Next program: March 14th; BLANCHE FURY (1947, dir: Marc Allegret), a stunning original Technicolor print, with Valarie Hobson, Stewart Granger; preceded by FAIR (1936), a comedy with a film-making background, starring Sydney Howard...

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society
February 28 1977

BROKEN CHINA (Christie Comedies-Educational, 1926) Directed by Earle Rodney

This is frankly not a very good comedy; Bobby Vernon has lost much of his boyish charm since his Sennett days, and the level of the comedy is indicated by the name of the Chinese villain: Won Lung. Nevertheless, it's fast, there is one really good gag, one quite elaborate set, and some interestingly bizarre byplay in the Chinatown sequences.

THE RETURN OF DRAW EGAN (Triangle-Kay Bee) Released, Oct. 5 1926; directed by William S. Hart for Thomas Ince; Scenario, J. Gardner Sullivan; Camera, Joseph August; Art Director, Robert Brunton; 5 reels; last Huff showing, April 1957.

With: William S. Hart (Draw Egan); Margery Wilson (Nyrtle); Louise Glaum (Poppy); Robert McKim (Arizona Joe); J.P. Lockney (Matt Buckton); and Bob Kortman.

Although already Hart's 33rd film, "The Return of Draw Egan" is nevertheless from the earlier and best years of his career. It's taut, incisively directed, with most of the standard and required Hart scenes, including some sentiment, but a sentiment less protracted and more restrained than in later films. Hart's love of the West and his insistence on accuracy of background, clothing and detail shows in every foot of the film, as does a rather strongly personal viewpoint expressed through the camerawork. John Ford's later view of the West was that of the immigrant-outsider looking in: optimistic and heroic, with horizons low in the frame, and a stress on figures nobly silhouetted against the sky. Hart's love is for the country itself: his horizons are always near the top of the frame, there is little sky, and men are dwarfed by the West. Even his chase scenes are usually photographed from above, so that pursued and pursuer become almost indistinguishable, speaks lost in the dust. Hart obviously understood film technique, and knew how effective it was when used sparingly; the camera tracks only once in the entire film, but to tremendous effect. "The Return of Draw Egan" is a solidly representative Hart in every way, and quite incidentally was the model for an early 50's Bill Elliott western, "Topaka".

THE COMING OF AMOS (Cecil B. de Mille-P.D.C., 1925) Directed by Paul Sloane
Scenario by Garrett Fort and James Creelman from the (1924) novel by William J. Locke; Camera, Arthur Miller; Art Director, Chester Gore; Asst. Dir., William J. Scully; 6 reels; last Huff showing, December 1959.

With: Rod La Rocque (Amos Burden); Jutta Goudal (Princess Radi); Noah Berry (Ramon Garcia); Richard Carle (David Fontenay); Arthur Hoyt (Hamilton); Triggy Friziana (Duchess of Parth); Clarence Burton (Valdez); Ruby Lafayette (nurse)

William von Brineken (Garcia's henchman)

Most of the Rod La Rocque vehicles for de Mille and P.D.C. release were generally mediocre, though to their credit they were short and breezy, and sometimes quite elaborate. La Rocque himself has a not too easily-acquired taste, but his tendency to use hardly hurts this decidedly tongue-in-cheek melodramatic rump. It's one of the earliest of the de Mille La Rocques (after they both left Paramount) and one of the best, given more care, a better cast and a bigger budget than most of the subsequent vehicles. The production values are extremely good, Arthur Miller's photography is exceptional, and there are some standout uses of glass shots. The climactic real is a lulu of unashamed melodrama, and the film takes neither its menace nor its romance too seriously. Few subtitles are without a pun of some kind, and one doesn't even feel like quibbling over an Australia seemingly peopled by London cockneys! All in all, it's one of the most enjoyable films from a not usually very distinguished director, Paul Sloane - who after a long period of inactivity turned up in Japan in the early 50's to direct a modern color version of "Madame Butterfly".