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Frank Hadley Ginn & Cornelia Root Ginn Foundation

PROMINENT FAMILY FOUNDATION CONVERTS TO CLEVELAND FOUNDATION SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION TO ADDRESS EDUCATION; COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NEEDS

As art collectors with an eye for impressionist masterpieces and other European art, early 20th century Clevelanders Frank Hadley Ginn and Cornelia Root Ginn enjoyed meeting with New York art dealers at their home in Gates Mills. With each purchase, they were curating Cleveland history

modern art dealers. He kept the family appraised of upcoming works and good prices, and dealers would visit the Ginn home to demonstrate artwork in certain settings.

“It’s a mystery how they became interested in art, and how they developed the ability to know what

Frank and Cornelia’s art collection, as well as their passion for the Cleveland community, was passed on to their four children, Francis, Marian, Alexander (Sandy) and Barbara. Over the years, several of the paintings were sold or donated, including a handful of pieces given to the Cleveland Museum of Art. One of the donated paintings, “Mother and Child,” is regarded as one of Renoir’s best pastels.

Their son Sandy would follow in his father’s footsteps and join Jones Day in 1938 to practice there for 40 years. Also, in 1938, Sandy married Helen Vilas, a member of a prominent Cleveland family, and they would have four children: Frank, Mary, Patty and Walter.



Cornelia Root Ginn



Frank Hadley Ginn



Current Ginn Foundation trustees (front row) Mary Ginn, Walter Ginn and Patty Feeney and (back row) Peter Ginn, Anne Ginn, Meredith Carr and Tara Feeney

and laying the groundwork for what would become an active and engaged local family foundation.

Both born in the mid-1800s, Cornelia’s family ran the Root Dry Goods store in downtown Cleveland. Frank was born in Clyde, Ohio, and came to Cleveland for a legal apprenticeship after attending Kenyon College. The first firm that he worked for merged with another to create Tolles, Hogsett, Ginn and Morley, a forerunner to Jones Day. In 1913, Frank was appointed managing partner, a position which he held until shortly before his death in 1938. While Frank was practicing law during a period of great prosperity in Cleveland, Cornelia was raising four children, staying active in the faith community, and, to ensure the best education for her children, maintaining a correspondence with Madame Montessori. This even led to establishing an early Montessori school in the Ginn attic.

At the time impressionism was being introduced in America, the Ginns formed a relationship with Paul Durand-Ruel, one of the first

was really good,” said grandson Walter Ginn. “The collection was considered an excellent representation of a variety of impressionist artists.”

In addition to their passion for art, the Ginns loved classical music. Frank was one of the founders of the Musical Arts Association, and at the request of his close friend John Severance, chaired the construction committee for Severance Hall. Frank and Cornelia also hosted “musicales” several Sundays each year in their home for orchestra members and visiting musicians. Their guest book is even signed by Maurice Ravel, who played on a piano that is still in the family.

Following their deaths in the late 1930s,



Alexander (Sandy) and Helen Vilas Ginn’s children, Frank Ginn, Patty Feeney, Walter Ginn and Mary Ginn

“Throughout their marriage, Helen and Sandy gave generously of their time and money to many area organizations and causes,” Walter said.

In the early ‘90s, about the time that the paintings would have been passed

to the third generation, Helen and Sandy’s children began encouraging their parents to auction the art for a charitable endowment. Nearly 10 years before Sandy’s passing, the paperwork was drafted to establish the Frank Hadley Ginn and Cornelia Root Ginn Charitable Trust, which would be seeded by the sale of the art.

In May 2000, the five remaining paintings were sold at Christie’s major spring sale for about \$4 million, and Helen and Sandy’s children became the first charitable trustees. Over the last 17 years, the family foundation has awarded 309 grants to 99 organizations, totaling more than \$2.7 million. The grants focus on the education and healthcare needs of low-income individuals, primarily in Cuyahoga County.

Over time, as there was interest and available seats, Ginn spouses and other family members were added as trustees. In 2009, the next generation began to participate as non-trustee grant reviewers, learning about the organization and the family’s process for determining awards. The trustees may review as many as 50 proposals twice a year, drafting and circulating written recommendations and holding two days of in-person meetings.

“When we meet to consider requests, we do so with the firm conviction that we are fulfilling the wishes of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents,” said second-generation trustee Meredith Carr.

In recent years, the Ginn family realized that there was an emerging need to “reinvent” the foundation. Three of the

four original trustees—all but Walter—and each of the grandchildren were living outside of Cleveland.

“Our first trustees grew up in Cleveland and were pretty knowledgeable about the nonprofit landscape,” said Patty Feeney, Ginn Foundation President. “But we were concerned about how future trustees would carry on our grantmaking without that insight.”

The family turned to the Cleveland Foundation as a charitable partner, recently converting the family foundation into a Supporting Organization, which would essentially operate as a “foundation within a foundation.”

“The Cleveland Foundation offers a level of flexibility allowing future generations to be involved and supported by the structure and expertise of foundation staff,” said Tara Feeney, another second-generation trustee.

The Cleveland Foundation will assist the family with reviewing grant proposals, investing the dollars for increased future giving and providing administrative support. As planned, the family’s next batch of grants will begin having an impact in summer 2018.

“It’s remarkable that the Ginn family’s artwork remains a charitable source for the community 80 years after Frank and Cornelia’s passing,” said Kaye Ridolfi, Cleveland Foundation Senior Vice President of Advancement. “The ink is definitely not dry on this amazing local history and family legacy that we look forward to continuing in perpetuity.”

To learn more about giving through the Cleveland Foundation, please call 877-554-5054.

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