



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the William Henry Holmes Artists' Files, 1879-1955, in the Archives of American Art

Rihoko Ueno

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	William Henry Holmes artists' files
Date:	1879-1955
Identifier:	AAA.holmwill
Creator:	Holmes, William Henry, 1846-1933
Extent:	0.2 Linear feet
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The artists' files of William Henry Holmes, curator and director of the Smithsonian's National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) in Washington, D.C., measure 0.2 linear feet and date from 1879 to 1955. The artists' files consist mostly of correspondence, but also include a few photographs, artwork in the form of sketches, and printed material. There is also one file relating to Holmes' affiliation with the Washington Water Color Club.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

These files were transferred from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art Library (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) to the Archives of American Art in two installments in 1981 and 1992.

Related Materials

Collections about William Henry Holmes are also located at other Smithsonian Institution archival units, including the National Anthropological Archives and Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Available Formats

This collection was digitized in 2017 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Processing Information

Portions of the collection were microfilmed onto reels 2227 and 5438 after receipt. The collection was processed and prepared for digitization by Rihoko Ueno in 2017 with funding provided by The Walton Family Foundation and the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

William Henry Holmes artists' files, 1879-1955. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

William Henry Holmes (1846-1933) was a curator, museum director, artist, scientific illustrator, archaeologist, geologist, and anthropologist. He served in various positions in the Smithsonian Institution, and finally as director of the Smithsonian's National Gallery of Art (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) from 1920-1932.

Holmes was born in Harrison County, Ohio in 1846. In 1870, he graduated from McNeely Normal School in Ohio and, after a short time of teaching at that school, moved to Washington, D.C. in 1871 to study art under Theodore Kaufmann. Thanks to his artistic skills, he was soon hired by Smithsonian paleontologist Francis B. Meek to do scientific drawings. In 1872, Holmes joined the geological survey of Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden, as an artist and topographer of the survey of Yellowstone National Park and surrounding area, and other regions in the west. In 1879, Holmes went to work for the newly founded U.S. Geological Survey. There he worked as a geologist and chief of scientific illustration. In addition to art and geology, his interests and expertise expanded into archaeology and anthropology.

Holmes worked as chief curator at the Field Columbian Museum (now the Field Museum of Natural History) in Chicago before returning to the Smithsonian in 1897, where he served as curator of anthropology and chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology. In 1910, he became chairman of the Division of Anthropology. In 1920, Holmes became director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Gallery of Art (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum), a position he held until 1932. William Henry Holmes died one year later.

Scope and Contents

The artists' files of William Henry Holmes, curator and director of the Smithsonian's National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) in Washington, D.C., measure 0.2 linear feet and date from 1879 to 1955. The artists' files consist mostly of correspondence, but also include a few photographs, artwork in the form of sketches, and printed material. There is also one file relating to Holmes' affiliation with the Washington Water Color Club.

Notable artists represented in the files include R.N. Brooke, William B. P. Closson, James Earle Fraser, Vinnie Ream Hoxie, Reuben Le Grand Johnston, John LaFarge, Gari Melchers, Thomas Moran, Henry Moser, Hobart Nichols, Violet Oakley, Joseph Pennell, Joseph Henry Sharp, Mary Vaux Walcott, Carl F. Weller, Max Weyl, Irving R. Wiles and George Julian Zolnay.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 1 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Artists' Files, 1879-1955 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art, American
Artists -- United States

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Brooke, Richard Norris, 1847-1920
Closson, William Baxter Palmer, 1848-1926
Fraser, James Earle, 1876-1953
Johnston, Reuben Le Grand, 1850-1914
La Farge, John, 1835-1910
Melchers, Gari, 1860-1932
Messer, Edmund Clarence, 1842-1919
Moran, Thomas, 1837-1926
Moser, James Henry, 1854-1913
Nichols, Hobart, 1869-1962
Oakley, Violet, 1874-1961
Pennell, Joseph, 1857-1926
Ream, Vinnie, 1847-1914
Sharp, Joseph Henry, 1859-1953
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Walcott, Mary Vaux, 1860-1940
Washington Water Color Club (Washington, D.C.)
Weller, Carl F., 1853-1920
Weyl, Max, 1837-1914
Wiles, Irving Ramsay, 1861-1948
Zolnay, George Julian, 1862 or 1863-1949

Occupations:

Curators -- Washington (D.C.)

Places:

Museum directors -- Washington (D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Artists' Files, 1879-1955

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Artists' files mostly consist of correspondence, along with some photographs, printed material, and limited artwork. Items of note include 3 photographs of R. N. Brooke: one a portrait annotated by Holmes, another of Brooke with his Corcoran School of Art class (accompanied by a key identifying a few students); and one of Brooke, E.H. Miller, Max Weyl, and E.C. Messer, autographed by each. Glued to the back of the latter is a typescript of an exchange of letters between Holmes and the donor of the photo, Emma North Messer. The Henry Moser file contains a letter from Moser to Holmes encouraging him in painting and exhibiting, two photographs of Moser, and correspondence with Moser's widow concerning the purchase of Moser's "Evening in the Berkshires" painting by the Cosmos Club. The Hobart Nichols file consists of 4 letters from Nichols to Holmes regarding information on his work and other artists and paintings. The Joseph Pennell file includes a sketch of Pennell. Carl Weller's file contains a watercolor sketch of the French countryside and a brief biography on Weller. The Max Weyl file includes a photo of Weyl, and a photo of a painting of Weyl by Holmes.

Arrangement: This series is arranged alphabetically by artist name. One folder of correspondence with members of the Washington Water Color Club is filed at the end.

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

Box 1, Folder 1	Brooke, R. N., circa 1900-1932
Box 1, Folder 2	Closson, William B. P., 1888-1928
Box 1, Folder 3	Fraser, James Earle, 1921
Box 1, Folder 4	Hoxie, Vinnie Ream, 1879
Box 1, Folder 5	Johnston, Reuben Le Grand, 1932
Box 1, Folder 6	LaFarge, John, 1909
Box 1, Folder 7	Melchers, Gari, 1929
Box 1, Folder 8	Moran, Thomas, 1883-1926
Box 1, Folder 9	Moser, James Henry, circa 1900-1921
Box 1, Folder 10	Nichols, Hobart, circa 1932
Box 1, Folder 11	Oakley, Violet, 1921
Box 1, Folder 12	Pennell, Joseph, 1881-1923

Box 1, Folder 13	Sharp, Joseph Henry, 1910-1914
Box 1, Folder 14	Walcott, Mary Vaux, 1932
Box 1, Folder 15	Weller, Carl F., circa 1915
Box 1, Folder 16	Weyl, Max, 1880-1908
Box 1, Folder 17	Wiles, Irving R., 1925
Box 1, Folder 18	Zolnay, George Julian, 1914-1917
Box 1, Folder 19	Washington Water Color Club, 1910-1955

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