

**Inventory of the Una Abell Brinker Papers, 1895-1952**

\*T-Mss 1989-001

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
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## Descriptive Summary

Title: Una Abell Brinker Papers, 1895-1952

Collection ID: \*T-Mss 1989-001

Creator: Una Abell Brinker

Extent: .8 linear feet (2 boxes)

Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.  
Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Languages Represented: English

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## Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited.

Preferred Citation: Una Abell Brinker Papers, \*T-Mss 1989-001, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

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## Biographical Note

Una Abell Brinker was born in Wayne, Michigan in 1874. She made her debut in Newark, New Jersey at age 24 in *Blue Jeans*, a melodrama. She soon became an idol of the theater going public, performing in over 1000 roles and earning the distinction, First Lady of the Newark Theatre. Her first husband, H. Coulter Brinker, was her leading man in many productions of the Columbia Theater Stock Company. She later married theatrical producer Jacob H. Kahn. Miss Brinker conducted her own stock companies at the Neu Century, Orpheum and Newark Theatres in Newark, as well as the Lee Avenue Theatre in Brooklyn, New York. She played with Sarah Bernhardt, Modjeska and Rhea in repertoire, in addition to Maurice, Lionel and Ethel Barrymore in such plays as *Camille*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Romany Rye* and *Under the City Lamps*. She made her farewell to the stage at age 50 in *The Ruined Lady*. She died in New York on November 12, 1952.

## Scope and Content Note

The Una Abell Brinker Papers consist of scrapbook clippings of her theatrical career, family photographs and personal effects, some correspondence and unpublished memoirs, spanning the years 1895-1952. The value of this collection is in its newspaper documentation of the Newark theatre in the early 20th century, as well as Miss Brinker's personal recollections of famous performers with whom she appeared. The collection also contains correspondence from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. and Wendell L. Willkie.

## Organization

The Una Abell Brinker Papers are organized in two series. They are:

- I. Personal Papers
- II. Clippings and Scrapbooks

## Container Listing / Series Descriptions

### **Series I: Personal Papers, 1895-1952**

.4 lin. ft.

arranged by form

Contains both professional and personal correspondence spanning the dates 1895-1952, including letters from such individuals as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. and Wendell L. Willkie. The majority of Una Abell Brinker's outgoing correspondence are handwritten letters to her daughter, Joan. The highlight of this section are her brief handwritten memoirs on performers with whom she collaborated, including Sarah Bernhardt and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., among others. Several manuscripts are also included: her grandfather's handwritten reminiscences and an autobiographical typescript. This series includes historic family photographs (tintypes), as well as stage portraits of the actress. Rounding out the collection are sheet music of the "Brinker-Abell March" and her baptismal cap.

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|------|------|---|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence - Chamberlain Brown          |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Correspondence - Harold L. Ickes            |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | Correspondence - Herbert H. Lehman          |
| b. 1 | f. 4 | Correspondence - Brock Pemberton            |
| b. 1 | f. 5 | Correspondence - Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. |
| b. 1 | f. 6 | Correspondence - Wendell L. Willkie         |

- b. 1 f. 7            Miscellaneous Incoming Correspondence, 1895-1944
- b. 1 f. 8            Miscellaneous Incoming Correspondence, 1946-1952
- b. 1 f. 9            Miscellaneous Outgoing Correspondence, 1947-1952
- b. 1 f. 10            Baptismal Cap
- b. 1 f. 11            Divorce Decree of Jacob H. Kahn and Edna D. Kahn
- b. 1 f. 12            Personal Photographs
- b. 1 f. 13            Sheet Music - "Brinker-Abell March," composed by Frank M. Miller
- b. 1 f. 14            Manuscripts - *The Autobiography of O. C. Abell*
- b. 1 f. 15            Memoirs of Una Abell Brinker
- b. 1 f. 16            *Story of a California Miner*

**Series II: Clipping and Scrapbooks, 1900-1952**

.4 lin. ft.

arranged chronologically

This series consists mostly of clippings and scrapbooks pertaining to Una Abell Brinker's career in the Newark theatre. The range of dates covered is 1900-1952. There are obituary files for both Miss Brinker and her second husband, Jacob H. Kahn, a theatre producer. One scrapbook remnant is devoted to the accidental death of her first husband and leading man, H. Coulter Brinker, due to a fall in 1900.

- b. 2 f. 1            Clippings, 1924-1934
- b. 2 f. 2            Clippings, 1944-1951
- b. 2 f. 3            Clippings - Obituaries - Una Abell Brinker, 1952
- b. 2 f. 4            Clippings - Obituaries - Jacob H. Kahn, 1944
- b. 2 f. 5            Scrapbook Remnant - death of first husband H. Coulter Brinker, 1900
- b. 2 f. 6            Scrapbook Remnant - career of Una Abell Brinker, 1900-1944
- b. 2 f. 7            Scrapbook - career of Una Abell Brinker, 1934-1950