



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Helen Haiman Joseph papers**

1907-1959

\*T-Mss 2013-145

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Joseph, Helen Haiman

**Title:** Helen Haiman Joseph papers

**Date:** 1907-1959

**Size:** .4 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Unknown.

**Abstract:** Helen Haiman Joseph (1888-1978) was a puppeteer who specialized in marionettes. The collection, dated from 1907 to 1959, focuses on Joseph's professional career as a master puppeteer and her family life. The files hold correspondence, photographs, and writings.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

## Creator History

Helen Haiman (1888-1978) was born in Atlanta, Georgia to Elias and Frances Lowenthan Haiman. Haiman, mostly raised in Cleveland, Ohio, attended the College for Women of Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University). After her graduation in 1910, she began an acting career with minor roles at the Cleveland Playhouse. The director suggested that she join their marionette troupe. This action began her new career as a puppeteer of marionettes. For the next ten years, Haiman would also produce and direct plays at the Playhouse.

In 1918, she married Ernest A. Joseph. After his death one year later, Helen Joseph decided to tour Europe with her daughters. This gave her the opportunity to continue to develop as a professional puppeteer. Prior to her departure for Europe, Joseph received a second B.A. from Vassar College (1921).

In 1924, Joseph returned to Cleveland and founded the Pinocchio Players who performed in schools, hospitals and other venues. In 1938, she was appointed director of puppet productions in Cain Park.

The outbreak of World War II temporarily ended her puppetry career because many of the puppeteers were drafted for military service. During the war, Joseph held many jobs. When peacetime returned, she resumed her career as a highly respected puppeteer touring extensively with her troupe.

Joseph published three books on puppetry: *A Book of Marionettes* (1920), *Ali Baba and Other Plays for Puppets* (1927) and *Little Mr. Clown* (1932). Her other writings include an entry on marionettes for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and an article for *Vassar Quarterly* entitled "The World of Puppets" (1935).

Joseph died in 1978. She was survived by her daughters Anne (Joseph) van Biema and Ernestine "Ernie" (Joseph) Eden, and a grandson.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The papers, dated from 1907 to 1959, document the personal life and the professional career of Helen Haiman Joseph (1888-1978), a master puppeteer of marionettes. The files hold correspondence, photographs, and writings.

The correspondence is letters to Joseph from family, friends and business associates. Many of the letters praised Joseph's first publication *A Book of Marionettes* (1920). Noted correspondents were Ernest Bloch, the Swiss-American composer; Ivo Duhonny, the German graphic artist and puppeteer; and Genevieve Taggard, American poet (B.W. Huebsch Publisher).

The photographs are mostly black and white images of Joseph and her family. A few are in color.

Joseph's writings are a partial autobiography, poems and plays. This unfinished autobiography and related notes consist of a recounting of her family history and family life in Atlanta, Georgia and Cleveland, Ohio. Regrettably, the autobiography did not develop to the stage of writing about her love of puppetry. The remaining writings are poetry on a variety of whimsical topics and plays (complete and partial) for puppetry productions.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged by format: Correspondence, Photographs and Writings

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Photographs  
Poems

### **Subjects**

Marionettes  
Puppets

### **Occupations**

Puppeteers

**Names**

Joseph, Ernest

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-3 Correspondence 1907-1959
- Photographs
- b. 1 f. 4 Joseph, Anne and Ernestine
- b. 1 f. 5-6 Joseph, Ernest
- b. 1 f. 7-11 Joseph, Helen Haiman
- b. 1 f. 12-13 Unidentified Individuals
- Writings
- b. 1 f. 14 Incomplete Autobiography
- b. 1 f. 15-16 Notes for Autobiography
- Plays
- b. 1 f. 17 *The Dutchess. A Story of Betty and her Big Black Cat*
- b. 1 f. 18 *Echoes Out of Order*
- b. 1 f. 19 *Edouard*
- b. 1 f. 20 *Faust*
- b. 1 f. 21 *The Fly and I*
- b. 1 f. 22 *Hope in the Sun*
- b. 1 f. 23 *Jerry and Joey*
- b. 1 f. 24 *Katch and Her Devil*
- b. 1 f. 25 *The Patches of Harliquin (sic)*
- b. 1 f. 26 *Polka Dot Marionette*
- b. 1 f. 27 Incomplete Plays
- b. 1 f. 28 Poems to Her Husband Ernest A. Joseph
- b. 1 f. 29 Assorted Poems