

Collection #
M 1314
OMB 0170

**MARJORIE MAIN
SCRAPBOOKS, 1895-1971**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half-size manuscript box, 1 flat manuscript box, 1 oversized manuscript box, 1 OVA photograph folder, 1 photograph folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1895-1971

PROVENANCE: Profiles in History, Calabasas, California, 2017

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2017.0281

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Famed for her 'dry wit, frosty smile, sparkling eyes, and rasping voice', Marjorie Main was a popular character actress who, unlike many females in Hollywood, gained the majority of her success after the age of 50.

Main was born in February 1890 in Acton, Indiana and was given the name Mary Tomlinson, but changed it when she became an actress to avoid embarrassing her family who did not approve of her chosen career. During her childhood, her family moved to Elkhart, Indiana, and she grew up as a rural farm girl. Despite her pastor father's disapproval of acting, Main was actually inspired to act from his family readings of Charles Dickens and would regularly put on performances for the family.

Main continued with her love of performing, attending first Franklin College in Indiana and then Hamilton College's School of Dramatic Expression in Lexington, Kentucky. She graduated from Hamilton in 1909 at the age of 19 and soon after accepted a position as a dramatics instructor at Bourbon College in Paris, Kentucky. This job lasted just one year after which she was fired for demanding a raise in salary. Main spend the next several years continuing to study the dramatic arts in both Chicago and New York. Her first paid role as a stage actress was as Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

In 1921, Marjorie married psychologist and lecturer, Dr. Stanley LeFevre who was twenty-six years her senior. The two met while Main was working with a Shakespearean company playing the Chautauqua circuit. It was during her marriage that Main got her first film appearance, acting as a gossiping extra in the 1931 film *A House Divided*.

LeFevre died just over a decade later in 1934. Using her grief as a widow to her advantage, Main achieved one of her best stage performances as the mother of gangster Joseph Downing in the stage production *Dead End*. She played the role in 460 out of 687 performances. In 1937, Samuel Goldwyn bought the rights to create the film version of the play and hired Main to reprise her role as the mother.

The year of 1937 was busy for Main. In addition to *Dead End*, Main had roles in 12 other films. The following few years were no different, and the public began to expect her face to show up on the screen in every movie they saw. After starring alongside Wallace Beery in the 1940 film *Wyoming*, Main signed her first long term contract with MGM studios. It was this contract that led her to her best known role as Ma Kettle in the Ma and Pa Kettle film series. She starred in nine Ma and Pa Kettle films between the years of 1949 and 1957.

Marjorie Main died from lung cancer in April 1975.

Sources:

Information in collection

Vogel, Michelle (2006). *Marjorie Main: The Life and Films of Hollywood's "Ma Kettle"*. Jefferson NC: McFarland

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains two scrapbooks, hand-assembled and notated by character actress Marjorie Main. It also includes ephemera from her career in movies including letters, cards, photographs, clippings, programs, and other papers.

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