



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Comfort family papers relating  
to George Fisk Comfort

Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Comfort family papers relating to George Fisk Comfort
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1857-1955
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.comfgeor
<b>Creator:</b>	Comfort, George Fisk, 1834-1910
<b>Extent:</b>	2 Linear feet ((on 3 microfilm reels))
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Comfort's son, the architect Ralph Manning Comfort, assembled and donated the family's papers to the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections at Syracuse University. The Archives of American Art microfilmed selected material from the papers pertaining to George Fisk Comfort. The lender kept letters exchanged among family members with the papers of the writer, not the recipient. Therefore, letters from relatives to Comfort are to be found in the author's papers rather than Comfort's and were not microfilmed.

### Location of Originals

Originals in George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.

### Available Formats

35mm microfilm reels 4274-4276 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

### Restrictions

The Archives of American art does not own the original papers. Use is limited to the microfilm copy.

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## Biographical / Historical

George Fisk Comfort was a museum director, educator, and one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y. Comfort established the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts (now known as the Everson Museum of Art) and the College of Fine Arts, Syracuse University. He served as dean of the College (1873-1893) and as director of the Syracuse Museum from its founding in 1869 until his death in 1910.

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## Scope and Contents

Biographical materials, correspondence, manuscripts, notes, sketchbook, subject files, photographs and printed materials documenting George Fisk Comfort's career as an educator and museum director, selected from the Comfort Family papers at Syracuse University.

Biographical materials consist of autobiographical writings, a biographical essay and abstract of a thesis about Comfort, and an address given at his funeral. Personal and professional correspondence includes numerous lengthy letters to his son, Ralph Manning Comfort. Correspondents include Luigi di Cesnola, Kenyon Cox (1901), Eastman Johnson (1902) and Andrew Johnson, who writes about the aims of his administration shortly after becoming President. Interfiled in the correspondence are a 15-page holograph list of "Works of Art Exhibited in the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts" (1903); a brochure on the organization and first meeting of the American Association of Museums (1906); and material relating to the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art including minutes, a transcript of Comfort's address at the 40th anniversary, and a brochure about the role he played in the organization of the museum. Also included are correspondence and documents relating to the Southern College of Fine Arts, La Porte, Texas, and a sketchbook of an Italian tour. The subject files concern the (Marcello) Massaranti collection; the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, including organizational material, minutes of trustees meetings, correspondence, and exhibition materials; and Syracuse University, including Comfort's resignation and printed materials about the role he played in the organization of the museum.

Drafts and completed manuscripts of Comfort's unpublished writings include a 12-page history of Syracuse University, a 2-page holograph on the art season of 1909-1910 in New York, and miscellaneous notes including "Fine Art Notes," possibly by a student, which contains a summary of a lecture by Comfort. Lectures consist of manuscripts of 4 talks given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and an excerpt from an address about establishing a Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts. Other materials consist of clippings and photographs of Comfort, his family, his home and of works of art depicting him.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Types of Materials:

Sketchbooks

### Names:

Cesnola, Luigi Palma di, 1832-1904  
Cox, Kenyon, 1856-1919  
Johnson, Andrew, 1808-1875  
Johnson, Eastman, 1824-1906  
Massaranti, Marcello  
Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)  
Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts  
Syracuse University. College of Fine Arts

### Occupations:

Art museum directors -- New York (State) -- Syracuse  
Educators  
Museum directors -- New York (State) -- Syracuse

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Comfort family papers relating to George Fisk Comfort

Reel 4274, Frame 1-113	Biographical Material
Reel 4274, Frame 114-1321	Correspondence
Reel 4275, Frame 1-1133	Correspondence
Reel 4276, Frame 1-44	Sketchbook
Reel 4276, Frame 45-320	Subject Files
Reel 4276, Frame 321-402	Writing
Reel 4276, Frame 403-543	Lectures
Reel 4276, Frame 544-613	Printed Material
Reel 4276, Frame 614-656	Photographs

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