

## ∞ ODDMENTS ∞

Margaret Mitchell got the idea for her book title from the 13th line of the Ernest Dowson poem, "Cynara". That line is:  
"I have forgot much Cynara!  
Gone with the wind."

Prior to the War, Atlanta was not a thriving metropolis. But with four major railroads connecting to all points South, it quickly became an important military supply center and grew from there.

In the first scene of the film, look for a young red-headed George Reeves. He would later become TV's first Superman.

In the "Burning of Atlanta" scene, actual movie sets are being burnt. Producer David Selznick needed to clear out the RKO backlot, so he set fire to old movie sets, including the giant gates from King Kong's 'Skull Island'.

Your relation to World War II would have been very similar to the original *GWTW* movie goer's relation to the Civil War. We are 74 years from the start of WWII (1939), just as 1939 was 74 years from the end of the Civil War (1865). Do you remember family members giving first hand accounts of WWII, or do you have those memories yourself? Imagine a young Margaret Mitchell hearing about the Civil War from Georgian veterans.

In the scene where Scarlett goes to look for Dr. Meade to help deliver Melanie's baby, she goes down to the hospital and sees 1,600 wounded soldiers. They couldn't afford to pay that many extras, so dummies were scattered among the 800 extras. Look closely. Can you spot them?

Hattie McDaniel was the first African American to win an Academy Award. Although lauded by many for a brilliant performance in a strong African American role, others were upset that she was praised for her portrayal of a stereotypical "Mammy" character.

Bonnie Blue's nickname comes from 1861's unofficial banner of the Confederate States of America consisting of a single, five-pointed white star on a blue field. The present-day popularly known 'Confederate flag' actually represented the Army of Tennessee, based on the Army of Northern Virginia battle flag. It never historically represented the C.S.A. (Look for the original "Stars and Bars" behind the announcer at the charity bazaar.)

**Save the Date: Friday, October 25th through Sunday, October 27th**  
**Historic Long Branch's**  
**History & Harvest Grand Re-Opening Weekend**

# GONE *With The* WIND

## UNDER THE STARS



*First Ever Outdoor Movie Screening*

**HISTORIC LONG BRANCH NATURAL AMPHITHEATER**

LEARN HOW TO ANALYZE THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE FILM!

**8 PM SATURDAY, AUGUST 17TH**

Historian's Toolbox

# PLAYBILL

## ∞ SETTING THE SCENE ∞

In the years since its release in 1940, *Gone with the Wind* has defined the Civil War and the pastoral image of the antebellum South for generations of Americans. Fans have accepted as truth the book's "Lost Cause" narrative of the pre-Civil War South as a region gilded by romance and whose cast of characters included cavaliers, belles, mansions, and loyal slaves.

*GWTW* addresses themes of the early half of the Reconstruction - the era of rebuilding the South after the War. The film's powerful theme of hope and survival resonated with this country and the rest of the world in 1939. America had gone through the Great Depression and was at the brink of WWII. Meanwhile, *GWTW* dealt with contemporary themes: dispossession and loss, homelessness, hunger, the collapse of a society and its miraculous recovery.

The causes of the Civil War have become clearer and more accurate as society has become more open and accepting of these new points of view. As you enjoy the film, consider the themes below, and watch with a historian's eye, also noting elements that have been filtered through an early twentieth-century sensibility.

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### ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

- ◆ "Plantation tradition" fiction looked nostalgically to the times before the War, before the "Lost Cause" of the Southern Confederacy. According to author Amy Kaplan, the literary tradition that romanticized slavery was invented by Thomas Nelson Page, great-nephew to Long Branch owners Philip and Sarah Nelson, and whose mother attended school here. Margaret Mitchell maintained that she did not write a "sweet, sentimental novel of the Thomas Nelson Page type," though her book is considered the climax of Southern plantation fiction.
- ◆ Changes in the story wrought by Hollywood movie censors, smoothed over Mitchell's world full of racist slurs, brothels, and painful miscarriages and births. Moviegoers were left with the old southern mythology - flirtations and courtships, mansions and rolling pastures, and cotton fields with singing slaves.
- ◆ In reality, most of the South's 8 million Whites had not owned slaves. Poverty was widespread, with a portion of the white population being illiterate.
- ◆ *Is this social class represented in the film?*

### FEMINISM

- ◆ Archetypal traits of a Southern Belle, including grace and strength, are represented differently in the white female characters. *How does Scarlett's transformation reflect the changes the South undergoes during and after the War?*
- ◆ Modern women have been divided on Scarlett's designation as a feminist heroine. *Is Scarlett a feminist heroine or woefully dependent on the men cast in her life? How is she portrayed?*

## REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

- ◆ Slaves are seen as contented, simple-minded and blindly loyal. The film fails to recognize the strength and courage of those who rebelled against their status as property.
- ◆ Not wanting to encourage a similar uprising caused by the release of *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, the presence of the Ku Klux Klan was erased, only referring to it as a "political meeting".
- ◆ The convicts Scarlett hires to work at the sawmill are referred to as being white, though they would most likely have been black. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, except as a punishment for crime. Consequently, convict leasing, a form of "Neo-Slavery," remained popular until the start of WWII.
- ◆ The film polarized the African American community, including the actors themselves. Some people considered it to be a glorification of the old system of slavery in which the suffering of millions of black people is trivialized to the point of laughter; others hailed it as a fine showcase for black actors.
- ◆ In the film, African American roles are divided into two camps: "good" or loyal and dimwitted, and "bad" or wild and savage.
- ◆ *What clues from each character's portrayal easily stereotypes them into these categories?*

### THE CIVIL WAR

- ◆ The film plays down slavery as a cause of the Civil War, while focusing on states' rights solely as the cause of the conflict.
- ◆ "Carpet baggers" and "scallywags" were derogatory terms used by post-war Southerners. The first, to describe Yankees moving south, suggesting opportunism and exploitation by the outsiders. The latter described traitors - white Southerners who supported Lincoln's policy of Black emancipation.
- ◆ General Sherman, referred to as the "Great Invader" is Scarlett's "wind". The film correctly depicts an occupied Atlanta being shelled, as well as the "ominous silence" prior to the city's evacuation. The Confederate Army under General John B. Hood torched all military supplies and installations as the city was abandoned, a scene which is dramatically depicted in the film.
- ◆ This depiction of Union soldiers, and absence of redeeming Northerners, was protested by groups including Daughters of Union Veterans, prior to the film's release.
- ◆ *How are Northern people and politics represented in the film?*

### ARCHITECTURE

- ◆ Mitchell was dismayed at the scale of the Tara and Twelve Oaks sets. She wrote, "I grieve to hear that Tara has columns. Of course, it didn't, and looked nice and ugly..." Noting that nothing like the movie versions of these homes were ever seen in Clayton County, she commented sarcastically to a friend that she would like to found a society called the 'Association of Southerners Whose Grandpappies Did Not Live in Houses with White Columns'.