



# THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

William Fox (Short form bio)  
January 1, 1879 - May 8, 1952



Growing up in Lower East Side tenements, the eldest son of impoverished Hungarian immigrants, Fox began selling candy on the street. That entrepreneurial ambition eventually led Fox to purchase his first nickelodeon in 1904 the start of what would become a \$300 million empire of deluxe studios and theaters that rivaled those of Adolph Zukor, Marcus Loew, and the Warner brothers.

By 1913 he was one of the most powerful of the independent exhibitors and distributors and a successful fight to acquire and distribute films to his own theaters and others against the Motion

Picture Patents Company, who was attempting to monopolize the industry. His legacy of great theaters in America include the Roxy in New York and construction of other “grand palaces” in Fox personally oversaw the construction of many Fox Theatres in American in cities including Atlanta, Detroit, Oakland, San Francisco and San Diego.



In 1915 the Fox Film Corporation, the progenitor of the Twentieth Century-Fox studios, was formed. with insurance and banking money and other investors basing the company out of Fort Lee, New Jersey, where many other early film studios were based at the beginning of the 20th century.



Fox introduced organ accompaniment to the silent films shown in his theatres and pioneered in designing theatres for the comfort of the patrons. Through an adroit use of publicity and marketing, he developed Theda Bara into the first screen vamp and a star.

In 1925 with the studio as a foundation, Fox purchased the U.S. rights to a German sound projection system creating the Movietone sound-on-film system which became along with RCA’s Photophone and Warner Brother’s “Vitaphone” the leading technologies that ended the silent era. In the next few years, Movietone became the primary format for sound on film leading the way with Fox’s Movietone News which was the first commercially successful sound film becoming one of the major newsreel series in the U.S. in theaters throughout the country.



In 1926, Fox bought the private ranch of it's silent Western star Tom Mix, including 176 acres of rolling countryside, a bungalow and a stable, between two roads which became Santa Monica and Pico. Here he started construction of a new studio he called

'Movietone City'. (The bungalow is still preserved on the Fox lot, near the satellite facility). Many of the stages still have Fox Movietone logos above their entrance doors.



In 1927, Marcus Loew, head of rival studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, died, and control of MGM passed to his longtime associate, Nicholas Schenck. Fox saw an opportunity to expand his empire, and in 1929, with Schenck's assent, bought the Loew family's holdings in MGM. However, MGM studio bosses Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg were outraged. An incredible set of circumstances set in place the tragic end of Fox's empire including varied legal maneuvers by Mayer & Thalberg, a horrific car accident that sidelined Fox for many months and ultimately stock market crash in the fall of 1929. His fortune and empire were virtually wiped out and he was forced to file for bankruptcy.

At his bankruptcy hearing in 1936, he attempted to bribe judge John Warren Davis and committed perjury, for which he was sentenced to six months in prison. After serving his time, Fox retired from the film business.

He died more or less unnoticed in 1952 at the age of 73 in New York City. No Hollywood producers came to his funeral. He is interred at Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Fox\\_\(producer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Fox_(producer))

<http://dobywood.com/FoxTheatreAtlanta/WilliamFoxBio.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movietone\\_sound\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movietone_sound_system)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movietone\\_News](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movietone_News)

<https://www.foxtheatre.org/about/fox-historystory>

<http://www.thestudiotour.com/fox/chronology.shtml>

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