



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Sophie Tucker Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 485



Collection Summary

Title	Sophie Tucker Papers, 1892-1966
Collection Number	MS-485
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Tucker, Sophie, 1884 - 1966
Extent	8.25 linear feet (7 Hollinger boxes and 3 oversize boxes)
Abstract	The Sophie Tucker papers contain correspondence, speeches, plaques, photographs, and other materials relating to her entertainment career and her work with the American Federation of Actors.
Language of the Material	English, Hebrew, and Yiddish

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch	<p>Sophie Tucker, also known as "The Last of the Red Hot Mamas," was born on January 13th, 1886 to a Jewish family from Ukraine. The family adopted the surname Abuza and immigrated to the United States and settled in Hartford, Connecticut where her father opened a restaurant. It was in the restaurant where she first began to sing to entertain diners.</p> <p>In 1903 at the age of 16, Tucker eloped with Louis Tuck, a beer cart driver, from whom she would take her professional surname. Tucker's son Albert was born in 1906 and shortly after his birth, the marriage ended. Tucker left the baby with her family and moved to New York City to pursue her entertainment career.</p> <p>In 1907, she made her first theater appearance, singing at an amateur night in a vaudeville establishment. It was there she was first asked to perform in blackface and with a deep southern accent. By chance during a 1908 tour, her luggage, including her makeup kit, was lost and Tucker went onstage without blackface. From that point on, Tucker performed without blackface and grew in popularity as she honed her stage act. During this time, Tucker turned to making records, including her two biggest hits "Some of These Days" and "My Yiddishe Mama."</p> <p>By the 1920's, Tucker established a large following not only in the United States, but Europe as well. As vaudeville began to decline, she turned to film and television which included roles in "Honkey Tonk" (1929) and "Thoroughbreds Don't Cry" (1937). Tucker's interest in acting also extended to supporting labor relations, as she was elected president of the American Federation of Actors from 1938 to 1939.</p> <p>Tucker continued to perform for the rest of her life, including appearances on popular variety and talk shows. She also became involved in various philanthropic causes which included the Sophie Tucker Foundation, contributions to various actors' guilds, and numerous hospitals and retirement homes. Sophie Tucker died on February 9th 1966 in New York, New York.</p> <p>Adapted from Sophie Tucker, Nearprint biographies, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.</p>
Scope and Content	The Sophie Tucker Papers captures her work as a vaudeville performer. Much of her papers consist of photographs and correspondence from other notable celebrities at the time, as well as awards received, photographs, and documentation of her charity work.
Arrangement	This collection is arranged in three (3) series: Series A. Photographs. 1892-1966. Series B. Printed Material. 1936-1965. Series C. Oversize. 1909-1965.
Terms of Access	The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.
Terms of Reproduction and Use	Terms of Reproduction and Use Copyright restrictions may apply. Authorization to publish, quote, or reproduce, with exceptions for fair use, may be obtained through the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. Please address queries to the Executive Director of the American Jewish Archives. For more information, see the American Jewish Archives copyright information webpage.
Preferred Citation	Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Sophie Tucker Papers and

the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-485. Sophie Tucker Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from Moses C. and Charles Z. Abuza, New York, N.Y., 1966.

Index Terms

Subjects

Actors / Jewish Actors / Jewish entertainers / Jewish philanthropists / Jewish singers / Jewish women -- New York (State) -- New York / Jewish women / Labor unions / Vaudeville / Women entertainers

Personal Names

Benny, Jack, 1894-1974 / Cantor, Eddie, 1892-1964 / Clayton, Bessie / Crosby, Bing, 1903-1977 / Davis, Bette, 1908-1989 / Garland, Judy / Halperin, Nan, 1898-1963 / Hope, Bob, 1903-2003 / Jessel, George, 1898-1981 / Lewis, Ted, 1892-1971 / Marx, Groucho, (Julius Henry Marx), 1890-1977 / Oakie, Jack, 1903-1978 / Taylor, Robert, 1911-1969 / Tucker, Sophie, 1884-1966 / Wood, Wee Georgie, 1894-1979

Corporate Names

American Federation of Actors.

Media

Photographs / Rare Documents / Scrapbooks

Series A. Photographs, 1892-1966

Extent 2.2 linear feet (5.5 Hollinger Boxes)

Scope and Content Note

Consists of photograph albums, focusing on family gatherings and charity work. Events featured include a farewell dinner held for Tucker in 1952 during her time in London, a trip to Beit Shemesh, Israel for charity work in 1962, and dedications in her honor for her charitable work. Also included are promotional photographs taken of Tucker along with many celebrities with whom she toured, such as George Jessel, Judy Garland, Ted Lewis, Bob Hope, and others.

Arrangement

Series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. General, 1892, 1909-1917

Box 1. Folder 2. Celebrity autographs, 1909-1918, undated

Box 1. Folder 3. General, 1917, 1920-1929

Box 1. Folder 4. Celebrity autographs, 1921-1962

Box 1. Folder 5. General, 1930-1937

Box 2. Folder 1. General, 1937

Box 2. Folder 2. General, 1938-1939

Box 2. Folder 3. General, 1940-1949

Box 2. Folder 4. General, 1950-1956

Box 3. Folder 1. Albany Club farewell party album, 1952 August 9

Box 3. Folder 2. Women's Division Israel Bonds album, 1956 October 22

Box 3. Folder 3. Ambulance dedication ceremony album, 1957

Box 3. Folder 4. General, 1957-1958

Box 3. Folder 5. General, 1959

Box 4. Folder 1. Family, 1960-1963

Box 4. Folder 2. General, 1961-1966
Box 4. Folder 3. Visiting Israel album, 1962
Box 4. Folder 4. Sophie Tucker youth center album, 1962
Box 4. Folder 5. Unknown event album, undated
Box 4. Folder 6. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 1. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 2. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 3. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 4. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 5. General, undated
Box 5. Folder 6. General, undated
Box 6. Folder 1. General, undated
Box 6. Folder 2. General, undated

Series B. Printed Materials, 1936-1965

Extent .6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of awards, correspondence, scripts, and speeches. Included in the correspondence folders there are letters from celebrities such as Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, and others. The bulk of the materials pertain to Tucker's charity work. Other materials included are scripts written by Al Boasberg and Frederick J. Jackson.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 6. Folder 3. Autograph book, 1952 May
Box 6. Folder 4. Awards, 1944-1965
Box 6. Folder 5. Correspondence. American Federation of Actors, 1936-1954
Box 7. Folder 1. Correspondence. American Federation of Actors, undated
Box 7. Folder 2. Correspondence. Jubilee dinner committee, 1947-1949
Box 7. Folder 3. Miscellaneous, 1928-1965
Box 7. Folder 4. Scripts, undated
Box 7. Folder 5. Speeches, 1954-1963, undated

Series C. Oversize Materials, 1909-1965

Extent 5.4 linear feet (3 oversize boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of pages removed from a deteriorating scrapbook, full scrapbooks, photographs from social events and performances, correspondence, awards, and autographed photographs of other celebrities, such as Nan Halperin, Georgie Wood, and Bessie Clayton.

Arrangement Series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box X-407. Folder 1. Awards, 1925-1965, undated
- Box X-407. Folder 2. Celebrity autographs, 1909-1962
- Box X-407. Folder 3. "Follow A Star" photograph album, 1930-1931
- Box X-408. Folder 1. General materials, 1927-1935, 1946, undated
- Box X-408. Folder 2. General photographs, 1917, 1921-1923
- Box X-408. Folder 3. General photographs, 1924-1926
- Box X-408. Folder 4. General photographs, 1936-1939
- Box X-408. Folder 5. General photographs, 1946, 1948-1950
- Box X-408. Folder 6. General photographs, 1952-1954, 1956, undated
- Box X-408. Folder 7. Greeting card scrapbook, 1948
- Box X-408. Folder 8. Kibbutz Be'eri Youth Center album (Negev, Israel), 1961
- Box X-409. Folder 1. Promotional photographs, 1952
- Box X-409. Folder 2. Scrapbook, 1929
- Box X-409. Folder 3. Scrapbook, 1931-1933, 1945
- Box X-409. Folder 4. Sophie Tucker and her Five Kings of Syncopation photographs, 1909-1921, 1925
- Box X-409. Folder 5. World War II performance scrapbook (Las Vegas, Nev.), 1945