

School Days

US : 1921 : dir. William Nigh : Warner Bros
prod: Harry Rapf : scr: Walter De Leon & William Nigh : dir.ph.: Jack Brown & Sidney Hickox
[Wesley Barry](#)
George Lessey; Nella P. Spaulding; Margaret Seddon; J.H. Gilmore; Arnold Lucy;
Arlene Blackburn

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Pondering the tableware – Wesley Barry

Source: The Warner Bros Story

The Warner Bros Story comment:

"Inspired by a well-known Gus Edwards song, "SCHOOL DAYS" was another Wesley Barry vehicle, this time dealing with reform. Barry played a youngster whose austere, small town upbringing failed to prepare him for the sophistication of New York's elite society and drove him, instead, to an underworld of crime.

By the last reel, however, he finds spiritual redemption, having reformed and returned to the town where he belongs. The same theme later found its way into Warner Bros. Pictures again and again. The script was written by Walter De Leon and William Nigh, the latter also serving as director. Its cameramen were Jack Brown and Sidney Hickox, who later became famous for his work on such classics as

"TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT". Also cast were George Lessey, Nella P. Spaulding, Margaret Seddon, J.H. Gilmore, Arnold Lucy, and Arlene Blackburn. The producer was Harry Rapf."

NFT Bulletin review:

"The first child star of feature-length Hollywood films was a skinny, lavishly freckled boy of irrepressible vivacity, who first came to notice as one of the smaller orphans of Mary Pickford's **"DADDY LONG LEGS"** (1919). Wesley Barry's sharp, cheeky personality made him a national figure. In **"SCHOOL DAYS"** he's a country boy with a nasty guardian and a nice schoolmarm. Spirited away to New York, he has brushes with smart society and the criminal underworld, and emerges suitably disgusted with both."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "Hollywood in the Twenties", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "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"]

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Barry:

"Mickey Rooney's predecessor as Boy of the People was also red-haired, but skinnier and more elfish, the son of a grocer. He was discovered by Marshall Neilan, who was to direct some of his best films. Neilan later described him as "a natural born artist", and supervised his education with extreme thoroughness. He introduced six-year-old Wesley Barry into the **"Ham and Bud"** series, with the comic duo of Lloyd V. Hamilton and Bud Duncan.

Barry was an instant hit, and over the next few years became well known to filmgoers. He appeared in six of Mary Pickford's movies, beginning with **"THE FOUNDLING"** and

ending with **"DADDY LONG LEGS"** (where he was memorable as a small orphan with a drink problem). In that same post-war year, 1919, he was seen in **"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"** as "George Washington Sticker, an American Boy Scout from Kansas, but temporarily in Belgium". "If any boy actor", wrote a critic, "ever succeeded in making more out of a part than Wesley does out of Sticker, neither the screen nor the stage has any record of the event."

His popularity can be gauged by the fact that in 1920 an impostor tried to cash in on it: a boy called Sidney Ward Scott was touted around by his father on a "Wesley Barry personal appearance" tour. To complaints that he was insufficiently freckled, the Scotts replied that these were only painted on for the camera. Other natural accidents couldn't be so easily foreseen ("Pseudo Wesley Barry Runs Into Real Wesley Barry's Grandma and Runs Away" - headline in "Moving Picture World"), and when the Scotts tried the bluff again in Detroit, Marshall Neilan got wind of it and called the police.

During 1920 Wesley got his first incontrovertible lead in the title role of **"PENROD"**, a feature-length kid film based on the 1914 Booth Tarkington best-seller. Penrod, for the benefit of non-American readers, was the American forerunner of Richmal Crompton's William, who saw the light eight years later - a creature of wild imagination and grandiose stratagems, from the ruins of which, by a mixture of luck and bluster, he emerges unscathed. Subsequent screen Penrods included Ben Alexander, Leon Janney and Billy Mauch.

Wesley Barry's **"PENROD"** wasn't in fact released until 1922, by which time he had had another lead in **"DINTY"** - an earlier role writ larger.

Though he retained his impishness, the teens eventually crept up on Wesley Barry. He married in 1926, but remained a popular screen teenager for several more years. As late as 1934 he was playing a Huck-Finnish role in **"THE LIFE OF VERGIE WINTERS"**, and Ford among others employed him in the 1930s. His last featured role was in **"ROCKY"** (48).

After World War Two, he produced and/or directed a few B movies, and at one stage had his own company, Genie Productions. He

produced 70 of the 113 "**Wild Bill Hickok**" TV half-hours for Broidy Productions, in which he was a partner."

No further information currently available. Not to be confused with "**SCHOOL DAZE**" (1988) which, in typical American fashion, isn't even set in a school, but on a black college campus. However, from the synopses above, this one had precious little to do with school either. [Wesley Barry](#) was 14.

See subject index under [SCHOOL](#), [SILENT CINEMA](#) and possibly **CRIME / DELINQUENCY**.