



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Rex Stewart Papers

NMAH.AC.0424

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1996

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Rex Stewart Papers
Date:	circa 1875-1890s, 1924-1988
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0424
Creator:	Stewart, Rex (William), Jr., 1907-1967 (cornetist) (Author)
Extent:	2.4 Cubic feet (5 boxes)
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Mrs. Claire Gordon, Stewart's companion, co-writer, and recipient of his estate, donated the Rex Stewart Papers to the National Museum of American History on January 3, 1992 and July 18, 1994.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Anne Kennedy Collection, 1959-1967 (AC 506)

Duke Ellington Collection, 1927-1982 (AC 301)

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Jeremy Nordmoe, Michael Randers-Pehrson, and Scott Schwartz, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Rex Stewart Papers, ca. 1875-1890s, 1924-1988, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Reproduction fees for commercial use. All rights transferred to Museum in Deed of Gift.

Biographical / Historical

Rex William Stewart Jr.(1907-1967) was born in Philadelphia on February 22, 1907. He received musical inspiration from his parents, who played piano and sang in both religious and social settings, and from his maternal grandmother, Angelina Denby Johnson, who wrote poetry and hymns. Stewart took up the cornet as a teenager, playing in several small time bands in Washington D.C. and New York. His first big break came in 1926 when he was invited to join the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra as a replacement for Louis Armstrong.

However, he did not become a regular member of the orchestra until 1928. Stewart remained with Fletcher Henderson until 1933 when he unsuccessfully tried to form his own band. In 1934, he worked briefly for Louis Russell before being invited to join the Duke Ellington Orchestra. As Ellington's lead cornetist, Stewart became widely known for his unique conversational style of playing and experimentation with half-valve effects. He also co-composed several numbers with Ellington including "Boy Meets Horn" and "Morning Glory". In addition, Stewart led small-group recording sessions during the late thirties with Ellington and his fellow sidemen, including Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney.

Rex Stewart left Ellington's orchestra in 1945 and briefly played with Jazz at the Philharmonic. He toured Europe as a soloist and leader of several bands between 1947 and 1951. It was also during this period that Stewart began to lecture and write about jazz. In the fifties and sixties, he entered into semi-retirement in order to concentrate on his writing. Stewart continued to perform periodically with numerous small jazz ensembles on the festival circuit. He was instrumental in the organization and recording of the Fletcher Henderson Reunion band in 1958 and 1959. Stewart died on September 7, 1967 in Los Angeles. A collection of his essays, *Jazz Masters of the 30's*, was published posthumously in 1972 by Macmillan Publishing Company.

Scope and Contents

The Rex Stewart Papers consist of book manuscripts, scrapbooks, photographs, correspondence, genealogical records, newspaper clippings, periodicals, and ephemera materials that document the life and career of Rex Stewart, as well as the history of jazz from the perspective of one who witnessed first-hand the genre's "golden era". The collection is organized into four series: Series 1: Book Manuscripts, circa 1950-1972; Series 2: Scrapbooks and Photo Albums, c.1930-1959; Series 3: Photographs, c.1875 and circa 1920-1967; and Series 4: Memorabilia, 1880-1905 and 1924-1988.

Of particular interest are the book manuscripts that were produced from the 1950's until Stewart's death in 1967. These document Stewart's impressions of and interactions with such jazz legends as Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. Interesting photographic images include "A Great Day in Harlem", taken in 1958, portraits and candid shots of Rex Stewart, Duke Ellington, Benny Carter and other jazz greats, photographs autographed by Rex Stewart, a portrait of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra at Danceland, tintypes of Stewart's family, a photo album and scrapbook documenting Stewart's 1948 tour in Berlin, Germany, and a photo album containing candid photographs of Ellington and Stewart's family. Other materials of interest include Stewart's cabaret card from 1959-1962 and some Stewart family genealogy records from 1880 to 1905.

Overall, the Rex Stewart Papers exist as a unique look into the creative process and life of a leading jazz figure of the 1930's through the 1960's. Stewart's colorful and poetic writing allows the reader to experience first-hand the excitement and honesty of jazz.

Arrangement

the collection is arranged into four series.

Series 1:

Series 2:

Series 3:

Series 4:

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Cornet music (Jazz) -- 1920-1970
- Jazz
- Music -- 20th century
- Musicians -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

- Manuscripts -- 1920-1970
- Photograph albums -- 1920-1970
- Photographs -- 20th century
- Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Names:

- Ellington, Duke, 1899-1974
- Henderson, Fletcher, 1897-1952

Container Listing

Series 1: Manuscripts, circa 1950-1972

Scope and Contents: Series one contains essays written by Rex Stewart and published in 1972 as *Jazz Masters of the 30's*. The hand written manuscripts, edited type copies, and photostatic copies are unarranged, with the exception of the essay "Stompin' at the Savoy", which is located at the end of this series. The current order of the documents may provide insight into Stewart's work patterns or processes.

Box 1, Folder 1-6	Jazz Masters of the Thirties, circa 1950-1972
Box 2, Folder 1-10	Jazz Masters of the Thirties, circa 1950-1972
Box 2, Folder 11	"Stompin' At the Savoy" by Rex Stewart, undated

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Series 2: Scrapbooks and Photo Albums, circa 1930-1959

Scope and Contents: Series two consists of two scrapbooks and one photo album that contain photographs, newsclippings, and other ephemera documenting the performing career and personal life of Rex Stewart. Due to the fragile condition of these materials, please consult the Archives Center staff about handling them for research.

Box 6 Scrapbook, 1938-1959

Box 4 Scrapbook - Rex Stewart in Berlin, Germany, July 1948

Box 4 Photo Album, circa 1930-1950

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Series 3: Photographs, circa 1875 and circa 1920-1967

Scope and Contents: Series three contains both candid and publicity black and white and color prints of various sizes. Documenting Stewarts performing and personal life, they were not used in his book. They are arranged alphabetically by subject heading. Oversized photographs are located at the end of the collection but are listed alphabetically within the container list.

Box 3, Folder 1	"A Great Day in Harlem", 1958
Box 3, Folder 2	Bigard, Barney, Benny Carter and Rex Stewart at the Doll House, circa 1965
Box 3, Folder 3	Candid, circa 1930-1967
Box 3, Folder 4	Ellington, Duke and Orchestra, 1934-1945
Box 3, Folder 5	Foreign Tours, circa 1947-1966
Box 3, Folder 6	Henderson, Fletcher and Orchestra at Danceland, circa 1926-1933
Box 5, Folder 2	Johnson, Angelina Ricketts Denby, circa 1875
Box 5, Folder 1	Johnson, George, undated
Box 3, Folder 7	Miscellaneous, undated
Box 3, Folder 8	Publicity, 1958-1965
Box 3, Folder 9	Stewart Family, circa 1920-1967
Box 3, Folder 10	Stewart, Rex in Berlin, July 1948
Box 5, Folder 4	Stewart, Rex - portraits, circa 1958-1959
Box 5, Folder 3	Stewart, Rex - negatives, circa 1940-1967
Box 3, Folder 11	Stewart, Rex with friends at Eddie Condon's, 1958
Box 3, Folder 12	Stewart, Rex with other musicians, circa 1940-1967

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Series 4: Memorabilia, 1880-1905 and 1924-1988

Scope and Contents: Series four contains correspondence, genealogical materials, newsclippings, periodicals, concert programs and ephemera arranged alphabetically by media type. Oversized materials are located at the end of the collection but are listed alphabetically within the container list.

Box 5, Folder 8	Album Cover "The Big 18: Live Echos of the Swinging Bands", undated
Box 3, Folder 13	Biographical Information on Rex Stewart, 1960-1988
Box 3, Folder 14	Cabaret Card, 1959-1962
Box 3, Folder 15	Calling Cards, Name Tags, and Other Ephemera, 1955-1966
Box 5, Folder 5	Certificate of Merit, 1962
Box 3, Folder 16	Concert Programs, 1948-1965
Box 3, Folder 17	Correspondence, 1938-1972
Box 3, Folder 18	Genealogy - Johnson Family programs and hymns, 1880-1905
Box 5, Folder 6	Johnson, Angelina Ricketts Denby - Hymn, "Be Not Faithless", 1905
Box 3, Folder 19	Newsclippings, 1948-1988
Box 5, Folder 7	Newsclippings - oversize, 1948-1957
Box 3, Folder 20	Obituary- George W. Johnson, February 1935
Box 3, Folder 21	Periodical - Down Beat, October 6, 1948 and April 7, 1966
Box 3, Folder 22	Publicity, 1924-1968
Box 3, Folder 23	Published Articles by Rex Stewart, 1966-1967

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Box 1 (Unprocssed) Unprocessed