



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Ida Benfey Judd papers**

1870-1952

\*T-Mss 2012-055

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Judd, Ida Benfey

**Title:** Ida Benfey Judd papers

**Date:** 1870-1952

**Size:** 2.2 linear feet (5 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

**Source:** Unknown.

**Abstract:** Ida Benfey Judd (circa 1859-1952) was an American storyteller and founding president of the Mark Twain Association. The collection dates from 1870 to 1952 and contains correspondence, programs, writings, and other materials that relate to her career as a storyteller, as founder of the Mark Twain Association, and as a teacher of elocution.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:  
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Creator History

Ida Benfey Judd (circa 1859-1952) was an American storyteller and founding president of the Mark Twain Association. She began studying elocution as a child under Allen Griffith, professor of Elocution at the State Normal School in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Judd began reading professionally upon her graduation from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1883. While in California, she also taught

elocution classes.

As a storyteller, Judd's repertory included Bible stories, poetry, Chinese folklore, and classic literature. She frequently read from works by George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, Edwin Markham, Mark Twain, and Oscar Wilde. Her recitals were held in drawing rooms of prominent socialites, Chautauqua assemblies, colleges, high schools, and theaters. In New York City, she frequently performed at the Little Theatre, The Waldorf-Astoria, and Steinway Hall on West 57th Street. Among her most well-received performances was her recitation of The Book of Job at the Carnegie Lyceum in 1899.

Beginning in the 1930s, Judd performed under the auspices of Great Literature Across the Footlights, an organization that she founded under the sponsorship of Felix Adler, Edwin Markham, Ida M. Tarbell, Angelo Patri, and William Lyon Phelps. Great Literature Across the Footlights also held an annual Edwin Markham poetry contest.

In 1926, Judd formed The Mark Twain Association. The organization's mission was to commemorate the literary contributions of Mark Twain and to promote the study and appreciation of humor. Among the association's primary activities were the proposed establishment of the Mark Twain Chair of Literature at the University of California, and an annual contest for the ten best quotations from Mark Twain's books.

Ida Judd performed and worked with the Mark Twain Association until about 1950. She died in Ossining, New York in 1952.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Ida Benfey Judd papers date from 1870 to 1952 and contain correspondence, programs, writings, and other materials relating her work as a storyteller, as founder of the Mark Twain Association, and as a teacher of elocution. The collection is arranged by subject or format.

Correspondence is both personal and professional in nature. Most of the letters from the 1890s are fan letters, and most letters from 1950 to 1952 are personal correspondence with friends and family. The majority of the correspondence relates to the Mark Twain Association, specifically the Mark Twain quotation contests that she conducted, and the proposed establishment of the Mark Twain Chair of Literature. Letters from Judd's close friend, writer Haryot Holt Dey, date from the 1920s to the 1930s and discuss literature and storytelling. One letter from Dey contains an annotated script for her play *The Chauffer and the Lady*. Letters from Judd's cousin, Arnold Castle, detail his life as a sea captain for the Luckenbach Steamship Company during the 1940s and 1950s.

Mark Twain Association files contain press releases, circular letters, and announcements for meetings, contests, and other events arranged by the organization. Submissions to contests, contest results, mission statements, and other essays pertaining to the organization are also present.

Quotations and Writings files contain poems, stories, plays, and quotations gathered or transcribed by Judd for her storytelling, teaching, and studying. Some of the writings may have been sent to her by friends or for contests for the Mark Twain Association or Great Literature Across the Footlights. The writings are full versions, excerpts, and annotated copies. Among the writers of the works are Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Ken Nikaido, Reverend I.J. Bartlett, Martha Martin, Thomas Augustine Daly, Celia Baldwin, Florence Hamilton, and O.C.A. Child. Among the writings is an edited typescript by Ida M. Tarbell entitled *Life of Lincoln*.

Storytelling files contain programs for Judd's performances, primarily between 1890 and 1900; as well as materials pertaining to Great Literature Across the Footlights, such as programs, announcements, and essays on the organization. Also present are writings contributed to the Third International Prize for Edwin Markham, consisting of poetry, prose, or essays about the poet Edwin Markham. Poems and essays submitted by Helen Carson Janssen, Haryot Holt Day, Melvin Beaunorus Tolson, and Elizabeth Hanly Danforth are included.

There is a small amount of material relating to Judd's study and teaching of elocution. Documents consist of foot and gesture charts, class descriptions, notes, and essays and quotations submitted to Judd by students.

The collection also contains articles, clippings, one scrapbook, photographs, and programs and brochures for events and recitals that Judd attended. The scrapbook documents Judd's storytelling from 1875 to 1905 and contains clippings, programs, and notes regarding her recitals. Articles and news clippings provide insight into Judd's professional activities and interests from the 1890s through the 1940s.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged by format or subject.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Excerpts  
Poems  
Programs (documents)  
Quotations (texts)  
Transcripts

### **Subjects**

Storytelling -- United States

### **Occupations**

Women storytellers

### **Names**

Markham, Edwin, 1852-1940  
Twain, Mark, 1835-1910 -- Study and teaching

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-3 Articles and Clippings 1891-1944
  - o. 1 Articles and Clippings 1923  
Sunshine Bulletin (The International Sunshine Society).  
  
LPA C12 Dwr #32.
- b. 1 f. 4-8 Correspondence 1891-1952
- b. 2 f. 1-2 Correspondence 1933-1950
  - b. 2 f. 3 Elocution and Teaching 1881-1940
- b. 2 f. 4-8 Mark Twain Association 1929-1949
  - o. 1 Mark Twain Association 1938, 1942
- b. 3 f. 1 Miscellaneous 1870-1949
- b. 3 f. 2 Photographs Circa 1886-1940
  - o. 1 Photographs circa 1940
- b. 3 f. 3 Programs and Brochures 1914-1947  
Recitals and shows that Judd attended.
  
- b. 3 f. 4-8 Quotations and Writings 1880-1947
- b. 4 f. 1-6 Quotations and Writings circa 1920-1940
  - b. 5 f. 1 Scrapbook 1875-1905
- b. 5 f. 2-5 Storytelling 1890-1939