

The H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture & Sports

The University of Texas at Austin

Finding Aid

Ottley Coulter Photograph Collection, 1892-1970

Abstract

Ottley R. Coulter was a circus performer, a vaudevillian, a professional bodybuilder, and one of the sport's first historians, having collected thousands of photographs, clippings, and other sports ephemera. The collection contains sports photography chronicling bodybuilding and weightlifting from the early 20th century through the 1970s. Photographs of circus strongmen and women exhibiting their physiques and feats of strength are a highlight of this collection. Also represented are photographs and sports card ephemera that document the early days of other sports like baseball, football, cycling, wrestling, boxing, track and field, and soccer. In addition to photographs depicting the early days of physical culture, there are numerous photos of Ottley and family members during his youth through middle age, including a rare glass negative and tintype.

Access

Access to the Ottley Coulter Photograph Collection is restricted to visitors of the H.J. Lutcher 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 http://www.starkcenter.org.



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Collection processed by Nikki Koehlert, Will Clements, and Kelly Garrett under the supervision of Brent Sipes.

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Preferred Citation

Ottley Coulter Photograph Collection, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.

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Subjects	Rugby	Hackenschmidt, George
Bodybuilding	Soccer	Horvath, Barton
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McMahon, Chas Sandow, Eugene Arnold

Nisivoccia, Gerard Sandwina, Katie Snyder, Robert

Norquest, Adolph & Joe (Brumbach, Katharina) Steinborn, Henry "Milo"

Biographical Note

Ottley Russell Coulter, the only son of David Coulter and Effie Elizabeth Ohl, was born in Parkman, Ohio, on June 6, 1890. Raised in a family of exceptionally tall and physically fit men and women, Coulter first became interested in physical culture and weightlifting while attending Hiram College. After dropping out of school in his second year to focus on weight and stunt work training, Coulter joined the ranks of professional circus strongmen in 1911. Ottley began his circus career partnered with Mexican ring artist Jose Prada before going on to perform solo in touring circus shows, including the Frank Robbins Circus, across the country. His most impressive feats while touring included the Jefferson lift, the Rectangular Fix lift, and various hand balancing acts.

By 1917, Ottley had married Ethel Alexander, and the couple settled down in Lemont Furnace, Pennsylvania, a town just outside of Pittsburgh, where they had three children - Athelda, David, and John Robert. Around this time Coulter began working as a police officer for the Lemont Furnace Police Department. Drawing upon his experience with physical fitness, Ottley taught fellow officers hand-to-hand combat techniques as an alternative to using firearms. He worked several decades for the department before



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retiring. As a hobby, Ottley also bought, traded, and sold magazines and books related to physical culture, most specifically weightlifting, as well as those on other topics such as gardening and furniture building. He felt that resources pertaining to physical culture should be preserved for posterity.

In the early 1920s, Ottley was one of the founding fathers of the American Continental Weightlifting Association (ACWLA). As the first association of its kind in the United States, the ACWLA advanced the field of strength training from a circus and vaudeville performance niche to an American sport. As an officiated sport, athletes registered and compared results with other weightlifters across the world. In 1952, Coulter published a book, *How to Perform Strongman Stunts*, about some of his classic feats of strength. In later years, he remained active in the weightlifting and powerlifting worlds by regularly attending contests, such as those hosted by Bob Hoffman's York Barbell Association in York, Pennsylvania. Ottley Coulter died in December 1976 at the age of 86.

Biography compiled from:

Beckwith, K., & Todd, J. (2005). Strength: America's first muscle magazine, 1914-1935. *Iron Game History* 9(1), 11-28.

Fair, J. D. (1993). George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby and the Organization of American Weightlifting, 1911-1924. *Iron Game History* 2(6), 3-15.

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

Todd, J., & Murphy, M. (2001). Portrait of a strongman: The circus career of Ottley Russell Coulter, 1912-1916. *Iron Game History* 7(1), 4-21.



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Scope and Content

Ottley Coulter Photograph Collection: 29 Boxes: clippings, correspondence, negatives, photographs, and calling cards, 1892-1970

The materials in this collection date from roughly the 1890s to the early 1970s. Ottley Coulter acquired all the items in this collection over his lifetime in an effort to document physical culture. Ottley wrote to other athletes and collectors of physical culture ephemera in order to procure materials for his personal archive. This collection of (approx.) 2600 items primarily consists of photographic materials, including photographic prints, photo postcards, cabinet cards, negatives, clippings, sports cards, and some personal correspondence. There is also a tintype and glass negative, depicting Ottley and his family, located in the series labeled "Coulter Family Photos & Personal Materials, circa 1892-1962." A number of these photographs are candid and formal portraits of Ottley Coulter throughout his professional career. Notable names from the world of bodybuilding featured in this collection are Charles Atlas, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Johnny Weissmuller as well as other men and women of the sport. Early strongmen and women that performed in travelling circus shows, where Ottley got his start, are also featured. Of particular interest are photographs of early strongmen and women performing various stunts and feats of strength. Photographs, baseball cards, and clippings from the worlds of boxing (including female boxers), hockey, wrestling, and dance are also represented. Many of the photographic prints and clippings are from Alan Calvert's Strength magazine (1914-1935), which was the first print publication in America devoted to weight training. Ottley was featured in Strength in addition to contributing articles to the magazine. Some photographs also include handwritten captions, names, dates, or locations regarding the various athletes and their feats of strength. Many of the photographs appear to be reprints and were used in



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publications after their original printing. Due to the inability to ascertain accurate dates of the photographs, many of the items remain undated. This collection is arranged into 15 series. The current arrangement mainly separates the collection into groups by sports activities, with folders arranged alphabetically by the photograph's subject. In addition, Coulter family photos are located in Series V.

Collection Arrangement

Series I: Baseball, circa 1901-1927

Box 1, Folder 1: Baseball cards

Series II: Bodybuilders/Strongmen/Lifters, 1892-1970

Subseries A. Bodybuilders/Strongmen/Lifters A-Z

Box 1, Folder 1: Abs, Carl (Karl) Johann Theodor

Box 1, Folder 1.1: Abs, Anna

Box 1, Folder 2: Anderson, Arvid

Box 1, Folder 3: Anderson, Paul

Box 1, Folder 3.1: Angeles, Vicente

Box 1, Folder 4: Apollon

Box 1, Folder 5: Arco, Otto

Box 22.1: Arco, Otto (negatives)

Box 1, Folder 6: Asnis, Dave

Box 22.1: Asnis, Dave (negatives)

Box 1, Folder 7: Aston, Edward

Box 1, Folder 8: Atlas, Charles

Box 1, Folder 9: Bacon, Jules



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Box 1, Folder 10: Baillargeon, Charles

Box 1, Folder 11: Bandiera, Sandos

Box 1, Folder 12: Bankier, Wm.

Box 1, Folder 13: Bard, Gracie

Box 1, Folder 14: Bareuther, Petrus (Apollos)

Box 1, Folder 15: Barnett, Mel

Box 1, Folder 16: Barnholth

Box 1, Folder 17: Barre, Horace

Box 1, Folder 18: Barrilleaux, Doris

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Box 2, Folder 20: Barzen, H.B.

Box 2, Folder 21: Batchelor, Mac

Box 2, Folder 21.1: Bauer, Jacob

Box 2, Folder 22: Bauman, Caroline

Box 2, Folder 23: Beaumont, Bill

Box 2, Folder 24: Beck, Hans

Box 2, Folder 25: Belling, Paul

Box 2, Folder 26: Benfante, Chas

Box 2, Folder 27: Bennett, David

Box 2, Folder 28: Berger, Al

Box 2, Folder 29: Bhaka, Sharak

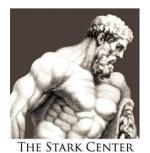
Box 2, Folder 30: Bienkowski, Franz "Cyclops"

Box 2, Folder 31: Blazer

Box 2, Folder 32: Bonomo, Joe

Box 2, Folder 33: Borra, Luigi (Milo Brinn)

Box 2, Folder 34: Boshes, Abe



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Box 2, Folder 35: Breitbart

Box 2, Folder 36: Brewer, Relna

Box 2, Folder 37: Brown, Saxon and Dorothy Dawes

Box 2, Folder 37.1: Brunet, Yvon

Box 2, Folder 37.5: Buchmiller, Floyd

Box 2, Folder 38: Burgo

Box 2, Folder 39: Cabana, Wilfred

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Box 2, Folder 41: Caddock, Earl

Box 2, Folder 42: Cameron, Alex A. "A. A."

Box 2, Folder 43: Carkeek, Jack

Box 2, Folder 44: Carll, Daisy R.

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Box 3, Folder 45.1: Carrington and Lupo

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Box 3, Folder 47: Cassidy, Hugh

Box 3, Folder 48: Caswell, W.P.

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Box 3, Folder 49.1: Chubb, Annie

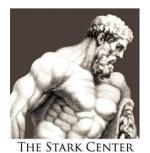
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Box 3, Folder 52: Clements, W.E.

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Box 3, Folder 54: Coffin, Ernest



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Box 5, Folder 78: Desbonnet, Edmund

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Box 22.1: Farnham, Elmer (negatives)

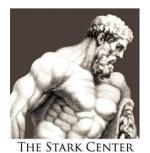
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Box 9, Folder 139: Ishikawa, Emerick

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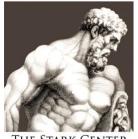
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Box 22.1: Strong Boy (negatives)

Box 20, Folder 291: Strongfort, Lionel (Max Unger)

Box 20, Folder 292: Stronoham, Todd

Box 20, Folder 293: Sulvane, Michael

Box 20, Folder 293.1: Suzinetta

Box 20, Folder 294: Swoboda, Karl

Box 21, Folder 295: Tampke, M. S.

Box 21, Folder 296: Tarzano

Box 21, Folder 297: Tate, Alica

Box 21, Folder 298: Terrell, Kenneth

Box 21, Folder 299: Thereault, Ed

Box 22.1: Theriault, Ed (negatives)

Box 21, Folder 300: Thiberville, V.J.

Box 21, Folder 301: Thomas, Alex

Box 21, Folder 302: Thompson, Frank

Box 21, Folder 303: Tinerino, Dennis

Box 21, Folder 304: Travis, Warren Lincoln

Box 21, Folder 305: Treloar, Al

Box 21, Folder 306: Triat, Hypollete

Box 21, Folder 306.1: Trumbo, Gena

Box 21, Folder 307: Tristram, John

Box 21, Folder 308: Tunney, Gene

Box 21: Folder 309: Van Der Berg, Dirk



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Box 21, Folder 310: Van De Velde, Elly

Box 21, Folder 311: Vansittart, C. E.

Box 21, Folder 312: Vasilef, Val

Box 21, Folder 312.1: "Victor"

Box 22.1: Veres, Gyozo (negatives)

Box 21, Folder 313: Verge, A.

Box 21, Folder 314: Von Boeckhiana, Paul

Box 21, Folder 315: Von Stanglemaier, Dargestellt

Box 21, Folder 316: Waddell, George & Harold

Box 21, Folder 317: Walker, Ronald

Box 21, Folder 318: Waller, Harry

Box 21, Folder 318.1: Ward, Irma

Box 22.1: Warchuk, Tania (negatives)

Box 21, Folder 319: The Walton Troupe

Box 22, Folder 320: Weaver, George R.

Box 22, Folder 321: Weber, Clarence

Box 22, Folder 322: Weber, Henri

Box 22, Folder 323: Webster, David

Box 22, Folder 324: Weider, Ben

Box 22, Folder 325: Weissman, Al

Box 22, Folder 326: Weissmuller, Johnny

Box 22, Folder 327: Wells, Melvin

Box 22, Folder 328: Wexler, Max

Box 22, Folder 329: Wheeler, C.

Box 22, Folder 330: Willoughby, Dave

Box 22, Folder 331: Willson, A. E.



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Box 22, Folder 332: Wilson, Bill

Box 22, Folder 333: Wirengards (Ossian, Emma Lena, Berndt, Hjordis)

Box 22, Folder 334: Wood, Harold

Box 22, Folder 335: Yacos, George

Box 22, Folder 336: Young, Noah

Box 22, Folder 337: Zass, Alexander

Box 22, Folder 338: Zinken, Harold

Box 22, Folder 339: Znamesky, Alexander

Box 22, Folder 340: Zybysco, Stanislaus

Subseries B. Bodybuilding/Strength Equipment

Box 23, Folder 341: Bodybuilding Equipment/ Milo

Box 23, Folder 342: Bodybuilding Equipment/ York Barbell

Subseries C. Bodybuilding/Strength Training Courses

Box 23, Folder 343: Apollo Course Pupils 1

Box 23, Folder 344: Apollo Course Pupils 2

Box 24, Folder 345: Milo Training Course 1

Box 24, Folder 346: Milo Training Course 2

Box 24, Folder 347: Physical Culture Training School (MacFadden)

Subseries D. Unidentified Bodybuilders/Strongmen/Lifters

Box 25, Folder 348: Unidentified Bodybuilders

Box 22.1: Unidentified Bodybuilders (negatives)

Box 25, Folder 349: Unidentified British "Oldtimers"



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Box 22.1: Unidentified Female Model (negatives)

Box 25, Folder 350: Unidentified Male Physiques

Box 25, Folder 351: Unidentified Mexico

Box 25, Folder 352: Unidentified Muscle Beach

Box 22.1: Unidentified Strongman (negatives)

Box 25, Folder 353: Unidentified Supermen Photos

Box 26, Folder 354: Unidentified Strong Women

Box 22.1: Unidentified Weightlifter (negatives)

Box 26, Folder 355: Unidentified Women

Box 26, Folder 356: Unidentified Women's Keep Fit Exercises

Series III. Boxing, circa 1920-1947

Box 26, Folder 1: Boxing

Series IV. Calling Cards Pre 1930

Box 26, Folder 1: Calling Cards Pre-1930

Series V. Coulter Family Photos & Personal Materials, circa 1892-1962

Box 26, Folder 1: Coulter Family Photos & Personal Materials

Series VI. Circus, circa 1910-1944 (1 Folder)

Box 26, Folder 1: Circus

Series VII. Cycling, circa 1947

Box 26, Folder 1: Cycling



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Series VIII. Dance, circa 1920-1930

Box 26, Folder 1: Dance

Series IX. Football, circa 1900-1956

Box 27, Folder 1: Football

Series X. Group Exercise, undated

Box 29, Folder 9: Group Exercises

Series XI. Hockey, circa 1934

Box 27, Folder 1: Hockey

Series XII. Publications, circa 1912-1948

Box 27, Folder 1: Photo Advertising

Box 27, Folder 1.5: Photo Advertising

Box 27, Folder 2: Postcards, Art Photos

Box 27, Folder 3: Strength Magazine 1

Box 27, Folder 4: Strength Magazine 2

Box 28, Folder 5: Strength Magazine 3

Box 28, Folder 6: Strength Magazine 4

Box 28, Folder 7: Strength Magazine 5

Box 29, Folder 8: Strength Magazine (Newman)

Series XIII. Rugby, circa 1947

Box 29, Folder 1: Rugby



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Series XIV. Soccer, circa 1947

Box 29, Folder 1: Soccer

Series XV. Track and Field, circa 1947

Box 29, Folder 1: Track and Field

Series XVI. Wrestling, circa 1900-1970

Box 29, Folder 1: Wrestling 1

Box 29, Folder 2: Wrestling 2

Box 29, Folder 3: Wrestling 3