



Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production

Erin Hill

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Histories of women in Hollywood usually recount the contributions of female directors, screenwriters, designers, actresses, and other creative personnel whose names loom large in the credits. Yet, from its inception, the American film industry relied on the labor of thousands more women, workers whose vital contributions often went unrecognized.

Never Done introduces generations of women who worked behind the scenes in the film industry—from the employees' wives who hand-colored the Edison Company's films frame-by-frame, to the female immigrants who toiled in MGM's backrooms to produce beautifully beaded and embroidered costumes. Challenging the dismissive characterization of these women as merely menial workers, media historian Erin Hill shows how their labor was essential to the industry and required considerable technical and interpersonal skills. Sketching a history of how Hollywood came to define certain occupations as lower-paid "women's work," or "feminized labor," Hill also reveals how enterprising women eventually gained a foothold in more prestigious divisions like casting and publicity.

Poring through rare archives and integrating the firsthand accounts of women employed in the film industry, the book gives a voice to women whose work was indispensable yet largely invisible. As it traces this long history of women in Hollywood, *Never Done* reveals the persistence of sexist assumptions that, even today, leave women in the media industry underpraised and underpaid.

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