



## **Finding One American Beauty: Deyo and *Deyo* (1897)**

**Dan Streible**

**New York University**

### **Abstract**

This analysis of two idiosyncratic works of early cinema considers the materiality of the forms each took, from creation through their restorations in the twenty-first century. Researching the well-known *Three American Beauties* (Edison, 1906) and the seldom-seen dance film *Deyo* (American Mutoscope Co., 1897) requires archival investigation and an understanding that the primary, secondary, and reference sources film historians rely upon sometimes contain erroneous reports, contradictory evidence, and misleading metadata. *Deyo* was shot on high-resolution film, but seen only on Mutoscope machines by a few people. It survives as fragments of 68mm paper rolls, which American Mutoscope and Biograph deposited for copyright ten years later. *Three American Beauties* survives as unique hand-colored 35mm prints, one of which I found to be a 1907 edition released as *Three American Beauties, No. 2*. However, a question conjoins these films: is Blanche Deyo, the dancer of 1897, also the “American beauty” of 1906?

### **The Media Ecology Project and Metadata**

What began as a quest to identify a performer in a well-known work of early cinema led to the restoration of an obscure motion picture made nine years earlier. What follows is a narrative of the research involved in the conjoined projects: a close historical analysis of *Three American Beauties*, made at the Edison rooftop studio in New York in 1906, and the reconstruction of a largely forgotten dance film called simply *Deyo*, made at the American Mutoscope Company rooftop studio in New York in 1897. Both works beg questions. Who is the lone beauty in the Edison production? Why did American Mutoscope and Biograph (AMB) wait ten years to deposit its *Deyo* pictures for copyright, and why as battered paper rolls from its obsolete 68mm format? The ultimate question, however, is are these two films related? Is the dancer of 1897 also the “American beauty” of 1906?

First, view these silent movies, each running less than a minute.

In the surviving fragments of *Deyo*, amid constant jump cuts, we see a smiling young woman dancing playfully in ruffled skirts and ballet shoes. She mixes acrobatics, French cancan, Italian fouettés, balletic turns en pointe, and an ebullient cartwheel finale. “Beautiful Deyo,” as she was then known, was Blanche Deyo, or Blanche Lillian Pixley Scott Deyo Jones, if we add up her given, maiden, married, and stage names. She was a well-traveled American stage performer whose career coincided with cinema’s first two decades. Best known as a solo dancer, she also sang and acted in musical theater, vaudeville, and variety shows. *Deyo* was eighteen when filmed in the studio on Broadway.<sup>1</sup>

**"Although distribution abroad of such a boastful presentation of American glory might have been rare, more first-generation prints survive in archives abroad—in Norway, England, and Canada—than in the United States."**

*Three American Beauties*, created by Edwin S. Porter and Wallace McCutcheon, conceptually links three shots in long dissolves, then adds a surprise ending that signals a second purpose. After the opening title card, we see a close-up of a rose in full blossom (presumably the American Beauty variety), its vivid red petals moving slightly, as if in the wind. A dissolve leads

to a medium shot of a woman in a yellow dress pensively admiring a long-stemmed rose. After twice smelling the flower, she demurely mouths a word: "Perfect."<sup>2</sup> We next see a shot of the American Stars and Stripes fluttering in a stiff breeze. Another dissolve transitions to a still image of some one hundred white stars (five-pointed, like the forty-five on the flag), on a black background. Via stop-motion animation, they spell out "Good Night," revealing their function as a show's endpiece.

Thus the film combines two established genres of early cinema: the good-night picture and the patriotic flag finale. Both derived from earlier magic lantern practices and were not unique to America. As early as 1898, British lanternist Charles Goodwin Norton produced *Good Night*, a comic film in which a shopkeeper closes his shutters, upon which the two words are written. As late as 1909, the Italian studio Ambrosio produced at least two editions of *Buona Sera, Fiori*, a.k.a. *Gute Nacht*. Emergent screen star Mary Cleo Tarlarini tosses a basket of flowers in the air. The animated petals spell out an Italian good night, and a German one in the alternative version.<sup>3</sup> The genre was well established, but this film, combining a woman bearing flowers with an animated farewell, might have been inspired by *Three American Beauties*. Although distribution abroad of such a boastful presentation of American glory might have been rare, more first-generation prints survive in archives abroad—in Norway, England, and Canada—than in the United States.

Within the US, the Lubin studio issued a unique variation five months after Edison. *Good Night* (1906) "opens with a Large Rose," said its advertisements, "which dissolves into a Beautiful Lady surrounded by a Wreath of Roses," followed by "an American Flag floating above clouds." This shot is probably recycled from *The American Flag, Floating* (Lubin, 1904). While animated stars spell out the title, "a lovely little girl blows out a Candle." Lubin also promoted its film as "beautifully hand colored."<sup>4</sup>

*Three American Beauties* would not have seemed incomplete if the flag were its final image, or even its only image. From the beginning of commercial cinema, producers sold recordings of flags in motion, and exhibitors often "showed the colors" to close a program. In 1896 W. K. L. Dickson shot *United States Flag* in the American Mutoscope studio, followed by what the catalog described as a "special colored film of the Stars and Stripes fluttering in the breeze," sold as *The United States Flag*. The company revived them for wartime display in 1898.<sup>5</sup> Edison's *American and Cuban Flag* (1897) suggested solidarity in the Cuban War of Independence more than a year before Congress declared war on Spain. A year later, the company sold two new productions titled *American Flag* and two others as *Old Glory* and *Cuban Flag*. Press accounts from 1898 described American audiences with enthusiastic—even hysterical—responses to the projection of a single-shot flag film.

Hype from producer and distributor catalogs

**"While not as ideologically loaded as a star-spangled banner, the American Beauty rose itself—despite its origins in France—was developing a nationalist connotation beyond its name."**

cued expectations about 1898 banners on screen. “‘Old Glory’ fluttering in the breeze never fails to rouse an audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm,” promised Selig Polyscope about *The American Flag*.<sup>6</sup> Rhetoric promoting Lubin’s *How the Flag Changed in Cuba* escalated the pitch about audiences “carried away,” “when, behold! our own starry banner appears on the screen. . . . You could almost hear the eagle scream were it not for the cheers, whistling and stamping of your patriotic audience.”<sup>7</sup> By 1906 such responses had diminished, but ads for *Three American Beauties* continued to pitch patriotism as a guarantor of popularity. At a time when national identity was associated with President Roosevelt’s “big stick” militarism and jingoism, however, the appearance of the flag on-screen would have engendered a mixed reception.

While not as ideologically loaded as a star-spangled banner, the American Beauty rose itself—despite its origins in France—was developing a nationalist connotation beyond its name. The popular film no doubt abetted the concept. In 1908 the Society of American Florists endorsed petitioning Congress to make it “the national flower of the United States.”<sup>8</sup> An additional problematic context in 1906 was the way in which American Beauties had unexpectedly become a metaphor for monopoly capitalism. In 1902 John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave a speech that received extensive press attention and criticism. Trusts such as Standard Oil, he argued, helped the nation by pruning away smaller competing companies. “The American Beauty Rose can be produced in its splendor and fragrance only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it,” he told a YMCA audience at Brown University. “This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God.” Ida M. Tarbell’s acclaimed 1904 exposé *The History of the Standard Oil Company* quoted Rockefeller’s rose analogy in a damning epigraph. In 1905 a well-circulated caricature of Junior depicted him standing next to a giant rose labeled “Standard Oil Co.” He holds a pruning knife and a bud he has cut away—represented as a tiny skull. A pile of such skulls at his feet are tagged “competitors.”<sup>9</sup>

American literature of the moment extended other negative associations to the rose in question. Robert McIlvaine shows that two novels of 1905 used it in critiques of the ruling capitalist class. The final sentence in Robert Herrick’s *The Memoirs of an American Citizen* has its corrupt senator receiving a crony’s gift of American Beauties. Edith Wharton’s lauded and popular *The House of Mirth* places them as a centerpiece at the table of the upper-class family whose social dissipation unfolds.<sup>10</sup> Beyond these literary allusions, the gaudy flower’s high price made it a symbol of luxury, a marker of status cultivated by a consumerist society. Kasia Boddy points out that the appreciation of the American Beauty in the early twentieth century exemplified Thorstein Veblen’s critique of “canons of taste” in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Veblen cited flowers as consumer objects given value by those in Western culture who could afford to be “educated to a higher schedule of pecuniary beauty in the florist’s products.”<sup>11</sup> These pejorative connotations of the rose cultivar hardly displaced the widespread appreciation of the American Beauty. It remained broadly seen as a thing of beauty, a flawless creation. “Perfect.”

## **Two American Beauties**

Showing the Stars and Stripes as a third thing of beauty in the Edison film was a kind of punchline. The filmmakers and their audiences knew the common trope equating roses and women as beautiful objects. Contextualizing this cinematic portrait amid the booming art of color illustration in American publications circa 1906, it bears a striking resemblance to popular depictions of young women said to signify “American beauty.” Of course, this dominant discourse about an “ideal” of feminine beauty was even more ideologically loaded than the symbol of the American flag. The

meaning of the latter was often articulated; the former presumed in silence within white Western culture. Seldom did discussion even mention that this was an image of whiteness, a Eurocentric assumption of what physical features were presumed beautiful. In American cinema of the time, comments on the race or ethnicity of female subjects emerged only when they were not white or of mixed race.

The term “American Beauty” itself has been used to epitomize a predominant theme of the so-called golden age of illustration.<sup>12</sup> Publishers and artists sometimes used wordplay pairing these idealized, if generic, feminine figures with picture-perfect roses. Portrait studios commonly photographed young women with the flower. The men of the Edison studio and the teams of anonymous women who colored their release prints were replicating well-known images by prominent illustrators, particularly Howard Chandler Christy and Harrison Fisher. Both built on the familiar Gibson girl icon-cum-stereotype first seen in Charles Dana Gibson’s pen-and-ink drawings of the 1890s.

We need look no further than two images closely resembling Edison’s anonymous model, both paired with roses. Christy’s *American Beauties* (1906) and Fisher’s *American Beauties* (1907) were reproduced for calendars, postcards, magazines, books, merchandise, and ephemera.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1. Harrison Fisher, *American Beauties*, 1907. Library of Congress photomechanical print, LC-USZC4-10358. Right: Howard Chandler Christy, *American Beauties*, 1906. Detail from the Christy Post Card.**

Such representations also existed amid public discourse about conceptions of beauty, femininity, and national identity. Certainly Edison advertised its subject simply and unproblematically: “a bust picture of a beautiful American girl,” and for the 1907 release *Three American Beauties*, No. 2, “a beautiful young American girl.” But others offered critique and analysis.

At the moment Porter was preparing No. 2, in September 1907, the *New York Times* ran a feature article, “American Beauty Analyzed by Artists.” Other North American newspapers ran similar items, all responses to a French writer’s critique of American women for not inspiring painters the way some Europeans had. Several artists and illustrators argued for the contemporary American girl

as the new ideal, surpassing the female form in classical Greek and Roman depictions. Their analyses of national “types” from across Europe (and Japan and South America) were vague generalizations but at least suggested the issue of beauty was more complex than simply asserting an idealized physical look. Some attributed the Gibson girl stereotype with setting a new ideal in the minds of Americans. The *Times* illustrated the article with a drawing captioned “Harrison Fisher’s Conception of the Ideal American Type of Feminine Beauty.” Its youthful white figure, with bouffant hair and pensive expression, is akin to Porter’s model.<sup>14</sup>

Key to its commercial success, *Three American Beauties* featured extensive hand-applied coloring, a laborious process not yet common in the United States. More specifically, it was among the first American productions to use the complex stencil-coloring technique developed by Pathé in 1904. The more precise placement of colors within the frame, historian Joshua Yumibe argues, made for an arresting viewing experience. When highlighting female bodies with stenciled color, the effect could be “charged with eroticism.”<sup>15</sup>

So who *is* the photogenic figure in the striking yellow dress? I wrongly presumed the answer would be relatively easy to find. *Three American Beauties* was and is widely seen. Thomas A. Edison’s extensive company records have been well researched and early cinema well mined by scholars, yet no answer has appeared. Experts I asked did not venture a guess. Perhaps the beauty’s face would be recognizable from the New York show world of 1906? From publications of the time? Or other motion pictures?

Eventually, as I explain, clues led to the name Blanche Deyo. Is it she? *Deyo* survives as a pair of fragments from a single take. It had been seldom seen since its preservation on 16mm film for the Library of Congress (LOC) in 1963. It was probably never projected to audiences before that. Only a few people watched it on a Mutoscope hand-cranked viewing machine in 1897.

Upon request in 2019, LOC provided the digital video file derived from its 16mm film print. However, the paper print source materials for *Deyo* are an anomaly: two 68mm rolls that required unique treatment as objects of preservation and study. Cineric film lab in New York scanned LOC paper rolls frame by frame on a custom-rigged rostrum. In 2020 this 4K restoration debuted online as part of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) annual Archival Screening Night. I created a video package comparing the scans of the 16mm film and 68mm paper. In 2021 AMIA distributed its Archival Screening Night Roadshow package to cinemas, and Turner Classic Movies televised the twenty-piece compilation. The “almost-never-before-seen” peep show of 1897 was getting an audience.<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 2. The 68mm paper rolls for *Deyo* (1897), deposited for copyright by American Mutoscope & Biograph Co. April 22, 1907. Library of Congress Paper Print Collection. Photos by Alexis Ainsworth.**

In 2022 a newer edition of *Deyo* played at the Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) annual To Save and Project International Festival of Film Preservation. Cineric removed footage duplicated on the two rolls. The composite nineteen seconds of vivacious dancing opened a program of orphan films.

The revision reveals an even more anomalous quality of these 68mm prints. Copyright applications required two copies of each work. However, the *Deyo* rolls are not copies, nor are they two parts of a single work. Each has unique passages mixed with duplicated footage. Part 1 ends with a cartwheel, for example, while Part 2 begins with the same. Other large-format AMB paper items at LOC take one of five forms: a reel with several hundred cards (*Pope Leo XIII in Carriage*, 1898), a small set of separate Mutoscope cards (*Jeffries–Sharkey Contest*, *Biograph Photographs*, 1899), single film frames printed on cardboard as three- by four-inch photographs (*Li Hung Chang at Grant's Tomb*, 1896), flip-books (*Foxy Grandpa Thumb Book*, 1903), and paper rolls contact-printed from a film negative (*The Gold Dust Twins*, 1903). The visible damage to the *Deyo* pieces and the extreme discontinuity of the moving images make it difficult to determine provenance. The presence of alternating white cards shows these are contact prints for mounting on the hub of a Mutoscope reel. But why and how would the jump cuts be imprinted? Perhaps the original 68mm negative was defective (or later damaged) when these prints were struck? Some of the delicate scratches visible throughout are found in many early American Mutoscope camera originals, caused by the mechanism advancing sprocketless film at high speeds and generating static electricity. Tears and folds in the paper are the more obvious damage in *Deyo*. Such 68mm paper rolls were created no later than 1902, and these likely date from 1897—the earliest in the Paper Print collection.

In Biograph's mass conversion of its 68mm library to 35mm negatives and distribution prints, it regularly made pairs of 35mm paper rolls for copyright deposits. For reasons unknown, the company did not make paper prints from its 35mm copy of *Deyo*. That was not unusual. Many early



subjects were not submitted for copyright. But why did AMB belatedly send these two obsolescent, mangled 68mm paper rolls in 1907? The ten-year gap between creation and copyright was highly irregular and probably unique. As I show in a later section, this was related to the publication of printed flip-books and “moving picture post cards” that same year by companies licensing material from AMB.

Learning about the largely forgotten Blanche Deyo—a minor stage star whose career spanned the period we equate with early cinema (1895–1915)—proves worthwhile. Seeing how a 68mm paper print can produce superior visual quality allows us to think anew about the supposed low resolution of paper prints and early films generally. Documenting how these rediscoveries materialized reveals research methods, sources, and tools for the study of early cinema. The process also entails dealing with a mix of verified and erroneous information found in primary sources (production records, press accounts, advertisements) and otherwise authoritative secondary sources (library catalogs, reference books, preservation metadata, scholarly literature). Such verification is particularly important when studying this era, in which most films do not survive and those that do are often fragmentary, unidentified, or misidentified.

The motion pictures in question come from the two dominant American production houses of the period, Edison and Biograph. More precisely, they were the work of the Edison Manufacturing Co., with Thomas A. Edison as copyright claimant (in 1911, the operation reincorporated as Thomas A. Edison Inc.). The American Mutoscope Company launched in 1895 and became AMB in 1899. Often also called American Biograph, in 1909 it became the Biograph Company. Regardless of the year, historians most often refer to them simply by the short brand names Edison and Biograph.

The Edison materials are well documented. The Thomas Edison papers have been archived, and many have been digitized. Charles Musser’s scholarship on the company’s output has been voluminous and essential. The scrupulousness of, for example, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (1997) and *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (1991) provides a model for research.

Biograph itself created key primary sources. In 1902 it published two sales catalogs, in part because AMB was making its back catalog of films available in 35mm for the first time. The seven-volume *Biograph Photo Catalog* printed three keyframes from each film, extending to more than three thousand titles through 1907. The AMB *Picture Catalogue* described thousands of titles produced in the seven previous years, including selections from its British, French, and German subsidiaries. A shorter *Film Catalogue, Supplement No. 1* (1903) offered recent Biograph titles alongside dozens of acquisitions from Miles Bros., Warwick Trading Co., and G. Méliès Star Film. A key unpublished primary source is now referred to as the Biograph Production Log (BPL, as the American Film Institute [AFI] Catalog cites it). Paul Spehr describes it as “handwritten, daily production logbooks, in which filming activity was recorded in roughly chronological order.” Volume 1 “begins April 15, 1899, with production number 935 [*Teasing the Cook*]. Each production is recorded in sequence by number, date, subject (often the release title), shooting location,” and camera operator. Later entries often have “production or release information,” including the original and edited footage counts and whether the item “was produced for Mutoscope (flip-card machine), Biograph (projection), or both.”<sup>17</sup> Spehr, with MoMA curator Eileen Bowser, created a digital spreadsheet compiling the metadata from these and other sources, particularly the AFI Catalog. They chose to research only AMB films made before D. W. Griffith began directing for the studio in 1908. They shared the file with others, and it was a work in progress when its creators both passed in 2019. The Media Ecology Project’s (MEP) electronic publication of this database is a boon for research. (See [Spehr–AM&B Production Log](#); hereafter AM&B database.) Being able to rapidly

search the annotated records for 3,445 films and sort them into subsets generates new knowledge and prompts new research questions.

A Spehr spreadsheet version was my guide throughout (as was Paul himself in correspondence and conversations from 2017 through 2019).<sup>18</sup> Because most films had multiple titles, I wanted to clarify the source of each. Understanding how the Biograph operation assigned titles at the point of creation, and how those changed, helps build chronologies. The first identifier (Column A) was “Title Prod. Log”—the first assigned after principal photography. In the online database of 3,445 records, the first column is now “Title AFI” and the second “Title Prod.” Since AFI Catalog titles are the best known, albeit imperfect, it’s a good organizing principle.

## Tracking Down the Missing Production Log

In researching *Deyo* and other nineteenth-century American Mutoscope films, I became aware of a peculiar but large omission in the accessible records. The AMB spreadsheet designated a single BPL title for every numeral, beginning with no. 1, *Sparring Contest Taken at Canastota* (1895). Since Volume 1 begins in 1899, what was the source of production log titles for the first 934 films? Was a daily logbook kept at the time? Or were these assigned retroactively from other sources? For many entries the only publication that references these titles is the AFI Catalog, which in turn cites “BPL” as its source.

The database title for *Deyo* is correctly typed as *Gaiety* [sic] *Dance by Miss Deyo*. The print edition of the AFI Catalog uses *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo*, but where was the log? MoMA’s *Guide to the Biograph Collection* does not say and does not suggest that comparable logs existed before 1899. It refers researchers to the microfilm roll “Biograph Production Records vol. 1 and 2, 1899–1912,” also cataloged as “Production Records, 1899–1912.”<sup>19</sup>

When MoMA had the logs photographed in 1967, earlier ledgers were not included. That roll of microfilm became the reference copy for researchers. When Elias Savada compiled the AFI Catalog “volume A,” *Film Beginnings, 1893–1910: A Work in Progress* (1995), he typed in the data from this source, among many others. He could not recall how he got the earliest BPL titles but thought it might have been through Charles Musser. Musser copied these titles by hand while researching the papers at the museum in the 1970s and 1980s but did not recall which artifact yielded these early American Mutoscope titles.<sup>20</sup>

With neither the microfilm nor paper originals accessible via the museum’s Film Study Center at the time of my research and writing, I consulted LOC, which had a copy of the microfilm. With the aid of reference librarian Zoran Sinobad and cataloger Laurie Ann Duncan, the interpretation of metadata and access to the objects clarified much of the arcana.

Sinobad noted that LOC stores miscellaneous paper collections at its National Audio-Visual Conservation Center in Culpeper, Virginia. “Box D-4 includes,” he wrote, “something labeled ‘Biograph logs.’ It is an oversized box.” Knowing that Biograph staff wrote in wide ledger books, I asked Duncan to look in the archival box (thirty by twenty inches) with me. It contained large printouts from the microfilm. Leafing through the pages allowed useful observations about the later productions, including one misidentified as a film of Blanche Deyo.

However, the revelation was a smaller folder in the box, one not previously inventoried and hence not discoverable without opening the box in Culpeper. Duncan’s handwritten label on the file folder reads “American Mutoscope & Biograph Production Log 1896–1899 (prod. No. 1–950).” The crossed-out text is correct: these are American Mutoscope Co. records. Inside were thirty-six loose pages, undated photocopies of poor resolution. Evidenced by the several styles of handwriting, this



was a palimpsest. Numerals, dates, question marks, and circles have been added to the right of the titles on every page. The annotator has cross-referenced the titles with copyright dates. The cryptic codes I eventually discerned were page numbers from the AMB *Picture Catalogue* as well as the 1967 edition of Kemp Niver's index to the Paper Print collection. In other words, this was metadata that came to populate the Spehr AM&B Production Log database.<sup>21</sup>

That day Duncan updated the LOC public catalog record for the microfilm item "Biograph Production Records," adding a note: "Photocopies of Biograph production logs are also held," by LOC, "including an earlier logbook listing films numbered 1 (1895) through 950 (1899)." <sup>22</sup> But where was the original log? Duncan knew that Spehr had put the nameless photocopy on file. She recognized his handwriting in the marginalia but would not speculate on its source. Presumably it was part of the Biograph at MoMA. With no record of it there, could it have come from elsewhere? A private collector, perhaps? Historian Gordon Hendricks, whose books often reference artifacts from his personal collection?

A footnote in his 1964 book *Beginnings of the Biograph* offers the key evidence. Hendricks explains the peculiar naming of early "subjects," such as *Sadow (no sun)*, *monkey's Feast*, and *Pennsy. Railroad Cliffs*. "These titles are taken from a remarkable ledger in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, approximately 5 3/8" x 14 3/8," which lists by number—but only approximately chronologically—the American Mutoscope film subjects from 1 to 1100." The LOC photocopy stops at 950 and has no cover page. "The cover of this notebook bear [sic] the legend 'List of subjects/Feet-Copyright/Scott.'" Hendricks speculates this "seems to be a record of 1902 and 1903 copyrights."<sup>23</sup> There is no copyright information in the ledger, but indeed AMB began to systematically copyright its works when converting them to 35mm prints in 1902–03. However, the list contains many entries never copyrighted. Did "Scott" retroactively fill in this notebook some years after the first films? If so, why does it often use titles not found in either the 1902 Biograph publications or copyright records? Were these used in previous company documents?

The "List of subjects/Feet-Copyright/Scott" is not mentioned in the MoMA guide. However, a clue lurks on page 41. Among the twenty-two boxes in the archive, four are labeled "Biograph Ledgers." Those begin with the aforementioned Production Records Vol. 1, followed by twenty-three ledgers of miscellaneous content. Box 6, Ledger #13 is labeled "Copyright book," handwritten, "with printed numbers, beside which has been written occasionally '02' or '03.'"

While deciphering this metadata, colleagues in the MoMA Film Department solved the puzzle. James Layton, manager of the Preservation Center, discovered the object in question was in the MoMA Library, separated from the archive. The library record identifies the Scott list as a book, titled simply *Copyright Records*, created by Biograph from 1902 to 1910. It indicates a longer inventory, running 1 to 1690 and 3842 to 3875. A note mistakenly says the list of films begins in 1902, rather than 1895.<sup>24</sup> Curator Ron Magliozzi examined the item in the library. A photostat negative copy had become a hardbound book whose new spine reads *List of Subjects by Scott*. The original is now being scanned for online access, to be linked from an updated version of the guide Magliozzi completed in 1999.

This source for the American Mutoscope Co. titles differs significantly from the "Biograph Production Records." It is, in fact, *not* a production log. This simple list of titles is written in a small notebook. By contrast, the two-volume production records comprise lined ledgers, five times wider, with multiple columns of detailed information. AMB staff used these as daily production logs, creating records as they worked.

*List of Subjects by Scott* does provide a small amount of data not transcribed in the AM&B database. Its narrow pages bear fifty preprinted numerals on the left margin. Three narrow columns

between the number and title are labeled “neg,” “Pos,” and “Copy.” About a fifth of the entries contain data, written in a neater, smaller hand. These are the lengths of the 35mm duplicate films and the quantity of copies made at the lab. The positive and negative footage counts do not always match listings from other sources but are most often approximately twenty-five or fifty feet. These precise facts do not appear in the database.

However, the text in *List of Subjects* matches production titles in the database down to idiosyncratic abbreviations and punctuation. *Gaiety* [sic] *Dance by Miss Deyo* is a faithful transcription of the handwriting, but so is the AFI’s corrected *Gaiety*. Looking closely at the photocopy, one sees a tiny caret inserting the missing “e.” The line beneath uses five ditto marks, indicating productions 167 and 168 were assigned the same title. Verification of this information and identification of its sources was difficult but necessary when sorting out the Deyo films in particular.

### The Film(s) of Blanche Deyo

A Deyo filmography is short. Is it even more than one or two works? Sources offer contradictory descriptions, dates, and titles. It’s certain she appeared in two American Mutoscope recordings in 1897, but the material I collected suggested at least two others from 1906–07, the same years Edison produced *Three American Beauties* and *Three American Beauties, No. 2*. The mistaken conflation of metadata about these works creates uncertainties. Even the lone film known to partly survive took on several manifestations: an 1897 large-format film negative and at least one Mutoscope reel of flip cards; two fragmented 68mm paper rolls deposited with the US Copyright Office in 1907; 35mm film copies offered for sale in two lengths in 1902; two 1907 flip-book publications, including a medical hygiene book; 16mm preservation and access elements created by Kemp Niver’s Renovare Company photographing the paper rolls in 1963 (and LOC’s 2K scan done in 2018); a rare 16mm compilation film of 1969, identified as [*Variety Dancing, series 3*] sold by Historical Films, another of Niver’s four commercial companies; and digital derivatives from Cineric’s 4K scan of the paper prints in 2019.<sup>25</sup>

Her name is associated with six AMB listings: *Skirt Dance (Deyo)* (1896), *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo* (1897), *Gaiety Dance* (1897), *Deyo* (1897), *The Famous Barefoot Dance* (1906), and *Deyo* (1907). To these we can now add and verify *Deyo*, *The Graceful Dancer* (Winthrop Press, 1907). Can we also add Edison’s *Three American Beauties*? The search gets off to a misleading start when using the standard reference book. The 1971 volume *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* compiles the company’s original publicity material and newspaper accounts, adding information about each film. The erroneous title *Skirt Dance (Deyo)* appears in its filmography, said to be a production of 1896 with an April 1897 copyright. The book reprints two press accounts from 1896 mentioning a “skirt dance” film in American Biograph theatrical programs, but these identify neither a dancer by name nor a picture title.<sup>26</sup> These 1896 screenings were likely either or both of the recordings from the company’s earliest productions. Two of three takes of celebrity Annabelle (Whitford) Moore were first logged using the titles *Skirt Dance by Annabelle* (AMB no. 9) and *Annabelle Skirt Dance* (no. 14). She also posed that same day in May or June 1896 for *Tambourine Dance* (no. 10) and, later that summer, *Flag Dance* (no. 35).<sup>27</sup>



Figure 3. The two copyright deposit photographs for *Serpentine Dance by Annabelle*; three by four inches. Library of Congress Paper Prints Fragment.

The company copyrighted no “skirt dance” titles but months later registered three from its Annabelle series: *Tambourine*, *Flag*, and *Serpentine Dance*, submitting a pair of still frames for each. However, three keyframes from this same *Serpentine Dance* by Annabelle footage appear in the 1902 AMB *Photo Catalog*, which uses the aforementioned title *Skirt Dance by Annabelle* (no. 9). Confusingly, the AMB *Picture Catalogue* calls no. 9 *Butterfly Dance* (“a very graceful dance with voluminous draperies, by Annabelle Moore, well-known on the metropolitan stage”). Annotations to the AM&B database add to the confusion,

saying *Skirt Dance* no. 14 is the serpentine.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 4. Keyframes in *Biograph Photo Catalog* (1902) for the first American Mutoscope subjects made for public release: *Skirt Dance by Annabelle* (no. 9) and two shots of *Union Square* (1896).

Further complicating this particular case, Annabelle Moore had already danced before the Edison Kinetograph in 1894 and twice again in 1895, each time performing three dances (butterfly,

serpentine, and sun). A year after her four Mutoscope recordings of 1896, Edison “made new negatives of the famous dancer,” copyrighted as *Serpentine Dance—Annabelle* and *Sun Dance—Annabelle* in May 1897.<sup>29</sup> The Annabelle films survive in various collections as celluloid prints.

All of the films are composed nearly identically. As with *Deyo*, the dancer looks to the unmoving camera, framed in long shot, performing in one continuous take. W. K. L. Dickson, in fact, produced the first six for Edison before replicating them at the American Mutoscope studio. By the time theatrical screenings of projected motion pictures became common in 1896, more than a dozen films of Annabelle were in circulation. The only Annabelle film that might not survive in any form was created in Berlin in 1902. Deutsche Mutoskop und Biograph produced *A Mermaid Dance*. The “double printing trick picture” superimposed one of Annabelle’s American productions onto “a German aquarium scene” (presumably *Rare Fish in an Aquarium*, no. 10024 [1899]). In 1900 the labs in New York used this technique of combining existing negatives to create new works. The first three involved dancing figures. *Nymph of the Waves*, for example, combined its 1899 film of ballerina Cathrina Bartho with 1896 footage of Niagara Falls.<sup>30</sup> Thus research in early cinema confronts the difficulty of identifying its many dance films. Even upon creation and initial distribution, these movies went by multiple titles, then were often duplicated or imitated under varying titles.

Given the hundreds of films of women dancing shot by dozens of companies in cinema’s first decade, misidentifications are common. An instructive case is that of Deyo’s contemporary Loie Fuller, the most celebrated dancer of the era and popularizer of the serpentine dance onstage. Throughout the history of cinema, attempts to distinguish between films of Fuller and those of her many imitators have proved vexing. Despite her fame and the many photographs and likenesses of her face, body, and costumes, scholars still have not definitively verified that she was filmed at all. Her name appears in titles, production credits, and advertisements for European and American motion pictures. The companies and directors sometimes

said to have filmed Fuller include no less than Lumière, Pathé, Gaumont, Georges Méliès, Georges Demenÿ, Segundo de Chomón, Alice Guy, Paul Nadar, and Fuller herself, as well as Edison and Lubin. Even the Pathé film entitled *Loie Fuller*—variously dated as 1901, 1902, and 1905—does not show her on-screen. The AFI Catalog lists four American titles in which she is said to appear. She is in none of them, yet some scrupulous scholars refer to her screen appearances. No consensus exists, but among those who have looked at many films for this purpose, most agree she was never on-screen. Often imitated, Fuller never appeared before a motion picture camera, not even when



**Figure 5. Detail from a full-page rotogravure photomontage pairing Loie Fuller and Blanche Deyo. “Dancing Sensations of the Year,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 1908. The photograph of Deyo was taken eight years earlier.**

she and her partner Gab Sorère coproduced three feature films in the 1920s.<sup>31</sup>

A similar but lesser instance exists for Fuller's successor as the era's acclaimed dancer, Isadora Duncan. An LOC Paper Print film called *Animated Picture Studio* (1903) originated in the British studio Hepworth. It shows a woman dancing for a photographer whose studio and movie camera are part of the set. When the film was included in a 1969 dance compilation, some experts who saw it proclaimed it was (probably) Duncan. The LOC catalog put this in the published summary: "The dancer has been identified as Isadora Duncan by several dance authorities."<sup>32</sup> Scholars now doubt the claim. A more egregious misrepresentation is now found among stock image licensors, who sell well-known photographs by Eadweard Muybridge as pictures of Duncan. Muybridge documented clearly that the "danseuse" in his 1885 series *Woman Dancing (Fancy)* was "Miss Kate Larrigan." Duncan was not yet ten years old.<sup>33</sup>

If, after decades of study by experts, none can verify that either of the era's best-known dancers appeared in early cinema, then difficulty in identifying the less familiar Blanche Deyo and the anonymous figure in *Three American Beauties* is not surprising. Despite the false lead with the never produced 1896 *Skirt Dance (Deyo)*, the 1897 entries *Gaiety Dance* and *Deyo* certainly existed. Yet even here the documentation offers confusion.

The two short titles come from the 1902 catalogs. Recall that Biograph's List of Subjects logged two films as *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo*. The database says this is also the AFI Catalog title, but it's not found in the version that has been online since 2003. It appears as an alternative title in the printed AFI volume *Film Beginnings, 1893–1910*. But *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo* appears in no other source.<sup>34</sup>

The 1902 AMB *Photo Catalog* splits the difference—no. 167 *Gaiety Dance* (146 feet); no. 168 *Deyo* (156 feet)—while the company's *Picture Catalogue* offers the same titles at 24 and 26 feet. The lengths are for the newly created 35mm "sprocket films." It remains unclear why one booklet sold films six times the length of the other. The shorts were a length appropriate for printing onto flip cards for the Mutoscope peep show machines, which used reels holding 800 to 1,200 frames. In this case, the two pieces, after being converted to 35mm in 1902, would have totaled fifty feet. That equates to eight hundred frames, an apt number for a Mutoscope item. However, the *Gaiety Dance* take is not part of the copyright deposit and does not survive.

The AFI Catalog also brings confusion with entries for two films entitled *Deyo*—one from March 1897, another from April 1907. But the latter repeats a common error, confusing dates of copyright and creation. The entry for that never made second film might seem a reliable record, as it lists a copyright number and specifies G. W. Bitzer as camera operator. Calling itself into question, the AFI annotation for 1907 says, "This may be the same film as *Deyo* (1897)." Looking at the AM&B database annotations for *Deyo*, we see the 1897 camerawork credited to "W. K. L. Dickson?". The question mark is from Spehr, his biographer, noting Dickson was in the vicinity of the New York studio but his presence on the set is unconfirmed. As the sole "director" at American Mutoscope in 1896, he shot more than one hundred subjects. The company produced more than one hundred more before Dickson departed in May 1897 to found British Mutoscope. Spehr credits "Dickson?" for most of these.

"The celebrated artist, Deyo, in one of her most popular diversions," reads the *Picture Catalogue* on *Gaiety Dance*. "A fascinating skirt dance by the well-known roof garden favorite," it says of *Deyo*. The three keyframes from no. 167 (Figure 6) show the dancer wearing a headdress. In 1897 she wore that stage costume in *The Girl from Paris*, a successful E. E. Rice production that opened on Broadway in December 1896.<sup>35</sup> The frames from no. 168 match what we see in the surviving *Deyo* footage.



Figure 6. From the Biograph Photo Catalog, AMB nos. 167 and 168. Biograph Collection, MoMA Department of Film Special Collections.

### A Famous Barefoot Dancer?

The AM&B database seems to provide concrete metadata on a film of Blanche Deyo called *The Famous Barefoot Dance* (no. 3266). Camera operator Bitzer filmed her, it says, in the studio on December 13, 1906, with lab processing done on December 15 and 17. The 35mm film, 134 feet in length, was for theatrical projection and not to be printed on Mutoscope cards. (The three other films Bitzer shot that day were fifty-footers designated for Mutoscope machines only.) Further, the database says the AFI Catalog's alternative title for this film is *Deyo*. But the AFI record does not mention *Famous Barefoot Dance*. Neither does the LOC catalog nor its catalog of copyright entries. The only other source that does is Treasures from the Film Archives, the database of the International Federation of Film Archives. Its entry for *Deyo* lists the alternative title *The Famous Barefoot Dance*, dated 1907. The lone archival holding listed is LOC's "positive paper" and "16mm dupe negative," meaning a work from the Paper Print collection rephotographed on 16mm film. Indeed the AM&B database's annotation "PP" means this title should be in the collection, but it is not.



How to explain this? Is it a lost film of Blanche Deyo? A title for a picture that never was? Certainly a conflation of metadata and factual error has taken place, wrong-footing a search for a barefoot dance film. The simplest explanation is that a composite record was created by mistake, one based on AMB's 1907 copyright deposit for the surviving 1897 *Deyo*. That item has a verified copyright record (no. H92889, April 22, 1907), lacking for the *Barefoot* title. But what about the AMB log no. 3266 for *Famous Barefoot Dance*? For some reason the Biograph photo and picture catalogs have no entries for the numbers 3235 through 3270. Yet the production log has titles for all of these gap numbers, and all are found in the AFI Catalog—except for *Famous Barefoot Dance*. Turning back to the original paper production log, all the metadata for the film is confirmed—except for the name Deyo. No performer name is inked in.

*The Famous Barefoot Dance*, therefore, is a production with an unknown cast and a motion picture not known to survive. (Spehr estimates only 40 percent of the logged Biograph films survive.<sup>36</sup>) There was no shortage of barefoot dancers on the stage circa 1906—Isadora Duncan had recently brought the form to the dance world. Earlier press accounts named one Mildred Howard de Grey as introducing her famous barefoot dance to audiences as early as 1897.<sup>37</sup> But I found no mention of the Biograph film in any publication. By contrast, several other films recorded among those gap numbers bear a female celebrity performer's name as the title. *Fay Templeton*, *Vesta Tilley*, *Lillian Russell*, and *Fougere* were all filmed on October 29, 1906.<sup>38</sup> In this case, nearly every reference offered some misleading or mistaken detail. Fortunately electronic sources are alterable. One of the founding premises of MEP is that archivists and scholars can inform one another to mutual benefit. The LOC catalog is a case in point.

When I began researching the oldest surviving copyrighted motion picture title, *Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze*, January 7, 1894, the public catalog record indicated one of the copies in the collection was a paper roll, four feet in length, with shelf number LC 26A. But we know there never was such an element. Presumably someone knowing the work to be part of the Paper Print collection described an element that existed for almost all other “paper film” items. I have written elsewhere about *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (as it is commonly known), learning from others how Dickson deposited it for copyright as a composite photograph of forty-five frames from the Edison motion picture.<sup>39</sup> The LOC record no longer contains this small error. In fact, the record is now annotated with some explanation about LC 0026A. However, that note still conflates the identities of *Sneeze* and the earlier *Edison Kinetoscopic Records*, granted copyright in October 1893. No specific film was identified, but in 2022 definitive documentation revealed it to be *The Blacksmith Shop*, made in April 1893.<sup>40</sup>

As with *Deyo*, one of the outcomes of the archival research on *The Sneeze* was a new LOC restoration of the work. In 2013 its lab created a 35mm film using all eighty-one frames that had been published in 1894, forty-five from a digitized photograph and the additional frames from the half-tone images printed in *Harper's Weekly*. Description of that newest version of *Sneeze* is not yet in the public catalog record, but the long version seen here debuted online January 7, 2023.<sup>41</sup>

Such information, however, is obtainable. Request it from an LOC motion picture reference librarian (mpref@loc.gov). They have access to the internal database of complete metadata. Read more about this method of research in my NYU Film Historiography blog post “[Notes about LOC XML files, film lengths, durations, and physical holdings](#)” (2017). It contains access to 170 XML items associated with early films hosted by MEP, plus *Deyo*.

The case of *Deyo* is almost as anomalous as *Fred Ott's Sneeze* and similarly instructive for understanding early cinema. Even if a motion picture work has a standardized title, it exists in several physical forms and frequently in differing versions.

## Other Wide-Format AMB Paper Prints: Thumb Books and Flip-Books

Biograph deposited few 68mm paper artifacts for copyright. The most notable exception was Dickson's series of films of Pope Leo XIII, deposited in 1898 on eight bound reels of Mutoscope cards.<sup>42</sup> The company often did not copyright its earliest films when they were made because its proprietary format could not be readily copied by rivals. Beginning in 1902, AMB deposited copies of its earlier 68mm titles as 35mm paper rolls. In his catalog for the Paper Print collection, Niver lists the 1907 copyright for *Deyo* but does not indicate when it was made—or that it arrived on 68mm paper rolls. As his 1967 book and its revised version *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (1985) became the standard references, researchers sometimes mistook a copyright date for the year a film was made. This, of course, can lead to errors about chronologies or historical causation.

What other large-format paper copies were deposited alongside *Deyo* and Pope Leo? LOC archivist Alexis Ainsworth provided this initial list of other AMB titles with copyright deposits on 68mm paper.

*Alphonse and Gaston, no. 1* [Journal thumb book]

*Alphonse and Gaston, no. 2* [Journal thumb book]

*Toodles's Strawberry Tart* [Journal thumb book]

*Toodles's Tea Party—thumb book*

*Hooligan's Thanksgiving Dinner (Thumb Book)*

*Hooligan to the Rescue*

*The Gold Dust Twins*

*Kicking Football—Harvard*

None were projected in theaters or commercially distributed on Mutoscope reels. Like *Deyo*, these were all commissioned productions.

Unlike *Deyo*, most of these and other large-format AMB paper prints are not actually 68mm wide. Their widths vary: 50, 54, 55, 68, 70, 72, and 75 millimeters. The number sixty-eight, in fact, is only a conventional reference established by archives. The film stock specifically measured 2 23/32 inches. Beyond AMB, publishers printed flip-books under varying names (flick books, kineographs, pocket kinetoscopes, etc.) and without standard paper sizes. A sampling of thumb books with photographs imitating the 1897 Corbett–Fitzsimmons fight, for example, revealed each used different widths of paper: 52, 58, 60, and 64 millimeters.<sup>43</sup> A more recent project to reanimate a corpus of thumb-driven booklets (folioscopes) published in France from 1896 to 1901 also found a variety of page sizes (70 to 110mm). Léon Beaulieu adapted extant films to paper folios. He patented his viewing device as “Petit Biograph Parisien,” but his work had no relation to the Mutoscope and Biograph companies.<sup>44</sup>

The six Biograph thumb books on the LOC list were made for the *New York Journal* in 1903, promoting the Hearst newspaper's new comic strip characters. These live-action comedies derived from cartoonist Frederick Burr Opper's tramp Happy Hooligan and his French duo of Alphonse and Gaston, as well as Grace Drayton's naughty toddler Toodles. Two other *Journal* comics adapted to a thumb book are logged for 1903, *Foxy Grandpa* and *Katzenjammer Kids*. I've not yet seen any of these as literal bound thumb books. The paper copies of these titles are paper rolls, some as short as three feet. Such ephemera were part of the era's Hearst yellow journalism phenomenon. In

addition to the AMB copyrights (as photographs, Class H), in 1902, W. R. Hearst copyrighted multiple works with titles that contained these comic characters' names (as "Class F, Engravings, Cuts, and Prints"). These were comic booklets published outside the newspaper.<sup>45</sup>

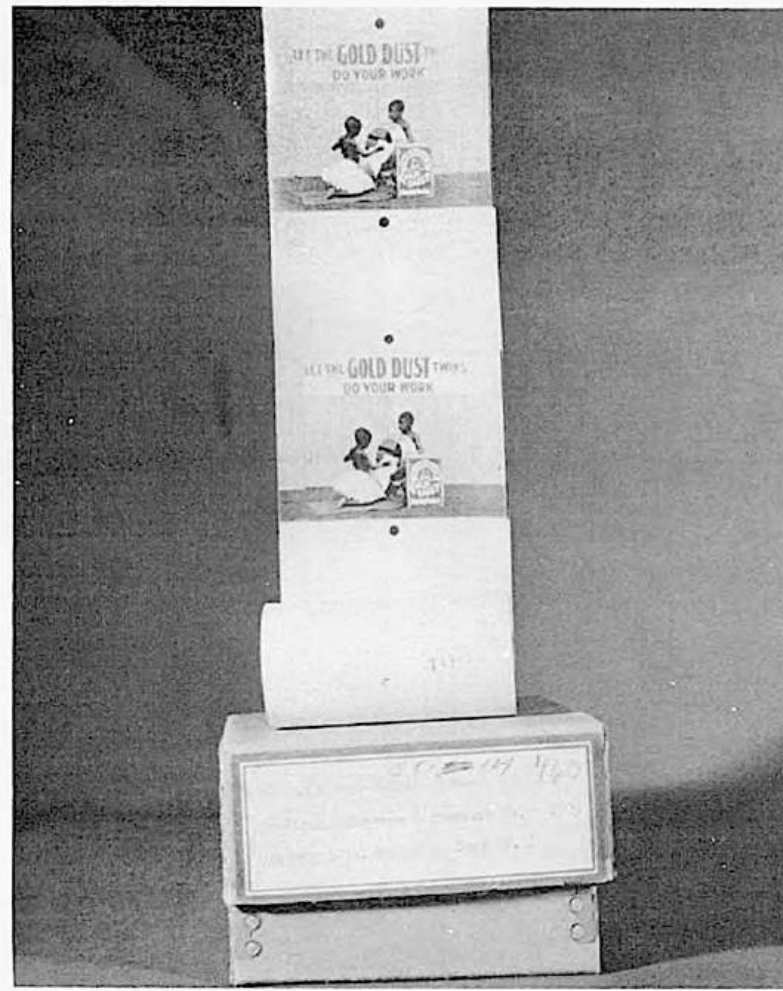
Hearst's acquisition of the *New York Journal* in 1896 coincided with the birth of motion pictures and a boom in newspaper comic strips. On election night 1896, Biograph projectors accompanied the paper's outdoor news bulletin service. Production records reveal an intermedial relationship with the *Journal* by 1897. The companies cross-promoted sports coverage and news events such as elections (*In Front of the "Journal" Building*, 1898), the war in Cuba (*New York Journal's War Issue*, 1898), and the Galveston Flood (*New York Journal Relief Corps*, 1900). Two films of 1900 show *Journal* political cartoonist Homer Davenport drawing caricatures of Governor Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Mark Hanna. *The Creators of Foxy Grandpa* (1902) filmed the cast of a new play posing in the studio.<sup>46</sup>

Before the first of these films and shortly before her Mutoscope appearance, the *New York Journal* ran a full-page feature on Deyo and her stage successes, illustrated with five photo portraits. Two British publications referenced the *Journal* article and reproduced a sixth photograph of "Miss Deyo" taken at the Sarony studio in New York. The city's preeminent maker of celebrity portraits, the company was near the film studio on Union Square.<sup>47</sup>

Returning to the *Journal* thumb book titles, Niver's annotations do not mention their paper dimensions. However, *Alphonse and Gaston*, no. 3 can be added to this list. Niver calls it "a longer version" of no. 1. "The film was taken off 70mm Mutoscope paper." In Niver's demonstration documentary *Reclaiming American History from Paper Rolls by the Renovare Process* (1953), we see hands unfurling 35mm paper rolls to demonstrate what the objects look like. It then shows a conspicuously wider roll, and his voice-over narration says, "The width of the paper varies, some as wide as 50 millimeter." We then see a hand writing "55 mm—wide" on a work order. The wide film displayed to the camera, however, is recognizable as *Alphonse and Gaston*, no. 3 (a.k.a. *Alphonse and Gaston Take a Dancing Lesson*). This object and Niver's words are both at odds with the LOC catalog, which lists the two paper print rolls as 35mm. The AM&B database lists ten works of 1902–03 with the comic duo, including three also identified as thumb books. None of the four reference catalogs—AFI, Niver, LOC, and copyright—list all ten. The same is true of the seven Toodles productions, four of which are described as thumb books.

The two Happy Hooligan titles AMB deposited on wide paper rolls offer complex evidence as well. *Hooligan's Thanksgiving Dinner (Thumb Book)* was also deposited for copyright as a single four- by six-inch photographic print, something the company did with only four other works. In its first years, American Mutoscope copyrighted 115 works as three- by four-inch prints (i.e., flip cards). These are inventoried in the Paper Print Fragments collection.<sup>48</sup> The production log title *Hooligan to the Rescue (Experimental)* is not explained, but the term "experimental" appears in numerous other database notes. To produce the handheld flip-books, the operators experimented with slow camera speeds of ten and even five frames per second.

AMB did considerable work for hire. Spehr categorizes more than 160 Biograph films as advertisements, for clients such as Westinghouse, General Electric, Heinz, Eastman Kodak, National Cash Register, and New York Central Railroad. For the thumb books, *The Gold Dust Twins* was an advertisement for a brand of washing powder. Three takes were filmed in November 1902 and another in 1903. Two were copyrighted in 1903: *Let the Gold Dust Twins Do Your Work* and *The Gold Dust Twins*. Niver includes a photograph (Figure 7) of the paper contact print in his preface to Early Motion Pictures but does not mention its rarity as a wide-format object.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 7. Photograph of a contact print in the LOC Paper Print Collection, from Niver's Early Motion Pictures. The images match those in *The Gold Dust Twins* (AMB no. 2259).**

Filmed by Robert K. Bonine, November 1902. The AFI Catalog suggests this was copyrighted in 1903 as *Let the Gold Dust Twins Do Your Work*.

Another work for hire resulted in the paper print film *Kicking Football—Harvard*. This title is absent from the production log, but AMB received a copyright in 1905. Harvard College coach Bill Reid hired Biograph to record a reel showing his kicking coaches Percy Haughton and Bob Kernan demonstrating technique. Reid's 1905 diary says some of the "1,200 pictures" were to illustrate a magazine article and the rest were framed for his players to study. The Niver catalog calls this a "75 mm paper print."



**Figure 8. Mutoscope rolls in situ. *Haughton and Kernan kicking and passing the football*, 1903. UAV 170.270.3, Harvard University Archives.**

Not listed in the production log or copyright records is this title in the Harvard Library catalog, *Haughton [sic] and Kernan kicking and passing the football*, 1903. Described as a photograph album, the box conserved in the university archives is labeled "American Mutoscope photos of Haughton and Kernon [sic], 1903." Inside are no fewer than eighteen rolls of

68mm paper and one flip-book—a bonanza of artifacts unlike anything in the Paper Print collection. The two former Harvard athletes served as assistant coaches in both the 1903 and 1905 seasons, but it's likely these Mutoscope rolls derive from the 1905 recording.<sup>50</sup>

Another example of these is documented in the first photograph in Niver's *Biograph Bulletins*. The thumb book's cover bears the words "Pocket Biograph."<sup>51</sup> The unnamed figure in the frame is recognizable as Kathryn Osterman in *Sweets to the Sweet* (1903).

A theatrical comic performer, she appeared in thirteen Biograph productions in 1903, more than any other person in this early period. Ten were of this vintage peep show variety: one-shot teasing scenes in which a woman looks flirtatiously to the camera, often talking in animated fashion too.

By coincidence, during my initial search for the performer in *Three American Beauties*, Spehr suggested I examine Osterman's film called *The Rose*. The *Photo Catalog* keyframes confirm she is not the figure in question. I've not seen *The Rose*, but the few digitized Osterman films available also confirm this, including one in which daisies are the flower.

In yet another wide-paper format, she posed for a series of fifteen AMB stereoview cards. These are not from a movie per se; however, the props, including the bunny Osterman cuddles and the chafing dish, are from two Mutoscope subjects filmed by Bitzer on June 24, 1903, *Making a Welch Rabbit* and *Strictly Fresh Eggs*. The black dress and roses are unique to the stereograph. Although Dickson was in England, he received a US patent for a stereoscopic camera just days before.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 9. Photo captioned "Thumb Book," in *Biograph Bulletins*, 1896–1908, 1.





**Figure 10. AMB stereograph card showing Kathryn Osterman. Three and a half by seven inches. From the collection of Shiyang Jiang.**

A final piece of evidence of 68mm paper prints is hinted at in early documentation of the paper-to-film project. Here is a photograph from May 1953.



**Figure 11. J. H. Culver, Lib. of Cong., Deck 4, Annex / by Jno. [John] Lane. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Gelatin silver print, eight by ten inches. LC-USZ62-16935.**

Its caption: "Photograph shows James H. Culver, Curator of Motion Pictures at the Library of



Congress, seated at a desk, looking at a paper print of motion picture film, in the John Adams Building of the Library of Congress. Canisters of film are in shelves behind him.” Near Culver’s right hand is a conspicuous roll of paper. Appearing about twice the height of the adjacent 35mm rolls, and lacking sprockets, could it be a rare 68mm paper print? If so, the 1898 Mutoscope scenes of Pope Leo XIII are prime suspects. When this photo was taken, LOC was shipping twenty-six paper prints to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles for copying. Niver took over the project by summer 1953. “Six reels of 1898 Mutoscope ‘flip cards’ [of the pope] were separated and photographed one at a time (1,500 cards in each reel),” Niver wrote. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences hosted a press screening of the pope pictures as *Renovare Production Company “Special”* to promote the new project.<sup>53</sup> The object in the Culver photograph appears too clean and too small in diameter to be a disassembled reel, such as we see in the *Deyo* rolls. But it does stand out as distinct from the many 35mm items.

Niver’s brief remark about *Deyo* calls for further interpretation. “The film was possibly a film test. The action is very slow, indicating that the camera was turned rapidly.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the motorized camera recorded thirty to forty frames per second, but Biograph projectors used that same rate to replicate natural, rather than slow, motion. Renovare dealt extensively with the Leo XIII pictures without noting camera speed or slow action. Yet the speculation about *Deyo* being a test film is understandable. Ten years had passed since the large-format pope pictures were preserved. Between Pope Leo and Miss Deyo, the paper print team handled thousands of 35mm paper rolls. Nearly all of those early AMB titles came to Renovare on 35mm paper.

A film restorer at the Netherlands Filmmuseum, Mark van den Tempel, worked on Mutoscope and Biograph material in the 1990s. He explains the complexities of making the large format viewable again. When Biograph copied the backlog of 68mm films to 35mm, it made two major shifts: “changing the speed from 30–40 frames per second to 15–16 frames per second,” and it did so “by copying [only] every other frame.” Eliminating half of what the original photography had captured was a radical transformation. Later preservation decisions by the three major archival collections entailed further loss. As van den Tempel wrote at the end of the twentieth century, MoMA preserved its small collection of twenty-five negatives in 35mm using the very printers AMB used in 1902. As the Filmmuseum found in preserving its two hundred Biograph prints, 68mm films restored in 35mm looked slow when projected at the sound standard twenty-four frames per second. Some new prints were made with speed corrected by skipping every fourth frame.

**“For those first-generation Biograph prints that survived into the twenty-first century, scanning at high resolution yields dramatic results.”**

For those first-generation Biograph prints that survived into the twenty-first century, scanning at high resolution yields dramatic results. The British Film Institute (BFI) and Eye Filmmuseum continue to showcase 4K and 8K scans of their best 68mm material. LOC benefited from the fact that Cineric had been restoring the major collections’ celluloid copies and agreed to scan the *Deyo* rolls pro bono. Twenty years before I benefited from Paul Spehr telling me LOC likely still had its paper copy, van den Tempel said in a footnote that Paul told him the same.<sup>55</sup>

## **The Winthrop Press and Winthrop Moving Picture Company**

When I requested to see any other 68mm paper prints in the LOC collection, nine items were pulled. Two of the boxes housed works by the little known Winthrop Moving Picture Company, *Christy Mathewson, N.Y. National League Baseball Team* and “*Goodby John*” (copyright title

*Goodbye John. 70mm*). The New York-based publisher copyrighted eight titles in 1907. “The producer of this film,” Niver commented, “made a practice of sending in only a few pieces of a film for copyright purposes.” When reanimating *Christy Mathewson* on film, Niver printed the footage three times, with the second take slowed down, creating a new version running about nine seconds instead of two. However, these are complete works, not pieces of longer films. Winthrop published flip-books. It did not sell or distribute film prints. As I suggest in a later section, this helps explain the two Deyo paper rolls.

Howard Walls’s 1953 copyright compendium *Motion Pictures, 1894–1912* begins with addenda: fifty-eight titles for “films not readily identifiable as such from the record book entries, since before 1912 motion pictures were registered simply as photographs.” Twenty-four of the added works were published by Winthrop Press, all in 1906.<sup>56</sup> LOC added only two of these to the Paper Print Collection, alongside four from the Winthrop Moving Picture Company. In other words, the library determined that most of these items—shot on film but sold as paper booklets—were not motion pictures to be preserved on film.

The Winthrop productions offer still more variations on wide-format paper films. *Dancing Boxing Match, Montgomery and Stone* (1907) is [cataloged](#) as two 35mm paper rolls, but the handwritten preservation title reads “Dancing Boxing Match, 70mm.” The LOC metadata for *Christy Mathewson* clarifies things but notes yet another width: “Paper roll has a 35mm. image printed on 54mm photographic paper.” Covers of several such flip-books marketed as Winthrop Moving Picture Post Cards are found online. Yet another variety is found in the LOC Prints and Photographs division. “*Three-Fingered Brown* (1907) shows Mathewson’s baseball rival, Chicago Cubs pitcher Mordecai Brown, in serial photographs printed on a single card. Each of the thirty-two numbered images appears twice, but the four rows of sixteen photos are pasted out of sequence. Although the recordings of each throwing a ball were nearly identical in origin, Mathewson is in the Paper Print collection, while Brown is not. A third 1907 Winthrop Moving Picture Post Card (no. 20), *Iron Man McGinnity: Pitcher, N.Y. National League Base Ball Nine*, shows Mathewson’s teammate. This survives in the same format as *Brown*.<sup>57</sup>

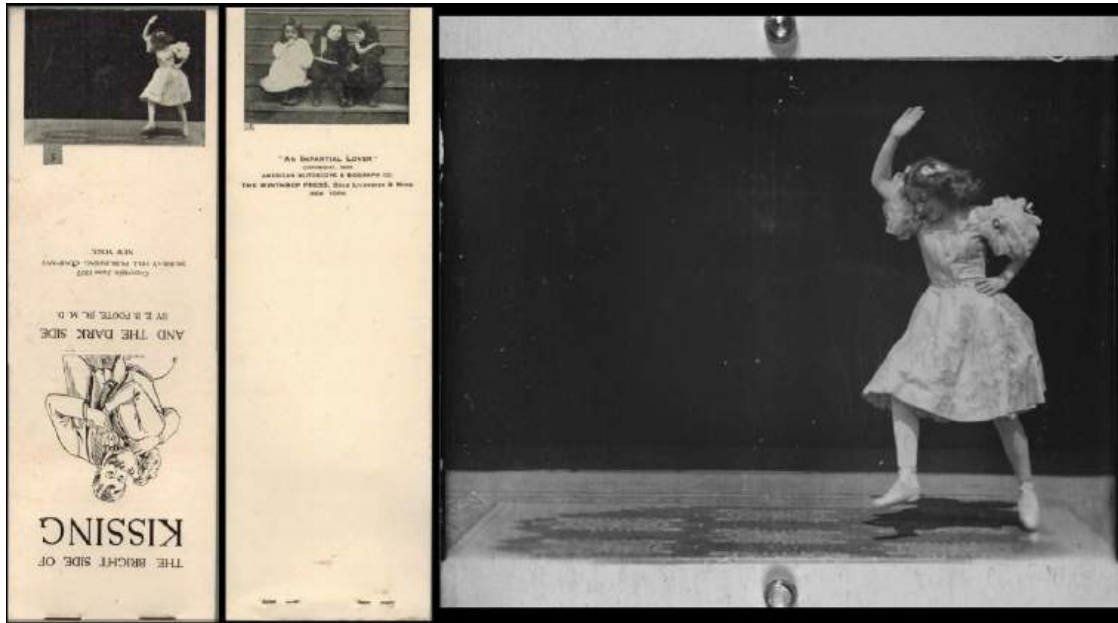
Researching Winthrop publications beyond the archive reveals a relationship with AMB, including Winthrop Moving Picture Post Card no. 14, *Deyo, The Graceful Dancer* (1907).<sup>58</sup> This novelty uses forty-eight frames of Blanche Deyo’s cartwheel from the 1897 American Mutoscope film. In fact, two frames—found in different print editions—match the LOC copy exactly, down to specific tears printed into the images. In an unusually reflexive turn, yet another Winthrop flip-book shows a close-up photograph of two hands thumbing through a Deyo flip-book. In 1909 the company placed an advertisement in *Moving Picture World* with another photograph of the Deyo demo. Winthrop pitched its booklets and postcards to theater managers, who could distribute them as souvenirs or sell them to patrons. Customized ads could be printed on the cover.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 12. Cover of *Deyo, The Graceful Dancer* (Winthrop Moving Picture Post Card, 1907) and Winthrop advertisement in *Moving Picture World*, July 17, 1909.

Another repurposing of the Deyo pictures in spring 1907 helps explain why Biograph chose to send those discontinuous fragments of *Deyo* to the copyright office. In June, Murray Hill Publishing issued *The Bright Side of Kissing, and the Dark Side* [with Two Sets Moving Picture Displays], a book attributed to E. B. Foote Jr., MD. In the previous forty years, both Edward Bond Foote and his physician father, Edward Bliss Foote, had written dozens of popular and controversial books on birth control, sexuality, and medical “common sense,” all published by Murray Hill. After his father’s death in 1906, Foote Jr. published this forty-eight-page novelty. The assemblage of texts about kissing and its medical risks included an image of the cartwheeling Deyo (unnamed) on one side of each page. *An Impartial Lover* (AMB, 1903) illustrated the other side: a little boy sits between two girls, kissing each. Multiple periodicals (including the *American Journal of Eugenics*) gave favorable notice to the Foote book-cum-flip-book. None asked what the dance pictures had to do with kissing.<sup>60</sup>

Knowing that Deyo’s ebullient cartwheel was published in booklets ten years later clarifies why Biograph was cutting up its prints, and possibly film negatives, from 1897. Since it had not made copyright deposit prints of *Deyo* during its mass conversion to 35mm in 1902–03, creation of these new flip-book editions provided the belated opportunity and rationale. AMB received copyright on April 22, 1907; Winthrop Moving Picture Co. on April 26.



**Figure 13. Back and front covers of *The Bright Side of Kissing, and the Dark Side* (1907). Right: The matching frame from the 68mm paper print of 1907, scanned full frame by Cineric.**

Winthrop Press published nonfiction books before and after its brief venture in moving picture novelties. Throughout 1906–07, dozens of Winthrop Moving Picture postcards and a series of at least twenty-five flip-books circulated widely. Some were original; others derived from AMB films. Tobacco companies, for example, used Winthrop to promote brands. These ephemeral items now circulate among private collectors. This rare library record from the University of Virginia is revealing.

Cover title: *Turkish trophies: Turkish cigarettes*. Variant title on back cover: *You Won't Cut Any Ice with Me*. The Winthrop Press, New York, N.Y., 1906, 72mm flip book. Maroon self wrapper, brown cloth spine. "Moving picture book manufactured by the Winthrop Press exclusive license under American Mutoscope and Biograph." "One in a series of flip books, issued as advertisements for a cigarette brand called Turkish Trophies, produced by Sotirios Anargyros [1849?–1929]. Sole licensee under patents of American Mutoscope & Biograph Co." University of Virginia, McGehee Lindemann Miniature Book Collection. <sup>61</sup>

**"Although no one saw the Deyo footage projected, and few saw it on a Mutoscope in 1897, many more eventually viewed some of those images in these novelty forms."**

*You Won't Cut Any Ice with Me* was one of the Winthrop addenda to the copyright catalog, registered as photographs, April 18, 1906. In contrast to the 72mm flip-book, the Paper Print Fragments database record indicates Winthrop deposited two 35mm contact prints, with "separate frames on same roll." If Biograph applied this thrifty method—printing only select frames onto a paper roll—that would help explain why its Deyo prints are filled with jump cuts.

Historian Pascal Fouché's inventory of more than ten thousand flip-books in his private collection includes photographs of their covers. Twenty-eight titles correspond to AMB productions adapted by the Winthrop brands (*A Little Bit Off the Top*, 1903; *Automobile Race for the Vanderbilt Cup*, 1904; *Deyo*, *The Graceful Dancer*, et al.) and unique Winthrop titles, such as "*Here's to the Prettiest*," Bairam Cigarettes no. 9 (1906); *Grant's Tomb*,

Winthrop Moving Picture Post Card no. 22 (1907); and the mildly risqué *But Somehow, Full upon Her Own Sweet, Rosy, Darling Mouth, I Kissed Her!* (1905?). The “post cards” were flip-books with covers designed to be addressed by hand and mailed like a single, standard-size postcard. Although no one saw the Deyo footage projected, and few saw it on a Mutoscope in 1897, many more eventually viewed some of those images in these novelty forms.

### **Blanche Deyo’s Show Business Career**

Deyo’s celebrity was modest, but she received press coverage that helps explain why American Mutoscope filmed her performances in 1897. It also hints of her possible connection to Edison’s *Three American Beauties* a decade later. Blanche Lillian Pixley joined her sister, actress Grayce Scott, when she moved from San Francisco to New York. Both established themselves well in the theatrical scene in 1895. Taking the French stage name of Deyo, she debuted as the discovery of producer Edward E. Rice, attracting attention for her solo dances in the stage extravaganza *1492 Up to Date*. (Members of the company were among the earliest to appear in Edison Kinetoscope films a year prior.) By November she was a featured performer in Rice’s musical burlesque *Excelsior, Jr.* From the beginning, press accounts and promotional material called her “the Beautiful Deyo.” (Her first name was not mentioned in print until 1903.) “New Stage Beauties,” a syndicated story, appeared in dozens of US newspapers in early 1896, often with an illustration of Beautiful Deyo.

If you have seen “Excelsior, Jr.,” . . . you certainly have noticed the exquisitely dainty and beautiful girl who leads the dance in the last act. Her delicate, fresh, youthful beauty is that of budding womanhood. Rounded, supple and graceful, dark of eye and brown-haired, she is a graceful figure to the vision. This seventeen-year-old girl is known on the bills only as “The Beautiful Deyo,” and she rightly wears the title.<sup>62</sup>

Her career thrived before she turned eighteen. Magazines published photographs from the noted portrait studios, often showing her in theatrical costumes. Her name and likeness appeared on tobacco cards. Rice cast her again for a summer revival of his show *Evangeline*. The dancer “created a great sensation among the dudes, and rows and rows of lovesick youths languish and sigh and hate each other while she’s on the stage.” The accompanying drawing of “Deyo the Dude Slayer” caricatured her curls and layered skirts.<sup>63</sup> By 1897 Beautiful Deyo was dancing and singing in Broadway musicals. She won praise for her idiosyncratic balletic performances, while her reputation for beauty persisted.

The AM&B database indicates *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo* was filmed in March or April 1897. A March 26 press item establishes a premise for connecting her to the American Beauty rose conceit of the later Edison film. A subsequent story firmly documents that Deyo visited the Broadway film studio in April. The *New York Evening Telegram* offered “chappies around town” some advice. If gifting bouquets to cast members of *The Girl from Paris*, know which flower each actress likes. “Little Deyo will have nothing but huge American Beauties, and rarely goes on the stage without one. All her girlfriends share in her good fortune when she receives a bunch, which she does almost every night.”<sup>64</sup>

On April 17, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* fully explained the how, when, and why of her film appearance.

By means of a new invention called the Mutoscope, it will be possible for managers in

Europe to judge of the merits of American performers before engaging them; that is, if the turn is in the nature of a dance. Deyo, the dancer of "The Girl from Paris," who expects to sail for Europe on April 28, was photographed in the studio of the Mutoscope Company last week, and the pictures, which were taken at the rate of forty to a second, were printed and placed in the machine, which was shipped to Ted Marks in London last Saturday [April 10]. Marks, who is Deyo's agent, can call in the managers of the London halls, and by turning a crank, show them exactly what Deyo's dance is, and get bids for her services accordingly. Each of the pictures is perfectly clear and distinct, and it takes over one thousand of them to show a dance which lasted only thirty seconds. A Mirror man was permitted to view the pictures through the courtesy of Claxton Wilstach, of the Mutoscope Company. Mr. Wilstach is very enthusiastic over the machine, the possibilities of which, he declares, are practically unlimited.<sup>65</sup>

The "demo reel" ostensibly worked. By May and through the summer, "Mademoiselle Deyo" was appearing daily as a featured solo artist in major London venues (the Tivoli, Palace, and Empire). At the Palace Theatre of Varieties, she played on a bill that closed with an American Biograph program of sixteen films. But no film listings mention her name or *Gaiety Dance*.<sup>66</sup>

For five years, the American beauty traveled the world. After several months in London, she performed at the Palace in Johannesburg in 1898. By April she was playing in Paris, received as a "belle fille Canadienne."<sup>67</sup> Afterward, Mlle. Deyo's continental tour took her (and her mother) to European cities, with stops in the ballet capitals of St. Petersburg and Moscow, then on to Vladivostok. In a 1905 article, "What Dancing Means," she also wrote of her experiences in Algeria, Turkey, China, and Japan. The full-page Sunday magazine piece featured eleven photographs of the author demonstrating national dances. Her tour of nations took her as far as Australia.<sup>68</sup> She returned to the American stage in the musical *A Country Girl* (1902), billed from then on as Blanche Deyo. Her name appeared regularly in the press for more than a decade, as did promotional photographs of her. She was no longer a solo act but a popular player in light musical stage fare.

When Porter and McCutcheon filmed *Three American Beauties* on or about March 17, 1906, Deyo was in previews for a new Shubert Organization production, *The Social Whirl*. The musical comedy starred Adele Ritchie, with Deyo in the supporting role of a French manicurist.<sup>69</sup> A successful Broadway run began at the Casino Theater in April, meaning her schedule would have permitted a visit to the small Edison studio on 21st Street, about a mile away. The LOC George Kleine Collection catalog says it was photographed on March 17.<sup>70</sup> Certainly filming the performer's single short take would occupy less than a day. But the production required five setups: the opening title, rose, performer, and flag, plus the labor-intensive animated finale. Whatever the dates of production, the copyright date for *Three American Beauties*, "scenes 1-3," meant Edison presumably submitted photographic material by May 1, 1906. (I say "material" rather than paper rolls because this special Edison work is not in the Paper Print Collection.)

By June advertisements for the hand-colored film prints ("Our Latest Novelty") appeared in show business journals *Billboard* and *New York Clipper*. These continued weekly for more than a year. As new Edison releases came and went, *Three American Beauties* remained a feature in the ads into 1908. Daily American newspapers in towns of every size praised it and carried local exhibitors' advertisements.<sup>71</sup> Although the boom in nickelodeon movie theaters that was underway came with the mass production of narrative films, this nonnarrative spectacle had a long life in theaters and among itinerant shows. The Edison labs worked to keep up with the demand for prints.<sup>72</sup> Another measure of the film's reach: anonymous needlepoint artists of the era created



embroidered pieces with the words “Three American Beauties” stitched alongside likenesses of the rose, woman's face, and flag.<sup>73</sup>

When the new trade journal *Moving Picture World* published Edison Manufacturing Co. ads in 1907 and 1908, they highlighted a new title, *Three American Beauties, No. 2*. All accounts described it as identical to the original, although longer (eighty-five rather than sixty to sixty-five feet). The October 7 copyright was for “scenes 1–4” rather than 1 through 3. In September 1907, according to Musser, Porter reshot the film in the new Edison studio in the Bronx because the negative wore out after so many prints were sold. Musser inferred this but did not find documentation of a reshoot per se.<sup>74</sup>

Might Porter have simply rephotographed one of the many existing prints? Or manipulated another negative, elongating any of the scenes? We’ve seen how Biograph created new works with new titles using only laboratory techniques in 1900 and 1901. If Edison were doing something similar, the title *No. 2* would be justified for honest advertising as well as copyright purposes. Or did Porter restage every shot and in-camera dissolve? If so, did the same performer pose with a rose in the studio again? Deyo would not have been available, as she was touring the Midwest throughout September in a new show, *Miss Pocahontas*.

The three accessible archival prints now online are struck from the same Edison negative of 1906. MoMA’s handsome color print is the best known. The museum screened its first-generation 35mm nitrate print through the 1940s and has preserved *Three American Beauties* in color three times. It circulated a 16mm copy made in 1958 before making a 35mm copy from the original in 1989 and two more prints in 2001.<sup>75</sup> In 1986 the American Federation of Arts sponsored *Before Hollywood*, a touring exhibition of film prints, including MoMA’s *Three American Beauties*. DVD releases in 2000 and 2005 gave it wider exposure. Nearly all the many video copies currently on the web derive from the MoMA version—which lacks the animated “good night” finale.<sup>76</sup> The National Library of Norway’s discovery of a complete version (Video 2) in its vaults was a revelation. Since every print had colors applied by hand, this 2015 digital restoration has a color palette distinct from the familiar MoMA print. The battered LOC version came from early cinema distributor George Kleine in 1947. Following protocols of the era, that color print was preserved on black-and-white 16mm safety film (viewable at [archive.org/details/3ab\\_20230420](https://archive.org/details/3ab_20230420)), then the flammable nitrate original was destroyed. In 2019 LOC acquired another color nitrate print from donor Jesse Crooks, who found it in a private collection. A fragment of *Three American Beauties* accompanied a 1907 projector, spliced on a reel between two 1911 Pathé dramas. Crooks reported these belonged to a Nova Scotian who was a part-time traveling film exhibitor.<sup>77</sup>

If *Three American Beauties, No. 2* survived, it had not been identified. The Cinémathèque québécoise database alone lists the title, but this refers only to its presence in print publications. Based on metadata in the BFI catalog, I speculated its National Archive might have the remake. Its database enumerates a dozen physical items of varying lengths under the title *Three American Beauties*. A color print dated 1907 has a length of seventy-eight feet—close to that of Edison’s *No. 2* release prints and longer than those in the three other archives.<sup>78</sup>

To resolve the mystery, BFI curator Bryony Dixon inspected the preservation print. Her report confirmed this is *No. 2*, likely the only surviving copy. Preserved in the 1990s, it has not yet circulated. This unique BFI copy is correctly catalogued as *Three American Beauties*, in that the title card in the opening shot says exactly that. The card is identical in design to the other prints, but the copyright notice on-screen says 1907. The subsequent shots do show a rose, woman, flag, and animated stars, but each clearly differs from those in the 1906 film. The performer has more “business,” looking off-screen right, addressing someone with a nod, making eyes at them, kissing

her rose and tossing it in their direction, then throwing a kiss with her hand and arm extended. The unidentified figure in *No. 2* is certainly not the same performer we see in the first film. And definitely not Blanche Deyo.



**Figure 14. Frames from a BFI National Archive 35mm print of *Three American Beauties, No. 2* (1907), as captured from a flatbed film viewer. Preview images courtesy of Bryony Dixon.**

Having confirmed Deyo was not in the remake, can we substantiate she is the figure posing in the 1906 *Three American Beauties*? A match of photographs with the motion picture proves difficult. Yet we've seen circumstantial evidence. Codirector Wallace McCutcheon started at the American Mutoscope Company in spring 1897.<sup>79</sup> He may have been

present for the *Gaiety Dance by Miss Deyo* recording session. If so, he might have remembered Beautiful Deyo when the Edison production called for a young woman representing beauty itself. A newspaper story about her love of the American Beauty rose was published days before the film was shot. She was often near the Edison studio when performing in the theater district in both 1897 and 1906.

Initially, a happenstance connection led me to pursue the Deyo possibility. MoMA's collection web pages added object no. W4152, artist Edwin S. Porter, *Three American Beauties*, represented by a still image of a woman in yellow holding a rose. A credit in small print (since removed) read "Gift of R. L. Giffen." Larry Giffen was a literary agent and a theatrical producer. His lone credit on the Internet Broadway Database is for *Miss Pocahontas* (1907), with Blanche Deyo among the New York cast. Giffen married Deyo's sister Grayce, so his possession of the film made sense—if it was a portrait of his sister-in-law.

While not a false lead, this personal connection was misleading. After his studio ceased production in 1918, Thomas Edison sold the assets to Giffen the following year. In 1940 MoMA acquired this signature collection of 450 negatives and prints, then still stored in West Orange, New Jersey.<sup>80</sup> Just months before, the museum's young and pioneering Film Library had acquired the Biograph collection. More than twice the size of the Edison haul, it included thirty-six reels of AMB 68mm prints and negatives—but no material on *Deyo* or *Gaiety Dance*.

No textual sources connect *Deyo* to *Three American Beauties*, but no other names have been suggested. Do frames from the two films present evidence beyond the circumstantial? A comparison of Deyo's Mutoscope pictures with the Edison model posing in 1906 is inconclusive: a smiling teenage face looking to the camera in a kinetic, black-and-white long shot versus a pensive adult averting her gaze in an artificially colored, near-tableau medium shot taken nine years later. Certainly there is some resemblance. Blanche Scott's passport application of 1900 described her as having a fair complexion, oval face, round chin, small mouth, medium forehead, short nose, brown hair—an apt description of the anonymous American beauty as well. She was twenty-seven years old when Porter filmed the unnamed rose muse. This age too is apt if she was Blanche Deyo.<sup>81</sup>

**"Some photographs of Deyo, especially those published in 1906, offer enough similarities to the visage of the Edison model to credibly argue they are the same person."**

Some photographs of Deyo taken in the early 1900s offer a closer match to the anonymous

beauty's features—others do not. Periodicals ran hundreds of studio portraits, publicity shots, and show advertisements. Her costumes, makeup, hairdos, hats, and wigs—not to mention photographers' lights, lenses, filters, added colors, and retouching—make comparisons challenging. Some photographs of Deyo depict faces I do not quite recognize as hers. Sophisticated biometric software might assess the Edison model's similarity to Deyo, but a 2019 Google image analysis of the former offered only that the person holding the rose is, with 93-percent certainty, female. (It actually first said “a lady”—an odd qualitative descriptor for data analysis.)

Some photographs of Deyo, especially those published in 1906, offer enough similarities to the visage of the Edison model to credibly argue they are the same person. In particular, a photo portrait in the *New York Tribune* shows her in a pose, costume, and hairstyle comparable to those in *Three American Beauties*, with a clear view of her face. It is, in fact, the only photograph I found that shows her ear—one which matches the movie model's. Seeing a higher-resolution medium shot of Deyo from 1906, published as a full-page portrait in photographer Burr McIntosh's monthly magazine, adds to the plausibility that she is in the film. For further comparison, I have posted thirty photographs of Blanche Deyo alongside the face of the anonymous beauty.<sup>82</sup>



**Figure 15.** Left: Found photograph by Hallen Studio of New York (before 1910). Center: Hallen photo, *Burr McIntosh Monthly* (November 1906). Right: “Blanche Deyo. In ‘The Social Whirl,’ at the Casino,” *New York Tribune*, April 1, 1906.

Without more definitive evidence, we can't say with certainty that Deyo is in the film. Yet because the circumstantial evidence is compelling and the photographic resemblance reasonably strong, we can say with some confidence that American Mutoscope's Beautiful Deyo of 1897, who desired American Beauties, is the uncredited rose admirer in Edison's *Three American Beauties* of 1906. Should this conclusion be proven wrong, understand it to be part of the long history of erroneous accounts about early cinema.

## Coda

Blanche Deyo's show career lasted another twenty years after her Mutoscope debut. She

had at least one other brush with motion pictures, one that brought her in touch with a new era of movie stardom. In Act One of the 1915 musical *All Over Town*, she appeared in a number with comic dancer Roy Atwell, a “diamond robbery motion picture specialty.” Theater historian Gwendolyn Waltz noted such acts at the time sometimes included a projected film made for the show, but she did not find evidence in this case. In Act Two, Deyo—playing a soubrette performing at the Winter Garden Theater—debuted the song “I Love My Movie Picture Man.” The lyrics convey that conversing with men is boring, so a silent cinema actor is a better companion. “I’ve loved him since the movies first began,” sang she who had performed for the camera in those earliest years. Set within a dream sequence, the number featured eight Charlie Chaplin imitators dancing with her. A later version called for multiple “Broncho Billys.”<sup>83</sup>

The final years of Deyo’s career were relatively quiet, aside from a 1908 incident in which Pittsburgh authorities objected to her leg-revealing Salome dance costume.<sup>84</sup> In 1913, as Mrs. Walter Jones, she received unwanted press attention after giving birth to a child weighing less than two pounds. The parents named the incubator baby Blanche Deyo. The mother made limited appearances with her comedian husband before retiring in 1917. Deyo was widowed five years later and worked at Gimbels department store in New York. The *New York Times* noted her passing in an obituary of August 30, 1933.<sup>85</sup>

A list of external links featured in this essay can be found here.<sup>86</sup>

## About the Author

Dan Streible is an associate professor in the Martin Scorsese Department of Cinema Studies at New York University, where he is also an associate director of its Moving Image Archiving and Preservation master’s program. He teaches courses on film historiography, silent cinema, nonfiction media, and curating moving images. He is author of the book *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (2008). His research focuses on “orphan films,” neglected works outside of the commercial mainstream. Since 1999, he has organized the biennial Orphan Film Symposium, an international gathering of scholars, archivists, and artists devoted to the study, preservation, and use of archival moving images. He serves on the US Library of Congress’s National Film Preservation Board. In 2012 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences named him an Academy Scholar.

---

<sup>1</sup> Blanche Deyo’s date of birth was difficult to determine, as it was reported incorrectly in reference resources. Thanks to research by historian Maria Vinogradova, the correct date and place of birth have been verified by primary sources linked from Ancestry.com: June 6, 1878, in San Francisco—not 1880 in Bournemouth, England, as Wikipedia had it before we updated the entry. Blanche Lillian Pixley (1878–1933) took the stage name Deyo. Elsewhere she was sometimes Blanche Scott, after her mother Lillian Scott. Deyo’s second marriage, to star comedian Walter Newton Jones in 1908, was well known, but the identity of her first husband I found in only one report, which named her one-time theater manager Frank L. Perley. “‘Deyo’ Scott Marries ‘Tramp’ Walter Jones,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, April 27, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Anna Briggs for the persuasive interpretation, lipreading the word “perfect.”

<sup>3</sup> Cineteca Milano streams a black-and-white *Buonasera, Fiori*. Eye Filmmuseum offers its red-tinted *Gute Nacht*. Bryony Dixon called my attention to Norton’s *Good Night* film, preserved by the BFI National Archive.

<sup>4</sup> Lubin *Good Night* ad, *New York Clipper*, November 24, 1906, 1076. The film is not known to survive, but two frames are reproduced in the ad. The catalog hype for *The American Flag, Floating* read: “America’s emblem, always beautiful and always welcome, no matter where exhibited. The flag is large, and, being shown on a black background, causes it to stand out as though one could grasp it. It will enthuse any audience.” *Lubin’s Films* (1904), 23.

<sup>5</sup> American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., *Biograph Photo Catalog* (1902) shows three keyframes from nos. 83 and

98. The framing and backdrop are identical, but the flagstaffs differ. The latter places the figure of an eagle atop the staff. The former matches the photograph deposited by American Mutoscope on January 6, 1897, for *United States Flag*, no. 83. Description in Biograph's *Picture Catalogue* (1902), 237. These catalogs were for new 35mm prints made in 1902; earlier exhibition copies were in 68mm or on flip cards for Mutoscope machines.

<sup>6</sup> *Complete Catalogue of Films and Moving Picture Machines* (Selig Polyscope Co., 1903, 1907), 88.

<sup>7</sup> F. M. Prescott, "Catalogue of New Films for Projection and Other Purposes" (1899), 26, cited in Dylan Lamar Robbins, "War, Modernity, and Motion in the Edison Films of 1898," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 26, no. 3 (2017): 351–75. See Charles Musser's account of such films' reception in New York theaters during the Spanish-American War. "A film of the American flag at the conclusion of each program guaranteed long, hysterical cheers." *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (University of California Press, 1991), 127. Other nations, of course, filmed other flags, such as the British productions *Union Jack Fluttering* (R. W. Paul, 1897) and *The Flag of Britain* (Cecil Hepworth, 1901).

<sup>8</sup> "Beauty Rose for National Flower," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, November 15, 1908.

<sup>9</sup> "Business and Christianity," *Boston Globe*, February 6, 1902. Illustrator Guy R. Spencer drew the caricature for the cover of William Jennings Bryan's weekly *The Commoner*, April 21, 1905; reprinted in *Literary Digest*, May 6, 1905.

<sup>10</sup> Robert McIlvaine, "Edith Wharton's American Beauty Rose," *Journal of American Studies* 7, no. 2 (1973): 183–85. Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (Scribner's, 1905) was serialized in *Scribner's Magazine*. The book's frontispiece, drawn by illustrator A. B. Wenzell, depicts protagonist Lily (age twenty-nine) standing on a stairway, surrounded by bouquets, looking disenchanted—even pained—as leisure-class guests gather in her parents' home. The unmarried woman bears some resemblance—in coiffure, dress, bearing, and porcelain-skinned whiteness—to the anonymous filmed beauty of 1906. Although there is no direct connection between the novel's complex character and the film's fleeting anonymous model, both are represented as a type drawn from the era's iconography.

<sup>11</sup> Kasia Boddy, *Blooming Flowers: A Seasonal History of Plants and People* (Yale University Press, 2020), xx.

<sup>12</sup> Library of Congress, "American Beauties: Drawings from the Golden Age of Illustration," 2017, [loc.gov/rr/print/swann/beauties](https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/beauties). Fifteen-year-old model Evelyn Nesbit became a media sensation in 1901, identified by artists as the embodiment of a new kind of beauty. The Hearst press published "A New American Beauty: Photographs of Miss Evelyn Florence Nesbit, the Glory of Artists Models in New York," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 31, 1901. A widely syndicated item introduced Nesbit's face and story. See "New Type of Beauty," *Clinton Daily Democrat*, May 14, 1901, and many other publications.

<sup>13</sup> Books by Howard Chandler Christy published by Moffat, Yard and Company: *Drawings in Black and White* (1905), *The American Girl* (1906), and *Drawings in Black and White and Color* (1908); books by Harrison Fisher, published by C. Scribner's Sons: *The Harrison Fisher Book* (1907) and *The American Girl* (1909). See also *Harrison Fisher's American Beauties* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1909).

<sup>14</sup> The newspaper credited the image to *The Fisher Calendar of 1908* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907). Elsewhere the drawing, in which the woman holds a tennis racket, was captioned "The Champion." "American Beauty Analyzed by Artists," *New York Times*, September 29, 1907. Similar stories include "Critique on Beauty," *Star Phoenix* [Saskatchewan, Canada], September 26, 1907.

<sup>15</sup> Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism* (Rutgers University Press, 2012), 78–80. See also Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (University of California Press, 1999), 47. See especially "Pathécolor, Pathéchrome, stencil coloring," Timeline of Historical Film Colors. [filmcolors.org/timeline-entry/1218](https://filmcolors.org/timeline-entry/1218). This includes Barbara Flueckiger's photographs of five frames from MoMA's nitrate print of *Three American Beauties*, as well as my 2017 video comparing MoMA's digital release versions transferred at fourteen versus sixteen frames per second. (See *Three American Beauties* (1906) speed comparison at



[archive.org/details/3ABx2x](https://archive.org/details/3ABx2x).) The video illustrates one of my three essays about researching early cinema, for which I used *Three American Beauties* as a case study. All are found on my NYU Film Historiography blog, [wp.nyu.edu/filmhist](http://wp.nyu.edu/filmhist), posted in 2017: Dan Streible, “Researching Early Cinema As Media Archaeology,” February 13; “Addendum to Three American Beauties,” February 15; and “More Beauties of Early Cinema; or, Show Me a Rose,” March 14.

<sup>16</sup> *ASN Roadshow II* (2021), [asnroadshow.com/2021/12/04/asn-roadshow-ii-2021](https://asnroadshow.com/2021/12/04/asn-roadshow-ii-2021). *Deyo* is sampled in AMIA, *ASN Roadshow 2 Trailer*, [vimeo.com/638026912](https://vimeo.com/638026912). The *Roadshow II* video package for the *Deyo* segment is here: [archive.org/details/deyo ASN2021](https://archive.org/details/deyo ASN2021). For an abbreviated account of the film’s preservation, see Dan Streible, “American Mutoscope and Biograph 68mm Paper Prints of *Deyo* (1897),” in *Tales from the Vaults: Film Technology over the Years and across Continents*, ed. Louis Pelletier and Rachael Stoeltje (International Federation of Film Archives/TECHNÈS, 2023), 52–53. Also in 2021, three students in NYU’s Screen Scoring Program—George Warren, Pano Fountas, and Noah Horowitz—each composed and recorded original music for the film under the direction of Ron Sadoff. See “Orphan Film Scores: *Deyo* (1897),” Orphan Film Symposium website, May 1, 2022, [wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/deyo\\_music](http://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/deyo_music).

<sup>17</sup> Paul C. Spehr, “Filmmaking at the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company 1900–1906,” *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* (Summer/Fall 1980): 414.

<sup>18</sup> The spreadsheet I worked with was named “American Mutoscope log no. 3” and dated 2017. An earlier file on deposit at LOC was “Amer Muto & Bio Productions, 1896–1908.xls.” Its last entry was AMB no. 3454, *adventures of Dolly* [sic], a marker that the Bowser–Spehr project was to research AMB films made before D. W. Griffith received his first director’s credit in June 1908.

<sup>19</sup> The Museum of Modern Art collection guide says Boxes 4 through 7 contain Biograph production records and “the Biograph ledgers,” with only one set of “production records (ledger 4, box 4). . . available on microfilm 0125.” Ronald S. Magliozzi and Alice Black, “Guide to the Biograph Collection,” Museum of Modern Art, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Telephone interviews with Elias Savada and Charles Musser, February 9, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Kemp R. Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, 1894–1912*, Bebe Bergsten, ed. (University of California Press, 1967), revised and updated as *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Library of Congress, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Notes added February 13, 2023. Microfilm 91/7005 (H). Variant LOC titles: “American Mutoscope and Biograph Company records” and “American Mutoscope and Biograph Company production logbook entries.” One must still consult with a librarian to see the papers in Box D-4. I was fortunate that Laurie Ann Duncan was on-site to explain the arcane system. She has worked at LOC since 1978, often with Paul Spehr on the Biograph and Paper Print collections.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph: The Story of the Invention of the Mutoscope and the Biograph and Their Supplying Camera* (1964), reprinted in Hendricks, *Origins of the American Film* (Arno Press, 1972), 34, n14.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks to James Layton for matching my query about the “Scott” notebook to the library record. The MoMA Library assigns Biograph’s *Copyright Records* (1902–1910) call number PN1999.B5 C67 1902. This places the archival document between two books in its library, Kemp R. Niver’s *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908*, and Eileen Bowser’s *Biograph Bulletins, 1908–1912*.

<sup>25</sup> A record in the New York Public Library (NYPL) catalog was the sole source of information about this obscure 1969 film. The entry reads: “[Historical films: Variety dancing, series 3] [motion picture].” “Nine short films from the Historical Films Paper Print Collection in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress.” *Deyo*, dated as 1907, is one of those works. The demystifying metadata is revealed because NYPL allows registered users to access its legacy catalog. We learn the library purchased a 16mm print from “Historical Films in California in 1969,” part of a nine-reel series of dance performances. In 1991 the library purchased a replacement



print from LOC, “due to severe shrinkage and deterioration” of the first. The “A.O.” (archival object) is a 16mm master positive, 195 feet in length, kept in a can in a box in Princeton’s cold storage facility Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP). [*Variety dancing, series 3*], obscure as it is, is also preserved in full at NYPL. Its preservation master is a duplicate negative copied from the A.O. The Kemp Niver Collection at LOC includes a dozen reels titled *Historical Films*, each a silent compilation of Paper Print films, minimally described. The University of Southern California and Pyramid Films sold and rented Niver compilations, starting with the twenty-six-part series *The First Twenty Years*. Niver authored and self-published an illustrated book companion, *The First Twenty Years: A Segment of Film History*, Bebe Bergsten, ed. (Locare Research Group, 1968). See also John Mercer, “Kemp R. Niver and the History of Cinema,” *Journal of the University Film Association* 23, no. 3 (1971): 71–73.

<sup>26</sup> Kemp Niver, *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (Locare Research Group, 1971), 14–15, 449.

<sup>27</sup> Spehr, “Filmmaking at the American Mutoscope,” 413–21. Paul Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies: W. K. L. Dickson* (John Libbey, 2008), 422, calls the document the Biograph production log. The Guide to the Biograph Collection, Museum of Modern Art, says Boxes 4 through 7 contain “the Biograph ledgers,” with only one set of “production records (ledger 4, box 4) . . . available on microfilm 0125.”

<sup>28</sup> As with *Deyo*, the shifting iterations of Annabelle Moore’s flag dance films reveal the complexities of material and textual expressions of a work. From the US Copyright Office: *Annabelle in Flag Dance*, American Mutoscope Co.; December 18, 1896; *Flag Dance*, American Mutoscope & Biograph Co.; May 21, 1903. The AMB records do not use the copyright titles. They refer to the same film, no. 35, as *Flag Dance by Annabelle* (AM&B database and *Photo Catalog*) and *A Flag Dance* (AMB *Picture Catalogue*). AMB reregistered *Flag Dance* for copyright in 1903 (dropping Annabelle’s name). It deposited duplicate 35mm paper rolls of the whole film. Kemp Niver’s catalog speculates, errs, and editorializes: “A girl, approximately fourteen years of age, dressed in a costume resembling the American flag, performs a dance . . . and her actions show she has had very little training.” The eighteen-year-old Moore had been dancing professionally for three years. *Flag Dance* also survives on celluloid. A nitrate 35mm copy became part of a 1944 compilation reel in the Fox Movietone News library. When LOC began to preserve the Paper Print Collection in 1943, Howard Walls and Carl Gregory used a modified optical printer to rephotograph the paper frames on 35mm motion picture film. The process was experimental and slow, producing a small but unknown number of films. In 1944 LOC made samples available to the major newsreel producers. A nearly complete copy of the 1903 paper print of *Flag Dance* survives in *50th Anniversary of Motion Pictures—outtakes*, Fox Movietone News story, 51-551 552, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina.

<sup>29</sup> F. Z. Maguire & Co., “We have recently made new negatives of the famous dancer, Annabelle, in her ‘Sun’ and ‘Serpentine’ dances,” catalog cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). Musser itemizes eleven Annabelle films and their varying titles. As with AMB, assigned titles scrambled the content. The 1894 recording *Annabelle* [no. 2], for example, was called both *Butterfly Dance, no. 1* and *Serpentine Dance*.

<sup>30</sup> *A Mermaid Dance* (no. 10125), *Picture Catalog* (1902), 73. Spehr, “Filmmaking at the American Mutoscope,” 415. The uncanny double-printing films of December 8, 1900, attributed to operator F. S. Armitage, are in the LOC Paper Print Collection and viewable online. *Neptune’s Daughters* in fact *triple*-printed scenic footage and a shipwreck actuality of 1897 with an 1899 trick film, *Ballet of the Ghosts*, which showed four white women covered in white sheets, then wearing faux Hawaiian costumes. In some cases AMB composite films survive because they were deposited for copyright, while the earlier, uncopyrighted ones do not. Armitage’s *Davey Jones’ Locker* (1900) printed *The Dancing Skeleton* (no. 354, 1897) over *Wreck of the Schooner “Richmond”* (no. 350). Curiously, the AFI Catalog speculates “There is a good chance” that *Dancing Skeleton* “was August and Louis Lumière’s 1897 French film *Le Squelette Joyeux*.” The latter survives but does not match the images in *Davey Jones’ Locker*.

<sup>31</sup> Among the studies asserting Loie Fuller was captured on film are Rhonda Garelick, *Electric Salome: Loie Fuller’s Performance of Modernism* (Princeton University Press, 2009) and Elizabeth Coffman, “Women in Motion: Loie Fuller and the ‘Interpenetration’ of Art and Science,” *Camera Obscura* 49 (2002): 73–104. Concluding the opposite are Laurent Guido and Giovanni Lista. See Guido, “Between Paradoxical Spectacles and Technical Dispositives: Looking Again at the (Serpentine) Dances of Early Cinema,” in *Cine-Dispositives: Essays in Epistemology across Media*,

Maria Tortajada and François Albera, eds. (Amsterdam University Press, 2015): 249–74; Lista, *Loïe Fuller: Danseuse de l'Art Nouveau* (Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2002) and *Loïe Fuller, Danseuse de la Belle Époque* (Stock, 1994). The latter contains a filmography of nearly one hundred recordings of Fuller imitators. See also Ann Cooper Albright, *Traces of Light: Absence and Presence in the Work of Loïe Fuller* (Wesleyan University Press, 2007). Richard Nelson Current and Marcia Ewing Current, *Loïe Fuller: Goddess of Light* (Northeastern University Press, 1997) mention in passing that Fuller went to producer Léon Gaumont in 1920 because he “had shot a sequence of her serpentine dance many years earlier” (278).

<sup>32</sup> Niver, *Early Motion Pictures*, 8. See Walter Terry, “World of Dance,” *Saturday Review*, March 8, 1969, 113–16. A Duncan biographer, Terry describes a 1968 screening in which he watched a set of dance films from the Paper Print Collection. Kemp Niver’s private company Historical Films released a twenty-minute compilation documentary. The BBC documentary *The Last Machine* (1994) shows footage from *Animated Picture Studio*, saying the performer is “thought to be Isadora Duncan.” Catherine Hindson dismisses the Duncan story as well as the Fuller films in “The Female Illusionist—Loïe Fuller: Fairy or Wizardess?” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, no. 2 (2006): 161–74. Kristina Kohler calls it a “false reference” in “Between the Old and the New Art of Movement: Dance and Cinematic Reflexivity at the Intersections of Cinema’s Past, Present and Future,” in *In the Very Beginning, at the Very End: On the History of Film Theories*, Leonardo Quaresima and Valentina Re, eds. (Udine: Forum Editrice, 2010), 195–203.

<sup>33</sup> *Woman Dancing (Fancy)*, in Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion* (1887), plates 187–89. Getty Images wrongly calls the pictures “A study of dancer Isadora Duncan,” [gettyimages.com/photos/isadora-duncan-muybridge](https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/isadora-duncan-muybridge). Bridgeman Images sells a video of the same images as *Animation of “Dancing Woman,”* calling her Duncan.

<sup>34</sup> One curious use of nearly the same title appeared on a 2022 placard mounted on a vintage Mutoscope machine (ca. 1900) sold at web auction. A *Photo Catalog* keyframe from *Gaiety Dance* is captioned “The Gaiety Dance by the Beautiful Deyo, the well-known roof garden favorite.” Although the auction house description misdates the film, it’s otherwise a well-informed Mutoscope connoisseur’s creation. “Clamshell Mutoscope 1 Cent movie viewer,” Potter and Potter Auctions, [auctions.potterauctions.com/ Clamshell Mutoscope 1 Cent movie viewer New York-LOT62603.aspx](https://www.potterauctions.com/Clamshell_Mutoscope_1_Cent_movie_viewer_New_York-LOT62603.aspx).

<sup>35</sup> Sarony studio photographs of Deyo in the headdress in “Recent Photographic Art,” *Cosmopolitan* (September 1896), 696; “Some Very Busy Feet,” *Broadway Magazine* (July 1898), 299.

<sup>36</sup> Spehr, “Filmmaking at the American Mutoscope,” 414.

<sup>37</sup> See Barbara O’Connor, *Barefoot Dancer: The Story of Isadora Duncan* (Carolrhoda Books, 1994). “Sam Devere’s Own Company” (*Baltimore Sun*, December 24, 1897) documents de Grey performing her barefoot dancing in a touring company with an American Biograph film unit nine years before the film.

<sup>38</sup> The AM&B database lists the 1906 title as *Fangere* (and originally *Tangere*). The AFI Catalog entry is also *Fangere*. This should be *Fougere*, with vaudeville headliner Eugénie Fougère. Seven years earlier, she appeared in an eponymous film (AMB no. 1328).

<sup>39</sup> Dan Streible, “Filmography: Edison–Ott Sneeze (1894),” Orphan Film Symposium blog, May 8, 2014, [wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2014/05/08](https://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2014/05/08), and “A New Look at an Old Sneeze: Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (1894),” May 9, 2014, [wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/sneezes](https://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/sneezes).

<sup>40</sup> Scholar Claudy Op den Kamp found W. K. L. Dickson’s letter to the Librarian of Congress (November 1893) inquiring about copyrighting motion pictures, to which he attached eighteen frames from the film *The Blacksmith Shop*, made in April 1893. Wendi Maloney, “‘The Big Bang’ of Cinema: Library Researcher Finds First Copyrighted Film,” LOC blog, October 18, 2022, [blogs.loc.gov/loc/2022/10/18](https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2022/10/18); George Thuronyi, “Scholar Identifies First Motion Picture Copyright Registration,” Copyright: Creativity at Work, LOC blog, October 13, 2022, [blogs.loc.gov/copyright/2022/10/13](https://blogs.loc.gov/copyright/2022/10/13). See also Op den Kamp, “Paper Print,” in *A History of Intellectual Property in 50 Objects*, Claudy Op den Kamp and Dan Hunter, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 145–52.

<sup>41</sup> Dan Streible, "Fred Ott Sneezes, Twice," Orphan Film Symposium blog, January 7, 2023, [wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2023/01/07](http://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2023/01/07).

<sup>42</sup> Dorinda Hartmann, "Happy 125th Birthday to the Mutoscope!" Now See Hear! The National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, LOC blog, November 21, 2019, [blogs.loc.gov/now-see-hear/2019/11](https://blogs.loc.gov/now-see-hear/2019/11).

<sup>43</sup> Shiyang Jiang, "History, Technology, and Preservation of Biograph Company Mutoscope Reels" (master's thesis, New York University, 2021), [tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies/miap/student-work](https://tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies/miap/student-work); Dan Streible, "Identifying an 1897 Flip Book with Fight Pictures," Orphan Film Symposium blog, August 4, 2015, [orphanfilmsymposium.blogspot.com/2015/08/identifying-1897-flip-book-with-fight.html](http://orphanfilmsymposium.blogspot.com/2015/08/identifying-1897-flip-book-with-fight.html).

<sup>44</sup> Thierry Lecointe and Rob Byrne, "Léon Beaulieu's Pocket Cinematograph," San Francisco Silent Film Festival, [silentfilm.org/leon-beaulieus-pocket-cinematograph](http://silentfilm.org/leon-beaulieus-pocket-cinematograph). The site streams twenty-nine high-resolution reanimations of "flipbooks manufactured by Beaulieu," all from the collection of Pascal Fouché.

<sup>45</sup> See *Catalogue of Title Entries of Books and Other Articles*, vol. 33, no. 52 (Library of Congress. Copyright Office, 1902), 998, for Class F titles such as *Alphonse and Gaston in Russia*, *Doings of Happy Hooligan and His Brother Gloomy Gus*, *Foxy Grandpa and His Improved Pebble Blower*, and *Mrs. Katzenjammer's Dinner Party*.

<sup>46</sup> "Journal's Bulletins," *New York Journal*, November 5, 1896. Charles Musser details the Biograph and Edison relationships with the *New York Journal*, particularly during the Spanish-American War.

<sup>47</sup> Alan Dale, "Dancing As We See It on the Stage; [Deyo, Who Leaves Skirt Dancing Severely Alone and Dresses Cleverly, Knows More of Our Taste Than Old-Time Stars]," *New York Journal*, February 21, 1897. Sarony photograph in "Small Talk," *The Sketch: A Journal of Art and Actuality*, June 30, 1897, 394. The text also appeared in "The Theaters," *Manchester Evening Chronicle* [UK], July 1, 1897, with a line drawing of the photograph.

<sup>48</sup> The term "Paper Print Fragments Collection" is an LOC designation for a variety of paper copyright deposits for motion pictures. However, the category is not integrated into the catalog, nor are entries verified. Request access to the database from a reference librarian ([mpref@loc.gov](mailto:mpref@loc.gov)). With more than 3,600 titles, the collection is larger than the Paper Print Collection of (mostly) complete films. The fragments range from single photographs of varying dimensions to 35mm filmstrips of "multiple contiguous frames" and "magazine cut-outs glued to notebook paper" (the latter in 1913, from a distributor of Asta Nielsen films). More than one hundred items came from American Mutoscope (1896–98) and four hundred from Biograph (1899–1914), the latter depositing dozens of individual frames (sometimes as 35mm negatives) and up to five duplicate copies of each frame. Copyright claimants continued to use this mode of deposit for motion pictures through 1943. Among the fragments are titles from major and minor studios of North America and Europe, independent producers, and one-off productions. In the 1930s and 1940s, many advertising and industrial film fragments came from General Electric, General Foods, General Motors, Chevrolet, Pontiac, Shell Oil, B. F. Goodrich, Purina, Pan American Airways, and others.

<sup>49</sup> *The Gold Dust Twins* (AMB nos. 2257–59). Curiously, the AM&B database adds a fourth entry. In July 1903, G. W. Bitzer recorded the Gold Dust performers in a nearly identical take. The *Photo Catalog* entitles it *Private Picture* (no. 2440) and lists no sales information.

<sup>50</sup> Ronald A. Smith, ed., *Big-Time Football at Harvard, 1905: The Diary of Coach Bill Reid* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), 32. See the record for "American Mutoscope photos of Haughton and Kernon [sic], 1903," Harvard Athletic Association, Harvard University Archives, [id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990137269280203941/catalog](https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990137269280203941/catalog). See also Alex M. Kupfer, "The Celluloid Campus: Filming College Football in the Interwar Years" (PhD diss., New York University, 2015), 10–11.

<sup>51</sup> Flip-books branded as Pocket Biograph must have been few in number. I've found only one other: *Quick Work behind the Scenes* (1903), on [flipbooks.info](http://flipbooks.info). It was also sold as a conventional Mutoscope reel and copyrighted in 1904 as *A Hustling Soubrette*. A small novelty company unconnected to AMB appropriated the name Pocket Biograph for a few non-Biograph flip-books, including *The Corbett–Fitzsimmons Fight* and *The Kiss*. See Acme Supply Co. ads, *Boston Globe*, February 21 and March 21, 1897.

<sup>52</sup> Ray Zone, *Stereoscopic Cinema and the Origins of 3-D Film, 1838–1952* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 46. See W. K. L. Dickson, “Stereoscopic Apparatus,” US patent no. 731,405, filed July 20, 1898, issued June 16, 1903.

<sup>53</sup> Niver, *Early Motion Pictures*, 239. See also Charles “Buckey” Grimm, “A Paper Print Pre-history,” *Film History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 204–216.

<sup>54</sup> Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection*, 325. Adding to the confusion of technical descriptions about early AMB films, he soon thereafter published, without explanation, two sample filmstrips captioned “62mm, modified American Mutoscope and Biograph (American, 1895)” and “2 7/8 in., American Mutoscope and Biograph (British, 1895).” The data do not square with Hendricks’s 1964 book or later research by Spehr and others. See Kemp R. Niver, “Motion-Picture Film Widths,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* 77, no. 8 (1968): 815.

<sup>55</sup> Mark van den Tempel, “Making Them Move Again: Preserving Mutoscope and Biograph,” *Griffithiana* 66–70 (2000): 224–39, 276.

<sup>56</sup> Howard Lamarr Walls, *Motion Pictures, 1894–1912* (US Copyright Office, LOC, 1953), xii. The Winthrop Press addenda are mostly replicated in the Paper Print Fragment Collection, but in the latter, the copyright claimant is listed as the Winthrop Moving Picture Co.

<sup>57</sup> LOC catalogs the two works as “*Iron Man*” McGinnity N.Y. *National League Baseball Team* (publisher not transcribed, 1907), 1 halftone photomechanical print, 92 x 122 cm.; “*Three-Fingered*” Brown (Winthrop Moving Picture Company, copyright July 12, 1907), “1 photomechanical print with 64 views.” An unarchived video shows the images looping in slow motion. Nate Little, *3 Finger Brown Pitching* (2009), [youtube.com/watch?v=FzkyW7WcybU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FzkyW7WcybU).

<sup>58</sup> Deyo, *The Graceful Dancer* (Winthrop Press, 1907), cover at [flipbook.info/fiche.php?id=4592](http://flipbook.info/fiche.php?id=4592).

<sup>59</sup> *Moving Picture World* ran a small item endorsing Winthrop (“An Ideal Souvenir or Advertisement for Moving Picture Shows,” July 17, 1909, 93) in the same issue in which the paid ad appeared (100). See illustrations in Pascal Fouché, “Photographies anciennes de flip books,” blog de Pascal Fouché, August 13, 2017, [flipbook.info/blog.php?id=400](http://flipbook.info/blog.php?id=400).

<sup>60</sup> Notices for *The Bright Side of Kissing, and the Dark Side* in *American Journal of Eugenics* (October 1907) and *Publisher’s Weekly*, July 13, 1907, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Record for *Turkish Trophies: Turkish Cigarettes*, [search.lib.virginia.edu/sources/uva\\_library/items/u4310516](https://search.lib.virginia.edu/sources/uva_library/items/u4310516). Another Turkish Trophy flip-book, *Before the Ball* (Winthrop Press, 1906), was photographed for collectibles seller WorthPoint, January 1, 2023. See “Motion Picture Flip Book Turkish Trophies 1906 Turkish Cigarettes,” [worthpoint.com/worthopedia/motion-picture-flip-book-turkish-4598805142](https://worthpoint.com/worthopedia/motion-picture-flip-book-turkish-4598805142). The book uses the same text about licensing AMB patents found in *You Won’t Cut Any Ice with Me*.

<sup>62</sup> [The New York Theatrical Letter], “New Stage Beauties,” *Champaign* [IL] *Daily News*, January 30, 1896. The earliest published photographs of Deyo I found are by Sarony: “Deyo,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, April 1896, 111, and “Mlle. Deyo,” *Cosmopolitan*, September 1896, 696.

<sup>63</sup> John Dennis Jr., “Evangeline Booms by the Booming Ocean,” *New York World*, June 14, 1896.

<sup>64</sup> “Over the Footlights,” *New York Evening Telegram*, March 26, 1897. From the files of Paul Spehr.

<sup>65</sup> “A Novel Idea,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, April 17, 1897. From the files of Paul Spehr.

<sup>66</sup> W. Moy Thomas, “The Theatres [Mademoiselle Deyo’s debut],” *The Graphic* (London), May 22, 1897; Palace ads, *Era*, August 14, and *Evening Standard*, September 21, 1897. *The Mutoscope* recording may or may not have helped get theatrical bookings. A report months earlier said Deyo and her mother planned to travel to London to meet her

father because she had “an offer to appear in spectacular work there.” (“Of Local Interest,” *New Haven Morning and Courier*, December 7, 1896.)

<sup>67</sup> Ajax, “Dans les Cirques,” *L’Art Lyrique et le Music-Hall* (Paris), May 1898, 12. See [gallica.bnf.fr](http://gallica.bnf.fr).

<sup>68</sup> Blanche Deyo, “What Dancing Means,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, July 9, 1905. “Theatrical Notes,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, November 21, 1905, said she was “conversant in twelve languages.”

<sup>69</sup> *Who’s Who on the Stage 1908*, ed. Walter Browne and E. De Roy Koch (New York: B. W. Dodge, 1908), s.v. “Ritchie, Miss Adele.”

<sup>70</sup> Rita Horwitz and Harriet Harrison, eds., *The George Kleine Collection of Early Motion Pictures in the Library of Congress: A Catalog* (LOC, 1980).

<sup>71</sup> The earliest newspaper item in Newspapers.com mentioning the film is coverage of a traveling exhibitor in Vermont (“Moving Pictures,” *Bennington Evening Banner*, July 31, 1906). The earliest direct advertisement came from an early nickel theater, the Theatorium in Wellsville, Ohio, which billed a “change of pictures,” but listed only the title *Three American Beauties*. (*Evening Review* [East Liverpool, Ohio], August 20, 1906.)

<sup>72</sup> “New Edison Films,” *Moving Picture World*, November 23, 1907, 619; Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 464.

<sup>73</sup> Several pieces in the online collectibles market date from the early twentieth century and are said to have been inspired by the 1906 film. See, for example, WorthPoint, “Three American Beauties, Needlework Embroidery,” [worthpoint.com/worthopedia/early-20th-century-three-american-522729054](http://worthpoint.com/worthopedia/early-20th-century-three-american-522729054). The Henry Weil & Co. work copyrighted as *Three American Beauties* in 1907 may be a related form. It was classified under Class F, “Engravings, Cuts, and Prints,” not photographs. (*Catalogue of Copyright Entries* [GPO, 1907], 102.)

<sup>74</sup> *Catalogue of Copyright Entries*, 754. Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 464. The codirector of *Three American Beauties*, Wallace McCutcheon, was no longer working for the Edison company when Porter reshot the film. Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 384.

<sup>75</sup> Email from James Layton, March 20, 2023. “Film Cycle Nears End,” *Daily News* (New York), December 28, 1947, reports on MoMA’s film series *History of the Motion Picture, 1946–1948*, which included projection of the nitrate Edison print.

<sup>76</sup> Jay Leyda and Charles Musser, *Before Hollywood: Turn-of-the-Century Film from American Archives* (American Federation of the Arts, 1986), 133. The National Film Preservation Foundation released *Treasures from American Film Archives* (2000) and now streams *Three American Beauties* from its website (the only authorized one, although the work is no longer under copyright). MoMA produced the four-DVD set *Edison: The Invention of the Movies* with Kino International in 2005. The many YouTube postings are copied from these DVDs.

<sup>77</sup> Jesse Crooks, comments to Facebook Orphan Film Symposium Group post (“I like BFI National Archive”), May 14, 2023, [facebook.com/groups/orphan.films/permalink/10159127834675636](https://facebook.com/groups/orphan.films/permalink/10159127834675636). Crooks included a photograph of the 35mm color print of *Beauties* sent to LOC (which found the nitrate film too deteriorated to save).

<sup>78</sup> BFI Collections Search database, [collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web](http://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web). Emails from Bryony Dixon, August 9, 2023. The preserved 35mm copies of *Three American Beauties* measure 53.5 feet (National Library of Norway) and 43.75 feet (MoMA’s incomplete version). LOC’s 16mm elements are listed as twenty feet, meaning the 35mm original was about fifty feet long. Email from Tone Førelund, National Library of Norway, December 12, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 226.

<sup>80</sup> Steven Higgins, *Still Moving: The Film and Media Collections of the Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA, 2006), 16. See



also "American Art and the Museum," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* (November 1940): 3–26, and "Chronology Details 1918," Thomas A. Edison papers, [edison.rutgers.edu](http://edison.rutgers.edu).

<sup>81</sup> Application of "Blanche Scott, professionally Mlle. Deyo," Embassy of the United States at St. Petersburg, Russia, August 28, 1900. Reproduced at Ancestry.com. Thanks to Maria Vinogradova for the reference.

<sup>82</sup> The video *Comparing Faces: Is Blanche Deyo in "Three American Beauties"?* (2023) streams here: [archive.org/details/faces-of-deyo](https://archive.org/details/faces-of-deyo). Photograph in the *New York Tribune*, April 1, 1906, also published in other newspapers, including *Chicago Inter Ocean*, June 15, 1905. Hallen Studio photograph, "Blanche Deyo," *Burr McIntosh Monthly* (November 1906), n.p. The "found" photograph in Figure 14 came from an eBay lot sold as "1910s Actress Lot Blanche Deyo Bessie Clifford Oversized Mounted Photos (7pc)," reposted by Worth Point, [www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1910s-actress-lot-blanche-deyo-bessie-3831695500](https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1910s-actress-lot-blanche-deyo-bessie-3831695500). Written on the back of the undated photo: "Blanche Deyo, engaged by Mort H. Singer, for La Salle Theatre, Chicago."

<sup>83</sup> My thanks to Gwendolyn Waltz for bringing her expertise to these questions about Deyo's stage and screen careers. She expressed some skepticism about the identification of the *Three American Beauties* figure, even suggesting that Deyo's spring 1906 costar in *The Social Whirl*, Adele Ritchie, also resembles the film beauty. (Emails, January 25 and May 24, 2019.) Joseph Santley et al., *All Over Town* songbook (T. B. Harms, 1915); "All Over Town' a Hit," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1915. Santley's book makes no reference to a diamond robbery. A photograph of the soubrette and eight Chaplins in rehearsal survives. See White Studio (photographer), "All Over Town keysheets," (Washington, D.C., 1915), in Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>84</sup> Gertrude Gordon, "Blanche Deyo Is Indignant," *Pittsburgh Press*, October 14; "Miss Deyo's Salome Well Covered," *New York Tribune*, October 15; and "Police Inspect Blanche Deyo's Attire Before They Let Her Dance," *New York Times*, October 15, 1908.

<sup>85</sup> "With the Press Agents," *Variety*, December 19, 1913, 12, and "Actress' Baby in Incubator," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, December 25, 1913; also "Blanche Deyo in Business," *Vaudeville News and New York Star*, June 8, 1929, 12–13.

<sup>86</sup> Links Featured in "Finding One American Beauty: Deyo and Deyo (1897)"

Video 1. *Deyo*, Parts 1 and 2 (American Mutoscope, 1897):

[https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/1\\_DEYO\\_Part1\\_Part2\\_LOC\\_16mm%e2%80%86.mp4](https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/1_DEYO_Part1_Part2_LOC_16mm%e2%80%86.mp4)

Video 2. *Three American Beauties* (Porter and McCutcheon, 1906):

[https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/2\\_Three\\_American\\_Beauties\\_1906\\_NORWAY.mp4](https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/2_Three_American_Beauties_1906_NORWAY.mp4)

Video 3. *Deyo* composite made from 1907 rolls (Lund, 2022):

[https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/3\\_DEYO\\_composite\\_2022.mp4](https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/3_DEYO_composite_2022.mp4)

Spehr-AM&B Production Log: <https://airtable.com/appVwqBAyZOW1pQju/tblsWz3m6kAvaw3Fi?blocks=hide>

Video 4. *Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze* (Dickson, 1894):

[https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/4\\_SNEEZE\\_LOC\\_restoration.mp4](https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/4_SNEEZE_LOC_restoration.mp4)

"Notes about LOC XML files, film lengths, durations, and physical holdings" (NYU Film Historiography, 2017):

<https://wp.nyu.edu/filmhist/2017/10/07/notes-about-loc-xml-files/>

Video 5. "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not" (Biograph, 1903):

[https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/5\\_He\\_Loves\\_Me\\_He\\_Loves\\_Me\\_Not\\_1903.mp4](https://mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/collections/other/5_He_Loves_Me_He_Loves_Me_Not_1903.mp4)

Library of Congress Catalog on *Dancing Boxing Match, Montgomery and Stone* (Winthrop Moving Picture Company, 1907): <https://lccn.loc.gov/96521911>