

Finding Aid to the Madalyn Kuhn Papers

Kuhn, Madalyn, 1917-2004

Madalyn Kuhn Papers, 1932-2000

3.2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 214

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Madalyn Kuhn, 1999-2002 (Acc. 2562, 2568, 2579, 2611, 2654).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Madalyn Kuhn Papers, MS 214, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Madalyn Brehmer, together with her twin sister Adalyn, was born July 6, 1917 at Lisbon, N.D., the daughter of Frederick A. and Effie (Gordon) Brehmer. She grew up in the Lisbon area and graduated from high school there. She then attended Interstate Business College in Fargo, N.D. Thereafter she worked at a number of businesses in the Fargo-Moorhead area including Palace Clothiers in Moorhead.

Madalyn married Mark J. Kuhn on January 17, 1948 in Moorhead. He was born at Millville, Minnesota on April 13, 1913 but moved to Enderlin, N.D. with his parents when age four. He had come to West Fargo in 1936 and was affiliated with Crane Johnson Lumber. He also served in World War II from 1941

to 1945. At the time of his death he was manager of the Kindred, N.D. lumber yard. He died December 27, 1951. Madalyn and Mark Kuhn had one son, Mark John Jr.

After her husband's death Madalyn continued to work at various jobs, including as a secretary for the Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service, and North Dakota State University. She became semi-retired in 1982 but worked at the Hardee's restaurant in West Fargo for many years. She died March 18, 2004.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Madalyn Kuhn Papers** contains her diaries while living in the Lisbon and Fargo-West Fargo, N.D. area. She lived and worked in North Dakota and Minnesota her entire life. The early diaries were written when she lived in the town of Lisbon, N.D. After 1936, she moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area where she lived until her death in 2004. The collection includes diaries written from 1932, when the author was 14, through 2000. She continued to write daily. Mrs. Kuhn donated her diaries to the Institute for Regional Studies under the condition that she remain anonymous while she is still living which was honored. The collection is organized into four series: **Diaries, Typed Transcripts, Financial Journals, and School Papers.**

The [Diaries Series](#) begins in 1932 and ends in 2000. From 1932 to 1976, the entries are handwritten in five-year diaries. From 1977 to 2000, the author typed each entry. After 1937, it appears as if the author wrote daily in her diary, but from Sept. 5, 1936 to Dec. 31, 1937 the entries are sporadic.

From a researcher's point of view, the diaries offer invaluable information on a number of different topics: life in North Dakota, growing up in the 1930s, teen issues, social life, entertainment (especially movies), fashion, finances, diet and nutrition, dating, working conditions for single women, widowhood, single mother issues, and weather.

In the early diaries, the author recounts growing up in North Dakota in the 1930s. During the school year she boarded in town with her grandmother, and during school breaks, weekends, and the summer, she lived with her parents. The author writes about school, her relationships, dances, boyfriends, and her daily activities. She often mentions the weather, and at times she writes about the effect of the depression on her family.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, the author writes about living on her own and working. She had an active social life, and she meticulously lists the people she encountered every day. She writes about dating, "necking," who she visited, and the movies she viewed. The author also includes a comment about the weather, the time she woke up, the time she went to bed, what she ate, and other daily routines. As a young single woman, her experiences working in an office, and her precarious relationship with her boss, provide interesting insight into the hardships women experienced working in a "man's world" during the 1940s.

The author married in the late 1940s, had a son, and was widowed in 1951. The later diary entries recount her daily life as a single mother. Much as the earlier entries, the later ones also go into great detail regarding the author's daily routines, whom she visited, places she went, the weather, and brief introspective comments.

The [Typed Transcripts Series](#) include the entries from 1932 to 1946. The Mrs. Kuhn went back to the original diaries and transcribed them into typed documents. The entries are far easier to read than the original diaries, and it appears that they are transcribed word for word (no editing). The transcriptions are bound into three volumes, following the same years as the original diaries. The researcher should be aware, however, that the transcribed entries for the 1942 to 1946 volume are bound incorrectly and do not follow a chronological order. The transcription ends on October 23, 1946, whereas the original diaries include entries through the end of the year.

The [Financial Journals Series](#) consists of notebooks documenting, in great detail, the income and expenditures of the writer from 1934 to 1986 (with some gaps). Each entry is dated along with the source of income or what items were purchased. She begins each page with her cash balance. At the bottom of each page she reconciled her expenditures to her income. There are also several undated journals and some financial records of her sister. The final folder contains passbooks for American State Bank of Moorhead, 1937-1944 (3); Bank of Southwest Fargo, 1947-1952, and Gate City Building and Loan Association, 1941-1951.

The [School Papers Series](#) contains examples of Madalyn's course notebooks from her years at Lisbon High School, from which she graduated in the spring of 1935, examples of her accounting coursework from the Interstate Business College in Fargo, N.D., a memory book and autograph books, and several photos taken at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

Her school notebooks provide insight into the subjects that were typical for high school girls at a rural high school to have studied including art, science, literature, home economics, history, psychology and sociology. Her home economics coursework, including notes on "cooking experiments", the history of cotton, and a "Hygiene Journal" is an interesting resource for women's studies and the expectations for young females the early 1930s.

The memory book and autograph books assist her diaries in giving evidence of her social life while attending Lisbon high school. The autograph books contain messages from friends and family members to commemorate graduation. The memory book contains several items of sentimental value such as note cards, invitations, dance cards, school photos, event programs, autographs, news clippings, and postcards which would show a researcher what may have been important or memorable for a teenager in this era. There is a copy of the book *Chicago and the World's Fair, 1933* (157 pages), no doubt a souvenir obtained by Madalyn who apparently visited the fair in 1933. Found in the book were fourteen snapshots of various buildings and scenes at the fair, perhaps taken by her. They have been placed in their own file within the collection.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder Contents

1/1 Finding aid, and Biographical material

Diaries Series

1/2 Jan. 1, 1932 – Sept. 5, 1936
 1/3 Jan. 1, 1937 – May 2, 1937, Aug. 15, 1937 – Dec. 31, 1941
 1/4 Jan. 1, 1942 – Dec. 31, 1946
 1/5 Jan. 1, 1947 – Dec. 31, 1951
 2/1 Jan. 1, 1952 – Dec. 31, 1956
 2/2 Jan. 1, 1957 – Dec. 31, 1961
 2/3 Jan. 1, 1962 – Dec. 31, 1966
 2/4 Jan. 1, 1967 – Dec. 31, 1971
 3/1 Jan. 1, 1972 – Dec. 31, 1976
 3/2 Jan. 1, 1977 – Apr. 30, 1979
 3/3 May 1, 1979 – Dec. 28, 1980
 3/4 Dec. 28, 1980 – Dec. 31, 1982
 3/5 Jan. 1, 1983 – Dec. 30, 1984
 3/6 Dec. 30, 1984 – Dec. 30, 1986
 4/1 Dec. 31, 1986 – Dec. 31, 1988
 4/2 Jan. 1, 1989 – Dec. 31, 1990
 4/3 Jan. 1, 1991 – Dec. 31, 1992
 4/4 Jan. 1, 1993 – Dec. 29, 1993
 4/5 Jan. 3, 1994 – Dec. 29, 1994
 4/6 May 1, 1995 – Dec. 30, 1995, Dec. 29, 1993 – Jan. 3, 1994
 4/7 July 18, 1996 – Dec. 31, 1994, Jan. 1 1995 – May 1, 1995
 4/8 Dec. 30, 1995 – July 17, 1996
 4/9 Dec. 30, 1996 – Dec. 31, 1997
 6/8 Dec. 31, 1997 – June 30, 1998
 6/9 July 1, 1998 – Dec. 31, 1998
 6/10 Dec. 31, 1998 – June 29, 1999
 6/11 June 30, 1999 – Jan. 1, 2000
 6/12 Jan. 1, 2000 – July 2, 2000
 6/13 July 3, 2000 – Dec. 31, 2000

Typed Transcripts Series

5/1 Jan. 1, 1932 – Sept. 5, 1936
 5/2 Jan. 1, 1937 – Dec. 31, 1941
 5/3 Jan. 1, 1942 – Oct. 23, 1946

Financial Journals Series

- 5/4 Oct. 13, 1934-1935 and Aug. 1, 1936-Sept. 28, 1940 (2)
- 5/5 Sept. 28, 1940-Oct. 27, 1941 and Aug. 16, 1945-March 29, 1946 (1)
- 5/6 Oct. 2, 1940?-Aug. 16, 1945 (3)
- 5/7 April 1, 1946-June 2, 1948 (2)
- 5/8 Oct. 1, 1937-Oct. 2, 1940 (1)
- 5/9 Jan. 11, 1936?-Oct. 1, 1936 and undated (2)
- 5/10 July 15, 1954—Oct. 3, 1956
- 5/11 Oct. 3, 1956—April 17, 1959
- 6/1 April 17, 1959—June 5, 1961
- 6/2 June 5, 1961—Feb. 16, 1963
- 6/3 Feb. 12, 1963—July 7, 1965
- 6/4 July 7, 1965—July 31, 1968
- 6/5 July 31, 1968—Jan. 7, 1972
- 6/6 Jan. 7, 1972—Sept. 30, 1986

- 6/8 Bank passbook account books, 1937-1952 (5)

School Papers Series

High school coursework

- 6/14 - Art
- 6/15 - English/Reading
- 7/1 - General Science
- 7/2 - History
- 7/3 - Home Economics
- 7/4 - Journalism
- 7/5 - “Problems of Democracy”
- 7/6 - Psychology
- 7/7 - Sociology

College course work

- 7/8 - Accounting
- 8/1 - Accounting cont.
- 9/2 - Accounting cont.

Memories

- 8/2 - Autograph Books
- 9/1 - Memory Book
- 8/3 - Chicago World’s Fair Photos
- 8/4 - Chicago World’s Fair Book