Sophie Tucker Collection, ca. 1890-1966 (bulk 1920-1960)
14 linear feet

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Prepared by Tim Gann, Archival Intern, March 2017
Edited by Morgen Stevens-Garmon, Associate Curator, Theater Collection, September 2017
Description is in English.

Descriptive Summary
Creator: Tucker, Sophie, 1884-1966
Title: Sophie Tucker Collection
Dates: ca. 1890-1966, bulk 1920-1960
Abstract: Sophie Tucker (1884-1966) was a Jewish vaudevillian and Broadway star. Throughout her fifty year career, she starred in numerous Broadway productions and films. She was notable for performing songs in Yiddish and for flaunting her large figure and sexuality. She had a lasting impact in musical theater and directly influenced other female singers and performers.
Extent: 14 linear feet
MCNY Numbers: 66.60; Activity ID: 17946
Language: English, Yiddish, Hebrew
Biographical Note
Sophie Tucker (1884-1966), originally Sophie Kalish, was born in Russia to a Jewish family in the midst of immigrating to America. Raised in Hartford, Connecticut as Sophie Abuza, she began singing in her family’s restaurant for tips. When she was 16, she married Louis Tuck, but shortly after her son Albert’s birth in 1906, she asked for a separation and moved to New York City. She changed her last name to Tucker and was soon introduced to the famous composer Harold Von Tilzer. Tucker was notably and proudly a large Jewish woman, which made show producers worry about her commercial potential early in her career. Because of their doubt, they insisted she perform only in blackface, thinking it would be the only way for her to appeal to the audience. Only when her makeup kit was lost was she given a chance to perform without it, and at the show she proudly proclaimed her Jewish heritage. She quickly became popular among vaudeville audiences, singing in both English and Yiddish. In 1921, she began a lifelong collaboration with Ted Shapiro, who frequently accompanied Tucker on piano and provided patter in between songs. Her most notable songs included “Some of These Days” and “My Yiddishe Momme.” Starting in 1929 with the film Honky Tonk, she also led a career as a screen actress, appearing alongside Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, and Robert Taylor in films such as Thoroughbreds Don’t Cry and Broadway Melody of 1938. She also made regular appearances on radio and in her later years performed on television programs such as The Ed Sullivan Show and The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson. She was well known for her philanthropy, donating regularly to a number of different organizations, including the Jewish Theatrical Guild, the Negro Actors Guild, and the Catholic Actors Guild. She has had a lasting influence on Jewish culture as well as feminism, flaunting her figure, sexuality, and independence openly. She has been cited as a major inspiration by many female performers, especially Bette Midler, who created a character based on Tucker. On February 9, 1966, Tucker died of kidney failure in New York City.

Scope and Content
Objects in the collection are primarily sheet music, lyrics, and patter (on-stage banter in between songs) for performances and songs used by Tucker. There is also a substantial number of photographs featuring Tucker, her family, and friends and colleagues also in the entertainment industry, such as Judy Garland and Bob Hope. The collection includes correspondence, as well as newspaper clippings and articles, speeches given by Tucker at various events, manuscripts, and publications. The collection contains a number of awards and certificates given to Tucker, a single recording of “My Yiddishe Momme” on shellac 78 rpm disc, and costumes worn by Tucker in various performances.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged in five series according to subject. Series I: Sheet music, lyrics, and orchestration and Series III: Photographs are arranged according to the accession number given at the time of donation or assigned during digitization. All other series are arranged chronologically.
Series I: Sheet music, lyrics, and orchestration, 1910-1940
Series II: Personal papers, 1902-1964
Series III: Photographs, ca. 1890-1966
Series IV: Phonograph record, 1928
Series V: Costumes, ca. 1925-1965

Series Description
Series I: Sheet music, lyrics, and orchestration, 1910-1940
This series is comprised of handwritten and printed sheet music, lyrics, and orchestrations used by Tucker and her bandmates in performances. The music covers a wide range of songs sung throughout Tucker’s career. There are often handwritten notes denoting various cues and changes in lyrics, and there are some scripts for patter, dialogue spoken between songs, including routines between Tucker and Ted Shapiro, her main accompanist. Some of the printed sheet music features Tucker on the cover.

Series II: Personal papers, 1902-1964
This series contains letters written to Tucker throughout her career, as well as a number of Christmas and birthday cards. Much of the material comes from family, friends, and colleagues, though there are a number of letters sent from various charities to which Tucker donated frequently. People of note include Jimmy Durante and Jack L. Warner. There are also scrapbooks created by Tucker consisting of news articles, clippings, and ephemera, and awards and paper certificates given to Tucker by the different organizations with whom she was involved. These organizations include the American Guild of Variety Actors, the Friars Club, the Catholic Actors’ Guild, the United States Army, and several Jewish and Israeli organizations. Ephemera includes souvenir programs from testimonial dinners given to honor Sophie Tucker. This series contains scripts for Follow a Star, written by Dion Titheradge and Douglas Furber starring Tucker and Sophie, a musical by Steve Allen and Phillip Pruneau based on her life. This series encompasses materials written by Tucker such as a speeches given at various events and a published first edition of Some of These Days, her autobiography. A high school notebook of Tucker’s is also included.

Series VI: Photographs, ca. 1890-1966
This series consists of photographs of Tucker and her family throughout her life and signed photographs sent to her by friends such as William Morris, Fanny Brice, Josephine Baker, and Eddie Cantor. The series also contains photograph albums and photograph album pages. The majority of photographs in this series have been digitized and are available on the Museum’s online Collections Portal.

Series VII: Phonograph record, 1928
Contains a single 78 rpm shellac recording of “My Yiddishe Momme” put out by Columbia. There is currently no way to listen to the recording.
Series VIII: Costumes, ca. 1925-1965
Costumes and props used by Tucker in performance.

Language of Materials
Materials are for the most part in English with some items in Yiddish and Hebrew.

Access and Use
The Museum of the City of New York collections must be examined on site. Appointments to examine materials must be made in advance by contacting the Archivist through e-mail at research@mcny.org.

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Administrative Information
Preferred Citation
[Title of item, date.] Sophie Tucker Collection, ca. 1890-1966. Museum of the City of New York.
   Accession #.

Custodial History
The collection was in the possession of Tucker until the time of her death in 1966. After her death, her estate donated the materials to the Museum. Portions of the collection were stored for a time at the Museum’s offsite collections facility. In 2017, the paper materials in the collection were reunited and rehoused.

Acquisition Information
All of accessioned materials in the collection were donated as part of a single gift from the Estate of Sophie Tucker on August 22, 1966. Objects given an “F” number were found with the Sophie Tucker Collection and were likely given at the same time.

Processing Information
The bulk of materials given from the Estate of Sophie Tucker were assigned the accession number 66.60. Materials not given accession numbers include some photographs, scrapbooks, articles, clippings, speeches, correspondence, and some loose sheet music and lyrics for songs performed by Tucker. Photographs and some sheet music with no numbers were given updated numbers with the
format F2017.27.xx. The collection was processed in early 2017 by archival intern Tim Gann, who also updated some catalog records. Photographs in the collection were digitized and cataloged in 2017 thanks to a grant from the Atran Foundation. Materials were rehoused in acid-free folders and boxes and reorganized according to the series described above.

**Related Material**

**Museum of the City of New York**

Collection on Broadway Productions

--Earl Carroll’s Vanities (Revue : 1924)
--Hello, Alexander (Musical)
--High Kickers (Musical)
--Leave it to Me! (Musical)
--Lulu’s Husbands (Play)
--Sophie (Musical)

**Collections in Other Repositories**

American Jewish Archives

[http://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0485/ms0485.html](http://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0485/ms0485.html)

Brandeis University

[http://findingaids.brandeis.edu/repositories/2/resources/192](http://findingaids.brandeis.edu/repositories/2/resources/192)

Dartmouth College Jewish Sound Archive

[http://djisa.dartmouth.edu/tracks?utf8=%E2%9C%93&query=sophie+tucker](http://djisa.dartmouth.edu/tracks?utf8=%E2%9C%93&query=sophie+tucker)

Florida Atlantic University

[https://rsa.fau.edu/sophie-tucker](https://rsa.fau.edu/sophie-tucker)

The Internet Archive


New York Public Library

[http://archives.nypl.org/mus/19915](http://archives.nypl.org/mus/19915)

University of California Santa Barbara

[http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/search.php?queryType=%40attr+1%3D1016&query=sophie+tucker](http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/search.php?queryType=%40attr+1%3D1016&query=sophie+tucker)

**Access Points**

**Personal names** (partial list)

Ager, Milton, 1893-1979

Akst, Harry, 1894-1963

Ahlert, Fred E., 1892-1953

Allen, Steve, 1921-2000
Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975
Bayes, Nora, 1880-1928
Berlin, Irving, 1888-1989
Brice, Fanny
Brooks, Shelton
Cantor, Eddie, 1892-1964
Carroll, Harry, 1892-1962
Christopher, George
Clayton, Lou
Coslow, Sam, 1902-1982
Creamer, Henry, 1879-1930
Dougherty, Dan, 1897-1955
Durante, Jimmy, 1893-1980
Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain, 1926–
Eltinge, Julian, 1883-1941
Fain, Sammy, 1902-1989
Furber, Douglas, 1885-1961
Garland, Judy
Gray, Gilda
Hershfield, Harry, 1885-1974
Hope, Bob, 1903-2003
Kern, Jerome, 1885-1945
Lauder, Harry, Sir, 1870-1950
Layton, Turner, 1894-1978
Leslie, Amy, 1860-1939
Lewis, Ted, 1892-1971
Mary, Queen, consort of George V,
   King of Great Britain, 1867-1953
Mata, Ruth
Meyer, George W., 1884-1959
Miranda, Carmen, 1909-1955
Morris, William, 1873-1932
Philip, Prince, consort of Elizabeth II,
   Queen of Great Britain, 1921–
Pinkard, Maceo, 1897-1962
Pollack, Lew, 1895-1946
Porter, Cole, 1891-1964
Rainger, Ralph, 1901-1942
Revel, Harry, 1905-1958
Rodgers, Richard, 1902-1979
Rooney, Pat, 1909-1979
Segal, Vivienne
Shapiro, Ted
Skinner, Otis, 1858-1942
Sullivan, Ed, 1901-1974
Tamara, 1910-1943
Titheradge, Dion, 1889-1934
Tobias, Ida
Tucker, Sophie, 1884-1966
Von Tilzer, Albert
Von Tilzer, Harry, 1872-1946
Warner, Jack L., 1892-1978
Windsor, Edward, Duke of, 1894-1972
Yellen, Jack, 1892-1991
Young, Victor, 1900-1956

Corporate names
   American Federation of Actors
   American Guild of Variety Artists
   American Theatre Wing
   Copacabana (Night club : New York, N.Y.)
   Disabled American Veterans of the World War
   Friars Club (New York, N.Y.)
   Jewish National Fund
   London Palladium (Theatre)
   Los Angeles Jewish Home
   National Broadcasting Company
State of Israel Bonds Organization  
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (New York, N.Y.)  
Ziegfeld follies

**Topical subjects**
- Actresses—United States
- Blackface entertainers
- Feminism and theater
- Jewish entertainers
- Jewish singers
- Minstrel shows
- Musical comedies & revues
- Songs, Yiddish—United States
- Vaudeville songs
- Vaudeville—United States
- Women entertainers
- Women in the theater
- Women singers

**Geographic subjects**
- Berlin (Germany)
- Budapest (Hungary)
- California
- Chicago (Ill.)
- Cincinnati (Ohio)
- Columbus (Ohio)
- England
- Florida
- France
- Grand Canyon (Ariz.)
- Hartford (Conn.)
- Havana (Cuba)
- Israel
- Massachusetts
- Milwaukee (Wis.)
- New Jersey
- New London (Conn.)
- New Orleans (La.)
- New York (N.Y.)
- New York (State)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Scotland
- Switzerland
- Venice (Italy)
- Vienna (Austria)
- Washington (D.C.)
- Washington (State)

**Container List**
See attached.

Images and catalog records for digitized individual items can be found on the Museum’s Collections Portal at the following link: [collections.mcny.org](http://collections.mcny.org)
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Series</th>
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<td>Songbooks</td>
<td>1929, 1936</td>
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<td>Sheet music index</td>
<td>1929</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous lyrics, sketches, patter, and &quot;Radio songs&quot;</td>
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<td>School notebook</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Articles, clippings, ephemera</td>
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<td>Correspondence</td>
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<td>Awards and certificates</td>
<td>1919, 1943-1949</td>
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<td>Follow a Star (Musical): script</td>
<td>1930</td>
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<td>II</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Some of these Days, published</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sophie Tucker, Golden Jubilee program</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Speeches and itineraries</td>
<td>1953, 1959</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Holiday and birthday cards</td>
<td>1962-1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sophie (Musical): script and sheet music</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Series I: Sheet music, lyrics, and orchestrations - Oversize boxes 3 through 17**

Contains material on the following songs:

- (I've got the blues) but I'm just too mean to cry
- Canary Isles (I've got a wild canary)
- 3-A papa
- Carolina in the morning
- After you've gone
- Casey Jones
- Ain't we got fun
- Cheese cake mamma
- Alabamy bound
- Complainin'
- All alone, I'm so all alone
- Cottage for sale, A
- All that is mine is yours
- Curse of an aching heart
- Along the way to Waikiki
- Daddy, I ain't mad at you
- Always
- Dance hall doll
- And still no luck with you
- Dancing Dan
- And that ain't all
- Dardanella
- And that ain't all arrangement
- Dear old lady
- April in Paris
- Dinah
- April showers
- Do I, do I do I love you
- Are you happy
- Does my sweetie do and how
- Baby doll
- Don't come crying to me
- Baby face
- Don't leave me mammy
- Baby won't you please come home
- Don't take advantage of my good nature
- Ballin' the jack
- Egyptian Ella
- Be my baby vampire
- Entertaining papa
- Best man was the best man after all, The
- Everybody but me
- Blue
- Everybody sing
- Blue river
- Everything is hotsy totsy now
- Bluebird where are you
- Fifty million Frenchmen
- Brother you got me wrong
- Fight for his country
By the sea
Floradora sextet
For all we know
For me and my gal
I may be growing older (golden jubilee song)
I wanna a girl just like the girl who married…
I wanna say hello
I want a daddy to chase my blues away
I wish I had my old girl back again
I wonder what's become of Sally
I wonder who
I'd love to live in dreamland with a girl like you
If I could be with you one hour tonight
If you knew Susie like I know Susie
If your kisses can't hold the man you love
I'll get by
I'll say she does
I'll show them all
I'm a rock and rollin' red-hot mama now
I'm always chasing rainbows
I'm crazy about my daddy in a uniform
I'm doing what I'm doing for love
I'm feathering a nest (for a little blue bird)
I'm feathering a nest for a bluebird
I'm feelin' like a million
I'm forever blowing bubbles
I'm free, single, disengaged, looking for someone to love
I'm funny that way
I'm just too mean to cry
I'm just wild about H arry
I'm living alone and I like it
I'm nobody's baby
I'm starting all over again
I'm still the last of the red hot mammas
I'm telling you
I'm the one the price came here to see
Inhibition papa
Introduce me
Iron curtain
It had to be you
It it ain't one man its another
It's a pleasure
It's just that feeling for home
It's nobody's business if I do
I've got a cross-eyed papa
I don't want to walk without you
I found the good man who was hard to find
I get along without you very well
I got a right to sing the blues
I love you

Let the little old world roll along
   she's only a bird.... On top someday
Let's call it a day
Little door, a little lock, a little key, A
Lord you made the night too long
Lost a wonderful man
Lou speakin' papa
Louisville lady
Louisville Lou (that vampin' lady)
Lovin' Sam (the sheik of Alabam)
Major burns
Make 'em say please
Make yourself at home
Mammy o'mine
Mammy's little chocolate drop
Margie
Mary Garden of ragtime
Me and myself
Meddlesome man
Melancholy baby
Mimi and he let me down
M indin' my business
Minstrel days
Minutes and hours
Moanin low
Monkey rag / There'll be no south
Moon about town
More I see of HawaiI the better I
   like New York, The
More than you know
Most gentlemen don't like love
Mr. Cugat
Mr. Fink
Mr. Siegel makes it legal
Mr. Toscanini
Music everything I have is yours
Music goes round and round
Music maestro

I've got a song for sale
Japanese Sandman
Leave it to me
Lemon in the garden of love, A
Let me call you sweetheart

Never let the same dog bite you twice
N o one but the right man can do me wrong
N o one man is ever gonna worry me
N o one woman can satisfy
N o one's fool
Nobody knows and nobody seems to care
Nobody knows what a red hot mama can do
N o-no-no-body but you
Now i'm in love
O you have no idea
Oceana roll
Oh how I laugh when I think how I cried about you
Oh how she can sing
Oh how she could yacki hacki wacki woo
Oh judge, he treats me mean
Oh Katharina
Oh! papa, Oh! papa (won't you be a pretty papa to me?)
Old king Tut
Old maid Jim
Old timer
Older they get, The
On the Hoko Moko Isle
One life to live
One sweet letter from you
Panama mama
Pansy
Paris in the spring

Paris will be paris once again
Percolatin' papa
Please don't take my harem away
Polly
Population explosion
Pray for the lights
Put a little rhythm in everything you do
Put me to sleep with an old fashioned melody
Ragtime soldier man
My bluebird's singing the blues
My buddy
My extraordinary man
My heart sings
My man o' war
My old flame and I used to love you
My people
My pet
My Yiddishe momme
Rose of the Volga
Rose of Washington Square
Roses of yesterday
Russia is her name phonetic Russia
Saturday
Shaking hands with the south
She can get 'em but she can't hold 'em
Shine on harvest moon
Ships that never came in
Shorter the working hours, The
Singer's best friends, A
Skylark
Snoops the lawyer
So is your old lady
Sob sister Sadie
Some of these days
Somebody's done me wrong
Something about it
Something I dreamed last night
Songs to remember
Sophie Tucker for president in 1964
(that's how I feel about you)
Sophie Tucker report
Sophie's matrimonial mart
Sophisticated lady
South American way
South in my soul
St. Louis blues
Stay out of the south
Strange
Strike song
Sun showers
Sunshine
Sweet cookie mine
Sweet papa, mama's getting mad
Reap what you sow
Red hot mamas and blues
Remember my forgotten man
Rendezvous time in Paris
Reno
River stay way from my door
Rivera trios (Sophie, Harry, Joe)
Robert E. Lee
Rockaby lullaby mamma
There are blues
There are such things
There'll be a new mule hitched in your stall
There's a cabin in the pines
There's a cradle in Caroline
There's a garden in Dixieland
There's a lot of little boy in every grown up man
There's new life in the old man (beer song)
There's no business like show business
There's nothing on my mind
These foolish things remind me of you
They can't make an old lady out of me
They've got their Indian habits on in Dixieland
Those big brown eyes
Time marches on
Tomorrow
Too much lovin'
Trail of the lonesome pine
Triflin' blues
Two cigarettes in the dark
Two time Dan
Ukelele lady
Underneath the Harlem moon
Vamping Sal, the Sheba of Georgia
Vitamins, hormones and pills
Wait until your papa comes home
Wanna sing, medley
Washing the blue from my soul
Way back when
Way down home
Way down yonder in New Orleans
Weep no more my mammy
What can I say dear after I say I'm sorry
What did Eve give Adam for Christmas
Syncopate Miss Andy  What do you want to make those eyes at me for
Tax on love  What does the sultan want for Christmas
Tea leaves  What will you do when there ain't no wimmin
ten cent toy, A  What'll you do
Tess's torch song  When a lady meets a gentleman down south
That man of my dreams  When I'm in love
That wonderful kid from Madrid  When Kentucky bids the world good morning
That's Georgia  When old Bill Bailey plays the ukulele
That's the good old sunny south  When your boy becomes a man
That's what Broadway means to me  When you're a long, long way from home
(what Harlem is to me)
That's what it says in the books  When you're alone
That's where the south begins  Where did Robinson Crusoe go
Where does my sweet daddy go  Yes sir that's my baby
Where have you been hiding all these years  You better keep babying baby
Who will I call mamma when she's gone  You don't sign love to your letter
Whoa Ida whoa  You gotta see mama every night or you can't see mama at all
Who's been around  You'll never know the good fellow I've been
Who's sorry now  Your Broadway and my Broadway
Why did I leave Wisconsin  You're a great big blue eyed baby
Why do I dream those dreams  You're cheating on me
why should I be alone  You're just a little too late
With your life, you can do what you will  Yours and mine
Without a shadow of a doubt  You've got to be loved to be healthy
Wonderful friends, medley  You've got to have it in Hollywood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Box #</th>
<th>Fldr #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oversize - awards and certificates</td>
<td>1921-1965</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Oversize - articles, clippings, ephemera</td>
<td>1925, 1953</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mata &amp; Hari scrapbook</td>
<td>1943</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oversize - holiday and birthday cards</td>
<td>ca. 1961</td>
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<td>Scrapbook - Cafe de Paris, season 1957</td>
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<td>Scrapbook</td>
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<td>OS</td>
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<td>Scrapbook - &quot;Honky Tonk&quot;</td>
<td>1929</td>
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<td>II</td>
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<td>Scrapbook - Jewish Theatrical Guild dinner</td>
<td>1947</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>OS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scrapbook - Sophie Tucker Golden Jubilee</td>
<td>1953</td>
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**Series III: Photographs and albums - Boxes 19 through 31**
Digitized photographs available online through the Museum's Collections Portal: [Gallery](#)

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<td>OS</td>
<td>Phonograph record: &quot;M y Yiddishe Momme&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
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**Series V: Costumes and props**
For a complete list email research@mcny.org