

Notes on Interpretive Messages Related to Marjorie Merriweather Post's Biography

2019 Garden Docent Training
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

C.W. Post's influence/importance of her father

- "Executive business training" at his side; her wealth gained from his company; he was self-made man— American dream; impact on American culture (food); influenced by his beliefs on "put money to work"

Importance of education

- As a child at her father's side....at Mt. Vernon Seminary (in social comportment, art/history/culture, importance of social service)...as an adult with classes at Met, by Duveen

Art collecting

- Began with French collection, to decorate homes, in French style popular at the time
- Led to her finding a passion in Russian art, as she came to understand its importance on her own
- Passion for decorative arts, as well as fine arts

Her wealth

- Enabled her art collecting, philanthropy, and participation in the family business

Philanthropist

- Connected to her interests, and events/location of the time (hospital during war, soup kitchen for women/children in Depression, arts in DC, students)
- Continuous throughout her life....with beginnings early in her life to "put money to work"

Business executive

- Sat on board at a time when not many women did; her training by father began at a young age, with him expecting/guiding her to understand the business

Being organized, disciplined, and gracious

- Her collection criteria....her estate-management

Knowing her mind

- Strong sense of knowing herself and what she liked....e.g. collected Russian art through her own convictions, not because someone told her to....repetitions in the garden from previous estates (bedroom overlooking parterre)

Dichotomy of being a product of her time, and yet ahead of her time

- E.g. her role in the company business on board of directors

She had many roles/identities....she was a complex person

- Her roles/responsibilities change/evolve over her long life
- Daughter/mother/grandmother....art collector....ambassador/diplomat.... business executive....philanthropist....estate creator and manager....employer/boss....event/party creator
- Life had ups and downs (early death of parents, divorces) but seems to move forward with positive outlook

Hillwood is a culmination

- Of her philanthropy: leaving museum for public to enjoy....as a showcase for her collection created over her whole life....as a way to preserve evidence of a way of life that was changing

Wellness

- Believed in healthy living (exercise, diet, alcohol in moderation)....connected to her experiences pertaining to her father's illness, move to Battle Creek, recovery, and development of Grape Nuts, Postum