

King Vidor:

An Inventory of His Collection in the Film Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

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| Creator: | Vidor, King, 1894-1982 |
| Title: | King Vidor Collection |
| Dates: | 1924-1941 (bulk 1941) |
| Extent: | 9 document boxes, 20 oversize boxes, 1 oversize folder (20.16 linear feet) |
| Abstract: | The King Vidor collection consists of photographs, scripts, props, publicity materials, production reports, studio memos, and other production materials primarily from the 1941 film <i>H. M. Pulham, Esquire</i> . |
| Call Number: | Film Collection FI-00046 |
| Language: | English |
| Access: | Open for research |

Administrative Information

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| Acquisition: | Gifts, 1936, 1941 |
| Processed by: | Luke Borders, Stephen Mielke, 2005 |
| Repository: | Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin |

Biographical Sketch

King Wallis Vidor was born February 8, 1894, in Galveston, Texas, to Charles Shelton and Katie Lee (Wallis) Vidor. The son of a prosperous lumber merchant, Vidor saw his first movie, *A Trip to the Moon*, at age fifteen, and later worked a summer job as a ticket taker and relief projectionist at Galveston's first movie theatre.

After leaving high school, Vidor made newsreel footage and short films around Galveston and Houston. While in Houston he made several films with fellow Texan Edward Sedgwick, who later gained prominence as a comedy director. In 1915, Vidor married aspiring actress Florence Arto and the two soon moved to California.

Arriving in Hollywood, Vidor found minor jobs at movie studios, eventually working as a freelance scenarist and short film director for Universal. In 1919, Vidor directed his first feature film, *The Turn in the Road*, backed by the small independent Brentwood Film Corporation. He made several more films for Brentwood before directing his first major studio production for Metro Pictures, *Peg o' My Heart* (1922). The movie's success brought Vidor steady work at Metro, which soon became known as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).

Over the next thirty-five years, Vidor directed more than forty movies for MGM, Paramount Pictures, Selznick Pictures, and Warner Brothers. Notable among his films are *The Big Parade* (1925), which became the highest grossing silent movie ever released, and *Hallelujah* (1929), Vidor's first sound film and the first major Hollywood production featuring an all-black cast. He directed (uncredited) the Kansas sequences in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and was nominated for Best Director Academy Awards for *The Crowd* (1928), *Hallelujah* (1929), *The Champ* (1931), *The Citadel* (1938), and *War and Peace* (1956). He received an honorary Academy Award in 1979 for his "incomparable achievements as a cinematic creator and innovator." He also served as president of the Screen Directors Guild from 1936 to 1938.

After retiring from directing in 1959, Vidor taught at film schools at the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles. He died in Paso Robles, California, on November 1, 1982.

Sources

Baxter, John. *King Vidor*. New York: Monarch, 1976.

"King Vidor." The Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm08965421>. Accessed 2 March 2005.

Vidor, King. *A Tree is a Tree*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953.

Scope and Contents

The King Vidor collection consists of photographs, scripts, props, publicity materials, production reports, studio memos, and other production materials primarily from the 1941 film *H. M. Pulham, Esquire*. Vidor donated the *Pulham* materials to The University of Texas Drama Department in conjunction with his guest lecture on movie making at the university on December 3, 1941. The materials were intended to form the nucleus of a program for the study of the production and direction of motion pictures, organized by Drama Department Chairman James Parke, Interstate Theatres President Karl Hoblitzelle, and Paramount Pictures Executive Vice President Y. Frank Freeman. Also in the collection are a typescript of Vidor's 1936 film *The Texas Rangers* and an accompanying photo of Vidor, and four additional photographs of Vidor dating from around 1924. The materials are arranged by volume, with *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* constituting almost the entire collection. The two *Texas Rangers* items and the four circa 1924 photographs are housed at the end of the collection.

The *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* materials are arranged roughly in order of their creation or use in the film-making process. Besides directing the film, Vidor also acted as producer and adapted the screenplay with his third wife, Elizabeth Hill, from the novel of the same name by John P. Marquand. Marquand, a Pulitzer Prize winner, helped Vidor and Hill work on the screenplay and is pictured with Vidor in one of the movie's research photos.

Included in the materials are the book review that inspired Vidor to make the film, Vidor's working copy of the book with numerous handwritten notations, and a transcription of a letter from Marquand to Vidor about the screenplay. Also present are several drafts of the screenplay, including retakes, the script clerk's copy, and the prop man's copy.

Photographs constitute the bulk of the materials and include costume, makeup, set, production, and film stills. The film's stars, Hedy Lamarr, Robert Young, Ruth Hussey, Charles Coburn, Van Heflin, Fay Holden, and Bonita Granville, are depicted in many of the photos. Publicity photos of actors and actresses considered for casting but not selected are also present.

Scenes and settings are documented with twenty production design sketches, and with architectural drawings and models for six of the movie's sets. Costume sketches include twenty-two original women's gowns by Robert Kalloch and thirty-three men's wardrobe sketches by Gile Steele, a six-time nominee and two-time winner of Academy Awards for costume design.

The tools of film making are represented by various props, a production board with shooting schedules, a scene slate, and a small brass periscope. Various daily reports and breakdowns for production, footage, and wardrobe track the financial and business aspects of the film.

Comment cards from members of a preview audience accompany editing notes from the preview. The original musical score by Branislav Kaper is documented with one folder of sheet music, memos, editing notes, and photographs of the orchestral recording.

Several items located with publicity materials may actually have been used for Vidor's lectures at The University of Texas. Other publicity materials include box office analyses, advertising plans, clippings, and promotional images.

All of the *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* materials date from 1941, except for a 1932 photograph from the MGM location department. A prop photograph depicting the lead character's World War I army unit is a photo of an actual army unit, identified in writing on the image as "137th Engineers USA 1918," but the date of the print is unknown.

The Texas Rangers script and accompanying photograph, signed by Vidor to the University of Texas, were presented to the university on the occasion of Vidor's August 28, 1936, visit to Dallas, Texas, for the world premiere of *The Texas Rangers* at the Majestic Theatre. Inspired by Walter Prescott Webb's book, Vidor wrote the screenplay, again in collaboration with his wife Elizabeth Hill, and premiered the movie in cooperation with the 1936 Texas Centennial celebration.

Four matted photographs of Vidor dating from around 1924 include handwritten captions indicating their use in magazine or newspaper stories. Their provenance is undetermined.

Related Material

King Vidor correspondence can be found at The Harry Ransom Center in the Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Records, The E. P. Conkle Papers, the Margaret Cousins Papers, The Robert Downing Papers, the Alice Corbin Henderson Collection, the David O. Selznick Collection, and the Swami Vidyatmananda Collection.

Additional King Vidor archival materials are located at The University of California at Los Angeles, The University of Southern California, Brigham Young University, Columbia University, and the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.

Index Terms

People

Brown, Phil, 1916-1973

Clyde, Dave

Coburn, Charles Douville, 1877-

Cooper, Bobbie

Erickson, Leif, 1911-

Granville, Bonita, 1923-
Heflin, Van, 1910-1971
Hill, Elizabeth
Holden, Fay, 1893-1973
Hussey, Ruth, 1917-
Kalloch, 1893-
Kapar, Branislav, 1902-
Lamarr, Hedy, 1915-
Marquand, John P. (John Phillips), 1893-1960
Steele, Gile

Organizations

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
Paramount Pictures

Subjects

H. M. Pulham, Esquire (Motion picture)
The Texas Rangers (Motion picture : 1936)
Motion picture producers and directors--United States
Motion pictures--History
Motion pictures--Production and direction
Motion pictures--United States

Document Types

Architectural drawings
Architectural models
Film stills
Motion pictures
Photographs
Props
Scores
Scripts
Screenplays
Sheet music

H. M. Pulham, Esquire (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1941)

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| <i>Book-of-the-Month Club News</i> , 1941 February | Container 1.1 |
| Annotated copy of book and typed movie outline, 1941 | Container 1.2 |
| Typed transcription of letter from J. P. Marquand to Vidor, 1941 March 21 | Container 1.3 |
| First script | |
| Typescript, 1941 March 25 | Container 1.4 |
| Mimeo copies, 1941 March 25 | Container 1.5-6 |
| Completed script, 1941 April 25 | Container 2.1 |
| Final script with retakes, 1941 June 25-October 24 | Container 2.2 |
| Script clerk's script, undated | Container 2.3 |
| Prop man's script, undated | Container 2.4 |
| Studio department memos and production correspondence, 1941 June-September | Container 3.1 |
| Research photographs | |
| Boston, undated | Container 3.2 |
| Advertising agency offices, undated | Container 3.3 |
| Assistant director's book, 1941 | Container 3.4 |
| Set designs | |
| Architectural drawings, 1941 July-August | Container osf |
| Architectural models, undated | |
| Scene 06, interior Pulham Sr.'s | Container 21 |
| Scene 07, interior Pulham Jr.'s | Container 22 |
| Scene 14, interior upper floor | Container 23 |
| Scene 24, interior Italian restaurant | Container 24 |

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| Scene 25, interior Westwood lower floor | Container 25 |
| Scene 34, interior Westwood upper floor | Container 26 |
| Props, 1941, undated | |
| Bayonet | Container 29 |
| <i>Boston Sphere</i> newspaper | Container 18 |
| Coza Flakes soap, two boxes | Container 9 |
| Envelope addressed to Harry M. Pulham | Container 3.5 |
| Hand grenades, three | Container 29 |
| "Harry's company A.E.F.," framed photograph identified under mat as 147th Engineers 1918 USA | Container 28 |
| Letter on H. M. Pulham letterhead | Container 3.5 |
| Letters on Harvard University Class of 1916 Letterhead, two | |
| Pack stage cigarettes | Container 28 |
| Pistol (in fragments) | Container 29 |
| Sketches | |
| "Artist sketch for 1920 Period," 27 x 20 inches | Container osf |
| Catch Run Hosiery, 22 x 18 inches | Container 18 |
| Comfort Cut Shoes, 21.5 x 19 inches | |
| Coza Soap, two 20 x 15 inches | |
| "Sketch for advertising agency, 1921 period," 31.5 x 24 inches | Container osf |
| <i>True Love Story</i> magazine with one 4 x 5 inch film still | Container 3.5 |
| Wardrobe breakdown, 1941 July | Container 3.6 |
| Wardrobe design sketches, 1941 July-August | Container 10-15 |
| Production breakdown, 1941 August 1, undated | Container 3.7 |

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| Production design sketches, undated | Container 16-18 |
| Footage breakdown, undated | Container 3.8 |
| Blank budget sheets and studio telephone directory, 1941 September | Container 3.9 |
| Casting memos, circulars and final selections, 1941 May-September | Container 3.10 |
| Performers considered, photographs, 1941 | Container 3.11 |
| MGM Player Roster | |
| Actors photographs, 1941 | Container 4.1-2 |
| Actresses photographs, 1941 | Container 4.3-4 |
| <i>Players Directory</i> , Issue 24, 1941 July | Container 4.5 |
| Shooting schedules, 1941 July-August | Container 5.1 |
| Production board, 1941 | Container 19 |
| Production slate, 1941 August 15 | Container 20 |
| Periscope, brass frame with square mirrors, marked "25MM LENS C. L. Q7 CAMERA 4.0 FROM FLOOR," 8 x 2.5 x 3 inches, undated | Container 28 |
| Script clerk's daily screen report, 1941 August-September | Container 5.2 |
| Daily progress report, 1941 August-November | Container 5.3-4 |
| Second unit reports, 1941 August-November | Container 5.5 |
| Daily light tests film canister label, 1941 | Container 5.6 |
| Make-up stills, 1941 August | Container 5.7 |
| Wardrobe stills, 1941 August | |
| Brown, Phil | Container 5.8 |
| Clyde, Dave | Container 5.9 |
| Coburn, Charles | Container 5.10 |
| Cooper, Bobbie | Container 5.11 |

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| Erickson, Leif | Container 6.1 |
| Granville, Bonita | Container 6.2 |
| Heflin, Van | Container 6.3 |
| Holden, Fay | Container 6.4 |
| Hussey, Ruth | Container 6.5 |
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| Location stills, 1932-1941 | Container 6.7 |
| Set stills, 1941, August-September | Container 6.8-7.1 |
| Film stills, 1941, August-September | Container 7.2-3 |
| Frame enlargements | |
| Hedy Lamarr and Robert Young, 1941 | Container 7.4 |
| General, 1941 | Container 7.5-8.1 |
| Sheet music, cutter's notes, music department memos, and photographs, 1941 October, undated | Container 8.2 |
| Preview audience comment cards, 1941 October | Container 27 |
| Preview and cutting notes, 1941 October | Container 8.3 |
| Publicity | |
| Promotional manuals, graphics, and clippings, 1941 August-November | Container 8.4 |
| Oversize items | Container 17 |
| "Brings a Picture to the Screen," loose film stills, 1941 | Container 8.5 |
| "The Director, King Vidor, at work," matted film stills, 1941 | Container 18 |
| Vidor at work on <i>H. M. Pulham, Esquire</i> , framed photograph 1941 | Container 17 |
| "Notes on techniques employed," typescript and mimeo copies, 1941 | Container 8.6 |

The Texas Rangers (Paramount Pictures, 1936)

Typescript, 1936

Container 8.7

Signed photograph of King Vidor, 1936

Container 17

Vidor, King

Four matted photographs of Vidor with captions, circa 1924

Container 18