

***The Gold Rush* (1925) with Charlie Chaplin**

The Gold Rush (1925) is the quintessential Chaplin/Little Tramp film, with a balance of slapstick comedy and pantomime, social satire, and emotional and dramatic moments of tenderness. It was Chaplin's own personal favorite film, that showcases the classic Tramp character (referred to as "The Little Fellow" in the re-release version) as a romantic idealist and lone gold prospector at the turn of the century, with his cane, derby, distinctive walk, tight shabby suit, and mustache.

Classic scenes include the starvation scene of two cabin-marooned prospectors boiling and fastidiously eating a stewed shoe, the Tramp's cabin-mate deliriously imagining his companion as a large chicken, the teetering cabin on the edge of a cliff, and Chaplin's lonely fantasized New Year's Eve party (with the dancing dinner rolls routine) when he waits for a girl who never comes.

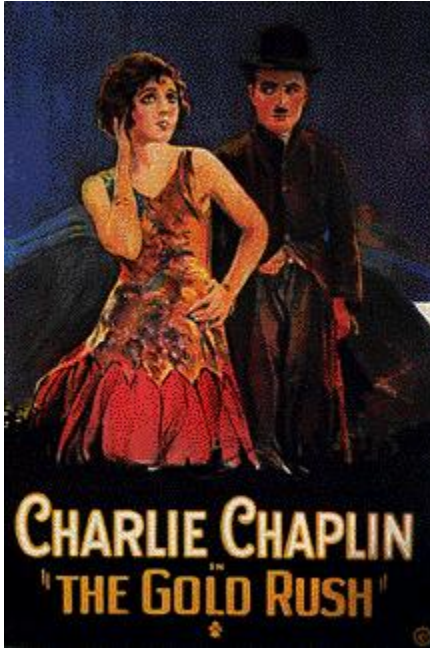
Early working titles for the film included *Lucky Strike* and *The Northern Story*. The film, inspired in part by the gruesome Donner Party story, was shot (over a period of 15 months from spring 1924-summer 1925) both on a Hollywood studio back lot and in Truckee, California/Nevada, and premiered in New York at the Strand Theatre in mid-August, 1925. Chaplin's film was re-released in 1942 with added sound narration and music, both spoken and composed/arranged by Chaplin.



It is prefaced with historical background:

During the Great Gold Rush to Alaska, men in thousands came from all parts of the world. Many of them were ignorant of the hardships before them - The intense cold, the lack of food and a journey through regions of ice and snow were the problems that awaited them.

In the spectacular opening scene, there is a view of an endless trail/line of hundreds of prospectors in the Klondike of Alaska in 1898, in the days of the Klondike Gold Rush. They are winding their way along to seek their fortunes, climbing up a mountain through the snow-covered Chilkoot Pass in search of the gold fields: "The Chilkoot Pass. A test of man's endurance. At this point, many turned back discouraged, while others went naively on." And then, "Three days from anywhere - a Lone Prospector," a lone Tramp (Charlie Chaplin) appears. With his cane, he is making his own trail on a snow-covered path, unaware that he is being followed by a bear.



Another fortune-hunter is Big Jim McKay (Mack Swain), who has just made a lucky strike fortune of gold. He exclaims, with outstretched arms: "I've found it! I've found it! A Mountain of Gold." Perilously lost, and facing a blizzard storm, the Tramp blindly seeks shelter. At the same time, Big Jim's tent is blown away in the storm. The Tramp arrives at the lone cabin of fearsome trapper Black Larsen (Tom Murray), a violent and "wanted" man. He enters the cabin, warming himself. But then, Black Larsen appears and he is ordered out. In a well-designed sight gag, the strong wind makes it appear that he is on a treadmill. The fierce wind blows him in and out of the doors of the cabin and also blows in Big Jim. Both men seek refuge in Black Larsen's cabin.

Black Larsen orders both of them out. He and Jim wrestle with a shot gun, forever aiming the muzzle of the gun at the Tramp during their struggle. Thanks to Big Jim's physical strength, Black Larsen is overpowered (and congratulated by the Tramp), and they are allowed to stay. When their food gives out, Jim experiences hunger hallucinations. The three draw cards in a lottery (the low man goes) and Larsen is sent out into the wilderness to brave the storm and search for

help, food and provisions. Out in the wilds, he encounters two lawmen who are looking for him. Following a struggle, he cold-bloodedly shoots both law officers.

Inside the cabin meanwhile, hungry and desperate, the Tramp and Big Jim celebrate "Thanksgiving Dinner," in a famous, classic feast/meal scene. The Tramp and Big Jim are reduced to starvation, so the Tramp resorts to boiling and cooking a tasty dinner for them. He chooses one of his boots [actually black licorice] as the object of their Thanksgiving dinner, taking on airs as a gourmet at a feast. He watches it cooking on the stove until perfectly simmered. He then carves the boot (splitting and cutting it like a filet), and offers the upper part to Big Jim. He pours water over it like gravy. He chews on the lower sole part, treating it like a delicacy, and he twirls the laces like spaghetti. He daintily sucks the nails, like they were the bones of a game bird, or small fishbones.

"Indifferent to his comrades plight, Black Larsen stumbles on the claim of Big Jim McKay," while the two of them still wait for relief. Because they have eaten his boot, and he only has rags for clothes, the Tramp must now sit with his foot in the oven to keep warm. When starvation strikes again, Jim suffers more "food" hallucinations, and crazily imagines the Tramp transformed into a giant, plump chicken, ripe for slaughter. He chases his appetizing friend with a gun and later with an axe. The panic-stricken Tramp defends himself with the shot-gun in a hand-to-hand struggle with Jim. A hungry passing bear wanders into the cabin and gets involved in the struggle. The Tramp aims and kills it as it runs off, solving their food problem.

They finally part ways, leaving the hut to go their own separate ways, Big Jim to "his secret mine," the Tramp "to his fate." On his mountainside of gold, Big Jim finds Black Larsen, who has stolen his mining claim. With a blow of his spade, Black Larsen knocks Big Jim to the ground. "The North. A law unto itself," repays Black Larsen shortly thereafter - he perishes in a crumbling avalanche beneath his feet.

Meanwhile, the Tramp, "a disappointed prospector," arrives in a little gold-mining boomtown, "one of the many cities in the Far North, built overnight during the great gold rush." Other

characters are introduced in the town, Jack Cameron (Malcolm Waite), "the ladies man," and his girl Georgia (Georgia Hale). The Tramp redeems the only gold he made with pick and shovel.

In the Monte Carlo Dance Hall that night, the pretty dancing girl named Georgia argues with tough and abusive Jack Cameron when he grabs her photograph. The Tramp, "the stranger," slowly enters the saloon, lonely and sad-faced. From a solitary vantage point, he watches others happily dancing and drinking at the bar. Thinking that Georgia is smiling at him from the bar, he is mistaken - she is looking at someone behind him. He overhears an upset Georgia tell one of her girlfriends: "I guess I'm bored...If I could only meet some one worth while - I'm so tired of this place." He immediately falls in love with her, although she looks past him and ignores him. The Tramp picks up a discarded and ripped photograph of Georgia, and tries to pretend that he isn't interested in keeping it.

A raucous Jack returns, and while surrounded by other dance-hall girls, he pulls Georgia to himself and calls her a "little spitfire." When she rejects him, pulls herself away and turns her back on him, he calls her "pretty fresh" for ignoring him. Jack demands a dance with Georgia, but to spite and provoke him, she calls out: "Hey you! Come here!" and dances with the first available man - the incredulous Tramp. She insults Jack: "You see. I'm very particular who I dance with."

The Tramp dances with her, with his bootless foot still bandaged. In a comical dance sequence, he ties up his trousers that are falling down with a piece of rope (a substitute for a belt), not realizing that the other end is attached to a large dog. When the dog growls at a cat and chases it, the Tramp is jerked to the floor. Georgia encourages the Tramp to bravely defend her from Jack's continued insults. The Tramp is no match for the brawny Jack. With the fortuitous help of a heavy grandfather clock that falls on Jack's head, his rival is knocked out.

The next morning, the Tramp walks by the cabin of Hank Curtis (Henry Bergman), "within a stone throw of the dance hall." The Tramp pretends to faint outside the cabin to get breakfast. Hank is a kindly prospector, and the Tramp is brought in for a warm meal.

"Big Jim McKay owing to the blow he had received, lost his memory and wandered aimlessly on." Back in town, Hank and his partner prepare for a trip to their mine. The Tramp is asked to care for the cabin and feed the mule during Hank's absence. Outside the cabin, Georgia and other girlfriends away from the dance hall, have a snowball fight. During the commotion, he opens the door and gets a snowball in the face. He sees Georgia again and she instantly recognizes him. "I haven't seen you since we danced together," she remarks. While he goes outside to retrieve firewood, Georgia discovers her photo under the Tramp's pillow. She observes: "I guess you're lonesome here." Winking at her girlfriends, she suggests a practical joke for him, asking to be invited to dinner sometime. He invites them to an 8 o'clock New Year's Eve dinner at the cabin. As they leave, they laugh at his foolish gullibility, but he falls more deeply in love with her. Exploding with utter joy, he tosses around his pillow, sending feathers flying everywhere. Georgia returns momentarily to retrieve her forgotten gloves, and finds him covered with feathers.

To make the dinner financially possible, "he begged, borrowed and shoveled." To earn money for favors and presents for the party, he takes a snow-shoveling job in a classic sequence. The Tramp cleverly shovels snow from one cabin's doorway to the next doorway, creating new customers as he progresses along.

On New Year's Eve, the night of the dinner, he excitedly gets ready for the party. By five minutes to eight, he has made elaborate preparations - he sets the table with lighted candles, table napkins, and a heart-shaped place card at Georgia's seat, with "To My Love" written on it. A chicken is roasting in the oven. He also places party favors at each place setting for each guest. Then, he dozes off while he waits, pathetically, for them to appear. He dreams of the party and is the perfect host/entertainer with Georgia. In a classic gag, "the Dance of the Rolls," he spears two

French bread rolls with forks and makes them do a pantomime ballet-dance - the Oceana Roll. The two rolls are stand-ins for his big boots - he smiles above the dancing shoes.



At midnight, Georgia fires a gun salute in the raucous dance hall saloon, and the Tramp is awakened by the celebrants. He realizes the women have stood him up - they have forgotten all about his dinner invitation. With a look of deep hurt and with a sad feeling of unrequited love, he hears members of the gold rush town distantly singing "Auld Lang Syne" from his opened door. When dancing begins, Georgia suddenly remembers her little friend the Tramp, and proposes to her friends (including Jack) that they visit his cabin: "Let's go up and have some fun with him." At the same moment, the Tramp leaves the cabin and shuffles up to the saloon window to watch the party through the window. By the time they arrive, the Tramp has already left and they find his hut empty. Georgia opens the door and enters the room, seeing the decorated dinner table. She is filled with remorse. Just then, Jack follows and demands a kiss from her, but she pushes him away. She tells her girlfriends: "The joke has gone too far, let's go!" She angrily slaps Jack when he asks for another kiss.

The next day, a dazed Big Jim wanders about in town, and ends up at the recorder's office. He has "a mountain of gold," but he can't remember the location of his gold mine claim. He suddenly gets a bright idea: "The cabin! That's it! If I only knew the way to the cabin, I could find the mine." Stepping outside the office, Big Jim just misses noticing the Tramp.

In the dance saloon that night, Georgia writes a note to Jack, apologizing for the previous night: "I'm sorry for what I did last night. Please forgive me. I love you. Georgia." Jack receives the note as Georgia watches from the second floor balcony. When the Tramp walks by, Jack asks the waiter: "Give that bum this note, and don't tell him I sent it." Obviously, the Tramp immediately wishes to find Georgia and speak to her, asking: "Where's Georgia?" But Big Jim spots the Tramp in the saloon and cries out: "THE CABIN!" - he eagerly wishes to renew acquaintances. The Tramp is surprised by Big Jim, shouting that if they locate the cabin, they will also find the claim:

The Cabin! The Cabin! Take me to the cabin...Take me to the cabin and I'll make you a millionaire in less than a month!

The Tramp notices Georgia, rushes to her on the second floor, hugs her, and kisses her hand. He is placated after reading the note, and declares his love for her. "...And now I'm going to make good --," he promises her. Kicking and protesting, the Tramp is lead by Big Jim out of the saloon to his gold strike.

"After a long and tedious journey," they locate their old cabin and plan to set out for the mine in the morning. The subtitle reads, "Man proposes, but a storm disposes." While the heroes slumber during the night, the wind begins to blow hard and a blizzard develops. The cabin in which they are sleeping is swept away -- "fate guided them to a spot where all was calm." The cabin ends up hanging halfway on the edge of an abyss. In the morning when they wake up, they are blissfully ignorant.

The cabin dangerously tips and shifts, teetering back and forth on the edge of the cliff. The Tramp walks from one side of the cabin to the other while preparing for breakfast, causing it to rock up and down - precariously balanced. The funny sensations are attributed to their stomachs. The Tramp opens the door to investigate and see what's outside and almost falls, but clammers back in, the floor tipping up. After hair-raising adventures in the cabin, it totally tips over, but a pick axe roped to it and stuck in a rock prevents its tumble into the precipice. The two must scramble up the floor's steep incline to safety. Big Jim climbs out first, and finds that his lost gold claim is located right where the pick axe is stuck in the mountainous ground. Then he helps pull the Tramp out too just as the cabin falls into the abyss. They embrace and Jim tells them: "Look! We're rich! We're millionaires."

As a result of their gold-mine windfall, they become elegant, well-dressed multi-millionaires on board a ship returning home from Alaska. Press photographers who are publishing a story on the Tramp's rags-to-riches career persuade the ex-Tramp to pose for photographs in his original, ragged mining clothes. The ex-Tramp wistfully looks at his picture of Georgia and thinks: "Everything but Georgia." Georgia, in fact, is on the same boat, one of the steerage passengers.

Accidentally falling off the deck during the picture taking, tumbling off to the steerage level, the tattered-looking Tramp lands in a coil of rope and emerges to see Georgia's face. Georgia mistakenly thinks he is a stowaway that is being sought by ship officials. She promises to protect him from the officers and pay his passage's fare, without knowing his good fortune. The misunderstanding is explained and the truth is revealed that he is Big Jim's partner, the Multi-millionaire. The ex-Tramp orders: "James. Make arrangements for another guest."

He takes Georgia in his arms implying that she is his fiancée, and invites the photographers to take an engagement picture of them. The photographers are pleased: "Gee! This will make a wonderful story." The couple cannot restrain themselves and stand still any longer for the photos - they move their lips together to kiss. The photographer shouts at them: "Oh! You've spoilt the picture," as the final image fades out on their loving kiss.