



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Joseph Attles papers

1930-1989

Sc MG 458

Compiled by Andre Elizee and Diana Lachatanere, 1992. Finding aid edited and adapted to digital form by Kay Menick in 2017.

Summary

Creator: Attles, Joseph

Title: Joseph Attles papers

Date: 1930-1989

Size: .67 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated by John Brooks.

Abstract: Joseph Attles (1903-1991) was a singer and dancer whose career spanned six decades. The bulk of his collection consists of playscripts for shows that Attles appeared in, including *Bubbling Brown Sugar* by Lofton Mitchell, *C & W*, *John Henry*, *Jericho-Jim Crow*, *Prodigal Son*, *Troupers*, and *Do Lord Remember Me* by James de Jongh. The collection also includes: correspondence, both professional and personal; contracts and financial documents; programs of productions Attles appeared in; lyrics; and clippings related to both himself and other show business personalities.

Conditions Governing Access:

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Preferred citation: [Item], Joseph Attles papers, Sc MG 458, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

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Creator History

Joseph Attles (1903-1991) was an actor, singer and dancer, whose career spanned six decades. Born

and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, Attles attended Avery Institute. He moved to NYC during the 1920s and shortly thereafter made his Broadway debut in *Blackbirds of 1928*, a popular musical revue that later went on tour in Europe. Attles is best known for his role of Sportin' Life in the 1950s revival of *Porgy and Bess* (he was Cab Calloway's understudy and after two years took on the role) and for his role in the 1975 production of *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. In addition, Attles appeared in *La Belle Helene*, *The Last of Mrs. Lincoln*, *Jericho-Jim Crow*, *Kwamina*, *Tambourines to Glory*, *Prodigal Son*, *Black Girl*, and *Day of Absence*. He also performed in nightclubs, including the Plantation Club in Harlem (1930s), Bricktop's (1950s), and the Copacabana (1960s), and appeared in films and television (1960s and 1970s). During the 1930s-50s, when not working on the stage, Attles was a dining car waiter on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American actors
African American dancers
African American entertainers
African American singers
African American theater
African Americans in the performing arts

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scrapbooks
Scripts

Names

Calloway, Cab, 1907-1994
De Jongh, James

Container List

Letters

- b. 1 f. 1 Professional 1963-1989
- b. 1 f. 2 Personal 1936, 1954, 1976-1989
- b. 1 f. 3 Contracts, Professional Associations Dues Books 1930-1940
- b. 1 f. 4 Miscellaneous
- b. 1 f. 5 Programs
- b. 1 f. 6 Radio Programs/Scripts
- b. 1 f. 7 Lyrics
- b. 1 f. 8 Lyrics - Joe Tinker Lewis Playscripts
- b. 1 f. 9-10 Bubbling Brown Sugar by Lofton Mitchell
- b. 1 f. 11 C & W by J. Jennings
- b. 1 f. 12 Charles Nuckolls
- b. 1 f. 13 Come on Home by Jobe Huntley
- b. 1 f. 14 Do Lord Remember Me by James de Jongh
- b. 1 f. 15 Dora by G. Watkins/Synopsis of Cages
- b. 1 f. 16 Emperor Jones/Harlem Bridge
- b. 1 f. 17 Fly Baby Fly by J.S. Blake
- b. 1 f. 18 The Four Children of Israel by Carlo Martignoni
- b. 1 f. 19 Freedom Train by M. Gordon
- b. 1 f. 20 Get on Board
- b. 1 f. 21 Helen/John Henry/Picking a Plot/We's Risin'
- b. 1 f. 22 Jericho-Jim Crow by Langston Hughes
- b. 2 f. 1 Our Street by Ted Shine
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Prodigal Son by Langston Hughes
- b. 2 f. 4 Sojourner Truth by G. Watkins
- b. 2 f. 5 Speak Easy by Victory Lane
- b. 2 f. 6 Troupers (1980)
- b. 2 f. 7 Winter Love by W. St. John
- b. 2 f. 8 Fragments, Untitled
- b. 2 f. 9 Certificates
- b. 2 f. 10 Clippings 1930s-1980s