

7-1-1999

W. C. (William Christopher) Handy Collection

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Recommended Citation

Trinity College, "W. C. (William Christopher) Handy Collection" (1999). *Watkinson Manuscripts Finding Aids*. 41.
https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/watkinson_finding_aid/41

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W. C. (WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER) HANDY COLLECTION, 1941-1958

Summary

This collection consists of manuscripts and other items from the library of American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) editor Ted Livingston relating to W.C. Handy (1873-1958). Handy had a major influence on 20th century American popular music by being the first to translate the blues into a compositional form. His "Memphis Blues" (1912) was the first blues to be published and printed. His "St. Louis Blues" achieved great success and is one of the most recorded songs ever written. For this reason, Livingston made it the subject of a brief essay, vetted by Handy, for an ASCAP series of booklets on stories behind songs. Besides drafts of this essay and correspondence relating to it, the collection contains a number of items of biographical interest concerning Handy.

List of Folders

Folder 1: Background on Handy, the blues, and the purchase of the collection.

Folder 2: Correspondence relating to Ted Livingston's account of the origin of the "St. Louis Blues":

a. Ted Livingston, ASCAP, to Handy, typed letter (copy). 4 December 1941. 1 p.
Re: Enclosing a draft account of the origin of the "St. Louis Blues."

b. Handy to Ted Livingston, typed letter signed, 6 December 1941. 2 p. on 2 l.
Re: Comments on Livingston's draft account of the origin of the "St. Louis Blues." Handy also encloses a copy of his typed letter (3 December 1941. 2 p. on 2 l.) to Ted Friend of *The Daily Mirror*, rebutting Woody Herman's claim the blues began in New Orleans while omitting all reference to Handy.

c. Ted Livingston, ASCAP, to Handy, typed letter (copy). 26 December 1941.
1 p. Re: Apologizes to Handy for having been "so negligent in sending ... a copy of the 'ST. LOUIS BLUES' supplement."

d. Handy to Ted Livingston, 30 December 1941 1 p. on 1 l.
Re: Acknowledges "with thanks receipt of the 'St. Louis Blues' flyer."

Folder 3: Drafts with manuscript corrections and final print version of Ted Livingston's "St Louis Blues." Includes one [First Draft], and two Second Drafts with corrections in the hand of Handy and Livingston (?), a recording history of the "St. Louis Blues" and other Handy songs, and two copies of the final print version of the piece, one numbered "9" and other "13."

Folder 4: Irma Lou Handy and W. C. Handy to Carol Bridgeman, ASCAP, type letter signed, 11 January 1954. 1 p. Re: Making New Years resolutions for 1954 and appearing on "LIFE BEGINS AT 80" ; also thanks Bridgeman for Christmas card.

Folder 5: News clippings (copies) relating to a review in *The New York Times* of Handy's autobiography (21 July 1943), Handy's accident in November 1943 and visit by Duke Ellington, his marriage to Irma Louise Logan (1 January 1954), along with originals of *The Handy News* (Nov. 17, 1956), and a "Eulogy to William C. Handy" by Paul Cunningham, ASCAP President (12 April 1958).

Folder 6: Lazarus A. Aaronson's "I See Tho My Eyes Are Closed, dedicated to W. C. Handy" (New York: Handy Brothers Music Co., Inc., 1951), signed by W.C. Handy.

Folder 7: Three W.C. Handy Christmas cards.

Folder 8: Ted Livingston's ASCAP booklet files of stories behind songs, including the "St. Louis Blues."