



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Willie Mosconi Papers

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Willie Mosconi Papers
<b>Date:</b>	1924 - 2000
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0744
<b>Source:</b>	Mosconi, William (Donor) Mosconi, Gloria (Donor)
<b>Creator:</b>	Mosconi, Willie, 1913-1993
<b>Extent:</b>	0.5 Cubic feet (3 boxes)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Papers documenting the life and career of the 15-time world champion billiard player. Includes photographs, business papers, letters, videos of Mosconi in action, printed material, and signed affidavits attesting to his record-setting plays.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The archival collection was donated to the Archives Center by Willie Mosconi's widow, Flora Mosconi, on August 23, 2000.

### Separated Materials

Related artifacts in the Division of Culture and the Arts (now Division of Cultural and Community Life), include cue stick, an ivory cue ball, and trophies.

### Processing Information

Collection processed by NMAH Staff, undated.

### Preferred Citation

Willie Mosconi Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu) or 202-633-3270.

### 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

Born in Philadelphia in 1913, Willie Mosconi learned his game at the pool hall owned by his father, Joseph Mosconi, a former prizefighter. Initially, Willie's father opposed his son's even coming into the pool hall above which the family lived. The father's preference was that Willie become a dancer and go into Vaudeville. However, after only a little practice accomplished behind his father's back, Willie was soon demonstrating amazing skill at the pool table. Joseph realized that the boy's talent could earn the growing family some money. Soon, Mosconi was considered a child prodigy, with advertisements posted challenging experienced players to try to beat him at billiards. Even as a child who had to stand on a box to reach the pool table, Mosconi beat experienced players. A match was arranged in 1919 between Willie and Ralph Greenleaf, then the World Champion. Though Greenleaf won the match, the hall was packed, and Willie played well enough to draw considerable attention, and launch his career in professional billiards.

After taking a few years hiatus from billiards in the 1930s, Mosconi returned to pool playing in an effort to earn some money. He entered one local tournament after another, and according to his autobiography, *Willie's Game*, "to be truthful, I don't remember losing any of them." He began making a living at billiards, and he claimed that he never hustled anyone: "I played everyone straight." In 1933, Mosconi participated in the world championship tournament of the Billiard Congress of America, having taken second place in the divisionals. He placed fifth in the world championship tournament, but his career and reputation were taking off. His performance in the tournament brought him to the attention of the president of Brunswick Corporation, and Mosconi joined the staff traveling around the country promoting Brunswick's products. He continued to compete in tournaments and after several near misses, in 1941 won the world championship, a feat that he would repeat fourteen more times. Shortly before that tournament, Mosconi had married his first wife, Ann Harrison, and shortly after it, the first of his three children was born, William Jr., followed soon after by a daughter, Candace. That marriage ended in divorce. After working in the defense industry for a few years, Willie enlisted in the Army in 1944, and after the end of World War II, resumed his affiliation with Brunswick and his successful tournament career. Mosconi remarried in 1953 to Flora Marchini. Their daughter Gloria was born in 1954. Mosconi continued his tournament work, and during the 1950s won several championships and set several records, including high run (most consecutive balls pocketed without a miss) of 526 in 1954. Mosconi slowed down his tournament appearances after recovering from a stroke in 1956. Additionally, he wrote a book on billiards in 1957, *Willie Mosconi on Pocket Billiards*. He was involved in the making of the 1961 movie *The Hustler*. It was he who suggested the casting of Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats, and he served as an instructor to Paul Newman, who had never played pool. The movie helped to resurrect the faded popularity of the game of billiards. He retired permanently from tournament play in 1966 and during his retirement, he consulted on and appeared in several movies dealing with billiards, made game show appearances, and wrote articles on billiards. Willie Mosconi died in 1993.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection is divided into four series: Series 1: Personal and Biographical Papers, including identification and business cards, notes, photographs, letters, and two scrapbooks.

Series 2: Papers Relating to Mosconi's Career, including business papers relating to his affiliation with Brunswick, legal records, papers relating to Mosconi's book, contracts and papers relating to television appearances, and affidavits attesting to records Mosconi set.

Series 3: Printed Materials, including magazines in which Mosconi contributed articles, posters advertising upcoming appearances, tournament programs, and miscellany.

Series 4: Videos, include testimonial dinners and appearances Mosconi made on the Ed Sullivan show.

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Billiard players
- Billiards
- Pool (Game)

Types of Materials:

- Affidavits
- Videotapes

Names:

- Mosconi, Gloria
- Mosconi, William

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Personal and Biographical Materials, 1945 - 1999

Box 1, Folder 1	ID and business cards
Box 1, Folder 2	Honorable discharge from the U.S. Army (copy), 1945 - 1945
Box 1, Folder 3	<a href="#">Handwritten notes, folded, from Mosconi's wallet, relating to billiard strategy</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Photographs, almost entirely relating to billiard career</a>
Box 1, Folder 5	Photomechanical reproductions, various topics, some appear to be publicity shots
Box 3, Folder 4	Photograph, 1955 - 1955
Box 1, Folder 6	Letters, miscellaneous, 1960 - 1993
Box 1, Folder 7	Awards and certificates, 1979 - 1990
Box 3, Folder 1	Certificate from the state of Tennessee, appointing Mosconi "Colonel, Aide de camp, Governor's staff", 1963 - 1963
Box 3, Folder 1	National Italian-American Sports Hall of Fame, certificate of recognition of Willie Mosconi, 1988 - 1988
Box 3, Folder 3	State of New Jersey, resolution to commend Mosconi, 1979 - 1979
Box 3, Folder 2	City of New Orleans, two proclamations honoring Mosconi, 1988 - 1988
Box 1, Folder 8	Contents of scrapbook kept by Mrs. Mosconi after Willie's death (photocopies), 1993 - 1993
Box 1, Folder 9	Scrapbook of clippings about Mosconi (photocopies), 1941 - 1999

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## Series 2: Papers Relating to Mosconi's Career, 1946 - 1994

Box 1, Folder 10	Business papers relating to Mosconi's affiliation with Brunswick, 1946 - 1967
Box 1, Folder 11	Legal records, 1962 - 1967
Box 1, Folder 12	Business and legal papers regarding Mosconi's book on billiards, 1959-1966, 1959 - 1966
Box 1, Folder 13	Papers relating to television appearances, (commercials, talk shows, game shows) 1958-1972, 1958 - 1972
Box 1, Folder 14	Litigation papers involving Brunswick Corp., 1964 - 1964
Box 1, Folder 15	<a href="#">Affidavits attesting to records set by Mosconi, 1953 - 1954</a>
Box 1, Folder 16	Press kit for the film, The Baltimore Bullet, 1980 - 1980
Box 1, Folder 17	Papers, mostly photocopies, relating to the production of trading cards featuring Mosconi, includes sample cards, 1994 - 1994

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## Series 3: Printed Materials, 1924 - 2000

Box 1, Folder 18	Papers relating to the sale of Mosconi-related items, auctions
Box 1, Folder 19	Bowler's Journal and Billiard Revue, 1963-01 - 1964-08
Box 1, Folder 20	Bowler's Journal and Billiard Revue, 1964-10 - 1967-11
Box 1, Folder 21	Miscellaneous printed material: press releases, clipping, magazines, tournament program, 1953-2000
Box 3, Folder 6	<a href="#">"11 Year Old Boy Wonder" Poster, circa 1924</a>
Box 3, Folder 5	Tournament program, 1942 - 1942
Box 3, Folder 5	Announcement from "The Lambasters", 1969 - 1969
Box 3, Folder 5	Leroy Neiman drawing of Mosconi, 1975 - 1975

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## Series 4: Videos, 1952 - 1991

Box 2 Willie Mosconi appearances on The Ed Sullivan Show VHS Copy: The Valley Hall of Fame Dinner Show, A Tribute to Willie Mosconi and Jimmy Caras, Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, Pennsylvania, August 10, 1991 (2 videocassettes) Betacam SP Copy: The Valley Hall of Fame Dinner Show, A Tribute to Willie Mosconi and Jimmy Caras, Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, Pennsylvania, August 10, 1991 (2 videocassettes), 1950 April 23-1952 January 6  
1 Videocassettes (VHS)

Box 2 The Valley Hall of Fame Dinner Show, A Tribute to Willie Mosconi and Jimmy Caras, Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, Pennsylvania, 1991 August 10  
2 Videocassettes (VHS)

Box 2 The Valley Hall of Fame Dinner Show, A Tribute to Willie Mosconi and Jimmy Caras, Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, Pennsylvania, 1991 August 10  
2 Videocassettes (BetacamSP)

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