



Käsebier, Gertrude, 1852-1934.

**Gertrude Käsebier papers
1897-circa 1940
(bulk dates 1934-circa 1940)**

Abstract: The Gertrude Käsebier papers consist of a small amount of handwritten and typed reminiscences, typed transcripts of the original handwritten material, and newspaper clippings collected by immediate family members to document the personal experiences of the noted American pictorial photographer. The papers are not dated, but most appear to have been created after Käsebier's death in 1934.

Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 149
Creator: Käsebier, Gertrude, 1852-1934.
Title: Gertrude Käsebier papers
Inclusive Dates: 1897-circa 1940
Bulk Dates: 1934-circa 1940
Extent: .3 linear feet (1 box)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 149, Gertrude Käsebier papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes (upright manuscript boxes)

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>

Source: Gift of Mason Turner, Jr., September 1989.

Processing: Processed by L.R. Johnson, June 1990. Encoded by L.R. Johnson Melvin, April 2012.

Materials Available in Alternative Format: Access to digitized versions of the Gertrude Käsebier papers is available at [University of Delaware Digital Institutional Repository](#).

Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

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Biographical Note

American pictorialist photographer Gertrude Käsebier, with the support and admiration of Alfred Stieglitz, became a founding member of the Photo-Secession movement in 1902.

Gertrude Käsebier was born in 1852 in Des Moines, Iowa, daughter of John and Muncy Stanton. The family was of established American lineage: Käsebier's maternal great-grandfather was the brother of Daniel Boone. When she was still very young, Käsebier moved to Colorado where her father eventually became owner of a gold mine in Leadville. The trip across the plains by covered wagon and the frontier life near Indians sparked the imagination and adventuresome personality of Käsebier.

Käsebier returned east to attend the Moravian Seminary for Girls in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. In 1874, she married Edward Käsebier, a successful businessman with traditional values who was a native of Wiesbaden, Germany. Käsebier's first trip to Europe was to meet her husband's relatives in Germany. The Käsebies lived in Brooklyn and had three children: Frederick W., Gertrude Elizabeth, and Hermine Mathilde.

With the duty of establishing a family behind her, at age 36 Gertrude Käsebier enrolled in the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to study painting. She wished to continue her study in Paris but her husband was not supportive of this idea. She found an opportunity to go to Paris in 1896, however, by chaperoning a group of art students from Pratt. She took her daughters as well and spent the next two years in France and Germany. During this time, Käsebier began experimenting with her camera and became enthused with the aesthetic treatment of photography.

Back in New York, and still without the encouragement of her husband, Käsebier abandoned painting and opened a photography studio. Early exhibits of her work, at the Pratt Institute in 1897 and at the New York Camera Club in 1899, were well received and Gertrude Käsebier became known for the impressionistic, pictorial style of her photography. Alfred Stieglitz was an admirer of her work, and in 1902 she became a founding member of the Photo-Secession movement. In 1903, the first issue of *Camera Work* featured Gertrude Käsebier's photography. She was elected the first woman member of London's Linked Ring in 1900; and with Alvin Langdon Coburn and Clarence White, she co-founded Pictorial Photographers of America in 1916. Gertrude Käsebier continued her successful career with portrait work and pictorial assignments for magazines until five years before her death at age 82. She died in 1934 in New York City.

Sources:

Homer, William Innes. *A pictorial heritage: the photographs of Gertrude Käsebier: Delaware Art Museum, March 2 - April 22, 1979* ... Newark: The University; Wilmington: distribution, The Delaware Art Museum, 1979.

International Center of Photography. *Encyclopedia of photography*. New York: Crown Pub., 1984.

Scope and Content Note

The Gertrude Käsebier papers consist of a small amount of handwritten and typed reminiscences, typed transcripts of the original handwritten material, and newspaper clippings collected by immediate family members to document the personal experiences of the noted American pictorial photographer. The papers are not dated, but most appear to have been created after Käsebier's death in 1934.

The University Gallery at the University of Delaware possesses the largest collection of Käsebier photographs in the country, approximately 130 examples. In 1979, Professor William I. Homer, chairman of the Department of Art History, collaborated with the Delaware Art Museum in the preparation of an exhibition of Käsebier's photographs. The University's collection was used, and other photographs were borrowed from private collectors and institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress. In researching the work of Käsebier, Professor Homer established contact with Mason E. Turner, Jr., of Wilmington, Delaware. Mr. Turner, the great-grandson of Käsebier, provided Professor Homer with these papers which were used extensively by Homer's students in preparation of the exhibition catalog. In the catalog, these papers are frequently quoted and referred to in the Notes as "unpublished manuscripts described in the Preface." In 1989, Mr. Turner formally donated the papers to the University of Delaware and the collection was transferred by Professor Homer to Special Collections in Morris Library.

The scrapbook clippings date from 1897 and some of the material attributed to Gertrude Käsebier would also date from before 1934. The purpose of the material was to provide notes for a biography of Gertrude Käsebier. The papers contain family anecdotes told with a certain sentimentality. The stories provide biographical facts, but they are most usefully illustrative of Käsebier's personality.

The material is arranged according to creator of the notes. "Autobiographical notes by Gertrude Käsebier" consists of 28 pages either typed by Gertrude Käsebier or copied by someone else from Käsebier's notes. "How the Indians came on earth" is also attributed to Gertrude Käsebier. As with most of the papers, the notes are taken from short memories recalled at random. "Scrapbook clippings" includes reviews of the 1897 exhibition of Gertrude Käsebier's work at the Pratt Institute, and a 1934 obituary.

The "Biography of Gertrude Käsebier by Elizabeth O'Malley" is an essay by Käsebier's granddaughter, Elizabeth, the child of Gertrude Elizabeth Käsebier O'Malley. The essay bears Elizabeth's name on each page, minor spelling corrections, and the comment "interesting" on the first page, which may suggest that this was a biographical essay written for a school assignment. The next folder contains several pages of verbatim notes with an accompanying paper describing the contents as "Material taken down by a woman who once wanted to write Granny's life."

The above-mentioned note is in the hand of Mina Turner, Gertrude Käsebier's granddaughter and the person who is apparently responsible for creation of material in the rest of the collection. Mina Turner was the daughter of Hermine Mathilde Turner, and aunt of Mason Turner, donor of the Käsebier Papers. Mina Turner's notes include several short anecdotes, each foldered separately but collected under three subseries: "Biographical notes on Gertrude Käsebier," "Biographical notes on Gertrude Käsebier from interviews," and "Proposed outline of biography for Gertrude Käsebier." The interviews were conducted with Edward Steichen, an important member of Gertrude Käsebier's early New York photographic circle; Samuel Lifshay,

under whom Gertrude Käsebier apprenticed; Harriet Hibbard, her studio assistant; and Mrs. Henry Clifton (Adele Miller), a fellow art student at Pratt Institute. Mina Turner's proposed outline of a biography is a compilation of all of her notes. Most of the short anecdotes are handwritten by Mina Turner and accompanied by typed transcripts which have been filed in the same folder behind the original notes. There are a few written notes in a second hand which may be Hermine Turner's.

Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Käsebier, Gertrude, 1852-1934.

Turner, Mina, 1908-

Steichen, Edward, 1879-1973.

Corporate Names

Photo-Secession (Association)

Topical Terms

Pictorialism (Photography movement)

Photographers--United States--History.

Photography, Artistic.

Photography--United States--History.

Form/Genre Terms

Newsclippings.

Reminiscences.

Typescripts.

Autobiographies.

Occupation

Photographers.

Personal Contributors

Turner, Mina, 1908-

Related Materials in this Repository

MSS 198 Gertrude Käsebier collection

Arrangement

Other than the arrangement of the papers by creator of the notes, the papers have been organized by separating identifiable anecdotes and placing them in individual folders in a roughly chronological sequence. The papers arrived in no specific order, having been used by their creators and Professor Homer's students in preparation of the exhibition catalog. The "Proposed outline of a biography of Gertrude Käsebier" still reflects the original disorder of the papers. This series includes several carbons of pages and cut-and-paste work. Most pages have small bracketed numbers pencilled into the upper right hand corners. These numbers were probably numbered by Professor Homer's students and may be disregarded in this arrangement.

Several of the folders contain holograph originals followed by typed transcripts of the notes. Preservation copies of the autobiographical notes by Gertrude Käsebier and the scrapbook clippings follow the folders of originals. A folder of photocopies of Mina Turner's notes is found at the end of the collection and is roughly arranged to parallel the contents of the original notes. One folder contains photocopies of "How the Indians came on Earth." The original of this seven-page document, which was probably in Gertrude Käsebier's hand, is missing.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Autobiographical and biographical material, undated

Autobiographical notes by Gertrude Käsebier , undated [Box 1 F1]

27 leaves

[PDF](#)

Autobiographical notes by Gertrude Käsebier (preservation copy), undated [Box 1 F2]

27 leaves

"How the Indians came on Earth" (photocopy), undated [Box 1 F3]

7 leaves

Scrapbook clippings , undated [Box 1 F4]

6 leaves

[PDF](#)

Scrapbook clippings (preservation copy) , undated [Box 1 F5]

6 leaves

Biography of Gertrude Käsebier by Elizabeth O'Malley, circa 1923 [Box 1 F6]

13 leaves

[PDF](#)

"Material taken down by a woman who once wanted to write Granny's life", undated [Box 1 F7]

20 leaves

[PDF](#)

Series II. Mina Turner's Biographical notes on Gertrude Käsebier, undated

Early life, relation to Boones, undated [Box 1 F8]

3 leaves

[PDF](#)

Edward Käsebier, undated [Box 1 F9]

17 leaves

[PDF](#)

Europe, Steichen, Newport, undated [**Box 1 F10**]

6 leaves

[PDF](#)

Pratt Institute, undated [**Box 1 F11**]

7 leaves

[PDF](#)

New Durham, Oceanside (Long Island), undated [**Box 1 F12**]

7 leaves

[PDF](#)

Smoking , undated [**Box 1 F13**]

3 leaves

[PDF](#)

Crucifix story , undated [**Box 1 F14**]

9 leaves

[PDF](#)

Lincoln story, undated [**Box 1 F15**]

5 pages (4 leaves)

[PDF](#)

Photographing Indians, undated [**Box 1 F16**]

7 pages (6 leaves)

[PDF](#)

Photographing Stanford White, Evelyn Nesbit , undated [**Box 1 F17**]

5 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner at Gertrude Käsebier's studios, undated [**Box 1 F18**]

4 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner dancing, undated [Box 1 F19]

10 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner's drawing exhibited at Independent Artists Show, New York, undated [Box 1 F20]

2 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner's engagement , undated [Box 1 F21]

6 pages (5 leaves)

[PDF](#)

Edison's daughter, deafness, undated [Box 1 F22]

13 leaves

[PDF](#)

Later life and death , undated [Box 1 F23]

8 leaves

[PDF](#)

Series III. Mina Turner's biographical notes on Gertrude Käsebier from interviews, undated

Col. Edward J. Steichen, undated [Box 1 F24]

9 leaves

[PDF](#)

Sam Lifshy, undated [Box 1 F25]

32 pages (23 leaves)

[PDF](#)

Harriet Hibbard, undated [Box 1 F26]

13 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mrs. Henry Clifton (Adele Miller) , undated [**Box 1 F27**]

22 leaves

[PDF](#)

Unidentified handwritten notes , undated [**Box 1 F28**]

3 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner's proposed outline of biography of Gertrude Käsebier, undated [**Box 1 F29**]

27 leaves

[PDF](#)

Mina Turner's proposed outline of biography of Gertrude Käsebier (fragments) , undated [**Box 1 F30**]

14 leaves

[PDF](#)

Photocopies of original Mina Turner notes , undated [**Box 1 F31**]

163 leaves
