

**ISABELLE SAYERS COLLECTION**

3.7 linear feet  
6 boxes  
ca. 1886-1980  
bulk dates 1920-1980

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

Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division  
Library of Congress

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March 2004

## Biography

Isabelle S. Sayers (1914-1981) was an avid collector of early recordings and audio equipment. Sayers' primary interest was in rare items, particularly those from the Incunabula period (1884-1905) of the early sound recording era. Sayers, one of the few female collectors of the mid-20th century, expanded her collection over a period of at least 30 years by placing advertisements in local newspapers and collector newsletters, and developing relationships with collectors and antique dealers nationwide. Sayers displayed and spoke about her collection locally; in 1959 she appeared on WBNS-TV to demonstrate early machines in her collection. She 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* (Dover Publications, Inc. New York: 1981) and *The Rifle Queen, Annie Oakley* (Sayers, 1973). Both incorporated historical photographs from her own collection as illustrations.

Isabelle Sayers resided with her husband, Frank T. Sayers, in Columbus, Ohio from ca. 1953 through 1971. The couple lived in Ostrander, Ohio from 1971 until her death in December, 1981.

## Scope and Content

The Isabelle Sayers Collection consists of the paper records created and gathered by Sayers as she assembled her collection of early recordings and audio equipment. These papers were part of a larger gift 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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, 4000 discs, and 50 antique phonographs and related equipment, and assorted objects such as statues of the Victor dog, Edison banks and old needle tins. Some publications, especially record catalogs, donated with the Sayers Collection have been cataloged and added to the Library's general collections.

This collection of paper and photographic materials from the Sayers Collection dates from ca. 1895 to 1980, but many of the items are undated. The collection is arranged in six series: Correspondence, Collection Notes, Printed Materials, Ephemera, Photographs and Oversize Materials.

## Series Descriptions

### **Series I. Correspondence (1951-1980, n.d.)**, .4 linear feet

Series I consists of correspondence between Isabelle Sayers and collectors, experts and dealers. Correspondence is arranged chronologically; one folder of undated material is filed at the end of the series. 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).

**Series II. Collection Notes (1919-1972, n.d.)**, .21 linear feet

Series II consists of acquisition notes, equipment descriptions, lecture notes, and other items. Included is a diary dating from circa 1952-1959 with notes about her 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.

**Series III. Printed Materials (1923-1977, n.d.)**, .42 linear feet

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.

**Series IV. Ephemera (1907-1977, n.d.)**, .21 linear feet

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.

**Series V. Photographs (ca. 1895-1975, n.d.)**, .42 linear feet

Series V consists of approximately 75 photographs (black and white and color) as well as 7 slides and 32 negatives. Many of the photographs in this series are 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.

**Series VI. Oversize Materials (1897-1965, n.d.)**, 2.04 linear feet

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 relate 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.

**Provenance**

This collection was donated to the Library of Congress in several increments by Isabelle S. Sayers in 1981, and then by Frank T. Sayers in memory of his wife between 1982 and 1987.

**Series I: Correspondence (1951-1980, n.d.)**

Correspondence is arranged by date, with undated materials filed at the end of the series.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>	
1 (RPA 00160)	1	Correspondence	1951-1957
	2	Correspondence	1958-1959
	3	Correspondence	1960-1961
	4	Correspondence	1962-1963
	5	Correspondence	1964-1965
	6	Correspondence	1966-1967
	7	Correspondence	1968-1969
	8	Correspondence	1970-1971
	9	Correspondence	1972-1976
	10	Correspondence	1977-1978
	11	Correspondence	1979-1980
	12	Correspondence, undated	n.d.

**Series II: Collection Notes (1919-1972, n.d.)**

Materials in this series are filed alphabetically by description.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>		<u>Date</u>
[1 (RPA 00160)]	13	Addresses	n.d.
	14	Diary of collection and acquisition notes	ca. 1952-1959
2 (RPA 00161)	15	Equipment descriptions	n.d.
	16	Janis, Elsie - notes and ephemera	1919-1972
	17	Lecture notes and miscellaneous writings	n.d.
	18	Receipts	1958-1975
	19	Miscellaneous collection notes	n.d.

**Series III: Printed Materials (1923-1977, n.d.)**

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

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>
[2 (RPA 00161)]	Journals/Newsletters	
	20	<i>The Music Box: An international magazine of mechanical music</i> (vol. 7, no. 1) 1975
	21	<i>Music Box Society Newsletter</i> , No. 4 1975 Mar
	22	<i>Music Memories Monthly</i> , Vol. 3, No. 4 1963 June
	23-24	<i>The Ragtime Society</i> 1962-1966
	25-26	<i>The Ragtimer</i> 1967-1973
	Pamphlets	
	27-28	Audio Equipment 1923-1977
	29	Edison, Thomas Alva (biographical) 1928, 1973
	30	Music programs and guides 1910-1929
3 (RPA 00162)	31	Radio, travel logs 1925-1963
	32	Radio, technical guides 1923-1930
	33	<i>The Rifle Queen: Annie Oakley</i> (by Isabelle Sayers) [3 copies] 1973
	34-36	Record price lists, advertisements, and catalogs 1930-1981, n.d.
	37	Reprints n.d.

#### Series IV. Ephemera (1907-1977, n.d.)

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

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>	
3 (RPA 00162)	Advertisements		
	<i>See also: Oversize</i>		
	38	Music box advertisements	1897-1900, n.d.
	39	Phonograph advertisements	1897-1923
	40	Piano advertisements	1897-1909
	41	Recording advertisements	1904-1929, 1969
	42	Miscellaneous advertisements	1898-1939, n.d.
	43	Calendar, from the Capehart Collection	1948
	44	Clippings [please use photocopies in folder 45] <i>See also: Oversize</i>	1932-1977, n.d.
	45	[Photocopies of clippings - use instead of originals]	
	46	Greeting cards	n.d.
	47	Phonograph diagrams	n.d.
	4 (RPA 00163)	48	Postcards and pictorial envelopes
49		Record Inserts for Edison Cylinders (#1828, 1889, 2024, 2034, 2051, 2063, 2142, 2152, 2219, 2269, 2288, 2290, 2389)	ca. 1912-1914
50		Miscellaneous	n.d.

### Series V. Photographs (1886-1975, n.d.)

Photographs are arranged alphabetically by subject or type; miscellaneous negatives and photographs are filed at the end.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>
[4 (RPA 00163)]	51 Audio equipment	1962, n.d.
	52 Berliner, Emile - portraits and equipment [prints from copy negatives]	n.d.
	53 Edison, Thomas and gravestone of Samuel Edison [one is a copy] <i>See also: Oversize - Photographs and Prints</i>	1969, n.d.
	54 Janis, Elsie - portraits [some are copies]	ca. 1895-1920, n.d.
	55 Photographs of phonograph Advertisements	n.d.
	56 Portraits of actors and musicians (including Helen Clark, Glen Ellison, Kirsten Flagsted, Ada Jones, Helen Jepson, Betsy Lee Shepherd and Blanche Theborn)[most are copies]	n.d.
	57 Sayers, Isabelle, with collection and musicians	ca. 1945-1975
	58-61 Scrapbooks [Family photographs, Broadway and theater stars and ephemera]	1886-ca. 1960
	62 Miscellaneous negatives [most are copy negatives]	n.d.
	63 Miscellaneous photographs	1899, n.d.

**Series VI. Oversize (1897-1965, n.d.)**

Oversize materials are arranged alphabetically by format.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>		<u>Date</u>
5 (RPC 00001)	64	Advertisements	1910-1923, n.d.
	65	Broadsides	n.d.
	66	Clippings [photocopies of oversize clippings; please use these rather than originals]	
	67-68	Clippings [Do not use - please use photocopies of clippings in folder 66]	1897-1961, n.d.
	69	Publications	1859, 1919-1973
	70	Photographs and Prints	1923, n.d.
6 (RPE 00002)		Posters [rolled]	ca. 1929-1930, n.d.