



The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Actors Fund of America scrapbooks

1897-1933

*T-Mss 1943-004

Processed by Valerie Wingfield in 2023.

Summary

Creator: Actors' Fund of America

Title: Actors Fund of America scrapbooks

Date: 1897-1933

Size: 9.8 linear feet (11 volumes)

Source: Gift of Actors Fund of America.

Abstract: The Actors Fund of America (renamed the Entertainment Community Fund) was founded in 1882 by Albert Marshman Palmer (1838-1905), an American theatrical manager. The scrapbooks, dated 1897 to 1933, document the early years of the Fund to support actors in financial crisis and to raise funding for the Actors Fund Home originally located on Staten Island. The scrapbooks hold articles, notices of board meetings, membership applications, playbills, registers and an autograph album.

Preferred citation: Actors Fund of America scrapbooks, *T-Mss 1943-004. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Valerie Wingfield in 2023.

Creator History

The Actors Fund of America (now known as the Entertainment Community Fund) was founded in 1882 by Albert Marshman Palmer (1838-1905), an American theatrical manager. According to their bylaws, the objective was to foster and benefit the physical, as well as advance the intellectual, welfare of actors in America. Fundraising proved to be a critical component for the organization accomplished through fairs and benefit performances. One of their first successes was to build the Actors Fund Home on Staten Island, a retirement home for actors (now defunct). This charitable organization continues to operate from their headquarters in New York City to support performers and behind-the-scene workers with health care and emergency financial assistance. The Fund owns and operates the Lillian Booth Actors Home facility in Englewood, New Jersey.

Scope and Content Note

The Actors Fund of America scrapbooks, dated 1897 to 1933, document the Fund's work to help actors and other entertainers in financial crisis, to support the Actors Fund retirement home. The scrapbooks represent approximately thirty years of the Fund's history through articles, applications for membership, flyers, playbills and promotional materials.

These scrapbooks are arranged in three groups: General Information; Registry Books for the Actors Fund Fairs; and Actors Fund Home Guest Registers. The scrapbooks are ordered by volume number.

The General Information scrapbooks offer a summary of the Fund's work from the late 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century. These scrapbooks hold mostly clippings that include topics about the transition of the presidency from Albert Marshman Palmer to Louis Aldrich; reports of annual meetings; and obituaries (including the death of Aldrich in 1901). Another obituary that received much attention regarded the death of Henry B. Harris, a Broadway producer and theater owner who died aboard the RMS Titanic in 1912.

Of special interest is the "Motion Picture Campaign of 1916" which details the efforts of the emerging motion picture industry to raise \$500,000 in fifteen weeks to support the Fund. This campaign brought in money from exhibitors who donated a portion of their proceeds; actors who used their star power to raise money; and donations from the general public (volumes 3 and 4).

Registry volumes, dated 1907 and 1910, were generated by the Actors Fund Fairs. The visitors were asked to register upon their arrival at the fair. These registers indicate that the signer often included their place of residence (volumes 5 to 6). There is also an Autograph Album, for the fair of 1910, which allowed visitors the opportunity to write their impressions about the fair (volume 7).

The Actors Fund Home Registers provide a daily record of whom visited the Home. Often, the address of the signer was included (volumes 8 to 11).

Arrangement: The collection is arranged as follows: General Information Scrapbooks; Registry Books for the Actors Fund Fairs; Actors Fund Home Guest Registers

Key Terms

Subjects

Actors' Fund Home
Arts fund raising
Charities -- United States
Nonprofit organizations -- New York (State) -- New York
Retirement communities

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Albums (books)
Autograph albums
Clippings (information artifacts)
Handbills
Theater programs

Names

Actors' Fund of America

Entertainment Community Fund

Container List

General Information Scrapbooks

Volumes 1, 2, 3 are fragile. Handle with care.

- v. 1 1897-1902
MWEZ + n.c. 5502
- v. 2 1901-1912
MWEZ + n.c. 5477
- v. 3 Motion Picture Campaign 1916
MWEZ+ n.c. 5478
The volume holds mostly newspaper clippings.
- v. 4 Motion Picture Campaign 1916
MWEZ + 5479
This volume holds printed matter generated for the "Motion Picture Campaign of 1916" that includes playbills, broadsides, a petition, and articles.

Registry Books for the Actors Fund Fairs

- v. 5 Actor's Church Alliance Booth 1907
MWEZ + n.c. 5480
- v. 6 71st Regiment Armory 1910 May 9-10
MWEZ + n.c. 5481
"Register, Actors Fund Fair, 71st Regiment Armory" was stamped on the cover.
- v. 7 Autograph Book, 71st Regiment Armory 1910, May 9-10
MWEZ + n.c. 5552

Actors Fund Home Guest Registers

- v. 8 1902-1910
MWEZ + n.c. 5493
- v. 9 1921-1933
MWEZ + n.c. 5494
- v. 10 1916-1921
MWEZ + n.c. 5495
- v. 11 1922-1927
MWEZ + n.c. 5496