



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
*Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Joseph Bruhl Territory Band Collection

NMAH.AC.0869

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2005

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Joseph Bruhl Territory Band Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0869
<b>Date:</b>	1925-1938
<b>Extent:</b>	1.33 Cubic feet (3 boxes)
<b>Creator:</b>	Bruhl, Joseph R., 1909-
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The collection primarily consists of photographs and a scrapbook documenting Joseph Bruhl's experiences playing with territory bands from the early 1920s through the late 1930s. There are also some materials that relate to his personal life.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): Joseph Bruhl Territory Band Scrapbook</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated to the Archives Center in 2004 by Joseph Bruhl's nephew George M. Bruhl.

### Processing Information

Processed by Kimberley Braun (intern), 2005; supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist.

### Preferred Citation

Joseph Bruhl Territory Band Collection, 1925-1938, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Gift of George M. Bruhl.

### Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Unprotected photographs must be handled with gloves.

### Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

## Biographical Note

Joseph Robert Bruhl (December 7, 1909- October 11, 1980) was born in Plattsmouth, Nebraska and attended Mitchell High School in Lincoln, Nebraska. From the time of his first engagement to play piano at local radio station WMAH at the age of twelve, Joseph Bruhl immersed himself in music. Bruhl played in local bands, and after two years in college decided to become a professional musician. Proficient with the banjo, guitar and piano, Bruhl traveled from the mid-1920s until the late-1930s with what were then popularly known as "territory bands." Such bands journeyed to various locales within a fixed geographic range to play for local events. Bruhl's early engagements spanned Nebraska, Wyoming and the Dakotas, where he accompanied a series of traveling orchestras to play in ballrooms, theaters, and at other local celebrations. Such travels required long trips over unpaved roads, and also necessitated the acquisition of transfer passes from the Lincoln chapter of the American Federation of Musicians (Local # 463), of which Bruhl was a member. From the beginning of his career as a full-time musician, Bruhl avidly collected and preserved performance billings and other memorabilia from his travels.

From 1927 on, Bruhl's performances reached listeners across the West and Midwest on several early radio stations, including WNAX, WOW, KGHL, KFAB, and KFSO. In 1929, Bruhl married Vera Halsted, while he continued to build his career as a musician traveling with various bands. Stints playing with orchestras led by Russ Henegar and Milt Askew in the late 1920s and early 1930s preceded Bruhl's 1934 move to the San Francisco Bay area. From there he assumed his most prominent role as the piano player in Joaquin Grill's Orchestra (1935-1939). With Grill and company, Bruhl traveled even more widely, reaching as far as Lake Tahoe and several southwestern states in 1937 and 1938.

Drafted during World War II, Bruhl became the leader of an Army band unit. After the war, he returned to broadcast radio. Bruhl eventually settled in San Leandro, California, where he opened and operated a successful Fender franchise guitar school and music store in the 1950s and 1960s.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection is organized into two series. Series One contains personal papers, and Series Two contains scrapbooks. Bruhl's personal papers consist of official documents, such as his high school diploma, United States Armed Services discharge notice, a notarized certification of birth, and the Bruhls' death certificates. Other personal papers include his correspondence, his writings, publicity materials promoting him, and photographs of Bruhl pictured in various stages of his long career. The scrapbook series includes two scrapbooks, one featuring Bruhl's wedding and honeymoon, and the second, larger book documenting Bruhl's travels as a territory band musician.

Bruhl's wedding scrapbook contains records of his 1929 marriage to Vera Bruhl, née Halsted. The scrapbook also includes photographs, postcards and brochures from their honeymoon, as well as several letters and telegrams of congratulation from the Bruhls' family and friends.

Bruhl's territory band scrapbook contains numerous photographs dating to the 1920s and 1930s, including many captioned snapshots of small-town main streets, roadways and local attractions as well as of the musicians and their friends. Accompanying these photographs in the scrapbook are performance billings and posters, letters of recommendation, newspaper clippings, women's dance cards, association and labor union cards, business cards, menus, and radio broadcast schedules. Items appear in the scrapbook roughly chronologically and were grouped and annotated by Bruhl, reflecting his membership in a series of territory bands.

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series.

Series 1: Personal Papers, 1922-1980; undated

Series 2: Scrapbooks, 1925-1938

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Bands (Music) -- 1920-1930
- Bands (Music) -- 1930-1940
- Military discharge -- United States
- Musicians -- 20th century
- Weddings

Types of Materials:

- Letters (correspondence) -- 20th century.
- Menus
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- 1900-1950
- Posters -- 20th century
- Scrapbooks -- 1900-1950

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Personal Papers, 1922-1980

Box 1, Folder 1	Official documents, 1922-1980
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1929-1975
Box 1, Folder 3	Writings, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Publicity material, 1974, undated
Box 1, Folder 5	Photographs, circa 1929-1960

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## Series 2: Scrapbooks, 1925-1938

- Box 2, Folder 1            Wedding , 1929
- Box 2, Folder 2            Wedding encloures and loose items, undated
- Box 2, Folder 3            Wedding, blank pages, undated
- Box 2, Folder 4            Wedding covers, undated
- Box 3, Folder 1            Territory Band, pages 1-24, early career, circa 1925-1931  
[Image\(s\)](#)

Jesse Stone and His Blue Serenaders [card]

*1 Item (Black ink on blue paper.; approx. 4" x 7".)*

[Image\(s\): Jesse Stone and His Blue Serenaders \[card\].](#)

Stone, Jesse, Advertiser

Card contains a reproduction of a photograph of the band and text: "This Is the Band / that is / Going to Set Sioux / City on Fire / at the / Roof Garden ... In a Battle of Music with Tracy / Brown's Oklahomoans." The band's permanent address is given as 115 West 5th Street, Kansas City, Mo.

## Local Numbers

AC0869-0000001.tif (AC Scan No.)

Topic:	Bands (Music) -- 1920-1930 Concerts Musicians -- 1900-1950
Place:	Iowa Kansas City (Mo.) -- 1910-1960 Sioux City (Iowa)
Genre/ Form:	Advertising cards Photographs -- 1920-1930 -- Reproductions

- Box 3, Folder 2            Territory Band, pages 25-47, late career, 1937-1938
- Box 3, Folder 3            Territory Band, loose scrapbook photographs, pages 39 and 47, undated
- Box 3, Folder 4            Territory Band, front cover, undated
- Box 3, Folder 5            Territory Band, back cover, undated

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