

**The New York Public Library
Rare Books Division
Arents Collection**

**Erskine Caldwell
Correspondence with
Laurence Pollinger Ltd.**

**Compiled by William Stingone
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Summary

Main Entry: Erskine Caldwell

Title: Correspondence with Laurence Pollinger Ltd., 1962-1985

Size: .6 linear feet (1-1/2 Boxes)

Source: Purchased from: Bertram Rota Ltd., March 14, 1995

Restrictions: None

Description: The Erskine Caldwell Correspondence (1962-1985) consists of the typed and autograph letters between Caldwell and his literary agent Laurence Pollinger Ltd. The correspondence primarily concerns the publication of reprints, translations, and foreign editions of Caldwell's books. The correspondence also includes letters from Virginia Caldwell to Laurence Pollinger Ltd.

Biographical Note

Erskine Caldwell, 1903-1987

Erskine Caldwell was born on December 17, 1903 in Georgia. During his life he produced more than fifty books of fiction and nonfiction, and edited the 25 volume *American Folkways Series*. He is best known for his novels *Tobacco Road*, and *God's Little Acre*. Both novels, which are set in the deep South, became objects of controversy when first published in the 1930s. Critics called the novels pornographic trash; admirers compared them to the powerful work of two other contemporary southern writers: William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams. Caldwell described his frank depiction of the plight of impoverished sharecroppers as social realism and he became known as a proletarian novelist.

After Caldwell's great success in the 1930s, in succeeding decades he began to fall out of favor with American critics, who found his later work far inferior to his earlier efforts. Ironically, during the same time Caldwell's popularity was growing as a result of the release of paperback editions of his early novels and short stories. By the early 1960s his paperback sales were so high that Caldwell became known as "the world's best-selling novelist." Also, while his work of the 1950s and 1960s went ignored in America, in Europe, particularly in France and the Soviet Union, Caldwell's new fiction continued to be critically anticipated and praised.

While Caldwell is known primarily as a novelist, almost half of Caldwell's work has been nonfiction, including travel writing and children's books. Caldwell continued to write regularly up to the end of his life, even after serious cancer surgery. In 1957 Caldwell married Virginia Moffett Fletcher, his fourth and final wife. Fletcher worked with Caldwell, managing his business affairs and illustrating several of his books. Caldwell died of lung cancer in 1987.

Laurence Pollinger Limited

Laurence Pollinger Limited, the second largest literary agency in the world, was established in 1958 by Laurence Pollinger with his two sons Gerald, who eventually became managing director of the agency, and Murray, who later started his own agency. Laurence Edward Pollinger (1897?-1976) began his 60-year career as a literary agent with Albert Curtis Brown. In 1933 he founded Pearn, Pollinger & Higham Ltd.

Pollinger was one of the first British literary agents to visit the United States and develop a working rapport with many American publishers, including Dodd Mead Morrow, New Directions, and Simon and Schuster. The agency's American clients have included Louis Bromfield, Will and Ariel Durant, James T. Farrell, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Carson McCullers, William Saroyan, Irving Stone, and Irving Wallace. Its British clients have included Richard Church, Graham Greene, John Masters, and John Cowper Powys.

Scope & Content Note

The Erskine Caldwell Correspondence (1962-1985) consist of the typed and autograph letters between Caldwell and his agent Laurence Pollinger Ltd. Most of the correspondence is with Gerald Pollinger and primarily concerns the publication of reprints, translations, and foreign editions of Caldwell's books. The papers also include letters from Virginia Caldwell to Laurence Pollinger Ltd.

Box List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1962-1975
2	1976-1985