



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Cady Wells Papers, 1913-1968, in the Archives of American Art

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

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Cady Wells papers
<b>Date:</b>	1913-1968
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.wellcady
<b>Creator:</b>	Wells, Cady, 1904-1954
<b>Extent:</b>	4.3 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter Cady Wells measure 4.3 linear feet and date from 1913 to 1968. The collection provides a range of documentation of Wells' life and career, namely as a landscape artist in New Mexico and as a servicemember of the United States Army during World War II. Among these materials are twenty-two personal journals; correspondence with friends, family, and art organizations; preliminary sketches and watercolors; fourteen sketchbooks; photographs; printed material; biographical material; and documents related to his professional affiliations.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The papers were donated in 1975 by Mason B. Wells, brother of Cady Wells.

### Available Formats

The collection is available on 35mm microfilm reels 1304-1309 and 1329 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory may not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

### Processing Information

This collection was minimally processed and a finding aid prepared by Tim Lake in 2019.

### Preferred Citation

Cady Wells papers, 1913-1968. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Cady Wells (1904-1954) was a painter and a patron of the arts, most associated with the Santa Fe, New Mexico, landscape artists of the 1930s and 1940s. Born in Southbridge, Massachusetts, Wells was raised in an affluent family, and pursued music as a concert pianist before discovering his passion for painting. Upon moving to New Mexico in 1932, Wells quickly gained rapport with regional modernist painters Andrew Dasburg and Georgia O'Keeffe. His artistic career was interrupted in the first half of the 1940s while he served in the United States Army during World War II. Returning to New Mexico in the mid-1940s, his innovative command of pattern and color earned him a reputation as a significant landscape painter of the American Southwest. Along with his original contributions, Wells was an avid supporter of his local arts community, assisting in the development of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society and the Museum of New Mexico.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Cady Wells measure 4.3 linear feet and date from 1913 to 1968. The collection provides a range of documentation of Wells' life and career, namely as a landscape artist in New Mexico and as a servicemember of the United States Army during World War II. Among these materials are twenty-two personal journals; correspondence with friends, family, and art organizations; preliminary sketches and watercolors; fourteen sketchbooks; photographs; printed material; biographical material; and documents related to his professional affiliations.

Biographical material consists largely of documents and awards pertaining to Wells' military service in the 1940s. A large collection of correspondence provides a broader perspective of Wells' personal and professional affiliations, including a number of letters from his friend and painter Georgia O'Keeffe. Writings feature twenty-two nearly uninterrupted personal journals from the age of thirteen to his death at age 49, providing candid insight to Wells' upbringing, family and friends, creative pursuits, and life during wartime. A variety of printed material includes exhibition announcements and brochures, art periodicals, and news clippings from his lifetime. A small amount of documents outline his professional affiliations, highlighting his support of both established and emerging art organizations of the 1930s-1950s. Fourteen sketchbooks and a variety of loose preliminary drawings and watercolors trace Wells' development as an artist during his time in New Mexico. Photographs feature images of Wells throughout his life, along with his personal photos of family and friends, including one photo each of Ansel Adams and Georgia O'Keeffe. A scrapbook provides additional printed material pertaining to Wells' exhibitions and the greater Santa Fe arts community.

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## Arrangement

This collection is arranged as eight series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1940-1945 (4 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1913-1968 (14 folders; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, 1918-1954 (24 folders; Boxes 2-3)
- Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1910s-1950s (8 folders; Boxes 3-4)
- Series 5: Professional Affiliations, circa 1930s-1950s (1 folder; Box 4)
- Series 6: Artworks, circa 1930s-1950s (10 folders; Box 4)
- Series 7: Photographs, circa 1920s-1950s (9 folders; Box 4)
- Series 8: Scrapbook, circa 1920s-1950s (4 folders; Box 5)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Painters -- New Mexico -- Santa Fe

Types of Materials:

Diaries  
Scrapbooks  
Sketchbooks

Names:

Adams, Ansel, 1902-1984  
O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-1986

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1940-1945

#### 4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: The biographical materials of Cady Wells contain predominantly items related to his military service during, and shortly after, World War II. Items include military identification, travel arrangements, stipend receipts, initiation and separation papers, and a variety of fabric and metal uniform decorations. Also included is a contact list of names and relationships of family and friends who sent condolences upon Cady Wells' passing in 1954, assembled by Cady's brother, Mason Wells.

Box 1, Folder 1	Award Plaque, 1940
Box 1, Folder 2	Condolences Sent, 1954-1955
Box 1, Folder 3	Military Decorations, 1941-1945
Box 1, Folder 4	Military Documents, 1941-1945

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1913-1968

### 14 Folders (Box 1)

**Scope and Contents:** Personal and professional correspondence span most of Wells' life, from his upbringing in Massachusetts, to his time spent in the military, and to his middle-aged years in New Mexico. There is much correspondence with his father, Channing Wells, particularly regarding his schooling and work prospects in the 1920s. His friendship with painter Georgia O'Keeffe is evident in a number of letters from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s. Other notable correspondents include Merle Armitage, Craig Barton, Elizabeth Boyd, Myron Brinig, Andrew Dasburg, Martha Graham, Erick Hawkins, Una Jeffers, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Georgia O'Keeffe, Anne Parrish, Olive Rush, Alfred Stieglitz, Edith Warner, Mason Wells, and Edward Weston.

**Arrangement:** The correspondence series begins with three folders of undated letters arranged alphabetically, followed by folders arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 5	A-L, Undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Mize, Beatrice, Undated
Box 1, Folder 7	O-W, Undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Chronological, 1913-1926
Box 1, Folder 9	<a href="#">Chronological, 1934-1940</a>
Box 1, Folder 10	<a href="#">Chronological, 1941</a>
Box 1, Folder 11	<a href="#">Chronological, 1942-1943</a>
Box 1, Folder 12	<a href="#">Chronological, 1944</a>
Box 1, Folder 13	Chronological, 1945
Box 1, Folder 14	Chronological, 1946
Box 1, Folder 15	Chronological, 1947
Box 1, Folder 16	Chronological, 1948
Box 1, Folder 17	Chronological, 1949-1951
Box 1, Folder 18	Chronological, 1952-1968

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## Series 3: Writings, 1918-1954

### 24 Folders (Boxes 2-3)

Scope and Contents: Writings include 22 personal journals dating from 1918 to 1954, providing candid insight to Wells' upbringing, family and friends, creative pursuits, and life during wartime. Also included is an undated student essay titled "What The West Wind Saw", as well as several notes and writing fragments without broader context.

Box 2, Folder 1	Journal 1, 1918
Box 2, Folder 2	Journal 2, 1920
Box 2, Folder 3	Journal 3, 1922
Box 2, Folder 4	Journal 4, 1923-1924
Box 2, Folder 5	Journal 5, 1924-1925
Box 2, Folder 6	Journal 6, 1931
Box 2, Folder 7	Journal 7, 1935
Box 2, Folder 8	Journal 8, 1936
Box 2, Folder 9	Journal 9, 1937
Box 2, Folder 10	Journal 10, 1938
Box 2, Folder 11	Journal 11, 1939
Box 2, Folder 12	Journal 12, 1940
Box 3, Folder 1	Journal 13, 1941
Box 3, Folder 2	Journal 14, 1941
Box 3, Folder 3	Journal 15, 1942
Box 3, Folder 4	Journal 16, circa 1944
Box 3, Folder 5	Journal 17, 1946
Box 3, Folder 6	Journal 18, 1947-1951
Box 3, Folder 7	Journal 19, 1950
Box 3, Folder 8	Journal 20, 1952



Box 3, Folder 9	Journal 21, 1953
Box 3, Folder 10	Journal 22, 1954
Box 3, Folder 11	Notes/Fragments, Undated
Box 3, Folder 12	Student Essay, circa 1910s-1920s

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## Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1910s-1950s

### 8 Folders (Boxes 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Printed material documents a variety of Wells' activities, including exhibition announcements/catalogs, wartime maps, news clippings, postcards, periodicals related to art, concert programs, and a transcript of a gallery presentation.

Box 3, Folder 13	Exhibition Materials, 1948-1968
Box 3, Folder 14	Postcards, Undated
Box 3, Folder 15	Maps, circa 1940s
Box 3, Folder 16	Periodicals, 1930-1961
Box 4, Folder 1	News Clippings, 1910s-1950s
Box 4, Folder 2	News Clippings, circa 1940s
Box 4, Folder 3	Transcript, 1948
Box 4, Folder 4	Miscellaneous, 1915-1940s

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## Series 5: Professional Affiliations, circa 1930s-1950s

### *1 Folder (Box 4)*

Scope and Contents: Professional affiliations provide documents pertaining to Wells' business activities. Included are the proposed by-laws and certificate of incorporation of The Spanish Colonial Arts Society, financial forms of the Wells Historical Museum, and loan agreements with the Museum of New Mexico.

Box 4, Folder 5          Professional Affiliations, circa 1930s-1950s

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## Series 6: Artworks, circa 1930s-1950s

### 10 Folders (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: Artworks include preliminary drawings and watercolors, tracing Wells' growth as an artist. Influence of time spent in Japan can be seen in pencil sketches, and his interest in Southwest landscapes are evident in later watercolors. Additionally, this series contains 14 sketchbooks, arranged chronologically, that provide insight to Wells' creative process. Also included is a folder of artworks by others.

Box 4, Folder 6	Drawings, Undated
Box 4, Folder 7	Watercolors, Undated
Box 4, Folder 8	Watercolors 2, Undated
Box 4, Folder 9	Sketchbooks 1-2, circa 1932-1933
Box 4, Folder 10	Sketchbooks 3-5, 1933-1935
Box 4, Folder 11	Sketchbooks 6-7, 1937-1938
Box 4, Folder 12	Sketchbooks 8-9, circa 1949-1952
Box 4, Folder 13	Sketchbooks 10-11, circa 1953-1954
Box 4, Folder 14	Sketchbooks 12-14, Undated
Box 4, Folder 15	Works by Others, circa 1940-1950

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## Series 7: Photographs, circa 1920s-1950s

### 9 Folders (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: Photographs include many images of Wells, mostly from 1930s to 1950s, with at least one photo by Ansel Adams. Personal photographs not containing Wells document friends, family, and travel. Also included are negatives, slides, and photos of artworks.

Box 4, Folder 16	Photos of Cady Wells, circa 1920s-1954
Box 4, Folder 17	Photos of Artwork, Undated
Box 4, Folder 18	Negatives, Undated
Box 4, Folder 19	Personal Photos , Undated
Box 4, Folder 20	Personal Photos, Undated
Box 4, Folder 21	Photos of Ansel Adams and Georgia O'Keeffe, circa 1953
Box 4, Folder 22	Slides, circa 1950s
Box 4, Folder 23	Travel Photos, circa 1930s-1940s

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## Series 8: Scrapbook, circa 1920s-1950s

### *4 Folders (Box 5)*

Scope and Contents: One scrapbook has been split into four folders and arranged in original sequence. It includes additional print material pertaining to Wells' exhibitions, his affiliations, and the greater Sante Fe art community. Many items previously glued in place are now loose.

Box 5, Folder 1          Scrapbook, Part 1, circa 1920s-1950s

Box 5, Folder 2          Scrapbook, Part 2, circa 1920s-1950s

Box 5, Folder 3          Scrapbook, Part 3, circa 1920s-1950s

Box 5, Folder 4          Scrapbook, Part 4, circa 1920s-1950s

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