



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Willis Jackson papers**

1955-1984

Sc MG 332

## Summary

**Creator:** Jackson, Willis

**Title:** Willis Jackson papers

**Date:** 1955-1984

**Size:** 2.21 linear feet (3 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of James L. Watson, 1989.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson was a composer, arranger, and saxophonist. The Willis Jackson papers consist principally of holograph musical compositions, mainly instrumental parts, composed and arranged by Jackson and others.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Willis Jackson papers, Sc MG 332, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

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**Separated Materials:**

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Transferred to the Photograph and Prints Division: photographs.

## Creator History

Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson, composer, arranger, and saxophonist, was born in 1932, in Miami, Florida. He began studying the piano at age ten, then added the clarinet, and made his professional debut at

age fourteen on the tenor saxophone with local bands. Jackson studied theory and harmony at Florida A and M University, and later worked and toured with Cootie Williams, Dinah Washington, and Jackie Wilson, among others. He formed various groups including the Willis Jackson Organ Quartet and the Willis Jackson Orchestra and utilized a rhythm and blues sound as well as jazz. His invention, the Jackson's Gator Horn, is a saxophone used for ballads; its sound is a cross "between soprano and alto [saxophone] and French horn and clarinet". Jackson died in 1987.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Willis Jackson papers consist principally of holograph musical compositions, mainly instrumental parts, composed and arranged by Jackson and others. The compositions are arrangements of standard jazz classics, popular tunes, and bossa nova pieces. Also included are performance contracts; songwriters' agreements; a small amount of personal and professional correspondence; and lists of compositions, recordings, and group members.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American composers

African American musicians

Jazz

Jazz musicians -- United States

Popular music -- United States -- 20th century

### **Names**

Jackson, Willis

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