Descriptive Summary

Title: Ray Henderson Papers, 1904-1937

Collection ID: *T-Mss 1965-003

Creator: Henderson, Ray, 1889-1937

Extent: 13.9 linear feet (8 boxes) + 10 scrapbooks


Abstract: Ray Henderson, advance man and publicist, promoted many of the well-known actors of the early 20th century, among them George Arliss, Katharine Cornell and E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe. His papers document this relationship with these theatrical personalities through correspondence, press releases, clippings and tour materials.

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice may be required

Preferred Citation: Ray Henderson Papers, *T-Mss 1965-003, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Processing Information: The collection was originally in the papers of Katharine Cornell. However, in 2000 the papers were separated out of that collection, organized, processed and cataloged. Some of the paper in the collection is brittle.
**Biographical Note**

Ray Henderson, press agent, was born John Ray Henderson on August 25, 1889 in Saquache County, Colorado, the youngest child of Robert Louis Henderson and Willamartha Laura Harris. At an early age he developed a love of the performing arts, attending theatrical and musical performances as they toured the Colorado Springs area. He began his career as a publicity man in Colorado Springs, doing house publicity for local theaters. Later, he joined the Forbes-Robertson Company as a press agent in Omaha, Nebraska. During his career, his clients included George Arliss, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe, Ethel Barrymore and finally Katharine Cornell and Guthrie McClintic.

He started working for Katharine Cornell and Guthrie McClintic in 1931, working as both an advance man and a publicist. Henderson was well-known and well-respected in his field where he was acknowledged to be the road's number one advance man. He was the first president of the New York Theatrical Press Agents.

In 1937, on an advance trip for an upcoming Katharine Cornell tour to Asia, Australia, Africa and Europe, he was killed in a plane crash off the coast of Athens, Greece. He was buried in Athens but through the intervention of Lillian Gish and Katharine Cornell his body was returned to the United States, aboard the ship Valconia and he was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Ray Henderson papers consist of correspondence, personal papers and ephemera, clippings and professional materials from his career as a publicist and advance man, that document both his personal life and his work for many of the theater personalities of the early 20th century. The papers are rich in information on early 20th century theater through the voluminous and news-filled correspondence of many actors who were both friends and clients of Henderson. Notables include George Arliss, Katharine Cornell, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe.

The personal papers illuminate other facets of his life including his early years and his family. A diary, written by a young Ray Henderson, describes both the theater and the opera tours which came to Colorado and shows how his early love for performance developed into his career. There is a significant amount of personal photographs, though many are unidentified, showing family members in Colorado in the early 20th century.

Other professional materials include tour diaries and itineraries for publicity tours of such notables as Ethel Barrymore, Sothern and Marlowe and Katharine Cornell. One tragic addition to the collection is the binder and papers which were found with his body after the plane crash off the Athens coast. Press releases and writings in typescript form complete this material. A series of scrapbooks contain clippings, as well as an occasional program or press release, on various productions.
Organization

- Series I: Personal Papers
- Series II: Correspondence
- Series III: Publicity Agent Materials
  - Sub-series 1 - Tour Materials
  - Sub-series 2 - Press Releases, Articles and Other Writings
- Series IV: Clippings
- Series V: Scrapbooks

Series Descriptions and Container Listing

**Series I: Personal Papers, 1904-1937**

1 box
This series contains a diary of his early years, clippings, passports and personal documents as well as photographs of his family and friends. Of special interest is a set of photographs with clippings about the destruction of the set for the Forbes-Robertson Company production of *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Other significant photographs include images of hospitals and battlefields of World War I, with one extremely graphic photograph of a mutilated body. Other items of interest are the family photographs and obituary for his brother, Alva, who died in the influenza epidemic of 1918.

b. 1 f. 1  Diary, 1904-1907.
1 volume

b. 1 f. 2  Awards / Ray Henderson, 1926
1 folder
Award in Norwegian belonging to Ray Henderson.

b. 1 f. 3  Draft board papers / Ray Henderson, 1917-1918
1 folder

b. 1 f. 4  Passports and visas / Ray Henderson, 1920-1928
1 folder

b. 1 f. 5  Ephemera / Ray Henderson
1 folder
Includes receipts, calling cards, one confederate 50 dollar bill, a graduation invitation, programs and a menu.

b. 1 f. 6  Obituaries / Alva W. (Alva Willie) Henderson, 1918
1 folder
Obituary for Alva Henderson, brother of Ray Henderson.
b. 1 f. 7  Professional organization papers
   1 folder
   Miscellaneous papers concerning Actors' Equity Association and
   Theatrical Press Representatives of America.

b. 1 f. 8  Photographs of the burning of the *Caesar and Cleopatra* sets,
   1915
   1 folder
   Photographs and clipping documenting the destruction in
   California of the *Caesar and Cleopatra* sets from the Forbes-
   Robertson production.

b. 1 f. 9  Snapshots with George Arliss and family
   1 folder

b. 1 f. 10  Photographs / Willamartha Farrington
   1 folder
   Photographs of Willamartha Farrington and her brother George,
   children of Ray Henderson's sister Bertha.

b. 1 f. 11  Portrait of Faversham children with others
   1 folder

b. 1 f. 12  Photographs / George Hayes
   1 folder
   Army photograph of George Hayes as well as photograph of John
   Sullivan Hayes.

b. 1 f. 13  Photographs / Alva W. (Alva Willie) Henderson
   1 folder
   Photographs of Ray Henderson's brother, Alva.

b. 1 f. 14  Photographs / Ray Henderson
   1 folder

b. 1 f. 15  Photographs of Ray Henderson in Honolulu, 1937
   1 folder

b. 1 f. 16  Photographs of North Africa
   1 folder

b. 1 f. 17  Photographs / Katherine Simpson
   1 folder
   Photographs of a friend or relative of Ray Henderson.

b. 1 f. 18  World War I photographs
   1 folder
   Photographs taken of World War I battlefields and hospitals.
Photographs of Ray Henderson's family and friends
1 folder
Unidentified photographs of Ray Henderson's family and friends.

Portraits of Ray Henderson's family and friends
1 folder
Unidentified portraits of Ray Henderson's family and friends.

Series II: Correspondence, 1905-1937
4 boxes
Alphabetical
This series contains letters from friends and clients of Ray Henderson during his career as publicity agent and advance man. Many are informative letters on the theater and personal news. Correspondents include George Arliss, Mary Daly (employee of Sothern and Marlowe), Maxine Elliott, Burns Mantle, H. T. Parker, Julia Marlowe, E. H. Sothern and Blanche Yurka. Of special note are a few missives from Henderson family members.

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1922-1923
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1924-1925
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1926
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1927 Jan.-May
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1927 Dec.-June
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1928 Jan.-June
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1928 July-Dec.
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1929 Jan.-May
1 folder

Correspondence / George Arliss, 1929 Aug.-Oct.
1 folder
b. 2 f. 10  Correspondence / George Arliss, 1929 Nov.-Dec.
1 folder

b. 2 f. 11  Correspondence / George Arliss, 1930
1 folder

b. 2 f. 12  Correspondence / George Arliss, 1931
1 folder

b. 2 f. 13  Correspondence / George Arliss, 1932-1933
1 folder

b. 2 f. 14  Correspondence / George Arliss
1 folder

b. 3 f. 1   Correspondence "A", 1929
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business
associates. Includes Brian Aherne and Winthrop Ames.

b. 3 f. 2   Correspondence / Rudolf Besier, 1931-1933
1 folder

b. 3 f. 3   Correspondence "B", 1912
1 folder

b. 3 f. 4   Correspondence / Eddie Cantor, 1921
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Eddie Cantor.

b. 3 f. 5   Correspondence / H. Cooper Cliffe
1 folder

b. 3 f. 6   Correspondence / Katharine Cornell, 1929-1936
1 folder

b. 3 f. 7   Correspondence "C", 1927-1931
1 folder

b. 3 f. 8   Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1924
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee
of Sothern and Marlowe.

b. 3 f. 9   Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1925
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee
of Sothern and Marlowe.
Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1926
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1927-1928
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1929-1930
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1931
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1932
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly, 1933-1936
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence / Mary Daly
1 folder
Undated correspondence to Ray Henderson from Mary Daly, an employee of Sothern and Marlowe.

Correspondence "D", 1919-1933
1 folder

Correspondence / Clare Eames
1 folder

Correspondence / Walter Prichard Eaton, 1933-1934
1 folder

Correspondence / Maxine Elliott, ca. 1918-1929
1 folder

Correspondence / Maurice Evans, 1936
Correspondence / William Faversham, 1921
1 folder

Correspondence / Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, 1912-1919
1 folder

Correspondence "F", 1920-1927
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business associates. Includes Daniel Frohman, Julia Opp Faversham and Minnie Maddern Fiske.

Correspondence / Ernest Glendinning, 1929
1 folder

Correspondence / Stanton Griffis, 1935
1 folder

Correspondence "G", 1922-1929
1 folder

Correspondence / Henderson family
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from his mother and his brother, Louis.

Correspondence / W. J. (William James) Henderson, 1905-1914
1 folder

Correspondence / Sidney Coe Howard, 1933
1 folder

Correspondence "H", 1917-1932
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business associates. Includes Walter Hampden.

Correspondence / Frieda Inescort, ca. 1928-1929
1 folder

Correspondence "J", ca. 1921-1924
1 folder

Correspondence from a woman named Liz
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from an unidentified woman
named Liz.

Correspondence from Lynne (Aunt Cindy)
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from an unidentified woman named Lynne also called Aunt Cindy. Contains genealogical data about the Henderson family.

Correspondence "K-L", 1921
1 folder

Correspondence / Guthrie McClintic, 1931-1932
1 folder

Correspondence / Gertrude Macy, 1935
1 folder

Correspondence / Burns Mantle, 1933-1935
1 folder

Correspondence / Jo Mielziner, 1935
1 folder

Correspondence "M", 1911-1931
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business associates. Includes Percy Mackaye.

Correspondence / Paul Nordoff
1 folder

Correspondence "N"
1 folder

Correspondence / Eleanor Painter
1 folder

Correspondence / H. T. (Henry Taylor) Parker, 1921-1929
1 folder

Correspondence "P", 1926-1932
1 folder

Correspondence / Leonora Raines, 1917
1 folder

Correspondence / Elisabeth Risdon, 1931
1 folder
Correspondence "R", 1925-1930
1 folder

Correspondence / Bernard Shaw, 1933-1937
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from Blanche Patch, secretary of George Bernard Shaw.

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1919
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1920 Jan.-Apr.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1920 May-Oct.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1921
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1922 Jan.-June
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1922 July-Dec.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1923 Feb.-June
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1923 July-Dec.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1924 Jan.-Apr.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1924 May-Aug.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1924 Sept.-Dec.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1925 Jan.-Mar.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1925 Apr.-Aug.
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1925 Sept.-Dec.
Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1926
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1927
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1928
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1929
1 folder

Correspondence / Sothern and Marlowe, 1930-1933
1 folder

Undated correspondence to Ray Henderson from E. H. Sothern and Jula Marlowe.
3 folders

Correspondence "S", 1922-1925
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business associates. Includes Hassard Short.

Correspondence "T", 1928-1932
1 folder
Correspondence to Ray Henderson from friends and business associates. Includes Deems Taylor.

Correspondence / John Van Druten, 1934
1 folder

Correspondence "V", ca. 1929
1 folder

Correspondence / Estelle Winwood, ca. 1930
1 folder

Correspondence / Peggy Wood
1 folder

Correspondence / Alexander Woollcott, May 1934
1 folder

Correspondence "W", 1923-1933
1 folder

b. 5 f. 16 Correspondence / Blanche Yurka, ca. 1926-1933
1 folder

b. 5 f. 17 Correspondence "Z", 1926
1 folder

b. 5 f. 18 Postcards to Ray Henderson
1 folder

b. 5 f. 19 Unidentified correspondence
1 folder

Series III: Publicity Agent Materials
2 boxes
This series consists of professional papers documenting Henderson's career and is comprised of two sub-series.

Sub-series 1 - Tour Materials, 1909-1937
1 box
This material includes Henderson's tour diaries, itineraries and financial papers for the road tours he publicized. Notables include Ethel Barrymore, Katharine Cornell, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe. Of special note is a binder of papers about the Cornell world tour of 1937 which was retrieved from the plane crash in which he died. That tour was cancelled and never took place.

b. 6 f. 1 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1909-1911
1 volume

b. 6 f. 2 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1911-1913
1 volume

b. 6 f. 3 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1919-1920
1 volume

b. 6 f. 4 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1920-1921
1 volume

b. 6 f. 5 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1921-1922
1 volume

b. 6 f. 6 Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1922-1923
1 volume
Tour diary / Ray Henderson, 1923-1924
1 volume

Itinerary for Ethel Barrymore tour, 1931
1 folder

Itinerary for Soviet Russia tour, 1931
1 folder
Tour led by Dr. Elsie Reed Mitchell.

Katharine Cornell tour materials, 1937
2 folders
Papers belonging to Ray Henderson salvaged from the 1937 plane crash in which he died. Papers removed from binder.

Katharine Cornell tour materials, 1937
1 folder
Binder belonging to Ray Henderson salvaged from the 1937 plane crash in which he died. Held papers in folders 10-11.

Unidentified tour itinerary
1 folder

Financial papers / Ray Henderson
1 folder
Financial materials involving theatrical tours belonged to Ray Henderson.

Sub-series 2 - Press Releases, Articles and Other Writings, ca. 1915-1937
1 box
Alphabetical
This series consists of typescripts of articles and press releases written by Ray Henderson and others. Most of the materials are about his clients who include George Arliss, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe. Most of the articles were probably written by Ray Henderson but many were unidentified as to the author. Of special note is a draft entitled *The Readiness of All*, written by E. H. Sothern about the excellence of the understudies in the Sothern and Marlowe Company.

Press releases and articles / Winthrop Ames
1 folder

Press releases and articles / George Arliss
1 folder
Press releases and articles / Barrymore family
1 folder

Press releases and articles / William Faversham
1 folder

Press releases and articles / Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson
1 folder

Press releases and articles / John Galsworthy
1 folder

Press releases and articles / Firmin Gémier
1 folder

Press releases and articles / Gilbert and Sullivan
2 folders

Press releases and articles / Sothern and Marlowe
3 folders

America pays royalties on Shakespeare at last
1 folder

Article about The Barretts of Wimpole Street
1 folder
Handwritten draft of article by Ray Henderson.

The graybeards keep the youngsters hustling
1 folder

In the year of 18 B.M.
1 folder

Lotus Club speech, 1927
1 folder
Typescript of speech given by Ray Henderson at the Lotus Club.

The readiness of all / E. H. (Edward Hugh) Sothern
1 folder
Draft written by E. H. Sothern about the understudies in the
Sothern-Marlowe Company.

The return of the Mary George / Ray Henderson.
1 volume
Play written by Ray Henderson (on the cover John Raymond
Henderson).
George Bernard Shaw article
1 folder
Typescript of article about George Bernard Shaw.

Why is a press agent?
1 folder

Play excerpts
1 folder
Includes portion of *The Yellow Jack* and a piece for community theatre.

Actors' poetry
1 folder
Poems written by Iris Tree and John Gielgud.

Unidentified article, 1924 Mar. 30
1 folder

Unidentified notes and papers / Ray Henderson
1 folder

**Series IV: Clippings, ca. 1915-1936**

1 box
Alphabetical
This series consists of clippings about Henderson clients as well as things in which he was interested. Topics include George Arliss, Ethel Barrymore, Walter Hampden's production of *Hamlet*, James K. Hackett's production of *Macbeth*, and Sothern and Marlowe. General interest topics include opera and theater.

*All editions / Charles Washburn, 1936*
1 folder
Clippings, removed from a scrapbook belonging to Ray Henderson, for the play *All Editions*.

Clippings / George Arliss
1 folder

Clippings / Ethel Barrymore
1 folder

Clippings / David Belasco
1 folder

Clippings / Jane Cowl
1 folder
b. 8   f. 6  
*Hamlet* / William Shakespeare
1 folder
Clippings about the Walter Hampden production of the play *Hamlet*.

b. 8   f. 7  
*Judith* / Gladys Unger
1 folder
Clippings about the Brooklyn Academy of Music production of the play *Judith*.

b. 8   f. 8  
*Macbeth* / William Shakespeare
1 folder
Clippings about the production of the play *Macbeth* starring James K. Hackett.

b. 8   f. 9  
Music and opera clippings
1 folder

b. 8   f. 10  
Clippings / Sothern and Marlowe
1 folder

b. 8   f. 11  
Theater (General) clippings
1 folder

b. 8   f. 12  
*Too true to be good* / Bernard Shaw
1 folder

b. 8   f. 13  
General interest clippings
1 folder

b. 8   f. 14  
Assorted programs
1 folder
Assorted programs of interest to Ray Henderson. Includes Sothern and Marlowe programs.

**Series V: Scrapbooks, 1934-1938**
10 boxes

Chronological
This series contains scrapbooks of clippings, with the occasional press release and program, on the listed play titles. The scrapbooks were more than likely kept by Katharine Cornell and donated by her. Most of these scrapbooks are very fragile, some are unbound, please handle with extreme care.

b. 9  
*Fresh fields* / Ivor Novello, 1934
1 unbound volume
Scrapbook of clippings.

b. 10  
*Fresh fields* / Ivor Novello, 1936  
1 unbound volume  
Scrapbook of clippings; also includes some press releases.

b. 11  
Petticoat fever / Mark Reed, 1935 ca. Mar. 4-June 16  
1 volume  
Scrapbook of clippings; also includes press release and programs.

b. 12  
Petticoat fever / Mark Reed, 1935  
1 unbound volume  
Scrapbook of clippings.

b. 13  
*Gengangere*. English / Henrik Ibsen, 1936  
1 folder  
Scrapbook of loose clippings on Ibsen's *Ghosts*.

b. 14  
*I am my youth* / Ernest Pascal, 1938  
1 bound volume  
Scrapbooks of clippings on *I am My Youth* by Ernest Pascal and Edwin Blum.

b. 15  
*I am my youth* / Ernest Pascal, 1938  
2 bound volumes  
Scrapbooks of clippings on *I am My Youth* by Ernest Pascal and Edwin Blum.

b. 16  
*Lorilei* / Jacques Deval, 1938  
1 unbound volume  
Scrapbook of clippings.

b. 17  
The Star-wagon / Maxwell Anderson, 1938  
1 bound volume; 1 unbound volume  
One scrapbook of clippings and one of press releases.

b. 18  
The Star-wagon / Maxwell Anderson, 1938  
3 unbound volumes  
Scrapbooks of clippings.
Separated Materials

Autographed Photographs

- George Arliss (2)
- Ethel Barrymore
- Katharine Cornell
- Maxine Elliott
- George Hayes
- Jane Houston
- Julia Marlowe (2)
- Edith Wynne Matthison (2)
- E. H. Sothern

B File Photographs

- Ethel Barrymore in *The Kingdom of God* (4)

Genealogy


Children:

- 1 - Bertha Virginia Henderson, b. Richardson County, Nebraska on February 25, 1873; d. April 15, 1924; m. George Farrington, ch. Willamartha Farrington (1909-1984), George Louis Farrington
- 2 - George Samuel Henderson, b. November 16, 1874 in Richardson County, Nebraska; d. 1904 in Colorado
- 3 - Robert Louis Henderson, b. October 12, 1876 in Richardson County, Nebraska; d. July 1963 in Colorado Springs, El Paso County, Colorado; m. Georgia Gertrude Yorke
- 4 - Alva Willie Henderson, b. March 25, 1887 in Saguache County, Colorado; d. December 18, 1918 in Colorado Springs, El Paso County, Colorado; m. Irene Thomas, ch. Frederick Louis, Alva, Doris.