

Shaker Historical Society and Museum
Elizabeth Nord Library & Archives
2nd Floor, 16740 South Park Blvd., Shaker Heights, OH 44120



Finding Aid for the Dorothy R. Davis Shaker Players Collection

2025.14.1

Date Range: 1920-1961

Bulk Dates: 1956-1961

Finding Aid created by Dawn Culp, 2025

Copyright Shaker Historical Society

Descriptive Summary

Title: Dorothy R. Davis Shaker Players Collection

Repository: Elizabeth Nord Library & Archives, Shaker Historical Society, 16740 South Park Blvd, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Identifier: 2025.14.1

Date Range: 1920-1961, undated (bulk 1956-1961)

Extent: 0.42 linear feet (1 Box)

Creator: Davis, Dorothy R.

Language: English

Administrative Information

Provenance: Gift of Dorothy R. Davis, 2005

Restrictions: Open for use by researchers. Some folders contain personally identifiable information that are restricted in accordance with institutional policy and applicable law. The following folders have unique restrictions:

- Folder 9 includes membership rosters with personal contact information and will remain restricted to internal use until 72 years after the record issuing date.

Copyright: The Shaker Historical Society (SHS) does not claim to control the rights for reproduction for all materials in this collection. Some materials may be protected by copyright, trademark, privacy, publicity rights, or other legal interests not owned by SHS.

Credit Line: Shaker Historical Society, Gift of Dorothy R. Davis

Related Materials: See related materials in Shaker Historical Society inventory; Cleveland State University, The Michael Schwartz Library, Special Collections; Shaker Heights Public Library, Local History Department

Processing Notes: The donation was received with the contents loose in a non-archival box with no apparent organizational process. Separated into 15 folders in one archival box. A finding aid was prepared by intern Dawn Culp in 2025.

Biographical/Historical

Dorothy R. Davis (1921-2019), born on November 22, 1921, was the president of The Shaker Players for their 40th anniversary season in 1959-1960 and then their vice president for the 1960-1961 season. She was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corp during WWII where she was on network radio stations while stationed in Washington, D.C. She was called back to Cleveland when her father passed to help her brother run their family business Overall Paint, Inc. Davis was the second woman to be The Shaker Players president in the 40 years since its inception. She had been a part of the Shaker Player for six years previously. Her donation to the Shaker Historical Society included handwritten notes on how the community theater was run, as well as playbills and photographs from several productions throughout the history of Shaker Players. She had a background in radio and TV advertisement copywriting and used her skills to promote the Shaker Players to the best of her ability.

The Shaker Players is one of, if not the oldest, community theaters in Ohio. In 1919, Rachel Cochran wanted to put on a play to raise funds for the construction of the new Plymouth

Church in Shaker Heights. The play successfully raised over \$90 to go towards the church, but community members were increasingly interested in participating in more productions. The year following, the Plymouth Players of Shaker Heights was formally organized by Mr. & Mrs. Cochran, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Schneider, Mrs. Carl Palmer, Mr. & Mrs. Walter McCaslin, and the Herbert Hosfords. The purpose of the players was to study the history and technique of drama, the mechanics of the theater, and to stimulate the community's interest in the dramatic arts. The group changed its name throughout its tenure, from The Plymouth Players to The Shaker Village Players, and ultimately settled on The Shaker Players in the 1930s after the group became a non-profit corporation. The Shaker Players held monthly meetings for their dues-paying members, as well as holding playwriting clinics and performing one-act plays written by community members. Some Shaker Players members went on to perform at Playhouse Square and on Broadway. The theater, with the help of patrons and advertisements in their playbill, continued to thrive into the 1960s, before slowly fading out of the limelight after their 45th anniversary in 1964, when they left the Shaker Heights High School stage, following their production of "Anything Goes", and did not have another stage to call their home. However, their legacy lives on at the Shaker Historical Society with the Dorothy R. Davis Collection.

Scope and Content

The Dorothy R. Davis Shaker Players archives measures 0.59 cubic feet (0.42 linear feet) and dates from 1920-1961 with the bulk of the collection dating from 1956-1961. The archives contain newspaper clippings, playbills, promotional materials, stationery, newsletters, membership rosters and information, Northern Ohio Council of Little Theaters lists, press releases, operations notes, and photographs of casts and sets from the Shaker Players performances.

Arrangement

The Dorothy R. Davis Shaker Players Archives are arranged as four series:

Series 1: Marketing, 1927, 1939, 1958-1961, undated

Series 2: Ephemera, 1920, 1956-1961, undated

Series 3: Organization, 1952-1960, undated

Series 4: Photographs, 1929, 1930, 1947, 1950-1961, undated

Access Terms

Actors

Actresses

Davis, Dorothy R.

Entertainment

Little theater movement

One-act plays

Performing arts posters

Theater programs
Theatrical productions
Shaker Heights
Shaker Heights (Ohio)
Shaker Players

Container List

Series 1: Marketing, 1927, 1939, 1952-1961, undated

This series contains carbon copies of press releases, invitations to performances, newspaper clippings detailing the Shaker Players, and other advertising correspondence.

Box 1, Folder 1	Press Releases, 1958-1961
Box 1, Folder 2	Invitations to Shaker Player performances, 1952-1960
Box 1, Folder 3	Newspaper Clippings, 1927, 1939, 1957-1960
Box 1, Folder 4	Miscellaneous (Advertising), 1952-1960

Series 2: Ephemera, 1920, 1956-1961, undated

This series contains playbills from performances, Shaker Players letterhead paper, and posters and tickets related to Shaker Players.

Box 1, Folder 5	Playbills, 1920, 1956-1961
Box 1, Folder 6	Shaker Players stationery
Box 1, Folder 7	Miscellaneous (Posters and Tickets), 1959-1961

Series 3: Organization, 1952-1960, undated

This series contains Shaker Player newsletters, membership lists, handwritten organizational notes, and other Little Theater documents.

Box 1, Folder 8	Newsletters, 1955-1959
Box 1, Folder 9	Membership & Roster Lists, 1952-1960 [Restricted]
Box 1, Folder 10	Operations (notes), 1953-1959
Box 1, Folder 11	Theater material unrelated to Shaker Players, NOCLT, ANTA, 1953-1960
Box 1, Folder 12	VP-Don Oehmler, 1958-1959

Series 4: Photographs, 1929-1961, undated

This series contains photographs of the Shaker Players' sets, shows, casts, and headshots.

Box 1, Folder 13	Shows, 1929-1961
Box 1, Folder 14	Headshots/Singles, 1948-1960
Box 1, Folder 15	Miscellaneous, 1950-1961