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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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WORK OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM LIBRARY SHOWN IN MGM

PASSING PARADE SHORT SUBJECT

The rescue and preservation of films of historical and scientific value, as shown in the work of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, is the theme of a short-subject motion picture just completed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It was shown Wednesday, October 21, to Will H. Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, William F. Rogers, Vice-President in charge of distribution, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, and other notables at a preview party held at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street.

The Film That Was Lost, the newly completed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Passing Parade short subject, tells the story of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and, from negatives in the library's vaults, presents film highlights of the past half-century. The aged Queen Victoria is seen on the occasion of her last visit to Ireland in 1901. A parade of 1900 marches by, headed by President McKinley and the silver-tongued orator William Jennings Bryan. There are glimpses of Thomas Edison, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, King George V, Czar Nicholas of Russia and his high priest Rasputin. Among other outstanding events shown in the film are the Russian revolution and Lenin, its leader; the McGovern-Corbett fight, an Easter Parade in the nineteen hundreds, and an auto race in the earliest days of the "horseless carriage."

The film, narrated by John Nesbitt, shows how these highlights of history--and the even more important events being written today on celluloid--are being preserved for posterity by the work of the Film Library. The need for such a library was first determined when the discovery was made that in about twenty years celluloid became too brittle to be run through a film projector. Newsreels of great events and motion picture epics were therefore no more permanent than words written on sand. A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1935 established the Museum's Film Library and the huge job of reclaiming old film, duplicating negatives, cataloguing and storing them in air-conditioned vaults began.

At the preview short addresses were made by Mr. Hays and Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers spoke on The Film That Was Lost and the work of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library as follows:

"I am glad that we were able to make this little short subject to record the very valuable work that is being done by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library.

"There can be no doubt that historians and educators of the future will have in the motion picture an incomparably fine and complete record of our times. And among the films that might be chosen as a historical record for the future, I believe there will be a great percentage of short subjects.

"For example, with the short subjects being made today by the motion picture industry, by the Army and Navy, by government and private agencies, succeeding generations will be able to see for themselves every phase, every factor of our present war from the economic aspects to the actual fighting. For years the short subject has been called the stepchild of the motion picture industry but we can be proud of the short subject today for the job it is doing in helping to fight this war. It is being used for the dissemination of information to train soldiers and to train workers, and to stimulate and coordinate all manner of necessary war activities.

"It is true that the shorts in the past have not always received the attention they deserved from many of us within the industry. This neglect has resulted, for the most part, from the attitude that since the short was only one-eighth or one-tenth the length of a feature picture it was therefore correspondingly less important. I have always believed, as I think the war shorts have proven, that the short subject should properly be considered a motion picture medium of its own, entirely separate and distinct from feature pictures. The short can only benefit from the increased thought and attention it is receiving in connection with the war. After the war, the short may have grown to the point where it will actually compete with the feature picture."

Mr. Hays spoke on the importance of the motion picture in recording historic events and in preserving the arts and culture.

Mr. Hays said:

"There was no cameraman with Leonidas and his Spartans at Thermopylae. There was no motion picture operator present when Wellington broke the power of Napoleon at Waterloo. But there were cameramen at Pearl Harbor and at Midway to show us history as it happened and make a lasting, living record of it for our children's children.

"As it preserves world events, so does the motion picture preserve arts and cultures. The beauty which genius has created has always been imperishable, but the artist's interpretation of that beauty was a fragile thing, caught only for a moment and held only in memory until that day when the motion picture, having found its voice, insured that age need not destroy anything that is imposing or exquisite or memorable. The personality of the artist will stir future generations. The singer will now live as long as the song.

"Within the ten minutes of the short subject The Film That Was Lost, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, William Jennings Bryan, Queen Victoria, King George pass before us in a parade of yesterday--not as the historian sees them in perspective, but as they were. The tremendous possibilities and values of this service, which only speaking and moving pictures adequately can perform, have interested not only those of us actively concerned with the

technical and artistic progress of the screen but Presidents Coolidge, Hoover and Roosevelt, who each in turn have given it their personal attention and their official approval.

"Among its many possibilities, Edison and Eastman visioned for the film the phase of service this picture shows. Eastman's own technicians worked on the problem as did others in the industry and, later, in the Government. The Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art is not only restoring and preserving these factual pictures, but is performing the important service of preserving the narrative fictional pictures which reflect the thought, the culture, the emotions of our time, that those who come after us may better know us for what we are.

"The motion picture does not attempt to appraise history. That is the business of the historian, who examines, sorts, weighs and polishes it--emphasizing those highlights which appeal to him, or fit the pattern of his work. The motion picture can show history white-hot from the pouring; rough in the mould--the gore with the glory; the terror with the triumph; the victim with the victory. Also it can present in moving form the dreams, the hopes, the aspirations of men; weaving the fiction with the fact.

"So while it is of small import what I say here, it is of great import what you do here; that once in every twenty years you re-record the ultimate of performance we attain, whether it be upon the stage of a studio or the stage of life itself, so that it may endure. I extend the Motion Picture Industry's appreciation to the Museum of Modern Art and those who made it possible, and congratulate you on having acquired so excellent a biographer for the Museum's Film Library as the Motion Picture Short Subject.

"I might hope that there will be a sequel to The Film That Was Lost, titled perhaps, The Film That Was Found; a short subject which will present in an equally fascinating manner the Museum of Modern Art Film Library's other and significant work of recording the classics and the technical progress of that which some have called the greatest of all arts, because it so much includes the other arts.

"Certainly, the value of the motion picture was never more apparent than at the moment. Not only is it doing its job of entertainment and visual education, but, in a time miraculously short, we actually can see and hear in our neighborhood theater the things which are happening in all parts of this present war-torn world.

"It is possible that, in preserving the living present for future study, the motion picture may be contributing the greatest service it has ever performed. In preserving the present moment for the eyes and ears of distant generations, in showing the actual grimness and horror which violent men have precipitated in the world today, the film may well be a mighty factor in helping to make sure that such a thing is not permitted to happen to humanity again.

"It will, we hope, also show those who study us in years to come that there were good things mixed with the evil, that there was strength and courage in our world, and that there were those who so loved justice and liberty that they were willing to give all they had or were that government of the people, by the people and for the people should not vanish from the earth."

In addition to The Film That Was Lost three other outstanding

short subjects were shown at the preview. They were:

The Good Job, written and directed by  
William Saroyan

The Magic Alphabet, one of the America  
Speaks series of short subjects produced  
in cooperation with the Bureau of Motion  
Pictures, Office of War Information

A T C A, the story of the air-training  
program recently inaugurated in the nation's  
schools and now merged with the Air Service  
Division of the High School Victory Corps  
under the sponsorship of the U. S. Office  
of Education.