

## Robert Shields

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**From:** Jeff Rapsis <silentfilmmusic@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 10, 2021 5:38 AM  
**To:** silentfilmmusic  
**Subject:** Saddle up and rediscover the Western with Town Hall Theatre summer silent film series  
**Attachments:** hells\_hinges.jpg; salomy\_jane.jpg; covered\_wagon.jpg; go\_west.jpg

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021 / FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Saddle up and rediscover the old West with Town Hall Theatre summer silent film series

Roots of the Western revealed in a dozen rip-roaring and rarely screened silent features, all shown with live music

WILTON, N.H.—It's a genre as old as the movies.

It's the Western, and its origins will be explored in a summer-long series of rarely screened silent films at the Town Hall Theatre in Wilton, N.H.

The series, which includes seven programs and a dozen movies, runs from early June through late August.

The screenings are free to the public; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

All programs will feature live music by silent film accompanist Jeff Rapsis.

"Many of these films are over 100 years old, and so they're not far removed from the 'Old West' depicted in them," Rapsis said.

The series ranges from big budget Hollywood epics such as 'The Covered Wagon'—the top grossing film of 1923—to obscure fare such as 'Salomy Jane' (1914), an early feature and the sole surviving film of the California Motion Picture Corp.

Along the way, audiences will sample the stern morality of William S. Hart, the exciting horsemanship of Yakima Canutt, and the deadpan comedy of Buster Keaton.

A highlight will be the first two westerns directed by a young John Ford, who would later go on to win four Academy Awards.

Here's a detailed line-up of titles included in the series:

- Sunday, June 6 at 2 p.m.: In '**The Lady of the Dugout**' (1918), legendary reformed outlaw Al Jennings (of the real-life "Jennings Gang") spins a tale of a woman living underground in a "dugout," or sod home; in '**Hell's Hinges**' (1918), William S. Hart stars in a raw and intense tale of a newly arrived minister and his sister in one of the roughest towns on the frontier.
- Sunday, June 20 at 2 p.m.: '**Salomy Jane**' (1914), the sole surviving film from the California Motion Picture Corp., tells the story of a gold-mining town in 1852. In '**The Old Oregon Trail**' (1928), a farm labor dispute

turns on an event that happened many years ago on the Oregon trail. A rare chance to see these two films on the big screen.

- Sunday, July 11 at 2 p.m.: **'The Covered Wagon'** (1923), the first big budget Western epic! Two wagon caravans converge at what is now Kansas City, and combine for the westward push to Oregon. On their quest the pilgrims will experience desert heat, mountain snow, hunger, and attack. To complicate matters further, a love triangle develops, as pretty Molly must choose between Sam, a brute, and Will, the dashing captain of the other caravan. Can Will overcome the skeleton in his closet and win Molly's heart? The highest-grossing box office hit of 1923!
- Sunday, July 25 at 2 p.m.: Popular cowboy star Yakima Canutt in two of his best silent-era features: in **'Branded a Bandit'** (1924), Yak is accused of murdering a miner whose family he was trying to aid; in **'The Iron Rider'** (1926), Yak is cheated in a poker game, and later learns the card sharks are wanted men, prompting a pursuit for justice!
- Sunday, Aug. 8 at 2 p.m.: The first Westerns directed by a young John Ford, these two films feature popular cowboy star Harry Carey as 'Cheyenne Harry,' the outlaw with a heart of gold. In **'Straight Shooting'** (1917), Carey plays a hired gun of cattle rustlers; in **'Hell Bent'** (1918), Carey rescues a virtuous woman from banditos. A rare chance to see early Ford learning his craft.
- Sunday, Aug. 22 at 2 p.m.: Set in western Canada, **'Mantrap'** (1926) tells the story of a New York divorce lawyer on a camping vacation to get away from it all, but gets more than he bargained for with Clara Bow, then fast on her way to becoming Hollywood's 'It' girl. Directed by Victor Fleming, who would go on to helm 'Gone With the Wind' (1939) and 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939).
- Sunday, Aug. 29 at 2 p.m.: Our look at silent-era Westerns concludes with the genre's lighter side. In **'Womanhandled'** (1925), Richard Dix tries to win his girlfriend by taking up the rugged cowboy life, only to find it not so rugged. In **'Go West'** (1925), Buster Keaton sends up the legends of the West with his timeless brand of visual comedy; includes perhaps the most unlikely love story in a mainstream 1920s Hollywood film.

Accompanist Jeff Rapsis will create musical scores for each film live during its screening, in the manner of theater organists during the height of silent cinema.

"For most silent films, there was never any sheet music and no official score," Rapsis said. "So creating original music on the spot to help the film's impact is all part of the experience."

"That's one of the special qualities of silent cinema," Rapsis said. "Although the films themselves are often over a century old, each screening is a unique experience — a combination of the movie, the music, and the audience reaction."

The Town Hall Theatre continues to observe procedures to comply with all state and CDC public health guidelines. Capacity is limited to 50 percent; patrons are required to maintain social distance and wear masks until seated.

The series of silent Westerns will kick off with a double bill of 'The Lady of the Dugout' (1918) and 'Hell's Hinges' (1918) on Sunday, June 6 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St., Wilton, N.H. Free admission; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

For more information, visit [www.wiltontownhalltheatre.com](http://www.wiltontownhalltheatre.com) or call (603) 654-3456. For more about the music, visit [www.jeffrapsis.com](http://www.jeffrapsis.com).

## IMAGE CAPTIONS

CAPTION HELLS HINGES: William S. Hart stars in 'Hell's Hinges' (1918), to be screened with live music as part of a summer series of silent Westerns on Sunday, June 6 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St., Wilton, N.H. Free admission; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

CAPTION SALMONY JANE: A promotional ad for 'Salomy Jane' (1914), to be screened with live music as part of a summer series of silent Westerns on Sunday, June 20 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St., Wilton, N.H. Free admission; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

CAPTION COVERED WAGON: A promotional poster for 'The Covered Wagon' (1923), to be screened with live music as part of a summer series of silent Westerns on Sunday, July 11 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St., Wilton, N.H. Free admission; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

CAPTION GO WEST: A promotional poster for Buster Keaton's comedy 'Go West' (1925), to be screened with live music as part of a summer series of silent Westerns on Sunday, Aug. 29 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St., Wilton, N.H. Free admission; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested to support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film series.

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Images attached.

More high-resolution digital images available upon request.