

An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings

Repository: University of Northern Colorado, James A. Michener Library, Archival Services

Collection number: SC 1-61

Title: An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings

Author: Inventory prepared by Shirley Soenksen on 2006 June 20; revised on 2008 September 8.

Dates: 1975

Creator or Collector: Norris, Erlene Giffin.

Size: 6 linear feet? (2 paintings)

Abstract:

This collection consists of two large oil on masonite framed paintings in wood frames, correspondence and miscellaneous items.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of two large oil on masonite framed paintings in wood frames, correspondence and miscellaneous items.

Biography of James A. Michener:

James Albert Michener was born in 1907 to unknown parents and raised as an orphan in the care of widow Mabel Michener of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. By the time he graduated from high school in 1925, he had visited 45 out of the 48 states. He was given a scholarship to Swarthmore, and after graduating summa cum laude in 1929, he traveled and continued his education at nine universities inside and outside the United States. During this time, he also taught in Pennsylvania, Colorado, and at the Harvard School of Education.

When he was not teaching, Michener worked as a textbook editor in New York, and he joined the British Merchant Marines. During WWII, he joined the Navy, making use of his experience in the British Merchant Marines to climb through the ranks to lieutenant and his knowledge of history to carry out sensitive assignments in the South Pacific. It was this experience that brought about *Tales of the South Pacific* in 1947, which won a Pulitzer Prize. Michener used this novel as the cornerstone of his writing career, publishing almost 50 books in the next 50 years, including *Sayonara*, *Hawaii*, *The Source*, *Iberia*, *Caravans*, *The Covenant*, *Sports in America*, and *Poland*.

In 1977, a four-part public television series called *The World of Michener* covered Israel, Hawaii, Spain, and Poland, just a few of the countries upon which his books have been based. Several other books have been turned into movies or miniseries, and two of his novels have been turned into musicals (most notably *South Pacific*, which won its own Pulitzer Prize).

During the time that he was publishing, however, Michener did not ignore the world around him. He ran for Congress in 1962 and held positions on several committees, including the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, the U.S. Postal Service stamp committee, and an advisory position on a council for NASA. He also spoke often at congressional hearings and at functions of those organizations in which he held particular interest.

James A. Michener died at the age of 90 on October 16, 1997 in Texas, three years after his third wife, Mari Yoriko Sabusawa. He had no children.

Biography of Erlene Giffin Norris:

Erlene Norris Giffin LeZhan is a local Greeley artist who was inspired by James A. Michener's novel *Centennial* to "make the West live again." As part of an art show at the University of Northern Colorado's James A. Michener Library to celebrate Colorado's Centennial and the nation's Bicentennial, she exhibited two oil on masonite paintings: "The Immigrants" and "The Buffalo Hunt."

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use: User is responsible for copyright compliance.

Preferred Citation: [Description of Item], James A. Michener papers (SC 1-61), Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings Collection Name, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

Acquisition Information (if applicable):

Gift of Erlene Giffin Norris in 198 [6?].

Documentation relating to the acquisition is on file in Archives, RG 13 S1 F11-2.

Documentation relating to a 1975 exhibit of artwork by Erlene Norris and Ellen Parker is on file in Archives, RG13 S14 F1-1, filed by date.

Original accession number: 090803-03. Erlene Norris Giffin.

Subjects:

Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997.

Norris, Erlene Giffin.

University of Northern Colorado. Libraries. James A. Michener Special Collection.

West (U.S.) -- In art.

Inventory:

Collection	MSS #	Series	Box 1	Folder	Title
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 0 – Finding Aid	Finding Aid
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 1 -- Paintings	<p>"The Immigrants." Large oil on masonite framed painting in wood frame. Approximately 41⁷/₈"x29³/₄" (framed) and 35⁷/₈" x 23⁷/₈" (without a frame). Signed Erlene Giffin Norris '75.</p> <p>Handwritten note on back of the painting reads: "The Immigrants. The continuity the immigrants represented to the frontiers of America naturalized this great country. Erlene Giffin Norris LeZhan. Told so beautifully in James Michener <i>Centennial</i> (book).</p> <p>Transferred to: Shelving Against Back Wall (SC1-49), Framed Items Along Back Wall.</p>

Collection	MSS #	Series	Box 1	Folder	Title
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 1 -- Paintings	<p>"The Buffalo Hunt." Large oil on masonite framed painting in wood frame. Approximately 41$\frac{7}{8}$"x29$\frac{3}{4}$" (framed) and 35$\frac{7}{8}$" x 23$\frac{7}{8}$" (without a frame). Signed Erlene Giffin Norris '75. No note on back of painting.</p> <p>Transferred to: Shelving Against Back Wall (SC1-49), Framed Items Along Back Wall.</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 1 -- Paintings	<p>["The Immigrants"]. Print. Framed in glass. 12"wx15"l.</p> <p>Text reads: University of Northern Colorado, James A. Michener Library, Historical Paintings Featured, Described in the book, Centennial, by the Pulitzer Prize author, James A. Michener, Noted Artist Erlene Giffin Norris LeZhan.</p> <p>"The covered wagon trains moved toward the outline of mountains as though sculpted against an immense sky of gold. The severity of their majestic perspective was like a brilliant benediction, full of hope after the midst of wild prairie and danger. Man always going forward for without his vision he would perish."</p> <p>Commentary by Erlene Norris LeZhan.</p> <p>Transferred to: Hanging on the north wall of the James A. Michener Room that houses the James A. Michener Special Collection.</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 1 -- Paintings	<p>["The Buffalo Hunt"]. Print. Framed in glass. 12"wx15"l.</p> <p>Text reads: University of Northern Colorado, James A. Michener Library, Historical Paintings Featured, Described in the book, Centennial, by the Pulitzer Prize author, James A. Michener, Noted Artist Erlene Giffin Norris LeZhan.</p> <p>"The gun in the hand of the hunter, be it six-shooter or rifle, had a multi-purpose role in the extension of man's</p>

Collection	MSS #	Series	Box 1	Folder	Title
					<p>survival in this unsettled land. Here man was only one notch above the wolf that followed this same buffalo herd for meat.”</p> <p>Commentary by Erlene Norris LeZhan.</p> <p>Transferred to: Hanging on the north wall of the James A. Michener Room that houses the James A. Michener Special Collection.</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 2 -- Correspondence	<p>Letter dated 198 [6?] July 30 from Claude Johns, Dean of Library Services, University of Northern Colorado, to Erlene Norris regarding her gift of the paintings “The Immigrants” and “The Buffalo Hunt.”</p> <p>Transferred to: RG 13 S1 F11-2, SC 1-00 -- Acquisition and Location of Materials (SC 1-61 – Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings)</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 3 -- Miscellaneous	<p>Endly, Doug. “Centennial-art Exhibit Inspired by Michener.” Publication title and date unknown.</p> <p>Article about local artists Erlene Norris and Ellen Parker being inspired by James A. Michener’s novel <i>Centennial</i> for “their ‘Centennial Art Exhibit’.”</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 3 -- Miscellaneous	<p>Art Exhibit of Erlene Giffin Norris and Ellen Parker. Endorsement. Signed by Gabor Kovacs and Virginia Costello, library staff on 1975 December 4.</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 3 -- Miscellaneous	<p>University Archives. “Centennial Railroad Festival.” Flyer signed by Erlene LeZhan.</p>
Erlene Giffin Norris Paintings	SC 1- 61		Box 1	Folder 3 -- Miscellaneous	<p>James A. Michener Special Collection. Series: Centennial. File V. General Files. Printout from defunct website dated 2005 February 12.</p>