

# Silo Circle Theatre Collection

ca. 1957 – 1961



*“The company will be a young one, fresh in scope, imaginative in ideas, boundless in energy to carry forth those ideas, so that the productions will have every chance to reflect theatre at its most creative pinnacle.”* – Letter of intent to the town of Black Mountain from Tinka Crawford, Dale Meador, and Norman Kean.

Title: Silo Circle Theatre Collection

Creator: Tinka Crawford

Alt Creator: Swannanoa Valley Museum and History Center

## Keyword

Theatre ; Arena Theatre ; Silo-Circle Theatre ; Tinka Crawford ; Anne Lauer ; Dale Meador ; Norman Keen ; Swannanoa Valley ; Black Mountain, North Carolina ; WNC Theatre ; WNC Arts ; Asheville, N.C. ; Appalachian Theatre ; Silo Playhouse ; Asheville Citizen Times ; WLOS ; WWNC 570 ; Swannanoa ; NC Test Farm ; U.S. Highway 70 ; Appalachia ; Repurposed Barn ; University of Denver ; Sound Effects Records ; Francine Sharon ; Arlen Digitale ; Betty Alexander ; Michael E. Rutenberg ; Edward DuPuy ; Gerry Rabkin ; Mary Gonzales ; Kent Mecham ; Jim Hopkins ; Puppetry ; WNC Photographs ; Asheville Area ; Asheville Theatre ; Community Theatre ; Local Theatre ; Swannanoa Bank & Trust ; Zinc Photo Plate ; Box Office ; Zinc Photo Plate ; Stage Performance ;

## Subject LCSH

Arena Theatre  
North Carolina, Western  
North Carolina  
Asheville, N.C.  
Swannanoa River Valley, N.C.  
United States Highway 70  
Broadway Theatre  
Keen, Norman  
Appalachian Region  
University of Denver  
Western Carolina University

## Description

In the summers of 1958 to 1961, Black Mountain had its own home theatre production in the form of the Silo Circle Theatre. Located in a refurbished barn adjacent to what is now Owen Middle School, the Silo Circle was a “Theatre-in-the-round”; meaning the seats were set up in an arena-like pattern surrounding the stage so that the audience could see a 360-degree view of the scene being acted out. The operation was produced by Black Mountain native Anne “Tinka” Crawford (later Anne Lauer) as well as other Broadway experienced producers Norman Keen and Dale Meador. This collection is taken from Crawford’s personal collection and contains production correspondence, stationery, playbills, photos, and newspaper clippings gathered during the 4-year run of the theatre. Tinka Crawford's acting career began in theatre performances at Black Mountain High School. She later attended Western Carolina University and went on to study theatre at the University of Denver where we made connections with fellow actor and producer Norman Kean. After spending several years continuing studying and acting in traveling productions across the country, Crawford and Kean and partner Dale Meador looked to begin their own theatre company, and chose scenic Black Mountain as their perfect location. According to a letter of intent addressed to the people of Black Mountain, the three producers chose the town due to the area’s large summer population, easy accessibility, and the natural beauty of the Swannanoa Valley. For a performance space, the company bought and renovated a state-owned cattle barn on a test farm that stood on Old Highway 70 beside Owen High School. After running

power and erecting lights and seating areas, the Silo Circle Theatre began their first seven-week summer season in June of 1958 with a production of "My Three Angels." The company put on plays from noted playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams as well as locally written plays in a close setting where the audience was often encouraged to participate. The program ran for four summers until 1961 where the theatre and company shut down due to financial difficulties. Both Tinka Crawford and Norman Keen went on to continue to work in theatre however, with Keen going on to be celebrated as a Broadway producer before being involved in a tragic murder-suicide in January of 1988. Although the Silo Circle Theatre operated for only a few years in Black Mountain, the production was able to make a name for itself among the Western North Carolina theatre scene and in the memories of the residents of the Swannanoa Valley.

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Swannanoa Valley Museum

**Contributor**

Anne Lauer and Jim Lauer

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Manuscript; Photographs ; Vinyl Records ;

**Format**

One Manuscript box

**Language**

English

**Relation**

Ed Dupuy Collection ;

**Coverage Temporal**

1957 – 1961

**Coverage Spatial**

Black Mountain N.C

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Acquisition

2004-17-11;

Citation

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Processed by

Joseph Aaron Hamrick

Contents

Folders	Description
Photos: Production and Official Release Photographs	Official Cast and Productions photographs by Ed DuPuy and provided by the Asheville Citizen Times. Labeled photographs are from the productions of “A Murder has been arranged, Rainmaker, Barbershop, Charley’s Aunt, Summer and Smoke, Little Hut, Gaslight, I am a Camera, GiGi, All my sons, The children’s puppet theatre program at the SCT, Blue Denim, and a local art exhibit featured at the SCT. Named individuals pictured include: Elaine Morgan, Marsha Leigh, Mary Gonzales, Arlen Digitale, Francine Sharon, Emily R. Wood, and Clara L. Crawford.
Photos: Personal and Candid Photographs; Barn Photographs	Scrapbooked pictures from personal cameras of people and plays that preexist the S.C.T., most being acting photos from Tinka Crawford. Personal Set photographs from the set of plays at the S.C.T. are also included as well as a DuPuy photograph of the barn and a Zinc Photo plate of the barn the S.C.T. was based in. Labeled Pictures of Betty Alexander, Debbie H, Dave Maddux and Tinka Crawford.
News Bulletins and Promotional Materials	WWNC Timeslots and readouts, WLOS T.V. Commercial Order, Poster hanging locations list, “The Bride’s Lament” Poster, Letters of Intent from the Producers Addressed to the town of Black Mountain.
Playbills and Related Materials	Show Specific Playbills and inserts from the 1958 to 1961 Summer Seasons, Including cast autographed inserts and production correspondence in relevant playbills as well as a handwritten play list for the 1959 season.
Box Office Materials	Blank remainder of box office statement booklet as well as 3 un redeemed tickets to the show on August 14, 1959

Stationary from the Producer's Desk	Including handwritten and typed Sustaining Member's lists, blank stationary from the desk of Tinka Crawford, and empty ticket envelopes.
Personal Correspondence	Personal Correspondence relating to the planning of the Silo Circle Theatre's first season from August 1957 to August 1959 in Chronological order. Including senders and recipients from Dale Meador, Norman Kean, Black Mountain Business owners, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, McDowell county Citizen's committee, Theatre Ad Agencies, Director Jerry Rumley, Local Legal representatives, The Actor's Equity Association, Insurance Agencies, and Western Carolina College.
Newspaper Clippings and Printouts	Clippings and printouts from the Asheville Citizen times regarding Silo Circle Theatre including show reviews and schedule information. Sorted by Specific play. Digitized.
Financial Correspondence	Correspondence and paperwork regarding the financial matters and physical property of the Silo Circle Playhouse. Including the lease to the barn, Southern Desk company and Independent Theatre Supply, and Wachovia Bank and Trust in Asheville. Also included are completed Box Office financial statements in chronological order from June of 1958 to August of 1959.
Sound Effects Records	Vinyl sound effect records from various sources including WWNC containing beach and animal noises for the production of "The Little Hut" as well as various clock sound effects.