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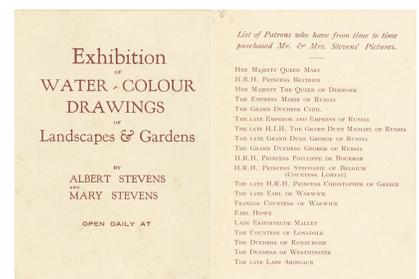
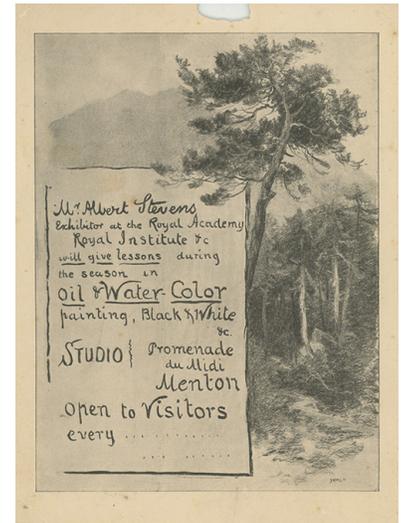
Archive of Artists Albert and Mary Stevens "A Pair of Aquarelists"

Original Sketches, Watercolors, Photographs, Correspondence, other Manuscript Material, Printed Ephemera and Contemporary Newspaper Reviews, of popular and prolific British Watercolorists Albert and Mary Stevens, who flourished between 1880 and 1925 in France, Italy, Switzerland and Britain. \$9,750.00

¶ Albert and Mary Stevens were successful artists in Europe and Britain between the later stages of the Victorian era and the early 20th century. They held regular exhibitions of their collaborative landscape studies of the French Riviera, Swiss Alps, Italian lakes and English countryside. They maintained galleries at Cannes and London and were patronized by European royalty and aristocracy, including Tsar Nicholas II and the Empress of Russia. The archive includes a portfolio of 20 watercolor studies and 15 pencil sketches; eight sketchbooks with approximately 100 watercolor or pencil studies; two albums of newspaper exhibition reviews; a file of testimonials, documents and letters concerning Russian purchases; printed invitation cards, gallery and price references; lists of important patrons; approximately 280 photographs taken by the Stevens (mostly silver gelatin prints); and three albumen photographs signed and captioned on the verso "Frank Mason Good."

¶ The archive documents the artists' working methods with field sketches, watercolor studies, and the use of photography; as well, the archive documents their commercial and financial success through correspondence, exhibition announcements, and two albums of fastidiously compiled press clippings. Overall condition is very good; sketchbooks with ordinary wear; foxing to just some of the works on watercolor board; a few photographs with edge wear; a large and well-rounded archive, fully deserving of proper preservation and study, with much to say about the intersections of Victorian landscape art, early photography, and the working methods and commercial life of husband and wife professional artists.

¶ Albert Stevens (1847-1934), son of a London auctioneer, married Mary Jane Ellen Draper (1866-1947) of Liverpool in 1884. Albert taught Mary to paint and she was quick to exhibit a distinctive talent and aesthetic of her own. Both artists exhibited throughout Britain, including several times at the Royal Academy. The couple had one daughter, Dorothy Mary Stevens, who also became an artist; she appears in several of the photographs.



¶ The majority of these images were taken by the artists and is also supplemented by purchases from various professional studio photographers, notably “N. D. Photos. Environs de Nice” in the south of France, and Alinari’s “Lago d’Orta” from Italy. Several photographs record Stevens family members on picnics or other rural excursions. Signed albumen photographs by Frank Mason Good are also captioned by him on the verso: “Shiplake. A Willow Walk”, “A Dorset Lane”, and “Ent To Stokesay Castle” F. M. Good was a Victorian landscape photographer renowned for his English and Middle-Eastern work and the presence of these rare signed images in the Stevens collection demonstrates more than a casual interest in photography by the Stevens. Many of the photographs contain the Stevens’ pencil annotations and captions on the verso, which relate to the paintings. Others image show Mary Stevens on a mule with a folding stool and paint box; Albert perched on a tabletop at work at his easel outdoors; Dorothy Stevens, two girls “Watching the Woodpecker,” a girl with a parasol, feeding the chickens, tree blossoms, children in a country lane or at play, glacier views, and Swiss cows in a meadow. Flooded landscapes and rugged beach studies all contribute to the pictorial narrative. The British landscapes depict Doone Valley Devonshire, Arundel Castle, Porlock in Somerset, and two views of Warwick Castle. The Earl of Warwick was one of the Stevens’ noted collectors and later their student. Included with the correspondence is a teaching testimonial from the Earl and a letter informing them of the destruction of one of their “beautiful drawings” in the great fire at the castle.



¶ As a patron and student of the Stevens the Earl was in good company: Her Majesty Queen Mary, H.R.H Princess Beatrice, The Queen of Denmark, Princess Phillippe De Bourbon, Princess Christopher of Greece, Princess Stephanie of Belgium, Earl Howe, Countess of Lonsdale, Duchess of Roxburghe and Duchess of Westminster were all avid collectors, as documented in this archive. A 1904 letter from Princess Beatrice of Saxe Coburg also sought private lessons. The Stevens were particularly favored by the Russian royal family: they enjoyed royal patronage from The Empress Marie, The Grand Duchess Cyril, The Grand Duke Michael, The Grand Duke and Duchess George, and The Emperor and Empress. The *Evening Standard* of September 29, 1913 noted: “The Czar of Russia has honored Mr. Albert Stevens and Mrs. Mary Stevens by purchasing several of their watercolor drawings. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens are well known at Cannes, where they winter every year.”



¶ Among the 24 pieces of original correspondence to the Stevens are letters pertaining to the sale of art works to members of the Russian court, including documentation of shipment, selection, returns, titles with prices, and payment for paintings. Several examples of Albert Stevens’ drafts and copies of outgoing correspondence are also present.



¶ The original watercolors include landscapes and still lifes, such as meadows, flowers in a vase, Lake Geneva, Como, Alpine and coastal views, gardens, a girl with a dove in a meadow – the latter similar to a work documented by a photograph in one of the two albums

of newspaper reviews. Pencil drawings depict Warwick Castle, Old Town San Remo, Loch Aire, and other locals, with pencil instructions concerning colors. Sketch book studies in pencil or watercolor detail sunset at Mont Blanc, lake views and figures, a girl with flowers or reading a book, Dolce Aqua village, poppies, fir trees, flower-specked stone steps, Fishing Boat Marcoti Lugano, Matterhorn, and the San Dalmazzo Church tower. One of the eight sketch books is inscribed “Mary Stevens, Chalet Stevens, Mentone.” In later years the couple retired to the Malvern hills.

¶ The Stevens documented their careers and success by maintaining two albums that contain over one hundred neatly clipped and mounted press reviews and notices of exhibitions, etc., including one in which they are described as a “A Pair of Aquarelists.” Among the clippings are ones from the Pall Mall Gazette, Manchester Guardian, Brighton Gazette, Daily Telegraph, Daily News, Court Journal, Queen, West London Observer, Saturday Review, Morning Post, Country Life, Cannes Gazette, Kensington Society, Illustrated London News, Vanity Fair, Bazaar, The Artist, Sunday Times, Daily Graphic, Ladies Pictorial, The Anglo American, Globe, and Daily Messenger.

¶ In a clipped article from the London Illustrated News, the reporter writes: “The ‘one man’ exhibition is likely to suffer from an unsuspected rival, if the art world can produce many couples displaying so much sympathy in their work as Mr. and Mrs. Albert Stevens. This may not be the first time on which a husband and wife have taken the burden of ‘a show’ upon their shoulders, but it is probably the first instance of a picture gallery being fully and satisfactorily furnished by the joint labours of a well-assorted couple. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens have wandered together over many parts of England and the Continent, taking notes with skillful hands of the scenes they have visited in sunshine and storm. Many will, perhaps think that Mr. Stevens is most successful in catching the atmosphere and effects of his own country, as shown in his pictures of the English lakes in the neighbourhood of Durham. Mrs. Stevens, on the other hand, is at her best when dealing with the flowery meadows of North Italy, before the scythe or the summer storm has laid low the masses of bright blossoms which crop up amid the tall grass. The neighbourhood o Le Presse - that charming little ‘Bath’ which travellers descending from the Bernina suddenly light upon has furnished Mrs. Stevens with some of her brightest and most successful inspirations, but both she and Mr. Stevens have found on Como and at Pontresina and among the olive-trees of Amalfi some delightful subjects, which pleasantly recall these favoured ‘beauty spots’ of Switzerland and Italy. The exhibition is held at the Dudley Gallery of the Egyptian Hall, where both artists have on various occasions been frequent exhibitors.”

