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Article Summary: Nebraska produced some early educational films for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Filmed sequences showing the state's farmers harvesting crops and its cowboys riding bucking broncos played to large and enthusiastic crowds.

Cataloging Information:

Names: T W "Billy" Bitzer, John H Mickey, Gurdon W Wattles, H G Shedd, E H Barbour, Geronimo, Thomas A Edison

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Photographs / Images: theater where Thomas Edison's moving pictures of Spanish-American War events were shown at Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898, University of Nebraska geologist and paleontologist E H Barbour, Nebraska exhibit in the agricultural building at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Barbour's sketches for "electric lanterns" and a "dark room for moving pictures" for the Nebraska film exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition

Nebraska's Home Movies

The Nebraska Exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair

By Andrea I. Paul

Although the motion picture came of age during World War I—*The Birth of a Nation* premiered in 1915—it originated some twenty years earlier when Thomas A. Edison unveiled his kinetoscope to fascinated audiences in 1893. After receiving popular acclaim for his peep show features of a couple kissing, an exotic dancer gyrating, and animal acts running through their paces, Edison constructed a motion picture studio at his West Orange, New Jersey, headquarters. Here more moving pictures were produced, grist for a new kind of mill—the movie theater.

The phenomenon spread like wildfire. Almost immediately people all over the country had access to entertaining scenes and current events via motion pictures, although in many cases reenactments were used to simulate newsworthy items.

As early as 1897 moving pictures appeared in Nebraska's small towns. The *Tecumseh Chieftain* described the "greatest amusement event of the season," which was to be featured at the local opera house: Edison's Wonderful Cineograph and Jolly Della Pringle.¹ Among the true-to-life moving images to be presented to the Tecumseh audience were waves breaking on the seashore, cavalry troops making a charge, a train moving at full speed, a boxing match, firemen putting out a fire, dancers, and the firing of a gatling gun. Anything with action was fair game for the motion picture camera. Just a year later a highlight

of Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition was the presentation of motion pictures showing the activities of American soldiers during the Spanish-American War, the most newsworthy event of the day.

While Nebraska provided a ready audience for such fare, it was at the Omaha exposition that the motion picture camera first photographed Ne-

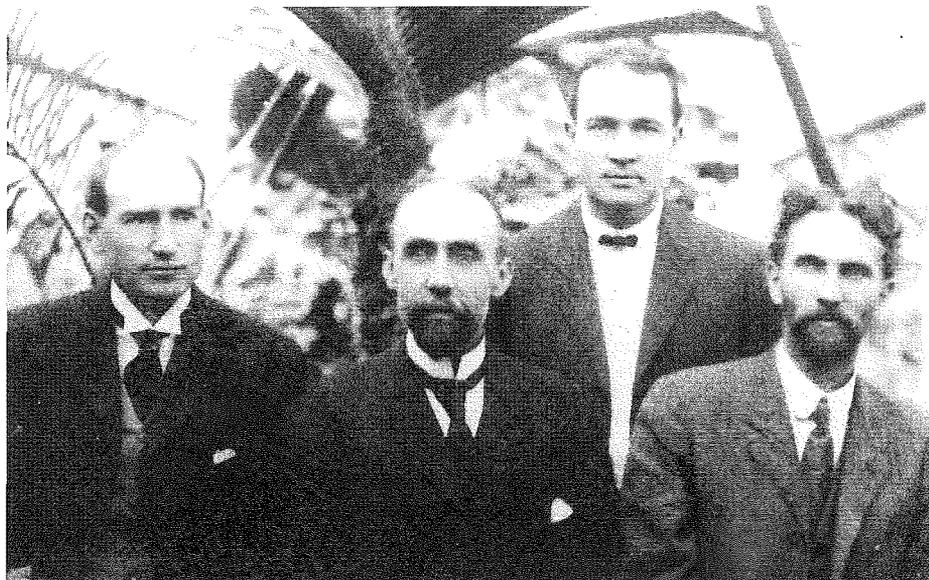
braska scenes. A now lost film captured President William McKinley's visit to the exposition in October 1898. The earliest-known motion picture footage of Nebraska that survives was taken by G. W. "Billy" Bitzer, who would become famous as D. W. Griffith's cameraman. On November 28, 1900, Bitzer maneuvered a camera attached to the front of a



Thomas Edison's moving pictures of recent Spanish-American War events were a popular attraction at Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898. (NSHS-T772-8)

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University of Nebraska geologist and paleontologist E. H. Barbour (second from left) helped develop an outline, movie projector, and theater for the Nebraska films.
(NSHS-U58-2071)

Union Pacific railroad car as the train left Council Bluffs, crossed a bridge over the Missouri River, and arrived at Omaha's Union Station. The finished product consisted of forty feet of film that could be viewed in fifteen seconds. In July 1901 Bitzer filmed cattle passing before the camera at the T. B. Hord Ranch in Central City and a passenger train arriving in Grand Island. These two films were even shorter than the first.²

Given these modest beginnings, it is somewhat surprising that the state of Nebraska entered the film production business in a big way in 1903. This step was undertaken by the Nebraska State Commission to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, created by House Roll No. 231 and appointed by Governor John H. Mickey. The guiding force behind the commission was its chairman, Gurdon W. Wattles of Omaha. Having earlier served as president of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, Wattles's executive ability and experience (he was also vice president at Omaha's Union National Bank) prepared him to administer a statewide project. He was ably assisted by the commission's secretary, H. G. Shedd, who had been the private sec-

retary to the chancellor at the University of Nebraska and chief clerk of the university's administrative office. Dr. E. H. Barbour, professor of paleontology at the university, served as the superintendent of the educational and mineral exhibit, but his foresight was the keystone upon which Nebraska's unique effort to promote the state through motion pictures was grounded.

Although the idea for advertising Nebraska through film probably originated with Wattles, Barbour proposed a fully developed outline in a fascinating letter dated July 22, 1903 (see sidebar). Barbour felt a series of films highlighting agricultural scenes such as harvesting wheat, corn, and fruit, sugar beet processing, and cattle and cowboys in action would "make one of the finest advertisements of the agricultural possibilities of Nebraska that can be offered." Nebraska's largest city would also be promoted: "A Journey Through the Broadway of Omaha" would be captured on film by attaching a camera to a streetcar during the busiest time of the day.³

Barbour's letter also included a hand-drawn illustration of the projector

he recommended for the public exhibition of the films. Leaving nothing to chance, Barbour's plan included a sketch of the theater to be constructed on the St. Louis fairgrounds.

None of the nine Nebraska films created for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition survives, but it can be assumed that Barbour's plan served as the script for the production. The legislature appropriated \$35,000 for the Nebraska exhibit to be supplemented by private subscriptions, the bulk coming from the three major railroads with lines traversing the state, the Union Pacific, the Burlington, and the Chicago and North Western. Still, with less than \$100,000 in its treasury, the Nebraska Commission had to be practical in its approach in contrast to many other states with budgets approaching \$500,000. Initially, the commission had planned to construct an independent Nebraska state building on the fairgrounds. When it was estimated that the building's cost would reach \$15,000, the commissioners opted to save money by acquiring more space in the exposition's main agricultural building. Along with separate exhibits in the fisheries, forestries, horticulture, and education buildings, Nebraska was awarded 5,600 square feet in the agricultural building. Ironically, Nebraska was the only state of those carved out of the Louisiana Purchase that did not have its own building.

During the summer of 1903 and the spring of 1904, a camera operator from the Selig Polyscope Company of Chicago viewed Nebraska through a camera lens, "shooting" 10,000 feet of motion pictures.⁴ Under the direct supervision of Secretary Shedd, every phase of Nebraska's agricultural and industrial life was documented. Special features included a panorama made from a train as it traveled through 150 miles of the state's best farm land, as well as scenes of the University of Nebraska campus, the state fair, Ak-Sar-Ben activities, and downtown Omaha.

Almost as soon as the Nebraska theater opened at the exposition, it was

E. H. Barbour's Outline

Professor E. H. Barbour's July 22, 1903, letter to Gurdon W. Wattles included an outline that provided explicit filming instructions to the cameraman. By underlining key terms and guidelines, Barbour emphasized the visual effect he hoped to achieve, while dealing with the practical issues of length (each scene was to run about three minutes) and the piecing together of the various scenes, or "ribbons," into a coherent whole. The following is one example of Barbour's vision. Other scenes he scripted were corn harvesting, cattle and cowboys in action, and a journey through Omaha.

Suggestions, Moving Pictures—agricultural scenes

Harvest Small grain, wheat barley oats etc. etc.

View of large field, preferably a fine loess table, with interesting foreground and first class background, rather distant to give the idea of distance . . . several teams and plows to be in action approaching the camera, where they will turn corner and pass one at a time out of sight. Select well groomed teams and first class tools, and husky

looking farmers. Perhaps a common plow might go ahead with good effect followed directly by two (or more if possible) riding plows, these to be followed in quick succession by harrows, disks, drills etc. This could, by proper prearrangement, be done in three minutes, which is about the length of one film.

The next scene should be a series of self binder[s] with men shocking the grain, followed immediately by several loaded teams driving to a stack and stacking grain with and [sic] extra active force of men. This would occupy about a three minute ribbon. Then take in a like manner, with equally well studied surroundings a good active threshing scene. By all means let the operator take the field with teams, stacks of grain, loaded wagons, and so forth all in action with the traction engine and train approaching the camera where it can make a turn and locate for business. This will take another three minutes. Start with a new ribbon and take the threshing in all its activity. . . .

I should recommend next an elevator scene with numerous farmers driving up to deliver grain, with trains pulling out etc. etc. This will take another ribbon. Remember all of these ribbons no matter how separated in time can all be cemented together so as to make one continuous story from start to finish.

pronounced an overwhelming success. The commission had planned to show the series of films twice daily. As the presentations drew larger and larger crowds, showings were scheduled hourly and then every half hour. By the end of May, the *Omaha Bee's* St. Louis correspondent reported that the films were "running continuously and the little theater, with its easy chairs and electric fans, is constantly filled."⁵ On June 1 Wattles provided Governor Mickey with a synopsis of Nebraska's unique exhibit and the favorable response it had received:

To illustrate the daily life of the principal business enterprises of the state, moving pictures of all the leading features of farming, stock raising, dairying, fruit culture and other features have been taken and are being taken throughout the state. These moving pictures are thrown on the canvas in a small theater, which is a part of the exhibit in the Palace of Agriculture. This feature of our exhibit has perhaps already attracted more attention than any other special exhibit in any of the buildings. The newspapers of St. Louis and of our own state have favorably commented on this entertainment part of our exhibit. The Exposition management has recognized the merit of this exhibit by advertis-

ing the Nebraska biographic pictures as one of the features of the Exposition.⁶

The theater initially had a seating capacity of 100, with standing room for 100 more. In the fall, the 98-by-52-foot space was increased to accommodate the overflow crowds by removing an inner wall of the lobby at the theater's entrance and by eliminating two small side wall closets. Forty seats were added and the standing room area was increased so that the theater could hold comfortably an audience of more than 240 persons.⁷

The commission hired lecturers to provide narration for the silent films. The narration told the story of Nebraska's development and described the state's resources. The six lecturers were young university professors or advanced university students, each hired for one or two months.⁸ The lecturers also distributed a variety of advertising material about the state, trumpeting Nebraska's status as a leader in agricultural production. Attendance at the Nebraska film theater averaged 2,000 persons per day. The peak was reached in October 1904 when 323 shows were pro-

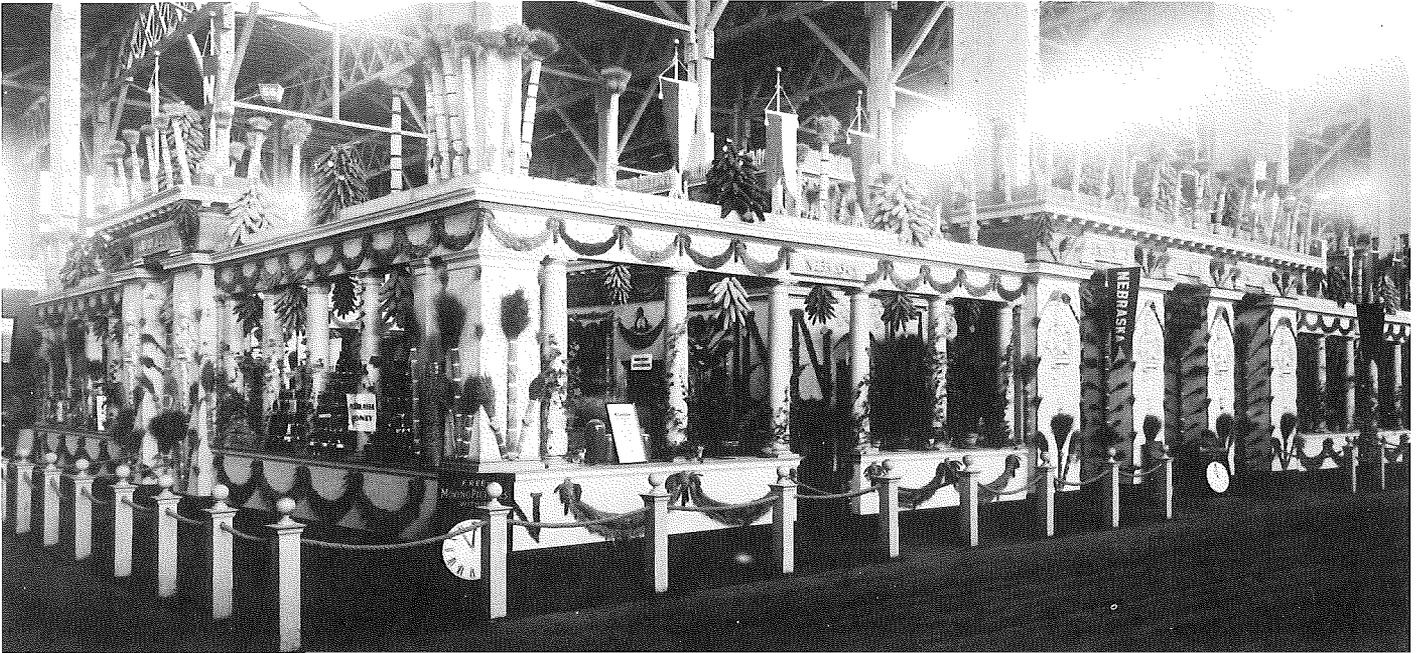
vided and attendance totalled 73,615.

Because a variety of films were shown, a fairgoer could see something different each time he visited the free exhibition. Among the most popular features were films showing a contest of cowboys riding bucking broncos and President McKinley at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, and films displaying the riches provided by Nebraska's fertile land.⁹ University of Nebraska botany professor Charles E. Bessey was enthusiastic about the presentation's overall impression when he reported to *Nebraska Farmer* readers,

I cannot say too much for the little theater and the moving pictures of Nebraska farm scenes. The room was packed with a most appreciative audience. Here they saw herds of fat hogs, flocks of fine sheep, herds of cattle and horses, and many characteristic farm scenes, all taken from actual life. It was a most pleasing series of pictures, and all who saw them felt that indeed this is a good state, flowing with milk and honey. At the close of the exhibit I heard a many [man] say that his "only criticism was that it wasn't long enough."¹⁰

Besides the regular public showings, at least two special exhibitions were ar-

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The Nebraska exhibit in the agricultural building at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The theater entrance is at right; signs with clocks announce the time of the next film showing. Missouri Historical Society

ranged.¹¹ The *Omaha Bee* reported that twenty Igorrotes, members of a primitive headhunting tribe from the Philippines who were on exhibit at the fair, attended a presentation clad in their native costumes with spears and loin-cloths.¹² The *Bee* also noted that the Apache chief Geronimo, a frequent visitor to the Nebraska movies, once brought a group of 150 Indian children from the government exhibit to a special film showing. The newspaper commented on Geronimo's taste by describing his movie-going habits: "He comes in quietly, takes a seat at the rear of the theater and watches the pictures with the greatest interest. While the old chief enjoys those pictures illustrating general farm life, the scenes showing cattle and especially those depicting the life on the range such as the roundup, branding and riding pitching broncos, are more to his liking."¹³

Testimonials to the films' success came from a variety of people. Nebraska Supreme Court Commissioner Charles B. Letton opined that the mov-

ing pictures "did more to show the people of other states the actual conditions and surroundings of farming in Nebraska than anything else that could have been devised."¹⁴ A correspondent to the *Omaha World-Herald* commented, "The moving pictures are wonderfully popular and effective. They mean more than the spoken or written word. They show the eye what Nebraska can do and is doing."¹⁵ F. B. Gould, president of Whitcomb College in Tacoma, Washington, congratulated the commission on its choice of exhibition technique:

The use of the biograph in exemplifying typical farm scenes in Nebraska is as unique as it is effective . . . where there is so much to see only the unusual and spectacular attract. The Nebraska Commissioners understood the disposition of an exposition crowd. Having a valuable exhibit, the Commissioners know how to arrest attention and to impart lasting impressions.¹⁶

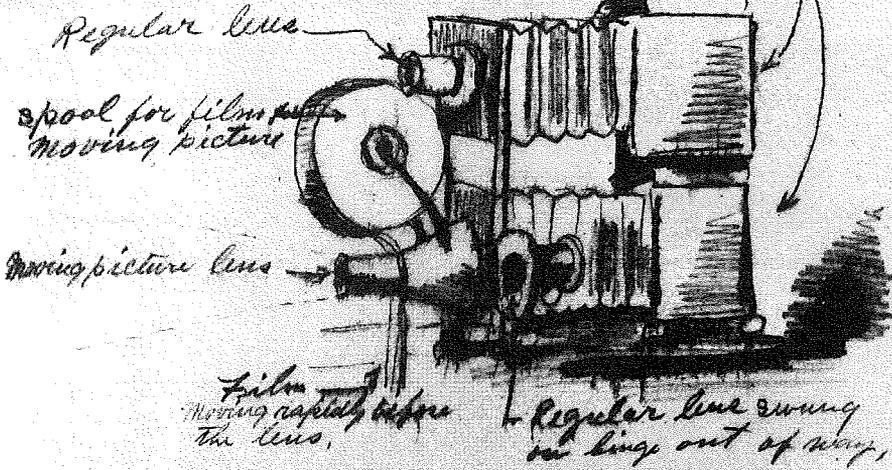
If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the Nebraska Commission should have been greatly flattered. Soon

after the Nebraska moving pictures proved successful, Westinghouse and the National Cash Register Company equipped theaters in the Machinery Hall and in the Varied Industry Building, respectively. Each company exhibited films that portrayed manufacturing activities within their plants. Only Nebraska's production, however, had the honor of being advertised in the daily program as a featured exposition attraction. In addition, Nebraska was awarded one of the fair's ten grand prizes for "its moving picture exhibition of Nebraska resources and industries."¹⁷

Not the least of the Nebraska Commission's rewards was a surplus of \$15,000 from the legislative appropriation after all expenses had been paid. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that the Nebraska Commission was congratulating itself for choosing a moving picture show instead of a state building, because spokesman Shedd believed that the films "advertised the state as no building would have done."¹⁸ Realizing the value of the films could outlast their

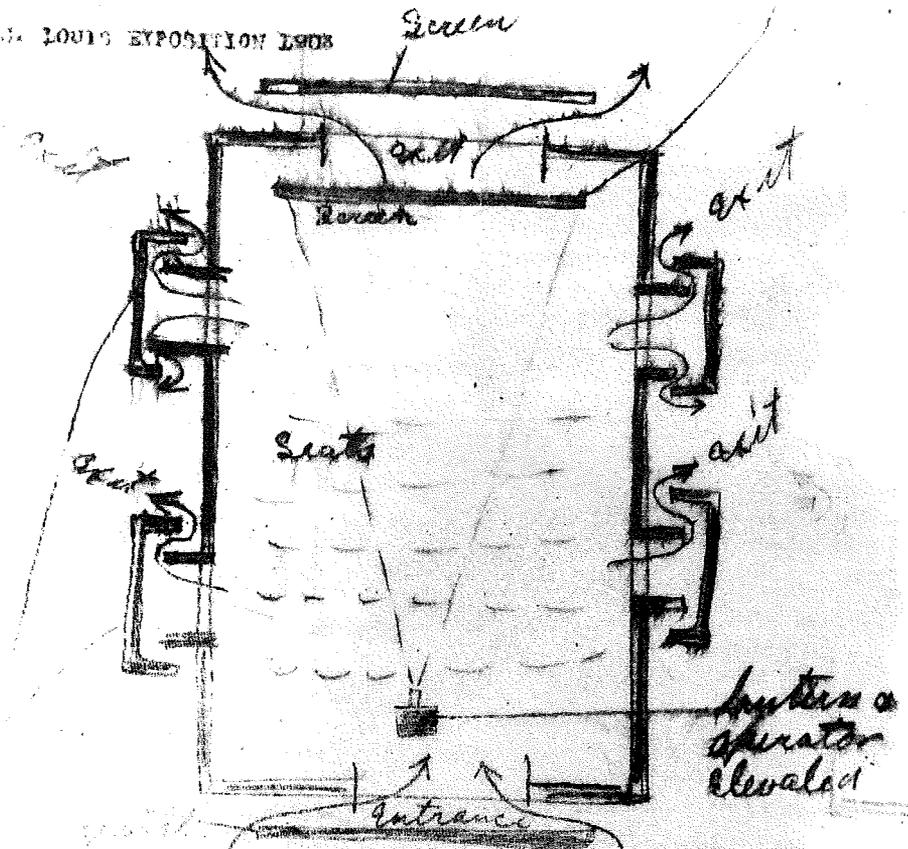
MOVING PICTURES — AGRICULTURAL SCENES

Submerged
electric
lanterns



FOR DARK ROOM
FOR MOVING PICTURES
ST. LOUIS EXPOSITION 1903

Screen & Curtains



Barbour's outline included his sketches for "electric lanterns" and a "dark room for moving pictures" for the Nebraska film exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. E. H. Barbour Collection, University of Nebraska State Museum

St. Louis engagement, the commission expected that the films would be re-used, either at the Nebraska State Fair or at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon.

By mid-December 1904 plans were announced to turn over the films to the state commissioner of public lands and buildings for safekeeping. The commissioner was hopeful that the films could be presented again at one of the two sites mentioned above, if appropriations were forthcoming.¹⁹ The legislature responded by adding a \$12,000 appropriation to the \$15,000 residue, creating a treasury of \$27,000 for installation and maintenance of a Nebraska exhibit in Portland. Because the initial expense of filming and purchasing a projector, chair, and lantern slides would not have to be repeated, it was anticipated that \$27,000 would cover all costs associated with reprising the film presentations, as well as setting up an exhibit of agricultural products in the agricultural palace.

Again, the investment proved worthwhile as the Portland press reported the Nebraska films were drawing hundreds of people daily and "creating the same enthusiasm they produced in St. Louis last summer."²⁰ Unfortunately, the historical record is silent about the final disposition of the films at the conclusion of the Lewis and Clark Exposition. The official exposition catalogue, the awards book, the photograph files, and the correspondence of the exposition's director of exhibits provide no indication of the films' return to Nebraska or their transfer elsewhere.²¹ Although Oregon's official records of the exposition do not mention Nebraska's exhibit or the films, numerous Nebraska newspaper articles reveal that the films enjoyed a popular run during the fair.²²

Whether the Nebraska films were shown after 1905 remains a mystery. They have not been found to date, and their reappearance is unlikely. Motion pictures of that era were made on nitrate film, a medium that is unstable under the best of conditions, and dangerous when badly deteriorated. In all like-

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lihood, the motion pictures produced for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition turned to dust unnoticed as other movies caught the public's attention.

The impact of the Nebraska films outlasted their physical lifespan. The Nebraska Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission concluded, "This moving picture feature has established a new idea in the matter of advertising a state's resources" and had created a useful tool for advancing the "educational and scientific field."²³ Although Nebraska is not acknowledged as a pioneer in the use of educational film, recognition of the state's role by film historians is appropriate. Contemporaries who viewed the Nebraska films at the Louisiana Purchase or the Lewis and Clark Expositions understood their importance at the time. It is likely that the opinion of the New York Commission's executive officer to the Lewis and Clark Exposition was shared by many: "Nebraska can fairly be said to have been the pioneer in the moving picture idea and the importance and effectiveness of this method of displaying a state's resources is demonstrated in the number of states and commercial organizations who have followed Nebraska's lead in conducting a theater with moving picture exhibitions."²⁴

The unfortunate disappearance of the exposition films has obscured Nebraska's unique contribution. Nevertheless, contemporary accounts of the films' appearances and the acclaim they received enables Nebraska to assert its

claim as a pioneer in educational and advertising filmmaking and as a leader in recognizing film's potential to impart knowledge.

Notes

¹ *Tecumseh Chieftain*, May 22, 1897, 4. Apparently the "Jolly Della Pringle" was some sort of recording device, because the presentation also featured sound effects that corresponded to what was being shown on the screen. Modern audiences may be surprised that attempts to synchronize sound to film date from the earliest days of motion picture production.

² Paper prints of the three films are at the Library of Congress. Videocassette copies are available for viewing at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

³ E. H. Barbour to Gurdon W. Wattles, July 22, 1903, E. H. Barbour Papers, University of Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln.

⁴ *Report of the Nebraska State Commission to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis, Missouri, 1905* (hereafter cited as Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission). This report and the report of the Nebraska State Commission to the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition cited below are in the Nebraska State Historical Society library.

⁵ *Omaha Bee*, May 29, 1904. Then, as today, chairs and fans probably were an additional attraction for weary fairgoers.

⁶ Gurdon W. Wattles to Gov. John H. Mickey, June 1, 1904, John H. Mickey Papers, RG1, SG21, S1, F3, NSHS.

⁷ *Omaha Bee*, Oct. 2, 1904.

⁸ The report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission names the lecturers as A. S. Reasoner of Shelton; Frank L. Rain of Fairbury; and E. H. Clark, George C. Shedd, W. C. Mercer, and Buell Chessington of Lincoln. Each was paid approximately \$.75 per month.

⁹ The McKinley film was loaned by photographer Frank A. Rinehart of Omaha. *Report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission*, 13.

¹⁰ *Nebraska Farmer*, Oct. 27, 1904.

¹¹ Although President Theodore Roosevelt visited the agricultural building on Nov. 26, 1904, "President's Day" at the fair, newspaper accounts do not indicate whether a special showing was made for him.

¹² *Omaha Bee* clipping, undated, in Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission scrapbook, RG54, NSHS.

¹³ *Omaha Bee*, Aug. 1, 1904.

¹⁴ *Report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission*, 88.

¹⁵ W. A. Paxton to the *Omaha World-Herald*, July 15, 1904.

¹⁶ *Report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission*, 96-97.

¹⁷ F. B. Griffin, the film projectionist, was awarded a special gold medal for his services. *Report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission*, 63.

¹⁸ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 13, 1904.

¹⁹ *Omaha Bee*, Dec. 12, 1904.

²⁰ *Portland Oregonian*, June 18, 1905.

²¹ Margaret N. Haines, Oregon Historical Society, to author, Oct. 17, 1985.

²² Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition Scrapbook, RG40, NSHS. This volume contains articles from several Nebraska newspapers, such as the *Fremont Herald*, July 26, 1905, and the *Schuyler Quill*, Aug. 6, 1905, which described the films and their acclaim by fairgoers.

²³ *Report of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission*, 17.

²⁴ *Report of the Nebraska State Commission to the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition at Portland, Oregon, 1905*, 68.

Preserving Nebraska's Film Heritage

By Paul Eisloeffel, Curator of Manuscripts and Audio-Visual Collections,
Nebraska State Historical Society

The moving image, now more than a century old, has changed the way we document our lives. In the beginning, creation of moving images was reserved to professionals using 35mm equipment. During the 1920s when the 16mm home movie format became available, the power of the moving image was placed in the hands of almost everyone and movies became a truly ubiquitous medium. In the theater and in the classroom, in the home and in the workplace, and finally through the vehicle of television, the moving image became one of the most common and most trusted means of capturing and communicating our experience. Nebraska has shared in this phenomenon.

Whether they were taken by amateurs or professionals, moving images are becoming more prized as historical documents, yet their fragility imperils their survival. Experts estimate that at least 50 percent of the film taken before 1950 no longer exists, and what does survive is in danger of decay. Even more recent film is at risk, for it is rarely housed in a repository that can adequately care for it.

Nebraska's film heritage dates almost from the beginning of the moving image. The earliest known Nebraska footage was made in 1900; from then on, filmmaking activity burgeoned. Local talent films, newsreels, home movies, government-sponsored films—all types were made here and many, especially from the earliest years, are lost or at least have not yet been discovered and preserved.



Countless early Nebraska films are lost, almost certainly forever, including one by W. W. Scott, shown here filming the aftermath of the 1913 Omaha tornado, and local motion pictures made in Hartington in 1916. (NSHS PCO350:31; *Hartington Herald*, August 4, 1916)

The Nebraska State Historical Society is committed to finding, collecting, preserving, and making available the moving image record of the state. The Society now houses about four hundred miles of motion picture and video footage dating from the turn of the century to the present. The collection reflects the full range of film genres: home movies and Hollywood features, newsreels and local news footage, television shows and documentaries, government public service films and commercial advertisements. All provide unique insight into Nebraska's past.

If you know of film footage that relates to Nebraska, or to learn more about Nebraska on film or the Society's collections, contact Manuscripts and Audio-Visual Curator Paul Eisloeffel at the Society's headquarters in Lincoln.

BIG CELEBRATION HARTINGTON, AUGUST 11 & 12

MOTION PICTURES

To be taken of Hartington for the first time in its history

Hartington to be placed before the public in Motion Pictures for better roads, better crops, better live stock, better homes, better markets and better business. Every Man, Woman and Child in Hartington and surrounding country are requested to be in Hartington and get in the picture.

PICTURES TO BE RUN LATER AT THE LYRIC

Business is the third greatest industry in the world. It is vast new industry springing up over night as it were, the business as a whole was inconsiderable, whereas, the business of the whole industry last year approximated a film makers last year are reported as having exported. This is enough film to reach around the world while there are more than 20,000 moving picture theaters using 16 reels per day.

Motion Picture Taken? An expert camera man will arrive Friday and Saturday, August 11 and 12, and will include public buildings, resident sections,

WE WANT YOU IN THE PICTURE

Business streets as everybody in Hartington on these days will have their names in moving pictures on the curtain at the Lyric Theater. Don't

Hartington are interested in this novel event and for further inducements respectively lines and invite all to make their places of business a visiting

- | | |
|---|--|
| DON BROOK, Great Northern Mills
EXCHANGE, Place for Gentlemen
HALL & ANDERSON, Clothing & Shoes
HARTINGTON HERALD, Omaha County and City Paper
IRRIGATOR UNION EXCHANGE, Farmers' Supplies
J. W. LUMBER CO., Building Material
J. W. HIRSCHMAN, General Merchandise
J. ANDERSON & SON, Stock Farm
J. LAMBERG, Coal and Lumber
J. OLSEN, Plumbing and Heating
J. COUNTY NEWS, J. P. O'Farrey
J. STEPHANSEN, Steam Laundry
J. NOTON COMMERCIAL CLUB | FIRST NATIONAL BANK
E. INGERSOLL, Dairy
G. W. COOPER, Blacksmith
J. G. BESTER, Drugs
J. W. HUPPENSTEIN, Bakery Market
F. B. STERLING, Groceries
S. B. KUNTSMAN, Electric Lights
JOHN HIRSCHMAN, Book Par.
JOHN DANSE & SON, Undertakers
W. C. FRYE, Hotel
W. A. BOWKER, Lyric Theater
C. E. CHURCHILL, Shorthorn Cattle
E. W. CHILDS, Shorthorn Cattle |
|---|--|

the Streets in Hartington On August 11 and 12

Ask the Camera Man to show you the workings of the Wonderful Machine that Takes the Pictures

Don't Forget The Date! Two Days Only, August 11 and 12, 1916

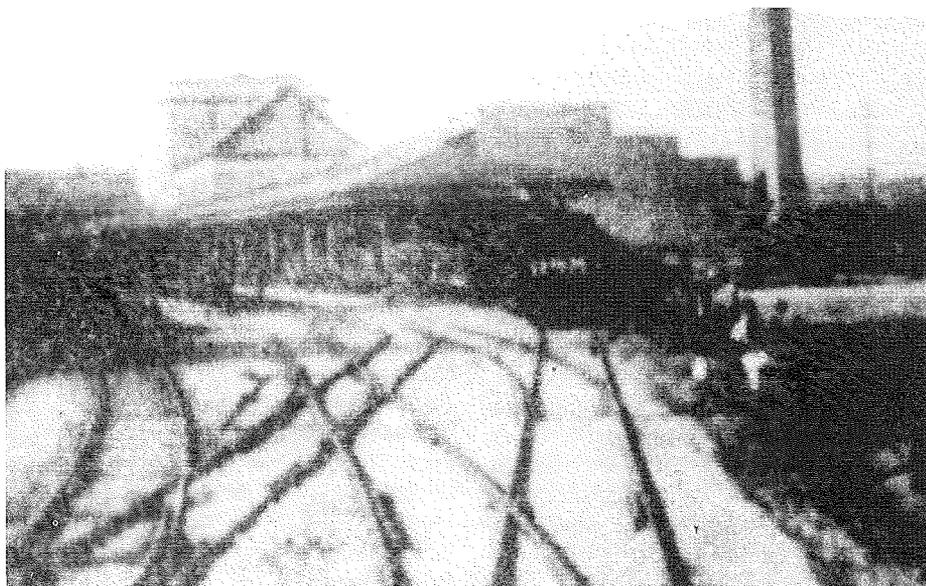
ALSO BIG BALL GAME FRIDAY, AUGUST 11

THE
THRILLING
 LIVES OF
Wild Bill
 AND
CALAMITY JANE



7 - Reels - 7
MOTION PICTURES

Produced by the Black Hills Feature Film Company, of Chadron, Nebraska. The Entire Picture Staged in the Black Hills. Finest Scenery in America. Don't Miss it and Bring Your Friends.



Clockwise, upper left:

In the Days of '75 and '76 is a unique, feature-length Western made by the people of Chadron, Nebraska, in 1915. It tells of the exploits of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane. Though the film enjoyed only a limited release in theaters, it survives as a testament to early filmmaking in Nebraska. (NSHS PC0725)

This scene is from a 1926 Universal film titled *Kearney and its People in Motion Pictures*, which still exists although only one copy was made. Universal also made similar films in Grand Island, Fremont, Norfolk, and Hastings; only those from Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney survive. (NSHS AV2.128.01)

This frame from the earliest Nebraska scene on film, a 1900 view of Omaha's Union Station, survives because it was once printed on photographic paper, a more stable medium than the film stock of the day. (NSHS AV2.110.04)