

## From the Authors

The silent era was one of the most fascinating times in human history. The introduction of the film industry had an unbelievable impact on society. To quote the *Guinness Book of World Records*:

*Few inventions have spread more rapidly than cinematography. By the end of 1896, a mere twelve months after the real start of commercial cinema in France, nearly all the major countries of the western world had witnessed their first demonstration of the new art.*

For the first time, silent films presented to the public a VISUAL version of news, travel, comedy, drama, and entertainment that had never been experienced before. And, since they were silent, it was presented as an international point of view with no language barriers. Cue cards could present any explanations needed.

Immediately, movement, travelogues and factuials were the craze. But by 1902, people grew tired of this type of entertainment, so much so that films began to be used to clear the vaudeville halls at the end of the performances.

Between the years 1902-1907, there was turmoil in the industry. As stories were beginning to be told and Georges Melies ignited the public imagination with his special effects and science fiction, the public clamored for more.



## Demand

Everyone was trying to get into some form of this new exciting industry. Feeding this frenzy was the ability to quickly, easily and cheaply get into EXHIBITING films. Theaters were opening rapidly.

This wasn't just in the U. S., it was worldwide. For example, to supply the demand, there was an estimated 500 production companies formed in Italy between 1905 and 1910 alone.

In 1908, Sears Roebuck and Co. released a catalogue selling moving picture equipment through Sears (see ads on next page). In every community, corner theaters were becoming common place.

<p>SEARS, ROEBUCK &amp; CO., CHICAGO, ILL.</p> <p><b>THE NEW 1908 MODEL MOVING PICTURE MACHINE</b>  <b>MOTIOGRAPH No. 1</b></p> <p>"MOTIOGRAPH" SIGNIFIES A RECORD OF MOTION.</p> <p><b>It Projects Steady Pictures, Flickerless Pictures, Brilliant Pictures</b></p> <p>It is a wonderful improvement over its predecessors. IT LOOKS RESEMBLING IT IN EFFICIENCY AND THE PICTURES IT PROJECTS ARE SUPERIOR.</p> <p>It is simple, light, portable and durable, and projects a picture that is remarkably better than other machines.</p> <p><b>The Value of a Motion Picture Show is all in the Pictures</b></p> <p>It is the quality of the pictures that bring the constant patronage, and the more perfect they are the more they are appreciated, while poor quality in the pictures will quickly raise a customer.</p> <p>The greatest income in this business may be attained only by the use of the best machines that money will buy.</p> <p><b>THAT'S THE MOTIOGRAPH</b></p> <p>If you need a machine you won't afford to consider any other. There is no other that will give you more of any picture, and will be found to be more useful, in fact, in a big way.</p> <p>The Motio-graph has been designed especially for the heavy and steady work of the Motion Picture business, and has only one claim that has been ignored, and it was adapted for this important class of work.</p> <p>There's the best of reasons for our claim of superiority, and if you will readily recognize, we believe you will think the same as we.</p> <p><b>WE GUARANTEE</b> that the Motio-graph will do what we say it will.</p> <p>Fifty cents a day for a year from a Motio-graph. If you already have a machine, please give it a trial run.</p> <p><b>SEE YOUR BUSINESS GROW</b></p>  <p>It Combines the Highest Efficiency with the Greatest Durability</p>	<p>SEARS, ROEBUCK &amp; CO., CHICAGO, ILL.</p> <p><b>SPECIAL 5-CENT THEATRE OUTFIT</b></p> <p><b>\$75.00</b></p> <p><b>THE OPTIGRAPH No. 4 AND COMPLETE EQUIPMENT FOR NICKELODEON WORK</b></p> <p><b>\$72.00</b></p> <p>FOR COMPLETE OUTFIT WITH ELECTRIC LIGHT EQUIPMENT.</p> <p>SEE IT USED BY ACTING LARRY ON ALL THE GREAT ELECTRIC LIGHT STAGE.</p>  <p><b>SOLD UNDER OUR BINDING GUARANTEE</b></p> <p><b>OUR NEW OPTIGRAPH No. 4 AND LAMP HOUSE OUTFIT</b> is especially adapted to any class of work where the use of Eastern Views is of secondary consideration. The Lamp House is large and roomy, is supported on sliding ways by a backward and forward adjustment of 4 1/2 inches, and together with the Optigraph and sliding base, is mounted on a separable oak baseboard. The base may be easily divided for convenience in transportation, but while in use is held together by ingenious arrangements, which make it as rigid as a solid board.</p> <p><b>PRICES.</b></p> <p>No. 2192000 Complete Machine on Separable Oak Base, including Optigraph No. 4, Mechanism, 3-inch lens, sliding adjustable lamp house, condensing lenses, burner support, view grip sliding base, bracket, arm, screw ring, adjusting rod, take up device, stereoscopic objective lens, any focus up to 12-inch in 1/4 size mount, 8-inch reel, plain reel head, arc lamp, rheostat (50 to 110 volt), knife switch and 20 feet of insulated wire. . . . . <b>\$75.00</b></p> <p>No. 2192000 Complete Machine, as above, with "Econo Special" No. 2 Calcium Jet and 8 feet of rubber tubing instead of arc lamp, rheostat, switch, wire, etc. . . . . <b>72.00</b></p> <p><small>NOTE—If Take Up Device is not wanted, deduct \$6.50 from prices quoted. If Compound Raward Steel Head is wanted instead of Plain Steel Head add \$3.50 to prices quoted.</small></p>
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In 1909, *Moving Picture World* printed some stats on the U. S. film industry under the title, "Do You Know..."

Here are a couple of excerpts from that page:

- That 250,000 people visit motion picture theaters in New York City every weekday?
- That 500,000 people visit motion picture theaters every Sunday?
- That there are 6000 licensed motion picture theaters in the U. S.?
- That there are now almost a 1000 more licensed theaters in the U. S. than there was 3 months ago?

**Now, this was in 1909.**

Before 1910, France had dominated the worldwide industry. However, World War I turned the film industry upside down by eliminating most of the European film industry, leaving the public screaming for more entertainment. The film industry's shift to the United States caused a massive void, and the rapid growth made it very hard to control.

But while the public was screaming for more films and all of the new theaters were looking everywhere to try to satisfy their consumers, Edison was trying to allow only those people who would pay him royalties through his Motion Picture Patents Co. to exhibit films.

Here is a quote from the March 12, 1910 issue of *Moving Picture World* by Edwin Thanhouser who started Thanhouser Films:

*I saw its possibilities. I became filled with the idea that I could produce better pictures than a majority of those I had seen. The idea became a*

*determination. I studied the situation on the market. To be frank with you, I applied for a license as a manufacturer, but was, of course, refused, as I then had no plant and may be said to have known nothing of the business. I have great respect for the Motion Picture Patents Company and appreciate what their protection means to the licensed manufacturer and to the moving picture business, but this was not helping me to realize my ambitions. So I set about seeing how I could make pictures without infringing upon patent rights... EDWIN THANHOUSER, The Moving Picture World, MARCH 12, 1910*

There was no complicated sound equipment or microphones, no scripts, no unions, no stages and many times, no experience. The demand was so great with the rise of the independents trying to fill the void that it made it definitely worth the risk of avoiding legal problems. Films could be shot in a few days and it was like panning for gold. If you were good at it, you could strike it rich almost instantly.

### **Documentation**

Documentation during the silent era is a historian's nightmare. From an international view point, documentation of the silent era was almost completely reliant upon the company's registration within the country archives (which was usually voluntary), historians (which primarily looked at the major companies or titles), preservation societies or film institutions (which were limited or non-existent) or the films themselves. So, massive amounts of production and distribution information have gone undocumented.

Plagiarism was such a problem that European companies established offices in the U. S. primarily to try to stop or at least try to slow it down. Logos became one of the major tools used for both the production and distribution side to try to establish and protect territory and identity.

Even though we are covering the world studios, let's focus for a few minutes on the U. S., mainly because we have more statistics and documentation and can more easily present the situation. Unfortunately, most countries, from a research and documentation view point, are in **WORSE** shape than what we are presenting here.

To get a better feel for how bad the situation really is in the U. S., the U. S. Congress commissioned David Pierce, a noted historian and archivist, to do a report. He did a phenomenal job and his report has been widely used. But,

while it brought a lot of needed attention to the situation and a few stats have been quoted, from our point of view, it only scratched the surface.

When thinking about the silent era, most people, whether in the business or not, automatically think of Keystone Kops, Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, Our Gang, Will Rogers, Charley Chase, Ben Turpin, Mabel Normand, Fatty Arbuckle, etc.

But is that what Congress was thinking of? You see, Congress commissioned the report to cover U. S. feature films from 1912-1929. **NOTE:** A feature film is considered a film over one hour in length (normally 5+ reels). That brings the question: Why would they start the report in 1912? Take a glance back at the stats *Moving Picture World* reported in 1909 and all the activity!

Here's the answer. There are two reasons for this time period. The year 1912 was the first year the U. S. produced what was classified as a feature film AND they are more easily documented. *Guinness Record Book of Movie Facts and Feats* states that in 1912, the U. S. produced their **FIRST TWO** feature length films: *Oliver Twist* produced by H. A. Spanuth with five reels and *Beloved Vagabond*, a six reeler produced by Gold Rooster.

What about all the hundreds of others like Mack Sennett (who produced over 1000 films such as Keystone Kops, cross-eyed Ben Turpin, Fatty Arbuckle, Andy Clyde and Hank Mann) and Hal Roach, who produced Our Gang, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd and Charley Chase?

Consider this. In that same time period between 1912 and 1929, Hal Roach produced 853 films. Of those, **THIRTEEN WERE FEATURE FILMS!** The OTHER 840 **are NOT included in the stats or the report!** Thanhouser (quoted above) produced 1086 films between 1910 and 1917. When he retired, 51 of those were feature films, **leaving 1,035 NOT included.**

Thousands upon thousands of newsreels, shorts, documentaries, travelogues and regionals are not covered in the statistics to Congress of what has been lost.

### **From Bad to Worse**

If so much has been lost, what has been done to try to save it?

Film preservation has been going on for a LONG time. Will Hayes, of the Hayes Commission, actually started film preservation in the U. S. in 1926. Since that time, MILLIONS of dollars have been spent in the U. S. on film preservation.

But STILL, with all that money spent, the American Film Institute declared that 90% of all silent films made in the U. S. are lost forever AND 50% of all U. S. films made before 1951 (when they invented safety film) are already LOST FOREVER.

Even if we accept those statistics, when you don't have the film anymore, what do you do to get information? You could go to the copyright offices, or in our case in the U.S., the Library of Congress. You could go to a film institution or try to find books that could at least give a few basics.

Well, what about the posters, stills, pressbooks and trade ads? – you know, the documents issued WITH the film, what we call, the film accessories. But there is a problem.

With all the millions spent in the U.S. on film preservation, we have not been able to find a single organization dedicated to film accessories preservation. No poster preservation societies, no groups to preserve film accessories. In fact, most institutions don't want to handle film accessories because film accessories were considered an “unimportant necessity of the business.”

Film accessories were normally produced on cheap acidic paper that is costly to maintain. They are also a pain to store, a pain to handle and a pain to present. Because they are such a problem, and cost so much of their maintenance budget to preserve, many institutions quietly just allow them to decay and disintegrate so they can be removed from their inventory.

This has been unfortunate, because when you don't have the actual film, the film accessories are the primary source of information. They are actually the historical documents issued WITH the film and are invaluable when you want to reconstruct more than just the basic information about a film title.

Over the last 10 years of advance research of film accessories, we have been completely SHOCKED that a complete industry is being allowed to gradually disappear mainly because it doesn't fit into the current archival structure.

Here is a small example of what we're talking about.

In 2010, there was a HUGE find in the film community. A film was found that had Charlie Chaplin in it! The film community in California didn't realize Charlie Chaplin was even in the film!

It became the headliner for the 2010 Cinecon Convention. The following is an announcement that they issued:

## Lost Chaplin Film



*A Thief Catcher* (Keystone, 1914), featuring a previously unknown performance by silent comedy star Charlie Chaplin, will have its West Coast re-premiere during the 46th annual Cinecon Classic Film Festival at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood California over Labor Day Weekend, September 2-6, 2010

Chaplin is officially credited with appearing in thirty-five films during his year at Keystone in 1914, but he claimed in various interviews

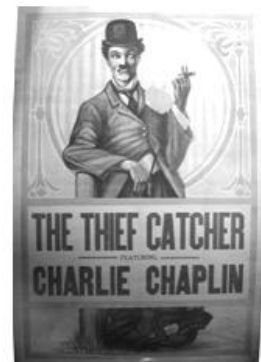
that he had also played bit roles as a cop and a barber while at the studio--but he did not name the films, and although there has been some speculation about the possibility of additional Chaplin-Keystone appearances, none has turned up until now. Film collector Paul Gierucki found a 16mm film print in a trunk at a Taylor, Michigan, antique store last year. "I could tell it was a Keystone comedy, so I haggled and got it for \$100," says Gierucki, but he didn't get around to looking at the print for several months. When he did put it on a projector this past March, he was astonished when Chaplin appeared as a cop about six minutes into the film for an extended two-minute cameo. "My heart stopped," Gierucki recalls. "I recognized him immediately."

Starring Keystone's famed comic villains Ford Sterling and Mack Swain, with support from Edgar Kennedy, *A Thief Catcher* was in production between January 5-26, 1914, soon after Chaplin arrived at the Keystone studio, and it represents the second or third screen role for the soon-to-be world famous comedy star.

*A Thief Catcher* is one of nearly forty rare and unusual films to be screened during the five-day Cinecon film festival, and will be shown on Saturday afternoon during a themed film preservation segment of the program.

You can see from the article that the film community was ecstatic to find this unknown Charlie Chaplin film (and it wasn't his second or third film – it was his fourth). While we have not found material from the original release, it was rereleased numerous times during the teens and twenties.

**If they had just taken the time to look at the poster that was issued WITH the film, this would not have been such a surprise. Several re-releases in the teens and twenties used this image on the posters for *The Thief Catcher* with varying backgrounds. But where do you find a reliable database that records them.**



## **Reconstructing Lost History**

Then your next question should be: WHY aren't museums and institutions compiling and reconstructing the lost film history using film accessories?

Simply put, they can't.

Museums, institutions and universities are not set up to reconstruct the film accessories because of their structure. All regular museums, institutions and universities are set up on the same principle.

They acquire a collection (preferably donated).

They have a curator and archivists to take care of that collection.

Then people have to come to that facility to SEE the collection. This brings in revenue, interest and stability for that facility.

The archivist job is to take care of that collection. If it is NOT in that collection, it is NOT part of their job – **AND THEREFORE DOES NOT EXIST** to that archivist and facility.

In most cases, this system works GREAT! (and has for many decades). If it is documenting the life of a famous person or an important event, **GREAT!!**

You see, normally a collection will come from a director, or an actor, or sometimes even a studio. For a specific film, they might get the script, production notes, a costume or two and a couple of stills or posters. **That would be a pretty good acquisition!!!**

If you have a couple of posters for each film, isn't that enough?

When it comes to film accessories, suddenly you're in a different and still largely undocumented world. **Very few realize the magnitude of FILM ACCESSORIES!!!**

For a medium size film, you have HUNDREDS of different film accessories created.

It all starts with the keybook. During production hundreds and hundreds of production stills are taken by the unit photographer. A keybook is created containing the best production stills taken for the advertising department to use to promote the film. The rest of the stills are put in storage in case they are

needed later. The stills pulled for the keybook are numbered with production codes. These are used for promotions, AND used in the making of the promotional material. These are also sent with a synopsis to the other countries where the film is being distributed for them to prepare their posters and promotional material.

On the right is an example of the 1934 medium size film *Zoo in Budapest* featuring Loretta Young. It had 99 stills pulled, numbered and used for promotions. From this would start the trade ads and fan magazine articles.



It also started the process of making all the advance advertising material. Then came premier material and then the massive amount of promotional material to be used to market the film throughout the country: pressbooks, insert cards, promos, portraits, heralds, lobby cards in sets, mini lobby cards, jumbo lobby cards, half sheets, window cards, mini window cards, jumbo window cards, 30x40s, 40x60s, one sheets, 2 sheets, 3 sheets, 6 sheets, 12 sheets, 24 sheets, door panels, banners, standees, and sometimes varying sets and several styles.

That did not include any oddities such as trolley cards, secondary printers, and local or regional production. Here are just a few of the larger posters from *King Kong* shown in the pressbook to order.



Rereleases were a MAJOR source of income for the studios because there were no production costs involved, only new promotional material. But, when you rereleased OR renamed the film, you had to do MANY OF THOSE SIZES OVER AGAIN. So, most films were re-released numerous times.

Many releases would also have to deal with varying sizes of: awards issues (for local, regional, national, international or festival awards), anniversary issues, combo issues, duotone, limited editions, military issues, strikes, review issues, roadshow, serials, shorts, stock and semi-stock issues, etc.



THEN for the films exported to other countries, you had to do a completely different set FOR EACH COUNTRY!!! And any rereleases for that country.

**An exhaustive amount of material for documentation!**

The current academic and archival systems are not able to record or research these massive and specialized areas of documentation. We have spent the past 20 years developing methods and systems that can. We truly believe that film accessories are the key to reconstructing a lot of the lost film history.

We have taken a reverse approach of documentation and reconstruction to try to preserve these areas that are so important to international film heritage. We began researching in 1995 and released the first reference book on the industry in 1997. Everything began to come together when we created the only research database dedicated to film accessories in 2006. Our Movie Poster Data Base has over 100,000 posters shown and is continuously generating tremendous amounts of compiled information that has never been available before. We have documented previously unknown areas such as our research on production codes with over 50,000 codes to help identify unknown movie stills; reconstruction of National Screen Service history with over 25,000 poster accounting codes and over 18,000 trailer codes; reconstruction of film industry lithographers with over 10,000 litho plate numbers used for dating purposes, reconstruction of movie poster artists filmographies with thousands of poster artists around the world including their signatures and lists of works; etc.

As we continue to bridge the gap between the academic, commercial and collecting communities, we hope this edition is a starting point for another major area to help establish a base to cross reference, expand the scope and continue to make our dating process more accurate.

***ed and Susan Poole***  
**Film Accessory Researchers**