



Olive Thomas

October 20, 1894 - September 10, 1920

Charleroi, Pennsylvania

Olive Thomas, the Charleroi, Pennsylvania, beauty who became a Ziegfeld girl and a silent-film star for Triangle and Selznick, died in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, on September 10, 1920. She was twenty-five. A night of confusion with her husband Jack Pickford's mercury bichloride medication - prescribed for his syphilis - ended in poisoning; she lingered long enough for the story to become one of Hollywood's first international scandals.

Born Olive Elaine Duffy on October 20, 1894, in the coal-and-steel town of Charleroi, she won a magazine contest, modeled in New York, and stepped into the Follies with a face the camera loved before most actresses understood what a camera wanted. Films such as *The Flapper* helped define a new, restless young woman on screen. She married Pickford, Mary Pickford's brother, and lived at the bright center of a young industry that had not yet learned how to bury its disasters.

Her body was brought back to New York and buried in Woodside, Queens. The gossip outran the facts for a century; what remains clear is a short American career that helped invent the flapper before the word was worn out, cut down on a Paris honeymoon that was never only a honeymoon.

Services

Died in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, on September 10, 1920. Buried at Woodside Cemetery, Queens, New York. Silent film actress and Ziegfeld performer; hometown Charleroi, Pennsylvania.

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