Papers of Dr. Robert P. Harris, 1908 - 1951

Overview
Repository
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
5401 Bay Shore Road,
Sarasota, Florida 34243
archives@ringling.org

Creator
Dr. Robert P. Harris, 1886-1950

Title
Papers of Dr. Robert Pierce Harris

Dates
1908-1951, bulk dates 1945-1948

Physical Description
1 box, 162 items
Linear feet

Language
English

Arrangement
Format

Summary
The collection consists of the papers of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Pierce Harris, who were doctor and nurse for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus from approximately 1944 to 1948. It consists of correspondence, stationary, newspaper clippings, an official tour booklet, a route book, a program, and black and white print photographs. The print photographs comprise the majority of this collection.
Administrative Information

Provenance

Grandchildren of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Pierce. Harris, Anita Berry and Sylvia Wesche donated this collection to The Ringling and all rights. Gift, 2013. Accessioned as A2021.0032.

Information about Access

The Papers of Dr. Robert Pierce. Harris can be accessed on site at The Ringling Archives.

Ownership and Copyright

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Cite As

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Papers of Dr. Robert Pierce Harris, 1908-1951.

Processing Note

Processed by Brittany Braasch, 2021.

Biographical Note

Dr. Robert Pierce Harris (1886-1950), born January 21, 1886, in Chicago, Illinois, was a private practice physician. During his early career, he worked for the United States Public Health Service and was with the Veterans Administration in Little Rock, Arkansas. Dr. Harris also worked as an assistant superintendent of Austin Hospital in Texas. In 1941, he was appointed as a physiatrist at Central State Hospital of Nashville, Tennessee, and resigned in 1943. Additionally, Dr. Harris briefly worked as a medical examiner for the Bureau of War Risk Insurance in Little Rock, Arkansas, and served in the Medical Corps as a first lieutenant of the administrative staff. He married Lula Green (1890-1987) on June 25, 1917, and Mrs. Lula Harris served as a nurse alongside Dr. Harris for the Ringling circus. Dr. Harris succeeded Dr. Joseph H. Bergin as the show physician for the Ringling circus in 1944 and was the Medical Director until 1948. After leaving the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus, Dr. Harris worked as a resident physician for two years at Eastern State Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee. Dr. Robert P. Harris died on December 23, 1950.
Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of the papers of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Pierce Harris, who were doctor and nurse for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. This record series consists almost exclusively of correspondence and black and white print photographs. A significant portion of the photographs are press release photos of approximately 7.5 x 9.5 inches capturing scenes of circus performers. The collection contains a series of smaller photographs of assorted sizes and thirteen photographs signed to Dr. Harris, all related to circus as well. The collection also contains some ephemera consisting of business cards, stationary, newspaper clippings, and a few publications. The publications include a magazine, a route book, an official tour program, and some published articles. The materials are primarily organized by format.

Related Materials

The Ringling Photography Collection
The Tibbals Circus Collection of Photography
The Ringling Collection of Wardrobes
The Ringling Circus Collection of Route Books
The Ringling Circus Collection of Programs

Subject Headings

Aerialists
Animal trainers
Circus
Circus Animals
Circus History
Circus Performers
Circus--United States—History
Circus workers
Clowns
Physicians
Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows

Contents of the Collection
## Box Listing
Box no.  Box Title Folder no.  Folder Title Description

**Box 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Western Union Telegrams, 1943-1944: 2 telegrams. A2021.0032.001</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Letter from Mrs. Harris. A2021.0032.002</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Joe Ward Christmas Card. A2021.0032.003</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Letter to Mrs. Harris from Fred Bradna, 1951. A2021.0032.004</td>
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<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>White Tops Holiday Number, 1945. A2021.0032.005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 8</td>
<td>Publication by Allen Fox - The Death of May Kovar Schafer. A2021.0032.021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 9</td>
<td>Employee Ticket, Ringling Bros. and Barnum &amp; Bailey. A2021.0032.022</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 10</td>
<td>Newspaper Clippings. A2021.0032.023-A.2021.0032.031</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 13</td>
<td>Ringling Medical Department Business Cards, R. Harris MD: 10 cards. A2022.0032.057-A.2022.0032.067</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 15</td>
<td>Autographed Photographs, black and white: 1-13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Cage Act signed by Willy Storey, nephew and apprentice to Alfred Court; 6 girls and 12 leopards. Inscribed, “To Tod Welles with best wishes, Wiley Storey”. Stamped on back is “Photo by Larry Lowry, Official Boston Garden Photo, Capitol 3200. A2021.0032.001</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Loyal Repenski Bareback Riding Act Family plus two other unidentified men signed “Best Wishes always to a great friend, Dr. Robert Harris, from the loyal Repenski family, 1945.” On the back is stamped “James Kollar Studios, R.K.O. Building Rockefeller Center, N.Y” A2021.0032.002</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Joe Ward, in clown attire, signed “To: Dr. Bob Harris With my kindest regards, Joe E. Ward, 1944. Written on back “Joe Wards called “Millionaire Clown” from Texas”. A2021.0032.003</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Chaplain Ed Sullivan signed “To Doctor and Mrs. Harris, My deep regards and sincere best wishes, Fr. Ed Sullivan”. Traveled with circus. Article about him in the White Tops magazine I have. A2021.0032.005</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. Equestrian Albert Ostermeyer, 3 images of him on horseback, signed “To Dr. Harris with, Sincerely Albert”. A2021.0032.007

8. Emmett Kelley signed “Very Sincere Wishes to My Friends, Mr. & Mrs. Dr. Harris, From Emmett Kelley, 1945” A2021.0032.008


10. Photo (Approx. 3” x 4”) of Fred Bradna, ringmaster during circus fire in 1944, on crutches besides a large tarpon he caught. Personal note to my grandparents written on front and back of photo. A2021.0032.010

11. Photo (approx. 3.5” x 5”) of Hanka Kelter, the long-haired girl, signed on back “Sincerely yours, Hanka Kelter”. A2021.0032.011

12. Photo of Ella Bradna with white horse and signed “To sweet Mom from her sincere friend Ella Bradna, 1-29-46”. Circus friends of my grandmother’s called her “Mom”. A2021.0032.012

13. Photo of Paul Jung signed “To my good friend Dr. Harris – all good wishes to you and Mrs. Harris, sincerely, Paul Jung, R.B. Circus, 1945” A2021.0032.013

Folder 16

Photographs 8”x11”, black and white: 14-48.

1. Lou Jacobs with unidentified female performer A2021.0032.014

2. Fred + Ella Bradna and “White Eagle” A2021.0032.015

3. 2 identical photos of Henry “Buddy” north. One has Buddy North written on the back, the other has “Henry “Buddy: North” written on back. A2021.0032.016

4. Matriarch of elephant herd “Ruth” A2021.0032.017

5. Paul Jung A2021.0032.018

6. The Loyal Repenski family A2021.0032.019


Helen, Madeline, Yetty, and Lee Wallenda. Father Sullivan is self-appointed chaplain of the circus and appears on the circus lot on unexpected occasions. A2021.0032.022

10. Fred Bradna 1944 A2021.0032.023
11. 40319 Mr. Jim Haley Vice Pres A2021.0032.024
13. Harry Dann (duplicate) Written on the back is “from St. Louis, his mother made his costumes” A2021.0032.025
14. Felix + Showgirls A2021.0032.026
15. Five Unidentified men on horseback holding flags A2021.0032.027
16. Lou Jacobs with three unidentified girls A2021.0032.028
17. Honey Shinnetto Man on bike with girl standing on his shoulders A2021.0032.029
18. Picture of a leopard- Written on back “Alfred Court Animals”. Chester Photo Service, Boston, Mass. is stamped on back A2021.0032.030
20. Gargantua – stamped on back is “Chester Photo Service, 125 Summer St. – Boston, Mass. HUBard 0047” A2021.0032.032
21. Fred & Ella Bradna A2021.0032.033
23. Truzzi juggling plates with one in his mouth, “H.A Atwell Studio” stamped on back, 1941 A2021.0032.035
24. Albert Court with a bear A2021.0032.036
26. Lou Jacobs pulling girl onto top of railroad car A2021.0032.038
30. Work Elephants A2021.0032.040
31. Helen, Yetta and Lee Wallenda on tight rope A2021.0032.041
32. Eloise Franklin, aerialist Chester Photo Service is stamped on the back A2021.0032.042
34. Tiger owned by Albert Court A2021.0032.044
35. Paul Jerome with girl performer sitting on his lap, “Chester Photo Service Boston, Mass.” stamped on back A2021.0032.162
36. Lalage – aerialist with Press Release attached to the back A2021.0032.046
38. Picture of a man from the Harness Department working on a stirrup A2021.0032.047

Folder 17 Photographs 8”x11”, black and white: 49-68.
1. Edith, Mrs. Charles Ringling A2021.0032.049
3. Valerie Antalek, aerialist Press release attached to back A2021.0032.051
4. Son + Dr. Harris, 1946. A2021.0032.052
6. Wallendas Stamped on back, “Please credit photo by H.A Atwell Studio 64 W. Randolph St. Chicago” A2021.0032.054
8. Alfred Court Joe Kovar, husband of May A2021.0032.056
10. Herbert Castle on high wire. Stampede on back is “Please credit, Maxwell Frederick Coplan, Florida S. 1416.” A2021.0032.058
15. Robert Ringling (duplicate) A2021.0032.62
16. “Antoinette Concello Wife of Art Concello” written on back
   A2021.0032.63
17. Lion “Albert Court Animals” written on back. A2021.0032.64
   A2021.0032.066
20. Lalages aerialist “Copyrighted by Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey” stamped on back. A2021.0032.067
21. Elly Ardety, aerialist outside tents A2021.0032.068

Folder 18
Photographs 8”x11”, black and white: 69-105.
1. Picture of Billy Livingston, Pat Valdo (“Fitzgerald”), Robert Ringling, and a Miss Jefferson (1944) looking at sketches. One person is not identified illir Mosier, Helen Wallenda, Mrs Tuffy Geuders greeting the postman A2021.0032.069
3. Fred Smyth – Sideshow manager for Ringling A2021.0032.071
4. Harry Dann in clown costume with unidentified lady circus performer A2021.0032.072
5. Charlie Bell with his dog, Trixie, and an unidentified lady circus performer A2021.0032.073
6. Gargantua; stamped on back is “Chester Photo Service, 39 Kingston St. – Boston, Mass. HUBbard 0047”. A2021.0032.074
7. Picture of Dizzy Dean (monkey) in sailor attire doing an act with Modoc, star member of the nine herds performing elephants with Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey; press release attached with details about Dizzy. Donor’s grandmother penciled in at the bottom of the release that “Poor Dizzy died with TB.” A2021.0032.075
8. Cristiani family doing a balancing act Yacopi Troupe, 1941. A2021.0032.076
10. Joe Ward: same photo as no. 3 except unsigned A2021.0032.078
11. Picture of Ruth the Elephant getting on the train A2021.0032.079
12. May Kovar Schaffer in lions cage with 3 lions. MY grandmother wrote on the back that she was killed in a lions cage in California in 1949 or 1950. I have an original detailed article by Allen Fox who visited with
Rudolph Muller in Thousand Oaks, CA at an animal training farm after her death. Rudolph Muller tried to rescue her as he did her three children. A2021.0032.080


15. Cheetah Cristiani is written on the back. It is a picture of a lady circus performer with a white horse. A2021.0032.083

16. Cassette and Cheetah Cristiani written on the back. It is a picture of two lady circus performers with a white horse. A2021.0032.084


18. Alfred Court tiger A2021.0032.086

19. “Spec” 1943 written on back. “Photo by Lucien Aigner, 381 Central Park West, New York City” is stamped on back. It is a picture of a carriage being pulled by elephants with ladies on top. Old King Cole is written on the side of the carriage. A2021.0032.087

20. Gargantua with a kitten on his back A2021.0032.088

21. Dolly Jahn Copeland with Harry Dann and two other clowns; “W.E, Windsor, 263 Pancoast Ave, Springfield, PA.” is stamped on back A2021.0032.089

22. Tomez and Gargantua; (different picture from no. A2021.0032.97) A2021.0032.090

23. Willir Mosier, Helen Wallenda, Mrs Tuffy Geuders greeting the postman A2021.0032.091

24. Felix Adler (Note 26) Lou Jacobs (Note 14) and Patty Warfield A2021.0032.092

25. Al Powell on trapeze A2021.0032.093

26. Unidentified lady circus performer on uni-cycle. “Please credit photo by H.A. Atwell Studio, 64. W. Randolph St., Chicago” is stamped on the back. (2 photos) A2021.0032.94 & A2021.0032.094

27. Merle Evans, Musical Director, playing the trumpet A2021.0032.095

28. Altero Konyat on white horse A2021.0032.096

29. Tomez and Gargantua. Tomez is lying on the floor with Garagantua on top of him A2021.0032.097

30. Cheetah Cristiani, “Please credit photo by H.A. Atwell Studio, 64. W. Randolph St., Chicago” is stamped on the back. A2021.0032.098
31. Ernestine Clark in the air about to land on a horse. A2021.0032.099
32. Ernestine Clark and her horse “Stranger.” Press Release attached to back A2021.0032.100
33. Justina is written on the back. It’s a picture of a woman in mid-air doing a somersault over two horses. I think she is one of the Loyal-Repenski family members (Newspapers.com Lucia Cristiani) A2021.0032.101
34. From “Ballerina” Picture of dancing female circus performers in ring A2021.0032.102
35. Clowns A2021.0032.103
36. Robert Ringling and Ernestine Clarke, 1945 A2021.0032.104
37. Unidentified picture of a woman on a horse. Horse is reared up. Elephants in background A2021.0032.105

Folder 19 Photographs, black and white, varying sizes: 105-147.

1. Chief John Bruce, Walter Larrimie, Dr. Harris Robert B Good 1609 Turner Street Allentown PA A2021.0032.106
5. Dr. Robert P. Harris with 1880 act Mr. + Mrs. Perez A2021.0032.110
6. Dr. R.P. Harris with Mr & Mrs. Perez “the 1880 Act” Ringling Bros. Circus Approx 1947 or ’48 A2021.0032.111
7. Bob Ringling Taken Sept. 16, 1945 A2021.0032.112
8. Ray, Taken Sept. 16. 1945 A2021.0032.113
10. Joe McCarthy + Dr. Harris 1948 A2021.0032.115
12. Taken September 16, 1945 Rose Behee A2021.0032.117
14. Taken Oct 6, 1946, Dr. Harris A2021.0032.119
15. Taken September 16. 1945 Donah Cameron + Mrs. Clark A2021.0032.120
16. Trailer + Chery Sarasota , Fla 1947 A2021.0032.121
17. The Bradna Family with illegible new addition Christine A2021.0032.122
20. Taken Oct. 6, 1946 Criss Cross Flying act and father and daughters  
A2021.0032.125
21. Circus Dr. Harris, Joseph, Harry, Jimmy – Midgets & Mr. Fisher – giant  
1948  A2021.0032.126
22. Snooper and Vickie A2021.0032.127
23. Robert P. Harris A2021.0032.128
24. Taken October 6, 1946. Dr. Robert P. Harris A2021.0032.129
25. Hebert Duval, Mrs. Duval, Pat Valdo. A2021.0032.130
26. and Vincent Darr Ringling Circus 1947 and 1948  A2021.0032.131
27. Red + Harris Sarasota 1947  A2021.0032.132
29. Dr. and Mrs, Robert Harris in a Medical Tent Milwaukee, 1945 by H.H  
Conley Pickamik Theater, Bell Park Ridge, Lola Harris Dr. Robert P.  
Harris A2021.0032.134
31. Dr. Robert Harris with Mike Carrigan, Philadelphia Dept. of Health,  
1948. A2021.0032.136
32. Dr. Robert Harris with Mike Carrigan, Philadelphia Dept. of Health,  
1948, signed by Mike Carrigan on back. (duplicate photograph)  
A2021.0032.136
33. Ella Bradna, Barnum and & Bailey, 1908 A2021.0032.137
34. Florence Tennyson (Mrs. Phil Fine) A2021.0032.138
35. Mrs. Edith Ringling (Mrs. Charlie) A2021.0032.139
36. Dr. Robert Harris, 1947 sitting in a medical tent  A2021.0032.140
37. Group picture at a party at District Atty’s home in Cincinnati, Ohio in  
1945; Standing left to right on first row: Mrs. Seiford (Marion’s  
Mother), Kitty Clark, Chinese girl (low wire act) husband of Chinese  
girl, Marion Seiford; Second Row; Ernestine Clark, (Equestrian and  
“Filer”) Bill Reynolds, Donna Cameron, Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, Robert  
P. Harris, M.D.; Bottom Row : Adriana’s husband and Adriana  
tumbling act), Henrietta Wallenda , Mrs. Robert P Harris, Margie of  
Chinese act later married to Kitty Clark’s first husband.  
A2021.0032.141
38. Ernestine Clarke A2021.0032.142
39. 1944 at Madison Square Garden, Mr. Bradna’s Birthday party; Mr &  
Mrs Ringling are cutting the cake and Dr. Robert Harris is at the  
microphone. A2021.0032.143
41. Loyal-Repenski family A2021.0032.145
42. Picture of a group of people at Mr. Bradna’s Birthday Party at the  
Boston Garden, May 1944. Pictured are Emmett Kelley, Mrs. Lula
Harris, Bradna, Mrs. Robert Ringling (Irene), Mr. Robert Ringling, Adriana, and Mrs. Clark (Ernestine’s Mom) A2021.0032.146

43. National Geographic picture of Dr. Harris and trapeze artist. Robert, Adriana, Mrs. Clark (Equestrians Mom) A2021.0032.147

44. Donald Meyers Mid Assistant ‘Don’ A2021.0032.148

45. Cristiani Sisters (Left- June, Right- Cozetta) with white horse. A2021.0032.149