

Inventory of Betty Bowman Ephemera

*T Mss 1996-034

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Billy Rose Theatre Collection

Billy Rose Theatre Collection

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Betty Bowman Ephemera, 1920-1926

Collection ID: *T Mss 1996-034

Provenance: Bowman, Betty

Extent: .2 linear feet, (1 portfolio)

Repository: Billy Rose Theatre Collection, 40 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10023-7498

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited.

Preferred Citation:: [Identification of item], Betty Bowman Ephemera, *T Mss 1996-034, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Biographical Note:

Betty Bowman grew up in Colorado, the youngest of four children. She began playing the piano when she was a little girl. The conductor, Paul Whiteman heard her play in Denver and recommended her for a vaudeville tour of the West Coast. Ms. Bowman eventually joined her sister Grace, who had established a singing career in New York. An introduction by her sister to J. H. Shubert led to a chorus job in the *Second Edition of Artists and Models*. Betty later toured with the *First Edition of Artists and Models* and appeared in *Naughty Riquette*. In 1926, while doing her piano specialty act at the Beaux Arts Cafe in Atlantic City, she was discovered by Al Jolson. She signed a two year contract to appear in his musical *Big Boy* but after touring with the show for a few months, she chose to leave the stage to marry bandleader Joe Smith.

Scope and Content Note:

The Betty Bowman Ephemera consists mainly of photographs of Betty Bowman, her sister Grace, and her husband, bandleader Joe Smith, and friends she worked with when she was performing in the early 1920's [among them Barbara Stanwyck, who was then Ruby Stevens]. Her charming autobiography tells of growing up out West, following Grace to New York, working for J.J. Shubert and being discovered by Al Jolson. Most of the material is from the 1920's.

Series Description and Container Listing

Series I - Ephemera

(.2 linear feet)

Arranged by form of material

The Ephemera Series consist of disassembled scrapbooks of photographs and clippings, one program and an autobiography entitled *Incredible (But True)*.

- b. 1 f. 1 Photographs of Betty Bowman, Grace and her friends
- b. 1 f. 2 Photographs of Joe Smith and his band
- b. 1 f. 3 Biographical materials
- b. 1 f. 4 *Big Boy* Program