

ACADIAN HANDICRAFT PROJECT RECORDS

Mss. 1880

Inventory

Compiled by
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2014

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SUMMARY

Size	9.5 linear ft.
Geographic Locations	Louisiana.
Inclusive Dates	1936-1962
Bulk Dates	1942-1962
Languages	English, French.
Summary	Project launched in 1942 to preserve the language and culture of the French-speaking people of Louisiana. Records consist of general office files, program files for festivals and exhibitions, and records relating to the promotion, production and sale of Acadian handicrafts.
Access Restrictions	No restrictions on access.
Copyright	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the writers of these materials in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Related Collections	Emeritte O. Perret Oral History Interview, 1995, Mss. 4700.0513, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Citation	Acadian Handicraft Project Records, Mss. 1880, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Locations	7:98-106, OS:A

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

The Acadian Handicraft Project existed from 1942 until 1962. It grew out of an earlier effort by the General Education Board to support French language and culture in Louisiana. The purpose of the Project was to preserve the traditional language and culture of the Acadians who settled in Louisiana in 1765. In 1942, Louisiana State University's General Extension Program picked up the project. Louise Olivier (d. 1962), served as the Extension Program's field representative and purchased crafts, mostly textiles, from Acadian women and marketed them throughout the state. Acadian handicrafts exhibited and sold included a variety of hand braided palmetto articles, handspun and hand-woven cotton items, and handmade children and infant wear. Louise Olivier enlisted traditional Acadian weavers, quilters, seamstresses, and palmetto braiders to produce items for sale and for exhibit at public libraries, meetings, and festivals.

Louise V. Olivier was born in Arnaudville, Louisiana to parents of Acadian descent. She held undergraduate and graduate degrees in music and French. In her position as a field representative of General Extension Division's French Project, she sponsored a series of radio broadcasts to rural Cajun assemblies. At these parish-wide gatherings, she collected and recorded French songs, stories, games, and dances unique to each area.

Although her original intent was to preserve the French language in Louisiana, Olivier realized that the most effective channel to perpetuate the preservation of language and culture was to promote Acadian handicrafts. The Acadian Handicraft Project encouraged the production of handicrafts by furnishing a sales outlet for the artisans' merchandise. The program was dismantled after her death in 1962.

The Acadian Bicentennial Celebration Association was formed in January 1954 following a meeting called by the Louisiana Department of Commerce and Industry. Dr. Thomas J. Arceneaux, Dean of the College of Agriculture at Southwestern Louisiana Institute, headed the effort. The Association had representatives from each Congressional District in the state. Events were held throughout the state in 1955, but were centered primarily in St. Martin Parish. They commemorated the British expulsion of the Acadians from their homeland in Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia) in 1755. Pageants, exhibits, fairs, festivals, and special programs were state funded events that spanned nearly a year.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection documents the work of Louise Olivier in reviving the Acadian culture in Louisiana. Through the promotion of handicrafts, folk festivals, and the instruction of the French language, Olivier strived to demonstrate the importance of preserving a culture, which had been suppressed by the State of Louisiana in the early part of the 20th century. The records consist of general office files, program files, and records relating to the production and sale of handicrafts.

General office files contain the correspondence of Olivier, her staff, vendors, the public, and the University. This group of files also includes reports, general financial papers, writings, and printed material. Program files pertain to events and exhibits, which promoted the Acadian performing arts, handicrafts and the French language. Records concerning the production and sale of handicrafts are comprised of correspondence and business papers relating to the artisans and the merchants who sold their works.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

Series I. General Office Files, 1936-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1939-1962, undated.

Subseries 2. Reports, 1942-1962.

Subseries 3. Financial Records, 1943-1962, undated.

Subseries 4. Writings, 1938-1961, undated.

Subseries 5. Printed Items, 1936-1962, undated.

Series II. Exhibitions and Programs Files, 1938-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Exhibitions, 1943-1962, undated.

Subseries 2. Programs, 1938-1960, undated.

Series III. Artisans Files, 1948-1961, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1948-1958, undated.

Subseries 2. Business Files, 1948-1961.

Series IV. Merchants Files, 1944-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1944-1962, undated.

Subseries 2. Business Files, 1944-1962, undated.

Series V. Artifacts, undated.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. General Office Files, 1938-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1939-1962, undated.

General correspondence consist of letters, short notes and memoranda. Correspondents include Louise Olivier, her staff, vendors, the public, and University offices, particularly memos from the Office of the Auditor. In-house memoranda and notes instruct the staff on office jobs and projects, and update them on Olivier's activities. University correspondence relates to financial matters and policies regarding employees, and procedures pertaining to the daily operation of the Acadian Handicraft Project. Correspondence with vendors discusses pricing, orders and shipping of supplies, which were ordered by Olivier, then supplied to the artisans. Letters from the public, mostly schoolchildren and teachers, request information on the Acadian culture. Two early letters are written in French by a man in Belgium seeking a pen pal (1939, 1940).

Note: Some items in French.

Subseries 2. Reports, 1942-1962.

Monthly reports submitted to the University itemize inventories, expenditures, and income generated from sales. They include yearly reports on exhibits sent out and summaries on wholesale outlets, which list museums, shops, and other businesses that sold handicrafts. Shipment reports, display room reports, and price lists are also present.

Subseries 3. Financial Records, 1943-1962, undated.

Records consist of invoices, bills, and statements of accounts with vendors, and requisitions and vouchers for acquisition of supplies made through the University. Travel vouchers for Louise Olivier's attendance at meetings, presentations, and exhibits from 1958 to 1961 are also present. Financial papers also include monthly accounts on petty cash expenditures. It was through this account that the artisans were paid for their work. Also included are samples of University budgets, bank statements, checks and check-stub books.

Subseries 4. Writings, 1938-1961, undated.

This subseries consists of stories, poetry, speeches, and musical scores and lyrics. The subseries begins with a short piece written by Arlin Turner of the LSU English faculty describing the Cajun people as semi-literate and ignorant. They include the handwritten lyrics and musical score for *Le Reveil de la Louisiane*. A history on the Acadian Handicraft movement presented to the Natchitoches Home Demonstration Council (undated). The foreign relations between France and the United States (Feb. 12, 1953, undated). Louise Olivier's biographical data and employment history (undated). The story of Louisiana's colored cotton in a talk *Chinese Nankeen Cotton*. Several speeches and articles discuss the history of the Acadians, including Governor Sam H. Jones's speech on the Evangeline country (July 16, 1942). The written goals and purpose of the Acadian Handicraft Project (Jan. 10, 1942, Aril 3, 1945, Jan. 20, 1961).

Subseries 5. Printed Items, 1936-1962, undated.

Printed items contain programs for musical and theatrical performances, musical scores, newspaper clippings, ephemera, newsletters, and photographs. Photographic postcards depict weavers posing in front of a weaving shed and a mill (June 1952). Ephemera include advertisements, with illustrations, for lace and lace collars (undated), and a flyer distributed by the Quebec-Wallonie promoting the unification of all French-speaking regions of the world (undated). Also present are issues of the French Language journals, *Le Petit Journal* (1936-1941), *La Vie Journal Solaria* (1939-1940), *La Semaine de Suzette* (Aug. 26, 1954), *l'intrepide* (1955), and the *National Folk Festival* program (April 1950).

Note: Some items in French.

Series II. Exhibitions and Programs Files, 1938-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Exhibitions, 1943-1962, undated.

This subseries relates to handicrafts sent on loan for display at public libraries, museums, schools, club meetings, and fairs. Papers are comprised of correspondence, program proposals, lists of articles sent for exhibit, schedules, and press releases. Some lists contain summaries of demonstrations on weaving, spinning and braiding.

Note: Some items in French.

Subseries 2. Programs, 1938-1960, undated.

This subseries relates to programs that promoted the history and culture of the Acadians in Louisiana. Papers consist of correspondence, notes, newsletters and announcements, with a large part pertaining to the Acadian Bicentennial Celebration (1954-1955). Correspondents discuss the initiation and development of projects, festivals and French language education. Proposed programs include a proposal for a radio program (1938), folk dance and music workshops, the performing arts, and handicraft demonstrations. *Articles of Incorporation of Acadian Bicentennial Celebration Association* are also present (March 5, 1954). Early files include a notebook of projects and festivals by parishes (1940). French language material includes issues of *Le Carillon* (1941-1942), a notebook of French clubs in Louisiana, and French language plays (1941-1942), and French vocabulary index cards (undated).

In addition to her work in Louisiana, Olivier accompanied Acadian handicraft exhibits to festivals, conferences and conventions held in other states. These included the Music Educators Conference, the National Folk Festival (1946-1951, undated), and the Lions Club conventions of 1949 and 1950. The Lions Club material contains correspondence, programs, ephemera, and a scrapbook entitled *Report on Publicity for the Lions Clubs of Louisiana* (1949). The scrapbook contains letters, newspaper clippings and two photographs. The photographic images show a weaving loom and an exhibit table of Louisiana products that were on display at 1949 convention in New York.

Series III. Artisans Files, 1948-1961, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1948-1958, undated.

In their correspondence, artisans provide updates on the progress of their work and request needed supplies. In her letters, Olivier discusses supplies, and the quality and workmanship of the merchandise.

Subseries 2. Business Files, 1948-1961.

This group relates the merchandise produced by artisans and marketed by the Acadian Handicraft Project. Records include lists of artisans, invoices, invoices and receipts for payment of merchandise accepted for sale. Some invoices contain correspondence. A pencil drawn sewing pattern of a boy's shorts and vest (undated) is also present.

Series IV. Merchants Files, 1944-1962, undated.

Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1944-1962, undated.

In their letters, merchants inquire about the availability and quality of particular items and place orders for merchandise. In her letters, Olivier states the terms and policies for purchasing, shipping and returns of purchases.

Subseries 2. Business Files, 1944-1962, undated.

Invoices for merchandise purchased from the Acadian Handicraft Project comprise this group.

Series V. Artifacts, undated.

Artifacts are comprised of Louise Olivier's two Lions Club Convention badges (1949, 1950), a palmetto-weaving sample (undated) and several lace samples (undated).

INDEX TERMS

Terms

Series, Subseries

Acadian Bicentennial Celebration Association.	II.1
Cajun music--Louisiana.	I.4-5, II.1
Cajuns-Louisiana.	I-IV
Craft festivals--Louisiana.	II.2
Folk festivals--Louisiana.	II.2
Folk songs, Cajun French--Louisiana.	I.4-5, II.1
French language--Studying and teaching--Louisiana.	I.4-5, II
Handicraft--Exhibitions--Louisiana.	I.2-3, II
Handicraft--Louisiana.	I-IV
Handicraft--Marketing.	I, III-IV
Lions Club.	II.2, V
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. General Extension Division.	I-IV
Olivier, Louise V., d. 1962.	I.1-4, II-V.1
Selling--Handicraft--Louisiana.	III, IV
Textile crafts--Louisiana.	I.1-3, III, IV

CONTAINER LIST

Location Box Folders Contents

Series I. General Office Files, 1936-1962, undated.

			Subseries 1. General Correspondence, 1939-1962, undated.
7:98	1	1-23	1939-June 1944.
	2	1-25	July 1944-June 1946.
	3	1-22	July 1946-Dec. 1947.
7:99	4	1-20	Jan. 1948-June 1949.
	5	1-20	July 1949-June 1950.
	6	1-23	July 1950-Dec. 1951.
7:100	7	1-23	Jan. 1952-March 1953.
	8	1-25	April 1953-Aug. 1954.
	9	1-23	Sept. 1954-Dec. 1955.
7:101	10	1-14	Jan.-Dec. 1956.
	11	1-11	Jan.-Dec. 1957.
	12	1-24	Jan. 1958-Aug. 1962, undated.
			Subseries 2. Reports, 1942-1962.
7:102	13	1-29	1942/1943-1954/1955.
	14	1-20	1955/1956-1957/1958.
	15	1-16	1958/1959-1962.
7:103	16	1-14	Subseries 3. Financial Records, 1943-1962, undated.
OS:A		1	Budgets, 1953-1962.
7:103	16	15-24	Subseries 4. Writings, 1938-1961, undated.
OS:A		25-42	Subseries 5. Printed Items, 1936-1962, undated,
		1	<i>La Vie Journal Solaria</i> , 1939-1940, <i>Le Petit Journal</i> , 1936-1937, <i>National Folk Festival</i> program, April 1950, <i>La Semaine de</i> <i>Suzette</i> , Aug. 26, 1954, <i>l'intrepide</i> , 1955.

Series II. Exhibitions and Programs Files, 1938-1962, undated.

7:103	16	43-54	Subseries 1. Exhibitions, 1943-1962, undated.
			Subseries 2. Programs Files, 1938-1960, undated.
7:104	17	--	French vocabulary index cards, undated.
	18	1-13	1938-1949.
7:105	19	1-24	1950-1960, undated.

CONTAINER LIST (cont.)

Location Box Folders Contents

Location	Box	Folders	Contents
			Series III. Artisans Files, 1948-1961, undated.
7:105	19	25-42	Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1948-1958, undated.
		43-59	Subseries 2. Business Files, 1948-1961.
OS:A		1	Pattern of boy's shorts and vest, undated.
			Series IV. Merchants Files, 1944-1962, undated.
7:106	20	1-24	Subseries 1. Correspondence, 1944-1962, undated.
	21	1-16	Subseries 2. Business Files, 1944-1962, undated.
			Series V. Artifacts, 1949, 1950, undated.
7:107	22	--	Convention badges (1949, 1950), palmetto-weaving sample, undated.
	23	1-6	Lace samples, undated.