Claude Williams Papers, circa 1920-2005

NMAH.AC.0909
Adrienne Cain
2008
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Claude Williams Papers
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0909
Date: circa 1920-2005
Extent: 1 electronic discs (cd)
        13 cassette tapes
        4.66 Cubic feet (14 boxes, 1 oversized folder)
Creator: Williams, Claude, 1908-2004
         Fouse-Williams, Blanche Y.
Language: English
         Some materials are in French.
Summary: Business and personal papers, photographs, and audio recordings of Claude "Fiddler" Williams, an award-winning jazz fiddler. Although Williams played music for almost a century the materials in this collection date largely from 1970 to 2005.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated by Claude Williams's widow, Blanche Y. Fouse-Williams, in 2005.

Separated Materials

Artifacts donated to the Museum's Division of Culture and the Arts include a suit and violin. See accession numbers: 2005.3105 and 2007.3020.

Processing Information


Preferred Citation

Claude Williams Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Researchers must handle unprotected photographs with gloves. Researchers must use reference copies of audio-visual materials. When no reference copy exists, the
Archives Center staff will produce reference copies on an "as needed" basis, as resources allow.

Technical Access: Do not use original materials when available on reference audio tapes.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Reproduction permission from Archives Center: fees for commercial use. All duplication requests must be reviewed and approved by Archives Center staff.

Biographical / Historical

Claude "Fiddler" Williams, 1908-2004, was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, the son of a blacksmith. His musical gifts developed at a very early age, and he quickly became adept at the guitar, banjo, mandolin and cello, learning mostly by ear, without formal training. After hearing the jazz violinist Joe Venuti, the violin became his instrument of choice, and it remained so for the rest of his life. He migrated to Kansas City in 1927 and toured with several territory bands. Additionally Williams toured with the Twelve Clouds of Joy and the Cole Brothers, and in 1936, joined Count Basie's band as the first guitarist. After he was fired from Count Basie's band because John Hammond thought Williams's guitar solos were taking too much attention away from Basie, he went back to the violin (or "fiddle" as he preferred to call it) and focused exclusively on it for the rest of his life. Later he started his own band and toured with several jazz groups working for a short time with the Works Progress Administration (WPA). His band appeared at the Monterey Jazz Festival, the Nice Jazz Festival, and the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folk Life. Williams received numerous honors and awards, including induction into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, a proclamation from the city of Kansas City, and a 1998 National Heritage Fellowship which included a $10,000 award. President Bill Clinton invited him to perform at one of the parties celebrating his first inauguration. Williams continued to tour and perform until well into his nineties. He also gave instruction at Mark O'Connor's annual fiddle camp to young violinists. Mr. Williams died in April 2004.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the later life and career of jazz violinist Claude "Fiddler" Williams. Materials include correspondence, photographs, unpublished writings, awards, business records, financial records, programs and a few music manuscripts. There is one scrapbook and several audio recordings. There are also an autographed poster from 1997 honoring five inductees to the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, including Claude Williams, Merle Haggard, Patti Page, Woody Guthrie and Eddie Burris. While there are some materials from Williams's youth, the vast majority of the collection dates from 1970. Williams's second wife, Blanche Y. Fouse-Williams, was vigilant about saving his papers. She also managed his career for the last few years of his life. This accounts for the increased volume of materials documenting his later years. Materials generally are arranged in chronological order within series and subseries.

Series 1, Business Records, 1973-2005, undated, is divided into seven subseries and includes business records, information relating to tours and performances, awards and certificates, business and personal correspondence, financial papers, articles and newspaper clippings, and biographical information.

Subseries 1, Events, 1977-2004, undated, includes contracts, copies of newspaper clippings, performance programs, brochures, ticket stubs, travel itineraries, travel receipts, correspondence, materials regarding his work as a fiddle teacher, advertisements for performances, a certificate of recognition, and napkins.
saved from a Washington Education Television Association (WETA) performance at the White House in 1998. Materials are arranged in chronological order.


Subseries 3, Awards and Certificates, 1978-2002, contains awards and certificates of appreciation from the Steamboat Delta Queen, Annual Black Musicians Conference, Kansas City Chapter of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors, and the Manhattan School of Music, as well as an invitation to a reception honoring Kansas City Jazz musicians from the Consul General of Japan. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Subseries 4, Correspondence, 1975-2004, consists of information relating to travel arrangements, tours, remuneration, music recordings, press kits, contracts, public television performances, involvement with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as Williams's Smithsonian Folkways recording. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Subseries 5, Financial Papers, 1990-2005, includes information about travel and payment, hotel bills and receipts, invoices for performances, music recordings sales, royalty statements and copies of checks. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Subseries 6, Press, 1973--005, undated, includes magazines, newspaper clippings and articles, about Williams's performances and music, appearances and jazz festivals, as well as the Kansas City Jazz scene. Magazine titles include Kansas City Magazine, Missouri Alumnus, The Masters Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, Jazz Ambassador Magazine, Kansas City Ambassador to Jazz, The Mississippi Rag, Fiddler Magazine, Jazz News, Jazz Times, Living Blues, Blues Access, and Kansas City. Materials are arranged by type and then in chronological order.

Subseries 7, Music, 1989-1995, undated, contains thirteen audio tape recordings, one CD, sheet music and set lists of music performed by Williams. There is an audio recording of Black and Blue: A Musical Revue, a Folk Master performance at Carnegie Hall. Williams's work with James Chirillo, an appearance on Birdflight, as well as recordings of live and studio performances are also included among these materials. There is a copy of Williams's CD Swingtime in New York and an interview from 1992. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Series 2, Personal Papers, 1978--005, undated, is divided into two subseries and contains letters, cards, postcards, invitations, copies of email, and requests for information and interviews. Most of the correspondence was addressed to Williams but there are materials that were sent to Blanche Williams. The correspondence is generally from fans, friends and family.

Subseries 1, Correspondence, 1978-2005, undated, consists of birthday cards from school age children, postcards, copies of newspaper clippings, White House and other government correspondence, congratulations or birthday wishes, as well as personal correspondence from friends inquiring about Williams's health and well-being. Also included is a draft for a chapter in a book on Claude Williams's contributions to jazz. Requests relating to research about Williams are also included. Materials are arranged in chronological order. Materials are arranged first by type followed by general correspondence in chronological order.

Subseries 2, Miscellaneous, undated, contains ephemera, autographs, affiliates list, well-wishes to Blanche Williams, a funeral program, mailing lists, lists of affiliated organizations, and a Count Bassie autograph.

Series 3, Photographs, 1977-2004, undated, includes personal and professional photographic prints and negatives of Williams. Subjects include performances and festivals, headshots and publicity, images of
other musicians, family, friends, and posters with photographs created for his funeral. The majority of these photographs are of performances. Materials are arranged by subject.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three series.

**Series 1, Business Records, 1973-2005, undated**

Subseries 1.1, Events, 1977-2004, undated

Subseries 1.2, Itineraries, 1990-2001

Subseries 1.3, Awards and Certificates, 1978-2002

Subseries 1.4, Correspondence, 1975-2004

Subseries 1.5, Financial Papers, 1990-2005

Subseries 1.6, Press, 1973-2005, undated

Subseries 1.7, Music; 1989-1995, undated

**Series 2, Personal Papers, 1978-2005, undated**

Subseries 2.1, Correspondence, 1978-2005, undated

Subseries 2.2, Miscellaneous, undated

**Series 3, Photographs, 1977-2004, undated**

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

- **Subjects:**
  - Jazz -- 20th century -- United States
  - Jazz musicians -- United States
  - Music -- 20th century -- United States
  - Musicians -- United States
  - Violinists

- **Types of Materials:**
  - Articles
  - Audiotapes
  - Awards
  - Business records -- 20th century
  - Financial records
  - Letters (correspondence) -- 20th century.
  - Manuscripts -- Music -- 20th century
  - Photographs -- 2000-2010
Photographs -- 20th century
Posters -- 1950-2000
Programs
Scrapbooks
Container Listing


Subseries 1.1: Itineraries, 1990-2001
Box 5, Folder 6  1990 - 1997
Box 5, Folder 7  1998 - 2001
Image(s)

Subseries 1.2: Awards and Certificates, 1978-2002
Box 5, Folder 8  1978-2002

Subseries 1.3: Correspondence, 1975-2004
Box 5, Folder 9  1975-1989
Box 5, Folder 10  1990-1994
Box 6, Folder 1  1995-1999
Box 6, Folder 2  2000-2002
Box 6, Folder 3  2003-2004

Subseries 1.5: Financial Papers, 1990s-2005
Box 6, Folder 4  1990s
Box 6, Folder 5  2000-2005

Subseries 1.5: Press, 1973-2005, undated
Box 6, Folder 6  Jazz Magazines, 1981-1991
Box 6, Folder 7  Jazz Magazines, 1992-1996
Image(s)
Box 7, Folder 1  Jazz Magazines, 1997-1999
Box 7, Folder 2  Jazz Magazines, 2000-2005
Box 9, Folder 5  Newspaper clippings and articles, 1973-1984
Box 9, Folder 6  Newspaper clippings and articles, 1985-1989
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 7, Folder 3</th>
<th>Newspaper clippings and articles, 1990-1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 4</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings and articles, 1999-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 5</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings and articles, 2003-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9, Folder 9</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings and articles, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 6</td>
<td>Press releases, press kits, and related items, 1979-1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subseries 1.6: Music, 1989-1995, undated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 12, Folder 1</th>
<th><em>Black and Blue</em> musical revue recorded in New York, 1989 November and 1989 December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 2</td>
<td>Folk Masters at Carnegie Hall, 1990 December 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 3</td>
<td>Duet with James Chirillo including interviews and advertisement, Zoo Bar, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1991 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 4</td>
<td>Interview for the public radio production <em>George Morrison: Colorado Jazz Pioneer</em> 1992 April 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 5</td>
<td>Live recording with Frank Smith, Byran Hicks and Gayland Prince, Zoo Bar, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1992 May 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 6</td>
<td>Live recording with Frank Smith, Byran Hicks and Gayland Prince, Zoo Bar, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1992 May 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 7</td>
<td>Live recording with Frank Smith, Byran Hicks and Gayland Prince, Zoo Bar, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1992 May 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 8</td>
<td>Studio recording, tape one, 1994 September 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 9</td>
<td>Studio recording, tape two, 1994 September 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 10</td>
<td>Recording with Phil Schaap, <em>Birdflight Radio Show, WKCR</em>, 1994 September 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 11</td>
<td>Fiddle camp sessions, 1995 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9, Folder 10</td>
<td><em>Swing Time in New York</em>, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 12</td>
<td>Recording with Warren Chaisson, Dmitry Shapko and Gail Allen, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12, Folder 13</td>
<td>Recording of various songs, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 7</td>
<td>Set and song lists, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, Folder 8</td>
<td>Sheet music, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subseries 2.1: Correspondence, 1978-2005, undated

Box 14, Folder 1  Christmas card from Blanche Y. Fouse-Williams, 1979
Box 8, Folder 1  Fan mail, 2001 - 2002
Box 8, Folder 2  Greeting cards from elementary school children, 1997
Box 8, Folder 41702 Thank you cards from junior high school children, 1997

Image(s)

Box 8, Folder 5  Correspondence, 1978-1997
Box 8, Folder 6  Correspondence, 1998
Box 8, Folder 7  Correspondence, 1999
Box 8, Folder 8  Correspondence, 1999
Box 9, Folder 1  Correspondence, 2000-2001
Box 9, Folder 2  Correspondence, 2002-2005
Box 9, Folder 3  Correspondence, undated

Subseries 2.2: Miscellaneous, undated

Box 9, Folder 4  Ephemera and list of affiliates

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Series 3: Photographs, 1920-2004, undated

Box 10  
Image(s)

Box 10  
Headshots and publicity photos, undated

Box 11, Folder 1  
Negatives, undated

Box 11  
Events and performances, undated  
Image(s)

Box 11  
Image(s)

Box 11  
Headshots and publicity photos of other musicians, undated

Box 11  
Personal Photos, April 1990, 1990

Box 11  
Personal Photos, undated  
Image(s)

Oversize O/S 1  
Posters with photographs created for funeral, 2004

Series 4: Events, 1977-2004, undated

Box 1, Folder 1  
1977-1979

Box 13, Folder 1  
1979-1989

Box 1, Folder 2  
1980-1981 April

Box 1, Folder 3  
1981 May-1984

Box 1, Folder 4  
1985-1987

Box 1, Folder 5  
1988-1989

Box 1, Folder 6  
1990-1991

Box 1, Folder 7  
1992-1993

Box 1, Folder 8  
America's Reunion on the Mall, 1993 January

Box 2, Folder 1  
1994

Box 2, Folder 2  
1995 January-1995 June

Box 2, Folder 3  
1995 July
Box 2, Folder 4  1995 August -1995 September
Box 2, Folder 5  1995 October-1996 April
Box 2, Folder 6  1996 May-1996 December
Box 2, Folder 7  1997
Box 2, Folder 8  Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame Induction, 1997 April
               Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 1  1998-1999
Box 3, Folder 2  Washington Education Television Association (WETA) performance at the White
               House, 1998
Box 3, Folder 3  National Heritage Fellowship, 1998
               Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 4  National Heritage Fellowship, 1998
               Image(s)
Box 13, Folder 3 Ninety Birthday Celebration, 1998 February
Box 3, Folder 5  Charlie Parker Symposium, 1999
Box 3, Folder 6  Topeka Jazz Festival, 1999
Box 3, Folder 7  First Night, Columbia, 1999 December 31-2000 January 1
Box 3, Folder 8  2000 January-2000 May
Box 4, Folder 1  2000 June-2000 August
Box 4, Folder 2  2000 September-2000 December
Box 4, Folder 3  Kansas City Blues and Jazz Festival, 2000
Box 13, Folder 2  1990-2000
Box 4, Folder 4  2001 January-2001 June
Box 4, Folder 5  Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival, 2001
               Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 6  Indiana Fiddler's Gathering Incorporated, 2001
Box 4, Folder 7  Lincoln Center, A Midsummer Night's Swing, 2001
Box 4, Folder 8  2001 July-2001 September
Box 5, Folder 1  2001 October-2002 August
### Image(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 5, Folder 2</th>
<th>2002 September-2003 July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 3</td>
<td>2003 August-2003 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 4</td>
<td>Funeral and memorials, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 5</td>
<td>Ephemera, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 13, Folder 4</td>
<td>Undated materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9, Folder 7</td>
<td>Information about postponed or canceled performances, 1996-1998, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9, Folder 8</td>
<td>Miscellaneous papers, notes, and ephemera, 1979, 1990, 1994, 1995, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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