



David O. Selznick (1902–1965) and The Journey of Gone with the Wind (1939)

By Omar Hashem

Class: FMP 294

Professor: Jason Scott

Historical Background & Road Map

More than 75 years of birth of *Gone with the Wind* movie on December 15, 1939 (Leopold). Till now it has its own audience even some people have dislike it for some reasons such as its racist, the actor Hattie McDaniel couldn't attend the premiere because of segregation laws even she won the Oscar for her role. In addition the movie is very long 222 minutes. On the other hand, lovers of the movie likes it for many reasons such as for how it was one of the peak of Hollywood filmmaking, and how it showed modern determent, independent woman (Leopold). Two companies Produced the movie: Selznick International Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).

This paper will reveal some vital issues Selznick faced while filming *Gone with the Wind* movie. At the beginning, a brief biography about Selznick will be introduced . Then, based on his life history and movies nominated to awards his main achievements out of many will be mentioned (Biography.com Editors, David O. Selznick Biography). Next, the Journey of the movie will start beginning with the poster, then how Selznick purchased the rights of the movie to how he choose his main role actors. Finalizing with the movie awards.

Biography.com Editors. *David O. Selznick Biography*. 18 March 2015. The Biography.com website.

Leopold, Todd. *Why we love -- and hate -- 'Gone with the Wind'*. 12 May 2015.

David O. Selznick Brief Biography

David O. Selznick was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on May 10, 1902. Selznick would later become one of Hollywood's most successful producers. In 1926 with his father's connections and ambition, Selznick traveled to Los Angeles to find a job as a script reader in one of the most famous studios, MGM. Selznick worked with MGM, Paramount and RKO. As a vice president in RKO, Selznick started to make a name for himself as a producer. He established two companies: International Pictures (1936) (which he had to sell due to taxes) and David Selznick Productions (1945). Selznick spent his time enjoying life with his second wife actress Jennifer Jones. On June 22, 1965 Selznick died of a coronary occlusion.

David O. Selznick Notable Achievements

Based on Selznick's biography, his most notable achievements among others (Biography.com Editors, David O. Selznick Biography):

A Bill of Divorcement (1932), and Katharine Hepburn's first screen role

King Kong (1933) and its special effects

Dinner at Eight (1933)

Anna Karenina (1935)

The Garden of Allah (1936)

A Star Is Born (1937), with seven Academy Award nominations

Gone with the Wind (1939) with 10 Academy Awards

Rebecca (1940) won Academy Award for Best Picture

The original movie poster is the one to the left. The other one is from the 1967 re-release. From the movie posters, I noticed the mix of actors positions, colors, and fonts. I found it contains strong messages. Messages of love and power. The original poster is more impressive and gives more to imagination (Janke).



Source: *Gone with the Wind* / Original Movie Posters. n.d



Source: *Gone with the Wind*, Original Vintage 1968 Re-Release Movie Poster. 21 December 2015.



How the Journey of the Movie Started

While Selznick was filming *The Garden of Allah* he got a telegram from an editor encouraging him to buy the rights of a novel about the Civil war epic. Selznick read the summary and refused to purchase it due to a bad previous experience with a Civil War movie. The chairman of the company offered to support him financially so he agreed to purchase the movie rights.

Source: Biography.com Editors. *David O. Selznick Biography*. 18 March 2015. The Biography.com website.

Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.

The Author Margaret Mitchell

This image shows the author Margaret Mitchell holding her novel (Rossi). Selznick paid the author Margaret Mitchell, \$50,000. It was the highest amount paid to an author for the original novel. In 1942, Selznick sold his company Selznick International Pictures, he felt he underpaid Mitchell and paid her another \$50,000 (Rossi).



The movie delayed for two years for two reasons (Rossi): First, Selznick determined to give the main role to Clark Gable. Second, Selznick was very selective in deciding who will be Scarlett. This resulted in over 1400 interviews for the role of Scarlett. In addition, Selznick had in mind Joan Crawford, Tallulah Bankhead, Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins, Barbara Stanwyck, Jean Arthur, Norma Shearer, and Paulette Goddard. The image to right shows a memo related to some of the names who had been tested (Producing Gone with the Wind, The search for Scarlett - Casting).

Form TS-55M-2-36-K-1 Co.

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL PICTURES, INC.
9330 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

Inter-Office Communication

TO Jerry Deardorf
FROM Agnes von Sternberg

DATE 6-1-39
SUBJECT

This is the list I have - and I have every reason to believe that it includes all girls tested for Scarlett:

- Adel Longdore - New York City 5/1/37
- Maria Stoddard - New York City 5/1/37
- Diana Forrest - New York City 5/1/37
- Linda Lee - New York City 5/1/37
- Torothy Mathews - New York City 5/1/37
- Anita Harrison - New York City 5/1/37
- Irene Merrill - New York City 5/1/37
- Edith Harringer - Culver City 5/1/37
- Paulette Goddard - Culver City 5/1/37
- Terry Ray - Culver City 5/1/37
- Frances Dee - Culver City 5/1/37
- Linda Watkins - New York City 5/1/37
- Susan Fox - New York City 5/1/37
- Margaret Talliebat - Culver City 5/1/37
- Anita Louise - Culver City 5/1/37
- Louise Platt - New York City 5/1/37
- Nancy Coleman - Culver City 5/1/37
- Shirley Logan - Culver City 5/1/37
- Mary Ray - Culver City 5/1/37
- Lena Turner - Culver City 5/1/37
- Doris Jordan - New York and Culver City 5/1/37
- Dianna Barrymore - New York City 5/1/37
- Marcella Martin - New York and Culver City 5/1/37
- Fleurette DeBussy - New York City 5/1/37
- Austine McDonnell - New York City 5/1/37
- Jean Arthur - Culver City 5/1/37
- Joan Bennett - Culver City 5/1/37
- Vivien Leigh - Culver City 5/1/37

Handwritten notes:

- K. K. K. - 10-1938
- By letter - 10-1938
- Tallulah Bankhead - 12/12/36
- Miss Charles Lauder - 7th 15, 1938
- Sign - 12/27/38

Girls tested for the role of Scarlet - Gone with the Wind
Source: "Producing Gone with the Wind, The search for Scarlett - Casting." n.d. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

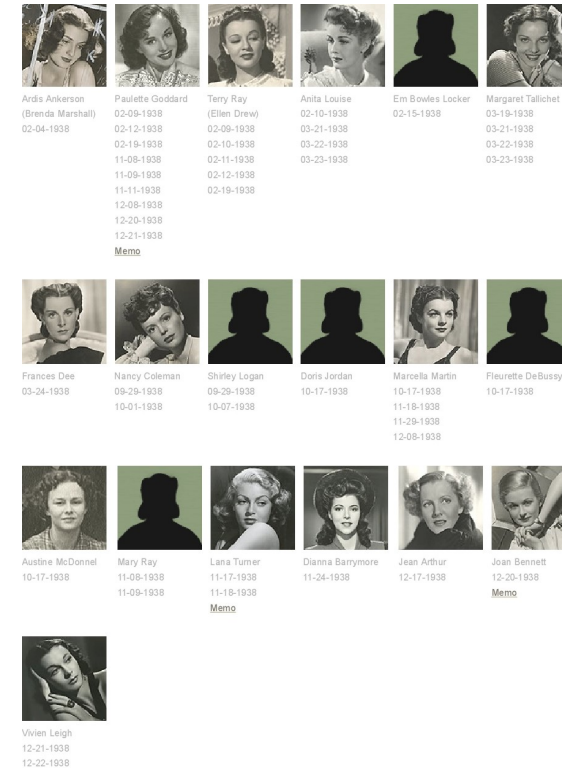
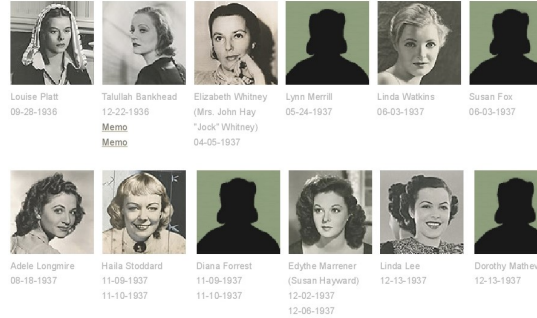


Katharine Aldridge
10-17-1938



Lyn Swann
12-27-1938

Women that auditioned for Scarlett
but who did not make it to the
film.



Women That Auditioned for the Role of Scarlett –Producing Gone With The Wind

"Producing Gone with the Wind, The Search for Scarlett - Women Tested for the Role of Scarlett." n.d. *Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin*

Lana Turner Tested for the Role of Scarlett O'Hara - Memo



Source: *5 Things About Lana Turner You Never Knew You Needed to Know*. Ed. Married at the Movies. 8 February 2017.

The search for Scarlett's role took a long time. Teams spread in more than one city. Maxwell Arnow and Charles Richards were auditioning in Los Angeles. Arnow wrote a report to Selznick about tested women. In the Memo to the left we may see Arnow's memo related to Lana Turner (The image in the top right). He found her too inexperienced (Producing *Gone with the Wind*, The search for Scarlett - Casting). For Selznick, he found Lana Turner "completely inadequate, too young to have a grasp of the part." (Tisdale).

Form 73A-10M-2-38-K-I Co.

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL PICTURES, INC.
9336 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

Inter-Office Communication

TO Mr. Selznick DATE Sept. 8, 1938

FROM Mr. Arnow SUBJECT

Had a discussion with Datig at Metro this morning and ran tests of their younger players. There was no one of interest to us except a boy by the name of Jack Hubbard and this test did not seem to do him justice. I therefore secured a test of Hubbard and Mimi Lilligren from R.K.O. on which test Metro signed them after R.K.O. failed to contract them. M.G.M. have no test of Lilligren.

The only other likely looking youngster was Lana Turner who, although she screens very well, is yet too inexperienced to assay any of the principal roles in *GONE WITH THE WIND*. However, she might be suitable for one of the smaller parts.

I have contacted the other major companies and have an appointment tomorrow at Paramount with Bagnall and Bottsford and Warner Brothers is sending over a new girl they have just signed. By Monday or Tuesday you will have a detailed report of the young stock players in every studio.

MA M.A.

dc

Source: "Producing *Gone with the Wind*, The Search for Scarlett - Women Tested for the Role of Scarlett." n.d. *Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin*.

Tisdale, Jennifer. *75 Days. 75 Years: Actresses who had screen tests for role of Scarlett O'Hara*. 13 December 2013.



Producer
David O.
Selznick, left,
reveals the
casting of
Vivien Leigh,
Leslie
Howard and
Olivia de
Havilland in
January 1939

Scenes Modified

In one of the war scenes, the union requested from Selznick to have at least 800 extra soldiers' bodies, so he mixed dummies with real bodies (Rossi).

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) requested from filmmakers to remove all racial scenes. Even more, protests had gone to boycott the movie. Therefore, Selznick removed all offensive scenes and words which were against the reality of that time in his opinion (Rossi). In addition, we may see a letter (third image), Selznick received on October 1936 from Brooklyn, New York asking him not to make "a Negro-baiting film". Therefore, Selznick removed the N-word from the movie's script (Smith).



285 Schenectady Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y.
October 29, 1936

Selznick International Pictures
Hollywood, California

Gentlemen:

I wish to register my protest against the making of *Gone With The Wind*. The picture is a Negro-baiting film that will only encourage such organizations as the Klu Klux Klan and The Black Legion to continue their terrorism and their violations of civil rights. I feel that such a film will certainly not meet with the approval of the people but will be welcomed by the Fascists and Nazis of this country. Again let me urge you not to produce this "UnAmerican" film.

Hyman Meyer

David O. Selznick Memos

Selznick wrote memos related to the movie and how he had to remove some words or related to choosing Vivien Leigh. Because of the importance of the movie, these memos were selected and edited.

Examples of these memos:

Under the code, Joe Breen is unable to give me permission to use this sentence because it contains the word "damn," a word specially forbidden by the code (Behlmer, p. 221).

P. 46: I think we can, and must, definitely lose the miscarriage. These infallible pregnancies at single contacts are a bit thick, and in any event I don't think the miscarriage gets us anywhere (Behlmer, p. 148).

Correcting on matter in teletype, i have no enthusiasm for Vivien Leigh. maybe I will have, but as yet have never even seen photograph of her. will: be seeing "fire over England.... shortly, at. which time will of course see leigh.. (Behlmer, p. 149).

I saw Yank at Oxford last night, which, by the way, is a swell picture. While I think Vivien Leigh gave an excellent performance and was very well cast, I don't like her for the part in our picture' as well as Margaret Lindsay, Pat Patterson, or Dorothy Hyson (Behlmer, p. 154).

Under the code, Joe Breen is unable to give me permission to use this sentence because it contains the word "damn," a word specifically forbidden by the code.

P. 46: I think we can, and must, definitely lose the miscarriage. These infallible pregnancies at single contacts are a bit thick, and in any event I don't think the miscarriage gets us anywhere.¹⁶

TO: KATHARINE BROWN
AND OSCAR SERLIN²⁰

FEBRUARY 3, 1937

CORRECTING ON MATTER IN TELETYPE, I HAVE NO ENTHUSIASM FOR VIVIEN LEIGH. MAYBE I WILL HAVE, BUT AS YET HAVE NEVER EVEN SEEN PHOTOGRAPH OF HER. WILL BE SEEING "FIRE OVER ENGLAND"²¹ SHORTLY, AT WHICH TIME WILL OF COURSE SEE LEIGH. . .

To: [Director Richard] Wallace, Mr. Wright February 17, 1938

I saw *Yank at Oxford* last night, which, by the way, is a swell picture. While I think Vivien Leigh gave an excellent performance and was very well cast, I don't like her for the part in our picture²⁰ as well as Margaret Lindsay, Pat Patterson, or Dorothy Hyson.²¹

DOS



Gary Cooper



Clark Gable & Rhett Butler

Author Mitchell described Rhett Butler in her novel as more dark and wicked than Clark Gable, but Selznick didn't care. Even Gary Cooper was offered to take the part of Rhett, he turned down the role (Rossi). At the same time Selznick determined to give the main role to Clark Gable.

Nearly at the end of the film Scarlett fell down the stairs after Rhett dodged her blow. This caused Scarlett to have a miscarriage with her baby. Gable was supposed to cry, but he was afraid for his image. Two shots were filmed one with tears and the other without. Then he was convinced that the one with tears wouldn't show him to be weak, but the opposite (Oneill).

Vivien Leigh & Scarlett O'Hara

Selecting an actress for the role of Scarlett O'Hara was not easy especially as Selznick wanted someone with a special character. Moreover, Scarlett was cast after filming the scene of "Burning of Atlanta" (Oneill). While casting was going on, fans were asked to vote for the suitable actress for the Scarlett. Vivien who was unknown at that time, received one vote. Later and after the movie was released she became the main star of the film (Rossi, 2017).



Oneill, Therese. "20 Things You Might Not Have Known About Gone with the Wind." *Mental Floss*. 3 November 2015.

Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.

Vivien Leigh & Scarlett O'Hara

Choosing Vivien Leigh (images at the right) exposed Selznick for a lot of criticism because she is an English actress. Anyway, opponents preferred her more than Katharine Hepburn who was considered a Yankee (Oneill).

In the book, Scarlett eyes were green. While Vivian's eyes were blue. Therefore, special effects made leigh's blue eyes look green by wearing a lot of green clothing and using special lightning filters (Rossi).

Source: Breg, Cecilie Gamst. *Going with the wind: a road trip to Scarlett and Rhett's old stomping ground*. Post Magazine, 27 February 2016.



Oneill, Therese. "20 Things You Might Not Have Known About Gone with the Wind." *Mental Floss*. 3 November 2015.
Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.

Clark Gable & Vivien Leigh Chemistry

Although Clark Gable was known for his affairs, both Clark and Vivien didn't socialize a lot. On the other hand, it was clear that the on-screen chemistry was obvious. At the time of filming, Vivien had a relationship with Laurence Olivier, and Gable had a relationship with Carole Lombard. Both couples got married to their lovers after the film (Anderson). Moreover, Leigh admitted in an interview "Kissing Clark Gable in *Gone with the Wind* was not that exciting. His dentures smelled something awful" (Rossi).



Anderson, Tim. *Clark Gable & Vivien Leigh: Sex Scandals and the Stars of "Gone With the Wind"*. 4 October 2018.

Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.

Facts

More than a million people participated in the festival of the premiere in Atlanta. The Georgia Governor announced the day of the premiere as a state holiday. Citizens celebrated wearing hoop skirts and top hats. Tickets sold at \$200 per person (in 1939 money) (Oneill). *Gone with the Wind* total running time was 3 hours and 45 minutes. During the 22 weeks of the filming time, Selznick rarely slept. The film cost more than \$4 million to make. It was the most ever spent on a production at that time (Biography.com Editors, David O. Selznick Biography)

Biography.com Editors; *David O. Selznick Biography*. 18 March 2015. The Biography.com website.
Oneill, Therese. "20 Things You Might Not Have Known About *Gone with the Wind*." *Mental Floss*. 3 November 2015.



The *Gone with the Wind* premiere in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 17, 1939.

Academy Award Best Actress

In this image Leigh celebrates winning the best actress Oscar with Selznick at the Academy Awards ceremony in 1940. "Selznick was the primary artistic influence on the film. He really pushed everyone," says Wilson, the exhibition curator. "His hand touched everything" (Smith).



The Movie Ten Academy Awards

In January 1938, Selznick started the production of the movie *Gone with the Wind*. The film was nominated 13 Oscars and won 10 out of them (eight competitive, two honorary) (Rossi):

The eight competitive: Best Director, Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Supporting Actress, Best Set Decoration and Best Editing.

The two honorary: Special Award and Technical Achievement Award

Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.



Source: Rossi, Nicola. "The Producers Of 'Gone With The Wind' Hid These Secrets." *Ninja Journalist*. 25 January 2017.

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<<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/scarlett/tests/#top>>.

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<<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/gone-with-the-wind-exhibit-75th-anniversary/index.html>>.

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<<http://sites.utexas.edu/ransomcentermagazine/2013/12/13/75-days-75-years-screen-tests-for-role-of-scarlett/>>.