NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD


Papers: 1912-1990
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Neb.: Dance instructor
Size: 2.25 cu.ft.; 7 boxes + oversized

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Daughter of George L. and Ida (Parsons) Waters, Flavia was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on April 3, 1902. Waters was taking very basic dance classes at the Y.W.C.A, then inspiration struck as she saw Ruth St. Denis dance in 1914. She knew dancing was her calling as a career. Ballet instructions were learned from Charlotte Whedon Scott, these ending after graduating from high school. Then the chance to spend ten weeks at the Rocky Mountain Dancing Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado was offered to her. Here she received additional ballet lessons from Portis Mansfield and Charlotte Perry. On her return to Lincoln, Waters started to teach dance at the Rosewilde School of Dancing. Keeping herself busy, Waters convinced the Rialto and Lyric Theatre to let her create dances for the introduction before a movie. After her sophomore year at UNL, Waters returned to the Rocky Mountain Dancing Camp to teach, however at the end of this summer, her career would take a different turn.

Waters, along with four other dancers, were trained under Portis Mansfield to start a vaudeville show. The show was produced by Ota Gygi and his wife Maryon Vadie. This was the beginning of a three year professional dance career. The cities the group toured were Springfield, Massachusetts, Hartford, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Illinois and New York, New York. A second tour found them in the Canadian cities of Toronto and Montreal, along with the larger cities in Oklahoma and Kansas. Waters last tour with the group took her to the west coast cities of Winnipeg and Vancouver Canada, Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California. At this time, all the travel had gotten monotonous and Waters desired to marry and settle down.

She married John Leland Champe on December 27, 1924, making a home in Lincoln, Nebraska. John knew Flavia wanted to return to teaching dance, so they made a makeshift studio in the basement of their home. This grew into a full studio, where she took on the role of choreographing the dances for the Pinewood Bowl productions. During the summers from 1947-1980, she would assist her husband John in anthropological field research in New Mexico. Flavia Waters Champe would instruct students on dance for five decades, finally hanging up the ballet slippers in 1978. She would go on to write an autobiography, Innocents on Broadway, along with The Matachines Dance of the Upper Rio Grande: History, Music, and Choreography.

Flavia Waters Champe died on October 6, 1992. She is buried next to her husband at Andrew Cemetery outside of Friend, Saline County, Nebraska.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of seven boxes and misc. oversized materials arranged into three series: 1) Personal Life, 2) Professional Life and 3) Assorted Dance Materials

**Series 1** contains information on the life of Flavia before opening her studio in 1924. The bulk of the materials in this series consist of her “Mother Dearie” scrapbooks which she later used in writing her autobiographical book, *Innocents on Broadway*.

**Series 2** includes awards, newsletters and documents on the Beaux Arts Ball dating to the 1930s-1940s. Of special note are the note cards kept on all of her students noting the classes and seasons of attendance to the studio. In tandem are cards which contain the costumes for the recitals over the years.

**Series 3** holds the assorted dance materials. This includes information on the Charles Weidman article, other dance studio programs and newspaper clippings. Of special note are the programs from Pinewood Bowl from 1952-1966.

Numerous photographs and photo albums have been transferred to the photo collection (RG2001.PH). Please ask a Reference Staff member for assistance with the photographs. See also the audio-visual collection for moving images.

DESCRIPTION

Series 1 - Personal Life

Box 1

Folder

1. Dancing Scrapbook, 1912-1918
2. Dancing Scrapbook, 1919-1920
3. Mother Dearie scrapbooks, original letters and clippings, 1914, 1922, n.d.
4. Mother Dearie scrapbooks, Portia’s Letters, 1921-1922
5. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1921, Summer-Dec. 31
6. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1922, Jan-Apr. 29
7. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1922, May 2-Aug. 29
8. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1922, Sept. 1-Dec. 30
10. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1923, Aug. 4-Dec. 31
11. Mother Dearie scrapbook, 1924, Jan. 2-May 24
12. Mother Dearie scrapbook, news clippings, 1922-1923

Series 2 - Professional Life

15. School of Dance, 1924-1930
16. Studio newsletters, etc., c.1940s-1970s
18. Beaux Arts Ball (Nebraska Art Association), 1930s-1940s

Box 2  Ballroom Dance Student Cards, 1924-1977
Box 3  Student Cards A-G, 1924-1977
Box 4  Student Cards H-N, 1924-1977
Box 5  Student Cards O-Z, 1924-1977
Box 6  Costume Card Files

Series 3 - Assorted Dance Materials
Box 7
Folder

2. Charles Weidman Research Scrapbook, 1930s-1970s
4. Mayor’s Arts Award materials, 1978
7. Marjorie Corrington, 1930s

Misc. musical scores (see oversized)
Flyer - University Week at Hooper, Neb., ca. 1920s (see oversize)