

Collection #
P 0857

**FRED, LOUISE, AND VIRGINIA YOUNG
COLLECTION, 1912-1945**

Collection Information	1
Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	4
Series Contents	5

Processed by

Matt S Holdzkorn
April 2023

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

*

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 half-sized box of photographs, 4 folders of manuscript material
COLLECTION DATES:	1912-1945
PROVENANCE:	Frederick and Marlene Devlin, 2023
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Indiana Circus Collection (M1512); Ferol Meeker Peru, Indiana Circus Oral History Transcripts (M1486)
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2023.0035
NOTES:	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Frederick Young and Louise Dangerfield were married on 1 June 1909 at the beach town of St. Joseph, Michigan. Louise would soon give birth to a daughter, Mary Virginia, and the three would eventually contribute to Indiana's rich circus heritage as a family of performing aerialists.

Frederick Young was born in Rochester, Indiana on 4 October 1889. His mother Angie Naomi (Whittenberger) Young passed away at the age of 27, the day after Fred's seventh birthday. Little is known about Fred's childhood, but by the time he married Louise, he was employed as a steel worker in Hammond and as a woodworker making cabinetry and refrigerators at the Indiana Manufacturing Company in Peru, Indiana.

Louise Mitchell (Dangerfield) Young was born in Converse, Indiana in 1891. At the time of her daughter's birth in 1909, she worked as a housekeeper in Peru.

By 1912, Fred and Louise had developed a trapeze and perch pole act and billed themselves as the Aerial Youngs. In April, they joined the La Mont Bros. Circus from Salem, Illinois. A couple of months later, they moved to the Gollmar Bros. show out of Baraboo, Wisconsin. They stayed with the Gollmars through the 1912 and 1913 seasons.

In 1914, the Youngs began a long association with circus owners Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers. The timing was right for Mugivan and Bowers to move their circuses to Peru, Indiana. After the 1913 flood and the sale of Peru's Hagenbeck-Wallace circus to West Baden casino magnate Ed. Ballard, the large circus quarters at Peru became available. The Aerial Youngs joined Mugivan and Bowers' Howe's Great London Circus for the 1914 season, and their Robinson's Famous circus in 1915. In 1916, Mugivan acquired the rights to the well-known John Robinson Circus, and the Aerial Youngs were a mainstay on that show for the next several years while it was headquartered in Peru.

Probably sometime during World War I, the Youngs also performed for 12 weeks with the Circo Pubillones in Cuba.

Virginia Young spent her childhood summers travelling with the circus, and by 1920 she may have been incorporated into the act. In 1922 Virginia played shortstop and Louise played catcher on the Red Birds, one of two women's baseball teams with the John Robinson Circus. The family spent the offseasons in Peru, where Virginia attended school and Fred tended bar at Billy P Gallagher's restaurant.

By 1927, Virginia had struck out on her own, working on the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. There is some evidence that she was part of a four-person aerial act around 1930. By 1933, she had joined Ethel Hamilton in her two-person aerial act called the D'Arcy Sisters that performed at fairs, including the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago.

In 1937, Virginia was billed as Virginia Senior, the Sky-High Girl. Evidently, she had married one William Senior who acted as her assistant. In this solo act she performed several tricks without a net on an enormous apparatus resembling a freestanding ladder.

The act ended with the “slide for life,” in which she slid to the ground while hanging by her teeth. At a performance in Springfield Ohio in April 1937, Virginia was performing a spin on the apparatus when she lost her grip and fell, breaking several vertebrae in her back. After several weeks in a plaster cast and more in rehabilitation, she resumed the act four months later. In 1939 she married Robert J. Devlin, and he became her assistant. That year Virginia fell again when her 120-foot-tall apparatus broke. This time she escaped with a broken right arm and hip.

Meanwhile, Fred and Louise had retired to Peru. Fred owned a bar on Broadway called the Jockey Club, worked as the promoter of a local women’s softball team, and operated a miniature train at fairs for children. He died in Peru on 28 November 1957, at which time Louise went to live with Virginia and Robert in Temperance, Michigan. Louise died there on 22 May 1965. Virginia died on 5 May 1990.

Sources:

Ancestrylibrary.com

Frederick Devlin, telephone interview by Matt S Holdzkom, 20 April 2023

John Polacsek, “On A Sunday Run Around the Diamond,” *Bandwagon*, Vol. 59 No. 3 (2015)

Material in the collection

Newspapers.com

“Under the Marquee,” *The Billboard*, 24 March 1917

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of photographs, clippings, and a few pieces of promotional ephemera from the Young family. It has been arranged in two series.

Series I is material related to Fred and Louise, “The Aerial Youngs,” and consists of photographs and a flier drawn by performer and cartoonist Emmett Kelly. It illustrates some of the tricks from their act. Other performers pictured in “Friends of the Aerial Youngs” are: Maguerite [sic], Ray Dick, Mrs. Dick Masters, Mrs. Mayo, Irma Winslow, Louise Nelson, Eunice DeMott, Vivian McLain, Bessie Castello, Augusta Webes [sic], Demarice Gabbart, Rube Walters, Mr. Decker, Frank Loving, Art LaRue, Bue Young, Tracy Andrews, Buster, Correia Sisters, Cecil Lowande, Mrs. Hay Stout, Harry and Loretta LaPearl.

Series II is material related to their daughter Virginia, “The Sky-Hi Girl.” Series II includes photographs, clippings, a telegram, press release, and other ephemera. Other performers pictured in “Friends of Virginia [Young] Senior/Devlin” are: Ethel Hamilton, “PeeWee,” Jack Brick, Bill Brick, Bob Terry, the Flying Behrs and Lillie, Bee Kyle Wecker, Norwich Conn, the Melzara Troupe, and Bob, Frances, and Maxine Fisher (Christmas card).

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Fred and Louise, “The Aerial Youngs”

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
General circus scenes, circa 1912	Box 1, Folder 1
Gollmar Bros. Circus, 1912-1913	Box 1, Folder 2
The Aerial Youngs, circa 1915, 1934	Box 1, Folder 3
Friends of the Aerial Youngs (1 of 3), circa 1915-1920	Box 1, Folder 4
Friends of the Aerial Youngs (2 of 3), circa 1920, 1940	Box 1, Folder 5
Friends of the Aerial Youngs (3 of 3), n.d.	Box 1, Folder 6
The Youngs and Devlins at Jockey Club, Peru Indiana, 1945, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 10
Miscellaneous photographs, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 11

Series 2: Virginia [Young] Senior/Devlin, “The Sky-Hi Girl”

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Virginia [Young] Senior/Devlin, 1920-circa 1939	Box 1, Folder 7
May Wirth autograph to Virginia, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 8
Friends of Virginia [Young] Senior/Devlin, circa 1920-1940	Box 1, Folder 9
Virginia Senior newspaper clippings, 1933-1939	Manuscripts: Folder 1 of 4
Virginia Senior documents, 1937, n.d.	Manuscripts: Folder 2 of 4
Virginia Senior envelope from Gus Sun Booking Agency, 1939	Manuscripts: Folder 3 of 4
Miscellaneous clippings, 1933, 1937	Manuscripts: Folder 4 of 4