



ZaSu Pitts gets stamped

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SANTA CRUZ — ZaSu Pitts, the silent screen actress and local girl whose dramatic talents were first recognized in school plays at Santa Cruz High School, will become the first Santa Cruz celebrity to be honored with a new postage stamp.

The actress with the wistful sad eyes and helpless hand-writing gimmick is one of 10 stars of the silent screen who will be commemorated in a series designed by theatrical illustrator Al Hirschfeld.

Others in the series are Rudolph Valentino, Clara Bow, Charlie Chaplin, John Gilbert, Harold Lloyd, the Keystone Cops, Theda Bara and Buster Keaton.

The stamps will be released April 28.

And Santa Cruz is pulling out the stops to honor its hometown girl, who is buried at Holy Cross Cemetery.

A ceremony marking the release of the commemorative stamp will be held and the first-day covers will be hand stamped. There will be a mayoral proclamation, a ZaSu Pitts look-alike contest, a free concert by the ZaSu Pitts Memorial Orchestra, dancing in the streets, and a guest appearance by Pitts' son. And, of course, the showing of several movies starring Pitts.

ZaSu, pronounced Zay-Soo, grew up in a modest house that still stands on Lincoln Street by the Nickelodeon theater. She appeared in high school plays in 1913 and 1914 and later went on to an illustrious career in Hollywood that spanned almost 50 years, from silent screen to television, and included more than 500 movies.

Organizers of the events say Pitts is the first Santa Cruzan to be commemorated with a stamp.

The events honoring Pitts will be held April 28 and 29, beginning with release of the stamp and local first-day covers at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, April 28 in front of the Main Post Office on Front Street.

The celebration will continue at the post office at 5 p.m. with a proclamation by Santa Cruz Mayor Scott Kennedy, a ZaSu Pitts look-alike contest and appearance by Pitts' son, Don Gallery.

Dancing in the streets and a free concert by the ZaSu Pitts Memorial Orchestra and San Francisco's Hot R&B Band will follow from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the area of the post office.