

DANDRIDGE, RUBY, 1900-1987.

Ruby Dandridge family papers, 1896-1999

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Dandridge, Ruby, 1900-1987.
Title: Ruby Dandridge family papers, 1896-1999
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1472
Extent: 13.5 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

Restrictions on Access

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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 Lauren 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.

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 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.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Baker, Loyse Elleene, funeral guest book, 1999
1	2	Dandridge, Dorothy, business cards, undated
1	3	Dandridge, Dorothy, correspondence, circa 1945-1947
1	4	Dandridge, Dorothy, death records, 1965
1	5	Dandridge, Dorothy, empty envelopes, circa 1945-1952
1	6	Dandridge, Dorothy, financial records, circa 1946-1949 [1]
1	7	Dandridge, Dorothy, financial records, circa 1946-1949 [2]
1	8	Dandridge, Dorothy, Hollywood Canteen volunteer card, undated
1	9	Dandridge, Dorothy, National Negro Congress, 1946
1	10	Dandridge, Dorothy, notes, undated
6	-	Dandridge, Dorothy, pepper mill, 1959 After her first marriage to tap dancer and entertainer Harold Nichols 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.
1	11	Dandridge, Dorothy, photographs, circa 1940-1960
10	1	Dandridge, Dorothy, photographs, circa 1943-1960
10	2	Dandridge, Dorothy, photographs inscribed to her, 1940
1	12	Dandridge, Dorothy, photographs inscribed to her, circa 1940-1960
2	1	Dandridge, Dorothy, printed material, circa 1950-1997
10	5	Dandridge, Dorothy, scrapbook, circa 1950-1959
13	-	Dandridge, Dorothy and Jack Denison, wedding album, 1959
9	1	Dandridge family, photograph album, circa 1940-1972
9	2	Dandridge family, photograph album, circa 1940-1980
2	2	Dandridge family and friends, photographs, circa 1870-1900
2	3	Dandridge family and friends, photographs, circa 1930-1960
10	3	Dandridge family and friends, photographs, circa 1939-1940
2	4	Dandridge family and friends, photographs, circa 1960-1980
2	5	Dandridge family and friends, printed material, 1946-1999
2	6	Dandridge, Ruby, contracts, circa 1956
2	7	Dandridge, Ruby, correspondence, circa 1946-1956
2	8	Dandridge, Ruby, correspondence, circa 1974-1980
2	9	Dandridge, Ruby, Earl Mills claim against Dorothy Dandridge estate, 1966
2	10	Dandridge, Ruby, empty envelopes, 1947-1977
2	11	Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, undated

- 2 12 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, 1941-1947
- 2 13 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1950-1959 [1]
- 3 1 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1950-1959 [2]
- 3 2 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1960-1969
- 3 3 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, circa 1970-1979
- 3 4 Dandridge, Ruby, financial records, 1981-1983
- CLP3 - Dandridge, Ruby, "Goodnight to Papa Mambo" and "I Gotta Have My Lovin'," undated [original: phonograph record]
- CLP3 - Dandridge, Ruby, "Hot Tamale Blues," and "Rhythmanian Boogie," undated [original: phonograph record]
- 3 5 Dandridge, Ruby, identification and membership cards, 1944-1977
- 3 6 Dandridge, Ruby, medical and death records, 1983-1987
- 3 7 Dandridge, Ruby, musical method books, circa 1950-1969 [1]
- 3 8 Dandridge, Ruby, musical method books, circa 1950-1969 [2]
- 4 1 Dandridge, Ruby, photographs, circa 1916-1970
- 4 2 Dandridge, Ruby, photographs inscribed to her, circa 1940-1969
- 4 3 Dandridge, Ruby, printed material, circa 1940-1987
- 4 4 Dandridge, Ruby, score, "Three Little Astronauts," 1969
- 4 5 Dandridge, Ruby, scores and transcripts, undated
- 8 2 Dandridge, Ruby, scrapbook, circa 1950-1959 [1]
- 10 6 Dandridge, Ruby, scrapbook, circa 1950-1959 [2]
- 4 6 Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, undated
- 4 7 Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1896-1923
- 4 8 Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1924-1967 [1]
- 4 9 Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1924-1967 [2]
- 4 10 Dandridge, Ruby, sheet music, 1924-1967 [3]
- 4 11 Dandridge, Ruby, songbook, undated
- 4 12 Dandridge, Vivian, birth certificate, 1921
- 4 13 Dandridge, Vivian, diary, 1937-1941
- 5 1 Dandridge, Vivian, letter regarding divorce filing, 1943
- 5 2 Dandridge, Vivian, photographs, circa 1940-1960
- 5 3 Dandridge, Vivian, photographs inscribed to her, circa 1939-1950
- 5 4 Dandridge, Vivian, printed material, 1991
- 5 5 Dandridge, Vivian, school certificates, 1933-1934
- 5 6 Mays, Billy, clippings and sheet music, 1952-1960
- 5 10 Mitchell, Jimmie, birth certificate, 1943
- 5 11 Mitchell, Jimmie, correspondence and financial records, 1965-1999
- 5 12 Mitchell, Jimmie, death certificate, 2004
- 11 1 Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1960-1985
- 5 13 Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1960-1985 [loose photographs]

7	-	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, 1973-1977
5	14	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, 1973-1977 [loose photographs]
11	2	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1975
8	1	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1980
12	1	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1985 [1]
12	2	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1985 [2]
5	15	Mitchell, Jimmie, photograph album, circa 1985 [loose photographs]
5	16	Mitchell, Jimmie, wallet, undated [1]
5	17	Mitchell, Jimmie, wallet, undated [2]
5	7	Nicholas, Harold, correspondence and financial records, 1944-1947
5	8	Nicholas, Harold, photographs, circa 1930-1950
5	9	Nicholas, Harolyn, birth certificate, 1943
5	18	Other performers, photographs, circa 1940-1960
5	19	Souvenir photographs and postcards, undated
5	22	Unidentified, annual planner, 1964
5	20	Wallace, Emmett, folder, undated
5	21	Wallace, Dorothea, report card, 1980
10	4	World Wide Records Hollywood (Los Angeles, California), posters, undated
