

ArMs 2004.023
2 record cartons and 1 manuscript box
2.5 cubic feet
4C – 2.6.E

Arthur I. Okanst scrapbooks
1928-1965

Brooklyn Historical Society
Othmer Library
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Introduction

This collection contains seventeen scrapbooks and one incomplete index. Compiled by Arthur I. Okanst (1886-1965), these scrapbooks document the personal life and interests of a Jewish Brooklynite during the middle third of the twentieth century. The scrapbooks consist mainly of newspaper clippings and other printed ephemera that cover the topics of domestic and international news, Jewish life, celebrities, theater, radio, and sports. There are also many greeting cards, as well as bar mitzvah and marriage announcements. Accession files indicate that the scrapbooks were donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society in 2004, by Okanst's youngest granddaughter, Rena Grossfield.

Biographical Note

Arthur I. Okanst was born on 22 March 1886, and married Helen Newman on 31 July 1910.¹ The family lived in Flatbush, Brooklyn (at 1625 East 13th Street, from at least 1940² through at least 1961³), and raised a daughter, Harriet. Harriet married Avery Grossfield, and they had two daughters: Anne Faith and Rena Ellen. At some point, the Grossfield family moved to Texas.

Okanst actively followed news related to the world and national state of Jewish affairs. In the scrapbooks, clippings on famous Jewish Americans are common, as are news articles on anti-Semitism and the events leading up to and during World War II. Okanst was an active member of his Jewish community – the scrapbooks contain programs, menus, and other materials from the United Jewish Appeal, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, American Palestine Campaign, the Federation of Jewish Charities in Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Zionist Region, and other Jewish charities.

Okanst attended the Reform Synagogue Temple Ahavath Sholom of Flatbush.⁴ He was close to Rabbi Alexander Alan Steinbach there, and they exchanged intermittent correspondence beginning in the mid 1930s. Okanst attended and kept the typescript lectures of Rabbi Steinbach's Adult Education Courses throughout the thirties and forties. He also saved the monthly newsletters published by the Temple's Men's Club. Although an active parishioner, Okanst does not seem to have held any offices or served on any committees at the Temple.

The Okanst family likely took at least two vacations: it is probable that they visited Niagra Falls in the summer of 1936, where souvenir leaflets from the Old Fort Niagra and Shredded Wheat factory were obtained,⁵ and Miami, Florida in the winter of 1948.⁶ Additionally, Okanst seems to have enjoyed popular entertainment: he attended at least one Worlds Fair (1939), from which he kept printed ephemera,⁷ and frequently attended the theater. He also followed celebrity news, as is evidenced by numerous clippings on the various marriages, divorces, and legal cases of the contemporary stars.

Almost nothing is known about Okanst's professional life. He attended the 10th annual lawyer's club dinner in 1943⁸, and may have been in the legal profession. He retired in 1955, and a cocktail party was given in his honor by friends and colleagues.⁹ No records of employment or professional affiliation have been found in the scrapbooks to date.

After at least two surgeries and a painful decline,¹⁰ Arthur Okanst died in September 1965. Helen joined their daughter's family in Texas after his death, where she died on 13 September 1970.

¹ "Marriage Announcement 1 – No Title," *New York Times*, August 8, 1910, page 7.

² "Report of the Fifty-Second Year of the Jewish Publication Society of America 1939-1940," *American Jewish Year Book* (1939/1940): 754.

³ See *Scrapbook: From Feb. 1961-July 1962*, folio 62

⁴ Then located at Avenue R at East 16th Street, Brooklyn

⁵ See *Scrapbook: 1934-1938*, folio 27

⁶ See *Scrapbook: 1950-1955*, folios 19 and 46

⁷ See *Scrapbook: 1938-1939*, folio 28

⁸ See *Scrapbook: 1934-1938*, folio 24

⁹ See *Scrapbook: 1950-1955*, folio 32

¹⁰ See *Scrapbook: 1962-May 1965*, folios 56-59

Scope and Content

The seventeen scrapbooks were once part of a larger series of nineteen. The first and last scrapbooks were not donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society. The inclusive dates of the first scrapbook are unknown, but it is likely that the final scrapbook was largely uncompleted and covered May to September, 1965. The presence of the two missing scrapbooks was ascertained by deciphering Okanst's hand-compiled index, also included in this collection. An introduction to his index precedes the Appendix.

The scrapbooks are common lined composition notebooks, hand foliated. They contain clippings and published obituaries; theater and event programs and playbills; souvenirs, menus, leaflets and other printed ephemera; greeting cards (especially Birthday and Anniversary cards), telegrams, and invitations to weddings and bar mitzvahs. The scrapbooks provide indications as to Okanst's life and interests. He was an active member of his Temple, and followed politics and Jewish relations at a local, national, and international level. He enjoyed entertainment, especially the theater, and was interested in radio, television, celebrities, and sports, especially boxing and baseball. There is unfortunately no record of his professional life included in the scrapbooks.

Most items are newspaper clippings and most items are pasted in. Many items are dated, either by hand in a large script or, later, by stamp. Some newspaper articles have portions underlined, though there are few, if any, annotations. Items that Okanst indexed have been marked with a check.

Condition:

The scrapbooks are common lined composition notebooks. Early scrapbooks have flimsy brown or blue card stock covers. Beginning with *Scrapbook: 1956-1957*, each is bound in black and white marbled boards. Each folio has been hand numbered in red crayon or pencil at the upper right corner of each page recto. All scrapbooks retain their covers; most are attached. The bindings are all intact, and the sewing remains strong. The pages, though slightly discolored and cockled by acid damage, are not brittle. The edges of the text block are somewhat battered or frayed (many items extend past the borders of the text block, adding to this effect), but the interiors are largely free of physical damage. Most items in the scrapbooks are clippings from newspapers and other materials of low paper quality. The newspapers are heavily discolored, though not yet brittle. Most newspaper clippings are pasted in: this has helped lead to the distorted, cockled pages. Some materials are attached with staples or pressure-sensitive tape. Most of the staples have become rusted, and should be removed; and most of the tape has oxidized to the extent that it can easily be peeled off with no danger of tearing. Due to the large quantity of items they contain, the scrapbooks have swelled by as much as two inches. Because of the pamphlet binding style, however, the bindings and joints are not in particular danger. Book cradles or props are unnecessary. Materials should be handled with care. Hands should be clean, and, due to the ragged edges of the text block, gloves should not be worn.

Processing Note

The seventeen scrapbooks have been put into the order prescribed by Okanst's index. This order is chronological, except in one instance. The titles are taken directly from the manuscript notations on the covers.

Related Material

See:

STEINBACH, ALEXANDER A. (1894-1978)

Papers, 1935-1964. 0.4 linear ft.

In the Rabbis Collection at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

<http://www.americanjewisharchives.org/collections/rabbis.php#S>

Papers include confirmation readings, services, and adult education lectures at Temple Ahavath Sholom of Brooklyn, New York.

Access Points

Personal Names:

Grossfield, Anne Faith, b. 1942
Grossfield, Avery
Grossfield, Harriet
Grossfield, Rena
Okanst, Arthur I., 1886-1965
Okanst, Helen (nee Newman), d. 1970

Corporate names (LCSH):

Temple Ahavath Sholom (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)

Subjects (LCSH):

Jews
Jews—Charities—20th century
Jews—United States—20th century
Antisemitism in the press—20th century
Zionism in the press—20th century

World War, 1939-1945

United States—Foreign relations—20th century
United States presidents—20th century
United States—Politics and government—20th century

Celebrities—United States—20th century

Theater—United States—20th century
Television—United States—20th century
Radio—United States—20th century
Sports—United States—20th century

Geographic subjects (LCSH):

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)—Social life and customs—20th century
Flatbush (New York, N.Y.)—Social life and customs—20th century
New York (N.Y.)—Social life and customs—20th century
United States—Social life and customs—20th century

Formats (AAT):

Clippings
Ephemera
Greeting cards
Invitations
Leaflets
Obituaries
Pamphlets (LCSH)
Programs

Scrapbooks

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Scrapbook: 1928-1933	1928-1933
	2	Scrapbook: 1934-1938	1934-1938
	3	Scrapbook: 1938-1939	1938-1939
	4	Scrapbook: 1940-1942	1940-1942
	5	Scrapbook: 1942-1944	1942-1944
	6	Scrapbook: 1944-1946	1944-1946
	7	Scrapbook: 1946-1949	1946-1949
2	8	Scrapbook: 1950-1955	1950-1955
	9	Scrapbook: 1956-1957	1956-1957
	10	Scrapbook: 1957-1958	1957-1958
	11	Scrapbook: 1958-1959	1958-1959
	12	Scrapbook: 1959-	1959
	13	Scrapbook: From 1957 to 1960	1957-1960
	14	Scrapbook: From Feb. 1960 to July 1960	1960
	15	Scrapbook: Aug. 1960 to Jan. 1961	1960-1961
	16	Scrapbook: From Feb. 1961 to July 1962	1961-1962
3	17	Scrapbook: 1962-May 1965	1962-1965
	18	Index	circa 1965

Appendix: Okanst's Index

Terms

Arthur I. Okanst's incomplete hand-compiled index consists of nearly 600 entries. Less than 200 are subject terms; the remaining two-thirds are personal or family names. The index that appears below was copied from Okanst's manuscript index. Duplicate terms have been consolidated, and the terms have been separated into two classes (subjects and names) and alphabetized. Corrected or expanded terms appear in [brackets]. The non-consolidated and original order of the index can be consulted in the spreadsheet "Okanst Index.xls".

Location notation

Locations associated with each index term appear as a fraction. The first number is Okanst's scrapbook number designation. The second number refers to the foliation. Each page has been numbered in the upper right corner of the recto. The number refers to that leaf's recto and the previous leaf's verso.

Because the first and last scrapbooks are not part of the collection, Okanst's locations match the scrapbook titles in the following manner (these numbers represent the first half of Okanst's fraction-like notations):

1	Not present
2	Scrapbook: 1928-1933
3	Scrapbook: 1934-1938
4	Scrapbook: 1938-1939
5	Scrapbook: 1940-1942
6	Scrapbook: 1942-1944

- 7 Scrapbook: 1944-1946
- 8 Scrapbook: 1946-1949
- 9 Scrapbook: 1950-1955
- 10 Scrapbook: 1956-1957
- 11 Scrapbook: 1957-1958
- 12 Scrapbook: 1958-1959
- 13 Scrapbook: 1959-
- 14 Scrapbook: From 1957 to 1960
- 15 Scrapbook: From Feb. 1960 to July 1960
- 16 Scrapbook: Aug. 1960 to Jan. 1961
- 17 Scrapbook: From Feb. 1961 to July 1962
- 18 Scrapbook: 1962-May 1965
- 19 Not present

Hence, Okanst’s indexed entry “Burns, Ray’d 6/27” refers to leaf 26 verso and leaf 27 recto of *Scrapbook: 1942-1944*, where there is an unidentified newspaper clipping, dated “Apr 1943” on said Raymond Burns.

Index

Subjects:

A

Amos & Andy	1/54, 1/61
Andria Doria	10/43
Animal Hospital	17/17
Announcers Radio	1/12, 1/68, 1/8
Arthritis	9/59, 17/22
Artists Radio	1/69
Astor Coffee Brand	1/11
Atomic Bomb	7/30

B

Berlin	7/59 (?)
Bi-Carb	3/37
Blood Pressure	7/3
Blue Star Camp	14/1
Book Finders (?)	8/4
Books	3/66
Books (roo) (?)	3/66
Boxing	9/14
Broadcast Central	1/8
Broadcast Special	1/20
Broadcasting Cards	1/39, 1/39a
Broadcasting Stations	1/13, 1/41, 1/42

Burlesque	2/14
C	
California Sunshine Girl	1/10
Cancer	11/64, 12/13
Capital Punishment	15/20, 15/25
Carnegie Hall	6/39
Carolinians, The	1/3
Cataract	2/26
Charities	10/10, 18/28
Chiropractors	18/40
Civilian Defense	8/6, 8/15
Cliburn [Van Cliburn?]	11/11a (?)
Colpon Case	8/57
Cuckoo Hour	1/79
D	
Diverticulitis	12/20
Dodgers	8/10, 9/53
Dubl-O-Products	2/18
E	
Elder Craftsman Shop	9/27
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Election 1964	18/88
Eveready Hour	1/15
Exercise	12/49 -
F	
Federation, T.V.	1/57, 6/15, 8/52, 9/20, 18/29, 18/63, 18/92
Flag	18/84
Flag, U.S.	5/48
Flip & Skip	1/46
Florida	11/8
Florida Trip	8/19, 8/46, 8/47, 8/53
Franks Radio	1/4
Freedom House	18/29
G	
Gamby	1/24
German Trans & Fliers (?)	2/1, 2/29
Germany Quits	7/28
Gnesener, B. Soc. [Gnesener Benevolent Society]	2/29, 2/48, 3/25, 3/40, 3/68, 4/37, 5/8, 3/70
Goldsmith (Stationer)	12/17
Grebe Train Radio	1/14

Guinan, Texas 1/24

H

H.I.P. 18/28

Happiness Boys 1/31, 1/48

Hay Fever 16/11

Heart-Liquor 7/3

Horseshoe 3/44

I

I Shall Not Pass (Poem) 7/2

Income 7/29

Insurance Coverage 2/30 (?)`

Ipana Troubadors 1/7, 1/29

J

Japan Surrenders 7/30

Jewish Actors 2/52

Jewish Hospital 4/12

Jews (Pop'n) [Jews--
Population] 8/2

Jews (World 1952) 9/4

K

K.D.K.A. Orchestra 1/15

Kinsey Report 11/88

L

La Follette 1/6

Las Vegas 11/110

Lindbergh Cars 1/6d (?), 2/21, 3/18

Long Island 9/1

Lucky Strike Brand 1/5

M

Marty & Bob 1/36

McCrarry's 9/40

Medicare 17/16

Mens Club 6/49

Mets 18/51

Midwood Radio 1/48

Mills Bros 1/73

Moro Castle Fire 3/12

Myrt & Marge 1/71

N

N.R.A. 2/70, 2/75

N.T.G. 1/2, 1/3

N.Y.C. 17/16

Negro (Segregation Out)	9/25
New York Post [from Post, N.Y.]	12/49
Niagara Falls	3/23, 3/27
Nova	4/6, 9/17
Nurses Aid	18/35
O	
Opera Stars	1/26
Orchestra Leaders	1/22
Overweight	13/9
P	
Pipes	9/30
Plane Acc't	16/38
Police Band N.Y.	1/4
Police Dept. N.Y.	1/4, 1/47, 2/17
Polters	7/25
Post, N.Y.	12/49
Presidents Wires	
Smithsonian	19/23
Q	
R	
Rabbis (Women)	18/66
Radio City Opening	2/51
Radio Convention	1/49, 1/50, 1/51
Radio Dealers	1/32, 1/32a
Radio Drama, First	1/9
Radio News	1/35
Radio Plate Removing	1/22
Radio Rulers	1/21
Radio Verse	1/32a, 1/33, 1/58
Radio, Word Origin	1/28
Radiotrons, The	1/16, 1/20
Real Folks	1/47
Red Cross	8/36
Rent Laws	7/42
Retired Folk	12/20
Rights Bill	18/82
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Rollickers, The	1/39
Rosenberg Case	9/2
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Hawaiians] 1/38

S

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Selner NY Ass'n
[Hyman Selner
Association, New York,
N.Y.] 3/8, 4/23

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Showboat 1/22, 1/84

Silver Masked Tenor 1/25

Singing Sam 1/84

Sisters of the Skillet 1/63

Sixth Ave "L" 4/16, 4/21, 4/21, 4/24, 4/16

Sixty Four D. Question
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Question] 9/62

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Social Security 3/23, 5/7, 11/54, 9/26

Specht's Band 1/5

Super Sud Girls 1/80

Supreme Court 18/24

T

T.V. 1/23, 16/15, 18/37

T.V. Quiz 12/2, 12/4, 12/8, 12/16, 12/22, 12/4, 12/41

Taft Hartley 8/18

Teachers Salary 10/69

Television 1/23, 1/46

Telithons [Telethons] 9/2

Telivison Reciever 1/16

Temple Picture 4/34

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Three Tube Set Cartoon 1/17

Tobacco 7/3

TV, WF (?) 18/79

U

V

Van & Schenck 1/48

Vitamins 12/86

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W

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W.M.C.A.	1/40
Waldorf Astoria	1/45, 1/47
Warburg (Poem)	7/2
WCAP Station	1/23
Webber & Fields	3/1
Weinberger Case	10/52
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Y

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A

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Alda, Frances	1/5
Allen, Fred	10/13
Angell, James R.	1/19a
Arliss, Geo	1/61
Arness	14/16
Arnold, Frank A.	1/18
Arnstein, D.	16/5
Astaire, Adele	1/81
Austin, Bernard	12/69

B

Bacharch, Bert	17/81
Bachrach, Mrs. C.G.	17/96
Baker, Belle	1/28, 1/48
Baker, Jos	3/55
Ballyn, Wm	1/11
Barkley, Alben W.	10/22
Barricini	10/46
Barry, Jack	11/12
Barrymore, Ethel	38/13
Barrymore, Lionel	9/32
Barton, Bruce	1/18

Bennett, Nat	9/35, 9/40
Benny, Jack	4/7
Berg, Gertrude	1/63
Berle, Milton (?)	18/35
Berlin, Irving	18/43
Bernie, Ben	1/1, 1/5, 1/28, 1/46, 1/58
Blore, Eric	13/5
Bogart, H.	7/5
Bonomo, Vic. A.	4/20
Bordoni, Irene	1/59, 1/80
Boswell Sisters	1/67
Boswell, Martha	12/3
Bowes, Major	1/19, 1/16, 1/17, 1/22, 1/25, 1/38, 5/24, 7/46
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Brokenshire, Norman	1/4, 1/25, 1/49
Browder, Earl	3(?) / 15
Browne, Bradford	1/52
Browning, E.W.	3/8
Bunchuk, Yasha	1/63
Burbig, Henry	1/61
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Burns, Harriet	1/74, 1/82, 1/85
Burns, Mort	9/29
Burns, Ray'd	6/27
Buttons, Red	9/47
Byrd, Admiral	2/27
Byrd, Commander	1/11, 1/27

C

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Caloway, Cab	1/64
Campanella, Roy	11/76, 12/26, 12/51, 12/65, 12/75, 12/84, 13/8
Cantor, Eddie	1/10, 1/67, 18/87 (?)
Cantor, Ida	18/2
Canzoneri, Tony	14/40
Capitol Family	1/19
Cardoza, Benj (Cardozo?)	11/1
Carlin, Philps	1/2, 1/8, 1/21, 1/48
Carson, Jack	18/28
Case, Anna	1/2, 1/8, 1/22
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Ce Fries F.C.	1/17
Celler, Emanuel	13/11
Chaplain, Charlie	1/28, 6/53
Chatfield, Gerald	1/7
Chatterton, Ruth	1/48
Chessman, Caryl	15/33
Chevallier, M.	6/31, 12/63
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Clooney, R. Marie	17 / 60,
Cobb, Irwin S.	1/20
Coburn, Chas	17/53 -
Columbo, Russ	1/73
Cook, Phil	1/63, 1/77
Coolidge, Calvin	1/8, 1/43, 2/59
Cooper, Gordon	18/43
Corbett, James J.	1/19a
Cordet, Jean de	1/67
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Costello, Lou	13/6
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D

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De Leath, Vaughn	1/1, 1/4, 1/13, 1/42
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De Plessen, Baroness	1/25
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E

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F

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Fields, Benny	13/53
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Fitzmaurice, Major	1/18
Flagg, James M.	1/13
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Gang, Our	42/13
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Gaston (?), Wm.	18/30
Geismar, A.H.	4/15
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Gibbs, Louis D.	2/12
Gibson, Althea	11/52
Gigli, Benjamin O.	1/15, 1/73
Ginsburg, Mr. & Mrs.	3/33
Gleason, James	13/18
Godfrey, Arthur	13/13
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Gory, Elizabeth	1/1
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Green, Martha	1/48
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Grossfield, A.J.	5/5, 6/5, 9/31, 9/34, 9/41 (?), 11/5, 15/34
Grossfield, Anne	33/13, 15/34, 15/43
Grossfield, H.B.	5/28, 9/31, 10/5, 13/30, 15/34, 15/40, 17/62
Grossfield, Rena	9/33, 10/11, 10/32, 15/34, 17/97, 18/39, 18/45, 18/73, 18/882, 18/85, 18/89
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H

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Hammerstein, O.	16/7
Harbord, General	1/19a
Harris, Mariam	1/72 (?)
Hartman, Gustave	1/45
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Havrilla, Alois	1/45
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Hearn, Murray	9/30
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Holmes, Burton	1/5
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Hopper DeWolfe	1/86
Huenfeld, Captain	1/18
Hughes, Chase	8/24
Hughes, Revella (?)	1/2
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Husing, Ted	1/82
Hussars, Pt. Arthur	17/79, 17/97
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I

J

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Jacobs, Jacques	1/5
Jaeger, Henry	1/38
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Jeritza, Mme.	1/25, 1/75a
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Kennedy, Pres.	17/2, 18/65
Kent Atwater	1/4, 1/5
Kibbe, Guy	10/28
King, Luther	18/89
Koehl, Captain	1/18
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L

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Lanin, Sam	1/1
Lanzansky, Edward	9/61
Larson, Don	10/56
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Lazar, Jesse	9/10
Lee, Dixie	1/83
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Lefcourt, A.E.	2/3, 2/44
Lehman, Herbert	18/68
Leibowitz Sobel [Liebowitz, Samuel and Sobel, Nathan]	15/9
Lennon Sisters	16/18
Lerman Wedding	18/36
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McCormack, John	1/2, 1/31
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McNamee, Graham	1/2, 1/4, 1/9, 1/29
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