



## Biography of D.W. Griffith

David Wark Griffith was born in La Grange, Kentucky on January 22, 1875. After stints as both writer and actor of poetry and plays, Griffith first entered the motion picture industry as an actor for Edison Studios in 1907. He moved over to Biograph in 1908 for the salary of \$5 a day. Griffith's work at Biograph would forever change the way movies were made.

Biograph was one of the first motion picture studios in America, when films were sold outright by the foot, and not rented as they are today. Films were silent and no more than one reel in length (a running time of about 12 minutes). At a price of 10-cents a foot, the cost of a reel of film was about \$100. When Griffith first came to Biograph, the studio was only selling about 20 copies of each new film and was in poor financial condition.

Biograph was in pressing need of a director. The job was offered to Griffith at an increase in salary, but he was reluctant to take it. He was working steadily and was afraid that if he failed he would lose his job as an actor. Henry Marvin, founder of Biograph, assured Griffith that if he did fail as a director, his acting chores would continue. Griffith reluctantly accepted.

Griffith had only a rudimentary understanding of film making. He knew that film directors were no more than shepherders, moving the actors from one place to another on the screen. The cameraman was king. Biograph had two: Arthur Marvin, brother of Griffith's boss, and a German immigrant named G.W. "Billy" Bitzer. When Griffith selected *The Adventures of Dollie* for his initial plunge, Marvin was assigned to be his cinematographer. Bitzer, in the meantime, offered the novice director all the help that he could.

Both cameramen wanted Griffith to succeed. If he didn't, chances were that they would be pressed into directing, a move that both considered a demotion.

*The Adventures of Dollie* was typical of the films of the day. A little girl is kidnapped by a band of roving gypsies and sealed in a water cask. The cask falls off the wagon when crossing a river and the cask, with the little girl inside, is swept down the stream toward a waterfall. In the nick of time the girl is rescued by two boys.

The simple story was filmed by Griffith and Marvin in two days at Sound Beach, Connecticut, in 700 feet (or just under nine minutes of running time). On the surface, the picture looked no better nor no worse than any other Biograph film.

But there was something special about it. *The Adventures of Dollie* sold almost 100 prints -- something almost unheard of for a Biograph film.

Griffith's second film, *The Redman and Child* did nearly as well and Biograph had found not only a new director, but its salvation as well.

Between 1908 and 1913, Griffith directed hundreds of films for Biograph, yet in the entire time his name never appeared on the credits -- nor did those of his actors. The greatest of all the early film actors worked for Biograph: Mary Pickford, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Mae Marsh, Harry Carey, Henry B. Walthall, Mack Sennett, Fred Mace, Florence Turner, Constance Talmadge, Donald Crisp, Robert Harron, and others -- all got their start with Griffith.

But Griffith was not happy. In his Biograph years he had perfected all the elements of so-called film grammar -- cross-cutting, tracking shots, the running insert, flashbacks, and more. He wanted to make longer films, but Biograph fought him all the way.

Biograph was a member of the Motion Picture Patents Company, a trust organized by Thomas Edison and his associates to restrict production of motion pictures to ten companies, to eliminate further competition. Theaters paid a two-dollar weekly fee and could only exhibit Trust-produced films. Independents who tried to produce their own films were often met with violence.

The Trust had a policy when it came to filmmaking -- keep it simple and keep it profitable. One-reel films were profitable and there was no reason to make them longer or more expensive. Griffith did manage to make a number of two-reelers, but it was always under protest from the company.

By 1913, the grip of the Trust was weakening, but not their resistance to change. Griffith decided to leave Biograph and, when he did, he took his stock company of actors with him. Biograph's decline began the moment Griffith walked out the door. In five years, it was gone.

Griffith, on the other hand, continued to prosper and in 1915 he put forth his most ambitious effort, the twelve-reel destined to be classic *Birth of a Nation*, based on Thomas Dixon's southern tilted Civil War era drama. Although highly controversial for its content both then and now....(the climax of the movie is a highly dramatic gathering and riding of the Ku Klux Klan)....the film was an instant sensation. Griffith was hailed as a genius.

He followed this up with another controversial film titled *Intolerance* in 1916. Although applauded by the critics, this movie met some box office resistance and lost money. The picture followed the action of three modern tales of city life, inter-cut throughout the film. It was perhaps a little too real for audiences of the time.

Griffith from this time on would alternate between more sure fire money makers such as *One Exciting Night* (1922), and more personally satisfying efforts such as *Orphans of the Storm* (1922). He was one of the founders of United Artists in 1919. But toward the end of the 1920s, Griffith's movies was slowly sinking into oblivion. In the glitter of the Jazz Age, his filmmaking was considered hopelessly old-fashioned.

He moved to New York and his movies lost even more appeal for mainstream audiences. His last picture, "The Struggle", was made in 1931 and played in theaters only a week before being withdrawn. Griffith returned to Kentucky and his family. Then, in 1940, comedy producer Hal Roach summoned Griffith back to Hollywood to "supervise" the making of "One Million B.C.", a remake of one of his old Biograph films about primitive man. Although he was to act as only a consultant, the autocratic Griffith tried to take over the whole production and was dismissed.

He died July 22, 1948. Among the mourners at his funeral were friends and colleagues from the days when the movies were young and Griffith was the undisputed king of the cinema. One of these, actor Donald Crisp, delivered a fitting eulogy: "I cannot help feeling that there should always have been a place for him and his talent in the motion picture field. It is hard to believe that the industry could not have found a use for his great gift."

Virtually forgotten by the industry he helped build, it was Griffith who had saved the ailing Biograph Studios from bankruptcy and, through his incredible talent, had made it a leader in the fledgling movie industry. And it was Griffith who turned filmmaking into an art.

### **Filmography of D.W. Griffith**

*One Million B.C. (1940) (uncredited)*  
*The Struggle, (1931)*  
*Abraham Lincoln (1930)*  
*Lady of the Pavements (1929)*  
*The Battle of the Sexes (1928)*  
*Drums of Love (1928)*  
*The Sorrows of Satan (1926)*  
*That Royle Girl (1925)*  
*Sally of the Sawdust (1925)*  
*Isn't Life Wonderful (1924)*  
*America (1924)*  
*Mammy's Boy (1923)*  
*The White Rose (1923)*  
*One Exciting Night (1922)*  
*Orphans of the Storm (1921)*  
*Dream Street (1921)*  
*Way Down East (1920)*  
*The Love Flower (1920)*  
*Remodeling Her Husband (1920) (uncredited)*  
*The Idol Dancer (1920)*

*The Greatest Question (1919)*  
*Scarlet Days (1919)*  
*Mother and the Law, The (1919)*  
*Fall of Babylon, The (1919)*  
*True Heart Susie (1919)*  
*Broken Blossoms (1919)*  
*Girl Who Stayed at Home, The (1919)*  
*Romance of Happy Valley, A (1919)*  
*The Great Love (1918)*  
*Hearts of the World (1918)*  
*Intolerance (1916)*  
*Birth of a Nation, The (1915)*  
*For Her Father's Sins (1914) (supervising)*  
*For Those Unborn (1914) (supervising)*  
*Her Awakening (1914/I) (supervising)*  
*Men and Women (1914) (supervising)*  
*Odalisque, The (1914) (supervising)*  
*Second Mrs. Roebuck, The (1914) (supervising)*  
*Soul of Honor, The (1914) (supervising)*  
*Strongheart (1914) (supervising)*  
*The Avenging Conscience; Thou Shalt Not Kill (1914)*  
*The Escape (1914)*  
*Home, Sweet Home (1914)*  
*Brute Force (1914)*  
*The Battle at Elderbush Gulch (1914)*  
*Judith of Bethulia (1914)*  
*Classmates (1914) (supervising)*  
*The Conscience of Hassan Bey (1913)*  
*The Mirror (1913)*  
*Mother Love (1913)*  
*Olaf-An Atom (1913)*  
*Primitive Man (1913)*  
*Stolen Bride, The (1913)*  
*Switch Tower, The (1913)*  
*Waijs (1913)*  
*Madonna of the Storm (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*So Runs the Way (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*A Modest Hero (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*A Woman in the Ultimate (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*Two Men of the Desert (1913)*  
*An Indian's Loyalty (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Reformers (1913)*  
*The Coming of Angelo (1913)*  
*During the Round-Up (1913)*  
*The Enemy's Baby (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Mistake (1913)*  
*The Sorrowful Shore (1913)*  
*Her Mother's Oath (1913)*  
*The Mothering Heart (1913)*  
*Death's Marathon (1913)*  
*A Timely Interception (1913)*  
*The Ranchero's Revenge (1913)*  
*His Mother's Son (1913)*  
*Just Gold (1913)*  
*The Yaqui Cur (1913)*  
*The House of Darkness (1913)*

*The Stolen Loaf (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Wanderer (1913)*  
*If We Only Knew (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Lady and the Mouse (1913)*  
*The Left-Handed Man (1913)*  
*A Misunderstood Boy (1913)*  
*The Little Tease (1913)*  
*The Perfidy of Mary (1913)*  
*The Hero of Little Italy (1913)*  
*The Sheriff's Baby (1913)*  
*Welcome Intruder, A (1913)*  
*Fate (1913)*  
*Near to Earth (1913)*  
*Unwelcome Guest, The (1913)*  
*A Girl's Stratagem (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*Broken Ways (1913)*  
*Love in an Apartment Hotel (1913)*  
*The Massacre (1913)*  
*A Chance Deception (1913)*  
*Drink's Lure (1913)*  
*Oil and Water (1913)*  
*Brothers (1913)*  
*A Misappropriated Turkey (1913)*  
*The Tender Hearted Boy (1913) (unconfirmed)*  
*An Adventure in the Autumn Woods (1913)*  
*Pirate Gold (1913)*  
*The Telephone Girl and the Lady (1913)*  
*Three Friends (1913)*  
*Grannie (1912)*  
*In the Elemental World (1912)*  
*Sailor's Heart, A (1912)*  
*The God Within (1912)*  
*The Burglar's Dilemma (1912)*  
*A Cry for Help (1912)*  
*My Hero (1912)*  
*The New York Hat (1912)*  
*Brutality (1912)*  
*The Informer (1912)*  
*My Baby (1912) (unconfirmed)*  
*Gold and Glitter (1912) (unconfirmed)*  
*Heredity (1912)*  
*The Musketeers of Pig Alley (1912)*  
*The Painted Lady (1912)*  
*The One She Loved (1912)*  
*In the Aisles of the Wild (1912)*  
*The Chief's Blanket (1912)*  
*A Feud in the Kentucky Hills (1912)*  
*So Near, Yet So Far (1912)*  
*Friends (1912)*  
*Two Daughters of Eve (1912)*  
*An Unseen Enemy (1912)*  
*Blind Love (1912)*  
*In the North Woods (1912)*  
*A Pueblo Legend (1912)*  
*A Change of Spirit (1912)*  
*With the Enemy's Help (1912)*

*The Inner Circle (1912)*  
*A Child's Remorse (1912)*  
*The Narrow Road (1912)*  
*Black Sheep (1912)*  
*The Sands of Dee (1912)*  
*Heaven Avenges (1912) (unconfirmed)*  
*Man's Genesis (1912)*  
*An Indian Summer (1912) (unconfirmed)*  
*Man's Lust for Gold (1912)*  
*The School Teacher and the Waif (1912)*  
*The Spirit Awakened (1912)*  
*Lena and the Geese (1912)*  
*A Temporary Truce (1912)*  
*Home Folks (1912)*  
*An Outcast Among Outcasts (1912)*  
*When Kings Were the Law (1912)*  
*Beast at Bay, A (1912)*  
*His Lesson (1912)*  
*A Lodging for the Night (1912)*  
*The Old Actor (1912)*  
*The Lesser Evil (1912)*  
*One Is Business, the Other Crime (1912)*  
*Just Like a Woman (1912)*  
*The Female of the Species (1912)*  
*Fate's Interception (1912)*  
*The Punishment (1912)*  
*The Goddess of Sagebrush Gulch (1912)*  
*The Root of Evil (1912)*  
*Iola's Promise (1912)*  
*The Girl and Her Trust (1912)*  
*A String of Pearls (1912)*  
*A Siren of Impulse (1912)*  
*The Sunbeam (1912)*  
*Under Burning Skies (1912)*  
*The Mender of Nets (1912)*  
*Billy's Stratagem (1912)*  
*For His Son (1912)*  
*A Sister's Love (1912)*  
*The Transformation of Mike (1912)*  
*A Blot on the 'Scutcheon (1912)*  
*The Old Bookkeeper (1912)*  
*A Tale of the Wilderness (1912)*  
*The Baby and the Stork (1912) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Eternal Mother (1912)*  
*Flaming Arrows (1911)*  
*The Voice of the Child (1911)*  
*A Terrible Discovery (1911)*  
*As In a Looking Glass (1911)*  
*Saved From Himself (1911)*  
*The Failure (1911)*  
*A Woman Scorned (1911)*  
*Sunshine Through the Dark (1911)*  
*The Miser's Heart (1911)*  
*Through Darkened Vales (1911)*  
*The Trail of Books (1911)*  
*The Battle (1911)*

*Love in the Hills (1911)*  
*The Long Road (1911)*  
*... aka Destiny's Roadway with Its Many Turns (1911) (USA: subtitle)*  
*The Adventures of Billy (1911)*  
*The Unveiling (1911)*  
*[Italian](#) Blood (1911)*  
*The Making of a Man (1911)*  
*Her Awakening (1911)*  
*The Revenue Man and the Girl (1911)*  
*Dan the Dandy (1911)*  
*The Squaw's Love (1911)*  
*The Old Confectioner's Mistake (1911)*  
*The Stuff Heroes Are Made Of (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*Swords and Hearts (1911)*  
*The Rose of Kentucky (1911)*  
*The Blind Princess and the Poet (1911)*  
*... aka A Biograph Fantasy in the Land of Flowers (1911) (USA: subtitle)*  
*The Sorrowful Example (1911)*  
*RThe uling Passion (1911)*  
*Out From the Shadow (1911)*  
*The Last Drop of Water (1911)*  
*A Country Cupid (1911)*  
*The Indian Brothers (1911)*  
*Bobby, the Coward (1911)*  
*The Jealous Husband (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Thief and the Girl (1911)*  
*Fighting Blood (1911)*  
*Her Sacrifice (1911)*  
*The Primal Call (1911)*  
*Enoch Arden: Part II (1911)*  
*Enoch Arden: Part I (1911)*  
*The Smile of a Child (1911)*  
*A Romany Tragedy (1911)*  
*The White Rose of the Wilds (1911)*  
*... aka A Story of the West (1911) (USA: subtitle)*  
*The Crooked Road (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*The New Dress (1911)*  
*In the Days of '49 (1911)*  
*The Two Sides (1911)*  
*How She Triumphed (1911)*  
*... aka An Argument in Favor of Physical Culture (1911) (USA: subtitle)*  
*His Mother's Scarf (1911)*  
*Madame Rex (1911)*  
*A Knight of the Road (1911)*  
*Paradise Lost (1911)*  
*The Chief's Daughter (1911)*  
*The Broken Cross (1911)*  
*The Spanish Gypsy (1911)*  
*The Lonedale Operator (1911)*  
*Teaching Dad to Like Her (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*Was He a Coward? (1911)*  
*Conscience (1911)*  
*A Decree of Destiny (1911)*  
*The Heart of a Savage (1911)*  
*Lily of the Tenements (1911)*  
*His Daughter (1911)*

*The Diamond Star (1911)*  
*Fisher Folks (1911)*  
*What Shall We Do with Our Old? (1911)*  
*Heart Beats of Long Ago (1911)*  
*Three Sisters (1911)*  
*A Wreath of Orange Blossoms (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Poor Sick Men (1911) (unconfirmed)*  
*Fate's Turning (1911)*  
*His Trust Fulfilled (1911)*  
*His Trust (1911)*  
*The Italian Barber (1911)*  
*When a Man Loves (1911)*  
*The Two Paths (1911)*  
*Effecting a Cure (1910)*  
*An Old Story with a New Ending (1910)*  
*The Tenderfoot's Triumph (1910)*  
*Up a Tree (1910)*  
*Winning Back His Love (1910)*  
*White Roses (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Lesson (1910)*  
*His Sister-In-Law (1910)*  
*The Golden Supper (1910)*  
*A Child's Stratagem (1910)*  
*A Plain Song (1910)*  
*Not So Bad as It Seemed (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*His New Lid (1910)*  
*The Song of the Wildwood Flute (1910)*  
*Sunshine Sue (1910)*  
*Simple Charity (1910)*  
*The Fugitive (1910)*  
*Waiter No. 5 (1910)*  
*Two Little Waifs (1910)*  
*The Message of the Violin (1910)*  
*The Banker's Daughters (1910)*  
*The Broken Doll (1910)*  
*That Chink at Golden Gulch (1910)*  
*A Gold Necklace (1910)*  
*The Iconoclast (1910)*  
*Examination Day at School (1910)*  
*Rose O'Salem Town (1910)*  
*A Summer Tragedy (1910)*  
*The Oath and the Man (1910)*  
*In Life's Cycle (1910)*  
*A Mohawk's Way (1910)*  
*Little Angels of Luck (1910)*  
*The Affair of an Egg (1910)*  
*A Summer Idyll (1910)*  
*Muggsy Becomes a Hero (1910)*  
*The Modern Prodigal (1910)*  
*Wilful Peggy (1910)*  
*The Sorrows of the Unfaithful (1910)*  
*When We Were in Our Teens (1910)*  
*The Usurer (1910)*  
*A Salutary Lesson (1910)*  
*The House with Closed Shutters (1910)*  
*Her Father's Pride (1910)*



*An Arcadian Maid (1910)*  
*Unexpected Help (1910)*  
*The Call to Arms (1910)*  
*As the Bells Rang Out! (1910)*  
*Serious Sixteen (1910)*  
*A Flash of Light (1910)*  
*A Child's Faith (1910)*  
*What the Daisy Said (1910)*  
*A Midnight Cupid (1910)*  
*The Purgation (1910)*  
*Muggsy's First Sweetheart (1910)*  
*A Child's Impulse (1910)*  
*May and December (1910)*  
*Never Again (1910)*  
*The Marked Time-Table (1910)*  
*The Face at the Window (1910)*  
*In the Border States (1910)*  
*A Victim of Jealousy (1910)*  
*A Child of the Ghetto (1910)*  
*In the Season of Buds (1910)*  
*The Impalement (1910)*  
*A Knot in the Plot (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*Ramona (1910)*  
*An Affair of Hearts (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*Over Silent Paths (1910)*  
*Love Among the Roses (1910)*  
*The Two Brothers (1910)*  
*The Unchanging Sea (1910)*  
*The Gold Seekers (1910)*  
*The Way of the World (1910)*  
*Thou Shalt Not (1910)*  
*A Romance of the Western Hills (1910)*  
*A Rich Revenge (1910)*  
*As It Is in Life (1910)*  
*His Last Dollar (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Smoker (1910)*  
*Gold Is Not All (1910)*  
*The Twisted Trail (1910)*  
*Faithful (1910)*  
*The Converts (1910)*  
*The Man (1910)*  
*In Old California (1910)*  
*The Thread of Destiny (1910)*  
*The Newlyweds (1910)*  
*The Final Settlement (1910)*  
*Taming a Husband (1910)*  
*His Last Burglary (1910)*  
*The Englishman and the Girl (1910)*  
*One Night and Then (1910)*  
*The Course of True Love (1910) (unconfirmed)*  
*The Duke's Plan (1910)*  
*The Woman From Mellon's (1910)*  
*The Cloister's Touch (1910)*  
*The Last Deal (1910)*  
*The Honor of His Family (1910)*  
*The Call (1910)*

*On the Reef (1910)*  
*The Dancing Girl of Butte (1910)*  
*Her Terrible Ordeal (1910)*  
*The Rocky Road (1910)*  
*Bill Sharkey's Last Game (1909)*  
*The Day After (1909)*  
*Edgar Allan Poe (1909)*  
*Mamma (1909)*  
*Choosing a Husband (1909)*  
*To Save Her Soul (1909)*  
*In Little Italy (1909)*  
*A Trap for Santa Claus (1909)*  
*In a Hempen Bag (1909)*  
*The Test (1909)*  
*A Corner in Wheat (1909)*  
*The Red Man's View (1909)*  
*Through the Breakers (1909)*  
*The Death Disc (1909)*  
*In the Window Recess (1909)*  
*The Trick That Failed (1909)*  
*In the Watches of the Night (1909)*  
*The Mountaineer's Honor (1909)*  
*The Open Gate (1909)*  
*A Sweet Revenge (1909)*  
*A Midnight Adventure (1909)*  
*Two Women and a Man (1909)*  
*The Light That Came (1909)*  
*The Restoration (1909)*  
*Nursing a Viper (1909)*  
*The Gibson Goddess (1909)*  
*What's Your Hurry? (1909)*  
*Lines of White on a Sullen Sea (1909)*  
*The Expiation (1909)*  
*His Lost Love (1909)*  
*A Change of Heart (1909)*  
*The Little Teacher (1909)*  
*Fools of Fate (1909)*  
*Pippa Passes (1909)*  
*... aka The Song of Conscience (1909)*  
*The Awakening (1909)*  
*Wanted, a Child (1909)*  
*A Fair Exchange (1909)*  
*In Old Kentucky (1909)*  
*The Broken Locket (1909)*  
*The Children's Friend (1909)*  
*Getting Even (1909)*  
*Comata, the Sioux (1909)*  
*The Hessian Renegades (1909)*  
*... aka 1776 (1909)*  
*Leather Stockings (1909)*  
*The Little Darling (1909)*  
*The Sealed Room (1909)*  
*The Mills of the Gods (1909)*  
*Pranks (1909)*  
*Oh, Uncle! (1909)*  
*The Seventh Day (1909)*

*The Indian Runner's Romance (1909)*  
*His Wife's Visitor (1909)*  
*Mrs. Jones' Lover (1909)*  
*... aka I Want My Hat (1909)*  
*With Her Card (1909)*  
*The Better Way (1909)*  
*Mr. Jones' Burglar (1909)*  
*They Would Elope (1909)*  
*The Mended Lute (1909)*  
*A Strange Meeting (1909)*  
*The Slave (1909)*  
*A Convict's Sacrifice (1909)*  
*Jealousy and the Man (1909)*  
*Sweet and Twenty (1909)*  
*The Renunciation (1909)*  
*The Friend of the Family (1909)*  
*Tender Hearts (1909)*  
*The Cardinal's Conspiracy (1909)*  
*... aka Richelieu or the Cardinal's Conspiracy (1909)*  
*The Country Doctor (1909)*  
*The Message (1909)*  
*The Necklace (1909)*  
*The Way of Man (1909)*  
*The Mexican Sweethearts (1909)*  
*The Peachbasket Hat (1909)*  
*Was Justice Served? (1909)*  
*The Faded Lilies (1909)*  
*Her First Biscuits (1909)*  
*The Son's Return (1909)*  
*The Lonely Villa (1909)*  
*A New Trick (1909)*  
*The Violin Maker of Cremona (1909)*  
*What Drink Did (1909)*  
*Eradicating Auntie (1909)*  
*His Duty (1909)*  
*The Cricket on the Hearth (1909)*  
*Eloping with Auntie (1909)*  
*Two Memories (1909)*  
*Jones and the Lady Book Agent (1909)*  
*Resurrection (1909/I)*  
*The Jilt (1909)*  
*A Baby's Shoe (1909)*  
*The French Duel (1909)*  
*The Note in the Shoe (1909)*  
*One Busy Hour (1909)*  
*The Eavesdropper (1909)*  
*The Suicide Club (1909)*  
*Tis an Ill Wind That Blows No Good (1909)*  
*Lucky Jim (1909)*  
*Twin Brothers (1909)*  
*The Drive for Life (1909)*  
*Lady Helen's Escapade (1909)*  
*A Trouble-Some Satchel (1909)*  
*Confidence (1909)*  
*A Sound Sleeper (1909)*  
*The Winning Coat (1909)*

*A Rude Hostess (1909)*  
*Schneider's Anti-Noise Crusade (1909)*  
*The Road to the Heart (1909)*  
*Trying to Get Arrested (1909)*  
*A Drunkard's Reformation (1909)*  
*Jones and His New Neighbors (1909)*  
*The Medicine Bottle (1909)*  
*A Burglar's Mistake (1909)*  
*And a Little Child Shall Lead Them (1909)*  
*The Deception (1909)*  
*The Voice of the Violin (1909)*  
*I Did It (1909)*  
*... aka I Did It, Mama (1909)*  
*The Lure of the Gown (1909)*  
*The Hindoo Dagger (1909)*  
*The Salvation Army Lass (1909)*  
*The Roue's Heart (1909)*  
*The Wooden Leg (1909)*  
*A Fool's Revenge (1909)*  
*His Wife's Mother (1909)*  
*The Prussian Spy (1909)*  
*At the Altar (1909)*  
*The Golden Louis (1909)*  
*The Politician's Love Story (1909)*  
*The Joneses Have Amateur Theatricals (1909)*  
*The Curtain Pole (1909)*  
*His Ward's Love (1909)*  
*Tragic Love (1909)*  
*A Wreath in Time (1909)*  
*The Brahma Diamond (1909)*  
*The Girls and Daddy (1909)*  
*The Cord of Life (1909)*  
*Those Awful Hats (1909)*  
*The Welcome Burglar (1909)*  
*The Fascinating Mrs. Francis (1909)*  
*Mr. Jones Has a Card Party (1909)*  
*The Criminal Hypnotist (1909)*  
*Those Boys! (1909)*  
*A Rural Elopement (1909)*  
*The Sacrifice (1909)*  
*The Honor of Thieves (1909)*  
*Love Finds a Way (1909)*  
*The Maniac Cook (1909)*  
*One Touch of Nature (1909)*  
*The Fight for Freedom (1908)*  
*The Helping Hand (1908)*  
*... aka The Scarlet Woman (1908) (USA)*  
*Mr. Jones at the Ball (1908)*  
*The Christmas Burglars (1908)*  
*An Awful Moment (1908)*  
*The Test of Friendship (1908)*  
*The Reckoning (1908)*  
*The Feud and the Turkey (1908)*  
*Mrs. Jones Entertains (1908)*  
*The Valet's Wife (1908)*  
*Money Mad (1908)*

*The Clubman and the Tramp (1908)*  
*A Woman's Way (1908)*  
*The Ingrate (1908)*  
*The Song of the Shirt (1908)*  
*The Guerrilla (1908)*  
*The Taming of the Shrew (1908)*  
*The Pirate's Gold (1908)*  
*After Many Years (1908)*  
*Concealing a Burglar (1908)*  
*The Call of the Wild (1908)*  
*Romance of a Jewess (1908)*  
*The Planter's Wife (1908)*  
*The Vaquero's Vow (1908)*  
*Ingomar, the Barbarian (1908)*  
*... aka The Barbarian Ingomar (1908) (USA)*  
*Father Gets in the Game (1908)*  
*The Zulu's Heart (1908)*  
*The Devil (1908)*  
*The Stolen Jewels (1908)*  
*A Smoked Husband (1908)*  
*Where the Breakers Roar (1908)*  
*The Heart of O'Yama (1908)*  
*The Red Girl (1908)*  
*Behind the Scenes (1908)*  
*The Girl and the Outlaw (1908)*  
*Monday Morning in a Coney Island Police Court (1908) (unconfirmed)*  
*Betrayed by a Handprint (1908)*  
*For a Wife's Honor (1908)*  
*Balked at the Altar (1908)*  
*For Love of Gold (1908)*  
*The Fatal Hour (1908)*  
*The Man and the Woman (1908)*  
*The Greaser's Gauntlet (1908)*  
*A Calamitous Elopement (1908)*  
*The Bandit's Waterloo (1908)*  
*The Red Man and the Child (1908)*  
*The Black Viper (1908)*  
*The Tavern Keeper's Daughter (1908)*  
*The Adventures of Dollie (1908)*

D.W. Griffith

**"The task I'm trying to achieve above all is to make you see."**

- D.W. Griffith

**W**idely and justly regarded as **the** American film pioneer, D.W. Griffith stretched the minds of audiences to bring film out of its infancy and launch it as the diverse and fascinating art form that it is today. Not content to be an actor in film ([56k jpg](#)), Griffith manned the helm of the director's chair and presented an incredible body of work between 1908 and 1913 alone, consisting of hundreds of short films. Many big stars of the movies got their first screen experience and learned their craft with Griffith. [Mary Pickford](#), for instance, made over 100 short

films with the master. [\*The Female of the Species\*](#) (American Biograph, 1912) is one example of the kind of films that Griffith was producing that presented a theme of social consciousness. Other future stars and screen artisans who would rise through the Griffith ranks were [Jeanie Macpherson](#), [Mack Sennett](#), [Henry B. Walthall](#), [Mabel Normand](#), [Donald Crisp](#), Mae Marsh, Robert Harron, [Lionel Barrymore](#) [Lillian and Dorothy Gish](#), [Blanche Sweet](#), [Constance Talmadge](#), [Carmel Myers](#) and [Richard Barthelmess](#), among the numerous, in the 1910's.

The influence of Griffith upon film was so pervasive at that time that his name alone seemed to be on everyone's lips as the generic association with filmmaking itself. He built his artistic empire complimented by the artists and film craftsmen that he carefully integrated into his personal dream factory. He had the heart of a poet and the vision of a pharaoh. His performers, whom he considered his children, respected him with absolute admiration. To them, he was the father of film and the future of the medium. They were fortunate enough to be in his place at the right time. As his popularity and bankability skyrocketed, so did the creative juices that flowed through his veins. His greatest triumph that still reverberates to this day for its ingenuity and scope, as well as its controversial subject matter and cultural fallout, is the epic [\*Birth Of A Nation\*](#) (David W. Griffith Corp., for Epoch Producing Corp., 1915). All at once, this film made his fame and shattered it. He was forced to recognize that his point of view on Southern history had serious flaws. After *Birth* his dreams became bigger, but they were also tempered to his newly forged consciousness towards racism and war that was awakened by the very public that he sought to entertain. As Griffith continued to produce feature films into the 1920's, it became abundantly clear that the impact and reaction of his bigger productions was more wide spread and intense than the response to the hundreds of short films he made before. His next film, [\*Intolerance\*](#) (Wark Producing Corporation, 1916), would show an altruistic Griffith who sought the world's understanding of peace and respect from the public for his artistic vision. He was still the king of directors critically, but this grand gamble would fail financially. No film would ever be so grandly mounted and produced during Griffith's career nor in the silent era for that matter.

Griffith's stature within the Hollywood hierarchy was one of respect and integrity. He became one of the three lynchpins of the ambitious Triangle Studios, along with [Thomas Ince](#) and Mack Sennett. Bringing these three giants together to oversee the production of their own films, Triangle was the brain-child of financial organizer Harry Aitken. For the three producers it was like the Garden of Eden: in Edendale for Sennett, the rolling pastures of Thomas Ince's Inceville (and at his Culver City studio), and Majestic for Griffith, where he took studio residence at the former Majestic-Reliance lot. Triangle paid top dollar for the finest performers and productions and flourished - as long as the money held out. Although the venture lasted four years, Griffith, Ince and Sennett, along with their two largest money making stars, [William S. Hart](#) and [Douglas Fairbanks](#), departed Triangle after two, in 1917.

In 1919 Griffith was asked to become a part of a daring plan to liberate the screen artisan from the suffocating embrace of studio control. Artists were completely dependent on these studios for better or worse. Griffith, as huge a figure as he was, accomplished his great works like a maverick with a mission. He didn't have anything to lose by joining this courageous crew. Always independent of mind and action, this proposal appealed to his nature. It is interesting looking at photos of the inauguration day of [United Artists](#). In several of the pictures ([48k jpg](#)) each founding participant conveys an expression that seems to broadcast their thoughts on that bold day. Douglas Fairbanks looks apprehensive, not like the carefree Doug portrayed in the movies. This dangerous professional gamble of this move is apparent in his face. [Charlie Chaplin](#) looks like he is going to burst with glee. He was finally experiencing his dreams of industry power and his complete artistic independence was becoming a reality. Mary Pickford's demeanor is closest to Chaplin's in her expression of unabashed triumph. However, in contrast to all of this, Griffith is pensive and almost detached from the excitement, as if he is lost in thought over his next production starring his controversial protegee, [Carol Dempster](#). The opportunity to have the freedom to create with the financial support and blessings from the studio - especially the feeling of having come out on top after his creative adversity concerning his previous films, must have been deeply satisfying.

After *Intolerance* Griffith may have turned away from the epic film because of the financial obstacles, but his gifted performers more than made up for this loss, for they were giants in their own right. For instance the Gish sisters blessed the films of Griffith, off and on from the mid-1910's to the early-1920's, with their exquisite beauty and awesome acting talent. Many film lovers covet [Broken Blossoms](#) (D.W. Griffith for United Artists, 1919) and [Orphans of the Storm](#) (D.W. Griffith, Inc., for United Artists, 1921) as their favorite Griffith productions. Both ladies ended their association with Griffith after *Orphans*.

[D.W. Griffith](#), the actor.

A scene from *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (Edison, 1907), directed by [Edwin S. Porter](#).

This was his first lead performance in a film.

It wouldn't be too long before Griffith would be directing the whole shebang.

This photo is from the [Silents Majority](#) collection.