

Joan Nicks Research Collection, 1910-2023, n.d.

RG 858

Brock University Archives

Creator: Joan Nicks

Extent: 8 cm textual records
85 slides
183 photographs
67 audiocassettes
34 videocassettes
1 map

Abstract: The collection consists of research material compiled by Joan Nicks while conducting research about local popular culture in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Most of the material consists of video and audio cassettes of interviews, photographs, and slides. Some of the photographs show performers in blackface. Some promotional material and legal documents concerning Niagara Falls theatres is also included, as well as a map of "Little Italy" in Niagara Falls (1922).

Materials: Audio and video cassettes, photographs, slides, legal documents, map

Processed by: Chantal Cameron

Last updated: September 2023

Terms of use: The Joan Nicks Research Collection is open for research.

Use restrictions: Researchers must obtain the written permission of the holder(s) of copyright and the University Archives before publishing quotations from materials in the collection. Most papers may be copied in accordance with the Library's usual procedures unless otherwise specified.

Preferred citation: RG 858, Joan Nicks Research Collection, 1910-2023, n.d., Brock University Archives.

Acquisition info.: Donated by Joan Nicks in September 2023.

Biographical sketch

Joan Nicks is a retired faculty member in the Department of Communication, Popular Culture, and Film at Brock University. Her main research interest is the local popular culture of Niagara Falls. In 2002 she co-edited a book with Jeannette Sloniowski titled *Slippery Pastimes: Reading the Popular in Canadian Culture*, and in 2010 she co-edited a book with Barry Grant titled *Covering Niagara: Studies in Local Popular Culture*. In 2022 two books that she authored were published, titled *Lost Movie Theatres, Niagara Falls, Ontario: movie-going in a cross-border city* and *Disappearing Motels, Niagara Falls, Ontario: cultural decline of a post-war travel icon*.

Scope and content

The collection contains material compiled by Joan Nicks while conducting research about local popular culture in Niagara Falls, Ontario. She is the author of two books, titled *Lost Movie Theatres, Niagara Falls, Ontario: movie-going in a cross-border city* and *Disappearing Motels, Niagara Falls, Ontario: cultural decline of a post-war travel icon*. Most of the material consists of video and audio cassettes of interviews, photographs, and slides. Some of the photographs show performers in blackface. Some promotional material and legal documents concerning Niagara Falls theatres is also included, as well as a map of “Little Italy” in Niagara Falls (1922).

Please note: This record contains language/images that reflects the time when it was created and the view of its creator(s). This can include offensive and negative language, references, and stereotypes that are no longer used or appropriate today. The item(s) retain their original content to ensure that attitudes and viewpoints are not erased from the historical record. The Archives & Special Collections are actively working on including more respectful and representative language in our descriptions now and into the future.

Organization

The collection was organized into five series:

Series I: Audio and Video Cassettes, 2003-2014, n.d.

Series II: Slides, 1910-2017

Series III: Photographs, 1910-2017, n.d.

Series IV: Written documents, 1940-2023

Series V: Map, 1922

Inventory

Series I: Audio and Video Cassettes, 2003-2014, n.d.

- 1-4 Audio tapes containing interviews, 2003-2014. Names of those interviewed include George Bailey; Ralph Biamonte; Marie Bodner; Gordon Brown; Ron & Joan Brown; John Burtniak; Billy & Ronnie Cupalo; Carl & Kitty DeCicco; Don Ede; Vincent Ferrando; Tony Gudgin; Alex Herlovitch; Jean Johnson; Carmen Maccarone; Rose Kirsh; Shirley and Bob Lamb; Wilma Morrison; Wayne Murray; Rob Nicholls; Helen Oberlein & Barbara Davidson; Oliver Palk & Zach Sloatsky; Elizabeth Polegato; Florence & Dolly Rocco; John Ross; Marlene Sachter; Tony Sagat; Inge Saczowski & Karin Haslam; Navan Shahani; Pat Simon; Jim & Florence Smith; Hilary and Lal Sitlani; Dave & Greg Taylor; Bill Timmons; George Vallo; Betty Vescio; Pat & Gary Ward; Rita Wilson; Bruce Woodruff; George Yerich; Robert Zahorchak; Sherman Zavitz; and Louis Ziff.
- 5 Video tapes containing interviews, 2003-2005. Names of those interviewed include Gordon Brown; Ron & Joan Brown; John Burtniak; Bill & Ron Cupolo; Carl & Kitty DeCicco; Mario Delduca; Don Ede; Vincent Ferrando; Tony Gudgin; Don Hammond; Jean Johnson; Bob & Shirley Lamb; Carmen Maccarone; Gene McCarthy ; Bill Johns; Thelma Morrison; Helen Oberlin & Barbara Davidson; Florence & Dolly Rocco; John Ross; Ron Sagat; Pat Simon; Jim & Florence Smith; Dave & Greg Taylor; Bill Timmons; Betty & Anthony Vescio; Bruce Woodruff; Sherman Zavitz; and Louis Ziff.
- 6.1 Kingsbridge Theatre personnel interviews / Fundraiser in Seneca Theatre, n.d. A VHS tape of personnel interviews 6 months into the Theatre's start and a Kingsbridge fundraiser in the Seneca Theatre.

Series II: Slides, 1910-2017

- 6.2 Princess Playhouse, 1910-2007. Contains slides of the Barely Legal Nite Club; the interior and exterior of the Maple Leaf Restaurant; lower Bridge St. from a post card around 1910; and an advertisement for a Louise Glaum silent film, 1918. (5 slides)

- 6.3 Queen and Capitol Theatres, 1915-1964. Contains an exterior shot of the Queen around 1915 draped in bunting / WWI fundraiser and an exterior shot of the Queen theatre around 1924; and several interior and exterior shots of the Capitol theatre. (9 slides)
- 6.4 Seneca Theatre exterior, 1947-2017. Contains several shots of the original marquee; stone relief of the 5 Nations Confederacy; the theatre vacant; and the theatre as “Party Down” dance club and “Tiffany’s” cocktail lounge. (9 slides)
- 6.5 Seneca Theatre interior, 1946-1995. Contains slides of the lobby, auditorium, original women’s washroom, the original Emmanuel Briffa mural, and the candy counter. (6 slides)
- 6.6 Seneca Theatre promotional flyer, 1942. Contains a flyer for the theatre featuring a thematic design motif. (2 slides)
- 6.7 Niagara Grand Theatre, 1921. Contains a slide of the excavation site. The theatre was never built. (2 slides)
- 6.8 Hollywood Theatre (on Main Street, Niagara Falls), 1945. Contains slides of the marquee, the entrance to the lobby, the view of the stage from the balcony and the balcony from the stage. (6 slides)
- 6.9 Audet Theatre, Welland, c. 1945. Contains a slide of the exterior of the building. (1 slide)
- 6.10 Cho-Rho Group / Christ Anglican Church Minstrel Shows, 1949-1963. Contains slides of the Merry Minstrels, including performers applying blackface make-up. Shows were performed in Christ Church Hall of NFCVI. (22 slides)
- 6.11 Knights of Columbus / St. Patrick & St. Ann Church co-production, 1952 and Toronto blackface shows, 1940s. Contains slides of the programme and cast of “Alabama Jubilee” (Knights of Columbus); and slides of the cast and audience (Toronto blackface shows). (11 slides)
- 6.12 “Phunny Follies and Minstrels”, 1934. Contains slides from a series of performances in Niagara Falls, N.Y. including the program cover; “Niagara Moon” number; blackface cast; black maid skit; male drag ballet parody; female chorines; “Chinese” costume number; robbery skit; and a Fred and Ginger dance number. (12 slides)

Series III: Photographs, 1910-2017, n.d.

- 6.13 Princess Playhouse, 1910-1990s. Contains interior and exterior shots of the Maple Leaf Restaurant; lower Bridge St. around 1910; and 10 photos of the Barely Legal Nite Club (late 1990s). Also contains a print and glass negative of an advertisement for the show "The Goddess of Lost Lake" featuring Louise Glaum. (13 photos, 1 glass negative)
- 6.14 Queen Theatre / Capitol Theatre, 1914-1938. Includes exterior views of the theatre as both the Queen Theatre and Capitol Theatre, longtime theatre manager Jack Ward with a news clipping about him, and the theatre dressed in bunting (World War I fundraiser). (17 photos)
- 6.15 Capitol Theatre, 1920s-2016. Includes photos of the interior and exterior of the theatre, photos of a Canada Trust branch which was located where the theatre used to be (1998); and a metal plate showing the exterior of the theatre. (5 photos, 1 plate)
- 6.16 Seneca Theatre, 1940-2003. Includes exterior views showing the stone reliefs; the concessions counter and Emmanuel Briffa mural; program; posters of coming attractions; views of the interior after a fire; a school play at the theatre showing the original red seats and large masks mounted on the wall; interior and exterior views of the theatre in 2003 (then a dance club), including the masks; the exterior of the former theatre as "Tiffany's Cocktail Lounge" and "Area 50"; and two metal plates showing the interior after a fire in 1964. (70 photos, 2 plates)
- 6.17 Niagara Grand Theatre, 2017. Contains photos of the excavation site for the theatre. It was a 1921 project at Queen St. and Buckley Ave. but the plans were axed due to a shortage of capital. (2 photos)
- 6.18 Mid-Town Silent Theatre, 1949-2017. Contains photos taken at Central Garage, the site of the demolished theatre, and the LCBO on Ferry St., also the former location of the theatre, 2017. (8 photos)
- 6.19 Hollywood Theatre, 1945-2011. Contains interior and exterior views of the theatre on Main Street in Niagara Falls. (10 photos)
- 6.20 Minstrel / Blackface shows, 1945-1959. Contains photos of the Chi-Rho / Christ Anglican Church including performances of "Merry Minstrels", "Killarney Bound", and men applying blackface make-up; The Lundy's Lane United Young Men's Group; Knights of Columbus / St. Pat & St. Ann production of "Alabama Jubilee"; and Toronto blackface shows. (36 photos)
- 6.21 Glenview / Silver Town pollution monitoring station, 2004, n.d. Contains two black and white photographs of teacher Darleen Morrice and some of her students receiving a tour

of the monitoring station near Glenview School in Niagara Falls. Also included is a news clipping about residual pollution from the Niagara Falls Cyanamid plant (2004).

- 6.22 Riviera Theatre, Buffalo, 1927, n.d. Contains photos of the renovated Riviera Theatre in Buffalo and a news clipping of the usherettes and usher at the theatre during World War II. (4 photos)
- 6.23 Hollywood Drive-in Theatre, 1984, n.d. Includes four sheets containing 11 photos of the theatre when it was active, during winter, and during demolition.
- 6.24 Starlite Drive-in Theatre, n.d. Contains photos of the theatre on Sodom Road in Niagara Falls including the screen, projector, and a matchbook cover advertising the theatre.
- 6.25 USB drive containing digital copies of most of the printed photographs described above. Also includes photos of some Niagara Falls motels and tourist attractions including the Fontaine Bleu Motel demolition, the Space Motel and its owners Hilary and Lal Sitlani, the Holiday Inn by the Falls, the Sky Wheel on Clifton Hill; Fallsview Casino; Fallsview Hotels; Fallsview skyline; and the Tesla Monument in Queen Victoria Park. Lists of material in the research collection including audio tapes, digital images (jpegs/tiffs), printed photographs; slides and miscellaneous material; and video tapes of interviews are also included.

Series IV: Written Documents, 1940-2023

- 6.26 Promotional material, 1940-2019. Contains an invitation to the 100th anniversary of Bickle Hardware & Supply on Main St. (next door to the former Princess Theatre); an invitation to the opening of the Seneca Theatre in Niagara Falls (1940); and an advertisement for the film "Idaho" starring Roy Rogers, at the Capitol Theatre in Niagara Falls, 1944.
- 6.27 Film Bookings, 1951-1974. Contains copies of film bookings from Dave Taylor, long-time local projectionist (1955-1995) at theatres across the Niagara Region including the Princess Theatre (Niagara Falls), Seneca Theatre (Niagara Falls), and Community Theatre (Welland). Also includes some handwritten notes.
- 6.28 Legal Documents, 1977-1996. Contains documents related to the City of Niagara Falls sale of Kingsbridge Theatre (Seneca) under Anthony Gudgin, to Vincent Petti (nite club), 1994-1996; documents related to the Canadian Theatres Group (M. Zahorchak) purchase of Canadian Odeon Theatres Ltd. (1977); and documents related to the Canadian Theatres Group (M. Zahorchak) purchase of Cineplex, 1984.

- 6.29 Participant consent forms for interviewees, 2003-2011. Contains consent forms completed by those who were interviewed by Joan Nicks.
- 6.30 Lists of material in the research collection compiled by Joan Nicks, 2023. Includes audio tapes, digital images (jpegs/tiffs), printed photographs; slides and miscellaneous material; and video tapes of interviews.

Series V: Map, 1922

- O.1 A map of Little Italy in the City of Niagara Falls, Township of Stamford, 1922. The map shows the streets, lots and property owners. **(stored with large rolled maps)**