Vera Berliner was a star violinist on the national vaudeville circuit during the period 1906-1926. Her parents, Kate and F. Berliner, lived on her farm in Chula Vista, and she stayed with them during her off seasons running the ranch, which produced lemons and guavas, during the summer months. Her brother Rudolph also played violin and served as a bandleader and production manager.

There is not a great deal of information on her life other than what can be gleaned from this collection. She was married in 1912 to Barney Kay and married again by 1938 to Rudy Howe. A married man, Charles Edward Wright, courted her until her father wrote him a letter telling him to stay away. Throughout her career, she traveled extensively. In 1908 she was billed as a “favorite of the late President McKinley,” and she was also called the “violinist with soul.” In that same year, the Evening Wisconsin describes her playing style as “freak or trick work...rapid and accurate fingering,” so it is apparent Berliner mixed traditional classical style with a more popular showmanship. Garnering favorable reviews wherever she performed, Berliner was also known as Vera Garliner and “Mioni.”

Scope and Content
This collection contains theater billings, contracts, and correspondence regarding the vaudeville career of star violinist Vera Berliner from the 1900s-1920s, as well as some Berliner family papers. Family papers include material on the farm in Chula Vista, Vera’s brother Rudolph Berliner, family letters, and letters from Vera’s first husband and other friends and admirers.

Arrangement
This collection is arranged in three series:
Series I: Vera Berliner Theater Career;
Series II: Vera Berliner Personal and Business Papers;
Series III: Berliner Family Papers.

Preferred Citation
Berliner Family Papers, MS 58, San Diego History Center Documents Archives, San Diego, CA.

Conditions Governing Access
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Processing Information

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Berliner, Rudolph
Berliner, Vera
Kay, Barney
Chula Vista (Calif.)
Farms--California
Vaudeville shows
Women musicians

Series I: Vera Berliner Theater Career
Series I: Vera Berliner Theater Career

Box-folder 1:1 Booking Contracts, 1913-1918
Includes:
Contracts with United Booking Offices of America; Western Vaudeville Managers’ Association; the Orpheum Circuit; Metropolitan Booking Offices; B.F. Keith’s Greater Circuit of Theatrical Enterprises; the Pantages Circuit; Maryland Theatre (Baltimore); and Western Vaudeville Theaters.

Box-folder 1:2 Correspondence, 1906-1919
Includes:
Letters regarding bookings with Will Davis; Pat Casey Agency; Western Vaudeville; Billy; Gus Sun Booking Exchange Co; Superior Amusement Co; Ernest Edelsten and Harry Burns of London; James McKowen; BF Keith’s NY Theatres Co; L.M. Garman; E.P. Churchill; Eugene Dial; Frank Evans of the Orpheum; Frank DunBar and Chocolate Soldier Opera Co; and Strand Theater.

Box-folder 1:3 Newspaper Articles and Images, 1907-1922 and undated
Includes:
Clippings from newspapers regarding appearances and women musicians, Orpheum programs, and a commercial photo of Vera with her violin.

Box-folder 1:4 Miscellanea, 1914-1922
Includes:
Violin insurance with AF Shaw Insurance Co, receipts of payment from Orpheum Theatre, a contract with Mosst Empires, and the by-laws of National Vaudeville Artists Inc.

Series II: Vera Berliner Personal and Business Papers

Box-folder 1:5 Correspondence: Barney Kay, 1911-1914

Box-folder 1:6 Correspondence: Friends and Admirers, 1905-1938 and undated
Includes:
Letters from Grace and J.K. Sebree; Harold Hersey; J. Wilson Carwik; Martha Harrison; William Pinkerton; Edward Flint; Louis M. Zach to Mr. Russo; Vera to Charles Wright; R.M. Campbell; and Harry Culbertson. Also includes two letters in German, one of which is translated and the other summarized.

Box-folder 1:7 Business Papers: Chula Vista Farm, 1918-1933
Includes:
Receipts and invoices related to supplies, equipment, and labor (Chula Vista Citrus Association), bank statements, correspondence regarding savings bonds, and a newspaper article about Vera as farmer violinist.

Series III: Berliner Family Papers

Box-folder 1:8 Family Correspondence, 1909-1918
Includes:
Letters between family members or regarding family issues, especially letters home from Rudolph and from Boby to Vera. Also includes two letters between Charles Wright and Vera’s parents regarding his courtship of her, and letters to Vera regarding unsuitability of Barney Kay.

Box-folder 1:9 Family Correspondence, 1919-1938 and undated
Includes:
Letters between family members, especially letters home from Rudolph, Boby to Vera, and Peter to Vera and Kate (their nephew and grandson respectively).
Box-folder 1:10  **Rudolph Berliner, 1917-1919**

Includes:

Articles from Montreal papers regarding his activities with Montreal Productions and Adanac Co, a visit by the Prince of Wales, and an orchestra at Savoy Hotel. Also includes one informational flyer regarding Adamac Producing Co. construction project.

Box-folder 1:11  **Postcards and Family Photos, 1923 and undated**