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## Movie Detail

† Name Occurs Before Title

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[Advanced Search](#)**Ethan Frome** Director: [John Madden](#) (Dir)Release Date: [12 Mar 1993](#)

Premiere Information: Los Angeles opening: 12 Mar 1993; New York opening: week of 12 Mar 1993

Production Date: Jan–Feb 1992 in the Northeast Kingdom, VT

Duration (in mins): [99](#)[Print this page](#)[Display Movie Summary](#)

Cast: [Liam Neeson](#) † ([Ethan Frome](#))  
[Patricia Arquette](#) † ([Mattie Silver](#))  
 and [Joan Allen](#) † ([Zeena](#))  
[Tate Donovan](#) ([Reverend Smith](#))  
[Katharine Houghton](#) ([Mrs. \[Ruth\] Hale](#))  
[Stephen Mendillo](#) ([Ned Hale](#))  
[Debbon Ayer](#) ([Young Ruth](#))  
[Rob Campbell](#) ([Young Ned](#))  
[Jay Goede](#) ([Denis Eady](#))  
[George Woodard](#) ([Jotham](#))  
[Gil Rood](#) ([Conductor](#))  
[Phil Garran](#) ([Mr. Howe](#))  
[Virginia Smith](#) ([Mrs. Howe](#))  
[Annie Nessen](#) ([Sarah Anne Howe](#))  
[Marcie Vaughan](#) ([Young woman](#))  
[Burt Porter](#) ([Harmon Gow](#))  
[Rusty De Wees](#) ([Man at post office](#))  
[Paul Donlon](#) ([Man at post office](#))  
[Robert Nutt](#) ([Church elder](#))  
[David Dellinger](#) ([Funeral minister](#))  
[W. Clark Noyes](#) ([Man at funeral](#))  
[Howard Boardman](#) ([Man at funeral](#))  
[Deborah Bremer](#) ([Woman at funeral](#))  
[Tom Todoroff](#) ([2nd conductor](#))  
[Louise De Cormier](#) ([Mrs. Varnum](#))  
[Edsel Hughes](#) ([Mr. Varnum](#))  
[Dennis Mientka](#) ([Andrew Hale](#))  
[Darri Johnson](#) ([Customer at Eady store](#))  
[Patty Smith](#) ([Mrs. Homan](#))

**Summary:** In Starkfield, Massachusetts, Reverend Smith arrives from Boston to take up his new post as the local clergyman. Ned Hale, the church sexton, escorts Smith into town, and on the way, they spot Ethan Frome, a crippled man, lumbering through the snow. Though Smith wants to offer Ethan a ride, Hale insists that Ethan would never accept. Later, despite the townspeople's belief that Ethan should be left alone, Smith visits Ethan's farm and hires him to be his driver. On the men's first errand, however, their horse-drawn sled tips over in a snowstorm, and they are forced to walk back to Ethan's house, where Smith stays the night. When Ned's wife, Mrs. Ruth Hale, learns of Smith's efforts to engage with Ethan, she tells him that it is presumptuous to assume Ethan wants his charity. Ruth informs Smith that Ethan has a wife named Zeena, whom Ethan failed to mention the night Smith stayed over. She suggests that they visit the Fromes, and on the way there, explains their tragic history. Several years in the past, after Ethan attends his mother's funeral, he explains to funeral guests that before his mother became ill he was studying engineering at college, and he now plans to sell their farm and move west. Meanwhile, Zeena, Ethan's distant cousin who has been serving as his mother's nurse, intends to return to her family. However, Ethan finds comfort in Zeena's presence, and she enjoys feeling needed by him, so they marry and remain on the farm. Sometime later, Zeena becomes sickly, and agrees to let Mattie Silver, a destitute young relative, live with them and help around the house. Though Mattie is frail when she arrives, she blossoms into a glowing young woman over the course of a year. One night, Ethan arrives to walk Mattie home from a dance and pauses at the window to stare at her. Denis Eady, the son of a local storekeeper, pursues Mattie at the dance and offers to drive her home, but Mattie opts to walk with Ethan. As they stroll through the snow, she and Ethan gaze at constellations, and Ethan promises to take her coasting on the hill where the townspeople sled. When they return home late, Zeena seems agitated and claims that her health has worsened. When Zeena takes an overnight trip to see a new doctor in Bedford, Massachusetts, Ethan employs

Jotham, the farmhand, to drive his wife to the train station, claiming that he must deliver lumber in town and lying that he will receive a hefty advance payment for the job. That night, Mattie cooks an elaborate dinner for Ethan and sets out nice dishes. During the meal, the cat leaps onto the table and knocks over a pickle dish, smashing it to pieces. Knowing Zeena will be angry, Mattie cries, but Ethan promises that they will glue it together the next day. After dinner, Ethan stares longingly at Mattie and kneels by her side. Though they part ways to retire to bed, Ethan follows Mattie into her room and they kiss. The next day, Mattie and Ethan happily drive together to buy glue for the pickle dish, but their carefree behavior draws negative attention from the locals. As they return home, Jotham looks on suspiciously, but fails to warn them that Zeena has returned. Inside, Mattie and Ethan chat with each other in the kitchen, and Jotham finally appears to inform Ethan that Zeena is there. Ethan skulks into Zeena's bedroom, where she announces that she needs an operation and has hired a new girl to take care of her with plans to send Mattie home. Ethan is devastated by the news, and the tension grows when Zeena discovers the broken pickle dish. On Mattie's last night at the house, Ethan sneaks into her bedroom and they make love while Zeena lies awake in bed. The next morning, Ethan finds Mattie attempting to commit suicide in the barn. He stops her, and later insists that he drive Mattie to the train station instead of Jotham. On their somber, final drive together, Ethan stops the horse at an overlook and proposes that he and Mattie run away together, insisting that he can save the fifty dollars necessary to make it happen, but Mattie says little in response. Once in town, Ethan drives Mattie to the store instead of the train station, intent on buying her a gift. Aware that the people inside the shop disapprove, Mattie becomes uncomfortable, but Ethan insists on buying a comb for her hair. Outside, Ethan reminds Mattie of his promise to take her coasting, and she cheers up. At the steep sledding hill, they take two runs, and climb back for a third. Ethan asks Mattie to sit behind him so that he can feel her embrace. Moments after Mattie pushes off, they crash into a tree. At the site of the accident years later, Ruth tells Smith that she took care of Mattie after the accident and states that she never heard another person moan in pain the way Mattie did. Smith and Ruth arrive at the Frome residence, where Ethan greets them and agrees to introduce Smith to his wife. Inside a bedroom, Smith spots a frail woman in a bed by the window and assumes it is Zeena; however, Ethan points to Zeena in another corner, and Smith realizes that the disfigured woman in bed is Mattie. Ironically, Zeena has become Mattie's caretaker. After a brief visit, Ethan watches as Smith and Ruth walk away.

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**Production Company:** [American Playhouse Theatrical Films](#)  
[Companion Productions](#)  
[BBC Films](#)

**Distribution Company:** [Miramax Films](#)

**Director:** [John Madden](#) (Dir)  
[Charles Darby](#) (Unit prod mgr)  
[Allan Nicholls](#) (1st asst dir)  
[Dan Nalepka](#) (2d asst dir)

**Producer:** [Stan Wlodkowski](#) (Prod)  
[Lindsay Law](#) (Exec prod)  
[Richard Price](#) (Exec prod)  
[Johlyn Dale](#) (Assoc prod)

**Writer:** [Richard Nelson](#) (Wrt)

**Photography:** [Bobby Bukowski](#) (Dir of photog)  
[Storn Peterson](#) (1st asst cam)  
[Bart Blaise](#) (2d asst cam)  
[Terri McTaggart](#) ("B" cam asst)  
[Joaquin Baca-Asay](#) (Cam P.A.)  
[Abigayle Tarsches](#) (Still photog)  
[Joseph Celeste](#) (Addl photog)  
[Daniel Shulman](#) (Addl photog)  
[David Lee](#) (Gaffer)  
[Richard J. Audino](#) (Best boy elec)  
[Andrew T. Watts](#) (Elec)  
[Eric L. Schmidt](#) (Elec)  
[Mike Reynolds](#) (Gen op)  
[Joseph Celeste](#) (Key grip)  
[Thomas F. Pielemeier](#) (Best boy grip)  
[Tim Spencer](#) (Dolly grip)  
[Rhen Alderman](#) (Grip)  
[Paul Norman](#) (Grip)  
[Aaron Kilc](#) (Grip/Elec intern)  
[Victor Duncan](#) (Cam equip)  
[DuArt Film Laboratories](#) (Film processing)  
[Production Screenings, Inc.](#) (Loc projection)

**Art Direction:** [Andrew Jackness](#) (Prod des)  
[David Crank](#) (Art dir)  
[Trish Hofmann](#) (Art dept coord)  
[Deb Jensen](#) (Art dept res)

**Film Editor:** [Katherine Wenning](#) (Ed)

	<a href="#">Graham Sutton</a>	(Asst film ed, UK)
	<a href="#">Mayin Lo</a>	(Asst film ed, US)
	<a href="#">Joss Agnew</a>	(2d asst film ed, UK)
	<a href="#">Gary Levy</a>	(2d asst film ed, US)
	<a href="#">Match/Cut Film Service</a>	(Negative cutter)
<b>Set Decoration:</b>	<a href="#">Joyce Anne Gilstrap</a>	(Set dec)
	<a href="#">Robert H. Schleinig</a>	(Asst set dec)
	<a href="#">Phil Schneider</a>	(Prop master)
	<a href="#">Geri Peterson</a>	(Asst prop master)
	<a href="#">Stephen Giordani</a>	(Prop asst)
	<a href="#">Peter C. Clarke</a>	(Leadman)
	<a href="#">Catie Dehaan</a>	(On-set dresser)
	<a href="#">William Bonn</a>	(Set dresser)
	<a href="#">Robert L. Bartell</a>	(Set dresser)
	<a href="#">Jim Russell</a>	(Set dresser)
	<a href="#">Timothy Moulton</a>	(Set dresser)
	<a href="#">Bill Ballou</a>	(Const coord)
	<a href="#">Janet Kalas</a>	(Charge scenic)
	<a href="#">James Conaway</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">Tom Doyle</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">Ronald Langley</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">Robert Preston Ling</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">James Owre</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">Peter Syrett</a>	(Carpenter)
	<a href="#">Elizabeth Linn</a>	(Scenic painter)
	<a href="#">Sharon Gozzo</a>	(Set painter)
	<a href="#">William G. Jones</a>	(Set painter)
	<a href="#">Terry C. Lafar</a>	(Set painter)
	<a href="#">Ann Therese Lemmon</a>	(Set painter)
<b>Costumes:</b>	<a href="#">Carol Oditz</a>	(Cost des)
	<a href="#">Jana Rosenblatt</a>	(Asst to the cost des)
	<a href="#">Ellen Ryba</a>	(Ward supv)
	<a href="#">Yvette Helin</a>	(Draper)
	<a href="#">Varcra Russal</a>	(Cost coord)
	<a href="#">Timothy D. Pratt</a>	(Ward asst)
	<a href="#">Christine Williams</a>	(Ward asst)
<b>Music:</b>	<a href="#">Rachel Portman</a>	(Mus comp)
	<a href="#">David Snell</a>	(Mus cond by)
	<a href="#">Dick Lewzey CTS Studios, Wembley</a>	(Mus rec by)
	<a href="#">Emerson Lang</a>	(Dance musician)
	<a href="#">Harrold Luce</a>	(Dance musician)
	<a href="#">Tony Washburn</a>	(Dance musician)
<b>Sound:</b>	<a href="#">Paul Cote</a>	(Sd mixer)
	<a href="#">Paul Koronkiewicz</a>	(Boom op)
	<a href="#">Campbell Askew</a>	(Supv sd ed)
	<a href="#">Paul Carr</a>	(Re-rec mixer)
	<a href="#">Robert Gavin</a>	(Dial ed)
	<a href="#">Mark Sale</a>	(Asst dial ed)
	<a href="#">William Trent</a>	(Eff ed)
	<a href="#">Richard Fettes</a>	(Asst sd ed)
	<a href="#">Robert Farr</a>	(Re-rec asst)
	<a href="#">Mary Garito</a>	(Sd intern)
	<a href="#">Douglas Jaffe</a>	(Sd intern)
	<a href="#">Goldcrest, London</a>	(Post-prod facilities and re-rec)
<b>Special Effects:</b>	<a href="#">Wayne Walsler</a>	(Snow eff)
	<a href="#">Jason Walsler</a>	(Asst snow eff)
	<a href="#">Allen Thresher, Jr.</a>	(Snow wrangler)
	<a href="#">Penny Madden</a>	(Main title des)
	<a href="#">Ray Short The Optical Partnership, London</a>	(Titles and opticals by)
<b>Dance:</b>	<a href="#">Patty Smith</a>	(Choreog)
	<a href="#">Chip Hedler</a>	(Choreog)
<b>Make Up:</b>	<a href="#">Kathryn Bihr</a>	(Key make-up)

	<a href="#">Theo Mayes</a>	(Key hair)
	<a href="#">Travis Randall</a>	(Asst hair/make-up)
<b>Production Misc:</b>	<a href="#">Billy Hopkins</a>	(Casting)
	<a href="#">Suzanne Smith</a>	(Casting)
	<a href="#">Bess O'Brien</a>	(Vermont casting)
	<a href="#">Jay Craven</a>	(Vermont casting)
	<a href="#">Ann Goulder</a>	(N.Y. casting assoc)
	<a href="#">Kerry Barden</a>	(L.A. casting assoc)
	<a href="#">Carla Neary</a>	(Extras casting)
	<a href="#">Margot Bridger</a>	(Loc mgr)
	<a href="#">Carlos Moore</a>	(Asst loc mgr)
	<a href="#">Peter Gray</a>	(Loc intern)
	<a href="#">Tiffany Rosen</a>	(Prod office coord)
	<a href="#">Kiah Caldwell</a>	(Asst P.O.C.)
	<a href="#">Rebecca Long</a>	(Scr supv)
	<a href="#">Merrilee Dale</a>	(Prod auditor)
	<a href="#">Denise Horsham</a>	(Post-prod accountant)
	<a href="#">Laura Berringer</a>	(Accounting intern)
	<a href="#">Bon Bon</a>	(Payroll services)
	<a href="#">Johlyn Dale</a>	(Post-prod supv)
	<a href="#">Splice-Rite Ltd.</a>	(Post-prod consultant)
	<a href="#">Francis Carlet</a>	(Horse wrangler)
	<a href="#">Penny Alessio</a>	(Cat wrangler)
	<a href="#">Tom Todoroff</a>	(Dialect coach)
	<a href="#">Cecilia Mamby</a>	(Key prod asst)
	<a href="#">Seth Blackman</a>	(Prod asst)
	<a href="#">Nicholas D'Alleva</a>	(Prod asst)
	<a href="#">Sue Roehre</a>	(Prod asst)
	<a href="#">Matthew Grant</a>	(Prod asst)
	<a href="#">Toya Hankins</a>	(Prod office asst)
	<a href="#">James McGovern</a>	(Driver capt)
	<a href="#">Robert Churchill</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">Jeremy Jacquet</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">Phillip Palmer</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">John Pierce</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">Bob Somers</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">Robert Young</a>	(Driver)
	<a href="#">Scott G. Burnham</a>	(Unit pub)
	<a href="#">Steve Carroll Albert G. Ruben &amp; Company</a>	(Prod insurance)
	<a href="#">Stephen Rodner Pryor Cashman Sherman &amp; Flynn</a>	(Prod attorney)
	<a href="#">High Output</a>	(Grip and elec equip)
<b>Stand In:</b>	<a href="#">Jery Hewitt</a>	(Stunt coord)
	<a href="#">Brenda De Young</a>	(Stuntwoman)
	<a href="#">Paul Schnabel</a>	(Stand-in)
<b>MPAA Rating:</b>	<a href="#">PG</a>	
<b>Country:</b>	<a href="#">Great Britain and United States</a>	
<b>Language:</b>	<a href="#">English</a>	

**Music:****Songs:**

**Source Text:** Based on the novel *Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton (New York, 1911).

**Authors:** [Edith Wharton](#)

Copyright Claimant	Copyright Date	Copyright Number
Companion Productions, Inc.	23/12/1992 <i>dd/mm/yyyy</i>	PA0000604373

**Physical Properties:** [Sd:](#) [Dolby Stereo® in selected theatres](#)  
[col:](#)  
[Lenses:](#) [Filmed with Panavision® cameras & lenses](#)

**Genre:** [Drama](#)  
[Romance](#)

**Subjects (Major):** [Cousins](#)  
[Infidelity](#)  
[Marriage of convenience](#)  
[Recluses](#)  
[Romance](#)

**Subjects (Minor):** [Accidents](#)  
[Convalescence](#)  
[Handicapped](#)  
[Massachusetts](#)  
[New England](#)  
[Nursemaids](#)  
[Reverends](#)  
[Sleighting](#)  
[Snow storms](#)  
[Storekeepers](#)  
[Trains](#)  
[Unrequited love](#)  
[Winter](#)  
[Wounds and injuries](#)

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**Note:** *The summary and note for this entry were completed with participation from the AFI Academic Network. Summary and note were written by participant Britta Kallevang, a student at University of Washington, Seattle, with Jennifer Bean as academic advisor.*

Producers acknowledge the following organizations and individuals in the end credits: the residents of Peacham, Vermont; Desi and Kati Bogнар; Henry A. Boisse, Green Mountain Power Corporation; Howard Fabrick; Green Mountain Railroad Corporation; Jerry Hebda; Brian Hickin; Deborah Jurist and Mark Gleischer; Dory Lewis, Travel Bound; Margo Lion; Carole Myer, The Sales Company; Fred Webster; and Irwin Young.

*Ethan Frome* marked John Madden's feature film directorial debut, as stated in production notes found at AMPAS library. A 30 Sep 1991 *HR* news item noted that Warner Bros., Inc. first planned to adapt Edith Wharton's novel into a feature film in the 1940s, with actors Henry Fonda and Bette Davis set to star, and described the development of the film project as one of the "longest incubation pregnancies in Hollywood history." Gary Cooper was also tied to the project at one time, according to the 12 Mar 1993 *LAT* review.

Following location scouting in New York, New Hampshire, and Maine, producer Stan Wlodkowski discovered Peacham, VT, a small town subject to the state's "strict zoning and environmental controls [that] ensured that the land and buildings...remained virtually untouched" for nearly one hundred years. After the town voted to allow filming there, a defunct farm in Peacham, "uninhabited since the early 1900s," was found for the Frome residence. Madden stated that shooting inside the small farm posed many difficulties but ultimately gave the film a sense of claustrophobia that aided the narrative.

With a budget of more than \$3 million, the picture was the largest financial commitment American Playhouse Theatrical Films had made to the time, as stated in a 3 Apr 1992 a *Screen International* brief. On 27 Mar 1992, *DV* announced that Miramax Films purchased theatrical and video rights for North and South America from the Sales Co., handling worldwide distribution rights for the film. *DV* also mentioned that post-production was being completed in London, England.

Critical reception for the film was mixed. Reviews from both *NYT* and *LAT* on 12 Mar 1993 stated that the film suffered from blandness, having lost the unique perspective Edith Wharton brought to the tale. A positive review in *HR* on 11 Jan 1993 described the film as a "sparse marvel" and lauded Bobby Bukowski's cinematography and Rachel Portman's score; the cinematography and music were also praised by *Var* in an otherwise negative review on 18 Jan 1993.

According to the 11 Jan 1993 *HR* review, the world premiere for *Ethan Frome* took place at the 1993 Palm Springs International Film Festival.

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Bibliographic Sources:	Date	Page
Daily Variety	27 Mar 1992.	
Daily Variety	31 Dec 1992.	
Hollywood Reporter	30 Sep 1991.	
Hollywood Reporter	11 Jan 1993	p. 8, 49.
Los Angeles Times	12 Mar 1993	p. 14.
New York Times	12 Mar 1993	p. 8.
Screen International	3 Apr 1992.	
Variety	18 Jan 1993	p. 78.



[Display Movie Summary](#)

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