Gladys Brooks Thayer, born in New York City in 1882, was a devoted philanthropist throughout her lifetime. An avid collector of antique furniture, china glass, prints, and other artifacts, she realized the importance of giving her collections to museums and other institutions that would be able to maintain them. In the late 1940s, for example, she gave an antique crystal chandelier to the White House, which was installed in the Red Room.

Upon her death in 1976, the Gladys Brooks Foundation was created to promote the intellectual, moral, and physical welfare of the American people by providing for and supporting nonprofit libraries, educational institutions, hospitals, and clinics.

The Gladys Brooks Foundation Endowed Library Collection in Italian Art has been designated to support the Hesburgh Libraries’ acquisitions approval plan for Italian art and art history. Most directly, it supports courses in Italian art history from the ancient culture of the Etruscans to the work of major 20th-century Italian artists.

Through a carefully defined buying profile that matches course offerings and faculty research interests with current Italian publications in the visual arts, the Brooks Foundation Endowment enables a systematic approach to collection development that provides for the collection of new titles in the field that enrich Notre Dame’s already strong holdings in Italian art.

This endowment also benefits students and faculty in other Notre Dame Italian studies programs, including the Devers Program in Dante Studies, the Ambrosiana Drawings Project, the School of Architecture’s Rome Studies Program, as well as those studying Italian language, history, culture, and sacred art.