

BLOG - P

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ZaSu stamp spurs festival

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When it comes to postage stamp heroes, the rest of America swoons over Elvis. Santa Cruz has the real-life Olive Oyl. And the town couldn't be happier.

Silent film star ZaSu Pitts, a fretting comedienne who learned drama at Santa Cruz High School in 1913 and 1914, became the inspiration for Popeye's girlfriend and eventually appeared in more than 500 films over a 50-year career, will be featured on a U.S. postage stamp to be released this month.

The Postal Service will unveil the 29-cent ZaSu (pronounced



The stamp featuring the silent film star from Santa Cruz will be released this month.

Zay-Zoo) stamp Wednesday as part of a group honoring 10 stars of Hollywood's silent film era.

The stamps were designed by legendary New York artist Al Hirschfeld. The other celluloid

notables are Rudolph Valentino, Buster Keaton, Lon Chaney, Harold Lloyd, the Keystone Kops, Theda Bara, Clara Bow, John Gilbert and a 1915 resident of Fremont, Charlie Chaplin.

Local boosters believe Pitts is the first Santa Cruz resident ever to appear on a stamp. No matter that many Santa Cruzans are a little rusty on their ZaSu Pitts trivia — she died in 1963 — next Thursday afternoon, the city will hold a ZaSu Pitts festival downtown with a proclamation by the mayor, a ZaSu Pitts look-alike contest, a guest appearance by her son and grandson, live music by the ZaSu Pitts Memorial Or-

chestra and screening of the 1924 classic "Greed," in which she starred.

"It's our 15 minutes of fame," said Santa Cruz City Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews, who owns the house Pitts grew up in at 208 Lincoln St. "This is just a good excuse to celebrate."

Pitts worked with such luminaries as W.C. Fields and pioneer director D.W. Griffith. One of Hollywood's leading ladies during the Roaring '20s, her less-than-dramatic voice narrowed her career to mostly comedic roles once talking pictures arrived.

"In her day, she was a big deal," Mathews said.



BILL AND CYNTHIA MATHEWS
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ZaSu Pitts, starred in the 1924 classic "Greed."