Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong

Music Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2021

Contact information: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/perform.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2020570084

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu021018

Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress
Finding aid encoded by Christopher Hartten and Shantel Lambert-Hardy, 2021
Revised 2023 August
Collection Summary
Title: Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong
Inclusive Dates: 1940-2009
Bulk Dates: 1940-1968
Call No.: ML95.A825 no. 4
Creator: Armstrong, Louis, 1901-1971; Preston, Lucille, 1921-2020
Collector: Preston-Folta, Sharon, 1955-
Extent: approximately 340 items
Extent: 5 containers
Extent: 3 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2020570084
Summary: Lucille "Sweets" Preston (1921-2020), a dancer at the Cotton Club and member of the vaudeville comedic duo Slim & Sweets, was an intimate partner of jazz legend Louis Armstrong beginning in the early 1950s. This collection consists of correspondence, photographs, and other materials formerly owned by their daughter Sharon Preston-Folta. The items document both the relationship between "Satchmo" and Lucille Preston as well as Preston's colleagues in the entertainment industry.

Acquisition Information
Gifts, Sharon Preston-Folta, 2020 and 2022

Accruals
No further accruals are expected.

Processing History
Christopher Hartten and Shantel Lambert-Hardy processed the Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong and coded the finding aid in 2021. Jane Cross added the materials from the 2022 accrual in August 2023.

Transfers
One audio reel from the Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong has been transferred to the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, where it is identified as part of the Sharon Preston-Folta Collection of Louis Armstrong Correspondence (MAVIS collection no. 17455). An inventory of this material is available in the Music Division's collection file.

Other Repositories
The Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens, New York, holds sound recordings, scrapbooks, personal papers, and other items formerly owned by Louis and Lucille (Wilson) Armstrong.

Related Material
The Music Division holds a variety of materials related to Louis Armstrong. The most significant of these are several holograph music manuscripts cataloged in ML96.A814 and miscellaneous autograph letters cataloged in ML95.A825.
The latter includes the Louis Armstrong Correspondence to Joe Glaser and Other Material, which consists of 30 items. Additionally, the William P. Gottlieb Jazz Photograph Collection contains several iconic portraits of Armstrong.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions on using or copying materials may apply.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Lucille "Sweets" Preston was born in Harlem on June 22, 1921, and rose to prominence in the 1930s as a vaudeville dancer at the Cotton Club and member of the Slim & Sweets comedy duo. Together with husband Luther "Slim" Preston they performed nationally and as part of USO tours, as well as appeared on the Chitlin' Circuit during the Jim Crow era of segregation. Their rendition of "Romeo and Juliet" was popularly acclaimed. The duo opened for many prominent performers, including Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong, the latter with whom they shared the same agent, Associated Booking. Following the death of Slim from cancer in 1950, Armstrong began an affair with Preston while married to his fourth wife, Lucille Wilson. On June 24, 1955, daughter Sharon Preston, nicknamed "Little Satchmo," was born.

Although Armstrong indicated that he wanted to marry Preston, he never followed through, continuing to provide financial support while maintaining a long-distance relationship. Preston and Sharon traveled with Armstrong during his summer tours until about 1962, when she and her daughter moved to Mt. Vernon, New York. Preston never remarried or conceived any other children. With Armstrong's passing in 1971, Lucille Wilson Armstrong signed an affidavit stating that Armstrong had no children. Preston never pressed the issue at probate with the Armstrong estate, believing ultimately that Louis Armstrong's personal recognition and support of Sharon was all that mattered. In her later years, she worked as a cook for the priest at Holy Family Church in New Rochelle, New York. She passed away on March 22, 2020, at age 99.

Bibliography

Scope and Content Note

The Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong spans from 1940 to 2009 with the bulk of materials dating from 1940 to 1968. Of the autograph letters in the Correspondence series, nearly half are from Armstrong to Lucille Preston and express his affection for her and Sharon while touring in the United States and abroad. Armstrong's personal letters to Preston are at times crude and demeaning towards women. The remaining letters are chiefly from Joe Glaser and David Gold of Associated Booking, an artist management service shared by both Armstrong and Slim & Sweets. These communications pertain to savings bonds and gifts forwarded to Preston and Sharon on behalf of Armstrong, including after his death.

The Photographs series primarily contains publicity photographs of musicians, dancers, comedians, ventriloquists, contortionists, and other novelty acts with whom Slim & Sweets (Luther and Lucille Preston) performed in the 1940s, primarily on the Chitlin' Circuit. The majority of photographs are inscribed, and some include dates, club locations, addresses, and phone numbers. Names of photographers and artist managers are occasionally included. There is also a small photograph collage assembled by Armstrong as a gift to Lucille Preston present in the series.

The items in the Miscellany series include clippings regarding Louis Armstrong, a customized airplane menu from Armstrong’s 1964 tour to Hawaii and Australia, the The Louis Armstrong Songbook, and several concert and festival programs for Armstrong’s performances, as well as a program for Larry Steele’s Smart Affairs and two programs for the Copacetics and Copeds.

The 2020 gift is housed in box 1. The materials comprising the 2022 gift are located in boxes 2-5.

Organization of the Sharon Preston-Folta Collection on Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong

The collection is arranged in three series:

- Correspondence, 1946-1973
- Photographs, 1940-1950 and undated
- Miscellany, 1949-2009

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Armstrong, Louis, 1901-1971--Correspondence.
Glaser, Joe, 1896-1969--Correspondence.
Gold, David, -2009--Correspondence.
Gold, David, -2009.
Preston, Lucille, 1921-2020--Correspondence.
Preston, Lucille, 1921-2020.
Preston-Folta, Sharon, 1955-

Subjects
Artists’ representatives--United States--Correspondence.
Jazz musicians--United States--Correspondence.
Jazz musicians--United States--Photographs.

Titles
Lucille Preston and Louis Armstrong correspondence
Sharon Preston-Folta collection of Louis Armstrong correspondence

Form/Genre
Business correspondence.
Clippings (Information artifacts)
Personal correspondence.
Photographs.
Programs (Publications)
Description of Series

Container  | Series  
---|---
BOX 1  | **Correspondence, 1946-1973**
This series consists chiefly of autograph letters to Lucille Preston from Louis Armstrong, Joe Glaser, and David Gold. Armstrong's personal letters to Preston are at times crude and demeaning towards women.
Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

BOX 1-5  | **Photographs, 1940-1950 and undated**
This series primarily contains 8 x 10 inch, black-and-white publicity photographs of musicians, actors, dancers, comedians, ventriloquists, contortionists, and other novelty acts with whom the Prestons performed in the 1940s, largely on the Chitlin' Circuit. Many photographs are inscribed, and the dates below are those noted in the inscriptions. Locations in the inscriptions include Abe and Pappy's Clubs in Houston and Dallas; Club Three Sixes and Club Plantation in Detroit; the Apollo Theater, 400 Club, Cafe Zanzibar, and Ubangi Club in New York City; and Club DeLisa in Chicago. A few photographs include addresses and phone numbers on the reverse. Photographers are listed when known. Management company information is sometimes noted at the bottom of the photographs and includes Associated Booking Corporation (Joe Glaser), the William Morris Agency, Shaw Artists Corporation, the Gale Agency, Nat Nazarro Management, Rentie Booking Agency, General Artists Corporation, Jolly Joyce Agency, Louise Crane, Universal Attractions, Dick Richards, Phil Tyrrell Music and Entertainment, Consolidated Radio Artists, Harry Green, Ferguson Brothers Agency, Mike Falk Agency, and Barney Young. There is also a small photograph collage assembled by Armstrong as a gift to Lucille Preston.
Arranged alphabetically.

BOX 4-5  | **Miscellany, 1949-2009**
This series contains clippings regarding Louis Armstrong, a customized airplane menu from Armstrong's 1964 tour to Hawaii and Australia, the *The Louis Armstrong Songbook*, and several concert and festival programs for Armstrong's performances, as well as a program for *Larry Steele's Smart Affairs*.
Arranged alphabetically.
# Container List

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| **BOX 1** | **Correspondence, 1946-1973**  
This series consists chiefly of autograph letters to Lucille Preston from Louis Armstrong, Joe Glaser, and David Gold. Armstrong's personal letters to Preston are at times crude and demeaning towards women.  
Arranged alphabetically by correspondent. |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Slim and Lucille Preston, 1946 January 29  
Typescript; 5 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Slim Preston, 1946 August 6  
Typescript; 2 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1954 November 11  
Typescript; 2 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1954 November 13  
Typescript; 2 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1958 October 23  
Telegram; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1959 October 19  
Manuscript; 3 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1960 June 24  
Telegram; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, circa 1961  
Postcard |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1965 November 27  
Manuscript; 12 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, Lucille Woods, and Sharon Preston, 1965 December 20  
3 postcards |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1965 December 20  
Manuscript; 2 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille Preston, 1967 August 31  
Manuscript; 6 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Armstrong, Louis, to Lucille and Sharon Preston, 1968 June 12  
Manuscript; 4 pages |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/2 | C. S. McClellan and Co., to Lucille Preston, 1967 August 02  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/2 | C. S. McClellan and Co., to Lucile Preston, 1970 August 04  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1950 November 30  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1955 December 24  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1963 December 16  
Typescript; 1 page |
Correspondence, 1946-1973

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| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to S. Preston, 1964 December 21  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1965 December 20  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1966 April 14  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1966 December 13  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille and Sharon Preston, 1967 June 20  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1967 December 6  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1968 August 6  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1968 December 4  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Glaser, Joe, to Lucille Preston, 1968 December 31  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Gold, David, to Lucille Preston, 1973 April 02  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Gold, David, to Lucille Preston, 1961 April 03  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Gold, David, to Lucille Preston, 1966 September 27  
Typescript; 1 page |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Gold, David, to Lucille Preston, 1967 August 10  
Typescript; 1 page |

BOX 1-5  
Photographs, 1940-1950 and undated  
This series primarily contains 8 x 10 inch, black-and-white publicity photographs of musicians, actors, dancers, comedians, ventriloquists, contortionists, and other novelty acts with whom the Prestons performed in the 1940s, largely on the Chitlin’ Circuit. Many photographs are inscribed, and the dates below are those noted in the inscriptions. Locations in the inscriptions include Abe and Pappy's Clubs in Houston and Dallas; Club Three Sixes and Club Plantation in Detroit; the Apollo Theater, 400 Club, Café Zanzibar, and Ubangi Club in New York City; and Club DeLisa in Chicago. A few photographs include addresses and phone numbers on the reverse. Photographers are listed when known. Management company information is sometimes noted at the bottom of the photographs and includes Associated Booking Corporation (Joe Glaser), the William Morris Agency, Shaw Artists Corporation, the Gale Agency, Nat Nazarro Management, Rentie Booking Agency, General Artists Corporation, Jolly Joyce Agency, Louise Crane, Universal Attractions, Dick Richards, Phil Tyrrell Music and Entertainment, Consolidated Radio Artists, Harry Green, Ferguson Brothers Agency, Mike Falk Agency, and Barney Young. There is also a small photograph collage assembled by Armstrong as a gift to Lucille Preston.  
Arranged alphabetically.

| BOX-FOLDER 2/1 | Acasta, Viola, undated |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/2 | Allan, Grace, 1944 |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/3 | Allen, Henry "Red", undated  
By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/4 | Alexander, Irvin, and Von, undated |
### Photographs, 1940-1950 and undated

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<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/5, 2/6</td>
<td>Armstrong, Louis, alone, 1946 and undated</td>
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<td>Candid montage by Lew Nathan</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/7, 5/1</td>
<td>Armstrong, Louis, with others, undated</td>
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<td>Auld, George, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/9</td>
<td>Aunt Jemima (Therese Gardella), undated</td>
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<td>Baker, Ann, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/12</td>
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<td>By Cecil Layne</td>
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<td>Alternate name: Mary Suarez Baird</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alternate name: Lon Bibeau, also known as Lon Fontaine and Alonzo Reed</td>
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<td>Big Time Crip (and Winifred), 1945</td>
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<td>By James Kollár, Radio City, New York</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/18</td>
<td>Billy and Eddie, undated</td>
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<td>Bradley, Johnnie, undated</td>
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<td>Brooks, Apus and Estrellita Bernier, 1946</td>
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<td>Buddie and Dick, undated</td>
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<td>Buck and Bubbles (Ford L. &quot;Buck&quot; Washington and John William Sublett), undated</td>
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<td>By James J. Kriegsmann, New York</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/29</td>
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<td>The Cats and the Fiddle, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/31</td>
<td>The Calypso Boys and China Doll, undated</td>
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<td>By Sam Manley</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/32</td>
<td>Camero, Cándido, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/33</td>
<td>Canfield and Lewis (James &quot;Spizzy&quot; Canfield and Willie Lewis), undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/34</td>
<td>Carol, Judy, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/35</td>
<td>Carter, Sonny, 1947-1948</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/36</td>
<td>Cecil Young Quartet, undated</td>
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<td>BOX-FOLDER 2/37</td>
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  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/39 | Clarence Robinson's Tropicana Revue, undated  
  By Maurice, Chicago |
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  By Maurice, Chicago |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/41 | Collins, Evelyn, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/42 | Cowans, Al and his Musical Madcaps, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
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  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/44 | Crawford, Gary, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/45 | Davis, Jackie, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/46 | The Delis (Doloras, Della, and Thelma), 1942  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/47 | The Delta Rhythm Boys, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/48 | DeMay, Sid, and Salley Moore, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, Radio City, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/49 | Dennis, Dolores, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/50 | Donahue, Sam, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/51 | Douglas, Roy, and Eddie Echo, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/52 | The Du Droppers, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/53 | Dudley Jr., S. H., 1943  
  Photo by Mason  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/54 | The Dunhills (Artie, Cliff, and Lou), undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, Radio City, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/55 | Eason, Otto, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/56 | Eckstine, Billy, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/5 | "Family portrait", undated  
  3 x 3 inch collage made by Armstrong, given to Lucille Preston  
  By George Van, Newark, NJ |
| BOX-FOLDER 4/52 | Fetchit, Stepin (Lincoln Perry), undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
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  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/58 | Four Tunes, undated  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/59 | Fred and Sledge, undated  
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| BOX-FOLDER 2/60 | Furness Brothers, undated  
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  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
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  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/65 | Hackette, Kid "Lips", 1944  
  By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
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By Maurice, Chicago |
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| BOX-FOLDER 2/70 | Henry, John, Jr., and Calhoun, 1942 |
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| BOX-FOLDER 3/6 | Jessye, undated  
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By James J. Kriegsmann, New York |
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By Nate Singer, Western Photo Co., Los Angeles |
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| BOX-FOLDER 3/19 | Mabley, Jackie "Moms", undated |
| BOX-FOLDER 3/20 | Mackay, Levi, undated |
| BOX-FOLDER 3/21 | Marquez, Mercia, 1942? |
| BOX-FOLDER 3/22 | McRae, Carmen, undated  
By Bruno |
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Photographers include Allen Morgan, Bloom, Maurice, Gene Wynne, Gaby of Montreal, J. Bushman, O'Connell, Emile of Montreal, The Teal Studio, Langford P. James, Arsene Studio, Jack Richburg, Niemi Studio, Blackstone Studios, Frank F. Turner Jr., Meyers Studios, Kerr, James J. Kriegsman, and De L'Aigle

BOX 4-5

**Miscellany, 1949-2009**

This series contains clippings regarding Louis Armstrong, a customized airplane menu from Armstrong's 1964 tour to Hawaii and Australia, the *The Louis Armstrong Songbook*, and several concert and festival programs for Armstrong's performances, as well as a program for *Larry Steele's Smart Affairs*.

Arranged alphabetically.

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*Note:* Regarding Louis Armstrong |
| BOX-FOLDER 4/74 | Menu, 1964  
*Note:* Customized menu for Louis Armstrong and party on the Pan-Am Clipper flight to Hawaii and Australia |
Piano-vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 4/73, 5/4 | Programs, 1949, 1958, 1988, and undated  
*Includes:* Revlon Salutes the Silver Belles, the Most Unforgettable Women of the Apollo; Copasetics and Copeds; Louis Armstrong (with inscriptions); American Music Festival presented by the Feld Brothers; Larry Steele's Smart Affairs |