F. Shirley Prouty Johannes Kirchmayer Research Collection

1873-2015
8.5 linear ft.

Acquisition Number: 2018-04
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Audio/Video: Retained with the collection.
Processing: Laura MacNewman, April 2019
HISTORY

Shirley Prouty is the great great-niece of the woodcarver, Johannes (John) Kirchmayer. Having promised her grandmother that she would write a book about her great great-uncle, she spent many years researching his life, family history, and artworks. Upon reviewing the news clippings that her grandmother had collected, she realized that the scope of the project would be broad. Her research really started in 1994 when her son visited Detroit and was directed to the Cranbrook Educational Community by the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Kirchmayer’s artworks are predominantly ecclesiastical wood carvings, though he also worked with stone and ivory. His work can be seen in many churches and cathedrals in the United States, with some further afield. Prouty’s research is published in her book, *Johannes Kirchmayer, 1860-1930: master carver from Germany’s passion play village to America’s finest sanctuaries*, which includes a biography of Kirchmayer and a detailed catalog of his work.

Johannes Baptist Kirchmayr was born in Oberammergau, Bavaria (now Germany), on March 31, 1860, to John Ev. Lang and Theresia Kirchmayr. Born out of wedlock, Lang acknowledged Johannes as his son, though he grew up in the household of his grandfather and thus assumed the Kirchmayr name. He adapted his name to John Kirchmayer upon his immigration into the United States, but retained Johannes for his artwork, which is identifiable by the inscription “IK” using the Latin spelling Iohannes. It was a common practice for Bavarian woodcarvers to leave their signature on their work. Kirchmayer had half-siblings from both lines of his parentage. In 1872, Theresia married Tobias Zwink and they had three children, one of which also became a wood carver, Adelbert Zwink. Kirchmayer’s father, John Lang, who later became the mayor of Oberammergau, also had subsequent children and his sons, Alois Lang and Anton (Andreas) Lang, became wood carvers.

Johannes’ early experiences in the village of Oberammergau were fundamental to the development of his artistic style and technique. Being famous for the Passion Play, in which many members of the Lang family participated, Oberammergau was the setting in which Kirchmayer learned the biblical stories and, through playing out the scenes of the play, he became familiar with the essential character and countenance of the saints that much inspired his work. He learned modeling in the Lang pottery shop and later excelled in drawing, but it was with his uncle, Georg Lang, that he learned his craft.

After spending time in Paris and London, Kirchmayer returned to Oberammergau; yet he found the village too small and he went in search of new experiences and opportunities. Kirchmayer emigrated to the USA in 1880, when he was twenty years old. His early employment was with furniture manufacturers, firstly, A. Kimbel and Sons, and then Herter Bros. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of great church building in the United States, initiated by the architect Henry Vaughn and
championed by the prolific architect Ralph Adams Cram and his colleague Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Kirchmayer went on to work with these architects and to carve many magnificent interior artworks. He worked for some time with the firm Irving and Casson, and in 1905, he became a partner with W.F. Ross and Otis.T. Lockhart in the firm W.F. Ross & Co. Together with architects and allied craftsmen—stonemasons, stained glass artists, silversmiths and painters—the American Gothic style evolved. This style blended the traditions of old European craftsmen with the inspirations of the New World. In his later years, Kirchmayer worked as an independent artist from his studio in East Cambridge, Massachusetts. Kirchmayer was not only a master of his craft, he was a deeply religious man whose carvings were thus inspired.

Kirchmayer was well respected and loved by his colleagues and patrons. He was commissioned by George Gough Booth to complete works for Christ Church Cranbrook, Cranbrook House, and Brookside School, and they both shared a zeal for the Arts and Crafts Movement. Like Booth in Detroit, Kirchmayer was a founding member of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts (1897). He earned two awards, the American Federation of Arts Award in Industrial Art—Special Honor in Woodcarving (1916), and the Award of the Craftsmanship Medal for Distinguished Achievement in Woodcarving (1930).

Kirchmayer married Frances LeClair in 1904. Their adopted son, Francis John Kirchmayer, died of meningitis when he was aged two in February 1906. His wife, Frances, died in 1923, and in 1929, he married Bessie Caroline Burdette. Kirchmayer died on November 29, 1930, in East Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Arlington, Massachusetts.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection was created, collected, and maintained by F. Shirley Prouty. The collection began with the original newspaper materials, as well as periodicals and Christmas cards with Kirchmayer’s signature, which she was given by her grandmother (Kirchmayer’s niece through marriage to Frances LeClair). The bulk of the collection was collected and created through her research into the family history and artwork of John Kirchmayer for the purposes of publishing a biography of his life and a detailed catalog of his work. The research materials include correspondence with Church archives, state archives, and authors, as well as smaller printed materials and photographic materials.

The arrangement of this collection has followed the original order of the creator, who maintained files on his artwork by the Church or other site where they reside. However, the research files were created and maintained in the order in which his work was discovered, and this order has been rearranged into alphabetical order for ease of reference. The chronology of Kirchmayer’s work, which appears in Prouty’s book, is included here as a reference tool and is updated based on her findings post-publication, and identifies works that are known to exist but have not yet been located. At folder level,
the contents are arranged in chronological order and include a variety of formats including correspondence, printed materials, notes, and photographs. In cases where research files or photographic materials are more voluminous, they have been separated into multiple folders according to format. The collection is divided into six series reflecting the type of materials: Biographical, Correspondence, Research Files, Printed Materials, Realia, and Oversize.

The Biographical (1888-2015, box 1) series comprises correspondence with archives and record offices; birth, death, and naturalization certificates; printed articles; news clippings; Christmas cards; and photographic materials relating to Kirchmayer and his family. While Christmas cards are usually arranged as a form of correspondence, they are included in the biographical materials as they were not sent or received by the creator of this research collection, but were collected as a documentary record of Kirchmayer’s life and work. Writings are also included in this series, including those by Kirchmayer himself as it documents his thoughts about his profession and artistic philosophy, as well as materials relating to lectures that Prouty gave about Kirchmayer, which similarly documents the blending of his personal and professional life.

Correspondence (1979-2009, box 2, 11 folders) is a small series that documents administrative aspects of Prouty’s work, including permission to publish photographs, book publication and orders, and correspondence with other researchers of Kirchmayer’s work.

Series III, Research Files contains the bulk of the collection and is divided into two subseries: Artworks and General. The Artworks (1891-2015, boxes 2-9) subseries comprises research into Kirchmayer’s artworks, and is arranged alphabetically by the sites which house his work, predominantly churches, but also other historic sites such as houses and museums. The folders regarding Kirchmayer’s artworks are organized by location rather than sculpture names because there may be more than one artwork at a location, and the folders were created and maintained in this way by the creator of the collection. The folders may contain correspondence and notes, photographs and smaller printed materials, such as brochures, leaflets and pamphlets. In cases where the materials are voluminous, materials are arranged in multiple folders and photographic materials are separated. Negatives have been removed for special storage.

The subseries General (1914-2011, boxes 9-10) comprises research into architects and other carvers, and background information into church building, Oberammergau, and the medieval influence upon contemporary arts and crafts both in aesthetic style and practical handcraftsmanship. These background materials highlight references to Kirchmayer’s spirit and artwork, and his relationship to other artists. This subseries includes isolated copies of articles and excerpts from books, as well as archival resources. It is arranged alphabetically by subject.

The Printed Materials (1908-1929, box 10) is a small series that comprises the resources that Prouty collected to understand the context of Kirchmayer’s work. It includes news clippings, periodicals, and book chapters. The news clippings and some periodicals are
surrogates due to the fragility of the originals, which are housed separately for optimal preservation.

The **Oversize** (boxes 11-13) series contains books regarding Johannes Kirchmayer, other artists, and the churches that hold his work. It also contains original newspapers, news clippings, and periodicals which are restricted to limit handling.

The **Realia** (box 14) series contains mounted copper plates and a wax candle with the image of John Kirchmayer.

**RELATED COLLECTIONS**

- George Gough Booth Papers (1981-01)
- Christ Church Cranbrook Records (1992-01)
CHRONOLOGY OF ARTWORKS

Dates are based on the construction and/or completion of the church building, as recorded in Shirley Prouty’s text based on diocesan and parish archival records.

1885-1886  Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park, Woodstock, VT
1888       St. James Church, New Bedford, MA
1890-1915  Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Providence, RI
1891       Millicent Library, Fairhaven, MA
1891       Hill House, St. Paul, MN
1894       Church of the Advent, Boston, MA
1894       St. Paul’s School, Concord, NH
1895       The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, New York, NY
1896       Unity Church, North Easton, MA
1898       The Parish Church of Our Saviour, Middleborough, MA
1898       All Saints’ Church, Dorchester, MA
1899       Bubbles of glory, Hiawatha, panels (location unknown)
1900       Groton School, Groton, MA
1900       Homestead, 79 Crescent Hill Avenue, Arlington, MA
1900       St. Luke the Beloved Physician Chapel, Loomis Sanatorium, NY
1902       All Saints’ Church, Great Neck, NY
1903       The Memorial Church, Fairhaven, MA
1904       St. Mary’s Church, Walkerville, ON
1905       Calvary Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, PA
1906       Christ Church, New Haven, CT
1907       St. John’s Episcopal Church, Quincy, IL
1908       All Saints’ Church, Worcester, MA
1908       St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Chicago, IL [destroyed by fire, 1950s]
1908-1916  Second Congregational Church, West Newton, MA
1908       Newman School, Hackensack, NJ
1908       Memorial tablet, Edward Benedict (location unknown)
1908       Madonna, Newman School (location unverifiable, school now gone)
1908       Prie-Dieu (location unverifiable)
1908       Frieze mirror surrounds, arch. Clighton Sturgis (location unverifiable)
1909       The Parish Church of St. Luke, Evanston, IL
1909       St. Catherine’s of Siena, Norwood, MA
1909       Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield, MA
1909       Methuen Memorial Music Hall, Methuen, MA
1909       Presentation of Mary Academy (Searles Castle), Methuen, MA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Rochester, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>St. Stephen’s Church, Geneva, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-1915</td>
<td>St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-1917</td>
<td>Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Jamaica Plain, MA (now closed)</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Walpole, MA</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Church of the Sacred Heart, Taunton, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>St. Paul’s Cathedral, Detroit, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Trinity Church, Columbus, OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912-1916</td>
<td>Aldophus Busch Hall, Cambridge, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1912</td>
<td>St. Anthony and the Holy Child (private collection)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1912</td>
<td>Sculptured Throne, carved for Gate of Heaven Church, South Boston, MA (location unknown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>US Military Academy, West Point, NY</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Cathedral Church of St. James, Chicago, IL</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Diocese of Rhode Island, Providence, RI</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Church of Our Saviour, Syracuse, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1913</td>
<td>Church of St. John the Evangelist, Newport, RI</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1913</td>
<td>American Church, Manila, Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1913</td>
<td>Head of Washington, Lincoln, and Philip Brooks (location unknown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1913</td>
<td>Childhood, sweet sixteen panel heads (location unknown)</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>Cover of Book of Common Prayer</td>
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<td>1914</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>House of Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, MN</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>Church of the Intercession, Harlem, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>St. Luke’s, Evanston, IL</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Larz Anderson Bridge, Cambridge to Boston, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Crib, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Our Lady of Hope, West Barnstaple, MA</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Brookings, SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Altar Book Cover, St. Clement’s Church, Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Our Lady of the Assumption, Osterville, MA</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>St. Michael’s Church, Milton, MA</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City, UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1917</td>
<td>Tryptch, Salt Lake City (location unverifiable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Emmanuel Church, Baltimore, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Altarpiece, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1918</td>
<td>Madonna (location unknown)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
c.1918 Reredos, arch. Joseph Untersee (location unverifiable)  
1918 Organ screen, Boston (location unverifiable)  
1918 Cranbrook House, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
1919 Cranbrook Academy of Arts, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
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1920 St. Catherine of Genoa Church, Somerville, MA  
1921 St. Vincent Ferrer Church, New York, NY  
1922 Symphony in Heaven, oak tableau (location unknown)  
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c.1924 A Madonna and Child, two adoring monks (location unknown)  
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1925 St. Luke’s Cathedral, Portland, ME  
c.1925 Ralph Adams Cram, portrayed in wood (location unknown)  
c.1925 Figure of Saint John the Baptist, carved for the National Cathedral (location unknown)  
1926 All Saints’ Church Peterborough, NH  
c.1926 All Saints’ Episcopal Parish, Brookline MA  
c.1927 American Gothic, French Gothic saint (location unknown)  
1928 Detroit News International Trophy (location unknown)  
c.1928 Self-portrait of I. Kirchmayer (location unknown)  
c.1928 Motherhood (location unknown)  
c.1928 Ralph Adams Cram, expounding his faith (location unknown)  
1929 Sulpician Seminary, Washington, DC  
1929 Christ the King Church, Littleton, NH  
1929 St. John the Evangelist, Newport, RI  
1929 Christ the King, Bethlehem, NH (now closed)  
1929 Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul (National Cathedral), Washington, DC  
1930 Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit  
n.d. Huge illuminated chest, Christmas gift to wife (location unknown)  
n.d. Behold the Lamb wood panel (location unknown)  
n.d. Carving, First Church, Boston (location unverifiable)  
n.d. St. Mary’s Convent, Brighton, MA (location unverifiable)  
n.d. Victor Lawrence House, Chicago (location unverifiable)  
n.d. Women’s Republican Club, Jordan House, Boston (location unverifiable)  
n.d. Carved walnut library ceiling, interview with Andrew Dreselly (location unverifiable)  
SERIES I. Biographical

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1. Awards—Correspondence, 1996-1997
2. Family History—Andreas Lang and Adelbert Zwink, 1888-2015
3. Family History—Bessie Caroline Burdette Kirchmayer, 1994-2005
7. Family History—Katholisches Pfarramt, 1997
11. Family History—Standesamt Staatsarchiv, 1997
12. Legal Documents, 1898-1930, 2001
16. Professional—‘About Woodcarving’ by J. Kirchmayer, Jan 1923
18. Professional—Society of Arts and Crafts Boston, 1897, 1906

SERIES II. Correspondence

Box 2

3. Arlington History Society—Presentation, 2008 [DVD, CD]
6. German-American Club, 2008
7. Permission to Publish Image—Geoff Stein, 2006
8. Permissions to Publish Images—Various, 2000
11. Van Roessel, Annemarie, 1994

SERIES III. Research Files

Subseries A: Artworks

13. Adolphus Busch Hall, Harvard University—Photographs, 2002
14. All Saints’ Church, Ashmont, Dorchester, MA, 2001-2013
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1. All Saints’ Church, Ashmont, Dorchester, MA—Photographs, 1995
2. All Saints’ Church, Ashmont, Dorchester, MA—Photographs, 1997
3. All Saints’ Church, Brookline MA, 2001-2002
4. All Saints’ Church, Brookline MA—Photographs, 2002
5. All Saints’ Church, Great Neck, NY, 1997
6. All Saints’ Church, Great Neck, NY—Photographs, 1998, 2000
7. All Saints’ Church, Peterborough, NH, 1997-2003
8. All Saints’ Church, Peterborough, NH—Photographs, 1997
9. All Saints, West Newbury, MA, 2014
10. All Saints’ Church, Worcester, MA—Correspondence, 1996-1997, 2012
11. American Church, Manila, 1995-2002
13. Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, PA, 1908-2002

Box 4

1. Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City, UT—Correspondence, 2009-2010
2. Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield, MA, 1997-2003
5. Christ Church, New Haven, CT, 1995-2009
6. Christ Church, New Haven, CT—Photographs, n.d.
8. Christ the King, Bethlehem, NH—Photographs, 2000
10. Church of Our Saviour, Middleborough, MA—Photographs, 1995
12. Church of St. Mary the Virgin, New York, NY, 1998
13. Church of St. Mary the Virgin, New York, NY, 2009-2010

Box 5

2. Church of the Advent, Boston, MA—Photographs, 1995
4. Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Jamaica Plain, MA—Photographs, 1997
5. Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Jamaica Plain, MA—Photographs, 2005-2006
10. Church of the Intercession, Harlem, NY, 1931

Box 5 (cont’d.)
13. Church of the Saviour, Syracuse NY, 2011
15. Detroit Institute of Arts, 1999-2000
17. Diocese of Chicago, 1998-2005

Box 6
1. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Baltimore, MD, 1973-2013
2. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Baltimore, MD—Photographs, Feb 1999
3. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Baltimore, MD—Photographs, Dec 1999
5. Groton School, Groton, MA—Photographs
8. Ivory Medallion [1902], 1996-1997
16. Memorial Church, Fairhaven, MA—Photographs, ca.1995

Box 7
1. Methuen Music Hall, Methuen, MA, 1996-2014
2. Methuen Music Hall, Methuen, MA—Newsletters, 1996-2013
3. Methuen Music Hall, Methuen, MA—Photographs, 1996
8. Our Lady of the Assumption, Osterville, MA, 2011
10. Our Lady of Hope, West Barnstable, MA, 2015
12. Presentation of Mary Academy, Methuen, MA, 1997, 2005
13. Presentation of Mary Academy, Methuen, MA—Photographs, 1996
17. Sacred Heart Church, Taunton, MA, 1997

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1. St. Clements Church, Philadelphia PA, 1998
2. St. Elizabeth’s Chapel, Sudbury, MA, n.d.
3. St. Frances de Sales, Charlestown, MA, 1997
4. St. James Church, Chicago, IL—Photographs, 2006
5. St. James Church, New Bedford, MA, 2009
6. St. John’s Episcopal Church, Quincy, IL 1997-1998
7. St. John the Evangelist, Newport, RI, 1998-2005
14. St. Mary’s Church, Walkerville, ON, 1954, 1979
15. St. Michael the Archangel, Providence RI, 1996
16. St, Michael’s Church, Milton, MA, 1996-1997
22. Searles Estate, Methuen, MA, 2012-2014

**Box 9**

1. Second Congregational Church, West Newton, MA, 1926, 2005
2. Second Congregational Church, West Newton, MA—Photographs, 1996
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5. Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbus OH, 1998
6. Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit, MI, 2008
7. Trinity Lutheran Church, New Haven, CT, 1996
8. United States Military Academy, West Point NY, 1998-1999
9. Unity Church, North Easton, MA, 1999
12. Not Applicable, Massachusetts, 2002
13. Not Applicable, Michigan, 1999

**Subseries B: General**


Box 10
1. Frank Walter, Woodcarver, 2011
2. Furniture, 1979, 1995
4. Lee Lawrie, Sculptor, 2009

SERIES IV. Printed Materials

8. Newsclippings, Boston Evening Transcript, 1924
11. Newsclippings, General
12. Newsclippings, Obituaries
14. Periodicals, American Magazine of Art, 1923, 1926-1928
15. Periodicals, Architecture, Feb 1931
17. Periodicals, Christian Art, December 1908
18. Periodicals, General
19. Periodicals, House Beautiful, 1915
20. Periodicals, International Studio, 1910, 1913, 1926
21. Periodicals, The Literary Digest, Nov. 1926

SERIES V. Oversize

Box 11
Art in New York—What Should A Visitor See?
Charles J. Connick—His Education and His Windows in and near Pittsburgh, Albert M. Tannler, 2008
Church of the Advent—A Guidebook, Boston, Mark A. Wuonola (1975)
Photographs, All Saints’ Church, Ashmont, MA
St. Thomas Church (1965)
The Church and the City—A Social History of 150 Years of Saint James, Chicago, Rima Lunin Schultz, 1986
The Church on the Hill 1886-1986, Marie B. Hecht (1987) [Signed by author]
The Literary Digest, Nov 1926
The Searles Saga, Sister Martina Flinton (1976)
The Story of the Cathedral of the Madeleine, Gary Topping, 2009 [signed by author]
Box 12
Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, PA, Richard G. Badger, The Gorham Press, 1908
Christ Church Cranbrook 1928-1978, Jervis Bell McMechan, 1979
Gate of Heaven Parish 1863-1988 Jubilee 125
Rhode Island Stained Glass—An Historical Guide, Paul F. Norton, 2001
St. Catherine of Genoa Parish—Celebrating Our Centennial Year, 1891-1991
St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Norwood, MA 100th Anniversary, 1890-1990
St. Mark’s—A Parish Church and Cathedral, The Cathedral Church of St. Mark, 1953
St. Mark’s, Minnesota, 1953
The Church and the City (History of St. James’, Chicago), Rima Lunin Schultz, 1986

Box 13 [Restricted: Fragile]
1. American Magazine of Art, Vol. 14, No. 1, Jan 1923
3. American Magazine of Art, Vol. 18, No. 8, Aug 1927
5. Christian Art, December 1908
6. International Studio, Sep 1910
7. Literary Digest, The, Nov. 1926
8. Newsclippings, Artwork, 1913, 1923-1924
10. Newsclippings, Awards, 1924, 1930
11. Newsclippings, Obituaries (of Johannes Kirchmayer)

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