Gordon Parks Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2011

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm96083761

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms003050

Prepared by Donna Ellis
Revised and expanded by Donna Ellis

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2003
Revised 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
Extent: 39 containers plus 4 oversize
Extent: 15.6 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm96083761
Summary: 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 LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
Parks, Gordon, 1912-2006.

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 directors.
Photographers.

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


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Copyright in the unpublished writings of Gordon Parks in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved.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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912, Nov. 30</td>
<td>Born, Ft. Scott, Kans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Married Sally Alvis (divorced 1961)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Awarded Julius Rosenwald Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941-1944</td>
<td>Photographer, Farm Security Administration (later absorbed by the Office of War Information), Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944-1948</td>
<td>Freelance photographer, Glamour and Vogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>PublishedCamera Portraits: The Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture. New York: Watts</td>
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<td>1948-1972</td>
<td>Photographer, Life magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Photographer, Life magazine, Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Named Photographer of the Year, American Society of Magazine Photographers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Writer and director, Flavio (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Published The Learning Tree. New York: Harper and Row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Married Elizabeth Campbell (divorced 1973)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Received Notable Book Award, American Library Association, A Choice of Weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Published A Poet and His Camera. New York: Viking Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Received Emmy Award, best television documentary, Diary of a Harlem Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Producer, director, and writer, The Learning Tree (film)</td>
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1971
Published *Born Black*. Philadelphia: Lippincott
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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1-22</td>
<td><strong>Books, 1959-1989</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 22-32</td>
<td><strong>Stage and Screen, 1963-1991</strong></td>
<td>Contracts, correspondence, financial records, scripts, and other production material relating to Parks's films and to his ballet <em>Martin</em>. Arranged alphabetically by title and therein alphabetically by type of material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 32-33</td>
<td><strong>Other Writings, 1964-1990</strong></td>
<td>Magazine articles written by Parks and texts of his speeches along with related material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 33-35</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1946-1990</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 36-39</td>
<td><strong>Addition, 1961-1990</strong></td>
<td>Contracts, correspondence, drafts, and production material relating to Parks's books, films, and other writings. Arranged by type of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1-OV 4</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, 1968-1975</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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</table>
## Container List

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<tr>
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| 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     | **Born Black**  
|           | Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1967-1981  
|           | Typescript, 1970  
|           | **A Choice of Weapons**  
|           | Drafts, undated  
|           | Excerpts, undated  
|           | Galley proofs, 1965  
|           | Notes, 1965-1969  
|           | Screenplay by Gilbert Moore, 1970 |
| BOX 2     | Typescript, undated  
|           | Complete  
|           | Miscellaneous chapters  
|           | **Fashion Photography**, undated  
|           | **Flavio**  
|           | Correspondence, 1961-1978  
|           | (3 folders)  
|           | Drafts  
|           | 1968  
| BOX 3     | 1976  
|           | 1977  
|           | Mar.  
|           | (2 folders)  
| BOX 4     | June  
|           | (2 folders)  
|           | 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  
<p>|           | Blueprints, 1978 |</p>
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| BOX 6     | Page proofs, 1977  
3 folders  
*Reader's Digest*, 1977-1979  
Research material, 1961-1963  
2 folders  
Typescript, undated  
*In Love*  
Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1970-1980  
Mock-ups, 1971 [See Oversize](#)  
Unbound book signatures, 1971  
*The Learning Tree*  
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  
*Moments Without Proper Names*  
Book jackets, 1975 [See Oversize](#)  
Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1972-1981 [See also Oversize](#)  
Mock-ups [See also Oversize](#)  
BOX 9     | Page proofs, 1975  
BOX 10    | *A Poet and His Camera*  
Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1968-1969  
Mock-ups, undated  
Notes, 1968  
*Shannon*  
Correspondence, 1979-1981  
Drafts, undated  
3 folders  
BOX 11    | (6 folders)  
BOX 12    | (2 folders)  
Galley proofs, 1981  
BOX 13    | Notes  
Research material, 1972-1978  
Typescripts, undated  
Bound  
pp. 1-361  
2 folders  
BOX 14    | (2 folders)  
pp. 362-634  
2 folders  
Miscellaneous pages  
2 folders  
Unbound  

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<td>BOX 15</td>
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<td>Set III</td>
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<td>BOX 16</td>
<td>Sets IV-VI</td>
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<td>BOX 17</td>
<td><em>Silence</em></td>
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<td>Correspondence and notes, 1972</td>
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<td>Drafts, undated</td>
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<td><em>To Smile in Autumn</em></td>
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<td>Contract, 1977</td>
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<td>Correspondence and notes, 1978-1988</td>
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<td>List of illustrations, 1979</td>
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<td>Mock-ups <em>See Oversize</em></td>
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<td>BOX 18</td>
<td>Proof sheets, 1979</td>
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<td>BOX 19</td>
<td>Typescripts</td>
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<td><em>A Voice in the Air</em>, undated</td>
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<td>BOX 22</td>
<td><em>Voices in the Mirror</em></td>
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<td>Correspondence and printed matter, 1987-1989</td>
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<td>BOX 22-32</td>
<td><em>Stage and Screen, 1963-1991</em></td>
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<td>Contracts, correspondence, financial records, scripts, and other production material relating to Parks's films and to his ballet <em>Martin</em>.</td>
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</table>
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

**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

**BOX 27**

Martin
- Cast and crew
  - Choreographer, 1987-1989
  - Dance companies, 1989
  - Dancers, 1989
  - Lists, 1989
  - Miscellany, undated
  - Photography, 1989
- Correspondence
  - 1986-1987

1988-1991
  (5 folders)
Financial records
   Budget, 1986-1990
   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
      Miscellany, 1989
      Public Television International, 1991
   Copyrights, 1986-1990
   Permits, 1989
   Release forms, 1989
   Miscellany, 1987-1989
Music, undated

BOX 29
Notes, undated
   Production reports, 1989
   Proposal, 1986-1989
   Publicity
      Brochures, 1989
      Interviews, 1989-1990
      Newspaper and magazine clippings, 1986-1990
      Press kit, undated
      Preview, 1989
      Screenings, 1989-1990
Research material, 1986-1989
   Schedules
      Calendar, 1989
      Call sheets, 1989
      Rehearsals, 1989
      Shooting schedule, 1989

BOX 30
Time sheets, 1989

Scripts, 1986
Storyboard See also Oversize

Moments Without Proper Names
   Contracts and correspondence, 1983-1988
Drafts, undated
Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

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<td>Contracts and correspondence, 1982-1983</td>
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<td>Notes, undated</td>
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<td>Schedules, 1983</td>
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<td>Scripts</td>
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<td>Screenplays</td>
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<td>By Lou Potter, 1983</td>
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<td>Revised, 1983</td>
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<td>Shooting script, undated</td>
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<td>Treatment, undated</td>
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<td>BOX 32-33</td>
<td>Other Writings, 1964-1990</td>
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<td>Speech file</td>
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<td>BOX 33-35</td>
<td>Miscellany, 1946-1990</td>
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<td>BOX 33</td>
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<td>Contracts, 1966-1973</td>
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| BOX 34    | 1969-1990 (4 folders)  
Guest appearances  
1946, 1962-1985 (5 folders) |
| BOX 35    | 1986-1988 (3 folders)  
*Life* magazine, 1966-1979  
Music royalty statements, 1971-1987  
Notes, 1983  
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  
*Born Black*, 1973  
*Flavio*  
Drafts, 1976-1977 (6 folders)  
*A Poet and His Camera*, 1968-1969  
*Shannon*, 1978  
*Silence*, undated  
*To Smile in Autumn*  
Drafts, undated (1 folder)  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 37    | Miscellaneous pages, 1976 (2 folders)  
Stage and Screen  
The Big Bamboo*, 1971  
An Endless Silence*, 1972  
*Leadbelly*, 1979 |
| BOX 38    | *The Learning Tree*, 1968-1969  
*Martin*  
Cast and crew  
Choreographer, undated  
Dancers, 1989  
Lists, 1989  
Correspondence, 1969, 1986-1989  
Financial records |
<table>
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<th>Contents</th>
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| BOX 39    | Storyboard, undated  
            (2 folders)  
            Moments Without Proper Names, 1984  
            Shaft, 1971-1972  
            Solomon Northup's Odyssey, undated  
| 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.  
                Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.  
| BOX OV 1   | Books  
            In Love  

Budget, 1986-1989  
Fund-raising, 1985-1990  
Legal papers  
Contracts  
Choreographer, 1987-1989  
Community Television of Southern California, 1989  
Dancers, 1989  
Director, 1989  
Feature titles and credits, 1989  
Miscellany, 1989  
Public Television International, 1990  
Miscellany, undated  
Production reports, 1989  
Proposal, 1986  
Publicity, 1986-1990  
Schedules  
Call sheets, 1989  
Rehearsals, 1989  
Shooting schedule, 1989  
Time sheets, 1989

Addition, 1961-1990

Biographical material, 1965-1988  
(2 folders)  
Correspondence, 1968-1990  
Guest appearances, 1966-1990  
Insurance, 1989  
Printed matter, 1968
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<td>Box OV 3</td>
<td>To Smile in Autumn</td>
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<td>The Learning Tree</td>
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<td>Set Design</td>
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