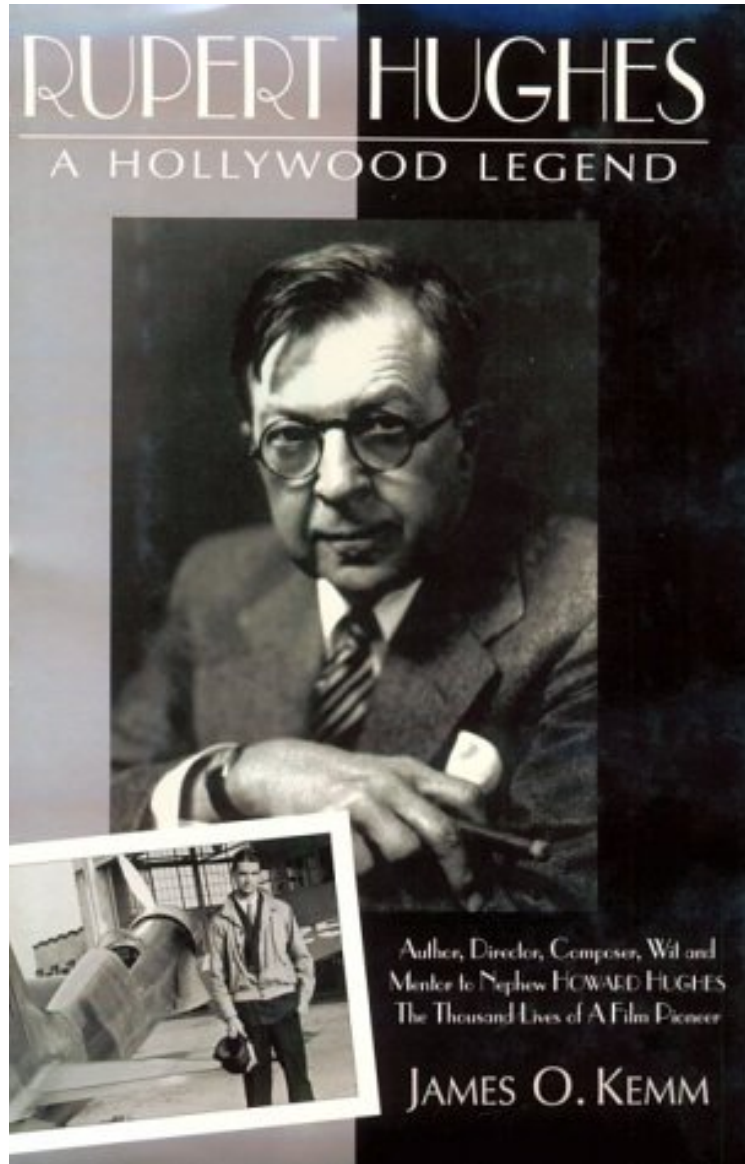


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## Rupert Hughes: A Hollywood Legend

*James O. Kemm*

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**James O. Kemm : Rupert Hughes: A Hollywood Legend** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rupert Hughes: A Hollywood Legend:

Rupert Hughes, A Hollywood Legend, explores the life of the film pioneer, author, screenwriter, film director,

composer, soldier, network radio commentator, wit and self-described "poor uncle of a rich nephew." As uncle and mentor to the enigmatic Howard Hughes, Jr., Rupert's role lends new intrigue to the legendary "missing will" and ensuing family debate. Branded an iconoclast, the elder Hughes was involved in countless controversies, including a furor over his 3-volume biography depicting George Washington as a human being rather than an idol. A strong opponent of censorship and a pioneer advocate of women's rights, Hughes urged reforms in working conditions, and divorce laws. One of his more than 50 books, (made into a silent motion picture) helped bring about the observance of Mother's Day. But his personal life rivaled the turbulence of his famous nephew's: of his three marriages, the first ended in a much-publicized divorce; his second wife committed suicide, and his third wife died of an overdose of sleeping pills.

From Kirkus a tediously enthusiastic biography of a once celebrated man of letters. The career and subsequent eclipse of Rupert Hughes (1872-1956) is further proof that, in literature at least, it is extremely rare for one to be both prolific and great. Hughes had an enormous, even compulsive need to create--writing dozens of novels, short stories, biographies, patriotic screeds that no one reads anymore; scripting, even directing, scores of silent and talkie films that now go unwatched; composing music that is never listened to. He even cranked out the occasional unmuseumed sculpture. In his own time, he was enormously successful and the tag "story by Rupert Hughes" was once a significant draw for both films and magazines. Today, he is remembered, if at all, as an uncle of billionaire Howard Hughes. In his dull and thorough way, Kemm, a retired journalist and distant cousin of Hughes's, tries to make the case that posterity has been unfair to "one of the most remarkable persons in the history of American literature and in the patriotic life of the nation." But the plot of every Hughes work he recounts seems worse than the last, and all the quotes and excerpts sound clumsy and wooden. Both Hughes and Kemm share an uncanny gift for using the next-best word. Kemm claims that Hughes led an interesting life, but apart from some mildly controversial opinionizing on subjects such as God, divorce, and George Washington, some late-life ratting out of film-industry communists, and a little home-front soldiery in both world wars, it was mainly scribble, scribble, scribble. History's verdicts are often unfair, but despite Kemm's best, belabored efforts to resurrect Cousin Rupert's reputation, he's arguing a losing case. (30 bw photos) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. A solidly researched biography of one of the most popular literary figures of his time. -- Rudy Behlmer, author of *Memo From David O. Selznick; Inside Warner Bros., and Behind the Scenes: The Making of . . .* It's very different, now, in what used to be known as the Film Colony. The pioneers have all gone to that great movie studio in the sky, and enduring legends attach only to players (Pickford, Valentine,) and directors (Griffith, Lubitsch) and producers (Goldwyn, Thalberg), and never to authors, particularly to those who "wrote" for the silent screen. However, Rupert Hughes in his own time was a legend, deservedly so. He is now so thoroughly forgotten that a full-scale biography of his arrives as a major surprise. . . He was a self-described "poor uncle of a rich nephew" and the nephew by the name of Howard Hughes was rich indeed, but Rupert Hughes never was poor. He cut a gaudy figure, not only in formative movieland but on the national literary scene. Rupert of the Hughes class was a popular novelist, secured by Sam Goldwyn as one of his "Famous Authors for Famous Pictures" . . . Hughes' nonfiction may not deserve its present neglect. *City of Angels* is a captivating portrait of Los Angeles in 1941, and his three-volume biography of George Washington is far more readable than Douglas Southall Freeman's celebrated five-volume account, and it may be more valuable. The Hughes study of Washington was a literary controversy of the Roaring '20s. Rather than viewing the father of our country as an icon, Hughes depicted him as a human being with discernible flaws who married the widow Martha Custis for her money. James Kemm's reportage on "the Washington furor" is the most interesting aspect . . . -- Larry Swindell, Books Editor; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Rupert Hughes helped invent the movies as we know them . . . In his glory days from the 'teens through the 1920s, 30s and into the 40s, Rupert Hughes was a name to conjure with: a prodigiously prolific writer of fiction, later a producer-director . . . Now he has been largely forgotten--until James Kemm's well-researched and admiring biography arrived to remind us of his creative achievements. -- Charles Champlin, Author of *George Lucas: The Creative Impulse* Rupert Hughes' life has been far too little appreciated. . . Any new biography which sheds light on his life is well worth careful scrutiny. (Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.) -- Samuel Goldwyn, Jr. The rediscovery of Rupert Hughes is long overdue! -- John Ahouse, Curator, American Literature University of Southern California About the Author James O. Kemm, born in 1921, is a retired newspaperman and public relations executive (petroleum) who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Kemm, a University of Missouri journalism graduate, taught journalism at Rider College and worked as a newspaperman in Springfield, Missouri. He is a past president of the the Oklahoma Historical Society. He conducted extensive research for this book at the University of Southern California, Yale, Princeton, the University of Iowa, and has interviewed scores of persons who knew Rupert Hughes. He and his wife, Betty Ann, have raised three daughters in Tulsa.