



Mary Pickford: Hollywood and the New Woman (Lives of American Women)

Kathleen A. Feeley

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On screen and off, movie star Mary Pickford personified the “New Woman” of the early 1900s—a moniker given to women who began to demand more autonomy inside and outside the home. Well educated and career-minded, these women also embraced the new mass culture in which consumption and leisure were seen to play a pivotal role in securing happiness. *Mary Pickford: Hollywood and the New Woman* examines Pickford’s role in the rise of industrial capitalism and consumer culture, and uses her life and unprecedented career as a wildly popular actress and savvy film mogul to illustrate the opportunities and obstacles faced by American women during this time.

Following Pickford’s life from her childhood on stage to her rise as a powerful studio executive, this book gives an overview of her enduring contribution to American film and mass culture. It also explores her struggles to surpass her confining public film persona as “America’s Sweetheart” with her creative and business achievements—mirroring how women, both then and today, must reconcile domestic life with professional aspirations and work.

About the Lives of American Women series:

Selected and edited by renowned women’s historian Carol Berkin, these brief biographies are designed for use in undergraduate courses. Rather than a comprehensive approach, each biography focuses instead on a particular aspect of a women’s life that is emblematic of her time, or which made her a pivotal figure in the era. The emphasis is on a “good read,” featuring accessible writing and compelling narratives, without sacrificing sound scholarship and academic integrity. Primary sources at the end of each biography reveal the subject’s perspective in her own words. Study questions and an annotated bibliography support the student reader.

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