



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Happy Ray scripts

1920s-1950s

*T-Mss 1997-005

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

Summary

Creator: Ray, Happy

Title: Happy Ray scripts

Date: 1920s-1950s

Size: 2.2 linear feet (5 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Purchased from John and Connie Tesner, 1997

Abstract: Happy Ray was a burlesque and vaudeville comedian active from the 1920s to the 1950s. The Happy Ray scripts (1920s-1950s) contain over 150 stage plays, musicals, and skits produced by his companies.

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:

Portions of the collection are in fragile condition. One item is located in the *T-Cabinet and is available by appointment only.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: Happy Ray scripts, *T-Mss 1997-005. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

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Creator History

Happy Ray was a burlesque and vaudeville comedian active from the 1920s to the 1950s who toured with his own companies. In the 1920s and 1930s he performed with Happy Ray's Revue, based out of Atlanta. Later in his career, he ran the Happy Ray Stock Company, which presented family-friendly variety shows including music, dancing, dramas, and skits.

Scope and Content Note

The Happy Ray scripts (1920s-1950s) contain over 150 stage plays, musicals, and skits produced by his companies. About half the scripts are for full plays (musicals, melodramas, and comedies). The rest are for skits or musical vignettes. The scripts for musicals include lyrics but no scores.

Almost none of the scripts bear author credits and none of the plays are known titles, nor are the credited authors present in library catalogs. Many of the scripts are divided into sub-scripts for individual characters. Multiple sub-scripts for the same play were consolidated and filed together.

All items in the collection were numbered by Connie Tesner. Scripts are filed in that order. Preceding and following the scripts in the container list are the following items: a poster advertising a performance by the Happy Ray Stock Company; a contract for the Happy Ray Revue; a stamp of a photograph of Happy Ray's Rhythm Girls from the Happy Ray Revue; an undated running order for one of Ray's productions; a published booklet entitled Coghlan's Comedy Sketches; and published songs performed in Ray's shows, as well as manuscript parts for an arrangement of one song.

Portions of the collection sustained water damage and are in fragile condition.

Arrangement: The papers are arranged by format. Scripts are arranged by numbers assigned by Connie Tesner.

Key Terms

Subjects

Burlesque (Theater)
Vaudeville

Occupations

Comedians

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Contracts
Photographs
Posters
Scores
Scripts

Container List

b. 5 f. 16 *Coghlan's Comedy Sketches* 1920s
Item number 135.

b. 5 f. 27 **Contract** 1930
For Happy Ray's Revue.

Item number 163.

b. 4 f. 1 **Poster** 1950s
Advertising Happy Ray Stock Company performance.

Item number 51.

o. 1 **Running Order** undated
C12 Dwr #31. Item number 170.

b. 5 f. 28 **Scores** undated
Item numbers 164-169.

Scripts 1928-1950s

b. 1 f. 1-13 1-13

b. 2 f. 1-15 14-30

b. 3 f. 1-14 31-50

b. 4 f. 2-94 52-94

b. 5 f. 1-15 95-131

b. 5 f. 17-26 139-162

Stamp undated (Item number 171.)

This item is located in the *T-Cabinet and is available by appointment only.