John Cotton Dana, John Dewey, and the Creators of the Newark Museum: A Collaborative Success in the Art of Progressive, Visual Instruction

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John Cotton Dana, John Dewey, and the Creators of the Newark Museum:
A Collaborative Success in the Art of Progressive, Visual Instruction

Michael J Mulryan

Master's Thesis
Professor Susan Leshnoff
1 April 2001
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I. Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, a pedagogical and aesthetic vision became a reality under the influence of John Cotton Dana (1856-1929). The Newark Museum, the first, if not the only, progressive, visual institute of instruction came into being. By implementing John Dewey's (1859-1952) philosophy along with his own eclectic ideas, Dana, along with his colleagues succeeded in their efforts to make his “New Museum” ideal a reality. Even though the philosophy of education that evolved at the Newark Museum in the 1920's owed a great deal to John Dewey's thought, it owed just as much to the American progressive movement of which Dewey was one of the founders. In 1924, The Progressive Education Association published the first issue of its magazine *Progressive Education*, in which a synopsis of the progressive movement was provided.

The overview of the progressive movement provided in the journal of the 1920's was based on the writings of John Dewey, Francis Parker, and Charles Wilson Eliot. The Progressive Education Association described a progressive learning environment as a place where: 1) independence and self-expression are not only permitted but also encouraged, 2) interest should be the sole motive of all scholarly and vocational work, 3) the teacher is the guide, not the taskmaster, 4) the classroom is a laboratory, not a mechanism controlled by tradition, and where 5) there should be many diverse, material things.\(^1\) By juxtaposing these principles with the pedagogical methods practiced at the Newark Museum during its formative years, one can perceive that the Newark Museum was a progressive institution in which progressive theories about classroom practice were applied to learning through museum exhibitions under Dana's leadership.

The physical realization of Dana's "New Museum" ideal at the Newark Museum coincided with the evolution of the American progressive education movement of the 1920's. Both the progressive movement and the philosophy of John Cotton Dana were anti-traditional, since they were both forms of retaliation against antiquated methods used for developing exclusive educational institutions. Both Dana and Dewey, as progressives, were interested in egalitarian education. Dana attempted to make his museum communal by making every effort to educate the populace instead of constructing a typically exclusive museum like those found in Europe. Dewey, as a philosopher and a founder of the progressive movement, attempted to make American education at the secondary level a legitimate right of every American citizen, instead of allowing the American high school diploma to remain a privilege that very few Americans enjoyed.

The progressive movement and Dana's museum, however, shared many more characteristics than their egalitarian nature. Dana and his colleagues executed many progressive educational strategies during the formative years of the Newark Museum such as an informal atmosphere at the museum where the student could discover all the fascinating artifacts that surrounded him in an independent manner. The Newark Museum, by selecting subject matter that was relevant to their everyday lives, intrigued Newarkers. Like the progressives, docents at the Newark Museum were not taskmasters who disciplined with stern authority, but acted as guides who led students in a pedagogical direction. Most of all, like Dewey and the progressives, Dana and his staff believed in the importance of process and its potential to convey knowledge and understanding.
John Cotton Dana was the leader and driving force behind the creation of the Newark Museum and his thought and ideas trickled down to the museum staff. He was a very well read scholar who remained informed in his professional milieu. John Dewey's publications, lectures, and even his classes were within geographical reach of Dana. Dewey taught at Teachers' College of Columbia University, while Dana was only about ten miles away from Dewey in Newark, New Jersey where he was developing his "New Museum" plan. As contemporaries one can imagine that they almost could not have avoided knowing about each other since both men were frequently featured in the New York Times.

Dana and Dewey were both proponents of independent learning, active learning, and experiential learning in an informal atmosphere. However, where Dewey was theoretical, Dana was practical: Dewey published a great deal, while Dana applied his and Dewey's theories with greater vigor than he published. Dewey published almost one hundred books and a multitude of articles and book reviews, whereas Dana only published a small series of articles on the New Museum and also published some papers on library methods. Dana was an industrious pragmatist who had the patience and the energy to make progressive ideology, with particular attention paid to Dewey's progressive theories, an institutional reality.

By rejecting the conventional European model of the museum, Dana was able to create a museum that was and still is vital to its community. He accomplished this by making the museum's exhibits accessible to the public and by making them pertinent to Newarkers' lives, and most of all useful. Dana transferred the focus of his museum from

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2 “Museums and Museums As Mr. Dana See Them,” Newark Evening News, 9 October 1922, 1.
the fine arts to the practical or applied arts. In this fashion, he won the public's confidence while simultaneously causing them to visit his museum in greater and greater numbers. These exhibitions were useful because they inspired Newarkers' interest. Industrial and applied arts (representing the craftsmanship of Newarkers) were the focal point and the thematic glue that held Dana's exhibitions together. John Cotton Dana and his disciple Louise Connolly knowingly implemented the progressive "doctrine of interest" and combined it with the application of experiential learning in order to create a progressive learning environment, where new, innovative and above all anti-traditional progressive ideas could prosper. For these reasons, the philosophical and institutional structure of Dana's museum remains intact to this very day and continues to flourish in a unique manner.

The purpose of this essay is threefold: 1) To provide a synthesis of the philosophical and pedagogical strategies employed at the Newark Museum. 2) To discuss the origins of John Cotton Dana and Louise Connolly's philosophies through their biographies. 3) To present a comprehensive history of the Newark Museum. 4) To demonstrate how Louise Connolly, Hoiger Cahill, Beatrice Winsor, and Katherine Coffrey succeeded in meeting Dana's criteria for the "New Museum." 5) To explain Dana's ideal of the "New Museum" versus his disdain for the gloom of the traditional museum. 6) To reveal the similarities between the philosophies of John Cotton Dana and John Dewey. 7) And to also illustrate how Dana and his followers created a progressive, visual institute of instruction by implementing progressive methods and by implementing John Dewey's philosophy of education.
II. The Philosophy of Education Employed at the Newark Museum

John Cotton Dana, the founder of the Newark Museum and the father of Newark, believed that a museum should not be merely a storehouse for priceless collections only admired by select individuals. On the contrary, a museum should be an “institute of visual instruction”, the principal objective of which is to educate the community. However, Dana never claimed that this would be a simple undertaking, since even during his twilight years and after extensive museological experience, he declared that nobody really knew how to run a museum. Dana was probably being modest when he made that statement, given the detail oriented nature of his own museum philosophy and the plans he had for implementing his theories.

If a student were to sum up Dana’s philosophy and its progressive undercurrents in a few words, he would probably state that a museum is not an old warehouse of classic paintings; for a true museum is an active educational institution whose presence in the community is crucial. Dana planned on changing the image of the museum by making it accessible and instructional for the public. He and his staff used their budget for several less expensive artifacts that could be of greater educational use to the public, instead of acquiring one or two masterpieces. In this way, they created a progressive learning laboratory with many diverse artifacts. It was his pragmatic belief that a museum could

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5 Ibid., 405-07.
get much greater use out of $10,000 employed for the benefit of the community via outreach programs and local artisans' products than $100,000 spent on a few chefs d'oeuvre. He also felt that trained museum experts should act as liaisons between the people and objects. In the Newark Museum, the docent acted as a progressive guide helping the visitors to discover what the objects had to offer. This idea became a reality through Dana's breakthrough program of apprenticeship, whereby young college graduates were trained eclectically for the museum profession within one year (a program that flourished for nearly twenty years until the onslaught of World War II). These young men and women were trained for every aspect of the museum profession: they spent time working in each department of the museum in order to discover which niche of the museum suited them best.

Dana and his colleagues also applied progressive methodology by promoting experiential learning. By inviting artisans and artists to the museum to demonstrate the beauty of their crafts before the public, Dana allowed children to witness the process of tanning, painting, spinning wool, and a myriad of other trades. Children could even

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7 Ibid., 76.

8 E.T. Booth and John Cotton Dana, Apprenticeship in the Museum (Newark: Newark Museum, 1928), 3-5.

9 Many of these museological students went on to do great things for the profession, especially as art educators in the New York Metropolitan area. For example, Dorothy C. Miller joined the apprenticeship program in 1925 upon graduation from Smith College. The Newark Museum was Miller's introduction to the world of art education and provided her with the opportunity she needed to begin a museum career for the Modern Museum of Art in New York.

Schnee, Alix Sandra, "John Cotton Dana, Edgar Holger Cahill, and Dorothy C. Miller: Three Art Educators" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, Teachers College, 1987), 154.
experiment themselves within the museum's walls and try each trade out individually by using an authentic loom or a sewing machine. In this way, students were granted independence and an avenue for self-expression within the museum atmosphere. Even after their museum visits, children could learn about what they saw in more detail. The Newark Museum actually lent objects to local schools to enrich schoolteachers' lessons and give children the opportunity to learn visually, and by doing so the Museum successfully helped to create progressive, learning laboratories in schools throughout Northern New Jersey.¹⁰
III. John Cotton Dana and Louise Connolly: A Progressive Visionary and His Energetic Disciple

John Cotton Dana and Louise Connolly worked together to develop a philosophy of education at the Newark Museum, and although these two museum experts were not tied by the bonds of marriage, their strong professional bond and their influence on one another led to the creation of an enduring educational program.

John Cotton Dana was born on August 19, 1856 in Woodstock, Vermont, a seventh generation descendant of Richard Dana who came to the New World from England in 1640. The Danas were a very well respected family in their town, since generations of their lineage had contributed to the community in a multitude of ways, many as professionals. Charles and Charity Dana, who owned a general store and farm, raised five sons together, John being the middle child. John spent most of his youth tending chickens and cows and playing in his father’s store, a time he remembered very fondly. This is probably where he first developed his entrepreneurial spirit, his inimitable pragmatism, and a love of common objects. Dana spent his entire childhood in Vermont, attending both elementary and secondary school in Woodstock. When he was 16, he had already independently created a monthly newspaper entitled The Acorn.

Following family tradition, he attended Dartmouth College, where he studied the Classics and prepared for a career in law. In 1878 he received his AB from Dartmouth and was voted ‘best-reader man in his class’ (he graduated fourth in a class of 78 students).  

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10 Educational Material for Teachers (Newark: Newark Museum Association, 1923), 1-5.
11 Schnee, 24-25.
12 Ibid., 26.
Even though Dana had chosen to study law, he was not satisfied working in a law office after graduation. From 1880-1889 Dana lived in various places throughout the West, including Colorado and Minnesota, where he experimented with a multitude of professions. Whether he was working on the railroads, surveying mining claims, teaching, dabbling with insurance claims, or practicing law, Dana always found time to publish. He was an idealist who changed faces politically from socialism to individualism during his experimental years as a wandering professional. Later on in life his growing belief in individualism possibly contributed to his endorsement of independent learning at the Junior Museum, a section of the Newark Museum.13

In 1883 he moved in with his brother Charles, who was critical of his inability to settle down. Perhaps his brother had some impact on Dana, since he finally took the bar on June 1, 1883 and passed it with ease.14 Even after establishing a life for himself in New York City with his brother, Dana became restless and moved to Ashby, Minnesota in March 1884, where he planned on practicing law. This was a great turning point in the life of John Dana, since his father passed away the same year. Dana not only had great respect for his father, but also consistently sought his advice and empathy during times of distress. Alix Schnee points out in his dissertation on Dana and his followers that the death of Dana's father forced him to be financially and emotionally independent.15

On November 15, 1888, Dana married Adine Rowena Waggener, who proved to be a very challenging spouse. She became a hypochondriac and a constant neurotic later

13 Dana, 163.

14 Ibid., 29-30.

15 Schnee, 33-34.
in life and proved to be an enigmatic life partner for Dana, since she harassed him and his employees. Alix Schnee affirms in his dissertation that she was probably jealous of the passion and commitment he had for his career.\(^\text{16}\)

At age thirty-three Dana finally found his true vocation as a librarian, an epiphany that hit him quite fortuitously: Aaron Grove, the brother of one of Dana's close friends from Dartmouth, appointed Dana director of the Denver Public Library in 1889.\(^\text{17}\) Dana found this professional domain to be his natural niche and did great things for the Denver library. He caused the number of visitors to rise dramatically during his tenure there. He abolished the antiquated requirement that applicants for a library card secure the signature of a reputable citizen, who would be responsible for the borrower. By leaving the library open from nine o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock in the evening, Dana welcomed uneducated manual laborers in his library, making books accessible to anyone who wished to read them. These policies point to Dana's pragmatism, his anti-traditional beliefs, and his progressive tendencies. By breaking with tradition, Dana empowered readers by allowing them to learn on their own. In 1894 he created the first children's reading room in the country with low tables and chairs to accommodate youths, a learning environment conducive to youngsters' bodies and minds. In 1896 he was elected president of the American Library Association.\(^\text{18}\)

By 1888 Dana was getting restless in Denver and sought a greater professional challenge by looking for job openings at other libraries throughout the East. In

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 35-37.

Springfield, Massachusetts he found a post to his liking and served as director of the City Library Association from 1898 to 1901.

In 1901 he moved once again, but this time to his final professional destination: the Free Public Library of Newark, New Jersey, where he served as director for twenty-nine years. Frank P. Hill, former director of the Newark Museum, left Dana a capable staff under Beatrice Windsor.

Not only was Dana's library in Newark in a brand new building, but also it had vacant floors, in which Dana organized an Exhibition of Paintings Lent by Newark Citizens in 1903. In the course of two weeks this exhibit attracted 32,000 visitors. By 1908 Dana had already produced fifty-six special exhibits.

Dana's museological ambitions proved successful, and in 1909 the Newark Museum Association was chartered as 'a museum for the reception and exhibition of articles of art, science, history, and technology and for the encouragement of the study of the arts and sciences.' The Newark Museum Association eventually became what is now known as the Newark Museum. The Newark Museum Association had fifty trustees, for which Dana was the secretary. By 1910 Dana had already acquired some of the main collections with which a modern day Newark resident would probably be familiar: the George T. Rockwell Collection of paintings and sculpture and the William S. Dishbrow scientific collection. This newly acquired art collection reinforced Dana's progressive philosophy, because the George T. Rockwell Collection included paintings by a group of urban painters known as the Ashcan School, who recorded New Yorkers' daily lives. These collections not only adhered to Newarkers' doctrine of interest, but

18 Alexander, 383.
also helped to sculpt an active learning laboratory. The Disbrow scientific collection was filled with specimens from New Jersey and could assist the elementary student of biology.\textsuperscript{20}

In 1912 Dana named Miss Louise Connolly the education advisor of the Newark Museum. She, like himself, was an advocate of experiential learning. When Connolly arrived, Dana asked her to compile a report on the contemporary educational methods used in museums throughout the country. This report was published as "The Educational Value of Museums." Dana knew that most New Jersey public schools had many more resources at their disposal than would ever be available to him, which led to his and Connolly’s research project. He was looking for new ideas by using other pioneering museums as a precedent. He also worked very closely with public schools by developing a lending department, which eventually delivered artifacts and pedagogical materials to these institutions.\textsuperscript{21}

Throughout his stay at Newark, Dana emphasized the importance of everyday objects and local handmade products, such as leather, jewelry, textiles, and ceramics. The museum held several exhibits with these themes all forging the Museum’s status as a pillar of the community, an institute of visual instruction just like the one Dana had envisioned earlier in life. Towards the end of his life, Dana kept a very busy schedule despite recurrent health problems, which afflicted him for many months prior to his death from uremia in 1929.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 390.

\textsuperscript{21} Schnee, 37.
Louise Connolly (1863-1927) was a devout educator throughout her life and never felt teaching was a burden. In fact, she declared that no one should ever complain about the lack of pay in teaching, since it is a privilege and a joy to teach “the angels” of an elementary classroom.\(^\text{23}\) Given that Connolly implemented progressive education principles throughout her life and was a woman of industry and moral purpose, she was the perfect match for Dana professionally. Dana came up with new ideas on education à propos the museum trade, and Connolly gave them a practical application.\(^\text{24}\)

Connolly was born of mixed English and Irish heritage in Washington D.C. during the days of the Civil War. Connolly’s parents, Thomas Connolly, who was a journalist, and Margaret Williams Connolly, both supported the Union in Confederate friendly Washington D.C. Connolly was born during a politically impassioned time period and was a passionate person who never gave up on her cause to grant every child the right to have a solid, quality education. This cause found expression in the progressive movement, which promoted the development of an inclusive American education system.\(^\text{25}\)

Connolly stayed in Washington throughout her childhood years. She gave up on going to college upon her father’s death, choosing to attend the Normal School instead. Even during her time off from school during the summer, Louise’s mother always secured excellent teachers for her daughter. They taught her the traditional subjects as well as modern trades such as telegraphy. After she completed her education, Miss


\(^{24}\) Ibid., 15.
Connolly became a first grade teacher for the Washington D.C. school district and was consistently promoted during her tenure of sixteen years. Miss Connolly managed to earn her B.S. and M.S. at George Washington University while teaching full time. She budgeted her time wisely and was able to write compelling fiction in spite of her busy schedule.26

From 1896 to 1898 Connolly was the head of the English department at the Commercial High School in Washington D.C., where she began writing textbooks, the first one entitled *Rational Grammar*. Her success brought her to the attention of several New York editors who convinced her to move there and start a new career in editing after sixteen years of teaching. However, upon moving to New York City Connolly never stopped teaching or being an inspirational speaker. While there she taught settlement classes at the Judson Memorial Church and gave lectures at Teachers' Institutes along the East Coast. She used brief outlines to guide her through her lectures while speaking extemporaneously and gained renown for her flair as a public speaker.27

In 1902 she reentered the field of education and became the superintendent of the public school system in Newark, New Jersey. In 1906 she was offered the position of superintendent of public schools in Summit, New Jersey, which she accepted. By 1906 Connolly was a pioneer in visual and social education. Her belief in the art of treating others humanely at all costs pervaded the school systems she supervised. She also promoted progressive methods in the classroom, including the use of visual materials and the potential of film to educate young minds. Through

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25 Good, 349-89.

26 Ibid., 12.
incorporation of visual materials and film, she helped to create a progressive laboratory of learning by improving the array of tools at the educator's disposal.\textsuperscript{28}

Miss Connolly had an office in the Newark Free Public Library and had known Dana for many years before becoming a member of the Library and Museum staff. Dana had already given Connolly advice on the curriculum for the public school by recommending readings that stressed the importance of Newark history and culture. Dana hired Connolly as the education advisor to the Newark Museum and Library in 1912. Her manifesto on museum education, "The Educational Value of Museums" (1914), formed a precedent for the way in which Connolly would educate her staff and the people of Newark. Connolly placed emphasis on the importance of a well-trained staff, a critical asset to a museum's success. Like Dana, she recognized the pedagogical potential of quality reproductions and locally produced artifacts. During her stay at Newark, Connolly wrote numerous educational pamphlets and catalogue texts for exhibitions at the Museum. She also laid the foundation for Newark policies on how to train volunteer docents. Her most progressive educational theory was that the pedagogue, docent, or speaker must be able to make the lecture or activity at hand relevant to students' everyday lives.\textsuperscript{29}

In 1925 Dana and Connolly collaborated to make one of the most advanced museum employee-training programs in the country. It consisted of one year of graduate study at the Newark Museum. Classroom hours were limited, since more of the apprentices' time was spent working in different museum departments. Graduate

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 15.
students were all required to complete a reading list on Museum Studies and learn to label, register, teach, install, and exhibit artifacts in the museum. The ambitious scope of this progressive program is outlined in the Newark Museum’s pamphlet “Museum Apprenticeship.”

Louise Connolly published and worked up until the time of her death in 1927. Following Connolly’s death, the Louise Connolly Library and Museum scholarship was created by a number of her friends to honor her commitment to education.

29 Ibid., 20-21.

30 Alexander, 399.
IV. The History of the Newark Museum

In 1959 the Newark Museum Association published an article in the periodical, *The Museum*, on the history of the museum. The following citation sums up the way the origins of the museum are treated in the journal:

At the entrance of the Museum's Main Building are two bronze plaques, one inscribed “John Cotton Dana: This Museum is his thought and his work”; the other, “Louis Bamberger: He gave this building to Newark.” These two men, together with a group of dedicated Newark citizens—the Trustees of the Newark Public Library, City officials, and individuals—organized the Newark Museum and guided it skillfully over legal and financial hurdles. The dynamic concept of service to the community upon which they established it laid the foundation for the success and growth of the Museum of the present and the future.

Although a very accurate statement in many respects, this citation leaves out one very important group whose presence was essential for the museum's success during all those formative years: the Museum staff. At the time the museum was built, Beatrice Windsor, Louise Connolly, and Katherine Coffrey were all major contributors to the Museum's success. Dana's “thought” could have never become an institutional reality without these women's assistance. These women permeate the history of the Newark Museum: their names fill the Newark Museum's archives alongside Dana’s. Dana’s leadership and original thought, compounded by his staff’s devotion, laid such a strong institutional foundation that the museum was able to survive the great turmoil of the twentieth century.

31 Twombly and Cahill, 15, 30. In their biographical pamphlet, Twombly and Cahill refer to Connolly as “Christ-like” to describe her personal warmth and her selfless devotion to students as an educator.
century. Dana's concept and practice of service to the community helped the museum to persevere when the Newark Town Council threatened to discontinue funding the museum during the race riots in the late 1960's. This incident almost became a disaster for the city of Newark, since it would have shut down the museum had the town council decided to withdraw its fiscal support completely.\textsuperscript{33}

From 1902 to 1908 Dana held fifty-six exhibitions in two rooms of the upper floors of the Newark Library, which he named the “Art Museum” and the “Science Museum.” Dana had already developed educational programs for the community surrounding these exhibitions, including lectures and meetings of community groups. Dana's exhibition on George T. Rockwell’s collection of oriental objects and Japanese prints (November 1908 to January 1909) was such a success that the city government recognized the need for a museum in Newark, and the Newark Museum Association was established in 1909.\textsuperscript{34}

The museum trustees granted Dana the funds to purchase the Rockwell Art Collection, which became the basis of Newark Museum’s American art collection. In 1911 the Crane family donated the Edward N. Crane Memorial Collection of Tibetan objects, and in 1912 Dr. William S. Disbrow left his science collection in custody of the Museum (it was not officially the museum’s property until 1922). Thus by 1912 the Newark Museum was already in possession of many of the artistic and scientific treasures


\textsuperscript{33} Alexander, 404-05.

\textsuperscript{34} Newark Museum Association, 7.
it is famous for today. This is also the same year Louis Connolly joined the staff of the library and museum.

In 1911 the city of Newark made its first appropriation of $10,000 for the upkeep of the Newark Museum and has continued to support the museum with generous financial appropriations ever since. Even though Dana stressed the beauty of simply wrought objects and the extravagance of masterpieces, benefactors still donated several significant works of art to the museum from 1910 to 1922. From 1911 to 1922 Dana's educational programs were booming with school groups coming to visit them daily. At this time Louise Connolly was already writing educational brochures for the museum's exhibits, such as "The Children at the Show, Textiles of New Jersey: Old and New," and "New Jersey Clay."

The city did not purchase an actual plot of land for the modern museum building until 1922, when Louis Bamberger, a prominent Newark merchant, announced that he would fund the construction of the museum building on the Marcus L. Ward plot. At the opening of the Newark Museum in March 1926, the mayor of Newark, Thomas L. Raymond, affirmed that, 'The Newark idea of a museum is as great as the museum itself; for it breathes [a].... life-giving force.'

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36 Louise Connolly, "The Children at the Show, Textiles of New Jersey: Old and New" (Newark: Newark Museum Association, 1916), 1-16.


38 Newark Museum Association, 8.
Mr. Raymond’s speech went beyond the traditional rhetoric to acknowledge the originality of Dana’s concept of the museum, an originality for which the museum workers of America were probably not yet prepared. The new kind of museum employee that Dana had envisioned was not a person who was always easy to find. Therefore, he set about creating a progressive museum school for future employees of the museum. He and Louise Connolly collaborated to create and carry out the aforementioned apprenticeship course, which lasted from 1925 until 1942.39

In 1937 the museum bought the John H. Ballantine House, a Victorian house next door to the Newark Museum. Beatrice Windsor (director of the Museum from 1929 to 1947) helped to acquire a brick extension building in 1937 behind the 1885 house to hold the Junior Museum, the adult Arts Workshop, the lending department, and the museum library. In 1939 the museum placed Newark’s old 1784 fully furnished schoolhouse in its capacious garden. In 1953, while Katherine Coffrey was director of the Museum, the Newark Museum acquired yet another educational facility. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Dreyfus gave the museum Spitz Planetarium in 1953 and a generous endowment for its future maintenance.40

During the first fifty years of the museum’s history, exhibitions were held on a variety of topics, but the general focus of the exhibits was the city of Newark, its manufacturers, its workers, and their products. The Newark Museum also held several exhibits on foreign cultures that were very liberal at the time they were put together. By 1950 the museum had successfully ignited the public’s interest in China, Columbia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Austria, Germany, and in the history of American art. From 1943 to

39 Ibid., 9
1948 the number of educational exhibits increased, especially on atomic energy and the mobilization of American troops. These exhibits helped the people of Newark cope with tragic times by increasing their understanding of the circumstances surrounding World War II.41

While Dana was implementing his vision of the museum, Newark was a vibrant city with a large population of skilled laborers from abroad, a hodgepodge of successful industries, and a cosmopolitan city center. By 1930 the demographic landscape of Newark was changing; between 1930 and 1970 the African-American population of Newark increased by about six hundred percent. Beatrice Windsor and her staff acknowledged the presence of this population by inaugurating exhibits on African-American art and heritage, such as Primitive African Art exhibit in 1944. Katherine Coffrey also organized an exhibit on African traditions at the museum with Art in Life in Africa (1954) that met with great success.42

According to Isaac Kandel, an historian of American education, progressive curricula and progressive lessons should include information that is “immediately useful” to the students—or in the case of the Newark Museum, the visitors and participants of the exhibits.43 By organizing exhibits that embraced that community and that were relevant to African-Americans’ lives, Coffrey and Windsor demonstrated that the Newark Museum was inclusive and promoted progressive methods. The practice of making such

40 Alexander, 403.

41 Newark Museum Association, 10-18.

42 Alexander, 405.

locally driven exhibits reflected the museum's commitment to the community and also reflected its commitment to progressive education policies.

In 1969 the President of the Board of Trustees of the Newark Museum funded an African Festival in an attempt to increase the museum attendance that had diminished since the race riots of 1967. One exhibition on view focused on African art and artifacts, while two smaller rooms in the museum were devoted to *Photos of People of Africa*. Musical performers, films, and lectures series sponsored by the festival drew huge crowds and included African leaders from the United Nations. This significant effort to bring about social change coincided with a unanimous vote by the Newark City Council on February 11, 1969, to terminate all appropriations for the Library and Museum. Members of the community protested vehemently against this political decision, which galvanized the community in an effort to save the museum and the library. The community managed to acquire the necessary funds by pooling local, state, and federal funds together. Samuel C. Miller, then director of the museum, proved to be an admirable leader during this time of crisis by demonstrating that the museum could persevere if Dana's idea of the museum were implemented. According to Dana, a museum is an institution of service to the community, one that educates by exhibiting and interpreting its collections in accordance with the needs of its people.44

The Newark Museum has flourished through its organization of intriguing exhibitions that attract international visitors and, more importantly, school groups from public schools in northern New Jersey. The current Director of the Newark Museum, Mary Sue Sweeney Price, with the sponsorship of the American Association of
Museums, initiated the publication of The New Museum: Selected Writings by John Cotton Dana as a tribute to Dana’s life and his unique museum philosophy. Since 1980 the Newark Museum has continued to dazzle the public with fascinating exhibitions, most recently on the work of Fluxus artists, the work of Auguste Rodin, and of African-American artists. John Cotton Dana’s philosophy not only helped build a museum out of two rooms in a library, but it also helped the museum to prosper and forge ahead during times of financial and social trauma.

Ibid.
V. Dana’s Attack on the Exclusivity of the Traditional Museum

Like John Dewey, Dana felt that impoverished members of society should have access to educational institutions. The museum was at times an exclusive institution that created many barriers, which prevented the working class from entering its doors. Dana fought this convention by granting Newark’s working classes access to his museum. Much like the progressives, Dana believed in equal educational opportunity for Americans, regardless of the status of the educational institution in question. By welcoming the uneducated and the poverty stricken into his museum, Dana was democratizing the most exclusive educational institution in America.

Dana’s populist beliefs and his disdain for unwarranted privilege on the part of the leisure class are ubiquitous in his published statements. Intellectually Dana was indebted to Thorstein Veblen, a fact that he reveals in one of his early publications on the social status of museums, “The Gloom of the Museum.”

Veblen believed that the leisure class had a distorted value system regarding aesthetic artifacts in that their utility was of no import and had no relation to the financial value of the object at hand. Dana concurred with Veblen and carried his beliefs one step further by proclaiming that there should be an American Renaissance to illustrate the importance and the true value of American products and artistic pieces created by American artisans.

Dana argued that this twisted philosophy, cited by Veblen, originated with the traditional idea of the museum and the realization of Europe’s first museums. Dana


46 Ibid., 64.

47 Schnee, 118-120.
exposed the most shameful side of the historical institution by exposing the gory, raw reality of almost every renowned museum's history: that its collections were synonymous with cultural conquest. In most cases, the original owner of any well-known collection of European masterpieces came from the noble class, or was a wealthy member of occidental society with power or political say at the time the artifacts were acquired. Dana argued that the status of paintings and sculptures as exclusive property was the one of the reasons for which wealthy and powerful Europeans allowed the arts to prosper: their domination of the arts distinguished them from the lower classes and helped them to flaunt their financial and intellectual superiority over the common people. Dana declared that the leisure class not only vied for power and riches through political conquest, but they also sought social distinction in other creative ways. By building glamorous, grandiose residences, by engaging in leisurely pursuits like hunting, by requesting the presence of court poets, historians, and intellectuals in their mansions and castles, and of course by displaying their artistic treasures in their homes they affirmed their social status and expressed their disdain for the general public.45

When the rigid hierarchy of European society finally collapsed as a result of the French Revolution and other political events, many private art collections were expropriated by the state. The primary objective in most politicians' minds was to preserve these priceless artifacts. While doing so, however, the politicians failed to explore the potential utility these collections might have had for the average person. Therefore, artifacts were normally kept in their original ornate palaces for safekeeping. In some cases, museums were built in the same manner as their former homes (i.e. 45 Dana, 44-46.
illustrious mansions such as Italian Renaissance palaces, Greek and Roman temples etc....) to house special collections. Since the safety of the collections was usually of the utmost importance, museums were built in parks with ample space far away from the center of town in order to prevent the occurrence of a fire.

These museums were normally inconvenient for the lay public to visit, since they were on the periphery of the city's borders. A museum's opening hours were equally inconvenient during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: museums were open only a few hours a day—during most people's working hours—since it was so expensive to keep these enormous buildings lit. In sum, the general public had a very dubious relationship with the museum world. Much like the universities and secondary schools of nineteenth century America and Europe, European museums were exclusive during the same time period.

Progressive educators of the twentieth century and educational reformers of the nineteenth century hoped to make education egalitarian and available to the public. Dana made his museum inclusive, much like the progressive school ideally would be, by making the museum and its resources available to the general public.

As the United States became more prosperous as a nation in the early nineteenth century, the need for an American version of the museum became more apparent to scholars and wealthy citizens. Dana declared that American museum promoters and architects attempted to imitate the European style, since these "institutions were, in most

49 Dana, 46-50.
50 Ibid.
51 Good, 121-35.
cases, long established and greatly admired, and they furnished the only illustrations of the museum idea."52 In other words, the European museum was the only model available to American museum experts at that time.

Contrary to this nation, Dana explained that the European philosophy of museums perverted many laws of logic and advocated outdated principles. For example, the European model equated rarity and cost with beauty.53 Thus, even though an artifact may have no utility whatsoever, it should be labeled beautiful if it incurred great cost for the owner due to its rarity. Americans followed this example by building museums as replicas of the European palaces that used to hold similar treasures and by acquiring chiefly fine art and archeological collections. Although these collections did have some relative use, Dana claimed that their relative utility was overrated. Oil paintings could demonstrate great skill and demonstrated a point or told a story pictorially, but their inadequate utility did not warrant their exorbitant price. According to Dana, oil painting was an esoteric art form that most people will never practice or never be able to appreciate or practice themselves.54 Instead, museums should display applied art, an art form the public can understand and appreciate, since it relates to their daily lives. A member of the Newark community can have much greater appreciation for a product that

52 Ibid., 49.

53 The question of whether a museum should only display objects that possess inherent beauty naturally arises here, since Dana's philosophy concerns the highly debatable issue of museum aesthetics. However, Dana's concept of beauty is vital to his museum's link to the progressive education movement in the United States, since he equated objects' beauty with their daily use by the people of Newark. This aspect of his philosophy applies to the progressive movement, because progressive philosophers, including John Dewey, viewed education's overall utility equal to its potential application in the daily lives of Americans. Dana successfully applied this concept by helping to create educational exhibits on the tools used and products created by the people of Newark.
is made locally, such as an armchair or any type of jewelry, than for a painting that has nothing whatsoever to do with his personal background or his education. 55

Louise Connolly represented Dana’s philosophy in her report on “The Educational Value of Museums” and explained three tendencies that in her opinion formed the basis of most American and European museums. First, Connolly stated that the hoarding instinct formed the psychological basis of the museum collection. In Connolly’s words, “the hoarding’s the thing, not the value of the hoard.” 56 Secondly, the ideal of exclusive possession, or the desire to own what others cannot because of lack of income or resources is a tendency, which gave birth to the creation of such museums as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Louvre. Lastly, a museum inspires wonder or mystery in the visitor’s imagination largely from the products of colonial expansion or spoils from the conquest of other nations. 57

In conclusion, for Dana the traditional museum was an antiquated form of political, social, and imperialistic values, which was normally imposed on the populace, without regard for local needs or interests.

54 Dana, 46-50.
55 Ibid., 55.
57 Ibid., 10-11.
VI. Dana's Inclusive Museum: A Progressive Institute of Visual Instruction

Dana’s vision of a new and brighter future for museums, a museum embracing its people and its idea of service was a reflection of his populist beliefs and the reason why he is so strongly associated with the progressive movement. The paradigm he developed for a museum with “brains” distinguishes itself from former museum models, because Dana attached fiduciary responsibility to the institution of the museum. Dana did not refute the legitimate origin of the name “museum,” but he did promote a temporary change in the name: since a museum should be an object school, it must be named “an institute of visual instruction.”58

Dana made his philosophy of the museum explicit by providing a series of guidelines and suggestions on how to plan a museum with a sound structure. First of all, a living museum, one that serves the public, must be created by the people (or at least this type is probably the most effective). The museum building should be above all accessible to the largest amount of people possible. In order to achieve this end, a museum must be located at the center of a population’s movement. Once an appropriate plot is purchased, a building of many stories should be constructed with very spacious floors with as few partitions as possible. Its skeleton should be made of steel coated with fireproof walls to protect its precious contents. The building should not be made to resemble a typical skyscraper in miniature, since to do so would completely destroy the people’s concept of the museum. In order to win popular support, some element of glamour must be attached to the building: in other words, the museum should have a

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58 Dana, 92.
great portal (e.g. bronze doors) or classical Corinthian columns at its threshold so it can be recognized as a museum.\textsuperscript{59}

For Dana, presenting a suitable structure to the public was one of the important initial steps in creating a museum with "brains," but was definitely subordinate to the importance of finding a trainable staff to fill it. Dana clarified that a museum could not be a house of experts and apprentices, since that would imply that the staff had nothing else to learn or that the museum's employees were somehow superior to the people it served. Instead, employees acted as progressive guides who assisted the museum's visitors in their discovery of the collections. It was to be a house and home for students who instructed and adapted to the needs of the people with the exhibits they organized. These students would be trained regularly, so that they could instruct the people effectively with objects.\textsuperscript{60}

Dana maintained that it was important to house some examples of masterpieces or at least reproductions of famous works for pedagogical reasons. When it was necessary to use old masterpieces instead of works of applied art (or reproductions of such masterpieces) in instruction or for museum visitors at large, the viewer's focus could be confined to one painting or a small group of sculptures. For example, Dana maintained that a room might contain only one painting with benches in front of it with educational brochures at its side. In this way, the viewer did not undergo museum fatigue and learned

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 66.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 67-69.
to fully appreciate the painting. The museum instructor was to employ the same technique with a group of related sculptures or casts.  

Even though Dana did leave some vestiges of the old model for a museum in his own museum and his library, the vast majority of theories he applied to his museum were original. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the first volume of his *New Museum Series* published by The Elm Tree Press in 1917. Within this treasure of museum lore, Dana enumerated all the practices a museum should follow and what needs should be met as an educational institution.

Dana’s prescriptions for museum making, as described in the *New Museum*, can be divided into roughly ten parts. The ideal museum should: (1) be a source of entertainment and interest for all its visitors; (2) instruct with labels, leaflets, handbooks, talks, and illustrated lectures; (3) welcome children of all age groups and use different pedagogical techniques accordingly; (4) lend slides and artifacts to schools, thus making each school a progressive laboratory of learning; (5) place exhibits in schools; (6) build independent teaching centers and branch museums (e.g. mini-exhibits in department stores); (7) secure the cooperation of specialists in the community; (8) not only send objects and exhibits to schools, but also send them to societies, groups, and individuals; (9) prepare and display local industry exhibits at the museum’s headquarters, branches, and at schools to show the results of local men and women’s labor; and (10) publish lesson plans, leaflets, and brochures for schools.  

61 Ibid., 69-70.  
In order to discover whether Dana's museum and library satisfied all these specified objectives, one must examine the evidence in quantifiable results during the formative years of the Newark Museum. From roughly 1907 to 1916, 5,382 meetings for educational and civic organizations were held at the museum and library with an attendance of 167,335 people. In other words, the Newark Museum was a public forum for the community's concerns. From 1903 to 1917, seventy-four exhibitions were held at the library and museum with an attendance of about 300,000 people. All of these exhibits had links to the lives of local Newarkers, whether the museum held an exhibit on textiles made in Northern Jersey or an exhibit on the products of vocational education in the public school system.

The Newark Town Council expressed its confidence in the Newark Museum staff's ability to provide entertainment for the public: As mentioned earlier, the city of Newark made its first appropriation of $10,000 for the upkeep of the museum in 1911. This was a significant sum of money at that time, since the average salary of a museum worker was between four hundred dollars and six hundred dollars. That appropriation would have been able to support at least ten full-time employees and a few exhibits a year including general maintenance of the museum. This crucial appropriation signified the town council's confidence in the museum staff's ability to serve the public as a source of entertainment and education.

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63 Ibid., 31.
64 Booth, 37.
65 Newark Museum Association, 8.
When Dana suggested that a museum should instruct with labels, leaflets, handbooks, talks, and illustrated lectures, he was not just paying lip service to education. Dana's museum had already been actively producing such literature and creating just such an atmosphere for educational practices in his museum.

Reference to Connolly's work on "The Educational Value of Museums" is necessary at this point, since she articulated exactly how museum labels should be written for their optimal pedagogical use several times in the pamphlet. One example that she provided reads as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scratcher for Decoying Seal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seals</strong> are curious and are easily attracted by unusual sounds. With a <strong>scratcher</strong> like this the hunter makes a sound near a blow-hole in the ice, and thus entices the seal into the net.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her progressive and populist style, Connolly went on to state that any layman would be able to easily read and understand this label; furthermore, he would also learn something, which would otherwise have required some detailed research.

It is surprising to learn that Connolly's ideas were very revolutionary during the time she lived, since most museums created labels that were excessively verbose, specialized, and unintelligible to most members of the general public. By making the museum's labels intelligible and easily understandable, Connolly made a stimulating learning environment full of diverse artifacts where progressive methods were the

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66 Connolly, "Educational," 36.

67 Ibid.
By animating objects with verbal clarity, Connolly brought them closer to the people of Newark while simultaneously demonstrating the utility of progressive methodology. According to Harry Good, the creation of a stimulating learning environment with diverse artifacts is one of the criteria for the successful construction of a progressive school.

Connolly was also the principal author of educational pamphlets at the Newark Museum of which a few are worth mentioning here. On March 18th, 1916 New Jersey Textiles debuted at the Newark Museum and Library. Louise Connolly wrote “The Story of Textiles,” an abridged text on the history of textiles and the process of making them, for the exhibition. As a pamphlet intended for teachers and students, the work is full of illustrations and many pedagogical devices employed to facilitate the student’s arduous journey through the world of textiles. For the same exhibit, she published the already cited essay, “The Children at the Show Textiles of New Jersey: Old and New,” in which she outlined the methods they used to demonstrate the process of weaving to schoolchildren who came to the exhibit. Through her endorsement of experiential learning, or learning by doing, Connolly explored the possibilities of progressive pedagogical techniques.

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68 Ibid.
69 Good, 381.
71 Connolly, “The Children at the Show,” 1-16.
72 Ibid., 3.
Schools groups came to the museum's exhibits regularly during the first quarter of the twentieth century and were normally instructed by docents, specialists, or students of the museum. However, a theory of instruction was not developed for the museum until the apprenticeship program was born. With beautiful clarity, Connolly outlined the essential qualities a docent should possess in her 1928 pamphlet, “Docentry.” She initially explained that a museum could not develop a theory of instruction until its purpose as an institution is established; only at that point can an institution provide an overview of an instructor’s duties at the museum. In her pamphlet, Connolly stated that the Newark Museum docent must speak grammatically correct English, enunciate with a good accent, be audible, vivid and spontaneous, be knowledgeable about the subject at hand, and punctiliously tactful. In addition, a docent must also be aware of the whole by relating the objects in a museum’s collections to the lives of his or her listeners—the docent must make her lesson interesting to the public.

Connolly’s docents did not rely on canned speeches either, since to do so would have taken away from the lesson and would have unduly bored the museum’s guests. Instead, Connolly trained docents who were eclectic, sociable, and intelligent educators.

In her pamphlet, Connolly also warned the reader that many specialists were unable to communicate with the public at large. In order to redress this issue, she suggested that specialists only be invited to speak before the public concerning their field or if they are in general alluring speakers. With such a proclamation, Connolly was

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73 Louise Connolly, “Docentry” (Newark: Newark Museum Association, 1928), 1-10.
74 Ibid., 1-10
75 Ibid.
freeing museum visitors from the shackles of tradition by allowing a new, inspirational museum employee to guide them through their visit, instead of a dusty curator.\textsuperscript{76}

Dana also paved the way for other children's museums to accommodate children of all ages. In 1936 Carolyn M. Heller, a 1926 graduate of the Newark Museum Apprenticeship Program,\textsuperscript{77} published a pamphlet, "The Young Child in the Museum: Statements from Thirty-five Museums Concerning Museum Activities for Children Under Seven." Heller not only surveyed thirty-five major museums, but also published Newark's policy concerning school children under seven years old. When addressing the Newark Museum's experience with youngsters, Heller stated that:

\begin{quote}
We have never had any age limit for children coming to visit the exhibits and have found that children of three and four, if they come often, begin to have an understanding and appreciation of the things they are observing.... [and children] as young as three and four have a definite contribution to make.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

During her tenure at the Newark Museum (1926-?) Heller had to hire more than ninety docents annually for first, second, and third grade classes, age groups not normally catered to by other museums.\textsuperscript{79} For example, a representative of the Metropolitan Museum of Art stated in 1936 that, "we have no special activities for children between the ages of four and six. I think it would be an exceptional child of six years who got

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Booth, 18.

\textsuperscript{78} Carolyn M. Heller, ed., "The Young Child in the Museum: Statements from Thirty-five Museums Concerning Museum Activities for Children Under Seven" (Newark: Newark Museum, 1936), 18.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 4.
much out of the museum. I can hardly imagine that a museum visit could mean much to them."80

At the time the Metropolitan released this statement, the Newark Museum had already constructed the Junior Museum—not only designed to house activity stations for children under seven, but also stations for youngsters of any age group.81 By 1919 the museum was already publishing a newsletter entitled "Junior Museum News," an experiment which met with great success.82 In 1927, the year after the grand opening of the new museum building, attendance in the Junior Museum totaled 42,993 children. Thus, it seems undeniable that the museum did in fact carry out Dana's plans for a museum that could open its doors to children of all ages, the main agent behind its evolution in the 1930's being a graduate of Dana and Connolly's apprenticeship course.83

In doing so Dana broke from traditional museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and paved the way for museums where children were welcome.

In "Schools and the Newark Museum" Louise Connolly provided a sample lesson plan for teachers exploring the utility of pictures relevant to Dutch life. Connolly provided the lesson plan and pictures as an educational package to local schools in Northern New Jersey. The museum actually had a very extensive collection of objects intended for schools very early in the museum's history. Connolly pamphlet emphasized that every single object in the Newark Museum's collections "can be used for more than

80 Ibid., 19.
81 Newark Museum Association, 9.
82 Dana,117.
83 Booth, 18.
one grade and in teaching more than one subject." The museum's policy of lending artifacts to neighboring schools was by no means haphazard; standards were developed for the process and published in 1923. In this publication, "Educational Material for Teachers," terms of borrowing and lending and late fees were cited. A school needed only to give three days' advance notice and a driver would drop off the required objects at the school itself.

Small exhibits were even installed in various schools throughout Newark's school district, all of which were lent by the Newark Museum. In 1925 the museum lent nearly two thousand exhibits a month to Newark schools. The museum lent all sorts of multimedia artifacts to schools, including dolls, pictures, photographs, scientific specimens, ethnographic artifacts, decorative arts, and many other objects which collectively constitute a museum. Many of these treasures were very impressive due to their international nature. Connolly helped to expose school children to a vast array of world cultures. Many of the objects lent to museums were recreations of scenes from everyday life in China, Turkey, Hungary, several countries in Africa, the Arctic, and many other lands filled with diverse cultures.

Individuals, societies, and civic organizations could also borrow objects or groups of objects for exhibits so long as the party in question possessed a borrower's card.

84 Louise Connolly, "Schools and the Newark Museum" (Newark: Newark Museum Association, ?), 4.
87 Ibid., 10-20.
Dana had very positive relationships with Newark industries and businesses, since hundreds of them loaned their products to the Newark Museum to be displayed.\(^9\) Dana also carried out his plan to have branch museums not only by displaying miniature exhibits in schools, but also by helping businesses, such as the Bamberger Department Store in Newark, to assemble and install elaborate exhibits. For example, Louis Bamberger and John Cotton Dana collaborated to put together Bamberger’s *International Exhibition of Ceramic Art*, which was held at the Bamberger Department Store in Newark in 1929.\(^9\)

The Newark Museum staff and Dana provided a service for Newark businesses and the industrial arts as a whole by producing several exhibits of applied arts in the first twenty years of the museum’s existence. Dana continually promoted these common trades, because he felt they were what made a country great and caused a national economy to thrive.\(^9\) By sponsoring the applied arts, Dana created a museum for the community: a museum filled with objects that the people could admire aesthetically but simultaneously relate to their function while learning the secret behind its creation.

The exhibit on the making of leather at the Newark Museum (1926) was a case in point. Several groups of employees from Macy’s in New York City visited the exhibit to learn more about the trade intellectually and to watch demonstrations of how leather goods were made at the time. They witnessed the art of making leather, but they also

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\(^8\) Ibid., 1.


\(^9\) Dana, 130.

\(^9\) Ibid., 112-114.
gained vital, practical knowledge about the different types of hides that were tanned and learned about the different companies that created leather goods throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{92} Macy's saleswomen learned very practical information in this makeshift progressive laboratory of diverse objects and information, which helped them in their trade immediately. They learned about the process and the origin of leather goods. After the exhibit, they would have been able to keep customers well informed independently.

Dana collaborated with a myriad of different industrial firms throughout New Jersey to produce such practical trade oriented exhibits on applied art, and he also opened his museum's doors to their employees.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{92} Agnes S. Zimmerman, "An Exhibit in the Making" (Newark: Newark Museum Association, 1928), 28.
VII. Dana and Connolly's Application of John Dewey's Progressive Methodology at the Newark Museum

In his article entitled “Progressive Education and the Science of Education,” published in the periodical *Progressive Education* in 1928, John Dewey outlined a set of philosophical principles common to most progressive schools and progressive thinkers of the early twentieth century. He did this because he felt standards needed to be established to improve the contributions of just such institutions across the country.\(^9^4\) Dewey stressed in his article that the individuality and the freedom of each student were fostered in the progressive school, along with experiential, active, self-initiated, and self-conducted learning.\(^9^5\)

Dewey also placed great emphasis on activity as the stimulus for learning, as opposed to the traditional concept of the teacher's responsibility to the students as a taskmaster. Dewey envisioned a class where students would not just sit idly listening to the teacher’s lecture.\(^9^6\) Dana and Connolly produced an atmosphere where these criteria could be met, since each visitor of a typical Newark exhibit, such as the textile show of 1916, was confronted with a myriad of choices and could explore each animated exhibition independently. Each visitor could choose the activity that suited him or her best, or the craftsman that he would like to watch ply his trade.\(^9^7\) A vibrant atmosphere

\(^9^3\) Ibid.


\(^9^5\) Ibid.

\(^9^6\) Ibid.
with weavers and textile workers at the loom, objects and machines with which each visitor could experiment, could be labeled a progressive learning laboratory according to Dewey's guidelines.

Dewey stated that the first contingency for a progressive institution of learning must be its respect for individuality and for the increased freedom of its students. According to Dewey, traditional methods of discipline were too strict and therefore inhibited the student's freedom and ability to do sound academic work. If a student is forced to act in a passive manner in the classroom by merely absorbing and regurgitating the instructor's lecture, the objective of education will have never been met.

In her philosophical treatise on museum education, "The Educational Value of Museums," Connolly repeatedly voiced the same views as Dewey in her rebuttal of antiquated liberal arts' teaching techniques. For example, in her passage on the "Aim of Museum Teaching," Connolly refuted the traditional disciplinary tactics employed by American educators:

The aim in the old days was always to escape a whipping. The elders still approve it as a proper aim. And so, when a teacher of to-day announces to her class in reading, 'We will now see what further happened to Ulysses,' their feelings are outraged. That teacher knows well enough, the old folks say, that the fate of Ulysses is not her aim.

98 Dewey, 170.
What she is after is to train the young to be intelligent readers, and she should frankly say, 'Now read with expression or be punished.'

Connolly went on to state how pointless the mere recitation of text can be without understanding, since active learning is a much better means of reinforcement than mechanically memorizing lines from a book.

Dewey also confirmed that a student should not only amass knowledge, but he should also learn to apply practical knowledge in his everyday life. None of this can be accomplished, however, without the cultivation of the student's individuality.

Dana also staunchly believed in this policy of lifelong learning and individual growth for each and every student. In 1935 John Kingdon, the premier biographer of Dana, delivered an address on the life of Dana for the Newark Museum in which it was stated that Dana strongly believed in the importance of individuality. Kingdon summarized Dana's view of individuality when he stated that, "there is for each of us a little area of freedom, a small sphere of anarchy, in which we can exercise our own wills."

During conferences for the American Library Association and the American Association of Museums during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Dana

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101 Ibid., 26.

102 Ibid.

103 John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, Schools of Tomorrow, 132-37.

expounded upon his progressive beliefs; at one conference of the American Library Association held in 1894, he bluntly stated his views concerning individuality and the lack thereof in the antiquated American school system:

We are in danger of being over-taught. We are...submitting too much to authority. There is a growing tendency in this country, as in others, to unify all systems of education; so far to unify them that the child shall be, from the beginning to the very end of his school life...in the hands of people of one mind and one thought as regards what constitutes education, what are the proper axiomatic views on all questions.\(^\text{105}\)

Dana went on to affirm that individual growth can only be fostered for each student through extensive reading, which hastens the development of “a multitude of differing opinions.”\(^\text{106}\) By promoting individuality, Dana acknowledged the importance of allowing a student to learn independently, a typical progressive exhortation.

The second stipulation that Dewey posited for progressive institutions is the importance of each child’s experiences in relation to his or her formal education. Dewey believed that building upon the blocks of experience and nature that are common to all children is much more effective pedagogically than imposing rigid standards for academic subjects.\(^\text{107}\) Again, Connolly, as Dana’s disciple, concurred with Dewey when she stated in her treatise that, “The best teaching is that which causes the pupils to apply promptly the knowledge that they gain.”\(^\text{108}\) Here Connolly is alluding to Dana’s motto “learning by doing.”\(^\text{109}\)

\(^{105}\) Schnee, 41.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.


\(^{108}\) Ibid.
Connolly attributed recent changes in educational methods to the rigid and unforgiving atmosphere of the traditional American classroom. For example, when describing experiential learning she referred to Dewey and Dana's motto the "doctrine of interest":

Crudely stated, the doctrine of interest teaches that we learn best that which interests us most. Studies are made of children's interests and the curriculum is altered to suit them. The recent exchange of modern for ancient languages in high schools and colleges, the substitution of composition writing for technical grammar, and the current enthusiasm for vocational education are based largely on this doctrine.\(^{10}\)

This statement closely resembles the views of Dana and Dewey in that they felt that traditional nineteenth century educational methods created a gap between knowledge and experience. In Dana's opinion, the snobbishness of scholars created an unnecessary division between knowledge and experience, a division that could be redressed with new and innovative pedagogical techniques.\(^{11}\) Kingdon succinctly states that Dana "saw learning fulfilling its purpose only as it walks the common road to make life more fascinating for living men and life coming into its own through the insights of the trained mind."\(^{12}\)

According to Dewey, a progressive institution also fosters an informal atmosphere in the classroom where students are active rather than inactive. In a modern school students no longer sit passively for hours on end waiting for the sting of the master's ruler

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 27.


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 8.
as punishment for an incorrect answer. Recitation and rote memorization are not completely absent in the new school envisioned by Dewey, but they are no longer paramount. Learning through process and experience does, however, become the rule in the progressive school.\textsuperscript{113}

Although this is a form of active learning, it required additional effort on the part of the student.\textsuperscript{114} Under Dana's influence Connolly helped to promote discovery learning by establishing vocational schools in Newark and in Vermont, schools where students could learn the trade of their choice.\textsuperscript{115} Connolly and Dana both argued that these types of schools would encourage students to stay in school longer at a time when a very small minority of the population made it through high school.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} Dewey, \textit{John Dewey on Education}, 171.

\textsuperscript{114} Connolly, "The Educational Value of Museums," 27.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{116} In a document entitled "Manual Training in the Public Schools," an anonymous author endorses the adoption of vocational education as a required part of the Vermont curriculum for public schools. Dana's Elm Tree Press published this pamphlet in 1908. In it the author argues that more students would stay in school longer if vocational education were adopted by the Vermont school system, because they would find their new classes interesting, practical, and applicable to their everyday lives. By advocating such a proposal, the author was helping to create learning microcosms, which would encourage independent thinking and discovery learning. The author is not making an exorbitant request either, since he is only asking for a few hours a week of vocational education. He outlines it in detail in his essay according to grade levels. Students would still learn the traditional academic subjects, but they would learn to apply them to their everyday lives through their vocational exercises. For example, carpentry sheds great light on Mathematics through its use of measurement, symmetry, and coherent shapes for any student.

Respect for activity as the stimulus to learning and social contact as the foundation of all learning are the last two criteria that Dewey listed in his essay concerning the philosophy of progressive education. Dana and Connolly undeniably followed this stipulation verbatim by stressing the importance of process, docentry, instruction, and experimentation in the educational policies of their museum. For example, at the “New Jersey Textiles” exhibit a local professional would have demonstrated the art of weaving to schoolchildren, while a docent explained the process in greater detail. Then the children would be permitted to begin the process of weaving on their own.
X. Conclusion

In John Cotton Dana’s writings, in his deeds, and in his influence the modern Newark resident can see just how pervasive beauty and aesthetics are in our everyday lives. It is found everywhere around us: in our homes, in our department stores, in our museums, in our civic buildings, and on our person in the form of jewelry, leather, and fashion. Dana, the progressive, demonstrated just how vital a museum can be as an institution for its community. Dana, his colleagues, and his successors at the New Museum succeeded in creating an institute of visual instruction where progressive, pedagogical methods prevail as the dominant form of teaching, a museum that is inclusive in its orientation, that welcomes the community of which it is an essential part. Dana provided a progressive object school for Newarkers, where they could learn independently in an informal atmosphere filled with diverse and compelling artifacts naturally tied to their interests.

Dana began his career by making the library an inclusive institution, where the individual, regardless of his socio-economic status, could become self-educated by reading works from the library’s collection. After experiencing the exclusive practices attached to the American aesthetic, Dana developed his “New Museum,” the Newark Museum with unchallenged vigor. As an ideological revolutionary, Dana charged the Newark Museum with populist notions in an attempt to create a museum that was diametrically opposed to the European model, a great feat that many even recognized as a significant accomplishment at the time he lived. Moreover, Dana carried his rebellious ideas one step further by applying contemporary progressive methodology to the museum world with a special emphasis on John Dewey’s philosophy of education. In conclusion,
John Cotton Dana attempted to make the museum world democratic by ridding his museum of all vestigial European elements, including the intrusion of any traditional and rigid pedagogical techniques that could be attached to the antiquated paradigm of the European classroom.
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Illustrations

1. John Cotton Dana, circa 1925, photograph.

2. Louise Connolly, circa 1925, photograph.

3. Entrance to the Newark Museum, 1928, photograph.


5. The Disbrow collection of scientific objects, 1905, photograph.

6. The simplicity of beauty: “beauty has not relation to price, rarity, or age,” 1928, photograph.


8. Overhead view of the geographical layout of the Newark Museum, blueprint, circa 1928.

9. *International Exhibit of Ceramic Art* held at the Bamberger department store, photograph, 1929.

10. Group of employees from Macy’s in New York City watching a glove-cutter at work from the leather exhibition of 1926, photograph, 1926.

11. Workers busy preparing material for schools in the lending department of the museum, photograph, 1928.


13. Class from the School of Crippled Children visiting the Junior Museum, photograph, circa 1925.
14. Museum employee showing school children how cloth is woven on a colonial loom, photograph, 1916.

15. Instructing children in the art of making pottery, photograph, 1915.

16. Mrs. Vornazos, a Greek resident of Newark came to the museum to give demonstrations on the primitive distaff and spindle daily for the textile exhibit, photograph, 1916.

17. Mr. Gengoult of the Edgewater Tapestry Co. working on a tapestry loom at the Newark Museum, photograph, 1916.

18. Main exhibition hall for the textile exhibit where demonstrations of process took place, photograph, 1916.
