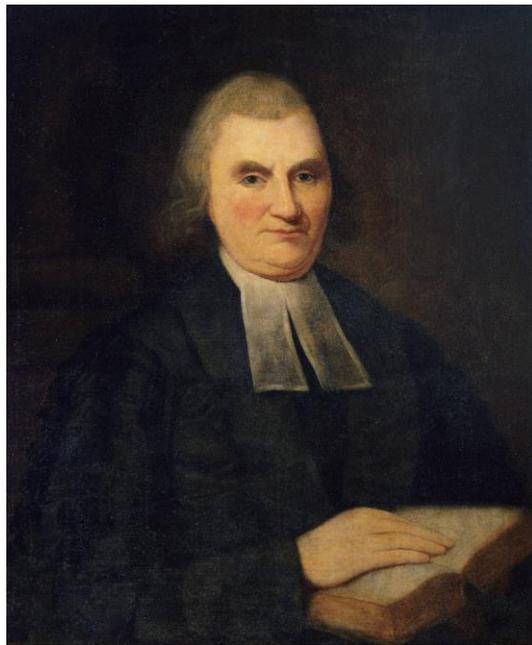


Withering Heights

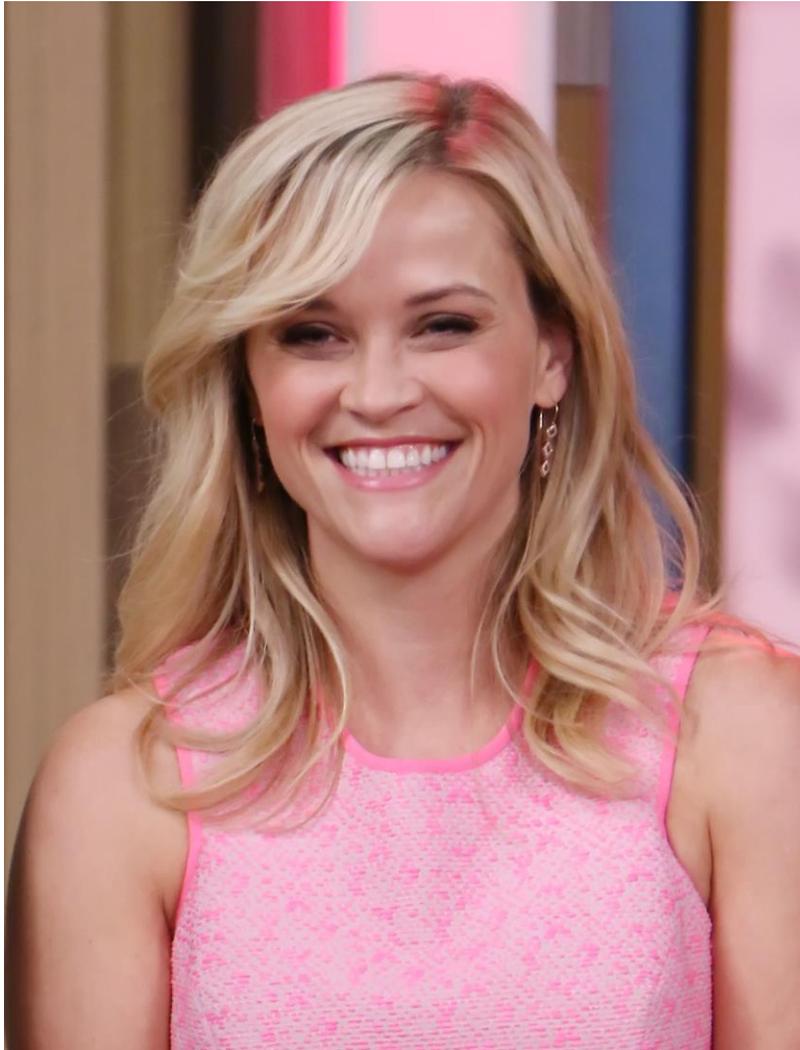
When one mentions the Presbyterian Church, the name that first comes to mind is that of the Scottish Calvinist clergyman John Knox. This dynamic religious leader of the Protestant Reformation founded the Presbyterian denomination and was at the beginning of his ministry in Edinburgh when he lost his beloved wife Marjorie Bowes. In 1564 he married again, but the marriage received a great deal of attention. This was because she was remotely connected with the royal family, and Knox was almost three times the age of this young lady of only seventeen years. She was Margaret Stewart, daughter of Andrew Stewart, 2nd Lord of Ochiltree. She bore Knox three daughters, of whom Elizabeth became the wife of John Welsh, the famous minister of Ayr. Their daughter Lucy married another clergyman, the Reverend James Alexander Witherspoon.

Their descendant, John Knox Witherspoon (son of another Reverend James Alexander Witherspoon), signed the Declaration of Independence on behalf of New Jersey and (in keeping with family tradition) was also a minister, in fact the only minister to sign the historic document.



John Knox Witherspoon (1723 – 1794), clergyman, Princeton's sixth president and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Just like Declaration of Independence signatory John Witherspoon, actress Reese Witherspoon is also descended from Reverend James Alexander Witherspoon and his wife Lucy (and therefore John Knox). The future Academy Award winner, born Laura Jeanne Reese Witherspoon, was born in New Orleans, having made her *début* appearance at Southern Baptist Hospital on March 22, 1976.



New Orleans born Academy Award winning actress, Reese Witherspoon

Reese did not get to play Emily Brontë's Cathy in "Wuthering Heights" but she did portray Becky Sharp in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair". She is also universally known as blonde attorney Elle Woods in the "Legally Blonde" box office smashes. Her first feature role was in "The Man in the Moon" in 1991, and then there was "Pleasantville" in 1998, "Cruel Intentions" in 1999 and "Sweet Home Alabama" in 2002. As June

Carter Cash in "Walk the Line", Reese landed the Academy Award, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Actress in 2005. New Orleans had an additional connection to the Academy Awards in 2006 when Helen Mirren won for her role as Elizabeth II in "The Queen".



Character actress and gifted comedienne Jennifer Coolidge, who splits her time between New Orleans and L.A., played "Paulette" opposite Reese Witherspoon in the "Legally Blonde" franchise.

Reese's parents, Dr. John Draper Witherspoon and Betty Reese, were living in New Orleans while Reese's father was a Tulane med student. That's why Reese was delivered at Baptist. But this future thespian wasn't the only Witherspoon actress to hail from the Big Easy.

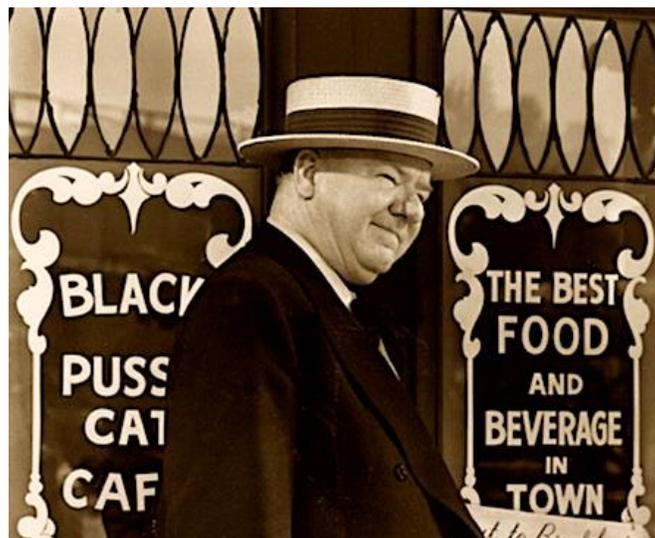
Cora Bell Witherspoon was born in New Orleans on January 5, 1890, and made her professional stage debut with a New Orleans stock company in 1905. She later became a noteworthy character actress in 48 films of the 1930s through the 1950s. She was in "Libeled Lady" (1936) with Jean Harlow, "Marie Antoinette" (1938) with Norma Shearer and Tyrone Power, "Dark Victory" with Bette Davis and Clare Booth Luce's "The Women" (both in 1939). Perhaps her most notable role was as W. C. Fields' nagging wife in "The Bank Dick" (1940).



Actress Cora Witherspoon

Pointing a finger at W. C. Fields

Fields is Egbert Sousé, which he informs others is pronounced "Sou-zay ... *accent grave* over the 'e'." Reiterated during the movie, it is not an *accent grave* at all but an *accent acute*. Fields has the movie take place in Lompoc, California (which had its start as a temperance community), and it is there that Sousé regularly visits the Black Pussy Cat Café. Fields lambastes Lompoc again by mispronouncing the town's second syllable as "pock" rather than "poke". This unemployed tippler is henpecked by three generations of women including his wife Agatha (played by Cora Witherspoon, who often took the roles of overbearing society matrons and harridan hausfraus).



Sousé asks the bartender at the Black Pussy Cat Café, “Was I in here last night and did I spend a twenty dollar bill?”

Bartender Joe Guelpe responds, “Yeah.”

“Oh boy,” sighs Sousé, “what a load that is off my mind? I thought I’d lost it.”

The audience discovers that Lompoc has something in common with New Orleans. It is revealed that the *Times-Picayune* is not the only newspaper of that name. While Sousé sits on the bus line bench, he is reading Lompoc’s *Picayune Intelligencer* when he quite accidentally aids in the arrest of a bank robber and the recovery of the stolen cash. This misdiagnosed misanthrope is then bestowed hero status and a job as “Bank Dick”. And today the *Picayune Intelligencer* is the name of the official W. C. Fields Fan Club newsletter.



Cora Bell Witherspoon, daughter of Cora S. Bell and Henry E. Witherspoon, died November 17, 1957, and is buried in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans. Her uncle, Samuel H. Bell (1844 – 1923) is considered to be “the man who created Metairie Cemetery”. A landscape gardener and land reclamation specialist, Bell served as secretary and manager of the Metairie Cemetery Association since its early days.



Cora Witherspoon in her 20s

ORLEANS-BORN ACTRESS DEAD

Cora Witherspoon to Be Buried Here

New Orleans-born actress Cora Witherspoon, 67, who played her last film in "Just For You" in 1951, was found dead in her apartment in Las Cruces, N. M., it was learned here Monday.

Miss Witherspoon apparently died Sunday night.

Her body will be brought to New Orleans. Funeral arrangements by the Jacob Schoen and Son, Inc., funeral home, 3827 Canal, were incomplete Monday night.

Miss Witherspoon was born in New Orleans in 1890 and made her stage debut in New York in 1910 in the show "The Concert." Later she appeared in many productions including "Daddy Long Legs," "The Great Lover," "Grounds for Divorce" and "Jigsaw."

Miss Witherspoon then turned to movies and appeared in such films as "This Love of Ours," "Over 21," "I've Always Loved You," and "The Mating Season."

In her last picture Miss Witherspoon appeared opposite Bing Crosby and Jane Wyman.

She is survived by one sister, Maude Witherspoon of Las Cruces.

Times-Picayune Nov. 1957

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Withering Heights"
Ned Hémard
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