

# THEATRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

152 N. York St., 2nd Floor, Elmhurst, IL 60126  
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## Finding Aid for the TERRY HELGESEN COLLECTION

Acc. #: xx-005

Future Additions Expected: No

Finding Aid creation: August 17, 2010

Size: 10.5 linear feet (approx.)

### Abstract

The **Terry Helgesen Collection** contains 26 oversize scrapbooks, some correspondence, several draft chapters of a book on theatres, and an oil painting of a young Terry Helgesen. The scrapbooks consist of photographs and drawings of theatres collected by THS member Terry Helgesen with his descriptions of the theatres and other information such as number of seats, architect, opening and closing dates, renovation and demolition dates, and other notable facts.

### Background Information

Terry Helgesen (1914-1995) was a pianist who played on stage in the waning days of presentation houses (a short stage show followed by a movie) as well as in nightclubs. Terry was also a THS Founding member and the 1979 Member of the Year. He was born in Seattle, WA but his family moved to Santa Barbara, CA when he was still very young. He was tutored in piano by Roger Clerbois and Joseph Hoffman, among others. Terry entered vaudeville (variety entertainment with a mixture of comedy, song and dance) in a “tyke” act called “Terry and Ty” with Terry playing a miniature piano and Ty doing a quick-step. Though Terry started as part of an act, he later changed to accompaniment and played on the Orpheum, Fanchon & Marco and Publix circuits. During his travels he sought out newspapers and photographers who had images of theatres which he purchased and assembled into scrapbooks. Terry retired to Hollywood, but still entertained guests by playing the piano given to him by Cole Porter. He died in Vista, CA on July 30, 1995. His scrapbooks were donated to Theatre Historical Society after his death.

### Scope and Contents Note

This collection required disassembly of the scrapbooks so that the pages could be housed in archival boxes (36 boxes). The pages are interleaved with acid free tissue paper due to the acidic quality of the scrapbook pages. Still, many pages have continued to deteriorate and have begun to crumble. Additionally, many of the photographs are pasted onto the acidic paper. As the adhesive fails, the glue is replaced with archival photo corners. The collection (as organized by Terry Helgesen) is organized in three different ways; by architect/designer (Books 1-12), location (Books 13-25), and by type of theatre (Book 26).

### Related Materials

**Researchers interested in this collection may also wish to consult the following resources in the Theatre Historical Society holdings:**

**Other materials in the Theatre Historical Society holdings may relate to the topics in this archive. Consult the archivist for further research assistance.**

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