

Francis Craig Papers, 1920-2003

Collection Summary

Creator: Craig Family

Title: Francis Craig Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1920-2003

Summary/Abstract: This collection, primarily consisting of recordings, scores, sheet music, scrapbooks, business documents, photos, and clippings, documents the career of Nashville bandleader Francis Craig – recording and radio star, longtime Hermitage Hotel bandleader, composer of “Near You” and other song favorites.

Physical Description/Extent: ca. 2.3 cubic feet

Accession Number: RT-116

Language: English

Stack Location: DHH Storage Room

Repository: Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library, Nashville, Tennessee

Chronology

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| 1900 | Francis Jackson Craig born September 10, Dickson, Tennessee |
| 1919-1922 | Attends Vanderbilt University |
| 1925 | Francis Craig and his Orchestra begin long run in the Grill Room of Nashville's Hermitage Hotel |
| 1925 | Makes first recordings for Columbia in Atlanta September 29 |
| 1925 | Orchestra plays on WSM's initial broadcast, October 5 |
| 1926 | Makes more recordings for Columbia, April 21-22 |
| 1928 | Makes final pre-war recordings, also for Columbia, April 16 |
| 1930 | Craig treated for tuberculosis in Denver |
| 1938 | Craig writes <i>Dynamite</i> , new fight song for Vanderbilt University |
| 1947 | Craig records his biggest hit and Nashville's first million-seller, <i>Near You</i> , for Bullet Records at WSM's Studio C, January 20 |
| 1966 | Long retired, Craig dies in Sewanee, Tennessee, November 19 |

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Francis Craig (1900-1966), ninth of ten children born to a Methodist minister and kinsman to the Craigs who founded National Life & Accident Insurance and WSM radio, attended Vanderbilt University and there launched his first orchestra. His orchestra performed at Nashville's Hermitage Hotel for over 20 years, and his was the first orchestra to perform over WSM when it began operations in the fall of 1925. He recorded for Columbia Records in Atlanta in the late 1920s, and successfully toured with his orchestra for several years. Craig wrote Vanderbilt's fight song “Dynamite” in the

early 1940s, and later enjoyed a brief career renaissance with the monster hit “Near You” in 1947 for Nashville’s Bullet Records. His band served as launching ground for the careers of James Melton, Dinah Shore, and Snooky Lanson. Craig died in retirement at Sewanee, Tennessee, November 19, 1966.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

Print, manuscript, and audio materials document the career of Nashville’s big band maestro Francis Craig (1900-1966) – composer, pianist, recording star and long-time Hermitage Hotel bandleader. Materials include family scrapbooks, sheet music, newspaper clippings, royalty statements, publishing contracts, musical scores and sheet music, commercial recordings, and posthumous tribute programs.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Organization: This collection is divided into the following series:

- I. Business Documents
- II. Personal Correspondence
- III. Music
- IV. Clippings
- V. Photos
- VI. 78 RPM Recordings
- VII. Audiocassettes
- VIII. Artifacts

Arrangement: Numerically listed.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: In library use only.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction: This material may be protected by copyright (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Craig, Francis (1900-1966)

Corporate Names/Organizations:

WSM Radio – Nashville, Tennessee

Hermitage Hotel – Nashville, Tennessee

Subjects:

Big band music

Popular music – 1921-1930 – Sound recordings

Popular music – 1941-1950 – Sound recordings
Bandmasters – United States - Biography

Places:

Nashville (Tenn.)

Genre/Document Types:

Audiocassettes
Clippings
Correspondence
Musical Scores
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Sheet Music
Sound discs

Associated and Related Material

Others of Francis Craig's scrapbooks and papers were given to Special Collections of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; the Library of Congress (see correspondence in Box 3, Folder 5); and the University of Wyoming (see correspondence in Box 3, Folder 6).

Administrative Information

Copyright: This material may be protected by copyright (Title 17 U.S. Code)

Preferred Citation: Francis Craig Papers, Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Acquired by the Special Collections Division from Donia Craig Dickerson in donations during 2002 and 2005.

Ownership and Custodial History: The collection was compiled during and after Craig's lifetime, passed from his widow to his daughter Donia Craig Dickerson, and was in her possession at the time of the donations.

Processing Information: Processed by Ronnie Pugh in 2006

Accruals: None

Detailed Description of the Collection

BOX 1 – BUSINESS DOCUMENTS

Folder 1 – Milene Music – 1972 – 2 Replacement Contracts & 3 Pieces of Correspondence with Mrs. Francis Craig

Folder 2 – Robbins Music Corporation – 1947 Contract for “Beg Your Pardon” – 2 Pieces of 1969 Correspondence with Mrs. Craig and with Lane Abernathy

Folder 3 – Edwin H. Morris Co. – 2 original contracts (1945 – “Sometimes I Wonder”) (1948 – “Do Me A Favor, Will Ya?”); 1 renewal contract for Mrs. Craig (1975 – “Do Me A Favor, Will Ya?”)

Folder 4 – Mercer & Morris – Copy & Original contract plus correspondence, “When Vandy Starts To Fight” (October 1941)
Folder 5 – Dot Records – Royalty Agreement for Dot Records’ 1954 release of Bullet’s original “Near You”
Folder 6 – Royalty Statements - 1970s
Folder 7 – Royalty Statements – 1980s
Folder 8 – Royalty Statements – 1990s
Folder 9 – ASCAP Copyright Concerns – 1976
Folder 10 – ASCAP Writer Performance Statements, 1989-1990
Last Quarter 1989, First Quarter 1990, Last Quarter 1990. (6 total pages)

BOX 2 – PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE – 1 OF 2

Folder 1 – Condolences – 1 (Includes 7-page handwritten list by Donia Craig Dickerson of “Flowers, Telegrams, Food Etc. When Daddy Died”)
Folder 2 – Condolences - 2

BOX 3 – PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE – 2 OF 2

Folder 1 – Condolences - 3
Folder 2 – Condolences – 4
Folder 3 – Condolences – 5 (206 total condolences sent)
Folder 4 – Condolence Thanks
Folder 5 – Library of Congress Donation
Folder 6 – University of Wyoming Donation

BOX 4 – MUSIC

(Sheet Music)

Folder 1 – Beg Your Pardon (2 original prints; 1 photocopy)
Folder 2 – The Nashville Banner March (For Band)
Folder 3 – Near You (1 sheet music print; 8 photocopies w/o covers)
Folder 4 – Red Rose (3 sheet music prints)
Folder 5 – When Vandy Starts To Fight (The Dynamite Song) (1 copy)
(Musical Scores--Handwritten Arrangements)
Folder 6
1. Red Rose (10 Parts—Hall, Arranger—Original Record Arrangement)
2. Near You (17 Parts—Hall, Arranger—Original Record Arrangement)
3. Near You (4 Parts—Hall, Arranger—WSM Broadcast, 2-3-1952)
4. Beg Your Pardon (13 Parts—Hall—WSM Broadcast, 2-3-1952)
5. Stars & Stripes – Francis Craig Piano Solo (2 Parts—Bass & Guitar)

BOX 5 – CLIPPINGS, PHOTOS

Folder 1 – Clippings (20 Originals & 16 Photocopies)
Folder 2 – Brochures, Pamphlets (6—Concern Craig’s Home & Nashville’s Whitland Neighborhood)
Folder 3 – Photos (18 B&W, 8x10 Prints & 9 Scans, 4 color snapshots, 1 B&W snapshot)
1. Francis Craig, Mrs. Craig, Celeste Craig – Ponte Vedra, Florida

2. Francis Craig and large fish caught near Sarasota
3. Francis Craig and Bob Lamm on stage in Chicago
4. Francis Craig, Jack Benny, Phil Harris
5. Francis Craig signing autographs
6. Francis Craig, Kay Kyser
7. Francis Craig's Navy "induction"
8. Francis Craig, Bob Crosby, Margaret Whiting
9. Francis Craig and the Andrews Sisters
10. Francis Craig and announcer on Mutual Radio
11. Francis Craig & Revue Marquee, RKO Golden Gate Theater, San Francisco
12. Francis Craig marquee @ Loew's State Theater, New York, 1947
13. Same marquee from the opposite direction (Loew's State, NYC, 1947)
14. Claude Jarman Jr. and Francis Craig inside the Loew's State, NYC, 1947
15. Francis Craig marquee, RKO Theater, Boston, 1947
16. Francis Craig marquee, Oriental Theater, Chicago, 1947
17. Ryman Auditorium crowd, Nashville, 1940s
18. Francis Craig
19. Francis Craig close-up scans, c. 1920s (5 copies—various resolutions)
20. Francis Craig & Orchestra, Hermitage Hotel, c. 1930s (4 copies—various resolutions)
21. Color scans (3), various front angles, Francis Craig home in Whitland neighborhood
22. Francis Craig hotel marquee, Dallas, Texas, 1930s (3x5—B&W)
23. Francis Craig & Orchestra (James Melton, vocalist) at opening of Nashville's Biltmore Motel (Color Snapshot—3.5 x 5—Print Dated August 1959)
24. Donia Craig Dickerson with two Library of Congress staff, October 2000 (4x6—Color)
25. Donia Craig Dickerson with same two Library of Congress staffers, October 2000 (Different shot) (4x6—Color)
26. Donia Craig Dickerson in Library of Congress stacks with one LC staffer, October 2000 (4x6—Color)

Folder 4 –Radio Script

Tin Pan Valley – WSM – February 3, 1952 – 9:00-9:30 P.M. (8 pages)

BOX 6 – 78 RPM RECORDINGS

Columbia 567-D – “Steady Roll Blues”/”Marble Halls”

Bullet 1001 – “Red Rose”/”Near You”

Bullet 1012 – “Beg Your Pardon”/”I’m Looking For A Sweetheart”

BOX 7 – AUDIOCASSETTES – MASTER COPIES

23 Master Tapes – Listed Below

- 01 Donia Craig Dickerson, interviewed by Ken Berryhill – WRVU – 4/13/2000
- 02 Francis Craig's 99th Birthday – WAMB – 9/10/1999
- 03 Francis Craig's 93rd Birthday – WAMB – 9/10/1993
- 04 WSM Tape #1/2

- 05 WSM Tape #3/4
- 06 WSM Tape #5/6
- 07 WSM Tape #7/8
- 08 "Near You" Classical Arrangement – Rough Idea Tape
- 09 "Near You" 1993 – Patrick Music
- 10 "Near You" Mix #1 – Patrick Music
- 11 Theatre Scene #149 – 9/12/1993 – Karen L. Deal, interviewed by Georgiana Moore
- 12 Neil Craig Remembers Francis Craig – 4/17/200 -- Ken Berryhill and E. D. Thompson, "Nashville Nostalgia"
- 13 Coffee Break– WPLN – 7/6/1972: Donia Craig Dickerson, Guest
- 14 Francis Craig Interviewed by Tom Landess – 1/24/1952
- 15 Old Record Shop Tribute To Francis Craig – WRVU – 7/1999
- 16 Dr. Robert Ikard, interviewed by Ken Berryhill – 10/1999 – Parts 1 & 2
- 17 Dr. Robert Ikard, interviewed by Ken Berryhill – 10/1999 – Parts 3 & 4
- 18 Tammy Wynette/George Jones – "Near You" – 1976
- 19 Francis Craig's 1920s Columbia Recordings (4) and "The Nashville Banner March" /Craig Orchestra W. Don Estes & Anita Kerr Singers (also performed as piano solo)
- 20 "WSM Remembers," w. Kyle Cantrell & Tom Bryant -- Pan American Whistle; the story of "Near You;" Martha White Grand Ole Opry, 2-1953 (Ernest Tubb, Johnnie & Jack, Tommy Sosebee, June Carter, Jordanaires)
- 21 "Stars of the Bandstand" – WAMB -- Memories of Snooky Lanson (7/1990), Bob Stitch, Announcing
- 22 Francis Craig Memorial – Hermitage Hotel (6/25/81), w. Owen Bradley, Mrs. Francis Craig & others / Francis Craig Memorial – Hermitage Hotel (7/1982)
- 23 "Red Rose," "Near You," "Beg Your Pardon" – Original 1947 Bullet Records

BOX 8 – AUDIOCASSETTES – USE COPIES

23 User Tapes – Same Contents As Listed Above

BOX 9 – ARTIFACTS – 1

1920's – 1930s Scrapbook (11x15 size – 29 double-sided pages)
 Francis Craig – "Near You" – 1947-1948 Scrapbook (10x11.5 size – 25 pages)
 Hermitage Hotel Menu (c. 1940s)
 Hermitage Hotel Menu (February 13, 2003) (2)
 Oversized Copied Newspaper Articles
 Oversized Scrapbook Photocopies

BOX 10 – ARTIFACTS – 2

Francis Craig Orchestra Banner