



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Maynard Morris collection of Edward Kean materials**

1787-1961 [bulk 1813-1832]

\*T-Mss 2014-123

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Kean, Edmund, 1787-1833

**Title:** Maynard Morris collection of Edward Kean materials

**Date:** 1787-1961 [bulk 1813-1832]

**Size:** 2.1 linear feet (8 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Maynard Morris, date unknown.

**Abstract:** Maynard Morris served as secretary of the Edmund Kean Club that celebrated the career of the Shakespearean stage actor. The collection, dated 1813 to 1961, holds letters, graphics, posters, and printed matter.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:  
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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**Preferred citation:** Maynard Morris collection of Edward Kean materials,\*T-Mss 2014-123. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2015

## Creator History

Maynard Morris (1898-1964) served as secretary of the Edmund Kean Club (defunct) that honored the career of the Shakespearian actor. Morris, a theatrical agent, collected theatre related materials. He died in New York City in 1964.

Edmund Kean (1787-1833) first gained prominence, for his role as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*

produced at the Drury Lane, London Theatre, in 1814. Critical acclaim for his artistry would continue throughout his life in productions that include Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, and Richard III.

Kean often was involved with controversy. In 1817, he refused to appear in the play *The Italians* written by Charles Bucke. His employer, the Drury Lane Theatre, wanted to stage the play, but Kean balked. His on-going fights with management led to the first public rebuke of Kean.

His personal life led to public scrutiny as well. In 1825, he was sued by the husband of Charlotte Cox for adultery. He lost the suit and his wife left him. When he returned to the Drury Lane, the audience pelted and booed him.

Despite these setbacks, Kean received wide recognition for his mastery of Shakespeare's plays in Europe and in the United States. In 1826, during a second tour of North America, the Huron Indians made him an honorary chief.

In later years, Kean's oratorical skills were diminished by his drug dependency. He collapsed into his son's arms during a performance of *Othello* in 1833. He would never appear on the stage again dying a few weeks later in Surrey, England.

## Scope and Content Note

The collection, dated 1813 to 1961 (bulk dates 1813-1832), documents the career of Shakespearean actor Edmund Kean. Other files relate to the Edmund Kean Club. The collection contains letters, clippings, playbills, prints, and artwork.

There are approximately eighteen letters autographed by Kean.

The clippings are reviews of Kean's performances at the Drury Lane Theatre and other venues. These clippings include articles about Kean's refusal to act in the play *The Italians*.

The playbills represent significant examples of Kean's performances at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and other theatres in England and abroad. Playbill advertisements include the plays *The Castle of Morsino*, *Five Miles Off*, *Hamlet*, *King Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice* and, *Othello*. There are several playbills from Kean's performances of *Othello* including his last stage performance at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

Two playbills have been attributed to Kean's father and uncle Moses Kean.

The prints include Kean in character for performances, tributes, Kean's friends and acquaintances, and theatres.

Pamphlets in the collection are the Fifth edition...*A Full Report on the Trial of Albion Cox, Esq. versus Edmund Kean, Esq.*; *A Celebrated Old Playhouse. The History of the Richmond Theatre*; *The Life and Theatrical Career of Mr. Kean*, and *The Patrician, the Tombs of Richmond Church*.

There are two artistic renderings, a watercolor of the "Red House," where Kean resided for a time and a pen and ink drawing of Kean as Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*.

The Edmund Kean Club files include information about their efforts to restore the George Frederick Cooke monument at St. Paul Church which was erected by Kean.

The MWEZ numbers represent the Library's former classification system. When requesting materials, please refer to the finding aid's box list.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actors (performing artists)

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings

Lithography

Pamphlets

Playbills

Works of art

### **Titles**

Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (London, England)

Walnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.)

### **Names**

Kean, Moses, -1792

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-6 Correspondence 1813-1832  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 576; 8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702; 8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- Printed Matter
- Clippings
- b. 2 f. 1 Memoir of Edmund Kean. The New Casket 1832  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- b. 2 f. 2 Recollections 1871  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 2 f. 3 Refusal--The Italians 1819  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 6 f. 1-3 1814-1830  
8-MWEZ = n.c. 21, 251
- b. 2 f. 4 1933  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 2 f. 5 (A) Celebrated Old Playhouse. The Richmond Theatre 1886  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- Pamphlets
- b. 2 f. 6 Fifth Edition...Albion Cox Esq. vs Edmund Kean, Esq 1825  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 2 f. 7 (The) Life of and Theatrical Career of Mr. Kean 1814  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 2 f. 8 (The) Patrician. The Tombs of Richmond Church 1844  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- Playbills
- b. 3 f. 1-15 1806, 1814-1819  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752; 8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- b. 5 f. 1-5 1812-1814, 1820  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752
- b. 4 f. 1-16 1821-1833  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752
- b. 2 f. 10 1923, 1961  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 4 f. 17 Mr. Kean and Mr. Harley  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- b. 4 f. 18 Sweet Kitty Clover  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 2 f. 9 Walnut Street Theatre. Philadelphia, Pa 1821  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- Reviews
- b. 2 f. 11-12 1815-1823  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758
- b. 2 f. 13 King Lear. Booth and Kean 1829  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752
- Prints

Prints (cont.)

Kean, Edmund

- b. 7 f. 1 Character Roles  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 2 Kean in Scenes from Productions  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 3 Honorary Chief of the Hurons 1926  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 4 Tributes circa 1833  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251; 8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 8 f. 1 Edmund Kean's Grave circa 1833  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 7 f. 5 Other Individuals  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 6 Memorial to George Frederick Cooke 1821  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 7 Scenic Views  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 7 f. 8 Theatres  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251; 8 - MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 8 f. 2 Mr. Wallack as Othello  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752

Art works

- b. 8 f. 3 Pen and Ink Sketch of Edmund Kean  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752
- b. 8 f. 4 Watercolor of the "Red House"  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 21, 251
- b. 2 f. 14 Edmund Kean Club 1948, 1954  
8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 758; 8-MWEZ + n.c. 20, 702
- b. 8 f. 5 Kean, Moses. Playbills 1787-1788  
8 - MWEZ + n.c. 20, 752