

Isabelle Sayers Papers



**National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2007**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/mbrsrs.contact>

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Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/eadmbrs.rs004001>

Prepared by Jennifer Lewis

Encoded by Karen Fishman and Marsha Maguire, 2007
Revised 2023-03

Collection Summary

Title: Isabelle Sayers papers

Span Dates: circa 1886-1980

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1920-1980)

Creator: Sayers, Isabelle S.

Extent: 3.7 linear feet (6 boxes, 2 map case folders, approximately 3,250 items)

Language: Collection materials are in English

Location: Recorded Sound Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2008647462>

Summary: 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); RPD 00041 (box 6)

Map case: RPM 00002-00003 (map folders 1-2)

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Deakins, Duane D.--Correspondence.

Ferguson, Clarence A.--Correspondence.

Green, Lew--Correspondence.

Janis, Elsie, 1889-1956.

Kishpaugh, Grace--Correspondence.

Kishpaugh, Harlan--Correspondence.

Marken, Lawrence McKinley--Correspondence.

Odell, L. Brevoort--Correspondence.

Sayers, Isabelle S.

Sayers, Isabelle S.--Archives.

Walsh, Jim, 1903-1990--Correspondence.

Organizations

Isabelle Sayers Collection (Library of Congress)

Subjects

Sound recordings--Collectors and collecting--United States.

Sound--Recording and reproducing--Equipment and supplies.

Women collectors--United States--Archives.

Titles

Papers from the Isabelle Sayers collection, circa 1886-1980

Form/Genre

Catalogs.

Diaries.

Ephemera.

Letters (Correspondence).

Newspaper clippings.

Notes.

Pamphlets.

Photographs.

Postcards.

Posters.

Scrapbooks.

Provenance

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.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

The papers were processed by Jennifer Lewis in March 2004.

Copyright Status

Restrictions may exist on copying, quoting, or publishing materials included in the collection. For additional information, contact a reference librarian in the [Recorded Sound Research Center](#), National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Access and Restrictions

The Isabelle Sayers Papers are open for research. Advance notice is required; contact a reference librarian in the [Recorded Sound Research Center](#), National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4690; (202) 707-7833.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [Container number, eg., Box 3], Isabelle Sayers Papers, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress.

Biographical Note

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 Note

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

The papers are arranged in six series:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1951-1980
- Series 2: Collection Notes, 1919-1972
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1923-1977, undated
- Series 4: Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1886-1975
- Series 6: Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated

Description of Series

Container

Series

Series 1. Correspondence, 1951-1980, undated

Series 1 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 2. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated

Series 2 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 3. Printed Materials, 1923-1977, undated

Series 3 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 4. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated

Series 4 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 6 contains oversize ephemera, such as promotional posters and banners.

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 5. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

Series 5 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 6. Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated

Oversize materials include posters, broadsides, photographs, prints, newspaper and magazine clippings, and posters. 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. Promotional posters and banners for Edison and Graphophone presentations and products are also included.

See also Series 4, Ephemera.

Container List

Container	Contents
	Series 1. Correspondence, 1951-1980, undated
	.4 linear feet RPA 00160 (box 1)
	Series 1 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 FOLDER 1	Correspondence, 1951-1957
BOX 1 FOLDER 2	Correspondence, 1958-1959
BOX 1 FOLDER 3	Correspondence, 1960-1961
BOX 1 FOLDER 4	Correspondence, 1962-1963
BOX 1 FOLDER 5	Correspondence, 1964-1965
BOX 1 FOLDER 6	Correspondence, 1966-1967
BOX 1 FOLDER 7	Correspondence, 1968-1969
BOX 1 FOLDER 8	Correspondence, 1970-1971
BOX 1 FOLDER 9	Correspondence, 1972-1976
BOX 1 FOLDER 10	Correspondence, 1977-1978
BOX 1 FOLDER 11	Correspondence, 1979-1980
BOX 1 FOLDER 12	Correspondence, undated
	Series 2. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated
	.21 linear feet RPA 00160 (box 1); RPA 00161 (box 2)
	Series 2 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 FOLDER 13	Addresses, undated
BOX 1 FOLDER 14	Diary of collection and acquisition notes, 1952-1959
BOX 2 FOLDER 15	Equipment descriptions, undated
BOX 2 FOLDER 16	Elsie Janis notes and ephemera, 1919-1972
BOX 2 FOLDER 17	Lecture notes and miscellaneous writings, undated

Series 2. Collection Notes, 1919-1972, undated

Container	Contents
BOX 2 FOLDER 18	Receipts, 1958-1975
BOX 2 FOLDER 19	Miscellaneous collection notes, undated

Series 3. Printed Materials, 1923-1977, undated

.42 linear feet

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

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

Pamphlets

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

Series 4. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated

.21 linear feet

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

Series 4 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 6 contains oversize ephemera, such as promotional posters and banners.

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 FOLDER 38	Music box advertisements, 1897-1900, undated
BOX 3 FOLDER 39	Phonograph advertisements, 1897-1923
BOX 3 FOLDER 40	Piano advertisements, 1897-1909

Series 4. Ephemera, 1907-1977, undated

Container	Contents
BOX 3 FOLDER 41	Recording advertisements, 1904-1929, 1969
BOX 3 FOLDER 42	Miscellaneous advertisements, 1898-1939, undated
BOX 3 FOLDER 43	Calendar from the Capehart Collection, 1948
BOX 3 FOLDER 44	Clippings, 1932-1977 <i>See also oversize Folder 66, Clippings, 1897-1961, undated</i> Please use photocopies in folder 45.
BOX 3 FOLDER 45	Photocopies of clippings Please use these photocopies rather than the fragile originals in folder 44.
BOX 3 FOLDER 46	Greeting cards, undated
BOX 3 FOLDER 47	Phonograph diagrams, undated
BOX 4 FOLDER 48	Postcards and pictorial envelopes, 1908-1947, undated
BOX 4 FOLDER 49	Record inserts for Edison cylinders, circa 1912-1914 For cylinders #1828, 1889, 2024, 2034, 2051, 2063, 2142, 2152, 2219, 2269, 2288, 2290, and 2389.
BOX 4 FOLDER 50	Miscellaneous, undated

Series 5. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

.42 linear feet

RPA 00163 (box 4)

Series 5 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 FOLDER 51	Audio equipment, 1962, undated
BOX 4 FOLDER 52	Emile Berliner portraits and equipment, undated Prints made from copy negatives.
BOX 4 FOLDER 53	Thomas Edison and the gravestone of Samuel Edison, 1969, and undated <i>See also oversize Folder 70, Photographs and prints, 1923 and undated</i> One image is a copy.
BOX 4 FOLDER 54	Elsie Janis portraits, circa 1895-1920, undated Some are copies.
BOX 4 FOLDER 55	Photographs of phonograph advertisements, undated
BOX 4 FOLDER 56	Portraits of actors and musicians, undated Included are images of Helen Clark, Glen Ellison, Kirsten Flagsted, Ada Jones, Helen Jepson, Betsy Lee Shepherd, and Blanche Theborn. Most are copies.
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.

Series 5. Photographs, circa 1895-1975, undated

Container	Contents
BOX 4 FOLDER 63	Miscellaneous photographs, 1899, undated
Series 6. Oversize Materials, 1897-1965, undated	
2.04 linear feet	
RPC 00001 (box 5); RPD 00041 (box 6); RPM 00002-00003 (map folders 1-2)	
Oversize materials include posters, broadsides, photographs, prints, newspaper and magazine clippings, and posters. 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. Promotional posters and banners for Edison and Graphophone presentations and products are also included.	
See also Series 4, Ephemera.	
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 for Edison and Graphophone concert demonstrations, circa 1929-1930, undated Item ID: RS 826 G1-G3
FOLDER map folder 1	Edison and Okeh promotional banners, undated Item ID: RS 826 G4-G5 Map case: RPM 00002 (map folder 1)
FOLDER map folder 2	Edison promotional banner, undated Item ID: RS 826 G6 Map case: RPM 00003 (map folder 2)

Transfers

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.