

## Guide to the **Wharton Studios Collection**

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### **Collection Number V-1-5-10**

Updated 2020

#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

This collection documents the significant contributions the Wharton brothers, Theodore and Leopold, made to the silent film industry in Ithaca from 1912 to 1921.

The origin story of Ithaca's silent film era begins on Cornell's campus in 1912 when Theodore Wharton, visiting from Essanay Studios in Chicago, filmed a Cornell football game. With his brother, Leopold Wharton, Theodore returned to Ithaca the next year and set up a studio at Renwick Park (now Stewart Park) in 1915. Throughout their time in Ithaca, the Wharton brothers made numerous films, some singles and some serials, such as the well-received series – *The Exploits of Elaine* – starring Pearl White. *The Eagle's Eye* was one of the Wharton brothers' last major serials, described as political propaganda. For a number of reasons, the Wharton brothers eventually left Ithaca in 1921. Their departure marked the end of an era that was beloved by many community members, including Cornell students and local Ithacans – such as Howard Cody who is highlighted in folder 4 – who were involved in various facets of the filmmaking process. Despite the end, Ithaca has maintained a fascination and appreciation for the silent film era, which is evidenced by the numerous articles retrospectively written in publications such as the *Ithaca Times* and *Cornell Alumni News Magazine*. In addition, Cornell professor and history scholar, Walter Stainton produced a large body of work that preserves the historical facts of the time and describes the Wharton brothers' filmmaking process, which is showcased in folder 3. In 2020, noted film scholar, Barbara Tapa Lupack wrote *Silent Serial Sensations: The Wharton Brothers and the Magic of Early Cinema*, which offers an excellent general survey of the Wharton brothers' work in Ithaca. This book will be added to The History Center library collection later in 2020.

## CONTAINER LIST

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Folder</i>
Pamphlets, Articles, Programs (1940s – 1990s)	1
Newspaper Articles/Clippings and Obituaries (1940s – 2015)	2
Walter Stainton's Work (1950 – 1976)	3
Articles (1929) and Correspondences featuring Howard Cody (1951, 1973)	4
Research Notes, Dewitt Historical Society Newsletters (1966, 1995), Lease (1915)	5
Miscellaneous Items: Wharton Letterhead, Calendar (1989), Seals (1914), Postcards	6
<i>Ithaca Journal</i> Notes, 1913 – 1919	7
<i>Ithaca Journal</i> Notes, 1913 – 1919 (duplicate of folder 7)	8