

Gordon Parks Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Donna Ellis
Revised and expanded by Donna Ellis



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

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Latest revision: 2011 September

Collection Summary

Title: Gordon Parks Papers

Span Dates: 1946-1991

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1960-1990)

ID No.: MSS83761

Creator: Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006

Extent: 7,900 items; 39 containers plus 4 oversize; 15.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Photographer, writer, filmmaker, and composer. Contracts, correspondence, financial records, production material, and scripts relating to Parks's books, films, speeches, and other writings.

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.

People

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006.

Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006. Flavio. 1978.

Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006. Learning tree. 1963.

Organizations

Gordon Parks Archives in the Library of Congress.

Subjects

American literature.

Ballet--United States.

Motion pictures, American.

Photography--United States.

Occupations

Authors.

Composers.

Motion picture producers and directors.

Photographers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Gordon Parks, photographer, writer, filmmaker, and composer, were transferred from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division in 1996. An addition was transferred in 2007.

Processing History

The collection was arranged and described in 2006. Additional material was processed in 2011.

Additional Guides

The Gordon Parks Archives, consisting of material in several divisions in the Library of Congress, is described in *Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, vol. 54, no. 16 (4 Sept. 1995).

Transfers

The papers of Gordon Parks are part of the larger collection entitled The Gordon Parks Archives in the Library of Congress. Manuscript music, sound recordings, and videotapes removed from the papers in the Manuscript Division have been transferred to the Music and Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound divisions where they are identified as part of the Gordon Parks Archives in the Library of Congress.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Gordon Parks in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division for further information.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Gordon Parks are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Gordon Parks Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1912, Nov. 30	Born, Ft. Scott, Kans.
1933	Married Sally Alvis (divorced 1961)
1941	Awarded Julius Rosenwald Fellowship
1941-1944	Photographer, Farm Security Administration (later absorbed by the Office of War Information), Washington, D.C.
1944-1948	Freelance photographer, <i>Glamour</i> and <i>Vogue</i>
1948	Published <i>Camera Portraits: The Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture</i> . New York: Watts
1948-1972	Photographer, <i>Life</i> magazine
1950	Photographer, <i>Life</i> magazine, Europe
1960	Named Photographer of the Year, American Society of Magazine Photographers
1961	Writer and director, <i>Flavio</i> (film)
1963	Published <i>The Learning Tree</i> . New York: Harper and Row Married Elizabeth Campbell (divorced 1973)

- 1966 Published *A Choice of Weapons*. New York: Harper and Row
Received Notable Book Award, American Library Association, *A Choice of Weapons*
- 1968 Published *A Poet and His Camera*. New York: Viking Press
Received Emmy Award, best television documentary, *Diary of a Harlem Family*
- 1969 Producer, director, and writer, *The Learning Tree* (film)
- 1971 Published *Born Black*. Philadelphia: Lippincott
Published *Gordon Parks: Whispers of Intimate Things*. New York: Viking Press
Published *In Love*. Philadelphia: Lippincott
Director, *Shaft* (film)
- 1972 Director, *Shaft's Big Score* (film)
- 1973 Married Genevieve Young (divorced 1979)
- 1974 Director, *The Super Cops* (film)
- 1975 Published *Moments Without Proper Names*. New York: Viking Press
- 1976 Director, *Leadbelly* (film)
- 1978 Published *Flavio*. New York: Norton
- 1979 Published *To Smile in Autumn: A Memoir*. New York: Norton
- 1981 Published *Shannon*. Boston: Little, Brown
- 1984 Director, *Solomon Northup's Odyssey* (film)
- 1988 Producer, *Gordon Parks: Moments Without Proper Names* (film)
Awarded National Medal of Arts
- 1989 Composer, *Martin* (ballet)
- 1990 Published *Voices in the Mirror: An Autobiography*. New York: Doubleday
- 1997 Published *Half Past Autumn: A Retrospective*. Boston: Bulfinch Press
- 2000 Published *A Star for Noon: An Homage to Women in Images, Poetry, and Music*. Boston: Bulfinch Press
- 2006, Mar. 7 Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Gordon Parks (1912-2006) span the years 1946-1991, with the bulk of the material dating from 1960 to 1990. The papers are organized in the following series: [Books](#); [Stage and](#)

Screen; Other Writings; Miscellany, consisting of works about Parks, general correspondence, project proposals, and printed matter; and an Addition.

The Books series documents Parks's writing career. Books such as *Flavio* are based on his experiences as a photojournalist for *Life* magazine. Other books such as *Moments Without Proper Names* and *Whispers of Intimate Things* combine his skills as a poet and photographer. He also produced fiction and autobiographical works. Types of production material include contracts, correspondence, drafts, financial records, mock-ups, notes, proofs, and research material.

The Stage and Screen series reflects Parks's accomplishments as a producer and director of films. The largest body of material pertains to his ballet, *Martin*, which was filmed for public television. In addition to contracts, correspondence, and scripts, production material includes set design and casting files, financial accounts, location arrangements, publicity, rehearsal and shooting schedules, and storyboards.

The Other Writings series primarily contains texts of speeches made by Parks along with related correspondence and printed matter. In addition, there are a few magazine articles written by Parks.

The Miscellany series includes biographical material, primarily magazine and newspaper articles about Parks. Correspondence from friends and colleagues includes requests and arrangements for Parks's many public appearances as a keynote speaker and television talk show guest. Printed matter consists of articles on topics of interest to Parks.

The Addition series contains material relating to Parks' books, films, and other writings, along with biographical material, general correspondence, and printed matter. The series is arranged to reflect the main body of the papers.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- Books, 1959-1989
- Stage and Screen, 1963-1991
- Other Writings, 1964-1990
- Miscellany, 1946-1990
- Addition, 1961-1990
- Oversize, 1968-1975

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-22	<u>Books, 1959-1989</u> Contracts, correspondence, drafts, mock-ups, and other production material relating to the publication of Parks's books. Arranged alphabetically by title and therein alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 22-32	<u>Stage and Screen, 1963-1991</u> Contracts, correspondence, financial records, scripts, and other production material relating to Parks's films and to his ballet <i>Martin</i> . Arranged alphabetically by title and therein alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 32-33	<u>Other Writings, 1964-1990</u> Magazine articles written by Parks and texts of his speeches along with related material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 33-35	<u>Miscellany, 1946-1990</u> Contracts, general correspondence, magazine and newspaper articles about Parks, music copyrights and royalty statements, notes, project proposals, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 36-39	<u>Addition, 1961-1990</u> Contracts, correspondence, drafts, and production material relating to Parks's books, films, and other writings. Arranged by type of material.
BOX OV 1-OV 4	<u>Oversize, 1968-1975</u> Jacket designs, mock-ups, and page proofs relating to Parks's books as well as set designs and storyboards pertaining to his films. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-22	Books, 1959-1989 Contracts, correspondence, drafts, mock-ups, and other production material relating to the publication of Parks's books. Arranged alphabetically by title and therein alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 1	<i>Born Black</i> Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1967-1981 Typescript, 1970 <i>A Choice of Weapons</i> Correspondence, 1965-1969, 1977, 1989 Drafts, undated Excerpts, undated Galley proofs, 1965 Miscellany, 1967-1968, 1986 Notes, 1965-1969 Screenplay by Gilbert Moore, 1970
BOX 2	Typescript, undated Complete Miscellaneous chapters <i>Fashion Photography</i> , undated <i>Flavio</i> Contracts, 1961-1963, 1975-1976 Correspondence, 1961-1978 (3 folders) Drafts 1968 1976 1977 Mar. (2 folders)
BOX 3	June (2 folders)
BOX 4	Undated (3 folders) Financial records, 1977-1984 Layout designs, undated
BOX 5	Magazine and newspaper articles, 1960-1966, 1974 (4 folders) Notes, 1968-1977 Proofs Blueprints, 1978

Books, 1959-1989

Container

Contents

	Page proofs, 1977 (3 folders)
BOX 6	<i>Reader's Digest</i> , 1977-1979 Research material, 1961-1963 (2 folders) Typescript, undated <i>In Love</i> Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1970-1980 Mock-ups, 1971 <i>See Oversize</i> Unbound book signatures, 1971 <i>The Learning Tree</i> Correspondence, 1963-1973
BOX 7	Drafts, undated (7 folders)
BOX 8	Galley proofs, 1963 Notes, undated Royalty statements, 1968 Malcolm X, research material, 1959-1963 (2 folders) <i>Moments Without Proper Names</i> Book jackets, 1975 <i>See Oversize</i> Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1972-1981 <i>See also Oversize</i> Mock-ups <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 9	Page proofs, 1975 <i>A Poet and His Camera</i> Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1968-1969 Mock-ups, undated Notes, 1968 <i>Shannon</i> Correspondence, 1979-1981 Drafts, undated (3 folders)
BOX 10	(6 folders)
BOX 11	(2 folders)
	Galley proofs, 1981
BOX 12	Notes (2 folders) Research material, 1972-1978 Typescripts, undated Bound pp. 1-361 (2 folders)
BOX 13	pp. 362-634 (2 folders) Miscellaneous pages (2 folders)

Books, 1959-1989

Container

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BOX 14	Unbound Set I (5 folders) Set II pp. 1-140
BOX 15	pp. 141-554 (3 folders) Set III (3 folders)
BOX 16	Sets IV-VI (5 folders)
BOX 17	<i>Silence</i> Correspondence and notes, 1972 Drafts, undated <i>To Smile in Autumn</i> Contract, 1977 Correspondence and notes, 1978-1988 List of illustrations, 1979 Mock-ups <i>See Oversize</i> Proof sheets, 1979 (3 folders)
BOX 18	Typescripts Set I, 1979 Set II, 1979 pp. 1-300 (2 folders)
BOX 19	pp. 301-456 Sets III-IV, undated (2 folders) <i>A Voice in the Air</i> , undated <i>Voices in the Mirror</i> Correspondence and printed matter, 1987-1989
BOX 20	Drafts 1987-1988 Undated (5 folders)
BOX 21	(1 folder) Notes, 1975-1989 Typescripts Sets I-II, 1988 (2 folders)
BOX 22	Sets III-V, 1989 (3 folders)

Books, 1959-1989

Container

Contents

- Whispers of Intimate Things*, mock-ups, 1971
(2 folders)
- BOX 22-32 Stage and Screen, 1963-1991
Contracts, correspondence, financial records, scripts, and other production material relating to Parks's films and to his ballet *Martin*.
Arranged alphabetically by title and therein alphabetically by type of material.
- BOX 22 *Eagle in the Air*, script
An Endless Silence, script, 1972
- BOX 23 *Leadbelly*
Budget, 1973-1974
Casting, 1974
Contract, 1973
Miscellany, 1974-1975
Publicity, 1975-1979
Research material, 1974
Schedules
 Call sheets, 1974
 Shooting and post production, 1974-1975
Scripts
 Dialogue script, 1975
- BOX 24 Screenplay by Ernest Kinoy, 1974
Set design
The Learning Tree
Contracts, 1963-1968
Correspondence, 1963-1969, 1989
(4 folders)
Financial records, 1963-1971
Location arrangements, 1968-1969
- BOX 25 Music, 1966-1985
Publicity, 1968-1969
Scripts
 Drafts, 1968
 (2 folders)
 Film editing, undated
 Final, 1968
 Treatment, undated
Set design, 1968 *See also Oversize*
- BOX 26 Shooting schedules, 1968
Storyboard, undated
Martin
Cast and crew
 Choreographer, 1987-1989
 Dance companies, 1989
 Dancers, 1989
 Lists, 1989

Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

Container

Contents

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	Correspondence
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	Fund-raising, 1986-1989
	Invoices and purchase orders, 1986-1991
	Miscellany, 1989
	Statements, 1988-1989
BOX 28	Legal papers
	Contracts
	Children, 1989
	Choreographer, 1987-1989
	Community Television of Southern California, 1989
	Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1988-1989
	Crew, 1989
	Dancers, 1989
	Director, 1987-1989
	Feature titles and credits, 1989
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	Public Television International, 1991
	Copyrights, 1986-1990
	Insurance, 1989-1991
	Permits, 1989
	Release forms, 1989
	Miscellany, 1987-1989
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BOX 29	Notes, undated
	Production reports, 1989
	Proposal, 1986-1989
	Publicity
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	Interviews, 1989-1990
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	Press kit, undated
	Preview, 1989,
	Screenings, 1989-1990
	Research material, 1986-1989
	Schedules
	Calendar, 1989
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	Rehearsals, 1989
	Shooting schedule, 1989

Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

Container

Contents

BOX 30	Time sheets, 1989 Scripts, 1986 Storyboard <i>See also Oversize</i> <i>Moments Without Proper Names</i> Contracts and correspondence, 1983-1988 Drafts, undated Notes, undated Script, undated <i>Shaft</i> Contracts, 1971 Financial records, 1986-1987 Newspaper clippings, 1971 Preview, 1971 Script, 1970-1971 <i>Shaft's Big Score</i> , contract, 1971-1972
BOX 31	<i>Solomon Northup's Odyssey</i> Cast, undated Contracts and correspondence, 1982-1983 Notes, undated Schedules, 1983 Scripts Screenplays By Lou Potter, 1983 (2 folders) Revised, 1983
BOX 32	Shooting script, undated Treatment, undated
BOX 32-33	Other Writings, 1964-1990 Magazine articles written by Parks and texts of his speeches along with related material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 32	Articles, 1970-1975, 1984, 1990 (3 folders) Speech file 1964-1985 (10 folders)
BOX 33	1988 (2 folders)
BOX 33-35	Miscellany, 1946-1990 Contracts, general correspondence, magazine and newspaper articles about Parks, music copyrights and royalty statements, notes, project proposals, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 33	Appointment book, 1982 <i>Audience</i> magazine, 1969

Miscellany, 1946-1990

Container

Contents

	Biographical material, 1965-1990 (5 folders)
	Contracts, 1966-1973
	Copyrights and permissions, 1968-1970, 1985
	Correspondence 1965-1968
BOX 34	1969-1990 (4 folders)
	Guest appearances 1946, 1962-1985 (5 folders)
BOX 35	1986-1988 (3 folders)
	Harper and Row Publishers, 1968-1969
	<i>Life</i> magazine, 1966-1979
	Music royalty statements, 1971-1987
	Notes, 1983
	Printed matter, 1953, 1962-1985 (2 folders)
	Projects, 1968-1974
BOX 36-39	Addition, 1961-1990
	Contracts, correspondence, drafts, and production material relating to Parks's books, films, and other writings.
	Arranged by type of material.
BOX 36	Books
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	Drafts, 1976-1977 (6 folders)
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	Drafts, undated (1 folder)
BOX 37	(3 folders)
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BOX 38	<i>The Learning Tree</i> , 1968-1969
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	Dancers, 1989
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	Feature titles and credits, 1989
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	<i>Moments Without Proper Names</i> , 1984
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	Miscellaneous pages, undated
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	Miscellany
	Biographical material, 1965-1988 (2 folders)
	Contracts, 1969, 1987-1989
	Correspondence, 1968-1990
	Guest appearances, 1966-1990
	Insurance, 1989
	Printed matter, 1968
BOX OV 1-OV 4	Oversize, 1968-1975
	Jacket designs, mock-ups, and page proofs relating to Parks's books as well as set designs and storyboards pertaining to his films.

Oversize, 1968-1975

Container

Contents

	Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Books
	<i>In Love</i>
	Mock-ups, 1971 (Container 6)
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	Book jackets, 1975 (Container 8)
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BOX OV 2	Mock-ups (Container 8)
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	Mock-ups (Container 17)
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