



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Charles E. Waltensperger Papers, 1893-1931, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Charles E. Waltensperger papers
Date:	1893-1931
Identifier:	AAA.waltchar
Creator:	Waltensperger, Charles E., 1871-1931
Extent:	1.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	This small collection of scattered papers of painter and illustrator Charles E. Waltensperger measures 1.2 linear feet and dates from 1893-1931. Papers include biographical material, scattered correspondence between family members, sales records, engagement diaries, notes, sketches of the human form, printed material, and photographs of Waltensperger, his family, colleagues, and travel scenes.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Charles E. Waltensperger papers were donated in 1973 by the artist's brother, George Waltensperger, through Mrs. Beverly Bassett who was conducting a survey of Michigan artists. In 1979, two photographs and two letters were donated.

Processing Information

The papers were processed to an intermediate level by Jean Fitzgerald in April 2007.

Preferred Citation

Charles E. Waltensperger papers, 1893-1931. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Charles E. Waltensperger was born on April 10, 1871 in Detroit, Michigan, the son of Emily and Fred Waltensperger, a merchant.

Waltensperger studied art at the Julius Melchers School with fellow students Joseph Kraemer, Myron Barlow, and Fred Leipziger. While working as an elevator operator for the *Detroit Free Press*, Waltensperger made sketches of the passengers. This attracted the attention of publisher William E. Quinby, who was so impressed with his drawings that he paid Waltensperger's tuition at the school of the Detroit Museum of Art.

During the early 1890s, Waltensperger exhibited his work in a competition at the Detroit Institute of Arts and was awarded a James E. Scripps scholarship that financed his art studies for two years in Europe. He studied both at the Académie des Beaux Arts under Jean-Léon Gérôme, and at the Académie Julian in Paris in 1893. Upon his return to the United States, Waltensperger was employed as a commercial artist and worked as an illustrator for the *Detroit Free Press*. He also illustrated books written by M. Quad, the pseudonym of humorist Charles Bertrand Lewis.

Waltensperger later established his own studio and turned his interest to creating oil paintings, primarily of Dutch interiors. He traveled extensively in Europe and in New England. He was a member of a group of Detroit artists known as the Hopkin Club that held exhibitions at the Old Detroit Museum of Art before they established the Scarab Club.

Waltensperger never married and during the last five years of his life, ill health forced him to curtail his travels. He died of a heart attack on December 12, 1931 in Detroit.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of painter and illustrator Charles E. Waltensperger date from 1893-1931 and measure 1.2 linear feet. Biographical material includes passports and membership cards, including one for the Scarab Club. Letters are generally from members of the Waltensperger family discussing travels. One letter from Waltensperger briefly mentions his studies at the Académie des Beaux Arts and his instructor, Jean-Léon Gérôme, "who is perhaps the best that ever happened. He is very severe and no fancy stuff goes with him." Business records consists primarily of receipts, but also include account books documenting sales. Also found within the papers are annotated engagement diaries, notebooks that contain addresses, notes about art, and annotated sketches, and miscellaneous notes. There is one folder of Waltensperger's artwork consisting of sketches of the human form. Printed material including clippings and exhibition catalogs relating to Waltensperger and others. Photographs found here are of Waltensperger, his family and friends, and scenes from his travels.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1905-1931 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 2: Letters, 1899-1931 (Box 1; 19 folders)
- Series 3: Business Records, 1925-1931 (Box 1; 4 folders)
- Series 4: Engagement Diaries, 1914-1931 (Box 1; 6 folders)
- Series 5: Notes and Writings, 1913-1931 (Box 1; 8 folders)
- Series 6: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1930 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 7: Printed Material, 1896-1931 (Box 1; 19 folders)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1890-circa 1930 (Box 1, 2; 25 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Illustrators -- Michigan -- Detroit
Painters -- Michigan -- Detroit

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Académie des beaux-arts (France) -- Students
Gérôme, Jean Léon, 1824-1904

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1905-1931

(Box 1; 2 folders)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material consists of three passports, identification cards, a voter's registration card, and membership cards for the Detroit Young Men's Christian Association and the Scarab Club.

Box 1, Folder 1 Passports, 1905-1925

Box 1, Folder 2 Identification, Registration, and Membership Cards, 1928-1931

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Series 2: Letters, 1899-1931

(Box 1; 19 folders)

Scope and Contents: Scattered letters are primarily between members of the Waltensperger family describing their travels. One letter from Waltensperger briefly mentions classes at the Académie des Beaux Arts and his instructor, Jean-Léon Gérôme, "who is perhaps the best that ever happened. He is very severe and no fancy stuff goes with him."

Arrangement: Letters are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 3	Letters, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Letters, 1899
Box 1, Folder 5	Letters, 1905
Box 1, Folder 6	Letters, 1906
Box 1, Folder 7	Letters, 1914-1918
Box 1, Folder 8	Letters, 1920-1924
Box 1, Folder 9	Letters, 1925
Box 1, Folder 10	Letters, 1926
Box 1, Folder 11	Letters, 1927-1928
Box 1, Folder 12	Letters, 1929
Box 1, Folder 13-16	Letters, 1930
Box 1, Folder 17-21	Letters, 1931

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Series 3: Business Records, 1925-1931

(Box 1; 4 folders)

Scope and Contents: Business records include handwritten account books listing prices and sales of artwork, a bank book listing financial transactions, and studio inventories listing prices for artwork and studio furnishings. Also included are miscellaneous receipts for frames, shipment of artwork, travel expenses, and insurance payments.

Box 1, Folder 22 Account Books and Bank Book, 1925-1929

Box 1, Folder 23 Studio Inventory Lists, 1926, undated

Box 1, Folder 24-25 Miscellaneous Receipts, 1925-1931, undated

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Series 4: Engagement Diaries, 1914-1931

(Box 1; 6 folders)

Scope and Contents: Twelve engagement diaries contain very brief entries describing daily activities, small drawings, and miscellaneous annotations.

Arrangement: Diaries are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 26 Engagement Diaries, 1914-1918

Box 1, Folder 27 Engagement Diaries, 1919-1920

Box 1, Folder 28 Engagement Diaries, 1921-1922

Box 1, Folder 29 Engagement Diaries, 1923-1925

Box 1, Folder 30 Engagement Diaries, 1927

Box 1, Folder 31 Engagement Diaries, 1928-1931

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Series 5: Notes and Writings, 1913-1931

(Box 1; 8 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series primarily consists of notebooks that contain miscellaneous addresses, notes on light and color, and annotated sketches. There are also addresses of models and miscellaneous notes primarily concerning Waltensperger's thoughts about painting and other art-related topics.

Box 1, Folder 32-36	Notebooks, 1913-1931, undated
Box 1, Folder 37	Addresses of Models, 1931, undated
Box 1, Folder 38-39	Miscellaneous Notes, 1924, undated

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Series 6: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1930

(Box 1; 1 folder)

Scope and Contents: Artwork consists of loose sketches by Waltensperger of human figures and a peacock.

Box 1, Folder 40

Loose sketches, circa 1890-circa 1930

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Series 7: Printed Material, 1896-1931

(Box 1; 19 folders)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes clippings concerning art, health, and financial investment, exhibition announcements and catalogs for Waltensperger and others, a Scarab Club yearbook, travel brochures, brochures concerning Christian topics, and miscellaneous printed material.

Box 1, Folder 41-43	Clippings, undated
Box 1, Folder 44	Clippings, 1896-1898
Box 1, Folder 45	Clippings, 1912-1915
Box 1, Folder 46	Clippings, 1916-1918
Box 1, Folder 47	Clippings, 1926-1927
Box 1, Folder 48	Clippings, 1928
Box 1, Folder 49	Clippings, 1929
Box 1, Folder 50	Clippings, 1930
Box 1, Folder 51	Clippings, 1931
Box 1, Folder 52	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Waltensperger, 1927-1929
Box 1, Folder 53	Exhibition Catalog for Others, 1915
Box 1, Folder 54	Scarab Club Yearbook, 1928
Box 1, Folder 55	Travel Brochures, 1925-1928, undated
Box 1, Folder 56	Brochures Concerning Christian Topics, 1914-1930, undated
Box 1, Folder 57	Miscellaneous Brochures, 1931, undated
Box 1, Folder 58	Books, The Bible and The Merchant of Venice, 1917, undated
Box 1, Folder 59	Miscellaneous Printed Material, undated

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Series 8: Photographs, circa 1890-circa 1930

(Boxes 1-2; 26 folders)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Waltensperger, an art class at the Académie Julian, and of Waltensperger's family and friends. Travel photographs show scenes in New England and Europe, including Belgium, Holland, and Italy. There are also photographs relating to various topics of interest to Waltensperger.

Box 1, Folder 60	Photographs of Waltensperger, undated
Box 1, Folder 61	Photograph of Waltensperger and Art Students at the Académie Julian, 1893
Box 1, Folder 62-67	Photographs of Friends, undated
Box 2, Folder 1	Photographs of Native Americans, undated
Box 2, Folder 2-3	Photographs of Miscellaneous Children, undated
Box 2, Folder 4-5	Photographs of Miscellaneous Animals, undated
Box 2, Folder 6-12	Photographs of New England Scenes, undated
Box 2, Folder 13-14	Photographs of European Scenes, undated
Box 2, Folder 15-16	Photographs of Miscellaneous Houses, undated
Box 2, Folder 17	Photographs of Artwork, undated
Box 2, Folder 18	Unprinted Negatives, undated

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