



Lifelong Fascinations:

A Portrait of Margaret Woodbury Strong

By Julia Novakovic

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Colorized photograph of Margaret and John Woodbury, Japan trip, 1905. Box 54, Folder 6, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

Front Cover: Margaret with her favorite doll Mabel, 1902. Box 53, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

ROCHESTER HISTORY

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Dear *Rochester History* Reader,

Margaret Woodbury Strong is an almost mythical figure in Rochester history. Born a child of privilege, she spent a lifetime pursuing experiences and collecting things that sparked her imagination. In Woodbury Strong's time, the concept of "play" was limited and certainly not thought of as a necessary thing in the healthy development of all children. She used her wealth and position to amass a collection of toys that eventually became the kernel of The Strong and set in motion a chain of events that has resulted in the creation and growth of one of the most famous and beloved of Rochester's museums. In this issue of *Rochester History*, you will learn about Margaret Woodbury Strong and her decades of collecting. If Woodbury Strong were alive today and able to see the thousands of children who gleefully play among the exhibits at The Strong, I think she would consider her life's work complete.

Patricia Uttaro, *Library Director*

Note from the Editor

This issue of the *Rochester History* journal has been a long time in coming. Subscribers likely have noticed a significant lapse in time since we mailed our last issue, Vol. 77 No. 2, in September 2016. Since then, the Office of the City Historian and the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library have undergone a restructuring and experienced some changes in staff. This resulted in a period of adjustment and training that prevented us from focusing on the journal. But we always knew that this publication serves a valuable purpose in sharing our region's history and that we would revive it when resources allowed.

We are currently working to fill the gap the two-year publishing hiatus created and to get back on a regular and predictable publication schedule. Rest assured that you will receive all of the issues due to you. We appreciate your patience and continued support and look forward to sharing the best of *Rochester History* with you for years to come!

Christine L. Ridarsky, *Editor*

About *Rochester History*

Rochester History is a scholarly journal that provides informative and entertaining articles about the history and culture of Rochester, Monroe County, and the Genesee Valley. Since 1939, we have sought to study local history as a microcosm of U.S. history, an approach that has brought insight and understanding to readers around the globe. The journal is funded in part by the Frances Kenyon Publication Fund, established in memory of Ms. Kenyon's sister, Florence Taber Kenyon, and her friend Thelma Jeffries.

Rochester History invites submissions of manuscripts of 6,000-7,000 words that further its mission of increasing knowledge of and interest in local history and culture and of placing local issues into a national or global context. To receive a copy of the journal's submission guidelines, send a request to HistoryJournal@libraryweb.org or call (585) 428-8095.

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Lifelong Fascinations:

A Portrait of Margaret Woodbury Strong

By Julia Novakovic

This year marks 50 years since Margaret Woodbury Strong received a provisional charter for the museum that would grow into what we now know as The Strong National Museum of Play. Today, The Strong welcomes more than 500,000 visitors a year to its downtown Rochester facility to experience the dynamic, interactive exhibits of the world's only collections-based museum devoted solely to the history and exploration of play. Few of these visitors know the story behind the place. They don't know that the museum grew out of a private collection of dolls, dollhouses, and other playthings amassed and cherished by Margaret Strong during her lifetime. Indeed, long before Strong's museum opened its doors in 1982 and even before New York State granted the museum its first charter in 1968, Margaret Strong was welcoming countless guests into her Pittsford home to delight in viewing her collections. Simply put, without Margaret Woodbury Strong there would be no Museum of Play. As Rochester celebrates this milestone in The Strong's history, an exploration of its founder's life sheds light into the museum's collections and current mission.

An Unconventional Childhood

Margaret Woodbury almost didn't make it home alive from her third trip abroad. In 1907, the Woodburys set off from Rochester to Honolulu, Hawaii. Margaret, 9, and her family spent the next three months traveling across Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Yemen. When they arrived in Egypt in 1908, Margaret was struck with typhoid fever; she became extremely fatigued and emaciated and temporarily lost all her hair. Terribly ill for nearly two months, Margaret finally recovered to write:

My dear Aunt Addie, Oh how I wish I was back in Rochester instead of being sick here in Cairo, but I am almost well now and oh how glad I am.... Would you like to be here in Cairo seeing donkeys, camels and lots of funny things, climbing up the pyramids and sphinx or would you rather be in Rochester, snow-shoeing and skating

in Seneca [sic] Park, going to teas and luncheons, or sailing on the Mediterranean [sic] Sea to Marseilles. Good-by, Margaret.¹

At just nine years old, Margaret had already visited more countries than most American adults might have seen in their lifetimes. “From the time I was eight years old my father and mother would take me out of school and away we would go to foreign countries,” Margaret later conveyed. “I was allowed to carry a small bag to put my dolls and toys in, and to add anything I acquired on the trips. Consequently, my fondness for small objects grew.”²

Margaret Woodbury (1897-1969), the only child of wealthy Victorian parents John Charles Woodbury and Alice Motley Woodbury, grew up in an atypical household. Though the family’s headquarters were officially in Rochester, the Woodburys spent a significant amount of time traveling the globe and seasonally residing at the opposite end of the United States. Margaret was afforded every luxury, but their homes were hardly the place for childish fun or mischief. “You would say I was almost the third adult in the family, wouldn’t you?” she reportedly once commented to a visitor.³ Surrounded by grown-ups and objects—but rarely children her own age—Margaret turned to her dolls and miniatures to keep her company. She also engaged in competitive solo sports, excelling at golf, archery, and horseback riding. This combination of loneliness and determination influenced Margaret’s later years, and most pointedly, her passion for collecting the objects that would become the basis for The Strong

National Museum of Play. To fully appreciate Margaret Woodbury Strong, a woman about whom many people still to this day have keen opinions, one must examine her unusual, fascinating life.

Margaret’s Father

The Woodbury family first arrived in Rochester in 1848.⁴ Margaret’s great-grandfather Jonathan Woodbury and sons Daniel and Edmund established the Woodbury Steam Engine and Boiler Works as manufacturers of steam engines and other agricultural machines. An ambitious family with a strong work ethic, the Woodburys were proud of their Revolutionary Era-heritage and motivated to succeed in their new environment in the Genesee Valley. Edmund Woodbury



*John Charles Woodbury, n.d.
[c. 1870s-1880s]. Box 124, Folder 1,
Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.*

married Frances Holyland in 1857 and in 1865 partnered with Henry Alvah Strong to form the Strong & Woodbury whip manufactory.⁵

Edmund and Frances' son, John C. Woodbury, born on August 25, 1859, received his education from both public school and private tutors. He witnessed his

father's business acumen firsthand and joined the company as a clerk in his twenties. The firm enjoyed great success in its early years, and an 1886 article noted, "its gradual and steady growth has been the customary result of commercial integrity, fair dealing and keen, although conservative, business enterprise."⁶ In 1889, the Woodbury family took over the reins—literally—and purchased Strong's interest in the firm, renaming the operation Woodbury & Co. Meanwhile, Henry Alvah Strong provided capital to George Eastman and was appointed the first president of Eastman Kodak Company. At Strong's urging, Edmund Woodbury also invested in the new photographic corporation early on, for which the Woodbury family was rewarded accordingly.

John became president of the Woodbury Whip Co. after his father's death in 1892.⁷ At its peak, the company employed more than 100 workers and manufactured thousands of horse whips per day for sale across the United States, Mexico, and Australia. However, with the automobile industry looming on the horizon, John had the foresight to sell off the company's interests in 1907 and retire at an early age. With his whip-generated profits and Eastman Kodak dividends, John became free to create his own schedule and enjoy a life of travel and leisure, allowing time for a hobby of collecting, an interest that would be inherited by his daughter. John's personal collections of coins, medals, and stamps were well-known in the region, and he maintained meticulous notes on what his collections contained (as well as "wish lists" for new acquisitions).⁸



Alice, John, and Margaret Woodbury, 1912. Box 58, Object 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.



*Alice Mary Motley, n.d. [c. 1870s-1880s].
Box 130, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury
Strong Collection.*

Margaret's Mother

Margaret's maternal grandfather George Motley IV had co-founded the Moseley & Motley Milling Co. after arriving in Rochester from Canada in 1857. Motley helped to innovate the milling industry in Rochester, patenting a process to remove the centers from wheat berries in 1871 and later installing porcelain or steel rollers in the place of traditional millstones. When milling in Rochester reached its peak in the 1880s, the 30 mills in town had a combined output of more than one million barrels of flour per year.⁹

Alice Mary Motley was born on September 23, 1859, the second of George and Ann Haughton Motley's nine children.¹⁰ "From the Motleys, [Alice] inherited brains and enterprise," according to younger sister Maude's charming handwritten biography. "From the

Haughtons, health, good looks, and a haughty demeanor!"¹¹ In 1873, at age 13, Alice passed the Regents Examination at the Rochester Free Academy and was registered as an Academic Scholar. Per Maude's notes, Alice's scores were the second highest in the city, and she was presented with a "gold medal" by Superintendent of Schools S.A. Ellis. Alice enrolled in a three-year college preparatory course in Classics and graduated with honors from Rochester Free Academy in 1876.

Mr. and Mrs. Motley took Alice to Philadelphia for the United States Centennial celebration that same year—her first major journey outside of the Genesee Valley. She intended to register for Vassar College, but "was prevented by certain family considerations."¹² Instead, Alice remained in Rochester and taught herself a variety of college-level subjects, including entomology, business, and art history. She doted on her younger brothers and sisters, organizing adventures and producing presents. In 1878, Alice accompanied her father, sister Addie, and family friend Cora Moseley on a grand tour across Europe.

As a well-heeled woman of the 19th century, Alice recognized that marriage was her ultimate obligation—though she did not make courting easy for potential matches. According

to Maude, “Various suitors aspired to the hand of the dignified Miss Motley, but all were discouraged by an unresponsive Alice,” until she at last accepted a proposal from a neighbor.¹³ John Woodbury and Alice Motley wed in the parlor at the Motleys’ Lake Avenue home on October 31, 1883. The two were a good match, and their interests in higher learning and travel aligned well. Alice’s dress, a pale pink silk brocade, complemented John’s suit of dark maroon cassimere, and the bride carried a small bouquet of pink roses.¹⁴ The ceremony and dinner were intimate, comprising only family members of both the bride and groom, with the Woodburys still in mourning due to the sudden death of their second daughter.

Following their honeymoon, the newlyweds lived at the Woodbury house on Lake Avenue with John’s parents.¹⁵ After losing an unnamed infant son at birth early in their marriage, Alice continued learning and traveling with her husband and other relatives. The Woodburys seemed content as a child-free couple; nearly 14 years into their union, however, they were blessed with a newborn daughter.

Margaret Woodbury was born on March 20, 1897, in the Woodbury home on Lake Avenue. She was christened at the newly-built St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on East Avenue on June 6, 1897, by Bishop William Walker of the Western New York Diocese. According to notes written by Alice, Margaret’s baptism was “the first service held in this church...and Margaret’s Father had contributed largely towards the cost of building—he had given one thousand dollars in Margaret’s name.”¹⁶

Stella Booth and Addie Motley Webster were named godmothers, while Margaret’s uncle Albert H. Motley was appointed as her godfather. The water used during the christening was brought back from the River Jordan by Margaret’s great-uncle, D.A. Woodbury.¹⁷

Miss Margaret Woodbury

When Margaret was two years old, her mother purchased Althea Cottage in Kennebunk, Maine. The Woodbury family, along with Alice’s



Lake Avenue house, Alice Motley Woodbury, n.d. [c. 1900s]. Box 111, Folder 13, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.



Margaret golfing at Kennebunk Beach, 1908. Box 58, Object 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

tight-knit siblings, spent numerous summers at the cottage, golfing, picnicking, and enjoying days at the beach. Margaret's Motley cousins were all older, so her companions in most early photographs were her parents and aunts. Margaret received her lifelong favorite doll, Mabel, at age 5; later, the doll's original wig was replaced by one crafted from Margaret's own hair.¹⁸ While at home in Rochester, Margaret attended the Columbia School on North Goodman Street. During the winters, the Woodbury family (often joined by assorted Motleys) departed snowy Rochester for their Miramar home in Santa Barbara, California, where Margaret went to the Gamble School for Girls. (Margaret ultimately did not graduate from either school, due to sporadic attendance.) Margaret first accompanied her parents, uncle, and aunt overseas on a trip to Japan in 1905, followed by a Western European tour the following year with her mother and two aunts. She did not often encounter

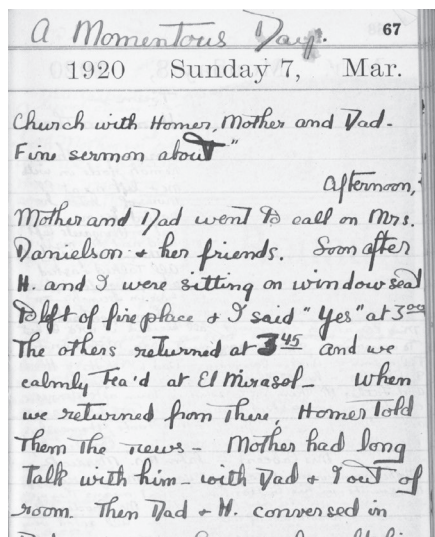
children on the ships or trains, and Margaret's excitement about young companions on one vessel was evident in a May 1906 letter to her father: "There are four little girls on the boat that I play with.... All of us have been down to the Dining-room for every meal so far and I have been a good girl all the time."¹⁹

Margaret Woodbury's teenage years were filled with the typical activities of a privileged young lady: music classes, art tutors, golf lessons, tennis matches, horseback riding, tea dances, dinners, day-long excursions, and extensive globetrotting.²⁰ A competitive golfer, Margaret trained under golf professional Walter Hagen. She won multiple titles and set women's records at Oak Hill and other local country clubs. Along with local newspaper clippings of her scores at tournaments, Margaret pasted articles from *The American Golfer* and *Golfers Magazine*, as well as memorable golf scorecards, into bound scrapbooks. Other popular topics and ephemera covered in her dozens of scrapbooks included plays and performances at Rochester's theaters (including the Lyceum, the Temple, and Convention

Hall), famous actors, world landmarks, jokes, poems, illustrations, and events of the day.²¹ In 1914, Margaret sat for several formal portraits taken using the Capstaff Kodachrome process. This early, short-lived color photograph method utilized two photos taken at the same time by a special camera through green and orange-red filters, reversing one image with a mirror; the positive images were later dyed with green and orange-red, resulting in a positive color image plate.²² At least one such picture of Margaret was exhibited at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, likely due to both its unique photographic processing technique and the Woodburys' amiable relationship with George Eastman. In a clipping proudly pasted into a scrapbook, someone scrawled, "I saw Miss Woodbury's colored picture in the Eastman's show room. Indeed she looks very fine and charming."²³

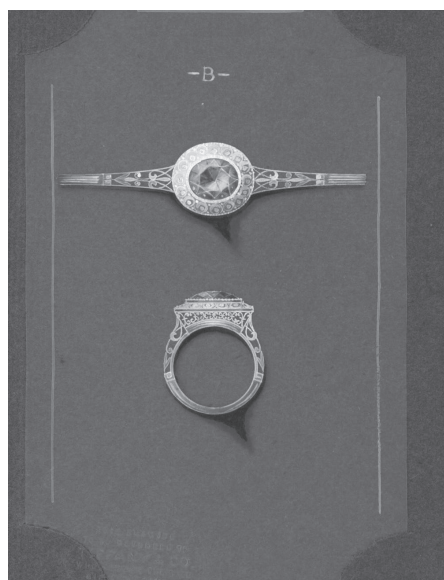
In 1917, during the first World War, Margaret enrolled and completed a course in Elementary Hygiene and Home Care of the Sick, administered by the American National Red Cross.²⁴ Margaret dutifully handwrote lesson notes—"If patient faints, let them alone. Dr. B. says he often likes patient to faint, as it keeps them from squealing so much"—in the margins of her text book.²⁵ Though she did not put her training to practice during the war, Margaret served as an aide to the Women's Division raising money for the American Red Cross War Fund Campaign. When the city set a goal of raising one million dollars for the Red Cross during the week of June 18–25, 1917, George Eastman penned letters to the chosen aides and dispatched a photographer from Eastman Kodak to record the young women marching around the Convention Hall for use in newsreels.²⁶

Homer Strong (1875-1958), a distant cousin of her grandfather's former business partner, entered Margaret's life in the mid-1910s. A lawyer by trade, Homer also dabbled in business, including a machine tool and steel supply company in Rochester. Around 1916, his initials began to appear sporadically throughout Margaret's diary entries: "H.S. took me to concert of Greta Torpadie at Elwangers"; "Pretty tiny roses bouquet. Eve. H.S. took me to Lyceum to see 'Her Regiment'"; "H.S. here in A.M. until 12—Then went to pack his car up + came back for lunch."²⁷ Homer and Margaret often took walks, attended the theater, and dined with her parents. Though Margaret's diaries often referenced other gentlemen (particularly those at special events or dances), she did not write about dating (or otherwise being romantically involved with) anyone besides Homer Strong. Despite the fact that he was 22 years older than Margaret, Homer was a match approved by her parents—likely steered by Alice. Margaret titled the March 7, 1920, entry in her diary "A Momentous Day." She recorded:



Margaret Woodbury's diary entry, March 7, 1920. Box 1, Folder 5, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

followed to family members and acquaintances back home on the East Coast, while the newly-engaged couple visited friends around Santa Barbara the next day. "Mother announced it saying, 'You see Mr. S. is wearing marguerite in his buttonhole + that means they are engaged.' Wild



Tiffany engagement ring drawing for Margaret Woodbury, 1920. Box 2, Folder 5, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

Afternoon. Mother and Dad went to call on Mrs. Danielson + her friends. Soon after H. and I were sitting on window seat to left of fire place + I said 'Yes' at 3:00. The others returned at 3:45 and we calmly tea'd at El Mirasol. When we returned from there, Homer told them the news—Mother had long talk with him—with Dad + I out of the room. Then Dad + H. conversed in Dad's room...and we celebrated by 'Champagne' at house, my first taste....²⁸

Telegrams and telephone calls

applause, etc.,"²⁹ recorded Margaret. The response from relatives and friends was overwhelmingly congratulatory. "Everyone is so sweet, and say the nicest things to me, + more telegrams keep arriving." Tiffany and Co. designed the future Mrs. Strong's engagement ring, a green Alexandrite surrounded by diamonds on a platinum band.³¹ Inside a week, Margaret, her mother, and her Motley aunts discussed wedding plans. Homer, who traveled back to New York to take care of business matters, devotedly sent letters to Margaret and her parents almost daily. Homer wrote to Alice Woodbury, "Every letter I've had from Margaret has made me happier and has made me feel more keenly what a beautiful splendid girl she is. Of course, I miss her terribly, but she has such a glorious way of

radiating happiness through her letters it takes away a lot of the lonesomeness.”³² Presents began arriving at the Woodbury home for Margaret within days of the engagement announcement, and her mother purchased a house on Culver Road (known then as the Gilman Perkins house) as a wedding gift for Margaret.³³

The wedding of Margaret Woodbury and Homer Strong occurred at noon at St. Ann’s Church in Kennebunkport, Maine, on September 9, 1920. Following the intimate ceremony, the newlyweds hosted a wedding breakfast at the nearby Breakwater

Court Hotel. The *Rochester Herald* reported on the bride’s attire, the church decorations, and the guests from the Rochester region who attended the memorable seaside event. Margaret’s silk wedding gown incorporated lace from her mother’s dress, and orange blossoms sent in from Santa Barbara adorned the bridal veil.³⁴ That same afternoon, Homer and Margaret set off on a week-long road trip from Maine back to Rochester, staying in hotels across New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and New York. They returned to their newly gifted house on Culver Road, already well-appointed with wedding presents and furnishings selected by Alice and the Motley clan.



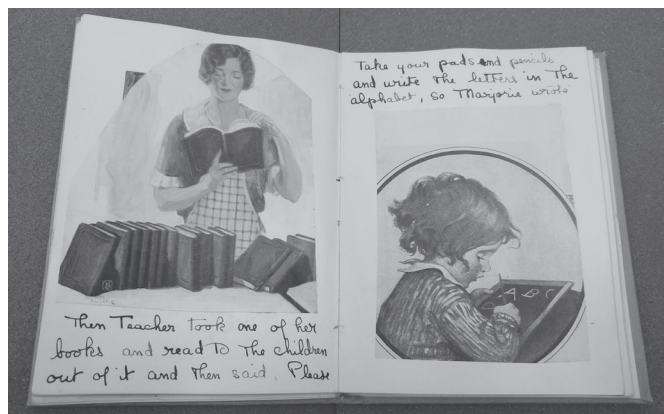
Margaret and Homer Strong at Kennebunk Beach, Maine, on their wedding day, September 9, 1920. Box 53, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

The Strong Family

After the honeymoon, Homer and Margaret Strong settled into their Culver Road home, located close to Margaret’s relatives, the Eastwoods. Soon thereafter, John and Alice built a new home on Douglas Street that connected via backyard to Margaret and Homer’s lot. For several years thereafter, Alice would cross the yard



Culver Road house, Strong family, n.d. [c. 1920s]. Box 110, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.



"All About Marjorie" handmade book for Barbara Strong, Margaret Strong, n.d. [c. 1920s]. Box 104, Folder 4, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

and arrange her daughter's day first thing each morning.³⁵ Margaret befittingly hosted formal teas and dinner parties at her new house, listing seating arrangements and menus in keepsake volumes. Shortly after celebrating their first wedding anniversary, Margaret and Homer welcomed their only child,

daughter Barbara, born on October 7, 1921. Though Margaret did not record her impressions about motherhood, she captured hundreds of photographs of her daughter's early years and even created small, hand-made books for Barbara by pasting illustrations and writing basic stories onto the pages of old bound volumes.³⁶ The Strong family continued life much as Margaret always had done: spending days with her parents and Motley relatives. In 1928 and 1929, Margaret, Homer, and Barbara went on a long trip to England with John and Alice—their last grand excursion together.

Margaret's mother Alice died in December 1933. She bequeathed a \$500,000 trust to Margaret, as well as funds to her granddaughter, Barbara. No documentation exists that personally articulated Margaret's feelings or mindset about the death of her mother, but it must have been a strange sensation for Margaret; every aspect of her life had been essentially micromanaged for the past 36 years. Alice advised Margaret on what to wear, how to act, who to befriend, where to travel, what purchases to make—and Margaret was never far from her parents, even as a married woman. According to the daughter of one of Margaret's employees, her mother mused to her, "When Mrs. Strong's mother died, she said, 'There. Now I will never again in my life have to do anything I don't want to do.'"³⁷

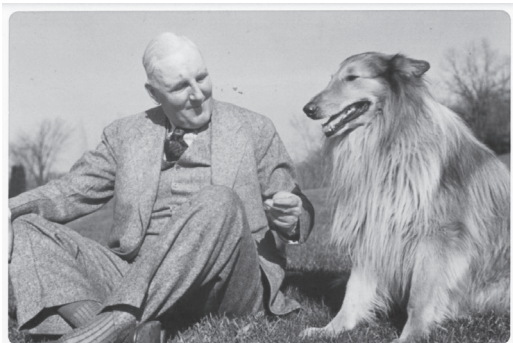
In February 1937, Alvah G. Strong (a distant relative) sold Homer Strong his mansion on Allens Creek Road in Pittsford. The thirty-room Italianate manor, originally named Twin Beeches, was situated on 50 acres of land, perfect for gardening and spreading out more than was possible within the Rochester city limits. Homer and Margaret affectionately referred to their new mansion as Tuckaway Farm. When John C. Woodbury, Margaret's father, died

in October 1937, he left her \$1.5 million (mostly in Kodak stock). She also inherited the collections both parents had acquired over their lifetimes; coins, medals, and stamps from her father, and bookplates, Japanese artwork, and inkwells from her mother. While Margaret may not have voiced her feelings about her stoic Victorian parents, she meticulously maintained their collections long after they were gone.

Both Homer and Margaret were fond of gardening, and Margaret's experiments in flower arranging garnered her an invitation to exhibit an avant-garde arrangement at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Homer belonged to the Grolier Club, the Men's Garden Club of Rochester, the Oak Hill Country Club, and numerous other social organizations and horticultural groups. He kept several dogs as pets over the years, including a handsome collie named Peanuts. The Strong family's doctor, Charles Gibbs, later remembered, "Homer was tall, a little slow moving, a little slow speaking, not a humorist—he was an agronomist."³⁸ While Homer gradually transformed into a homebody who liked strolling around the grounds and tending to his gardens, Margaret continued playing golf, archery, and bowling. She attended fundraisers, participated in civic interest groups (such as the Rochester Museum Women's Council, Landmark Society, and Rochester Historical Society), and joined various clubs herself. Throughout her lifetime, Margaret was a member of social organizations (Genesee Valley Club, Rochester Country Club, Century Club), as well as nature groups



Tuckaway Farm, Pittsford, New York, 1940. Box 110, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.



Homer with dog Peanuts, n.d. [c. 1940s]. Box 96, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

(Rochester Rose Society, Little Garden Club of Rochester, Federated Garden Club of New York State) and art and hobbyist clubs (Rochester Art Club, Print Club of Rochester).³⁹ Margaret also gradually began to amplify the collections already housed in the expansive Allens Creek Road mansion.

Barbara Strong

Similar to Margaret's own upbringing, daughter Barbara studied under private tutors, participated in athletic pursuits, and traveled abroad at a young age. Barbara became an accomplished equestrian as a teenager. Though Margaret's diaries and scrapbooks trail off after she became a mother, family photographs and clippings of horse shows chronicled Barbara's growth. Barbara attended Andrébrook School in Tarrytown, NY, (where she was President of the Riding Club) and later Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY. Barbara, whose college nickname was "Bobbie," took courses in journalism, economics, and creative writing. In 1938, she joined the staff of the college newspaper, *The Campus*, and was appointed Associate Editor during her senior year. Barbara was a serious student, interested in a journalism career.



Barbara and Margaret Strong, 1923. Box 54, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

During college (and likely throughout her teen years), Barbara and her mother had a strained relationship. In a 1982 interview, former Sarah Lawrence College professor Jean McKelvey imparted, "What was most unusual about her was her desire to be independent of her family. She didn't like her family. Her distaste (for them) was really remarkable.... She never spoke about her mother."⁴⁰ Indeed, while Homer continued doting on his daughter well into her twenties, Margaret's extant records indicated stress between the two. Whether Barbara protested against Margaret's (or societal) expectations or the family's money caused disagreements, their mother-daughter relationship was

never especially warm. One article claimed that “Margaret Strong once told an acquaintance, ‘I wish I could go back to 1920 and live my life over. I was so wildly happy up until then but somehow after that, my life changed.’”⁴¹ Margaret’s own irregular upbringing likely did not prepare her for motherhood, and Barbara essentially rebelled against the family once she had the opportunity. Barbara graduated in 1942 and, after receiving her diploma, worked briefly at the Odyssey Press in New York.⁴²

In December 1941, Homer and Margaret Strong announced their daughter’s engagement to Francis Richard Wholley of New York City. The caption under Barbara’s photo, printed in the *Democrat and Chronicle*, loudly proclaimed “Bobbie and Frank Engaged!!!!”⁴³ Wholley, a graduate of Phillips-Exeter Academy and Yale, enrolled in the U.S. Army in early 1942 and was stationed at the Fort F.E. Warren Army Replacement Training Center in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He died there on March 23, 1942, of “acute toxic myocarditis.”⁴⁴ The crematory contacted the Strong family regarding the urn to hold Wholley’s cremains, and they were sent to the Strong’s Allens Creek Road address in April 1942. Barbara must have been despondent over the death of her fiancé, though none of her written records from this time endure. The President of Sarah Lawrence College wrote to Margaret in May 1942, “Miss Seeley tells me that she has just seen Barbara and that she thinks she is settling down fairly well. I am so glad that she has a job to occupy her time and thoughts. Evidently it was a great comfort to her to have her father come and approve her living and working arrangements.”⁴⁵

Less than four months later, on July 7, 1942, Barbara married Lieutenant Richard Carroll Dickinson (six years her senior) in a brief ceremony at Fort Myer in Florida. Dickinson, also of Rochester, graduated from the University of Rochester and worked at Eastman Kodak before enrolling in the armed forces in 1941. Within three months of the Dickinsons’ wartime wedding, Richard was



Barbara Strong with horse Town Talk, 1935. Box 108, Folder 9, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

stationed overseas in England. Richard and Barbara did not spend much time together due to the war, and by 1945, they had divorced.⁴⁶ Barbara sent postcards to her father in March and April 1945 from Reno, Nevada, establishing her residency there to receive a divorce, as many women from states like New York and New Jersey had done to be granted their “Reno cure.”⁴⁷ Richard stayed cordial with Homer and Margaret, sending holiday cards even after the relationship had ended.

Barbara married once more, this time to former sailor Albert R. Timberman, originally of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Their brief marriage lasted until Barbara’s death in 1946. While visiting relatives in Schenectady, NY, Barbara was admitted to Ellis Hospital on July 16, 1946, in a comatose state. She died at the hospital. The coroner’s report noted that her blood alcohol content was .17 percent, with cirrhosis of the liver cited as the official cause of death. Articles published decades after Barbara’s death speculated that she was an alcoholic, though there is no extant documentation to support or refute the theory. Barbara was buried in the Timberman family plot at Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee. Margaret Strong did not attend the funeral.⁴⁸

The Collector

Life persisted for Homer and Margaret after losing their only child. They continued participating in area social groups and sporting events until a mishap left Margaret temporarily disabled and led her to develop an interest in a new hobby. In 1953, Margaret fell down the stairs at her Maine cottage, breaking multiple bones, including several vertebrae. It was during her recovery that she “started in collecting doll houses in a big way.”⁴⁹ “Because I could not bend I had tables built to hold the doll houses and I could easily furnish them standing up,” Margaret recalled later. “A great many of the doll houses came from New England and from around Rochester.... It has been marvelous furnishing them. I find furniture and furnishing in the oddest places and use a great many things that were not designed for furnishings.”⁵⁰

She was known to repurpose ordinary household goods, such as thimbles, spools, or washcloths, as additional decorative objects within these elaborate antique houses. A 1957 article in the *Rochester Times-Union* called this assemblage “Rochester’s tiniest suburb.”⁵¹ Margaret later explained her absorption with doll houses:

When I was a little girl, my mother bought a charming doll house for me in Boston.... [I]t was by far my favorite toy and I spent many, many happy hours

playing with it.... Each year before Christmas I was required to give my most cherished toy away to provide room for Santa Claus' gifts. I kept the doll house, however, because I never admitted it was my treasure until I was twelve years old, when I gave it to my cousins.⁵²

By the mid-1950s, Homer's health was fading. Margaret, now fully capable of running her household and making decisions, was in charge. One employee who had joined the Strong staff a decade prior confirmed, "Mrs. Strong was the boss."⁵³ After Homer died in September 1958, Margaret launched herself wholly into the pursuit of adding to her existing collections. In 1955, Margaret hired Anne Hotra to catalog her large collection of bookplates. Hotra ultimately became Margaret's personal secretary, closest confidante, and "unquestionably the person in whom Mrs. Strong had entrusted most of the facts and details of her long life."⁵⁴ Hotra recalled that after Homer's death, "Mrs. Strong had the time, the energy, the space, and the motivation to pursue her dream—the establishment of her museum. The news traveled faster than the speed of sound, and a steady parade of hopeful vendors wound their way up the serpentine driveway to her house.... When they didn't come, she went out and about looking for treasures. The hunt was half the fun."⁵⁵ Hotra admitted that Margaret was a "compulsive buyer," who during her buying trips "kept repeating 'How fascinating!' And whatever fascinated her, she bought—in great numbers at times."⁵⁶

What had once seemed a superfluous amount of space—thirty rooms—quickly became inadequate for Margaret's burgeoning accumulations. She patronized auctions, antique shows, and dealers with great frequency.⁵⁷ She also bought the entire contents of the Tiny Old New England Museum, with 76 miniature rooms handcrafted by Alice Steele.⁵⁸ Margaret entertained the notion of turning her collections into a museum for nearly two decades. Her assemblages of dolls, dollhouses,



Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum at Tuckaway Farm, Pittsford, showing the wings Strong constructed to store her vast collections, 1970. Institutional Archives at The Strong.



Doll house room at Tuckaway Farm, Pittsford, 1970. Institutional Archives at The Strong.

Japanese artifacts, Sailor's valentines, and miniatures had roots based on her early childhood and travels. Toys, decorative objects, and other themed accumulations, like windmills and bookplates, developed based on her varying interests. There were collections everywhere: in the ballroom, the basement, bedrooms, bathtubs, and the flooded-over, drained indoor

swimming pool. Faced with the need for more space, she gradually added extra wings onto the house to accommodate her collections so that she could display them for others to see.

The Strongs had often hosted their affiliated social groups at the Allens Creek Road mansion, and Margaret kept out a guestbook to encourage visitors to sign and record any impressions they had of their visits. One laudatory entry read, "A veritable museum of beautiful possessions!"⁵⁹ Visitors were impressed by both the décor of the house itself and the many collections which were taking shape. In May 1959, for example, Margaret hosted a fundraiser for the Rochester Rose Society where guests could view her doll house collection for the price of one-dollar admission. The program for this event gushed, "These wondrous doll houses make a veritable Lilliputian Village amazing to see.... Each little house shows a cross section of the home with every room from living room to bath completely furnished with miniature household furniture, appliances, and personal effects."⁶⁰ Flora Gill Jacobs, founder of the Washington Dolls' House & Toy Museum, conveyed to Margaret that she had "examined doll houses in museums both in this country and abroad and I am not sure I had seen in the whole fifteen years as many as you now have in your collection. You have some marvelous specimens."⁶¹

The vendor files retained by Margaret were extensive; Hotra organized them in alphabetical order by the vendor's last name or shop title. These letters, receipts, and catalogs, dating mainly from the late 1950s through 1969, span a variety of collecting areas: dolls, dollhouses, miniatures, books, bookplates, buttons, paintings, artwork, shells, and other

antiques. “She wanted to collect everything there was in a certain number of fields,” posited Jane Des Grange, who, as a young girl, had spent time with Margaret Strong. “I think there was a compulsion to get a sample of everything within the fields that she did collect.”⁶² By the mid-1960s, almost all of Margaret’s transactions involved thousands of dollars and truckloads of deliveries. “A mind-boggling but probably inevitable combining of social talk and mercenary detail characterizes the letters that the doll dealers, most of whom were women, wrote to Mrs. Strong. The less dignified of these dealers openly praise Mrs. Strong, cajole her, and then beg her, two, three times, for the remainder of the bill owed to them.”⁶³ Margaret used her money to express her sentiment, observed oral historian Mia Boynton. “She liked or needed certain dealers enough to pay them promptly but trifled a bit with others.”⁶⁴

Hotra defended Margaret’s notorious practice of not paying her bills on time. “She did not do this to be mean, nor was she trying to hang on to her money, she just didn’t like sitting down and doing these tasks alone; she had other things to do which were more interesting.”⁶⁵ Margaret held accounts at department stores, antique shops, and with dealers all over Western New York and in Maine. In Kennebunk, Maine, where she continued to visit through the late 1960s, Margaret contributed heavily to the local economy. There were rumors that at the end

GUESTS			
DATE	NAME	RESIDENCE	DATE
July 5, 1948	Jack Wells George Phreaner	a very fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable evening Delightful evening in a lovely July day. The last word in everything etc.	Aug 31
July 15, 1948	AC Margolia 1804 East Ave		Sept
7-16-48	John B. Hoyt	My thanks for a pleasant home and what a museum!	Sept
July 16-48	Ethel R. Williams	Picked up two angels.	Sept
"	John R. Melton	Fascinating all the way through	Sept
July 19-48	Marion J. Hoyt	Thank you; what wonderful hospitality	Sept
25 July 1948	Alfred Fowler	a most fascinating evening.	Sept
Aug 6, 1948	Peter A. Schwartz	I'm so glad I was here.	Sept
Aug 27-48	Kay Pennington	Everything made most fascinating	Sept
Aug 27-48	Gertrude Melton		Sept

Allen’s Creek Road guestbook, Strong family, 1937-1952. Box 39, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

of each summer, she would buy out the stock of entire shops.

Not everyone in Maine adored (or even accepted) Margaret, however. In 1968, tired of beachgoers parking on her cottage's lawn, Margaret purchased 46 old-fashioned white bathtubs at an auction and lined her property with them, end-to-end. The *York County Coast Star* reported, "For a week, Kennebunk Beach has been a beehive of angry buzzing and indignation. Neighbors are meeting for strategic talks. Battle is planned. Lawyers are being consulted. Pickets have been active."⁶⁶ Margaret filled the tubs with geraniums and invited local artists to the cottage to paint the bathtubs, resulting in a mix of seascapes and psychedelic imagery. "I've seen bathtubs set out in the middle of lawns," Margaret disclosed to the newspaper. "I have given orders for fences to be built here to several carpenters, but no one would build one for me. So I thought I'd do something different."⁶⁷ Some neighbors wrote angry letters, while others resorted to vandalism—tipping over some bathtubs and painting unpleasant phrases onto their sides. One anonymous midnight joker left an old toilet on her lawn.

If the tony summer folks in Maine were thrown by Margaret, the affluent people in



Painted bathtubs surrounding the perimeter of Althea Cottage, Margaret's main summer home in Kennebunk Beach, Maine, 1968. Box 111, Folder 10, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

Rochester were outright offended by her. By the 1960s, all of her relatives had been gone for years, and the Gilded Age of Rochester had faded into obscurity. Margaret's attention was focused on acquiring objects, and that was not viewed kindly by Rochester's upper crust. "Mrs. Strong was not particularly desirous of being extolled or loved by her own immediate community of peers," Boynton remarked. "Her need to have them love her was replaced by a desire to show them that she had more skill than they had, and the skill she chose, after her athletic and flower arranging days were over, was collectorship."⁶⁸ Daniel Manning, a former employee, offered, "She was so absorbed by what she was collecting that she gave no thought as to how her collections were perceived by others including the community."⁶⁹ Margaret and her household staff carefully curated exhibit cases and displays throughout the mansion and the added wings.

Her doll collection increased in size from 600 dolls in 1960 to 27,000 by 1969. Dollhouses filled room after room throughout the estate. Margaret owned at least 500 of them, often modeled on real-life architectural designs. The collections even spilled out to the building's exterior—the driveway to the mansion was lined with specially-built outdoor dollhouses.⁷⁰

People frequently approached Margaret for contributions to worthy causes and charities, but she was more apt to provide service than cash. "She remained charitable on her



One of many rooms at Tuckaway Farm used to showcase Margaret Strong's 27,000 dolls. Main doll room, 1970. Institutional Archives at The Strong.



Another named room in the mansion starring a small segment of Margaret's doll collection. Greene Room, 1970. Institutional Archives at The Strong.



Margaret Strong at Episcopal Diocese Luncheon, 1960. Box 54, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

own personal terms, a habit which irritated those who thought she should have more social conscience, and contribute money the way they wanted her to,” a reporter later related.⁷¹ Margaret opened her home for viewing to school classes, scouting groups, hobbyist clubs, and other local associations. She regularly bought art from local artists, including James Dexter Havens and John Taylor Arms. She offered “regular folks” from Rochester weeks of free accommodations at any of her (by now) dozens of Kennebunk cottages. Her philanthropy manifested itself in other ways besides what Margaret considered to be impersonal financial transactions. “‘Fun’ and ‘fascination’ were two of her favorite

words,” Hotra recalled. “The collecting was fun, and the people she met were certainly fascinating.”⁷²

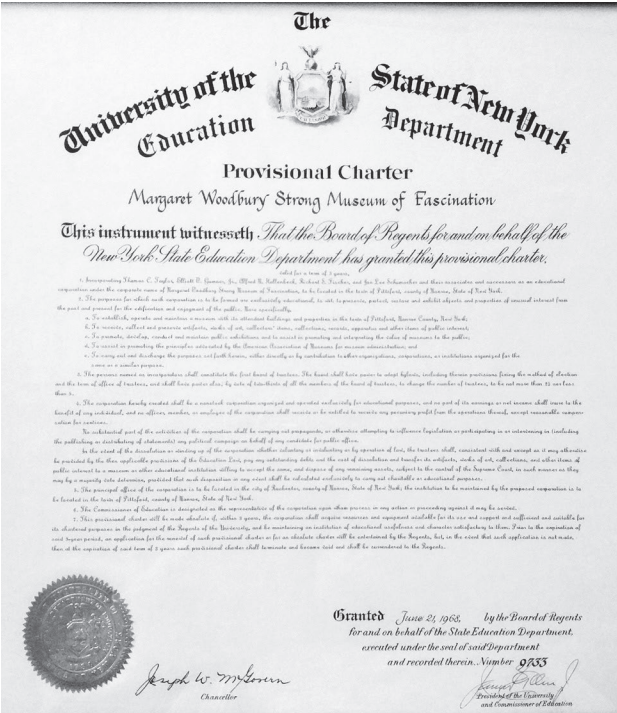
Margaret’s Legacy

Ultimately, Margaret’s attorney, Donald R. Harter, persuaded her to apply for a charter for her prospective museum. “It was a lengthy process.... She knew that meant that she would have less control than she might if she didn’t have to go through the licensing procedure,” Boynton said.⁷³ The New York State Education Department’s Board of Regents granted a provisional charter for the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum of Fascination on June 21, 1968. Margaret pronounced, “I have devoted much of my life, particularly in recent years, to the acquisition of such collections and much public interest has been exhibited therein. I believe such a museum as I contemplate will offer a significant contribution to the cultural life of this area and will also attract many visitors from more distant places.”⁷⁴

Margaret Woodbury Strong passed away at home on July 17, 1969. At the time of her death, she was reportedly the largest individual shareholder of Kodak stock in the world. She was cremated and interred at the Woodbury family mausoleum in Mount Hope Cemetery. In

her will, she provided for the transfer of her collections and estate to the museum corporation and entrusted her executors to determine how best to use her collections for a “Museum of Fascination.” (Margaret had chosen that title because to her, collecting “has been, and is, fascinating.”⁷⁵) *The Brighton-Pittsford Post* noted, “Like a fairy god-mother, she spread generous gifts among dozens of individuals, and her will could mean major gifts for some 19 educational, charitable, and religious organizations.”⁷⁶ Other beneficiaries of her estate included the University of Rochester, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Genesee Hospital, Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester Art Club, Rochester Historical Society, and the Garden Club of Rochester. She bequeathed her massive bookplate collection to the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Members of her household staff received lifetime use of her houses in Rochester and Maine, along with financial gifts for their years of loyal service.⁷⁷

Harter, Margaret’s lawyer and friend, remarked that although plans for the museum were not complete, certain guidelines had been developed from previous conversations between the two and with members of Margaret’s household staff. “We will continue her collections and acquire more items, presumably along the same vein as they started,” Harter told the *Democrat and Chronicle*, “but that doesn’t mean we cannot add other collections. We plan to make it an instructive, entertaining part of the cultural and educational life of the city. We want it to be used and enjoyed.”⁷⁸ The museum corporation, tasked with determining the museum’s future (such as its mission and endowments), hired expert assessors from Parke-Bernet to appraise the items at Margaret’s



Provisional charter for the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum of Fascination, June 21, 1968. Institutional Archives at The Strong.



Sign for Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum at Allen's Creek Road, n.d. [c. 1970s]. Institutional Archives at The Strong.

estate. Sixteen professionals spent more than a year inventorying, examining, and appraising the nearly half-million objects in her collections at the Allens Creek Road mansion. The experts classified the items into fourteen categories, including books, buttons, coins, dolls, furniture, minerals and shells, paintings, paperweights, and toys.⁷⁹ The consultants acknowledged that the greatest cluster of items in Margaret's collections were those that implied play and imagination. While the dolls, toys, and play artifacts were the strength and heart of her collections, professionals at the time did not think that they were profound enough to be the foundation for an educational museum.

Instead, the consultants and the museum corporation concluded that the

museum's mission would be to explore and interpret the cultural development and everyday life in the U.S. in the post-industrial age. The museum utilized many of the mass-produced, decorative items from Margaret's collections, but it further acquired home furnishings and household equipment to portray the impact of changing technologies on the American home. "Essentially, what Mrs. Strong did was to assemble objects which are an extraordinary mirror of popular taste in America over the past 150 years," said the museum's first director, Holman J. Swinney.⁸⁰ The corporation also opted to change the name of the institution from the Museum of Fascination to the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum. Swinney said that the previous name was "too odd, intriguing, and too flashy—while we wanted to educate."⁸¹ Margaret's will had permitted the sale of existing collections, and about one-fifth of her 27,000 dolls, primarily duplicates, were auctioned off to prominent doll collectors.⁸²

The Strongs' mansion in Pittsford could not be zoned for commercial use, so the museum corporation began making plans to move the collections. The corporation researched more than 50 possible locations in the Rochester area before selecting a plot of land next to Manhattan Square in downtown Rochester, part of the Southeast Urban Renewal Project, as

the site for the new museum.⁸³ After more than a decade of careful cataloging, planning, and building, the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum opened to the public in October 1982, offering educational programs, innovative exhibits, and study collections.



Guests in exhibit at opening day of Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, October 12, 1982. Institutional Archives at The Strong.

In time, the museum realized it could not sustain such a broad mission indefinitely. In 2003, following an intensive period of research, planning, and expansion, the museum refined its mission to better reflect Margaret's original intent. The treasure trove of dolls, toys, and other materials related to play became the focus of the museum, exploring the cultural history of play and how it encourages learning, creativity, and discovery. Fifty years after Margaret Strong first chartered it, the Strong National Museum of Play, filled with fascinating collections for all ages and interests, is thriving thanks to her foresight and generosity.

Fun and Fascination

Margaret Woodbury Strong did not have a typical 20th-century upbringing. Her family's wealth and lack of customary obligations allowed for a life of near-constant leisure. But with few childhood playmates, companions were most often disapproving, controlling adults, primarily her older parents and grown-up relatives. She must frequently have been, as people indicated, very lonely. Objects brought her great delight, and she could do with them what she wanted. Acquiring collections on a grand scale later in life filled the void left by the passing of her parents, daughter, and husband. Margaret focused her energy outward into the creation of a museum that would enchant people of all ages. As the *Brighton-Pittsford Post* declared in 1969, the institution would "bear the permanent imprint of one of the most unusual and colorful figures...a woman who in many ways remained a little girl throughout her life and was determined to create for many others the special joys of childhood."⁸⁴



Margaret Strong in gardens, n.d. [c. 1930s]. Box 54, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

During her lifetime, people judged Strong's lifestyle, her fortune, her fashion sense, her attitude, and her possessions. Some people loved her; some disliked her. Some thought she was peculiar, even batty; others considered her practical and cautious. "Well, I'm sure everyone is truthful in what they say," conceded another former employee. "She was all of these things, I'm sure."⁸⁵ Whichever lens you choose to view her through, Margaret Woodbury Strong has undoubtedly had a positive impact on Rochester. She wasn't just some eccentric millionaire with hoarding tendencies, as persistent rumors might have us believe; she was a confident, competitive nonconformist whose lifelong fascination with playthings and sport made "fun" one of her favorite words. And after all, couldn't we all use a little more fun in our lives?

Endnotes

1. Letter, Margaret Woodbury to Addie Motley Webster, March 6, 1908. Box 3, Folder 5, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection, 1818–2002. Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play, The Strong, Rochester, New York. The resource record for the Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection can be found in The Strong’s Archives Catalog at <http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/145>.
2. “My Doll Houses” draft text by Mrs. Homer Strong, 1960. Box 90, Folder 4, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
3. “\$60 Million Estate Established Hobbyist’s Museum: The Incredible Mrs. Strong,” *Brighton-Pittsford Post*, July 24, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
4. Jonathan (1796–1877) and Sally Frost (1796–1869) Woodbury arrived in New York with Sarah Ann Eliza (1824–1884), Daniel Azro (1827–1913), Edmund Frost (1829–1892), and Marcia Electa (1832–1852). Their third daughter, Mary Augusta Woodbury (1834–1842), died several years before the family moved to Rochester.
5. Only one of the children of Edmund and Frances Holyland (1839–1889) survived to adulthood. Their children were John Charles (1859–1937), Clara Frances (1864–1880), and Alice (1876–1883). Especially difficult for the family was Clara’s death; she was tragically felled by typhoid fever. John continued to carry photographs of both sisters in his billfold throughout the rest of his life. See also “The Woodbury Lineage: Ten Generations of Woodburys in America, 1624–1969,” Gladys Holton, c. 1969. Box 112, Folder 20, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
6. “Strong, Woodbury, & Co.” clipping, unidentified newspaper, 1886. Box 113, Folder 11, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
7. Edmund Woodbury’s obituaries praised him as an active member of the Chamber of Commerce, incorporator of the Rochester Homeopathic Hospital, and a vestryman at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. Obituary clippings for Edmund F. Woodbury, c. 1892. Box 112, Folder 12, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
8. These notebooks are contained in Boxes 119–123 of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. (The museum no longer holds Woodbury’s numismatic collections.)
9. Wesley M. Angle, “Milestones in Millstones,” *Rochester Commerce*, March 28, 1932. Box 133, Folder 9, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
10. The Motley children were Ida Jane (1857–1929), Alice Mary (1859–1933), Addie (1861–1938), Lily Bratley (1864–1920), George Motley V (1868–1927), Eleanor Haughton (1870–1942), Maude Motley (1872–1933), Jessie Motley (1874–1881), and Albert Haughton (1877–1926). Lily’s eventual husband, Albert O. Fenn, was a childhood friend of George Eastman’s and likely the person who recommended that the Motleys invest early in Eastman Kodak.

11. Maude Motley, "Alice Motley Woodbury, by her sister Maude Motley," handwritten biography, 1921. Box 128, Folder 11, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
12. Ibid. It is unclear what this meant, other than potential financial issues resulting from nine children in the Motley household..
13. Ibid.
14. As a wedding gift, John gave his bride a gold watch set with a sapphire and two diamonds. Notes in "A Continuous Family Genealogy," partially filled out by Alice M. Woodbury, [c. 1900]. Box 128, Folder 10, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
15. Ibid. The new Mr. and Mrs. John C. Woodbury spent three weeks traveling across the United States to Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Columbus, and Cleveland..
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Mabel, a bisque-head doll from the J.D. Kestner doll factory in Germany, is still on display at The Strong.
19. Letter, Margaret Woodbury to John C. Woodbury, May 1, 1906. Box 3, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
20. Margaret maintained some diaries throughout her lifetime, though the extant entries are not particularly descriptive. Curiously, she recopied initial journal entries from 1908 to 1915 into a single book in 1924, and the originals were discarded. Instead of seven separate diaries for that time span, her archival collection holds one "Keystone Five-Year Diary" with five or so entries on each date's page, with the year indicated on every fourth line. This type of diary, while surely useful to jog memories for the original author, is not always the most informative for future researchers. See "Diary-1908, 1910-1915, recopied by Margaret Strong in 1924," in Box 1, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
21. The bulk of these scrapbooks are dated between 1910 and 1924. Boxes 26-38, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
22. For more information, see Smithsonian Museum of American History, "Discovery in the Collections: 1914 Kodachrome of George Eastman," May 15, 2012. <http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/2012/05/discovery-in-the-collections-1914-kodachrome-of-george-eastman.html>. Accessed 26 February 2018.
23. Clipping in Margaret Woodbury scrapbook, "March 1915-May 1915, From My 18th Birthday to Decoration Day 1915," 1915. Box 29, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
24. American National Red Cross course completion certificate, July 21, 1917. Box 1, Folder 7, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
25. Other amusing annotations include "Head bandage = hard to stay on, especially for women," "Old people and children shouldn't eat when tired," and "Causes of fractured thigh = telegraph

poles, auto accidents, horse rearing.” Notes, Margaret Woodbury, in *American Red Cross Abridged Text—Book on First Aid, Women’s Edition* (1913), 1917. Box 1, Folder 7, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

26. “American Red Cross War Fund Campaign to Raise One Million Dollars in One Week,” Report Sheet, 1917, in Margaret Woodbury scrapbook “December 1916–November 1917, December 1916,” 1917. Box 31, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection; Letter, George Eastman to Margaret Woodbury, June 15, 1917, and “Young Women on Screen,” newspaper clipping from unidentified newspaper, c. 1917, with annotations from Margaret Woodbury in scrapbook “December 1916–November 1917, December 1916,” 1917. Box 31, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

27. Margaret Woodbury, entries dated November 22, 1916; September 13, 1918; and September 4, 1919 in “Diary – 1916–1919.” Box 1, Folder 4, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

28. Entry, March 7, 1920, in “Diary – 1920,” Margaret Woodbury, 1920. Box 1, Folder 5, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

29. Entry, March 8, 1920, in “Diary – 1920,” Margaret Woodbury, 1920.

30. Entry, March 12, 1920, in “Diary – 1920,” Margaret Woodbury, 1920.

31. Ring drawing, Tiffany and Co., 1920. Box 2, Folder 5, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

32. Letter, Homer Strong to Alice Woodbury, April 5, 1920. Box 94, Folder 15, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. Homer’s 1920–1921 letters to Alice Woodbury, in which he affectionately calls her “Marmo,” are increasingly ingratiating—take, for instance, the introduction of this August 2, 1920, letter, located in the same folder: “I think one of the reasons why I love Margaret so much is because she has so many of her mother’s virtues.”

33. Margaret recorded all the wedding presents in another scrapbook, titled “Her Memory Book.” Box 33, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

34. Clipping of wedding announcement, *Rochester Herald*, September 12, 1920. Box 2, Folder 6, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

35. Betsy Brayer, *Margaret Woodbury Strong and the Origin of the Strong Museum* (Rochester, NY: Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, 1982), 21.

36. These can be found in Box 104 of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

37. Jane Des Grange, interview by Mia Boynton, 1989, transcript, 13. Box 91, Folder 16, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

38. Charles Gibbs, interview by Mia Boynton, 1989, transcript, 17. Box 91, Folder 19, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. Gibbs noted (on the transcript’s page 18), “I liked Homer, he was a genial, cordial, affable man. I never heard either of them say anything bad about anybody.”

39. Anne Hotra, “Lists of Margaret Strong’s affiliations,” [c. 1980s]. Box 5, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

40. Stephen Wigler, "Margaret Woodbury Strong," *Upstate Magazine* (October 10, 1982): 26.
41. Ibid.
42. Barbara Strong Alumnae File, 1938–1946, Sarah Lawrence College Archives, Esther Raushenbush Library, Bronxville, New York. (Copies of the original Sarah Lawrence College files are housed in Box 105, Folder 8 of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.)
43. "Scanning the Social Horizon," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, December 27, 1941. Box 104, Folder 10, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
44. Acute myocarditis, or inflammatory cardiomyopathy, is an infection or autoimmune disorder of the heart resulting in cardiac arrest. Toxic indicates that the inflammation may have resulted from a reaction to some sort of drug or poison, such as from a spider bite or scorpion sting. Information on Wholley from Yale University, *Bulletin of Yale University, Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the Year 1941–1942* (Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1943), 161. http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1925_1952/1941-42.pdf. Accessed 14 February 2018.
45. Letter, Constance Warren to Margaret Strong, May 14, 1942. Box 104, Folder 10, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
46. Richard married an Englishwoman sometime in 1945, and she was noted in a newspaper article as "awaiting passage to this country" from Bristol, England. ("Daddy and Twin Bring Double Confusion to Tot," *Rochester Times-Union*, December 10, 1945. Box 104, Folder 11, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.)
47. Correspondence, Barbara Woodbury Dickinson to Homer Strong. Box 104, Folder 13, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. "Sisters Tell Tales from the 'Divorce Ranch,'" *Storycorps*, NPR, July 16, 2010. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128545233>. Accessed 14 February 2018.
48. Wigler, 61.
49. Margaret Woodbury Strong, "My Doll Houses" draft, 1960. Box 90, Folder 4, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
50. Ibid.
51. Joan Lynn Schild, "In Rochester's Tiniest Suburb: 200 Miniature Buildings," *Rochester Times-Union*, December 18, 1957. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
52. Margaret Woodbury Strong, "My Doll Houses" draft, 1960.
53. John Nazmick, interview by Mia Boynton, transcript (1989), 24. Box 92, Folder 2, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
54. Mia Boynton, Field Notes, 1989, 1. Box 92, Folder 13, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
55. Anne Hotra, Recollections, 1989, 4. Box 91, Folder 22, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
56. Raymond A. Joseph, "Starting a Museum is Easy; Just Acquire 300,000 or So Curios," *Wall*

- Street Journal*, December 23, 1977. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
57. While attending auctions or going shopping, Margaret often dressed in clothes that hid her wealth and social status. People who encountered her in the 1960s frequently repeated (somewhat nastily) that she dressed like a “charwoman.”
58. The Tiny Old New England Museum was operated in West Cummington, Massachusetts, during the mid–20th century by Alice Steele. She was an artist who painstakingly built more than 300 miniature rooms of typical historic New England homes and shops. Steele later dispersed her collection of miniature rooms—many of which ended up with Margaret Strong (and now, in the collections of The Strong museum).
59. Mr. & Mrs. Edward H. Branson, guestbook entry, May 2, 1953. Box 39, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
60. Rochester Rose Society program, May 1959. Box 5, Folder 18, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
61. Letter, Flora Gill Jacobs to Margaret Strong, April 8, 1960. Box 110, Folder 15, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. (Flora Gill Jacobs’ papers are also housed at The Strong; the resource record for the collection can be found on The Strong’s Archives Catalog at <http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/68>.)
62. Jane Des Grange, interview by Mia Boynton, transcript, 1989, 5–6. Box 91, Folder 16, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
63. Mia Boynton, Final report, 1989, 24–25. Institutional Archives at The Strong.
64. Ibid.
65. Anne Hotra, Recollections, 1989, 3. Box 91, Folder 22, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
66. “Mrs. Strong surprised at bathtub uproar; leafy water closet not her idea,” *York County Coast Star*, August 7, 1968. Box 111, Folder 10, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
67. Ibid.
68. Mia Boynton, Final Report, 35–37. Institutional Archives at The Strong.
69. Letter, Daniel Manning to Mia Boynton, 1989. Box 92, Folder 9, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
70. Since dollhouses were representative of the periods in which they were created, it is possible to see social and economic changes that have taken place over the years by viewing dollhouses. The addition of indoor plumbing, bathrooms, elevators, electricity, telephones, radios, and household appliances helps a viewer to estimate the location and time of each tiny building’s manufacture and use.
71. Mary Anne Pikrone, “Strong Estate Estimated at Near \$100 Million,” *Rochester Times–Union*, July 24, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
72. Anne Hotra, Recollections, 1989, 5. Box 91, Folder 22, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

73. Ruth Harter, interview by Mia Boynton, transcript, 1989, 8–9. Box 81, Folder 11, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
74. “Last Will and Testament of Margaret Woodbury Strong,” January 6, 1969. Box 51, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
75. Margaret Woodbury Strong, “My Doll Houses” draft, 1960.
76. “\$60 Million Estate Established Hobbyist’s Museum: The Incredible Mrs. Strong,” *Brighton–Pittsford Post*, July 24, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
77. “Mrs. Strong’s Will Sets Up ‘Fascinations Museum,’” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, July 19, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
78. Anne Stearns, “Museum of ‘Fascinations’ to Expand,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, July 25, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
79. Parke–Bernet appraisal, Vol. 1 of 2, May 1, 1970, 2. Box 14, Folder 1, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
80. “New Director Sees Strong Museum as Fascinating Opportunity,” *Brighton–Pittsford Post*, October 14, 1971. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
81. Raymond A. Joseph, “Starting a Museum is Easy; Just Acquire 300,000 or So Curios,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 23, 1977. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
82. Proceeds received from sales such as this went directly back into a museum collections acquisitions account.
83. Jay Gallagher, “City Lures Strong Museum Downtown,” *Rochester Times–Union*, September 1, 1977. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
84. “\$60 Million Estate Established Hobbyist’s Museum: The Incredible Mrs. Strong,” *Brighton–Pittsford Post*, July 24, 1969. Box 90, Folder 3, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.
85. Bob Freitag, interview by Mia Boynton, transcript, 1989, 23. Box 91, Folder 17, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.



About the Author

Julia Novakovic is the Archivist at The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, where she oversees the preservation of and access to archival collections of play scholars, toy inventors, game designers, video game companies, and other collections which explore play—including the Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection.

Novakovic graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2012 with her MLIS, specializing in Archives, Preservation, and Records Management. Prior to joining The Strong in 2013, she held internships at the Martha’s Vineyard Museum and the University of Pittsburgh’s Nationality Rooms Program.



Capstaff Kodachrome glass plate photograph of Margaret Woodbury, 1914. Box 55, Folder 9, Margaret Woodbury Strong Collection. This photographic process was only in use for a short period of time around 1914-1915. Prints from plates taken of Margaret Woodbury and other acquaintances were displayed at the Memorial Art Gallery in 1915.



The Strong National Museum of Play exterior, 2017. Institutional Archives at The Strong.



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