Guide to the Merle Clayton Papers 1951/1976

Special Collections & University Archives

Overview of the Collection
Collection Title: Merle Clayton Papers
Dates: 1951-1976
Bulk Dates: 1970-1973
Identification: MS-0089
Creator: Clayton, Merle
Physical Description: 0.63 linear ft
Repository: Special Collections & University Archives
5500 Campanile Dr. MC 8050
San Diego, CA, 92182-8050
URL: http://library.sdsu.edu/scua
Email: scref@rohan.sdsu.edu
Phone: 619-594-6791

Access Terms
This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Genre/Form of Material:
Personal Papers
Photographs
Publications

Topical Term:
Performing arts -- California -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Theaters -- California -- San Diego -- History

Conditions Governing Use:
The copyright interests in these materials have not been transferred to San Diego State University. Copyright resides with the creators of materials contained in the collection or their heirs. The nature of historical archival and manuscript collections is such that copyright status may be difficult or even impossible to determine. Requests for permission to publish must be submitted to the Head of Special Collections, San Diego State University, Library and Information Access. When granted, permission is given on behalf of Special Collections as the owner of the physical item and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder(s), which must also be obtained in order to publish. Materials from our collections are made available for use in research, teaching, and private study. The user must assume full responsibility for any use of the materials, including but not limited to, infringement of copyright and publication rights of reproduced materials.

Conditions Governing Access:
The collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation:
Identification of item, folder title, box number, Merle Clayton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.

Related Materials:
For San Diego theater of this era, see:
Old Globe Theatre Photographs Collection
San Diego Vertical File
San Diego Memorabilia Collection
Louise Patterson Scrapbook
Hortense and Howard Nugent Papers
Guide to the Merle Clayton Papers

Arrangement of Materials:
Series I: San Diego Theatre History
Series II: Other Writing

Scope and Contents
This small collection consists primarily of research materials used by Merle Clayton, author of several local history pieces for San Diego Magazine. The materials consist of paper records, photographs, and several copies of San Diego Magazine. Clayton did a series of pieces on topics in the history of theatre and performing arts in San Diego, and most of this material pertains to that work.

Series I, San Diego Theatre History, consists of research materials on San Diego theatre and performing arts history. Of special note in Series I is the six-year correspondence between Clayton and actress Virginia Brissac, who he interviewed several times in person for a series of articles on her life. Brissac was famous in San Diego during the most active period in its performing arts theater; first with the Savoy Players and World’s Fair Stock Company, then founding and managing the Virginia Brissac Company, a stock company which put on a play a week from about 1915 to 1921. She was a star actress there, and went on to star in dozens of films, including Rebel Without A Cause. After work in Hollywood, she appeared again on the San Diego stage beginning in 1935 as an actress with the Savoy Players.

In this series there is one folder of ephemera (including correspondence, performance attendance figures, financial figures, playbills) pertaining to the Strand and Savoy Theatres; and one folder of disparate issues from 1918 and 1919 of The Strand Weekly, a publication put out by Virginia Brissac about the company’s work.

Also of special note in Series I are the photographs (circa 1920-1935), of the Savoy Players, which include images of Virginia Brissac, Hayward Nugent, Louise Larabee, Scott Palmer, Jim Palmer, Beula Fair, Hub Wheeler, Isaac McCay, John G. Wray, and many unidentified others. Perhaps the most interesting materials in Series I are the publicity stills and photographs of Julian Eltinge, a local entertainer who was called “the best female impersonator of the twentieth century.” Eltinge played various female characters in vaudeville acts, on Broadway, and on screen from about 1910 until about 1935. Clayton wrote an article about Eltinge, who was of local interest for the ranch he kept near Alpine.

Series II, Other Writing, consists of speech drafts, a writing journal, and copies of other articles on topics in early San Diego history.

San Diego Theatre History

Box 1, Folder 1

Articles
Scope and Contents
San Diego Magazine, November 1969: "Just Plain Bill: Julian Eltinge Female Impersonator"

Box 1, Folder 2

Articles
Scope and Contents

Box 1, Folder 3

Correspondence with Virginia Brissac, 1969-1971

Box 1, Folder 4

Correspondence with Virginia Brissac, 1971-1975

Box 1, Folder 5

Strand and Savoy Theatre ephemera

Box 1, Folder 6

The Strand Weekly
Scope and Contents
v.1, no.1, June 16, 1918 v.1, no.3, June 30, 1918 (2) v.1, no.4, July 7, 1918 v. 1, no. 5, July 14, 1918 v. 1, no.26, February 2, 1919 v. 1, no. 30, March 2, 1919 (2) v.1, no. 36, April 6, 1919

Box 1, Folder 7

The Savoy Players, a Stock Company, by William Quiett; research paper for Ralph Freud, 1960

Box 1, Folder 8

Photographs, Virginia Brissac Company, Savoy Players

Box 1, Folder 9

Research material on Eltinge
Photographs, Julian Eltinge

Other Writing

Speech on early San Diego history, "Let Us Soar"

Scope and Contents

Writing Journal, 1951