



## **Rotoscope Collection (R1499)**

**Collection Number:** R1499

**Collection Title:** Rotoscope Collection

**Dates:** 1938-1981

**Creator:** Carney, Rowe E., Jr.

**Abstract:** The Rotoscope Collection contains the personal papers of Rowe Carney, Jr., photographs, patents, schematics and design materials, promotional material, and 35mm reels of film related to the Rotoscope. Invented by Rowe Carney, Jr. of Rolla, Missouri, and Tom Smith of Urbana, Missouri, the Rotoscope is a single camera, single projection system capable of taking and projecting a scope of 180 degrees on one reel of film. The collection also includes film scripts written by Rowe 'Doc' Carney and correspondence related to the production of two of his films.

**Collection Size:** 11 cubic feet  
(23 folders, 50 reels 35mm film)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center – Rolla](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [rolla@shsmo.org](mailto:rolla@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

**Restrictions on Use:** The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Rotoscope Collection* (R1499); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Rolla [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Rolla].

**Donor Information:** The collection was donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Gene Carney on March 8, 2018 (Accession No. RA1661).

**Processed by:** Processed by Kathleen Seale, April 30, 2018

**Historical Note:**

Rowe Carney, Sr., also known as Doc, was born in January 1892, to George Carney and Agnes Dyer Carney. Doc Carney had business interest in and owned several theaters in Phelps County, Missouri. Starting in the 1940s, he worked on a series of film scripts based in Phelps County, Missouri. One film, *Redemption*, was partially filmed in Arlington, Missouri. Doc purchased the town of Arlington in 1946 for \$10,000 and used the town as the setting for two of his film scripts. He intended to enlarge and run Arlington as a resort location, but the area was prone to flooding and he could not secure financial backing. Towards the mid-1950s Doc's interest in film production waned leading to him selling his 35mm camera to his son Rowe Carney, Jr.

Rowe Carney, Jr. was born August 1924, in Rolla, Missouri. Rowe grew up working in his father's theaters and worked as a film projectionist while serving in the United States Army during World War II. After returning home in 1945, Rowe took over the management of the Carney family theaters in Rolla, Missouri. In 1953, Rowe travelled to New York to see the premier of *Cinerama*. Inspired by the invention Rowe set out to make a more efficient and cost effective widescreen production. Rowe soon hired a fellow projectionist, Tom Smith. Smith was the owner of a drive-in movie theater. Smith had designed and built the first auto-scope drive-in theater in Urbana, Missouri. Over the next five years, the two men experimented and tinkered with mirrors and lenses to a camera attachment capable of recording a 180-degree view on to a single reel of 35mm film, a projector attachment capable of projecting the film, and a curved screen on which to project the film. In 1958, Rowe Carney and Tom Smith began converting the Rollamo Theatre to accommodate the large curved screen and projection booth required to show the Rotoscope film. The first public showing was May 13, 1961, at the Rollamo Theatre in Rolla, Missouri. The men applied for patents, first in the United States in 1958, followed by countries in Europe, Asia, and South America.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following six series:

- Correspondence
- Promotional
- Photographs
- Film Scripts
- Rotoscope
- Audiovisual

**Scope and Content Note:****Correspondence**

This series contains the correspondence of both Rowe Carney, Sr. and Rowe Carney, Jr. Carney, Sr.'s correspondence focuses on his film scripts and filming of his movies *Redemption* and *Arlington Secret*. The correspondence are separated by family member and organized chronologically. There are letters between Carney, Sr. and George Merrick, a Hollywood film director, who came to Missouri and filmed shots in Arlington, Missouri. Carney, Jr.'s correspondence focuses on the operation of the family owned theaters and his work on creating and promoting the Rotoscope.

## Promotional

This series consists of advertisements for shows at the different theaters owned by the Carney family. There are also promotional materials from the first official showing of the Rotoscope, that took place in Rolla, Missouri, at the Rollamo Theatre in 1961. These materials include ticket stubs, flyers, and newspaper advertisements.

## Photographs

The photograph series contains images of creation, testing, and promoting of the Rotoscope. There are also photographs of director George Merrick on set in Arlington at the filming of the short film *Redemption*.

## Film Scripts

This series consists of film scripts created by Rowe 'Doc' Carney. The story lines contain pioneer and Civil War era themes of Phelps County. The Carney and Smith script was a short film written by Rowe Carney, Jr. and Tom Smith to be filmed using the Rotoscope. Portions of that movie can be found on film reel 20.

## Rotoscope

This series contains the experiment notes, schematics, and patent information for the Rotoscope camera attachment, projector attachment, and film screen. The patents include three separate patents for the screen, camera attachment, and projector attachment of the Rotoscope. Rowe Carney and Tom Smith obtained patents in the United States, Italy, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany, Brazil, France, Spain, Canada and Japan.

## Audiovisual

This series contains the Rotoscopes films produced by Rowe Carney, Jr. and Tom Smith. The 35mm films included scenes from the Missouri State Fair, Illinois State Fair, Rolla street views, Route 66, Jefferson City, and St. Louis, Missouri. A number of the reels are simply test shots where Carney and Smith worked on camera and lens angles, lighting, and camera movement. Reels 14 and 15 were not shot with the Rotoscope lens, but as regular 35mm film. Some of the reels are duplicate scenes that Carney and Smith had sent off to be developed into positive film. Reels 1-14 and 17-48 have been digitized. The films were organized by the donor and have been kept in their original order.

## Container List:

f. 1-3		Correspondence
Box 001	f. 1	Rotoscope promotional, 1958-1968
	f. 2	Rowe Carney, Sr., 1946-1970
	f. 3	<i>Arlington Secret</i> , 1938-1953
f. 4-8		Promotional
	f. 4	Newspaper articles, 1958-1963
	f. 5	Vaudeville at the Uptown Theatre, no date
	f. 6	Rotoscope, 1960s
	f. 7	Movie guides, 1953-1965

- f. 8 Rotoscope demo film strips, 1958-1961
- f. 9-13 Photographs
  - f. 9 Rotoscope equipment, 1958-1960s
  - f. 10 Screen in theater, 1958
  - f. 11 Test film shots, 1953-1961
  - f. 12 George Merrick filming *Redemption*, circa 1947
  - f. 13 Promotional viewing, 1961
- f. 14-19 Film scripts
  - f. 14 Script agreement, 1947
  - f. 15 *Arlington Secret* script and proposal, 1946
  - f. 16 Carney and Smith script, no date
  - Box 002 f. 17 *Desperado's Decision* script, 1957
  - f. 18 *Redemption* script, 1957
  - f. 19 *Bushwhacker: A True History of Bill Wilson, Missouri's greatest desperado*, by George Clinton Arthur, 1938
- f. 20-23 Rotoscope
  - f. 20 Schematics and design, 1959-1961
  - f. 21 Film data, 1958-1961
  - f. 22 Patents, 1958-1981
  - f. 23 Film inventory
- r. 1-50 Audiovisual, Reel 35mm film, 1961
  - r. 1 Demo reel, A1, 1961
  - r. 2 Demo reel, A2, 1961
  - r. 3 Missouri State Fair, 'Comet' roller coaster; Rolla, Missouri, 1959-1961
  - r. 4 Trip on the Mississippi River, 1961
  - r. 5 Ed Peacock steam engine show, 1961
  - r. 6 Shafer's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Show, 1961
  - r. 7 Illinois State Fair, 1961
  - r. 8 Alton Drag Races, *Goldenrod, Admiral* showboats; Forest Park Highlands, 1961
  - r. 9 Demonstration footage, 1961
  - r. 10 Test footage, Rolla, Missouri, 1958
  - r. 11 Vichy airport, Mississippi River run; 'Comet' roller coaster; Rolla, Missouri, 1959
  - r. 12 Gooding's Million Dollar Midway, 1959
  - r. 13 Rolla, Missouri, 1958
  - r. 14 Lake of the Ozarks, no date
  - r. 15 Rodeo Pageant, no date [not rotoscope]
  - r. 16 Short subject, 1952 [not rotoscope]
  - r. 17 Roller coaster at Forest Park Highlands, no date
  - r. 18 Rolla, Missouri; Missouri School of Mines; Illinois State Fair, no date
  - r. 19 Tugboat *Eagle* on the Mississippi; Missouri School of Mines, no date
  - r. 20 Carney and Smith production, 1959
  - r. 21 Rolla, Missouri, Route 66, 1958
  - r. 22 Plane ride, Vichy, Missouri, no date

r. 23	Rolla, Missouri; Missouri State Fair, no date
r. 24	Rolla, Missouri, 1958
r. 25	Steamship <i>Avalon</i> , 1961
r. 26	F-stop tests, no date
r. 27	Practice pans near Arlington, Missouri, no date
r. 28	Steam engine show; Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy, 1961
r. 29	Missouri State Fair, 1961
r. 30	Illinois State Fair, 1961
r. 31	Jefferson City, Missouri, 1958
r. 32	St. Louis, Missouri, 1959
r. 33	Focus tests, no date
r. 34	Uptown Theatre; plane ride at Vichy Airport, no date
r. 35	Ed Peacock Steam Engine Show; <i>Admiral</i> , <i>Avalon</i> , Highway Gardens, no date
r. 36	Airplane ride; Jefferson City; Missouri River bridge, no date
r. 37	Lake of the Ozarks, no date
r. 38	Gooding's Millions Dollar Midway, 1959
r. 39	Rolla, Missouri, 1960
r. 40	Slate tests at Lake of the Ozarks, no date
r. 41	Illinois State Fair, 1961
r. 42	St. Louis, Missouri, 1960
r. 43	<i>Admiral</i> showboat, no date
r. 44	Camera pan tests, no date
r. 45	Uptown Theatre, 1966
r. 46	Slate tests at Uptown Theatre, no date
r. 47	Rolla, Missouri, no date
r. 48	Dykes (Dixie) farm, no date
r. 49	Sound track and picture, no date
r. 50	United States Marines, no date

**Index:**

Index Term	Folder	Image	Mediums
Arlington (Mo.)	3-4, 12, 15		r. 27
Berry, Garvin	3, 17-18		
Carney, Rowe E., Jr.	1, 4-7, 20-22		r. 1-48
Carney, Rowe E., Jr.	9-10, 13	Yes	
Carney, Bob	8, 13	Yes	
Carney, Rowe "Doc," 1892-1971	2-3, 6, 14-15, 18		r. 10
Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York	1		
Hubbard, Tom	2-3, 6, 14, 18		
Hughes, Howard, 1905-1976	1		
Jefferson City (Mo.)	4, 11,	Yes	r.1-2, 31, 36
Merrick, George M.	3		
Merrick, George M.	12	Yes	

Index Term	Folder	Image	Mediums
Missouri University of Science and Technology	1		r. 1, 18-19, 28
Rolla (Mo.)	1, 4-7, 9-11	Yes	r. 1-3, 9-10, 13, 18-19, 21, 24, 28, 34, 39, 45-47
Rollamo Theatre (Rolla, Mo.)	1, 4-7, 10, 13	Yes	
Sanford H. Dickinson Inc.	1, 3		
Smith, Tom Field	1, 4, 8, 20-22		r. 1-48
Smith, Tom Field	9-11, 13	Yes	
St. Louis (Mo.)	1		r. 1-4, 8, 17, 19, 42
Symington, Stuart (1901-1988)	1		
United States Highway 66		Yes	r. 1, 9, 21
Uptown Theatre (Rolla, Mo.)	1, 5		
Time Warner, Inc.	1		