



# Munn, Frank (1894-1953.) Photo Albums, 1925-1945

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Munn, Frank (1894-1953.) Photo Albums, 1925-1945.  
1.0 cubic ft.

Frank Munn was the “Golden Voice of radio” from 1931-1945. He was born in the Bronx, NY in 1894 and moved to Merrick, Long Island in 1942. Munn was a turbine factory worker until a work accident left him jobless. He then began taking singing lessons and rose to fame in 1931 as the lead vocalist for NBC radio until his retirement in 1945. Munn married later in life at the age of 38. He died unexpectedly at the young age of 59 in 1953.

This collection contains two photo albums with candid photos, portraits, and signed portraits. The photo albums are from 1925-1945.

<u>Photo Album</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Years</u>
1	Candid photos, landscape photos, group photos, season greeting cards Signed portrait	1936-1948
2	Group photos, portraits, signed portraits	1925-1945

#### **Biographies of individuals in the albums:**

##### **Frank Munn** (February 27, 1894-October 1, 1953)

During a time when radio brought Americans the news and entertainment into their homes for the first time Frank Munn was the “Golden Voice” of radio. Born in the Bronx on February 27, 1894 Frank was born the year before a new invention would change life as it existed. Frank’s “Golden Voice” helped people indulge and forget about what was going on in the outside world for a little while during the Great Depression and World War II.

Munn has been described as plump, jovial, and timid. His mother died when he was nine years old leaving him to be raised by his grandmother and father. Munn was known for never taking a drink or smoking which was a result of growing up with a stern police officer father. Munn was a firefighter and turbine factory worker. While working in the factory, stuck in poverty following the death of both his father and grandfather, Munn would sing to help pass the time. A foreman heard him singing and after that the factory used Munn’s singing as a source of entertainment. Munn still didn’t believe his voice would bring him fortune. After a minor accident at work that affected the bone in one of his fingers Munn was told he would not be able to return to work for a year and a half. He was living in poverty, how was he going to make a living? With no money or job Munn thought maybe he could train his voice so he could make some money off of it. He went to see a music teacher by the name of Dudley Buck. Buck was so impressed with Munn’s voice he offered to train him for free until he could secure a job to pay him back. Eventually Munn got a position singing on WJZ in a program called “*Sixty White Minutes*,” this was the start of his real career. Munn became a star having dozens of programs on NBC and ABC and was given the famous nickname for his Irish tenor voice, the “Golden Voice of radio”. Munn’s radio career started in 1928 and in 1931 he became the lead vocalist for NBC Radio and remained on the air until he retired in 1945. Munn exclusively sang on radio and recordings, he never sang at night clubs, concert halls, theaters, or for movies. Frank Munn died unexpectedly on October 1, 1953 while visiting his brother-in-law in Queens. He was survived by his wife, Anne, and brother, Percy.

**Lewis John Fuiks aka Victor Arden** (March 8, 1883-July 31, 1962)

Victor Arden was an arranger and pianist who was born in Illinois. Arden attended Chicago University where he received a music degree. Arden started producing piano rolls when he met his future business partner Phil Ohman. After Arden and Ohman split up in the 1930s Ohman went West and Arden stayed East. Arden was able to secure work as a pianist and conductor on NBC while recording with his dance band. He also filled in for conductor Abe Lyman on the *Waltz Time* shows and in the late 1940s on *The American Melody Hour*. During the 1950s Arden led an orchestra for singer Dick Powell, who starred in many MGM movies. Arden died at age 69. Arden was married to Frances Newson Arden and had two sons, Lewis and Robert.

**Frank Jeremiah Black** (November 28, 1894-January 29, 1968)

Frank J. Black became the music director of NBC in 1928 and was responsible for arranging and producing orchestral shows of light classical music for NBC throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Black was also the conductor of the orchestra on *The James Melton Show* in 1951.

Frank Black was the son of a dairyman who grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended Haverford College and graduated with a chemical engineer degree. After graduation he was offered a job as a chemical engineer and as a pianist in a hotel. He took the gig as a pianist and never looked back! While being a pianist and arranger for a quartet called "*The Revelers*" Black launched them to fame in 1926. In 1927, Black arranged his own orchestra and in 1928, Black began his esteemed career as NBC's Music Director (for 14 years). Black had a deaf fan who was a former musician. Black designed a special set of headphones and invited the former musician down to the studio to not only watch the show but listen to it. An innovator, Black was the first to build a record library, and to record shows for future re-broadcast. Interestingly Black commuted weekly from the Manhattan studio to Chicago, where he ran *The Carnation Hour*. In 1951 Black was the conductor for the orchestra on *The James Melton Show* and in 1953 Black returned to radio as conductor of the new *Cadillac Choral Symphony*.

**Dudley Buck** (March 10, 1839-October 6, 1909)

Dudley Buck was a composer, organist, and music writer. Born in Connecticut he attended college and then went on to study music in Leipzig and Paris. Upon his return to America, Buck was an organist in Hartford, Chicago, and Boston. Buck became the assistant director of concerts in Boston in 1875. Buck then went to New York where he helped conduct orchestral concerts with Theodore Thomas and was organist at Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn for 25 years, retiring in 1902. Buck was the founder and director of the New York Apollo Club. During his career Buck taught private music lessons and published many compositions for the organ. Buck was survived by his widow, two sons Edward and Dudley Jr., and his daughter Francis.

**Wilfred Glenn** (April 20, 1881 - June 1970)

Wilfred Glenn was a bass singer. Born in San Francisco he moved to New York City to begin his singing career. He did solo and duet work singing bass in *The Revelers* quartet along with Franklyn Baur, Lewis James, and Elliott Shaw. Working with Frank J. Black who was the arranger and pianist for *The Revelers* whom he shot to stardom. He recorded from 1909 to late 1920. *The Revelers* were one of the most popular recording and radio groups of the 20's and early 30's although they started in 1916 (as the *Shannon Four*). Wilfred Glenn was the only original member of the group that remained performing until 1953.

**Lewis Lyman James** (July 27, 1892 – February 19, 1959)

Lewis Lyman James was a singer and among the most active of recording artists in the US from 1917 through much of the 1930s. He was a member of *The Shannon Four*, *The Revelers*, and *The Criterion Trio*. He recorded as a soloist, duet partner, and quartet lead singer. *The Shannon Four*, *Revelers*, *Crescent Trio*, and *Merrymakers* consisted mostly of the same singers, with occasional substitutes. James sang with *The Revelers* from 1926-1936 touring Europe five times, he even sang for British Royalty. He was the former chief of production for the radio station WGN, retiring in 1957. James died in 1959 and was survived by his daughter, a brother, and two sisters.

**John Francis “Chick” Meehan** (September 5, 1893-November 9, 1972)

John “Chick” Meehan was an American football player and coach. He played as quarterback for Syracuse from 1915-1917. He served in the US Navy then returned to his alma mater, Syracuse University, as the head football coach from 1920-1924. He then went on to be the head coach at New York University from 1925-1931. Meehan was elected president of the National Football Coaches Association in 1930. He finished his coaching career as head football coach at Manhattan College, 1932-1937. In 1963, Meehan was honored by the Touchdown Club of New York with the “Man of Distinction Award.” Knute Rockne of Norte Dame also called Meehan “the best football coach in America.” Meehan was a consultant in the Development Office at Hofstra for the University's physical-fitness project from 1968-1971. In 1970, Hofstra announced that its Field House was to be named in his honor. Meehan was a showman, it was said that he added theater to football. His teams were known for their gaudy uniforms, precision drills, and “military huddles.” Meehan died at the age of 79 and was survived by his wife Esther.

**Dick Merrill** (February 1, 1894-October 31, 1982)

Dick Merrill was known for barnstorming, delivering airmail, conquering the Atlantic, flying over the Himalayans, and as an avid gambler. Merrill was an adrenaline junky whether it was rolling dice or performing stunts in an airplane as a barnstormer.

Born Henry Tyndall, Merrill was born in Mississippi where he received his nickname “Dick” because of his ambidextrous pitching, like sports hero Dick Merriwell. Merrill made the minor leagues, served in the US Navy during WWI, and then worked on for the railroad like his father had done. His passion for aviation, however did not go away. After the government announced the sale of a surplus Curtiss Jenny in 1920 Merrill and a friend began taking flying lessons. With little experience Merrill began barnstorming. During a time when pilots were celebrities, Merrill was described as a pioneer aviator and one of the best passenger pilots in the world. Merrill set the record of logging the most documented hours in the air —36,000 hours to be exact. In 1930 Merrill was named a member of the “Caterpillar Club” after he was forced to jump from his plane in North Carolina when the gasoline was exhausted. Merrill was a captain at Eastern Air Lines (“crack pilot”), flew over the Himalayans to supply China’s Allied defenders in during WWII, was the highest paid airmail pilot, and flew the first round-trip transatlantic flight in 1936. As captain of Eastern Air Lines Merrill was often sent on special missions. One of these missions took place in 1935 when Merrill flew from Kanas City to the southern tip of Chile to help search for two explorers that went missing in the Antarctic, Lincoln Ellsworth and Herbert Hollick-Kenyon. His most famous flight was a 1936 round-trip transatlantic flight that has gone down in the history of flight as the “Ping Pong Flight.” For this achievement Eastern Air Lines presented Merrill with the Distinguished Service Medal. The following year, Merrill also completed the first commercial

trans-Atlantic flight. He was Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal pilot during the 1952 presidential elections and set several speed records including, making a 1,192 mile trip in 5 hours and 26 seconds. Forced to retire due to new federal age restrictions, Merrill retired as a commercial airline pilot at 67 years old on October 3, 1961. Retirement did not stop Merrill from flying. In 1972, Merrill helped EAL deliver its first L-1011 TriStar from California to Miami with hurricane-like tailwinds, the aircraft averaged a record 710 mph groundspeed. Merrill's logbook ended with a total of 45,000 hours in the air, equal to about five years. All of Merrill's records and achievements, essentially his life work, was rewarded by a gold medal from the Federation Aeronautique Internationale in 1970. This same award was won by his transatlantic competitor Charles Lindbergh.

In 1938, Merrill married actress Martha Virginia "Toby" Wing. He was two decades her senior. In 1940 the Merrills would lose their infant son to crib death. In an attempt to stop Merrill's addiction to gambling the couple purchased a home in Miami Beach with a large mortgage—Merrill had to stop gambling in order to make mortgage payments. In 1982, their second son, Ricky, would be murdered in his Miami home. Merrill died in 1982 at the age of 88.

#### **Fillmore Wellington "Phil" Ohman (October 7, 1896-August 8, 1954)**

Phil Ohman was a film composer who was born in Connecticut and is famous for piano collaborations with partner Victor Arden. The duo were pianists in musicals, recorded piano rolls, records, and leaders of a dance orchestra. This piano duo worked together on radio and in Broadway shows. Ohman and Arden met while both were working for a piano roll company. They decided they would try their hand as a duo performing in many street clubs before being hired for the Broadway musical "*Lady Be Good*." After the duo split up in the 1930s, Ohman went on to create his own orchestra in Hollywood. From 1934-1946 Ohman's orchestra had a residency at the Mocambo club, played at various Hollywood restaurants, and he continued writing music for films. Ohman died in Los Angeles at the age of 57.

#### **Anthony George "Andy" Sannella (March 11, 1900-December 10, 1962)**

Andy Sannella was a musician and bandleader in the twentieth century. Sannella was born to Italian immigrants in Brooklyn, NY. He played many instruments including: violin, piano, organ, banjo, vibraphone, clarinet, alto saxophone, and guitar. Sannella began playing instruments at a young age. He enlisted in the US Navy during WWI. Throughout the 1920s Sannella worked on recording as a studio musician rather than playing live with bands. Sannella was popular and in demand. After many studio recordings he began to appear on radio and became director of four NBC radio programs. In the 1940s he also appeared on CBS TV shows. Sannella was also a pilot who flew a plane to his concerts. Sannella died of a seizure at the age of 62.

#### **Fritzi Scheff (August 30, 1879-April 8, 1954)**

Fritzi Scheff was born in Vienna, Austria-Hungary. She began singing in the church choir when she was five. Her mother, Anna, was a prima donna of the Imperial Opera House of Vienna. Following in her mother's shoes, Scheff made her debut as an actress in 1898 in "*Martha*." She went on to be an Opera singer who would sing at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1901. Victor Herbert wrote a role specifically for Scheff in his opera "*Babette*" in 1903 where Scheff performed in both Washington D.C. and New York. Scheff was a Broadway musical actress who made her only silent-film debut in 1915. In the 1940s and 1950s she began starring in sound movies and television. Scheff was married and divorced three times. She was described as a "saucy, piquant star who was a prima donna."