



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Sammy Price papers

1929-1992

Sc MG 465

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

Summary

Creator: Price, Sammy

Title: Sammy Price papers

Date: 1929-1992

Size: 10.21 linear feet (11 boxes)

Source: Gift of Sharon Mack, 1991.

Abstract: Sammy Price was a recording artist, house pianist, recording supervisor, and band leader at Decca Records in New York. Additionally, he was the Executive Director of Neighborhood Board no. 2. The Sammy Price Papers, 1929-1992, consist of materials pertaining to his musical and political career.

Conditions Governing Access:

Restricted access to some materials, mostly those related to employee records.

Preferred citation: [Item], Sammy Price papers, Sc MG 465, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Miranda-Tarisa Mims and Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, 2014.

Separated Materials:

Photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints Division.

Creator History

Samuel "Sammy" Blythe Price (Oct. 6, 1908, Honey Grove, Texas - Apr. 14, 1992, New York City), a self-taught pianist, debuted onstage dancing the Charleston with the Alphonso Trent Orchestra in 1925.

He toured with the Theater Owners Booking Association (TOBA) circuit, playing piano with renowned musicians like Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson. Price was an accomplished and prolific recording artist as well, recording his first blues album in 1929 in Dallas, Texas, for J. Mayo Williams. From 1937 to 1954, Price was a recording artist, house pianist, recording supervisor, and band leader at Decca Records in New York. He performed with singers such as Trixie Smith, Coot Grant, Wesley Wilson, Blue Lu Barker, Bea Booze, and Peetie Wheatstraw. He eventually landed his own session in 1940, Sam Price and His Texas Bluesicians.

Price organized the Jazz Festival Society of Philadelphia and the Harlem Jazz Festival Society. In the mid 1950s, he was booked by Jeunesses Musicales de France, and toured in Europe and North Africa with Emmett Berry, George Stevenson, Herbie Hall, Pops Foster, and Fred Moore. Eubie Blake ordained Price as the "boogie-woogie" king.

While in New York, Price became politically active in Harlem after meeting Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., on a NAACP boat ride. Price's uncle, Joseph E. Ford, managed Powell's political affairs. In the 1960s, Price became the executive director of the Neighborhood Board No. 2, Inc., a community organization governed by Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU-ACT), an organization that worked with young African Americans in Harlem. Neighborhood Boards were established to give residents of Harlem an active voice in creating policies that specifically addressed their needs, with particular emphasis on the needs of the underprivileged.

Scope and Content Note

The Sammy Price Papers, 1929-1992, consist of materials pertaining to his musical and political career. Included in the collection are interviews with Price and various versions of his autobiography, *What Do They Want*; interviews; published and unpublished sheet music; flyers; and programs. There are also contracts and correspondence which detail the financial and legal background for his songs; performances; concerts and engagements; and royalties, taxes, and bank statements. Materials concerning Price's political activities include correspondence primarily related to Price's capacity as director of Neighborhood Board No. 2. There are also letters generated by his work as executive director of Sam Price and Associates, and other organizations, along with memorabilia, financial documents, and printed matter.

Arrangement: Arranged into three series: I. Personal; II. Music; III. Political Activities

Key Terms

Subjects

African American band directors -- United States
African American dancers -- United States
African American entertainers -- United States
African American jazz musicians -- New York (State) -- New York
African American leadership -- New York (State) -- New York
African American musicians -- Biography
African American singers -- United States
African Americans -- Civil rights
African Americans -- Music
African Americans in the performing arts -- United States
Black author

Jazz musicians -- United States
Pianists -- United States
Piano music (Jazz)
Piano music -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Contracts
Fliers (printed matter)
Letters (correspondence)
Sheet music

Geographic Names

Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- Social conditions
United States -- Social conditions -- 1960-1980

Names

Price, Sammy
Price, Sammy. What do they want
HARYOU-ACT (Organization)
Sam Price and Associates

Container List

Personal ca. 1969-1988

This 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.

- b. 1 f. 1 Will
- b. 1 f. 2 Passports
- b. 1 f. 3 Certificates
- b. 1 f. 4 Membership cards
- b. 1 f. 5 Medical
- Legal
- b. 1 f. 6 Riverton Association
- b. 1 f. 7 Auto accident
- b. 1 f. 8 Miscellaneous
- b. 1 f. 9 Checker Club
- b. 1 f. 10 Greeting cards
- b. 1 f. 11 Obituaries of others
- b. 1 f. 12 Drawings of Price
- b. 1 f. 13-15 Phone books
- b. 1 f. 16-17 Calendars
- b. 1 f. 18-21 Biographical information
Includes interviews and writings on Price.
What Do They Want
- b. 1 f. 22 Promotional material
- b. 1 f. 23-27 Drafts
- b. 2 f. 1-9
- b. 2 f. 10-13 Handwritten drafts
- Writing by others
Tambourines to Glory by Langston Hughes
- b. 2 f. 14 Uncut version 1959
- b. 2 f. 15 Rehearsal version 1960
- b. 2 f. 16 *Sarah Vaughan (2 copies), Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra, and The Incredible Jimmy Smith*

Music ca. 1929-1992

The Music series includes sheet music, published and unpublished; songs; and lyrics (handwritten and typed, some annotated) by Price and others, as well as flyers, programs, and printed matter. The contracts and correspondence detail the financial and legal background for his songs, performances, concerts, and engagements. The financial matter is significant because Price kept thorough records of his royalties, taxes, and bank statements, providing insight into the money he made as a musician for the majority of his career.

- b. 3 f. 1-3 Sheet music by Price
Includes handwritten music, words, and notes.
- b. 3 f. 4-9 Sheet music by others
- b. 3 f. 10 Discography and related

Music (cont.)

Financial

- b. 4 f. 1-6 Contracts
- b. 4 f. 7-13 Royalties
- b. 4 f. 14-17 General
 - b. 4 f. 18 Taxes
- b. 5 f. 1-8 Correspondence
- b. 5 f. 9-10 Schedules
- b. 5 f. 11-13 Calendars
- b. 5 f. 14-15 Notes
- b. 5 f. 16-17 Bios and resumes of musicians
 - b. 5 f. 18 Phone list
 - b. 5 f. 19 Harlem Jazz Music Center
 - b. 5 f. 20 American Negro Reference Guide
 - b. 5 f. 21 Letterhead
 - b. 5 f. 22 Miscellaneous
- Printed matter
- b. 6 f. 1-17 Flyers and programs
- b. 7 f. 1-17 News clippings, magazine articles, and press releases

Political activities 1965-1990

This series is organized into four subseries and documents community activism in Harlem, especially with the HARYOU-ACT. The series contains correspondence, mostly in Price's capacity as director of Neighborhood Board no. 2. His involvement in other organizations and his position as executive director of Sam Price and Associates, a public relations consultancy, are 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.

Some material restricted in the Neighborhood Board No. 2/HARYOU subseries, mostly related to employee records.

Correspondence

- b. 8 f. 1 From Price 1969-1979
- b. 8 f. 2 To Price 1968-1990
- b. 8 f. 3 General
- b. 8 f. 4 NYC Police Department 1968-1973
- b. 8 f. 5 Writing

By Sam and Sharon Price.

Neighborhood Board no. 2/HARYOU

- b. 8 f. 6 Membership cards
- b. 8 f. 7 Trainings
- b. 8 f. 8 Arts and culture

Political activities (cont.)

Neighborhood Board no. 2/HARYOU (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 9 Council Against Poverty
- b. 8 f. 10-11 History and by-laws
- b. 8 f. 12 Certificates
- b. 8 f. 13 Proposals 1965-1968
- b. 8 f. 14 Agendas 1968-1988
- b. 8 f. 15 Minutes 1967-1971
- b. 8 f. 16-17 Memorandum 1965-1980
- b. 8 f. 18 Notes
- Human resources
- b. 8 f. 19 Employee records
Restricted material.
- b. 8 f. 20 Job descriptions 1968-1970
- b. 8 f. 21 Organizational charts 1970-1979
- b. 8 f. 22 Policies and handbooks undated
- b. 8 f. 23 Resumes
Restricted material.
- Financial
- b. 8 f. 24 Bank statements 1969-1971
- b. 8 f. 25 Bills and receipts 1969-1971
- b. 8 f. 26 Budgets 1967-1974
- b. 9 f. 1-2 Checks 1969-1971
- b. 9 f. 3 Financial reports 1969-1979
- b. 9 f. 4 Inventory and purchase reports 1970-1971
- b. 9 f. 5-7 Payroll registers 1969-1971
- b. 9 f. 8 Petty cash
- b. 9 f. 9 Tax forms
- Community Board elections
- b. 9 f. 10 Election plan 1970
- b. 9 f. 11 Final reports 1971
- b. 9 f. 12 Election maps and polling sites 1970-1972
- b. 9 f. 13 Candidate lists 1969-1978
- b. 9 f. 14 Election Board of Directors lists 1969-1974
- b. 9 f. 15 Election results complaints 1970
- b. 9 f. 16 Press releases
- b. 9 f. 17 Miscellaneous programs, events, and lists
- Other agencies and organizations
- b. 9 f. 18-19 Community Development Agency 1967-1970
- b. 10 f. 1 Education agencies 1968-1984
- b. 10 f. 2 Harlem Assertion of Rights 1976-1978
- b. 10 f. 3 Harlem Urban Development Corporation 1981
- b. 10 f. 4 New York City Council Against Poverty 1968-1978
- b. 10 f. 5 Rice High School "Job In" sign-in sheets

Political activities (cont.)

Other agencies and organizations (cont.)

Youth Development Agency 1968-1974

b. 10 f. 6 Youth In Action 1967

b. 10 f. 7 Youth Mayor 1967-1968

b. 10 f. 8 Miscellaneous

b. 10 f. 9 1974

Closed.

Printed matter

b. 10 f. 10 Harlem Youth, C.A.P. Bulletins

b. 10 f. 11-12 Neighborhood Board

b. 10 f. 13-14 YDA Soul Bulletins

b. 10 f. 15 Program plans for Harlem Urban Development and Community Development

b. 10 f. 16-19 Political programs, flyers, and newsletters

b. 11 Financial ledger and other oversize material