Henry Hurford Janes:
An Inventory of His Collection of Edith Evans at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Janes, Henry Hurford
Title: Henry Hurford Janes Collection of Edith Evans
Dates: 1891-1989 (bulk 1940-1976)
Extent: 8 document boxes, 1 oversize box (osb) (3.36 linear feet), 1 oversize folder (osf)
Abstract: The Henry Hurford Janes Collection of Edith Evans consists of correspondence, address and appointment books, articles and clippings, biographical information, a diary, family papers, performance texts, photographs, and programs and promotional materials belonging to English actress Edith Evans. Material belonging to English writer Henry Hurford Janes includes research material, legal documents, correspondence, articles and clippings, auction catalogues, personal papers, photographs, programs, subject files, and works by Janes and others.
Call Number: Performing Arts Collection PA-0045
Language: English
Access: Open for research.

Administrative Information

Acquisition: Purchase, 1989 (R11647)
Processed by: Daniela Lozano, 2016
Repository: The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center
Biographical Sketch

English actress Edith Evans was born February 8, 1888 in Pimlico, London to Edward Evans and Caroline Ellen Foster. She began attending drama classes and had her first stage appearance in 1910 as Viola in Twelfth Night with the amateur performing group, the Streatham Shakespeare Players. In 1912, she was spotted by producer William Poel who would go on to cast her in several roles. She later toured with Ellen Terry and joined the Old Vic Company for the 1925-1926 season where one of her roles included the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet, one of her most celebrated roles which she played in three additional productions later in her life. Other notable performances in her stage and film career include roles in The Way of the World (1924), The Nun's Story (1959), The Chalk Garden (1964), The Whisperers (1967), and The Importance of Being Earnest, in which she played her most famous role, Lady Bracknell, on stage in 1939 and on film in 1952. Evans was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 1946. She died on October 14, 1976 at the age of 88.

Henry "Harry" Hurford Janes was born in 1909 in Chelsea, England. He was a secretary and aspiring writer and his first article was published at the age of 20. At the start of World War II in 1939, he joined the British Expeditionary Force and was eventually promoted to personal assistant to Basil Dean, the director of the Entertainments National Service (ENSA), in 1943. After the war, Janes worked as a freelance writer, writing articles for publications such as the Evening News, as well as plays and short stories. He also wrote commissioned industrial biographies and booklets on historical events.

Janes and Evans met in 1941 when she joined ENSA. They became close friends, especially in Evans’ later years. Janes collected notes and stories, as well as documents and correspondence given to him by Evans, and planned to write her biography, though she maintained that no biography of her should be published while she was alive. Before her death, Evans appointed Bryan Forbes as her literary executor and biographer resulting in a legal dispute between Forbes and Janes over Evans’ papers in Janes’ possession. Janes’ biography of Evans was never completed.

Sources:

In addition to material found in the collection, the following sources were used:


Scope and Contents
The Henry Hurford Janes Collection of Edith Evans consists of correspondence, address and appointment books, articles and clippings, biographical information, a diary, family papers, performance texts, photographs, and programs and promotional materials belonging to English actress Edith Evans. Material in the collection belonging to English writer Henry Hurford Janes includes research material, legal documents, correspondence, articles and clippings, auction catalogues, personal papers, photographs, programs, subject files, and works by Janes and others. The papers are organized into two series: I. Edith Evans Papers, 1905-1977, undated; and II. Henry Hurford Janes Papers, 1891-1989, undated.

As received at the Ransom Center, the bulk of the material lacked original order, though some correspondence was sorted into groups. There is occasional overlap between Evans' material and Janes' material. Many of the same correspondents are filed in more than one category throughout the collection. A list of correspondents represented in the collection is provided in this guide’s Index of Correspondents.

Series I. Edith Evans Papers consists of four document boxes of material originally belonging to Edith Evans. It is arranged into two subseries: A. Correspondence, 1935-1977, undated; and B. Personal and Career Related, 1905-1977, undated.

Subseries A. Correspondence consists of personal and professional correspondence to and from Evans. Some of the letters were grouped and labeled, such as 'good letters to her,' 'misc. personal letters,' and 'theater letters,' and those groupings have been retained; however, overlap between the groups does exist and the folder labels are not always indicative of folder contents. The rest of the correspondence is arranged chronologically. Within each folder, the letters are arranged alphabetically, except in cases where letters were paper-clipped or housed together, in which case they were kept together in their original order in a paper file and filed at the end. Letters for which a last name could not be identified or which lacked a last name are filed at the end, followed by those with illegible signatures and unidentified letters.

Correspondence located in the 'good letters to her' file include fan mail and a get-well letter from British author and playwright, Enid Bagnold; several letters from English actor, John Gielgud, including one in which he expresses excitement about acting with Evans in a production of Henry VIII; and a letter from Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma, thanking her for entertaining the troops during World War II. Additional correspondents in this file include American actress, Katharine Cornell, and English actor and writer, Peter Ustinov. Also found in this folder is a list containing dates, menus, and guests at dinner parties, perhaps hosted by Evans, from 1949 to 1952.

'Misc. personal letters' contains letters from family, friends, and acquaintances from 1945 to 1971. Notable correspondents found here include George Devine, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Glen Byam Shaw, and Googie Withers. This folder also includes fan mail, letters related to financial matters, correspondence from her lawyers regarding a codicil to her will, and several get-well cards sent to Evans when she was in the hospital.

The 'Miscellaneous Events' group contains correspondence from 1945 to 1971 though some items are not necessarily event-related such as get-well letters and clippings. A folder labeled 'first night telegrams and cards' was filed within this group and consists of telegrams, cards, and letters expressing best wishes to Evans on the first night of a performance. Senders include Bronson Albery, Norman Ayrton, Hugh Beaumont, Lally
Bowers, Sir Rayne Kruger, Iain Paul, Michael Redgrave, Francis Rose, and Arnold Weissberger. Greeting cards from 1968 to 1971 were also included in this file.

'Theater letters' consists of requests for appearances, thank you letters, and fan mail from the public as well as from others in the theater business. Some of the correspondents found in this file are Hugh Beaumont, Michael Benthall, Lady Georgina Coleridge, and Bernard Miles. It also includes letters from the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This file also contains a few outgoing letters throughout.

The Christmas cards and postcards date from 1957 to 1971. Some of the cards are from people in the theater business; however, many are signed with first names only and could not be identified.

The chronological files of correspondence range from 1936 to 1971. They are primarily business and theatre related but also include some personal letters, fan mail, invitations, and requests from publishers for Evans to write an autobiography. There are a few outgoing letters throughout. Notable correspondents include fashion designer Hardy Amies, Cecil Beaton, Alec Guinness, and filmmaker Thorold Dickinson. The correspondence from 1960 includes several letters of condolence sent to Evans after the death of her close friend, Judith Wilson. A small group of letters from 1944 to 1954 was originally located in an envelope addressed to Evans from Joseph Reed, though nothing from that sender was found in the envelope. It includes a letter dated 1944 from Alec Guinness (signed with his birth name, Cuffe) in which he expresses his admiration for Evans, his longing for the theatre after being away during the war, and his recently completed adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

A small group of outgoing letters, some photocopied, from 1935 to 1975 are arranged chronologically. The bulk of these letters are typed carbons, but a few handwritten letters and letter drafts are also present and include a photocopy of a letter Evans wrote to her parents after the death of her husband in 1935.

Subseries B. Personal and Career Related consists of two undated address books, two appointment books from 1955 and 1956, and various other personal and career related papers. It is arranged alphabetically by name or topic.

A large amount of clippings from 1925 to 1977 covers Evans’ professional life beginning with articles on her early performances to reviews of her last appearance on stage in *Edith Evans and Friends* in 1974. These files also contain clippings announcing Evans’ surprise marriage to Guy Booth in 1925, announcements of her death and obituaries, and reviews of two books published shortly after her death, her biography and a memoir by her long-time former secretary.

The biographical information in this subseries was compiled for *Who’s Who in the Theatre* for 1952 and 1955. It includes lists of Evans’ performances as well as awards and honors.

A small diary from 1945 documents Evans’ daily activities beginning in March that year. Entries referencing who she dined with on that day are common and people mentioned include Alec Guinness, Glen Byam Shaw, and Googie Withers.
Family papers consist of certified copies of Evans’ birth certificate, and the birth and death certificates of her older brother who died at the age of four. Also included is a small amount of her father’s correspondence—a letter he wrote to Evans soon after the death of her mother, and a photocopy of a letter he received from an acquaintance in 1913. A photocopy of Evans’ Indenture of Apprentice to Milliner in 1903 is also in this file.

Performance texts include partial scripts of several Shakespeare plays for a production, "A Homage to Shakespeare," and several poems and other partial scripts, some unidentified. Some of the typescripts include handwritten notes.

The photographs of Evans range from 1936 to 1972 and are made up of professional as well as personal photographs depicting Evans in candid moments as well as on stage.

The programs and promotional materials in this subseries are for productions and readings in which she participated.

The organizations with which Evans was involved represented in the Theatrical Organizations files are the London Theatre Council, the Westminster Society, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Minutes from meetings of the Central School of Speech and Drama are also included here.

Series II. Henry Hurford Janes Papers consists of four boxes of material belonging to Janes and is divided into three subseries: A. Evans Biography, 1943-1987, undated; B. Correspondence, 1928-1987, undated; and C. Personal and Career Related, 1891-1989, undated.

Subseries A. Evans Biography contains material about Edith Evans collected by Janes in preparation for writing his biography about Evans. The file 'E.E. Important' is made up of research material, handwritten and typed notes and note fragments, and correspondence, some of which is unrelated to Evans. Some outgoing letters from Janes to Evans are included, as well as several empty envelopes addressed to Janes possibly from Evans.

The correspondence regarding Evans consists of incoming letters, and some outgoing, from 1965 to 1978, and includes letters from Evans’ lawyer to Janes about her lease and furniture when she was moving out of her home. Outgoing letters to Evans are chiefly typed carbon copies beginning in 1943 to 1976. The evolution of their relationship from acquaintance to friendship is evident in these letters.

Janes’ diary notes contain detailed accounts written by Janes describing his encounters with Evans from 1958 to 1970, including holidays which she spent with him and his wife, Peggy, at their home, their visits to Evans’ home, their attendance at her performances, and various personal tasks which Janes took care of for her when her health declined. A transcript of a conversation which Janes recorded between himself, Peggy, and Peggy’s daughter regarding Evans is included, as well as preliminary drafts of an introduction to his Evans biography.

The folder labeled 'Trial' contains material related to a legal dispute between Janes and Bryan Forbes, Evans’ biographer and literary executor. It includes a copy of Evans’ will, a statement written by Janes detailing the background of his friendship with Evans, correspondence primarily from Janes to Evans, but also between Janes and Forbes, and their respective lawyers. Letters and other notes which Janes had compiled for use as
evidence in the trial with Forbes are also included here.

Writings about Evans include short handwritten poems and a typescript of an article written by Janes.

Subseries B. Correspondence contains letters to and from Janes and consists of both personal and professional correspondence. The original order of 'personal,' 'stars,' and 'theatre' groupings of letters were retained. The rest of the letters are arranged chronologically. All of the letters are arranged alphabetically within each folder.

Personal letters range from 1943 to 1981 and include letters from friends and family, letters dealing with matters related to Janes’ house and church, and condolences sent to him after the death of his wife. Some outgoing letters are included in this file.

The 'stars' folder includes both incoming and outgoing letters from 1941 to 1971, most of them regarding Janes’ plays and one-act scripts that he would send out to various people in the industry hoping they would be interested in producing or starring in his work, or to elicit feedback. Correspondents in this file include William "Billy" Armstrong, Lilian Braithwaite, Betty Ann Davies, Jeanne De Casalis, Alice Delysia, Joyce Grenfell, Stanley Holloway, and Naomi "Mickie" Jacob.

The theatre correspondence from 1934 to 1987 consists of incoming and outgoing letters from theatre actors and writers with which Janes was acquainted such as Hugh Beaumont, Peter Cushing, Clemence Dane, Alice Delysia, Sir Herbert Dunnico, Leslie Henson, Stanley Holloway, Collie Knox, Sybil Thorndike, and Adza Vincent. The letters are primarily business related and, like the letters in the 'stars' folder, are responses to Janes’ request for feedback and interest in his work.

The chronological files contain incoming and outgoing, personal and professional correspondence from 1940 to 1986. Correspondents in this file include Peter Cushing, Basil Dean, Louise Hampton, and Naomi Jacob.

Letter fragments, third party correspondence, and letters for which a recipient was not able to be determined are filed at the end of this subseries.

Subseries C. Personal and Career Related is made up of other papers belonging to Janes including articles and clippings by and about him, auction catalogues, engravings, personal papers and notes, and assorted programs, catalogues and brochures.

The photographs include family photographs and professional headshots of people with which Janes was acquainted, some inscribed to him. The bulk of the photographs are unidentified. The earliest photographs include portraits of a man and woman that may be Janes’ parents, as well as a family photo taken during World War I which may depict Janes as an infant with his parents, siblings, and two soldiers.

The subject files primarily contain research material, notes, and clippings. Drafts of works by Janes are found in some of the folders especially in the New Watergate Theatre Club and Lord Southborough files. The assorted clippings consist of obituaries, reviews of books and plays, wedding announcements, and general news from small towns. Notable in this section is the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA)/Basil Dean file which contains correspondence, both incoming and outgoing, a magazine article about ENSA, photographs, and a book of clippings with a statement written by Janes titled "The Liquidation of ENSA."
Works by Janes include the play, "Don’t Call Me Sir;" short stories, "Lucky," "My Address Was," and "The First Year, Some Thoughts on the War;" and several short poems. "Four in Hand" was a collection of four plays written by Janes and produced at the Torch Theatre in January-February 1947. This file contains correspondence that consists mostly of telegrams wishing good luck and letters addressed to the press representative of the Torch Theatre, as well as handwritten notes, promotional material and a synopsis of the four plays.

Notable in the Works by Others section is three versions of the play "Cathedral Steps" by Clemence Dane, which was performed on the steps of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London during World War II and whose cast included Edith Evans and Sybil Thorndike. All three typescripts contain handwritten corrections, including one with corrections by Dane, Janes, and Basil Dean.

Related Material

The Ransom Center also holds the Edith Evans Papers and the Bryan Forbes Collection of Edith Evans.

Additional Evans material are held at the Center in the Richard Church Collection, the Donald Wolfit Papers, the Chris Castor Papers, and the Stark Young Collection. Costume Designs for Edith Evans’ 1945 production of The Rivals at the Criterion Theatre can be found in the B.J. Simmons Collection. Evans was interviewed by Basil Langton on October 26, 1960 for a proposed book on George Bernard Shaw and the recording and transcript of this can be found in the Basil Langton Collection. The Ransom Center Library also holds a number of books belonging to Edith Evans.

Separated Material

The following book was transferred to the Ransom Center Library:

Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Textiles. Guide to the English Costumes presented by Messrs. Harrods Ltd. London: Printed under the authority of His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1913. (Call number: GT 730 V5 1913)

Index Terms

Correspondents

Shaw, Glen Byam.
Thordike, Sybil, Dame, 1882-1976.

Subjects
Actresses--England.
Actresses--Great Britain.
Entertainments National Service Association (Great Britain).
Theater--England.

Document Types
Clippings.
Correspondence.
Manuscripts.
Photographs.
Scripts.
Series I. Edith Evans Papers, 1913-1977, undated

Subseries A. Correspondence, 1935-1977, undated

'Good letters to her,' 1945-1960, undated

'Misc. personal letters,' 1945-1971

'Miscellaneous events'

1945-1971, undated

'First night telegrams and cards,' 1963-1971, undated

Greeting cards, 1968-1971, undated

'Theater letters,' 1951-1971, undated

Christmas cards and postcards, 1957-1971, undated

Chronological files

1936-1949

1944-1954

1951-1959

1960-1971

Undated

Outgoing, 1935-1975, undated

Subseries B. Personal and Career Related, 1913-1977, undated

Address books (2), undated

Appointment books (2), 1955-1956

Articles about Evans

Clippings, 1925-1977

Films and Filming, May 1967
Unknown author. Arkadina (variously titled Ibsen and Tchehov). Handwritten manuscript and partial typescript, undated

Biographical information, 1952-1955, undated

Diary, 1945

Family papers, 1913-1972

Performance texts

A Homage to Shakespeare. Excerpts from plays, typescripts, undated

Poems and partial scripts. Typescripts, undated

Poems. Typescripts, undated

Unidentified work. Typescript, undated

Photographs of Evans, 1936-1972, undated

 Programs and promotional material, 1957-1974, undated

Theatrical organizations. Brochures, registration certificates, meeting minutes, 1962-1971
Series II. Henry Hurford Janes Papers, 1891-1989, undated

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'E.E. Important.' Research material, notes, correspondence, 1963-1987

Correspondence

Re: Evans, 1965-1978

Christmas cards from Evans, undated

Outgoing to Evans, 1943-1976

Diary notes, 1958-1987

'Trial.' Correspondence and legal documents, 1950-1977

Writings about Evans, 1977, undated

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Theatre Notebook, volume XXV, number 1, Autumn 1970  Container 8.5

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 Centenary Commemoration of the Opening of Hernhill School (historical sketch). Printed booklet, 1972  Container 8.6
Don’t Call Me Sir (play)  
Typescript, undated  
Correspondence, 1953-1962  

Don’t Call Me Sir (play)  
Typescript, undated  
Correspondence, 1953-1962  

Four in Hand (play). Synopsis, promotional material, notes, and correspondence, 1946-1947  

Short stories and poems. Typescripts, typescript fragments, and handwritten manuscript, 1940, undated  

Works by Others  
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor and T. Mee Pattison. The Ancient Mariner. Sheet music, undated  

Constantine, Learie. Tonight’s Talk, transcript, 1943  

Dane, Clemence. Cathedral Steps (play). Typescripts, three versions with corrections, 1942, undated  

Gellhorn, Martha. The Arabs of Palestine. Offprint from the Atlantic Monthly, October 1961  

Proud, Peter. Boz (or Dickens’ Days) (TV series). Typescript, undated  


Unidentified author. Ariadne at Mantua. Typescript, undated  

Unidentified author. Mr. Handel’s Nightingales or The Rival Queans [sic]. Typescript, undated  

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- Groves, Donald--1.5
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- Hall, Joyce and Elizabeth--2.1
- Hall, Joyce G.--2.1
- Hall, Julian--1.6, 2.6
- Hall, L. A. Keith--8.1
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- Hoffnung, Annetta--1.8
- Holloway, Irene--1.2
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- Hopknisar?, Stephan--2.5
- Hopwood, Charles--8.1
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- Houghton, M____?--1.6
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• McGregor, Sheila--1.2
• McLean, Robert--1.8
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