

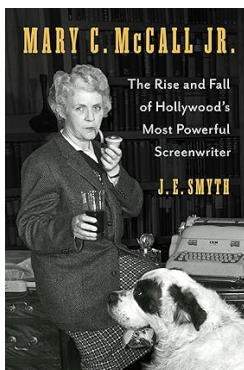
Hollywood: Her Story December 2024 ENewsletter Early Movers and Shakers of the Screen Writers Guild

Professionals often gather with people within their occupation for networking and professional development and screenwriters for the film industry are no different. As is also often the case, these organizations go through phases and sometimes cease to exist for a while or reconfigure themselves. This is particularly true for the film industry which grew from infancy in the 1910s to maturity in the 1930s and 1940s. Let's learn a little about the history of the Screen Writers Guild and some key women along the way.

The Photoplay Author's League was founded in 1914 in Los Angeles to promote photoplays and increase the professionalization associated with them. It was in existence for two years. The Author's League, which had been established in New York in 1912 to address needs of writers for the theater industry centered in New York City, formed a Dramatists branch to address the needs of writers for the film industry now centered on the West Coast. The writers in Hollywood established the Screen Writers Guild (SWG) in 1920. The Screen Writers Guild also had a social arm called The Writers Club. From 1927 to 1933, the SWG was inactive. It was revitalized in 1933. Today it is named the Writers Guild of America.



Silent film era writer and editor **Mary H. (Hamilton) O'Connor** was a key figure during almost all of the early history of SWG and predecessor organizations. She served on the board of directors of the Photoplay Author's League. When the SWG was founded in 1920, she was elected First Vice President. O'Connor also served as the organizer of The Writers Club. She was also the primary shareholder of the company under which the SWG did business, The Las Palmas and Sunset Corporation. In 1923, the SWG and The Writers Club officially split into two independent organizations. O'Connor served on the board of directors of The Writers Club. Her personal archive, which includes play and event programs during the period of 1921-1935 as well as business and financial documents, is available at the Writers Guild Foundation Library in Los Angeles.



Screenwriter **Mary McCall, Jr.** was a charter member of the Screen Writers' Guild when it was revitalized in 1933. She was also the first woman president serving from 1942 to 1944 and then from 1951 to 1952. In 1962, she became the first recipient of the Guild's Valentine Davies Award which recognizes members of the organization who bring honor and dignity to writers everywhere through their service to the entertainment industry and to the community at large. In 1985, she received the Guild's Edmund H. North Award which is presented to members "whose courageous leadership, strength of purpose and continuing selfless activity on behalf of the Guild through the years, as well as professional achievement of the highest order, have served to establish the Writers Guild of America as a pillar of strength and security for writers throughout the world."

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

Jill S. Tietjen and Barbara Bridges

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