



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Virgil Whyte "All-Girl" Band Collection

NMAH.AC.0503

David E. Haberstich with Forrest MacCormack

1993

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

P.O. Box 37012

Suite 1100, MRC 601

Washington, D.C. 20013-7012

[archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Arrangement.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	4
Series 1: Unmounted Snapshots.....	4
Series 2: Scrapbooks.....	5
Series 3: Alice Smaus Jacoby's Picture Postcards.....	6
Series 4: Packaged soap samples.....	7
Series 5: Audiovisual Materials, 1991-1993.....	8
Series 6: Framed Portrait Photoprints.....	9
Series 7: Oversize Photoprints.....	10

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Virgil Whyte "All-Girl" Band Collection
<b>Date:</b>	1942-1948, 1991-1993
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0503
<b>Creator:</b>	Kovan, Florice Whyte (Collector) Whyte, Virgil (bandleader) (Author)
<b>Extent:</b>	3 Cubic feet (11 boxes)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): Virgil Whyte "All-Girl" Band Collection</a>

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Florice Kovan, 1993.

### Provenance

Two donors, Doris Nilo and Betty Hansen, transferred their personal scrapbooks to Florice Kovan in 1993. Ms. Kovan then donated the videotapes and audiotape made by her and conveyed the scrapbooks on behalf of the other donors, to the Archives Center. In 1994 Mrs. Jacoby sent her postcards to Ms. Kovan, who delivered them to the museum on Mrs. Jacoby's behalf.

### Preferred Citation

Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Band Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Founded 1942 in Racine, Wis., by Virgil Whyte, his "all-girl" band was composed of young Racine women. Whyte was instructor, manager, and the initial leader on drums; later his sister Alice took over as drummer. After initial success in Racine and elsewhere in Wisconsin, the band began to accept engagements in other parts of the country, eventually touring the U.S. The band's success drew other acts and performers, including Jill Fontaine and the Wilford Mae Trio, Sam Hearn (known as "Schlepperman"), the Woodson Sisters, and Paul La Verre and Bro. They did U.S.O. tours, entertaining servicemen.

The principal donor, a free-lance researcher and writer, is the daughter of Virgil Whyte.

---

## Scope and Contents

Includes 7 VHS videotapes and 1 audio tape produced by Florice Whyte Kovan, containing interviews and recollections by some band members. Studio portraits and snapshot photographs in 3 scrapbooks, which also contain display advertisements and newspaper clippings from about the band, 1940s. Snapshots include documentation of the band's travels and leisure activities while on the road, including swimming, horseback riding, etc. Packaged hotel soap bars collected by Betty Hansen during the bands' touring documents their itinerary, as do picture postcards written by Alice Smaus Jacoby.

---

## Arrangement

The collection is divided into seven series.

Series 1: Unmounted snapshots

Series 2: Scrapbooks

Series 3: Alice Smaus Jacoby's postcards

Series 4: Packaged soap samples

Series 5: Audiovisual Materials

Series 6: Framed Portrait Photoprints

Series 7: Oversized Photoprints

The scrapbook pages are arranged in original order, apparently partly chronological, but series 1 snapshots are in topical order.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Band music -- 1940-1950
- Barracks -- 1940-1950
- Beaches -- 1940-1950
- Comedians -- 1940-1950
- Horseback riding -- 1940-1950
- Horses -- 1940-1950
- Jazz -- 1940-1950
- Jazz musicians -- 1940-1950
- Portraits -- Women
- Railroad passenger cars
- Singers -- 1940-1950
- Swimming -- 1940-1950
- Swimming pools -- 1940-1950
- Travel photography -- 1940-1950 -- U.S.
- Women musicians -- 1930-1950
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Musicians

Types of Materials:

- Announcements
- Audiotapes
- Clippings
- Diaries
- Labels
- Letterheads
- Packages
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- Silver gelatin -- 1940-1950
- Photomechanical prints
- Postage stamps
- Postcards
- Soap -- Packaged
- Videotapes

Names:

- United Service Organizations (U.S.)
- Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Band

Occupations:

- Tap dancers -- 1940-1950

Places:

- Racine (Wis.) -- 1940-1950

---

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Unmounted Snapshots

Scope and Contents: Doris Kahl Nilo's snapshots from two small albums: 123 black-and-white silver gelatin prints and 1 color print. Albums, of recent vintage, not period, are included in the box. Gift of Doris Kahl Nilo.

Box 1, Folder 1	Members of Virgil Whyte's "All Girl Band," taken 10/19/91 (1)., undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Woman in park (4)., undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Studio portraits (2)., undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Ships on water, U.S. military transport planes (5)., undated
Box 1, Folder 5	Virgil Whyte band during performance; dancing; soldiers (6)., undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Soldiers, women with soldiers posed as couples; barracks; jeeps (18)., undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Band members: group and individual snapshots (11)., undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Group and individual snapshots near a large body of water (12)., undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Members of band (?) on horseback (2)., undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Band members (?) in bathing suits on beach (11)., undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Monuments; urban landscapes; gardens (19)., undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Rural landscapes, taken from railcar; mountains and desert (10)., undated
Box 1, Folder 13	Band members (?), swimming pools, diving boards, bathing suits; flotation devices; group snapshots (15)., undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Women sunbathing on lawn (8)., undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 2: Scrapbooks

Box 2	Scrapbook, ex-coll. Doris Kahl Nilo. Gift of Doris Kahl Nilo., undated
Box 3	Scrapbook, ex-coll. Doris Kahl Nilo. Gift of Doris Kahl Nilo., undated
Box 4	Scrapbook, ex-coll. Betty Knudsen Hansen. Gift of Betty Knudsen Hansen., undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Alice Smaus Jacoby's Picture Postcards

Box 5	Picture postcards , undated Notes: 38 postcards (stamped and postmarked), nearly all containing messages from Alice Smaus to her parents in Downers Grove, Illinois, and to her future husband, P.F.C. Gerald Jacoby at Camp Keaney, Nebraska; mailed from locations in the South where the band entertained. Most images are photolithographs, but the group includes a "real photo" card of Amphitrite Hotel and its "gangplank," Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The cards are in an album with plastic pages, apparently supplied by Ms. Kovan, not actually used by Ms. Jacoby. Donated by Alice Smaus Jacoby.
Box 5	Printout of a computer catalogue of the postcards by Pamela Hoyle, which describes the images and publishers of the postcards, but not the message content., undated
Box 5	List of postcards, holograph by Ms. Kovan, 2 pp., undated
Box 5	72nd Anniversary Program, Kenosha Pops Concert Band, containing article by Alice M. [Smaus] Jacoby, "History of the Pops.", 1994

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*



## Series 4: Packaged soap samples

Box 6

Scrapbook containing samples of wrapped soap from hotels., undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 5: Audiovisual Materials, 1991-1993

Scope and Contents: Audiotape and videotapes of interviews with former band members, created by Florice Whyte Kovan, 1991-1993. These tapes are copies; Ms. Kovan retains the originals. Note: there is no volume 5 in this series.

Box 7, Folder 1	Videotape: Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Bands [sic] America's Musical Sweethearts / Musicians' recollections of USO tours 1944-1946. Volume One: Alice Whyte / "America's Champion Girl Drummer." Alice Whyte Skoglund interviewed by Patricia Badger at Prairie School, Racine, Wisconsin, 1991-08-17
Box 7, Folder 2	Videotape: Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Bands [etc.]. Volume Two: May Peterson / "America's Finest All Girl Band." May Peterson Ricchio reads her essay at The Mansards on the Lake, Racine, Wisconsin, 1991-08-16
Box 7, Folder 3	Videotape: Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Bands [etc.]. Volume Three: Betty Knudsen / "To Instill the Joy of the Love of Music." Betty Knudsen Hansen interviewed by Florice Whyte Kovan at The Mansards on the Lake, Racine, Wisconsin, 1991-08-18
Box 7, Folder 4	Videotape: Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Bands [etc.]. Volume Four: Doris Kahl / "Do I have the stories..." As related at The Mansards on the Lake, Racine, Wisconsin, 1991-08-18
Box 7, Folder 5	Videotape: Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Band [sic] [etc.]. Volume Six: Alice Smaus / "All the old romantic songs..." Alice Smaus interviewed by Florice Whyte Kovan at The Mansards on the Lake, Racine, Wisconsin , 1991-08-17
Box 7, Folder 6	Videotape: "Let's Go Home!" Vol. 1. Virgil Whyte's All-Girl Band, 1942-1948 / reassembles in its Racine, Wisconsin home to play at Prairie School Auditorium. Producer/Director: Florice Whyte Kovan. Director: Norean Gray Sauls, 1991-08-19
Box 7, Folder 7	Videotape: "How Our Mothers Learned Jazz." © Florice Whyte Kovan., undated
Box 7, Folder 8	Videotape: Betty Hansen snapshot [scrapbook] assembly and conversation with Flori Whyte Kovan Oct. 25, 1993., 1993
Box 7, Folder 9	Audio cassette tape: Flori Kovan discussing the history of the band., undated

*Return to Table of Contents*

## Series 6: Framed Portrait Photoprints

Box 8; Frames, undated  
 Box 9; Notes: The Frames are identical in style, in two basic sizes, so  
 Box 10 apparently are not original, perhaps having been supplied  
 by Ms. Kovan. The framed portraits duplicate some found in  
 the scrapbooks. Large professional photographs of the band  
 members depict them with their musical instruments.

[Virgil Whyte's Musical Sweethearts: America's Champion Girl Band  
 \(photograph\), ca. 1943](#)

1 Item (8" x 10".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0503-0000001

Silver gelatin on paper.

Later known as Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Band. Photo includes: Dorothy Reigart, Gertrude Gosieski Whyte, Alice Smaus, Jeanette Kramer, and Virginia Shumaker. Front contains text: "Personal Direction Ralph Williams Music Service 203 No. Wabash Chicago [IL?]."

Shown in exhibition "Jazz Photographs: Composed and Improvised," Archives Center display cases, National Museum of American History, March 28-May 10, 2005.

Names: Whyte, Virgil (bandleader)

Whyte

Virgil Whyte's "All-Girl" Band

Jazz Photographs: Composed and Improvised (Archives Center display cases, National Museum of American History, March 28-May 10, 2005).

Topic: Jazz musicians

Women musicians -- 1930-1950

Genre/Form: Photographs -- 1950-2000 -- Black-and-white photoprints  
 -- Silver gelatin

Box 10 Six small framed photographs from band members' childhoods, including a  
 photograph of a young Virgil Whyte with his drums., undated

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 7: Oversize Photoprints

Box 11

Four photoprints of the band during performance, mounted on foam-core board, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

["Musigals" and bus (Virgil Whyte's "all-girl band") : photoprint], [ca. 1942.]

2 Items (photoprints; approx. 2" x 4".)

Photographer: Whyte, Virgil (bandleader)

Language: English.

Notes: 96-2288 (OPPS Neg.)

Silver gelatin on paper, unmounted.

Unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Unprotected photographs must be handled with cotton gloves.

2 photoprints from same negative, 1 with margins, the other with margins trimmed off. Pencil identifications on verso of untrimmed print. Shows touring band standing beside their bus. As Virgil Whyte is not shown, he may have taken the photograph.

Names: Musigals.

Topic: Women musicians -- 1930-1950

Bands (Music) -- 1940-1950

Buses -- 1940-1950

Genre/Form: Photographs -- 1940-1950 -- Black-and-white photoprints -- Silver gelatin

The Spirit of the U S O : sheet music, 1942

1 Item (Ink on paper.; 12" x 9".)

Composer: Godlis, Albert

Lyricist: Street, Wolcott D.

Bush, Prescott S.

Publisher: Miller, Bob, Inc.

Language: English.

Notes: In Box A.

2 folded sheets. Words by Wolcott D. Street and Prescott S. Bush, music by Albert Godlis, publ. by Bob Miller, Inc., 1619 Broadway, New York City. Cover drawing, printed in red and blue, "by Barbelle from Howard Scott," shows a helmeted soldier holding a cup of coffee, a cigarette, and a bayonet. At top of cover: "Official march of the U S O".

National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution: World War II exhibit, 1995.

Names: United Service Organizations (U.S.)

Topic: Bayonets

Soldiers -- 1940-1950