

Joseph Nathan Kane Collection



**National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2009**

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

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/96702168>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsrs/eadmbrs.rs009006>

Prepared by Karen Fishman

Finding aid encoded by Marsha Maguire, 2009

Revised 2023-03

Collection Summary

Title: Joseph Nathan Kane collection

Span Dates: 1938-1939

Creator: Kane, Joseph Nathan, 1899-2002

Extent (Textual Materials): .5 linear feet (1 box)

Extent (Sound Recordings): 116 sound recordings, including 110 sound discs and 6 sound tape reels

Extent (Artifacts): 1 microphone

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/96702168>

Summary: The Joseph Nathan Kane Collection consists of original and preservation recordings of the radio program *Famous First Facts*, scripts and publicity materials from the program, and a vintage 1930s microphone.

Location of Textual Materials: RPA 00352

Location of Sound Recordings: IDB 00419-00524; IDC 00020-00023; RWD 7324-7329

Location of Artifact: On display in the Recorded Sound Research Center

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

Albright, Horace M. (Horace Marden), 1890-1987

Boyd, Louise Arner, 1887-1972

Connolly, James B. (James Brendan), 1868-1957

Dawley, J. Searle

Handy, W. C. (William Christopher), 1873-1958

Jarvis, Anna, 1864-1948

Kane, Joseph Nathan, 1899-2002--Archives.

Kane, Joseph Nathan, 1899-2002.

Lake, Simon, 1866-1945

Martin, Glenn L. (Glenn Luther), 1886-1955

McClure, S. S. (Samuel Sidney), 1857-1949

Murphy, William L. (William Lawrence), 1876-1959

Slater, Tom

Stimson, Julia C. (Julia Catherine), 1881-1948

Valentino, Thomas J.

Vanderhoof, Frank E., 1888-

Vincent, G. Robert

Young, Mahonri Mackintosh, 1877-1957

Subjects

Curiosities and wonders.

Titles

Famous first facts (Radio program)

Form/Genre

Microphones.

Promotional materials.

Radio interviews.

Radio scripts.

Occupations

Authors.
Inventors.
Radio personalities.

Provenance

The collection was donated to the Library of Congress by Joseph Nathan Kane in 1995.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

The collection was processed by Karen Fishman in December 2009.

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 Joseph Nathan Collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [Container number, eg., Box 1], or [Sound recording number, eg., RWD 7324], Joseph Nathan Collection, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress.

Biographical Note

Joseph Nathan Kane (1899-2002) was a radio host and author of the standard reference works *Famous First Facts*, *Facts about the States*, and *Facts about the Presidents*, among others.

Born in New York City, Kane attended Columbia University in 1917 but dropped out before finishing his degree. He then enrolled at the Columbia School of Engineering, earning a certificate in electrical engineering.

After graduating Kane worked in the export office of the New York confectioner D. Auerbach and Sons, using his language skills in French, German, and Spanish. While there he began to write articles about the export business. From this initial effort, Kane syndicated his columns to several trade journals, capitalizing on their popularity by creating the Kane Feature News Syndicate and becoming an accredited correspondent for the U.S. State Department.

Kane traveled extensively throughout the United States, gathering information for his columns and visiting every state and almost every city. While doing research for a book on inventions, he found that many inventors and innovators were never given proper credit. His decision to correct this oversight resulted in his first publication, *Famous First Facts*.

Building on the book's success, Kane was asked to host a radio program of the same title. Guests who claimed a place in the show's "hall of famous firsts" represented a wide range of activity and included the holder of the first safety pin patent, the

victim of the first auto accident, the first X-ray photographer in the United States, and the first woman taxicab driver. Kane, billed as an eminent authority on "firsts," would either reject or accept a guest's claim to fame.

The half-hour program was broadcast on New York radio station WOR over the Mutual Broadcasting network from August 1, 1938, until July 13, 1939. The on-air interviewer for most of the programs was Tom Slater.

In 1959 *Facts about the Presidents* was published and soon became a staple in most libraries. For each president, the book provided biographic information as well as facts about cabinet selections, legislative bills, elections, favorite pastimes, nicknames, marital status, and much more. It has been revised six times.

Kane's next book, *Facts about the States*, was published in 1989 and provided geographic, demographic, economic, political, and cultural information about each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Kane published many more books during his lifetime and also wrote articles for trade journals and newspapers.

In his later years, Kane moved to Palm Beach, Florida. He died on September 22, 2002, at the age of 103.

Scope and Content Note

The Joseph Nathan Kane Collection consists of original and preservation recordings of the radio program *Famous First Facts*, scripts and publicity materials from the program, and a vintage 1930s microphone.

Recordings from the program include 106 12-inch 78-rpm acetate discs, four 16-inch 78-rpm acetate discs, and six 10-inch tape reels (preservation copy).

The paper materials date from 1938 to 1939 and include one folder of publicity materials and 21 scripts dating from November, 1938, to July, 1939.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in four series:

- Series 1: Publicity Materials, 1938-1939, and undated
- Series 2: Scripts, 1938-1939
- Series 3: Sound Recordings, 1938-1939
- Series 4: Microphone, circa 1930-1939

Description of Series

Container

BOX-FOLDER 1/1

Series

Series 1. Publicity Materials, 1938-1939 , and undated

Series 1 contains publicity materials from the radio program Famous First Facts. These include press releases from July, 1938, to June, 1939; fact sheets about the program from the WOR Program Department; a script from a 1939 WOR promotional program featuring an interview with guest Joseph Nathan Kane; and two scripts from the radio program, Vanishing New Yorkers.

Series 2. Scripts, 1938-1939

This series contains 21 scripts from Famous First Facts, many if not all, annotated by Joseph Nathan Kane. The series does not contain scripts from the complete run of the program. Beginning with the date of the first broadcast, November 28, 1938, they continue to January 26, 1939, and then run from April 20, 1939, until July 13 of that year. The gap represents February 2 through April 13, 1939.

Series 3. Sound Recordings, 1938-1939

Sound recordings in the collection include original 78 rpm discs (12-inch and 16-inch) and analog tape reels (10-inch). The tapes were duplicated from the original discs as a preservation copy by the Library of Congress Recording Laboratory in 1995.

Broadcast over the Mutual network, Famous First Facts was an interview program with occasional historical dramatizations. Persons interviewed included, among many others, Frank E. Vanderhoof, author of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933; Anna Jarvis, founder of Mother's Day; J. Searle Dawley, an early motion picture director; Mahonri Young, sculptor and grandson of Brigham Young; W.C. Handy, musician; Simon Lake, inventor of the modern-day submarine; Julia C. Stimson, first woman major in the Army Nursing Corps; S.S. McClure, cartoonist; G. Robert Vincent, collector of recordings of famous people; Thomas J. Valentino, creator of recorded sound effects; James Brendan Connolly, medal winner in the 1896 Olympics; Horace M. Albright, conservationist; Glenn L. Martin, airplane designer and builder; Louise Arner Boyd, polar explorer; and William L. Murphy, inventor of the Murphy bed.

Series 4. Microphone, circa 1930-1939

Vintage 1930s microphone.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	Series 1. Publicity Materials, 1938-1939 , and undated 1 folder RPA 00352 (box 1) Series 1 contains publicity materials from the radio program Famous First Facts. These include press releases from July, 1938, to June, 1939; fact sheets about the program from the WOR Program Department; a script from a 1939 WOR promotional program featuring an interview with guest Joseph Nathan Kane; and two scripts from the radio program, Vanishing New Yorkers.
	Series 2. Scripts, 1938-1939 21 folders RPA 00352 (box 1) This series contains 21 scripts from Famous First Facts, many if not all, annotated by Joseph Nathan Kane. The series does not contain scripts from the complete run of the program. Beginning with the date of the first broadcast, November 28, 1938, they continue to January 26, 1939, and then run from April 20, 1939, until July 13 of that year. The gap represents February 2 through April 13, 1939.
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	Famous First Facts, 1938-11-28
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	Famous First Facts, 1938-12-05
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Famous First Facts, 1938-12
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Famous First Facts, 1938-12-19
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Famous First Facts, 1938-12-29
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Famous First Facts, 1938-12-31
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Famous First Facts, 1939-01-05
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	Famous First Facts, 1939-01-12
BOX-FOLDER 1/9	Famous First Facts, 1939-01-19
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Famous First Facts, 1939-01-26
BOX-FOLDER 1/11	Famous First Facts, 1939-04-20
BOX-FOLDER 1/12	Famous First Facts, 1939-04-27
BOX-FOLDER 1/13	Famous First Facts, 1939-05-04
BOX-FOLDER 1/14	Famous First Facts, 1939-05-11
BOX-FOLDER 1/15	Famous First Facts, 1939-05-18
BOX-FOLDER 1/16	Famous First Facts, 1939-05-25
BOX-FOLDER 1/17	Famous First Facts, 1939-06-08
BOX-FOLDER 1/18	Famous First Facts, 1939-06-16
BOX-FOLDER 1/19	Famous First Facts, 1939-06-22
BOX-FOLDER 1/20	Famous First Facts, 1939-07-06
BOX-FOLDER 1/21	Famous First Facts, 1939-07-13
	Series 3. Sound Recordings, 1938-1939 106 sound discs 4 sound discs 6 sound tape reels

Series 3. Sound Recordings, 1938-1939

Container

Contents

IDB 00419-00524 (12-inch 78-rpm discs)

IDC 00020-00023 (16-inch 78-rpm discs)

RWD 7324-7329 (10-inch tape reels, preservation copy)

Sound recordings in the collection include original 78 rpm discs (12-inch and 16-inch) and analog tape reels (10-inch). The tapes were duplicated from the original discs as a preservation copy by the Library of Congress Recording Laboratory in 1995.

Broadcast over the Mutual network, Famous First Facts was an interview program with occasional historical dramatizations. Persons interviewed included, among many others, Frank E. Vanderhoof, author of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933; Anna Jarvis, founder of Mother's Day; J. Searle Dawley, an early motion picture director; Mahonri Young, sculptor and grandson of Brigham Young; W.C. Handy, musician; Simon Lake, inventor of the modern-day submarine; Julia C. Stimson, first woman major in the Army Nursing Corps; S.S. McClure, cartoonist; G. Robert Vincent, collector of recordings of famous people; Thomas J. Valentino, creator of recorded sound effects; James Brendan Connolly, medal winner in the 1896 Olympics; Horace M. Albright, conservationist; Glenn L. Martin, airplane designer and builder; Louise Arner Boyd, polar explorer; and William L. Murphy, inventor of the Murphy bed.

Series 4. Microphone, circa 1930-1939

1 microphone

On display in the Recorded Sound Research Center

Vintage 1930s microphone.

Related Sound Recordings

Joseph Nathan Kane speaking in the Mary Pickford Theater, Library of Congress, 1995-10-11. 1 sound tape reel (circa 60 minutes). RWC 9489. [Library of Congress catalog record](#)

WOR oral history material: interview with Joseph Nathan Kane, circa 1980s, Marianne Macy, interviewer. 2 sound cassettes. WOR Collection, RYL 2615-2616. Transcript of interview available in the Library of Congress Recorded Sound Research Center. [Library of Congress catalog record](#)