DANDRIDGE, RUBY, 1900-1987.
Ruby Dandridge family papers, 1896-1999

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ruby Dandridge family papers, 1896-1999
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1472
Extent: 10.625 linear feet (13 boxes)
Abstract: Papers of African American musician and actress Ruby Dandridge and her daughter Dorothy Dandridge, as well as other family members, including correspondence, financial records, photographs, and sheet music.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

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Source
Gift of Dianne Bougher and Marijane Miki Jackson, 2018

Custodial History
Dianne Bougher and Marijane Miki Jackson are the executors of the estate of Jimmie Mitchell, the great-nephew of Ruby Dandridge. Pellom McDaniels, III, Curator of African American Collections, packed the collection in the home of the late Laureen May Mitchell, spouse of Jimmie Mitchell, and shipped it to the Rose Library.

Citation
[after identification of item(s)], Ruby Dandridge family papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Appraisal Note
Acquired by Pellom McDaniels, III, Curator of African American Collections, as part of the Rose Library’s holdings in African American culture and history. Less than one quarter of a linear foot of duplicate photographs of Ruby and Dorothy Dandridge were removed from the collection and discarded. Appraisal decisions were made by McDaniels and Interim Head of Manuscript Processing Sarah Quigley.

Processing
Arranged and described at the file level by Sarah Quigley, May 2019.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
Ruby Dandridge (1900-1987) was born in Wichita, Kansas, to George and Nellie Simon Butler. George Butler was a janitor at Union National Bank and a minister who taught his daughter to dance and sing. Ruby moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1919, where she married Cyril Dandridge. The couple had two children, Vivian (born in 1921) and Dorothy (born in 1922) but separated before Dorothy was born. Ruby worked as a maid to support her daughters and new partner, Geneva Williams, who helped Ruby train Vivian and Dorothy for the entertainment business. The family moved to Los Angeles, California, in the 1930s where Ruby began an acting career while also pursuing acting opportunities for her daughters. Ruby Dandridge is most known for her roles in Amos ’n Andy and The Judy Canova Show. She also briefly performed in a nightclub act around Los Angeles in the 1950s but had effectively left show business by the 1960s. Her relationship with Williams ended around the same time she stopped acting and she lived the rest of her life in relative seclusion. She died in 1987.

Dorothy Dandridge (1922-1965) was born to Ruby and Cyril Dandridge in Cleveland, Ohio. As a child, she performed with her sister Vivian in the duo The Wonder Kids, traveling the south and
primarily performing at church functions. Following the family's move to Los Angeles, Dorothy and Vivian formed the Dandridge Sisters with Etta Jones and began to work steadily in such venues as the Cotton Club in New York (New York). Dorothy married dancer Harold Nicholas in 1942, and the couple had one daughter, Harolyn. In 1954, Dorothy starred in Otto Preminger's film *Carmen Jones* and subsequently became the first African American woman to be nominated for an Academy Award for her role. In 1959, she won a Golden Globe for her performance in *Porgy and Bess* and married her second husband, nightclub owner Jack Denison. They divorced in 1963 amid significant financial difficulties. She died in 1965 from a drug overdose.

**Scope and Content Note**
The collection consists of the papers of the Dandridge family from 1896-1999, primarily those of Ruby Dandridge and her daughter Dorothy Dandridge. The Ruby Dandridge papers consist primarily of correspondence, financial records, photographs, and sheet music. There is one score for a song written by Ruby Dandridge. The Dorothy Dandridge papers are primarily photographs and scrapbooks, including a photograph album of her wedding to Jack Denison, with a small amount of correspondence and financial records. The collection also contains correspondence, financial records, and photographs of Dorothy's first husband, Harold Nicholas. The papers of Dandridge's great-nephew Jimmie Mitchell consist almost entirely of photograph albums documenting vacations and social events. The collection also includes some Vivian Dandridge papers, including photographs and a diary.

**Arrangement Note**
Arranged by family member, then in alphabetical order by record type.
After her first marriage to tap dancer and entertainer Harold Nicholas ended in divorce, Dandridge had a brief relationship with international playboy Porfirio Rubirosa. His sexual prowess and rumored manly endowment inspired Parisian waiters to name gigantic pepper mills “Rubirosas.” In 1959, Dandridge married Jack Denison. As a wedding gift, she received an engraved Rubirosa more than likely as a joke.
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, 1941-1947
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1950-1959 [1]
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1950-1959 [2]
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1960-1969
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1970-1979
Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, 1981-1983
Dandridge, Ruby, "Goodnight to Papa Mambo" and "I Gotta Have My Lovin'," undated [original: phonograph record]
Dandridge, Ruby, "Hot Tamale Blues," and "Rhythmanian Boogie," undated [original: phonograph record]
Dandridge, Ruby, identification and membership cards, 1944-1977
Dandridge, Ruby, medical and death records, 1983-1987
Dandridge, Ruby, photographs, circa 1916-1970
Dandridge, Ruby, photographs inscribed to her, circa 1940-1969
Dandridge, Ruby, printed material, circa 1940-1987
Dandridge, Ruby, score, "Three Little Astronauts," 1969
Dandridge, Ruby, scores and transcripts, undated
Dandridge, Ruby, scrapbook, circa 1950-1959 [1]
Dandridge, Ruby, scrapbook, circa 1950-1959 [2]
Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, undated
Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1896-1923
Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1924-1967 [1]
Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1924-1967 [3]
Dandridge, Ruby, songbook, undated
Dandridge, Vivian, birth certificate, 1921
Dandridge, Vivian, diary, 1937-1941
Dandridge, Vivian, letter regarding divorce filing, 1943
Dandridge, Vivian, photographs, circa 1940-1960
Dandridge, Vivian, photographs inscribed to her, circa 1939-1950
Dandridge, Vivian, printed material, 1991
Dandridge, Vivian, school certificates, 1933-1934
Mays, Billy, clippings and sheet music, 1952-1960
Mitchell, Jimmie, birth certificate, 1943
Mitchell, Jimmie, correspondence and financial records, 1965-1999
Mitchell, Jimmie, death certificate, 2004
Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1960-1985
Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1960-1985 [loose photographs]
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<td>Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1985 [loose photographs]</td>
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<td>Mitchell, Jimmie, wallet, undated [1]</td>
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