



Bob Steele Collection

A Guide to the collection at the Hartford History Center

Collection Overview

Repository:	Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library Hartford, Connecticut
Creator :	Steele, Bob, 1911-2002
Title :	Bob Steele Collection
Dates :	1912-2003
Extent :	7 linear feet (16 boxes)
Abstract :	Papers of Hartford, Connecticut radio legend, Bob Steele.
Location:	Ground Floor Electronic Stacks
Language:	English

Biographical Note

Robert Lee Steele was born in Kansas City, Missouri on July 13, 1911. The middle name on his birth certificate is actually Jesse, but he chose to change it to Lee. He began his first job at age seven, in a drug store. At age 18 he owned and operated a restaurant. It was also about this point that he entered the boxing ring. Bob's career continued with motorcycle racing. In 1930 he moved to Los Angeles. During his six years there he sold motorcycles, worked as a stunt man in movies, and announced auto and motorcycle races over public address systems and a Los Angeles radio station. It was motorcycling that brought him to Hartford. Well-known Hartford jeweler Bill Savitt needed an announcer for races he was sponsoring at Bulkeley Stadium. When the season ended, Bob planned to return to Los Angeles. With some time to spare, he made his way to WTIC and applied to be an announcer. He started on October 1, 1936 and was a fixture on the air for 55 years. His official retirement was September 30, 1991. Bob continued to make periodic appearances on the program until a few weeks before his death, December 6, 2002.

Bob married Astrid Shirley Hanson, of West Hartford, Connecticut, in 1938 (she later changed her first name to Shirley). The couple made their home in Wethersfield, Connecticut and raised four sons: Robert Hampton Steele, Paul Alan Steele, Philip Lee

Steele, and Steven Michael Steele. Among his accomplishments during his time in Hartford, Bob included the following in the obituary he prepared.

Retired vice-president WTIC Radio, announcer, morning personality and sports director. Member National Radio Hall of Fame, Connecticut Sports Hall of Fame, four times named Connecticut Sportscaster of the Year, recipient of Marconi Award for top radio ratings, received Pierpont Edwards Award for distinguished Masonic service, 33 degree Mason, 50-year Shriner, Honorary doctorate (Doctor of Humane Letters) University of Hartford. A wordsmith, he was instrumental in establishing the Bob Steele Literacy Volunteers Reading Center in Hartford, and authored "The Word of the Day: 65 Years of Wit & Wisdom on Mispronunciation" this fall.

At the time of his death, Bob had eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Scope and Content

The bulk of the papers in the Bob Steele Collection were gathered by Steele's son, Phil Steele, as he prepared to publish *Bob Steele's Century*, a ten volume compilation about his father. For the most part, they remain in the chronological order Phil Steele initiated. To aid in preservation, the photographs have been moved to a series of their own. The remaining materials have been sorted into the following series: Personal Papers, Scrapbooks, and Radio. Information about Bob's personal and professional lives overlap, particularly in the Scrapbook series. Further descriptions of each series may be found below. Items not used in the publication have, when possible, been added chronologically. The remainder were added to the Topical section of the Radio series. This finding aid also contains a list of the material objects in the collection.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

The records are stored in a restricted area and therefore may not be available on a same-day basis.

Use Restrictions

See Hartford History Center's Collection Use policy. Permission to publish from the Collection must be obtained in writing from curator of the Hartford History Center, and a copy of the published work may be requested by the Hartford History Center. The Hartford History Center reserves the right to refuse permission to publish, etc. to those who have not complied with its policies. Use of the collections will normally not be permitted for the purpose of promotion of commercial products and services or political campaigns. Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library reserves the right to limit the number of photographic prints/captures and to restrict the use or reproduction of rare, fragile, or valuable objects.

Subject Headings

Personal Names

Hanson, Astrid Shirley
Steele, Paul Alan
Steele, Philip Lee
Steele, Robert Hampton
Steele, Shirley Astrid
Steele, Steven Michael

Corporate Names

WTIC (Radio station : Hartford, Conn.)

Subjects

Boxing
Families -- Connecticut -- Hartford
Families -- Connecticut -- Wethersfield
Motorcycle racing
Radio -- Connecticut -- Hartford

Geographic Names

Hartford (Conn.) -- Radio

Genre Terms

Photographs.
Scrapbooks.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

Processing Details

Collection was processed by Jennifer Sharp in 2013.

EAD Finding Aid created February 2013.

Accruals

The collection is closed. Additional accruals are not expected.

Bob Steele Collection contents:

I. Photographs

The photographs series spans Bob's entire life. The earliest photos are primarily of his family, including Bob and his parents. His foray into boxing and his love of motorcycles become evident in the 1930s. By the end of that decade he has become a radio announcer. The photos have expanded to include professional headshots for WTIC, as well as images of Shirley and their growing family. Family photos dominate the collection through the 1950s, with the occasional print of Bob with a famous sports figure. As the kids, and Bob's celebrity grew, the photographs are increasingly from his work events. Black and white film gives way to color in the 1960s, and the family photos also show Bob's daughters-in-law and grandchildren. In the 1970s, photographs appear to include those sent in by fans who met him at events. Award ceremonies, and similar occasions, dominate the photographs from Bob's final decades. Headshots may be found throughout this series.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Photographs, ca. 1912-1917
1	2	Photographs, 1918-1935
1	3	Photographs, 1936-1942
1	4	Photographs, 1943-1946
1	5	Photographs, 1946-1947
1	6	Photographs, 1947-1951
Box	Folder	
2	1	Photographs, 1952-1954
2	2	Photographs, 1955-1958
2	3	Photographs, 1959-1961
2	4	Photographs, 1962-1965
2	5	Photographs, 1966-1972
Box	Folder	
3	1	Photographs, 1973-1979
3	2	Photographs, 1980-1986
3	3	Photographs, Commercial photo shoot 1981
3	4	Photographs, 1987-1990
3	5	Photographs, 1991-2002
3	6	Photographs, Assorted

II. Personal Papers

The family series contains both family history and correspondence among family members. Included are copies of Bob's parents' divorce papers, letters he wrote to his father, and his high school admission certificate. Most of the correspondence in the series is from Bob to Shirley, with occasional postcards sent to the boys. A couple letters from Shirley to Bob are included, as are a few to Bob from his sons. Bob's trademark sense of humor is evident in all of his writing, especially in his letters to Shirley. Most of the letters, or their envelopes, contain his sketches, some in elaborate detail. Diaries form a large portion of the Personal Papers series. Bob kept these periodically over the years.

Box Folder

- 3 7 Family history
- 3 8 Divorce papers
- 3 9 Letters to his father, 1917
- 3 10 High school admission certificate, 1923
- 3 11 Family correspondence, Letters to Astrid Shirley Hanson Steele, 1937-1943
- 3 12 Family correspondence, 1943-1946

Box Folder

- 4 1 Baseball score card, Boston Red Sox at New York Yankees 1946
- 4 2 Family correspondence, 1948-1952
- 4 3 Family correspondence, 1954
- 4 4 Family correspondence, 1964-1991
- 4 5 Birthday cards (sent to Bob Steele) 1992
- 4 6-8 Condolence letters (sent to Steele family) 2002-2003

Box Item

- 11 1 Diary, Photographs, 1928
- 11 2 Diary, 1944
- 11 3 Diary, 1946
- 11 4 Diary, 1950
- 11 5 Diary, 1951
- 11 6 Diary, 1952
- 11 7 Diary, 1953
- 11 8 Diary, 1968
- 11 9 Diary, 1972
- 11 10 Diary, 1973 (1 of 2)
- 11 11 Diary, 1973 (2 of 2)
- 11 12 Diary, 1974
- 11 13 Diary, 1979
- 11 14 Diary, 1980
- 11 15 Diary, 1981
- 11 16 Diary, 1982
- 11 17 Diary, 1983
- 11 18 Diary, 1988

- 11 19 Diary, 1989
- 11 19 Diary, 1991
- 11 20 Diary, 1992

Box Item

- 12 1 Diary, 1996
- 12 2 Diary, 1997
- 12 3 Diary, 1998
- 12 4 Diary, 1999
- 12 5 Diary, 2000
- 12 6 Diary, Proof copy of "The Word for the Day," 2002
- 12 7 Diary, Retirement Party Guest Book, 1992
- 12 8 Diary, Family photographs, 1928-1951

III. Scrapbooks

Bob had a penchant for scrapbooks. He collected newspaper clippings from all aspects of his life, and often captioned the photographs. In the scrapbooks he could mark occasions that he was not able to discuss on the radio, including son Robert's tenure in the US House of Representatives. The earliest pages contain clippings of his column, "Krazy Kracks from K.C.," published in MotorCycling. There are also programs from the motorcycling races he announced at Hartford's Bulkeley Stadium. In the late 1930s he wrote a column under the name Prof. Popper. Bob continued writing columns into the 1940s. At that time, photographs of his children are included on the pages as well. There are also many clippings about his work at WTIC and ticket stubs from events attended.

Box	Folder	
4	9	Scrapbook pages, Assorted
4	10	Scrapbook pages, 1926-1928
4	11	Scrapbook pages, 1927-1932
4	12	Scrapbook pages, 1934-1935

Box	Folder	
5	1	Scrapbook pages, 1936
5	2	Scrapbook pages, 1937-1939
5	3	Scrapbook pages, 1940-1941
5	4	Scrapbook pages, 1942
5	5	Scrapbook pages, 1943
5	6	Scrapbook pages, 1944-1945
5	7	Scrapbook pages, 1945
5	8	Scrapbook pages, 1947
5	9	Scrapbook pages, 1948-1950
5	10	Scrapbook pages, 1954
5	11	Scrapbook pages, 1955-1960

Box	Folder	
6	1	Scrapbook pages, 1970-1973

6 2 Scrapbook pages, 1973-1988

Box

16 Scrapbook, 1951-1968
(Oversize)

IV. Radio

In the earlier years of Bob's tenure at the radio station, the papers he maintained were primarily scripts and jokes. Over time the bulk of the material became fan letters. Many words for the day may be found, including suggestions mailed in by listeners. As mentioned above, the primary difference between the material in "Chronological" and "Topical" is whether they were incorporated into *Bob Steele Century*. Similar items may be found in both sections.

A. Chronological

Box Folder

6 3 Radio, 1939
6 4 Radio, 1943-1944
6 5 Radio, 1944-1947
6 6 Radio, 1948-1951
6 7 Radio, 1952-1954
6 8 Radio, 1955-1960

Box Folder

7 1 Radio, 1961-1965
7 2 Radio, 1966-1967
7 3 Radio, 1968-1969
7 4 Radio, 1970
7 5 Radio, 1971-1972
7 6 Radio, 1973-1976
7 7 Radio, 1977-1978
7 8 Radio, 1979-1980
7 9 Radio, 1981-1982

Box Folder

8 1 Radio, 1983-1984
8 2 Radio, 1985
8 3 Radio, "WTIC: Radio to Remember," 1985
8 4 Radio, 1986
8 5 Radio, Hartford Courant: A Salute to Bob Steele, 1986
8 6 Radio, 1987
8 7 Radio, 1988
8 8 Radio, 1989
8 9 Radio, 1990
8 10 Radio, 1991

Box Folder

9 1 Radio, 1992-1993

9	2	Radio, 1994-1995
9	3	Radio, 1996-2000
9	4	Radio, Neutral Corner Annual Awards Dinner 1998 October 18
9	5	Radio, 2002
9	6	Radio, Hartford Public Library exhibit 2011

B. Topical

Box Folder

9	7-11	Radio, Jokes and Humor, Undated
---	------	---------------------------------

Box Folder

10	1-7	Radio, Jokes, Scripts, Correspondence, Undated
10	8	Radio, Letters from Maury, 1946-1948
10	9	Radio, Morning Watch Jokes, Assorted dates
10	10	Radio, Shared material,
10	11	Radio, Speaking engagement notes,

V. Phil Steele Files

As Phil Steele prepared *Bob Steele's Century*, he digitized many items. Additionally, the volumes were all compiled electronically. Phil kept these files on an external hard drive, and allowed us to copy them. Some may be duplicates. An item level index is available with the collection. Also included in this series is an audio CD of clips from Bob's show and material from the exhibit at Hartford Public Library.

Box Item

13	1-7	DVDs
13	8	CD, <i>Bob Steele: The Steele Archive</i> , Volume 6
13	9	Bob Steele anecdotes
13	10	Proof of <i>Bob Steele's Century</i>

Material Objects in the Collection

Box Item

14	1	Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases Signed by George Bernard Shaw
14	2	Round by Round, Jack Dempsey Autographs are all by Bob Steele
14	3	Certificate, Sovereign Grand Inspector General, 33' and Honorary Member of our Supreme Council, Freemasons 1990 September 25
14	4	Certificate, Prince of the Royal Secret, 32' 1946 May 18
14	5	Certificate, Noble of the Mystic Shrine 1946 June 8
14	6	Certificate, Entered Apprentice, Free and accepted Masons 1937 November 9
14	7	Certificate, High School graduation, Westport High School, 1929 June 7
14	8	11x17" photograph of Bob Steele holding a microphone
14	9	Congressional Record, Tribute to Bob Steele 1991 September 27
14	10	Congressional Record, Tribute Robert L. Steele 1991 July 17
14	11	Wood mount, Cover of Northeast Magazine 1982 August 29

Box Item

- 15 1 Trophy, Large Market Personality of the Year 1989
- 15 2 Mason's hat
- 15 3 Boxing gloves