

**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
BILLY ROSE THEATRE COLLECTION**

**A'BECKET FAMILY DIARIES AND PROMPT BOOKS, 1840-1890**

\*T-Mss 1991-002

MER 12/91

MAIN ENTRY: A'Becket Family

TITLE: Diaries and Prompt Books

SIZE: 1.5 lin.ft.; 5 boxes

ACCESS: Unrestricted

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Thomas A'Becket, Sr. was an actor, writer and musician in the Philadelphia theater between The years 1840 to 1889.

DESCRIPTION: The A'Becket Family diaries and prompt books consist of the personal diaries of Thomas A' Becket, Sr. and Jr. and prompt books belonging to Thomas A' Becket, Sr. The diaries of Thomas A'Becket, Sr. contain some information on the life of an actor in 19th century America. The diaries of his son are less informative and contain little more than a listing of daily activities.

## **A'BECKET FAMILY DIARIES AND PROMPT BOOKS**

**\*T-MSS 1991-002**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The A'Becket Family Diaries and Prompt Books were purchased by the Billy Rose Theatre Collection in 1987 from The Center for Musical Antiquities. They arrived in good condition and required no conservation treatment other than archival housing and processing. Two published musical items were separated and sent to the Music Division. The rest of the collection was fully processed in December 1991.

### **ARRANGEMENT NOTE**

The A'Becket Family Diaries and Prompt Books are arranged in three series. They are: I. Thomas A'Becket, Sr. Diaries, 1844-1890; II. Thomas A'Becket, Jr. Diaries, 1862-1880; III. Scripts and Prompt Books.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Thomas A'Becket, Sr. was an actor, musician and writer in the Philadelphia theatre from 1840 to 1889. He acted for both the Arch Street Theatre Company and the Walnut Street Theatre Company though the greatest portion of his time was spent at the Walnut. He acted there 1841-1842; 1845-1847; 1849-1855. After this time he seemed to travel, taking acting jobs in Chicago, St. Louis and other Midwestern cities. A'Becket was known as a major player in the Walnut Street Theatre and played many roles among them Polonius in HAMLET. A'Becket was born on March 17, 1808 and died in Philadelphia on January 6, 1890.

Thomas A'Becket, Jr. was a musician who worked in the Philadelphia area performing in concert ensembles. He also gave music lessons on a daily basis. He was born June 19, 1843, the oldest child of Thomas A'Becket, Sr.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The A'Becket Family Diaries and Prompt Books include handwritten memoirs and daily notations of his life and career from 1844 to 1890. The diaries show the extent of A'Becket's theatrical and musical career giving brief but itemized accounts of his daily activities. The diaries of his son, Thomas A'Becket, Jr. are not truly theatre related, as his career was primarily a musician. These diaries span the years 1862 to 1880. The scripts and prompt books are sometimes annotated and sometimes unmarked and belonged to Thomas A'Becket, Sr. They span his career, and some give information on the theater and year of the production. The collection appears to be a useful research source for detailing the life of a stock actor, writer and musician of the 19th century. Becket includes information of his work schedule and his travel schedule in the circuit theaters. Information as well, regarding his friends and acquaintances can be found in the diaries.

## SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

**Series I - Thomas A'Becket, Sr. Diaries** .8 lin.ft.,2 boxes  
arranged chronologically

The diaries of Thomas A'Becket, Sr, span the years 1844 to 1890 and include information on his theatrical career, during the years he worked in Philadelphia as well as the time he spent in out-of-town productions. There is also much information on his personal and family life and records on a daily basis the life of a 19th century acting family.

**Series II - Thomas A'Becket, Jr. Diaries** .6 lin.ft, 2 boxes  
arranged chronologically

The diaries include information on his daily activities and span the years 1862-1880. Included as well are two engagement books, which have appointment information. There is also a picture of Thomas A'Becket, Jr. in this series.

**Series III - Scripts and Prompt Books** .4 lin. ft., 1 box  
arranged alphabetically

This series contains published scripts, many annotated for productions which A'Becket, Sr. was involved in. The plays are all rather obscure.

**A'BECKET FAMILY DIARIES AND PROMPT BOOKS**  
**\*T-MSS 1991-002**  
**CONTAINER LIST**

**SERIES I - THOMAS A'BECKET, SR. DIARIES (1844-1890)**

***BOX NO. 1***

Folder No.

- 1 Diary - 1844
- 2 Diary - 1845
- 3 Diary - 1846
- 4 Diary - 1847
- 5 Diary - 1848
- 6 Diary - 1849
- 7 Diary - 1850
- 8 Diary - 1851
- 9 Diary - 1852
- 10 Diary - 1853
- 11 Diary - 1855
- 12 Diary - 1856
- 13 Diary - 1857
- 14 Diary - 1861
- 15 Diary - 1863
- 16 Diary - 1864
- 17 Diary - 1865
- 18 Diary - 1867
- 19 Diary - 1871
- 20 Diary - 1872
- 21 Diary - 1873
- 22 Diary - 1874

***BOX NO. 2***

Folder No.

- 1 Diary - 1875
- 2 Diary - 1876
- 3 Diary - 1877
- 4 Diary - 1878
- 5 Diary - 1879
- 6 Diary - 1880
- 7 Diary - 1881

- 8 Diary - 1882
- 9 Diary - 1883
- 10 Diary - 1884
- 11 Diary - 1885
- 12 Diary - 1886
- 13 Diary - 1887
- 14 Diary - 1888
- 15 Diary - 1889
- 16 Diary - 1890
- 17 Diary - Odd Fragments (Unidentified)

**SERIES II - THOMAS A'BECKET, JR. DIARIES**

***BOX NO. 3***

Folder No.

- 1 Diary - 1862
- 2 Diary - 1864
- 3 Diary - 1866
- 4 Diary - 1867
- 5 Diary - 1868
- 6 Diary - 1869
- 7 Diary - 1874
- 8 Diary - 1875
- 9 Diary - 1876
- 10 Diary - 1877
- 11 Diary - 1878
- 12 Diary - 1879
- 13 Diary - 1880

***BOX NO. 4***

Folder No.

- 1 Diary - 1881
- 2 Diary - 1882
- 3 Diary - 1883
- 4 Diary - 1884
- 5 Diary - 1885
- 6 Engagement Book (1867-1879)
- 7 Engagement Book (1872-1880)
- 8 Photograph (Thomas a Becket, Jr. - 1889)

### SERIES III - SCRIPTS AND PROMPT BOOKS

#### BOX NO. 5

Folder No.

- 1 *The Agreeable Surprise* by Mr. O'Keefe [Belfast:1785]
- 2 *Barbarossa* by Dr. Brown [New York:1809]
- 3 *The Belle's Stratagem* by Mrs. Cowley [Boston:1810]
- 4 *The Blue Devils* by George Colman, the younger [Philadelphia:1811]
- 5 *Bold Stroke for a Husband* by Mrs. Cowley [New York:1831]
- 6 *The Cedar Chest* by George Almar [London:n.d.]
- 7 *The Clerk of Clerkenwell* by George Almar [London:n.d.]
- 8 *Damon and Pythias* by John Baldwin Buckstone [London: n.d.]
- 9 A - *Fire and Water* by S. Beazley [New York:1821]  
B - *The Sleeping Draught* by S. Penley [Baltimore:1818]
- 10 *Fortune's Frolic* by John Till Allingham [New York:1824]
- 11 *Guy Faux* by [George Marfarren] [n.d.]
- 12 *The Honey Moon* by John Tobin [London:n.d.]
- 13 *Ion* by Fox Cooper [London:n.d.]
- 14 *The Irish Lion* by John Baldwin Buckstone [Philadelphia:n.d.]
- 15 *The Iron Chest* by George Colman, the younger [London:n.d.]
- 16 *Jealous On All Sides* by S. Beazley, Jun. [Philadelphia:1818]
- 17 *My Landlady's Gown* by W.C. Oulton [Baltimore:1817]
- 18 *London Assurance* by Dion Boucicault [Baltimore:1842]
- 19 *Love Laughs at Locksmiths* by George Colman, the younger [London:n.d.]
- 20 *Money* by Edward Bulwer Lytton [New York:n.d.]
- 21 *Paul and Virginia* by James Cobb [London:n.d.]
- 22 *Pedlar's Acre* by George Almar [London:n.d.]
- 23 *Popping the Question* by John Baldwin Buckstone [London:n.d.]
- 24 *The Poor Gentleman* by George Colman, the younger [n.d.]
- 25 *The Review; or, The Wag of Windsor* by George Colman, the younger [New York:1817]
- 26 *The Rise of the Rothschildes* by C.Z. Barnett [London:n.d.]
- 27 *The Siege of Belgrade* by James Cobb [New York:1823]
- 28 *The Stranger* by Benjamin Thompson [New York:n.d.]
- 29 *Uncle John* by John Baldwin Buckstone [Philadelphia:n.d.]
- 30 *The Weathercock* by John till Allingham [Philadelphia:1826]
- 31 *The Wheel of Fortune* by Richard Cumberland [London:n.d.]
- 32 *X,Y,Z; or, The American Manager* by George Colman, esq.[New York:1828]