

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>

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Revised and expanded by Donna Ellis

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2003
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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://lcn.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.

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 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

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

Date	Event
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 <i>A Choice of Weapons</i> . New York: Harper and Row Received Notable Book Award, American Library Association, <i>A Choice of Weapons</i>
1968	Published <i>A Poet and His Camera</i> . New York: Viking Press Received Emmy Award, best television documentary, <i>Diary of a Harlem Family</i>
1969	Producer, director, and writer, <i>The Learning Tree</i> (film)

1971	Published <i>Born Black</i> . Philadelphia: Lippincott Published <i>Gordon Parks: Whispers of Intimate Things</i> . New York: Viking Press Published <i>In Love</i> . Philadelphia: Lippincott Director, <i>Shaft</i> (film)
1972	Director, <i>Shaft's Big Score</i> (film)
1973	Married Genevieve Young (divorced 1979)
1974	Director, <i>The Super Cops</i> (film)
1975	Published <i>Moments Without Proper Names</i> . New York: Viking Press
1976	Director, <i>Leadbelly</i> (film)
1978	Published <i>Flavio</i> . New York: Norton
1979	Published <i>To Smile in Autumn: A Memoir</i> . New York: Norton
1981	Published <i>Shannon</i> . Boston: Little, Brown
1984	Director, <i>Solomon Northup's Odyssey</i> (film)
1988	Producer, <i>Gordon Parks: Moments Without Proper Names</i> (film) Awarded National Medal of Arts
1989	Composer, <i>Martin</i> (ballet)
1990	Published <i>Voices in the Mirror: An Autobiography</i> . New York: Doubleday
1997	Published <i>Half Past Autumn: A Retrospective</i> . Boston: Bulfinch Press
2000	Published <i>A Star for Noon: An Homage to Women in Images, Poetry, and Music</i> . 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

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

Container List

Container	Contents
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)
BOX 12	Galley proofs, 1981 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)
BOX 14	Unbound

Books, 1959-1989

Container

Contents

	Set I (5 folders)
	Set II pp. 1-140 pp. 141-554 (3 folders)
BOX 15	
	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) <i>Whispers of Intimate Things</i> , 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 <i>Martin</i> .

Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

Container

Contents

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
 Screenplay by Ernest Kinoy, 1974
- BOX 24** 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
 Miscellany, undated
 Photography, 1989
Correspondence
 1986-1987
- BOX 27** 1988-1991
 (5 folders)

Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

Container

Contents

	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
	Insurance, 1989-1991
	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 <i>See also Oversize</i>
	<i>Moments Without Proper Names</i>
	Contracts and correspondence, 1983-1988
	Drafts, undated

Stage and Screen, 1963-1991

Container

Contents

	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
	Biographical material, 1965-1990
	(5 folders)
	Contracts, 1966-1973
	Copyrights and permissions, 1968-1970, 1985
	Correspondence
	1965-1968

Miscellany, 1946-1990

Container	Contents
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 <i>Born Black</i> , 1973 <i>Flavio</i> Drafts, 1976-1977 (6 folders) Miscellany, 1961-1976, 1989 <i>A Poet and His Camera</i> , 1968-1969 <i>Shannon</i> , 1978 <i>Silence</i> , undated <i>To Smile in Autumn</i> Drafts, undated (1 folder)
BOX 37	(3 folders) Miscellaneous pages, 1976 (2 folders) Stage and Screen <i>The Big Bamboo</i> , 1971 <i>An Endless Silence</i> , 1972 <i>Leadbelly</i> , 1979
BOX 38	<i>The Learning Tree</i> , 1968-1969 <i>Martin</i> Cast and crew Choreographer, undated Dancers, 1989 Lists, 1989 Correspondence, 1969, 1986-1989 Financial records

Addition, 1961-1990

Container

Contents

	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
BOX 39	Storyboard, undated (2 folders)
	<i>Moments Without Proper Names</i> , 1984
	<i>Shaft</i> , 1971-1972
	<i>Solomon Northup's Odyssey</i> , undated
	Other writings
	Articles, 1970
	Miscellaneous pages, undated
	Poetry, undated
	Speech file, 1984
	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.
	Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Books
	<i>In Love</i>

Oversize, 1968-1975

Container

Contents

	Mock-ups, 1971 (Container 6)
	<i>Moments Without Proper Names</i>
	Book jackets, 1975 (Container 8)
	Contracts, correspondence, and royalty statements, 1972-1981 (Container 8)
BOX OV 2	Mock-ups (Container 8)
BOX OV 3	<i>To Smile in Autumn</i>
	Mock-ups (Container 17)
BOX OV 4	Stage and Screen
	<i>The Learning Tree</i>
	Set Design
	Blueprints, 1968 (Container 25)
	<i>Martin</i>
	Storyboard (Container 30)