

THE SILENT TREATMENT

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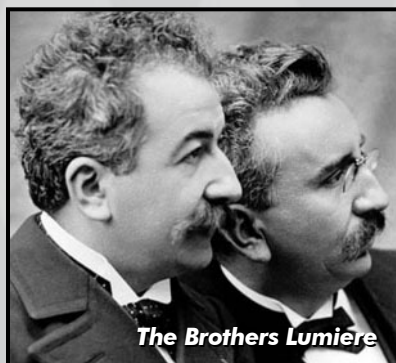


Institut Lumière Exhibition

By Rachel Donadio (Excerpted from the *New York Times*).

PARIS. On the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the invention of the cinematograph, the Institut Lumière has organized an unprecedented exhibition dedicated to the flagship inventions of the Lyon-based pioneers of cinema, Louis and Auguste Lumière.

On view through June 14, the exhibition “**Lumière! Inventing Cinema**” showcases early films by the brothers, restored by the Institut Lumière in Lyon, a film history and



The Brothers Lumière

restoration center; along with examples of early cinema technology—kinetoscopes, zoetropes—and documentation about the rapid spread of the medium at the turn of the 20th century. The show captures a time of optimism when viewers first had access to footage from around the world, before the carnage of World War I descended on Europe.

It also seeks to put the Lumière brothers in context. Many innovators, including Thomas Edison in the United States, were experimenting with recording images. But it was Louis Lumière who in 1894 invented the cinematograph, a compact device that united all the existing technology to capture 17-meter films (each about 50 seconds long) on 35-millimeter strips and to project them. He patented the machine in 1895.

“He’s the last of the inventors but he’s the first of the filmmakers,” said Thierry Frémaux, director of the Cannes Film Festival and of the Institut Lumière, who is a curator of the exhibition with Jacques Gerber.

“Lumière was a great filmmaker,” Mr. Frémaux added. “There’s something extremely cinematographic in the films that Louis Lumière and his cameramen made.”

In the exhibition at the Grand Palais, all 1,500 films are being shown on a huge wall-size screen, like a rose window to cinema. The exhibition also has a model of the Salon Indien inside the elegant Hotel Scribe in Paris, where 10 Lumière films, including the workers leaving the factory, were on the program of the first public screening to a small, rapt paying audience in 1895. (Complete article: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/arts/design/lumiere-inventing-cinema-in-paris-celebrates-the-birth-of-movies.html?_r=2#)



ALLA NAZIMOVA

Lost Costumes Surface

By Martin Trumbull

In the fall of 2014, a trove of costumes and fashionable street wear from the estate of Broadway and silent-film superstar Alla Nazimova was discovered in an unlikely place: a storage building behind a home in

Columbus, Georgia. Jack Raines, a college student, found the garments neatly packed away in a long-forgotten steamer trunk in the building behind his grandmother's house.



Among the items Raines found inside the trunk was an unusual headpiece festooned with pearl-like beads. It was, in fact, a key element in one of the most iconic images of the silent film era—the wig worn by Nazimova in *Salome*, a prototype art film that she financed, wrote (under the name Peter M. Winters) and directed (under the name of her faux husband, Charles Bryant) and starred in in 1923. The wig, along with the costumes and sets for *Salome*, was designed by Nazimova's protégée, Natacha Rambova, the second wife of Rudolph Valentino, one of the immortals of the silent-film era.

Raines also found a four-piece costume labeled "Salome" in the trunk, along with costumes from Nazimova's storied theatrical career, including a jacket from a 1928 production of Anton Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*; a headdress she wore in the original production of *The Good Earth*; and, perhaps rarest of all, a headpiece designed by Nazimova

herself for a production of *Tsar Fyodor* not long after she arrived in the United States from her native Russia in 1905.

Alla Nazimova was a household name in the earliest decades of the 20th century. Her first fame came on Broadway, where she was considered one of the finest interpreters of European Modernist plays by Chekov, Strindberg, and Henrik Ibsen. In just two years, 1908 and 1909, her plays produced \$4 million in revenue for the Shubert Organization, an amount equivalent to \$51 million today.

She was in such demand that in 1917, when she was hired by Metro Pictures, a precursor to MGM, her weekly salary of \$13,000—about \$200,000 today—made her the highest paid actress in the industry. Soon after she moved to Los Angeles in 1918, she bought an estate on Sunset Boulevard at the western limits of Hollywood. Originally named Hayvenhurst, she jokingly called her home the Garden of Alla," a reference to the best-selling 1904 novel by Robert Smythe Hichens.

In 1926, she converted her estate into a residential hotel by adding 25 villas onto the 2.5 acre lot. Within a few years, she sold the hotel and returned to Broadway. The hotel, which the new owners christened the Garden of Allah, became one of the most popular and notorious establishments in Hollywood. It was the riotous West Coast home of members of New York's Algonquin Round Table, including Dorothy Parker and Robert Benchley.

Not long after Nazimova's death, her longtime companion Glesca Marshall became partners with Emily Woodruff, and they eventually moved from Los Angeles to Columbus (Emily's hometown). Nazimova's costumes and clothing were carefully wrapped, with many items neatly labeled on notepaper from Glesca's stationery, and packed into

the trunks. After Glesca died in 1987, the trunks remained on the property when the house was purchased by Jack Raines' grandmother (www.allanazimova.com)

SILENT SPOTLIGHT

Helen Holmes: THE GIRL AT THE SWITCH

By Miss Cellania (Excerpted Article, 01/02/15).

A century before Jennifer Lawrence was slinging arrows as Katniss Everdeen, Helen Holmes invented the female action hero, starring in the wildly popular 1915 silent film series *The Hazards of Helen*. In a few year's time, short action flicks like *Hazards* had become standard weekend diversions for moviegoing Americans, giving rise to the first generation of screen stars: Mary Fuller in *What Happened to Mary*, Kathlyn Williams in *The Adventures of Kathlyn*, and Pearl White in *The Perils of Pauline*. These weren't coy coquettes or damsels in distress; they were action stars racing cars, riding horses, and jumping trains.



A Chicago-raised tomboy-turned-model, Holmes was more than just

the star of *The Hazards of Helen*—she was, in large part, its creator. Holmes landed her first film roles in silent comedies in 1912. Shortly after, she joined forces, personally and professionally, with J.P. “Jack” McGowan, an Australian director who specialized in short action flicks, most of them one or two reel railroad dramas.

From the start, McGowan and Holmes wanted to do something different. They envisioned a rough-hewn adventure series centered on Helen, a railroad operator, who threw herself into peril in every episode. Production for *Hazards* began in Glendale, California, in 1914, but by early 1915, McGowan had fallen from a telegraph pole performing a stunt. That’s when Holmes took over the production, and she fully embraced the task.

“If a photoplay actress wants to achieve real thrills, she must write them into the scenario herself,” she once said. Each weekly installment found Helen facing fresh danger, from thieves to runaway trains—simple stories, simplistically told—but with a radical message by 1915 standards. In the pre-Hollywood days of early cinema, moviemaking was defined by a rough-and-tumble DIY aesthetic. Unlike many of her colleagues, Holmes performed many death-defying stunts herself, from swinging onto moving locomotives to crawling across the hoods of speeding cars. Asked about her stunt work, she remarked that she sought to perform stunts without losing “that air of femininity of which we are all so proud. But by that I do not mean the frail side of a woman. I mean the heroic side.”

The pace of producing a weekly serial was grueling, and it took a toll. Reputedly, she nearly suffered a career-ending injury when she fell off a train face first into a cactus thicket, puncturing her eye. Holmes took risks



with her body, but she was equally bold with her writing. Whereas her contemporaries often saw their characters thrust into jeopardy by chance, Helen’s character plunged into danger intentionally—after all, it was her job. And while the plots of other series revolved around romance, the story line of *Hazards* was always Helen’s career and her attempts to prove herself in a treacherous workplace inhabited exclusively by men.

The themes played nicely to the audience. At the time, moviegoers were mostly working-class women who went to see serial pictures; they were the ones Helen was speaking to. There was a growing appetite for depictions of strong women, and on screen, no female better exemplified the New Woman ideal than one who could jump trains without breaking the ostrich brim on her hat.

Before long, Holmes had starred in 46 episodes of *Hazards*, directing at least two. In 1915, Holmes and McGowan left *Hazards* to capitalize on Holmes’ tremendous box-office appeal. The pair continued to make adventure films together until they split in 1918. Holmes went on to start her own production company, but in a market now flooded with female action stars, her draw slipped. A payment disagreement with her distributor added to her woes, contributing to her first box-office bomb, and she soon gave up screen acting. By

the 1920s, some censorship boards refused to allow films that showed women scrapping with men and holding their own.

Action films soon became the exclusive domain of male protagonists, and over the years, “women’s pictures” came to mean melodramas. And while American cinema had its share of strong women like Bette Davis and Ida Lupino, by the ’30s the female action star had essentially ceased to exist. Holmes died in 1950 of pulmonary tuberculosis. (Full Article: <http://www.neatorama.com/2015/01/02/Helen-Holmes-The-Girl-at-the-Switch/>)

TST BOOKCORNER

Flickering Empire:

How Chicago Invented the U.S. Film Industry

By Michael Smith and Adam Selzer

Flickering Empire: How Chicago Invented the U.S. Film Industry tells the fascinating but too little known story of how Chicago served as the unlikely capital of film production in America in the years prior to the rise of Hollywood (1907-1913). This book straddles the worlds of academia and popular non-fiction alike in its vivid illustration of the rise and fall of the major Chicago movie studios in the mid-silent era (principally Essanay and Selig Polyscope).



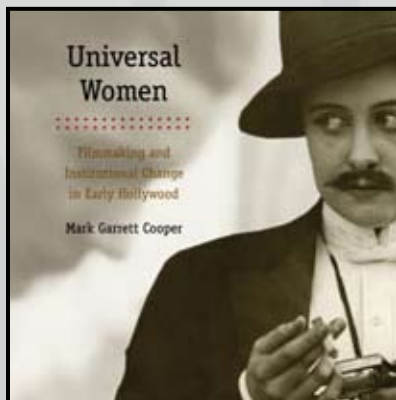
Flickering
Empire

Colorful, larger-than-life historical figures like Thomas Edison, Charlie Chaplin, Oscar Micheaux and Orson Welles are major players in **Flickering Empire** - in addition to important but forgotten industry giants like 'Colonel' William Selig, George Spoor and Gilbert 'Broncho Billy' Anderson. (<http://cup.columbia.edu/books/wallflower-press>)

Universal Women: Filmmaking and Institutional Change in Early Hollywood

By Mark Garrett Cooper

Between 1912 and 1919, the Universal Film Manufacturing Company credited eleven women with directing at least 170 films, but by the mid-1920s all of these directors had left Universal and only one still worked in the film industry at all.



Two generations of cinema historians have either overlooked or been stymied by the mystery of why Universal first systematically supported women directors and then abruptly reversed that policy. Cooper examines the relationship between institutional organization and aesthetic conventions during the formative years when women filmmakers such as Ruth Ann Baldwin, Cleo Madison, Ruth Stonehouse, Elise Jane Wilson, and Ida May Park directed films for Universal. (<http://www.press.uillinois.edu>)

Buster Keaton's Crew: The Team Behind His Silent Films



By Lisle Foote

Buster Keaton told an interviewer in 1965, "When I'm working alone, the cameraman, the prop man, the electrician, these are my eyes out there—they knew what they were talking about."

Drawn from film trade magazines, newspapers, interviews and public records, this book tells the previously unpublished stories of the behind-the-scenes crew who worked on Keaton's silent films—like Elgin Lessley, who went from department store clerk to chief cameraman, and Fred Gabourie, who served as an army private in the Spanish American War before he became Keaton's technical director. He couldn't have made his films without them. (www.amazon)

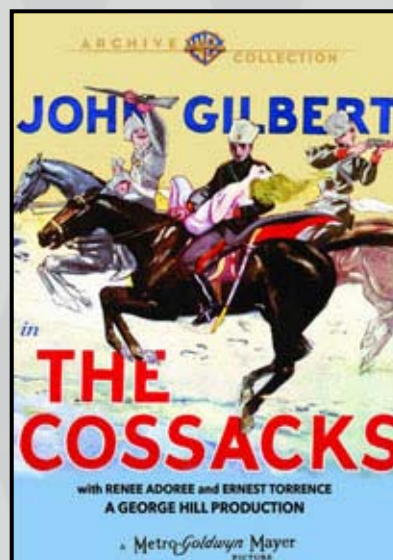
HOME ENTERTAINMENT

The Cossacks (1928)

A novel by Leo Tolstoy provides the source for the rowdy and romantic silent-era adventure, *The Cossacks*, presented to today's audiences in a superb print and with a colorful orchestral score by Robert Israel. John

Gilbert, the screen's famed "Great Lover," portrays Lukashka, son of a Cossack Chieftain. Mocked for his peace-loving ways, the young Cossack proves he's made of sterner stuff when he outrides and overwhelms enemy Turks who've escaped with his village's horses. He also faces a romantic rival - a czarist prince intent on marrying Lukashka's beloved (played by Renee Adoree, Gilbert's costar in *The Big Parade*).

Applauded by The New York Times for its "earnest attention to the atmospheric detail," the film is rife with celebration, ceremony and, above all, amazing trick-riding performed on galloping steeds by real-life Cossack horsemen. (www.wb-shop.com)



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