

# **HOLIDAY, BILLIE, 1915-1959.**

## **Billie Holiday collection, 1953-1981**

Emory University  
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### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Holiday, Billie, 1915-1959.  
**Title:** Billie Holiday collection, 1953-1981  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 1035  
**Extent:** 1 linear ft. (2 boxes), 13 oversized papers (OP)  
**Abstract:** Collection of materials relating to the personal life and career of African American blues singer Billie Holiday, her husband Louis McKay, and her estate.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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### **Administrative Information**

#### **Restrictions on Access**

OP12 is restricted for preservation reasons. Researchers must use photocopies in OP13 instead

#### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

#### **Source**

Purchase, 2005, with subsequent additions.

#### **Citation**

[after identification of item(s)], Billie Holiday collection, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

#### **Processing**

Processed by Elizabeth Russey, January 25, 2006.

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## **Collection Description**

### **Biographical Note**

Billie Holiday (1915-1959), an African American blues and jazz singer, was born Eleanora Holiday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 7, 1915. The daughter of Clarence Holiday and Sadie Fagan, Holiday began singing in the early 1930s and was discovered by John Hammond in 1933 at a Harlem jazz club. Her career included performances with Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Artie Shaw. Holiday recorded on the Commodore, Columbia, and Decca record labels; her most famous recordings include "Strange Fruit," "Gloomy Sunday," and "Lover Man." She also appeared in the film *New Orleans* in 1946 and toured extensively. Billie Holiday had a series of husbands, marrying James Monroe in 1941, Joe Guy in 1945, and Louis McKay in 1956. She died July 17, 1959 in New York.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection contains materials relating to the personal life and career of Billie Holiday, her husband Louis McKay, and her estate from 1953-1981. The collection includes correspondence, legal documents, financial statements, and photographs. The first section of the collection contains documents directly related to Billie Holiday, including some of her correspondence, notes she wrote concerning performances, manuscript music scores, photographs, tax returns, and legal documents. Of particular interest is a prescription for an experimental drug to help with her heroin addiction. The second section of the collection contains materials created after Holiday's death concerning the management of her estate. The majority of the correspondence and documents relate to legal proceedings regarding royalty payments. One of the correspondents is African American civil and women's rights activist Florynce Kennedy. The final section of the collection contains the personal papers of Louis McKay, who primarily managed the Eleanora McKay (Billie Holiday) estate. His correspondence reflects his efforts to maintain copyright to her recordings and performances. This section also includes material related to Louis McKay's personal life and his business ventures.

### **Arrangement Note**

Arranged by record type.

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## Container List

### Billie Holiday

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Addresses
OP1		Album cover, Billie Holiday, Commodore Records, undated
1	2	Correspondence, 1954-1958
1	3	Contracts, 1953-1959
1	4	Legal proceedings, Gowns vs. Holiday, 1953
1	5	Legal proceedings, Tshernoff vs. Fagan and McKay, 1958
1	6	Lyrics and recording notes, undated
OP2		Manuscript music score, "Deed I Do," [saxophone part]
OP3		Manuscript music score, "Don't Worry About Me," [complete]
OP4		Manuscript music score, "Lover Come Back," [complete]
OP5		Manuscript music score, "My Man," [fragment]
OP6		Manuscript music score, "Nice Work," [1st trombone part]
OP7		Manuscript music score, "Too Marvelous" [1st trumpet part]
OP8		Manuscript music score, "Too Marvelous for Words," [complete]
OP9		Manuscript music score, "Travelin' Light," [piano part]
OP10		Manuscript music score, "Violets," [complete]
1	7	Newspaper clippings, 1955
OP12		Newspaper clippings, 1959-1960 [RESTRICTED; see OP13]
OP13		Newspaper clippings, 1959-1960 [photocopies of OP12]
1	8	Permissions for "Don't Explain, 1955-1960
1	9	Photograph: "The Clerks of the Charles Hotel, To the Sweetest Lady on Earth," undated
OP11		Photograph: Holiday, Billie, undated [portrait]
1	10	Photographs: Holiday, Billie, undated
1	11	Prescription script, 1959
1	12	Receipts and expenses, 1955-1957
1	13	Tax returns, 1953, 1955

### Eleanora McKay Estate

1	14	Billie Holiday memorial arrangements, 1960
1	15	Billie Holiday Memorial Jazz Tribute, 1962
1	16	Correspondence, Ellis, Emil K., 1959-1969
1	17	Correspondence, Hayes, L. Mifflin, 1969-1980
1	18	Correspondence, Kennedy, Florynce, 1961-1965, undated
1	19	Correspondence, Sperry, Weinberg, and Kallman, 1967
1	20	Correspondence, Watson, Carter, Smith, and Rhone, 1960

- 1 21 Correspondence, Wilkes, Donald E., 1959
- 1 22 Financial statements, 1961-1977
- 1 23 Legal expenses, 1964, 1979
- 1 24 Legal proceedings, McKay / Holiday Estate vs. Columbia Broadcasting, 1962
- 1 25 Legal proceedings, Surrogate's Court documents, 1959-1962
- 1 26 Legal proceedings, fragments
- 1 27 Newspaper clippings, 1960-1980
- 1 28 Performance / copyright permissions, 1962-1972
- 1 29 Royalty statements, 1962-1980

### **Louis McKay**

- 2 1 Certificates of publication, 1962 [for musical works by Louis McKay]
  - 2 2 Correspondence, McKay, Louis [incoming], 1961-1979
  - 2 3 Correspondence, McKay, Louis [outgoing], 1961-1969
  - 2 4 Correspondence, McKay, Louis [outgoing], undated
  - 2 5 Correspondence, McKay, Louis III, 1981
  - 2 6 Empire State Agency business certificate, 1966
  - 2 7 Legal proceedings [personal], 1962-1973
  - 2 8 Marriage certificate, Louis McKay and Mae Baker, October 16, 1966
  - 2 9 Newspaper clippings, 1962-1964
  - 2 10 Notes, undated [includes notes from McKay's lawyer Florynce Kennedy]
  - 2 11 Nubian Artists Bureau certificate of incorporation, 1963
  - 2 12 Personal management contracts, 1960-1963
  - 2 13 Photograph, di Milo, Cardella, undated
  - 2 14 Photograph, Greene, Laura, undated
  - 2 15 Photograph, Hollins, Helena, undated
  - 2 16 Photograph, Two Hot Coles, undated
  - 2 17 Photographs, unidentified
  - 2 18 Play script, "Lady Sings the Blues," photocopy of typescript [fragment, pgs. 99-105, 129-142]
  - 2 19 Receipts and invoices, 1960, undated [includes bill for Holiday's final hospital stay]
  - 2 20 Will, undated [photocopy]
  - 2 21 Writings [unpublished], undated
  - 2 22 Fragments and unidentified
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