

Update on the Historic Film Performance in Birmingham

Jan Scholl (PA), 75th Anniversary Committee

Since the film performance at the Alabama Theatre, there have been many requests and questions about the silent films shown at the Annual Session in Birmingham.

The film clips featured a demonstration comparison of clothes worn by a Victorian woman and a Flapper in the 1920s. Another clip showed 4-H members recycling "dad's" old coat to create a new one for junior. A film titled, Milk for You and Me illustrated how groups of factory workers, children in school, and even baseball players enjoy drinking milk. This film also showed the composition of milk through an animation sequence.

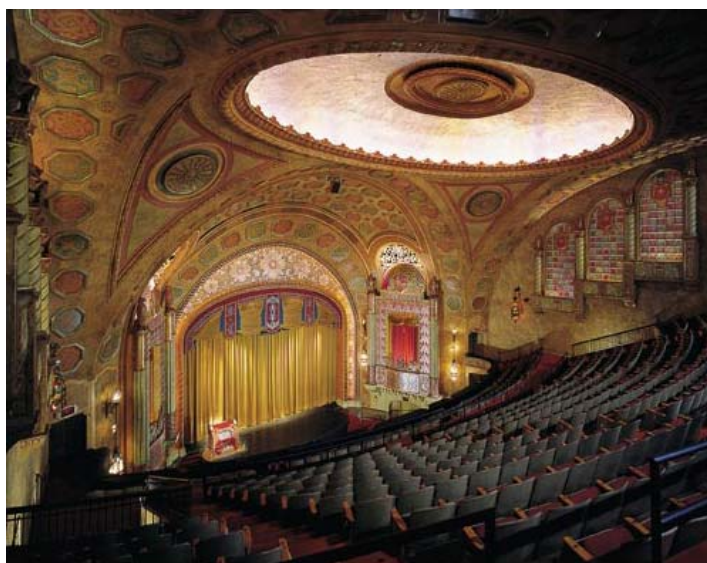


Photo by M. Lewis Kennedy

Finally, an entire feature film, *The Happier Way*, created by Assistant Home Demonstration Leader, Mignon Quaw was shared. Louisa Little was the film's main character who is "rescued" from exhaustion by a new kitchen arrangement and appliances.

The films are representative of 30 silent, black and white films about early Extension family and consumer science programs within a larger selection of 400 USDA films created after World War I. Some of the films are commodity oriented, but more than just a few are feature films with plots and story lines. USDA film producers were innovative, using animation, cross-cutting, chase scenes, hit men, fist fights and dream sequences to keep the action moving.

To read about the films and how they are cataloged, [locate an earlier article online](#), (Scholl, 2001).

Recently, one of the films, *Poor Mrs. Jones*, was remastered by the National Film Presentation Board (2007). This film is especially interesting as Grace Frysinger (whom one of our national awards is named after) was responsible for the content. Unlike the films shown in Alabama, this film can be shown to a group without the enhancement of a large screen or additional lighting. In addition to it being available for purchase, interested persons can interlibrary loan this film through their public, college or university libraries at no charge. The films that were shown in Alabama were located in the National Archives (Archives II) and in the Library of Congress and are considerably more difficult to locate.

The ambiance of the glorious [Alabama Theatre](#), and Cecil Whitmire's exceptional playing of an 82 year old Wurlitzer organ to the silent films, made it a special evening in Alabama at the Annual Session.

If you have other questions, please send a note to jscholl@psu.edu.

REFERENCES

National Film Preservation Board (2007). *Poor Mrs Jones!* In *New Women* (disk title). In *Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film, 1900-1934* (series title). DVD format

Scholl, J. (2001). Black and white films show Extension's early years. *The Forum for Family and Consumer Sciences Issues*, 6 (3), <http://ncsu.edu/ffci/publications/2001/v6-n3-2001-fall/black-and-white-films.php>

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