



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the William Trost Richards Papers, 1848-1920, in the Archives of American Art

Erin Corley

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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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	William Trost Richards papers
Identifier:	AAA.richwill
Date:	1848-1920
Creator:	Richards, William Trost, 1833-1905
Extent:	1.8 Linear feet
Language:	The records are in English.
Summary:	The William Trost Richards papers measure 1.8 linear feet and date from 1848-1920. The collection documents Richards' personal life and his career as a landscape and seascape painter. The collection consists of correspondence, writings, business files, printed material, photographs, and other miscellaneous materials.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was donated in 1980 by Mrs. James B. Conant, Richards's granddaughter. The Archives microfilmed this portion of the collection on reels 2296-2299 upon receipt. The inventory of paintings by others was donated by Victor Spark in 1954 and filmed on reel 3470.

Related Archival Materials

Also available on microfilm at the Archives are the Geoge Whitney papers relating to William Trost Richards, 1875-1885, which includes 112 watercolors and an oil painting by William Trost Richards. These items were lent anonymously in 1979 and returned to the lender after they were filmed. They are available on reels 1497.

Available Formats

This site provides access to the papers of **William Trost Richards** in the Archives of American Art that were digitized in 2010, and total 1,295 images.

Processing Information

The entire collection was fully processed, arranged, and described by Erin Corley in 2005 and scanned in 2010 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

William Trost Richards papers, 1848-1920. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

William Trost Richards was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1833. From 1850 to 1858 he worked as a designer and illustrator of ornamental metalwork, and briefly studied draughtsmanship and painting with the German artist Paul Weber. Richards was also an active member of the Forensic and Literary Circle of Philadelphia during the early 1850s. In 1852 he had his first exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and a year later was elected a full Academician. He had great interest in landscapes and geological subjects, and spent summers sketching in the Catskills and Adirondacks. From 1855 to 1856 Richards toured Europe with William Stanley Haseltine and Alexander Lawrie, and was influenced by the Dusseldorf school of landscape painters.

Richards married aspiring poetess Anna Matlack in 1856, and they settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania, where they had eight children, five of which survived to adulthood. In 1858 he attended an exhibition of British art in Philadelphia, and was greatly influenced by the works of Pre-Raphaelite painters. He began painting outdoors, executing precise, naturalistic, yet atmospheric, landscapes. In 1862 he joined the National Academy of Design, and in 1863 joined the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art, an American Pre-Raphaelite organization. From 1868 to 1874, Richards spent summers on the East Coast and began focusing on marine subjects painted in watercolor, exhibiting often with the American Watercolor Society. Richards also traveled to Europe several times, and lived there from 1879-1880 while trying to find a new direction for his artwork. In 1881 he built a summer house for his family in Newport, Rhode Island and moved there permanently in 1890. His wife Anna died in 1900, and he continued to paint landscapes and seascapes until his death in 1905.

Scope and Contents

The William Trost Richards papers measure 1.8 linear feet and date from 1848-1920. The collection documents Richards' personal life and his career as a landscape and seascape painter. The collection consists of correspondence, writings, business files, printed material, photographs, and other miscellaneous materials.

Correspondence files date from 1851 to 1917 and include family correspondence between Richards and his wife Anna as well as with their children. Of note are letters written by William Trost Richards to his wife while he was in Europe, which include many illustrations of his travels. Also found is general correspondence of a personal and professional nature between Richards and friends, artists, art dealers, and collectors, many of whom played a prominent role in Philadelphia society. Writings include essays written by Richards, homemade magazines written and illustrated by the Richards family, and writings by his wife Anna and others. Business files contain financial, legal, and real estate records, and printed material contains an exhibition catalog from 1976, news clippings, and event programs. Miscellany found in this collection include artwork by others, and inventory of paintings by others, compiled by Richards, and an interview transcript with Miriam Thayer Richards. Photographs include images of Richards, his wife Anna, and their home in Newport, Rhode Island.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 6 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1851-1917, undated (Box 1-2; 0.7 linear feet)
- Series 2: Writings, 1849-1905, undated (Box 2-4; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 3: Business Files, 1865-1920, undated (Box 4; 3 folders)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1850-1906, 1976, undated (Box 4-5; 5 folders)
- Series 5: Miscellany, 1848-1876, undated (Box 5; 5 folders)
- Series 6: Photographs, circa 1850-1900 (Box 5; 7 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Landscape painters -- Pennsylvania -- Germantown
Landscape painting -- 19th century -- Pennsylvania -- Germantown
Marine painters -- Rhode Island -- Newport
Marine painting -- 19th century -- Rhode Island -- Newport

Types of Materials:

Daguerreotypes
Photographs

Names:

Avery, Samuel Putnam, 1822-1904
Coates, Edward Hornor, 1846-1921
Eakins, Thomas, 1844-1916
Lambdin, George Cochran, 1830-1896
Lanman, Charles, 1819-1895
Whitney, George, d. 1885
Wilcox, William H.

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1851-1917, undated

0.7 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: This series contains Richards' incoming and outgoing correspondence with family, friends, artists, dealers, and collectors, and is divided into family and general correspondence. Files arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and chronologically within each folder.

Arrangement: The Correspondence series is arranged into 2 subseries:

- 1.1: Family Correspondence, 1878-1905, undated
- 1.2: General Correspondence, 1851-1917

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

1.1: Family Correspondence, 1878-1905, undated

Scope and Contents: Family Correspondence includes letters from William Trost Richards or his wife, Anna M. Richards, to family members. The bulk of this subseries are intimate and detailed letters to their daughter Eleanor (Nelly) Richards Price concerning things such as the family, travels throughout Europe, raising children, clothing, and societal issues. Also found are letters to their son-in-law, William Price, one letter to their son Herbert, letters to their son Theodore and his wife, Miriam Thayer Richards, and letters to Anna's brother, Charles Matlack. Also of note are letters written by William Trost Richards to his wife while he was in Europe, which include many illustrations of his travels. Researchers should note that much of the correspondence was originally undated and was dated much later based on the content of the letter.

Box 1, Folder 1	William T. Richards to wife Anna, circa 1878-1885
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Box 1, Folder 2	Charles Matlack, 1896-1905, 1878-1879, undated
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Box 1, Folder 3-20	Eleanor Richards Price, circa 1880-1905, undated
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Box 1, Folder 21	William Price, circa 1880-1897
Box 1, Folder 22	Herbert Richards, 1891
Box 1, Folder 23-26	Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Richards, 1887-1905, undated 4 Folders Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)

1.2: General Correspondence, 1851-1917

Scope and Contents: General Correspondence is with friends, fellow artists, collectors, and others and includes letters to and from William Trost Richards. Correspondence is with artists Fidelity Bridges, George Cochran Lambdin, and William H. Willcox, art dealer Samuel Putnam Avery, and Edward H. Coates, President of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Also found are numerous letters to and from his major patron and collector, George Whitney, and from his friend and patron, Elias Lyman Magoon. Items of note in the miscellaneous correspondence include, an 1877 letter from Thomas Eakins, an 1881 letter from Alexander Lawrie, and an 1883 letter from Charles Lanman.

Box 1, Folder 27	Charlotte Augusta Astor, undated
Box 1, Folder 28	Samuel P. Avery, 1869-1904, undated
Box 1, Folder 29	Fidelity Bridges, undated
Box 1, Folder 30	Edward H. Coates, 1886-1905
Box 1, Folder 31	George Cochran Lambdin, 1885-1887
Box 1, Folder 32	Elias Lyman Magoon, 1871-1884
Box 2, Folder 1-2	James T. Mitchell, 1851-1853 2 Folders Image(s) Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 3	Harrison S. Morris, 1898-1905
Box 2, Folder 4	Daniel Neall, 1876, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	A. E. Outerbridge, 1887, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	George W. Outerbridge, 1894-1902
Box 2, Folder 7	John R. Sheridan, 1892-1893

Box 2, Folder 8 [George F. Shradly, 1900-1905](#)

Box 2, Folder 9 [Hannah W. Smith, 1866](#)

Box 2, Folder 10-22 [George Whitney, circa 1860-1885](#)

13 Folders

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Box 2, Folder 23 [William H. Willcox, 1854, 1879, 1885, undated](#)

Box 2, Folder 24-28 [Miscellaneous, 1853, 1864-1917, undated](#)

5 Folders

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

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[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 2: Writings, 1849-1905, undated

0.8 Linear feet (Box 2-4)

Scope and Contents: Writings include essays written by Richards in the early 1950s including "Flowers" and "The Spirit of Toil," as well as several essays for the Forensic and Literary Circle of Philadelphia. Also found are unpublished, homemade magazines, created by Richards, Anna, and their children. "London Days: A Homemade Magazine of Literature, Art, Science and Fun" was created while the family lived in London from 1879 to 1880, and upon their return the series was called "Our Own Monthly." Anna home schooled all of their children and these were made as part of their education. All of the magazines are illustrated by William and Anna.

Writings also include works by Anna, such as an edited manuscript of her poem "Chemistry" and annotated editions of her published work, *Dramatic Sonnets*. Also found is Anna's "commonplace book" filled with quotations, literary excerpts, and her own thoughts. This series also includes writings by others, including an "In Memoriam" poem for Richards by Esther Morton Smith.

Arrangement: The bulk of this series has been scanned. Three volumes of "London Days" are fragile and have not been scanned.

Box 2, Folder 29	"Flowers," 1850
Box 2, Folder 30	Forensic Literary Circle, 1850-1851
Box 3, Folder 1	Humbly Dedicated to Marie by Her Friend Will," undated
Box 3, Folder 2	"London Days," Vol.1, Part I, 1879 Notes: Not scanned
Box 3, Folder 3	"London Days," Vol.1, Part II, 1880 Notes: Not scanned
Box 3, Folder 4	"London Days," Vol.1, Part III, 1880 Notes: Not scanned
Box 3, Folder 5	"London Days," undated
Box 3, Folder 6	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 2, No. 18, March 5, 1881
Box 3, Folder 7	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 2, No. 19, April 2, 1881
Box 3, Folder 8	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 2, No. 20, May 7, 1881
Box 3, Folder 9	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 2, No. 23, January 7, 1882
Box 3, Folder 10	"Our Own Monthly," No. 25, circa 1882
Box 3, Folder 11	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 26, April 1, 1882
Box 3, Folder 12	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 27, December 9, 1882

Box 3, Folder 13	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 28, January 7, 1883
Box 3, Folder 14	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 29, February 3, 1883
Box 3, Folder 15	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 30, March 3, 1883
Box 3, Folder 16	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 31, April 7, 1883
Box 3, Folder 17	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 32, May 1883
Box 3, Folder 18	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 33, November 3, 1883
Box 3, Folder 19	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 34, December 1, 1883
Box 4, Folder 1	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 35, January 5, 1884
Box 4, Folder 2	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 36, February 2, 1884
Box 4, Folder 3	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 3, No. 38, April 5, 1884
Box 4, Folder 4	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 39, January 3, 1885
Box 4, Folder 5	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 40, February 7, 1885
Box 4, Folder 6	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 41, April 4, 1885
Box 4, Folder 7	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 42, November 7, 1885
Box 4, Folder 8	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 43, December 5, 1885
Box 4, Folder 9	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 44, January 2, 1886
Box 4, Folder 10	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 46, March 6, 1886
Box 4, Folder 11	"Our Own Monthly," Vol. 4, No. 47, April 3, 1886
Box 4, Folder 12	"Our Own Monthly," undated
Box 4, Folder 13	"The Spirit of Toil," 1852
Box 4, Folder 14	"Sunlight," 1851
Box 4, Folder 15	Miscellaneous writings by Richards, 1852, undated
Box 4, Folder 16	Anna M. Richards, "Chemistry," undated
Box 4, Folder 17	Anna M. Richards, Commonplace Book, Vol. 4, undated

Box 4, Folder 18 [Anna M. Richards, Dramatic Sonnets, 1881](#)

Box 4, Folder 19 [Writings by Others, 1849-1860, undated](#)

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Series 3: Business Files, 1865-1920, undated

3 Folders (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: Business files include various financial statements for the sale of artwork, purchase of materials, and shipping expenses. Also found are three copies of legal documents concerning Richards' artwork while living in London, and various real estate documents for his property in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

Arrangement: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 4, Folder 20	Financial Statements, 1865-1920, undated
Box 4, Folder 21	Legal Documents, 1879
Box 4, Folder 22	Real Estate Documents, 1874-1890, undated

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1850-1906, undated

5 Folders (Box 4-5)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes an exhibition catalog for a Richards exhibition at the Art Association of Newport and numerous clippings concerning Richards' artwork, his death, and a major auction of his work in 1906. Also found are event programs for gatherings of the Forensic and Literary Circle.

Arrangement: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 4, Folder 23	Catalog, William Trost Richards, 1976
Box 5, Folder 1	Event Programs, Forensic and Literary Circle, 1850-1953
Box 5, Folder 2-4	News Clippings, 1871-1906, undated 3 Folders Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)

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Series 5: Miscellany, 1848-1876, undated

5 Folders (Box 5)

Scope and Contents: This series contains artwork by others, including small paintings and prints, an award to Richards from the United State Centennial Commission, and a handwritten list of paintings by others, including painter, title, and dimensions of each work. Also found is a transcript of an interview with Mrs. Theodore (Miriam) Richards, primarily discussing her memories of Anna M. Richards.

Arrangement: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 5, Folder 5	Artwork by Others, 1848, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Award Certificate, 1876
Box 5, Folder 7	Inventory of Paintings by Others, undated
Box 5, Folder 8	Transcript, Mrs. Theodore Richards, undated
Box 5, Folder 9	Unidentified Sketch, undated

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Series 6: Photographs, circa 1850-1900

7 Folders (Box 5)

Scope and Contents: Photographs include portraits of William Trost Richards as a young man, as well as later in his life. Two photographs of note are a daguerreotype of Richards from the 1850s, and a photograph of Richards painting in his studio. Also found are portraits of Anna Richards, two of Richards' children, possibly Theodore and Anna, a pendant with photographs of William and Anna, and photographs of the Richards family home on Conanicut Island.

Arrangement: This series has been scanned in its entirety except for negatives.

Box 5, Folder 10-11	William Trost Richards, circa 1850-1900 2 Folders Image(s) Image(s)
Box 5, Folder 12	William Trost Richards, Daguerreotype, circa 1850 Notes: See Black Cabinet, Drawer 8: Cased Photographs
Box 5, Folder 13	Anna Matlack Richards, circa 1880s
Box 5, Folder 14	Portrait Pendant of W. T. Richards and wife Anna, circa 1860
Box 5, Folder 15	Two Richards children, circa 1860s
Box 5, Folder 16	Conanicut House, circa 1885
Box 5, Folder 17	Negatives, William Trost Richards, circa 1850-1900 Notes: Not scanned

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