



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Thomas Currier Vaudeville Collection

NMAH.AC.1120

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Thomas Currier Vaudeville Collection
Date:	1928-1986.
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1120
Creator:	Currier, Thomas, 1906-1986 Currier, Terrence P. Granville, Bonita Warner, H.B.
Extent:	0.5 Cubic feet (2 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Thomas Currier (1906-1986) and his partner Max Zides (1904-1975) formed the radio, vaudeville, night club and television song and patter duo known as Hum (Zides) and Strum (Currier). The collection documents the career of Currier and Zides as Hum and Strum.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Thomas Currier Vaudeville Collection

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Collection donated in 2007 by Thomas Currier's son, Terrence P. Currier.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.; supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist, November 2007.

Preferred Citation

Thomas Currier Vaudeville Collection, 1928-1986, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research but one film is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

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Biographical Note

Thomas C. Currier was born July 27, 1906, in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended the High School of Commerce in Boston. Currier reportedly met Max Zides in a music publisher's office. They formed their act, Hum and Strum, in 1924 singing standards and comedy songs while playing ukulele and piano. They performed on the radio, initially WGI in Medford Hillside, Massachusetts, and later WBZ in Boston. By 1928 they were one of the acts featured in the catalogue of the White Entertainment Bureau billed as The Hum and Strum Boys. In a 1929 listeners' poll they were rated third behind radio personalities Rudy Vallee and Amos 'n Andy. They were featured with Guy Lombardo and the Royal Canadians, Glenn Miller's Orchestra and others.

Currier and Zides moved into vaudeville performing on the bill at the Boston Lowe's State Theater, The Orpheum and eventually the famed Palace Theater on Time's Square in New York City. In 1928 they toured the RKO vaudeville circuit through the United States and Canada with Mildred Hunt, star of Roxie's Gang. The act continued working in radio, both in Boston and nationally, over the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network. They were credited as the first team to use a public address system. They are cited as having mentored George Burns and Gracie Allen and comedian Phil Silvers and they have been credited as the inventors of the "jingle" or singing commercial. They performed radio commercials for such varied products as Marshmallow Fluff and Sieberling Tires. The duo occasionally appeared as the Oxiton Twins, Oxi and Ton, twin clowns promoting Oxiton, a patent medicine for sore gums and mouth.

Currier and Zides moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1933-1934 and continued their radio career on station WATM. During World War II, they entertained troops overseas with the United Service Organization (USO). They performed many benefits and charity functions during their career. In 1947, the duo began their work in television with the DuMont network in New York City. They also appeared on WBZ-TV in Boston. By 1955 they were doing eight television shows a week on WJAR-TV in Providence, Rhode Island. They had their own music show and appeared on Breakfast at the Sheraton, Tip Top Circus, and Weekend in New England. The act lasted thirty-five years until 1958. They reunited briefly in 1959 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, where both had moved their families to retire. Zides then returned to Brookline, Massachusetts, ending their career for good. Currier continued performing as a solo act.

Currier was Roman Catholic and Max Zides was Jewish, and when asked about their pairing in 1955, Currier replied, "We believe that racial and religious hatreds are the dark glasses of the soul that blot a man's vision and make him unable to see character and vision in others."

Currier married Helen Mary Egan and had two children: Thomas C. Currier and Terrence P. Currier. His son Terrence became a professional actor. Currier lived in both the Hough's Neck and Merrymount areas of Quincy and later in Braintree, Massachusetts. The elder Currier moved to Ft. Lauderdale during his retirement and later moved to Reston, Virginia to be near family. Max Zides died in Boston in February 1975. Thomas Currier died on July 2, 1986 in Fairfax, Virginia, and was buried in Braintree, Massachusetts.

Scope and Contents

This collection of memorabilia documents the career of Thomas C. Currier, known as Strum in the radio duo Hum and Strum. The collection is arranged chronologically and is comprised predominately of publicity photographs, news clippings, radio programs, and minimal correspondence (three items). There are autographed photographs of vaudeville performers including one of a young Irene Noblette Ryan who in her later career appeared as Granny on the CBS television program, *The Beverly Hillbillies*. There is an autographed photograph of former Speaker of the House of Representatives, United States Congress, Tip O'Neill. A scrapbook documenting Currier's career, started and kept by his wife Helen, includes news clippings, ticket stubs, and one photograph. There is a script of the radio drama *Hitler's Children* (1943); it is autographed by Bonita Granville and H.B. Warner on the reverse of page twenty-two. A theatre program from the Maine Civic Theatre is autographed by actor Michael Whalen. There are two magazines: *Radio and Television Mirror*, and *TV Radio Mirror*. There is one reel of 16mm film featuring Hum and Strum. There are a few news articles featuring Thomas's sons, Tommy and Terrance.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

Series 1: Memorabilia, 1928-1986

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs and negatives. Special arrangements required to view materials in cold storage. Using cold room materials requires a three hour waiting period. Contact the Archives Center at 202-633-3270.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Vaudeville

Types of Materials:

Clippings

Correspondence -- 20th century

Motion pictures (visual works) -- 20th century

Programs

Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Scripts (documents)

Names:

Ryan, Irene

Zides, Max

Container Listing

Series 1: Memorabilia, 1928-1986

Box 1, Folder 1	The White Entertainment Bureau Catalogue, 1928-1929
Box 1, Folder 2	Theater Marquees (publicity photographs), 1929-1939
Box 1, Folder 3	Theater Programs, 1929-1958, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Celebrity Photographs, 1931-1942, undated
Box 1, Folder 5	Hum and Strum Publicity Photographs, 1933, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Script: Hitler's Children, 1943
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1946-1949
Box 1, Folder 8	Radio and Television Mirror, 1949 June
Box 1, Folder 9	TV Radio Mirror, 1955 September
Box 1, Folder 10	News Clippings, 1955-1986, undated
Box 2, Folder 1	Celebrity Photographs, 1930, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Hum and Strum (Photograph), undated
Box 2, Folder 3	Hum and Strum Caricature, undated
Box 2, Folder 4	Stars and Stripes Mediterranean, 1944
Box 2, Folder 5	News Clippings, 1955-1986, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Scrapbook Cover, 1931-1975, undated
Box 2, Folder 7	Scrapbook pages 1-7, 1931-1975, undated
Box 2, Folder 8	Scrapbook pages 8-58, 1931-1975, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	Scrapbook pages 59-67, 1931-1975, undated
Reel OF1120.1	Hum and Strum television appearance, 1948

1 Film reel (100 feet, 16mm, b&w, optical track, probably a kinescope of a television appearance)

Notes: Hum (Max Zides) and Strum (Tom Currier)

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