



Jefferson David Chalfant Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

Extent

5 folders

Contents

Newspaper articles, exhibition catalogs, and photographs of the artist

Access Restrictions

Unrestricted

Processed

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Jefferson David Chalfant Papers, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

Biography of Jefferson David Chalfant

Jefferson David Chalfant was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1856.

After a series of moves with his family from Lancaster, Lititz, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Chalfant settled in Wilmington, Delaware where he was employed by Jackson and Sharp Car and Sash Works as a painter of parlor car interiors. Sometime between 1881 and 1883, Chalfant began to develop his career as a fine artist. He had no formal training. From his first location at 1218 Washington Street, he moved his studio in 1886 to the northwest corner of Eighth and Market Streets in the old Wilmington Institute Building. It was during this time that Chalfant began what was to become a long association with H. Wood Sullivan, a businessman with the firm of Blumenthal and Company, dealers in leather. Sullivan, from that time until his death in 1903, acted as Chalfant's agent and manager. In fact, it was Sullivan who was responsible not only for Chalfant's popularity among private collectors but also for making certain that his works were shown at competitive shows, such as those held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He first exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1887, and he apparently continued to exhibit there until his departure for Europe. He also exhibited works at the National Academy of Design, the Providence Art Club, and galleries in New York and Philadelphia.

Chalfant's first works were still lifes and landscapes inspired by the Brandywine Springs area. By 1889, they had come to the attention of New York art patron Alfred Corning Clark, who sponsored Chalfant's two-year trip to Europe from 1890 to 1892. In Paris he studied figure drawing and portraiture with Adolphe-William Bouguereau and Jules LeFebvre.

Upon his return, Chalfant maintained a studio from 1893 to 1905 at 721 Market Street known as the Almond Building. During this period he exhibited his *trompe l'oeil* work *Perfect Counterfeit* in the Delaware Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. At this time he was also exhibiting works in Boston, Albany, and Chicago and continued to exhibit at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the National Academy of Design.

In 1903, at the age of forty-seven, Chalfant married Katherine Braunstein of Wilmington. Their only child, Jefferson David, was born in 1904. In 1905 Chalfant moved his studio and family to "Ashley" in Richardson Park, where he remained for the rest of his life. He suffered a stroke in 1927 which forced his retirement from painting. He died February 3, 1931.

Source: *Artists in Wilmington, 1890-1940*. Wilmington, DE: Delaware Art Museum, 1980.

Description of the Collection

Folder

- 1 Articles
- 2 Biographical
- 3 Catalogs: "A Century of American Still-Life Painting, 1813-1913" Selected by William H. Gerdts, Organized and circulated by The American Federation of Arts, 1966; "Chalfant Used Unique, Dramatic Approach in his Paintings," *Brandywine Catalyst: Newsletter of The Brandywine Conservancy and Museum*, May 1979; "Jefferson D. Chalfant, 1856-1931," exhibition catalog of an exhibition held at the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, January 8, 1959-February 1, 1959 (2 copies)
- 4 Photocopies and reproductions of work
- 5 Photographs: "Photograph of J. D. Chalfant in his studio at Ashby, Wilmington" photograph mounted on black board; Photograph of Chalfant in his studio.