



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Houghton Cranford Smith
Papers, 1890-1991, in the Archives of American Art

Eden Orelove

Funding for a portion of the processing was
provided by the Laura Cranford Smith Art Trust.

September 19, 2011

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

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Houghton Cranford Smith papers
Identifier:	AAA.smithoug
Date:	1890-1991
Extent:	2.2 Linear feet
Creator:	Smith, Houghton Cranford, 1887-1983
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter Houghton Cranford Smith measure 2.2 linear feet and date from 1890-1991. They consist of eight scrapbooks compiled by his widow containing correspondence with family and friends, biographical materials, sketches, school work, extensive clippings, exhibition catalogs, travel documents and numerous photographs of family and friends.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Florence Cranford Smith Shepard donated her father's papers in 1993-1994.

Alternative Forms Available

The bulk of the collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reels 5029-5030 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The donor Florence Cranford Smith, assisted by AAA staff Arleen Pancza-Graham, organized and arranged most of the collection into eight scrapbooks. The donor also provided notations and detailed item lists for the contents of each scrapbook. The collection was microfilmed shortly after receipt on reels 5029-5030. The papers were further arranged and a finding aid created by Eden Orelove in September, 2011.

Preferred Citation

Houghton Cranford Smith papers, 1890-1991. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The Houghton Cranford Smith 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.

Biographical Note

Painter Houghton Cranford Smith (1887-1983) traveled extensively and painted throughout his life. He lived and studied art in France, South America, New York City and Provincetown. He had three children, Houghton Jr., Gerrit and Florence with his first wife, Elena Peralta. He held the position of Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas department of Drawing and Painting from 1921-1925.

Smith became widely recognized for his artwork in the 1940s. He married his second wife, Laura Gilbert Williams, in 1941. He has exhibited at many venues including the Passedoit Gallery, Corcoran Gallery, Richmond Museum, Columbia Art Museum, Walker Memorial Gallery, Art Institute of Kansas City and the Provincetown Art Association. For six consecutive years he was represented at Carnegie Institute's annual invitation exhibition.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of painter Houghton Cranford Smith measure 2.2 linear feet and date from 1890-1991. They consist of eight scrapbooks compiled by his widow containing correspondence with family and friends, biographical materials, sketches, school work, extensive clippings, exhibition catalogs, travel documents and numerous photographs of family and friends.

Biographical materials include photographs of Smith, of his artwork and of friends and family in Provincetown and New Mexico, school documents from the Foebel Academy, the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and the Art Students' League, autographed menus, correspondence, including postcards and letters to family and friends sent from Bermuda and Jamaica, customs declarations, exhibition catalogs, newspaper clippings, a passport to Chile, newsletters, and Smith's teaching contract from the University of Kansas. Additionally, there are significant photographs and letters documenting Smith's art studies with E. Ambrose Webster at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

The collection also includes Smith's correspondence from France and South America. A significant portion of the collection includes papers from his time in France from 1913-1914, where he studied at the Parisian art school Academie Julian. These include a log from a tandem bicycle trip with classmate Harold P. Browne, an invitation to the Bal Randolphe, a Browne Art Class brochure and a narrative entitled "A Party of Fugitives from France," which describes Smith's forced fleeing from France after the French mobilization in 1914. There are also papers describing his South American travels which include notes and correspondence about Argentina, Uruguay and his time in Chile, which spans five years.

Materials documenting Smith's return to France and studies at the Academie Ozenfant from 1926 to 1933 include Smith's passport, ship passenger lists and other travel documents, correspondence with family, French identification letters, exhibition catalogs, newspaper clippings and his Academie Ozenfant list of classes and student card. Of particular note are correspondence from and a picture of Sir Walter Kitchener, governor of Bermuda, and letters from wife Elena Peralta to her parents-in-law. Topics covered in the correspondence of this scrapbook include sons Houghton Jr. and Gerrit and the birth of daughter Florence, financial difficulties, art teachers Amadee Ozenfant and Andree L'hote and the family's travels to Bermuda, New Mexico and New York City.

Materials from later in Smith's life include correspondence from Smith to second wife Laura Gilbert Williams, exhibition catalogs and registers, photographs of artwork, newspaper clippings of reviews received for Smith's exhibited paintings and congratulatory letters from family and friends on Smith's successful exhibits and feature article in *The American Artist*. Additionally, there is significant correspondence with the Passedoit Gallery, Homer Saint-Gaudens of the Carnegie Institute regarding the exhibition and purchase of Smith's artwork and Smith's gifted painting to the Butler Institute of American Art. Additionally, there are several biographical newspaper articles and a biographical sketch written by his wife Laura after his death.

Of note is the artist's original handwritten notes and final published version of his reminiscence "The Provincetown I Remember," notes about painting with various colors and color charts, related assignments from Smith's Color Theory Class, a signed copy of the book *Color* by E. Ambrose Webster, Smith's former art teacher, pencil sketches, a class notebook about lettering and an address book.

Arrangement

As requested by the donor, the original arrangement has been maintained, but the collection has been rehoused for preservation purposes. The collection is arranged as 4 series.

- Series 1: Scrapbooks, 1890-1991 (Boxes 1-2; 1.5 linear feet)
- Series 2: Writings, 1963-1991 (Box 2; 2 folders)
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1916-1991 (Box 2, OV 4; 6 folders)
- Series 4: Miscellany, circa 1920s-1977 (Box 2, OV 3; 7 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art students -- France -- Paris
Art, American -- Massachusetts -- Provincetown
Color guides
Color in art

Types of Materials:

Notebooks
Notes
Photographs
Postcards
Scrapbooks
Sketches

Names:

Académie Julian
Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Students
Butler Institute of American Art
Cape Cod School of Art
Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art
Lhote, André, 1885-1962

Ozenfant, Amédée, 1886-1966
Passedoit Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
Pratt Institute. Art School -- Students
Saint-Gaudens, Homer, b. 1880
Smith, Laura Gilbert Williams
University of Kansas -- Faculty
Webster, E. Ambrose (Edwin Ambrose), 1869-1935

Occupations:

Art teachers -- Kansas
Painters -- Massachusetts -- Provincetown

Geographic Names:

Chile -- description and travel
Paris (France) -- description and travel
Provincetown (Mass.) -- Description and Travel

Container Listing

Series 1: Scrapbooks, 1890-1991

(Boxes 1-2; 1.5 linear feet)

This series contains materials from 1890-1991 and forms the bulk of the collection. The scrapbooks consist primarily of letters, photographs and memorabilia. Materials document Smith's travels and studies in France, New York, Bermuda, New Mexico, Jamaica and South America and include correspondence, photographs, travel documents, exhibition catalogs, newsletters, notes, sketches, student records and newspaper and magazine clippings. The arrangement of the material is generally chronological.

Box 1, Folder 1-21

Scrapbook 1: Biographical Materials, 1890-1926

A large portion of this scrapbook focuses on the period of Smith's life spent studying art at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Included are photographs of his artwork, friends and family in Provincetown and New Mexico, Smith as a child and young man and his first wife. A high school transcript, commencement program and other school pamphlets, autographed menus, correspondence, including postcards and letters to family, customs declarations, exhibition catalogs, newspaper clippings, a passport to Chile, newsletters and Smith's teaching contract from the University of Kansas are also included. Postcards from his first wife, Elena Peralta, discuss the beginning of their relationship.

Box 1, Folder 22-45

Scrapbook 2: Letters from France, 1913-1914

This scrapbook is mostly comprised of Smith's correspondence from France, particularly letters written to family and friends, in 1913 and 1914. Smith traveled to France in 1913 to attend the Academie Julian, a Parisian art school. The letters remark on his studies and life in France. Also included in this scrapbook is a log from a tandem bicycle trip with classmate Harold P. Browne, an invitation to the Bal Randolphe, a Browne Art Class brochure and a narrative entitled "A Party of Fugitives from France". This final document describes Smith's forced fleeing from France after the French mobilization in 1914.

Box 1, Folder 46-57

Scrapbook 3: Letters from Chile, 1916-1920

This scrapbook include notes and correspondence about Smith's travels in South America and home in Chile. He left for South America from Brooklyn on October 19, 1916 with his "Uncle" Steve, a family friend. Smith writes at length about his train trip across Argentina to Los Andes, Chile and about his explorations of Los Andes, Puerto Varas and Santiago. He also writes about his financial difficulties and his artwork.

Box 1, Folder 58-70

Scrapbook 4: Letters from Spain and France, 1926-1933

This scrapbook contains Smith's passport, ship passenger lists and other travel documents, correspondence with family, French identification letters, exhibition catalogs, newspaper clippings and Academie Ozenfant list of classes and student card. Of particular note are correspondence from and a picture of Sir Walter Kitchener, governor of Bermuda, and letters from Elena to her parents-in-law. Topics covered in the correspondence include family life with sons Houghton Jr. and Gerrit and the birth of daughter Florence, financial difficulties,

his art studies and the family's travels. During this period the family moved from New York to France in 1926, traveled in Spain, returned to New York in 1928, traveled in both Bermuda and Spain for several months before returning to France and settling in Paris. Smith attended the Academie Ozenfant and studied under Andre L'hote and Amadee Ozenfant.

- Box 1, Folder 71-81 Scrapbook 5: The Exhibition Years (1 of 2), 1940-1954
This scrapbook includes correspondence from Houghton to second wife Laura Gilbert Williams as well as their marriage certificate and passport papers for their honeymoon in Guatemala, sketches, exhibition catalogs, photographs, registers, correspondence and newspaper clippings of his wedding announcement and reviews received for his exhibited paintings. There are also congratulatory letters from family and friends about his successful exhibitions and significant correspondence with the Passedoit Gallery and Homer Saint-Gaudens of the Carnegie Institute regarding the exhibition and purchase of his artwork.
- Box 2, Folder 1-10 Scrapbook 5: The Exhibition Years (2 of 2), 1940-1954
- Box 2, Folder 11-20 Scrapbook 6: Letters and Printed Material, 1957-1991
This scrapbook is comprised mostly of correspondence from later in his life as well as newspaper clippings and exhibition programs. There is an especially large section of correspondence from fans and friends congratulating him on his feature article in *The American Artist*. There are also a substantial number of newspaper articles and correspondence about Houghton's gifted painting to the Butler Institute of American Art. Of note are biographical newspaper articles and a biographical sketch written by his wife, after his death.
- Box 2, Folder 21-30 Scrapbook 7: Charts and Notes on Color, circa 1920s
This scrapbook consists primarily of handwritten notes about painting with various colors and color charts from circa 1920s. Also included are related assignments from Smith's Color Theory Class and a signed copy of the book "Color" by E. Ambrose Webster, Smith's former art teacher.
- Box 2, Folder 31-38 Scrapbook 8: Class Sketches and Notes, circa 1920s
This scrapbook contains materials from circa 1920s which include pencil sketches, mostly of nude figures, handwritten art class notes and a price list for Rembrandt oil and water colors.

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Series 2: Writings, 1963-1991

(Box 2; 2 folders)

Series II consists of writings from 1963 and 1991 which include Smith's handwritten manuscript and the published version of "The Provincetown I Remember". This memoir recalls the beginnings of the Provincetown artists' colony, c. 1908-1914. His family edited and published his recollections posthumously in conjunction with exhibitions of Smith's Provincetown paintings in New York and in Provincetown.

Box 2, Folder 39 Manuscript of "The Provincetown I Remember", 1963

Box 2, Folder 40 Published Book "The Provincetown I Remember", 1991

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Series 3: Printed Material, 1916-1991

(Box 2, OV 4; 6 folders)

The material in the Printed Matter series dates from 1944-1992. It includes exhibition catalogues from the Carnegie Institute and posthumous exhibitions in Provincetown and at the Grace Borgenicht Gallery in New York. Magazine articles, including the June 1976 American Artist magazine that features Smith, reviews of a posthumous exhibition and several exhibition announcement booklets form a substantial part of this series.

Box 2, Folder 41	Carnegie Institute Exhibition Catalogs, 1944-1947
Box 2, Folder 42	Carnegie Institute Exhibition Catalogs, 1948-1949
Box 2, Folder 43	Other Exhibition Catalogs, 1990-1991
Box 2, Folder 44	Clippings, 1976-1990
Box 2, Folder 45	Exhibition Announcements, 1990-1991
Box OV 4	Oversize Newspaper Clipping, 1916

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Series 4: Miscellany, circa 1920s-1977

(Box 2, OV 3; 7 folders)

The papers in series IV date from circa 1920s to 1977. These include an address book, nude sketches, a Bulletin from the University of Kansas, a class notebook on lettering, a photograph of Smith taken in 1977 and the etching "The Crucifixion" by Oscar Gieberich.

Box 2, Folder 46	Class Notebook on Lettering, undated
Box 2, Folder 47	Loose Materials from Notebook on Lettering, undated
Box 2, Folder 48	University of Kansas Bulletin, 1922
Box 2, Folder 49	Address Book, circa 1920s-1930s
Box 2, Folder 50	Nude Sketches, undated
Box 2, Folder 51	Photograph of Houghton Cranford Smith, 1977
Box OV 3, Folder 1	Oversized Etching, "The Crucifixion", circa 1920s

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