



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**James F. Durnell collection of photographs**

1840-1970

\*T-Mss 2012-076

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Durnell, James F.

**Title:** James F. Durnell collection of photographs

**Date:** 1840-1970

**Size:** 2.94 linear feet (7 boxes)

**Source:** Unknown.

**Abstract:** The collection dates from 1840 to 1970 and contains photographs of actors, film and theater productions, and theater buildings collected by James F. Durnell.

**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>

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2014

## Creator History

James F. Durnell (b. 1896) was an American real estate agent and photograph collector.

## Scope and Content Note

The collection (1840-1970) holds three sets of photographs: actor photographs, arranged alphabetically

by actor surname; production photographs, arranged alphabetically by title; and photographs of theater buildings and other film and theater related subjects. Although the collection spans over one hundred years, a large portion of the photographs date from the 1930s to the 1940s. The photographs are original photographs, reproductions, and clippings from publications. Each photograph is annotated with identifying information, such as actor name and birth and death dates; the date of the photograph; and title and date of production. The photographs have been separated from backings, mounts, or other materials previously used for presentation. While some of the early photographs in the collections are originals or prints, many were clipped or photocopied from publications.

Hundreds of actors and actresses are pictured in the photographs, which consist of headshots, publicity photographs for films and plays, and other portraits of well-known performers who were active between the 1870s and the 1960s. Productions represented in the photographs include those for film and theater. They consist of film and performance stills as well as publicity photographs of individuals and groups of actors. Also included are photographs of less traditional productions, such as a Buffalo Bill Wild West Show located in Seven Presidents Park in Long Branch, New Jersey.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actors

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Film stills

Photographs

### **Subjects**

Motion pictures -- United States

Theater -- United States

## Container List

### Actor Photographs

- b. 1 f. 1-7 A-D 1872-1964
- b. 2 f. 1-6 E-M 1898-1967
- b. 3 f. 1-5 N-Z 1880-1966

### Production Photographs

- b. 3 f. 6 A 1932-1958
- b. 4 f. 1-5 B-G 1840-1965
- b. 5 f. 1-6 H-M 1870-1966
- b. 6 f. 1-7 M-T 1840-1969
- b. 7 f. 1-3 U-Z 1882-1964
- b. 7 f. 4-5 Theaters and Miscellaneous Photographs 1877-1970