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Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter collection, 1890-1998

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Maine Women Writers Collection

Abplanalp Library

University of New England

716 Stevens Avenue

Portland, Maine 04103

mwwc@une.edu

URL: <https://library.une.edu/mwwc/>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Maine Women Writers Collection
Creator:	Thaxter, Phyllis Schuyler
Title:	Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter collection
ID:	0380
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/3/resources/798
Date [inclusive]:	1890-1998
Physical Description:	3 linear feet 59 folders
Language of the Material:	English .

Preferred Citation

Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter collection, Maine Women Writers Collection, University of New England, Portland, Maine

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Biographical/Historical Note

Marie Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter of Portland was a classically trained actor who performed on Broadway and in regional theaters in Maine from the 1920s-1940s. A highlight of her career was her 1923 role as "Elvira" in Booth Tarkington's then new play, "Magnolia." The comedy opened in Atlantic City at the Apollo Theatre and then ran on Broadway at the Liberty. Thaxter had married Maine Supreme Court Justice Sidney St. Felix Thaxter in 1913, and in the early thirties she shifted her acting focus to the greater Portland area and became involved in the promotion of regional theater as well, serving as president of the Portland Players, whose South Portland theater now bears her name.

In addition to her stage career Thaxter was also a journalist, writing two columns for the Guy Gannett newspapers (*Portland Press Herald*) and contributing to the entertainment section of the *New York Times*. Her *Press Herald* column "Through the Stage Door with Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter" gave readers glimpses behind the scenes of the theatrical world and the latest news from the stages of New York, Boston and Maine. Thaxter also

interviewed Hollywood's greatest film stars for her other *Press Herald* column, "Adventures in Cinemaland." In early 1937, the newspaper invited readers to vote for their favorite movie stars and, once the votes were tallied, Thaxter was dispatched via jet plane to the Hollywood lot of Paramount Pictures for a whirlwind interviewing tour. From the studios Thaxter sent columns of numbered "adventures," each sharing an interview with a particular film star or describing her observations of the movie making process. Her daughter, Phyllis Thaxter, became a successful film actor (working with a number of the stars whom Thaxter had interviewed,) and is especially remembered for her role as the mother of Christopher Reeve's "Superman." Thaxter's granddaughter, Skye Aubrey, is a successful television actor.

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Collection Scope and Content

This collection consists of several manuscripts written by the author, a few pieces of correspondence, and some playbills and professional photos of Thaxter from her stage career, which spanned the 1920s-1940s. There is also a large collection of playbills from the 1930s-1960s, many related to her theater column "Through the Stage Door With Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter," written for the Guy Gannett newspapers (*Portland Press Herald*) and covering theaters in Maine, Boston and New York, as well as a number of clippings of the column. Her seven scrapbooks also contain a wealth of professional photographs of Thaxter with movie stars such as Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, John Ford, Shirley Temple, Myrna Loy, Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers and others, taken in 1937 on her *Press Herald*-sponsored interviewing trip to Hollywood, as well as clippings of her interviews with them for her column "Adventures in Cinemaland." The earliest album is dated 1913 and includes snapshots taken in 1936 of her travels in Europe, including shots of Russia, Denmark, and Germany under the reign of the Nazi regime. There are also three signed etchings, possibly purchased during her stay in the West.

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Arrangement

This collection is organized as a single series.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Maine Women Writers Collection

Abplanalp Library
University of New England
716 Stevens Avenue
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mwwc@une.edu
URL: <https://library.une.edu/mwwc/>

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Custodial History

This collection was the gift of the author's daughter, Phyllis Thaxter.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Travel
- Theater
- South Portland (Me.)
- Manuscripts
- Typescripts
- Correspondence
- Photographs
- Playbills
- Clippings
- Scrapbooks

- Thaxter, Phyllis Schuyler

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Handwritten manuscripts	Box 1	Folder 001
Handwritten manuscript on "The Charm of Good Manners"	Box 1	Folder 002
Typescripts	Box 1	Folder 003
Typescripts	Box 1	Folder 004
Shoppe Talke (2 issues), 1924 May <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 005
Three letters to Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter, 1935-1942 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 006
Travel photographs - Germany, 1936 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 007
Travel photographs - Russia, mostly Moscow, 1936, undated <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 008
Souvenir photographs from Russia	Box 1	Folder 009
Travel photographs - Stockholm	Box 1	Folder 010
Travel photographs - Copenhagen, 1936 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 011
Portraits of Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter	Box 1	Folder 012
Film and stage publicity photographs including Thaxter, circa 1930-1939 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 013
Film and stage publicity photographs including Thaxter, circa 1930-1939 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 014
Film and stage publicity photographs, circa 1930-1939 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 015
	Box 1	Folder 016
	Box 1	Folder 017
	Box 1	Folder 018
Hollis St. Theatre, 1906 December 10	Box 1	Folder 019

Phyllis Schuyler Thaxter collection, 1890-1998

<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Gem Theatre, Peaks Island, 1900	Box 1	Folder 020
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Portland Dramatic Guild, 1933	Box 1	Folder 021
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Theater programs and travel guides, circa 1930-1939	Box 1	Folder 022
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Portland Players playbills, 1934-1946	Box 1	Folder 023
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
The Play of the Moment, 1948, 1949	Box 1	Folder 024
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Post - clippings, Portland Players, 1966	Box 1	Folder 025
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Playbill - Deertrees Theater, Harrison, ME	Box 1	Folder 026
Playbills from Maine and other regional theaters, 1954-1966	Box 1	Folder 027
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Playbills from Maine and other regional theaters, 1954-1966	Box 1	Folder 028
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Scrapbook of playbills - Boston theaters, circa 1890-1899	Box 1	Folder 029
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 030
Playbills from New York theaters, 1930-1939	Box 1	Folder 031
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 032
	Box 1	Folder 033
	Box 1	Folder 034
Moscow Theater Festival Program, 1936	Box 1	Folder 035
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Program: First National Convention of the Legitimate Theatre, 1937	Box 1	Folder 036
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		
Playbills from New York Theaters, 1950-1959	Box 1	Folder 037
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 1	Folder 038
Playbills from New York Theaters, 1960-1969	Box 1	Folder 039
<u>Language of the Material:</u> English.		

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	Box 1	Folder 040
	Box 1	Folder 041
	Box 1	Folder 042
	Box 1	Folder 043
	Box 1	Folder 044
Playbills and souvenir programs from New York theaters	Box 2	Folder 045
	Box 2	Folder 046
"Descendants of Pieter Tjercks" genealogy, 1601-1998 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 2	Folder 047
Photograph--Boston Maine train car, 1912 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 2	Folder 048
Scrapbook--theater clippings and correspondence, 1913-1920s <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 2	Folder 049
Scrapbook--theater clippings, 1935 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 2	Folder 050
University of Maine Mosque--Helen of Troy, 1939 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 2	Folder 052
Souvenir book--James K. Hackett, 1901 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 3 (OVS)	Folder 053
Inscribed photograph--Billie Burke	Box 3 (OVS)	Folder 054
Engravings--California desert and wagon trail	Box 3 (OVS)	Folder 055
Scrapbook--theater clippings and photographs, 1936-1937 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 3 (OVS)	Folder 056
Scrapbook--theater clippings and photographs, 1937 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 4 (OVS)	Folder 057
Scrapbook--theater clippings and photographs, 1937-1938 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 4 (OVS)	Folder 058
Scrapbook--theater clippings and photographs, 1938-1939 <u>Language of the Material:</u> English.	Box 4 (OVS)	Folder 059