

Papers from the Isabelle Sayers Collection

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Motion Picture, Broadcasting and
Recorded Sound Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2007

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(*Describing Archives: A Content
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eadmbrs.rs004001](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/eadmbrs.rs004001)

Latest revision: May 2007

Collection Summary

Title: Papers from the Isabelle Sayers Collection

Inclusive Dates: circa 1886-1980

Bulk Dates: 1920-1980

Creator: Sayers, Isabelle S.

Extent: 3.7 linear feet (6 boxes)

Language: Collection materials are in English

Repository: Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Paper and photographic materials created and gathered by Isabelle S. Sayers as she assembled her collection of early recordings and audio equipment.

Location: RPA 00160-00163 (boxes 1-4); RPC 00001 (box 5); RPM 00002 (box 6)

Key Subjects and Formats

The following headings represent names, topics, places, and formats of major significance in the collection.

Names

Sayers, Isabelle S.--Archives

Janis, Elsie, 1889-1956

Kishpaugh, Harlan--Correspondence

Kishpaugh, Grace--Correspondence

Odell, L. Brevoort--Correspondence

Deakins, Duane D.--Correspondence

Marken, Lawrence McKinley--Correspondence

Green, Lew--Correspondence

Ferguson, Clarence A.--Correspondence

Walsh, Jim--Correspondence

Isabelle Sayers Collection (Library of Congress)

Topics

Women collectors--United States--Archives

Sound recordings--Collectors and collecting--United States

Sound--Recording and reproducing--Equipment and supplies

Forms of Material

Letters (Correspondence)

Photographs

Newspaper clippings

Ephemera

Scrapbooks

Pamphlets

Catalogs

Postcards

Notes

Diaries

Administrative Information

Acquisition of the Papers

The papers were donated to the Library of Congress by Isabelle S. Sayers in several increments in 1981, and by Frank T. Sayers in memory of his wife in 1982 and 1987.

Additions

No further additions to the papers are expected.

Processing Information

The papers were processed by Jennifer Lewis in March 2004.

Restrictions on Use of the Papers

Restrictions may exist on copying, quoting, or publishing materials included in the papers. For additional information, contact a reference librarian in the Recorded Sound Reference Center, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Restrictions on Access to the Papers

The Papers from the Isabelle Sayers Collection are open for research.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [Container number, eg., Box 3], Papers from the Isabelle Sayers Collection, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress.

Biography of Isabelle S. Sayers

Isabelle S. Sayers (1914-1982) was an avid collector of early recordings and audio equipment. Sayers's primary interest was in rare items, particularly those from 1884 to 1905 of the early sound recording era. One of the few female collectors of the mid-20th century, Sayers expanded her collection over a period of at least 30 years by placing advertisements in local newspapers and collectors' newsletters, and by developing relationships with collectors and antique dealers nationwide. She displayed and spoke about her collection locally; in 1959 she appeared on WBNS-TV to demonstrate early machines in her collection. Sayers was also interested in inventors of recording equipment: she collected photographs, clippings, and ephemera relating to Thomas Edison, Emile Berliner and their various inventions.

Sayers also had an avid interest in photography and the history of the West. She wrote two books on Annie Oakley: *Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981) and *The Rifle Queen, Annie Oakley* (Sayers, 1973). Both incorporated historical photographs from her own collections as illustrations.

Isabelle Sayers resided with her husband, Frank T. Sayers, in Columbus, Ohio, from circa 1953 through 1971. The couple lived in Ostrander, Ohio, from 1971 until Isabelle Sayers's death in December 1982.

Scope and Content of the Papers

These papers were part of the larger Isabelle Sayers Collection, a donation of early disc and wax cylinder recordings, phonographs, and related equipment donated to the Library of Congress in several increments between 1981 and 1987. The Sayers Collection includes some extremely rare items from the incunabula period (1884-1905) of the sound recording era. Among these rare items are 19th-century Berliner Gramophone Company discs, concert grand wax cylinders, and an assortment of playback equipment such as a "player-piano type harmonica." The collection totals approximately 2,000 wax cylinders, 4,000 discs, and 50 antique phonographs, as well as related equipment and assorted objects such as statues of the Victor dog, Edison banks, and old needle tins.

This collection of paper and photographic materials dates from circa 1886 to 1980, but many of the items are undated.

Arrangement of the Papers

The papers are arranged in six series:

- Series I: Correspondence, 1951-1980
- Series II: Collection Notes, 1919-1972
- Series III: Printed Material, 1923-1977, undated
- Series IV: Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated
- Series V: Photographs, circa 1886-1975
- Series VI: Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated

Description of Series

Container

Series

[Series I. Correspondence, 1951-1980, undated](#)

Series I consists of correspondence between Isabelle Sayers and collectors, experts, and dealers. The majority of the correspondence relates to the exchange, sale, or appraisal of antique records, cylinders, recording equipment, phonographs, or other equipment. Many of the letters relate both to Sayers's collection and to her personal life, reflecting the close relationships she developed with other collectors and experts.

Frequent or prominent correspondents represented in this series include Harlan and Grace Kishpaugh, L. Brevoort Odell, Duane D. Deakins, Lawrence McKinley Marken, Lewis G. Green, Clarence A. Ferguson, and Jim Walsh (whose papers are also held by the Recorded Sound Section).

Correspondence is arranged chronologically; one folder of undated material is filed at the end of the series.

[Series II. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated](#)

Series II consists of acquisition notes, equipment descriptions, lecture notes, and other items. Included is a diary dating from circa 1952 to 1959 with notes about Sayers's acquisition of equipment and recordings. Lecture notes and miscellaneous writings refer to the history of recording in the United States and Ohio. Miscellaneous collection notes consist of scraps of paper with brief notations about individual recordings, record lists, and addresses of dealers and collectors. One folder contains notes and ephemera relating to Sayers's interest in vaudeville performer Elsie Janis. Materials in this series are filed alphabetically by description.

[Series III. Printed Materials, 1923-1977, undated](#)

Series III contains newsletters, journals, pamphlets, guides and other printed materials relating to music, recordings and phonographs.

Included are programs for music and theater performances, pamphlets on Thomas Edison's inventions and life, technical equipment guides, radio travel logs, record price listings and small catalogs, and reprints of articles on Ohio music and black recording artists.

Printed Materials are arranged alphabetically by type and thereunder by title or description.

[Journals and newsletters](#)

[Pamphlets](#)

[Series IV. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated](#)

Series IV consists of items in a variety of formats relating to Sayers's recording interests. Included are clippings relating to musicians, inventors, and equipment; a calendar issued by the Capehart Collection; advertisements; record inserts from early Edison recordings; greeting cards; pictorial envelopes; phonograph diagrams; and postcards. One folder of miscellaneous materials includes a slide with song lyrics, business cards, and a record coupon.

Materials are arranged alphabetically by format. A folder of miscellaneous ephemera is filed at the end of the series.

Advertisements See also Oversize Folder 31, Radio, travel logs, 1925-1963

Series V. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

Series V contains approximately 75 photographs (black-and-white and color) as well as 7 slides and 32 negatives. Many of the photographs in this series were printed from copy negatives of older photographs or images from journals and books. Included are photographs of Isabelle Sayers displaying equipment from her collection and portraits of inventors Thomas Edison and Emile Berliner. Also represented are various actors and musicians, with a particular focus on Elsie Janis, a Columbus, Ohio, native and star of many vaudeville productions. Photographs of recording equipment and phonograph advertisements are also present. Three scrapbooks are included in this series. One contains Isabelle Sayers's family photographs and related ephemera; the two others include portraits and clippings of Broadway, movie, and recording personalities. Photographs are arranged alphabetically by subject or type; miscellaneous negatives and photographs are filed at the end.

Series VI. Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated

Oversize materials include posters, broadsides, photographs, prints, and newspaper and magazine clippings. A small collection of broadsides for early concerts and equipment demonstrations are mostly undated. Oversize photographs are all of Thomas A. Edison or his inventions; also included in this folder are several copies of an undated wood block print of Edison. Clippings related to Thomas A. Edison (a few are full copies of publications focusing on his career or death), Elsie Janis and other musicians. Oversize advertisements are also included.

Detailed Description of the Papers

Container

Contents

Series 1. Correspondence, 1951-1980, undated

.4 linear feet

RPA 00160 (box 1)

Series I consists of correspondence between Isabelle Sayers and collectors, experts, and dealers. The majority of the correspondence relates to the exchange, sale, or appraisal of antique records, cylinders, recording equipment, phonographs, or other equipment. Many of the letters relate both to Sayers's collection and to her personal life, reflecting the close relationships she developed with other collectors and experts.

Frequent or prominent correspondents represented in this series include Harlan and Grace Kishpaugh, L. Brevoort Odell, Duane D. Deakins, Lawrence McKinley Marken, Lewis G. Green, Clarence A. Ferguson, and Jim Walsh (whose papers are also held by the Recorded Sound Section).

Correspondence is arranged chronologically; one folder of undated material is filed at the end of the series.

BOX 1	Correspondence, 1951-1957
FOLDER 1	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1958-1959
FOLDER 2	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1960-1961
FOLDER 3	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1962-1963
FOLDER 4	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1964-1965
FOLDER 5	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1966-1967
FOLDER 6	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1968-1969
FOLDER 7	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1970-1971
FOLDER 8	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1972-1976
FOLDER 9	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1977-1978
FOLDER 10	
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1979-1980
FOLDER 11	
BOX 1	Correspondence, undated
FOLDER 12	

Series II. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated

.21 linear feet

RPA 00160 (box 1); RPA 00161 (box 2)

Series II. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated

Container	Contents
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Series II consists of acquisition notes, equipment descriptions, lecture notes, and other items. Included is a diary dating from circa 1952 to 1959 with notes about Sayers's acquisition of equipment and recordings. Lecture notes and miscellaneous writings refer to the history of recording in the United States and Ohio. Miscellaneous collection notes consist of scraps of paper with brief notations about individual recordings, record lists, and addresses of dealers and collectors. One folder contains notes and ephemera relating to Sayers's interest in vaudeville performer Elsie Janis. Materials in this series are filed alphabetically by description.

BOX 1	Addresses, undated
FOLDER 13	
BOX 1	Diary of collection and acquisition notes, 1952-1959
FOLDER 14	
BOX 2	Equipment descriptions, undated
FOLDER 15	
BOX 2	Elsie Janis notes and ephemera, 1919-1972
FOLDER 16	
BOX 2	Lecture notes and miscellaneous writings, undated
FOLDER 17	
BOX 2	Receipts, 1958-1975
FOLDER 18	
BOX 2	Miscellaneous collection notes, undated
FOLDER 19	

Series III. Printed Materials, 1923-1977, undated

.42 linear feet

RPA 00161 (box 2); RPA 00162 (box 3)

Series III contains newsletters, journals, pamphlets, guides and other printed materials relating to music, recordings and phonographs.

Included are programs for music and theater performances, pamphlets on Thomas Edison's inventions and life, technical equipment guides, radio travel logs, record price listings and small catalogs, and reprints of articles on Ohio music and black recording artists.

Printed Materials are arranged alphabetically by type and thereunder by title or description.

Journals and newsletters

BOX 2	<i>The Music Box: An International Magazine of Mechanical Music</i> , vol. 7, no. 1, 1975
FOLDER 20	
BOX 2	<i>Music Box Society Newsletter</i> , no. 4, 1975 March
FOLDER 21	
BOX 2	<i>Music Memories Monthly</i> , vol. 3, no. 4, 1963 June
FOLDER 22	
BOX 2	<i>The Ragtime Society</i> , 1962-1966
FOLDER 23-24	
BOX 2	<i>The Ragtimer</i> , 1975 March
FOLDER 25-26	

Series III. Printed Materials, 1923-1977, undated

Container *Contents*

Pamphlets

BOX 2	<i>Audio Equipment</i> , 1923-1977
FOLDER 27-28	
BOX 2	Thomas Alva Edison biographical materials, 1928, 1973
FOLDER 29	
BOX 2	Music programs and guides, 1910-1929
FOLDER 30	
BOX 3	Radio, travel logs, 1925-1963
FOLDER Oversize 31	
BOX 3	Radio technical guides, 1923-1930
FOLDER 32	
BOX 3	<i>The Rifle Queen: Annie Oakley</i> , 1973
FOLDER 33	
BOX 3	Record price lists, advertisements, and catalogs, 1930-1981, undated
FOLDER 34-36	
BOX 3	Reprints, undated
FOLDER 37	

Series IV. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated

.21 linear feet

RPA 00162 (box 3); RPA 00163 (box 4)

Series IV consists of items in a variety of formats relating to Sayers's recording interests. Included are clippings relating to musicians, inventors, and equipment; a calendar issued by the Capehart Collection; advertisements; record inserts from early Edison recordings; greeting cards; pictorial envelopes; phonograph diagrams; and postcards. One folder of miscellaneous materials includes a slide with song lyrics, business cards, and a record coupon.

Materials are arranged alphabetically by format. A folder of miscellaneous ephemera is filed at the end of the series.

Advertisements [See also Oversize Folder 31, Radio, travel logs, 1925-1963](#)

BOX 3	Music box advertisements, 1897-1900, undated
FOLDER 38	
BOX 3	Phonograph advertisements, 1897-1923
FOLDER 39	
BOX 3	Piano advertisements, 1897-1909
FOLDER 40	
BOX 3	Recording advertisements, 1904-1929, 1969
FOLDER 41	
BOX 3	Miscellaneous advertisements, 1898-1939, undated
FOLDER 42	
BOX 3	Calendar from the Capehart Collection, 1948
FOLDER 43	
BOX 3	Clippings, 1932-1977 See also Oversize Folder 66, Clippings, 1897-1961, undated
FOLDER 44	
	Please use photocopies in folder 45.
BOX 3	Photocopies of clippings

Series IV. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated

Container

Contents

FOLDER 45

Please use these photocopies rather than the fragile originals in folder 44.
Greeting cards, undated

BOX 3

FOLDER 46

BOX 3

Phonograph diagrams, undated

FOLDER 47

BOX 4

Postcards and pictorial envelopes, 1908-1947, undated

FOLDER 48

BOX 4

Record inserts for Edison cylinders, circa 1912-1914

FOLDER 49

For cylinders #1828, 1889, 2024, 2034, 2051, 2063, 2142, 2152, 2219,
2269, 2288, 2290, and 2389.

BOX 4

Miscellaneous, undated

FOLDER 50

Series V. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

.42 linear feet

RPA 00163 (box 4)

Series V contains approximately 75 photographs (black-and-white and color) as well as 7 slides and 32 negatives. Many of the photographs in this series were printed from copy negatives of older photographs or images from journals and books. Included are photographs of Isabelle Sayers displaying equipment from her collection and portraits of inventors Thomas Edison and Emile Berliner. Also represented are various actors and musicians, with a particular focus on Elsie Janis, a Columbus, Ohio, native and star of many vaudeville productions. Photographs of recording equipment and phonograph advertisements are also present. Three scrapbooks are included in this series. One contains Isabelle Sayers's family photographs and related ephemera; the two others include portraits and clippings of Broadway, movie, and recording personalities. Photographs are arranged alphabetically by subject or type; miscellaneous negatives and photographs are filed at the end.

BOX 4

Audio equipment, 1962, undated

FOLDER 51

BOX 4

Emile Berliner portraits and equipment, undated

FOLDER 52

Prints made from copy negatives.

BOX 4

Thomas Edison and the gravestone of Samuel Edison, 1969, and undated

FOLDER 53

[See also Oversize Folder 70, Photographs and prints, 1923 and undated](#)

One image is a copy.

BOX 4

Elsie Janis portraits, circa 1895-1920, undated

FOLDER 54

Some are copies.

BOX 4

Photographs of phonograph advertisements, undated

FOLDER 55

BOX 4

Portraits of actors and musicians, undated

FOLDER 56

Included are images of Helen Clark, Glen Ellison, Kirsten Flagsted, Ada Jones, Helen Jepson, Betsy Lee Shepherd, and Blanche Thebourn.
Most are copies.

Series V. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 4 FOLDER 57	Isabelle Sayers with collection and musicians, circa 1945-1975
BOX 4 FOLDER 58-61	Scrapbooks, 1886-circa 1960 Includes family photographs, images of Broadway and theater stars, and ephemera.
BOX 4 FOLDER 62	Miscellaneous negatives, undated Most are copy negatives.
BOX 4 FOLDER 63	Miscellaneous photographs, 1899, undated

Series VI. Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated

2.04 linear feet

RPC 00001 (box 5); RPM 00002 (box 6)

Oversize materials include posters, broadsides, photographs, prints, and newspaper and magazine clippings. A small collection of broadsides for early concerts and equipment demonstrations are mostly undated.

Oversize photographs are all of Thomas A. Edison or his inventions; also included in this folder are several copies of an undated wood block print of Edison. Clippings related to Thomas A. Edison (a few are full copies of publications focusing on his career or death), Elsie Janis and other musicians. Oversize advertisements are also included.

BOX 5 FOLDER 64	Advertisements, 1910-1923, undated
BOX 5 FOLDER 65	Broadsides, undated
BOX 5 FOLDER Oversize 66	Clippings, undated Photocopies of oversize clippings; please use these rather than the fragile originals.
BOX 5 FOLDER 67-68	Clippings, 1897-1961, undated Please use the photocopies of these clippings housed in folder 66.
BOX 5 FOLDER 69	Publications, 1859, 1919-1973
BOX 5 FOLDER Oversize 70	Photographs and prints, 1923, undated
BOX 6	Posters, circa 1929-1930, undated Rolled.

Separated Materials

Some publications, especially record catalogs, that originally formed part of the Sayers papers have been cataloged separately and added to the Library's general collections.