Program in order of screening:

"HOODOO ANN" (Fine Arts-Triangle, 1916) Directed by Lloyd Ingraham; supervised by D.W. Griffith; written by Granville Warwick (D.W. Griffith); released March 26 1916


One often wonders just how much "personal supervision" D.W. Griffith put into the Fine Arts programmers that followed "Intolerance" in 1916. Clearly, there was little or no supervision of any kind where the Fairbanks films were concerned, and others showed varying degrees of Griffithian influence—and overseeing. "Hoodoo Ann" presumably is one of those that interested Griffith the most. For one thing, he wrote the original story — a story with much of the flavor of "True Heart Susie" and the other rural romances that he did over at Paramount a couple of years later. Secondly, after a rather lengthy illness, this was Mae Marsh's first vehicle under the Triangle banner, and one would assume that D.W. would be sufficiently concerned over another director's handling of his protege to keep close tabs on the situation. Certainly many scenes — including the "sophisticated walk" to get attention, a bit of business that Griffith used regularly and at least twice more with Mae — suggest that Griffith's supervision was more than usually in evidence. Lloyd Ingraham, the official director, was a good film-maker though one with no real style of his own. But unlike Christy Cabanne, another prolific Triangle director, he was no hack who just did as he was told. "Hoodoo Ann" has a lot of charm and sensitivity, and no little of it must be due to Ingraham. His later films included one of Fred Thomson's best, "Jesse James", but actually he was better known as an actor. He was the judge in the modern story of "Intolerance", and continued to play character roles right through the 1940's.

Although the film's plot is slender, it moves along briskly, with a neat blending of comedy and pathos. The satirical western in the village movie hall is a pleasant bit of spoofing, and Mae's performance throughout is delightful. She was really at her loveliest and most appealing at this period. In view of her charm and the film's overall lightness of touch, the film's advertising campaign was strange, to say the least. One of the principal blurbs read thus: "Would you vote to hang a person on circumstantial evidence? There's the question in "Hoodoo Ann". A woman said five words and came close to death when her husband disappeared". Just how misleading all this is (though no more so than many current movie ads) you'll realize when you see the film!

Our print, incidentally, is not quite complete. Like "Brass" and certain other films we've run in the past, it came to us totally disassembled, and had to be pieced together like a jigsaw. (If it were a sound film, the number of splices in it would make it just about unrunnable; they are of course less noticeable without the reminder of a popping sound track) As it stands now, every sequence is there, but sometimes missing are short extensions of existing scenes. We've examined these additional bits and pieces quite carefully on a reviewer, and they're all such short clips that it makes for a much smoother running film to leave them out than to re-insert them and add so many more splices. However, if a scene does seem abrupt here and there, it is because of this, and not because of any sloppiness originally.

"DOG SHY" (Hal Roach-Pathe 1926) Directed by Leo McCarey; supervised by F. Richard Jones; with Charlie Chase, Stuart Holmes, Mildred June, Josephine Crowell, William Orlamond.
While not top-quality Chase, "Dog Shy" is still well above average, and the dapper Charlie is on top form. If it had a little more imagination in its finish, it would be one of his best, but even so it's a delightful romp, with many fresh and original gags.

INTERMISSION

"ARE PARENTS PEOPLE?" (Paramount, 1925) Directed by Mal St. Clair; photographed by Bert Glennon; scenario by Frances Agnew from the Saturday Evening Post story by Alice Duer Miller; starring BETTY BRONSON, ADOLPHE MENJOU and FLORENCE VIDOR, with Lawrence Gray, Andre Beranger, Emily Fitzroy, Mary Beth Milford, William Courtwright.

Although a great personal favorite, "Are Parents People?" isn't such an important film that we would normally have repeated it only a little over three years after its last showing. However, as we explained in our monthly bulletin, there were reasons why this month's programs had to be put together rather hurriedly. This film was handy -- it is a delight -- and there have been a number of requests for it. So, here it is. The following notes are abbreviated from our previous program note on this film:

"Are Parents People?" is a typical example of the light, charming social comedy that has completely disappeared from the screen today. With a plot that is admittedly no more than pleasant trivia, it sparkles from first scene to last, wafting an admonishing yet friendly finger at the audience, and sending it home with an understanding pat on the back ...... the film marked Mal St. Clair's directorial debut at Paramount following several years of directing two-reel comedies (Keaton and others) and Rin Tin Tin ... it established the 28-year-old director immediately, and led to a wonderful series of frothy comedies - "The Grand Duchess and the Waiter", "The Show Off", etc. Even to the last, St. Clair's touch showed through - though most of his talkies were routine, his 1946 "Arthur Takes Over" (one of his last - he died in '52) had much of the old comic invention and gentle charm even though but a humble "B". .... one of his greatest talents was an ability to build minor incidents into fine comedy sequences. The episode with Beranger as a satirised Barrymore, is typical. Too, his intelligent pacing and sparse use of titles enables him to tell his story so visually that one hardly notices the rather static camerawork. A nice little sequence shows Betty Bronson passing through several stages of indecision merely by a closeup of her ankles in differing attitudes. But notwithstanding the assured comedy direction of St. Clair and the fine playing by Menjou and lovely Florence Vidor, the bulk of the film's wholly engaging charm is due to the delightful performance of Betty Bronson. Winsome, elfin heroine of two of the loveliest films ever made, "Peter Pan" and "A Kiss for Cinderella", exuding a charm and warmth quite unique even in the heyday of the silents, Miss Bronson shows here that the attributes considered new and startling in Audrey Hepburn had been enchanting silent day audiences years earlier. Unlike Hepburn, who became almost intolerable after the first picture or two, Bronson's screen personality is not self-consciously smug or cloying in its sentimental appeal ....... a unique product of her period, she was in her mid-teens when this film was made. It was her first film after "Peter Pan" (prior to which she had done only bit roles) and showed immediately that she was no one-picture star. Her seemingly perpetual gaiety attaches itself to every scene in which she appears, and yet, with the slightest alteration of a facial expression, she switches effortlessly to a mood of abject pathos. This characteristic was at its most expressive in the second Barrie film, "A Kiss for Cinderella", which contained Bronson's best acting and Bronson's best direction. Alas, Miss Bronson's career was sadly mishandled (see our notes on "The Locked Door", "Peter Pan", "Medicine Man") and she retired from the screen in 1932, returning only once, for a Gene Autry western in 1937. — Wm.K. Everson