

# George Kleine Papers

## A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Revised and expanded by Mary Wolfskill



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

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## Collection Summary

**Title:** George Kleine Papers

**Span Dates:** 1886-1946

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1900-1930)

**ID No.:** MSS52274

**Creator:** Kleine, George

**Extent:** 26,000 items ; 77 containers ; 30.6 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

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

**Abstract:** 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 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

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 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.

# Administrative Information

## Provenance

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 and more fully processed in 1978. 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.

## 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

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
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.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-67	<b>Subject File, 1886-1946</b> 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 1	A. Film Co. <u><i>See Container 2, Armstrong, W. W., and Leon Bories</i></u> Abrams, Hiram, 1908, 1926 Advertising Classics series, 1913, 1929 Miscellaneous, 1913-1928 Aetna Life Insurance Co., 1922-1928 Airplanes and Wilbur Wright, 1909 Albion Cinema Supplies Co. and Royal Film Agency ( <i>The Cossack Whip</i> ), 1919-1922 All Star Feature Distributors <u><i>See Container 33, same heading</i></u> Allen (Jule and Jay J.), 1919 Alliance Trading Co. (Guido Serra), 1919-1922 Altschuler, Modest, 1924 Amalgamated Film Exchange, 1909-1918, undated Ambrosio (Societa Anonima Ambrosio), 1913-1920 American Motion Picture Corp., 1923-1924 American Red Cross, 1920 American Show Print Co., 1920-1928 Americanism Committee of the Motion Picture Industry of the United States, 1920 Amkino Corp. <u><i>See Container 51, Russian educational films</i></u> <i>Anne Boleyn</i> , 1913 Ansbach Amusement Co., 1916-1919 <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , 1913-1928 <i>The Apple-Tree Girl</i> , 1917-1918 Applications, 1915-1916 "Archaeology and Moving Pictures," by B. L. Ullman, <i>Art and Archaeology</i> , vol. 15, Apr. 1923, pp. 177-183
BOX 2	Arcus Ticket Co. <u><i>See Container 59, same heading.</i></u> Armstrong, W. W., and Leon Bories (A. Film Co.), 1917-1923 (3 folders) <i>Art and the Motion Picture</i> , by Carlyle Ellis (galley of article) Art Sign Corp., 1918, 1920 Ashton, Rosalie, 1930 Associated First National Pictures of Michigan <u><i>See Container 52, Scott, Harry</i></u> Authors' League of America, 1916 <i>The Awakening of Ruth (Girl From the Sea)</i> , 1917 Banks Branch banks (Boston, Mass.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Dallas, Tex., etc.), 1920-1921

- Canada (Vancouver), 1923-1924
- Codes for cabling balances, 1924
- Harriman National Bank, 1914-1920
- London, England 1920-1923
- Barber, Frederick Arthur, 1928-1930
- The Barber of Seville*, 1913-1914
- Barnaby Lee*, 1916-1925
- Bates, Frank, 1921-1923
- Batigne, Rene, 1927, undated
- Baumer Films, 1920-1923
- Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., 1904, 1926 *See also Container 59, same heading.*
- BOX 3
  - Beadell, Ben
  - Bech, Van Sicien and Co., 1919-1924, undated
    - (2 folders)
  - Beck, Arthur F. *See Container 12, The Destroying Angel*
  - Beggars on Horseback*, 1924
  - Behind the Lines in Italy*, 1918
  - Bell and Howell Co., 1927-1930
  - Bell, Nelson B.
  - Bell Pictures, 1930 *See also Container 20, Exploitation and distribution*
  - Ben Hur*, 1913, 1923
  - Bergh, D. H.
    - 1915-1917
      - (4 folders)
    - 1918-1920, undated
- BOX 4
  - Berman, Charles *See Container 5, Cooper, Thomas S., and Charles Berman*
  - Bermuda*, 1915
  - Berri, Maude Lillian, 1916
  - Berst, J. A., 1914
  - Better and highbrow film movements, 1914-1923
  - Between Savage and Tiger*, 1913-1914
  - Bickel, George, and Harry Watson, Jr., 1915-1922
  - Big Three Film Exchange, 1926
  - Biograph Co., 1914-1926
  - Birmingham (Ala.) Film Exchange, 1908-1909
  - A Blackjack Bargainer and In the Fog*, 1921
  - Bloom, Sol, 1914-1916
  - Boetzel, Eric L. *See Container 59, same heading*
  - Bolster, Harold, 1917-1925
  - Boone University Library, 1921
  - Bories, Leon *See Container 2, Armstrong, W. W., and Leon Bories*
  - Bourget, Alfred *See Container 23, France*
  - Boy Scouts of America, 1921-1926
  - Bradenburgh, G. W., 1916
  - Brady, William A. *See Container 38, National Association of Moving Picture Associations*
  - Branches

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

	Accounting, 1914-1916
	Boston, Mass., 1918-1919
	Closing, 1919-1924
	Exchanges, 1915-1920
	Interoffice, New York, N.Y., and Chicago, Ill., 1919-1921, undated (4 folders)
BOX 5	Leases, 1909-1924
	Minneapolis, Minn., 1920
	Offices, 1917
	Brazelle, Charles Lander
	Bromberg, Arthur C., 1924
	<i>The Brook</i> , 1917
	<i>Brown of Harvard</i> , 1917-1920
	Brownell, John C. (Universal Film Manufacturing Co.), 1920
	Buckwalter, H. H., 1924-1926
	Bulkley, H. G. (Positype Corp. of America), 1924-1926
	Burkan, Nathan, 1916
	Burke, Billie, 1916
	Burnet-Kuhn Advertising Co., 1917
	Burroughs Adding Machine Co., 1917-1920
	Busby, Frank M., 1908-1924
	Café des Beaux-Arts, 1916
	Calehuff, Charles A. <i>See Container 60, same heading.</i>
	Calumet Film Exchange, 1909-1910
	Canada
	Bon Cinema Enrg.
	Cooper, Thomas S., and Charles Berman, 1919-1920
	Canadian Exhibitor Exchange, 1919
	<i>Canavan, the Man Who Had His Way</i> , 1915
	Capitol Machine Co., 1927
	Carmen, Fletcher, 1929
	Carter (Katherine F.), Inc. <i>See Container 40, same heading</i>
	Cartoons and comedies, 1916
	Castle Films
	Catrow, H. G., 1921
BOX 6	Celebrated Players Film Corp., 1921
	Censorship
	First, 1909
	“Hays office,” 1916, undated
	Connecticut, 1925
	Kansas, 1915, 1919
	New York, 1921-1922, 1927
	Ohio, 1912-1927 (2 folders)
	Pennsylvania, 1915-1929 (2 folders)
	Washington, D.C., 1914, 1918

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Central Bureau for Registered Addresses, 1929  
Chadwick Pictures Corp., 1918-1920  
Chaplain, Charles, 1918-1921  
Chaplin Classics, 1922  
Charles & Co., 1929-1930  
Chicago Athletic Association, Chicago, Ill., 1926-1929  
Chicago Film Exchange, Chicago, Ill. *See Container 36, same heading*  
Chidnoff Studio  
Choynski, Morris *See Container 33, Wolf, Nathan, and Morris Choynski* ; and *Container 36, same heading*  
*Christian Register*, 1929  
Christie Comedy Co., 1925  
Churchill, Thomas W., 1913-1916  
Cifre, Joseph *See Container 60, same heading*  
Cinema Exhibitors Association, 1916  
**BOX 7** Cines (Societa Italiana Cines)  
    1911-July 1914  
    (6 folders)  
**BOX 8** Aug. 1914-1924, undated *See also Container 49, Contracts with Cines and James W. Davidson of Canada*  
    (4 folders)  
Circular letters, 1917-1926, undated  
*Classical Journal*, 1922, 1929  
Clement-Mason Films *See Container 28, Imperial Films*  
Clubs, 1900-1923  
Cohan, George, 1930  
Cohan & Harris, 1913, 1917  
Cohen, Benjamin, 1929 *See also Container 60, same heading*.  
Cohen, Harry J., 1929  
Cole, Rex, 1929-1930  
Collard, H. T. *See Container 20, Film Service Bureau*  
College of the City of New York, New York, N.Y., 1926, 1928  
*The Colonel of the Red Huzzars*, 1912  
Commander Hotel, New York, N.Y., 1929  
Commercial Cable Co., 1930  
Community Motion Picture Bureau  
    Dallas, Tex., 1919-1920  
    New York, N.Y., 1919-1920  
*The Commuters*, 1915-1925  
Conquest Films, 1917-1928, undated  
Consolidated Film Industries, 1924-1930  
Consolidated Pictures and Photo Products Export Co., 1920  
Contests and prizes, 1914  
Contract and agreement forms  
Contract memoranda file, 1919  
**BOX 9** *Convention News*, 1913  
Cool, Roy C., 1926

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Cooney & Verhoeven, 1915-1916  
Cooper, Douglas, 1914-1930  
Cooper Thomas S. (General Film Co. [Canada]), 1919 [See also Container 5, Cooper, Thomas S., and Charles Berman](#)  
Copyright  
    Canadian, 1924  
    Decisions, 1911-1926  
    Infringement, 1917, 1919, 1928  
    Legislation, 1912-1919  
    Litigation, 1912-1920  
    *Quo Vadis?*, 1911-1925  
*The Cossack Whip*, 1916-1927  
Costikyan, Kevork, 1925  
Coufal, Joseph F., 1929 [See also Container 60, same heading](#)  
Cox and Sons Co., 1929-1930  
**BOX 10** Craerin, R. G. (Strobridge Lithographing Co.), 1923  
Crandall, Ernest L.  
Credit ratings, 1913-1928  
    (2 folders)  
Credit reports, 1906-1912  
Crescent Towel Supply Co., 1929  
Criticism (*Quo Vadis?*), 1913, undated  
Critics (motion picture and dramatic), 1911, 1920  
Crosby W. C. [See Container 40, same heading](#)  
Culver Military Academy, Culver, Ind., 1922  
Curtis Publishing Co., 1928  
*The Customary Two Weeks*, 1917  
*Cy Whitaker's Ward*, 1917  
Dacey, John, 1929  
Datlowe, Samuel, 1929  
Davidson (James W.) of Canada [See Container 49, Contracts with Cines and James W. Davidson of Canada](#)  
Davis, Owen (stories), 1915-1925  
Davis, Richard Harding, 1926  
Dawson, Robert J., 1917-1918  
*Dearborn Independent*, 1921  
Decker, D. O., 1930  
De Forest Phonofilms, 1924-1928, undated  
**BOX 11** Delforno, Henrietta (Mrs. Enrico Dente), 1914-1927, undated  
    (2 folders)  
*Deliverance*  
    College reports, 1922-1925  
    Correspondence, 1919-1930  
    Financial records, 1919-1928  
    (2 folders)  
Democracy, 1919-1921  
**BOX 12** Deposit system, 1917-1920

**Subject File, 1886-1946**

**Container**

**Contents**

---

	Derr (A. C.) Co. <i>See Container 21, same heading</i>
	Dessiz, Elizabeth Richey, 1928
	<i>The Destroying Angel</i> (Arthur F. Beck), 1919-1923
	DeVry Corp., 1920-1921
	<i>The Dinosaur and the Missing Link</i> , 1924
	Directors, 1913-1927, undated
	Distribution
	General, 1916-1928, undated
	Plans, improvements, and methods, 1917, 1926
	Reports, 1917, undated
	State rights and percentages, 1920, undated
	Dixie Film Co., 1921
	Du Barry, 1913-1929
	Dudley, William H., 1929-1930 <i>See also Container 40, Dudley, William H., and F. W. Reynolds</i>
	Dupes, 1917
	Dyer, Frank L., 1911, 1915
BOX 13	E & H Film Distributing Co., 1920
	Eastman Kodak Co.
	General, 1908-1928
	Eastman Teaching Films, 1929-1930, undated <i>See also Container 26, Eastman Kodak Co.; and Container 50, Raw film stock</i>
	Eckhardt, Conrad <i>See Container 60, same heading</i>
	Eclipse (Société Générale des Cinématographes) and Urban Trading Co., 1908-1915
	Edengraph
	General
	1907-1909
	(2 folders)
BOX 14	1910-1923, undated
	(2 folders)
	Equipment, 1910-1928
	Minutes of meetings, Edengraph Manufacturing Co., 1907-1911
	Patents
	1903-1928
	(3 folders)
BOX 15	Printed diagrams and texts, 1897-1912
	Publicity, 1910-1911
	Simplex, 1903-1929
	(3 folders)
	Edison, Thomas A.
	Camera patent decision, 1902
	Clippings, 1924, 1928
	Correspondence, 1921, 1929
	Dinners, 1911-1928
	Edengraph <i>See Container 43, Edison, Thomas A. (edengraph)</i>
	Kinetoscope projector model 1901
BOX 16	Luncheon, 1924

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

	Memorabilia
	Edison (Thomas A.), Inc.
	1915-Apr. 1918
	(4 folders)
BOX 17	May 1918-1930, undated <i>See also Container 35, A Message to Garcia</i> ; and <i>Container 45, same heading</i>
	(6 folders)
BOX 18	Edison Institute, 1928-1930
	Edison Lamp Works <i>See Container 60, Edison Lamp Works, General Electric Co.</i>
	Edison Manufacturing Co., 1902-1908
	Edison Pioneers, 1923
	Edison Studios, 1919-1920
	Edmunds, W. O. 1910-1914
	Edouarde, Carl, 1929
	Educational and Motion Picture Entertainment Bureau <i>See Container 40, Carter (Katherine F.), Inc. (Educational and Motion Picture Entertainment Bureau)</i>
	Educational distribution to universities, 1921-1928
	Educational Film Bureau, 1921
	<i>Educational Film Magazine</i> , 1921
	Educational films, 1916, 1920-1930
	Educational institutions, 1913-1930
	Educational Screen, 1929
	Edwards, C. S. (Kansas City Film Corp.), 1919-1925
	Edwards, Herbert T. <i>See Container 60, same heading</i>
	Electrotypes, 1929
	Empire Film Vaults, 1929-1930
	Employees
	General, 1914-1925
	Bonding, 1917-1919
BOX 19	Branch managers' life stories, 1916-1917
	Interoffice memoranda, 1917-1918
	Lists
	Endorsements
	Deliverance, 1921-1926
	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
	1912-1930, undated
	(3 folders)
	Printed matter
	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , 1922
	<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , 1922
	<i>Quo Vadis?</i> , 1913
	<i>Spartacus</i> , 1923-1928, undated
	Miscellaneous, 1922-1926
	Equipment theater, 1916-1925
BOX 20	Equitable Translation Service
	Equity Building & Loan Association, 1929
	Essanay Film Manufacturing Co., 1916-1927, undated

---

	Evolutional system applicants
	Exchanges, 1919-1921
	Exhibitors
	Advertising, 1916
	Associations, 1916-1926
	Europe, 1913
	Sunday opening, 1919
	Exhibitors' Film Co., 1919-1920 <i>See also Container 21, same heading</i>
	<i>Execution of Czolgosz</i> , 1940
	Exploitation and distribution
	Eye strain and motion pictures
	Famous Players-Lasky Corp. <i>See Container 21</i> ; and <i>43, same heading</i>
	Farrell, E. J. <i>See Container 34, Major Film Inc.</i>
	Fassini, Baron, 1928
	Federal Securities Corp. <i>See Container 21, same heading</i>
	<i>Fifth Avenue Laundry</i> , 1929
	<i>Fifth Avenue Playhouse</i> , 1928
	Film Arts Guild, 1928
	Film Associates of California, 1928
	Film Booking Offices of America, 1924
	Film Bureau, 1927
	Film Clearing House, 1918
	Film Co. of Ireland <i>See Container 63, Warde, Arthur F.</i>
	<i>Film Daily</i> , 1927-1928
	Film Sales Co. <i>See Container 54, Stone, Harry S.</i>
	Film Service Bureau (H.T. Collard), 1920-1921
	Film title prices
	Filmstab, Inc., 1929
BOX 21	Finances
	Bankruptcies, 1920-1928
	Deposits, 1916
	Derr (A. C.) Co.
	Exhibitors' Film Co.
	Expenses, 1917-1923
	Famous Players-Lasky Corp., 1917-1927
	Federal Securities Corp., 1920
	Film stock
	<i>Financialstic Debater</i> , 1927, undated
	Foreign market buyers
	Griffith (D. W.) Inc.
	Historical Film Corp., of America
	Imperial Films, 1924-1927
	Kleine attractions (key to expenses for branches), 1913-1919
	Kleine Optical Co., 1903-[1917?]
	Ledger (pages only), 1919-1922
	Ledger (cast) book, 1924-1927

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

BOX 22	Ledger book, 1901-1928 <i>Little Picture House</i> Miscellaneous Non-theatrical films, 1924-1925 Stock market, 1928-1930 Story rights cost Theater construction, 1924-1928
BOX 23	Fires, 1917-1926 First National Exhibitors' Circuit, 1920 First National Pictures, 1929 <i>See also Container 49, First National Pictures and Unione Cinematographica Italiana</i> Flagg Comedies, 1919 Fleming, Grace (Mrs. Edward), 1927 Flu epidemic, 1918-1919 <i>For Napoleon and France</i> , 1914 <i>For the Honor of the School</i> , 1916-1917 Ford, Henry, 1921 Foreign films, 1913, undated Foreign sales, 1921-1922 Foreign territory, 1921 Forms France (Alfred Bourget), 1920-1927, undated (4 folders) Franklin Simon and Co., 1929 Frasso, Comte, Dentice, 1919 Friars Club, 1913-1917 Frohman, Milton C., 1929 Fulco Sales Co. <i>See Container 61, same heading</i> Furmiss, Thomas, 1916
BOX 24	[Gallacher?], A. H. 1929 Gallegher, 1922-1928 Gardner, Jack, 1930 Gaumont, 1909-1915, undated Geddes, John J., 1921 Geller, James J. General Electric Co., lecture service General Film Co., 1910-[1920?], undated <i>See also Container 26 ; and Container 33, same heading</i> (4 folders) General Film Co. [Canada] <i>See Container 9, Cooper, Thomas S.; and Container 5, Cooper, Thomas S., and Charles Berman</i> General Theatres Equipment, 1929-1930 Gibson, Miles T., 1917 Giffen, R. L. (Larry), 1919-1930 Gifford, F. W., 1915 Gilchrist, Emily (Mrs. William), 1917 Gillett Camera Stores, 1929

- The Girl Alaska (Case of Soapy Smith)*, 1919, 1930  
 Globe Film Exchange *See Container 36, same heading*  
*Gloria's Romance* (Randolph Corp.), 1915-1920  
*Glory of Clementine*, 1927  
 Goldwyn Pictures Corp., 1920  
 Gordon (school), 1929  
 Gowen, Albert Y., 1921  
 Gradwell, Ricord (Producers Security Corp.), 1923-1924  
 Graham and Scott *See Container 61, same heading*  
 Gradin, Ethel *See Container 53, Smallwood case*  
 Grau, Robert, 1913-1915  
 Graves, Armgaard Karl, 1921-1928, undated  
 BOX 25  
 Great Meadow Prison, Comstock, N. Y., 1922  
*The Great Train Robbery* (Thirty Years Ago), 1925-1929, undated  
 Greater New York Film Rental Co., 1909-1915, 1928 *See also Container 37, same heading*  
 Green, W. E., 1917-1920, undated  
*The Green Cloak*, 1923  
 Greene, Nelson L., 1928-1930  
 Griffith, D. W., 1909-1919  
 Griffith (D. W.), Inc. *See Container 21, same heading*  
 Gulick, W. M., 1929  
 Gunning, Wid, 1917 *See also Container 64, Wid Gunning, Inc.*  
 Guyon, Eugenie M., 1924  
 Haldenstein, I., 1929  
*The Half-Back*, 1916-1917  
 Hallberg, J. H. *See Container 61, same heading*  
 Hampton, Benjamin B., 1916-1917, 1927  
 Hansen, O. L., 1926  
 Harcol Motion Picture Industries, 1926  
 Hardcastle, B. T. (Ted), 1920-1921  
 Harris, Sam H. (Officer 666 and Stop Thief), 1914-1920, undated  
 Hart, Frank W.  
 Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1928-1930  
 Hays, Will H. (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America), 1922-1929, undated  
 (2 folders)  
*The Heart of the Hills (Girl From the East)*, 1915-1919  
 BOX 26  
 Historical file  
     General, 1900-1928  
     Clippings and printed matter, 1908-1930  
     Distribution, 1908-1910  
     Eastman Kodak Co. (contracts), 1909-1914  
     *The Fly Pest*, 1910  
     General Film Co. (financial statements), 1912-1917  
     Licensed exchanges, 1909-1910, undated  
     Motion Picture Patents Co., 1909-1913  
     Patent fight, 1908-1916, undated

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Pathe News (15th anniversary dinner), 1925-1926
- BOX 27**      Publicity
- Advertisements, [1900?]-1917, undated
  - Clippings, circa 1912-1928
    - (2 folders)
  - Correspondence and other items, 1914-1927
  - Quo Vadis?*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and other films, 1912-1913
  - Show World*, 1908
- BOX 28**      Historical Film Corp. of America *See Container 21, same heading*
- Hodkinson, William W., 1913-1920
  - Hoffberg (J. H.) Co. (list of films)
  - Hoffman, C. A., 1926
  - Hollis, A. P., 1924
  - Home Motion Picture Corp. of America
  - The Hope Diamond Mystery*, 1919-1930
  - Hough (detective report), 1916
  - Houton, Alma, 1915
  - How Heroes Are Made*, 1913
  - Howells (David P.), Inc., 1921
  - Hubbard, Elbert, II (*A Message to Garcia*), 1916-1926 *See also Container 35, A Message to Garcia*
  - Humphrey, Olgo (Mrs. Olgo Humphrey Hassan Broadwood), 1922, undated
  - Hunter, Thomas Hays, 1915-1916
  - Hutton, Clarence, and Mabel Waterbury, 1908-1910
  - Hymen, Arthur S., 1918-1920
  - Imperial Film Exchange *See Container 33*; and *37, same heading*
  - Imperial Films (Clement-Mason Films [1922]), 1922-1923 *See also Container 21, same heading*
  - In at the Finish*, 1917
  - International Health Board, 1920-1921
  - Inter-Ocean Film Corp (*The Unwritten Code*, etc), 1922-1924 *See also Container 62, The Unwritten Code.*
  - Italy, 1921-1922
  - Ivan Film Productions (*The Unchastened Woman* and *Conquered Hearts*), 1918-1920, undated
- BOX 29**      Jaques & Co., 1928-1930
- Jay & Dee Sign Service, 1930
  - Jefferson Pictures Corp., 1933
  - Jenner, William H., 1924-1929
  - Jennings, William A., 1917
  - Johnson, Ligon, 1924
  - Johnson, William A. (Motion Picture News), 1921-1929
  - Jones, Linick & Schaefer Co. Theatrical Enterprises, 1917
  - Julius Caesar*, 1914-1930
  - Junk film, 1925-1929
  - Kalem Co., 1906-1927
  - Kane, Arthur S., 1915-1920
  - Kansas City Film Corp. *See Container 18, Edwards, C. S.*

**Subject File, 1886-1946**

**Container**

**Contents**

---

- Kay-Tee Exchange *See Container 37, same heading*  
Kelley, W. R., 1922  
Kelly, Kitty, 1918-1919  
Kent, S. R., 1921  
Kerman Films, 1927-1928  
*Kidnapped*, 1916-1917  
Kieran, J. M., 1928-1929  
Kinetograph Co.  
Kipling, Richard  
Klaw, Marc. 1915
- BOX 30** Kleine, George  
    Clippings, 1909-1928  
    European trips  
        1913-1914  
        1927  
        (3 folders)  
    Miscellaneous, 1907-1929  
Kleine (George) Film Co., 1912-1913, 1918  
Kleine (George) System, 1918-1919  
Kleine Optical Co., 1908-1927 *See also Container 21, same heading*  
Kleine Optical Co. v. Photoplay Co., 1917-1920
- BOX 31** Klutho, H. J., 1920  
*Knights of the Square Table*, 1917-1923  
Kosmik Films  
    File no. 1, 1919-1920  
    File no. 2, 1919-1924  
    File no. 3, 1920-1924  
    File no. 4, 1920  
    *The Hope Diamond Mystery* (contract), 1920-1921  
Kyler, H. A. (Supreme Photoplay Corp.), 1920  
Kyne, Peter B. (*The Hand-Shake Agreement, Light in Darkness, One Touch of Nature, and Salt of the Earth*), 1922-1930
- BOX 32** Laemmle, Carl, 1908-1928, undated  
    (2 folders)  
*The Lance of Kanana*, 1917-1927  
Laramie Amusement Co., 1915  
Larkin, Harold, 1946  
*The Last Days of Pompeii* (copyright), 1913  
*The Last Days of Pompei and Quo Vadis?*, (Distribution in the United States ), 1913-1926  
*The Last of the Freight Thieves*, 1919  
Lauch, A. J., 1913-1922  
Launching of the U.S.S. *Salem* at the Fore River Shipyards, Quincy, Mass., 27 July 1907  
*The Law of the North*, 1918-1925  
Lee, Henry ("Cyclo-Dramatica"), 1907-1908  
Leibfreed, Edwin, 1920  
Leslie, Amy, 1914-1927, undated  
Lessor, Sol, 1919-1920

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- BOX 33
- Liberty Film Exchange [See Container 34, Magner, Nat A.](#)
  - Licenses
    - Light in Darkness*, 1917-1928
    - Lincoln and Parker Co., 1917-1919
    - Lion of Venice*, 1913-1914
    - Literature and the Motion Picture*, by Arthur Edwin Krows (galley of article)
  - Litigation
    - All Star Feature Distributors, 1915-1920
    - Bonds for various suits, 1917
    - Damage suits, 1916, 1928, 1940
    - General Film Co., 1917
    - Imperial Film Exchange, 1916
    - Kleine v. Schiller (*At Napoleon's Command*), 1913
    - Miscellaneous
    - Mudd & Colley Amusement Co., 1918-1919
    - Payne v. Kleine, 1914
    - Pirated films, 1920-1921
    - Smallwood case
    - Sturdo Amusement Co., 1918-1919
    - Turner and Dahnken, 1918-1921
    - Wolf, Nathan, and Morris Choynski, 1917
  - The Little Chevalier*, 1917
  - Little Picture House* [See Container 22, same heading](#)
  - Lloyd (Harold) Corp., 1923
  - Louisiana, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics [See Container 41, same heading](#)
  - Lubin, Sigmund, 1923-1924
- BOX 34
- Ludwig Film Exchange, 1920-1927
  - Luporini Brothers, 1921-1922
  - Lynch, S. A., 1915
  - Magner, Nat A. (Liberty Film Exchange), 1919-1922
  - Magnetism and Electro-Magnets*, 1920-1923
  - Major Film Inc. (E. J. Farrell), 1919-1920
  - Mann, Paul [See Container 34, McCormick, Muriel](#)
  - Massachusetts, Department of Education [See Container 41, same heading](#)
  - Mastbaum, Jules E. (Stanley Co. of America), 1917-1918, 1926
  - The Master Passion*, 1916
  - The Matinee Girl* (James Montgomery Flagg), 1923
  - Matre & Co. (Victor G. Matre), 1919-1920
  - Matters, Thomas H., Jr. [See Container 61, same heading](#)
  - McChesney, L. W., 1940
  - McCormick, Muriel, and Paul Mann, 1922-1923
  - McQuade, James A. (Moving Picture World), 1920-1921
  - Meille, Arturo (Tecno-Commercio-Film), 1918-1929
  - Melies, Paul, 1919-1920
- BOX 35
- Melville, Henry, 1914-1927

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- A Message to Garcia* (Thomas A. Edison, Inc.; Elbert Hubbard II; Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corp.), 1915-1925
- Messing, A. H., and Alexander Yokel (*Quo Vadis?*), 1921-1922 *See also Container 50, Messing & Yodel*
- Metric table
- Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corp. *See same container, A Message to Garcia*
- Miami Studios, 1921
- The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, 1923-1924
- Miles, Herbert, 1921
- Miner Lithograph Co., 1914-1922
- Minneapolis Film Corp., 1919
- Minnesota State Board of Health, 1910
- The Mishaps of Musty Suffer*, 1916-1929
- BOX 36** Montagu, Mr. And Mrs. E. H.
- Montagu, Howard H., 1929
- Motion Picture Chamber of Commerce of America, 1923
- Motion Picture Club of New York, 1927-1930
- Motion Picture Exhibitors League, 1916
- Motion picture industry, 1914-1926
- Motion Picture News, 1918, 1926 *See also Container 29, Johnson, William A.*
- Motion Picture Patents Co. litigation
- Annual summary of litigation, 1918
  - Bradenburgh v. Lubin, 1913
  - Chicago Film Exchange, Chicago, Ill., 1908-1918
  - Choynski, Morris, 1917
  - Damage suits, 1914-1918
    - (2 folders)
  - Expenses, 1910-1921
  - Globe film Exchange, 1917
- BOX 37** Greater New York Film Rental Co., 1913-1917
- Imperial Film Exchange, 1910-1917
  - Infringements, 1909-1911
  - Irwin claim, 1918
  - Kay-Tee Exchange, 1911
  - Precedents, 1913
  - Preferred stockholders suit, 1913-1919
  - Roland, Richard A., 1913-1918
  - Sampliner case, 1916-1921
  - Scull, George F., 1916-1918
  - Smallwood case, 1917-1919
  - Swaab, Lewis M., 1916-1917
  - Texas suit, 1912-1914
  - Theatre Film Service Co., 1916
  - Travels, 1911-1913
  - United States Film Exchange, 1917
  - United States government, 1912-1919
  - United States Sherman law suit, 1916

- United States suit appeal, 1916  
Waters, Percival L., 1916-1919 *See also Container 63, same heading*  
Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, 1930-1937 *See also Container 25, Hays, Will H.*  
Moving Picture World, 1915-1917 *See also Container 34, McQuade, James A.*  
Moyer, James A. (National University Extension Association), 1923  
**BOX 38** Mudd & Colley Amusement Co. *See Container 33, same heading*  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y., 1935-1942  
*My Friend from India*, 1920-1927  
Myll, Louis, 1925  
*The Naked Truth*, 1914-1927  
National Academy of Visual Instruction *See Container 41, same heading*  
National Association of the Motion Picture Industry, 1916-1918  
National Association of Moving Picture Associations (William A. Brady), 1918  
National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, 1923-1929  
National Exchanges *See Container 51, Savini Film Corp.*  
National Exploitation Co., 1923  
National Non-Theatrical Motion Pictures, 1922 *See also Container 41, same heading*  
National Republican Club, 1928-1930  
National Republican Publicity Fund, 1921  
National University Extension Association *See Container 37, Moyer, James A.*  
Neumade, catalog, no.4  
New England Educational Film Association  
New Era Exchange, 1920  
New Era Films, 1919-1922  
**BOX 39** New York Central Railroad Co.  
New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, 1929  
New York Public Library, 1925-1936  
New York Telephone Co., 1928-1930  
Newgass, Nayfack & Waldheim, 1929  
Non-theatrical films  
    General  
        1909-1924, undated  
            (3 folders)  
        Printed matter  
**BOX 40** Amateur 16 mm film, 1927  
Carter (Katherine F.), Inc. (Educational and Motion Picture Entertainment Bureau), 1915  
Crosby, W.C. (North Carolina State Department of Education and Carolina Film Corp.), 1921-1923  
Distribution, 1922, 1925, 1928  
Dudley, William H., and F. W. Reynolds, 1921-1923  
Educational use of films, 1919-1922  
Foreign, 1922  
Industrial productions  
Lectures, 1910-1912, undated  
**BOX 41** Lists of universities schools using films  
Louisiana, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, 1922

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Massachusetts, Department of Education  
National Academy of Visual Instruction, 1921, undated  
National Non-Theatrical Motion Pictures, 1922  
Publicity, 1910-1922  
Questionnaire, 1927  
References, 1910-1922  
Reiss, Ernst, 1922  
Sage (Russell) Foundation, 1922  
Stock sales prospectus, 1923-1924  
University catalogs, 1920-1927  
(2 folders)  
University engagements, 1922-1924  
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans., 1921-1923  
University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1921-1922  
**BOX 42** University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., 1922-1927  
University propaganda, 1920-1923, undated  
(2 folders)  
Visual Instruction Association of New York City and National Academy of Visual Instruction, 1922, undated  
North Carolina State Department of Education and Carolina Film Corp. *See Container 40, Crosby, W. C.*  
O'Brian, Malevinsky & Driscoll, 1914-1924  
Office furniture and equipment, 1916  
Officer 666, 1912-1920  
**BOX 43** Okamoto & Co., 1922-1923  
Oldfield, George H., 1921  
*Othello*, 1914  
Pan American Union, 1922  
Paper film, 1922, undated  
Paramount Pictures  
Famous Players-Lasky Corp., 1919-1929  
Paramount Publix Corp., 1931-1932  
Parker Pen Co., 1929  
Parsons, Louella (*Morning Telegraph*)  
Pasquali & Co. (Spartacus), 1913  
Patents  
Edison, Thomas A. (edengraph), 1908-1911  
Kleine, George (stereopticone), 1903-1906  
Various, 1886-1926  
Paterno, J., 1915  
Pathe Freres Moving Pictures, 1911  
Pathe News, 1925-1926  
Pathescope, 1917  
Pavlovska, Irene, 1925  
Peckham, C. H., 1910  
Pedrazzini, Guido (Unione Cinematografica Italiana), 1923-1924  
Peerless Towel Supply Co., 1929

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

	Peoples Amusement Co., 1917-1920
	Perfection Pictures, 1917
	<i>Philip Kent in the Lower School</i> , 1917
BOX 44	Photo-Drama Co. (Ill.), 1913-1925
	Photo-Drama Producing Co.
	General, 1913-1917
	Butteri claim, 1917-1920
	Minutes of first meeting, 1914
	Original charter, 1914
	<i>The Photoplay</i> , by Professor Munisterberg (article)
	Photoproducts, 1919-1920
BOX 45	Photo Products Export Co.
	General, 1918-1925
	Edison (Thomas A.), Inc., 1917-1922
	Norway censors, 1919-1922
	United Kingdom Exchange rates, 1920-1922
	United Kingdom Photoplays, 1919-1922 <i>See also Container 53, Sowerbutts, Alfred Henry, and Photo Products Export Co.</i>
	Photoprint studios
	Pictorial clubs
BOX 46	Pictorial Film Library
	<i>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</i> , 1919
	<i>Pierrot the Prodigal</i> , 1914, 1916
	<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , 1921-1926
	Pirated films, 1918-1926 <i>See also Container 33, same heading</i>
	Play House Co., 1918
	<i>The Politicians</i> , 1925-1928
	Pollitzer, Sigmund
	Pope Leo XIII and Pope Benedict XV, 1946
	Population census of cities in the United States over one thousand in 1920
	Positype Corp. of America <i>See Container 5, Bulkley, H. G.</i>
	Posters
	Premises
	Leases, 1916-1918
	Rentals, 1919-1923
	Preservation of films, 1924, undated
	Press, 1917-1920
	Price, J. L., 1922
	Printing costs, 1911-1920
	Prize fights (Johnson v. Ketchel and Johnson v. Jeffries), 1909-1927
	(2 folders)
BOX 47	Proctor Automatic Projectors Co.
	1919-1929, undated
	(3 folders)
	Printed matter
	Producers, 1920-1921
	Producers Security Corp. <i>See Container 24, Gradwell, Ricord</i>

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Production costs, 1917-1919  
Production techniques ("talkies"), 1913, 1926  
Production theory, 1922-1927
- BOX 48** Prohibition, 1929-1930  
Projectors  
    1910-1928, undated  
        (2 folders)  
    Printed matter, 1922-1928  
        (2 folders)  
Publicity, 1915-1921  
Publix Theatres Corp., 1929  
*Putting the Bee in Herbert*, 1917-1927
- BOX 49** Quigley, Martin (*Garden of Allah*, *Mother*, and *The Warrior*), 1918-1921  
*Quo Vadis?*  
    Audit of accounts, 1913  
    Cash summaries, 1913  
    Contracts with Cines and James W. Davidson of Canada  
    Copyright, 1912-1921  
    First National Pictures and Unione Cinematographica Italiana, 1912-1929  
        (2 folders)
- BOX 50** Messing & Yokel, 1920-1925  
Miscellaneous, 1913-1924  
Ramsaye, Terry, *A Million and One Nights; a History of the Motion Picture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926)  
Randolph Film Corp. (liquidated shares), 1916 *See also Container 24, Gloria's Romance*; and *Container 56, Tribune Co. and Randolph Film Corp.*  
Raw film stock (Eastman Kodak Co., etc.), 1909-1921  
Raynor, W. E., 1929  
Reiss, Ernst *See Container 41, same heading*  
Rembusch, Frank J., 1922  
Republic Distributing Corp. *See Container 65, same heading*  
Republican Club, 1917  
*The Resurrection of Dan Packard*, 1916-1917  
Reynolds, F. W. *See Container 40, Dudley, William H., and F. W. Reynolds*,  
Richardson, F. H., 1923
- BOX 51** *The Ride of Paul Revere*, 1929  
Riegel, Vernon, 1927-1931  
Ritz-Carlton Hotel, 1924  
Ritz-Carlton Pictures Corp., 1923  
Roberts, May, 1929  
Rockefeller Foundation  
Rodgers, W. F., 1924-1925  
Roebuck, A. C., 1925  
Rogers, Rowland, 1924  
Roland, Richard A. *See Container 37, same heading*  
*Romance* (story rights), 1919  
Rose & Paskus *See Container 61, same heading*

- 
- Rothacker, Watterson R., 1925  
 Rothapfel, S. L., 1916-1922  
 Rowland, E. W., 1923  
 Royal Film Agency, 1919-1921 *See also Container 1, Albion Cinema Supplies Co. and Royal Film Agency*  
*The Ruby of Kishmoor*, 1917  
 Russian educational films (Amkino Corp.), 1930  
 S Film Supply Co., 1920-1924  
 Saenger Amusement Co., 1917-1921  
     (2 folders)  
 Safety Cable Co., 1929  
 Sage (Russell) Foundation *See Container 41, same heading*  
 St. Louis World's Fair, St. Louis, Mo., 1916  
 Sales, foreign, 1918-1928  
 Sanger and Jordan, 1915-1923  
 Saniel, S.  
 Saunders, Alfred H., 1921, 1929  
 Savini Film Corp. (National Exchanges), 1919-1922  
*The Scarlet Road*, 1915
- BOX 52**
- Scenarios, 1920-1922  
 Schmidt, L. E., 1924  
 Schwab, Charles M., 1922-1927  
 Schwerin, Charles, 1918, 1927  
 Scott, Harry (Associated First National Pictures of Michigan), 1921  
 Scripts, 1911-1932  
 Scull, George F., 1909-1921 *See also Container 37, same heading*  
 Seabury, William Marston, 1917-1925  
 Seabury and Binder, 1924, undated  
*The Secret of the Seedless Prune*, 1915  
*Secret Service*, 1916-1926  
 Selig, William N. (Selig Polyscope Co.)  
     General, 1911-1930  
     Brown of Harvard, 1917-1920  
 Seligsberg, Lewis & Strouse, 1920  
 Serra, Guido, 1912-1925, undated *See also Container 1, Alliance Trading Co.*  
     (2 folders)  
 Serra, Ugo, 1915-1916  
*Sheep's Clothing*, 1919-1928
- BOX 53**
- Sheridan, L. A., 1920  
 Simplex projectors, 1915-1916  
 Singer, Paul, 1921  
 Slides, 1921-1930, undated  
 Sloane and Chase Manufacturing Co. *See Container 61, same heading*  
 Smallwood case (Ethel Grandin), 1915-1919 *See also Container 33*; and *Container 37, same heading*  
 Smith, Merle, 1920  
 Societa Anonima Ambrosio *See Container 1, Ambrosio*

- Societe Generale des Cinematographes *See Container 13, Eclipse (Société Générale des Cinématographes) and Urban Trading Co*
- Southern Enterprises (list of films for non-theatrical use), circa 1922
- Southwestern Film Corp., 1919-1925
- Sowerbutts, Alfred Henry, and Photo Products Export Co., 1919, 1922
- Spartacus*, 1913-1924
- The Spendthrift*, 1915-1930
- Spitzer, Rorick & Co. *See Container 63, Voris, William*
- Spoor, George K., 1923-1924
- Spoor, Harry, 1919-1927
- Square Deal film Corp., 1920-1921
- BOX 54
- Stahl Amusement Co., 1918-1925
- Standard Motion Picture Service, 1926 *See also Container 64, Wilson, Eska*
- Stanley Co. of America, 1926, 1928 *See also Container 34, Mastbaum, Jules E.*
- Star Safety Film catalog
- The Star Spangled Banner*, 1927
- Starrett, W. A. 1928
- Stars, 1916-1922
- State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1928
- Stationery samples, 1917
- Statistics (production costs, distribution costs, etc.), 1917-1927, undated  
(2 folders)
- Steiner, William (Sky Eye), 1919
- Sterling Service & Amusement Co., 1920-1921
- Stevani, Mario, 1913-1914
- Ste[venson?], Charles A., 1915
- Stone, Harry S. (Film Sales Co.), 1920
- Stop Thief, Who's Who in Society, The Commuters, and The Spendthrift*, 1915
- Storage vaults, 1917-1924
- The Story That the Keg Told Me*, 1917-1925
- Straton, John Roach, 1922
- Strehmenger, C.F., 1915
- Strobridge Lithographing Co. *See Container 10, Craerin, R G.*
- Studios, 1916-1920
- Sturdo Amusement Co. *See Container 33, same heading*
- Suicides, 1915, 1920
- Supreme Photoplay Corp. *See Container 31, Kyler, H.A.*
- Sussfeld, Lorsch, and Schimmel, 1908-1924
- Swaab, Lewis M. *See Container 37, same heading*
- BOX 55
- Swanson, S. L., 1921
- Swanson Theatre Circuit, 1916
- Syndicate Superfeatures, 1919-1920
- Talbot, Charles H., 1928
- Taxes, 1910-1925
- Taylor Holmes Productions, 1920
- Tecno-Commercio-Film *See Container 34, Meille, Arturo*

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Teitel, Albert, 1926-1930  
(3 folders)  
Television, 1926  
Texas Gulf Sulphur Co., 1931
- BOX 56**
- Theaters  
European, 1926-1929  
Mergers and monopolies, 1912-1928  
Programs  
Projection and construction, 1914-1928  
Theatre Film Service Co. *See Container 37, same heading*  
Thefts  
Panama and Canada, 1918, 1920  
Taif, George W., 1919  
*Thirty Years Ago*, 1919-1925  
Thon, Frederick, 1930  
Ticket machines, 1910-1915  
Tiffany & Co., 1924-1925  
Tilton, Benjamin T., 1929  
Times-Picayune (New Orleans), 1917-1919  
Tooney, Tom, 1925-1928  
Town and Country Films, 1917-1919  
Toyland Films, 1916  
Trademarks, 1909-1918  
Trade press, 1915-1927  
Travel, 1916-1926  
Tribune Co. and Randolph Film Corp., 1915-1916  
Tri-State Film Exchange & Theater Supply Co., 1921  
Trust prosecutions, 1927-1928  
Tuohy, William H., 1925  
Turner and Dahnken *See Container 33, same heading*  
Tuttle, T. O., 1917-1926
- BOX 57**
- Uber, J. E., 1927-1928  
Ullman, B. L., 1923-1925 *See also Container 1, "Archaeology and Moving Pictures," by B. L. Ullman, Art and Archaeology*  
*The Unbeliever*, 1918-1927  
Under the Great Bear, 1916-1917  
Union Trust Co. of Chicago, 1928  
Unione Cinematografica Italiana *See also Container 43, Pedrazzine, Guido; and Container 49, First National Pictures and Unione Cinematografica Italiana*  
United Artists Studios, 1923-1929, undated  
United Cinema Co.  
United Film Service, 1920, 1922 *See also Container 63, Werren, Sam*  
United Kingdom Photoplays, 1924 *See also Container 45, same heading*  
United Managers' Protective Association, 1916  
United Projector and Film Corp., 1923  
United States Bureau of Commercial Economics, 1923-1924

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

	United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, 1913-1918 (2 folders)
	United States Congress, Senate
	Bill for the prevention of block and blind booking of films, 1927-1928
	Bill to codify, revise, and amend the laws relating to patents, 1912
	Committee on Interstate Commerce, hearings on motion picture films, 1928
	United States Consulate General, Italy, 1924-1925
	United States Customs Service, 1911-1922
	United States Department of Commerce, 1921-1930
	United States Department of Interior, 1919-1924
	United States Department of Justice, 1919, 1921
	United States Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, 1920
BOX 58	United States Federal antitrust laws, 1914-1926
	United States Federal Trade Commission, 1915-1927
	United States Film Exchange <i>See Container 37, same heading</i>
	United States Government Printing Office, 1927
	United States Library of Congress, Copyright Office, 1912-1940
	United States Navy Motion Picture Exchange, 1919
	United States Post Office, 1922-1929
	United States Treasury Department, 1918-1921
BOX 59	United Theatre Equipment Corp.
	Accounting, 1918-1926, undated
	Arcus Ticket Co., 1923
	Assets and liabilities, 1922-1923
	Banking matters, 1920-1927, undated (3 folders)
	Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., 1923
	Boetzel, Eric L., 1924
BOX 60	Calehuff, Charles A., 1921-1927
	Cifre, Joseph, 1923-1926
	Cohen, Benjamin
	Collections, 1926-1928
	Collections in doubt, 1923-1926
	Uncollectable accounts, 1922-1928
	Contracts, 1916-1919
	Coufal, Joseph F., 1923
	Customers, 1923
	Eckhardt, Conrad, 1923-1925
	Edison Lamp Works, General Electric Co., 1923
	Edwards, Herbert T., 1917-1927
	Endorser's expenses, 1923-1928
BOX 61	Forms
	Fulco Sales Co., 1922-1923
	Graham and Scott, 1923-1926
	Hallberg, J. H., 1917-1923
	Inventory, 1917

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

---

- Kleine memorandum, 1923
- Legal papers, 1922-1926
- Matters, Thomas H., Jr., 1923-1927
- Merger, 1923
- Miscellaneous matters, 1923-1926
- Rose & Paskus, 1923-1927
- Sales, circa 1920-1922, undated
- Shares, 1917-1923
- Sloane and Chase Manufacturing Co., 1922-1923
- Stockholders, directors, minutes of meetings, etc., 1922-1924
- Transactions, 1916-1920
- BOX 62
  - University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans. [\*See Container 41, same heading\*](#)
  - University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah [\*See Container 41, same heading\*](#)
  - University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., 1921-1928 [\*See also Container 42, same heading\*](#)
  - The Unwritten Code* (Inter-Ocean Film Corp.), 1920-1922
  - Urban, Charles, 1923, 1925
  - Valentino, Rudolph, 1925-1926
    - (2 folders)
  - Vendetta*, 1914-1922
  - Vanity Fair*, 1915-1926
  - Vanoscope Co., 1913
  - Variety*, 1926
  - Victor Animatograph Co., 1923-1930
  - Victor Safety Cinema Corp., 1920-1923
  - Viking Blade Co., 1929
  - Virginia (educational distribution of films), 1923-1930
- BOX 63
  - Visual education, 1926
  - Visual Instruction Association of New York City, 1922-1923 [\*See also Container 42, Visual Instruction Association of New York City and National Academy of Visual Instruction\*](#)
  - Vitagraph Co. of America, 1922
  - Vitagraph-Lubin-Selig-Essanay, 1916
  - Vitaphone, 1926
  - Vogel, William, 1929
  - Voorhis, Otie, 1927-1929
  - Voris, William (Spitzer, Rorick & Co.), 1915-1919
  - Wainwright (J. G. & R. B.), Ltd. (Officer 666), 1920
  - Warde, Arthur F. (Film Co. of Ireland), 1919-1922
  - Warren (F. B.) Corp., 1921-1923, 1928
  - Waters, Percival L. [\*See Container 63, same heading\*](#)
  - Watson, Harry, Jr., 1916, undated [\*See also Container 4, Bickel, George, and Harry Watson, Jr.\*](#)
  - Wellington, 1919
  - Werren, Sam (United Film Service), 1922
  - Wertheimer, E., 1915-1919
  - Wescott Film Corp., 1919-1920
  - Western Photogravure Co., 1918-1923
  - Western Star Feature Co., 1921-1922
  - Wheeler, L. C., 1918-1920

## Subject File, 1886-1946

### Container

### Contents

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	White, Francis D., 1922-1923
	White, James A.
	Wholesome Film Service, 1923
	Widescope Camera Co., 1919-1920
BOX 64	Wid Gunning, Inc., 1922
	<i>Wild Oats</i> , 1916-1928
	Wilk, Jacob, 1921
	Williams, Mrs. Sumner (Juliet), 1925
	Williamson (J. C.) Ltd. (Australian and South African theaters), 1915
	Wilson, Eska (Standard Motion Picture Service, 1921-1922)
	Wilson Film Co., 1919-1920
	<i>Window Opposite</i> (schedule of cost), circa 1918
	Wisby, Hrolf (pre-visualization plan), 1926
	Wolf, Nathan <i>See Container 33, Wolf, Nathan, and Morris Choynski</i>
	<i>The Woman Next Door</i> , 1921
	<i>The Woman Who Dared</i> , 1921
	World Film Corp.
	General, 1919-1925
	(2 folders)
BOX 65	Accounting, 1919-1920
	Charlie Chaplin films, 1919
	Contract, 1919
	Republic Distributing Corp. (Kleine claim against), 1919-1921
	The Unwritten Code and The Girl Alaska (accounts), 1919-1922
	World War I
	Aid and gifts by George Kleine, 1918
	Canada, 1918-1919
	Committee on Public Information, 1917-1918
	Employees in United States Military and other service, 1917-1919
	Italian war pictures, 1918, undated
BOX 66	Liberty Loan, 1917-1920, undated
	(3 folders)
	Miscellaneous, 1915-1922, undated
	(3 folders)
	Motion pictures, 1918
	Postwar Americanization, 1920-1923
BOX 67	Taxes, 1917-1922
	(2 folders)
	<i>The Unbeliever</i> , 1918
	War Camp Motion Picture Committee, 1917-1918
	War Industries Board, 1917-1918
	Wright, Wilbur <i>See Container 1, Airplanes and Wilbur Wright</i>
	Xydias, Anthony, 1915-1916
	<i>Your Obedient Servant</i> , 1920-1922
	(2 folders)

Zeza, Baron A., 1914-1916

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 68

Advertised in Motion Picture News (titles, authors, directors), Mar.-Apr. 1920  
“Around the World in 52 Reels of Film” (advertisement)  
Classic series glass negatives  
Conquest Films, 1918-1921  
Copyrighted films (select list, 1913-1916)  
Edison-Kleine Features  
Edison negatives, 1917, 1919  
Edison schedules A-D, F-H, K-M (with titles and release dates), 1915-1920, undated  
Edison unreleased subjects, 1920, undated  
Educational distribution  
    Campbell County High School, Gillette, Wyo., 1930  
    Central High School, Scranton, Pa., 1929-1930  
    Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, 1930  
    State College of Washington, Pullman, Wash., 1927-1930  
    University of California, Berkeley, Calif., 1922-1930  
    University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo., 1922-1928  
    University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1930  
    University of Indiana, Bloomington, Ind., 1921-1928  
    University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1921-1928  
    University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans., 1921-1928, [1930?]  
    University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla., 1925  
    University of Texas, Austin, Tex., 1924-1928  
    University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1925-1928  
    University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., 1921-1928  
    Ursuline Academy, Cleveland, Ohio, 1930  
Empire City Film Laboratory, 1919-1929  
Feature release chart, 1927  
Feature releases, [1913?], 1917  
Films bought, returned, held for consideration  
Furniture, 1924-1926  
*George Kleine Cycle of Film Classics* (brochures)  
Griffen-owned films, circa 1915  
Historical films, [1900?], [1924?]  
Lombard, Ill., storage facility, 1923, 1927  
Manuscript files, 1927  
Manuscripts sent to Selig, 1928  
Master inventory of Kleine records, 1919, 1924  
Miscellaneous, 1917-1929  
National Archives (films selected for archival value), [1945?]  
Negatives, 1918, 1922, undated

BOX 69

## Inventories and Lists, circa 1900-1945

### Container

### Contents

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- Old cold foreign copies, 1919  
Perfection pictures  
Prints, 1919-1928  
Publicity stills, 1924, 1927  
"The Roosevelt Series of History and Biography," [1912?]  
Schedule of releases, 1913-1918  
Sixteen millimeter special subjects, circa 1930  
Statement of amounts for extra footage credited to manufacturers, 1910-1914  
Story rights
- BOX 70** Teitel (A.) Vaults, 1923-1930  
*Thirty Years Ago*, 1928  
Titles, 1913-1928  
Toronto and Montreal, circa 1920  
United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means  
(educational motion pictures imported by George Kleine), 1913  
Value per reel, 1919  
Watson, Henry (comedies in Chicago, Ill.), 1925
- 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.
- BOX 71** "A" miscellaneous  
Foreign  
Australia, 1926-1930  
Bahamas, 1926-1928  
Belgium, 1926-1928  
Canada, 1923-1930  
China, 1921  
Czechoslovakia, 1928  
England, 1925, 1929  
Finland, 1929  
France, 1923-1928  
Greece, 1920-1921  
India, 1925-1928  
Japan, 1922-1929  
New Zealand, 1927-1929  
Philippines, 1922-1925  
Puerto Rico, 1922-1927  
Spain, 1928  
Fox, William (Fox Films, Fox Theatres), 1930  
"K" miscellaneous  
Kleine credit accounts, 1927-1930  
"L" miscellaneous  
Service Film Corp., 1925  
Sound devices, 1928

## Distribution File, 1920-1932

### Container

### Contents

---

	Spoor, George K., 1925-1929
	Staehli, Edward, 1924, 1930
	States
	Alabama, 1922-1929
	Arizona, 1927-1929
	Arkansas, 1922-1929
<b>BOX 72</b>	California, 1922-1931 (2 folders)
	Colorado, 1923-1930
	Connecticut, 1925-1929
	Delaware, 1928-1930
	District of Columbia, 1925-1929
	Florida, 1921-1930
	Georgia, 1926-1929
	Hawaii, 1923-1930
	Idaho, 1922
	Illinois, 1922-1930
<b>BOX 73</b>	Indiana, 1922-1929 (2 folders)
	Iowa
	Iowa State College, Ames, 1927-1931
	Miscellaneous, 1929-1930
	State University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1924-1929
	Kansas, 1923-1931 (2 folders)
	Kentucky, 1921-1929
	Louisiana, 1922-1929
	Maine, 1926-1929
	Maryland, 1925-1929
	Massachusetts, 1921-1930 (2 folders)
<b>BOX 74</b>	Detroit public schools, 1925-1929
	Miscellaneous, 1922-1930
	Minnesota
	Miscellaneous, 1921-1930
	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1922-1927
	Mississippi, 1922-1930
	Missouri, 1922-1930
	Montana, 1923-1929
	Nebraska, 1922-1929
	New Hampshire, 1923-1929
	New Jersey, 1925-1930
	New Mexico, 1927
	New York, 1924-1930 (2 folders)
<b>BOX 75</b>	North Carolina, 1921-1930
	North Dakota, 1922-1929

## Distribution File, 1920-1932

### *Container*

### *Contents*

---

	Ohio
	Miscellaneous, 1921-1930
	(2 folders)
	Riegel, Vernon M., 1926-1930
<b>BOX 76</b>	Oklahoma, 1921-1930
	Oregon, 1921-1929
	Pennsylvania, 1925-1930
	(2 folders)
	Rhode Island, 1927
	South Carolina, 1929-1930
	South Dakota, 1922-1927
	Tennessee, 1926-1930
	Texas, 1922-1931
	Utah, 1921-1929
<b>BOX 77</b>	Vermont, 1925-1929
	Virginia, 1929-1930
	Washington, 1921-1932
	West Virginia, 1926-1929
	Wisconsin, 1927-1930
	Wyoming, 1927-1930
	Miscellaneous
	Stern Brothers, 1928-1929
	Tichenor, Frank A., 1923-1927
	Verhoeven, John A., 1924-1928
	Victor Animatograph Co., 1930
	Western Union Telegraph Co., 1929-1930
	Zincograph Co., 1926-1928