



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning papers**

1860s-1992 [bulk 1905-1992]

\*T-Mss 1993-032

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Beaufort, John

**Title:** John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning papers

**Date:** 1860s-1992 [bulk 1905-1992]

**Size:** 10.81 linear feet (22 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by the Estates of John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning, 1993 and 1998.

**Abstract:** John Beaufort was a theater critic for the Christian Science Monitor; he also served as a war correspondent, London bureau chief, and feature editor. His wife, Francesca Bruning, was a stage actor who was most active in the theater during the 1930s and 1940s. The John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning papers (1860s-1992) hold writings, correspondence, clippings, photographs, appointment books, and other documents related to Beaufort and Bruning's careers and personal lives. Early records consist of Bruning's parents' correspondence and other Bruning family records.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: <https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

### Conditions Governing Access:

Inquiries regarding videorecordings in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division ([theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org)). Videorecordings will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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**Preferred citation:** John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning papers, \*T-Mss 1993-032. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014 Materials in binders were removed and transferred to folders. Most of Francesca Bruning's papers were loose, and were placed in folders.

## **Creator History**

John Beaufort (1912-1992) was a Canadian-American journalist who worked for the Christian Science Monitor from 1930 until his death. Beaufort was the Monitor's New York theater critic from 1939 to 1943, and served as a theater and film critic in the 1950s.

In addition to writing about theater, Beaufort served as a war correspondent from 1943 to 1945, reporting on the war in the Pacific. He was the Monitor's London bureau chief from 1962 until 1965, when he became feature editor. After his retirement from the position of feature editor in 1973, he continued to write on theater regularly for the Monitor. In 1983, he published a book, *505 Theatre Questions Your Friends Can't Answer*. He was also a president of Drama Desk. He married Francesca Bruning in 1940. Beaufort died in New York City in 1992.

Francesca Bruning (1907-1996) was a stage actor who was most active in the 1930s and 1940s. Born in Miles City, Montana, Bruning launched her career in 1928 at the Berkshire Playhouse in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. She studied voice and acting with Laura Elliot in New York City. On Broadway, she appeared in *Amourette* (1933), *Remember the Day* (1936), and *Junior Miss* (1943), among other plays. She also acted in television and radio. Beaufort died in New York City in 1996.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The John Beaufort and Francesca Bruning papers (1860s-1992, bulk 1905-1992) hold writings, notes, correspondence, clippings, photographs, appointment books, and other documents related to Beaufort and Bruning's careers and personal lives.

The collection holds Beaufort's alphabetical files, which relate to his writing and lecturing about theater and other topics; his employment with the Christian Science Monitor and the Christian Science Publishing Society; and his study of Christian Science and activities as a member of the church. Theater-related materials include ideas for books and articles, lecture notes, and Beaufort's correspondence with readers of his reviews. Monitor correspondence concerns his assignments, the conditions of his employment, and the newspaper's policies. The files hold telegrams and memoranda regarding his posting to the Pacific during World War II and his posting to Japan immediately after the war. Beaufort left Japan in early 1946, and the files hold letters from colleagues and friends describing the situation in Japan after he left. Files also contain correspondence between Beaufort and his friend Jaromír Matoušek in Czechoslovakia from 1935 to 1992. Church-related materials include correspondence and meeting minutes documenting his activities as a member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, and of Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist in New York City.

Beaufort's writings, notes, and scrapbooks are chiefly on theater topics. Notes mostly date to the 1950s and 1970s, and consist of ideas for articles, notes on plays, and notes from interviews. Interview subjects include Boris Aronson, Anthony Quayle, Harvey Sabinson, Woodie King, Jr., and Dick Williams, among many others. Writings comprise drafts of articles, film scripts, and books. Drafts are present for *505 Theatre Questions Your Friends Can't Answer* and an unfinished book, *The State of the Stage* (written around 1959). Scrapbooks contain clippings of Beaufort's work, most of which are articles for the Monitor from the 1930s and 1940s. Scrapbooks also hold draft articles. Some of Beaufort's writings and notes can also be found in his alphabetically-arranged files.

Films from Beaufort's work as a reporter are also present. Inquiries regarding audio/visual materials in

the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division ([theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org)). Audio/visual materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Daily appointment books are present for both Beaufort and Bruning. Beaufort's date from 1950 to 1991; Bruning's date from 1951 to 1991.

Francesca Bruning's personal papers chiefly hold correspondence, photographs, notes, and ephemera. While the material mostly relates to Bruning, the files also contain some material pertaining to Beaufort. The files include legal documents such as Beaufort and Bruning's wills, and documents concerning property in Lakeville, Connecticut and Montana. Bruning's writings and notes from her study of Christian Science are present.

Documentation of Francesca Bruning's acting career is held in her professional papers, and includes photographs, clippings, correspondence, promotional material, study materials from an acting course, and two scripts. The scripts are for an episode of the television show *The Verdict is Yours*, and for the play *The Fourth Generation*, by Anthony Veiller. A scrapbook contains clippings and telegrams from her stage appearances between 1933 and 1942.

Bruning's family papers document her family history and her early life. The bulk of the material is letters from her father, Dr. L.C. Bruning, a county health officer in Custer County, Montana, to her mother, Ruby Bruning (née Houg). A letter Dr. Bruning wrote in 1898 while serving in the U.S. military in the Philippines is also present. Ruby Bruning held property in Custer County and Powder River County, Montana, and the family papers include title abstracts and other documents regarding the property and mortgages between 1914 and 1927. Pictures of Bruning's family and childhood, as well as some pictures from her early career, are held with the family papers. The earliest items in the collection are photographic portraits from the 1860s, and an invitation to Bruning's grandmother's wedding, dated 1875.

**Arrangement:** The collection is divided into John Beaufort's papers and Francesca Bruning's papers. Beaufort's papers are arranged in five categories: alphabetical files, appointment books, notes, scrapbooks, and writings. Bruning's papers are arranged in four categories: appointment books, family papers, personal papers, and professional papers.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actresses  
Theater critics

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Appointment books  
Articles  
Clippings (information artifacts)  
Correspondence  
Photographs

### **Titles**

Christian Science monitor

**Subjects**

Christian Scientists

War correspondents -- United States

**Names**

Bruning, Francesca

## Container List

### John Beaufort Papers

#### Alphabetical Files

- b. 6 f. 1-12 J-Y 1932-1951
- b. 1 f. 1-12 A-C 1954-1992
- b. 2 f. 1-12 C-F 1956-1992  
Includes letters from readers.
- b. 3 f. 1-14 F-L 1953-1992  
Includes letters from readers.
- b. 4 f. 1-17 M-R 1935-1992
- b. 5 f. 1-15 S-Z, Miscellaneous 1949-1992
- b. 19 Appointment Books 1950-1992
- b. 5 f. 16-17 Appointment Books 1982-1987

#### Notes

- b. 10 f. 1-9 1934-1935, 1960-1970s
- b. 11 f. 1-5 1950s-1992
- b. 9 f. 1-9 1951-1978  
Includes interview notes.
- b. 8 f. 6-9 1955-1957
- b. 22 f. 9 Scrapbook 1929-1934
- b. 8 f. 1-5 Scrapbooks 1933-1961
- b. 6 f. 13-19 Writings 1950-1992
- b. 7 f. 1-8 Writings 1952-1982, undated

### Francesca Bruning Papers

- b. 20 Appointment Books 1951-1969
- b. 21 Appointment Books 1970-1991

#### Family Papers

##### Correspondence

- b. 13 f. 1-6 1898-1908, 1952
- b. 12 f. 1-6 1905-1917
- b. 11 f. 6 1906-1908
- b. 18 f. 11-12 Photographic Portraits 1860s, undated
- b. 13 f. 7-10 1875-1927
- b. 14 f. 1-3 1900s-1967

#### Personal Papers

- b. 14 f. 4-8 1909-1987
- b. 16 f. 1-7 1920s-1992
- b. 17 f. 1-7 1926-1988
- b. 15 f. 1-8 1932-1989

#### Professional Papers

- b. 18 f. 1-10 1930s-1988

Francesca Bruning Papers (cont.)  
Professional Papers (cont.)

- b. 22 f. 4-8      1933-1937
- b. 22 f. 1-3      Scrapbook 1933-1942, 1978