Guide to the Phyllis Swerilas collection of scrapbooks and photograph albums
PA Mss 158


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Title: Phyllis Swerilas collection of scrapbooks and photograph albums
Identifier/Call Number: PA Mss 158
Contributing Institution: UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Research Collections
Language of Material: Multiple languages
Physical Description: 4.59 linear feet (5 flat boxes)
Creator: Swerilas, Phyllis
Date (inclusive): 1910-1938
Abstract: Four historical scrapbooks and one photograph album from the collection of Phyllis Swerilas. Three scrapbooks, dating to 1910-1930, document the Hollywood, California residence of Dr. and Mrs. Alfred Guido Castles, "Sans Souci." The fourth scrapbook tracks the performances of American vaudeville team Roth and Shay, "America's Beau Brummels," from 1928 to 1938. The photograph album dates to 1924-1925 and contains snapshots of various Southern California locales.

Language of Material: Scrapbooks contain clippings, correspondence, memorabilia, and captions in English, German, French and Danish.

Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research. Some of the scrapbooks are brittle and will require special handling. Please contact the Department of Special Research Collections in advance to request access.

Use Restrictions
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Acquisition Information

Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Phyllis Swerilas collection of scrapbooks and photograph albums, PA Mss 158. Department of Special Research Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Scope and Content
This collection contains four scrapbooks and one photograph album. Three of the scrapbooks, likely compiled by Dr. and Mrs. Alfred Guido Castles, contain clippings, photographs, correspondence and memorabilia related to their Hollywood California mansion, "San Souci." The mansion also housed Castles' clinic. The fourth scrapbook consists of newspaper clippings and photographs chronicling various vaudeville performances of the American comedy acrobat duo Roth and Shay, active in the 1920s-1930s. The photograph album consists of snapshots taken in mid-1920s Southern California, including natural landmarks, hikes, picnics, and vacations.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Acrobats
Vaudeville
Mansions -- California -- Los Angeles
California, Southern -- 20th century -- Photographs
Correspondence
Clippings (information artifacts)
Memorabilia
Photograph albums
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Castles, Alfred Guido Rudolph, 1851-1933

Language of Material: Album contain clippings, correspondence, memorabilia, and captions in German and English.

Biographical Note
Alfredo Guido Castles (nee Schloesser) was born in Chicago in 1851. He received his education at Rush Medical College, after which he took graduate courses at various European universities, namely Heidelberg, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and London. In 1874, he married Emma Marie Rose McDonell. The couple had four children. In 1849, Castles purchased a mining prospect in Lassen Country on the border of California and Nevada that produced significant profits for him. In 1909, he moved to Los Angeles, where he built two enormous mansions, Sans Souci and Glengarry Castles, that dominated the hills of Hollywood at a time in which the area was very little developed. Castles worked as a doctor for an affluent clientele looking for rejuvenation. He held licenses to practice in Illinois and California and specialized in new methods of endocrinology that were not necessarily based on science. It was not until 1918 that he changed his last name from Schloesser to Castles (Castles is a literal translation of Schloesser).

Castles was known for his eccentricity and his interests in orientalism and mysticism, which was not uncommon in Hollywood's social circles of the 1920s. He was a fixture in the growing city's social life, and regularly entertained friends, royalty, and LA society. Guests included Clark Gable, Howard Hughes, Ronald Reagan and Cecil B. DeMille. Castles also became involved in the real estate business.

In 1928, Castle decided to demolish Sans Souci and build a seven-story luxury apartment complex instead, which stands to this day and still bears his name. Castles died in 1933.

Scope and Content
This scrapbook, spanning the years 1921-1930, features interior and exterior shots of Castle's Hollywood mansion, Sans Souci. Built in 1912, it became a Hollywood landmark, surrounded mostly by citrus groves and undeveloped plots, which dominated the area in the 1910s. The major film studios began setting up production in Hollywood around the same time. Photographs also show other residences presumably built in the same area. Newspaper clippings in this album regard Castles himself, Sans Souci, as well as miscellaneous other topics reflecting Castle's personal interests (such as architecture, entertainment, history, and world news). Advertisements and programs in the scrapbook provide evidence for the various events Castles organized for his guests. Programming included, among other things, Edmund Russel's talks on orientalism; a Spanish-language program under the auspices of the Order of the Amaranth to raise funds for their Masonic Temple; and musical performances by Geneve Johnston-Bishop, a soprano from Chicago. Additionally, the album contains some postcards (from Rome, Ceylon, San Francisco, and Alaska) and portrait photographs of Castles and his wife, as well as photos of various other unnamed individuals. The last third of the album mostly contains letters, written in German, from Castle's friend Erich Graf von Klinkowstroem, a count who lived in Freiburg (Southern Germany) at the time.


Language of Material: Album contain clippings, correspondence, memorabilia, and captions in German and English.

Scope and Content
The materials in this album are similar to Album 1, consisting mostly of newspaper clippings, Sans Souci-related materials, and photographs of the mansion. Additionally, this album includes documents related to Castle's name change, which he completed at the Superior Court of the State of California in May 1918. While the name change was likely prompted by the anti-German sentiment during the First World War, Castles continued to advertise his services to the sizable German-speaking community of Hollywood as well. This scrapbook, too, includes letters from Castle's friend Graf von Klinkowstroem from 1924 and 1925, as well as one letter from Castle's cousin, Lulu.
Language of Material: Album contain clippings, correspondence, memorabilia, and captions in German and English.
Scope and Content
The bulk of this album consists of newspaper articles about various topics, ranging from entertainment and travel stories to historical architecture and world politics. It also includes some event programs, as well as a letter from Castle's uncle, H.H. Hoffman, who was the owner of an account book business in Chicago.

Roth and Shay "America's Beau Brummels" scrapbook 1928-1938
Language of Material: Album contain clippings, correspondence, memorabilia, and captions in English, German, French, and Danish.
Historical Note
Roth and Shay were comedy acrobats and Vaudeville performers active mainly in the late 1920s and through the 1930s. They usually shared the bill with other acts, but at times were booked as the main act. After the peak of their career, the duo seems to have been largely forgotten. The American trade press mentions Roth and Shay scarcely, but the scrapbook attests to the duo's significant success overseas. The duo spent two years in England, and enjoyed returning engagements in European cities such as Paris and Berlin. The American artists stayed popular in Germany well into the late 1930s - performing there as late as 1938 - despite the changing political situation. Italy, however, would not grant Roth and Shay visas in 1936 on the grounds that Shay was actually Danish.
Scope and Content
This album is a scrapbook concerning various domestic and international engagements of the American comedy acrobats Roth and Shay, ranging from 1928 through 1938. Newspaper clippings, programs, and photographs chronicle the duo's performances in England, where they spent two years of their careers (performing in Leeds, Brighton, Dublin, London, Blackpool, and Liverpool); in France (Paris, Nice, and Tunis, which was under French occupation at the time); Germany (Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and Elberfeld); Belgium (Liege); Sweden (Stockholm); Denmark (Copenhagen); Switzerland (Geneva); and the United States (New York, Memphis, Chicago, and Cedar Rapids). Newspaper clippings consist of reviews as well as advertisements for Roth and Shay's shows. They often shared the stage with other performers. The album also contains photographs taken of the exterior of establishments in which the duo performed, displaying their name on the marquee. Additionally, the scrapbook contains promotional photographs of Roth and Shay.

Southern California photograph album 1924-1925
Scope and Content
The majority of the photographs were taken in 1924 and 1925. They show various architectural and natural landmarks of Southern California, such as the San Fernando, San Juan Capistrano, San Gabriel, and Santa Barbara Missions; Devil's Gate Dam, Hotel St. Catherine in Catalina, the new bridge in Riverside, and Little Church of Flowers in Glendale; the sunset cliffs at San Diego and Laguna, Santa Monica, and Balboa Beaches; Mt. Lowe and Mt. Rubidoux; and oak trees in Mint Canyon. A majority of these pictures was taken during hikes, picnics, and other outings, and include several group photos. They capture the Rose Tournament in Pasadena (January 1924) and chronicle repeated visits to Bernheimer's Japanese Garden in Hollywood. Several photos show Santa Barbara in its restored version after the Earthquake of 1925, with a focus on the mission and Samarkand Hotel. Apart from California, photos also show Colorado Springs, CO and the Peace Arch in Blaine, WA. In addition to photographs, the album contains postcards from Stanford University and Mt. Wilson Observatory.
The album also includes photographs of the sets at the studios of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, most likely taken during their construction for the 1924 silent film Romola, directed by Henry King, which was set in Renaissance Florence.