

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)

Container List

Container	Contents
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)