

# The Flying Deuces.

*Magazine for fans of Laurel & Hardy and Abbott & Costello.*

January 2026 Edition. Volume 1, Issue 11



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The Flying Deuces.

January 2026 Edition  
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# Pardon My Sarong

**Stan Laurel:** "I've certainly got to hand it to you."  
**Oliver Hardy:** "For what?"

Welcome to the January 2026 edition of our newsletter.

Christmas is over, the January sales are on, diets are on for the next month at least, gym memberships are being used, and a few are declaring that they will never touch alcohol again.

Our website is gaining even more pages and information about these duo's. We're adding a new section listing the vinyl releases of both Abbott & Costello and Laurel & Hardy. By the time you read this newsletter we should have a nice selection of each for you.

Our newsletter started in March 2025 and next months issue will be celebrating a year. I've no idea how to celebrate the year but I'm sure I will think of something.

But for now enjoy this oversized special new year issue.



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## Vivian Blaine

Vivian Blaine (born Vivian Stapleton; November 21, 1921 - December 9, 1995) was an American actress and singer, best known for originating the role of Miss Adelaide in the musical theater production of *Guys and Dolls*, as well as appearing in the subsequent film version, in which she co-starred with Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons and Frank Sinatra.

Blaine was born in Newark, New Jersey to Leo Stapleton, an insurance agent, and Wilhelmina Tepley. The cherry-blonde-haired Blaine appeared on local stages as early as 1934 and she started touring after graduating from South Side High School. Blaine was a touring singer with dance bands starting in 1937.

At one point in the 1940s, she was the top-billed act at New York's Copacabana nightclub. In his book, *Dean and Me: (A Love Story)*, Jerry Lewis wrote about appearing at the club when Blaine was on the same bill: "We [Lewis and Dean Martin, as the double act Martin and Lewis] weren't even the top-billed act. That honor went to a Broadway singing star named Vivian Blaine, who'd conquered Manhattan, gone out to Hollywood to make movies for 20th Century Fox, then returned to the Big Apple in triumph. Vivian was a lovely and very talented actress and singer ..."

In 1942, Blaine's agent and soon-to-be husband Manny Franks signed her to a con-

tract with Twentieth Century-Fox, and she moved to Hollywood, sharing top billing with Laurel and Hardy in *Jitterbugs* (1943) and starring in *Greenwich Village* (1944), *Something for the Boys* (1944), *Nob Hill* (1945), and *State Fair* (1945). Blaine appeared on Broadway in *Guys and Dolls*; *A Hatful of Rain*; *Say, Darling*; *Enter Laughing*; *Company*; and *Zorba*, as well as participating in the touring companies of plays such as *Light Up the Sky*; and musicals such as *Gypsy*.

Blaine was a special guest during the *This is Your Life* tribute episode to Laurel and Hardy, seen over NBC-TV on December 1, 1954. Blaine had worked with the duo in the film *Jitterbugs* and had fond memories of the experience. On the 25th annual Tony Awards in 1971, she appeared as a guest performer and sang "Adelaide's Lament" from *Guys and Dolls*.

Later in her career, her television career took off, with guest appearances on shows like *Fantasy Island*, *The Love Boat* (S2 E9 1978), and a recurring role in the cult hit *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*.





## Vivian Blaine

Her final onscreen appearance was in "Broadway Malady", a Season 1 episode of *Murder, She Wrote*.

In 1983, Blaine became the first celebrity to make public service announcements for AIDS-related causes. She made numerous appearances in support of the then-fledgling AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) and in 1983 recorded her cabaret act for AEI Records, which donated its royalties to the new group; this included the last recordings of her songs from *Guys and Dolls*. Her prior albums for Mercury Records have all subsequently been reissued on CD.

Blaine died of congestive heart failure in Beth Israel Hospital North in New York City on December 9, 1995, aged 74.



Manufactured By – American Entertainment Industries Inc.

Art Direction – Tom Saponaro. Liner Notes – Robert Osborne

Other [Make-up And Hair] – Jeff Angell . Other [Special Thanks] – Alan Eichler

Photography – Edd Anthony. Producer [Produced By] – David R. Gooch\*

An AEI Records © ® 1983. AEI Green Room

Blue vinyl with silver print. Miss Blaine's Cabaret Act





## *Vivian Blaine*

This recording was made during the evenings of July 8 and 9, 1983 before a live audience at Tom Rolla's Gardenia, Hollywood.

Track A2: from "Follies"

Track A3: from "Seesaw"

Track A4: from "20th Century Fox's Say One For Me"

Track A5: from "Jimmy"

Track A6.a: from "Hello, Dolly!"

Track A6.b: from "Pal Joey"

Track A6.c: from "Gypsy"

Track A7: from "Company"

Track B2: from "Between The Devil"

Track B3: from "Applause"

Track B4.a: from "Hello 'Frisco, Hello"

Track B4.b: from "Coney Island"

Track B4.c: from "I'll Get By"

Track B4.d: from "Jitterbugs"

Track B4.e: from "Jitterbugs"

Track B4.f: from "Jitterbugs"

Track B4.g: from "State Fair"

Track B4.h: from "State Fair" Track B5.a, B5.b, B5.c: from "Guys And Dolls"

Even tho not seen on this version I added the 1999 cd version liner notes because it gives great insight on the reason for the album recording.

Extracts from liner notes from 1999 CD version by Alan Eichler, Los Angeles.

"Vivian was in the midst of rehearsing a new cabaret act for New York and she came up with the idea of recording a live album and donating the proceeds to APLA. She gave her only two performances on July 8 and 9, 1983 at "Tom Rolla's Gardenia", historically the first time a star had publicly shown support for the organization. The shows were taped by David Cunard for AEI Records and the LP was released with a printed sticker on the cover proclaiming that all proceeds went to AIDS Project/Los Angeles."

"Happily, this recording captures Vivian Blaine at the peak of her artistry with a selection of songs that trace her great career with sophistication and wit, permanently preserved for generations to come. She was indeed a magnificent "doll"."

## Jean Yarbrough

Jean Yarbrough was born in Marianna, Arkansas on August 22, 1900. He attended the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. In 1922, Yarbrough entered the film business working in silent pictures, first as a "prop man" and later rising through the ranks to become an assistant director.

By 1936, he became a director, first doing comedy and musical shorts for RKO. His directorial debut for a feature-length film was *Rebellious Daughters*, made by the low-budget studio Progressive Pictures in 1938.

His success came in the 1940s and 1950s when he directed comedy teams like Abbott and Costello (five films: *Here Come the Co-Eds*, *In Society*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Lost in Alaska*, and *The Naughty Nineties*), *The Bowery Boys* (five films: *Angels in Disguise*, *Master Minds*, *Triple Trouble*, *Crashing Las Vegas*, and *Hot Shots*) and horror/cult movies, such as *The Devil Bat*, *King of the Zombies*, *She-Wolf of London*, and *House of Horrors*.

Yarbrough made the transition from B-movies to television. He directed many episodes for different TV series throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to directing, he worked as both producer and director of the popular *Abbott and Costello Show*. He directed some episodes of *The Silent Service* and *Navy Log*, also during the 1950s.

He directed episodes of Walter Brennan's series *The Guns of Will Sonnett* and *The Addams Family*. His last theatrical film was 1967's *Hillbillys in a Haunted House*, a mixture of comedy horror and country music, starring Basil Rathbone and Lon Chaney Jr.





## Jean Yarbrough

### Partial filmography

The Devil Bat (1940)  
King of the Zombies (1941)  
The Gang's All Here (1941)  
Father Steps Out (1941)  
Let's Go Collegiate (1941)  
Caught in the Act (1941)  
Good Morning, Judge (1943)  
In Society (1944)  
Moon Over Las Vegas (1944)  
Here Come The Co-Eds (1945)  
The Naughty Nineties (1945)  
House of Horrors (1946)  
Inside Job (1946)  
She-Wolf of London (1946)  
Cuban Pete (1946)  
The Brute Man (1946)  
Shed No Tears (1948)  
The Creeper (1948)  
The Challenge (1948)  
Holiday in Havana (1949)  
Sideshow (1950)  
According to Mrs. Hoyle (1951)  
Jack and the Beanstalk (1952)  
Lost in Alaska (1952)  
Crashing Las Vegas (1956)  
The Women of Pitcairn Island (1956)  
Footsteps in the Night (1957)  
Saintly Sinners (1962)  
Hillbillys in a Haunted House (1967)  
The Over-the-Hill Gang (1969) TV movie



## THE HISTORY OF WHO'S ON FIRST ?

The History of “Who’s on First” by Abbott and Costello: Origins, Cultural Legacy, and Possible Connections to Mike and Meyer

### INTRODUCTION

“Who’s on First” stands as one of the most iconic and enduring routines in the history of American comedy. Originating in the vaudeville and radio heyday of the early twentieth century, the sketch, performed by the duo Abbott and Costello, epitomizes the art of wordplay, timing, and comic confusion. While the routine is widely recognized as the masterpiece of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, its precise origins have been the subject of scholarly interest and popular debate. Among the questions that have arisen are the extent to which “Who’s on First” drew from pre-existing comedic traditions, including possible links to earlier performers such as Mike and Meyer. This essay traces the historical development of “Who’s on First,” situates it within the broader context of American comedy, explores its connections to antecedent routines and performers, and assesses its enduring legacy. In doing so, it draws on the intersections of cultural history, performance studies, and the sociology of humor, demonstrating how a single routine can encapsulate complex processes of cultural transmission and transformation.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT: VAUDEVILLE, RADIO, AND THE RISE OF ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

The emergence of “Who’s on First” must be understood against the backdrop of American vaudeville and the evolution of popular entertainment in the early twentieth century. Vaudeville, a theatrical genre characterized by a variety of acts, including comedy, music, dance, and novelty performances, served as a crucible for the development and dissemination of comedic routines. It fostered a culture of borrowing, adaptation, and innovation, in which performers



frequently reworked existing material to suit new audiences and contexts. As the medium of radio gained prominence in the 1930s and 1940s, acts that had succeeded on the vaudeville stage found new life and broader audiences through the airwaves. Among the most successful of these acts was the partnership of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, whose radio, film, and television appearances made them household names.

Abbott and Costello’s comic dynamic was rooted in the classic “straight man and comic” pairing, with Abbott playing the patient, exasperated straight man and Costello taking the role of the befuddled, literal-minded comic. Their routines were characterized by rapid-fire exchanges, intricate wordplay, and a mastery of timing. “Who’s on First,” which debuted in its canonical form in the late 1930s, quickly became their signature sketch. The routine centers on a baseball team whose players’ names—Who, What, and I Don’t Know—become the source of escalating confusion as Costello seeks to determine the positions of the players and Abbott attempts to explain them. The resulting dialogue is a mas-



## THE HISTORY OF WHO'S ON FIRST ?

terclass in ambiguity, linguistic circularity, and comedic frustration.

### THE ORIGINS OF “WHO’S ON FIRST”: TRACING THE LINEAGE

#### EARLY FORMS AND THE CULTURE OF COMIC BORROWING

While Abbott and Costello are rightly credited with perfecting and popularizing “Who’s on First,” the routine did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Its roots can be traced to a longstanding tradition of comic misunderstandings based on homonyms, puns, and ambiguous phrasing—devices that were staples of vaudeville and burlesque comedy. The structure of the sketch, which derives humor from the literal interpretation of proper names and the confusion between names and common nouns, can be found in earlier routines involving similar comic mechanisms.

The culture of vaudeville was one in which comic material circulated widely and was subject to continual adaptation. As Redei and Werndl (2011) observe in their analysis of the history of scientific ideas, the process of transmission and transformation in intellectual traditions often involves both the preservation of core elements and their recombination in new contexts. In the case of “Who’s on First,” Abbott and Costello drew on familiar comic tropes, refining them through their unique timing, characterizations, and the specificity of the baseball setting (Redei & Werndl, 2011).

#### MIKE AND MEYER AND THE JEWISH COMIC TRADITION

A key area of scholarly debate concerns the possible influence of earlier acts, such as Mike and Meyer, on “Who’s on First.” Mike and Meyer were a Jewish comic duo who performed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, known for routines that played on linguistic misunderstandings, ethnic humor, and the comedic potential of names. While direct documentary evidence linking Mike and Meyer’s specific routines to “Who’s on First” is limited, it is plausible that the general style of their humor contributed to the environment in which Abbott and Costello developed their act.



The transmission of comic motifs across generations and ethnic traditions was a hallmark of vaudeville. As Crawford (2019) notes in a different context, the intertwining of intellectual traditions and the synthesis of diverse influences are central to the evolution of cultural forms. The Jewish comic tradition, with its emphasis on verbal dexterity, double entendres, and the navigation of linguistic ambiguity, provided fertile ground for routines that exploited the confusions between names and meanings (Crawford, 2019). While “Who’s on First” is not an explicitly ethnic routine, it inherits the structural logic and comic sensibility that animated acts such as Mike and Meyer.

#### PRECEDENTS IN BURLESQUE AND MINSTREL SHOWS

Further antecedents can be identified in the routines of burlesque and minstrel shows, where sketches involving confusing names, mistaken identities, and literal-minded exchanges were commonplace. For instance, routines in which one character attempts to obtain information from another, only to be stymied by ambiguous or unhelpful answers, were a standard

## THE HISTORY OF WHO'S ON FIRST ?

part of the comic repertoire. These sketches often revolved around the comic potential of language itself, foregrounding the instability of meaning and the limits of communication.

As Redei and Werndl (2011) document in their historical study of mathematical theory, the process of establishing equivalence or isomorphism—whether in scientific or cultural domains—often reveals subtle distinctions and the persistence of difference beneath apparent similarity. In the case of “Who’s on First,” Abbott and Costello elevated a familiar comic premise to new heights through their precise execution, the elaboration of the scenario, and the development of character dynamics that resonated with audiences.

### “WHO’S ON FIRST” IN PERFORMANCE: STRUCTURE, TIMING, AND RECEPTION

#### THE ANATOMY OF THE ROUTINE

“Who’s on First” is notable for its intricate structure and the escalating rhythm of its exchanges. The routine unfolds as a dialogue in which Costello, eager to learn the names of the players on a baseball team, is repeatedly frustrated by Abbott’s explanations:

**Abbott:** Who’s on first, What’s on second, I Don’t Know’s on third...

**Costello:** You know the fellow’s names?

**Abbott:** Yes.

**Costello:** Well, then who’s playing first?

**Abbott:** Yes.

The routine’s humor derives from the collision of Costello’s literalism and Abbott’s deadpan delivery, as well as the deliberate ambiguity of the player names. The sketch is structured as a series of increasingly complex misunderstandings, with each attempt at clarification only deepening the confusion. The timing of the exchanges, the modulation of tone,



HARRY  
LANG and BERNICE  
HALEY

*Offering “Who Is Your Boss?”*

THANKS FOR  
KEITH - ALBEE ROUTE

SEASON 1926-27

*Personal Direction* CHAS. H. ALLEN

M. S. BENTHAM

and the interplay of exasperation and patience are crucial to its effect.

#### AUDIENCE RECEPTION AND CULTURAL IMPACT

Upon its introduction, “Who’s on First” was immediately embraced by audiences, both in live performance and through radio broadcasts. Its appeal lay in its universality—the frustration of failed communication—and in the virtuosity of its performers. Over time, the routine became a touchstone of American comedy, referenced and parodied in countless contexts, from television shows to political discourse.

The legacy of “Who’s on First” can be understood in terms of what Gurvits (2023) describes in relation to scientific innovation: the establishment of new standards and the creation of reference points against which subsequent work is measured. Just as the development of space-based radio astronomy set new benchmarks in scientific practice (Gurvits, 2023), “Who’s on First” established a template for comedic excellence and be-

## THE HISTORY OF WHO'S ON FIRST ?

came a foundational text in the canon of American humor.

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: ISOMORPHISM, TRANSMISSION, AND ADAPTATION

#### ISOMORPHISM AND THE UNIQUENESS OF "WHO'S ON FIRST"

The question of the originality of "Who's on First"—and its relationship to antecedent routines—can be illuminated through the concept of isomorphism as articulated by Redei and Werndl (2011). In their historical study of dynamical systems, they distinguish between spatial and spectral isomorphism, noting that similarity in one dimension does not guarantee equivalence in another. Applying this insight to the history of comic routines, one can argue that while "Who's on First" shares structural features with earlier sketches, the specific combination of elements—timing, characterization, setting, and language—renders it a unique cultural artifact (Redei & Werndl, 2011).

The process by which Abbott and Costello transformed generic comic material into a singular performance mirrors what Castellani (2021) describes as the entanglement of histories in quantum mechanics: distinct but interrelated trajectories that intersect to produce novel outcomes. The history of "Who's on First" is thus not a story of simple derivation, but of creative synthesis and the emergence of something greater than the sum of its parts (Castellani, 2021).

#### TRANSMISSION ACROSS MEDIA AND GENERATIONS

The durability of "Who's on First" is also a testament to the capacity of cultural forms to adapt to new media and audiences. As Gurvits (2023) observes in the context of technological innovation, the ability to transcend original constraints and find new applications is a hallmark of lasting achievement. "Who's on First" has been performed on stage, radio, film, television, and even in digital formats, each time re-



taining its essential structure while accommodating the demands of changing media environments.

The routine's influence can be seen in the work of later comedians and writers, who have borrowed its techniques of wordplay, misdirection, and escalating confusion. Its logic has been appropriated in sketches ranging from Monty Python's "Argument Clinic" to contemporary sitcoms, attesting to the power of foundational routines to shape the contours of future creativity.

### THE MIKE AND MEYER QUESTION: ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

#### DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE AND SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATION

The issue of whether "Who's on First" is directly indebted to Mike and Meyer remains a subject of ongoing investigation. While some oral histories and secondary accounts suggest that routines involving confusing names were part of the Mike and Meyer repertoire, definitive documentation is scarce. The absence of direct evidence, however, does not preclude the possibility of influence; as Crawford (2019) argues, the evolution of intellectual and cultural traditions often involves diffuse and untraceable forms of borrowing and adaptation.

The broader point is that routines such as "Who's on First" emerged from a milieu in which comic ideas circulated fluidly, crossing boundaries of ethnicity, geography, and genre. The Jewish comic tradition represented by Mike and Meyer contributed to



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the larger ecosystem of American humor, providing both specific motifs and a general ethos of linguistic playfulness. Abbott and Costello, as products of this environment, were both heirs to and innovators within this tradition.

## THE BROADER CULTURAL ECOLOGY OF AMERICAN COMEDY

Rather than seeking a single point of origin, it is more productive to view “Who’s on First” as the culmination of multiple streams of influence. The routine synthesizes elements from vaudeville, burlesque, ethnic comedy, and the emerging mass media of radio and film. Its genius lies in the way it harnesses these disparate influences to create a performance that is both deeply rooted in tradition and strikingly original.

As Katz (2025) notes in his analysis of the history of mathematical concepts, the evolution of ideas is often characterized by a combination of continuity and rupture, with periods of revival and innovation following episodes of skepticism or decline. Similarly, the emergence of “Who’s on First” can be understood as an instance of creative resurgence, in which old forms are revitalized through new contexts and performers (Katz, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The history of “Who’s on First” by Abbott and Costello exemplifies the complex processes by which comic routines are created, transmitted, and transformed. While the routine owes much to earlier traditions of vaudeville, burlesque, and ethnic comedy—including possible links to Mike and Meyer—its enduring power resides in the specific contributions of Abbott and Costello: their timing, characterization, and mastery of language. The routine’s legacy, both as a touchstone of American humor and as a template for future comedic innovation, attests to the dynamic interplay of tradition and originality in the history of performance. As in the history of scientific ideas, the question is not simply one of equivalence or derivation, but of creative synthesis and the emergence of new forms from familiar materials. “Who’s on First” endures not because it is unique in its premises, but because it achieves, through artistry and precision, a singularity of effect that

continues to resonate across generations.

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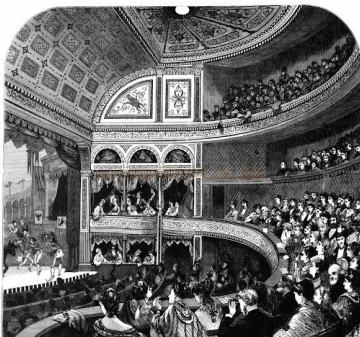




## THE HISTORY OF WHO'S ON FIRST ?



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## HILLARY BROOKE

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Hillary Brooke (born Beatrice Sofia Mathilda Peterson; September 8, 1914 - May 25, 1999) was an American film actress. A 5'6" blonde from the Astoria neighbourhood of New York City's borough of Queens, Brooke, who was of Swedish ancestry, started work as a model while attending Columbia University. She spent a year in the United Kingdom, mastering an RP accent that she used in several of her films. She frequently played English women in Hollywood films, and also had such a role in her only British-made film, *The House Across the Lake*.

Brooke began her acting career in movies, where she changed her name to Hillary Brooke because, as she put it, she thought her own name was "so long and so heavy". She co-starred in three Sherlock Holmes films with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* (1943) and *The Woman in Green* (1945).

She was a regular on several television series of the early 1950s, playing Roberta Townsend, the glamorous love interest of Margie's father Vern Albright on the 1952-1955 TV series *My Little Margie*. On *The Abbott and Costello Show*, produced in the early 1950s and syndicated for many years afterward, Brooke played the role of a straitlaced, classy tenant of the rooming house where the two main characters lived. She was treated with reverence by the duo and was not a target of pranks and slapstick. The love interest of Lou Costello, she always addressed him as "Louis". As with the other main characters, her character's name was her real name. She also appeared in *Africa Screams* (1949) and *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd* (1952) with the comedy team.

Brooke's other movie credits include *Jane Eyre* (1943), *The Enchanted Cottage* (1945), *Lucky Losers* (1950) with



*The Bowery Boys*, the Alfred Hitchcock thriller *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), the 3-D film *The Maze* (1953), and William Cameron Menzies classic *Invaders from Mars* (1953). On September 28, 1957, she played Doris Cole in the second episode of *Perry Mason*, titled "The Case of the Sleepwalker's Niece". Brooke also played Angela Randall in *I Love Lucy's* "The Fox Hunt", which aired February 6, 1956. She retired from television in 1960 following guest appearances on *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* as Laura Renault and in *Michael Shayne* as Greta Morgan.

Brooke married Alan Shute in 1936, divorcing in 1940. Brooke then married assistant director Jack Voglin in 1941, and the couple had one child together, Donald, before divorcing in 1948. Brooke was married to Raymond A. Klune, an executive at MGM, from 1960 until his death on September 24, 1988. Through Klune she had two stepchildren, Carol V. Klune and Donald C. Klune.

Brooke was a Democrat who supported Adlai Stevenson's campaign in the 1952 presidential election. On May 25, 1999, Brooke died from a blood clot in the lung at a hospital in Bonsall, California. She was cremated with her ashes scat-



## HILLARY BROOKE

tered in the Pacific Ocean. She had two brothers, one of which was called Arthur (1912-2008), ie not actor Arthur Peterson Jr. (1918-1996), as has often been claimed in recent years. Her actual brother is mentioned among surviving kin in her obituaries.

For her contribution to the television industry, Hillary Brooke has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6307 Hollywood Boulevard. She refused to play dumb blondes. "Vacuity will never substitute for a glint of intelligence," she remarked. "However, anyone, man or woman, who is ostentatiously erudite, is lacking in something else or else is just a crashing bore.". "I never thought I was a great actress. Maybe I would have been better if I'd worked harder at it. But I really enjoyed my career and the wonderful people I worked with."

### Partial filmography

New Faces of 1937 (1937) Showgirl (billed as Beatrice Schute)

Eternally Yours (1939) Blonde on Stage (uncredited)

Two Girls on Broadway (1940) Second Girl in Powder Room (uncredited)

Florian (1940) Horsewoman (uncredited)

New Moon (1940) Party Guest (uncredited)

The Philadelphia Story (1940) Main Line Society Woman (uncredited)

The Lone Rider Rides On (1941) Sue Brown

Maisie Was a Lady (1941) House Guest (uncredited)

Country Fair (1941) (uncredited)

The Lone Rider in Frontier Fury (1941) Georgia Deering

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1941) Mrs. Arnold (uncredited)

Unfinished Business (1941) Woman (uncredited)

Married Bachelor (1941) Hillary Gordon (uncredited)

Two-Faced Woman (1941) Dress Shop Clerk



Hotel-Caller (uncredited)

Mr. and Mrs. North (1942) Party Guest (uncredited)

Sleepytime Gal (1942) Railroad Station Blonde (uncredited)

To the Shores of Tripoli (1942) Parade Spectator (uncredited)

Ship Ahoy (1942) Hillary (uncredited)

Calling Dr. Gillespie (1942) Mrs. Brown (uncredited)

Wake Island (1942) Girl at the Inn (uncredited)

Counter-Espionage (1942) Pamela Hart

Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror (1942) Jill Grandis (uncredited)

Happy Go Lucky (1943) Wife (uncredited)

The Crystal Ball (1943) Friend of Jo Ainsley (uncredited)

Sherlock Holmes Faces Death (1943) Sally Musgrave

Africa Screams (1949) Diana Emerson

## HERE COME THE CO-EDS



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Here Come The Co-Eds is a 1945 American comedy film starring the comedy team Abbott and Costello. Oliver Quackenbush, Molly McCarthy and her brother Slat who acts as her publicity agent work for the Miramar Ballroom as taxi dancers. Slat plants a phony article in the local newspaper that declares Molly's ambition is to attend Bixby College. The dean of Bixby reads the article and offers her a scholarship. She agrees, but only if Oliver and Slat can accompany her. They are hired as caretakers. Meanwhile, Chairman Kirkland, whose daughter Diane also attends Bixby, holds the mortgage on the college and threatens to foreclose if the dean continues to ignore tradition and does not expel Molly. Slat and Oliver run into some problems of their own as they fail at every task assigned to them by their supervisor, Mr. Johnson.

Slat devises a plan to raise \$20,000 to save the school: Oliver will wrestle the Masked Marvel. However, just before the match the Masked Marvel becomes ill and is replaced by Mr. Johnson. Oliver still manages to win the match, and Slat takes the \$1,000 winnings and bets it on Bixby in a basketball game at 20-to-1 odds. Unfortunately the bookie attempts to ensure the outcome by hiring a professional team to play in place of Bixby's opponent, Carleton. Oliver dresses in drag and joins the Bixby team. Halfway through the game he receives a bump on the head and is convinced he is Daisy Dimple, "the world's greatest woman basketball player." Bixby pulls into the lead, but Oliver suffers another bump on the head and returns to his usual persona, and ends up losing the game for Bixby. To make up for it, he steals the bookie's money and after a crosstown chase (in a sailboat on a trailer), the boys arrive in time to pay the mortgage and save the school.

It was filmed from October 24 through December 6, 1944. North Hollywood Park was the filming location of Bixby college, while the school's main building was a Universal backlot "Shelby" home (Colonial Mansion 1927) that was also used in another Abbott

and Costello film, The Time of Their Lives. Lou Costello was a real-life basketball star in high school, and performed many of the trick shots himself, without special effects.

### Cast

Bud Abbott as Slat McCarthy

Lou Costello as Oliver Quackenbush

Peggy Ryan as Patty Gayle

Martha O'Driscoll as Molly McCarthy

June Vincent as Diane Kirkland

Lon Chaney Jr. as Johnson (credited as Lon Chaney)

Donald Cook as Dean Larry Benson

Charles Dingle as Jonathan Kirkland

Phil Spitalny and his All-Girl Orchestra as themselves



## THE MUSIC OF THE DUO'S

Laurel & Hardy – Stan Laurel & Oliver Hardy

Label: Another Fine Mess Records – MESS LP1

Format: Vinyl, LP, Orange / Red

Country: UK

Released:

Genre: Non-Music, Stage & Screen

Style: Soundtrack, Dialogue, Comedy

Side 1:

01 Cuckoo Song

02 At The Ball

03 The Trail Of The Lonesome Pine

04 There's Gonna Be A Fight

05 Eloping

06 We Want To Get Married

07 All Aboard

08 Ice Cream Shop

Side 2:

01 School Room

02 Lazy Moon

03 Where's My Clothes

04 Higher Endeavours

05 Four Rounds Tonight

06 Hat Eating

07 Way Down South / Dixie

Limited edition sticker - colour vinyl

Also released in Gold vinyl and picture disc.



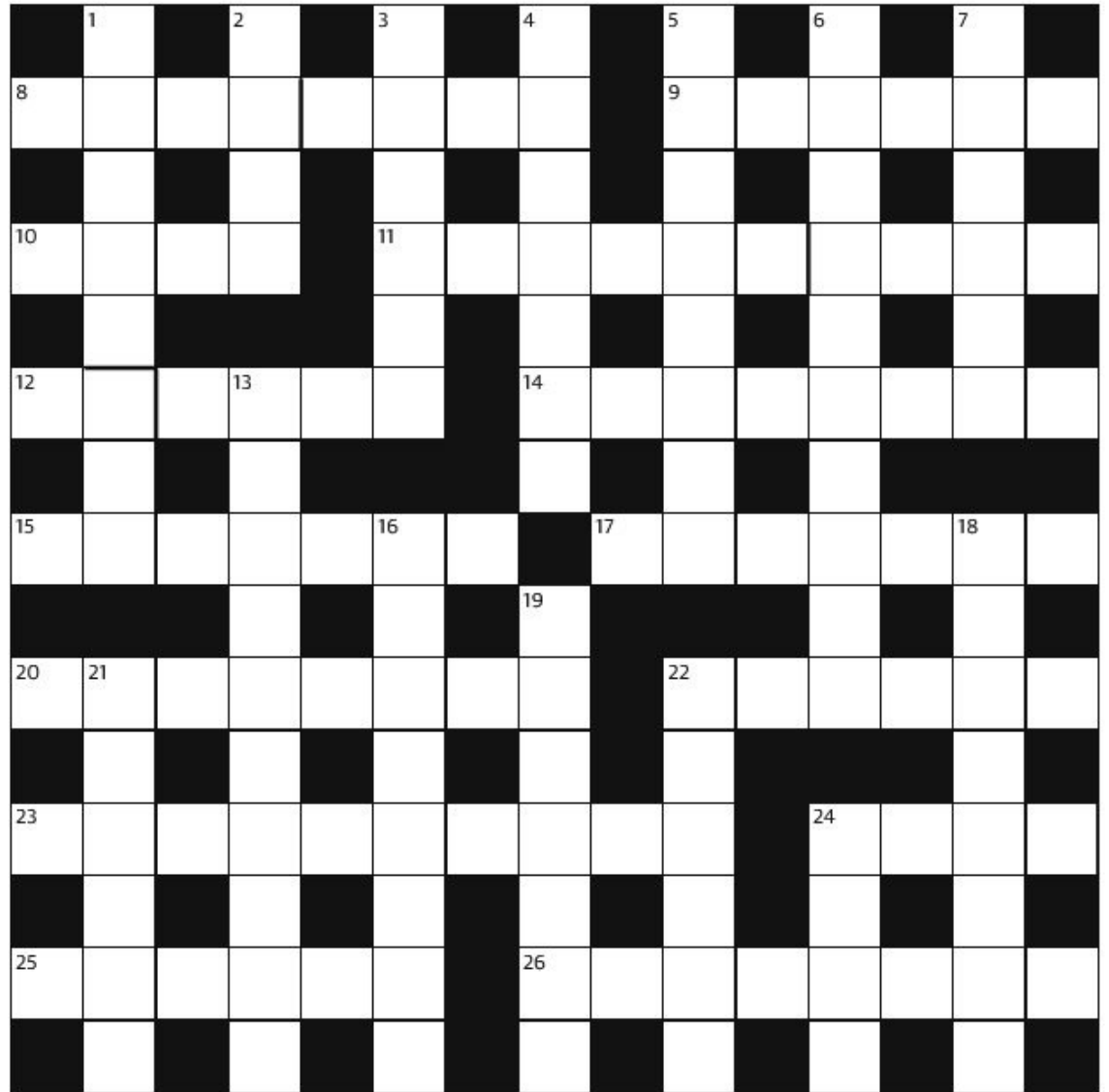


# DECEMBER 2025 CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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A		D		S		N				U		U
<sup>22</sup> B	E	A	M	E	N	D	S		<sup>23</sup> S	T	A	T

# The Flying Deuces



# JANUARY 2026 CROSSWORD

The Flying Deuces

## Across

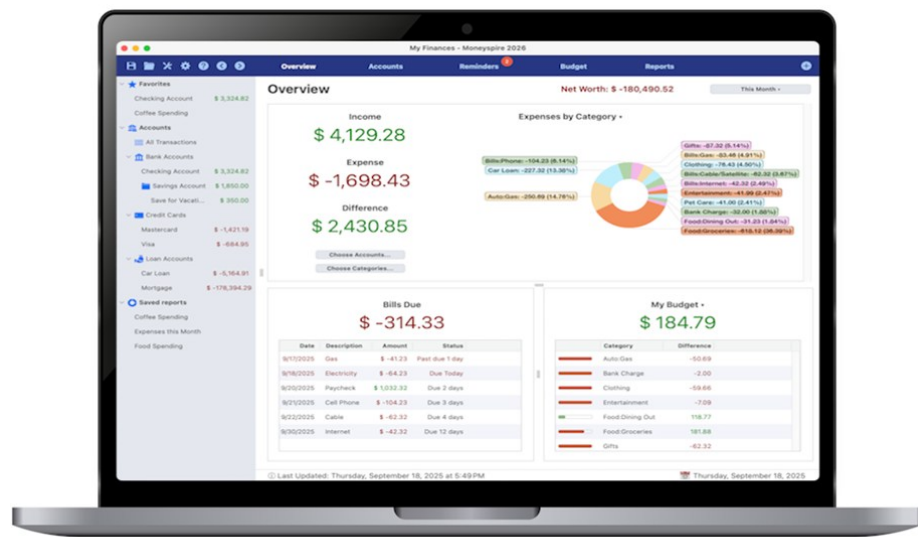
- 8** Bit of drink to convey threat to Aussie, supposedly (4,4)
- 9** Glimpse gold-plated seat ~~very, very good occupying~~ tavern, but to no effect (2,4)
- 14** Interplay of tide and dune not checked (8)
- 15** Draw US lawyer to right law (7)
- 17** Conservative guy, not too bright, seen around Republican festival (7)
- 20** Trick sign containing Government name (8)
- 22** Rector intervening in University accommodation protest? (6)
- 23** Nuns and monks initially among the very best groups of motorists? (10)
- 24,** Trumpeter's accessories **10** provided by pale relative of trumpeter? (4,4)
- 25** What Admiral's found in hold? (6)
- 26** Good for France, back under governance - such as the aristocracy? (8)

## Down

- 1** Fishing accessory, crude, left covered by overturned canvas (5,3)
- 4** Classic musician's musical work twice interrupted by King and ambassador (7)
- 5** Comment about a new central heating that uses very small components (8)
- 6** Information provided in Rhineland city for 'improver' of community (10)
- 7** Gain account with regret (6)
- 13** Someone skilled in the field - and margins too, possibly (10)
- 16** Understand policy about introduction of military service (8)
- 18** Desperately in love, French are excessive in sexual activity (8)
- 19** Second article all but elsewhere (7)
- 21** Sanctioned 'natter' to turn up in dictionary (6)
- 22** Bear's second to enter water (6)
- 24** Way of working ascribed to American musician (4)



## MONEYSPIRE 2026 REVIEW



I don't normally advertise products, I hate sites (or restaurants / cafes) asking for likes and feedback. But I'm making an exception for the best new paid-for finance package available. I originally purchased the 2025 version after trying out the trial.

I have my main copy installed under Windows 11, and installed the Linux versions under Fedora and Manjaro. This review and guide will also help you if you wanted to try the Linux version, because the Linux version isn't quite there yet with getting dependencies automatically installed, you will have to use the terminal. Don't fret as it's really easy. Once done Moneyspire works perfectly under Linux.

Moneyspire (<https://www.moneyspire.com/>) is a finance package that I found in 2025 and decided to try it out while using KMyMoney. Over the years I've tried Quicken, Microsoft Money, and a few so called "freebies" that were basically naff.

It's currently priced at \$59.99 for the 2026 version which is £44.89 Pounds. It works on Windows, Mac, Chromebook and Linux. I've not tried the Mac or Chromebook versions but the Windows is a downloadable exe file.

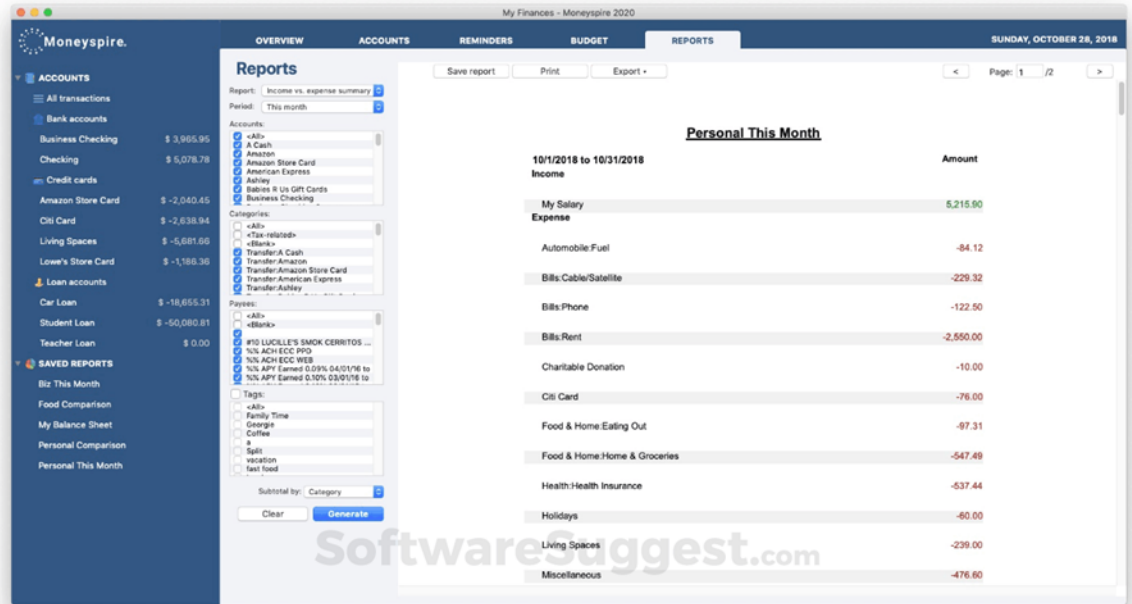
Most finance packages allow you to export your accounts as "Qif", and then the new finance package lets you import "Qif" files. This is pretty much standard across the board.

Another feature is a mobile phone version for Android and IOS. You can use the desktop version to update your accounts and then save to your cloud account. The mobile version connects to the cloud to update itself.

If you wanted to try [Moneyspire](https://www.moneyspire.com/) under Linux then you can download either a Deb package or RPM package. Deb means it's for Debian based distros like Ubuntu, Linux Mint and obviously Debian itself. RPM stands for RPM Package Manager (originally Red Hat Package Manager) and works on Manjaro, PCLinuxOS and other RPM based distros.

I believe the Linux version needs a bit more work from the installation point of view. Let me explain. When you install a native package under your Linux Distro then the package manager will download and install the dependencies required (well hopefully it will if the correct version required is available). Downloading and installing either the Deb or

# MONEYSPIRE 2026 REVIEW



After downloading and installing the RPM package in Manjaro I ran the software and it failed to run. So I opened a terminal and ran the software from there. Moneyspire was missing a dependency called libsoup which is currently (I think) version 3. So I typed the command "pacman -S libsoup3" and all installed fine. Rebooted my machine just in case, and then tried running Moneyspire again. This time it worked fine. Another system file(s) needed is webkitgtk. I've always had this installed prior to installing Moneyspire because of the setup I have.

Installing under Fedora, especially version 43 requires webkitgtk installed. As of writing the version is 4.1 and can be installed easily (if not already installed) by entering the following command via the terminal "sudo dnf install webkit2gtk4.1". Also issue the command "sudo dnf install libsoup3" to make sure that is installed if not already. Once these dependencies are installed go ahead and install the RPM version of Moneyspire.

Date	#	Payee	Withdrawal	Deposit	Category	Tags	Memo	Balance	Cleared bal
10/7/2018		TARGET	-84.80		Food & Home/Home & Gr...			3,608.74	3,608.74
10/8/2018		chevron	-84.12		Automobile Fuel		CHEVRON XXXX391 LAKEWOOD CA 4910 LAKEWOOD	3,524.62	3,524.62
10/9/2018		eDeposit		30.00	Business Checking		eDeposit	3,554.62	3,554.62
10/9/2018		Frontier	-229.32		Bills/Cable/Satellite			3,325.30	3,325.30
10/10/2018		mcdonalds	-24.14		Food & Home/Eating Out			3,301.16	3,301.16
10/10/2018		Pavilions	-6.19		Food & Home/Home & Gr...			3,294.97	3,294.97
10/12/2018		ohana hawaii bbq	-22.97		Food & Home/Eating Out			3,272.00	3,272.00
10/13/2018		kohls	-60.00		Miscellaneous			3,212.00	3,212.00
10/13/2018		Jamba Juice	-12.78		Food & Home/Eating Out			3,199.22	3,199.22
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10/15/2018		Debit ABC	-82.00		Miscellaneous			2,971.19	2,971.19
10/15/2018		Debit Jamba Juice	-12.78		Food & Home/Eating Out		JAMBA JUICE 0398 QSR LAKEWOOD CA 4993 CAND	2,958.41	2,958.41
10/16/2018		Debit Withdrawal	-240.00		Miscellaneous			2,718.41	2,718.41
10/16/2018		Debit Kohl's	-60.00		Holidays		Withdrawal KOHL'S DEPT STRS	2,658.41	2,658.41
10/17/2018		Citi Card	-76.00		Citi Card			2,582.41	2,582.41
10/17/2018		mcdonald	-14.64		Food & Home/Eating Out			2,567.77	2,567.77
10/17/2018		Debit pavilions	-2.99		Food & Home/Home & Gr...		POS PAVILIONS STORE 2209 LAKEWOOD CA PAVIO	2,564.78	2,564.78
10/18/2018		active	-10.00		Charitable Donation			2,554.78	2,554.78
10/18/2018		Debit Citibank	-76.00		Miscellaneous		Withdrawal CITI CARD ONLINE	2,478.78	2,478.78
10/19/2018		DEPOSIT		2,800.00				5,078.78	5,078.78
10/20/2018		Debit Kohl's	-60.00					5,018.78	5,018.78
10/26/2018		EFT Edison	-127.83		Bills Electric			4,890.95	4,890.95
10/27/2018		EFT Socialgas	-58.32		Bills Gas			4,832.63	4,832.63
10/27/2018		HELNET	-278.20		Student Loan			4,554.43	4,554.43

## MONEYSPIRE 2026 REVIEW

Conclusion: Moneyspire is well worth the investment. Is easy to use, and the reports are brilliant. Installing under Windows is easy and straight forward. I've only tried it under Manjaro and Fedora and after installing the dependencies it works perfect.

Go to their website, download the trial version and give it a spin and see what you think. If you decide to buy the license key for it after the trial then mention that you read our review.

Now a seasoned Linux user will tell you that software packages are distro dependent and you have to download a specific Deb or RPM for your distro as anything else could break your system. This is mostly true, but thankfully I've had no problems with Moneyspire on the three named distros.

### **What Distro(s) does Moneyspire work on with very minimal work ?**

The following Distros with the KDE Plasma Desktop have now been tested by me, and Moneyspire works well. These are the Distro's that I have tested installing Moneyspire on.

- Fedora 43
- Mageia 9
- Manjaro 24.2.0
- ROSA Fresh Desktop 13.1
- Ubuntu 25.10

Update. Fedora 43 Installed libsoup and webkitgtk by default as I assume it was needed by other installed software.



### **Fedora 43 with the KDE Plasma Desktop.**

Fedora 43. Moneyspire works perfectly without issue. Libsoup and webkitgtk are installed natively as they are needed by other components. After Googling AI informed me that these dependencies were installed as they were needed by both Gnome and KDE desktops, so installing Moneyspire under Gnome should have the same result and work fine.

Installing Moneyspire was as simple as downloading the RPM package, open Dolphin (or Nautilus under Gnome), going to Downloads and right clicking on the file and selecting "Open with Discover".



### **How do I install Moneyspire in Mageia ?**

First make sure your system is up-to-date. Open a console and log in as Root User. I'm a big fan of always installing updates as soon as possible. You can skip these steps if you wish and go straight to the last section.

First update all your repositories use: `urpmi.update -a`



## MONEYSPIRE 2026 REVIEW

Next update your system with the latest security updates/bugfixes: `urpmi --auto-update`

The command above brings the system up-to-date do the same as the following command sequence:

```
urpmi.update -a && urpmi --auto-select
```

To install a package via the console you can use the following command:

```
urpmi <nameofpackage>
```

If after an update you have orphaned packages, if you wish to remove them, you can use `urpme --auto-orphans`

### Now To Install Moneyspire in Mageia 9

Download the RPM version to your Downloads folder.

Open Dolphin file manager and click on Downloads folder

Right Click on the Moneyspire file and select "Open with software installer"

Then click "Install". Enter the Root password and press "Return"

All dependencies are already installed and Moneyspire runs perfectly.



### ROSA Linux Desktop 13.01

Back in the day was a Distro called "Mandrake" which was based in France. I believe it was the first distro with a GUI installer for installing the OS onto your computer. Well Mandrake got sued by a guy called "Mandrake the Clown" over the name Mandrake.

So Mandrake settled and changed its name to Mandriva. Then the company basically went bankrupt and laid off a load of staff. A lot of these Devs went on to start Mageia.

Out of the ashes have risen a few distro's based on Mandriva, such as Mageia, Open-Mandriva and ROSA Linux. So, I wanted to test Moneyspire under ROSA.

After installing ROSA and installing updates I proceeded to download the RPM package.

I opened Dolphin as I was running the KDE Plasma Desktop and navigated to the Downloads folder.

Next I right clicked on the Moneyspire file and selected "Open with RpmGrab – RPM Package Installer"

I was asked for the Root User password and the ROSA installed the package.

Moneyspire-2026 ran with no issues under ROSA, no extra dependencies or anything. So another distro that Moneyspire works on with minimal work needed by the user.



## How To Install Moneyspire in Ubuntu 25.10

Download the Deb version to your Downloads folder

Open Nautilus. (Ubuntu's version of Dolphin / File Manager) and click on Downloads folder

Right click on the Moneyspire file and select "Open with App Center". Follow the prompts and install. There is no dependency issues in Ubuntu, so Moneyspire works perfect.

There is a a lot of distros in the Ubuntu family that use Ubuntu as its base and have different desktops. Kubuntu (KDE), Xubuntu, Lubuntu, Linux Mint and Zorin OS to name a few.

Without trying all these flavours I'm going to assume that Moneyspire will work under them. Some MAY need dependencies installing (libsoup and webkitgtk etc), but it should be very painless and easy.

The main point to remember. The deb package should (if I remember) use the apt-get command and auto install all needed dependencies.

### Distros with install issues or missing dependencies:



## Opensuse Leap 16

Opensuse is one of those distros that requires a Moneyspire rpm specific to itself. One dependency it seems to need is "XojoGUIFramework64.so". From looking I couldn't find a native file to install.

I found this site <https://www.xojo.com/download/> to download xojo file. You need to sign up for an account to download the file

You also need to make sure that the following files are also installed:

- libc6
- libncurses5
- libstdc++6
- libglib2.0-dev
- libglib2.0-0
- libsoup2.4-1
- libgtk2.0-0

What would be absolutely amazing is if the Moneyspire Devs could make an installable rpm package for both Opensuse Leap and Tumbleweed that has the dependencies included. Or if you love tinkering then maybe you could locate / download the needed files yourself.

## THE MYSTERY OF RAVENSHOLLOW CASTLE



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The ancient stones of Ravenshollow Castle had weathered eight centuries of Atlantic storms, their gray surfaces worn smooth by salt spray and time. Perched dramatically on the rugged coastline of Cornwall, the fortress commanded a view that stretched endlessly across the churning waters, its towers and battlements silhouetted against the perpetually overcast sky like something from a Gothic novel. For the past five years, this medieval stronghold had served an unlikely purpose as a tourist attraction, drawing visitors from across England and beyond who came seeking both historical enlightenment and supernatural thrills.

The castle's transformation from crumbling ruin to profitable enterprise was largely due to the efforts of its two most unlikely custodians: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, a pair of American expatriates who had somehow found themselves the proprietors of one of Cornwall's most notorious haunted landmarks. Abbott, tall and lean with sharp features and an even sharper tongue, handled the business side of their operation with the efficiency of a seasoned entrepreneur. His partner, the rotund and perpetually nervous Costello, possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the castle's history that he delivered to tour groups with a mixture of genuine enthusiasm and barely contained terror.

The ghost that made Ravenshollow Castle

famous was no ordinary Specter. Lady Evangeline Blackthorne, according to local legend, had been the wife of the castle's lord during the tumultuous fourteenth century. Her tragic tale, which Abbott and Costello had refined through countless retellings, spoke of a woman driven to madness by her husband's cruelty, who had thrown herself from the castle's highest tower during a violent storm. For centuries afterward, visitors and residents alike reported sightings of a woman in flowing white robes, her long dark hair streaming behind her as she wandered the castle's corridors and battlements, forever searching for the peace that had eluded her in life.

The supernatural activity at Ravenshollow had always been sporadic but undeniable. Doors would slam shut of their own accord, cold spots would appear in rooms warmed by roaring fires, and the sound of weeping could be heard echoing through the stone passages during the darkest hours of night. These phenomena had provided Abbott and Costello with excellent material for their ghost tours, allowing them to regale visitors with firsthand accounts of paranormal encounters that sent delicious shivers down spines and kept the booking calendar full.

However, two years ago, the ghostly manifestations had ceased entirely. The sudden silence was as mysterious as the hauntings themselves had been. Lady Evangeline, it seemed, had finally found her rest, leaving behind only the stories and legends that had made the castle famous.



## THE MYSTERY OF RAVENSHOLLOW CASTLE

Abbott had initially worried that the absence of genuine supernatural activity would hurt their business, but he quickly discovered that tourists were just as eager to hear about the ghost's mysterious disappearance as they had been to experience her presence. Costello, for his part, was secretly relieved to conduct tours without the constant fear of encountering the spectral lady around every corner.

The peace, however, was not to last. On a particularly stormy evening in late October, as Abbott was reviewing the accounts in the castle's converted office and Costello was securing the tourist areas for the night, the familiar sounds returned with a vengeance. The first indication that something had changed came in the form of a door slamming so violently in the great hall that both men felt the vibration through the stone floors. This was followed by the unmistakable sound of footsteps echoing through the corridors above, measured and deliberate, as if someone were pacing back and forth across the ancient floorboards.

Costello, who had been checking the locks on the gift shop, came running to find Abbott, his face pale and his hands trembling. "Bud, Bud!" he gasped, his voice barely above a whisper. "She's back! Lady Evangeline is back, and she sounds angrier than ever!"

Abbott, ever the pragmatist, initially dismissed his partner's concerns as the product of an overactive imagination combined with too much exposure to their own ghost stories. But as the nights progressed, the phenomena intensified beyond anything they had experienced during the castle's previous period of



activity. Objects moved on their own with unprecedented frequency and violence. The temperature in certain rooms would plummet so dramatically that their breath became visible even on mild autumn evenings. Most disturbing of all, the weeping that had once been a barely audible whisper now rose to wailing that could be heard throughout the entire castle, a sound so mournful and piercing that it seemed to penetrate not just the walls but the very souls of those who heard it.

The renewed supernatural activity began to affect their business almost immediately. Tour groups

that had once delighted in the mild thrills of a supposedly haunted castle now found themselves genuinely terrified by experiences that went far beyond entertainment. Several visitors had to be escorted from the premises after fainting or becoming hysterical. One elderly gentleman claimed to have been pushed down a flight of stairs by invisible hands, though fortunately he suffered only minor bruises. Word of these incidents spread quickly through the tight-knit community of paranormal enthusiasts and ghost tour operators, and bookings began to decline as Ravenshollow Castle developed a reputation for being genuinely dangerous rather than merely atmospheric.

More troubling still were the incidents that occurred when the castle was supposedly empty. Abbott and Costello had taken to staying overnight in their small apartment within the castle walls, partly for security reasons and partly because they had grown fond of their unusual home. But their sleep was now regularly interrupted by sounds that defied explanation: heavy footsteps in rooms they knew to be vacant, the scraping of furniture being moved across floors, and voices engaged in what sounded like heated conversations, though the words were never quite clear enough to understand.

On one particularly unsettling night, Costello awoke to find every door in their apartment standing wide open, despite his certainty that he had

## THE MYSTERY OF RAVENSHOLLOW CASTLE

### The Flying Deuces

locked them all before retiring. When he went to investigate, he discovered that the same phenomenon had occurred throughout the castle. Every door, from the massive oak portals that guarded the main entrances to the small wooden doors of storage closets, stood ajar as if the entire structure had exhaled and released all its secrets at once.

The breaking point came when Abbott, who prided himself on his rational scepticism, had his own undeniable encounter with the supernatural. While working late in the office, he heard the distinct sound of a woman singing coming from the great hall. The voice was hauntingly beautiful but filled with an indescribable sadness that seemed to seep into his bones. Against his better judgment, he followed the sound, only to find the hall empty save for moonlight streaming through the tall windows. But as he stood there, trying to convince himself that he had imagined the entire episode, he saw her.

Lady Evangeline Blackthorne stood at the far end of the hall, her white robes seeming to glow with their own inner light. Her face, though beautiful, was marked by an expression of such profound anguish that Abbott felt his heart constrict with sympathy. For a moment that seemed to stretch into eternity, their eyes met across the centuries, and Abbott understood with absolute certainty that this was no mere residual haunting or trick of the imagination. This was a soul in torment, and she was trying to communicate something of vital importance.

The apparition lasted only seconds before fading away, but the impact on Abbott was profound and lasting. He found himself unable to sleep, unable to concentrate on the mundane details of running their business, unable to think of anything but the desperate plea he had seen in those ghostly eyes. It was clear that Lady Evangeline was not simply resuming her old patterns of haunting. Something had changed, something had disturbed whatever peace she had found during her two-year absence, and she was trying to tell them what it was.

It was Costello who suggested they seek outside help. Despite his nervous disposition, or perhaps because of it, he had always been more open to unconventional solutions than his pragmatic partner. "Bud," he said one morning over breakfast, his eyes red-rimmed from another sleepless night, "we need someone who understands these things. Someone who can figure out what Lady Evangeline is trying to tell us."

Abbott's first instinct was to contact the local paranormal investigators, but Costello had a different idea entirely. He had been reading the morning paper when inspiration struck, his finger pointing excitedly at a small article buried in the back pages. "Look at this, Bud! It says here that Sherlock Holmes is in London, consulting on a case for Scotland Yard. The real Sherlock Holmes!"

Abbott looked at his partner with the expression of a man whose patience was wearing thin. "Lou, Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character. He was made up by Arthur Conan Doyle."

But Costello was insistent, waving the newspaper with growing excitement. "No, no, Bud, you don't understand! It says right here that he's real, that he's been working cases all along, and that Doyle just wrote about some of them. It says he's the greatest detective in the world, and if anyone can solve a mystery involving ghosts and castles, it's got to be him!"

Despite his scepticism, Abbott found himself intrigued by the possibility. Their situation had moved far beyond the realm of normal business problems, and conventional solutions seemed inadequate to address supernatural phenomena. If there truly was a real Sherlock Holmes, and if he was indeed the master detective of legend, perhaps he could unravel the mystery that was destroying their livelihood and their peace of mind.

The process of contacting Holmes proved surprisingly straightforward. A telegram sent to the address listed in the newspaper article received a prompt reply, written in a precise hand that somehow conveyed both intelligence and authority even in its brevity. Holmes indicated

## THE MYSTERY OF RAVENSHOLLOW CASTLE

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that he would be available to consult on their case within the week, and that he found the combination of supernatural phenomena and their mysterious cessation and resumption to be of considerable interest.

When Sherlock Holmes arrived at Ravenshollow Castle three days later, he was exactly what Abbott had expected and nothing like what Costello had imagined. Tall and lean, with sharp, aquiline features and penetrating gray eyes, Holmes possessed an air of intellectual intensity that seemed to charge the very atmosphere around him. He was accompanied by his faithful companion, Dr. John Watson, whose solid, reassuring presence provided a perfect counterpoint to the detective's mercurial energy.

Holmes's first action upon arriving at the castle was to conduct what he called a preliminary survey of the premises. This involved a methodical examination of every room, corridor, and staircase, during which he made numerous notes in a small leather-bound notebook and occasionally paused to examine seemingly insignificant details with a magnifying glass. Abbott and Costello followed at a respectful distance, watching in fascination as the great detective's keen eyes took in everything from the wear patterns on stone steps to the way dust had settled in corners.

"Fascinating," Holmes murmured as they completed their tour of the main structure. "The castle shows clear signs of recent supernatural activity, but there are also indications of human presence that do not correspond to your normal tourist operations or your own residence here."

Watson, who had been taking notes of his own, looked up with interest. "What sort of indications, Holmes?"

"Observe the dust patterns in the unused chambers on the third floor," Holmes replied, gesturing toward the stairs they had just descended. "While most areas show the expected accumulation of dust and debris, certain rooms have been disturbed recently. Not cleaned, mind you, but disturbed, as if

someone has been moving through them regularly. Yet Mr. Abbott assures me that neither he nor Mr. Costello has had occasion to visit those areas in months."

Costello shifted nervously, wrapping his arms around himself as if warding off a chill. "Maybe it was Lady Evangeline. Ghosts don't leave footprints, do they?"

Holmes fixed him with a penetrating stare. "An interesting hypothesis, Mr. Costello, but ghosts, in my experience, do not require the use of oil lamps. Yet I found clear evidence that someone has been using the chambers on the third floor for extended periods, including the remains of lamp oil and candle wax that could not be more than a few weeks old."

This revelation sent a chill through both Abbott and Costello that had nothing to do with supernatural phenomena. The idea that living, breathing intruders had been using their castle without their knowledge was somehow more disturbing than any ghostly manifestation.

Over the following days, Holmes conducted an investigation that was both thorough and methodical. He interviewed Abbott and Costello extensively about the history of the supernatural activity, the exact timing of its cessation and resumption, and every detail they could remember about the recent incidents. He examined the castle's financial records, studied local shipping schedules, and even made inquiries in the nearby village about any unusual activity or strangers who might have been seen in the area.

Watson, meanwhile, focused on documenting the supernatural phenomena themselves. He spent several nights in different parts of the castle, armed with various scientific instruments and a detailed log in which he recorded every unusual occurrence. His findings were both fascinating and disturbing. The ghostly activity, he discovered, followed distinct patterns that seemed to correlate with specific times and locations within the castle.

"The phenomena are most intense between the hours of midnight and three in the morning," Watson reported to Holmes after his third night of observation. "They seem to center



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around the great hall and the chambers directly above it, but there's also significant activity in the tower stairwells and along the eastern wall of the castle."

Holmes nodded thoughtfully, adding Watson's observations to his growing collection of notes and sketches. "And what of the nature of the phenomena themselves? Do they seem random, or is there a pattern to the manifestations?"

"Definitely a pattern," Watson replied without hesitation. "The door slamming always occurs first, followed by the footsteps, then the temperature drops, and finally the weeping or wailing. It's as if Lady Evangeline is following a specific routine, or perhaps trying to lead someone somewhere."

This insight proved to be crucial to Holmes's understanding of the case. Rather than viewing the supernatural activity as random haunting, he began to consider the possibility that the ghost was attempting to communicate specific information. This theory was reinforced when he discovered that the areas of most intense paranormal activity corresponded exactly to the locations where he had found evidence of unauthorized human presence.

The breakthrough came on Holmes's fourth night at the castle. Rather than simply observing the supernatural phenomena, he decided to follow them, treating Lady Evangeline's manifestations as clues in a complex puzzle. When the familiar sequence of door slamming and footsteps began, Holmes positioned himself to track the sounds as they moved through the castle. What he discovered was that the ghostly footsteps followed a very specific route: from the great hall to the third floor chambers, then down to the cellars, and finally to a section of the eastern wall that had been sealed off centuries ago.

Armed with this knowledge, Holmes began a detailed examination of the sealed section. What he found there would have shocked even the most experienced investigator. Behind a carefully concealed entrance, accessible only through a narrow passage that connected to the castle's ancient drainage system, was a sophisticated operation that had nothing to do with su-

pernatural phenomena.

The sealed chambers had been converted into a temporary storage and processing facility for what was clearly an international smuggling operation. Crates of various sizes filled the rooms, containing everything from rare artifacts and precious metals to more mundane but valuable goods like fine wines and luxury textiles. Maps of the coastline covered one wall, marked with tidal charts and shipping schedules. Most telling of all was a detailed plan of the castle itself, showing not only the layout of the tourist areas but also the location of every hidden passage and secret chamber.

Holmes's investigation revealed that the smugglers had been using Ravenshollow Castle as a halfway house for their operations for at least two years, coinciding exactly with the cessation of supernatural activity. The castle's isolated location, combined with its reputation for being haunted, made it an ideal base of operations. Who would think to look for criminals in a place that most people avoided after dark?

The resumption of ghostly activity, Holmes deduced, was Lady Evangeline's attempt to warn Abbott and Costello about the intruders. The ghost, it seemed, had been dormant during the period when the smugglers were using the castle because their presence had somehow disturbed the spiritual equilibrium of the place. But as their operations expanded and became more brazen, her protective instincts toward the castle and its legitimate inhabitants had overcome whatever force had kept her at rest.

The evidence Holmes gathered painted a picture of a sophisticated international operation with connections stretching from London to the Continent and beyond. The smugglers had chosen their base well, using the castle's tourist operations as perfect cover for their activities. Delivery boats could approach the castle's private dock under cover of darkness, unload their cargo into the hidden chambers, and depart before dawn. The goods would then be processed, repackaged, and distributed through a network of contacts who posed as legitimate antique dealers and art collectors.

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What made the operation particularly clever was how the smugglers had used the castle's supernatural reputation to their advantage. Local residents, already wary of the haunted fortress, were unlikely to investigate unusual lights or sounds coming from the building at night. Even if someone did notice suspicious activity, they would probably attribute it to ghostly phenomena rather than criminal enterprise.

Holmes's investigation also revealed why the supernatural activity had become so much more intense recently. The smuggling operation was preparing for its largest shipment yet, a collection of priceless artifacts stolen from museums and private collections across Europe. The increased activity and the presence of more people in the castle had agitated Lady Evangeline to an unprecedented degree, causing her manifestations to become more violent and frequent.

The detective's findings explained every aspect of the mystery that had been plaguing Abbott and Costello. The doors that opened by themselves were the result of the smugglers' need to move freely through the castle during the night. The cold spots and temperature drops occurred in areas where the criminals had installed ventilation systems to preserve their stolen goods. Even the voices that Abbott and Costello had heard were simply the smugglers conducting their business, their words distorted by the castle's acoustics and their own fear.

But Holmes's investigation went beyond simply identifying the smugglers and their methods. Through careful analysis of the evidence he had gathered, he was able to determine that the operation was run by a criminal organization with connections to some of the most notorious thieves and fences in Europe. The leader of the group was a man known only as "The Raven," whose identity had eluded law enforcement agencies across multiple countries.

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place when Holmes discovered a coded message hidden among the smugglers' papers. Using

his extensive knowledge of criminal ciphers, he was able to decode instructions for the upcoming major shipment, including the date, time, and method of delivery. The information revealed that the stolen artifacts were scheduled to arrive at Ravenshollow Castle within forty-eight hours, providing the perfect opportunity to capture not only the local operatives but potentially The Raven himself.

Holmes immediately contacted Scotland Yard, providing them with detailed information about the smuggling operation and requesting assistance in apprehending the criminals. Inspector Lestrade, despite his usual scepticism about Holmes's methods, was impressed by the thoroughness of the detective's investigation and agreed to provide the necessary manpower for a coordinated raid.

The plan Holmes devised was both elegant and practical. Rather than simply arresting the smugglers already in the castle, he proposed allowing the major shipment to proceed as scheduled, thereby catching the entire organization in the act. Abbott and Costello would continue their normal operations, maintaining the appearance that nothing had changed, while plainclothes officers positioned themselves throughout the castle and its grounds.

The night of the operation was one that none of the participants would ever forget. As predicted, a ship approached the castle's dock under cover of darkness, its crew working quickly to unload crates that clearly contained items of enormous value. The smugglers in the castle moved with practiced efficiency, directing the placement of the goods and preparing them for distribution to their network of buyers.

Holmes, Watson, and the Scotland Yard officers waited until the entire shipment had been brought into the castle before making their move. The raid was swift and decisive, with the criminals caught completely off guard by the sudden appearance of law enforcement officers in what they had believed

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to be their secure hideout.

Among those arrested was indeed The Raven, whose real name proved to be Sir Reginald Blackwood, a respected member of London society whose criminal activities had been hidden behind a facade of respectability. The recovery of the stolen artifacts was a major victory for international law enforcement, as many of the items had been missing for years and were considered lost forever.

In the aftermath of the arrests, an interesting phenomenon occurred at Ravenshollow Castle. The supernatural activity that had plagued Abbott and Costello for weeks suddenly ceased entirely, returning to the peaceful state that had existed before the smugglers' arrival. Lady Evangeline, it seemed, had accomplished her purpose in warning the castle's inhabitants about the intruders, and could now return to her eternal rest.

Holmes's explanation for the ghost's behaviour was characteristically logical, even when dealing with supernatural phenomena. "Lady Evangeline Blackthorne was, by all accounts, a woman who loved this castle and considered it her sacred trust," he told Abbott and Costello as they surveyed the now-quiet great hall. "When criminals violated that trust by using her home for their illegal activities, her spirit was compelled to act. The intensification of her manifestations was directly proportional to the threat posed to the castle and its legitimate inhabitants."

Watson, ever the scientist, was fascinated by the correlation between the supernatural activity and the criminal enterprise. "It's as if she was trying to communicate with you in the only way she could," he observed. "The patterns of her appearances, the specific locations where she manifested most strongly, even the timing of her activities, all pointed toward the areas where the smugglers were operating."

The resolution of the case brought unexpected benefits to Abbott and Costello beyond the simple restoration of peace to their castle. The story of how a ghost had helped solve an international smuggling operation captured

the imagination of the press and the public, generating more publicity for Ravenshollow Castle than any advertising campaign could have achieved. Bookings for ghost tours increased dramatically, with visitors eager to hear the true story of Lady Evangeline's heroic intervention.

More importantly, the experience had given both men a new appreciation for their unusual home and its supernatural inhabitant. Abbott, whose scepticism had been thoroughly challenged by his encounter with Lady Evangeline, developed a more respectful attitude toward the castle's ghostly resident. Costello, meanwhile, found that his fear of the supernatural had been replaced by a sense of gratitude toward the spirit who had protected them from very real, very dangerous criminals.

Holmes and Watson departed Ravenshollow Castle with the satisfaction of having solved one of their most unusual cases. The detective's methods had proven effective even when dealing with supernatural phenomena, demonstrating that logic and careful observation could illuminate mysteries regardless of their apparent nature.

In his final report on the case, Holmes wrote: "The investigation at Ravenshollow Castle serves as a reminder that the most extraordinary circumstances often have the most mundane explanations. What appeared to be a supernatural mystery was, in fact, a very human crime. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss entirely the role played by forces beyond our complete understanding. Whether one believes in ghosts or not, the fact remains that Lady Evangeline Blackthorne's manifestations provided crucial clues that led to the resolution of a significant criminal enterprise."

The case of Ravenshollow Castle became one of the most celebrated in Holmes's career, not only for its successful resolution but for its demonstration that even the supernatural could be subject to logical analysis and deduction. It also established a lasting friendship between the great detective and the unlikely duo of Abbott and Costello, who would occasionally consult Holmes on other mysteries



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that arose in their continued operation of the castle.

Years later, visitors to Ravenshollow Castle would hear the complete story of the ghost who helped catch international criminals, a tale that perfectly blended historical mystery, supernatural phenomena, and detective work. Lady Evangeline Blackthorne had found her place in history not just as a tragic figure from the medieval past, but as an active participant in bringing justice to the modern world.

The castle itself continued to thrive as a tourist destination, its reputation enhanced rather than diminished by the revelation that its supernatural activity had served a noble purpose. Abbott and Costello became minor celebrities in their own right, their story inspiring books, articles, and even a film adaptation that brought their unusual adventure to audiences around the world.

But perhaps the most significant outcome of the entire affair was the peace that finally settled over Ravenshollow Castle. Lady Evangeline's spirit, having fulfilled her protective duty, seemed to find the rest that had eluded her for eight centuries. While the castle retained its reputation as one of England's most haunted locations, the supernatural activity became gentle and benevolent, more like the presence of a guardian angel than a tormented ghost.

On quiet evenings, when the last tour group had departed and the castle settled into its ancient rhythms, Abbott and Costello would sometimes catch a glimpse of a figure in white moving gracefully through the great hall or along the battlements. But these sightings brought comfort rather than fear, a reminder that they shared their home with a spirit who had proven herself to be not just a resident of Ravenshollow Castle, but its most devoted protector.

The mystery of Ravenshollow Castle thus became more than just another case in Sherlock Holmes's illustrious career. It became a testament to the idea that justice and truth could prevail even in the most unlikely cir-

cumstances, and that sometimes the most effective allies in the fight against crime could come from the most unexpected sources. In solving the mystery of the ghost and the smugglers, Holmes had not only brought criminals to justice but had also helped restore peace to a troubled spirit and security to two men who had found themselves in circumstances far beyond their understanding.

