# “Newhallywood” Silent Film Festival

Nearly a decade ago, Friends of Hart Park director E.J. Stephens had an idea: we should put on a silent film festival in William S. Hart Park! It only made sense… countless silent films were shot in our own Santa Clarita Valley, and William S. Hart himself was one of the first superstars of the silent era. It’s hard to believe in retrospect that Southern California never had a silent film festival before.

But thanks to E.J. and a host of other heavy lifters, now we do! On Valentine’s Day weekend, the Friends of Hart Park, the County of Los Angeles, the City of Santa Clarita, and the Natural History Museum brought together all the pieces and parts to host the first annual “Newhallywood” Silent Film Festival. It was well attended, and a complete success!

See the images below for highlights, and click here for more photos.

## “BusTour” Keaton

The festival kicked off with a guided bus tour of Hollywood silent film sites led by E.J. and his wife Kimi and film preservationist Marc Wanamaker. Those three knowledgeable tour guides, along with a busload of history and movie fans got a rare tour of William S. Hart’s own production studio and the site of Buster Keaton’s studio! Along the way, we also visited the Hollywood Heritage Museum and saw many Hollywood landmarks along the way.

## A Pickford♥Fairbanks Valentine Dinner

It was a Valentines night filled with fun, food and love as silent film fans gathered at Hart Hall for the premier event of the festival, the Newhallywood dinner.

This special dinner celebrated the 100th anniversary of the wedding of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Props and wardrobes from their movies were on display throughout the hall thanks to the Natural History Museum. Guest enjoyed the silent film*The Black Pirate* with live accompaniment.

Friends of Hart Park helped with this celebration including board members Nancy Gallardo, Laurene Weste, Jim McCarthy, Tim Murphy, and Patti Rasmussen. Patti’s husband Charlie and their two sons manned the bar.

Catering by Charlie of Valencia put out an amazing spread of delectable delights for dinner. Actor and film director Ricky Schroder, who attended Silents Under the Stars last year, was one of the special guests in attendance for the Valentine’s dinner.

## The Rest of the Weekend…

… was filled with Silent Movies of all sorts! There was a weekend-long running of slapstick comedies in the Saugus Train Station in Heritage Junction, special showings of silent films in Old Town Newhall with live accompaniment, Barnyard animal meet-and-greets, and in William S. Hart’s home the Natural History museum helped guests learn the art of silent film (over-)acting!

In Hart Hall was held a screening of *Little Annie Rooney*, starring Mary Pickford, including a panel discussion with Cari Beauchamp of the Mary Pickford Foundation and Douglas Fairbanks biographer Tracey Goessel. Later we hosted another panel discussion on the topic of silent film with motion picture archivist Stan Taffel, and David Pierce of the Library of Congress and vice president of Cinecon.

At the Newhall Family Theater for the Performing Arts, we were proud to host a screening of the first Oscar ® Winning motion picture, *Wings*, featuring a talk with the director’s son, William Wellman Jr. The evening also featured a showing of portions of the documentary *Wild Bill: Hollywood Maverick*.

Also screened was the Douglas Fairbanks production *The Mark of Zorro* with live accompaniment by Scott Lasky.

The festival wound up with a screening of the 1910 version of D.W. Griffith’s *Ramona* starring Mary Pickford held at Rancho Camulos, the site where it was filmed!

Except for minimal fees charged for the bus tour and the dinner, the entire experience was free to the public. Thanks to all who came for our inaugural silent film festival.

## Stay Tuned…

All in all, it was a complete success, and next year will only be bigger. Plans are already underway, so check back on FriendsOfHartPark.org to make sure you’re in the loop on our annual Newhallywood Silent Film Festival!