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HUGH ABERCROMBIE ANDERSON

Papers

MF-147

Arranged and Described

by

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Scope and Content

This is a very small amount of material related to the career of Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, a Newfoundlander who spent most of his working life in New York City. It includes the dust jacket to Anderson's biography of his brother, John Murray Anderson, a prominent Broadway producer in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; a review of the biography by Sylvia Wigh, which appeared in a St. John's newspaper; a newspaper report on Hugh Anderson's visit to St. John's in 1955; a clipping showing him addressing the St. John's Rotary Club; and two newspaper accounts of his death in 1965. The information contained in this material is mainly biographical.

In June 1995 the Archives acquired the original document awarding Anderson membership in the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire. At the same time, a newspaper clipping of a column written by the Wayfarer in the St John newspaper, *The Daily News*, was found in a box of miscellaneous clippings which were part of the bequest to Memorial University of Joseph R. Smallwood. The clipping contained information on the Anderson family and a reprint of a poem by Hugh Anderson, "Damming the Belle Isle Straits", which he sent to the newspaper. It has been photocopied for preservation reasons and added to this collection.

Gilbert Higgins was given a typescript of Anderson's play "The Mermaid Tavern" by Anderson many years ago. In July 1996 he presented that copy to the Archives.

Custodial History

In the fall of 1993 the estate of Edward Ellis, a St. John's resident, was offered for auction sale. One of the items offered was a very good copy of *Out without my Rubbers*, a biography of Newfoundland-born Broadway producer John Murray Anderson by his brother, Hugh Anderson. The Centre for Newfoundland Studies was successful in obtaining this book, which, according to the inscription, had belonged to Florence Miller, a poet who lived in Topsail. Inside the book there were several newspaper clippings about the Andersons, mainly Hugh Anderson. These were transferred to the Archives in 1994 where they were all photocopied for preservation purposes as the newsprint had become quite brittle. One clipping on John Murray Anderson's death was added to MF-288, which contains other material related to him. The others, together with the dust jacket from the book, constitute the main body of this collection. (94-027)

In June 1995 the Archives acquired Anderson's certificate for the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire from Livyers Antiques, who had acquired it from a private collector who had purchased the item in the United States. (95-064) A photocopy of a newspaper clipping of a poem by Anderson entitled "Damming the Belle Isle Straits" was added at this time; it was found in a box of miscellaneous newspaper clippings which were part of the Joseph R. Smallwood bequest to Memorial University in 1992.

The typescript of the play "The Mermaid Tavern" was a gift (96-080) to the archives from Gilbert Higgins, Stephenville, Newfoundland in July 1996. Higgins had been given this copy by Anderson many years ago.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on access to or use of the contents of this collection. Users should be aware that copyright rules and regulations may apply. It is the responsibility of the user to obtain copyright clearance from the copyright holder(s).

Extent

8 items

Biography

Hugh Abercrombie Anderson was born in St. John's, Newfoundland on February 10, 1890, the son of Amelia Murray and John Anderson. His father was a prominent businessman who served on the St. John's City Council, as a Member of the House of Assembly and a Member of the Legislative Council. John Anderson is credited with being the father of Daylight Savings Time, as he formulated the idea and shepherded its successful passage through the Newfoundland Legislature in 1917.

Hugh Anderson received his early education at Bishop Feild College in St. John's before following the path of many other young lads of his social class: he was sent to Europe in order to enhance his education, first at the Edinburgh Academy in Scotland, and later in Switzerland and France. After this tour of Europe he returned to St. John's and in 1909 joined his father's business. He remained there until 1915.

With the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 many young Newfoundlanders were quick to join up to serve King and country. The First Five Hundred Newfoundland recruits left for Europe in October. Anderson joined the Newfoundland Regiment in 1915 and was soon in England, but medical problems prevented him from seeing service at the front. Instead he worked in the Pay and Record Office in London. In 1917 he was promoted to Lieutenant and in 1918 to Captain. In 1919 he was awarded an MBE in the military division for his war service, one of only nine members of the Regiment so honoured.

After the war, in 1919, Anderson returned to St. John's and his father's business. He became involved with the newly formed Great War Veterans' Association and worked hard for improved benefits and pensions for returning veterans. He was soon restless, however. His older brother, John Murray Anderson (1886-1954), had gone to the United States in 1911 where he was involved in the New York theatre and with motion pictures. In 1921, Hugh decided to join him, eventually becoming his business manager and associate producer. During their lengthy collaboration they produced 29 major Broadway musicals. From 1926 to 1929 he directed a New York theatre school; some of the students were Bette Davis, Joan Blondell, Katherine Hepburn and Paul Muni.

In addition to his involvement in the theatre as a producer and teacher, Anderson was a prolific writer. He wrote plays directly for the stage (*The Mermaid Tavern*, *Queen Elizabeth Looks in her Mirror*, *Auld Lang Syne*), and dramatized others for the stage from works already published in another form (Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Suicide*

Club). He acted as writer in collaboration with his brother on the latter's biography, *Out without my Rubbers : The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson as told to Hugh Abercrombie Anderson*, published in 1954. He also served as secretary and president of the Canadian Club of New York, and wrote a book on the history of that club entitled *The Kinship of Two Countries*, published in 1964. For many years he served as editor of the quarterly publication of the Canadian Club of New York, the *Maple Leaf*. He also wrote sketches, short stories and poetry.

While Anderson spent the remainder of his life in New York, he was a somewhat regular visitor back to Newfoundland. On a return visit in 1955 he addressed the St. John's Rotary Club. Anderson married Sybil Irene Bartlett in 1917 but the marriage ended in divorce; he later married Lillian Bradley: there were no children from either marriage. He died at his home at Forest Hills Inn, Queens, New York on November 9, 1965.

<h2>Arrangement & Description</h2>
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1.0 Clippings

- Review of *Out without my Rubbers* by Sylvia Wigh, ca. 1954
- "Broadway Producer Home For Visit, Plans Movie" by Don Morris, *The Evening Telegram*, ca. 1955
- Anderson addressing St. John's Rotary Club
- "Hugh Anderson, Nfld.-Born Revue Producer, Dies" in *The Daily News*, November 11, 1965
- "Hugh A. Anderson dies...in theatre, picture business" in *The Evening Telegram* (?), November 1965
- "Damming the Belle Isle Straits", a poem by Hugh A. Anderson reprinted in the Wayfarer's column in *The Daily News*, nd

2.0 Dust Jacket

- dust jacket from Florence Miller's copy of *Out without my Rubbers* (1954)

3.0 Certificate

Certificate awarding Hugh A. Anderson membership in the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire, June 3, 1919, signed by King George V and Edward P (Grand Master of the Order), 20.2 x 32.4 cm

4.0 Plays

"The Mermaid Tavern, A One-Act Play, with Music", Copyrighted May 1929 (typescript, carbon copy)