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Betsy Siggins Papers

1958-2018

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A key figure in the New England folk revival of the 1960s, Betsy Siggins (nee Minot) entered Boston University in the fall 1958 just as the music was taking off. Along with her college friend Joan Baez, she soon left school for the lure of the bohemian musical scene in Cambridge. At the age of 20, Betsy married the banjo player for the Charles River Valley Boys, Bob Siggins, who was also a founding member of Club 47, the most important venue for folk music in the region. For musicians from Baez and Bob Dylan to Jim Kweskin, Eric Von Schmidt, and Jim Rooney, Club 47 was a career launching pad and despite the segregation of the era, it was a place where white northern audiences first encountered African American and blues musicians. Siggins worked full time at Club 47, filling a variety of jobs from office work to waitress to art gallery manager, eventually becoming program officer, arranging the schedules for musicians booked by Rooney or Byron Linardos. After Club 47 closed in 1968, Siggins went on to work for a succession of not for profit organizations, including the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife and for programs for the homeless and poor.

The Siggins Collection contains important materials on Club 47 and its successor, Club Passim, including business records, ephemera, clippings, and some remarkable scrapbooks featuring performers such Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Richard Farina. The collection contains dozens of photographs (many taken by Charlie Frizzell), showing Siggins, her friends, and musicians at home, at Club 47, and at folk festivals in Newport, Brandeis, and Monterey. Of particular note in the collection is a remarkable series of 27 reel to reel tapes of performances at Club 47 featuring John Hammond, Doc Watson, Bill Monroe, Eric Von Schmidt, Jim Rooney, Jeff and Maria Muldaur, Jackie Washington, the Charles River Valley Boys, Joan Baez, and others. Additional material on Siggins and the Minot family was retained by the Cambridge Historical Society.

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Folk music

Massachusetts (East)

Background on Betsy Siggins

Betsy Siggins was born on October 1, 1939, the daughter of naval engineer, Francis Minot, and Ellen Le Maire. Siggins grew up in Cotuit, Massachusetts, with her half-sister, Agnes Olney Minot Gilmore, her half-brother, Francis Minot Jr., and her adopted sister, Muriel Minot. Siggins attended Cherry Lawn, a boarding school in Darien, Connecticut, and participated in the Gilbert and Sullivan Players group during the summers. Siggins attended Boston University in 1958, where she met artist, Joan Baez, in her first college drama class, and within a year both friends had dropped out of school, becoming part of the burgeoning musical community in Cambridge and beyond. Crossing the river into Cambridge led Siggins to Club 47 and her future husband, Robert (Bob) Siggins, the banjo player for the Charles River Valley Boys and a neuro-pharmacologist. Bob was also a founding member of Club 47, the most important venue for folk music in the region. The pair married in 1960, and had their daughter, Leah Siggins, in 1965. During these years, Siggins worked full time at Club 47, filling a variety of jobs from office work, to waiter, to art gallery manager, eventually becoming program officer, arranging the schedules for musicians booked by Jim Rooney or Byron Linardos.

A vital part of Club 47, Siggins had contact with various artists such as Jim Kweskin, Eric Von Schmidt, Baez, and Rooney, all of whom helped launch folk revival. Furthermore, she was witness to and participant in some of the pivotal moments of the folk and music activist scenes of the 1960s, including the 1965 concert in Newport, RI, where her friend Bob Dylan preformed. The unique power of music also played a role in connecting people across the social boundaries of the time. Despite the segregation of the era, Club 47 was a place where white northern audiences first encountered African American and blues musicians.

After Club 47 closed in 1968, Siggins worked for multiple nonprofit organizations, including aiding Ralph Rinzler, founder of the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C., patterned after earlier festivals he had produced in Newport. During twenty years living in New York City, she founded programs for homeless individuals with AIDS, and worked at various soup kitchens and food pantries. Siggins later returned to Club 47's successor and parent organization, the Passim Folk Music and Cultural Center, where she served as Executive Director from 1997-2009. She helped found the New England Folk Music Archive in 2009, to preserve the history of folk music. Siggins has received numerous awards, including the "Spirit of Folk Award" at the International Folk Alliance's Annual Convention in Kansas City. Siggins was one of the first people to connect social problems requiring funding and awareness with musical artists who shared her concerns, and she continues her work connecting music and activism to affect social change to this day.

Scope of collection



Betsy Siggins backstage at the closing of Club 47, ca. April 1968

The Betsy Siggins Papers consist of clippings, programs, promotional material, posters, publications, concert passes and badges, recorded music, and photographs from 1958-2018. The histories of Club 47 and Club Passim are a large part of the collection, with business, administrative, and promotional records documenting various donors and members, finances, correspondence, and events hosted. Detailed monthly club calendars outline activities the club hosted each month. The New England Folk Music Archive (NEFMA) is also documented, with administrative and promotional materials revealing the spread and history of folk music. There is also material from the Food and Hunger Hotline, the first nonprofit restaurant started by Siggins.

A small, but early, collection of Broadside!, a publication on folk music in the Boston area, is included and ranges from 1962-1967, joining other publications and programs documenting early and later folk music history. Some clippings and files are organized around specific musicians, such as Bob Dylan and Siggins' good friend, Joan Baez. There are several posters including one for Dylan's documentary, *Don't Look Back*, and Humbead's Revised Map of the World.

A wealth of photographs document Siggins and the folk scene from the early 1960s and beyond. The collection contains several photographs of Siggins' family, including Siggins as an adolescent, and many of Siggins with friends and musicians, such as those with the Minot family at their home in Falmouth, MA. Numerous performers are captured, some formally and many in candid shots, both individually and at various locations including Club 47, Club Passim, the Newport Folk Festival, a John Prine Benefit Concert, and other events. Many of the photographs were taken by Charlie Frizzell, showing Siggins, her friends, and musicians at home, at Club 47, and at folk festivals in Newport, Brandeis, and Monterey.

The collection also includes recorded music, concert passes, and badges from various artists including, John Hammond, Doc Watson, Bill Monroe, Jim Rooney, Jackie Washington, Joni Mitchell, Eric Von Schmidt, the Charles River Valley Boys, Neil Young, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, Geoff and Maria Mulduar, Joan Baez, The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others. Audio material, including CDs and a remarkable series of open reel audio tapes, is organized chronologically. There are pages of music and lyrics written by Richard Fariña, and an ink sketch by musician Julia Dawson, drawn for Siggins. There are also lyrics to the song *Trials, Troubles, Tribulations*, which Siggins recorded with Maria Muldaur for the album *Potty Pie*.

The collection is arranged chronologically under alphabetically organized categories, and was donated to the Cambridge Historical Society by Betsy Siggins in 2009. Additional material on Siggins and the Minot family was retained by the Cambridge Historical Society.

Inventory

Club 47 and Club Passim

Annual Reports, Histories, Objectives

ca.1997-2008

Box 5: 1

Articles

1984-1998

Box 2: 1

Articles

2000-2007

Box 2: 2

Board Meetings

1998-1999

Box 2: 3

Correspondence

1987-2014

Box 5: 2

Event Calendars

1962-1968

Box 2: 4-5

Event Calendars

1979-1995

Box 2: 6

Event Calendars and Promotional Material

1999-2008

Box 1: 2

Finances and Correspondence

ca.1960-1966

Box 2: 7
Grants and Scholarships
ca.1995-2005
Box 5: 3
Oral History - Linardos, Bryan
2007-2008 March-Jan
Box 5: 4
Promotional Material
ca.1960-1970
Box 2: 8
Publications
1997-2007
Box 2: 8
Concert Passes and Badges
1993-2008
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Food and Hunger Hotline
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Box 2: 12
Musicians - Clippings

Baez, Joan
1962-1998
Box 2: 13
Baez, Joan and Washington, Jackie
2018 March-Sep
Box 1: 1
Dylan, Bob
1963-2004
Box 2: 14
Muldaur, Maria
ca.2017
Box 2: 15
Muldaur, Maria - Awards
1973-2013
Box 2: 5
Washington, Jackie
ca.1962-1963
Box 2: 17
New England Folk Archive (NEFMA)

NEFMA Administrative
2002-2014
Box 5: 5
NEFMA Calendar
2013
Box 2: 18
NEFMA Finances and Donations
2006-2014
Box 5: 6
NEFMA Promotional Material
ca.2002-2016
Box 5: 7-8
Photographs and Slides

Baez, Joan and family

ca.1963-2009
Box 2: 19
Baez, Joan and Siggins, Betsy
ca.1970-2008
Box 2: 20
The Charles River Valley Boys
1960-1999
Box 3: 1
Club Passim
ca.1991-2000
Box 3: 2
Club Passim - 40th and 50th Anniversary
1999, 2008
Box 3: 3
Club Passim - New Years Eve Event
ca.2000
Box 3: 4
Dylan, Bob
1963-1964, 2009
Box 3: 5
Friends, Musicians
ca.1959-1969
Box 3: 6
Friends, Musicians
ca.1960-1969
Box 3: 7
Friends, Musicians
ca.1974-1987
Box 3: 8
Friends, Musicians
ca.1991-1999
Box 3: 9
Friends, Musicians
ca.2000-2006
Box 3: 10
Frizzel, Charlie (captured)
ca.1962-1965
Box 3: 11
Frizzel, Charlie (photographer)
1961-1965
Box 3: 12
Franklin Zoo (slides)
1967
Box 3: 13
Muldaur, Geoff, Jenni, and Maria
ca.1960-2003
Box 3: 14
Musicians
ca.1958-1969
Box 3: 15
Musicians
ca.1960-1969
Box 3: 16
Musicians
1962-2009
Box 1: 3
Musicians
ca.1983-2000
Box 3: 17

Negatives

ca.1990-1998

Box 3: 18

Newport Folk Festival

ca.1963-1966

Box 3: 19

Newport Folk Festival

ca.1980-1995

Box 3: 20

Newport Folk Festival

ca.1990-2000

Box 3: 21

Prine, John - Concert

2007

Box 3: 22

Siggins, Betsy

ca.1958-1959

Box 3: 23

Siggins, Betsy

ca.1960-1968

Box 4: 1

Siggins, Betsy

ca.1970-2009

Box 4: 2

Siggins family

ca.1968-1982

Box 4: 3

Slides

ca.1967

Box 4: 4

Washington, Jackie

ca.1963, 1984

Box 4: 5

Programs

Events

1971, 2005-2016

Box 4: 6

Jim Kweskin Jug Band 50th Reunion Concert

2003

Box 4: 7

Newport Folk Festival

1963, 1967, 1986

Box 4: 8

Newport Folk Festival

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Box 4: 9

International Folk Alliance Conference

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Box 5: 9

Promotional Material

Fliers, Handbills

ca.1959-2002

Box 4: 10

Postcards, Pamphlets

ca.2001-2002

Box 4: 11
Posters and Music
1967-1999
Box 1: 4
Publications

Broadside!
1962-1963
Box 4: 12
Broadside!
1964
Box 4: 13
Broadside!
1965, 1967
Box 4: 14
Clippings
1961-2006
Box 4: 15
Magazines
2012, 2017
Box 5: 10
Magazines
2016
Box 5: 11-12
Siggins, Betsy - Correspondence, Cards
ca.1988-1999
Box 4: 16
Siggins, Betsy - Writings
ca.2013
Box 4: 17
Audio Material

Baez, Joan, Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1959
Box 6
Baez, Joan, Club 47: Golden Vanity [open reel audiotape]
1959
Box 6
Ric, Bob; Greenberg, David [open reel audiotape]
ca.1959-1970
Box 6
Von Schmidt, Eric: Home Demos [open reel audiotape]
ca.1959-1960
Box 6
Cahn, Rolf: Lessons, fingerpicking, and Blues [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Charles River Valley Boys(Signer, Ethan; Jackson, Clay; Siggins, Bob [open reel audiotape]
1960
Box 6
Charles River Valley Boys [open reel audiotape]
1960
Box 6
Charles River Valley Boys (#2) [open reel audiotape]
1960
Box 6
Club 47 "All Commercial" [open reel audiotape]

ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Hoot [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Hoot 1A [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Jackson, Clay Backwards [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1970
Box 6
Prison Songs [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960
Box 6
Reverend Davis, Gary [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Roberts, Robin [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1965
Box 6
Stanley Brothers and Osborne Brothers [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1970
Box 6
Unknown Charles River Valley Boys [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1969
Box 6
World's Worst Folksingers WHRB [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1970
Box 6
World's Worst Folksingers WHRB #2 [open reel audiotape]
ca.1960-1970
Box 6
Arnoldi, Paul at Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1961
Box 6
Charles River Valley Boys; Arnoldi, Paul at Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1962
Box 6
Keith, Bill and Rooney, Jim [open reel audiotape]
1962
Box 6
Von Schmidt, Eric; Herald, John; Rush, Tom; Rooney, Jim [open reel audiotape]
1962
Box 6
Hammond, John on Balladeer Show WHRB [open reel audiotape]
1963
Box 6
Hoot: Rush, Tom; Washington, Jackie [open reel audiotape]
ca.1963, 1964
Box 6
Jones, Bob; Alevizos, Ted; Von Schmidt, Eric; Richmond, Fritz; Muldaur, Geoff; Dylan, Bob at Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1963
Box 6
Rooney, Jim et. al [open reel audiotape]
1963
Box 6
Watson, Doc at Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1963
Box 6

Louisiana Trip: Jones, Bobfield recordings [open reel audiotape]
1965
Box 6
Monroe, Bill at Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1966
Box 6
Keith, Bill et. al [open reel audiotape]
1969
Box 6
Keith, Bill et. al [open reel audiotape]
1969
Box 6
Seeger, Peter and Green, Richard [open reel audiotape]
ca.1969-1975
Box 6
Baez, Joan, Singles: Maria Dolores; Deportee (Plane Wreck At Los Gatos) [7-inch long-playing record]
1971
Box 6
Jones, Bob; Monroe, Bill [open reel audiotape]
1978
Box 6
Club 47 [open reel audiotape]
1994
Box 6
Canterbury Dance Orchestra [CD]
ca.2001
Box 6
Revival A Folk Music Novel [CD]
2004
Box 6
Baez, Joan at Golden Vanity [CD]
2011
Box 6
Baez, Joan, Club 47 [CD]
2011
Box 6
Mother Bay State Entertainers [open reel audiotape]
2011
Box 6
Mother Bay State Entertainers [open reel audiotape]
2011
Box 6
The Oxford American Southern Music [CD #13]
2011 Oct
Box 6
Von Schmitt, Eric: Leavin' Cambridge 1/2 [CD]
2011
Box 6
Von Schmitt, Eric: Leavin' Cambridge 2/2 [CD]
2011
Box 6
WBZ Coffee Shop Interview [open reel audiotape]
2012
Box 6
Watson, Doc at Club 47 [CD]
2013
Box 6
Hoot and Holler [CD]
2014

Box 6
Massachusetts Walking Tour, Volume V [CD]
2015
Box 6

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Transferred from Cambridge Historical Society, April 2018.

Processing Information

Processed by Kylee Christensen.

Related Material

Also see the other collections in the Folk New England Collection:

Broadside (Cambridge, Mass.) Collection

Folk New England Ephemera Collection

Charles Frizzell Collection

Bill Keith Collection

Jim Rooney Collection

Separated Material

Books that came with the Betsy Siggins Papers were removed from the collection and will be cataloged separately:

Alarik, Scott. *Revival: A Folk Music Novel*. Songsmith, 2011.

Baez, Joan, et al. *The Folk Music Scene*. M. Witmark & Sons, 1967.

Burger, Jeff, editor. *Leonard Cohen on Leonard Cohen: Interviews and Encounters*. Chicago Review Press, 2014, 2015.

Cohen, Ronald D. *The Basics: Folk Music*. Routledge, 2006.

Cott, Jonathan. *Dylan*. Rolling Stone Press, 1985.

No Depression, Spring 2016.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Club 47 (Cambridge, Mass.)

Folk music--New England

Folk musicians--Photographs

Siggins, Betsy, 1930-

Contributors

Siggins, Betsy, 1930- [\[main entry\]](#)

Genres and formats

Ephemera

Open reel audiotapes

Photographs

Posters

Sound recordings

Link to similar SCUA collections

Folk music

Massachusetts (East)



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