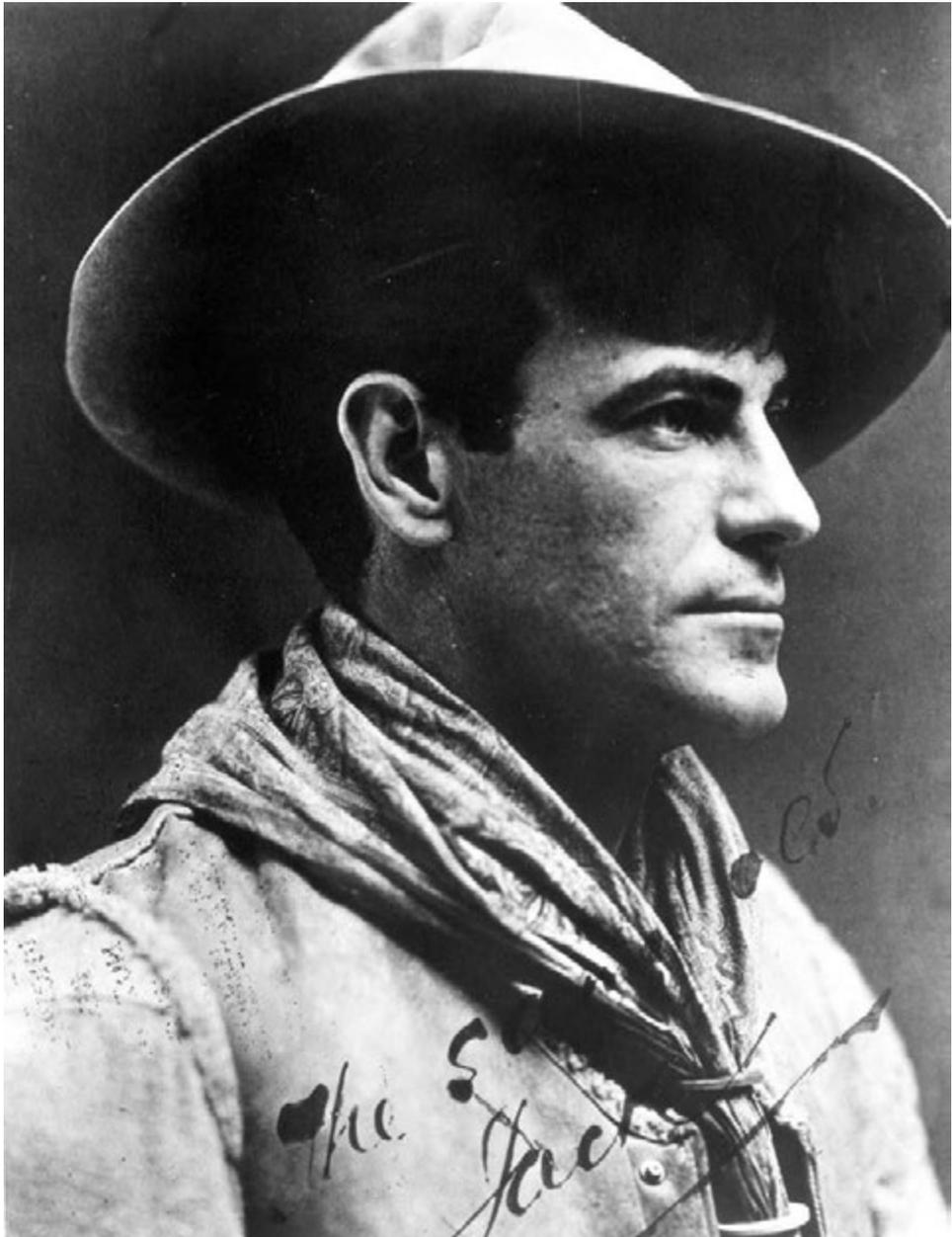


Hollywood's First Australian



J. P. McGowan. The inscription reads: "The same old Jack."
(Courtesy of the Hollywood Museum Collection,
City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks.)

Hollywood's First Australian

THE ADVENTUROUS LIFE OF J. P. MCGOWAN,
THE MOVIE PIONEER THEY CALLED 'THE RAILROAD MAN'

by JOHN J. MCGOWAN

Display Vision
PRODUCTIONS

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Adelaide, South Australia

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First published in 2005 by McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640, under the title *J. P. McGowan – Biography of a Hollywood Pioneer*; ISBN 0-7864-1994-6. Library of Congress and British Library cataloguing data are available.

This edition published in 2016 by Display Vision Productions Pty Ltd.
Printed in Australia by Digital Press Australia.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Creator: McGowan, John, 1941- author.

Title: Hollywood's first Australian: the adventurous life of J.P. McGowan, the movie pioneer they called "The Railroad Man" / John J. McGowan.

Edition: Revised edition.

ISBN: 9780646950174 (paperback)

Notes: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Subjects: McGowan, J. P. (John Paterson), 1880-1952.

Motion picture producers and directors—United States—Biography.

Motion picture actors and actresses—United States—Biography.

Motion picture producers and directors—Australia—Biography.

Motion picture actors and actresses—Australia—Biography.

Silent films—United States.

Dewey Number: 791.43092

To my wife, Ursula,
who first urged me to write it,
and then put in so much sheer hard work
helping me achieve it.

About the Author

JOHN J. MCGOWAN has written and directed documentaries and educational productions for national television. He is also a broadcaster and motion picture commentator.

He has won a number of television industry awards, including a Diploma of Merit from the Adelaide International Film Festival (1975) for the documentary *Beyond is Anything – Sidney Nolan and Ern Malley*; and the inaugural Australian Human Rights Commission Media Award (1984) for the six-episode documentary series *Six Australians*.

He is a Churchill Fellow (1977) and a graduate of the University of Adelaide, with a BA majoring in History and Politics. He was born in South Australia and lives there now.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my very good friend Kristine Krueger of the National Film Information Service in the Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Beverly Hills, California. It would simply not have been possible for me to have written this biography without the thoughtful, patient and professional research that Kristine carried out on my behalf during the course of the 15 years in which the project was taking shape.

I would also like to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions to this project:

Patricia King Hanson, executive editor and project director of the *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films*, for granting me permission to reproduce filmographic information from the *AFI Catalog* and for her expression of encouragement for the project.

Linda J. Barth, Division Head, Administrative Resources Division, Department of Recreation and Parks, Los Angeles, for granting permission to reproduce photographs from the Hollywood Museum Collection and for her support of the project.

Stephen Pearson, deputy head, technical services, British Film Institute National Library, for granting me permission to use information from the Film Index International database.

Anthony Slide, motion picture historian, for permission to quote from his book *Early American Cinema* and for his expression of encouragement for the project.

Floris Van der Merwe of the University of Stellenbosch for so graciously making available to me the results of his research into the Boer War Spectacle at the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904, and for taking the time to read, and comment on, the relevant chapters in my book.

George Stevens, Jr., producer, director and motion picture historian, for granting me permission to use the photograph of his father chairing an executive meeting of the Screen Directors Guild.

Bob King, editor of *Classic Images* magazine, for granting me permission to use quotations from several articles.

Mark Stevens, city archivist, City of Sydney Archives, for granting permission to use the photograph of Burton Street, Camperdown.

Ken Williams, Manager, Australian Railway Historical Society, New South Wales Division, for granting me permission to use the photograph of the Eveleigh Locomotive Works.

Debbie Sander, of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Jerzy Toeplitz Library, Sydney, for her pleasant and professional research assistance.

Sarah Sanderson, of the Australian Film Institute Research Collection at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Victoria, for her thoughtful and professional research assistance.

John M. Cureton, honorary librarian of the Naval Military and Air Force Club of South Australia Inc., for granting me access to the club's library.

The library staff at the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide and at the Flinders University Library.

Ted Gostin of Generations Press, Sherman Oaks, California, for his great skills in searching out details of the lives of many of the people mentioned in this book.

Ted Elrick, of the Directors Guild of America, for his friendly and professional assistance.

Shirley Freitas, of California, who has a very special interest in this project and has made some valued contributions.

Annette M. D'Agostino Lloyd, celebrity biographer and motion picture historian, of Sylmar, California, for her advice and encouragement for the project.

David Donaldson, film nostalgist and founder of the J. P. McGowan Appreciation Society in South Australia, for his determined enthusiasm to make J. P. McGowan better known in his native land.

Franklin Rosenfeldt, a lifelong friend, who took the trouble to read the manuscript when it was still at an early stage of development, and then gave his whole-hearted encouragement in urging me to continue with the project.

Maria Harriss, another great friend, who shares my dreams about the movies and who was a helpful sounding-board throughout the writing of this book.

My special thanks to all of the team at McFarland who really mean it when they say they are "author friendly."

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Preface to the Second Edition

This revised and re-titled edition is enhanced by the inclusion of many new images of J. P. McGowan's family and his working life. Most of these images have been sourced from *The Gilmour Collection* which came to light in Queensland following the publication of the first edition of my book. I wish to express my thanks to John Gilmour for his gracious cooperation in making these images available to me for my research, and for granting me permission to publish a selection of them.

I also wish to thank McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, for generously permitting, and encouraging me to publish this revised edition in Australia.

*John J. McGowan
Adelaide, South Australia
Summer, January 2016*

Preface

In a Hollywood movie industry magazine there is a photograph of John Paterson McGowan in a Los Angeles hospital bed, balancing a portable typewriter on a tray in front of him and speaking into a telephone. The caption tells us that J. P. McGowan, in hospital to recover from injuries suffered when a movie stunt went wrong, was, during his recuperation, “directing his productions at long range” and continuing to write script material for ongoing productions (*Photoplay Magazine*, March 1915 p. 54). This photograph and its caption go a long way towards summing up the manner in which J. P. McGowan lived his life.

Australian-born Hollywood pioneer John Paterson McGowan (1880–1952) was a big, rugged soldier of fortune, an adventurer who became an actor, screenwriter, director, producer and later an industrial advocate for the motion picture industry. He was creative, fearless, tough and inexhaustible, qualities that are reflected in both the vast numbers of movies he made and in the style and content of the movies themselves. He was actively involved in the movie industry right up to the end of his life. In retirement, after he had ceased acting, directing and producing, he became executive secretary of the Screen Directors Guild (later Directors Guild of America). He worked for the Guild until his death.

Although his tough appearance meant that J. P. McGowan played the role of the heavy in numerous movies, in real life he was something of a romantic, a quality that shines through in his descriptive writing. He was certainly a man’s man, but one who, during 30 years of moviemaking, formed highly effective professional collaborations with three creative women and was sensitive and vulnerable enough to be emotionally damaged when the most significant of these relationships went off the rails.

When he became a director, McGowan was dubbed The Railroad Man. A production still from one of the earliest episodes of his classic series *The Hazards of Helen* shows a villain in the process of tying Helen Holmes to a railroad track. The image of the heroine being tied to the track in front of an onrushing locomotive has become an iconic symbol of silent era cliffhangers.

McGowan was involved in more than 600 productions over a time span of three decades, but despite this vast body of work, his significant contribution to the global development of the motion picture industry has never been widely acknowledged. The movie genres with which he was most involved — railroad movies, series Westerns and serials— eventually fell from favor with audiences, and the memory of what he had achieved in Hollywood began to fade away.

At an early age I developed a passion for the movies, a passion fueled by the fact that there were ten picture theaters within walking distance of the Adelaide city hotel that was my home until I was almost 15 years old. Easy access to so many movie theaters was a wonderful asset in the pre-television era. Television did not arrive in South Australia until 1959 and just two years later I began work as a TV journalist.

My father, Edward John McGowan, needs to be acknowledged for sparking the thought which eventually, many years later, resulted in this book. Dad began his working life as a professional jockey and later became a hotelier but he, too, had a love of theater and the movies. Aware of my interest, Dad mentioned to me somewhat enigmatically on a couple of occasions when I was a kid, that sometime in the past, “one of the McGowans” (as he put it) had “gone to Hollywood to work in the movies.”

In time, I decided to attempt to discover who that McGowan was. That was the beginning of my quest to unearth the story of John Paterson McGowan.

In this book, the first biography of one of Hollywood’s significant pioneers, I have set out to chronicle J. P. McGowan’s life and to place him within the context of the times in which he lived and worked.

*John J. McGowan
Adelaide, South Australia
Fall 2004*

1

Who Was John Paterson McGowan?

When John Wayne walked out of the Monument Valley sagebrush in 1939 as the Ringo Kid and hitched that fateful ride on John Ford's *Stagecoach*, the movie became the launching pad that sent The Duke to the stars. The same movie was also probably carrying another Hollywood performer on one of the last rides of an illustrious, but now much less well-known, movie career. It is likely that John Paterson McGowan, whose movie career had begun 30 years earlier, used his uncredited acting role in *Stagecoach* as his farewell ride into the sunset.¹

There was, however, more than just a passing connection between Wayne and McGowan. While The Duke eventually came to personify the very essence of the Hollywood Dream Factory, his own 40-year career began with an apprenticeship in B-features. He had to learn the craft of screen acting, and to do this he needed to be given work and encouragement by directors who recognized his potential. One of those directors was J. P. McGowan who, seven years before *Stagecoach*,² directed the 25-year-old Wayne in the 12-part cliffhanger serial *The Hurricane Express*. McGowan also co-wrote the screenplay for this serial. His double-handed contribution to this serial as writer and director was typical of the level of involvement which he applied to almost every production in which he was concerned. He acted in many of the movies that he directed, and he also wrote and produced numerous others. He brought an astounding breadth of talent to the motion picture industry.

John Paterson McGowan's Hollywood career was immensely productive. He achieved a prodigious output as actor, director, writer and producer, with an involvement in over 600 productions. Unlike many of his colleagues, he made a successful transition from the silents to the talkies, and as an actor, he was never out of work until his retirement from the screen at the age of 60. Despite this stellar record, McGowan suffered the fate of many of Hollywood's trailblazing pioneers: He was eventually largely forgotten.

However, the contribution which he made to the development of the motion

picture industry was, like that of many of the other unsung pioneers, of enduring significance. McGowan's prodigious production numbers on their own are enough to demand that he should rate a special regard amongst Hollywood's pioneers. Only a select few can claim a body of work approaching anything like the numbers of productions in which McGowan had a hand. However, the measurement of his contribution to the development of motion pictures and the motion picture industry goes deeper than a simple tally of his production figures.

He brought to the movies his experience and skill as a stage actor, and tuned this skill to the new medium of motion pictures with such success that he became a screen actor who readily found work either as a leading man or a major heavy for his entire 30-year career.

He was a fine storyteller, and as a director he brought stories to the screen in a manner that kept his audiences coming back for more. He had a guiding hand in creating series and serials that were at the forefront of developments in the technique of motion picture storytelling and often exhibited high levels of production values. When he retired from the screen, he continued to work for the industry that he loved and, for the remaining 13 years of his life, played a major role in helping to consolidate the strength of the then newly formed Screen Directors Guild.

John Paterson McGowan, who used the name "Jack," and was also widely known as J. P. McGowan,³ worked *in* and *for* the movie industry, from its beginnings on the East Coast of the United States through to the flowering of Hollywood during its Golden Years. From his first involvement with movies in 1909 until his death in his Hollywood home in 1952, this astounding achiever devoted his boundless energy to the movies. As director or actor he worked with some of the biggest "names" in the industry. As well as John Wayne, his professional associates included many members of Hollywood's "A" list who became prominent from the 1930s to the 1950s and beyond. As a Western specialist director and actor, he was associated with a number of the cowboy stars who brought worldwide popularity to the Hollywood Western.

For the past 20 years or so, Australians have crossed the Pacific in increasing numbers to take their place in the motion picture industry. This migration of Australian talent to the Hollywood of today parallels a similar movement of Australians to the motion picture industry during McGowan's era.⁴ Included amongst the numbers of Australians who found work in the new movie industry were the creatively named Louise Lovely (born Louise Carbasse), Clyde Cook (*The Kangaroo Boy*), stuntman Snowy Baker and Annette Kellerman (*The Diving Venus*) who, herself, later became the subject of a movie, *Million Dollar Mermaid* (1952), in which she was portrayed by Esther Williams.

However, of the Australians who worked in the new industry, McGowan was the first to consolidate a long-term career in Hollywood itself. He was sent out to the Kalem Company's Glendale studio in mid-1913, thereby staking a claim to the title of Hollywood's First Australian. McGowan certainly led the charge ahead of the numerous Australian actors, writers, directors, cinematographers, producers and others who have made successful careers in the American movie industry over the past 90 years.

By the 1930s, if McGowan chose to reflect on his origins in the railroad junc-

tion town of Terowie, located in the backblocks of South Australia, he would no doubt have wondered at the distance he had traveled in making a career in an industry that, at the time of his birth, did not even exist. He had traveled a long way from Terowie to Hollywood.

John Paterson McGowan was born on February 24, 1880, when the State of South Australia was still a British colony. In that same year, a “wild colonial boy” named Ned Kelly,⁵ the last of Australia’s outlaw bushrangers, was hanged in the Melbourne jail, bringing to an end the era that was the equivalent of America’s Wild West. McGowan also grew up as something of a wild colonial boy, but he channeled his desire for adventure into activities which were more socially acceptable, albeit often just as dangerous, as those of the bushrangers.

Jack’s parents were immigrants who had arrived in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, just two years before he was born. Thomas Kennedy McGowan was 27 years old and his wife, Mary Paterson McGowan, was 21 when they sailed from Plymouth, England, in the vessel *Hydrabad* to make a new life in Australia. Thomas, a railway stoker, planned to take up work in the rapidly expanding railroad system in South Australia. Jack’s mother was Scottish-born, while his father was probably born in Ireland. They were married in Edinburgh in 1876, in the rites of the Presbyterian Church. Mary, then 20 years old, was a domestic servant. Thomas’ father, Edward McGowan,⁶ already deceased at the time of the marriage, had been a locomotive engine driver, thereby beginning three generations of railwaymen which culminated in his grandson, J. P. McGowan, who would eventually become known as The Railroad Man. Mary’s father’s occupation was that of farm “grieve,” or overseer. The surname McGowan derives from the Gaelic expression for an artisan or smith, and is fairly widespread in both Scotland and Ireland.

By the time they sailed for South Australia, Mary was pregnant with the young couple’s first child, and Thomas Edward (Ted) McGowan was born in Adelaide soon after their arrival in 1878. Although their origins were working class, Thomas and Mary displayed unusual pride in their family lineage, and reflected this in the naming of their children. Their first-born, Thomas Edward, was given the names of his father and grandfather, and the names of their next two children included the surnames of Thomas’ mother (Hart) and Mary’s mother (Paterson).⁷

The family soon left Adelaide to follow the expansion of the railroad in the north of the colony. They settled in the railroad junction town of Terowie, and Jack was born there in 1880. Jack was thus connected with trains from the moment of his birth. Terowie is located 130 miles (about 216 kilometers) north of Adelaide. The township is surrounded by fertile, grain-growing country. However, it is not far below the northerly limits of arable land in South Australia; just a little way beyond Terowie, the arid landscape takes on a desert-like appearance which stretches away to the northern horizon. Late February, when J. P. McGowan was born, is summer in South Australia and, at that time of the year, the rolling hills and plains around Terowie are typically parched, bleached and shimmering under a blazing sun which frequently takes temperatures to a scorching 100 degrees Fahrenheit (39 degrees Centigrade) and beyond. In 1880, Terowie was a bustling center with a population of around 5,000 people. Photographs of Terowie taken at the time show fine stone



Workers' cottages in Camperdown, Sydney, in the late nineteenth century close to Brown Street where J. P. McGowan spent his childhood. (Courtesy of City of Sydney archives, CRS 51/543.)

buildings with broad verandas. Hotels, banks, general stores, a large “coffee palace,” livery stables, harness makers and blacksmiths flank the wide, unsealed main street.⁸ In more recent times, the town has been bypassed by both the railroad and the main highway, and the population has dwindled to about 150.

Jack McGowan was destined to become Terowie's most notable son.⁹

By 1883 Jack's family had moved back to the city of Adelaide and another child, Allan, was born there. Two years later the family moved to Sydney, in New South Wales, where in February 1885 Thomas began work in the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshops of the New South Wales Railways. He would remain there until his eventual retirement, after 34 years of service, in 1919. Five more children were born after the couple settled in Sydney. However, only six of the family's nine children, four boys and two girls, survived beyond infancy.

In New South Wales, the family settled down in Sydney's inner-western suburbs, a closely built, working-class area. Their cramped workman's cottage at 29 Brown Street, Camperdown, was only a few minutes by train from the Eveleigh Workshops. The rough-and-tumble streets of Camperdown thus became the environment

in which Jack grew up. The house at number 29 no longer exists, and Brown street itself has, over the years, been totally transformed. Stylish apartment buildings, set within landscaped surroundings, now stand in place of the tiny workers' cottages that, in Jack's time, huddled together and crowded to the edge of the unpaved, narrow street. Life would have been a constant financial struggle for Jack's family but, at this time, it is unlikely that there was any indication that the family would face even harsher times in the future and would ultimately be torn apart from within.

If today's commuters from Sydney's western suburbs glance out of the window as their electric trains approach Central Station, they will glimpse a long factory building, solidly built of soot-colored brick, which now forms part of a contemporary technology precinct. This building was once the major structure of the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshops. To the passing commuter, there remains little to reflect the vital role played by these workshops for over 100 years, in the building and maintaining of the locomotives and other rolling stock which served the extensive New South Wales railway system. In its heyday, Eveleigh employed over 3,000 workers.

When Jack's father came to Eveleigh, he was obliged to start again at the bottom, despite his qualifications and experience gained both in Scotland and South Australia. During a trial period, he worked for four months as a cleaner before being promoted to the locomotive crew position for which he was already qualified. Thomas Kennedy McGowan was clearly a man of great determination, a quality he would have needed to see him through his subsequent 34 years at Eveleigh, for the workshops would have been a most unpleasant place to earn a living.¹⁰ They exhibited many of the characteristics of the typical nineteenth century "dark satanic mills." They were dangerous places, cluttered with unshielded machinery and flapping pulley-belts. The deafening noise from the clangor of this machinery, together with the banging of riveting and boilermakers hammers, would have added to the danger by making communication between workers difficult. Grit and soot would have filled the air; and in Sydney's humid summers, the level of heat inside the buildings, already high from the many furnaces, would have been stifling.

Young Jack would have known this place well and from time to time, as a child and teenager, may even have found some casual employment there, carrying out menial tasks. Perhaps, under the watchful eye of his father, Jack would have learned to drive a locomotive at Eveleigh. It is also very likely that yarns about the work of railroad men, recounted by Jack's father and his colleagues at Eveleigh, became an integral part of Jack's consciousness, and eventually found their way into some of the dozens of railroad dramas which Jack later wrote and directed. It is clear from Jack's railroad productions that he found much to admire about the skill and dedication of railroad men such as his father. One of the notable aspects of Jack's railroad dramas is the great respect which he shows toward ordinary railroad workers, particularly the engine drivers. There is a fine example of this embodied in the fond son-to-father relationship depicted in the opening sequences of the serial *The Hurricane Express*, which Jack co-wrote and co-directed in 1932.

The 12-chapter serial begins with the son of an old engine driver giving his father a ride in his car to the railroad yards, where the old man is to begin his shift as the driver of the mighty locomotive known as *The Hurricane Express*. Upon arrival



at the yards, father and son stroll over to the huge engine. They then begin a passage of dialogue in which the son, an airline pilot, played by John Wayne, teasingly, but respectfully, ribs his father about the potential of the airplane to supplant the railroad as a faster form of transportation. Noting the pride which his father takes in the great engine, the young man opens the dialogue with the words:

You're sure jealous of this old boiler, Dad.

For his response, Jack McGowan provides the old engine driver with words that encapsulate the ethos of the railroader. The old man says:

Why shouldn't I be? My boy, she's part of me, or maybe I'm just part of her, I don't know. I took her out on her first run, and I hope I'll be at her throttle when I make my last.

However, the young man continues to tease his father. He grins, pats him gently on the shoulder and says:

Too bad the old heap's out of date.

This really gets the old man's dander up. He retorts:

What do you mean, "out of date"? You're talking about The Hurricane Express, the fastest train in the country...the fastest train in *any* country.

Looking skyward at a passing airplane, the younger man says with a smile:

I wasn't comparing it with *trains*.

The old driver scoffs:

Them playthings! The Hurricane Express gets you there on time. She's safe and she's sure.

The driver continues, making the point that his train is able to carry many more passengers than the relatively small airplanes of the time. At this point the son laughingly gives in, allowing his father to end the verbal tussle with the upper hand. There is no suggestion of any ill will between them, only great respect and deep understanding, forming the basis of a warm and relaxed relationship between father and son.

Not long after this sequence, The Hurricane Express is wrecked by the villains and the old engine driver dies in the crash. His son arrives at the crash site just moments too late to prevent the catastrophe, and discovers his father's body in the wreckage of the engine cab. An emotional John Wayne vows to bring his father's murderers to justice "if it takes the rest of my life." *The Hurricane Express* was released in 1932, the year following the death of Jack's own father.

The railroaders depicted in Jack's movies are utterly dependable but with a

Opposite: The Eveleigh Locomotive Workshops near Sydney, where J. P. McGowan's father was employed for 34 years. (Courtesy of ARHS [NSW] Railway Resource Centre.)

freedom of spirit which seems to draw strength from the power of the great engines under their control. However, the circumstances in which men worked at Eveleigh conspired to crush the human spirit. Eveleigh was a place of rigid, almost prison-like working conditions, where men's lives were regulated throughout the day, to the minute, by time clocks and the ringing of bells.

Jack clearly disdained this level of workplace rigidity and the effect it had on men's spirits. When he said in a magazine interview in 1916 that, as a director in charge of a production crew, he wanted to have on his team "no men with time-clock souls," it was a statement that echoed with his memories of Eveleigh. In the same interview he said:

I want no punctuality that can be measured by a mess of springs and wheels. I want no man working with me who arrives at the same minute each morning to punch a clock, for he will be quite as punctual in punching it on his way out in the evening. I want no man who comes merely to spend a specified number of hours at the studio. I want the men who come because they are interested. If that interest is not strong enough to get them here on time, no time-clock would do it [*Photoplay*, October 1916].

While taking a critical view of clock-punching workers, Jack's statement is also a critique of the rigid system that he knew so well from his father's experience. Eveleigh was a place from which the free-spirited young Jack would have wanted to flee, as indeed he eventually did.

However, his father stuck it out and even took on additional paid work at the factory to supplement his meager wage. For a period of ten years he undertook the extra role of Secretary and Instructor of the Ambulance Corps. Given the fearsome working conditions at Eveleigh, it can be imagined that he was called upon far too often in this capacity. In the last few years before his retirement, Thomas Kennedy McGowan achieved some respite from the rigors of the factory when he was appointed as an instructor for engine drivers and located on a railway carriage which had been especially equipped as a mobile classroom. Thomas had developed considerable skills in practical engineering and, in his own time, he constructed locomotive models for use as teaching aids in the instruction carriage. The fact that Thomas took the trouble to build the models reveals his thoughtful and creative approach to the teaching process. Indeed, the models proved to be such valuable instructional aids that, when Thomas was eventually obliged to retire, the New South Wales Railways purchased the models from him for a small sum of money, in order to continue to use them for instructional purposes.

Thomas applied to keep on working beyond the normal retirement age and managed, on two separate occasions, to persuade the railways to keep him on for a little longer. When he was finally obliged to retire, he was 69 years of age. However, it was not only dedication to his job that motivated his desire to keep on working at this age, for by this time he had fathered a second family of five children and would have been sorely in need of an income.

Thomas Kennedy McGowan made the railroad his life. He was intelligent, diligent, hard-working, resourceful, skilled with his hands and determined, all qualities

which were reflected in his son Jack. However, Thomas was not able to keep his marriage together, and he and Mary eventually separated when Jack was in his teens. Mary moved out, but Thomas continued to live in the house in Brown Street, and by 1903 had formed a relationship with English-born Beatrice Ames, 29 years his junior, the daughter of one of his colleagues. Tragically, Beatrice died at the age of 38 following complications resulting from the birth of their fifth child. At the age of 67, and on the verge of retirement, Thomas was left to care for five young children, including a newborn infant. When he retired, Thomas moved to Parramatta, just outside Sydney, and passed away there in December 1931, at the age of 82.

After she left her husband, Jack's mother lived for a time at various addresses around Sydney, but eventually moved to Sydney Harbour's leafy, genteel North Shore, a far cry from the cluttered streets of Camperdown. Here she spent the last 20 years of her life. By the 1920s Jack was well-established in the movie industry and may have provided some assistance to enable his mother to make the move to this more pleasant neighborhood. The break-up of their parents' marriage seems to have brought the Sydney-based children closer to their mother, and some of them also chose to live near her, in the same neighborhood. Intriguingly, by the time she passed away in September 1940, Jack's mother had begun using the Christian name of *Marion* rather than the simpler *Mary* of her younger years. Perhaps this modification of her name reflected an attempt to try to put behind her some of the disappointment resulting from the breakdown of her marriage to Thomas.

Young Jack's childhood in the impoverished streets of Camperdown would have been made additionally unpleasant by the deterioration of his parents' relationship. His formal education would also have been limited by his family's lack of money. Much of his early education would have been gleaned in the poor-but-honest neighborhood in which he lived: the school of hard knocks. Schooling of a more formal kind was rudimentary for most Australian working class children during the late 1800s. To progress beyond the Primary years was unusual and the concept of a University degree was simply out of the question for most working class Australians. However, young Jack was fortunate in that he did learn to read and write, and this provided him with the basis on which to build a more elaborate structure of knowledge during the course of his life. Eventually, schooled by his short but intensive years of dealing with the spoken word in the theater, Jack became an accomplished and stylish writer, able to express his thoughts and observations with clarity through the precise use of language and an extensive vocabulary.

With little formal education to guide him, it was life itself that became Jack's educational wellspring. His travels, adventures and intensive working experiences accumulated within him and gradually changed him from the raw young adventurer of his youth into the sophisticated man of the world of his maturity. Throughout his life, Jack exhibited a thirst for knowledge, and this thirst, coupled to a quest for adventure, led to his early years of travel. Indeed, his eventual decision to travel to the United States and take part in the St. Louis World's Fair, a decision which ultimately contained momentous, life-changing implications for Jack, was another early example of his quest for adventure coupled with his urge to learn.

Although Jack never lost his adventurous spirit, in time it became more

temperate, modified by the astounding variety of the experiences which he encountered throughout his life. While some of these experiences strengthened and toughened him, they also brought him wisdom. He was, for instance, proud of his service in the Boer War, and cherished the medals which were awarded to him. But later, during the First World War, he resisted any temptation to again become involved in the military. During the Second World War, when he was beyond the age for military service, he gave freely of his time and energy in fund-raising for the American Red Cross Organization, revealing his understanding of the need to provide for those who suffer as a result of war.

Over the years, Jack's professional skills became well developed. From his beginnings as an actor in the motion picture industry, he became a respected director and was eventually able to take his place on the organizational board of the Signal Film Corporation. Later in his career he became, for a short time, a producer of his own movies. In this venture he had the misfortune to coincide with the beginning of the Great Depression and he probably suffered financially as a result. However, at the very end of his life, he was still planning further projects, this time in television. His skills of organization and negotiation proved of great value during his years as Executive Secretary of the Hollywood Screen Directors Guild (later to become the Directors Guild of America).

However, much as Jack changed and developed, one thing about him did not change. This was his empathy with the common working man. This attitude is embedded in the characters in his movies and is, in all likelihood, one of the reasons why he was so ready to undertake industrial work with the Screen Directors Guild. Jack's sympathy for the working man was probably shaped by the values learned during his childhood amongst Sydney's working poor.

Jack's lifelong voyage of self-discovery began at the age of 17. Fired with a quest for adventure and an urge to escape from the downtrodden surroundings of his childhood and the overhanging ogre of a claustrophobic life of toil in the railroad factory, young Jack set out into the world. He left home and went to sea, undertaking an apprenticeship on a shipping line. However, after several voyages, he tired of life at sea and found work on the land as a stockman in the cattle industry. He settled into this for a year or two, becoming an expert horseman and a crack shot. The understanding for horses which he developed during this time, was an important skill which was to serve him well in later life.

By the time he left home, Jack would have achieved the physique that would eventually grace the silver screen in scores of productions. He was over six feet tall (his older brother, Ted, grew to a towering six feet six inches), broad-shouldered and strongly built. His head was crowned with a thick crop of wavy, dark hair. His face reflected something of his inner strength: a square jaw; wide thin-lipped mouth; long, well-shaped nose; and wide-set, dark eyes. It was a face that suggested quiet depths of intelligence and resolve, the face of a person who was not to be trifled with. Later, in closeups on the big screen, it proved to be a face which had the power to command the attention of an audience. Jack's face proved to be perhaps a little too gaunt and chiseled to be the face of a matinee idol leading man. However, his face *was* well-suited to embody the strongly defined characters that Jack would often play

in his long acting career. It could be an appropriately threatening face to suit the roles of villains and heavies, while on other occasions it could be the resolute face of authority required to portray the lawmen that Jack also frequently played.

No doubt some of Jack's determination to carve out a good living in the movie industry was motivated by the memories of his impoverished childhood. However, unlike some high-flying Hollywood performers, Jack never denied his humble origins and was always ready to acknowledge that his birthplace was the little township of Terowie in South Australia. Despite his busy life, he also kept in regular contact with his family back in Sydney, particularly his youngest sister Dorothy, who was 12 years his junior. Jack and Helen Holmes' only child was also given the name of Dorothy.¹¹ Jack's special regard for his sister Dorothy was continued, after his death, by his second wife Kaye. When Kaye passed away in 1962, ten years after Jack had died, she left instructions that Dorothy was to be notified of her death. Kaye also bequeathed Dorothy the wedding ring which Jack had given her. This ring, and two others, formed part of The Gilmour Collection (see Photo Gallery) and are now in the care of Dorothy Gilmour's descendants.