

# THE THEATRE

## *A Department of Practical Showmanship*

### QUAKES, WIND, RAIN AND FIRE And the Aftermath—But These Coast Showmen Conquered It All

By H. D. McBRIDE  
*California Theatre Company*

Battling the elements is second nature to showmen but E. A. Johnson, president of the California Theatre Company of Santa Barbara, Cal., claims the record for encounters with Mother Nature.

In three weeks, Johnson has had a few rounds with (1.) Earthquakes, (2.) windstorms, (3.) electrical storms, (4.) brush fire, and (5.) cyclone.

They say "it never rains but it pours," and this is true both literally and figuratively, in Santa Barbara.

Figuratively, because of the amount of grief and destruction heaped upon the Channel City of California within the brief period of 21 days; and literally, because it did "pour" during the electrical storms, bringing actual damages to an open air theatre owned by the California Theatre Company, as well as multiplying in the public

mind the hazards of attending amusements or any public gathering.

So many conflicting reports have been broadcast on the Santa Barbara disasters that Johnson explained exactly what happened at Santa Barbara.

On the morning of June 29, 1925, at exactly 17 minutes to seven, Santa Barbara was hit by one of the worst earthquakes in the history of the Pacific Coast. That point the newspapers and film weeklies had correct. The toll of lives was 13, with the injured numbering 28.

The California Theatre Company, owns and controls the Granada, California, Mission and Potter theatres.

Now the Potter is a mass of twisted steel and broken bricks, and the printers have been ordered to remove the name from the company's letterhead, as it will never be rebuilt as a theatre. This leaves the Granada, California and Mission.

The Granada is housed in the tallest building in the city, an eight story structure. The building, structurally, withstood the shocks in tip-top shape but the auditorium of the theatre suffered a loss placed by architects and engineers at \$150,000.

The damage consists chiefly of total destruction of false construction work and ornamental effects necessitating, engineers say, redecorating the entire auditorium. This means that the theatre will be closed for a total of at least six weeks.

The California theatre likewise suffered only to the extent of false construction and decorations plus a portion of the fire wall which was knocked down by falling walls

### The Granada Theatre Is Open for Public Inspection

Beginning today, and continuing indefinitely, the Granada Theatre will be open from 10 a. m. to 5 p. m. so that you may get first hand information on the condition of the city's tallest and finest building.

We want you to see for yourself that what little damage was done is superficial and not structural.

We want you to be convinced that the engineers were correct in the decision that the Granada is safe for occupancy.

Come in. Look around. You will see that the quake just knocked down some artificial decorations.

We are mighty proud of the Granada Building and the Granada Theatre.

One look is worth a thousand words. Come in and see for yourself.

California Theatre Co.  
Granada Holding Co.

EDWARD A. JOHNSON, President.

### "LET'S GO TO THE THEATRE TONIGHT"

Tired nerves and worn-out bodies demand a tonic. And the best tonic known is amusement. The best and most popular form of amusement in America is the theatre. There comedy, with its hilarious laughter; drama, with its thrills and suspense; music, with its soothing charms, are component parts of the varied programs.

The theatres are the clearing houses of the amusement talent of the world. The highest salaried actors and actresses in the world are at your disposal via local box offices. Two hours of solid enjoyment will do a million dollars worth of good to tired minds and worn out bodies. Let's go to the theatre—tonight!

The programs at local theatres are always good—mosttimes great. Current bills include a 7-act vaudeville show at the Lobero; Bex, the world's most intelligent horse in "Black Cyclone" at the California; Adolphe Menjou, Florence Vidor and Betty Bronson in "Are Parents People?" at the Airdome. Let's go to the theatre—tonight!

# THE Theatre Herald

Fresh  
Screen  
NotesLate  
Film  
News

YOU NEED THE THEATRE—THE THEATRE NEEDS YOU

## By George!

YOU never really know how big a town is until you get a sore foot.

\* \* \*

Speaking of sore feet our foot doctor has on his door "Dr. Black, chiropodist, walk in." If I could walk in what in the world would I be doing there?

\* \* \*

As we write this there are one hundred and ten brass bands going by in the "Greater Movie Season" parade, playing one hundred and ten different tunes. It takes a lot of brass to run a band and more brass to write a column.

\* \* \*

There have been more quakes on the West Coast the past week. Let's call 'em quakes while we can, in another year they'll be "fires." (San Francisco papers please copy.)

\* \* \*

A London doctor is in favor of abolishing long pants for men:

*Oh, handsome legs as you all know  
Are exclusively for women.  
We see enough of other kinds  
When the male sex goes in swimmin'.*

\* \* \*

With evolution off the front page (temporarily) we learn again that the war between France and the Rifians is still on. Meanwhile the well known League of Nations is seeking to interpret the clause that would have prevented it.

## Colleen Moore Back; to Start "We Moderns"

HOLLYWOOD.—With the arrival of Colleen Moore here, preparations for "We Moderns," the next First National production in which the little comedienne will appear, have been speeded materially. Photographic work is expected to be started this week.

John Francis Dillon, according to a recent announcement, will handle the business end of the megaphone on Colleen's first film offering to be made since she signed her new First National contract. Jack Mulhall will play opposite the star.

A tentative cast for "We Moderns" has been selected and is only awaiting the signature of John McCormick.

## Bi-Ray-Em!

CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S next picture will be "Suicide Club."

Marshall Neilan has finished "The Skyrocket" with Peggy Joyce.

"The Dark Angel" will soon be made in Hollywood? ? ?

Jesse J. Goldberg is making "Lightning Strikes." Everybody should know that.

"The Hermit Doctor" will be Nazimova's next Metro picture.

Bob Dillon is going to make a serial for Rayart.

Morris R. Schlank, president of Anchor Distributing Corporation, has a news reel he's distributing,—made in Hollywood. (None genuine without the trade mark.)

## At the Studio

Anna Q. Nilsson and May Allison have begun work in "Viennese Medley" for First National.  
Aileen Pringle and Lew Cody have started "Dance Madness" for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
Pola Negri has begun "Flower of the Night," Paramount.  
Julian Eltinge has begun "Madam Lucy," Christie-Producers Distributing Corporation.  
Irene Rich has begun "Compromise," Warner picture directed by Alan Crosland.

## Subjects Completed

"The Girl Who Wouldn't Work," F. B. O. feature starring Marguerite de la Motte.  
"The Love Hour," Warner Brothers production starring Ruth Clifford and Huntly Gordon.  
"What Fools Men," First National, starring Lewis Stone and Shirley Mason.  
"The Unnamed Woman," Embassy production starring Katherine MacDonald.  
"The Winner," Chadwick, starring Charles Ray.

10 to 12 acres, and headed direct for the residence section of the city. The entire town had suitcases and valuable papers packed ready to flee at a moment's notice but only an act of God, in causing a sudden change of the wind, and the services of a company of U. S. Marines, stationed in Santa Barbara for patrol duty, saved the city from destruction.

With the fire the morale of the city was again destroyed and attendance at any public gathering, including churches and lodge meetings, was almost nil.

Following the fire on the morning of July 13 an electrical rain storm destroyed 350 seats in the Airdome theatre, and this loss, too, is chargeable against the elements.

With reconstruction work rushed at the California theatre this house was re-opened after much inspection by the city on Wednesday, July 15. The Lobero theatre, a community playhouse, was temporarily leased by the California Theatre Company to house vaudeville exclusively. This house was opened simultaneously with the California, on July 15.

Business as was to be expected was practically nothing.

Then on Friday, July 17, came the cyclone to help push the public morale to a lower scale, and bring the fear barometer to a new high level.

Fortunately the cyclone struck the ocean only which caused it to be classified by mariners as a "waterspout." It was, however, easily discernible on land and was accompanied by a terrific wind storm. The "waterspout," according to the mariners, was approximately 1,000 feet high, and presented an uncanny appearance, and did much to frighten the already nerve-racked populace into a state of near-panic.

Business at the theatres then dropped below nothing, and the two houses, the Lobero and California, suffered a loss of more than \$2,500 on the first four days they were open.

But E. A. Johnson and his associates are not discouraged. They are "down but not out," and are planning a "come back" of the theatres that should go down in history.

Plans are now under way to launch a "greater movie season" all their own, along with the re-opening of the Granada, their largest and finest theatre. It will be an interesting event, cinematically speaking, for exhibitors throughout the world.

## Creamer Turns A Trick or Two in Newspaper Advertising

Will send you in some of my stuff on Paramount's "The Air Mail." We played this on Tuesday July 14 to the best Tuesday's business in nine weeks. For several days previous I used the lobby display shown in the photo, this was simply a drawn map showing the route of the U. S. Mail planes, and tacked onto the board were two small flat planes. Under the map was a list of the stations and the arriving and leaving time of the planes from each station. This information and a small map from which I reproduced the large one I secured from the postoffice. Also on the board were two photos and part of a one sheet.

There was a large crowd in town that day as the County was holding a Bridge Dedication and old-fashioned barbecue, so I got out the bill, copy of which I am enclosing. It was just the type of crowd that was anticipating Aeroplane Flights, so I satisfied their desire (at two bits).

The bill was worded and so made up, that when passed out of the crowd, they did not immediately throw them down, but held onto them, then came to see the show.

I have also changed the style of heading for my newspaper "readers." Formerly

from adjoining buildings.

All of the false construction, leading from the main walls of the building to the stage and forming a gradual curve to the proscenium was totally wrecked which, perforce, called for rebuilding and redecorating. The cost totals in the neighborhood of \$35,000, Johnson states.

The Mission theatre lost its entire stage, through the back wall of the theatre falling inward wrecking, stage, scenery, orchestra pit and damaging the front of the auditorium proper. False construction at this theatre also suffered considerably. Total cost of rebuilding is estimated at \$48,000.

Face to face with the destruction of their theatres by the earthquake, and feeling that the morale of the city would be upheld by some sort of amusement, Johnson and his associates decided to erect an Airdome for temporary use. The structure was started Friday, July 3, and was completed and opened to the public on July 7. The "auditorium" has a seating capacity of 1200. A stage, 50 by 30 feet was also erected, capable of handling road shows and vaude-

ville. The policy of the theatre calls for first run pictures, with a flat admission of 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children.

People were dubious about attending even an open air show, and this attitude was perpetuated through the fact that the city experienced more than 1,000 earth tremors in the first two weeks.

So much for the earthquakes!

With the airdome running and the public morale gradually coming back to normal other elements stepped in to supplant the earth's convulsions. On the evening of Sunday, July 12, one of the worst wind and sand storms in the history of the city struck with a velocity of 60 miles per hour.

With the first gusts of wind, went the screen, main curtain, and part of the temporary walls of the Airdome, causing a cancellation of the shows—another loss chargeable against the elements.

At 11:15 the same evening, a brush fire on the out-skirts of the city was started by a "burned out" rubbish pile and, fanned by the wind, soon spread over an area of