Primary Source Materials related to Blackface Minstrelsy in the collections of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University

What is Blackface Minstrelsy?
A type of popular American entertainment, which spanned from 1830 to the mid-20th century. Blackface minstrelsy consisted of the theatrical presentation of ostensible elements of black life in song, dance, and speech, and was generally derogatory. At first performed by whites impersonating blacks, minstrelsy only later was participated in by blacks.

What original materials do you have related to Blackface Minstrelsy?
The Center for Popular Music has numerous holdings that relate to blackface minstrelsy from the 19th through mid-20th centuries. These items include posters, theatre playbills and programs, songsters and other song books, sheet music and song broadsides, photographs, trade catalogs, sound recordings, and manuscript collections containing minstrel-related items, such as scrapbooks. (See examples below.)

How do I search for these primary source materials?
Most of these primary source materials are cataloged and may be searched online through the Center’s website. Sound recordings may be searched in the Center’s Reading Room through the in-house database.

Online Searching:
To search for these materials online, visit the CPM website at http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/collections/default.aspx. You may search for specific titles, artists or songs in the Quick Search field. Other keywords or search terms to try are: Minstrel, Blackface, Minstrel show, Minstrel music, Minstrel songs and music, Blackface entertainers, African Americans Stereotypes, or Ethiopian. This catalog will search for minstrel materials in the following collection categories: Manuscript Collections, Rare Books and Scores; Sheet Music; Song Broadsides; Posters, Playbills, and Programs; Trade Catalogs; Photographs; and Periodicals: Secondary Collection. For an overview of each of the major collections, see the detailed menu to the left of the screen under “Search Our Collections.”

Click on the Advanced Search link http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/collections/advanced-search.aspx to take you to a more detailed search screen. You may limit your search to a particular field or type of material.

To search our separate website for the digitized Kenneth S. Goldstein Collection of American Song Broadsides, go to: http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/Broadsides/index.html.

Visit the Songs of Sam Lucas http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/lucas/lucas.html to learn about this celebrated minstrel entertainer of the post-Civil War era.

At the Center (in-house searching only):
To search for Sound Recordings, please visit the Center and use our in-house database or email Rachel Morris or Martin Fisher.
Secondary Source Materials
To search for Secondary Source Materials available in the Center’s Reading Room—go to MTSU’s Walker Library catalog (http://library.mtsu.edu/) and use either search terms listed above. This includes books about minstrelsy, as well as minstrel joke books, minstrel show handbooks, histories, and dissertations.

Minstrel Music Bibliography


Original Minstrel Books:


Dumont, Frank. The Witmark amateur minstrel guide and burnt cork encyclopedia / by Frank Dumont / New York : M. Witmark & sons [1899]


Kaser, Arthur LeRoy, 1890-1956. Minstrel spice; a collection of minstrel stunts, jokes and novelties / Syracuse, N.Y., Bugbee, [c1934]
Examples of Center for Popular Music Special Collection Minstrel items:

**Sheet Music**

- 003331-CPMLG  Jim Crow’s Ramble!, Center for Popular Music
- 001234-BYULG  Ethiopian Quadrilles, Center for Popular Music

**Broadsides**

- 001554-BROAD  Kitty Wells, Center for Popular Music
- 002510-BROAD  Jim Crow, Center for Popular Music
Posters, Playbills, Programs

Center for Popular Music 000054-MINSTREL, Christy’s Minstrels

Center for Popular Music 000007-MINSTREL, Bawl Room of the Biblical Brewery

Photographs

Center for Popular Music GEN-CD-00001

Center for Popular Music GEN-CD-00025
**Trade Catalogs**

- Crest Catalog Center for Popular Music CAT-00240
  Crest Trading Co., 1906

- Center for Popular Music CAT-00505
  T.S. Denison Company, Everything For Your Minstrel Show[1930]

**Manuscript Collections**

- 97-036  Billy Carter Minstrel Scrapbook - Memorabilia scrapbook primarily assembled by Billy Carter, containing newspaper clippings; clippings of humorous sketches, jokes, and cartoons; contracts; prints; programs; and playbills, 1863-1904.
  [http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/archives/inventory/Carter.htm](http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/archives/inventory/Carter.htm)

- Carter 97-036 from Billy Carter Minstrel Scrapbook. Center for Popular Music

- 01-012 McCauley, Jamie. "Johnny Leighman's Superior Minstrels" Papers -.2 l.f. of materials documenting the origin and 1923 tour of the "Johnny Leighman's Superior Minstrels."
  [http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/archives/inventory/Leighman.htm](http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/archives/inventory/Leighman.htm)

- MAN-PR-00001 from "Johnny Leighman's Superior Minstrels."  Center for Popular Music