

George Kleine Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



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Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

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Collection Summary

Title: George Kleine Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1886-1946

Bulk Dates: 1900-1930

ID No.: MSS52274

Creator: Kleine, George

Extent: 26,000 items

Extent: 77 containers

Extent: 30.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78052274>

Summary: Film executive and businessman. Business records consisting of correspondence, financial and legal papers, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and other material relating primarily to Kleine's ventures in the early motion picture industry. Includes files relating to patent and distribution litigation, educational and European films, and to Kleine's business relations with Thomas A. Edison, Eastman Kodak Company, Motion Picture Patents Company, and Biograph Co.

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

Edison, Thomas A. (Thomas Alva), 1847-1931.

Kleine, George.

Organizations

Ambrosio (Firm)

Biograph Company.

Cines (Firm)

Eastman Kodak Company.

Eclipse (Firm)

Essanay Film Manufacturing Co.

Famous Players-Lasky Corporation.

General Film Company.

Greater New York Film Rental Company.

Kalem Company.

Kleine (George) Collection (Library of Congress)

Kleine Optical Company.

Motion Picture Patents Company.

Thomas A. Edison, Inc.

United Theatre Equipment Corporation.

Subjects

Motion picture industry--United States.

Motion pictures in education.

Motion pictures--Distribution.

Motion pictures--Europe.

Motion pictures--Patents.

Motion pictures--United States.

Occupations

Businessmen.

Executives.

Acquisition Information

The papers of George Kleine, film executive and businessman, were transferred to the Manuscript Division from the Motion Picture Division of the Library of Congress in 1967.

Processing History

The papers of George Kleine were arranged in 1968 by Ruth Wennersten and more fully processed in 1978 by Mary Wolfskill. The finding aid was revised in 2013.

Additional Guides

In 1979 the Library published *George Kleine, a Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress*.

Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Some photographs and posters have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division. Sheet music has been transferred to the Music Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the George Kleine Papers.

Related Material

Select papers from the George Kleine film collection are available in the Library's Moving Image Research Center, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, and described at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsmi/eadmbrsmi.mi020002>.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of George Kleine is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of George Kleine 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, George Kleine Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1863	Born, New York, N.Y.
1882	Graduated, City College of New York, New York, N.Y.
1896	Became involved in the motion picture business
1897	Incorporated the George Kleine Optical Co., Chicago, Ill.
1903	Began the importation of foreign films

1906	Established film rental and selling branches in the United States and Canada
1907	Founded, with Samuel Long and Frank J. Marion, the Kalem Co., and served as first president
1910	Published <i>Catalog of Educational Moving Pictures</i> . Chicago: Press of Bentley, Murray Sold his distributing exchanges to the General Film Co., served as vice president, 1910-1913, and president, 1916
1913	Imported the Italian film <i>Quo Vadis?</i> that became a model for future films
1916	With others formed the Kleine-Edison-Selig-Essanay Service
1917	Instituted a new film rental system
1920s	Devoted much time to the development of a system for the distribution of educational films
1921	Produced the serial <i>The Hope Diamond Mystery</i>
1923	Moved to New York, N.Y.; became treasurer and chairman of the board of directors of Ritz-Carlton Pictures
1931, June 8	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of George Kleine (1863-1931) span the years 1886-1946, with the bulk of the material dated between 1900 and 1930. The collection consists primarily of business records including correspondence, financial and legal papers, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and miscellaneous material generated by Kleine's various financial ventures in the motion picture industry. The papers are organized into three series: [Subject File](#), [Inventories and Lists](#), and [Distribution File](#).

A variety of material in the [Subject File](#) documents the early history of the motion picture industry. There are patent papers for some of the first projection equipment, legal documents from court suits, and correspondence of major producers, distributors, and exhibitors.

The extent of Kleine's involvement in the industry is evident from files on corporations that comprise a large portion of the [Subject File](#). In addition to papers relating to companies that Kleine either owned or was associated with, such as Kleine Optical Company, Kalem Company, and United Theatre Equipment Corporation, there are papers for Eastman Kodak Company, Biograph Company, Essanay Film Manufacturing Co., and Famous Players-Lasky Corporation.

Kleine's relationship with the Thomas A. Edison enterprises is documented in a file on Edison and in correspondence with Thomas A. Edison, Inc. Kleine made extensive use of Edison's "Conquest Film" series, which was especially designed for use in schools, churches, and civic organizations. Kleine was also a member with Thomas A. Edison, Inc., and other firms in the first motion picture trust, the Motion Picture Patents Company, and its distributing arm, the General Film Company, in which Kleine served as vice president and later president. There are substantial files for this venture. The papers also document the trust's fall from power following a suit against it by the Greater New York Film Rental Company. The particulars of this suit and other legal entanglements are detailed in files on litigation and Motion Picture Patents Company litigation.

Both the [Subject File](#) and [Distribution File](#) series document Kleine's efforts to establish a non-theatrical film distribution system. His aim to provide wholesome and instructional films is evident in the titles of subject files: "better and highbrow film movements," "non-theatrical films," "educational films," "educational distribution to universities," and "educational institutions." In correspondence with William H. Dudley, chief of the Bureau of Visual Instruction of the University of Wisconsin and organizer of the National Academy of Visual Instruction, Kleine discusses his proposals for ensuring the moral content of film subjects. In the [Distribution File](#) series is evidence of his system for distributing films to schools, churches, and community organizations through state universities.

The importation of foreign films consumed a significant part of Kleine's professional interests beginning in 1903. Kleine eventually became the largest importer of foreign films in the United States and Canada. In the [Subject File](#) is correspondence with foreign film companies such as Ambrosio (Società Anonima Ambrosio), Cines (Società Italiana Cines), and Eclipse (Société Générale des Cinématographes). Among the foreign films featured are *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Julius Caesar*, and the spectacular motion picture, *Quo Vadis?* Kleine discontinued importing films after the start of World War I, but correspondence in the 1920s with Alfred Bourget, his representative in France, reveals a continuing interest in the subject.

Other topics in the collection that reflect on the early history of the film trade include files on censorship, copyright, prize fights, and World War I.

Though brief in size, the [Inventories and Lists](#) series and [Distribution File](#) series provide an overview of the most popular or sought-after film releases for the periods covered. Together with subject files on banks, branches, distribution, finances, and historical material, they give a detailed picture of the film distribution system for which Kleine is best known.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in three series:

- [Subject File, 1886-1946](#)
- [Inventories and Lists, circa 1900-1945](#)
- [Distribution File, 1920-1932](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-67

Series

Subject File, 1886-1946

Correspondence, financial and legal papers, clippings, printed matter, and miscellaneous material.

Arranged alphabetically by topic, title of film production, name of organization, or person.

BOX 68-70

Inventories and Lists, circa 1900-1945

Lists and inventories of film titles, release schedules, prints, negatives, and other material with related correspondence.

Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

BOX 71-77

Distribution File, 1920-1932

Correspondence, financial records, and other items relating to the distribution of motion pictures.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material or geographic location.

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	Vogel, William, 1929
	Voorhis, Otie, 1927-1929
	Voris, William (Spitzer, Rorick & Co.), 1915-1919
	Wainwright (J. G. & R. B.), Ltd. (Officer 666), 1920
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	Warren (F. B.) Corp., 1921-1923, 1928
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Advertised in Motion Picture News (titles, authors, directors), Mar.-Apr. 1920

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