

# Amateur Hour Collection

Guides to Special Collections in the Music Division of the Library of Congress



Music Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
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## Collection Summary

**Title:** Amateur Hour Collection

**Inclusive Dates:** 1934-1950s

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1934-1948)

**Call No.:** ML31.A4

**Creator:** Bowes, Edward, Major, 1874-1946

**Size:** approximately 8,500 items

**Size:** 20 boxes

**Size:** 9 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2010563506>

**Summary:** The *Original Amateur Hour* was a popular radio talent show hosted by Edward Bowes (stagename, Major Bowes) from 1935-1952. The collection primarily consists of more than 7,000 applications from contestants who appeared on the program between 1934 and 1948. A small amount of administrative papers dating from the late 1940s and 1950s, as well as materials relating to the Mexican version of the program, *La hora internacional del aficionado*, are also included. Filed with the contestant applications are letters of introduction, reference letters, and other documents sent by prospective contestants. Applications from conventional performers such as musicians, dancers, singers, and impersonators are most numerous, but there are also applications from novelty acts, such as a human piccolo, a group of hand standing singers, and a group who played harmonicas with fire extinguishers. Of particular interest are applications from performers who are now well-known, including Teresa Brewer, Stubby Kaye, Robert Merrill, Beverly Sills, and Frank Sinatra. Photographs from the 1940s and 1950s provide a visual record of the show, while correspondence to and from program staff members recount some of the program's business transactions. Scripts, promotional material, and advertising and sponsor documents also are part of the collection.

## 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

Bowes, Edward, Major, 1874-1946.

Brewer, Teresa.

Graham, Lewis, 1900-1983.

Kaye, Stubby.

Mack, Ted.

Merrill, Robert, 1917-2004.

Sills, Beverly.

Sinatra, Frank, 1915-1998.

### Subjects

Popular music--United States--History and criticism.

Talent shows--United States--History.

### Titles

*Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour collection, 1934-1957*

*Original amateur hour (Radio program)--Sources.*

*Original amateur hour (Television program)--Sources.*

*Original Amateur Hour collection, 1934-1957*

### Form/Genre

Biographical sketches.

Business correspondence.

Cilippings (Information artifacts)

Letters of introduction.  
Letters of recommendation.  
Photographs.  
Promotional materials.  
Radio scripts.  
Television scripts.

## Provenance

Deposit, Joseph Brown, 1970

## Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

## Processing History

Robert Saladini processed The Amateur Hour Collection in 1993 with assistance from Timothy Bullard, Cheryl Dempsey, Michael A. Ferrando, and Claudia Widgery. The original finding aid was prepared with Corel WordPerfect 5.1. Michael A. Ferrando edited and coded the finding aid in 2004.

## Related Material

The Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division has in its custody both the Original Amateur Hour radio broadcasts dating from 1935 to 1944 and the television recordings of the show from 1948 to 1968.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright on the materials of the Amateur Hour Collection is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

The Amateur Hour Collection is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Amateur Hour Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Agency Sketch

Date	Event
1934 April	First radio broadcast of <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> on WHN, New York
1935	William Edward Maguiness (stage name Ted Mack) joined Bowes as emcee and talent scout
1935 March 24	Coast to coast broadcast on NBC radio with Chase & Sanborn as sponsor

1935 June	<i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> named the most listened to radio program in the United States
1935 September 8	Performance by the Hoboken Four, featuring Frank Sinatra
1936 September 17	<i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> moved to CBS radio, with Chrysler Corporation as sponsor
1944	Bowes retired for health reasons
1945	Radio broadcast of <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> suspended
1946 June 13	Bowes died in Rumson, New Jersey
1948 January 18	<i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> revived on television by Dumont Studios, with Ted Mack as emcee
1948 October 29	P. Lorillard Company became a sponsor
1949 October 4	First national television broadcast of <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> , on NBC
1952	Final radio broadcast
1953 April 25	Pet Milk became a sponsor
1955 October 30	First broadcast on ABC under the name <i>Ted Mack and the Original Amateur Hour</i>
1957 January 19	First broadcast of <i>La hora internacional del aficionado</i> , a Mexican version of the program
1957 July 1	Program returned to NBC
1959 May 1	Program broadcast on CBS
1960 March 7	Program returned to ABC
1960 October 2	Program returned to CBS
1970 September 20	Final broadcast

## Scope and Content Note

The records of the Amateur Hour Collection primarily consist of more than 7,000 applications from contestants who appeared on the *Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour* radio program between 1934 and 1948. The remainder of the materials in the collection are administrative papers dating from the late 1940s and 1950s. Although these materials comprise only a small percentage of the administrative papers related to the program, they are notable in that they provide some insight into its day to day operations. Materials related to the Mexican version of the program, *La hora internacional del aficionado*, are also present.

The Amateur Hour collection is organized in eight series. The first and largest series, [Contestant Materials](#), contains the aforementioned applications, as well as biographical sketches and lists of performers. Filed with these applications are letters of introduction, reference letters, and other documents submitted by prospective contestants. Both the "type of entertainment" and "details of interest" responses on the applications provide an overview of the broad range of amateur performance genres of the period. Applications from conventional performers, such as musicians, dancers, singers, and impersonators, are most numerous, but there are also applications from novelty acts such as a human piccolo, a group of hand standing singers, and a group who played harmonicas with fire extinguishers. Of particular interest are applications from performers, now well-known, who "got their break" on the show, including Teresa Brewer, Stubby Kaye, Robert Merrill, Beverly Sills, and Frank Sinatra.

The second series, [Photographs](#), consists of black and white prints, arranged by subject, that provide a fascinating visual record of the show from the 1940s and 1950s. A small series of [Correspondence](#) that follows contains letters to and from program staff members Lou Goldberg, Daniel Manjarrez, and Harry McWilliams pertaining to program business transactions. The remaining series consist of small quantities of administrative and operational materials, programs, clippings, and other miscellaneous items. General program information, advertising packages, and ratings information are included with the [Advertising/Sponsor Materials](#), while scripts in the collection are housed with the [Production Materials](#).

## Organization of the Amateur Hour Collection

The collection is organized in eight series:

- [Contestant Materials](#)
- [Photographs](#)

- [Correspondence](#)
- [Advertising/Sponsor Materials](#)
- [Promotional Materials](#)
- [Production Materials](#)
- [Financial and Legal Papers](#)
- [Miscellany, 1934-1957](#)

## Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-16	<p><b><u>Contestant Materials</u></b></p> <p>Applications and other related materials of contestants for the Amateur Hour. The majority of these pertain specifically to the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948.</p> <p>Organized as three subseries.</p> <p><b><u>Applications and Related Documents</u></b></p> <p>Chiefly applications from contestants who appeared on the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948. Includes letters of introduction, reference letters, and other related materials.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of group or last name of performer.</p> <p><b><u>Biographical Sketches</u></b></p> <p>Brief biographical sketches of contestants who appeared on the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of group or last name of performer.</p> <p><b><u>Lists of Performers</u></b></p> <p>Typescript lists of performers from the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i>.</p> <p>Arranged by nationality.</p>
BOX 16	<p><b><u>Photographs</u></b></p> <p>Black and white prints of contestants, Major Bowes, Ted Mack, and other aspects of production.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 17	<p><b><u>Correspondence</u></b></p> <p>Chiefly letters and other communications related to business operations and performers on the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i>.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 17	<p><b><u>Advertising/Sponsor Materials</u></b></p> <p>Materials created or generated by the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> to advertise its unique entertainment value for potential investors or broadcasters.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 18	<p><b><u>Promotional Materials</u></b></p> <p>Publications, brochures, and packages created by the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i>.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject or genre.</p>
BOX 18	<p><b><u>Production Materials</u></b></p> <p>Materials used during the creation of <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> programming.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 19	<p><b><u>Financial and Legal Papers</u></b></p> <p>Financial and legal documents related to the operations and expenses of the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i>.</p>

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

**BOX 19-20**

**Miscellany, 1934-1957**

Clippings, programs, notes, one award, and other assorted materials.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

# Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-16	<p><b>Contestant Materials</b></p> <p>Applications and other related materials of contestants for the Amateur Hour. The majority of these pertain specifically to the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948.</p> <p>Organized as three subseries.</p> <p><b>Applications and Related Documents</b></p> <p>Chiefly applications from contestants who appeared on the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948. Includes letters of introduction, reference letters, and other related materials.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of group or last name of performer.</p>
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	Aalrud -- Alvi
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	Amato -- Astroff
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Atanasoff -- Banks
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Barad -- Beloff
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Benak -- Bishop
BOX-FOLDER 2/1	Bjornie -- Bombara
BOX-FOLDER 2/2	Bon Bons -- Bauner
BOX-FOLDER 2/3	Breen -- Brydof
BOX-FOLDER 2/4	Buchannan -- Capwell
BOX-FOLDER 2/5	Cardonna -- Caye
BOX-FOLDER 2/6	Clancy -- Connie
BOX-FOLDER 3/1	Connors -- Cross
BOX-FOLDER 3/2	Crowell -- Davis
BOX-FOLDER 3/3	Davy -- Dexter
BOX-FOLDER 3/4	Diamond -- Dottie and Bobbie
BOX-FOLDER 3/5	Dougherty -- Dynamic Harmonica Four
BOX-FOLDER 4/1	Eagle -- Ely
BOX-FOLDER 4/2	Emerick -- Farrow
BOX-FOLDER 4/3	Fasany -- Fiore
BOX-FOLDER 4/4	Five Aces -- Flatbush Floogies
BOX-FOLDER 4/5	Fleer -- Foster
BOX-FOLDER 4/6	Four Amateur Rogues -- Fourtan
BOX-FOLDER 5/1	Fox -- Fyfe
BOX-FOLDER 5/2	Gaderick -- Gaynor
BOX-FOLDER 5/3	Geankoplis -- Giusti
BOX-FOLDER 5/4	Goerger -- Grazzini
BOX-FOLDER 5/5	Great Lakes Swing Sextet -- Gypsy Quartet
BOX-FOLDER 6/1	Hackman -- Harmony Four
BOX-FOLDER 6/2	Harold -- Hechl
BOX-FOLDER 6/3	Hedling -- Hjerpe
BOX-FOLDER 6/4	Hoag -- Hopkinson



## Contestant Materials

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 6/5	Horlbogen -- Hylselop
BOX-FOLDER 7/1	Idaho Ranch Boys -- Jive'n Five
BOX-FOLDER 7/2	Joan and Ernie -- Juvinall
BOX-FOLDER 7/3	Kaaren -- Keenan
BOX-FOLDER 7/4	Keister -- Kiwanis Quartette of Yonkers
BOX-FOLDER 8/1	Klaff -- Kwan
BOX-FOLDER 8/2	Laborde -- Lazzesi
BOX-FOLDER 8/3	Leah -- Leslie
BOX-FOLDER 8/4	Leuname -- Logue
BOX-FOLDER 8/5	Lohr -- Lyric Male Quartet
BOX-FOLDER 9/1	Maas -- MacVeigh
BOX-FOLDER 9/2	Macchiaverna -- Mansan
BOX-FOLDER 9/3	Maranville -- Maryella
BOX-FOLDER 9/4	Mäsch -- Melodie
BOX-FOLDER 9/5	Melodious Harmonica Trio -- Mike and Bill
BOX-FOLDER 10/1	Miki -- Mistichelli
BOX-FOLDER 10/2	Mitchel -- Morris, D.
BOX-FOLDER 10/3	Morris, M. -- Myers
BOX-FOLDER 10/4	Nadel -- Nogueira
BOX-FOLDER 10/5	Nona -- O'Neil
BOX-FOLDER 11/1	Ooms -- Pagin
BOX-FOLDER 11/2	Pagliarini -- Payne
BOX-FOLDER 11/3	Peace -- Pizzuto
BOX-FOLDER 11/4	Plantation Four -- Puzelli
BOX-FOLDER 11/5	Quantico Marine Quartet -- Rezits
BOX-FOLDER 12/1	Rhodes -- Robbins, R.
BOX-FOLDER 12/2	Robbins, S. -- Rondeau
BOX-FOLDER 12/3	Roosa -- Rozman
BOX-FOLDER 12/4	Rubenstein -- Sanders
BOX-FOLDER 12/5	Sandherr -- Scott
BOX-FOLDER 13/1	Seabee Quartet -- Shiff
BOX-FOLDER 13/2	Shilton -- Six Janitors
BOX-FOLDER 13/3	Six Jars of Jam -- Southwick
BOX-FOLDER 13/4	Spadafora -- Stewart
BOX-FOLDER 13/5	Stock -- Swing Sisters Trio
BOX-FOLDER 13/6	Swingers of Harmony -- Texas Wanderers
BOX-FOLDER 14/1	Thatcher -- Three Coxswains
BOX-FOLDER 14/2	Three Davis Brothers -- Three Mouth Organ Kings
BOX-FOLDER 14/3	Three Niblicks -- Towle
BOX-FOLDER 14/4	Tracy -- Tyler
BOX-FOLDER 14/5	Watcher and Freeman -- Weal
BOX-FOLDER 14/6	Wetherson -- Westward Ho!
BOX-FOLDER 15/1	Uccellini -- Vuylsteke
BOX-FOLDER 15/2	Whalen -- Williams, L.
BOX-FOLDER 15/3	Williams, M. -- Wittig
BOX-FOLDER 15/4	Wobnick -- Wyoming Range Buddies

## Contestant Materials

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 15/5	Yaffe -- Zyne
	<b>Biographical Sketches</b>
	Brief biographical sketches of contestants who appeared on the <i>Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour</i> radio program between 1934 and 1948. Arranged alphabetically by name of group or last name of performer.
BOX-FOLDER 16/1	All Girl Swing Band -- One Man Band
BOX-FOLDER 16/2	Ray, Kathleen -- White, Frances
	<b>Lists of Performers</b>
	Typescript lists of performers from the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> . Arranged by nationality.
BOX-FOLDER 16/3	American
BOX-FOLDER 16/4	Irish
BOX-FOLDER 16/5	Mexican
BOX 16	<b>Photographs</b>
	Black and white prints of contestants, Major Bowes, Ted Mack, and other aspects of production. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX-FOLDER 16/28	Bowes, Major
BOX-FOLDER 16/6	Cowboy acts
BOX-FOLDER 16/7	Dancers: adult, male
BOX-FOLDER 16/8	Dancers: adult, female
BOX-FOLDER 16/9	Dancers: child, female
BOX-FOLDER 16/10	Dancers: partners, adult
BOX-FOLDER 16/11	Dancers: partners, child
BOX-FOLDER 16/30	Game shows
BOX-FOLDER 16/12	Impersonators
	Instrumentalists
BOX-FOLDER 16/13	Accordion players
BOX-FOLDER 16/14	Bands
BOX-FOLDER 16/15	Bell ringers
BOX-FOLDER 16/16	Guitar players
BOX-FOLDER 16/17	Harmonica players
BOX-FOLDER 16/18	Piano players
BOX-FOLDER 16/19	Trumpet players
BOX-FOLDER 16/20	Xylophone players
BOX-FOLDER 16/29	Mack, Ted
BOX-FOLDER 16/33	Miscellany
BOX-FOLDER 16/26	Novelty acts
BOX-FOLDER 16/27	Performing Groups
BOX-FOLDER 16/32	Promotional banners and billboard
BOX-FOLDER 16/21	Roller-skaters
BOX-FOLDER 16/22	Singers: adult, male

## Photographs

### Container

### Contents

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BOX-FOLDER 16/23 Singers: adult, female  
BOX-FOLDER 16/24 Singers: child, male  
BOX-FOLDER 16/25 Singers: child, female  
BOX-FOLDER 16/31 Stage Set

### BOX 17

#### Correspondence

Chiefly letters and other communications related to business operations and performers on the *Original Amateur Hour*.  
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

BOX-FOLDER 17/25 Collage of commendatory letters received by Ted Mack  
BOX-FOLDER 17/1 Goldberg, Lou, 1936 June 26 -- 1957 February 11  
BOX-FOLDER 17/2 Manjarrez, Daniel, 1957 March 27 -- 1957 June 25  
BOX-FOLDER 17/3-6 McWilliams, Harry, 1936 June 1 -- 1957 December 2  
Miscellaneous correspondence  
BOX-FOLDER 17/7-24 A -- Z  
Letters received, arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent  
BOX-FOLDER 17/26 Unidentified and undated

### BOX 17

#### Advertising/Sponsor Materials

Materials created or generated by the *Original Amateur Hour* to advertise its unique entertainment value for potential investors or broadcasters.  
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

General program information

BOX-FOLDER 17/27 Individual documents  
BOX-FOLDER 17/28 *Ted Mack and the Original Amateur Hour*, NBC television  
BOX-FOLDER 17/37 Miscellany  
BOX-FOLDER 17/29 *Original Amateur Hour*, NBC television  
BOX-FOLDER 17/36 Other television and radio program listings  
BOX-FOLDER 17/35 Program listings  
Program ratings sheets  
BOX-FOLDER 17/30 Mexico  
BOX-FOLDER 17/31 United States  
BOX-FOLDER 17/32 *The Amateur Hour Program* examination  
Station listings sheets  
BOX-FOLDER 17/33 Mexico and the Caribbean  
BOX-FOLDER 17/34 United States

### BOX 18

#### Promotional Materials

Publications, brochures, and packages created by the *Original Amateur Hour*.  
Arranged alphabetically by subject or genre.

BOX-FOLDER 18/5 Flyers and proofs  
BOX-FOLDER 18/3 In-house publications  
BOX-FOLDER 18/9 Mack, Ted  
BOX-FOLDER 18/10 Miscellany  
BOX-FOLDER 18/6 Newspaper materials

## Promotional Materials

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 18/4	<i>Original Amateur Hour</i> magazine
BOX-FOLDER 18/7-8	Posters
BOX-FOLDER 18/1	Press release drafts
BOX-FOLDER 18/2	Program fact sheets and announcements
BOX 18	<b>Production Materials</b> Materials used during the creation of <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> programming. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX-FOLDER 18/18	Miscellany
BOX-FOLDER 18/16	Program order and sequence, <i>La hora internacional del aficionado</i> stage directions Scripts
BOX-FOLDER 18/14-15	Commercials (English and Spanish)
BOX-FOLDER 18/11	<i>Original Amateur Hour</i>
BOX-FOLDER 18/12	<i>La hora internacional del aficionado</i> , 1957 March 9 - 1957 July 13
BOX-FOLDER 18/17	Stage directions
BOX 19	<b>Financial and Legal Papers</b> Financial and legal documents related to the operations and expenses of the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> . Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX-FOLDER 19/1	Balance sheets
BOX-FOLDER 19/2	Bank deposits lists
BOX-FOLDER 19/3	Bills
BOX-FOLDER 19/12	<i>La hora internacional del aficionado</i> Contract
BOX-FOLDER 19/10	Miscellany
BOX-FOLDER 19/4	Payroll sheets
BOX-FOLDER 19/5	Program budgets
BOX-FOLDER 19/13	Servicio postal Mexicano Registration form Time/rate tables
BOX-FOLDER 19/6	American television stations
BOX-FOLDER 19/8	Mexican radio stations
BOX-FOLDER 19/7	Mexican television stations
BOX-FOLDER 19/9	Travel expenses
BOX 19-20	<b>Miscellany, 1934-1957</b> Clippings, programs, notes, one award, and other assorted materials. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX-FOLDER 20/10-11	Articles
BOX-FOLDER 20/6	Award, 1953 May 2 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States certificate presented to Ted Mack and the <i>Original Amateur Hour</i>
BOX-FOLDER 20/8	Catalogues of films Clippings, 1935-1957 and undated

## Miscellany, 1934-1957

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 19/15-20	1935 January -- 1956 December 5
BOX-FOLDER 20/1-3	1957 January 25 -- 1957 November 6
BOX-FOLDER 20/5	Undated
BOX-FOLDER 20/4	Collage of clippings
BOX-FOLDER 20/9	McWilliams, Harry Miscellaneous notes, including some from <i>Original Amateur Hour</i> tours
BOX-FOLDER 20/7	Notebook of Lloyd Marx
BOX-FOLDER 19/14	Programs, 1934-1954 and undated
BOX-FOLDER 20/12	Stationery and forms
BOX-FOLDER 20/13	Travel brochures, postcards, and maps