
Hal Cooper Magic Cottage Collection

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

7000 West Third Street

Los Angeles, California 90048

(323) 782-4680

hswett@wgfoundation.org

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Hal Cooper Magic Cottage Collection

Dates: 1950-1955

Collection Number: WGF-MS-086

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 7.5 Linear Feet, 6 boxes

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The collection consists of scripts for 1000 episodes of daily children's TV series The Magic Cottage and includes some production documents and merchandise from the show.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment.

Publication Rights

The responsibility to secure copyright and publication permission rests with the researcher.

Preferred Citation

Hal Cooper Magic Cottage Collection. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Hal's son James Cooper on 7/11/2018

Biography/Administrative History

Hal [Harold] Cooper was a prolific television director. His notable works include All in the Family, The Dick Van Dyke Show, I Dream of Jeannie, and Maude. Born on February 23, 1923, he grew up in New York City, attended the University of Michigan and served in WWII as a junior grade lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve. At age 9, Cooper acted for the radio show Rainbow House. He was drawn to the control room and behind-the-scenes work, learning from the show's producer and director Bob Emery. When Hal was 13 years old, Emery was unable to direct an episode due to illness and he recommended Hal direct. This was Cooper's first live television broadcast. Cooper started working at the DuMont Television Network in New York, producing, writing, and acting in Your Television Babysitter. His first wife, Pat Meikle, hosted the show. Following its success, Cooper was hired to write and produce The Magic Cottage, which Meikle hosted. Cooper directed and produced many daytime shows from 1950 to 1957, including Search for Tomorrow, the first successful soap opera. Cooper moved to Los Angeles as the television industry shifted west. He found success directing episodes of popular shows, such as Gilligan's Island and The Brady Bunch, and worked until the mid-1990s. Cooper passed away on April 11, 2014 in Beverly Hills, California, at the age of 91, survived by two daughters, a son, and a grandson.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Magic Cottage aired on the DuMont Television Network each weekday from 6:30pm ET to 7:00pm ET and was aimed at teaching lessons to young schoolchildren. The Magic Cottage was well received by critics and its target audience. It aired nationally from 1949-1952 and locally from 1953-1955. Pat Meikle hosted the show and Hal Cooper wrote and produced the episodes. Each episode began with Meikle illustrating a story on a sketch pad, and then the characters would come to life through actors on stage. Nearly all episodes of the show are lost, but two are known to exist. One episode can be found at UCLA Film and Television Archive, while another is located at the Paley Center for Media. Apart from show's beginning in 1949, this collection contains scripts for almost every episode that aired. The available scripts are all written by Hal Cooper, who interestingly did not direct any episodes. New broadcasts ended on the DuMont Television Network in 1952, but The Magic Cottage returned in 1953 on WABD and continued until 1955, with episodes still penned by Cooper. A lone weekend special aired in 1954, sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Paper material also includes song lyrics, a format/writer's guide for the show and a few episode summaries used in publicity. In addition, a few excerpts from Your Television Babysitter are included. Aside from scripts, the collection contains a small assortment of merchandise created for the show, called "premiums." There are several children's stationery sets, pins, and "secret" messages sponsored by Cocoa Marsh snack company. Also included is a plaque from TV Guide, for Children's Show of the Year 1951.

Indexing Terms

Golden age of television

Children's television programs.

Live television programs.

Fairy tales.

DuMont Television Network

Television scripts.

Television producers and directors
