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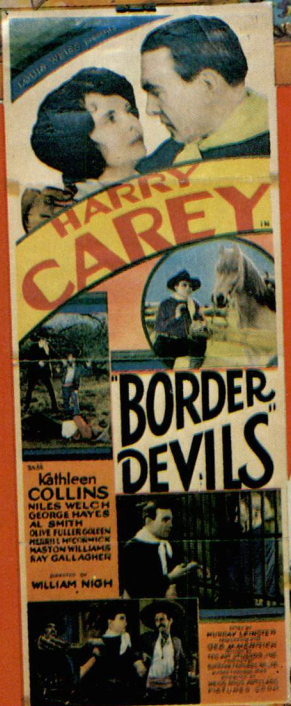
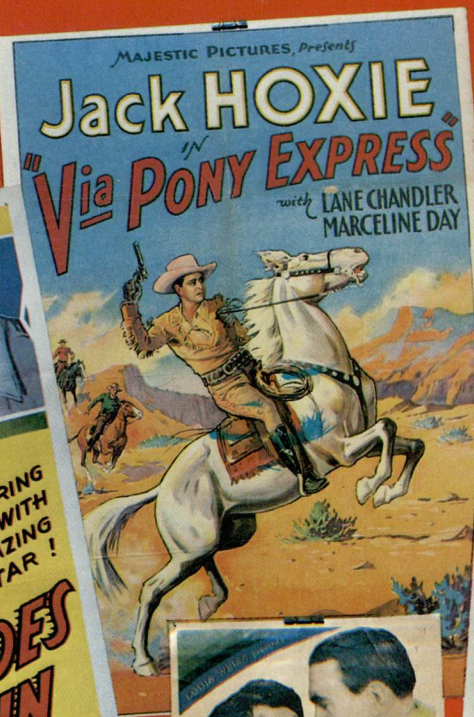
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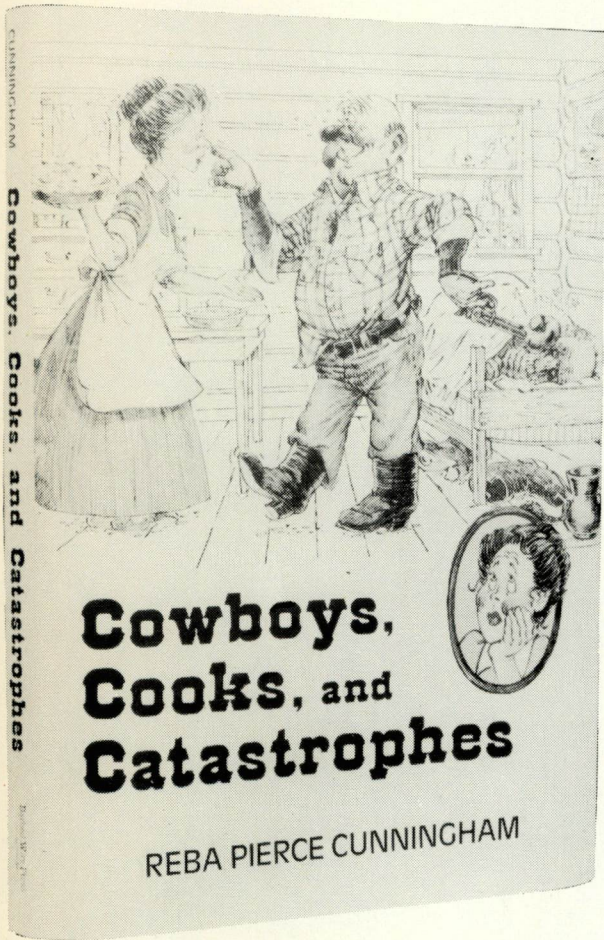
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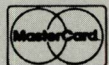
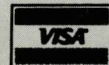
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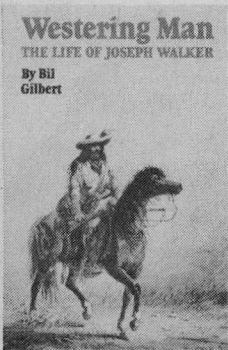
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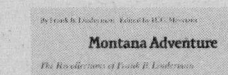
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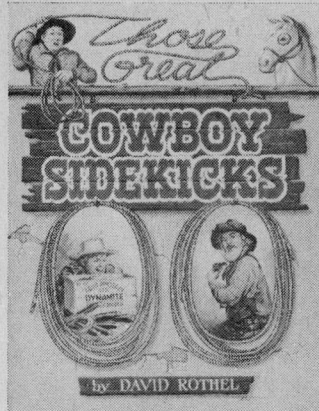
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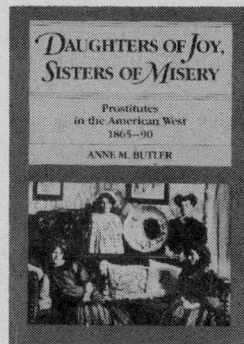
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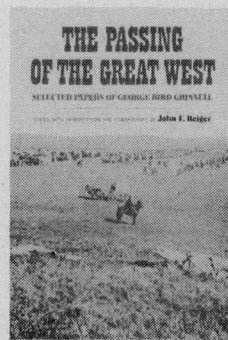


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- 24 **Harry Carey.** For nearly forty years, a casual approach and homespun individuality kept this actor at the forefront of Western filmmaking.
- 32 **Fred Thomson.** A Presbyterian minister trades his pulpit for a horse and rides to movie fame.
- 40 **Jack Hoxie.** Oldtimers knew him as plain "Oklahoma Jack," but this championship rider led a life of glamor and excitement on the screen.
- 46 **Tom Tyler.** Vincent Markowski, a brash young New Yorker, takes a crash course in horsemanship and gallops onto the set to become Tom Tyler, Cowboy Strongman.
- 54 **Buck Jones.** A cowboy hero's popularity endured through the eras of Wild West shows, silent films, and the talkies.

The articles in this issue originally appeared in TRUE WEST, OLD WEST, and *The Westerner* magazines.

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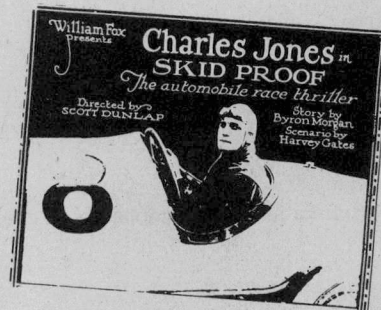
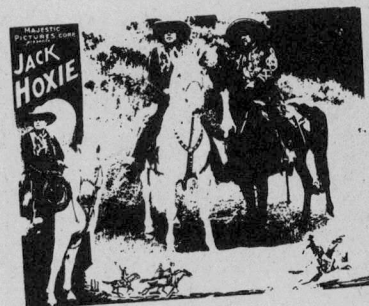
53 Books

62 Trails Grown Dim



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From the Editor

The first time I met Glenn Shirley he was hurrying off to see "some old boy" in western Oklahoma who had some material on Henry Starr. Glenn blew into our offices, took time for a handshake and a howdy-do, told a couple jokes, and blew out again on his lifelong search for photographs, records, and documents from the Old West.

The next time I saw Glenn, he was hurrying off in another direction to see "some other old boy" who had some material on Bill Tilghman, the subject of his forthcoming book. Once again he stopped just long enough to say hello and tell a joke or two. Then he disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Those meetings were an impressive introduction to the man. He walked fast and talked fast. Glenn Shirley at a walk moves faster than most men at a gallop. And his darting, penetrating eyes reveal that he thinks even faster than he moves.

But it was not until our third meeting that I caught a glimpse of the "real" Glenn Shirley. TRUE WEST publisher Randy Clausen and I had driven to Glenn's spread just north of the Cimarron River. We needed a photograph of a saddle, rifle, and six-shooter for an advertisement we were putting together. Randy had the inspiration and Glenn had the gear. I happened to have the camera, so—like the kid who owns the baseball—I got to play.

Glenn was in his darkroom making prints when we drove up. He wasn't in a hurry to go anywhere that morning, so he took the time to show us a few of the prints and tell the story behind them. He had already made sixty or seventy prints the night before and was about to finish that particular project. He also took the time to discuss his print-making techniques and tell an interesting yarn or two about his equipment.

I learned that morning that Glenn not only moves fast but that he also moves in his own direction. What I had expected to be a quick photo session before getting back to the office turned into a fascinating, all-morning visit. Before we unpacked the camera, Glenn showed us his basement, one room of which was packed with files and files of material about western movies. Meticulously stored and recorded were thousands of negatives, hundreds of

prints, and scores of beautiful old posters.

In an amazing display, Glenn pulled out poster after poster. He told us about the making of each film and the lives of



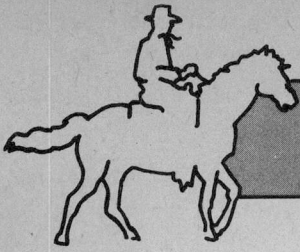
its stars, often throwing in a few facts about the history of the production company. If western history is Glenn's work, then western movies are his hobby, and he pursues it with a passion.

We eventually climbed back upstairs to Glenn's study, an enormous room lined with books, magazines, file cabinets, and artifacts. Momentarily idle at one end of the room were two desks, a pipe stand, and the old manual typewriter that he still uses for all his work.

Sometime that morning we took the photographs we had come for. I don't remember when. What I do remember is leaving—after hearing a couple more examples from Glenn's endless repertoire of funny stories—with an overwhelming respect for his accomplishments.

It's true, Glenn Shirley is almost always in a hurry. But in that hurry he has amassed an exceptional knowledge of western history and an unexcelled collection of western Americana. In this special issue commemorating TRUE WEST's return as a monthly magazine, we're proud to present a small sample of his work.

John Joerschke



Truly Western

Letters from our readers

Controversial Character of Columbus Nickerson

I read the article by Mr. John Watson, "A Most Unusual Rustler," in TRUE WEST, September '85, with mixed emotions of delight and confusion.

I was delighted that someone with Mr. Watson's obvious literary talents was interested enough in the life of my Uncle Columbus Nickerson (1858-1937), to write about him, but I have a few problems with his treatment of the subject.

Firstly, I do not believe Trafton (or Harrington, as he also called himself), was having a torrid love affair with Lum's wife, Alice Emma (Pritchard) Nickerson (1861-1891). Nor do I believe Mr. Watson's innuendos are provable by any acceptable standards of historical research.

Secondly, I can state one fact—that if Lum Nickerson had any suspicion of an affair between his wife and Trafton, he would have killed him.

I will gladly concede that Lum Nickerson was a hard man, and that he was probably illiterate, and a man of intemperate habits, but he was no coward.

I am proud of my blood relationship to Lum Nickerson. He has descendants living in Idaho today who are fine people.

Again, I congratulate Mr. Watson on an interesting and well-written article. But I believe he could have done just as well by leaving out the sly winks and innuendos.

As you can see in the photo, Lum may have been "unshaven," but he was hardly tall and thin. As to his "rancid smell" I really couldn't say.—**Tim Mangham, Sacramento, CA.**

Trapdoor Carbine Passed the Test

I want to congratulate you on the October '85 issue of Frontier Times. I was especially interested in "The Much Maligned Trapdoor Carbine." I have one of those rifles, a caliber .45-70, serial



Columbus "Lum" Nickerson

number 31819, manufactured in 1874.

I acquired the rifle around 1935 in a trade and started hunting with it. I loaded my own ammo, cast my own bullets, etc. I don't know how much game it has killed. I didn't keep count. But it has accounted for deer, elk, bear, antelope, cougar, turkey, and other types of game too numerous to mention.

Like Ray Meketa says, the gun has never given me any trouble and has never failed me in any way. It is still in the military order that it was in when I got it and would be good enough to hunt with today if I was in good enough health to go.

I do not believe Custer's losing the battle to the Indians can in any way be blamed on the Springfield 1873 Trapdoor Carbine.

Thanks for a good magazine.—**B.N. Elliott, Stephenville, TX.**

Indianola's Imports Included Camels

I enjoyed Mike Blakely's interesting and vivid article about Indianola, Texas, but I was a bit surprised that no mention was made of the fact that in 1856 the first shipment of camels arrived there under orders from Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War. The experimental expedition then proceeded to California. Too much has already been printed about the camels, much of it untrue. I just want to point out that Indianola played a role in their arrival in the States.—**Avram Davidson, Retsil, WA.**

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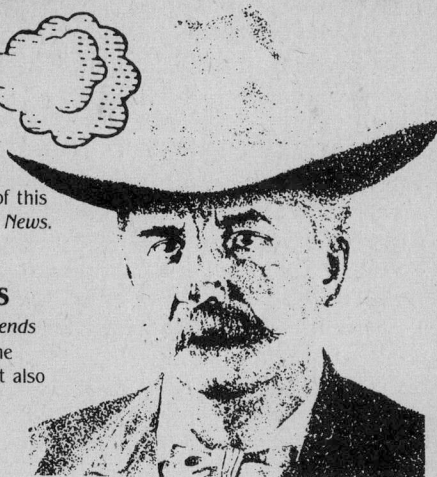
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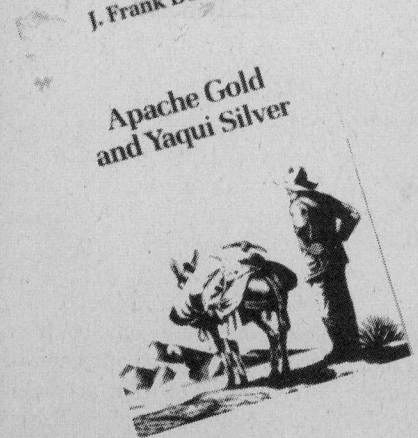
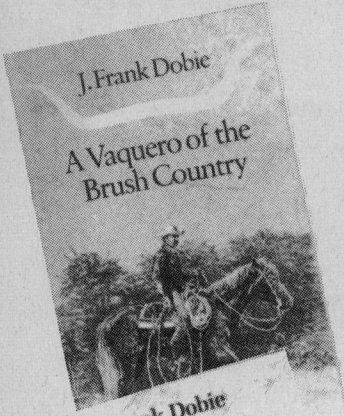
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Hoolihan was Handy to Know

In regard to Fannie Caffall's question to Chuck Parsons about the Hoolihan (TRUE WEST, January '85), it was described by Milt Hinkle, one of the best old-time cowboys I've ever known, in September '63, Frontier Times, "Rough and Roaring."

Milt described the Hoolihan as a back-hand loop, for roping in a corral off the ground. Mostly used for catching horses, for a right-handed man, the loop was held beside the left leg on the ground, brought around to the right above your head, and turned loose in such a manner as not to scare the stock.—A.U. Lung, Bunch, OK.

Voice of a Volunteer

I was very gratified to see the article in the January '85 TRUE WEST. "Disastrous March of the 19th Kansas," by Louis Boyd James. My grandfather, Andrew "Andy" McMains, was a member of Company G of the 19th Kansas Cavalry. He felt lucky to be a

member of Company G as they left Topeka, Kansas, on October 31, 1868, for Fort Hays, Kansas, to act as an escort for General Phillip H. Sheridan. They went to Fort Dodge, Kansas, and then on to a camp at Bluff Creek, Indian Territory. They left there November 18, and arrived at Camp Supply on November 21. On the Twenty-second they asked for twenty-five volunteers from each company to join Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry. My grandfather, being eighteen years old, a redheaded Scotsman, and not afraid of man or beast, took those two paces forward. Later in life he said that was his second mistake; the first being when he left home at Fort Scott, Kansas, for Topeka, Kansas, to enlist.

This paper would have to be made out of asbestos for me to use the words my grandfather used to describe the "massacre on the Washita," by that ___ Custer. He stated that, "I didn't have a weak stomach, but I sure upchucked the food in there when I saw the almost complete disregard for

human life displayed by most of the men in the 7th Cavalry."

From that time on he could not quite make up his mind which was worse, being a volunteer under Custer or spending twenty-three days riding, marching on foot, and going hungry in a Kansas blizzard with the men in the other ten companies.

I enjoy TRUE WEST very much; keep them coming.—Bryan W. McMains, El Cajon, CA.

The Eccentricities of Mrs. Sarah Winchester

I thoroughly enjoyed "Sarah Winchester, Woman of Mystery," in the October '85 Frontier Times.

In the early 1930s I went through every room in the house, wrote a newspaper article on it, and had the good fortune to meet an old-timer who told me some interesting anecdotes.

The two beautiful cut glass front doors were opened only twice. Once when Mary Baker Eddy visited Mrs. Winchester, and again when Mrs. Win-



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chester's body was carried out of the house the day of her funeral.

The story is told that when William McKinley was to visit San Jose, the townspeople told Mrs. Winchester she should have the honor of entertaining the President at tea. She listened patiently and courteously and then replied, "I am sorry, I have to refuse. You see, I have never met Mr. McKinley."

I was also shown a picture, taken before the earthquake, of the house with its top stories intact. It is nice to know such a landmark has been restored. I believe Mrs. Winchester was also known for the many charities she supported. Thank you for a glimpse of fifty years ago.—James Neill Northe, Oklahoma City, OK.

Applauding Reba's Exploits

I want to congratulate you on the publication of Reba Cunningham's *Cowboys, Cooks, and Catastrophes*.

Having written many western stories throughout the years, I'm always interested in anything about the old range days. Mrs. Cunningham's stories seem to me to capture the "behind the scenes" every day working of a ranch as well as anything I've read for a long time.

Congratulations on your excellent publication, and I'll be looking forward to reading more of Reba Cunningham's accounts of her efforts to hold a ranch together through the cookhouse.—Thomas Thompson, Newbury Park, CA.

Is There a Story Behind This Saddle?

I have an old saddle made by Garcia of Elko, Nevada. On a big silver plate in back of the cantle is inscribed "To John F. Casper, Frontier Days 1913."

It is a beautiful hand carved saddle with quite a bit of silver. I presume it must have been a trophy saddle. Perhaps someone has information regarding John F. Casper. I would be interested to know who he was and the story behind his saddle.—Ernest Eckhoff, Orange, CA.



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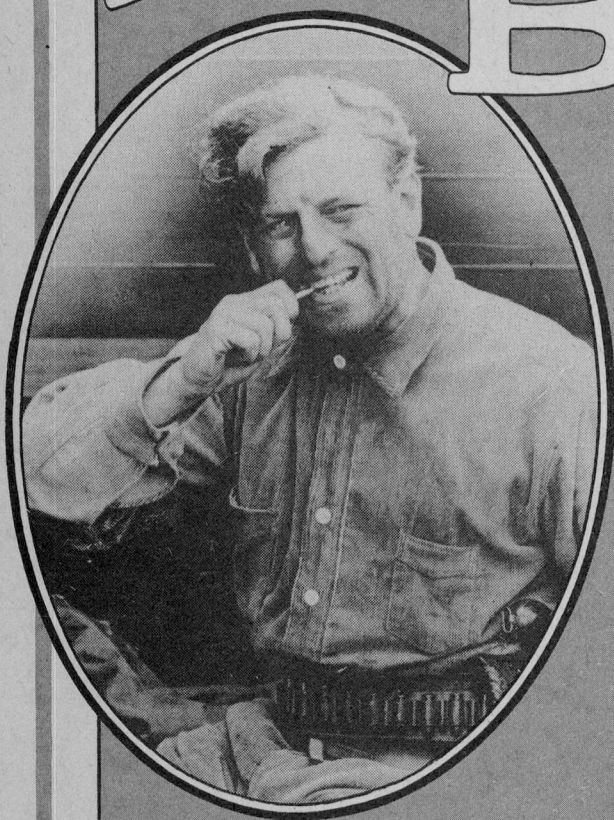
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HAPPY HOLIDAYS,
from all of us at **TRUE WEST!**

BRONCHO BILLY



"I made them like popcorn. I'd write 'em in the morning and make 'em in the afternoon. Sometimes I had the scenario written on my cuff."

THE GOLDEN WEST PRODUCING CO., PRESENTS

GILBERT ANDERSON

BIG GUN HERO
OF THE BADLANDS

IN
A DRAMATIC
RANCH LIFE
STORY

"SHOOTIN' MAD"

A TRIUMPH OF ROMANTIC REALISM

ALSO IN "THE SON OF A GUN" ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OUTDOOR PRODUCTIONS OF THE DECADE AND -

"RED BLOOD AND YELLOW"

A REAL LIVE STORY OF HUMAN PASSION RIGHT FROM THE RAW

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

The NEW YORK HERALD says:
"The son of a gun" is one of Anderson's best bits of work. It takes one and flings dramatic affairs into the wide spaces and fills the frame with old-fashioned scenes of farm life with its romance.

The NEW YORK TRIBUNE says:
"Red Blood and Yellow," one of the best of Gilbert Anderson's work. It takes one and flings dramatic affairs into the wide spaces and fills the frame with old-fashioned scenes of farm life with its romance.

The NEW YORK TRIBUNE says:
"Red Blood and Yellow," one of the best of Gilbert Anderson's work. It takes one and flings dramatic affairs into the wide spaces and fills the frame with old-fashioned scenes of farm life with its romance.



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When it comes to motion picture "firsts," few actors or actresses can measure up, either in number or im-

portance, to Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson.

Anderson not only was the original Western screen hero—he was the first "star" in motion picture history. He was first to advance the idea that a film should tell a story. He created and played a major role in the first feature ever made. He introduced the first movie close-up in the same film by firing a pistol point blank at the audience. He produced the first movie in the Los Angeles area known as Hollywood and got arrested for doing it. And, while somewhat ironic yet in keeping with this world of make-believe, he was the first western screen hero who couldn't ride a horse.

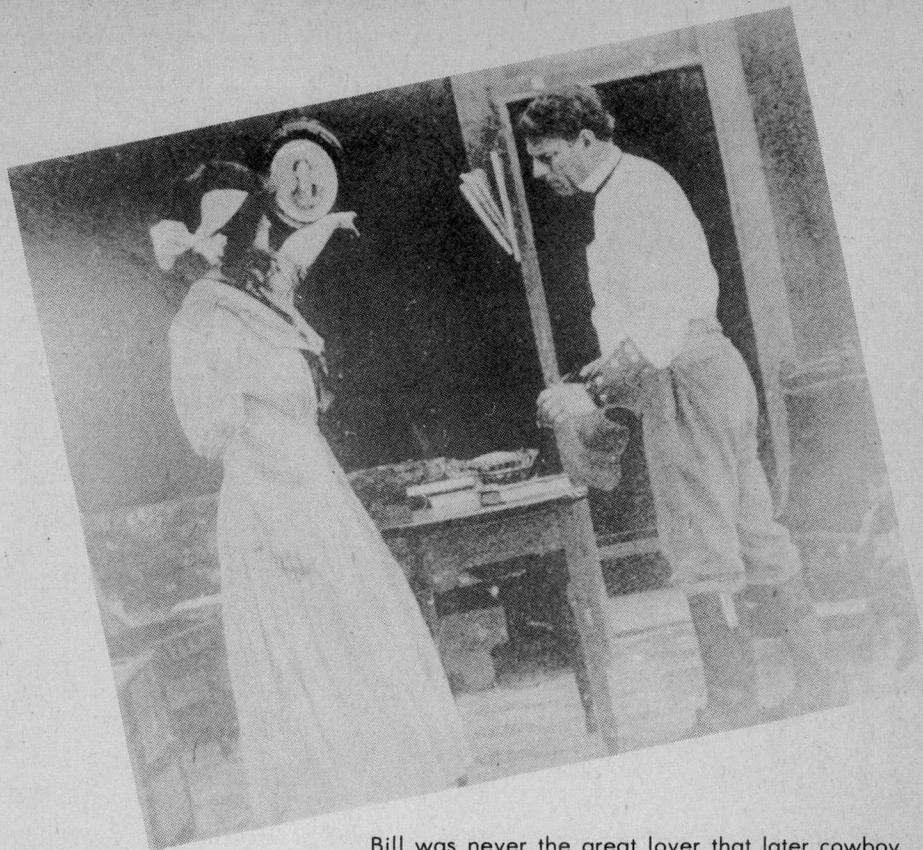
He was born Gilbert Max Aronson in 1882, at Little Rock, Arkansas. Nothing is known of his childhood. While still in his teens he went to St. Louis, Missouri, where he worked for a time as a salesman, then decided to become an actor. A rather beefy, flamboyant youth, he tried his hand at vaudeville.

He achieved nothing in the way of fame, but gained some acting experience. In 1901, he went to New York, where he became an artist's model. In the fall of 1903 he was back in vaudeville. By this time, through the "theatrical transmutation of names," Max Aronson had become Max Anderson.

New York was center of the theatrical world and rapidly becoming the center of a new industry—"moving pictures." Biograph, Vitagraph, and Edison were the major companies. There were no studios. All one needed to get into business was a camera, an empty building or suitable street, a performer or two, and a few bench warmers from Union Square as extras.

Films consisted of one-reel quickies fifty to sixty feet in length. They were merely incidents, pictures of prize fights, snatches of acrobatics—anything that "moved on the screen." Nobody thought of telling a story. The public had grown so weary of freaks and tricks and pictures with nothing to say that theaters were running them as "chasers" (to chase bored patrons out between vaudeville shows). With this decrease in patronage and the depressing effect of patent wars "inhibiting initiative that might have come to freer minds," it appeared that the films would even disappear from the screens of vaudeville shows.

Some effort had been made to use the screen to tell a story. Cecil Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover*, the adventures of a small girl and her dog, had been made in London. Blackton and Smith of Vita-
True West



Bill was never the great lover that later cowboy heroes became. He always appeared clumsy near his leading ladies, as in *The Punchers New Love*.

graph had photographed *Burglar on the Roof*. Both were little more than episodes.

In this dark hour before the dawn, at the Edison Company where Edwin S. Porter, the American inventor, had collaborated with Thomas A. Edison in developing the motion picture camera and film art was born, the narrative idea emerged. James H. White, head of Edison's Kinetograph department, and Porter, now cameraman and chief concoctor of picture material, came up with a subject entitled *The Life of An American Fireman*.

THE FIRST HALF of the film portrayed the routine duties of a fire chief, played by White himself, who takes the audience on an inspection of the fire house. Suddenly the scene shifts to a cottage where a fire breaks out, trapping a mother and sleeping child. The firemen spring into action, sliding down brass poles from dormitory to engine house. Horses are hooked to the fire wagon in a flash and the outfit thunders down the street with smoke and sparks flying. En route the chief learns it is his own house and family that are in danger. He arrives just in time, rushes into the flames, and emerges with wife and child for the happy clincher.

It was the grand staple situation of

immediate peril, with help on the way. Despite this element, it was more informative than narrative. More gripping, however, than anything heretofore presented, it excited the motion picture industry.

While other producers floundered about for something to exceed it, Porter made another, casual subject. Based on an idea of Wendell P. Colton, advertising manager for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western railroad, it cast Marie Murray, a photographer's model, as the famous "Phoebe Snow," a mythical girl in white who rode *The Road to Antracite* without soiling her gowns, "all to the rocking horse rhythm and accompanying jingles." The film was no great screen contribution, but it placed Porter on friendly terms with the railway officials, an important stone in his next great step in motion picture history.

Despite the unpopularity of films in vaudeville houses, Max Anderson had become deeply interested in this new media. Shortly after the Phoebe Snow production, he visited the Edison Company and was hired by Porter to appear in a one-reeler entitled *The Messenger Boy's Mistake*. Porter also was searching for a possible actor for a bit in a short play starring acrobat, scene painter, and handy man, Billy Martinetti. Martinetti mentioned the name of a fellow who



The audience would boo Anderson as villain one week and cheer him as hero the next. He was on the side of law and order in *The Bearded Bandit* (Essanay, 1912).

had been on the road for many years with a stage production called *The Great Train Robbery*. The title gave Anderson an idea. He suggested that Porter invest \$800 to convert the popular stage play into a fifteen-minute western.

Porter argued: "It would be a failure. No audience would have the patience to sit through it."

"They'd sit through 5,000 feet of film if it told a story and had plenty of excitement," replied Anderson.

Porter finally agreed. He went to work, writing a "memorandum of scenes" consisting of a train hold-up, a rip-roaring chase by a frontiersmen posse, a big saloon-dancehall episode, and a final escape. Then he prevailed on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western railroad to loan him a special train and the use of its line near Dover, New Jersey, for filming the story. It would be the real thing—no painted canvas backdrops.

Next, he looked for a cast. He had no use for variety actors and unappreciated Hamlets occupying benches in Union Square. This picture was more exacting. He needed stunt men. Frank Hanaway, an actor with considerable experience in the U.S. cavalry, was hired "because he could fall off a galloping horse without killing himself." George Barnes, who performed at Huber's Museum on Fourteenth Street, was chosen for the role of

robber chief. Marie Murray, the Phoebe Snow model, would appear in the dancehall scene. Needed now was someone to lead the posse.

Anderson volunteered.

"Can you ride?" Porter asked.

"I was born on a horse," Anderson flashed back. "I was raised in Missouri, and can ride like a Texas Ranger."

"Good," Porter decided. "You also play the robber that shoots the passenger and the passenger who runs out in the foreground at the robbery scene and gets shot. You're also the dude in the dancehall, who dances as the bandits shoot into the floor. We've got to make this film as cheaply as possible."

MAKING THE PICTURE proved almost as thrilling as the production itself. During the robbery, the fireman on the train, doubled by a dummy, was tossed from the engine cab as it approached the high bridge over the Passaic River, landing on a track in front of a speeding trolley below.

There was a squealing of brakes and the screaming and screeching of frightened, fainting passengers as the car came to a violent stop. It was several minutes before the unintended victims discovered the deception and could be revived and quieted.

For the chase, Porter moved his crew into the wilds of Essex County Park.

The woods rang with rough riding and gunfire as the frontiersmen posse engaged the bandits. The robbers took off, the posse gave pursuit, but something had happened to Anderson. He couldn't be found. It was too late to worry about a missing star, so Porter doubled the part and finished the scene.

That evening, when the horses were returned to West Orange, the mystery was solved. In the escape, Anderson had tried to mount his horse from the wrong side and had been thrown. Unable to catch the frightened animal, which had returned to the stable on its own, Anderson had walked the full distance to West Orange and caught the train back to New York. He returned, however, to appear in the dancehall episode, and close with a punch—firing a pistol into the eye of the audience.

The Great Train Robbery created a sensation. It played to packed houses on its first runs at Huber's Museum, the Eden Musee and at Hammerstein's. It became the first story on film in the United States, and the most popular of hundreds of three- and five-minute pictures available for presentation. It took the movies out of the novelty bracket, being 800 feet and two full reels in length, and put numerous new exhibitors, with the film as their principal property, into business. It even invaded the back country where movies had never been before.

As Anderson said, reminiscing years later, "This thriller took motion pictures out of diapers, put them in rompers, and fathered an unending line of American horse-opéras."

Director Porter quickly followed this initial success with *The Great Train Robbery*, a similarly realistic stage play. In fact, while playing in one New Jersey village, one of the merchants thought it so real that he "opened fire on the company with lead."

Anderson saw the great potential in Westerns. Such films, he suggested, could put the motion picture abreast of the dime novel. Porter wasn't interested. His next production was a picture play about the same length as *The Great Train Robbery* called *Kleptomaniacs*, which presented the parallel stories of a rich woman caught shoplifting being treated as the victim of kleptomania, and a poor woman arrested for the same offense being jailed. There was no immediate need for Anderson's services.

Undaunted by this rebuff, Anderson left Edison Company. Biograph, swinging into the new trend toward the story picture, had produced *The Moonshiners*, climaxed by the first big screen fight,

True West

Broncho Billy Anderson's first encounter with a horse left him sitting in a cloud of dust. The director doubled for Anderson and finished the scene.



enacted by Wallace McCutcheon and Harold Vosburg. But it was only one reel and no more than "a film translation of the combat motion of the prize ring into terms of drama." Vitagraph, however, was making films about contemporary life with *The Life of An American Fireman* in its version of *A Gentleman of France* with Kyrle Bellew. A more pretentious effort, it had action and drama, picturing the first famous sword fight on the stairs. Anderson thought his future lay here and landed a job at Vitagraph.

He collaborated with Blackton and Smith in making *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman*, in a thousand feet, and a big hit in 1905. He directed and acted in a number of pictures, mostly one-reelers, that followed. But Vitagraph also was receptive to his Wild West ambitions.

In Chicago, then a minor motion picture metropolis, Colonel William Nicholas Selig, George Kleine, and George K. Spoor were competitively adding their bits to the story inspiration. Selig's establishment was at 43 Peck Court, a little downtown alley. At a nearby corner saloon he had recruited a cast for a Sunday's picture work in the wild suburban district of Rogers Park. Their pay was a lunch and a barrel of beer. The plot is simple. A lone woman is strangled to death by a marauding tramp. The tramp is promptly pursued by men and dogs. (The dogs, incidentally, had to be dragged through the woods by the posse.) The film is climaxed by a hanging that would have been realistic had the actor not twisted on the rope and revealed his improvised harness. Despite its imperfections, this first Selig drama, *Trapped by Bloodhounds*; or, *A Lynching in Cripple Creek*, was an important success.

Anderson went to Chicago. He reminded Selig of the acclaim of *The Great Train Robbery* and wanted to try his own ideas along this line. Selig seemed apathetic, so Anderson looked up his old friend, Spoor.

Spoor was proprietor of the National Film Renting Company at 62 North Clark Street. Anderson arrived at the opportune moment. There was a scarcity of pictures for both Spoor's vaudeville circuit showings and the clamoring store showmen. They decided to go into business. In February, 1907, Anderson, with Spoor, became co-owner of the Essanay Film Manufacturing Com-

pany, the new name being derived from their last initials "S" and "A." Their trademark was the famous Indian head borrowed from the copper penny.

Essanay progressed rapidly, soon boasting top names like Ben Turpin, Francis X. Bushman, Henry Walthall, and later, Wallace Beery, Charlie Chaplin, and Gloria Swanson. In the spring of 1908, Anderson took a camera crew to Golden, Colorado, hoping to recruit a cast on location, to make a series of Westerns. But it was cold and there was little sunshine. Learning that the Selig Company was starting a studio in southern California to take advantage of ideal weather conditions, he rushed his equipment to Los Angeles and directed a comedy starring Ben Turpin.

"It was the first movie in Los Angeles history," Anderson claimed, in a 1964 interview. "We were using Westlake (now MacArthur) Park as a location, and Ben had to jump in the lake and grab a duck for one of the scenes. He'd scarcely hit the water and got hold of the duck when policemen surrounded us. They took us all to jail and booked us for creating a disturbance. When we got out we finished our picture in Boyle Heights, dodging the lawmen. But I never tried to make another movie in Los Angeles.

"INSTEAD, I went to Niles Canyon . . . with Turpin, Wallace Beery, and Charlie Chaplin, whom I'd hired away from Mack Sennett . . ."

Realizing the possibilities the West Coast offered for movie making, he established a new studio at Niles, on the San Francisco Bay, which eventually became headquarters for the Essanay Company.

"I made comedies and began making Westerns, working the comedians into them," Anderson said. "These two-reelers appeared in theaters all over the country for the next six years, and I became quite a star myself."

He had stuck to his guns on the Western's being destined to become the most popular genre of screen entertainment. Porter's formula should not be followed too closely, he thought. The picture not only had to tell a story—it needed a strong central character with whom the audience could identify. He had tried to convince Selig and Vitagraph. Now he was on his own.

Naming his character "Broncho Billy," he looked for someone to play the part. He was unable to come up with a likely candidate in the wilds of California, and time was wasting. He decided



Anderson often played a two-gun cowboy who couldn't resist a fight as in *Broncho*

to play the role himself. Anderson was only a fair actor, of heavy, solid build, with little fluidity of movement and far from handsome by today's conception of Western stars; but he presented a striking appearance, had that cold, "man of the West" glint in his eye, could handle a six-shooter well and had learned to ride since *The Great Train Robbery*.

His first film was *Broncho Billy and the Baby*, based on a story by the famous author Peter B. Kyne. The film was an overnight hit and, much to his surprise, Anderson found himself the first idol of the silver screen, thus paving the way for Tom Mix and William S. Hart, and the scores of Western movie and TV heroes that followed.

From 1909 to 1915, he was responsi-

ble for an estimated 374 productions. Stories taken from various sources, with titles like *Broncho Billy's Redemption*, *Broncho Billy's Oath*, *Broncho Billy's Adventure*, *Broncho Billy and the Maid*, *Broncho Billy and the Redskin*, *The Puncher's New Love*, *The Bandit Makes Good*, *The Bearded Bandit*, *The Deadline*, *Caught Red Handed*, *Broncho Billy's Reward*, *In the Nick of Time*, *Broncho Billy Escapes*, *A Ride for Life*, *Last Roundup*, *When Love and Honor Call*, *Naked Hands*, *Shootin' Mad*, *The Cowboy Coward*, and *Broncho Billy's Sentence*, rolled from his camera almost weekly.

Anderson recalled: "I made them like popcorn. I'd write 'em in the morning and make 'em in the afternoon. Sometimes I had the scenario written on my cuff."



Billy's Adventure (Essanay, 1911).

In this rush—or necessity—to turn out a new title each week, Anderson gave little thought to consistency of character. One week Broncho Billy was a lawman, the next a die-hard villain. In a couple of instances at least, he got himself killed!

The costumes were a little curious and the dialogue so often overdone that critics and historians have accused Anderson of portraying a "dime novel" West that never was.

Broncho improved as he went along. He never became a "fighting fool," but was husky enough to hold his own in any type of combat. He even leaped into the saddle occasionally, and his cold, steady gaze cowed renegades right and left. His lawman and outlaw roles were soon combined, thus pioneering the con-

True West

cept of the "good badman" and providing Hart another springboard to success.

Although his pictures fell short of the story qualities that characterized Hart's Westerns, they were amazingly complex. There was hardly a foot of film that did not advance the plot, logically and rapidly. A good example is *Broncho Billy's Sentence*:

The opening scene shows Broncho stashing the loot he has obtained in a robbery. In attempting to elude a posse, he hides in a cabin with a girl (Virginia Ames) and her father (Ernest Van Pelt). The posse arrives and, at gunpoint, he forces the girl to steer them the wrong direction. After they have gone, he forces a kiss from the girl, then flees to the woods. The angry lass snatches up father's rifle and plants a bullet in his back. Broncho staggers into a small church and collapses. The minister (Carl Stockdale) and his wife (Evelyn Selby) care for him. While he recovers, they read him stories from the Bible. He is converted, retrieves the loot and surrenders to the sheriff. In prison, he continues his Bible study and preaches to the other prisoners. Finally, Broncho is set free.

Broncho Billy's Sentence, the last of the series, was released in late February, 1915. The year also signaled the government's breaking up of the corporate lineages begun with the Kinetoscope Company of 1894 and typified by the Broncho Billy one- and two-reelers. Kinetoscope succeeded to Mutual Film Corporation and the Patents Company-General Film group (the Trust), personified by Mary Pickford and her costly new feature dramas. It marked the end of two eventful decades of motion picture development, with 17,000 screen theaters across America. Anticipating the Supreme Court order to desist from their unlawful acts as of October 15, Vitagraph, Selig, and Essanay, with the old Philadelphia film manufacturer "Pop" Lubin, joined in a new endeavor to distribute features made by their companies. They continued, however, to contribute short pictures to General.

Anderson gave Broncho Billy a rest and turned to writing scenarios. "Then, in 1919," he said, "I started making five-reelers with me as the western star. But I got into this field too late. I had

laid off too long—you can't do that in the picture business. William S. Hart was making five-reelers already, and Tom Mix was coming up fast. They had the market tied up. Too, I wanted to be top hand in the field, and I knew I couldn't overhaul Mix and Hart and the others who were cropping up—Ken Maynard, Hoot Gibson, and the rest."

Essanay also was having problems—both financial and personal. Many of their stars left to join Universal and other companies. The greatest blow came when Spoor allowed Mutual of Hollywood to outbid Essanay and steal their best comedian, Charlie Chaplin. Spoor also opposed the investment necessary to produce features. Anderson sold Spoor his interest and retired.

He made a brief comeback three years later, directing a series of two-reel comedies starring Stan Laurel for the Metro company. Like others before him, however, he ran into disagreements with the studio. Under his releasing arrangement with Louis B. Mayer, the profits were not worth the effort. Unable to remedy the situation, he said goodbye to films—permanently.

Nothing more was heard of Anderson and people believed him dead until a newspaper reporter discovered him living in Los Angeles in 1948. Due to a renewed interest in the history of motion pictures and the fact that he had been the first cowboy star, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him a special "Oscar" for his contribution to the film industry.

Again, in June, 1958, appearing on NBC's ninety-minute "Wide Wide World" presentation of John Ford, John Wayne, Gene Autry, Gary Cooper, and other Western directors and stars, he told television audiences of his part in molding Hollywood's cowboy formula. In 1965, fifty years after making his last Broncho Billy silent, Anderson capped his career with a cameo role in his first talking picture, *The Bounty Killer*, an Alex Gordon-Marshall Schacker production, starring Rod Cameron and Dan Duryea.

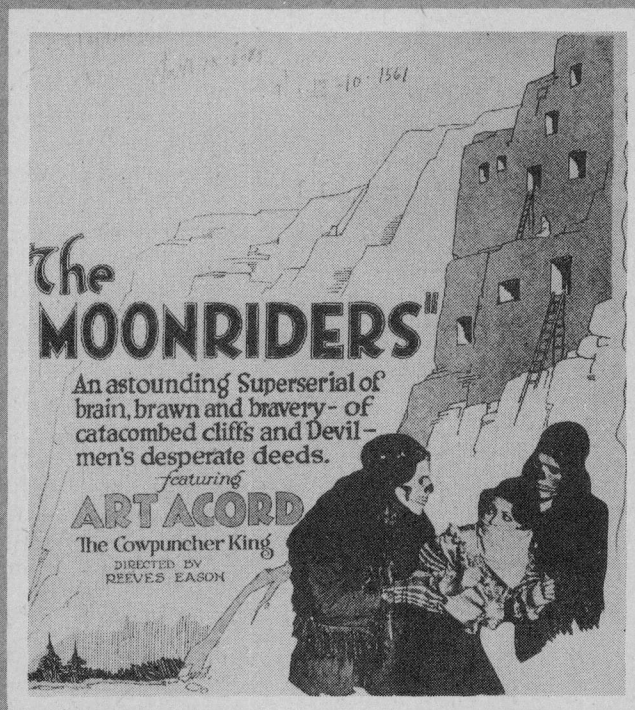
On January 20, 1971, he died in his sleep at Braewood Sanitarium, an affiliate of the Motion Picture Country House and rest home where he had spent his last years.



ART ACORD



He proved himself every bit as skilled a performer as Universal's other Western stars at the time . . . But he possessed an Achilles heel in the shape of a bottle.



Mention the name Art Acord and, excepting a handful of younger archivists, scholars, buffs and

senior citizens who misspent their childhood watching Saturday matinee silent features and chapter-plays, people will respond with vacant stares. They have never heard of this tall, melancholy cowboy, fighter, and expert horseman, who made his way to the silver screen via the rodeo and Wild West show circuits shortly after the turn of the century. For a time he ranked in popularity with Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Harry Carey, and Buck Jones, but then faded into obscurity. Because his career ended tragically, he has been all but forgotten. Information about him is difficult to obtain, and much of it contradictory.

Our first documented record places Art in New York in 1909 where he was appearing with the Dick Stanley-Bud Atkinson Wild West show as a trick-roper, bulldogger, and bronc-buster. He was a "sensitive country boy" of nineteen, thick-browed, sad-faced, with steel grey eyes, over six feet tall, muscular, weighing 185 pounds, and prone to do battle at the drop of a hat. He had competed in rodeos all over the West, won a "trunk full of trophies," and boasted that he "hailed from the Oklahoma plains near Stillwater," where, as part of his growing up years, he had become an expert at handling horses, cattle, guns, and fists.

In New York, Art met Adam Kessel, who was in the process of organizing the Bison Film Company in New Jersey. Kessel gave him a job as stuntman in some of the earliest one-reelers the company made. The company went off to the Big Bear Lake wilds of California to avoid the pressures of the Motion Picture Patents Company, a "film-trust" which threatened independent outfits such as Bison. Here Acord supplemented his riding and roping before the "new fangled cameras" by writing stories for which Bison paid him \$10 each. In 1910, he tried his hand at "play-acting" with the Selig Polyscope Company. Selig's manager called him "the greatest rider in the country—absolutely fearless and can be relied upon to tackle any stunt."

Art found the "grubstakes" paid out by the early picture companies less fantastic than he had expected. In 1911, he joined the combined Buffalo Bill Wild West and Pawnee Bill Great Far East show then touring the United States and Canada. His all-around versatility in stunting and riding soon landed him back in motion pictures in his first oater, *A Deputy's Honor—To Uphold the Law*. In 1912, he appeared as the telegraph operator in Thomas H. Ince's *Indians* and the frontier production, *The Invader*. *He True West*

The Moonriders (Universal, 1920) gave Acord his first real break at stardom.



was one of the untamed heavies in the Dustin Farnum picture of 1914 adapted from Edwin Milton Royle's famous play, *The Squaw Man*.

Between pictures, Acord followed the rodeo circuits. At Pendleton, Oregon, in 1912, he carried away the world bulldogging championship by throwing his steer in twenty-four seconds. At the Cheyenne, Salt Lake City, and Klamath Falls roundups, he competed with such greats as Tex McLeod and Yakima Canutt. He took the bronc-riding championships and won seven of eight events at the Calgary Stampede in 1916.

While competing in the Salt Lake City roundup in July, 1913, he married actress Edythe Sterling. This marriage, more than anything, settled him permanently in Hollywood. He and Edythe bought a home in Glendale, near Helen and Hoot Gibson, who became their close friends.

Art's career moved into high gear. In 1915, Mutual Film Corporation cast him as the lead in a series of two-reel "Buck Parvin" Westerns based on Charles E. Van Loan's "Buck Parvin and the Movies" stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Acord's easy, prowling gait, droll expression and sincere interest made him a perfect replica of Van Loan's popular hero. He quickly rose to fame as a top-notch actor, and upon completing the

series, was tendered a contract to star in another string of horse-operas for the American Film Company. He left West-erns briefly in 1916 to appear in William Fox's *Battle of Life*. In 1917, he co-starred with Theda Bara in the Fox production of *Cleopatra*. Miss Bara's vamp-ing days were at their height. She had decided to make her pictures there. Only a small part of *Cleopatra* was filmed in the East.

Cleopatra was roadshown in its initial engagement. A symphony orchestra traveled with the print. It became one of Bara's biggest money-makers, and Acord began to reap the "long-delayed adulation which feeds an actor's ego." But things were not well between him and Edythe Sterling. The details are not available, but they were divorced.

Art took the matter seriously. Some say he "went to pieces." America's entry into World War I killed the pain temporarily. Art joined the army and, with thousands of other AEF dough-boys, left for France to defend the colors. He acquitted himself admirably with the 144th and 39th Infantry and all Fourth Division campaigns, especially at Verdun, for which he was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* and other medals. He returned home an authentic hero, and was discharged January 24, 1919.

Art did not re-enter motion pictures

immediately. The bizarre slaughter of men and animals on the Western Front had left him, like thousands of others, with a damaged psyche. And he still had pre-war memories to forget. After a round of victory-toasting with his war buddies, he rejoined the Stanley-Atkison Wild West show and made a tour of the United States and Australia. When he did finally reappear in Hollywood, he did not have to start at the bottom again. Carl Laemmle's Universal Pictures signed him for the lead in *The Moon Riders*.

The Moon Riders was a fast-paced

natural, Acord, his ex-wife Edythe Sterling, and Pete Morrison made a number of two-reelers for Dominant Pictures Corporation—*Call of the Blood*, *The Fighting Actor*, *The Fighting Line*, *The Gypsy Trail*, *The Ranger's Reward*, *Tracked Down*, and *Unmasked*.

Moving Picture Weekly of March 21, 1921, surveying Art's box-office and rodeo accomplishments, declared him "Champion Cowboy of the World." The "big man with a smile," as his close cohorts and fans called him, humbly accepted the recognition. Beebe had finished his script, and Universal rushed

brother over a cliff to silence him. En route from the mine, he is captured by a roving outlaw band called the "White Spiders," who force the secret from him and determine to possess the mine. Into this complication rides the mysterious "White Horseman," who sets matters straight and turns out to be Allen.

The White Horseman proved almost as popular as *The Moon Riders*, and assured Acord a permanent niche as one of the foremost exponents of the reel West.

But the serial as an entertainment medium was undergoing a radical change. Across the country local citizens groups criticized this story form and complained that the sudden wave of petty banditry and juvenile burglaries sweeping their cities was largely the result of sensational holdups, criminal conspiracies, the liberal use of weapons, and torture methods portrayed in serial chapters. Censors objected to the handling of female characters in the stories and refused to permit even laying a hand upon a woman. The Woman's Picture Committee of Buffalo, New York, demanded that the city's theaters stop showing chapter-plays as Saturday matinees, and Superior, Wisconsin, banned all serials as of January 1, 1921.



Dr. Marcus Whitman's journey along *The Oregon Trail* (Universal Serial, 1923) to carry the word of God to the Northwest Indians depended on Art Acord (second from left), who also fought a vicious fur syndicate in his spare time.

spine-tingling Western, replete with skull-faced demons. Directed by Reeves Eason and Albert Russell, *The Moon Riders* was released April 26, 1920, in eighteen episodes. From *Over the Precipice* through *Vultures of the Hills*, *Death's Door*, *Pit of Fire*, *The Flaming Peril* and similar escapades to *Clearing Skies*—with the strong support of Mildred Moore, George Field, Beatrice Dominguez, Charles Newton, and Tote DuCrow—Acord galloped astride his pony-pal "Buddy" back into the hearts of his former fans and thousands of new ones. Among the earliest Universal chapter-plays to hit the screen, *The Moon Riders* proved extremely popular and gave Art his first real taste of stardom.

The picture's success caught Universal off guard. The studio had no follow-up script ready. While waiting for Ford Beebe to draft another tale of the super-

Acord into *The White Horseman*.

Directed by Albert Russell, supported by Eva Forrester and Beatrice Dominguez, Art again dashed through eighteen chapters of thrills and action from the *Cave of Despair* to *The Wings of Destiny*. It was a sort of Cain and Abel plot. Acord starred as Wayne Allen, a young westerner who has inherited a piece of apparently worthless land occupied by two squatter brothers. While foraging one day, the pair turn up an ancient bracelet engraved with some picture writing that, when translated, leads them to the base of a mountain honeycombed with underground mines which once belonged to a long-extinct Indian tribe. In one of these they find a chest of blue opals. One brother wants to inform Allen of the discovery, the other wants to keep the treasure for themselves. A violent argument ensues, in which the latter shoves the honest

THE PRODUCING companies, faced with the loss of a potent source of revenue, began making basic changes. Over the years, attempts had been made to use stories with historical backgrounds. Universal had done some work in this area. Replacing holdups, criminal conspiracies, and torture with natural hazards encountered in the nation's frontier development proved to be a happy compromise. It also gave the serial plot sophistication and got rid of the trite, overworked clichés prevalent in the perils of Pearl White, Blanche Sweet, and others.

On September 26, Universal released its third Acord vehicle, *Winners of the West*. Directed by Ed Laemmle and supported by Burton C. Law, Percy Pembroke, Burt Wilson, Jim Corey, and Myrtle Lind, Acord played the role of Arthur Standish, a young hunter and trapper reminiscent of John C. Fremont, blazing a trail westward during the California gold rush. Woven through eighteen episodes of the historical expedition was the familiar lost cave of gold, complete with a map dating back to the days of Sir Francis Drake. The villain tricks the map from Acord and contests him for the love of the heroine, but by the time Art reaches San Francisco, the end of the journey, he has both the girl and the gold.

Winners of the West was not all that Acord fans expected of him. History was all right, but they did not wish to be educated. They wanted more mystery and thrills.

Universal stuck to historical backgrounds and clean-cut plots. William F. Cody was known and appreciated all over the world. His life and times were carefully researched. The resulting chapter-play, released September 11, 1922, titled *In the Days of Buffalo Bill*, dealt with the last days of Abraham Lincoln and the building of the Union Pacific Railroad, woven around the career of the famous Indian fighter and scout. Although historical accuracy was maintained, it was Acord's hard, fast action, supported by Duke R. Lee and Dorothy Woods, that insured the serial's popularity.

It was the same in *The Oregon Trail*, released in March, 1923, and plotted around Dr. Marcus Whitman's journey from New York to Oregon to carry God's Word to the Northwest Indians. Through patriotic scenes of Jefferson closing the deal with Napoleon for the Louisiana Territory, the Lewis and Clark expedition into the newly acquired region, and Eli Whitney inventing the cotton gin, Acord as a trapper battled a vicious syndicate, assisted and inspired by the talented actress Louise Lorraine.

Still fans clamored for the slambang performance of his earlier days on the screen. His three-year contract at



Art Acord fans wanted action. He gave them their money's worth in *Sky-High Corral* (Universal, 1926).

Universal having expired, Art joined the J. Joseph Sameth Productions to make a couple of five-reelers, *Fighting For Justice* and *Looped For Life*, fraught with outlaws, robberies, crooked lawyers, friendship, jealousy, drunkenness, prison breaks, and hairbreadth escapes.

Universal gave in and signed him to star in a group of three- and five-reel features known as "Blue Streak Westerns." Basically action-thrillers, they contained plenty of trick riding and fancy stunts designed to please Art's followers, such as *Sign of the Cactus*, *The Call of Courage*, *Triple Action* and *The Circus Cyclone*. Art also introduced his trained pet horse named "Raven." He proved himself every bit as skilled a performer as Universal's other Western stars at the time—Hoot Gibson, Harry Carey, Pete Morrison, and Jack Hoxie. But he possessed an Achilles heel in the shape of a bottle.

While his contemporaries were fond of drinking and having a good time, they were able to control it. Art could not. For him, the post-war celebrating had never lost its flavor, and the momentum of the riotous Twenties picked up with lawless gambling, high-speed cars, and bootlegging.

His restlessness matched the spirit of the revelry. After a severe bout, he would disappear for days, sometimes weeks. Even his studio was unable to contact him. When his Blue Streak features were completed, Universal was glad to see him go. He managed a tour of South America with a Wild West troupe and returned to make a series of Westerns for Truart Studios late in 1925—*Three in Exile*, *Pals*, *The Wild Girl*,



Running the gauntlet in *In the Days of Buffalo Bill* (Universal Serial, 1922), Art received the bruises and cuts himself. In the early days of motion pictures, there were no stunt men to take his place in the rough scenes.

Acord wore a white hat in *The Ridin' Rascal*, one of eight Blue Streak Westerns he made for Universal in 1926.



Acord could hold his own with ruffians as well as the ladies in *The Man from the West* (Universal, 1926).

and *The Silent Guardian*. Louise Lorraine, then his wife, appeared with him. His marriage to Miss Lorraine seemed to bring him to his senses, and he was able to convince Universal that he was a changed man.

In 1926, he made eight pictures for Universal, most of them Blue Streak Westerns: *Lazy Lightning*, *The Man From the West*, *The Ridin' Rascal*, *Rustlers Ranch*, *The Set Up*, *Sky-High Corral*, *The Terror*, and *Western Pluck*. In 1927, he made at least five more: *Hard Fists*, *Loco Luck*, *Set Free*, *The Western Rover*, and *Spurs and Saddles*.

Many of these features were directed by Clifford S. Smith, who had won his spurs as William S. Hart's assistant in more than forty pictures. Art was usually cast as a mysterious vagabond or wandering stranger, fleeing from the law justifiably or otherwise, who becomes caught up in situations not of his own making. Because of remorse for his past he feels a responsibility to become involved, often sacrificing himself. Though his talent was above question, it was the screen character he liked best.

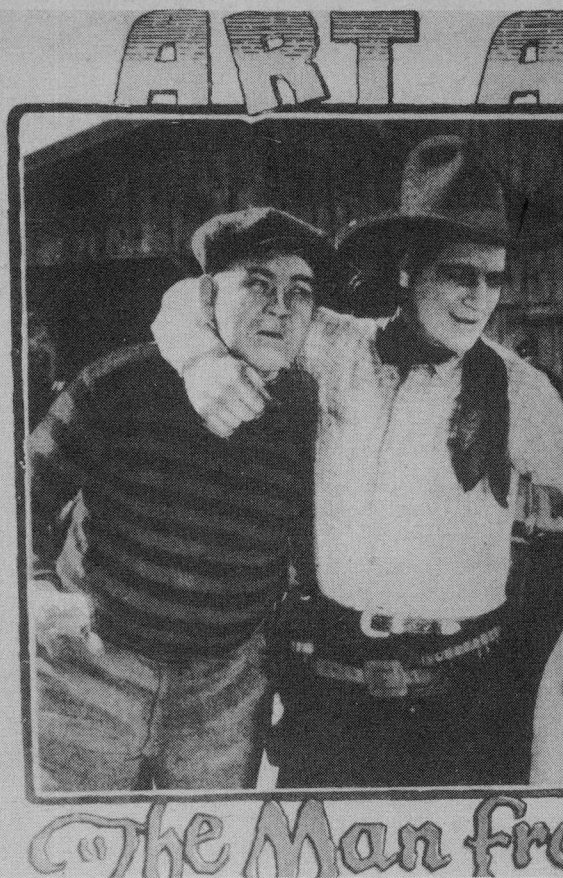
Throughout his make believe years, he seldom flaunted romantic getup, preferring the simple, realistic dress of the cowhand; however, advance billing of one of his last pictures in 1927 noted,

"Art Acord, Western motion picture star, has an outfit of cowboy's clothes which cost him \$1,155 from his \$125 hat to his \$370 gold inlaid silver spurs. This surpasses the value of the average society matron by far."

His cash handouts to cronies of his rodeo circuit days and less fortunate studio cowpokes were frequent and generous. When he refused to drink, his "sociable" companions would badger him until he broke down. Good natured and extremely likeable when sober, he became belligerently hostile under the influence and spent as much time recovering from barroom brawls as he did on movie sets. It soon became apparent that he was the same Acord who had previously delayed Universal's production schedule.

Well-meaning friends and associates tried to help him, but he lashed back. Even easy-going Hoot Gibson, who used to rough-and-tumble with Art for the fun of it, became a target, and it took a dozen cowboys to break up a bitterly fought battle between the pair in a box stall at the old Ascot Speedway where they had gone to "have it out." Within a few months, Louise Lorraine filed for divorce.

Divorce and alimony, with their attendant mounting torment, drove Acord



onward. The only answer to his dilemma was will power, which he was unable to muster. Smoldering memories received a frequent dousing. By mid-1928 Art was a very sick man. Lightweight contender Joey Benjamin helped him to work off his disenchantment and keep fit for his film chores, which were now limited to independent producers who could dash off a picture during his rare sober periods.

Exhibitors Film Corporation released him in *Two Gun O'Brien* in 1928. He made *The White Outlaw*, *Bullets and Justice*, *The Arizona Kid*, *An Oklahoma Cowboy*, *Wyoming Tornado*, and *Fighters of the Saddle* for J. Charles Davis Productions in 1929. Ill-luck continued to dog him.

IN OCTOBER, 1929, he was jailed in Los Angeles for assaulting a taxicab driver and possession of liquor. Finally released on bond, Art left California. On January 6, 1930, Robert E. Ferguson, an operative for the surety company, located him in a hotel at Nogales, Arizona. When Ferguson entered his room, the movie cowboy drew a knife and forced the officer in a closet. Acord then crashed through a window and was about to drop to the ground when he was nabbed by a deputy sheriff. Re-



turned to Los Angeles, he was fined \$150 and given a fifteen-day jail sentence.

Art's triumphs were behind him. He tried repeatedly, unsuccessfully, to remain in pictures. Producers were unwilling to invest money trying to disprove his well-established reputation. Dejected and despondent, he took his saddle and ropes and went down to Chihuahua City, Mexico.

Art appeared on the stage. His act was pleasing and the handsome horse which he rode in the streets kept the sleepy old town buzzing for weeks. He was paid two-hundred pesos (\$75) a day, which he spent in heavy gambling and drinking. When he finished his contract with the five theaters in town, he was without funds.

He had struck up a friendship with a man named Joe Gasper, who operated a mine 175 miles west of Chihuahua City. When Gasper left for his mine, Art went with him. He took a pick, carried it thirteen hundred feet into the earth, and went to work.

Acord stayed at the mine several days. He "dried out," put weight onto his six-foot-two-inch frame, and otherwise became a fair hand. Gasper allowed him full run of the camp, even the privilege of telling the Chinese cook what

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he wanted for the next meal.

But Art longed for the States. At night he talked of his movie life, of the money he had made and given away, and how they had no further use for him.

"I'm nearly forty-two years old, Joe," he said, "and all I know is cowpunching."

Gasper sent him over to the nearby

Hearst properties had been in complete peace and security.

The Babicorn ranch manager gave Acord a job. In one day at the ranch, Art roped ninety-six calves for branding, leading the army of *vaqueros*, and for the first time in years seemed relaxed.

Within a few weeks, however, he was back at the mine. He told Gasper that, despite romantic Western stories he had

sombre air behind his laugh. He had few good things to say about Hollywood.

He had been whooping it up the whole week after Christmas. Gasper was back in Chihuahua City, and visited with Art a couple days after New Year, 1931. He was in the hotel lobby about ten o'clock the morning of January 4, when he heard a fall in Acord's room immediately above on the second floor. The porter's bell rang, and Gasper rushed upstairs.

ACORD LAY on the floor. A white powder smeared his face. A former wrestling champion, Gus Sonnenberg, arriving on the scene at the same time, struck a vial from his hand. It had contained enough cyanide to have killed twenty men.

Acord was rushed to the hospital and a physician summoned. He told hospital attendants that he had taken poison. They tried desperately to resuscitate him. By early afternoon he was dead.

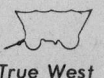
Many believed his death was an accident rather than suicide. Hollywood cohorts claimed he had met with foul play. Still others swore he had been knifed in a barroom brawl and that his obituary as reported in the press was an effort to avoid an international incident at a time when the United States and Mexico were adjusting political differences.

The confusion apparently stemmed from the contents of the burial order, issued January 6, signed by the Chihuahua official Augusto Cesas Dominguez, which read in part: "According to the certifying doctor of this city, the death... was due to *alcohol poisoning*..."

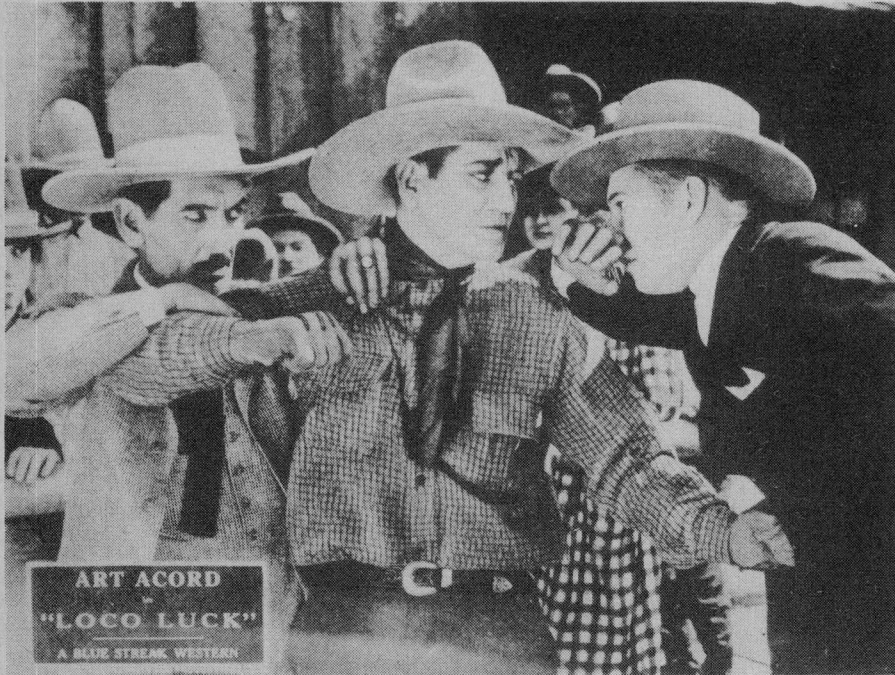
The body already was in a state of decay. The quick action of Legionnaires of the Los Angeles post kept it from being buried in potter's field of the Mexican town. They contacted T.C. Sarber, adjutant of the El Paso post, who in turn contacted Chihuahua City. Two days later, the body was placed in a rubber sack, and while Mexican officials watched, an airplane lifted the cargo. It was brought to the El Paso railroad station and placed on a train to California.

On January 17, 1931, Acord was buried at Glendale with full military honors. A star in his memory is embedded on Hollywood Boulevard; his grave-marker with its American Legion seal simply reads:

Our Pal
ART ACORD
1890-1931



True West



Art pulls no punches in the title scene of *Loco Luck*, one of the Blue Streak Westerns he made for Universal Pictures in 1927.

million-and-a-half acre ranch of William Randolph Hearst, wealthy newspaper-magazine publisher and editor. The Hearst family had holdings of ranch, oil, mining, timber, and chicle property in the states of Chihuahua and Campeche valued at more than four million dollars. It had been protected under the iron regime of their good friend President Porfiro Diaz. With Diaz' overthrow in 1911, there was a drive by the revolutionists to remove Yankee imperialists who had taken so much of the country's land and resources. Hearst's Babicorn ranch in Cihuahua was overrun and looted by irregulars under Pancho Villa, who stole over 60,000 head of cattle. Later, the ranch was occupied by the Carranza forces. Hearst complained to the Secretary of State about the lawlessness, without results. Finally, Babicorn *vaqueros* formed their own 100-man "army" and reportedly killed more than a score of the bandits in one pitched battle. After adoption of the revised constitution of 1917, things settled down. Under the administration of the new president, Alvaro Obregon,

heard, cowpunching was the hardest, poorest-paid work in the world next to mining. When Gasper returned to Chihuahua City for supplies, Acord went with him, wondering what to do.

He made several more personal appearances, bringing in some money. It soon found its way to the bars and gaming tables.

Acord took a room in a hotel where Pancho Villa had headquartered and stabled his horses while he swept like a plague over Mexico. It was the gathering place for American tourists, and Art spent much time in the lobby keeping up with gossip from the States.

He was always a welcome sight. Wound up, he would regale Americans with his early experiences on the plains of Oklahoma, how he had once entered Brigham Young University of Utah to obtain an education, won the *Croix de Guerre* in France, and played opposite Theda Bara in *Cleopatra*.

They were sympathetic and expressed regret for a fellow American stranded in a foreign land. Art accepted the aid they gave him, but there was an ominous,

CHARLES M. RUSSELL

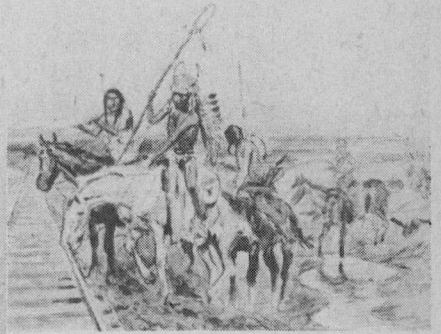
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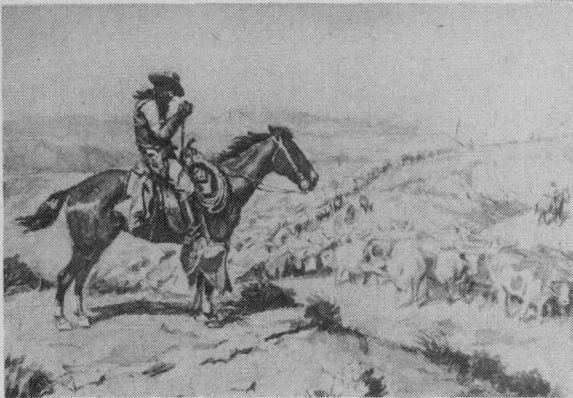
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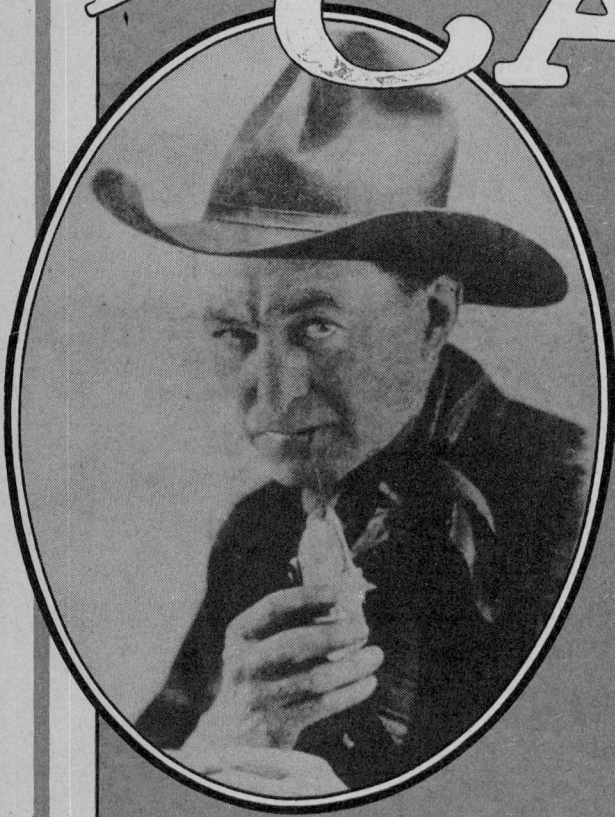
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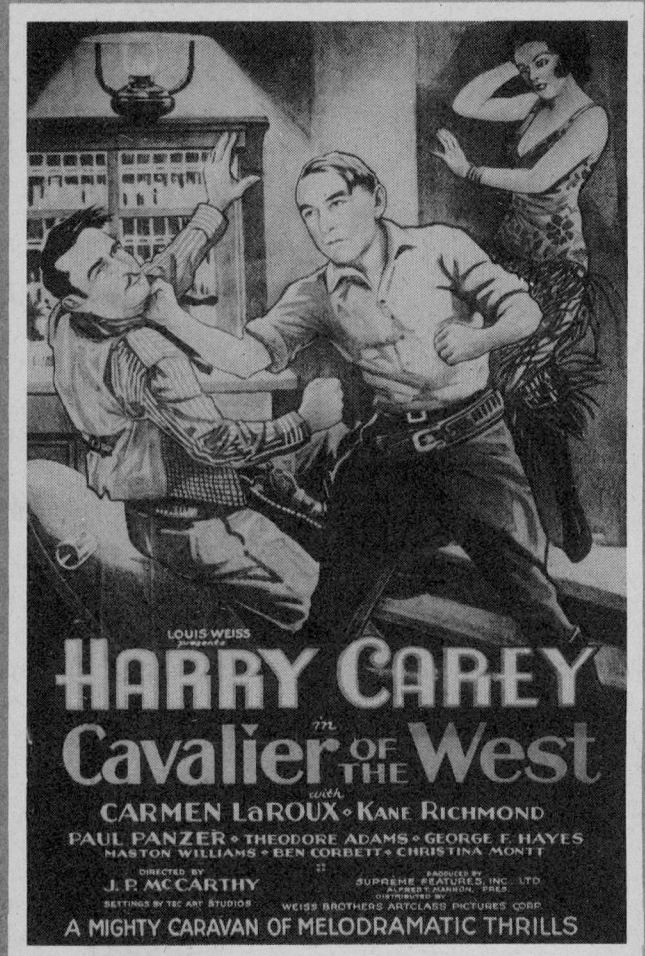
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HARRY CAREY



"... in a dirty blue shirt, an old vest, and patched overalls. He seldom carried a gun, and sometimes didn't even wear a hat. We tried to do it in the way it had been done in the West..."—John Ford.



A majority of early favorites who epitomized the Western hero on the silver screen were born east of the

Mississippi and knew little of riding, roping, and rough-and-tumble combat before becoming transplanted sagebrush idols.

Harry Carey was no different. City bred, he won fame and fortune far from the streets of his native New York. For more than a decade he portrayed a two-fisted son of the West, and after a brief sojourn on the stage, came back as a character actor in motion pictures. His dedication and durability went unquestioned, and his casual approach and down-to-earth individuality made him unique at a time when many Western stars were merely carbon copies of each other. He has been described as "a stern Bill Hart and homespun Will Rogers rolled into one."

Harry DeWitt Carey II was born on January 16, 1878, in the Bronx, the son of a Tammany Special Sessions judge, Henry DeWitt Carey, who later operated a horse-car line. Carey grew up in City Island. As a boy he learned from the mounted police some of the rudiments of horsemanship. He attended Hamilton College and New York University, where he took part in track, played tackle on the football team, and studied law.

While filling in as an emergency horse-car driver during a snowstorm in 1899, Carey was stricken with pneumonia. He was forced to give up his law studies and was sent to a friend's ranch in Montana to recuperate. During the visit he became a student of the history of that great colorful land. It inspired him to write a melodrama, a burlesque on western plays, entitled *Montana*. When the star "fell down on the job," he took the leading role of "Cheyenne Harry."

Carey made his stage debut in the Yorkville Theater in 1903, and for the next four years toured America. His initial success resulted in a second effort, *The Heart of Alaska*, but it was a failure. His experience, however, convinced him he would rather act than become a lawyer.

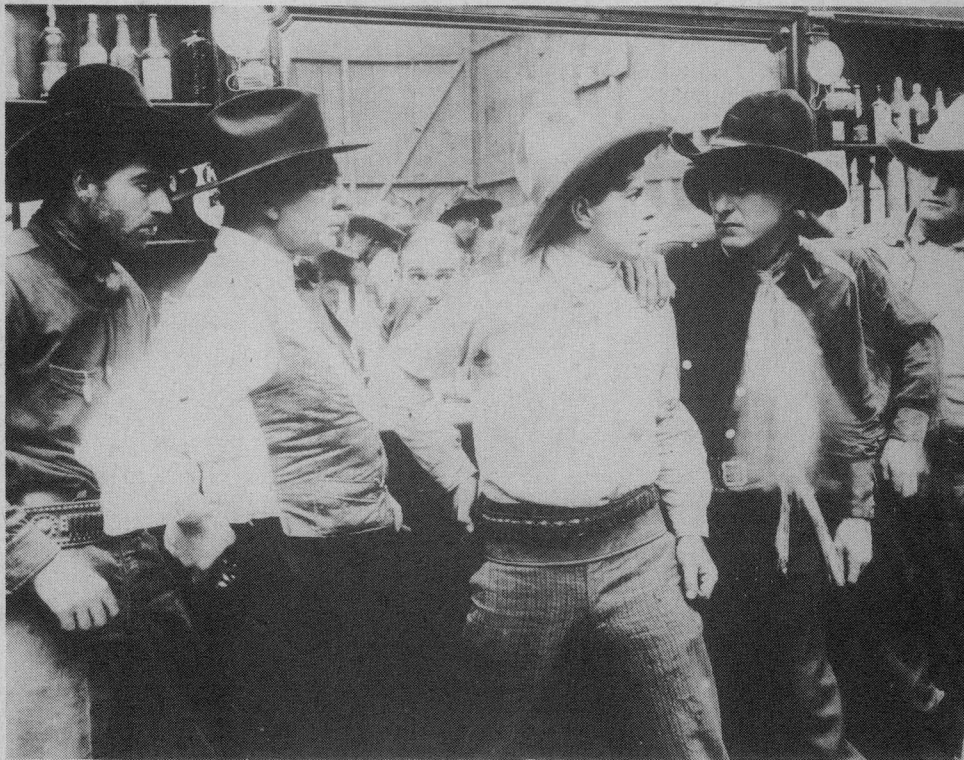
In 1908 he found work in a Western two-reeler being filmed on Staten Island entitled *Bill Sharkey's Last Game*. David W. Griffith was just starting his Biograph Studios. Griffith was impressed with Carey and gave him an important part in *The Unseen Enemy*, the film in which the popular Gish sisters, Lillian and Dorothy, made their debuts. Lionel Barrymore also was in the cast. Again, in 1912, Carey appeared in Griffith's *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, ancestor to the gangster films of later decades.

During the winter of 1913 Biograph True West

Studios moved to California. The future of flickers was still doubtful and nickelodeons were looked upon as a fad that would soon pass, but Carey took a gamble and went along. In the next two years, under Griffith's direction, he established himself as a competent actor in a variety of roles, both hero and villain.

Meanwhile, the serial as a cinema

Mystery and *Zudora*, starring James Cruze and Marguerite Snow; North American Film Corporation released *The Diamond From the Sky* in thirty chapters, featuring Lottie Pickford in a role originally intended for her sister, Mary; and Vitagraph made *The Goddess* with Anita Stewart and *The Fates of Flora Fourflush*, starring Clara Kimball Young. Not to be outdone, Kalem



Hoot Gibson goes for his gun as Harry Carey restrains him in *A Knight of the Range* (Universal, 1916).

form had reached a respectable maturity. In 1912 *McClure's Ladies World*, with the view of increasing magazine readership, arranged a promotion with the Edison Company. A series of one-reelers—a group of short stories having the same plot—were released simultaneously with the publication each month. The result was a twelve-chapter thriller entitled *What Happened to Mary?* starring Edison's favorite actress, Mary Fuller. The idea had a far-reaching effect. Companies financially unable to produce feature pictures turned to the serial as a product which could be shot in a short time, at a low cost, and which could be relied on to make a profit.

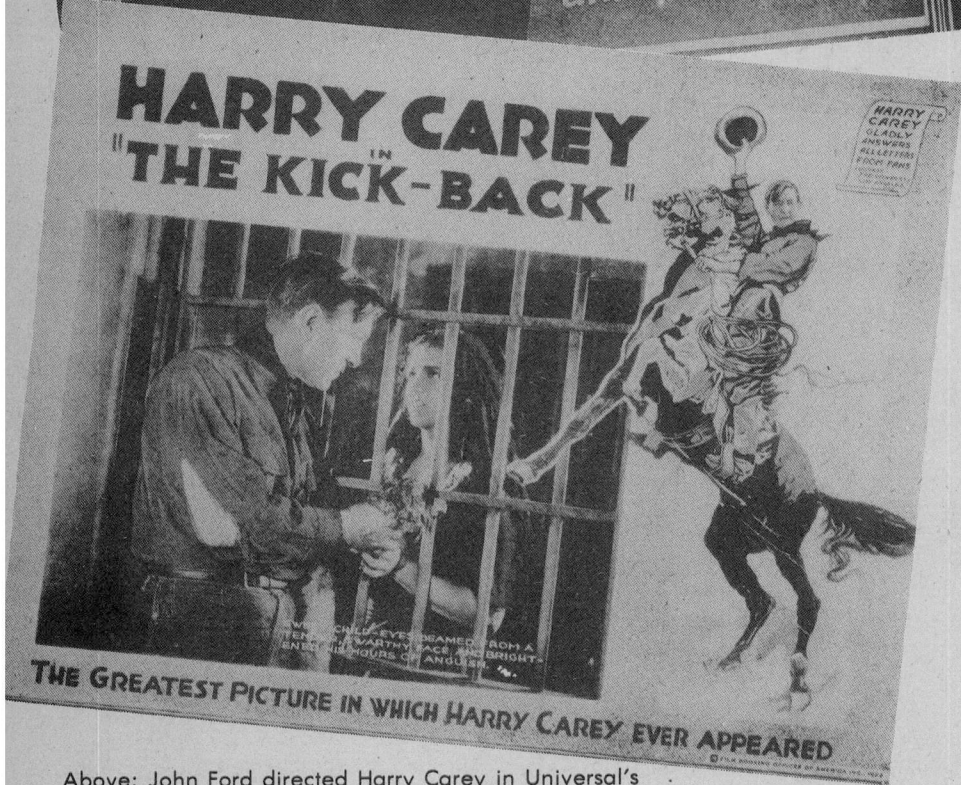
In 1913 Selig released *The Adventures of Kathlyn* in thirteen chapters, starring Kathlyn Williams. The following year Lubin did *The Beloved Adventurer*, and Pathe produced its Pearl White *Exploits of Elaine* and *The Perils of Pauline*. Thanouser made *The Million Dollar*

launched *The Hazards of Helen* (119 chapters, one reel each!) starring Helen Gibson and Helen Holmes.

Universal also got into the act in 1914 with *Lucille Love, Girl of Mystery*; *The Trey of Hearts* and *The Master Key*. In 1915 the company released *The Black Box* with Herbert Rawlinson and Anna Little, and *The Broken Coin* in twenty-two chapters, starring Francis Ford and Grace Cunard.

Joe Brandt was then general manager at Universal. He was always looking for a new slant. Perhaps the original *McClure's* idea was still turning in his brain. He conceived the proposition of a round robin—a continued picture in fifteen episodes, written by the nation's leading fiction authors. One writer would prepare the opening chapter, and the next would pick it up, until each had handled a chapter in the manner he felt best.

The serial title was *Graft*. Hobart



Above: John Ford directed Harry Carey in Universal's 1919 production *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. Below: Harry Carey and Conchita Pinellos starred in *The Kick-Back* (FBO, 1922).

Henley played the leading role of a young attorney in the first three episodes, then was forced to give it up. Brandt looked around for another actor already in public favor. Biograph, for some reason, had not entered the serial field, perhaps because the company was on its way out of business. Brandt prevailed on Harry Carey to replace Henley. By this time Carey had been expanded to twenty episodes, and Carey finished the remaining seventeen, from *The Power of the People*, *The Railroad*

Monopoly, *The Insurance Swindlers*, *The Illegal Bucket Shops*, *The Iron Ring*, *The Pirates of Finance*, and *The Hidden City of Crime*, to *The Final Conquest*.

With *Graft* Carey became "instantly recognizable on-screen." His taciturn characterizations and humanistic approach won him many faithful fans. Nearly forty years old, with a strong body and rugged features, he was a natural western hero. So thought the famed John Ford, then an assistant director at Universal. Carey's contract

was running out and Ford had orders to utilize him. He went to Carey about an idea he had.

Carey replied, "That's good, let's do it."

"Well, we haven't a typewriter," Ford said.

Carey shrugged, "Oh, hell, we don't need one—we can make it up as we go along."

It turned out to be one of Universal's best pictures of the year—released February 3, 1916, entitled *A Knight of the Range*.

This picture also introduced Carey to his leading lady, Olive Fuller Golden, a blonde charmer of eighteen, whom he later married. Another member of the cast—and destined to go far in Western films—was twenty-three-year-old Hoot Gibson.

During the next two years, Carey appeared in thirteen Westerns under Ford's direction and the Universal banner: *The Soul Herder*, *Cheyenne's Pal*, *Straight Shooting*, *Secret Man*, *A Marked Man*, *Bucking Broadway*, *The Phantom Riders*, *Wild Women*, *Thieves' Gold*, *The Scarlet Drop*, *Hell Bent*, *A Woman's Fool*, and *Three Mounted Men*.

Excepting *Thieves' Gold* (from Frederick R. Becholdt's *Back to the Right Trail*) and *A Woman's Fool* (from Owen Wister's popular novel *Lim McLean*), the story lines were Ford's and Carey's.

"Carey and I usually wrote our own scripts," Ford recalled. "We finally got a writer to take it down in shorthand and tap it out for the crew so they would have some idea what we were doing—we certainly did not. Then we'd ride our horses out to location, shoot till dark, and camp in sleeping bags. We just stayed till we'd finished the picture, then rode back. The two-reelers were made in five—six days at the most."

With the exception of *Scarlet Drop* (as "Kaintuck" Harry Ridge) and *A Woman's Fool* (as Lin McLean), Carey appeared as "Cheyenne Harry," the hero of his first melodrama.

Straight Shooting the only film that exists from Ford's early career at Universal, was his first full-length feature, a five-reeler. It was also a milestone in that Ford had only six months of directional experience behind him and had been working in two-reelers that were little more than rough-and-tumble "actioners" with roistering, rowdy heroes.

Straight Shooting's build-up is surprisingly slow and methodical. Carey, a professional gunman, is hired by cattlemen to help them fight their war against homesteaders. Violence erupts when Carey learns that the cattlemen are ter-

True West



Harry Carey strikes a typical pose in this scene from *Bullet Proof*, directed by John Ford (Universal, 1920).

rorizing women and children. It ends in a spectacular street battle, with the homesteaders besieged, and a ride to the rescue. The William S. Hart influence is apparent, in the austerity of production and in the intermingling of good and bad in both the good guys and bad guys.

In these early pictures, Hart's "good badman" style even overlapped Carey's role as "Cheyenne Harry." Generally there was showmanship and polish, a more epic and grander view of man and the land, and a deliberate striving for realism and detail typical of Ford in later years. *Moving Picture World* (October 13, 1917) described *Secret Man* as "a generous lot of picturesque scenes, flooded with California sunshine," and commented on *Bucking Broadway* (December 22, 1917): "Ford again demonstrates his happy faculty for getting all outdoors into the scenes." *Motion Picture News* (June 29, 1918), reviewing *Hell Bent*, stressed the "sustained punch" Ford put in his pictures.

In *The Soul Herder*, Carey, a drifter, is thrown out of town. In the desert he meets the new minister and his family en route. When the minister is killed in an Indian raid, Harry assumes the care of his small daughter, dons his frock, and returns to reform the settlement.

In *Cheyenne's Pal*, Carey, again down True West

on his luck, sells his mount, Cactus, to a British quartermaster, only to learn that the shipment of horses is going to France—probably to death. He boards the boat in the guise of an employee and that night jumps ship with Cactus. Carey is captured, but the captain allows him to keep the horse and puts him to work to pay back the sale price.

"They were character stories," Ford said. "Carey was a great actor, and we didn't doll him up. They had several at Universal whom they were grooming to be Western leading men, so we decided to kid them—made Carey sort of a bum, a saddle tramp . . . in a dirty blue shirt, an old vest, and patched overalls. He seldom carried a gun, and sometimes didn't even wear a hat. We tried to do it in the way it had been done in the West. In the shoot-outs, he used a rifle instead of a pistol—none of that quick draw stuff and flashy clothes."

BY 1919 CAREY was one of Universal's hottest properties. He had been getting \$75 a week. He signed a new contract at \$1,250, and Ford was elevated to director. This successful combination continued another three years and through nearly a score of Western short subjects and features: *Roped*, *A Fight For Life*, *Bare Fists*, *Riders of Ven-*

geance, *The Last Outlaw*, *The Outcasts of Poker Flats*, *The Ace of the Saddle*, *The Rider of the Law*, *A Gun-Fightin' Gentleman*, *Marked Men*, *Overland Red*, *Bullet Proof*, *Human Stuff*, *Blue Streak McCoy*, *If Only' Jim*, *The Freeze Out*, *The Wallop*, and *Desperate Trails*.

The plots continued strong and unusual, always uncomplicated. While George C. Hull was a frequent scenarist, Carey and Ford depended more often on popular stories like Bret Harte's *The Outcasts of Poker Flats*, Ford's greatest affection was for *Marked Men*, an early version of Peter B. Kyne's *The Three God-fathers*. *If Only' Jim* came from Philip Ver-rill Mighel's *Bruvver Jim's Baby* (1904); Courtney Ryley Cooper's *Christmas Eve at Pilot Point* provided the source for *Desperate Trails*; and *The Wallop* was adapted from Eugene Manlove Rhodes' *The Girl He Left Behind Him*.

Critics continued to take note of Carey's steady improvement as an actor and Ford's magnificent locations and first-class camera work. *Photoplay* called *The Outcasts of Poker Flats* an "optic symphony."

Carey's last two pictures for Universal were directed by Robert Thornby (*The Fox*, 1921) and Stuart Paton (*Man to Man*, 1922). Ford became director at Fox Studios, where he was to work exclusively for the next ten years, and Carey left Universal for a more lucrative contract with R-C Pictures—Film Booking Offices of America, one of the foremost producers of Westerns in the 1920s. He made six features for FBO: *The Kick-Back*, *Good Men and True*, (another Rhodes story), *Canyon of the Fools*, *Crashin' Thru*, *Desert Driven*, and *The Miracle Baby*.

In 1924 Carey cast his lot with Stellar Productions for *The Night Hawk*, *The Lightning Rider*, *Tiger Thompson*, *Roaring Rails*, *The Flaming Forties*, and *Soft Shoes*, distributed by W.W. Hodkinson; and *Beyond the Border* for Rogstrom Productions and PDC (Producers Distributing Corporation). In 1925 he joined forces with Hunt Stromberg for a series of features that ranged across the breadth of the West: *Beyond the Border*, *Silent Sanderson*, *The Texas Trail*, *The Bad Lands*, *The Prairie Pirate*, and *The Man From Red Gulch*. Charles R. Rogers Productions—Pathe Exchange kept Carey on the move in 1926 with *Driftin' Thru*, *The Seventh Bandit*, *The Frontier Trail*, and *Satan Town*.

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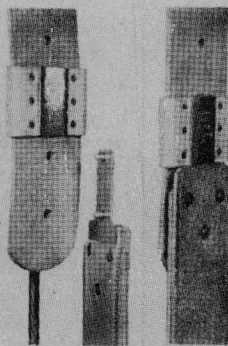
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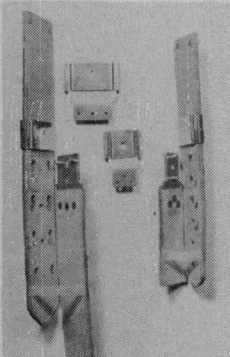
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All were intelligent, well above average programmers, and Carey's fans continued to enjoy his strong roles. The *New York Times*, reviewing *Silent Sandersson*, described Carey as possibly the best of his type portraying Western heroes," and, about *The Texas Trail* commented: "One of his excellences is that he doesn't trouble himself about 'acting' but just walks through what he has to do—when he is not riding."

But none of the series brought Carey the recognition received from his films with the Ford touch. Nor did he nail down the fame being enjoyed by Hoot Gibson at Universal and by Tom Mix and Buck Jones at Fox. Independent producers did not have the distribution facilities of the big studios.

Somewhat discouraged, Carey finished his work at Rogers Productions with *Burning Brigades* and *The Border Patrol*. Pathe did not renew his contract.

"At Liberty," so to speak, Carey played character roles in Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer's adaptation of Rachel Crother's play, *A Little Journey*, and in a sports melodrama built around the pitching skill of the New York Yankees' bush-leaguer, Jim Kelly, entitled *Slide Kelly, Slide*. In MGM's production of Robert W. Service's novel, *The Trail of '98*, Carey portrayed villain Jack Locasto, whose cutthroat existence in the Alaskan wastes during the gold rush ended in a wonderfully realistic brawl. Locasto, enveloped in flames, plunged from his burning dancehall and gambling den to his death.

With the arrival of the "talkies" and the attendant problems of additional equipment—in some cases, the reorganization of whole production companies—Harry Carey was forced into temporary retirement.

HE HAD NO worries. Like Bill Hart, he was caught up in the West. With the monetary returns of an already lengthy career, he had purchased and stocked a large ranch and trading post in the San Fernando Valley. He and Olive had a son, Henry DeWitt Carey III (later to appear in pictures as Harry Carey, Jr.), and a daughter, Ada. For a while he was content to enjoy his family, manage the ranch and work with genuine cowboys. He often made camping trips into the mountain ranges, covering many of the back trails of the old frontier.

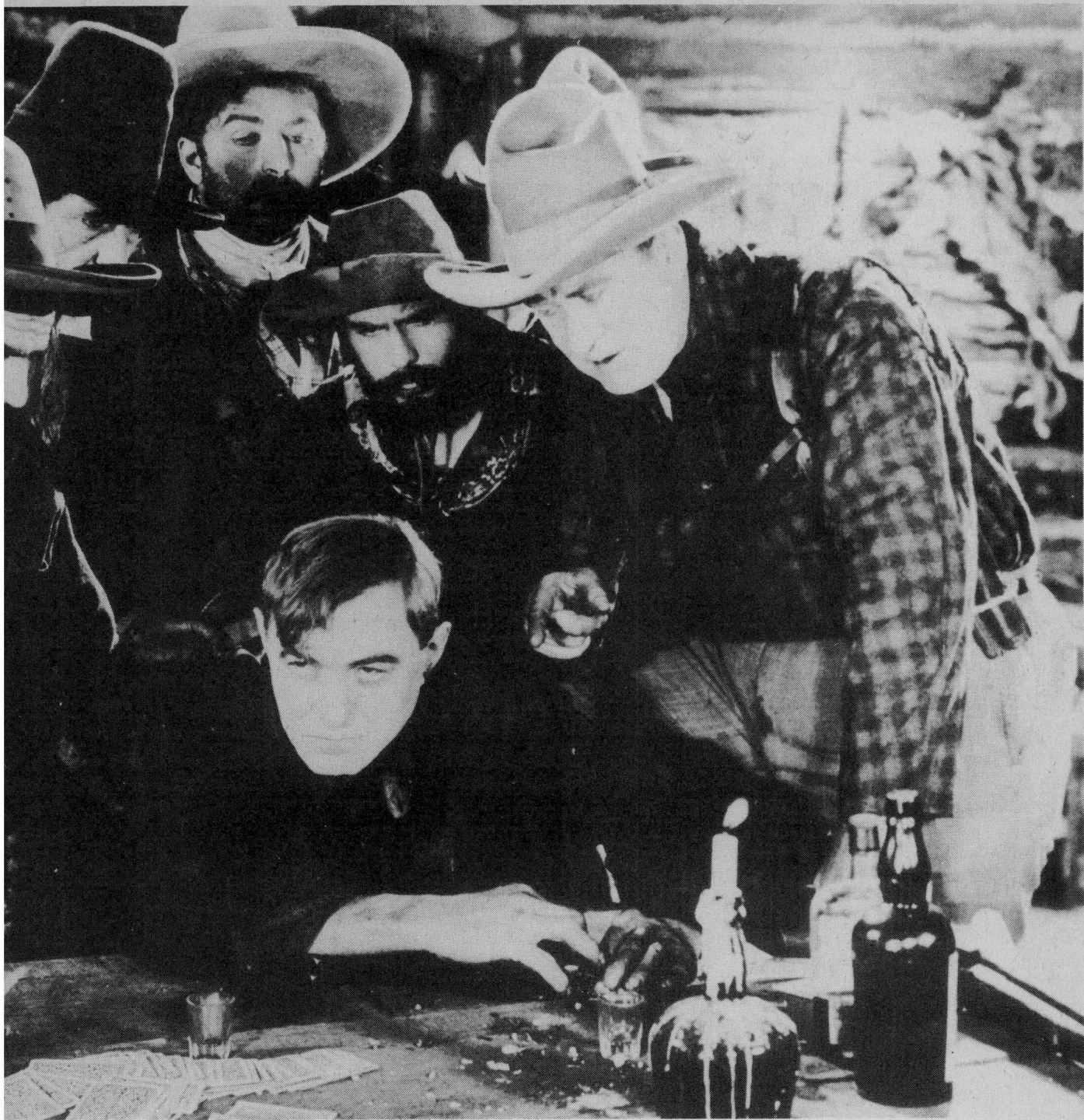
Then tragedy struck. The St. Francis Dam was part of the great Owens aqueduct system supplying Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley with water for irrigation and domestic purposes. At one o'clock on the morning of



Harry Carey played a dispirited Saul

March 13, 1928, the dam collapsed, pouring a sudden, seventy-eight-foot wall of water into San Francisquito Canyon in a mad race to the ocean. The dry bed of the Santa Clara River was able to contain the initial outlet, but soon the banks broke and it spread over a strip of country sixty miles wide. Citrus orchards, roads, and utility lines were destroyed; state highway bridges and a steel bridge on the Southern Pacific railroad were demolished; more than 700 homes and ranches that dotted the can-

True West



Scanlon in Charles R. Rogers Productions' 1926 *The Seventh Bandit*.

yon were crushed like egg shells and, in most instances, their inhabitants were swept to their doom.

Within an hour after sunrise, thousands of volunteer rescue workers had assembled on the Carey trading post trail and at every other entrance into the canyon, aiding 600 deputy sheriffs and police and state motor vehicle officers in the difficult task of carrying over 200 bodies from the silt and mudwash to dry land and transferring them by ambulances to temporary morgues at

True West

Moorpark, Piru, Newhall, and Fillmore. Many were clad in nightclothes partly torn off by the force of the waters, evidence that the little warning given had been insufficient.

It was the worst disaster California had known in years. Carey's ranch was directly in the path of the deluge, and he lost 750 sheep, 60 horses, and 200 cattle. Financially ruined, he worked up a vaudeville act with his wife and made personal appearances in the nation's theaters.

Both were soon rescued from their plight, however, by Irving Thalberg, who cast them in MGM's new talking picture, based on the 1927 Alfred Aloysius Horn-Ethelrada Lewis novel, *Trader Horn*. Directed by W.S. Van Dyke, other featured players were Edwina Booth and Duncan Renaldo (later popular as "The Cisco Kid"). In February 1929 the party left Culver City to spend the next several months in Africa, filming in such locations as Nairobi, Lake Victoria, Tanganyika,



Native drums fill the jungle as Nina (Edwina Booth), Peru (Duncan Renaldo), and Trader Horn (Harry Carey), with his faithful companion, Rencharo (Mutia Omoolu) flee from the pursuing Isorgi warriors in *Trader Horn* (MGM, 1931).

Uganda, Belgian Congo, Masdini, Butabia, Panyamur, Murchison Falls at Lake Albert, and Kenya.

The project was not completed without hardships. Booth contracted a near fatal jungle sickness. There was considerable delay and difficulty in getting sound equipment into Africa. Then MGM was dissatisfied with some of the scenery, and a number of exterior shots had to be redone in Hollywood and Mexico. But *Trader Horn* was a shrewdly fashioned adventure movie. Carey not only played his most notable role as old Aloysius Horn, but earned enough to rebuild his San Fernando ranch.

Hardly had this been accomplished when fire struck, and every ranch building burned to the ground. Dismayed and disgusted, Carey worked hard to survive a second financial crisis, dividing his time between Westerns, character parts, and the stage.

Although younger actors had taken his place for good, he proved that he could hold his own in *The Vanishing Legion* (a Mascot serial), *Bad Company* (RKO-Pathé), and *Cavalier of the West* (Artclass-Weiss Bros.) made in 1931. In 1932, he made two more serials for Mascot (*The Devil Horse* and *Last of the Mohicans*), three Westerns for Artclass (*Without Honors*, *Border Devils*, and *The Night Rider*), and *Law and Order* for Universal—"a superior specimen of Western heroics" in which Walter Huston as "Saint" Johnson, "armed with a brace of six-shooters and a sense of indignation, admirably assisted by Harry Carey, Raymond Hatton, and

Ralph Ince, set out to convert the shouting hellhole of Tombstone."

Following a character bit in Zane Grey's *Sunset Pass* (Paramount, 1933), Carey made *Wagon Trail*, *Rustler's Paradise*, *Powdersmoke Range*, *The Last Outpost*, *Wild Mustang*, *Last of the Clintons*, and *Ghost Town* for Astor Pictures, Paramount, Ajax, and RKO, respectively, and was leader of the Vigilantes in *Barbary Coast* (United Artists, 1935).

The years 1936-1939 saw Carey in his most widely varied roles. He was commandant in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*; Kit Carson in *Sutter's Gold*; Senator Nash in *The Accusing Finger* (a crusade against capital punishment); a newspaper publisher in the circulation war of *Street of Missing Men*; and captain of the *William Brown*, a legendary slave ship that foundered and sank in *Souls at Sea*.

In *Danger Patrol*, a story of "the stern-faced, resolute fellows who 'fly' the high explosives when oil wells are blazing their heads off and only a dose of 'soup' will stop them," Carey was the "typical hard-shelled father with the inevitable heart of gold—one of the 'soup' hustlers—who forbids his daughter to marry the young man of her choice because he is a 'soup' hustler too."

In *The Law West of Tombstone* he was a tall-talking, colorful liar named Bill Parker (reminiscent of Texas' famed Judge Roy Bean), who takes up residence in the frontier town of Martinez and dispenses barroom justice backed by his quick-speaking Colt.

His versatility was best attested as President of the Senate in *Mr. Smith Goes*

to Washington.

In 1940, after nearly thirty years on the screen, Carey made his legitimate Broadway debut in a play called *Heavenly Express*. He portrayed an aged locomotive engineer "with seasoned authority." The following year he was again on the stage in a revival of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* which *Life* magazine called the best play of the season. In 1944 he appeared in *But not Good-bye*.

During that period, he also had character parts in such motion pictures as *My Son Is Guilty*, *Outside the Three Mile Limit*, *Beyond Tomorrow*, *They Knew What They Wanted*, *Parachute Battalion*, *Among the Living*, *The Great Moment*, *The Shepherd of the Hills*, *The Spoilers*, *Air Force*, *Happy Land*, and ironically enough *Sundown*—"a tale of intrigue among the African blacks and stalwart English heroes."

Still straight and lean at sixty-nine, Carey made his last appearance in three Westerns: *The Sea of Grass*, from the novel by Conrad Richter; *Angel and the Badman* with Gail Patrick and John Wayne; and David O. Selznick's multi-million-dollar, two-hour-and-a-quarter interpretation of Niven Busch's sex-blistered romance involving a half-breed Indian girl and two dagger-eyed Texas brothers entitled *Duel in the Sun*. These three pictures were released during the early months of 1947.

Shortly afterward, Carey developed a heart and lung condition. A Black Widow spider bite at Balboa Beach in August aggravated it. On September 21 he died at his home in Brentwood, near Hollywood, of coronary thrombosis.

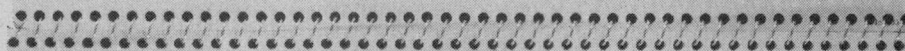
More than a thousand persons, many wearing ten-gallon hats, gathered at the Photo Memorial Farm, of which Carey was a member, for an outdoor service conducted by Reverend J. Herbert Smith of the All Saints Protestant Episcopal Church. The funeral was exactly as Carey said he wanted it to be. He was wearing his cowboy boots, a black suit and shoestring tie. Burl Ives sang a cowboy lament, and John Wayne recited a favorite poem.

As further tribute, when John Ford directed his Technicolor version of *The Three Godfathers* with John Wayne, Pedro Armendariz, and Harry Carey, Jr. in the leading roles in 1949, he introduced it with a film clip of Harry Carey on horseback against a sunset. A footnote stated that the feature was dedicated to the memory of this popular character actor and great Western star.

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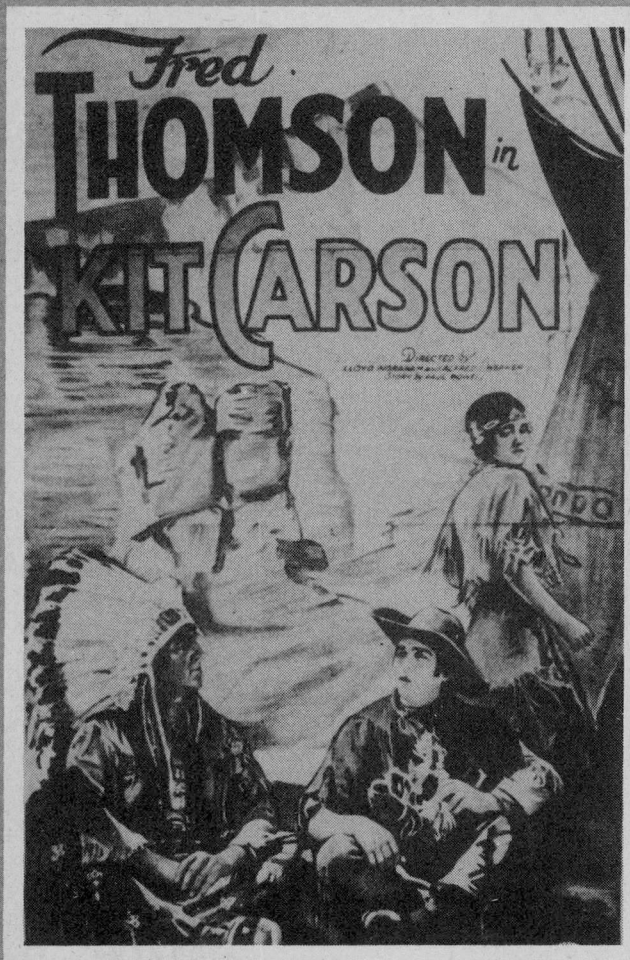
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FRED THOMSON



... his pictures were slanted to be a good influence on America's youth. There was no sex or undue violence and occasionally there were meaningful subplots, like bringing in Boy Scouts to help solve a problem.



There is an old truism that the measure of a man in his passing is the contribution he made to society and

how much he gave of himself to others. Although his screen career ended too abruptly—unexpectedly, Fred Thomson had acquitted himself admirably on both points.

He was born Frederick Clifton Thomson in Pasadena, California, on February 26, 1891, the son of Reverend Williel and Mrs. Clara P. Thomson. Obtaining his early education in Pasadena, he entered Occidental College in Los Angeles, 1910. Of excellent physique, he participated in college football, baseball, and track.

The year of his graduation Fred took first place in national track and field competition, scoring a total of 7,009 points. In 1911, the year he entered Princeton Theological Seminary, he repeated his victory, winning with 6,709. In the national ten track and field events at Princeton, New Jersey, the spring of 1913, the six-foot-three, 230-pound Thomson out-scored all athletes in the land—even topping the great Jim Thorpe—with 7,499 points. This record was to stand nearly eight years.

In the latter part of 1913, Fred was ordained a Presbyterian minister. He married a college classmate, Gail Dubois Jepson, returned with his wife to Los Angeles, and became a pastor of Hope Church, Eagle Rock Valley, in Southern California. In 1915, the couple moved to Nevada. Fred served as pastor of the Presbyterian church at Goldfield. Because of his interest and work with young people, he was appointed state commissioner for the Boy Scouts of America. In 1916, his wife died.

Fred returned to California. World War I was raging in Europe. The young minister enlisted as a chaplain in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 143rd Field Artillery stationed at Camp Kearney, San Diego. During an inter-service exhibition football game, he broke a leg. Recuperating in the army hospital, he was visited by actress Mary Pickford and her screenwriter friend, Frances Marion. Miss Marion was taken by Fred's cheerfulness and handsome appearance, and Fred never forgot her when his regiment was sent to France.

While lending spiritual guidance to doughboys in the American Expeditionary Forces overseas, Fred met a young marine who had just demonstrated his boxing ability behind the battlelines to the great satisfaction of

When the script called for Thomson to scale a building, he had no need for a stunt man to double for him as in *Ridin' The Wind* (Monogram, 1925).

True West





Thomson's tough expression and real fights won the hearts of his fans. As *The Silent Stranger* (FBO, 1924), he protects Hazel Keener from threatening mail thieves.

the soldiers of the sea. His ideals of chivalry, courtesy, and professional morality in athletic endeavors were much the same as Thomson's, and the two became good friends. The marine was nearly as tall as Thomson, but underweighed him by forty pounds. He had been born May 25, 1898, in the Greenwich Village section of New York City. He was soon to become champion heavyweight boxer of the world. His name was James Joseph "Gene" Tunney.

Thomson next saw him in Paris at the inter-allied games following the Armistice in 1918. Fred won the hand-grenade throwing contest. Carried away by the enthusiasm of his buddies, he entered and won the decathlon event without taking off his shirt. Tunney participated in the inter-allied service fights, reached the finals, and ultimately

became the light heavy-weight champion of the AEF. It would be some time before he and Thomson met again.

Back in California after the war, Fred resumed his friendship with Frances Marion. They were married in September, 1919. Frances and her studio acquaintances began coaxing him to enter the movies. They pointed out that, while he reached hundreds of people from the pulpit, on the screen he could reach millions, especially youngsters, with his ideals of clean living.

Looking at it from that angle, there was something mystical about the motion picture. It had the power to compress his message as a powerful telescope compressed space, and possibly rocket him to fame and fortune in the process.

Fred left the ministry. He made his screen debut as co-star opposite "Amer-

ica's Sweetheart" in Mary Pickford's 1921 production *The Love Light*, which Frances had written. Angela (Pickford) tends the lighthouse in an Italian fishing village while her brothers are fighting at the front. A foreigner (Thomson) is washed ashore. He pretends to be an American, but in reality is a German spy who has caused her brother's death. Angela cares for him; they fall in love and are secretly married. Too late she realizes her mistake, but the spy falls over a cliff and dies. Angela bears their child. Then her old sweetheart Giovanni returns blind from the war. Almost beside herself, Angela gives the baby to Maria, who has lost her own child. During a storm, Maria drowns. Angela rescues her child and returns to Giovanni and happiness.

BEING KILLED off before the film was a third over did Fred no good. His performance as a straight supporting star, however, drew fine comments.

Frances gave him a better break in her screen adaptation of Fannie Hurst's story, *Just Around the Corner*, a Cosmopolitan production released in December, 1921. Fred poses as a reluctant fiance whom the heroine's mother, in failing health, has repeatedly begged to meet. The mother dies, convinced that her daughter is to marry "a real man," and Fred wins the girl.

His next supporting role was in the Marshall Neilan production of Booth Tarkington's popular comedy-drama *Penrod*, premiered in Chicago in January, 1922. That year Fox Film Corporation produced its new Dustin Farnum adventure-drama *Oathbound*, and signed Fred as the heavy. Lawrence Bradbury (Farnum), a wealthy ship owner is determined to catch silk thieves who operate by means of his ships. His brother, Jim, (Thomson), is the ringleader, but the skipper and a friend are suspected. Jim hoodwinks Lawrence into believing he is a revenue officer, until the skipper's friend proves to be the real agent and traps the crooked brother.

Fred's ability to handle action caught the attention of Universal. He was given the lead in *The Eagle's Talons*, a 1923 serial, in which an unscrupulous gang of investors attempts to corner the wheat market to make themselves richer and the poor poorer. A financier who holds an incriminating document jeopardizes their plan. He mysteriously disappears and the gang turns to his daughter (Ann Little) to force him to terms. Al Wilson, an accomplished stunt flyer, enters the plot. Miss Little, hanging onto the wing

of his rapidly climbing plane, falls into a racing automobile, leaps from the car to another plane and is transferred in mid-air back to Wilson's plane. At this point Thomson steps in and in fourteen more chapters that take him from the *Edge of Eternity* through *The Flood of Fury* down *The Road to Doom* and into *The Inferno*, the Eagle is foiled in a thrilling climax.

Universal then cast Thomson as Nat Bonnell in the Weber-Schroeder adaptation of Clara Louise Burnham's *Jewel: A Chapter of Her Life*, the Christian Science bestselling novel of 1903. Fred saw it as a "dead end" role. *The Eagle's Talons* had given him his first real taste of stardom. Widow, grandfather, in-law, family life plots no longer appealed to him. He wanted action with a moral.

One day he walked into the local riding academy and observed a big white horse of Irish hunter breed tearing furiously about the tanbark, apparently unmanageable. Thomson soon quieted him. He bought the animal, trained him, named him Silver King, and signed with Monogram R-C Pictures (not the Monogram of the 1930s) to make a series of westerns to be released through the Film Booking Offices of America.

Harry Joe Brown, who would guide Ken Maynard and others to fame, was producer. Al Rogell directed the scripts written by Marion Jackson. With the help of this trio, Fred soon found himself ranked among the top five cowboy stars of the silent era.

He made seven feature westerns distributed by FBO in 1924: *Mask of Lopez*, *North of Nevada*, *Galloping Gallagher*, *The Silent Stranger*, *The Dangerous Coward*, *The Fighting Sap*, and *Thundering Hoofs*. Generally, these features presented the same superficial, distorted picture of the West to which fans had grown accustomed in the 1920s.

For instance, in *Mask of Lopez* Thomson impersonates a convict, "Angel Face" Harry, who is released from prison as a reform measure to work on Doris Hampton's ranch. He discovers that Doris' cattle are being rustled by her foreman, tracks the thieves to their lair and holds them at bay until Doris rides up in the nick of time with help. In *North of Nevada* a large ranch owner dies intestate and his holdings go to two eastern relatives, his niece and a stupid, effeminate nephew. The nephew signs a contract to sell the ranch, unaware that the water rights alone are worth a fortune. The girl is kidnapped in order to force her into signing. The foreman (Thomson), who is supposed to have in-

True West



"Unhand her you villain!" Thomson rides into Mexico to rescue Bess Flowers in *Hands Across the Border* (FBO, 1926).

herited the ranch in the first place, follows the trail into the mountains. There, with the help of Silver King, he overcomes the villain and rescues the girl.

With *Galloping Gallagher* the plots became more sophisticated. Adventurer Bill Gallagher (Thomson) arrives in a town overrun with bandits. Its citizens elect him sheriff. He rescues the heroine, a lady minister, from the bank president and bandit leader, "Lilly Finger" Burke, and rounds up the entire gang with the aid of his horse. In *The Dangerous Coward* the Lightning Kid (Thomson), believing he has crippled the Weazel, his opponent in a prizefight, goes West under an assumed name, vowing never to fight again. In the climax, discovering the Weazel has been faking, he enters the ring to defeat Battling Benson, wins a bet on the match and the villain's girl. In *Thundering Hoofs*, the best of the 1924 series, Dave Marshall (Thomson) is forced to take many dangerous chances to see his sweetheart, Carmelita, because villain Luke Severn convinces her father, Don Juan Estrada, that Dave is a fugitive from justice. Finally, Severn has Dave jailed, but Dave escapes in time to reach the bull ring where Silver King, as the picador's mount, is in serious danger of being

disembowled. The picador's right leg has the protection of a heavy stirrup and steel armor, the horse has none. Dave intervenes, saves Silver King and together they wrestle the bull down American style. The audience goes wild with enthusiasm, Don Estrada consents to the marriage of Carmelita and Dave, and the sheriff arrives to arrest Severn.

The silent western was quite different from the "talkie" that replaced it. In the silent movie the picture had to tell the story and hold interest itself. A minimum of dialogue, when inserted, replaced actual happenings. It was a fast, compact form, always a "moving picture."

Thomson, with his fine build, sense of timing and enough spunk to do his own tricks, filled any void with dangerous yet seemingly effortless acrobatics. He went even further than Tom Mix with his lighthearted action sequences, emulating Douglas Fairbanks in adding feats extraneous to the basic story. The only jarring factor was his costume. While most early western stars dressed rather realistically in the style of William S. Hart, Thomson's outfit smacked more of the rodeo than the range—especially his white-striped boots and white holster.

Best of all, his action often was

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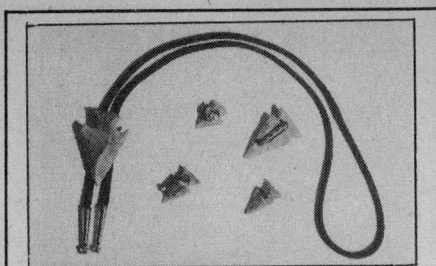
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tempered with comedy. This facility did much for Hoot Gibson's popularity and even Ken Maynard found time for a laugh or two.

Important also was the fact that his pictures were slanted to be a good influence on America's youth. There was no sex or undue violence and occasionally there were meaningful subplots, like bringing in Boy Scouts to help solve a problem.

Fred maintained the same straightforward, clean-living standards off the screen that he portrayed on it. At a time when Hollywood suffered from unsolved murders, drug-induced deaths and startling exposes of its stars, Thomson pointed with pride to his happy marriage to Frances Marion as proof that there were still highly respected people in the film colony.

Adults and young people alike admired his genuine fondness for animals. Silver King gave performances like any other member of the cast and was billed as "the horse with a personality." A most touching scene occurred in *Thundering Hoofs*. While Dave languishes in the Mexican jail, his father dies. Silver King is shown kneeling beside the grave in final tribute, then in a quick fade-out, gallops away into Mexico to aid his master.

These first Thomson Westerns received excellent reviews. As one Iowa exhibitor commented: "Boys, I'm here to tell you that if you are passing these up, you deserve to starve. . . Fred is a combination of Mix and Fairbanks—only better—and is some 'looker,' because he draws the ladies. If only 50 percent of the pictures on the market today were as good as these, we'd all have as much money as some of the film companies." A Missouri exhibitor thought: "Thomson's horse is as good, if not better, than Tony. . ." An exhibitor in Arkansas advised on showing *North of Nevada*: "Use the three sheet on the athletic record of this star in front of the theater some time before play date. It will get them to talking and bring them in. After that, all you need to do is say 'Fred Thomson.'"

From Jamaica, New York: "Strong audience appeal in *Thundering Hoofs*. Action great, stunts marvelous. Silver King improves all the time. A whirlwind finish!" A Nebraska theater owner added: "*Thundering Hoofs* is a knockout. Made more money on this in one day than I did on *The Covered Wagon* in four—had several tell me they liked it better than Paramount's big so-called 'mortgage lifter.'"

Needless to say, Monogram R-C con-
 True West

tinued to grind out Fred's streamline, thrill-packed melodramas. FBO released five more in 1925: *That Devil Quemado*, *The Bandit's Baby*, *Wild Bull's Lair*, *Ridin' the Wind* and *All Around Frying Pan*. A reasonably good mixture of sentiment, humor and adventure," even if frothy and sometimes illogical, they won Thomson the allegiance of western and non-western fans alike. Reviewers labeled *Wild Bull's Lair* "a house packer." "Old Silver King sure struts his stuff in *Ridin' the Wind*, so does Fred." *The Bandit's Baby* was "something different and a good one." *All Around Frying Pan* "drew so well" one Colorado theater "turned away a number of patrons."

THOMSON FANS looking for a moral got it in *The Two Gun Man*, adapted from a story by the noted American novelist Stewart Edward White. Dean Randall (Thomson), returning from action in the trenches, rescues Grace Stickley from the cruel tactics of Texas Pete, an Ivor Johnson hireling who is charging for the use of the waterhole. He also learns that Johnson, who has been a trusted friend, is behind the attempt to steal the ranch from his father. "Dad" has been forced to mortgage his cattle to pay a debt after receipts for the money he actually paid were stolen. Dean straps on his guns to settle the affair Army fashion, but Grace persuades him to use more subtle methods. He hires out to Johnson. When the cattle are stolen, he goes after them. Tricked by Johnson, he disposes of a half-dozen villains in a brawl in the confines of a small cabin and escapes with the help of Grace and Silver King. Dean lures the pursuing gang into the arms of the sheriff, and in a final showdown with Johnson demonstrates that "one's end can be easily reached without resorting to violence, even though the quicker way is sorely tempting."

The Two Gun Man became the first of Fred's Westerns to play on Broadway, opening at the Warner Theater in Autumn, 1926.

Thomson made four more features in 1926. In *The Tough Guy* he rides into a wild town, recovers money stolen from the minister's collection plate, thereby winning the love of the minister's daughter, June. He saves an orphan boy from a gang of kidnappers. The boy turns out to be June's long lost brother, and Fred and June are married by her father. In a hair-raising chase in *Hands Across the Border* he rescues a beautiful Spanish girl who is forcibly carried off by automobile from a Los Angeles horse show and returns her to her father's

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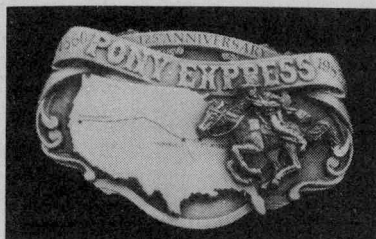


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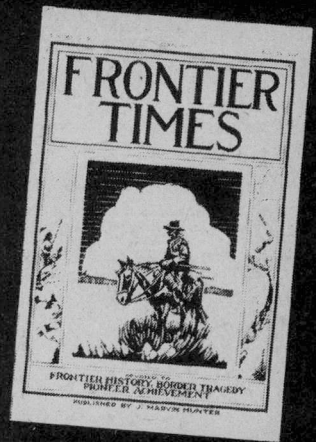
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Thomson played a surgeon who is stricken with grief and guilt at the death of his sister, and vows never again to use his surgical talents. The plight of a crippled boy inspires him to return to his profession in *Lone Hand Saunders* (FBO, 1926).

ranch in Mexico. Here he becomes involved in a narcotic smuggling investigation, is finally discovered, captured, and about to be executed along with the girl and her father when Silver King arrives with a detachment of American and Mexican cavalry. In the role of *Lone Hand Saunders* Fred never uses his right hand. The villains take advantage of his peculiarity and rob the local stage. The sheriff doubts Fred's involvement after Fred rescues Buddy, a crippled boy, in the desert. Fred reveals that he is a surgeon. Because his sister died before he could operate on her he vowed never to use his right hand again. The stage is robbed a second time and the driver killed by the left-handed bandit. The villains lead the posse to Saunders. Saunders persuades the posse to wait until he operates on Buddy, then tricks the real culprits into a confession.

A Regular Scout, Fred's last feature that year, was designed as entertainment for the Boy Scouts of America. It was more or less his own production. His wife had taught him much about story construction and plot development. On the technical side, he had become an expert on trick optical effects and lighting techniques. He has been credited by most authorities with hav-

ing invented the gold leaf reflector as a better means of illuminating scenes. Because of his inquisitiveness and natural drive for excellence, Fred also developed production aids to make his pictures outstanding. While there was little beyond his scope in the way of riding on Silver King, he came up with a wooden horse mounted on balloon tires, so that other actors could be shot in closeups in the saddle. This cut down on the number of takes because most horses spooked when too close to the camera. There were various other useful devices on which he obtained patents.

HOLLYWOOD was in its heyday in the mid-twenties. Stars lived up to their reputations, and so did Fred. He purchased a fabulous estate in Beverly Hills heights with a luxurious twenty-room mansion to the tune of \$650,000 and built an adjoining \$25,000 stable for his famous horse.

It was in this mansion that he entertained Gene Tunney on the eve of scoring his greatest pugilistic triumph over Jack Dempsey. Tunney was in Hollywood to star in Pathe's ten-chapter serial, *The Fighting Marine*. He sought and received much advice from his old friend on picture making, but after the

serial was released in September, 1926, Gene realized he had no future as an actor. He offered Pathe \$5,000 to take it off the market.

R-C did three Thomson pictures in 1927: *Don Mike*, *Arizona Nights* and *Silver Comes Through*. The latter feature introduced Silver's little colt—Silver Prince. "A drama of sage and turf," raved the reviewers, "spiced with roaring guns and flashing feet, and a race that will make them cheer for Silver and Fred."

With his immense following, it was inevitable that Thomson would be approached by the major producers. One company allegedly offered him as much as \$17,000 per week. It was Adolph Zukor and Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation who finally won the bidding game.

Thomson's Paramount westerns were longer than FBO's, running seven and eight reels. The stories, written by Frank M. Clifton, were more deliberately paced with stronger logic and taken from the pages of American history. Lloyd Ingraham directed. Like Fred, Ingraham was more concerned with quality than footage output. He welcomed Thomson's suggestions on photography, lighting, and other technical

True West

details. Fred offered them with tact and without offending anybody.

Just how successful this new combination was is shown by the public response to *Jesse James*, Thomson's first biographical melodrama. A glamorization of the life of Jesse, there is an exciting train robbery, but not a single bank robbery is shown. It opens with some spectacular Civil War scenes in which Jesse (Thomson), a member of Quantrill's Partisan Rangers, is saved from capture as a spy with the help of Zeralda Mimms, a northern girl marooned on the southern plantation of Frederick Slade, her uncle. The war over, Jesse becomes a persecuted soldier. His friend, Parson Bill, informs him that his mother has been maimed by fanatic Union sympathizers and is threatened with expulsion from town by Slade. Jesse is about to wreak vengeance on Slade when his screams bring help. Jesse flees and becomes a notorious bandit. A posse attempts to trap him through the duplicity of Bob Ford, but Jesse escapes with Zeralda on Silver King. Parson Bill marries the couple as they leave the country in a stagecoach. There had been other silents made depicting the life and adventures of this famous outlaw, but reviewers labeled *Jesse James* "unusually interesting drama" and "the best of the lot." Released in July, 1927, the film was



Fred Thomson starred in *Jesse James*, a movie glamorization of the life and adventures of the famous bandit (Paramount, 1927).

demanding in every picture house where Fred had shown. It was still the current attraction at the Palace Theater on Broadway the week of December 18. Its box-office gross was over \$1.2 million.

Fred made three more pictures for

Paramount, all historicals. *The Pioneer Scout*, released in January, 1928, was described in *Variety* as "a story of old wagon train days, gangs of thieves who dress as Indians, the menace with a hook for a hand, horses beating up the dust and men beating up each other . . ." *The Sunset Legion*, released in April, 1928, dealt with the courageous corps of southwestern peace officers, the Texas Rangers. In *Kit Carson*, released in June, 1928, Fred played the role of this famous scout from Taos who rides north into the troubled Blackfeet country on a peace-keeping mission for the government.

Fred continued to hold up so well at the box office that he was on the verge of surpassing Tom Mix (William S. Hart had retired in 1925) as King of the Cowboys.

In the early part of December, 1928, he suddenly became ill and entered the hospital for a check up. A few days later he underwent an operation for gallstones. He was recovering satisfactorily until he suffered a relapse. He died shortly before midnight December 25, at the age of thirty-eight.

Only a few Fred Thomson westerns are in circulation today, and those are in the hands of collectors. But thousands of fans over the world still remember this idol of millions who swapped his pulpit for a saddle.

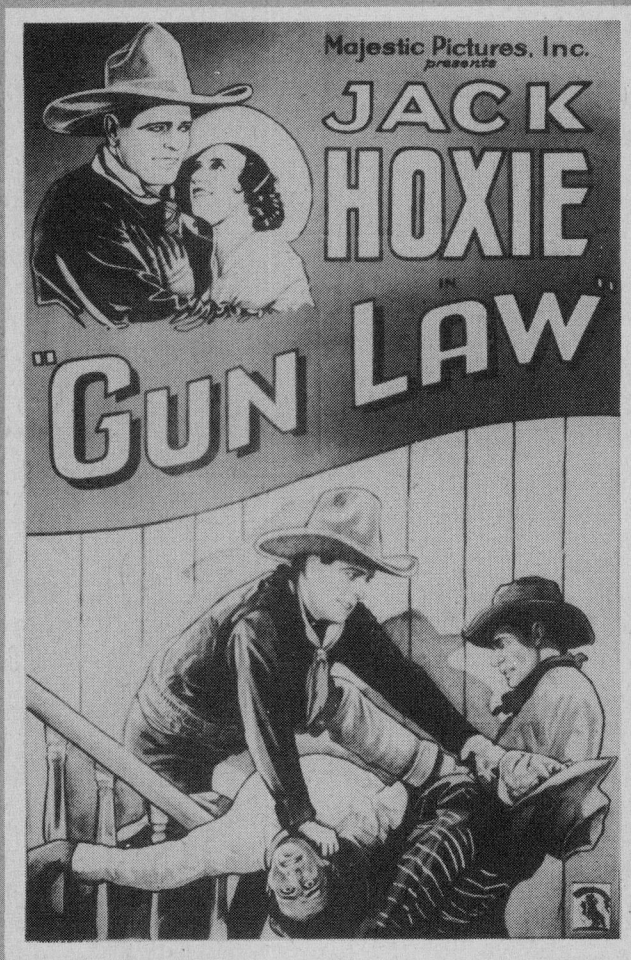


A movie poster from FBO's 1927 release *Arizona Nights* depicts Silver King being treated to a plate of pancakes.

JACK HOXIE



Handling action came naturally to him... He did all his own fighting, performed all dangerous scenes without doubles, and could boast countless bruises and scars to prove it.



Jack Hoxie's press agents always claimed he was part Indian, born on a reservation in Indian Territory in

1888. An admirable, rugged example of manhood—six-feet, ramrod straight, wide chested and bushy browed—he looked like an Indian. Some called him “Cherokee,” and during his career as a two-gun epic of the silver screen, he perpetuated this portion of the legend by adding “Red Elk” to the long list of names he went by. But to old timers in Oklahoma, who knew him throughout his lifetime as a cowboy, circus performer, and rodeo rider, he was plain “Oklahoma Jack.”

He was born Jack Hartford Hoxie, January 11, 1890, on Kingfisher Creek, between Kingfisher and Guthrie, in a small cabin his father had built on a claim obtained in the great Oklahoma “land rush,” one of nine children. His father, Doc Hoxie, was a veterinarian; his mother, Matilda Quick.

Doc died while Jack was still a small boy. He was decapitated by an unruly stallion he attempted to examine. Jack helped his mother eke a living from the homestead as soon as he was old enough to work. When not busy laboring as a farmhand, he took part in rodeos around the Territory, and became the proud winner of at least a dozen pots and trophies before he reached fourteen. Matilda Hoxie remarried. Jack wasn't too happy with his stepfather. He struck out on his own, working as a cowhand on various ranches throughout the west.

When his mother next heard from him, he was breaking wild horses on an Indian reservation in the Salmon River country of Idaho. A school teacher's wife had taught him to read and write, his only formal education.

At the same time Jack was getting the experience that would serve him well in his future—then unsuspected—vocation. The reservation was infested with bear and wildcats, and he took to hunting as naturally as he had learned to walk and ride. His first handgun was a Colt's Single Action .45, which he liked best for close situations. In those days you didn't waste ammunition, and he learned to make each shot count. That kind of training produced a skill far beyond mere manual dexterity.

Little else is known of that phase of his early life. He won a championship in a national riding contest and accepted an offer to appear in a Wild West act with a circus then touring the United States. In 1909 he signed with the Dick Stanley Wild West Show as a bronc rider and bulldogger. While the show was touring California, Stanley was killed. His widow asked the young cowboy to take over as manager. Jack

True West



Jack Hoxie played “White Elk” in Universal Pictures *The Red Rider* released in 1925.

was only nineteen, but apparently he did well, for at Los Angeles the entire troupe was signed up for the movies. Jack himself made his debut as a stuntman.

That was in 1911. From then until 1915 he alternated between rodeos, Wild West performances and motion pictures. Using the name Hartford Hoxie, he gradually rose to more important roles.

By 1917, according to early cast listings of trade paper reviews, he had appeared in Universal's *Dumb Girl of Portici*, *Man From Nowhere*, *Border Wolves*, and *Rider of the Law*. There were

others, like *The Romantic Sheriff*, *Sparks of Flint*, *A Western Romance*, and the Paramount-Artcraft (Laskey) production of Marah Ellis Ryan's popular novel *Told In the Hills*. In 1918, he was cast as the villain “Babette” in a William S. Hart five-reel thriller, *Blue Blazes Rawden*.

In 1919, he was scheduled to play Tarzan in *The Son of Tarzan* for the National Film Corporation. The information that Hoxie was being cast as Tarzan number three in that fifteen-episode epic of 1920 was published in the trade magazines, but he failed to come to a financial agreement to appear in the picture. The



Hoxie stands between his leading lady and three, very Caucasian looking, hostile "Indians," in *Heroes of the Wild* (Mascot Serial, 1927).

magazines continued the publicity, however, and Jack had to threaten to sue before they refrained from using his name.

From 1921 through 1922 he starred in a number of features for Arrow, Aywon, and Standard Film Company—*Cupid's Brand*, *Cyclone Bliss*, *Devil Dog Dawson*, *Hills of Hate*, *The Sheriff of Hope Eternal*, *Wolves of the North*, *Barb Wire*, *The Crow's Nest*, and *Two Fisted Jefferson*, to name a few.

In 1923 Universal Studios decided to enlarge its growing stable of Western stars and offered Hoxie a chance to become associated with a major company. In June, Universal released *Men*

In The Raw, *The Red Warning*, and *Where Is This West?* In the next three years he made nearly forty pictures—serials, a series of Blue Streak Westerns, and five-reel features.

With his fast cross-draw (he always carried a single action Colt's on his left hip with butt forward) and aboard his trusty steed, he rode against Indian bands and border renegades to rescue such pretty heroines as Geraldine Farrar and Anna Pavlova, while the small fry cheered lustily in countless darkened movie houses. He quickly rose to fame along with other Universal cowboys Harry Carey, Neal Hart, Pete Morrison, and Hoot Gibson. Fans spoke his name

in the same reverent tone reserved for such kings of the sagebrush as Buck Jones and Tom Mix.

Handling action came naturally to him. He made no pretense about his acting ability—he had the background of a genuine cowhand and was proud of it. He did all his own fighting, performed all dangerous scenes without doubles, and could boast countless bruises and scars to prove it. Once or twice when he was required to jump from an airplane, a dummy was used.

In those days a fight scene was seldom made in which the fighters were bloodied or even lost their sombreros. Hoxie's Westerns were different. A



fight was just that. One he liked to tell about was "the worst in pictures." He tackled a man who had to be pulled off Tom Mix and who had beat up Buck Jones.

According to Hoxie, "I thought I was whipped for a while. Then I got in a lucky blow and broke his jaw. I wasn't looking like a rose myself. I laid in the hospital five days before I could see out of both eyes. But," he would add with a chuckle, "the other fellow was laid up three weeks."

Nor were all his adventures limited to celluloid heroism. He could tell how, during the filming of a picture in the remote California wilderness, a mountain lion

True West

attacked a fellow actor. It undoubtedly would have killed him but for the timely arrival of Hoxie, who wrestled the beast off its victim and ended its life with a knife.

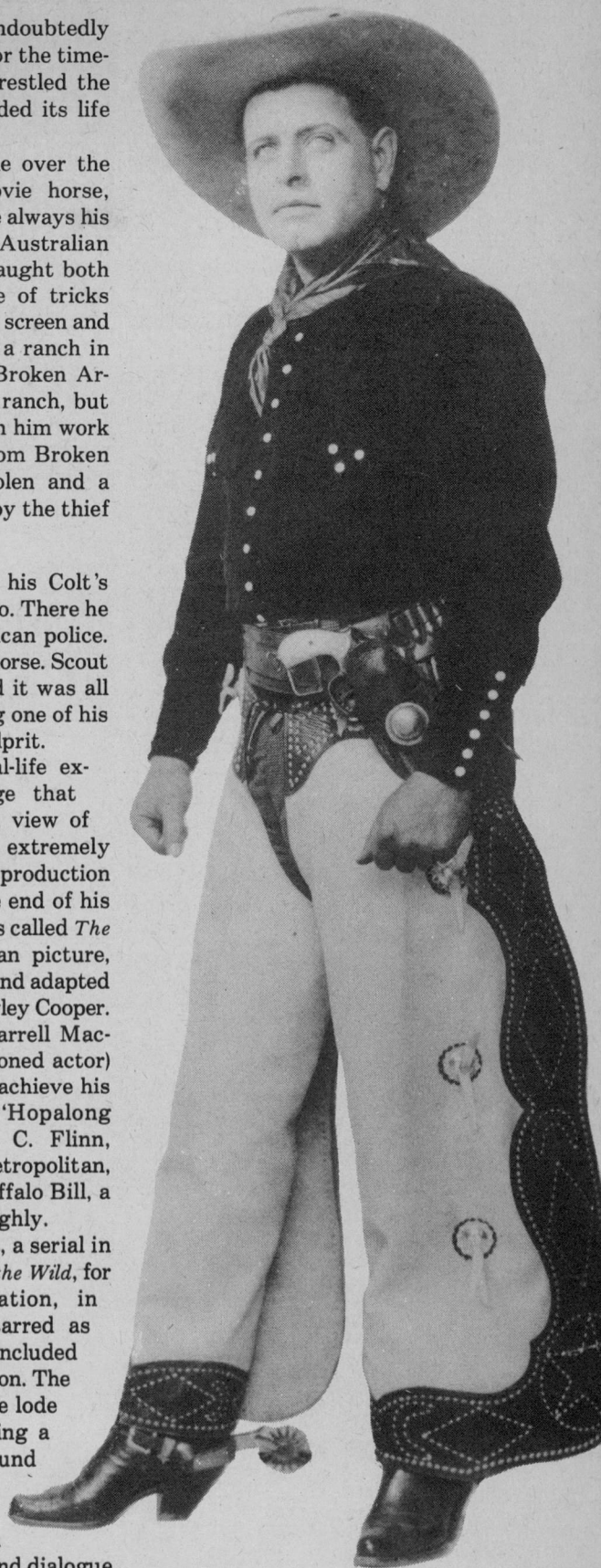
Another time, Hoxie rode over the border to recover his movie horse, Scout. Jack's first loves were always his white horse and Bunk, his Australian dog. Jack had raised and taught both of them a whole repertoire of tricks which they performed on the screen and in Wild West acts. He had a ranch in Hereford, Arizona. Called Broken Arrow, it was a regular cattle ranch, but visitors came often to watch him work with his animals. It was from Broken Arrow that Scout was stolen and a "played-out" sorrel ridden by the thief left in the pasture.

HOXIE STRAPPED on his Colt's and traced Scout into Mexico. There he enlisted the aid of the Mexican police. Five days later he found his horse. Scout had been abused badly, and it was all Jack could do to resist using one of his silver-plated .45s on the culprit.

In the light of such real-life exploits, it was not strange that Hoxie took a light-hearted view of his screen success. He was extremely proud, however, of one 1926 production in which he appeared at the end of his career with Universal. It was called *The Last Frontier*, a Metropolitan picture, directed by George B. Seitz and adapted from a story by Courtney Ryley Cooper. Hoxie co-starred with J. Farrell MacDonald (already a well-seasoned actor) and William Boyd (soon to achieve his greatest popularity as "Hopalong Cassidy"). Producer John C. Flinn, president and director of Metropolitan, had chosen Jack to play Buffalo Bill, a role he always cherished highly.

Hoxie made his last silent, a serial in ten chapters called *Heroes of the Wild*, for Mascot Pictures Corporation, in 1927, Josephine Hill co-starred as Selma Sanderson. The cast included Joe Nonomo and Helen Gibson. The plot centered on a secret ore lode in Argentina, the clues being a diary and a silver chain around the hoof of a wild stallion.

That same year the first pictures with sound-on-film recording (Fox Movietone) and dialogue (Warner Brothers' *The Jazz Singer*) were shown. Hoxie's and many another silent stars' careers were interrupted momentarily while the industry reorganized and equipped itself to produce sound pictures, and a theater buying war was waged by producers. Jack took the time



Jack Hartford Hoxie

to tour the country with the Charles Sparks Circus. When Sparks sold his show after the 1928 season, Jack joined the Miller Brothers' famous 101 Ranch Wild West Show in Oklahoma.

With the 101 Ranch show, Hoxie re-enacted many scenes from his old movies, assisted by the 101 Ranch female trick rider, Dixie Starr, Scout, and Bunk. His acts also included trick shooting, at which he was adept.

An amusing incident occurred during the 1930 season as the result of Colonel Zack Miller's suggestion for a new entrance. Zack wanted Hoxie to come riding into the arena at full speed, reins in his teeth and both guns blazing. Hoxie felt it was carrying matters a little far, but he was game and did not wish to offend the Colonel. He made his entrance astride Scout. Out of control with the reins in his master's teeth, the horse raced across the arena and stopped short of the fence, almost tossing Jack over his head. Jack's guns went flying in opposite directions as he scratched leather to hang on. Then Scout spun on his hind legs and raced back with Jack crosswise on the saddle and looking like everything except a dignified cowboy star. Colonel Miller almost fell off a wagon tongue laughing.

Joe Miller, the real founder of the 101 Wild West, had died in October, 1927. George, the financial wizard of the Miller trio, had been killed in an automobile accident in January, 1929.



Hoxie's beloved horse, Scout, had more fans than any other horse during his heyday. He steals the scene in this publicity poster from *Outlaw Justice* (Majestic, 1933).

Zack alone remained in management of the ranch and show properties. He had taken the show on the road for its last full season in 1929. The stock market crash and ensuing depression put the show in the red until it was forced into

winter quarters before it had been out three months in 1930. Despite the fact that creditors had begun closing in on the fabulous 101 empire, Zack took the show out again in 1931. Dogged by creditors and fighting a losing battle against poor attendance and high traveling expenses, the show went broke in Washington, D.C. While charity organizations and the American Legion cared for more than 300 unpaid employees, Zack assembled the limping remains for its death march back to Oklahoma. Later that year, he was forced to sell the show equipment and animals piece-meal to other circuses. In March, 1932, every head of livestock and all farm implements, harness and feed on the 101 went under the auctioneer's hammer.

Hoxie wasn't around for the 1931 demise. He already had returned to Hollywood. In 1932 and 1933 he made at least six good features with sound for Majestic Pictures, including *Gold, Law and Lawless, Gun Law, Outlaw Justice, Trouble Busters, and Via Pony Express*.

While his fighting and riding were up to par, even better than in his old silents with Arrow, Mascot and Universal, it became increasingly evident that Jack was poorly suited for talkies. His voice was "too scratchy," his ability to handle scripts or dialogue "sorely lacking." His critics even went so far as to label



Producers Distributing Corporation released *The Last Frontier* in 1926, with Jack Hoxie starring as "Buffalo Bill."

him "illiterate."

On the other hand, Jack could still outdraw the current crop of Western stars and roll a cigarette with one hand while riding horseback. He worked day and night trying to improve his shortcomings. Scout and Bunk had more fans than any other horse and dog attraction.

Nevertheless, Jack was through in movies. He made his last appearance in *Desert Justice* in 1936, for Atlantic, and quit Hollywood for good.

About that time he also suffered one of the bitterest moments of his life. His ranch house at Broken Arrow was destroyed by fire which took with it many of his prized mementoes and relics of the real West. He managed to save some of his boots and spurs, wide-brimmed hats, his silver-plated Colt's and \$5,000 silver-mounted saddle.

He had laid back a little money from his motion picture career. In 1937 he organized the Jack Hoxie Circus and traveled the United States another year before he decided to retire. But the excitement and glamor of show business was in his blood, and he couldn't stand loneliness.

He had long since divorced Marin Sais. Tall tales about his many other

alleged marriages and love affairs swirled around him. One fact is certain: in June 1944, he married for the final time to Bonnie Showalter in Las Vegas, and joined the Mills Brothers Circus.

This small three-ring truck show, opened in 1940 by three brothers who had been employed by other shows, adapted and developed a system of using local sponsors to insure ticket sales, and thrived for more than a decade. Jack and Bonnie traveled with the Mills Brothers five years.

In 1948 and 1949, Hoxie was back touring the United States, Canada, and Mexico with his own show. He made his last personal appearance with the Bill Tatum Circus in 1959. His horse, Scout, was dead, aged twenty-eight years. He had buried old Bunk while touring with his own show in Texas.

Nearly seventy years lay on his now spare frame. His hair had turned salt-and-pepper gray, and his eyesight was failing. He acquired a small stretch of Ozark country near Mulberry, in Crawford County, Arkansas, with plans to open a dude ranch. It was then that he discovered he was suffering from leukemia.

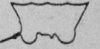
While the disease ravaged his once

muscular body, Hoxie disposed of his Arkansas property and moved to a little place his mother had owned at Keyes, in the Oklahoma panhandle. He spent his last days reminiscing with fans and admirers who still sought his autograph. Reverend LeRoy Sebastian of the Keyes Methodist Church, Hoxie's minister and one of his closest friends, managed to secure one of his old movies, *Gold*, for showing at a family night gathering.

Youngsters packed the front rows, whooping and applauding as Jack's illustrious past came to life in rip-roaring action. Sitting nearby in his famous ten-gallon hat with its eight-inch brim, Hoxie cheered himself on, especially during the gun battles, and admitted afterwards that the scenes even had him on the edge of his chair.

He died in the hospital at Elkhart, Kansas, on March 27, 1965, and was buried at Keyes, in the soil of the state of his birth.

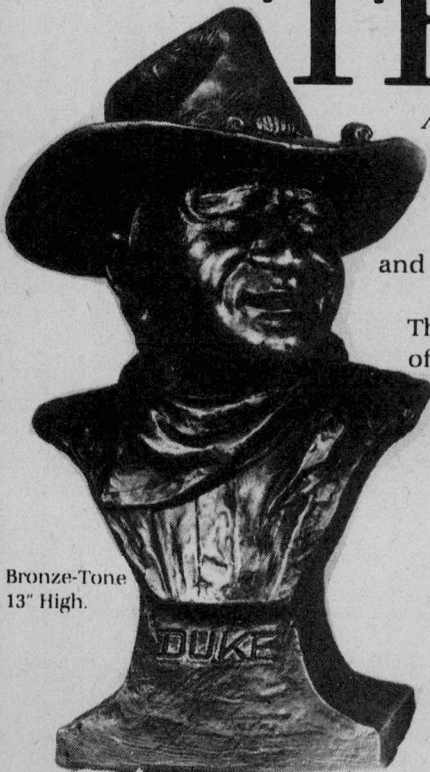
His days of Wild West show and cinema glory are gone, but with the homefolks, he is still a hero.



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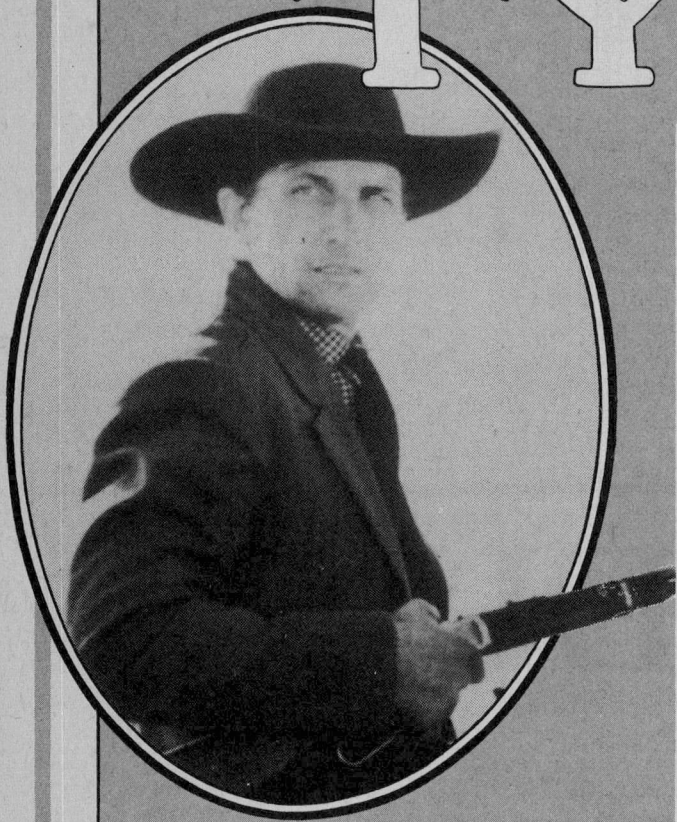
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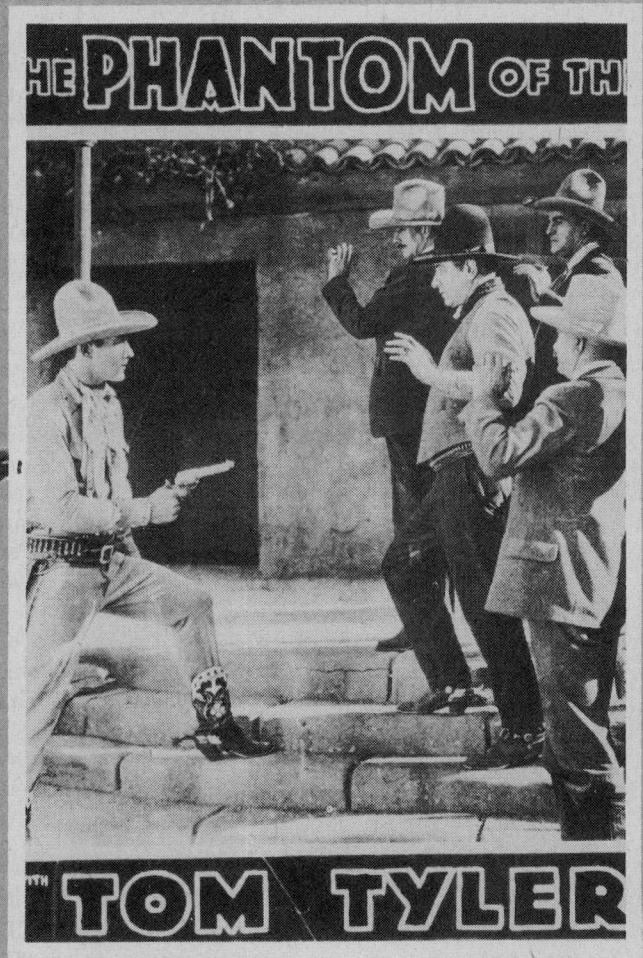
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TOM TYLER



... when he galloped onto the set for the first day's shooting, no one suspected that only a short time before, their leading man scarcely had known the front end of a horse from its rear.



He played numerous roles in life and, during his movie career, almost as many parts on camera. Whether a



Tyler takes on the scoundrels two at a time in *The Man From Death Valley*, one of eight films he made for Monogram in 1931 and 1932.

comics superhero, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a fearless flying ace, or a 3,000-year-old living mummy—it was all in the day's work. But it is as cowboy-strongman of the silver screen that Tom Tyler is best remembered.

He was born Vincent Markowski on August 9, 1903, at Port Henry, New York, where he attended high school and excelled in athletics. When his family moved to Detroit, Michigan, his formal education ended. Like most boys, Vincent dreamed of becoming rich and famous.

He became interested in acting and spent all the money he earned at odd jobs on make-up kits. When his father, a factory worker, pooh-poohed his theatrical ambitions as a waste of time, Vincent left home.

En route back to his native state, he took a job in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, coal mines. It was rugged work for a youngster, but the black-haired, brown-eyed Vincent was already over six feet tall, solidly muscled, and weighed 190 pounds. He soon gave up mining, however, continuing to New York, where he signed on as able seaman aboard a merchant steamer.

At sea he took up weight lifting, specializing in the right and left hand clean jerk (the weight is picked up with either or both hands, rested against the

chest, then hoisted as high as possible) and the snatch (the weight is picked up with either or both hands and hoisted as high as possible in one continuous movement), and became a champion of the fleet. He also excelled in "Indian wrestling" and other hand to hand competition, allegedly overpowering more than 200 consecutive opponents in various matches.

After nearly a year of life at sea, Vincent returned to Michigan and worked for a time in the north woods as a lumberjack. But he was still determined to act. Joining a circus as a sideshow strongman and amateur boxer he headed west, finally reaching Los Angeles in 1924.

UNLIKE Lucien Albertini, a strongman of the day, and Joe Bonomo, the "Modern Apollo" or "Cinema Colossus" (hero-stuntman of several early jungle and circus serials, who wound up his career with body-building ads in men's magazines), Vincent Markowski was no muscle man. But once he took off his shirt and flexed his lithe, lean body, he had no difficulty finding employment as a sculptor's model. His persistence, handsome appearance, and physique soon paid off—he was given a job as "prop boy" and "muscular extra" in Metro-Goldwyn's film version of Elinor Glyn's fantastic, red-covered book,

Three Weeks. This was followed by a minor role in Metro-Goldwyn's production of another Elinor Glyn novel, *The Only Thing*.

Three years before, Marcus Loew, Nicholas M. Schenck and other executives, looking for a way to unite their theater interests into an active production organization, had acquired the stock of Metro Pictures Corporation. In 1924, with further expansion in order, Loew and his associates made successful overtures for an interest in Goldwyn Company. Shortly thereafter the producing assets of Louis B. Mayer Pictures were acquired by the company, and the organization controlled by Loew's took the name Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. One of the first MGM productions was the magnificent pictorial conception of *Ben-Hur*, adapted from General Lew Wallace' novel, starring Ramon Navarro as Ben Hur, Francis X. Bushman as his formidable opponent Messala, lovely May McAvoy as the heroine, Carmel Myers as the inevitable vamp, and that fine old Griffith actress, Claire McDowell, as Ben Hur's mother.

When Vincent heard that MGM was casting the picture, he armed himself with a portfolio of suitable photographs (he also could boast of a solid acting experience) and headed for the director's office. He was hired immediately.

Vincent was now traveling in top company. Although playing a small part, he was spotted by an agent for Film Booking Offices of America. FBO, one of the foremost producers of Westerns in the 1920s, was in the market for a leading man for action features at R-C Pictures (releasing through FBO), and the agent visualized at once how well Vincent's marvelous physique would fit into cowboy costumes. Only one thing bothered him.

He asked Markowski, "Can you ride a horse?"

"I said 'Yes'—and didn't even gulp," Vincent explained afterwards, "because I knew if there was a way to stick on, I'd find it."

Signed to an FBO contract, he sought out a friend who was an expert horseman. Vincent proved so adaptable to the saddle that within a week he was riding like a veteran cowhand. In fact, when he galloped onto the set for the first day's shooting, no one suspected that only a short time before, their



Tom's on-screen brawling came naturally, as in *Galloping Thru* (Monogram, 1932).

leading man scarcely had known the front end of a horse from its rear.

The film, a five-reeler titled *Let's Go, Gallagher*, was released September 20, 1925. An instant hit, it was immediately followed by *The Wyoming Wildcat*, released in November and, in December, *The Cowboy Musketeer*. Reviewers praised the "fine riding" and predicted great success for the new star.

In 1926, Tom made eight R-C pictures for FBO: *Born to Battle*, *The Arizona Streak*, *Wild to Go*, *The Masquerade Bandit*, *The Cowboy Cop*, *Tom and His Pals*, *Out of the West* and *Red Hot Hoofs*. He made eight more in 1927: *Lightning Lariats*, *Sonora Kid*, *Cyclone of the Range*, *Splitting the Breeze*, *Tom's Gang*, *The Cherokee Kid*, *The Desert Pirate*, and *Flying U Ranch*.

While *Flying U Ranch* was adapted from a book of the same title by the popular woman novelist Bertha Muzzey Bower, most of Tom's other plots were the creations of screen writers Percy Heath, F.A.E. Pine, William E. Wing, and Buckleigh Fritz Oxford. John Leeser photographed and Robert De Lacey directed. Tyler's acting was so relaxed that many thought he couldn't act at all. But Tom was a likeable hero. His riding got better with every film and his on-screen brawling came naturally. He not only held his own with other FBO cowboys—Fred Thomson, Bob Custer, Hoot Gibson, Bob Steele—but soon began surpassing them at the box office.

De Lacey also directed his 1928 films: *When the Law Rides*, *Phantom of the Range*, *The Texas Tornado*, *The Avenging Rider*, *Terror*, *Terror Mountain*, and *Tyrant of Red Gulch*, and four more in 1929: *The Trail of the Horse Thieves*, *Gun Law*, *Idaho Red*, and *The Pride of Pawnee*, with Nick Musuraca as cameraman and scripters Oliver Drake and Frank Howard Clark.

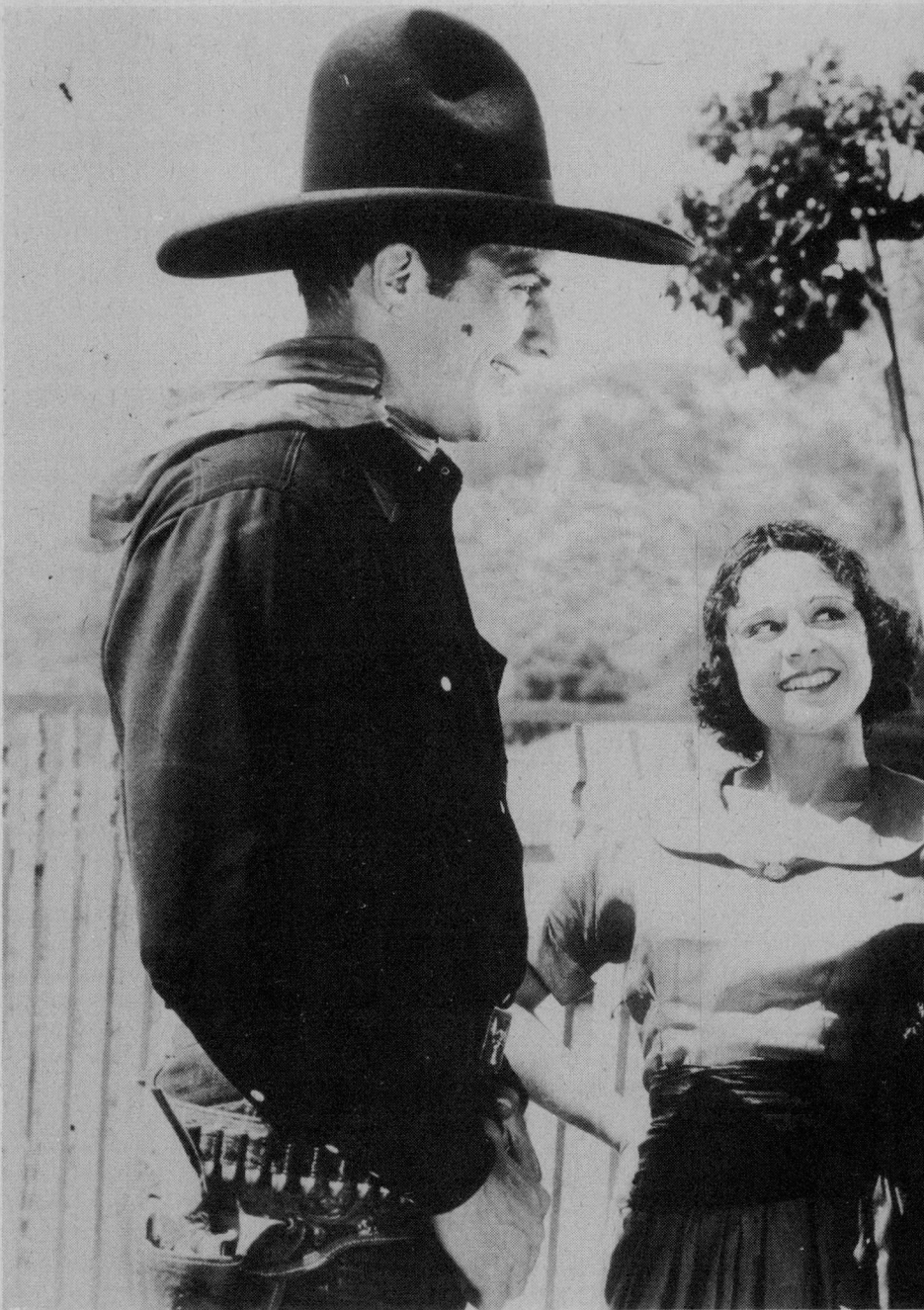
While virtue was considered a manly

attribute of the Western formula of the 1920s, Tom was not just another handsome hero in the same vein. His roles were so varied he did not become stereotyped. Occasionally he played a badman, in the fashion of such early stars as Broncho Billy Anderson and William S. Hart. In Tom's case, however, he was redeemed either by love of the heroine or the efforts of "Beans," a small dog, and diminutive, nine-year-old Frankie Darro.

Darro's inclusion in supporting casts particularly pleased Tyler fans. The lad's presence not only gave Tom a sidekick but provided plot motivation and a guaranteed "out" for any predicament

in which the hero found himself. By the same token, when Frankie was not saving Tom from some dastardly villain's plot, it was because the boy had been kidnapped or otherwise endangered, giving Tom a chance to gallop to the rescue. Darro, who idolized Tyler, gave excellent performances and became a popular star himself in the 1930s.

Although Tom got plenty of action on the stages and back lots of Hollywood, he continued his gym workouts and was a star member of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. In 1926 the *American Athlete*, an annual publication, called him "a perfect example of the all-around



Tom Tyler gets approval from the heroine's mother in *Fighting Hero*, a Republic Pic-

True West

athlete," and noted, "He scales 197 pounds in trained condition and is surprisingly fast on his feet. . . Among his other accomplishments, he can perform an astonishing variety of acrobatic tricks and daring stunts on the horizontal bar." In 1928 Tom established a new world's weight lifting record in the senior heavyweight class by lifting a total of 760 pounds. This record would remain unbroken for nearly fourteen years.

The Pride of Pawnee, released in June, 1929, was the last Tyler picture for FBO. With the arrival of talkies, the firm was reorganized into a new company called RKO.



ures Corporation production of 1934.
True West

His contract ended, Tom signed with Syndicate Pictures. For the 1929-30 season he made another series of eight silent oaters under the direction of J.P. McGowan: *Law of the Plains*, *The Man From Nevada*, *The Phantom Rider*, *Neath Western Skies*, *The Lone Horseman*, *Pioneers of the West*, *Call of the Desert*, and *The Canyon of Missing Men*.

These pictures, slowly paced and full of long shots for economy reasons, did not have the action and excitement of Tyler's FBO films. In *The Man From Nevada* for instance, McGowan himself played a timid papa with a flock of kids who finally was able to keep his land after learning from Tom that "a jolt on the chin is better than good penmanship in sticking to a land claim." There was a heroine in a motherless big-sister role, but not much love stuff. McGowan stuck pretty much to juvenile male appeal, with plenty of hard riding.

Late in 1930, while waiting for Syndicate to equip for sound, Tom made *Phantom of the West* for Mascot, his first serial. While some of his silents had been released with music and other sound effects, this was Tom's first "100% All-Talking" (as some advertisements read) film. This ten-episode play featured him alongside veteran performers Tom Santschi, Joe Bonomo and comic Tom Dugan, who to the surprise of everyone, turned out to be the Phantom. Besides good characterization, the picture had strong adult appeal, which was more to Tom's liking, and his pleasant voice assured him of success in the era of sound.

He returned to Syndicate briefly in 1931 to make *A Rider of the Plains*, *God's Country and the Man*, and his first all-talking feature, *West of Cheyenne*. As before, McGowan insisted on playing to the juvenile male audience. One reviewer described *A Rider of the Plains* as "a gr-r-r-rand old Western with all those things: The hard guy whose heart is purest gold and he loves litt-ul cheel-dren; the beautiful heroine who buh-lieves in him despite all; the parson who—sh-shshshsh—was oncet a bad man; the post-office that gets robbed; the unjust accusations—and the happy, happy ending when voitude is rewarded and the dastardly villains get theirs."

So Tom went to Universal for serial number two, a historical special called *Battling With Buffalo Bill*, starring Rex Bell and featuring veteran actors Edmund Cobb, Yakima Canutt, and William Desmond. Tom was given the title role, complete with buckskins, mustache, goatee, and flowing hair.

He enjoyed playing a "real" character



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for a change. "It was a wonderful part," he said at the time. "I love the out-of-doors and the feel of a good horse under me will always give me a thrill, but this doesn't make me unfit for any but cowboy portrayals."

Universal believed him and starred him in two other popular serial milieus of Depression days, the sky and the jungle. Tom swapped his Stetson for a Frank Buck helmet in *Jungle Mystery* (1932). In 1933 he took to the clouds as *The Phantom of the Air* with Gloria Shea. Situations involving airplanes were woven into many serials and adventure features during the 1930s, but aviation never did match the Western in the affections of the young. Tom played even another role in 1933. His fourth Universal serial, laid in the Canadian Northwest, was *Clancy of the Mounted*.

At the same time, he was busy on a series of eight releases for Monogram: *Partners of the Trail*, *Galloping Thru*, *Man From Death Valley*, *Single-Handed Sanders*, *Vanishing Men*, *Honor of the Mounted*, *Two-Fisted Justice*, and *Man From New Mexico*. Those films, all top-notch action efforts with some very novel plots, were released in 1931 and 1932.

IT WAS IN Western roles that Tom's fans liked him best. In 1933 he made four Monarch productions for Freuler Film Associates: *The Forty-Niners*, *Deadwood Pass*, *War of the Range*, and *When A Man Rides Alone*. From 1934 to 1936, producer Bernard B. Ray of Reliable Pictures Corporation starred him in sixteen six-reelers: *Riding Thru*, *Tracy Rides*, *Mystery Ranch*, *Fighting Hero*, *Terror of the Plains*, *Unconquered Bandit*, *Rio Rattler*, *Coyote Trails*, *Laramie Kid*, *Silent Valley*, *Fast Bullets*, *Pinto Rustlers*, *Roamin' Wild*, *Santa Fe Bound*, *Trigger Tom*, and *Ridin' On*.

While working for Reliable, Tom squeezed in a couple of performances for RKO. In *Powdersmoke Range* (1935) the all-time greats Harry Carey, Hoot Gibson, and Guinn "Big Boy" Williams join hands to rid Los Potros of a crooked politician, cattle rustlers and other undesirables such as "Sundown Saunders" (Tyler), a hired gunman who later reforms. In *The Last Outlaw* (1936) Tom was Al Goss, a bandit leader whose inglorious downfall comes with an inexorable seige on his hideout and the business end of a left-handed lariat toss by Hoot Gibson. These films provided Tom his first opportunity to play really villainous roles, and his fans objected.

When Sam Katzman needed cowboy stars for his newly-organized Victory Pictures Corporation, Tom returned to 50



Tyler was so adept at transferring the Whiz Comics magazine character to celluloid that *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* serial (Republic, 1941) became one of the most successful chapter movies ever produced.



Tom Tyler as Geronimo challenges hero James Craig in RKO's 1942 screen version of Clarence Budington Kelland's novel *Valley of the Sun*.



Tyler made a departure from the western scene in his role as a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman in *Honor of the Mounted* (Monogram, 1932).

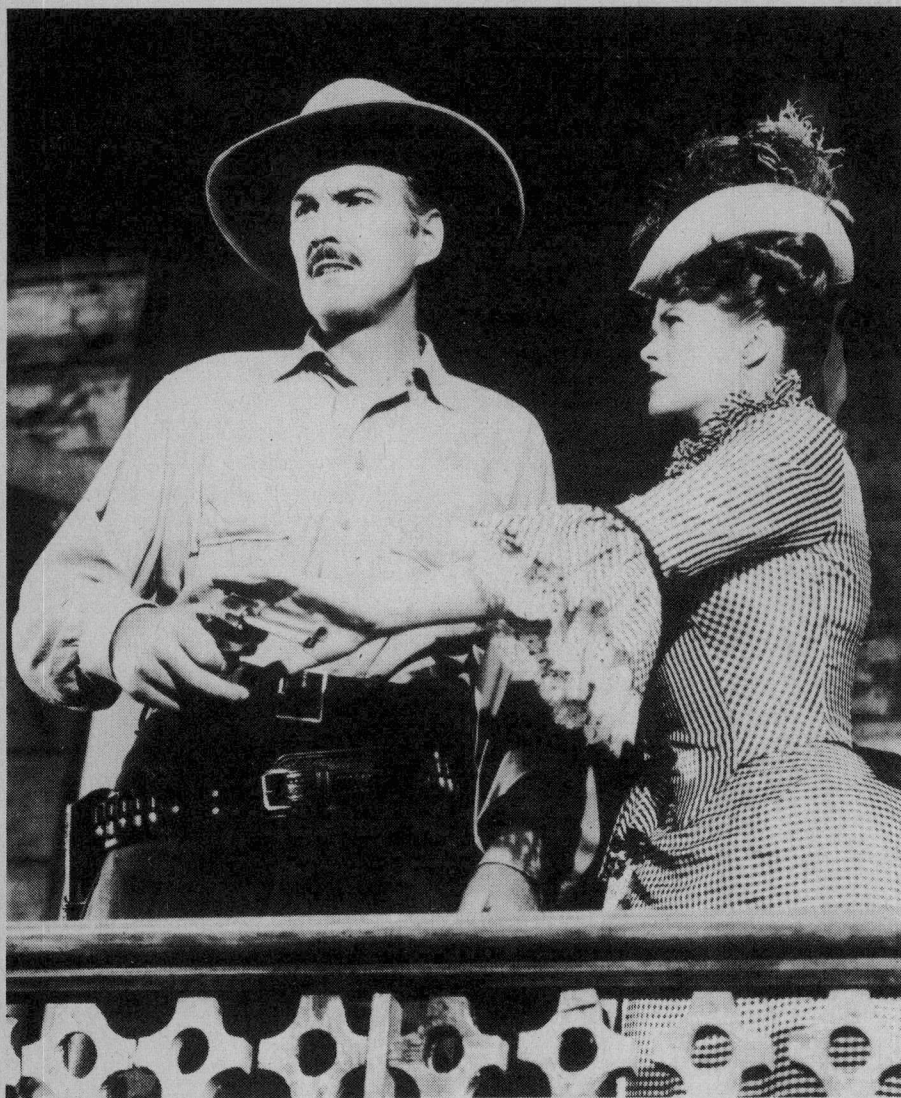
his customary heroics. In 1936-37, he made seven Westerns for the company: *Rip-Roarin' Buckaroo*, *The Feud on the Trail*, *Cheyenne Rides Again*, *Mystery Range*, *Brothers of the West*, *Lost Ranch*, and *Orphan of the Pecos*.

By working for independent producers, Tom had been constantly employed, and his output of pictures exceeded that of many top cowboy stars. Perhaps it was nostalgia for the days he had worked his way west to Los Angeles, or maybe he just felt his slam-bang performances needed a rest. Whatever the reason, when his quota for Victory was completed he joined the Wallace Brothers Circus. His weight lifting, daring stunts on the horizontal bar, and Wild West acts became the 1937 season's big draw under the big top.

After Tom's return to Hollywood in 1938, his longing to play more demanding roles than cowboy-hero parts bore fruit. The choice role as "Luke Plummer," John Wayne's rival in award-winning director Ford's classic *Stagecoach* (United Artists, 1939), started Tyler on a long line of unusual characterizations.

His appearances in historical extravaganzas such as *Gone with the Wind* (MGM, 1939) and modern dramas like *Brother Orchid* (Warner Bros., 1940) and *The Talk of the Town* (Columbia, 1942) were conclusive evidence that he should never have been confined solely to stirrups and saddle.

He continued in Westerns, but his parts were in the vein of Luke Plummer. He was "Buck Newton" in *Frontier Marshal* (20th Century-Fox, 1939), which was the saga of Wyatt Earp (Randolph Scott) and Doc Holliday (Caesar Romero) based on the popular but highly controversial biography by Stuart N. Lake. Tom was "King Evans" in *The Westerner* (United Artists, 1940), the Gary Cooper-Walter Brennan saga of the fabulous Judge Roy Bean; "Grimes" in *Cherokee Strip* (Paramount, 1940), the story of the pious seizure of Oklahoma Indian lands, starring Richard Dix. Tom followed with a villainous role in Paramount's 1940 re-make of Zane Grey's *The Light of Western Stars*, played



Tom Tyler played "Hatch" in *The Younger Brothers*, a Warner Brothers-First National film released in 1949.

"Geronimo" in RKO's 1942 screen version of Clarence Buddington Kelland's *Valley of the Sun*. Tom's most sensational appearance was as "Kharis," the living mummy, in Universal's 1940 production, *The Mummy's Hand*.

"A really excellent specimen he is, too," said the *New York Times*. "According to whispered advices, our Egyptian friend is not less than 3,000 years old—he's a trifle puckered up in the face but then, what do you expect at that age?—is kept alive with a mysterious elixir and, when the moon is full, walks murderously forth from his carved-stone coffin. . . In the usual mumbo-jumbo of secret tombs in crumbling temples and salacious old high priests guarding them against the incursions of an ar-

cheological expedition, the scientists busily explore dank passageways and decipher weird hieroglyphics on tombs and chests, [while] jackals howl outside, the native work-gangs mutiny and the mummy is always just around the corner. . . Frankenstein was just a lollipop compared to the mummy."

AS A RESULT, Tyler was chosen for two more serials: *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (Republic, 1941) and *The Phantom* (Columbia, 1943). So adept was he in transferring the comic strip heroes to celluloid that those chapter plays became two of the most successful ever produced.

Meanwhile, the departure of Bob Livingston as "Stony Brooke" in *The Three*

Mesquiteers series left Republic in a bind. The problem was quickly solved. In no time they had Tom back in his Western outfit alongside his old pal of FBO and Syndicate silent days, Bob Steele. Comedian Rufe Davis rounded out this 3-M trio, to be replaced in 1942 by Jimmie Dodd.

From 1941 to 1943, Tyler appeared in thirteen *Mesquiteers* features: *Gauchos of Eldorado*, *Outlaws of Cherokee Trail*, *West of Cimarron*, *Code of the Outlaw*, *Raiders of the Range*, *Westward Ho!*, *The Phantom Plainsmen*, *Shadows on the Sage*, *Valley of Hunted Men*, *Thundering Trails*, *The Blocked Trail*, *Santa Fe Scouts*, and *Riders of the Rio Grande*.

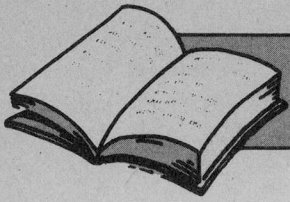
Shortly after completing the series, Tom's health began to fail. A crippling arthritis for which he could find no cure began chopping away at his powerful physique. He was forced to remain out of pictures two years. When he did return, it was obvious to his fans the disease had taken a heavy toll.

He continued to appear in pictures, however. He was "Lafe McWilliams" in *San Antonio* (First National, 1945); he played Frank James when the James Boys, the Dalton Brothers, Belle Starr, Sam Bass, and a dozen more or less-celebrated desperadoes contributed their fair share of "shootin' an' brawlin'" in RKO's 1946 *Badman's Territory*. He was "Frank Reardon" in RKO's 1948 *Blood on the Moon*, and "Wild Bill Yeager" in *Return of the Badmen* (RKO, 1948). He again played Frank James in *I Shot Jesse James* (Screen Guild); "Hatch" in *The Younger Brothers* (Warner Bros.-First National); "Luke" in *Lust For Gold* (Columbia); and "Quayne" in John Ford's grand movie, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* starring John Wayne (Argosy Pictures Corporation)—all released in 1949.

Tom's illness, by this time, had reduced him to a mere shadow of himself, so that he was given only small assignments in his last pictures: *Colorado Ranger* (Lippert, 1950), *Trail of Robin Hood* (Republic, 1950), and *The Great Missouri Raid* (Paramount, 1951). The pilot film for a proposed TV series starring Tyler had to be shelved.

In 1952, a walking skeleton and peniless, Tom left the movie colony where he had once earned a fortune as a top-notch action star and went to his sister's home in Detroit. There death came mercifully from a heart attack on May 1, 1954. He was fifty.





A Critical Perspective on Western Films

THE AMERICAN WEST IN FILM: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE WESTERN. By Jon Tuska. Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881.

John Tuska, authority nonpareil on Western movies, has produced a thought-provoking new book, *The American West in Film: Critical Approaches to the Western*. In the Introduction, Tuska announces that no book-length study has ever attempted an ideological analysis of Western films, and that he intends to reflect upon the ethical implications of the history of Western movie-making. His first chapter is devoted to a philosophical consideration of Critical Theories about Western Films, in which he feels it necessary to quote at length other critics of sagebrush sagas, then to refute them with an air of pendantic superiority.

Following this scholarly but labored beginning, Tuska gets down to business and analyzes the genre in masterly fashion. No one knows more about the filming of Western movies than Tuska, as he proved in his monumental study, *The Filming of the West* (Doubleday, 1976). He has studied thousands of Western films, interviewed numerous actors, directors and producers of Westerns, and is an accomplished historian of the real West, as he proved in *Billy the Kid: A Bio/Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 1983). Tuska emphasizes that most critics of Western films do not have an adequate knowledge of Western history, although his own command of Western history is not foolproof: he mentions "George" [William] Tecumseh Sherman (p. 76), for example, and fails

True West

to include Henry Brown in the group accompanying John Tunstall when the Lincoln County War commenced with Tunstall's murder (p. 150). Tuska correctly insists that it is essential to know what was going on behind the scenes—studio politics and economics, feuds between stars and directors, etc.—before the screened results of a Western film can be understood or appreciated.

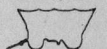
The book abounds in backstage anecdotes. On the set of *Blazing Frontier*, a low-budget 1943 Western, funds were so limited that during the chase sequence the villain galloped past the camera, circled back and dismounted. The hero Buster Crabbe swung into the saddle and spurred the same horse past the camera to continue the chase! Peggy Stewart, a lovely brunette who appeared in numerous B-Westerns during the 1940s, complained to Tuska that she disliked acting in oaters, because usually she was costumed in tight-fitting jeans and her backside received more footage than her face.

Indeed, Tuska's chapter on Women in the Westerns argues persuasively that the masculine-dominated genre relegated females to exploitative and historically fallacious roles. In a subsequent chapter, "Images of Indians," Tuska indicts Westerns for dealing execrably with Native Americans. Film portrayals of Indians abound with historical inaccuracies (Apaches wearing Sioux headdresses, Comanches sporting Mohawk haircuts, etc.), and Tuska feels that Westerns have taught the public to enjoy genocide. He acidly concludes that the genre "deserves the strongest censure which can be brought to bear for the lies it has told" (p. 260).

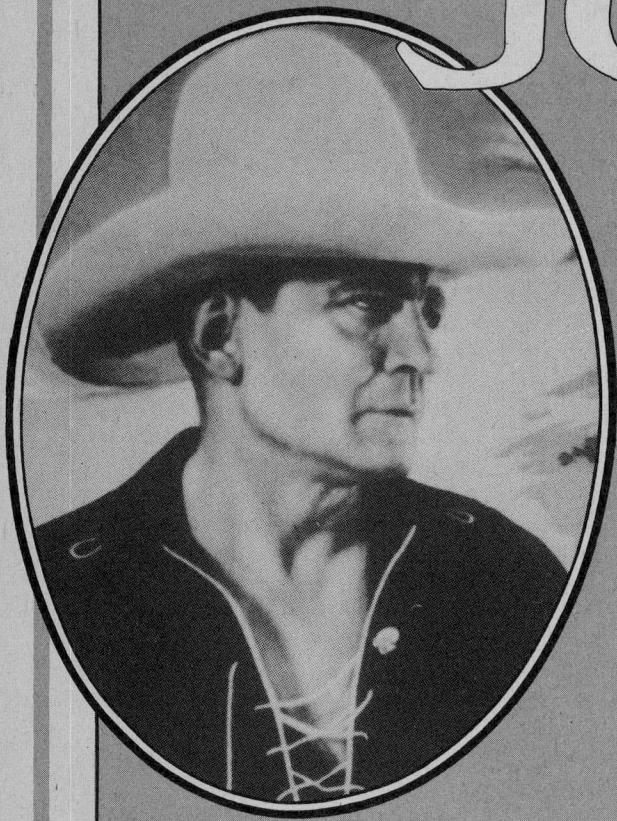
Tuska devotes nearly 100 pages to an intriguing analysis of the work of prominent Western directors: John Ford, Howard Hawks, Henry Hathaway, Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, and Sam Peckinpah. He also considers at length the film images of Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, George Armstrong Custer, and other real-life Western figures. Film treatment of these men, of course, has been rife with distortion, most of it intentional, and Tuska finds that heroes and villains alike have been portrayed as "men who are all good, men who are good but become bad, or men who are all bad" (p. 209), depending upon the whim of the director.

This book is footnoted, indexed, and has a helpful bibliography. The photos—taken mostly from Tuska's collection—illustrate ideological trends the author has perceived. His frequent use of French and Latin quotes is needlessly distracting, as is his use of English-style dating (4 April 1878). But no one speaks with greater knowledge or more perceptive insight about Western films. For those of us who love the genre, it is sad to see Tuska convincingly conclude that Western movies have for so long been preoccupied with "illusions and comforting fantasies about an American West that never was" (p. 263), that it now would be impossible to successfully film a truthful version of frontier life.

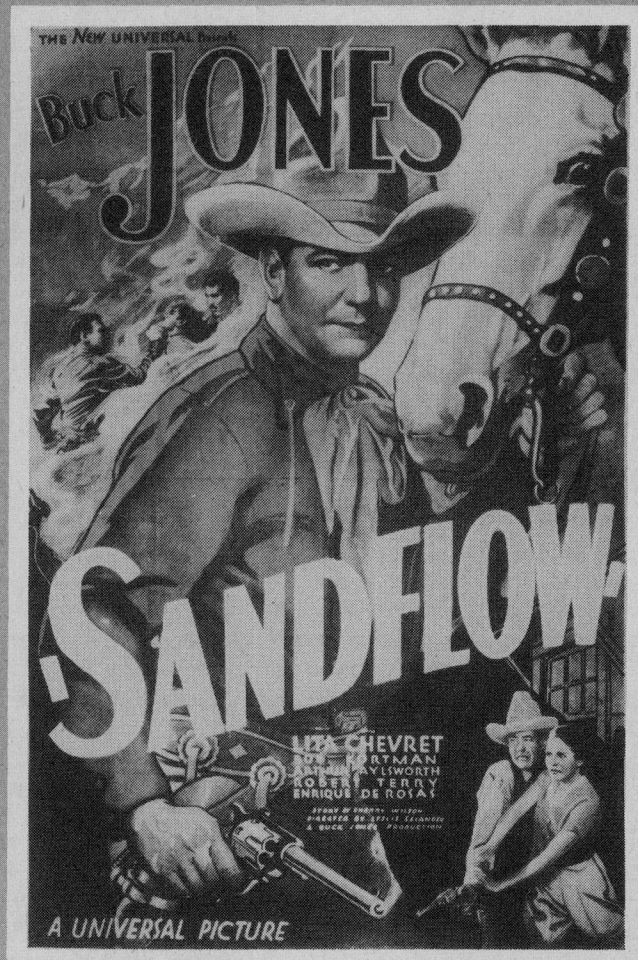
—Bill O'Neal
Carthage, TX



BUCK JONES



... in this madhouse of trampling feet and crazed men and women, he thought of others. He went back into the flames twice to carry and lead hysterical people to the roof.



The runaway team broke free from the speeding wagon and galloped madly away with flying harness.

The vehicle, its tongue thrust high in the air, careened down the mountain trail and headed straight for the theater audience. The first three rows emptied quicker than magician Houdini would finger-snap a disappearance. I was among the first of a score of kids who ducked under the seats for safety. But, just as quickly, we realized the thing wouldn't jump off the screen into our laps, and the three rows filled up again.

By that time the wagon was around a bend in the trail edging the mountain-side and headed for the jutting point of cliff overhanging the roaring river. Roped to the seat, bound hand and foot, our helpless hero struggled to free himself. . . . Then a resounding crash as the vehicle struck a boulder, turned end over end and pitched into space down into the swirling, angry, murky current. . . .

The ill-fated victim was Buck Jones, and I never knew how he really fared until a week later.

Well, he hadn't gone over the cliff at all, we were shown, but the crash against the rock had shattered the seat to which he had been fastened and the wagon had plunged into the water. Buck had rolled clear. Still hog-tied, and unconscious, he lay on the brink of eternity until his white horse appeared—it had been pursuing the runaway wagon—nuzzled Buck back to his senses, and picked his bonds loose with its teeth!

That was my introduction to Buck Jones and his famous movie mount, Silver. The title of that cowboy picture I will never know, but I remember how wonderful it was and how it whetted my appetite. The sign on the screen stated the show was to be continued next week, and I was there every Saturday until the last of the seemingly unending chapters was shown.

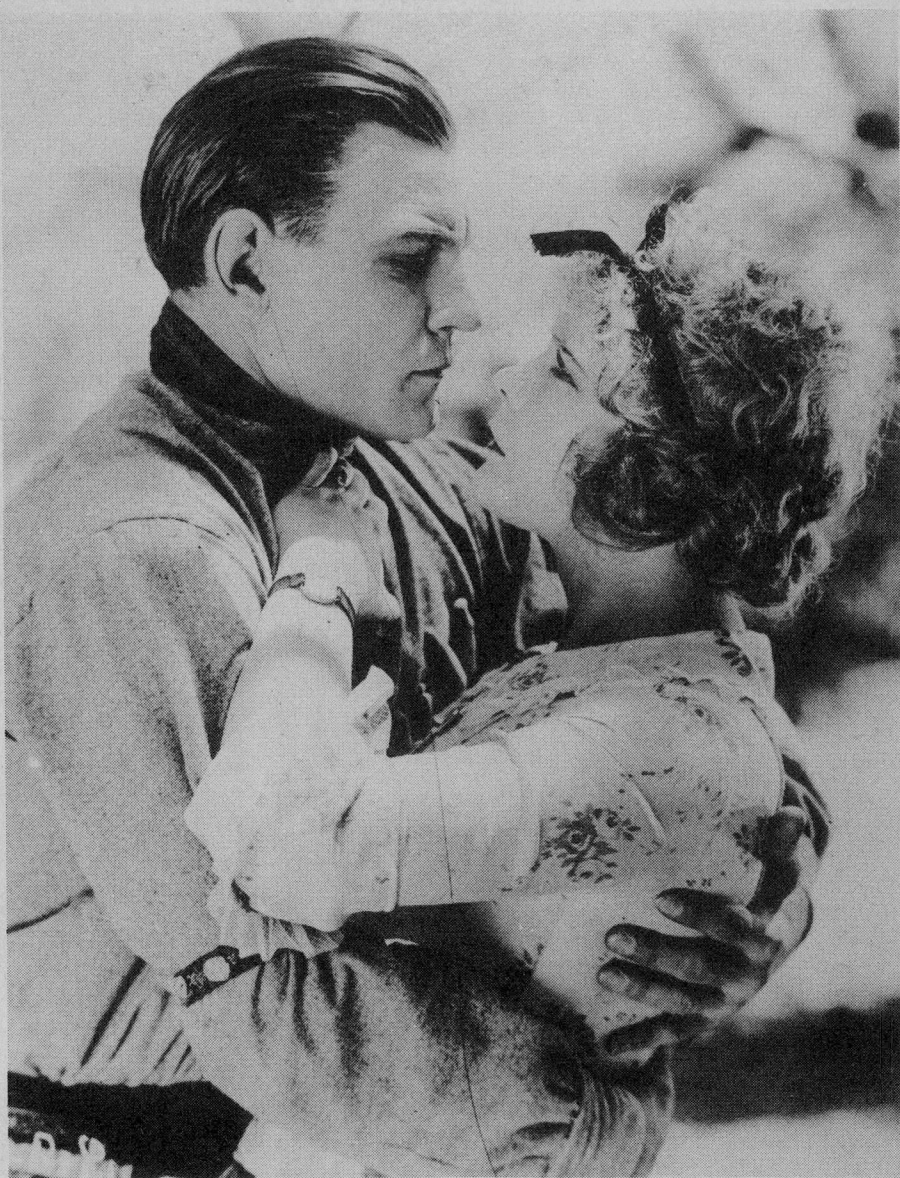
For me, a patch-seated country lad, the Saturday thing to do was to accompany my parents to the city where butter and eggs and other farm products were traded for cash and staples needed for the family larder. On those afternoons I saw many other Western stars at the local theaters—Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Jack Hoxie, Tim McCoy, Bob Steele—but my favorite was Buck Jones.

More than his acting and Silver's clever performances, what attracted me to Buck was the fact he was an authentic cowboy, having worked on his father's ranch near Red Rock, Oklahoma, and the nearby famous Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch, less than forty miles from my home. His name may not

True West

mean much to the present generation, but in the 1920s and 1930s there were few boys who would not rather have been Buck Jones than President of the United States. His action-packed features appealed to youngsters and adults alike. He kept up the finest tradi-

his father worked for the railroad and young Chuck attended grade school. Then his father obtained a farm in the old Cherokee Outlet of Oklahoma, leased an additional 1,000 acres from the nearby Otoe and Missouri Indians, and the family went there to live. His



Buck brought hair-raising adventure to young and old alike. Tall and well-built, with grey eyes, and rugged features, he also proved to be quite a lady killer in *Firebrand Trevison* (Fox, 1920).

tions of the screen for more than twenty-five years. He gave courage and inspiration to millions of fans throughout the world. His life story is packed with more adventure than any screen plot he ever appeared in.

He was born Charles Frederick Gebhard (spelled Gebhart by some biographers) at Vincennes, Indiana, on December 12, 1891. At the age of three his family moved to Indianapolis, where

boyhood was spent in the saddle, roping and shooting and taking part in roundups along with the regular cowboys.

While still very young, the story goes, some friendly ranch hands encouraged him to sit a cantankerous old mule. Of course, the boy was quickly thrown. His performance brought such gales of laughter that the ranch hands provided him with a new handle. "Chuck"

became "Buck," a name he was proud to claim the rest of his life.

Buck soon found life on his father's ranch too confining. He wanted to see more of the country and, impelled by that desire and his love for horses, decided to join the army. He was only sixteen, but could join with his parents' consent if he was eighteen. His parents realized refusing permission would only delay the event, so his mother accompanied him to Columbus Barracks, Ohio, where, on January 8, 1907, Buck enlisted in Troop G, Sixth U.S. Cavalry, giving his date of birth as December 12, 1888. That date appears in most references.

After a brief recruit training at Nogales, Arizona, Trooper Gebhard was assigned to duty along the Mexican border where Pancho Villa and his revolutionists were terrorizing settlements. In September, 1907, his troop was ordered to the Philippines, and the the next two years Buck fought Moro bandits. During a jungle battle late in 1909, he was badly wounded in the right thigh by bushwhackers. Infection set in before he could be returned to camp on a stretcher, and even after his leg healed he could not use it. In November, he was transferred to the Recruit Depot, Fort McDowell, California. There army surgeons said they had done all they could for him. On December 20, 1909, he was honorably discharged "for the convenience of the government."

The future looked bleak for Buck. But he returned to his father's ranch, cheerfully vowing not to spend the rest of his life a hopeless invalid. And he didn't. He swung that leg back and forth in the saddle for hours, daily. By sheer grit and determination he regained its full use.

The chief topic of conversation around the bunk house in those days was the new and fascinating sport of auto racing. Buck became interested and headed for the Indianapolis Speedway.

"The track was practically completed," Buck later recalled, "and already race drivers from everywhere were gathered, testing it and looking over their precious motors. Nobody paid much attention to me, except to stare at my cowboy outfit as though I were a creature from another world.

"A fellow who appeared to be working as a mechanic was very nice to me. His name was Harry Stillman, who became one of the most famous race drivers in the country. I told him I wanted to get into the racing racket in some way or another, and his first crack was: 'These are automobiles son, not



Buck Jones reportedly played all the rough and tumble scenes in the movies himself. He was a real cowboy growing up on the old Cherokee Outlet in Oklahoma. Jones

horses.' Even though I knew he was ribbing me, we became fast friends."

Buck worked as a mechanic on the early racing cars for nearly a year. He also found a friend in Eddie Rickenbacker, who was to become America's World War I aerial ace. Later, Buck opened his own garage, but soon went bankrupt. On October 14, 1910, he returned to Columbus Barracks and re-enlisted in Troop G, Sixth U.S. Cavalry.

In two years he had attained the rank of Sergeant. But cavalry life was no longer exciting for him. The army was becoming interested in aeroplanes, and on the strength of his mechanical experience at the Indianapolis Speedway, Buck applied for a transfer to the Aviation Squad, Signal Corps. On April 1, 1913, he was demoted to private and

assigned to duty with the First Aero Squadron.

His interest in motors brought him a ranking as first-class aviation mechanic, but Buck wanted to fly. Even with the help of his friend Rickenbacker, he had no luck. Enlisted men, he learned, seldom became pilots. Disgusted, he let his enlistment expire, and on December 23, 1913, again became a civilian.

Buck wandered around Texas and up into Montana, looking for work. After his army experience, life on the range seemed rather tame. So it was with great enthusiasm that he heard the news that the Miller Brothers in Oklahoma were about to start a tour of America and Europe with its 101 Ranch Wild West Show and needed riders. Buck hurried back to Oklahoma.



tells a co-actor to be brave in this scene from *Sunset Sprague* (Fox, 1920).

"I put resin in my chaps to help me hold the saddle and drove horseshoe nails into the heels of my boots to keep my spurs on, then went over for a tryout," he explained.

The Millers liked his performance, and when the show played its first important engagement in Madison Square Garden in New York City the spring of 1914, Buck thrilled thousands with his bronc busting and roping.

There he met a lovely equestrienne named Odelle Osborne, who had joined the show from Philadelphia while her parents toured in vaudeville. Odelle was not a very good cowgirl, but Buck soon taught her enough of the rudiments of range riding to keep her job. By the time the 101 was due to leave for England, they had fallen in love. They decided not

True West

to go, and joined the Julia Allen circus.

By the time the Julia Allen show reached Lima, Ohio, they had announced their plans to marry. On August 11, the ceremony was performed in the circus arena with everybody, including the preacher, on horseback. According to Buck, "Half the town applauded us and the other half scandalized. We didn't care. We were in love and wanted to do what we loved best—ride."

In 1916 they traveled with the Gollmar Brothers Circus. But Buck quit his job in mid-season and took his wife out of the show because the horses were mistreated. As Odelle put it, "No man would abuse an animal and expect Buck to work for him!"

The 101 Ranch Wild West was again touring the United States. The country was on the brink of war with Germany, and Buffalo Bill, who had severed relations with the Sells-Floto Circus, owned by Harry Tammen of Denver, was appearing in the show with twenty soldiers in a recruiting stunt called "Pageant of Preparedness." Buck considered joining the act, but hearing that there was big money to be had breaking horses for the French army at the Chicago stockyards, he headed there.

Part of his job was to select horses to be used in the cavalry and field artillery. Due to army regulations, only black or brown animals could be chosen. When

World War I began, Buck went to France in charge of a load of horses and worked at a remount camp. Before he left Chicago, a rancher brought in a fine silver-grey stallion which he had to turn down. Something about the animal attracted Buck, and his personal offer of \$100 was accepted. He named the horse "Silver" and left him in Odelle's care. When the war ended and Buck returned to the States, Silver became the "star" of their act as they toured the tank towns of Dakota and Montana with several small riding exhibitions.

The "big time" beckoned in 1919 when Buck received an offer from Ringling Brothers. He and Odelle joined the circus in Chicago. When the show reached California, Odelle whispered in Buck's ear that they were to become a threesome. Buck promptly quit the show. Their total assets were \$15.

Hearing that the movies paid more than hay for the things he did best, Buck went to Hollywood. He rented an apartment for \$12.50 a month, told his wife not to worry and started looking for a job. Three days later and down to \$12.50 (just enough for the apartment rent!), he had been unable to get inside a studio gate.

What to do? Duck the landlord and eat, or pay the rent and trust to luck for food? Buck had decided on the latter when he ran into an old circus pal who was working in Westerns at Universal. There on the old Universal City lot,



Producers tried to get Jones out of the western field into other types of roles. In *Skid Proof* (Fox, 1923) they even changed his name to Charles Jones.



Silver co-starred with Buck in *The Phantom Rider* (Universal Serial, 1936), one of many serials Jones made for Universal Studios.

Buck made his motion picture debut as a shepherd. He worked six days and got \$30.

After the birth of his little girl, whom he named Maxine, Buck got "extra" work in some 2-reelers for Canyon Pictures. Extra work didn't pay much, but he stayed around hoping things would get better. His range-riding background proved a boon and he soon graduated to the higher salaried position of stuntman. Then through the help of Scott R. "Scotty" Dunlap, later to become his best friend and manager, he landed a \$40-a-week contract as a year-round double in some of the more hazardous scenes for the cowboy stars at Fox Studios, and the depression was over.

TOM MIX WAS Fox's chief breadwinner. With his horse Tony, replete with silver trimmed accouterments of elaborately carved leather, and fancy boots, hats, and suits that would have made even a modern day cowboy blush, he enjoyed an immense popularity, and at the peak of his career earned \$25,000 a week. But he was hard to handle. He not only disliked doubles but insisted on more money and threatened to stop making pictures unless he got it. It has been said that Fox decided to build up another Western star to frighten him into line. That may be true. Legend has it that he and Buck slugged it out on a vacant lot because Mix was jealous of his superior riding skill. That is doubtful in light of the fact that Mix and Jones became firm friends from the start and remained so the rest of their lives.

It was not long, however, before people began noticing the tall, well-built, grey-eyed cowboy from Oklahoma. Many remembered him from his performances in circuses and Wild West shows. Fan mail poured in. Toward the end of 1919, Fox increased his salary to \$150 a week and gave him his first starring role in his own leather legend, *The Last Straw*. The film was released in the United States in 1920, and shown the next year in England. It drew immediate praise from critics and moviegoers everywhere, and was quickly followed by *Forbidden Trails*, *Firebrand Trevision*, *The Square Shooter*, *Sunset Sprague*, and *Just Pals*.

In the next seven years Buck made fifty-eight pictures for Fox, each a profit-making success. Although Mix was the more flamboyant showman, Buck became his closest competitor and, by 1928, even surpassed him and was hot after William S. Hart's crown

True West

as "King of the Cowboys."

During this period, Fox tried several times to move Buck out of Westerns into straight acting roles such as *The Big Punch*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *Skid Proof* (an automobile race thriller), and *Second Hand Love*. The studio even changed his name to Charles Jones, because "Buck" wasn't sophisticated enough. His fans complained and clamored for more Westerns. So back to Westerns he went, and legally adopted the name Buck to prevent its being changed again.

One of Buck's favorite directors during those years was W.S. Van Dyke. Van Dyke was no practical joker, but he had a terrific sense of humor and would pull almost any prank or goofy gag to break the boredom of a movie set. He had early learned the disastrous results of being camera conscious and often a gag in the middle of a scene caught a person off guard and got him the spontaneity of action he sought. Buck spent much time with him figuring new stunts.

To keep from building up competition to their Western hero, it was customary to change leading ladies frequently. Buck's leading lady list read like a Who's Who of Cinema: Vivian Rich, Loretta Sayers, Mona Maris, Doris Hill, Lita Chevret, Dorothy Fay, Barbara Weeks, Helen Twelvetrees, and most famous of all, Carole Lombard, who was an inquisitive, happy-go-lucky sixteen-year-old kid named Jane Peters when she made her film debut with Buck in *Hearts and Spurs*.

Each new leading lady was always initiated into the ranks. Buck's favorite gag was to shoot himself in a fake accident while practicing the quick draw. He would break an imitation capsule of blood over his shirt front, then collapse into the startled, and oft-times shrieking leading lady's arms. Van Dyke decided Jane was a perfect "stooge" for a "nice, juicy act" in which he also would participate.

The crew was on location at the old Calico Mines near Barstow in the Mojave Desert. During lunch, the conversation shifted to Van Dyke, after Van had left. Buck impressed on Jane that Van Dyke was highly temperamental. "Just keep anybody waiting on a set when the whole company has been called for work, and he'll give you a piece of his mind you'll never forget," Buck said.

The next morning everyone reported for work at seven sharp—except Buck. Jane felt certain, after the conversation at lunch the day before, that he would be there any moment. Ten minutes

passed... fifteen... twenty-five.

Jane stood tense and silent, holding her horse. Van Dyke paced back and forth before her, really peeved. Suddenly he whipped out his six-shooter and fired at a tin can a few feet away. The can jumped, so did her horse, jerking the

Bang! Bang! Bang! BANG! They were four of the loudest reports ever heard on a Buck Jones set. The entire cast froze in their tracks. Up by the boulder, the chauffeur leaped to his feet and yelled, "Oh my God!" Mrs. Jones sat perfectly still.



Jones wrote the original story for *The Cowboy and the Kid* (Universal, 1936) in which he starred, with Billy Burrud filling the role of the kid.

reins from her hands. She grabbed them quickly, wide-eyed at his prowess with a Frontier Colt's.

Another half-hour passed. Van Dyke became a raving maniac. He fired again, and another tin can rattled off into the rocks. Everybody was running around trying to locate the star. Jane gripped the reins of her horse until her knuckles shone white.

At eight o'clock, Buck and his wife, together with his chauffeur, drove up as unconcerned as could be. Odelle and the chauffeur walked up the hillside to a big boulder and sat in the shade to watch the company work, and Buck strode lazily onto the set.

Van Dyke stopped pacing to and fro and lit into him with a verbal lashing the like of which those present had never before witnessed. Buck whirled angrily and told him to shut his mouth or he'd slap out his teeth.

"Why, nobody can talk to me that way and get by with it!" snarled Van Dyke, and cut loose with a haymaker.

Buck ducked the blow and drove a right squarely to Van's chin that sent him toppling head over heels in a cloud of dust. Van came out of the cloud with his six-shooter in his hand.

Buck fell to the ground, face twisted in an anguished expression and clutching his stomach while "blood" oozed between his fingers. He called to the petrified Jane Peters to get him some water.

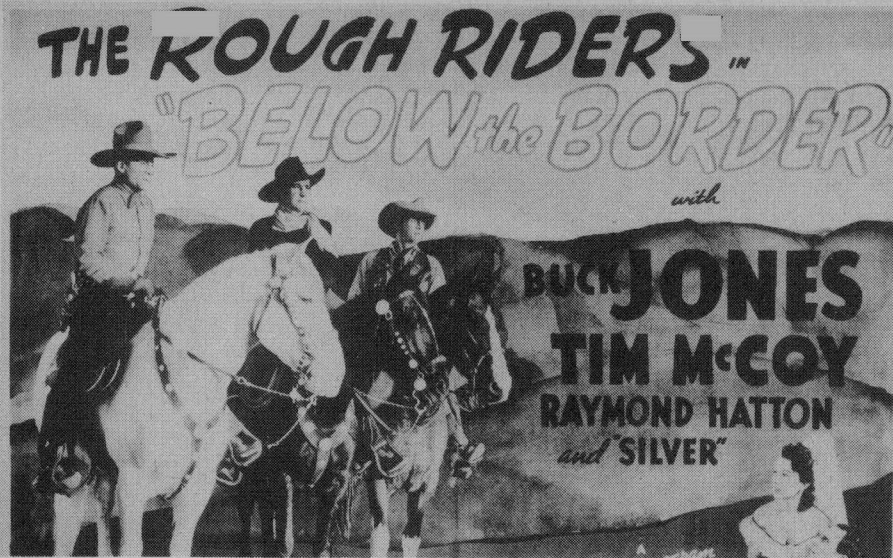
The girl was so beside herself she couldn't let go of the reins, and started dragging her horse toward the river. Finally she dropped the reins on the ground and placed her hat over them to keep the horse from running away. Then she grabbed a bucket and dashed madly to the stream. When she returned, out of breath, she found both Buck and Van Dyke on the ground doubled up—with laughter.

They told her she was the best audience they had ever had.

"Why, you horrible... you... Oh! OH!" She swung the bucket. The water flew through the air, and both Van and Buck were drenched.

Van Dyke had been careful to load his six-shooter with two live cartridges to fire at the tin cans. The other four were blanks. No one else had been in on the gag except Buck's wife, not even his chauffeur.

Buck was sorry when Van Dyke dropped out of Westerns and went on



Below the Border (Monogram, 1942) was one of *The Rough Riders* series which combined the talents of Buck Jones, Scotty Dunlap, Tim McCoy, and Raymond Hatton.

to film bigger and better pictures. He had been making \$500 a week when Van Dyke became director, and \$3,500 a week when he left. But Van Dyke told him, "It won't affect your situation. You're too well established. You'll prosper no matter who directs you."

That was 1926. Buck was a rich man. He owned a big ranch, several lots in Hollywood, and a beautiful home on a corner lot in Beverly Hills. He and Odelle visited England. He didn't bring Silver, so he couldn't ride up the Mansion House steps to meet the Lord Mayor of London as Tom Mix and Tony had. But he was amazed to learn that he ranked with Mix in popularity there.

By the time Buck returned to the United States, William S. Hart had decided to retire. Ken Maynard was on his way up with the hard-riding, fast-action stuff preferred by the public, but as yet offered no serious competition. His only other rival was Fred Thomson, a former U.S. Army chaplain and all-round athlete, who within two years had sky-rocketed to fame on a large grey horse named "Silver King." On Christmas Day, 1928, Thomson died tragically. Buck rode close to becoming "king cowboy."

His over-confidence and early taste of fame and wealth, perhaps, prompted him to sever relations with Fox and embark on two financially disastrous ventures of his own.

His second catastrophe occurred in 1929 when he put together his Buck Jones Wild West Show. During his years at Fox, a group of youthful admirers known as The Buck Jones Rangers had been organized as a promo-

tional stunt. The idea snowballed and hundreds of major cities across the United States boasted clubs totaling 4,000,000 members. Despite the appeal of the silver screen, Buck felt a return of the outdoor show business would be successful if he played in towns sporting great concentrations of his Rangers. The plan might have worked, except for the stock market crash and a few unscrupulous tricks sometimes practiced in the circus world. As soon as his advance man posted his show bills, rival circuses would either destroy or cover up his notices. By the time the Buck Jones Wild West Show arrived in town, hardly anyone knew it was there. In less than two months, the show folded. Disheartened and poorer by \$300,000, Buck returned to Hollywood.

AGAIN SCOTTY DUNLAP came to his aid. Buck still was very much in demand, and Dunlap was able to arrange a contract for him to make a series of eight Westerns for producer Sol Lesser's Beverly Hills Pictures, released by Columbia. The 1929 crash also had dealt Hollywood a blow, and Buck's weekly salary now was \$300.

But he entered into this new pact enthusiastically. In July, 1930, he completed *The Lone Rider*, his first "talkie." It was acclaimed "one of the best talking Westerns of the season," and other top-notch action efforts, *Shadow Ranch*, *Men Without Law*, *The Dawn Trail*, *Desert Vengeance*, *The Avenger*, *The Texas Ranger*, followed.

In 1937-1938, he provided Columbia six starrers: *Hollywood Roundup*, *Headin' East*, *California Frontier*, *Overland Express*,

Stranger From Arizona, and *Law of the Texan*.

But Westerns were taking on a new format. At Universal, Buck's place had been filled with a singing cowboy, Bob Baker. Other major studios, combining the fairly standardized action plot with overly "streamlined" frontier surroundings, comic foolery and guitar-strumming, starred such "sensational discoveries" as Fred Scott, Dick Foran, Tex Ritter, Gene Autry, and Roy Rogers. There were many more. Buck predicted the death of this musical intrusion, but it would come too late to do his career any good.

Scotty Dunlap came to his rescue in 1941 with a Monogram contract which united Buck with two other elder statesmen of the sage, Tim McCoy and Raymond Hatton, in that studio's *The Rough Riders* series. These features, eight in all, were well received and held their own despite stiff competition from the musical dramas.

Buck was to make only one more film, a sort of Monogram "special," entitled, ironically enough, *Dawn on the Great Divide*. It was completed in 1942, to be released early in 1943.

America had entered World War II and 1942 was a busy year for Buck. Like many other stars, he combined his numerous radio and personal appearances with bond-selling tours. On November 28, he had been a special guest of the city of Boston, Massachusetts, where he attended a toyland parade and Thanksgiving season football game. That evening he attended a testimonial and party that theater owners were giving him at the Cocomanut Grove night club.

The club was a squat, one and one-half story, block-long, stucco building that faced on a narrow Back Bay street. It fronted on Piedmont, and the rear faced Shawmut street, with one end bordering Broadway and the other adjoining a block of buildings. The Broadway side was about half the width of the rest of the building, an open air parking lot occupying the remaining space.

Entrances to the cocktail lounge and the entrance to the entertainers' dressing rooms flanked the band stand. The walls and ceiling were hung with colored cloth similar to plush or velvet. In the main room rope braiding ran up several poles, topped with artificial palm leaves and cocoanuts.

The place was jammed with people, mostly service men and women and parties of youngsters celebrating their football victory. It was the first time Buck had been inside a night club in five years.

In a corner a ceiling light seemed to be bothering a couple at one of the tables. The man reached up and unscrewed the bulb. This made the room too dark, and one of the waiters sent a bus boy to screw the bulb back into place.

The boy stood on a chair to do it. He lighted a match and held it while he screwed the bulb with the other hand. The orchestra leader had raised his baton to signal for the National Anthem as a prelude to the night floor show, then—

The match touched one of the artificial palm trees. There was a puff of smoke; a thin finger of flame raced among the decorations; a girl cried "fire," and within seconds everything was bedlam.

More than a thousand men and women, screaming together, tried to get out first. The street door to the lounge was locked. The crowd got to the revolving door on Piedmont street and one of the women went down. Other women and men fell on top of her and bodies kept piling up. While the people were trapped and tangled with one another the mass of flames reached the front door. It was impossible then for anyone to get out.

Many who escaped made their way to the roof of the building and leaped to the tops of parked automobiles, then to the street, clothing and hair burning as they fled to safety. Others took refuge in a huge basement ice box.

A fire alarm was sounded shortly after 10:15 p.m. Three additional alarms followed quickly, but long before they could be answered nearly 500 dead were piled up inside the club—victims of smoke inhalation and burns. As proportions of the disaster grew, aid was called from surrounding communities. Ambulances, beach wagons, private cars, even express trucks with police riding the running boards were used to carry the dead and injured to hospitals and morgues, while firemen fought foot by foot through the flames...

By daybreak all bodies had been removed. The structure itself had the appearance of a huge stucco oven—filled with burned and charred wreckage. The narrow sidewalks of Piedmont street were cluttered with cups and saucers and hundreds of small wooden cocktail forks, washed out by the fire hose lines—and women's clothes and slippers. Nearby streets and parking lots were crowded with parked and locked automobiles, many of which would

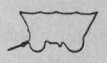
never be called for by their owners.

As the hours passed mortuary officials announced that most of the dead remaining unidentified were women. Unlike the male victims, their relatively flimsy clothing contained no identifying papers or wallets, their handbags were lost.

Buck Jones was one of 180 critically burned victims taken to the Massachusetts General Hospital. He had reached the top of the building and could have escaped. Instead, in this madhouse of trampling feet and crazed men and women, he thought of others. He went back into the flames twice to carry and lead hysterical people to the roof. On the second trip he was overcome by smoke and trapped when the roof caved in.

For two days doctors tried to save his life, but on the afternoon of November 30, the announcement came that he was dead. The tragedy shocked Hollywood and his fans all over the world.

His body was flown back to California. Episcopal services were held at the Washington Boulevard Chapel in Hollywood before cremation. His ashes were strewn over the Pacific he loved so well.



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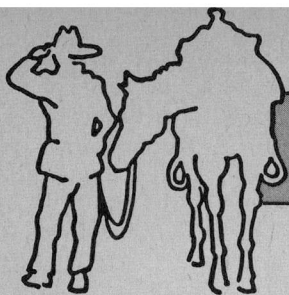
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Western genealogy

Grandpa was a Lawman

My great-grandfathers were lawmen. A family member, who is now deceased, had a picture of great-grandpa James M. Taylor wearing a U.S. deputy marshal's badge. James was born in Mississippi, in 1860, and died at Long Beach, California, in 1935. He was in the land run of 1889, and settled in Perry, Oklahoma. I have been told he served under Sheriff John McGhee of Perry as a deputy. He escorted some prisoners from Leavenworth, Kansas, to McAlester, Oklahoma, and stood guard while they started the building of the penitentiary there. He was also instrumental in starting a boy's reformatory at Granite, Oklahoma. He must have been in his thirties when he became a lawman in Perry around the late 1890s or early 1900s.

My other great-grandfather was Joseph Shelby Clifton. We have his application to be a police officer of Broken Bow, Oklahoma. It mentions he was a deputy sheriff of Noble County, Oklahoma, and a policeman of Perry. He was also state livestock inspector of Oklahoma, appointed March 1, 1920. I don't know when he served as a lawman, and have no pictures of him.

I am very interested in any records of both maternal great-grandfathers, and also any information on William Joel "Billy Jo" Clifton. He was Joseph S. Clifton's brother, and a lawman of Indian Territory and Noble County, Oklahoma. He was wounded while in office, having an eye put out. I would like to know how he died and where.—**Marilyn Rogers, 4440 Misty Lane, Redding, CA 96002.**

Gray

I am requesting information on my great-great-grandfather. His name was Joe L. Gray. He had five brothers, Hue,

Jim, John, Tom, and Lene; and two sisters, Martha Faggin and Mary Rose.

I know he was living in Burnsville, Mississippi, in 1867 because my great-grandpa Samuel Augustus Gray was born there April 20, 1867.

Samuel Augustus was married in Burnsville, November 8, 1885, to Mary (Molly) Catherine South, who was born in Burnsville, April 3, 1869.

Joe L. Gray was married to Sara Ann Phillips. His father's name was Hue Gray and his mother's name was Polly Ann (Patterson) Gray.—**Jim D. Gray, 2195 Ball Road, Eagle Point, OR 97524.**

Millard-Sirse-Leach-Adamson

I would like to hear from anyone knowing or related to my grandparents, Thomas Jefferson Millard and Julia Elvara Sirsea (Searcy). Thomas was born April 17, year unknown, and died December 6, 1917, at or near Pawnee, Oklahoma. Julia was born February 4, 1855, and died May 14, 1904. She was buried at Hornet, Missouri.

I would also like information on Comfort Leach Adamson and Al Adamson. They are buried near Joplin, Missouri, or Baxter Springs, Kansas. They are also my grandparents.—**Sylvia W. Kensbock, R.R. 3, Box 280A, Leavenworth, KS 66048.**

Bradley

I am searching for information on the parents of Benjamin Bradley. He was born March 22, 1806, in Virginia, and

died August 6, 1839, in Brush Creek, Tennessee. He married Frances Lancaster October 28, 1823. Their children were: Elizabeth Cathern, Judah Davis, William L., Thomas F., James, Benjamin, Frances Davis, Mary Davis, and Melinda Woodson.—**Oleta Bradley Morris, Route 2, Anna, TX 75003.**

Stranigan

My grandfather, James Stranigan, had three children, Virgil (my father), James, and Margarette. Two of his brothers migrated west in the late 1800s or early 1900s. He also had a brother, Joseph, who had spina bifida.

I would appreciate information on my grandfather's family.—**Jennie R. Shapley, Box 457, Malabar, FL 32950.**

Vaughn-Jackson

I am seeking information on the family of Nancy Vaughn. She married Andrew Jackson, who was supposedly a descendant of President Andrew Jackson. A son, James, was born of this union at Cumberland Gap, (Tennessee or Virginia), in 1851. Other children were, Virginia (Jenny), Louise, Andrew, and Carr. Carr had red hair and was high tempered.—**Mrs. J.D. Sutton, Rt. 5, Box 298, Russell Springs, KY 42642.**

Hendren

I am wanting to find out if Chief Blackjack Hendren was one of my ancestors. My lineage includes, Hen-

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True West

dren, Sanders, Vincent, and Preuitt. I have traced my family geographically to Monroe County, Missouri, Madison County, Kentucky, Wilkes County, and Mercer County, North Carolina, and possibly Virginia.

I have reason to believe my ancestry also includes, Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, and Susquehanna.—Mrs. Ted Hartung, Sr., 3102 So. 148th St., Seattle, WA 98168.

Randall

I would like information about my grandfather, Solomon Randall. He was a Pinkerton Man in Oklahoma Territory. He worked on James Gang and Belle Starr cases.—Isabelle Chase, Box 23, Oakridge, OR 97463.

Allison

I am trying to find out if I am related to Edwin (Edward) Henry Allison, the scout who arranged for the surrender of Sitting Bull. He was a native of McComp County, Michigan, and was born March 16, 1847. I would like to know who his grandparents and parents were and where they lived. My great-great-grandfather was Westly Allison, inventor of the Allison Railroad Dump Car and Allison Motors from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He had a son, John Westly Allison of Philadelphia, and a grandson, my grandfather, Harvey Allison, from Brooklyn, New York. All were adventurers and traveled West. Could there be a link?—Lynn H. Wilke, Box 446, Peru, NY 12972.

Cannon-Mathews

I am searching for information on the ancestors of James W. Cannon, born circa 1812, probably in Lansing, Michigan, and Mary Ellen (Wood?) Cooksey. Their children were, George Riley, Thomas Bentley, William Allen, John Wilson, James Crittenton, Francis Marion, Pete, Lewis, Madison, Cicero, Laura, Julie Doc, and Missouri A.

I would also like information on the ancestors, birthdate, and place of John Mathews, and his wife, Ann (Archer) Mathews. Both were born in Ireland, and came to America between 1730 and 1739. They settled on Moffitts Branch, in Augusta County, Virginia. Their son, William, was born in 1715, in Ireland.—Mrs. Elaine M. Von Moos, 324 N. Willow Ave., West Covina, CA 91790.

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Oct. 15	Jan. 1986	Dec. 1 - Jan. 1
Nov. 15	Feb. 1986	Jan. 1 - Feb. 1
Dec. 15	Mar. 1986	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1
Jan. 15	Apr. 1986	Mar. 1 - Apr. 1
Feb. 15	May 1986	Apr. 1 - May 1
Mar. 15	June 1986	May 1 - June 1
Apr. 15	July 1986	June 1 - July 1
May 15	Aug. 1986	July 1 - Aug. 1
June 15	Sep. 1986	Aug. 1 - Sep. 1
July 15	Oct. 1986	Sep. 1 - Oct. 1

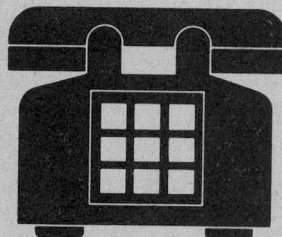
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THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE IN THE OLD WEST

"The Grey-Eyed Man of Destiny"

By H. Franklin Greene

One of the most treacherous and vicious of the Old West renegades was really not the Clantons, Earps, Ringos, Har- dins, or Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch, but a rather dignified lawyer, medical-doctor and statesman by the name of William Walker, a meek-looking gentleman of a Southern aristocratic family from Nashville, Tennessee.

To William Walker, the first years of the 1850's were boom years — a heyday of magnificent innovation in which California was at once a symbol and an effective cause.

California was golden opportunity: a new chance for the young, a last chance for men who felt that the Goddess of Fortune had hitherto sniffed and passed them by.

California's gold changed the old order of finance. Her demand for admission to the Union brought on the great congressional debates of 1850 and produced the compromise on the slavery question which takes its name from that date. California was more than a frenzy along mountain riverbeds. California was a state of mind and a prime factor in establishing the myth that actions by their very daring and magnitude could be above conventional morality and worthy of praise and imitation.

The men who profited by the California scramble were not necessarily men who had known the perils of Indian massacre, gunfights, cattle rustling and stage robberies on their way Westward, but all did have one characteristic in common — an adventurous ruthless love of the West and its unknown secrets.

After failing in law, medicine, and journalism all the way from Nashville to New Orleans, Walker headed West to try his luck as a prospector or sluice-box tender along the Mokelumne and the San Joaquin. However, this was hard labor, and labor was not suited for William Walker's talents — after all, he was a gentleman, and had connections back East.

One of his supporters back East was none other than the eloquent scoundrel, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and with his support Walker organized and led the famous 1853 attempt to seize Mexican territory and organize it as the "Independent Republic of Lower California."

He proclaimed himself master of Sonora in Lower California in January, 1854.

William Walker planned to build an empire in Lower California, have himself appointed dictator of a slave-tended system of agriculture. However, many of Walker's enemies disappeared and subsequently the Federal Government became involved. The U.S. Government, after investigating Walker's activities, notified the Federal authorities to refuse him supplies and equipment, and his empire-building venture ended in retreat, and surrender to a United States force at the border.

William Walker's career was a fascinating tale of acquisition — no holds barred and the throttle wide-open. He played with great enterprises as a child played with blocks. His frankness was arrogance; his passion for order and efficiency only the trick of a clever salesman.

In the year of 1855, Walker was not daunted. He was planning a descent on Nicaragua with the eventual federalization of all Central America under his control. He landed with only 57 men, all adventurers and renegades from California, Arizona, Texas, and other border territories. Men that wanted to be lost from recognition back in the States. He was financed by Vanderbilt, and was supplied ships, supplies and ammunition from his steamship lines. With this capital, Walker dictated a peace and had his coup d'etat recognized by the United States in 1856. Walker was now Master of the Nicaraguan state and all appeared serene. He repealed the Spanish laws against Negro slavery and reinstated a slave system of his own — patterned after his plans in Lower California.

At this promising point in his career, he was admired by the slave interest in the United States, and by the imperialists who hung about the fringes of the Democratic Party. He hoped to extend the slave system to the vast areas of South America, as well as Central America and the Islands, but Walker fell foul of his pal, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt — and did a double-cross.

Now Commodore Vanderbilt was a formidable gentleman, and did not approve of anyone who disagreed with him. The reasons for supporting Walker was his strategy to avoid a group take-over of his vast enterprises. He made an arrangement with Walker whereby he was to void the original charter of his steamship company, seize what assets existed in Nicaragua, and turn everything over to themselves together with a new charter in their favor.

It took Commodore Vanderbilt a little time to get around to Walker for this double-cross. He had to dispose of two other thorns in his side by the names of Morgan and Garrison. This he did quickly and then he went for Walker in this manner: he roused up all Central America against Nicaragua with a war against Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Walker was doomed. Walker escaped in May, 1857, aboard a United States man-of-war and left the Central American scene.

So ended his days of glory. He made two attempts to reassert his authority in Nicaragua. The first of these ended in his arrest and return for trial in the United States, where he was defended by Pierre Soule, a famous French-American statesman who became a United States Senator from Louisiana.

The second time his luck ran out. The Commodore's influence was strong in Central and South America. So when he landed in Honduras in August, 1860, and attempted to cross into Nicaragua, he was arrested and executed by his late subjects.

Yes, the Old West was full of outlaws and lawmen. It took both to make history — without one, the other was unnecessary. So as with William Walker — the "grey-eyed man of destiny." He too made history, and in all probability robbed, stole, killed or had murdered more men than any 30 more famous named outlaws that we read about continually.

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