



2008 Summer Film Symposium  
*City & Country*

Friday, July 25 – Saturday, July 26, 2008

Northeast Historic Film  
85 Main Street  
Bucksport, Maine

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Program of Events



Advertisement for unidentified Portland furniture store  
(ca. 1958),  
WCSH Collection,  
Northeast Historic Film

*The How and Why of Spuds* (1920),  
National Archives Collection,  
Northeast Historic Film

## 2008 Summer Film Symposium: City & Country

Images and archetypes of the city and the country as seemingly distinct locations and ways of life have remained a potent force in the cultural imagination since the mid 19th century. Even though the transformations of industrial culture and mobility have changed rural and urban landscapes and lifestyles, the ideas and images associated with the City and the Country continues to thrive as traditional poles of modern experience. They are where we anchor the dreams and fears of technology and tradition, and where we are animated by hopes of progress and the comforts of nostalgia. As Raymond Williams noted of this powerful duality, “the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society.”

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### Friday, July 25, 2008

9:30 AM           **Coffee and conversation in the Alamo Theatre Lobby**

10:00 AM           **Welcome, Opening Remarks: City**  
Snowden Becker, University of Texas, Austin School of Information

10:15 AM           ***Maine and the Rural Imagination in Early Amateur Films***  
Mark Neumann & Janna Jones, Northern Arizona University



*Snow White* (1916),  
Kitty Clements Collection,  
Northeast Historic Film

Drawing largely on material from the moving image collections at Northeast Historic Film, this presentation will interpret how and why urban amateur filmmakers constructed cinematic visions of rural Maine in the early twentieth century.

11:00 AM

***Exploring Women's Experience through the Work of Female Amateur Filmmakers***

Gemma Perretta, Northeast Historic Film



Girls dancing (ca. 1948),  
Janice Smith Collection,  
Northeast Historic Film

Looking at films from the Walter Woodman Wright Collection, Ethel Bean Turner Collection, Wohelo-Luther Gulick Camp Collection and other collections at Northeast Historic Film, I will attempt to identify aesthetic themes, recurring imagery and additional ways in which a filmmaker's genderfication as a woman permeates the subject matter as well as the visual and emotional qualities of amateur films.

11:30 AM

Lunch

1:00 PM

***Urbs in Horto: Public Parks, Leisure and Race in Chicago South Side Home Movies***

Jacqueline Stewart, Northwestern University

The City of Chicago's motto, "City in a Garden," reflects a longstanding effort by activists, architects and planners to preserve the health and beauty of the rapidly expanding metropolis. During the mid- and late 19th century, Chicago developed plans for a unified park and boulevard system that would not only provide spaces to relieve urban tensions, but also connect communities and serve as sites of democratic interaction. Using footage collected by the South Side Home Movie Project, this presentation will focus on the development and uses of two of the city's largest public parks, examining how the city's persistent racial tensions profoundly shaped the parks' design, funding, and uses.

1:45 PM

***Cinematic Visions of Place: Chicago***

Brendan Kredell, Northwestern University



Conrad Friberg's  
*Halsted Street* (1932)

How do we render cities legible and memorable? That is the primary question asked by several films documenting the city of Chicago that will be examined here. These films represent a way of perceiving the city in a manner that is shaped by the contours of the city and its built environment. Discussion will also focus on the ways our cinematic vision of place is shaped by our lived experience of those places, and how the methods used by the filmmakers underscore this relationship.

2:30 PM

Break

2:45 PM

***Many Chicagos: Utopian Promises and Urban Ruin in Post-War Chicago***

Michelle Puetz & Andy Uhrich, Chicago Film Archives



Gordon Weisenborn's  
*Mural Midland Metropolis* (1960)



Kenji Kanesaka's  
*Super Up* (1966)

During the turbulent period following WWII, the city of Chicago faced numerous social and economic difficulties: severe housing shortages, huge demographic shifts, urban blight, and financial malaise. City planners used and abused the promise of modernist architecture to address these problems in ways that drastically transformed the look of the city and the way its citizens inhabited it. ***Many Chicagos*** will examine the way film can be utilized to tell stories in a manner not possible in formalist architectural critiques or sociological studies. Working with films from the Chicago Film Archives' collection, we will draw from a variety of film styles – amateur, experimental, documentary, and sponsored – to include a multiplicity of voices and responses to these rapid architectural shifts. Charting the resulting personal and psychological upheavals, these films reveal a regenerated city that offered a vision of optimism and abundance to some while leaving others in forgotten squalor.

7:00 PM

**Screening, 9.5**

courtesy of Keith Wilson, University of Texas

An expanded cinema/documentary film presentation of Wilson's documentary, *9.5*. Invented by Pathe in 1922, 9.5mm was the world's first practical, inexpensive, and widely used home movie film. *9.5* examines this (almost) forgotten gauge in three separate and complimentary chapters.

Snowden Becker will introduce the program.

## Screening, City and Country Selections

Jay Schwartz, Secret Cinema founder

A program of selected films from the collection of Jay Schwartz relating to the City & Country theme.

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**Saturday, July 26, 2008**

9:30 AM           **Coffee and conversation in the Alamo Theatre Lobby**

10:00 AM           **Welcome, Opening Remarks: Country**  
Snowden Becker, University of Texas, Austin School of Information

10:15 AM           ***Cinema's Speedy Dissemination to the Hinterlands***  
Paul Spehr, independent scholar

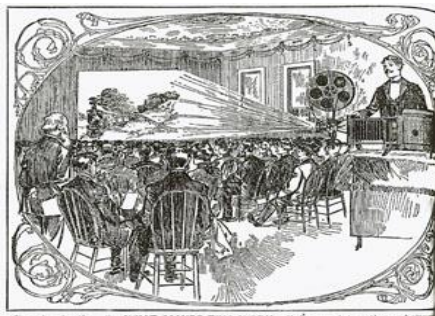


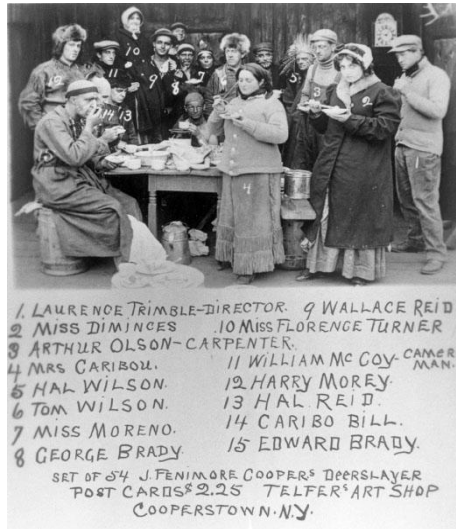
Image from Fall 1900 Sears Catalog,  
page 208

This presentation will focus on the early years of cinema, the very beginning of film, and on two overlooked but important contributors to the diffusion movies: The Columbia Phonograph Company and Sears & Roebuck. From 1896 until after the turn of the 20th Century the two companies sold inexpensive projectors to a burgeoning field of potential entrepreneurs who took their projectors into the countryside, showing films in smaller cities, rural communities, churches, fairs, and other sites where the curious could gather for amusement, diversion and enlightenment.

11:00 AM

***The Vitagraphers Come to Cooperstown***

Kathy Fuller-Seely, Georgia State University



Souvenir postcard showing the Vitagraph crew in Cooperstown, NY

In 1911, a small-town newspaper editor convinced a Vitagraph Company troupe of actors and film crew to journey to the small upstate New York village of Cooperstown to produce a two-reel version of James Fenimore Cooper's classic pioneering tale, *The Deerslayer*. This presentation will explore the Vitagraphers interactions with local residents and movie viewers and is part of a larger project on how the coming of motion pictures to Cooperstown brought urban cultural modernity "in through the back door" to a rural, traditional society.

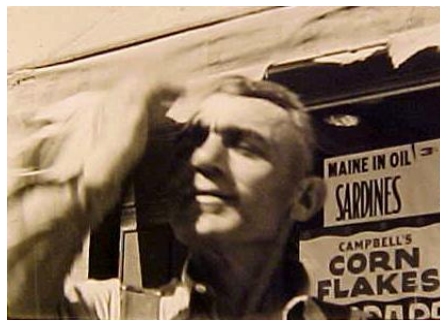
12:00 PM

Lunch

1:00 PM

***Towns in the Countryside: The Itinerant Films of Arthur J. Higgins***

Albert Steg, film collector and archivist



Still from the Arthur J. Higgins films,  
Image courtesy Albert Steg

During the late 1930's, an itinerant filmmaker named Arthur J. Higgins traveled over a large swath of the American heartland photographing small-town citizens for profit. Advertising his program as "Home Town Movies," he offered the local public an opportunity to see themselves on the big screen. But the film record that survives Higgins' business plan is illuminating well beyond the filmmaker's intention, providing a record of small-town rural America unlike any intentional survey or record of his day.

1:45 PM

**Screening, Amateur Films from the University of Georgia Media Archives**

courtesy of Margie Compton, University of Georgia Media Archives

2:15 PM

***The Space of Memory: Migration and Rural Identity***

Andrew Jawitz, University of Southern Maine; Alyce Ornella, Spindleworks;  
Tim Findlen, documentary filmmaker

Where are the boundaries of identity? How does emigration from the country to the city (and then back again) enable a person to see the borders of their own culture? And how does a person, or a group, reconcile the anxiety of displacement? This is an examination of how memories function to place each of us on tenuous borders of rural and urban experience and relate to the wider historical context of migration between the country and the city. Will include a screening of video shot on location “back home” with oral history interviews entwined with archival film clips and related contemporary “amateur” video found via youtube.com.

2:45 PM

Closing Discussion

6:00 PM

Cocktails

6:30 PM

Lobster Dinner

7:30 PM

**Screening, *Hidden in Plain Sight***

courtesy of Mark Street, Fordham College, Lincoln Center



*Hidden in Plain Sight* (2008)

The Maine premiere of Mark Street’s exploration of Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, Ho Chi Minh and Salvador Allende. Screened at the Tribeca Film Festival, 2008.