



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

George Wotherspoon papers

1887-1990

*T-Mss 1990-024

Summary

Creator: Wotherspoon, G. (George)

Title: George Wotherspoon papers

Date: 1887-1990

Size: (1 box + 2 portfolios)

Source: unknown, 1990

Abstract: George Wotherspoon was a theatrical and motion picture publicist, theatrical manager, stage critic, and journalist. George Wotherspoon began his theatrical career in 1889, when he managed the Australian and European tour of *LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY*. He was a published critic as early as 1887, and in the summer 1895 he began a daily column for the *New York Evening Telegram*. In 1899 he began a five-year stint with the *New York Evening Journal* as reporter and drama editor. Wotherspoon's involvement in motion pictures began as early as 1899, when he promoted a film depicting the Tom Sharkey-Jim Jeffries boxing match. In 1911, he promoted an experimental "Kinemacolor" film of the coronation of King George V. For several years, beginning in 1904, Wotherspoon was a press agent for the Dreamland and Luna Park attractions at Coney Island. From 1917 to 1920, he worked as reporter, columnist, drama critic, and writer of feature stories for the *New York Evening Telegram*. Throughout this period he also acted as press agent for motion pictures such as *CLEOPATRA* (1917) starring Theda Bara, D. W. Griffith's *ORPHANS OF THE STORM* (1921), and Cecil B. DeMille's *KING OF KINGS* (1927). Wotherspoon continued to act as manager and advance man for stage shows through the 1920s, and, in the waning days of vaudeville, managed units of players who would perform in motion picture theaters prior to the showing of the film. The George Wotherspoon papers consist of a scrapbook of clippings and other items, documents such as letters, caricatures, and photographs, and a poster advertising the 1889 production of *LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY* which was an early milestone in George Wotherspoon's career. The bulk of the collection is found in a scrapbook which was apparently begun by Wotherspoon himself in the 1930s and completed by his daughter Elita Wilson in 1990. Wotherspoon wrote a 9-page Chronology for this scrapbook, covering the highlights of his career from 1889 to 1934. The Chronology is followed by dozens of testimonial letters from various employers speaking highly of Wotherspoon and his professional abilities. Also in the scrapbook are clippings of Wotherspoon's play reviews and theater-related feature stories from the *New York Evening Journal* circa 1900-1902, and the *New York*

Telegram, circa 1917-1918. Also in the scrapbook, tucked within the front cover, are two items: a souvenir ticket made of silver which commemorates the opening night of INFORMATION, PLEASE!, the premiere attraction at the Selwyn Theatre which opened on October 2, 1918, and a booklet entitled LITTLE MESSAGES OF TRUTH AND FICTION by George Wotherspoon, published in 1917 and featuring what the author considered his best advertising lines. Also in the collection are photographs of Maxine Elliott and Mrs. Leslie Carter.

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>

Preferred citation: George Wotherspoon papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

George Wotherspoon was a theatrical and motion picture publicist, theatrical manager, stage critic, and journalist. George Wotherspoon began his theatrical career in 1889, when he managed the Australian and European tour of LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY. He was a published critic as early as 1887, and in the summer 1895 he began a daily column for the New York Evening Telegram. In 1899 he began a five-year stint with the New York Evening Journal as reporter and drama editor. Wotherspoon's involvement in motion pictures began as early as 1899, when he promoted a film depicting the Tom Sharkey-Jim Jeffries boxing match. In 1911, he promoted an experimental "Kinemacolor" film of the coronation of King George V. For several years, beginning in 1904, Wotherspoon was a press agent for the Dreamland and Luna Park attractions at Coney Island. From 1917 to 1920, he worked as reporter, columnist, drama critic, and writer of feature stories for the New York Evening Telegram. Throughout this period he also acted as press agent for motion pictures such as CLEOPATRA (1917) starring Theda Bara, D. W. Griffith's ORPHANS OF THE STORM (1921), and Cecil B. DeMille's KING OF KINGS (1927). Wotherspoon continued to act as manager and advance man for stage shows through the 1920s, and, in the waning days of vaudeville, managed units of players who would perform in motion picture theaters prior to the showing of the film.

Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings
Correspondence
Photographs
Reviews
Scrapbooks

Subjects

Motion picture industry -- United States -- History
Silent films -- United States -- History
Theater -- United States -- History -- 19th century
Theater -- United States -- History -- 20th century

Occupations

Press agents -- United States

Names

Wotherspoon, G. (George)
Carter, Leslie, Mrs., 1862-1937
Elliott, Maxine, 1871-1940