Finding Aid to the Western Television Programs Script Collection MSA.35

Finding aid prepared by Holly Rose Larson
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Title: Western Television Programs Script Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MSA.35
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Autry Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 35.75 Linear feet (26 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1950-1982
Abstract: Western television programming features stories of the American West, usually occurring during the historical period of westward expansion, from 1865-1900, and typically set in the western United States or northern Mexico. Popular series in this genre include Bonanza, Gunsmoke, and Rawhide. This collection of 996 Western television program scripts ranges from 1950-1982 and includes final scripts, drafts, notes, and documents from Western television series, mini-series, television movies, and other programming.
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org. An item-level inventory is available from library staff.
Use
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Custodial history
Walter Reuben acquired part of the collection from Douglas Hart in the 1980s and 1990s. Reuben collected the remainder of the collection from various sources, often the editor or cutter of a specific series. The Autry purchased the entire collection from Walter Reuben in 1999.
Preferred citation
Western Television Programs Script Collection, 1950-1982, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MSA.35; [folder number] [folder title] [date].
Acquisition
Purchase from Walter Reuben, 1999 July.
Historical note
Western is a genre of entertainment that features the American West, typically during the historical period of westward expansion, from 1865-1900. Time periods for these stories can occur during Mexican or American rule of the western United States, and geographical settings are usually in the United States or sometimes in Northern Mexico.
Western television programs were preceded by Western radio plays and movies, which were popular in the United States in the 1940s, especially with children. As television became a staple of American households, Western television programs continued to be successful among young audiences. In the 1950s, programs like Gunsmoke started to change the typical Western format by introducing more complex and sophisticated storylines and themes which had crossover appeal into the primetime market. Western television programs were most popular in the 1950s and 1960s, and included The Big Valley, Bonanza, Cheyenne, The Gene Autry Show, Gunsmoke, Have Gun, Will Travel, The High Chaparral, Laramie, The Lone Ranger, Maverick, Rawhide, The Rifleman, Sugarfoot, The Virginian, Wagon Train, and Wanted: Dead or Alive.
Scope and contents
This collection of scripts from Western television programs are from individual episodes of series, mini-series, pilots, and specials from 1950-1982 and have been annotated by their original owners, who were actors, composers, editors, prop masters, and other production staff. Folders include script drafts, notes, rewrites, and final versions. One press kit for the mini-series Centennial is included. Some scripts include name and department ownership information for that particular copy, hand-written notes, and laid-in production documents such as rehearsal schedules, shooting schedules, and budgets.
Processing history
Processing and finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, NHPRC Project Archivist, 2012 April 12, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).
Series 1: Scripts, Western television series, 1950-1982
Series 2: Scripts, other Western television programs, 1950-1982
Related Archival Materials note
David Dortort Collection, 1942-2005, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MSA.23
John Dunkel Scripts and Papers, 1945-1988, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MSA.37

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Television -- Production and direction
Western television programs -- United States

Scripts, Western television series, 1950-1982
Scope and contents

Scripts, other Western television programs, 1950-1982
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