



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements papers

1909-1965

*T-Mss 2014-102

Processed by Joyce Joseph in 2015.

Summary

Creator: Ryerson, Florence

Title: Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements papers

Date: 1909-1965

Size: 4.42 linear feet (7 boxes, 6 volumes)

Source: Donated by Unknown

Revision History: 5 boxes processed by Valerie Wingfield

Abstract: Florence Ryerson (1892-1965) and Colin Clements (1894-1948) were a married American writing team who created plays, novels, and short stories. The Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements papers date from 1909 to 1965 and contain scrapbooks, typescripts, notes, and correspondence.

Preferred citation: Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements papers, *T-Mss 2014-102. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Joyce Joseph in 2015.

Creator History

Florence Ryerson (1892-1965) was an American writer. Born Florence Willard in Southern California, she was the daughter of journalist and author Charles Dwight Willard. She retained the last name of her first husband, Harold Swayne Ryerson, with whom she had one son. While a student at Pasadena High School, Ryerson wrote *Wan o' the Wood*, a play that was later produced by the Los Angeles Children's Theatre in 1911. Her numerous short stories appeared in publications such as *The American Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Metropolitan*. Ryerson also wrote for film, and was co-author of the script for the 1939 screen version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Colin Clements (1894-1948) was an American writer. In the late 1910s, Clements attend drama

educator George Pierce Baker's 47 Workshop in playwriting at Harvard University. He then wrote and published several series of short plays such as *The Touchstone and Other Plays* (1919), *Plays for a Folding Theater* (1923) and *Plays for Pagans* (1924).

In 1927, Clements met Ryerson while directing a small play in California. They married a year later and soon after began collaborating. They wrote plays for Broadway such as *Glamour Preferred* (1941), *Harriet* (1943), and *Strange Bedfellows* (1948); and novels such as *Fear of Fear* (1931), *Diana Laughs* (1932), and *The Borgia Blade* (1937). Appleton-Century Company published several of their mystery novels. In the 1930s, Ryerson and Clements acquired the Albert Workman 19th century ranch in California and renamed it Shadow Ranch. They lived on the property for several years before selling it in 1948. Now, Shadow Ranch is one of Los Angeles' historic-cultural monuments and a city park.

Scope and Content Note

The Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements papers date from 1909 to 1965 and contain scrapbooks, typescripts, notes, and correspondence. The collection is not a comprehensive representation of their work, and is more reflective of Ryerson's experiences and career.

The bulk of the collection consists of scrapbooks. A few of the scrapbooks document the reception of Ryerson's and Clements's collaborations such as the clippings for *Fear of Fear*, *Diana Laughs*, and *The Borgia Blade*. There is also a guide to the screen version of *The Wizard of Oz* in *Photoplay Studies* magazine. The other scrapbooks highlight periods in their individual careers. One pertains to Clements's theatrical work for amateur groups such as his *Plays for a Folding Theater* and *Plays for Pagans*. There is a scrapbook of Ryerson's short story clippings with a table of contents that includes the name of the story, where it was published, the date, and the amount she received for publication. Additionally, there is a scrapbook of materials from Ryerson's life as Florence Willard and her early theatrical efforts such as clippings and programs from the 1911 Los Angeles Children's Theatre's first production of *Wan o' the Wood*; her costume designs for *Bury Fair* (1914); and correspondence related to her first marriage.

There are some writing files that include story development outlines, work diaries, drafts, correspondence, and research materials for *Oh! Susanna*, *Sombra*, and *The Beckoning Fair One* among others.

There are various autobiographical materials that detail their careers and personal lives such as Ryerson's "How Did You Land on Broadway?" and "I Look at My Life" narratives; a comprehensive list of their books and Ryerson's individual writing projects; and correspondence and notes about Ryerson's father's life and work.

The collection holds background information on Shadow Ranch before it became a California historic monument. There are clippings, personal photos, and correspondence about legal matters. There is also correspondence between Ryerson and the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission once the property was turned into a city park. Ryerson wrote several narratives about the ranch itself and her family's experience living on the property.

The Additions, dated 1934 to 1964, are mostly scripts which are rough drafts with editorial comments. These scripts were integrated into the Script files and include *Cinderella*; *The Dark House* (co-written with Alice D.G. Miller); *Early American*; and *Spring Green*. One script *Oh! Susanna* received a significant amount of new material including correspondence by Ryerson, and scripts for the New York and Pasadena tryouts.

The Notes files expand with information about Ryerson's creative process for developing scripts. The topics include detective stories, musical comedy ideas, plays, short stories and the work *Strange Bedfellows*.

There are also two files that hold autobiographical content. One file was named "auto notes" by Ryerson. These notes mostly describe her childhood and young adulthood. The file was filed with the Autobiographical Materials.

The second file "Circus Story, Work Diary," dated 1947, was written by Ryerson to describe her working relationship with Clements and their struggle to complete scripts. According to Ryerson, Clements proposed to write a circus story for high schools. This file was placed with the Work Diaries.

Materials in the collection were assigned catalog numbers before final processing, and those numbers are retained as notes in the container list.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Albums (books)
Correspondence
Diaries
Manuscripts for publication
Notes (documents)
Playwrights
screenplays
Scripts

Subjects

American drama
Authorship -- Collaboration
Detective and mystery fiction
Screenwriters -- United States
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Theater -- Production and direction
Women authors, American
Women dramatists

Occupations

Dramatists.
Novelists.

Names

Clements, Colin, 1894-1948
Miller, Alice D.G.
Ryerson, Florence
Shadow Ranch Park (West Hills, CA)

Container List

Scrapbooks

- v. 1 1927-1931
MWEZ + N.C. 11,299
- v. 2 1931-1934
MWEZ + N.C. 11, 300
- v. 3 1934-1940
MWEZ + N.C. 11, 301
- v. 4 Clements, Colin 1924-1927
MWEZ + N.C. 11, 298

Ryerson, Florence

- v. 5 1909-1923
MWEZ + N.C. 11,296
Ryerson's life as Florence Willard and her early theatrical efforts.
- v. 6 1910-1918
MWEZ + N.C. 11,297
Published short stories.
- b. 1 f. 1 Shadow Ranch 1942-1965
MWEZ + N.C. 22, 755
Contains Ryerson's "I Look at My Life" narrative and other autobiographical materials.

Writing Files

- b. 1 f. 2 Autobiographical Materials 1948-1962
- b. 7 f. 9 MWEZ + N.C. 22, 755

Scripts

The scripts are arranged alphabetically by title.

- b. 1 f. 3-6 *The Beckoning Fair One and Great Son* 1930s-1940s
MWEZ + N.C. 22, 758
- b. 3 f. 1 *Brief Flower* 1950
- b. 3 f. 2 *Butterfly Inside*
- b. 1 f. 7 *Centennial* 1950
MWEZ + N.C. 22, 757
- b. 3 f. 3-4 *Cinderella* 1945
The files also include notes on how to write a short story and names for Cinderella's sisters.
Ryerson may have been developing a related story for the fairy tale.
- b. 3 f. 5-12 *The Dark House* 1946-1948
Ryerson and Clements initially worked on this script before his death in 1948. Alice D.G. Miller (1894-1985), a screenwriter, replaced Clements as the collaborator.
- b. 3 f. 13 *Dear Old Darling* 1951
- b. 4 f. 1-4 *Early American* 1943-1945
- b. 4 f. 5 *Farewell to Love* 1938
- b. 4 f. 6 *Fear No More* 1943
- b. 4 f. 7-9 *For Valor* 1934
The files include a comparison of two scripts by Ryerson, *The Lady With a Lamp* and *For Valour*.
- b. 4 f. 10-12 *The Harder They Fall* 1940, 1964
Oh! Susanna 1945-1951
- b. 2 f. 2-4 1945-1951
MWEZ + N.C. 22, 755

Writing Files (cont.)

Scripts (cont.)

Oh! Susanna (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 13-14 Correspondence 1948
- b. 5 f. 1-3 New York Script 1946
- b. 5 f. 4 Pasadena Script 1947
- b. 5 f. 5-9 Drafts, Research Notes and Musical Layout 1946
- b. 6 f. 1-9
- b. 6 f. 10 *One Way Ticket*
- b. 2 f. 5 *She Sold Her Husband* 1928-1930
- b. 6 f. 11 MWEZ + N.C. 22, 757
- b. 2 f. 6-8 *Sombra* 1930s-1950s
- MWEZ + N.C. 22, 757
- b. 6 f. 12 *Spring Green* 1941
- b. 7 f. 1
- b. 7 f. 2 *Turn Back the Clock* 1953
- b. 7 f. 3-5 *Welcome Home* circa 1943
- b. 7 f. 8 *The Whistling Bird*

Notes

- b. 7 f. 10 *The Black Crook* 1944
- b. 7 f. 11-12 Detective Stories 1951-1955
- b. 7 f. 13 Ideas for Reducing Farm Play
- b. 7 f. 14 Mendelssohn, Felix 1943
- b. 7 f. 15 Mother Sea 1954-1955
- b. 7 f. 16 Musical Comedy Ideas 1945
- b. 7 f. 17 One Act Play Ideas
- b. 7 f. 18-19 Plays and Short Stories 1940-1950s
- b. 7 f. 20 Run-Through 1947
- b. 7 f. 21-22 *Strange Bedfellows* 1946-1947
- b. 2 f. 1 Notes 1940s-1960s
- MWEZ + N.C. 22, 757
- b. 2 f. 9 Work Diaries 1941-1951
- b. 7 f. 23 MWEZ + N.C. 22, 755
- "Circus Story, Work Diary" located in box 7, folder 23.