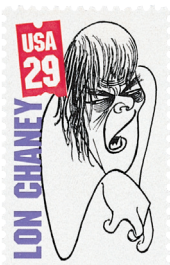


## This Day in History... February 10, 1906

# Birth of Lon Chaney Jr.

Lon Chaney Jr. was born Creighton Tull Chaney on February 10, 1906, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory.



*Chaney's father was dubbed "The Man of a Thousand Faces."*

Creighton was the son of Leonidas (Lon) Chaney, a popular vaudeville, theater, and silent film actor. As a child, Creighton traveled the country with his mother, who was a singer. When his parents divorced in 1913, Creighton was shuffled between several homes and boarding schools. Then by 1916, his father began working in the film industry, re-married and was able to provide him with a stable home.

Early on, Creighton worked to separate himself from his famous father's legacy. His father didn't want him to become an actor, so Creighton attended business school and found success working for an appliance company.

After his father died in 1930, Creighton decided to give acting a try. He had his first role, though uncredited, in the 1932 movie *Girl Crazy*. For the first few years of his career, when he was credited, he used his real name. He adopted the name Lon Chaney Jr. in 1935, but was later billed simply as Lon Chaney.

Though he had appeared in over 50 movies by that point, Chaney had his first major success in 1939 when he played Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men*. He then began to receive larger roles, particularly in 1941's *Man Made Monster*. Taking on a role originally written for Boris Karloff, Chaney impressed everyone and was offered the starring role in *The Wolf Man*, which was released later that year.

The makeup for the film involved a rubber snout, large teeth, and yak fur for the werewolf's hair. In a scene where Chaney is transformed into the beast, filming took 10 hours. The makeup artist applied a layer of fur, a few frames would be filmed, and then Chaney returned to the makeup chair for the next layer. The final product was a seamless transition from man to beast, which takes only a few seconds in the movie.

Chaney then became typecast as a horror film actor, spending the next decade in the genre. He reprised his *Wolf Man* character in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, *House of Frankenstein*, *House of Dracula*, and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Chaney went on to portray Frankenstein's monster, the Mummy, and Dracula, making him the only actor to play all four of Universal Studios' major horror characters. He later reprised his *Frankenstein* role for a 1952 live television performance.

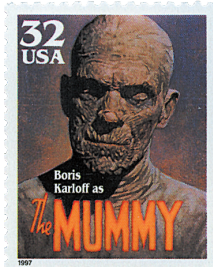
In the 1950s, Chaney began to forge a new persona for himself, away from the horror characters for which he had become famous. He found success as a supporting actor and villain in such films as *High Noon*, *Casanova's Big Night*, and *The Defiant Ones*. In 1957, Chaney took part in the first American-Canadian television production. He played Chingachgook in *Hawkeye and the Last of the Mohicans*, inspired by the stories of James Fenimore Cooper.

*Chaney starred opposite Gary Cooper in High Noon.*

Chaney continued to work in the 1960s, starring in horror, westerns, and even low-budget productions. He also made a number of television guest appearances including on *Wagon Train* and *The Monkees*. Chaney made his final horror film appearance in *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* in 1971. He spent his final years working on a book about his family's legacy, that was never finished. He died in 1973 in California.



*Chaney in his hallmark role as the Wolf Man.*



*The original mummy played by Boris Karloff was named Imhotep. The mummy Chaney played in the sequels was named Kharis.*



*Chaney got his big break in *Of Mice and Men*, based on the novel by John Steinbeck.*



*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein was the first of several films to pair the comedy duo with classic movie monsters.*

# This Day in History... February 10, 1906

## Birth of Lon Chaney Jr.

Lon Chaney Jr. was born Creighton Tull Chaney on February 10, 1906, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory.



Chaney's father was dubbed "The Man of a Thousand Faces."

Creighton was the son of Leonidas (Lon) Chaney, a popular vaudeville, theater, and silent film actor. As a child, Creighton traveled the country with his mother, who was a singer. When his parents divorced in 1913, Creighton was shuffled between several homes and boarding schools. Then by 1916, his father began working in the film industry, re-married and was able to provide him with a stable home.

Early on, Creighton worked to separate himself from his famous father's legacy. His father didn't want him to become an actor, so Creighton attended business school and found success working for an appliance company.

After his father died in 1930, Creighton decided to give acting a try. He had his first role, though uncredited, in the 1932 movie *Girl Crazy*. For the first few years of his career, when he was credited, he used his real name. He adopted the name Lon Chaney Jr. in 1935, but was later billed simply as Lon Chaney.

Though he had appeared in over 50 movies by that point, Chaney had his first major success in 1939 when he played Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men*. He then began to receive larger roles, particularly in 1941's *Man Made Monster*. Taking on a role originally written for Boris Karloff, Chaney impressed everyone and was offered the starring role in *The Wolf Man*, which was released later that year.

The makeup for the film involved a rubber snout, large teeth, and yak fur for the werewolf's hair. In a scene where Chaney is transformed into the beast, filming took 10 hours. The makeup artist applied a layer of fur, a few frames would be filmed, and then Chaney returned to the makeup chair for the next layer. The final product was a seamless transition from man to beast, which takes only a few seconds in the movie.

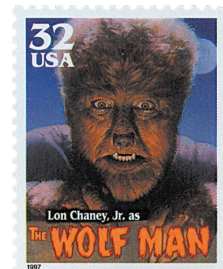
Chaney then became typecast as a horror film actor, spending the next decade in the genre. He reprised his Wolf Man character in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, *House of Frankenstein*, *House of Dracula*, and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Chaney went on to portray Frankenstein's monster, the Mummy, and Dracula, making him the only actor to play all four of Universal Studios' major horror characters. He later reprised his *Frankenstein* role for a 1952 live television performance.

In the 1950s, Chaney began to forge a new persona for himself, away from the horror characters for which he had become famous. He found success as a supporting actor and villain in such films as *High Noon*, *Casanova's Big Night*, and *The Defiant Ones*. In 1957, Chaney took part in the first American-Canadian television production. He played Chingachgook in *Hawkeye and the Last of the Mohicans*, inspired by the stories of James Fenimore Cooper.

Chaney starred opposite Gary Cooper in *High Noon*.



Chaney continued to work in the 1960s, starring in horror, westerns, and even low-budget productions. He also made a number of television guest appearances including on *Wagon Train* and *The Monkees*. Chaney made his final horror film appearance in *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* in 1971. He spent his final years working on a book about his family's legacy, that was never finished. He died in 1973 in California.



Chaney in his hallmark role as the Wolf Man.



Chaney got his big break in *Of Mice and Men*, based on the novel by John Steinbeck.



Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein was the first of several films to pair the comedy duo with classic movie monsters.