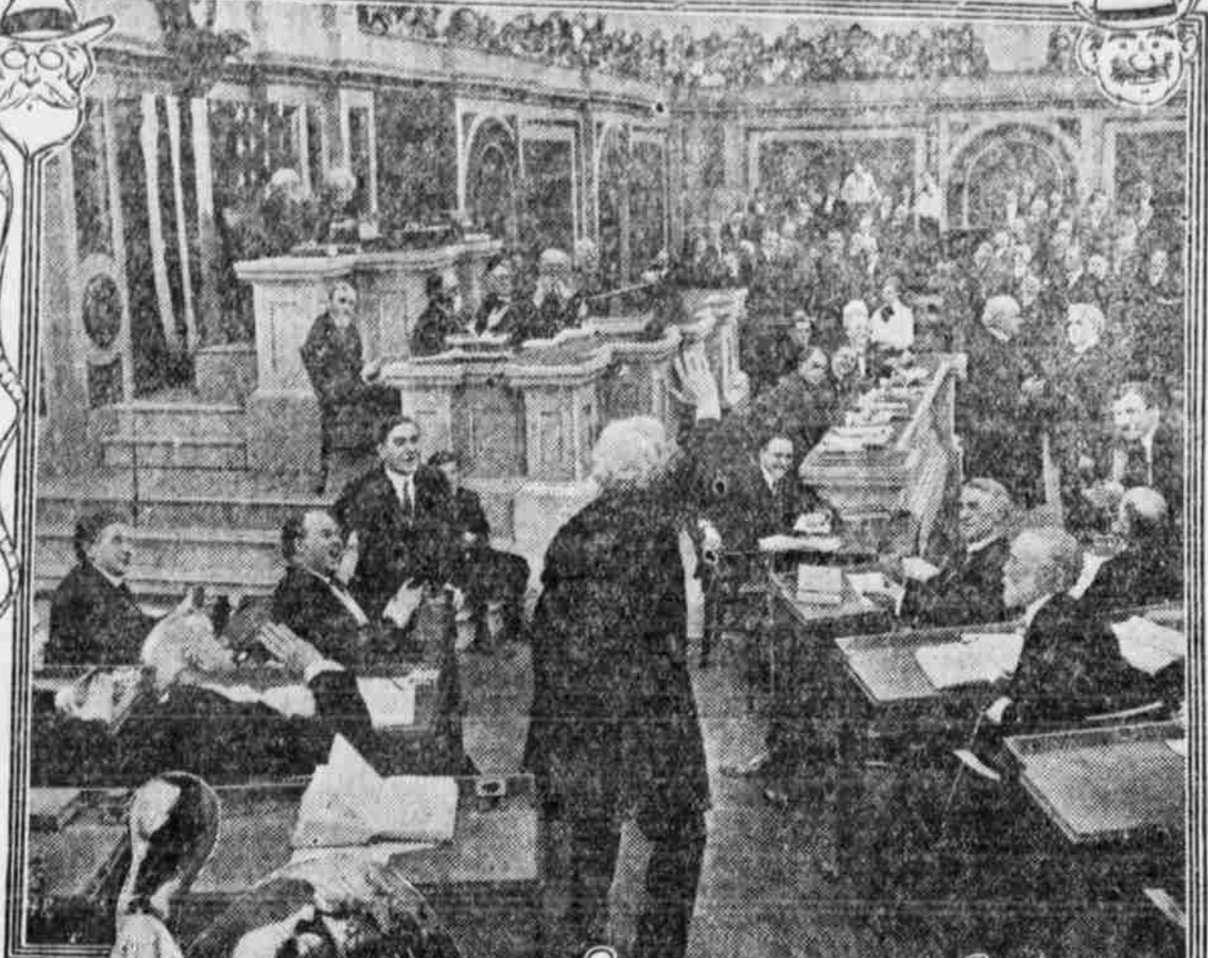
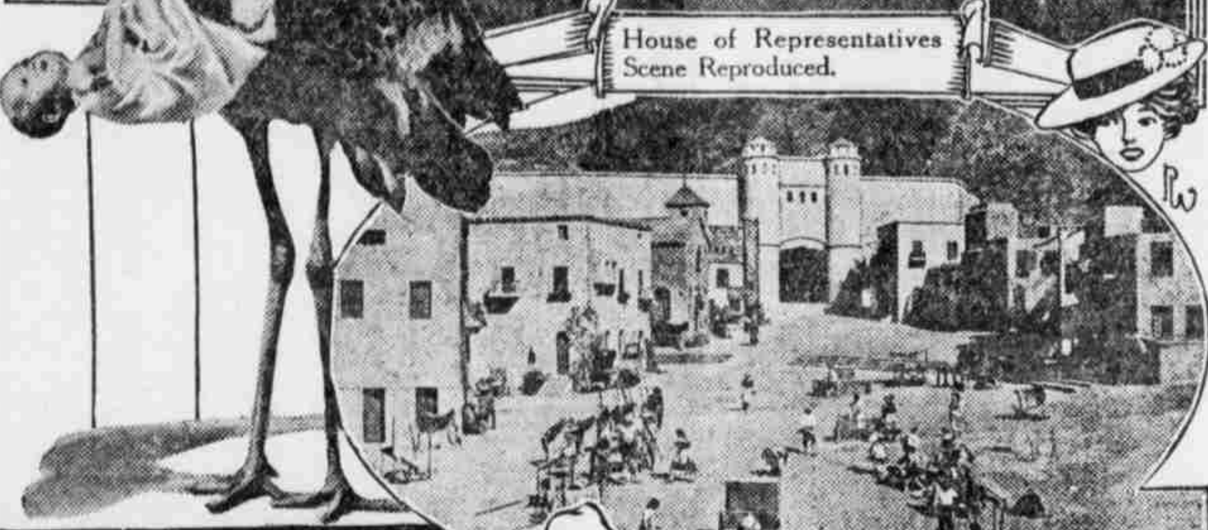
WHERE THEY MAKE THE MOVIES

MANY million dollars are invested in motion picture studios in southern California. Climate and scenery there ideal for "producing" the filmed drama.



House of Representatives Scene Reproduced.



Street Scene of Naples, Italy, During the Middle Ages Reproduced.

Scotch Village Street Scene Reproduced.

By J. C. LESSEN.

THE first motion picture maker went to Los Angeles, Cal., to secure scenic or travelogue subjects, having learned from railroad folders of the beautiful scenery there. That was not more than eight years ago. The scenic photographer secured the views desired and left, never once suspecting that the greater part of the industry would later find California the best place to make pictures. About seven years ago another director discovered that government weather reports showed that full three hundred days of each year the sun shone brightly, and this man, Frank Boggs, induced his employers, the Selig company, with producing plant then located in Chicago, to send a company to Los Angeles to open a studio. All effects of the company were packed in a small trunk. The first studio opened by the organization was on the roof of a downtown building. The first picture cost less than three hundred dollars and consisted of less than a thousand feet. Since that day the greatest motion picture the world has ever seen, costing more than a quarter million, was made but a short distance from the location of the first studio—but that is getting ahead of my story.

Cutting cost in production was so pleasing to this one manufacturer that he could not keep the secret of his success. The word reached his competitors, and they investigated statistics compiled by the government, and a few months later sent companies West.

"Go West," became the slogan of makers of "canned amusement," and one after another established plants in or near Los Angeles.

Besides the advantageous climatic conditions there are other reasons for film producers going to California. Within a radius of fifty miles of Los Angeles practically any kind of a scene desired may be "shot."

It was not until during the last year or eighteen months that manufacturers came to realize fully that the producing end of the industry should be located in California, and now that some fully appreciate the economy of such a move they are building expensive permanent plants.

Before decisions for this move were reached, however, every excuse was offered for continuing in the East, and attempts made to prove the correctness of each one of them; for a big expense is added when the selling department of a concern is located in New York city, three thousand miles from the manufacturing plant.

New York city has always been, and, no doubt, will for years remain, the theatrical center of this continent. There it is that all big theatrical producing organizations have their headquarters, and as the motion picture has to a very great extent taken the place of legitimate stage drama, comedy and musical shows, and is conducted largely by former theatrical men, its headquarters should, the managers think, continue in this eastern metropolis.

With the offices and selling force at one side of the continent and the manufacturing at the other additional expense is caused by the need of each keeping in touch with the other. Practically all of the communications go by wire, and the telegraphic expense of some companies exceeds a thousand dollars per month. In one or two instances wires across the continent are leased from the telegraph companies and operators maintained at the New York office and the studio, in the same manner as newspapers lease wires for news received. This has materially lessened the expense and at the same time added speed and efficiency to the service of the companies.

As the manufacturers come to realize the economical need of continuing permanently the making of motion pictures in California, they have gradually improved their properties there.

The first Universal producing company arrived in Los Angeles Thanksgiving, 1911, and the manager, director, scenario writer, scenic artist, property man, laboratory superintendent, and Actor Al. E. Christie, with his band of thirty, leased a barn. To save the cost of buying muslin to use as cloths, that there would be no shadows in the pictures and all faces and images be plain, he caused the stage—which consisted of a mere flat platform—to be built in the north side of the barn where the players could work all day in the shade without the sun spoiling a single scene.

From this very humble beginning has grown the only municipality in the world devoted exclusively to the manufacture of motion pictures—Universal City, four miles north of Los Angeles. This mammoth plant consists of almost four hundred acres, contains a river, valleys, hills and picturesque nooks suitable for filming scenes. The grounds are divided into two sections, because of foot hills extending through the center, with flat valleys on either side. In front are the administration buildings, a cafe with a capacity of serving one thousand people an hour; barber, manicuring, hair dressing and photography shops; the laboratories, where all film is developed and a positive print made; a wardrobe department, where clothing for an army can be had at a minute's notice, no matter what nation the army is to represent. Here, too, will be found the dressing rooms of the five hundred players, the carpenter shop, scene painting studios and five mammoth stages with a floor space equivalent to four acres. All buildings are of concrete and steel. Beyond the foothills are other stages and the zoo, which contains approximately two hundred wild animals trained to work in pictures. Across the road from this is an honest-to-goodness wild-west horse and cattle corral and bunkhouses for the cowboys. The big grounds are dotted at all times with settings built for this or that production. On one side will be seen a coal mine, while a few feet away is a reproduction from photographs of a street scene in Cairo, Egypt, or the Bowery of New York—possibly a typical Scotch scene, or the native huts of African savages. One of these sets, fifty to five hundred feet long is frequently erected at a cost of several thousand dollars and torn down after the making of from one to three hundred feet of film that will require one to five minutes to show at the theater. It is very seldom that the same setting is used in more than one production.

The world's greatest privately owned collection of wild animals is said to be that at the zoo of the Selig company, located near a public park on historic Mission road, leading into Los Angeles from the famous San Gabriel missions.

This big show place, built at an expense of more than two hundred thousand dollars, contains thirty-eight acres—thirty of which are taken up in animal houses and pens and beautiful lawns and groves. In all there are seven hundred or more specimens, including fifty lions, a herd of elephants, droves of ostriches, scores of monkeys, and many rare animals, together with birds and reptiles from every part of the world. All are maintained for exclusive use in motion pictures, and that they may have homelike settings to "work" in, duplicates of their native haunts have been built on the grounds, each one strongly inclosed to prevent escape, injuries or fatalities to employees. Within the Selig zoo were made all scenes for the fifteen episodes of the first serial motion picture, "The Adventures of Kathlyn," which had an East India locale, together with scores of other great animal pictures. Here also was built and filmed the Alaskan village for 'The Spoilers," adapted from the story by Rex Beach, one of the two most profitable pictures made.

More than a quarter of a million dollars is being spent in the building of a mammoth studio at Culver City, a suburb of Los Angeles, by the New York Motion Picture corporation. Since 1910 this company has leased a tract of ground consisting of 18,000 acres thirty miles southwest of Los Angeles where cattle raising has been conducted in connection with the making of motion pictures. The reason for leasing this great tract was that the company originally intended making only western dramas. Later other kinds of stories were filmed, and recently the producing manager or director, Thomas H. Ince, became one of the three points of the Triangle Film corporation, which inaugurated in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, motion picture theater programs, where two dollars was charged for the best seats. The new plant will consist of twenty or more concrete and steel fireproof buildings, including nine separate inclosed with ground glass stages—one for each producing organization.

The players will have every comfort, including individual dressing rooms, with steam heat, electric fans, and hot and cold water, etc. Factories in connection with the plant will manufacture all sets, furniture and wardrobe needed. The ranch studio will be maintained, and there two big organizations making western drama will be maintained.

Every hamlet in the country has been invaded by Keystone comedies made in Los Angeles. Four years ago the nucleus of this company, consisting of Mack Sennett, Mabel Normand and Fred Mace, arrived there and rented a vacant lot. Now the Keystone studio occupies two city blocks, practically half of which space is covered with stages, where fun making reigns supreme. Padded bricks, billies and trick props of every nature, from a toy warship to an aeroplane, are on hand at every turn, and here are to be found the greatest collection of comedians the world has even known—Weber and Fields, Sam Bernard, Eddie Foy, Raymond Hitchcock, Roscoe Arbuckle, Chester Conklin, Charlie Murray of Murray and Mack fame, and scores of others who have graced the comedy and vaudeville stage or the sawdust ring, as headliners. Fun making is here a serious proposition and the hundred odd players, writers and directors treat it as such—even the famous Keystone cops.

The producing quarters of the maker of the most profitable motion picture ever filmed, "The Birth of a Nation," adapted by David Mark Griffith from the book, "The Clansman," consists of two city blocks at present—one taken up with executive office buildings, stages and dressing rooms, laboratories, and factories, and the other block retained as a site for settings. Mr. Griffith came to Los Angeles in January, 1914, and leased a lot containing a bungalow. Back of this he built a stage and began work. Additions to the producing staff were made so frequently that no time could be given for future planning. As the result scores of buildings were erected as needed for workshops, developing and printing, laboratories, dressing rooms, etc., so that the studio now has a hit-or-miss appearance, where about five hundred people are employed, fully two hundred being actors, actresses and writers.

In February, 1914, a livery stable in Hollywood, which had later been used for a garage, was leased by two men well known in the theatrical producing world, and they began making a motion picture along new lines. That their method was successful is proved by the fact that five times since they have found it necessary to lease additional grounds, and their plant now covers a block 350 by 700 feet, and the studio is crowded. The men were Jesse L. Lasky, previously a vaudeville producer, and Cecil B. de Mille, legitimate stage producer and playwright. Their company became the Jesse L. Lasky Picture Play company, and they, during the last year, introduced America's greatest opera star, Geraldine Farrar, on the motion picture screen. Miss Farrar worked at the studio twelve weeks in the making of three five-reel subjects at a salary of more than a dollar a minute.

In a brief manner the foregoing describes the producing plants of the largest makers of motion pictures. There are many other studios in Los Angeles, with from one to four companies working at each. It would be impossible to go from the center of the business district to the city limits in any direction without coming upon one or more motion picture plants.

OUT-OF-ORDINARY PEOPLE

INVENTOR OF THE FOKKER

Mijnheer Fokker, the inventor of the monoplane that bears his name and that for several months has been greatly disturbing the adversaries of Germany by its speed and destructive powers, is a native of Holland, and is said to be not more than twenty-three or twenty-four years old. He has spent the greater part of his life in Germany, but would appear to be thoroughly familiar with the French flying machines. A number of the devices on the Fokker are claimed by the French to be outright copies of their own.

About five years ago Fokker made his appearance in the German flying corps, and his first monoplane was received with such small enthusiasm there that the invention was offered to the British government. Some English experts examined it, recommended it as being uncapsizable, but so badly constructed that it made the flyer's life anything but secure. They, therefore, declined to recommend its purchase by Britain.

Nothing more was heard of Fokker, except in a general way, until his formidable new monoplane entered the field last December and speedily captured, for the time being, the honors of war.

The chief value of the Fokker is its speed, this being over one hundred miles an hour and to exceed by twenty-five or thirty miles an hour anything which the British or the French monoplanes can accomplish, and Fokker himself seems to be responsible for this unique feature of his machine. The gun is stationary. The flyer has only to steer the monoplane.

WRISLEY BROWN'S PLIGHT

Among the bright young lawyers attached to the department of justice at Washington is Wrisley Brown. Not long ago he was sent to a town in the middle West to investigate quietly the condition of a bank there. In order not to arouse any suspicions he used an assumed name in registering at the hotel.

All day long he busied himself about the town and went to his hotel at night tired and footsore.

"Let's see, what's your room number?" asked the proprietor, when Wrisley went to the desk for his key.

"I forget," said Wrisley.

"What's your name, then? I'll look it up."

For the life of him, Wrisley couldn't remember what name he had used when he registered that morning, and the register had been put away.

"I forget—er, that is—" began the usually self-possessed Wrisley.

"What, you don't know your name?" shrieked the hotel proprietor. And he looked scared half to death. Nor would any amount of explanation go down.

"I'd be afraid to have such a fellow in the house," said he.

And as there was no other hotel in town, Wrisley Brown was obliged to tramp the streets all night like an outcast.

WHY UNDERWOOD DECLINED

Senator Underwood, who for many years was a member and chairman of the house committee on ways and means, and who is the author of the present tariff law, declined a position on the finance committee of the senate, the tariff-making body of the upper branch. Asked why he refused the proffered appointment, Mr. Underwood told this story of an old Alabama shoemaker:

"This old chap used to sit all day pegging shoes. Once a month he bought a ticket in the Louisiana state lottery. Finally his persistence was rewarded, and he was notified that he had won the $25,000 prize. He closed his shop, bought an outfit of new clothes and went up to New York, as he had always dreamed of doing.

"Two years he spent in the metropolis, doing all the things he had wanted to do for many years. But the pace was too fast. He went back to Birmingham with the little money he had left and reopened his shoemaker's shop. As before, he began buying tickets in the lottery. Just as he was becoming contented with his life as a cobbler, and beginning to enjoy his meals once more, an official of the lottery company came to the shop and told him he had won the $25,000 prize for the second time.

"The old man looked at the lottery agent blankly, and then exclaimed: "'My God, have I got to go through with all that again?'"

"COUSIN BOB" BROUSSARD'S HOLD

Down in his state of Louisiana Robert F. Broussard, United States senator, is generally addressed as "Cousin Bob," and, indeed, he seems to be related to most of the people in his district, if not most of those in the state. He speaks Louisiana French, which is a language entirely distinct from young-ladies'-finishing-school French, or learn-to-speak-French-for-eighteen-dollars French. Speaking their language as he does, "Cousin Bob" has a strong hold on the people of this section of the state, and their main religion is to vote for Bob Broussard without question and without stint whenever he runs for anything.

When Broussard was running for the United States senate, Representative James B. Aswell was seeking election to the lower house of congress. Aswell was talking to a man in the section where Broussard is best known, and asked him for his vote.

"No, I'm going to vote for Bob—Bob Broussard," said the man.

"That's all right. You can vote for Bob and for me, too," Aswell explained. "We're not running for the same thing."

The man shook his head. "No," says he, "I'll vote for Bob. Then if you're entitled to have an office, Bob can appoint you to it."