

Eric Desmond

Aka: Reginald Sheffield

Titles: 23 Sources: 1 Stills: 1

Born: Matthew Reginald Sheffield Cassan; London; February 18th 1901

Died: Pacific Palisades, California; December 8th 1957

Father of Johnny Sheffield [\[qv\]](#)



Blue blood on the silver screen (and well-cushioned)

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

“Matthew Reginald Sheffield Cassan came from a family with a strong sense of pedigree. He claimed direct descent on his father’s side from the 17th-century soldier, poet and courtier John Sheffield, 1st Duke of Buckingham, and on his mother’s side from Benjamin Franklin. Hopes of a transatlantic dynasty were not, as it turned out, to be wholly disappointed.

The sturdy, curly-haired little boy was discovered by the British director, producer and inventor Cecil Hepworth, and appeared as Reggie Sheffield in what is said to have been his debut film, “**LIEUTENANT PIE’S LOVE STORY**“. In August 1913 he changed his screen name to Eric Desmond (after the Earls of Desmond?) but appeared on the London stage the following month, in a Charles Hawtrey farce, as Reginald Sheffield. It was as Eric Desmond, though, that he continued busily to perform for Hepworth until 1915, when he became a war evacuee to the USA and appeared in his first American film – as Reginald Sheffield. All very confusing.

In 1939 a sturdy, curly-haired little boy called Johnny Sheffield burst into the Hollywood jungle wearing nothing but a loincloth, but otherwise looking the spitting image of pre-1914 Eric Desmond. Needless to say, this was the evacuee’s son, and the evacuee himself had made a very useful Hollywood career as a debonair, aristocratic character actor – one which he kept going right up to his death in 1957. He played President Grant in “**CENTENNIAL SUMMER**“ (46).

It hadn’t, though, lived up to the hopes of one who had played the hero of “**DAVID COPPERFIELD**“ both as a child (in 1913) and as a man (in 1923). The boy David in Thanhouser’s 1911 “**DAVID COPPERFIELD**“, incidentally, was played by one of the company’s female stars, Flora Foster.”

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
13	12	LIEUTENANT PIE'S LOVE STORY	
13		THE CAMERA FIEND	
13		THE CHRISTMAS STRIKE	
13		DAVID COPPERFIELD	in title role as a boy
13		THE FORSAKEN	
13		THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER	
13		A SILENT WITNESS	
14	13	ALL IN A DAY'S WORK	
14		THE BRIDGE DESTROYER	
14		ENTERTAINING UNCLE	
14		FOLLOW YOUR LEADER	
14		HOW BILLY KEPT HIS WORD	
14		THE HUNCHBACK	
14		LITTLE BOY BOUNTIFUL	in title role ?
14		THE MAGIC CLASS	
14		MEMORY	
14		A PRICE ON HIS HEAD	
14		TOMMY'S MONEY SCHEME	
14		UNFIT, or: THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK	
14		WHAT THE FIRELIGHT SHOWED	
15	14	BE SURE YOUR SINS	
15		A CALL FROM THE PAST	
15		THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE	US
		with <i>Bobby Connelly</i>	
20-22		RAGS TO RICHES	(first film for Warner Bros)
20-22		SCHOOL DAYS	
21		BOB HAMPTON OF PLACER	
22		PENROD	title role
		with <i>Gordon Griffith, Clara Horton, Sunshine Sammy Morrison, Florence Morrison</i>	
23		THE COUNTRY KID	
		with <i>"Spec" O'Donnell, Bruce Guerin</i>	
23		THE PRINTER'S DEVIL	
23		HEROES OF THE STREET	
		with <i>Joe Butterworth</i>	
24		GEORGE WASHINGTON, Jr	