



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Samuel F. B. Morse  
Papers, 1826-2009, bulk 1826-1871,  
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 and The Walton Family Foundation

2018 July 19

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Container Listing .....	3
Series 1: Samuel F. B. Morse Papers, 1826-2009.....	3

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Samuel F. B. Morse papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.morsesam
<b>Date:</b>	1826-2009 (bulk 1826-1871)
<b>Extent:</b>	0.4 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Morse, Samuel Finley Breese, 1791-1872
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter and inventor Samuel F. B. Morse date from 1826-2009 (bulk 1826-1871), and measure 0.4 linear feet. This small collection documents Morse's role in the early years of the National Academy of Design through his correspondence as the academy's first president, and also includes scattered biographical material, Morse's writings and notes on art from that period, printed material including clippings about Morse and an exhibition catalog, eight photographs, including one of Morse, and a microfilm reel of one of Morse's sketchbooks.

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The papers were donated to the Archives of American Art by the National Academy of Design in 2018.

### Related Materials

The bulk of Samuel F. B. Morse's papers are held by the Library of Congress.

### Available Formats

The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2019 and is available on the Archives of American Art website. Materials which have not been digitized include blank pages, blank versos of photographs, duplicates, and the microfilm reel. Morse's published book has had only the cover, title pages, and table of contents pages digitized.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and described in a finding aid by Stephanie Ashley in 2018, and digitized in 2019, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art and The Walton Family Foundation.

## Preferred Citation

Samuel F. B. Morse papers, 1826-2009, bulk 1826-1871. 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.

## Terms of Use

The Archives of American Art makes its archival collections available for non-commercial, educational and personal use unless restricted by copyright and/or donor restrictions, including but not limited to access and publication restrictions. AAA makes no representations concerning such rights and restrictions and it is the user's responsibility to determine whether rights or restrictions exist and to obtain any necessary permission to access, use, reproduce and publish the collections. Please refer to the [Smithsonian's Terms of Use](#) for additional information.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Portrait painter and inventor Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872), was a founding member of the National Academy of Design who was subsequently known for his invention of the Morse code.

Morse was born in Massachusetts and educated at Yale College. In 1811 he traveled to England and was admitted to the Royal Academy. He returned to the United States in 1815 and began a career as a painter, primarily of portraits.

From 1826-1845 he served as president of the newly founded National Academy of Design in New York City. In the 1830s Morse developed the concept of a single-wire telegraph and the Morse code, and was involved in the growth of the commercial use of telegraphy throughout the world. Morse was also known for his portraits of the Marquis de Lafayette, and presidents John Adams and James Monroe.

---

## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and inventor Samuel F. B. Morse date from 1826-2009 (bulk 1826-1871), and measure 0.4 linear feet. This small collection documents Morse's role in the early years of the National Academy of Design through his correspondence as the academy's first president, and also includes scattered biographical material, Morse's writings and notes on art from that period, printed material including clippings about Morse and an exhibition catalog, eight photographs, including one of Morse, and a microfilm reel of one of Morse's sketchbooks.

---

## Arrangement

Due to its small size the collection is arranged as one series.

- Series 1: Samuel F. B. Morse Papers, 1826-2009 (0.6 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)

---

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Samuel F. B. Morse Papers, 1826-2009

#### *0.6 Linear feet*

Morse's biographical material records the \$1000 gift to the National Academy of Design bequeathed in his will. Morse's correspondence as president of the academy details the conflicts with the American Academy of Fine Arts, and failed attempts to bring about a union of the two organizations. It also documents other academy business such as exhibitions and interactions with other arts institutions, as well as Morse's independent work as an artist receiving commissions. This correspondence is described in two itemized lists compiled by National Academy of Design staff members which are included in this series. Additional correspondence documents negotiations with Morse's son, Edward L. Morse, to secure the gift of the Morse papers that constitute this collection.

Morse's writings and notes on art, primarily in the form of lectures and lecture notes, can also be found here. They include his "Discourse" on the National Academy of Design delivered on the academy's one year anniversary, a criticism of that address, and Morse's response to the criticism. Some of the loose notes were assigned an alphanumeric identification system that does not appear to be explained in the collection, but has been left as is.

Printed material includes eleven articles about Morse, one 1871 edition of the publication *Dots and Dashes*, by the Morse Telegraph club, Inc., an obituary for Morse's granddaughter, Clara, and a catalog for the exhibition *Samuel F. B. Morse: Paintings, Inventions, Documents* (1956) at the Syracuse Museum of Art. Also found is a copy of Morse's 1835 book *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*.

Photographs include a copy print of a photo of Morse taken at fifty-nine years of age, shortly after he sent his first successful telegram between Washington and Baltimore on May 24, 1844; three photographs taken at the April 1968 dedication of a plaque by members of the Morse Telegraph Club; a photo of a tablet on Morse's house; and a photograph of a man, probably Morse's son, William Goodrich Morse. Also found is a photo of a charcoal sketch by Morse of his niece, entitled "Lottie," and a photo of a sketch of an unidentified woman, by Kalman Oswald.

Records are arranged by type.

The bulk of this series has been digitized. Materials which have not been digitized include blank pages, blank versos of photographs, duplicates, and the microfilm reel. Morse's published book has had only the cover, title pages, and table of contents pages digitized.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Material, Morse Family Trees, 1959 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Material, Morse's Gift to National Academy of Design, 1902 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence 1826-1868, Itemized List, 2008 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1826-1829

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 5 Correspondence, 1830-1836

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 6 Correspondence, 1842-1868, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 7 Correspondence circa 1826-1833, Itemized List, 2009

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 8 Correspondence, circa 1826-1833, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 9 Correspondence, National Academy of Design, 1932-1992

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 10 Correspondence, National Academy of Design and Edward L. Morse, circa 1909-1916

[Image\(s\)](#)

#### Writings and Notes

Box 1, Folder 11 Article, Criticism of Morse's "Discourse", 1827

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 12 Article, Morse's Reply to Criticism of His "Discourse", 1828

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 13 Lectures, "A Discourse Delivered on Thursday, May 3, 1827...Before the National Academy of Design", 1827

[Image\(s\)](#)

Lectures, "On the Affinity of Painting with the Other Fine Arts"

Box 1, Folder 14 Lecture 1, circa 1826-1833, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 15 Lecture 2, 1826

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 16 Lecture 2, Alternate Opening, 1826

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 17 Lecture 3, 1826

	<a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 18	Lecture 4, 1826 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 19	Notes, circa 1826-1833, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 20	Lectures, Principles of Fine Art, circa 1835 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 21	Lecture Notes, Bound Volume 1, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 22	Lecture Notes, Bound Volume 2, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 23	Lecture Notes, A: 1-17, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 24	Lecture Notes, B: 18-33, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 1	Lecture Notes, C: 34-54, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 2	Lecture Notes, A-H, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 3	Notes on National Academy of Design, circa 1820s <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 4	Printed Material, circa 1851-1871 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 5	Printed Material, 1872-1976 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 6	Printed Material, <i>Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States</i> by Morse, 1835 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 7	Artwork, Unidentified, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 8	Photographs, 1922-1968

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 2, Folder 9

Microfilm Reel of Morse Sketchbook, undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*