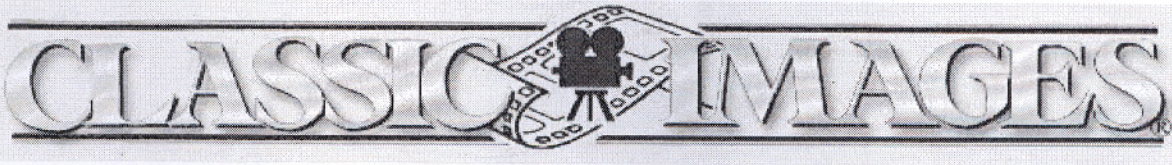




Sincerely,
Claire
July 1914

Pub. F-70



Claire Windsor
One Fan's Fond Remembrance
by Al Bohrer

Claire Windsor was born Clara Viola "Ola" Cronk in Cawker City, Kansas, on April 14, 1897. An early marriage, to William Bowes, ended in divorce. With her infant son, she moved with her parents to Seattle, Washington, where she entered and won a local beauty contest. Later, she moved to California and took the advice of a friend who suggested that the burgeoning film industry could help her support her little boy. She first hired on as an extra and toiled anonymously for a while. Then, one day she caught the eye of Lois Weber, the pioneer producer and director of silent pictures. Weber was impressed by Ola's rare beauty and signed her to a contract for \$150 per week. She did a string of five movies from 1920 through 1922. The second year of her contract her salary increased to \$350 per week. She was ideally suited to the kind of melodramas the Weber pictures called for. Another newcomer, Louis Calhern, was her leading man in two of these, *The Blot* and *What's Worthwhile* (both 1921).

In June of 1921, a feverish headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle* proclaimed: "Chaplin Offers \$1000 Reward for Missing Star." This started the ball rolling. Claire was the "missing film star." Of course, this was nothing more than a publicity stunt. Claire had been a frequent Chaplin date.

In 1922 the Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers, a film publicity group, began their annual "Wampas Baby Star" awards, naming Claire as one of the year's most promising starlets along with Colleen Moore, Bessie Love, and others. The award was a brilliant publicity scheme and kindled public interest in the industry as a whole.

Claire and Buddy were regulars at William Randolph Hearst's "Xanadu" castle in the late 1920s. Among the many books written on this social phenomenon, the late Ken Murray did a marvelous job with his, "The Golden Days at San Simeon." Claire figured prominently in the book, among the many stars who spent happy hours frolicking in the luxurious setting.

In 1929, Fox summoned her from vacation in Cuba to do a picture that was a complete turn around for her. She had always portrayed the society girl (once or twice a princess). In Captain Lash, opposite the popular Victor McLaglen, Claire was called upon to enact the role of a lady jewel thief. According to the critics, she did it very well.

With the coming of sound, Claire's days as a film star were drawing to an end. However, her career would extend well into the 1940s, albeit as a character actress.

On June 16, 1930, she was in a tragic boating accident on Long Island Sound in New York. Phil Plant, a wealthy playboy and former husband of Constance Bennett, was at the helm of his yacht, "The Moleta" when it collided with another fast cabin cruiser. After the accident, Claire tried to hide her identity from the press, but her beautiful face drew the attention of reporters who soon splashed her name in ink across the headlines. It became a lurid tale, with accusations fueled by the drowning of an 18-year-old sailor. The tragedy scuttled the romance that had been brewing between the actress and the playboy.

In 1931 Claire signed to do a road tour with Al Jolson in The Wonder Bar (1931-1933). She got good notices for it. (Odd little note here. Claire's pal, Dolores Del Rio, got her part when it was later made into a movie.)

It was during rehearsals for Wonder Bar that a thunderbolt struck out of the blue. Marion Read, the wife of a young Boston broker, Alfred Read, Jr., brought an "Alienation of Affections" suit against the actress. Mrs. Read claimed that the

screen beauty had stolen the love of her husband. Read had met Claire on a transcontinental train in 1931. He first told her that he was not married, then said that he and his wife were separated and getting a divorce. Mrs. Read sued Claire for \$100,000. The trial, gleefully reported daily in the nation's newspapers, lasted 2 weeks and ended badly for Claire. Mrs. Read won, and was awarded \$75,000. The actress was devastated. Some reports said that Claire had only herself to blame by showing up at court each day in a different outfit, while the wife cleverly toned down her appearance to win the jury's sympathy. Fortunately, for Claire, the case was later settled for \$1200, leaving Mrs. Read and her lawyers a very small pie to carve up between them.

Claire Windsor's screen career faded. She made about six talkies from 1932 to 1938, and remained a staple of Hollywood society, with cameramen ever ready to snap the picture of this "photogenic delight," as one shutterbug said.

In 1942 many of the former big names of the screen did what was known as the "Subway Circuit" in New York, appearing in playlets, so that "yesterday's stars" could be seen by 1942's audiences. There were Gloria Swanson, Ramon Novarro, Esther Ralston, Nancy Carroll, etc. and, Claire Windsor. She chose the delightful farce *Getting Gertie's Garter*. Judith Arlen co-starred with her, and her leading man was John Baragray, one of New York's favorite sons. Dorothy Appleby was also in the cast. (Note: I had the pleasure of seeing this; and it was delightful. Claire beautifully played a young bride in her twenties. Pretty impressive for a woman of 45 years!)

More stage work was to follow. In 1945, opening on Broadway, New York, a play called *The Boy Who Lived Twice*. It played at the Biltmore Theater and got poor reviews and closed in a week. Her co-star was well-known stage actor Vaughn Glaser. It was a psychic/drama and too heavy handed, said the critics.

Back to the Coast for more time to socialize. She did a few more playlets in Hollywood in 1954, *A Later June* in which she was cast as a lovely woman,

whose daughter meets a boy she wants to marry, but when the boy meets the mother he has a "puppy love" crush on her. Short run, but Claire said it was fun for her. The following year she did *The Shining Hour*. (Joan Crawford did a screen version of this on a grander scale.)

Then a new turn for her. For about ten years Claire had been dabbling in art. In 1968 she reigned as President of "The American Institute of Fine Arts," a group founded by Mary Pickford (Claire's dear friend since the 1920s), Rufus Von Kleinsmid and Don Wells. The AIFA tried to bring back an appreciation of traditional art, and its fellows included former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dmitri Tiomkin, and Lauritz Melchior. Claire exhibited her work in local art shows, and gave away a lot of her work to fans. She said she "couldn't bear to sell them." (Note: I have three of them ... lovely indeed.)

In April of 1972 (Claire's 75th birthday, April 14), an honor was bestowed upon her. The Alexandria Hotel (famous at the turn of the century for all the celebrities who stayed there, and Claire herself once danced there with Rudolph Valentino) was refurbished, and the hotel named suites for many of the stars. The Claire Windsor suite (#1219) had in attendance over 200 people, including scores of classic screen personalities. It was a glorious time, and many of her contemporaries told her when leaving, "You're still as beautiful as ever."

In June of 1972 there was a reunion party held in the town of Pleasanton, California for a "command" performance of Mary Pickford's 1917 movie *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* made in the Pleasanton area. Mary herself was too ill to attend, but sent her dear, close friend, Claire Windsor, in her stead. It was a wonderful time. And, Claire's "Last Act." (The Last Act was a short TV movie (1954) in which Claire Windsor starred.) On October 24, 1972 a massive heart attack took her away from us. She was 75.

Her granddaughter Raquel told me, "Right to the end, she never lost the God-given beauty ... people would stare at her with admiration." Her beloved son,

Billy, sent me a telegram before the funeral. I was unable to attend, and felt heartsick about it.

Claire Windsor was beautiful, and glamorous, and yet she was never a snob. It is because of people like her that many of us still feel that the magic of Hollywood's Golden Age was and is a real and intimate part of our lives.

Claire Windsor Filmography

1. *To Please One Woman.* (1920) (Lois Weber-Paramount) Claire Windsor, Edith Kessler, George Hackathorne, Edward Burns, Mona Lisa, Howard Gay, L. C. Shumway, Gordon Griffith.
2. *What Do Men Want?* (1921) (Lois Weber-Paramount) Claire Windsor, Frank Glendenning, Hallam Cooley, George Hackathorne.
3. *What's Worth While?* (1921) (Lois Weber-Paramount) Claire Windsor, Louis Calhern, Mona Lisa.
4. *The Blot.* (1921) (Lois Weber/F. B. Warren Corp.) Philip Hubbard, Margaret McWade, Claire Windsor, Louis Calhern, Marie Walcamp.
5. *Too Wise Wives.* (Lois Weber-Paramount) Claire Windsor, Louis Calhern, Mona Lisa, Phillips Smalley. (1921)
6. *Dr. Jim.* (1921) (Universal) Frank Mayo, Claire Windsor, Oliver Cross, Stanhope Wheatcroft, Robert Anderson, Gordon Sackville.
7. *The Raiders.* (1921) (Canyon Pictures Corp.) Franklyn Farnum, Claire Windsor.

8. *Grand Larceny*. (1922) Claire Windsor, Elliott Dexter, Lowell Sherman, Richard Tucker, Tom Gallery, Roy Atwell, John Cosear.
9. *One Clear Call*. (1922) Milton Sills, Claire Windsor, Henry B. Walthall, Irene Rich, Stanley Goethals, William Marion, Joseph Dowling, Edith Yorke, Doris Pawn, Donald MacDonald, Shannon Day, Annette DeFoe, Fred Kelsey, Albert MacQuarrie, Nick Cogley.
10. *Fools First*. (1922) (First National) Richard Dix, Claire Windsor, Claude Gillingwater, Raymond Griffith, George Siegmann, Helen Lynch, George Dromgold.
11. *Rich Men's Wives*. (1922) (Gasnier Productions) House Peters, Claire Windsor, Rosemary Theby, Gaston Glass, Myrtle Stedman, Baby Richard Headrick, Mildred June, Charles Clary, Carol Holloway, Martha Mattox, William Austin.
12. *Brothers Under The Skin*. (MGM) (1922) Pat O'Malley, Helene Chadwick, Norman Kerry, Claire Windsor.
13. *The Strangers' Banquet*. (1922) (Goldwyn) Hobart Bosworth, Claire Windsor, Rockliffe Fellowes, Ford Sterling, Eleanor Boardman, Thomas Holding, Eugenia Besserer, Nigel Barrie, Stuart Holmes, Claude Gillingwater, Margaret Loomis, Tom Guise, Lillian Langdon.
14. *Broken Chains*. (1922) (Goldwyn) Malcolm McGregor, Colleen Moore, Ernest Torrence, Claire Windsor, James Marcus, Beryl Mercer, William Orlamond, Gerald Pring, Edward Pell, Lee Willis.
15. *The Eternal Three*. (1923) (Goldwyn) Hobart Bosworth, Claire Windsor, Raymond Griffith, Bessie Love, George Cooper, Tom Gallery, Helen Lynch, Alec B. Francis, William Orlamond, Charles H. West,

Maryon Aye, William Norris, James F. Fulton, Irene Hunt, Peaches Jackson, Victory Bateman, Billie Bennett.

16. *The Little Church Around The Corner*. (1923) (Warner Bros.) Claire Windsor, Kenneth Harlan, Hobart Bosworth, Walter Long, Pauline Starke, Alec B. Francis, Margaret Seddon, George Cooper, Winter Hall.

17. *Rupert of Hentzau*. (1923) (Selznick) Elaine Hammerstein, Bert Lytell, Lew Cody, Claire Windsor, Hobart Bosworth, Bryant Washburn, Marjorie Daw, Mitchell Lewis, Adolphe Menjou, Elmo Lincoln, Irving Cummings, Josephine Crowell, Nigel de Brullier, Gertrude Astor.

18. *The Acquittal*. (1923) (Universal) Claire Windsor, Norman Kerry, Richard Travers, Barbara Bedford, Emmett King.

19. *Nellie, The Beautiful Cloak Model*. (Goldwyn) (1924) Claire Windsor, Betsy Ann Hisle, Edmund Lowe, Mae Busch, Raymond Griffith, Lew Cody, Hobart Bosworth, Lilyan Tashman, Dorothy Cummings, Will Walling, Mayme Kelso, William Orlamond, Arthur Houseman, David Kirby.

20. *A Son of the Sahara*. (1924) (First National) Claire Windsor, Bert Lytell, Rosemary Theby, Montague Love.

21. *For Sale*. (1924) (First-National) Claire Windsor, Adolphe Menjou, Robert Ellis, Mary Carr, Tully Marshall, John Patrick, Finch Smiles, Marga LaRubia.

22. *Souls For Sale*. (1924) (MGM) (Claire Windsor & other stars in cameo roles).

23. *The Dixie Handicap*. (1924) (Metro-Goldwyn) Claire Windsor, Frank Keenan, Lloyd Hughes, John Sainpolis, Otis Harlan, Edward Martindel, Wm. Orlamond.

24. *Born Rich*. (1924) (First National) Claire Windsor, Bert Lytell, Doris Kenyon, Cullen Landis.

25. *The Denial*. (1925) (Metro-Goldwyn) Claire Windsor, William Haines, Bert Roach, Edward Connelly, Lucille Ricksen, Robert Agnew, Emily Fitzroy.

26. *Just A Woman*. (1925) (First-National) Claire Windsor, Conway Tearle, Dorothy Brock, Percy Marmont, Dorothy Revere, George Cooper.

27. *The White Desert*. (1925) (MGM) Claire Windsor, Pat O'Malley, Robert Frazer, Frank Currier, Sojin, Priscilla Bonner, Smitz Edwards, Trixie Friganza.

28. *Souls For Sables*. (1925) (Tiffany Productions) Claire Windsor, Eugene O'Brien, Claire Adams, Edith Yorke, George Fawcett, Eileen Percy.

29. *Dance Madness*. (MGM) (1926) Conrad Nagel, Claire Windsor, Douglas Gilmore, Hedda Hopper, Mario Carillo.

30. *Money Talks*. (1926) (MGM) Claire Windsor, Owen Moore, Bert Roach, Ned Sparks, Phillips Smalley, Dot Farley, Kathleen Key, George Kuwa.

31. *Tin Hats*. (1926) (MGM) Conrad Nagel, Claire Windsor, George Cooper, Bert Roach, Tom O'Brien.

32. *A Little Journey*. (MGM) (1927) Claire Windsor, William Haines, Harry Carey, Claire McDowell, Lawford Davidson.

33. *The Claw*. (1927) (Universal) Claire Windsor, Norman Kerry, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Tom Guuise, Helena Sullivan, Pauline Neff, Nelson MacDowell, Dick Sutherland.
34. *The Bugle Call*. (1927) (MGM) Jackie Coogan, Claire Windsor, Herbert Rawlinson, Tom OâBrien, Johnny Mack Brown, Harry Todd.
35. *Foreign Devils*. (1927) (MGM) Tim McCoy, Claire Windsor, Cyril Chadwick, Frank Currier, Sojin.
36. *The Frontiersman*. (1927) (MGM) Tim McCoy, Claire Windsor.
37. *Nameless Men*. (1928) (Tiffany-Stahl) Antonio Moreno, Claire Windsor, Eddie Gribbon.
38. *Fashion Madness*. (1928) (Columbia) Claire Windsor, Reed Howes, Laska Winters.
39. *Satan and The Woman*. (1928) (Excellent Productions) Claire Windsor, Cornelius Keefe, Tom Holding, Edith Yorke, Vera Lewis, Madge Johnston.
40. *Blondes By Choice* (1928) (Gotham Prod.) Claire Windsor, Allan Simpson, Walter Hiers, Bess Flowers, Louise Carver, Leigh Willard.
41. *Grain of Dust* (1928) (Tiffany-Stahl) Claire Windsor, Ricardo Cortez, Alma Bennett, Richard Tucker, John St. Poulis.
42. *Opening Night* (1928) (Columbia) Claire Windsor, John Bowers.
43. *Domestic Meddlers* (1928) (Tiffany-Stahl) Claire Windsor, Lawrence Gray, Roy DâArcy, Jed Prouty.

44. *Captain Lash* (1929) (Fox) Victor McLaglen, Claire Windsor, Arthur Stone, Clyde Cook, Albert Conti, Jean Laverty, Jane Winton.
45. *Midstream*. (1929) (Tiffany-Stahl) Ricardo Cortez, Claire Windsor, Montague Love, Helen Jerome Eddy, Larry Kent.
46. *Sister To Judas*. (1933) (Mayfair) Claire Windsor, John Harron, Holmes Herbert, Virginia True Boardman. (Also released as *Her Hour of Shame*)
47. *The Constant Woman*. (1933) (World Wide/Fox) Conrad Nagel, Leila Hyams, Claire Windsor, Tommy Conlon. Robert Ellis, Stanley Fields, Ruth Clifford. (Also released as *Auction in Souls*).
48. *Self Defense*. (1933) (Monogram) Pauline Frederick, Claire Windsor, Theodore Von Eltz, Barbara Kent, Robert Elliott, Henry B. Walthall, Jameson Thomas, George Hackathorne, Willie Fong, Lafe McKee, Si Jenks, George Hayes. (Also released as *My Mother*)
49. *Cross Streets*. (1934) (Invincible Productions) Claire Windsor, Johnny Mack Brown, Anita Louise, Kenneth Thomson, Matty Kemp, Josef Swickard, Niles Welch.
50. *Kiss of Araby*. (1938) (Burton King/Freulier Film Assoc.) Maria Alba, Walter Byron, Claire Windsor, Theodore Von Eltz, Claude King, Frank Leigh.
51. *Barefoot Boy*. (1938) (Monogram) (Youngsters: Jackie Morgan, Marcia Mae Jones, Bradley Metcalfe, Johnnie Morris, Marilyn Whittaker, Terry (the dog), (grown-ups) Ralph Morgan, Claire Windsor, Helen MacKellar, Matty Fain, Frank Puglia, J. Farrell MacDonald, Charles D. Brown, Roger Gray, Earl Hodgins, Henry Roquemore, Hal Cooke.

52. *How Doooo You Do?* (PRC, Producers Releasing Corp.) (1946) Bert
(The Mad Russian) Gordon, Harry Von Zell, Cheryl Walker, Frank
Albertson, Ella Mae Morse, Claire Windsor, Keye Luke, Charles
Middleton, Fred Kelsey.

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