

THE STARK CENTER

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

Finding Aid

Ottley Coulter Correspondence Collection: 2 Boxes: 100 Folders: no date, 1899-1974 (100 files)

Abstract

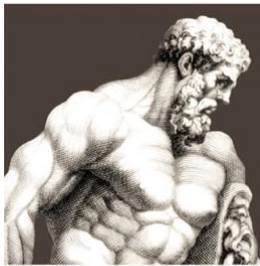
Ottley Coulter was a famous circus strongman and handbalancer. Coulter was born June 6, 1890 in Parkland, Ohio. His exploits led Coulter to be named *Strongman of 1912*. He participated in the *National Police Gazette Strongman Tournament* in 1918, lifting a total of 7,306 pounds over the course of several 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, at which time, the collection was 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 Collection is restricted to visitors of the H.J. Lucher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports. The Stark Center welcomes access inquires and encourages research appointments. For more information, phone (512) 471-4890, email info@starkcenter.org, or visit www.starkcenter.org.

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Processing Information:

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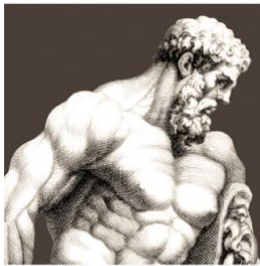
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Preferred Citation

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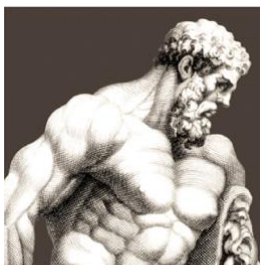
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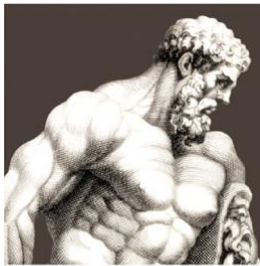
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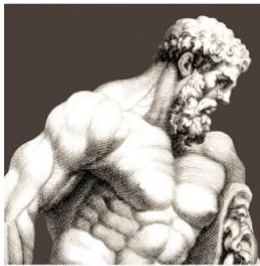
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Biographical Note

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



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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 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 funds' 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

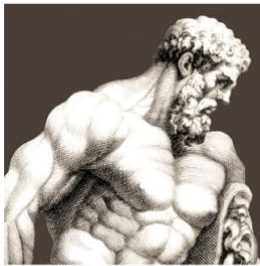
2 Box: 100 Folders: no date, 1899-1974 (100 files)

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)



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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)

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)

Box 1, Folder 5: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the American Continental Weight Lifting Association (A.C.W.L.A.): Records, no date, 1921-1924 (1 file)

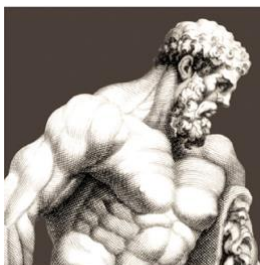
Box 1, Folder 6: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: Apparatus Price Quotes from manufacturers, no date, 1922-1926 (1 file)

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

Box 1, Folder 8: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the Continental System (Philadelphia, PA), no date, 1914-1915 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 9: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: Course Prospectuses, no date, 1901-1934 (1 file)

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



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Box 1, Folder 12: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with magazines re: exercise schedules, no date, 1940-1952 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 13: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with the Milo Bar-Bell Company, 1919-1930 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 14: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the *National Police Gazette*, no date, 1915-1947 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 15: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the (A.) Rollo System, no date, 1921-1922 (1 file)

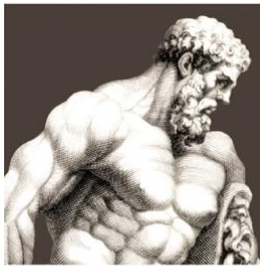
Box 1, Folder 16: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the (Eugen) Sandow Course, no date, 1913-1922 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 17: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: Show Business Inquiries, no date, 1915 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 18: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: Shows that employed Coulter in their acts, no date, 1913-1915 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 19: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: *The Strong Man* magazine, no date, 1931-1933 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 20: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: the *Warren Lincoln Travis Challenge*, 1920-1922 (1 file)



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Box 1, Folder 22: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Jack Abrams, 1939-1940 (1
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Box 1, Folder 23: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Professor Louis Attila, no
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Box 1, Folder 24: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Professor Anthony Barker,
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Box 1, Folder 25: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with J.F. Bartlett, no date, 1908
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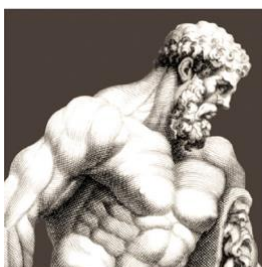
Box 1, Folder 26: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Mark Berry, 1924-1933 (1
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Box 1, Folder 27: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Dana Blackmarr, 1955-1967
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Box 1, Folder 28: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Vic Boff, no date, 1963-
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Box 1, Folder 29: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Joe Bonomo, no date, 1958-
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Box 1, Folder 30: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Alan Calvert, 1912-1919 (1
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Box 1, Folder 32: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Ernest Edwin Coffin, no date, 1932-1941 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 33: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with George Dembinski, 1923 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 34: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Wilfrid Diamond, 1967-1969 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 35: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Joseph Dryer, no date, 1925 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 36: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Bert Elliot, no date, 1959-1962 (1 file)

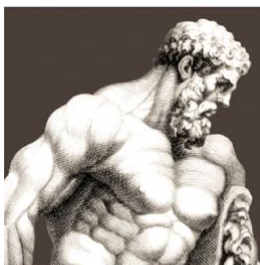
Box 1, Folder 37: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Bert Elliot, 1963-1967 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 38: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Ron Farrar, 1965-1968 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 39: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Karl Feather, 1964-1965 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 40: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Pierre Gasnier, 1917 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 41: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Leo Gaudreau, no date, 1962-1974 (1 file)



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Box 1, Folder 43: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Bill Good, 1922 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 44: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with John Grimek, no date, 1942-1959 (1 file)

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Box 1, Folder 46: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Bob Hasse, 1960-1963 (1 file)

Box 1, Folder 47: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Henry Higgins, no date, 1916-1919 (1 file)

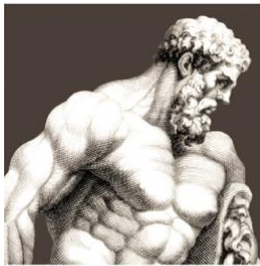
Box 1, Folder 48: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Harry Hill, no date, 1965-1967 (1 file)

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Box 1, Folder 50: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Bob Hoffman, 1938-1944 (1 file)

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Box 1, Folder 53: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Robert L. Jones, 1939-1945
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Box 1, Folder 55: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with George F. Jowett, 1960-
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Box 1, Folder 58: Ottley Coulter Correspondence re: George Lurich, no date (1
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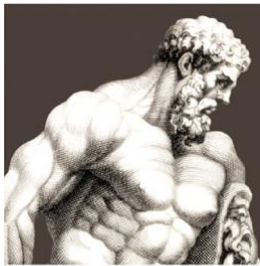
Box 1, Folder 59: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Dan Lurie, 1945 (1 file)

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Box 1, Folder 67: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Hal Spellman, 1946-1956 (1
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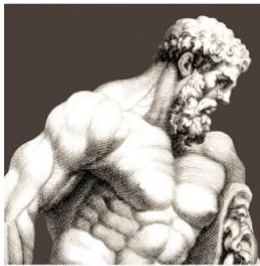
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(1 file)



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Box 2, Folder 75: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with Carl Victor, 1911-1915 (1 file)

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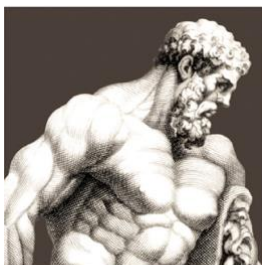
Box 2, Folder 82: Ottley Coulter Correspondence with F. Weste, no date (1 file)

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Box 2, Folder 86: Siegmund Klein Correspondence with R.J. Stambaugh, 1948 (1 file)

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Box 2, Folder 90: Feats and Measurements of Various Strongmen, no date (1 file)

Box 2, Folder 91: Gripping Feats, no date (1 file)

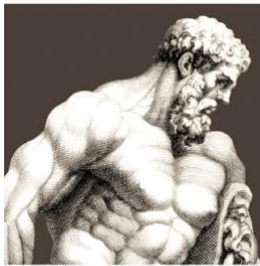
Box 2, Folder 92: Manuscript notes by Ottley Coulter, no date, 1945-1953 (1 file)

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Box 2, Folder 94: Miscellaneous Ottley Coulter Correspondence: J-Y, no date, 1909-1974 (1 file)



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Box 2, Folder 95: Miscellaneous Ottley Coulter Correspondence: postcards

Box 2, Folder 96: Gay, Arthur, 1919 – 1921

Box 2, Folder 97: Snodgrass, Rue, 1970, undated

Box 2, Folder 98: Eliason, Alton, 1956

Box 2, Folder 99: Mr. Kernie, undated

Box 2, Folder 100: Lowry, Bill, 1921