

**Inventory of the James Elson Papers, 1950-1970**

\*T-Mss 1970-007

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
New York, New York

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## Descriptive Summary

Title: James Elson Papers, 1950-1970

Collection ID: \*T-Mss 1970-007

Creator: Elson, James, 1925-1970 .

Extent: 1.25 linear feet (4 boxes)

Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.  
Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Abstract: James Elson was a director and producer of theater, radio, and television. He directed television shows such as *The Tonight Show*, *That Was the Week That Was*, and *The Steve Allen Show* . The papers contain correspondence, production materials, and scripts.

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## Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice may be required.

Preferred Citation: James Elson Papers, \*T-Mss 1970-007, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Processing Information: The papers were preserved, rehoused, and reprocessed in 1996.

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## Biographical Note

James Elson, producer and director, was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on January 26, 1925. He attended elementary school and high school in Tulsa. In college he majored in English and minored in Engineering at University of Texas. In 1948, he earned his bachelors degree and moved to New York City to attend graduate classes at the American Theatre Wing.

During his career James Elson was involved in radio, theater, and television. Early in his career he worked in radio as a radio writer. Later he worked on a variety of theatre productions including the 1948 Broadway show *Three Short Plays* . In 1951, he became a

producer-director for an NBC local station, WRCA-TV in Ohio. He specialized in producing cultural and documentary shows. One of his most successful programs entitled *Princeton '54* won first place for best educational programs in the Ohio State Awards. He stayed with the station for the next five years until he was hired by the NBC Network in 1956. He produced and directed nationally televised shows such as the *Steve Allen Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and *Wide Wide World*. In addition, he directed special episodes for television programs including *Music From Schubert Alley* an Andy Williams Special and three specials for the *Dupont Show of the Week* entitled *The Ziegfeld Touch* with Joan Crawford, *Chicago and All That Jazz*, and *Regards to George M. Cohan*. He directed a children's show entitled *Children's Specials* for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. During the 1964-65 season, he directed *That Was The Week That Was*. As a producer and director he worked with Carol Burnett, Dick Van Dyke, Rosemary Clooney, and Jose Ferrer in a Thanksgiving special entitled *No Place Like Home*. He went on to direct programs for public broadcasting and became the producer of N.W. Ayer T.V. James Elson died on April 26, 1970 in New York.

### Scope and Content Note

The papers of James Elson contain correspondence, personal papers, writings, production materials, and scripts. The papers are divided into 3 series: personal papers, productions, and scripts. The production and personal papers series provide the most information about the career of James Elson. The two series contain materials including Elson's writings during college, production notes, shooting schedules, and correspondence from his professional career. The scripts series also contain annotated scripts of produced television programs.

### Organization

- Series I: Personal Papers
- Series II: Productions
- Series III: Scripts

### Container Listing and Series Descriptions

#### Series I: Personal Papers, 1950-1969

1 box

Chronological

This series contains James Elson's correspondence and correspondence from his friends and colleagues.

b. 1 f. 1

Correspondence "A-Z", 1950-1954

1 folder

Correspondence from James Elson's friends and colleagues, including Richard Pack and Bibi Osterwald.

- b. 1 f. 2      **Correspondence "A-Z", 1955-1959**  
1 folder  
Correspondence from James Elson's friends and colleagues,  
including Steve Allen.
- b. 1 f. 3      **Correspondence "A-Z", 1960-1964**  
1 folder  
Correspondence from James Elson's friends and colleagues,  
including Pat Boone and Dorothy Adams.
- b. 1 f. 4      **Correspondence "A-Z", 1965-1969**  
1 folder  
Correspondence from James Elson's friends and colleagues,  
including Robert Benton and Harold Prince.
- b. 1 f. 5      **Correspondence / James Elson, 1955-1964**  
1 folder  
Correspondence written by James Elson.
- b. 1 f. 6      **Correspondence "A-Z"**  
1 folder  
Undated correspondence from James Elson's friends and  
colleagues.
- b. 1 f. 7      **Employment agreements / James Elson, 1960**  
1 folder  
Agreements between James Elson and his employers include NBC  
and Westinghouse.
- b. 1 f. 8      **School papers / James Elson**  
1 folder  
James Elson's school papers include transcripts, notes, and  
writings.
- b. 1 f. 9      **Personal papers / James Elson**  
1 folder  
Personal papers of James Elson that include notes and  
employment background.
- b. 1 f. 10      **Show proposals / James Elson**  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 11      **Financial papers / James Elson, 1964**  
1 folder  
Miscellaneous budget notes for some of James Elson's projects.

## Series II: Productions, 1959-1964

2 boxes

Alphabetical

This series contains production materials from the television programs produced and/or directed by James Elson. The materials include shooting schedules, financial papers, letters, production notes, programs, and photographs. The series is arranged in alphabetical order by the title of the television program. The television programs are: *America's Music-Chicago and All That Jazz-Regards to George, Autumn in New York, Coke Time, His and Hers, Merchant of Venice, The Mohawk Show-No Place Like Home, Music from Shubert Alley, Pat Boone Show, People and Other Animals, Specials for Children, Star System, Steve Allen Show, Teenage Celebrity, That Was The Week That Was, Wonderful World of Entertainment, and The Ziegfeld Touch.*

- b. 2 f. 1      *America's music* (Television program), 1961  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *America's Music*.
- b. 2 f. 2      *America's music* (Television program), 1961  
1 folder  
Production materials for the episode of *America's Music* entitled *Chicago and All that Jazz*.
- b. 2 f. 3      *America's music* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Production materials for the episode of *America's Music* entitled *Regards to George M. Cohan*.
- b. 2 f. 4      *Autumn in New York* (Television proposal)  
1 folder  
Proposal for the television program *Autumn in New York*.
- b. 2 f. 5      *Coke time* (Television program), 1960  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *Coke Time* starring Pat Boone.
- b. 2 f. 6      *His and hers* (Television proposal), 1963  
1 folder  
Proposal for the television program *His and Hers*.
- b. 2 f. 7      *Merchant of Venice* (Motion picture), 1964  
1 folder

Budgets and letters of agreement for a motion picture version of *The Merchant of Venice*.

- b. 2 f. 8 *The Mohawk show* (Television program), 1960  
1 folder  
Production materials for the episode of the *Mohawk Show* entitled *No Place Like Home*.
- b. 2 f. 9 *The Mohawk show* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Programs and promotional materials for the episode of *The Mohawk Show* entitled *No Place Like Home*.
- b. 2 f. 10 *Music from Shubert Alley* (Television program), 1959  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *Music of Shubert Alley*.
- b. 2 f. 11 *Music from Shubert Alley* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Programs for the television show *Music from Shubert Alley*.
- b. 2 f. 12 *Music from Shubert Alley* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Programs and promotional materials for the television program *Music from Shubert Alley*.
- b. 2 f. 13 *Music from Shubert Alley* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Photographs of Alfred Drake, Lisa Kirk, and Andy Williams from the television program *Music from Shubert Alley*.
- b. 2 f. 14 *The Pat Boone show* (Television program), 1961  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *The Pat Boone Show* starring Pat Boone.
- b. 2 f. 15 *People and other animals* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Press kit includes photographs from the television show *People and Other Animals*, part of a series of specials for children.
- b. 2 f. 16 *Specials for children* (Promotional brochure), 1962  
1 folder  
Publicity materials for a series of television programs designed for children.
- b. 3 f. 1 *Star system* (Television proposal), 1961

- 1 folder  
Proposal for the television program *Star System*.
- b. 3 f. 2      *The Steve Allen show* (Television program : 1968)  
1 folder  
Program for *The Steve Allen Show*.
- b. 3 f. 3      *Teenage celebrity* (Television proposal)  
1 folder  
Proposal for the television show *Teenage Celebrity*.
- b. 3 f. 4      *That was the week that was* (Television program), 1964  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *That Was The Week That Was*.
- b. 3 f. 5      *Wonderful world of entertainment* (Television program), 1959  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *Wonderful World of Entertainment*.
- b. 3 f. 6      *The Ziegfeld touch* (Television program), 1961  
1 folder  
Production materials for the television program *The Zeigfeld Touch*.

**Series III: Scripts, 1959-1970**

1 box

Alphabetical

This series contains annotated scripts of television programs produced and/or directed by James Elson.

- b. 4 f. 1      *America's music* (Television script) / William Nichols, 1961  
1 folder  
Shooting script for the episode of *America's Music* entitled *Chicago and All That Jazz*.
- b. 4 f. 2      *America's music* (Television script) / William Nichols, 1961  
1 folder  
An early version of the script for the episode of *America's Music* about George M. Cohan.
- b. 4 f. 3      *America's music* (Television script) / William Nichols, 1962  
1 folder  
Annotated script for the episode of *America's Music* entitled

*Regards George M. Cohan.* Includes a shooting schedule.

- b. 4 f. 4      *America's music* (Television script) / William Nichols  
1 folder  
Script for the episode of *America's Music* entitled *The Ziegfeld Era*.
- b. 4 f. 5      *Coke time* (Television script) / Herb Sargent, 1960  
1 folder  
Annotated script of the television program *Coke Time* starring Pat Boone.
- b. 4 f. 6      *The J.F.K. memorial show* (Television program)  
1 folder  
Annotated script for the television program *The J.F.K Memorial Show*.
- b. 4 f. 7      *The merchant of Venice* (Screenplay) / Richard Baldrige  
1 folder  
Film adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.
- b. 4 f. 8      *Mohawk show* (Television script) / Sydney Zelinka, 1960  
1 folder  
Final script of the episode of *The Mohawk Show* entitled *No Place Like Home*.
- b. 4 f. 9      *Music from Shubert Alley* (Television script) / Herb Sargent, 1960  
1 folder  
First draft and revisions of the television program *Music from Shubert Alley*.
- b. 4 f. 10      *Bulova Watch time* (Television script), 1961  
1 folder  
Annotated script entitled *Bulova Watch Time* written by Herb Sargent and Saul Ilson for the television program starring Pat Boone.
- b. 4 f. 11      *The sacrifice* / Godfrey de Weever, 1970  
1 folder  
Script of the one act play entitled *The Sacrifice*. Included with the script is correspondence concerning the play.
- b. 4 f. 12      *The Steve Allen show* (Television script), 1959  
1 folder  
Script of an episode of *The Steve Allen Show* entitled *Brooklyn II*. Also includes an undated script for a comedy sketch entitled



*Meeting of Minds.*

b. 4 f. 13

*The Ziegfeld touch* (Television program), 1961

1 folder

Annotated script for the television program *The Ziegfeld Touch*.