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

SONNY JAMES COLLECTION 18-026

Creator:
James, Sonny [James Hugh Loden] (May 1, 1928 – February 22, 2016)
Loden Family

Type of Material:
Manuscript Materials, Scrapbooks, Clippings, Performance Documents, Souvenir Items, Photographs, Manuscript Audio/Visual Materials, Sound Recordings

Physical Description:
5 linear feet of manuscript materials, including scrapbooks, clippings, programs, souvenir items, photos, Country Music Hall of Fame induction items, 5 oversized posters.
11 videos
  o 1 manuscript VHS
  o 2 – 16mm manuscript films
  o 8 – ¾” manuscript U-Matics
4 commercial CDs
232 audio discs
  o 4 – 7” commercial LPs
  o 58 – 12” commercial LPs
  o 131 – 7” commercial 45rpsms
  o 18 – 10” manuscript LPs
  o 21 – 10” manuscript 45rpsms
260 audio tapes
  o 1 – commercial 8-track
  o 3 commercial cassette tapes
  o 11 – manuscript microcassette tapes
  o 134 – manuscript cassette tapes
  o 5 – manuscript 2 inch reel-to-reel masters
  o 5 – manuscript 1 inch reel-to-reel masters
  o 34 – manuscript ¼ inch (10”) reel-to-reel masters
  o 12 – manuscript ½ inch reel-to-reel masters
Sonny James Collection 18-026

- 1 – manuscript 3 inch reel-to-reel
- 44 – manuscript 7 inch reel-to-reels
- 10 – manuscript 5 inch reel-to-reels

**Dates:**
1938-2016, bulk 1950-1984; 2006

**Restrictions:**
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.

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**
This collection was donated to the Center by Sonny James’ niece and nephew Donna Mora and Charles Holcombe. Mr. Holcombe delivered the collection to the Center on March 7, 2019.

**Arrangement:**
The original arrangement scheme for the collection was maintained during processing where there was order implied, including some folder naming; otherwise, the processing archivist organized the collection for ease of use.

**Subject/Index Terms:**
James, Sonny, 1928-2016
Grand ole opry (Radio program)
Loden, James
Loden Family Band
The Loden Family and Sonny Boy
Country music fan clubs
Southern Gentlemen (band)
Robble, Gary
Liggett, Milo
West, Duane
Bown, Lin

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**
“Sonny” James Hugh Loden was born May 1, 1928 in Hackleburg, Alabama, to a musical farming family. His parents, Archie Lee “Pop” Loden and Della Burleson Loden, and sister Thelma Lee Loden (Holcombe), known as The Loden Family, had their own radio show on WMSD-AM in Muscle-Shoals, AL in the early 1930s. The Loden Family unofficially adopted a young Ruby Palmer, who also sang in the family band. While the Loden Family started with a radio show in Muscle Shoals, they moved over the next 15 years to do radio shows in Jackson, MS, Blytheville, AR, Knoxville, TN, Raleigh, NC, Memphis, TN and Birmingham, AL. They did a live show very weekday morning and performed in the listening area on the weekends at auditoriums and tent shows. James also won many fiddle contests throughout the southeast.
James served in the Korean War in the Alabama Army National Guard. After his service in the military, he moved to Nashville, TN. In 1954, James was signed by Ken Nelson to Capitol Records, when it was suggested he change his stage name for simplicity to Sonny James. James became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in October 1962. In the 1970s he signed with Columbia Records. Sonny James produced Marie Osmond’s “Paper Roses”, on MGM Records in 1973; the song sold over one million records.

From 1953 to 1983, Sonny James charted 72 times, including 23 that reached #1. According to Billboard statistics, between 1960 and 1979 he spent fifty-seven weeks in the #1 chart position—more than any other country artist of the era.

Sonny James was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2006.

**Scope and Content:**

**Collection Contents (Box/Folder List):**
[Folder titles in brackets given by processing archivist.]

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<th>Box #</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1</td>
<td><strong>Manuscript Materials</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Loden Family</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
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<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Alabama Music Hall of Fame</td>
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<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>2005 Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony</td>
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<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>2006 Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony</td>
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<td>Folder 6</td>
<td>2008 Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony</td>
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<td>Folder 7</td>
<td>2012 Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony</td>
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<td>Folder 8</td>
<td>The Southern Gentlemen Letters to Sonny</td>
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<td>Folder 9</td>
<td>CMA Membership/Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 10</td>
<td>Press Kits</td>
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<td>Folder 11</td>
<td>Sonny James Discography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 12</td>
<td>Sheet Music (<em>search CPM catalog for more sheet music</em>)</td>
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<th>Box 2</th>
<th><strong>Manuscript Materials</strong></th>
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<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Fan Club News</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Track listings</td>
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<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Lyrics</td>
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<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Stage Show Outline &amp; Programs</td>
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<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>Dial 116 Script</td>
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<td>Folder 6</td>
<td>Marie Osmond (includes photographs)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 3</th>
<th><strong>Photographs</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Sonny Loden &amp; His Southerners / Loden Family Band</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Sonny James Promotional photos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Sonny James &amp; the Country Gentlemen</td>
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</table>
Folder 4  Sonny James House / Tour bus
Folder 5  Friends of Sonny James – Radio casts
Folder 6  Friends of Sonny James
Folder 7  Miscellaneous 1950s
Folder 8  Southern Gentlemen Store signing [Georgia]
Folder 9  Korea [military]
Folder 10 Country Music Hall of Fame Induction photos
Folder 11 Pop Goes the Country [includes negatives]
Folder 12 Minneapolis 1975 – slides
Folder 13 “In Prison” Album photos – park photos

Box 4  Photographs
Folder 1  Miscellaneous photos
Folder 2  2003 Photos for website [includes negatives]
Folder 3  Reprints from website
Folder 4  Choice Photos for copies [includes negatives]
Folder 5  Sonny James album covers negatives
Folder 6  Mounted photographs

Box 5  Clippings [folder titles given by processing archivist]
Folder 1  Clippings – “Early Years” – Sonny Loden 1940s
Folder 2  Clippings – 1965-1966
Folder 3  Clippings – Sonny James Month Nov 1966
Folder 4  Clippings – 1967
Folder 5  Clippings – 1970
Folder 6  Clippings – 1971
Folder 7  Clippings – 1972
Folder 8  Clippings – 1973-1976
Folder 9  Clippings – 1977-1994
Folder 10 Clippings – 2000-2006
Folder 11 Clippings – Neighbor Day
Folder 12 Clippings – Country Music Hall of Fame Induction
Folder 13 Clippings – undated

Box 6  Programs and Periodicals
Sonny James Songbook [in Japanese]
Souvenir Program Picture Album
The Sonny James Songbook
Full Sonny James Press Kit
Amusement Business March 1, 1969
BMI: The Many Worlds of Music Fall 1987
CMA Close Up Oct/Nov 2006
Country Music People Sept 1980
Country Music People Feb 2001
Country Scene Sept 1980
Country Song Roundup Aug 1966
Country Song Roundup Oct 1967
Country Song Roundup Mar 1972
Country Weekly June 18, 2007
Hit Parader Songs & Stories June 1973
Keynotes [Capitol Records] undated
Music Capitol News Countrywide
Shindig Issue May-June 1972 The
Music Reporter June 29, 1963
Radio & Record Report Feb 14, 1975
Rustic Rhythm Jul 1957
TV Radio Mirror Jan 1958
TV Radio Mirror June 1963

Box 7    Country Music Hall of Fame Induction Book
Framed thank you speech
Leather box containing ephemera relating to induction

Box 8    Manuscript Scrapbook
Dorris Loden’s cookbook

Box 9    Fan created scrapbooks
Fan Photo album [Rehoused for preservation]
Fan’s family Sonny James Scrapbook [Rehoused for preservation]

Box 10   Manuscript Scrapbook
1950s black scrapbook [mostly publications/programs]

Box 11   Manuscript Scrapbook
1950s woodgrain scrapbook [mostly clippings]
Pearl Tie tack

Box 12   Manuscript Scrapbook
#1 Guitar photo album [rehoused for preservation, original retained for context]

Box 13   Manuscript Scrapbook
Oversized mounted family photographs
Red & Black 150s scrapbook [mostly clippings]
“My Radio Scrapbook” [early career/Loden Family, mostly photographs]

Box 14   Manuscript Scrapbook
“Chuck’s Red Scrapbook” [created by Charles Holcombe, Sonny James’ nephew documenting the career of Sonny James, including personal letters. This was rehoused for preservation, original scrapbook retained for context.]

Location:
All manuscript materials are located in the special collections storage area filed by accession number. Please contact Audio Curator and/or Archivist for audio/visual materials. Oversized posters are located in the map drawers – ask archivist for access.
**Items Cataloged Separately:**

**Rare books:**
- Conway Twitty souvenir book
- Super Stars of Country Music picture book
- The Sonny James Songbook
- Souvenir Program Picture Album [Sonny James]
- Songs as Sung by Happy Wilson and his Golden River Boys
- Lew Childre Memory Book: Songs, Poems and Stuff
- Marson Music, Inc. Publisher’s binders [sheet music of all James’ songs]

**Sheet music:**
- Come On In
- Shutters and Boards
- The Minute You’re Gone
- Runnings Bear
- Hold What You’ve Got
- Behind the Tear
- Only the Lonely
- I Love You More and More Every Day
- Here Comes Honey Again
- A Mi Esposa Con Amor (To My Wife with Love)
- I’m So In Love with You
- A Little Bit South of Saskatoon
- Talk of the School

**Related Materials:**
The George Hamilton, IV Collection (17-027), the Charlie Walker Collection (08-020),
the Osmond Collection (10-007), other Grand Ole Opry and country music items can be
found by searching the CPM catalog.

Processed by Olivia M. Beaudry, July-October 2019.