



ArchivesSpace

a community served by †Lyrasis

Charles Over Cornelius papers 10077696

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 14, 2025.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Content	4
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Controlled Access Headings	6
Publication Date	7
Collection Inventory	7
Series I: Professional Papers	7
Series II: Personal Papers	9

Summary Information

Repository:	Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library
Creator:	Cornelius, Charles Over, 1890-1937
Title:	Charles Over Cornelius papers
ID:	10077696
Date [inclusive]:	1921-1932
Physical Description:	3 manuscript boxes
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Charles Over Cornelius (1890-1937) was an American architect who served as the Associate Curator of American Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1925-1931. The bulk of his papers are photographs, postcards and glass negatives of houses and furniture, some of which Cornelius used in his writings or for restoring colonial or pre-Civil War properties for clients.

Preferred Citation

Charles Over Cornelius papers, 1921-1932, Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Charles Over Cornelius (1890-1937) was born in Sewickley, PA and died in Irvington-on Hudson, NY. He was an architect who was also an associate curator of American art at The Met. Among his known architectural projects was the renovation of Dey House in Wayne, NJ, which served as Washington's headquarters during 1780. Prior to that project, he received the commission to design a library at Blair House in Washington, D.C. in 1920.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Cornelius received his B.A. from Princeton in 1913, and his B.S. from MIT in 1916. That same year, he entered the architectural practice of Frank A. Colby in New York. In 1917, he was hired by the Metropolitan Museum, and became an Assistant Curator in the Department of Decorative Arts in 1918. In 1925, he was appointed Associate Curator of American Art. While at The Met, he consulted with clients on their private collections. He resigned from The Met in February, 1931, and around that time was an associate in the architectural practice of Holden, McLaughlin & Associates in New York.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

In 1922, he curated the first exhibit at The Met to be devoted to one cabinetmaker, in "Furniture from the Workshop of Duncan Phyfe" and he would write "Furniture Masterpieces of Duncan Phyfe." In 1924, R. T. H. Halsey and Cornelius would write "A Handbook of the American Wing" a publication of The Met about the American Wing building which is devoted entirely to American art of the colonial, revolutionary, and early republican periods. In 1926, he would write "Early American Furniture" and contribute to "Mahogany, Antique and Modern: a Study of its History and Use in the Decorative Arts."

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content

The Charles Over Cornelius papers are in two series. Series I documents his professional life as an architect and associate curator of American Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Series II is made up of personal papers. Much of the material is undated, although some catalogs and correspondence are dated 1931-1932, around the time he resigned from The Met in February of 1931. The professional folders include manuscripts of his first book, "Furniture Masterpieces of Duncan Phyfe," and more writings on Phyfe that were possibly used in the exhibition and the catalog. There are architectural drawings from an alteration and a restoration project that Cornelius worked on. There are a few pages of notes in several of his mostly blank, pocket-sized notebooks. The bulk of his papers are photographs, postcards and glass negatives of houses and furniture, some of which he used in his books and others for restoring colonial or pre-Civil War properties for his clients. There are vendor communications and invoices that

dealt with his restoration work. In his personal papers, there are almost 90 letters from his sister, mother, and brother-in-law sent mostly between 1921 and 1930.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content

The Cornelius papers were separated from the donated papers of Arthur C. and Mariam Y. Holden. Arthur C. Holden was a principal in the architectural firm of Holden, McLaughlin & Associates where Cornelius was an architect in the latter part of his career.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

This collection is made up of two series: Professional Papers and Personal Papers.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

Revision Description

File created. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2012-12-18 2019-05-20

Restrictions on Access

This collection is available for use by appointment in the Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. For further information, please email avery-drawings@library.columbia.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Source of acquisition--Arthur C. Holden.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by R. Brenessa Rovere (Library Intern) under the supervision of Shelley Hayreh, Avery Archivist, in 2012.

Restrictions on Use

Columbia University is providing access to the materials in the Library's collections solely for noncommercial educational and research purposes. The unauthorized use, including, but not limited to, publication of the materials without the prior written permission of Columbia University is strictly prohibited. All inquiries regarding permission to publish should be submitted in writing to the Director, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. For additional guidance, see [Columbia University Libraries' publication policy](#).

Restrictions on Use

In addition to permission from Columbia University, permission of the copyright owner (if not Columbia University) and/or any holder of other rights (such as publicity and/or privacy rights) may also be required for reproduction, publication, distributions, and other uses. Responsibility for making an independent legal assessment of any item and securing any necessary permissions rests with the persons desiring to publish the item. Columbia University makes no warranties as to the accuracy of the materials or their fitness for a particular purpose.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Architecture -- Conservation and restoration
- Decoration and ornament
- Interior decoration -- United States
- Phyfe, Duncan, 1768-1854
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.). American Wing

Publication Date

1921-1932

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Inventory

Series I: Professional Papers

Title/Description	Instances	
Incomplete manuscript, "Furniture Masterpieces of Duncan Phyfe", 1923 Scope and Contents Chapters 6 & 7 are missing.	box 1	folder 1
Manuscript, Duncan Phyfe Exhibition, 1922 Scope and Contents 1922 Met exhibition text includes miscellaneous notes with historical timeline.	box 1	folder 2
Manuscript, unidentified, undated Scope and Contents Summary on Duncan Phyfe.	box 1	folder 3
The Dey House, Restoration (Preakness Valley, NJ), undated Scope and Contents 4 blueprints: one each of first floor, second floor, roof, and elevation.	box 1	folder 4
John deWitt Peltz, Library Alteration (136 East 79th Street, New York, NY), 1931 Scope and Contents 24 blueprints; and 14 drawings of plan, column base and baseboard.	box 1	folder 5
Mrs. Coleman DuPont, Mantelpieces (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY), undated	box 1	folder 6

Scope and Contents

2 pencil on trace drawings.

Wall Sconce by Kantack & Company, undated	box 1	folder 7
---	-------	----------

Scope and Contents

2 photographs and 2 pencil and color pencil drawings on trace paper.

Notebooks and miscellaneous notes/drawings, undated	box 1	folder 8
---	-------	----------

Scope and Contents

16 items: 4 notebooks includes drawings, building details, history, house tour notes, decorative arts/porcelain, and 12 miscellaneous notes/drawings.

Correspondence, 1923, 1929 to 1932	box 1	folder 9
------------------------------------	-------	----------

Scope and Contents

With Vendors and Clients.

Vendor invoices, 1928 to 1930, and 1932	box 1	folder 10
---	-------	-----------

Catalogs of furniture	box 1	folder 11
-----------------------	-------	-----------

Scope and Contents

6 items : The Karl Freund Collection (includes letter from Mabel Lindsay Gillespie possibly to furnish her property, Langdon Farm in Sherwood, Maryland, dated May 18, 1932); Charak Furniture; Selections from the Work of Simons and Lapham, Architects (Charleston, South Carolina); MOMA's catalogue, Modern Architecture for Interational Exhibition (1932); Ginsburg & Levy, Inc.'s list, Cabinet-Makers in Colonial and Early Federal America.

Paintcards, undated	box 2	folder 01
---------------------	-------	-----------

Scope and Contents

13 items, most with details of where the paint was used in which section/room of the American Wing of the Met.

Silhouette prints of Dyke Mill Stencils in the Pennsylvania Museum, 1922	box 2	folder 02
--	-------	-----------

Scope and Contents

Some of the silhouettes were used in his "Early American Furniture" book.

Visual Material, Dey House (Preakness Valley, NJ), 1931	box 2	folder 03
---	-------	-----------

Scope and Contents

11 photographs

Visual Material, Furniture, undated

box 2

folder 04

Scope and Contents

27 photos (including 9 stuck together), 14 negatives, 9 glass negatives (including 1 broken), and Antiquarian Magazine reprint of early American Franklin stoves

Visual Material, Houses, undated

box 2

folder 05

Scope and Contents

113 photographs, 38 negatives, 9 postcards of Dey House, Baron Stiegels House, Delaware Bank, Modern House, Jackson House, among others that are unidentified.

Visual Material, Haddon Hall (England), undated

box 2

folder 06

Scope and Contents

Haddon Hall photograph album of 16 pictures, and separately, 9 postcards.

Visual Material, Foreign Houses, undated

box 2

folder 07 to 08

Scope and Contents

102 commercial photographs and 167 postcards.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)**Series II: Personal Papers****Title/Description****Instances**

Correspondence, 1921-1924, 1926-1930

box 3

folder 01 to 02

Scope and Contents

68 letters from sister, mother, brother-in-law (Thomas King Whipple), Katharine Cornelius (first wife?), Jessie Baxter Black, and Alfred L. Donaldson.

Financial materials

box 3

folder 03

Scope and Contents

Check registers (2), check holder, deposit receipts, professional memberships, invoices, stock purchases

Photographs, undated

box 3

folder 04

Scope and Contents

Family, friends, boat trip.

Miscellaneous

box 3

folder 05

Scope and Contents

3 items: phone list [possibly from Holden collection?];
The Architectural Record, Volume 81, Number 5, May
1937; The Texaco Star, July-August 1932 issue.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)