



The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Elsie Janis diaries

1920-1928

*T-Mss 2000-036

Summary

Creator: Janis, Elsie, 1889-1956

Title: Elsie Janis diaries

Date: 1920-1928

Size: 1.5 linear feet. (5 diaries)

Source: Gift, Siegel, Andrew M, 11/26/2000

Abstract: Elsie Janis (1889-1956) was a performer in musical comedy, vaudeville, and motion pictures, and also a composer and screenwriter. Born Elsie Bierbower in Columbus, Ohio, March 16, 1889, Elsie Janis made her stage debut at the age of eight in THE CHARITY BALL, and quickly rose to popularity in vaudeville as "Little Elsie." She made her Broadway debut in THE VANDERBILT CUP in 1906, and also appeared in THE HOYDEN (1907), THE FAIR CO-ED (1909), THE SLIM PRINCESS (1910) and THE LADY OF THE SLIPPER (1912). Silent film appearances by Elsie Janis included THE CAPRICES OF KITTY (1915), 'T WAS EVER THUS (1915) and THE IMP (1919). Known as the "Sweetheart of the A.E.F." for entertaining Allied troops during World War I, Elsie Janis continued performing in vaudeville through the 1920's. After talking pictures were introduced she contributed songs and dialogue to several films, including MADAME SATAN (1930) and THE SQUAW MAN (1931) for Cecil B. DeMille, and REACHING FOR THE MOON (1931) for Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Aside from a brief return to the screen in WOMEN IN WAR (1940), Elsie Janis retired from show business after the death of her mother in 1932. She died in Los Angeles on February 26, 1956. The Elsie Janis diaries consist of five yearbook volumes covering the years 1920, 1921, 1923, 1924, and 1928, with one page devoted to each day. Most entries are written in ink, a few in pencil. The latter portion of the volume for 1920 is water-damaged. Elsie Janis was intimate with many of the stage and screen notables of her day, but references to them are sketchy. Her journal entries are brief and superficial, and read more like those found in datebooks than in diaries.

Preferred citation: Elsie Janis diaries, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Elsie Janis (1889-1956) was a performer in musical comedy, vaudeville, and motion pictures, and also a composer and screenwriter. Born Elsie Bierbower in Columbus, Ohio, March 16, 1889, Elsie Janis

made her stage debut at the age of eight in THE CHARITY BALL, and quickly rose to popularity in vaudeville as "Little Elsie." She made her Broadway debut in THE VANDERBILT CUP in 1906, and also appeared in THE HOYDEN (1907), THE FAIR CO-ED (1909), THE SLIM PRINCESS (1910) and THE LADY OF THE SLIPPER (1912). Silent film appearances by Elsie Janis included THE CAPRICES OF KITTY (1915), 'T WAS EVER THUS (1915) and THE IMP (1919). Known as the "Sweetheart of the A.E.F" for entertaining Allied troops during World War I, Elsie Janis continued performing in vaudeville through the 1920's. After talking pictures were introduced she contributed songs and dialogue to several films, including MADAME SATAN (1930) and THE SQUAW MAN (1931) for Cecil B. DeMille, and REACHING FOR THE MOON (1931) for Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Aside from a brief return to the screen in WOMEN IN WAR (1940), Elsie Janis retired from show business after the death of her mother in 1932. She died in Los Angeles on February 26, 1956.

Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Subjects

Actresses -- United States

Motion picture actors and actresses -- United States

Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

Vaudeville -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diaries

Names

Janis, Elsie, 1889-1956