



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Victor Moore papers

1864-1958 [bulk 1890s-1958]

*T-Mss 1970-003

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2015

Summary

Creator: Moore, Victor, 1876-1962

Title: Victor Moore papers

Date: 1864-1958 [bulk 1890s-1958]

Size: 8.1 linear feet (10 boxes, 21 volumes)

Source: Donated by Shirley Paige, 1970.

Abstract: The Victor Moore papers, dating from 1864 to 1958, offer comprehensive coverage of the actor's stage and film career from 1894 onward, primarily through scrapbooks and photographs. They also hold letters, contracts, writings, awards, diaries, scripts, family papers, and drawings.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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Processing note: Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2015

Creator History

Victor Moore (1876-1962) was a stage and screen actor and comedian active from 1894 to 1957. He began his career in both theater and vaudeville, in which he performed in a comedic duo with his first wife, Emma Littlefield. His first Broadway appearance was in the play *Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway*, in 1906. He was particularly active on stage from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, appearing in 12 Broadway plays and musicals, including *Oh Kay!*, *Funny Face*, *Anything Goes* (with Ethel Merman

and William Gaxton), and *Of Thee I Sing*, a major hit.

Moore appeared in silent films from 1915 to 1925, and successfully made the transition to sound films in 1930. For the rest of his career he alternated between stage and screen. Among his film appearances were *Gold Diggers of 1937*, *Swing Time* (with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers), *The Heat's On* (with Mae West), *Ziegfeld Follies*, *It Happened on Fifth Avenue*, and *The Seven Year Itch*. His later stage appearances included *Louisiana Purchase* (as well as its film version with Bob Hope), *On Borrowed Time*, and a 1957 revival of *Carousel*.

Victor Moore died of a heart attack in 1962.

Scope and Content Note

The Victor Moore papers, dating from 1864 to 1958, offer comprehensive coverage of the actor's stage and film career from 1894 onward, primarily through scrapbooks and photographs. They also hold letters, contracts, writings, awards, diaries, scripts, family papers, and drawings.

The bulk of the collection consists of scrapbooks containing programs and clippings dating from 1894 to 1953. There are also two folders of loose programs. Most of the scrapbooks document multiple plays, musicals, or films, but some are devoted to one to three projects only; these are named in the container list. They include *Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway*, *Hold Everything*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *It Happened on Fifth Avenue*, *Louisiana Purchase*, and *On Borrowed Time*.

Loose photographs and photograph albums also comprise a significant portion of the collection. They date from the late 1800s to the early 1950s, and primarily contain stage production shots, film stills, and head shots. Images of Moore with friends and at social events are also present, and the earliest portions (1800s – circa 1910) contain pictures of his family.

The photographic coverage of Moore's stage and film career is voluminous. It includes his early theater work, the vaudeville years with Emma Littlefield, countless silent and sound films, and shots from Broadway productions up to *On Borrowed Time*, one of his final stage appearances. Many of the loose photographs, particularly from earlier years, have notes on the back identifying the character or production. Many of the film stills feature Moore with his co-stars, as do some of the photographs of Moore with friends and colleagues. Co-stars and colleagues pictured include Mae West, Bob Hope, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, William Gaxton, George McManus, and Edward G. Robinson.

Most of the photographs are arranged chronologically, but several sets of photographs or albums are devoted to single topics. These include an album of RKO Pictures publicity stills; prints autographed by colleagues of Moore's such as Will Rogers, Ethel Merman, the comedic duo Olsen and Johnson, and the singer Cliff Edwards; a skit, *Sleepy Steve*, performed by Moore and Emma Littlefield; the musical *Oh Kay!*; and a Treasury Department war bonds event at which Moore performed.

The letters to Moore consist mostly of fan letters, thank-you notes, and a small amount of business correspondence. Letters are from Paramount Pictures; friends and colleagues such as Victor Herbert; and political figures including Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Wagner, and J. Edgar Hoover. They also hold correspondence with and marriage records of Moore's parents, Orville and Sarah, and include Orville Moore's Union army discharge records of 1864 and 1865.

Moore's contracts for stage and film engagements cover the bulk of his career from 1900. His writings include diaries, school essays, and skits he wrote for vaudeville. The writings also hold a few scripts for

plays or musicals in which Moore appeared, or which were meant for him. These include Mr. Manhattan, a musical comedy written by Jerome Lawrence and Val Burton for Moore, William Gaxton, and Ethel Merman. The drawings and caricatures of Moore are by unknown artists.

Most of the collection components were assigned classmarks before final processing. These classmarks appear in notes within the container list.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by format.

Key Terms

Occupations

Actors (performing artists)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Awards

Contracts

Correspondence

Photographs

Scrapbooks

Scripts

Subjects

Motion pictures -- United States -- 20th century

Theater -- United States -- 19th century

Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Awards and Citations 1936-1953
MWEZ + n.c. 21,438
- b. 2 f. 1-2 Contracts 1900-1958
MWEZ + n.c. 21,450
- b. 1 f. 2 Drawings and Caricatures of Moore 1920s-1950s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,438
- b. 2 f. 3-4 Letters 1864-1957
MWEZ + n.c. 21,443 and MWEZ + n.c. 21,445
- Photographs
- b. 2 f. 5 Late 1800s-1919
MWEZ + n.c. 21,476-A
- b. 3 f. 1 Late 1800s-1919
MWEZ + n.c. 21,476-A
- v. 1 1890s
Family photographs only.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,470
- b. 3 f. 2-4 1890s—circa 1910
MWEZ + n.c. 21,474-A
- b. 4 f. 1-4 1890s—circa 1910
MWEZ + n.c. 21,474-A
- b. 5 f. 1 1890s-circa 1910
MWEZ + n.c. 21,470
- b. 1 f. 3-4 1890s-1940s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,469
- b. 6 f. 1-4 1902-1950s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,470
- b. 5 f. 2 1910s-1930s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,474-A
- b. 5 f. 3-5 1910s-1950s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,475-A
- b. 7 f. 1-3 1920s-1950s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,475-A
- b. 7 f. 4 1940s
- b. 8 f. 1 Autographed 1910s-1940
MWEZ + n.c. 21,438
- b. 7 f. 5 The Night When Victor Moore Helped To Sell \$6,263,000 In War Bonds circa 1943
Includes images of Moore, Olsen and Johnson, Milton Berle, Eddie Cantor, Zero Mostel, and Dooley Wilson.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,469
- v. 9 Oh Kay! 1926
MWEZ + n.c. 21,468
- v. 11 RKO Pictures Publicity Stills 1930s
MWEZ + n.c. 21,465
- b. 8 f. 2 Sleepy Steve 1912
MWEZ + n.c. 21,470

Photographs (cont.)

- v. 21 Unidentified Stage Production undated
MWEZ + n.c. 21,467
- b. 9 f. 1-2 Programs 1915-1953
MWEZ + n.c. 21, 444
- Scrapbooks
- b. 9 f. 3 1894-1896
MWEZ + n.c. 21,440
- v. 2 1894-1898
MWEZ + n.c. 21,441
- v. 3 1898-1937
MWEZ + n.c. 21,437
- v. 4 1900-1911
Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway, The Happiest Night of His Life.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,442
- v. 5 1902-1919
Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway, See You Later.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,456
- v. 6 1907-1909
Talk of New York, Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,453
- v. 7 1915-1929
Easy Come Easy Go, Hold Everything.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,446
- v. 8 1925-1933
MWEZ + n.c. 21,460
- v. 10 1928-1935
Dangerous Nan McGrew, Hold Everything, Heads Up.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,459
- v. 12 1931-1935
Of Thee I Sing, Let 'Em Eat Cake, Anything Goes.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,457
- b. 8 f. 3 1935-1940
MWEZ + n.c. 21,452 and MWEZ + n.c. 21,464
- v. 13 1936-1937
MWEZ + n.c. 21,449
- v. 14 1937-1938
MWEZ + n.c. 21,447
- v. 15 1941
Louisiana Purchase.
MWEZ + n.c. 21, 448
- v. 16 1941-1942
Louisiana Purchase.
MWEZ + n.c. 21, 448
- v. 17 1941-1957
MWEZ + n.c. 21,463
- v. 18 1947
It Happened On Fifth Avenue.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,455

Scrapbooks (cont.)

v. 19 1952-1953
MWEZ + n.c. 21,458

v. 20 1953
On Borrowed Time.
MWEZ + n.c. 21,462

Writings

MWEZ + n.c. 21,454 and MWEZ + n.c. 21,445

By Moore

- b. 9 f. 4-5 Diaries 1905, 1942-1942, undated
- b. 10 f. 1-3 Essays and Skits 1918-1944, undated
- b. 10 f. 4 By Others 1950, undated