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Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1954-1977

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[[newspaper article clipping]]

^[[[CYT, Sept. 23, 1955]]]

[[2 columns]]

[[column 1]]

SAMUEL H. KRESS,
MERCHANT, DEAD

Founder of Department Store Chain, 92, Had Collections of Paintings
and Sculpture

DONATED TO MUSEUMS

Set Up Foundation in 1929 to Promote Welfare and Progress of
Humanity

Samuel Henry Kress, founder and chairman of S. H. Kress & Co., who
was one of the nation's outstanding art collectors, died early yesterday
at the age of 92 in his home at 1020 Fifth Avenue. He had been in poor
health for a decade.

From profits made on 5-10 and 25-cent sales, Mr. Kress amassed a
fortune and spent a large part of it buying art treasures from abroad. He
bestowed many of his collections on American museums.

He came of old American stock, a descendant of Carl Kress, who
emigrated from German in 1752 to settle in Pennsylvania. He was the
son of John Franklin Kress, Civil War veteran, and Margaret Connor
Kress. Mr. Kress was born in Cherryville, Northampton County, Pa.,
July 23, 1863, three weeks after his namesake uncle had been killed at
Gettysburg.

After completing high school, which he combined with odd jobs, selling
papers, clerking and working quarries, Mr. Kress began teaching at \$25
a month. At 24 he bought a stationery and novelty store in Nanticoke,
Pa., and a little later a wholesale stationery and toy business at Wilkes-
Barre.

His next move was to develop the chain-store idea, starting in Memphis,
Tenn., in 1896. Within four years Mr. Kress had twelve stores and
moved his headquarters to New York.

[[bold]] Acquired 5th Avenue Store [[/bold]]

The organization established and led by Mr. Kress now operates 264
stores in twenty-nine states and Hawaii and employs more than 22,000
persons. Sales last year amounted to \$169,416,-\$47.

Among Mr. Kress' associates were his brothers, Claude W. Kress, who
died in 1940, and Rush H. Kress.

In 1934 he acquired a long-term lease on property at the corner of Fifth
Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street, once the home of the Wendel sisters, for
a Fifth Avenue outlet. It was in this store's window that Mr. Kress
exhibited in the Christmas season of 1938 a painting titled "Adoration of



the Shepherds," attributed to Giorgione.

This was only one hundreds of paintings that Mr. Kress had bought on his many trips abroad, or as they appeared on the market here, from the collections of other wealthy art patrons. The painting had been offered to Andrew Mellon by Lord Duveen for \$750,000.

Mr. Kress specialized in the works of the Italian masters, many of which adorned his duplex apartment on the top of a cooperative building.

In the summer of 1939, Mr. Kress donated a collection to the National Gallery of Art, then being built in Washington as Mr. Mellon's gift to the nation. The collection contained large part of it buying art stock, a descendant of Carl 375 rare paintings and eighteen pieces of sculpture, from practically al the important painters of Italian schools from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. Lord Duveen, who had sold some of the pieces to Mr. Kress, valued the collection at \$25,000,000.

Gifts Aided National Gallery

Critics said Mr. Kress' donations, which totaled more than 600 paintings and sculptures, brought the gallery nearly to a par with the great galleries of Europe. Mr. Kress also gave Italian Renaissance paintings valued at more than \$1,000.00 to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Earlier, he had given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art a collection of antique velvets and other works of art.

Some of his gifts were made through the Kress Foundation, which he founded in 1929 "to promote the moral, physical and mental welfare and progress of the human race." One donation was of \$8,000,000 to the New York University-Bellevue Hospital Medical Center for post-graduate medical education.

In the last five years, through the foundation, Mr. Kress set up collections of art works at Tucson, Ariz; Birmingham, Ala.; Portland, Ore.; Seattle; Kansas City, Mo.; New Orleans, Tulsa, Olka.; Houston, Tex.; Columbia, S. C.; Denver, San Francisco and Honolulu.

In 1929 he gave Primer Benito Mussolini of Italy a check to pay for the restoration of crumbling architectural treasures. Among these were the palace at Mantua, the Church of St. John the Evangelist at Ravenna, and the single Doric column, remnant of a temple in Cotrona, a Calabrian town dating to the sixth century B. C. Italy made him Grand Officer of the Order of the Crown.

Between 1927 and 1946 Mr. Kress and the Kress Foundation gave the Metropolitan Museum of Art nine paintings, a number of textiles and an ancient Persian court carpet.

Paintings given in 1927 were "Crucifixion," by an unnamed artist of the Florentine school in the second half of the fourteenth century; "Peacocks," by Melchior d'Hondecoeter, Dutch school (1636-1695) and "Madonna and Child," by Guido Palmerucci, Italian (active 1315-1349). "Madonna and Child," by Luca di Tomme, Italian (active 1356-1389), was given in 1928.

A painting given in 1932 was c [[cut off]] "Crucifixion," by an unnamed m
[[/column 1]]

[[column 2]]

[[image: black and white photograph of Samuel H. Kress]]

1939

[[bold]] Samuel H. Kress [[/bold]]

[[double-line]]

artist of the Italo-Byzantine school, sixteenth century.

In 1936 the museum received from Mr. Kress "The Meeting" by Pietro Longhi. In 1942, he donated the Velzquez painting "Cardinal Gaspar de Borja y Velasco."

Mr. Kress donated twenty-six Italian textiles of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, including many velvets, in 1946. A 1937 gift by the foundation was the triptych, "Madonna and Child, St. Philip, St. Agnes," painted by the Italian Bernard di Giovanni Bragadin (active 1438-1473). The same year the foundation gave "St. Peter, Martyr, healing the leg of a youth," by Antonio Vivarini, Italian (active 1441-1464).

In 1946 the Anhalt Carpet, a sixteenth century Persian medallion and Arabesque court carpet was given by the foundation.

Mr. Kress was elected a benefactor of the museum in 1928. At his death he was its oldest trustee.

[[bold]] Trustee of Metropolitan [[/bold]]

Mr. Kress was bachelor. He was president and a trustee of the National Gallery of Art, and a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation. He was a member of the Military Order, Loyal Legion of the United States, Sons of the Revolution, Sons of the Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution and the Masons.

A funeral service will be held Saturday morning. Burial will be in Woodlawn Cemetery, the Bronx.

Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States, as chairman of the board of trustees of the National Gallery of Art, issued the following statement yesterday on learning of the death of Mr. Kress:

"The National Gallery of Art has suffered a great loss in the death of its president, Mr. Samuel H. Kress. He gave his important collection of paintings and sculptures to the Gallery before the institution was just opened in 1941.

"Since that time Mr. Kress and the Kress Foundation under the devoted leadership of his brother, Rush H. Kress, have added many beautiful and rare works of arts which have greatly increased the prestige of the National Gallery throughout the world and have provided enjoyment for millions of Americans.

All of have reason to be grateful for what Mr. Kress accomplished for his

country and its people." [[/column 2]]

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