

THE PENALTY

LON CHANEY

The Penalty was a major career boost for Lon Chaney. It is one of his most compelling performances, giving us an idea of what the actor was capable of offering.

As Blizzard, the double-amputee ruler of San Francisco's underworld, Chaney designed a leather harness to strap his legs behind him, allowing him to walk on his knees with the aid of crutches, eschewing trick camera angles. Prior to filming, Chaney spent many hours at home practicing the things he had to do in the film while wearing the stumps. During rehearsals, he would stand behind a dress dummy and read his lines, before donning the harness.

Based on the Gouverneur Morris novel and produced by Goldwyn Pictures, *The Penalty* began filming its 49-day shooting schedule in San Francisco on February 7, 1920. With location filming completed, the company returned to the Goldwyn Pictures Studio in Culver City (later the home of M-G-M Studios).

When the film was originally released, Goldwyn Pictures inserted a scene at the end of the film showing Chaney walking down a flight of stairs (on his own legs) and smiling at the camera. The reason behind this insertion was to prove that Chaney was not doubled, nor was he an amputee. Unfortunately, this sequence does not exist in any surviving prints.

Michael F. Blake

CHASING CLAIRE ADAMS: From Hollywood to Australia, and Back Again

Even though Claire Adams appeared in over 80 films alongside such luminaries as Jean Hersholt, Tom Mix, John Gilbert, and Adolph Menjou, many in Los Angeles have forgotten her. She retired in 1927 and eventually came to enjoy a very "Hollywood" fairytale ending, living "happily ever after" with a handsome

"Prince Charming" in the Australian Bush. Her ongoing contributions to her Australian community ensures her memory still shines brightly, more so than a brass star in the pavement in the city she used to call home.



Claire Adams was a child star on the stages of Canada and London. She first appeared in motion pictures in 1912, making 15 shorts over two years with Edison Company. At the outbreak of World War 1, she became a nurse in her hometown of Winnipeg. She returned to films in 1917, eventually starring in the government sponsored film *The Spirit of the Red Cross*. This was followed by the lead role in *The*

End of the Road, a public education film about venereal disease and the perils of non-marital sex. Her talent, beauty and courage drew the attention of Hollywood, where she arrived in 1919.

Claire barely seemed to have had time to fix her hair and check her makeup prior to hitting the set. She made two westerns before being cast as Barbara Ferris in *The Penalty*. This was the first of many supporting roles where Claire portrayed respectable young women in transition, reaching for their newfound independence in a more permissive 20th Century world, but finding themselves imperilled by the underlying predatory forces of a still flawed society, from the less-than-glittering fate suffered by many of her contemporaries.

She carried into these roles the refinement and grace she was known for in life, which kept her removed. These "good-girl" characterizations were offset by many fearless cowgirl roles in Zane Grey adaptations and Tom Mix Westerns. She earned the nickname "Tom Mix's Favorite Cowgirl" for her exemplary riding skills and ability to do her own stunts. After a string of melodramas, her most recognizable role was as Justyn Reed, John Gilbert's hometown fiancé, in *The Big Parade* (1925). This giddy innocent, encouraging her paramour to enlist so she could see him in uniform, was the perfect bookend to her wartime roles, both dramatic and real life of a decade before.

For more information about Claire Adams and Heather Robinson Long, please visit:
<http://www.robinsonlonginla.typepad.com/chasing-claire-adams/>

Heather Robinson Long



THE PENALTY

Black and White, 1920

90 minutes

Goldwyn Pictures

Presented by.....Samuel Goldwyn and Rex Beach
Director.....Wallace Worsley
Scenario.....Charles Kenyon and Philip Lonergan
(from the novel by Gouverneur Morris)
Photographer.....Dan Short
Film Editor.....Frank S. Hall and J.G. Hawks

Cast

Lon Chaney.....Blizzard
Ethel Grey Terry.....Rose
Claire Adams.....Barbara Ferris
Charles Clary.....Dr. Ferris
Kenneth Harlan.....Dr. Wilmont
James Mason.....Frisco Pete
Edouard Trebaol.....Bubbles
Milton Ross.....Lichtenstein
Wilson Hummel.....One of Blizzard's Men
Cesare Gravina.....Sculpting Instructor



Images Courtesy of the Seaver Center for Western History Research and Michael F. Blake

CHANEY MEMORABILIA

The History Department of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County in 1930 began collecting motion picture costumes, props, equipment, scripts, stills, set models, animation cels, and numerous other objects associated with movie-making. Today, the institution has amassed everything it would take to plan, produce, and publicize a film.

Curatorial staff still works with studios and individuals in the industry soliciting donations of materials documenting this definitive Los Angeles industry. Following Lon Chaney's death in 1930, History staff contacted both his widow Hazel and his studio, MGM, asking for artifacts pertaining to the actor's career. Both responded, with Hazel giving both of his makeup kits and MGM donated his costume from *The Penalty* among other items.



The major objects from both collections are displayed today only in the lobby of the Alex Theatre, with the exception of the wax head on which Chaney used to practice his cotton and collodion techniques which is too fragile to travel. The piece was cast from life, with glass eyes.

The display marks the first time in decades that both of Chaney's makeup kits have been exhibited together.

DANIEL REDFELD

Daniel Redfeld attended Boston's New England Conservatory of Music before transferring to UCLA where he received his degree in composition/conducting. Since then, in addition to his live theater work, he has also been commissioned by the city of Ventura to compose music for the silent classics *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Sheik*, *Hell's Hinges*, *The Black Pirate*, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* and *Robin Hood* as part of the annual Music Under the Stars festival. He premiered his score for the Harold Lloyd classic, *Safety Last*, in September 2008 at the Olivus Adobe in Ventura. He has also composed a score for *The Covered Wagon* which premiered at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood. His most recent silent film composition was for a screening of Mary Pickford's *Sparrows* in July 2009 at the Alex Theatre in Glendale.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

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OUTER
SPACE**

Saturday, **November 26**
at 2 & 8 pm only

Over 14th
Three Stooges®
BIG SCREEN EVENT!

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at 2 & 7 pm only

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