

The society is on the move again - and this time we're heading West! Our two years at the Capitol Hotel was our longest stay at any single location - locations that have ranged from tiny projection rooms to a psychiatric institution!

Our new quarters are at 400 West 57th Street - on the South West corner of 57th Street and Ninth Avenue. The screening room is on the ground floor; no further details are necessary, since as soon as you enter the front door, you are bound to run into us! This will not necessarily be our permanent locale from now on, but if it works out, we would like it to be, as it is still centrally located, and convenient to busses and subways.

In theory, the room should seat at least as many, and possibly more, than our old room at the Capitol. It isn't quite as long - but it is much wider, and much higher. No, we're not planning on stacking you in tiers - but greater height means that we can project well over the heads of our audience, and thus eliminate the wide aisle that we have needed before. Also, we can eliminate tops of heads on bottoms of screens -- which should be especially good news to the charming habitué of row three whose head frequently confounds film historians by presenting an iris effect on the screen long before that device came into being!

We don't think the room will comfortably seat the occasional outside crowd, but fortunately our arrangements can now be more flexible than they were at the Capitol. We know more or less which shows can be expected to bring out an above-average attendance, and for those showings, we will of course rent a larger room elsewhere.

We'd like to thank one of our members, Mr. Lon Hannagan, for placing this room at our disposal, and at such a nominal rental that, even after we have rented chairs, we are still operating at our old overhead. The chairs themselves come in different price ranges, indicating we assume levels of comfort that can be classified as "None", "Quite good" and "Luxurious". Our budget allowed us to settle for the middle category!

Incidentally, we glad to report that our union projectionist problem has been disposed of, and that we can thus bring our admission down to a dollar again. We're glad that this temporary inflation was disposed of so quickly - and thank you for bearing with us in the difficulties.

On the whole, our past year was a successful one. We've given up the idea that this type of film society can break even, but the losses were comparatively minor, and the pleasure of being able to present these wonderful old silents more than compensated for it. Our two "blockbuster" shows (in terms of attendance) were "Merry Go Round" and the Chaplin show; and "The Bells" and "That Certain Thing" proved stronger attractions than we expected.

Biggest fiasco of the year (financially) - our two British comedies. Those who came liked Jack Hulbert, are still trying to de-code George Formby. Running it a close second was "Romola", which drew slightly better but had correspondingly higher overheads. Still, we're glad we ran them. Shows we liked doing the most were the Waltham and Griffith-Ince composite programs; we hope to do more of this type of thing shortly.

We already have enough product lined up to last us through the year, but since the lesser items are apt to be pulled out when a worthwhile surprise comes along, we won't mention them all here. Definitely in store however are "Lucrezia Lombard" with Norma Shearer, "The Wrecker" with Carlyle Blackwell and Benita Hume, Tod Browning's "The White Tiger" with Priscilla Dean, a program of Laurel and Hardy (following them through from their individual silent comedies, to their silent and sound work as a team) and a program of early Edison films - from "The Adventures of Kathlyn" to one of his 1912 talkies. Erratum: please strike out "Kathlyn" and insert "What Happened to Mary"! Then there'll be a "festival" of Westerns of the twenties - Hart, Mix, Hoot Gibson, Ken Maynard, Harry Carey, Fred Thomson, Tim McCoy and others in three or four programs which will really cover, comprehensively, this aspect of Americans. And of course there'll be Rin Tin Tin, Colleen Moore, request repeats of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "The Scarlet Letter" - and anything else that's old and worth running.

Please note that this month's shows are so arranged that we are not screening on consecutive Tuesdays as has been our habit. This is to avoid conflict with the series of Japanese screenings being held at the Museum of Modern Art. In February we will probably revert to our former schedule.

Program Notes & enquiries: E.K. Everson, Manhattan Towers Hotel, 2166 Broadway, NYC 24
Committee: Dorothy Lovell (Secretary) and Charles Shibuk.

TOM TOM THE PIPER'S SON (American Biograph 1905, half-a-reel)

This filmed nursery rhyme of 1905 has no great distinction, other than being one of the first things of its kind. It is rather stodgy in its presentation, scene stolidly following scene in picture-book fashion, but it's an interesting sample from a period of Biograph that is rather sparsely represented today. The sets however, are quite pleasing; they were all built in Biograph's first small studio on the roof of 841 Broadway.

"IN THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT" (American Biograph, 1909, one reel)

Directed by D.W. Griffith, with Marion Leonard, Mary Pickford, Kate Bruce, Mack Sennett.

It was Griffith of course who really put the Biograph company on its feet. After only a year of direction, Griffith had already, by 1909, established himself as a fine story-teller, and was now beginning to experiment more and more with cinematic grammar. 1909 was the year of such outstanding Griffiths as "The Lonely Villa" and "A Corner in Wheat"; and of such comparatively routine (for Griffith) actioners as "Leatherstocking" and "1776". "In The Watches of the Night" stands mid-way between these two extremes. Its plot is strong stuff, with some really stark moments; cinematically it has a few weaknesses, including the rare one for Griffith of telegraphing its action via superfluous titles. Nevertheless, a very interesting and worthwhile early effort from D.W.

"BOOBS IN THE WOOD" (Mack Sennett-Pathe, 1924, two reels) With Harry Langdon, Vernon Dent, Marie Astaire.

What a pity that the great Langdon comedies - especially "Tramp Tramp Tramp" and to a lesser degree "The Strong Man" - are known and appreciated by so few people. And what a greater tragedy too that, due to mistaken faith in his own ability as a writer-director, Langdon himself was responsible for his all-too rapid decline. Not a great comedy in itself, "Boobs" is nevertheless an interesting blend of Sennett knockabout and Langdon pantomime. His lovable, babyish innocence comes through beautifully in some sequences.

"SMOULDERING FIRES" (A Universal Jewel, 1924, 8 reels); Produced and Directed by Clarence Brown; story by Sada Cowan, Howard Higgin and Melville Brown; asst. director: Charles Dorian; photographed by Jackson Rose; edited by Edward Schroeder; titles by Dwinelle Benthall; art director - E.E. Sheeley.

With PAULINE FREDERICK, LAURA LA PLANTE, Malcolm MacGregor, Tully Marshall, Wanda Hawley, George Cooper, Helen Lynch; and as extras - Bert Roach, Arthur Lake, George Lewis.

"Whether we win it to hold it; or win it to lose it; or never win it at all; the greatest thing in all the world is -- LOVE!"

From this little piece of prose - a catchline in Universal's ads - it is quite apparent that "Smouldering Fires" is what is known as "a woman's picture". It's the first one of its type that we've shown - and a darned good one at that. The Pauline Frederick vehicles of the twenties were the counterparts of the Kay Francis (mid-thirties) and Bette Davis (late thirties, early forties) dramas of the sound era, although perhaps they paralleled most exactly the Ruth Chatterton films of the early thirties ("Female", etc.).

The plot of "Smouldering Fires" is basically familiar triangle stuff, but what a wealth of style Clarence Brown puts into it. We've never been great Brown devotees - in the later sound era especially, his films were far too sloppily sentimental - but here he handles obvious material with taste, discernment, and rare polish. The camerawork is first-class and never static; when the camera itself moves, it is for a purpose. The few exteriors are particularly well shot. The sets are tasteful and lavish (what a PLEASURE to see real height in a movie set again in this CinemaScopic age!) - and, despite the soap opera background, convincing. The factory looks like a busy, efficient factory, and not like the art director's homework. Pauline Frederick herself gives a very fine performance that doesn't date at all; Laura La Plante is as fresh and lovely as ever - and incredibly, looks just the same today! Malcolm MacGregor, who never quite made it, is somewhat overshadowed by these two. Bert Roach, strangely billed as an equal supporting player along with Tully Marshall on Universal's ads, actually has a mere bit; Arthur Lake, looking ridiculously young, is easily recognisable, and if you'll look closely, you can spot George Lewis too - another old-timer who, albeit a bit plump and seedy, is still going strong.

"Smouldering Fires" came out late in 1924, when too much was going on for it too attract the attention it really deserved. "Isn't Life Wonderful?" was doing great business on Broadway - one of the critics termed Griffith "The Homer of the Screen" as a result of this film - and "Peter Pan" was the most eagerly-awaited new film. There was also talk that Griffith would sign with Universal and make "Show Boat" since he had had "experience with films of the South" (!). Universal was selling its Broadway offices by advertising - "The place where Laemmle's Luck was born is for rent!" Jassy comedies - Evelyn Brent in "Silk Stocking Sal" - were everywhere. But if "Smouldering Fires" didn't become a

boxoffice sensation, it did attract a lot of attention in the right quarters. The Film Daily reviewed it on December 7, and called it "...an unusually fine picture ... exceptionally well handled and splendidly directed ... one of the most entertaining pictures Universal ever released". Jostled next to it were reviews for "Greed" (which got a mixed write-up), "Romola" (their discerning critic agreed with our program notes) and sundry delectable morsels with Fred Thomson et al. On the next page was a big ad for Colleen Moore's "So Big". Those were really the days! Universal themselves thought well enough of the film for it to spearhead their "21 White Pictures" group (other than explaining that films were always sold in advance in blocks, we won't try to explain the meaning of this particular group heading) which also included "The Price of Pleasure" with Virginia Valli and Norman Kerry, "The Clash" with Alma Rubens and Percy Marmont, and 18 others with Laura La Plante, Eugene O'Brien, House Peters, May McAvoy, Hoot Gibson, Reginald Denny and Jack Hoxie.

A few days after the review, a letter to Universal from an exhibition group, praising the film, was re-printed in the Film Daily as an ad. Of course, one can never put too much stock in this type of letter, but this one is interesting enough to reprint in part. Addressed, of course, to Mr. Laemmle, it said:

"I want to thank you for giving to the industry a picture of modern life without cigarette-smoking women, cocktail-drinking flappers, hip-flasks, rolled hose, and other "props" so noticeable in current attractions..... this picture, in addition to being a wonderful drama, cleverly produced, is certainly a relief ... from a standpoint of drama and entertainment, one of the most entertaining pictures in many moons the cast is excellent, the story clean, interesting and gripping. A word of praise for director Brown he had plenty of opportunity to resort to questionable scenes, but he availed himself of none of them - he kept the picture clean and wholesome; in lieu of wild parties and indecent exposure, he gave us scenes to make the most confirmed grouch laugh. This is the first time I have written you a testimonial letter; I believed it my duty to lend my moral support to the class of film you have produced here. The industry needs more of this kind, less of the other kind, if we are to survive. I wish everyone connected with the industry could see this film, because it's the kind we need!

(S.N. Chambers of the Consolidated Amusement Company, Wichita)

(For the members who do not go for "clean, wholesome pictures", a promise that more rolled hose and hip flasks are on the way in future programs).

The print is in fine shape, du-tinted, and all of its 7356 feet are there - complete to the credit announcing that this film was advertised in the Saturday Evening Post. With that final endorsement to back up Mr. Chambers, we know you'll want to see it!

PROGRAM TWO January 29, 7.30.

"LAW AND ORDER" (Hal Roach-Rolin, 1921; one reel; Pathe release); directed by Charles Parrott, with Snub Pollard and Marie Mosquini.

This one is really an oddity! It starts off with some wonderful foolery in the craziest old tradition - and then decides to cash in on current headlines by bringing the Ku Klux Klan into it! (The Klan was then re-activating itself). So here's the film with the other "Ride of the Klansmen", and what a weird, vaguely distasteful, sequence it is. It doesn't quite come off, but it's an off-beat Pollard that's well worth seeing.

"FLIGHT FOR A FORTUNE" (Majestic-Mutual, 1914; two reels; directed by W. Christy Cabanne) Starring F.A. Turner and Signe Auen.

Made under Griffith's over-all supervision by protegee Cabanne, "Flight for a Fortune" is a well done melodrama that starts a little slowly, builds up to a really exciting finish of a chase by motor boat and plane. These little Majestic melodramas were always solid, well constructed and entertaining films; it's a pity that so few appear to have survived. We have a fine print, and consider this an interesting little re-discovery.

"THE CIRCUS" (UA-Chaplin, 1926-28; our version - 5 1/2 reels; original version 6 1/2 reels) Written, directed by and starring Charlie Chaplin; assisted by Harry Crocker; director of photography - Rollis Totheroh; cameramen - Jack Wilson and Mark Marklatt; with Allan Garcia (circus owner); Merna Kennedy (his step-daughter); Betty Morrissey (the vanishing lady); Harry Crocker (Rex); George Davis (magician); Henry Bergman (old clown); Stanley Sanford (chief property man); John Rand (assistant property man); Steve Murphy (pickpocket); Doc Stone (prizefighter).

Since it is at least four years since we showed Chaplin's last completely silent film, it seemed high time for a revival. Our print is substantially better than the one we showed on that occasion; i.e., although both prints are from the same negative, our first one had really "made the rounds" and was very much scratched and chopped up. Our current print is brand new, and a good, sharp one - although of course with various defects present in the negative. These defects consist primarily of the clipping short of certain scenes, and the total elimination of odd shots. In all, there is a difference of a little less than a reel of actual footage between this print and the original release print, but careful perusal of Theodore Huff's meticulous description of the film in his biography of Chaplin, indicate that nothing of great importance is out - save for the shot of Chaplin crumpling up the piece of paper with the imprinted star, and kicking it away, just before the climax.

All of the great comedy sequences appear to be intact, and certainly the wonderful pantomime in the chamber of mirrors, and where Charlie cleverly steals the baby's frankfurter, are unmarred.

Spaced between "The Gold Rush" (1925) and "City Lights" (1931), "The Circus" is not top-grade Chaplin. It is over-melodramatic, over-inclined to a slapstick somewhat below Chaplin's best level. But it is often very fine, and never less than good. Certainly the care with which its backstage circus atmosphere is created (a similar care, and a similar atmosphere, are evidenced in "Limelight") is unusually meticulous, and considering the many troubles that beset Chaplin during the shooting (litigation which attached the film for a while, divorce proceedings with Lita Grey), its overall quality is very high.

Certainly the film was a tremendous success, and if its overall standard was not of Chaplin's best, nevertheless individual moments of pathos and comedy certainly were. One of the most notable moments is an intriguing little dream image episode wherein Charlie blissfully imagines himself shaming his romantic rival, all the time standing politely a few feet away and giving no sign of the thoughts that are racing through his mind.

Merna Kennedy (seen recently in "Broadway") was an attractive, but here not very personable or vivacious, leading lady. Although she improved quite considerably in the early days of talkies, and had a good voice, she never progressed beyond grade "B" quickies in the early thirties, and dropped from sight. She died from a heart-attack in 1944, still aged only 35.

Theodore Huff's biography of Chaplin contains a complete breakdown of the contents of "The Circus", together with a detailed study of the conditions under which it was made, Chaplin's associates on the film, and other extremely interesting data. If you haven't seen "The Circus" before, we recommend a study of this work before you do so.

"Officer 444" - episode 8. This is one of the best episodes to date, extremely lively, and possibly even a little more complicated than usual. It all winds up with an exciting melee in the railroad yards. With only two more chapters to go before the Frog is unmasked, we are desperately looking around for prints of "The Return of Officer 444" and "Son of Officer 444" so that we can keep Ben Wilson and Neva Gerber with us! (Non-serial devotees will need to be told here that those two sequels were fortunately never made!)

OUR NEXT PROGRAMS:

February 19th: Paul Czinner's "NJU" with Elizabeth Bergner, Conrad Veidt, Emil Jannings
"The Golden Clown" (condensation) with Gosta Ekman
and shorts to be announced.

February 26th: The first show in our Western Cycle:
Tom Mix in THE STAGECOACH DRIVER
WILLIAM S. HART in "THE RETURN OF IRON EGAN"; with Marjorie Wilson
and the very antithesis of Hart -
FRED THOMPSON in "THUNDERING HOOPS"
