

Today in Columbus History – Special Edition November 14, 2020

Happy 125th Birthday Louise Huff!

Many people don't realize that Columbus had a pair of silent film star sisters in the early days of motion pictures. Louise and Justina Huff graced the silver screen between 1913 and 1922. The younger sister Louise was born in Columbus on November 14, 1895. The girls were the children of Thomas Daniel (T.D.) Huff and Lucinda Salisbury. Lucinda was the daughter of Colonel William L. Salisbury, banker, alderman and owner of the *Columbus Enquirer*. Their father, T.D. Huff, was the city editor at the *Enquirer* who wrote the story that eventually led to Salisbury's murder in 1878.

Louise moved to New York with her family by 1908. After their father died in 1910, the girls had to find ways to make ends meet. Louise found employment in a touring theater company. One of their stops was in her hometown at the Springer Opera House in the play *Graustark: A Love Behind A Throne* on Christmas Day, 1911. Louise had two roles in the play – Theresa, maid to the princess and Countess Ysabel. She left the theater after touring the country in a production of *Ben Hur* in 1912. Louise made over 70 films between 1913 and 1922 and sister Justina made over 40 films between 1913 and 1916. In the latter half of her career, Louise was often paired with Jack Pickford, the brother of silent super star Mary Pickford. Most of Huff sisters' movies are "lost," but a handful of Louise's have survived. She ended her career on the Broadway stage in 1924.

In 1914, Louise married Edgar Jones, an actor and director at the Lubin Co. where Louise and Justina made many of their films. In the movie *The Vagaries of Fate*, Louise and Edgar play a couple of newlyweds in the lead roles of a kidnapping drama. The couple married on January 27, 1914 and the film was released on February 6, 1914. This short movie (about 14 minutes) is one of her few surviving films and can be watched online here: <https://mc3betzwood.wordpress.com/betzwood-films/the-vagaries-of-fate/>

The couple had one child, Mary Louise in 1915. They divorced and Louise married Edwin Stillman, president of the Watson-Stillman Hydraulic Co. in 1920. Mary Louise lived with them while this union added children William in 1920 and Nancy in 1922.

Louise gave up film in 1922 for the Broadway stage. She appeared in two shows *Mary the Third* in 1923 and *The New Englander* in 1924, retiring afterwards. The family lived in New York City at 155 East 72nd Street, on the Upper East Side for decades. In retirement, she was a director of the Friends of the Theater and Music Collection at the Museum of the City of New York.

Although she lived most of her life in New York City, Louise was not forgotten in Columbus. Her obituary appeared in both the Columbus Enquirer and Columbus Ledger in August 1973. For more on Louise and Justina, see [Those Huff Girls: Darlings of the Early Silver Screen](#) in the Fall 2016 issue of *Muscogiana* at: <https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=muscogiana>

Daniel A. Bellware



A “magic lantern” slide, used to project advertising on the screen between movies. The black & white slides were hand-colored for added impact. Courtesy of the Columbus Museum

<https://columbusmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/DBBA7A46-D410-43AA-9C32-356965934910>



Screen grab from *The Vagaries of Fate* (1914) showing Louise with her real-life newlywed husband Edgar Jones. <https://mc3betzwood.wordpress.com/betzwood-films/the-vagaries-of-fate/>



EDWARD THAYER HUNTER.

ONE would like to write a sentimental poem to Louise Huff. She is so fragile, so flower-like—but then whenever we get to the second stanza we are certain to remember that she is happily married and the mother of Mary Louise.

From 100 years ago - November 1920 Photoplay magazine from <https://archive.org/details/photoplay1819chic/page/n555/mode/2up>

Columbus Movie Star Coming Here For Short Visit

Miss Louise Huff, leading lady for the Metro Moving Picture Company and a Columbus girl, arrives in Columbus tomorrow morning to spend

Columbus Enquirer January 3, 1916, Courtesy of the Columbus Public Library Microfilm Collection



Miss Louise Huff, a Former Beautiful Columbus Girl, Who Will Be Seen Here Tomorrow As Lady Yaabel in Graustark.

THEATRICAL

"GRAUSTARK TWICE XMAS

Columbus theater-goers are much interested in the appearance, here tomorrow of Miss Louise Huff, a beautiful former Columbus girl with Graustark.

When "Graustark", George Barr McCutcheon's book play, which has been dramatized for stage purposes by George D. Baker, comes to the Springer Opera House tomorrow matinee and night, the theater-goers of Columbus will have the opportunity of witnessing the most talked-of and successful romantic drama before the public in recent years.

This play has been dramatized with Mr. McCutcheon's novel as a basis, and those readers of fiction who have passed a few hours pleasantly pursuing same, will be more than satisfied with its appearance in play form.

Mr. Baker, who made the dramatization, has closely followed the book. From the time of the meeting of the young couple in Denver, through the strenuous and trying ordeals of court life and intrigues, to the final culmination of the story, he has been most faithful in his portrayal.

The play comes to Columbus with the assurance of all concerned in its presentation, of a most excellent cast of players, especially fitted for their parts and a magnificent scenic production of old world scenes, with continuing to match.

It is seldom a mythical principally such as Graustark is used as a background for a play, hence the tremendous success of this offering. Not since the "Prisoner of Zenda" was given for the delectation of theater-goers, has there been a dramatic play of this caliber. There seems to be a penchant for romantic drama, when it is as clean and wholesome as "Graustark."

small bridge party in honor of Miss Ruth Hall of Mexico, who is the guest of Miss Isabel Garrard.

On Thursday evening Miss Susette Joerg will entertain at an informal dance at the Country club, in honor of her guest, Miss Mac Intyre of Atlanta.

Miss Susie Blackmar will also entertain next week for her guest, Miss Louise Broyles of Atlanta.

Many other affairs have been planned, the dates to be announced later.

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BASKET-BALL GAME.

A large and enthusiastic crowd witnessed the basket-ball game on Friday evening between the team from the Central college of Missouri and the Y. M. C. A. team of this city. The game was played on the Y. M. C. A. court and resulted in an overwhelming victory for the local team.

(Continued on page six.)

SPRINGER OPERA HOUSE
 XMAS MATINEE, NIGHT, MONDAY,
 DECEMBER 25TH.
 Messrs. Baker and Castle Announce

Graustark

(A Love Behind a Throne)

Presented with a cast of New York
 Players.

Miss Louise Huff
 (A former Columbus girl) as Yaabel.
 Seats on Sale Friday, Dec. 22.

PRICES—Matinee: \$1.00, 75c, 50c,
 35c, 25c.
 Night: \$1.50, \$1.00, 75c, 50c,
 25c.

Columbus Ledger December 22, 1911, Courtesy of the Columbus Public Library Microfilm Collection

Columbus Ledger December 24, 1911, Courtesy of the Columbus Public Library Microfilm Collection