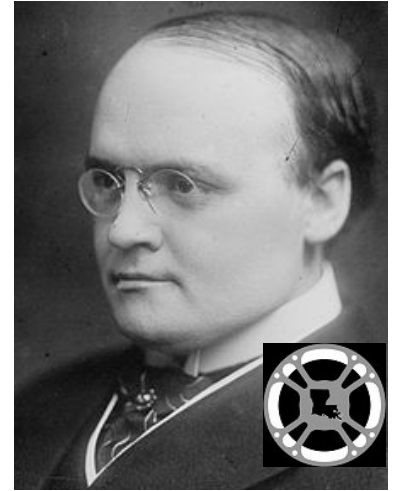


THE MAKING OF *THE LONE WOLF* - 1917

Louis Joseph Vance (right) was a prolific author who wrote more than forty novels. But his most successful literary character was *The Lone Wolf*, whose exploits were chronicled in a series written between 1914 and 1934. Part James Bond and part Simon Templar, the Lone Wolf was the nickname given to Michael Lanyard, a cultivated jewel thief who later turned his attention to solving crimes rather than committing them. Lanyard was a charming sort of rogue with a soft spot for damsels in distress and trained in the criminal arts by the mysterious Irishman Bourke. The nine books featuring *The Lone Wolf* formed the basis for over two dozen films, the first of which was the 1917 photoplay *The Lone Wolf*.



The Lone Wolf Makes His Screen Debut



Just three years after his introduction, the popularity of the Lone Wolf caught the attention of famed film producer and director Herbert Brenon (left). An Irish immigrant, Brenon began his film career in 1910 at the IMP Company as a scenario writer and ultimately director. During his five years with IMP, Brenon had directed more than forty films.

In 1915, Brenon moved to Fox where he directed a number of famous stars. He left Fox over a dispute over credit for the film *A Daughter of the Gods*. In 1916, Brenon left Fox and entered into an agreement with Lewis J. Selznick to partner in a production company known as Herbert Brenon Film Corp. The next year, Brenon approached author Vance about rights to his famous novel. Mr. Vance received somewhere between \$6,000 and \$7,000 for producing rights.

The book *The Lone Wolf* had run through several editions but when it was announced that the book was to be turned into a photoplay, it was discovered that not a single bookstore in New York had a copy remaining on its shelves. A new edition was rushed through the press to supply the demand.

The plot of the film follows the life of a Parisian street thief named Marcel. When Marcel saves master crook Burke from the police, Burke adopts the youngster and teaches him his profession. Years later, Marcel has become a master crook himself, working under the name of Michael Lanyard.

His clever work baffles the Paris police, who dub him "The Lone Wolf." The Pack, a gang of criminals, notifies The Wolf that unless he joins them, he is marked for destruction. Lucy, an undercover agent masquerading as a crook to expose the gang, helps The Wolf escape.



This inaugurates a series of adventures in which Lucy and The Wolf are pursued by the gang, finally making their escape to England by plane. The Pack follows, only to meet their death in a plane crash. Liberated from his tormentors, The Wolf vows to go straight and marries Lucy.

The film showcased a top-notch silent-era cast. The role of Lanyard was played by Bert Lytell, a popular screen star of the silent film era who starred in romantic, melodrama and adventure films. Broadway star Hazel Dawn starred as Lucy. According to several news articles of the day, in order to appear in the film, Dawn "played hooky" from her appearance in the stage production of *The Century Girl*, telling her producers that she was "sojourning in Florida." It was her first film appearance in over a year.

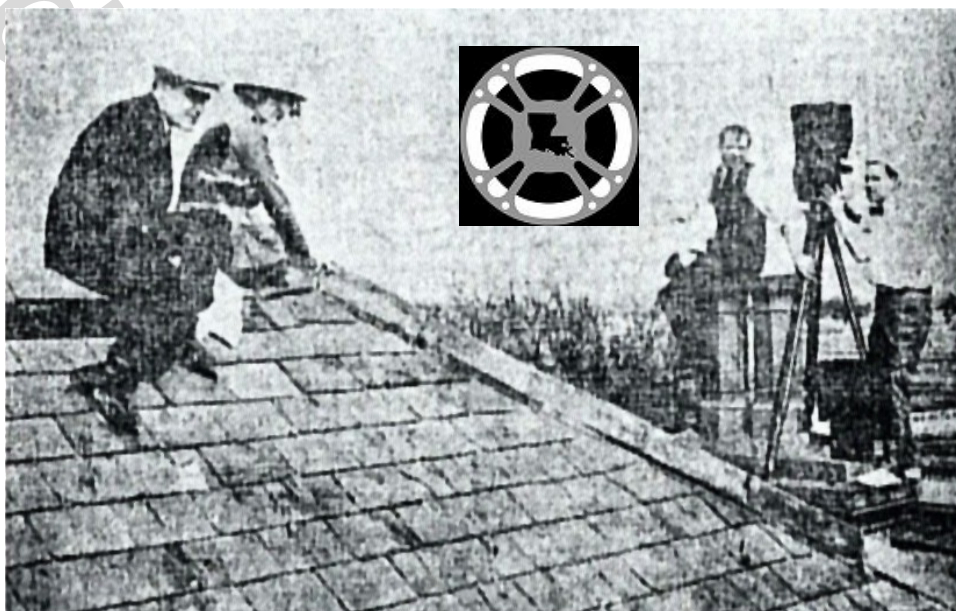
The remainder of the cast included Cornish Beck as the young Marcel, Alfred Hickman as Eckstrom, and Robert Fisher as Bannon.

The Lone Wolf was Brenon's first melodrama, and authenticity was key in his film's development. Although the film takes place in Paris, Brenon chose to film the exterior shots in New Orleans, America's "Paris." Brenon and his cast and crew arrived in the city on March 10, 1917, and filmed through April 8th. Brenon then returned to his studios in New Jersey to complete interior scenes and some additional exterior footage.

Brenon was very familiar with the city of New Orleans. Before working for IMP, Brenon was a stock actor, working his way up through the ranks to play leading roles in various companies, including Elysium Stock Corporation and Baldwin-Mellville Stock Company in New Orleans. His aggressive on-stage personality earned him the nickname of "Peek's Bad Boy." Eventually, he would direct his own stock company.

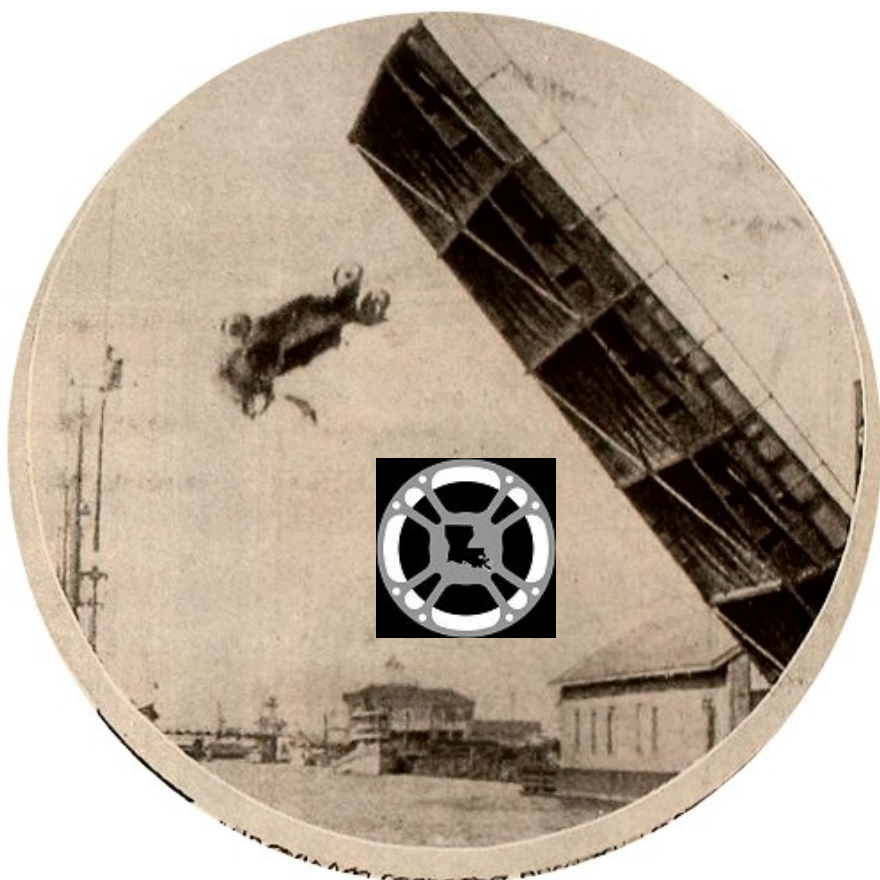
Brenon wanted his first foray into an action film to look and feel real, thus placing his actors in some precarious situations. One of the scenes involved Lytell and Dawn jumping from the roof of a building (right).

In addition to roof jumping, the actors were involved in three harrowing action scenes, all done without stunt doubles. One of these "thrilling" shots was filmed in New Orleans.



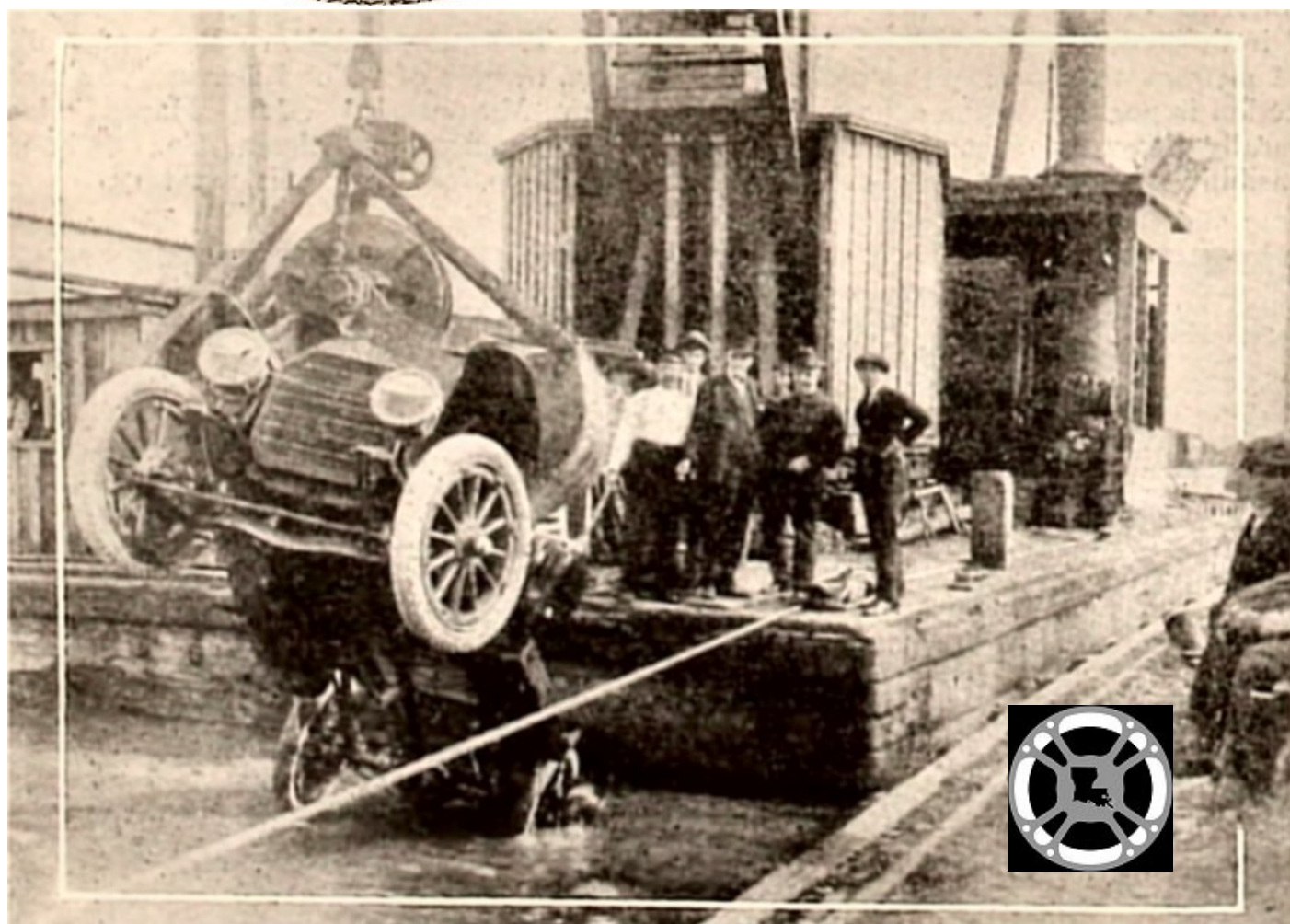
In this particular scene, three members of the "pack" pursue the hero and heroine by car. Lytell and Dawn barely escape over a rising "jack-knife" drawbridge, but their pursuers drive headlong into the open draw and into the canal below. Three actors who took this plunge escaped with minor injuries, although one was caught beneath the car and had to be rescued. During the taking of the scene, actor Otis Skinner is seen as an interested bystander.

This scene was filmed on the bridge over the New Basin Canal in West End. An article appearing in *Variety* Magazine reported that "while making the scene on the bridge near the Southern Yacht Club, an automobile used in the picture slid back and slightly injured a local citizen. The camera man kept working, and the scene of the accident will be used in the picture." (See photos next page)



The Lone Wolf features three action-packed scenes, one of which was filmed at the New Basin Canal at West End in New Orleans. In the scene on the left, a car is seen falling from the open drawbridge. Below, the car is being removed from the canal.

The New Basin Canal no longer exists. It was filled in during the 1950's to create the Pontchartrain Expressway & West End Boulevard.



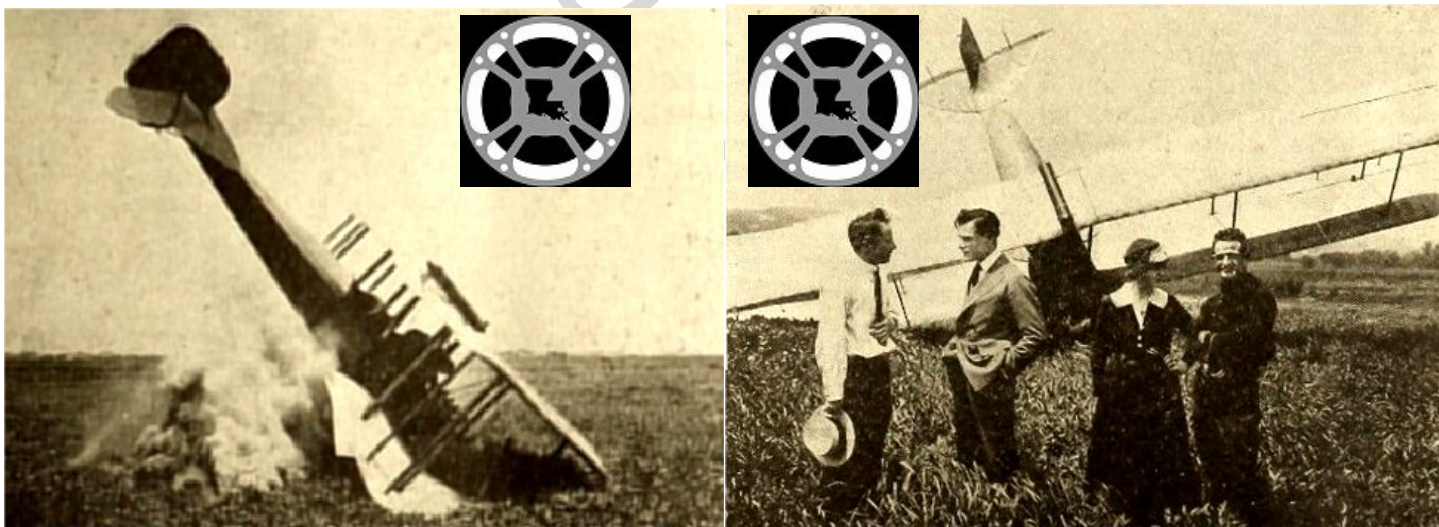
Other New Orleans scenes were shot in the "Latin Quarter" and the Jockey Club.



While most melodramas of the time depended on one big "punch" scene for their success, ***The Lone Wolf*** had three. In addition to the drawbridge sequence, another scene involved the burning of Troyon's, a Paris hotel, which was filmed at Brenon's New Jersey studio.

The biggest punch came at the end of the film. The scene involved the Lone Wolf and Lucy escaping from France to England in an airplane while being pursued by the "Pack." Aviation instructor Tex LeGrane was brought in to handle the stunt. As he started up he accidentally deflected one of the rising rudders while about 25 feet off the ground. The airplane at once dove to the ground and was completely wrecked (below left).

While LeGrane was fortunate to escape with a few bruises, the film's cameraman was able to secure a splendid piece of action film. Brenon did not intend to smash an \$8,000-\$10,000 dollar airplane. The plan was to shoot an airplane in air and then build a prop wreckage. Instead, the accident furnished both the fall and the wrecked vehicle without additional cost. Hazel Dawn and Bert Lytell, who were scheduled to go up in the next flight, were standing by on the location and were grateful that the fall did not occur during their own flight (below right).



The Lone Wolf opened in New Orleans theaters on January 6, 1918, when it was premiered at Loew's Crescent Theatre and reviewed in New Orleans papers as "one of the most entertaining pictures Mr. Loew has yet staged."

Numerous articles raved, in the wake of "Wolf," New Orleans has been brought to national attention as a filming site, thanks to its lighting, setting, atmosphere, architectural charm, climate, and abundance of cheap labor. "The Lone Wolf" is also an example of the precise type of film to which New Orleans so clearly lends itself, being set in Paris, and thus able to use the "French atmosphere" of neighborhoods such as the Latin Quarter.

Unfortunately, it is believed that this film is lost and all that remains are some trade ads and newspaper articles.