

Guide to the Lillian E. Bradley Papers, ca 1893-1961

JPB 06-24

Music Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Lillian E. Bradley Papers
Collection ID:	JPB 06-24
Creator:	Bradley, Lillian E.
Extent:	2.5 linear feet, 2 boxes
Repository:	Music Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: Lillian E. Bradley was a singer, entertainer, and producer. This collection consists of Bradley's photographs, one scrapbook of recital programs and thank you letters from various groups she entertained, and one folder of loose clippings, programs, correspondence, and her single musical composition.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division.

Preferred Citation

Lillian E. Bradley Papers, JPB 06-24, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Lillian E. Bradley Papers were donated to the Music Division by Elizabeth Graham.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in April 2007.

Biographical Note

Lillian E. Bradley was born Lillian Elizabeth Rustmann in 1880. Variouslly described as a soprano, singing comedienne, and “outstanding producer of fine entertainment,” she married John James Bradley in 1904. Bradley was the son of a millionaire contractor, William Bradley, whose company built much of the earliest subway infrastructure of New York City. The marriage was an unhappy one and when Bradley left her husband she began to sing in local venues in order to support herself and her daughter, also Lillian. A newspaper front page, datelined Reno, described John Bradley’s attempts to reconcile with his wife, while establishing residency there in order to get a divorce. This was finalized in 1912, and Bradley declined alimony. The papers emphasized the millions she was losing, since it was generally believed that John Bradley would have a very large inheritance. However, William Bradley filed for bankruptcy in 1923, shortly before his death.

Bradley gave concerts and published a single composition, *Without You Dear, I’m So Lonely*, in 1912. This song appeared frequently in programs of her repertoire. During World War I she organized the Bradley Volunteer Entertainers, soliciting donations to support the performers who went to military hospitals and training camps around the United States. In the 1930s she presented programming under the auspices of the Lillian Bradley Entertainment Bureau, described as “the largest Entertainment Bureau in New York City,” on a program for the Gold Cup Regatta at the Red Bank Yacht Club.

In 1940 she celebrated her twentieth year in show business, with a lavish Gay Nineties Ball at the Hotel Warwick in New York City. This was given as a benefit for the Stagecrafters Dinner Club, and the patrons included Milton Berle, Irving Berlin, Al Jolson, Mary Pickford, and Ed Sullivan. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s she continued to entertain stateside military in hospitals, and civilians in hospitals and homes for the aged. She became known for Lillian Russell impersonations.

Bradley’s photographs show a very stylish woman with a penchant for lavish furs and extravagant hats. A 1956 photo taken at Luchow’s at age 75 displays her vivacious beauty. Her death was preceded by several years of hospitalization, and she died in New York City on May 29, 1961.

Scope and Content Note

There are three folders of photographs, mainly of Lillian Bradley. One scrapbook contains concert programs and thank you letters for her humanitarian efforts. A folder of programs and correspondence also includes the musical score of her one published song, *Without You Dear, I'm So Lonely*. Bradley's wedding invitation and funeral card are among the documents, but there is little else of a personal nature.

Container Listing

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Correspondence, Programs, Musical Composition, 1904-1961 and undated
		Photographs
		Lillian Bradley
	2	ca 1893 and undated (Includes mother and brother.)
	3	Mid 1930s, 1956, and undated
	4	Unknown Woman
	5	Scrapbook, 1916-1951 (Programs, thank you letters for concert appearances.)
2	1	Front page, New York American, 26 June, 1912 (Lillian Bradley's impending divorce)