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Blazing the Trail

A fascinating and authentic history of the early motion pictures

By Gene Gauntier

At the opening of the theatrical season of 1907-8, St. Loften's actors, who had been engaged from picture to picture only, began to desert him. Joe Sartelle was to star in Luckey Jim with Vitograph playing the villainous Mexican. Olcott was offered a part and was about to accept. He had no deep real interest in moving pictures, just enough to do the daily task. He loved acting and the effortless life of the theater. Moreover he was very tired and he did not look to the future of the industry and his opportunities in it.

But my woman's intuition was keener. I had seen him advance from a carefree actor in third-rate plays to a position of authority and respect revealing unexpressed potentialities. I believed he had found his calling and used every argument to induce him to remain with Kalem through the season. In the end such insistence prevailed and we all trooped off, leaving him to a horrible nerve-racking winter alone.

The first picture we made after we left was Way Down East, made in a tiny six Avenue studio rented from the Edison Company. This was another case of pirating, for Harper and Brothers had not yet brought their famous suit over Ben Hur. However, I never heard that William Brady made any trouble over the production, possibly because it was such a failure that he never heard of it!

There were plenty of excuses for this failure. The studio was small and cold, the lights utterly inadequate, and Kalem experienced here its first encounter with static.

For the benefit of the uninformed, I will explain that static is a species of electricity generated by the rapid passing of the cold celluloid through the camera. There were many forms of it, and all of them were disheartening. One kind resembled forked lightning running from top to bottom of the picture; and again it took the form of sheet lightning, white flashes moving from side to side. Cold weather and dry atmosphere were conducive to it, even in a warm studio.

Four years war was waged against it, the Eastman Company joining the struggle and putting out a non-static film, which at first was not satisfactory.

Because of the failure of the studio picture, Mr. Marion cast about for one that could be taken in open air in winter, and Washington at Valley Forge was the result. It was made in blizzards and the coldest weather of the year. A military school up the Hudson cooperated and a possible picture was produced, but at the cost of desperately hard work, frostbites and sickness. In early spring came The Scarlet Letter, which was a little better, and then in April a real success—The Japanese Invasion.

Everyone connected with Colonel Verbeck's Military Academy at Montauk, New York, cooperated with fine enthusiasm. The Colonel had been born in Japan. On the grounds of the school was a lovely Japanese garden, with tiny streams, arching bridges, tea house and rockeries. The boys were fine young chaps, keen about exhibiting their military training on the screen. The picture depicted the invasion of California by the Japanese, and its battle scenes created almost as great a furor at that time as did those in The Birth of a Nation some six years later.
of these times, as Grayson wrote of the period during which the struggle for the Constitution was in progress, that "pelf was a better goal than liberty and at no period in my recollection was the worship of Mammon more widely spread, more world and disgusting."

We are more tolerant than our fathers were. Loyal members of the Ku Klux Klan do not compare in intolerance with those who made vicious attacks on Thomas Jefferson. Old women in New England hearing of his election hid their Bibles because the word had gone forth that he would burn them all.

We are freer from hucksters than our fathers were.

To me it is one of the most encouraging proofs of the soundness of our democracy that a man like Calvin Coolidge could be sent back to the White House by the largest majority ever given any presidential candidate, and that the Republican party should nominate Herbert Hoover. For these two men contradict every one of the old-fashioned requirements for political success.

They have no pleasing personality. They are frugal in the use of language. They have never told the voter that his life will be happier and easier if they are elected. They have never denounced their opponents nor "viewed with alarm" what may happen to the country if their party should fail to carry an election. They have dealt in no large and glittering generalities, kissed no babies, promised no miracles. Simply and quietly they have performed their jobs and the American people, looking on the work and pronouncing it good, have continued to honor them.

IT IS almost unthinkable that either man could have come up to the doors of the White House in an earlier generation and, without having been almost impossible for Andrew Mellon or Dwight Morrow to be admitted to the public service. It is hard to overestimate the importance of what they did. Not only does he promise to bring together two neighbor nations that for generations have vied each other with suspicion and distrust, but he is likely to introduce a new and splendid fashion into the musty conduct of diplomacy.

When the world a few weeks ago sent a humorist like Will Rogers and a flying youth like Lindbergh can do more for international relations than a regiment of old-fashioned diplomats, we hope for the ultimate overthrow of the whole diplomatic machine. Perhaps no war would ever be started if all the chancellories were manned with some common business men; and no nations are going to misunderstand each other permanently if they can be led to cheer for the same athletes and laugh at the same jokes.

THERE are many other reasons—including the banishment of the saloon which will never come back; however many the faults of prohibition may be—why the present seems to me a time for political optimism. I can understand how my pretty dinner companion might have been disgusted with politics had she lived in the days of Washington or Lincoln, but not now. This is a day to give thanks and take courage.

"All right," says the pretty lady, "I'll agree for the sake of argument that things are better than they were. But I still don't see any reason why I should vote."

Let us admit in all frankness that there is some reason for that feeling. I cast my last vote for the man who was national party with something that resembled real issues. The Democratic party stood for a low tariff and states' rights; the Republican party was only disposed toward both these doctrines I was taught to enroll under the Democratic banner but I was dissuaded by Mr. William Jennings Bryan who was still preaching Silvery, a doctrine which I believed then and still believe would have led to economic chaos.

Along came our period of industrial development, followed by the war and the old-time issues vanished. If you want to express yourself in favor of a lower tariff today, how are you going to do it? The steel mills of Birmingham, the cotton mills of Georgia, and the sugar plantations of Louisiana are no more friendly to free trade than the shoe factories of Brockton or the chemical plants of Wilmington.

If you believe in states' rights will you support the Republican party which is traditionally committed to a strong national government, or the Democrats who during the war centralised government at Washington to a degree which Republicans had never even dreamed of? If you desire to express yourselves on the subject of prohibition, will you vote with the Republicans who are dry in Kansas and wet in New Jersey, or with the Democrats who are dry in Alabama and wet in New York? The politicians seek earnestly and persistently to convince us that great issues are at stake in every national election but we are not deceived. Politics at the moment is a choice between individual leaders, and between parties in their capacity for administration. Until some new issue arises this will continue to be true.

It is true also, and always has been, that the individual feels himself more or less a part of the political game. The stage is set, the actors chosen and the play produced by professionals. If you take the membership of any national convention and compare it with the membership of the convention of the same party four years before, you are surprised at the percentage of duplicity. The same machinery elects the same delegates. The old-time bosses have passed away, but the machinery they built and the new crowd of lesser bosses pull the strings. There is no use trying to displace the fact that the average voter has little party influence.

IT MIGHT almost be said that in some respects the nation has outgrown its institutions. Our whole governmental machinery has worked admirably in Foxboro, Massachusetts, where I have my summer home. Every voter knows the qualifications of every candidate for office. Every family is aware of whether the streets have or have not been properly looked after; whether the schools are or are not efficiently administered, and exactly where the responsibility lies. If my street has been neglected I can go to the town meeting and make a fuss and help to bring about the election of a different street commissioner.

But how can I function intelligently in New York City where the ballot which is handed to me carries a hundred names, hardly one of which means anything to me at all? How can I choose judges, when I know nothing of their qualifications? How can I feel that my vote has any importance when the names on the ticket have been selected by a machine over which I have no control? Isn't it any wonder that I am tempted to sneak off early on election morning and put in the day playing golf?

These I take it are the reasons which make men and women feel that it is useless to vote: the lack of clear-cut issues; the dominance of the machines, the impossibility of putting an intelligent judgment on such candidates.

In spite of all this I continue to vote. And I believe that every man and woman, including the pretty lady, ought to do likewise. My reasons can be explained in three statements:

1. As a citizen of the greatest democracy on earth I conceive it my duty to have an intelligent opinion on public matters and to express it whenever a proper occasion presents, whether such an expression will be immediately effective or not.

Most of our misgivings about the importance of voting, and about democracy in general, arise out of a misconception of the way in which democracies are really governed. We assume that we elect a President and a Congress and that these proceed to create issues and settle them. Parties do not govern us in any such concrete fashion. Administrations do not create progress, they merely register it. The real facts were never better stated than by John Delane, great editor of the London Times. Commenting on the change of government in 1896, he said:

"If there is one lesson more than another which the late Administration has bequeathed to its successors, it is that it is not in the power of any one party to dictate the policy of the country. In fact the country will govern itself. It naturally, and almost unconsciously, makes the Ministries what it wants them to be. The Ministries can only say a little simpler or perplex, quicker or retard. In spite of governments a great necessity grows up and compels a hearing. Measures spring forth, no one knows how, in continuing on page 10."
The Father

It was two miles to the post office. Long rutted miles, at that. Mercy raced down it mud like a mad thing. Then, she knocked a rail of astonished little brothers, mothered, crooned, she slung the little crookedness store.

"Letter, my letter! Give it to me, quick!"

"Why, I put her into the mailbag not ten minutes ago. And here it is again right now. Didn't you want her for you?"

"Open that mailbag, Hussy!"

"Hussy, Jesus, Mass Mercy. Ain't I just laid her down and some red-eyed, lettered sealing was on her? She, federal property now. I disown..."

MERCY's eye caught the stone carving to her left, adapted instantly for purpose from slicing bacon to whittling plug tobacco. She caught it up, cut the mailbag open. As the postman stood by, uncertain whether to intervene. She had unlocked it and put the letter and was reciting the words before he could put his protest into another world.

The stage halted with a flourish, a yell of command: "Hustle with that mail!

We're late now."

MERCY hurried. She seized on the mailbag, was still wet, she pushed the plug tobacco in the hole and pushed the bag to the driver. The coach pulled away.

Late that night she awoke. She felt it the burden of Atlas had fallen from her shoulders. Then she was toiled, she was not toiled fast and loose with Lesta's young affections. As to fact of it was Lesta who had played fast and loose with her own. She reached out for Thomas' hand to make sure he was safe, locked a key. Anake, Thomas.

Thomas emitted an unsavory groan.

"Because if you're here, I've got a secret to tell you. I've been hired. And I'll wager there never was a jilting woman in all the world who enjoyed as much as I do."

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A little while later Grafth came to my desk, his face beaming.

"I'm to direct a picture," he said, "and Mr. Marvin has given me free rein. He told me to ask for you first, and he selected one which told a simple quiet story, and I plan to make it because it has an interesting exterior only. It was called The Aztec, but after the family, I suggested The Sound Beach where I had been through the main door on my first picture. The upper stories of the river and the surrounding country were just the places needed for the scenes in the script. So I assigned him Bills, Bitts, our cleverest cameraman, told Grafth where to go, helped him select his cast, all except the leading lady, whom he wished to pick for himself. What was my surprise when I found it was my little ac-

The Father

(continued from page 165)

take what I will say. You must be aware that you are the best of you with the highest

Rob. I have considered you as my

an Affair. You can agree with me, wasn't it?

I remember the time when we were two

your attention, I was not, I had the best

Valentine, ring. You have this to say. As

Your father, your father, Your father,

she, the pictures she and the wonder.

These three, oh, the land bought by the

Mr. Jeffords N. Perkins, the Pa of your

friend Leta She Perkins. After thinking

over I feel that I prefer to remain here in

Green River rather than to go West, as was

first intended. Now I write to ask, do you

think favorably of my suit; I do it, I wish

you tell everyone and to do as at once.

They all pick on me because they say I was

too slow and clumsy, and you give me the

Slip.

"If you wish to keep things as they stand, that's all right. But if you should feel that your affection's are growing cold, then notify me at once."

"I have seen a good deal of Lucinda since your departure. I consider her a perfect woman, nothing planned. To war, to combine, and command. She has a right smart of property, and since her dis-

Mrs. for your pa's woods and pasture it

almost seems like a head "Thank you.

lady's delight."

"Yes, with the deepest respect and with

Lena's whole devotion."

"P. S. If you do not care for the ring any

longer, do not feel that you have to keep it.
It can go at the Postoffice there. You can

send it back in a letter. It may cost as much as ten to return it to me, so I am enclosing 2 for postage."

Merry flashed down the left ladder, seized her bonnet and cape.

"My letter to Lena? Oh, oh, the stage

is due in the 'Corners this minute. Oh, if I

can just get there in time to snatch it back?"

role almost, but he was absolutely and

inexpressively aware of it, and never dreamed

that he had shocked him. Though his in

nected fairly flustered, I was uncomfortable in

his presence, never knowing what he would

say next. But she saw my interest had been

aroused and every time I came through the

studio he would make me with the same quiv-

ering voice."

"Don't they give us actors a chance to

direct? I wish I had the opportunity."

THE repeated suggestion began to work,

and very soon there came a moment when

it may be possible to involve Mr. Martin needled a new director and cast an eye at Ulloa who was doing fine work for Calum but he did not dare look at a director, saving until he had severed his connection with Calum, which Ulloa was ever inclined to do. So one afternoon Mr. Martin called me to his office and announced:

"I am going to give Tony Sullivan a chance to direct."

I was surprised.

"Who is Sullivan?" I asked.

He has been with us longer than anyone

er self, and therefore I think he should have

the first opportunity. What's your opin-

ion?"

"Well, in the first place he is a low-

numbered character, and does not under-

stand dramatic work or know dramatic

values. Who don't you give Tony?"

"Who is he, and why do you think

he would make good?"

Mr. Ulloa, the dark man who

did the man of town in At the Cross-

roads of the Cab. He has unusual intellige-

cent, very serious for an appearance, and

has recently written a play which though it failed must have had something in it to come so much discussion."

"All right, send him up and I will talk to

him."

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feet of film which scared the master of directors as his muse. The critic's review was in his favor, but the woman who had been written into the picture for a notable role. The Quaker woman was not missed in the film, and the critic praised the Quaker for her natural acting. The Quaker woman was a success, and the film was a great success.

GRIFFITH'S entry as director was quite a success, and more so in the fall of 1915. Griffith was in charge of a picture called "The Birth of a Nation." The picture was a huge success and Griffith's name was associated with it.

An article in the trade journal described Griffith's style of direction as "realism." The article stated that Griffith's style was realistic, and that he was able to create a sense of reality in his pictures. The article also mentioned that Griffith's pictures were "realistic" and that they were "real" in the sense that they were true to life.

GRIFFITH'S realistic style of direction was well received, and it was a major factor in the success of "The Birth of a Nation." The picture was a huge success, and it helped to establish Griffith as a major figure in the film industry.

The success of "The Birth of a Nation" was due in part to Griffith's realistic style of direction. Griffith was able to create a sense of reality in his pictures, and he was able to make the audience believe in the characters and the events that were taking place on the screen.

GRIFFITH'S realistic style of direction was also due in part to the fact that he was able to use the latest technologies in filmmaking. Griffith was one of the first directors to use the latest technologies in filmmaking, and he was able to make his pictures look more realistic than those of his contemporaries.

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You will get the effect of a Paris Gown if you use McCall Patterns.
and myself, James Vincent, Korean Bud, Mabel Biddle, Thomas Flanery, Ben Owens, the cameraman, Max Scheider and his wife who were sometimes pressed into photo detail although she made no pretense of being an artist. To this nucleus of a camera company we added some friends of our acquaintance who drifted into Florida during the winter season, and the vacuum was filled by the vanguard pioneers appearing at the Ormond Farm, a local amusement resort. The camera company at Jacksonvile which in 1917 was vastly different from the bustling plantation it is today. The main street was more like that of a country village than the artery of a town containing nearly sixty thousand people.

FOR our headquarters, Mr. Marion and Mr. Oldcott had selected Fairfeld, a small suburb about fifteen minutes by rail from Jacksonville. We were on the point of moving to The Roseland, a big rambling ramshackle old house set in three acres of ground, on the banks of the St. John's River, at this point a mile and a half walk. The house was run by Mr. Perkins, a stout-looked, and always ready to drop down in a chair to the front veranda for a chat. The meals were plentiful and well-cooked in real southern style, and the meals were big and jolly and the family atmosphere was such as "Miss Fanny" and "Miss Lillie" lived in. Perhaps the company occupied at least half of the house, and we were several groups of students always there as permanent guests. The rest of the time we were tolerated transients to the different social events being played at the Ormond Farm, a block up Tales by Van. Two of the boys were engaged for the winter. Mary S., old-six, the girl who worked with us, was our company between "Tales by Van" and "The Third"-days, and T unity, a half-Russian who, in keeping with her look and her voice, was a persistent drop every weekend and on Sunday a triple drop. Thomas Quinette was another high-looker who was happy in the less dangerous world of the motion picture scene.

DIRECTLY across the St. John's River from Fairfeld was a territory rich in locations easily reached by the steamer. The scattered homes were on the river, a mile or so apart and beyond them lay real wilderness. Steel Creek, a stream, several hundred yards broad and spanned by a primitive old plank bridge, played many parts in the old Kalamazoo, of which the powder engines were kept in it. In it, it was burnt with smoke-guts, many a charred pine and stump rooted above the high banks, and horses jumped from twenty feet to the water.

Steel Creek and its tributaries presented a true picture of tropical Florida, with spruce trees, bonnet-shaped mangrove, and by water hyacinths, banks lined with live oaks and Spanish moss hung in silver lassoms to delight the heart of the photographer, and with tangled masses of palmetto whose only drawback was that they were the shade of diamond-back rattles, some of them six feet in length, and poisonous copperheads. The waters were also infested with water moccasins and the swamps with vipers. We always carried a medicine kit and whisky for snake bites, but we always saw very few, but we had occasion to use the care.

From the edge of the Ormond grounds a long pier ran not at least a thousand feet into the river. It was so ramshackle that it looked about to break away. The supports were rusting and in some places had given way, and the piers rose at an angle of fifteen degrees. Across these treacherous spots swimmers were not allowed to cross. This pier was not repaired the entire season. The Southern homes were too tired and we were too lazy to care about it.

We rented a motor boat, the Bebe Bert, equipped with everything necessary for photographing, but it was semi-motor and its engine was not always reliable but sometimes left one on the river with no one to tow it. Worse still it would go in a circle and go in a channel which was the odd one to do. There we would find feet and feet with the sun mounting higher the while.
praise and blame given where due, and last judgment passed on the entire picture.

From the office letters of commendation or criticism which would be duly read to the "bunch." They were attained, were Meson, Marian and Long. We would work our staff and take any risks for the honor of being singled out in one of Mr. Martins' important letters.

We need praise and appreciation to carry us through those strenuous days. We needed help of the conveniences and the luxuries of the modern studio.

WE HAD no property men, no carpenters, no wardrobe facilities. Each of the boys worked in their own clothes and lent an arm in an emergency. But the director's duties were taken up by the entire company and their help was overwhelming.

There was no building, but our pleasure was in the theater. It was a puppet show. For we had written and directed the entire show ourselves.

I WROTE a picture called The Adventures of the Girl Spy. Washington and I were the only cast members. Our challenge was to create a character that would captivate the audience and keep them coming back for more. This was the beginning of a film career that would span two decades and forever change the film industry. I was not only one of the pioneers of the industry, but also one of the most influential and successful directors of all time.

I want to express my gratitude to the millions of people who have supported and believed in me throughout my career. Without your support, I would not be where I am today. Thank you for all your love and support.

THERE is still a long way to go before the dream of a world without discrimination and prejudice becomes a reality. But I believe in the power of hope and the importance of standing up against injustice. Let us work together to make the world a better place for all.

Millions huddle to bring to life their and develop.

Your name, in Use on day or on the cage wit

It is per child