

OCTOBER 19, 2018

TIMELINE FOR FILMING AT STAIRS

Isn't Life Terrible - Released July 5, 1925 - Charley Chase at steps located on Vendome Street in Silver Lake District of Los Angeles.

Ice Cold Cocos - Released June 20, 1926 - Billy Bevan and Andy Clyde are ice men carrying blocks of ice up the same Vendome Street steps.

Hats Off - Filmed August 19 through 24, 1927. Filming resumed August 26 through 29, 1927. Released November 5, 1927. Laurel & Hardy move a washing machine up those same Vendome Street steps. Directed by Hal Yates.

The Music Box - Filmed December 7 through 17, 1931. Released April 16, 1932. Laurel & Hardy moving a piano up the familiar Vendome Street steps.

An Ache In Every Stake - Released August 22, 1941. The Three Stooges are delivering ice at the Edendale Place steps in the Silver Lake District in Los Angeles.

It's Your Move - Released August 10, 1945. Edgar Kennedy and Jack Rice recreate Laurel & Hardy's washing machine moving efforts up a steep number of stairs in this comedy located at 3200 Larissa Drive in the Silver Lake District in Los Angeles.

Films Shown In Class

IT'S YOUR MOVE - Released August 10, 1945

Directed by Hal Yates, the same man who directed Laurel & Hardy in *Hats Off*.

Known as the Descanso Stairs, they are situated at the intersection of Descanso and Larissa Drives, specifically between the residences of 3217 Descanso Dr. and 3200-3206 Larissa Dr.,

Edgar Kennedy - traveled across the country, working at different jobs. He became a professional boxer, claiming to have gone 14 rounds against Jack Dempsey. He sang in musical shows in the midwest before winding up at the Mack Sennett Studios in Los Angeles. By the 1920's, Edgar was at the Hal Roach Studios as an actor in many two-reel films and director in two Laurel & Hardy comedies. He also worked with the Marx Brothers and Charlie Chaplin. He was the "Average Man" in a series of comedy shorts for RKO, one of which you will see today.

Florence Lake - Older sister of Arthur Lake best known for his portrayal of Dagwood Bumstead in the Blondie Series of films and on radio. She made numerous appearances as Edgar Kennedy's wife in his series of comedies at RKO during the 1940's.

Dot Farley - She began her film career in 1910. She played Edgar Kennedy's mother-in-law in the same RKO series until it ended in 1948.

Jack Rice - the best-known of Edgar Kennedy's brother-in-laws in his comedy shorts series. He was also a regular on the 'Blondie' series of films in the 1940s as the character 'Ollie'.

Maxine Semon - as the rather persistent lady at the top of the stairs, she also made numerous television appearances on shows such as *I Love Lucy*, *Bachelor Father*, *The Addams Family*, *The Andy Griffith Show* and *My Three Sons*.

Gwen Crawford - She plays the washing machine customer in this comedy. Her brief two year career in films included parts in *The Falcon In Hollywood* and *The Bells Of St. Mary's*. Canadian born, Gwen was married with six children.

Larry Wheat - Plays Mr. Henderson, Edgar Kennedy's landlord in this film. His film career dates back to 1921. In 1943, he had an uncredited appearance as a recruiter in Laurel & Hardy's *Air Raid Wardens* from MGM. Edgar Kennedy made his final appearance with Laurel & Hardy in this film as well.

THE MUSIC BOX - Filmed December 7 through 17, 1931. Released April 16, 1932. Working titles: Top-Heavy, The Up And Up, Words And Music.

An updated version of Laurel & Hardy's silent film *Hats Off*.

The address in the film - 1127 Walnut Avenue - is not a real address for this location. The steps are actually located in the Silver Lake district on Los Angeles. There are 133 steps at this location.

There was actually a real piano in the crate according to Roy Seawright. "It was something you'd never buy -- but they needed it to be there for the weight." Many crates were used during the filming because they kept getting destroyed. These crates were designed by Thomas Benton Roberts.

Marvin Hatley supplied the musical tones you hear when the piano is moved.

William Gillespe - entered the movie industry in 1915 with the Selig Company, made a few films with Charlie Chaplin before landing at the Hal Roach Studios a short time later where he could be seen in over 170 short comedies. In addition to working with Harold Lloyd and Charley Chase, Gillespie appeared in six of Laurel & Hardy's comedies. As the piano salesman in *The Music Box*, this was his only speaking part with Stan and Ollie.

Hazel Howell plays the Professor's wife in this film. Her movie career began in the film adaptation of George M. Cohan's *45 Minutes From Broadway*. After a few years off, she returned to films in *Neptune's Stepdaughter* which had Babe Hardy in the cast.

She had also worked with Larry Semon, Monty Banks and Charley Chase. *The Music Box* is her next to last film followed by *King Kong* where she appeared as an extra.

Charlie Hall - Appeared in 47 films with Laurel & Hardy. He left school in 1914 to assist his father as a carpenter and began supplementing his wages by doing comedy sketches in vaudeville around music halls. When he was 16, Charlie was signed up with the Fred Karno Troup. This is where he met Stan Laurel while the company toured Britain. In the Laurel and Hardy short *Laughing Gravy*, he played a dog-hating landlord who mercilessly threw a little dog, named Laughing Gravy, out into the frigid cold. In real life, he reportedly adopted one of Laughing Gravy's puppies. By the mid-1950s, Hall's health was declining. Due to his inability to continue working as an extra and bit player, he returned to his carpentry skills and took a job as a prop-maker at Warner Brothers.

Susie the horse was 18 years old at the time of this filming and under the care of Tony Campanero at the Hal Roach ranch.

Lilyan Irene arrived in the United States from England in November of 1927 and became a naturalized citizen in 1943. Her first film at the Hal Roach Studios was with *Our Gang* followed by this part as the nursemaid in *The Music Box* the same year. It was Stan Laurel who added the "daily duties" line for her to tell the police officer in this film. She also appeared in Laurel Hardy's *County Hospital*. Lilyan also had small parts in films such as *Mutiny On The Bounty* and *Random Harvest*.

Sam Lufkin was a mainstay at the Hal Roach Studios especially with Laurel & Hardy where he made 39 appearances in films with them beginning with *Sugar Daddies* in 1927 and ending with *Saps At Sea* in 1940. Early on he was a salesman for the Wilshire Oil Company and was married three times.

Billy Gilbert - Best remembered as the voice of "Sneezy" in Walt Disney's *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*. He is at his best as the irate professor Professor Theodore von Schwarzenhoffen, M.D., A.D., D.D.S., F.L.D., F-F-F-and-F in this film. A mainstay at the Hal Roach Studios in many two reel comedies, Billy also worked with Charlie Chaplin, W. C. Fields and The Three Stooges.

When the Star Spangled Banner was played in the film, this song had only been the National Anthem for about nine months. President Herbert Hoover made this official on March 3, 1931.

1932 was the first year Oscars were conferred for short subjects. On July 25, 1932, nine executives representing short subjects producers, including Walt Disney, Henry Ginsberg (on behalf of Hal Roach Studios), and Warren Doane (on behalf of Universal), sent a letter to David O. Selznick, chairman of that year's Academy Awards Committee. The purpose was to encourage formal recognition of the industry's short subject branch at the annual Oscars' awards presentations.

On November 18, 1932 in the Fiesta Room of the Ambassador Hotel's Cocoanut Grove, Hal Roach accepted the certificate as producer of THE MUSIC BOX. Privately he gave the award to Stan Laurel, generously insisting Laurel was the one who deserved to keep the document. Oliver Hardy attended the banquet ceremony as well, and stills exist showing the threesome happily clowning

and posing for the cameras. No film footage exists. Nor does Lois Laurel Hawes (Stan's daughter) know whatever happened to the single page certificate Roach gave her father.

Former California politician Jackie Goldberg didn't realize that she lived right by The Music Box steps. During the 1960's she used to borrow films and 16mm film projector from the local library and project the films on a sheet in the small park (now Laurel & Hardy Park) in front of the stairs for the neighborhood children. One day in 1967, she showed *The Music Box* to the kids and made the connection as the film was running.

On November 18, 1997, the 65th anniversary of the 1932 Oscar ceremony, the Library of Congress announced that *THE MUSIC BOX* had been added to the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

The Music Box Steps are now a Los Angeles City landmark.

HOG WILD - Filmed April 4 through 21, 1930. Release May 31, 1930. Working title: Hay Wire. Aerial Antics was the British title.

This makes one ask the question: How many men would go up on the roof to install aerial antenna while wearing a coat and necktie?

This comedy was also filmed in French and Spanish at the same time as the English version. This was the 5th Laurel & Hardy short comedy filmed in a foreign language version. Foreign language dialogue coaches were off stage with Laurel and Hardy.

This film inspired three re-workings for television: The Three Stooges in 1953 for *Goof On The Roof*; Abbott and Costello for their episode titled *Fal'l Guy* which featured Laurel & Hardy alumnus Charlie Hall; The Lucy Show 1962 episode titled *Lucy Puts Up A TV Antenna* with Lucille Ball and Vivian Vance.

Fay Holderness - Both Oliver and Fay look into the camera to bring the audience into their frustration. For one brief second, you can see her smile at the antics of Laurel & Hardy. Played Mrs. Laurel in *Their Purple Moment*. Appeared in a total of four films with Laurel & Hardy. Her early work includes films directed by D. W. Griffith. She also worked with Our Gang, Charley Chase, Max Davidson, Thelma Todd & ZaSu Pitts and W. C. Fields.

Dorothy Granger - plays Tillie the maid and also the girl trying to negotiate the puddle by the sidewalk. Once considered for the role of Belle Watling in *Gone With The Wind* by then-director George Cukor, but Cukor was replaced and the part went to actress Ona Munson. She also played Leon Errol's wife in his long running

RKO two-reel series. She was also one of the first members in the Screen Actors Guild. Upon her retirement from films, she helped her husband run a successful upholstery business.

Charles McMurphy - appeared as an uncredited extra in seven Laurel & Hardy films including this one. You might remember him as the policeman chasing Oliver Hardy and falling into the sidewalk opening in *Scram*.

Stan Laurel was actually driving the car through the intersection while looking at the girl trying to maneuver the puddle.

Oliver Hardy really took the fall off the table when Stan honked his horn upon arriving at Ollie's house.

Oliver Hardy was wearing a protective pad and his pants when Stan's car backfired.

The water tower for the MGM studio is visible in the background from the roof.

The repeat gag is played with Ollie being soaking wet while getting out of the pond and is completely dry by the time he gets back up on the roof.

When Laurel & Hardy are rolling off the roof together, these are two stuntmen.

A counterweight was put under the platform in the car to balance the weight of the person on the ladder during the wild driving scenes.

Stunt doubles were used for some of the driving sequences. Stan and Oliver were in the close-ups.

What looks like a possible accident occurred when the car made the wide turn and drove under the bridge.

The closing scene was filmed at what is now part of the USC campus.

A dummy was used when Ollie fell off the ladder at USC.

REFERENCES FOR LAUREL & HARDY FILMS:

Laurel & Hardy: The Magic Behind The Movies
by Randy Skretvedt

Commentary by Richard W. Bann and Rich Correll from Laurel & Hardy: The Essential Collection DVD set

Internet Movie Database