Harry B. Baker papers, 1891-1946
KA.0090

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February 28, 2017
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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Collection Overview

Repository Kellen Design Archives

Creator Baker, Harry B., 1868-1941

Title Harry B. Baker papers

Date [inclusive] 1891-1946

Extent 1.9 linear ft: 2 boxes, 1 oversize box, 1 oversize folder

Summary Harry B. Baker (1868-1941) was an illustrator who taught at the New York and Paris branches of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (which became Parsons School of Design) in the early 20th century.
Before moving to New York, Baker traveled around the American West. He illustrated bar fights, cowboys, Native Americans, and street scenes. The collection includes photographs of Baker and his students, a letter from Frank Alvah Parsons, identity cards and papers, and illustrations by Baker, including one for the cover of *Western Story* magazine.

**Preferred Citation note**

[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Harry B. Baker papers, KA.0090, box __, folder __, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

**Biographical Note**

Harry Brown Baker was born on December 24, 1868 in Spencer, West Virginia. Although his given name was Henry, he primarily used Harry throughout his professional life. He married fellow artist Maud Claire Hainer in Emporia, Kansas in 1897, and by 1900, they were living in Oklahoma City. Baker worked as a traveling salesman for the McAlester Fuel Company of South McAlester, Indian Territory. Much of Baker's surviving illustration work depicts classic images of the American West, including cowboys, horses and wagons, and saloon scenes.

Sometime after 1904, the Bakers moved east, eventually settling in New Jersey. Harry Baker began teaching at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later, Parsons The New School for Design) during the 1915-1916 academic year. He also served as Dean of Men for the school in the 1920s. During the 1927-1928 academic year, he taught at the school's Paris Ateliers. Although his title and the name of his department evolved over time, Baker taught life drawing classes until his death in 1941. The November 1940 issue of the school's *Alumni Bulletin* notes that Baker was not only the oldest faculty member, but had taught for the longest amount of time at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. The article also notes his popularity among students and alumni, despite his lack of commercial fame.


**Scope and Contents of Collection**

The Harry B. Baker papers consist of artwork, correspondence, ephemera, and photographs produced, received, and collected by Harry Baker. A small percentage of the collection pertains to Maud Baker,
Harry's wife and a fellow artist. The papers include documentation of a personal and a professional nature.

The General series includes a variety of textual materials and ephemera, such as a marriage certificate, identification cards and licenses, and receipts relating to Baker's death and burial. Correspondence in the series includes postcards and letters from New York School of Fine and Applied Art colleagues Frank Alvah Parsons, Robert Castle, and Betty Carter, as well as from unidentified individuals, possibly former students. Of note is a 1928 letter from Parsons advising that he has abolished the school's student government.

The Artwork series consists of drawings, paintings, and sketches in a variety of media, including charcoal, pencil, ink wash, and watercolors. Much of the artwork depicts frontier settings, often populated by horses and cowboy figures, although some drawings depict busy urban scenes with women, children and laborers. Cartoons and caricatures of clowns, cowboys, hobos, and minstrels are also present. The series includes proofs of a cover of *Western Story* magazine featuring an illustration by Baker.

The Photographs series consists of negatives and prints documenting Harry Baker's travels and teaching activities. Many photographs depict Baker with his students engaged in classwork and recreational activities, such as men's life drawing classes, a plein-air painting camping trip with male students, and a visit to Riverside Park in New York City. There is a humorous element to many of the photographs, such as a staged scene in which Baker appears handcuffed by a gun-wielding sheriff. Twelve prints and their accompanying negatives depict what may be either a Wild West show or the filming of a motion picture in the Western genre. With the exception of one print labeled 1929, none of the photographic materials are dated.

**Organization and Arrangement**

- **Organized in 3 series.**
  - I **General, 1891-1946**
  - II **Artwork, before 1941**
  - III **Photographic materials, before 1941**

**Administrative Information**

**Publication Information**
Kellen Design Archives February 14, 2011

**Access Restrictions**
Collection is open for research use. Please contact archivist@newschool.edu for appointment.
Use Restrictions
To publish images of material from this collection, permission must be obtained in writing from the New School Archives. Please contact: archivist@newschool.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Related Materials
The New School Archives holds a portrait sketch of Baker drawn by New York School of Fine and Applied Art alumnus James Vinton Stowell (KA.0100).

The Francis J. Geck papers (KA.0052) in the New School Archives include figure drawings that may have been produced in a class Geck took under Baker's instruction.

The Parsons School of Design Alumni Association records (PC.03.02.01) includes photographs of Harry Baker during his time teaching at the Paris Ateliers of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art.

Keywords for Searching Related Subjects

Corporate Name(s)
- New York School of Fine and Applied Art.

Genre(s)
- Cartoons (humorous images).
- Drawings.
- Manuals (instructional materials).
- Negatives (photographic).
- Photographic postcards.
- Photographs.
- Sketches.

Personal Name(s)
- Parsons, Frank Alvah, 1868-1930

Subject(s)
- Art teachers -- United States -- 20th century.
- Art -- Study and teaching.
Other Finding Aids note

For selected item-level description and images from the Harry B. Baker papers, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0090.

Collection Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series I. General circa 1891-1946</th>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camera manual for Kodak 3A, with notes, between 1902 and 1941</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kodak 3A Autographic allowed amateur photographers to create photographic postcards. Baker may have used the camera to create the photographic postcards included in this collection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color card and Crayonex booklet, 1915, after 1914</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence, 1904-1932</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York School of Fine and Applied Art, 1925-1939</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes brochure advertising new school facility and museum passes for Baker's classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal ephemera, 1893-1946</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes a marriage license, a funeral expense receipt, a bill for a monument, a membership card for the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, Harry and Maud's French identification cards, and Maud's student identification card.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Travel ephemera, circa 1891-1941</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series II. Artwork before 1941</th>
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<th>Folder</th>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
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<td>OSx-1</td>
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</table>

| Four caricatures | k_OSxxx-1 | 1 |

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### Series III. Photographic materials before 1941

Link to selected images from this series, before 1941


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negatives and prints</th>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access copies available electronically.</td>
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<td>9-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>