

Eyelash Beginnings

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Actress, Seena Owens

Movie still from Intolerance

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Have you ever wondered who designed and who wore the very first pair of eyelashes? Oddly enough, a man named D.W. Griffith from LaGrange, Kentucky designed the first eyelash in 1916. I say oddly because I have lived most of my life in Kentucky and did not discover that until I began doing research on eyelashes several years ago.

Griffith left Kentucky for the lure of Hollywood and the desire to become a movie director. Unfortunately his success as a movie director was marginal. However, in 1916 as director of the movie *Intolerance* his vision for the star, silent screen actress Seena Owens, propelled him to legendary status.

Griffith wanted Owens' eyelashes to brush and gently sweep over her cheeks as she looked down, blinked or closed her eyes. A studio wigmaker was summoned to craft the eyelashes by wefting human hair to a thin piece of gauze. After the hair was attached, the gauze was cut into a growth eyelash shape. The hairs were trimmed hair by hair to insure the correct length and hair direction. The result was dramatic, sweeping eyelashes that created the effect Griffith had envisioned. The only question still unanswered was how to attach the eyelash to Owens' eyelid.

It was finally decided that if wig makers adhesive was good enough to adhere beards to the skin, it should work for the eyelashes. Well, kind of...it held long enough to get the shots Griffith wanted. It also created lots of down time between takes while the eyelashes were re-applied.

I have often wondered if Mr. Griffith ever dreamed his personal vision in 1916 would still be transforming women in every part of the world.