

May Robson Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2024

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82038059>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013070>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2013
Revised 2024 August

Collection Summary

Title: May Robson Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1849-1955

Bulk Dates: 1885-1950

ID No.: MSS38059

Creator: Robson, May, 1858-1942

Extent: 450 items

Extent: 16 containers plus 5 oversize

Extent: 7 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82038059>

Summary: Actress and author. Correspondence, books, playscripts, and other material autographed or created by prominent actors and producers of stage and screen from the late nineteenth-century until Robson's death; also includes scrapbooks, playbills, correspondence, photographs, and other material documenting her life and stage and film career.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Gore, Edward H. L., 1876-1954--Correspondence.

Gore, Edward H. L., 1876-1954.

Robson family.

Robson, May, 1858-1942.

Zanes family.

Zanes, Marie Maxwell--Correspondence.

Zanes, Marie Maxwell.

Subjects

Actors.

Actresses.

Drama--Stories, plots, etc.

Motion picture industry--United States.

Motion picture producers and directors.

Theater--United States.

Theatrical producers and directors.

Occupations

Actresses.

Authors.

Acquisition Information

The papers of May Robson were given to the Library of Congress by her son, Edward Gore, from 1944 to 1947. Additional items were given by Elizabeth B. Callender in 1989 and transferred from the Library's Prints and Photographs Division in 2003.

Processing History

The papers of May Robson were inventoried by Elizabeth G. McPherson in 1944. The collection was processed and the finding revised by Brian McGuire in 1980. The finding aid was revised again in 2012. Additional material was processed and the finding aid revised by Laura J. Kells in 2024.

Transfers

Film stills, portraits and stage portraits, and a set of playing cards have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the May Robson Papers, and an inventory of a portion this material is available in their [finding aid](#). Patrons are encouraged to contact the Prints and Photographs Division in advance of a research visit.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of May Robson is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of May Robson are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, May Robson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| Date | Event |
|---------------|--|
| 1858, Apr. 18 | Born Mary Jeannette Robison, Melbourne, Australia |
| 1874 | Married Charles Livingstone Gore (died 1880s) |
| 1883 | Began stage career with the name Robson at Brooklyn Grand Opera House |
| 1889 | Married Augustus Homer Brown (died 1920) |
| circa 1911 | Established touring theatrical company |
| 1916 | Starred in <i>A Night Out</i> (silent film) |
| 1931 | Starred in <i>The She-Wolf</i> (motion picture) |
| 1933 | Played the Queen of Hearts in <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (motion picture) Nominated for Academy Award for Best Actress for <i>Lady for a Day</i> (motion picture) |
| 1936 | Played Countess Vronsky in <i>Anna Karenina</i> (motion picture) |
| 1938 | Played Aunt Polly in <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> (motion picture) |
| 1942, Oct. 20 | Died, Beverly Hills, Calif. |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of May Robson (1858-1942) span the years 1849-1955, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1885-1950. The collection consists of correspondence, books, playscripts, and other material autographed by prominent actors, authors, and producers of stage and screen from the late nineteenth-century until Robson's death; scrapbooks containing play reviews, letters, telegrams, photographs, and other material; files of playbills, theatrical programs, and other

printed matter; and miscellaneous items relating mainly to Robson's career in the theater and on film. Included are family correspondence, scripts used by Robson, poems by her, and other biographical documentation.

The 2024 Addition is primarily comprised of correspondence, photographs, and printed matter from Robson and her son, Edward Gore, that was saved by Robson's godchild, Marie Maxwell Zanes. Several letters Robson and her son wrote to each other in the late 1880s and 1890s make up the earliest correspondence. The largest portion consists of letters Robson wrote to Zanes from 1929 to 1942. She refers to Zanes as "Poppie" and signs her letters "Aunt Poppie." Robson's letters document her relationships with Zanes and other family members and mention her work in films and radio as well as her failing eyesight. Letters to "Poppie" from Edward Gore include details about Robson's failing health and death in 1942. Photographs include portraits of Robson spanning more than fifty years, from young stage actress to older character actress in motion pictures. The printed matter includes press clippings from the 1930s and 1940s featuring Robson and some of the films she appeared in during that period.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged by type of material with oversize items filed at the end of each section.

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 1 | Correspondence and autographs |
| BOX 1 | Robson, May (including a letter of 1942 to son Edward Gore), 1882-1942 |
| BOX 1 | Gore, Edward, 1942-1944, undated |
| BOX 1 | Poems |
| BOX 1 | Untitled, undated |
| BOX 1 | "Heartsease," undated |
| BOX 1 | Scripts used by Robson |
| BOX 1 | Motion picture |
| BOX 1 | Weaver, John V. A., <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> , 1937 |
| BOX 1 | Play, "Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary" |
| BOX 1 | Contains notes made by Robson, undated |
| BOX 1 | An early version of the above script submitted to Robson, undated |
| BOX 1 | Radio |
| BOX 1 | Swart, Howard, "Aunt Mae," undated |
| BOX 1 | "Martha by the Day," undated |
| BOX 1 | Obituaries, 1942 |
| BOX 2 | Scrapbooks |
| BOX 2 | May 1885-Jan. 1891 |
| BOX 2 | Apr. 1893-Jan. 1895 |
| BOX 3 | May 1892-July 1901 |
| BOX 3 | 1895-Oct. 1899 |
| BOX 4 | Jan. 1898-July 1904 |
| BOX 4 | Aug. 1901-Dec. 1902 |
| BOX 5 | July 1904-May 1907 |
| BOX 5 | May 1907-June 1908 |
| BOX 6 | July 1909-Oct. 1910 <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX 6 | Nov. 1910-May 1913 |
| BOX 7 | Sept. 1913-May 1915 |
| BOX 8 | Oct. 1915-June 1920, undated |
| BOX 9 | Oct. 1923-Oct. 1942 (includes three poems by Robson, two signed) |
| BOX 9 | Sept. 1933-Apr. 1934 |
| BOX 9 | Sept. 1933-May 1934 |
| BOX 9 | Sept. 1933-May 1934 |
| BOX 10 | Sept. 1933-Apr. 1940 (includes signed poem) |
| BOX 10 | Printed matter |
| BOX 10 | Skidmore, Thorton, to Robson, with illustrated note, 1909 |
| BOX 10 | Newspaper page, 1910 <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX 10 | "Scaramouche," film pamphlet, undated |
| BOX 10 | Critical reviews of "Lady for a Day," from <i>Hollywood Reporter</i> , 1933 |
| BOX 10 | Graham, Fanya, "May Robson, 50 Years on Stage," 1933 |
| BOX 10 | Ticker News Screen Service, inaugural program, 1934 |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 10 | Memoriam to Irving Thalberg, 1936 See Oversize |
| BOX 10 | "A Tribute to May Robson," radio broadcast of "Your Hollywood Parade," 1938 |
| BOX 10 | Jewish Home for the Aged of Los Angeles, resolution of appreciation, 1939 See Oversize |
| BOX 10 | <i>Santa Fe Trail</i> , film promotional volume detailing the train tour, 1940 |
| BOX 10 | Cards, invitation, and other items, undated |
| BOX 10 | Lyceum Theater, playbill cover |
| BOX 10 | Magazines featuring Robson |
| BOX 10 | <i>Vanity Fair</i> , 1901 |
| BOX 10 | <i>Truth</i> , 1901 |
| BOX 10 | <i>Footlights</i> , 1902 |
| BOX 10 | <i>Burr McIntosh Monthly</i> , 1904 |
| BOX 10 | <i>Movie Life</i> , 1940 |
| BOX 10 | Autographed books |
| BOX 10 | Book with foreword by Robson |
| BOX 10 | Ryerson, Florence, and Colin Clements, <i>First Person Singular</i> , 1937 |
| BOX 10 | Books |
| BOX 10 | Bulliet, C. J., <i>Robert Mantell's Romance</i> , 1918 |
| BOX 10 | Cahoon, Haryot Holt, <i>What One Woman Thinks</i> , 1893 |
| BOX 11 | Dale, Alan, <i>Wanted: A Cook</i> , 1905 |
| BOX 11 | Darling, Esther Birdsall, <i>No Boundary Line</i> , 1942 |
| BOX 11 | Fisk, May Isabel, <i>Monologues</i> , 1903 |
| BOX 11 | Hazzard, John Edward, <i>The Four-Flusher</i> , 1908 |
| BOX 11 | Howard, Marion, <i>Perpetrations</i> , 1912 |
| BOX 11 | Huard, Frances Wilson, <i>My Home in the Field of Honour</i> , 1916 |
| BOX 11 | Hughes, Edith Wakeman, <i>Motoring in White</i> , 1917 |
| BOX 11 | Huntley, Florence, <i>The Gay Gnani of Gingalee</i> , 1908 |
| BOX 12 | Leale, John, <i>Recollections of a Tule Sailor</i> , 1939 |
| BOX 12 | Locke, William J., <i>Stella Mars</i> , 1913 |
| BOX 12 | Lounsbery, G. Constant, <i>An Iseult Idyll</i> , 1901 |
| BOX 12 | Masterson, Kate, <i>The Dobleys</i> , 1900 |
| BOX 12 | McIntosh, Burr, <i>Cheerful Philosophy Poems</i> , [1937] |
| BOX 12 | Ryerson, Florence and Colin Clements, <i>This Awful Age</i> , 1930 |
| BOX 12 | Strang, Lewis C., <i>Famous Actresses of the Day</i> (chapter on Robson), 1906 |
| BOX 13 | Warde, Frederick, <i>Fifty Years of Make Believe</i> , 1920 |
| BOX 13 | Warner, Anne, <i>The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary</i> , 1905 |
| BOX 13 | Westwood, T., <i>The Quest of the Sancgreall</i> , 1868 |
| BOX 13 | Younger, Edward Francis, <i>Yazoo Valley Verse</i> , 1926 |
| BOX 13 | Autographed playscripts |
| BOX 13 | Dumas, Alexandre, the Younger, <i>La Dame aux Camelias</i> , 1880 |
| BOX 13 | Gates, Eleanor, "The Poor Little Rich Girl," 1916 |
| BOX 13 | Books |
| BOX 13 | Twain, Mark, <i>Roughing It</i> , 1872 |
| BOX 13 | Playbills and other programs |
| BOX 13 | Opera, "The Rat-Charmer of Hamelin," undated |
| BOX 13 | Recital, Geraldine Farrar et al., 1919 |
| BOX 13 | Theater |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 13 | "The Arcadians," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "As You Were," 1919 |
| BOX 13 | "The Awakening of Helena Richie," 1910 |
| BOX 13 | "Baby Mine," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "The Bohemian Girl," 1913 |
| BOX 13 | "The Campus," 1910 |
| BOX 13 | "The Candy Shop," 1913 |
| BOX 13 | "The County Fair," 1891 |
| BOX 13 | "The End of the Bridge," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "The Fascinating Widow," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "The Fortune Hunter," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway," 1909 |
| BOX 13 | "Graustark," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "Linger Longer Letty," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "Look Pleasant," 1918 |
| BOX 13 | "The Major's Appointment" and "Gloriana," 1892 |
| BOX 13 | "The Mikado," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "Miss Innocence," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "Mr. Wu," 1924 |
| BOX 13 | "The Nigger," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "Officer 666," 1917 |
| BOX 13 | "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," 1911 |
| BOX 13 | "Peck O'Pickles," 1912 |
| BOX 13 | "The Prima Dona," 1906 |
| BOX 13 | "The Prince of Pilsen," 1910 |
| BOX 13 | "Richard III" (facsimile of 1849 playbill) <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX 13 | "Sea-Born," 1925 |
| BOX 13 | "Somebody's Luggage," 1917 |
| BOX 13 | "Stop Thief," 1913 |
| BOX 13 | "Thackeray Tableaux," 1886 |
| BOX 13 | "Tillie's Nightmare," 1911 |
| BOX 14 | Vaudeville shows from 1910, 1911, 1914 |
| BOX 14 | Special theater and musical programs |
| BOX 14 | Actors' Fund Fair, 1892 |
| BOX 14 | Actors' Home Fund, 1904 |
| BOX 14 | Centennial Celebration of the Inauguration of George Washington, 1889 |
| BOX 14 | Neil Burgess in "Vim," undated |
| BOX 14 | Miscellany |
| BOX 14 | Fifty-year acting tribute, autographs 1933 <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX 14 | Scrapbooks and memorabilia <i>See Oversize</i> |
| BOX OV 1 | Oversize |
| BOX OV 1 | Scrapbooks of play reviews and other material |
| BOX OV 1 | July 1909-Oct. 1910 (Container 6) |
| BOX OV 2 | Printed matter |
| BOX OV 2 | Newspaper page, 1910 (Container 10) |
| BOX OV 2 | Memoriam to Irving Thalberg, 1936 (Container 10) |

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| Container | Contents |
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| BOX OV 2 | Jewish Home for the Aged of Los Angeles, resolution of appreciation, 1939 (Container 10) |
| BOX OV 2 | Playbills and other programs |
| BOX OV 2 | Theater |
| BOX OV 2 | "Richard III" (facsimile of 1849 playbill) (Container 13) |
| BOX OV 3 | Miscellany |
| BOX OV 3 | Fifty-year acting tribute, autographs 1933 (Container 14) |
| BOX OV 4 | Scrapbooks and memorabilia, undated (Container 14) |
| BOX 15 | 2024 Addition |
| BOX 15 | Correspondence |
| BOX 15 | Gore, Edward, 1886-1888, 1940-1950, undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 15 | Others, 1901, 1939-1949, 1955 |
| BOX 15 | Robson, May, 1895, 1929-1942, undated (5 folders) |
| BOX 15 | Photographs |
| BOX 15 | Gore, Edward, 1943-1950, undated |
| BOX 15 | Others, 1894, 1940-1942, undated |
| BOX 15 | Robson, May, 1885, 1895, 1934-1937, undated <i>See also Oversize</i> (3 folders) |
| BOX 16 | Poems, undated |
| BOX 16 | Printed matter, 1894, 1901, circa 1910, 1926, 1933-1942, 1954 (4 folders) |
| BOX OV 5 | Oversize |
| BOX OV 5 | Photographs, 1937 (Container 15) |