



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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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	William Anderson Coffin papers
Date:	1886-1924
Identifier:	AAA.coffwill
Creator:	Coffin, William A. (William Anderson), 1855-1925
Extent:	1.6 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	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.

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.

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.

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)

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

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 Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

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	Correspondence, circa 1915-1924
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1915 Notes: Includes U.S.S. Battleship <i>Arizona</i> invitation.
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1916
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1917 January-June Notes: Includes correspondence from Frank W. Benson and Royal Cortissoz.
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1917 July-December Notes: Includes correspondence from Edwin Howland Blashfield and Whitney Warren.
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, 1918
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1919
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence, 1920-1924 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	Letters, 1900
Box 1, Folder 12	Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 13	Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 14	Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 15	Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 16	Drafts of Reports, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 17	Final Copy of Part 2 of Rough Draft, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 18	Final Copy of Part 3 of Rough Draft, 1900-1901
Box 1, Folder 19	Pan-American Clippings Scrapbook 1, 1900-1901 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 20	Pan-American Clippings Scrapbook 2, 1900-1901 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 21	Photograph Album, 1901
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	Letters, 1915
Box 1, Folder 23	Letters, 1916
Box 1, Folder 24	Letters, 1917-1923
Box 1, Folder 25	Ledger of Donations to the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1914-1916
Box 1, Folder 26	Documents Inserted in Ledger of Donations to the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1914-1916
Box 1, Folder 27	Financial Report for the Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists, 1917
Box 1, Folder 28	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 29	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 30	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 31	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 32	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 33	Address Lists, circa 1914-1923
Box 1, Folder 34	Exhibition Catalogs, 1915-1916
Box 1, Folder 35	Brochures and a Photograph of Art Work, circa 1921-1923

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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 Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

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

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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	Clippings Scrapbook 1, 1886-1891
Box 3, Folder 2	Clippings Scrapbook 2, 1891-1900
Box 3, Folder 3	Clippings Scrapbook 3, 1900-1913 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	Clippings, 1912-1916
Box 1, Folder 48	Clippings, 1917
Box 1, Folder 49	Clippings, 1918-1919
Box 1, Folder 50	Clippings, 1920-1923
Box 1, Folder 51	Miscellaneous Programs, 1916-1919
Box 1, Folder 52	Miscellaneous Souvenir Tickets, 1917-1924

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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 Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by subject and document type.

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

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