

DEERFIELD ACADEMY
ARCHIVES



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**Helen Childs Boyden Collection, 1900-1973:
Finding Aid**

Summary Information

Location: Deerfield Academy Archives, Deerfield, MA

Title: Helen Childs Boyden Collection, 1900-1973

ID No.: MSS006

Creator: Boyden, Helen Childs, 1883-1973

Quantity: 3 boxes, 1.5 linear ft.

Abstract: Collection of materials by and about Helen Childs Boyden, Deerfield teacher and wife of headmaster Frank L. Boyden. Includes correspondence, writings, photographs, memorabilia.

Administrative Information

Processing Information: Processed by unknown, revised by Anne Lozier, 2015

Acquisition: The Helen Childs Boyden Collection was transferred to the Academy Archives in various stages over the years.

Access: Access to these papers is governed by the rules and regulations of the Deerfield Academy Archives. The collection is open to research without restrictions.

Preferred citation: [Identification of item], [Box #, folder #], in Helen Childs Boyden Collection, Deerfield Academy Archives, Deerfield, MA.

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Biographical Note

The daughter of an historic farm family, Helen Childs was born in 1883 in the Wapping section of Deerfield. She graduated from Smith College in 1904, and in 1905 was hired to teach chemistry and algebra at Deerfield Academy, a career that lasted 63 years. She married headmaster Frank L. Boyden in 1907, and they had three children: John, Theodore, and Elizabeth.

Helen Boyden was as loved and respected as much - if not more than - Mr. Boyden. She was an educator, scholar, and scientist, an avid world traveler, a great entertainer, a lover of plants (parents gave her a greenhouse in 1951, attached to Ephraim Williams, that she maintained for years), and a fan of baseball. Students and colleagues alike have described her as charismatic, witty, intelligent, charming, a joyous learner, passionate, devoted, eternally curious, indefatigable, and inexhaustibly patient. She received honorary degrees from Mount Holyoke College, St. Lawrence University, Smith College, and Trinity College. The citation from Smith reads: "To Helen C. Boyden, sound scientist and brilliant teacher, who shares with her husband the glory of having by tact, intelligence, and tireless devotion, created in Deerfield Academy one of the truly great schools of the country." The famously quoted line "...and who with some slight assistance from her husband" was improvised by President Neilson at the time of the award.

In John McPhee's 1966 book, *The Headmaster* she is described as "the brightest person of the faculty and the busiest person at the school...her interests have no limit...her reputation as a teacher of chemistry grew quickly, and it stood for decades among the highest in secondary education."

Mr. Boyden said of her, "She is much more important than I am. She has a wonderful sense of humor and a deep affection for the boys. She has more influence on them than I have. She makes them want to do the work. Her judgment is excellent. She could have been the head of any school."

Longtime administrator Russ Miller said at her funeral, "Each individual was important to her, and in turn made her important to each individual with whom she came in contact. Her success in classroom instruction was based on the secret of eternal youth and eternal curiosity."

Bill Guthrie '43 wrote in a letter to Mrs. Boyden on her 50th anniversary at the school: "I can remember puzzling over the school motto and wondering what that meant. Be worthy of your heritage. Somehow the word heritage seemed strangely remote and abstract. I was never sure what it was. So, I changed it in my mind to "Be worthy of Mrs. Boyden." ...that was the motto I tried to live up to. And I'm still trying."

She retired with Mr. Boyden in 1968. She died in 1973.

Scope and Content

The Helen Childs Boyden Collection spans the years 1900-1973 and consists of biographical material, articles and papers about Mrs. Boyden, correspondence from former students, and photographs. Also included are typed notebook transcriptions by Margery Howe, wife of faculty Sheldon Howe and personal secretary to Mrs. Boyden. These transcriptions are mostly outgoing correspondence to friends and alumni, but include personal reminiscences as well.

Additional Index Terms

The following entries represent persons, organizations, and topics documented in this collection.
THIS IS NOT AN INDEX.

People

Boyden, Frank L. (Frank Learoyd), 1879-1972
Boyden, Helen Childs
Conte, Silvio O. (Silvio Ottavio), 1921-1991
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 1890-1969

Organizations

Deerfield Academy
Smith College

Subjects

Women in Education

Honorary Degrees

L.H.D., Smith College, 1934
Sc.D., St. Lawrence University, 1946
L.H.D., Mount Holyoke College, 1961
L.H.D., Trinity College, 1952

Related materials

Scrapbooks

Helen Childs Boyden testimonials on 50 th Anniversary	1956
Helen Childs Boyden "21" Club Luncheon (1/12/67)	1967
Dedication of Helen Childs Boyden Science Center	1975

Container list

BOX-FOLDER	Contents	
1-1	Biographical – quotations, astrological chart, autobiographical notes, etc.	1941-1975
1-2	News clippings	1946-1973
1-3	Writings, speeches, notes – Alumni Journal article, 50 th anniversary speech, class notes	1952, 1962
1-4	Writings about	1954-1978
1-5	Writings about	1986-2007
1-6	Awards and citations – see also oversized collection	1934-1968
1-7	Obituaries	1973-1974
1-8	Miscellaneous correspondence re 50 th Anniversary Dinner	1956
1-9	50 th anniversary of teaching – collection of letters from former students, part 1	1956
1-10	50 th anniversary of teaching – collection of letters from former students, part 2	1956
Box 2		
2-1	Miscellaneous correspondence	1925-1972
2-2	Miscellaneous correspondence re HCB	1955
2-3	Letter from President Eisenhower	1967
2-4 to 2-6	3 folders of Mrs. Boyden relating personal stories, and miscellaneous outgoing correspondence – no originals, transcribed in 1989 by Margery Howe, personal secretary to Mrs. Boyden.	
2-4	Notebook transcriptions folder 1	1967
2-5	Notebook transcriptions folder 2	1967
2-6	Notebook transcriptions folder 3	1967
2-7	Condolence letters received on the death of Frank L. Boyden, folder 1	1972
2-8	Condolence letters received on the death of Frank L. Boyden, folder 2	1972
2-9	“Mrs. Boyden’s Letter” from Deerfield magazine (Alumni Journal) – copies	1944-1958
2-10	Miscellaneous – 1933 class book, signed photograph of John Wozencraft ’43	1933, 1943
Box 3		
3-1	Baseball scorebook, autographed by team, “Helen Childs Boyden, from Varsity Baseball Team”	1950
3-2	Photographs – alone, portrait, with Childs family	various
3-3	Photographs – in classroom	various
3-4	Photographs – with faculty, students, others at various events; cards, travel, sports, science building groundbreaking, etc. folder 1	various
3-5	Photographs – with faculty, students, others at various events; cards, travel, sports, science building groundbreaking, etc. folder 2	
3-6	Photographs – honorary degrees, awards, gifts	1955-1973

3-7 Photographs – greenhouse, garden
3-8 Photographs – dogs

1951-1960
various