



**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC  
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, MURFREESBORO, TN**

**DON ROBEY COLLECTION**

**13-042**

**Creator:**

Robey, Don D., 1903-1975

**Type of Material:**

Manuscript materials, Photographs, Negatives

**Physical Description:**

1 box (.5 linear feet) of manuscript materials, including promotional photographs and negatives, promotional flyers, royalty ledgers, song lyrics, bank statements, and correspondence

**Dates:**

1950-1965

**Restrictions:**

*All materials in this collection are subject to national and international copyright laws. Center staff are able to assist with copyright question for this material.*

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

This collection was donated to the Center by Ken Flaherty in December of 2013. The collection was salvaged by Mr. Flaherty from a warehouse containing other materials created by Don Robey. Doug Seroff facilitated the transfer of the physical materials to the Center.

**Subject/ Index Terms:**

Robey, Don D., 1903-1975  
Duke Records, Inc.  
Peacock Records, Inc.  
Rhythm and blues music

Gospel music  
Brown, Clarence, 1924-2005

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**

Born in 1903 in Houston, Texas' Fifth Ward, Don Robey dropped out of school to become a professional gambler. By his twentieth birthday he had a family to provide for. He employed his risk-taking skills and ability to read people, developed from his career as a gambler, to become a traveling sales representative for a Texas liquor distributor. He then became a party promoter, which gave him the capital and entertainment connections to open his own night club. Robey used his night club as a springboard for his creation of a record label named after his club, the Bronze Peacock.

In the late 1940s, Don Robey founded Peacock Records and Duke Records, which featured both gospel and rhythm and blues styles. Don Robey is considered a pioneer in the recording industry because of his ability to run a record label for over thirty years. As an African American, the south posed race based challenges for his business development, as well as his business location. Texas, and the south as a whole, was not a prominent area for record producing, yet Robey's business ability enabled him to carve out a created and economic space that allowed his label to flourish. Robey used the historic tradition of "musicking" (a phrase designed to describe the bridge created by African American musicians between African American music and the music market) to create a qualitative data driven market analysis not yet seen in the 1940s. His consumer centric marketing and music production allowed him to fuse musical styles when producing gospel music that had an R&B sound.

**Scope and Content**

This collection contains 88 different photo images that are in print and/or negative form, along with duplicates of some prints. Also included are Don Robey's Peacock/Duke business documents, including promotional materials, royalty ledgers, bank statements, song lyrics, and correspondence.

**Collection Content (Box/Folder List)**

1 box, 15 folders.

| <b>Folder #</b> | <b>Folder Description</b>                               | <b>Item Description</b>  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Folder 1        | Promotional flyers & Peacock Recording Artist Addresses | Flyer - order form listing the band's name, song and number for both Duke and Peacock recordings |

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|          |                    | Flyer and advertisement of Peacock/Duke recording artists like Bobby Bland, 8X10   |
|          |                    | Flyer and advertisement of Peacock/Duke recording artists like Al, James, and Floyd Braggs, 8X10                           |
|          |                    | Document - Peacock Recording Artist Addresses; list of artists from Marie Adams to Carlyle Vinson Moon, 8X10               |
| Folder 2 | Business Documents | Bank statement - Houston National Bank, charge to Bronze Peacock Dinner Club on November 15, 1950 for \$210.08             |
|          |                    | First City National Bank - a check marked paid from Don Robey to Fred Marshall Press for \$84.00 on January 5, 1960        |
|          |                    | Bank ledger & deposit receipts from October 23 1963 to November 1963   |
|          |                    | Check - Port City State Bank from Don Robey to Robert "Bobby" Bland for \$5,212.92 on March 24, 1964                       |
|          |                    | Bank Ledger & paid checks -from January 1965 to February 1965  |
|          |                    | Bank Ledger & paid checks - for June 1965  |
|          |                    | Don Robey and Naomi Park Robey balance sheets as of December 31, 1945, 1947, and 1950                                      |
|          |                    | Promotional Expense list for Pilgrim Travelers - Soul Stirrers- Blind Boys at the City Auditorium on Sunday March 21, 1954 |
|          |                    | List of Peacock Artist Dropped as of June 30, 1957   |
|          |                    | Royalty Earnings Statements to The Goldenaires from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957                                   |
|          |                    | Hand written, untitled notes in royalties in October   |
|          |                    | Royalty Earnings Statements to Andrew Gospel Singers from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957                             |

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|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to Stars of Hope from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957  |
|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to Stars of Hope from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957  |
|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to James "Hurricane" Edwards from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957  |
|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to Jimmy Swann from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957  |
|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to The Five Scamps, James Whitcomb, from Peacock Records on December 31, 1957   |
|          |                         | Royalty Earnings Statements to Elvis Presley Music, Inc. from Lion Publishing Company on August 1, 1961   |
| Folder 3 | Record Information      | List of Peacock record numbers  |
|          |                         | List of record release information  |
|          |                         | List of Duke, Peacock, Backbeat, and Progressive Jazz Records current releases  |
|          |                         | Handwritten notes on Spirit of Memphis session  |
|          |                         | Lyrics for "Blessed Jesus"  |
|          |                         | Lyrics for "My Mind on Jesus"   |
|          |                         | Handwritten notes on songs – musician -duration - band for Lion Publication   |
| Folder 4 | Correspondence, by date | Hand written letter to Don Robey from John on Gotham Hotel stationery   |
|          |                         | Copy of a telegram to Mrs. Leslie Alexander, from Evelyn Johnson, about her son Johnny having been shot   |
|          |                         | Letter on Peacock Records stationery from Don Robey to John R. Colgin about writer-publisher information on latest record releases. Dated November 17, 1967 |

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|  |  | Letter on Peacock Records stationery from Don Robey to John R. Colgin about writer- publisher information on latest record releases. Dated January 26, 1968 |
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| Folder # | Folder Description       | Item Description  |
|----------|--------------------------|---|
| Folder 5 | Unidentified Photographs | Unknown group – late1950s, young girls in robes, Print, 5X7<br>Unknown man - younger, shoulder to head shot in jacket and tie, Print, 8X10<br>Unknown man - older, seated at piano, Print, 8X10   |
| Folder 6 | Photographs B – D        | Bells of Joy Spiritual Singers - on photo paper: shows elaborate trophy w/caption, “Awarded to ‘Bells of Joy’ for outstanding spiritual recording of ‘Let’s Talk About Jesus’ on Peacock Label certificate of award issued by Cash Box Magazine,” Print, 8X10 |
|          |                          | Bobby “Blue” Bland, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                          | The Christland Singers, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                          | Dixie Hummingbirds - the classical pose with white tuxes & printed autographs, Print, 8X10 (5 copies)   |
|          |                          | Dixie Hummingbirds - the leaning back pose with white tuxes & printed autographs, Print, 8X10 (10 copies)   |
| Folder 7 | Photographs F – J        | The Four Internes, Print, 8X10  |
|          |                          | Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown - holding a guitar in a wide legged tuxedo suit with short jacket, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                          | The Gospel Challengers - four women standing by a piano with a man seated at the piano, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                          | 1- The Gospel Tones - group of 7 men in suits with 1 seated the rest in higher order, and the last 2 are standing, Print, 8X10  |

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|          |                   | 1- The Gospel Tones - group of 7 men in suits in 2 rows, seated, Print, 8X10  |
|          |                   | Jeanette Harris - leader of the Golden Harp Gospel Singers, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | Rev. H.L. Galloway, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | Golden Harp Gospel Singers, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | The Gospelairees, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | Joe Hinton, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | Jimmy Holloway, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)  |
| Folder 8 | Photographs K – R | Kansas City Melodyaires - picture of 5 women standing in choir robes and 1 man seated in a suit, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)   |
|          |                   | Lightnin Hopkins, Print, 5X5  |
|          |                   | Loving Sisters - picture of 6 women in choir robes looking upward, Print, 8X10  |
|          |                   | Mighty Clouds of Joy - picture of 6 men in black tuxedos, Print, 8X10   |
|          |                   | 1- Original Five Blind Boys Jackson Harmonizers - picture of 5 men standing in order of height and 4 are wearing tinted glasses, Print, 8X10<br><br>1- Original Five Blind Boys Jackson Harmonizers, picture of 5 men from head to shoulder and 4 are wearing tinted glasses, Print, 8X10 |
|          |                   | Jackson Harmonizers Original Five Blind Boys of Mississippi - picture of 6 men 3 with tinted glasses seated and three standing, Print, 8x10   |
|          |                   | Pilgrim Jubilees - picture of 6 men, 3 of whom are standing with their hands on 3 men kneeling, Print, 8X10   |

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|           |                     | Pilgrim Jubilee - picture of 3 men in black suits and 1 with a guitar, Print, 8X10   |
|           |                     | Rev. Cleophus Robinson - picture of him holding his glasses, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)  |
|           |                     | Rev. Cleophus Robinson - picture of him with glasses on and a dark suit and tie, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)  |
|           |                     | Otis Rush - shoulder to head shot of a man in a dark suit and tie, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)  |
| Folder 9  | Photographs S – Se  | The Salem Travelers - pictures of members along with the letters S and T, Print, 8X10  |
|           |                     | Joe Scott, Band Director Bobby Bland Revue – man, head & shoulder shot wearing a dark tie and gray jacket, Print, 8X10   |
|           |                     | The Sensational Nightingales - 2 rows, with 3 men in each row, Print, 8X10 (14 copies)<br><br>The Sensational Nightingales - 2 rows with 2 men in the top row and 4 men seated, Print, 8X10 (4 copies) |
| Folder 10 | Photographs Sh – Wr | Shaw & His Union Spiritual Harmonizers - man in a light colored suit with a dark tie, Print, 8X10  |
|           |                     | The Southern Wonders - 5 men in suits, 2 seated 3 standing, Print, 8X10  |
|           |                     | Tammi Starr - woman looking up with a dark top and light skirt, Print, 8X10 (2 copies)   |
|           |                     | Stars of Hope - 5 men in suits, one has glasses, Print, 8X10   |
|           |                     | Stripes of Glory - 5 men in uniforms, 4 at a microphone, 1 kneeling with a microphone in his hand, Print, 8X10   |
|           |                     | Sunset Travelers - 5 men with 1 holding a guitar, seated, Print, 8X10  |
|           |                     | The Sunset Travelers - 5 men in 2 rows, 3 on top 2   |

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|  |  | below, Print, 8X10  |
|  |  | The Swan Silvertones - 5 men in suits, Print, 8X10  |
|  |  | Tempo Toppers Quartet, Benny Lee Gilmore -Bass<br>Duces Rhythm - a man in a light suit dark tie and his<br>hand in his pocket, Print, 8X10 (2 copies) |
|  |  | Rev. Trammell - man in a dark suit looking up with a<br>bible in his hand, Print, 8X10.   |
|  |  | Sandra Kay Tucker - with autograph and note to<br>"fellow teenagers," Print, 8X10   |
|  |  | Jackie Verdell - woman smiling with diamond<br>earring, Print, 8x10   |
|  |  | The Wilson & Watson Singers - 3 men with 1<br>woman, all in choir robes, Print, 8X10  |
|  |  | Jimmy Witherspoon - head-shot of a man with a<br>mustache wearing a jacket and tie, Print, 8X10 (2<br>copies)   |
|  |  | O.V. Wright - man in a suit sitting on a stool wearing<br>tinted glasses (8 copies)   |

| <b>Folder #</b> | <b>Folder Description</b> | <b>Item Description</b>  |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--|
| Folder 11       | Unidentified Negatives    | Negative - man with a microphone marked KNUZ<br>and headphones on, 8X10                              |
|                 |                           | Negative - 5 men wearing glasses, 8X10 [this might<br>be the 5 Blind Boys of Jackson?]               |
|                 |                           | Negative - 2 men beside one another leaning on a<br>knee, 8X10                                       |
|                 |                           | Negative labels that have fallen off   |
| Folder 12       | Negatives A – C           | Negative - The Angelic Gospel Singers - 5 women,<br>4 with glasses, 1 holding a CBS microphone, 8X10 |
|                 |                           | Negatives - Bells of Joy - 6 men in suits, one<br>holding a guitar, 8x10 (4 copies)                  |



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|           |                 | Negative - award to the Bells of Joy, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Bells of Joy - 6 men framed in a bell, 1 kneeling with his hands open, 1 standing with a guitar, 8X10<br><br>Negative - Bells of Joy - 6 men, each face inside a bell design, 3 bells on top row, 4 on bottom row    |
|           |                 | Negatives - Brother Cleophus Robinson, 4 1/2 X 6 (2 copies)<br><br>Negative - Brother Cleophus Robinson - man standing with his hands open, 8X10<br><br>Negative - Brother Cleophus Robinson -shoulder head shot of a man, 8X10 |
|           |                 | Negative - The Christland Singers - 5 men in diagonal order, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - Christian Travelers - 7 men in suits with 3 seated and 5 standing, 8X10  |
| Folder 13 | Negatives D – G | Negative - Dixie Hummingbirds - 5 men in 2 rows, 2 in bottom row are wearing glasses, 5X6   |
|           |                 | Negatives - The Five Blind Boys Jackson Harmonizers - 5 men, 4 wearing glasses, 8X10 (2 copies)   |
|           |                 | Negative - The Four Internes - 5 men in suits, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - Gladys Hill - woman with beaded necklaces, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Golden Harp Gospel Singers - 5 women, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - The Gospelairees - 6 men in light suits and dark shirts, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - The Gospel Tones - 7 men in suits arranged in two vertical rows, 8X10<br><br>Negative - The Gospel Tones - 7 men in suits arranged in three vertical rows, 8X10  |

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|           |                 | Negative - The Gospel Tones - 7 men in suits arranged in two horizontal rows, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Jeanette Harris, Leader of The Golden Harp Gospel Singers - women in a head shoulder shot looking over her shoulder, 8X10  |
| Folder 14 | Negatives H – P | <p>Negative - Joe Hinton - man with his hands crossed and has an open collared shirt, 8X10</p> <p>Negatives - Joe Hinton – man, multi design shirt with a thin mustache, 4 ½ X 5 (2 copies)</p> <p>Negative - Joe Hinton - man with a thin mustache, checkered jacket, 8X10</p> |
|           |                 | Negative - Louis Jones - man leaning on one elbow, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - The Loving Sisters - 5 women in choir robes, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Chester McDowell - head shot of a man with his hands crossed and on chin, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - The Mighty Mighty Clouds of Joy - 6 men in 2 rows and light colored tuxedos, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Paul Monday - man singing and playing a piano, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Ollie Marie Adams Blues & Torch Singer - a woman with a flower designed necklace, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negatives - The Original Casuals - 3 men, 1 holding a guitar, 4X4 ½ (2 copies)  |
|           |                 | Negative - Rosetta Perry - a woman looking to the side with arms crossed, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Al Grey and Rosetta Perry - a woman looking to the side with arms crossed above; a man holding a trombone, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - The Pilgrim Jubilee Singers - 5 men in   |

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|           |                 | light colored suits, 1 holding a guitar, 8X10  |
| Folder 15 | Negatives S – V | Negative - The Scamps - 5 men in vertical order, 8X10<br><br>Negative - The Scamps - 5 men with different instruments, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - The Sensational Nightingales - 6 men, 1 with glasses, wearing light colored suits with dark shirts and ties, 8X10 |
|           |                 | Negative - Swanee Spiritual Singers of Dothan Alabama - 6 men in 2 rows, and 2 in the center are wearing glasses, 8X10       |
|           |                 | Negative - Shaw & His Union Spiritual Harmonizers - a man with his hand on his arm leaning on his knee, 8X10                 |
|           |                 | Negative - Spirit of Memphis Quartet - 7 men, Western Victorian ties, 8X10   |
|           |                 | Negative - The Stripes of Glory - 5 men in uniforms, 1 kneeling with a microphone in his hand, 8X10                          |
|           |                 | Negative - The Sunset Travelers - 5 men, 1 holding a guitar wearing glasses, 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton- woman smiling with her arm bent in front of her waist, 8X10                       |
|           |                 | Negatives - Willie Mae Thornton - a woman with a flower designed earring, 8X10 (2 copies)                                    |
|           |                 | Negatives - Willie Mae Thornton - a woman, a cluster of 5 photos of the same woman singing, 8X10 (4 copies)                  |
|           |                 | Negative - Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, Vocalist and Comedienne - a woman in a pantsuit and applejack hat, 8X10           |
|           |                 | Negative - Ike & Tina Turner - 8X10  |
|           |                 | Negative - Jackie Verdell - a woman with either short or pulled back hair, 8X10  |

**Arrangement:**

The arrangement scheme follows original order, as the Center received the materials. The collection is organized by three subject areas: 1. Business documents, grouped according type of record and arranged chronologically. 2. Photographs, organized alphabetically by name. 3. Negatives, organized alphabetically by name.

**Location:**

This collection is located in the Manuscript section of the Center for Popular Music archival stacks, organized by accession number.

**Related Materials:**

Other manuscript collections related to gospel music include "Bessemer [Alabama] Black Gospel Quartets" 89-064, "Black Gospel Disc Collection" 89-009, and "Doug Seroff African American Gospel Quartet Collection" 10-026. Manuscript collections related music business include "Brad McCuen Collection" 97-023, "Charlie Walker Collection" 08-020, "Joel S. Herron Collection" 12-030, and "Lance LeRoy Collection" 14-008. The Center for Popular Music also holds other materials, such as sound recordings, books, photographs, and sheet music, related to gospel and R&B music and artists.

Processed by Katie Rainge-Briggs, January-May 2017.