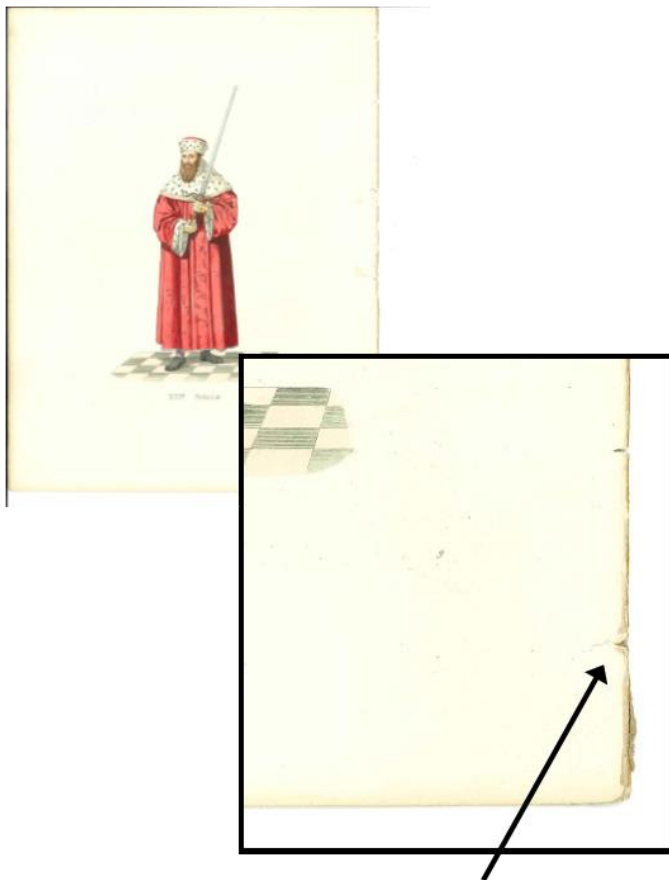


## LIBRARY ART PRINTS WARRANT ARTICLE #39 - FAQ

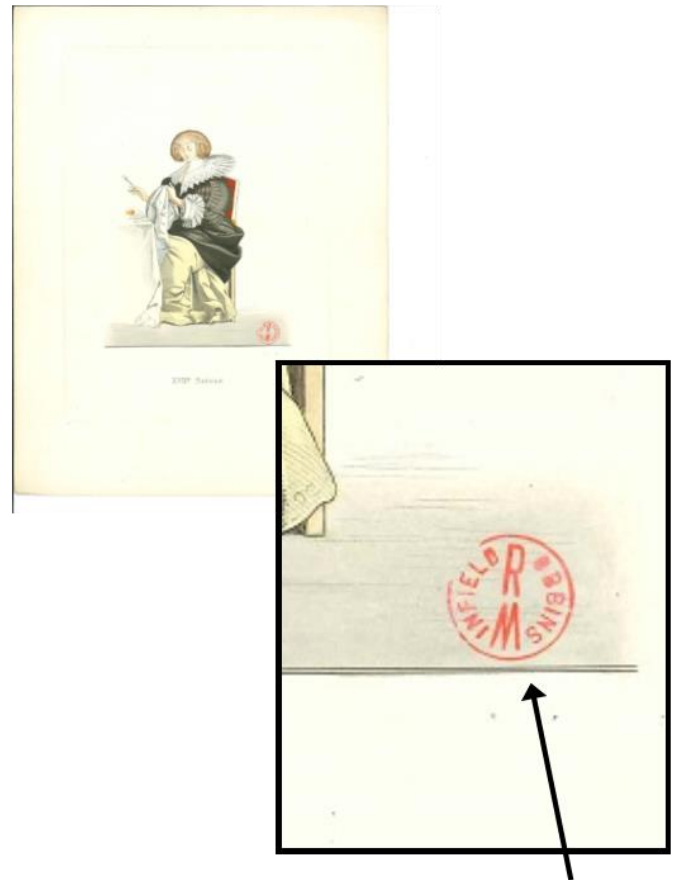
- 1. What are the Winfield Robbins Art Prints?** In the late 1800's Winfield Robbins toured Europe. He collected prints (largely in bulk) to save the medium from extinction, perceiving a threat from the new medium of photography. Mr. Robbins was infatuated with prints as a medium and was an enthusiastic, if indiscriminate, collector. The prints number approximately 150,000 of mostly European portraits. None are specifically related to the Town of Arlington.
- 2. Why is this Warrant Article coming to Town Meeting?** The art print collection was gifted to the Town of Arlington; therefore the Town must authorize the Library Board of Trustees to take action on its behalf with this property. For decades, Library Trustees and Directors have been seeking guidance from art world professionals, art museum curators, legal counsel, and others on how to address this collection and would like to move forward with resolving this issue once and for all.
- 3. Is it normal for the library to deaccession material?** Yes. In order to meet its mission and address the challenges of limited space, the Library's collection development policy states: "The library has the obligation not only to serve its current users but also to search for materials and methods that will meet the needs of new members of the community and those who have not been traditional library users. Continuous and periodic examination of the community and its changing needs is necessary to give purpose, vitality and relevancy to the selection of materials....De-acquisition, or weeding and discarding materials from the collection, occurs on a systematic basis and is necessitated by limitations of space, obsolescence of material, lack of use over extended period of time, physical condition of the item, and acquisition of new materials."
- 4. Why not keep the prints?** For two primary reasons: 1) The Art Print collection takes up a significant amount of space in the Library, which could be used for other purposes that better meet patron needs, and 2) Historic art prints are not an integral part of the library's overall mission: "The Library is a vital community center for all. We create opportunities for lifelong learning, personal fulfillment and enjoyment that make Arlington a great place to live, work, study, and visit. We are committed to services that anticipate and respond to the needs and interests of all who use the library." If anything, the Library would like to use its space to prioritize local artists' work.
- 5. How do you know the value of the prints?** The collection has been appraised on at least three occasions, most recently in 2018. Adjusted for inflation, the 2018 value of \$365,000 is almost 30% less than the value at the time of the previous appraisal in 2001 (approximately \$514,000). Expert art print and historical appraisers consider the collection to be of little fine art value. This opinion has not changed over the past 60 years and was confirmed again in the most recent appraisal. Given that, the appraiser cautioned that it is highly unlikely we would receive the appraised value, if the collection could even be sold given the lack of interest in art prints today. Therefore, we should anticipate that we might need to donate or otherwise dispose of the collection.
- 6. What did Winfield Robbins leave to the Library?** Along with the print collection donated to the Town, his bequest of 1910 states, "Fourth, I give and bequeath to the Robbins Library in the Town of Arlington state of Massachusetts, the sum of twenty-five thousand [25,000] dollars to be devoted to the care, preservation and increase of my collection of prints. The disbursement of the interest of the fund and the supervision of my collection to prints to be under the sole control of Caira Robbins [his cousin], so long as she may desire." This trust is currently worth approximately \$684,000. In addition, his cousin Ida Robbins' bequest of 1949 states, "I give and bequeath to the Robbins Library of said Arlington the sum of Thirty Thousand (30,000) Dollars, said sum to be kept as a fund the income only to be used for the purchase and care of prints." This trust is currently worth approximately \$548,000.

- 7. What happens to the trusts if the prints are deaccessioned?** There are no known direct descendants who could be contacted about revising the trust. Therefore, at the request of the Library Board of Trustees, Town Counsel has started a parallel process with the Attorney General's office to review the bequest language and determine if the original purpose has been "frustrated," meaning that it is impossible or impracticable to carry out. Ultimately, the aim would be to secure legal permission to release the trust funds for use in a manner "as nearly like" as possible to the original charitable purpose, i.e. in support of the Robbins Library for the benefit of the community. A probate judge would make the final decision and the process could take a year or more to conclude.

**Representative examples of the Winfield Robbins Art Print Collection  
showing features that affect fair market value:**



**Example 1:** magnified corner of print torn from book



**Example 2:** magnified property stamp on print face