SPIVEY, VICTORIA.
Victoria Spivey papers, circa 1960-1976

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
Atlanta, GA 30322
404-727-6887
rose.library@emory.edu

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Spivey, Victoria.
Title: Victoria Spivey papers, circa 1960-1976
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 809
Extent: 7.75 linear feet (17 boxes), 1 oversized papers box (OP), and 1 bound volume (BV)
Abstract: Papers of Victoria Spivey, African American blues artist, motion picture actress, and owner of Spivey Records.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Special restrictions apply: Due to the fragile nature of some of the materials, researchers are required to use photocopies.

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Printed or manuscript music in this collection that is still under copyright protection and is not in the Public Domain may not be photocopied or photographed. Researchers must provide written authorization from the copyright holder to request copies of these materials.

Related Materials in Other Repositories
Leonard Kunstadt papers and audio recordings, Institute of Jazz Studies Repository, Rutgers University.

Source
Purchase, 1997 with subsequent additions

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

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
Victoria Spivey, October 15, 1906 - October 3, 1976, African American blues artist, motion picture actress, and owner of Spivey Records, was born in Houston, Texas to Grant Spivey, a musician, and Addie Smith, a nurse. Her sisters Leona, Elton "Za Zu" and Addie "Sweet Peas" were also blues artists. She married four times; her husbands included Ruben Floyd, Billy Adams, and Len Kunstadt.

Spivey began her career playing first in Houston, Texas then later St. Louis, Missouri in the vaudeville and blues scene. At the age of 20 her first record, Black Snake Blues, was recorded in 1926 with Okeh Records. She recorded and performed in New York, Chicago, and Missouri through the 1930s with a range of prominent artists including Louis Armstrong, Lonnie Johnson, Lucille Hegamin, Dallas Tan Town Topics, Hunter's Serenaders, and Blind Lemon Jefferson. In 1929 she appeared in the first all-African American musical film, Hallelujah! During this era she was recorded on nine records. In her performances she was a vocalist, as well as a ukelele and piano player.

After taking a semi-retirement in the 1950s, Spivey returned to performing in the United States and internationally in Europe and in 1962 began her own record company, Spivey Records. She used this company as a vehicle to resurrect older blues artists as well as introduce new artists, including Luther Johnson, Lucille Span, Olive Brown, and the first recording of folk artist Bob Dylan. She also recorded some of her own music during this period and occasionally performed on television. By the time of her death in 1976 she had attained copyrights on the lyrics of at least seventy-five songs.

Scope and Content Note
The collection consists of papers of Victoria Spivey and those gathered about Spivey by her last husband Len Kunstadt from ca. 1960-1976. The papers include personal, business, and biographical documents. The collection mainly documents the resurgence of her singing career and her involvement in Spivey Records.

Arrangement Note
Organized into four series: (1) Personal papers, (2) Business records (3) Biographical materials, and (4) Restricted damaged materials.
Description of Series

Series 1: Personal papers
Series 2: Business records
Series 3: Biographical materials
Series 4: Restricted damaged materials
Series 1
Personal papers
Boxes 1-4; OP1 and BV1

Scope and Content Note
The personal papers contain her music, a small collection of her correspondence, writings by and about Spivey, and a few photographs. The lyrics include drafts, lead sheets, and copyrights of her published work after 1960, in addition to much that was never published. The lyrics are organized by titled and untitled lyrics. The titled works are arranged alphabetically, the untitled works are arranged alphabetically by the first word on the page. Many works are undated so they may date prior to 1960. Other writings by her include a musical play and submissions to Record Research.

Arrangement Note
Arranged by type of record.

Music

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3 4  Untitled Lyrics, Victoria Spivey, First word, A-F
3 5  Untitled Lyrics, Victoria Spivey, First word, G-L
3 6  Untitled Lyrics, Victoria Spivey, First word, M-R
3 7  Untitled Lyrics, Victoria Spivey, First word, S-Z
OP1 2  Untitled Lyrics, "Down here in deep valley," Victoria Spivey, Oversized
3 8  Titled Lyrics, Other Artists
3 9  Sheet Music, Other Artists
3 10  Playlists
3 11  Record, Victoria Spivey, "Turpentine/Buddy Tate"
3 12  Scrapbook, Lyrics
3 13  Scrapbook, Music for Blue Horizon

**Correspondence**
4 1  Personal correspondence
4 2  Greeting cards
4 3  Post cards

**Writings by Victoria Spivey**
4 4  Play, "Riding the Waves"
4 5  Play, Notes on
4 6  Columns and column drafts

**Writings about Victoria Spivey**
4 7  Article drafts
4 8  Articles
OP1 3  Berendt, J.E., *Jazz Kalender 1965*
4 9  Obituaries
BV1  Scrapbook

**Photographs**
4 10  Spivey, Victoria
4 11  Others

**Documents**
4 12  Death certificate, 1976
4 13  Passport
4 14  Negro Actors Guile, membership card, 1975

**Ephemera**
4 15  Victoria Spivey's teeth
Series 2
Business records
Boxes 5-10 and OP1

Scope and Content Note
Her business records include her business correspondence, record sales, and royalty records. The business correspondence reflects the international scope of her late career. The correspondence is therefore separated into domestic and international correspondence and reflects her interactions with companies and people.

Arrangement Note
Arranged by type of record.

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**Series 3**  
**Biographical materials**  
**Boxes 11-14**

**Scope and Content Note**  
The series contains biographical materials generally collected by Spivey's husband Len Kunstadt. The first grouping contains notes taken on Spivey's life organized around particular periods. Kunstadt's notes depict events in Spivey's life from 1906-1969. The second grouping contains subject files on people and places. His methodical collections of newspaper citations relating to Spivey are also included in this series.

**Arrangement Note**  
Biographical notes are arranged in chronological order, biographical subject files are arranged in alphabetical order.

**Biographical Notes**

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Series 4  
Restricted damaged materials  
Boxes 15-17  

Scope and Content Note  
The last series of the papers contains items that are extremely fragile and therefore have been restricted from public access is restricted. Many of the documents in this collection had been burnt in a fire. Each item has been photocopied, and the photocopy remains in the original location. The damaged items can be accessed if the researcher must look at the original item because the photocopy is unclear.

Arrangement Note  
Arranged by original box and folder number.

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