



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the William Anderson Coffin Papers, 1886-1924, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

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

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Archives of American Art  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	William Anderson Coffin papers
<b>Date:</b>	1886-1924
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.coffwill
<b>Creator:</b>	Coffin, William A. (William Anderson), 1855-1925
<b>Extent:</b>	1.6 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of New York painter and art critic William Anderson Coffin date from 1886-1924 and measure 1.6 linear feet. Found within the papers are scattered biographical materials and correspondence, project files for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, the American Artist's Committee of One Hundred, and the exhibition of works by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris, three additional scrapbooks, printed material, and photographs.

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The William Anderson Coffin papers were donated in 1970 by Stewart Klonis to whom the papers were given by Mrs. DeWitt M. Lockman of Manorville, Long Island, New York.

### Alternative Forms Available

The collection was digitized in its entirety in 2016 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

### Processing Information

The papers were minimally arranged prior to microfilming on reel 109 and further arranged and described in a finding aid by Jean Fitzgerald in 2010. The collection was prepared for digitization by Judy Ng and digitized in 2016, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

### Preferred Citation

William Anderson Coffin papers, 1886-1924. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions on Access

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 Note

William Anderson Coffin (1855-1925) of New York City was a landscape and figure painter and art critic. He organized several notable exhibitions and art-related charitable events for relief work in post-World War I France.

William Anderson Coffin was born near Pittsburgh in Allegheny, Pennsylvania on January 31, 1855, the son of Isabella C. Anderson and James Gardiner Coffin. Coffin studied art and graduated from Yale University in 1874. Three years later, he left for Paris and studied with academic artist Léon Bonnat. Coffin exhibited in the Paris Salons of 1879, 1880, and 1882.

In 1882, Coffin moved to New York City, participating in many exhibitions, including at the National Academy of Design. He also wrote as an art critic for *Scribner's* and *Harper's Weekly*, among other publications. From 1886 to 1891, he was art critic for *The New York Evening Post*, and was art editor at the *New York Sun* from 1896 to 1901.

Coffin directed the Fine Arts Division of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo from 1900 to 1901, and participated as a member of the New York Advisory Board of the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915. Coffin was also president of the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred that established a relief fund for families of French soldier-artists. For this charitable work, Coffin received the medal of the Legion of Honor from the French government in 1917.

Coffin was a member of various arts organizations including the Lotos Club, the Architectural League of New York, and the National Academy of Design. His artwork is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Municipal Gallery of Venice, Italy, the Albright Art Gallery, and the Brooklyn Museum.

William Anderson Coffin died on October 26, 1925 in New York City.

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## Scope and Content Note

The papers of New York painter and art critic William Anderson Coffin date from 1886 to 1924 and measure 1.6 linear feet. Found within the papers are scattered biographical materials and correspondence; project files for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, the American Artist's Committee of One Hundred, and the exhibition of works by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris; three additional scrapbooks; printed material; and photographs.

Scattered biographical material includes membership cards and an autobiographical essay. Correspondence is with colleagues and related generally to receptions and events, including an invitation to the launch of the U. S. Battleship *Arizona*. There are one or two letters each from Frank W. Benson, Edwin Howland Blashfield, Royal Cortissoz, Walter Gay, and Whitney Warren.

Three series of project files document Coffin's work for the Fine Arts Division of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred that established a relief fund for families of French soldier-artists, and an exhibition of artwork by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris. Files contain a variety of materials, such as letters, drafts of reports, meeting minutes, photographs, catalogs and brochures, and other materials. There are two oversized scrapbooks for the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition. The files for the Luxembourg Museum exhibition include a letter signed by Louis Bouché, Bernard Gussow, Alfred H. Maurer, Joseph Stella, and William Zorach protesting the exclusion of their work.

Three additional scrapbooks contain clippings of articles written by Coffin when he was employed as an art critic for *The New York Evening Post*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The New York Sun*.

Printed material consists of miscellaneous clippings primarily about Coffin, programs from American Rights Committee exercises, a Dixie Club of New York concert, a Lotos Club concert, the Lafayette-Marne Anniversary exercises, and souvenir tickets to various art-related events including several Paris Salon Vernissage events sponsored by the Société des Artistes Français.

Photographs include an album of photographs of Coffin, various family members, and residences; a photograph of Coffin posing with an unidentified group of his colleagues; and photographs of family friends. Project files also contain photographs.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1916-1922 (2 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1915-1924 (8 folders; Box 1)
- Series 3: Project File for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, 1900-1901 (0.3 linear feet; Box 1-2)
- Series 4: Project File for the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred, 1914-1923 (14 folders; Box 1)
- Series 5: Project File for the Exhibition of Works by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris, 1919-1920 (11 folders; Box 1)
- Series 6: Scrapbooks of Clippings of Articles Written by Coffin, 1886-1913 (0.3 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 7: Printed Material, 1912-1924 (6 folders; Box 1)
- Series 8: Photographs, 1905-1923 (10 folders; Box 1)

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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 Exhibitions France Paris  
Art, American  
Landscape painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
World War, 1914-1918

Types of Materials:

Photographs  
Scrapbooks

Names:

American Artists' Committee of One Hundred  
American Rights Committee  
Benson, Frank Weston, 1862-1951  
Blashfield, Edwin Howland, 1848-1936  
Bouché, Louis, 1896-1969  
Committee for the Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture (Paris, France)  
Cortissoz, Royal, 1869-1948  
Exposition d'artistes de l'école Américaine (1919 : Paris, France)  
Gay, Walter, 1856-1937  
Gussow, Bernard, 1881-1957

Lotos Club (New York, N.Y.)  
Mauer, Alfred  
Musée d'histoire et d'art (Luxembourg)  
Pan-American Exposition (1901: Buffalo, N.Y.)  
Société des artistes français  
Stella, Joseph, 1877-1946  
Warren, Whitney, 1864-1943  
Zorach, William, 1887-1966

Occupations:

Art critics -- France -- Paris  
Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painters

Preferred Titles:

*Harper's Weekly*  
*New York Post*

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1916-1922

#### *2 Folders (Box 1)*

Scope and Contents: Biographical material consists of a calling card; a place card; membership cards for the American Legion, the Citizens' League for America, and The Allies; and an autobiographical essay concerning the influence of Léon Bonnat, Coffin's art instructor in Paris.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Box 1, Folder 1      [Calling Card and Place Card for Coffin, and Membership Cards, 1916-1922](#)

Box 1, Folder 2      [Autobiographical Essay Concerning the Influence of Léon Bonnat, 1922](#)

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1915-1924

### 8 Folders (Box 1)

**Scope and Contents:** Correspondence consists of scattered letters exchanged with colleagues that do not relate to other series. There are one or two letters each from Frank W. Benson, Edwin Howland Blashfield, Royal Cortissoz, Walter Gay, and Whitney Warren, and an invitation to the launch of the U. S. Battleship *Arizona*.

**Available Formats:** This series has been scanned in its entirety.

**Arrangement:** Materials are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 3	<a href="#">Correspondence, circa 1915-1924</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1915</a> Notes: Includes U.S.S. Battleship <i>Arizona</i> invitation.
Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1917 January-June</a> Notes: Includes correspondence from Frank W. Benson and Royal Cortissoz.
Box 1, Folder 7	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1917 July-December</a> Notes: Includes correspondence from Edwin Howland Blashfield and Whitney Warren.
Box 1, Folder 8	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1918</a>
Box 1, Folder 9	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 10	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1920-1924</a> Notes: Includes correspondence from Walter Gay.

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## Series 3: Project File for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, 1900-1901

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

Scope and Contents: This series documents Coffin's involvement as director of the Fine Arts Division of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo and includes letters, drafts of reports, scrapbooks of clippings, and an album of photographs.

Available Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 11	<a href="#">Letters, 1900</a>
Box 1, Folder 12	<a href="#">Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 13	<a href="#">Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 14	<a href="#">Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 15	<a href="#">Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 16	<a href="#">Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 17	<a href="#">Final Copy of Part 2 of Rough Draft, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 18	<a href="#">Final Copy of Part 3 of Rough Draft, 1900-1901</a>
Box 1, Folder 19	<a href="#">Pan-American Clippings Scrapbook 1, 1900-1901</a> Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 20	<a href="#">Pan-American Clippings Scrapbook 2, 1900-1901</a> Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 21	<a href="#">Photograph Album, 1901</a>
Box 2, Folder	Oversized Pan-American Scrapbook 1 scanned with Box 1, Folder 19, 1900-1901
Box 2, Folder	Oversized Pan-American Scrapbook 2 scanned with Box 1, Folder 20, 1900-1901

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## Series 4: Project File for the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred, 1914-1923

### 14 Folders (Box 1)

**Scope and Contents:** This series documents Coffin's involvement as president of the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred that established a relief fund for families of French soldier-artists and includes letters, a ledger of donations, a financial report, address lists of donors, catalogs for fund-raising exhibitions, brochures listing the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred, and a photograph of a relief sculpture *Fraternité des Artistes* by Antonin Mercié, used as a logo for the organization.

**Available Formats:** This series has been scanned in its entirety.

**Arrangement:** Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 22	<a href="#">Letters, 1915</a>
Box 1, Folder 23	<a href="#">Letters, 1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 24	<a href="#">Letters, 1917-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 25	<a href="#">Ledger of Donations to the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1914-1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 26	<a href="#">Documents Inserted in Ledger of Donations to the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1914-1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 27	<a href="#">Financial Report for the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1917</a>
Box 1, Folder 28	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 29	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 30	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 31	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 32	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 33	<a href="#">Address Lists, circa 1914-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 34	<a href="#">Exhibition Catalogs, 1915-1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 35	<a href="#">Brochures and a Photograph of Art Work, circa 1921-1923</a>

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## Series 5: Project File for the Exhibition of Works by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris, 1919-1920

### 11 Folders (Box 1)

**Scope and Contents:** This series includes original and photocopied materials documenting Coffin's involvement in the organization of an exhibition of art work by American Artists at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris. It includes correspondence including a letter signed by Louis Bouché, Bernard Gussow, Alfred H. Maurer, Joseph Stella, and William Zorach protesting the exclusion of their work, minutes of meetings, miscellaneous writings concerning the exhibition, and miscellaneous printed material.

**Available:** This series has been scanned in its entirety.

**Formats:**

**Arrangement:** Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 36	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 January-February</a>
Box 1, Folder 37	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 March</a>
Box 1, Folder 38	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 April-August</a>
Box 1, Folder 39	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 September</a>
Box 1, Folder 40	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 October</a>
Box 1, Folder 41	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1919 November-December</a> Notes: Includes letter of protest signed by artists.
Box 1, Folder 42	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1920</a>
Box 1, Folder 43	<a href="#">Minutes of Meetings, 1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 44	<a href="#">Minutes of Meetings, 1920</a>
Box 1, Folder 45	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Writings, 1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 46	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1919</a>

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## Series 6: Scrapbooks of Clippings of Articles Written by Coffin, 1886-1913

### 0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)

**Scope and Contents:** Scrapbooks contain clippings of articles written by Coffin when he was employed as an art critic. Scrapbook 1 contains clippings written for *The New York Evening Post*. Scrapbook 2 contains clippings written for *The New York Evening Post*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The New York Sun*. Scrapbook 3 contains clippings written for *The New York Sun* and *The New York Evening Post*.

**Available Formats:** This series has been scanned in its entirety.

**Arrangement:** Materials are arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 1	<a href="#">Clippings Scrapbook 1, 1886-1891</a>
Box 3, Folder 2	<a href="#">Clippings Scrapbook 2, 1891-1900</a>
Box 3, Folder 3	<a href="#">Clippings Scrapbook 3, 1900-1913</a> Notes: Original scrapbook is stamped with page 33 twice.

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## Series 7: Printed Material, 1912-1924

### 6 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists of miscellaneous clippings, programs, and souvenir tickets from various art-related events.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 47	<a href="#">Clippings, 1912-1916</a>
Box 1, Folder 48	<a href="#">Clippings, 1917</a>
Box 1, Folder 49	<a href="#">Clippings, 1918-1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 50	<a href="#">Clippings, 1920-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 51	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Programs, 1916-1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 52	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Souvenir Tickets, 1917-1924</a>

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## Series 8: Photographs, 1905-1923

### 10 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Photographs consist of an album of photographs of Coffin and various family members, a photograph of Coffin posing with a group of his colleagues, and photographs of family friends.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by subject and document type.

Box 1, Folder 53	<a href="#">Photograph of Coffin with Colleagues, circa 1910-1920</a>
Box 1, Folder 54	<a href="#">Family Photograph Album, 1905-1911</a>
Box 1, Folder 55	<a href="#">Family Photograph Album, 1905-1911</a>
Box 1, Folder 56	<a href="#">Family Photograph Album, 1905-1911</a>
Box 1, Folder 57	<a href="#">Family Photograph Album, 1905-1911</a>
Box 1, Folder 58	<a href="#">Family Photograph Album, 1905-1911</a>
Box 1, Folder 59	<a href="#">Photographs of Family Friends, A-F, circa 1918-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 60	<a href="#">Photographs of Family Friends, G-K, circa 1918-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 61	<a href="#">Photographs of Family Friends, L-M, circa 1918-1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 62	<a href="#">Photographs of Family Friends, O-Z, circa 1918-1923</a>

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