

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 12, 2016

Actors and Actresses Depicting Famous People: The Weekly News of December 11, 2006, was entitled "Let's Go to the Movies." When I was young during the Golden Age of Hollywood, I loved the movies, culminating in the Club House Theater in Yorklyn, which I operated for two seasons in 1947 and 1948.

From the 1930s through the '50s, leading stars of the screen were under contract with the big studios and often took roles not to their liking. Among the features during this period was the portrayal of American heroes in full-length films, which carried over to historical documentaries on TV. The earlier movies took liberties with actual facts, but they were popular. Big name stars were often asked to portray historical figures. Sometimes they were honored to do it; often they "had to." Following is the list of those I can recall.

Spencer Tracy: Clarence Darrow, Father Flanagan, Christopher Jones, Jimmy Doolittle, Thomas Edison, Robert Rogers.

Edward Arnold: Pawnee Bill, Daniel Webster

Walter Hampden: Thomas Jefferson

Hal Holbrook: John Adams, Mark Twain, Abraham Lincoln

Henry Fonda: Abraham Lincoln

James Stewart: Glenn Miller, Charles A. Lindbergh

Cary Grant: Cole Porter

Don Ameche: Alexander Graham Bell, Stephen Foster

James Cagney: George M. Cohan

Gary Cooper: Lou Gehrig, Sergeant York

Joel McCrea: Buffalo Bill Cody

Louis Calhern: Buffalo Bill Cody

Raymond Massey: Abraham Lincoln, John Brown

Robert Walker: Jerome Kern

Jose Ferrer: Sigmund Romberg

Tony Curtis: Harry Houdini

Charlton Heston: Andrew Jackson (twice)

Van Heflin: Andrew Johnson

Ronald Reagan: George Custer, George Gipp

Errol Flynn: Earl of Essex, Gentleman Jim Corbett, Jeb Stuart, George Custer

Howard Keel: Frank Butler

Fess Parker: Swamp Fox Marion, Davy Crockett, James J. Andrews

Ralph Bellamy: Franklin D. Roosevelt

Charles Boyer: Napoleon

Charles Laughton: Captain Bligh

Gene Lockhart: Stephen A. Douglas

James Mason: General Edward Braddock

Victor Mature: Samson

Walter Huston: Abraham Lincoln, Jerry Cohan

John Wayne: Davy Crockett

Richard Widmark: Jim Bowie

Mickey Rooney: Young Tom Edison

Ray Middleton: Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Frank Butler

Clark Gable: Fletcher Christian

Howard Da Silva: Benjamin Franklin, Jack Armstrong

Fredric March: William Jennings Bryan

Yul Brynner: King Solomon

Pat O'Brien: Knute Rockne

Fred Astaire: Vernon Castle
Mario Lanza: Enrico Caruso
Ethel Merman: Annie Oakley, Perle Mesta
Helen Hayes: Queen Victoria, Empress Maria of Russia
Bette Davis: Queen Elizabeth I
Hedy Lamarr: Delilah
Elizabeth Taylor: Cleopatra
Gina Lollobrigida: The Queen of Sheba
Mary Tyler Moore: Mary Todd Lincoln
Ruth Gordon: Mary Lincoln
Patty Duke: Martha Washington
Jaclyn Smith: Sally Fairfax
Ingrid Bergman: Princess Anastasia
Betty Hutton: Annie Oakley

If you need to know who some of these historical people were, or what film they were in, drop me an E-mail.