

JASPER CROPSEY COLLECTION

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

Arranged and Described by

Janice Quinter

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

Grant Number 79-124

PROVENANCE:

Many of the papers that comprise the Cropsey Collection were collected by William T. Davis, Charles Leng and other founders of the Institute. Mabel Abbott also contributed much material. Many of these papers are covered by accession numbers. Barnett Shepherd's research notes and correspondence form the most recent addition to the collection. (Barnett Shepherd was a temporary staff member [1975-1980] and research associate of the Institute.) Most of the material has been in the archives for many years and recently was set up as a storage group.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Jasper Francis Cropsey was born February 18, 1823 in Rossville of parents of Dutch descent and died in 1900. He began his career as an architect on Staten Island and designed St. Luke's Church at Rossville, erected in 1843 and the Moravian Church at New Dorp in 1845, as well as an apartment house and the Metropolitan Elevated Railway, Sixth Avenue Line, both in Manhattan.

Cropsey is best remembered for his oil paintings and is considered a member of the Hudson River School. He remains Staten Island's most prominent artist. Early in his career he travelled to Italy and England, where he painted landscapes. Thomas Cole and Asher Durand are two American landscape painters who influenced Cropsey. His paintings show close observation of nature to detail. Many of his scenes show a concern with effects of air, light and atmosphere. Numerous scenes are devoted to illustrating autumn on the Hudson River. One of his last paintings, executed in 1895, "Looking Eastward from Todt Hill with the Vanderbilt Farm in the Valley," is on view at the Staten Island Museum. Other paintings also depict rural Staten Island.

SCOPE & CONTENT:

The Cropsey Collection consists of one cubic foot of biographical information and related notes about Jasper Cropsey as a painter and architect, as well as his family and forebears on Staten Island. Because Cropsey is the most outstanding artist of which Staten Island can boast, most of the material in the collection and discussion of his paintings center on local themes. The range in dates is 1856-1979.

The biographical data consists of material relating to his father, Captain Cropsey, and notes concerning the Cropsey house in Rossville, which was in very poor condition as of 1975. Notes and correspondence by Barnett Shepherd comprise much of the biographical information.

Auction and exhibition catalogs of Cropsey's paintings are included in the nineteenth-century section of the collection.

The twentieth-century material consists of notes on paintings of Todt Hill, Staten Island and the acquisition of Cropsey paintings. Also included are notes and correspondence regarding the planning of the Cropsey exhibit at SIIAS, which took place in the spring of 1968. There are also auction and exhibition catalogs of Cropsey's paintings and drawings published during Cropsey's lifetime and after his death, as well as a definitive biography. Several catalogs are devoted to illustrating the works of many American artists and Cropsey is only one artist featured in these.

The "Other Artists" subgroup contains information pertaining to other American artists. In particular, biographical data and other information on Staten Island's Fred Kost is included.

As with any research about a person's life's work, a great deal of subsidiary research needs to be done. Barnett Shepherd will donate his own article about Cropsey when it is published. The collection remains open. This collection provides background material for the Institute's own collections.

ARRANGEMENT:

The arrangement of the Cropsey Collection attempts to show a century of the peregrination of Jasper Cropsey's paintings. The material is subdivided into biographical material including his contributions to Staten Island architecture, and auction catalogs from the nineteenth century. Material from the twentieth century follows the earlier papers.

There is one subgroup: "Other Artists" – "OA".

Janice Quinter
November 6, 1980

JASPER CROPSEY COLLECTION
Box Inventories:

Box 1/1

Folders		
1-6	Biographical data	1867-
7	Correspondence, Barnett Shepherd re: Cropsey	1975
8-25	Catalogs and transcripts of catalogs, exhibitions, and auctions	1856-1965
26-28	Correspondence, biography, transcripts of catalogs Fred Kost	1947-1949