Finding Aid for the Laurell Gaines papers, ca. 1923-1976

Processed by Yasmin Damshenas in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Lilace Hatayama and Megan Hahn Fraser, December 2011; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Laurell Gaines papers

Date (inclusive): ca. 1923-1976

Collection number: 1761


Extent: 1 oversize flat box (15" x 19")

Abstract: Laurell Gaines was a dancer who performed in vaudeville, musical revues and Hollywood films from the 1920s-1940s. This collection contains newspaper clippings, letters, programs, portraits and publicity photographs. It covers both her U.S. engagements and her tour of Asia and Australia during WWII.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.

Language of the Material: Materials are in English.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections. Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

Open for research. STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition


Processing Note

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Laurell Gaines papers (Collection 1761). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

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Biography/History

Laurell Gaines was a ballet and ballroom dancer who performed in vaudeville, musical revues and Hollywood films from the 1920s-1940s throughout the U.S., as well as coastal Asia and Australia. She was born in Missouri in 1909 and trained in ballet on the West Coast with Theodore Kosloff (1882-1956), a Russian choreographer and silent film actor. At the age of 15 she began dancing professionally to support her family after the death of her father. She danced in vaudeville shows for Fanchon and Marco, performed in Hollywood films, and went on to partner with Ted Mendenhall (stage name Ted Vaun). Together, Gaines and Vaun performed throughout the United States at hotels, nightclubs and resorts in cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Shreveport and Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, Laurell and Ted performed at a number of popular spots like the Biltmore Hotel Supper Room, Beverly Hills Hotel, Café de Paree, the Palomar Ballroom and the Catalina Casino. In 1939 she began a tour of coastal Asia with Lynn Cowan and Bill Bailey's "Cocoanut Grove" Entertainers. She performed in Singapore, Colombo, Cathay, Manila, Federal Malaya States and Hong Kong. Stranded in Colombo when WWII broke out and the troupe's French steamer was recalled, Gaines made her way back to America via Singapore, Manila and eventually Australia, where she performed with Florence Chappel. Once she secured a steamer for the West Coast, she stopped over in Honolulu where she witnessed the bombing of Pearl Harbor from her hotel. Gaines retired after returning to Los Angeles on a refugee convoy. During WWII she worked an office job by day and took a defense job by night. Post-WWII she continued working office jobs until her retirement. She passed away in 2004.

Scope and Content

This collection contains newspaper clippings, letters, programs, portraits and publicity photographs. It covers both Laurell Gaines’s U.S. engagements and her tour of Asia and Australia during WWII. It also contains some of the letters that Gaines
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received from the Office of Strategic Services regarding the identification of photographic materials she provided of Malaya, Colombo, Bali, Java, and the Philippines.

**Organization and Arrangement**

Arranged in the following series:

2. Asia and Australia Tour, 1939-1941

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Gaines, Laurell, 1909-2004 --Archives.

Women dancers --United States --Archival resources.

**Related Material**

[Ted Vaun Papers (Collection 1336)]. Box 1, scrapbook and photo album donated by Laurell Gaines in 1983. Available at Library Special Collections, UCLA.

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**U.S. Engagements. 1923-1946, 1974-1976.**

Physical Description: 4 folders

Box 1, Folder 1 **Letters received re: U.S. booking engagements. 1933-1976.**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note
Includes letter referring to or addressed to Ted Mendenhall aka Ted Vaun. 1976 letter concerns a photograph LG donated to Oakland Paramount Theatre.

Box 1, Folder 2 **Clippings re: U.S. engagements. 1923-1974.**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note

Box 1, Folder 3 **Scrapbook pages re: U.S. engagements. 1932-1946.**

Scope and Content Note
Mostly clippings. Includes programs for Beverly Hills Hotel and Catalina Casino.

Box 1, Folder 4 **Publicity photographs. ca. 1930s-1940s.**

Scope and Content Note

**Asia and Australia Tour. 1939-1941.**

Physical Description: 3 folders

Box 1, Folder 5 **Letters received re: Asian booking engagements. 1940-1944.**

Scope and Content Note
Clippings re: Asian and Australian engagements. 1939-1941.

Scope and Content Note
Clippings from newspapers including Malaya Tribune, South China Morning Post, the Singapore Free Press. Also, a few programs and business cards.

Clippings re: Asian and Australian engagements. 1939-1940.

Scope and Content Note
Clippings and programs mostly concerning LG's engagements in Asia and some of Australian tour. Includes a publicity spread with LG and Florence Chappel in Australia. Mention also made of her teaching in Singapore.