

Lillian Gish Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2012

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2012

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms012120>

Collection Summary

Title: Lillian Gish Papers

Span Dates: 1829-1978

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1920-1969)

ID No.: MSS22871

Creator: Gish, Lillian, 1893-1993

Extent: 9,750 items ; 25 containers plus 1 artifact ; 10.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Actress. Chiefly synopses of silent films and scripts of plays, films, and television productions in which Gish did not appear; scripts, some annotated, for productions in which she did perform; letters received by Gish; and legal files.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Gish, Lillian, 1893-1993.

Organizations

America First Committee.

Subjects

Acting.

Drama--Stories, plots, etc.

Motion pictures--Production and direction.

Titles

All the way home (Play)

Anya (Play)

Arsenic and old lace (Television play)

I never sang for my father (Play)

Night of the hunter (Motion picture)

Nine Pine street (Play)

Portrait of a Madonna (Play)

Star-wagon (Play)

Uncle Vanya (Play)

Occupations

Actresses.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Lillian Gish, actress and author, were given to the Library of Congress by Gish, 1970-1980. An additional item was purchased in 1992.

Processing History

The papers of Lillian Gish were processed in 1980. Additional material was added in 1985 and 2012. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Some photographs, posters, and drawings have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Maps have been transferred to the Geography and Map Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Lillian Gish Papers.

Other Repositories

Other papers of Lillian Gish can be found in the Billy Rose Theater Division of the New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Lillian Gish in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Lillian Gish are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Lillian Gish Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1893 Oct. 14	Born, Springfield, Ohio
1901	Made her stage debut
1905	Danced in Sarah Bernhardt's stage production, New York, N.Y.
1912	Began her movie career, working for D. W. Griffith's Biograph Studio, film debut in <i>An Unseen Enemy</i>
1913	Appeared on stage with Mary Pickford in <i>A Good Little Devil</i>
1914	Appeared in the film <i>Birth of a Nation</i>
1915-1916	Appeared in the film <i>Intolerance</i>
1917	Traveled to Europe to appear in D. W. Griffith's film <i>Hearts of the World</i>
1919	Appeared in the film <i>Broken Blossoms</i>
1920	Appeared in the film <i>Way Down East</i> Directed the film <i>Remodeling Her Husband</i>
1921	Appeared in her last D. W. Griffith film <i>Orphans of the Storm</i>
1925	Joined the Metro-Goldwyn Co.

- 1925-1932 Involved in litigation resulting from suits filed by producer Charles Duell
- 1929 Appeared in her first talking motion picture, *One Romantic Night*
- 1930 Returned to the stage in the play *Uncle Vanya*
- 1948 Appeared on stage in *Crime and Punishment*
Television debut in *The Late Christopher Bean, Philco Playhouse*
- 1950 Appeared on stage in *Miss Mabel* and *The Curious Savage*
- 1954-1960 Appeared in the films *Night of the Hunter*, *Duel in the Sun*, *Portrait of Jennie*, and *The Unforgiven*
- 1960-1961 Appeared on stage in *The Family Reunion* and *All the Way Home*
- 1963 Appeared on stage in *Too True To Be Good* and *A Passage to India*
- 1965 Appeared on stage in *Romeo and Juliet*
- 1967 Appeared in the film *The Comedians*
Appeared on the stage in *I Never Sang for My Father*
- 1968 Appeared with Helen Hayes in the television version of *Arsenic and Old Lace*
- 1969 Published with Ann Pinchot *Lillian Gish; The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- 1969, 1971-1973 Toured Europe, Russia, and United States as lecturer on the art of film
- 1971 Received Honorary Academy Award
- 1973 Published *Dorothy and Lillian Gish*. New York: Scribner
Received Handel medallion, City of New York, N.Y.
- 1978 Appeared in the films *La Boheme* and *A Wedding*
- 1980 Appeared in the television film *Thin Ice*
- 1982 Received Kennedy Center Honors, Washington, D.C.
- 1983 Appeared in television production of *Hobson's Choice*
- 1984 Received the Lifetime Achievement Award, American Film Institute
Appeared in the film *Hambone and Hillie*
- 1987 Last film role in *The Whales of August*
- 1993, Feb. 27 Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Lillian Diana Gish (1893-1993) span the years 1829-1978 with the bulk of the material dating from 1920 to 1969. They are arranged into the following series: [General Correspondence](#); [Subject File](#); [Speech, Article, and Drama File](#); [Miscellany](#); [Additions](#); and [Artifacts](#).

Lillian Gish was a silent film star whose acting career on stage, in motion pictures, and on television spanned more than eighty years. The bulk of the Gish Papers consists of scripts of plays, movie and television scenarios, and synopses of silent films that are part of the [Speech, Article, and Drama File](#), but the majority of these are works in which Gish did not perform. However, there are scripts, a few of which are annotated, of productions in which she did appear, including the plays *All the Way Home*, *Anya*, *I Never Sang for My Father*, *Nine Pine Street*, *Portrait of a Madonna*, *The Star-Wagon*, and *Uncle Vanya*; the movie *The Night of the Hunter*; and the television production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

Included in the [Subject File](#) are papers pertaining to Gish's involvement with groups and organizations such as the America First Committee and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

[Miscellany](#) includes financial papers, interviews, printed matter about Gish that includes material about her younger sister, the actress Dorothy Gish, scrapbook pages featuring printed portraits of Gish in the silent film era, as well as a holograph testimonial written by the author Eugene O'Neill to his wife Carlotta.

An [Additions](#) series is comprised of material added to the papers after 1980. Addition I consists of correspondence and legal papers involving lawsuits brought against Gish by producer Charles Duell in the 1920s. Addition II is a typed letter signed by Gish in which she provides answers to two questions about actors and acting.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [General Correspondence, 1924-1970](#)
- [Subject File, 1906-1969](#)
- [Speech, Article, and Drama File, 1923-1968](#)
- [Miscellany, 1829-1969](#)
- [Additions, 1922-1978](#)
- [Artifact, 1940](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1	<u>General Correspondence, 1924-1970</u> Letters received by Gish. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 2-6	<u>Subject File, 1906-1969</u> Correspondence, printed matter, and other papers. Arranged alphabetically by topic, organization, or name of person.
BOX 7-17	<u>Speech, Article, and Drama File, 1923-1968</u> Scripts, speeches, articles. Organized by type of writing or production and alphabetically therein. Speeches are arranged chronologically.
BOX 18-21	<u>Miscellany, 1829-1969</u> Financial papers, interviews, music, printed matter, scrapbook pages, and other papers. Arranged alphabetically by type of material, topic, or name of person.
BOX 22-25	<u>Additions, 1922-1978</u> A legal file of correspondence, briefs, affidavits, and related documents in the case of Duell v. Gish, and one letter. Organized into two additions. Addition I is arranged as received from the donor and includes a guide at the beginning of the file.
BOX VA 1	<u>Artifact, 1940</u> Invitation. Described according to the series, container, and folder from which the item was removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	General Correspondence, 1924-1970 Letters received by Gish. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 1	"A" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Bushman, Francis X.
BOX 1	"B" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Cukor, George
BOX 1	"C-E" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Flynn, John T.
BOX 1	"F" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Hall, Julian
BOX 1	Hayes, Helen
BOX 1	"H-J" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Kohler, Helene
BOX 1	"K-M" miscellaneous
BOX 1	"P" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Reagan, Ronald
BOX 1	Rogers, Buddy
BOX 1	"R" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Stone, Harlan
BOX 1	"S" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Thompson, Frank, Jr.
BOX 1	"T-U" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Wanger, Walter F.
BOX 1	Weigel, Helene
BOX 1	Wilder, Thornton
BOX 1	"W" miscellaneous
BOX 1	Unidentified
BOX 2-6	Subject File, 1906-1969 Correspondence, printed matter, and other papers. Arranged alphabetically by topic, organization, or name of person.
BOX 2	America First Committee
BOX 3	American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New York, N.Y.
BOX 4	American Institute of Architects
BOX 4	Atkinson, Brooks
BOX 4	Commission of Fine Arts, report to the president
BOX 4	Congress Hall, Berlin, Germany
BOX 4	Daughters of the American Revolution
BOX 4	European trip, 1935

Subject File, 1906-1969

Container

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BOX 4	Federal Advisory Committee on the Arts
BOX 4	Federal grants for fine arts programs and projects
BOX 4	Fine Arts secretary, presidential cabinet position
BOX 5	George Eastman House Second Festival of Film Artists, Rochester, N.Y.
BOX 5	Griffith, D. W.
BOX 5	Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, N.Y.
BOX 5	Marsh, Mae
BOX 5	National Council on the Arts and Government
BOX 6	Purves, Edmund R. <i>See Container 4, American Institute of Architects</i>
BOX 6	Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla.
BOX 6	Rooke, James S.

BOX 7-17

Speech, Article, and Drama File, 1923-1968

Scripts, speeches, articles.

Organized by type of writing or production and alphabetically therein. Speeches are arranged chronologically.

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BOX 6	1941, Apr. 1
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BOX 7	<i>Bub</i>
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BOX 8	<i>The Cave Dwellers</i>
BOX 8	<i>A Charm of Finches</i>
BOX 8	<i>The Children's Playhouse</i>
BOX 8	<i>The Cotillion</i>
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BOX 9	<i>Farewell, Farewell Eugene</i>
BOX 9	<i>The Good Pretenders</i>
BOX 9	<i>The Great Big Doorstop</i>
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BOX 9	<i>High Tor</i>

Speech, Article, and Drama File, 1923-1968

Container

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BOX 10	<i>The Infinite Light</i>
BOX 10	<i>The Joyous Season</i>
BOX 10	<i>Lady from the Sea</i>
BOX 10	<i>Mother's Day</i>
BOX 10	<i>The Nightingale</i>
BOX 10	<i>Nine Pine Street</i>
BOX 10	<i>Pagan in the Parlor</i>
BOX 10	<i>Pavillon sur Mer</i>
BOX 11	<i>Peer Gynt</i>
BOX 11	<i>A Play on Mesmer</i>
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BOX 11	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
BOX 11	<i>A Sea Shell</i>
BOX 12	<i>Seven Women</i>
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BOX 12	<i>A Stranger in This City</i>
BOX 12	<i>The Sweet Birds Sang</i>
BOX 12	<i>The Third Day</i>
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BOX 13	<i>The Yearling</i>
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BOX 14	<i>The Emperor Jones</i>
BOX 14	<i>Follow Me, Boys</i>
BOX 15	<i>Orders to Kill</i>
BOX 15	<i>The Night of the Hunter</i>
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Speech, Article, and Drama File, 1923-1968

Container

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BOX 17	<i>Mr. Novak</i>
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BOX 17	Productions in which Lillian and Dorothy Gish appeared, list
BOX 18-21	Miscellany, 1829-1969 Financial papers, interviews, music, printed matter, scrapbook pages, and other papers. Arranged alphabetically by type of material, topic, or name of person.
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BOX 18	General miscellany
BOX 18	Interviews
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BOX 18	O'Neill, Eugene, testimonial to Carlotta O'Neill
BOX 18	Photographs
BOX 18	Playbills
BOX 18	Prayer books
BOX 19	Printed matter
BOX 19	About Lillian Gish and Dorothy Gish
BOX 20	Miscellaneous
BOX 21	Miscellaneous
BOX 21	Scrapbook pages
BOX 21	"The Theatre in France"
BOX 22-25	Additions, 1922-1978 A legal file of correspondence, briefs, affidavits, and related documents in the case of Duell v. Gish, and one letter. Organized into two additions. Addition I is arranged as received from the donor and includes a guide at the beginning of the file.

Additions, 1922-1978

Container

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BOX 22	Guide to files (on which the following titles are based)
BOX 22	File I. general E - Z
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Additions, 1922-1978

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BOX 25	D. pleadings
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BOX 25	Addition II, letter, 1975
BOX VA 1	Artifact, 1940
	Invitation.
	Described according to the series, container, and folder from which the item was removed.
BOX VA 1	Miscellany
BOX VA 1	Invitation to twenty-fifth anniversary screening of <i>Birth of a Nation</i> , 1940 (Container 18)