



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

SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATION RECORDS

89-090; 90-025

Creator:

Center for Popular Music staff
Robert Cogswell

Type of Material:

Photographs, manuscript audio materials, clippings

Physical Description:

3 audio cassette tapes (TCA-0120A/B, TCA-0122)
86 photographs
1 folder of manuscript materials

Languages:

English

Dates:

31 May 1990

Access/Restrictions:

The collection is open for research use. *All materials in this collection are subject to standard national and international copyright laws. Center staff are able to assist with copyright questions for this material.*

Preferred Citation:

(Box Number, Folder Number/Name), Sonny Boy Williamson Historic Marker Dedication Records, Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Provenance and Acquisition Information:

TCA-0122 tape was made by Tim Roberts, Center audio assistant. TCA-0120A/B was made by Center audio archivist Bruce Nemerov from original tapes made by WMOT radio. Manuscripts copied from originals. The photographs were taken by Robert Cogswell, coordinator of the Tennessee Folk Arts program, a division of the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Subjects/Index Terms:

Sonny Boy Williamson
Historic Markers
Harmonica
Jackson, Tennessee
Blues Music

Agency History/Biographical Sketch:

John Lee Curtis "Sonny Boy" Williamson (March 30, 1914 – June 1, 1948) was an American blues harmonica player, singer and songwriter. He is often regarded as the pioneer of the blues harp as a solo instrument. He played on hundreds of recordings by many pre–World War II blues artists. Under his own name, he was one of the most recorded blues musicians of the 1930s and 1940s and is closely associated with Chicago producer Lester Melrose and Bluebird Records. His popular songs, original or adapted, include "Good Morning, School Girl", "Sugar Mama", "Early in the Morning", and "Stop Breaking Down".

Williamson's harmonica style was a great influence on postwar performers. Later in his career, he was a mentor to many up-and-coming blues musicians who moved to Chicago, including Muddy Waters. Williamson was born in Madison County, Tennessee, near Jackson, in 1914. His original recordings are in the country blues style, but he soon demonstrated skill at making the harmonica a lead instrument for the blues and popularized it for the first time in a more urban blues setting. He has been called "the father of modern blues harp". While in his teens he joined Yank Rachell and Sleepy John Estes, playing with them in Tennessee and Arkansas. In 1934 he settled in Chicago.

- Wikipedia contributors. "Sonny Boy Williamson I." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 23 Jan. 2024. Web.

Scope and Content:

Audio tape cassette of the dedication of a Tennessee Historical Commission marker sponsored by the Jackson Madison County public library in Jackson, TN, to blues harmonica player and Jackson native Sonny Boy Williamson and copies of the marker text (including bibliographic citations); an invitation to, press release about and program of the dedication; and an article about the dedication from the Jackson (TN) Sun 31 May 1990. 59 contact prints and negatives and 27 5x7 black and white prints (including 13 duplicates) of the dedication.

Also audio tape cassettes of 5 minute feature (TCA 0120A) by the news staff of WMOT and of a 15 minute feature (TCA 0120B) by WMOT program director based on an interview with Center audio archivist Bruce Nemerov concerning the dedication.

The Center had supported the Jackson library in its petition for the marker, and Nemerov represented the Center and spoke at the dedication in Jackson 1 June 1990. He was accompanied by harmonica/guitar blues duo William House and Jack Pearson who performed at the dedication. Examples of music by Williamson and by House/Pearson appear on the third tape.

Arrangement:

Original processing archivist had separated photographs of for storage and access. The collection was reassembled storing photographs and manuscript materials together in a box with other small collections, in order of accession number. Audio tapes are stored in the audio-visual section of the archive by tape number.

Collection Contents (Box/Folder List):

Box # Folder # Title / Description

Box 1

Folder 1	Manuscript materials Clippings, press releases, invitation
Folder 2	Photographs 59 contact prints and negatives and 27 5x7 black and white prints (including 13 duplicates) of the dedication

Materials Cataloged Separately:

No items from this collection are cataloged separately from this finding aid.

Location:

Audio visual materials are filed by tape number in the audio-visual archives. Manuscripts and photographs are filed by accession number with other manuscript groups.

Related Materials:

The Center holds other items related to Sonny Boy Williamson including sound recordings, CPM programs and reading room books. All items can be searched for in the Center's catalog.