

THE STARK CENTER

Ottley Coulter Correspondence
The H.J. Lutch Stark Center for Physical Culture & Sports
The University of Texas at Austin

Finding Aid

Ottley Coulter Correspondence: 1 Box: 95 Folders: no date, 1899-1974 (95 files)

Abstract

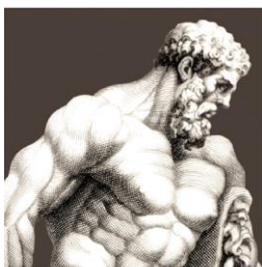
Ottley Coulter was a famous circus strongman and handbalancer. Coulter was born June 6, 1890 in Parkland, Ohio. His exploits led Coulter to be named *Strongman of 1912*. He participated in the *National Police Gazette Strongman Tournament* in 1918, lifting a total of 7,306 pounds over the course of several events. In the early 1920s, Coulter and George Jowett formed the American Continental Weightlifting Association (A.C.W.L.A.) to regulate the practice. Coulter later began to collect all manner of items related to the iron game. Terry Todd met Ottley while using Coulter's materials to aid in the completion of Todd's PhD dissertation. Coulter passed away in 1976 and the fonds were purchased by Jan and Terry Todd. The materials became part of their physical culture collection which developed into the basis for the creation of the Stark Center.

Access

Access to the Ottley Coulter Correspondence is restricted to visitors of the H.J. Lutch Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports and must be requested in writing prior to arrival at the Center. The research request/proposal should explain the proposed project, the expected outcome, and institutional affiliation, if any. Requests should be sent to: Dr. Jan Todd at jan@starkcenter.org. For additional information, please phone 512-471-0993.

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Processing Information:

Collection processed in 2014 by Geoff Schmalz, Stark Center Archivist. To contact Geoff about the content of the collection, please write him at geoff@starkcenter.org or call 512-471-0991.

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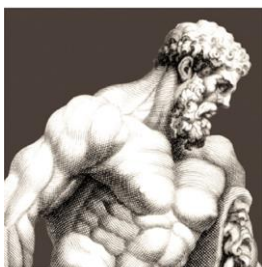
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Preferred Citation

Ottley Coulter Correspondence, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture & Sports, The University of Texas at Austin. *[There is no space between H.&J.]*



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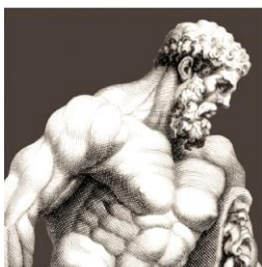
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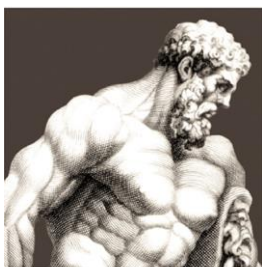
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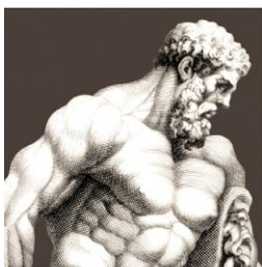
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Biographical Note

Ottley Coulter excelled as a circus strongman, muscle control artist and later as a handbalancer with his partner, Charles Shaffer. Born in Parkland, Ohio, June 6, 1890, Coulter made use of nutrition and training to become the stoutest of his household. He performed throughout the 19 teens as a circus strongman, achieving the title of *Strongman of 1912*. Furthermore, Coulter toured with Charles Shaffer performing handbalancing acts in different arenas and at circuses, beginning in 1916. On March 21, 1918, Coulter took part in the *National Police Gazette Strongman Tournament* organized by the publisher of the *Gazette*, Richard K. Fox. At that contest, Coulter performed the Jefferson lift with 510 pounds, a world record at the time. Over a series of events Coulter lifted an astounding 7,306 pounds though he only weighed 139 pounds. In 1923, Coulter performed another world record endeavor by succeeding in the raising of 109 pounds in the Rectangular Fix lift.

Coulter met Ethel Alexander, whom he married in 1917. The couple moved to Pittsburgh around 1920 and together they had three children: Athelda, David and John Robert. In the early 1920s, Coulter and George F. Jowett worked together to create the first weightlifting association in the United States, the American Continental Weight Lifting Association (A.C.W.L.A.). Coulter and Jowett also attempted to create an Apollo Training Course correspondence system, but the courses did not catch on with the public and had to be abandoned. In 1931, Coulter briefly considered joining George Jowett at the Health Developing Company, makers of the famous Seat of Health rowing machine. However, Ottley decided the New York City position would too often take him away from Ethel and the children in Pennsylvania. Moreover, Ethel wanted to continue to raise chickens, not a likely proposition in New York City.

In later years, Ottley Coulter and George Jowett remained close. Letters from the 1960s detailed how both men felt that physical culture had lost its way thanks to the rise of bodybuilding and an overemphasis on muscle size. Nevertheless, Coulter retained his love for the iron game and continued to attend both weightlifting and powerlifting



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contests. Ottley met Terry Todd when Todd sought him out while working on his PhD dissertation. Coulter believed that his vast physical culture holdings needed to be preserved for future generations. Ottley stated in 1967 that as he was nearly 77 he would not have much longer use for his collection, and that if he felt the amount offered to him by Terry Todd were commensurate with the fonds' value, Todd would receive the materials. Ottley Coulter passed away in 1976, but through the purchase from Coulter's family of his Correspondence collection by Jan and Terry Todd; Coulter has ensured that generations will be fascinated by the iron game.

Scope and Content

1 Box: 95 Folders: no date, 1899-1974 (95 files)

The near entirety of the Ottley Coulter Correspondence collection consists of letters between Ottley Coulter and various businesses and people. With relation to the file folders, 87 of them hold correspondence to and from Coulter, while one folder each holds correspondence between R.J. Stambaugh and Mac Batchelor, Siegmund Klein, Peary Rader and Roy L. Smith. A further three contain information relating to gripping and strongman feats. One additional folder encloses notes for an Ottley Coulter article about weight training and records. The collection allows for increased insight into the life of Ottley Coulter, a superb handbalancer, muscle control artist and strongman.

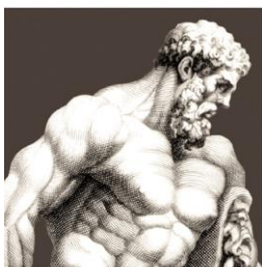
Collection Arrangement

Box 1: 95 Folders: Ottley Coulter Correspondence, no date, 1899-1974 (95 files)

Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence with Mac Batchelor, no date (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 1: Mac Batchelor Correspondence with R.J. Stambaugh, no date (1 file)

Box 1, Folders 2-20: Correspondence with Ottley Coulter: Business, no date, 1901-1952 (19 files)



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Box 1, Folder 2: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the Achilles Course Brochures (George Walsh), no date, 1946 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 3: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the American Continental Weight Lifting Association (A.C.W.L.A.), no date, 1920-1925 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 4: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the American Continental Weight Lifting Association (A.C.W.L.A.): Letters, no date, 1922-1926 (1 file)

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Box 1, Folder 7: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the (Otto) Arco Balancing Course, no date, 1916-1917 (1 file)

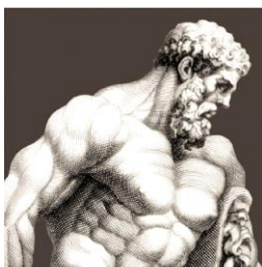
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Box 1, Folder 10: Ottley Coulter Letters to customers re: the Iron Shoe Apparatus, no date, 1926-1928 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 11: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the (George F.) Jowett Institute, no date, 1927-1933 (1 file)

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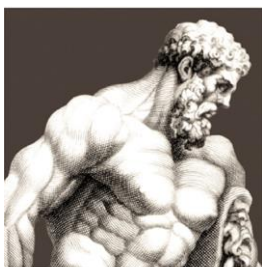
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Box 1, Folder 22: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Jack Abrams, 1939-1940 (1 file)



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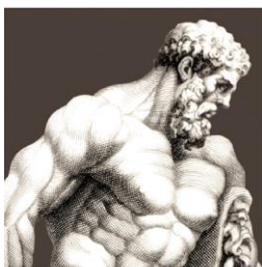
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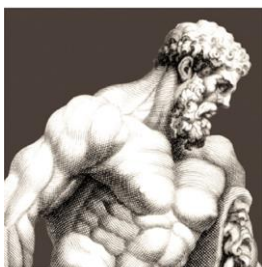
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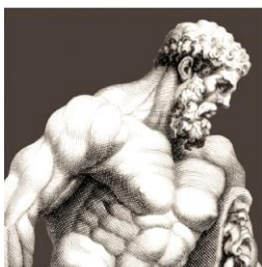
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Box 1, Folder 62: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Ed Quigley, no date, 1935-1967 (1 file)

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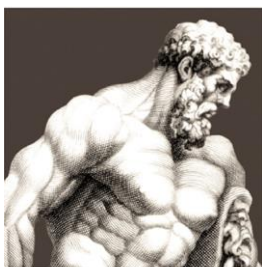
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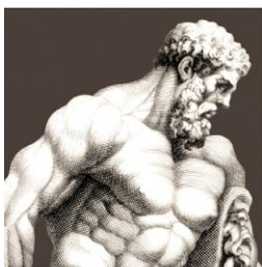
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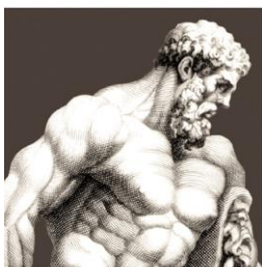
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