

# Denishawn Legacy Collection



**Music Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
2021**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/perform.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020570118>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu021021>

Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Finding aid encoded by Rachel McNellis, 2021

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Denishawn Legacy Collection

**Inclusive Dates:** 1906-2019

**Bulk Dates:** 1952-1968

**Call No.:** ML31.D45

**Creator:** St. Denis, Ruth, 1880-1968; Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972

**Extent:** approximately 70 items

**Extent:** 2 containers

**Extent:** 1.4 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020570118>

**Summary:** Denishawn, which modern dancers Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968) and Ted Shawn (1891-1972) founded in 1915, was a renowned dance company through which numerous prominent performers, including artists such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, Louise Brooks, Anne Douglas, and Grace McCrea, received dance training and began their careers. The Denishawn Legacy Collection consists of programs, promotional materials, photographs, correspondence, articles, and scrapbook pages pertaining to the company and its members. These items also document the history and performances of Jacob's Pillow, which Shawn founded in 1931 and directed until his death.

## Acquisition Information

In 2020, the Library of Congress purchased a set of about 65 programs and other materials related to Denishawn and Jacob's Pillow that had had been collected by Paul McMahan, a writer and photographer based in Boston. These items constitute the core materials of the Denishawn Legacy Collection, to which other donated and purchased programs of unknown provenance have been added. The collection is open to additions of other items related to the Denishawn legacy.

## Accruals

Accruals are expected.

## Processing History

Libby Smigel processed the Denishawn Legacy Collection in 2021. Rachel McNellis coded the finding aid in 2021.

## Other Repositories

Other libraries and archives that hold significant collections related to Denishawn, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn include: Adelphi University; Florida State University; Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Florida, Gainesville; and the University of Denver.

## Related Material

The Library of Congress Music Division houses several special collections related to Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, or the Denishawn Company. The [Herbert H. Coburn Dance Program Collection](#) includes numerous playbills and performance programs for St. Denis, Shawn, and Jacob's Pillow. The [Cesi Kellinger Collection of Dance Materials](#) contains programs and photographs for Shawn and St. Denis. Additional photographs, programs, and correspondence related to St. Denis are available in the [Oliver Daniel Papers](#), and the [Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation Collection](#) and the [Serge Koussevitzky Archive](#) both contain correspondence with Ted Shawn.

Several Music Division special collections feature artists whose careers began in the Denishawn company: the [Anne Douglas Papers Related to Denishawn](#), [Grace McCrae Papers Relating to Denishawn](#), [Martha Graham Collection](#), and the [Martha Graham Legacy Archive](#).

## Copyright Status

Materials from the Denishawn Legacy Collection are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

## Access and Restrictions

The Denishawn Legacy Collection is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions on using or copying materials may apply.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container or reel or digital ID number], Denishawn Legacy Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Administrative History

Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968), née Ruth Dennis, was an American modern dancer who first performed in vaudeville and musical theater. She produced her earliest choreographic work, a solo dance titled *Radha*, in 1906 in New York City, and then embarked on a three-year European tour that met with critical acclaim. American modern dancer Ted Shawn (1891-1972) became St. Denis's dance partner; they were married in 1914. The following year, they founded the Denishawn School of Dancing and the Related Arts, which is reputed to be the first dance institute to establish a professional dance company.

The choreography of St. Denis and Shawn exhibited diverse influences, including elements drawn from Latin American, Asian, Native American, and Middle Eastern cultures. Denishawn greatly influenced the careers of numerous prominent dancers and choreographers, such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Anne Douglas, Grace McCrea, Louise Brooks, Francesca Braggiotti, and Jack Cole. Denishawn was seriously impacted by the stock market crash of 1929, and in 1931, St. Denis and Shawn had separated, which marked the end of Denishawn. They never divorced. After Denishawn closed, St. Denis continued to focus on the connection between religion and dance by reassembling her Rhythmic Choir and by founding the Society of Spiritual Arts in 1940. She also established the dance department at Adelphi University in 1938, and in 1941, began to perform annually at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival until 1955. She died in Los Angeles in 1968.

Ted Shawn bought Jacob's Pillow in Becket, Massachusetts, in 1931. That same year he founded a company of male dancers. The company used Jacob's Pillow as a summer rehearsal space and held public performances that later became the foundation for Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. When Shawn's company disbanded in 1940, Jacob's Pillow was sold to ballet stars Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin the following year. They built a new theater, which Ted Shawn directed until his death in 1972. Jacob's Pillow theaters and archives remain a renowned center for performances and research.

## Scope and Content Note

The Denishawn Legacy Collection spans the years 1910 to 2019. The bulk of the material dates from 1923 to 1968 and is organized into five series. The [Programs and Promotional Materials](#) series consists of programs, brochures, and flyers related to Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Denishawn, and Jacob's Pillow. Images of St. Denis and Shawn comprise the [Photographs](#) series. The [Correspondence](#) series includes letters between Paul McMahon and Ted Shawn during the 1960s

and the press release that Jacob's Pillow published about St. Denis's death. The [Publications](#) series consists of articles and books written by Shawn, Mumaw, and Lucien Price. The [Miscellany](#) series contains scrapbook pages filled with clippings and programs collected by Paul McMahon about Denishawn, Martha Graham, Angna Enters, and Uday Shakar.

## Organization of the Denishawn Legacy Collection

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Programs and Promotional Materials, 1910-2019](#)
- [Photographs, 1906-1970s](#)
- [Correspondence, 1962-1968](#)
- [Publications, 1936-1984](#)
- [Miscellany, 1932-1934](#)

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Braggiotti, Francesca, 1902-1998.  
Enters, Angna, 1897-1989.  
Graham, Martha.  
McMahon, Paul, -2011.  
Mumaw, Barton, 1912-2001.  
Mumaw, Barton, 1912-2001.  
Price, Lucien, 1883-1964.  
Shankar, Uday, 1900-1977.  
Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972.  
Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972.  
St. Denis, Ruth, 1880-1968.

### Organizations

Denishawn Dancers.  
Denishawn Dancers.  
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival--History.  
Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers.

### Subjects

Dance companies--United States--History.  
Dance festivals--United States--History.  
Dancers--United States--Photographs.  
Modern dance--United States--History.

### Titles

*Chitra hunting (Choreographic work : St Denis)*

### Form/Genre

Albums (Books)  
Articles.  
Books.  
Business correspondence.  
Dance programs.  
Personal correspondence.  
Photographs.  
Promotional materials.

## Description of Series

### Container

### Series

BOX 1

#### Programs and Promotional Materials, 1910-2019

This series consists of programs and promotional materials that relate primarily to Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Denishawn, and Jacob's Pillow. Three rare programs for early performances of Ruth St. Denis are especially notable, as is one for a Denishawn performance in which Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Louise Brooks appeared in 1923. In addition, the items in this series document activities that took place at Jacob's Pillow between 1952 and 2019. Among these souvenir programs, press releases, and brochures are a Silver Jubilee (25th anniversary) program from 1952, as well as a program celebrating the 50th anniversary of the wedding of St. Denis and Shawn. An autographed souvenir program of Barton Mumaw's solo dance concert is of note, as many of Shawn's dances were inspired by and created for him.

Arranged chronologically.

BOX 1

#### Photographs, 1906-1970s

Photographs of Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Jacob's Pillow comprise this series. Some of the images are reprints of their earliest activities. Other notable items include a photograph of St. Denis in her choreographed work *Rangoon* in 1926, as well as one of Shawn performing in her 1952 production of *Chitra*. A later photograph shows Shawn with Liz Thompson, who was appointed the executive director of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 1979.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

BOX 1

#### Correspondence, 1962-1968

This series contains a small amount of correspondence between Ted Shawn and Paul McMahon.

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

BOX 1

#### Publications, 1936-1984

This series includes articles, books, clippings, and other documents about modern dance that were published between 1936 and 1984. Of note is Ted Shawn's final column in his 27-article series on modern dance in the *Boston Herald*.

Arranged alphabetically by organization or author's last name.

BOX 2

#### Miscellany, 1932-1934

This series contains three scrapbook leaves with content that dates between 1932 and 1934.

These pages include programs, clippings, and published images, many of which are cut from unidentified sources. In addition to Denishawn artists, several items feature their artistic contemporaries Angna Enters and Uday Shankar.

Arranged alphabetically.

# Container List

Container	Contents
<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Programs and Promotional Materials, 1910-2019</b> This series consists of programs and promotional materials that relate primarily to Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Denishawn, and Jacob's Pillow. Three rare programs for early performances of Ruth St. Denis are especially notable, as is one for a Denishawn performance in which Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Louise Brooks appeared in 1923. In addition, the items in this series document activities that took place at Jacob's Pillow between 1952 and 2019. Among these souvenir programs, press releases, and brochures are a Silver Jubilee (25th anniversary) program from 1952, as well as a program celebrating the 50th anniversary of the wedding of St. Denis and Shawn. An autographed souvenir program of Barton Mumaw's solo dance concert is of note, as many of Shawn's dances were inspired by and created for him. Arranged chronologically.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/1</b>	St. Denis, 1910 Promotional flyer <i>Note:</i> National Theatre, Washington, D.C.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/2</b>	St. Denis, 1911 Program <i>Note:</i> Columbia Theatre, Washington, D.C.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/3</b>	St. Denis, 1916 Advertising brochure
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/4-5</b>	Denishawn, 1923 Promotional brochure; two programs <i>Includes:</i> Martha Graham; Charles Weidman; Louise Brooks
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/6-7</b>	Denishawn, 1924 Two promotional flyers
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/8</b>	Denishawn, 1925 Promotional flyer
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/9</b>	Francesca Braggiotti, 1929 Program
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/10</b>	G. Schirmer book flyer, 1930 Advertisement for six illustrated instructions for dances by Shawn and St. Denis
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/11</b>	Ruth St. Denis and Her Dancers, 1931 Program
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/12</b>	Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers, 1937 Souvenir program; booking brochure
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/13</b>	Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers, 1938 Program
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/14</b>	Barton Mumaw, 1941 Souvenir program autographed 1947; playbill
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/15</b>	Jacob's Pillow, 1952 Souvenir program; recreation center program
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/16</b>	Jacob's Pillow, 1957 Silver Jubilee souvenir program

## Programs and Promotional Materials, 1910-2019

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/17	Jacob's Pillow, 1958 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/18	Jacob's Pillow, 1959 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/19	Jacob's Pillow, 1960 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/20	Jacob's Pillow, 1961 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/21 to 1/22	Jacob's Pillow, 1964 Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn 50th anniversary program; press releases; souvenir program from Jacob's Pillow; program for Ted Shawn special event; individual programs by week
BOX-FOLDER 1/23	Jacob's Pillow, 1968 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/24	Jacob's Pillow, 1970 Souvenir program
BOX-FOLDER 1/25	Jacob's Pillow, 2019 Brochure
BOX 1	<b>Photographs, 1906-1970s</b> Photographs of Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Jacob's Pillow comprise this series. Some of the images are reprints of their earliest activities. Other notable items include a photograph of St. Denis in her choreographed work <i>Rangoon</i> in 1926, as well as one of Shawn performing in her 1952 production of <i>Chitra</i> . A later photograph shows Shawn with Liz Thompson, who was appointed the executive director of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 1979. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX-FOLDER 1/26	Shawn, Ted at Jacob's Pillow, 1970s
BOX-FOLDER 1/27	Shawn, Ted in <i>Chitra</i> , 1952 <i>Note:</i> Ted Shawn as Arujuna, Lalla Lezzi as Chitra; Ruth St. Denis, producer and director
BOX-FOLDER 1/28	Shawn, Ted and Ruth St. Denis photograph array, 1906-1908, 1923 and undated Reprinted photographs, two pages
BOX-FOLDER 1/29	St. Denis, Ruth in <i>Rangoon</i> , 1926
BOX 1	<b>Correspondence, 1962-1968</b> This series contains a small amount of correspondence between Ted Shawn and Paul McMahon. Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.
BOX-FOLDER 1/30	McMahon, Paul to/from Ted Shawn, 1962-1968 <i>Laid in:</i> Copy of the Jacob's Pillow press release on Ruth St. Denis's death
BOX 1	<b>Publications, 1936-1984</b> This series includes articles, books, clippings, and other documents about modern dance that were published between 1936 and 1984. Of note is Ted Shawn's final column in his 27-article series on modern dance in the <i>Boston Herald</i> . Arranged alphabetically by organization or author's last name.
BOX-FOLDER 1/31	Jacob's Pillow, "The Campaign for Jacob's Pillow," circa 1984 Report

## Publications, 1936-1984

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/32	Mumaw, Barton, "How It All Began," 1982 July <i>Note: Published in Dance Magazine</i>
BOX-FOLDER 1/33	Price, Lucien, "All-Man Performance," 1936 Reprint <i>Note: Originally published in the Atlantic Monthly</i>
BOX-FOLDER 1/34	Shawn, Ted, <i>How Beautiful upon the Mountain</i> , 2nd ed., 1947 Monograph
BOX-FOLDER 1/35	Shawn, Ted, "Shawn Suggests Many Books on Subject of the Dance," 1936 <i>Note: Final column of a 27-article series on dance published in the Boston Herald</i>
BOX 2	<b>Miscellany, 1932-1934</b> This series contains three scrapbook leaves with content that dates between 1932 and 1934. These pages include programs, clippings, and published images, many of which are cut from unidentified sources. In addition to Denishawn artists, several items feature their artistic contemporaries Angna Enters and Uday Shankar. Arranged alphabetically.
BOX-FOLDER 2/1	Scrapbook pages, 1932-1934 and undated Three scrapbook leaves