

Kate Smith's Biography



Kathryn Elizabeth Smith was born May 1, 1907 in the nation's capital. From an early age she loved to sing and dance. She performed locally in theatres and at nightclubs and was discovered by a New York City show producer in 1926. She was featured in the musical comedy *Honeymoon Lane* on Broadway and later in *Hit the Deck* and *Flying High*.

She was discovered in 1930 by Columbia Records vice president Ted Collins, who became her partner and manager and who put her on the radio in 1931. She was an immediate success on the air and she soon broke the record for longevity at the legendary Palace Theatre.

In 1932 she had a cameo role in Paramount's *The Big Broadcast*. Then she starred in her own movie, *Hello Everybody!*, with co-stars Randolph Scott and Sally Blane. In 1943 she sang "God Bless America" in the Irving Berlin picture *This is the Army*.

Kate began making records in 1926; among her biggest hits were *River, Stay 'Way From My Door* (1931), *The Woodpecker Song* (1940), *The White Cliffs of Dover* (1941), *I Don't Want to Walk Without You* (1942), *There Goes That Song Again* (1944), *Seems Like Old Times* (1946), and *Now Is the Hour* (1947).

In the fifties she began making LP albums, with such best sellers as *Kate Smith at Carnegie Hall* (1963), *How Great Thou Art* (1965), and *America's Favorites: Kate Smith/Arthur Fiedler/Boston Pops* (1967).

Her theme song was *When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain*, whose lyrics she helped write. Irving Berlin regarded the song she made most famous, *God Bless America*, as his most important composition. Kate predicted, in 1938, that the song would still be sung long after all of us are gone - and it surely will.

She had the most popular radio variety hour, *The Kate Smith Hour*, which aired weekly from 1937-45. At the same time she had the No. 1 daytime radio show, the midday *Kate Smith Speaks*, a news and commentary program. In 1950 Kate entered television with a Monday-Friday afternoon variety show, *The Kate Smith Hour* (1950-54). It proved so popular that NBC gave her a prime-time show on Wednesday evenings, *The Kate Smith Evening Hour*. Her last TV series was CBS's *The Kate Smith Show*, a weekly half-hour musical series in 1960. She made many guest appearances on top TV shows, such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Tennessee Ernie Ford Show*, *The Jack Paar Show*, *ABC Hollywood Palace*, *The Dean Martin Show*, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, *The Andy Williams Show*, *The Tony Orlando and Dawn Show*, and *The Donny & Marie Show*.

During the last decade of her career Kate gave dozens of live concerts, in various American cities. In 1972-73 she had extended engagements at the largest nightclub in the Reno area, giving two shows each day.

Kate ended her career on a high note. She became singing good-luck charm for the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team with her renditions of *God Bless America*, helping to inspire them to two successive Stanley Cups (1974 and 1975). In 1976 she was named Grand Marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade. Fittingly, the last song she sang was that Irving Berlin anthem on a bicentennial special just before July 4, 1976. She died in Raleigh, NC, June 17, 1986.

Join the Kate Smith Commemorative Society

<http://www.katesmith.org>

Irving Berlin

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm019.html>

America's unofficial national anthem was composed by an immigrant who left his home in Siberia for America when he was only five years old. The original version of "God Bless America" was written by Irving Berlin (1888-1989) during the summer of 1918 at Camp Upton, located in Yaphank, Long Island, for his Ziegfeld-style revue, Yip, Yip, Yaphank. "Make her victorious on land and foam, God Bless America..." ran the original lyric. However, Berlin decided that the solemn tone of "God Bless America" was somewhat out of keeping with the more comedic elements of the show and the song was laid aside.

In the fall of 1938, as war was again threatening Europe, Berlin decided to write a "peace" song. He recalled his "God Bless America" from twenty years earlier and made some alterations to reflect the different state of the world. Singer Kate Smith introduced the revised "God Bless America" during her radio broadcast on Armistice Day, 1938. The song was an immediate sensation; the sheet music was in great demand. Berlin soon established the God Bless America Fund, dedicating the royalties to the Boy and Girl Scouts of America.

Berlin's file of manuscripts and lyric sheets for this quintessentially American song includes manuscripts in the hand of Berlin's longtime musical secretary, Helmy Kresa (Berlin himself did not read and write music), as well as lyric sheets, and corrected proof copies for the sheet music.

These materials document not only the speed with which Berlin revised this song, but also his attention to detail. The first proof copy is dated October 31, 1938; the earliest "final" version of the song is a manuscript dated November 2; and Kate Smith's historic broadcast took place on November 11. These documents show the song's step-by-step evolution from the original version of 1918 to the tune we now know.

These manuscripts are part of the Irving Berlin Collection, a remarkable collection that includes Berlin's personal papers as well as the records of the Irving Berlin Music Corp. It was presented to the Library of Congress in 1992, by Berlin's daughters, Mary Ellin Barrett, Linda Louise Emmet, and Elizabeth Irving Peters.

Spoken Introduction:

While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer:

God Bless America.
Land that I love
Stand beside her, and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies ,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America
My home sweet home.

God Bless America,
Land that I love
Stand beside her,
And guide her,
Through the night
With the light from above,
From the mountains,
To the prairies,
To the ocean,
White with foam,
God bless America,
My home sweet home.
God bless America,
My home sweet home.

Irving Berlin
(1888-1989)

<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/biography/berlin.html>



Irving Berlin once said that, "a patriotic song is an emotion and you must not embarrass an audience with it, or they will hate your guts." This philosophy made him one of America's most outstanding writers of patriotic songs from World War I through World War II.

Berlin was born Israel Baline in Eastern Russia on May 11, 1888. He was one of eight children born to Leah and Moses Baline. His father was a shochet (one who kills chickens as prescribed by Jewish religious laws) who was also the cantor in the synagogue. His family moved to New York in 1893 to escape the pogroms in Russia. At the age of eight, he took to the streets of the Lower East Side of New York City to help support his mother and family after his father had died. In the early 1900s he worked as a singing waiter in many restaurants and started writing songs. His first published hit was "Marie From Sunny Italy." His successes continued through two years.

Berlin was married for only a year to Dorothy Goetz, who died from typhoid contracted while on their honeymoon in Cuba in 1913. He married Ellin Mackay in 1926. She was the daughter of Clarence Mckay, president of Postal Telegraph Company, a leading Catholic layman who opposed the wedding. The Berlins had three daughters.

In World War I, he wrote the musical Yip, Yip, Yaphank, which was produced by the men of Camp Upton. In this musical, the big hit song was "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," which reflected Berlin's aversion to rising early. This musical raised more than \$150,000 to build a service center at Camp Upton.

On Armistice Day, 1939, he introduced "God Bless America," which was sung by Kate Smith. This song threatened to replace the national anthem because of its patriotism and popularity.

In World War II, he wrote the musical This is the Army, which raised \$10 million for the Army Emergency Relief. His hits in this musical were "This is the Army, Mr Jones" and "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen." He also wrote other patriotic songs such as "Any Bonds Today?," "Arms for the Love of America," and "Angels of Mercy" for the American Red Cross.

Berlin was prolific: He wrote more than 900 songs, 19 musicals and the scores of 18 movies. Some of his songs that have become classics include "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Easter Parade," and "White Christmas." He is the top money maker among songwriters in America. In 1924, songwriter Jerome Kern observed "Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He is American music."

Berlin supported Jewish charities and organizations and donated many dollars to worthwhile causes. He was honored in 1944 by the National Conference of Christians and Jews for "advancing the aims of the conference to eliminate religious and racial conflict." Five years later, he was honored by the New York YMHA as one of "12 outstanding Americans of the Jewish faith." On February 18, 1955, President Eisenhower presented him with a gold medal in recognition of his services in composing many patriotic songs for the country. Earlier, Berlin assigned the copyright for "God Bless America" to the God Bless America Fund, which has raised millions of dollars for the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Berlin's World War I doughboy uniform and many of his original patriotic scores are on display in the Jewish War Veterans Museum in Washington, D.C.

Irving Berlin died on September 22, 1989, at the age of 101.

Following a gala 100th birthday celebration concert at Carnegie Hall, Morton Gould, president of ASCAP, said that "Irving Berlin's music will last not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but

always." Not bad for a poor immigrant who had only two years of formal schooling and who never learned to read or write music!

Sources: Jewish Heroes and Heroines in America from Jewish Heroes & Heroines of America : 150 True Stories of American Jewish Heroism, © 1996, written by Seymour "Sy" Brody of Delray Beach, Florida, illustrated by Art Seiden of Woodmere, New York, and published by Lifetime Books, Inc., Hollywood, FL. Also, the Jewish-American Hall of Fame - Jewish Museum in Cyberspace.

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