



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Hillman family papers**

1905-1995

Sc MG 588

## Summary

**Creator:** Hillman, George Abraham

**Title:** Hillman family papers

**Date:** 1905-1995

**Size:** 0.46 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of George I. Hillman, Jr., February 1996.

**Abstract:** The Hillman family papers provide documentation on the performance careers of four members of this family. Included are a notebook containing George A. Hillman's monologues and news clippings discussing the vaudeville performances of George and his wife, Ethel Riddick Hillman, and scrapbooks of news clippings and programs illustrating the tap dancing careers of their sons, George I. and Christopher Hillman, known as the Hillman Brothers, (1930s-1940s). Another scrapbook provides information about George I. Hillman's performance in Curley McDimple (1968).

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Hillman family papers, Sc MG 588, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Chandra Buie, April 1996, and Janice Quinter, September 2005.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

## Creator History

The Hillman family consisted of two generations of performers: George Abraham Hillman and his wife Ethel Riddick Hillman, a song and dance team, that performed around the turn of the century and later, and their sons, George Ira and Christopher, the Hillman Brothers.

Known as the "Creators of Suave Syncopation" and the "Aristocrats of Modern Dance", the Hillman

Brothers had numerous engagements in vaudeville, theaters, and nightclubs in the United States and abroad. They toured with the USO, Bob Hope, Sophie Tucker, Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole, and Ben Vereen, performing for over thirty years.

In 1968, George made his Off-Broadway debut in the starring role of Bill Bojangles in *Curley McDimple*, which ran for two years. He later appeared in the Off-Broadway play, *On Toby Time* (1977), as well as *Suddenly the Music Starts* (1979), *Stompin' at the Savoy* (1980) and *1000 Years of Jazz* (1981), where he starred as one of the "Original Hoofers". He was also a principal dancer in *Black and Blue* (1991). George died in 1995, following Christopher, who had died one year earlier.

## Scope and Content Note

The Hillman family papers provide documentation on the performance careers of four members of this family. Included are a notebook containing George A. Hillman's monologues and news clippings discussing the vaudeville performances of George and his wife, Ethel Riddick Hillman, and scrapbooks of news clippings and programs illustrating the tap dancing careers of their sons, George I. and Christopher Hillman, known as the Hillman Brothers, (1930s-1940s). Another scrapbook provides information about George I. Hillman's performance in *Curley McDimple* (1968).

Additional files about George I. Hillman include printed material concerning high school athletic participation in the 1920s; programs; flyers; news clippings relating to the Off-Broadway shows *Curley McDimple* and *1000 Years of Jazz*; contracts (1970s); and memorial programs relating to the death of the two brothers.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American dancers  
African American entertainers  
African American families  
African Americans in the performing arts -- United States  
Tap dancing  
Vaudeville -- United States

### Names

Hillman, Christopher, 1909-1994  
Hillman, Ethel Reddick  
Hillman, George Abraham  
Hillman, George, 1906-1995  
Hillman Brothers (Dance team)

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Personal information ca. 1920s-1990s
- b. 1 f. 2 Postcards 1983-1991
  - Curley McDimple* 1968-1969
- b. 1 f. 3 Programs and flyers
- b. 1 f. 4 News clippings
- b. 1 f. 5 Contracts 1974-1975
- b. 1 f. 6 Programs and flyers 1974-1995
- b. 1 f. 7 News clippings 1977-1991
  - 1,000 Years of Jazz* 1981-1983
- b. 1 f. 8 Programs and flyers
- b. 1 f. 9 News clippings
- b. 1 f. 10 Memorial programs 1994-1995
- b. 2 f. 1 George A. Hillman's monologue book (photocopy) 1905-1911
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Hillman Brothers' scrapbook 1930s-1940s
- b. 2 f. 4 *Curley McDimple scrapbook* 1968