

Guide to the George H. Seeley Papers and Photographs

YCAL MSS 459



by Matthew Daniel Mason

May 2011

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 459

CREATOR: Seeley, George H., 1880-1955

TITLE: George H. Seeley papers and photographs

DATES: 1900-1975

BULK DATES: 1900-1950

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 8.5 linear feet (24 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: This collection consists chiefly of papers and photographs created and collected by George H. Seeley that document his photographic career, as well as his later life and family spanning from 1900 to 1975. The collection includes glass plate negatives used by Seeley to create his professional photographs. Photographic prints in the collection are predominantly work prints created by Seeley. There are also film negatives that document his later life and family, as well as the landscape around Stockbridge and at Cape Cod.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.seeley>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.seeley>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Marion Cady Davis Byron, 1975.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Boxes 8-17 (glass negatives): Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Boxes 19-21 (glass transparencies): Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Boxes 22-23 (film negatives): Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

The George H. Seeley Papers and Photographs is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

George H. Seeley Papers and Photographs. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

This finding aid is based on an inventory of the collection created by library staff in the 1970s. The collection was further processed in 2011, when it was arranged into the present series structure and rehoused into acid-free boxes.

Former call number: Uncat Za Ms 350.

George H. Seeley (1880-1955)

George Henry Seeley (1880-1955) was a photographer. He was a lifetime resident of Stockbridge, Massachusetts and supervisor of the art instruction for local schools, as well as an amateur ornithologist. As a photographer, Seeley was a leading member of the Photo-Secession movement along with Alfred Stieglitz, Clarence White, and others. Related to this work, he wrote articles about photography and published his photographs in photographic journals, including *Camera Work*, as well as exhibiting his images around the world. Seeley frequently used his sisters, May Elizabeth Seeley (born 1878), Lilian R. Seeley (born 1884), and Laura S. Seeley (1888-1979), as models for his photographs. His photography emphasizes soft focuses and subtle tonality. Seeley is also known for his landscape photography of winters in New England and Cape Cod beachscapes.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists chiefly of papers and photographs created and collected by George H. Seeley that document his photographic career, as well as his later life and family spanning from 1900 to 1975.

A strength of the collection is the glass plate negatives used by Seeley to create his professional photographs. Photographic prints in the collection are predominantly work prints created by Seeley. There are film negatives that document his later life and family, as well as the landscape around Stockbridge and at Cape Cod.

A scrapbook in the collection, 1900-1915, includes correspondence with Alfred Stieglitz and Clarence White, as well as Curtis Bell, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Wendell G. Corthell, Daniel Chester French, Spencer Kellogg, Jr., John Nilsen Laurvik, Philip P. Sharples, and Edward Steichen. There is also loose correspondence with many of the same people, circa 1900-1930, as well as John Burroughs, Adolph de Meyer, Edward R. Dickson, and Augustus Thibaudeau. Writings in the collection include a set of index cards with notes relating to his photography and a notebook with entries about birds, as well as drafts by Laura Seeley about art photography and her brother. Realia in the collection consists of medals and awards for his photography, 1905-1930, as well as a register for an exhibit of Seeley's photographs in New York City, circa 1915-1918.

A small quantity of correspondence in the collection documents communication between his sister, Laura Seeley and Robert M. Doty of the George Eastman House, as well as with staff at the Yale University Library, circa 1960.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Papers, 1900-1975. II. Photographs, 1900-1950. III. Negatives and Glass Transparencies, circa 1900-1940.

Collection Contents

Series I: Papers, 1900-1975

1.46 linear feet (4 boxes)

This series chiefly consists of correspondence written to Seeley, as well as examples of his writing and collected material. A scrapbook in the subseries Other Papers and Material also includes correspondence

Series I is organized into three subseries: Correspondence, Writings, and Other Papers and Material.

Correspondence

Arranged alphabetically by name.

b. 1, f. 1	Anderson, Paul L.	1913? December 15
b. 1, f. 2	Boston Art Club Invitation by James Fortescue, Jr.	1920 January 6
b. 1, f. 3	Buergel Goodwin, Heinrich	1923 September– October 30
b. 1, f. 4	Burroughs, John Includes a note from "Baky."	1911 December 27
b. 1, f. 5	Butler, Norman F.	1911 January 17
b. 1, f. 6	Camera Club of New York Letter by Floyd Vail.	1921 August 14
b. 1, f. 7	Choate, Mabel	1911? October 24
b. 1, f. 8	Coburn, Alvin Langdon	1906 August 7-1907 June 12
b. 1, f. 9	<i>Country Life in America</i> Letter written by Henry Hodgman Saylor.	1916 October 26
b. 1, f. 10	de Meyer, Adolph	1913 July 15
b. 1, f. 11	Dickson, Edward R.	1911 April 11-1915 January 29
b. 1, f. 12	Doty, Robert M. Letters to Laura Seeley. Includes a postcard also signed by Alvin Langdon Coburn.	1959 August 13-1961 October 10
b. 1, f. 13	Ellis, Rosalie J. Letter to Laura Seeley.	1955 December 22
b. 1, f. 14	Ewel, Otto	1908 July 1-1909 July 27
b. 1, f. 15	Forbush, Edward Howe	1920 January 5

Correspondence (continued)

b. 1, f. 16	French, Wilfred A.	1911 September 18
b. 1, f. 17	Hofmann, Julius Letter to Dr. Robert Reininger.	circa 1904
b. 1, f. 18	International Photography Exhibition, Gothenburg, Sweden Exhibition sponsored by the <i>Göteborgs Handels - och Sjöfartstidning</i> [<i>Gothenburg Trade and Shipping Gazette</i>] newspaper. Includes a draft letter by George H. Seeley.	1929
b. 1, f. 19	Laine, Edmund Randolph	1943 December 17-1944 January 5
b. 1, f. 20	Laurel Hill Association Invitation by Alice McBurney Riggs, secretary of the association.	1944 June 13
b. 1, f. 21	Lindblom, Andreas	1929 October 21
b. 1, f. 22	<i>New York Times</i> Letter written by Seymour Eaton.	1914 April 14
b. 1, f. 23	Philadelphia Museum of Art Letter written by Philip N. Yountz.	1933 February 14
b. 1, f. 24	Pope, Eric	1919 January 16
b. 1, f. 25	<i>La Revue moderne des arts et de la vie</i> Includes a draft manuscript by critic G. de Cordis, "'Il fut un temps . . .," which reviews the exhibit by Seeley at the International Photography Exhibition, Gothenburg, Sweden, as well as English translations by Laura Seeley.	1929 December 2-1930 January 22
	Seeley, George H. Letters and draft letters written by George H. Seeley.	
b. 1, f. 26	Laurel Hill Association Draft letter.	circa 1944
b. 1, f. 27	Seeley, Laura	1900 October 20-1907 December 2
b. 1, f. 28	Seeley family Eight postcards to members of the Seeley family.	1910 November 5-1911 March 2, undated
b. 1, f. 29	----, Walter	1944 June 19
	Seeley, Laura Letters and draft letters written by Laura Seeley.	circa 1960
b. 1, f. 30	Byron, Marion Davis	1975 August 31
b. 1, f. 31	Doty, Robert M.	circa 1960

Correspondence > Seeley, Laura (continued)

b. 1, f. 32	Seeley, George H. NOS, 20110401	1912 January 2
b. 1, f. 33	Stieglitz, Alfred	1907 January 9-1910 October 28
b. 1, f. 34	Struss Pictorial Lens Letters by Karl Struss	1916 November 9-18
b. 1, f. 35	Thibaudeau, Augustus	1915 April 28- May 8
b. 1, f. 36	White, Clarence H.	1910 April 25- May 7
	Yale University Library Letters from staff of the Yale University Library to Laura Seeley.	
b. 1, f. 37	Babb, James T.	1960 July 8
b. 1, f. 38	Gallup, Donald C.	1960 May 18
b. 1, f. 39	----, Helena D.	1955 December 28
b. 1, f. 40	----, Marsha	1960 August 5
b. 1, f. 41	Envelopes Envelopes, some from corporate bodies, including George Eastman House, Fiera di Milano, and Société de photographie de Marseille.	1906-1959
	Writings	
	By George H. Seeley	
b. 1, f. 42	Notebook with notes about birds	1919-1920
b. 2	Index Cards on photographic processes	circa 1925-1935
b. 1, f. 43	Memorandum book	1939-1948
	By Laura Seeley	
b. 1, f. 44	"American Painting and Photography"	1916 November- December
b. 1, f. 45	Notes about George H. Seeley Prepared for Weston Naef of the Metropolitan Museum	1973
	By Others	
b. 1, f. 46-48	Hyman, F. S., Jr., Poems	1948
b. 1, f. 49	Unidentified, Sketchbook	1938 November

Other Papers and Material

Other Papers and Material (continued)

b. 3	<p>Scrapbook</p> <p>Scrapbook compiled by Seeley that includes correspondence, exhibition catalogs, tear sheets, and newspaper clippings.</p> <p>Scattered correspondence, 1904-1913, includes letters from Curtis Bell, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Wendell G. Corthell, Daniel Chester French, Spencer Kellogg, Jr., John Nilsen Laurvik, Philip P. Sharples, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, and Clarence H. White, as well as the Société de photographie de Marseille. There is also a poem dedicated to Seeley by Frederick Henry Koch in 1909.</p> <p>The scrapbook includes catalogs and newspaper clippings related to exhibitions of Seeley's photographs, 1905-1915. These include shows at the Albright Art Gallery, Galleries of the Art Association of Montreal, Montross Gallery, National Arts Club, Photographic Society of Philadelphia, Photo-Succession Galleries, Print Gallery, and Utica Public Library, as well as shows at his home. A catalog for an exhibition at the Free Public Library of Newark in 1911 is accompanied by photographs of the show.</p> <p>Tear sheets of photographic reproductions and articles about Seeley, 1900-1914, derive from several publications, including <i>Academy Notes</i>, <i>American Photography</i>, <i>The Camera</i>, <i>The Craftsman</i>, <i>The International Studio</i>, <i>Photo Era</i>, <i>The Photographer</i>, <i>Western Camera Notes</i>, and <i>Wilson's Photographic Magazine</i>.</p>	1900-1915
b. 1, f. 50	Exhibit Label for Photograph Landscape at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco	1915
b. 3, f. 51	<p>Register for a Gallery Exhibit in New York City</p> <p>Includes signatures for attendees, including Laura Gilpin, Walter Eben Nettleton, and Augustus Thibaudeau.</p>	circa 1915-1918
b. 3, f. 52	Willo Visible Dodger for Controlled Projection Prints	circa 1938
b. 3, f. 53	Group studio portrait of six women and six men	circa 1900
	Awards	
b. 4, f. 54	Photo Club Budapest, Bronze Medal	1905
b. 4, f. 55	Société de photographie de Marseille, Salon 1905, Gold Medal	1905
b. 4, f. 56	Wiener Photo-Klub (Vienna Photo Club), VII. Exhibition, Bronze Medal	1905
b. 4, f. 57	All Japan Societies in the Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo and Osaka, Fourth International Photographic Salon of Japan, Silver Medal	1930

Series II: Photographs, 1900-1950*0.84 linear feet (3 boxes)*

This series chiefly consists of artistic and family photographs created by Seeley. The photographic prints may derive from negatives in Series III, but no effort was made to match prints to negatives during processing the collection.

Series II is organized into three subseries: Photographic Prints, Photograph Album, and Family Photographs and Photographs by Others.

b. 5	Photographic Prints <i>circa 140 photographic prints</i> Chiefly work platinum prints of art photographs created Seeley. Many of the images depict his sisters, May Elizabeth Seeley, Lilian R. Seeley, and Laura S. Seeley as allegorical figures. A portion of the prints depict male figures, including several portraits of an African American man. Landscape views in the subseries depict farms, ponds, streams, and woodland scenes. There is also a small quantity of still lifes.	circa 1900-1915
b. 6	Photograph Album <i>35 photographic prints</i> Album with contact gelatin silver prints from glass plate negatives. Images principally consist of portraits of Seeley's sisters, as well as landscape views and still lifes.	circa 1910-1915
b. 7	Family Photographs and Photographs by Others <i>circa 40 photographic prints</i> This subseries principally includes informal family photographs that depict Seeley, his sisters, and his extended family, including his brother-in-law, Winthrop Isham Davis (1870-1957), and niece, Marion Cady Davis Byron (1910-1988). Photographs by other photographers include a portrait of Frederick H. Koch created in 1908 by John H. Lorenz of Boston, Massachusetts, and inscribed to Seeley by Koch; a view of the rostrum on Laurel Hill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, by F. S. Hyman, Jr., circa 1945; and a studio portrait of an unidentified group of men and women, circa 1905.	circa 1910-1950

Series III: Negatives and Glass Transparencies, circa 1900-1940*5.64 linear feet (16 boxes)*

This series chiefly consists of artistic and family photographs created by Seeley. The negatives may be the source for photographic prints in Series II, but no effort was made to match prints to negatives during processing the collection.

Many of the images on the glass negatives and transparencies depict his sisters, May Elizabeth Seeley, Lilian R. Seeley, and Laura S. Seeley as allegorical figures, as well as images of male figures. Landscape views in the subseries depict farms, ponds, streams, woodland scenes, and beachscapes. There is also a number of still lifes.

Series III is organized into three subseries: Glass Negatives, Glass Transparencies, and Film Negatives.

b. 15, 13, 16, 14, 17, 11-12, 9-10, 8, 10A	Glass Negatives <i>263 negatives</i> Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	circa 1900-1915
b. 18	Wooden negative boxes A sample set of two boxes that originally housed the glass negatives.	circa 1915
b. 19-21	Glass Transparencies <i>52 transparencies</i> Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	circa 1900-1915
b. 22-23	Film Negatives <i>circa 420 negatives</i> Nitrate film negatives of photographic images created by Seeley that chiefly document natural and built landscapes, probably surrounding Stockbridge and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, as well as informal images of his family and animals, including cows, ducks, and wild birds. Restricted fragile material. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	circa 1930-1940

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Photographers -- Massachusetts
Photography, Artistic

Geographic Names

Cape Cod (Mass.) -- Pictorial works
Stockbridge (Mass.) -- Pictorial works

Genres / Formats

Gelatin dry plate negatives
Gelatin silver negatives
Photograph albums
Photographic prints
Platinum prints

Names

Bell, Curtis
Burroughs, John, 1837-1921
Coburn, Alvin Langdon, 1882-1966
Corthell, Wendell G.
Davis, May Elizabeth Seeley, 1878-
De Meyer, Adolf, Baron, 1868-1949
Dickson, Edward R. (Edward Robert), 1880-1922
Doty, Robert M.
French, Daniel Chester, 1850-1931
Kellogg, Spencer, Jr., 1876-1944
Laurvik, J. Nilsen (John Nilsen), 1877-
Seeley, George H., 1880-1955
Seeley, Laura S., 1888-1979
Seeley, Lilian R., 1884-
Sharples, Philip P. (Philip Price)
Steichen, Edward, 1879-1973
Stieglitz, Alfred, 1864-1946
Thibaudeau, Augustus Jackson, 1866-1939
White, Clarence H., 1871-1925