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BROOKS ATKINSON, 1894-1984 PAPERS, 1904-1980

> *T-MSS 1968-001 MER 11/94

MAIN ENTRY: Atkinson, Brooks, 1894-1984

TITLE: Papers, 1904-1980

SIZE: 11.25 linear feet; 46 boxes

ACCESS: Unrestricted

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Brooks Atkinson, drama critic for the *New York*

Times was born in Melrose, Massachusetts in 1894. His interest in the press began at an early age and by the age of eight he was printing his own paper filled with local interest stories. He began writing for the *New York Times* in 1922 as editor of The Book Review but became the drama critic three years later after the retirement of Stark Young. In 1942 the paper sent him to China. He returned to the United States after two years and in 1945 was sent to Moscow. When he returned in 1946 he resumed his position of drama critic. Atkinson officially retired as drama critic for the *New York Times* in 1960. However, he continued to write for the paper for five additional years with a column entitled Critic-At-Large. Atkinson died

in 1984 at the age of 89.

DESCRIPTION: The Brooks Atkinson papers contain

correspondence, personal papers and ephemera and writings documenting his life and career. The papers span the years 1904-1980 and give an indepth view of Atkinson, both from a personal and

professional perspective.

RELATED MATERIALS: Papers of Brooks Atkinson, held at:

Harvard Theatre Collection

THE BROOKS ATKINSON PAPERS

INTRODUCTION:

The Brooks Atkinson papers were received by the Billy Rose Theatre Collection in two separate donations. The papers and correspondence were received in 1967 and appraised by Laurence Gomme in 1968. An additional donation was made in 1982 at the request of his wife, Oriana Atkinson. This donation contained scrapbooks and datebooks documenting his career. The collection was reprocessed in 1993-1994.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE:

The Brooks Atkinson Papers are arranged in eleven series. They are:

Series I: Correspondence; Series II. Awards and Citations; Series III. Ephemera; Series IV: Subject Files; Series V: Articles; Series VI: Reviews and Clippings; Series VII: Writings; Series VIII: Early Publications; Series IX: Manuscripts; Series X: Scrapbook of Writings; Series XI: Datebooks.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Justin Brooks Atkinson was born in Melrose, Massachusetts in 1894. His interest in writing became apparent at an early age when he began writing and publishing his own newspapers. He continued throughout high school and some of the publications include: *The Bay State Amateur, The Coagent, The Melrose Record* and *The Olympian*. Atkinson graduated from Harvard University and from there taught English at Dartmouth. After a working as a reporter in Massachusetts newspapers, Atkinson joined the army in 1918. In 1922 he joined the staff of the *New York Times*.

Atkinson's career at the *New York Times* spanned the years 1922 until his final retirement in 1965. His first position there was as editor of the Sunday literary section, although he occasionally wrote play reviews. In 1926 Atkinson became the drama critic of the *New York Times*, replacing Stark Young. He served in this capacity until his retirement in 1960. In 1941 he took a temporary leave from this position while be worked as a war correspondent during World War II. He officially retired from the *New York Times* in 1960 when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 65. However, he continued for an additional 5 years writing a twice weekly column known as Critic-At-Large. Atkinson's love of theater revealed itself not only in his frequenting traditional Broadway productions but also by his discovery and encouragement of new talents to be found on the Off Broadway stage. A champion of both traditional and new forms of theater in New York, Atkinson was also known as an outspoken voice against the practices of the McCarthy era and the interrogations of the House Un-American Activities Committee, using his skill as a journalist to inform the public and expose the tactics practiced by Joseph McCarthy and his supporters in their vigilant fight against communism.

Atkinson maintained both professional and personal relationships with some of the foremost playwrights of the 20th century. He carried on a long standing friendship and correspondence with Sean O'Casey which is revealed in the vast amount of correspondence between them. Other friends and acquaintances include Tennessee

Williams, Moss Hart, Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Robert W. Anderson, George S. Kaufman, Clifford Odets, Robert Sherwood, Thornton Wilder and Eugene O'Neill, among others.

Brooks Atkinson was honored throughout his life both by his peers and those he served in the theater community by numerous awards and honors. In 1947, he won a Pulitzer prize for a series of articles which he had written when he was in Moscow in 1945. He was awarded the Antoinette Perry Award for his "distinguished achievement in the theater" and was the only critic to have a Broadway theater named after him. Honorary awards include membership in the Players and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Atkinson not only wrote as a journalist but also published many other works on the theater and other topics. Some of his titles include: *Broadway Scrapbook*, *The Cingalese Prince*, *The Lively Years*, *Tuesdays and Thursdays*, *Broadway*, and *This Bright Land*. He also edited and wrote the forward for a volume about the works of his long-time friend, Sean O'Casey entitled *The O'Casey Reader*.

Atkinson died in Huntsville, Alabama on January 13, 1984.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The Brooks Atkinson papers contain correspondence, awards, personal papers, photographs, ephemera, scrapbooks, datebooks, clippings and subject files and document his life and career as a drama critic for the *New York Times*. The papers span the years 1904-1980. Signicant in the papers is the correspondence with major figures of theater community including writers, actors, scholars and other journalist. Included in these are Sean O'Casey, Tennessee Williams, Eugene and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, Robert W. Anderson, Maxwell Anderson, Clifford Odets and George S. Kaufman, to name a few.

His correspondence often contains not only incoming letters but carbon copies of his responses. This gives a wonderfully detailed look at all aspects of his personal and professional career. Many issues of the day interested and concerned Atkinson and this is revealed in depth not only in his articles and columns but also in his correspondence to his readers and friends. Prominent in his files is correspondence dealing with Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. His championship of the theater community during this period of harrassment and persecution in American history can be viewed in this collection as both amazing and heroic.

Atkinson writings include diaries from his time as a correspondent in China as well as a manuscript copy of *Once Around the Sun*. Other items of note in the collection include his early attempts at publishing when he was a child in Massachusetts. These journals entitled, *The Puritan*, *The Watchout*, *The Bay State Amateur*, *The Coagent*, *The Melrose Record* and *The Olympian* are very rare and show his budding interest in publishing and journalism.

Other writings of Atkinson's can be found in the scrapbooks which contain complete text of articles and columns written for the *New York Times* and span his entire career. There are also manuscripts of other articles and other writings done by Atkinson.

Ephmera and awards are included in the collection and contain citations, photographs, honorary degrees and testimonial dinner programs. His subject files include information on topics of interest or research value and include much information about communism and the McCarthy anti-communist movement.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS:

CORRESPONDENCE [1921-1980] (8 boxes; 3.36 lf.)

This series consists of correspondence, including carbon copies of Brooks Artkinson's replies, documenting Atkinson's life as a writer and theater critic. Correspondence includes letters to the editor from readers, correspondence concerning the publication of his many books and letters from actors, playwrights and other notables of the theater community commenting on reviews, as well as his opinion of plays and performances. Some of his correspondents include: Maxwell Anderson, Robert W. Anderson, S. N. Behrman, J. Edgar Hoover, George S. Kaufman, Charlotte Kesselring, Lawrence Langner, Howard Lindsay, Archibald MacLeish, Jo Mielziner, Sean O'Casey, Clifford Odets, Eugene and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, John S. Service, Irwin Shaw, Robert G. Sherwood, Margaret Webster, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Alexander Woollcott and Flo Ziegfeld, among others.

Of important note in the correspondence is Atkinson's political and personal perspective on the House Un-American Activities hearings. His outspoken denunciation of McCarthy and the hearings elicited positive and negative correspondence from his reading public. Another interesting section of the correspondence are the letters from Sean O'Casey to Atkinson. This correspondence spans from the 1930's until O'Casey death and illuminates the family life of O'Casey, the political and religious response to O'Casey's plays in Great Britain and Ireland and O'Casey's opinions and thoughts on his life and his work.

<u>AWARDS AND CITATIONS</u> [1917-1967] 1 lf. (1 box)

This series consists of Atkinson's diplomas, honary degrees, awards, citations and membership certificates.

EPHEMERA [1909-1962]; .1 lf. (13 folders)

This series consists of personal items including business cards printed by Atkinson when he was a child, testimonial dinner programs and a few business papers.

SUBJECT FILES [1950-1961; n.d.]; .15 lf. (13 folders)

This series contains articles and papers collected by Brooks Atkinson for his personal interest and reference. Of special note and interest in this series is information on the McCarthy era and blacklisting. Included is a copy of the newsletter <u>Counterattack</u>.

<u>ARTICLES</u> [1917-1967]; .02 lf. (3 folders)

This series contains articles by and about Brooks Atkinson.

<u>REVIEWS AND CLIPPINGS</u> [1947-1973]; .1 lf. (7 folders)

This series contains reviews and clippings about books written by Brooks Atkinson. Included are *Broadway*, *The Lively Years*, *Once Around the Sun*, *This Bright Land* and *Tuesdays and Fridays*. Also included is the review for Oriana Atkinson's book *Over at Uncle Joe's*.

WRITINGS [1944-1950; n.d.]; .05 lf. (7 folders)

This series contains manuscript copies of writings by Brooks Atkinson and others. Other authors include Robert Crandell, Percy Hammond and Oliver M. Sayler.

<u>EARLY PUBLICATIONS</u> [1904-1916]; .42 lf. (1 box)

This series contains copies of publications which Brooks Atkinson either wrote for or published during his youth. Included are copies of *The Bay State Amateur*, *The Coagent, The Melrose Record, The Olympian, The Puritan*, and *The Watchout*.

MANUSCRIPTS [1944-1950]; .42 lf. (3 volumes)

This series consists of handwritten notebooks containing Atkinson's China diaries from his years in Asia during World War II, as well as drafts for *Once Around the Sun*.

SCRAPBOOK OF WRITINGS [1907-1976]; 3.54 lf. (14 volumes).

This series includes scrapbooks of clippings of articles and columns written by Brooks Atkinson throughout his career. The first volume of this series contains articles and reviews written by Atkinson in the beginning of his career. Later volumes contain articles from his years as theater critic and critic at large for the *New York Times*.

DATEBOOKS [1945-1980] 2.09 lf. (18 volumes)

This series includes agenda books belonging to Brooks Atkinson and document his appointments. Often included in these volumes are phone lists and miscellaneous jottings.

Container Listing

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                      Correspondence, 1947-1969 / Thornton Wilder.
Box 8, folder 9
Box 8, folder 10
                      Correspondence, 1947-1961 / Tennessee Williams.
                      Correspondence, 1937-1939 / Alexander Woollcott.
Box 8, folder 11
                      Correspondence, 1927 / Ed Wynn.
Box 8, folder 12
                      Correspondence "W", 1926-1949.
Box 8, folder 13
                      Correspondence "W", 1950-1955.
Box 8, folder 14
                      Correspondence "W", 1956-1959.
Box 8, folder 15
                      Correspondence "W", 1960-1970.
Box 8, folder 16
                      Correspondence "W", [n.d.].
Box 8, folder 17
Box 8, folder 18
                      Correspondence, 1960-1971 / Blanche Yurka.
                      Correspondence "Y", 1948-1971.
Box 8, folder 19
                      Correspondence, 1929-1932 / Flo Ziegfeld.
Box 8, folder 20
Box 8, folder 21
                      Correspondence, 1958 / Allen Zwerdling.
                      Correspondence "Z", 1951-1965.
Box 8, folder 22
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Unidentified correspondence, 1930-1971.

Box 8, folder 23

Series II: Awards and Citations

Box 9, folder 1	Citation, 1960 / Actors' Equity Association.
Box 9, folder 2	Life membership, 1951 / Actors' Fund of America.
Box 9, folder 3	Honorary degree, 1960 / Adelphi University.
Box 9, folder 4	Membership certificate, 1960 / American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
Box 9, folder 5	Citation, 1957 / American Educational Theatre Association.
Box 9, folder 6	Citation, 1957 / Boston University.
Box 9, folder 7	Honorary degree, 1965 / Brandeis University.
Box 9, folder 8	Honorary degree, 1965 / Clark University (Worcester, Mass.).
Box 9, folder 9	Honorary degree, 1962 / Franklin and Marshall College.
Box 9, folder 10	Citation / Grand Jury Association of New York County.
Box 9, folder 11	Diploma, 1917 / Harvard University.
Box 9, folder 12	Honorary membership, 1967 / Hasty Pudding Club.
Box 9, folder 13	Citation, 1965 / J. Akuhead Pupule Show.
Box 9, folder 14	Citation for the Kelcey Allen Award, 1968.
Box 9, folder 15	Honorary degree, 1967 / Long Island University.
Box 9, folder 16	Honorary degree, 1961 / Pace College.
Box 9, folder 17	Salute to the arts, 1957.
Box 9, folder 18	Certificate, 1946 / Society of Silurians.
Box 9, folder 19	Certificate, 1960 / Stratford Festival (Ont.).
Box 9, folder 20	Off Broadway Award, 1959 / Village Voice.
Box 9, folder 21	Award, 1965 / Yale School of Drama.
Box 9, folder 22	Citation, 1946 / United States. War Department.
Box 9, folder 23	Honorary degree / Washington College (Chestertown, Md.).
Box 9, folder 24	Honorary degree, 1941 / Williams College.

Series III : Ephemera

Tribute, 1960 / Actors' Equity Association.
Business cards / Justin B. Atkinson, Printer.
The critics' circular: official organ of the Critics' Circle, 1932.
The day I joined the New York Times.
Luncheon menu, 1960 / Lambs (New York, N.Y.).
Luncheon photographs, 1960 / Lambs (New York, N.Y.).
Luncheon program, 1960 / League of Off-Broadway Theatres and
Producers, Inc.
Original art work.
Testimonial dinner program, 1958 / Sardi's Restaurant.
Victoria Regina, 1962 / Laurence Housman (Program).
Rental agreement.
Riegel Paper Corporation miscellaneous papers.
Miscellaneous royalty statements.

Series IV : Subject Files

Box 10, folder 14	Censorship of wartime publications regulations.
Box 10, folder 15	Childhood education articles, 1947.
Box 10, folder 16	Counterattack, 1953.
Box 10, folder 17	Plan for an independent federal theatre.
Box 10, folder 18	Clippings, 1955 / House Un-American Activities Committee.
Box 10, folder 19	Articles written by John Steinbeck about Arthur Miller.
Box 10, folder 20	Clippings, 1958-1961 / Joseph Papp.
Box 10, folder 21	Outline of enforcement regulation governing the encouragement of
	foreign capital for the industrial development.
Box 10, folder 22	Blunt warning by forty ears / A. N. (Abraham Nathaniel) Spanel.
Box 10, folder 23	Clippings / Theater.
Box 10, folder 24	Clippings / Thoreau Society.
Box 10, folder 25	Ti-Coq clippings.
Box 10, folder 26	Clippings, 1957 / Walter Locke.
Box 10, folder 27	Articles, 1960 and undated / Brooks Atkinson.

Series V: Articles

Box 10, folder 28	Miscellaneous articles, 1917-1967 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 29	The "nothing" element in King Lear, 1962 / Robert F. Fleissner.

Series VI: Reviews and Clippings

Box 10, folder 30	Brief chronicles, 1966 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 31	Broadway, 1970 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 32	The lively years, 1973 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 33	Once around the sun, 1951 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 34	Over at Uncle Joe's: Moscow and me, 1947 / Oriana Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 35	This bright land, 1972 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 36	Tuesdays and Fridays, 1963 / Brooks Atkinson.

Series VII: Writings

Box 10, folder 37	Deus ascendit in jubilo (Poem), 1965 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 38	Critics Circle remarks / Percy Hammond.
Box 10, folder 39	I am the theatre (Poem), 1944 / Oliver Martin Sayler.
Box 10, folder 40	A journalist in love / Robert Crandell.
Box 10, folder 41	Remarks at Arthur Hopkins funeral, 1950 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 42	Rodgers and Hammerstein / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 10, folder 43	Stillwell notes / Brooks Atkinson.

Series VIII : Early Publications

The bay state amateur, 1909-1912.
The coagent, 1912.
The Melrose record, 1904-1905.
The olympian, 1907.
The puritan, May 1910.
The puritan, August 1910.
The puritan, August 1911.
The puritan, October 1916.
The watchout, 1905-1908.
The watchout, 1908-1910.

Series IX : Manuscripts

Box 12	China diaries, 1944-1945 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 13	Once around the sun / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 14	Once around the sun / Brooks Atkinson.

$Series \ X: Scrapbooks \ of \ Writings \ (Chronological)$

Box 15	Scrapbook of writings, 1907 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 16	Scrapbook of writings, 1928-1930 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 17	Scrapbook of writings, 1930-1932 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 18	Scrapbook of writings, 1932-1935 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 19	Scrapbook of writings, 1935-1937 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 20	Scrapbook of writings, 1937-1940 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 21	Scrapbook of writings, 1940-1942 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 22	Scrapbook of writings, April 1942-November 1942 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 23	Scrapbook of writings, 1942-1948 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 24	Scrapbook of writings, 1949-1952 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 25	Scrapbook of writings, 1952-1955 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 26	Scrapbook of writings, 1956-1958 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 27	Scrapbook of writings, 1958-1962 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 28	Scrapbook of writings, 1962-1976 / Brooks Atkinson.

Series XI: Date Books (Chronological)

Box 29	Datebook, 1945 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 30	Datebook, 1947 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 31	Datebook, 1961 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 32	Datebook, 1962 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 33	Datebook, 1963 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 34	Datebook, 1964 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 35	Datebook, 1965 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 36	Datebook, 1966 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 37	Datebook, 1967 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 38	Datebook, 1968 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 39	Datebook, 1973 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 40	Datebook, 1974 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 41	Datebook, 1975 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 42	Datebook, 1976 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 43	Datebook, 1977 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 44	Datebook, 1978 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 45	Datebook, 1979 / Brooks Atkinson.
Box 46	Datebook, 1980 / Brooks Atkinson.