A sojourn in Toronto brought me back to New York only the night before the show, which left very little time for assembling this program, doing the notes, and selecting music -- so if any of these elements seem a little sketchy this evening, please bear with us.

One or two of the "primitives" in tonight's program will have a slightly shaky appearance, although not seriously enough to be disturbing. This is due to shrinkage in the negative, and not to the projection. Also, one or two of the items have no end titles -- but be assured, none of the footage itself is missing. For the most part, the program is arranged in chronological order, with just a couple of minor deviations in the interests of variety.

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**THE SUBURBANITE**. Biograph, 1904. Dir: Wallace McCutcheon; One Reel.
With director McCutcheon's own family furnishing much of this comedy's cast, "The Suburbanite" is a surprisingly up-to-date little essay on the unchanging problems of commuting. It's a subtle little film for 1904, but occasionally a careless one -- note the cameraman's photographic equipment dumped on the front lawn, in full view of his lens!

**THE FIREBUG**. Biograph, 1905. No credits available; One Reel.
A good little thriller, following in the pattern of "The Great Train Robbery" -- crime, pursuit, capture. Primitive perhaps, but no more so than many films that were being made a good five years later.


When we last ran this short we rather generously termed it a "little gem"; since then we've seen too many great Sennett's for such a term to be repeated. As comedy it is crude, and its flagrant racial stereotypes commit the cardinal sin of not being funny. But its comedy element has never been the source of its main interest. While Ince was shooting his Civil War opus "The Battle of Gettysburg" he invited Sennett to make use he chose of his vast battle panoramas. So Sennett shved his comics in front of the marching armies and galloping cavalry, and improvised this film. It looks as though he had about five minutes' notice, as the improvisation is hardly inspired (and one wonders how many scenes he may have ruined for poor Tom!) But the Ince material is truly quite staggering, and makes one yearn to see the whole film. Presumably however, it was all shot from quite different angles, and one hopes that Ince was historian enough not to let his comics pick up the Pacific ocean as blatantly as do Sennett's!

A well-knit little tear-jerker, not by any means up to top Reliance standards, but enjoyable nonetheless -- not least in its fine street scenes, and glimpses of nights that have gone forever -- such as the elaborate shoe-shine stand outside the bar-room.

Although a good little picture in every way, for once it is the personality of the star rather than the director that dominates this film. Mary Pickford, in a surprisingly mature role, gives a most winsome, appealing and genuinely sensitive performance, and often looks quite stunning in some lovely closeups.

**FISH** Biograph, 1916 One reel Starring Bert Williams

After Griffith and his crew left Biograph, the company went into a rapid decline. Imitation Griffith dramas, imitation Keystone comedies - and reissues - hastened their demise. The one bright spot in these last dismal years was provided by Polli's star Bert Williams, who certainly tried hard to help keep Biograph alive - but couldn't make it alone. Although "Fish" is as good as the classic "Natural Born Gambler", it has some good Williams pantomime, and well photographed rural exteriors. Williams by the way was light-skinned and used black-face makeup, rather adding to what has now become another racial stereotype, but was then accepted in the spirit in which it was offered.

**SKYLARKING** Pathé-Sennett, 1923 Dir: Del Lord One Reel With Harry Gribbon, Alberta Vaughan, Kaye Morgan, Lila Leslie, Josephine Adair, Jackie Lucas.

"Skylarking" contains what has always seemed to me to be one of the best and funniest of the old gag of outrage - a blind man's tapping cane systematically breaking lamps and scratching paint on an automobile, with the owner standing helplessly by, prevented by embarrassed compassion from intervening. But the rest of it is fun too, in a more conventional manner, and it gives us a these days all-too-rare glimpse of that much under-rated comic, Harry Gribbon.

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**INTERMISSION**

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**THE LEATHERPUSHERS** - Round Two Universal, 1922 Dir: Harry Pollard

From the stories by H.C. Witwer; starring Reginald Denny with Hayden Stevenson. 2-reels

"The Leatherpushers" series, like the later "The Collegians", were good-natured and tremendously popular, mixing light dramatics with action and comedy. A young and very handsome Reginald Denny made a most ingratiating hero, and production values, as always with Universal, were solid. The series was made here in New York, and this installment has a good sequence in Central Park - a welcome reminder of those happy days when boxers and sprinters found it an economical work-out area. Today of course they'd be mugged before they'd covered half-a-lap.

**SUNDOWN LIMITED** Hal Roach-Pathé, 1924 Dir: Robert McGowan 2 reels.

This is not only one of the most typical, but quite one of the best silent Our Gang comedies that we've come across. Faster-paced than most of them, it never lets up for a moment, and offers some genuine thrills along with the comedy. The photography and editing are first-rate too. Inventive and resourceful as most kids were before tv-inertia set in, it's still unlikely than many of them quite approached the spectacular tricks of the Gang in this one, first aboard a real locomotive, and then on an ingenious one of their own design.

**THE LEATHERPUSHERS (Round 7) - Payment Through The Nose**

A direct follow-up to our earlier installment, this episode is quite different
in content. Of primary interest are some fine scenes of NY cafe night-life, and a wonderful episode of a publicity parade down Broadway at night—past theatres that coincidentally have Universal wares on view— including "The Fox" and "Foolish Wives." The print, a fine toned original, seems to have a small chunk out of the middle—but it's quite apparent that Denny loses the fight that is thus interrupted.


Bearing a casual relationship to "Mighty Like a Moose", one of his best silents, "Fate's Father" doesn't quite live up to its marvellous title, but it's good fun none-the-less. Freezy and good-humored, with Chase breaking into song (as he frequently did) it's one of his better sound comedies; perhaps it's no coincidence that it's one he directed himself.


Having played most of the best L&H comedies over the years, even their lesser works are welcome now. "Any Old Fort" is a bizarre derivation from a "Broken Blossoms" theme, with Walter Long very appropriately in the old Crisp role, and Jacqueline Wells doing her best as Miss Gish. Unevenly paced, and with a climactic boxing-match that is a little disappointing (especially after Chaplin's similar sequence in "City Lights" of a couple of years earlier), "Any Old Fort" scores most on its by-play—the hotel register scene, repeated from "Double Whoopee", and—best of all—the wonderful dialogue between Stan and Ollie in the brief lunch counter scene.

RAPPY'S PUPPY Warners Bros. 1955 Dir: Friz Freling 1 reel

We've rhapso-dized so much in the past about the best of the Warners cartoons that there's no need to repeat our thoughts here. It's up there with the best of them, and like all the others, viciously, violently, savagely and quite inoffensively sadistic. It also represents something of a triumph of sight over (spoken) sound— all of the gags are brilliantly visual and save for one opening line and one closing line (neither of them at all necessary) there is no dialogue at all.