

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives

Durr Friedley Records, 1906-1918

**Processed by Brigid Harmon, Archives Intern
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Collection Summary

Title: Durr Friedley Records

Creator: Friedley, Durr 1888-1938

Dates: 1906-1918 (bulk 1917-1918)

Extent: 3 linear feet (8 boxes)

Abstract: Durr Friedley was a staff member of the Department of Decorative Arts of The Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1911 until 1917, serving as an assistant, Assistant Curator and Acting Curator. Records consist primarily of correspondence regarding prospective Museum acquisitions. Items of special interest include letters concerning the Museum's acquisition of early American colonial furnishings, later displayed in the American Wing.

Administrative Information

Provenance: Transfer to Museum Archives; date of transfer unknown.

Form of citation: [Title of item], [date of item], Box [number], Folder [number], Durr Friedley Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

Restrictions

Access: Collection is open for research.

Use restrictions: Consult Archives staff regarding permission to quote or reproduce.

Biographical Note

Curator and artist Durr Friedley (1888-1938) was born in Indianapolis, Indiana and received a degree in Fine Arts from Harvard University in 1911. (At Harvard and later in life his surname was spelled Freedley; in records from his time at The Metropolitan Museum of Art it consistently appears as Friedley.) He joined the staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in October, 1911, as an assistant in the Department of Decorative Arts. In 1912, after favorable recommendations by colleagues, Friedley was appointed Assistant Curator. He was promoted to Acting Curator in 1914 when the department's Curator, Dr. Wilhelm R. Valentiner, took a leave of absence to enlist in the German army. Valentiner resigned from the Metropolitan in 1917 and Friedley was offered the post of Curator, but he declined and instead announced his own departure from the Museum.

During his time at the Museum, Friedley was involved with the acquisition and exhibition of a wide range of decorative arts objects. He corresponded extensively with collectors and dealers who owned items of interest to the Museum, and assessed objects under consideration by the Purchasing Committee of the Board of Trustees. Towards the end of his tenure, he worked intensively on the acquisition of colonial American interiors and objects intended for exhibition in the Museum's planned American Wing. Shortly after leaving the Metropolitan, Friedley drew a set of architectural plans for the proposed American Wing, but they were never used.

In 1918, Friedley served in the U.S. Army as a member of the Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps (renamed in May 1918 the Division of Military Aeronautics) painting camouflage on war planes. During the 1920s he spent time in Europe as a portrait painter. He eventually returned to the United States and settled in Newport, Rhode Island, where he continued his career as a portrait painter and muralist. He was commissioned to paint the interiors of the Memorial Chapel at the Seaman's Church Institute of Newport in 1930. Friedley died in a car accident in March of 1938 at the age of fifty. Memorial exhibitions of his artwork were held at the John Herron Art Institute (now the Indianapolis Museum of Art) in November 1938 and at the Walker Galleries in New York City in early 1939.

Scope and Content

Records include letters regarding potential Museum acquisitions exchanged by Durr Friedley with dealers and private owners of decorative arts objects. There are also some letters from the desks of other Decorative Arts Department staff, notably Assistant Curator Russell A. Plimpton (see Series 2). Prominent dealers and collectors represented include Duveen Brothers, Judge A.T. Clearwater and White, Allom & Company. There are a few personal letters, and a small amount of correspondence from before and after Friedley's service at the Museum. Also included are collection inventory lists, handwritten notes regarding museum objects, photographs and typescript essays by Friedley and other Museum staff. There is substantial documentation regarding the acquisition by the Museum of colonial interiors and period rooms, and planning for the proposed American Wing. The records also include correspondence between Friedley and other members of the Museum administration including Secretary Henry Watson Kent and Director Edward Robinson.

Arrangement

Prior to processing, the Durr Friedley Records were organized into three series. The first was Durr Friedley correspondence and subject files dating mostly from 1911-1916, but also including a few earlier documents. The second was Durr Friedley correspondence and subject files dating from 1916-1917. The third series was correspondence and subject files of Russell A. Plimpton. The Plimpton series has been maintained while the two Friedley series have been integrated because of general similarities in content and the presence of correspondence that overlapped the chronological break. Presently, the Durr Friedley Records consist of two series:

Series 1. Durr Friedley Files

Series 2. Russell A. Plimpton Files

Both series are arranged alphabetically by corporate name, personal name or subject. Documents within files are arranged chronologically.

Related Materials

The records include correspondence relating to many objects eventually acquired by the Museum; when it has been possible to identify these, a note including the object accession number has been added to the relevant entry in the Container List. The Museum Archives or curatorial departments may have additional documentation regarding these objects. Consult Archives staff for further information. Additional files of interest include:

Durr Friedley Correspondence File, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

Russell A. Plimpton Correspondence File, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

Subject Headings

Corporate Names

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.).

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.). American Wing

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.). Dept. of Decorative Arts

Personal Names

Kent, Henry Watson, 1866-1948

Breck, Joseph, b. 1885.

Subjects

Decorative arts.

Decorative arts--United States.

Decorative arts--United States--History--20th century--Exhibitions

Container List

Series 1. Durr Friedley Files

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	A, 1912-1917. [Regarding January-May 1915 letters from Charles Allom see also: Swan Room blueprints in Museum Archives flat files, and White, Allom & Company letters in White-Wy, 1912-1917 B.6/F.8.]
	2-3	Altman Guide, n.d.
	4	American Art Galleries, 1915-1916
	5	Ames, Frederic A., 1915-1916
	6	Arnold Seligmann, Rey & Company, Inc., 1916-1917 [Includes February 1917 letters regarding Museum accessions 17.40.1-2]
	7	Ba-Bl, 1911-1917
	8	Barnard, George Gray, 1913-1917
	9	Barney, Charles T., 1912
	10	Barney, James Whitney, 1915-1916 [See also: P.W. French & Company, 1915-1917 B.4/F.16]
	11	Beilouny, Gabriel, 1914-1917
	12	Bennett, J. Albert, 1915-1916
	13	Birckhead, Mrs. P.M., 1917
	14-15	Blanks, purchase - Miscellaneous drafts and duplicates, 1916-1917
	16	Blumenthal, George, 1916-1917
	17	Bo-By, 1914-1917
	18	Breck, Joseph - Bulletin writings, 1916, 1918
	19	Breck, Joseph - Miscellaneous writings, n.d.
	20	Bowler House (Portsmouth, R.I.), 1916
	21	Ca-Com, 1911-1917
	22	Cabot House (Beverly, Mass.), 1917 [See also: Cousins, Frank, 1912-1915 B.2/F.7]
	23	Canessa, C. & E., 1915-1917
	24	Carr, H.W., 1916
	25	Ceramics Report – Garrett Chatfield Pier, 1906-1907
	26	Clearwater, Hon. A.T., 1913-1917
2	1	Coles, Elizabeth U. - bequest, 1916 [See also: Office of the Secretary Records Correspondence Files – Coles, Mrs. William – Collection, regarding Museum accession 92.1.*]
	2	Colton House (Longmeadow, Mass.), 1916
	3	Con-Cu, 1912-1916
	4	Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 1916-1917
	5	Cooper Union, n.d.
	6	Cornelius, C. O., 1916-1917
	7	Cousins, Frank, 1912-1915 [See also: Flint, Frank, 1915-1916 B.2/F.18; Cabot House (Beverly, Mass), 1917 B.1/F.22]
	8	Da-Dob, 1911-1917
	9	Davis, Theodore M., 1911-1915
	10	de Forest, Lockwood, 1912-1917 [Includes Oct. 22-Dec. 17 1917 letters from J. Spielberg regarding Museum accessions 17.32.1-55 and 17.34.1-3]
	11	de Forest, Mrs. Emily & Robert W., 1914-1917
	12	Dod-Dy, 1912-1917

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| 2 | 13 | Duveen Brothers, 1915-1917 [See also: Edson Bradley letters concerning tapestries in Bo-By, 1914-1917 B.1/F.17] |
| | 14 | E, 1912-1917 [Includes June 11, 1917 letter from Thomas Rush regarding Museum accession 17.103*] |
| | 15 | F, 1912-1917 [Includes December 23, 1915 letter from Durr Friedley to Mrs. William J. Fitzgerald regarding Museum accession 26.57*] |
| | 16 | Fergusona and other Oriental collections, 1912 |
| | 17 | Fixtures Metal Display, n.d. |
| | 18 | Flint, Frank, 1915-1916 [See also: Cousins, Frank, 1912-1915 B.2/F.7] |
| | 19 | Friedley, Durr, 1915-1917 [Primarily correspondence to and from Friedley and members of the Decorative Arts Dept. during periods when Friedley was away from the Museum.] |
| | 20 | Friedley, Durr - Bulletin Writings, 1912-1917 |
| | 21 | Friedley, Durr - Miscellaneous Writings, n.d. |
| 3 | 1 | Foote, E.T., 1916-1917 |
| | 2 | Forbes, Edward, 1916-1917 |
| | 3 | Ga-Grav, 1909-1917 |
| | 4 | Gray-Gu, 1911-1917 |
| | 5 | Griffith, C.H.E., 1915 |
| | 6 | Ha-Hi, 1912-1917 |
| | 7 | Halsey, R.T. Haines, 1915-1917 |
| | 8 | Harding, H. Wareham, 1915-1917 |
| | 9 | Hearn-Hist, 1910-1917 [Includes Hearn item dated December 9, 1917 regarding Museum accession 17.101*] |
| | 10 | Herter Looms, 1915-1917 |
| | 11 | Ho-Hy, 1913-1917 |
| | 12 | I, 1912-1917 |
| | 13 | Indjoudjian, M., 1915-1917 |
| | 14 | Inquires on China, 1911-1914 |
| | 15 | J, 1912-1917 [Includes June 29, 1916 Juilliard letter from de Forest Brothers regarding Museum accession 19.172*] |
| | 16 | K, 1913-1917 |
| | 17 | Kelekian, Dikran, 1915-1917 |
| | 18 | Kent, Henry Watson, 1914-1917 |
| | 19 | Kindermann, C.H.F., 1915-1917 [Includes correspondence regarding Museum accession 17.111*] |
| | 20 | La-Le, 1912-1917 |
| 4 | 1 | Labels - Information regarding, 1912-1914 |
| | 2 | Li-Ly, 1913-1917 |
| | 3-4 | Library Lists - books added, 1915-1917 |
| | 5 | Lists – miscellaneous, 1917 |
| | 6 | Ma-Mc, 1913-1917 |
| | 7 | McIlhenny, John D., 1916-1917 [See also: Meyrick-Jones, F. & L.M., 1916-1917 B.4/F.9] |
| | 8 | Me-Mu, 1912-1917 |
| | 9 | Meyrick-Jones, F. & L.M., 1916-1917 |
| | 10 | Monif, R. Khan, 1915-1917 |
| | 11 | Morgan, J.P. – Lists, 1916-1917 |
| | 12 | Museum shipping pamphlets, n.d. |
| | 13 | N, 1912-1917 |
| | 14 | O, 1914-1917 |

4	15	Oatway, H., 1914-1917
	16	P.W. French & Company, 1915-1917 [See also: Barney, James Whitney, 1915-1916 B.1/F.10]
	17	Pa-Pe, 1912-1916
	18	Parker, Elizabeth F. and Alice P., 1912-1916
8		Parker Seals – Imprints, n.d. [See also: Parker, Elizabeth F. & Alice P., 1912-1916 B.4/F.18]
5	1	Ph-Pu, 1912-1917 [Includes July 30, 1915 letter to Mrs. Post and Oct. 21 1915 letter regarding Museum accession 30.58*]
	2	Q, 1912
	3	R, 1912-1917
	4	Rathbone, Fredrick, 1912
	5	Receipts, 1917
	6	Robinson, Edward (Director), 1914-1917
	7	Sa-Sl, 1914-1917
	8	Sm-Sw, 1912-1917 [Includes April 4, 1917 letter regarding Museum accession 16.46.1-8]
	9	T, 1912-1917
	10	Tabbagh, George, 1916-1917
	11	Tapestry Catalogue, n.d.
	12-13	Textiles, 1915
6	1	Thaw, Mrs. Benjamin, 1915-1916
	2	V, 1909, 1914-1917
	3	Valentiner, Dr. Wilhelm. 1910, 1914, 1917
	4	Volpi, Elia, 1916
	5	Wa-Whip, 1912-1917 [Includes May 1, 1914 letter regarding Museum accession 15.141a-d]
	6	Walser, G., 1915-1917
	7	Warner, Langdon, 1915-1917
	8	Whit-Wy, 1912-1917 [Regarding White, Allom & Company letters see also: Charles Allom letters in A., 1912-1917 B.1/F.1]
	9	Writings – Miscellaneous, 1916-1917, n.d.
	10	Y-Z, 1913-1917

Series 2. Russell A. Plimpton Files

Box	Folder	Title
6	11	A, 1916-1917
	12	B, 1916-1918
	13	C, 1915-1918
	14	Clark, Charles C., 1916-1917
	15	Clearwater, Hon. A.T., 1918
	16	D, 1916-1917
	17	E, 1916
	18	F, 1916-1918
	19	G, 1916-1917
	20	H, 1916
7	1	I, 1917
	2	K, 1915-1916
	3	Kent, Henry W., 1916
	4	L, 1915-1917

7	5	Lowndes, Mrs. Stanley, 1916
	6	M, 1915-1917
	7	Mexican Majolica, n.d.
	8	Miscellaneous notes, n.d.
	9	N, 1916-1917
	10	O, 1916
	11	P, 1916
	12	Pitcairn, Raymond, 1917
	13	Q, 1917-1918
	14	R, 1916-1918
	15	Robinson, Edward (Director), 1916-1917
	16	S, 1915-1918
	17	Silver, 1914-1918
	18	Silver, notes on, n.d.
	19	T, 1915-1917
	20	V, 1917
	21	W, 1915-1917
	22	Y, 1917