



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Alson Skinner Clark Papers, 1870-1971, bulk 1890-1940, in the Archives of American Art

Kimberley Henze

Glass plate negatives in this collection were digitized in 2019  
with funding provided by the Smithsonian Women's Committee.

2015 May 26

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Alson Skinner Clark papers
<b>Date:</b>	1870-1971 (bulk 1890-1940)
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.claralso
<b>Creator:</b>	Clark, Alson Skinner, 1876-1949
<b>Extent:</b>	7.2 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter and muralist Alson Skinner Clark measure 7.2 linear feet and date from 1870 to 1971, with the bulk of the material from 1890 to 1940. Clark's career is documented through biographical material; correspondence with family, friends, galleries, and dealers; eleven diaries by the artist as well as 16 by his wife Medora Clark; stories and essays by Medora; financial records and business files of art and civilian concerns; assorted printed material including exhibition catalogs and announcements, maps, news clippings (singly and in scrapbooks), advertisements, and ephemera; and photographs of the artist, his friends and family, studio, travels, and artwork.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The 1897 diary, sales notebook, glass negatives, and albums of negatives were donated in 1986 by Joseph Moure, an art historian who purchased the material from occupants of Clark's former studio. The remainder was donated by Clark's son, Alson Clark, in 1989, 1991, 1992, and 1997 and by Clark's grandniece, Deborah Clark, in 2006.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared in 2015 by intern Kimberley Henze.

### Preferred Citation

Alson Skinner Clark papers, 1870-1962, bulk 1890-1940. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Alson Skinner Clark (1876-1949) was a painter and muralist who travelled and worked in Europe, Mexico, Canada, Panama, and the United States, ultimately settling in southern California.

Clark was born in Chicago, Illinois, and began training in 1891 at the age of 11 at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1896 he studied under William Merritt Chase at the Art Students' League of New York and briefly at the Chase School of Art before moving to Paris to train with James Abbott McNeill Whistler at the Academia Carmen in 1898. Alongside his wife, Medora (married 1902), Clark travelled extensively, painting the landscapes and urban activity of Chicago, New York, Quebec, France, Dalmatia, and Spain.

In 1913, Clark journeyed to Panama to document the construction of the canal, and in 1919, after serving as a military photographer in World War I, he settled in Pasadena, California, where he adopted the landscapes and colonial architecture of Mexico and the American West as subjects en plein air. It was during this time that Clark began to take on work as a muralist, accepting commissions from the local bank and theatre while also embarking on a teaching career at Occidental College and eventually the Stickney Memorial School of Fine Arts, where he served as director.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and muralist Alson Skinner Clark measure 7.2 linear feet and date from 1870 to 1971, with the bulk of the material from 1890 to 1940. Clark's career is documented through biographical material; correspondence with family, friends, galleries, and dealers; eleven diaries by the artist as well as 16 by his wife Medora Clark; stories and essays by Medora; financial records and business files of art and civilian concerns; assorted printed material including exhibition catalogs and announcements, maps, news clippings (singly and in scrapbooks), advertisements, and ephemera; and photographs of the artist, his friends and family, studio, travels, and artwork.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 9 series. Glass plate negatives are housed separately and not served to researchers.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1890-1958 (Box 1; 6 folders)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1895-1962 (Boxes 1-2; 1.7 linear feet)
- Series 3: Diaries, 1889-1922 (Boxes 2-4; 1.5 linear feet)
- Series 4: Writings, circa 1900-1962 (Boxes 4-5; 0.9 linear feet)
- Series 5: Personal Business Records, 1889-1930 (Boxes 5, 8; 0.7 linear feet)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1890-1971 (Boxes 5-6; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 7: Artwork, circa 1910-1920 (Box 6; 2 folders)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1885-1935 (Boxes 6, 8, 9; 1.6 linear feet)
- Series 9: Scrapbooks, 1902-1955 (Boxes 7, 8; 0.5 linear feet)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Artists' studios -- Photographs
- Landscape painting
- Mural painting and decoration, American
- Painting, American

### Types of Materials:

- Diaries
- Glass negatives
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

### Names:

- Clark, Medora

### Occupations:

- Painters -- California

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1890-1958

#### 6 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series contains scattered biographical documents. Found here are legal documents of citizenship, driving, and parking papers; miscellaneous biographical material, including a recipe, address list, and Chicago social organization roster; documents from Medora Clark's membership in a Pasadena society club; and the typewritten and annotated transcript in two drafts of Margaret Truax Hunter's oral history interview with Medora Clark in 1956.

Box 1, Folder 1	Legal Papers, 1913-1958
Box 1, Folder 2	Miscellaneous Biographical Material, circa 1890
Box 1, Folder 3	Town Club Membership Material, Medora Clark, 1925-1960
Box 1, Folder 4	Transcript of Oral History Interview with Medora Clark, Part 1, 2nd Draft, 1956
Box 1, Folder 5	Transcript of Oral History Interview with Medora Clark, Part 2, 1st Draft, 1956
Box 1, Folder 6	Transcript of Oral History Interview with Medora Clark, Part 2, 2nd Draft, 1956

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1895-1962

### 1.7 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence includes mostly personal exchanges with family and friends, but professional communications with galleries and dealers are also interspersed. Correspondence between Clark and his wife Medora constitute a large share of the series, with a significant body of letters from Clark's time as a military photographer in World War I (1917-1919).

Family correspondence is primarily with the artist's mother Sarah Clark during the artist's travels abroad and after settling in California in 1919. The artist's brothers, Mancel Talcott Clark and Edwin Hill Clark, are also represented. Fellow artist and good friend Rufus Dreyer appears in correspondence from Paris in 1917.

Correspondence with Amelia (Mela) Baker, a family friend since childhood, includes letters (sometimes illustrated) and postcards from Clark, his brothers, his mother, and Medora from 1895 to 1910.

Box 1, Folder 7-31	Correspondence with Amelia Baker, 1895-1910
Box 1, Folder 32-33	General Correspondence, undated, circa 1895-1950
Box 1, Folder 34-39	General Correspondence, 1870-1915
Box 2, Folder 1-21	General Correspondence, 1916-1962
Box 2, Folder 22	Miscellaneous Envelopes, 1897-1916

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## Series 3: Diaries, 1889-1922

### 1.5 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4)

**Scope and Contents:** This series contains 11 diaries belonging to Alson Skinner Clark and 16 belonging to his wife Medora. Of interest are Clark's diaries from his first tour of Europe as a 13-year-old (1889); accounts of activities in the Art Students' League and the Chase School of Art (1897 and 1898); and entries from his time as a military photographer (1918). Medora's travel diaries include anecdotes and descriptions of the people and places the couple visited on their European travels (circa 1904-1909).

**Arrangement:** The series is arranged as 2 subseries.

- 3.1: Diaries of Alson Skinner Clark
- 3.2: Diaries of Medora Clark

### Subseries 3.1: Diaries of Alson Skinner Clark, 1889-1922

Box 2, Folder 23	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, May-July 1889
Box 2, Folder 24	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, July-November 1889
Box 2, Folder 25	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1894
Box 2, Folder 26	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1897
Box 2, Folder 27	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1898
Box 3, Folder 1	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1899
Box 3, Folder 2	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1900
Box 3, Folder 3	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1902
Box 3, Folder 4	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, November 1917-January 1918
Box 3, Folder 5	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1918
Box 3, Folder 6	Diary of Alson Skinner Clark, 1919-1922

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### Subseries 3.2: Diaries of Medora Clark, 1891-1915

Box 3, Folder 7	Diary of Medora Clark, 1891-1892
Box 3, Folder 8	Diary of Medora Clark, 1902
Box 3, Folder 9	Diary of Medora Clark, 1903
Box 3, Folder 10	Diary of Medora Clark, 1904



Box 3, Folder 11	Diary of Medora Clark, 1905
Box 3, Folder 12	Diary of Medora Clark, 1906
Box 3, Folder 13	Diary of Medora Clark, 1907
Box 3, Folder 14	Diary of Medora Clark, 1908
Box 4, Folder 1	Diary of Medora Clark, 1910
Box 4, Folder 2	Diary of Medora Clark, 1911
Box 4, Folder 3	Diary of Medora Clark, 1912
Box 4, Folder 4	Diary of Medora Clark, 1914
Box 4, Folder 5	Diary of Medora Clark, 1915
Box 4, Folder 6	Travel Diary of Dalmatia and Venice, circa 1904
Box 4, Folder 7	Travel Diary of Malaga and Grenada, circa 1909
Box 4, Folder 8	Travel Diary of Spain, circa 1909

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## Series 4: Writings, circa 1900-1962

### 0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 4-5)

Scope and Contents: Writings are by Medora Clark and include notes and notebooks of drafts and story ideas as well as typewritten fiction short stories, nonfiction essays, and poems that she submitted to magazines for publication. Of interest are Medora's accounts of her visit with Clark to the Panama Canal and her ruminations on art and art viewing.

Box 4, Folder 9	Notebook, undated
Box 4, Folder 10	Notebook, undated
Box 4, Folder 11	Notebook, circa 1917
Box 4, Folder 12	Notebook, "Art, My Wiggly Tooth, M. Seguin's Goat", undated
Box 4, Folder 13	Notebook, "The Buying Public", undated
Box 4, Folder 14	Notebook, "London in Seven Days", undated
Box 4, Folder 15	Notebook, "Samplers, Canadian Story, Rochefort", circa 1902-1910
Box 4, Folder 16	Notebook, "Shipboard Story, en route to Tropics", circa 1913
Box 4, Folder 17	Notes, Miscellaneous, undated
Box 4, Folder 18	Fiction, "After-Glow", circa 1921
Box 4, Folder 19	Fiction, "Aftermath of a Drought", circa 1960
Box 4, Folder 20	Fiction, "Un Aperitif", circa 1908
Box 4, Folder 21	Fiction, "A Bit of Desiccated Cloisonne", undated
Box 4, Folder 22	Fiction, "A Breton Mutiny", circa 1908
Box 4, Folder 23	Fiction, "Casarabonela", undated
Box 4, Folder 24	Fiction, "A Chevrolet Flying", undated
Box 4, Folder 25	Fiction, "Connecticut", undated
Box 4, Folder 26	Fiction, "Consequences", undated
Box 4, Folder 27	Fiction, "The Court of LeRay de Chaumont", undated
Box 4, Folder 28	Fiction, "A Day of Court Life in Paris", undated

Box 4, Folder 29	Fiction, "The Drums", circa 1905-1915
Box 4, Folder 30	Fiction, "The Fields of Pemzec", circa 1908
Box 4, Folder 31	Fiction, "The Green Bottle", circa 1905-1915
Box 4, Folder 32	Fiction, "The Happiness Kit", undated
Box 4, Folder 33	Fiction, "The Highway" (Three Versions), undated
Box 4, Folder 34	Fiction, "The Highway" Notes, undated
Box 4, Folder 35-37	Fiction, "The Highway" Working Drafts, undated
Box 4, Folder 38	Fiction, "Jack's Ghost Story", circa 1900
Box 4, Folder 39	Fiction, "The Lion in Captivity", circa 1908
Box 4, Folder 40	Fiction, "Milady's Retainer" (Incomplete), circa 1905-1915
Box 4, Folder 41	Fiction, "The Moment," Acts I, II, and III, undated
Box 4, Folder 42	Fiction, "The Moment," Act I (Two Versions), undated
Box 4, Folder 43	Fiction, "The Moment," Act II, undated
Box 4, Folder 44	Fiction, "The Moment," Act III (Two Versions), undated
Box 4, Folder 45	Fiction, "The Pasterijica", undated
Box 4, Folder 46	Fiction, "Peacock and Almonds", circa 1905-1915
Box 5, Folder 1	Fiction, "People" (Two Versions), undated
Box 5, Folder 2	Fiction, "The Release of the Lizards", circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 3	Fiction, "Reproaches to a Work-Table", circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 4	Fiction, "A Successful Experiment", undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Fiction, "Sunspots", undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Fiction, "Torbas" (Three Versions), undated
Box 5, Folder 7	Fiction, "Tumorius", circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 8	Fiction, "Two Afternoons in the Woods", circa 1908

Box 5, Folder 9	Fiction, "Two Irish Anecdotes", circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 10	Fiction, "Two Legends of Trecessions" (Two Versions), undated
Box 5, Folder 11	Fiction, "Within the Gates" (Three Versions), circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 12	Fiction, "The Yellow Helmet", undated
Box 5, Folder 13	Nonfiction, "Breton Life", circa 1910
Box 5, Folder 14	Nonfiction, "Breton Slide Lecture", circa 1910
Box 5, Folder 15	Nonfiction, "Defense Against Disaster", undated
Box 5, Folder 16	Nonfiction, "Early Settlers of Jefferson County, New York", undated
Box 5, Folder 17	Nonfiction, "The Fourth in Brittany", circa 1905
Box 5, Folder 18	Nonfiction, "French Art" (Incomplete), circa 1908
Box 5, Folder 19	Nonfiction, "How to Look at Pictures", undated
Box 5, Folder 20	Nonfiction, "Letter to Century Magazine Regarding 'Our Barbarous Fourth'", 1908
Box 5, Folder 21	Nonfiction, Miscellaneous, undated
Box 5, Folder 22	Nonfiction, "A Painter in Panama", 1913
Box 5, Folder 23	Nonfiction, "The Real Bohemia", undated
Box 5, Folder 24	Nonfiction, "Smells", undated
Box 5, Folder 25	Nonfiction, Untitled Essay, undated
Box 5, Folder 26	Nonfiction, "The Zone from A Woman's Point of View" (Two Versions), circa 1915
Box 5, Folder 27	Poems, circa 1908-1962

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## Series 5: Personal Business Records, 1889-1930

### 0.7 Linear feet (Boxes 5, 8)

**Scope and Contents:** This series contains financial and occupational documents related to art materials, memberships, sales, and shipping, as well as non-art transactions, such as hotel and restaurant receipts, home and car purchases, and invoices for leisure and material goods. Mailing lists include museums as well as private buyers.

Inventories of artwork, including sales records and exhibition submissions, are represented in a card file inventory, notebooks, and a sales list. These inventories furnish information on the title, size, date, canvas, place of origin, varnish, exhibition history, and buyer (when applicable). Additionally, the sales notebook and sales list include small black and white photographs of artworks.

Box 5, Folder 28	Bills and Receipts, Art Related, 1914-1928
Box 5, Folder 29	Bills and Receipts, Non-Art Related, 1907-1927
Box 5, Folder 30	Card File Inventory of Clark's Paintings, circa 1903-1911 (shoebox)
Box 5, Folder 31	Hotel and Restaurant Receipts, 1889
Box 5, Folder 32	Mailing Lists, circa 1915
Box 5, Folder 33-35	Sales Notebook, circa 1915-1930
Box 5, Folder 36	Submission Notebook, 1905-1914
Box 8, Folder 1	Oversized Sales List with Images, circa 1915

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## Series 6: Printed Material, 1890-1971

### 0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 5-6)

Scope and Contents: This series contains a Victoria and Albert Museum Accession Catalog from 1913; a *Popular Monthly* article on photography by Lawrence Fletcher, Ph.D.; exhibition announcements and catalogs; two pre-World War I maps of France and Brussels; arts and civil membership and association materials; miscellaneous ephemera, including a theatre program and tickets, ration notes, art material advertisements, and a Grand Canyon tour brochure; news clippings on the arts and Clark; and unmarked postcards of European landmarks and American laborers.

Box 5, Folder 37	Accession Catalog, 1913
Box 5, Folder 38	Article, "A Talk About Photography", 1890
Box 5, Folder 39	Exhibition Announcements, circa 1920-1930
Box 5, Folder 40	<a href="#">Exhibition Catalogs, 1910-1971</a>
Box 5, Folder 41	Maps, circa 1910
Box 5, Folder 42	Memberships and Associations, 1915-1946
Box 5, Folder 43	Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1912-1957
Box 5, Folder 44	News Clippings, circa 1909-1937
Box 6, Folder 1	Postcards, undated

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## Series 7: Artwork, circa 1910-1920

### 2 Folders (Box 6)

Scope and Contents: Artwork includes two pencil landscape drawings, labeled "Conquest of California by Sloat at Monterey" and "Gold Discovery;" one colored pencil figure drawing; and two small watercolor figure sketches, labeled "Uncle 'Al'" and "Madam's Assistant." Also found here is a pen and ink diagram of the Panama Canal.

Box 6, Folder 2            Pencil and Watercolor Studies, circa 1910-1920

Box 6, Folder 3            Profile of Panama Canal, 1913

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## Series 8: Photographs, circa 1885-1935

### 1.6 Linear feet (Boxes 6, 8, 9)

**Scope and Contents:** Found here are personal photographs of the artist, his friends and family, his Pasadena home and Palm Springs studio circa 1930, and his travels in Mexico and the American West. There is also a set of five cabinet cards of theatre portraits and the *Treasure Island* set that Clark designed for the Pasadena Playhouse. Photographs of artwork consist mostly of Clark's paintings but also include reproduced engravings of California circa 1850 (filed in Photographs of Artwork, The West) and Alfred Maurer's portraits.

Negatives from the artist's personal albums contain mostly travel images of Rochefort (circa 1907), Quebec/New York (circa 1908), and the American West (circa 1919), and are accompanied by indices. Glass plate negatives document the artist's family, artwork, and Southern California landscapes. These images can be seen in the contact sheets enclosed in this series. Oversized photographs include eight "California Club" portrait paintings, two images of a mural for Polytechnic Elementary School in Pasadena, and one photograph of a screen painted for Dalzell Wilson's home in Pasadena.

**Available Formats:** Glass plate negatives have been scanned.

Box 6, Folder 4	Alson Skinner Clark, circa 1915-1918
Box 6, Folder 5	Friends and Family, circa 1910s-1930s
Box 6, Folder 6	Home and Studio, circa 1930
Box 6, Folder 7	Theatre Cabinet Cards, circa 1885-1900
Box 6, Folder 8	Travel, circa 1915-1930
Box 6, Folder 9	Treasure Island Set Design, circa 1926
Box 6, Folder 10	Photographs of Artwork by Alfred Maurer, 1925
Box 6, Folder 11	Photographs of Artwork, California, 1920s
Box 6, Folder 12	Photographs of Artwork, Chicago, Quebec, New York, 1904-1906
Box 6, Folder 13	Photographs of Artwork, Circle Theatre, circa 1926
Box 6, Folder 14-15	Photographs of Artwork, European Paintings, 1904-1912
Box 6, Folder 16	Photographs of Artwork, Figure Paintings and Still Lifes, 1904-1934
Box 6, Folder 17-20	Photographs of Artwork, Landscape Paintings, circa 1910-1925
Box 6, Folder 21-25	Photographs of Artwork, Mexico, circa 1920-1935



Box 6, Folder 26	Photographs of Artwork, Miscellaneous, 1900s-1920s
Box 6, Folder 27-28	Photographs of Artwork, Panama, circa 1913
Box 6, Folder 29	Photographs of Artwork, Pasadena First Trust and Savings Bank, 1928-1929
Box 6, Folder 30-31	Photographs of Artwork, Spain, 1909-1910
Box 6, Folder 32	Photographs of Artwork, The West, circa 1920-1930
Box 6, Folder 33	Film Negatives, Album A (Rochefort), circa 1907
Box 6, Folder 34	Film Negatives, Album B (Quebec), circa 1908
Box 6, Folder 35	Film Negatives, Album C (The West), 1919
Box 6, Folder 36	Film Negatives, Album Indices, circa 1907-1919
Box 6, Folder 37	Film Negatives, Miscellaneous, circa 1910-1935
Box 6, Folder 38-39	Contact Sheets of Glass Plate Negatives, circa 1920-1930
Box 8, Folder 2	Oversized Photographs of Artwork, circa 1920-1933
Box 9	<a href="#">Glass Plate Negatives, circa 1920-1930</a> Notes: see copy prints in Box 6, Folders 38-39

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## Series 9: Scrapbooks, 1902-1955

*0.5 Linear feet (Boxes 7, 8)*

Scope and Contents: This series contains three news clipping scrapbooks of articles and images documenting Clark and his work. Pieces of correspondence, exhibition literature, and miscellaneous ephemera are interspersed.

Box 7, Folder 1-4	Scrapbook, 1909-1925
Box 7, Folder 5-9	Scrapbook, 1923-1955
Box 8, Folder 3	Oversized Scrapbook, 1902-1913

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