

# Seiffert family collection, circa 1900-1994

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Seiffert family
<b>Title</b>	Seiffert family collection
<b>Dates</b>	circa 1900-1994 (inclusive) 1900 1994
<b>Quantity</b>	2 cubic feet, (3 document cases, 2 flat boxes)
<b>Collection Number</b>	Coll 70
<b>Summary</b>	Papers of John and Olive (Southcott) Seiffert of San Francisco, California, and Portland Oregon. John Seiffert was active in theater groups in Portland and San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s, and ran dancing schools in later years. The collection contains photographs, scrapbooks, personal documents, play scripts, original poetry, and ephemera.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Oregon Historical Society, Davies Family Research Library</a> Davies Family Research Library Oregon Historical Society 1200 SW Park Avenue Portland, OR 97205 Telephone: 503-306-5240 Fax: 503-219-2040 <a href="mailto:libreference@ohs.org">libreference@ohs.org</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	The collection is open to the public.
<b>Languages</b>	English

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## Historical Note

John Theodore Seiffert was born on September 11, 1900 (although some documents say 1903), in St. Paul, Minnesota. His parents were Joseph and Mary Seiffert. Joseph Seiffert was born in Germany and was brought to the United States by his father, Theodore, in 1879. Joseph's wife, Mary Auvley, was born in Confluence, Pennsylvania, to native born parents. Sometime before 1910 the Joseph Seiffert family, including John and his older sister Marie, moved to Portland, Oregon. They are shown on the 1910 census residing in North Portland on N. Minnesota Ave. The family, however, did not own that home until 1917.

In 1919 the then nineteen year old John T. Seiffert attended Portland's School of Drama and Expression. Invitations show the school holding three recitals in 1919 and 1920. On September 19, 1920, the press took note of Seiffert's stage debut in a review of the play "at 9:45", a murder melodrama performed at Portland's 3rd Avenue Baker Theater : "The murdered boy is a newcomer, John Seiffert". A scrapbook in the Seiffert collection contains a number of notices, reviews and notes of Seiffert's career. Seiffert played a number of roles at the Baker Theater before he joined road theater companies that took him from theaters in Vancouver and Seattle, Washington, to Utica, New York, and St. Paul, Minnesota. He is noted as an actor and director in numerous plays.

Around 1933 Seiffert moved to San Francisco and was noted as performing and directing in small theaters. One July 1933 notice shows a theater company bearing his name, the John Seiffert Players, performing in a basement theater on Geary Street. He also conducted acting classes and led a group of actors performing drama on San Francisco radio station KJBS. At some point Seiffert converted the Geary basement theater into a ballroom dancing school, the Irene Studio. In 1941 he was certified as a teacher of "Absolute Science," possibly related to the Christian Science church.

In April, 1938, Seiffert married Olive (Southcott) Simmons of San Francisco. She was the daughter of W.H. Southcott, once the mayor of Grass Valley, California, and his wife Jessie (Buckett) Southcott. Olive's *Oregonian* obituary notes that she was a dance instructor and worked together with John Seiffert in San Francisco for about 20 years. This corresponds to evidence that the Seifferts left San Francisco in 1958 and moved to Portland that year. Portland City Directories begin listing John Seiffert's residence at his parent's Minnesota Avenue home in 1958. His occupation was noted as a salesman at Meier & Frank department store that year and 1960. The directories did not list John's occupation in 1961, and by 1964 he is shown as retired. In 1960 the State of Oregon bought the Seiffert's home, and the family purchased a new home at 6607 Borthwick.

John T. Seiffert died in Portland on August 19, 1972. The death certificate notes that he died of congestive heart failure and that he was a diabetic. He was buried in Portland's Memorial Cemetery. His widow Olive continued to live in the Borthwick home and died in Portland in on May 16, 1994. There is no evidence that the Seifferts had any children.

## Content Description

The collection contains family photographs and albums; ephemera; some personal correspondence and records; and a scrapbook containing newspaper reviews, notices, publicity material for various stage productions in which John Seiffert was involved; and poems by Seiffert and others. Also included in the collection are a number of scripts to one act plays or short skits, some with authors noted, many anonymous.

## Use of the Collection

### Restrictions on Use

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### Preferred Citation

Seiffert family collection, Coll 70, Oregon Historical Society Research Library

## Administrative Information

### Arrangement

The collection is arranged in the following series:

Seiffert family collection, circa 1900-1994

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv03100>

Series A: Personal papers and documents, 1904-1994.

Series B: Photographs, circa 1900-1980

Series C: Poetry, theatrical and dancing school materials, circa 1922-1955

Series D: General materials, circa 1930-1994

## Custodial History

The collection was acquired by friends of John and Olive Seiffert after Olive Seiffert's death, and donated to the Oregon Historical Society in 2007.

## Acquisition Information

Acquired 2007, Library Accession 26316

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

### Series A: Personal papers and documents, 1904-1994

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<b>Box/Folder</b>		
1/1	Death certificates, funeral notices, obituaries, for John and Olive Seiffert	1972-1994
1/2	Marriage and birth certificates, affidavits	1938-1941
1/3	Property documents and records Includes deeds, correspondence, and documents for properties in Portland at 4217 N. Minnesota; and 6607 N. Bothwick.	1907-1973
1/4	Correspondence of John and Olive Seiffert	1904-1979
1/5	Personal documents of John T. Seiffert Includes transcripts of 1900 and 1910 census records for Seiffert family.	1943-1962
1/6	Insurance papers, policies, and bills	1963-1985
1/7	Appliance manuals, home improvement records	circa 1960-1983
1/8	Health insurance records and policies, Olive Seiffert	1974-1981
1/9	Life insurance papers for John and Olive Seiffert	1935-1968

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Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/10	Income tax and other documents for Olive Seiffert	1958-1984
1/11	Pacific Gas and Electric Company investments and stock certificate	1958-1972
1/12	Joseph and Esther (Auvley) Seiffert documents Includes immigration and genealogy information, and deed for plot in Rose City Cemetery (1920).	1920-1945
1/13	Legal documents relating to Muriel Woodruff (Olive Seiffert's sister) and Marie Bjork	1936-1972

## Series B: Photographs, circa 1900-1980

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
2/1	Portraits of John Seiffert	circa 1910-1960
2/2	John Seiffert photo album On cover is written "Dear John / Family and friends"	circa 1920-1940
2/3	Olive Seiffert photo album Includes members of the Southcott family and Grass Valley, California	circa 1910-1930
2/4	General family photographs Includes school class groups, circa 1900-1910	circa 1900-1980
5/1	Family photograph album Due to the fragility and deterioration of this album, it can only be used with the assistance of a reference librarian.	circa 1900-1990
2/5	Irene Studio parties	circa 1952-1960
2/6	Color transparencies and slides of Irene Studio parties	circa 1952
2/7	Bill fold and photographs	circa 1970

## Series C: Poetry, theatrical and dancing school materials, 1922-1955

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
3/1	Poetry of John Seiffert and Esther A. Auvley (John's aunt) published in the <i>Oregonian</i>	1922-1927
3/2	Poems and scripts, anonymous	circa 1930
3/3	Collection of scripts, with index	circa 1930
3/4	Theatrical newsletters and related papers Includes 2 issues of the <i>Southold Theatrical News</i> and one issue of the <i>George Players' Review</i> , probably from the early 1930s.	circa 1930
3/5	Poems and short scripts, authors noted	undated
3/6	Actors studio materials, ads, lessons, practice drills, and other materials	1931-1936
4/1	Scrapbook relating the theatrical career of John Seiffert	circa 1920-1935
3/7	Irene Studio dancing school materials	1937-1955

## Series D: General materials, circa 1930-1994

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
3/8	"Absolute Science" course and teaching materials, San Francisco	circa 1939-1941
3/9-10	Olive Seiffert address books	circa 1975-1994
3/11	Bible of W.H. Southcott Contains the obituary of W.H. Southcott, former mayor of Grass Valley and father of Olive Seiffert.	undated

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Actors--California--San Francisco

Actors--Oregon--Portland  
Christian Science--Study and teaching  
Dance--Study and teaching--California--San Francisco  
Theater--California--San Francisco--History  
Theater--Oregon--Portland--History

**Personal Names :**

Seiffert, John T., 1900-1972--Archives  
Seiffert, Olive.

**Corporate Names :**

Irene Studio (San Francisco, Calif.)  
John Seiffert Players

**Family Names :**

Seiffert family

**Geographical Names :**

Grass Valley (Calif.)--History  
Portland (Or.)--History  
San Francisco (Calif.)--History

**Form or Genre Terms :**

Photograph albums  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks

**Other Creators :**

**Family Names :**

Southcott family  
(creator)

Collection processed and finding aid prepared by Raymond Caballero  
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