



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

Guide to the

**Pearl Bailey letters**

1943-1990

Sc MG 824

## Summary

**Creator:** Bailey, Pearl

**Title:** Pearl Bailey letters

**Date:** 1943-1990

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Gift, Lillian Morrison, May 2010

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** Pearl Bailey (1918-1990) was an African American actress and singer. In films, she was known chiefly for two roles: Maria in *Porgy and Bess* (1959) and Frankie in *Carmen Jones* (1954). She was also known for her starring role on Broadway in an all-Black cast version of *Hello Dolly*. During World War II, Bailey toured with the USO, performing for American troops. Beginning in 1946, she was a top attraction in nightclubs, variety houses, and television programs in the United States and Britain. At age 67, in 1985, she graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor's degree in theology. Between 1968 and 1989, she published six books on her life, cooking, and educational experiences. Bailey served as a special ambassador to the United Nations in 1975 and 1989, and in 1988, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Pearl Bailey letters (1943-1989) consist of correspondence between Bailey and her friend, Lillian Morrison, a published author, compiler, and editor of children's and young adult books as well as a librarian at the New York Public Library, 110th Street Branch. Most of the letters were written by Bailey, and refer to her various endeavors, including her USO work at Fort Huachuca in Arizona; recordings of the song "Tired", which was one of her hit songs; Disney's *The Fox and the Hound*, for which she provided one of the voices; and her service with the United Nations. As both women were published authors, several of the letters make reference to this fact and to their long friendship and shared birthday, March 29, 1918. The letters do not provide a great amount of detail about Bailey's show business career.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Pearl Bailey letters, Sc MG 824, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Separated Materials:**

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

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Transferred to the Programs and Playbills collection, Sc MG 928, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: flyers and playbills

**Creator History**

Pearl Bailey (1918-1990) was an African American actress and singer. In films, she was known chiefly for two roles: Maria in *Porgy and Bess* (1959) and Frankie in *Carmen Jones* (1954). She was also known for her starring role on Broadway in an all-Black cast version of *Hello Dolly*. During World War II, Bailey toured with the USO, performing for American troops. Beginning in 1946, she was a top attraction in nightclubs, variety houses, and television programs in the United States and Britain. At age 67, in 1985, she graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor's degree in theology. Between 1968 and 1989, she published six books on her life, cooking, and educational experiences. Bailey served as a special ambassador to the United Nations in 1975 and 1989, and in 1988, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Pearl Bailey letters (1943-1989) consist of correspondence between Bailey and her friend, Lillian Morrison, a published author, compiler, and editor of children's and young adult books as well as a librarian at the New York Public Library, 110th Street Branch. Most of the letters were written by Bailey, and refer to her various endeavors, including her USO work at Fort Huachuca in Arizona; recordings of the song "Tired", which was one of her hit songs; Disney's *The Fox and the Hound*, for which she provided one of the voices; and her service with the United Nations. As both women were published authors, several of the letters make reference to this fact and to their long friendship and shared birthday, March 29, 1918. The letters do not provide a great amount of detail about Bailey's show business career.

**Key Terms****Subjects**

African American actresses  
African American motion picture actors and actresses  
African American women entertainers  
African American women singers  
African Americans in the performing arts  
Authors, Black  
Female friendship

**Names**

Bailey, Pearl  
Morrison, Lillian