



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Dennis Miller Bunker Collection, 1882-1943(bulk 1882-1890), in the Archives of American Art

Erin Corley

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Dennis Miller Bunker collection
Date:	1882-1943 (bulk 1882-1890)
Identifier:	AAA.bunkdenn
Creator:	Bunker, Dennis Miller, 1861-1890
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Dennis Miller Bunker collection of letters, an exhibition catalog, and photographs measures 0.4 linear feet and dates from 1882 to 1943, with the bulk of the material dating from 1882 to 1890. Most of the collection consists of letters to Bunker's friend Joseph Evans (46 letters) in New York City, written between 1882-1889. Four volumes of letterpress books, circa 1889-1890, contain letters to Bunker's fiancée Eleanor Hardy prior to their marriage in the fall of 1890, and his untimely death a few months later. There are also a 1943 exhibition catalog and three photographs of Bunker.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Letters were donated in 1974 by William and Geoffrey Platt, sons of Eleanor Hardy by her second marriage. Printed material and one photograph were donated in 1974 by Frederick D. Hill of Berry-Hill Galleries. Two photographs of Bunker were donated in 1977 by Catherine B. Ramsdell.

Related Material

Also found at the Archives of American Art is the Charles A. Platt letter collection. Platt was the second husband of Dennis Miller Bunker's wife Eleanor Hardy. Included in the collection are a letter from Platt to Bunker, a letter from Bunker to Anne Page, and other related items.

Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Dennis Miller Bunker** in the Archives of American Art were digitized in 2007, and total 1,237 images.

Processing Information

The Dennis Miller Bunker collection received a preliminary level of processing at some point after donation. Material was microfilmed in the order that it was donated on reels 1201, 2773, and 1817. The various accessions were merged and fully processed by Erin Corley in 2006 and digitized in 2007 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Dennis Miller Bunker collection, 1882-1943. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection has been digitized and is available online via AAA's website.

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Biographical Note

Painter Dennis Miller Bunker (1861-1890) was born in New York City and from 1878 to 1881 studied at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League with William Merritt Chase. He traveled to Paris and attended the Ecole des Beaux Art where Jean-Leon Gerome was his teacher, graduating in 1885. He returned to the United States and took a job in Boston teaching at the Cowles Art School. That same year Bunker had his first one-man exhibition at the Noyes & Blakeslee Gallery in Boston. In the winter of 1885-1886 he met and befriended Isabella Stewart Gardner who became a great supporter and patron of his work. A few years later in 1887 Bunker met John Singer Sargent during Sargent's visit to Boston and, in 1888, spent the summer with Sargent at Calcot Mill in England painting plein-air landscapes. That summer was a turning point for Bunker's painting style as he became greatly influenced by impressionism and turned to brighter colors and looser brushwork. He brought this style back with him to Boston and was praised for his new work.

Bunker always felt like an outsider in Boston's society and in the Spring of 1889 resigned his teaching position at Cowles Art School, lived briefly that summer at Medfield, Massachusetts, and then moved back to New York City. Earlier that year he had met Eleanor Heady of Boston and they were married in October 1890. They moved into Sherwood Studios in New York City, but during a visit to Boston that Christmas Bunker fell ill and died at the age of 29.

Scope and Content Note

The Dennis Miller Bunker collection of letters, an exhibition catalog, and a few photographs measures 0.4 linear feet and dates from 1882 to 1943, with the bulk of the material dating from 1882 to 1890. Most of the collection consists of letters. Letters dating from 1882 to 1889 are primarily to Bunker's friend Joseph Evans (46 letters) in New York City and discuss work, projects, his dislike of teaching, mutual interests and friends, and other topics. Four volumes of letterpress books, circa 1889-1890, contain letters to Bunker's fiancée Eleanor Hardy wherein he discusses their plans for the future, his work, his studio, friends, artists, and general news prior to their marriage in October, 1890 and his untimely death a few months later. There is also a 1943 exhibition catalog and three photographs of Bunker.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection, there is only one series. Items are arranged chronologically within each folder.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Study and teaching
- Artists' studios
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painting, American -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

- Photographs

Names:

- Evans, Joseph
- Hardy, Eleanor

Container Listing

Series 1: Dennis Miller Bunker Collection, 1882-1890, 1943, undated

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This collection contains numerous letters to Bunker's friend Joseph Evans, a painter in New York City, and a few letters to Annie Page. These letters mostly document Bunker's life prior to meeting fiancée Eleanor Hardy and date from 1882 to 1889. He writes of his activities, working at Cowles Art School, current painting projects, mutual friends, and general news. Four bound volumes of letters dating from 1889-1890 are written to his fiancée and future wife, Eleanor "Nell" Hardy. The letters document Bunker's daily life as a painter, discussing his activities, his dislike of teaching, his plans for the future, current painting projects, working in his studio, his friends and other artists, their upcoming marriage, and general news. The letters appear to end upon their marriage in October, 1890 and his untimely death a few months later.

Miscellaneous letters include two letters to his friend Charles A. Platt, a landscape architect, a letter to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Alpheus Hardy, a letter from William Dean Howells congratulating him on his wedding, and a letter of appreciation from his students at Cowles Art School. The collection also houses a catalog from the Dennis Miller Bunker exhibition in 1943 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and a few miscellaneous printed items. Photographs of Bunker include a portrait taken at H. G. Smith Studio Building, a photograph of him in costume, and a copy print of a photograph of him in his studio.

Box 1, Folder 1	Bound Letters to Eleanor Hardy, Volumes 1 and 2, circa 1889-1890
Box 1, Folder 2	Bound Letters to Eleanor Hardy, Volumes 3 and 4, circa 1889-1890
Box 1, Folder 3	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1882-1885
Box 1, Folder 4	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1886 June-December
Box 1, Folder 5	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1886 January-June
Box 1, Folder 6	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1887 January-June
Box 1, Folder 7	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1887 July-December
Box 1, Folder 8	Letters to Joseph Evans, 1888-1889
Box 1, Folder 9	Letters to Annie Page, 1886-1887, 1889
Box 1, Folder 10	Miscellaneous Letters, 1886-1890, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Printed Material, 1943, undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Photographs of Dennis Miller Bunker, circa 1886, undated

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