, websites, and films representing a significant part of the Museum's image reproduction and licensing operation.

The digitization project of the Hedrich Blessing images directly supports the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation's interest of artistic vitality by preserving the collection and making it available to a variety of audiences. The Museum acknowledges that without the support of the foundation, these photographs would not be accessible for local, national, and international audiences.

The following collections make up the 15,000 images that will be digitized from the Hedrich Blessing Digitization Project. They are listed in the order they will be completed.

- **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**
- **Frank Lloyd Wright**
- **Photographs of A Century of Progress International Exposition, 1933-34**
- **Bertrand Goldberg**
- **Holabird & Roche (including Holabird & Root)**
- **Burnham and Root**
- **Graham, Anderson, Probst & White**
- **Skidmore, Owings and Merrill**
- **Harry Weese Associates**
- **Albert Kahn**
- **White, Perkins and Will**
- **Photographs commissioned by the Great Northern Railway Company**
- **Photographs commissioned by the Illinois Central Railroad**
- **Photographs commissioned by Meredith Publishing, the parent company for *Better Homes & Gardens, Successful Farming, and other magazines.***

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The Chicago History Museum, a major museum and research center for Chicago and American history, is located at 1601 N. Clark Street. The Museum can be reached by CTA buses 11, 22, 36, 72, 151, and 156. Parking is conveniently located one block north of the Museum at Clark and LaSalle Streets (enter on Stockton Drive). Admission to the Museum is \$14 adults with audio tour, \$12 seniors/students with audio tour, free for children 12 years and younger. General Admission is free on Mondays. Please call 312.642.4600 or visit us at www.chicagohistory.org.