

Guide to the Brooklyn Sheet Music Collection, 1869-1987

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Various
Title: Brooklyn Sheet Music Collection
Date Span: 1869-1987
Abstract: The Brooklyn Sheet Music Collection consists of 102 pieces of sheet music, primarily for voice and piano, all celebrating or emanating from the borough of Brooklyn. Contents include marches written in honor of a local person or business, pieces celebrating the whole or a part of the borough, songs from shows and movies set in or about Brooklyn, and pieces from Brooklyn's early 20th-century Yiddish-language theater.
Quantity: 2 15.5" x 13" x 3" boxes
Location: Brooklyn Collection Map Room
Repository: Brooklyn Public Library – Brooklyn Collection

Scope and Content Note

The Brooklyn Sheet Music Collection consists of 102 pieces of sheet music all celebrating or emanating from the borough of Brooklyn. In the aggregate, they embody the varied ways in which Brooklyn has been interpreted as a locus of cultural meanings. The Brooklyn Collection bought the bulk of this collection as a unit from historian and collector Brian Merlis in 1999. Numerous additions acquired from Mr. Merlis in 2002 have increased the sheet music archive to its present size.

In good physical condition, the pieces are enclosed in polyethylene envelopes with acid-free backing cards. Most measure 9 x 12 inches to 11 x 14 inches.

Contents fall into four major categories:

- pieces, often in march form, written in honor of a person, organization or business, such as *Drake's Cake Walk* (for a bakery); the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Bridge Crush March* (for Brooklyn's daily newspaper); the *St. George March* (for the eponymous hotel); *The Noble Commander* (for the Commander in Chief of a Masonic Temple); the *Second Battalion March* (for the Officers and Seamen of the 2nd Naval Battalion of Brooklyn NY); *Hurrah for Bushwick High*; and *Martin's Silver Dress Parade* (for Martin's Department Store on Fulton Street);
- pieces celebrating a part or the whole of the borough, such as *Brooklyn Life Waltzes (Dedicated to the Belles of Brooklyn)*; *Down at Steeplechase Park*; *On a Sunday at Coney Island*; *Manhattan Beach March*; *Brooklyn Polka*; *My Brooklyn (Tribute to the Great Borough)*; *Bergen Beach Schottisch*; *Give Me The Moon Over Brooklyn*; *Mariutch Down at Coney Isle (Make-a-the Hootch-a Ma Kootch)*;
- pieces from shows and movies that are set in Brooklyn or use the borough as a plot element, such as: *Born and Bred in Brooklyn* (from *The Rise of Rosie O'Reilly*); *My Baby Said Yes (Yip Yip de Hootie)* (from *The Blonde from Brooklyn*); *She's a Bombshell from Brooklyn (and not from Brazil)* (from *Stage Door Canteen*); *I Love an Old-Fashioned Song* (from *The Kid from Brooklyn*); and *Time after Time* (from *It Happened in Brooklyn*); and
- pieces from Brooklyn's once-active Yiddish-language theater that include items such as *Di Geist Dain Weg! Ich Geh Main Weg* from *Little Rabbi*; *In Shtrom fun Leben, Vy Ich Zol Nit Zein Vel Ich Dich Leibn* from *Who is Guilty?*; and *Bist Main Kroin* from *Yosel der Klezmer*. (These materials represent a particularly scarce relic of early 20th-century Jewish communities in our borough.)

The sheet music is written for piano, with vocal parts for those songs that have lyrics. A number of the pieces also include guitar or ukulele chord symbols and diagrams, and one piece, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, is written for the organ.

With the oldest piece dating from 1869 and the latest from 1987, the music spans over a century of social change, from the age of parlor music to rock and hip-hop. Many of the earlier ones, which were written during the days of brass band concerts at the beach, recall a time when pianos and the skills to play them were more common in homes than they are today. These marches, waltzes and polkas are neither profound nor artistically impressive; however, they speak of a powerful connection to the borough that expressed itself in music and found enough popularity to be disseminated in published form. Sheet music, unlike many other published works, can be produced rapidly, allowing for rapid

response to events or public interest. The earlier pieces, especially, offer a valuable perspective on local events and public attitudes.

Quite a few of the pieces date from the Tin Pan Alley period of popular music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were published by some of the most successful publishers in New York's Tin Pan Alley, such as T. B. Harms, Willis Woodward, M. Witmark, Harry Von Tilzer, and Leo Feist.

As the twentieth century progressed, Brooklyn began to appear in movies and musicals written by the many talented musicians and lyricists who grew up here. Pieces about Brooklyn's Coney Island and other shore communities that had been associated so strongly with leisure and play gave way to celebrations of grittier neighborhoods where romance could bloom amid the cares of the workaday world. Immigrant groups—Italian, Irish, Jewish—started making their mark on the cultural landscape, both as originators and subjects of a vital musical tradition (as in the Yiddish theater) or as objects of parody in vaudeville songs.

The sheet music covers provide a unique window into how Brooklynites and their borough were portrayed: serious, sassy, silly, sensual, eager, elegant, romantic, and naïf. All of this is expressed in the graphics and illustrations confined within the borders of the title page. Usually in black and white, or two- to three colors at most, many show the date and publisher of the piece. Many covers, particularly for the Yiddish theater pieces, include portraits of performers well-known in their day. More than half of the pieces include advertisements on the back and inside covers, for pianos, music stores, music instruction, local merchants and newspapers, and other sheet music. These covers and advertisements bear succinct witness to cultural changes that took place during the twentieth century.

References

About sheet music. (n.d.). In *Historic American Sheet Music*, Duke University. Retrieved July 18, 2006, from <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/sheetmusic/about.html>

Hamm, C. (1986). Popular music. In *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, New York: Grove's Dictionaries of Music, 589-610.

Arrangement

Items in the collection are arranged chronologically.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

Our mission is to provide free access to information on the rich heritage of our community. Most materials are fragile and unique; items do not circulate and many cannot be photocopied or photographed with flash. Scanning equipment is not allowed. For access to original photographs, ephemera and manuscript collections, call for an appointment: 718.230.2762

Use Restrictions

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Access Points

Subject Topics:

- United States—New York (State)—New York—Brooklyn
- Sheet music
- Music publishing industry
- Popular music
- Piano music
- Songs with piano
- Motion picture music
- Musical theater
- Songs, Yiddish

Document Types:

- Sheet music

Administrative Information

Provenance

Purchased from historian and collector Brian Merlis in 1999 and 2002.

Preferred Citation

This collection should be cited as The Brooklyn Sheet Music Collection, Brooklyn Public Library – Brooklyn Collection.

List by Song Title

Title	Date	Identifier
Anniversary Hymns 1901	1901	sm0028
Another Kiss (Un Autre Baiser)	1928	sm0058
Army and Navy Waltzes	1894	sm0017
Bergen Beach Schottisch	1896	sm0022
Bist Main Kroin [You're My Crown]	1941	sm0065
Born and Bred in Brooklyn (Over the Bridge)	1923	sm0050
Brighton Beach March	1904	sm0031
Brooklyn	1973	sm0101
Brooklyn Belle Barn Dance	1910	sm0037
Brooklyn Bridge March	1883	sm0006
The Brooklyn Citizen March	1894	sm0018
Brooklyn College Victory March	1946	sm0086
Brooklyn Daily Eagle Bridge Crush March	1907	sm0033
Brooklyn Glide Waltzes	1886	sm0010
Brooklyn High School March	1894	sm0016
Brooklyn Life Waltzes	1880	sm0004
Brooklyn Polka	1944	sm0076

Brooklyn Public Library March	1951	sm0094
Brooklyn Public Library March	1951	sm0095
Brooklyn, My Brooklyn	1928	sm0056
Brooklyn's March [Opus 79]	1898	sm0025
The Brooklyn Society Two-Step	1895	sm0019
Coney Island March and Two-Step	1899	sm0026
Coney Island Washboard	1926	sm0054
Crossing on the Ferry	1869	sm0001
Der Schwerd Fin Blut Und Treiren [The Sword of Blood and Tears]	1915	sm0043
Di Geist Dain Weg! Ich Gei Main Weg (You Go Your Way! I Go My Way)	1935	sm0061
Down At Steeplechase Park	1911	sm0040
Drake's Cake Walk	1909	sm0034
Feigele Un Chanele [Feigele and Chanele]	1943	sm0069
(Give Me The) Moon Over Brooklyn	1946	sm0082
(Give Me The) Moon Over Brooklyn	1946	sm0081
Goin' Back To Brooklyn	1945	sm0079
Gott Hit Op Mein Bashertn [God Help My Destined]	1944	sm0072
Hurrah for Bushwick High	1912	sm0041
I Believe	1947	sm0091

I Love An Old Fashioned Song	1946	sm0083
I Love An Old Fashioned Song	1946	sm0084
If You Haven't Got A Sweetheart	1951	sm0097
I'm Gonna Hang My Hat On A Tree That Grows In Brooklyn	1944	sm0075
It's The Same Old Dream	1947	sm0088
It's The Same Old Dream	1947	sm0090
Jacqueline	1957	sm0098
Klytia Waltzes	1889	sm0011
Koift Kichelach [Buy Cookies]	1935	sm0062
The Library Song (It's the Latest, It's the Greatest, It's the Library)	1967	sm0100
Lilly Lee	1878	sm0003
Love Is The Reason	1951	sm0096
Manhattan Beach March	1893	sm0014
Manhattan Beach March	1893	sm0015
March of the Veterans	1896	sm0023
Mariutch (Make-a the Hootch-a Ma Kootch) Down at Coney Isle	1907	sm0032
Martin's Silver Dress Parade	1903	sm0030
My Brooklyn	1927	sm0055
My Brooklyn Love Song	1947	sm0087

Nesting Time in Flatbush	1917	sm0046
The New Arcadia Waltz	1913	sm0042
New York and Coney Island Cycle March Two-Step	1896	sm0021
No Sleep Till Brooklyn	1987	sm0102
The Noble Commander	1925	sm0051
Noch A Regen Sheint Die Zin [After Rain Shines the Sun] [Nokh a Regen Shaynt di Zun]	1931	sm0059
On A Sunday At Coney Island	1951	sm0093
The Original Chateau Three Step	1916	sm0045
"Our Boys" Waltzes	1880	sm0005
Peeking thro' the Bars	1884	sm0009
The Permans' Brooklyn Cake Walk	1899	sm0027
Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey	1910	sm0038
Ride Tenderfoot Ride	1938	sm0063
Salute to Israel (Mazol Tov Isroel)	1949	sm0092
Second Battalion March	1897	sm0024
Sheepshead Bay	1890	sm0013
She's A Bombshell From Brooklyn (And Not From Brazil)	1943	sm0070
She's A Bombshell From Brooklyn (And Not From Brazil)	1943	sm0071
Shew Fly Polka Redowa	1869 [1888]	sm0002
The Song of Love	1928	sm0057
St. George March	1925	sm0053

St. George March	1925	sm0052
St. Joseph's College For Women School Songs	1939	sm0064
The Sterling March and Two-Step	1909	sm0035
The Sterling March and Two-Step	1909	sm0036
Strolling on the Brooklyn Bridge	1883	sm0007
Summertime, When All the Girls Get Back From School	1916	sm0044
Take It From There	1942	sm0068
Take It From There	1942	sm0067
That Man Could Sell Me The Brooklyn Bridge	1958	sm0099
Thinking of You All the Time	[1920-1950]	sm0048
Those Lovely Brooklyn Girls	1889	sm0012
Time After Time	1947	sm0089
A Tree Grows In Brooklyn	1944	sm0074
Twin City Favorite	1902	sm0029
Undine March [Opus 75]	1895	sm0020
Unser Neue Heim [Our New Home] [Unzer Nayeheim]	1918	sm0047
Veni Creator Spiritus	1883	sm0008
Vi Nemt Men Parnuse [How Do You Make a Living]	1934	sm0060
Victory Salute	1942	sm0066

Vu Ich Zol Nit Zein Vel Ich Dich Lieb'n [Wherever I Will Be I Will Love You]	1944	sm0073
Vu Nemt Men A Moische Rabeinu? [Where Do You Find Moische Rabeinu (Moses)?]	1944	sm0077
(Why Doesn't Someone Write a Song About) Brooklyn	1944	sm0078
(Yip Yip De Hootie) My Baby Said Yes	1945	sm0080
Yosem Leid; Dos Glick Kunt Nor Ain Mol in Leben [Orphan Song; Luck Comes Only Once in Life]	1922	sm0049
You're The Cause of It All	1946	sm0085