



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Harry Hershfield collection

1896-1974 [bulk 1930s-1960s]

*T-Mss 1979-004

Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2015. Finding aid updated to reflect changes in the container list by Joyce Joseph, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Hershfield, Harry, 1885-1974

Title: Harry Hershfield collection

Date: 1896-1974 [bulk 1930s-1960s]

Size: 5.76 linear feet (11 boxes, 1 volume, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Donated by Morris P. Arnoff, 1979.

Abstract: Harry Hershfield (1885-1974) was an American cartoonist, humorist, and radio personality. The Harry Hershfield collection dates from 1896 to 1974 (bulk dates 1930s-1960s) and contains photographs, writings, letters, programs, scrapbooks, clippings, awards, and certificates.

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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Creator History

Harry Hershfield was an American cartoonist, humorist, and radio personality. He was born in 1885 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and was married to Sarah Jane Isdell. In the 1940s, Hershfield worked as a radio personality on programs such as *Stop Me If You've Heard This One* and *Can You Top This?*, and he

made frequent appearances on television programs during the 1950s. Throughout his career, Hershfield entertained as toastmaster or master of ceremonies at countless banquets, dinners, and stage benefits. He was a member of the charitable organization Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America, and the theatrical social club The Lambs. He died in 1974 in New York, New York.

Scope and Content Note

The Harry Hershfield collection dates from 1896 to 1974 (bulk dates 1930s-1960s) and contains photographs, writings, letters, programs, scrapbooks, clippings, awards, and certificates. The collection is not a comprehensive record of Hershfield's career, and is more reflective of his humorist and radio personality work.

The bulk of the collection consists of photographs from various events where Hershfield was either a toastmaster or master of ceremonies. There are also photographs from *Can You Top This?*, and personal images of his family and early life in Iowa.

The collection includes some of his original humor writing such as a list of punch lines, joke setlists for banquets, short stories such as "Barbara of Seville" and "Market Value," radio scripts such as *Life is Funny with Harry Hershfield*, and a few of his comic strips.

The Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America and The Lambs are featured through materials such as newsletters, flyers, and programs. There are also programs from events where Hershfield either entertained or was honored, and letters of appreciation for his appearances and participation. The Joseph Warren Lodge, No. 933 scrapbook in the collection chronicles milestones in Hershfield's life. The other scrapbooks are a mix of photos, letters, and clippings.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by format or subject.

Key Terms

Occupations

Cartoonists
Humorists
Masters of ceremonies

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Certificates
Clippings (information artifacts)
Letters (correspondence)
Photographs
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks

Subjects

Humorous stories
Radio comedies

Names

Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America, Inc.

Lambs (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Autographs 1930s-1960s
 - Award 1955
 - Located in the *T-Cabinet. To view, email theatre@nypl.org to make an appointment.
- b. 1 f. 2 Certificates 1942-1966
- b. 11 f. 1 Certificates 1942-1974
 - o. 1 Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America 1940s-1960s
- b. 1 f. 3 Circus Saints and Sinners Club of America 1943-1960s
- b. 11 f. 2 Clippings 1924-1971
- b. 1 f. 4-7 Clippings 1930-1971
 - Humor Writing
- b. 11 f. 3 1930s-1952
- b. 1 f. 8 Comic Strips 1912-1930s
- b. 1 f. 9-10 Joke Setlists 1930s-1960s
 - b. 2 f. 1 Joke Setlists 1930s-1960s
 - b. 2 f. 2-3 *Life is Funny with Harry Hershfield* 1943
 - b. 2 f. 4 Punch Lines 1930s-1960s
 - b. 2 f. 5-7 Short Stories 1929-1960s
 - o. 1 The Lambs 1940s-1960s
 - b. 2 f. 8-9 The Lambs 1944-1970
- b. 3 f. 1-8 Letters 1925-1974
 - Photographs
- b. 11 f. 4 1896-1960s
 - Family photos
- b. 4 f. 1-7 1900s-1960s
 - Family photos in folders 2 through 5.
- b. 5 f. 1-8 1930s-1960s
- b. 6 f. 1-6 1930s-1960s
- b. 7 f. 1-7 1930s-1960s
- b. 8 f. 1-10 1930s-1960s
- b. 11 f. 5 1930s-1960s
- b. 11 f. 6 1930s-1960s
- b. 9 f. 1-5 *Can You Top This?* 1940s-1950s
- b. 9 f. 6 The Lambs 1950s-1960s
- b. 9 f. 7-10 Programs 1929-1972
 - b. 11 f. 1 Programs 1942-1979
- Scrapbooks
- b. 10 f. 1-12 1928-1971
 - b. 11 f. 3 1945-1964
 - v. 1 1963