



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Archives of American Art*

## **Transcript of an interview of Packard by Louise Gilbert, 1979**

Extracted on Apr-19-2024 03:48:37

**The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.**

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website ([transcription.si.edu](https://transcription.si.edu)), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the Archives of American Art as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the Archives of American Art website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact Archives of American Art or [transcribe@si.edu](mailto:transcribe@si.edu)

For more information on this project and related material, contact the Archives of American Art. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

[[left marginalia]]  
descrip 8  
473  
Jackson ST

McElroy

Amy Schechter

historic  
landmark

Giacomo Patri

labor day  
[[?]]  
Frank Cerda

Wholesale  
produce

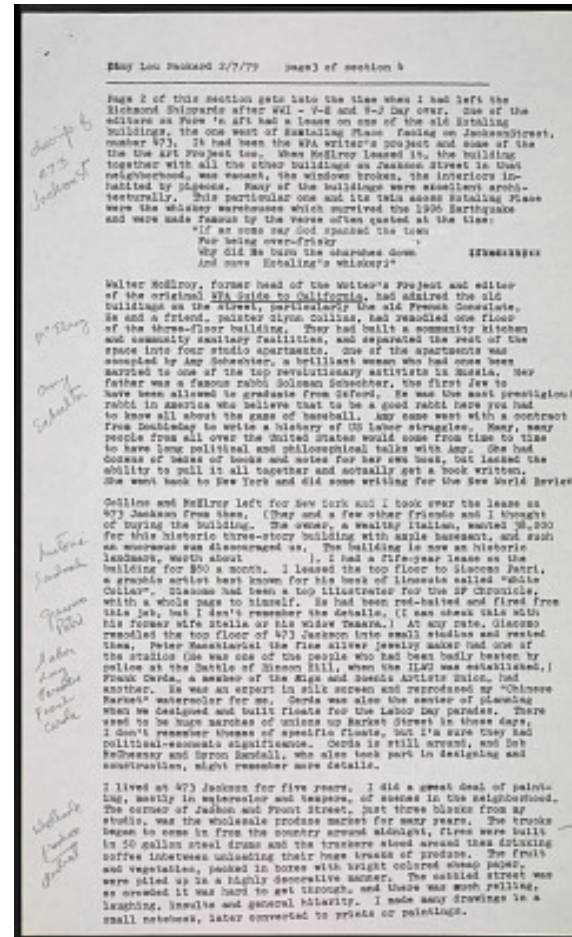
-----  
[[?]]

[[end marginalia]]

Page 2 of this section gets into the time when I had left the Richmond Shipyards after WWI - V-E and V-J Day over. One of the editors on Fore 'n Aft had a lease on one of the old Hotaling buildings, the one west of Hotaling Place facing on Jackson Street, number 473. It had been the WPA writer's project and some of the the Art Project too. When McElroy leased it, the building together with all the other buildings on Jackson Street in that neighborhood, was vacant, the windows broken, the interiors in-habited by pigeons. Many of the building were excellent archi-tecturally. This particular one and its twin across Hotaling Place were the whiskey warehouse which survived the 1906 Earthquake and were made famous by the verse often quoted at the time:

"If as some say God spanked the town  
For being over-frisky  
Why did He burn the churches down [[crossed]] find [[crossed-out]]  
and save Hotaling's whiskey?"

Walter McElroy, former head of the Writer's Project and editor of the original WPA Guide to California, had admired the old buildings on the street, particularly the old French Consulate. He and a friend, apinter Glynn Collins, had remodled one florr of the three-floor building. They had built a community kitchen and community sanitary facilities, and separated the rest of the space into four studio apartments. One of the apartments was occupied by Amy Schechter, a brilliant woman who had once been married to one of the top revolutionary activist in Russia. Her father was a famous rabbi Soloman Schechter, the first Jew to have allowed to graduate from Oxford. He was he most prestigious rabbi in America who believe that to be a good rabbi here you had to know all about the game of baseball. Amy came west with a contract from Doubleday to write a history of US labor



struggles. Many, many people from all over the United States would come from time to time to have long political and philosophical talks with Amy. She had dozens of boxes of book and notes for her own book, but lacked the ability to pull it all together and actually get a book written. She went back to New York and did some writing for the New World Review.

Collins and McElroy left for New York and I took over the lease on 473 Jackson from them. (They and a few other friends and I thought of buying the building. The owner, a wealthy Italian, wanted 38,000 for this historic three-story building with ample basement, and such an enormous sum discouraged us. The building is now an historic landmark, worth about

). I had a five-year lease on the building for \$80 a month. I leased the top floor to Giacomo Patri, a graphic artist better known for his book of linocuts called "White Collar". Giacomo had been a top illustrator for the SF Chronicle, with a whole page to himself. He had been red-baited and fired from this job, but I don't remember the details. (I can check this with his former wife Stella or his widow Tamara.) At any rate, Giacomo remodeled the top floor of 473 Jackson into small studios and rented them. Peter Macchiarini the fine silver jewelry maker had one of the studios (He was one of the people who had been badly beaten by police at the Battle of Rincon Hill, when the ILWU was established.)

Fran Cerda, a member of the Sing and Scenic Artist Union, had another. He was an expert in sil screen and reproduced my "Chinese Market" watercolor for me. Cerda was also the center of planning when we designed and built floats for the Labor Day parades. There used to be huge marches of unions up Market Street in those days.

I don't remember themes of specific floats, but I'm sure they had political-economic significance. Cerda is still around, and Bob McChesney and Byron Randall, who also took part in designing and construction, might remember more details.

I lived at 473 Jackson for five years. I did a great deal of painting, mostly in watercolor and tempera, of scenes in the neighborhood. The corner of Jackson and Front Street, just three blocks from my studio, was the wholesale produce market for many years. The trucks began to come in from the country around midnight, fires were built in 50 gallon steel drums and the truckers stood around them drinking coffee in between unloading their huge trucks of produce. The fruit and vegetables, packed in boxes with bright colored cheap paper, were piled up in a highly decorative manner. The cobbled street was so crowded it was hard to get through, and there was much yelling, laughing, insults and general hilarity. I made many drawings in a small notebook, later converted to prints or paintings.

Transcript of an interview of Packard by Louise Gilbert, 1979  
Transcribed and Reviewed by Digital Volunteers  
Extracted Apr-19-2024 03:48:37



## Smithsonian Institution

*Archives of American Art*

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: [www.si.edu](http://www.si.edu)

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)