

**March 28, 2022**

**Grand Canyon History Tidbit by Kim Besom**

**Hollywood wasn't Grand Canyon**

As a nod to the weekend's **Academy Awards**, this tidbit is about an early Grand Canyon encounter with Hollywood. The story comes from *I Married a Ranger* by Dama Margaret Smith and relates the filming of a Tom Mix movie that was written and directed by Lynn Reynolds, and came out in 1922.

According to Smith, "... [Actors] Tom Mix and Eva Novak had arrived with beautiful horses and swaggering cowboys to make a picture in the Canyon."

"Tom and Eva spent three weeks making the picture, and we enjoyed every minute they were there. Ranger Winess was assigned to duty with them, and when they left the Canyon, he found himself with the offer of a movie contract. Tom liked the way the ranger handled his horse and his rifle, and Tom's wife liked the sound of his guitar. So we lost Ranger Winess. He went away to Hollywood, and we all went around practicing: 'I-knew-him-when' phrases. But Hollywood wasn't Grand Canyon, and there wasn't a horse there, not even Tom's celebrated Tony, that had half as much brains as his own bay Tony of the ranger horses. So Winess came back to us, and everybody was happy again."



The plot of the silent movie, according to the movie's packaging:

“Border Patrol agent Grant Newburg [Tom Mix] works undercover to infiltrate a gang of outlaws who are smuggling illegal Chinese immigrants into the United States by way of the Grand Canyon. During his investigation, Newburg stumbles across a dazed young woman - Estelle Halloway [Eva Novak]- wandering lost in the canyon, apparently separated from her companions. Newburg rescues Estelle and vows to protect her, unaware that her companions were the very group of smugglers that he has been working to arrest.”

No word on the movie's Rotten Tomatoes score, but one Amazon review reads, “There were definitely no special affects!”

But the main takeaway from this is that “Hollywood wasn’t Grand Canyon.”