

Joe Sanders Collection

Joe Sanders and Carleton Coon co-founded the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks orchestra, gaining their fame during the decade of the 1920s. This collection contains a variety of material accumulated by Joe Sanders over his musical career and obtained by the library from his widow.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Joe Sanders
Title: Joe Sanders collection
Dates: circa 1908-1987, bulk 1920-1940
Size: 11.4 cubic feet, 20 boxes
Location: SC1-1

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Terms governing use and reproduction: Due to preservation concerns, researchers are asked to use the photocopies of Scrapbook A located in Box 6.1.

Additional physical form available: Many photographs in the collection have been digitized including those in Box 1 and 2.

Publication note: Several photographs from Scrapbook A published in *The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks: The Band That Made Radio Famous* by Fred W. Edmiston, McFarland and Company, c2003.

Related collections in other repositories: The Marr Sound Archives located at the University of Missouri at Kansas City contains musical recordings and additional information.

Acquisition information: Purchase, 1966, from Mrs. Joe Sanders.

Custodial history: This collection represents a large, intact amount of material that remained after the bulk of his materials were reportedly stolen around 1950. Upon purchase, the collection was housed in the library's Art and Music Department and transferred to Missouri Valley Special Collections, April 10, 1976.

Citation note: Joe Sanders collection (SC1-1), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Pubic Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

Joe L. Sanders was born in Thayer, Kansas in 1896, spent part of his childhood in Belton, Missouri, and moved to Kansas City in his early teens. He started his musical performances as a boy soprano in local church choirs and graduated from Westport High School. After World War I, he organized an orchestra with Carleton Coon called the Nighthawks and the group played music on local radio and traveled the country. After Coon's untimely death in 1932, Sanders continued as a composer, piano player, singer and conductor of his own band, referring to himself as the "Ole Left Hander," a name derived from an earlier baseball feat.

Sanders died in 1965 and is buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri.

Scope and content note

The collection represents an important chapter in the musical history of Kansas City and of one of its leading musicians who was a bandleader, pianist, singer, composer and musical arranger. Material in the collection covers his early days as a boy soprano, through the period when he organized his first jazz band in 1919, the great days of the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks band in the 1920s and early 1930s, and the three decades he directed his own bands with much of this time spent in the Chicago area.

Items included in this collection represent his personal and professional career. Included are many photographs which depict Sanders, his bands and famous celebrities of the time. There are several scenes from the movie *King Kelly of the U.S.A.* in which Joe Sanders and Bernie Grossman are credited with the movie music. Photographs are also found in scrapbooks with narrative provided by Mr. Sanders. These snapshots are many times quite informal and give a representation of the humorous side of the band as they traveled. They provide a pictorial record of the Nighthawks earliest road tour in 1923 as well as other tours that took them to New York, New Orleans and Atlantic City. Additional loose photographs include many taken by Mr. Sanders during professional travels.

Sheet music is also an important element in the collection. It includes that published, performed and written by Sanders as well as his own manuscripts. Music includes an edition of Mr. Sanders' composition *The Nighthawk Blues* which became one of the band's best-selling recordings. There is also a copy of the manuscript and sheet music edition of one of his first published songs, *Martha*, published by the J. W. Jenkins Music Company in 1924. A list of the music is found with the collection and is divided between sheet music written by Joe Sanders, manuscripts containing original music by Sanders, and miscellaneous sheet music featured/performed by Joe Sanders and his band.

Another major component of the collection are the numerous scrapbooks. There are a total of 11 scrapbooks that contain a variety of items. These items include newspaper clippings, telegrams, photographs, correspondence, and many ephemeral type miscellaneous items including programs, dinner menus, Christmas cards, advertising pieces, etc. Most of the scrapbooks have been photocopied.

The collection also contains five boxes of various, interesting miscellaneous items associated with Mr. Sanders. These include personal date books, travel post cards, band cards, diary book with band's schedule (1926), brochures and travel information, miscellaneous trade publications, radio scripts, awards, certificates, journals, etc.

This collection provides information and detail about Joe Sanders covering his formative musical years and later successful band career. It becomes apparent how the emerging radio broadcasting and recording industry aided the popularity and success of this musician and his organization. They appeared first over station WDAF, broadcasting from the Hotel Muehlebach; then on a coast-to-coast hook-up from Chicago's Blackhawk Cafe, developing a large national following in the 1920s and 1930s.

Missouri Valley Special Collections has three other special collections related to Joe Sanders. They are SC1-2, Harvey Rettberg Papers, SC1-3, Fred Edmiston

Papers and SC1-4, Clyde Hahn Collection. Mr Edmiston's book *The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks: the Band That Made Radio Famous* is available in the department and a good source for information on the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks. There are also audio recordings of the Coon-Sanders band, both long playing records and cassette tapes. Newspaper clippings may also be found in the Newspaper Clipping Collection and there are entries for him in the library's Local History Database. The collection folder contains inventories of music, donation information, and other documenting material.

Arrangement note

Arranged by record type.

Finding aid note

Sheet music in the collection is listed alphabetically by title for Box 7 and 8. Sander's manuscript compositions listed for Box 9, arranged by page number order.

Collection Inventory

Box 1 - Photographs - Online

- Portraits and professional poses of Sanders (8 folders)
- Group poses which include Sanders (2 folders)
- Informal poses of Sanders (4 folders)
- Signed photos of celebrities (9 folders)

Box 2 - Photographs - Online

- Sander's Orchestra (4 folders)
- Billboards and marquees (1 folder)
- Stage scenes (1 folder)
- Mrs. Sanders (1 folder)
- Carleton Coon (1 folder)
- Mtd. Snapshots from album (2 folders)
- Miscellaneous folders (2 folders)

Box 3 - Photographs (Snapshots) and Postcards (Unposted) - 1930s, 1940s - 415 pictures (Not online)

- Snapshots are loose arranged by state, subject or an unidentified category. They are mostly identified travel shots. They do include some of the Joe Sanders Band tour bus and there are a few of Joe Sanders. - States include: Arizona/New Mexico, California, Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia. Subjects include: Airplanes (Joe standing beside a Mainliner airplane as well as aerial views from a plane), Baseball (Cleveland Stadium), Football (Notre Dame), Tombstones, Joe Sanders, Band, etc., (Includes one of Joe and his brother Ray and Joe's Cord automobile), Unidentified, and photograph postcards from trips.

Box 4 - Photographs (20 oversize) and Scrapbook A (Photographs and Hand Written Text by Joe Sanders, Also Photocopied) Two Coon-Sanders record albums in front of box

- Professional portraits and poses
- Groups
- Signed celebrities
- Scrapbook A (1923 - 1932) - "Join Coon-Sanders and See America," 88 p. - Begins with first tour to Oklahoma City and ends with Carleton Coon's death. Contains numerous snap shots of the band from road tours with commentary.

Box 5 - Scrapbook Y (1932-1933?) - Contains photographs and commentary (Also Photocopied)

- Scrapbook starts after the death of Carleton Coon in 1932 and ends with an Ozark fishing trip in perhaps 1933. Contains photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, handwritten commentary at time similar to a diary, travel memorabilia, etc.

Box 6 - Scrapbook Z (1934-?) & P (1935 -?) - Contains photographs and commentary (also photocopied)

- Scrapbook Z starts with "Our California Trip", March 15, 1934 and contains trip photographs and some commentary. Includes family pictures of Joe and wife Madeline and their pets.
- Scrapbook P starts with description of engagement at the Blackhawk Restaurant in May 18, 1935, includes 1936 Winter tour, and ends with photographs of Washington, D.C.

Box 6.1 - Photocopies of Scrapbook A, Y, Z & P

Box 7 - Sheet Music - Published, written by Sanders. Arranged alphabetically by title.

- Because You Said "I Love You" (3 copies)
- Beloved (3 copies)
- Blue Moonlight
- Do You Miss Me (2 copies) [Band's Theme Song]
- Dreaming of Tomorrow (3 copies)
- Got a Great Big Date With a Little Bitta Girl (2 copies)
- Half Way to Dawn
- Harold Teen (2 copies)
- I Found a Rose in the Snow (2 copies)
- I Want to Go Home (3 copies)
- I'll Never Forget I Love You (2 copies) [Band's Theme Song]
- I'm a Man About Town (That's About to Settle Down)
- Improvisation: A Folio of Modern Piano Solos - Intangibility, Embers, Inhibition, Southology (4 copies)
- In the Hills of Old Missouri
- Lazy Waters (2 copies)
- A Little Bird Told Me So
- Little Feller (2 copies and one hand-written one)
- Little Orphan Annie
- Martha (2 copies)
- My Dear (2 copies)
- My Paradise
- Nighthawk Blues (1 complete copy and 1 incomplete)
- Over the Rim of the Sun
- Right Next Door to Love

- Save the Grease
- She Loves Me Just the Same
- Sittin' and Whittlin'
- Slue-Foot
- Somebody From Home (3 copies)
- Southology
- Take Me (2 copies)
- Tennessee Lazy (2 copies)
- That Was Destiny (3 copies)
- There's No One Just Like You (2 copies)
- Tune in On My Heart (4 copies)
- Until Yesterday (2 copies)
- What a Girl! What a Night!
- What Have I Done? (2 copies)

Box 8 - Sheet Music – Performed by Sanders. Arranged alphabetically by title

- Ain't You Ashamed
- Am I Dreaming?
- Collegiate
- Dinin' and Dancin' With the One You Love
- Foolish
- Home
- I Couldn't Believe My Eyes
- I Get the Blues When It Rains
- I'll Sing For You
- It's the Darndest thing
- Joe Davis' Piano Modes of 15 Foremost Modern Pianists (Includes Joe Sanders)
- Lies
- Lights Out
- Loafin' Time
- Lovers' Holiday
- Mrs. Winchell's Boy
- Moonlight
- Please Believe Me (2 copies)
- Pretty Little Dream Girl
- Red Sails in the Sunset
- Robbins Hollywood Dance Folio, No. 12, containing 15 songs
- Singin' the Blues
- Solitude
- A Song of India
- Sweet Rambler Rose (2 copies)
- Tears
- Two Hearts That Pass in the Night (See Box 18, Folder 4)
- Was I the Foolish One
- Who's Blue
- You Cried Your Way Into My Heart (But Laughed Yourself Right Out Again)

Box 9 - Music manuscripts, Sander's compositions. Arranged by page number order.

- Martha
- Happiness
- Geisha Girl
- Wonderful Pal of Mine
- I Want You (My Dream Girl)
- Daddy, Look What You've Gone and Done
- Dolores
- Evolution
- Lonesome (I Wonder If You're Lonesome, Too)
- M-I-SS-O-U-R-I (That Spells Heaven to Me)
- Snuggles
- And Then You Came
- Timbuctoo
- Smile (Keep Smiling)
- Forgotten
- Destiny
- Divine Poesy
- Daddy
- Yiddisha Vamp
- I Want You Back (That's Why I'm Blue)
- I Ain't Got Nothin' To Be Thankful For
- Old Legion Buddy of Mine
- Moonlight and You
- Little Feller
- Nightie Night
- Save the Grease

Box 10 - Miscellaneous material

- Folder 1 - Autographs to Madeline Sanders (early 1930s) - on various items and including names as Rudy Vallee (with pictures of the Lodge at Lake Kezar, Maine), Bing Crosby, Carmen Lombardo, Joe Sanders (on a Blackhawk Restaurant menu), and many others.
- Folder 2 - Awards - From the American Legion (1932), President Lyndon Johnson (n.d.)
- Folder 3 - Certificates - Medinah Club of Chicago membership, 1930, 1935
- Folder 4 - Christmas cards sent to Joe Sanders, 1930s-1940s
- Folder 5 - Christmas cards sent by Joe Sanders, n.d.
- Folder 6 - Correspondence, 1911 - 1942, Addressed primarily to Joe Sanders
- Folder 7 - Correspondence, 1928 - 1987? - Miscellaneous primarily addressed to Joe Sanders
- Folder 8 - Florsheim Shoe radio program - Programs, posters, publicity pieces- featuring Coon-Sanders Band
- Folder 9 - Journal/Diary sheets (11 sheets) - handwritten. Believed to have been written by Madeline Sanders, wife of Joe Sanders. First part begins August 21, 1931, Little Rock, Arkansas and ends with Kansas City, September 13, 1931 and second part is titled "New York City" and begins October 21, 1931 and ends January 6, 1932. She explains daily activities, people, celebrities, Joe's engagements, etc.
- Folder 10 - Musical programs, ca1909-1915 - Kansas City area - Joe Sanders featured
- Folder 11 - Musical programs, menus, and newsletters, ca1915-1943

- Folder 12 - Dance programs, publicity pieces, invitation, etc. ca1932 - 1945
- Folder 13 - Miscellaneous items including a typed list dated 1931 listing the most important bands on the air in rotation, *Key*, *The Weekly Magazine of Southern California Life*, September 7-14, 1944, and brochure "On the Air Everywhere", MCA orchestras
- Folder 14 - Radio scripts, 1931-1943, includes "The Lucky Strike Dance Hour" program for November 26, 1931 and December 3, 1931.
- Folder 15 - Programs, miscellaneous, 1915-1935. Includes Kentucky Derby, Chautauqua, pageant, football
- Folder 16 - Directory of Radio Columnists, typed, n.d.
- Folder 17 - Song lyrics, typewritten - Includes: "Syncopated Mid-Night Hob-Goblin Man", "You Went Away", "Patrick Shay", "Somebody From Home", "The House Isn't Home Without You", and a postal telegraph's New Year song-o-gram featuring Joe Sanders.

Box 11 - Miscellaneous material

- Includes a group of travel/souvenir post cards, 3 personal/professional date books (n.d., 1925-1926, 1927-28), band cards, personal ephemera.

Box 12 - Miscellaneous material including

- Agreements between Coon and Sanders and Music Corporation of America(1924) and Victor Talking Machine Company (1924), artwork, newspaper clippings, map of the Country Club District (1930), magazine covers, exhibit items, various publications, early Nighthawks tour items, and a few KC related items including *The Laurelette* yearbook from Loretto Academy (1937)

Box 13 - Miscellaneous material

- Brochures, booklets, etc., pertaining to travel and tourist information, much of it on California (1930s-1940s), contains an early TWA ticket stubs and envelope for flight from St. Louis to Kansas City (n.d.)

Box 14 - Miscellaneous trade publications

- *This Week in Chicago*, September 26, 1936, July 3, 1937; *Mastertone*, March, 1929, *Radio Digest*, April, 1932 and January, 1933, *Down Beat*, December, 1937, *Billiards Magazine*, March, 1932, *Hollywood Low-Down*, March, 1938, etc.

Box 15 - Scrapbooks

- Scrapbook #1 (1909-1980s) - Photocopies only, identified as including photocopies of newspaper clippings, articles, etc. relating to the Coon-Sanders Band and their engagements and, following Coon's death, the engagements for Joe Sanders and his Original Nighthawks. Apparently these items were loose in the collection when it came to the Art and Music Department of the library and someone photocopied them and tried to arrange them either by date or engagement. Many of these items are in the collection in other boxes. Found at the beginning of the scrapbook is a typewritten list by date of where the band appeared, 1926-1931.
- Scrapbook #2 (1920s-1980s) - Photocopies only, identified as photocopies of newspaper clippings and articles relating to Joe Sanders' early career,

sports, interviews, and articles written by Joe Sanders. Also, miscellaneous items relating to his band, promotional activities, and clips about Coon's death. Vertical file and biographical articles from several jazz books are also included as well as articles from his later life and obituary. Many of these items are in the collection in other boxes.

- Scrapbook #3 (1930s) - Includes original scrapbook entitled "The Old Left Hander – Joe L. Sanders" as well as a photocopy. Inside of cover reads "1936. From a very ardent fan that has been a listener of yours since using ear phones. A Fan." Contains primarily newspaper clippings with some engagement notices.

Box 16 - Scrapbooks

- Scrapbook #4 (ca1937-1945) - original and two photocopies. One full page as original and 2nd with full contents rearranged for photocopying purposes. Contains newspaper clippings, pictures, publication articles, engagement ads, ephemeral items, etc.

Box 17 - Scrapbooks

- Scrapbook #5 (1922-1987) – Photocopy only. Includes diary, correspondence, Christmas cards, diner menus, advertising pieces, etc
- Scrapbook #6 (1931-1943) - Photocopies only. Primarily radio scripts.
- Scrapbook #7 (ca1920s-1986) - Photocopies only, made by William Phipps. Some poems by Sanders, contract/agreement between Sanders and Coon in 1924, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, photographs, miscellaneous items, etc.
- Scrapbook #8 (1924-1942, majority 1929-30) - Telegrams primarily, assembled from more than one source into this arrangement. Newspaper and magazine clippings in Folder 8, 1936-37.

Box 18 - Scrapbooks

Scrapbook #9 (ca1939-1941)

- Folder 1 - Ephemeral items, club items including from Michael Todd's Theatre-Cafe which include photographs of Sanders and his orchestra (1940s)
- Folder 2 - Photographs, newspaper clippings, Michael Todd's Theatre-Cafe item with photographs, photograph, correspondence (1937), Professional Music Men, Inc. souvenir journal of 1939
- Folder 3 - *Guldegrams: The Voice of the Fan Clubs*, v.4,#6, May, 1940 and v.5,#4, January, 1941, newsletter, newspaper clippings, *Missouri Shamrock* from College of Engineering, University of Missouri, March, 1940
- Folder 4 - Sheet music - "Two Hearts That Pass in the Night", c1941, correspondence (1940-41), *The Nicollet Visitor*, May 18-25, 1940 (Minneapolis, Minn.), ephemeral items, newspaper clippings, *Guldegrams*, v.5,#5, Feb., 1941, telegrams
- Folder 5 - Telegrams (1939), newspaper clippings, *Sanders Salute*, 1940, newsletter page, poem, Michael Todd's Theatre-Cafe souvenir program (n.d.), Hunleth Music Co., St. Louis publication

Scrapbook #10 (1934-1936)

- Folder 6 - Newspaper clippings, telegrams, correspondence, ephemeral items, Blackhawk Restaurant menu
- Folder 7 - Newspaper clippings (1935), telegrams
- Folder 8 - Telegrams (1935)
- Folder 9 - Telegrams (1935-1936)
- Folder 10 - Telegrams (1936), newspaper clippings, magazine clippings, correspondence, ephemeral items
- Folder 11 - Telegrams (1936), magazine articles, newspaper clippings, correspondence, promotional piece entitled "Music Corporation of America Presents" which contains photos of dance band directors including Joe Sanders, ephemeral items
- Folder 12 - Radio program schedules (Station WOR), correspondence, ephemeral items, Penn State *Froth*, Soph hop issue, March, 1936

Scrapbook #11 (1908-1920s)

- Folder 13 - Programs from early local recitals of Joe Sanders (1908-1915), newspaper clippings
- Folder 14 - Newspaper clippings (1920s), programs (1915-1916)
- Folder 15 - Newspaper clippings including early Coon Sanders Band ads (1920s), programs including radio program lists which gives songs played by the band and times
- Folder 16 - Newspaper clippings including articles on how far the Nighthawks radio broadcasts are heard (1920s), programs

Initially processed in 1991; further processing by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, October 1997; Summer 2005.