



Staten Island Advance

Staten Island Museum establishing a legacy for Edith Susskind's porcelain collection

By [Michael J. Fressola](#) on February 02, 2014



Through a glass brightly: Some of the Susskind porcelains (*Advance file photo*)



(Right) The late collector in the raw space that will one day house her collection. [*Courtesy Staten Island Museum*]

SILVER LAKE —Before she reached her 90s, businesswoman and collector Edith Susskind made arrangements for the afterlife of some of her treasures. Edith, as she was widely known on the Island (no surname required) died last month at 93.

Items of clothing from her public life as a clubwoman and philanthropist were donated some time ago to Historic Richmond Town and they are accessible in the on-line collections database. Susskind very much enjoyed fashion and shopping, make-up and dressing up, not necessarily in that order.

She and her late husband were serious collectors of porcelain, mostly 18th and 19th Century English Worcester ware, with some Chinese celadon and Sevres. Much of it is headed for the Staten Island Museum.

Not long ago, the collector struck a pose in the raw space that will house her collection someday soon in Building A, the museum's new home, ready for occupancy later this year at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

For now, the museum expects to launch a \$250,000 fundraising campaign in the collector's honor.

Museum chief executive Elizabeth Egbert explained "We know that there are friends of Edith's who looking for ways to celebrate her life and honor her legacy," she said. "We hope that they'll consider helping us to establish "Edith and Alfred Susskind Gallery of Decorative and Fine Arts" with the kind of style that Edith would have enjoyed.

Donations will help to furnish and light the gallery and could also underwrite publications and lectures. In addition to the porcelain, Susskind earmarked rare furniture and fine art for the museum.

Community-minded collecting institutions, like the Staten Island Museum and Historic Richmond Town, are invariably happy to hear from members of the community interested in donating items of local historic/aesthetic interest — artifacts and art, correspondence and ephemera.

Still, they can't accept anything and everything, much as they might like to. "Very few institutions can take everything they're offered," said Maxine Friedman, chief curator at Historic Richmond.

"Storage is limited, naturally," she added, "and so are the resources required to care for things properly. But we do love to hear from people with ties to the community."

SMALLER IS BETTER

A private donor's bequest recently enlarged, by about 3200 specimens, the museum's unusual collection of "micro-mounts," which are tiny mineral specimens, so small that they can only be appreciated under a microscope.

For rock hounds who simply enjoy looking at, studying and owning minerals, tiny specimens offer the advantage of convenience. They don't take up a lot of space.

But even more important, very small specimens may exhibit the perfect structure, often crystalline, that excites collectors. "Large pieces get banged up," explained the museum's science curator Ed Johnson. "But the smaller you go the more perfection you find."

Johnson speaks from experience, as a micro-mount collector himself. The metropolitan area is a good place for mineral fans because it offers easy access to places like Sussex County N.J. an old mining area world-renowned for its deposits of fluorescent minerals.

A hundred years ago, Manhattan was actually a great place to find rare minerals, Johnson, said, because the deep excavations required to build the subway system brought up quantities of unusual minerals.

Today, visitors can admire some of the Staten Island Museum's 5,000 micro-mounts in the geology section on the first floor of the St. George building.