# **John Thompson Ford Papers**

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# Manuscript Division, Library of Congress Washington, D.C. 2011

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LC Online Catalog record: http://lccn.loc.gov/mm87061995

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff Revised and expanded by Laura J. Kells

## **Collection Summary**

Title: John Thompson Ford Papers

**Span Dates:** 1809-1960 **Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1850-1894)

**ID No.:** MSS61995

Creator: Ford, John Thompson, 1829-1894

Extent: 5,000 items; 22 containers plus 12 oversize; 15.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Theater executive and dramatist. Correspondence, playbooks, playbills, subject files, scrapbooks, and other papers relating to Ford's life and work as a theater manager in Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., in the last half of the nineteenth century, including the assassination by John Wilkes Booth of President Abraham Lincoln at his theater in Washington.

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

#### People

Booth, Edwin, 1833-1893--Correspondence.

Booth, John Wilkes, 1838-1865.

Ford, Annie. Annie E. Ford papers.

Ford, John Thompson, 1829-1894.

Ford, Lizzie. Lizzie Ford papers.

Forrest, Edwin, 1806-1872--Correspondence.

Gilbert, W. S. (William Schwenck), 1836-1911.

Jefferson, Joseph, 1829-1905--Correspondence.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Assassination.

Sullivan, Arthur, 1842-1900.

Tayleure, Clifton W., -1891--Correspondence.

Winter, William, 1836-1917--Correspondence.

#### **Organizations**

Ford's Theatre (Washington, D.C.)

Grand Opera House (Baltimore, Md.)

Holliday Street Theatre (Baltimore, Md.)

#### **Subjects**

Charities.

Theater--United States.

Theaters--Alexandria--Richmond.

Theaters--Maryland--Baltimore.

Theaters--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Theaters--South Carolina--Charleston.

Theaters--Virginia--Richmond.

Theaters--Washington (D.C.)

#### Places

Baltimore (Md.)--Politics and government.

#### **Occupations**

Dramatists.

Executives.

## **Administrative Information**

#### **Provenance**

The papers of John Thompson Ford, theater executive and dramatist, were given to the Library of Congress by Stanley W. McClure in 1960 and John F. Sollers in 1986. Additional material was received from Sollers between 1988 and 1998.

#### **Processing History**

The papers of John Thompson Ford were arranged and described in 1986. Additional items were placed in the collection in 1992. The collection was partially reprocessed and expanded in 2011.

#### **Transfers**

Some photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.separatedmat

#### **Copyright Status**

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Thompson Ford is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States(Title 17, U.S.C.).

#### **Access and Restrictions**

The papers of John Thompson Ford are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

#### **Preferred Citation**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Thompson Ford Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# **Biographical Note**

biographical note		
Date	Event	
1829, Apr. 16	Born, Baltimore, Md.	
1849	Married Edith Branch Andrews	
1851-1854	Agent for the Nightingale Serenaders, a minstrel troupe Correspondent for the <i>Baltimore Clipper</i>	
1854-1855	Formed a partnership with George Kunkel and Thomas Moxley in leasing the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md.	
1856-1861	In partnership with George Kunkel and Thomas Moxley, managed Marshall Theatre, Richmond, Va.	
1858	Elected to First Branch City Council from the fourteenth district, Baltimore, Md.	
circa 1861	Became sole manager of the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md.	
1862	Built Ford's Athenaeum, Washington, D.C.	
1863	After Ford's Athenaeum burned down, rebuilt it as Ford's New Theatre (later called Ford's Theatre), Washington, D.C.	

1865	Incarcerated from April 18-May 27, following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.
1867	Ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Baltimore, Md.
1870	Purchased the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md. Managed Academy of Music, Charleston, S.C. Elected to Second Branch City Council from the nineteenth and twentieth district, Baltimore, Md.
1871	Built Ford's Grand Opera House, Baltimore, Md.
1874	Elected to First Branch City Council from the nineteenth district, Baltimore, Md.
1878	Managed Broad Street Theatre, Philadelphia, Pa.
1894, Mar. 15	Died, Baltimore, Md.

# **Scope and Content Note**

The papers of John Thompson Ford (1829-1894) document his career as a theater manager. Ford is best known as the owner of the Washington, D.C., theater where President Abraham Lincoln was shot in April 1865, but he managed theaters in Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Charleston, South Carolina; Alexandria, Virginia; Richmond, Virginia; and Washington, D.C., in the last half of the nineteenth century. He also managed traveling and resident acting companies. His papers are arranged into the following series: General Correspondence, Subject File, Writings, Playbooks, Playbills, Scrapbooks, Addition, and Oversize. The collection spans the period 1809-1960, with the bulk of the material from 1850 to 1894.

The General Correspondence covers the period 1832-1894 and includes letters from notable theatrical personalities such as Edwin Booth, Edwin Forrest, Joseph Jefferson, Clifton W. Tayleure, and William Winter. These letters, as well as those written by Ford's friends and business associates, reflect the influence Ford had on the theater during this period. Copies of letters from Ford, some from other manuscript repositories, are included. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln by the actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre, the subsequent arrest of Ford and his brothers, and the closure of the theater are related in the correspondence. Ford's civic activities, particularly in Baltimore, are also documented.

A large portion of the <u>Subject File</u> consists of unbound scrapbook pages documenting productions at the Holliday Street Theatre and Ford's Grand Opera House in Baltimore, his charitable activities, and management of Gilbert and Sullivan productions. Included also is biographical and genealogical information.

The Writings File contains writings and notes by Ford and plays written by his daughters, Annie E. Ford and Lizzie Ford. Among John Thompson Ford's writings are handwritten transcriptions of his letters to the *Baltimore Clipper* during the period he was on tour with the Nightingale Serenaders minstrel troupe, letters to the editor on theatrical topics, and an account of his belief in the innocence of Mary E. Surratt of the charge of being a conspirator in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

A <u>Playbooks</u> series is comprised of playbooks for productions staged at theaters managed by Ford. They include one-act farces, full-length comedies, and dramas. Such books were bought by patrons at the theater and contained the entire script of the play by character. They were helpful in following the play and also were kept as souvenirs. A few of the playbooks contain annotations.

A series of <u>Playbills</u> spanning 1856-1881 contains theater programs and broadsides for productions at theaters Ford managed in Washington and Baltimore. Arranged chronologically under the name of the theater, it provides details such as names of performers and theater managers, dates of performances, and the cost of admission.

The <u>Scrapbooks</u> series is comprised of seven volumes compiled by Ford's daughter Lizzie. They contain mainly newspaper clippings, but include programs, notes, menus, and other memorabilia. Focusing on theatrical topics, her father's career and interests, and productions and benefits at Ford's theaters, they also chronicle events in Baltimore.

An <u>Addition</u> to the papers contains family correspondence between members of Ford's extended family, a ledger, 1869-1870, of a theatrical company in Charleston, S.C., that was also used as a scrapbook about his Baltimore theaters in the years 1875-1879, a copy of a diagram depicting John Wilkes Booth's escape from Ford's Theatre, and copies of autograph books containing entries by prominent theatrical figures of the nineteenth century. An incomplete biography written by Ford's grandson, John Ford Sollers, covers Ford's early years, the Lincoln assassination, and Ford's struggles to retain his theater following that event.

# **Arrangement of the Papers**

The collection is arranged in eight series:

- General Correspondence, 1832-1894
- Subject File, 1852-1956
- Writings, 1852-1894
- Playbooks, 1809-circa 1890
- <u>Playbills, 1856-1881</u>
- Scrapbooks, 1846-1923
- <u>Addition, 1849-1960</u>
- Oversize, 1856-1893

## **Description of Series**

Container Series

BOX 1-2 <u>General Correspondence</u>, 1832-1894

Letters to Ford from actors and managers, friends and family members, and some letters sent

by Ford.

Arranged chronologically.

**Subject File, 1852-1956** 

Newspaper clippings, contracts, printed matter, notes, and other documents.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

BOX 5 <u>Writings</u>, 1852-1894

Writings primarily by Ford and his daughters, Annie E. Ford and Lizzie Ford.

Arranged alphabetically by name of author.

BOX 6-14 Playbooks, 1809-circa 1890

Theatre playbooks.

Arranged alphabetically by title.

BOX 15-17 Playbills, 1856-1881

Theater programs and broadsides.

Arranged chronologically under the name of the theater.

BOX 18-21 Scrapbooks, 1846-1923

Lizzie Ford's scrapbooks.

Arranged according to the numbers assigned to six of the volumes by Lizzie Ford, followed by a seventh unnumbered volume. Scrapbooks are accompanied by folders of loose material

that had been inserted in the volumes.

BOX 21-22 Addition, 1849-1960

Family correspondence, ledger, photocopies of autographs books, incomplete typescript biography of John Thompson Ford, a list of plays, printed matter, and other documents.

Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

BOX OV 1-OV 12 <u>Oversize</u>, 1856-1893

Programs, broadsides, and a theater seating plan.

Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

# **Container List**

Container	Contents
вох 1-2	General Correspondence, 1832-1894
	Letters to Ford from actors and managers, friends and family members, and some letters sent by Ford.
	Arranged chronologically.
вох 1	1832, 1856-1879
	(13 folders)
вох 2	1880-1894
	(11 folders)
	Undated
вох 3-4	Subject File, 1852-1956
	Newspaper clippings, contracts, printed matter, notes, and other documents.
	Arranged alphabetically by subject.
вох 3	Actors, 1878-1920, 1927
	Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, 1878-1956
	Baltimore, Md., 1875-1923
	(2 folders)
	Benefits, 1876-1893, 1906
	(2 folders)
	Biographical material, 1878-1893, 1912, undated
	(2 folders)
	Charities, 1869, 1876-1893
	Church and stage, 1875-1879, 1893
	Clarke, Creston See Container 4, Ford, Martha and Creston Clarke
	Contracts, 1874
	Copyright issues
	The Mikado, 1885
	Miscellaneous, 1878-1881
	Ford, Annie E., 1871-1877
BOX 4	Ford, Elias, 1852-1853, 1876
	Ford, Martha and Creston Clarke, 1887-1895, 1910
	Ford family genealogy, 1884-1948
	Ford's Grand Opera House, Baltimore, Md.
	Ground rent suit, 1871-1894
	Miscellany, 1873-1894, 1902, 1920-1948, 1964
	(2 folders)
	Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., 1863-1865, 1893, 1930, 1951
	H.M.S. Pinafore, 1878-1879
	Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md., 1860-1880, 1902, 1917, 1949
	(2 folders)
	Managers versus critics, laws, and unions, 1876-1917

Minstrels, 1853-1855, 1888, 1895, 1902, 1909, 1918, 1946 Miscellaneous topics, 1874-1895, undated (2 folders) **BOX** 5 Obituaries, 1894-1895, 1914, 1921 Reminiscences and interviews, 1870-1915 Washington, D.C., theaters, 1862-1886, 1912, 1943 BOX 5 Writings, 1852-1894 Writings primarily by Ford and his daughters, Annie E. Ford and Lizzie Ford. Arranged alphabetically by name of author. BOX 5 Ford, Annie E., undated (2 folders) Ford, John Thompson, 1852, 1876-1894 Ford, Lizzie, 1892, undated (3 folders) Others, undated **BOX** 6-14 Playbooks, 1809-circa 1890 Theatre playbooks. Arranged alphabetically by title. BOX 6 The Adopted Child Adrienne An Alarming Sacrifice Aline Ambrose Gwinett An Ample Apology Angelo Anthony and Cleopatra The Apostate Apple Blossoms The Area Belle Armand L'Article 47 As You Like It Aunt Charlotte's Maid Avenger Babes in the Woods **Bamboozling** Bardell v. Picwick Beau Brummell Beaux's Stratagem Beauty and The Beast Behind Time The Bell Ringer of St. Paul's

The Belle's Stratagem

Belphegor Ben Bolt

Ben the Boatswain

BOX 7 Betsey Baker

Billy Taylor

Black Ey'd William

Black Sheep

The Blind Boy

Blow for Blow

A Bold Stroke for a Husband

A Bold Stroke for a Wife

Boots at the Swan

Bowl'd Out

Box and Cox

The Boy Martyrs

The Bravo

Breach of Promise

The Bridal

The Bride of Lammermoor

**Brigand** 

The Broken-Hearted Club

The Brothers

Bruised and Cured

The Busy Body

Camille

Captain Kyd

Captain's Not A-Miss

Cabman No. 93`

Carte De Visite

Castle Spectre

Cataract of the Ganges

Caught in a Line

The Charcoal Burner

Cheap Excursion

The Child of Nature

Chops of the Channel

Clari

Clouds

Columbus el Filibustero!!

Comfortable Service

Confounded Foreigners

Comical Countess

The Conscript

Country Squire

Crossing the Line

A Cup of Tea

**John Thompson Ford Papers** 

**BOX** 8

9

Cupboard Love

Cupid's Eye-Glass

Cure for the Heartache

Der Freischutz

Doing for the Best

Fair Maid of Perth

False Pretences

A Family Failing

Family Jars

Family Pride

Fashion

Fashion and Feeling

Fatal Marriage

Father and Son

Faust and Marguerite

The Fellow That Likes Me

The Female Detective

Fernande

Feudal Times

The Field of Forty Footsteps

Fifth Wheel

The Fire Raiser

The Fireman

First Love

Fitzsmythe of Fitzsmythe Hall

Flies in the Web

Floating Beacon

The Flying Dutchman

Fontainbleau

The Fool's Revenge

Forest Keeper

The Forest Rose

Fortunes Frolic

Fortunio and the Seven Gifted Servants

Forty and Fifty

Found in a 4-Wheeler

Founded of Facts

Fountain of Beauty

Fra Diavolo

French Exhibition

French Spy

Gambler's Fate

The Game of Life

The Game of Love

The Gamester

Gen. Grant

**BOX** 9

BOX 10 The Gentle Shepherd

George Barnwell

Gertrude's Money Box

Giralda

Glance at New York

Glory of Columbia

Go to Putney

Going to the Dogs

A Golden Fetter

Goose with the Golden Eggs

Grandfather Whitehead

Green Mountain Boy

Grimsham, Bagshaw, and Bradshaw

The Gun-Maker of Moscow

Gustavus the Third

A Hard Case

The Hidden Hand

How to Settle Accounts with Your Laundress

If I Had a Thousand a Year

If the Cap Fits

I'll-Treated Il Trovatore

The Illustrious Stranger

*In for a Holiday* 

In the Wrong House

Inkle and Yarico

Ireland as It Is

The Irish Attorney

The Irish Lion

The Iron Chest

(2 folders)

BOX 11 Jane Eyre

Jenny Lind at Last

Jessie Brown

John Bull

(2 folders)

Little Em'ly

Marie

Mary's Birthday

Mazeppa

A Most Unwarrantable Intrusion

Mr. Scroggins

My Friend Isaac

Nature's Nobleman

Nearly a Tragedy

The Nervous Man and the Man of Nerve

Never Reckon Your Chickens

**John Thompson Ford Papers** 

New Footman

A New Way to Pay Old Debts

The Naiad Queen, with notes by Ford

Nick of the Woods

No Thoroughfare

The Noble Heart

Nobody's Child

Noemie

Norah Creina

Not at Home

Not Guilty

Nothing Like Paste

Nothing Venture, Nothing Win

**BOX** 12 Nursey Chickweed

Othello

Our Clerks

Pas de Fascination

Peter Wilkins

Pygmalion and Galatea

Queen of the Frogs

The Queen's Heart

Richard the Second

Richard the Third

Richelieu

Rival Tenants

The Robber's Wife

Romance and Reality

The Rose of Ettrick Vale

St. Mary's Eve

Sam's Courtship

Sarah the Creole

Sardanapalus

Satan in Paris

The Sergeant's Wedding

The Sergeant's Wife

Scampini

School

School for Coquettes

The School for Prodigals

The School of Reform

A Scrap of Paper

The Sea of Ice

The Secret

Seeing Warren

Self

She Stoops to Conquer

**BOX** 13

A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

The Sheriff of the County

Shocking Events

A Silent Protector

Sisterly Service

The Six Degrees of Crime

The Sleeper Awakened

The Social War of 1900

Speed the Plough

Stage Struck

The Streets of New York

The Stupid Servant

The Suspicious Husband

Sweethearts and Wives

The Swiss Cottage

There's No Smoke without Fire

An Uncle Too Many

Under the Gaslight

Vandyke Brown

The Vermont Wool-Dealer

Very Little Faust and More Mephistopheles

The Veteran

Victorine

Walter Brand

Wanted, a Young Lady

War to the Knife

Warlock of the Glen

Water Witches

The Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish

Which of the Two?

White Farm

The White Horse of the Peppers

Whitbait at Greenwich

Who is Who?

Who Killed Cock Robin?

Why Women Weep

The Wicked World

Widow Freeheart

The Widow's Victim

The Wife

William Tell

The Winter's Tale

Wizard of the Wave

The Woman in Red

Woman's Vows and Mason's Oaths

The Wonder

**BOX** 14

**BOX** 16

A Wonderful Woman The Woodman's Hut The Writing on the Wall The Youthful Queen

#### BOX 15-17 Playbills, 1856-1881

Theater programs and broadsides.

Arranged chronologically under the name of the theater.

BOX 15 Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md.

22 Aug. 1856-1 Aug. 1857 See Oversize

7 Sept. 1860-18 Apr. 1861

21 Aug. 1861-22 July 1862 <u>See Oversize</u>

20 Aug. 1863-25 June 1864 See Oversize

1 Aug. 1867-11 June 1868

Feb.-June 1871 See Oversize

Ford's Grand Opera House, Baltimore, Md.

13 Sept. 1875-27 May 1876 See Oversize

BOX 17 2 Feb.-27 May 1876 ( The Stage)

Sept. 1876-2 June 1877 <u>See Oversize</u>

18 Aug. 1879-28 May 1880 See Oversize

21 Aug. 1880-2 Apr. 1881 See Oversize

Ford's Athenaeum, Washington, D.C., 19 Mar.-31 Dec. 1862 See Oversize

Ford's New Theatre, Washington, D.C., 26 Aug. 1863-6 Aug. 1864 See Oversize

#### BOX 18-21 Scrapbooks, 1846-1923

Lizzie Ford's scrapbooks.

Arranged according to the numbers assigned to six of the volumes by Lizzie Ford, followed by a seventh unnumbered volume. Scrapbooks are accompanied by folders of loose material that had been inserted in the volumes.

BOX 18 Vol. 1

(2 folders)

Vol. 2

(2 folders)

BOX 19 Vol. 3

(2 folders)

Vol. 4

(2 folders)

BOX 20 Vol. 5 See also Oversize

(3 folders)

Vol. 6

(2 folders)

Container	Contents
вох 21	Vol. 7
DUA 21	(2 folders)
BOX 21-22	Addition, 1849-1960
	Family correspondence, ledger, photocopies of autographs books, incomplete typescript biography of John Thompson Ford, a list of plays, printed matter, and other documents. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
вох 21	Account book for free summer excursions used as a notebook, 1876, undated
BOA 21	Autograph books, photocopies
	Ford, Annie E., 1849-1877
	Ford, Lizzie, 1867-1924
	Charleston Theatre, Charleston, S.C., 1869-1870
	Family correspondence, 1858-1886, 1893
	·
	(4 folders) Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., circa 1863, 1960, undated <u>See also Oversize</u>
	Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md., list of plays in library, 1874, undated
	"John T. Ford of Baltimore," incomplete biography by John Ford Sollers, undated
BOX 22	Ledger and scrapbook, 1869-1879
BUX 22	
	Menus, 1883-1889
	Miscellany, 1915, undated
	Printed matter, 1859, 1870
	(2 folders)
<b>BOX</b> OV 1-OV 12	Oversize, 1856-1893
	Programs, broadsides, and a theater seating plan.
	Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Playbills
	Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, Md.
	22 Aug. 1856-1 Aug. 1857 (Container 15)
BOX OV 2	21 Aug. 1861-22 July 1862 (Container 15)
BOX OV 3	20 Aug. 1863-25 June 1864 (Container 15)
BOX OV 4	FebJune 1871 (Container 16)
BOX OV 5	Ford's Grand Opera House, Baltimore, Md.
	13 Sept. 1875-27 May 1876 (Container 16)
BOX OV 6	Sept. 1876-2 June 1877 (Container 17)
BOX OV 7	18 Aug. 1879-28 May 1880 (Container 17)
BOX OV 8	21 Aug. 1880-2 Apr. 1881 (Container 17)
BOX OV 9	Ford's Athenaeum, Washington, D.C.
	19 Mar31 Dec. 1862 (Container 17)
BOX OV 10	(1 vol.)
BOX OV 10 BOX OV 11	(1 vol.) (1 vol.)
BOX OV 10 BOX OV 11	(1 vol.) (1 vol.) Ford's New Theatre, Washington, D.C.
	(1 vol.) (1 vol.)

Contents

Addition

Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., circa 1863 (Container 21)