

George C. (George Cunnibell) Howard and Family:

An Inventory of Their Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Howard, George C. (George Cunnibell), 1815-1887, and Family
Title:	George C. (George Cunnibell) Howard and Family Collection
Dates:	1833-1963 (bulk 1840-1935)
Extent:	6 document boxes, 7 oversize boxes, 11 oversize folders (7.0 linear feet)
Abstract:	George C. Howard (1815-1887), Caroline Emily Fox (1829-1908), and her brothers George L., James A., Henry N., and Charles K. Fox, were nineteenth-century actors who performed together as a theatrical troupe in New England and New York. In 1852 they originated the stage adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , a theatrical sensation that was performed continuously in the United States for eighty years. The George C. Howard and Family Collection was gathered together by Howard's grandson, George P. Howard, and brings together original materials passed down within the family, as well as George P. Howard's notes and research materials. Prompt books and playbills comprise the bulk of the collection, with programs, posters, original manuscripts, daguerreotypes, and assorted materials making up the balance.
Call Number:	Performing Arts Collection PA-00044
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Due to the fragile condition of the original, a digital copy of the George L. Aiken promptbook for <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> must be used unless permission is obtained from the Research Librarian.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1963 (R1375)
Processed by:	Helen Baer, 1999; Ancelyn Krivak, 2009
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

The marriage of actor George C. Howard to Caroline Emily Fox in 1844 linked the theatrical careers of not only Howard and Fox, but also those of two of Caroline's brothers and two of the Howard children (Cordelia and Walter), as well as cousins George L. and Frank E. Aiken.

George C. Howard (1815-1887) was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He appeared in amateur theatricals in Boston in 1837, then took engagements in Philadelphia and Baltimore. In 1842 he joined the company at the Tremont Theatre in Boston where he met, or was reacquainted with, thirteen-year-old Caroline Emily Fox (1829-1908). Caroline, already an experienced actress, had appeared as a child as one of the "Little Foxes" with her brothers George L., James A., Henry N., and Charles K. Fox. She married Howard in October 1844.

In early 1846, Howard took over the management of the Fox troupe and began billing them as "Howard and Foxes." The troupe toured through New England, securing engagements in previously theater-hostile towns because of the air of respectability lent by their status as a family. As the Foxes grew up they left the troupe as they developed careers of their own. James A. Fox quit the stage in 1850, much to the advantage of George L. Fox, who had been overshadowed by James. Little Henry had died in 1844. In the fall of 1850 George L. Fox was hired at the National Theatre (N.Y.), though he continued to work with George C. Howard throughout the 1850s.

In 1852 Howard commissioned Caroline's cousin George L. Aiken to write an acting version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, probably as a vehicle for his four-year-old daughter Cordelia. Aiken's dramatization was produced at the Troy (N.Y.) Museum in September 1852 with Howard as St. Clare, Caroline as Topsy, Cordelia as Eva, and the playwright as George Harris. Though the script ran at three hours fifteen minutes, it only took the story up through little Eva's death, and in November Aiken prepared a sequel that ended properly with Stowe's denouement. The two scripts were combined later that month into a drama of six acts which became the standard acting version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. When Alexander H. Purdy agreed to put on the play the following July at his National Theatre in New York, where George L. Fox was employed, it became a sensation, running at that theater until April 1854. The play was performed continuously in the United States for eighty years, a remarkable run by any standard. The Howards appeared in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* until 1857.

Howard undertook the management of the Troy Adelphi Theatre in 1857, but the season failed and George, Caroline, and Cordelia were soon back on the road. In 1863 Howard stepped in as acting manager of Fox's Bowery Theatre, filling in for his brother-in-law while Fox served in the Civil War. He stayed at the Bowery until Fox's managerial role terminated in 1867, but even the presence of a relative as business manager could not prevent other employees from gambling away the receipts. Howard appeared on the stage intermittently until he died in 1887.

Caroline Emily Fox Howard continued to play Topsy until her husband died in 1887. She lived in Cambridge until her death in 1908.

After starring in *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Katy, or the Hot Corn Girl*, and *The Death of Little Eva*, a shortened version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, **Cordelia Howard** (1848-1941) retired from the stage in 1861 at thirteen years of age. She completed her education in Cambridge, Massachusetts and married Edmund Jesse Macdonald in 1871.

After *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, **George L. Fox** (1825-1877) continued appearing at the National where he stayed until he decided to become a manager in 1858. That year he leased the Bowery Theatre, then the New Bowery, with partner James W. Lingard, but in 1862 he split with Lingard and opened his own George L. Fox's Olympic. Less than a month later he went back to the old Bowery as lessee where he stayed until 1867, appearing in a variety of roles. In 1868 at Mrs. John Wood's Olympic Theatre he was first seen in a pantomime called *Humpty Dumpty*. This quickly became his most popular and lasting role. He scored another success in 1870 with his travesty of *Hamlet* at Wood's Olympic. Four years later, he tried management again, this time lasting six weeks as head of Fox's Broadway Theatre. In 1875 he began showing signs of dementia. During a performance of *Humpty Dumpty* in November 1875 he was removed from the stage by George C. Howard and placed in an insane asylum. He died in 1877.

Charles K. Fox (1833-1875) acted with the "Little Foxes" and "Howard and Foxes," then appeared in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Later he became assistant manager to his father. In the 1860s he played Pantaloon to his brother George's Clown. He died in 1875 of typhoid fever.

Frank E. Aiken (1836-1910) was born in Boston. He began his dramatic career acting under the management of his uncle George H. Wyatt and went on to become a leading man before going into theater management in Philadelphia. He opened the Aiken Theatre in 1873 and ran it for fifteen years.

Walter S. Howard (1868-1945), son of George C. Howard and Caroline Emily Fox, was an actor and stage manager with the Joseph Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson, Augustin Daly, and Ada Rehan Companies before his retirement in 1912.

Provenance

George P. Howard, grandson of George C. Howard, sold the George C. Howard and Family Collection to the Harry Ransom Center in 1963. A small portion of the sheet music and playbills in the collection are photostats of originals which are held in other theater libraries. These photostats were collected by George P. Howard during the course of his research on the performance history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Researchers will occasionally find typed notes and enclosure sheets in the collection that were inserted by George P. Howard.

Sources used for the Biographical Sketch and Genealogy:

Day, Roy. "Charles Kemble Fox" and "George Washington Lafayette Fox." In *Dictionary of American Biography*, A. Johnson and D. Malone, eds. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931.

"Frank Eugene Aiken." In *Who's Who on the Stage 1908: The Dramatic Reference Book and Biographical Dictionary of the Theatre*, Walter Browne and E. De Roy Koch, eds. New York: B.W. Dodge, 1908.

Senelick, Laurence. *The Age and Stage of George L. Fox*. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988.

Winslow, Ola Elizabeth. "Cordelia Howard." In *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, Edward T. James, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

Scope and Contents

The George C. Howard and Family Collection was gathered together by Howard's grandson, George P. Howard, and brings together original materials passed down within the family, as well as George P. Howard's notes and research materials. Prompt books and playbills comprise the bulk of the collection, with programs, posters, original manuscripts, daguerreotypes, and assorted materials making up the balance. The collection is organized into three series with materials arranged chronologically or alphabetically by title or author where possible: I. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852-1935, II. Acting Companies, 1833-1928, and III. Individuals, 1837-1963.

The *Uncle Tom's Cabin* series is split into two subseries: A. Scripts, 1852-1870s?, and B. Playbills, Prints, and Clippings, 1852-1935. The George L. Aiken and H. J. Conway versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are included in the Scripts subseries, the Aiken version represented by several prompt books used by the Howards between 1852 and probably as late as the 1870s. Please note that access to the 1852 prompt book is restricted due to its fragile condition; a digital copy is available for use. The Conway version was produced at least twice at the Boston Museum, in 1852 and 1876. Aiken also wrote a dramatization of Stowe's *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* which was produced in December 1853; the holograph manuscript is located here. Many of the scripts contain performance annotations. Subseries B contains assorted materials relating to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that were collected by the Howards, including playbills for rival stage versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Conway and C. W. Taylor.

The Acting Companies series is composed of three subseries: A. Fox Company, 1833-1846, B. Howard-Fox Company, 1846-1928, and C. Related Material, 1840s. Materials are arranged chronologically within each subseries. The Fox Company subseries contains playbills, posters, and daguerreotypes which document the activities of George C. Howard and the Fox children while the latter were still managed by their parents. (Though Caroline and George were married in October 1844, playbills from 1845 and early 1846 with both Howard and the Foxes on the same bill are included here. Starting around April 1846, the Howard-Fox appearances were billed as being "under the direction of Mr. G. Howard"; these and later playbills are located in the Howard-Fox Company subseries.) The Howard-Fox materials tell of the many *Uncle Tom's Cabin* performances as well as other productions in which Cordelia Howard acted. Most of the later items refer to George, Caroline, or Cordelia Howard, the other Foxes having moved

on to careers of their own. The last subseries holds the covers of an account book in which Emily C. (Wyatt) Fox kept "Little Foxes" and "Howard and Foxes" playbills for performances dating through 1851.

The Individuals series pulls together materials concerning four actors who either were not members of the Fox or Howard-Fox companies, or are represented here by materials from their "solo" careers: A. George C. Howard, 1837-42, B. George L. Fox, 1861-1903, C. Frank E. Aiken, 1880-1910, and D. Walter S. Howard, 1879-1963. The George C. Howard subseries comprises a property letter, probably kept as a souvenir, and a playbill which predate his association with the Foxes. The George L. Fox subseries contains Professional and Personal subseries which include an account book from Fox's first attempt at theater management and a *Humpty Dumpty* script written for him but never performed due to illness, as well as programs featuring Fox's second wife, Mattie Temple Fox, and their daughter Georgia L. Fox. The Frank E. Aiken subseries contains four folders of programs and clippings, as well as memorabilia such as a letter certifying his copyright for the five-act comedy *Under the Arch*. The Walter S. Howard subseries is divided into three subseries: Professional, 1889-1935, Personal, 1879-1963, and Creative Works, 1928, undated. Howard's professional career with the Joseph Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson, and Ada Rehan Companies is well documented with programs, playbills, scripts kept as souvenirs, and assorted other materials. The Personal items relate to his wife, Minnie Parker Howard, her father, and Howard's son George P. Howard, whose research notes about the Howard-Fox family history are placed here. The Creative Works subseries contains a short autobiographical account of Howard's days with Joseph Jefferson and two longer narratives about the performance history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, one fiction, the other nonfiction.

Related Material

The Performing Arts Library at the Ransom Center contains around 200 published plays and books collected by George C. Howard, many with annotations by unidentified playwrights, actors, and stage managers, as well as a 1968 dissertation by William Jackson Kessler about the early productions of the Aiken-Howard versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Researchers may also wish to consult the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Collection.

Index Terms

People

Howard, George C. (George Cunnibell), 1815-1887

Fox, Caroline Emily, 1829-1908

Howard, Cordelia, 1848-1941

Fox, George Lafayette, 1825-1877

Fox, Charles K., 1833-1875

Aiken, Frank Eugene, 1840-1910

Howard, Walter S., 1868-1945

Subjects

Theater--United States--History--19th century

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Series I. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852-1935**Subseries A. Scripts, 1852-1870s?***Uncle Tom's Cabin*

George L. Aiken versions for Howard

Prompt book for Troy Museum, 1852 (*restricted due to fragile condition; digital copy available for use) **Container 1.1-6***

Preservation photocopy **Container 1.7-9**

Prompt book, circa 1869 **Container 1.10**

Prompt book, 1870s? **Container 2.1**

Preservation photocopy **Container 2.2**

H. J. Conway's Boston Museum version

Prompt book, [1852] **Container 2.3-4**

Preservation photocopy **Container 2.5-6**

Actor's sides, [1852] **Container 3.1-3**

Scenic and property charts, and properties, [1852] **Container 3.4**

"The Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," holograph manuscript by George L. Aiken, [1853] **Container 3.5**

Subseries B. Playbills, Prints, and Clippings, 1852-1935

Playbills, C. W. Taylor and H. J. Conway versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852-1854 **Container flat file 3**

Clippings about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* actors, [1905-1935], undated **Container 3.6**

French *Uncle Tom's Cabin* prints, undated **Container 11.1**

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Subseries B. Howard-Fox Company, 1846-1928

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Playbills, 1846-1878	Container 11.2; flat files 6-8
George C. Howard scrapbook, 1846-?, 1908	Container 9
Charles K. Fox's scrapbook with playbills, prints, and clippings, 1850-1851	Container 3.7
Prints, [1852?-1854]	Container 11.3
Daguerreotypes of Caroline Emily Fox, Emily C. (Wyatt) Fox, Cordelia Howard, [Lewis] Pease, and George C. Howard, 1853-1858	Container 7-8
Sheet music, 1853-1868, undated	Container 11.4-5
Cash book, Troy Adelphi Theatre, Sept. 1857-July 1858	Container 3.8
Programs, 1877-1881	Container 4.1, 12.1
Clipping, 1878	Container 11.6
Photograph of George C. Howard, 1880s?	Container 4.2
Cordelia Howard MacDonald, "Memoirs of the Original Little Eva," holograph manuscript, [1928], and typescript, 30 pp	Container 4.3
Photograph of oil painting of George C. Howard, undated	Container 4.4

Subseries C. Related Material, 1840s

Covers of account book with journal pages, 1840, and clippings, 1846	Container 4.5
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Series III. Individuals, 1837-1963**Subseries A. George C. Howard, 1837-1842**

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Programs and playbills, 1861-1875 **Container** 11.8; flat
file 10

Account book, Olympic and Old Bowery Theatres, Apr. 1862-Nov. 1863 **Container**
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[George C. Howard], Introduction to Centennial Humpty-Dumpty, holograph sketch, 8 pp, [1875] **Container**
4.8

Stockings worn at final performance of *Humpty Dumpty*, [1875] **Container**
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Little Red Riding Hood, autograph? script, undated **Container** 4.9

Plaster bust, undated **Container** 10

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Programs with Mattie Temple Fox and Georgia L. Fox in the cast, 1885-1903 **Container**
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Subseries C. Frank E. Aiken, 1880-1910

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George P. Howard's research notes about the performance history of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , undated	
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Vols. 3-4	Container 6.1-3
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From Slavery to Prohibition: A History of the Drama of Uncle Tom's Cabin, typescript, undated, 72 pp	Container 6.5
Strollers in a House Divided, typescript, undated, 16 pp	Container 6.6