

# Collections: Movie Queen Mania

The folks in Van Buren finally know what's in the can: a 1930s movie queen.

*The Movie Queen, Van Buren*, that is. The 16mm film had been passed from person to person ever since it surfaced in the Van Buren Rotary Club some years ago.

"No one had any idea what was on it because there was no way to show it," says Daniel Lapointe, who decided to satisfy everyone's curiosity by sending the reel to NHF for transfer to videotape.

While assessing the movie's condition, archivist Dwight Swanson noticed similarities to the Movie Queen series shot around New England by Boston filmmaker Margaret Cram or Margaret Cram Showalter in the mid-1930s.

Lapointe, who works in Van Buren's economic development office, agreed to donate the original footage to NHF, bringing our collection of Movie Queens to eight.

Meanwhile, the video has been a conversation starter in Van Buren, where Lapointe has been showing it to elders in hopes of identifying the all-local cast. "Some of them saw their fathers or grandfathers," he says. "And they were



*The Van Buren Movie Queen and her Boy Scouts. Frame enlargement by Dwight Swanson.*

really interested in the scenes from the old days."

## A Bustling Town

The Van Buren film offers a rare glimpse of the community, its people and businesses circa 1935. It begins with townspeople eagerly awaiting the movie queen at the railway station. The Boy Scouts, who benefited from the project according to signs displayed in the movie, march down Van Buren's streets, followed by the Silver Bell marching band in spanking white uniforms, and cars bearing dignitaries.

The film differs from other Movie Queens in that the actress is not kidnapped and rescued by a handsome local hero.

Lapointe says the film depicts Van Buren during its economic heyday, when 34 lumber mills kept the town humming. A few scenes were shot in St. Leonard, New Brunswick, evidence of the closer ties the towns once shared.

"The first time we saw it, I was really excited," Lapointe says. "We hadn't had a clue of what was in there, and we recognized some people right away." He is arranging for a public screening at the Van Buren Public Library.

## Geography of the Movie Queen

