



The NEW BERN MIRROR

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Only the town's old timers remember that New Bern once had an honest to goodness movie studio.

Long before Hollywood came into its own, the Acme Film Company was in operation here. It came into being in 1919, and lasted a year and a half, turning out one-reel comedies, animated cartoons, and at least two newsreels.

Many a change has occurred in the industry since then, but some of the selfsame methods used are still utilized by screen moguls. Even the recognized genius of Hollywood, Walt Disney, is treading a trail blazed locally long ago.

It all started when Ben Strausser and his wife blew into New Bern from New York City, and let it be known that they would like to open a studio here. Strausser was no greenhorn at the business, and Dr. E. C. Armstrong decided to back him.

They went into business in the old Ghent casino, and shortly thereafter were producing a series of Black Spade comedies that had theater goers in stitches. Even in their crudity the films were more humorous than some of the stuff you see today.

A Japanese camera man, whose name escapes us, joined the Straussers in due time. He excelled at his profession, and soon the Pepsi Cola Company, founded here before World War I, was clamoring for animated ads to flash on screens far and wide.

That's when New Bern's own Marcus Blonck joined the staff. Marcus was a cartoonist of no mean ability, and pretty soon the Firestone Company and the manufacturers of Willard batteries were ordering advertising too.

Block made the lay-outs and created the animation. Then two girls filed in the drawings. That's the way Disney does it, even to this day. The cartoons were then photographed in black and white. Color, of course, didn't come along until many years later.

Although the Ghent casino wasn't built with a movie studio in mind, it was enclosed on all four sides with glass panes and worked out very well. The casino was built off the ground, leaving room underneath for a laboratory to develop and print films.

Tanks that were six feet in diameter were used. Film to be developed was placed on large wooden reels, revolved in 12 inches of solution, and then transferred to other reels to dry.

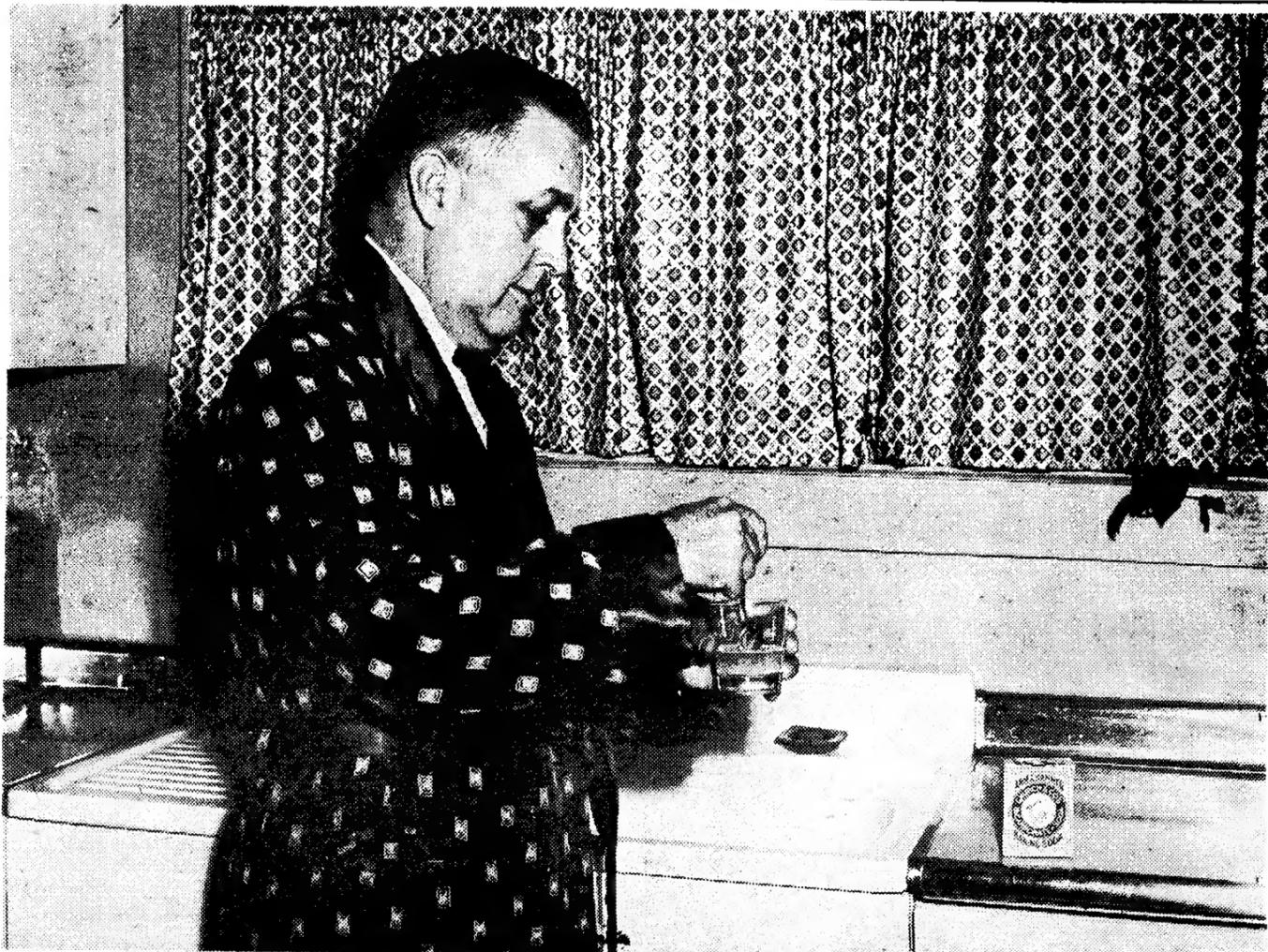
In making printed film, virtually the same process was followed. Believe it or not, the Acme folks could take picture at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and have them on the screens of New Bern theaters by 6 P. M.

Strausser represented Pathe News, and two of his filmings here got national distribution. One was of a train that went overboard when the Neuse river trestle gave way, while the other was the launching of a concrete boat at the shipbuilding yard on North Craven street.

We had our own local stars in a home made movie too. David Johnson, an exceptionally handsome motorman for Callie McCarthy's trolley cars, was the hero, and incidentally, just about every gal in town had a crush on him. Zora Styron, as we remember, was the heroine.

For the life of us, we can't recall the villain, but we do remember that a dummy was tossed from the top of the Elks Temple during the movie's most exciting sequence.

Strausser was eventually convinced that New Bern was too far from his market. Other studios, such as Edison in Fort Lee, N. J., Lubin in Philadelphia and Essay in Chicago were beating him to the punch. So, with reluctance, he



HAPPENED TO US ALL—If you're suffering today from the consequences of eating far too much Thanksgiving turkey, and an extra serving of dressing, you aren't by yourself. New Bern's usually jovial Mayor, Robert L. Stallings,

Jr., looks downright miserable in the wee small hours, as he stirs up a dose of soda in the kitchen of his home. Like the rest of us, he didn't know when to quit.—Photo by Billy Benners.

Quiet Reflection Prevailed On Town's Thanksgiving Day

Another Thanksgiving Day has gone into the annals of Time, and for most New Bernians the occasion passed rather uneventfully.

Thanksgiving has been like that, through the years, ever since the Pilgrim Fathers celebrated their first American harvest festival in October 1621.

Christmas has its Santa Claus, and Easter its Peter Cottontail, but there is little of the jocular about our annual observance of national gratitude. We approach

it seriously, and in most cases soberly.

That's why the day wouldn't have been complete for many local citizens, if they had failed to attend the union services held yesterday morning at Centenary Methodist church.

You don't have to be a Methodist, or a Baptist or a Presbyterian to feel humble and grateful on Thanksgiving morning. Denominations and creeds may differ, but all of us in our own way are aware of

the goodness of God.

Being aware isn't enough, if we have no sense of gratitude. Fortunately, gratitude is universal, although some of us are thoughtless enough and selfish enough to be less grateful than others.

Here in New Bern, and elsewhere in the Land of The Free, we think of Thanksgiving as a holiday peculiarly American. Actually, there were thanksgiving celebrations in the harvest season long before America was discovered

and populated by the white man.

It was customary in England and in other parts of the world to hold special days of fasting and prayer, and to celebrate with feasting and thanksgiving the bounty of Nature and the blessings of God.

New Bern, in its 249 years of existence has for the most part been a God fearing community, and conscious of its gifts from Deity. However, since Thanksgiving Day for many years was a strictly New

Talent, No Temperament, Brought Rosalie Happiness

Can two people of a creative and artistic nature blend their respective talents into a normal and enduring marriage?

New Bern's Rosalie Smith obviously thought so, when she married Tom Liggitt, a Cherry Point marine, and together they have made it work out admirably.

In far-off Bakersfield, Calif., the local musician and her writer husband are achieving success in their chosen fields, but more than that they are providing a happy home for themselves and their two charming daughters, Judy and Ann. "Tom began writing when he

was in the Marine Corps during World War II," says Rosalie. "Although this war novel has not yet been published, it led to the writing of Pigeon, Fly Home—the novel Walt Disney used as a basis for his recent television show, The Pigeon That Worked a Miracle."

"Pigeon, Fly Home" got fine reviews in the New York Times, Saturday Review, and many other quality publications. The New York Times listed it among its 100 best adventure books, and about 700 copies of the novel were purchased by the state of Ohio for schools there.

Encouraged, Tom submitted a copy to the story editor at Disney Productions. Disney bought the rights from Holiday House. It was two years before the film was produced and released on television,

pulled up stakes and departed.

That was the end of New Bern's movie industry. Like the automobile industry attempted by Gib Waters, it vanished for all time to come.

(Continued on Page 5)

