3 cubic feet (6 document boxes, 1 carton, 1 flat box)

**Biographical Note:** Albert Walter Grokoest, physician and art collector, was born April 2, 1917 in Lincoln, N.H., the son of Stephen and Sana Grokoest. He received his undergraduate education at Hamilton College (B.S. 1940) and his medical degree from Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S) in Dec. 1943, during the wartime accelerated program.

After World War II military service in Italy and residencies at Presbyterian Hospital in New York and the Cushing Veterans Affairs Hospital in Framingham, Massachusetts, Grokoest received a fellowship at the Edward Daniels Faulkner Arthritis Clinic at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. The study and treatment of arthritis would remain Grokoest’s primary interest throughout his career, though he also maintained a successful general practice for many years. A specialist in juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, he co-authored with Arthur I. Snyder and Ralph Schlaeger *Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis* (Boston, 1962), which long remained a leading text in the field.

His interaction with arthritis patients – and perhaps his own experience undergoing Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1950s – made Grokoest a practitioner of “holistic medicine” before the term was generally used. He believed that emotional states – especially loneliness – could manifest themselves as illness and he educated both his patients and his medical students to see physical and emotional well-being as being inextricably intertwined. At the end of his life, he summarized these beliefs in an essay, “Nature’s Cure,” that was later made into a video documentary by Ken Browne.

To the general public, Grokoest was better known as a discerning art collector. His collection of about 300 pieces leaned towards works that reflected his interest in how psychological unease manifests itself in the physical body. He had important holdings of the Polish-born French artist, Jan Lebenstein; Edward and Mary Scheier; Jennings Tofel; and Pehr Hallsten. His collection’s sole Mark Rothko painting, *Untitled (Red Over Brown)*, was a gift from the artist in gratitude for Grokoest’s services as physician and counselor. His most important acquisition was Egon Schiele’s *Portrait of the Painter Zakovsek* (1910) which he purchased at a charity auction for $5,000 in 1959. In 1983, he sold it at Sotheby’s for $2.4 million – then a record for the artist.
Besides his interest in art, Grokoest was a gifted amateur viola player with many friends and patients among New York City’s musical circles. He was a founding board member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and served as physician to the New York Philharmonic during its 1974 tour of New Zealand, Australia, and Japan.

Grokoest was on the faculty of P&S from 1949 until his retirement as a Clinical Professor of Medicine in 1989. He was then named a professor emeritus. He served on the staff of Presbyterian Hospital, 1947-1974, and was chief of Roosevelt Hospital’s arthritis clinic, 1974-1986.

Grokoest died on Sept. 22, 1991 in New York. His ashes were scattered in the woods of his birthplace.

**Scope and Content:** The Grokoest papers contain correspondence; medical notes, articles and notebooks; photographs; certificates; several works of art on paper; and artifacts. Though the medical notes document his medical interests, the papers largely focus on Grokoest’s personal rather than professional life.

Most of the correspondence is with friends, former students, musicians, and artists from whom Grokoest purchased works. Included are letters from the poet, Jean Pedrick Keferstan; artists Alfred M. Doane, Joe Henry, Jan Lebenstein, John Loftus, Edwin and Mary Scheier, and Jennings Tofel; critics John Canaday, Andrew Porter, and Harold C. Schoenberg; and the musician Frederick Zimmermann. The Lebenstein correspondence includes many letters from the Polish-born writer and literary critic, Olga Scherer-Virski, who served as an intermediary between Grokoest and Lebenstein, who was not fluent in English. There are also five folders of correspondence received by him from patients reacting to the closing of his medical practice in 1988.

The only family correspondence is Grokoest’s letters to his mother in 1935 when he was visiting New York City; and in 1940 during his first year as a student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In addition, there are records relating to the sale of Grokoest’s Schiele painting in 1983, including the Sotheby’s auction catalog, newsclippings, and a video excerpt from NBC’s *Today* show. Grokoest’s role as physician to the New York Philharmonic 1974 tour to New Zealand, Australia and Japan is also documented in the papers and include correspondence, financial records, concert programs, and newsclippings.

The medical notes and articles are arranged by topic, though there are two folders of uncategorized notes. Even those notes arranged by topic are in no discernible order and are often
difficult to read. Reprints of scientific articles on the topic are sometimes interspersed with the notes; however, few of these are Grokoest’s own articles.

There are also drafts of and correspondence about two popular articles Grokoest wrote outlining his ideas on the connection between illness and the mind, entitled “Nature’s Cure” and “The Prevention of Dis-Ease;” both appear to date from the late 1980s.

The photographs include many images of Grokoest, both formal studio shots and casual snapshots, and images of his art collection. Of particular interest is a photo essay, c. 1970s, documenting the examination of patients in the arthritis clinic of either Presbyterian or Roosevelt Hospital.

The works of art on paper (found in Series VII: Oversize Materials) consist of two pieces by “J.H.” (Joe Henry?); one by C. Reyes; and a caricature of Grokoest by “Z.A.”

**ORGANIZATION:** Organized in seven series: I. Biographical; II. Correspondence/Subjects; III. Medical Notes & Articles; IV. Notebooks/Datebooks; V. Photographs; VI. Artifacts; VII. Oversize Materials.

**LANGUAGE:** English; Spanish.

**ACCESS:** Access to some material may be regulated by the Privacy Rule of US Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). For more information, see Archives & Special Collections’ Access Policy to Records Containing Protected Health Information.


**Subjects**

Doane, Alfred M.
Lebenstein, Jan, 1930-1999.
Loftus, John, 1921-
Pedrick, Jean, 1922-
Scherer-Virski, Olga.
Schiele, Egon, 1890-1918.
Tofel, Jennings, 1891-1959.
Zimmermann, Frederick, 1906-1967.
New York Philharmonic.
Art – Collectors and collecting – United States.
Arthritis – Treatment.
Holistic medicine – United States.
Mind and body – Health aspects.
Rheumatoid arthritis in children.

Papers processed and finding aid written by Stephen Novak, July 2011; revised, January 2015.
## Albert W. Grokoest Papers, 1924-1999

### Series I: Biographical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General biographical information, 1946-1994</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Military service: orders, documents, certificates, etc., 1943-1946</td>
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### Series II: Correspondence/Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Correspondence from Grokoest, 1947, 1965, 1986</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Letters to his mother, 1935</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letters to his mother, 1940</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Correspondence, A-C, unsorted</td>
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<td>Correspondence, D-G, unsorted</td>
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<td>Correspondence, H-L, unsorted</td>
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<td>Correspondence, M-P, unsorted</td>
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<td>Correspondence, R-T, W, unsorted</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1962-1991, unsorted</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Artworks: catalogs, newsclippings, etc., re Grokoest’s artworks, 1959-1998</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Art/Artists, General: newsclippings, postcards, etc., 1970s-1980s</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Browne, Ken, 1986-1988</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Cacioppo, Curt, 1979, 1988</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Canaday, John, 1962</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cardona, Alejandro, c. 1982</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Coleman, Elliott: memorial tribute [by Grokoest?], c.1980; copies of poems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Doane, Alfred M., 1962</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Henry, Joe, 1965, 1969</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lebenstein, Jan, 1959, 1964-1969, 1975; includes many letters from Olga Scherer-Virski, serving as intermediary between Lebenstein and Grokoest</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Loftus, John, 1959-1962</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>New York Philharmonic Tour – New Zealand, Australia, Japan, 1974: correspondence, financial records, ephemera</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>New York Philharmonic Tour – New Zealand, Australia, Japan, 1974: newsclippings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Albert W. Grokoest
Papers, 1924-1999

Box   Folder

16   Office inventory, undated
17   Porter, Andrew, 1981
18   Presbyterian Hospital: correspondence, printed material, c.1947
19   Ranney, Helen, 1988, 1991
20   Scheier, Edwin and Mary, 1966-1967
21   Schoenberg, Harold C., 1981, 1988
22   Tofel, Jennings, 1956-1959
23   Wasserstein, Wendy, 1989
24   Wilkins, Christopher P., 1982
25   Zimmermann, Frederick, 1960, 1962 and undated

3   1-5   Correspondence received upon closing practice, 1988

Series III: Medical Notes & Articles

4   1   Hyperthyroidism: notes, undated
2   Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis: notes, articles by Grokoest and others, c.1960s-1970s
3   Medical articles (mostly by others) and ephemera, 1950s-1970s
4   “Nature’s Cure”: drafts and printed version, c.1987
5   “Nature’s Cure”: correspondence regarding publication, 1990-1991
7   “Recovery” movements: printed ephemera, c.1980s
8   Rheumatoid arthritis – psychological factors: notes, articles, 1950s-70s
9-10 Scientific/Clinical notes: general, 1950s-1970s

Series IV: Notebooks/Datebooks

5   1   World War II, 2 v.
2   Medical notebooks, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, 1947-1948, 2 v.
3   Medical notebook, c.1949, 1 v.
4   Medical notebook, 1954, 1 v.
5   Datebooks, 1974, 1976
Series V: Photographs

6 Portraits of Grokoest both studio photos and snapshots, 1924-1980s
7 Military service photos, 1940s
8 Group photos, c.1940s-1980s
9 Grokoest art collection
10 Frirsz, Max and Nicholas, c.1970s?
11 Members of the College of Physicians & Surgeons class of 1945 (taken 1944?)
12 Primrose, William: 2 portrait photos, one autographed by Primrose to Grokoest
13 Photo essay: Examining a patient in the arthritis clinic, c.1970? 1/2

6 1 Photo essay: Examining a patient in the arthritis clinic, c.1970? 2/2
2-3 Miscellaneous photos

Series VI: Artifacts

7 Loose in box:

Medical instruments, including blood pressure kit and hypodermic needles; U.S. Army Medical Corps name plate; Grokoest’s copy of Human Anatomy: Double Dissection Method by Dudley J. Morton (2nd printing, Aug. 1939), with his notes; Grokoest’s copy of Egon Schiele by Frank Whitford (1981); copy of his Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1962); videotape: “Dr. Albert Grokoest-Sotheby’s auction,” Today, WNBC-TV, Nov. 17, 1983; Red Cross arm band; College of Physicians & Surgeons Bicentennial Medal, 1967; cuff links; DVD version of the original video documentary Nature’s Cure, produced for the Grokoest art collection exhibit at the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, N.H., 1999; DVD with compilation of original interviews with patients and friends for the original Nature’s Cure.

Series VII: Oversize Materials

Flat Box 1

1 Works of art on paper: 2 by J. H. (Joe Henry?); 1 by C. Reyes; caricature of Grokoest by “Z.A.” Venice, 1956
2 Certificates, Professional
3 Photo Essay, Examining a patient in the arthritis clinic, c.1970: oversize and matted photos

4 Oversize Photos: College of Physicians & Surgeons Class Photo, Class of 1943-Dec.; unidentified photos of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center groups, c. 1940s-50s; group photo of Grokoest with military colleagues, c.1945; Drs. Walter W. Palmer & Robert Loeb

Loose in box:
Rolled certificates, including Columbia University medical diploma; medical license; professional memberships; poster for Currier Museum’s Grokoest exhibit, 1996