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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Sonora Carver Papers
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0521
Date: undated 1891-1994
Extent: 3 Cubic feet (8 boxes, 1 oversize folder)
Creator: Carver, Sonora Webster, 1904-2003
Language: English
Collection is in English.
Summary: The collection consists primarily of materials collected by Sonora Webster Carver documenting her career as a diving horse rider and later in life her advocacy work with the Lighthouse for the Blind.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated to the Archives Center by Sonora Carver, 1994.

Processing Information
Collection processed by Kelly Sanford, intern, 1996 and Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist, 1996.

Preferred Citation

Restrictions
Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.
Biographical / Historical

add

Scope and Contents

The collection consists primarily of materials collected by Sonora Webster Carver relating to her career as a diving horse rider and later in life her advocacy work with the Lighthouse for the Blind. It is arranged into six series. Series one contains biographical information about Sonora Webster Carver and her family and dates from 1924-1994. Series two includes material relating to Carver's career as a diving horse rider on the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Series three documents Carver's later life and career and also her advocacy work on behalf of people with visual impairments dating from 1953-1977. Series four contains material relating to the creation of the Walt Disney Pictures film *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken* dating from 1990-1993. Series five consists of materials relating to Dr. William Frank "Doc" Carver and the Wild West dating from 1891-1975. Series six contains miscellaneous materials dating from 1962-1991.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series.

Series 1: Biographical Information, 1924-1994, undated
Series 2: Diving Horses Career and Atlantic City, 1924-1986, undated
Series 4: Walt Disney Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken Movie, 1990-1993, undated
Series 5: Dr. William Frank "Doc" Carver and the Wild West, 1891-1975, undated

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

- Subjects:
  - Blind athletes
  - Blindness
  - Diving
  - Horsemen and horsewomen
  - Horses
  - Steel Pier (Atlantic City, N.J.)
  - Women in horse sports
Names:
   Lighthouse for the Blind.

Geographic Names:
   Atlantic City (N.J.)
   New Jersey
Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Information, 1924 - 1994, undated

Primarily consists of unpublished drafts of Carver's manuscript *A Girl and Five Brave Horses* documenting her career and memories of being a diving horse rider in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The manuscript was published in 1961 and was later used as the basis for the Walt Disney fictionalized film *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*. Also included among these materials are diaries dating from 1929-1930. There are some magazine articles relating to Sonora Webster Carver and her sister Arnette Webster French, who was also a diving horse rider. In addition to the articles there is an interview with Carver dating from 1994. A genealogy and photograph album of Sonora Carver and her family are also included among these materials. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1  Genealogy, undated

Box 5, Folder 1; Box 5, Folder 2  Photograph album of Sonora Webster Carver and family, circa 1924

Box 6, Folder 1  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, pages 1-30 , 1924-1961

Image(s)

- Red Lips' first diving picture---Houlton, Maine, 1929 / Sonora riding [black and white photoprint], 1929
  1 Item (9.75" x 7.75").

Image(s): Red Lips' first diving picture---Houlton, Maine, 1929 / Sonora riding [black and white photoprint].

Porter Studios, The (Houlton, Me.), Photographer
Diving horse with woman rider (Sonora Carver).

Unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Photographs must be handled with cotton gloves unless protected by sleeves.

Silver gelatin on paper.

Local Numbers

02052102.tif (AC Scan)

In Box 2, Folder 4.

Names:  Carver, Sonora Webster, 1904-2003

Topic:  Diving
        Women athletes
        Women in horse sports

Place:  Maine

Genre/ Form:  Photographs -- 1920-1930

Box 6, Folder 2  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, pages 31-60, 1924-1961

Box 6, Folder 3  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, pages 61-90, 1924-1961
Box 6, Folder 4  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, pages 91-114, 1924-1961
Box 6, Folder 5  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, pages 115-141, 1924-1961
Box 1, Folder 2  Diary, 1929 January 1 - 1929 February 9
Box 1, Folder 3  Diary, 1929 February 9 - 1929 March 28
Box 1, Folder 4  Diary, 1929 March 28 - 1929 June 13
Box 1, Folder 5  Diary, 1929 June 14 - 1929 August 6
Box 1, Folder 6  Diary, 1929 October 17-1930 January
Box 1, Folder 7  Draft of Unpublished manuscript, *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, pages 1-9, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 8  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, pages 10-103, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 9  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, pages 104-181, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 10  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter one, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 11  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter two, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 12  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter three, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 13  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter four, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 14  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter five, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 15  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter six, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 16  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter seven, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 17  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter eight, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 18  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter nine, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 19  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter ten, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 20  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter eleven, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 21  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter twelve, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 22  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter thirteen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 23  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter fourteen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 24  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter fifteen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 25  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter sixteen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 26  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter seventeen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 27  Draft of *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, chapter eighteen, circa 1961
Box 1, Folder 28  Article about Carver, *Inn Dixie*, 1961 February
Box 1, Folder 29  "How to Plan a Valentine's Party", 1961
Box 1, Folder 30  Article, *Publisher's Weekly*, 1962 January 1
Box 1, Folder 31  Article about Carver, *Tourovues*, 1968 July 8
Box 1, Folder 32  Article about Arnette Webster French, *Outdoor Whirl*, 1987 May
Box 2, Folder 1  Interview with Carver, 1994 November 3
Box 2, Folder 2  Unpublished Manuscript, undated

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Series 2: Diving Horse Career and Atlantic City, 1924 - 1986, undated

Series primarily documents Carver’s career as a diving horse rider through photographs illustrating acts and the activities of other women who participated in this popular form of water sport at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The photographs date from the late 1920s through the 1930s and are supported by magazine articles and newspaper clippings. The articles and clippings provide very useful information on the history of Atlantic City and its amusement industry during this time. The materials are arranged in chronological order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 6</td>
<td>Scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs, 1924 - 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td>Photograph album of Sonora Carver, Dr. Carver and diving horses, 1927 - 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 1</td>
<td>Photographs of Carver as a young woman and as a horse diver, 1927 - 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 2</td>
<td>Photographs of Carver with Diving Horses, circa 1927-1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 3-4</td>
<td>Photographs of Diving Horse Acts , 1927-1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 5</td>
<td>Photographs of Steel Pier and diving horse acts including images of Sonora Carver, 1929 - 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 6</td>
<td>Photographs of Steel Pier, 1929 - 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 7</td>
<td>Photographs of Steel Pier Water Sports, 1929 - 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 8</td>
<td>Photographs of Steel Pier, General Acts and Attractions, 1929 - 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 9</td>
<td>Article on Atlantic City's Circus, Steel Pier Parade, 1937 May 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 10</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1938 - 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 11</td>
<td>Article on Atlantic City's History and Carver, Philadelphia, 1979 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 12</td>
<td>Atlantic City: One Hundred and Twenty Five Years of Ocean Madness, 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 13</td>
<td>Article on Atlantic City's Horse Divining History, Atlantic City, 1981 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 14</td>
<td>Article on Atlantic City's Horse Divining History, Atlantic City, 1986 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 15</td>
<td>General Information on Atlantic City, The Atlantic Flyer , 1986 July - August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 3</td>
<td>Cover of scrapbook with article relating to diving horse act, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Materials document Carver's life as a blind person and her advocacy work on behalf of the blind. This aspect of her life is generally overshadowed by her career as a riding horse diver. As a member of the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired community, an organization that was founded in 1902, she helped support and promote their mission of providing independence and equality for people who were blind or had low vision. The materials include her identification card, news bulletins, leaflets, photographs, a scrapbook and speeches. There are some correspondence and TV guides for the Longstreet miniseries. The materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 7, Folder 1  Scrapbook, 1953 - 1965
Box 7, Folder 2  Cover of scrapbook, 1953-1961
Box 3, Folder 16 Identification cards, Seeing Eye Incorporated, 1959 - 1977
Box 3, Folder 17 Photographs of "Carnival Ball", Lighthouse for the Blind, 1960 - 1961
Box 2, Folder 3  News Bulletins, Lighthouse for the Blind, May 1963 - Summer 1967
Box 3, Folder 18 Speeches at the Roosevelt Hotel, 1964
Box 3, Folder 19 News bulletin and photographs of "Melpomene Ball," Lighthouse for the Blind, 1965
Box 3, Folder 20 Correspondence and Television guides for Longstreet miniseries, 1970 - 1971
Box 4, Folder 1  Leaflet for Lighthouse for the Blind, undated
Box 4, Folder 2-7 Photographs, undated

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Series 4: Walt Disney *Wild Hearts Can't be Broken* Movie, 1990 - 1993, undated

Consists of material documenting the creative process and logistics of making the film about Sonora Webster Carver which debuted in 1991. The film starred Gabrielle Anwar as Carver with Michael Schoeffling and Cliff Robertson and is primarily based on her life as a rider of diving horses, as told in her memoir *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*. Despite the fact that Carver was invited on the set while filming the movie she later commented that she was disappointed in the movie's portrayal of her life and career. Materials include the screenplay, call list, correspondence between the production company and Carver, publicity photographs, travel itineraries, magazine articles and newspaper clippings. These materials are arranged in chronological order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4, Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Screenplay, circa 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Call list, circa 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1990 - 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Publicity photographs for movie, circa 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Publicity photographs of Sonora Carver and Arnette French, circa 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Itinerary, print and national television press junket, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Travel accommodations and activities for screening, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Fan Mail, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Public appearances, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map-folder 1</td>
<td>Movie poster, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Series 5: Dr. William Frank "Doc" Carver and the Wild West, 1891 - 1975, undated

Includes materials on Dr. William Frank "Doc" Carver and the Wild West, primarily through magazine articles, photographs, a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, an unpublished manuscript and narratives of personal experiences dating from 1923. The materials are arranged in chronological order and provide a wealth of information on Native American stories and western American folklore.

Box 8  Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, 1891 - 1975
Box 4, Folder 24  Narratives and personal experiences of the Wild West, 1923, undated
Box 4, Folder 20  Photographs, 1926
Box 4, Folder 21  Article, *Field and Stream*, 1929 September
Box 4, Folder 21  Article, *Field and Stream*, 1929 October
Box 4, Folder 22  Article, *Outdoor Life*, 1930 May
Box 4, Folder 23  Article, *Frontier Times*, 1961 February - March
Box 4, Folder 24  Blake's Western Stories: The Truth about Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody), Wild Bill, undated
Box 4, Folder 24  J. B. Cody and California Joe (Dr. Carver), undated
Box 4, Folder 25  Unpublished manuscripts, undated

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Series consist of a few items of interest including an article on circus and rodeo history and a newspaper clipping defending the care of horses. There is also correspondence to Sonora Carver from Ripley's Believe It or Not requesting a photograph. The materials date from 1962-1991 and are arranged in chronological order.

Box 4, Folder 26    Article, Circus and Rodeo History, true, 1962 July
Box 4, Folder 27    Newspaper clippings relating to the care of horses, 1991
Box 4, Folder 28    Miscellaneous Materials

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