

**Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum
Record Unit 314**

Amelia Watson Collection, 1896-1987

By Linda M. Wilson

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.

Title: Amelia Watson

Creator: Linda M. Wilson

Quantity: .5 cubic foot

Abstract: The Amelia Watson Collection is a compilation of correspondence relating to Amelia and her sister Edith (1889- 1942), newspaper clippings arranged chronologically (1896-1986), publications from the MVM (1968), loose leaves from *Cape Cod* illustrated with her watercolor paintings (1896), biographical notes including a copy of the bill of sale for the Museum's purchase of her watercolors (1942).

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: The records were acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum in _____ by _____.

Processing Information: Linda M. Wilson

Access Restrictions: none

Use Restrictions: none

Preferred citation for publication: Martha's Vineyard Museum, Amelia Watson Collection, 1896-1987, Record Unit 314.

Index Terms

- Watson, Amelia Montague
- Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute
- Thoreau, Henry David
- *Cape Cod*. Houghton Mifflin, 1896
- Water colors
- Painting

Series and Subseries Arrangement:

Series I: Correspondence

 Subseries A: Amelia Watson, 1889-1896

 Subseries B: Edith Watson, 1942

Series II: Clippings, 1896-1986

Series III: Publications, 1896-1968

Series IV: Research, 1986-1987

Series IV: Reference

Historical Note:

Amelia Montague Watson (1856-1934) was an illustrator and artist who specialized in watercolor landscapes. She was born in East Windsor Hill, CT and spent her adult life in the family home there. Summers were spent in Florida and Tryon, North Carolina and on Martha's Vineyard at the family home in East Chop. Her best known published work is in the 1896 Houghton Mifflin edition of Thoreau's *Cape Cod* for which she provided the illustrations. She taught drawing and painting at The Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute from 1878 to 1902 and served for a time as head of the Art Department for the Institute. Although she was a prolific painter few of her original works can be found in collections today. The largest collection of her work (32 watercolors, 5 pencil sketches) is held by the Martha's Vineyard Museum and was the subject of an exhibit at the Museum in 1985. These pieces were purchased in 1942 from Amelia's sister Edith. Her personal papers, sketchbooks, and clippings reporting on her many exhibitions in both Massachusetts and Connecticut can be found in the Stowe-Day Library and the Connecticut State Library, both of which are in Hartford, Connecticut. She died unexpectedly in Orlando, Florida in 1934.

Scope and Content Note:

This small collection provides a look at the life and work of Amelia Watson through biographical notes and chronologically arranged clippings and correspondence related to Amelia and her sister Edith. Of note is an independent study written in 1987 by Linda Smith Cohen, a letter from Miss Watson's editor at Houghton Mifflin regarding the publication of Thoreau's *Cape Cod* and her illustrations for this 2-volume work. Eight non-consecutive leaves from *Cape Cod* are included in the collection. There is also a letter of reference from the President of the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute dated 1902 recommending her ... "for any position where the best artistic work is required."

Series Descriptions:

Series I: Correspondence, 1889-1942

Subseries A: Amelia Montague Watson

This subseries contains letters written to Amelia Watson.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1889-1896

Subseries B: Edith Watson

This subseries contains letters written to and from Edith Watson.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 2: Correspondence, 1942

Series II: Clippings, 1896-1986

This series contains book reviews that mention Amelia Watson's illustrations and reporting on contemporary exhibits of her Martha's Vineyard watercolors.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 3: Newspaper clippings, 1896-1986

Series III: Publications, 1896-1968

This series contains 8 leaves from the 1896 Houghton Mifflin edition of *Cape Cod* showing page decorations by Amelia Watson, a 1968 calendar published by the MVM, and a copy of *The Intelligencer*, February 1968, which contains a brief article written by Henry Beetle Hough about Amelia Watson with illustrations from the Museum's holdings of her work.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 4: Loose pages from *Cape Cod*, 2 MVM publications

Series IV: Reference

This series contains biographical notes from a variety of contemporary art reference works.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 5: Photocopies from various art reference works

Series V: Research

This series consists of an independent study project written by Linda Smith Cohen in 1987 and an article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on 19th century attitudes about art education in the United States as reflected in the founding of art schools to teach drawing.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 6: Independent study on Amelia Watson and photocopied article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1986.