



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

Smothers Brothers Collection

NMAH.AC.1437

NMAH Staff

Archives Center, National Museum of American History  
P.O. Box 37012  
Suite 1100, MRC 601  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012  
archivescenter@si.edu  
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

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## Collection Overview

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|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Repository:</b>      | Archives Center, National Museum of American History  |
| <b>Title:</b>           | Smothers Brothers Collection  |
| <b>Identifier:</b>      | NMAH.AC.1437  |
| <b>Date:</b>            | 1937-2003<br>(bulk 1960-1990)   |
| <b>Extent:</b>          | 12 Cubic feet (12 boxes)  |
| <b>Language:</b>        | English   |
| <b>Summary:</b>         | The collection documents the lives and careers of the Smothers Brothers, with emphasis on their television variety show, The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. |
| <b>Digital Content:</b> | <a href="#">Image(s): Smothers Brothers Collection</a>  |

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## Administrative Information

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Sarah G. Gegiman, intern, Julia Gibson, intern, Savannah C. Hildre, intern, Lauren M. Janik, intern, Abigail L. Starck, intern, supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons Archivist, 2019

### Preferred Citation

Smothers Brothers Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Reproduction restricted due to copyright or trademark.

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## Biographical / Historical

The Smothers Brothers were a folksinging duo who toured and made occasional appearances on television variety shows during the 1960s. Starting in 1967, the brothers had their own show, The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. The show often contained controversial content and often featured appearances by controversial guest performers. The show was cancelled in 1969 by the network, over conflicts regarding the network's rights to edit or censor the programs in advance. The brothers sued

the network successfully but the show was not reinstated. They continued to make occasional television appearances, tour and record, retiring in 2010.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection documents the lives and careers of the Smothers Brothers, with emphasis on their television variety show, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*. The collection includes very large numbers of photographs, slides, contact prints and negatives. These include a few childhood photographs of the brothers and their family, performance photographs, their talent agency's publicity shots, candid photographs of the act on tour, album cover shots, and behind-the-scenes photographs of the show and its guest stars. The comedian Pat Paulsen appears in many of the photographs. The photographs of the show's guests are mostly contact sheets and include no captions. Other types of materials in the collection include publicity materials including press releases, programs, biographical information, and clippings; fan mail, some from famous persons (many of these are photocopies) such as Lucille Ball, Jack Paar, and others; business records including contracts, tour itineraries, talent agency correspondence, memos, correspondence with CBS regarding content of the shows and relating to editing, objections, etc.; a file of letters received from viewers, some complimentary, some critical, after the show aired a feature lampooning gun owners; a file of letters criticizing the show for having Pete Seeger as a guest; a file of letters from members of Congress; one script; several scrapbooks, mostly containing clippings; one photograph album; and a large file of legal and other papers relating to the lawsuit against CBS.

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## Arrangement

Collection is unarranged.

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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:

- Comedy
- Folk singers
- Television
- Television personalities
- Variety shows (Television programs) -- Production and direction

Types of Materials:

- Biography files
- Clippings -- 20th century
- Color prints (photographs) -- 20th century
- Color slides -- 20th century
- Contact sheets
- Contracts
- Itineraries
- Legal records
- Letters (correspondence) -- 20th century.
- Photograph albums

Photographs -- 20th century  
Photographs -- 20th century -- Color prints  
Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- 20th century  
Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- Acetate film  
Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- 20th century  
Press releases  
Programs  
Scrapbooks  
Scripts (documents)

Names:

Paulsen, Pat  
Seeger, Pete, 1919-2014