



**Dock Street Theatre collection, 1933-1958**  
**SCHS 1177.00**  
**Containers 21/195-208**

**Creator:** Tobias, Thomas J.

**Description:** 6.5 linear ft.

**Biographical/Historical Note:** Thomas J. Tobias, Charleston, S.C. advertising executive, historian, and author. He was a member and president of the Carolina Art Association. The Carolina Art Association (founded 1857) assumed the management of the Gibbes Memorial Art Gallery (later the Gibbes Museum of Art), which opened in 1905. From 1937 to 1950 the Association also managed and operated the Dock Street Theatre, mostly in association with the Footlight Players, a community theater group, until the two organizations separated in 1941.

**Scope and Content:** Records consist of correspondence, photographs, financial records, publications, clippings, and other items.

Correspondence (1933-1954) of director Robert N.S. Whitelaw, president Albert Simons, and other staff members, board members, friends and associates of the Carolina Art Association of Charleston (S.C.) concerns the leasing, administration, and maintenance of the Dock Street Theatre; affiliation and differences with the Footlight Players; various artistic projects including planned productions of the play "Porgy"; and other topics. Correspondents include DuBose Heyward, Josephine Pinckney, Clare Booth Luce, Emmett Robinson, the Rockefeller Foundation (N.Y.) and many others. Interspersed among the letters are press releases, contracts, by-laws, and other material.

Financial records include annual reports (1938-1950) on income and operating and production expenses. Publications include promotional and fundraising brochures; and issues (1943-1948) of the Association's magazine (eventually called "The Living Arts") containing articles on the activities of the Dock Street Theatre and the Gibbes Art Gallery, the preservation movement in Charleston, and other topics. Clippings, many in scrapbooks, concern Dock Street productions, the Footlight Players, cultural events in Charleston, and other topics.

Photographs are of Association employees, actors, backstage workers, stage scenes, the Dock Street Theatre, and other subjects. Other items include minutes of meetings of the managing committee (1943), operating committee (1937-1938), production committee (1939-1941), and the board (1945-1946); attendance and membership records (1938-1950); printed announcements, invitations, newsletters, and forms pertaining to activities of the Association; programs for productions staged at the Dock Street and elsewhere; and programs for performances of other theater groups and performers including the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals.

**Preferred Citation:** Tobias, Thomas J. (Thomas Jefferson), 1906-1970. Dock Street Theatre collection, 1933-1958. (1177.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

**Provenance:** Some material from Mrs. Elizabeth Rife.

**Search terms:**

Whitelaw, Robert N. S., 1905-  
Carolina Art Association -- Records and correspondence.  
Dock Street Theatre (Charleston, S.C.)  
Footlight Players (Charleston, S.C.)  
Gibbes Museum of Art (Charleston, S.C.)  
Arts -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Historic preservation -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Theater -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Charleston (S.C.) -- Intellectual life.  
Charleston (S.C.) -- History.  
South Carolina -- History.  
Genre Clippings.  
Financial records.  
Letters (correspondence)  
Minutes.  
Photographs.  
Programs.  
Publications.

**Container listing:**

**21/195-197 Carolina Art Association**

**Correspondence, 1933-1954. 1 ¼ ft.**

Charleston cultural organization. Mostly correspondence of Robert N.S. Whitelaw, director and other employees, board members, friends & associates of the CAA regarding administering the Dock Street Theater, Charleston, with information regarding its organization, finances (including correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation), a national playwriting contest, the hiring, firing, and duties of employees, association and competition with the Footlight Players, underwriting productions, road shows, and the founding (1950) of Dock St. Theater, Inc. to handle theatrical productions. Other topics include: consulting for USD camp shows and producing shows at Ft. Moultrie (1942), unfulfilled plans for a Josephine Pinckney/Lincoln Kirstein pageant at Middleton Gardens (1946); production of training film for Army Signal Corps (1951); and unrealized productions (1938, 1952-1953) of "Porgy" play, the latter cancelled due to segregational setting . Early correspondence (1938-1940) include DuBose Heyward, Josephine Pinckney, Soloman Guggenheim, Mr. & Mrs. Victor Morawetz, Thomas A. Stone, Nicholas & Emily Roosevelt, Henry Luce, Clare Booth Luce, John Mead Howells, Emmett Robinson and other prominent Charlestonians. Chronologically arranged.

**21/198 Carolina Art Association**

**Miscellaneous Records. Approx. 750 items. 1937- ca. 1950**

Charleston Cultural Organization. Mostly records of the CAA's managing of the Dock St. Theater, Charleston. With minutes of production committee (1939-1941), detailing association with the Footlight Players; minutes of managing committee (1943), operating committee (1937-1938) and of the meetings of the CAA Board (1945-1946). With misc. regarding the Dock St. Theater School (1947-1949), and the Dock St. Theater building at 135 Church St, Charleston (including photographs, clippings, and correspondence regarding furnishings, nesting equipment, apartment & theater rentals). Misc. financial records include selected checks, reports, and list of guests attending the Beaux Arts Ball (1950).

**21/199 Carolina Art Association  
Financial Reports, 1938-190. Approx 30 reports.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Yearly reports of income and disbursements, with reports of various expenses of various committees and theatrical productions. With data regarding the Gibbes Art Gallery, the Dock St. Theater, and the founding and incorporation of the Historic Charleston Foundation in 1947.

**21/200 Carolina Art Association  
Attendance and membership records. 1938-1950. Approx ½ ft.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Records of attendance at film, plays, and other Cultural events at the Dock St. Theater, managed by the CAA. With scattered membership rolls and miscellaneous items regarding membership drives.

**21/201 Carolina Art Association  
Printed matter, 1935-1945. Approx 750 items.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Printed and mimeographed announcements, invitations, newsletters, forms, etc. regarding the activities of the CAA, including many regarding the Dock Street Theater and the Gibbes Art Gallery.

**21/202 Carolina Art Association  
Publications, 1938-1948. Approx 100 items.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Promotional and Fundraising brochures of the CAA; with a run (1943-1948) of the magazine of the CAA (eventually called "The Living Arts") detailing the activities of the Dock St. Theater and the Gibbes Art Gallery, but also including information on other aspects of Charleston, such as the growth of the preservation movement, as well. With correspondence and miscellany regarding printing of and advertising in Dock St. Theater programs.

**21/203-204 Carolina Art Association  
Clippings, 1935-1951. Approx ¾ ft.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Mostly scattered clippings of the CAA managed Dock St. Theater regarding actors, employees, and productions. But including clippings on the Footlight Players and cultural events in Charleston as well.

**21/205 Carolina Art Association  
Clippings, programs, & misc. 1937-1957, Approx 150 items**

Charleston cultural organization. Clippings (1952-1954) regarding productions staged at Dock St. Theater and elsewhere by CAA affiliated Dock St. Theater Inc. With programs (1937-1957) of other institutions, artists and troupes to come to Charleston, including the Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals, the Charleston String Symphony, Emile Baume, Ruth Draper (including promotional photographs, ca. 1940, of her) and the Martha Graham dancers and others. With incomplete radio script and adaption of George Bernard Shaw's "Misalliance."

**21/206-208 Carolina Art Association**

**Programs and photographs, 1937-1958, n.d. 1 ¼ ft.**

Charleston Cultural organization. Chronological arrangement of programs of plays staged at the Dock St. Theater by the CAA and Dock St. Theater, Inc. With photographs of CAA employees, theater actors, sets, backstage workers, etc. With lists of plays produced.