DAVID HARUM (Famous Players-Paramount, 1914; rcl: 1915) Directed by Allan Dean; Presented by Charles Frohman; Based on the 1898 novel and the 1900 play by Edward Noyes Westcott; Camera, Henry Lyman Broening; 65 mins. With: William H. Crane (David Harum); May Allison (Mary Blake); Harold Lockwood (John Lenox); Kate Meeks (Aunt Polly); Hal Clarendon (Chet Timson); Guy Nichols (Deacon Perkins)

Clearly, being based on a play and benefitting from colloquial dialogue, "David Harum" worked better as a talkie and the Will Rogers version is the definitive one. Nevertheless this initial version has a great deal of academic interest, as well as considerable sophistication for a film made in 1914. This was the first film of William H. Crane, who had scored a solid hit playing the same role on Broadway much earlier. It also gives a welcome (and these days rare) look at the popular team of May Allison and Harold Lockwood, something of a wholesome, Van Johnson/June Allyson parallel. Most remarkable of all is its use of the moving camera and long tracking shots into the bank, which establish its importance as the centre of town activity and tinha out of the bank, concentrating on Harum and establishing his importance. Other tracking shots are more orthodox, but to find so many of them in one 1914 film, even if not asstartlingly flamboyant as in the earlier—shown "Second in Command", is quite unusual. The film is also the first-known (and certainly earliest extant) work by the prolific Allan Dean. In all, it's both a valuable record of an important theatrical event, and a charming film in its own right, dating perhaps only in Hal Clarendon's villain. But then theatrical audiences liked a villain that was all bad - utterly untrustworthy and in every sense of the word, untidy, and looking both sinister and weak at the same time. Since Clarendon delivers in all of those areas, one might consider it a successful rendering of a familiar theatrical type. Reviews were good, "Variety" even claiming that no film had ever gotten to such a good start as this one, with audiences chuckling uproariously at Crane's opening breakfast scene. Well, it is a good scene, and Crane's personality, better known then, may well have carried it, especially when the art of comedy was still so new on the screen. But the appraisal does seem a trifle over-generous!

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

A Pot-Pourri of Silent Comedy from the 20's, all in fine original prints.

HIS MARRIAGE WOW (Mack Sennett-Fathe-1924) Directed by Del Lord, with Harry Langdon and Vernon Dent.

Like most of the Langdon Sennett's, this is a curious but satisfying mixture of pantomime and slapstick, with Vernon Dent, in Gugliari makeup, as an odd comic villain.

NAPOLEON JR (Fox, 1926) Directed by Mark Sandrich, with Bill Elliott.

Fox's 2-reel comedy series had no theme, no continuing stars (western star-to-be, Bill Elliott, still known as Gordon Elliott) and no overall standards. Some were complete misfires, others (like "Easy Paynets") reaching almost classic status. But all of them were elaborate with big-scale comic set-pieces. This is certainly one of the better ones, with some extremely unusual animal action.

UP ON THE FARM (Fox, 1924) Directed by Lewis Seiler, with Lee Moran.

This seems much too elaborate and too full of non-stop action to have been a one-reeler, and is almost certainly (well) cut-down from a two-reel length, a fairly common practice for the home movie market in the 20's. Lee Moran was never very funny in himself, but he does not have to be here as the sight gag, old and new, good and bad, come too fast for him to matter very much other than as a peg on which to hang them.

LIMOUSINE LOVE (Hal Roach-MGM, 1928) Directed by Fred Guiot; supervised by Leo Madigan, with Charley Chase, Edgar Kennedy.

Robert Youngson used a well-edited chunk of this genuinely classic Charley Chase in his comedy compilation "Four Clowns", some years ago. Otherwise it hasn't been seen in its full version since its original release. Also, as with so many silent films, its negative was stored with every single film negative. Those of you with super reading speed will enjoy noticing the tribute to the little man, the slight assistant as while it is very easy to follow, one does need to follow the motivation - as per this brief synopsis. Charley is on route to his wedding.

He stops to get some gas, and his empty car is used by a young lady to change her clothes. By processes better seen than described, she loses them all and Charley is stuck with a nude girl in his car. Moreover he gives a lift to Edgar Kennedy, the girl's jealous husband - who takes a man of the world attitude to Charley's passenger, whom he hasn't seen all the while expounding on what he would do if his wife misbehaved. Arriving at the church, he is other great scenes of the car race, and constantly, Charley unloads his cargo without husband or his own bride-to-be catching on.

Here the titles all take on a pun quality - "She's stripped!" yells Charley, trying to explain why the car won't stop.

NORTH OF 50-50 (Hal Roach, Pathé, 1924) Directed by Fred Guiot. A "Dippy Doocads" animal comedy. Held to the end because it always proves such a sure-fire audience pleaser, Hal Roach's educated ducks, goats and monkeys in a funny (because it is held to a tight single reel) western satire of the "Rose Marie"-"Girl of the Golden West" school of romantic western. A little goes a long way, and Roach cannily never over-played his hand. --- William K. Everson

Program Ends app. 10:15.

Discussion/questions follow.