



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Sardi's (Restaurant) papers**

1913-1976

\*T-Mss 1979-005

Processed by Elisabeth Elkind.

## Summary

**Creator:** Sardi's (Restaurant)

**Title:** Sardi's (Restaurant) papers

**Date:** 1913-1976

**Source:** papers: gift, Vincent Sardi, Jr

**Abstract:** This small collection of papers consists of letters to the Sardis on their retirement, a scrapbook of photographs of Vincent Sardi, Sr. receiving a Shubert Foundation award in 1967, a drawing of Eugenia Sardi, clippings about the restaurant, a few printed programs and menus for special events, a souvenir program (1913) from the Screen Club, and drawings by the illustrator, Don Freeman, mostly of New York scenes and people. Some of the drawings are loose, but most are bound into copies of Don Freeman's Newsstand (1938-1950), a self-published periodical.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Photocopying prohibited.

**Conditions Governing Use:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division. The library, though, does not hold copyright, and permission will have to be sought from the artists or their estates.

**Preferred citation:** Sardi's (Restaurant) Papers, \*T-Mss 1979-005, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Processing note:** Processed by Elisabeth Elkind.

### Separated Materials:

Sardi's (Restaurant) Caricatures collections which consists of the work of three caricaturists who illustrated the restaurant's walls is found in \*T-VIM 1979-005

### Related Materials:

## Creator History

Sardi's restaurant opened on March 5, 1927. For Vincent Sardi (Melchiorre Pio Vincenza Sardi) and his wife, Eugenia "Jenny" Pallera Sardi, immigrants from Italy, this was their second restaurant. They had originally, in 1921, opened a restaurant at 146 West 44th Street called the Little Restaurant (named for the Winthrop Ames' Little Theater next door, now the new Helen Hayes Theater). It lasted until 1926. A year later they opened their new restaurant, Sardi's, that stands today in the same spot at 234 West 44th Street in which it opened in 1927.

A group of columnists and press agents began meeting at Sardi's every day for lunch. They were dubbed the Cheese Club. A member of this club, press agent Irving Hoffman, brought Alex Gard to meet this Cheese Club. Gard, born Alexis Kremoff in Kazan, Russia, had fled Russia after the Revolution and went to Bulgaria, France and, finally, to the United States. He had drawn caricatures of his commanding officers in the Russian Imperial Naval Academy and had had the occasional caricature published in *Le Matin* in France during his stay in that country. At Sardi's, he drew caricatures of the Cheese Club, which Vincent Sardi put on the walls of Sardi's restaurant, thus beginning the long tradition that continues until today.

Vincent Sardi wanted to imitate a Paris restaurant, Zelli's, that placed caricatures on the walls of the restaurant. Sardi and Gard signed a contract that provided a meal a day in Sardi's for Alex Gard in return for his caricatures. It was stipulated that Sardi could not complain about the caricatures and Gard could not complain about the food. The first caricature under this agreement was bandleader and comedian, Ted Healy (the man who brought the Three Stooges together). Sardi's restaurant soon became a theatrical landmark famous for the caricatures of its prominent patrons primarily actors, directors, producers and others connected to the stage.

In 1947 the senior Sardis retired and their son Vincent Sardi, Jr. took the helm. The following year Alex Gard died, but the position of house caricaturist was maintained as a Sardi's tradition.

## Custodial History

Vincent Sardi, Jr., donated these papers to the Billy Rose Theatre Division in 1979.

## Scope and Content Note

This small collection of papers consists of letters to the Sardis on their retirement in 1947, a scrapbook of photographs of Vincent Sardi, Sr. receiving a Shubert Foundation award in 1967, a drawing of Eugenia Sardi, clippings about the restaurant, a few printed programs and menus for special events, a souvenir program (1913) from the Screen Club, and drawings by the illustrator, Don Freeman, mostly of New York scenes and people. Some of the drawings are loose, but most are bound into copies of *Don Freeman's Newsstand* (1938-1950), a self-published periodical.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Drawings

### **Subjects**

Restaurants -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Names**

Sardi's (Restaurant)

Freeman, Don, 1908-1978

Sardi, Vincent, 1915-2007

Sardi, Vincent, 1915-2007

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 **Correspondence / Vincent Sardi, Sr. ca. 1945-1964 (1 folder)**  
Letters to Vincent Sardi, Sr. and his wife, Eugenia. Most concern their retirement from the running of their restaurant, Sardi's. Also two Christmas cards, one mentioning the restaurant, the other an official greeting sent out by the restaurant.
- b. 1 f. 2 **Clippings / Vincent Sardi, Sr. 1940-1969 (1 folder)**  
Sardi's (Restaurant)  
Clippings about Vincent Sardi and his restaurant.
- b. 1 f. 3 **Photographs / Vincent Sardi, Sr. June 21, 1967 (1 folder)**  
Scrapbook of photographs of Vincent Sardi, Sr. receiving the Shubert Foundation award.
- b. 1 f. 4 **Printed material / Sardi's (Restaurant) ca. 1925-1976 (1 folder)**  
Tribute Sardi, Vincent, 1915-2007  
Programs and menus pertaining to Sardi's Restaurant and both Vincent Sardi Sr. and Jr.
- b. 1 f. 5 **Printed material / Screen Club 1913 (1 folder)**  
A souvenir booklet about The Screen Club bound in soft green leather with pages 3-4 missing belonged to Eugenia Sardi, the wife of Vincent Sardi, Sr.
- b. 1 f. 6 **Drawing / Eugenia Sardi (1 folder)**  
A drawing [n.d.] in pencil and ink, artist unknown, is probably of Eugenia Sardi, the wife of Vincent Sardi, Sr.
- b. 1 f. 7 **Drawings / Don Freeman (1 folder)**  
Cooley, Lydia  
Prints of drawings by Don Freeman, Lydia Cooley and maybe others, most are unsigned. Includes caricatures of actors and writers as well as political cartoons and mother and child drawings.
- b. 1 f. 8-12 **Don Freeman's newsstand / Don Freeman 1938 (5 folders)**  
Caricatures and cartoons--New York--New York  
Copies of illustrator Don Freeman's graphic quarterly [1938-1950 and n.d.], a journal consisting almost entirely of drawings depicting people and scenes mainly in Manhattan. Early issues were self-published; the winter 1941 issue was published by the Associated American Artists, Inc. "V. Sardi" is printed on the cover of this issue which shows a man being thrown out of a new restaurant at Christmas time and includes a section on the theater called "Broadway Speaking."