

Tom Tichenor Scrapbooks, ca. 1947-ca. 1988

Collection Summary

Creator: Unknown

Title: Tom Tichenor Scrapbooks

Inclusive Dates: ca. 1947 to ca. 1988

Summary/Abstract: This collection is comprised of three scrapbooks and materials pertaining to puppeteer Tom Tichenor, his career achievements, and the puppet theatre of the Children's Division of the Nashville Public Library. Included in the collection are photographs, newsclippings, ephemera, articles, correspondence, and several original writings of Tom Tichenor.

Physical Description/Extent: .31 cu. ft.

Accession Number: RT-100

Language: English

Stack Location: Closed stacks workroom range 3 section 5

Repository: Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library, 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37219

Chronology

- Feb. 19, 1923 Tom Hager Tichenor was born in Decatur, Alabama.
- ca. 1926 As a very young child, Tom came to live with his aunt Ruby Tichenor in Tennessee.
- 1938 At age 15, while a student at Hume-Fogg High School, Tom staged a production of "Puss in Boots" for the Children's Department of the Nashville Public Library Main Library.
- 1940 Tichenor was performing a 15 minute radio show on the Nashville radio station WSIX, where he played many of the parts and also wrote and directed the production.
- 1943 Tichenor joined the Army's Special Services Corps, bringing movies and stage productions to soldiers in England, France, and Germany.
- 1947 Tichenor began marionette productions as a staff member of the Library. He began writing and producing "Wormwood Forest," a WSM radio series that would air coast-to-coast for two years.
- 1950 Tom appeared with his puppets on camera at WSM-TV, presenting his original scripts.
- 1950 Marco Polo Bear first appeared as a marionette in the annual Christmas show "Jingle the Christmas Brownie."
- 1954 Tom was shooting films of his own at Warner Park.
- 1957 Tichenor commuted four days a week to Memphis, where he became the Children's Director of the educational station WKNO-TV. His "Poindexter" series was aired on stations all over the country.
- 1961 Tichenor went to Broadway, at the invitation of Gower Champion, to be part of the musical production of "Carnival." Tom's original puppets had important roles in the musical: Carrot Top, Renardo the Fox,

- Horrible Henry, and Marguerite, with its premiere at the Imperial Theatre on April 12, 1961, with later performances at the Winter Garden Theatre, for a two-year run of 719 public performances. Tichenor's puppets received rave reviews.
- 1964 WNBC-TV in New York asked Tom to do a daily children's television program, "Birthday House," and he performed at this anchor station for the NBC network until 1967.
- 1967 Tichenor returned home to Nashville, Tennessee and continued his puppet and marionette shows at the Public Library.
- April 1980 "Tom Tichenor Marionettes," appeared in a special Century III production, "Fables of the Cumberland Country," depicting the history of Nashville and Tennessee.
- June 1980 Tichenor "Carnival" puppets were among the puppets on display at the 13th Congress L'Union International de la Marionette, June 8-16.
- 1988 Mr. Tichenor retired from the Pubic Library in January, and donated many of his original marionettes and puppets to the Children's Division.
- Nov. 18, 1992 Tom Tichenor passed away at the Alvin C. York Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Murfreesboro, and was interred in the Nashville National Cemetery in Madison, Tennessee.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Thomas Hager Tichenor was born in Decatur, Alabama on February 10, 1923. His father, Jacob Marshall Tichenor, was of Welsh descent and earned his living in several occupations as a school teacher, grocer, farmer, and carpenter. His mother, Emma Moore Tichenor, was a dressmaker. As a very young child, he came to live with his aunt Ruby Tichenor in Tennessee.

Tom began his career as a puppeteer when he was an elementary school student at Tarbox School in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1938, while attending Hume-Fogg High School, he staged a production of "Puss in Boots" for the Children's Department of the Nashville Public Library Main Library, beginning an approximately fifty-year relationship with the children of Nashville.

In 1943, Tichenor joined the Army's Special Services Corps, bringing movies and stage productions to soldiers in England, France, and Germany. Upon his return to the United States in 1945, he attended college in Pennsylvania, and came home to Nashville to study at George Peabody College for Teachers.

In 1947, Tichenor joined the staff of the Children's Department of the Nashville Public Library, and he began creating marionette productions to entertain children. Tichenor was a renowned puppeteer, playwright, designer, lyricist and performer in a very active career. In 1961, at the invitation of Gower Champion, Tichenor took his puppets to New York's Broadway, for important roles in the musical production of "Carnival," in a two-year run of 719 performances at the Imperial Theatre and the Winter Garden Theatre. Returning to Nashville at the end of 1967, he joined the Nashville Public Library Story Hour and Puppet Playhouse and soon created entertaining productions with such

unforgettable puppet and marionette characters such as Carrot Top, Renardo the Fox, Marco Polo Bear, Rumpelstiltskin, Bookworm, Felicia Fieldmouse, Witchie and Poindexter.

At his retirement in 1988, Mr. Tichenor donated many of his original marionettes and puppets to continue the legacy of bringing the world of puppetry to children. Tichenor passes away on November 18, 1992 at the Alvin C. York Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Murfreesboro, and was interred in the Nashville National Cemetery in Madison, Tennessee.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

The collection consists of three scrapbooks and miscellany, related to the life and career of Nashville puppeteer Tom Tichenor (1923-1992). Materials include photographs, newsclippings, ephemera, articles, correspondence, and several original writings of Tom Tichenor. The articles are from *The Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville Banner* newspapers, pertaining to Tichenor's career and his puppet theatre productions while an employee of the Children's Division, Nashville Public Library Main Library. The photographs are generally the 8 x 10 black and white prints that accompanied the newspaper articles. The original writings, correspondence, and program fliers of original theatre productions such as "To the Moon" and "Carnival" provide information about the puppeteers' achievements and career. Includes sources, circa 1970s, about Diane McNabb, a former Director of the Children's Division, Nashville Public Library's Main Library.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

The collection is comprised of two series.

Series I. Scrapbooks (3 volumes)

Series II. Miscellaneous (Oversize folder and 2 envelopes)

Arrangement:

The scrapbooks are arranged in a semi-chronological order. The miscellaneous materials are arranged according to format (original writings, correspondence, etc.)

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: In library use only. Available by appointment.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction: This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Tichenor, Tom

McNabb, Diane

Corporate Names/Organizations:

Public Library of Nashville and Davidson County. Children's Division

Subjects:

Children's theatre--Tennessee--Nashville

Libraries and puppets--Tennessee--Nashville

Puppeteers--Tennessee--Nashville

Genre/Document Types:

Scrapbooks

Photographs

Manuscripts

Programs

Correspondence

Occupations:

Puppeteers--Tennessee--Nashville

Associated and Related Material

Related materials include the original puppet and marionette collection donated to the Nashville Public Library by Tom Tichenor.

Separated Material The following loose and/or oversize materials were removed from the scrapbooks and rehoused within Series II. Miscellaneous:

1. *Civic Week* (May 8, 1953), complete news digest, includes an article about Tichenor "King of Make Believe."
2. "Puppet Show, Its Audience: Youngsters Share the Trials of Maria, the Beautiful Ballerina" n.d.
3. "Tichenor's Timbered *Magical Setting*," Included in: *The Nashville Tennessean*, Aug. 24, 1969. Section F.
4. "Tichenor Marionettes Now 21 Years Old" by Clara Hieronymus. *The Nashville Tennessean*, Nov. 22, 1959. 1 sheet
5. The program fliers: "To the Moon" Nashville Children's Theatre, and "Night of the Full Moon," Circle Players.

Administrative Information

Copyright: Copyright status is undetermined, published materials protected.

Preferred Citation: Tom Tichenor Scrapbooks, Special Collections Division of the Nashville Public Library, 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37219.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Unknown provenance, the scrapbooks were probably compiled by the Nashville Public Library staff.

Ownership and Custodial History: Unknown.

Processing Information: Processed by Leanne Garland in April 2006.

Accruals: None.

References to Works by or about Collection Creator/Topic

Tom Tichenor. *Christmas Tree Crafts*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1975].
Nashville Room Authors Coll. j745.59T -Circulating copies are available
in Main, Children's Room.

Folk Plays for Puppets You Can Make. New York: Abingdon Press, [1959]
Neat-O, the Supermarket Mouse. Illustrated by Ray Cruz. Nashville: Abingdon,
1981. Nashville Room Authors Coll. j791.53 T555f and Main, Children's
Room.

Sir Patches and the Dragon. Illustrated by Mary Helen Wallace. Nashville:
Aurora Publishers, [1971] Call no.: Juvenile Fiction Tichenor

Smart Bear. Drawings by Margo Locke. Nashville: Abingdon Press, [1970]
Tom Tichenor's Puppets. Nashville: Abingdon Press, [1971]
Nashville Room Authors Coll. E Tichenor and Main, Children's Room.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Scrapbooks, ca. 1947-ca. 1985

The scrapbook series is comprised of three albums of photographs, program brochures, ephemera, and published newspaper and magazine articles relating to Tom Tichenor's puppet productions and story hours of the Children's Division of the Nashville Public Library (both the Carnegie Library and the Ben West Library). Many of the sources pertain to Tichenor's career and recognition that extended beyond Nashville. The articles are primarily from *The Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville Banner* newspapers.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Container List

Box 1 of 1

Scrapbook I, ca. 1947-ca. 1950

Comprised of local newspaper articles, photographs, and ephemera related to Tom Tichenor and the Children's Division of the Nashville Public Library. Highlights from the scrapbooks include, but are not limited to the following:

Articles

"Library 'Reading Road Contest' Winners Listed. *The Nashville Banner*, July 31, 1947.

“One on the Aisle” by Josephine Murphey. *The Nashville Tennessee Magazine* (Mar. 12, 1950)

An article related to the winners named in the “Hansel and Gretel” contest, n.d.

“Curtain Time at Christmas” in *Girls Today*, Vol. 9, no. 12 (Dec. 1950), pt. 4. The article depicts Tichenor’s special Christmas occasion puppet show, doll furniture, and Tichenor’s workshop. (complete issue)

The Nashville Tennessean Magazine, Jan. 24, 1954. Includes “Poindexter Packs a Punch” by Louise Davis. An article about Tom Tichenor’s puppet pup named Poindexter and the marionette show at the Nashville Public Library.

“Tom Tichenor Takes a Holiday: Puppeteer Stay Short, N. Y. Calls” by Clara Hieronymous. Mar. 25, 1962.

Photographs

1. “Deep Concentration at Performance of ‘Jack Rabbit and the Beanstalk’”--
A group of schoolchildren watching a marionette performance in the Children’s room of the Nashville Public Library.
2. Tom Tichenor and Linda Harap [Harper?] working the marionette puppets.
3. Tichenor with a “Jack Rabbit” puppet.
4. Cinderella” set design, Children’s Dept., Nashville Public Library
5. Girl Scouts shown with dolls they made, after a Tichenor design.
6. Spring bunny rabbits.
7. Puppet on stage.

Loose Ephemera

1. Typescript of an original story program.
2. “Carnival” flyer.
3. Wormwood Forest characters, copyright 1949.

Scrapbook II, ca. 1974-ca. 1976

Comprised of newspaper clippings and articles about The Nashville Public Library Puppet Playhouse and educational puppet shows, Mrs. Edward McNabb, Director of children’s services for the Metro Public Library, *The Trees of Christmas* celebration at the Botanical Gardens and Fine Arts Center of Cheekwood, Davidson County Horticultural Society, storytelling art, Children’s Book Week, Children’s Division of the Public Library downtown. Highlights from the scrapbooks include, but are not limited to the following:

Articles

“Bringing Books to Life” by Joe White and Jack Gunter.

“Storytelling Art to be Explored at Peabody College Workshop Saturday” by Leila D. Phillips. *The Nashville Banner*, Nov. 6, 1974.

“Library’s Mice Investment Pays Off in Big Way” by Marsha Van de Berg. *The Tennessean*, Sept. 24, 1974.

“Menagerie Stranger than Library’s Fiction” by Alan Carmichael. An article about the various pets in the department, such as: gerbils, turtles, a parakeet named “Charlie Byrd,” fish, a cat named “Stewart,” and eight guinea pigs.

“Wizard Doing Word Magic at Library” by Alan Carmichael about the Puppet Playhouse’s Wonderful Word Wizard and the Marco Polo Bear. [*Tennessean*, Nov. 17, 1975]

“Tichenor’s Friends ‘Live’ for Christmas” by Clara Hieronymus. An article about Tom Tichenor’s home décor, dolls, and tree ornaments. [*Tennessean*, Dec. 21, 1975]

“Kids Tell Tales in Metro Schools” by Lisa Hemby. An article about the re-enactment performances of American folk tales. [*Nashville Tennessean*, May 16, 1976]

“Library’s Flibbers Not Just Kid Stuff” by Lisa Hemby. An article about Wanda Burns and Dan Cox’s program skit for youth and how to make flibbers. [*Nashville Tennessean*, Nov. 14, 1976]

“Santa’s Workshop or Tom Tichenor’s” by Clara Hieronymus. An article about visiting Tom Tichenor’s house at Christmastime. [*Tennessean*, Dec. 16, 1976]

“Tom Tichenor Makes Christmas Come Alive!” by James Ewing. *Nashville Magazine*, Dec. 1976.

Scrapbook III, ca. 1977-ca. 1988

Comprised of articles, newsclippings, and photographs about Tom Tichenor’s puppetry and marionette creations, programming at the Nashville public library (Ben West Library) Children’s Department, the Puppet Playhouse, and an article about Diane McNabb, Director of the Children’s Division. Includes information about Mayor Richard Fulton’s participation in Japanese Day and the Children’s International Education Center at the Nashville Public Library.

Articles

“Her tales have been told around the world,” by Leila D. Phillips. *Nashville Banner*, June 30, 1982. An article about storyteller-novelist Anne Pellowski and the Children’s International Educational Center at the Ben West Library.

Tom Tichenor letter, to “Dear Karen” (1 sheet)

Certificate of Appreciation to Nashville Public Library, extended by Hermitage School, 1985

“Word on a String,” [newspaper article] Dec. 10, 1978. Article about Tom Tichenor.

“Tichenor Continues Tradition” by Clara Hieronymus. Dec. 24, 1978.

Photographs

The Tom Tichenor Theatre (2)

A Puppet Playhouse performance and schoolchildren

The 40th anniversary recognition of Tichenor marionette shows at the Nashville Public Library (4)

Series II. Miscellaneous, ca. 1950-ca. 1983

The miscellaneous series is comprised of original writings, correspondence, and program fliers related to Tom Tichenor and the Children’s Department of the Nashville Public Library.

Arrangement

Arranged by format.

Container List

Box 1

Envelope 1, folder a. Original Writings

Includes original works by Tom Tichenor, such as “The Secret of the Silver Snail,” “Out of the Silver Mist,” “The Willow Tree,” and “A Christmas Legend.”

Envelope 1, folder b. Original Writings

Includes costume and stage production information, “Hot Puff the Dragon,” and “The Last of the Wretched Creatures: A Story for Grownups” by Charles B. Hunt.

Envelope 2, folder a Publications and Theatre Programs

Includes the July 1961 issue of “Theatre Arts” featuring an article “A Case of Puppet Love” by Tom Tichenor, and four theatrical program fliers: “To the Moon” Nashville Children’s Theatre, “Night of the Full Moon,” Circle Players, and two “Carnival” programs.

Envelope 2, folder b Correspondence

Three letters and one postcard circa 1979 and 1980’s.

Corrugated Board Wrap of Oversize Materials (4 published articles)

Civic Week (May 8, 1953), complete news digest, includes an article about Tichenor “King of Make Believe”

“Puppet Show, Its Audience: Youngsters Share the Trials of Maria, the Beautiful Ballerina” n.d.

“Tichenor’s Timbered *Magical Setting*,” Included in: *The Nashville Tennessean*, Aug. 24, 1969. Section F.

“Tichenor Marionettes Now 21 Years Old” by Clara Hieronymus. *The Nashville Tennessean*, Nov. 22, 1959. 1 sheet