



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Philip Dunning papers**

1912-1968

\*T-Mss 2001-075

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Dunning, Phillip, 1890-1968

**Title:** Philip Dunning papers

**Date:** 1912-1968

**Size:** 2.5 linear feet (5 boxes, 2 volumes, 2 oversized folders)

**Source:** Donated by Adam Kurzer, 2001.

**Abstract:** Philip Dunning (1890-1968) was a playwright and a theatrical producer and director. The Philip Dunning papers, dating from 1912 to 1968, document Dunning's life and career through production files, scrapbooks, and letters. Half of the collection relates to the play Broadway.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

## Creator History

Philip Dunning (1890-1968) was a playwright and a theatrical producer and director. He and George Abbott co-wrote and directed the play Broadway, a hit of the late 1920s that played New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities in the United States, as well as London. They also teamed up as producers for several musicals and plays, including Lilly Turner, which Dunning co-wrote, and Heat Lightning. Dunning produced several plays on his own, some of which he wrote. Among the plays Dunning wrote or co-wrote were Remember the Day and The Drums Begin.

## Scope and Content Note

The Philip Dunning papers, dating from 1912 to 1968, document Dunning's life and career through production files, scrapbooks, and letters.

Production files are composed of annotated scripts, account ledgers, programs, clippings, letters, and photographs. Most of the files document plays written or co-written by Dunning, and also include scripts produced or considered for production by Dunning and various partners, including George Abbott. Some scripts contain notes from Dunning offering details about the play's production, or stating why it was not produced.

Half of the production files relate to the play *Broadway*. Scripts contain various versions of the play, including drafts, a prompt script, and a revision that was to be used for a 1940 revival. The latter script also includes letters and production notes. Account ledgers, dating from 1925 to 1930, record the financial performance of the New York, Boston, Chicago, and London productions, as well as for regional touring companies in the southern and western United States. One folder of production information holds wardrobe, prop, and electrical requirements.

The production files hold other scripts written or co-written by Dunning, including *Lilly Turner*, *Remember the Day*, *Anything for a Laugh*, *Big City Feller*, *The Dead Level*, *Face Value*, *Happy Hour*, *Home Sweet Home*, *Knee Deep in Diamonds*, and a script with the provisional title of *A New Play*. Also present are scripts for *Ladies' Money*, a play by George Abbott; the plays *Twentieth Century* and *The Drums Begin* (both produced by Dunning); and *The Last Song*, a musical with a book by Dunning and Jack McGowan and music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Also among the scripts is *Great Scenes from Great Plays*, a collection compiled by Dunning. Two scripts hold photographs. One of them, a publicity photograph for *Remember the Day*, is a signed portrait of Claudette Colbert. There are two folders of untitled manuscripts.

Two scrapbooks, dating from 1912 to the 1960s, hold photographs of Dunning, his family, friends, and colleagues. The single folder of letters mainly has condolences sent to Dunning's widow, Frances Fox Dunning.

**Arrangement:** The papers are arranged by format.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Business records  
Letters (correspondence)  
Photographs  
Scripts

### **Occupations**

Directors (performing arts)  
Playwrights  
Producers (managers)

### **Subjects**

Theater -- United States -- 20th century

### **Names**

Abbott, George, 1887-1995

## Container List

- b. 4 f. 1 Letters 1935, 1955, 1968
- Production Files
- b. 1 f. 1-2 A - Bi 1931, 1941
  - Broadway*
- b. 1 f. 3-9 Account Ledgers 1925-1930
- b. 2 f. 1 Account Ledgers 1927-1928
- b. 2 f. 2-6 Scripts 1926, 1940
- b. 2 f. 7 Wardrobe, Props, and Electrical Requirements 1926
- b. 3 f. 1-9 D - K 1933-1943, undated
- b. 4 f. 2-9 L - P 1932-1941, undated
  - Remember the Day*
- b. 5 f. 1 Prompt Script 1935
  - o. 1 Photograph 1941  
C12 DWR #31
- b. 5 f. 2 *A Thousand Times, No* 1939
  - Twentieth Century* 1932
- b. 5 f. 3 Script
  - o. 2 Photograph  
C12 DWR #31
- b. 5 f. 4-5 Unidentified Manuscripts undated
  - v. 2 Scrapbook 1912-1920s
  - v. 1 Scrapbook 1916-1960s