

**The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts & Archives Division**

**Bernard Katz**

**Papers, 1936-70**

**John D. Stinson  
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Title: Bernard Katz Papers, 1902-70

Size: 5 archival containers (3.3 lin. ft.)

Source: Gift of Jonathan Ned Katz, December 6, 1993

Access: No restrictions

Description: The papers consist of miscellaneous correspondence of Bernard Katz; letters of condolence to his wife; personal miscellany; notes; writings and printed ephemera.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bernard Katz (1902-1970), advertising art director, was raised in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn in surroundings which brought him, as he reports in his unpublished autobiographical writings, into contact at an early age with several personalities who were later to achieve success in the theater and in motion pictures. During one of his summer vacations from school he was employed as copy boy in the sports department of the N.Y. *Sun*. At age eighteen, continuing his journalistic bent, he edited and published (in Bensonhurst) a monthly scandal sheet entitled "The Town Gossip", which, although ephemeral, succeeded in attracting at least one literary contribution (a novelette) from the novelist, Oscar Schisgal.

His literary and artistic talents led him into the field of advertising. Following employments as production manager at Namm's, and as art director at Abraham & Straus, both leading department stores in New York City, Mr. Katz became advertising and promotion director of Hearns, a department store located at 14th Street and Tompkins Square. At the time of his appointment in 1932 Hearns was floundering in the depths of the Great Depression and was virtually bankrupt. By employing, in his own words, "some of the maddest institutional, sales and promotion stunts in advertising history," he contributed to the transformation of Hearns into a thriving success with a multi-million dollar annual volume. Mr. Katz left Hearns in 1950 to become art director of Fairfax, Inc., a small but established advertising agency in New York City where he remained for some eighteen years until his retirement.

Mr. Katz had a lifelong interest in African-American history and music. He was the compiler a work entitled *The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States* (N.Y., Arno Press, 1969); and with his son, Jonathan Ned Katz, he co-authored *Black Woman: A Fictionalized Biography of Lucy Terry Prince* (1973). He accumulated a large collection of sound recordings of American jazz and was acknowledged authority on the subject. He served as script-writer and impresario for a series of jazz concerts held at Town Hall in New York City on New Years Day.

Bernard Katz was married to Phyllis Brownstone Katz. They resided for many years in Manhattan's Greenwich Village at 81 Jane Street. Two of their sons have become noted historians: William Loren Katz, who specializes in Black history; and Jonathan Ned Katz, who is an authority on the history of gay men and lesbians in America.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers, consisting of miscellaneous correspondence received, personal miscellany, notes, essays and autobiographical writings, reflect the career of Bernard Katz as an advertising executive in New York City; and his avocational interests as a researcher and writer on Black history, American jazz and other subjects.

## NOTE ON PROVENANCE

The papers of Bernard Katz were donated to the Library on December 6, 1993 by his son, Jonathan Ned Katz, as part of a collection of the latter's personal papers. During the processing of the papers of Jonathan Ned Katz, the papers of Bernard Katz were removed and processed as a separate collection.

## NOTE ON PAPERS AT THE SCHOMBURG CENTER

The Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Division at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture has custody of the Lucy Terry Prince Collection, 1967-73 (1.2 linear feet on 3 microfilm reels) which contains manuscript drafts, research files and research notes relating to the book *Black Woman: A Fictionalized Biography of Lucy Terry Prince* (1973), by Bernard Katz and Jonathan Ned Katz.

## NOTE ON ARRANGEMENT

The Bernard Katz Papers are arranged into four series: I. Correspondence & Personal Miscellany; II. Notes; III. Writings; and IV. Printed Ephemera. The series are described in sequence below.

## SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

### I. Correspondence & Personal Miscellany (Container #1)

The correspondence, which is arranged chronologically in the period 1943, 1946, 1950 (and undated) consists mainly of miscellaneous letters received by Mr. Katz from friends, acquaintances and librarians. There are also a few drafts of outgoing letters. The correspondence relates to his book on early Negro music, his researches on Shakespeare, and miscellaneous personal matters. Included is a letter (undated) from the noted American artist, Stephen Longstreet. There is a separate file of letters (1970) addressed to his wife, Phyllis Brownstone Katz, which express condolences on the death of Bernard Katz.

The personal miscellany includes papers (1936-40) relating to the advertising department of Hearns department store; personal notes; a snapshot of Bernard and Phyllis Katz; and a humorous vignette ("The Return of Mr. Squidge"), handwritten and illustrated by Mr. Katz, which was intended apparently for a young nephew and niece.

### II. Notes (Container #2)

The series consists of holograph and typewritten notes (and printed matter) on the history of jazz, Negro music, slavery and slave songs, William Shakespeare, and black regiments in the Spanish-American War.

### III. Writings (Containers #3-4)

The writings consist of manuscript and typescript drafts of autobiographical writings and of essays on miscellaneous subjects including American jazz, William Shakespeare, and on black regiments in the Spanish-American War. The autobiographical writings include Mr. Katz's reminiscences of his boyhood in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn where he encountered theatrical and vaudeville personalities; and humorous accounts of tricks and gags played by office-mates upon one another when business was slack in the advertising field during the "middle years" of the Great Depression.

### IV. Printed Ephemera (Container #5)

The printed ephemera reflects the advertising career of Bernard Katz. Included are copies of printed advertisements, brochures, and flyers for merchandise offered by retail stores and other commercial establishments. There are also a few pencil sketches on tracing paper.

# BERNARD KATZ PAPERS

## Container List

Container No.

### I. CORRESPONDENCE & PERSONAL MISCELLANY

- 1            -Miscellaneous correspondence (1943-70 & n.d.) of Bernard Katz  
              -Letters (1970) of condolence to Mrs. Phyllis Katz (on the death of Bernard Katz)  
              -Personal miscellany

2        II. NOTES

3-4    III. WRITINGS

5        IV. PRINTED EPHEMERA