



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Betty Carpenter papers, circa 1867-1971, bulk 1927-1963, in the Archives of American Art

Sabine Lipten

The processing of this collection received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

2023 March 24

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Betty Carpenter papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1867-1971 (bulk 1927-1963)
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.carpbett
<b>Creator:</b>	Carpenter, Betty
<b>Extent:</b>	2.8 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of Betty Carpenter measure 2.8 linear feet and date from circa 1867-1971, with the bulk from 1927-1963. The papers document Betty Carpenter's extensive research of John Orne Johnson (J.O.J) Frost and George E. Lothrop, the primitive style painters whose work she collected. Included are: drafts, notes and manuscripts of Carpenter's unpublished book on Frost; primary source material including letters from Frost to his grandchildren, copies of articles by Frost; photographs of Frost, his family and paintings; scrapbooks compiled by Carpenter and Frost, respectively; exhibition catalogs; printed material such as newspaper clippings on Frost and his hometown Marblehead, Massachusetts; notes on George E. Lothrop and photographs of his paintings.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated 1972 by Peter Carpenter.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Sabine Lipten in 2023.

### Preferred Citation

Betty Carpenter Papers, 1867-1971. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Researchers interested in accessing born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Betty Carpenter, was an art historian, biographer and collector from Massachusetts. Her collection comprised the work of Massachusetts folk artists John Orne Johnson and George E. Lothrop. In 1943 Carpenter and her husband began collecting Frost's work from his son Frank Frost. From there Mrs. Carpenter developed friendships with Frost's family and in 1948 she helped arrange an exhibition of Frost's work (along with George Lothrop's) at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

In addition to collecting the work of these two artists, Carpenter gathered primary source material, such as Frost's scrapbooks and diaries, as well as utilizing secondary sources; this, exclusively, in the case of George E. Lothrop on whom information was rather more limited; for the purpose of compiling biographies of the two. After both Carpenter and her husband had died, the art collection was sold at auction and the reposit of the source materials facilitated by an agent of the auction house. The source material, through Parke-Bernet, was eventually given to the Archives.

John Orne Johnson Frost (1852-1928), also known and self referred to as J.O.J Frost, was a self taught artist from Marblehead, Massachusetts. Originally a fisherman and restaurant owner, Frost only began to paint and sculpt at after his first wife Annie Frost's death in 1919. His naive style paintings depict scenes from his youth at sea, and the history of Marblehead and how it developed from its early wilderness beginnings through the American Revolution and the Civil War. George Lothrop (1967-1939), was from Dighton, Massachusetts and also began painting later in life. Lothrop was highly interested in poetry and theater, but by trade worked as a wood carpenter at a piano factory where he would carve frames for many of his paintings. He held a second job as a night security guard at the Howard Watch Company, which is where he did most of his painting. Many of his works are of fanciful or mythical scenes in oil.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of Betty Carpenter measure 2.8 linear feet and date from circa 1867-1971, with the bulk from 1927-1963. The papers document Betty Carpenter's extensive research of John Orne Johnson Frost and George E. Lothrop, the primitive style painters whose work she collected. Materials included are correspondence related to Carpenter as well as the Frost Family. Betty Carpenter's letters are with museums, historical societies, publishers, and writers regarding the selling, loaning, book planning and exhibiting of art work by J.O.J Frost and George Lothrop. There are also letters from the Frost family to Carpenter discussing both J.O.J Frost's life as well as matters of Carpenter's personal friendship with the family. The Frost Family correspondence is comprised of letters from J.O.J Frost to his granddaughters Ethelyn Frost Flagg and Irena Frost Greatorex as well as letters from J.O.J Frost's son Frank A. Frost to his daughter Ethelyn; and miscellaneous letters to J.O.J Frost. Writings primarily consist of manuscripts and notes related to catalogs and an unpublished biography on Frost that Carpenter was working on. Additional writings include essays and notes by J.O.J Frost, biographical notes on George Lothrop and notes on American folk art. Also found are exhibition files; personal business records such as expense receipts and documentation of a probate court trial related to the ownership of some of Frost's work; scrapbooks respectively compiled by Carpenter and Frost. Printed material such as newspaper clippings and exhibition ephemera, photographs and negatives of Frost, his home and artwork as well as photographs and negatives of Lothrop's paintings. Additionally, there is an artwork series which contains 35 figurative pencil sketches signed "IL Prado", an unidentified pen and ink sketch and a pen sketch sent to Carpenter on an unsigned postcard.

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## Arrangement

The Collection is arranged as eight series. Glass plate negatives are housed separately and closed to researchers.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1912-1968 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 2: Writings, circa 1868-1966 (1.1 Linear feet: Box 1-2)
- Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1948-1949 (1 Folder: Box 2)
- Series 4: Personal Business, 1943-1964 (6 Folders: Box 2)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1902-1971 (0.5 Linear feet: Box 2)
- Series 6: Scrapbooks, circa 1868-1954 (0.5 Linear feet: Box 3)
- Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1852-1965 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 3-4, MGP4)
- Series 8: Artwork, circa 1939-1950 (2 Folders: Box 4)

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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:

Art -- Collectors and collecting  
Folk art  
Marine painting  
Primitivism in art -- United States  
Women art historians

### Types of Materials:

Scrapbooks

### Names:

Frost, J. O. J. (John Orne Johnson), 1852-1928  
Lothrop, George E., Jr.

### Occupations:

Art historians -- Massachusetts  
Biographers -- Massachusetts  
Collectors -- Massachusetts

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Correspondence, 1912-1968

#### 0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Betty Carpenter's correspondence is primarily with museums, historical societies, publishers, and writers regarding the selling, loaning, book planning and exhibiting of art work by J.O.J Frost and George Lothrop. Included are a few handwritten copies or drafts of her outgoing letters. Carpenter's regular correspondence is followed by letters from the Frost family to Carpenter discussing both J.O.J Frost's life as well as matters of Carpenter's personal friendship with the family. Also found are letters related to appraisal of Carpenter's personal collection of artwork. The Frost Family correspondence is comprised of letters from J.O.J Frost to his granddaughters Ethelyn Frost Flagg and Irena Frost Greatorex as well as letters from J.O.J Frost's son Frank A. Frost to his daughter Ethelyn; and miscellaneous letters to J.O.J Frost.

#### Betty Carpenter Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 1	A, circa 1940-1955
Box 1, Folder 2	B, 1951-1966
Box 1, Folder 3	C, circa 1955-1964
Box 1, Folder 4	D, circa 1947-1959
Box 1, Folder 5	E, 1950-1959
Box 1, Folder 6	Ethelyn Frost Flagg to Betty Carpenter, 1947-1957
Box 1, Folder 7	Frank J. Frost to Betty Carpenter, 1946-1947
Box 1, Folder 8	Marguerite Frost to Betty Carpenter, circa 1955-1956
Box 1, Folder 9	Sadie Frost to Betty Carpenter, 1946-1953
Box 1, Folder 10	F, 1955-1964
Box 1, Folder 11	G, circa 1947-1964
Box 1, Folder 12	H, 1945-1966
Box 1, Folder 13	Margot Johnson, 1950-1968
Box 1, Folder 14	Louis C. Jones, 1955-1964

Box 1, Folder 15	J, 1949-1964
Box 1, Folder 16	K, 1947-1962
Box 1, Folder 17	L, circa 1942-1966
Box 1, Folder 18	Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1941-1959
Box 1, Folder 19	M, circa 1940-1967
Box 1, Folder 20	N, 1947-1965
Box 1, Folder 21	Betty Parsons, 1964-1965
Box 1, Folder 22	John Alexander Pope, 1945-1955
Box 1, Folder 23	P, 1943-1961
Box 1, Folder 24	R, circa 1950-1959
Box 1, Folder 25	Grace Kellog Smith, 1955
Box 1, Folder 26	S, circa 1946-1959
Box 1, Folder 27	V, 1946, 1949
Box 1, Folder 28	W, 1947-1966
Box 1, Folder 29	Miscellaneous, Last Name Unsigned, circa 1955-1965
Frost Family Correspondence	
Box 1, Folder 30	Letters from J.O.J Frost to Ethelyn Frost Flagg, circa 1919-1928
Box 1, Folder 31	Letters from J.O.J Frost to Irena Frost Greatorex, 1924
Box 1, Folder 32	Copies of Letters from J.O.J Frost to Ethelyn Frost Flagg and Irena Frost Greatorex, circa 1924-1928
Box 1, Folder 33	Letters from Frank A. Frost to Ethelyn Frost Flagg, 1912-1941
Box 1, Folder 34	Miscellaneous Letters to J.O.J Frost, 1921-1926

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## Series 2: Writings, circa 1868-1966

### 1.1 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Writings primarily consist of manuscripts and notes related to catalogs and an unpublished biography on Frost that Carpenter was working on. Included are edited drafts of book chapters and accompanying notes, as well as research notes on Frost's life, book planning notes, detailed captions for artwork that were to be included, and an outline of a catalog of his work. Also found is a notebook from Frost, along with diary entries, essays by Frost on Marblehead, Massachusetts and life as a fisherman, and in memoriam writings by his son Frank and granddaughter Evelyn. Additional writings include biographical notes on George Lothrop and notes on American folk art.

Box 1, Folder 35	J.O.J Frost Notebook Containing Catalog of Paintings, circa 1919-1928
Box 1, Folder 36	J.O.J Frost Frost Diary Excerpts, circa 1868-1869
Box 1, Folder 37	Essays to the Marblehead Messenger from J.O.J Frost, circa 1921-1928
Box 1, Folder 38	"Frost's Paintings Tell Marblehead History" Lecture by J.O.J Frost, 1921
Box 1, Folder 39	"Description of The Murals in J.O.J Frost's Kitchen at 11 Pond Street" Interview with J.O.J Frost by George Damon, circa 1927-1928
Box 1, Folder 40	"A Fadeless Picture" Memorial Poem by Ethelyn Frost Flagg, circa 1928
Box 1, Folder 41	"Memorial to Fisherman of Marblehead" Obituary By Frank A. Frost, circa 1928
Box 1, Folder 42	Frost Family Genealogy Notes, circa 1950-1963
Box 1, Folder 43	Lists of Paintings by J.O.J Frost, circa 1948
Box 1, Folder 44	Notebook Containing Lists of Frost Paintings at the Lee Mansion, 1962
Box 1, Folder 45	Betty Carpenter Lecture Drafts and Notes on J.O.J Frost, circa 1947-1954
Box 1, Folder 46	"The Life Sketch of A Unique Character in a Unique Town" Biography of John Orne Johnson Frost Manuscript, circa 1928
Box 1, Folder 47	"John O.J. Frost: Marblehead Painter-Chronicler" by Betty Carpenter Partial Manuscript, circa 1955
Box 1, Folder 48	Frost Catalog Layout Draft, circa 1948-1955
Box 1, Folder 49	Frost Catalog Painting Captions and Notes, circa 1948-1955
Box 1, Folder 50	Essay Drafts on J.O.J Frost's Scrapbooks, circa 1948-1963
Box 1, Folder 51	Biographical Notes on J.O.J Frost, circa 1947-1955



## J.O.J Frost Book Chapter Notes and Drafts

Box 1, Folder 52	"Biography", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 53	"Preface to Critical Writings About Frost", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 54	"Early Life", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 55	"The Compass", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 56	"Discovery of J.O.J Frost", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 57	"Off to the Grand Banks", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 58	"After Annie's Death", circa 1955-1963
Box 1, Folder 59	"Last Chapter", circa 1955-1963
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Miscellaneous Chapters, circa 1955-1963
Box 2, Folder 3	Annotated Copy of Catalog Printed by J.O.J Frost (1926), circa 1948-1963
Box 2, Folder 4	Notes on J.O.J Frost's Paintings, circa 1955-1964
Box 2, Folder 5	Research Materials for J.O.J Frost Book, 1962
Box 2, Folder 6	Dedication List of Names for J.O.J Frost Book, circa 1955-1963
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Miscellaneous Notes on J.O.J Frost for Book, circa 1955-1963
Box 2, Folder 9	Biographical Notes on George Lothrop, circa 1948-1952
Box 2, Folder 10	Article Research Notes on Lothrop, circa 1952-1963
Box 2, Folder 11	American Primitive Art and George Lothrop Article Draft, circa 1952-1963
Box 2, Folder 12	"George Lothrop, Yankee Limner" Article by Barbara B. Walker, 1952
Box 2, Folder 13	Miscellaneous Notes on George Lothrop, circa 1959-1966
Box 2, Folder 14	"An Art Dealer is Intrigued by American Folk Art" Talk Transcript given by Albert Duveen, circa 1961

Box 2, Folder 15

Miscellaneous Notes, circa 1940-1955

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## Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1948-1949

### 1 Folder (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: The Exhibition Files series documents a joint exhibition of Frost and Lothrop's work organized by Carpenter. Materials include scrapbook pages of clippings, correspondence with the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston related to the planning of the exhibition, and loan records.

Box 2, Folder 16	Exhibition of Two New England "Primitives", Frost and Lothrop (Nov.18 - Dec.12, 1948), The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1948-1949
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## Series 4: Personal Business, 1943-1964

### 6 Folders (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Personal Business includes expense receipts and notes related to Carpenter's research on Frost as well as personal expenses. Also found are insurance policies for Carpenter's collection of Frost and Lothrop artwork and loan and sale receipts of artwork. Additionally there are records including correspondence and notes related to the probate court case the Carpenters were involved in regarding the ownership of Frost's painting. A copy of Sadie Frost, J.O.J's second wife's will is also found in this series.

Box 2, Folder 17	Painting Sales and Loan Receipts, 1943-1952
Box 2, Folder 18	J.O.J Frost Research Expenses, 1954
Box 2, Folder 19	J.O.J Frost and George Lothrop Artwork Insurance Policies, 1955-1962
Box 2, Folder 20	Carpenter Personal Expense Receipts, 1948-1964
Box 2, Folder 21	Estate of Frank Frost vs. Mason Jr. Et al. Probate Court Case, 1955-1957
Box 2, Folder 22	Copy of Sadie Frost's Will, 1954

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## Series 5: Printed Material, 1902-1971

### 0.5 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials include newspaper and magazine clippings, exhibition announcements, catalogs and a book about Marblehead, Massachusetts that mentions Frost's first wife Annie Frost. Clippings document J.O.J Frost's career and life; Marblehead, Massachusetts; American folk art and primitive art and miscellanea. Printed material related to George Lothrop include a group exhibition catalog featuring two of Lothrop's paintings and a solo exhibition poster.

Box 2, Folder 23	Articles about J.O.J Frost by Harry Wilkinson for Northshore Breeze and Reminder Magazine, 1926-1929
Box 2, Folder 24	Magazine Clippings, J.O.J Frost, 1954-1956
Box 2, Folder 25	Marblehead Messenger Newspaper Columns Written by J.O.J Frost, circa 1921-1928
Box 2, Folder 26	Marblehead Messenger Newspaper Columns About J.O.J Frost, 1927-1928  Newspaper Clippings
Box 2, Folder 27	J.O.J Frost, circa 1948-1971
Box 2, Folder 28	Frost Probate Court Case, 1956-1957
Box 2, Folder 29	Marblehead, Massachusetts, circa 1924-1960
Box 2, Folder 30	Excerpts from "The History and Traditions of Marblehead" by Samuel Roads Jr. in The Marblehead Messenger Newspaper, 1956-1958
Box 2, Folder 31	Folk Art, circa 1954-1962
Box 2, Folder 32	Arthur Heintzelman, 1958, 1965
Box 2, Folder 33	Miscellaneous, 1956-1963
Box 2, Folder 34	J.O.J Frost Exhibition Catalogs, circa 1954
Box 2, Folder 35	J.O.J Frost Exhibition Announcements and Flyers, 1924-1956
Box 2, Folder 36	J.O.J Frost Painting Postcards, circa 1955-1965
Box 2, Folder 37	An Old Marblehead Garden book by Elijah Bruce, 1902
Box 2, Folder 38	George Lothrop Exhibition Catalog, 1942
Box 2, Folder 39	George Lothrop Exhibition Poster, circa 1948-1963

Box 2, Folder 40	Primitive Art Catalogs, circa 1954-1955
Box 2, Folder 41	Boston Society of Independent Artists Annual Exhibition Catalogs, 1929, 1938-1939
Box 2, Folder 42	Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1946-1970

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## Series 6: Scrapbooks, circa 1868-1954

### 0.5 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: The Scrapbook series contains scrapbooks of clippings compiled by Carpenter on Frost as well as scrapbooks created by Frost. Frost's scrapbooks document the experiences of fishermen, living in Marblehead, Massachusetts, his family and American history he was interested in such as the Civil War and the relationship between Native Americans and settlers of early Marblehead. Also found are photocopies of some pages of Frost's scrapbooks.

Box 3, Folder 1	Betty Carpenter Scrapbook of News Clippings, circa 1940-1954
Box 3, Folder 2	Betty Carpenter Disbound Scrapbook of News Clippings, circa 1940-1954
Box 3, Folder 3-5	J.O.J Frost Scrapbooks of News Clippings, Photographs, Notes and Drawings, circa 1868-1928

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## Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1852-1965

### 0.4 Linear feet (Box 3, MGP4)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material contains photographs, slides and negatives of J.O.J Frost and George Lothrop's artwork. Also found are photographs of Frost, his home and studio, one of his granddaughter Ethelyn Frost Flagg and citizens of Marblehead MA. There are also two glass plate negatives of a rock sculpture Frost built called the "Musical Rocks".

Box 3, Folder 8-10	Photographs of J.O.J Frost Artwork, circa 1955-1965
Box 4, Folder 1-2	Photographs of J.O.J Frost Artwork, circa 1955-1965
Box 4, Folder 3	J.O.J Frost Exhibition Photographs, circa 1945-1955
Box 4, Folder 4	Photographs of J.O.J Frost, circa 1852-1928
Box 4, Folder 5	Photographs of J.O.J Frost's Home and Studio, circa 1890s, 1945-1955
Box 4, Folder 6	Photographs of Ethelyn Frost Flagg, circa 1918-1928
Box 4, Folder 7	Photographs of Citizens of Marblehead, Massachusetts, circa 1867-1928
Box 4, Folder 8	Slides of J.O.J Frost's Artwork, circa 1955-1965
Box 4, Folder 9	Negatives of J.O.J Frost's Artwork, circa 1955-1965
Box 4, Folder 10	Photographs of George Lothrop Paintings, circa 1952-1963
Item MGP4	Glass Plate Negative of "Musical Rocks" sculpture, circa 1915-1928
Item MGP4	Glass Plate Negative of "Musical Rocks" sculpture, circa 1915-1928
Box 4, Folder 11	Slides of George Lothrop Paintings, circa 1952-1963
Box 4, Folder 12	Negatives of George Lothrop Paintings, circa 1952-1963

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## Series 8: Artwork, circa 1939-1950

### 2 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: The artwork series contains 35 figurative pencil sketches signed "Il Prado", an unidentified pen and ink sketch and a pen sketch sent to Carpenter on an unsigned postcard.

Box 4, Folder 13	Pencil Sketches, circa 1939-1942
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Box 4, Folder 14	Pen and Ink Sketches, circa 1950
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