

SAMMY PRICE PAPERS

The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research
in Black Culture
515 Malcolm Blvd.
New York, New York 10037

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SAMMY PRICE PAPERS, 1929 -1992.

10 Record Cartons and one Large Flat Box, 11 linear feet

Biographical Sketch

Samuel "Sammy" Blythe Price, a self-taught pianist, was born October 6, 1908 in Honey Grove, Texas. Growing up, his family occasionally boarded traveling musicians, introducing him to the world of music at an early age. At the age of 17, he debuted onstage dancing the Charleston with the Alphonso Trent Orchestra in 1925 and eventually toured with the TOBA circuit, playing piano with renowned musicians like Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson. Price was an accomplished and prolific recording artist, recording his first blues album in 1929 in Dallas, Texas for J. Mayo Williams, under the band title *Sam Price and his Four Quarters*. Through his relationship with Williams, in 1937 Price became the house pianist and recording supervisor and band leader at Decca Records in New York where he remained until 1954. Decca also signed him as a recording artist. He performed with singers such as Trixie Smith, Coot Grant and Wesley Wilson, Blue Lu Barker, Bea Booze and Peetie Wheatstraw for Decca. Eventually landing his own session in 1940, called *Sam Price and His Texas Blusicians*.

Price often performed at places such as the Café Society (1938-1940), Famous Door (1942-1944), Metropole (ca. 1940s-1950s) and Crawdaddy, Sweetwater and the West End Café (ca. 1970s-1980s). He organized the Jazz Festival Society of Philadelphia, a concert series held every Sunday afternoon, and the Harlem Jazz Festival Society. In the mid-1950s Price was booked by Jeunesses Musicales de France, and went on tour in Europe and North Africa with Emmett Berry, George Stevenson, Herbie Hall, Pops Foster and Fred Moore. He enjoyed much success playing at places such as the Salle Gaveau in Paris, Palais Chaillot, and the Olympia, and produced many records. Price put together a jazz trio for the Copley Plaza Hotel where he worked during the early 1980s. Eubie Blake ordained Price as the "boogie-woogie" king.

While in New York, Price became politically active in Harlem after meeting Adam Clayton Powell on a NAACP boat ride. Price's uncle, Joseph E. Ford, managed Clayton Powell's political affairs. However, it was not until the 1960s that Price really became committed to political activities. He became the head of the Neighborhood Board no.2, which was a community organization governed by HARYOU-ACT that worked with inner-city youth.

Scope Note

The Sammy Price Papers, 1929-1992, are organized into three series: **PERSONAL, MUSIC and POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**, the bulk of which relate to his music career.

The **PERSONAL ca. 1969-1988 (2 lin. ft.) series** contains biographical information, passports, certificates and awards. The most significant part of this series pertains to interviews with Price, various versions of his autobiography *What Do They Want* and other writings on his life and career.

The **MUSIC ca. 1929-1992 (5 lin. ft.) series** includes sheet music, published and unpublished and songs and lyrics (handwritten and typed, some annotated) by Price and others, as well as flyers, programs and printed matter relating to his music career. The contracts and correspondence detail the financial and legal background for his songs, performances, concerts and engagements. The financial matter is significant in that Price kept thorough records of his royalties, taxes, and bank statements which gleans insight into the money he made as a musician for the majority of his career.

The **POLITICAL ACTIVITIES 1965-1990 (4 lin. ft.) series** is organized into four subseries and documents community activism in Harlem, especially with HARYOU-ACT. The series contains correspondence, mostly in Price's capacity as director of Neighborhood Board no. 2 although his involvement in other organizations and his position as executive director of the Sam Price and Associates, a public relations consultancy, is also represented, along with memoranda, financial documents and printed matter.

The Neighborhood Board no. 2 files form the bulk of the series and outline the programmatic and financial workings of the board. The proposals and memoranda in particular detail the board's goals and objectives, and hint at how funding cuts affected their overall vision. Also included are plans and reports related to the election of community boards broadly representative of the community's major interest groups. The Other Organizations and Agencies subseries provide a picture of the various vehicles operating to offer services in Harlem and to develop grassroots leadership of adults and youth in attempts to solve the problems facing the community.

Donor: Sharon Mack
Gift, 1991

Processed by Miranda-Tarisa Mims and Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, 2014

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
		PERSONAL
1	1	Will
	2	Passports
	3	Certificates
	4	Membership Cards
	5	Medical
		Legal
	6	Riverton Association
	7	Auto Accident
	8	Miscellaneous
	9	Checker Club
	10	Greeting Cards
	11	Obituaries - Others
	12	Drawings of Price
	13-15	Phone Books
	16-17	Calendars
		Biographical Information
	18	Biographical
	19-21	Interviews and Writings on Price
		<i>What Do They Want</i>
	22	Promotional Material
	23-27	Writing/Drafts
2	1-9	Writing/Drafts
	10-13	Writing - Handwritten
		Writings by Others
		<i>Tambourines to Glory</i> - Langston Hughes
	14	Uncut Version, 1959
	15	Rehearsal Version, 1960
	16	<i>Sarah Vaughan</i> (2 copies), <i>Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra</i> and <i>The Incredible Jimmy Smith</i>
3		MUSIC
	1-3	Sheet Music - Sammy Price (hand written music, words/notes)
	4-9	Sheet Music - Others
	10	Discography and Related
		Financial
4	1-6	Contracts
	7-13	Royalties
	14-17	Financial - General
	18	Taxes

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
5	1-8	Correspondence General
	9-10	Schedules
	11-13	Calendars
	14-15	Notes
	16	Bios of Musicians
	17	Resumes of Musicians
	18	Phone List
	19	Harlem Jazz Music Center
	20	American Negro Reference Guide
	21	Letter Head
	22	Miscellaneous
		Printed Matter
6	1-17	Flyers/Programs
7	1-17	News Clippings/Magazine Articles and Press Releases
		POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
8		Correspondence
	1	From Sam Price, 1969-1979
	2	To Sam Price, 1968-1990
	3	General, 1968-1986
	4	NYC Police Department, 1968-1973
	5	Writing - Sam Price and Sharon Price HARYOU
	6	Membership Cards
	7	Trainings
	8	Arts and Culture
	9	Council Against Poverty Neighborhood Board 2
	10	History
	11	By-laws
	12	Certificates
	13	Proposals, 1965, 1968
	14	Agenda, 1968, 1973; 1987-1988
	15	Minutes, 1967-1971
	16	Memorandum, 1965-1969
	17	Memorandum, 1970-1980
	18	Notes Human Resources
	19	Employees Records (RESTRICTED)
	20	Job Descriptions, 1968-1970
	21	Organizational Charts, 1970-1979

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
8	22	Policies and Handbooks, n.d.
	23	Resumes (RESTRICTED)
		Financials
	24	Bank Statements, 1969-1971
	25	Bills and Receipts, 1969-1971
	26	Budgets, 1967-1974
9		Checks
	1	1969
	2	1970-1971
	3	Financial Reports, 1969-1979
	4	Inventory and Purchase Reports, 1970-1971
	5-7	Payroll Registers, 1969-1971
	8	Petty Cash
	9	Tax Forms
		Community Board Elections
	10	Election Plan, 1970
	11	Election Final Reports, 1971
	12	Election Maps and Polling Sites, 1970-1972
	13	Candidates Lists, 1969, 1978
	14	Election Board of Directors Lists, 1969, 1974
	15	Election Results Complaints, 1970
	16	Press Releases
	17	Miscellaneous Programs, Events and Lists
		Other Agencies and Organizations
	18	Community Development Agency, 1967-1969, n.d.
	19	Training for Community Development Agency, 1970
10	1	Education Agencies, 1968-1974; 1984
	2	Harlem Assertion of Rights, 1976-1978
	3	Harlem Urban Development Corporation, 1981, n.d.
	4	New York City Council Against Poverty, 1968-1978
	5	Rice High School "Job In" Sign-In Sheets
		Youth Development Agency, 1968-1969
	6	Youth In Action, 1967
	7	Youth Mayor, 1967-1968
8	Miscellaneous	

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
10	9	Youth Services Agency, 1974 (CLOSED)
		Printed Materials
	10	Harlem Youth - C.A.P. Bulletins
	11-12	Neighborhood Board
	13-14	YDA Soul Bulletins
	15	Program Plans - Harlem Urban Development /Community Development
	16-19	Political Programs, Flyers, Newsletters
11		Oversized Materials (Including a Financial Ledger)