



# Guide to the Louise Kidder Sparrow Papers 1900-1986

Archives and Special Collections  
Library and Research Center  
National Museum of Women in the Arts

Re-processed by Patrick Brown  
August 2006  
2.5 linear feet; 3 containers

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## Biography

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Louise Kidder Sparrow was a sculptor of portraits and busts from 1924 to 1934, earning her international recognition. Maintaining her studio at 1661 Crescent Place in Washington, D.C. for several years, she was successful in securing commissions for portrait busts of Senators and military leaders. Her works are on permanent display in public buildings and galleries throughout the United States.

Sparrow was a writer and translator as well. Her poetry appeared in anthologies, small journals and poetry magazines. She wrote more than a dozen books of poetry. Her last piece was written right before her death, "Midnight Meditation."

## Chronology

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- 1884**      *January 1.* Born Louise Winslow Kidder in Malden, Mass. Her father Wellington Parker Kidder was the inventor of the noiseless typewriter.
- 1900-1901**      During her second year at the Girls' Latin School, Louise (age 16) is offered the opportunity to study and travel for a year and a half in Europe (Italy, Switzerland, France and England) with Mrs. Alice S. Pitts and her daughter.
- She writes an unpublished manuscript about the trip on her return "Carol Discovers Europe."
- 1904**      Louise's father privately prints her first book of poems "Lyrics and Translations."
- This book wins her membership into The Boston Authors Club. She is the youngest member.
- 1905**      She begins her two years at Quincy Mansion Finishing School, at the end of which she receives a diploma.
- 1906**      Travels for 9 months with Thompson-Baldassaroni School of Travel for the second time. She is under the tutelage of Francesco Baldassaroni and his wife. In Rome she studies painting with Henry Coleman. She receives a diploma.
- 1907**      Louise studies drawing at the Eric Pape School of Art in Boston.
- Spends two years at Emerson College of Oratory in Boston.
- 1909**      *Novembers 16.* Marries Lieut. Herbert George Sparrow, USN in Jamaica Plain, MA. She lives in Washington, D.C. for a year with her husband.

- 1910**      **November 24.** Herbert George Sparrow, Jr. is born in Louise's childhood home in Jamaica Plain, MA.
- 1915**      The artist moves back to D.C. and enrolls in sculpting classes at the Corcoran Gallery of Art with Mr. Messer.
- Studies, for brief periods, with Henry K. Bush-Brown, Ulric S. Dunbar, and Frederick W. Allen.
- 1916-1919**      Louise lives with her parents off and on during the time her husband is at sea. During her stays in Boston, she studies with Frederick W. Allen one summer and in the fall studies with Bela Pratt in his life-modeling class at the Boston Art Museum.
- 1920-1922**      Spends two years in Rio de Janeiro when her husband becomes Naval Attaché at the American Embassy.
- 1923**      Lives in Panama and then Europe.
- 1924**      **January 21.** Her husband dies when the ship he's commanding, the *USS Tacoma*, is wrecked near Vera Cruz, Mexico. She writes a book, "The Last Cruise", about her life with her husband and the circumstances of his death.
- Soon after her husband's death, she moves to D.C. and begins her career as professional sculptor, staying for ten years (1924-1934). She has an exhibition practically every year of that time.
- Makes a memorial plaque for husband, which is placed in Bancroft Hall at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. This plaque is unveiled during a ceremony by their 14 yr old son.
- 1925**      Becomes a member of the Society of Washington Artists.
- ca. 1928-1937**      Is hired to be Editor of *Translations of Star-Dust*. This position lasts for three years.
- 1929**      **December.** Bust is complete of Senator Theodore E. Burton (who appointed husband to Annapolis and their son to West Point).
- 1930**      **January.** Awarded the Sculpture Medal at the Corcoran Gallery by the Society of Washington Artists, of which she is an active member.
- The U.S. Government commissions a portrait bust of Senator Theodore Burton for placement in the Capitol building in D.C.
- November 11.** Statue of *Titanic* disaster hero, Col. Archibald Gracie IV is unveiled in the National Gallery of Art in D.C.
- At almost the same time as the Gracie sculpture, a portrait bust of Capt. Gilliss is approved by Lorado Taft and bought by Act of Congress as a gift to Chile for their new Naval Observatory.
- Dec. 28, 1930-Jan. 10, 1931.** Exhibition at the Arts Club of Washington in the auditorium.
- 1931**      **May.** Receives Diplome d'Honneur from the Exposition Coloniale Internationale in Paris. She is awarded for the bronze bust of General Gorgas.

- 1934** Louise is in a serious car crash, which ends her career as a sculptor.
- 1938** Wrote My World Constitution.
- 1940** Is invited to be Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London.  
*November 9.* She marries Lieut. Comdr. Paul E. H. Gripon who is in the French Navy.
- 1940-1941** Lives in France.
- 1942** Gives ten 15-minute radiobroadcasts on the "Wisdom of the Classics."
- 1942-1946** She spends four years in Virginia, which leads to her writing a book, Virginia Byways.
- 1946-1948** Lives in France with second husband.
- 1949** *June.* After a 5-year separation due to World War II, Louise gets a divorce from Paul Gripon and legally changes her last name back to the name of her first husband.
- 1962** Settles in Washington, D.C. permanently.
- 1962-1963** Starts the process of donating her personal papers to Radcliffe College after they invite her to do so.
- 1979** *July 9.* Louise Sparrow dies of a heart attack at the age of 95.

## Scope and Content

The Louise Kidder Sparrow collection consists of materials given to the museum by Sparrow's son, Maj. Gen. Herbert G. Sparrow, USA, Ret. A majority of the materials are photocopies from the Louise Kidder Sparrow Papers at the Schlesinger Library, which is part of the Harvard University Libraries system. The photocopies are interspersed throughout the collection – the Box Inventory states which folders contain photocopies. The series divisions were maintained from previous processing, but the names of the series were changed for the sake of clarity. The seven series are Biographical Files, Clippings, Correspondence, Works of Art Files, Writings, and Tools .

The first series is Biographical Files, which range from biographical essays, chronologies, and notes written by Sparrow. Also included in this series are directions for Sparrow's son after her death. Letters of condolence and Sparrow's death certificate are also included.

The Clippings series includes mentions of Sparrow in newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and Sparrow's obituary. Sparrow's letters of editor cover a wide variety of subjects from sculpture to the need for a world constitution.

The third series is Correspondence, which includes personal letters and letters from foundries about sculptural commissions. The Ephemera series has brochures for commission portrait busts, an exhibition pamphlet, and cards. Of all the paper series in this collection, Ephemera is the only series that does not include facsimiles from the Schlesinger Library. The Works of Art Files series contains a negative of one of Sparrow's works. The sixth series is Writings, which include memoirs, poetry, and essays.

The seventh series contains 48 tools for Sparrow's sculptural work, such as rulers, calipers, wooden and metal modeling tools, loop and ribbon tools, a tape measurer, and improvised tools.

The collection is divided into seven series:

Series I:	Biographical Files, 1900-1986 (original order)
Series II:	Clippings, 1929-1979 (original order)
Series III:	Correspondence, 1912-1980 (by subject)
Series IV:	Ephemera, 1930-1931
Series V:	Works of Art Files, 1943-1980 (original order)
Series VI:	Writings, 1938 (original order)
Series VII:	Tools, n.d.

## Provenance

The Louise Kidder Sparrow papers were donated in 1986 by the artist's son, Maj. Gen. Herbert G. Sparrow, USA, Ret. from the artist's effects after her death. A majority of the material is photocopies from a collection of papers donated to the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, but there are some original exhibition catalogues, tools and small works of art. This collection, which is contained in two boxes, is an excellent representation of the artist's methods, her work and her thoughts.

The Library and Research Center also has a file on the artist in the Archives on Women Artists, with photographs of the artist, news clippings, catalogs, etc, attained before the donation.

## Series Descriptions

### Series I: Biographical Files

This series contains biographical essays, chronologies, and notes written by Sparrow. Also included in this series are directions for Sparrow's son after her death. Letters of condolence and Sparrow's death certificate are also included.

### Series II: Clippings

This series includes mentions of Sparrow in newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and Sparrow's obituary. The letters to the editor by Sparrow cover a wide variety of subjects from sculpture to the need for a world constitution.

### Series III: Correspondence

This series includes personal letters and letters from foundries about sculptural commissions.

### Series IV: Ephemera

This series consists of brochures for commission portrait busts, an exhibition pamphlet, and cards. Ephemera is the only series that does not include facsimiles from the Schlesinger Library

### Series V: Works of Art Files

This series contains a negative of one of Sparrow's works.

### Series VI: Writings

This series includes memoirs, poetry, and essays.

### Series VII: Tools

This series contains 48 tools for Sparrow's sculptural work, such as rulers, calipers, wooden and metal modeling tools, loop and ribbon tools, a tape measurer, and improvised tools.

## Processing

Tania Lee prepared the initial housing for the Louise Kidder Sparrow Papers in 1988. In 2003 a finding aid was written for the collection. In 2006, Patrick Brown re-housed the collection in three acid-free boxes and rewrote the finding aid according to DACS standards. The Louise Kidder Sparrow Papers are housed in three acid-free boxes which are located in the Library and Research Center. The collection is in good condition. In 2006, a rack was constructed for the tools in the collection in order to minimize abrasion.

## Related Materials

The photocopies in this collection come from the Louise Kidder Sparrow Papers. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Hollis Number: 000605220.

The Archives on Women Artists in the Library and Research Center at the National Museum of Women in the Arts maintains a vertical file on Louise Kidder Sparrow, which includes articles and other secondary research material.

## Box Inventory

### **SERIES I: BIOGRAPHICAL FILES**

#### **Box 1**

- 1 "The Advantages of Voluntary Seclusion," n.d.
- 2 "Brief Autobiography..." 1965
- 3 "Brief Glimpses of Travel and of Sculpture," 1938
- 4 Condolences, 1979
- 5 Death Certificate, 1979
- 6 "Family Data of All Kinds and dates – always incomplete!" n.d.
- 7 "A Handful of Girlhood Gaffes," 1900
- 8 Inventories of Archive from Radcliffe, n.d.
- 9 "Le Jury International des recompenses decerne," 1931
- 10 Letters of Last Wishes, 1928, 1934, 1973
- 11 "Outstanding Epochs in One Ordinary Life," n.d.
- 12 Photocopies of Family Photos, n.d.
- 13 Le Roman du Vieux Tronc, 1986
- 14 "Spiced Herbs and Rose Petals from the Old Blue Jar," n.d.
- 15 Toast, 1940
- 16 Travel logs, n.d.
- 17 "The Wreck of the USS Tacoma," 1924

### **SERIES II: CLIPPINGS**

#### **Box 1**

- 18 Clippings, 1929-1963
- 19 Letters to the Editor, 1934-1942
- 20 Obituaries, 1979

### **SERIES III: CORRESPONDENCE**

**Box 1**

- 21 Ada, 1980
- 22 Architect of the Capitol, 1965, signed Mario Campioli
- 23 Caroline, 1979
- 24 Curtis, Kenneth, 1970
- 25 Dad, 1962
- 26 Director of the Art Museum of Montgomery, Ala, n.d.
- 27 Duban, 1979
- 28 ETL Studios, 1928
- 29 Griffith, Paul, 1974
- 30 Hancock, Howard E, 1978
- 31 Hoare, Edna, 1949
- 32 June, 1973
- 33 Mason, 1963
- 34 McIntosh and Otis, Inc., 1962
- 35 National Cathedral, 1978
- 36 Naval Historical Center, 1979, signed Rear Admiral John Kane & H.A. Vadnais
- 37 Nixon, Richard, 1970
- 38 Plough, John and Helen, 1977
- 39 The Public Library of the City of Boston, 1963
- 40 Roman Bronze Works, Inc., 1964-1978
- 41 Smith, J.H.B, 1979
- 42 Sparrow, Herbert, 1912
- 43 Sparrow, Herbert, Jr., 1949-1971
- 44 United World Federalists, 1967, signed Mary Lee Hunters

**SERIES IV: EPHEMERA****Box 1**

- 45 Arts Club of Washington Exhibition, 1930-1931
- 46 Ephemera, n.d.

**SERIES V: WORKS OF ART FILES****Box 1**

- 47 Colonel Archibald Gracie IV, n.d.
- 48 Fountain Proposal, c. 1980
- 49 List of her works and owners, n.d.
- 50 Original Works, n.d.
- 51 "Sculpture Notes," 1943

**SERIES VI: WRITINGS****Box 1**

- 52 "For a World Constitution," 1938
- 53 "The French That Is Ours," n.d.
- 54 "Misc. essays & stories -- Sorrento Period -- unpublished," n.d.
- 55 Personal Poetry, n.d.
- 56 "A Planetary Concept 1938," 1938
- 57 Published Poetry, n.d.
- 58 Translations, n.d.

**SERIES VII: TOOLS**

**Box 2**

Tools, n.d.

**Box 3**

Tools, n.d.