

## The Eberle Brothers



*The museum has an extensive collection of items pertaining to the Eberle Brothers, including photographs and newspaper and magazine articles. Please see the Contact Us page for the museum's hours of operation or call for an appointment.*



In the early 1910's, Bob and Ray Eberle were born into a home in which music was a priority. His parents, John and Margaret, were both accomplished musicians. After living in Mechanicville for a time, they moved to Elm Street in Hoosick Falls, where they raised their four sons and two daughters. Although money was tight, John and Margaret ensured that their children took music lessons. The Eberle children sang in school plays and in the church choir.

Bob, the oldest brother, was a handsome, outgoing boy, who loved singing before an audience. In 1935, when he was 18 years old, Bob decided to try out as a contestant on the popular Fred Allen Amateur Night. He traveled to New York City and spent a month trying to get a spot on the show. He finally succeeded and won first prize - \$50 and a week's engagement at the Roxy Theater in New York. After returning to Hoosick Falls, Bob was asked to sing at a local ball with the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra. The band members needed a new singer and hired Bob on the spot.

The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra broke up soon after Bob joined, but he stayed as a member of the new band that Jimmy Dorsey formed. A year later, Bob accepted an offer from Bing Crosby to do a regular spot on his Kraft Music Hall Show. Bob traveled to Hollywood with the band and spent the next 18 months doing the radio show, movies, and recording. In the words of Bing Crosby, "Bob has everything it takes – personality, good looks, perseverance, and a fine voice." It was the big band era, and Bob was one of its stars.

Meanwhile, back in Hoosick Falls, Ray Eberle, who was three years younger than Bob, was still a high school student. Four months before graduation, he took a train to New York City to visit his brother, and soon found himself at the club where Bob was singing with his band. Glenn Miller was there, and immediately saw the resemblance between the brothers. He had Ray audition, and soon the younger brother had a job singing with the Glen Miller Band.

In the 1930's, big band singers were considered to be major celebrities, often mobbed by eager fans. But for Bob and Ray, traveling, rehearsing, recording, and club engagements consumed most of their time and energy. The bands often appeared in six to eight shows a day. By the early 1940's, Bob and Helen O'Connell's duets were wildly popular with listeners and record buyers. The duo recorded several successful and best-selling records with the Jimmy Dorsey band.

When World War started, both Bob and Ray were drafted into the military. During the war, a recording strike, a prohibitive entertainment tax, and growing popularity of pop music doomed the

big bands. Many clubs eliminated dance floors. By the time Bob and Ray came home, singers like Perry Como and Frank Sinatra had taken over the recording industry.

Although the Golden Era of the big bands was over, Bob and Ray continued to have active careers. They sang in the U.S. and abroad in clubs, concert halls, and on television. Bob worked primarily as a single act after the war, working in clubs and on television music and variety shows. He and Helen O'Connell joined together a few times to reprise their duets at nightclubs and concert venues.

Both brothers had long and successful careers, booking engagements until the end of their lives. Ray sang regularly at country and state fairs in Georgia, where he settled. He died in the summer of 1979, at the age of 60. Bob passed away in 1981, at the age of 65.