

# **19th Century playbills, 1803-1902**

## **FLP.TH.C.PLAYBILLS**

**Finding aid prepared by Megan Good and Forrest Wright**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

November 08, 2011

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Free Library of Philadelphia: Rare Book Department

2010.06.22

Philadelphia, PA, 19103

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Free Library of Philadelphia: Rare Book Department
<b>Creator</b>	Glase, Paul E.
<b>Title</b>	19th Century playbills
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	Bulk, 1852-1902
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1803-1939
<b>Extent</b>	29.25 Linear feet 117 volumes (many volumes are boxed)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The 19th Century playbills collection contains a range of material related to theater culture in nineteenth century Philadelphia and in selected other theaters across the northeastern United States. Researchers will find nineteenth century playbills from the following Philadelphia theaters: the Walnut Street Theatre, the Academy of Music, the Arch Street Theatre, the Chestnut Street Theatre, National Theatre (Walnut Street), the National Theatre (Chestnut Street), the Melodeon, and the Continental Theatre. There are also playbills from the Chestnut Street, Arch Street, and 11th Street opera houses. This collection contains an assortment of scrapbooks which include newspaper clippings, photographs, and reviews of actors and performances. The majority of scrapbooks were assembled by various theater enthusiasts; however ten were compiled by theater producer and director Paul E. Glase, who was active in the Philadelphia theater scene during the early twentieth century. Because the collection covers an extensive period of time, it would be extremely valuable to researchers interested in the history and evolution of theater in Philadelphia, especially the latter half of the nineteenth century. The scrapbooks also have considerable research value, as many include</p>

newspaper clippings and photographs of famous actors and actresses of the nineteenth century whose careers may not otherwise be extensively documented.

**Preferred Citation note**

[Description and date of item], [Box and folder number], 19th Century playbills, 1803-1939 (bulk, 1852-1902), Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department -- Theatre Collection.

## Biographical/Historical note

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Theater in Philadelphia has a long history, extending at least as far back as 1766 with the construction of the Southwark Theatre, which was located on South (then Cedar) Street, close to the waterfront. Since that time, the city has developed a rich theatrical heritage that included the establishment of theater troupes and the construction of new theaters throughout the city. Of note was the Chestnut Street Theatre, nicknamed as “Old Drury,” the Walnut Street Theatre, Arch Street Theatre, and the Academy of Music. Philadelphians enjoyed a wide breadth of popular entertainment at those theaters including, but not limited to, burlesque shows, minstrel shows, vaudeville, melodramas, comedies, and musical shows. In the mid 1800s, “Philadelphians loved ephemeral pieces based on contemporary life. At least thirty-seven plays, produced between 1841 and 1854, had the name of Philadelphia in their titles...” (Weigle, p. 342).

Paul E. Glase (born 1885) was an avid collector of early American playbills and materials relating to the history of the entertainment world. He is one of the best known directors and producers of amateur productions in the greater Philadelphia area. Glase started his entertainment career as an extra at the turn of the 20th century and later gravitated towards theater management. He was a manager of Wilmer & Vincent’s Embassy in Reading, PA, the State and Capitol theaters, and a press agent for the Hippodrome, Princess, Empire, Pictureland, Grand, Palace, and Orpheum Theatres. Glase also wrote for *The Historical Review of Berks County* and issued an annual pamphlet, “Lest We Forget,” in 1938 that contained brief reviews of careers of show people who died the previous year.

### Bibliography

Weigle, Russel, editor. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982.

“History of Theatre in Collection of Showbills.” *Box Office*, January 26, 1952. 48-49. ([http://issuu.com/boxoffice/docs/boxoffice\\_012652-1](http://issuu.com/boxoffice/docs/boxoffice_012652-1))

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## Scope and Contents note

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The 19th Century Playbills collection contains over 100,000 playbills dating from 1803 to 1899. The majority of playbills in the collection are from Philadelphia theaters, but there are also selected playbills from New York and other cities in the Northeastern United States. The collection also includes 26 scrapbooks which document the theater culture of Philadelphia from 1852 to 1939.

The “Playbills” series, 1803-1899, houses playbills from Philadelphia theaters including: the Walnut Street Theatre, the Academy of Music, the Arch Street Theatre, the Chestnut Street Theatre, National Theatre (Walnut Street), the National Theatre (Chestnut Street), the Melodeon, and the Continental Theatre. The series also contains playbills from the Chestnut Street, Arch Street, and 11th Street opera

houses; and advertising sheets for several local museums, including the City Museum, Colonel Wood's Museum, and the Dime Museum.

The "Scrapbooks" series, 1852-1939, consists of two sets of theatrical scrapbooks. The first, "Philadelphia Programs," is a set of 16 scrapbooks that documents the history of Philadelphia theater through playbills, articles, and illustrations of actors and actresses clipped from popular magazines. These volumes cover the period 1852 to 1939.

The other set of scrapbooks, "Paul E. Glase scrapbooks," were compiled and donated to the Free Library of Philadelphia by Paul E. Glase. These ten scrapbooks are arranged alphabetically by actor and actress, and include playbills, programs, articles, and magazine illustrations. The Glase scrapbooks include materials from Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington D.C.

With the exception of the Glase scrapbooks, most items in the collection are included in the Theatre Collection's Philadelphia Theatre Index, which chronicles where and when professional productions played in Philadelphia between 1855 and 2000.

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## Arrangement note

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The collection is arranged in two series: I. Playbills; and II. Scrapbooks. Series I is arranged alphabetically by theater. Series II is divided into two subseries: i. Philadelphia programs is arranged chronologically; ii. Paul E. Glase is arranged alphabetically by actor or actress's last name.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Free Library of Philadelphia: Rare Book Department 2010.06.22

### Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research use.

### Conditions Governing Use note

The right of access to material does not imply the right of publication. Permission for reprinting, reproduction, or extensive quotation from the rare books, manuscripts, prints or drawings must be obtained through written application, stating the use to be made of the material.

The reader bears the responsibility for any possible infringement of copyright laws in the publication of such material.

A reproduction fee will be charged if the material is to be reproduced in a commercial publication.

### **Processing Information note**

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century Collections*, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages, in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Related Archival Materials note**

Historical Society of Philadelphia: Playbills collection.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Academy of Music (Philadelphia, Pa.).
- Arch Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.).
- Chestnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.).
- National Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.).

- Walnut Street Theatre (Organization : Philadelphia, Pa.).

### **Genre(s)**

- Clippings
- Playbills
- Scrapbooks
- Souvenir programs

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

### **Subject(s)**

- Burlesque (Theater)
- Comedy
- Drama
- Minstrel shows
- Musicals
- Performing arts
- Theater
- Vaudeville



## Playbills

## Collection Inventory

<b>Playbills 1803-1915</b>	
	<b>Box</b>
11th Street Opera House (Sanford's Opera House) 1855-1862	1
11th Street Opera House (Sanford's Opera House) 1859-1871	2
11th Street Opera House (Sanford's Opera House) 1863	3
11th Street Opera House (Sanford's Opera House) 1863 September-1863 December	4
Academy of Music 1860-1895	5
Arch Street Opera House 1872-1878	6
Arch Street Theatre 1828-1849	7
Arch Street Theatre 1851 September 18-1852 December 31	8
Arch Street Theatre 1853 January 1-1853 May 31	9

## Playbills

Arch Street Theatre 1853 April 1-1853 December 19	10
Arch Street Theatre 1854-1858	11
	<b>Volume</b>
Arch Street Theatre 1858 August-1859 May	12
	<b>Box</b>
Arch Street Theatre 1860-1899	13
	<b>Volume</b>
Arch Street Theatre 1860 August 20-1860 December 29	14
Arch Street Theatre 1861	15
Arch Street Theatre 1861 January 1-1861 April	16
	<b>Box</b>
Arch Street Theatre 1861-1863	17
Arch Street Theatre 1863-1864	18
Arch Street Theatre 1864-1866	19

Playbills

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Arch Street Theatre 1866-1868	20
Arch Street Theatre 1867-1868	21
Arch Street Theatre 1869-1871	22
Arch Street Theatre 1871-1874	23
Arch Street Theatre 1874-1879	24
Arch Street Theatre 1876-1878	25
Arch Street Theatre 1879-1883	26
Arch Street Theatre 1883-1885	27
Arch Street Theatre 1885-1887	28
Arch Street Theatre 1887-1890	29
Broad Street Theatre 1880-1900	30
Chestnut Street Opera House (Fox's American Theatre) 1880-1899	31

## Playbills

Chestnut Street Theatre 1803-1827	32
Chestnut Street Theatre 1828	33
Chestnut Street Theatre 1829-1849	34
Chestnut Street Theatre 1851-1900	35
	<b>Volume</b>
Chestnut Street Theatre 1876-1879	36-37
Chestnut Street Theatre 1876 January-1979 June	38-41
	<b>Box</b>
Dime Museums 1842-1889	42
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
<p>This box contains playbills from the following museums: American Museum (1871), Barnum's Museum (undated), Broadway Theatre (1852), The City Museum (1854-1889), Colonel Wood's Museum (1872-1883), Forepaugh's Theatre and Museum (1886), Frazier's Museum and Theatre (1887), The Great European Museum (undated), Long's Museum (1859), Peale's Museum (1847), and Philadelphia Museum (1842-1849)</p>	
The Melodeon 1860-1861	43

## Playbills

Minstrels 1830s-1915	44
Minstrels 1860s-1870s	45
National Theatre, Circus, and Amphitheatre (Chestnut Street) 1842-1853	46
National Theatre (Walnut Street) 1854-1860	47
National Theatre (Walnut Street) 1861-1863	48
	<b>Volume</b>
National Theatre (Walnut Street) 1880-1883	49
New York Bowery Theatre 1827-1828	50
New York Bowery Theatre 1828-1829	51
Philadelphia Theatre 1817-1818	52
	<b>Box</b>
Walnut Street Theatre 1820-1835	53
Walnut Street Theatre 1835 January-1849 November	54

## Playbills

Walnut Street Theatre 1850 June-1852 December	55
Walnut Street Theatre 1853 January-1862 March	56
Walnut Street Theatre 1858-1859	57
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
This box includes some Arch Street Theatre playbills from 1858-1859	
Walnut Street Theatre 1862 September-1862 December	58
Walnut Street Theatre 1863 January-1863 December	59
Walnut Street Theatre 1864-1900	60
	<b>Volume</b>
Walnut Street Theatre 1866	61
Walnut Street Theatre 1866-1867	62
Walnut Street Theatre 1868-1869	63
Walnut Street Theatre 1869-1870	64

Playbills

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Walnut Street Theatre 1870-1871	65
Walnut Street Theatre 1871-1872	66
Walnut Street Theatre 1874-1875	67
Walnut Street Theatre 1874, 1877-1878	68
Walnut Street Theatre 1875-1876	69
Walnut Street Theatre 1882-1883	70
Walnut Street Theatre 1883-1884	71
Walnut Street Theatre 1885-1886	72
Walnut Street Theatre 1886-1887	73
Walnut Street Theatre 1887-1888	74
Walnut Street Theatre 1880-1889	75
Walnut Street Theatre 1889-1890	76

**Scrapbooks**

Walnut Street Theatre 1890-1891	77
Walnut Street Theatre 1891-1892	78
Walnut Street Theatre 1892-1893	79
Walnut Street Theatre 1893-1894	80

**Scrapbooks 1852-1939****Scope and Contents note**

Researchers should be aware that dates provided for the scrapbooks are approximate. Though not always noted, processors noticed clippings from as late as the 1960s intermingled with clippings and other materials from the late 19th century.

**Philadelphia programs 1852-1939**

	<b>Volume</b>
1852-1876	81
1863-1933	82
	<b>Box</b>
1876 January-1876 August	83



## Philadelphia programs

	<b>Volume</b>
1878-1887	84
	<b>Box</b>
1878-1892	85
	<b>Volume</b>
1879-1923	86
	<b>Box</b>
1886-1890	87
	88
1887-1893	88
1889-1890	89
	90
1890-1891	90
1890 December-1891 December	91
	92
1891 December-1892 April	92
1892 October-1893 March	93
	<b>Volume</b>

## Philadelphia programs

1890-1902

94

**Scope and Contents note**

Material from the following theatres can be found in this scrapbook: Broad Street Theatre (1890-1895), Grand Opera House (1892-1894), Chestnut Street Theatre (1890-1900), Walnut Street Theatre (1899, 1901), Chestnut Street Opera House (1893-1900), and the Garrick Theatre (1902).

**Box**

1893 March-1893 December

95

1893-1900

96

1894-1896

97

1894-1897

98

1894-1900

99

**Volume**

1894-1900

100

**Box**

1895-1902

101

**Volume**

**Paul E. Glase**

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1895-1902	102
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**Box**

1896-1909	103
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1896-1939	104
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**Volume**

1897 September 4-1898 July 4	105
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1898-1899	106
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**Box**

1899-1900	107
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**Paul E. Glase undated****Arrangement note**

The Paul E. Glase subseries is arranged according to its original order, first with "Minstrels" then arranged alphabetically by actor and actress's last name.

**Box**

Minstrels undated	108
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A-Bos undated	109
Bou-C undated	110
D-F undated	111
G-H undated	112
I-L undated	113
M-O undated	114
P-R undated	115
S-T undated	116
U-Z undated	117