

# Guide to the Robert B. Fisk Papers

WA MSS S-2683



by Lisa Conathan, Brooke McManus

2011. Revised: December 2022.

P. O. Box 208330  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** WA MSS S-2683

**CREATOR:** Fisk, Robert B.

**TITLE:** Robert B. Fisk papers

**DATES:** 1882-1951

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 11.22 linear feet (18 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The Robert B. Fisk Papers consist of family correspondence and business papers created and accumulated by Robert B. Fisk during the course of his career as an attorney and land developer in Potter County, South Dakota.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fiskr>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fiskr>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Carmen D. Valentino on the Arthur Corbitt Hoskins Memorial Fund, 2007, and gift of Carmen D. Valentino, 2019 and 2020.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

The Robert B. Fisk Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

Robert B. Fisk Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

Former call number: Uncat MSS 1173

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization, at the time of acquisition. Further description was added in 2011 and 2022.

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## Robert B. Fisk

Robert Brown Fisk was born in Covington, Kentucky in 1852. He was an attorney and land developer in Gettysburg, Potter County, South Dakota from 1884 until his death after 1929.

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## Scope and Contents

The Robert B. Fisk Papers consist of family correspondence and business papers created and accumulated by Robert B. Fisk during the course of his career as an attorney and land developer in Potter County, South Dakota. Correspondence broadly documents nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Dakota life, including the rapidly growing settler population, business and real estate transactions, politics and the transition to statehood, the conditions of workers and prisoners, and the effect of economic recessions on the local population. Additionally, letters from family members document life in contemporary Kentucky. Other papers concern government assistance to indigent people in North Dakota in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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## Arrangement

Organized into four series: I. Business Papers, 1882-1929. II. Family Papers, 1885-1929. III. December 2019 Acquisition, 1884-1951. IV. January 2020 Acquisition, 1883-1951.

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Business Papers, 1882-1929

*2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)*

Business Papers consist of correspondence (chiefly incoming, though also including retained copies of some outgoing letters) and financial records (chiefly bills and statements). Correspondence includes letters from colleagues, clients, and prospective settlers, relating to legal matters and cases, to economic conditions in the Dakota Territory and South Dakota, and to real estate prospects and transactions. Of particular interest is correspondence from mortgage and wholesale companies (for whom Fisk worked as a collections agent) and from individuals seeking relief from debt, documenting the economic conditions in the Dakota Territory and South Dakota in the context of rapid settlement, widespread mortgages, and the Panics of 1893 and 1907.

Correspondence is arranged chronologically.

b. 1, f. 1	Receipts	1883, undated
b. 1, f. 2-13	Business correspondence	1882-1894
b. 2, f. 14-19	Business correspondence	1895-1900
b. 3, f. 20-25	Business correspondence	1901-1906
b. 4, f. 26-30	Business correspondence	1908-1911 August
b. 5, f. 31-38	Business correspondence	1911 September-1916
b. 6, f. 39-50	Business correspondence	1917-1926
b. 6, f. 51	Unidentified notes and sketches	1929, undated

**Series II: Family Papers, 1885-1929***0.84 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Family correspondence addresses not only family matters such as health and welfare, personal financial situations, and births and deaths of family members, but also legal and economic topics related to the conditions in and prospects of the Dakota Territory and South Dakota. Estate papers document the holdings and distribution of the property of Fisk's parents, John F. and Elizabeth S. Fisk.

Organized into two subseries: Correspondence and Estate Papers.

## Correspondence

Organized by sender and then arranged roughly chronologically.

b. 7, f. 52-53	Julia C. Fisk (wife)	1885-1898, undated
b. 7, f. 54	John F. Fisk (father)	1887-1903
b. 7, f. 55	William Greene (brother?)	1887-1908
b. 7, f. 56-57	Olin Meredith Fisk (son)	1893-1917, undated
b. 7, f. 58-59	John F. Fisk (brother)	1884-1911, undated
b. 7, f. 60-63	Charles H. Fisk (brother)	1901-1909
b. 7, f. 64	Selene (sister)	1898-1905
b. 7, f. 65	Hennie (sister)	1896-1908, undated
b. 7, f. 66	J.W. Hale (brother-in-law)	1896-1899
b. 7, f. 67	Otis Harrison Fisk (nephew)	1889-1901
b. 7, f. 68	Ella (sister)	1895-1904
b. 7, f. 69	Belle Fisk Andrews (sister)	1894-1916, undated
b. 7, f. 70	Elizabeth S. Fisk (mother)	1891-1904
b. 7, f. 71	Nellie Michener (niece)	1897-1898
b. 7, f. 72	Mary (sister)	1890-1891
b. 8, f. 73	Tom (nephew)	1901-1904
b. 8, f. 74	Gineva (cousin)	1902
b. 8, f. 75	Sadie (niece)	1894-1899
b. 8, f. 76-78	Other relatives	1884-1917, undated

## Estate Papers

Estate Papers (continued)

b. 8, f. 79-82	Parents' estate documents	1904-1906, undated
b. 8, f. 83-84	Estate correspondence	1905-1929

**Series III: December 2019 Acquisition, 1884–1951**

*1.46 linear feet (4 boxes)*

This acquisition consists of correspondence and other papers relating to business dealings of Robert B. Fisk.

Materials maintain order found at time of acquisition.



## **Series IV: January 2020 Acquisition, 1883–1951**

*6.42 linear feet (6 boxes)*

This acquisition consists of papers relating to government assistance to indigent people in St. Thomas, North Dakota. Included are deeds, mortgages, contracts, and other legal documents; insurance policies and certificates; tax returns and related papers; bills and vouchers for goods and services; condition reports of the Farmers State Bank (now Nebraska Bank); correspondence; and a small amount of personal papers.

Materials maintain order found at time of acquisition.

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Frontier and pioneer life -- South Dakota  
Lawyers -- South Dakota  
Public welfare -- North Dakota  
Real property -- South Dakota

### **Geographic Names**

Dakota Territory -- Economic conditions  
Dakota Territory -- Politics and government  
Dakota Territory -- Social life and customs  
Kentucky -- Social life and customs  
North Dakota -- Economic conditions  
Potter County (S.D.) -- Economic conditions  
Potter County (S.D.) -- Politics and government  
South Dakota -- Economic conditions  
South Dakota -- Politics and government  
South Dakota -- Social life and customs

### **Occupations**

Lawyers -- South Dakota

### **Names**

Fisk, Robert B.

### **Families**

Fisk family