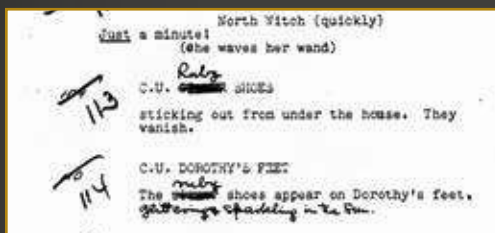


A TALE OF TWO SLIPPERS

In the Land of Oz there's just one pair of magic shoes, worn by Dorothy Gale. But in the Land of Hollywood there are multiple pairs of ruby slippers, all worn by Judy Garland in MGM's classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. One of those pairs is now publically offered for the first time.

This is the remarkable true story of Michael Shaw's ruby slippers, if Hollywood screenwriters had dreamed it up they'd be accused of fantastic fabrication. It's a complicated tale of provenance, fascinating in detail, with more twists and turns than the Yellow Brick Road.



The trail begins in May, 1938, when Oz script doctor Noel Langley changes the color of Dorothy's magic shoes from silver to ruby, most likely because MGM boss Louis B. Mayer doesn't want black & white shoes in his big dollar Technicolor movie.

When the color change is made MGM's star wardrobe designer, Gilbert Adrian, creates the red sequined shoes that will become Judy Garland's ruby slippers, the Holy Grail of all Hollywood memorabilia.

Multiple pairs are made—typical of any production involving important costumes when a busted seam or heel could halt filming—but exactly how many pairs remains a mystery. At least four pairs are known to exist today and, because of advances in high definition technology, we know with reasonable certainty which pairs are worn in specific scenes.

WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD

During principal photography, between October 1938 and March 1939, Michael Shaw's ruby slippers are visibly identifiable in more scenes than any other pairs worn in the film. Some are big scenes, including several memorable close-ups. But there's a big twist to this claim.

After production wraps, the multiple pairs of slippers and most of Adrian's unique Oz specific costumes are deemed impossible to use again and are consigned to MGM's version of deep storage. And there they remain with no one giving a whit about them for the next three decades.

THE MGM AUCTION



Cut to 1969. The old studio system is crumbling under the thumb of Wall Street. MGM is sold in its entirety to Los Angeles financier Kirk Kerkorian. He doesn't care about Hollywood history. He wants the studio for the land he intends to flip into a vast condominium development to fund a lavish casino and resort empire in Las Vegas. But first he has to clear out the entire contents of the studio's four immense back lots.

For a paltry \$1.5 million veteran liquidator and auctioneer David Weisz buys everything stored there, including actual ships, trains, tanks, aircraft, cars, furniture, props and costumes from 50 years of filmmaking. Weisz knows what to do with most of the properties, but he knows nothing about the enormous collection of costumes.

THE KEEPER OF THE SHOES



Enter Kent Warner. The 25 year old New York transplant is an avid fan of the Golden Age of Hollywood, a veritable encyclopedia of movie knowledge with a keen eye for the most important pieces of wardrobe in all of Hollywood's greatest films. He comes to Hollywood in the 1960s, gets a job in a rental costume house, and witnesses the studios literally trashing their own histories. Warner begins covertly nicking costumes, from Ginger Rogers' gowns to Clark Gable's coats, to save them from certain destruction and for historic posterity. He is the Robin Hood of Hollywood memorabilia.

In early 1970, auctioneer Weisz hires Warner to sort through MGM's vast costume collection—some 350,000 separate pieces—and set up a “Star Wardrobe Auction.” It's Warner's dream job. He knows the MGM catalog of films by heart and he's immediately on the hunt for costumes worn by MGM's biggest stars. But his great obsession is to find Judy Garland's ruby slippers. And nobody on the lot knows where they are.

A RAY OF SUNLIGHT, AND A SPARKLE...

Warner searches the lot with no luck until he climbs into the rafters of an ancient building. Some call it “Mr. Culver's Barn”; others, the “Stable.” According to Kent, he is rummaging through dusty bins of forgotten costumes when a ray of sunlight hits something that sparkles: red sequins. And Eureka! He's found them: a cache of ruby slippers. To this day, no one knows how many pairs he actually found. But we know of at least three continuity pairs and one test pair, the “Arabian” slippers.

First, Warner secretly takes all the slippers home and carefully examines each shoe, puts the pairs together, and then he decides how to dole them out. He gives one pair to the auctioneer, saying, “Look what I found, the ruby slippers.” He lets Weisz assume they're the one and only pair.

THEY'RE MINE BY RIGHTS



On May 17th, 1970, the pair of ruby slippers Kent Warner gives to the MGM auction sells to an anonymous buyer for an astounding \$15,000. The news spreads quickly across the country. The next morning, a woman in Memphis Tennessee reads about the sale in her local newspaper and is confused. “How could they sell the ruby slippers,” she asks, “when I have them in my closet?” Her name is Roberta Bauman and, indeed, she has an authentic pair of Judy Garland's ruby slippers.

Roberta won them in an MGM promotional contest to name the ten best movies of 1939. Her revelation is a shock to almost everyone, including David Weisz and the anonymous MGM auction buyer, but not to studio costumers who know that doubles and triples are made for every important costume. Kent Warner is probably surprised when a fourth pair surfaces in Tennessee, but not that a fourth pair exists.



Around the time of the auction, Kent Warner quietly sells a pair of Ruby Slippers to Michael Shaw, the pair offered here, along with a “Wicked Witch of the West” witch hat (see following lot). Later, Warner sells the “Arabian” test pair to actress Debbie Reynolds. Warner keeps a pair for himself (the so-called “Witch's Shoes” now housed at Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Museum in Los Angeles).

Nine years later, in 1979, the anonymous buyer of the MGM auction shoes donates the pair to the Smithsonian Institution where they reside today. A year later, Kent Warner sells the pair he kept for himself. And then Kent Warner dies, in April 1984, taking the secret of the ruby slippers to his grave.

THE RUBY SLIPPER RABBIT HOLE

Two years after Kent's death I arrive on the scene, accidentally falling into a ruby slipper rabbit hole, when I discover the Oz script in the MGM vault where Noel Langley changes the color of Dorothy's shoes from silver to ruby. I show it to an editor at the Los Angeles Times who says it's an interesting sidebar. And then he asks, "Where are the shoes, kiddo?" That sends me off on an investigative odyssey to find Judy Garland's ruby slippers. Mostly, I'm chasing the ghost of Kent Warner. What did he do with the shoes? And where are they?

THE BIG SWITCHEROO

The chase consumes me for three years. I track down what I believe to be the only surviving ruby slippers from the movie. I publish a story in the Times and write a book. Near the end of the process I compile an appendix to describe each known pair and that's when I come to a surprising revelation. The ruby slippers auctioned at MGM and later donated to the Smithsonian are mismatched twins to the pair Kent Warner passed to Michael Shaw in 1970. In fact, manufacturer's numbers in Shaw's left shoe exactly match the numbers in the Smithsonian's right shoe, and vice versa. I wonder how did this happen? When did the pairs get switched?



A NIGHT LIKE NO OTHER

For the better part of three decades, Michael Shaw tours his pair of ruby slippers around the country, leading me to dub them the "Traveling Shoes." That comes to an end in the early hours of August 28th, 2005, when thieves break into the Judy Garland Museum in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, and steal Shaw's ruby slippers. Now they have a new moniker: the "Stolen Shoes." But news of the theft is muted because, on that same day, Hurricane Katrina steals all the headlines. But these shoes will not be out-sparkled for long. The mystery builds for 13 years: Who stole Judy Garland's ruby slippers?



In July, 2018, the FBI acts on a tip and in a sting operation recovers a pair of ruby slippers alleged to be Michael Shaw's stolen shoes. The investigating special agents think they have the right pair but they must be sure. Having studied the shoe saga, they know from my book about the mismatched pairs. So there's only one place to authenticate Michael Shaw's ruby slippers: the Smithsonian Institution.

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

Cut to the National Museum of American History. A repair and restoration of the Smithsonian's fragile pair of ruby slippers is coincidentally and conveniently underway when the recovered pair of ruby slippers are secretly delivered to the Institution by the FBI. It's a unique moment, the first time the two pairs have been together since Kent Warner found them nearly 50 years before. After a side-by-side examination, museum curators verify the authenticity of Michael Shaw's ruby slippers. And based on the manufacturer's numbers in each shoe they are confirmed as cross-matched twins

Looking closer, it appears some of the handwriting in each of Shaw's shoes may have rubbed off: a "#1" in Shaw's left shoe and "#6" in Shaw's right shoe. These handwritten numbers would cross-match with the same numbers faintly visible in the Smithsonian's slippers. Other subtle comparisons exist among the shoes, notably the bows, all slightly unique, and the heel caps. Shaw's left shoe and the Smithsonian's right shoe have matching "Cat's Paw" rubber heel caps, and the other two shoes have matching leather heel caps. It's obvious the two pairs were mixed up.



Randy Struthers, a ruby slipper forensic expert and Smithsonian consultant, has studied the film using high definition technology. Frame by frame, he examines each scene in which the shoes are visible. Based on subtle differences among the bows and heels he determines that the pair designated #1—Shaw's left shoe and the Smithsonian's right shoe—is worn by Garland in the majority of the film's scenes. By contrast, the #6 pair—Shaw's right shoe and the Smithsonian's left—is visible in very few but important scenes. Taken together, the two pairs, Judy Garland #1 and #6, are the predominant ruby slippers worn in the film,

SHOW ME THE SHOES

The pair designated "#1 Judy Garland" is visible when Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion, and for all the "We're Off to See the Wizard" dances. They're also in the Poppy Field, interior shots in the Emerald City, the "King of the Forest" song, and in the Wizard's Throne Room. More significantly, the #1 pair is clearly visible in the iconic close-up when the shoes shock the Wicked Witch of the West's hands. And finally, the #1 pair is the "Tap Your Heels" pair in the climactic "There's No Place Like Home" scene.



The #6 Judy Garland pair is used sparingly. They may have been in the Poppy Field scene when it appears the #1 pair suffered some damage and needed repair. More significantly, they are visible at the Gates of Oz during the “Who Rang That Bell?” scene, including the close-up. They’re also visible in the Hallway to the Throne Room and interior wide shots in the Witch’s castle.



Taken together, these are the primary pairs of shoes worn by Judy Garland through most of the film, including all but a few of the most memorable scenes.

Which brings us back to the question of when the two pairs were switched? It had to be after the film wrapped. Whatever the case may be, we now know much more about the fabled shoes—all of them—and how valuable and cherished they are in American History. The magic is evident: Judy Garland’s ruby slippers are enduring symbols of the power of belief.

— Rhys Thomas
Author, *The Ruby Slippers of Oz*

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7. Shaw Slippers, courtesy F.B.I.
8. Smithsonian & Shaw Slippers, courtesy Smithsonian Institution
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