

Bulking-Up Sport History: Sources for the Study of Physical Culture

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One of the primary obstacles to historical studies in the field of physical culture has been the difficulty in finding archival sources for materials in the field. Since most weightlifting, bodybuilding and naturopathic publications were neither purchased by libraries or placed in archives, historians interested in the training of the body have been primarily limited to examination of traditional physical education journals. Scholarship field has been further hampered by the lack of any reliable bibliography of these sorts of materials.

Through the auspices of a new publication at the University of Texas: *Iron Game History—The Journal of Physical Culture*, we have now traced the publishing careers of more than 350 different serial publications in English in the field of physical culture. This paper will attempt to define “physical culture” and examine this surprisingly large body of materials, a body largely ignored by historians of sport and exercise. In addition, the author will discuss the evaluation of the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection at the University of Texas.

The Todd-McLean Collection in the History of Physical Culture was begun in 1983 when Terry and Jan Todd decided to donate their extensive collection of books, magazines, courses, films, videos, photographs and artifacts in the field to the University of Texas, where they both teach. Shortly after the Todds’ decision, U.T. Professor Emeritus Roy J. McLean added his own collection to the Todds’ and donated \$50,000 to support the collections through the establishment of the McLean Research Fellowship in Sport History. Over the next several years, that \$50,000 donation was matched by the university, as were later, similar gifts by Mrs. McLean and Mr. and Mrs. Doyle Hartman.

When Terry Todd was working on his doctoral dissertation on the history of resistance exercise, he met Ottley Coulter, an ex-vaudeville strongman who had what may have been the largest collection in the physical culture field in the United States. Coulter, who began collecting in the first decade of this century, allowed Todd to use his personal collection and they became friends. In 1975, after Coulter’s death, the Todds purchased the Coulter Collection (387 book cartons of material) from the family.

In addition, all or part of the collections of David P. Willoughby, Joe Assirati, Dr. Jack Leighton, Dr. Christopher Gian-Curseo, Sam Loprinzi, Dr. Jesse Mercer Gehman, George Hackenschmidt, Sieg Klein, Vic Boff, Al Leroux and Pudgy Stockton have been added to the holdings at U.T.

The collection itself currently consists of almost 100,000 books, magazines, photos, courses, videos, films, artifacts and pieces of correspondence. Among the holdings of the collection are the personal scrapbooks of George Hackenschmidt, Ottley Coulter and Professor Attila; the drawings and notebooks of David P. Willoughby, an oil painting of Professor Attila done in 1887 by a royal court painter in London; a complete set of the major weightlifting magazines in English, including *Strength & Health*, *Iron Man* and *Muscle Builder/Power*; newsreel footage of dozens of lifters, bodybuilders and strongmen from the 30’s, 40’s and 50’s; correspondence from such people as George F. Jowett, Ottley Coulter, George Hackenschmidt, Professor Attila, Warren Lincoln Travis, Earle Liederman, Sieg Klein, Mac Batchelor, Joe “The Mighty Atom” Greenstein, Alan Calvert,

Mark Berry, Bob Hoffman, Hermann Saxon, and many others; and hundreds of books in the fields of naturopathy, vegetarianism and health, dating back to the Eighteenth Century.