



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Richard Mansfield family papers**

1856-1940 [bulk 1898-1940]

MssCol 1863

Compiled by Robyn Hjernstad, 2015.

## Summary

**Creator:** Mansfield, Richard, 1857-1907

**Title:** Richard Mansfield family papers

**Date:** 1856-1940 [bulk 1898-1940]

**Size:** 13.8 linear feet (32 boxes, 8 volumes, 1 oversized folder)

**Source:** Gift of Harold Van Doren, May, 1942, July 8, 1944

**Abstract:** Collection consists of correspondence, writings, legal documents, drawings, photographs, printed matter, and other Mansfield family papers. Papers are largely personal in nature with the bulk being Beatrice Cameron's papers. Other members of the family represented in the collection are Hermine Rudersdorff, Richard Mansfield's mother, and George Gibbs Mansfield, the Mansfields' son. Writings are plays and poems; family papers include diaries, daybooks, address books, photographs, scrapbooks, drawings, blueprints, and newspaper clippings.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** Richard Mansfield family papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Robyn Hjernstad, 2015. Processed by Claudia Funke; machine readable finding aid created by APEX data services and revised by Chatham Ewing. Additional materials were integrated into the collection by Robyn Hjernstad, 2015.

**Related Materials:**

Horoscopes for Richard Mansfield and Beatrice Cameron Mansfield MWES. The New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

Richard Mansfield promptbooks and typescripts NCOF+. The New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

## Creator History

Richard Mansfield (1857-1907) was a prominent actor of the late 19th century. He was born in Helgoland, Germany, into a family that excelled in the performing arts. His mother was the prima donna Hermine Rudersdorff (1822-1882), and his grandfather, the violinist Joseph Rudersdorff (1788-1866). His father, Maurice Mansfield, was a London businessman.

Richard Mansfield began his stage career touring the English provinces in Gilbert and Sullivan and made his first appearance in New York in 1882 in light opera. It was in the United States that Mansfield experienced his greatest success, in nonmusical as well as musical roles, including Prince Karl, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Cyrano de Bergerac, and Beau Brummel, a role created especially for him by Clyde Fitch. He also performed in the Shakespearian parts of Shylock, Brutus, Henry V, and Richard III. He introduced Shaw's drama to America and produced the first English-language version of *Peer Gynt*, just before his death. He was the author of a number of revised versions of noted plays as well as such original writings as the play *Monsieur* (1887), and the books *Blown Away* (1897) and *The Adventures of Beatrice and Jessie* (1900).

In 1892, Mansfield married Susan Hegeman, who had appeared with his company under her stage name, Beatrice Cameron, since 1886. Beatrice Cameron Mansfield's (circa 1863-1940) outstanding portrayals were Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Nora in *A Doll's House* (the first U.S. production). Following her husband's death, Beatrice spent a number of years trying to make contact with him through psychic mediums. After the death of her son in 1918, she went to Europe and the Near East to do war relief work. During the 1930s, she commuted from her New London, Connecticut, estate to teach speech and drama and give readings at the Christodora settlement house on New York's Lower East Side.

The Mansfield's only son, George Gibbs Mansfield (1898-1918), died before his twentieth birthday in an army training camp. Sometime after his father's death, he assumed the name Richard Mansfield 2d. He had shown an interest in acting and playwriting, and a volume of his poetry, *Courage!*, was published the year of his death.

## Scope and Content Note

The Richard Mansfield papers span the years 1856 to 1940, with the bulk falling between 1898 and 1940. They consist of handwritten and typewritten documents including letters, diaries, daybooks, address books, plays, poems, transcripts, mortgages, bonds, and other legal papers; as well as drawings, blueprints, photographs, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and other printed matter. The collection is composed of the papers of family members Hermine Rudersdorff, Richard Mansfield, Beatrice Cameron Mansfield, and George Gibbs Mansfield, with the bulk being Beatrice Mansfield's papers. The papers are largely personal in nature.

## Key Terms

### Occupations

Actors

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Blueprints

Diaries  
Drawings (visual works)  
Photographic prints  
Scrapbooks

**Subjects**

Disaster relief  
Drama -- Study and teaching  
Parapsychology  
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

**Names**

Blashfield, Grace Hall.  
Cameron, Beatrice, 1863-1940  
Churchill, Winston, 1871-1947  
Clements, Colin, 1894-1948  
Damrosch, Walter, 1862-1950  
Fitch, Clyde, 1865-1909  
Hampden, Walter, 1879-1955  
Irving, Henry, Sir, 1838-1905  
Landone, Brown  
Mansfield, George Gibbs, 1898-1918  
Mansfield, Richard, 1857-1907  
Phelps, William Lyon, 1865-1943  
Pollock, Channing, 1880-1946  
Remington, Frederic, 1861-1909  
Rudersdorff, Hermine, 1822-1882  
Stahl, Lorraine  
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 1850-1894  
Tarkington, Booth, 1869-1946  
Terry, Ellen, Dame, 1847-1928  
Winter, William, 1836-1917  
Mansfield family

## Container List

### Series I. Hermine Rudersdorff 1856, 1872 (.5 box)

- b. 1 **Almanacs 1856, 1872**  
Historical almanacs with copious manuscript annotations in German script.

### Series II. Richard Mansfield 1885-1907 (1 box)

- b. 1 **Letters Sent 1889-1907**  
Primarily letters from Richard Mansfield to his wife, Beatrice Mansfield.
- b. 1 **Letters Received 1887-1907**  
Primarily letters from professional friends, arranged chronologically. Correspondents include the novelist Winston Churchill, artists William Frith and Frederic Remington, impresario Henry Irving, actress Ellen Terry, critic William Winter, and Robert Louis Stevenson.
- b. 1-2 **Writings 1885-1907**  
A typescript of his version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, plays, poems, and other miscellaneous writings.

### Series III. Beatrice Cameron Mansfield 1888-1940 (16 boxes)

- b. 3 **Letters Sent 1891-1940**  
Mainly Beatrice Mansfield's letters to her husband and to her son, arranged chronologically.
- b. 4-7 **Letters Received 1891-1940**  
Professional and personal letters, arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent. Correspondents include Grace Hall Blashfield, Colin Clements, Walter Damrosch, Clyde Fitch, the Comité Américain pour les Régions Dévastées de la France, Walter Hampden, Brown Landone, William Lyon Phelps, Channing Pollock, Lorraine Stahl, Booth Tarkington, and William Winter. Most letters are in English. Some are in French and Czech.
- b. 8 **Business Letters Received 1930-1940**  
The more mundane business letters separated out by Beatrice Mansfield. They are arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent.
- b. 9-11 **Diaries, Daybooks, Calendars 1888-1936**
- b. 12 **Unsorted Writings 1919-1924**  
Includes Beatrice Mansfield's writings while in the Near East, as well as poems written by herself and others, and notes for teaching.
- b. 13-16 **American Society for Psychical Research Letters & Transcripts, (with gaps) 1907-1936**  
Letters from James Hylsop, secretary of the society, to Beatrice Mansfield and transcripts of sittings arranged to make contact with Richard Mansfield.
- b. 17 **Assorted Papers & Printed Matter 1880-1940**  
Newspaper clippings, travel documents, genealogical charts for Beatrice Mansfield's family, astrological charts and forecasts, award pins, and other miscellaneous matter.
- b. 18 **Legal Papers, Financial Records, Address Books 1890-1940**  
Mortgages, wills, bonds, contracts, check book stubs, address books, etc.

### Series IV. George Gibbs Mansfield 1898-1918 (2 boxes)

Series IV. George Gibbs Mansfield (cont.)

- b. 19 **Letters Sent 1905-1918**  
Primarily George Gibbs' letters to his mother from boarding school. They reveal his troubled adolescence.
- b. 19 **Letters Received 1905-1918**  
Arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent. Correspondents include Booth Tarkington.
- b. 20 **Writings & Drawings 1905-1918**  
Poems, plays, drawings, and notes, unsorted.
- b. 20 **Assorted Papers and Printed Matter 1898-1918**  
Gibbs' birth certificate, school reports, newspaper clippings, notes, and other miscellaneous items.

Series V. Mansfield Family 1859-1930 (12 boxes, 8 volumes)

**Photographs**

Photographs and albums dating between 1898 and the early 1900s chiefly contain photographs of George Gibbs Mansfield as a baby and young child in and around the family's New London, Connecticut home.

Images dating between 1900 and 1907 may document Richard and Beatrice Cameron Mansfield in portraits, publicity photographs for plays, traveling abroad, and in and around their home. Photographs from this time may also include interior and exterior shots of the family's home in New London and on Riverside Drive in New York City.

Photographs and albums dating between 1910 and 1911 generally document travels taken by Beatrice and George through Italy, France, Germany, and Egypt, after the death of Richard Mansfield.

Photographs of George Gibbs Mansfield in costume for plays are located throughout the photograph files and albums, and generally date from 1910 to 1917. Also present are photographs of George in uniform just before departing for army training camp, where he died in 1918.

- b. 22 f. 1-6 1867-1906
- b. 23 f. 1-7 1873-1917
- b. 24 f. 1-5 1890-circa 1926
  - b. 21 1895-1940  
Also includes drawings and blueprints of the Grange, the Mansfield's New London, Connecticut estate.
- o. 1 circa 1900  
Portrait of Beatrice Cameron Mansfield.
- b. 25 f. 1-8 1902-1920s
  - Photograph Albums**
  - b. 24 f. 6 1899-1901
  - b. 24 f. 7 circa 1900
    - v. 4 1899-1902
    - v. 5 1899-1903
    - v. 6 1899-1903
  - b. 26 f. 1 circa 1903-circa 1905
  - b. 26 f. 2 circa 1910

Series V. Mansfield Family (cont.)

Photographs (cont.)

Photograph Albums (cont.)

- b. 26 f. 3 1911
- b. 27 f. 1 1911
- v. 8 1911

Printed and Visual Materials

- b. 23 f. 8 Print-- Mansfield, Beatrice Cameron 1880s
- b. 23 f. 9 War Relief Certificates-- Mansfield, Beatrice Cameron 1919, 1921  
From France and Czechoslovakia.
  
- b. 23 f. 10 *Program-- Old Heidelberg* 1916
- b. 23 f. 11 *Elegy-- Mansfield, Richard* 1907
- b. 26 f. 4 *Poems-- Mansfield, Richard and George Gibbs* circa 1898, 1918
- b. 26 f. 5 *Notebook-- Mansfield, George Gibbs-- "Historie du Moyen Age"* circa 1910
- b. 26 f. 6 *Miscellany* 1889-1918
- o. 1 *Drawing* 1895  
Depicts Beatrice Cameron as Queen Louisa and Richard Mansfield in *Arms of Man*.
  
- b. 27 f. 2-4 *Drawings and Painting* 1904-1910

Scrapbooks

The scrapbooks primarily document the acting careers of Richard and Beatrice Cameron Mansfield through newspaper clippings, programs, letters, and photographs. Materials dating after 1918 record Beatrice Cameron Mansfield's war relief efforts in Europe and the Near East.

- b. 28 f. 1-2 1859-1908
- b. 29 f. 1-8 1871-1937
- b. 28 f. 3-5 1879-1928
- b. 30 f. 1-4 1880-1932
- v. 1 1883-1909  
Given to George Gibbs Mansfield by Paul Wilstach, the scrapbook documents the acting career of Richard Mansfield.
  
- b. 30 f. 5-7 1887-1920s
- v. 2 1889-1893  
Contains clippings that review plays produced by Richard Mansfield's company, in which he and Beatrice Cameron acted.
  
- b. 31 f. 1-6 1891-1930
- v. 3 1898-1899  
Baby book for George Gibbs Mansfield.
  
- b. 31 f. 7-10 1905-1907  
Postcard album.
  
- b. 32 f. 1-4 1907-1926
- v. 7 1910-1911  
Documents travels of George Gibbs Mansfield.