Carl Milles, 1875-1955
Papers, 1917-2000 (bulk, 1929-1945)
1 linear ft.

Acquisition Number: 1989-13

Acquisition: Transferred to the Archives from the Cranbrook Academy of Art via transfer Jul-Aug 1989. Photocopied material and correspondence re the Aloe Plaza fountain commission was a gift of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri, October 1987.

Access: Access to the collection is unrestricted.

Copyright: Copyright to this collection is held by the Cranbrook Educational Community.

Preferred Citation: Carl Milles Papers, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Photographs: Moved to special photograph collection.

Index: See end of finding aid.

Processing: Gregg T. Trendowski, 1989. Collection was re-processed and finding aid updated by Jill Griffiths, July 2004.
Carl Emil Wilhelm Anderson was born 23 June 1875 at Orby in Lagga near Upsala, Sweden. He was the eldest son and second child of Lt. Emil (Mille, hence Milles’ adopted name) Anderson and his wife, Walborg Tissel. Milles lived at a boarding house in Stockholm while attending the Jacobskala (1885-1892). When he left school he was apprenticed to a cabinet maker/woodworker and attended night classes (1892-1897) in woodworking, and later in carving and modeling. After this period of work-study, he attended the technical school full time and was awarded a prize of 200 kroner from the Swedish Arts and Crafts Society. He then accepted a position to help manage a school of Swedish gymnastics in Santiago, Chile. However, upon reaching Paris on his way to Marseilles (en route) to South America he changed his plans.

Milles remained in Paris until 1904, attempting to support himself with work jobbed out by master cabinetmakers, while continuing to teach himself modeling and trying to establish professional recognition as a sculptor. In 1899 he was admitted to the Salon for the first time. In 1902, his maquette for the Sten Sture monument at Upsala University received an initial fourth prize, but a popular vote by the students awarded it a first, and it was the design eventually chosen, establishing his Swedish reputation. Disagreements and lack of funds delayed the completion of the monument until 1925. Between 1903-1904 he traveled in various parts of Western Europe and in 1905 Milles married painter Olga Granner. From 1906-1908 he suffered a cycle of ill health and short recoveries. In spite of these setbacks, in 1908, he began to build a home at Hersud, Lidingo, near Stockholm.

In 1914, a major group of his works at the Baltic exposition in Malmo, Sweden garnered favorable attention from European critics, however, World War I interfered with further building his reputation on the continent. Feeling that his earlier works did not meet his new standards, Milles destroyed most of the work in his Lidingo studio in 1917.

By 1920, he had become Professor of Modeling at the Royal Academy of Art, Stockholm. His newest works were given a prominent place at the Tercentenary Exhibition, Stockholm. A large fountain project at Holmberg was completed in the same year (1923). The occasion of his 50th birthday was celebrated in the Swedish press: he had become the pre-eminent sculptor in Sweden. However, his increasing simplification of form and daring with subject matter also brought with it increasing adverse criticism in his home country.

An exhibition at London’s Tate Gallery (1926-1927) was his first contact with the English-speaking world. In 1931, after two trips to the United States, Milles decided to accept the invitation of George Gough Booth (1869-1949) to live and work under the auspices of the Cranbrook Foundation in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He worked as head of the Department of Sculpture, Cranbrook Academy of Art from 1931-1951. His first comprehensive showing was at the City Art Museum of St. Louis, Missouri followed
by exhibitions in Detroit, MI, Cleveland, OH, and Brooklyn, NY. By 1932 he had settled 
permanently at Cranbrook and in 1934, the Cranbrook Foundation acquired a 
comprehensive collection of his work. In 1935, he received an Honorary Doctor of 
Humane Letters from Yale University (New Haven, Conn.).

He continued to win awards, high praise, and many large (usually fountain arrangements) 
commissions. In 1945, he and Olga became U.S. citizens.

After World War II, between 1947-1950, he and Olga visited and worked in Sweden, and 
he further developed his estate at Lidingo. In 1950 the American Academy in Rome 
invited him to use their facilities, he worked there almost full-time after his retirement 
from Cranbrook in 1952. He died at his home in Lidingo, Sweden on 19 Sept 1955.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

This collection was compiled from various sources and is artificially arranged into the 
following series: BIOGRAPHICAL; ART WORK; PUBLICATIONS; EVENTS; 
REALIA. The documents in the folders are organized chronologically and/or 
apphabetically. Most of the publications and news clippings in the collection were moved 
to non-Cranbrook publications or the E & M files. The bulk of this collection covers the 
time period 1929-1945.

BIOGRAPHICAL: This series contains materials related to the life of Carl Milles and 
includes correspondence and legal information. Of special note is Milles’ 
correspondence with Tony Rosenthal and Douglas Froeb which include Milles’ thoughts 
on spirituality and philosophy. The bulk of Mr. Milles’ correspondence relating to the 
Cranbrook institutions and individuals associated with them can be found in the George 
Gough Booth Papers, #1981-01.

ART WORK: This series contains documents relating to the art work of Carl Milles and 
includes his notes on his works, lists of holdings of his work at Cranbrook, and a 
photocopied scrapbook concerning the Aloe Memorial Plaza.

PUBLICATIONS: The series contains publications and some clippings about Carl Milles 
as well as catalogs of exhibitions. Of special note are an unknown magazine clipping and 
an article by Luc Willink concerning Cranbrook Foundation and George Gough Booth.

EVENTS: This series includes documents relating to events in Milles’ life including his 
seventieth birthday celebration and his informal speech given at Kingswood School.

REALIA: This series consists of a pouch belonging to Carl Milles. It is not known at this 
time what the pouch was used for.

**Related Collections**
- George Gough Booth Papers (1981-01)
- Kate Thompson Bromley Papers (1981-04)
- Cranbrook Academy of Art Records (1998-05)
- Cranbrook Foundation Records, RGI: Office Files (1981-05)
- Hills Arnold Papers (2005-09)
- William Gehron Papers (2003-08)
- Marguerite Kimball Papers (1991-03)
- Microfilm, Carl and Olga Milles Papers, Archives of American Art-The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts
Box 1

**BIOGRAPHICAL**
1. Correspondence, Alice Warren Dockstader, 1944
2. Correspondence, Douglas Froeb, 1945, 1947
3. Correspondence, Tony Rosenthal, 1944-1945
4. General Correspondence, 1934
5. General Correspondence, 1936
7. Telegrams, n.d.
8. Elegy for Eliel Saarinen, ca. 1950
9. Legal, sale of sculpture collection, 1948
10. Portrait of Carl Milles by Olga Milles, 1917

**ART WORK**
11. Drawings, Charles Krause, 1965
12. Lists, Milles’ works, 1956, 1959
13. Notes, Milles (on his work), 1936
14. Scrapbook, Aloe Memorial Plaza, 1929-1934
15. Scrapbook, Aloe Memorial Plaza, 1935-1938
16. Scrapbook, Aloe Memorial Plaza, 1938-1939
17. Scrapbook, Aloe Memorial Plaza, 1940

**PUBLICATIONS**
18. Articles, 1932, 1956
23. Clippings, Detroit Public Library, 1983

Box 2

**PUBLICATIONS** (cont’d)
2. Programme, The Fountain of Faith dedication, 1952
3. Report, the Sino-Swedish Expedition, Sven Hedin, 1948

**EVENTS**
4. Correspondence, Seventieth birthday celebration, 1945
5. Guest lists, Seventieth birthday celebration, 1945

Box 2 (cont’d)
6. Invitations and programs, Seventieth birthday celebration, 1945
7. Outline, Kingswood School Presentation of Rings, 1945

REALIA
8. Pouch

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