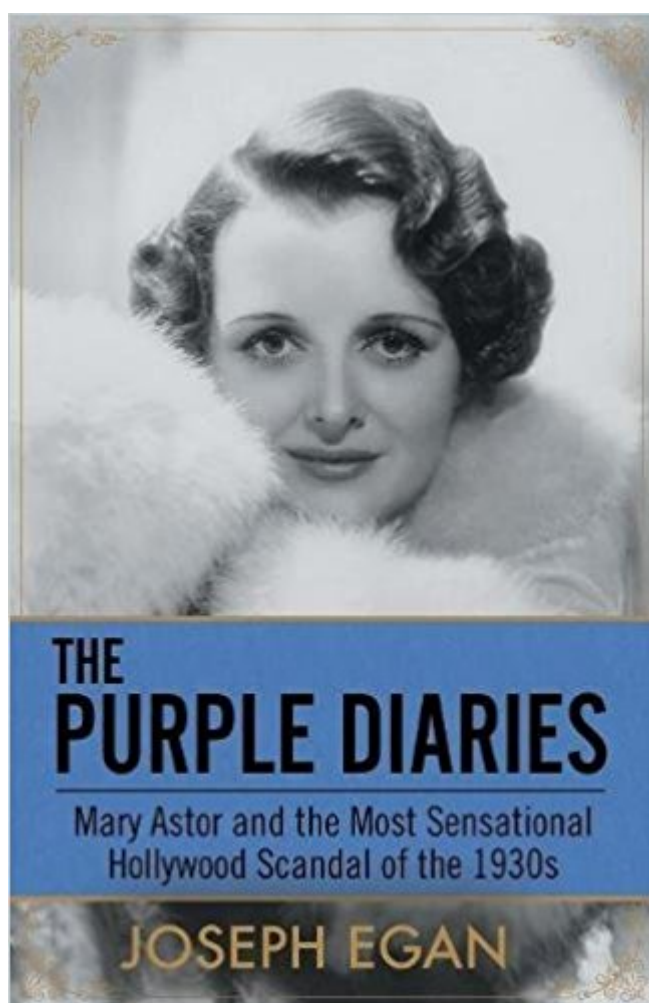


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# The Purple Diaries: Mary Astor And The Most Sensational Hollywood Scandal Of The 1930s



## Synopsis

One of Hollywood's first scandals was nearly its last. 1936 looked like it would be a great year for the movie industry. With the economy picking up after the Great Depression, Americans everywhere were sitting in the dark watching the stars—and few stars shined as brightly as one of America's most enduring screen favorites, Mary Astor. But Astor's story wasn't a happy one. She was born poor, and at the first sign that she could earn money, her parents grabbed the reins and the checks. Widowed at twenty-four, Mary Astor was looking for stability when she met and wed Dr. Franklyn Thorpe. But the marriage was rocky from the start; both were unfaithful, but they did not divorce until after Mary Astor gave birth to little Marylyn Thorpe. What followed was a custody battle that pushed The Spanish Civil War and Hitler's 1936 Olympic Games off of the front pages all over America. Astor and Thorpe were both ruthless in their fight to gain custody of their daughter, but Thorpe held a trump card: the diaries that Mary Astor had been keeping for years. In these diaries, Astor detailed her own affairs as well as the myriad dalliances of some of Hollywood's biggest names. The studio heads, longtime controllers of public perception, were desperate to keep such juicy details from leaking. With the complete support of the Astor family, including unlimited access to the photographs and memorabilia of Mary Astor's estate, *The Purples Diaries* is a look at Hollywood's Golden Age as it has never been seen before, as Egan spins a wildly absorbing yarn about a scandal that threatened to bring down the dream factory known as Hollywood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Egan tells Astor's story with smooth efficiency. He captures important nuances, facts and emotions, but he doesn't weigh his narrative down with unnecessary details. The players in this drama are fleshed out like characters in a play..." -- A Classic Movie Blog

"Joseph Egan gives a detailed account of the custody battle that, for a time, pushed the Spanish Civil War and Hitler's Olympic Games off the front pages of America." The New York Post

"Newspaper clippings and family photos pepper The Purple Diaries, providing a glimpse into the lost world of Old Hollywood and the pandemonium the court case caused. It's this wider scope that makes The Purple Diaries endlessly fascinating. Now if the present-day Hollywood could just adapt it to the screen." -- Entertainment Weekly

"Joseph Egan gives a detailed account of the custody battle that, for a time, pushed the Spanish Civil War and Hitler's Olympic Games off the front pages of America." -- The Huffington Post, Best Film Books of 2016

"As much as Astor's fans liked reading about her romantic exploits, they loved seeing her in the role of martyred mother even more: the woman who was willing to gamble her reputation in order to save her relationship with her child." The New York Post

"The Purple Diaries is a Red Hot Read!" -- Medium

"The Purple Diaries is a fascinating piece of Hollywood detective work, a character study of a forward-thinking and sexually liberated woman and an examination of the tabloid press." -- Shelf Awareness

"Cinema and celebrity buffs...will revel in Joseph Egan's account of Mary Astor's life" -- Broadway World

"This candid account of the case, drawn from materials in Astor's estate and written with the support of her family, will fascinate fans of the golden age of films." â •Booklist

Joseph Egan is something of a renaissance figure. Soon after earning a degree in film and theatre, he wrote for and edited a weekly entertainment newspaper. In addition, he is the editor of a privately printed anthology, has edited several college literary magazines, worked as a freelance editor, and is a professional researcher. Mr. Egan has also worked in motion picture promotion, has had several film scripts optioned, and served as a judge at an international independent film festival. As a conceptual artist, he has presented installations in New York City as well as in the Midwest.

Joseph Egan is also a close personal friend of Marylyn Thorpe Roh, the child at the center of this famous custody case. He is an expert on a wide range of subjects, including the motion picture Heaven's Gate, producer David O. Selznick, inventor Nikola Tesla, and of course, Mary Astor. Mr. Egan and his wife live on the side of a mountain in Dutchess County, New York, where their daily visitors are restricted to white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, chipmunks, rabbits, raccoons, and a rather reclusive family of possums.

This is a luscious juicy peach of a book that covers one of the most notorious incidents in Hollywood history. It was covered briefly in other books but I was always hoping for a more thorough coverage because this was such a bombshell in its day and is one hell of a story. My wish was granted with this book. You get acquainted with every character ( had no idea Franklyn Thorpe was such a womanizer, he'd always been portrayed as the injured party) and get taken through the story as though it was unfolding right before your eyes. A much better picture of Miss Astor emerges (she comes across as wounded emotionally but very strong willed) and we get to know little Marylyn and find out what happened to her in later years. Many photos are included, most of which I'd never seen before, which was fantastic. Well-researched and written, this will be the last word on this scandal for some time. Highly recommended.

The Purple Diaries is absolutely fantastic. From the moment I started it, I truly could not put it down. Admittedly, I am fascinated by this time period in Hollywood and have recently read a number of books about this era so the subject matter appeals to me very much. Before I read The Purple Diaries, I knew very little about Mary Astor and her long, varied life and careers. Joseph Egan conducted an incredible amount of research to write this book, and his attention to detail really adds a lot. There is so much drama that the story reads like a well-written soap opera that involves various famous actors, actresses and other Hollywood players from that era. Throughout the story, Egan includes a number of photos and newspaper articles which significantly contribute to the storyline. Without these additions, I would not have enjoyed the story quite as much " it truly makes the story come alive, and I loved pouring over the old photos. The focus of The Purple Diaries is the custody dispute between Mary Astor and her second husband Franklin Thorpe over their young daughter Marylyn. The story is not a particularly happy one, but the independence and strength Mary Astor showed to pursue such an issue as a female in the 1930s was nothing short of amazing. The fact that she was able to endure such controversy during that time period and continue with her career as an actress (she even goes on to win an Academy Award) is quite impressive. Egan interviewed and communicated with Marylyn Thorpe while writing the book and includes a chapter at the end that conveys Marylyn's thoughts on her childhood and relationship with both her mother and her father. In addition to summarizing the rest of Mary Astor's life, Egan also takes the time to quickly follow the timeline of several other of the major characters in the drama including Franklin Thorpe and his parents, George Kaufman, and Ruth Chatterton. I really appreciated knowing how their lives played out too. I highly recommend The

Purple Diaries; Joseph Egan spent a substantial amount of time and effort researching Mary Astor with a particular focus on the custody dispute, and it really paid off. Thanks to Diversion Books and NetGalley for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Quick and good read. Found the strategy of both sides in court really interesting. Also tells you just because movies were in black and white back then, sex and publicity were the same as today. The end about the dairys was a little muddled. Good read though.

Wonderful book penned by Mr. Egan! Thoroughly and exhaustively researched by the author, this book takes the reader inside the personal life of Mary Astor in a way never before made public. In addition, Mr. Egan does a masterful job of detailing the lives of all the pertinent parties after the sensational trial had ended. Once I began this book, i found it difficult to out down.

This is the only book on the Mary Astor scandal written with the support of her family members and throughly researched. If you want to read the truth of what actually happened, then this is the book for you. I will warn you that the real story is more about a woman fighting for her child than sexual escapades. The book is very well written. I found myself reading late into the night worrying about Mary's legal battles and if she could regain custody of her daughter even though I knew the outcome. A fascinating book that Ms. Astor deserved to see written in her lifetime.

This was a fascinating book. I have been a fan of Mary Astor for years but never her entire story. I could not put it down.

A good read if you are interested in Mary Astor. The so called "scandal" and trial go on and on in the entirety of the book and it gets a bit tedious at some point when you wish this book would end.

Although I am a fan of vintage Hollywood, I somehow had never previously read anything more detailed than a passing reference to Mary Astor's 1930s scandal, so I began this book truly not knowing what the outcome of the story would be. I was riveted. I found the book absolutely fascinating, well researched, and well written. Each personality in the case was brought to life and I came away with not only a thorough understanding of the case and its shock value in its day, but also a sympathy to all parties involved and their respective motivations. Especially fascinating was the update on Marylyn, who is now in her 80s, and seems to have lived a life unaffected by the

calamity that surrounded her custody in her early years. Overall, a highly recommended and compelling read!!!

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