

Sam Hellman: The Man Who Started it All  
by Danya Shaikh

In 1885 Samuel Hellman, St. Louis Writers Guild's first president, was born in San Francisco, California, and then later moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he married Selma Schwartz. He was among six co-founders of St. Louis Writers Guild. In 1920, when the organization got its start, Hellman was the managing editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* as well as a freelance fiction writer. As one of the most successful of founders, he later gained international fame as a screenplay writer.

Though little is known about his full life story, Hellman did produce an abundant number of films that he wrote or co-wrote, including one, *Slave Ship*, that was co-authored with William Faulkner. Hellman was an established writer for Fox Studios beginning in the 1920s and survived the 1935 matriculation of Fox Studios into 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, seizing the opportunity to move forward with other big names in the movie industry. In the 1940s, he switched to Warner Bros., where he co-wrote films such as *Doughgirls* (1945) and *The Horn Blows at Midnight* (1945).

Following his passions, Hellman was able to continue writing through the Great Depression, unlike many other writers. Hellman's screenplays were uplifting, adventurous, and entertaining. The stories he wrote contained a range of characters, from the "common, everyday man" to the wild spirit traveling through Africa (*Stanley and Livingstone*, 1939). Their moods and tones allowed people to escape from reality, revealing that Hellman wrote to make people happy.

Hellman wrote for many notable actors. Among his most cheerful scripts are films that starred Shirley Temple, one of the most popular actresses of her era. He collaborated on numerous Shirley Temple hits including *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Captain January*. He also wrote for Will Rogers (*The County Chairman*, 1935), Spencer Tracy (*It's a Small World*, 1935), and the Ritz Brothers (*The Three Musketeers*, 1939), and other major Hollywood names including John Carradine, Jane Darwell, Guy Kibbee, and Donald Meek.

Sam Hellman's daughter, Verna Hellman Fields, was also successful in Hollywood as a sound editor.

St. Louis Writers Guild is proud of Samuel Hellman and the contributions he made to St. Louis and the world of film. His elevating screenplays helped Americans get through some of the roughest times in U.S. history. Although he passed away on August 11, 1950, the scripts he authored remain a tribute to this St. Louis author.

Filmography of Samuel Hellman  
(1920's-1950's)

1. Powder River (1953) (writer)
2. Sorrowful Jones (1949) (adaptation)
3. Pirates of Monterey (1947) (writer)
4. My Darling Clementine (1946) (story) ... a.k.a John Ford's My Darling Clementine (USA: complete title)
5. The Dark Horse (1946) (story)
6. The Runaround (1946) (writer)
7. The Horn Blows at Midnight (1945) (writer)
8. The Doughgirls (1944) (writer)
9. Shine on Harvest Moon (1944) (screenplay)
10. The Return of Frank James (1940) (original screenplay)
11. He Married His Wife (1940) (screenplay)
12. Day-Time Wife (1939) (contributor to screenplay) (uncredited)
13. Here I Am a Stranger (1939) (writer)
14. Stanley and Livingstone (1939) (historical research and story outline)
15. Frontier Marshal (1939) (screenplay)
16. The Three Musketeers (1939) (screenplay) ... a.k.a The Singing Musketeer (UK)
17. We're Going to Be Rich (1938) (writer)
18. The Baroness and the Butler (1938) (screenplay)
19. Slave Ship (1937) (writer)
20. Reunion (1936) (writer)
21. Poor Little Rich Girl (1936) (writer)
22. Captain January (1936) (writer)
23. A Message to Garcia (1936) (writer)
24. In Old Kentucky (1935) (writer)
25. Two-Fisted (1935) (writer)
26. The Daring Young Man (1935) (writer)
27. It's a Small World (1935) (writer)
28. George White's 1935 Scandals (1935) (contributing to treatment) (uncredited) (story) (uncredited) ... a.k.a George White's Scandals
29. The Lottery Lover (1935) (writer)
30. The County Chairman (1935) (writer)
31. Little Miss Marker (1934) (screenplay) ... a.k.a The Girl in Pawn (UK)
32. Murder at the Vanities (1934) (dialogue)
33. Thirty Day Princess (1934) (adaptation)
34. Good Dame (1934) (writer)... a.k.a Good Girl (UK)
35. Search for Beauty (1934) (dialogue)
36. Casey at the Bat (1927) (titles)
37. A Kiss in a Taxi (1927) (titles)
38. Fighting Hearts (1926) (writer)

39. Flying Fists (1924) (writer)

\*Taken from [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)

#### References

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