THE NEW THEODORE HUFF MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY

Tuesday July 29 at 8:00 p.m. in the Capitol Room, Capitol Hotel, Eighth Avenue & 51st St., NYC.

NEXT SHOW: August 16

THE SILENT SERIAL
A complete program devoted to the serials of 1912-1930 featuring Pearl White, Helen Holmes, Walter Miller, Ruth Roland, Herbert Bunting, Tim McCoy, etc.

TOM SAWYER

WITH JACK PICKFORD


The Cast: Tom Sawyer (JACK PICKFORD), Sid (George Hackathorne), Mox (Alice Marrin), Aunt Polly (Eddy Chapman), Becky Thatcher (Greta Horton), Widow Douglas (Helen Gilmores), Huck Finn (Robert Gordon), Joe Harper (Amar Sum Short).

"NAPOLEON IN 1814"

French - Gaumont (1910) One reel.

"THE LITTLE COUNTRY MOUSE"

Majestic (1914) One reel. Directed by Donald Crisp, Supervised by D.W. Griffith. Starring WALLACE BEED and BLANCHE SWEET with Howard Gaye and Raul Walsh.

and

THE WOLF'S TRAIL


Starring EDMOND COBB and "DEMANITE" the wonder-dog.

with Dixie Lumenn, Joe Bennett, Edmund Terry, Frank Baker.
**THE WOLF'S TRAIL**

Last January we played a Jack Perrin western from Universal titled "Wild Blood", notable primarily for the astonishing penetration of German camerawork. Our Western tonight, with Edmund Cobb, is from the same group of Universal action pictures put out under the collective heading of "Universal Thrill Series". This group included jungle adventures and straight mysteries as well as westerns, and perhaps because the westerns were thus a little more individual than the routine eight-a-year with a set star, they often had quite unusual ingredients. "THE WOLF'S TRAIL" is notable for a quite inventive comedy content — including a strange dream-like episode that makes clever use of miniatures. Too, the film never takes itself really seriously. The climax in particular, while being successfully exciting in the traditional way as horses ride to the rescue while the hero battles it out with the villains, at the same time satirizes such climaxes.

Universal's dog star Dynamite, a Belgian police hound, was of course an obvious attempt to cash in on the popularity of Rin Tin Tin. Most of the studies at that time had their canine stars — Thunder at Fox, and so on. Rinty had acting ability and personality in such a high degree that none of his competitors succeeded in shaking his throne, let alone copying it. Dynamite lacks rather starkly in comparison and certainly doesn't have the charm and human qualities that Rinty possessed; indeed, he seems distinctly vicious at times. Nevertheless, he seems a shrewd enough little trouble and a willing performer, and puts over some exciting and well-timed stunts. There'll never be another Rinty — but Dynamite rates as one of the best of his imitators.

Perhaps because of the tongue-in-cheek approach which pokes fun at some of his heroes, and perhaps too because of the flashy, dudo-like cowboy outfit he is made to wear, Edmund Cobb doesn't come over too well as a western hero in this particular film. Some of the fights too, are rather carelessly and unrealistically staged. Actually Cobb was one of the best of the second-string Western stars, a good all-round action man, and quite a competent actor. His career goes well back into the early silent period, and when the talkies arrived, he continued as a western hero (playing an occasional Bill Hart-type role as the "good badman" in films like "Arizona Badman") until, with the coming of middle-age, he made the inevitable switch to heavies. Cobb is still active in small roles and bits, especially in Universal's bigger westerns — and also in such films as "Black Tuesday" from UA, in which he had a few minutes as a bank guard.

Francis Ford, who had been a first-rate director of westerns since 1910 (and who induced brother John Ford to come to Hollywood to get in on the easy money), adds some neat touches and striking camera angles to "The Wolf's Trail". By now he was getting along in years, but was still a vigorous and powerful man. As an actor, he specialized in action roles — and next month you can see him involved in several hectic scenes of "The Indiana Are Coming". Never absent from the screen, even though his final roles were just bits, Ford died in harness nearly two years ago.

**NAPOLEON IN 1811**

Hardly a rediscovered masterpiece, this little-known film is nevertheless a pleasing and quite fascinating subject, not least in that so few French films of the 1910 period are available to us. Somewhat theatrical in its acting and direction, and certainly made with economy (the deployment of extras in the "battle" sequence really shows the penny-pinching it manages to move along quite quickly and sustains interest throughout. In plot, it is not unlike the American one-landers from Biograph and Broncho of that same period: substitute Robert Harron for the French hero, the American Civil War for France's conflict, and Lincoln for Napoleon, and you have a typical Ince or Griffith drama of that era.

**THE LITTLE COUNTRY HOUSE**

Made under Griffith's supervision, with several of his leading players, this is a charming and simple little drama of a young innocent in danger of going astray in the big city. Wallace Reid and Blanche Sweet give especially pleasing performances, and moustache-twirling villain Raoul Walsh (now preparing to direct the remake of "The Birth of a Nation") is very much in the spirit of the piece. Taken in the right spirit, "The Little Country House" remains an enjoyable and nostalgic little drama, and dates far less than many films of its type.
This engaging adaptation of the Mark Twain classic is a delightful place of Americans - but a rather puzzling one. All the dramatic (and abundantly cinematic) highlights of the book - the grey-eyed scenes, the flight from Injun Joe through the caves - have been carefully deleted. Instead the film concentrates solely on the homespun humor of the original, and the familiar lesser highlights - the whitewashing of the fence, the fiasco in church when Tom, holding several ill-gotten Bible prizes, is unable to answer a simple question, and the hue and cry when Tom and his pals are believed drowned. Filmed almost wholly in Hannibal, Missouri, the film sketches in quite effortlessly the atmosphere of a sleepy Southern town, and captures the true spirit of Twain's creation.

Jack Pickford, well-established in this type of fare via such films as "Seventeen", "The Dummy" and "Freckles", is obviously well-cast as Tom - and equally obviously, had made a careful study of study of Mary's most profitable mannerisms (Jack had been an extra in Mary's "The New York Hat" and other early Biopics; his rise to popularity had been less rapid, and his span of stardom was much shorter. He died at a relatively early age.) Little Clara Horton would be the dream-girl of anyone's tender years, and makes a most appealing Becky Thatcher.

William Desmond Taylor and Pickford had been a successful star-director team on several films prior to this, and though Taylor was a good, solid craftsman, it is unfortunate that he is remembered today almost solely on the strength of the sensational aspects of his death - a murder that to this day has never been solved. In his autobiography, Macomber devotes a great deal of space to the case, quoting liberally from the writings of Ekdal Stanley Gardner, who covered the case in some detail. In his book "The Public is Never Wrong", Paramount head Adolph Zukor writes:

William Desmond Taylor, a director for us and other companies, was a handsome, sophisticated man of forty-five. He knew little of his past except that since 1912 he had been a film actor and director. One night somebody entered his house and shot him dead. His real name, if it came out, was William Cunningham Dear-Tanner, born in Ireland, a former rancher in the American West, and New York City antique dealer. One day in 1906, Dear-Tanner had disappeared from his shop. His wife, who had divorced him, and his daughter recognized him four years later on the screen. In Hollywood Taylor's valet and chauffeur, a mysterious fellow named Sands, had forged his employer's name to a number of checks and then had disappeared. He was never located. A double curious twist to this strange case was that a brother of Taylor's had dropped out of sight in much the same way as he had. Many people believed Sands to be this missing brother.

The murder of any screen director would have brought about enough bad publicity, Taylor's strange career compounded the trouble and, in addition, the names of other screen notables were drawn into the case. Mabel Normand had dropped by Taylor's house on the evening of the murder to pick up some books he had bought for her. Witnesses had seen Taylor escorting Mabel to her automobile and she was not suspected. But her name increased the size of the headlines. It developed too, that blonde little Mary Miles Minter, a teen-age ingenue in the Mary Pickford tradition, had been secretly engaged to Taylor. After learning of the tragedy, she had rushed to his home and made a hysterical scene. Headlines and more headlines, Dope was dragged into the case because Taylor was campaigning against the traffic. Authorities considered the possibility that underworld figures had slain him. Whatever the true facts, they have never been brought to light.

The condition of our print is good, and quite complete save for one or two fragments which are missing due to the deterioration of the negative. However, it is worth pointing out that the film did rely, originally, on an extensive use of tints since a good deal of the action took place at night. Night scenes in our print, minus the blue tint, appear of course exactly as they were shot - during bright sunlight.

Strange, we can find no record of the cameraman on this film. Neither the Library of Congress copyright list, nor the original press-book of the film, list any credits other than cast, director and scenario writer. Equally strangely, Paramount put out a carefully compiled music-cue-sheet for the film (arranged by Louis F. Gottschalk) which went to extreme pains to avoid any kind of American traditional music, so essential, one would think, in a film of this type. Paramount's score offers not a note of Stephen Foster but a wide selection of the works of European composers, among them Bizet, Tchaikovsky, Poldini, Pinti, and Mendelssohn.

THE ADOLESCENT YEARS - a few thoughts about the era that produced "Tom Sawyer"

The early days of cinema, culminating in 1915's "The Birth of a Nation", have rightly been designated as the 'Dead' of American cinema. And, also with some justification, the years 1921-26 have come to be regarded as the "Golden Age" - an age when Griffith still ruled supreme, when Stroheim developed his brand of realism, an age of Dwan, Dwan, Lubitsch, Vidor and Ingrams.
What wonderful, light-hearted times those pre-1920 years were for the film industry! Griffith had shown how to make films. Ford had pioneered sound business practices. The star system was in full swing, a vengeance, the appeal of the movies was growing by leaps and bounds, and all America (including of course the movie-makers) exuded the optimism to be expected after the victorious end of a War. Prohibition and the roaring twenties were just around the corner perhaps … but this was a time to relax.

This spirit of relaxation is particularly evident in the films of the period. Perhaps because of the dearth of great films (in the accepted sense) these six years are usually brushed aside by the recorders of film history, apart from the usual references to Hart, Chaplin, the early Valentino and of course "Intolerance." Certainly at no time in the history of the cinema has there been such a consistently light-hearted approach to film, or such a determinedly friendly desire to please. Even the titles of most of the films bore out this trend – Charlie Ray in "Peaceful Valley," "Nineteen and Phyllis" and "The Old Swimming Hole," Lillian Gish in "The Romance of Happy Valley," and the sprightly Elsie Janis in "The Caprices of Kitty" and "Betty In Search of a Thrill." (Of course, the period encompasses the war years before and after America's entry into the conflict, but apart from the more serious propagandist themes during the war itself, this "Light" period certainly dates from 1915, merely redoubling its energy and enthusiasm with the armistice.)

The charm, gaiety and beauty of many of these films, unforced and natural, seems alas to be gone forever. Maurice Tourneur's "The Blue Bird," made in New York in 1917, is still a sensitively wrought fantasy of exquisite beauty, handsomely photographed in the traditionally stylish Tourneur manner, and mounted in soft tints – sometimes two and three in the same frame so that the film was, to all purposes, a color production. Charlie Ray was at his peak – and many of us feel that Chaplin was too. Notwithstanding "The Gold Rush," those Mutuels were hard to beat! John Barrymore's delicious "Baffles" of 1917 is still – to my mind – the best of the many versions of this film, and Will Rogers was never better than in these days. Mary Pickford in "Heart of the City" never looked so much more appealing – and we are not overlooking her later UA specials such as "Little Annie Rooney," good as they were. Robert Brenworth was to the sea what Duke was to the western. Typhifying the carefree spirit of the times more than any other individual was Douglas Fairbanks, whose early films seem not to be screened at all any more (except privately) in deference to the later costume epics. "The Thirde of Bagdad" and "Robin Hood" are wonderful films certainly, but they don't quite have the get-up of "American Aristocracy," the zip of "Manhattan Madness," the very satire of "His Picture in the Paper," in the current fashionable of "The Kelly-Dadle," one of Doug's first UA films (a 1920 release) and one which included a delightful carton sequence to explain the villain's motives seemingly no other plot than "Audiences seem to like these cartoons, so let's give 'em one!" When Doug switched to smashbusters in 1921 some of his most appealing traits went out the nearest window … and indirectly one of the most enjoyable periods in movie history went with them.

OUR NEXT SHOW IN OUR SOUND SERIES – TUESDAY JULY 26th – IN THE MARINE ROOM –

GINGER ROGERS and NED ASTOR in "THE STORY OF VERNON AND IRNE GAST". Plus shorts. IMPORTANT! This will be your only notification by mail. Notes will be distributed at the door.

THOUGHTS IN PASSING

GOOD NEWS! We're happy to report that the society is now out of the red, and has the enormous credit balance of five dollars and a few cents. If we seem to be crowing unduly over a few dollars, it's because a society like this should be able to support itself, and since we re-opened in January it has been very much an uphill struggle to reach this happy state. Our thanks to our members who have thought the society worthwhile and by their attendance have enabled it to become self-sustaining.

We're building up quite a backlog of silent films to be screened, and among the good things to look forward to are Barrymore in "THE TEMPEST" and the first screening in many years of Van Dyke's famous "WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTHERN SEAS ... plus a two-reel selection of highlights from Chaney's "PHANTOM OF THE OPERA," some Harold Lloyd comedies, and (a rare find indeed) one of the old Selig Jungle epics with Addie Noyes. Because of this backlog, we intend to divert on-screeners in January. It has been very much a struggle to reach this happy state. Our thanks to our members who have thought the society worthwhile and by their attendance have enabled it to become self-supporting.

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Program Notes and Enquiries – William R. Eversen, Manhattan Towers Hotel, 2166 Broadway, NYC 24
Committee of the Society: Dorothy Lovell, Edward Connor, Michael Kraft, Mr. K. Eversen

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