



20.1998.1 Howard W. Hawks
Elkhart County
Marker Text Review Report
09/21/11

Marker Text:

Born 1896 in house on this site into locally prominent family. Moved with parents to Neenah, Wisconsin 1899 and to Pasadena, California 1906. Hawks - director, producer, screenwriter - is recognized as one of Hollywood's greatest filmmakers. His more than forty-six movies include fine examples of traditional film genres, both comedy and drama. Died 1977.

Report:

Although the text of the Howard Hawks marker is accurate and offers insights into the filmmaker's birthplace and subsequent moves, further information could be added to create a more detailed picture of his early life and his involvement in cinema. More importantly, as it stands now, the marker does not adequately convey the significance of Hawks's film career. Hawks was a versatile director who worked in a wide array of genres. The marker could be re-written to more clearly communicate his accomplishments and contributions in the motion picture business. This report will provide further information regarding Hawks's participation in the filmmaking process, his collaboration with many well-known actors, actresses, and writers, and some of his films.

The marker text's claim that Hawks was born in 1896 into a locally prominent family is correct. The U.S. Federal census of 1900 marks his birth date as May 1896 and lists Hawks at age four at the time of the census.¹ Seminal biographies on the filmmaker, including Todd McCarthy's *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* (1997) and Joseph McBride's *Hawks on Hawks* (1982), both of which cite interviews with Hawks, specify May 30, 1896 as his birthday and show that he originated from Indiana.² McCarthy also offers details related to Hawks's family and their time in Goshen, Indiana that are substantiated by primary sources such as city directories, deeds, and newspapers.³ According to McCarthy, "if you did business in Goshen in 1896, you had to do business with the Hawkses; they had basically made the town, and they virtually owned it."⁴

According to an article in the *Goshen Weekly News-Midweek News* (1899), Frank W. Hawks resigned as manager of the Hawks Furniture Company in 1899 and he and his family moved to Neenah, Wisconsin, where Frank worked with his father-in-law.⁵ The 1900 U.S. Federal Census and 1905 Wisconsin State census confirm this relocation and place Howard in Neenah until his family moved to Pasadena, California in 1906.⁶ The 1910 and 1920 U.S. Federal censuses show him living in California, and it was this state that would serve as his primary residence until his death.⁷

While the marker details Hawks's locations and comments on his family's standing, it could benefit from further information about Howard, such as his service during World War I and his personal interests, both of which later influenced him in his films. According to his World War I Draft Registration Card (1917-1918) and World War I Soldier Service Records (1917-1918), Hawks served in the Army Air Corps during the war.⁸ In interviews with him in McBride's *Hawks on Hawks* (1982), Howard states that he went through ground school and trained as a squadron commander.⁹ These details also appear in several secondary sources.¹⁰ After extensive research in newspaper archives, IHB staff has not located any other primary sources to confirm the statements. Hawks's experiences during the war and his



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interest in airplanes are noteworthy in that they became the subjects of many of his movies, including *The Air Circus* (1928), *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), *Ceiling Zero* (1936), *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), and *Air Force* (1943).¹¹ A 1943 article in the *Indianapolis Star* commented on Hawks's service as a flier in the war and stated that "though he never got to France, the fruits of that training period in the romantic flying crates of those days were presented to moviegoers of America."¹² A *New York Times* article that same year also discussed Hawks's time in the war and remarked that "Hawks is a name that has been associated with practically every thrilling aviation film which has come out in Hollywood."¹³

In a similar manner, Hawks's interest and involvement in racecar driving may also be worthy of mention, as this "passion for cars was at the root of" at least one of his films, according to McCarthy.¹⁴ The *Internet Movie Database* credits Hawks with directing both *The Crowd Roars* (1932) and *Red Line 7000* (1965), each of which featured the sport.¹⁵ This interest in racing helped bring Hawks back to Indiana in the 1930s when he filmed *The Crowd Roars* at the Indianapolis Speedway.¹⁶ A film advertisement and review for the movie appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* on April 17, 1932 and described how some shots from the movie were "actually taken at past races and some [were] atmospheric pictures made by Director Hawks and his crew here [in Indianapolis] last winter."¹⁷ IHB staff has not identified any additional sources regarding Hawks's time in Indiana while filming the movie, though in interviews with the director, he states that he used several Indianapolis 500 drivers in the film.¹⁸ With few ties connecting Hawks with Indiana besides his birth, his experiences with racing and the film may help to establish another link to the state.

The marker correctly states that Hawks worked as a director, producer, and screenwriter during his career. While newspaper articles most frequently reference him in regard to his directing, it is important to include the other roles, as they highlight his active involvement in multiple aspects of the filmmaking process.¹⁹ The *Internet Movie Database* credits him with each of these positions.²⁰ A *New York Times* article written shortly after Hawks's death states that "Hawks always participated in the preparation of his screenplays as well as in the editing of his pictures," believing it "necessary to insure that the movie he shot would be the movie that was seen by the public."²¹ Secondary source, *Howard Hawks, Storyteller*, provides further details, remarking how "he developed (if not actually wrote) every script he shot...He produced most of the films he directed."²²

The marker text makes no reference to Hawks's entry into film. According to the *New York Times* article "Eagles and the Hawks" and an obituary in the *Indianapolis Star*, he began as a property man at Paramount (known at the time as the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation) during his summer vacation, and later moved on to story editing and then directing and producing.²³ Hawks's interviews, featured in *Hawks on Hawks*, confirm this early involvement in films and detail his work on various pictures in the early 1920s.²⁴ Writing about his career in the month following his death, the *Indianapolis Star* reported that the first film he directed on his own was *The Road to Glory* in 1926.²⁵

While the marker text credits Hawks with more than forty-six movies, it is unclear whether it refers only to those films he directed or to all those with which he contributed in some facet. The



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Internet Movie Database lists Hawks as the director of forty-seven titles, but of these six are marked as “uncredited.”²⁶ Listings of his filmography in the secondary sources, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* and *Howard Hawks, Storyteller*, also cite him as the credited director of forty-one films, but the first of these sources also states that “Hawks officially directed forty feature films.”²⁷ In an attempt to avoid confusion, the marker text may be better worded to say “his more than forty movies,” rather than “forty-six.” The text might also benefit from examples of some of his most noteworthy pictures, which include *Scarface*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Big Sleep*, and *Rio Bravo*.²⁸

Additionally, though the marker is accurate in claiming that Hawks’s movies “include fine examples of traditional film genres,” the statement is not effective enough in describing why Hawks and his work merit commemoration. Hawks not only directed comedies and dramas, but aviation movies, westerns, gangster films, musicals, and mysteries as well.²⁹ He worked with a number of major Hollywood stars, including John Wayne, Cary Grant, Katherine Hepburn, and Humphrey Bogart, and even collaborated with writers William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway.³⁰ As the *Indianapolis Star* stated in December 1977, “his knack for discovering stars was legendary.”³¹ Hawks is credited with discovering Lauren Bacall, George Raft, Montgomery Clift, and Carole Lombard.³² He is also recognized as inspiring what has been referred to as the “Hawksian woman” in his films.³³ His female characters were oftentimes strong, sophisticated women who wore pants, talked back to men, and played “consequential roles” in his stories.³⁴ Writing about Hawks in *Senses of Cinema* in 2002, film and literature teacher David Boxwell described how women in Hawks’s films “shed their conventional gender identities as passive, domestic, and feminine to become ‘Hawksian women’ who are involved in male formations and institutions in something more than just peripheral roles.”³⁵ Though Hawks never won an Academy Award as a director, he was nominated for an Oscar for the film *Sergeant York* in 1942 and received a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1960.³⁶ The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented him with an Honorary Award in 1974 that read “a master American film maker whose creative efforts hold a distinguished place in world cinema.”³⁷ Even today, he continues to earn praise, with directors like Quentin Tarantino commenting on how one could always identify a Howard Hawks movie and how “[Tarantino’s] aim is that some kid in 50 years time has the same experience with [him] and [his] films.”³⁸

The final statement on the marker is accurate. According to the *California Death Index, 1940-1997*, Hawks died December 26, 1977 in Riverside, California.³⁹ Obituaries in the *Indianapolis Star*, *Indianapolis News*, and *Newsweek* confirm these details.⁴⁰

¹ “1900 United States Federal Census,” *AncestryLibrary.com*.



² Todd McCarthy, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), 18; Joseph McBride, *Hawks on Hawks* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 10. McBride draws largely from nine interviews he had with Hawks from 1970 through 1977, in which Hawks recounted his early years, his experiences in the film business, and gave details about specific pictures on which he worked.

³ McCarthy, 18-33.

⁴ McCarthy, 18; The "1897 Goshen Directory" (Goshen, IN: The Directory Publishing Co., 1897) provides a listing of the numerous businesses the Hawks held, including C & E Hawks Real Estate and Loans, Dwight H. Hawks Drugs and Medicine, and the Hawks Furniture Company, the latter of which Howard's father, Frank W. Hawks, managed; The "General Deed Index" (Elkhart County, 1890s, Indiana State Library Microfilm) also references these businesses; Additionally, they appear in Abraham E. Weaver, "A Standard History of Elkhart County," vol. 1, (1916), p. 270. Taken together, these sources validate that the Hawks were well-situated in Goshen in the 1890s. More research could be done, however, to trace Howard back to his exact house in Goshen.

⁵ "Frank W. Hawks Resigns," *Goshen Weekly News-Midweek News*, April 26, 1899.

⁶ "1900 United States Federal Census;" "Wisconsin State Census, 1905," *AncestryLibrary.com*; "1910 United States Federal Census," *AncestryLibrary.com*; McBride, 10.

⁷ "1910 United States Federal Census;" "1920 United States Federal Census," *AncestryLibrary.com*; "Obituary: Howard Hawks," *Newsweek*, January 9, 1978, p. 42, Indiana State Clipping File.

⁸ "WWI Soldier Service Cards and Photos, 1917-1918," *AncestryLibrary.com*; "World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," *AncestryLibrary.com*.

⁹ McBride, 13.

¹⁰ McCarthy, 43, 46; Peter Bogdanovich, *The Cinema of Howard Hawks* (New York: Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 7; Gerald Mast, *Howard Hawks, Storyteller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 5; Richard Schickel, *The Men Who Made the Movies* (Chicago, IL: I.R. Dee, 2001), 99.

¹¹ "Hoosier Boy H. Hawks Makes Good in Pictures," *Indianapolis Star*, March 21, 1943, in "Howard Hawks," Indiana State Library Clipping File; "Howard Hawks," [Internet Movie Database](#).

¹² "Hoosier Boy H. Hawks Makes Good in Pictures."

¹³ "Eagles and the Hawks," *New York Times*, January 24, 1943, p. X4.

¹⁴ McCarthy, 157; McBride, 12, 52.

¹⁵ "Howard Hawks," *Internet Movie Database*.



¹⁶ McCarthy, 158-159; Corbin Patrick, "Thrills and Spills on the Speedway," *Indianapolis Star*, April 17, 1932, p. 33.

¹⁷ "The Crowd Roars," *Indianapolis Star*, April 17, 1932, p. 35; "Thrills and Spills on the Speedway."

¹⁸ McBride, 52; Schickel 103.

¹⁹ "Hollywood Giant," *Indianapolis Star*, January 1, 1978, p. 22, in "Howard Hawks," Indiana State Library Newspaper Clippings File; Mast, 7.

²⁰ "Howard Hawks," *Internet Movie Database*.

²¹ Vincent Canby, "Hawks Pleased Public and Critics," *New York Times*, December 28, 1977, p. 34.

²² Mast, 28.

²³ "Eagles and the Hawks;" "Howard Hawks, Legendary Movie Director, Dies," *Indianapolis Star*, December 28, 1977, p. 15, Indiana State Library Microfilm.

²⁴ McBride, 12-13.

²⁵ "Hollywood Giant."

²⁶ "Howard Hawks," *Internet Movie Database*.

²⁷ McCarthy, 667-690; Mast, 390-398; McCarthy, 6.

²⁸ "Howard Hawks," *Internet Movie Database*; "Hollywood Giant;" "Obituary: Howard Hawks," *Newsweek*.

²⁹ Dennis Drabelle, "Macho Genius," *Civilization*, 4(2) (April/May 1997); "Hollywood Giant."

³⁰ "Howard Hawks, Legendary Movie Director, Dies."

³¹ "Howard Hawks, Legendary Movie Director, Dies."

³² "Howard Hawks, Legendary Movie Director, Dies;" "Western Director Howard Hawks Dies," *Indianapolis News*, December 28, 1977, p. 51; "Lauren Bacall-Honorary Award," [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences](#); Lauren Bacall went so far as to say, "he created me," quoted in "Howard Hawks, Director of Films And Developer of Stars, Dies at 81," *New York Times*, December 28, 1977, p. D14.

³³ "Hollywood Giant."



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³⁴ Naomi Wise, "The Hawksian Woman," *Take One*, vol. 3 no. 3, April 1972, reprinted in *Howard Hawks American Artists*, 111-119: 111.

³⁵ David Boxwell, "Howard Hawks," [*Senses of Cinema*](#), May 21, 2002.

³⁶ "The 14th Academy Awards (1942) Nominees and Winners," [*Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*](#); "Howard Hawks," [*Hollywood Walk of Fame*](#); "Howard Hawks," *Internet Movie Database*.

³⁷ "Academy Award "Academy Award Acceptance Speeches," [*Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*](#) .

³⁸ Ben Child, "Why Quentin Tarantino Wants to be the Next Howard Hawks," [*Guardian*](#), January 12, 2010.

³⁹ "California Death Index, 1940-1997," [*AncestryLibrary.com*](#).

⁴⁰ "Howard Hawks, Legendary Movie Director, Dies;" "Western Director Howard Hawks Dies;" "Obituary: Howard Hawks."