

# Guide to the Josephine Baker Collection

JWJ MSS 108



by Beinecke staff

January 2014

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** JWJ MSS 108

**CREATOR:** Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975

**TITLE:** Josephine Baker Collection

**DATES:** 1929–1968

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4.5 linear feet (12 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** In English and French.

**SUMMARY:** The Josephine Baker Collection is comprised of correspondence, photographs, personal papers, and printed material documenting the life and career of Josephine Baker between 1929 and 1968.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bakerj>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bakerj>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Carol Lipton on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, Eugene G. O'Neill Memorial Fund, and James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts & Letters Fund, 1995.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

The Josephine Baker Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

Josephine Baker Collection. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing in 2014, including rehousing and minimal organization.

The collection was arranged into several notebooks prior to its acquisition by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This arrangement has been left as is. Researchers should note that material within each notebook overlaps with/or relates to material found in other notebooks. For instance, correspondence can be found in all notebooks. In order to locate all relevant material within this collection, researchers will need to consult each notebook described in the Collection Contents section. Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

This collection includes materials previously identified by the following call number: Uncat JWJ MS 56.

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## Josephine Baker (1906-1975)

Josephine Baker (1906-1975), African-American dancer, singer, actress, and civil rights activist.

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## Scope and Contents

The Josephine Baker Collection is comprised of correspondence, photographs, personal papers, and printed material documenting the life and career of Josephine Baker between 1929 and 1968.

Evidence of Baker's career as a performer can be found in her correspondence with managers and producers, clippings from her performances, and pamphlets and brochures from concerts. There is correspondence and printed material regarding her appearances in Argentina in 1947 and 1952 and in Canada in 1960. The collection also includes material relating to Baker's involvement in the French Resistance during the second World War as seen in a decree for the Medal of the Resistance.

Correspondence with family members, financial records, and other documents provide insight into Baker's personal life, including her financial affairs and her home in France, Château des Milandes.

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## Collection Contents

b. 1	Notebook I <i>5 Folders</i>  Contains Baker's outgoing letters addressed to family and friends (including Christine Scotto and Jo Bouillon). Topics include Château des Milandes.	1940–1960
b. 2	<a href="#">Notebook II</a> <i>8 Folders</i>  Contains accounts relating to Château des Milandes, a typed document concerning "Mes raisons et conditionnes pour laisser ma place aux Milandes a Jo Bouillon (car j'y suis force)," notes for a press conference regarding Château des Milandes in Cologne, notes for a radio program, notes and correspondence regarding the U.S. government's refusal to renew her visa, and a note paraphrasing a letter from John F. Kennedy. The notebook also includes a letter from Jacques de Visme (March 29, 1968).	1962–1968
b. 3	Notebook III <i>3 Folders</i>  Contains copies of Baker's outgoing letters relating to her career as well as correspondence from and concerning her children.	1965–1968
b. 4	<a href="#">Notebook IV</a> <i>5 Folders</i>  Contains correspondence, photographs, artwork, documents and printed material. Correspondence includes a note from Hadj Thami el Glaoui and congratulatory letters from Mistinguett, Jacques Soustelle, Maurice Escande, and others. Photographs spanning Baker's career can also be found in the notebook in addition to original artwork relating to "Baker Mask/Baker Buste" products. Documents consist of a contract from Lloyd's insurance (1930), contract from the Ministère du Travail (1934), decree for Médaille de la Résistance (October 8, 1946), and Insigne des commandos d'Afrique (March 16, 1945). Printed material is comprised of brochures, pamphlets, and handbills, such as a brochure about Peron dedicated to Baker, brochures about Château des Milandes, and material relating to Baker's career.	1929–1967
b. 5	<a href="#">Notebook V</a> <i>6 Folders</i>  Contains letters and documents. Correspondence includes letters with Vienna sponsors concerning performances, a letter from Marcel Achille, several telegrams dating from 1946 to 1967, and copies of outgoing correspondence. Documents include bills and other material relating to Château des Milandes.	1946–1953
b. 6	Notebook VI <i>4 Folders</i>  Contains contracts with performers (including Pepito Abatino), correspondence with French and American managers (Larry Potter, E. Herzog, H. Margot, and Ben Waller), and letters and documents relating to Baker's financial affairs with I.M.E.F. Bank.	1934–1963

b. 7	<a href="#">Notebook VII</a> <i>7 Folders</i> Contains a press book (1952) and printed material about Baker, including newspaper clippings and a copy of <i>Ebony Magazine</i> (May 1951) featuring Baker on the cover. Also stored in: Oversize box 13	1947–1952
b. 8	<a href="#">Notebook VIII</a> <i>4 Folders</i> Contains a press book with clippings dating from November 20 to December 11, 1952.	1952–1952
b. 9	Notebook IX <i>4 Folders</i> Contains a press book covering the end of Baker’s tour in Argentina (1952) and arrest in Canada (1960).	1952–1960
b. 10	Notebook X <i>5 Folders</i> Contains a press book and financial records for Baker’s tour in Argentina.	1947
b. 11	Notebook XI <i>4 Folders</i> Contains a contract and financial records pertaining to Baker’s tour in Argentina.	1947
b. 12	Oversize <i>2 Folders</i> Contains a copy of <i>Ebony</i> (May 1951) and a certificate awarding Baker the Brotherhood Award (1960).	

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

African American civil rights workers  
African American entertainers -- 20th Century  
Dancers -- United States -- Archives  
Singers -- United States  
World War, 1939-1945 -- Underground  
movements -- France

### **Genres / Formats**

Photographic prints -- United States -- 20th  
Century  
Photographs -- United States -- 20th Century

### **Occupations**

Dancers -- France -- 20th Century  
Dancers -- United States -- 20th Century  
Singers -- France -- 20th Century  
Singers -- United States -- 20th Century

### **Names**

Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975

### **Acquired From**

Carol Lipton