



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Donald Weissmuller papers

1910-1990s

*T-Mss 2012-050

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2014

Summary

Creator: Weissmuller, Donald

Title: Donald Weissmuller papers

Date: 1910-1990s

Size: 2.17 linear feet (4 boxes, 1 volume)

Source: Donated by Donald Weissmuller in 1990 and Donald Smith in 2012.

Abstract: Donald Weissmuller (1922-2013) was an American actor, dancer, and choreographer who worked in theater and television. The papers (1910-1990s) consist of biographical material; correspondence; a diary; production material; photographs; and programs and news clippings that document his career as an actor, dancer, and choreographer. There is one scrapbook that predates Weissmuller and contains news clippings and photographs of dancers, some signed, from 1910 to 1920, and one file on his teaching.

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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Preferred citation: Donald Weissmuller papers, *T-Mss 2012-050. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2014

Related Materials:

Donald Weissmuller papers, 1952-1978. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Creator History

Donald Weissmuller (1922-2013) was an American actor, dancer, and choreographer who worked in theater and television. Weissmuller was born in Louisville, Kentucky on August 31, 1922 to Joseph and Kendra Weissmuller. As a young adult, he briefly studied acting and dancing. His first stage performance was when he was seventeen at St. Louis Municipal Opera. Weissmuller appeared in the Broadway shows *Keep Off the Grass* (1940), *High Kickers* (1941), *Panama Hattie* (1941), *Count Me In* (1942), *What's Up?* (1943), *On the Town* (1944), *Ziegfeld Follies* (1944), *High Button Shoes* (1950), *Pipe Dream* (1955), *Happy Hunting* (1957), and *Follies* (1971). In addition to Broadway shows, he also acted and danced in off-Broadway productions and with stock companies, including the Detroit Light Opera, the Dallas Light Opera, and the Palace Hotel Garden Court. In 1953, he toured Italy in a review called *Scio, Scio*.

Weissmuller moved to California in 1957. He appeared on television in the *Shirley Temple Show* and *The Real McCoys*, and was a choreographer for the *Hollywood Bowl*, *Shower of States*, *Martin and Lewis Show*, *Robert Q. Lewis Show*, and the *Jackie Gleason Show*. He was affiliated with the *Sacramento Music Circus* for fourteen years where he choreographed over sixty musicals. In addition to his work in theater and television, Weissmuller taught beginner ballet, tap, and jazz classes.

Scope and Content Note

The Donald Weissmuller papers (1910-1990s) consist of biographical material; correspondence; a diary; production material; photographs; and programs and news clippings that document his career as an actor, dancer, and choreographer. There is one scrapbook that predates Weissmuller and contains news clippings and photographs of dancers, some signed, from 1910 to 1920, and one file on his teaching. A second scrapbook dates from the 1922 to 1952 and contains photographs, news clippings, and artwork documenting his childhood, and his appearances on Broadway and off-Broadway theater.

The production material is composed of cast lists, scripts, and sides for the *Sacramento Music Circus*, *High Button Shoes*, *On the Town*, and *Follies*. The correspondence consists of letters and telegrams to Weissmuller from other actors, dancers, and choreographers; and letters and postcards that Weissmuller wrote to his mother from Los Angeles and Sacramento describing his appearances on television. The diary details the Italian tour of *Scio, Scio* in 1953. The programs and news clippings are for regional and off-Broadway productions.

Key Terms

Subjects

Choreography and dance
Dancers -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs
Scrapbooks

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical Materials 1953-1979
- b. 1 f. 2-3 Correspondence 1954-1987
- b. 1 f. 4 Diary 1953
- b. 1 f. 5-6 Photographs 1939-1990s
- b. 2 f. 1 Photographs 1939-1990s
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Production Files 1950-1989
- b. 2 f. 4-6 Programs and News Clippings 1949-1984
 - v. 1 Scrapbook 1910-1920
 - b. 3 Scrapbook (1 of 2) 1924-1952
 - b. 4 Scrapbook (2 of 2) 1924-1952
- b. 2 f. 7 Teaching 1965-1986