

Information Sheet

R **Draper, Arthur Clinton, 1872-1944.**
847 **Photograph collection, ca. 1890-1935.**
 Nine folders.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are the photographs of Arthur Clinton Draper, a producer of minstrel shows. Draper produced minstrel shows in the central and western states for over thirty years, specializing in benefit performances at Elks lodges.

Clint Draper was born in Oswego, Kansas, in 1872. His mother was a music teacher who had moved there from the east, and his father was a physician who had relatives living near Lebanon, Missouri. Draper was reared in Oswego, after which he moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where for twelve years he was a partner in Carpenter and Draper, a retail grocery business. He was well-known as an amateur entertainer, and was a member of the Colorado Springs Opera House orchestra and the Centennial State Band.

Draper's break into professional entertaining came when he accepted an invitation to join Haverly's Mastodon Minstrels, a popular troupe then playing Colorado Springs. He performed with Haverly's only briefly before going into business in 1900 with Harry Miller of Paris, Texas, a producer of minstrel shows. Miller and Draper produced shows with local amateur performers, contracting to provide all scenery, props, costumes, songs, special acts, and music. They helped with advertising and publicity, and bore responsibility for rehearsals and final stage production. The sponsoring organization provided the theater, a pianist for rehearsals, a carpenter to build props and scenery, and local talent for the shows.

Miller and Draper specialized in benefit performances with the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Although they contracted with similar organizations, most of their shows were staged under the auspices of the B.P.O.E. Working with groups such as the Elks assured the producers of a ready pool of amateurs for "burnt cork" performances. Miller and Draper produced shows from New York to the Pacific, playing some towns year after year. When Miller and Draper dissolved the partnership in 1920, Miller took the eastern part of the territory and Draper the western part.

Draper continued producing benefit shows through the mid-1930s, one of the last being staged in his adopted home town of Lebanon. He lived briefly in Grand Island, Nebraska, in 1935-1936, where he was director of membership activities of the Elks lodge. Ultimately he retired to his farm near Lebanon, where he died in 1944. The Lebanon newspaper referred to Draper as one of the last "top-flight minstrels."

The Draper photograph collection complements the correspondence, scrapbooks, advertising materials, scripts, and ephemera previously microfilmed as WHMC-Rolla Collection R112. There are one hundred eight professionally-produced views, nearly all of which illustrate Draper's career as a minstrel performer and producer of minstrel shows. The earliest views show the Carpenter & Draper grocery store in Colorado Springs, Colorado. All of the other photographs show Draper and other blackface performers in various costumes, in parades, and on stage. Included are views of Draper in his Centennial State Band uniform, with Haverly's Mastodon Minstrels, and with Wynn Jones of Draper & Jones. The partnership with Harry Miller is well represented, as is the longtime association with the Elks. A significant number of views are group photos of the casts of various minstrel shows. Not all of the locations are known. Of those that are identified, the locations include Fresno and Santa Cruz, California; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; Pittsburg, Kansas; Joplin, Missouri; Helena, Montana; Grand Island and McCook, Nebraska; Mount Vernon and Syracuse, New York; Bismarck, North Dakota; Shawnee, Oklahoma; and

Warren, Pennsylvania. Folder 9 contains photographs inscribed to Clint Draper from fellow entertainers Harry Gorson Clarke, Jack Cullen, George and John Gorman, and "Tiny" Jones.

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17 May 1982

Emma Gibbs Phillips

Gift

Shelf List

These are the photographs of Arthur Clinton Draper, a producer of minstrel shows. Draper produced minstrel shows in the central and western states for over thirty years, specializing in benefit performances at Elks lodges.

- Folder 1: Carpenter & Draper grocery store (Colorado Springs, Colo.)
(5 items)
- Folder 2: Miller & Draper
(7 items)
- Folder 3: Draper & Jones
(13 items)
- Folder 4: Arthur Clinton Draper
(19 items)
- Folder 5: Elks Minstrels
(17 items)
- Folder 6: Elks Minstrels (group portraits of casts)
(16 items)
- Folder 7: Unidentified minstrel group photographs (most are probably Elks Minstrels)
(16 items)
- Folder 8: Miscellaneous photographs
(10 items)
- Folder 9: Entertainers (portraits inscribed to Clint Draper)
(5 items)

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- Draper, Arthur Clinton, 1872-1944.
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Photograph collections.

Revues.