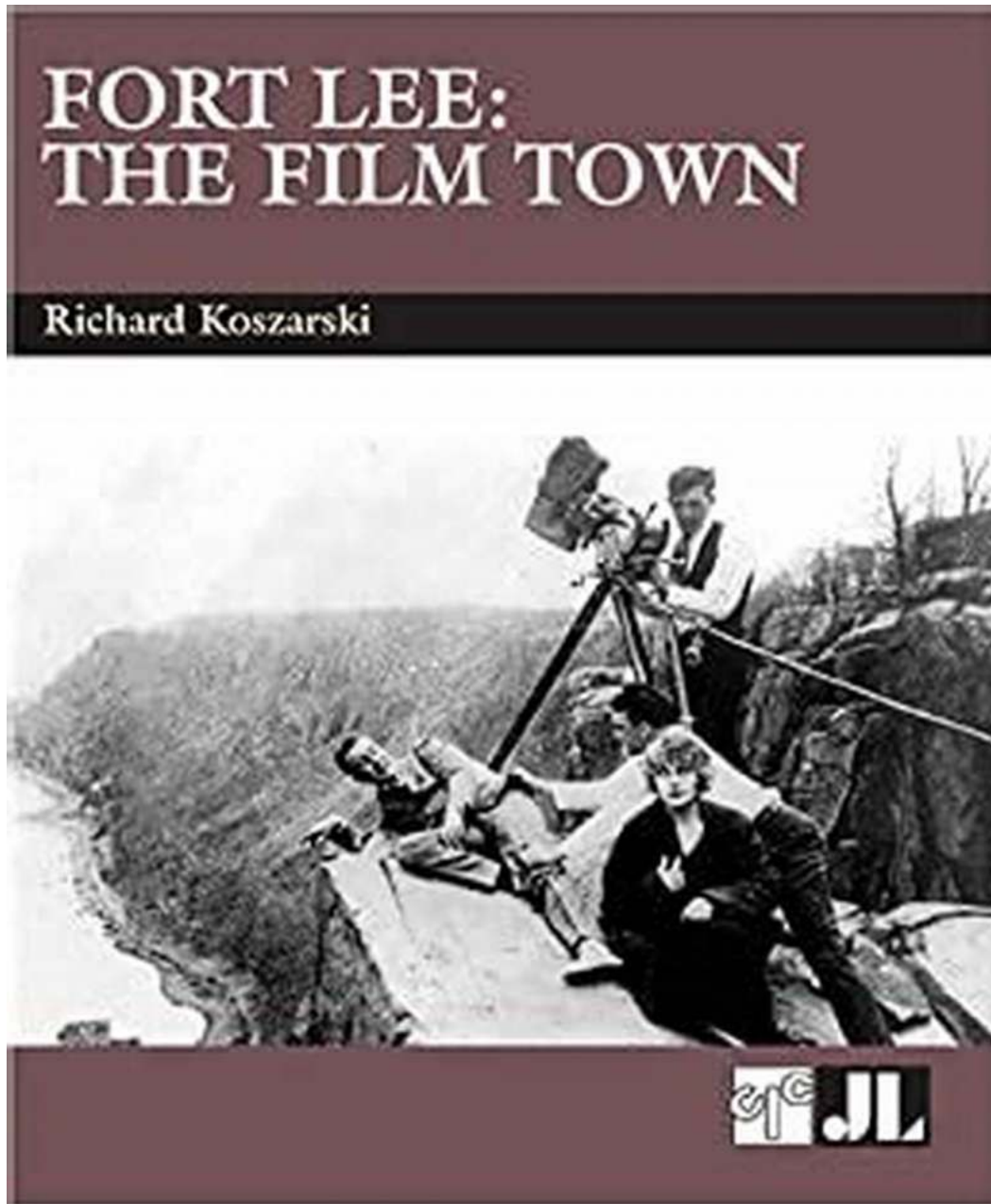



Unveiling the Glorious History of Fort Lee: The Film Town 1904-2004



Fort Lee, New Jersey – a small but significant town nestled along the Hudson River, holds a remarkable secret. From 1904 to 2004, this unassuming town played a leading role in the early years of the American film industry, earning the prestigious title of "The Film Town."

Embark on a journey back in time with us as we delve into the captivating story of Fort Lee's cinematic legacy, exploring its rise, accomplishments, and enduring impact on the world of film.

 Fort Lee: The
Film Town
(1904-2004)

Fort Lee: The Film Town (1904-2004)

by Richard Koszarski (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 69607 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 380 pages



A Star is Born: The Birth of Fort Lee's Film Industry

In the early 20th century, the film industry was still in its infancy, struggling to find a suitable location to bring stories to life. Enter Fort Lee, a picturesque town just a short distance from New York City. With its scenic landscapes, diverse architecture, and proximity to major transportation networks, Fort Lee became the perfect setting for filmmakers seeking a versatile backdrop.

As filmmakers flocked to the town, studios began to emerge, transforming Fort Lee into a bustling hub of creativity. Glittering movie stars and industry pioneers flocked to Fort Lee, turning it into an entertainment hotspot.

Hollywood on the Hudson: The Golden Era

Between 1910 and 1920, Fort Lee experienced its golden era, becoming the epicenter of the American film industry. Studios such as Universal, Fox, and

Edison set up their headquarters in this small town, attracting famous actors and actresses who brought their talents to the silver screen.

Iconic films like "The Perils of Pauline" and "The Birth of a Nation" were shot in this very place, forever etching Fort Lee's name in cinema history. Filmmakers embraced Fort Lee's diverse architecture, utilizing its streets, homes, and scenic surroundings to create breathtaking sets that mesmerized audiences.

The Dark Days of Decline

However, despite its initial success, Fort Lee's reign as the Film Town could not withstand the tests of time. As the 1920s dawned, other locations, particularly Hollywood, began to dominate the industry. With its year-round good weather and untapped potential for growth, Hollywood became the new go-to destination for filmmakers.

Fort Lee faced numerous challenges, including increased competition, lack of investment, and inadequate infrastructure. The town's once thriving film industry began to fade, and many studios were forced to close their doors.

Film Town Reborn: Fort Lee's Resurgence

Though Fort Lee faced a decline in the film industry, its story does not end there. Today, the town proudly honors its cinematic heritage and has taken significant steps towards revitalizing its connection to film.

The Fort Lee Film Commission, established in 2000, plays a crucial role in preserving the town's rich film history. Through various initiatives, such as film screenings, exhibitions, and educational programs, the commission seeks to commemorate Fort Lee's past while fostering a newfound appreciation for the art of filmmaking.

Exploring the Film Town: A Visitor's Guide

For film enthusiasts and history buffs alike, a visit to Fort Lee is a must. Immerse yourself in the town's storied past by exploring its landmarks, which include the Fort Lee Museum, Palisade Avenue Film Tour, and the famous "Main Street of Motion Pictures" where you can stroll through the remnants of its glorious film sets.

In addition to its historical sites, Fort Lee offers stunning scenic views, charming neighborhoods, and a vibrant community that remains passionate about showcasing the magic of filmmaking.

The Legacy Lives On: Fort Lee's Impact on Cinema


Fort Lee's influence on the film industry cannot be understated. Its early contributions paved the way for the development of Hollywood and established the blueprint for modern filmmaking techniques. The town's ability to transform into any location set the stage for countless cinematic adventures.

Today, filmmakers still draw inspiration from Fort Lee's pioneering spirit and its enduring legacy of creativity. The town's remarkable journey serves as a testament to the power of film to transcend time and transport audiences to new worlds.

: A Town that Shaped Cinema

Fort Lee, once hailed as "The Film Town," will forever be etched in the annals of film history. From its humble beginnings as a relatively unknown town, it rose to become a powerhouse of cinematic creativity, leaving an indelible mark on the art and industry of film.

As visitors explore the remnants of this significant era, Fort Lee's story continues to captivate and inspire. Its legacy serves as a reminder that sometimes, the most extraordinary stories are hidden in the most unexpected places.

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During the 1910s, motion pictures came to dominate every aspect of life in the suburban New Jersey community of Fort Lee. During the nickelodeon era, D.W. Griffith, Mary Pickford, and Mack Sennett would ferry entire acting companies across the Hudson to pose against the Palisades. Theda Bara, "Fatty" Arbuckle, and Douglas Fairbanks worked in the rows of great greenhouse studios that sprang up in Fort Lee and the neighboring communities. Tax revenues from studios and laboratories swelled municipal coffers.

Then, suddenly, everything changed. Fort Lee, the film town once hailed as the birthplace of the American motion picture industry, was now the industry's official ghost town. Stages once filled to capacity by Paramount and Universal were leased by independent producers or used as paint shops by scenic artists from Broadway. Most of Fort Lee's film history eventually burned away, one studio at a time.

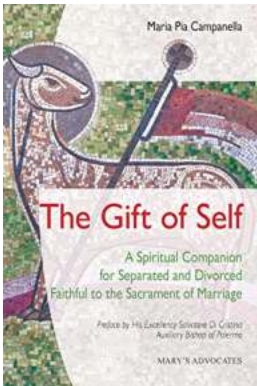
Richard Koszarski re-creates the rise and fall of Fort Lee filmmaking in a remarkable collage of period news accounts, memoirs, municipal records, previously unpublished memos and correspondence, and dozens of rare posters and photographs—not just film history, but a unique account of what happened to one New Jersey town hopelessly enthralled by the movies.

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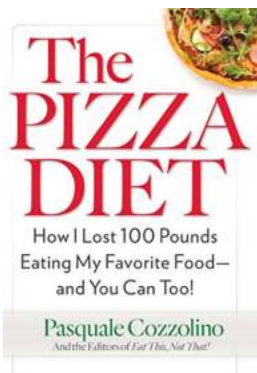
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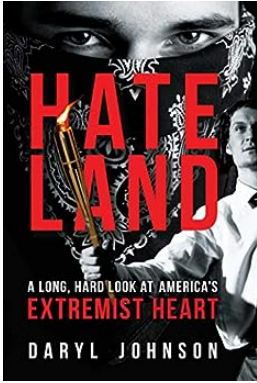
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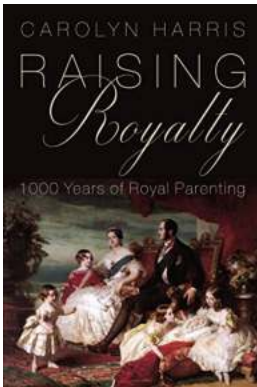
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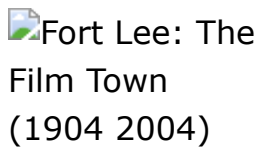
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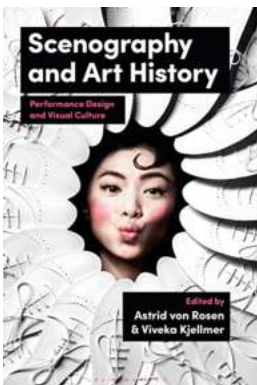
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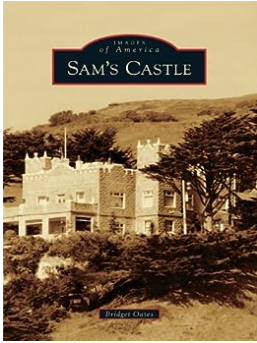
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