

**LEONARD LATON COLLECTION  
OF  
ANTHONY (TONY) J. SANSONE PHOTOGRAPHS**

**1935, 1955**

Collection number: GLC 62

The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center

San Francisco Public Library

2010

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	p. 3
Biographical and Historical Note	p. 4
Scope and Content	p. 4
Container Listing	p. 5

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Provenance**

The Leonard Laton Collection of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone Photographs was donated to The San Francisco Public Library by an anonymous donor in July 2009.

### **Access**

The collection is open for research and available through the San Francisco History Center on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Main Library. The hours are: Tues.-Thurs. 10a.m.-6 p.m., Fri. 12 noon-6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sun. 12 noon-5 p.m.

### **Collection Number**

GLC 62

### **Size**

2 folders (20 photographs + 1 volume)

### **Processed by**

Tim Wilson

### **Date Completed**

February 2010

### **Preferred Citation**

[*Identification of item*], Leonard Laton Collection of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone Photographs (GLC 62), The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library.

### **Copyright and Literary Rights**

No information.

### **Conservation Note**

All items were placed in acid-free folders and boxes.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTE**

In July 2009, the Hormel Center received an anonymous donation of 20 black and white photographs and a small book titled *Rhythm* (Brooklyn, NY: 1935). The photographs and book feature studies of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone, a physique model and dancer.

The letter accompanying the donation explained that Leonard Laton once owned the book and photographs and gave them to the donor for safe-keeping in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the donor lost track of Laton. Now, decades later, the donor sent the material to the Hormel Center in Laton's name. The donor describes Laton as a German Jewish gay man who "escaped the Nazi holocaust, fled to Canada and then established citizenship in the United States. He was a gentle, intelligent, cultured person, interested in photography, and nature particularly horticulture."

Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone (1905- ) was a model, gym owner, and dancer. He was born in the United States to Ignazio (Charles) Sansone and Paolina (Pauline) Giardina, both immigrants from Sicily. Other family and friends who immigrated included Angelo Siciliano who became well known as Charles Atlas, body builder, circus strongman, and mail-order entrepreneur. Sansone's early life included dancing with Desha and other modern dance troupes, modeling for several artists, and some stage and film acting.

A protégé of Charles Atlas, Sansone was a much sought-after model for photographers and artists during the late 1920s and 1930s. He worked extensively with Edwin Townsend, Achille Volpe and, in later years, worked some with Lon of New York. Townsend and Sansone collaborated on *Modern Classics* (1929) and *Rhythm* (1935). The introduction to *Rhythm* is by the sculptor Arthur Lee and includes photographs of Lee's bronze sculpture of Sansone.

Later Sansone became a gym owner in New York. He married Rita and had two children, Paulina and Anthony, Jr. For his complete biography, see John Massey's *American Adonis: Tony Sansone, the first male physique icon* (New York: Universe, 2004). Massey's book places Sansone within the context of the burgeoning physical culture of the early 20th century.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

This collection contains 20 black and white photographs of Tony Sansone and the book *Rhythm*. Most of the photographs are nude studies and 10 images are reprinted in *Rhythm*. One photo is inscribed: "For Leonhard Laton, with every friendly wish, Tony Sansone, 1955."

### **ARRANGEMENT NOTE**

There are two folders; one contains photographs, the other contains the book.

CONTAINER LIST

**Folder**

**Number   Title**

1            20 black and white photographic prints of Tony Sansone.

Prints numbered:

114 (*Rhythm* p.2, *American Adonis* p.19) [Edwin Townsend, photographer]  
127  
209  
242 (*Rhythm* p.20)  
253  
258 (*Rhythm* p.21, *American Adonis* p.26) [Edwin Townsend, photographer]  
277 (*Rhythm* p.38)  
279 (*Rhythm* p.29)  
288 (*Rhythm* p.45, *American Adonis* p.31) [Edwin Townsend, photographer]  
291 (*Rhythm* p.11)  
296 (*Rhythm* p.44)  
329 (*Rhythm* p.27)  
338 (*Rhythm* p.31)  
357 (*American Adonis* p.16) [Edwin Townsend, photographer]  
362  
377  
378  
380  
387  
390

2            Sansone, Anthony J. *Rhythm* (Brooklyn, New York: Anthony J. Sansone, 1935). 49 p.  
Black and white photographs of Sansone posing and sculptures for which he  
posed. Book also includes some text.