

A Milestone Film & Video presentation

Turner Classic Movies
Hugh Hefner and Timeline Films

Present

Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies

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Phone: (201) 767-3117 • Fax: (201) 767-3035 • Email: milefilms@aol.com
www.milestonefilms.com

Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies

“Superb! Eye-opening! This one’s a must!” — *The Star-Ledger*

“Fascinating!” — *Wall Street Journal*

“A wonderful comedienne deserves, and gets, a wonderful documentary!” — Scott Eyman, author of *Print the Legend: The Life and Times of John Ford*

Blonde, beautiful and supremely talented, Marion Davies was Hollywood’s first and funniest screwball comedienne. Star of two of the best comedies ever made, *Show People* and *The Patsy*, she was a master of both zany slapstick and exuberant mimicry. Famous also for her 35-year-long love affair with tycoon William Randolph Hearst, Davies has too often been misidentified as the model for the character of *Citizen Kane*’s second wife. Unlike the weak and talentless Susan Alexander, Davies was glamorous, witty, kind and genuinely funny.

Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies is a loving and insightful exploration of her life and work that combines archival film clips, interviews and rare home movies. The Brooklyn-born Davies was a Ziegfeld showgirl who went on to reign over Hollywood’s elite at Hearst’s legendary San Simeon. A wonderful, moving tribute to this Hollywood legend, this is a documentary to own and cherish. A bonus feature on this video is Davies’ brilliant performance in the rarely seen classic, *Quality Street!*

Catalog Number: Mile083 • UPC Code: 7-84148-0083-3-2 • 170 minutes total B&W/Color • \$29.95

Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies

Production Credits

Narrated by Charlize Theron

Executive Producer Hugh M. Hefner

Producer Elaina B. Archer

Director Hugh Munro Neely

Written by Elaina B. Archer, Hugh Munro Neely, John J. Flynn

Executive Producer for TCM Tom Brown

Original Music Nigel Holton

Director of Photography Harry Dawson

Opening Statement
Elaina Archer, Producer

While we were between productions of Louise Brooks and our Clara Bow documentaries, I worked part time at the Library of Moving Images for my friend, Michael Yakaitis. Michael has been a collector of Marion Davies memorabilia and films for over twenty years. He basically opened my eyes to the magic of Marion. Then we went into production on our piece on Clara Bow.

Throughout the production, we were in touch with Bob Board, another collector of Marion Davies materials. Bob has a lovely museum dedicated to Marion where he has regular screenings and Hugh and I were invited up to his home to screen rare films and to go through his extensive Marion Davies photo collection.

After we were finished with Clara Bow's piece, I contacted Frederick Guiles and after many conversations with Fred, he admitted that he had rare audiotape recordings of Marion's voice which were saved in his attic. Fred agreed to become a consultant on the show and to appear in it, as well as to provide us with his audiotapes of Marion's voice and (for research purposes) audiotape interviews he had himself conducted in the 1960's for use in his biography of Marion. Fred served as a consultant and appeared on camera in the program. Sadly, he passed away before the production was completed, literally within six weeks of being interviewed. The film was dedicated to him.

During the time period where we were on yet another hiatus between the Clara Bow and the Marion Davies projects, I worked with Michael to produce a documentary film on Jack Pickford. Timeline Films worked out a deal with Michael where I was able to use the Avid and the PhotoShop and after effects that were available in house as a direct trade for Marion Davies footage, photos and information. Timeline was extremely supportive of our piece, and in turn, we had a large resource of materials available to us for the Marion Davies documentary.

TIMELINE FILMS

Biographies

John J. Flynn

John J. Flynn, Ph.D. is a founding partner at Timeline Films who has written, produced, edited, and/or directed a number of productions including documentaries about United Artists, the DeMilles, Clara Bow, Marion Davies and others. In 1995 he completed a Ph.D. in theater at UCLA where he was given the Pendleton Award for excellence. Dr. Flynn is also a past Regent's Scholar and the recipient of a Community Service award from UCSC. He also teaches theater history and theory classes at Cal State Los Angeles. His scholarship and articles have focused on interculturalism, Japanese theater, fight choreography, and high technology. He shoots theater and dance performances by two renowned companies: American Repertory Dance Company and Cornerstone Theater Company. He has also created video segments for the Theatre L.A. Ovation Awards, and worked with subjects ranging from Mary Pickford to the Longshoremen's union. Current projects include the Alzheimer's Association, Lionel Hampton and Masters of Production for PBS.

Keith Lawrence

Keith Lawrence is a partner in Timeline Films. He has been producing films for over 20 years. He served as President and CEO of Ferde Grofe Films, where he produced over 60 documentaries and three feature films. At Timeline he directed "The DeMille Dynasty," for AMC, two episodes of "Forever Wild," for PBS, "Mary Pickford- A Star" and produced many of the current productions. He is Chief Financial Officer and Secretary of the Mary Pickford Foundation. Keith is a licensed Marriage and Family Counselor and works parttime in South Central Los Angeles as a therapist for at risk youth.

Hugh Munro Neely

Hugh Munro Neely is a documentary filmmaker, theater director, and musician. A native of California, he attended the USC School of Music (1972-1977). He worked for several years as a commercial photographer. In 1989 he directed several episodes of "Air Combat" for the "Our Century" series, originally on the A&E cable network. Since then he has served as supervising editor on ten A&E Biographies, including "Michaelangelo" and "Thomas Jefferson." In 1996 he started Timeline Films with partners Keith Lawrence and John J. Flynn. For Timeline he has written, produced or directed eight documentaries, including films on the lives of Mary Pickford, Louise Brooks, Clara Bow, and Marion Davies. Most of these have appeared on the Turner Classic Movies channel, and have received screenings at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Italy and other festivals. In theater, Hugh has directed award-winning productions of "Candide" and "A Piece of My Heart," as well as the world premiere of Edgar Rice Burroughs' only play, "You Lucky Girl!" (1998). As a musician, he plays viola and violin and has conducted orchestras in America and in Europe, specializing in music for silent films.

Diane MacIntyre

Associate Producer, Research

Diane MacIntyre has been an independent film scholar for over 20 years. She founded The Silents Majority On-line Journal of Silent Film (<http://www.silentsmajority.com/>) in January 1996 and has overseen its growth to become the premiere silent-film related website. As senior editor, her experience includes writing content, researching and public relations. The Silents Majority currently has over 4000 pages and now consistently receives more than 300,000 hits a month. At Timeline Films, she worked on post-production marketing, publicity and rights clearance for "Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies." Diane is currently working on the Timeline documentary "Complicated Women," for Turner Classic Movies, as associate producer, lead researcher and co-writer. She is also Assistant Librarian at the Mary Pickford Library.

Elaina Archer

Producer, Editor

Elaina Archer has a Masters Degree in Radio-Television-Film from the University of Texas at Austin. She was an Art Director on feature films before taking a position as a photo editor at New Line Cinema. Archer moved on to a marketing position at BMG Music before she came to work at Timeline Films in 1996. Archer represented Timeline in program development, bringing five productions to the company. She has produced, co-written and co-edited four documentaries: *Louise Brooks: Looking for Lulu*, *Clara Bow: Discovering the 'It' Girl*, *In Mary's Shadow: The Story of Jack Pickford*, and *Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies*. Three off these documentaries were produced for Turner Classic Movies and included narrators such as Charlize Theron, Courtney Love and Shirley McLaine. As the manager of the Mary Pickford Library from 1996 to 2001, Archer significantly increased the holdings of the Library, oversaw several film restorations, and helped produce the travelling series, "Sweetheart: The Films of Mary Pickford." In 2001, Archer went off on her own to co-found the new production company, The Bigger Picture.

Marion Davies: Behind the Screen

- Marion Cecile Douras was born in Brooklyn in 1897.
- Broadway producer George W. Lederer, who had married Davies's sister Reine, gave Davies her first professional work as a chorus girl in his productions of *The Sunshine Girl* (1913) and *The Queen of the Movies* (1914).
- Davies's sister got the name "Davies" from a shop sign. She and all of her sisters changed their last names.
- William Randolph Hearst discovered Davies when she was dancing in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1916*. She was 19; he was 53.

He was so infatuated with her that he attended every performance for eight weeks. He bought two tickets each night, using the second seat for his hat. Although he never divorced his wife, former showgirl Millicent Wilson, and remained a devoted father to their five sons, Hearst and Marion would remain together for the rest of his life. His sons often socialized with him and Davies and often traveled with them on their European excursions.

- When they moved to Hollywood, Hearst bought Davies a lavish Beverly Hills mansion and built her a 118-room beach house in Santa Monica. The latter cost \$7 million. Because of her many lavish parties there, it was dubbed “The Versailles of Hollywood.”
- Once she became a star, Davies showed uncommon generosity to other fledgling talents. When Norma Shearer was having trouble getting started in Hollywood, she and Hearst gave her a small role in *The Restless Sex* (1920) and even arranged for her to shoot a screen test.
- Although the two often competed for roles, Davies hosted Norma Shearer’s 1927 marriage to Irving G. Thalberg at her Beverly Hills home and served as a bridesmaid. When Thalberg took ill years later, Davies helped Shearer design the beach house in which he would recuperate.
- Davies frequently appealed to Hearst to help film stars on the skids. When drug addiction ended Alma Reubens’s career in the ‘20s, she went to England in a highly publicized “rescue” mission and brought her back to Hollywood, convincing Hearst to put her up in an apartment in the same building where they stayed when in New York.
- Davies was famous for her lavish parties. For one, she rented an amusement pier and forced Hollywood’s finest to dress as children. When Thalberg and Shearer left Hollywood for a European tour, she threw a “Night in Heidelberg” costume party at which everyone wore German peasant dress. Davies was so pleased with her costume that she threatened to start a fashion trend by wearing it around town for a week.
- Despite Hearst’s moralistic stance (he even limited drinking at San Simeon), Davies had a rowdy sense of humor and loved to indulge in practical jokes. When she entertained teetotaling president Calvin Coolidge, she slipped him some wine, claiming it was fruit juice. By the time he got to his third glass, he was heard to say, “I don’t know when I’ve had anything as refreshing.”
- Davies’s bungalow on the MGM lot was the ultimate stopping place for many celebrities visiting Hollywood. Among the notables she hosted were Charles Lindbergh and George Bernard Shaw. Tennessee Williams once said, “Marion Davies makes up for the rest of Hollywood.”
- When Hearst fell on hard times in 1937, Davies dipped into her personal savings to give him the \$1 million he needed to save his empire. She would later say, “Why have him tortured for a miserable million dollars?”
- *Citizen Kane* wasn’t the only fictionalized treatment of Davies’s relationship to Hearst. Two years before Welles’s film classic, British author Aldous Huxley painted a scathing picture of the two in his 1939 novel *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, about a millionaire willing to give up his humanity to escape death.
- Hearst threatened to sue Orson Welles for defamation of character but ultimately never followed through for fear of having to testify about his relationship with Davies. Welles biographer Barbara Leaming claims that Welles’s attorneys threatened to prove Davies had given birth to twins fathered by Hearst.
- Nobody knows for certain if Davies ever saw *Citizen Kane*, though there are numerous legends suggesting that she and Hearst screened it at San Simeon or viewed it during its premiere run in San Francisco. A copy had been sent to Hearst in 1941, but it was returned with the protective seals unbroken. One friend of Hearst’s claimed that, when asked if he had seen the film, the publisher’s only comment was, “We thought it was a little too long.”
- Ironically, Davies’s nephew, screenwriter Charles Lederer, was married to Welles’ first wife, Virginia Nicholson, through most of the ‘40s. Lederer and the former Mrs. Welles were frequent guests at San Simeon and Davies’s Santa Monica beach house but had to keep Welles and Nicholson’s daughter, Christopher, out of sight whenever Hearst was around.
- When a Japanese submarine sank a U.S. freighter off the coast of California in December 1942, Hearst and Davies shut down San Simeon and moved their partying to Wynton, an estate in northern California.
- In 1945, Hearst’s health failed. On doctors’ orders, he sold San Simeon and moved to a relatively modest home in Beverly Hills, which Davies deeded to Hearst so that he could die in a house that he owned. Davies sold the beach house for \$600,000.
- Hearst died on Aug. 14, 1951, at age 88. The family had his body removed while Davies slept under sedation. She would later say, “I asked where he was, and the nurse said he was dead. His body was gone, whoosh, like that. Old W.R. was gone. The boys [Hearst’s sons] were gone. I was alone. Do you realize what they did? They stole a possession of mine. He belonged to me. I loved him for 32 years, and now he was gone. I couldn’t even say goodbye.” Although she was not mentioned in his will, she already had voting control of Hearst’s businesses. She sold her voting rights to the family for the fee of \$1 a year.
- Two months after Hearst’s death, Davies eloped to San Francisco with former stuntman Horace Brown. It was her first marriage.
- Davies died September 22, 1961, leaving an estate of \$8 million, which was squandered by her family members.
- Davies’s memoirs, taken from tapes she made in the ‘50s, were finally published in 1975 as *The Times We Had*. For the

forward, the publishers turned to Orson Welles, whose brief essay pointed up the many differences between Davies and the second wife in *Citizen Kane* and praised her skills as an actress and comedienne and her lifetime of devotion to Hearst.

Marion Davies Movie Milestones

- 1917 Davies makes her screen debut for her brother-in-law, producer George W. Lederer, in *Runaway Romany*.
Determined to make her a bigger star than Mary Pickford, William Randolph Hearst buys Sulzer's Harlem River Park Casino in New York and turns it into a movie studio, home of his new Cosmopolitan Pictures, created primarily to produce Davies's films.
- 1918 Hearst releases Davies's first starring vehicle, *Cecilia of the Pink Roses*, through Paramount Pictures. His papers hail it as a cinematic milestone. Like most of Davies's early silents, it is too lavishly produced to ever turn a profit.
- 1922 Davies stars in her first film to make money, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, in which she plays Mary Tudor, wife of France's Louis XII. Victor Herbert composes "The Marion Davies March" to be played along with the silent film. When film reviewer Louella Parsons praises Davies, but criticizes Hearst for his overly lavish production, he hires her as motion-picture editor for his *New York American*.
- 1923 At a cost of \$225,000, Hearst has New York's Cosmopolitan Theatre refurbished for the premiere of *Little Old New York*. The film marks the start of a new distribution deal with Goldwyn Pictures.
- 1924 MGM picks up Goldwyn's production arrangement with Cosmopolitan Pictures through the various mergers that create the new studio. As a result, Hearst will give MGM pictures favorable treatment in his many newspapers and magazines around the nation, while MGM agrees to pay Davies \$10,000 a week – more than any other star there. As a sign of the high regard in which they hold Davies – and Hearst – the studio builds an elaborate 14-room bungalow for the star.
Hearst stops production on Davies's first MGM film, *Zander the Great*, fires director Clarence Badger and all of the cast except the star, and orders the entire production to start again with George Hill directing. The expense makes it impossible for the film to turn a profit.
- 1925 Tied up with his publishing concerns, Hearst allows MGM production chief Irving G. Thalberg to take control of Davies's *Lights of Old Broadway*. When the film fails at the box office during its first weeks out, Hearst blames Thalberg. Thalberg, however, suggests that Hearst oversold it in his papers, leading to audience dissatisfaction with a picture that couldn't live up to the hype. Fortunately, word of mouth saves the film and business picks up.
- 1926 Hearst bombards Thalberg with memos complaining about the slapstick scenes in Davies' *Tillie the Toiler*, claiming that his star has been humiliated.
- 1928 Davies scores two of her biggest hits with a pair of comedies directed by King Vidor, *The Patsy* and *Show People*. During production of the latter, Hearst refuses to allow Davies to be hit in the face with a custard pie, calling it undignified. Instead, he approves having her hit with a squirt of seltzer.
- 1929 Despite fears that her habitual stutter will make her unsuitable for talking pictures, Davies makes a successful talkie debut in *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, in which she sings and dances. Like many people who stutter, she can speak clearly from memory.
For her first starring talkie, Davies starts work on the musical *The Five O'Clock Girl*, but production is abandoned after a few weeks. Instead, she makes her talkie debut as a French farm girl in *Marianne*, a role that also allows her to sing and imitate Maurice Chevalier. The film does not do well at the box office.
- 1933 Hearst registers his disappointment with MGM for assigning Thalberg's wife, Norma Shearer, to two roles he had wanted for Davies: Elizabeth Barrett Browning in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and the title role in *Marie Antoinette*. He even has Davies film a one-hour test for the former role, with embarrassing results. In retaliation, he orders all mention of Shearer barred from his papers for months. He also attempts, unsuccessfully, to get MGM to produce a film version of George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan* for Davies.
- 1934 As a consolation prize for losing *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, Thalberg assigns Davies to *Operation 13*, a Civil War espionage tale co-starring Gary Cooper. Despite a disastrous preview, after which most of the film is re-shot, Hearst always calls this one of his favorite pictures.
Unhappy with MGM's preferential treatment of Norma Shearer, Hearst moves Cosmopolitan Pictures to Warner Bros. for a 12-film deal, with four of them to star Davies (other Cosmopolitan films at Warners include *Captain Blood* and *The Story of Louis Pasteur*). He also has Davies's MGM bungalow cut into three pieces and moved to the Warners lot.
- 1936 Warner Bros. borrows Clark Gable from MGM (in return for Paul Muni, who will star in *The Good Earth*) to co-star

with Davies in the lavish musical *Cain and Mabel*. Despite the popular star's performance as a boxer involved with musical star Davies, the film flops at the box office.

Davies makes her final acting appearance in a Lux Radio Theatre production of *The Brit*.

- 1937 With Hearst's publishing empire crumbling, Davies announces her retirement from the screen. Her final released film is *Ever Since Eve*, co-starring Dick Powell.
- 1943 Producer David O. Selznick tries to lure Davies back to the screen to play Dorothy McGuire's mother in *Claudia*, but she turns him down. The role goes to stage star Ina Clare.
- 1960 Davies makes her last public appearance in an interview on *Hedda Hopper's Hollywood*. She is so delighted with her makeup for the one-hour special that she visits all of her old friends to show off.

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Filmography

Runaway Romany (1917)
The Burden of Proof (1918)
Cecilia of the Pink Roses (1918)
The Belle of New York (1919)
Getting Mary Married (1919)
The Dark Star (1919)
Cinema Murder (1919)
April Folly (1920)
The Restless Sex (1920)
Enchantment (1921)
Buried Treasure (1921)
When Knighthood Was in Flower (1922)
The Young Diana (1922)
Beauty's Worth (1922)
Bride's Play (1922)
Adam and Eva (1922)
Little Old New York (1923)
Janice Meridith (1924)
Yolanda (1924)
Zander the Great (1925)
Lights of Old Broadway (1925)
The Fair Co-Ed (1927)
Tillie the Toiler (1927)
Red Mill (1927)
The Patsy (1928)
The Five O'Clock Girl (1928)
The Cardboard Lover (1928)
Show People (1928)
Marianne (1929)
The Hollywood Revue of 1929 (1929)
Not So Dumb (1930)
The Florodora Girl (1930)
Bachelor Father (1930)
A Christmas Story (1931)
It's A Wise Child (1931)
Five and Ten (1931)
Polly of the Circus (1932)
Blondie of the Follies (1932)
Peg o' My Heart (1933)
Operator 13 (1933)
Going Hollywood (1933)
Pirate Party of Catalina Isle (1935)

Page Miss Glory (1935)
Hearts Divided (1936)
Cain and Mabel (1936)
Ever Since Eve (1937)

Captured on Film: The True Story of Marion Davies

Interviewees

Charles Champlin	former film critic for the <i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Cari Beauchamp	film historian
Jeanine Basinger	film historian
Kevin Brownlow	film historian and documentarian
Mary Collins	daughter of Patricia Lake
Suzanne Vidor Parry	King Vidor's daughter
Stanley Flink	former <i>Life</i> magazine correspondent, was present on the day Hearst's body was removed from Davies's home. He also interviewed Davies on tape.
Bob Board	fan of Marion Davies
Fredrick Lawrence Guiles	Davies biographer. This was his last interview before his death in June 1999.
Belinda Vidor Holiday	King Vidor's daughter
Virginia Madsen	portrayed Davies in the 1984 film <i>The Hearst and Davies Affair</i>
Constance Moore	actress, close friend of Davies
Carl Roup	was discovered by Davies for a role as an extra on the film <i>The Red Mill</i> . Davies eventually went on to pay for Roup's education and helped him find a job at MGM, where he worked for more than 40 years.
George Sidney	director, worked on <i>Operator 13</i> at the start of his career
Ruth Warrick	played Mrs. Kane in <i>Citizen Kane</i> .

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Hugh Heffner

Film Notes by Turner Classic Movies and Timeline Films

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