

## **Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton**

### **Section 13, Pages 361 - 390**

A series of research correspondence from the Robert Taft collection relating to frontier artists. Robert Taft (1894-1955) was a professor of chemistry and author on the subjects of photography and art. The artists included here are Herman W. Hansen, Alexander F. Harmer, Matthew Hastings, William J. Hays, Gwynn Harris Heap, Joseph Heger, Thomas Hill, Ransome Gillett Holdridge (or Ransom Holdredge), William H. Holmes, Arthur Boyd Houghton, John D. Howland, and William Rich Hutton.

Date: 1930-1955

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## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

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MALCOLM GLENN WYER  
LIBRARIAN

January 9, 1940

Dr. Robert Taft  
Department of Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Dr. Taft:

I am afraid that answers to your requests are somewhat slow in getting started. We have been shifting the collection all around and we are also having much of it recataloged which has been keeping us in turmoil.

I know that very little of what I send you will be of any use but one never knows what the little will be. The newspaper material is indexed, not very satisfactorily, thru a W.P.A. project. We also have a "labor of love" index made by a rather queer old lady who takes all the "nice" people but leaves out all the outlaws, much to our sorrow. Since she was an artist she has caught many items of that sort in her very useful but decidedly unsystematic work. These help out a rather general index which has been made, also unsystematically, by the library. So we often like to gather the material together and type it for our clipping file as it is so much more useful in that way.

I hardly know what to say about sketches of early Denver. There are a few drawing made by residents and most of them are drawn from memory. A few drawings, such as those in Richardson's book, can be almost anything from photographs to imagination. We have never found any photographs which are like them but, without doubt, there were photographs made which we do not have. A picture of Denver in the New York Illustrated News of Oct. 4, 1862 says it was a sketch sent by a correspondent. We cannot find any mention of H.C. Warren.

I am sending you the Mathews material this time and I have included a few duplicates of Jack Howland material. You may have found all you want about him but I can send you our clipping book if you need any more. There is a clipping from a Boston paper and one from Zanesville, Ohio, and some newspaper copies of quite a few of his pictures.

I will send you the other pictures and probably will run across a few more things some place.

We do not have A. D. Richardson's letters from Denver in 1860 and we will certainly be very glad to have copies if you have them. However we do feel that to have people write such books as yours is all the return we need for the little help we may be able to give.

Sincerely yours,

*Ina J. Auler*



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2317 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
January 14, 1940

Dr. Robert Taft,  
Department of Chemistry,  
The University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Dr. Taft:

I am sorry to have appeared discourteous in not replying to your letter of November 23, relative to the life of my father, the late Captain, John D. Howland. A traffic accident in Los Angeles, which resulted in the death of my brother, Forster, has been the cause of my delay in writing to you.

The book that you have now in preparation sounds most interesting and should be of immense educational and cultural value. I enjoyed looking over the folder which you enclosed, describing something of "Photography and the American Scene".

Part of the data you ask for, in the form of a short biographical sketch, I can give you quite readily. Other parts I am not so sure of. My father's life was extremely varied and most glamorous. A scout in the Indian wars, a soldier in the Civil War, a member of the Indian Peace Commission - his background was such as to make his knowledge of the West, which he recorded on his canvases, extremely accurate. Yet, as critics have so often pointed out, he brought to his work a highly trained hand and mind, for he studied for many years (at two different periods) with some of the finest masters of the Old World; not only in France, but also in England and Italy. He was well acquainted with Edouard De Taille, Meissonier and others, studying art with some of the same teachers. His paintings were not confined to western animal and Indian subjects entirely. He was extremely versatile, and painted many portraits and landscapes as well. Several years were spent in portrait work in old Mexico, and some time in Utah, and I understand that one of the pictures painted at that time was the portrait of the eldest son of Brigham Young. It may also interest you to know that for a period of eleven years, (through the Civil War and thereafter) Captain Howland was sketch artist for Harper's and Leslie's Weeklies.

On account of the fact that I have but just recently returned from Los Angeles, and have not had time to look over my files, it will be a few days before I can send you the statistical information asked for. As to who are the owners of paintings and as to where the paintings are, may I say that I am quite ignorant on this subject, as the paintings are all over the world. However, I do know where several very fine ones are, and will check the names and addresses, and send them to you.

Very sincerely,

*John D. Howland Charles (son of John D. Howland)*

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

July 22, 1940

Mrs. A. J. Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

You will recall our correspondence of last January, relative to the work of your father, Captain John D. Howland. Have you been able to assemble any biographical material for me? I am anxious to get my data together so that I can begin writing in the fall. I am particularly anxious to get Captain Howland's portrait and two or three photographs of his representative western paintings.

Many thanks for any help that you can give me.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
August 7, 1940.

Dr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Dr. Taft:

In reply to your letter of recent date, may I say that I have assembled some biographical data concerning my father, John D. Howland, which I shall be glad to send you very soon.

Concerning the portrait and two or three photographs that you desire, I must explain, that although my sister and brother are willing to have you use these in your work, that they represent a part of the John D. Howland Private Collection, of which I am the Trustee. Over a period of some time I have been sorting this collection, and assembling data, with view to an exhaustive biography concerning my father. I had hoped this spring to have been able to go ahead on such a biography through the financial aid of one of the Foundations. This, however, did not materialize, so that any work that I may do along this line may not be completed for many years, and then by some one in the family other than myself. For this reason, I believe you will understand that I can not furnish portraits or photographs in any way that would make their later use prohibitive to us, in books or publications as we see fit to use them. If there is some way to say in your book "By permission of the John D. Howland Collection" or in some other way, wherein rights to these specific photographs would remain in our hands, I shall be glad to send them on. Of course, with the understanding that the originals be returned to us.

May I suggest, it might be quite profitable for you to pay a visit to Denver before your school begins. I shall be most happy to show you what is in my possession in the way of pictures etc, in this collection. You might wish to photograph some of these for your use in your book. It would also give me great pleasure to take you to visit the State Historical Museum and other places where many of our things relating to our Collection are on display. I believe that I could get permission from different owners for you to be able to photograph some of my father's most famous paintings.

I shall await word from you, and trust that you will find a way to come to Denver in order to further the work you are doing.

Very sincerely,

*Kate Howland Charles*  
(Mrs Alfred J Charles)

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

August 10, 1940

Mrs. Alfred J. Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

Thank you for your kind letter of August 7th. I shall be happy to give credit in any form you may desire for illustrative material used in connection with your father's work. I was in Denver for a week in the middle of July doing work at the Public Library, the Historical Society and the Art Museum. If I had had more time I would have looked you up then. There is a possibility that I will be in Denver again before my book is finished and if I am, I shall be glad to take advantage of your kind invitation to examine the Hawland Collection.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft.

RT/cv



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
September 8, 1940

Dr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Dr. Taft:

I have decided that you will obtain a much better picture of my father, the late Captain John D. Howland, and the scope of his work, if you are able to review clippings in my possession. With a view to helping along this line, I am enclosing herewith a page from the Denver Post, July 30, 1908, a page from the Rocky Mountain News, July 27, 1908. I am also enclosing a clipping from the Daily News, Denver, Colo. August 1, 1908. This last paper just mentioned is a magnificent account of Captain Howland and his wide recognition by Alfred Damon Runyon. I believe that these papers will give you a wider conception of the man and the artist and the wide fame he enjoyed, more than anything than I might write. I am sorry not to send clippings from the New York Times and the Chicago papers, but most of these are in scrap books and I cannot send them. I am sure that you will realize that the enclosed clippings are very precious to me and that as soon as you have gotten the wanted information from them that you will return them to me as they are a part of our collection, *also the magazine, picture & other clippings enclosed*

Since owners of paintings die, and pictures become widely scattered, may I state that the names of the owners of my father's paintings as stated in the clippings are no longer accurate, as many of these owners are dead, and the pictures may have changed hands. Mrs. H. H. Tamm, whose husband was an owner of the Denver Post is the present owner of the picture "Greed". This picture was bought by Senator Simon Guggenheim as a gift to the Tamms. Senator Thomas Patterson bought "In the Arroya" one of my father's most famous paintings. This is now owned by the President of the Western Seed Company. The name has at present slipped my mind, but I can send it to you if important. Senator Simon Guggenheim has two very fine paintings in his New York Office. Another painting is in the Watertown Library at Watertown, Conn. The paintings being all over the world it is hard for me to give much definite information. The School of Mines at Golden has a fine elk picture; the Colorado State Teacher's College has also. You doubtless saw the painting of the buffalo at the waterhole in the Historical Building in Denver. My father's paintings sold for considerable money, and were bought largely by very wealthy, art-appreciative men, who happened to stop off in Denver to see his paintings, which were always on display at the Brown Palace Hotel.

Concerning a few photographs: I can send you a photograph of the "White Captive" "In the Arroya" and the picture entitled "On Guard". Or I can send you a photograph of Berthoud Pass (an Elk picture) which is owned by the School of Mines.



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Since these pictures were painted just at the turn of the century, however, 1901-1902, I am at a loss to know how to help you, since your book is of the period of 1800 to 1900. As a matter of fact, my father's work never ceased growing and just prior to his accidental death in 1914 at the age of 71, he had turned out three of his very finest paintings. One I hold, one is owned by my sister, and one by the family of my deceased brother. I have, however, "The Manifest Destiny" which was done in 1891 or thereabouts. I also hold two paintings which were done while he was a student in Paris, both of which were commended most highly. These, however, are not photographed. I also hold several portraits, which work he excelled in, and which was done by him prior to 1900 both here, abroad and in old Mexico. These, however are not photographed, and should you want one of these, you would have to photograph them yourself,

the first  
It may interest you to know that my father was President of the very first Art Club in Denver. The present Art Club, which I believe now terms itself the "The Artist's Club" and which Chappell House as the home of the Denver Art Museum is the outgrowth, claims to be the first Art Club in Denver, stating in "The Echo" for June 1926, that it was organized December 26, 1893, and that Mrs. Emma Richardson Cherry was the first President.

The Denver Art Club was organized prior to 1887. I have in my possession the Articles of Incorporation of this Club, and although no date is stated, I hold a letter written by Frank Hall, Secretary of the Denver Chamber of Commerce, under date of August 4, 1887, written to my father in which he addresses him as President of the Denver Art Club, and in which he asks him to preside at a coming exhibition. If these are of interest to you in your book I shall be glad to send a copy of the letter and ~~xxxxxxx~~ an original Articles of Incorporation. This little pamphlet is most interesting as Alexis Comparet, R. H. Tallant, Chas P. Adams, and many other early day artists are named therein as members.

Concerning a picture of my father, I am enclosing one herewith in full Indian Regalia, and which was taken in the year 1887 in Washington, D. C., at which time he was under appointment as a Secretary of the Indian Peace Commission. I will also send you a more representative one from the standpoint of the man as an artist and a cultured gentleman, taken about 1883 or 1884, shortly before his marriage.

I believe the information contained herein is what you desire. However, on a separate sheet I am making some notations for you.

Captain Howland is a book all by himself. It is hard to condense him.

I feel sure that what you have to say about my father will be complimentary, as I feel it cannot help but be, and I shall look forward with pleasure to the completion of your work.

Very sincerely,

*Kate Howland Charles*



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

### Notations for Dr. Taft.

1. Captain John D. Howland was the son of Joseph Howland and Mary Forsythe. He was a direct descendant of John Howland of the Mayflower for whom he was named. His parents lived in Zanesville, Ohio, his grandparents having pioneered into Ohio with Zane, for whom Zanesville was named. Mary Forsythe, his mother, was brought as a small child from Ireland, being Scotch Irish, and a member of the MacCallister Clan. (I am not sure about the spelling of MacCallister.) Captain Howland's people were plain people, and good people- what is often called "the backbone of the American Nation. They were also adventurous, pioneering people, having drifted into Ohio as pioneers from New Bedford, Mass. Joseph Howland was Captain of a boat on the Mississippi River, and it was always his desire that his son follow in his footsteps. He had no tolerance with art as a profession, and yet from the time John D. Howland was a very little boy, art was the end and aim of all existence.

John D. Howland received a common school education, and was a pupil at Marietta College. As near as I can figure it out, it was a preparatory school, on account of the fact that he was only fourteen when he ran away from home after an altercation with his father.

2. Did I tell you that my father designed the figure for the Civil War Monument which stands just above the steps of the Capitol Building. Should you desire a photograph of this I suggest that you write the Art Department of the Denver Post, for ~~xxxxxxx~~ I believe on Colorado Day, August 1, of last year, a very magnificent picture of this monument appeared in the pictorial section of that paper. It was either taken by Mr. Good or Mr. Gooding, but I am sure that you could receive the desired information from them.

3. John D. Howland married Esther Mary Talmage on January 21, 1884 in Denver, Colorado. Miss Talmage had come to Denver with an ailing sister, and it was here that she met Captain Howland, but recently arrived from Europe, where he had again been studying art not only in France, but also in Italy and England.

Miss Talmage was the daughter of Colonel Daniel Talmage, of New Jersey and New York, who was a cousin of Governor Vroom of New Jersey. Her uncle was T. DeWitt Talmage, the preacher. This family is also a distinguished family, her ancestors having arrived in the United States, and settled in Southampton in 1630.

John D. and Esther M. Talmage had six children. Harry, a newspaper man and writer who died in 1916, at the age of 31; Carrie, who died as an infant; Helen (now Mrs. Harold W. C. Prommel a poet; Kate (myself), Mrs. Alfred J. Charles, who also writes, now and then (principally then); Forster T. Howland, who was killed in a traffic accident in 1939; and Chaffee Howland.



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2317 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
September 11, 1940

Dr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Dr. Taft:

In looking over your letters I find that I have not made clear some of the points you asked me to cover; namely Captain Howland's methods of work.

My father was of the French School of Art. I am writing my brother, Chaffee to obtain for you some information along this line. He studied many years with my father. I know, however, that the French School always blocked out the composition and then first did it in sepia. My brother, however, can help you on this better than I.

Another person, Miss Eddah Hillier, who is an art teacher in the High Schools in Denver, studied with my father. She is very much of an artist herself, and has also studied abroad at many different times. I am asking her for some data concerning the methods of my father's work.

Very truly yours,

*Nate Howland Charles*





## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

September 25, 1940

Mrs. Kate Howland Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

I have copied or made notes on the material concerning your father that you so kindly sent me several weeks ago. You will find the material and the photograph enclosed.

I would very much like to borrow the photographs of "In the Arroya" and the "White Captive" mentioned in your letter of September 8th. Concerning a second photograph of your father, I like the one that appeared in the Denver Post for July 20, 1902 and if a copy of the original photograph is available, might I also borrow that? If you are willing, I would also like to have your "Manifest Destiny" copied. Mr. Cyril F. Norred, 830 18th Street has done some photographic work for me very satisfactorily and if it is agreeable to you I will write him to make the photographs for me.

Do you think that Mrs. Tamman would be willing to have the painting "Greed" copied if a photograph is not already available? There are two other paintings of your father's of which I would like to secure copies "A Frontier Inquest" and "Looking for Trouble". Do you know anything about the originals?

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

Dr. Taft to Mrs. Charles -2-

When you write to me, will you also tell me the exact form of the credit line to be used. Would "Reproduced through the courtesy of Kate Howland Charles" be satisfactory?

Many thanks again for your aid. It is highly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.





## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

[September 1940]

Dear Dr. Taft:

- ✓ 1. Enclosed herewith please find: "The Colorado Magazine" March, 1931 see page 60.
- ✓ 2. Picture of my father, Capt. John D. Howland, in full Indian Regalia, taken in Washington in 1867. (This is a photograph of the original photograph.)
- ✓ 3. A page from the Denver Post, July 20, 1903 "A Picturesque Painter of Savage and Beast."
- ✓ 4. A page from the Rocky Mountain News, Denver, July 27, 1903. "Animal Paintings of the Rocky Mountain Region."
- ✓ 5. A clipping from the Daily News, August 1, 1908. by Alfred Damon Runyon "Captain Jack Howland Fifty Years a Coloradan Today".
- ✓ 6. A Clipping from the Rocky Mountain News concerning death of Captain Howland, September 11, 1914.

Please let me know if there is any data that you need that I have omitted.

Very sincerely,

*Kate Howland Charles*

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2317 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
October 15, 1940

Dr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

My dear Dr. Taft:

Thank you for being so prompt about returning the data which I sent you.

I have arranged with Mr. Hartner, present owner of "In the Arroya" for your man to photograph this picture, at any time we definitely get in touch with him. He would like you to say "Courtesy of Elmer Hartner". I am sorry that I do not have a suitable photo of this picture, but I cannot find one that I think would do.

I have not as yet been able to find out if Mrs. Tamman will be willing to have a photograph made of "Greed". But I think she will be agreeable. Although this has been photographed as the others all have, many times, we have no copy in our possession.

I have tried to get a copy of the photograph of my father at his easel, which was in the Denver Post for July 20, 1903. Joseph Langer was then Post Photographer. He died some years ago, and the Librarian at the Post informed me that since his death, a fire destroyed a great many of the negatives and prints which he took. However, I am sending you a very precious photograph of my father, which I am sure you will feel is even better than the one at the easel. This was taken about 1882 or thereabouts either before or after his second period of study abroad. Please return it as soon as possible as this is the original, and I have no copies of this in my possession. The same is true of "The White Captive". The owner, Mrs. J. W. Ady of Colorado Springs will be happy to have you use her picture in your book. Naturally she too would like the phrase "Courtesy of Mrs. J. W. Ady". Although the photograph I am sending you belongs to our collection and I am sending it on, so as to save you the bother of copying the original painting. This I am sure you will return as soon as possible, as again it is the only one I have.

Would it be too much to ask when you are making copies of these photographs or pictures, would you have an extra print finished for my sister and one for myself.

About the Manifest Destiny. Your photographer may either photograph the picture directly, or the Historical Society will photograph the one they have on display as part of my father's collection. Mr. Hafen said it would cost \$1.50 to have the photograph copied. I should like very much to have a print of this myself, since the print at the Historical Building is the one I owned which was donated at their request.



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

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May I suggest that you should have one of the very fine portraits copied. After all my father was noted for this type of work in the latter part of the 19th century, and practically all his work for five years both in Mexico and Utah was portrait work. As I told you once before, I believe Robert Vose of the Vose Galleries of Boston makes the claim that to him the portrait work is more outstanding than even the animal paintings.

My sister has a fine picture of an early day Judge, Judge Marsh. I have a portrait of a young woman of about 25, entitled "My Aunt Emma" and Tom Ferril of this city, a writer prominent in many circles, has a most lovely one of a young girl. I also hold in my possession the portrait of the "Old Soldier," copy of which was included in the newspaper sent you for July 20, 1902. I believe I told you also that my father painted the portrait of the eldest son of Brigham Young.

Please let me know your pleasure along the line of the portraits.

Regarding a "Frontier Inquest" and "Looking for Trouble". I am sorry I have no copies. I presume the original of the former is still in England. They were very celebrated paintings.

Concerning a credit line for us, please say "Reproduced through the Courtesy of the Trustees of the John D. Howland Collection" or if that is too long, just "Courtesy of the Trustees of the John D. Howland Collection."

Please advise me concerning your photographer and when I should arrange about the pictures.

Very sincerely,

*Tate Howland Charles*

P.S. Mr. Ferril is Thomas Hornsby Ferril  
the poet of national note.

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
May 26, 1941.

Mr. Frank A. Kemp,  
President, Board of Trustees,  
Denver Art Museum,  
Denver, Colorado.

My dear Sir:

It has come to my attention that some of the staff members of the Denver Art Museum are not properly informed concerning the life and technical art training of John D. Howland, noted Western animal painter.

Several prominent owners of Howland paintings have spoken to me indignantly of the fact that in recent lectures, Captain Howland was called a "cowboy artist" a "local artist" and that he had "very little technical art training". They feel that such careless attention to the real facts has a tendency to discredit the artist and to undervalue his paintings.

I took this matter up recently with Mr. Bartlett, giving him a thumbnail biography of this artist, but I have learned that erroneous information still persists.

Captain Howland, my father, has been dead almost twenty-seven years; therefore, it is but natural that some of the young members of the staff would know but little concerning his life or works. Although the State Historical Society has some authoritative data in connection with Captain Howland's Indian and Army Permanent Loan Collection, there is very little authentic compiled data accessible to the public, concerning this artist.

I feel sure that the Denver Art Museum will be glad to have the following authoritative information, taken from manuscript records on file in the John D. Howland family collection, of which I am the Trustee. I shall be glad at any time to show these records to any interested persons, and to cooperate in giving further data.

Captain Howland was a highly trained artist. He was perhaps the earliest Colorado artist to have European training, having spent two periods abroad, comprising several years.

This artist was one of Colorado's own pioneers, helping in the locating of what is now Denver in 1858. Directly after the Civil War, in which he fought in the First Colorado Regiment, young Howland went abroad to study with Armand Dumarecq, celebrated French military artist. He also spent some time in England and in Italy. Prior to his going to Europe, he had been sketch artist for Harper's and Leslie's Weeklies, as their Western Correspondent, which position he held with these papers over a period of many years. This was the era of the trapper and the scout, long before the cowboy! Howland



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

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was a Captain of Scouts in the Indian Wars.

In 1867, Howland returned from France to take part in the Indian Peace Commission. Five years were then spent in Mexico, where he did much portrait work, and also some time in Utah in this same type of painting. In the early part of 1880 he again returned to France to again study with Armand Dumaresq. At this time he also renewed study in both England and Italy. While in France he did much sketching with Edouard De Taille and others.

In 1884, he returned to Colorado, and from that time on, until his death in 1914, he resided in Denver, where he held a prominent place in the cultural, pioneer and political life of the city. His high degree of training was skillfully used in the interpretation of Western subjects. He was commissioned by the State of Colorado, in conjunction with the Governor and the G. A. R. Commander to erect a monument in honor of the Civil War soldiers, and Captain Howland, himself, designed the figure of the Cavalryman which tops the pedestal. This monument as you know, guards the west entrance of the Capitol Building.

Senator Guggenheim was a great admirer of Captain Howland's paintings, and two of them hang in his office in New York. Howland paintings are owned by the Denver Country Club, the Denver Club, the Denver Athletic Club, the El Jebel Mosque, the Colorado School of Mines, the Greeley Cormal School, and are also on display in many private collections. His paintings hang in both private and public collections on two continents. The family of Lord Randolph Churchill of England was a purchaser of one of the Howland paintings.

Will you kindly bring this information to the members of the Board, so that any misinformation concerning this artist may be corrected in the future.

Thanking you, I am

Yours very truly,

Signed: Kate Howland Charles  
(Mrs. Alfred J. Charles)

Copies to State Historical Society

Mr. Charles T. Mahoney, Sons of Colorado.  
Territorial Daughters of Colorado.  
Supervisor of Art, Denver Public Schools.  
Vose Art Galleries, Boston, Mass.  
Mr. Robert Taft, University of Kansas.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street,  
Denver, Colorado.  
June 1, 1941.

Dr. Robert Taft,  
Department of Chemistry,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

My dear Dr. Taft:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter written by me to the Trustees of the Denver Art Museum.

I think it is self-explanatory in part. However, I will add a word or two, since you are not a Colorado man. The Denver Art Museum has on its staff many young persons, who are rather ultra-modern in their art appreciations. I do not believe that they have any but the vaguest knowledge about any of the earlier Colorado artists, and I do not believe they feel the need of being informed. I believe that this is especially true of Mr. Bartlett, recent Acting Director, to whom I spoke personally and indignantly about certain statements made by him. My conclusion was that he placed little importance on any of our earlier Colorado men. He, himself, from what I have been told, is not an artist, and the lectures that he gives both in the schools and at the Museum are founded on meager catalogue information. Unfortunately, as in the case of my father, there is no authentic compiled data on his technical training. A Mr. Edgar C. McMechen, published a volume some years ago, touching on earlier artists; but he never took the trouble to contact either my sister or myself, who are Trustees of the John D. Howland collection, and who hold the manuscript records-letters, recommendations, passports, articles, etc -. Any information that young staff members or any other persons get from this type of book would be absolutely nil where authenticity concerning my father,-and doubtless most of the others- was desired.

Various persons who own the Howland paintings have been incensed by erroneous information that has been made public and have spoken to me about it. Naturally I am taking steps to quash this type of misinformation concerning my father, and will take more stringent steps if necessary. My father was too great an artist to have small fry, who know nothing of art, casually or unwittingly discredit his training or his work.

I have not heard from you in a long time. I believe I wrote you asking what else you desired, but have heard nothing. Perhaps you have all the data you need.

With kind regards, I am

Yours very truly,

*Howland Charles*



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

June 5, 1941

Mrs. Kate Howland Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

Thank you for sending me the statement concerning your father in your letter of June first. I sympathize with you in your efforts to secure modern recognition for your father's ability and work. It is an attitude, of course, with which I am entirely familiar. Modern museum directors, art critics and writers look with supercilious contempt on the whole western school of artists. In my judgment, however, these artists have made an exceedingly important contribution to American life. It is from this point of view that I am developing my story of the frontier in picture. Unfortunately, my work has had to be laid aside for the past year as I was unexpectedly assigned the task of writing the history of the University in connection with our 75th anniversary this June. The book has just been published but all of my spare time - night and day - has been used in this project.

I hope to get back to my work on western artists next fall. I undoubtedly will have further questions to ask concerning your father when I reach the period in which he worked.

Sincerely yours,

RT/cdo

Robert Taft.

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

November 11, 1942

Mrs. Kate Howland Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

Thank you for the feature article from the Zanesville News about your father. I was glad to add it to my collection of materials on western artists. I am afraid that it will be a long time before I am able to use it. We are so busy training chemists and chemical engineers these days that there is time for little else.

When you do publish your book on Captain Howland will you be sure to send me a notice of it.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT/wac



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

6-27

2217 Elm Street  
Denver 7, Colorado

June 19, 1944

Dr. Taft  
University of Kansas  
Hutchison, Kansas

Dear Dr. Taft:

At the time you corresponded with me on a book of Western Art, you mentioned that you had become familiar with the name of John D. Howland through his work with Harper's and Leslie's Weeklies. Will you be good enough to inform me at what earliest date you ran across sketches of my father's in these weeklies?

Thanking you for this information, I am,

Yours truly,

*Kate Howland Charles*

Kate Howland Charles

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

June 27, 1944

Mrs. Kate Howland Charles  
2217 Elm Street  
Denver 7, Colorado

Dear Mrs. Charles:

I have been delaying the answer to your letter of June 19th in the hope that I could make a careful search of my notes for the information you desire. I have not been able to complete my search but, in order that there be no further delay in answering, I'll send you the information I have at present.

The earliest record of J. D. Howland's illustrations in Harper's that I have found so far is in Harper's Weekly, p. 629, October 5, 1867-- two illustrations: "A Village of the Santee Indians near Fort Thompson, Minnesota" and "Council on the Steamer 'St. John' between Peace Commissioners and Chiefs of Indian Tribes of Dakota". These two were followed shortly by (Nov. 16, 1867, p. 724): "Indian Lodge at Medicine Creek, Kansas" and "Council at Medicine Creek Lodge".

If I have time to look more carefully and find any further information, I shall write you again.

Sincerely,

Robert Taft

RT/unc



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street,  
Denver 7, Colorado  
May 16, 1946.

Mr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

My dear Mr. Taft:

Thank you for the # 1 "Pictorial Record of the Old West", containing the account and sketches of Frenzeny and Travernier. I think that your points concerning the value of pictorial records are well taken. I am studying it carefully.

I am very sorry that much of my research work was not completed when we were corresponding, as, had I realized your chief interest I could have done so much for you concerning Captain Howland's sketch record of the early west. For instance, you mention Frenzeny in Salt Lake City in 1874. In 1871, and probably in 1872, according to very old newspaper data, Captain Howland was on a sketching tour through Utah. Small newspaper clippings from Salt Lake City, dated July 3 and December (see bottom of second clipping relating to another matter) copies enclosed, tie up with the letter from Mr. C. Parsons, Supt. of the Art Dept. of Harper's Weekly, under date of Sept. 18, 1871 enclosed herewith; especially as the next issue of Harper's would be Sept. 30th as the 23rd issue would be practically off the press by the 18th. This September 30th issue, which as stated, I take to be the next issue in the mind of Mr. Parsons, has a double page entitled "Sacrament in the Mormon Tabernacle". This is page 912-913 and the written account is page 914. On October 7th, page 939 there is a sketch "Great Hawk and little Mormon." Description page 941. A scene in the far west. Although these sketches and descriptions are unsigned, all data, as well as the way the pictures and the written account are handled point clearly to the fact that Howland was both the artist and journalist in these cases. He was considered a journalist and belonged to various Press Clubs. You remember, he was artist correspondent for the Weekly with the Sherman Peace Commission 1867-68, and the book by Henry M. Stanley who was also a correspondent with this Commission, states this fact. Of course, Captain Howland was also a member of the Peace Commission itself.

I have never been able to find all the work he did for either Harper's or Leslie's Weeklies as much of his work is unsigned, but the newspaper records state that he was artist correspondent for both papers over a period of twelve years. I have ruled out Frenzeny on the Sept. 30th issue referred to in the above paragraph, for although he has a country love scene in this issue it is a peaceful eastern scene and before his trip west. Also it could not be Thomas Moran, because he has a picture of Laurel Hill Cemetery near Philadelphia in the Oct. 14th 1871 issue. Also with small exception, Davis, Moran, Nast, Frenzeny signed their pictures. I am quite familiar with my father's work as well as his way of saying things.



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

-2-

My opinion is, that Captain Howland did not sign these Utah pictures of which I have spoken, nor the written account of same because of the fact that he was well favored by Brigham Young. (Old newspaper accounts say that he painted the portrait of the eldest son of Brigham Young) He was entertained by Brigham Young and met many of his wives, and his work according to the clippings enclosed herewith was receiving much flattering attention in Salt Lake City. I have lived in Utah myself, and I have heard, how rarely a stranger was ever received in their midst. I have always thought that he was sent to Salt Lake to find out what was going on, for newspaper accounts say that he was there in the "turbulent Mormon period." I do not know whether he was there later than 1872. A 1902 account of his paintings states that he painted "Mount Nebo, and also The Old Shingle Mill which stood near Salt Lake City 40 years ago, and which made the shingles for the Tabernacle." Since Howland was in Salt Lake to describe the situation, naturally he would do so in spite of the fact that although he liked Brigham Young, he did not favor his methods. Naturally with this set-up, his signature would not appear.

It is hard to determine just what twelve year period Captain Howland sketched for Harper's and Leslie's Weeklies. The "Land of the Carbonates" sketch of Leadville in my possession is under date of July 5, 1879, Frank Leslie's. We do not have early copies in our library here, so I cannot check. I also have original sketches of a scene typifying Sand Creek and one representing two soldiers at Apache Canyon, in which battle Howland fought. As you know Captain Howland designed the Colo. Pioneer badgeshowing the Prairie Schooner, etc. Also "The Sleeper we came in" and the "Prospector", both used on the Program of the First Pioneer Reunion in Denver at the Windsor Hotel, January 25, 1881. You also know he designed the figure for the Civil War Monument that stands above the Capitol Steps fronting the West. The figure and the accoutrements are authentic of the Civil War soldier.

You remember how vexed I was in a letter, copy of which I sent you, protesting the ignoring and "brushing off methods" of the Museum heads here where Western artists are concerned. I laugh now when I think of it, for although it still holds true, these people are really not worth a person's thought or worry. Mr. Bartlett, then acting head of our Art Gallery, now a head of Fine Arts in Colo. Springs, I have been told got his job through a powerful old lady, Ann Evans; his sole claim to a knowledge of art being a trade journal writer or a clerk in a drug store. The man who followed him had about the same background; I believe he was the Drug Store clerk. One of these recent Directors of our Art Museum is now the head of a San Diego Art Gallery. The present head, Mr. Bach, graduated from Dartmouth, with a three months travelling scholarship to Paris (on his honeymoon). He is an ultra-modernist of the lunatic variety of art and has apparently no use for realistic art. The Blue Boy, and Pinkie, and Western Art are not art at all, if I understand him correctly.





## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

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On the other hand, as balm to my soul, after such an experience with poseurs, is the letter I received from Mr. Vos of the Vos Art Galleries, Boston, who says "There should be a fine future for Howland paintings, for his work is excellent. Also Frank Marsh of the Dutton people wrote me that Captain Howland certainly deserves his niche in American Biography. And more than that, I came across a catalogue of an exhibition in the National Gallery of Washington 1869, at which time two Howland paintings were displayed, along with Corot, Inness and others. With a very nice little comment, too. One was the Buffalo Hunt; the other an Indian Chief, - I forget his name.

I am still working on the biography of my father, but I fear it will be a long time before I have it ready for consideration by a publisher.

If you come this way, I shall be pleased to have you call. I am glad that your work is progressing so nicely. I hope that this long letter has not worn you out completely.

Very sincerely,

(Mrs) Kate Howland Charles



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2317 Elm Street,  
Denver 7, Colorado.  
May 19, 1946.

Mr. Robert Taft,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence,  
Kansas:

Dear Mr. Taft:

Just a brief addition to my letter of recent date.

The issue of Harper's Nov. 25, 1871, page 1108 "Troublous Times in Utah. Mormon Troubles. Brigham Young in his study. Trial of Thomas Hawkins". This is also a part of the Howland sketches I am sure. If you refer to the bottom of the second clipping concerning "Young Women's Christian Association, it gives you the date of December, showing that Captain Howland was there in November and December<sup>1871</sup> and probably in the 1872's.

Perhaps I included this page in my letter, but if I did not, thought you might like it as an addition to my information.

Very sincerely,

*Hate Howland Charles*

The question that arises to my mind is this: If these Salt Lake pictures in the 1871 issue were not Captain Howland's, what pictures are his in the issues of this year, for we know according to Parson's letter that his sketches were accepted and to be used.



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

2217 Elm Street  
Denver 7, Colorado  
August 1, 1949

Mr. Robert Taft,  
Professor of Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Mr. Taft:

I will appreciate it greatly if you can give me some information on the specific years or numbers of volumes in which my father Captain John D. Howland made sketches. (Harper's and Leslie especially or any other magazine you have run across.)

I only have the early day sketches that he made for Harper's 1867-78 at the time he was a secretary and Chief Clerk of the Indian Peace Commission. I also have the sketch entitled Land of the Carbonates, Leslie's about 1878. However, the eastern publishers with whom I am now negotiating have asked for more of early day sketches by Howland, and I am at a loss to know what to do about obtaining same. As you must know, I am very anxious to satisfy the publishers and obtain a contract to complete my work, which in the past I could never complete owing to various stringent circumstances.

Since, you have been kindly waiting for me to do something on Captain Howland and have not wished to intrude on my work, I am wondering if you could possibly give me the desired information, so that I could write a Library holding Harper's and Leslie's early files and ask them to photograph certain numbers. Or if you have copies yourself, I shall be most happy to remunerate for the cost of having the photographs made.

Captain Howland was a sketch artist for twelve years and earned in this period more than \$17,000.00. There must be more material available than the scanty sketches which I have mentioned.

I shall greatly appreciate any assistance that you can give me. Will you be so kind as to write me at your very earliest opportunity as a reply from me is expected in New York.

My red-haired nephew John D. Howland was a pupil of yours, I believe, last year. He enjoyed your work so much.

Very sincerely,

*John D. Howland Charles*



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

August 4, 1949

Dear Mrs. Charles:

I have not made extensive notes on John D. Howland as I knew you had his biography under way and most of the information I have is second-hand. Two illustrations credited to Howland appear in Harper's Weekly, Vol. 11, 1867, pp. 629 and 724, and I doubt if there are any more in the Weekly as I have a catalogue of all western illustrations in that publication from 1865 until 1900. There is also mention of Howland in Conquest of the Southern Plains by Charles J. Brill (1938) in connection with the peace conference of 1867. I take it, too, that you are familiar with the material on Howland in the Denver Public Library and in the Colorado Historical Society.

I am glad that you mentioned the fact that young John D. Howland was your nephew, I had noticed the identity of name with your father and meant many times to ask him if he was related, but I never got to it. Young John D. is a very likeable fellow and a capable student.

Sincerely,

Robert Taft

RT:c



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



PUBLISHERS

597 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

August 25, 1949

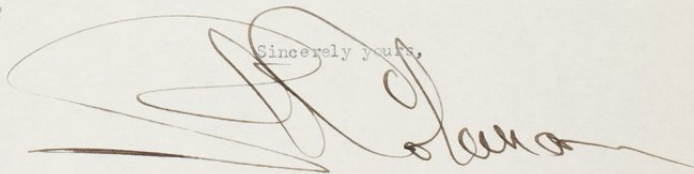
Professor Robert Taft  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Professor Taft:

From one source or another, I gather that, at one time or another, you had in mind including John D. Howland in your studies.

Without revealing the source of our information, I will say that Kate Howland Charles has been in correspondence with us about her father's work and I question whether there is a full size book in it, but rather suspect that there may be a chapter for you. In short, it looks as though we are going to say "no" to the idea of a book, but do you want us to turn the girl loose on you when we decline the present proposal?

Sincerely yours,



R. V. Coleman

RVC:gwt

## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART  
(The William Rockhill Nelson Trust)

ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

KANSAS CITY 2, MISSOURI

Cable Address: Neltrust

December 2, 1950

Robert Taft, Esq.  
Department of Chemistry  
The University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Dr. Taft,

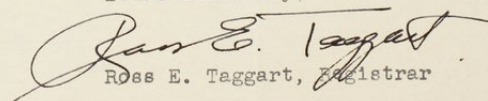
Mr. Gardner, the Director, has been most pleased and excited about the material that you have sent us on John D. Howland. Indeed we agree that there is ever reason to believe that our painting was done by him, even though we have not seen any canvases definitely by his hand. Mr. Gardner has asked me to express to you his gratitude for the enormous help you have given us.

I hope that we may take the liberty of keeping the material for a while until we have had sufficient time to go over it carefully and make copies of that which particularly pertains to our painting.

I am looking forward to having the opportunity of meeting you. Mrs. Taggart is particularly anxious to talk with you about the early painters of the mid-west. She has done some research on 19th century American painting, and in the process has become acquainted with the early artists who came out here on the various expeditions. He has been particularly interested in Bierstadt, but also is very anxious to question you about Joshua Shaw. I hope that some time we will be able to talk with you about these painters.

You certainly have been a great help to us. It is impossible to fully express our appreciation for your kindness. I hope that we may some time be able to be of service to you.

Yours sincerely,

  
Ross E. Taggart, Registrar



## Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Hansen - Hutton

WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART  
(The William Rockhill Nelson Trust)

ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

KANSAS CITY 2, MISSOURI

Cable Address: Neltrust

December 27, 1950

Robert Taft, Esq.  
Department of Chemistry  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas

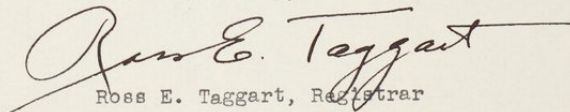
Dear Mr. Taft,

You have certainly been most kind and generous to the Gallery in sending us the Howland material which I am returning herewith. I have copied all of it and have it now in our permanent files with the painting. It is a great satisfaction to us to have so much material about the artist of our Buffalo Hunt, a subject which should be of interest in Kansas City. We are turning some of the material over to the Kansas City Star along with a photograph in the hope that they may publish the painting. We are planning to feature the painting in January as our "Masterpiece of the Month".

I especially wish to thank you for the many reprints you have sent from your articles on Western painters. It was through your articles in the Kansas Historical Quarterly that I knew you could be of help to us in solving the problem of the identity of the artist of our picture. I am very glad to have these reprints available.

I most sincerely hope that you will come to the Gallery in the near future and will let me know that you are here. It will be a great pleasure to meet you and to express to you in person our gratitude for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Ross E. Taggart, Registrar