Tuesday next, September 21st. A program of mystery and horror. "THE BAT WHISPERERS" by Roland West's 1930 classic, most exciting of the "old house" chillers and a pictorial stunner, with Chester Morris; and "THE DEVIL COMMANDS," best of the Columbia Karloffs; directed by Edward Dmytryk in 1942; traditional but top-flight.

Friday September 17th 1965
The Theodore Buff Memorial Film Society

The Barrymores at Rko

"THE RETURN OF PETER GRIMM" (Rko Radio, 1935) Directed by George Nicholls Jn. Produced by Kenneth Macdonan; screenplay by Francis Edwards Faragoh, based on the novel by Marion; and presented by David Selasco; camera; Lucien Andriot; Musical director, Alberto Colombo; 8 reels.

With Lionel Barrymore, Helen Mack, Edward Ellis, Donald Meek, James Bush, Donald Crisp, Allen Vincent, Ethel Griffies, Lucien Littlefield, Grata Moyer, Bay Moyer.

On loanout from his long-running MGM contract, Lionel Barrymore made occasional films for Paramount, Fox and Rko during the 30's, the Rkos being perhaps the most interesting in his personal viewpoint in that they were definitely vehicles for him. "The Return of Peter Grimm" is both typical of his Rko films, and in fact of Rko films in general during this period—handsomely mounted, sincerely done, often commandingly off-beat, but sometimes stagy and stagy, and lacking the style that almost any other major studio would have given it. Despite being an adaptation of a stage play, and thus being in a good position to use the dialogue denied the earlier silent version (1925, with Alec B. Francis and Janet Gaynor), this remake is actually somewhat less interesting than its predecessor. However, it is a good showcase for Barrymore and Ellis, has some charming moments in the opening sequences, settles down into rather a rut in the middle portions, and then regains its stride in the latter third where it becomes both more cinematic, and even rather moving. It never quite attains the emotional power of Barrymore's later and roughly similar "On Borrowed Time", but the surface of the old play do come through quite well in these latter scenes. George Nicholls Jn., son of the veteran Griffith character actor ("Hearts of the World", "The Greatest Question etc.) was an interesting and versatile director who never really evolved a style of his own but seems to have been leaning towards themes of Americana--such as this one, "N'tis" and "Anne of Green Gables". He also turned out some first-class长-film actioners, including "The Soldier and the Lady" and "Man of Conquest".

Intermission

"LONG LOST FATHER" (Rko Radio, 1933; rel: 1934) Directed by Ernest B. Schoedsack; Executive Producer: Marian C. Cooper; Ass. Producer, Kenneth Macdonan; screenplay by Dwight Taylor from the novel by C.B. Stern; Music by Max Steiner; Camera: Nick Musurac; 7 reels.


As with Lionel, this film of John's was made for Rko when he was also keeping continually busy over at MGM. "Long Lost Father" (a singularly uninspired title) is the least known of all of John's films of the early 30's, and admittedly, since it is rubbing shoulders with "Svengali", "Topaze", "Consorter at Law", "Reunion in Vienna", "Grand Hotel", "Dinner at Eight" et al, it's not hard to see how Rko has just dropped off in rather a hurry. It's well enough mounted, the sets are good, and the property itself at. least has possibilities, but in running time it is strictly a "B" picture, and as if knowing that it was destined for such a slot, the script just skims along the surface of everything, leaving too much unsaid, and never making the most of any one situation. It gives John the expected witty and sarcasinc lines, allows him scenes of good and pathos, but never sustains a mood long enough for him to be able to do very much with any of it. Still, it's always a pleasure to see Barrymore, and if this is the least important film that he made in those incredibly prolific years, it's also the least seen, and thus well deserving of a revival. He and Helen Chandler seem to pair off rather well; curiously, in her earlier stage career she had played one of the princes in the tower, murdered at his orders, in "Richard III". "Long Lost Father" seems a curious film to have headed to Schoedsack to direct, fresh as he was from "King Kong", But his whole career has been somewhat of an enigma, with oddities like "The Last Days of Pompeii" and some John Holt "B" aspects inserted in infrequently before his eventual return to the stunt genre with "Dr. Cyclops" and the later "Mighty Joe Young". "Long Lost Father" is a kind of pseudo Bozage, with a little Lubitsch thrown in, but it's a pleasing trifle and a curious one we think you'll enjoy catching.

"Mr. K. Everson

NOTE: Henri Langlois reported last week that he had cancelled the plans for a mammoth retrospective at the Huntington Hartford Museum, so our earlier warning that part of our current 3-month schedule might be cancelled, in order to facilitate attendance at the Museum, can now be disregarded.