



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1296
Date:	1934-1950, undated (bulk 1939-1942)
Extent:	0.15 Cubic feet (1.5 document boxes)
Creator:	Westbrook Theatre Corporation Robinson, Verna Kimball, 1904-1988 Robinson, Colby W., 1900-1950 Westbrook Theatre
Language:	English
Summary:	This collection contains the business records of the Westbrook Theatre Corporation of Westbrook, Maine. Records include the Colby, Rialto, and Knights of Pythias motion picture theatres in Bingham, Fryeburg, and elsewhere. The collection includes financial records, business correspondence, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated to the Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian, by Archives Center employee Craig A. Orr in 2013.

Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archivist, May 2016; supervised by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist

Preferred Citation

Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records, 1934-1950, undated, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

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Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The Westbrook Theatre Corporation was formed July 30, 1934 in Westbrook, Maine. The president was Colby W. Robinson and Philip W. Hawkes was treasurer. There were 161 shares of stock divided among Robinson (eighty shares), Hawkes (eighty shares), and Marion Hawkes (one share). At its inception the corporation's stock was valued at ten dollars a share. The corporation ran the Colby Theatre in Bingham, the Rialto Theatre, and later rented the Knights of Pythias Hall in Fryeburg, Maine.

The Corporation was independent, not allied with or owned by one motion picture studio. Film rentals were handled through exchanges, and motion pictures produced by Paramount, RKO, and Universal (to name three producers) regularly appeared on its programs. Programs included such first run films as *Citizen Kane*, *Young Man With a Horn*, and *The Howards of Virginia*, motion pictures with well-known stars produced by the major studios. B pictures made up a considerable portion of the fare as well as motion picture serials such as the *Blondie* comedies, and Westerns. The meticulous recording of daily programs, attendance, and receipts as well as supporting documents provides an accurate basis for research into the daily life of an independently run motion picture theatre.

The papers indicate that day to day management and running of the theatres was the job of Robinson and his wife Verna. Later Verna's sister, Lucy, seems to have joined the business. With Robinson's death in 1950 it is unknown if the Corporation continued or was dissolved. Philip and Marion Hawkes rarely show up in the documents. The Hawkeses eventually moved to Southern California so perhaps that explains their absence from the records.

Colby W. Robinson was born in Bingham, Maine on November 16, 1900, the son of Walter E. Robinson and Nellie M. Preble. Robinson's father was a merchant. On October 21, 1925 Robinson married Verna L. Kimball, the daughter of Leon L. and Ruth Clifford Kimball. Verna's father was a farmer in Albany, Maine and Verna was born on February 28, 1904 in Albany. By the 1940 United States census, they were living in Portland, Maine along with Verna's younger sister Lucy. Robinson listed his occupation as theatre manager; Verna was listed as bookkeeper, and Lucy was a theatre cashier. Robinson died in 1950, and it is unclear if the business continued past his death as the records in this collection cease in 1950. Verna died November 28, 1988. Both of them are buried in the village cemetery at Bingham, Maine. They had no children.

Phillip Hawkes, treasurer, was born in Westbrook, Maine on July 17, 1897 to E. Leroy and Maude Laura Hawkes. Leroy Hawkes was a laundryman. He married Marion A. Harlow on April 5, 1924. By the 1930 census, Hawkes is listed as a superintendent in a laundry. Hawkes died on September 21, 1962 and Marion died November 17, 1986. Both are buried at Forest Lawn Cypress Cemetery in Orange County, California.

Scope and Contents

Series 1, Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records, 1934-1950, undated. This series contains ledgers, business-related correspondence and documents, monthly accounts detailing attendance, cost, revenue, and program for the three theatres managed by Westbrook; equipment advertising and specifications,

licenses, receipts, documents related to various film exchanges and motion picture production companies (including Paramount, RKO, and Universal), union contracts, check books, a weekly report card book (a book of standardized forms for motion picture projectors produced by the International Photographers of the Motion Picture Industry, a branch of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)), and black and white photographs of the Colby Theatre in Bingham, Maine.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Knights of Pythias
- Motion picture industry
- Motion pictures -- History
- Theater -- History -- 20th century

Names:

- Colby Theatre -- 20th century
- Hawkes, Philip, 1897-1962 -- 20th century

Geographic Names:

- Bingham, Maine
- Fryeburg, Maine
- Westbrook, Maine

Container Listing

Series 1: Westbrook Theatre Corporation Records, , 1934-1950, undated (bulk 1939-1942)

Box 1, Folder 1	Ledger, 1934-1942
Box 1, Folder 2	International Photographers of the Motion Picture Industries Weekly Report Card, 1936
Box 1, Folder 3	Business and employment documents, 1936-1950, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Business correspondence, 1940-1950
Box 1, Folder 5	Monthly accounts, 1937-1942
Box 1, Folder 6	Check stubs, 1940-1941
Box 1, Folder 7	Daily receipts: Rialto, Knights of Pythias (Fryeburg), Bingham, 1937-1940
Box 1, Folder 8	Daily receipts: Rialto, Knights of Pythias (Fryeburg), Bingham/Colby, 1940-1941
Box 1, Folder 9	Check book, 1941-1942
Box 2, Folder 1-6	Daily receipts: Colby and Rialto, 1941-1943
Box 2, Folder 7	Colby Theatre, photographs, undated

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