



Introduction to Moving Image Archiving & Preservation

November 4, 2008

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The Impressionable Years

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- The two versions
- United States Information Agency
- United World Films
- NYPL Children's Books & Film Locations
- Personalities:
 - Frances Clarke Sayers
 - Peter Elgar
 - Morris Mamorsky
 - Henry Fonda
 - The Cast
- Preservation History & Recommendations

The Impressionable Years



The Impressionable Years



The Impressionable Years



The Impressionable Years



Timeline

Pre-Production

- Summer 1951: Frances Clarke Sayers trains production staff
- Production staff observes children in library
- Sayers searches for lead girl

Timeline

Production

- October 1951: Production at Nathan Straus Branch begins, lasts five weeks



Timeline

Distribution

- April 16, 1952: Premiere at MOMA
- May 9: NY Herald-Tribune reviews MOMA screening
- Fall: Screening for library staff and neighborhood guests
- December: Film made available by NYPL for outside groups

PETER ELGAR

18 EAST 53RD STREET

INVITES YOU TO THE FIRST SHOWING OF

THE IMPRESSIONABLE YEARS

A FILM OF CHILDREN AND THEIR LIBRARIES

PRODUCED FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF

THE UNITED STATES.

THE SHOWING WILL TAKE PLACE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1952, AT 8.30 P. M.

IN THE AUDITORIUM OF THE

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET

NEW YORK CITY

*Because of limited seating capacity, a card of admission is required. Please
return the enclosed acceptance form in order that a card may be sent you.*

Multiple Versions of *The Impressionable Years*



Two versions of film

- 40 minutes version
 - “unreleased,” although copies exist
- 30 minute version
 - “official” version released by State Department
 - Missing two scenes
 - Carl Sandburg sings and tells stories to children
 - Christmas party - final scene in film

Why?

No conclusive evidence, but...

- State Department funded film
 - Held final authority over version of film released.
 - Decision to cut scenes was theirs
- cutting occurred on or around April 21, 1952

New 3 Reel
Version 13.70
Be Fixed

Foreign Versions
April 21, 1952

Don. Macdon

F.V. FILE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

THE IMPRESSIONABLE YEARS

F.V. FILE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

16 & 35mm
Footage: 16mm 1,446 Ft.
35mm 3,521 Ft.
Screening Time: 39 Min. 7 Sec.
Produced By: PETER ELGAR PRODUCTIONS

- 6 -

4/21/52

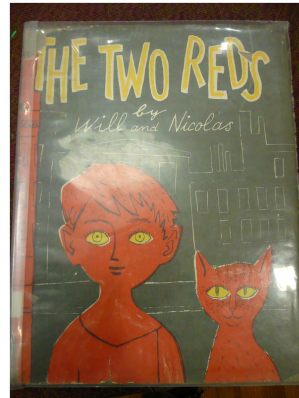
26. Four girls - one speaking
495 - 502
27. MS of girl counting
507 - 512
28. MS of girl asking question.
515 - 530
29. Children entering public library
at 42nd Street.
536 - 565
30. Carl Sandburg talking and joking with
the children in the audience.
667-681
31. Carl Sandburg points to boy.
684 - 696
- The president opens the meeting to discussion. 3 1/3
- Seriously, each one presents her point of
view, assembles her arguments and defends her
own opinion. 9 1/3
- Each is heard in turn, until the president
calls for a vote. 4 2/3
- The majority decides and "biography" is chosen
as the reading for the year. 3 1/3
- "Perhaps we could ask a writer of "Biography"
to come and speak to us". PAUSE And so a
letter is written asking for suggestions... 10
- Because the children asked a "biographer"
and "poet" came to visit them. A poet in
whom the great traditions of America have
found a powerful and a loving voice. Biographer
of Lincoln... poet of the people... singer of
folk songs - Carl Sandburg. 19 1/3
- This is a man who has listened to the
heartbeat of a nation; who has listened
to the million voices of its people until
his own voice speaks with eloquence and fire. 9 1/3
- "You there, you look like a boy with the wind
behind your eyes! I know. I was born on the
prairie, where the wind blows all the time... 8

Our four theories

- Two specifically related to Sandburg
 - Do not account for removal of Christmas scene
- Two are more general
 - Production and use of film

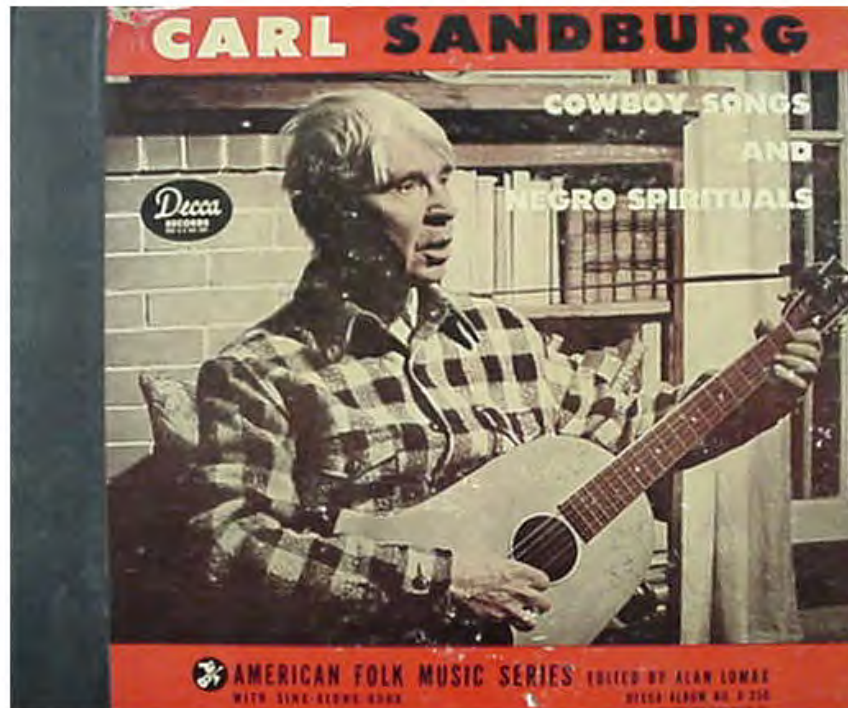
Theory #1

- Sandburg is considered a potential Communist subversive
 - Never testified before HUAC
 - Named in three separate testimonies (1938, 1940, 1947)
 - State Dept. advisor on set (Harry Keith) vetoed *The Two Reds*



Theory #2

- Potential copyright and/or licensing issues for Sandburg's songs or recordings



Excerpts of three traditional songs are performed:

- “I Ride an Old Paint”
 - Cowboy song
- “Sweet Violets”
 - Multiple versions, some very bawdy
 - Anticipated rhyme scheme
- “Go Down Moses”
 - Spiritual
 - Later made famous by Paul Robeson

Are these live recordings?

- “I Ride an Old Paint” and “Go Down Moses” had previously been recorded by Sandburg, BUT
- “Sweet Violets” was never recorded by Sandburg
- Gerald Hirschfeld (cinematographer) remembers that live sound was recorded at the shooting
- If these are live recordings, they are unreleased Sandburg recordings

Theory #3

- The film was meant to be sent to many different foreign countries
- Perhaps the cut scenes were too culturally specific

"THE IMPRESSIONABLE YEARS"

NOTE TO TRANSLATORS, CHECKERS, AND RECORDING DIRECTORS

Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu Versions.

For the above versions the following changes are to be made:

The Title has been changed to:

"CHILDREN'S LIBRARY"

REEL I - Insert the following NEW paragraphs:

1. What place is this? Where is "brother" going?
 What goes on here? Where are these children
 coming and going? All this, little Jane doesn't
 know yet. But she will--- soon!
 This is the story of a little girl who has come
 with her brother for the first time to the New York
 Public Library - this is the children's section -
 here seeds are sown for a healthy mental growth -
 for friendship with new places - and new peoples.

Change Par. 1 in the script of 10/22/52 to Par. 1-A. and eliminate the
word "RUMPELTILTSKIN" in line eight of same paragraph.

REEL II - Insert the following NEW paragraph:

13A - Don't worry, Jane! Come again when you can sign
your name - then you can take a book home.

REEL III - Insert the following NEW paragraph:

21A - Books of lands far away---

Substitute the following text for:

Par. 25- Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Little Red Riding
Hood--- Tales of Kings and Queens and Fairies
have warmed the hearts of every child all over
the world.

Special Note to HINDI, translator and checker.

The Embassy in Karachi has requested that the correct Hindi of
"Once upon a Time" --- "Ek tha Raja" be used since Indian
stories begin this way.

Theory #4

- Scenes contained only sync sound in film
- Sandburg singing songs & kids singing “Deck the Halls” at Christmas
- Would have been impossible to dub

U.S.I.S.

United States Information Service

Presents

United States Information Agency

- Promoted US national interests abroad
- Produced *The Impressionable Years*, among other films
- Known as US Information Service abroad
 - Name changed for domestic purposes to avoid confusion with US Immigration Service

United World Films, Inc.

- Created by Universal Pictures, International Pictures, and J. Arthur Rank after World War II.
- Major producer and distributor (e.g., bought Castle Films in 1947, which was previously the largest distributor of “nontheatrical” films).
- State Department distributed *The Impressionable Years* through United World Films, Inc.
- Original price: \$41.60.

NYPL Children's Book Collection

A Brief History

The Early Years

- 1906: Dept. of Work with Children created
 - Anne Carroll Moore hired as Superintendent
- 1911: Central Children's Room opens
 - Located in new 42nd St. building
 - Setting for Carl Sandburg scene in *The Impressionable Years*



The Central Children's Room

- Reading room
- Historical children's book collection
- Frequently hosted events: storytelling, poetry reading, puppet shows, concerts
- “There was the time when Carl Sandburg... sat on a corner of the desk in the reading room strumming his guitar and singing ballads in his deep rich voice.”

“The Central Children's Room” by Helen Adams Masten

The Central Children's Room



Nathan Straus Branch



Nathan Straus Branch

- Main location for *The Impressionable Years*
- Opened in 1941
- First NYPL branch devoted to children & young people
- Located at 348 32nd St. in former pasteurization center

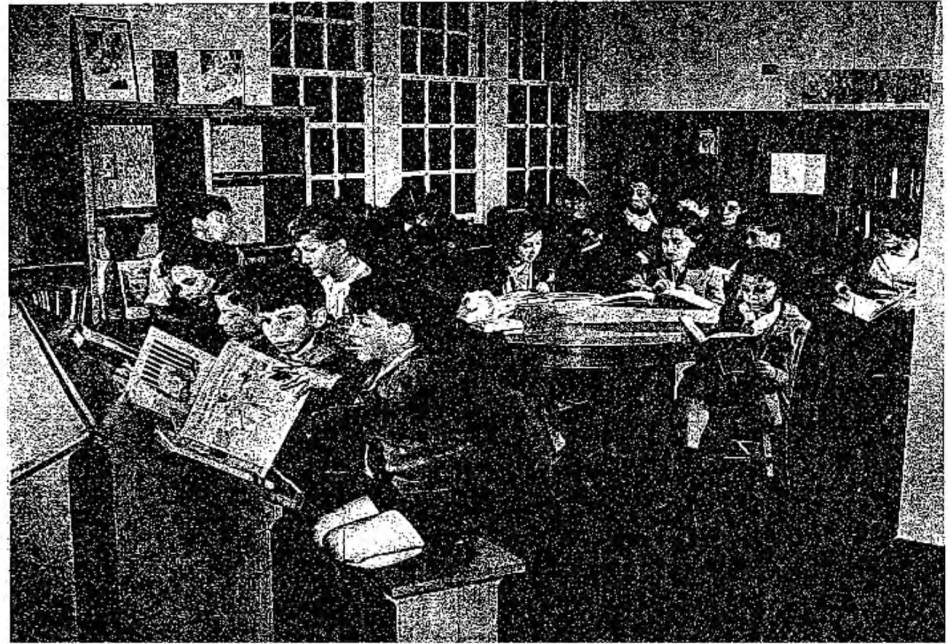
Nathan Straus Branch

First floor: Junior high to age 21



Nathan Straus Branch

Second floor: Children's Room



Nathan Straus Branch

Third floor: Story hour room



Post-Impressionable Years

- 1955: Nathan Straus Branch closes
- Collection moves to newly-opened Donnell Library
- Collection split into Children's Collection and Nathan Straus Young Adult Collection (aka Teen Central)
- 1970: Central Children's Room closes, collection moves to Donnell

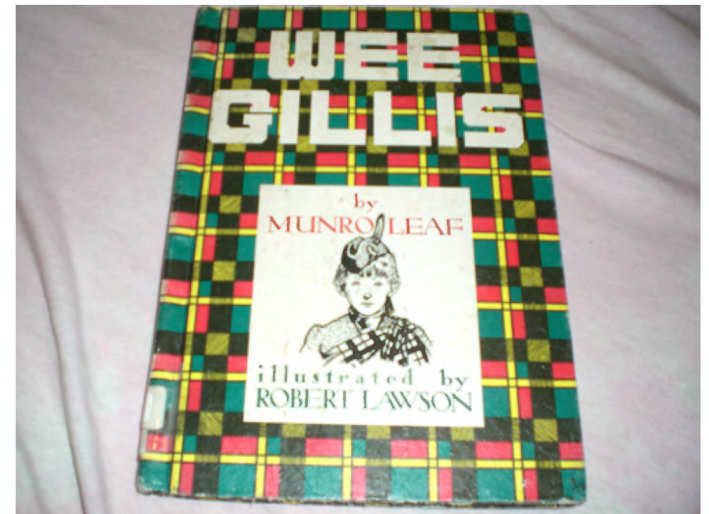
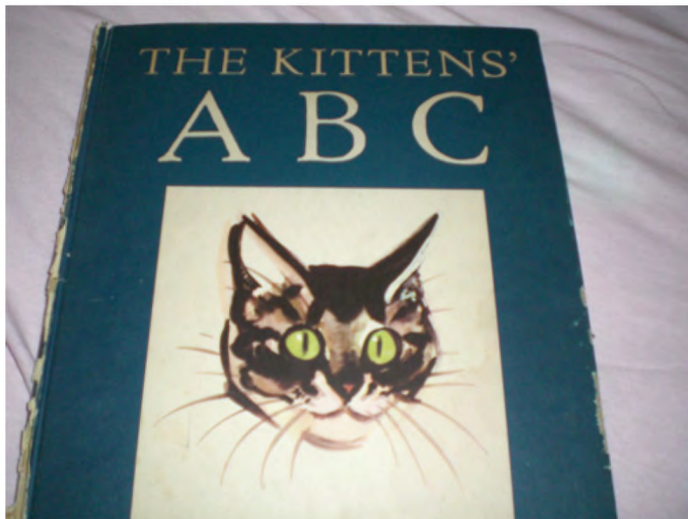
Today

- 2008: Donnell Library Center closes
- Children's Collection to move back to 42nd St.
- Fate of Nathan Straus Young Adult Collection undetermined
- Both collections currently in storage

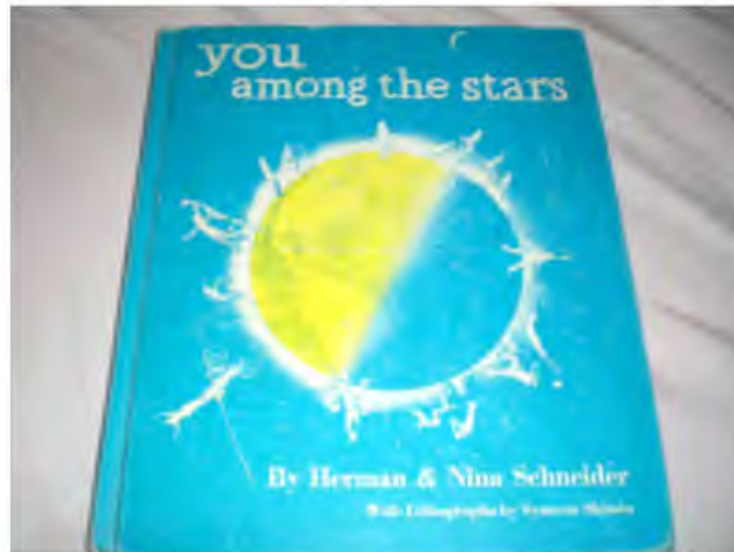
Nathan Straus Today



Books in the Film



Books in the Film



Frances Clarke Sayers (1897-1989)

Wrote Narration for *The Impressionable Years*



Children's Librarian (NYPL)

- Librarian in the Central Children's Room (1918-1923)
- Superintendent of Work with Children (1941-1952)
- Worked closely with mentor/adversary Anne Carroll Moore

Author of children' s books

- *Bluebonnets for Lucinda* (1932)
- *Mr. Tidy Paws* (1934)
- *Oscar Lincoln Busby Stokes* (1970)

Sayers' Role

- Wrote narration

*Narration written by
Francis G. Sayers*

Sayers' Role

- Approved project

For some time Miss Ernestine Evans has advocated a film showing work with children and has discussed her ideas with Mrs. Sayers who agrees with most of them but not all. The State Department has bought the idea from Miss Evans but with the understanding that the film will be made by the Peter Elgar Productions with The New York Public Library as background.

Mrs. Sayers will clear with Mr. Elgar the episodes to be used in the script - story hours, puppet shows, playground, book-mobile, housing developments.

NYPL memo, July 24, 1951

Sayers' Role

- Helped develop concept for film

Mr. Peter Elgar
Peter Elgar Productions
270 Park Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Elgar:

Is this any good? Here is a new book which has come to the library just within the month. In a way it does something no other book we ever had does and that is to explain the solar system for younger children in a way that makes it somehow as personal as the great concept can be made.

Anyhow, could we use this book as the book that comes into the Office? It goes out to one of the Branches where they are arranging an exhibition on the stars and the sky. You remember the charts at George Bruce Branch.

Sayers to Elgar, September 1, 1951

Sayers' Role

- Solicited Carl Sandburg's involvement
 - Seems to have had prior relationship

I have been here now ten years this very day and I have never wanted anything so much as I want you for this occasion. I do hope you can crowd it in into your schedule. Long ago you wrote in my copy of the Rootabaga Stories, first edition: "Your Zig Zag, Carl Sandburg". I hope that Zig Zag brings you back to what will certainly be the high point of my professional life if you come.

With much affection,

Frances Clarke Sayers
Superintendent of
Work with Children

Sayers to Sandburg, August 28, 1951

Peter Elgar: A Bio-Filmography



Life

Film

1905

Peter Frederick “Fritz” Eckhardt
born in Vienna, Austria-Hungary

1931

Mädchen in Uniform

Director: Leontine Sagan

Producer or Co-Producer:

Peter Elgar



MÄDCHEN IN UNIFORM / Léontine Sagan

1930s

“Elgar... made many educational and artistic films in Europe, including religious films for the Vatican.” □

TV Guide, 4/2/54

1939

Peter and Monica Eckhardt arrive in New York

4	FRIEDLANDER	Bernard	30	M	M Writer	Yes	Eng. Germ.	Yes	Germany	Hebrew	30-12	Vienna	Q
5	ECKHARDT	Fritz	33	M	M Writer	Yes	Eng. Germ.	Yes	Germany	Hebrew	30-12	Darmstadt	Q
6	ECKHARDT	Monica (Wanda) <i>Beckhardt</i>	25	F	M Housewife	Yes	Eng. Germ.	Yes	Germany	Hebrew	08-15	London	RE

c.1941

Eckhardt changes name to Peter Fitzgerald Elgar, joins Army Signal Corps

Judsons Hosts at Housewarming

Friends of the Eddie Judsons (Rita Hayworth) gathered for hot drinks the other day and then made a tour of the Judsons' new Westwood home. Climax to this, the "official" housewarming, was a buffet supper.

Among those wishing the hosts well in their new home were the Richard Hallidays (Mary Martin), Frank Freeman Jr., Henry Ginsberg, Jerry Wald, Robert Taplinger, Charles Vidor, the William Hallingworths, the Frank Parsons, the Peter Hears, Glen Ford, Bob Tomy, Evelyn Keyes, Lynn Hawers and George Wilburn.

LA Times, 3/2/41

1941



THEY FAVOR POMPADOURS—Monica Elgar (left) and Rita Hayworth dined at the Mocambo and at the same

time presented a few springtime fashion decrees of their own, among them pompadours and glittering diamonds.

LA Times, 2/23/41

1945

Reunion (version of *Le Retour*)

Produced by the United States Information Service in cooperation with the US Army Creative Consultant (Original Version):

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Supervisor and Editor (Edited Version):

Peter Elgar



1946

Peter and Monica Elgar divorce in Palm Beach, FL

Elfinbein, Henry	Rebecca	Dade	1946
Elgar, Peter F.	Monica	Palm Beach	1946
Elia, August D.	Lucy	Bradford	1946

The Pale Horseman

Produced by the Army Signal Corps

Director: Irving Jacoby

Editor: **Peter Elgar**



New York Calling

Director: **Peter Elgar (?)**

“10/24/46: I worked with Peter Elgar on the state department film with the Eyemo: churches in Harlem, a crowd on Wall Street, and a couple of pigeons making love on Watt’s head in the graveyard at Trinity church.” □

Todd Webb, *Looking Back*

1947

My Father's House (Beit Avi)

Director: Herbert Kline

Editor: **Peter Elgar**



1950

"The Parable of the Good Samaritan"

Marionette film for television

Produced by the Protestant Radio
Commission

Director: Charles Schwep

Editor: **Peter Elgar**

1949

Peter marries Dorothy Wallerstein, they
travel to Europe

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
United States Customs Service
Form No. 44-2000-1

LIST OF IN-BOUND PASSENGERS
(United States Citizens and Aliens)

Class **FIRST** from **ROTTERDAM** **SEPT. 20th** 19**49**

on S.S. **KINHOUS AMSTERDAM** arriving at port of **NEW YORK N.Y.** **SEP 28 1949**

21	Crosse Point Park Mich.	43	Belgium	1, PACK
	ELGAR Peter		298930	7 SC
	Knollwood Rd.			6 CASES
	Elmsford N.Y.		Austria	
	ELGAR Dorothy	26	299431	5 PACK
	Knollwood Rd.		Port Ches-	
	Elmsford N.Y.		ter N.Y.	
	ELGAR Dorothy	26		

Son Steven born

1951

Peter Elgar Productions formed

1952

The Impressionable Years

Producer & Director: **Peter Elgar**



Son Michael born

Elgar family travels to Bermuda

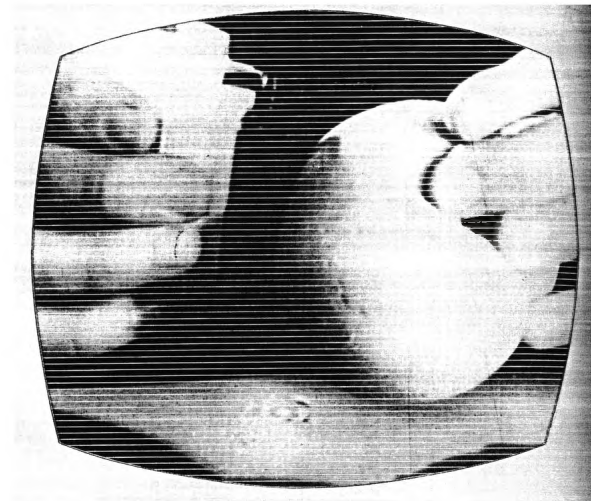
17. DUFALA	WILLIAM.
18. ELGAR	DOROTHY.
19. ELGAR	STEPHEN.
20. ELGAR	PETER.
21. ELGAR	MICHAEL.

1954

Pall Mall Commercial, March '54
First color commercial



“Peach of a Shave” aka “Peach & Brush”
Remington commercial



1954 (cont.)

“Beer Belongs”

20-minute ad for US Brewers’
Foundation

“From the Atlantic to the Pacific”

Pabst commercial

1955

Elgar makes at least three trips to England in
spring/summer.

27 HESSLER, ROBERT, L.

28 ELGAR, PETER, F.

32. ELGAR PETER F.

32. ELGAR PETER F.

Elgar Making Sterling Ads In \$500,000 Film Contract

PRODUCTION was launched last week in London by Peter Elgar Productions, New York, on what was described as “the largest tv film commercial contract yet awarded a single producer.” It covers 109 filmed commercials for Sterling Drugs Inc. to be produced at a cost of about \$500,000.

The filming will be done in England through Elgar’s international affiliates in London, Tr Film Commercials Ltd. More than 200 sets and exteriors will be used in some 470 scenes, according to Peter Elgar, president of Elgar Productions.

The contract was awarded to Elgar by Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample, New York, agency for Sterling. The commercials will be placed on a spot basis and on programs in the U. S., starting in the fall, and will promote Sterling products, including Bayer Aspirin, Philip’s Milk of Magnesia, Energine cleaning fluid and Dr. Lyon’s tooth powder.

Broadcasting, 7/18/55

1956

Peter and Dorothy Elgar divorce in
Limestone, AL

ELGAR
ELGAR
PETER F
ROBERT A
DOROTHY W
CLIBLEY

Peter embroiled in engagement scandal

HEART BALM SUIT—In Superior court here, Peter Elgar, New York television and documentary film producer, was named defendant in a \$100,000 breach of promise suit brought by Mrs. Barbara de Gumoens Denney, blonde divorcee, of Kings highway, Westport. Mrs. Denney alleges she accepted Mr. Elgar's proposal of marriage Sept. 17, 1956, and though a reasonable time has elapsed he now refuses to marry her . . .

Bridgeport Sunday Post, 12/30/56

“Telephone Store”

AT&T commercial

“Surf”

Proctor & Gamble commercial

1960

“Feel Really Clean”

Zest Soap commercial



1961

*Florida Folk Festival and Creek
and Seminole History*

23-minute film

1962

Peter marries Ruth Woods

1963

Elgar closes Peter Elgar Productions
due to declining business, joins MPO
Videotronics

Invited by Gerald Hirschfeld

1965

Peter travels to Paris to “guide
French broadcasting system on
appropriate TV commercials for
that country.”

Broadcasting, 3/65

1968

Peter Elgar dies

ELGAR—Peter F. On Feb. 20, 1968, beloved husband of Ruth Woods Elgar, devoted father of Stephen and Michael. Services at "The Abbey," Lexington Ave. and 66th St. Friday Feb. 23 at 7 P.M. In lieu of flowers contributions to the Heart Fund would be appreciated.

EMANUEL—Phyllis K. - beloved wife of Alton

New York Times, 2/23/68

Morris Mamorsky (1910-2003)

Composed and Conducted the Score
for *The Impressionable Years*



Early Career

- Member of the WPA-funded Composers' Forum-Laboratory (1935)
- Trained at Yale University School of Music (1937)
- Composer for the Bennington School of Dance (1937-1938)
- Musical Director for the Humphrey-Weidman Dance Group (1937-1938)

Radio

- Hired as a staff composer by NBC in 1940
 - *Words at War* (1943-1944)
 - *Here ' s to Youth* (January 1944-May 1944)
 - *Arthur Hopkins Presents* (April 1944-July 1944)
 - *The Eternal Light* (1945-1948)
 - Miscellaneous programs produced in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee

Television

- *The Philco Television Playhouse*
(1948-1949)
 - live dramatic series
- AT&T commercial (1956)
 - Produced by Peter Elgar

Film

- *With These Hands* (1950)
 - propaganda film for the ILGWU.
 - Cinematographer: Gerald Hirschfeld
- *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* (1950)
 - marionette film for the Protestant Radio Commission.
 - Producer: Peter Elgar

Henry Fonda - Narrator

- Break from Hollywood, 1949-1955.
- Acting on Broadway.
- Very likely rehearsing or performing *Point of No Return* on Broadway when he recorded narration for *The Impressionable Years*.
- Narrated a few other educational films in the early 1950s.



The Cast



Kathleen McDonnell



Beth



Peter

The Cast



Mario



Linda (with Kathy)



Margaret Deegan
Eileen McNiff
Rosemary Mele



Miss Schwartz

Film Status

- NYPL seems to be doing acceptable job with prints.
- One unofficial copy on VHS at NYPL.
- Copies in OCLC at NYPL, University of North Texas, California State University-Chico, and Western Cape Provincial Library Service (South Africa). NYPL has both cuts, others have 30-minute cut (on record).

Preservation Recommendations

- Improve cataloguing on file of materials on *The Impressionable Years*.
- Loose papers in a folder, historical files listed on one paper as “in closet.”
- Access