



Thea Bara and Einar Linden pose for a publicity shot for *Carmen* (1915)

“Directing motion pictures is merely capturing life”

-Maurice Tourneur
in *Variety*, December 27, 1918

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Fort Lee Film Commission
Fort Lee Historical Society
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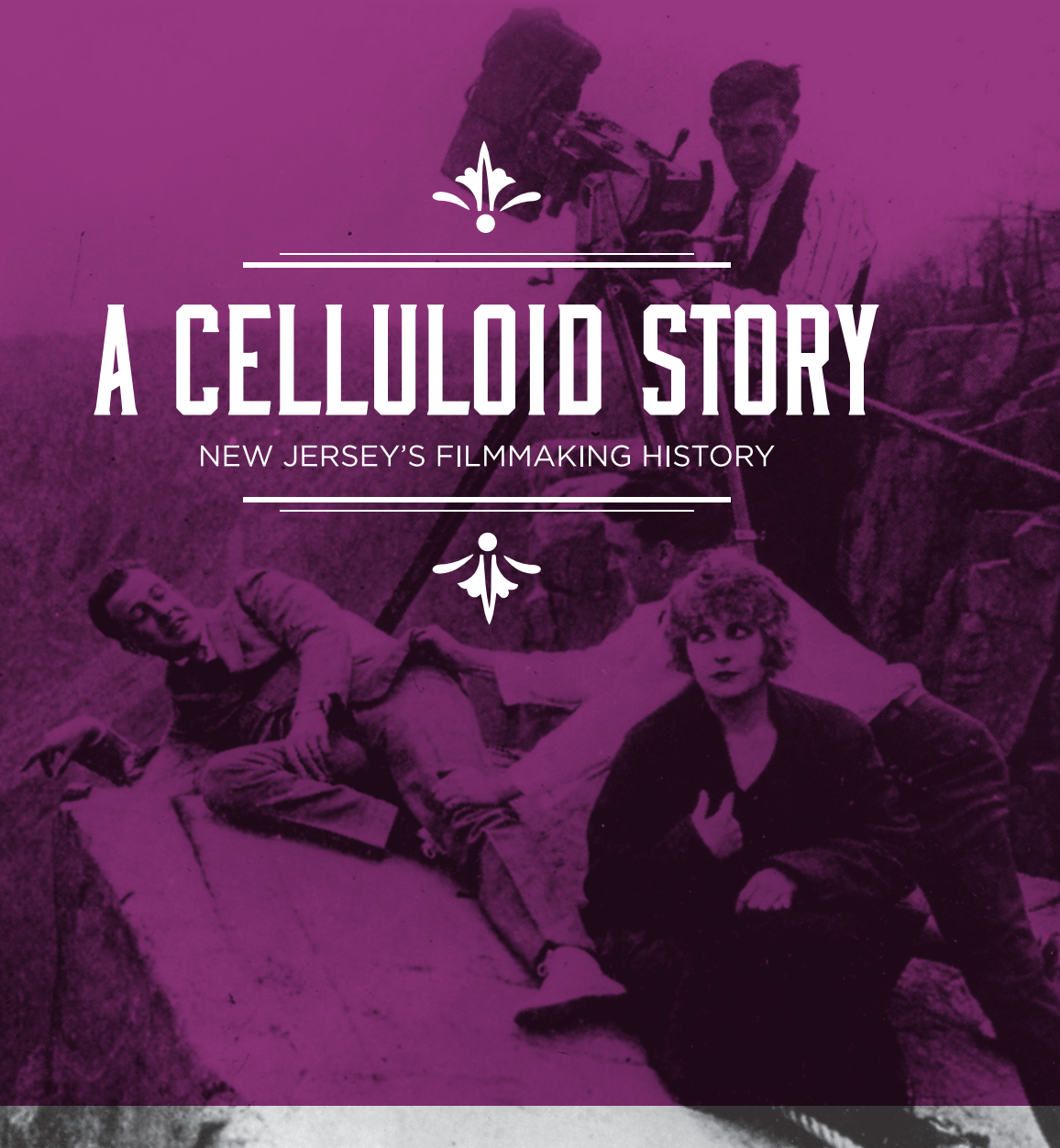
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Front: Pearl White rehearsing on the Palisades for *The House of Hate* (Pathé, 1918), with Arthur Miller at the camera

A CELLULOID STORY

NEW JERSEY'S FILMMAKING HISTORY



The Walsh Gallery at Seton Hall University

400 S. Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
973.275.2033 || www.shu.edu/walshgallery

An exhibition of filmmaking history from 1880-1920
in honor of New Jersey's 350th anniversary

Curated by Sarah Hart and Romana Schaeffer

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3 — FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2014



A CELLULOID STORY

NEW JERSEY'S FILMMAKING HISTORY

The 1895 version of the Kinetophone in use

New Jersey's main contributions to the origins and growth of film took place over just 40 years from 1880-1920. Although brief in time, it was a significant period in film history. Over subsequent generations, the influence of film development on the East Coast is evident as film is still today both a product and a shaper of human culture.

Little did Thomas Edison know when he filmed the first short clips of movement—such as Strongman Eugen Sandow flexing his muscles—that film would one day be a way of telling some of the most important stories in society. But these first steps in the invention of film technology were results of the creativity, forethought, and experimentation of New Jersey inventors, and the film process itself was infused from the very start with the spirit of human creativity.

As technology progressed, filmmakers were able to connect these short clips of moving images together, which allowed for longer films that incorporated basic plot lines. As the art of the film developed, fuller, more elaborate stories could be communicated to the audience. Fort Lee director Maurice Tourneur captured this transition eloquently, stating that “directing motion pictures is merely capturing life.”

As thousands of films rolled off the cameras, filmmakers and directors gradually learned how to create moving pictures that told stories effectively and beautifully. Actors also learned how to communicate through film. Even though it

was a medium closely related to the ancient art of the theatre, communication styles were significantly different. The many Broadway stars that came to the New Jersey studios were challenged to find new ways of interpreting the story for a camera that could not capture sound, only intimate gestures and expressions. Cinema was a completely new art form, and the studios in New Jersey were the laboratories where this new medium was tested and refined.

This new art form was not one that could be undertaken by just a solitary individual. The complexity required to create one film need a variety of people. Writers, directors, actors, carpenters, extras, and all the other departments contributed to this collaborative process; a process that first became a complete industry in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Once the films were produced, people from many different backgrounds enjoyed them in a community setting. While the initial moving pictures designed by Edison were intended to be a single-person viewing experience, demand quickly rose for a way for viewers to enjoy the film together through a large projection. The early movie picture houses that developed for the use of projected films introduced the cinema trips that are still a beloved community experience shared with family and friends.

The popularity of the movies and society's demand for longer, more intricate stories allowed films to become mirrors of contemporary society. They gave people perspective to better understand themselves and their culture, as well as the lives, cares, and interests of others around the world. Now, in the years that have followed, historic movies have turned from mirrors into windows, allowing those in the present to look back on past generations and see how they shared, experienced and understood their culture.

But these windows are often broken, as the films, the places, and the stories from the past are lost, destroyed, and forgotten. So the larger film community works to preserve and record the history of its past through institutions, organizations, and individual storytelling so that we can continue to build on our predecessors' legacies.

New Jersey's first 350 years have been filled with thousands of important people, events, and places that have shaped it as a state. May New Jersey's next 350 years be filled with the same spirit of cooperation, creativity, and innovation demonstrated by the filmmakers of 1880-1920.

-Sarah Hart and Romana Schaeffer, curators

“...a host of silent-screen pioneers, from D.W. Griffith to Theda Bara, created the American motion picture industry right here in the streets and studios of New Jersey.”

-Dr. Richard Koszarski

PROGRAMMING

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 6:30-8pm

A special presentation from **Dr. Richard Koszarski** and a film screening of ***The Reckless Romeo***



Preparing the set for filming *The Black Panther's Club* (1921)