



MC 106

The William ("Dicky") Wells Collection, 1907-1985

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2011

Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University Libraries

Finding aid encoded in EAD, version 2002 by Robert Nahory December 2013

Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** William ("Dicky") Wells (1907-1985)
- Title:** The William ("Dicky") Wells Collection
- Dates:** 1907-1985
- Quantity:** 3 boxes, 3 linear feet
- Abstract:** The William ("Dicky") Wells Collection (1907-1985) consists of three linear feet of materials in three archival boxes (two document boxes and one oversize flat box). The collection represents a cross-section of his life as a jazz trombonist in many top jazz groups. It includes a number of music manuscripts of his own compositions as well as sheet music of popular songs and standards. In addition, there are two copies of early twentieth century method books for clarinet and fingering charts for flute, photos of musicians he worked with or admired, and two scrapbooks on the death of jazz greats Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. There are also a few manuscript pages from his 1971 autobiography as well as two copies of the published book: *The Night People: Reminiscences of a Jazzman* by Dicky Wells, as told to Stanley Dance.

Collection No.: MC 106
Language: English
Repository: Rutgers University Libraries, Institute of Jazz Studies

Biographical Sketch of William "Dicky" Wells

William "Dicky" Wells was born in Centerville, Tennessee on June 10, 1907 and grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where he took up the baritone at age 10. He switched to the trombone at 16 after hearing Jimmy Harrison, a Louisville musician who later starred in the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. He played in local bands during his teens before moving to New York in 1926 with the Lloyd Scott Orchestra, later taken over by Scott's brother Cecil in 1930. Over the next eight years he worked with Elmer Snowden (1930-31), Benny Carter (autumn 1932-1933), Fletcher Henderson (May-December 1933), and Teddy Hill (1934-37), which toured Europe in 1937. During this time, he recorded with Spike Hughes (1933), Henry Red Allen (1935, 1935), and Pee Wee Russell and Billie Holiday (1938). Among the best known work of career were recordings under his name in Paris in 1937 that sometimes included such European luminaries as Django Reinhardt.

Wells came to prominence beginning in July 1938 when he joined the Count Basie Orchestra just prior to what Basie called the band's biggest break when John Hammond booked the band at the Famous Door in New York. Wells complimented the playing of its other star trombonist Benny Morton, and was considered one of Basie's principal sidemen during his six and a half years with the band ending in late 1945, alongside Buck Clayton, Harry Edison, Lester Young, Herschel Evans, Freddie Green, Walter Page, Jo Jones and singer Jimmy Rushing. Wells' first departure from the band was due to illness. He teamed up with Basie again between 1947 when he was again part of the core of the Basie sound and 1950 when Basie disbanded before reconstituting his big band in 1952.

Beginning in 1950, Wells played with a group backing his old friend from the Basie years, Jimmy Rushing, before playing and touring with groups led by Paul Quinichette (1952), Bill Coleman (1952), Lucky Millender (1953) and Earl Hines (1954). He played with Basie and an all-star band in December 1957 for the live television broadcast of *The Sound of Jazz*, as well as with Fletcher Henderson reunion bands during this period. He twice toured Europe with the Buck Clayton All Stars (1959, 1961) and as a member of the Ray Charles Orchestra (late 1961-early 1963) before joining the house band at the Apollo Theater in Harlem.

Scope and Content Note

The Dicky Wells Collection, while small, contains a cross-section of his musical life. Several partial and complete music manuscripts and parts for small groups, both original and published, contain many of Wells' own compositions and those of others, as well as

sheet music for popular songs and standards. Statements covering some of Wells' compositions are available from examples prepared at the British Mechanical Rights Society and the Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society from the 1970s. Another creative side of the trombonist can be seen in photo montages of artists he had worked with or admired, as well as scrapbooks of newspaper clippings surrounding the deaths of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington and the first Newport Jazz Festivals in New York in 1972 and 1973, along with a notebook chronicling the deaths of jazz musicians along with published obituaries. The Wells Collection contains a few pages of typescript from his 1971 autobiography as told to jazz historian Stanley Dance, *The Night People: Reminiscences of a Jazzman* (Boston: Crescendo Publishing Company), as well as two copies of the book, one inscribed to Quentin "Butter" Jackson (1909-1976).

Also included in Wells' papers are materials inscribed by Leslie (Les) Carr, possibly a composer from the 1930s or 1940s. Among the items belonging to Carr include sheet music, a notebook and loose sheets of song lyrics, and a typescript of an article *Ernest 'Bass' Hill as I Knew Him* by Johnny Simmen, published in the August/September 1965 issue of *Coda*. In addition, the collection contains two early twentieth-century clarinet method books and flute fingering charts.

Arrangement Note

The William ("Dicky") Wells Collection is divided into five series:

[Series 1: Music Manuscripts and Parts](#)

[Series 2: Creative Works: Autobiography, Photo Montages and Scrapbooks, Ephemera](#)

[Series 3: Business Papers and Ephemera](#)

[Series 4: Clarinet Method Books and Flute Fingering Charts](#)

[Series 5: Leslie \(Les\) Carr Papers](#)

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

The William ("Dicky") Wells Collection (MC 106), Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University Libraries.

Detailed Description/Container List

This section provides descriptions of the materials found within each series. Each series description is followed by a container list, which gives the titles of the folders and their locations in the numbered boxes that comprise this collection.

Series 1: Music Manuscripts and Parts, dates unknown

ARRANGEMENT: Series 1 consists of 3 subseries

SUBSERIES 1A. COMPOSITIONS BY DICKY WELLS, most dates unknown

Box	Folder	
1	1	- Dicky/Dicky Bump; 1st, 2nd saxophones, piano, guitar, bass
	1	- Dirty Books
	1	- Girl Hunt
	1	- Greasy Kitchen, (with lyrics)
	1	- Heavy Duty; trombone (Baby Girl, 2nd trumpet, verso), piano, (O Red Boogie, tenor sax, verso), guitar, bass
	1	- Hello Louie, (with lyrics), piano, February 14, 1970
	1	- Hurry, Hurry Home to Me
	1	- It's All Over Now
	1	- Stop Hangin' Around My Heart
	1	- Tell Me Baby
	1	- You're Never Too Old to Rock and Roll
	1	- We Remember Prez (Lester Young)

SUBSERIES 1B. COMPOSITIONS BY OTHERS AND UNKNOWN COMPOSERS, circa 19th C., 1913 - 1964

Box	Folder	
1	2	- After the Lights Go Down Low (Phil Belmonte-Allen White-Leroy C. Lovett) Verso Honky Tonk, 1956
	2	- Baby, Please Be True and Baby, Please Be Mine
	2	- Back Beat; trumpet
	2	- Bass Face; trumpet
	2	- Bat Man; trumpet, trombone, piano
	2	- Because You're Mine (with lyrics); I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus (with lyrics) (Tommie Connor) (verso), 1952
	2	- Blueberry Hill (Vincent Rose-Al Lewis-Larry Stock), 1940
	2	- Boo Boo
	2	- Brown Skin Gal
	2	- Bunny Hop (Ray Anthony) (concert key), 1952
	2	- Mexican Hat Dance (Jesus Gonzalez Rubio) (concert key), 19th C.
	2	- Canadian Capers (Earl Burnnett-Gus Chandler-Earl White- Henry

- Cohen), 1915
- 2 - Carioca (Vincent Youmans-Edward Eliscu-Gus Kahn) - 1st sax;
Mananitas de Montmartre (verso) - alto sax, 1933
 - 2 - Devil - trumpet, trombone, tenor sax and baritone sax
 - 2 - Dizzy Fingers (Zez Confrey) - tenor sax; Stardust (Hoagy
Charmichael), All the Things You Are (Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart)
(verso), 1921
 - 2 - Domani (Tomorrow) and Mama Rosa, Ulpio Minucci and Tony Velona,
1955
 - 2 - Don't Take Your Love From Me, Henry Nemo, 1941
 - 2 - Falling in Love With Love (Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart), alto sax;
Sweethearts, Victor Herber (verso), 1938 and 1913, respectively
 - 2 - Greasy Pig, undated
 - 2 - Harlemistic (H. White), trombone, tenor sax, 1st, 3rd alto sax, undated
 - 2 - Here I am Broken Hearted(Johnnie Ray), 1951
 - 2 - He's Got the Whole World in His Hands, undated
 - 2 - It's All Over Now (Bobby and Shirley Womack) - 1st, 2nd, 3rd,
trombone, organ, bass, drums, 1964
 - 2 - Just Look At What I Can Do [Transferred from Compositions by Others
and Composers Unknown], undated
 - 2 - Knock on Wood - trumpet, trombone, tenor sax (on same sheet) undated
 - 2 - Letter - 2nd trombone, tenor sax, baritone sax, undated
 - 3 - Manhattan (Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart), 1925
 - 3 - May Be Wrong - piano, undated
 - 3 - Muskat Ramble (Kid Ory) - clarinet, 1926
 - 3 - Nola - alto sax, undated
 - 3 - Pretty Little Girl, undated
 - 3 - Ring 'Dem Bells (Duke Ellington) - 1st tenor sax, undated
 - 3 - Roar Lion Roar (Corey Ford-Roy Webb), (Columbia University Fight
Song, originally titled Bold Buccaneers), 1923
 - 3 - Roller Coaster (Louis Bush-Milton DeLugg), (theme from What's My
Line?), undated
 - 3 - Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (Johnny Marks), 1948
 - 3 - Skipity Hop (Skip Hall) - guitar (theme from What's My Line?),
undated
 - 3 - Sara Lu Lu, undated
 - 3 - Someday - trumpet, guitar; Lonesome (verso), undated
 - 3 - Stack of Barley - alto sax; Time Out for Tears - piano (verso), undated
 - 3 - Stomping at the Savoy (Benny Goodman), 1935
 - 3 - Stop Now - 1st, 3rd alto sax, tenor sax, and baritone sax, undated

- 3 - Sunrise Serenade - clarinet, undated
- 3 - Sweethearts / I'll See You Again; from play Bittersweet, Noel Coward, 1929
- 3 - That's a Plenty (Lew Pollack) - clarinet, 1914
- 3 - Them There Eyes (Maceo Pinkard-Doris Tauber-William Tracey, 1930
- 3 - Tico-Tico and Si Si - alto sax, undated
- 3 - Toy Land, undated
- 3 - Who Dat, undated
- 3 - Wine-O Junction - 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th trombone, undated
- 3 - X Marks the Spot - bass, undated
- 3 - Youthfulness Fantasie - flute, undated
- 3 - Thirteen Untitled Music Manuscripts, undated

SUBSERIES 1C. BAND BOOK WITH PARTS, undated

ARRANGEMENT: Listed by Number on Charts

Box	Folder	
1	4	1. Fish Cake and Rum - trumpet, 1st tenor sax, alto sax, baritone sax, guitar
	4	2. Burnt Buns - trumpet, tenor sax, baritone sax, guitar
	4	3. Mr. B: trumpet - tenor sax, guitar
	4	4. In a Corner - trumpet, tenor sax, clarinet, guitar
	4	5. Feelin' Blue - trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, baritone sax, guitar
	4	6. Rise and Shine (S. Heywood); Dough Baby - trumpet, tenor sax, baritone sax, guitar (verso)
	4	7. X Marks the Spot - 2 B-flat horns, alto sax, baritone sax, guitar
	4	8. Moon River (Henry Mancini) - trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, baritone sax
	4	9. Godchild (George Wallington; arranged by Tiny Kahn) - copywrite 1949 American Academy of Music, Inc., 1619 Broadway, New York, 19, NY - 1st, 2nd, 3rd trp, 1st, 2nd, 3rd trb, 1st sax (alto), 2nd sax (ts), 3rd sax, piano, guitar, bass, drums (alto), 4th sax (tenor), 5th sax (baritone)
	4	10. Pie-Face Baby - trumpet, guitar
	4	11. Don't Misunderstand - tenor sax and bass (Verso: Pie-Face Baby), guitar
	4	12. We Remember Prez (Lester Young), (Dicky Wells); Walk It, Baby (verso) - trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, baritone sax, guitar
	4	13. Swing Your Bottom, Baby - trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, Ben
	4	14. Mr. Chicken Shit (Pat Jenkins) - 1st trumpet, tenor sax, baritone sax
	4	15. Always (Irving Berlin) - tenor sax, alto sax, baritone sax
	4	- Unnumbered 1: Knock on Wood: tenor sax, baritone sax
	4	- Unnumbered 2: Some Day: tenor sax, baritone sax

SUBSERIES 1D. PUBLISHED SHEET MUSIC, circa 1922 - 1989

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | 5 | - True Tone Echoes (Smith and Holmes) - alto sax 1922 |
| | 5 | - Folder containing music for: Morning Light by Deborah Colony - alto part; and Love Will Shine by Deborah Colony (performed by Althea Rodgers), 1987 and 1989, respectively |

Series 2: Creative Works: Autobiography, Photo Montages and Scrapbooks, Ephemera c

SUBSERIES 2A. AUTOBIOGRAPHY, circa 1971

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | - <i>The Night People: Reminiscences of a Jazzman</i> by Dicky Wells, as told to Stanley Dance |
| | 1 | - 4 pages of original typescript from chapter 9, "Genius and the Blues" as well as cover page and table of contents |

SUBSERIES 2B. PHOTO MONTAGES, circa 1920s - 1960s

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 2 | - 13 cardboard cut-outs/folders with several photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings and reviews either glued or taped down into montages. All about 11 x 8 inches, dates varied |
|---|---|--|

SUBSERIES 2C. SCRAPBOOKS, circa 1969-1974 and undated

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 3 | - The New York Times; copied article about Dicky Wells and Benny Morton, who were both in Count Basie's Orchestra together; Newspaper unknown; clipping of an article about Gus Cannon; Newport Jazz Festival, New York; folder with Newport Jazz Festival, July, 1969, undated, 1972-1973, respectively |
| | 3 | - Scrapbook compiled after the death of Louis Armstrong, 1900-1971 |
| | 3 | - Scrapbook after the death of Duke Ellington, 1899-1974 |

Series 3: Business Papers and Ephemera

SUBSERIES 3A. BUSINESS PAPERS, circa 1970s-1980s

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 6 | - British Mechanical Rights Society and the Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society royalty statements and newsletters, 1971-1974 |
| | 6 | - US Internal Revenue tax return, 1973 |
| | 6 | - Unsigned agreement between William (Dicky) Wells and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (New York), 1976-1985 |

SUBSERIES 3B. MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS AND EPHEMERA circa 1960s-1970s and undated

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 7 | - Hand-written document (bio) entitled <i>Who's Who of Jazz (Storyville to Swing Street)</i> by John Chilton, and the name Clyde Bernhardt at the top, |
|---|---|--|

1970

- 7 - Hand-written document (bio) entitled *Who's Who of Jazz (Storyville to Swing Street)* by John Chilton, and the name Andrew Sandy Wallace at the top, 1970
- 7 - Typed copy of the "I Have a Dream: A Testament of Faith in Human Brotherhood" speech by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968); Excerpts from the address at the March on Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963
- 7 - Program for WQXR (stations for the NY Times: 1560 AM, 96.3 FM) show, *The World of Jazz* with John S. Wilson for the dates of Saturdays @ 10:10 pm, May-June of 1970
- 7 - Bill Coleman and His Swing All Stars: Randy Downes, Zutty Singleton, Miriam Burton, Guy Lafitte, A. Buddy Banks, Dicky Wells at Le Hot Club de Nimes 15x23 inch Poster, undated

Series 4: Clarinet Method Books and Flute Fingering Charts, circa 1905-1918 and undated

Box Folder

- 2 8 - *Lazarus Clarinet School: A New and Modern Method for Clarinet, Boehm and Ordinary System*, Revised, Compiled, and Enlarged by Paul de Ville, Part II; (last 2 pages loose/out) copyright Carl Fischer, 1905
- 8 - *The Cundy-Baermann Celebrated Clarinet Method* by Carl Baermann; Revised and Adapted by Harry Bettoney, Parts I and II; copyright the Cundy-Bettoney Company, 1910
- 8 - Tables of Fingerings for the Boehm Flute (and piccolo) with Open and Closed G Sharp Key, and Tables of Shake or Trill Fingerings for the Boehm Flute (and piccolo) with Open and Closed G Sharp Key by Ernest Wagner; copyright by Carl Fischer, 1918
- 8 - A List of Methods, Studies, Solos, and other Supplementary Material selected from the Carl Fischer Catalogues, undated
- 8 - Complete Table of Shakes for Ten, Eleven, and Thirteen Keyed Flutes by Paul de Ville, undated
- 8 - Hand-written flute fingering chart, undated

Series 5: Leslie (Les) Carr Papers, circa 1925-1968 and undated

SUBSERIES 5A. PUBLISHED SHEET MUSIC

Box Folder

- 3 1 - Alone
- 1 - All the Things You Are
- 1 - Because
- 1 - Bridal Chimes Waltz / The Thunderbolt
- 1 - Does Your Heart Beat for Me?
- 1 - Girl From Ipanema
- 1 - Harbor Lights

- 1 - Heavy Artillery / Gold and Sunshine / Georgia Rose / Jolly Blacksmith / A Spring Song / Skating Rink / The Argonaut / The Mascot / Dinkelspiel / Star of Beauty / Norma / Idora
- 1 - Mambo Jambo
- 1 - Ma Honey Gal
- 1 - My Moonlight Madonna Waltz
- 1 - Oh Promise Me
- 1 - Oodles of Noodles
- 1 - People Will Say We're In Love
- 1 - Prisoner of Love
- 1 - Robbins Vienne Waltz Melody
- 1 - Rose in the Bud / I'll Walk Beside You / On Wings of Memory / I Saw A Star Tonight
- 1 - Russian Rag
- 1 - Sophisticated Lady
- 1 - Smile
- 1 - The Songs of Songs
- 1 - So Tired
- 1 - Star Dust
- 1 - The Shepherd's Dreams
- 1 - Sun Spots
- 1 - Summertime
- 1 - Treasure Chest of Famous Waltzes
- 1 - True Tone Echoes
- 1 - Valse Erica / Waltz "Llewellyn" / Laughing Gas
- 1 - Valse Helen
- 1 - Radio City Album for Violin and Piano
- 1 - What Kind of Fool Am I?
- 1 - Where or When

SUBSERIES 5B. LYRICS

- | Box | Folder | |
|------------|---------------|---|
| 3 | 2 | - Sterling Marble Notebook American Federation of Musicians filled with handwritten lyrics, 59 pages, undated |

SUBSERIES 5C. EPHEMERA

- | Box | Folder | |
|------------|---------------|--|
| 3 | 3 | - Savoy Ballroom's Fall Opening Flyer - Lloyd 'Great' Scott and his Bright Boys and Fess Williams' Royal Flush Orchestra, undated |
| | 3 | - Flyer for Washington Theater shows, one of which featuring Lloyd Scott and His Victor Recording Orchestra, week of June 6, no year given |

- 3 - N.Y. Amsterdam News clipping featuring a few segments of various articles, Saturday, November 11, 1967
- 3 - Flyer for Mid-Nite Frolic at Avalon park in Springfield, Ohio featuring Lloyd Scott and His Eleven Brownskin Entertainers, September 22, no year given
- 3 - Flyer/Brochure for F. Tapp and His Kentucky Melody Lads at the 88 (8?) Mile House in Louisville, Kentucky. Wells was a member of this group. 1925
- 3 - Flyer for Capitol Palace Club, Inc. in New York, NY honoring Lloyd Scott's Band upon completing engagement, Thursday, February 2, no year given
- 3 - "Ernest 'Bass' Hill - As I Knew Him" by Johnny Simmen with note to Carr inside, 1965
- 3 - The Count Basie Story by Leonard Feather, (transferred), January 1968
- 3 - Leslie Carr's Musician's Protective Union Card, 1928
- 3 - Lockwood Lewis, Victor Record Artist, Manager of the Lockwood's Original Blackbirds business card, undated
- 3 - Home Cooking, Rufus Emerson Restaurant Lunch Card, undated
- 3 - Miss Donna Rae's Business Card, Hotel Patten Stationery, Carr's Louisville Cleff Club Membership Card, 1926
- 4 - Necrology, "In Memoriam," hand-written register and published obituaries of jazz musicians, undated