

Alfred Baber Fonds

Chemistry and Art
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Theft - Aida Memoire

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES	
LOCATOR	5095.5
BOX	10
FILE	2 (2096)

AIDE MEMOIRE

THE THEFT

1994

Isabel and I arrived at Amsterdam Central Station on Saturday afternoon, November 12, and while waiting for the tram to take us to our hotel, I went to the tourist office to pick up a map of the city, leaving Isabel with our luggage, two suitcases and my briefcase. When I returned, minutes later, the briefcase was gone. A swarthy, bearded man had distracted her attention by asking a question about trams, while a woman grabbed the briefcase.

The case contained many photographs and papers, American and English money, travellers checks, checkbooks, two pieces of jewelry and three small paintings which I had planned to discuss with Dutch art historians.

We rushed to the police in the Voorburgwal nearby and M. Te Pas, the very pleasant officer, took the details and told us that the money was certainly lost, but the paintings might be recovered.

From the hotel, we called two old friends, one in London, to ask for help with alerting the London bank about the blank checks, the other an art dealer in the Hague, to ask for advice about the painting.

All three paintings were 17th century. I had purchased the smallest at Sotheby's in London the previous July. A sketch of a man, I believe by Gonzalez Coques, the Antwerp portraitist, ca 1635 might seem the most valuable to the thieves, because it was in an elaborate, carved gilt frame, with an 18th century label on the back stating that it was by Anthony Van Dyck. Thieves may not know of the unreliability of 18th century attributions.

The other two paintings, both on panels, I had purchased from London dealers just the day before. One depicted Rembrandt's mother, in the manner of Dou, and probably by a



Rembrandt student of 1630. It was in a padded envelope, unframed. The other, also unframed, was just in a plastic folder, between my papers. The seller had suggested that this study of a man might be by Willem Drost, a well-known Rembrandt student, an attribution I found difficult to believe. But as it was certainly mid 17th century and of fine quality, I liked it immensely and thought it the best of the three lost paintings.

We were exhausted after our phone calls from the hotel, took sleeping pills and I had nightmares about robberies and paintings. But at least we were physically unharmed and one couldn't but admire the teamwork of the thieves!

Miracles still happen, At 8 o'clock the next morning, our friend in the Hague called us to tell us of a phone call she had received at midnight from a man in Amsterdam who had found many of the photographs and papers and one painting. At first we thought that he might be one of the thieves trying to exchange paintings for more money. That this was ludicrous soon became clear when we met Mr. Bert Vos later that morning. He had been returning to his home along tramline 17, several miles from the station, at 11.15 the night before, when he noticed a pile of papers and photographs lying in the gutter between two dustbins. Closer inspection convinced him that this was not rubbish and so he scooped up the pile and took it to his simple third story apartment, spread out the papers and photographs to dry, read some of the papers and discovered the non-Drost study of the man and my telephone list. He called my son in Milwaukee but heard only his answering machine; he then phoned the police and the Rijksmuseum because he had seen a letter from Dr. Filedt-Kok there, but of course at midnight, he talked only to a guard. The he noticed on a Dutch phone number, that of our friend in the Hague, who knew of our loss and cautioned him not to dry the panel on a radiator.



The miracle is not that we got our papers and the painting back, but that a person would do what Mr. Vos did. Just think of it: A man living by himself, going to the enormous trouble - at midnight - to examine the papers, make those phone calls around the world - and try to dry all that material. And at first he refused compensation. Only when I insisted did he accept, saying that he would use it for his boy-scout troop. We have invited him to be our guest in Milwaukee and hope he will accept. When I fell asleep the night of our misfortune, I thought that I never wanted to be in Amsterdam again. Now I know that we want to go back, if only to get to know Mr. Vos better.

The thieves had taken the study of Rembrandt's mother out of its envelope which they threw away with all the other papers. But they overlooked the study of a man, and the panel had not suffered. We took it to the Rijkbureau voor Kunsthistorische Dokumentatie in the Hague and discovered that it came from the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and was sold in Berlin in 1935. Abraham Bredius, the greatest Rembrandt expert of his day, had considered it to be a genuine Rembrandt and given it no. 226 in his catalogue of the master's work. When I first saw it in London, I remembered seeing another, certainly inferior version in the Johnson collection in the museum in Philadelphia. Today these sketches are no longer thought to be by Rembrandt, but ours is certainly by one of his ablest students, painted in the early 1640's. When I showed it to Dr. Filedt-Kok, he said "how nice - the poor man's Rembrandt." And when I showed it to Professor Josua Bruyn, the retired head of the Rembrandt Research Project, he agreed with my dating, but thought we might never be able to ascertain the name of the very able student. Perhaps, but I will try. And in the meantime, I think of it as my Bert Vos panel.

*He visited us in
Milwaukee; a great guy.
His tel: 20-683 0645.*



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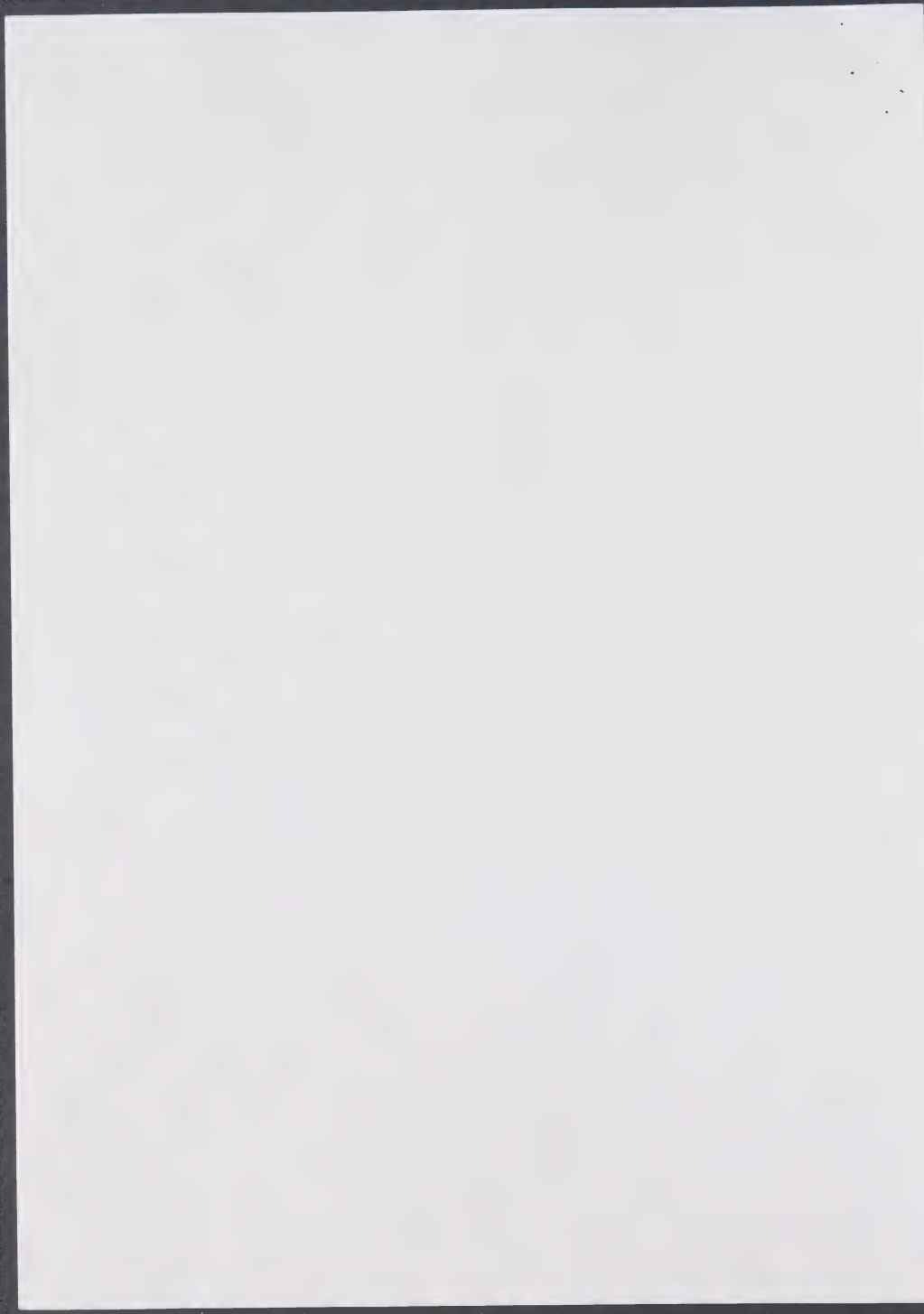


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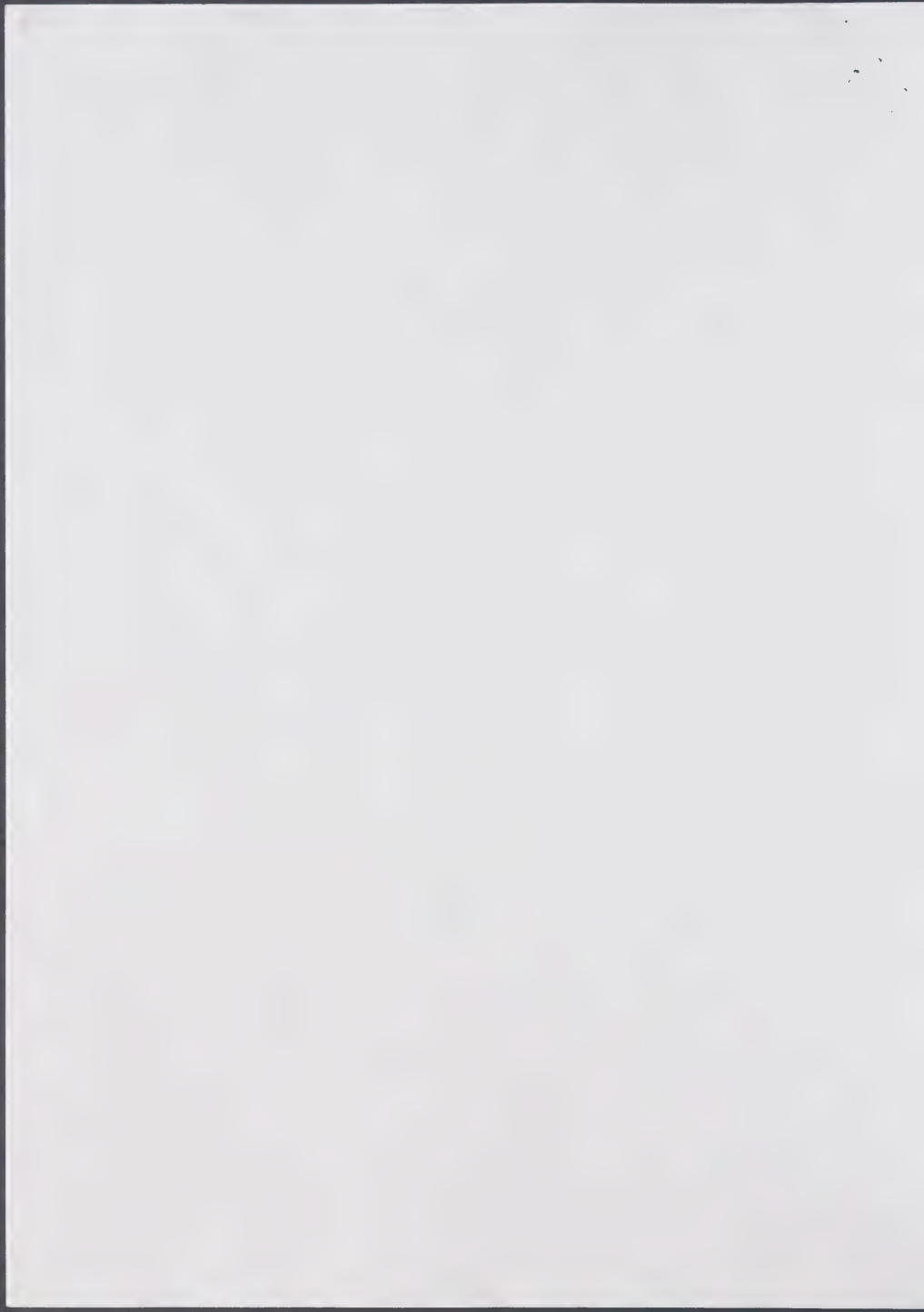
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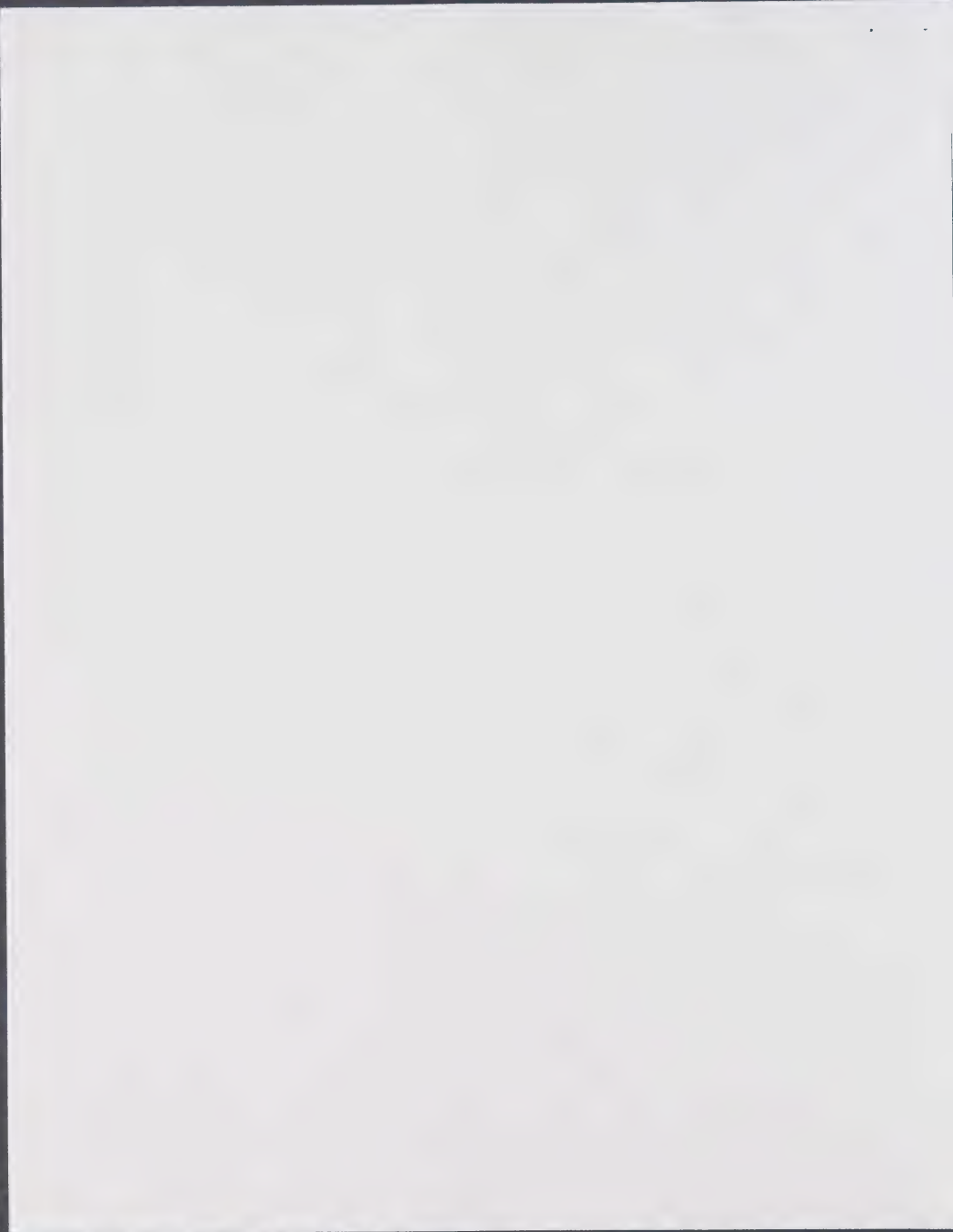
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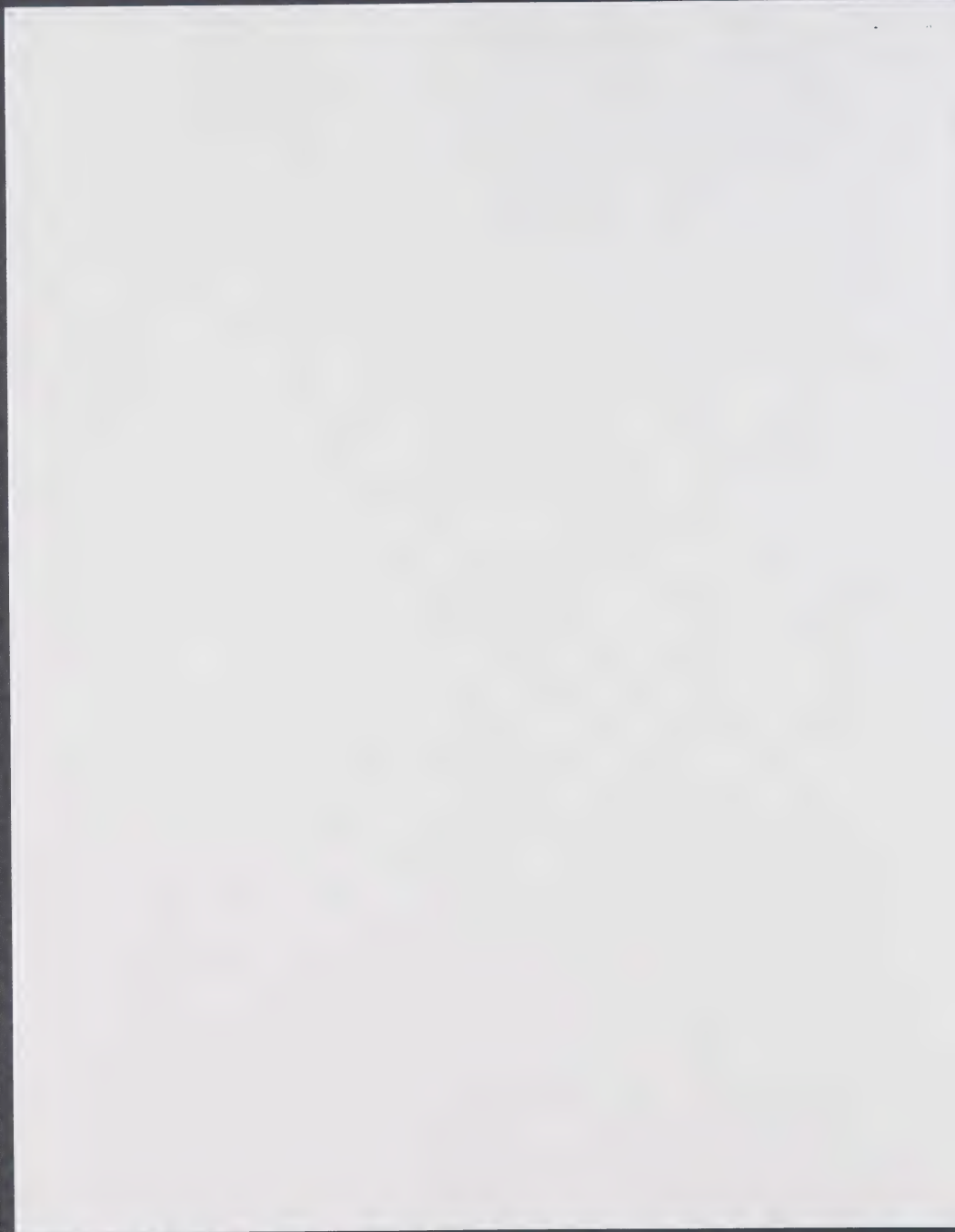


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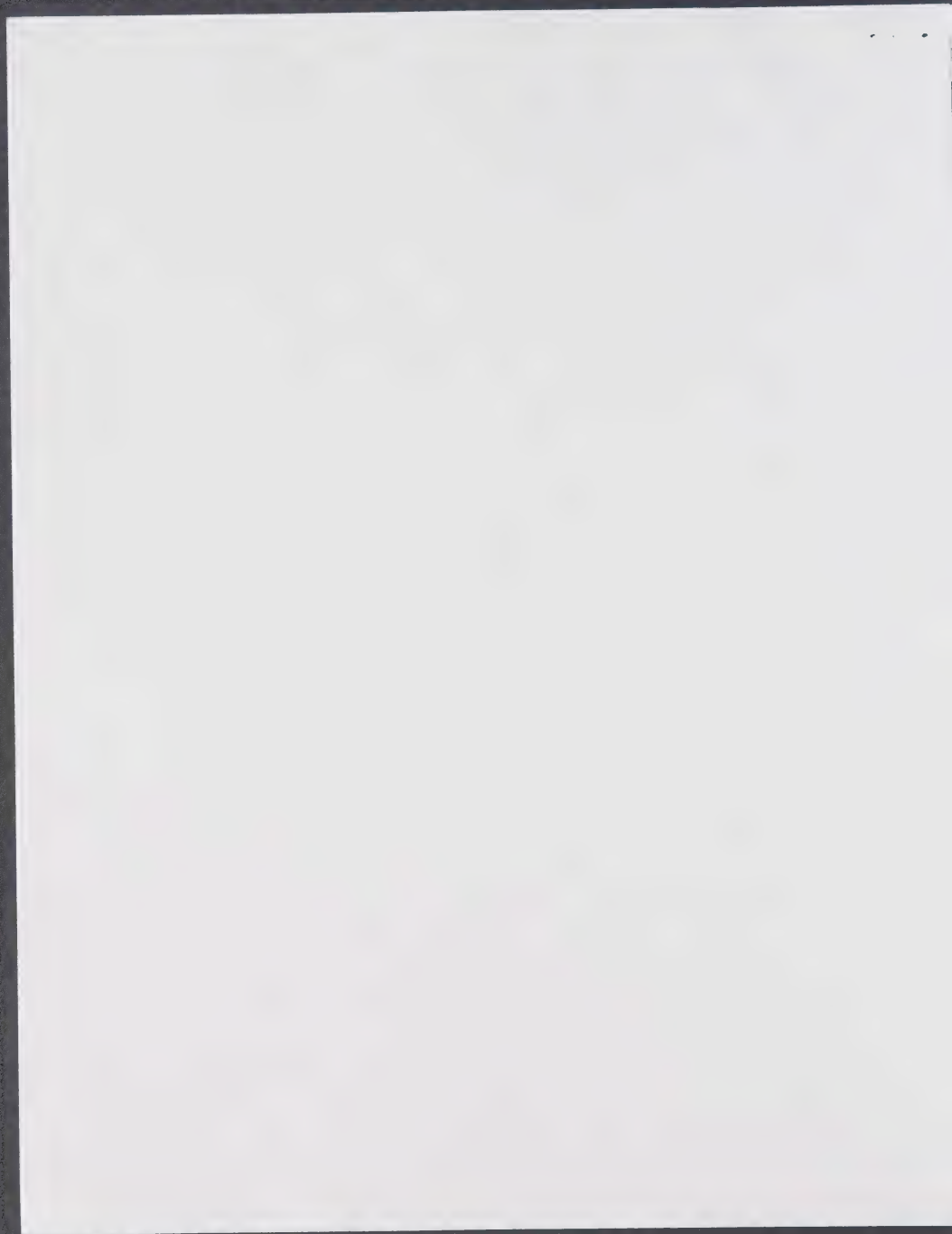
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ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

DR. ALFRED BADER

ESTABLISHED 1961

January 23, 1995

Mr. Ben Ho
Chubb & Son, Inc.
Two Plaza East, Suite 1450
330 East Kilbourn Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Dear Mr. Ho:

In response to our telephone conversation today, enclosed please find the police report detailing the theft, an essay which I wrote regarding the incident, and the list of materials stolen with the briefcase.

Of these, the paintings belong to Alfred Bader Fine Arts. Everything else belonged to my wife, Isabel Bader, and me.

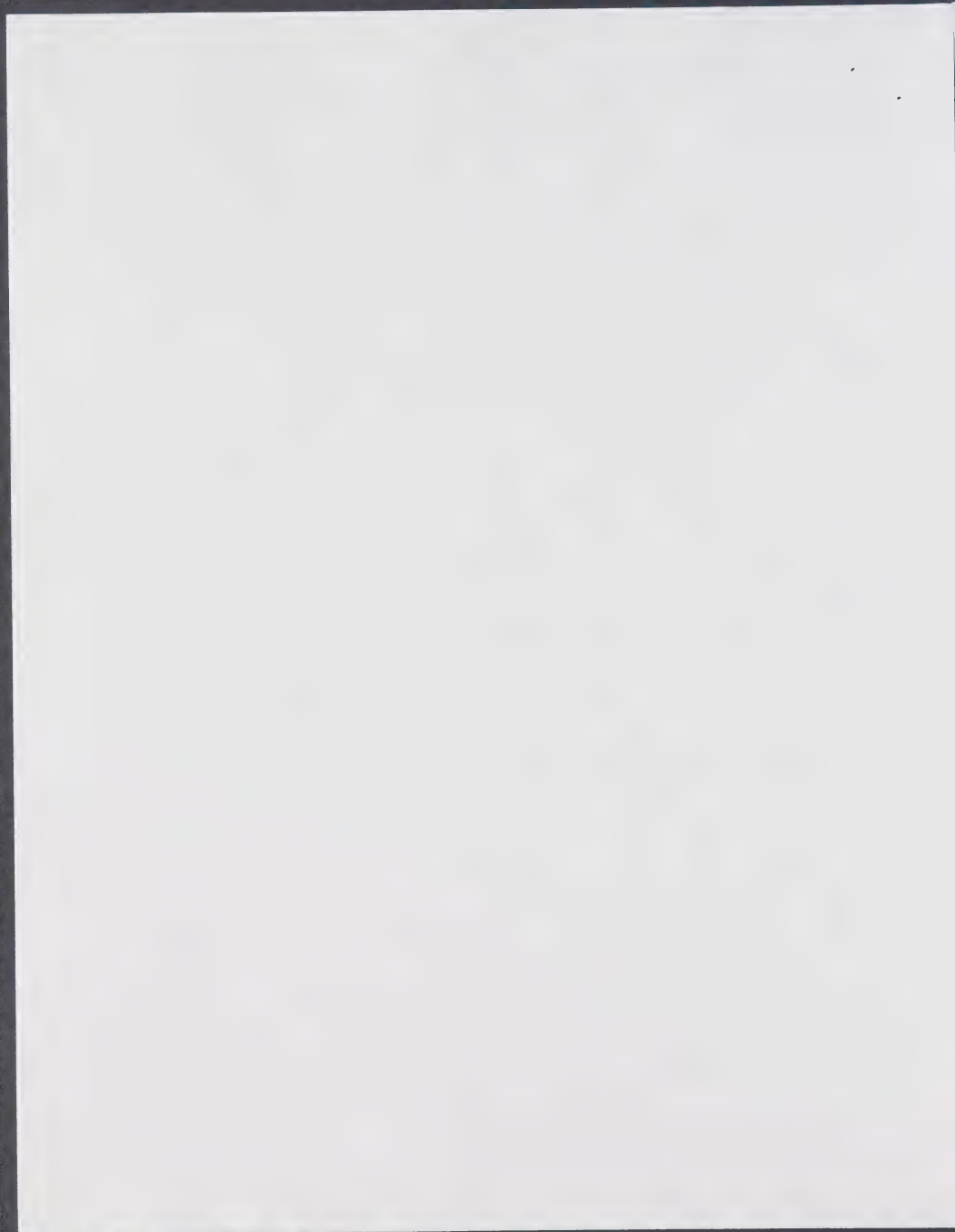
All of the travellers checks were replaced promptly by American Express, and I will be certain never again to carry so much cash with me.

Many thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

By Appointment Only
ASTOR HOTEL SUITE 622
924 EAST JUNEAU AVENUE
MILWAUKEE WISCONSIN USA 53202
TEL 414 277-0730 FAX 414 277-0709





Mr. William Ho
Chubb & Son, Inc.
January 23, 1995
Page Two

Owned Personally by
Alfred and Isabel Bader

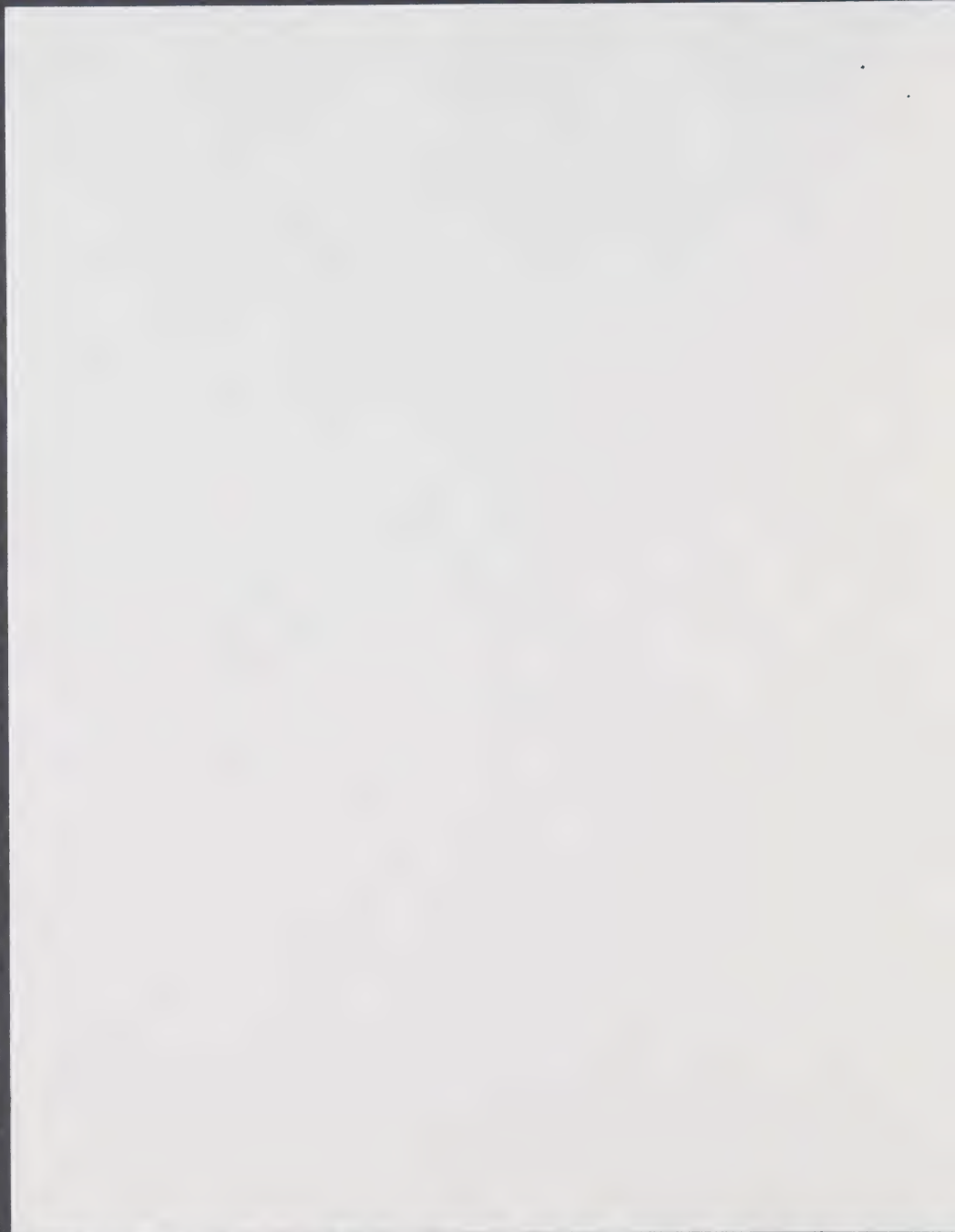
Cash U.S.\$6000
 British £500 (U.S.\$750)

Travellers checks (replaced by American Express)

2 pieces of antique jewelry (Isabel's) cost \$800

Almost new briefcase \$100

3 paintings owned by Alfred Bader Fine Arts - 1 recovered (see story attached)



Owned personally

Cash

us \$ 6000-

Brit £ 500 (us \$ 750)

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by American Express)

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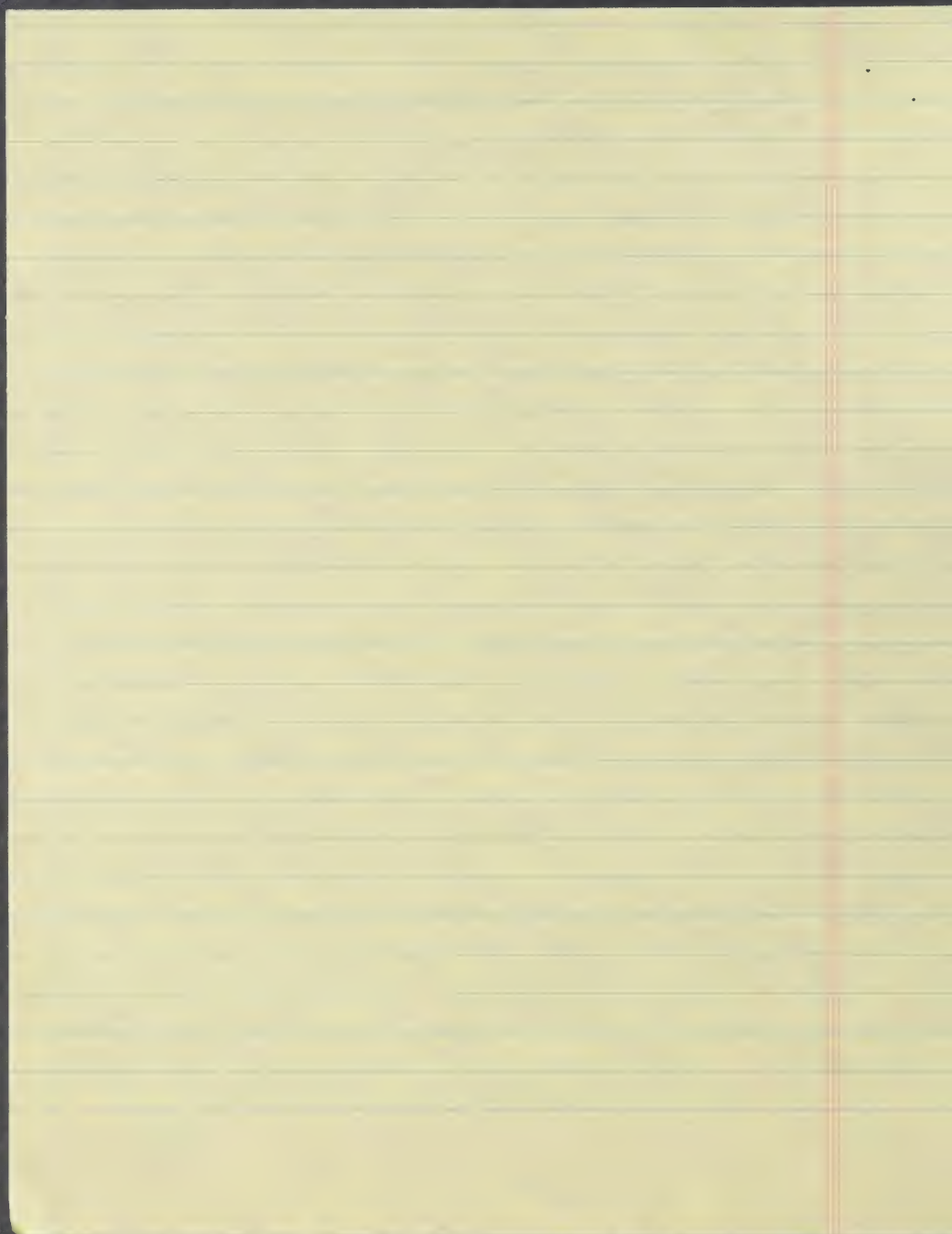
almost new brief case \$ 100

Owned by Alfred Bates Fine Arts

3 paintings

(1 recorded - see story
attached)

~~28040~~
~~2905~~
~~25175~~



Address:

Chubb & Son, Inc.
Two Plaza East
Suite 1450
100 E. Kilbourn Ave.
Waukegan, WI 53312
 (414) 961-1100

Dr. Alfred L. ...
 2461 N. Simpson St.
 Waukegan, WI



Dear _____

Will you please call me, collect, Station-to-Station as soon as possible

at _____

regarding your recent accident or loss.

Clubb

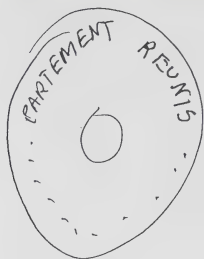
333 E Kibbourn

Thank you, _____

Date of Loss/Acc. 11-12-94

Policy No. 1110-2-001

Top left corner from front was damaged



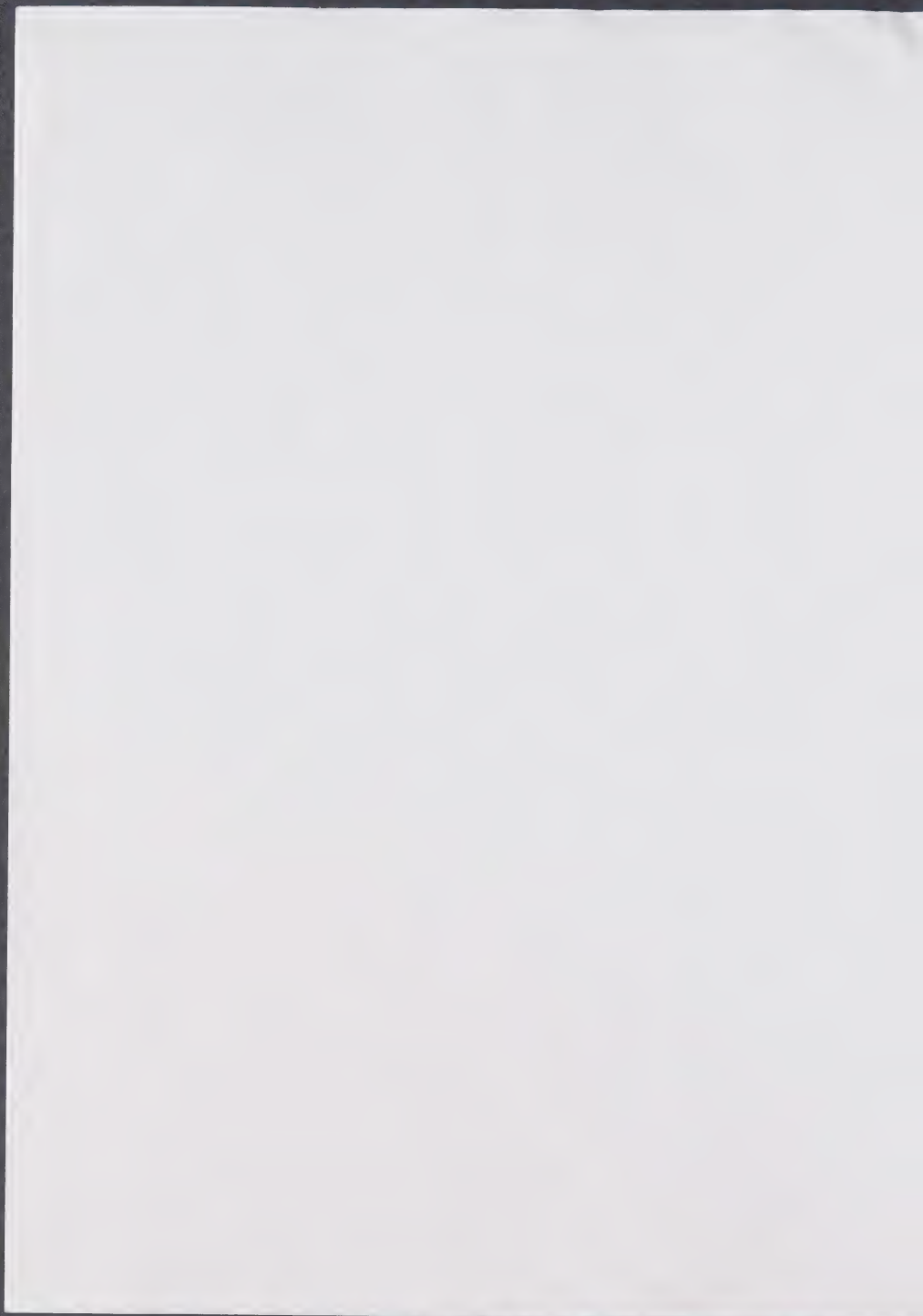
one red seal in wax



Seals on back of oak panel
bevelled on three sides.

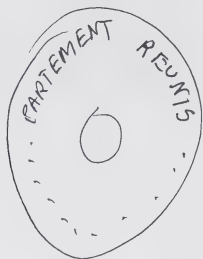
my recollections of me
'Rembrandt's mother'
purchased from me
by Alfred Baader
Nov. 1954

Christie



Top left corner from front was damaged

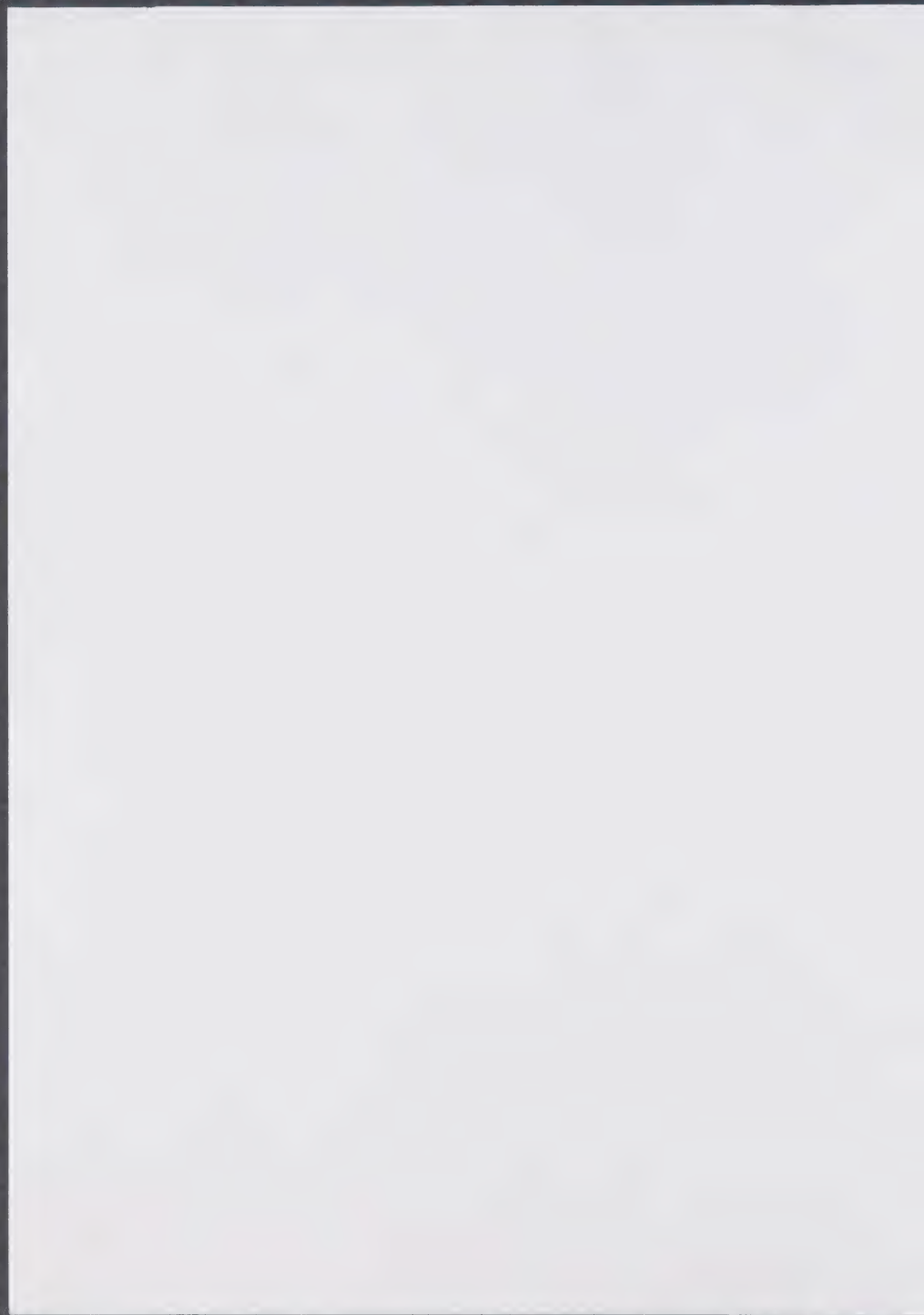
one red seal in wax



Seals on back of oak panel
bevelled on three sides

my recollections of the
'Rembrandt's mother'
purchased from me
by Alfred Baader
Nov. 1954

Christfeld.





Close Brothers Limited

MHO/las/1511.6

16th November 1994

Dr Alfred Bader
% 52 Wickham Avenue
Bexhill On Sea
East Sussex

Dear Alfred,

YOUR CHEQUE BOOK ACCOUNTS

I was very sorry to hear from Ralph Emmanuel about the theft of your travelling case while you were in Amsterdam recently. However, it was a relief to know that at least you had not come to any harm.

I understood from Ralph that in addition to a valuable oil painting and other effects, your case had contained your current Close Brothers cheque books for both yourself personally and Alfred Bader Fine Arts. So that you may continue to use your accounts while in this country, I am enclosing a fresh cheque book for each account with this letter.

For your personal account the new cheque book contains cheque numbers 005651-005680 inclusive. For Fine Arts the new cheque book numbers are 022501-022600 inclusive.

ALFRED BADER DADA ACCOUNT NUMBER 280401

Current balance - nil

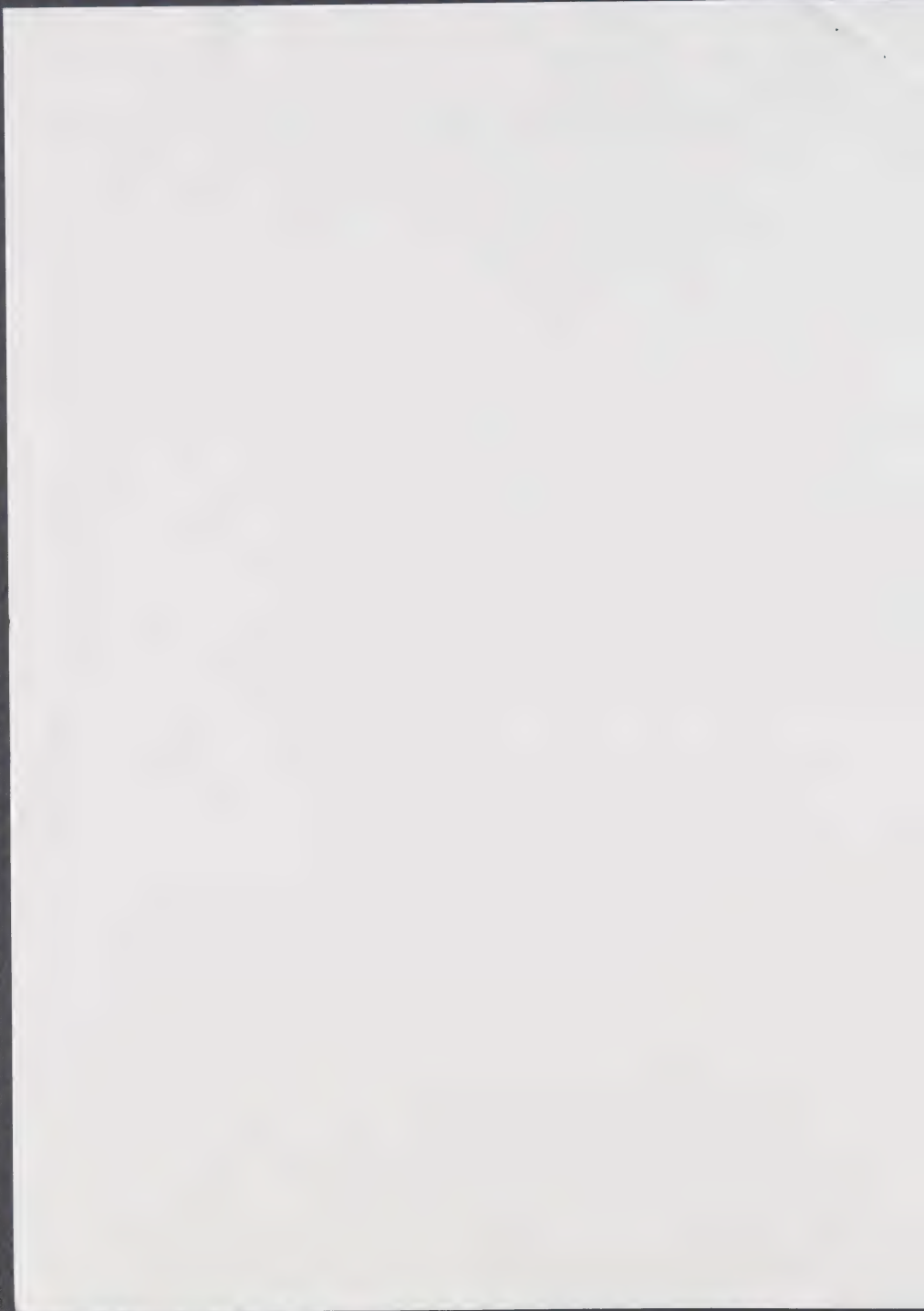
In the case of your personal account, this has remained continuously at a nil balance since 15th July 1994. I have therefore instructed that no cheques be paid from this account from previously issued cheque books. In the event that you have any previously issued cheque books for this account in your possession I would be grateful if you could return them to me for cancellation.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS DADA ACCOUNT NUMBER 280701

Current balance - £9,747.60

On this account there has been no movement of funds since 20th September 1994. I understood from Ralph that before your cheque book was stolen you issued two

Continued/...





Close Brothers Limited

- 2 -

cheques which you still wish to be presented and paid in the normal fashion. The details of these were as follows:-

1. Whitfield £3,200.00
2. John Van Haeften £5,000.00

These cheques were both presented today and have been paid. I attach photocopies for your records. As with your personal account I have instructed our accounts department that with the exception of these two cheques no cheques from cheque books previously in your possession should be accepted and paid from your account.

As above, if you have any other Fine Arts cheque books I would be grateful if you could return them to me for cancellation.

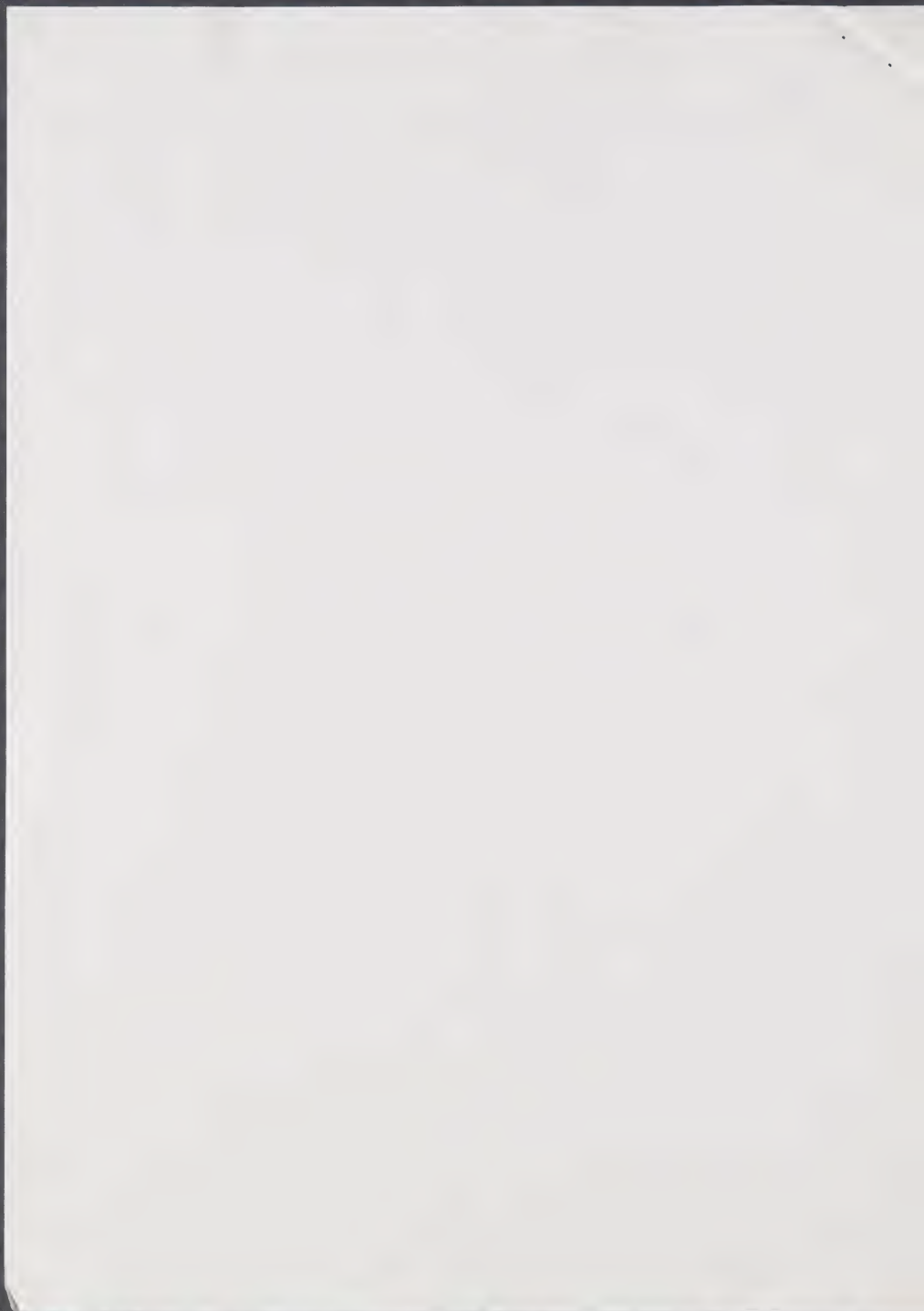
I think the above measures should provide an adequate safeguard for your funds. I do hope that, in any event, your case and its contents are quickly recovered and returned to you.

In the meantime, I trust you and Isobel are both well and we hope to see either or both of you when you are next in London.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Martin Orkin
Group Treasurer



Drs Salomon Lilian b.v.
Kunsthandel

414 277 0709

Dear Marilyn:
Had to report that our briefcase
was stolen in Amsterdam. Among papers

*Close acct on
(1) yet.*

not recovered were — you have a
6 ABTA blank checks and *Close acct.*

*7m⁺
year*

(2) 9 x 100 American Express Travellers
checks bought at M&I ca 3 year ago —
the last 9 of 30 x 100 checks bought
together. Unfortunately numbers of checks
were elsewhere in briefcase and also stolen

(3) my personal M&I checkbook. *Bank One?*

*MM
M&I
Datatars*

Please advise M&I to be careful.
Luckily we were not hurt, and
of the 3 paintings stolen, one has been
recovered.

Best wishes

Nov. 14 94.

11/14 35 1/4 + 1 1/2 208,000

Am Expr. at least mo. + yr
long job search fee

Nos. at home somewhere?

Chg at M+I only 3 per statement
period - M market

Was check book stolen from
Bank One? Last ck # &

DEDICATED TO THE DUTCH PEOPLE
FOR THEIR CONTINUING LOVE OF
THE BIBLE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK.

OPGEDRAGEN AAN HET NEDERLANDSE VOLK
OM ZIJN BLIJVENDE LIEFDE VOOR
DE BIJBEL EN HET OUDE VOLK.

The Bible Through Dutch Eyes

De Bijbel Gezien Door Nederlandse Ogen

