



# Smithsonian

## *Archives of American Art*

### A Finding Aid to the Robert Aitken Papers, circa 1900-1960, in the Archives of American Art

Stephanie L. Ashley

Funding for the processing of this collection was  
provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art

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Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Robert Aitken papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1900-1960
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.aitkrobe
<b>Creator:</b>	Aitken, Robert, 1878-1949
<b>Extent:</b>	0.5 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of California-born sculptor Robert Aitken measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1900-1960. The collection primarily consists of photographs of Aitken in his studio and photographs of his sculpture including fountain figures, mausoleum doors, medallions, reliefs, and portrait busts. Also found is a photograph of Theodore Roosevelt at the dedication of the Navy Monument in Union Square, San Francisco, in 1902. The collection also includes one 1904 letter from Benjamin Wheeler to Robert Aitken thanking Aitken for a bust of George Washington, and scattered clippings and postcards reproducing works of art by Aitken.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the Archives of American Art by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in November 1973.

### Available Formats

This collection is also available on 35 mm microfilm reel 1027. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

### Processing Information

The Robert Aitken papers were microfilmed at some point after receipt on reel 1027. The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by archivist Stephanie Ashley in 2014, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art. The Archives of American Art has implemented minimal processing tactics when possible in order to increase information about and access to more of our collections.

Minimal processing included arrangement to the series and folder level. Generally, items within folders were simply verified with folder titles but not arranged further. Folders within boxes may not be numbered. The collection was rehoused in archival containers and folders.

### Preferred Citation

Robert Aitken papers, circa 1900-1960. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

Use of original materials requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D. C. Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Noted sculptor Robert Aitken (1878-1949) was born in San Francisco, California, and taught at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art from 1901-1904. He studied in Paris in 1897 and from 1904-1907, and then settled in New York City where he spent most of his career teaching at the National Academy of Design.

He completed numerous sculpture commissions including portrait busts, medallions and coins, reliefs, and fountain figures. His works include the "Fountain of Earth" for San Francisco's Panama Pacific Exposition, the Navy Monument in San Francisco's Union Square, doors for the Greenhut and John W. Gates Mausoleums in New York, several military sculptures at West Point, and Guardian Figures at the National Archives building and the West Pediment of the United States Supreme Court building, both in Washington D. C.

Aitken was a member of the National Academy of Design, the National Arts Club, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Sculpture Society and the New York Architectural League.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of California-born sculptor Robert Aitken measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1900-1960. The collection primarily consists of photographs of Aitken in his studio and photographs of his sculpture including fountain figures, mausoleum doors, medallions, reliefs, and portrait busts. Also found is a photograph of Theodore Roosevelt at the dedication of the Navy Monument in Union Square, San Francisco, in 1902. The collection also includes one 1904 letter from Benjamin Wheeler to Robert Aitken thanking Aitken for a bust of George Washington, and scattered clippings and postcards reproducing works of art by Aitken.

Some of the photographs are silver gelatin and gold toned silver gelatin prints, and some were taken by noted photographer De Witt Ward.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Robert Aitken Papers, circa 1900-1960

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Artists' studios -- Photographs  
Monuments -- California -- San Francisco  
Monuments -- Washington (D.C.)  
Sculptors

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919  
Ward, De Witt  
Wheeler, Benjamin

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Robert Aitken Papers, circa 1900-1960

#### *0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 2)*

Box 1, Folder 1	Letter, 1904
Box 1	Photographs
Box 1, Folder 2	Aitken and Busts, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 3	Aitken and "Fountain of the Earth" Statue, Panama Pacific Exposition, circa 1915 Notes: Includes blank postcards of the fountain
Box 1, Folder 4	Aitken and Friezes, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 5	Aitken and Military Sculpture, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 6	Aitken and Monmument to American Navy in Union Square, circa 1902 Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 2.
Box 1, Folder 7	Aitken and National Academy of Design Medallion, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 8	Aitken and Samuel Gompers Monument, circa 1930s Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 2
Box 1, Folder 9	Book Ends, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 10-11	Busts, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 12	Frederick W. Schumacher Frieze, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 13	Mausoleum Doors, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 14	Medallions, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 15	Monuments, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 16	National Archives Figures, circa 1930s, circa 1959-1960 Notes: Includes 3 news clippings circa 1959-1960
Box 1, Folder 17-18	Other Sculpture, circa 1900-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 19	Unidentified Individuals in a Forest, 1908

Oversize 2

Oversized Aitken and Monument to American Navy in Union Square from  
Box 1, Folder 6

Oversize 2

Oversized Aitken and Samuel Gompers Monument from Box 1, Folder 8

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