



SILVERSCREEN  
PRIMARY  
EDUCATION

## *Laurel & Hardy: A Celebration*

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Session 2*



Welcome to Session 2 of this celebration of the life, times and laughs of Laurel & Hardy! This year marks 60 years since the death of Stan Laurel, and English Vaudeville comedian who became part of the world's most famous on-screen double act.

Over the next ten weeks, we will journey through their lives, their movies, their highs and lows, and immerse ourselves in the history of their time in Hollywood; a time when movies were only just beginning!

So, adjust your hat, avoid the banana skin and let's follow 'the boys' on an adventure...

### **Session 2:**

As we hit Session 2 of our journey, the world of cinema is beginning to emerge. No longer is it a sideshow in the theatre; a part of the evening's entertainment. Now it is a standalone piece of entertainment; a night out! And we need movie theatres to watch them in.

But how do we use this new-found film invention to tell stories? Are we to just film stage shows? Or can we think bigger?

Tonight, as the movie theatre takes hold across the world, we learn about the sheer quantity of films which begin to be made to encourage the city punters to shell out their wages on!

Chaplin is up and running, and one of his characters is about to prove a HUGE hit, but our boys are finding progress a little slower; making a living as a variety of parts in a variety of films.

What we need is for somebody in the business to see their potential as a pair and put them together.

Enter Mr. Hal Roach...

Our journey is beginning to gather pace as our lovable clowns look for work...

### **Useful information for Session 2:**

#### **Mack Sennett**

Mack Sennett (born Michael Sinnott; January 17, 1880 – November 5, 1960) was a Canadian-American producer, director, actor, and studio head who was known as the "King of Comedy" during his career.

Born in Danville, Quebec, he started acting in films in the Biograph Company of New York City in 1908, and later opened Keystone Studios in Edendale, California in 1912. Keystone possessed the first fully enclosed film stage, and Sennett became famous as the originator of slapstick routines such as pie-throwing and car-chases, as seen in the Keystone Cops films. He also produced short features that displayed his Bathing Beauties, many of whom went on to develop successful acting careers.

After struggling with bankruptcy and the dominance of sound films in the early 1930s, Sennett was presented with an honorary Academy Award in 1938 for his contributions to the film industry, with the academy describing him as a "master of fun, discoverer of stars, sympathetic, kindly, understanding comedy genius".

Many successful actors began their film careers with Sennett, including Marie Dressler, Mabel Normand, Charlie Chaplin, Harry Langdon, Roscoe Arbuckle, Harold Lloyd, Raymond Griffith, Gloria Swanson, Charley Chase, Ford

Sterling, Andy Clyde, Chester Conklin, Polly Moran, Slim Summerville, Louise Fazenda, The Keystone Cops, Carole Lombard, Bing Crosby, and W. C. Fields.

### **Lubin Manufacturing Company**

The Lubin Manufacturing Company was formed in 1902 and incorporated in 1909 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by Siegmund Lubin. The company was the offspring of Lubin's film equipment and film distribution and production business, which began in 1896.

Siegmund Lubin, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, was originally an optical and photography expert in Philadelphia but became intrigued with Thomas Edison's motion picture camera and saw the potential in selling similar equipment as well as in making films. Known as "Pop" Lubin, he constructed his own combined camera/projector he called a "Cineograph" and his lower price and marketing know-how brought reasonable success. In 1897 Lubin began making films for commercial release including *Meet Me at the Fountain* in 1904. Certain his business could prosper, the following year he rented low-cost space on the roof of a building in Philadelphia's business district. He exhibited his new equipment at the 1899 National Export Exposition in Philadelphia and the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

In 1912, Lubin purchased a 350-acre (1.4 km<sup>2</sup>) estate in Betzwood, in what was then rural countryside in the northwest outskirts of Philadelphia and converted the property into a studio and film lot. That November Lubin Company field representative T. D. Cochrane visited Birmingham, Alabama as the guest of a local real estate executive and film exhibitor. After two days visiting sites he wired approval for a production team to immediately depart for Alabama to film cowboy movies at a rate of about six per month. The company set up at the Bluff Park Hotel on the ridge of Shades Mountain south of the city, and constructed a stage. By the end of December, however, they had abandoned the project and the premises and stage were taken over by a troupe from the Kalem Company of New York led by director J. P. McGowan.

Some of the pioneer actors who worked for Lubin included Romaine Fielding, Ed Genung, Harry Myers, Florence Hackett, Alan Hale, Arthur V. Johnson, Lottie Briscoe, Florence Lawrence, Ethel Clayton, Gladys Brockwell, Edwin Carewe, Ormi Hawley, Rosemary Theby, Betty Brice, Alice Mann and Pearl White. Lubin films also marked the first film appearance of Oliver Hardy, who started working at Lubin's Jacksonville, Florida studio in 1913. Hardy's first onscreen appearance was in the 1914 movie, *Outwitting Dad* where he was billed as O. N. Hardy. In many of his later films at Lubin, he was billed as "Babe Hardy." He was most often cast as "the heavy" or the villain and had roles in comedy shorts, appearing in some 50 short one-reeler films at Lubin by 1915.

### **Films to look out for:**

*Julius Caesar (1908)*

*Julius Caesar (1914)*

*Making A Living (1914)*

*The Kid Auto Race In Venice (1914)*

*Love & Duty (1916)*

*Nuts In May (1917)*

*Busy Bodies (1933)*

