

\*T-Mss 1938-001

## Guide to the Winthrop Ames Papers, 1908-1931

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

New York, New York

The Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.

40 Lincoln Center Plaza

New York, NY 10023-7498

(212) 870-1639

[theatrediv@nypl.org](mailto:theatrediv@nypl.org)

<http://nypl.org/research/lpa/the/the.html>

Processed by: Elisabeth Elkind.

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Encoded By: Elisabeth Elkind

## Descriptive Summary

Title:	Winthrop Ames Papers, 1908-1931
Creator:	Winthrop Ames
Call Number:	*T-Mss 1938-001
Size:	1 linear foot ; 1 box and 1 volume
Repository:	The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Billy Rose Theatre Division. New York, New York
Abstract:	Most of the collection documents the workings of the New Theatre Company during its short life, 1908-1911. Ames was the managing director of this theater which was, at the time, the largest playhouse in New York City.
Languages Represented:	English

## Administrative Information

Source:	The papers arrived at the Library in 1938, probably a gift of Ames' wife Lucy after his death.
Access:	Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice required
Preferred Citation:	Winthrop Ames Papers, *T-Mss 1938-001, The Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

## Biography

Theatrical manager, producer, director and writer, Winthrop Ames was born on November 25, 1870 into a wealthy and socially prominent family in North Easton, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard and began a career in publishing because of his family's strong opposition to a career in theater. In 1904, however, he traveled to Europe to study the "new stagecraft" and on his return became joint manager of the Castle Square Theatre in Boston with Loren F. Deland. This led to his appointment in 1908 as managing director of the New Theatre, the largest playhouse in New York City at Central Park West and 62nd St., with Lee Shubert as the business manager and John Corbin as the literary advisor. Founded by millionaires, the New Theatre was to be a repertory theater presenting the best in classical and modern drama free of commercial pressures. Shakespeare was to be the primary offering; the theatre opened in November 1908 with a lavish production of *Antony and Cleopatra* starring Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothorn. However, due to its unwieldy size and financial failure, the theater was closed by its founders after a mere two seasons.

The New Theatre reopened as the Century, but Ames had moved on to open the Little Theatre on West 44th St. in March 1912. At 300 seats, it was the smallest playhouse in New York City. In 1913, he opened the Booth Theatre on West 45th St. with the Shuberts and managed both theaters into the 1930s. Ames had many successes as a producer including Shaw's *The Philanderer* (1913), *The Beggar on Horseback* (1924) by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, and revivals of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas at the Booth, 1926-1929. He was also the director of his plays, demanding high standards for all aspects of each production.

Respected in the theater world, Ames served on various committees. During World War I he organized the Over There Theatre League which sent actors to Europe to entertain the troops. He retired from theatrical management in 1932 because of poor health, returning to North Easton, but continued to be involved in theatrical affairs helping to found the Cambridge (Mass.) School of Drama. He was elected a Harvard trustee in 1929 and vice president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1936. He also translated *The Merchant of Paris* from the French (1930) and wrote an adaptation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1913) under the name Jessie Braham White.

Ames married Lucy (Fuller) Cabot in London on September 28, 1911; they had two daughters: Catherine and Joan. He died of pneumonia on November 3, 1937 in Boston, Mass. and was buried in North Easton.

## Scope and Content Note

Most of the collection reflects the workings of the New Theatre. Includes correspondence, legal papers and printed material pertaining to the Theatre's founding, budgets and reports on the Theatre, and production files such as correspondence and reports about play scripts submitted for possible production, stage plans, property and lighting plots, cues, stage manager's time sheets, notes on previous productions and a schedule of the road tour of the New Theatre Company. Also includes a volume bound by the Library many years ago containing rehearsal schedules, a memo by Ames for a promptbook for *Antony and Cleopatra*, diagrams and forms for the New Theatre, invitations to the opening night of the New Theatre, lists of opening night attendees and original box owners, a typed report of the opening night dedication, transcripts of speeches at the opening night ceremony by Senator Elihu Root and Governor Hughes and issues of *The American Architect*, *The Architect* and *The New York Architect* with articles, photographs and diagrams of the New Theatre and the Little Theatre. The collection also contains a folder of correspondence and contracts, 1922-1931, of the Winthrop Ames office on production rights for plays and a bound book of caricatures by Roland Young of the 1924 production of *Beggar on Horseback* in which he starred titled "Mr. Winthrop Ames Presents," probably a gift to Ames.

## Organization

- Series I. New Theatre Correspondence, Legal and Other Papers
- Series II. New Theatre Production Files
- Series III. Winthrop Ames Office Correspondence and Contracts
- Series IV. Bound material

## Series Descriptions/Container List

### **Series I. New Theatre Correspondence, Legal and Other Papers, 1908-1912**

7 folders

Correspondence, contracts, reports, financial and printed material document the brief history of the New Theatre.

- |      |      |  |
|------|------|--|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence and contracts, 1908-1911<br>1 folder<br>On Ames' employment as Director of the New Theatre. Also one thank you letter by Ames related to a New Theatre production of <i>The Blue Bird</i> . |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Comments accompanying a draft of rules proposed to the Executive Committee of the New Theatre by Ames, 1908 June 13<br>1 folder<br>Various typescript drafts, some with pencil revisions.                  |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | Report by Ames to the Founders of the New Theatre at the end of the first season, 1910<br>1 folder<br>Typescript with handwritten revisions.   |
| b. 1 | f. 4 | Budgets for the New Theatre, 1910?<br>1 folder<br>Three typescript budgets.  |
| b. 1 | f. 5 | New Theatre printed material, 1910 and n.d.<br>1 folder<br>Publicity and diagrams.   |
| b. 1 | f. 6 | Printed statements by the New Theatre Founders, 1911<br>1 folder   |
| b. 1 | f. 7 | Mortgage contract of Ames and Shubert, 1912 July 26<br>For theaters on West 44th and West 45th Streets.  |

### **Series II. New Theatre Production Files, 1909-1911 and n.d.**

13 folders

Correspondence and comments of the play dept., followed by production materials, all arranged alphabetically by play title.

Production materials shed light on the workings of the New Theatre's play department as it discussed and evaluated plays submitted for production. Other materials for specific productions include notes, cues, stage plans, light and property plots, stage manager's time sheets and reviews of prior performances. Also includes a road schedule for the New Theatre Company.

- b. 1 f. 8 New Theatre play dept., correspondence and comments on submitted plays, A-H, 1909-1911  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 9 New Theatre play dept., correspondence and comments on submitted plays, J-S, 1909-1911  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 10 New Theatre play dept., correspondence and comments on submitted plays, T-Y, 1909-1911  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 11 Production notes for *Julius Caesar*, n.d.  
1 folder  
Scene design, actors' plot and Ames' notes on Robert Mantell's production.
- b. 1 f. 12 Crowd murmurs for Ames' production of *The Merchant of Venice*, n.d.  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 13 Production notes for *Much Ado about Nothing*, n.d.  
1 folder  
Includes Ames' notes on past performances, old reviews, 1765-1789, blueprints, stage drawings, scenery plots and music.
- b. 1 f. 14 Diagram of boat for a production of *Noah's Flood* at the New Theatre, n.d.  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 15 Property plot for *Old English*, n.d.  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 16 Production notes for *The School for Scandal* at the New Theatre, 1910 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Includes notes and reviews on previous performances and a stage manager's time sheet.
- b. 1 f. 17 Production notes for *Twelfth Night* at the New Theatre, 1910 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Light and property plots in Ames' hand, stage manager's time sheets and stage plans.
- b. 1 f. 18 Road schedule of New Theatre Company, 1910  
1 folder
- b. 1 f. 19 Stage manager's time sheets, 1911 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Consists of time sheets for Ames' productions of *Don*, *Sister Beatrice* and *The Scarlet Mask*.
- b. 1 f. 20 Miscellaneous production material, n.d.  
1 folder  
A memo on play production and a partial review for *Nobody's Daughter* which opened in 1911 at the New Theatre.

**Series III. Winthrop Ames Office Correspondence and Contracts, 1922-1931**

1 folder

Correspondence and contracts with playwrights and performers document Ames' work as a producer in the 1920s.

b. 1 f. 21

Correspondence and contracts, 1922-1931

1 folder

Primarily concerning production rights for plays. Includes letters by Ames.

**Series IV. Bound material, 1909-1924**

2 volumes

Consists of a volume bound by Roland Young of his caricatures and a volume of papers pertaining to the New Theatre's opening night ceremony and other affairs that was bound by the Library many years ago.

b. 1 f. 22

Caricatures by Roland Young, 1924

1 folder

Caricatures by Roland Young, pasted in and loose, in binder with rings and handwritten title, "Mr. Winthrop Ames Presents." Drawings are connected to the 1924 production of *Beggar on Horseback*, a play by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly in which Young starred. The volume was probably a gift to Ames who produced the play at the Broadhurst Theatre in New York City.

v. 2

New Theatre Papers, 1909-1913

1 volume

Volume bound by the Library many years ago contains rehearsal schedules, a memo by Ames for a promptbook for *Antony and Cleopatra*, diagrams and forms for the New Theatre, invitations to and program for the opening night of the New Theatre, lists of opening night attendees and original box owners, a typed report of the opening night dedication, transcripts of speeches at the opening night ceremony by Senator Elihu Root and Governor Hughes, telegram to Ames from the Governor's office and issues of *The American Architect*, Dec. 1913, *The Architect*, Apr. 1912, and *The New York Architect*, Nov. 1909, with articles, photographs and diagrams of the New Theatre and the Little Theatre.

**Separated Material**

**T-cabinet**

- One scroll to Winthrop Ames from the New Theatre Company signed by its members, 1911 Jan. 8.