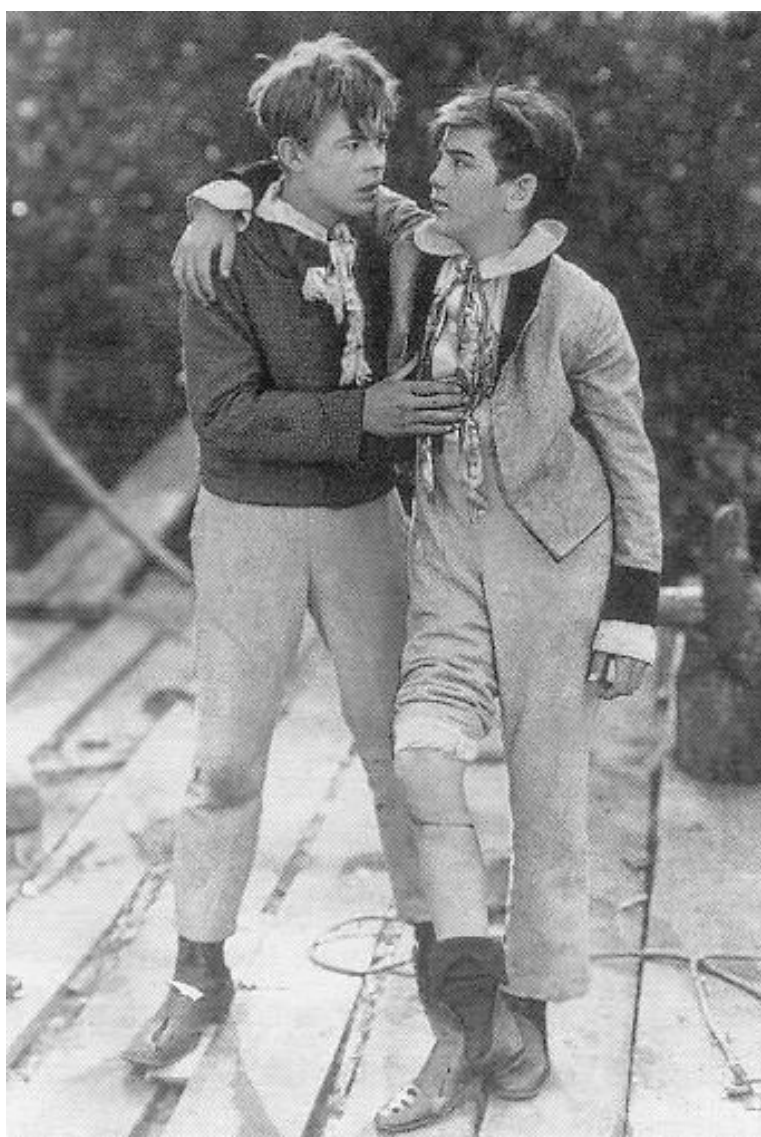


Huckleberry Finn

US : 1919 : dir. : Silent : ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Lewis Sargent; Gordon Griffith; Thelma Salter
 Adult cast unknown

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2684	4	1	4	1,294	3 - - - -	No	<i>unseen</i>



Huck (Lewis Sargent) and Tom (Gordon Griffith, right) rehearse a raft-hitching technique later imitated by Claudette Colbert ("**IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT**")
 Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*



...The ruse works, but Tom and Huck entertain misgivings about their companions
 Source: *A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen*

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Sargent:

"Lewis was one of the older members of the Franklin brothers' "Kiddie" troupe, playing mature roles like Ben Gunn in **"TREASURE ISLAND"**. But at 15 he became the cinema's first convincing Huck Finn. (Robert Gordon in the 1917 **"TOM SAWYER"** and the 1918 **"HUCK AND TOM"** had been far too old, as had Jack Pickford's Tom.)

His boyhood over, the rangy, athletic Sargent acted busily throughout the Twenties and Thirties. He was in **"ANNE OF GREEN GABLES"**, **"NURSE MARJORIE"** and **"THE SOUL OF YOUTH"** (all 1920), **"JUST AROUND THE CORNER"** (21), and the following year in the Jackie Coogan **"OLIVER TWIST"**, but only as Noah Claypole. Also in 1922 he starred in a series of **"Lewis Sargent Comedies"** for Universal.

In 1927 he was the hero of a two-reeler boxing series called **"The Fighting Fool"**, and in 1928 of a series of twelve **"Racing Blood"** stories. In **"CRASHING BROADWAY"** (33) he was billed as "Louis Sargent", but this was probably a printer's error. He was seen in **"NEW ADVENTURES OF TARZAN"** (35) and **"TARZAN AND THE GREEN GODDESS"** (37) before drifting out of the movies."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Gordon Griffith:

"This athletic fellow entered the movies around 1913. With Paul Jacobs, he became one of the leading "Keystone Kids", and was in several of Chaplin's 1914 comedies. Like Wesley Barry (whose **"PENROD"** he would later appear in) he had kid parts in the **"Ham and Bud"** series.

Gordon was no tender flower. Under the headline "A Little Too Much Realism", a 1914 reporter penned a vivid account of the rough-and-tumble in **"LITTLE SUNSET"**. In this baseball story, the eponymous hero "licks the Apache's former bat-boy in a fair fight, and becomes bat-boy himself. Unfortunately, the boy chosen for the defeat didn't want to be licked, and furthermore he didn't propose to be licked as long as his two fists held out. Gordon Griffith, who plays "Little Sunset", had no intention of being downed either, especially as the play demanded that he win out. The fight did not go according to schedule... Holding the boys apart by main strength, Mr Bosworth explained that it was only make-believe. "But I kin lick him easy!" howled the other boy. "Can't either!" yelled Sunset, and they were at it again..."

Griffith could claim to have been the screen's first Tarzan – several minutes ahead of Elmo Lincoln – in **"TARZAN OF THE APES"** in 1918. "Gordon Griffith," wrote a critic, "a youthful actor of uncommon gifts, impersonates Tarzan as a boy. He is a fit



Nobody's going to pack **this** Mississippi boy off to school
Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

subject for a sculptor, as he climbs through the trees in the company of the apes, his naked body showing its grace of line in every move. The same could hardly be said of the grotesquely barrel-chested Lincoln. Gordon swung again two years later in the serial "**SON OF TARZAN**".

He would soon be seen as Tom Sawyer in the 1920 "**HUCKLEBERRY FINN**", but meanwhile must have swallowed hard before signing up for a moral propaganda film of 1919, which did not belie its title: "**THE SOLITARY SIN**". This was "a study of sexual abuses on the part of young men, through neglect on the part of their parents. It follows the careers of three boys. One was taken in hand by his father, while still very young, and profited by learning the secrets of nature and sex. The other boys were allowed to grow up in ignorance; one contracts syphilis and is not allowed to marry, the other goes insane from self-abuse."

It is a relief to hear that Gordon was the one "taken in hand by his father" in the nick of time. (The other, less fortunate principals

were tactfully left uncredited.) One imagines that masturbation had a lean year or two following this hair-raising sermon.

"**JUNGLE TRAIL OF THE SON OF TARZAN**", released in 1923, was simply a cut-down version of the 1920 "**SON OF TARZAN**". Griffith had another lead in "**THE STREET OF TEARS**" (24), and went on acting till the mid-Thirties. Then he moved into assistant directing and producing with various companies."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "Hollywood in the Twenties", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



A spoonful of molasses helps the medicine go down – Tom Sawyer meets his soulmate Becky, and the anarchist inside him begins at once to die.

Source: A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen

No further information currently available. Second of (to date) eleven attempts to capture on screen the wit and southern character of Twain's most memorable – though not in point of fact his favourite – creation. And, as with **"THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER"**, the story and characters have also been filmed under various guises and altered period settings. What is most interesting about these earliest Twain films is that they were shot while the cultural values of the South remained far closer to Twain's time than our own. The civil rights movement was still a very long way off and, if slavery had been abolished, racial apartheid certainly had not, so the social context of the original books was still very much alive in Dixie. Crude as they must certainly be then, these pre-1960s **"HUCKLEBERRY FINN"**s would have been free of the revisionism and anachronistic white man/black man dynamics of the later films. Also perhaps, these had not yet come to be classified as "children's stories" in the Disney sense, so the tone and treatment may be different accordingly.

Lewis Sargent was 15/16 in 1919. He played in **"ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP"**, **"TREASURE ISLAND"** and **"ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES"** for the Franklin brothers' "Kiddie Comedies", but also such titles as **"SIX SHOOTER ANDY"** (18), **"THE HEART OF YOUTH"** (19) and **"MISS ADVENTURE"** (19). Gordon Griffith was 12, with 35 films and six years in the business already to his credit. He made **"HIS SISTER'S KIDS"** and **"OUR CHILDREN"** in 1913, several **LITTLE BILLY** comedies in 1914 and some First World War flag-wavers in 1916/17 – **"IF MY COUNTRY SHOULD CALL"**, **"STORMING THE TRENCHES"**. He never seems to have gained a series in his own name, as other popular boy actors of the day did, and mostly played second fiddle roles, as in **"PENROD"** (20 – to Wesley Barry) or **"PECK'S BAD BOY"** (21 – to Jackie Coogan). However, he played first fiddle in a masturbation movie, and it's not every boy actor who could claim that. Nothing else is known of Thelma Salter, who presumably plays Becky Thatcher.

See subject index under **BOY MEETS GIRL, ORPHANS / ADOPTION, RASCALS & SCALAWAGS, RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS, SILENT CINEMA, WESTERNS** and **MARK TWAIN** for a chronological list of all other known film and TV adaptations..