



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Walter Gay Papers,  
1870-1937, 1980, in the Archives of American Art

Stephanie Ashley

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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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Walter Gay papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.gaywaltp
<b>Date:</b>	1870-1937 1980
<b>Extent:</b>	1.2 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Gay, Walter, 1856-1937
<b>Language:</b>	Multiple languages  Collection is in English and French.  English; French
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of expatriate painter Walter Gay measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1870-1937 with some photocopied items and a photograph dated 1980. The collection includes photocopies of two letters, scrapbooks assembled by Gay's wife, Matilda Gay, with correspondence, photographs, exhibition catalogs, price lists for artwork, and clippings, photocopies of a scrapbook of clippings, four of Gay's sketchbooks, three photographs of Gay and a photograph of a painting by Gay.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Walter Gay papers were donated in two 1980 accessions. Scrapbooks, transcripts and photographs of Gay were donated by Mrs Bronson (Sophie Gay) Griscom, niece of Walter Gay. Sketchbooks, photocopies of a scrapbook, photocopies of letters, and a photograph of artwork were donated by John Gay, nephew of Walter Gay.

### Available Formats

The collection was digitized in 2015 and is available via the Archives of American Art's website.

### Processing Information

The Walter Gay papers were microfilmed on Reels 2137-2130, and Reel 2802 after accession. All accessions were merged and processed and a finding aid prepared by Stephanie Ashley in June 2014. The collection was processed and digitized in 2014 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

## Preferred Citation

Walter Gay papers, 1870-1937, 1980. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

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

## Conditions Governing Use

The Walter Gay papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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## Biographical / Historical

Expatriate painter Walter Gay (1856-1937) was born in Hingham, Massachusetts. He married heiress Matilda E. Travers, and in 1876 the couple moved to Paris where Gay became a pupil of Leon Bonnat. The couple lived in an apartment on the Left Bank and in 1907 purchased Chatea Le Breau near the Forest of Fontainebleau.

Gay painted figure studies of French peasant life but was best known for his interiors of turn of the century private homes furnished by decorators such as Elsie de Wolfe and novelist Edith Wharton, who formed part of the large and stylish circle of friends in which the Gays circulated.

Gay received honorable mention in the Paris Salon of 1885 and a gold medal in 1888. He became an Officer of the Legion of Honor and his works can be found in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Tate Gallery, London.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of expatriate painter Walter Gay measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1870-1937 with some photocopied items and a photograph dated 1980. The collection includes photocopies of two letters, scrapbooks assembled by Gay's wife, Matilda Gay, with correspondence, photographs, exhibition catalogs, price lists for artwork, and clippings, photocopies of a scrapbook of clippings, four of Gay's sketchbooks, three photographs of Gay and a photograph of a painting by Gay.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of the collection the papers are arranged as one series.

- Series 1: Walter Gay Papers, 1870-1937, 1980 (Boxes 1-4; 1.2 linear feet)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Expatriate painters -- France -- Paris  
Painters -- France -- Paris

Types of Materials:

Photographs  
Scrapbooks  
Sketchbooks

Names:

Gay, Matilda Travers

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Walter Gay Papers, 1980, 1870-1937

#### 1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-4)

Two 1929 photocopied letters from Gay to "Willie" provide an overview of Gay's life for an article the recipient was writing about Gay's birthplace, Hingham, Massachusetts..

Scrapbooks contain correspondence with Sarah Cooper-Hewitt, Royal Cortissoz, Ralph W. Curtis, Elsie De Wolfe, Henry James, Val Prinsep, Auguste Rodin, Edith Wharton, and others. Also found is correspondence between Matilda and Walter Gay, and between them and other family and friends. Subjects include Walter and Matilda's engagement and early marriage, their daily lives and social engagements in France and during travels to England and the United States, Walter Gay exhibitions and awards, and the experience of living through World War 1. Scrapbooks also include an 1867 pencil sketch; photographs including Gay's Paris studio and apartment and his 1908 exhibition at the George Petit Gallery in Paris, and photos of family, friends, and pets. Some exhibition catalogs, price lists for artwork and clippings are also found in the scrapbooks.

Three additional volumes provide typescript transcripts of all the items in the scrapbooks. The first two volumes also include a table of contents for Scrapbooks 1 and Scrapbook 2. Photocopies of a scrapbook from 1874-1882 are of news clippings regarding Gay and exhibitions of his artwork.

Sketchbooks primarily include animal studies, in addition to some figure studies, European landscapes and marine studies. The bulk of the sketches are in pencil with a few in ink and watercolor.

Three photographs include a photographic portrait of Gay as well as Gay in his Paris Studio and in an exhibition hall. An additional 1980 photograph is of an oil painting by Gay.

Series is scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 1	Letters from 1929 (Photocopies), 1980 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 2	News Clipping, Walter Gay Obituary, 1937 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 3	Scrapbook 1, 1889-1906 <a href="#">Image(s)</a> Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 1
Box 1, Folder 4	Scrapbook 2, 1906-1916 <a href="#">Image(s)</a> Oversized material housed in Box 4, Folder 1
Box 1, Folder 5	Scrapbook 3, 1916-1930 <a href="#">Image(s)</a> Oversized material housed in Box 4, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 6	Scrapbook 1, Typescripts, 1889-1906 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	Scrapbook 2, Typescripts, 1906-1916 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 8	Scrapbook 3, Typescripts, 1916-1930 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 9	Scrapbook of Clippings from circa 1874-1882 (Photocopies), 1980 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 1	Sketchbook, Boston, 1870 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 2	Sketchbook, Boston, 1873 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 3	Sketchbook, Europe, 1882 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 4	Sketchbook, Nebraska, 1872 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 5	Photographs of Gay, circa 1895 <a href="#">Image(s)</a> Gay, Walter, 1856-1937 Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 2
Box 2, Folder 6	Photograph of Painting by Gay, 1980 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 1	Oversized Scrapbook 1 scanned with Box 1, Folder 3
Box 3, Folder 2	Oversized Photographs of Gay scanned with Box 2, Folder 5, circa 1895
Box 4, Folder 1	Oversized Scrapbook 2 scanned with Box 1, Folder 4
Box 4, Folder 2	Oversized Scrapbook 3 scanned with Box 1, Folder 5

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