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Guide to the
Frank McHugh and Family papers

1894-1969

*T-Mss 2001-036

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, January 2012

Summary

Creator: McHugh, Frank, 1899-1981

Title: Frank McHugh and Family papers, 1894-1969

Size: 1.38 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Donated by Patricia McHugh in 2001.

Abstract: Frank McHugh (1898-1981) was an American stage and film actor, most noted for playing supporting roles at Warner Brothers in the 1930s and 1940s, often supporting stars James Cagney and Pat O'Brian. The Frank McHugh papers document McHugh's film and stage career, World War II activities and his family.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

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Creator history

Frank McHugh (1898-1981) was an American stage and film actor from the 1920s through the 1960s. McHugh was born in Homestead, Pennsylvania and grew up in a theatrical family. His parents ran a theater company and his father, Edward McHugh was an actor. By the time Frank McHugh was ten he was touring in a Vaudeville act with his brother Matt and sister Kitty, both of whom also become actors as adults. Another of his brothers, Ed McHugh Jr., was a stage manager on Broadway for many years.

McHugh honed his skills performing in stock companies in the early 1920s. His breakthrough role on Broadway came in 1925, when he starred in *The Fall Guy*. He continued to work on Broadway throughout the decade, appearing in plays such as *Tenth Avenue* and *Excess Baggage* in 1927 and *Conflict* and *Ziegfeld's Show Girl* in 1929.

In 1930, McHugh landed in Hollywood along with a rash of other New York theatre actors and writers. The advent of talking pictures created a demand a vast demand for specific skills that silent pictures hadn't. McHugh signed a contract with Warner Brothers' and quickly became one of the studio's most reliable supporting players, appearing in seven films his first year and twelve films the next. Though McHugh got a few star parts, more often he supported stars James Cagney and Pat O'Brien. Irish-Americans McHugh, Cagney, O'Brien and Spencer Tracy were close friends and the core members of a group known as, "The Irish Mafia," which also included Allen Jenkins, Ralph Bellamy, Lynne Overman and Frank Morgan.

Though McHugh appeared in roughly 100 films, most are forgotten today. Some of his more memorable films include *The Front Page* (1931) *Footlight Parade* (1933), *Gold Diggers of 1935* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), *Four Daughters* (1938), *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), *Going My Way* (1944), *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) and *The Last Hurrah* (1958).

Like many movie stars, McHugh was a keen supporter of the war effort. In 1942, he was a member of the Hollywood Victory Caravan, a crew of twenty-one stars traveling across the U.S. by train, performing in several cities over the course of three weeks to raise money for the Army and Navy Relief Fund. McHugh also went to Europe with the USO to entertain the troops twice. He first toured England in August and September of 1942, appearing in the *American Variety Show* with Al Jolson, Merle Oberon, Patricia Morrison and Allen Jenkins. In 1945, McHugh came back to Europe with his own show, "McHugh's Revue" which toured France, Holland, Belgium and Germany in November and December of 1944, actually performing in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge.

In the 1950s, McHugh's film career began waning, but he worked steadily in television during the 1950s and 1960s. He also returned to his New York theatre roots, replacing David Burns as Senex in the original production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in 1963 and playing the title role in *Finian's Rainbow* at City Center in 1967.

In 1933, McHugh Married Dorothy Spencer. Their marriage lasted until McHugh's death in 1981 and produced three children.

Scope and content note

The Frank McHugh papers document McHugh's film and stage career, World War II activities and his family. Materials on McHugh's films consist mainly of production still photographs from his films. For a few films there are other items, such as publicity materials and ephemera. McHugh's activities as a USO entertainer during World War II are well documented with photographs, programs, publicity materials, correspondence, writings by McHugh and his official citations for exceptional service to the war effort. His early stage career is documented by photographs, programs, reviews and other publicity materials. This collection also includes materials from other member's of McHugh's theatrical family, such as scripts, programs and photographs of productions that involved his father and brothers and a "Theatre Record" scrapbook, possibly kept by McHugh's mother describing many plays she'd seen at the turn of the century.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged alphabetically by topic and, within that, alphabetically by production title.

Key terms

Subjects

Irish Americans
Motion Pictures -- 1930-1940
Motion Pictures -- 1940-1950
United Service Organizations -- 1940-1950
Vaudeville -- United States -- Twentieth Century

Occupations

Actors -- Motion Pictures -- Twentieth Century
Actors -- Television -- Twentieth Century
Actors -- Theater -- Twentieth Century

Names

McHugh, Edward A.
McHugh, Edward A., Jr.
McHugh, Frank, 1899-1981

Special formats

Clippings
Correspondence
Diaries
Photographs
Posters
Programs

Container list

Film Career, 1930-1969

Films, 1930-1969

Unless otherwise noted, the film files contain only photographs.

- b.1 f.1 *Bowery to Broadway*, 1944
- b.1 f.2 *Devil Dogs of the Air*, 1934
- b.1 f.3 *Dodge City*, 1939
- b.1 f.4 *Elmer the Great*, 1933
- b.1 f.5 *Four Wives*, 1939
- b.1 f.6 *Freshman Love*, 1936
- b.1 f.7 *Going Wild*, 1930
- b.1 f.8 *Gold Diggers of 1935*, 1935
- b.1 f.9 *The Great Junction Hotel*, 1931 (Short film)
- b.1 f.10 *I Love You Again*, 1940
- b.1 f.11 *The Irish in Us*, 1935
- b.1 f.12 *Kiss Me Again*, 1930
- b.1 f.13 *Lancer*, 1969 (Television series)
- b.1 f.14 *The Last Hurrah*, 1958
- b.1 f.15 *Lily Turner*, 1932
- b.1 f.16 *Marine Raiders*, 1943
- b.1 f.17 *Marry the Girl*, 1937
- A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- b.1 f.18 Photographs, 1935
- b.4 f.1 Photograph of Cast, with Autographs, 1934
- b.1 f.19 Premiere Invitations and Program, 1935
- b.1 f.20 *On Your Toes*, 1939
- b.1 f.21 *Page Miss Glory*, 1935
- b.1 f.22 *Parachute Jumper*, 1933
- b.1 f.23 *Stage Struck*, 1936
- b.1 f.24 *Stars Over Broadway*, 1935
- b.1 f.25 *There's No Business Like Show Business*, 1954
- Three Men on a Horse*, 1936
- b.1 f.26 Photographs
- b.1 f.27 Reviews and Advertisements
- b.1 f.28 *Til We Meet Again*, 1940
- b.1 f.29 *Tomorrow at Seven*, 1933
- b.1 f.30 *Traveling Husbands*, 1931
- b.1 f.31 *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, 1940
- b.1 f.32 *Wings of the Navy*, 1939
- b.1 f.33 Various, 1935-1948
- USO Activities, 1942-1945
- b.1 f.34 Hollywood Victory Caravan-Photo Album, 1942 April 26-May 14
All-star cross country tour to raise money for the Army and Navy Relief Fund

Film Career, 1930-1969 (cont.)

USO Activities, 1942-1945 (cont.)

First USO Tour, 1942

American Variety Show with McHugh, Al Jolson, Merle Oberon, Patricia Morrison and Allen Jenkins, toured in England

b.2 f.1 Correspondence and Certificate of Recognition

b.2 f.2 Publicity, Poster and Ticket

McHugh's Revue

McHugh starred in this show, which toured France, Holland, Belgium and Germany in November and December of 1944

b.2 f.3 Citation , 1944

Citation "for exceptionally meritorious service while working as a member of an entertainment unit" from the army, signed by Major General Raymond S. McLain

b.2 f.4 Correspondence, 1945

b.2 f.5 Flyer, 1944

b.2 f.6 *Trans Quips*, 1944

A service publication which covered the show in several editions

b.2 f.7 Writings, 1944-1945

McHugh's personal accounts of his experiences on tour

Stage Career, 1920-1967

b.2 f.8 *Conflict*-Program, 1929

b.2 f.9 *Excess Baggage*-Program, 1928

b.2 f.10 *The Fall Guy*-Program, 1926

Finian's Rainbow, 1967

b.2 f.11 Programs

b.2 f.12 Reviews

b.2 f.13 *Show Girl*-Program, 1929 (Produced by Florenz Ziegfeld)

b.2 f.14 Various Early Shows-Scrapbook, 1920-1929

Scrapbook contains reviews, programs and photographs and publicity materials from the shows already listed as well as *Broadway Jones*, *Oh! Lady, Lady*, *Broken Wings*, *Poly with a Past*, *Papa Joe*, *So Long Letty*, *Tenth Avenue*, and *Puffy*

Family, 1894-1952

McHugh, Edward Jr.

Frank McHugh's brother, Edward, a Broadway stage manager

b.2 f.15 Biography/Profile, 1952 May 6

b.2 f.16 *The Corn is Green*-Photographs, 1939

b.2 f.17 *The Petrified Forrest*-Program, 1935

b.2 f.19 Various Photos and drawings, 1948, undated

b.2 f.18 McHugh, Edward A., Sr.-Program for *Human Hearts*, 1902-1903

Frank McHugh's father, an actor and theatrical manager

b.2 f.20 McHugh, Peter-Script for *Is Zat So*, undated

Various/Unknown Family Members

b.2 f.21 Assorted Programs from Hartford, CT, 1902-1916

b.3 f.1 "Theatre Record" Scrapbook, 1894-1902 (A diary of all plays seen with notes)