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Margarita Fischer Papers

Collection Summary

Title:	Margarita Fischer Papers
Call Number:	MS 81-04
Size:	17.0 linear feet
Acquisition:	Donated by Kathie Fischer Havens, Pollard's niece
Processed By:	MJM, 10-7-1981; JEF, 8-11-1998; MN, 12-2008
Note:	Related collection: MS 81-05, Harry Pollard Papers
Restrictions:	None

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Restrictions

None

Content Note

The Margarita Fischer Papers contain photographs, fan mail, contracts, scrapbooks, and travel mementoes reflecting her life as a stage and screen actress. Her film work as Eliza in Uncle Tom's Cabin is documented through photographs, news clippings, and promotional materials.

Biography

Margarita Fischer was born February 12, 1886, in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Her father, John Fischer, was Swiss, and her mother, Kate, was of Scots-Irish descent. In 1889, John, Kate, Margarita, and her five-year-old sister Dorothy moved to Silverton, Oregon. The Fischer's managed a hotel, their daughters attended public elementary school, and Margarita Fischer studied dance several days a week.

Fischer's acting career began when she was eight years old. A theatrical agent and manager convinced Mr.

Fischer to let the child perform a small part in *The Celebrated Case*. A series of small parts and much praise from the press convinced Mr. Fischer that his daughter had a promising career as an actress. He sold his hotel and formed the Margarita Fischer Company, which later became the Fischer/Van Cleve Company. Fischer was billed as "Babe" Fischer -- America's youngest actress. Her sister, Dorothy, using the name Mary Scott, performed with the company as well.

At fourteen, Fischer was playing the lead role in adult comedies and dramas and was no longer billed as "Babe." Her repertoire covered every conceivable style and variety of play. The twenty-number troop toured the West Coast for seven years until Mr. Fischer died in Eureka, California in 1906.

Soon after her father's death, Fischer joined Walter Sanford's Dramatic Company in San Francisco. She also worked with theatre producer T. Daniel Frawley in Canada, and Grace George at the Grand Opera House in Chicago. While in Chicago she also starred in Joseph M. Patterson's *By Products*.

While working as an actress in vaudeville, Fischer met a young actor named Harry Pollard. They worked together, performing a sketch entitled *When Hearts are Trumps*. They were secretly married on July 9, 1911 in Golden, Colorado and announced their union the following spring when they opened with the Lloyd Ingraham Stock Company at the Gayety Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska. Ingraham became a close family friend, and years later, directed Fischer in many of her films.

During her nine years in the theatre, Fischer starred in over fifty plays, but her movie career proved to be even more prolific. Her sister Dorothy and her niece Kathy were featured in many of her films.

Fischer and Pollard began their movie careers with the Selig Polyscope Company in Chicago in 1910. They remained with Selig for nine months and made at least 18 movies. Between 1910 and 1912, they made several films for the American Film Company. In 1913, they starred in the original film version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, produced by IMP (Independent Motion Pictures), and *The Turn of the Tide*, produced by the Rex Film Company.

Fischer and Pollard moved to Arizona in 1914 and returned to American Studios. Fischer starred in over 30, one-reel pictures, many of which were directed by Pollard. *Withering Roses* (January 14, 1914), was the first "Beauty" film produced by American and was filmed at their Santa Barbara studio.

During the spring of 1914, Photoplay held a contest to determine America's most popular star. Fischer was the winner of the 7,000,000 vote contest, which ranked her above such stars as Mabel Normand, Mary Pickford, and Mary Fuller.

In 1916, the Equitable Motion Picture Corporation hired Fischer and Pollard to make *The Dragon* (July 1916). However, they continued working for American Studios for several more years.

Although most films of that era dealt with the lighter side of life, several sought to confront more serious issues. *The Miracle of Life* (July 1916), endorsed by the National Congress of Mothers, was a melodrama made in protest of abortion and *The Devil's Assistant* (1917) dealt with morphine addiction. *The Pearl of Paradise* (November 1916) was notable for Fischer's nude scenes.

In 1918, Fischer legally dropped the "c" from her last name in response to the anti-German sentiment of World War I. She later would exhibit her patriotism during the Second World War by acting as a plane spotter and Red Cross instructor.

Fischer and Pollard were separated in 1919. Pollard lost his contract with American, probably due to a combination of alcoholism and artistic differences, and moved to New York. A year later, Fischer traveled to New York in hopes of a reconciliation and eventually, she and Pollard were reunited. The marriage lasted until Pollard's death in 1934.

Payment Guaranteed (March 1921) was Fischer's last picture for American. The company brought suit against her for breach of contract. Although the collection contains no information as to the disposition of the case, the lawsuit was instigated by American when Fischer refused to act in one of the "Flying A" pictures, *The House of Toys*.

From 1921 to 1927, Fischer made five movies. *K the Unknown*, produced by Universal in 1924, and her last film, the remake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, another Universal film, were directed by Pollard. *Beach of Dreams* (May 1921) was produced by Haworth Studios and *Any Woman* (May 1925) was produced by the Famous Players-Lasky/Paramount.

After starring in over 90 movies, Fischer retired, but appeared in several plays in Hollywood and Pasadena. She traveled, and volunteered her time and services to many charities. She was an active member in the Dominos Club, which was an organization for actors.

Margarita Fischer died in 1973 and was buried in Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale, California.

Publications about Margarita Fischer's life and times include two by Theresa St.Romain, *An American Beauty: The Life and Films of Margarita Fischer* (2004) and *Margarita Fischer: A Biography of the Silent Film Star* (2008). Dana Driskel authored an article, "Margarita Fischer: First Lady of the Flying A" published in *Noticias, Santa Barbara Historical Museum journal*, Fall 2008.

Detailed Description: Series Listing

Series 1	Box 1 FF 1-25	Correspondence
Series 1.1	Box 1 FF 1-17, FF 23-25	Correspondence. Fan Mail, 1917-1968. This sub-series includes cards and letters from the United States, Canada, Japan, and other countries.
Series 1.2	Box 1 FF 18-22	Correspondence. Personal, 1919-1969. This sub-series includes cards and letters to and from Fischer's family and friends. Also includes letters from Hedda Hopper, Virginia Grey, Roi Uselton, Senator Frank Church, and one letter to and from Mrs. William E. Borah.
Series 2	Box 1 FF 26	Contracts and Letters, 1911-1918. This series includes signed contracts and letters from the Independent Motion Picture Company and the American Film Company.
Series 3	Box 2-Box 12	Photographs
Series 3.1	Box 2-Box 8	Photographs. Film Stills, 1910-1927. This sub-series includes stills from approximately 92 of Fischer's films. Also included are a number of unidentified stills.
Series 3.2	Box 9	Photographs. Publicity, 1914-1920. Included in this sub-series are photographs used for magazine covers and feature stories about Fischer's personal and professional life.
Series 3.3	Box 10	Photographs. Miscellaneous, 1914-1930. Included in this sub-series are headshots, photos of Fischer's early and later stage career.
Series 3.4	Box 11-Box 12	Photographs. Personal, 1899-1961. This sub-series includes a number of photographs of Fischer, her husband Harry Pollard, and other members of her family.
Series 4	Box 13-Box17 FF 1	Scrapbooks, 1904-1920. This series includes nine scrapbooks. Three deal with Fischer's early stage career and six reflect her film career. Two press books were compiled by Fischer's secretary.
Series 5	Box 17 FF 2-8	Travel Souvenirs, 1936-. This series includes itineraries, maps, photographs, postcards, and souvenir books of Fischer's trips in the United States and abroad. This series

also includes some sheet music written for Fischer.

Series 6	Box 17 FF 9-13	Miscellaneous, 1917-1960. This series includes invitations, menus, photo postcards, Christmas cards, clippings, and theatre bulletins.
Series 7	Box 18-Box 19 and Oversized Storage	Oversized Materials, Includes oversized photographs of Fischer, both personal and professional, photographs of colleagues and friends of Fischer, travel photographs, several posters including one from "The Hellion," and publicity materials for the movie <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> .

Detailed Description: Box and Folder Listing

Series 1 – Correspondence

Series 1.1 – Fan Mail

Box 1	FF 1	Japanese fan mail, 1917
Box 1	FF 2	Japanese fan mail, March - May 1918
Box 1	FF 3	Japanese fan mail, June - August 1918
Box 1	FF 4	Japanese fan mail, Sept. - Dec. 1918
Box 1	FF 5	Japanese fan mail, Jan. 1919
Box 1	FF 6	Japanese fan mail, Feb. - Apr. 1919
Box 1	FF 7	Japanese fan mail, May - July 1919
Box 1	FF 8	Japanese fan mail, Aug. - Oct. 1919
Box 1	FF 9	Japanese fan mail, 1920-1922
Box 1	FF 10	Japanese fan mail, undated
Box 1	FF 11	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1914
Box 1	FF 12	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1915
Box 1	FF 13	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1916
Box 1	FF 14	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1917
Box 1	FF 15	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1918
Box 1	FF 16	Fan mail from the United States and Canada, 1919 and two letters from 1968
Box 1	FF 17	Fan mail from other foreign countries, 1908-1919

Series 1.2 – Personal Correspondence

Box 1	FF 18	Family correspondence, 1936-1965
Box 1	FF 19	Letter and response to Hedda Hopper from Kathy Fischer, 1965
Box 1	FF 20	Letters to and from Senator Church and Mrs. William E. Borah, 1966
Box 1	FF 21	Letters to Margarita Fischer from actress Virginia Grey, 1966
Box 1	FF 22	Letters to and from film historian Roi Uselton, 1967-1968
Box 1	FF 23	Undated fan mail
Box 1	FF 24	Miscellaneous cards and letters, 1965-1969
Box 1	FF 25	Miscellaneous cards and letters, 1965-1969

Series 2 – Contracts and Letters

Box 1	FF 26	Contracts and letters, 1911-1918
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Series 3 – Photographs

Series 3.1 – Film Stills

Box 2	FF 1	<i>Anna's Finish</i>
Box 2	FF 2	<i>Bertie's Bandit</i>
Box 2	FF 3	<i>The Butterfly Girl</i>
Box 2	FF 4	<i>Caught in a Tight Pinch</i>
Box 2	FF 5	<i>Charge it to Me</i>
Box 2	FF 6	<i>Close to Ten</i>
Box 2	FF 7	<i>The Courting of Prudence</i>
Box 2	FF 8	<i>Cupid and a Dress Coat</i>
Box 2	FF 9	<i>The Dangerous Talent</i>
Box 2	FF 10	<i>The Devil's Assistant</i>
Box 2	FF 11	<i>The Divinity of Motherhood</i>
Box 2	FF 12	<i>The Dove and the Serpent</i>
Box 2	FF 13	<i>The Dragon</i>

Box 2	FF 14	<i>The Dream Ship</i>
Box 2	FF 15	<i>Drifting Hearts</i>
Box 3	FF 1	<i>Eugenics Versus Love</i>
Box 3	FF 2	<i>Fair Enough</i>
Box 3	FF 3	<i>A Fight Against Evil</i>
Box 3	FF 4	<i>Fooling Uncle</i>
Box 3	FF 5	<i>Forbid Them Not</i>
Box 3	FF 6	<i>A Friend of the Family</i>
Box 3	FF 7	<i>The Girl and the Halfback</i>
Box 3	FF 8	<i>The Girl from his Home Town</i>
Box 3	FF 9	<i>The Girl that Dared</i>
Box 3	FF 10	<i>The Girl Who Couldn't Grow Up</i>
Box 3	FF 11	<i>The Hellion</i>
Box 3	FF 12	<i>Her Heritage</i>
Box 3	FF 13	<i>Her Really Mother</i>
Box 3	FF 14	<i>Infatuation</i>
Box 3	FF 15	<i>Impossible Susan</i>
Box 3	FF 16	<i>An Interrupted Elopement</i>
Box 3	FF 17	<i>Italian Love</i>
Box 4	FF 1	<i>Jackie of the Army</i>
Box 4	FF 2	<i>Jackie of the Navy</i>
Box 4	FF 3	<i>Jane the Justice</i>
Box 4	FF 4	There is no title listed for these stills.
Box 4	FF 4A	<i>Jilted Janet</i>
Box 4	FF 5	<i>The Land of the Free</i>
Box 4	FF 6	<i>Legend of Black Rock</i>
Box 4	FF 7	<i>The Lonesome Heart</i>

Box 4	FF 8	<i>The Man Who Came Back</i>
Box 4	FF 9	<i>Mid-Summer Love Triangle</i>
Box 4	FF 10	<i>La Mode</i>
Box 4	FF 11	<i>A Modern Othello</i>
Box 4	FF 12	<i>Motherless Kids</i>
Box 4	FF 13	<i>The Mantle of Charity</i>
Box 5	FF 1	<i>Molly Go Get 'em</i>
Box 5	FF 2	<i>Molly of the Follies</i>
Box 5	FF 3	<i>Money Isn't Everything</i>
Box 5	FF 4	<i>Nancy's Husband</i>
Box 5	FF 5	<i>Nell the Outcast</i>
Box 5	FF 6	<i>Niedra</i>
Box 5	FF 7	<i>Nigel Barrie</i>
Box 5	FF 8	<i>On the Shore</i>
Box 5	FF 9	<i>The Only Way</i>
Box 5	FF 10	<i>The Other Train</i>
Box 5	FF 11	<i>The Peacock Feather Fan</i>
Box 5	FF 12	<i>The Pearl of Paradise</i>
Box 5	FF 13	<i>Paying the Price</i>
Box 5	FF 14	<i>The Portrait</i>
Box 6	FF 1	<i>The Primitive Woman</i>
Box 6	FF 2	<i>The Primeval Test</i>
Box 6	FF 3	<i>The Professors Awakening</i>
Box 6	FF 4	<i>Put Up Your Hands</i>
Box 6	FF 5	<i>The Quest</i>
Box 6	FF 6	<i>Retribution</i>
Box 6	FF 7	<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>

Box 6	FF 8	<i>The Rose of Hell</i>
Box 6	FF 9	<i>The Sacrifice</i>
Box 6	FF 10	<i>Sally Scraggs Housemaid</i>
Box 6	FF 11	<i>Shon the Piper</i>
Box 6	FF 12	<i>A Square Deal</i>
Box 6	FF 13	<i>Susies New Shoes</i>
Box 6	FF 14	<i>The Thirtieth Piece of Silver</i>
Box 7	FF 1	<i>The Tiger Lily</i>
Box 7	FF 2	<i>Trixie from Broadway</i>
Box 7	FF 3	<i>Until Death</i>
Box 7	FF 4	<i>The Weekend</i>
Box 7	FF 5	<i>When Queenie Came Back</i>
Box 7	FF 6	<i>Who Wears Them</i>
Box 7	FF 7	<i>The Wife</i>
Box 7	FF 8	<i>Withering Roses</i>
Box 8	FF 1-13	Miscellaneous stills

Series 3.2 – Publicity Photographs

Box 9	FF 1	Beauty artist photo 1914 used by <i>Photoplay</i> , <i>Kinematograph</i> , <i>Billboard</i> , and other magazines
Box 9	FF 2	Tour of American Film Company, April 1918 (pictured left to right: J. A. Wilson, Margarita Fischer, Sergeant "Doc" Wells, and Manager Joe Riley.)
Box 9	FF 3	Photo used for <i>Fashion Gossip</i> , June 1920
Box 9	FF 4	Photo used for cover of music "The Roses Have Nothing on You"
Box 9	FF 5	Photo used for <i>Motion Picture</i> , April 1914
Box 9	FF 6	Photo used for <i>Motion Picture</i> , July 1918
Box 9	FF 7	Fischer posing for pictures with captured German cannon on exhibit at Santa Barbara post office, October 9, 1919
Box 9	FF 8	Fischer, her sister Dorothy, her mother Kate and niece Kathy Fischer at the ranch house, 1920

Box 9	FF 9	Japanese fan magazine photos
Box 9	FF 10	United States Navy band serenading Fischer at American Film Company
Box 9	FF 11	Photos of Fischer in front of film studio with her Winton Six Automobile
Box 9	FF 12	Photos honoring the Aero Squadron
Box 9	FF 13	Photos promoting the American Red Cross
Box 9	FF 14	Fischer at St. Vincent's Orphanage
Box 9	FF 16-23	Miscellaneous publicity photographs

Series 3.3 – Miscellaneous Photographs

Box 10	FF 1-8	Head Shots
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Series 3.4 – Personal Photographs

Box 11	FF 1-2	Photos of Fischer from 1899 to 1961 arranged chronologically
Box 11	FF 3	Family photos: one photo of Fischer's uncle and one photo of Fischer, Dorothy, Kate and Kathy
Box 11	FF 4	Photos of Dorothy and Kathy
Box 11	FF 5	Photos of Dorothy
Box 11	FF 6	Photos of Fischer, Kathy and Kate at the beach
Box 11	FF 7	Photos of Fischer's aunt Anna
Box 12	FF 1	Fischer and Pollard traveling
Box 12	FF 2	Miscellaneous family photos
Box 12	FF 3	Miscellaneous colleagues and friends
Box 12	FF 4-5	Miscellaneous family photos
Box 12	FF 6	Half-tone block photo of Harry Pollard
Box 12	FF 7	Half-tone block photo of Margarita Fischer
Box 12	FF 8	Two photos of an unidentified man
Box 12	FF 9	Photos of family and friends

Series 4 – Scrapbooks

Box 13		Two scrapbooks: one bound loose leaf of Fischer's early stage career and
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the other is blue containing film and stage clippings

Box 14		One brown ledger scrapbook, one grey scrapbook, and two green scrapbooks
Box 15A		Black press book prepared for Fischer by her secretary Winona Higgins, September 1, 1919
Box 15B		Black press book prepared for Fischer by her secretary Winona Higgins, May 12, 1920
Box 16		Black press book
Box 17	FF 1	Music written for Margarita Fischer

Series 5 – Travel Souvenirs

Box 17	FF 2-3	Travel itineraries, 1936
Box 17	FF 4	Travel photographs
Box 17	FF 5	Travel souvenirs
Box 17	FF 6	Travel souvenir book
Box 17	FF 7-8	Miscellaneous travel material

Series 6 – Miscellaneous Items

Box 17	FF 9	Miscellaneous Christmas cards
Box 17	FF 10	Miscellaneous invitations, menus, etc.
Box 17	FF 11	Miscellaneous postcards
Box 17	FF 12	Miscellaneous publicity clippings
Box 17	FF 13	Miscellaneous material

Series 7 – Oversized

Box 18		Six large matted portraits of Margarita Fischer
Box 19		Includes oversized photograph of International Professional Tennis Match with Suzanne Lengler, October 9, 1926, in Madison Square Garden, Direction of Charles C. Pyle; one oversized photograph of the Taj Mahal; September 1919 poster for <i>The Hellion</i> ; two oversized portraits of Margarita Fischer; six oversized photographs of Margarita Fischer as Eliza in <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ; two oversized portraits of Fischer taken in Shanghai; one oversized photograph of Margarita Fischer in Egypt; four oversized photographs of Fischer's early stage career; six oversized photographs of colleagues and friends of Margarita Fischer; four oversized photographs of

Margarita Fischer as a young woman; one oversized photograph from *The Pearl of Paradise*

Oversized
Storage

These items are located in the oversized collection and pertain to publicity for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: a program; 16 page press copy; promotional piece with printed telegrams; 7 page Big Paper promotional sheet; two clippings from the *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1927; a clipping from *Fortnightly Feature Service*, Vol. 2, No. 22; a clipping from *Motion Pictures Today*; two clippings from the *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1927; two clippings from the *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1927; a clipping from the *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1927; a clipping from the *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1927. The folder also includes three large posters unrelated to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, including Margarita Fischer Rex Company; John Fisher Presents The Non Pareil Miss Margarita Fischer and Her Own Company; John Fisher Presents The Non Pareil Miss Margarita Fischer and Her Own Company.

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