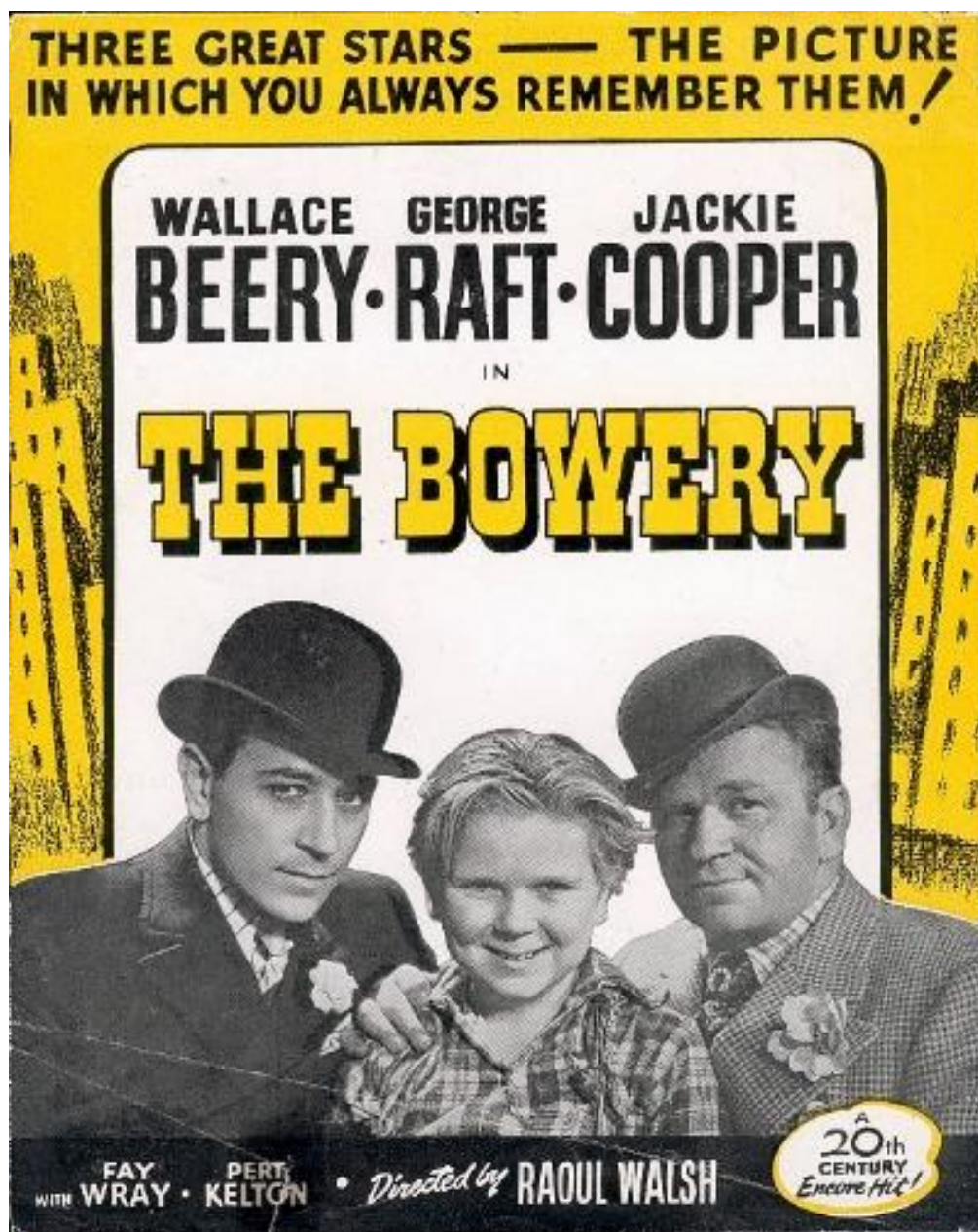


The Bowery

US : 1934 : dir. Raoul Walsh : 20th Century : 92 min
 prod: Darryl F Zanuck : scr: Howard Estabrook & James Gleason : dir.ph.: Barney McGill
[Jackie Cooper](#); [Tad Alexander](#); [Leonard Kibrick](#)
 Wallace Beery; George Raft; Fay Wray; Pert Kelton; Herman Bing; George Walsh;
 Oscar Apfel; Harold Huber; Fletcher Norton; John Kelly; Ferdinand Munier; Lilian Harmer;
 Tammany Young; Esther Muir; John Bleifer

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	✂	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Lord help the sister – who comes between me and my mister...

Source: A Pictorial History of the Talkies

Leonard Maltin's TV Movies and Video Guide review:

"Raft is Steve Brodie, Beery a notorious saloon owner, Cooper his young nemesis in a rowdy story of New York City's Bowery during the Gay 90s. Kelton is marvellous as Beery's saloon soubrette. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"In nineties New York, two boisterous rivals settle their differences after one has jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge for a bet. Roistering saga of cross and double cross on the seamy side, splendidly vigorous in acting and treatment. "THE BOWERY" was the first production for 20th Century (Gable was sought for the Raft rôle, but proved unavailable). *** "

"It delivers as entertainment. It should draw by itself, while the cast will be a considerable help." - **Variety**

"A model of skilful reconstruction and ingenious research." - **Times**

"Fairly reeking with authentic, rowdy, hurdy-gurdy atmosphere... a grand evening of fun for everybody." - **Photoplay**

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"It was a rollicking time on the Bowery in those days – according to this film, anyway – which pits two saloon-owners (Wallace Beery, George Raft) against each other. Among their bones of contention are an orphan (Jackie Cooper) and a girl (Fay Wray). ** "

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"An excellent turn-of-the-century saloon drama, drawn from director Raoul Walsh's childhood memories, including Steve Brodie's (Raft's) historic leap from the Brooklyn Bridge. ***1/2 "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"One of the first films to break away from the stagy confines of the studio to portray the people, streets and characters of the city. Big, gruff Wallace Beery and little, pouty-mouthed Jackie Cooper were already big box office



Humiliated by Beery before a mere woman (he gets one slap on the behind) Jackie Cooper promptly moves in with Beery's arch-rival, Raft. Hell hath no fury like an urchin scorned.
Source: indeterminate website

together when director Raoul Walsh teamed them with slit-eyed George Raft and lovely Fay Wray¹ in this bruising story of life in New York's East Side. The (real-life) names of the two leading characters - Steve Brodie and Chuck Connors - were both adopted by Hollywood actors in later years.

The vigour of the direction placed the film well ahead of its time, and its portrait of the poorer quarter of New York in the 1890s fairly teems with life. Watch out for a super performance from feisty Pert Kelton as Beery's saloon soubrette girlfriend². *** "

Variety Movie Guide review:

"Two old Bowery characters, Steve Brodie and Chuck Connors, have been dramatised to a point where the only thing that's recognisable from the record books about them are the jump from Brooklyn Bridge and Bowery lingo respectively. This script - from the novel by Raymond Griffith and Michael Simmons - makes them rivals for mass leadership on the old street, but the important point is that as rewritten the two practically legendary characters make good entertainment.

¹ lovely to whom?

² He'd read the Maltin review too, obviously

The Connors/Brodie honest rivalry over everything, from gals to fighting ability, giving the tale a Flagg-Quirt glow, is the story. Brodie (George Raft) gets the girl. But he takes a licking from Connors (Wallace Beery) in their private finish fight on a river barge. The fight is an exciting interlude, and it comes in handy where it's placed - under the finale. Previously, in the extremely well-staged Brodie bridge leap, the picture has reached its peak. It then stumbles until the fight arrives, but the latter brings home the bacon.

Beery is doing "**THE CHAMP**" all over again to a great extent, with Jackie Cooper again as his foil. The Cooper kid, obviously outgrowing the baby type, is still a trouper and sends in another gem performance. Raft, much improved, is an okay choice as Brodie. The other meat parts are carried by Fay Wray, who plays straight to the boys, and Pert Kelton, who sings and dances as a Bowery soubrette in Connors' joint."

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"A rousing, two-fisted action movie about two friendly rivals, Steve Brodie (George Raft) and Chuck Connors (Wallace Beery). Beery owns a glittering saloon on the Bowery and takes care of kid Jackie Cooper on the side. Raft plays the dapper daredevil who reportedly

jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge to make a name for himself. The two men and their gangs – groups of hooligans who provide muscle for their political organisations and social clubs – are in constant competition. The blustering, pompous Beery befriends the homeless, poverty-stricken Fay Wray, but the slick-haired Raft soon wins her heart. Angered and jealous, Beery schemes to exploit Raft's enormous ego, daring him to do something spectacular to impress Wray. He challenges Raft to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge³. If he makes the leap and survives, he will win Wray and the saloon. Action-packed complications ensue.

The films of famed action film-maker Walsh are noted for their masculine ethos and accelerated pace. Every scene in "**THE BOWERY**" bustles with a jocular belligerence befitting the wild and woolly Gay Nineties in New York City. This was producer Darryl F Zanuck's first film for Fox as its production chief. It was a hit at the box office and cemented his position at the studio. ***1/2 "

Those Endearing Young Charms - still caption:

"Jackie Cooper portrays a newsboy who befriends Wallace Beery, the most influential man in the Bowery and owner of the district's largest saloon. George Raft and Fay Wray also star."

NFT bulletin – July 1979 – review:

" "**THE CHAMP**", in 1931, made Cooper a super-star, and his unique blend of toughness and pathos took him triumphantly through another dozen starring roles in the next few years. "**THE BOWERY**" brought Beery and Cooper together again, this time in an 1890s setting, as a tough, swaggering saloon-keeper and his admiring young protégé⁴. George Raft plays Beery's crooked rival, a reptilian dandy who is obliged to leap from Brooklyn Bridge for a bet. We also see in action the pugilist John L Sullivan, played by Raoul Walsh's brother."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "50 Years of the Movies", "The Films of 20th Century Fox", "The Movies", "Rating the

³ not so

⁴ well, that's **one** word for it...

Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out



Film Guide" or "Video Movie Guide 1993"]

Fay Wray in the metaphorical and literal clutches of George Raft
Source: indeterminate

Radio Times review:

"Wallace Beery and George Raft are roistering rivals in this energetic turn-of-the-century saloon drama, based on director Raoul Walsh's childhood memories. Young Jackie Cooper, Fay Wray and Pert Kelton feature among the cast. The first production of Twentieth Century (later Fox). *** "

"Boisterous action comedy set in New York's Bowery in the 1890s, with Jackie Cooper and Fay Wray."

TV Quick note:

"Comedy. A real slice of 1890s life in the Bowery district of New York, where two rival saloon owners (Wallace Beery and George Raft) indulge in a game of cross and double cross. With Fay Wray."

TV Times reviews:

"Wallace Beery and George Raft tough it out as rowing rival saloon-keepers, until orphan Jackie Cooper and little Fay Wray turn up and just melt their hard old hearts⁵. I guess Depression audiences might have found it uplifting... ** "

⁵ inaccurate - Cooper has been living with Beery from the outset



Little peacemaker Jackie compels the two men in his life to shake hands and come out fighting (the Mexicans)
Source: Those Endearing Young Charms

"Action comedy. In New York's East Side at the turn of the century, the rivalry between a gambler and a saloon owner comes to a head with a spectacular dare. **** "

20th Century souvenir flier synopsis:

" "THREE GREAT STARS - THE PICTURE IN WHICH YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER THEM!"

Chuck Connors (Wallace Beery) saloon owner and "big shot" of the Bowery, and Steve Brodie (George Raft) who never took a dare, are rivals. Brodie, envying Chuck for his leadership, delights in playing tricks on his slower-witted rival.

The devilry of Swipes (Jackie Cooper) newsboy pal of Chuck's, starts a fire in a Chinese laundry. Chuck bets a hundred dollars his volunteer brigade will get to the hydrant ahead of Steve's. The result is a battle between the two brigades while the building burns to the ground.

One of Steve's best jokes on Chuck is when he bets \$500 he has a fighter who can wipe the floor with Chuck's ring protégé, "Bloody Butch". Steve's battler steps into the ring wearing a mask. Butch quickly takes the count in the bare-fisted fight and the winner is

unmasked as John L. Sullivan (George Walsh), the Boston Strong Boy.

Steve is a "lady killer", but Chuck says "skoits is nutty like fruit cake, a guy shouldn't trust 'em."

However, he trusts Lucy Calhoun (Fay Wray) whom he rescues from kidnappers. She becomes his housekeeper, to the disgust of Swipes, who persecutes Lucy, hoping she'll leave. Instead he exasperates Chuck into spanking the boy in front of Lucy. Humiliated Swipes leaves Chuck's home and switches his allegiance to Brodie.

A love affair develops, secretly, between Steve and Lucy. She is grateful for Chuck's kindness and regrets the stealthy nature of their love.

Beneath his ruthless ribbing of Chuck, Steve is fond of his rival for, when the kidnappers from whom Chuck saved Lucy offer to put him "under the daisies" if Steve will hire them, Steve gives them a terrific beating.

Steve realises a gambler gets nowhere. If he only had a saloon, he believes he could outrival Chuck in popularity. When brewers offer to put him in business if he can become famous, Steve proposes to jump off Brooklyn Bridge, a feat inviting death. Chuck is so confident it can't be done that he bets his

saloon that Brodie – the man who never took a dare – can't do it.

Steve plans to fake the dangerous jump with a dummy. He gets past the police guard by a ruse, and though at the last minute the dummy is stolen, Steve "takes a chance".

The jump makes him the idol of the Bowery. He takes over Chuck's saloon and has it rebuilt after Carrie Nation, a militant prohibitionist, and her axe-slinging followers have wrecked it.

Chuck is forgotten, neglected and poor. The kidnapers show him Steve's dummy, which they had stolen, and tell him he was framed by Steve. Chuck takes Steve out on a barge for a fight and gives him a beating that puts him in the hospital in bad shape.

When Steve refuses to identify Chuck as his assailant, Swipes takes advantage of Chuck's embarrassment at Steve's generosity to make them shake hands. Friends at last, they march off together to war - the battleship Maine has been blown up! Swipes stows away in an army wagon and Lucy waves good-bye with tears in her eyes for both.

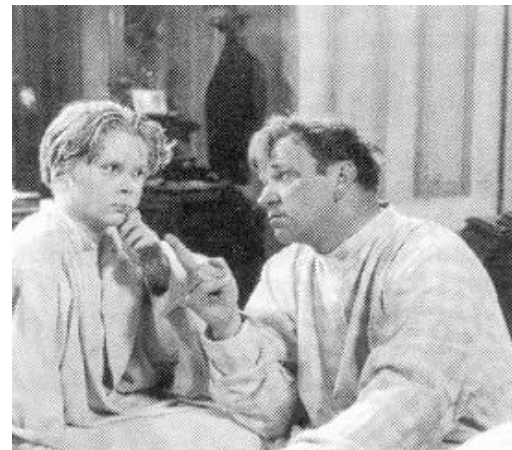
Screenplay by Howard Estabrook and James Gleason, based on the novel by Michael L. Simmons and Bessie R. Solomon. Photography: Barney McGill. Length: 8209 feet. Running time: 1 hr 32 minutes. Certificate "A".

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** lengthy filmography of Cooper:

"...Unlike Temple, Cooper had neither beauty of face nor of voice. He achieved what he did solely through personality and talent. His tough, vehement ten-year old manner was endearingly comic, and when he jerked the tears (as he was doing even, now and then, with **Our Gang**) he did so with genuine pathos and a certain tact - not the maudlin barnstorming which Rooney would sometimes lay on. With an "Aw, gee.." the defiant face would begin to melt, the lower lip stick out still further⁶, and he would weep like a man. The world wept with him.

His four-time partnership with Wallace Beery (from "**THE CHAMP**" to "**TREASURE ISLAND**" and "**O'SHAUGHNESSY'S**

BOY") was an inspired pairing of rough diamonds - often, as in "**THE BOWERY**", almost like a married relationship, with tantrums, jealousies, stormings-out and tearful reconciliations. (There are even "infidelities": on one occasion Jackie storms out and shacks up with George Raft instead.) When disreputable Beery totters home after a late night out, Cooper the homemaker is virtually waiting behind the door with a frying pan poised. It's a funny and tender parody of the real thing, though to imply it's not real is to underestimate it."



The on-screen camaraderie between Beery and Cooper was strictly for the cameras. Cooper later revealed the big man tended to ignore him on set. Evidently Beery was not much enamoured of the studio's fondness for pairing him up with kid sidekicks
Source: indeterminate

⁶ if humanly possible...



Source: indeterminate



Caption not required

Source: indetoinimate

It makes a nice change to see George Raft playing a more amiable character, away from the lean and mean Chicago gangster type with which he's indelibly associated, and it's easy to see Clark Gable filling the same role (though doubtless he wouldn't have liked being bested

by Beery in the fight). No change for Beery, however, playing Wallace Beery once again. For that matter, [Jackie Cooper](#) (here 12) plays Jackie Cooper once again, and has a few affecting weepy scenes explicitly written in for him. They'd made "**THE CHAMP**" together two years previously, and "**TREASURE ISLAND**" would follow the next year. Cooper and Beery were certainly a hit with the public of the day, but their aw-shucks camaraderie only looks mawkish and phoney now.

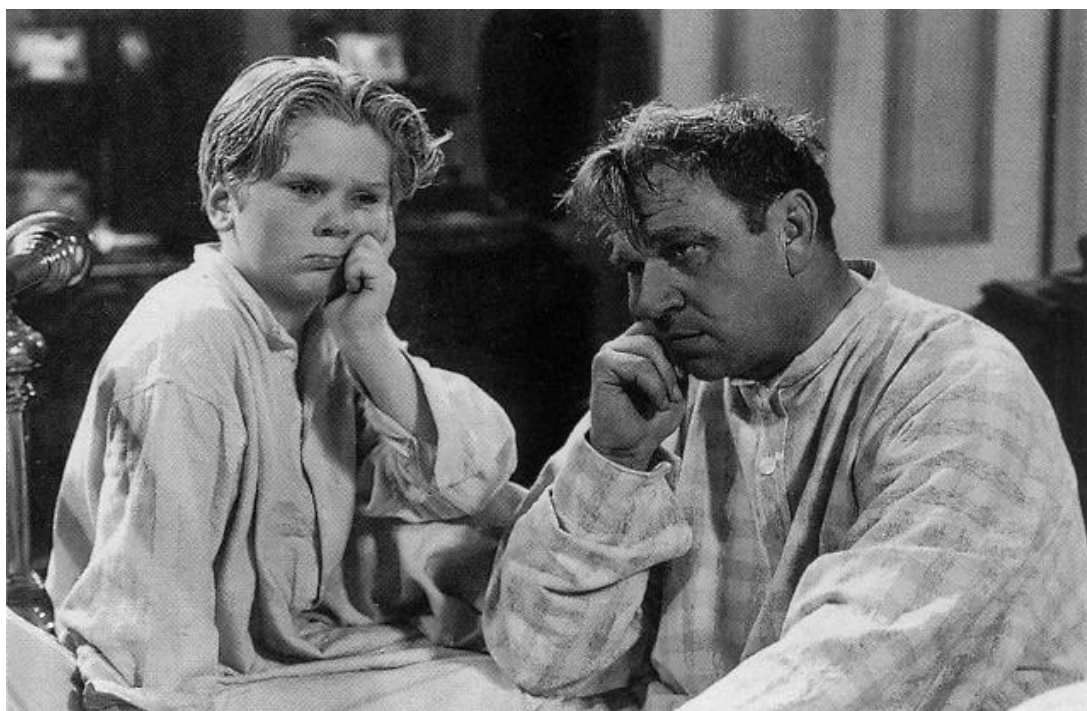
As the gloriously yclept "Swipes McGurk", Cooper is an urchin salvaged from the gutter and living happily with saloon owner Beery, who cautions him emphatically to have no truck with "the skoits". Cooper, naturally, is entirely happy with this philosophy, and when Beery betrays it himself by bringing a "skoit" into the house (Fay Wray, struggling as ever to look virginal) they quarrel, Beery slaps his behind, and Cooper trudges broken-hearted out the door. Before the day is out, he's happily shackled up with Beery's arch-rival Steve Brodie (Raft).

Raft and Beery run competing firefighting teams, and in one early scene – intended for comic effect – the two sides brawl in the street over a fire hydrant while some Chinamen are being burned alive in their workplace, the fire started by Cooper "throwing rocks at the chinks' winders". The script refers to "chinks", "coons" and "niggers" as blithely as it does to "skoits" (Beery slugs one woman senseless with a cosh when she pesters him in conference with "his boy") but what's more, while the reviews above praise the film for its vivacity and perky street flavour, it's actually peppered with racial caricatures (Germans, Chinese, Italians) and is too busy being jocular to show any glimmer of genuine humanity. "**THE BOWERY**" is about as true to New York slum life as the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan films were to Africa. Compare this, for example, with "**A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN**", set in the same place and period.

While it's hilariously prone to deconstruction as a po-faced man-boy-man love triangle, the three of them ultimately marching off to war to escape the clutches of *la femina*, one can't gloss over the brutish insensitivity of the principal characters, locked in their pointless masculine games, like the heroes of many a John Ford film. Raoul Walsh, like Ford, was what they please to call a "man's film-maker". By trying to present the viciousness of 1890s ghetto life as an endless round of high-spirited tomfoolery, "**THE BOWERY**" is as dishonest and morally questionable as "**THE GODFATHER**" in its portrayal of Mafia life. "Colourful" it may be, accurate is another matter.

Holmstrom cites Tad Alexander and Leonard Kibrick as being in the film, but their roles must have been very slight indeed. Alexander (who played the Tsarevitch in "**RASPUTIN AND THE EMPRESS**") was 10, while Kibrick (a kind of dwarfish Spencer Tracy with freckles), in his first recorded film, was 9.

See subject index under **BOY SIDEKICKS**, [HISTORY](#), [ORPHANS / ADOPTION](#), **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS** and **STREET KIDS**.



"We could always try another hand of penuchle..?" "Yeah.. we could do that..."

Source: indeterminate