

MARGUERITE GABRIELLE COURTOT

Silent Film Star Born In Summit

Robert A. Hageman

Although little known today, in her time Marguerite Gabrielle Courtot was regarded as one of the screen's greatest beauties, starring in many of her seventy-three films from 1913-1924.



Marguerite Courtot

Early Start to a Wonderful Career

Marguerite was born in Summit, New Jersey on August 20, 1897. Her home is listed in Boyd's Summit Directory 1899-1900 as Woodland Avenue near Ridge Road. Her father, Gustave, was a caterer who was born in France. Her mother, Charlotte, came from Switzerland.

The young girl was a beauty contest winner at the age of four and later became a model. In 1909, at the age of twelve, she was sent to a European convent to be educated. When she returned from Europe, she became a top photographers' model. Shortly after her return she also began to receive offers from the film industry, which at that time was mainly located in New Jersey.

By 1912, her mother finally allowed her to take some small parts filmed locally in studios in New Jersey, while continuing her education. In one year however, Marguerite progressed from bit parts to starring roles and eventually moved to Califor-

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nia following the motion picture industry to Hollywood.

A Marquee Film Career And Marriage

Between the years 1913 and 1917, Marguerite appeared in fifty-one films, enhancing her "leading lady" image in silent films. For most of 1918, she left her screen work to tour the country selling war bonds and savings stamps during World War I.

Later in 1918 she returned to the screen playing a Belgian refugee in "The Believer". Her co-star was the extremely handsome Elden Raymond McKee (Raymond). Four years later, she again co-starred with McKee in "Down to the Sea in Ships" which was filmed in Massachusetts. This was one of four films Marguerite made in 1922. It also marked the second film for a young Clara Bow, age sixteen.

The next year, on April 14, 1923, Marguerite and Raymond (a film star in his own right with 175 films to his credit between 1912-1935) married. She would make a few more films before retiring from the screen at the age of twenty-seven in 1924 to raise a family. Raymond retired from films in 1935. The marriage produced one son, Raymond Courtot McKee born in 1926. The couple had a successful restaurant in Los Angeles and later divided their time between homes in Honolulu, Hawaii and Long Beach, California.

The union lasted sixty-one years until Raymond's death in 1984 at the age of 91 years. Marguerite passed away two years later, 1986, at the age of 89 years. They both died in Long Beach and they are buried together in the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California.