

# The STARS Ride a REAL ESTATE



Ginger Rogers, who has just put up a \$20,000 home, is one of many movie stars attracted to such new real estate developments as the San Fernando valley, shown at upper right. Encino, in this same rising "movie colony," finds it worth advertising, as at right.

By  
Erskine  
Johnson



Eddie Horton, Adolphe Menjou, Hobart Cavanaugh, and Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler live there now. Jolson, president of the Encino Chamber of Commerce, is campaigning for a new set of street lights in anticipation of further settlers.

Before Hollywoodites started spilling into this fertile valley most of the stars lived either in Beverly Hills or on the slopes of the Santa Monica mountains. Before that their homes were centered right in Hollywood. Whenever neighborhoods get too crowded the privacy-loving stars get itchy feet. Then they move. Real estate booms result.

LAST to respond to the "buy now" movement was Mae West. Ever since she came to movietown three years ago Mae has lived in an apartment, swearing she'd never buy property in Hollywood. But now she's studying plans, juggling figures and considering whether to buy or build, and where her home should be.

It's a cinch she won't join the rush to rural San Fernando valley, however. Mae likes the city too well. Besides, country night noises get on her nerves.

Builder of one of the new homes outside the valley is red-headed Ginger Rogers. Her place will cost around \$20,000. She'll give the deed to her mother, Lela Rogers, as a combination Christmas and birthday gift. Both will live in the place, which will be novel in that one wing will be made of stone, a second of shakes, a third of flatboard and a fourth of plaster.

Recent buyers of homes include Jane Withers, Henry Fonda, Andy Devine, Fred Astaire, Richard Dix—who is also building an apartment house—Ann Shirley, Robert Taylor, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and a host of others. Among sellers, at good profits, are William Powell, Wallace Beery, Bing Crosby, Dick Powell, Charles Butterworth, Jean Harlow and others.

A "for sale" sign also adorns the big \$300,000 Beverly Hills home of Claudette Colbert. Although it was just finished, the actress is anxious to sell if she can show a profit. She and her new husband, Dr. Joel Pressman, moved in, with her mother, right after their marriage.

Among the others, Gene Raymond and Jeanette MacDonald are planning to build a honeymoon home, Paul Muni is heavily interested in San Fernando valley land, recently adding 19 acres to his holdings, and Spencer Tracy is holding several lots in Beverly Hills on speculation.

Leo Carrillo, who already owns an apartment site and has started work on a \$150,000 multiple-family building, has another big project—an Agua Caliente type of resort in the heart of Hollywood. It will be his most ambitious project and will probably cost a half-million or more.

**U**NMISTAKABLE signs of a good old-fashioned real estate boom have broken out like a rash all over movietown. Film folk and the natives are buying, selling and building with feverish excitement. Cocktail party guests have switched conversation about themselves to the value of vacant lots and such, and an architect's lines attract more attention than those of a new blond ingenue.

Real estate agents, happy for the first time in years, have adopted movie ballyhoo tactics and prices are climbing overnight. Story conferences wind up in arguments about leases and mortgages, and cafe dinner cloths mysteriously assume the likeness of blueprints. Clark Gable's valet, Ballinger, has left him to return to the plastering trade.

Yes sir, there's a real estate boom in flickerland. Hollywood building permits prove it. In 1935 they totaled two and a half million dollars. This year they already have passed four million.

Publicity tricks adopted by energetic salesmen for Star-Studded Acres Sweetheart Homes, Inc., and the like are making some of the high-powered studio press agents look like amateurs. One land subdivider hit a new peak the other day when he sent down Hollywood boulevard a 10-foot model home mounted on a sound truck from which blared a nasal recording of "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The rush to get in on the ground floor has resulted in construction of close to 50 new homes for film people in recent weeks. Others have bought houses, are studying plans or are buying on speculation.

Large scale operators like Harold Lloyd are selling at good profits. Director Clarence Brown is erecting a

store building in Beverly Hills. So is Dolores Del Rio. John Boles just bought a downtown Hollywood corner for \$105,000. Other deals are being hatched and movie dough is going round and round in a dizzy whirl.

**S**PECTATORS of the Hollywood scene over a period of years have learned that real estate investments in filmland are sure-fire.

Homes of stars increase from 10 to 20 per cent in value when "for sale" signs go up. Mr. and Mrs. John Public are more than willing to pay extra if given the opportunity to say they live in a house once occupied by so and so—"you know, my dear, the big movie star. He used to sleep in this very room."

Likewise, the home of a star in a certain district attracts the non-film folk settlers like feudal castles of yore. Let a star build a home in an undeveloped area and soon the land all about him will be subdivided and sold. Prospective home owners fall hard for the vision of having a screen celebrity as a neighbor.

If the star happens to own surrounding property, which often is the case, he cleans up. When the neighborhood gets too crowded he sells his own place to another hero worshiper at a nice profit and moves on to begin the same procedure all over again.

We hear a chorus demanding why film stars are so greedy. Don't they get big salaries? Sure, but the answer is that movie careers don't last very long. The big idea in Hollywood today is to get all you can while the big dough lasts and then take life easy when screen oblivion comes. Buying and selling real estate, if a boom is on, is one way to increase bank accounts

for rainy days.

Several of Hollywood's smarter old-time stars realized this in the dim, pre-talkie days of wild spending and wisely sunk a lot of their money in real estate. Now these ex-stars, people like Norma Talmadge, Betty Compson, Conrad Nagel, Bebe Daniels, Ruth Roland and Richard Barthelmess, are still active in the real estate mart.

**N**ORMA owns several apartment houses around Hollywood, Betty has lots of property, Nagel owns a couple of market buildings, Barthelmess controls a valuable Hollywood boulevard lease, and Bebe has extensive holdings. Miss Roland, serial queen of the silents, remains as Hollywood's outstanding real estate operator.

Ruth started buying up land long before her film career ended. Every time she jumped off a cliff, with a host of villains in pursuit, she bought a lot, or so the story goes. When her star flickered and died she blossomed out as president of the Ruth Roland Land Corp. She made a fortune selling homes in Ruth Roland square and still controls nearly \$2,000,000 worth of property round town.

The current boom blankets the town but is officially centered in broad San Fernando valley, a half-hour auto ride north of Hollywood. Here the stars are gobbling up gentlemen-farmer estates of varying sizes. A few are announcing they will raise oranges and walnuts and other things as profitable hobbies. Small lot subdividers are cleaning up around these estates, beguiling customers by advertising "film star home views."

A small valley community called Encino is overrun with film players and others are moving in. Warren William,