



Florence Lawrence, the Biograph Girl: America's First Movie Star

Kelly R. Brown

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Florence Lawrence's film career began just as the cinema was being born. She recognized the wonder and appeal of the fledgling industry, and her early work with the Vitagraph company gained her a legion of fans and a reputation as a willing and hard working actress. In 1908 she appeared in *Romeo and Juliet*--America's very first screen Juliet. By 1909, she was working steadily for the Biograph studio--she was dubbed "the Biograph girl"--and was being praised for her "personal attractions" and "very fine dramatic ability." But just as Lawrence was the first movie star in the industry, she was also one of the first to be undone by it. Hindered by setbacks, grueling work schedules, self-imposed retirements, three marriages, repeatedly unsuccessful comeback attempts, Lawrence finally committed suicide in 1938. This impressively researched piece of film history represents the first full-length biography of Florence Lawrence, also called "The Girl of a Thousand Faces." Among the photographs are some never before published. A complete filmography of Lawrence's entire career is provided. A summary chapter includes comments from various critics and historians, addressing how Lawrence is important to film history.

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