



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

**A Finding Aid to the Karl Theodore
Francis Bitter Papers, 1887-circa
1977, in the Archives of American Art**

by Jayna M. Josefson

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Creator:	Bitter, Karl Theodore Francis, 1867-1915
Title:	Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers
Dates:	1887-circa 1977
Quantity:	2.5 linear feet
Abstract:	The papers of sculptor Karl Bitter date from 1887 to 1977 and measure 2.5 linear feet. The bulk of the collection consists of photographs of works of art and commemorative medals from expositions. Also found are scattered biographical information, family correspondence, two diaries, printed materials, sketchbooks, and sketches.
Language:	The collection is in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers were donated by Marietta Bitter Abel (Mrs. Walter), Mr. Michael Abel, and Lt. Col. Jonathon F. Abel in several increments from 1970-2010. The commemorative medals were donated in 1975 by Walter Hancock, a friend of Bitter's son Francis.

Separated Materials

Originals of material loaned for microfilming, which consist of biographical material, correspondence, and photographs, were returned to Marietta Bitter Abel. Loaned material is available on reels N70-8 and N7-35 but is not described in the container listing of this finding aid.

Available Formats

The collection was digitized in its entirety in 2014 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Processing Information

Portions of the collection were previously microfilmed on reels N70-35, N70-40, and 673. Microfilmed portions were merged, processed, and arranged by Jayna Josefson in 2013 and digitized in 2014 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers, 1887-circa 1977. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Ownership & Literary Rights

The Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

Austrian-born sculptor Karl Bitter (1867-1915) was active in New York City, New York. He exhibited his works at worldwide expositions and examples of his sculpture and memorials can be found throughout the United States.

Karl Theodore Francis Bitter was born in Vienna, Austria, where he trained as a sculptor. While serving in the Austrian military in 1889, Bitter immigrated to the United States and applied for citizenship. Ultimately, Bitter settled in New York City and worked as an assistant in a home decorating firm while establishing his reputation as a sculptor. After winning a 1930 competition to design the Astor memorial bronze gates at Trinity Church, he used the funds to establish a small studio on 13th Street, which he shared with fellow sculptor Giuseppe Moretti. Bitter quickly established himself as a world-famous sculptor who also specialized in private memorials and works for public buildings.

After working as a sculptor at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and as director at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901, Bitter was named head of the sculpture programs at both the 1904 St. Louis Exposition and the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco, California.

Bitter was awarded the silver medal of the Paris Exposition, 1900; the gold medal of the Pan-American Exposition, 1901; and the gold medal at the St. Louis Exposition, 1904. He was a member of the National Institute of Arts and Sciences, National Academy of Design, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Players' Club, Century Club, and the Architectural League.

Karl Bitter married Marie Sherrill with whom he had three children. He died suddenly in 1915 after being struck by a car.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of sculptor Karl Bitter date from 1887 to 1977 and measure 2.5 linear feet. The bulk of the collection consists of photographs of works of art and commemorative medals from expositions. Also found are scattered biographical information, family correspondence, two diaries, printed materials, sketches, and sketchbooks.

Biographical material consists of one short biography of Karl Bitter. The bulk of the correspondence is to Bitter's children, Marietta (Mrs. Walter Abel) and Francis Bitter, and relates to the relocation of Bitter's caryatid sculptures on the St. Paul Building in New York City. There are typescripts of letters from Karl Bitter to sculptor Daniel C. French and from Marie Bitter to her children.

Two diaries from 1901 and 1909 kept by Bitter describe his trips abroad. The 1901 diary is similar to a scrapbook and was kept during his honeymoon with Marie Sherrill. Their travels through France and Italy are vividly described through prose, sketches, maps, postcards, and a photo of Bitter and Marie. A 1909 diary is from Bitter's first trip back to Austria since he left for the United States. Written in the form of letters to his wife, he describes his reactions to being back in Europe, seeing his family, and sightseeing.

Scattered printed material includes a clipping, an exhibition announcement, a postcard, and reproductions of works of art by Bitter.

Photographs are of Bitter, his family and friends, studios, and sculpture. Also found are two photo albums containing many images of Bitter's sculptures throughout the country.

There are two sketchbooks and a print by Blanche Stollson. Also found are Bitter's commemorative medals from various international expositions.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 6 series.

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927 (Box 1; 1 folder)

Series 2: Family Correspondence, 1915-1958 (Box 1, 3 folders)

Series 3: Diaries, 1901-1909 (Box 1, 3; 0.1 linear feet)

Series 4: Printed Material, 1912-circa 1977 (Box 1, OV 7; 4 folders)

Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1887-circa 1960s (Box 1-5, OV 7; 1.0 linear feet)

Series 6: Artwork and Artifacts, circa 1890-1915 (Box 1, 3, 6; 1 linear foot)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Archives of American Art under the following terms:

Subjects:

Artists' studios
Artists' studios--Photographs
Sculptors--Austria--Vienna
Sculptors--United States

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Medals
Photographs
Prints
Scrapbooks
Sketchbooks
Sketches

Names:

Bitter, Francis, 1902-1967
Bitter, Marie
Bitter, Marietta
French, Daniel Chester, 1850-1931
Stollson, Blanche

Geographic Names:

Austria -- Description and travel
France -- Description and travel
Italy--Description and travel

Series Descriptions/Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927

1 folder; Box 1

Found is one short biography of Karl Bitter.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Biography, circa 1927

Series 2: Family Correspondence, 1915-1958

3 folders; Box 1

Found is correspondence of Karl Bitter's children, Marietta (Mrs. Walter Abel) and Francis Bitter, most of which concerns the Committee to Preserve American Art and the reinstallation of the caryatids on the St. Paul Building in New York City. There is also a copy of a letter written by Marie Bitter to her children concerning the death of her husband and wishes for her own burial, which was sent to Francis Bitter. Also found is a copy of a letter written by Karl Bitter to Daniel Chester French in which he discusses Greek archaeology and his feelings on World War I.

Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	2	Abel, Marietta (Mrs. Walter), 1958
1	3	Bitter, Francis, 1945-1958 Includes a copy of a letter written by Marie Bitter in 1916 concerning the death of her husband Karl and of burial arrangement.
1	4	Bitter, Karl, 1915 Copy of a letter to Daniel C. French.

Series 3: Diaries, 1901-1909

0.1 linear feet; Box 1, 3

Found are two diaries from Karl Bitter describing his travels abroad in 1901 and 1909. The 1901 diary is from Bitter's honeymoon with his wife Marie and details their travel schedule in France, Switzerland, and Italy. The diary is very specific and describes hotels, restaurants, historic sites, castles, and ruins. It includes scrapbook elements such as hand-drawn maps of bicycle routes, travel receipts, a photograph of Marie and Karl, postcards, and sketches. Visited cities and sites include Cherbourg, Valognes, Mont Saint-Michel, Vitre, the Loire Valley, Geneva, St. Monte, Lake Como, Verona, Venice, and Milan.

The 1909 diary documents Bitter's trip to Austria in the form of letters written to his wife. Bitter details his journey on the USS Deutschland and his trip from Paris to Vienna. He gives his reactions to seeing his family and other sites after living many years abroad. On June 25th, 1909, Bitter describes a lavish party.

Materials are arranged chronologically.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	5	Diary, 1901 Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 1.

1	6	Diary, 1909
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Box	Folder	
3	1	Oversized Diary Items scanned with Box 1, Folder 5., 1901

Series 4: Printed Material, 1912-circa 1977

4 folders; Box 1, OV 7

Found is a clipping concerning the 1912 Panama-Pacific Exposition, an exhibition announcement, a postcard, and reproductions of works of art by Bitter.

Materials are arranged by document type.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	7	Clipping, 1912 Oversized material housed in OV 7.
1	8	Exhibition Announcement, circa 1958
1	9	Postcards, circa 1977 One post card depicts the transferred St. Paul Building caryatids in Holiday Park, Indiana.
1	10	Reproductions of Works of Art, circa 1930 Excerpted from Ferdinand Schevill's book.

Box		
OV 7		Oversized Clipping scanned with Box 1, Folder 7, 1912

Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1887-circa 1960s

1 linear foot; Box 1-5, OV 7

Found are two photo albums; portraits of Karl Bitter; snapshots of Bitter with his family, friends and works of art; studios and homes; and photographs works of art.

Materials are organized by document type and subject.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	11	Photo Album #1, 1897-1914 Oversized materials housed in Box 3, Folder 5 and Box 4.
1	12	Loose Materials from Photo Album #1, 1897-1914 Oversized materials housed in Box 3, Folder 4.

1	13	Photo Album #2, 1887-1914 Oversized material housed in Box 5.
1	14	Loose Materials from Photo Album #2, 1887-1914 Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 3.
1	15	Karl Bitter, circa 1915
1	16	Jonathan Abel, after 1958 In front of "The Ruins" in Indianapolis, Indiana.
1	17	Studio, Bitter and Moretti, circa 1910 Works of Art Indiana
1	18	Fountain, Indianapolis, circa 1950 Minnesota
1	19	Lowry Memorial, Minneapolis, circa 1910 New York
1	20	Standard Bearer for Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, circa 1910
1	21	Andrew D. White, Seated, Cornell, circa 1910 Plaster Model
1	22-23	All Angels Church, New York City, circa 1910
1	24-25	St. Paul Building Caryatids, New York City, circa 1958
1	26	Franz Sigel Equestrian Statue, New York City, circa 1910
1	27	Villard Memorial, Sleepy Hollow, circa 1910 Ohio
1	28-29	Alexander Hamilton and Lord Mansfield, Cleveland, circa 1910 Oversized material housed in OV 7. Vermont
1	30	John Erastrus Hubbard Memorial, circa 1910
1	31	Mrs. C. R. Crane and Child, Portrait Relief, circa 1910
1	32	Robert Curtis Ogden, Tablet, circa 1910
1	33	Fritz Schwyzer Memorial, circa 1910
1	34	Relief Bust, circa 1910
1	35	Negatives, circa 1960s

Box	Folder	
		Glass Plate Lantern Slides
2	1	Karl Bitter, Portraits, circa 1890-1915
2	2	Karl Bitter, with Family and Friends, circa 1890-circa 1915
2	3	Karl Bitter, with Works of Art in Studio, circa 1890-1915
2	4	Studio, New York City, circa 1890
2	5	Studio, Weehawken, New Jersey, circa 1890
2	6	Homes, Adirondacks, New York, circa 1890

2 7 Works of Art, circa 1890-1910

Box **Folder**
3 3-5 Oversized Photo Album Materials scanned with Box 1, Folders 11-12, 14, 1887-1914

Box
4 Oversized Photo Album scanned with Box 1, Folder 11, 1887-1914

Box
5 Oversized Photo Album scanned with Box 1, Folder 13, 1887-1914

Box
OV 7 Oversized Photographs of Works of Art scanned with Box 1, Folder 28-29, circa 1908

Series 6: Artwork and Artifacts, 1890-1915

1 linear foot; Box 1, 3, 6

Found is a sketchbook, a bound sketchbook of drawings of the Depew Foundatin, a print by Blanche Stollson, and 11 commemorative medals.

Materials are arranged by document type.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	36	Sketchbook, circa 1890
1	37	Sketchbook, Depew Fountain (Dismantled), 1914-1915 Oversized material housed in Box 6.
1	38	"The Depew Fountain," by Blanche Stollson, after 1915 Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 2.
		Commemorative Medals
1	39	World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Illinois (1892), 1892
1	40	Exposition Universelle Internationale, Paris, France (1900), 1900 Two medals, one to K. Bitter and another to C. Bitter.
1	41	Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York (1901), 1901
1	42	South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition (1901), 1901-1902
1	43	Universal Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri (1904), 1904
1	44	Universal Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri (1904), 1904 Plaque
1	45	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915
1	46	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915 Placquette
1	47	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915 Division of Works, Chief of Sculpture Award

1 48 Unidentified, circa 1900

Box Folder

3 2 Oversized Etching scanned with Box 1, Folder 38, after 1915

Box

6 Oversized Sketchbook scanned with Box 1, Folder 37, 1914-1915