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Lloyd Binford collection

Title: Lloyd Binford collection
Collection No: MSS.430
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: circa 1946-1950 and undated.

Abstract: The collection contains copies of letters and articles written by Lloyd Binford, Chairman of the Memphis Board of Censors (1928-1956).

Processed by: James E. Montague, August 2003; Gerald Chaudron, February 2014.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: Lloyd Binford collection, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: February 2014

Biographical information

Lloyd Tilgham Binford (1866-1956) was born in Duck Hill, Mississippi, the son of an infantry colonel and future state senator. He left school at the end of the fifth grade and worked for the Illinois Central Railroad before joining the staff of the Woodmen of the World. He then joined the Columbia Mutual Life Insurance Company and rose to become president of the company in 1916. Binford moved the company from Atlanta to Memphis and was responsible for building the Columbia Mutual Tower (later the Lincoln-America Tower) in 1925.

Prominent in many civic organizations, Binford was named chairman of the Memphis Censor Board in 1928 by the city's political boss, E.H. Crump and stayed in the job for 28 years. The board had been formed in 1911 to "censor, supervise, regulate, or prohibit any entertainment of immoral, lewd, or lascivious character, as well as performances inimical to the public safety, health, morals, or welfare." Though it had broad powers, the board had not used them often until Binford became chairman. By the 1940s, Memphis became known for having the strictest film censorship in the country. Binford opposed any fraternization between blacks and whites and giving prominence to black actors. He was sensitive also to any negative portrayal of Southern life and undermining of public morals. As a result, many films were banned or cut, forcing Memphians to go to Arkansas if they wanted to see them. Though ill-health led him to resign several times, he was persuaded to stay on until finally stepping down in 1956.

Sources:

Nickas, Laura, "Lloyd T. Binford and the Memphis Board of Censors (1866-1956)", *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*.

<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=1558>

Strub, Whitney, "Black and White and Banned All Over: Race, Censorship and Obscenity in Postwar Memphis", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2007 Spring, pp. 685-715.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/212767/pdf>

Dowdy, Wayne, "Censoring Popular Culture: Political and Social Control in Segregated Memphis," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 55, 2001, pp. 98-117.

Scope and contents

The collection contains carbon copies of two typed letters written by Lloyd Binford, Chairman of the Memphis Board of Censors disapproving films. One letter (circa 1946) was written to David O. Selznick regarding "Duel in the Sun". The other (circa 1947) was written to United Artists Corporation about "The Macomber Affair". There is also a copy of the public notice disapproving "Duel in the Sun". The collection also contains copies of articles by Binford and one submitted to *Collier's Magazine* in 1950.

Related materials

MSS.475. *Memphis Press-Scimitar* newspaper morgue. Folder 4410.

Subject terms

Binford, Lloyd T., 1866-1956.
Censorship--Tennessee—Memphis.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Letters (carbon copy): Binford to David O. Selznick, Los Angeles, Calif., undated. Re: film "Duel in the Sun"; Binford to United Artists Corporation, St. Louis, Mo., undated. Re: film "The Macomber Affair".
Official notice re: decision not to accept "Duel in the Sun", undated.
- 2 Letter and article (copies) submitted by Binford to *Collier's Magazine*, New York, 1950 May 30. Sent in response to article in *Collier's* May 6, 1950, issue "You Can't See That Movie".
Articles written by Binford (copies), undated: "'Hollywood Changes for the Worse': Pornographic Propaganda"; "The City of Happiness is in the State of Mind: 'Keep the Mind Young and the Years Won't Matter'".