The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum Newsletter

OF BY And FOR MuSeum MemberS.

Published Monthly | Hoboken, New Jersey | Tuesday, June 14, 1988 | Vol. 2, No. 17

OPERA STAR DONATES DISPLAY FRAMES TO MUSEUM.

Through the efforts of Museum member Chris André, with help from Jim Hans and Luke Faust, a donation of several fine picture frames has been obtained from opera star Anna Moffo of New York city. Miss Moffo, incidentally, performed at a birthday party for Frank Sinatra last December.

Other donations include ten original photos of the 1947 inauguration of Hoboken Commissioners who defeated Mayor McFeeley after he had been in office 22 years, a gift from Museum member Ed Chius.

From John Catrambone of Hoboken comes an oak instrument case manufactured by Keuffel & Esser Co, a Hoboken company from the 1860s to the 1960s at 3rd and Grand.

The Museum thanks these donors.

THEATRE SERIES CONTINUES

Most readers will be pleased to see that this issue is devoted less to current news and more to Hoboken history: a lengthy extract from our continuing series on theatre in Hoboken, describing our first movie house.

Good time for a reminder: if you have not yet seen the current Museum exhibit on the history of the theatre, vaudeville, and motion pictures in Hoboken, or wish to take a second look, it continues until October on the second floor of City Hall.

A TELEVISION SHOW ABOUT OUR WATERFRONT CREATES A NEW DATE FOR THE JUNE MEETING

There's more reason than ever to not stay at home to watch tv reruns on Tuesday night, June 14. It's the changed date for the Museum's June meeting, and we're going to screen a television show, "Tales of the Waterfront," obtained for us by member Bob Foster and presented by Geri Fallo. The 16-minute show, all about the waterfronts of Hoboken, Jersey City, Weehawken, and Bayonne, will be followed by other video footage related to Hoboken. The public is invited; show time is 9:15.

THE FIRST MOTION PICTURE THEATRE IN HOBOKEN

The small store at 420 Washington Street is now empty*. Every day thousands of Hobokenites pass by the store, completely unaware of its historical significance. The unprepossessing little store was the location of Hoboken's very first movie theatre, the Hippodrome. Opened in 1903,



this little theatre was a far cry from the grandiose picture palaces of later years. It did have a great electric sign from the roof to the ground, one of the largest of the day. Most smaller theatres at the time

* Now vacant -the last tenant was Maritime Hardware. The B&D Bargain Store was located there before them, and the Alberta Market was there during the 1930's and '40's.

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were content with an arc light to attract attention.**

But the proprieter, a Mrs. Van der Heyden (or Vanderheyden), did not believe in doing things by halves, and her theatre, which soon came to be known as "The 5 Cent Hip". (Born and raised in Hoboken, she had gotten her training in the movie business working for 13 years for film distributors, Miles Brothers, of San Francisco and New York.) According to an



article from the old Hudson Dispatch:*** "The theatre was one of the first to show motion pictures of local events the day after they had occurred, for at the time of the fire in the old Odd Fellows' Hall, motion pictures were made if the Hippodrome showed them the very next day, which was remarkable at the time. Every day an entire new program of films was shown. When Hoboken celebrated its semi-centennial, in March 1905, with a big evening parade, motion pictures were again made, and shown the next day in the theatres. The Hippodrome also erected an immense spotlight on the roof of the building for that parade and picked out in it any local celebrity passing by the house, which gave occassion for much cheering for the powers that were in office in that long ago time."

Reminiscing about the historic theatre, Mrs. Van der Heyden told the Dispatch, "Not long before we opened there had been a big fire in a motion picture house in a foreign country, and most people were afraid to come in at first, for fear of fire; they would come and peek in, and go away. That didn't last long, however, and soon we had them in lines waiting for the place to open; we had 185 seats, but usually there were about 250 in the audience."****

HAND CRANK PHONOGRAPH PLAYED AND MARY PICKFORD THE FIRST HEROINE AT THE HIPPODROME

"The very first reel we showed," continued Mrs. Van der Heyden, "was a Mary Pickford reel; she was as much a favorite then as she is now, and then of course she was really a little girl.

** An early electric-type lamp composed of two carbon rods, through which a current is passed, producing an arc.

*** August 3, 1928.

**** According to another source, the theatre had 132 seats.

The price of admission was five cents and soon we were showing two, and then three reels for a nickel. In a little while we had a piano instead of the phonograph, and blind Mike Gorman, who still lives in downtown Hoboken, was our pianist. The next addition to the picture entertainment was a singer - still for a nickel, you understand, and our first soloist was Clyde Rooney, who is now in Atlantic City.* He got his training as a singer with the Hippodrome, and has sung all over since those days. Many others who have become well known as soloists had their


HIPPODROME

THE PIONEER OF MOVING PICTURES IN HUDSON COUNTY. " " "

Entire New Program Every Day.

ILLUSTRATED SONGS.

We exhibit for the first time the GREATEST moving pictures from all parts of the world. Do not miss a night, for if you do, you will miss a picture that you may never see again.

420 WASHINGTON STREET,

HOBOKEN, N. J.

The Coolest Place in the City.

ADMISSION, 5 CENTS

1908 Advertisement

start in the old Hippodrome. The soloist would chose one of the newest songs and sing a verse; the chorus would be shown on the screen and the entire audience would join in. It was wonderful to hear them, and they would go out saying 'didn't we have a fine time.' Just like a big family party. Nothing like that now! [1928]

* A fashionable resort at the time of this interview.

And the babies - there would be lines of baby carriages in front of the theatre and the policeman at the door would watch them. Later, we hired a boy to do it.

PARKING PLACE FOR KIDS

"Sometimes we would reserve the front rows for children, and people would leave their youngsters with us while they went to New York, or to do their marketing. How we watched those youngsters - nothing ever happened to any child left in our care at the Hippodrome; you see - I had a boy of my own, and his friends, both girls and boys, used to come in to the show. So I was interested in all the children."

HOBOKEN JOE

Joseph Hornstein, Vice-President of the National Theatre Supply Company, which furnished all the motion picture accessories for the Fabian Theatre when it opened in 1928, was the camera operator for the Hippodrome. Frank Daley, who "Mrs. Van" later married, was her partner in the venture.

About two and a half years after opening in Hoboken, the pair opened a second theatre, also called the Hippodrome, on Monticello Avenue in Jersey City. This was near Astor Place, and was as successful as the Hoboken location. Many of the films shown at the theatres were still in Mrs. Van's possession when, after the death of her first husband, Mr. Van der Heyden, she went out of business. Of these, "Custer's Last Fight" had been a big favorite; so was "In God We Trust" and "From The North Pole To Constantinople". Pearl

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white, Mary Pickford and Florence Davenport were the favorite heroines of the day, and King Baggot the greatest movie hero. By 1928, the year Frank Daley died, Mrs. Van had given away or destroyed most of the films she'd possessed. But the first motion picture machine, which "Hoboken Joe" Hornstein had operated in the old Hippodrome was still tucked away in a corner of the attic in her house at 146 33rd Street in Union City, where she had move about 1923. The newspapers said in tribute to Frank Daley, who had loved pictures and scenes here in Hoboken, "went to a world of new scenes, and his widow, living still with the memories of the days when together they helped develop an art which is now one of the most powerful influences in American life, still keeps busy and active, although her connection with pictures ceased long ago. The pictures which interest her now are those she carries in her memory, of the strenuous but happy days when the motion picture industry was young."

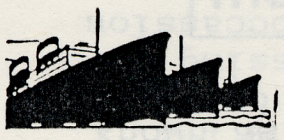
HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

CITY HALL

WASHINGTON AND FIRST STS. HOBOKEN, N.J.

MUSEUM HOURS
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Weekdays
6.30 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.
Wednesday evenings

Hoboken Historical Museum
P.O. Box M-1220
Hoboken NJ 07030



NON PROFIT
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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 6
HOBOKEN, NJ

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER
VOL. 2, NO. 17 JUNE 14, 1988
Editor Jim Hans
Production Editor Paul Lippman
Associate Editor Mary Manhardt
Subscription Rate:
Free to Museum members.

NOTICE

Video tapes will be shown at our next meeting Tuesday, June 14 at 7:30pm in the Clam Broth House on Newark Street in Hoboken. All members are invited, and potential new members and guests are always welcome to sit in without obligation.

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