

Virginia Lee Burton papers, circa 1954-1962
FLP.CLRC.BURTON

Finding aid prepared by Lindsay Friedman

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Free Library of Philadelphia: Children's Literature Research Collection
2011.02.4
1901 Vine Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19103
215-696-5370

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Summary Information

Repository	Free Library of Philadelphia: Children's Literature Research Collection
Creator - Artist	Burton, Virginia Lee, 1909-1968
Title	Virginia Lee Burton papers
Date [inclusive]	circa 1954-1962
Extent	12.5 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	This collection consists of sketches, artwork, illustrations, dummies, galleys, typescripts, and color separations created by Virginia Lee Burton for the book <i>Life Story</i> (1962).

Preferred Citation note

[Description and date of item], [Box and folder number], Virginia Lee Burton papers, 1954-1962, Free Library of Philadelphia, Children's Literature Research Collection.

Biographical/Historical note

Virginia Lee Burton was born in Newton Center, Massachusetts, on August 30, 1909 to Lena Dalkeith Yates, a poet and artist, and Alfred Burton, an engineer. The family moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, in 1920, and in 1925 Burton's parents divorced. After high school, Burton studied art and dance in San Francisco, but her ballet career ended in 1928 when she moved back to Massachusetts to take care of her father. In 1930, she enrolled in a drawing class taught by George Demetrios at Boston Museum School. They were married less than a year later, on March 28, 1931. Their first son, Aristides Burton Demetrios, was born on February 17, 1932. The family settled in Folly Cove, the northernmost part of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and their second son, Michael Burton Demetrios, was born on August 30, 1936.

Burton began writing children's books to entertain her sons. Her first book, *Jonnifer Lint*, was about a piece of dust. It was rejected by thirteen publishers and the reason became clear when she tried to read the story to her 3-year-old son Aris, who fell asleep. Her first illustration work was a commission by the publisher Houghton Mifflin Company to provide the artwork for *Sad-Faced Boy* (1937) by Arna Bontemps. Shortly afterward, *Choo Choo: The Story of a Little Engine Who Ran Away* (1937) became the first published book that Burton both wrote and illustrated. Burton received the Caldecott Medal and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award for *Little House* (1942). Other well-known works by Burton include *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* (1939), *Calico, the Wonder Horse* (1941), *Katy and the Big Snow* (1943), and *Maybelle, the Cable Car* (1952).

It would be ten years before Burton published her final book, *Life Story* (1962). Returning to some of the themes and design of *Little House*, Burton tells the tale of life at its inception through an illustrated stage play. The acts and scenes are narrated by a cast of characters including an astronomer, a geologist, a paleontologist, a historian, a grandmother, and Burton herself. Burton researched the text at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Her attention to detail is evident in all of her books, but none more so than *Life Story*. The final pages depict the last twenty-five years of her life in Folly Cove, where she lived until passing away on October 15, 1968 at the age of fifty-nine.

Bibliography

Children's Literature Review, vol. 11, 32.

Something About the Author, vol. 100, 42.

"Virginia Lee Burton," Wikipedia, accessed October 12, 2010, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Lee_Burton.

Elleman, Barbara. *Virginia Lee Burton : A Life in Art*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Scope and Contents note

This collection contains sketchbooks, preliminary sketches, final illustrations, dummies, galleys, typescripts, and color separations for *Life Story* written and illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton. The collection consists primarily of sketches, drawings, and illustrations.

Burton pinned her initial watercolor sketches to her studio walls, and the sketches still have pinholes, bearing witness to her working methods. The six sketchbooks consist of handwritten drafts and drawings, many of which were made at the American Museum of Natural History. Further evidence of Burton's artistic technique can be found in the preliminary artwork, which consists of multiple versions of each page, some on small scraps of papers and others on oversized board. The earlier scenes were much more extensively reworked than the later scenes, of which there are far fewer iterations.

Each dummy is a bound volume containing sketches and drawings of the final artwork. Color separations are for the textual pages only and suffer from vinegar syndrome. (Please consult Curator regarding use.) The final artwork consists of the finished illustrations that appeared in the published addition. Altogether, the collection outlines the evolution of the project at each stage, and provides a valuable record of Burton's creative process. This collection does not contain any correspondence regarding the book.

Arrangement note

This collection is arranged in eight series: I. Sketchbooks and notes; II. Ideas not pursued; III. Preliminary artwork; IV. Dummies; V. Typescript and galley proof; VI. Final artwork; VII. Color separations; VIII. First published edition.

Within each subseries, materials are arranged in probable order of creation.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Free Library of Philadelphia: Children's Literature Research Collection 2011.02.4

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open to researchers by appointment. Please contact the Curator for information on access.

Conditions Governing Use note

The right of access to material does not imply the right of publication. Permission for reprinting, reproduction, or extensive quotation from the rare books, manuscripts, prints, or drawings must be obtained through written application, stating the use to be made of the material. The reader bears the responsibility for any possible infringement of copyright laws in the publication of such material. A reproduction fee will be charged if the material is to be reproduced in a commercial publication.

Some of the materials in this collection may be too fragile for use without the Curator's supervision.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gift of Virginia Lee Burton, 1968.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Boston Public Library: Alice M. Jordan Collection, Special Collections.

Boston Public Library: Drawings for Children's Books Collection, Print Department.

Cape Ann Museum: Virginia Lee Burton, Archive Collection, #A00.

San Francisco Public Library: Jane Hart Collection on Book Design, Book Arts & Special Collections.

Sawyer Free Library: *Katy and the Big Snow* art originals.

University of Minnesota: Virginia Lee Burton papers, 1942-1962, CLRC-10.

University of Oregon: Virginia Lee Burton Papers, 1937-1962, AX839.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- Color separations
- Drawings (visual works)
- Dummies (printed matter)
- Galley proofs
- Illustrations
- Sketchbooks
- Sketches
- Typescripts

Personal Name(s)

- Burton, Virginia Lee, 1909-1968

Subject(s)

- Children's authors--20th century
- Children's literature--20th century
- Illustrated children's books--20th century
- Illustration of books--20th century

Bibliography

This collection is referenced in Barbara Elleman's *Virginia Lee Burton: A Life in Art* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Sketchbooks and notes

Collection Inventory

Sketchbooks and notes

General note

Includes three handwritten notes identifying the sketchbooks which were drawn from observations at the Museum of Natural History. These notes may have been written by an assistant to Ms. Burton.

Preliminary sketches, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink, 30 sheets

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	1

Co-Mo small sketchbook, graphite and pen and ink, 34 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	2

Small sketchbook, graphite, pen and ink, and watercolor, 60 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	3

Ideas not pursued

Top spiral sketchbook, graphite, pen and ink, and watercolor, 56 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	4

Bond Pad, graphite, pen and ink, and watercolor, 26 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	5

Green sketchbook, graphite and pen and ink, 200 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	6

Black sketchbook, graphite and pen and ink, 314 pages

	Box	Volume
Graphic materials	1	7

Ideas not pursued

General note

Preliminary artwork

This series was labeled "Ideas not pursued" by Ms. Burton or her assistant.

Manuscript and typescript drafts, 3 sheets

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	9	1-3

Preliminary sketches, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 19 sheets

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	9 and 14	4-21

Preliminary artwork

Box

2, 3,
and 14

Title page and preliminaries, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 59 sheets

4

Prologue, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 32 sheets

5 and 6

Act I, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 86 sheets

7 and 14

Act II, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 88 sheets

Dummies

8

Act III, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 50 sheets

Act IV, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 11 sheets

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	9	22-32

Act V, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper and board, 16 sheets

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	9	33-48

Closing end papers, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on board, 6 sheets

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	9 and 14	49-53

Dummies

Master dummy, graphite on paper with text pasted in, 83 pages 1960

	Box	Folder
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Typescript and galley proof

Graphic materials	10	4
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Color dummy, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on paper, 84 pages

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	10	5

Typescript and galley proof

Corrected typescript

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	10	1

Type specimens

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	10	2

Corrected galley proofs

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	10	3

Color separations

Color separations**Box**

11

Page 3, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 5, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 7, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 9, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 11, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 13, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 15, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 17, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 19, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

11

Page 21, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets

Color separations

Page 23, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 25, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 27, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 29, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 31, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 33, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 35, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 37, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 39, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 41, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 43, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 45, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11

Color separations

Page 47, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 49, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 51, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 53, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 55, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 57, yellow color separation, 1 sheet	11
Page 59, yellow color separation, 1 sheet	11
Page 61, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 63, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 65, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Page 67, grey and yellow color separations, 2 sheets	11
Endpapers, grey and yellow color separations, 4 sheets	11

Final artwork

Final artwork

Box

Cover, gouache on board	14
Front endpapers, gouache and pen and ink on board	14
Title page, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Copyright page, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Program page 1, gouache on board	12
Program page 2/4, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Program page 3/5, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 1, pen and ink with on paper	12
Page 2, gouache and pen and ink and on board	12
Page 3, gouache and pen and ink on paper	12

Final artwork

Page 4, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 5, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 6, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 7, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 8, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 9, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 10, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 11, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 12, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 13, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 14, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 15, pen and ink on paper	12

Final artwork

Page 16, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 17, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 18, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 19, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 20, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 21, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 22, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 23, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 24, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 25, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 26, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 27, pen and ink on paper	12

Final artwork

Page 28, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 29, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 30, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 31, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 32, gouache and pen and ink on board	12
Page 33, pen and ink on paper	12
Page 34, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 35, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 36, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 37, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 38, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 39, pen and ink on paper	13

Final artwork

Page 40, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 41, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 42, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 43, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 44, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 45, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 46, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 47, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 48, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 49, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 50, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 51, pen and ink on paper	13

Final artwork

Page 52, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 53, gouache and pen and ink on paper	13
Page 54, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 55, gouache and pen and ink on paper	13
Page 56, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 57, gouache and pen and ink on paper	13
Page 58, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 59, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 60, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 61, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 62, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 63, pen and ink on paper	13

First published edition

Page 64, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 65, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 66, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 67, pen and ink on paper	13
Page 68, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Page 69, gouache on board	13
Page 70, gouache and pen and ink on board	13
Closing endpapers, pen and ink on paper, 2 sheets	13
Separated text, 48 sheets	13
Scope and Contents note	
Printed text separated from original illustrations. This is cut-up galley text that was originally taped to final art and has become separated. Text for page 69 is missing.	
First published edition 1962	Box
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