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Guide to the Betty Lynd Thompson Papers, 1916-1980

Title

Betty Lynd Thompson Papers (MSS Thompson)

Dates

1916-1980 (inclusive)
1925-1970 (bulk)

Creator

Thompson, Betty Lynd.

Summary

The Betty Lynd Thompson Papers were created and assembled by Thompson, a dance instructor at Oregon State University from 1927 until her retirement in 1972. The Papers include correspondence; teaching materials and student papers; writings by Thompson on a variety of topics; publications pertaining to dance instruction; dance programs, clippings, and ephemera; photographs; and motion picture films.

Quantity

5 cubic feet, including 1500 photographs and 11 motion picture films (12 boxes, including 1 oversize box)

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Oregon State University Libraries, University Archives
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Corvallis, OR 97331-4501
Phone: 541-737-2165
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Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Nielsen, 2008.

Biographical Note

Dance professor Betty Lynd Thompson came to Oregon State College in 1927 to teach dance in the Department of Physical Education for Women. Until 1945, she taught all dance classes -- modern, folk, square, tap, and ballroom -- as well as basic rhythm and movement. As other dance faculty were added to the department, she was able to concentrate on her major interest of creative dance. She wrote a college textbook for dance instruction, *Fundamentals of Rhythm and Dance*, which was published in 1933. In 1931, she founded the Oregon State chapter of Orchesis, the modern dance honorary.

Thompson earned a B.A. in English Literature from Illinois Wesleyan University in 1923 and an M.A. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1926 with an emphasis in modern creative dance. She later pursued intensive training in the studios of master artists in New York, including Martha Graham, who became a friend as well as mentor.

She became interested in ceramics in the 1940s while volunteering with the USO and began to sculpt small figurines of dancers after studying ceramics at the University of Washington for one term. She referred to this work as "danceramics".

Thompson retired from teaching in 1972. On her 83rd birthday, colleagues and friends organized a celebration, during which she danced on stage. She died a month later on March 2, 1985.

Content Description

The Betty Lynd Thompson Papers document the teaching and dance performance career of Thompson. The Papers include correspondence; teaching materials and student papers; writings by Thompson on a variety of topics; publications pertaining to dance instruction; dance programs, clippings, and ephemera; photographs; and motion picture films. The bulk of the documentary materials were created or assembled during her years as a dance instructor at Oregon State; they also include materials from her high school and college years. The teaching materials include the two books that she wrote on dance instruction, *Fundamentals of Rhythm and Dance* (1933) and *Student Manual for Modern Creative Dance* (1966), as well as papers and projects completed by students in her classes. The collection also includes sound recordings that she apparently used for warm-up in her classes.

The photographs include a variety of formats (prints, film negatives, slides, and tintypes) and depict a wide range of subjects including dance classes and performances, her family and friends, pets and animals, her home, and her student years at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The motion picture films are 16 mm b/w and color. Most are silent; a film of dance students made in the 1950s includes sound. The films consist primarily of footage of students in modern and creative dance classes at Oregon State University; there is also one film of Thompson and a film of women's field hockey.

The Papers also include several ceramic figurines of dancers made by Thompson as well as photographs of the figurines.

Preferred Citation

Betty Lynd Thompson Papers, Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Processing Note

This collection is not fully processed; this guide is preliminary. Many of the materials in this collection were not foldered and had no apparent arrangement. They were placed in folders at the time the collection was donated and during preparation of this preliminary finding aid.

Additional Reference Guides

[Preliminary container list](#) available online.

Related Material

Materials pertaining to dance instruction and physical education at Oregon State are available in the [College of Health and Human Performance Records \(RG 031\)](#). Additional footage of dance performances are available in the Continuing Higher Education Films (FV P 048).

Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the OSU Libraries Catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog (<http://oasis.oregonstate.edu>) using these headings.

Organizations

Oregon State College--Students.
Oregon State College. Division of Physical Education.
Oregon State University--Students.
Oregon State University. Division of Physical Education.

Topics

Dance--Study and teaching--Oregon--Corvallis.
Modern dance.
Physical education for women--Oregon--Corvallis.
Student activities--Oregon--Corvallis.
Women field hockey players--Oregon--Corvallis.

Forms of Materials in the Collection

Albumen prints.
Ephemera.
Film negatives.
Motion pictures (visual works).
Photographic prints.
Scrapbooks.
Silent films.
Slides.
Sound recordings.
Tintypes.