

**Department of Rare Books and Special Collections  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library**

**University of Toronto**



**Margaret Fairley  
Papers**

1972

2024

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## Biographical note

Margaret Adele Fairley (née Keeling) was an activist, author, editor, and member of the Communist Party of Canada and the Labor-Progressive Party. She was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England on 20 November 1885. She attended St. Hugh's College, Oxford, and graduated with first class honours in English; however, she was not awarded a degree because Oxford did not grant degrees to women at that time. She subsequently worked as a tutor in English at St. Hilda's College, Oxford. While at St. Hilda's, she met Henry Marshall Tory, president of the University of Alberta. Tory invited Fairley to be the newly established university's first dean of women and offered her a B.A. for the work she had completed at Oxford. She moved to Edmonton in 1912, where she met Barker Fairley, a professor of German studies. They married in Edmonton in 1914 and subsequently moved to Toronto. The Fairleys had five children together.

Margaret Fairley edited several publications including *Spirit of Canadian Democracy* (1945), *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie* (1960), *Highways to Peace: A Challenge to Youth* (1961). She also edited a quarterly magazine called *New Frontiers* from 1952 to 1956. At the time of her death, Fairley was working on a book titled 'With Our Own Hands,' which sought to document the creative contributions of settlers to Canadian culture.

In the 1950s Fairley participated in two Canadian cultural delegations. In the summer of 1954, Fairley led a delegation of Canadians on a cultural tour of Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The tour was organized by *New Frontiers* and was led by Fairley in her role as editor. A 1959 delegation to the People's Republic of China included Fairley, archeologists Paul Sweetman and Frank Ridley, and two other Canadians. As guests of the Republic, they visited numerous historical and archaeological sites.

Towards the end of her life Fairley was instrumental in the creation of a park at Brunswick and Ulster in Toronto's Sussex-Ulster neighbourhood (now Harbord Village). Fairley began petitioning the city for a park in 1965. Following her death in 1968, friends and neighbours petitioned the city to name the park the "Margaret Fairley Park." The park was officially dedicated to her on 23 June 1972 and a bronze bust of Fairley was installed at the park in 1973.

## References

- James Doyle, "The Canadian Worker Poet: the Life and Writings of Joe Wallace," *Canadian Poetry*, Volume 35 (Fall/Winter 1994).  
<https://canadianpoetry.org/volumes/vol35/doyle.html>

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- June Ridley and Doris Ridley, "Frank Ridley, 1904-1985," *Arch Notes* 89-3 (May/June 1985), <https://ontarioarchaeology.org/wp-content/uploads/an1985-03.pdf>
- Canada's Early Women Writers. *Margaret Adele Fairley*. Canada's Early Women Writers, 18 May 2018. <https://cwrc.ca/islandora/object/ceww%3A30d7deab-101f-4778-bb20-a0645e4654a4>

### **Scope and content**

The Margaret Fairley Papers consists of donations from 1972 and 2024.

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## Margaret Fairley Papers

### Margaret Fairley Papers, 1972

**Dates:**

[1937]-1972 (primarily 1950-1961)

**Extent:**

5 boxes (0.67 m)

**Scope and content:**

This accession of Margaret Fairley's papers consists of material for *New Frontiers*, *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, 1824-1837* (1960), and an unpublished book titled 'With Our Own Hands,' as well as research files for unspecified projects. Material includes research, writing, and lecture notes, clippings, drafts, photographs and illustrations, correspondence, minutes and reports, and ephemera. Other material includes travel diaries and correspondence from Fairley's visit to China in 1959 and various printed material published in or about China.

**Custodial History:**

Material was donated to the University of Toronto Rare Book Library (now the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library) in 1972.

**Notes:**

Folder titles are taken from Fairley's original folder titles. Some titles have been supplied or replaced when necessary.

Shorthand notations are used in the finding aid:

TLS: Typed letter signed (typed letter signed by hand)

TL: Typed letter, not signed

ALS – Autograph letter signed (signed by the author of the letter, handwritten)

AL – Autograph letter not signed

### Series 1: With Our Own Hands

**Dates:** 1947-[195-]

**Scope and content:**

Consists of workers' and farmers' letters and research, writing, and lecture notes relating primarily to 'With Our Own Hands.'

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
1:1	Notebook	[1950s]
1:2-1:9	Workers' and farmers' letters on pioneer days in Canada	1950-[195-]
1:10	Letters re: Emigration to Canada.	[195-]
1:11-1:12	Research notes	[1951]-[1958]
1:13-1:16	Writing notes	[1950s]
1:17-1:18	Lecture notes (Canadian literature)	1947-[195-]
1:19	Lecture notes (Workers' and farmers' letters, etc.)	[1950s]
<b>Box 5</b>	Index cards	[1950s]

### Series 2: Research files

**Dates:** 1937-[1961]

**Scope and content:**

Consists of research files on various topics relating to Canadian culture, history, and social issues; notes, clippings, illustrations and photographs, articles, and ephemera for *New Frontiers* and other unspecified projects; and material related to the Labor-Progressive Party (L.P.P) National Cultural Commission.

Box:Folder Number	Contents: Research File Titles	Date range
1:20	Black Canadians	1951-1961
1:21	Booklists	1955-1958
1:22	Canadian books	1949-1959
1:23-1:24	Canadian culture	[195-]-1961
1:25	Canadian drama	[1950s]
2:1-2:3	Canadian history	1937-1961

Box:Folder Number	Contents: Research File Titles	Date range
2:4	Canadian poetry [for <i>Canadian Forum</i> and <i>New Frontiers?</i> ]	1944-[1961]
2:5	Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace	1949
2:6	Education	[1950s]
2:7	Gourlay, Robert	n.d.
2:8	Indigenous peoples	1952-1959
2:9	Kon, Louis. Letter to M.F., article [for <i>New Frontiers?</i> ]	[1955]
2:10	Labor-Progressive Party (L.P.P.) National Cultural Commission minutes, bulletins, etc.	1948-1959
2:11	Libraries	n.d.
2:12	Museums	[1957]-[1958]
2:13-2:15	Photographs and illustrations [for <i>New Frontiers?</i> ]	n.d.
2:16-2:17	Wallace, Joe. Letter to M.F., article [for <i>New Frontiers?</i> ]; poetry	[19--]
2:18	Miscellaneous research files	[1950s]

### Series 3: The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, 1824-1837

**Dates:**

1954-1961

**Scope and content:**

Consists of research notes, clippings, and typed drafts for *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, 1824-1837* (1960), as well as reviews and related correspondence.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
3:1	Research: Mackenzie's refutation. Newspaper clippings and other printed material.	1954-1957
3:2	Research notes on Mackenzie writings.	[195-]
3:3-3:7	Typed drafts of selected Mackenzie writings from 1824-1837. Duplicates and single pages.	[195-]
3:8	Reviews of <i>The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie</i> .	1960-1961
3:9	Correspondence	1960-1961

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
	1 TLS: Lester B. Pearson to C. C. Johnson (Oxford University Press). 1 TLS: John Diefenbaker to C. C. Johnson (Oxford University Press). 1 AL, Bertha D. Wright to Margaret Fairley, c/o Oxford University Press.	
3:10	Miscellaneous notes and printed material.	1960-1961

#### Series 4: China

**Dates:**

1959-[1963]

**Scope and content:**

Consists of correspondence, diaries, and other material from Margaret Fairley's visit to China in 1959 and miscellaneous printed material from or about China.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
3:11	Correspondence 7 ALS, 7 postcards: Margaret Fairley to Barker Fairley. 1 TL, 1 TLS: "Judy Godefrey" (alias of Dorise Nielsen) to Hazel Wigdor, Margaret Fairley, others. 1 TLS, Daniel Longpre to Margaret Fairley.	1959-1960
3:12	Travel diaries, China, 1959.	1959
3:13	Draft, 'One of China's Smallest Cities,' by Margaret Fairley.	[1959]
3:14	35 mm photograph slide	[1959]
4:1	The Canadian Far Eastern Newsletter. Vol. 11, No. 114-116; Vol. 12, No. 126-129; Vol. 13, No. 130-131, 133-139; Vol. 14, No. 140-145, 147-148; Vol. 15, No. 149-151, 153-155, 157-159; Vol. 16, No. 160-164; Vol. 17, No. 173, 176.	1958-1964
4:2	Letter from China by Anna Louise Strong. No. 5, 9, 10	1963



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Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
4:3-4:4	Printed material about China.	1950's- 1960's

### Margaret Fairley Papers, 2024

**Dates:**

[1908]-2014

**Extent:**

3 boxes (0.5 m); 1 mapcase folder

**Scope and content:**

This accession of Margaret Fairley's papers consists of material created or collected by Margaret Fairley, material related to the Fairley and Keeling families, and material related to the Margaret Fairley Park in Toronto.

**Contains series:**

1. Margaret Fairley material
2. Fairley family material
3. Margaret Fairley Park
4. Miscellaneous

**Custodial History:**

Material was donated by Paul B. Schabas to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in 2024.

**Arrangement:**

Material that Margaret Fairley created and/or collected is arranged in the series Margaret Fairley files; some can also be found in series 3 and series 4. Material created or collected by her children and grandchildren can be found in the series Fairley family material.

**Series 1: Margaret Fairley material**

**Dates:**

1908-1975 (predominantly 1952-1968)

**Scope and content:**

Consists of material created or collected by Margaret Fairley during her life, including correspondence, personal documents, copies of publications that she contributed to, photographs, film slides, and ephemera. A significant amount of material relates to Fairley's participation in Canadian cultural delegations to Hungary, Poland, and Romania in 1954 and China in 1959. Material related to the delegations includes memo books, photographs, and postcards.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
6:1	Travel diaries and scrapbooks: Norway, 1908; Paris, [19--].	1908; [19--]
6:2-6:3	Publications: clippings and xeroxes (1920-1957); periodicals and pamphlets (1955-1968).	[1920]-1968
6:4	35mm photograph slides: 9 slides labelled 'French River 1952'; 7 unlabeled slides depicting individual people, etc.	1952; [19--]
6:5	Typewritten summary of a lecture given by Margaret Fairley on 19 February 1954 titled 'English-Canadian Literature.'	1954
6:6-6:7	Canadian cultural delegation to Hungary, Poland, and Romania: 6 memo books; 5 mini photo albums.	1954
6:8	Covered notepad with Fairley's notes related to various <i>New Frontiers</i> and cultural delegation activities. Material enclosed within includes: Draft, 'Report to Committee on Cultural Relations,' Budapest, [1954]. Draft, 'Canadian Literature,' [195-]. 4 postcards, Margaret Fairley to Barker Fairley, [1959]. 1 postcard, Margaret Fairley to Mark Frank, [1959].	[195-]-1959

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
6:9	Canadian cultural delegation to China: postcards from historical sites and other ephemera.	1959
6:10	Canadian cultural delegation to China: 27 black & white photographs taken in China.	1959
6:11	Letters to Margaret Fairley. 1 ALS, Dorothy Keeling to Margaret Fairley, 20 November 1961. 1 ALS, Maisie Caswell to Margaret Fairley, [19--]	1961; [19--]

## Series 2: Fairley family material

### Dates:

[1926];1964-2014

### Scope and content:

Consists of material created or collected by Margaret and Barker Fairley's children and grandchildren. Includes family history research notes, correspondence with researchers and relatives, publications that mention Margaret or Barker, and miscellaneous biographical material.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
7:1	Barker Fairley biographical material.	[1926]-2014
7:2	Material related to portraits of Margaret Fairley by Frederick H. Varley (1921) and Aba Bayefsky (1959). Includes ephemera and clippings.	[1964]-[1982]
7:3	Margaret Fairley obituaries and tributes.	1968
7:4	Media Club of Canada, Canadian Women of Note (C.W.O.N) project. Correspondence and forms.	1978
7:5	Research notes and xeroxes related to Margaret Fairley's time at Oxford.	[198-?]
7:6	Material related to two articles by David Kimmel on Margaret Fairley. Includes correspondence with Fairley/Schabas family members.	1990-1993

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
7:7	Material related to James Doyle's article on Margaret Fairley. Includes correspondence with Fairley/Schabas family members.	1993-1994
7:8	Correspondence related to Margaret and Barker Fairley.	1994-2014
7:9	Miscellaneous publications that mention Margaret Fairley.	[19--]-2011

### Series 3: Margaret Fairley Park

**Dates:**

[1965]-2006

**Scope and content:**

Consists of material related the creation of the Margaret Fairley Park. It includes some material related to Fairley and her neighbours' early petitioning. The bulk of the material relates to the Sussex-Ulster Residents' Association (SURA) and the Committee of the Margaret Fairley Memorial Fund, which was established to coordinate the installation of a bronze bust at the park. Material includes correspondence, meeting minutes and agendas, material related to donors, and miscellaneous clippings and ephemera.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
7:10	Early petition and planning material.	1965-[1967]
<b>MAPCASE</b>	Blueprint of Margaret Fairley Park designed by A. Webb and drawn by E.J. Scott. Dated 14 October 1966.	1966
7:11	Planning material. Sussex-Ulster Residents' Association and Margaret Fairley Memorial Fund committee correspondence, signed petitions, posters, minutes, agendas, reports, newspaper clippings.	[1972]-1973
7:12-7:14; 8:1-8:3	Responses to the Committee's requests for donations.	1973
8:4	Memorial Fund donor tax receipts.	1973
8:5	Photographs depicting the bronze bust of Margaret Fairley unveiled at Margaret Fairley Park. 7 black & white photographs and 1 photo negative.	[1973]
8:6	Miscellaneous.	1993-2006

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**Series 4: Miscellaneous**

**Dates:**

[1911]-[1953]

**Scope and content:**

Consists of printed and manuscript material collected by Margaret Fairley or the Fairley family.

Box:Folder Number	Contents	Date range
8:7	<i>Ourselves: A Magazine for Cheerful Canadians</i> . Volume 1, Nos. 5 (February 1911), 6 (March-April 1911), and 7 (May-June 1911).	1911
8:8	<i>Contact</i> 7, Vol. 2, No. 3 (May-August 1953).	1953
8:9	Manuscript recipe book.	n.d.
8:10	Sketchbook.	n.d.