

**Conservation ID Number:** 22-060

**NYU Libraries Barbara Goldsmith Book and Paper Conservation Laboratory**

**Collection:** Tamiment-Wagner

**Call, Bib, or Collection**

**Curator:** Shannon O'Neil

**Number:**

AIA.031.001

**Title:** Mick Moloney Irish-American Music and Popular Culture Commercial Recordings Collection  
AIA.031.001

**Creator:** Mick Moloney (collector)

**Date:** 20th century

**Dimensions:** 10 x 10 (in)

**Format:**

KEY WSP=Wheat  
Starch Paste PST=Pressure  
Sensitive Tape; MC= Methyl  
Cellulose; PVA= Polyvinyl  
Acetate; DiH2O= Dionized  
Water

**Publication Information:**

**Curator Notes:**

MOLDY discs found in 20 Cooper quarantine room

#### **Object Description and Condition Report**

Dimensions: The objects arrived at the lab in one 16" x 12" Paige cardboard box and were rehoused into three 11" x 7" x 11" boxes.  
Each record has a 10" diameter except one Pathé disc, which has a 11.5" diameter.  
Number of Objects: 68 records

Summary: These records make up a fraction of the Moloney Collection, which includes over 3500 sound recordings of Irish and Irish-American music spanning nearly a century. All but one of the discs in this portion of the collection are 10", 78 RPM records dating from the turn of the century through the 1950s. Major labels such as Columbia, Victor, and Decca are represented, as well as smaller ethnic labels such as Copely and Celtic. Some of the discs were acquired by Moloney from the record library of the Irish Hour, a long-running radio show hosted by Pat Stanton. The records' content ranges from traditionally trained Irish vocalists, to instrumental Irish music, to Irish-American pop songs.

Object Description (Technology and Structure): 78 RPM records are most commonly made from a shellac resin, although after World War II, they were often pressed in vinyl. The shellac-based discs also contain a variety of fillers and additives, such as carbon black for color and cotton fibers for increased strength. Early 78s were produced completely mechanically, without electricity, and are termed "acoustic" recordings. Sound was collected through a horn and funneled toward a vibrating diaphragm. The vibrations controlled the movements of a stylus which cut grooves into a rotating wax master disc. Examples of this early recording technology among these sixty-eight Moloney records include two Edison Diamond Discs, which are thicker than the rest at about 0.25", would have required a different playback machine, and are made from an early plastic known as Amberol. The only non-78 RPM record in this set, a 90 RPM 11.5" Pathé disc, is also an acoustic recording, and would have required its own sapphire ball-shaped stylus. Some early records, including the Edison Diamond discs and Pathé disc, were "vertical cut," meaning sound was recorded as variations in the depth of the record's grooves. Others were "lateral cut," meaning that the cutting stylus moved horizontally when recording sound, in plane with the record. In the mid 1920s, records began to be produced using electricity: a microphone and amplifier captured the sound as an electrical signal, which controlled the movements of a recording head. At this time, the "lateral cut" method became standard. A 10" 78 RPM record has a duration of roughly three minutes per side.

Condition Report: The set of records showed signs of mold damage in the form of white and brown-colored spots and smears on both the labels and discs. Additionally, fifteen of the records had cracks, breakages, and losses summarized in the table below.

Item no.

Other identifying information (record label, inscriptions)

Condition issue(s) (approximate size in inches)

19.174 Box 7

Columbia

Edge loss (1") and related minor radial crack (3")

19.215 Box 7

Decca

Minor radial crack (2")

13.075 Box 42

Decca, "Property of Pat Stanton" label

3 minor radial cracks (2")

23.080 Box 38

"Property of Pat Stanton" label

Detached edge fragment (1") and subtle radial crack (3")

15.077 Box 20

Gael Linn

Edge loss (2")  
12.042 Box 8  
Regal Zonophone  
Detached edge fragment (3")  
13.288 Box 29  
Decca  
Subtle radial crack (3")  
19.189 Box 7  
Irish Records  
Minor radial crack (1")  
13.263 Box 29  
MGM  
Subtle radial crack (4")  
13.257 Box 29  
MGM  
Subtly radial crack (4")  
13.306 Box 9  
Standard  
Major radial crack (5")  
11.057 Box 26  
Decca  
Major radial crack (4")  
12.033 Box 8  
Columbia  
Curved edge crack (3")  
19.198 Box 7  
Columbia  
2 major radial cracks (4")  
18.049 Box 6  
Decca  
Major radial crack (4")

**Treatment Proposal:**

Treatment Proposal: Perform mold remediation by vacuuming either side of the records' labels, clean the discs using a Keith Monks Record Cleaning Machine, and re-house them in new sleeves. The records should be divided among multiple smaller boxes to reduce risk of accident or damage during handling.

**Testing:**

Testing: To better understand the technology and structure of the records, a few discs were examined using microscopy, ultraviolet fluorescence, and FTIR. These were two detached fragments from Item no. 23.080 Box 38 and 12.042 Box 8, and an exposed broken edge of Item no. 19.174 Box 7. Under magnification, the detached fragments appeared to be made up of a homogeneous, fine-grained material. The exposed edge of the intact Columbia record had a slightly different structure: a more coarsely-textured core, with a discrete layer of beige fibrous material between it and the grooved surface. These differences demonstrate the variation in techniques and materials used by different record labels. Under ultraviolet radiation, the samples did not have the bright orange fluorescence that is characteristic of shellac, although this does not rule out a shellac component, as the UV-absorbing nature of additives such as carbon black may interfere. FTIR was conducted on the two detached fragments from Items no. 23.080 Box 38 and 12.042 Box 8.

**Treatment Description:** ☐ Photo Documentation ☒ Mold ☒ RehouseOnly ☐ Salvage Treatment

**Treatment Performed:**

The workflow for each record was as follows:

Each side of the record's label was vacuumed under the fume hood, while mold removal was gently encouraged with a soft Hake brush. The record was removed from its old sleeve and checked for condition issues.

If the record was structurally stable, it was placed on the Keith Monks Record Cleaning Machine. The disc was washed with the Monks Machine's cleaning brush and solution, rinsed with the rinsing brush and deionized water, and dried with the Monks Machine's vacuum attachment.

Item numbers or cataloging information from the old sleeve was transferred to the new sleeve. The record was inserted and placed inside the storage box.

Of the sixty-eight records, sixty-three received the full treatment, while five were determined to be too damaged and fragile to undergo cleaning using the Monks Machine. Their labels were vacuumed for mold remediation and they were placed in new sleeves. Their item numbers are as follows:

13.306 Box 9  
11.057 Box 26  
12.033 Box 8

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19.198 Box 7

18.049 Box 6

**Enclosure:** Archival box - prefabricated

**Date to Conservation:** 5/30/2022

**Conservator:** Jenks

**Date Returned:** 6/28/2022

**Notes:**

**Treatment Time (hours):** 18

Guidelines for Handling and Storage: Always handle the records with gloves and avoid putting stress on fragile areas of damage. Records should be stored in a cool, dry environment and positioned vertically, as a horizontal stack places pressure and weight on discs toward the bottom of the pile and can cause them to crack.

**References:**

"Guide to the Mick Moloney Irish-American Music and Popular Culture Commercial Recordings Collection," The Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Archives, [http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/aia\\_031\\_001/scopecontent.html](http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/aia_031_001/scopecontent.html)

"The history of 78 RPM records," Yale University Library, <https://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/historyof78rpms>

"Phonograph Record," Preservation Self-Assessment Program (PSAP), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, <https://psap.library.illinois.edu/collection-id-guide/phonodisc>