



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records

NMAH.AC.0872

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	3
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Stringed Instrument Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1927-1979, undated.....	4
Series 2: Bow Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1988-1990, undated.....	30
Series 3: Emil Hermann Photographic Negatives, 1939-1951, undated.....	33
Series 4: Sale Books, Receipts and Office Files, Programs, 1844-1990, undated.....	35

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records
Date:	1844-1998, undated
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0872
Creator:	Herrmann, Emil, 1888-1968 (Creator) Français, Jacques, 1923-2004 (Creator)
Extent:	33.3 Cubic feet (61 document boxes, 30 binder boxes, 5 flat oversize)
Language:	Collection is in English. Some materials in French, German, and Italian.
Summary:	Jacques Français was a preeminent luthier, violin expert, and dealer in rare stringed instruments. Emil Herrmann was also a violin expert and dealer in rare violins. This collection contains photographic prints, negatives, certificates of authenticity, and sale books related to their business as dealers and authenticators of rare stringed instruments.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was bequeathed to the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Archives Center, by Jacques Français in 2004.

Separated Materials

The National Museum of American History, Division of Music, Sports and Entertainment (now Division of Cultural and Community Life) holds instruments associated with the Français atelier, most notably the Axelrod Quartet of Antonio Stradivarius instruments (See accession numbers, 2000.0013, .01, .02, .03, .04).

Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archives technician; supervised by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist, assisted by interns Anne Cnockaert, David DeAngelis, Veronica Gonzales, Amanda Leinberger, and John Mask, 2006.

Preferred Citation

The Jacques Français Rare Violins, Inc. Archive, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

Researchers must use gloves when viewing this collection.

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Biographical / Historical

Jacques Français was born in Paris, France on July 3, 1924 the son of Emile Français and Lucile Caressa. His ancestry can be traced to the French town Mirecourt in Lorraine, the traditional center of French violin production. Jacques's grandfather, Henri Français, was an official violin maker to the Paris Conservatory. His maternal grandfather, Albert Caressa, was a violin and cello dealer. The House of Caressa & Français was one of the world's renowned violin making and repair shops. They had acquired the former House of Gustave Bernardel in 1901 (the former House of Gand & Bernardel Freres in Paris founded by Nicolas Lupot in 1796). Henri sold his share in the business to Albert at the end of World War I. The House of Caressa was eventually taken over by Emile Français in 1938. The shop remained open during the German occupation of Paris in World War II and closed in 1981 after the death of Lucile Caressa Français. The Paris shop was patronized by some of the greatest names in music.

Jacques Français's early training was in the Paris shop, beginning work at the bench at age twelve. At age eighteen he was apprenticed to violin maker Victor Aubry in Normandy. He completed his apprenticeship with George Apparut in Mirecourt. He then worked in his father's shop on Rue de Madrid and in the shop of Fridolin Hamma in Stuttgart, Germany. He was sent to New York City in 1947 and worked under Simone Sacconi in the shop of Rembert Wurlitzer. After a year Jacques returned to Paris to work in his father's establishment. A year later, Jacques returned to the United States and opened his own shop in New York on 57th St. near Carnegie Hall. He pursued a career in the repair and sale of rare violins independent of his father. Over the course of its lifetime the shop became well-known and was patronized by many of the preeminent names in the concert world.

Many photographic images in the Français Archive originate with rare violin dealer Emil Herrmann. Herrmann maintained a shop at 148 W. 57th St., New York City and later at 161 W. 57th St., just opposite Carnegie Hall and even later at 130 W. 57th St. After Herrmann's retirement, Français acquired his extensive certificate and photographic archive. In 1964, renowned luthier Rene A. Morel joined the Français shop and became a close business and personal associate of Français. Morel and Français worked together for the next thirty years. In 1985, Emmanuel Gradoux-Matt was employed by Jacques Français. He became shop foreman in 1990. On February 1, 1994 Jacques Français, Rare Violins, Inc. ceased business at 250 W. 54th Street. Morel and Gradoux-Matt remained at that address and renamed the company René A. Morel Rare Violins, Inc. Jacques Français died in New York City on February 4, 2004. He left a widow, Beatrice Français, and one surviving daughter, Isabelle Français. His nephew, Gael Français, a student of both Français and Morel, continues the family luthier tradition.

References (Copies may be found in the Archives Center control file): Français, Gael. "The Français House of Violin Making: A Retrospective," *Journal, Violin Society of America*, Volume XIX, No. 3, 2005, pgs. 3-22.

Martin, Douglas. "Jacques Francais, 80, Dealer in String Instruments, Dies," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2004.

Miller, Stephen. "Jacques, Francais, 80, Dealer in Rare Violins," *The New York Sun*, Weekend Edition, undated.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of a wide-ranging photographic survey of rare stringed musical instruments and bows. Many of these photographs were made in support of creating certificates of authenticity for a wide

variety of stringed instruments. The photographs date exclusively to the 20th century and were the product of both the Français and Emil Herrmann rare violin shops. The collection also contains sale books from the Français violin atelier in Paris and New York and a small number of office files from the Français New York shop. There are minimal correspondence and office files, from either the Herrmann or Français shop, within the collection.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four series.

Series 1: Stringed Instrument Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1927-1979, undated

Series 2: Bow Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1988-1990, undated

Series 3: Emil Herrmann Photographic Negatives, 1931-1959, undated

Subseries 3.1: Violins, undated

Subseries 3.2: Bows, Labels and Checks, 1939-1951, undated

Series 4: Sale Books, Receipts, and Office Files, Programs, 1844-1998

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Appraisals
- Musical instruments
- Stringed instruments
- Violin

Types of Materials:

- Certificates
- Photographs -- 20th century

Container Listing

Series 1: Stringed Instrument Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1927-1979, undated

Scope and Contents: SERIES 1: STRINGED INSTRUMENT CERTIFICATES AND PHOTOGRAPHIC REFERENCE FILES, 1566-1959, undated. This series consists of Français and Herrmann's stringed instrument certificate files, photographic prints, and negatives. The date span of this series reflects the manufacture dates of the instruments pictured in the certificates as assigned by Jacques Français or Emil Herrmann. The series is arranged alphabetically by surname of the instrument maker. Copies of certificates were created in the office and used as a reference archive; information on many of them was not as detailed as that on a customer's certificate. Not all certificates were duplicated for the office archive and seldom, if ever, did they carry a date of creation. Loose photographs are labeled with the certificate number and filed with that certificate. If no certificate or certificate number was available to identify the extra material, it is filed separately in chronological order by the year of manufacture --if given. The year of manufacture is written on the photograph along with the date of the photograph (if any) from the accompanying envelope. Spelling of makers' names follows Français and Herrmann's original folder labeling; obvious misspellings have been corrected. The researcher is encouraged to check for alternative spellings. Photographs with undateds are filed at the back of folders or in a separate folder. Herrmann's certificates are often in German.

Also included in this series are photographic portfolios of violins by the photographic studio, P.S. Photo. The P.S. Photo portfolios are large format photographs. This series also contains the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM) Photo Archive 1997 and Violin Photos, 1988. The photographer Herman Gordon's portfolio entitled "36 Famous Italian Violins" is in this series.

Box 1, Folder 1	Alagia, Nicolo, 1912
Box 1, Folder 2	Albani, Joh. Mich., 1703
Box 1, Folder 3	Albani, Joseph, 1709-1761
Box 1, Folder 4	Albani, Mathias, 1672-1706
Box 1, Folder 5	Alletsee, 1750
Box 1, Folder 6	Altavilla, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Amati, 1647
Box 1, Folder 8	Amati, Andrea, 1566-1574
Box 1, Folder 9	Amati, Antonia, undated
Box 91, Folder 1	Amati, Antonio e Gerolamo, Viola 1615, La Stauffer

Box 94, Folder 1	Amati, Antonio e Gerolamo, Viola 1615, La Stauffer, Portfolio Cover
Box 1, Folder 10	Amati , Ant. & Hier., 1583-1626
Box 1, Folder 11	Amati, A. & H., 1729
Box 1, Folder 12	Amati, Don Nicolo, 1695-1740
Box 1, Folder 13	Amati, Hieronymo, 1610-1710
Box 2, Folder 1	Amati, Nicolo, 1638-1678
Box 2, Folder 2	Amati, Nicolo, 1652-1697
Box 2, Folder 3	Amati, Nicolo, 1652-1664
Box 2, Folder 4	Amati, Nicolo, 1665-1681
Box 2, Folder 5	Amati, Nicolo, 1682-1735, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Amati, Pietro, undated
Box 3, Folder 1	Amati, 1666, undated
Box 96, Folder 3	Stringed instrument certificates and photographic reference files, Amati, undated
Box 3, Folder 2	Antoniazzi, Gaetano, 1852-1887
Box 3, Folder 3	Antoniazzi, Ricardo, 1908
Box 3, Folder 4	Antoniazzi, Romeo, 1898-1920
Box 3, Folder 5	Audinot, N., 1880-1896
Box 3, Folder 6	Bailly, Paul, 1890
Box 3, Folder 7	Baldantoni, 1726-1827
Box 3, Folder 8	Baldantoni, undated
Box 3, Folder 9	Balestrieri, Thomasso, 1750-1765
Box 3, Folder 10	Balestrieri, Thomasso, 1767-1786, undated
Box 3, Folder 11	Balestrieri, Thomasso, 1750-1772, undated
Box 3, Folder 12	Ballarini, Santa, 1780

Box 4, Folder 1	Barak, Norman, 1710
Box 4, Folder 2	Banks, Benjamin, 1780-1792
Box 4, Folder 3	Barberi, Pietro, 1905
Box 4, Folder 4	Bargelli, Guisepe & Figlio, Vn., 1920
Box 4, Folder 5	Bargelli, Guisepe, 1920
Box 4, Folder 6	Becker, Carl, 1926
Box 4, Folder 7	Belestrini, 1761
Box 4, Folder 8	Bella Rosa, Ricardo, 1786
Box 4, Folder 9	Bellosio, Anselmo, 1737
Box 4, Folder 10	Bellosio, Anselmo, 1760-1788
Box 4, Folder 11	Beretta, Felice, 1798, undated
Box 4, Folder 12	Berger, Karl August, undated
Box 4, Folder 13	Bergonzi, Carlo, 1716-1747
Box 4, Folder 14	Bergonzi, Carlo, 1723
Box 4, Folder 15	Bergonzi, Carlo, 1731-1746, undated
Box 4, Folder 16	Bergonzi, Carlo II, 1796, undated
Box 4, Folder 17	Bergonzi, Michel Angelo, 1736, undated
Box 4, Folder 18	Bergonzi, Michel Angelo, 1743, undated
Box 4, Folder 19	Bergonzi, Nicolo, 1728-1756/60
Box 4, Folder 20	Bergonzi, Nicolo, 1750
Box 5, Folder 1	Bernardel, Gustave, 1897, undated
Box 5, Folder 2	Bernardel, (Pere), 1820-1851
Box 5, Folder 3	Bernardel, (Pere), 1834
Box 5, Folder 4	Bernardel, 1854

Box 5, Folder 5	Betts, John, 1800, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Betts, John Edward, 1800
Box 5, Folder 7	Bisiach, Andrea, 1931
Box 5, Folder 8	Bisiach, Carlo, 1925-1939
Box 5, Folder 9	Bisiach, Leandro, 1898-1942
Box 5, Folder 10	Bisiach, Leandro, 1819-1914
Box 5, Folder 11	Bisiach, 1946-1964, undated
Box 5, Folder 12	Blanchard, Paul, 1883
Box 5, Folder 13	Blanchi, Alberto Aloysus, 1910
Box 5, Folder 14	Blasich, Lodovico, 1880
Box 5, Folder 15	Boquay, 1725, undated
Box 5, Folder 16	Boquay, undated
Box 5, Folder 17	Bucci, Mariano, 1896
Box 5, Folder 18	Busan, 1781
Box 5, Folder 19	Bussetto, Giov. Maria, 1675-1680
Box 5, Folder 20	Bossu, Josephe Benoit, 1750
Box 6, Folder 1	Calcanius, Bernardus, 1690-1770
Box 6, Folder 2	Calcanius, undated
Box 6, Folder 3	Calvarola, Bartholomae, 1742-1780, undated
Box 6, Folder 4	Camilli, Camillus, 1699-1759, undated
Box 6, Folder 5	Camilli, Camillus, 1739-1751, undated
Box 6, Folder 6	Candi, Cesare, 1929-1951
Box 91, Folder 2	Candi, Cesare, Genova, 1922, (P.D. Photos), 1979
Box 6, Folder 7	Cantavalli, Primo de Luigi, 1932

Box 6, Folder 8	Canternari, Enrico, undated
Box 6, Folder 9	Capichione, 1942-1959
Box 6, Folder 10	Cappa, Goffredo, 1636-1730, undated
Box 6, Folder 11	Cappa, Goffredo, undated
Box 7, Folder 1	Cappecchioni, 1960
Box 7, Folder 2	Carcassi, Lorenzo & Tommaso, 1743-1798, undated
Box 7, Folder 3	Carcassi, Lorenzo & Tommaso, 1767-1775
Box 7, Folder 4	Carcassi, Vincenzo, 1751-1793, undated
Box 7, Folder 5	Carcassi, undated
Box 7, Folder 6	Caressa & Français, 1906
Box 7, Folder 7	Cargassi, undated
Box 7, Folder 8	Carletti, Carlo, 1927-1936, undated
Box 7, Folder 9	Casini, Antonio, 1673
Box 7, Folder 10	Cassini, 1734, undated
Box 7, Folder 11	Castagneri, Andrea, 1740
Box 7, Folder 12	Castagneri, Andrea, 1747-1750, undated
Box 7, Folder 13	Castagnino, Guiseppe, 1920-1925
Box 7, Folder 14	Castellani, 1821
Box 7, Folder 15	Castello, Paolo, 1770-1778, undated
Box 7, Folder 16	Cateni, undated
Box 7, Folder 17	Caussin, Francois, 1800, undated
Box 7, Folder 18	Cavani, Viola
Box 7, Folder 19	Celani, 1886
Box 7, Folder 20	Celionatus, Giovanni Francesco, 1728-1734

Box 7, Folder 21	Cerin, Marco Antonio, 1780-1793, undated
Box 7, Folder 22	Ceruti, Enrico, 1840-1906, undated
Box 7, Folder 23	Ceruti, Enrico, 1853-1881
Box 8, Folder 1	Ceruti, G.B., 1791-1879
Box 8, Folder 2	Ceruti, G.B., 1805-1815, undated
Box 8, Folder 3	Ceruti, Gianini, undated
Box 8, Folder 4	Ceruti, undated
Box 8, Folder 5	Chanot, George S., undated
Box 8, Folder 6	Chappuy, undated
Box 8, Folder 7	Chardon, Pere et Fils, 1882, undated
Box 8, Folder 8	Chiocchi, Gaetano, 1860
Box 8, Folder 9	Christofori, Bartolomea, circa 1700
Box 8, Folder 10	Coleanius, undated
Box 8, Folder 11	Collin-Mezin, 1882
Box 8, Folder 12	Comuni, Antonio, 1828
Box 8, Folder 13	Consili, Joannes, 1828
Box 8, Folder 14	Contavale, undated
Box 8, Folder 15	Contavalli, Luigi, 1909
Box 8, Folder 16	Contino, Alfredo, 1886-1938
Box 8, Folder 17	Contino, Alfredus, 1830
Box 8, Folder 18	Contino, Alfredus, 1919-1932, undated
Box 8, Folder 19	Contreras, Joseph, 1750-1790
Box 8, Folder 20	Contreras, Joseph, undated
Box 8, Folder 20	Cordanus, Jacobus, 176?-1774

Box 9, Folder 1	Costa, Felix Mari, 1804
Box 9, Folder 2	Costa, Pietro Antonio, undated
Box 9, Folder 3	Cristofore, undated
Box 9, Folder 4	Cuypers, Johannes, 1769-1792
Box 9, Folder 5	Cuypers, Johannes, 1781
Box 9, Folder 6	Da Calco, Camillo, 1929
Box 9, Folder 7	Dall'Aglio, Giuseppe, 1796-1810, undated
Box 9, Folder 8	Da Salo, Caspar, undated
Box 9, Folder 9	Da Salo, Gasparo, 1570-1600, undated
Box 9, Folder 10	Dearlove, Mark, 1820
Box 9, Folder 11	De Barbieri, Paolo, 1924
Box 9, Folder 12	Deconet, Michael, 1742-1790, undated
Box 9, Folder 13	Deconet, Michele, 1734-1754, undated
Box 9, Folder 14	De Emiliani, F., 1725-1726
Box 9, Folder 15	Degani, Eugenio & Giulio, 1888-1937, undated
Box 9, Folder 16	Della Corte, Alfonso, 1861
Box 10, Folder 1	Della Costa, Pietro, 1700-1768
Box 10, Folder 2	De Lorenzi, G.B., 1877
Box 91, Folder 3	De Lorxi, Valention, Firenze, 1902 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 94, Folder 2	De Lorxi, Valention, Firenze, 1902 (P.S. Photos), Portfolio Cover, 1979
Box 10, Folder 3	Derazy a Mirecourt, 1889
Box 10, Folder 4	Desiato, 1771-1823, undated
Box 10, Folder 5	D'espine, Alessandro, 1822-1830, undated
Box 10, Folder 6	Dionelli, undated

Box 10, Folder 7	D'March, undated
Box 10, Folder 8	Dodd, Thomas, 1713, undated
Box 10, Folder 9	Dollenz, undated
Box 10, Folder 10	Duke, Richard, undated
Box 10, Folder 11	Eberle, Johannes Udalricus, 1754
Box 10, Folder 12	Eberle, Thomas, 1734-1787, undated
Box 10, Folder 13	Eberle, Thomas, undated
Box 10, Folder 14	Emiliani, Franciscus de, 1725
Box 10, Folder 15	Evangelisti, undated
Box 10, Folder 16	Fabris, Luigi, 1878
Box 91, Folder 4	Fagnola, Annibale, Torino, 1925 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 10, Folder 17	Fagnola, Hannibal, 1874-1929, undated
Box 10, Folder 18	Fagnola, Hannibal, 1928-1933, undated
Box 11, Folder 1	Farotti, Celeste, 1914
Box 11, Folder 2	Febre, J.B., undated
Box 11, Folder 3	Fendt, undated
Box 11, Folder 4	Fernandus, Cantino Filius, undated
Box 11, Folder 5	Ficker, Johann Gott'ob, undated
Box 11, Folder 6	Fioratto, undated
Box 11, Folder 7	Fiorini, Guiseppi, 1870-1926, undated
Box 11, Folder 8	Fiorini, Guiseppi, 1922, undated
Box 11, Folder 9	Flambeau, Pierre, undated
Box 11, Folder 10	Fletcher, 1830
Box 11, Folder 11	Forbes, undated

Box 11, Folder 12	Ford, Jacob, undated
Box 11, Folder 13	Forster, undated
Box 11, Folder 14	Fredi, 1918, undated
Box 11, Folder 15	Furber, undated
Box 11, Folder 16	Gabrielli, G.B. (Firenze), 1737-1770
Box 11, Folder 17	Gabrielli, G.B., 1757-1770, undated
Box 11, Folder 18	Gadda, 1900-1960, undated
Box 11, Folder 19	Gagliano, Alessandro, 1707-1728
Box 11, Folder 20	Gagliano, Alessandro, 1705-1710, undated
Box 12, Folder 1	Gagliano, Antonio, 1789-1846, undated
Box 12, Folder 2	Gagliano, Antonio, undated
Box 12, Folder 3	Gagliano, Carlos, 1758, undated
Box 12, Folder 4	Gagliano, Fernando, 1752-1775, undated
Box 12, Folder 5	Gagliano, Fernando, 1780-1793, undated
Box 12, Folder 6	Gagliano, Fernando, 1758-1780, undated
Box 12, Folder 7	Gagliano, Gaetano, 1809-1810, undated
Box 12, Folder 8	Gagliano, Gennaro, 1732-1785, undated
Box 12, Folder 9	Gagliano, Januarius, 1747, undated
Box 12, Folder 10	Gagliano, Johannes, 1780-1830, undated
Box 12, Folder 11	Gagliano, Johannes, 1782, undated
Box 13, Folder 1	Gagliano, Joseph, 1730-1793, undated
Box 13, Folder 2	Gagliano, Joseph, 1769-1787
Box 13, Folder 3	Gagliano, Joseph & Antonio, 1735-1820, undated
Box 13, Folder 4	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1668-1739

Box 13, Folder 5	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1777, undated
Box 13, Folder 6	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1740-1750, undated
Box 13, Folder 7	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1751-1758
Box 14, Folder 1	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1760-1780, undated
Box 14, Folder 2	Gagliano, Nicolo, 1760-1768, undated
Box 14, Folder 3	Gagliano, Raffaele & Antonio, 1810-1856
Box 14, Folder 4	Gagliano, Raffaele & Antonio, 1820
Box 14, Folder 5	Gagliano, J., 1684
Box 14, Folder 6	Gagliano, V., undated
Box 14, Folder 7	Gagliano, undated
Box 14, Folder 8	Gand & Bernardel, 1879-1888
Box 14, Folder 9	Gand & Bernardel, 1888
Box 14, Folder 10	Gand, Charles F., 1830-1846, undated
Box 14, Folder 11	Gand, Freres, 1855-1863, undated
Box 14, Folder 12	Gand, G. 1822
Box 14, Folder 13	Gasparo de Sala, 1590-1610
Box 14, Folder 14	Gasparo de Salo, undated
Box 15, Folder 1	Geissenhof, Franz, 1813-1814
Box 15, Folder 2	Gemunder, George, 1877-1890, undated
Box 15, Folder 3	Gemunder, George, 1880, undated
Box 15, Folder 4	Gennaro, Janarius, undated
Box 15, Folder 5	Genova, Giovanni Battista, 1770
Box 15, Folder 6	Germain, E., 1908
Box 15, Folder 7	Germain, Vuillaume, undated

Box 15, Folder 8	Gilbertini, Antonio, 1844
Box 15, Folder 9	Gibertini, 1866
Box 15, Folder 10	Gigli, Julio Cesare, 1747-1762, undated
Box 15, Folder 11	Gobetti, Francesco, 1709-1770, undated
Box 15, Folder 12	Gobetti, Francesco, 1713
Box 15, Folder 13	Gofriller, Francesco, 1700-1739, undated
Box 15, Folder 14	Gofriller, Matteo, 1696-1720
Box 16, Folder 1	Gofriller, Matteo, 1721-1733
Box 16, Folder 2	Gofriller, Matteo, 1736-1737
Box 16, Folder 3	Gofriller, Matteo, undated
Box 16, Folder 4	Gofriller, Matteo, 1696-1723, undated
Box 16, Folder 5	Goulding, undated
Box 16, Folder 6	Gagnani, Antonio, 1760-1778
Box 16, Folder 7	Gagnani, Antonio, 1780-1786, undated
Box 17, Folder 1	Gagnani, Antonio, 1788, undated
Box 17, Folder 2	Gagnani, Antonio, 1779
Box 17, Folder 3	Gagnani, Onorato, 1797
Box 17, Folder 4	Grancino Brothers, 1696
Box 17, Folder 5	Grancino, Giovanni, 1666-1700
Box 17, Folder 6	Grancino, Giovanni, 1705-1752, undated
Box 17, Folder 7	Grancino, Giovanni, 1686-1714, undated
Box 17, Folder 8	Guadagnini, A., 1872
Box 17, Folder 9	Guadagnini, Antonio, 1831-1879
Box 18, Folder 1	Guadagnini, Francesco, 1872-1928

Box 18, Folder 2	Guadagnini, Fratelli, 1918
Box 18, Folder 3	Guadagnini, Gaetano, 1799-1852
Box 18, Folder 4	Guadagnini, Gaetano, 1828-1831
Box 18, Folder 5	Guadagnini, J. B., 1743-1762, undated
Box 18, Folder 6	Guadagnini, J. B., (Milano) 1750-1753
Box 18, Folder 7	Guadagnini, J. B., (Milano) 1754
Box 18, Folder 8	Guadagnini, J. B., (Milano) 1755
Box 18, Folder 9	Guadagnini, J. B., 1743-1746, undated
Box 19, Folder 1	Guadagnini, J. B., (Milano) 1756-1757, undated
Box 19, Folder 2	Guadagnini, J. B., (Cremona) 1758
Box 19, Folder 3	Guadagnini, J. B., (Parma) 1759-1769
Box 19, Folder 4	Guadagnini, J. B., 1770-1772, undated
Box 19, Folder 5	Guadagnini, J. B., 1751-1780
Box 19, Folder 6	Guadagnini, J. B., 1753, undated
Box 20, Folder 1	Guadagnini, J. B., (Turin) 1770-1775
Box 20, Folder 2	Guadagnini, J. B., (Turin) 1776-1780
Box 20, Folder 3	Guadagnini, J. B., (Turin) 1781-1786
Box 20, Folder 4	Guadagnini, J. B., (Turin) 1781-1786
Box 20, Folder 5	Guadagnini, Joseph, 1765-1805
Box 20, Folder 6	Guadagnini, Joseph, 1800-1805
Box 20, Folder 7	Guadagnini, Lorenzo, 1730-1750, undated
Box 21, Folder 1	Guadagnini, Lorenzo, 1739-1751, undated
Box 21, Folder 2	Guarneri, Andrea, 1663-1669
Box 21, Folder 3	Guarneri, Andrea, 1673-1687

Box 21, Folder 4	Guarneri, Andrea, 1690-1699
Box 21, Folder 5	Guarneri, Andrea, 1615-1673, undated
Box 21, Folder 6	Guarneri, Andrea, undated
Box 21, Folder 7	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1716-1730
Box 22, Folder 1	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1731-1733
Box 22, Folder 2	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1734
Box 22, Folder 3	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1735-1736
Box 22, Folder 4	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1737-1739
Box 22, Folder 5	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1740-1742
Box 22, Folder 6	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1715-1743
Box 23, Folder 1	Guarneri, Giuseppi, 1743-1744, undated
Box 23, Folder 2	Guarneri, Giuseppi, undated
Box 23, Folder 3	Guarneri, Giuseppi, fils Andrea, 1694-1710
Box 23, Folder 4	Guarneri, Giuseppi, fils Andrea, 1711-1714
Box 23, Folder 5	Guarneri, Giuseppi, fils Andrea, 1715-1725
Box 23, Folder 6	Guarneri, Giuseppi, fils Andrea, undated
Box 23, Folder 7	Guarneri, Giuseppi, fils Andrea, 1710-1727
Box 24, Folder 1	Guarneri, Pietro (Mantua), 1689-1704
Box 24, Folder 2	Guarneri, Pietro (Cremona), 1694
Box 24, Folder 3	Guarneri, Pietro (Mantua), 1705-1733, undated
Box 24, Folder 4	Guarneri, Pietro (Venetia), 1723-1746
Box 24, Folder 5	Guarneri, Pietro (Venetia), 1750-1757, undated
Box 24, Folder 6	Guarneri, Pietro, 1707, undated
Box 96, Folder 4	Guarneri, draft certificates, undated

Box 24, Folder 7	Guastella, Dante, 1915
Box 24, Folder 8	Guerra, Alberto, 1921-1949
Box 91, Folder 5	Guerra, Evasio Emilio, Torino, 1924 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 25, Folder 1	Guerra, Emilio Evasio, 1927-1948
Box 25, Folder 2	Guerra, Emilio, 1949
Box 25, Folder 3	Guerra, Evasio, 1921
Box 25, Folder 4	Guerra, undated
Box 25, Folder 5	Guersan, Louis, 1744-1748
Box 25, Folder 6	Guersan, undated
Box 25, Folder 7	Guidantus, Johannes (Florence), 1715-1740
Box 25, Folder 8	Guillami, undated
Box 25, Folder 9	Gussenhof, undated
Box 25, Folder 10	Hamm, Johann, undated
Box 25, Folder 11	Hele, Joseph, 1900
Box 25, Folder 12	Helmer, Johann Georg, 1760
Box 25, Folder 13	Heinike, undated
Box 25, Folder 14	Hill, undated
Box 25, Folder 15	Hill, James, undated
Box 25, Folder 16	Hill, Joseph, 1900
Box 25, Folder 17	Hill, W.E., 1934
Box 25, Folder 18	Horil, Jacob, 1730, undated
Box 25, Folder 19	Huffman, undated
Box 25, Folder 20	Jacobs, Hendrick, 1678-1698, undated
Box 25, Folder 21	Jacobs, Hendrick, circa 1710

Box 25, Folder 22	Jay, Henry, 1757
Box 25, Folder 23	Johnson, John, 1751-1764
Box 25, Folder 24	Jorio, Vincenzo, 1818-1838
Box 26, Folder 1	Keffer, Johann, circa 1750
Box 26, Folder 2	Kennedy, Thomas, 1800, undated
Box 26, Folder 3	Kleyman, undated
Box 26, Folder 4	Klotz, George, 1774
Box 26, Folder 5	Klotz, Sebastian, 1752-1806
Box 26, Folder 6	Kulick, Johannes, 1861
Box 26, Folder 7	Landolphi, Carlo Fernando, 1736-1759
Box 26, Folder 8	Landolphi, Carlo Fernando, 1760-1770, undated
Box 26, Folder 9	Landolphi, Carlo Fernando, 1744-1760, undated
Box 26, Folder 10	Landolphi, Pietro, 1743-1775, undated
Box 26, Folder 11	Landolphi, Pietro, 1760-1768
Box 26, Folder 12	Landolphi, undated
Box 26, Folder 13	Larousse, undated
Box 27, Folder 1	Lavazza, Antonio Maria, circa 1715
Box 27, Folder 2	Lavazza, Antonio Mario, 1729-1778, undated
Box 27, Folder 3	Lavazza, Santino, 1778
Box 27, Folder 4	Leeb, Carolus, 1797
Box 27, Folder 5	Lefebre, Jacque B., circa 1701-1772
Box 27, Folder 6	Longiaru, G., 1944
Box 27, Folder 7	Lorenzini, Gaspare, 1749-1757, undated
Box 27, Folder 8	Lorenzini, Gaspare, undated

Box 27, Folder 9	Lott, John, circa 1840-1849, undated
Box 27, Folder 10	Lott, John, 1825, undated
Box 27, Folder 11	Lupot, Francios, 1790
Box 27, Folder 12	Lupot, Nicolas, 1792-1818
Box 27, Folder 13	Lupot, Nicolas, 1821-1824
Box 27, Folder 14	Lupot, Nicolas, 1790-1810, undated
Box 27, Folder 15	Luthier, undated
Box 27, Folder 16	Maggiali, Cesare, 1961
Box 27, Folder 17	Maggini, Giovanni, 1600-1620, undated
Box 28, Folder 1	Maggini, Giovanni, undated
Box 28, Folder 2	Maggini, Giovanni, undated
Box 28, Folder 3	Mangi, Guiseppe, 1792
Box 28, Folder 4	Mantegazza, Pietro Giov., 1759-1775
Box 28, Folder 5	Mantegazza, Pietro Giov., 1773
Box 28, Folder 6	Marchetti, Eduardo, 1905-1926, undated
Box 28, Folder 7	Marchetti, Enrico, 1886-1929
Box 28, Folder 8	Marchetti, E., 1926
Box 28, Folder 9	Marchi, undated
Box 28, Folder 10	Mariani, Antonio, 1669, undated
Box 28, Folder 11	Marianni, L., undated
Box 28, Folder 12	Marketter, Enrico, 1929
Box 28, Folder 13	Maurizi, Francesco, circa 1850
Box 28, Folder 14	Maximillian, 1701
Box 28, Folder 15	Medeolani, Petrus Mantegatia, 1768

Box 28, Folder 16	Melegari, Enrico, 1860, undated
Box 28, Folder 17	Messori, Pietro, 1910
Box 28, Folder 18	Mezin, Collin, 1908
Box 28, Folder 19	Mezzadri, Alessandro, 1720, undated
Box 28, Folder 20	Mezzadri, Alessandro, 1719
Box 28, Folder 21	Miremont, C.A., 1865
Box 29, Folder 1	Montagnana, Domingo, 1717-1730
Box 29, Folder 2	Montagnana, Domingo, 1731-1737
Box 29, Folder 3	Montagnana, Domingo, 1740, undated
Box 29, Folder 4	Montagnana, Domingo, 1725-1740, undated
Box 29, Folder 5	Mozzani, Luigi, 1903
Box 29, Folder 6	Nadotti, Joseph, 1775-1790
Box 29, Folder 7	Naidinoff, Vladimir, 1981
Box 29, Folder 8	Nemessanyi, 1868-1878, undated
Box 29, Folder 9	Nicolas, 1780
Box 29, Folder 10	Norman, Barak, 1706
Box 91, Folder 6	Oddone, Carlo Giuseppe, Torino, 1911 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 29, Folder 11	Oddone, Carlo Giuseppe, 1931
Box 29, Folder 12	Odino, undated
Box 30, Folder 1	Odoardi, Guiseppe, 1782
Box 30, Folder 2	Ornati, Guiseppe, 1919-1930, undated
Box 30, Folder 3	Ornati, Guiseppe, undated
Box 30, Folder 4	Ortagas, 1837
Box 30, Folder 5	Pacherel, Pierre, 1828-1853

Box 30, Folder 6	Palotta, Pietro, 1790-1814
Box 30, Folder 7	Panormo, George, 1832
Box 30, Folder 8	Panormo, Louis, 1820, undated
Box 30, Folder 9	Panormo, Vincenzo, 1706-1799, undated
Box 30, Folder 10	Panormo, Vincenzo, 1796, undated
Box 30, Folder 11	Parker, Daniel, 1720
Box 30, Folder 12	Pasta, Gaetano, 1700
Box 30, Folder 13	Pedrazzini, Guisepe, 1909-1949
Box 30, Folder 14	Pedrazzini, Guisepe, 1930, undated
Box 92, Folder 1	Peddrazzini, Giuseppe, Milano, 1927 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 31, Folder 1	Pedrenilli, Antonio, 1820
Box 31, Folder 2	Pelizon, Antonio, 1807
Box 31, Folder 3	Pellacani, G., 1935
Box 31, Folder 4	Peternella, Jago, 1925
Box 31, Folder 5	Pierray, Claude, circa 1700-1712, undated
Box 31, Folder 6	Pique, Francios, 1804
Box 31, Folder 7	Platner, Michael, 1721-1722, undated
Box 31, Folder 8	Plumerel, 1840
Box 31, Folder 9	Poggi, A., 1925-1942
Box 92, Folder 2-3	Pollastri, Augusto, Bologna, 1900 (P.S. Photos), 1978
Box 94, Folder 3	Pollastri, Augusto, Bologna, 1900 (P.S. Photos), Portfolio Cover, 1978
Box 31, Folder 10	Pollastri, Augusto, 1920-1925, undated
Box 31, Folder 11	Pollastri, Gaetano, 1920-1947
Box 31, Folder 12	Pollastri, 1926-1937, undated

Box 31, Folder 13	Postacchini, Andreas, 1817-1884, undated
Box 31, Folder 14	Postacchini, Andreas, undated
Box 31, Folder 15	Postacellini, undated
Box 31, Folder 16	Postiglione, Vincenzo, 1800-1886
Box 31, Folder 17	Postiglione, Vincenzo, 1892-1904, undated
Box 32, Folder 1	Pressenda, Francesco, 1819-1835
Box 32, Folder 2	Pressenda, Francesco, 1843-1920, undated
Box 32, Folder 3	Pressenda, Francesco, 1831, undated
Box 32, Folder 4	Prevadini, 1841
Box 32, Folder 5	Puglisi, Concetto, 1923
Box 32, Folder 6	Rambaut, 1724, undated
Box 32, Folder 7	Rastelli, 1845
Box 32, Folder 8	Resuche, undated
Box 32, Folder 9	Rinaldi, G.B., 1886
Box 32, Folder 10	Rinaldi, Marengo-Romanus, 1897-1900, undated
Box 32, Folder 11	Rivolta, Giacomo, 1830
Box 32, Folder 12	Rocca, Enrico, 1901-1911
Box 32, Folder 13	Rocca, Enrico, 1912, undated
Box 33, Folder 1	Rocca, Guiseppe, 1831-1861
Box 33, Folder 2	Rocca, Guiseppe, 1865, undated
Box 33, Folder 3	Rocchi, Sesto, 1961
Box 33, Folder 4	Rodiani, Giovanni B., 1615
Box 33, Folder 5	Rodiani, undated
Box 33, Folder 6	Roger, undated

Box 33, Folder 7	Rogeri, G.B., 1675-1702
Box 33, Folder 8	Rogeri, G.B., 1704-1709, undated
Box 33, Folder 9	Rogeri, G.B., 1687-1705, undated
Box 34, Folder 1	Rogeri, Pietro Giacomo, 1690-1722, undated
Box 34, Folder 2	Rogeri, undated
Box 34, Folder 3	Rombouts, Pietr, 1724, undated
Box 34, Folder 4	Rossi, Dominico, 1896
Box 34, Folder 5	Rouescalli, 1906-1930
Box 34, Folder 6	Ruggieri, Francesco, 1673-1690
Box 34, Folder 7	Ruggieri, Francesco, 1693-1698, undated
Box 34, Folder 8	Ruggieri, Francesco, 1679-1698, undated
Box 34, Folder 9	Ruggieri, Vincenzo, 1690-1735, undated
Box 34, Folder 10	Ruggieri, undated
Box 35, Folder 1	Sacconi, Simon Fern, 1938
Box 35, Folder 2	Saloman, J.B., 1745
Box 35, Folder 3	Sanino, 1898-1925
Box 35, Folder 4	Sanino, 1918, undated
Box 92, Folder 4	Sannino, Vincenxo, Napoli, 1931 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 35, Folder 5	Santagiuliana, 1819, undated
Box 35, Folder 6	Santino, Lavazza, 1729
Box 35, Folder 7	Scarampella, Giuseppe, 1876
Box 35, Folder 8	Scrampella, Stephano, 1882-1898
Box 35, Folder 9	Scrampella, Stephano, 1900-1901
Box 35, Folder 10	Scrampella, Stephano, 1902-1905

Box 35, Folder 11	Scrampella, Stephano, 1906-1910
Box 35, Folder 12	Scrampella, Stephano, 1911-1914, undated
Box 92, Folder 5	Scarampella, Stefano, Mantova, 1911 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 36, Folder 1	Scrampella, Stephano, 1887-1911, undated
Box 36, Folder 2	Scrampelli, V., 1900
Box 36, Folder 3	Sderci, Iginus, 1937-1971
Box 36, Folder 4	Seraphin, Santo, 1718-1743
Box 36, Folder 5	Seraphin, Santo, 1746-1752, undated
Box 36, Folder 6	Sgarabotto, 1924, undated
Box 92, Folder 6	Sgarabotta, Gaetano, Parma 1928 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 36, Folder 7	Sgarbi, Antonio, 1873-1905, undated
Box 36, Folder 8	Siega, Etorre and Figli, undated
Box 36, Folder 9	Silvestre, 1889-1897
Box 36, Folder 10	Silvestre, 1850-1858, undated
Box 37, Folder 1	Simonazzi, Amendo, 1920-1938, undated
Box 37, Folder 2	Sneider, Joseph, 1703
Box 37, Folder 3	Socquet, 1766
Box 37, Folder 4	Soffritti, Ettore, 1896-1928
Box 92, Folder 7	Soffritti, Ettore, Ferrara, 1923 (P.S. Photos), 1979
Box 37, Folder 5	Soliani, Angelo, 1806, undated
Box 37, Folder 6	Sorsana, Spirito, 1725-1737
Box 37, Folder 7	Stainer, Jacob, 1650-1696, undated
Box 37, Folder 8	Stainer, Jacob, 1659-1673, undated
Box 37, Folder 9	Stainer, Jacob, (Axelrod Quartet), undated

Box 37, Folder 10	Stautinger, 1763
Box 38, Folder 1	Storini, Lorenzo, 1741-1780
Box 38, Folder 2	Storini, Lorenzo, 1781-1793
Box 38, Folder 3	Storini, Lorenzo, 1795-1797, undated
Box 38, Folder 4	Storini, Lorenzo, 1784-1797, undated
Box 38, Folder 5	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1661-1680, undated
Box 38, Folder 6	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1681-1685
Box 39, Folder 1	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1686-1690
Box 39, Folder 2	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1691-1996, undated
Box 39, Folder 3	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1672-1698, undated
Box 39, Folder 4	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1690-1698, undated
Box 39, Folder 5	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1696-1700
Box 39, Folder 6	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1701-1703
Box 40, Folder 1	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1704-1708, undated
Box 40, Folder 2	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1709
Box 40, Folder 3	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1710-1712
Box 40, Folder 4	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1700-1717
Box 40, Folder 5	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1713-1714
Box 41, Folder 1	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1715
Box 41, Folder 2	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1716
Box 41, Folder 3	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1717-1719
Box 41, Folder 4	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1719-1725
Box 41, Folder 5	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1720
Box 41, Folder 6	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1714-1720

Box 42, Folder 1	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1721
Box 42, Folder 2	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1722-1723
Box 42, Folder 3	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1724-1725
Box 42, Folder 4	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1726-1727
Box 43, Folder 1	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1728-1731
Box 43, Folder 2	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1732-1735
Box 43, Folder 3	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1736-1737
Box 43, Folder 4	Stradivari, Antonio: Cremona, 1727-1737, undated
Box 44, Folder 1	Stradivari, Francesco, 1742
Box 44, Folder 2	Stradivari, Omobono, 1700-1744, undated
Box 44, Folder 3	Strasser, Andreas, 1730
Box 44, Folder 4	Sylvestre, Pierre, 1858
Box 44, Folder 5	Szepessy, Bela, 1889-1901
Box 44, Folder 6	Tanagia, Carlo Antonio, 1721
Box 44, Folder 7	Tassini, Bartholomae, 1751-1757
Box 44, Folder 8	Techler, David, 1700-1785, nodate
Box 44, Folder 9	Techler, David, 1698-1724
Box 44, Folder 10	Tenucci, 1911
Box 44, Folder 11	Testore, Carlo Ant., 1728-1766
Box 44, Folder 12	Testore, Carlo Ant., 1703-1766, undated
Box 45, Folder 1	Testore, Carlo Ant., 1698-1748
Box 45, Folder 2	Testore, Carlo Ant., undated
Box 45, Folder 3	Testore, Carlo Gius., 1695-1748, undated
Box 45, Folder 4	Testore, Carlo Gius., 1703-1737

Box 45, Folder 5	Testore, P.A., 1696-1759, undated
Box 45, Folder 6	Testore, P.A., 1728
Box 45, Folder 7	Testore, 1690, undated
Box 45, Folder 8	Thernes, 1845
Box 45, Folder 9	Thibout, Jacques P., 1834
Box 46, Folder 1	Thir, Anton, 1810
Box 46, Folder 2	Thir, Johann Georg, 1754
Box 46, Folder 3	Thir, Mathias, 1765
Box 46, Folder 4	Thir, undated
Box 46, Folder 5	Thompson, undated
Box 46, Folder 6	Tononi, Carlo, 1696-1738, undated
Box 46, Folder 7	Tononi, Carlo, 1685-1763, undated
Box 46, Folder 8	Tononi, Joannes, 1681-1696, undated
Box 46, Folder 9	de Toppanis, Angelus, 1740
Box 46, Folder 10	Ungarini, 1806
Box 46, Folder 11	Ungarini, Antonio, 1740
Box 46, Folder 12	Unidentified, 1722
Box 46, Folder 13	Valenzano, 1867, undated
Box 46, Folder 14	Van Der Syde, William, 1668-1700
Box 46, Folder 15	Vangelisti, 1740
Box 46, Folder 16	Varotti, Giovanni, 1798
Box 47, Folder 1	Ventapane, Lorenzo, 1824-1830
Box 47, Folder 2	Ventapane, Pasquale, 1830-1879, undated
Box 47, Folder 3	Verini, Andrea, 1884

Box 47, Folder 4	Vinaccia, Antonio, 1773
Box 47, Folder 5	Vinaccia, Gaetano, 1778-1818
Box 47, Folder 6	Vinaccia, Genaro, 1773-1780
Box 47, Folder 7	Vinacchia School, 1768, undated
Box 47, Folder 8	Violoni, Francesco, 1925
Box 47, Folder 9	Vitacek, 1925
Box 47, Folder 10	Voller, 1763-1810, undated
Box 47, Folder 11	Voller, undated
Box 47, Folder 12	Vuillaume, J.B., 1825-1865, undated
Box 48, Folder 1	Vuillaume, J.B., 1823-1865, undated
Box 48, Folder 2	Vuillaume, J.B., 1860-1863, undated
Box 48, Folder 3	Vuillaume, J.B., 1842-1846, undated
Box 48, Folder 4	Vuillaume, J.B., 1860-1928, undated
Box 48, Folder 5	Vuillaume, J.B., undated
Box 48, Folder 6	Vuillaume, J.B., undated
Box 49, Folder 1	Vuillaume, J.B., undated
Box 49, Folder 2	Vuillaume, Nicolas Francois, 1835-1884, undated
Box 49, Folder 3	Vuillaume, Sebastian, 1730, undated
Box 49, Folder 4	Wenger, Ferdinand, 1747
Box 49, Folder 5	Widhalm, Leopold, 1780-1830, undated
Box 49, Folder 6	Willems, 1690, undated
Box 49, Folder 7	Zanetto, Peregriuo, 1568, undated
Box 49, Folder 8	Zanetto, undated
Box 49, Folder 9	Zanoli, Giacomo, 1745-1753, undated

Box 49, Folder 10	Zanoli, Giov. Bapt., 1745
Box 49, Folder 11	Zanoti, Antonio, 1732
Box 49, Folder 12	Ziani, 1672
Box 49, Folder 13	Owner Identified Instruments and Unknown, undated
Box 87	Associazione Liuteria Artistica Genovese, Airenti-de Vincenzi, 1927, undated
Box 88-89	American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM), Photo Archive (slides), 1997
Box 93, Folder 2	Violin Photos (AFVBM, Inc.), 1988
Box 93, Folder 3	36 Famous Italian Violins (Herman Gordon), 1974

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Bow Certificates and Photographic Reference Files, 1988-1990, undated

Scope and Contents: SERIES 2: BOW CERTIFICATES AND PHOTOGRAPHIC REFERENCE FILES, 1825, undated. This series consists of Français and Herrmann's bow certificate files, photographic prints, and negatives. The series is arranged alphabetically by surname of bow maker. Copies of certificates were created in the office and used as a reference archive; information on many of them was not as detailed as that on a customer's certificate. Not all certificates were duplicated for the office archive and seldom, if ever, did they carry a date of creation. Loose photographs are labeled with the certificate number and filed with that certificate. If no certificate or certificate number was available to identify the extra material, it is filed separately in chronological order by the year of manufacture --if given. The year of manufacture is written on the photograph along with the date of the photograph (if any) from the accompanying envelope. Spelling of makers' names follow Français and Herrmann's original folder labeling with obvious misspellings corrected. The researcher is encouraged to check for alternative spellings. Photographs with undateds are filed at the back of folders or in a separate folder. Herrmann's certificates are often in German.

Box 50, Folder 1	Adam, undated
Box 50, Folder 2	Base, undated
Box 50, Folder 3	Bausch, Ludwig, undated
Box 50, Folder 4	Bultitude, undated
Box 50, Folder 5	Caressa and Français, undated
Box 50, Folder 6	Chanot, undated
Box 50, Folder 7	Coppi, Santa De, undated
Box 50, Folder 8	Dodd, undated
Box 50, Folder 9	Eury, undated
Box 50, Folder 10	Eury, Nicholas, undated
Box 50, Folder 11	Fetegue, Victor, undated
Box 50, Folder 12	Français, Emile, undated
Box 50, Folder 13	Henry, undated
Box 50, Folder 14	Hill, William E. and Sons, undated
Box 50, Folder 15	Jombar, Paul, undated
Box 50, Folder 16	Kittel, Nicholaus, undated

Box 50, Folder 17	LaFleur, J., undated
Box 50, Folder 18	Lamy, undated
Box 50, Folder 19	Lamy, Alfred, undated
Box 50, Folder 20	Lupot, Francois, undated
Box 51, Folder 1	Maire, Nicolas, undated
Box 51, Folder 2	Maline, undated
Box 51, Folder 3	Morizot, undated
Box 51, Folder 4	Nageli, Conrad, undated
Box 51, Folder 5	Ouchard, Emile, undated
Box 51, Folder 6	Pajeot, undated
Box 51, Folder 7	Panormo, Louis, 1825, undated
Box 51, Folder 8	Pawel, D.M., undated
Box 51, Folder 9	Peccatte, undated
Box 51, Folder 10	Peccatte, Charles, undated
Box 52, Folder 1	Peccatte, Dominique, undated
Box 52, Folder 2	Peccatte, Dominique, undated
Box 52, Folder 3	Saccani, Benisno, undated
Box 52, Folder 4	Satori, undated
Box 52, Folder 5	Satory, undated
Box 52, Folder 6	Satory, Eugene, undated
Box 52, Folder 7	Satory, Eugene, undated
Box 53, Folder 1	Serdent, Paul, undated
Box 53, Folder 2	Serjean, undated
Box 53, Folder 3	Simon, undated

Box 53, Folder 4	Simon, P., undated
Box 53, Folder 5	Thomassin, Claude, undated
Box 53, Folder 6	Tourte, undated
Box 53, Folder 7	Tourte, Francois, undated
Box 53, Folder 8	Tourte, Louis, undated
Box 53, Folder 9	Tourte, Xavier, undated
Box 53, Folder 10	Tubbs, James, undated
Box 53, Folder 11	Vidoudez, undated
Box 54, Folder 1	Vigneron, Andre, undated
Box 54, Folder 2	Vorin, Francois Nicolas, undated
Box 54, Folder 3	Vuillaume, undated
Box 54, Folder 4	Vuillaume, Jean Baptiste, undated
Box 54, Folder 5	Weisshaar, H., undated
Box 54, Folder 6	Yale University Bows, undated
Box 54, Folder 7	Unknown Bows
Box 93, Folder 1	Bow Photos, (AFVBM, Inc.), 1988
Box 96, Folder 2	Bow certificates and photographic reference files, 1990
Box 96, Folder 9	Bows, Louis Tourte violin bow, undated
Box 96, Folder 11	Bows, background information, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Emil Hermann Photographic Negatives , 1939-1951, undated

Scope and Contents: SERIES 3: EMIL HERRMANN PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVES, 1939-1951, undated. This series is divided into two subseries: Subseries A: Violins and Subseries B: Bows, Labels and Checks, 1939-1951, undated

Subseries 3.1: Violins consists of large format negatives used by Emil Herrmann in creating his certificates of authenticity for violins. The negatives are arranged alphabetically by instrument maker. All original negative sleeves were copied and the negatives filed in the enclosures along with each copied sleeve. Original sleeves that were empty but with written information on them were copied and noted as "empty" on the reverse side of the copy. Herrmann on occasion used opaquing on his negatives to give a better print. (Français negatives, when they exist, are filed with the corresponding certificate and material in Series 1 and Series 2.)

Subseries 3.2: Bows, Labels and Checks, 1939-1951, undated, consists of large format negatives used by Emil Herrmann in creating his certificates of authenticity for bows and for documenting violin maker labels and checks used for payment. It also includes the photographs of those labels and checks. The bow negatives are arranged alphabetically by instrument maker. The check negatives and photographs are arranged chronologically. All original negative sleeves were copied and the negatives filed in the enclosures along with each copied sleeve. Original sleeves that were empty but with written information on them were copied and noted as "empty" on the reverse side of the copy. Herrmann on occasion used opaquing on his negatives to give a better print. (Français negatives, when they exist, are filed with the corresponding certificate and material in Series 1 and Series 2.)

Subseries 3.1: Violins, undated

Box 61	Albani--Amati
Box 62	Amati
Box 63	Amati-Bergonzi
Box 64	Bergonzi- Celionatus
Box 65	Deconet-Gagliano
Box 66	Gagliano
Box 67	Gand-Gofriller
Box 68	Gragnani-Grancino
Box 69	Guadagnini
Box 70	Guadagnini
Box 71	Guadagnini-Guarneri
Box 72	Guarneri

Box 73	Guarneri del Jesu-Guarneri, Joseph
Box 74	Guarneri, Pietro-Mezzadri
Box 75	Montegnana-Rogeri, G.B.
Box 76	Ruggieri, G.-Storioni
Box 77	Stradivari
Box 78	Stradivari
Box 79	Stradivari
Box 80	Stradivari
Box 81	Stradivari-Tecchler
Box 82	Testore, C.A.-Tononi
Box 83	Varotti-Zanoli

Subseries 3.2: Bows, Labels and Checks, 1939-1951, undated

Box 84	Adam-Steel
Box 85	Toute-Vorin and Unknown
Box 86	Labels, 1620-1805 and checks, 1939-1951

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Sale Books, Receipts and Office Files, Programs , 1844-1990, undated

Scope and Contents: SERIES 4: SALE BOOKS, RECEIPTS AND OFFICE FILES, 1844-1998. This series consists of sale books and receipts from the Français shops in Paris and New York City. The books and receipts usually contain date of sale, person sold to, and amount of sale. They may also contain notations of repairs made, ownership, and provenance for violins and bows. This series is arranged chronologically and by type of record. The receipts are filed randomly, the majority of them written in French. Many of the early sale books are written in French. The pre-1901 entries and sale books are most likely for Gand & Bernardel Freres and subsequently for the House of Gustave Bernardel and Albert Caressa. Box 55 Folder 2 and Folder 4 are copies of Charles Gand's "Catalogue descriptif des instruments de Stradivarius et J Guarnerius", begun in 1870 with addition of violins and annotations by the successor firms of Bernardel, Carressa, and Français. These ledgers provide detailed descriptions and provenance for many rare violins. It appears that entries were made in books over subsequent years with no thought to keeping books in a chronological fashion. The majority of office files are from the Français shop in New York City and include files on stolen instruments and one folder pertaining to the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM). There are two folders of material from the Herrmann shop.

Box 55, Folder 1	Sale Book, 1844-1938
Box 55, Folder 2	Sale Book, 1870-1936
Box 55, Folder 3	Receipts from 1870-1936 Sale Book, 1921-1942, undated
Box 55, Folder 4	Sale Book, 1870-1968
Box 55, Folder 5	Receipts from 1870-1968 Sale Book, 1932-1962, undated
Box 55, Folder 6	Sale Book, 1937-1938
Box 55, Folder 7	Receipts, 1937-1938
Box 56, Folder 1	Sale Book, 1941-1942
Box 56, Folder 2	Sale Book, 1943-1945
Box 56, Folder 3	Sale Book, 1946-1948
Box 56, Folder 4	Receipts, 1941-1948
Box 56, Folder 5	Sale Book, 1949
Box 56, Folder 6	Receipts, 1949-1950
Box 56, Folder 7	Sale Book A-F, 1954-1966, undated
Box 56, Folder 8	Sale Book, G, 1956-1966, undated
Box 57, Folder 1	Sale Book, G, 1952-1965, undated

Box 57, Folder 2	Sale Book, GU-, 1958-1965, undated
Box 57, Folder 3	Sale Book, H-R, 1955-1966, undated
Box 57, Folder 4	Sale Book, S, 1957-1965, undated
Box 57, Folder 5	Sale Book, T-Z, 1958-1966, undated
Box 58, Folder 1	Sale Book, 1956-1958
Box 58, Folder 2	Receipts from 1956-1958 Sale Book, 1947-1959, undated
Box 58, Folder 3	Sale Book, 1959-1961
Box 58, Folder 4	Receipts from 1959-1961 Sale Book, 1959-1966, undated
Box 58, Folder 5	Sale Book, 1964-1968
Box 58, Folder 6	Receipts from 1964-1968 Sale Book, 1967-1968
Box 58, Folder 7	Sale Book, 1969-1972
Box 58, Folder 8	Receipts from 1969-1972 Sale Book, 1969-1973, undated
Box 59, Folder 1	Receipts, undated
Box 59, Folder 2	Bow Book, 1953-1963, undated
Box 59, Folder 3	Bow Book, undated
Box 59, Folder 4	Various Business Cards and Sales Tags, 1941-1970, undated
Box 59, Folder 5	"Diapason des Instruments a Cordes Frottees", circa 1878-1920
Box 59, Folder 6	Not Genuine, 1723-1758, undated
Box 59, Folder 7	Antique Instruments, 1624-1769, undated
Box 59, Folder 8	Emile Français Certificates, 1946-1959
Box 59, Folder 9	Odd Certificates, 1888-1982, undated
Box 59, Folder 10	Notes, 1957, undated
Box 96, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1907-1996, undated
Box 60, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1997-1998, undated

Box 60, Folder 2	Violin Book, undated
Box 60, Folder 3	Reported Stolen, 1962-1969
Box 60, Folder 4	Reported Stolen, 1970-1979
Box 60, Folder 5	Reported Stolen, 1980-1984
Box 60, Folder 6	Reported Stolen, 1985-1989
Box 60, Folder 7	Reported Stolen, 1990
Box 60, Folder 8	Reported Stolen, undated
Box 60, Folder 9	Blotting Paper, undated
Box 60, Folder 10	Blank Envelopes Misc. Shops, undated
Box 60, Folder 11	Misc. Material, 1881-1996
Box 60, Folder 12	American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM), Photo Archive, 1997
Box 90	Emil Herrmann Papers, 1910-1947
Box 93, Folder 4	Henry Beryve, autographed photo, 1961
Box 95, Folder 1	Jacques Français Oversize Certificates (Various Makers), 1977-1989, undated
Box 95, Folder 2	Oversize Certificates (Emile Français and Others), 1924-1955
Box 95, Folder 3	Emil Herrmann, Blank "Fiddledale" Certificates, undated
Box 95, Folder 4	Misc. Notes, Financial & Other, 1922, undated
Box 96, Folder 5	Stradivarius Memorial Concert, program (Carnegie Hall, New York, New York), 1937-12-20
Box 96, Folder 7	Fiddles of the Mastercraftsman, catalogue and certificates (Brooklyn Museum, New York, New York), 1945-06-03
Box 96, Folder 8	Programme, Jacques Francais Rare Violins, promotional brochure, undated
Box 96, Folder 10	Photographs, 1938, undated
Box 96, Folder 12	Science 84, magazine, 1984-03

Box 96, Folder 13	Jacques Francais Presents Collector's Choice, Musical Instruments of Five Centuries from American Private Collections, program, 1975-04-04
Box 96, Folder 14	Certificates and broadsides, 1990, undated
Box 96, Folder 15	The Collector Investor, magazine, 1980-1982
Box 96, Folder 16	Connoisseur, magazine, 1990-03
Box 96, Folder 17	The New Yorker, magazine, 1953-10
Box 96, Folder 18	Francais, Emile, undated
Box 96, Folder 19	Caressa & Francais, catalogues, undated
Box 96, Folder 1	Loic et Verena le Cann, Luthiers (catalogue), undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)