



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

Guide to the

Marie Joe Browne collection

1868-1999

Sc MG 685

Summary

Creator: Browne, Marie Joe, 1902-1999

Title: Marie Joe Browne collection

Date: 1868-1999

Size: 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Gift of Marie Joe Browne Estate, April 2000.

Abstract: Marie Joe Browne (1902-1999) was an African American dramatic artist, school secretary, and a community volunteer. This collection contains a diversity of materials which document Browne's personal and professional life.

Preferred citation: [Item], Marie Joe Browne collection, Sc MG 685, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by L. J. Sewell-Williams, July 2001.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: books and periodicals

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio material. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

Marie Joe Browne (1902-1999) was an African American dramatic artist, school secretary, and community volunteer. Browne was born in Richmond, Virginia, to Joe and Lizz Browne. She lived most of her life in Boston, Massachusetts, and relocated to St. Mary's County, Maryland, in 1945, remaining

there until her death.

Browne received her dramatic training from Boston's Helen Boll's Dramatic Studio. At age 24, she made her debut as a monologist and received a very favorable response. During her career she recited the works of established "New Negro" writers and poets, including Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and Countee Cullen. Browne's training prepared her to eventually perform with the Boston Players, an all Black theatrical troupe supported by the Boston Urban League. She performed with the troupe for six years, and while with them, she had roles in *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1933-1934) by Julia Peterkin, and *Abraham's Bosom* (1930) by Paul Green, among other plays. During the mid-1930s and 1940s, Browne toured various historically Black colleges performing monologues.

In 1945, Browne moved to St. Mary's County, Maryland, to work with the USO teaching home economics during World War II. After the war ended, Jarboesville School, where she taught, hired her as the school secretary. In 1954, she was employed by the Spring Ridge Middle School. She retired from there in 1974, at age 72.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains a diversity of materials which document Browne's personal and professional life. The Personal papers include biographical materials consisting of her birth certificate, last will and testament, and medical records, as well as letters from artistic friends Jester Hairston (actor), Langston Hughes (poet), James Weldon Johnson (educator and poet), and Lois Mailou Jones (visual artist). The Family papers include correspondence, military records (1916-1940), and death certificates. The documents making up her professional papers primarily reflect her artistic career. Files include correspondence; writings such as poems, short stories, and plays in which she performed (many of which were sent to her by the artists); and printed materials such as programs and clippings (mainly featuring the Boston Players and Marie Joe Browne's solo performances). There are also awards and certificates that principally document Browne's service to St. Mary's County school system.

Arrangement: Arranged into 3 series: I. Personal; II. Family; and III. Professional.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Actresses -- United States
Dramatists -- United States
Poetry -- United States
Programs -- United States

Subjects

African American actresses
African American dramatists
African American women
African American women entertainers
Voluntarism -- United States
Volunteer workers in education

Names

Browne, Marie Joe, 1902-1999

Hairston, Jester, 1901-2000
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967
Johnson, James Weldon, 1871-1938
Jones, Lois Mailou

Container List

Personal papers 1902-1999

Biographical

- b. 1 f. 1 Birth certificates and related correspondence 1902-1964
- b. 1 f. 2 Last will and testament and other legal documents 1997
- Educational records
- b. 1 f. 3 School course curriculum, correspondence, and transcripts 1928-1964
- b. 1 f. 4 Class notes and exams 1955-1956
- b. 1 f. 5 Medical records 1984-1987
- b. 1 f. 6 Career synopsis
- b. 1 f. 7 Diaries 1938-1955
- b. 1 f. 8 Spring Ridge Middle School yearbook 1996

Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 9 General 1934-1999
- b. 1 f. 10 Hairston, Jester 1989-1993
- b. 1 f. 11 Hughes, Langston 1936
- b. 1 f. 12 Johnson, James Weldon 1934-1937
- b. 1 f. 13 Jones, Lois Mailou 1983-1991
- b. 1 f. 14 Cards 1982-1999
- b. 1 f. 15 Journal of drafted letters 1943
- b. 2 f. 1 Address books 1984-1994
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Celebrations 1992-1996
Includes Browne's 90th and 94th birthdays.

Family papers ca. 1868-1959

- b. 2 f. 4 Genealogy ca. 1868
- b. 2 f. 5 Correspondence 1885-1959
- Cowen, Walter Scott
- b. 2 f. 6 Military records 1916-1940
- b. 2 f. 7 Death certificates and letters 1932
- Cowan, Susan
- b. 2 f. 8 Red Circle stores stocks 1942
- b. 2 f. 9 Will

Professional 1930-1999

- b. 2 f. 10 Correspondence 1936-1990
- b. 2 f. 11 Navy Civilian Club membership 1951
- b. 2 f. 12 Identification and membership cards 1974-1994

Writing

- b. 2 f. 13 Dramatic instruction 1931
- b. 2 f. 14 Poems (includes journals) 1944-1981
- b. 3 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 2 Manuscript music

Professional (cont.)

Printed matter

Programs

b. 3 f. 3 Browne, Marie Joe 1933-1970

b. 3 f. 4 Boston Players 1930-1933

b. 3 f. 5 General 1948-1987

Clippings

b. 3 f. 6 Browne, Marie Joe 1934-1995

b. 3 f. 7 Boston Players 1930-1933

b. 3 f. 8 General 1933-1999

b. 3 f. 9 Brochures, flyers, and invitations 1935-1990

b. 3 f. 10 Awards, certificates, and citations 1963-1995

b. 3 f. 11 Miscellaneous

Includes stage directions and itinerary.