



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Lilly Martin Spencer Papers,
1828-1966, in the Archives of American Art

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2019/12/03

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Lilly Martin Spencer papers
Identifier:	AAA.spenlill
Date:	1828-1966
Extent:	0.9 Linear feet
Creator:	Spencer, Lilly Martin, 1822-1902
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of portrait and genre painter Lilly Martin Spencer, measure 0.9 linear feet and date from 1828-1966. The collection includes biographical material, scattered lists, notes, receipts, and legal documents relating to Spencer's life and work, Spencer's business and family correspondence, printed material, a lithograph, photographs of Spencer and others, and photographs of Spencer's artwork.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the Archives of American Art in 1971 by Lillian Spencer Gates, Spencer's granddaughter.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming on reel 131 including family history; biographical material; circa 50 photographs of Spencer and her paintings; M.A. thesis, "Lilly Martin Spencer: American Painter of the Nineteenth Century," by Ann Byrd Schumer; articles about Spencer's life and work, 1959; and a list of paintings owned by her granddaughter, Lillian Spencer Gates. Loaned materials were returned to the donor and are not described in the collection container inventory.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art also has microfilm (reel 132) of the Martin family papers and Campus Martius Museum records regarding Lilly Martin Spencer. Originals are located at the Campus Martius Museum, Ohio Historical Society.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection are available on 35mm microfilm reel 131 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and was microfilmed on reel 131. The collection was processed and described in a finding aid by Stephanie Ashley in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Lilly Martin Spencer papers, 1828-1966. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is temporarily closed to researchers due to archival processing and digitization. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

New York and Ohio painter Lilly Martin Spencer (1822-1902) was known for her popular portrait paintings and humorous domestic genre scenes.

Spencer was born Angelique Marie Martin in England to French parents, Giles and Angelique Martin, who were followers of the French social critic Charles Fournier. The family came to New York in 1830, moved to Marietta, Ohio, in 1833 and, in 1845, co-founded the communal settlement, Trumbull Phalanx, near Braceville, Ohio. In 1848, after her marriage to Benjamin Spencer at the age of 22, Spencer returned to New York. She achieved much success as a painter and was the main breadwinner for her family while giving birth to thirteen children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. The family moved several times, to Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio; Newark, New Jersey; and Highlands and Poughkeepsie, New York.

Scope and Contents

The papers of portrait and genre painter Lilly Martin Spencer, measure 0.9 linear feet and date from 1828-1966. The collection includes biographical material, scattered lists, notes, receipts, and legal documents relating to Spencer's life and work, Spencer's business and family correspondence, printed material, a lithograph, photographs of Spencer and others, and photos of Spencer's artwork.

The collection documents Spencer's popularity and success as a painter, her involvement with art associations and civic organizations such as Sorosis, and her personal life as a wife, mother, and breadwinner through correspondence with family, artists including John Sartain and Benjamin John Lossing, dealers including Samuel Putnam Avery, writers and editors such as Robert Green Ingersoll and Fannie Raymond Bitter, and social activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as four series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material and Other Papers, 1853-1959 (0.3 linear feet; Box 1, OV 3)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, 1828-1966 (0.3 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
 - Series 3: Printed Material, 1857-1961 (0.2 linear feet; Box 2, OV 3)
 - Series 4: Photographs, circa 1890-circa 1950 (0.1 linear feet; Box 2)
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Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women painters

Names:

Avery, Samuel Putnam, 1822-1904
Ingersoll, Robert Green, 1833-1899
Sartain, John, 1808-1897
Sorosis (New York, N.Y.)
Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 1815-1902

Occupations:

Genre painters -- New York (State)
Genre painters -- Ohio
Portrait painters -- New York (State)
Portrait painters -- Ohio

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material and Other Papers, 1853-1959

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 3)

In addition to biographical material this series contains scattered documentation relating to different aspects of Spencer's life and career. There are five calling cards and a card with Spencer's signature; a certificate for a silver medal awarded for Spencer's painting *Power of Fashion*; exhibition invitations and tickets including a member's ticket to the 1860 National Academy of Design annual exhibition, and Spencer's identity card for the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia; and legal documentation of Spencer's 1857 purchase of real estate in Newark, New Jersey, and a document granting power of attorney in 1901.

A folder of notes and writings by Spencer includes an 1858 list of her pictures for a raffle, a poem about her Hudson River home, and a fragment of a notebook with a "List of subscribers" for a photograph of Spencer's painting, *Truth Unveiling Falsehood*. Records related to Spencer's membership in the professional women's association, Sorosis, include documentation of her election as a member in 1869, and invitations to events. Records relating to *Truth Unveiling Falsehood* include published descriptions of the painting, a poem and a letter written by unidentified people in response to the picture, and a photograph of the painting by A. J. Daniels of London, England, where it was probably sold by Spencer's daughter, Lilly Spencer Redding, circa 1914. Also found is a lithograph by A. Sirouy.

Other posthumous records include a folder of receipts for storage of Spencer's paintings in various warehouses; and records related to Campus Martius Museum, including a list of Spencer's records given to the museum by the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society in Columbus, Ohio; a typescript of "examples of work to be on display" at the museum including transcribed letters and printed material relating to Spencer; and genealogical notes on the Martin family.

Box 1, Folder 1	Calling Cards, circa 1860-1902
Box 1, Folder 2	Campus Martius Museum Records, circa 1949-1959
Oversize 3	Certificate, Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association Silver Medal for <i>Power of Fashion</i> , 1853
Box 1, Folder 3	Exhibition Invitations/Tickets, 1860-1879
Box 1, Folder 4	Land Purchase Agreement, 1857
Oversize 3	Lithograph by A. Sirouy, 1858
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes and Writings by Spencer, circa 1850s-1860s
Box 1, Folder 6	Notes on Spencer, circa 1900
Box 1, Folder 7	Papers Related to <i>Truth Unveiling Falsehood</i> , circa 1870-circa 1914

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|---------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 8 | "Partial List of Oil Paintings" by Spencer, circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Power of Attorney Document, 1901 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Receipts for Storage of Paintings, 1908-1950 |
| Box 1, Folder 11-12 | Sorosis, circa 1869-circa 1902 |

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1828-1966

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Early correspondence focuses primarily on preparations for the Martin family's emigration to the United States and includes letters of reference for Giles Martin prior to his departure from England. From the 1840s on there is correspondence between Spencer and her parents documenting daily routines, life events including the births of Spencer's children, and discussions of her work, paintings, and other professional activities.

Professional correspondence relates to Spencer's work as a painter, including arrangements for exhibitions, her involvement in various professional associations, and sales and commissions for various people. Correspondents include artists, authors, editors, and historians and include Samuel Putnam Avery, Fannie Raymond Bitter, Charles H. Brainard, Cyrus Butler, T. Apolson Cheney, Mary Mapes Dodge, Jessie Benton Fremont, Robert Green Ingersoll, Jenny Lind, Rembrandt Lockwood, Benson John Lossing, John Sartain, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Further detail on correspondents is provided in the Container Listing.

Box 1, Folder 13	Correspondence, 1828-1829
Box 1, Folder 14	Correspondence, 1830-1833
Box 1, Folder 15	Correspondence, 1841-1845 Image(s) Includes letter from Edward D. Mansfield regarding exhibition of Spencer's paintings; and an exchange between Nicholas Longworth and S. P Hildreth regarding exhibiting Spencer's paintings in Cincinnati.
Box 1, Folder 16	Correspondence, 1846-1849 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 17	Correspondence, 1850-1853
Box 1, Folder 18	Correspondence, 1854-1859
Box 1, Folder 19	Correspondence, 1860-1867, 1875
Box 1, Folder 20	Correspondence, 1868-1869
Box 1, Folder 21	Correspondence, 1870-1873 Includes letter from author Mary Mapes Dodge of <i>Home and Hearth</i> .
Box 2, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1874-1875
Box 2, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1876-1879 Includes two letters from John Sartain as Chief of Art Bureau of the 1876 International Exhibition, and other letters relating to Spencer's entry in the exhibition; also letters from Cyrus Butler and the Union League Club.

- Box 2, Folder 3 Correspondence, 1880-1882
Includes letters from Fannie Raymond Bitter; Cyrus Butler; and Benson John Lossing.
- Box 2, Folder 4 Correspondence, 1883-1889
Includes letters from Samuel P. Avery
- Box 2, Folder 5 Correspondence, 1890-1899
Includes letters from Robert Green Ingersoll; and from Spencer to the National Academy of Design with a description of three pictures she's submitting, including *Blind Faith*
- Box 2, Folder 6 Correspondence, circa 1880s-circa 1890s
- Box 2, Folder 7 Correspondence, 1900-1902
Includes a letter from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, her calling card and a signed print of Stanton.
- Box 2, Folder 8 Correspondence, Posthumous, 1906-1966
Includes letter to Spencer's daughter from her cousin Georgiana Stow; and copies of several letters relating to interest in Spencer's paintings.

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Series 3: Printed Material, 1857-1961

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2, OV 3)

Printed material includes an 1857 National Academy of Design exhibition catalog with annotations, an 1890 auction catalog featuring paintings by Spencer, and a 1959 catalog for an exhibition of Spencer's paintings at the Ohio State Museum. Also found are articles about Spencer in newspapers and periodicals, including *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*.

Box 2, Folder 9	Catalogs, 1857
Box 2, Folder 10	Catalogs, 1890, 1959
Box 2, Folder 11	Catalogs, Photocopy of 1841 Documentation (of Marietta, Ohio exhibition), circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 12	<i>Cosmopolitan Art Journal</i> , 1850s-1860s
Box 2, Folder 13	<i>Cosmopolitan Art Journal</i> , 1850s-1860s
Box 2, Folder 14	National Academy of Design Act of Incorporation, 1858
Box 2, Folder 15	News Articles, Clippings, circa 1850s-circa 1870s
Box 2, Folder 16	News Articles, Clippings, 1900-1902
Box 2, Folder 17	News Articles, Clippings, 1944-1961
Oversize 3	News Articles, Clippings, 1869-1966

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Series 4: Photographs, circa 1890-circa 1950

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

Photographs include six photos of Spencer, including one of her at her easel, two photos of Spencer's sister, Mary Stowe, and one photo of her cousin, Lilly Stowe. Photos of others include two of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of poet Mrs. Francis Gage, and two of Wallace Bruce, who was a poet and American Consul to Scotland and gave the eulogy at Spencer's funeral.

Photos of Spencer's artwork include a portrait of Robert Green Ingersoll, and a photo of an angel in a cloud which is hand painted but has no identifying information.

Box 2, Folder 18	Photographs of Spencer, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 19	Photographs of Family, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 20	Photographs of Others, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 21	Photographs of Artwork, circa 1900-circa 1914, circa 1950

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