

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞
for Special Collections
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ **The Warren D. Hanscom Chautauqua Collection, 1927-1984** ◀

MSS-104

Size: 7 Inches

Provenance: The Warren D. Hanscom Chautauqua Collection was donated to the Ward M. Canaday Center, University of Toledo Libraries, in 1994 and 1996 by Priscilla Hanscom Krimm of Lakeland, Florida.

Access: open

Collection Summary: Chautauqua was the first form of adult education and consists of traveling entertainment that includes lectures, music, plays, and other performances. Collection consists of materials collected during Hanscom's career, including clippings, newsletters, programs, a typescript, photographs, and two books.

Subjects: [Collectors and Collecting](#)

Related Collections:

Processing Note: Some materials have been sampled

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Completed by: Barbara A. Shirk, April 1996

Reformatted by: Arjun Sabharwal, June 2010; last updated: June 2014

**The Warren D. Hanscom Chautauqua
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Introduction

The Warren D. Hanscom Chautauqua Collection with items dating from 1927-1984, documents the career of Warren D. (“Bob”) Hanscom who spent 20 years as an actor, impersonator, director, and producer on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits throughout the United States and Canada.

Chautauqua was probably the first “adult education” in America. It was traveling entertainment for adults and youngsters of small-town America which included lecturers, male quartets, Welsh singers, Swiss bellringers, military bands, play companies, impersonators, operetta companies, magicians, and novelty acts. Its name came from the resort town of Chautauqua, New York (on Lake Chautauqua), where it originated in 1874 and was the outgrowth of the Methodist Episcopal Summer Sunday School Institute. Chautauquas were formed in other communities and gradually became nationwide. It still continues to draw thousands of people to New York every summer from the US and Canada, and many well-known personalities have appeared in the outdoor amphitheater there over the years. The first Chautauqua caravan appeared in Canada in 1917. The Chautauqua movement died when radio and the movies captured public attention, but there was a rebirth in the mountain and plain states in the 1980s.

There are no restrictions on the use of the Warren D. Hanscom Chautauqua Collection.

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Biographical Sketch

Warren David “Bob” Hanscom was born in Thomaston, Maine in 1898.

It was in high school that he realized he wanted to become an actor. He played roles in various school and church plays and directed some community shows.

He enlisted in the army in 1917 and served in World War I and the Mexican Border War. While on duty on the Mexican Border in Nogales, Arizona, he saw his first Chautauqua and decided he wanted to do that after his discharge from the Army. While at Nogales, he entertained the soldiers under the name of Bob Rackett, and the name “Bob” stuck with him through the years.

He left the Army in 1919 and attended the Horner Institute of Fine Arts in Kansas City, Missouri. In the early 1920s, he began his career on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits as an impersonator known as “Sunshine Bob.” In later years, he acted in Chautauqua plays and directed and produced them as well.

It was during this time that he met and married Florence Borland who was also traveling the circuit. They had three children -- one of whom died at the age of four years.

After leaving the Chautauqua circuit, he settled in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1948 he moved to Bradenton, Florida and served as USO Director for the southern states during World War II and was an active actor until 1967. Between seasons, he worked for years as a newspaperman and feature writer. He joined the National American Legion Press Association in 1958 and was founder and first president of the Florida American Legion Press Association. He later became president of the National American Legion Press Association.

He is the author of two books: *Pioneers in Grease Paint* (chronicles his Chautauqua career) and *The First Fifty Years* (a Legion history.)

In the Preface of *Pioneers in Grease Paint*, he writes, “ I spent a large share of my active years on this merry-go-round. I might have made more money, achieved more fame, in other fields, but as I look back over the serpentine trail that winds over the maps of the United States and Canada like a vine on a trellis, I see nothing but happy memories and enriching friendships.”

Mr. Hanscom died in Bradenton, Florida on January 24, 1986.

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Scope and Content

The material in the Warren D. Hanscom Collection was generated and collected by Mr. Hanscom and is related to his career as an entertainer with the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits in the United States and Canada. Included in the collection are:

Clippings (1972-1982) which discuss Chautauqua and its performers and personalities.

Newsletters (1933-1938) that consist of the Miami Valley Chautauqua and The I.L.A. News which was later changed to Talent.

A newspaper (1984), The Michigan Connection.

A magazine entitled Genii (1975) which contains articles on Loring Campbell, a magician and fellow performer) with his handwritten note on the cover.

Programs (1927-1975) from various Chautauqua events; some of which are related to Mr. Hanscom's appearances.

A typescript (n.d.) entitled, America's Cultural Revolution: A History of Lyceum and Chautauqua.

Books. - One entitled, Recollections of the Lyceum and Chautauqua Circuits by Irene Briggs DaBoll and Raymond F. DaBoll; the other, Chautauqua in Canada is written by Sheilagh S. Jameson.

Photographs of fellow performers. - Two photos of "the Loveless Twins" (n.d.) and a photo of Herbert Petrie and his White Huggars (n.d.); also a panoramic photograph of the 26th Annual Convention of International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association at Winona Lake, Indiana (1928.)

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Folder List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	Clippings, 1940-1982
	2	Newsletters, 1933-1938
	3	Newspaper (The Michigan Connection) Winter/Spring, 1984
	4	Magazine - Genii, 1975 Program s
	5	1927-1931
	6	1934-1975 Typescript - <i>America's Cultural Revolution: A History Of Lyceum and Chautauqua</i>
	7	(1 of 3)
	8	(2 of 3)
	9	(3 of 3) Books
	10	<i>Recollections of the Lyceum & Chautauqua Circuits</i>
	11	<i>Chautauqua in Canada</i>
	12	Miscellaneous Photographs
	13	Miscellaneous, n.d., (1 of 2)
	14	Twenty-sixth Annual Convention - International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1928, (2 of 2)