Inventory of the Mary Louise Lawser Collection, 1941-1957

Collection number: MS 19

California State Railroad Museum Library

Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary
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Collection Description
The Mary Louise Lawser Collection consists of correspondence, pamphlets and brochures concerning her railroad work, photographs and transparencies of her work, and ephemera. The major portion of the collection, however, consists of preliminary sketches and colored renderings for murals and panels to be installed in cars of the Seaboard Air Line and on the California Zephyr and Denver Zephyr.

Historical Background
Mary Louise Lawser (1908-October 30, 1985) began her study of fine art at the Pennsylvania Museum School in Philadelphia. Later she attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and L'École des Beaux Arts, where she studied
sculpture. The winner of a number of prizes for painting and sculpture, Mary Lawser worked for architect Paul Cret in the 1940s, and during this period she completed many decorations for streamlined trains of the New York Central, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and Seaboard Air Line, as well as for the famed California Zephyr train of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, Denver & Rio Grande Western, and Western Pacific lines. In preparing these decorations, she relied on her skills in painting, sculpture, and linoleum and wood carving. In later years, Mary Lawser produced decorations for the Burlington's Denver Zephyr. In addition, her work appeared in public works projects in New York City and Philadelphia.

Box 1, Folder 1
Mary Louise Lawser biographical materials

Folder 2-3
Correspondence, 1941-1957: incoming letters and copies of replies, schedules, receipts, invoices, photocopies, and miscellany. Includes correspondence with the Budd Company, and the Philadelphia architectural firm of Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson, regarding art work for Budd-built railroad passenger cars.

Folder 4

Folder 5
1941 brochure on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe train El Capitan showing the lounge car mural by Mary Louise Lawser.

Folder 6-7
Twenty four 3-1/4x4-1/4 inch color transparencies of completed murals by Mary Louise Lawser for the California Zephyr

Folder 8
Twelve 5x7 inch color prints of the completed murals for the California Zephyr

Folder 9
Six 3x5 inch color prints and one color transparency of decoration designs and one photocopy of a drawing of a passenger car interior, prepared by Mary Louise Lawser for the Seaboard Air Line

Box 2
Sample swatches of wall covering and upholstery material for the California Zephyr

Three 11x14 inch black and white photographs of the interior of the El Capitan lounge car showing the mural by Mary Louise Lawser.

Color renderings for carved linoleum panels for Seaboard Air Line Budd- built coaches, 1945-1947, by Mary Louise Lawser. Twenty 15 x 20 inch panels with two 6x8 inch renderings per panel:

Budd No. 68-28238, 68-28239
A. Seminole Indian hunter;
B. Seminole Indian frog hunter

Budd No. 68-28240, 68-28241
A. Great blue heron;
B. Little blue heron

Budd No. 68-28244, 68-28245
A. Three Seminole women walking;
B. Three Seminole women, one holding a baby

Budd No. 68-28246, 68-28247
A. Two black necked stilts;
B. One black necked stilt sitting on nest

Budd No. 68-28248, 68-28249
A. Picking cotton;
B. Loading cotton

Budd No. 68-28252, 68-28253
A. Night booming cereus;
B. Water lilies with dragonfly

Budd No. 68-28254, 68-28255
A. Flamingo and baby bird;
B. Two flamingos on nests

Budd No. 68-28256, 68-28257
A. Two Seminole women grating sweet potatoes;
B. Seminole woman and girl sorting cloth

Budd No. 68-28258, 68-28259
A. Seminole woman sewing;
B. Seminole woman washing clothes  
Budd No. 68-28262, 68-28263  
A. Florida beach scene;  
B. Florida beach scene  
Budd No. 68-28268, 68-28269  
A. Confederate officer and girl dancing;  
B. Confederate soldier and girl dancing  
Budd No. 68-28270, 68-28271  
A. French angelfish;  
B. Spade fish  
Budd No. 68-28272, 68-28273  
A. Horse racing scene;  
B. Horse racing scene  
Budd No. 68-28274, 68-28275  
A. Sponge diver with hook;  
B. Sponge diver with net  
Budd No. 68-28280, 68-28281  
A. Two pelicans flying;  
B. One pelican standing  
Budd No. 68-28282, 68-28283  
A. Three tropical fish;  
B. Four shark remora  
Budd No. 68-28286, 68-28287  
A. Black and yellow rock beauties, sea urchin;  
B. Angel fish and coral growth  
Budd No. 68-28288, 68-28289  
A. Seminole boy riding on tortoise;  
B. Seminole boy leading pet alligator  
Budd No. 68-28290, 68-28291  
A. Seminole boy dancing with crocodile;  
B. Seminole boy holding rooster  
Budd No. 68-28296, 68-28297  
A. Male pelican;  
B. Female pelican with a young bird  
No numbers  
A. Passion flower;  
B. Hibiscus  

Two unfinished designs

Box 3

Untitled perspective study, drawing

Three 15x20 inch panels containing the preliminary color renderings for murals for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Denver Zephyr coffee shop car, 1956:
Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson Nos. 680-2248, 680-2249, "Chuck Wagon"  
Two 8x10 photographs of the completed murals

Twenty 15x20 inch panels containing preliminary color renderings for murals for the California Zephyr Budd-built Vista Dome coaches, 1947-1948:
Budd No. 517-862  
"Gold panning in California"  
Budd No. 517-862  
"Gold panning in California" (Photocopy)  
Budd No. 517-864  
"The Mormons settle the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847"  
Budd No. 517-865  
"Mission Santa Clara"  
Budd No. 517-865  
"Mission Santa Clara" (Photocopy)  
Budd No. 517-866  
"Mission Dolores"
Budd No. 517-866
"Mission Dolores" (Photocopy)
Budd No. 517-867
"Mormon emigration"
Budd No. 517-867
"Mormon emigration" (Photocopy with revisions)
Budd No. 517-889
"Forty-niners mining on the Stanislaus [Feather] River"
Budd No. 517-890
"Pony Express"
Budd No. 517-891
"Building a sod house on the prairie"
Budd No. 517-891
"Building a sod house on the prairie" (Revised sketch)
Budd No. 517-898
"Breaking sod on the prairie"
Budd No. 517-899
"Fur traders rendezvous"
Budd No. 517-900
"Fort Laramie"
Budd No. 517-913
"Sutter's Fort" (with revised sketch)
Budd No. 517-914
"Covered wagon train following the Platte River on the California Trail"
Budd No. 517-915
"Central City"
Budd No. 517-916
"Pike's Peak or bust"
Budd No. 517-917
"Denver and Rio Grande Western Narrow Gauge"
Budd No. 517-918
"Zebulon Pike's first view of peak later to carry his name"