



Florence La Badie

April 27, 1888 - October 13, 1917

Ossining, New York

Florence La Badie, one of the brightest stars of the silent-film era, died in Ossining, New York, on October 13, 1917, six weeks after an automobile accident. She was twenty-nine.

She was born Florence Russ in New York City on April 27, 1888. After her father died in 1890, she was adopted at the age of three by Joseph E. La Badie, a prominent Montreal attorney, and his wife, Amanda, and she took their surname. She went to school in New York City and at the Convent of Notre Dame in Montreal.

She worked as a fashion model, took a small stage part in 1908 and toured with a road company. Along the way she met a fellow Canadian, the young actress Mary Pickford, who urged her to try pictures and in 1909 brought her to the Biograph studio in Manhattan. After several films under D. W. Griffith, she joined the Thanhouser Film Corporation in New Rochelle, New York, in 1911 and soon became its leading lady. She starred in *The Tempest* (1911), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1912), the first film version of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1914) and, most famously, the 1914-1915 serial *The Million Dollar Mystery*. Fan magazines called her "Fearless Flo" because she did many of her own stunts. By the summer of 1917 she had appeared in about 185 films.

When war came to Europe, friends and relatives from Montreal shipped overseas. A young soldier at the front in northern France mailed her dozens of photographs of the fighting, and she traveled the United States with a stereopticon slide show of those images, speaking out for peace.

On August 28, 1917, she was driving near Ossining with her fiancé, the writer Daniel Carson Goodman, when the brakes failed and the car plunged down a hill and overturned. She was thrown from the car and suffered a

compound fracture of the pelvis. She spent more than six weeks in the hospital and seemed to be recovering when she died of sepsis. Her final two films, *The Man Without a Country* and *War and the Woman*, had been scheduled for release only weeks earlier.

She was the first major female film star to die at the height of her career. After a large funeral she was buried in an unmarked grave at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. In 2014 Ned Thanhouser, grandson of the studio's founder, raised money for a headstone, which was set on April 27, what would have been her 126th birthday.

Services

Died in Ossining, NY, October 13, 1917, aged 29. Portrait: Portrait from *The Motion Picture Story Magazine*, December 1912 (public domain), hosted by Notice Nearby.

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