

Guide to the Laura Burt Papers, 1883 – 1950 and undated

***T-Mss 1952-004**

Billy Rose Theatre Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Laura Burt Papers
Collection ID:	*T-Mss 1952-004
Creator:	Burt, Laura
Extent:	1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)
Repository:	Billy Rose Theatre Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: The Laura Burt Papers document portions of both her personal and professional life as an actress in the U.S. and England from the late 19th century through the middle of the 20th century.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

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Preferred Citation

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Custodial History

The Laura Burt Papers were received by the Billy Rose Theatre Division in 1952.

Biographical Note

Actress Laura Burt was born on September 15, 1875 on the Isle of Man to Captain Brown Burt and a Welsh mother, Ann Lloyd Burt. The family came to Shannon, Illinois around 1876. Her sea captain father was reported murdered in Liverpool and in order to earn a living, her mother was forced to lecture on temperance to Welsh settlers in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, where they finally settled. Mrs. Burt became a well-known temperance and religious lecturer. At the age of three, Laura Burt would recite at her mother's meetings. Burt had a half brother, Richard Lloyd Roberts, from her mother's first marriage, as well as a sister Elizabeth, and brother Will.

She made her first appearance on the stage at the Academy of Music, New York City in *The Old Homestead* (1889). Afterwards she studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Burt was first noticed for her performance as Nell Tutewiler and subsequently as June in *Blue Jeans* (1890). Another of her notable roles was Madge in the play *In Old Kentucky* at Palmer's Theatre (1893). Burt toured in this role for two seasons.

In 1897, Burt also played Iza Simpkins in *The Widow Goldstein* (1897) at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, as well as Olga in *The Heart of the Klondike* at the Star Theatre. She made her first appearance in London in February 1898 at the Shakespeare Theatre, Clapham, as June in *Blue Jeans*. At the New York Theatre, Burt appeared in *The King's Carnival* (1900).

On March 2, 1902, she married British actor Henry B. Stanford (nee Costello) at All Souls' Church in New York City. The two performed together as well as separately and were married until Stanford's death in 1921. The couple purchased a home in Great Kills, Staten Island, called Stanford Lodge. Stanford played with Sothern and Marlowe and was in the original production of *Peg O' My Heart* with Laurette Taylor. According to a 1934 Louella Parsons' column, Stanford left Burt a legacy on condition she use his name.

Stanford and Burt played with Sir Henry Irving's company both in England and on his last U.S. tour. Burt performed for Sir Henry Irving from 1903 to 1906, starring as Helen of Swabia in *Dante*, and also performing in *Louis XI*. While with the company, Burt took time to perform in St. Louis in *In the Palace of the King* and *Soldiers of Fortune*, although these productions are not documented in the collection. After her contract with Sir Henry Irving expired, Burt took her own company on a successful tour of the English provinces in 1907. Among the productions in which Burt and Stanford performed together are *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall* (1906-1907), *The Walls of Jericho* (1907-1908), and *The Order of the Bath*, a vaudeville skit (ca. 1908-1910). Burt also performed recitations and impersonations in vaudeville. In 1912, Burt sued Castle Square Opera Company producer Henry W. Savage for \$7,000, after he abruptly cancelled her engagement in the production *Madame X*.

Perhaps one of Burt's most notable roles was the Nurse in Eugene Brieux's, *Damaged Goods*, a play that explored the repercussions on a family of a husband with a sexually transmitted disease. The play opened at the Fulton Theatre in 1913 and was seen by many medical professionals and clerics. The cast gave a virtual command performance for President Woodrow Wilson, cabinet members, and other notable diplomats at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Burt was active in theatrical clubs and associations, such as the Twelfth Night Club, and was a lifelong member of the Professional Woman's League. She also took part in suffragette activities and was also a convert to Christian Science, although the exact date is unclear. (In a 1909 newspaper interview, Burt mentions her religion.). Although she participated in many Welsh heritage events and clubs, Burt became a U.S. citizen in 1924.

She was forced to auction her Staten Island home in 1922 after it was attached in a lawsuit against her by a workman injured there. She died at the age of 80 in Fordham Hospital, New York City on October 16, 1952.

Scope and Content Note

The Laura Burt Papers include clippings, correspondence, family and personal papers, programs, some production materials, and several scripts and sides for parts played by Burt. There are also some papers belonging to Henry B. Stanford, Burt's husband, as well to Sir Henry Irving, with whom both Burt and Stanford performed. The papers are arranged alphabetically by subject.

There are a large number of clippings, sometimes annotated by Burt relating to her career, family, and subjects in which she was interested, such as poetry. The largest segment of the correspondence is from the Earl of Yarmouth (George Francis Alexander Seymour, seventh Marquess of Hertford). Productions are documented mostly with clippings programs, and publicity materials. Burt's activities honoring her Welsh heritage are also reflected in the papers.

Laura Burt Papers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Addresses, ca. 1920s - 1930 and undated
	2	Adult Education Classes, 1934-1935
	3	Associations, 1904 - 1930 and undated
	4	Autographs, 1907 and undated
	5	Bios, undated
	6	Burt, Laura and Stanford, Henry B., 1902 - 1921 and undated (See also <i>The King's Carnival</i> , <i>The Order of the Bath</i> , and <i>The Walls of Jericho</i> .)
	7	Christmas Card Lists, 1932 - 1934 and undated Clippings, 1883 - 1939 and undated Burt, Laura, 1883 - 1939 and undated
	8	1883 - 1905
	9	1906 - 1914
	10	1916 - 1939
	11	undated
	12	Stanford, Henry B., 1900 - 1916 and undated Subjects, 1892 - 1938 and undated
	13	1892 - 1938 and undated
	14	undated
		Clubs, 1893 - 1950 and undated
	15	General, 1893 - 1950 and undated
	16	The Dominos, 1930 - 1934
	17	Twelfth Night Club, 1910 - 1940 and undated
	18	Contracts, 1894, 1934
		Correspondence, 1892 - 1949 and undated
	19	A - C, 1892 - 1949 (Includes correspondence with Georgia Caine and the Lotta Crabtree estate.)
	20	Burt, Laura - From, 1885 - 1935 and undated
	21	Christmas Cards, 1927 - 1936 and undated (Includes cards from Stella Roebing, Dorothy Tennant; see also Burt Family Correspondence.)
	22	Condolence Letters on Henry Stanford's Death, 1921 (Includes letters from Gilbert Douglas, Frederick Lewis, Lester Lonergan, Olive Oliver, Rachel Booth Powers, E.H. Sothern, P.R. Stephenson (probably), and unidentified correspondents.)
	23	D, 1925 - 1939 and undated
	24	E - F, 1894 - 1936 and undated (Includes correspondence with J. O. Francis.) Earl of Yarmouth, 1928 - 1929 and undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	1928 - 1929 and undated
2	1	
	2-6	undated
	7	G - I, 1897 - 1940 and undated (Includes correspondence with Sam Harris and William Randolph Hearst (telegrams).)
	8	J - L, 1914 - 1941 and undated (Includes telegram probably from Cecilia Loftus.)
	9	LaVerne, Lucille, 1925 - 1935
	10	M, 1915 - 1943 and undated
	11	Messages - Hotel Christie, 1934 - 1935
	12	N - P, 1904 - 1948 and undated (Includes correspondence with Louella Parsons and Louis Nethersole.)
	13	R - S, 1922 - 1949 and undated (Includes correspondence with Blanche Ring, Stella Roebling, Upton Sinclair (form letter on Christian Science), and Sibyl Wilbur Stone.)
	14	T - W, 1897 - 1944 and undated
	15	Diets, undated Family Papers, ca. 1895 - 1934 and undated
	16-17	Correspondence and General, 1882 - 1934 and undated Stanford, Henry, ca. 1895 - 1921 and undated
	18	Correspondence, 1919 and undated
	19	Papers, ca. 1895 - 1921 and undated (See also Henry Irving Papers file for telegram to Stanford (1901).)
	20	Correspondence from Laura Burt to Family, 1930 - 1934 (Includes letters to sister Elizabeth and to brother Will.)
	21	Financial, 1903 - 1940 and undated
	22	Irving, Henry, 1892 - 1901 (Includes correspondence to unidentified people and telegram to H.B. Stanford (1901) handwritten, but not in Irving's hand.)
	23	New York Committee of One Thousand, 1932 and undated (Includes text of speech delivered by Burt for Mrs. James L. Laidlaw.)
	24	Notes, 1908 and undated
<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	Personal Ephemera, 1911 - 1915 and undated
3	1	
	2	Poetry Collected, 1909 - 1924 and undated Productions, 1887 - 1937 and undated
	3	<i>Blue Jeans</i> , 1890 - 1913 and undated (Includes flyers with London reviews (1898) and one with note from Burt, and clippings.)
	4	<i>A Butterfly on the Wheel</i> , 1913 and undated (Includes program fragments and clippings.)

- 5 *Damaged Goods*, 1913, 1937, and undated (Includes program fragment and clippings.)
- 6 *Dante*, 1902 - 1903 and undated (Includes side for Helen of Swabia and clippings.)
- 7 *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*, 1906 - 1907 and undated
(Includes publicity materials, box office statement, and clippings.)
- 8 *Fantasma* and *New Fantasma*, 1887 - 1888 and undated
(Includes handwritten segment of script and clippings.)
- 9 *Going Out to Dinner*, undated (Includes typescript and clipping.)
- 10 *The Heart of the Klondike*, 1897
(Includes cover from *The Prompter* (1887 Nov. 20) and clippings.)
- 11 *In Old Kentucky*, 1894 - 1900 and undated (Includes clippings.)
- 12 *The King's Carnival*, 1901 and undated (Includes clippings.)
- 13 *Lady Gossip*, 1916 and undated (Includes program fragment and clippings.)
- 14 *The Lucky Star*, 1895 and undated (Includes program fragment and clippings.)
- 15 *Ninon*, undated (Includes flyer fragment.)
- 16 *The Order of the Bath*, 1905 - 1921 and undated
(Includes correspondence from author H.H. Morell, copyright office receipt, production materials, publicity materials, and clippings.)
- 17 *The Reclamation*, 1918 and undated (Includes clippings, program, and flyer.)
- 18 *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, 1923 and undated
(Includes opening night telegrams, program, and clippings.)
- 19 *The Walls of Jericho*, 1907 - 1908 and undated (Includes publicity card and clippings.)
- 20 Programs - General, 1892 - 1903 and undated
(Includes programs and program fragments for several benefit performances, Orpheum program (1899), Grand Opera House (undated), and Sorosis (undated).)
- 21 Programs, 1934 - 1939 and undated
(Includes several programs for events attended by Burt.)
- 22 Sides - Unidentified, undated
(Includes sides for Kitty Creighton and *Nance Oldfield*.)
- 23 Speech - Unidentified, undated (Includes handwritten text of speech.)
- 24 Testimonial Benefit - Casino Theatre,
- 25 Travel, 1894 - 1933 and undated
- 26 Welsh Societies, 1916 - 1942 and undated

(Includes program for *Cymanfa* conference of Welsh Congregational Churches and Ministers (1916); Burt's half-brother, Rev. Lloyd Roberts, was pastor of Elm St. Church, Youngstown, Ohio (conference site); see also Burt Family Papers.)