

**Collection #
M 1503
BV 5557-5560**

**NELLIE SIMMONS MEIER
COLLECTION, CA. 1880-2001**

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Processed by

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 11 manuscript boxes, 4 boxes of photographs, 1 box OVA photographs, 1 folder of upright graphics, 1 box of 4x5 acetate negatives, 4 bound volumes

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1880-2001

PROVENANCE: Ken Keene Estate, c/o Jan F. Kilpatrick, Helmsburg, IN

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: George and Nellie Meier Collection, P0060; *Lion's Paws, the Story of Famous Hands*, BF921.M36 1937

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2021.0197

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nellie Simmons Meier (November 10, 1862-March 24, 1944) was born in Cohoes, New York to Daniel Simmons and Catherine Clinton Austin Simmons. The family moved to Indianapolis when Nellie was a small child, so she grew up in the city, attending the Benjamin Harrison school and May Wright Sewall Girl's Classical School. On Valentine's Day 1899, she married George Philip Meier. Initially studying palmistry to use as a parlor trick at parties, she found a deeper understanding of the science of palmistry and used it to present character studies to friends and clients. Nellie and George's home, which they called Tuckaway, located at 3128 N. Pennsylvania Street, became known as a place for parties, gatherings, palm readings, and Nellie's Hoosier fried chicken dinners. Many national and international celebrities, artists, and musicians made a stop at Tuckaway as they passed through Indianapolis or had engagements in the city. In addition, she would give lectures on the science of palmistry and wrote on the subject as well, most notably her 1937 publication, *Lion's Paws*, where she shared palm prints and character sketches of some of her famous clients. In addition, she was a member of the Contemporary Club, League of Women Voters, the Propylaeum, the John Herron Art Association, the National Humane Society, the National League of Penwomen, the Anti-Vivisection League, the Women's Committee of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Children's Museum, and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

George Philip Meier (September 16, 1864-September 18, 1864) was born in Marshall, Michigan. He came to Indianapolis to work for L.S. Ayres as a buyer and designer in the dressmaking department. For more than twenty years, Meier traveled to Europe every summer to get inspiration for new designs. He was best known for his wedding gowns and trousseaus. Meier belonged to a Masonic order and was also a charter member of the Indianapolis Athletic Club and the Meridian Hills Country Club.

Ruth Austin McGinnis Peaslee Cannon (1895-1973) was born in Chicago, Illinois to Archibald McGinnis and Florence Simmons McGinnis. She had two brothers, Archibald McGinnis Jr. and Capt. Knefler McGinnis. Ruth studied dance in Chicago, where she was a student at the Dennis-Shawn School of Dance, studied with Russian dancers Pavley and Oukrainsky, and later taught dance at the Chicago Musical College and at Pavley-Oukrainsky studio in Chicago. She married Willis Dhu Aine Peaslee (1887-1960) in Indianapolis on October 14, 1922. After she was widowed, she married Fermor S. Cannon (1888-1973), an Indianapolis architect and businessman. Ruth inherited Tuckaway and its contents upon the death of her aunt, Nellie Simmons Meier. Eventually, Ruth sold the home, which came with her aunt's collection of correspondence, character sketches, client photographs, and other papers, to Ken Keene. Keene took great interest in Nellie Simmons Meier's story and worked to preserve the history of Tuckaway.

Sources:

"Reader of Noted Palms Dies Here." *Indianapolis Star*, 25 March 1944, Page 7.

"George Philip Meier, Among Foremost Stylists in U.S., Dies at Home Here." *Indianapolis Star*, 19 September 1932, Page 1.

Barker, Myrtie. "Home Revives Memory." *The Indianapolis News*. 1 October 1975, Page 22.
Ancestry.com

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is divided into six series. The first three series are related to Nellie Simmons Meier's work as a palmist. Meier would take palm prints from each of her clients- some were taken on special paper produced especially for palmists- and have the client sign and date their prints for authenticity. Some prints have shorthand notation and sketches of fingernails or notations about the shape or feel of the fingers and palms. After examining her client's hands, Meier would relate how the lines and shapes of the hands exposed certain elements of that person's character in her character sketch. Finally, Meier would ask her clients to bring or send her a photograph of themselves, most of which are autographed and inscribed, which she then framed and hung on the wall of her home, Tuckaway. The character sketches, palm prints, and client photographs are arranged in alphabetical order by surname. The fourth series contains Nellie and George Meier's personal papers, photographs, and correspondence. The fifth series contains correspondence, photographs, and personal papers from the McGinnis family, which was Nellie's sister's family, especially her niece Ruth. The final series contains information from the time that Ken Keene owned Tuckaway and continued to preserve Nellie's collection and legacy.

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CONTAINER

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