Frank Alvah Parsons correspondence and tribute by James Wilfrid Kerr, 1925-1930
KA.0106

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

Repository Kellen Design Archives

Creator Kerr, James Wilfrid, 1897-1994

Creator - Recipient Kerr, Rose Netzorg, 1892-1974

Creator - Correspondent Parsons, Frank Alvah, 1868-1930

Title Frank Alvah Parsons correspondence and tribute by James Wilfrid Kerr

Date [inclusive] 1925-1930

Extent 0.1 linear ft: 1 folder

Summary The collection contains correspondence from Frank Alvah Parsons, president of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later, Parsons School of Design), to alumni James Wilfrid Kerr and Rose Netzorg Kerr, in addition to a short manuscript written by James Wilfrid Kerr upon
Parsons' death. The tribute relates Kerr's experiences as a World War One veteran studying art under Parsons' tutelage.

Preferred Citation note

[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Frank Alvah Parsons correspondence and tribute by James Wilfrid Kerr, KA.0106, box __, folder __, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

Biographical note

Frank Alvah Parsons was born April 1, 1866 in Chesterfield, Massachusetts. In 1901, after a period of European travel, Parsons moved to New York City where he earned a degree in Art Education from Columbia University in 1905.

Parsons began teaching at the New York School of Art (later Parsons The New School for Design) during the 1904-1905 academic year. At that time, the New York School of Art was primarily an institution for instruction in the fine arts. Parsons became co-manager of the school in 1907, and in 1911, became the school's director. From then until his death in 1930, Parsons shaped the school, turning its focus permanently from the fine arts to the "applied" arts, and building it into one of the premier design schools in the country. Innovations Parsons introduced include the addition of departments for costume design, interior decoration, and commercial illustration. In addition to administering the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, Parsons continued teaching and often lectured at museums, universities, organizations, and private clubs throughout the United States and Europe. He also wrote several design books.

Frank Alvah Parsons died on May 25, 1930. The New York School of Fine and Applied Art was formally re-named Parsons School of Design in 1941.

James Wilfrid Kerr was born in New York in 1897. He studied at the Poppenhusen Institute in College Point, New York and served in the U.S. Navy from 1917 until 1919, before attending the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. He graduated in 1923 with a degree in Advertising. Kerr married Rose R. Netzorg, a fellow student, in 1922. Netzorg had served as director of the Western Michigan University's art department before attending the New York School of Fine and Applied Art.

Following graduation, the Kerrs established a publishing company specializing in art reference, and both became freelance artists. James Kerr later studied with painter Camilo Egas at the New School for Social Research in the 1930s and served as president of the American Veterans Society of Artists. The Kerrs eventually moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Rose Netzorg Kerr died in 1974 and James W. Kerr died in 1994.
Scope and Contents of Collection

The collection includes typed and handwritten correspondence from Frank Alvah Parsons to James W. and Rose Netzorg Kerr. The letters, affectionate in tone, are addressed to the Kerrs individually and as a couple. Also included are two carbon copies of letters James Kerr wrote to Caroline Lanterman, secretary of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, and to the editor of *School Arts Magazine* immediately following Parsons' death in 1930.

The collection also contains a typed manuscript by James W. Kerr, "Mr. Parsons and Forty Ex-Servicemen," describing a vocational training program Parsons administered for veterans of the First World War. Kerr was one of the veterans enrolled in that program.

Related Materials

The Parsons School of Design Alumni Association records (PC.03.02.01) in the New School Archives include a file of correspondence between the Kerrs and the Alumni Association.
Keywords for Searching Related Subjects

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

Genre(s)
- Correspondence.
- Manuscripts.

Subject(s)
- Art schools -- Alumni and alumnae.
- Art -- Study and teaching -- New York (State) -- New York -- 20th century.
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Veterans -- United States.

Other Finding Aids note
For selected item-level description and images from the Frank Alvah Parsons correspondence and tribute by James Wilfrid Kerr, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0106.

Collection Inventory

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<th>Correspondence and tribute 1925-1930</th>
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