Guide to the Barrett Deems Papers
circa 1950s-1999

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Descriptive Summary

Identifier ICU.SPCL.DEEMSB

Title Deems, Barrett. Papers

Date circa 1950s-1999

Size 2.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

Repository Special Collections Research Center
University of Chicago Library
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Barrett Deems, drummer. The Barrett Deems Papers contain articles, correspondence, photographs, obituaries and funeral programs, concert and event ephemera, publications, organization newsletters, and a poster.

Acknowledgments
The Barrett Deems Papers were processed and preserved as part of the "Uncovering New Chicago Archives Project," funded with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Information on Use

Access
Series I, Personal, does not include access copies for the audio material in this series. Researchers will need to consult with staff before requesting material from this series.

The remainder of the collection is open for research.

Citation
When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Deems, Barrett. Papers, [Box#, Folder#], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note
Barrett Deems was born in 1914 in Springfield, IL. Deems, once billed as “the world’s fastest drummer,” began his professional career in the late 1920s and led several Chicago-area bands, including his own Barrett Deams 18-piece Big Band.

Deems worked with Joe Venuti, Jimmy Dorsey, Red Norvo, Muggsy Spanier, Jack Teagarden, and Art Hodes. While leading his own band, Chicago’s Brass Rail Club, Deems also collaborated with the Dukes of Dixieland, Joe Kelly’s Gaslight Band, and several Louis Armstrong tribute

Deems was best known for his energetic nature and fast, driving drumming technique. Legend has it Louis Armstrong said of him: “He makes coffee nervous.”

Deems died in 1998.

Scope Note
The Barrett Deems Papers are divided into two Series I, Personal; and Series II, Organizations and Publications. The Barrett Deems Papers contain articles, correspondence, photographs, obituaries and funeral programs, concert and event ephemera, publications, organization newsletters, and a poster.

Series I, Personal, contains correspondence, a photograph, concert and event ephemera, and a compact disc. Correspondence includes letters from jazz societies and organizations, geriatric publications, musicians, and friends. The photograph is of an unknown musician taken by Louis H. Kaufman. Concert ephemera include programs, fliers, and advertisements for performances given by Deems. The event ephemera are arranged by location and include programs, fliers, and advertisements from jazz festivals and events. There are obituaries and funeral programs of musicians including Philly Joe Jones and Hillard Brown. There is a proof sheet of biographical information on Deems for “Who’s Who in Entertainment.” The compact disc was produced by Arts Midwest and is a professional recording of Johnny Frigo, Isaac "Redd" Holt, and Willie Pickens.

Series II, Organizations and Publications, contains publications such as The Jazz Rag, Down Beat, Vantage, and The Mississippi Rag. International Musician is in German. There are newsletters from various organizations including “Bix Notes,” “Browsers’ Notes,” and “The Force of Jazz” as well as directories for the Associated Musicians of Greater New York and the Chicago Federation of Musicians. There is a brochure from Delmark Records. The articles feature performances, musicians, and art related news, and an article about Deems in “Health and Harmony.” Also included is a poster advertising a performance by Deems. Oversize publications are in Box 3.

Related Resources
The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html
Chicago Jazz Archive

Subject Headings

• Deems, Barrett
• Jazz
• Jazz -- History and criticism
• Jazz -- Illinois -- Chicago
• Jazz -- Periodicals
• Jazz festivals
• Jazz musicians
• University of Chicago. Chicago Jazz Archive

INVENTORY

Series I: Personal

Box 1
Folder 1
    Application, Chicago Artists Abroad, 1990
Box 1
Folder 2
    Certificate, Chicago Federation of Musicians, 1996
Box 1
Folder 3
    Compact Disc, Midwest Jazz Masters, 1999
Box 1
Folder 4
    Concert Ephemera, Deems, 1989-1998
Box 1
Folder 5
    Correspondence, 1986-1997
Box 1
Folder 6
    Event, California, 1979-1989
Box 1
Folder 7
Box 1
Folder 8
    Event, Illinois, 16th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival, 1994
Box 1
Folder 9
Box 1
Folder 10
    Event, Iowa, 1996
Box 1
Folder 11
   Event, Missouri, 1992
Box 1
Folder 12
   Event, Pennsylvania, 1983
Box 1
Folder 13
   Event, Wisconsin, 1992-1997
Box 1
Folder 14
   Obituaries, 1985-1994
Box 1
Folder 15
   Photograph, undated
Box 1
Folder 16
   Royalty Check, American Federation of Musicians, 1995
Box 1
Folder 17
   "Who's Who in Entertainment," undated

Series II: Organizations and Publications

Box 1
Folder 18
   Arbor Records, 1994
Box 1
Folder 19
   Arts Midwest Jazz Letter, 1991
Box 1
Folder 20
Box 2
Folder 1
   "The Big Bands," 1977
Box 2
Folder 2
   "Bix Notes," 1996
Box 2
Folder 3
Box 2
Folder 4
   Chicago Federation of Musicians, Directory, 1995-1996
Box 2
Folder 5
Box 2
Folder 6
Delmark Records, undated
Box 2
Folder 7
Down Beat, 1991
Box 2
Folder 8
Box 2
Folder 9
International Musician, 1980
Box 2
Folder 10
The Jazz Rag, 1998
Box 2
Folder 11
Vantage, 1990
Box 3
Folder 1
Articles, circa 1950s-1997
Box 3
Folder 2
Barfly Newspaper, 1997
Box 3
Folder 3
"Health and Harmony," 1985
Box 3
Folder 4
Illinois Entertainer, 1995
Box 3
Folder 5
Inside, 1998
Box 3
Folder 6
The Mississippi Rag, 1986-1996
Box 3
Folder 7
Poster, 1980
Box 3
Folder 8
Reader, 1993