



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Georgia Johnstone papers regarding Agnes Moorehead

1930-1974

*T-Mss 2003-039

Processed by Elisabeth Elkind, October 2003

Summary

Creator: Johnstone, Georgia

Title: Georgia Johnstone papers regarding Agnes Moorehead

Date: 1930-1974

Size: 2.25 linear feet (4 boxes)

Abstract: Georgia Johnstone Papers regarding Agnes Moorehead consist primarily of correspondence between actress, Moorehead and Johnstone, her personal secretary. The letters by Moorehead are rich in the details of her life and her acting career. Letters written by Johnstone on which Moorehead scrawled her answers are filed with the letters Moorehead wrote. There is some correspondence each woman had with third parties, but it all pertains to Moorehead. Also includes a small amount of production material such as scripts she considered and texts for her one-woman show, two speeches she gave, a few programs and itineraries, memos of the Agnes Moorehead fan club, and biographical sketches, clippings and two scrapbooks about Moorehead.

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>

Physical Location: *T-Mss 2003-039

Preferred citation: Georgia Johnstone papers regarding Agnes Moorehead, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: Materials in English

Processing note: Processed by Elisabeth Elkind, October 2003

Creator History

Agnes Moorehead, star of radio, television, stage and film, was born on December 6, 1906, in Clinton,

Massachusetts. Her parents were John Henderson Moorehead, a Presbyterian minister, and Mary Mildred MacCauley. The family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, and then to Reedsburg, Wisconsin. Agnes Moorehead began performing during the summers at the age of ten and worked with the St. Louis Municipal Opera Company in the ballet and chorus for four years. She graduated from Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio, and received a master's degree in English and Public Speaking from the University of Wisconsin. She then studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City.

Moorehead began her broadcasting career as a singer and frequently appeared in dramatic and variety radio programs through the 1930s and 1940s. This included a starring role in *Sorry, Wrong Number* on *Suspense* in 1943, and a role as Marilly, the volatile housekeeper in *Mayor of the Town*, with Lionel Barrymore. She appeared with Beatrice Lillie, Bert Lahr, Bob Hope, Fred Allen, and others in tragedy, comedy, mystery, and other genres. She was a founder and charter member of the Mercury Theatre Players with Joseph Cotton and Orson Welles. Her connection to Welles led to her screen debut as the mother in *Citizen Kane* in 1941. This was followed by *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), which brought her the New York Critics Award for Best Actress and her first of five Academy Award nominations. She was also nominated for *Mrs. Parkington* (1944), *Johnny Belinda* (1948), *All That Heaven Allows* (1956), and *Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964). She appeared in many other films, including *Dark Passage*, *How the West was Won*, *Jane Eyre*, *Raintree County*, *Showboat*, and *The Singing Nun*.

Moorehead made her Broadway debut in *Scarlet Pages* and then appeared in *All the King's Horses*, *Courage, Soldiers and Women*, *Candlelight*, and *Lord Pengo*, among others. She toured in George Bernard Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* with Charles Boyet, Sir Frederick Hardwicke, and Charles Laughton in the United States and Europe. She also toured in her one-woman show, *The Fabulous Redhead*, beginning in 1954 and intermittently for ten years including stints in the Middle East. She also toured in *The Pink Jungle*, *The Rivalry*, *Prescription: Murder*, and *High Spirits*.

Moorehead's best-known television role was as the mother witch Endora on ABC's *Bewitched* (1964-1971), for which she received 5 Emmy nominations. She won an Emmy for a guest-starring role on *The Wild, Wild West*. Other television credits include *The Twilight Zone*, *Playhouse 90*, *Studio One*, *Shirley Temple Theatre*, *Wagon Train*, *The Rebel*, and *That's Life*, among many others.

Agnes Moorehead was married and divorced twice, to John Griffith and to Robert Grist, and had one adopted son, Sean. Along with her acting career, she was also a teacher of drama. She lived in Beverly Hills, California, but enjoyed spending time at a family home in the Ohio countryside. She died on April 30, 1974.

Scope and Content Note

Georgia Johnstone papers regarding Agnes Moorehead consist primarily of correspondence between Moorehead and Johnstone, who was her personal secretary. The letters by Moorehead are rich in the details of her life and her acting career. Letters written by Johnstone on which Moorehead scrawled her answers are filed with the letters that Moorehead wrote. There is some correspondence with third parties, but it all pertains to Moorehead's career. Also included is a small amount of production material, such as scripts that she considered and texts for her one-woman show, two speeches that she gave, a few programs and itineraries, memos of the Agnes Moorehead fan club, and biographical sketches and clippings about Moorehead.

Arrangement: Arranged in 6 series: Series I. Correspondence; Series II. Personal papers; Series III. Production materials; Series IV. Publicity; Series V. Clippings; Series VI. Scrapbooks

Key Terms

Subjects

Actresses

Television actors and actresses

Names

Moorehead, Agnes, 1906-1974

Container List

Series I: Correspondence 1954-1974

Correspondence is primarily between Agnes Moorehead and her secretary, Georgia Johnstone. It focuses on Moorehead's career, but also touches on her personal life.

Subseries 1: Agnes Moorehead's letters to Georgia Johnstone 1954-1974

Letters are mostly handwritten to Johnstone. Also Johnstone's letters to Moorehead on which Moorehead wrote her replies and some answers to questionnaires submitted to Moorehead are filed here. Moorehead's letters are rich in personal detail.

Chronological arrangement.

- b. 1 f. 1 Agnes Moorehead's letter of reference for Georgia Johnstone, with Johnstone's note attached 1954
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1963
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence 1964
- b. 1 f. 4 Correspondence 1965
- b. 1 f. 5 Correspondence 1966
- b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence 1967
- b. 1 f. 7 Correspondence 1968
- b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence 1969
- b. 1 f. 9 Correspondence 1970
- b. 1 f. 10 Correspondence 1971
- b. 1 f. 11 Correspondence 1972
- b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence 1973-1974, undated

Subseries 2: Georgia Johnstone's letters for Agnes Moorehead

Letters, mostly carbon copies retained by Johnstone, concern the details and logistics of Moorehead's personal life and career.

Arrangement is chronological

- b. 1 f. 13 Correspondence 1963 April-August
- b. 1 f. 14 Correspondence 1963 September-December
- b. 1 f. 15 Correspondence 1964
- b. 1 f. 16 Correspondence 1965
- b. 1 f. 17 Correspondence 1966
- b. 1 f. 18 Correspondence 1967
- b. 1 f. 19 Correspondence 1968
- b. 1 f. 20 Correspondence 1969
- b. 1 f. 21 Correspondence 1971
- b. 1 f. 22 Correspondence 1972
- b. 1 f. 24 Correspondence 1974, undated

Series I: Correspondence (cont.)

Subseries 3: Correspondence of Moorehead or Johnstone with third parties
(5 folders)

Material pertains to Moorehead and her career. Includes correspondence on bookings and Johnstone's accounting of her expenditures on Moorehead's behalf in order to be reimbursed.

- b. 1 f. 24 Agnes Moorehead's correspondence with third parties 1962-1974
- b. 1 f. 25 Georgia Johnstone's correspondence with third parties about Agnes Moorehead 1963-1974
- b. 2 f. 1 Georgia Johnstone's correspondence with accountant Harold Williams or his office 1962-1965
- b. 2 f. 2 Georgia Johnstone's correspondence with Irving Brinskin on her expenditures for Moorehead 1965-1968
- b. 2 f. 3 Georgia Johnstone's correspondence with lawyer Franklin B. Rohner on her expenditures for Moorehead 1971-1974

Series II: Personal Papers (2 folders)

- b. 2 f. 4 Miscellaneous notes of Georgia Johnstone on Moorehead's activities 1963, undated
- b. 2 f. 5 List of Moorehead's stolen property and notice of hearing for probate of her will 1974, undated

Series III: Production Materials (4 folders)

This small file contains texts for readings delivered by Moorehead, speeches she gave, and a script and film scenario sent to her for consideration.

- b. 2 f. 6 Titles and texts for readings, one-woman show, etc 1964-1965
- b. 2 f. 7 Two typescript speeches 1962, undated
One speech is a eulogy for Lawrence Langner and the other was given to a convention of the Western Speech Association of drama education.
- b. 2 f. 8 Potions of Siren Songs. Script by Betty Brown, with accompanying letter 1962-1963
- b. 2 f. 8 Script was sent to Moorehead for her consideration
- b. 2 f. 9 A Safe Place, scenario of screenplay 1971

Series IV: Publicity (3 folders)

This series contains press releases with biographical information on Moorehead, programs, and the newsletter of her fan club.

- b. 2 f. 10 Biographical material and press releases 1947-1973, undated
- b. 2 f. 11 Programs, press releases and Moorehead's schedule for One-Woman show 1941-1972
- b. 2 f. 12 Agnes Moorehead fan club newsletter 1971-1973

Series V: Clippings (4 folders)

This series contains photocopied clippings about Moorehead's career.

- b. 2 f. 13 Clippings 1930-1948
- b. 2 f. 14 Clippings 1950-1959
- b. 2 f. 15 Clippings 1960-1967
- b. 2 f. 16 Clippings 1971-1974, undated

Series VI: Scrapbooks (2 folders)

This series contains two oversized scrapbooks of personal correspondence, telegrams, Christmas and birthday cards, programs, and clippings reflecting Moorehead's personal and professional list. They were removed from their binding at some point before processing. The mounted material has not been removed or photocopied.

- b. 3 **Scrapbook on Agnes Moorehead 1972-1974**
Includes correspondence, cards, programs and clippings.

- b. 4 **Scrapbook on Agnes Moorehead in Gigi 1973**
Includes correspondence, telegrams, programs and clippings on Moorehead in the role of Aunt Alicia.