



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Howard Russell Butler Papers, 1874-1936, in the Archives of American Art

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2021 June 30

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Howard Russell Butler papers |
| Date: | 1874-1936 |
| Identifier: | AAA.butlhowa |
| Creator: | Butler, Howard Russell, 1856-1934 |
| Extent: | 3 Linear feet |
| Language: | English . |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated and lent 1970-1975 by H. Russell Butler, Jr., Butler's son.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming on reels 89 and 93. Loaned materials were returned to the donor after microfilming.

Available Formats

35mm microfilm reels 89, 93, 347-349, and 1189-1190 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Microfilmed materials must be consulted on microfilm. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Howard Russell Butler (1856-1934) was a businessman, lawyer, and landscape painter from New York, NY. Butler was actively involved in many art associations, including founding the American Fine Arts Society. He was a National Academician of the National Academy of Design, and a member of the Architectural League and the Society of American Artists.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Howard Russell Butler measure 3.0 linear feet on 7 microfilm reels and date from 1874 to 1936. The collection includes writings, journals, organizational papers, correspondence, biographical information, printed matter, art works, and diaries.

Correspondence includes about 1700 letters concerning Butler's artwork, his interest in astronomy, support for the League of Nations and the World Court, his investigation of the Lincoln statue controversy, his

management of the Andrew Carnegie house and property, and extensive correspondence about the various activities of the National Academy of Design and the American Fine Arts Society.

Also included are letters from Howard Russell Butler to family and friends, written from Princeton University, Cuba, Mexico, California, Colorado, and Europe; five diaries, 1876-1877; one drawing; and two oil sketches after a painting by Titian. It also includes a book of Butler's works, Howard Russell Butler, including an appreciation by F. Newlin Price, and an unpublished autobiography written from a journal kept by Butler.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 13 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1922 (Reel 0347)
- Series 2: Correspondence and Exhibition Files, 1886-1933 (Reel 0347)
- Series 3: Association Records, 1895-1932 (Reel 0347-Reel 0348)
- Series 4: Project Files, circa 1918-1934 (Reel 0348-Reel 0349)
- Series 5: Abraham Lincoln statue controversy, circa 1917-1922 (Reel 0349)
- Series 6: Professional Files, 1903-1905 (Reel 0349)
- Series 7: Book Projects, 1922-1931 (Reel 0349)
- Series 8: Essay, undated (Reel 0349)
- Series 9: Professional files, 1915-1920 (Reel 0349)
- Series 10: Writings, circa 1936 (Reel 0089, Reel 0093)
- Series 11: Letters, 1874-1907 (Reel 1189-Reel 1190)
- Series 12: Diaries, 1876-1877 (Reel 1190)
- Series 13: Artwork, circa 1888 (Reel 1190)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Landscape painting
Painting, American

Names:

American Fine Arts Society
Brush, George de Forest, 1855-1941
Carnegie, Andrew, 1835-1919
Coffin, William A. (William Anderson), 1855-1925
Cox, Kenyon, 1856-1919
National Academy of Design (U.S.)

Occupations:

Lawyers -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Functions:

Arts organizations

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1922

Reel 347, Frame
759-773

Biographical Notes, circa 1922

Notes: Includes a genealogy and career biography prepared by Butler.

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Series 2: Correspondence and Exhibition Files, 1886-1933

Scope and Contents: This series consists of about 500 items, including correspondence and exhibition material relating to Butler's art sales and exhibitions.

Reel 347, Frame 774-1295 General correspondence, 1886-1933
Notes: Correspondence is primarily from buyers of Butler's paintings, discussing prices, alterations, shipping and exhibition. Correspondents include James Bertram, writing for Andrew Carnegie, George H. Smillie, Harrison S. Morris, John Frederick Lewis, Corcoran Galleries, Robert de Forest, R.C. and N.M. Vose Galleries, Boston, and Kanst Art Gallery, Los Angeles.

Reel 347, Frame 1296-1351 Letters of congratulation and clippings, circa 1916
Notes: Letters and clippings emanating from Butler winning the Carnegie Prize, 1916, for his painting *Maine Cliffs in Moonlight*.

Reel 347, Frame 1352-1392 Exhibition Files and Jury Lists, circa 1907-1921
Notes: Include pictures exhibited by Butler at the Century Club, 1921; unidentified exhibit layouts, jury lists, and price lists of Butler paintings; and catalogs dating from 1907 to 1918.

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Series 3: Association Records, 1895-1932

Scope and Contents: This series includes records relating to the American Fine Arts Society, for which Butler was president and founding member, and the National Academy of Design (NAD).

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| Reel 347, Frame 1393-1510; | General correspondence, 1895-1931 |
| Reel 348, Frame 1-47 | Notes: Includes about 300 items concerning the function of NAD, negotiation for various NAD sites, relations with the Architectural League, reconstruction of the Fine Arts Society building following a fire in 1920, NAD elections, and cooperation with the American Society of Landscape Architects in restoring the Augustus St. Gaudens homestead and studio as an historic site. Also included is a correspondence with James Carroll Beckwith, George H. Smillie, H. W. Watrous, and Charles Lamb, concerning the creation of two separate exhibiting societies, with supporting articles and newspaper reports. Other correspondents include Cass Gilbert, President of NAD, Robert W. De Forest, and Edwin Howland Blashfield. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1-106 | Correspondence and newspaper clippings concerning the controversy over the NAD building in Central Park, 1909 Notes: Includes drafts of Butler's letters to the New York Times and other New York newspapers. |
| Reel 348, Frame 107-144 | Correspondence relating to stock gifts from Butler, 1928-1929 Notes: Includes correspondence from NAD Treasurer Francis Coates Jones, Corresponding Secretary Charles C. Curran, and other Academy officials. |
| Reel 348, Frame 145-229 | Correspondence relating to stock transfers, 1920-1924 Notes: Includes correspondence from Charles C. Curran, Daniel C. French, and others, concerning the transfer of stock from American Fine Arts Society to National Academy of Design. |
| Reel 348, Frame 230-379 | Material relating to the purchase of the West 57th Street site for NAD, 1905-1928 Notes: Includes a Cass Gilbert sketch, 1925; blueprints submitted by the Architectural League, 1928; and proposals, memoranda, and resolutions. |
| Reel 348, Frame 380-446 | Memoranda and announcements, 1900-1932 Notes: Includes nomination lists and election tallies; correspondence and regulations on building safety; prize rules; and other material concerning miscellaneous administrative functions. |
| Reel 348, Frame 447-731 | Minutes of the NAD Council and committees, 1911-1921 Notes: Includes an address by Butler detailing the history of the Lenox Library Plan for acquiring an Academy site. |
| | Addresses and articles by Butler, circa 1900-1911 |

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| Reel 348, Frame 732-757 | "On the founding of a 'National Academy Association' for securing a building for the joint use of the art organizations of New York", 1911 March 31 Notes: Address presented to the National Academy of Design. |
| Reel 348, Frame 758-762 | "Speech at gathering on a great exhibition in 1900", 1900 Notes: Tentatively identified as a speech at an Architectural League dinner. |
| Reel 348, Frame 763-786 | "Founding of the American Fine Arts Society", undated |
| Reel 348, Frame 787-799 | "The rebuilt galleries of the American Fine Arts Society", undated |
| Reel 348, Frame 800-801 | "Tariff on art", undated |
| Reel 348, Frame 802 | "The needed art galleries for New York", undated Notes: Contains one page of an incomplete draft. |
| Reel 348, Frame 803-806 | Clippings of an address, undated |
| Reel 348, Frame 809-897 | Clippings and printed material, circa 1915-1925 Notes: Includes clippings and miscellaneous printed matter relating to National Academy of Design. |

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Series 4: Project Files, circa 1919-1932

Scope and Contents: This series includes material concerning Butler's astronomical studies and paintings.

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| Reel 348, Frame 899-1030 | General correspondence with astronomers and physicists, 1919-1932 Notes: Includes about 250 items concerning Butler's astronomical observations and paintings of astronomical events. Correspondents include John A. Miller, Joseph Raymond Swain, Jakop Kimz, Frderick Socub, N. E. Wheeler, George E. Hale, John Q. Stuart, and representatives of Mount Wilson Observatory. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1031-1192 | Correspondence with selected astronomers and observatories, 1922-1932 Notes: Correspondence includes topics relating to arranging for station watches and observation of eclipses. Correspondents include Edward Adams, W. H. McFetridge, Leander McCormick Observatory, University of Virginia, Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona, and Lick Observatory, Mt. Hamilton, California. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1193-1236 | Material relating to Butler's appointment as supervising architect for Astronomical Hall, American Museum of Natural History, 1925-1932 Notes: Includes correspondence with Henry F. Osborn, American Museum of Natural History president, and Butler's critique of plans, articles, and blueprints. |
| Addresses and essays, circa 1918-1934 | |
| Reel 348, Frame 1237-1241 | "The planetarium," by Clyde Fisher, circa 1934 Notes: Prepared for publication in the Amateur Astronomer. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1242-1250 | "Painting the solar eclipse of 1918", circa 1918 Notes: Includes two address drafts, with notes. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1251-1257 | "Painting the solar eclipse", circa 1918 Notes: Typescript draft varying considerably from "Painting the solar eclipse of 1918," apparently prepared as an address. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1258-1266 | "The planet Mars as seen from his satellites - photos and demos. Two paintings by Howard Russell Butler, N.A." , undated Notes: Includes two drafts. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1268-1278 | Correspondence and printed material, 1930 Notes: Includes material relating to an exhibition of Butler's eclipse paintings at the Littlecote Galleries, Utica, New York. |
| Reel 348, Frame 1280-1351; | Clippings, 1918-1927 Notes: Clippings concerning astronomical events and Butler's eclipse paintings. |

Reel 349, Frame
33-74

Reel 349, Frame
1-75

Pencil studies, circa 1919-1932

Notes: Contains Butler's pencil studies of Mars and the Moon

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Series 5: Abraham Lincoln statue controversy, circa 1917-1922

Scope and Contents: In November 1918, John A. Stewart, Chairman of the American Peace Centenary Committee, notified the British government that the committee charged with selecting a statue of Lincoln as a gift to the citizens of Great Britain had selected one done by George Gray Barnard. Prompted by the protests of Robert Todd Lincoln, Howard Russell Butler investigated and learned that the committee had not ratified this choice but had preferred a statue done by Augustus St. Gaudens. This series contains material detailing the public debate that followed and reflects various attitudes toward public monuments.

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| Reel 349, Frame 77-344 | <p>Correspondence, 1917-1922</p> <p>Notes: Correspondence includes about 100 items relating to Butler's investigations concerning the Abraham Lincoln statue gift. Principal correspondents include Robert Todd Lincoln, F. Wellington Ruckstull, Nicholas Murray Butler, James B. Townsend, Lawrence F. Abbott, Charles W. Eliot, Frederick R. Coudert, Henry S. Haskell, Robert W. De Forest, and Alfred Mond, British First Commissioner of Works. Also included are copies of letters to Butler, or associates, from John A. Stewart and Arthur James Balfour, and drafts of Butler's letters to colleagues and newspapers supporting the Augustus St. Gaudens statue.</p> |
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| Reel 349, Frame 345-436 | <p>Letters, circa 1917-1922</p> <p>Notes: Includes replies to letters Butler sent soliciting the opinions of members of the Committee on their statue preference, with Butler's tabulation of the replies.</p> <p>Letters are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Ade • James F. (James Franklin) Ailshie • E. A. Alderman • George Burnham, Jr. • Theodore E. (Theodore Elijah) Burton • Colonel Joseph C. Butler, Jr. • George C. Chase • L. R. Cheney • Winston Churchill • William A. Clark • Andrew Cohan • W. H. Cowles • George L. Crossman • J. M. Dickerson • Henry M. Edmonds • Henry W. Farman • William Herbert Perry Faunce • Woodbridge N. Ferris • Austin G. Fox • George Gray • J. P. Greene • Rev. Walter F. Greenman • B. W. Griffith |
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- W. R. Hammond
- Albert Bushnell Hart
- James H. (James Henry) Hawley
- Rev. Edwin Hughes
- R. W. Husted
- Henry C. (Henry Clay) Ide
- Henry B. Judson
- A. R. Kimball
- George W. Marble
- Theodore Marburg
- Josiah Marvel
- Charles Mattison
- J. Horace (John Horace) McFarland
- J. S. Moffatt
- Walter E. Moore
- Henry C. Morris
- H. L. Myers
- John C. Nicholson
- Cyrus Northrup
- Charles S. Osborn
- F. E. Packard
- Robert Treat Paine
- Rt. Rev. James Wolf Pernith
- Gifford Pinchot
- William Polk
- Ira Remsen
- P. M. Rhineland
- Henry N. Snyder
- Francis Lynde Stetson
- F. V. Stevens
- Oscar S. Straus
- George Sutherland
- J. M. Thomas
- Charles Franklin Thwing
- Frank Tomlinson
- Joseph Walker
- Wilber Walker
- Henry Watterson
- Rt. Rev. Cortlandt Whitehead
- George W. Wickersham
- Wardner Williams
- George M. Young

Reel 349, Frame
438-489

Resolutions and reports, circa 1918

Notes:

Includes a National Academy of Design resolution, April 1918, with a discussion by Butler; Fine Arts Federation of New York resolution, April 25, 1918; American Federation of Arts resolution prepared by Butler, with a transcript of the discussion; and a paper, "Argument to prove the lack of authority on the part of the Subcommittee of the American Peace Centenary Committee....," including a chronology of events and discussion.

Reel 349, Frame
490-626

Clippings, circa 1917-1918

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Series 6: Professional Files, 1903-1905

Reel 349, Frame
627-849

Letters relating to Butler's management of Andrew Carnegie's house and property, 1903-1905

Notes: Includes references to the affairs of the Music Hall Company.

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Series 7: Book Projects, 1922-1931

Scope and Contents: This series includes correspondence and editorial material relating to *Painter and Space* by Howard Russell Butler, and published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Reel 349, Frame 850-1058 Correspondence and editorial material, 1922-1931
Notes: Correspondence includes letters from Scribner and J.W. Chapin, Art Editor, concerning costs, proof corrections, and illustrations; contract; and letters from readers. Also included are advertisements, and other distribution material, and notes and articles gathered by Butler on color systems.

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Series 8: Essay, undated

Reel 349, Frame
1059-1064

"Hints on a Method for Outdoor Painting", undated
Notes: Includes an undated essay by Butler.

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Series 9: Professional Files, 1915-1920

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence, essays, letters, and miscellaneous material concerning Butler's professional and political life outside of the art world.

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| Reel 349, Frame 1065-1120 | Miscellaneous material relating to American participation in World War I and the American Security League, 1915-1919 Notes: Includes correspondence, essays, poems, articles, and miscellany relating to American participation in World War I and the American Security League. |
| Reel 349, Frame 1121-1234 | Correspondence and essays relating to the United States entry into the League of Nations and the election of 1920, 1916-1920 Notes: Includes correspondence and Butler's essays and articles supporting the United States' entry into the League of Nations. These include "The Covenant Guttled," "Synopsis of the Covenant of the League of Nations, with comments," and a letter to the editor of the New York Times. |
| Reel 349, Frame 1235-1248 | Letters relating to United States' participation in the World Court, 1925-1928 Notes: Includes letters to United State Senators from Butler as Chairman of the Peace Awards Committee, Princeton Chamber of Commerce, supporting the United States Participation in the World Court. |
| Reel 349, Frame 1249-1300 | Miscellany, circa 1910-1917 Notes: Includes a report on the estate of Henry W. Ranger, July 3, 1917; notes on Theodore Roosevelt's address before the Nobel Prize Committee, May 5, 1910; prospectus for a project for improving the Princeton Inn; and other printed material. |

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Series 10: Writings, circa 1936

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| Reel 89 | "Howard Russell Butler", circa 1936 Notes: Consists of <i>Howard Russell Butler</i> , a published monograph relating to Butler's work and including an appreciation by F. Newlin Price. |
| Reel 93 | Unpublished autobiography, undated Notes: Includes an unpublished autobiography written from a journal kept by Butler. In it Butler records travel impressions in Canada and the U.S. Northwest, Mexico, and Cuba; experiences as agent and executive in the telegraph business; thoughts on acquaintances as an art student in Paris, and artist in New York, including memories of William A. Coffin, Kenyon Cox, George de Forrest Brush, and others; work as founder of the American Fine Arts Society, which introduced him to George Vanderbilt and Andrew Carnegie; and his 10-year association with Carnegie, including various business dealings. |

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Series 11: Letters, 1874-1907

Scope and Contents: Includes letters written by Butler to family and friends from Princeton University, Cuba, Mexico, California, Colorado, and Europe.

Reel 1189, Frame 290-1261 Letters written by Howard Russell Butler to family and friends, 1874-1907

Reel 1190, Frame 1-401 Letters written by Howard Russell Butler to family and friends, 1874-1907

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Series 12: Diaries, 1876-1877

Reel 1190, Frame
402-815

Howard Russell Butler diaries, 1876-1877

Notes: Includes five diaries dating from 1876 to 1877.

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Series 13: Artwork, circa 1888

Reel 1190, Frame
816-825

Study sketches and drawings, circa 1888

Notes: Includes one drawing and two oil sketches after a painting by Titian.

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