Smithsonian
*Archives of American Art*

# Oral history interview with Margaret Babcock

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions
https://www.aaa.si.edu/

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## Collection Overview

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|---|---|
| **Repository:** | Archives of American Art |
| **Title:** | Oral history interview with Margaret Babcock |
| **Date:** | 1998 July 21 |
| **Identifier:** | AAA.babcoc98 |
| **Creator:** | Babcock, Margaret Meras, 1907- (Interviewee)<br>Brown, Robert F. (Interviewer) |
| **Extent:** | 2 Items (sound cassettes (total 120 min.); analog.)<br>29 Pages (Transcript) |
| **Language:** | English . |
| **Digital Content:** | Digital Content: Oral history interview with Margaret Babcock, 1998 July 21, Transcript<br>Audio: Oral history interview with Margaret Babcock, 1998 July 21, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt) |

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics and administrators.

### Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

## Biographical / Historical

Margaret Mera Babcock (1907- ) was a curator from Camden, Maine.

## Scope and Contents

An interview with Margaret Babcock conducted 1998 July 21, by Robert F. Brown, for the Archives of American Art, in Camden, Maine. The interview covers her family background up through the 1920s.

## Scope and Contents

Babcock discusses being raised in Exeter, New Hampshire, where her father owned Daniel Chester French's former house; being a precocious student; attending Phillips Exeter Academy's June Ball with Francis Grover Cleveland, a grandson of the president (she recites a poem that commemorated her romantic thrill over

the experience); attending Smith College where she concentrated in zoology but aspired to be a writer and teacher; devoting much time to modern dance; meeting, her freshman year, an Amherst College senior & pupil of Robert Frost, Ernest Robson (formerly Rosenblum) from Chicago; the snobbish economic and anti-semitic caste system at Smith; her parents divorce while at Smith, causing sudden financial problems, and becoming a scholarship student; Robson coming to Smith to see her during her junior year, and following her at the end of that year to Camden, Maine, where her grandmother Frye and her mother lived, and a secret camping trip to northern Maine and Provincetown; marrying Robson April 7, 1926 and graduating from Smith; Peter Blume, the poet Sidney Peak Crawford, and his dog "Little Peak" joined her and Robson on Lime Island, off Camden, summer of 1926; Blume staying behind and showing his "Maine Coast", which he had painted on the island, to her shocked mother and grandmother; supporting Blume financially.

## General

Originally recorded on 2 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 56 min.

## General

Babcock's speech is impaired by a stroke and deafness. Sound quality is poor.

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women museum curators

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Curators -- Maine -- Camden