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*Ed Jack Knop
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PHOTOGRAPHED
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Arnold Rossa

DOROTHY..... *Judy Garland*
 HUNT EM..... *Evelyn Kennedy*
 UNCLE HENRY..... *Edna St. Vincent*

SCARECROW..... *Ray Bolger*
 TIN WOODMAN..... *Jack Haley*
 COWARDLY LION..... *Billie Burke*
 GOOD WITCH..... *Paul Robeson*
 BAD WITCH..... *Martha Scott*
 WIZARD OF OZ..... *Frank Morgan*

*—but not too bad!! Pictures by W.W. Denslow. It's a beautiful
 thing. But, dear, for all you "old" folks, would you buy the only
 original "Wizard of Oz" book?*

W.W. Denslow

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Judy Garland

Finding the First-Rate Version

In the autograph community, Judy Garland is legendary. *Autograph* uncovers why this troubled entertainer's signature is among the most difficult to authenticate.

By Tricia Eaton

JUDY GARLAND'S TALENT, LARGER-than-life personality and reputation for outrageous behavior earned her Hollywood renown. From her role as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* to her celebrated performance at Carnegie Hall, Garland lived up to her title of "The World's Greatest Entertainer."

She's famous in the autograph community for a second reason. Garland's signature is one of the most erratic and difficult to authenticate. After studying more than 400 examples of authentic signatures, forgeries and secretarially-signed items, I've found no one trick to picking out an authentic Judy Garland autograph because few aspects of her signature remained consistent over her life. But even though the actress and singer's autograph lacked lifelong telltale traits, it often would be fairly consistent for a year or more. I've included an autograph timeline that you can compare signatures you're considering against. Studying Garland's major signature changes can also reveal what was going on in her life—her emotional state—as well.

Be sure to study the secretarial sidebar. Several secretaries answered all of her fan mail from as early as 1937 until the end of her life. There was only one example found, very early in her career (circa 1938–39), of fan mail possibly answered by her. The photo's small size of 5x7 inches (the standard measurement of studio photos), the lack of a personal inscription and the rushed, smudged nature of the signature, imply she signed a stack of photos in one sitting. Unfortunately, Garland secretarial signatures frequently appear at auction as authentic, and her popularity has ensured that forgeries flood the marketplace.

Read on to uncover the knowledge needed to purchase genuine Garland-signed memorabilia. Judy said, "Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else." The same goes for her autograph.



All images courtesy R&R Enterprises unless otherwise noted.

"I Was Born at the Age of 12 on an MGM Lot"

Born Frances Ethel Gumm on June 10, 1922, in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, Judy began her career at two and a half by singing *Jingle Bells* at her family's theater. Frances, then known as "Baby," and her two older sisters became a vaudeville act and the family relocated to Lancaster, California a few years later.

DIRECTED
Victor Fleming

PHOTOGRAPHED
 BY
Arden Rossa

DOROTHY..... *Judy Garland*
spiky recovery!

AUNT EM..... *Edna Landick*

UNCLE HENRY.....

SCARECROW..... *Ray Rolger*

TIN WOODMAN..... *Jack Haley*

DOWNWARDLY LION..... *Beet Lutz*

GOOD WITCH.....

BAD WITCH..... *- but how too bad!! Betwixt pie & explosion - it's been here!*
Thank you Betty dear - for all you "took" for me. much love - Judy - the Hog - Margaret Hamilton

WIZARD OF OZ..... *Frank Morgan*

MGM



Opposite Page: The only known example of Judy signing through the mail, circa 1938. Left: A rare cast-signed *The Wizard of Oz* book, which sold for \$20,037 in February 2007. Below: A 1941 signed publicity photo from *Ziegfeld Girl* with a looped *d* in Garland.

of the *G* in *Garland* is circular; she would make it pointier the following year. Another noteworthy trait is the way the top of the *d* in *Garland* flows upward and curls toward the left. This formation of the *d* is very important, as it remained consistent for about six years.

Throughout 1937, during the making of Judy's first feature film, *Broadway Melody of 1938*, fans took a heightened interest in Judy evidenced by the appearance of many more autographs on album pages. These autographs were most likely obtained at radio performances, on set at the studio and at MGM promotional engagements. This version of her signature shows that she had grown more confident. One important aspect of this period is the formation of the *dy* in

The Gumm Sisters changed their stage name to *Garland* in 1934, at the urging of entertainer and movie producer George Jessel. Their new name brought more bookings, and Judy was singled out as a star, receiving rave reviews as "the little girl with the big voice." Though vaudeville was in decline, their act was surprisingly successful. One reviewer wrote, "As a trio, it means nothing, but with the youngest, Frances, 13, featured, it hops into first-class entertainment."

Important people about Hollywood began to take notice, and Judy signed a contract with MGM, the biggest and most prestigious studio of the time, in 1935. She started in October of that year, making \$100 per week. She later said, "I was born at the age of 12 on an MGM lot." She knew this was the day she would forever leave Frances behind and formally adopt the *Judy Garland* persona.

That same month, her first publicity photos were taken as a member of the MGM "family," and on that image her first known autograph appeared. Her signature had the choppiness of a child's, intensified by the uneasiness of assuming her new identity. The disjointed letters reveal she was signing a name other than her own. There are no known examples of Judy signing as *Frances Gumm* before she changed her name.

Characteristics of this first example are the dash underneath and the *G* and *d* of *Garland*. Even then Judy made her telltale dash under her name, perhaps in a moment of fleeting confidence, because, as with other elements, she did not always do it. The bottom



Judy. When beginning to form the *y* she connected the two letters with the same line. Her signature flowed more easily, but it was still messy and awkward; quite different from the form it would take the following year.

The Wizard of Oz

What happened the next year would make film history—and turn Judy’s signature into a confident expression of her newfound success. She won the role of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* in 1938 at 16. The epic role would forever earn Judy a place in the hearts of millions, and win her a juvenile Oscar in 1939.

Judy’s autograph during this period reflects the success that flooded into her life. Her signature was more attractive than at any other time. During 1938–39, there are many authentic autographs on album pages and on several gorgeous matte-finish MGM studio photos. This is the era when authentic Garland autographs are most plentiful, except for documents from her later years. A few rare *The Wizard of Oz* books autographed by the cast exist that bring exceptional prices when offered. One sold for more than \$20,000 at auction in 2007.



As Judy’s career continued to soar, she stayed true to this flowing form of her autograph until May 3 to 23 of 1940, when she made perhaps the most significant change in her signature. Be conscious of this deviation and you can instantly spot poorly executed forgeries.

She changed the *G* in Garland from a gorgeous uppercase *G* into a lowercase *g*. She changed to the lowercase *g* because it was quicker to write, most likely due to the increase in autograph requests. This is one change that stuck for the rest of her life.

Judy made another important change to her signature in 1941. Take a close look at the *d* in Garland. She changed it from flowing upward and curling at the top to ending downward in a loop. One of the first examples with this downward *d* is a signed photo from *Ziegfeld Girl*, released on April 25, 1941. Heavy stress due to Judy’s first marriage to composer David Rose in 1941 may have contributed to this change. Her mother, Ethel, and studio head Louis B. Mayer disapproved of the nuptials because she was only 19. The marriage ended in 1944.

Again, once she made this change to the *d* in Garland, she did not usually go back, aside from rushed, in-person autographs in later years. But do keep in mind that in autographs there are exceptions to every rule.

“I’m the Original Take-Orders Girl”

From 1940 to 1945, Judy provided MGM with a string of box office successes. Due to stress and the pressure of ever-increasing expectations, Judy began to exhibit the traits she became infamous for: pill popping, severe mood swings and unpredictability on the set.

Despite her self-proclaimed “less than Lana Turner looks,” Judy reigned supreme as one of the most popular actresses of the 1940s, starring in such musical classics as *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Easter Parade*, *The Harvey Girls* and *In The Good Old Summertime*. Most considered Judy to have looked her best from 1941 to 1944. Despite growing personal problems, her signature seems to reflect her outward beauty and mask her inner turmoil.

1935

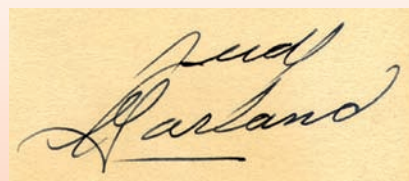
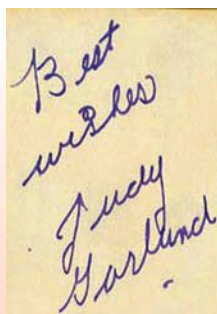
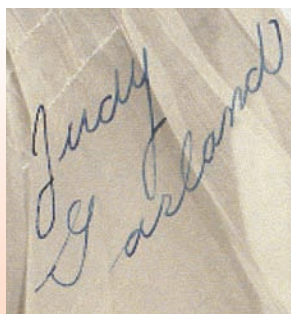
1935



1936

1937

1938



In Person with Judy Garland

One longtime New York City collector remembers his experiences with Garland.

Difficult to obtain in the 1940s

"Judy was extremely difficult to get in the early 1940s. Before I was a collector myself, I went along with autograph-seeking friends. One night in the early 1940s a friend and I caught

up with Judy and he asked her to sign a picture he had. Judy refused to sign the photo and my friend got so angry he ripped it up right in front of her! Judy began to cry and after that she agreed to sign anything that he wanted."

Judy in distress in the late 1950s

"A friend and I were at a play that Mrs.

Garland happened to be attending as well. During the intermission Judy went across the street to a bar. She came back intoxicated with two random men. I asked, "Mrs. Garland are you enjoying the show?" and she responded in slurred words something I could barely make out. Even in that sorry state Judy agreed to sign an autograph for me."



Opposite page left to right: A photo of Judy with her first husband, David Rose, at their June 15, 1941 engagement party that's signed and inscribed to *House and Garden* magazine. A publicity still from 1945's *The Clock* signed with a lowercase *g*. This page: A signed 1962 photo shows her signature became more jagged, but the lowercase *g* remained.

Around 1944 Judy's autograph began to portray her chaotic life. A keen eye will notice a choppy, indecisive quality as she was filming *Meet Me in St. Louis*. She began to separate the *l* in Garland from the rest of the letters. In fact, most of the letters in her name were usually separated from each other, with the exception of those connected with the letter *a*.

Judy fell in love with the director of *Meet Me in St. Louis*, Vincente Minnelli, and they were married on June 15, 1945. The birth of their daughter Liza followed on March 12, 1946. At first, Vincente was a good influence on Judy, and she pledged to quit the pills—and did.

Behind Every Cloud is Another Cloud

Judy experienced significant postpartum depression following Liza's birth and resented having to go back to the set and waking up early. But the studio world was all she knew, and Mayer wanted her back in front of the camera as soon as possible.

She signed another five-year contract with MGM in November 1946. Thrown back into the workplace too soon, Judy couldn't function without medication. Reflecting on the mistake of renewing her contract, Judy later said, "Every day when I went to work it was with tears in my eyes, resistance in my heart and mind. It gave me no pleasure."

Judy suffered a nervous breakdown while filming her first movie after returning to the studio, *The Pirate*, and few examples of her signature from 1946–47 have come to light.

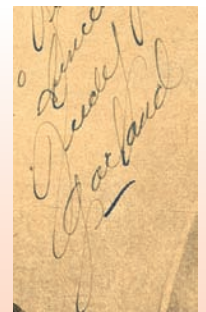
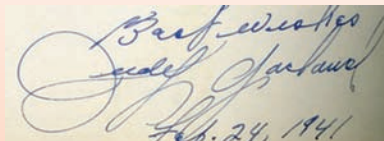
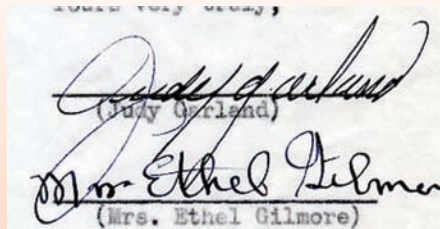
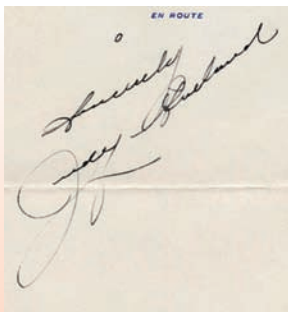
1939

1940

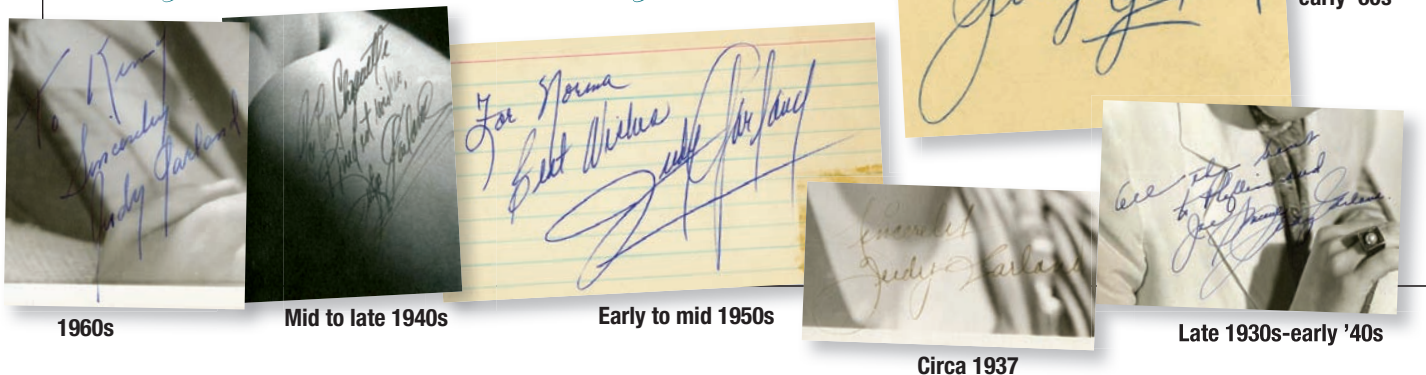


1941

1943



Judy's Secretarial Signatures



Judy had a slight comeback while filming the classic *Easter Parade* in 1948 with Fred Astaire. As she began to feel healthier and more energized, more examples of her signature showed up as well. She inscribed several, now vintage, studio photos to her friends and associates dating from late 1948 to 1949. When the star wrote to close friends, she simply signed *Judy*, without her last name.

Judy completed three films for MGM. Ironically, her last musical number was "Get Happy" from 1950's *Summer Stock*. But in the wake of several suspensions and a highly-publicized suicide attempt, Judy's contract was terminated on September 29, 1950.

She and Minnelli separated two months later. Her marital and legal troubles in 1950 left an abundance of signed documents.

Her release from the studio was bittersweet. After spending almost half her life working for the legendary Louis B. Mayer, she was out in the cold. Judy resented MGM, but it was familiar and comfortable. Where would she go? What would she do?

Act II, Second Chances

The end of her contract looked like the end of her career. But over the next 19 years, Garland would prove it was only the beginning. In the 1950s and '60s she rediscovered the love of her life, the stage, and with it came a revolving door of sublime happiness and bitter despair. She became increasingly unpredictable and so did her autograph. The second act of her career explains why Judy's autograph is one of the most misunderstood in Hollywood history.

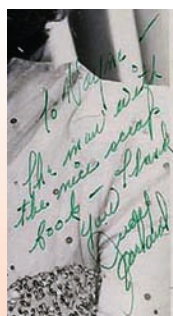
His Name was Sid

In 1951 Judy met Sid Luft. The quintessential bad boy was the trigger Judy needed to move on with her life. He became her manager, and with his help, she began her comeback tour at the London Palladium, followed by her record-breaking 19-week run at New York

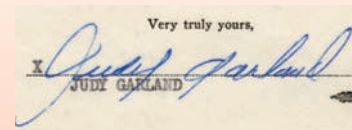
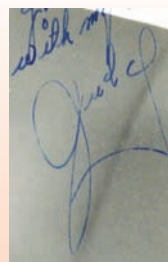
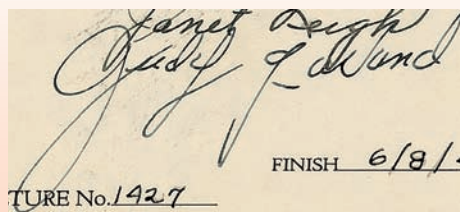
Below: An 11x14 matte-finish photo signed by Garland, circa 1949, sold for \$2,427 in September 2007.



1945 1947 1948 *Q* *D* 1949 1950



(1947) COURTESY ADAM ANDRUSIER





Left: A Columbia Records publicity photo, circa 1953, shows Judy's broken-up signature after her dismissal from MGM. Above: A photo of Judy with third husband, Sid Luft, signed by both.

A Star is Born

Basking in the light of love, Judy and Sid were an unstoppable team, booking an unprecedented number of sold-out concerts and earning Judy new respect. She was no longer dismissed as a washed-up movie star.

Judy got another chance in film in the 1954 remake of *A Star is Born*. The movie was a hit and Sid was at her side, personally and as a producer. Many consider Judy's portrayal of naive up-and-comer Esther Blodgett to be the best performance of her career. Nominated for the Best Actress Oscar, she lost to Grace Kelly in

City's Palace Theater.

Sid gave Judy firm guidance during these busy times, and for a while, they were happy and desperately in love. On April 25, 1952, they were married and had two children, Lorna and Joey Luft.

Their marriage was her longest, spanning 13 years. Although Judy would marry five times, *Luft* was the only married name she routinely signed. These *Judy Garland Luft* examples are mostly found on documents.

Country Girl—an event that remains one of the biggest upsets in the history of the Academy Awards.

Throughout the 1950s Judy's autograph remained relatively similar, retaining the "broken up" nature it had acquired after she was dismissed from MGM. But it was still decipherable, unlike her signature in the late 1960s. The timeline from 1951–67 shows a rapid decline in neatness and uniformity. Her signature "thumbprint" was a sign of how her life was going at any one time.

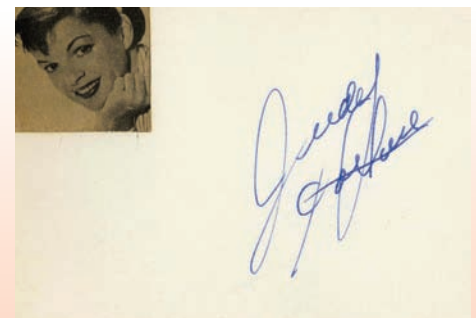
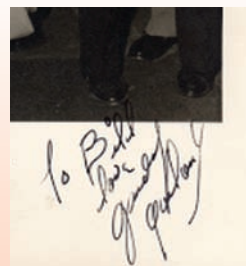
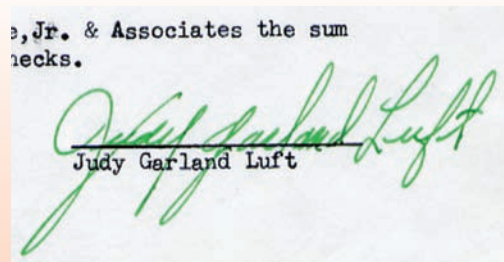
1951

1952



1953

1954





Far left: Kingsrow bank checks are the most plentiful Garland-signed items on the market. This check sold for \$317 in August 2006. Left: A concert program signed in blue that bears one of the last known examples of Garland's signature, circa 1967. The black signature in bottom right corner is pre-printed. Below check: First known Garland autograph, on one of her first MGM publicity photos, circa 1935.

Documents, Documents and More Documents

Documents far outnumber all other authentically-signed Garland memorabilia from her later years. This is surprising because she was constantly out in public during the almost two decades she did concerts.



Judy was almost always a gracious signer when she met her fans, so where are these in-person autographs today? Perhaps their owners are too attached to let them go. One disturbing possibility is that Judy was often too intoxicated to sign, and rushed from stage to limo at the end of each show.

After compiling an archive of more than 150 authentic examples of Garland's signature from the 1950s and 1960s, the number of documents available compared to in-person signed items is astounding. About half of the signed items from the 1950s are documents. But at least 80 percent of authentic Garland autographs from the 1960s are on documents, including Kingsrow Enterprises bank checks, mainly from 1963 and 1964. Documents from the mid-1960s are the most plentiful of Garland autographs.

The Final Two Stages

It appears that Garland's autograph went through three distinct phases. Phase one autographs, from the 1930s to the mid-1940s, are relatively neat and flowing. Phase two autographs, from the mid-1940s through the 1950s, are messy and disjointed. Phase three autographs,

from the 1960s, are spread out and at times indecipherable. The one consistency with Judy's autograph, especially during the later years, is that there is no consistency. Fortunately, there are some guidelines that may assist collectors in their quest to find a first-rate Garland autograph from the later years.

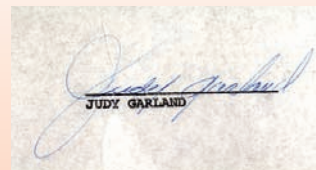
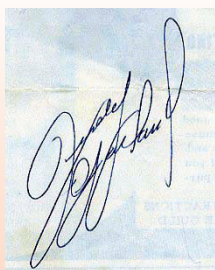
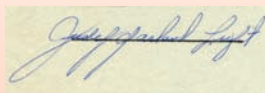
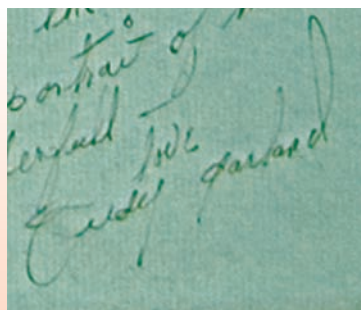
Be careful—there are significantly more forgeries dating from Judy's later years. The majority of fakes on in-person album pages from the 1950s and '60s follow the lead of her contract-style signature. This is a dead giveaway because she never signed documents the way she did in person. It's common sense she would sign differently on the go than when sitting at a desk.

Then there are the secretarial. The secretarial signatures from through-the-mail fan requests are, to the untrained eye, very hard to spot due to the aged ink and the uninhibited pen strokes. That's why it's especially important to be aware of them, so study the secretarial sidebar carefully.

Study Garland's Handwriting—Not Just Her Autographs

The real keys to unlocking the Judy Garland enigma are her unique handwriting tendencies. Although her signature continually changed, her penmanship was fairly consistent. Being familiar with her handwriting style is important when authenticating a Judy Garland piece, so study the handwritten letters on page 51.

Judy's signature began to spin out of control as her life did around 1965-1966. Autographs from this period are sure to make the collector doubt the ability to authenticate such an erratic signer. This significant



Judy Garland's Handwriting

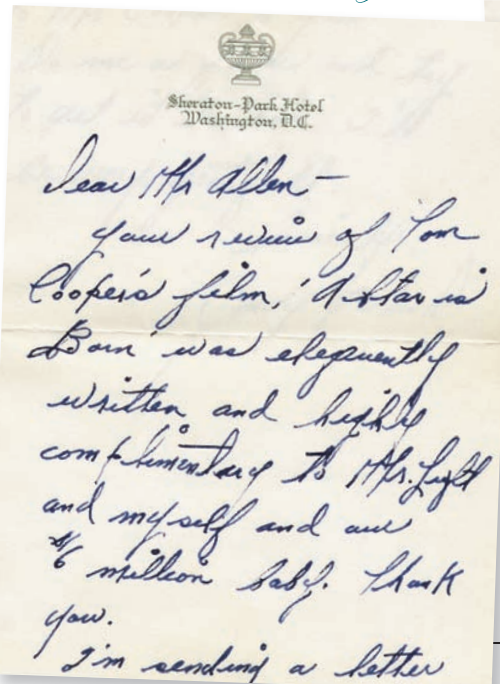
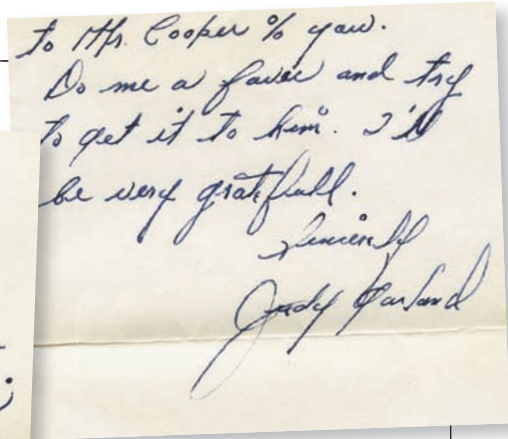
Judy Garland's unique handwriting was fairly consistent throughout her life. Compare these two letters, written almost 20 years apart. You'll find that while her autograph continually changed, her penmanship maintained the same fundamental characteristics.

Judy sometimes interchanged her upper and lowercase Es. In words that ended with an e she sometimes made them uppercase, conversely, flowing words with an e in between the other letters were usually lowercase.

These words almost always contained uppercase Es: BEst, WishEs, LovE, FEEl and BEtEr.

Judy's favorite sentiment was *sincerely*, almost always with a lowercase s. She usually dotted the *i* over ce.

The dots on Judy's *is* are like bubbles. They begin at the top, circled down to the left and come back to the top leaving a small



space from the beginning.

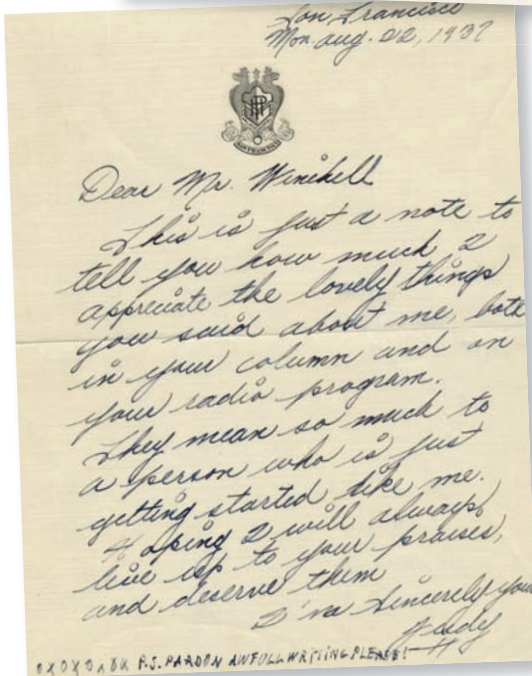
Judy's uppercase F and T and I are distinctive. Her usual inscription began with *To* or *For*. When one of these opening letters doesn't match her style it is a dead giveaway that the autograph is a forgery or secretarial. Judy's uppercase I looked like the number 2.

Her Final Days

"I think there's something peculiar about me that I haven't died. It doesn't make sense but I refuse to die." —Judy Garland

Over her lifetime Judy starred in 32 feature films, recorded more than 24 albums and gave more than 1,000 nightclub and theater performances. When Judy passed away in London from an accidental overdose of barbiturates on June 21, 1969, her family did not mourn her death—they celebrated her life. The memory of Judy Garland will never die. She continues to be a source of joy for millions of fans worldwide. **A**

Tricia Eaton is the Auction Processing Manager and Signature Archivist of R&R Enterprises. She has been involved with autographs since a very young age and began studying as an authenticator-in-training for R&R, beginning in 2003. Tricia can be contacted at Tricia@rrauction.com.



change can be attributed to many factors, including ever-increasing financial troubles, whirlwind romances (Judy separated from fourth husband Mark Herron after a mere five months, followed by another short marriage to Mickey Deans), a failed television show and poor health. Signatures from this time are practically indecipherable—and she often signed half off the page on in-person items. She also stopped inscribing for her fans.

The archive compiled as part of the research for this article lacks any autograph examples that can be positively dated to 1968 or 1969, most likely due to her failing health. The last few examples we uncovered were from 1967.

1964

1965



1966

1967

1967

