



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Elizabeth Campbell Fisher
Clay papers, circa 1873-circa 2015, bulk
1890-1930, in the Archives of American Art

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2016 August 2

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay papers
Identifier:	AAA.clayeliz
Date:	circa 1873-circa 2015 (bulk 1890-1930)
Extent:	1.9 Linear feet 0.057 Gigabytes
Creator:	Clay, Elizabeth Campbell Fisher, 1871-1959
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of Massachusetts lithographer and etcher Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay measure 1.9 linear feet and 0.057 GB and date from circa 1873 to circa 2015, with the bulk of materials from 1890 to 1930. This collection includes biographical materials, correspondence, writings, fifteen diaries, six travel diaries, teaching files, artwork, printed materials, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated to the Archives of American Art in 2015 by Harriet Fisher Bemus, Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay's daughter.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Rihoko Ueno in August, 2016. Born-digital materials were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2019 with funding provided by the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund.

Preferred Citation

Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay papers, circa 1873-circa 2015, bulk 1890-1930. 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. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

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Biographical / Historical

Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay (1871-1959) was a lithographer and etcher who worked in Massachusetts and Halifax, England.

Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay was born in West Dedham, Massachusetts in 1871. Her parents were Joseph and Mary Elizabeth Fisher and she had 2 siblings, Hattie and Joseph. Clay graduated from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1892. She then attended the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the New York School of Art, where she studied under Robert Henri and William Merritt Chase from approximately 1898 to 1909. Around this same time, Clay traveled abroad and studied art in Holland and Spain. She also attended the Art Students League of New York and studied in Paris where she shared a studio with other art students. Robert Henri, whom Clay considered a mentor, regularly visited the Paris studio to review the students' work.

In 1908, Clay had a solo exhibition at Rowland's Gallery in Boston. In 1909, she married Howard Clay in Dedham, Massachusetts. Henry was the alderman of Halifax, England, and the couple moved there sometime after their marriage. They had three children, Howard Fisher Clay, Monica Mary, and Harriet.

Clay continued to exhibit her artwork in England for over 30 years. She exhibited at the British Society of Women Artists, the New English Art Club, the Royal Academy of Arts, the Royal Cambrian Academy of Art, the Royal Society of British Artists, the Women's International Art Club, and the Yorkshire Union of Arts. In Massachusetts, her artwork was in exhibitions at the Boston Art Club, the Copley Society of Art, and other venues.

Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay eventually returned to the United States and passed away in Philadelphia in 1959.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Massachusetts lithographer and etcher Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay measure 1.9 linear feet and 0.057 GB and date from circa 1873 to circa 2015, with the bulk of materials from 1890 to 1930. This collection includes biographical materials, correspondence, writings, fifteen diaries, six travel diaries, teaching files, artwork, printed materials, and photographs.

Biographical materials include ephemera from a Spain trip, and other miscellany.

The bulk of the correspondence consists of letters from artist Robert Henri giving advice and information about travel plans and visits. Other correspondents include family members, the artist William Rothenstein, and a few others.

Writings include annotated appointment calendars, art class notes, notebooks, and a book register. Diaries and travel diaries describe Smith College, feedback from Robert Henri regarding artwork, and travels abroad to England, France, and Holland, as well as to New York and California. There are a few sketches scattered throughout the diaries. There is an audiocassette and digitized photographs and content related to the diaries. There is also an annotated chronological list of the diaries.

Artwork consists of one sketchbook and several folders of loose sketches, drawings, and paintings of people and places.

Printed materials consist of a few news clippings about Smith College, a newspaper image of an art class trip to Spain, 2 reviews of exhibitions, and a clipping about the New York School of Art.

Photographs are of Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay, family, friends, artists, travel, and houses. There are three photograph albums: one of the woods around Smith College; another album of travel photographs in France and Holland that includes photographs of Clay and fellow art students painting at various locations; and an album of Paris photographs that depict the studio Clay shared with other students, friends, and a few images of Robert Henri. Some photographs are annotated.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1906-circa 2015 (0.1 linear feet, 0.001 MB; Box 1, ER01)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1897-1960 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings and Notebooks, circa 1898-1959 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 4: Diaries, 1887-circa 2005 (1 linear feet, 0.016 GB; Boxes 1-2, ER02-ER03)
- Series 5: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1957 (0.3 linear feet, Boxes 2-3, OV 4)
- Series 6: Printed Materials, 1894-1957 (0.1 linear feet; Box 3, OV 4)
- Series 7: Photographs, circa 1873-1987 (0.2 linear feet; Box 3)

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 -- Photographs
Etchers -- Massachusetts
Women artists -- Massachusetts

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Drawings
Paintings
Photographs
Sketchbooks
Sketches
Sound recordings
Travel diaries

Names:

Henri, Robert, 1865-1929
Rothenstein, William, Sir, 1872-1945
Smith College

Occupations:

Lithographers -- Massachusetts

Geographic Names:

California -- description and travel
England -- description and travel
France -- description and travel
Netherlands -- description and travel
New York (N.Y.) -- Description and views

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1906-circa 2015

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

0.001 Gigabytes (ER01)

Biographical materials include notes and transcriptions of diaries, ephemera from a Spain trip such as a travel permit and postcards, a business card, and other miscellany.

The materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1	Ephemera from Spain Trip, 1906
Folder ER01	Notes and transcriptions of diaries, Digital Documents, 1981-2002 <i>0.001 Gigabytes (Four computer files)</i>
Box 1, Folder 3	Harriet Bemus Business Card, circa 2015

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1897-1960

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

The bulk of the correspondence consists of letters from artist and mentor Robert Henri dispensing advice about Clay's artwork along with information regarding his travel plans and studio visits. Other correspondents include family members such as husband Howard Clay and daughter Harriet Bemus, the artist William Rothenstein, and a few others but most of the folders only contain one letter.

Box 1, Folder 4	Bemus, Harriet Fisher, 1960
Box 1, Folder 5	Chaplain of Christ Church in Oxford, England, 1897
Box 1, Folder 6	Clay, Howard, 1908-1909 Congratulations on wedding from 2 friends.
Box 1, Folder 7	Henri, Robert, 1900-1908
Box 1, Folder 8	Rothenstein, W., 1911 Probably the English painter William Rothenstein, letter mentions Robert Henri.

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Series 3: Writings and Notebooks, circa 1898-1959

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Writings include annotated appointment calendars, notes from an art class taught by Robert Henri, a book register that chronicles Clay's thoughts on various books she read, a notebook tracking artwork sent to be framed along with exhibition lists, and a notebook with miscellaneous lists and sketches.

Materials in this series are arranged by document type, then arranged chronologically within each grouping.

Box 1, Folder 9	Notes from Robert Henri Art Class, circa 1898-1909
Box 1, Folder 10	Annotated Appointment Calendar, circa 1912
Box 1, Folder 11	Annotated Appointment Calendar, 1959
Box 1, Folder 12	Notebook, circa 1922
Box 1, Folder 13	Notebook on Paintings, circa 1925-1957
Box 1, Folder 14	"Book Register" Notebook, circa 1930-circa 1950

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Series 4: Diaries, 1887-circa 2010

1 Linear foot (Boxes 1-2)

0.015 Gigabytes (ER02-ER03)

Fifteen diaries and six travel diaries describe Smith College; feedback from Robert Henri regarding artwork; and travels to England, France, and Holland as well as to New York and California. Loose pages of notes, clippings, and occasionally objects like pressed leaves or drawings are often interleaved throughout the diaries. There are a few sketches in the diaries, but they are fairly rare. There are some diary entries that consist of loose pages. There is an audiocassette that is probably a recording of people reading selections from Clay's diaries, and digital diary entries and images. There is also a chronological list of diaries with a few notes providing context. Folders with quotation marks in the title indicate that the original diary title was retained.

Diaries and travel diaries are arranged separately and are organized chronologically within each grouping. Miscellaneous items such as the list of diaries, audiocassette, and digitized materials are grouped together towards the end of the series and arranged chronologically. "Diary entries" means there are just loose pages that are grouped together by subject and the pages are were not part of a bound diary.

Box 1, Folder 15	Diary, 1887
Box 1, Folder 16	Diary, 1889
Box 1, Folder 17	Smith College Diary, circa 1892
Box 1, Folder 18	Diary, circa 1894
Box 1, Folder 19	Diary, circa 1895
Box 1, Folder 20	Diary, 1896
Box 1, Folder 21	Diary, 1897
Box 1, Folder 22	Diary, 1900
Box 1, Folder 23	Diary, 1901
Box 1, Folder 24	Diary, 1902 Mentions Spain trip with William Merritt Chase, Robert Henri, and other art students.
Box 1, Folder 25	Diary, 1903
Box 1, Folder 26	Diary, 1904
Box 1, Folder 27	Diary, 1906

Box 1, Folder 28	Diary Entries about Howard Clay, circa 1908
Box 1, Folder 29	Diary, 1908
Box 1, Folder 30	Diary, 1910-1913
Box 2, Folder 1	"Crossing the Atlantic" Travel Diary Entries, 1894
Box 2, Folder 2	"Trip Around England with Mother" Travel Diary, 1894
Box 2, Folder 3	"Returning from England" Travel Diary Entries, circa 1895
Box 2, Folder 4	Holland Trip Travel Diary, 1896
Box 2, Folder 5	Halifax, England and Paris, France Travel Diary, 1899
Box 2, Folder 6	New York Travel Diary Entries, 1907
Box 2, Folder 7	"Trip to U.S. on Queen Elizabeth" Travel Diary, 1946
Box 2, Folder 8	California and Boston Travel Diary, 1950
Box 2, Folder 9	California and Massachusetts Travel Diary, 1953
Box 2, Folder 10	Selections from Diaries, circa 1990-circa 2000 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 2, Folder 11	Transcribed Selections from Diaries, circa 1990-circa 2010 Diary entries probably transcribed by Harriet Fisher Bemus.
Box 2, Folder 12	Chronological List of Diaries and Event Highlights, circa 1997 List probably written by Harriet Fisher Bemus.
Folder ER02	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay Photos, Digital Photographs, 2005 <i>0.016 Gigabytes (32 computer files)</i>
Folder ER03	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay Diary, Digital Document, 2005 <i>0.001 Gigabytes (One computer file)</i>

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Series 5: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1957

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, OV 4)

Artwork includes sketches, drawings, and paintings of people and places. There is one sketchbook that might be from a trip Elizabeth Clay took to Dieppe, France. Although a few drawings provide notes about the location, most do not include identifying information or dates.

The materials in this series are arranged in loose chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 14	Sketchbook, circa 1898 Possibly from trip to Dieppe, France.
Box 2, Folder 15	Quebec Drawings, circa 1898 Oversized drawing housed in OV 4.
Box 2, Folder 16	Ink Drawings of Houses Along Wharf, circa 1898-circa 1930
Box 2, Folder 17	2 Small Watercolor Paintings, circa 1900-circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 18	Pencil Drawing of House in Llanrwst, Wales, circa 1910-circa 1950
Box 3, Folder 1	Ink Drawing of Halifax Parish Church, circa 1915-circa 1950
Box 3, Folder 2	Assorted Sketches, circa 1890-circa 1957
Box OV 4	Oversized Quebec Drawing from Box 2, Folder 15, circa 1898

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Series 6: Printed Materials, 1894-1957

0.1 Linear feet (Box 3, OV 4)

Printed materials consist of a few clippings about Smith College, a group photograph from a newspaper of an art class trip to Spain, 2 reviews of exhibitions, and a clipping about an incident at the New York School of Art.

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 3	Smith College Clippings, 1894-1920
Box 3, Folder 4	Clipping about New York School of Art Incident, circa 1898-circa 1905
Box 3, Folder 5	Clipping of New York School of Art Trip to Spain, circa 1902 Newspaper group photograph of art students, including Elizabeth Clay, with William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri.
Box 3, Folder 6	Clipping of Exhibition Reviews, 1933-1957 Oversized review housed in OV 4.
Box OV 4	Oversized Review from Box 3, Folder 6, 1933

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Series 7: Photographs, circa 1873-1987

0.2 Linear feet (Box 3)

This series consists of photographs of Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay, family, friends, artists, travel, and houses. There are three photograph albums. There is a photo album of what looks to be the woods and land around Smith College and there is an album of travel photographs in France and Holland that are mostly sightseeing photos but also includes photographs of art students, Clay among them, painting and drawing at various locations. The third album of Paris photographs show the studio Clay shared with fellow art students, photographs of friends, and a few photographs of Robert Henri. Photographs sometimes include notes and annotations written by Harriet Fisher Bemus, Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay's daughter.

The albums are at the beginning of the series followed by photographs of Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay, family, travel, houses, and one image of a painting. Photographs are arranged by subject, then chronological order.

Box 3, Folder 7	Album of Smith College and Environs, circa 1894
Box 3, Folder 8	Album of France and Holland, circa 1896-circa 1901 Mostly sightseeing photographs of places such as the Chartres Cathedral and some photographs of Elizabeth Clay and fellow art students painting and one photograph of Robert Henri.
Box 3, Folder 9	Album of Paris, 1899-1901 Includes photographs of Paris studio, Robert Henri, Elizabeth Clay, and friends.
Box 3, Folder 10	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay Childhood Portraits, circa 1873-circa 1885
Box 3, Folder 11	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay Portraits, circa 1891-circa 1910
Box 3, Folder 12	Mary Elizabeth Fisher, circa 1880
Box 3, Folder 13	Clay Family Photograph, circa 1917
Box 3, Folder 14	Art Class with William Merritt Chase, circa 1905 Class photo includes Elizabeth C. F. Clay, William Merritt Chase, Robert Henri, and other students.
Box 3, Folder 15	Fisher Delivery Service Wagon, circa 1880
Box 3, Folder 16	Robin Hood's Bay, England, circa 1894
Box 3, Folder 17	Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay Travelling to Bethlehem, circa 1895-circa 1900
Box 3, Folder 18	Quebec, Canada, circa 1898
Box 3, Folder 19	Westwood Clapboard Church, circa 1950

Box 3, Folder 20 Joseph Fisher House in Westwood, Massachusetts, circa 1980

Box 3, Folder 21 "House Mary E. C. Fisher built in Westwood", 1987

Box 3, Folder 22 Painting of London, circa 1910-circa 1950

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