



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Cornelia Otis Skinner scrapbooks**

1921-1978

\*T-Mss 2012-015

Two scrapbooks were rehoused into flat boxes. Loose press clippings were arranged by date, foldered, and housed in one box. Duplicates were removed from the collection.

## Summary

**Creator:** Skinner, Cornelia Otis, 1901-1979

**Title:** Cornelia Otis Skinner scrapbooks

**Date:** 1921-1978

**Size:** 7.2 linear feet (3 boxes, 32 volumes)

**Source:** Unknown

**Abstract:** Cornelia Otis Skinner was a distinguished writer, monologist, and actress. Skinner began her acting career in 1921 on the stage, alongside her father, Otis Skinner. Throughout her career, Skinner toured the country performing one-woman monologues, appeared on Broadway, wrote essays, and published volumes of writing compilations and memoirs. The Cornelia Otis Skinner scrapbooks contain performance announcements and reviews, book reviews, programs, and copies of Skinner's published essays, thoroughly documenting Skinner's professional career from 1921 to 1978.

**Conditions Governing Use:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

**Preferred citation:** Cornelia Otis Skinner scrapbooks, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Lauren Dzura, Palmer School, 2012 Two scrapbooks were rehoused into flat boxes. Loose press clippings were arranged by date, foldered, and housed in one box. Duplicates were removed from the collection.

### Related Materials:

George Freedley papers. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

John Golden papers. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Philip Faversham papers. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Romney Brent papers. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

## Creator History

Cornelia Otis Skinner was an American writer, monologist, and actress. Born on either May 30, 1899 or 1901 in Chicago, Illinois, Skinner was the daughter of actors Otis Skinner and Maud Durbin. Skinner attended Bryn Mawr College, but left during her sophomore year to move to Paris, where she attended the Sorbonne and studied acting at the Jacques Copeau School and the Comedie Francaise.

Skinner began her acting career in 1921, debuting as Dona Sarasate in the stage adaptation of Blasco-Ibanez's *Blood and Sand*, alongside her father, Otis Skinner. Skinner went on to establish herself as a well-known stage actress in her plays *Will Shakespeare* (1923), *Tweedles* (1923), *The Wild Wescotts* (1923), *In His Arms* (1924), and *White Collars* (1925). In 1925, Skinner wrote her first play for her father, the off-Broadway production, *Captain Fury*.

Skinner continued writing and toured the United States from 1926 to 1929 performing one-woman monologues. In 1928, she married Alden S. Blodget and had one son, Otis Skinner Blodget. In the early 1930s, Skinner's roles focused on historical women, writing and portraying a range of different characters in *The Wives of Henry VIII* (1931), *The Empress Eugenie* (1932), *The Loves of Charles II* (1933), and *The Mansion on the Hudson* (1935). Additionally, Skinner earned recognition for her adaptation of Margaret Ayer Barne's novel *Edna, His Wife*, which toured London in 1937 and the United States in 1938, as well as for the lead in George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* in 1939. In 1952, Skinner won the Barter Theatre Award for outstanding acting on the Broadway stage. That same year her one-woman show, *Paris '90*, debuted on Broadway. Skinner played fourteen different characters, celebrating the women depicted by French painter Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. Skinner's final stage performance was in *The Irregular Verb to Love* in 1964.

After retiring from acting, Skinner continued to write, contributing numerous essays to publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Vogue*, *Life*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Reader's Digest*. Compilations of Skinner's essays include *Tiny Garments* (1932), *Excuse It, Please!* (1936), *Dithers and Jitters* (1938), and *Soap Behind the Ears* (1941). In the 1950s, three more volumes were created: *Nuts in May* (1950), *Bottoms Up!* (1955), and *The Ape in Me* (1959). In 1948, Skinner published the memoir, *Family Circle*. Other writing projects included *Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals* (1962), adapting material from her one-woman play *Paris '90* about the Belle Époque; *Madame Sarah* (1967), a biography of Sarah Bernhardt; and Skinner's final book, *Life with Lindsay and Crouse* (1976), a biography of Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse. Skinner died on July 9, 1979 in New York City.

## Scope and Content Note

The Cornelia Otis Skinner scrapbooks contain press clippings documenting Skinner's professional life from 1921 to 1978. Arranged chronologically, years often overlap within the scrapbooks. The scrapbooks include copies of Skinner's published articles from *Harper's Bazaar* and *The New Yorker*, and book reviews of her memoirs and novels: *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*, *Family Circle*, *The Ape in Me*, and *Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals*. There are also announcements and reviews of her stage performances. Many of her notable stage performances are included, such as *Wives of Henry the VII*, *Edna, His Wife*, *Empress Eugenie*, *The Loves of Charles II*, *Candida*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and *Paris '90*. There are press clippings from all over the United States announcing and reviewing her one-woman tour from 1926-1929. Some of the loose press clippings and scrapbooks contain programs of Skinner's performances.

Additional books, playbills, and audio interviews relating to Cornelia Otis Skinner can be found by conducting an author search for "Skinner, Cornelia Otis" in the catalog ([www.nypl.org/catalog](http://www.nypl.org/catalog)).

**Arrangement:** Alphabetically by document type, then chronologically by year.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actresses

Women authors -- 20th century

Women dramatists, American

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Scrapbooks

## Container List

### Press Clippings

- b. 1 f. 1 1921-1930  
MWEZ+N.C. 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 2 1931  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 3-4 1932  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 5 1933  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5935
- b. 1 f. 6 1934  
MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 7 1935  
MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 8 1936  
MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 9 1937  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 10 1938-1939  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 11 1940  
MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 12 1941  
MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 13 1942  
MWEZ+N.C 5935; MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 14 1943  
MWEZ+N.C 5936
- b. 1 f. 15 1967  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843
- b. 1 f. 16 1968  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843
- b. 1 f. 17 1969  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843
- b. 1 f. 18 1970-1978  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843
- b. 1 f. 19 Undated  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,843; MWEZ+N.C 5936

### Scrapbooks

- b. 2 1927-1932  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,809
- v. 32 1931
- v. 1 1932  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,812
- v. 2 1932-1933  
MWEZ+N.C. 22,811

Scrapbooks (cont.)

- v. 3     1932-1934  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,810
- v. 4     1934  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,813
- v. 5     1935-1936  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,814
- v. 6     1936-1937  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,821
- v. 7     1937  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,815
- v. 8     1937  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,819
- v. 9     1937-1938  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,820
- v. 10    1938  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,822
- b. 3     1938-1939  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,825
- v. 11    1938-1939  
         MWEZ+N.C. 817
- v. 12    1938-1942  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,816
- v. 13    1939  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,823
- v. 14    1939-1940  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,818
- v. 15    1940  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,824
- v. 16    1940-1942  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 827
- v. 17    1942-1946  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,826
- v. 18    1944-1947  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,828
- v. 19    1946-1947  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,829
- v. 20    1947-1949  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,831
- v. 21    1948-1949  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,830
- v. 22    1949-1951  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,832
- v. 23    1951-1952  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,834
- v. 24    1953-1955  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22,835

Scrapbooks (cont.)

- v. 25    **1955-1962**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 839
- v. 26    **1956-1958**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 836
- v. 27    **1958-1960**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 837
- v. 28    **1959-1960**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 838
- v. 29    **1962-1963**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 840
- v. 30    **1962-1964**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 841
- v. 31    **1966-1967**  
         MWEZ+N.C. 22, 842