



Pickford: The Woman Who Made Hollywood

Eileen Whitfield

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"A knockout of a biography."?Newsweek A silent-film star. A woman who played children, wide-eyed and gamine, skipping about in frills and long curls. That's how most people remember Mary Pickford. In reality, Pickford was a towering figure in movie history, central to the evolution of film acting and the development of the Hollywood motion picture industry. Born in Toronto in 1892, Pickford began acting as a child. She switched from stage to film at seventeen, joining D.W. Griffith's Biograph Company, and became almost unimaginably popular. This allowed her to dictate the terms of her contracts?power she seized and consolidated. She developed her own production company at Adolph Zukor's Famous Players, and in 1919 she co-founded United Artists (along with Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, and her husband, Douglas Fairbanks), taking not only creative control but also direction of the marketing and distribution of her films. Eight years in the making, this definitive biography brings Pickford to life as a complex knot of contradictions and establishes her as a groundbreaking genius, casting new light on one of the most influential and least understood artists in the history of popular culture. Eileen Whitfield recreates Pickford's life in meticulously researched detail, from her trying days in turn-of-the-century Toronto through her reign as mistress of Pickfair, the legendary Beverly Hills estate at which she and Fairbanks entertained the world's elite, to her sadly moving demise. Along the way, Whitfield explores the intricate psychology that tied Pickford to her mother throughout her life and analyzes Pickford's brilliant innovations in the art of film acting, her profound influence on the movie business, and her role in the history of fame: once the best known woman in the world, she was the object of a mass adoration that prefigured today's cult of celebrity.

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