

**Guide to  
MS – 191: The Laubenheimer Collection**



*(Musselman Library/Special Collections & College Archives)*

**Devin McKinney  
March 2016**

## **MS – 191: The Laubenheimer Collection**

(2 boxes, .00 cubic feet)

*Processed by Devin McKinney  
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Inclusive dates: 1892-1896  
Temporary Location: Conservation, 3/2016

### **Provenance**

Gift of Nancy Hobor Dewing, February-March 2016, in honor of her husband, Andrew Dewing.

### **Biographical note**

Rudolph Phillipp Laubenheimer (1833-1905) was a world-renowned engraver, die-sinker, and medallieur who designed and created seals, badges, coins, postage stamps, and printed ephemera for individuals, businesses, and governments in North and South America. He was also a gifted artist in ink, pencil, and charcoal, and a musician who played several instruments and composed classical pieces.

Rudolph was born on July 11, 1833, in the town of Meisenheim, in what was then Prussia and is now Germany. Apprenticed to an engraver at the age of 14, he immigrated four years later to the United States, where two older brothers were already living. After working in the John Hoole Sr. firm, he opened his own engraving business in Lower Manhattan in 1858. Five years later, Rudolph married the former Harriet Zimmer, a Lutheran minister's daughter.

Their son Ernst Gervinus Laubenheimer was born in New York on November 3, 1871. He was the only one of five siblings to live past the age of 12, and his mother died shortly after his own birth. Thereafter, he and his father formed an especially close bond, which lasted for the rest of Rudolph's life. The father passed his artisanal skills on to his son, who made a successful career as an engraver and lithographer.

On November 28, 1906, Ernst (who sometimes Americanized his name as "Ernest") married the former Myrtle Ford in Boston; four years later they gave birth to a daughter, Millicent. Ernst was employed for many years by the American Bank Note Company, and held business addresses in both Manhattan and Plainfield, New Jersey. In later years, he and Myrtle lived with Millicent in North Bergen, New Jersey, and established a second family home in Maine.

Ernst Laubenheimer died in 1956.

### **Scope and content note**

This collection contains three items: the "die trial" of a seal made by Rudolph Laubenheimer for the 1893 Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) in Chicago; Ernst

Laubenheimer's handwritten diary of an 1896 trip to Europe; and a *carte de visite* (photograph) of Ernst created at roughly the same time.

On June 20, 1896, Ernst and his father sailed from New York to Hamburg, Germany, on the S.S. *Palatia*. They traveled south through Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, then back to Germany, returning to New York on October 16.

The diary is a detailed record of prices, distances, and other logistics. It also gives insight into travel practices of the era (comparisons of hotels and hostels, private and public bathing facilities, etc.). Included is Ernst's hand-drawn map of Central Europe, with colored lines which show the planned route and subsequent deviations. Interleaved are several loose or affixed pages of supplemental notes, maps, brochures, passenger lists, deck plans, ship's stationery, and a color postcard.

The solid-lead die, which shows Christopher Columbus planting a flag in the New World, is a first-rate example of the elder Laubenheimer's art and craft. It also exemplifies the heroic depiction of Columbus which was accepted as standard for many generations.

### **Subjects**

Engraving – 19th century

Germany—Social life and customs—19th century

Germany—Foreign relations—1871-1918—United States

Italy—Description and travel—1861-1900

Italy—Foreign relations—1870-1914

Italy—Social conditions—1870-1918

Passenger ships

Switzerland—History—1848-

Switzerland—Social conditions

Travelers' writings, American

### **Box List**

#### **Box 1**

1-0. Finding Aid and Biographical Information

1-1. Photograph of Ernst G. Laubenheimer

1-2. Europe Diary of Ernst G. Laubenheimer

#### **Box 2**

Die-cast made for 1893 World's Fair

**For more information about Rudolph P. Laubheimer**

Kahn, Eve M. "A Trove of 19th-Century Engravings Conjures a Lost World." *The New York Times*, June 18, 2015.

Rhoda, Erin. "Maine descendants of famous engraver to sell thousands of his works at auction." *Bangor Daily News*, June 20, 2015.

Schwartz, Robert I. "Foreword: Welcome to the Sale." Catalog, Archives International Auctions Part XXVI, June 25, 2015.