



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Mildred Baker Papers in the Archives of American Art

Judy Ng

Processing of this collection was funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	3
Arrangement	3
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1882, 1934-1990	5
Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1937-1997	6
Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1985	8
Series 4: Federal Art project, WPA, circa 1934-1953	9
Series 5: Project Files, 1934-1996	12
Series 6: General Printed Material, 1923-1996	13
Series 7: Photographs, circa 1934-1992	14
Series 8: Jacob Baker, 1930-1975	15

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Mildred Baker papers
Date:	1882 1923-1997
Identifier:	AAA.bakemild
Creator:	Baker, Mildred, 1905-
Extent:	2.7 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of arts administrator Mildred Baker measure 2.7 linear feet and date from 1882 to 1997, with the bulk of the material dating from 1923 to 1997. Found within the papers are biographical materials; personal and professional correspondence; writings; files related to her work on the WPA Federal Art Project and other institutional art projects; printed material; photographs of Baker; and photographs and papers related to the work of her husband, Jacob Baker, who also administered programs for the WPA.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Mildred Baker donated her papers in several increments between 1971 and 1993. In 1999, the bulk of her papers were donated to the archives by Baker's estate executor, Patricia Haskell, some of which included materials that had been loaned for microfilming in 1963.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming on reel D110 including exhibition catalogs and clippings. Loaned materials were returned to the lender and are not described in the collection container inventory.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art holds several collections related to Mildred Baker and the WPA Federal Art Project. There are two oral histories with Mildred Baker, one conducted by Harlan Phillips, September 21, 1963 and another by William Agee, July 22, 1965. There is also an oral history with Jacob Baker conducted by Harlan Phillips, September 25, 1963. Transcripts of the interviews conducted by Harlan Phillips are found within the collection. Collections related to the Federal Art Project include the Federal Art Project of the Work Projects Administration records and the Holger Cahill papers.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection and material lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels D110 and 1817 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note

that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

Portions of materials donated between 1971-1993 were microfilmed onto reel 1817. All previously filmed and unfiled accessions were merged, fully processed, and described by Judy Ng in 2013 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Mildred Baker papers, 1882, 1923-1997. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

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Biographical / Historical

Mildred Baker (1905-1998) was an arts administrator who worked in New York City, New York; Newark, New Jersey; and Washington, D.C.

Baker was born in Brooklyn, New York to composer and musician George Weiss and his wife Sophia Soennichsen, whose family were also musicians and writers. In 1925, while enrolled at the University of Rochester, she married the artist Ernest Holzhauser and together they moved to Europe for study and travel. In 1927, they returned to New York where Baker began working in administrative positions for the Van Diemen Galleries and the College Art Association. In 1934, she was hired by Holger Cahill to assist him in organizing Rockefeller Center's Salons of America Exhibition and First Municipal Art Exhibition. After the success of these shows, in 1935, Baker was hired as Cahill's assistant after he was selected to run the Federal Art Project for the Work Projects Administration in Washington, D.C.

While working for the Federal Art Project, Baker was appointed director of exhibitions and surveyed the work of over 100 art centers, organized over 500 traveling exhibitions, and managed the final allocation of artworks created for the FAP. In 1940, Baker divorced Mr. Holzhauser and married Jacob Baker, an economist and WPA administrator, union organizer, and a founder of the left-wing Vanguard Press, in 1947. After overseeing the closing of the Federal Art Project offices in Washington, Baker and her husband moved back to New York and became longtime residents of the Chelsea Hotel. Baker joined the staff of the Newark Museum in 1944, was promoted to assistant director in 1949, and to associate director in charge of exhibitions and programs from 1953 until her retirement in 1971.

In 1963, Baker was appointed by Governor Richard Hughes to the Commission to Study the Arts in New Jersey, and while serving as vice chairman, she oversaw the establishment of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She was a member of the Cosmopolitan Club, Women's City Club, Woman Pays Club, and American Association of Museums. Baker died on December 9, 1998.

Scope and Contents

The papers of arts administrator Mildred Baker measure 2.7 linear feet and date from 1882 to 1997, with the bulk of the material dating from 1923 to 1997. Found within the papers are biographical materials; personal and professional correspondence; writings; files related to her work on the WPA Federal Art Project and other institutional art projects; printed material; photographs of Baker; and photographs and papers related to the work of her husband, Jacob Baker, who also administered programs for the WPA.

Biographical materials include birth and award certificates, curriculum vitae, divorce documents, an oral history transcript, and genealogical research and information on Baker's family, including her brother, the composer and bassoonist Adolph Weiss.

Correspondence is primarily with Baker's friends, business associates, researchers, and art institutions discussing personal relationships, research inquiries into the administration of the Federal Art Project, and loans and gifts of artwork to various institutions. The series includes Baker's responses to researcher requests regarding FAP exhibitions, programs, artists, and recollections of her fellow administrators.

Writings by Baker consist of reminiscences, 8 travel diaries, 3 essays, an exhibition catalog introduction, 4 lectures, and miscellaneous notes. Writings by others consist of 4 essays on contemporary art and art administration.

Federal Art Project files include correspondence; artist and exhibition lists; memoranda and general information; reports; speeches; information and photographs related to regional art centers and black artists; printed material; and miscellaneous material related to the Index of American Design, Southern California Art Project, and the Technical Services Laboratory.

General project files include information for 4 exhibitions, including the 1934 First Municipal Art and Salon of America Exhibitions; reports and speeches for the Newark Museum; information on the commissioning of the New Jersey Council on the Arts; and member information from the Woman Pays Club.

Printed material includes clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, newsletters, press releases, and a commercial recording of Alice Tully Hall.

Photographs are of Mildred Baker, including photos during her tenure at the Federal Art Project and Newark Museum. There is also a photograph of fellow FAP administrator Audrey McMahan.

Materials related to Jacob Baker include interview recordings and transcripts; personal correspondence with friends and business associates; writings and speeches; information related to Baker's work for the United Federal Workers of America; printed materials; and photographs of Baker.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1882, 1934-1990 (7 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1937-1997 (0.4 linear feet, Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1985 (17 folders; Box 1)
- Series 4: Federal Art Project, WPA, circa 1934-1953 (0.8 linear feet, Box 1-2)
- Series 5: Project Files, 1934-1991 (0.4 linear feet, Box 2)
- Series 6: General Printed Material, 1923-1996 (11 folders; Box 2-4)
- Series 7: Photographs, circa 1934-1992 (2 folders; Box 3)
- Series 8: Jacob Baker, 1930-1975 (0.3 linear feet; Box 3-4)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Exhibitions -- New York (State) -- New York
- Federal aid to the arts
- Women arts administrators

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Photographs
- Transcripts

Names:

- Baker, Jacob
- Federal Art Project
- Index of American Design
- McMahon, Audrey, 1900?-1981
- Municipal Art Committee (New York, N.Y.)
- Newark Museum
- Salons of America, Inc.
- Technical Services Laboratory (National Space Technology Laboratories)
- United Federal Workers of America
- Weiss, Adolph, 1891-1971

Occupations:

- Arts administrators -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1882, 1934-1990

7 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials include birth and award certificates, curriculum vitae, divorce documents, a voting card, and an oral history transcript of Baker's interview with Harlan Phillips in 1963 discussing her work with the Federal Art Project. There is also genealogical research and information on Baker's family, including her three brothers and sister. Information on her brother, the composer and bassoonist Adolph Weiss, includes his travel diary from tours to Asia and Europe during the 1960s.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 1	Birth Certificate and Voting Card, 1967, 1976
Box 1, Folder 2	Certificates, 1975
Box 1, Folder 3	Curriculum Vitae, 1953-1975
Box 1, Folder 4	Divorce Papers, 1934
Box 1, Folder 5	Family Genealogy, circa 1975-1990
Box 1, Folder 6	Family, Siblings, 1882-1984
Box 1, Folder 7	Interview Transcript with Harlan B. Phillips, 1963

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1937-1997

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is primarily with Baker's friends, business associates, researchers, art institutions, and admirers of her residency at the Chelsea Hotel.

The series includes Baker's responses to researcher requests regarding FAP exhibitions, programs, artists, and recollections of her fellow administrators. Correspondence with Rutgers University, Francis O'Connor, Wendy Jeffers, and James Wechsler includes reports from their projects on the Federal Art Project, Holger Cahill, and Arthur Murphy and the WPA respectively. Correspondence with Robert Reiss includes an essay and research information on Sarah Freedman McPherson. There is also a letter from the writer Max Eastman describing the last days of his wife, Eliena Krylenko.

Correspondence with the Archives of American Art, the Montclair Art Museum, Newark Museum, Roberson Center, Memorial Art Gallery, and the University of Wyoming record gifts and loans to these institutions from Baker's private collection.

Arrangement: All correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Box 1, Folder 8	A Miscellaneous, circa 1970-1990
Box 1, Folder 9	Archives of American Art, 1962-1993
Box 1, Folder 10	B-C Miscellaneous, circa 1968-1990
Box 1, Folder 11	Chelsea Hotel, 1996
Box 1, Folder 12	Cowell, Sydney Robertson, 1970-1990
Box 1, Folder 13	Craft, Douglas, circa 1980
Box 1, Folder 14	D-J Miscellaneous, circa 1954-1990
Box 1, Folder 15	Jeffers, Wendy, 1987-1996
Box 1, Folder 16	K-M Miscellaneous, circa 1949-1990
Box 1, Folder 17	Mavigliano, George J., 1982-1984
Box 1, Folder 18	Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, 1990-1993
Box 1, Folder 19	Montclair Art Museum, 1973-1992
Box 1, Folder 20	Museum of Early American Folk Art, 1966-1982
Box 1, Folder 21	Museum of Modern Art, 1962-1966
Box 1, Folder 22	N Miscellaneous, circa 1966-1990

Box 1, Folder 23	National Collection of Fine Arts, 1970-1978
Box 1, Folder 24	National Council on the Arts, 1971
Box 1, Folder 25	Newark Museum, 1954-1997
Box 1, Folder 26	Newark State College, 1972
Box 1, Folder 27	O Miscellaneous, 1987
Box 1, Folder 28-29	O'Connor, Francis, 1966-1996
Box 1, Folder 30	P-Q Miscellaneous, circa 1967-1990
Box 1, Folder 31	Petteys, Chris, 1982
Box 1, Folder 32	R Miscellaneous, circa 1937-1990
Box 1, Folder 33	Reiss, Robert, 1979-1980
Box 1, Folder 34	Roberson Center for the Arts and Sciences, 1990
Box 1, Folder 35	S Miscellaneous, circa 1966-1990
Box 1, Folder 36	Sherwood, Leland H., 1971
Box 1, Folder 37	T-U Miscellaneous, circa 1968-1990
Box 1, Folder 38	Udell, Susan, 1978
Box 1, Folder 39	University of Wyoming, 1975-1992
Box 1, Folder 40	W Miscellaneous, circa 1960-1990
Box 1, Folder 41	Wechsler, James, 1993
Box 1, Folder 42	White, John Franklin, 1985-1988

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1985

17 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings by Baker consist of reminiscences, 8 travel diaries to Europe and the Middle East, 3 essays on the Federal Art Project and museum administration, an exhibition catalog introduction, 4 lectures on government patronage of the arts, and miscellaneous notes. Writings by others consist of 4 essays on contemporary art and art administration.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1	By Mildred Baker
Box 1, Folder 43	Diary, General, circa 1960-1985
Box 1, Folder 44-46	Diary, Travel, 1972-1984
Box 1, Folder 47	Essay, "Consumer Demand for Today's Art", 1955
Box 1, Folder 48	Essay, "Exhibition Section of the Federal Art Project", circa 1940-1980
Box 1, Folder 49	Essay, "On Using Your Museum", circa 1950-1960
Box 1, Folder 50	Exhibition Catalog, On the Federal Art Project, 1967
Box 1, Folder 51	Lecture, At Artist's Club, circa 1950-1975
Box 1, Folder 52	Lecture, At University of Maryland, 1966
Box 1, Folder 53	Lecture, "Public and Private Art Patronage", 1973
Box 1, Folder 54	Lecture Introduction, At Artist's Club, 1970
Box 1, Folder 55	Notes, circa 1960s
Box 1	By Others
Box 1, Folder 56	Goodrich, Lloyd, "Economics of Contemporary Art", 1958
Box 1, Folder 57	Kent, Henry W., "What I'm Pleased to Call My Education", circa 1950-1980
Box 1, Folder 58	Ripley, S. Dillon, "Museums in Today's Changing World", 1965
Box 1, Folder 59	Sinnick, A., "Modern Principles of Museum Administration", circa 1950-1970

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Federal Art project, WPA, circa 1934-1953

0.8 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Federal Art Project files include correspondence to Mildred Holzhauer, Dorothy Miller, and Jacob Baker; artist and exhibition lists; department memoranda and general information; 8 reports; speeches; information and photographs related to regional art centers and black artists in 33 states; and clippings and news releases. The series also includes note cards and printed material related to the Index of American Design; a catalog and report produced by the Southern California Art Project; and general information, furniture blueprints, and circular publications produced by the Technical Services Laboratory.

Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 60	Artist Biographies, circa 1934-1939
Box 1, Folder 61	Artist Lists, circa 1934-1939
Box 1, Folder 62	Correspondence, Mildred Holzhauer, Dorothy Miller, and Jacob Baker, 1936-1953
Box 1, Folder 63	Exhibition Allocations Lists, circa 1942
Box 1, Folder 64	Memorandum, Exhibition Unit, circa 1936-1941
Box 1, Folder 65	Memorandum, Exhibition and Allocations Unit, circa 1941-1943
Box 1, Folder 66	Report, "Art Project", 1943
Box 1, Folder 67	Report, "Brief Summary of the United States Government Art Projects", 1943
Box 1, Folder 68	Report, Conference on the Music, Writers' and Art Program, WPA, 1941
Box 1, Folder 69	Report, On the Federal Art Project, circa 1936-1943
Box 1, Folder 70	Report, "Relationship of the Federal Work Program to Unemployment", 1936
Box 1, Folder 71	Report, Sun Yat Sen, 1937
Box 1, Folder 72	Report, WPA Art Program, 1940
Box 1, Folder 73	Report, WPA Federal Art Project, circa 1943
Box 2, Folder 1	Speeches, 1936
Box 2, Folder 2	Art Centers, Memorandum and General Information, 1936-1939
Box 2, Folder 3	Art Centers (AL, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, IL, IA, KS, MA, MD, MS, MT), 1937-1942

Box 2, Folder 4	Art Centers (NY, RI, OR, UT, VT, WA, WI), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 5	Art Centers, Photographs (AZ), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 6	Art Centers, Photographs (CA), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 7	Art Centers, Photographs (DC, FL, IA, IL, MI), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 8	Art Centers, Photographs (MN, MS, MT, NJ, NM), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 9	Art Centers, Photographs (NC, NY, OK, OR, SC), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 10	Art Centers, Photographs (UT, VA, WA, WI), 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 11	Art Centers, Photographs, Scrapbook Pages, 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 12	Art Centers, Photographs, Unidentified, 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 13	Art Centers, Black Artists, Memorandum and Notes, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 14	Art Centers, Black Artists (AL, FL, IL, MI, NC, NY, OH, PA, TN, VA), circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 15	Art Centers, Black Artists, Printed Materials, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 16	Art Centers, Black Artists, Photographs (DC, FL), circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 17	Art Centers, Black Artists, Photographs (IL, MS, NC, VA), circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 18	Index of American Design, Note Cards, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 19	Index of American Design, Press Releases, circa 1936-1942
Box 2, Folder 20	Index of American Design, Printed Material, 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 21	Southern California Art Project, Catalog, 1939
Box 2, Folder 22	Southern California Art Project, Report, Southern California Creates, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 23	Technical Services Laboratory, General Information, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 24	Technical Services Laboratory, Blueprint Furniture Design, circa 1937-1942
Box 2, Folder 25	Technical Services Laboratory, Circulars (#3-5), 1939-1940
Box 2, Folder 26	Printed Material, Brochure, 1935

Box 2, Folder 27	Printed Material, Clippings, circa 1936-1949
Box 2, Folder 28	Printed Material, Press Releases, 1936-1939

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Project Files, 1934-1996

0.4 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: General project files include information for 4 exhibitions, including a sales register for the First Municipal Art Exhibition and a photograph and catalog of the Salon of America Exhibitions; reports and speeches for the Newark Museum; and member information from the Woman Pays Club. The series also includes general information and three public hearing transcripts regarding the commissioning of the New Jersey Council on the Arts.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by subject and document type.

Box 2, Folder 29	Exhibition, "Abstract Art, 1915 to Today" (1956), General Information, 1956
Box 2, Folder 30	Exhibition, "First Municipal Art," Sales Register, 1934
Box 2, Folder 31	Exhibition, "Salons of America," Catalog, 1934
Box 2, Folder 32	Exhibition, "Salons of America," Photograph of Artists and Staff, 1934
Box 2, Folder 33	Exhibition, "United States Building Exhibition," General Information, 1955
Box 2, Folder 34	Newark Museum, Reports, 1948-1956
Box 2, Folder 35	Newark Museum, Speeches, circa 1950, 1991
Box 2, Folder 36	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Correspondence, 1966-1975
Box 2, Folder 37	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, General Information, 1963-1967
Box 2, Folder 38	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Speeches, 1966-1967
Box 2, Folder 39	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Public Hearing Transcript, 1965 September 14
Box 2, Folder 40	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Public Hearing Transcript, 1965 September 21
Box 2, Folder 41	New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Public Hearing Transcript, 1965 September 29
Box 2, Folder 42	Woman Pays Club, Directories, 1974-1992
Box 2, Folder 43	Woman Pays Club, Member Information, 1984-1996

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: General Printed Material, 1923-1996

11 Folders (Box 2-4)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes general clippings, clippings featuring Mildred Baker, newsletters, press releases, and a commercial recording of Alice Tully Hall on sound disc (vinyl). There are also general exhibition announcements and catalogs, as well as catalogs and information on artists whose work Baker collected.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 2, Folder 44	Clippings, 1923-1995
Box 2, Folder 45	Clippings on Mildred Baker, 1931-1996
Box 2, Folder 46	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1934-1978
Box 2, Folder 47	Exhibition Announcements, Catalogs, and Clippings, A-C, circa 1970-1985 Notes: Artists whose work was purchased by Mildred Baker.
Box 3, Folder 1-3	Exhibition Announcements, Catalogs, and Clippings, D-Z, circa 1970-1985 Notes: Artists whose work was purchased by Mildred Baker.
Box 3, Folder 4	Newsletters, 1950-1996
Box 3, Folder 5	Press Releases, 1975
Box 3, Folder 6	Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1950-1990
Box 4	Recording, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, 1977 1 Sound discs (vinyl)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 7: Photographs, circa 1934-1992

2 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Mildred Baker, including photos during her tenure at the Federal Art Project and Newark Museum. There is also a photograph of fellow FAP administrator Audrey McMahan.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by subject and chronological date.

Box 3, Folder 8 Photographs of Mildred Baker, circa 1934-1992

Box 3, Folder 9 Photograph of Audrey McMahan, circa 1937-1942

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 8: Jacob Baker, 1930-1975

0.3 Linear feet (Box 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Materials related to Jacob Baker include personal correspondence with friends and business associates; writings and speeches on economics, management, and labor relations; finances, meeting minutes, member lists, and correspondence related to Baker's work for the United Federal Workers of America; clippings; and photographs of Baker. There is also an oral history transcript of Baker's 1963 interview with Harlan Phillips, and an interview recording with Tex Goldschmidt dating from the 1960s discussing his administrative work with the Federal Art Project on 4 sound discs (lacquer).

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Available Formats: The Interview recording by Tex Goldschmidt has been digitized for research access.

Box 3, Folder 10	Biographical Material, Interview Transcript with Harlan A. Phillips, 1963
Box 3, Folder 11	Biographical Material, Interview Recording with Tex Goldschmidt, circa 1960s 4 Sound discs (lacquer) Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 4.
Box 3, Folder 12	Correspondence, A-Z, 1930-1975
Box 3, Folder 13	Correspondence, Condolences, 1963, 1967-1968
Box 3, Folder 14	Writings and Speeches, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 15	Project Files, United Federal Workers of America, 1937-1941
Box 3, Folder 16	Printed Material, Clippings, 1967
Box 3, Folder 17	Printed Material, Miscellaneous, 1950-1951
Box 3, Folder 18	Photographs of Jacob Baker, circa 1940-1967
Box 4	Oversized Interview Recording with Tex Goldschmidt, circa 1960s Notes: Oversized material from Box 3, F11.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)