



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Dr. Saram R. Ellison scrapbooks

1832-1918

*T-Mss 1915-001

Summary

Creator: Ellison, Saram Richard, 1852-1918

Title: Dr. Saram R. Ellison scrapbooks

Date: 1832-1918

Size: 6.13 linear feet (24 volumes and 1 box)

Source: Gift: Saram R. Ellison, M.D., 1915-1917.

Abstract: Dr. Saram R. Ellison (1852-1918) was a medical doctor and avid collector of magic and related materials, particularly published materials and ephemera. He also maintained friendships and correspondence with most of the major and minor magicians practicing during his lifetime. In 1902 he co-founded, along with W. Golden Mortimer and Francis Martinka, the Society of American Magicians, which was headquartered in New York City. Includes manuscript correspondence, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, original photographs, ephemera, illustrations, and other documents relating to the founding and early years of the Society of American Magicians (S.A.M.), and the subjects of magic, hypnotism, spiritualism, legerdemain, ventriloquism, and the conjuring arts. Ellison compiled this material into scrapbook volumes lettered B through X2. Loose correspondence, programs, and promotional materials are housed in Box 1.

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: Dr. Saram R. Ellison scrapbooks, *T-Mss 1915-001. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Previously cataloged as 8-MZC+ (Ellison, S. R. [Collection of manuscript letters, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, etc.]

Related Materials:

See also related collections: Magic scrapbooks and posters (*T-Mss 2011-031); Houdiniana (*T-Mss 2016-010); and Houdini artwork (*T-Vim 2011-293).

Creator History

Dr. Saram R. Ellison (1852-1918) was a medical doctor and avid collector of magic and related materials, particularly published materials and ephemera. He also maintained friendships and correspondence with most of the major and minor magicians practicing during his lifetime. In 1902 he co-founded, along with W. Golden Mortimer and Francis Martinka, the Society of American Magicians, which was headquartered in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

Includes manuscript correspondence, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, original photographs, ephemera, illustrations, and other documents relating to the founding and early years of the Society of American Magicians (S.A.M.), and the subjects of magic, hypnotism, spiritualism, legerdemain, ventriloquism, and the conjuring arts. Ellison compiled this material into scrapbook volumes lettered B through X2. Loose correspondence, programs, and promotional materials are housed in Box 1.

Arrangement: Scrapbooks are arranged in alphabetical order. Volume A is lacking and there is no evidence that Volumes Y or Z ever existed in this collection.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Business records
Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Ephemera (general object genre)
Manuscripts (documents)
Photographic prints
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks

Subjects

Magic
Magic paraphernalia
Magic tricks
Magic wands.
Magicians

Names

Ellison, Saram Richard, 1852-1918
National Conjurers' Association (U.S.)
Society of American Magicians

Container List

- v. 1 **Scrapbook B** 1878-1903, undated
1) Correspondence to Ellison 1902-1903 (Charles Howard, [W.]B. Maughley, J.H. Stevenson, William J. Hilliar of *The Sphinx*, The Great Lafayette, Ruth [L. Hollaman], Prof. Krieger, Hilliar, Ciivette, Adelaide Herrmann, De Vere, Paul Valadon, Gabriel A. Healy, Hal Merton, A[?] Lewis, Adelaide Herrmann, G.G. Laureyns, John J. Goodwin, Thomas H. Kerr, Eugene Powell, Sargent the Merry Wizard, Horace Goldin, Ransom, Henry Hatton, Leon Herrmann, Kaufmann and W. Golden Mortimer, 2) Clippings: 1894-1902 (several in Spanish), 3) Business Cards; 4) Programs 1878-1902 and undated (in Spanish and English), 5) Advertisements 1878, 1902 and undated, 6) Receipts 1902 and undated (from *Mahatma* for Ellison 1902), 7) Notes 1902 (list of charter members of the Society of American Magicians, May 10th 1902), 8) Photograph (fragment) and 9) 1894 contract (in Spanish).
- v. 2 **Scrapbook C** 1900-1903, undated
Includes numerous calling cards, as well as programs, tickets, and published articles. Also includes ephemera from the Society of American Magicians and Saram Ellison's original membership card for the S.A.M., numbered "1".
- v. 3 **Scrapbook D** 1870-1904, undated [bulk 1902-1903]
Correspondence to Ellison 1903 (Great Lafayette, Redan the Incomparable, Buckingham Palace, Buatier de Kolta, Adelaide Herrmann, Joe McKay, The Great Powell, LeRoy Talma and Bosco, Rouclere, George Heller, the Zancigs, Carl Willmann, Kellar, Bailey, and others); and articles regarding magic, magic tricks, legerdemain, and séances.
- v. 4 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook E 1832-1903, undated
1) Articles 1832-1903 and undated, 2) Clippings 1904, and 3) Correspondence to Ellison 1904 (in German).
- v. 5 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook F 1860-1903
Articles with a focus on occult, spirituality, fire juggling, hypnotism, charlatans and rope throwing.
- v. 6 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook G 1878-1903, undated
Articles and clippings with a focus on card tricks, illusion, hypnotism, puzzles, natural magic (e.g. chemical reactions and acoustics), fire walking, best tricks of magicians, conjurers, paper folding and ventriloquism.
- v. 7 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook H 1877-1903, undated
Articles with a focus on box tricks, topsy turvy house, Chinese puzzles, hand shadows, side shows, most extraordinary dinner, cleverest child, riddle books, dime museum, Indian jugglers, Burlesque bullfight, champion orange peeler, marksmanship, fire dancer, caricature, greatest juggler-Paul Cinquevalli, playing cards, mindreading, silhouettes, illusions, cycling feats, whistles, card-sharping, and hypnosis.
- v. 8 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook I 1859-1904
Articles with a focus on secrets in cipher, luck/chance, the Buffalo Fair, performing animals, Coney Island, Ram Pershad the Juggler, trick photography, conjuring lifestyle, palmistry, and silhouette photography.
- v. 9 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook J 1854-1903, undated
Articles with a focus on necromancy, the confessions of an assistant magician, chapeaugraphy, mediums, coin tricks, J. Herrman Moore, photography, cards, conjuring, modern sorcerers, witches, necromancers, art of magic, high-caste Indian magic, American Indian magic, cabinet mystery, mind reading, Zulu witches/witch finders, high magic, Fiji firewalking, Indian conjuring, hoop rolling, shadow play, and knot making.

- v. 10 **Scrapbook K** 1840-1903, undated
Various articles and clippings.
- v. 11 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook L 1891-1903, undated
Articles and clippings with a focus on side shows, hieroglyphics and other forms of picture-writing, skin writing, cricket, human alphabet (people posing to form an alphabet), witch scarers, mysteries of sound, fireworks, smuggling devices, bear training, optical illusions in nature, tattoo artist Sutherland Macdonald, vaudeville, mediums, folk theater, silhouettes/shadow pictures, Nicholas Grollier de Servièrre, peculiar acts, hypnotism, gambling/speculation, wizards of the Sioux Nation, training wild animals, handcuff trick, and dog orchestra.
- v. 12 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook M 1894-1906, undated
Articles and clippings with a focus on the haunted hat, wire-sliding, doll impersonation, Kellar's thoughts on magicians, ghosts, palming, paper folding, Hindu Fakirs, magic circle, automata, conjurers, magicians, second sight, parlor magic, Trewey, mediums, illusions, handkerchief magic, silhouette photography, living Lilliputians, shadowgraphy, and David Devant; postcard from L. Herrmann to Ellison 1906; letter to Ellison from David Devant 1903; and promotional and advertising material.
- v. 13 *Two labels affixed on inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook N 1894-1909, undated
Photographs: Mrs. Eva Kellar (note and signature), Adelaide Herrmann, David Devant (with autograph signature), Prof. De Kolta and Madam De Kolta, F.E. Powell, ? stage, Adelaide Herrmann 1894, Frontispiece for *The Art of Hocus Pocus* and *The Universal Conjurer*, Faivre, B. Alexander, Dr. A.M. Wilson, Imro Fox, Robert Heller, De Villiers, F. Buchoa, J. N. Maskelyne, H. S. Lynn, Krieger, Bellachini, C. Andress, Stevenson (signed "yours fraternally Stevenson"), G.W. Heller, C.J. Boldt, Adelaide Herrmann, Ellison Library, Frontispieces for *Les Nouveaux Bowans de Societe* and *The Conjuror Unmasked*, Carl Willmann, W. S. Perkin, Happ, Mme. Clivette, Clivette, Imro Fox (several in row), Goldin and Francis J. Martinka, Adelaide Herrmann, Alexander Herrmann, Harry Kellar, Charles Anders, Alexander Carl Leon Herrmann, Prof. Hoffmann, Adrian Plate 1901, H.R. Evans, Samri S. Baldwin, Francis J. Martinka, H.J. Burlingame, Lanskaill, W.D. Le Roy, Dr. Elliott, Fred Hurd, Houdin & downs, T.J. Peters, [Charles Anders], A. Martinka and J. Willmann, Francis J. Martinka, the Zancigs, Mdmé Reno, Wagren, E.J. Moore, Mingus, Stueck, Kellar's hands (photography of xray), Herne Bros., Mc Intosh, W.J. Hilliar at Martinka's shop, N.F. Thom, Antonio Archambault[?], Bursey, Martinka, Goldin, Henderson, Beers, Leipsig, William H. Coffrin, Dalirue[?], Baircroft, Fantasmagorie de Robertson dans la Cour des Capucines en 1797, Heller Couch, Bosco di Torino [?], Zaino, W.E. Robinson, Laurant, Tenji, M'Swankey and Abanazer, Imro Fox (several), magic equipment models in library (unnamed), Leon Herrmann, Buatier de Kolla, Fifth Annual Dinner--The Society of American Magicians at the Hotel Marlborough June 3, 1909 (handle carefully) Mrs. Eva Kellar ("To Dr. Ellison with sincere regards Eva L. Kellar"), and Murray; a letter from Carl Willmann to Ellison.
- v. 14 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook O 1893-1906, undated
1) Articles and clippings, 2) Business cards, 3) Programs, 4) Correspondence to Ellison, 5) Optical illusion calendar (Martinka & Co. produced), 6) Financial (bill of sales), 7) S.A.M. printed material, and 8) advertisement and promotional material.
- v. 15 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook P 1903-1909, undated
Articles and clippings that focus on teaching magic tricks and solving puzzles. Note tipped in on page 251: "to my dear Dr S.R. Ellison, with best wishes, yours fraternally," signed by Louis Oliver Herrmann 1907.
- v. 16 *Two labels affixed on inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook Q 1906-1909, undated
Strong focus on Julius and Agnes Zancig and Harry Kellar; contents include: 1) Articles and clippings, 2) advertisements, 3) correspondence to Ellison.

- v. 17 *Two labels pasted to the inside top cover: a) "Presented by Mrs. Henry Draper to the New York Public Library"; b) "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D., collection."*
Scrapbook R 1855-1909, undated
1) Clippings, 2) correspondence (William M. Linnett Jr, Francis Werner, Victor Andre, Patrick Walsh, and Theo Okito, letters addressed to Dr Ellison, 3) newsletters / annual dinner menus / dues notices and receipts / programs for The Society of American Magicians - New York, 4) advertisement: Charles Roltare, J. Warren Keane, Mr. Max Sterling, The Zancigs, Mildred and Rouclere, Dante the Great, Maitre de Chant-vaudeville de parisienne, Charles Roltare, Nelusco the Boy Magician, Wm. Kirsch, and Morey the Mysterious, 5) business cards: John J. Goodwin, Geo. W. Heller, William A. Ransom, Prof. Wm. C.R. Kirsch, Prof. Shaikh M. Ismail, August J. Rehbein, Servais Sylvester, Herbert S. Ardell, LeRoy, Le Roy McCafferty, Frank J. Best, The Wizards of Ozaga (R. Henri Elroy and Klintonne Burgesse), Clément de Lion, Arthur Berel, Manek Shah, Prof. E. Walsh, Peter N. Graef, Vernon Blythe, Martinka & Co., and Professeur C. Herrmann, 6) programs (Kellar and Thurston, Kellar assisted by Mrs. Kellar, and M. Herrmann, 7) invitation, 8) magic tricks (Kellar's / Maskelyne's levitation, Kellar cabinet trick, and Mme. Adelaide Herrmann), 9) receipts and 10) tricks explained.
- v. 18 *Two labels affixed to inside front cover: "The Saram R. Ellison, M.D. collection" and "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook S 1899-1906, undated
1) Articles and clippings, 2) advertisements and promotional material, 3) photographs, 4) correspondence to Ellison; strong emphasis on career of Howard Thurston.
- v. 19 *Label affixed on inside front cover: "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook T 1899-1906, undated
Articles with a focus on dollhouse creation, Harry Houdini, Robert Houdini, and hypnotism.
- v. 20 *One label affixed on inside front cover: "The New York Public Library--presented by Saram R. Ellison, M.D."*
Scrapbook U 1871-1903, undated
1) Prose on Martinka's Little back shop by J.W. Sargent, 2) correspondence to Ellison, 3) notes / hand drawn art, 4) financial (bill of sale), 5) advertisement/ promotional material, 6) clippings/articles, 7) program (Harlem Opera House program has handwritten notes within), 8) business card, 9) wedding announcement of Mary Eleanor Harper to Frederick Eugene Powell and 10) photograph.
- v. 21 **Scrapbook V** 1915-1917, undated
1) Photographs of objects and wands from the Dr. Saram R. Ellison collection and of people, 2) articles (two on Ellison), 3) advertisements, 4) program, and 5) correspondence addressed to Ellison (from Mystical Heith, H. Hannon, John Mulholland, Will Goldstone, Howard Thurston, A.M. Wilson, Harry Kellar, Charles J. Carter, H.R. Evans, Drs. Brown and Greene).
- v. 22 **Scrapbook W** 1907-1913, undated
1) Correspondence to Ellison (several from Harry Kellar), 2) notes for people participating Eusapia Palladino séance, 3) clippings and articles, 4) advertisement (Julius and Agnes Zancig, W.A. Russell, and Barnes & Levina), 5) Society of American Magicians newsletters and financial documents, 6) photographs (Karl Germain, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Houdini, several unidentified), 7) poster of Karl Germain (torn on folds), 8) programs and 9) business cards; focus on Eusapia Palladino.
- v. 23 **Scrapbook X1** 1899-1916, undated
1) Patents, 2) clippings, 3) newsletters for the National Association of Conjurers and other organizations, 4) Society of American Magicians - New York ephemera, 5) programs, 6) catalogs, 7) business cards, 8) advertisements, 9) postcards, 10) photographs (Dunninger's is autographed), 11) correspondence to Ellison, and 12) two cards from Mr. and Mrs. Harry Houdini - photographs and typeset message (no personal message).
- v. 24 **Scrapbook X2** 1890-1917, undated
1) Clippings / articles (one written by Ellison), 2) correspondence addressed to Ellison, 3) correspondence addressed to Geo. H. Little, 4) advertisement and promotional material, 5) business cards, 6) programs, 7) tricks explained, 8) manuscript pages for article "Japan's Magic and Magicians" by Max Berol) and 9) photographs. Card towards back of scrapbook says: "Collection of Saram R. Ellison M.D., Magical Wands, The Largest Collection in the World, My library was given to the NYPL. My Models were given to Howard Thurston. I have the Magic Kettle and Rapping Skull, and remade a few models".

b. 1 **Miscellaneous loose materials 1902-1918, undated**

An autograph letter, signed, from Imro Fox to Ellison, dated 16 October 1902, regarding a magic wand he is giving to Ellison. Also includes a poster and souvenir program for the artist and illusionist Henry; an undated entry ticket to the Theatre Robert-Houdin, Paris; and one undated mounted gelatin-silver photograph of the "Shrine Den of Dr. Saram R. Ellison, 118 West 103rd Street, New York, N.Y." with verso inventory of contents of the room; and various photocopied trick advertisements and published writings about magic and illusions. Also includes other correspondence, clippings, programs and promotional materials.