

PORTRAITS *of* PHILANTHROPY

Dorothy Spreckels Munn



The memory of Dorothy Spreckels Munn, the daughter of one of San Francisco's pioneer families, lives on in widely diverse ways.

In 1942, she sat for a portrait by Salvador Dali. The painting now is part of the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, which Mrs. Munn served as a trustee.

During more than four decades as a prominent member of Palm Beach society, she became known as a hostess of legendary proportions.

When she died in January 2000, her enduring legacy became one of philanthropy. Among the beneficiaries of her remarkable generosity was Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, which received a bequest of more than \$4 million from Mrs. Munn's estate.

Dorothy Spreckels Munn was a descendant of the Spreckels family—German immigrants who founded a sugar company in San Francisco in the 1860s and were largely responsible for introducing the sugar industry to Hawaii.

In 1953, she married Charles Alexander Munn. Known in later years as "Mr. Palm Beach," Munn earned his first fortune by creating a mechanical mail-sorting machine. He later gained even greater success in the racetrack business by manufacturing and marketing pari-mutuel machines and owning several tracks in England.

The Munns' oceanfront home in Palm Beach, Casa Amado, was designed by Addison Mizner. The couple entertained frequently, hosting dinner dances and movie parties known as "Wednesday Nights at the Flicks." On those occasions, they would set up projectors in their home and show first-run films following dinner for 40 or more guests.

Mr. Munn died in 1981. Before his death, he and his wife made numerous contributions to local charities. In most cases, they gave anonymously. Mrs. Munn did support several animal welfare organizations publicly, but for the most part maintained a low profile when it came to giving.

Known for her elegance, she was described as "the epitome of good looks and style." She was a member of the Beach Club, the Society of the Four Arts, the Palm Beach Civic Association, the President's Council of the Norton Museum of Art, and the advisory club of Planned Parenthood. She was an honorary member of the Everglades Club and a life member of the Henry M. Flagler Museum and the Metropolitan Club in San Francisco.

Following her death, generous bequests from Mrs. Munn's estate were received by a number of organizations in South Florida. In addition to Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, she made provisions for the Children's Home Society, Planned Parenthood of Palm Beach, the Rehabilitation Center for Children and Adults, the American Lung Association, the Norton Museum of Art, and The Lord's Place.

Mrs. Munn was survived by several nieces and nephews.