

MS-138

The Museum of Northern Arizona
Harold S. Colton Memorial Library
3101 N. Fort Valley Road
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
(928)774-5213 ext. 256

Title

Gunnar Widforss collection

Dates

1894-1973

Extent

1.32 linear ft.

Name of Creator(s)

Widforss, Gunnar, 1879-1934
Belknap, Bill, 1920-
Belknap, Frances Spencer, 1913-
McDade, Daniel
Dilliard, Irving, 1904-2002
Museum of Northern Arizona

Biographical History

Gunnar Widforss (1879-1934), born in Stockholm, Sweden to parents Laurentius Mauritz Vikter Widforss and Blenda Carolina Weidenhayn Widforss, was a painter of landscapes, primarily in watercolors. Displaying an artistic talent as a youth, Widforss attended the Royal Technical Institute in Stockholm beginning in 1896. Upon completing his art studies at RTI he received his journeyman's certificate as a decorative painter by the City of Stockholm, concentrating on architectural decoration. Leaving his career as a decorative painter, Widforss toured Europe and the United States of America from 1904-1908 seeking to cultivate his ability as a painter.

Widforss began receiving international acceptance beginning in 1912 when two of his paintings were exhibited for a year at the Paris Salon. In 1913 he studied for a year at the Academie Colaresse in Paris. Returning to the United States in 1921, in route on a proposed trip to Asia, Widforss was captivated by the wonderful scenery of Yosemite National Park in California and began painting landscapes of his surroundings. Stephen T. Mather, the first Director of the National Park Service, encouraged Widforss to concentrate his work on the National Parks. Widforss primarily focused his works on Yosemite National Park and Grand Canyon National Park, as well as other national parks and monuments in the Southwest, living much of the time at the Grand Canyon National Park. In 1924 he was featured in a one man exhibit at the National Gallery of Art.

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Widforss became a U.S. citizen in 1929. Upon returning to the Grand Canyon from a trip to the Midwest, Widforss passed away from heart failure on November 30, 1934.

In 1966 Bill and Frances Belknap were contracted by the Museum of Northern Arizona to produce a book and exhibit of Widforss' works. The book, *Gunnar Widforss: Painter of the Grand Canyon*, was published in 1969 with the exhibit taking place at the Museum of Northern Arizona from August 17 through September 28, 1969. Materials in this collection were collected in preparation for the book and exhibit.

Scope and Content

Correspondence, legal documents, minutes, printed materials, financial documents and photographic materials (1894-1973) document the research of Bill and Francis Belknap for their publication *Gunnar Widforss: Painter of the Grand Canyon*. Records include research materials, Widforss' estate documents, and personal records of Gunnar Widforss. Materials are divided into three series: Belknap Research Materials, Gunnar Widforss' Personal Records, and Photographic Materials. The first series, Belknap Research Materials (1924-1973) include interview notes, meeting minutes, correspondence, and Widforss' estate documents gathered by the Belknaps in preparation for their publication and accompanying exhibit. The second series, Gunnar Widforss' Personal Records (1929-1934), includes Widforss' correspondence and legal documents. Photographic Materials (1894-1935), the final series, contains photographs of Widforss, friends and family, and Widforss' paintings.

System of Arrangement

Arranged in 3 series: 1. Belknap Research Materials (1924-1973), 2. Gunnar Widforss' Personal Records (1929-1935), 3. Photographic Materials (1894-1935). The first series is divided into two subseries: 1. Correspondence (1966-1971), 2. Research Materials (1924-1973), files are arranged chronologically.

Conditions Governing Access

Materials are available for research.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Unpublished and published manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

Languages and Scripts of the Materials

English & Swedish

Finding Aids

Detailed inventories are available upon request.

Custodial History

Gunnar Widforss' personal documents were obtained by the Belknaps from Dan McDade, the executor of Gunnar Widforss' estate.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Materials were donated to the Museum of Northern Arizona by Bill and Frances Belknap.

Publication Note

Belknap, Bill and Frances. *Gunnar Widforss: Painter of the Grand Canyon*. Published for the Museum of Northern Arizona by the Northland Press, Flagstaff, AZ, 1969.

Description Control

Finding aid written by Aaron Spelbring using *DACS*, 5 January 2012.

Inventory

Title

Series 1: Belknap Research Materials

Dates

1924-1973, n.d.

Extent

6.18 linear inches

Scope and Content

This series includes research materials used by the Belknaps in preparation for the book *Gunnar Widforss: Painter of the Grand Canyon* and accompanying exhibit.

Series 1: Belknap Research Materials				
Box/Folder	File Description	Date(s)	Extent	File #
Sub-Series 1: Correspondence				
1.1	Correspondence	1966-1968	.38 in.	MS-138-1-1-1
1.2	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-2
1.3	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-3
1.4	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-4
1.5	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-5
1.6	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-6
1.7	Correspondence	1968	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-7
1.8	Correspondence	1968-1971	.13 in.	MS-138-1-1-8
Sub-Series 2: Research materials				
1.9	Interviews and exhibit planning	1966-1968, n.d.	.5 in.	MS-138-1-2-9
1.10	Interviews and book planning	1968-1973, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-1-2-10
1.11	Will and estate settlement documents	1927-1947, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-1-2-11
1.12	Correspondence RE: settlement of estate	1934-1937	.5 in.	MS-138-1-2-12
1.13	Dan McDade day book (Widforss estate accounts) (photocopy)	1934-1937	.25 in.	MS-138-1-2-13
1.14	Irving Dilliard, <i>St. Louis Dispatch</i> (photocopies)	1935, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-1-2-14

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2.1	Articles and press releases RE: Widforss	1929-1963, n.d.	.75 in.	MS-138-1-2-15
2.2	Exhibitions with Widforss paintings	1924-1929, n.d.	.25 in.	MS-138-1-2-16
2.3	Dan McDade and Harvey Co. materials	1928-1935, 1965, n.d.	.5 in.	MS-138-1-2-17
2.4	<i>Songs of Yosemite</i> , by Harold Symes (Illustrated by Gunnar Widforss) (3 copies)	1924	1.0 in.	MS-138-1-2-18
2.5	Manuscript of <i>Widforss Painter of the Grand Canyon</i>	1969	.5 in.	MS-138-1-2-19
2.6	Photocopies of <i>Widforss Painter of the Grand Canyon</i> (2 copies)	n.d.	.5 in.	MS-138-1-2-20

Title

Series 2: Gunnar Widforss' Personal Records

Dates

1929-1934, n.d.

Extent

.65 linear inches

Scope and Content

This series includes Widforss' correspondence and legal documents.

Series 2: Gunnar Widforss' Personal Records				
Box/Folder	File Description	Date(s)	Extent	File #
2.7	Posthumous correspondence to Widforss	1934	.13 in.	MS-138-2-1
2.8	Correspondence from Widforss to McDade	1934, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-2-2
2.9	Widforss Certificate of Naturalization	1929	.13 in.	MS-138-2-3
2.10	Widforss passport	1930	.13 in.	MS-138-2-4
2.11	Christmas cards from Widforss	1929, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-2-5

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Series 3: Photographic Materials

Dates

1894-1935, n.d.

Extent

8.96 linear inches

Scope and Content

This series contains photographs of Widforss, friends and family, and Widforss' paintings.

Series 3: Photographic Materials

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Box/Folder	File Description	Date(s)	Extent	File #
3.1	Photographs of Widforss Family and Young Gunnar Widforss	1894-1919, n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-3-1
3.2	Photographs of Gunnar Widforss	1925-1933, n.d.	.25 in.	MS-138-3-2
3.3	Photographs of Widforss' Funeral	1934-1935, n.d.	.25 in.	MS-138-3-3
3.4	Photographs of Dan and Ann McDade	n.d.	.13 in.	MS-138-3-4
3.5	Black & White Photographs of Widforss' Paintings	n.d.	.5 in.	MS-138-3-5
3.6	Color Photographs of Widforss' Paintings	n.d.	.75 in.	MS-138-3-6
3.7	Copy Negatives of Various Photographs	n.d.	.2 in.	MS-138-3-7
4.1	Gunnar Widforss Paintings (Photographs with captions)	n.d.	3.25 in.	MS-138-3-8
4.2	Widforss Show (illustrations and photographs of works used in Widforss exhibit)	n.d.	3.0 in.	MS-138-3-9
4.3	Slides Taken by Bill Belknap while working on book	n.d.	.5 in.	MS-139-3-10