



Smithsonian

Institution Archives

Ruel P. Tolman Collection, 1909-1964

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Ruel P. Tolman Collection
Date:	1909-1964
Identifier:	Record Unit 7433
Creator::	Tolman, Ruel P. (Ruel Pardee), 1878-1954
Extent:	1.75 cu. ft. (3 document boxes) (1 half document box)
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7433, Ruel P. Tolman Collection

Historical Note

Ruel Pardee Tolman (1878-1954) was born in Brookfield, Vermont. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley in 1902, he moved to Washington and attended the Corcoran School of Art. In 1906 he studied at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League in New York. He taught classes at the Corcoran from 1906 until 1919. His association with the Smithsonian began in 1912 when he joined the Division of Graphic Arts of the U.S. National Museum (USNM) as a preparator. He became an aide in 1913, assistant curator in 1920, and curator in 1932. From 1932-1946 he also occupied the position of acting director of the National Collection of Fine Arts (NCFA - known as the National Gallery of Art until 1937). Appointed director in 1946, he spent two years in the position and retired in 1948.

Tolman was a practicing graphic artist, working in lithography, etching, mezzotint, drypoint, oil paint, and watercolor. He was active in the Washington art community and was a nationally recognized painter of miniatures. His work included 26 miniature portraits of U.S. presidents and governors. He was founder and president of the Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers Society of Washington. In 1909, he obtained a patent for an artist's wet-canvas carrier.

During the period 1923-1946 Tolman organized a series of monthly exhibits at the Smithsonian of work by living artists. He also developed the traveling series "How Prints are Made" which circulated through the United States for two decades.

His publications included journal articles on graphic art, American art and American miniature painters; biographical articles for the Dictionary of American Biography; and catalogs and reports relating to the collections of the Division of Graphic Arts and the NCFA. His major work, *The Life and Work of Edward Greene Malbone, Miniature Painter*, was published in 1958 by the New York Historical Society.

He died on August 24, 1954. His wife, Nelly Summerel McKenzie Tolman, died in August of 1961. His daughter, Sarah Bruner Tolman Kemper, lives in Arlington.

Chronology

<i>March 26, 1878</i>	Born in Brookfield, Vermont
<i>1897</i>	Attended Pomona College Prep School, Claremont, California
<i>1902</i>	Graduated from University of California at Berkeley
<i>1902</i>	Moved to Washington and attended Corcoran Art School
<i>1906</i>	Studied at National Academy of Design and Art Students League (New York)
<i>1906</i>	Taught classes at the Corcoran
<i>1908-1919</i>	Appointed assistant instructor at Corcoran
<i>November 23, 1909</i>	Obtained patent for artist's wet-canvas carrier
<i>1912</i>	Preparator at Division of Graphic Arts, United States National Museum (USNM)
<i>1913</i>	Aide in Division of Graphic Arts, USNM
<i>1914</i>	Married Nelly Summerel McKenzie
<i>1920</i>	Assistant curator in Graphic Arts Division, USNM
<i>1932-1946</i>	Curator, Division of Graphic Arts, USNM, and Acting Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, NCFA (known as the National Gallery of Art until 1937)
<i>1934</i>	Trip to New York, Philadelphia, Boston
<i>1939</i>	Trip to Chicago
<i>1940</i>	Elected to Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters
<i>1946</i>	Appointed director of NCFA, USNM
<i>1947</i>	Elected to Royal Society of Arts
<i>March 31, 1948</i>	Retired from NCFA
<i>Summer 1948</i>	Exhibition of etchings and drypoints at Smithsonian castle
<i>August 24, 1954</i>	Died at Washington Sanitarium in Takoma Park, Maryland
<i>1958</i>	<i>The Life and Work of Edward Greene Malbone, Miniature Painter</i> , published by New York Historical Society
<i>August 1961</i>	Wife Nelly Tolman died
<i>October 25, 1962</i>	Tolman library and artwork auctioned at Sloan's
<i>January 7-February 3, 1964</i>	Posthumous exhibition of etchings and drypoints held in Smithsonian castle

Descriptive Entry

The Ruel P. Tolman Collection contains official correspondence; biographical information; photocopies of prints, drawings and photographs; and scrapbooks. Included are papers relating to Tolman's work as a graphic artist, his interest in miniature painting, and his participation in arts-related organizations.

Of particular interest are four scrapbooks. One scrapbook documents a tour Tolman took of art galleries, museums and historical societies in the northeastern United States and New England. Three scrapbooks contain photographs taken by Tolman of Smithsonian staff, Smithsonian grounds and buildings, Smithsonian exhibitions, and Washington, D.C. scenes.

Other types of material in this collection include tax returns, personal notes, trip reports, newspaper clippings, exhibit catalogs, invitations and Tolman's personal Christmas cards.

For a complete record of Tolman's association with the Smithsonian, the records of the Division of Graphic Arts, 1882-1962 (Record Unit 206); the Office of the Director, NCFAs (Record Unit 311 and Record Unit 312); USNM, 1877-1975, Permanent Administrative Files (Record Unit 192); and the USNM, Curators' Annual Reports (Record Unit 158) should be consulted.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art
- Art museum directors
- Art museums
- Artists

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Drawings
- Manuscripts
- Scrapbooks

Names:

- Art Students League (New York, N.Y.)
- Corcoran School of Art (Washington, D.C.)
- Malbone, Edward Greene, 1777-1807
- Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers Society of Washington, D.C.
- National Academy of Design (U.S.)
- National Collection of Fine Arts (U.S.)
- National Gallery of Art (U.S.)
- New York Historical Society
- Tolman, Ruel P. (Ruel Pardee), 1878-1954
- United States National Museum
- United States National Museum. Division of Graphic Arts
- University of California, Berkeley

Container Listing

Series 1: PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE AND RELATED MATERIALS, 1909-1954, 1958, AND UNDATED.

Note: This series consists of personal correspondence and memoranda relating to Tolman's work at the Division of Graphic Arts; his own work as a graphic artist, painter and restorer; his participation in art-related organizations; and his interest in miniature painting and autographs. Includes tax returns, draft board documents, biographical information, employment records, publication lists, and photographs.

Box 1

Box 1 of 4	Folder 1 General Correspondence A-Z, 1920-1951. Correspondents include Gist Blair, William H. Holmes, J. E. Graf, H. A. McBride, J. E. Lodge, and Remington Kellogg. Includes January 2, 1932, letter of protest to J. E. Graf, associate director of Smithsonian, in response to Arts Commission's proposal to raze the Smithsonian Building (castle).
Box 1 of 4	Folder 2 Autographs. Material relating to Tolman's interest in autographs. Includes copies of handwritten documents by Henry Longfellow, John Keats, Francis Scott Key and Benjamin Franklin; 1836 publication of letters of Junius; 1922 catalogue of books, autographs and prints from the estate of George D. Smith; January 22, 1853, and February 5, 1853, issues of Illustrated News.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 3 Government Art Projects. American Federal Convention Mayflower Hotel, May 20, 1935. Includes Tolman's pencil drawings on reverse side of documents.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 4 Graphic Arts, Division of. Report by Tolman, undated.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 5 Malbone, Edward Greene (1777-1807). Correspondence relating to publication of The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone (1707-1807), Tolman's biography of American miniature painter Edward Malbone, 1946-1947, 1958. Includes copy of book cover and title pages. (Book is in the Ruel Tolman Papers of the Archives of American Art.)
Box 1 of 4	Folder 6 Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers Society, The. Twenty-First Annual Exhibition catalog, May 9-31, 1954. Tolman was president of this group and wife Nelly Tolman was a member.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 7 Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters, The. Letter from A. M. Archambault, secretary of society, notifying Tolman of his election to membership.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 8 Tolman, Ruel P.: Appointments. Includes Appeal from classification allocation, 1930.

Box 1 of 4	Folder 9 Tolman: Bibliography (list of published articles), 1922-1930
Box 1 of 4	Folder 10 Tolman, (Ruel Pardee and Nelly): Biographical information. Form submitted to Biographical Encyclopedia of the World. February 12, 1939, Washington Times-Herald article, "Who's Who in Washington Art Circles." Catalog of paintings by Tolman from 1910 exhibition at 1517 H Street, NW (studio). Newspaper wedding announcement of Ruel Tolman and Nelly Summerel, circa 1914. Washington Post obituary of Ruel Tolman, August 26, 1954. Washington Post obituary of Nelly Tolman, August 18, 1961. Note from Sloan (auction house) regarding selling Tolman's library and personal papers on October 25, 1962. Includes photographs of Tolman.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 11 Tolman: Color testing data, 1906, 1920, 1925-1926. Originals in Archives of American Art.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 12 Tolman: Income tax information. Tax return work sheet, 1918, tax return (duplicate), 1922.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 13 Tolman: Personal notes
Box 1 of 4	Folder 14 Tolman: Trip reports and related information. Notes and typed narrative from February 1934 trip to Florida; notes from July 1941 trip to New York and New England; narrative from circa 1940 trip to Chicago. Includes booklets from Grant House and The Glenwood Hotel in Catskill, New York.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 15 Tolman: War Department. Registration certificate, Office of the Provost Marshall General, 1918.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 16 Trott, Benjamin. Correspondence relating to exhibition of miniature painter Benjamin Trott's work at the National Collection of Fine Arts, March 16-April 29, 1945. Includes photograph of painting entitled "Girl With Long Hair" by Trott.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 17 Washington Artists, The Society of; Washington Club of Printing House Craftsmen; Washington Printmakers, Society of; Washington Water Color Club.
Box 1 of 4	Folder 18 "The First Hundred Years of the Smithsonian Institution 1846-1946" - Autographed copy, August 10, 1946 (Accession 15-124)

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Series 2: SCRAPBOOKS, 1934-1936, 1944.

Note: This series consists of four scrapbooks. One scrapbook documents a trip Tolman took to art galleries, museums and historical societies in the northeast and New England in 1934. Three scrapbooks contain photographs of the Smithsonian buildings and grounds, Smithsonian employees, the mall, scenes of Washington, D.C., and notable Washingtonians. Includes negatives of photographs in scrapbooks.

Box 2

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Folder 1 Scrapbook I, 1934. Consists of narrative written by Tolman to Charles Abbot, Secretary of Smithsonian, accompanied by maps, post cards, brochures, and photographs documenting his trip to art galleries, museums and historical societies in northeastern U.S. and New England. Includes Philadelphia Museum of Art; Newark Museum (New Jersey); Buck County Historical Society (Pennsylvania); Worcester Art Museum (Massachusetts); Morgan Memorial (Hartford, Connecticut); Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court; Lyman Allyn Museum (New London, Connecticut), Charles Platt, architect; Providence Athenaeum, Rhode Island School of Design, Annmary Brown Memorial (Brown University); Plymouth Rock; William Harlow House (Plymouth); Boston Museum of Fine Arts; Fogg Art Museum (Harvard); Addison Gallery of American Art (Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts); Currier Gallery (Manchester, New Hampshire); Art Museum of Portland (Maine); St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, 1887 photograph (Vermont); Augustus St. Gaudens Memorial (Cornish, New Hampshire); The Jones Library (Amherst, Massachusetts); and the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts (Massachusetts).

Box 3

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Folder 1 Scrapbook II, 1934-1942, "A-N." Consists of photographs of Smithsonian employees and buildings, Federal Triangle buildings, Washington cityscape and landscape, and art exhibitions. Includes photographs of Charles G. Abbot; Lillian Moore Abbot; Jimmie Atwell, Shadyside, Maryland; Allen Meriden; Lucile Torrey Barrett, National Gallery of Art librarian; Paul Bartsch; Lenhard Stejneger; Charles Bittinger; Herbert S. Bryant; T. T. Belote; James Berm; Tom Brown; Charles L. Bowie, Jr.; Albert B. Bibb; Theodore Bolton; Mrs. Theodore Bolton; Jean Lambert (Mrs. Thomas Brockway); George Clark; Thomas T. Clark; Frank H. Cole; William Crossingham; Richard R. Chaney; Benjamin Chambers; Frederick Carder; Leland B. Clark; W. L. Corbin; Tom Clark; Leila Forbes Clark; C. R. Denmark; Harry W. Dorsey; W. W. Dorsey; Jo Davidson, sculptor; Mrs. George Morrison Dupre; _____ DeRoose; F. K. Detwiller; W. H. Egberts; Bjorn P. Egeli, portrait painter; Ernest R. Ford; F. E. Fowle; Hubert Friedmann; Bertha Ferguson; Messrs. Farrell (plumber), Keefer and Firman (guards); Charles E. Fairman, art curator of the Capitol; Leonard C. Gunnell; Gordan Grant; Walter Hough; J. H. Hill; Sammy Hawkes, Hawkes Glass Company, Corning, New York; _____ Hoover, Radiation & Organisms; John D. Howard; Helen H. Hogan; William F. Jackson; George Johnson; Earl S. Johnston; William W. Johnson; Neil M. Judd; Garnet W. Jex;

_____ Kirk; Andrew Kramer, mechanic; _____ Friel, Anacostia Motor Company; A. Remington Kellogg; Herbert Krieger; Philip B. Keefer; _____ Kauffman; Clarisa Kennedy, Nellie Tolman's cousin; Edward Kirby; William Alexander Knowles; Frederick L. Lewton; Robert Le Fevre; _____ Locke, White House; F. E. Lees; John E. Lodge; Rowland Lyon; Henry F. W. Meyer; Mourse C. Moxley; _____ McCake, plasterer; Josephine McDevitt; Robert E. Motley; Carl Mitman; _____ McAlister; Frank J. Mather, Jr.; Norman T. A. Munder; Benson B. Moore; Leila Mechlin, Evening Star reporter; James Nevin Miller; Gerrit S. Miller; Florence E. Meier (Mrs. William W. Chase); Hirst Mulhollen, Print Division, Library of Congress; Helen McCormack, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia; Elizabeth Muhlhofer; C. Powell Minnegerode; Charles Frederick Naegele; and Jesse W. Nicholson, Internal Revenue. Also includes photographs of Corning Glass Works, exterior and interior views of factory; views of Charleston, South Carolina; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania State Capitol building, interior and exterior views, including sculpture groups by George Gray Barnard; Massachusetts Avenue residence of Andrew Mellow (home of National Trust now); and National Geographic lecture hall.

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Folder 2 Scrapbook III, 1934-1942. "O-Z." Includes photographs of Jeremiah O'Connor, Corcoran Art Gallery; John Clagett Proctor, Evening Star reporter; M. J. Rathbun; Frank H. H. Roberts; A. H. O. Rolle; Sir Charles Ross; _____ Shepherd, chief carpenter at the White House; Matthew W. Stirling; C. W. Shoemaker; Morsell A. Tolson; W. P. True; Roy Trembly; Frank Taylor; Lucius M. Tolman; Ruel P. Tolman; Charles Whitebread; Mary Virginia Young, disbursing office. Also includes photographs of Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Capitol Building, Stonewall Jackson statue, and George Washington statue by Houdon; paintings undergoing restoration; the flattening of the mall in the spring and summer of 1935; Andrew Jackson Downing urn (before it was moved to west side of Arts & Industries); and views of White House.

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Folder 3 Scrapbook IV, 1934-1942. "Misc." Includes photographs from the roof of the Smithsonian castle; views of the mall during the flood of 1936; Heurich Brewing Company, Washington, D.C.; George Washington Masonic Temple, Alexandria, Virginia; Brooklyn Institute of Art and Science; Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts; Morgan Library, New York; Philadelphia, New York City (at night); and National Archives under construction. Includes photos of ceremony to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mark Twain.

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Series 3: PRINTS, DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

Box 4

- Box 4 of 4 Folder 1 Copies of prints, drawings, photographs, reproductions, postcards, and greeting cards, originals of which are in the Tolman Papers of the Archives of American Art. Includes photographs of Tolman's house at 3451 Mt. Pleasant Street; Washington monument surrounded by trees, 1922; group of men in Tolman's studio at 1517 H Street, circa 1910; 1921 wedding announcement of Ruel Cowles Tolman, Tolman's nephew.
- Box 4 of 4 Folder 2 Copies of prints depicting Washington landscape and buildings, unidentified persons, unidentified outdoor scenes. Includes print of Horatio Greenough's monumental sculpture of George Washington in Roman toga (1841), now in National Museum of American History; National Gallery of Art under construction, circa 1940.
- Box 4 of 4 Folder 3 Copies and some originals of prints Tolman sent as Christmas greeting cards, circa 1914-1945. Includes print dated 1921, captioned "Sarah Bruner Tolman;" print depicting three men hanging from a tree, captioned "Tree These Three and Free the World for a Merry Christmas."

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Series 4: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, 1908-1952, 1964.

Box 4

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Copies of newspaper articles relating to Tolman's career at the Division of Graphic Arts and his personal accomplishments as an artist/etcher. Includes 1946 Evening Star article entitled "Scratching Out a Picture," with illustrations of Tolman demonstrating the etching process; 1948 Evening Star review of retrospective exhibition at United States National Museum; and review of exhibition 10 years after Tolman's death.

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Series 5: PATENT, 1909.

Box 4

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Patent 941,212, granted to Ruel Pardee Tolman of Berkeley, California for Artist's Wet-Canvas Carrier, November 23, 1909.

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