

Mrs. Christian R. Holmes

1871–1941

Collector and Philanthropist



Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Bettie Holmes was the daughter of Charles Louis Fleischmann (1835–1897), a food manufacturer and founder of the Fleischmann Yeast Company. His commercially produced yeast allowed bread to be mass-produced. With her inherited wealth, Bettie collected works of art, particularly Chinese art, and supported many charitable causes and institutions, including the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society and the Metropolitan Opera. She reportedly donated \$20 million during her lifetime.

She married Danish émigré Dr. Christian Ramus Holmes (1858–1920), an eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist, in 1892. In 1903 Christian Holmes founded the Cincinnati General Hospital. After her husband's death, Mrs. Holmes established the Christian R. Holmes Memorial Hospital in 1929 and the Christian R. Holmes Foundation.

In 1929 Mrs. Holmes moved to “The Chimneys,” a mansion at Sands Point on Long Island, New York, that provided a fitting setting for her growing art collection. In addition to forming an outstanding Chinese collection that included ceramics, jades, and bronzes, she lent objects to overseas exhibitions, such as the 1929 Chinese Art Exhibition in Berlin and the International Exhibition of Chinese Art held at the Royal Academy in London in 1935 and 1936. C. F. Yau, the manager of the New York branch of Tonying and Company, published a portfolio of her collection of bronzes, possibly as a promotional publication, following her death in 1941. Most of her Chinese collection was sold in 1942, with ex-Holmes objects finding a home in museum collections worldwide.

Literature

Art Collection of the Late Mrs Christian Holmes: Chinese Ceramics and Jades, Persian Pottery, Egyptian Antiquities. . . , Parke-Bernet Galleries, April 15–18 (New York, 1942).

English and French Furniture, Rugs, Table China, Silver, Glass, Linens and Laces Removed from “The Chimneys,” Sands Point, Port Washington, Long Island, Residence of the Late Mrs. Christian R. Holmes, Property of Holmes Foundation, Parke-Bernet Galleries, September 26–30 (New York, 1944).

Alan Priest, “Chinese Bronzes,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s., 4, no. 4 (December 1945), pp. 106–12.

Important Chinese Art: Early Dynastic Bronzes, Silver and Gold, Chinese Jade, Coral and other semi-precious mineral carvings, early dynastic Pottery, Porcelain, Tomb Jades, Single-color and Decorated Porcelains, Japanese and Chinese Ivories, Chinese, Siamese, and Indian Sculptures, Chinese Furniture, Paintings, Lamps and Decorative Arts Collected by Late Bettie F. Holmes (Mrs. Christian Holmes), Sold by the Order of the Holmes Foundation, Parke-Bernet Galleries, November 14–15 (New York, 1963).

Selected Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Collection of Mrs. Christian R. Holmes (privately printed, no date).

Roy Davids and Dominic Jellinek, *Provenance: Collectors, Dealers and Scholars in the Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain and America* (Oxford, England, 2011), pp. 239–40.

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