

"SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS" FILMED AFTER 34 YEARS

The benign old man working at the card table below is writing his 18th novel. He is 70 years old. To a generation coming of age in a fearfully complex world his name brings, at best, a faint and amused smile of doubtful recognition. But to their parents he will be remembered as a landmark in an era now coated with the shimmer of nostalgia, a beautiful bygone day when peace and prosperity seemed like permanent and indestructible blessings. This old man is Harold Bell Wright.

It was in 1903 that he first started on his strange

and astonishing literary career. An itinerant sign painter turned preacher, he had written his first novel as a parable to be delivered in weekly installments from his pulpit. When published between covers, *That Printer of Udell's*, to everyone's surprise, sold 500,000 copies. *The Shepherd of the Hills*, four years later, rolled up a sensational sale of 2,000,000. Like other bestsellers of that happy decade (Gene Stratton Porter's *Freckles*: 2,000,000 copies; John Fox Jr.'s *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*: 1,255,000), Harold Bell Wright's books were hearty, naive melodramas of the big out-of-doors whose chief virtue was that they brought to a heterogeneous people the beauty of the remote corners of their land. Otherwise, to modern concepts, these works seem almost bare of merits. The writing is lurid and overwrought. The characters are stalking cardboard figures, crudely symbolizing weakness or strength, cour-

age or cowardice, good or evil, each brushed in solid with a single flat paint. The women are paragons of youth, health, beauty, charm and purity. The action goes galloping along, heedless of reality, from thrilling gun duel to breathless escape, from knock-down fist fight to hair-trigger rescue. But a generation of readers as yet unfamiliar with the austerities of a Hemingway, a Dos Passos or a Faulkner found such moral tales as *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, *The Calling of Dan Matthews* and *The Re-creation of Brian Kent* so engrossing that, all in all, 10,000,000 copies of Wright's books were sold.

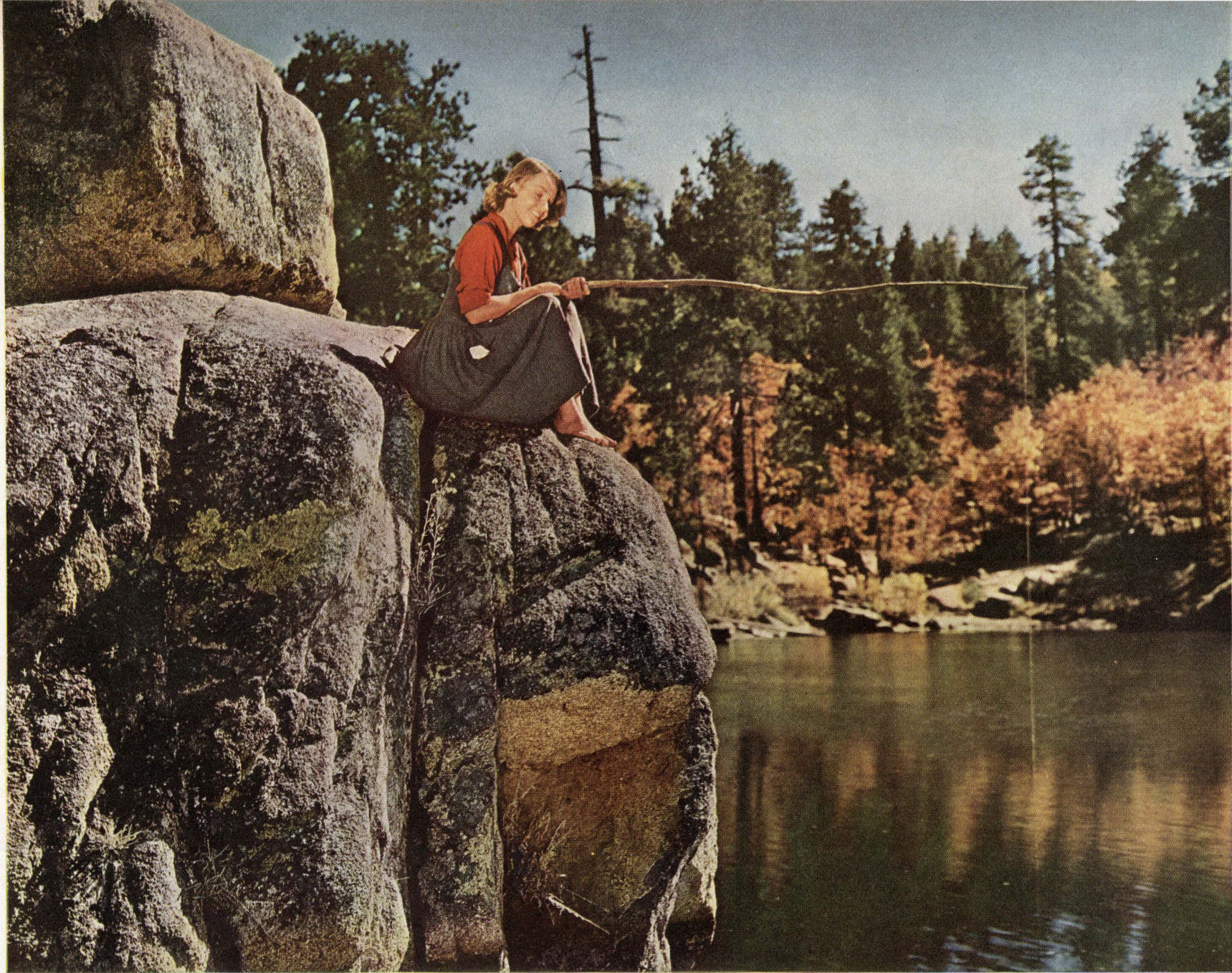
Of his 17 novels, eight have been made into movies, some of them twice. The last, soon to be released by Paramount, is a Technicolor version of *The Shepherd of the Hills* (on opposite page), which, for all its mountain scenic splendor, has even in a restrained adaptation, the dated sentimentality of its 34-year-old book.



Portrait of novelist at work is posed by Harold Bell Wright before his bungalow in Palm Springs. The new novel, as yet

untitled, is laid in the redwood country of California and will be his first since *To My Sons* (1934). Ill from pneu-

monia, Mr. Wright left his ranch at Escondido, Calif. several months ago to recuperate in Palm Springs' desert air.

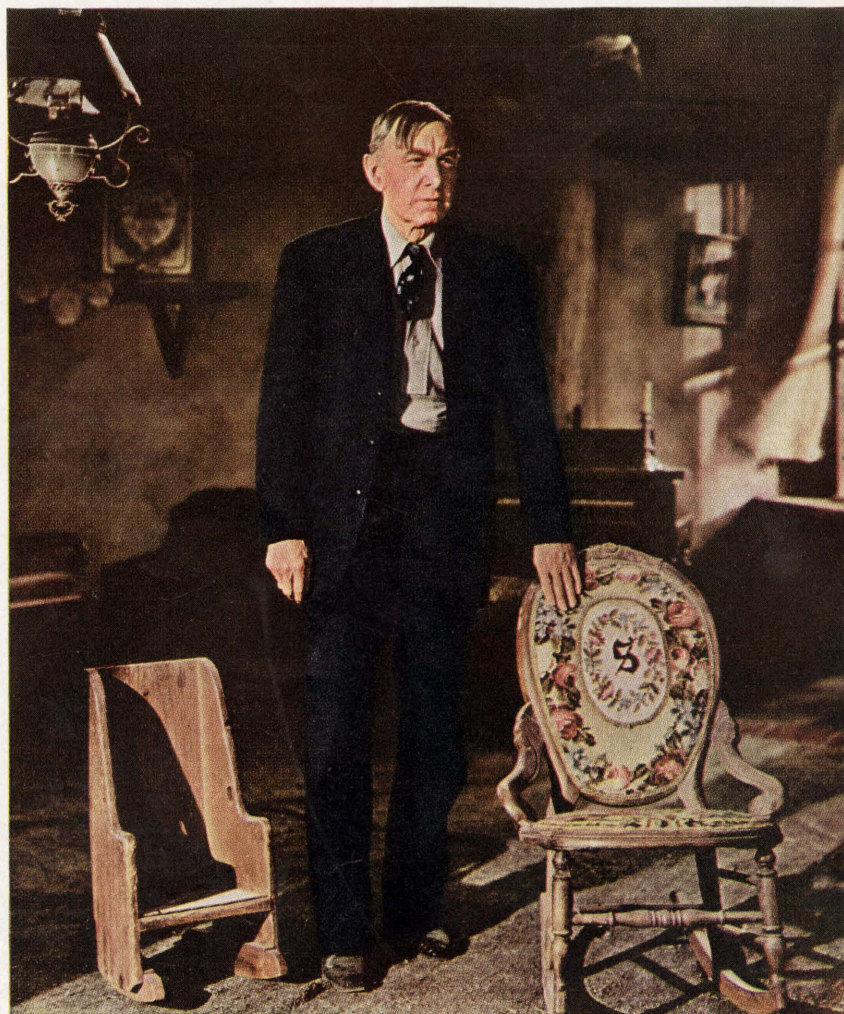


For an Ozark Mountain background, Paramount took its Technicolor crew and 200 actors 5,000 ft. up in the San Bernardino Mountains of California. Here they found a locale resemb-

ling the Missouri country where Harold Bell Wright once preached and from which he drew his characters. Fishing in the lake is Betty Field, who plays Wright's heroine, Sammy Lane.



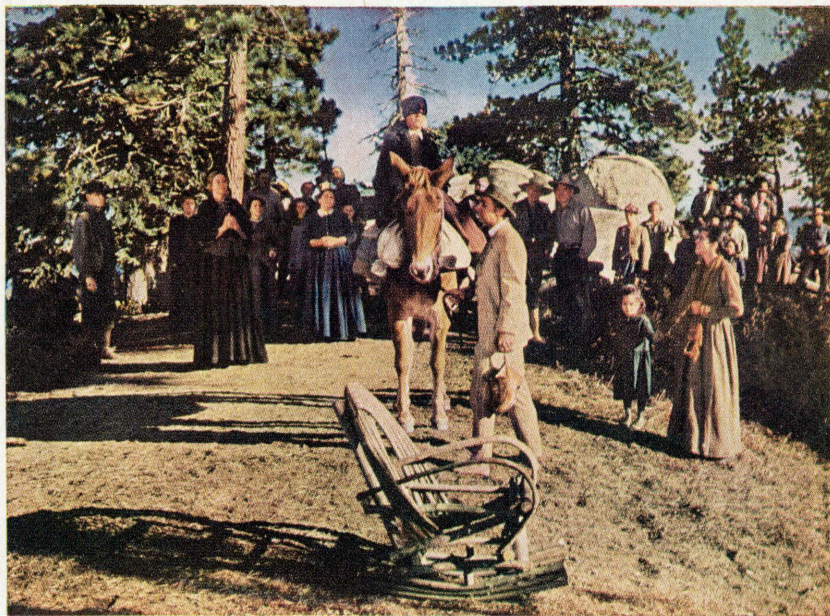
A stranger to the hill folk is Dan Howitt (Harry Carey) who buys Moaning Meadow from Matthews family for \$1,000. For his kindness, Howitt comes to be known as the Shepherd.



At Moaning Meadow the Shepherd visits the hut of Sarah Matthews, who returned from the city to bear a son and die. Son's father, whom the Matthews have sworn to kill, is Shepherd.



At Flying Clouds Bluff mountain folk gather to witness the crowning achievement of Shepherd's good work. He has been teaching them to earn a living by making wicker furniture.



On a droopy old mule comes blind Granny Becky, to supply the chief drama on this occasion. In foreground is a rocker made by mountaineers to pay for Granny's eye treatments.



Granny sees for the first time in her life when bandages are removed. But her seeing eyes also detect and reveal resemblance between the Shepherd and the son of Sarah Matthews.



To save the Shepherd, the half-witted son of Aunt Mollie Matthews sacrifices his life. Peace follows between young Matthews (John Wayne, left) and his father, the Shepherd.

THIS IS WHAT THE SUPERSTITIOUS MOUNTAINEERS CALL A WITCH-RING. SEATED AROUND IT WITH GUNS, THEY WAIT TO KILL EVIL SPIRITS WITH SILVER BULLETS

