

Event Cinema

Land Shows and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition

“Today the motion picture is a world power in the fullest sense,” *Motography* categorically announced on April 24, 1915. That’s quite a claim, different from but as equally grand as calling film a universal language or a democratic art. Proof of this claim for *Motography* was not the release earlier that month of Chaplin’s *The Tramp* or the unprecedented capacity of the motion picture camera to record for posterity an event on the magnitude of the European war. It was the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE)—“representing all of modern civilization . . . in a few acres of ground”—that this trade journal considered “a living example of the fact that the motion picture is an absolute necessity in our modern complex life.” At the PPIE, *Motography* reported, “approximately one hundred and fifty thousand feet of film” were being screened in “moving picture shows” found in virtually all the state buildings, foreign pavilions, and exhibit palaces. The sheer quantity of footage and screening sites mattered, but so did the stature of the sponsors, including, *Motography* noted, a major transcontinental railway line like Great Northern, offering “a film which shows the Glacier National Park and other views of interest.”¹ In fact, Great Northern offered each afternoon at the exposition’s Palace of Machinery not just a single film but four lectures illustrated with slides and moving pictures highlighting the northwest territory covered by its line.²

It is not at all surprising that Great Northern and other exhibitors at the PPIE recognized the utility of moving pictures. By 1911, an editorial in the *Laredo [TX] Weekly Times* could confidently announce: “The East is moving West, and the moving picture is proving to be an important factor in the transformation of the land.”³ Key to this reshaping of the nation were railroads like Great Northern and Southern Pacific, which, a syndicated newspaper article in 1913 declared, “have

put their seal of approval upon moving pictures as a means to encourage travel and induce tourists, home seekers and investors to settle along their lines.”⁴ In practice, moving pictures served as a means of *publicizing*—a promotional strategy encompassing attracting, directing, and maintaining the attention of audiences through the media, as well as promoting goods, services, organizations, policies, ideas, and values. In the early twentieth century, publicity was understood as both a product (like a moving picture or an exhibit) and a goal (like garnering coverage in newspapers, magazines, or theatrically screened newsreels).

This chapter draws on my discussion of the screening sites, exhibition practices, sponsors, and audiences of cinema beyond the theater, though the focus here will not be on specific advertising campaigns, unique screening occasions, local practices, narrowly targeted audiences, or the circulation of individual films. I will examine instead the use of moving pictures at conventions and, particularly, at large, carefully organized, extra-ordinary public events, including, most notably, “Land Shows” designed to promote the western United States and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. At these high-profile events, regularly scheduled screenings sponsored by US federal and state government agencies, major railroad corporations, and booster organizations constituted a particularly prominent and potentially influential model for how multi-sited, multi-purpose cinema could be put into practice.

CONVENTIONS AS SCREENING SITES

During the 1910s, conventions and conferences were potentially prime non-theatrical occasions—and gaining access to suitable films, a projector, and an operator apparently did not pose much of a problem. Packing public halls, opera houses, or hotel ballrooms, these gatherings could provide sponsors and lecturers with a well-defined audience brought together under the aegis of a common occupation, business, product, field of research, or set of beliefs. For example, at the 1911 convention of the Southern Surgical and Gynecological Association (held at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC), the presidential address by Rudolph Matas was “a lecture illustrated by moving pictures of ultramicroscopic life in the blood and tissues, and of surgical operations.” Matas surveyed for his colleagues the scientific applications of film, which, he claimed, “has become one of the most astounding and prodigious forces in the social organization of the twentieth century, in diffusing, imparting and disseminating knowledge, as well as in providing diversion, recreation, and amusement to the countless multitudes of the civilized world.”⁵ Matas’s lecture reached a broader audience when it was published in the *Southern Medical Journal*, illustrated with images of strips of celluloid. Distinct from the “countless multitudes” seeking amusement were, Matas implied, the surgeons and gynecologists comprising his audience—one of many professional groups primed to benefit from knowledge disseminated via moving pictures.

Across the spectrum of what Matas calls the “social organization of the twentieth century,” countless multi-day conventions, large and small, relied on film screenings during the 1910s. These events offered what amounted to an ongoing demonstration of the medium’s valuable utility as well as a testament to the increasing ubiquity of cinema outside the movie theater. In St. Louis, for example, moving pictures were on the program for meetings held by an array of state, regional, and national organizations, including the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations (1912), Missouri Retail Hardware Dealers Association (1914), American Physical Association (1914), Missouri State Poultry Show (1914), Motor Accessory Trade Association (1916), and Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (1917). These events had become even more common in the city by the end of the decade, with films screened in 1919 for the American Zinc Institute, National Shoe Retailers’ Association, American Mining Congress, Motion Picture Exhibitors of America, Missouri State Social Hygiene Society, Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, and Women’s Presbyterian Board of Home Missions.

Whether organized to serve a profession, industry, or social mission, these conventions arranged programs tailored for their own membership, though on occasion organizers opened certain activities to St. Louis residents as a form of outreach and strategic public relations. Thus the American Mining Congress, held during 1919’s bitterly contentious coal strike by the United Mine Workers, included free screenings open to the public of *The Story of Coal* (from the US Bureau of Mines) and *The Story of Petroleum* (from Standard Oil)—films that highlighted extractable natural resources, corporate investment in expertise and technology, and industrially driven progress rather than any issues related to wages, profits, and unionization.⁶

Moving pictures also served as attractions in other big events—most often referred to as *shows* or *expositions*—that actively courted the public and typically charged an admission fee, while functioning as advertising for goods and services or encouraging participation in a cause. For example, the Coliseum, St. Louis’s largest indoor space, capable of holding ten thousand people, was in 1912 the site for the St. Louis Pure Food Show (with “beautiful slides and Kinemacolor motion pictures”) and the Western National Business Show (with “lectures on the connection between business and civic betterment, illustrated with colored moving pictures”).⁷ Among the most ambitious in scope and widely attended of such events was Chicago’s Cement Show, a three-ring testament to the advantages of cement as a building material for everything from bridges and offices to houses and boats. Along with eight hundred exhibitors, the 1910 iteration of this show featured “a lecture room” where the secretary of the American Portland Cement Association presented moving pictures and stereopticon views to “illustrate the progress of cement building and the allied industries.”⁸

Following Chicago’s lead, cement shows were held annually in New York City, Kansas City, and smaller localities.⁹ With the full backing of the Universal




FIGURE 5.1. Omaha Cement Show, *Omaha Daily News*, June 10, 1915; *Dunn County News [Menominee WI]*, June 10, 1915.


Portland Cement Company (a subsidiary of US Steel), these shows aimed to “weld the contractor, architect and engineer into a Cement Fraternity,” while drawing a broader audience of potential consumers.¹⁰ To this end the five-day Mid-Western Cement Show in Omaha, Nebraska (1915), for example, offered “as a special feature” “moving pictures and slides of cement, showing its uses in various lines of construction,” promising further that “the reels and slides are new, and have never been shown in this part of the United States before.” Also on the program was *A Concrete Romance* (1915), billed as a two-reel “industrial romance about the use of cement on modern farms,” shot by Essanay for the Universal Portland Cement Company and also screened theatrically as a sponsored film.¹¹

THE UNITED STATES LAND AND IRRIGATION EXPOSITION (1909)

The practical utility and inspiring romance of cement notwithstanding, Cement Shows were but one of many heavily promoted themed events making use of moving pictures: Electrical Shows, Travel Shows, Safety Expositions, Automobile Shows, Poultry Shows, and, most notably, what came simply to be known as Land Shows, arguably the most prominent type of large-scale public expositions in the US during the early 1910s. By the turn of the twentieth century, state and county fairs were an established American tradition, joined by a host of relatively small-scale congresses, institutes, and conventions focused on specialized agricultural topics, but the Land Show only emerged as a national phenomenon in the wake of the United States Land and Irrigation Exposition, sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1909. Quite unlike the National Irrigation Congress and other trade shows, the Land and Irrigation Exposition (generally called the Land Show) was designed and advertised as a major public event. It ran from November 20 through December 4 at the Coliseum in Chicago, a venue large enough to hold indoor college football games, the Barnum and Bailey Circus, and the Republican National Convention.¹² Of the major events at the Coliseum in 1909, only the Land Show featured lectures illustrated by slides and moving pictures, delivered in a five-hundred-seat space designated as the “lecture room.”



A n n o u n c e m e n t


R. EDMUND T. PERKINS
 of the United States
 Reclamation Service
 will lecture *at the* Land Show
 Coliseum, every day
Nov 20th to Dec 4th

¶ These lectures will be illustrated
by lantern slides and moving pictures

The U.S. Land & Irrigation Exposition
 Office Fourth Floor (407) 115 Adams St.

DENSON & EASTON - Advertising Agents
R. J. C.

FIGURE 5.2. Lectures at the Land Show, *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1909.

“Are you hungry for land” and wondering “how to get big profits out of land?” asked one of the many *Tribune* advertisements for this ambitious event.¹³ The professed aim was to encourage city dwellers to “establish American homes upon small farms,” for—as a newspaper in rural Iowa categorically put it—“the best place for an American family is in a home of its own, and that home on a tract of land large enough to maintain the family in an emergency.”¹⁴ The Land Show no doubt drew people who also frequented Chicago’s amusement parks and nickelodeons, but this event was a celebration of America beyond the metropolis. It was constructed

to highlight the nation's glorious natural resources and its vast acreage rendered more fertile and more profitable through reclamation projects, the "magic wand of irrigation," and the principles of "scientific farming." A giant mural of the Grand Canyon and a panorama of Yosemite Valley overlooked booths covered with grapevine trellises strung with incandescent lights and filled with eye-catching produce and other evidence of the rich plenitude of American agriculture from Louisiana to Utah, and Minnesota to Washington.¹⁵

With tickets priced at fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children, the Land Show cost considerably more to attend than a neighborhood picture show, but its array of "interesting features" supposedly far outpaced quotidian entertainment. Thanks to the Santa Fe Railroad, complementing the photographs, transparencies, and paintings picturing the West, Navajo jewelry makers and weavers (residing during the show with their children in an adobe hut) served as exoticized reminders that the West had not always been a field of opportunity waiting to be plowed by white would-be yeoman to form a vast patchwork of family farms.¹⁶ Probably more than the Arizona-bred ostriches on display or the concerts by the uniformed Mexican National Band, the moving pictures scheduled daily between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. aimed to be distinctly informative and educational. The lecture room, wrote the *Tribune*, overflowed with spectators.¹⁷

ILLUSTRATED LECTURES FROM UNCLE SAM

"Uncle Sam Will Lecture at the Land Show" promised one advertisement, suggesting quite accurately the prime role that the US government played in sponsoring lectures illustrated with moving pictures and slides as part of its extensive exhibit, which highlighted the transformative activities of the Forestry Service, Reclamation Service, Patent Office, Geological Survey, and Department of Agriculture, as well as "the great development of Alaska and Hawaii under American government."¹⁸ A promotional notice on opening day promised attendees that "travel-ogues through Yellowstone park and the Yosemite valleys with moving pictures will give variety" to a lecture schedule largely concerned with the "more serious problems of irrigation and conservation."¹⁹ In addition, James C. Boykin, representing the Department of the Interior, provided films of volcanoes and other sights in Hawaii, including the novel phenomena of "surf riding." This footage, like most of the government exhibit, had also been used at an even more ambitious event held directly before the *Tribune's* Land Show, the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle, which ran June through October 1909.²⁰

Before arriving at the Land Show, Boykin (1866–1929) had played a central role through the first decade of the century in the federal government's earliest efforts at deploying moving pictures to publicize its initiatives and accomplishments. Born and educated in Alabama, Boykin had been a civil servant since 1887, when he was hired by the Bureau of Education, where he became the resident expert

on expositions. He prepared this bureau's exhibit at and authored the official report on the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta (1895), the Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition in Knoxville (1896), and the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha (1898).²¹ By 1901, Boykin had begun to take an active role in the production of government-sponsored media designed specifically for use in major public events. As "Chief Special Agent in charge of the Interior Department Exhibit" at the Pan-American Exposition (1901), he oversaw the making and exhibition of what looks to have been an innovative program that detailed the achievements of the public schools in Washington, DC, the US military academies, and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (all of these were under the control of the Bureau of Education). Presented in the Government Building, Boykin's multiple-media exhibit combined phonograph recordings of student recitations, photographic slides of these students, and brief motion picture scenes, including footage of vocational education in Washington (with boys working lathes and learning blacksmithing and girls cooking and learning dressmaking) and of Carlisle students performing gymnastics and playing basketball.²²

Newspaper accounts in 1903 describe Boykin (and a camera operator from the American Biograph & Mutoscope Company) filming mail trains in Missouri then heading to the Southwest to gather footage for screening at the St. Louis World's Fair (1904). These moving pictures documented the Interior Department's irrigation initiatives and its "Albuquerque Indian School," while also effectively "advertising" the Arizona Territory as a destination for settlers and tourists—or so claimed the *Arizona Republic*, a Phoenix newspaper.²³ Sketches and photographs from Boykin's travels in the West served as the basis for working models of Arizona irrigation projects and panoramic representations of the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Yellowstone that were displayed at the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland (June–October 1905).

Moving pictures played an increasingly prominent role at the Portland event. The National Cash Register Company presented daily in its "auditorium" a lecture with slides and motion pictures, entitled *A Trip to the N.C.R.* (fig. 5.3), and the Navy Department attracted would-be recruits to a two-hundred-seat screening area in its exhibit for a rotating series of sixty "biograph motion picture scenes" projected in "groups of ten or twelve" at regularly scheduled times.²⁴ Boykin was put in charge of what the Interior Department referred to as the "biograph room" at this exposition, "where actual photographs, some of them moving pictures, will be thrown on canvas every day during the fair." Promotional material promised that forty "biograph pictures" (including footage of Native Americans) and 350 stereopticon views (predominantly of national parks) would be screened—all "described" by "competent" lecturers.²⁵

By 1909, when plans were being made for yet another major exposition, to be held in Seattle to promote the opportunities of the American Northwest as a gateway to Alaska and the Pacific, it had become standard practice for the US

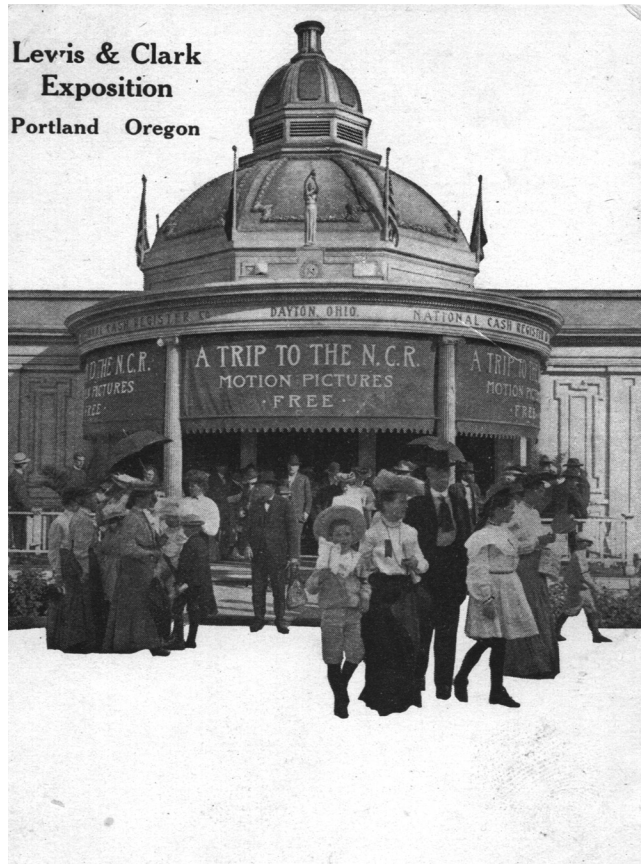


FIGURE 5.3.
Postcard for
National Cash
Register, Lewis &
Clark Centennial
Exposition, 1905.

government's exhibit to include a space designed and equipped specifically for lectures illustrated by moving pictures and lantern slides. At the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, the federally funded Hawaii Building housed what officials called a "biograph" section, a dedicated lecture room seating five hundred, with a fireproof projection booth and a twenty-by-twenty-eight-foot "plaster" screen. Five thousand dollars had been allocated out of the total \$200,000 federal appropriation to cover preparing and equipping this room and paying salaries for lecturers, operators, and other staff. Boykin was in charge of the biograph section, and in his official report to Congress on the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, he indicated that ten thirty-minute lectures were presented in this space daily, each typically using "about 60 slides and five or six motion scenes." These presentations covered Hawaii and, to a lesser extent, Alaska, as well as the US military, national parks, and the work of the Public Health Service, the Reclamation Service, the Forestry Service, and the Bureau of Printing and Engraving.²⁶

For Theodore T. Kling, writing in *The Nickelodeon*, the government's "moving picture show" that was "attracting 4,000 patrons a day" at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition was irrefutable evidence of cinema's utility.²⁷ (Kling doesn't consider how attendance at lectures may have been affected by the other attractions in the Hawaii Building, which included an aquarium and a "native" orchestra.) He deemed the pictures screened at this exposition to be "the best that money and talent can buy," perfectly paired with the compelling and convincing performances of government-employed lecturers, "experts who have gained their knowledge at first hand and whose heart is in their work"—like E. C. Culver, a Civil War veteran whose experiences at Yellowstone dated back to the 1880s, or M. O. Eldridge, from the US Office of Public Roads, who could turn "even the most phlegmatic of men" into "missionaries in the cause of good roads."²⁸ These presentations all quite likely espoused a common, highly optimistic outlook toward the role of the state, the nation's remarkable resources, and the promise of twentieth-century America.

What Kling called "motography in the government service" shared little, if anything, with the programming of nickelodeons, which were then typically providing one-reel or half-reel films of different genres, with some sort of musical accompaniment, often interspersed with illustrated songs or other live performances, and sometimes with advertising or announcement slides added to the mix. At the Seattle exposition, in contrast, moving pictures—usually but not always combined with colored slides—were incorporated into what had become a stable, readily identifiable format: the professionally created, self-contained, thirty-minute illustrated lecture.²⁹ This format allowed for (and often depended on) the inclusion of visual spectacle and novel sights, yet each individual lecture was unified by the performance of an experienced lecturer as well as by the non-fiction subject at hand (e.g., the process of producing currency, the life of a soldier, saving the forests). With fifteen-minute breaks separating *Picturesque Hawaii* from *The Life of a Soldier* from *Our Friends in Latin-America* from *A Trip through Alaska*, each lecture was in effect a discrete half-hour event. The fixed daily schedule of these repeating performances afforded fair goers with a distinct (if still limited) menu of options. Basically, the same format would be deployed in the 1909 Chicago Land Show's "lecture room" and subsequently at a host of large-scale public shows in the early 1910s, leading to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.³⁰

But unlike the self-styled "international" expositions in St. Louis, Portland, and Seattle, the Chicago Land Show was more narrowly concerned with particular regions of the continental US. Its program of illustrated lectures focused principally on the efforts of and the opportunities afforded by the US Reclamation Service, created by Congress in 1902 and soon responsible for a number of major water projects in Arizona, Montana, and other Western locations.³¹ Historian Donald J. Pisani argues that "the triumph of publicity—not the conquest of science, engineering or administrative efficiency—best defined the Reclamation Service in its early years," for this federal agency "fed the public an endless stream of

stories about the construction of hydraulic works, the retreat of the desert, and the transformation of nature.”³² This promotional effort was designed not only to tout government achievements, but also to encourage settlers to lay claim to reclaimed land. To this end, C. R. Blanchard, then head of what was called the “Information Section” of the Reclamation Service, had been prominently billed among the speakers at the Yukon-Pacific-Alaska Exposition. A syndicated feature article from 1908 praised Blanchard as a tirelessly active “fluent talker and writer” who uses the “most up-to-date methods” in “advertising the government’s new land enterprise,” illustrating his many lectures with moving pictures and “the finest of photographic views” produced by the Reclamation Service.³³ Not surprisingly, *Moving Picture World* fully endorsed the “useful and important part” that the moving picture was playing in bringing “the possibilities of irrigated lands and recently reclaimed districts . . . to the attention of the prospective settler.”³⁴

RAILROADS AND LAND SHOWS

When the *Chicago Tribune* sponsored its second Land and Irrigation Show, which ran November 19 through December 4, 1910, hoping to attract half a million people, two one-thousand-seat lecture halls were prominently placed in the Coliseum, and “graphophones declaimed for states and sections. ‘Barkers’ invited attendance to free lectures.”³⁵ The US Government’s exhibit and moving picture lectures highlighted the military and the USDA, as well as the Reclamation and Irrigation Service.³⁶ But almost all of the other exhibits—funded and staffed by state immigration bureaus, railroads, and land companies—were commercially driven efforts devoted to championing the benefits of particular places, not only throughout the West and the upper Midwest, but also across the South from Florida to Texas.³⁷ The Southern Louisiana Association, for example, arranged “free moving picture exhibits daily and free lectures” to advertise drained swamp lands ready to become productive cornfields.³⁸

The most prominent sponsors at the 1910 Land Show were Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and their affiliated railroad lines. This vast transcontinental railway system offered “moving picture lectures” daily from 1:00 to 10:00 p.m. covering sites and investment opportunities throughout “Union Southern Pacific Country,” which stretched from the Gulf Coast across the Southwest and California to the Pacific Northwest. By the end of the exposition, these railroads claimed to have attracted seventy-seven thousand people to their lectures.³⁹ Union Pacific–Southern Pacific enlarged and improved its screening facilities for the 1911 Land Show, as part of what *Judicious Advertising* described as a \$1,250,000 annual campaign in the US and Europe to “advertise for settlers.”⁴⁰ This effort, wrote *Printer’s Ink*, relied heavily on newspaper and magazine advertising that “is complemented by almost every type of promotion, including moving picture shows and lectures. The whole gamut of appeal is covered. The public appetite, whetted by local and



**Free to
Land Show
Patrons
Moving Picture
Lectures
Illustrating
Life in the
Union
Southern
Pacific
Country**

DON'T FAIL TO ATTEND the illustrated lectures
given by the Union-Southern Pacific System

At the Land Show
At the Coliseum, 15th St. and Wabash Ave.

Two Beautiful Theatres, handsomely decorated with paintings of
actual farming scenes and equipped with 1,500 Comfortable Opera
Seats, will be open to the public every day, including Sunday, during
the Land Show, from

1:00 P. M. to 9:30 P. M.

A different lecture, illustrated with moving pictures, on interesting
farming subjects will be given every 30 minutes. The speakers are well
informed and the talks will be instructive and entertaining.

The Opportunity of a Lifetime to see and hear about the wonderful
country served by the Union-Southern Pacific System—the West, the
Southwest and the Great Pacific Coast.

Music During Intermissions

FIGURE 5.4. Ad for Land Show, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1911.

general publicity, is transformed into a craving by an almost inexhaustible stream of books and booklets, filled with pictures and descriptions of the wonders of the western land.²⁴¹

A widely syndicated article marveled at the “fortune” that Union Pacific–Southern Pacific invested in erecting two self-styled “moving picture palaces,” purpose-built venues meant only for use during the three-week duration of the 1911 Land Show (see fig. 5.4). Audiences entered these non-theatrical theaters through doorways “brilliantly lighted with electric signs” that led to a fully carpeted foyer

and auditorium with 1,500 “comfortable wide armed opera chairs.” The interior walls were covered with paintings of “western scenes”—farms, “immense irrigation projects, and a number of the scenic wonders of the world.” All was designed to provide a refined environment for a high-quality theatrical experience: “The ‘cages’ for the moving picture operators were fireproof . . . the ceilings of the two halls were beamed and paneled and the interior decorations were equal to those of any theater in Chicago. In front of each room was the platform on which the lecturers stood, and to the left of this was the screen, on which the pictures were thrown. This was one huge sheet without seam to mark or mar it, and the reflections were cast as clear as it was possible to make them.”⁴²

Over the course of the Land Show, these two theaters hosted 506 separate presentations, with “moving picture lectures” (some of which were also referred to as “travelogues”) offered every thirty minutes, interspersed with musical performances. “Beautifully colored stereopticon pictures” were paired with moving pictures to display farming methods, cities, and “scenic splendors” found along Union Pacific–Southern Pacific’s western routes. There were 155,000 people who purportedly attended these presentations, and, according to the *Tribune*, during the 1911 Land Show “practically the same number” filled the seats for lectures from other sponsors at two additional theaters that had been constructed on the balcony level of the Coliseum.⁴³

After the 1911 exposition in Chicago, Southern Pacific–Union Pacific appears not to have invested in erecting temporary “moving picture palaces” for other events, but its lecture hall at the Los Angeles Land Show in 1912 followed the same programming format, with twenty-five rotating speakers offering “copiously illustrated” “half-hourly turns explaining the conditions, advantages and attractions” of different Western destinations.⁴⁴ At the 1912 Chicago Land Show, the Great Northern Railway became the largest exhibitor, and moving pictures played an even greater role than in previous years.⁴⁵ Ads promised “100 Moving Picture and Stereopticon Shows Every Day,” and the layout of exhibition space (see fig. 5.5) indicates the prominent place of the three “Moving Picture Lecture Rooms” constructed for this event.⁴⁶

However, even when sequestered in special rooms, moving pictures at attraction-filled events like land shows were very likely deployed as part of variegated promotional efforts that could rely as well on freely distributed print material and souvenirs, barkers working the crowds, and agents interacting with potential customers. Consider, for example, the exhibit mounted at the 1911 Chicago Land Show by the Rumely Tractor Company, a prominent manufacturer of farm machinery. Described at length in an article that ran in *Threshermen’s Review* and other trade journals, Rumely’s “wonderfully handsome exhibit” exemplifies the adage that when it comes to pulling in potential customers and highlighting a brand, the more “mediums” the better—to use the advertising parlance of the period. Featuring a tractor set up to show the engine in operation, displayed against the backdrop

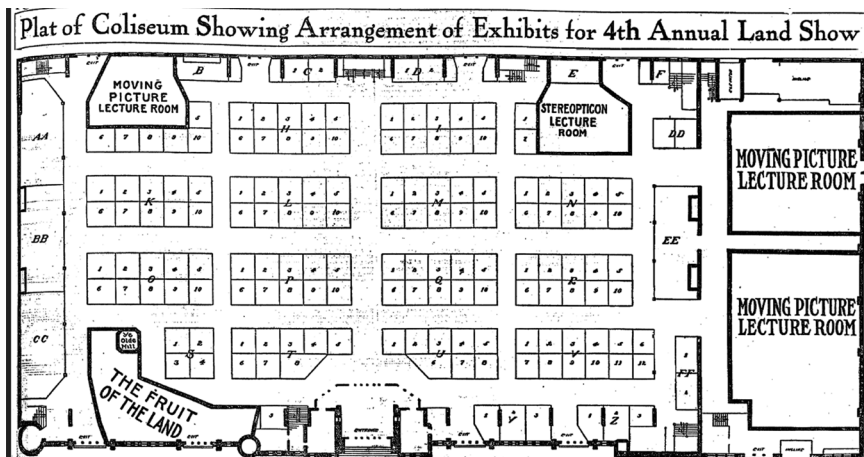


FIGURE 5.5. Floor plan of Land Show, *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1912.

of an “immense scenic painting” of Rumely equipment at work in a western field, this exhibit also included: more than a dozen “large colored photos” of tractors in operation; electric signs over the entrances to the booth with the “Rumely trademark set off by twinkling lights”; and a continuously running countertop “automatic stereopticon with fifty colored photographic slides . . . telling the Oil Pull story” to a “crowded aisle full of people.” In the balcony lecture room, company representatives gave “moving picture lectures on power farming.”⁴⁷ Like its even more prominent competitor, the International Harvester Corporation, Rumely incorporated moving picture lectures into a multi-faceted sales and publicity strategy that relied on an array of media—a particularly clear example of *Medienverbund*, which Thomas Elsaesser defines as “mutually interdependent and complementary media, or media practices, focused on a specific location.”⁴⁸ This is not at all surprising, since expositions and large-scale shows, where scores of attractions and exhibitors were vying for attention, encouraged multiple-media promotional strategies (and audience experiences) that had little if anything in common with the theatrical presentation of moving pictures accompanied by live music.

THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY: SELLING THE NORTHWEST

With buy-in from firms like Rumely, booster organizations, and government agencies, land shows quickly proliferated, staged at large public auditoriums in Pittsburgh (1910), St. Louis (1910), New York City (1911), Omaha (1911), St. Paul (1911), Kansas City (1912), Los Angeles (1912), Portland (1912), San Francisco (1913), and Denver (1915).⁴⁹ American railroads continued to play a central role at these

events, as part of what *Railway Age Gazette* praised as the “efforts that are being made by the railways of the entire country to develop an interest in agriculture along their lines; to introduce better methods of farming; and to help in the work of taking the immigrant out of the congested, unhealthy city and distributing him where he can do the most good.”⁵⁰ Judging from promotional material, moving picture lectures presented in a designated and dedicated space remained a major draw at land shows.⁵¹ These sponsored performances were, the *Chicago Examiner* declared, compelling proof that moving pictures are “an aid to empire builders.”⁵² Nowhere was this ambitious aim more evident than in the activities of the Great Northern Railway, the northernmost transcontinental line, which ran from St. Paul to Seattle, with connections over the Great Lakes to Buffalo, New York, and onto New York City.⁵³

In *Highways of Progress* (1910), James L. Hill, Great Northern’s founder and self-proclaimed “empire builder,” credited the “modern transportation system” with contributing most to “the development of the American Northwest,” where “immigration and industry have transformed a wilderness in half a century into the home of plenty.”⁵⁴ Historian Claire Strom finds that in practice Hill’s “vision of a settled, agrarian Eden on the northern tier of states,” translated not surprisingly into “a program to settle the land and promote types of agriculture that would result in maximum railroad use.”⁵⁵ Richard White offers a more pointedly critical assessment in *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (2011), arguing that Great Northern and the other major railroads that drove the development of the West engaged in “vast promotions unlike anything seen until that time.” “Like so many carnival barkers,” White concludes, “railroad publicity bureaus promoted the virtues of the West and cajoled potential settlers to seize the opportunity that the railroads offered” very much at the expense of indigenous peoples, the land, and the many homesteaders who proved to be unprepared for the demands of a new life in the supposed promised land.⁵⁶

Great Northern’s efforts to encourage settlement, investment, and tourism along its Western routes ramped up appreciably after Hill’s son Louis W. (1872–1948) became president of the railway in 1907. Louis’s efforts were crucial in lobbying for and developing the tourist accommodations at Glacier National Park, which was designated as such in 1910. By the time he was named chairman of the Great Northern board in 1912, a *Saturday Evening Post* profile would dub Louis Hill the real “inventor” of the Northwest, a new, triumphantly American land of boundless opportunity for hardy white settlers and sublime experiences for well-to-do white tourists. This forty-year-old is the “booster” supreme, the *Post* marveled, a modern captain of industry fit for the new century, whose “real occupation, diversion, vocation, avocation and passion is publicity.”⁵⁷ Hill’s tireless boosterism, I would argue, extended not only to the Northwest states and Glacier National Park, but also—perhaps inadvertently or indirectly—to a certain form of sponsored, useful cinema. His publicity campaigns for Great Northern demonstrated to *Christian*

Science Monitor, for example, that “the motion picture record of human activity is a form of chronicle as varied in possibilities as it is modern in method . . . each week records a new type of its employment, another discovery as to its utility.” *Moving Picture News* quoted this endorsement, then specifically singled out Hill’s role: “in this quick seizure of a popular and effective new form of publicity, President Hill has shown characteristic enterprise . . . there are many things about rail-roading, home-seeking, home-making, mining, forestry and all the multitudinous activities of a region like the American Northwest that no wizard with a pen or typewriter can depict on the printed page, but which a camera can record graphically and faithfully.”⁵⁸

Likely drawing on Great Northern promotional material, newspapers gave Louis Hill much credit for authorizing the filming of scenes of “farming and commercial activity along the country traveled by” this railway, an undertaking purportedly costing ten thousand dollars and requiring 20,000 feet of film—numbers intended to underscore the magnitude of Hill’s commitment to generating publicity.⁵⁹ Central to this plan was Edward F. Seavolt, a “veteran moving picture artist,” hired by Great Northern in 1911 to film in Montana, Oregon, and Washington. With a representative of the railway’s advertising department, Seavolt traveled the region in a specially equipped coach that included a film developing “laboratory” and a projector. Thus he was able, after filming local motorists and a speeding train passing through Prickly Pear Canyon near Helena, Montana, to screen the footage on a “stretched sheet” in front of a Helena hotel.⁶⁰ Boosters could have “industrial scenes or pictures of their collective resources taken” by Seavolt for “the wholesale cost of the films only, and at a nominal cost can have all the reproductions they want for local use.”⁶¹ By this strategy Great Northern could access additional footage and encourage localities and states to ramp up their own promotional efforts.

Footage that Seavolt shot during his seven-thousand-mile film-gathering excursion was probably incorporated into *The Homeseeker’s Claim*, a narrative moving picture sponsored by Great Northern and screened at the 1911 Chicago Land Show. With the transparent logic and ideological purity of an inspirational parable, this film, as described in newspaper accounts,

starts with the receipt of advertising matter and literature from northwestern commercial organizations and railroads by a resident of an eastern city. The recipient becomes convinced that he had better follow Greeley’s advice. He kisses his wife and three children goodbye and starts west on a colonist train. He arrives in Montana and takes up a 320-acre homestead. The next scene shows him cultivating it. Then comes the harvest scene, the homesteader smiling as he reaps his bountiful crop. Thus, having prospered, he sends for his family. In all these successive stages the hero of the story is presented in advancing conditions of prosperity and happiness, the climax being reached when the homesteader is reunited with his family in the little farm house that he has built in the center of his land, which he brought to a splendid state of productiveness entirely through his own efforts.⁶²



GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

SPECIAL STATE DAYS AT THE NORTHWESTERN PRODUCTS EXPOSITION

ARMORY, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Do you want to know something definite about any of the states in the "Zone of Plenty"? Then hear what the governors and other state officials of Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon have to say on the following days:

November 16—Oregon Day	November 20—Montana Day
November 18—North and South Dakota Day	November 21—Washington Day, Alaska Day
November 19—Minnesota Day	November 22—Seven States Day
November 23—Idaho Day	

Great Northern Moving Picture Lectures

in the lecture hall every afternoon and evening. Great Northern lecturers will supplement what the governors have to say with detailed information regarding where to go along the line of the Great Northern Railway to get free homestead land, low priced logged-off land, grain land, dairy farms, fruit land, etc., in the "Zone of Plenty." Get a copy of the Great Northern's map of this great exposition. Free on request at the Great Northern booth, just inside the main entrance at the Land Show.

H. A. NOBLE,
General Passenger
Agent,
St. Paul, Minn.

"See America First"



National Park Route

E. C. JEEDY,
General Immigration
Agent,
St. Paul, Minn.

FIGURE 5.6. Ad for Great Northern Railway at Northwestern Products Exposition, *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 25, 1912.

The footage shot by Seavolt was regularly described as being intended to serve in a "gigantic educational campaign to make the Northwest known all over Europe among those who may come here to settle and among the higher classes who come

Come And See The
MONTANA--WASHINGTON--OREGON
FREE EXHIBIT CAR
At Sullivan, Ind. Jan. 15,
Near C. & E. I. Depot

A State Fair on wheels. Greatest and Most Marvelous Collection of Grains, Grasses, Vegetables, Fruits, etc., ever exhibited by a railroad. Shows what marvelous crops are being grown in the ZONE OF PLENTY.

160 and 320 Acre Farms Free

In Montana and Oregon under the new THREE YEAR HOMESTEAD LAW. Come and see what a man of brains, brawn and small capital can accomplish in this wonderful land of opportunity. The Great Northern Railway has no land for sale, but it is vitally interested in the productive development of this vast new territory.

Free Stereopticon and Moving Picture Lecture

At 7:30 p. m. a free moving picture lecture will be given—150 stereopticon slides and moving pictures of actual scenes in the North West. EVERYBODY WELCOME.

Write for literature to
E. C. LEEDY,
 General Immigration Agent,
 St. Paul, Minn.

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

AN INVITATION is extended to you to visit the two
Great Northern Railway
Free Exhibition Cars

containing the most complete and interesting collection of Grains, Vegetables and Fruits from the States of **Montana and Washington** ever sent out. These cars are beautifully decorated and contain an elaborate display of the Big Red Apples and other fruits.

Information about **FREE HOMESTEADS** of 320 acres in Montana, grain farms, stock ranches and fruit farms, along the Great Northern Ry. will be cheerfully given by courteous attendants. No land for sale.

Located at 13th and Jones Streets, Omaha, December 6th to 18th, during the Corn Exposition. Two blocks east and two blocks south of main entrance to Exposition Building.

S. J. ELLISON,
 General Passenger Agent,
 St. Paul, Minn.

E. C. LEEDY,
 General Immigration Agent,
 Chicago, Ill.

(OVER)

FIGURE 5.7. Ad for Great Northern Exhibit Car, *Sullivan [IN] Union*, January 8, 1913 (left); postcard invitation for Exhibit Car (right).

to America on pleasure trips.”⁶³ This footage would likely have also been used in Great Northern’s exhibits at land shows from 1911 through 1913. These shows included a full schedule of moving picture lectures focusing on Glacier National Park and the “opportunities for homeseekers and investors” in the Northwest “Zone of Plenty,” as this ad from the Northwestern Products Exposition (1912) in Minneapolis indicates (fig. 5.6).

Great Northern’s use of moving pictures extended to various other non-theatrical sites and occasions as part of Hill’s commitment to “spare no expense” in “shining the searchlights of publicity” on the Northwest.⁶⁴ Most notably, Great Northern relied on a well-established strategy that had proved popular for railroads, state colleges of agriculture, and booster organizations: using railroad coaches as traveling “exhibit cars,” transporting displays and lecturers from site to site, as with the “State Corn Show on Wheels” and the “special dairy exhibit cars” co-sponsored by the Missouri Pacific railway and the State Agricultural College that widely circulated through Kansas in 1907.⁶⁵

In 1909 and 1910, Great Northern sent through the Midwest three specially equipped cars—each a veritable “state fair on wheels,” filled with photographic displays, print material, and agricultural products from Oregon, Washington, and Montana.⁶⁶ After considerable advance bill posting and advertising, the exhibit car would be left on a sidetrack near the town’s station for a day or two and opened to the public, often with schoolchildren specially invited. In the evening at a hall or a room in the courthouse, a free illustrated lecture would be given, featuring 150 or 175 “of the most beautiful views of the scenic Cascade and Rocky Mountain scenery, the ranges, the northwest stock and grain farms, fruit ranches, timber scenes, and others (fig. 5.7).”⁶⁷

By February 1912, Great Northern had added moving pictures to the free lectures that accompanied the exhibit cars. The company claimed in May 1912 that “in the state of Indiana alone, 100,000 people have attended the Great Northern’s moving picture shows and as many visited the two exhibit cars during the last few months.”⁶⁸ Advertisements indicate that this “Free Stereopticon and Moving Picture Lecture” continued to be presented into 1914, always with the claim that Great Northern was in no way making a “land sale” pitch, but instead providing valuable information to rural communities.⁶⁹ The moving pictures screened were intended to “open wide the ‘other eye’ of the dubious farmers,” wrote a Montana newspaper: “They flash upon him scenes entirely different than those he had pictured in his own mind. Thus he gets his first true conception of the new Northwest. Imagine the surprise, when, instead of the western farmer plowing with a rifle nearby to protect himself from Indians, the film runs off a modern traction plow turning over eight furrows at the rate of 40 acres per day. . . . Railway enterprise and the motion picture film are doing great missionary work in this direction.”⁷⁰

While Great Northern’s publicity efforts were clearly designed to demonstrate the agricultural productivity of the Northwest in order to encourage would-be homesteaders, the exhibit cars traveling through rural Indiana also pictured the region as a destination for tourists. In particular, the footage (and colored slides) of Glacier National Park that Great Northern prominently featured in its traveling exhibits and land show programming complemented a vast advertising campaign that included schedules, guidebooks, postcards, pamphlets, billboards, and posters.⁷¹ Louis Hill did not originate the idea of “See America First,” but he appropriated the phrase in promoting Great Northern’s passenger service, with Glacier National Park—home to resort facilities built by the railway—as the prime, distinctively American attraction on its transcontinental route. In her study of “tourism and national identity,” historian Marguerite S. Shaffer provides a detailed account of Great Northern’s development and promotion of what was then the newest national park. Hill’s plans and policies, Shaffer argues, sold a version of the West that hinged on racial, gender, and class inequity and inequality.⁷²

Great Northern’s elaborate “Western exhibit” at the Second Annual Travel and Vacation Show at Grand Central Palace in New York City, from March 20 to 29, 1913, is a case in point. A glowing report (offered as a newspaper article but very likely a press release) praised Great Northern for providing the “largest and most attractive exhibit at the show comprising electrical effects, transparencies, oil paintings, relief maps, eight scenic booths showing scenes of Glacier National park, and surmounted by heads of elk, moose, and mountain sheep.” In addition to this array of attractions—another example of *Medienverbund*—“Great Northern lecturers give moving picture illustrated lectures afternoon and evening in the lecture-hall annex, depicting the beauties of Glacier National Park and the Northwest for tourist tours.”⁷³ Judging by the press coverage, Hill’s most successful publicity stunt for the Travel and Vacation Show was transporting ten members of

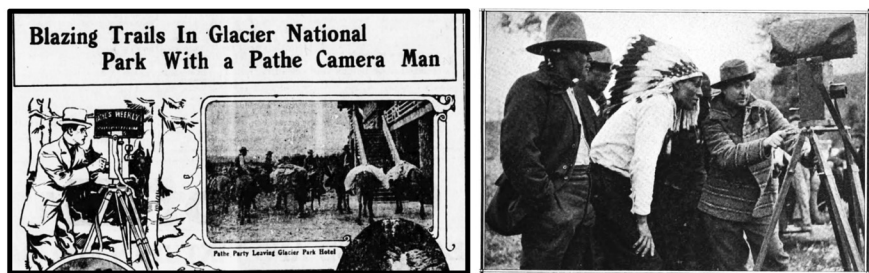


FIGURE 5.8. Filming in Glacier National Park, *East Oregonian* [Pendleton OR], December 2, 1913 (left); *Sunset Magazine*, March 1915 (right).

the Blackfoot Nation to Manhattan, where they pitched teepees atop the twenty-four-floor McAlpin Hotel. Tribal members also appeared under Great Northern auspices at land shows in New York and Chicago, where they appeared as literal and symbolic tokens of Glacier National Park, represented as a natural outpost within the sublime American wilderness, far removed from urban modernity yet accessible by Great Northern trains. This promotional strategy, which would also be central at the PPIE, is all the more disturbing because Great Northern's branding of Glacier National Park took place during a period of ongoing efforts to reject tribal land claims and the right to continue to hunt within the park.⁷⁴

Thanks to the "clever press agents of the Great Northern," wrote the *Pioneer Press* of Cut Bank, Montana, "Glacier Park is certainly the best advertised resort in America today."⁷⁵ Given Great Northern's investment in this vacation site and Hill's role as what a 1915 profile in *Sunset Magazine* called "a drummer of trade for Uncle Sam's newest sideshow," it is not surprising that Hill took advantage of the opportunity for generating publicity through moving picture theaters as well as land shows and exhibit cars.⁷⁶ Significantly, he gained access to theatrical audiences without relying on advertising films, industrials, or promotional slides. Before Glacier National Park officially opened for tourist business, the visit of President William Taft's son and daughter was filmed as one of the seven segments for the most prominent of early newsreels, *Pathé Weekly* (no. 37, released September 15, 1912). The segment featured members of the Blackfoot Nation at the park performing "tribal dances, which an Indian-surfeited public may appreciate, knowing they are the genuine article."⁷⁷ In addition, Pathé produced and distributed three non-fiction scenics as part of its "See America First" series: *Glacier National Park* (released September 26, 1912), *Blazing a New Trail in Glacier National Park* (released September 25, 1913), and *Glacier National Park in Winter* (released June 22, 1914).⁷⁸ All were split-reel films that ran from five to ten minutes and were released as part of Pathé's regular weekly schedule (fig. 5.8).

Ralph Radnor Earle, who shot the Glacier National Park films for Pathé, told local newspapers in the Northwest that the company released five hundred prints

of each scenic, ultimately reaching millions of viewers worldwide. I have not been able to verify these numbers, but theater advertising indicates that *Glacier National Park*, for example, was screened theatrically in the US for nine months.⁷⁹ The publicity value of the three Pathé films about the park was amplified by press coverage and promotional material concerning the work of intrepid cameraman Earle, who described the territory he covered for Pathé as everything west of Colorado stretching from Mexico to Canada. Earle was especially active in the Northwest, where his filming was encouraged and supported by Great Northern and Louis Hill, in particular. While shooting *Blazing a New Trail in Glacier National Park*, Earle accompanied a representative of the railway's advertising department, which likely outfitted and set the itinerary for this "expedition."⁸⁰ But even outside the park, Earle was working with, if not directly for, Great Northern. "It was through the efforts of Mr. Hill," wrote the *Butte [MT] Miner*, that Earle in 1912 "made the long jump from Seattle to Montana for harvest scenes," and Hill deserves credit "for recommending to the Pathe man Montana as a state overflowing with motion picture subjects of national importance."⁸¹ Earle explained in an interview with an Oregon newspaper that "[c]ooperation is one of the greatest aids to the motion picture photographer . . . and in no section of the country do I have finer cooperation than in the northwest. In securing industrial, educational and scenic subjects, commercial club secretaries, secretaries of chambers of commerce, railroad men and others identified with the development of a state along broad lines are absolutely invaluable to the camera man. It is largely through the cooperation of such men that I have been enabled to recently photograph some of the wonderful and interesting things of the Pacific northwest."⁸²

It is difficult not to regard the "wonderful and interesting things" that Earle "secured" in his wide-ranging travels as all representative of one type of media production: publicity. His account straightforwardly endorses sponsorship understood as the informal but essential "cooperation" between, in this case, Great Northern, civic boosters, and Pathé's cameraman. The result was sponsored footage appearing on theater screens as the "genuine article."

With a rapidly increasing population driven by significant immigration, a spectacular new national park, and the territory from Minnesota to the Pacific coast ready to be packaged and developed as the twentieth-century American agricultural frontier, Great Northern Railway saw immense opportunities for growing its passenger and freight business and for asserting its public prominence as an engine of American progress. In "promoting and packaging" the West's national parks, Marguerite Shaffer concludes, Great Northern and the other transcontinental railway corporations "worked to boost their public images as nation builders while forging a national clientele."⁸³ For Louis Hill, one prime means toward these ends was generating publicity through all available media, including relying on moving pictures screened in self-styled theaters at metropolitan land shows, at public sites in towns visited by exhibit railway cars, in movie theaters that booked

Pathé films, and in Great Northern's building at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, where this railway was awarded a gold medal for "Best Display of Scenic, Agricultural, and Industrial Resources."⁸⁴

Except for the newsreel segments and short subjects about Glacier National Park released by Pathé, Great Northern always embedded moving pictures within a broader *Medienverbund*, supplied lecturers for all performances, and advertised these "realistic picture tours" as informative, free entertainment, with "everybody welcome"—provided that they were already attending a land show or living close to a small midwestern town visited by an exhibit car. This was by no means a unique or innovative appropriation of film's utilitarian or multi-sited possibilities. But thanks to the resources Great Northern had at its disposal, its exploitation of moving pictures was ambitious, visible, and successful—at the very least in attracting a substantial audience, generating publicity, and also demonstrating, without necessarily aiming to, how moving pictures could best be utilized to serve corporate and purportedly national interests.

A DEVICE EXACTLY SUITED TO EXPOSITION PURPOSES

Although Great Northern did not have a line that reached San Francisco, it operated steamship service from Seattle to the PPIE (and further down the coast to San Diego's Panama-California Exposition, which ran in 1915 and 1916). At the exposition, this railroad had constructed a free-standing building on the marina, half devoted to Glacier National Park and half to agricultural products and opportunities along its route from Minnesota to Washington and Oregon. As it had done at land shows, Great Northern filled the building with displays, photographs, oil paintings, maps, models, and more than one hundred color transparencies (even adding an aquarium).⁸⁵ Every afternoon free presentations illustrated with slides and moving pictures were offered at the building's theater, whose daily schedule drew on familiar promotional fare. The amount of film footage varied from lecture to lecture:

- 1:30 Oregon (1000 feet, approximately 10–15 minutes of screen time)
- 2:30 Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana (800 feet)
- 3:30 Glacier National Park and Blackfeet Indians (1750 feet)
- 4:30 Washington (925 feet)⁸⁶

It was not the films but the actual presence of "a band of Blackfeet Indians" that again attracted the most publicity for Great Northern, particularly on the PPIE's Glacier National Park Day (June 15) when ten aged chiefs and other members of the tribe performed what was billed as a "Medicine Lodge" ceremony and "genuine Pow-Wow."⁸⁷ This supposedly authentic performance of tribal rituals was

one of several ways that the exposition simultaneously celebrated, exoticized, and eulogized now-archaic Native Americans including, most prominently, in photographs and daily lectures with moving pictures at the Rodman Wanamaker exhibit and with the widely praised and re-presented statue, *The End of the Trail*, which depicted a (broken, defeated, dying?) solitary brave slumped atop a horse on its last legs, signifying for one contemporary commentator “the hopelessness of the Red Man’s battle against civilization.”⁸⁸

As a public event intended to generate publicity, the powwow sponsored by Great Northern was matched a month later, when the PPIE celebrated Metro Moving Picture Day on July 15, scheduled to coincide with the Fifth Annual Convention of the Motion Picture Exhibitors’ League, then meeting in San Francisco.⁸⁹ At 2:00 p.m. a parade of “Stars, Producers, and Moving Picture Delegates,” accompanied by a military band, entered the grounds and proceeded to the Court of the Universe, described in guidebooks as “the grand radiating center for the Exposition.” Here, surrounded by the PPIE’s allegorical, imposing, ornate exhibition “palaces” and overseen by the glass-stone-festooned 435-foot Tower of Jewels, commemorative bronze medals were presented to Metro Pictures’ recent signee, Francis X. Bushman, then ranked among the leading male movie stars; the Exposition Players Corporation, which had the rights for filming on the grounds; and a representative of the Hearst-Selig News Service, who touted the newsreel as a “new and vital educative force in the modern civilized community.”⁹⁰ *Motography* reported that twenty thousand fairgoers witnessed the ceremony.⁹¹

Perhaps because of the size of the crowd, Bushman and his Metro co-star, Marguerite Snow, did not, as planned, enact a scene from their latest feature film. But the rest of the festivities went according to schedule, with Hearst-Selig filming the crowds for its newsreel and four young women chosen to appear in a film to be shot at the Filmland concession in Joy Land, the exposition’s amusement zone, where fairgoers could watch Universal pictures and visit what was billed as “a live motion picture studio in operation.”⁹² Moving Picture Day concluded with Art Smith, the daredevil “boy aviator,” “etching the word ‘Metro’ in letters of fire on the heavens” and being presented with a medal by Bushman.⁹³

The entertainment trade press duly celebrated the event. “Without a doubt,” Metro Moving Picture Day “constitutes the most important recognition of motion pictures and motion picture stars,” declared *Billboard*, *Moving Picture World*, and *Motography* (likely all drawing from the same press release).⁹⁴ For the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, this “signal honor” bestowed by the PPIE stood as a “surprising tribute to the advancement that motion pictures have made, when one remembers that at the most recent of other World’s Fairs the screen drama was little more than the other cheap attractions of the tent show section.”⁹⁵ While this tribute did put the commercial film industry at the exposition’s center stage, it is worth keeping in mind that specially designated days were a basic promotional strategy for the PPIE. In addition to being Metro Moving Picture Day, July 15 was also

designated National Lumber Exporters' Association Day and Non-Smokers Protective League of America Day, while the rest of this mid-July week saw twelve other days, recognizing, for instance, wine, the Federal Suffrage Association of the United States, and New Haven, Connecticut.⁹⁶ And Art Smith performed his thrilling aerial maneuvers not just on Metro Moving Picture Day, but nightly.

Nonetheless, the appearance on Metro Day of Francis X. Bushman (who had purportedly posed for statues on display at the exposition), the public acknowledgment of the Hearst-Selig newsreel service, METRO emblazoned on the night sky, and even the presence of souvenir booths selling photographs of movie stars all attest to the visibility of the movies at the PPIE.⁹⁷ In addition to newsreel segments, other films that had been shot at the exposition reached theatrical audiences, including Keystone's April 1915 release *Fatty and Mabel Viewing the World's Fair at San Francisco*, featuring its comic stars Fatty Arbuckle and Mabel Normand. A month later, the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch, which operated a wild west concession in Joy Land, announced that it had purchased 50 percent of Filmland and would use its "cowboys and Indians" for in-house productions, beginning with *The Exposition's First Romance*, which was booked at theaters sporadically through the rest of the year.⁹⁸ However, neither Filmland nor the 101 Ranch attraction stayed in business past June.⁹⁹

Regardless of visits by movie stars or the skywriting skills of Art Smith, the prominence, presence, and status of motion pictures at the exposition finally had little if anything to do with Filmland or Metro Moving Picture Day, with the projectors on display in the Palace of Liberal Arts, or even with the appearance of Thomas Edison at a day in his honor in October.¹⁰⁰ What registered, practically and symbolically, were the vast number of regularly scheduled, free screenings of non-fiction film in self-styled motion picture theaters that were permanently housed in the PPIE's exhibition palaces and in many of the state and national buildings erected on the grounds. With a few notable exceptions, venues like the theater in Great Northern's building were utilitarian sites not designed to be spectacular attractions in themselves. And motion pictures were most definitely not considered to be equivalent in any way to the fine art that filled the galleries and formal gardens, nor did they rank with grand-scale, postcard-worthy attractions like the "Electric Color Scintillator" (responsible for dazzling evening light shows), the Remington Company's fourteen-ton working typewriter, or with what William Lipsky calls the exposition's highlighted "manifestations of progress," like the first exhibit of a periscope and a million-volt electric transformer.¹⁰¹ The films screened at the PPIE did not warrant a special celebratory day, for they were woven into the daily fabric throughout the exposition.¹⁰²

For Frank Morton Todd, author of the four-hundred-page "official history" of the PPIE, the use of moving pictures at more than sixty sites on the grounds "was one of the educational wonders of the Exposition."¹⁰³ Todd devoted a chapter in his book to surveying the prominent role of film exhibition because "the development

of the motion picture gave the Panama-Pacific International Exposition a singular advantage over its predecessors. The exhibits showed the products of different lands, but the films showed the countries themselves; their topography, their harbors, mines, transportation facilities, their life and industries, how some of the exhibits they sent had been produced, and the conditions under which their people worked. The device was exactly adapted to exposition purposes."¹⁰⁴

A similar note was sounded by the PPIE's Division of Exploitation, which was able to place its promotional copy in countless magazines and, by one estimate, more than twenty-one thousand newspapers in the US and Canada.¹⁰⁵ "There is no department in the Exposition, and scarcely a state building or foreign pavilion, which does not make use of the motion picture as a feature of instruction," declared a Sunday supplement article in the Portland *Oregonian*.¹⁰⁶ The same claim appeared verbatim in newspapers from Bountiful, Utah, to Memphis, Tennessee.¹⁰⁷ Trade publications followed suit. In an article otherwise devoted to exhibits about coal mining, *Coal Age* pointed out that "one of the most striking advances to be noted in the Panama-Pacific Exposition is the extensive use of moving pictures, mainly as an educational feature, with the advertising feature absent or only very incidental."¹⁰⁸ The entertainment trade press likewise drew attention to what *Billboard* called "the omnipresent motion picture screen with the machine busily grinding out what the exposition exhibitor most desires to present to the public."¹⁰⁹

"Even a casual observer cannot help but notice," wrote *Moving Picture World*, that moving pictures "are everywhere, no matter where you turn. You cannot go into a building without seeing them."¹¹⁰ The omnipresence of film exhibition at the PPIE meant that "the motion picture [is] strengthening its already firm hold upon its willing captive, the dear public," concluded the *New York Dramatic Mirror*,¹¹¹ while *Moving Picture World* took the screening of moving pictures across the exposition as a testament to the maturation and unlimited promise of film as "a progressive growing industry, which is bound to increase and will eventually influence and become a part of every activity whether industrial or educational."¹¹² Hyperbole aside, such claims frame multi-sited, multi-purpose cinema less as competition than as an opportunity for the motion-picture industry still on the rise in 1915.

RIDING THE RAILS

In a guidebook dedicated largely to the architecture, lighting, and fine art at the PPIE, Ben Macomber acknowledged that "a striking feature of all the palaces, and one that differentiates this Exposition from its great predecessors of a decade or more ago, is the common use of the moving-picture machine as the fastest and most vivid method of displaying human activities and scenery. Everywhere it is showing industrial processes." In building after building were found what Macomber calls the "seventy-seven free moving picture halls" or "motion-picture

theaters” that were not operated as and could not have been confused with movie theaters.¹¹³ This difference was particularly evident in the programming strategies, design, and location of the three fairly discrete kinds of non-theatrical theaters at the PPIE: the screening facilities operated by railroads, drawing from their experiences with land shows; those housed in state buildings and foreign pavilions; and those operated by the US government and other sponsors in the exposition’s palaces devoted to machinery, the liberal arts, and education and social economy.

Given the role that transcontinental railroads played at land shows, it is not surprising that their exhibit spaces at the PPIE almost always incorporated some sort of screening facility. The lectures with moving pictures presented in the Canadian Pacific building, for example, covered recreational activities and locales from Quebec to British Columbia, while films like *Home Making in Western Canada* aimed to encourage investors and homesteaders as well as tourists.¹¹⁴ Southern Pacific, with a well-established route to San Francisco, mounted a particularly ambitious effort, displaying locomotives and other equipment in the Palace of Transportation and erecting one of the largest single-exhibit buildings on the grounds, complete with ticket offices, public restrooms, and a first-aid station—all planned, according to its souvenir postcard, “for the service, convenience, pleasure, and entertainment of the Exposition’s guests” (fig. 5.9). This building housed the 350-seat Sunset Theatre, which was said to be modeled on a venue in midtown Manhattan.¹¹⁵ Every day from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., the Sunset Theatre featured seven half-hour “travel talks,” illustrated by newly shot motion pictures and colored slides displaying the “marvelous scenic features and industrial resources of the states traversed” by this railway system through the West. Organ recitals filled the time between travel talks. Among the experienced speakers employed was John P. Clum, former Indian agent, friend of Wyatt Earp, and newspaper editor in Tombstone, Arizona, who had been lecturing on the “golden west” for Southern Pacific since 1911.¹¹⁶

To attend one of Clum’s lectures, fairgoers passed from a massive foyer via a doorway through a “big tree” to enter “the Glade,” an indoor walkway and “miniature woodland” replete with dioramas of memorable sights along this railway’s lines, creating a reimagined geography of the West in which the Alamo on the Mexican border was adjacent to an irrigation project in northern Nevada.¹¹⁷ Beyond the Glade and accessible only through the Southern Pacific ticket office stood the Sunset Theatre, where illustrated travel talks continued the visitor’s journey. The moving pictures shown in the Sunset Theatre were thus embedded in a sponsored, constructed, multi-mediated environment that testified to Southern Pacific’s largesse and transcontinental reach as well as its capacity for planning and organization.

The Pennsylvania Railroad’s self-styled “educational” exhibit in the Palace of Transportation reflected a different, more cartographic strategy, featuring a twenty-six-by-forty-two-foot topographical map of the territory covered by this railroad across the Midwest to the East Coast, along with models of Penn Station

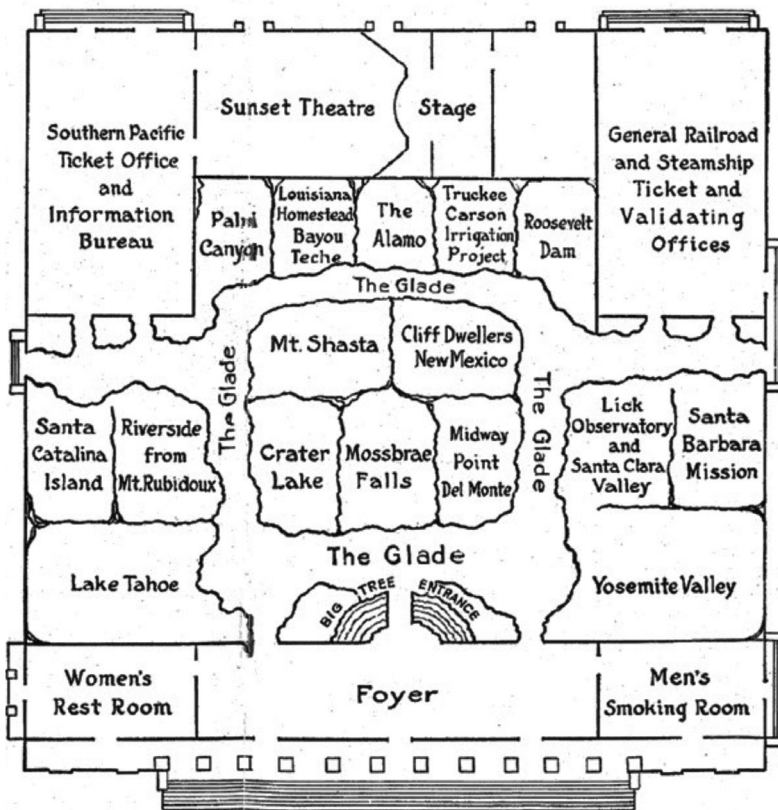
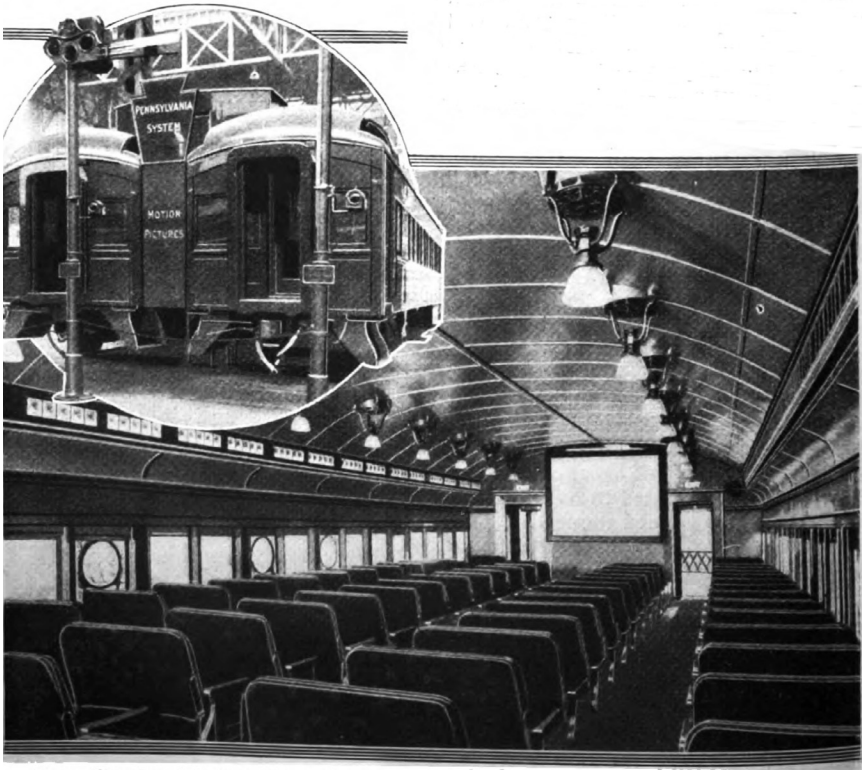


FIGURE 5.9. Sunset Theatre and layout of Southern Pacific building.

in New York City and Union Station in Washington, DC. Another topographical map complete with small electrical lights depicted an aerial view of New York City, as it “would appear to Zeppelin invaders”—a hardly subtle reminder of the war then underway in Europe. Complementing the scaled models and maps were twenty-seven reels of moving pictures covering Pennsylvania Railroad’s major routes between Chicago and New York City, supposedly all shot by the Edison Company from a camera mounted on the front of a moving train and screened in order over a three-day period. Individual reels focused on cities as well as sights along the way.¹¹⁸ Todd singled out these moving pictures as collectively constituting “one of the longest and most real travel pictures ever exhibited.”¹¹⁹

But the main attraction in this exhibit was most likely the unique “Passenger Car Moving Picture Theatre” that the Pennsylvania Railroad constructed at considerable cost specially for the PPIE (fig. 5.10). Consisting of two steel first-class passenger coaches connected side-by-side with the inner walls removed, this theater had seating for 112 with standing room for thirty-eight additional spectators.¹²⁰ An article in *Railway Age Gazette* estimated that in its first seven months of operation, the Passenger Car Moving Picture Theatre, offering eight shows daily, drew seventy-four thousand spectators, who turned over their (free) tickets to a uniformed attendant, climbed aboard, and took a train “journey by cinematograph,” guided by lecturers dressed as conductors.¹²¹ This “novel” theater caught the eye of *Popular Mechanics* as well as *Scientific American* (fig. 5.10).¹²² In fact, this was the only mention of moving pictures at the PPIE in *Scientific American*, which was more inclined to focus on the exposition’s complex lighting systems and the ten-thousand-horsepower water turbine on display.

The Passenger Car Moving Picture Theatre hearkens back to earlier versions of simulated travel that also relied on footage shot from a moving train. Most notably, Hale’s Tours, introduced at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, had some commercial success as a novelty attraction, with spectators experiencing scenic moving pictures with sound effects while seated inside a facsimile of a railway car capable of a rocking motion.¹²³ Aside from Pennsylvania Railroad’s theater, virtual travel at the PPIE was to be found among the commercial attractions in the Joy Zone, where paying customers could visit the Grand Canyon (sponsored by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway), ride a special observation car for a trip to Yellowstone National Park (sponsored by Union Pacific railroad), or survey the Panama Canal from a moving platform equipped with headphones so that each passenger could listen to a recorded lecture. These concessions did not involve moving pictures. Aside from the Passenger Car Moving Picture Theatre, only a handful of screening facilities at the PPIE were novel enough to qualify as attractions in their own right. For example, the California Viticulture exhibit constructed its theater “in the semblance of a wine-keg,” at the San Joaquin Valley exhibit, “a hollow, snow-crested mountain . . . contained a movie theater,” and rear-projection moving pictures appeared “on the ground-glass top of a beer barrel” at the exhibit for



Above: Exterior of Railway Motion-Picture Theater. Lower View Shows the Interior and Finishing of the Unusually Built Auditorium

FIGURE 5.10. Passenger car moving-picture theater, *Popular Mechanics*, November 1915.

Rainier Beer (fig. 5.11).¹²⁴ As attractions, these screening sites were nowhere near as spectacular as the mine explosion and rescue staged by the US Bureau of Mines, the operational on-site factories run by Ford and Levi-Strauss, or even AT&T's "Transcontinental Telephone Theater" in the Palace of Liberal Arts.

Five times daily (with private evening shows) in a two-hundred-seat, elegantly comfortable "theater de luxe," AT&T offered fairgoers a "comprehensive program" with dissolving lantern slides and moving pictures that covered the "growth and development of the telephone business" and the "construction of the transcontinental line" westward across the United States, an accomplishment this corporation deemed "the highest achievement of practical science up to to-day . . . gigantic—and it is entirely American."¹²⁵ Dramatically capping this illustrated account of AT&T's bridging of the US, the presentation concluded with a live demonstration. Telephone receivers attached to each seat in the theater afforded spectators the opportunity to participate in an otherwise expensive and restricted telephonic experience. Earphones in place, they listened to the day's newspaper headlines



FIGURE 5.11.
Postcard, Rainier
Beer exhibit.

being read in New York and a recording of popular music “wafted over the line from the Atlantic to the Pacific.” To “complete” “the realistic effect,” moving pictures of the eastern seashore were projected on screen while via a transcontinental telephone connection spectators heard the roar of the surf at New York’s Far Rockaway beach.¹²⁶

Beyond these few notable exceptions, the many theaters at the exposition were functional, safe, unadorned, practical sites. This was as true for the West Virginia state building as for United States Steel Corporation’s massive exhibit in the Palace of Mines and Metallurgy, which offered a “fixed daily program” of six hours of film that moved from the discovery of iron ore to the manufacture of wire, pipe, cement, and sheet metal in a “motion picture theatre” with walls, chairs, operating room, and equipment, all supposedly constructed entirely of steel.¹²⁷

PROMOTING STATES AND NATIONS

Theaters were incorporated into more than half of the free-standing, individual buildings (sometimes called pavilions) constructed at the exposition by twenty foreign nations and twenty-eight US states and territories, which saw moving pictures as a means of encouraging tourism and investment by providing evidence of prosperity and “advancement” that celebrated distinctive resources and achievements. In other words, the non-theatrical theaters in these buildings largely offered a steady diet of shot-to-order, self-promotional films that reflected the aims and assumptions of sponsors and boosters.

This strategy was readily apparent in Illinois’s participation in the PPIE. The Illinois Building, whose main attraction was a memorial room dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, featured a “motion-picture theatre” on the first floor with daily screenings that highlighted what an official description identified as “the parks and boulevards of Illinois; the educational, charitable and penal institutions; the roads; the agricultural and live-stock interests; and views of the principal large

WASHINGTON STATE BUILDING MOTION PICTURE PROGRAM (With Lectures)	
1:00 P. M.—Dairying and other scenes of Washington. —H. J. THOMAS	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">ONE CENT</div> ADDRESS
1:20 P. M.—From the raw land to the big red apple; and general farming scenes. —H. J. THOMAS	
1:45 P. M.—The big tree, from the felling to the finished product of the mill. —H. J. THOMAS	
2:10 P. M.—Train-Automobile Race—"Four Hours from Tacoma to the Glaciers in Rainier National Park." —G. F. SEVIUS	
3:00 P. M.—State Educational Institutions. —H. J. THOMAS	
3:20 P. M.—Life of the salmon, from the egg to the can. —H. J. THOMAS	
3:40 P. M.—Spokane, the power city, "Hub of 'The Inland Empire.'" —W. G. HANNAM	
4:00 P. M.—Seattle, "The Metropolis of the Great North- west." —D. B. DUNCOMBE	
4:30 P. M.—Washington—Scenic and Industrial. —H. J. THOMAS	
ASK FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.	

FIGURE 5.12.
Postcard, schedule
for Washington
Building lectures.

cities of the state." Lest there might be some confusion or worries about sully-
ing Illinois's reputation, the pamphlet went on to insist that "the pictures of the
various state institutions are intended, primarily, to show the great advancement
along the lines of humanity and mercy that has been made in very recent years in
the conduct and management of these institutions."¹²⁸ Illinois's moving pictures,
reported a PPIE visitor to the folks back home in Belleville, portray the "great-
ness and advancement of our state,"¹²⁹ evidenced in footage of the Illinois State
Fair, Joliet Prison, coal mines, the Chicago park system, the production of farm
machinery, and the University of Illinois.¹³⁰ In fact, part of the target audience for
all state buildings at the exposition was current and former residents ready to take
pride in their home state.

In planning its exhibit, Illinois's state-appointed PPIE Commission had offered
the "business interests of the state" in early 1914 the opportunity to have motion
pictures produced for regular screening at the exposition.¹³¹ It is probably impossi-
ble to determine precisely who commissioned, planned, shot, edited, and paid for
all the film used in the Illinois Building, though some of it was produced, accord-
ing to *Billboard*, by Watterson Rothacker's Industrial Moving Picture Company,
and *Farm Implements* magazine noted that in addition to its extensive display of
machinery and miniature model farms in the Palace of Agriculture, the Interna-
tional Harvester Corporation also provided a "series of motion pictures showing
not only the modern methods of farm work, but a comparison of the old and the
new" to be screened in Illinois's theater.¹³² The final report on Illinois's partici-
pation in the PPIE itemized the \$5,779 spent on operating the theater, including
\$4,100 for the production of the films screened (but with no line item for lecturers
or accompanists). In return for its investment, "perhaps, the state received a great
deal of the most desirable kind of advertising," the report concluded.¹³³

There was some variation from theater to theater in the state buildings (fig. 5.11).
Oregon's films depicted the Columbia River Highway, logging camps, quartz
mines, apple orchards, and native "bird and fish life,"¹³⁴ while West Virginia's

featured “mountain and valley scenery, the larger cities, glass plants, steel and iron mills, and the great Pocahontas coal field.”¹³⁵ The California Building was particularly ambitious, with five theaters promoting different areas of the state. The Sacramento Valley exhibit, for example, scheduled in its theater nine illustrated lectures daily that captured what organizers called “the many beautiful situations, as well as the marvelous productiveness of this favored part of California,” including footage of mines in operation and the eruption of Mt. Lassen.¹³⁶ According to an official report, 185,844 people attended these lectures over the course of the exposition. Massachusetts took a slightly different tact, commissioning from the Edison Company *Paul Revere’s Ride* and five other one-reel historical reenactments to go along with more than 20,000 feet of film focusing on sights and public activities in Boston as well as 10,000 feet supplied by manufacturers throughout the state.¹³⁷ The Massachusetts PPIE commission’s professed aim was to promote the state “as a place favorable for business, home or recreation”—a goal it shared with all the states that mounted exhibits at the exposition.¹³⁸

The same type of informational/promotional films offered in the various state buildings were also regularly screened in the pavilions constructed by Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Denmark, Guatemala, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Siam, and Sweden. These nations utilized moving pictures as one component in a larger exhibition strategy to assert modern nationhood, boost international prestige, and attract tourists, trade, and investment, often while addressing both former residents and potential immigrants. To these ends, the films usually foregrounded resources, industries, and urban progress as well as scenic beauty, unique folkways, and even indigenous peoples. For example, Sweden’s 37,000 feet of film, according to Todd, included “logging and lumbering and iron and steel manufacturing, and skating and the national dances. Hydro-electric plants and electric locomotives, nomad Lapps and their reindeer herds all appeared with perfect realism.”¹³⁹ Among the sights that registered most strongly for Laura Ingalls Wilder (later to gain fame as author of the *Little House on the Prairie* books) when she visited the PPIE were the moving pictures shown in the New Zealand building—particularly, scenes of harvesting, sheep herding, hot springs, geysers, surf riding, and “native islanders.”¹⁴⁰ Screenings like these fit comfortably within a consistent ideological pattern at the exposition that juxtaposed modern “advancement” with evidence of the premodern as archaic, picturesque, and “native.”

MOVING PICTURE LESSONS IN THE PALACE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ECONOMY

The promotional aims driving film exhibition at the state buildings and national pavilions were similar to what informed railroad investment in staging large exhibits at land shows and the PPIE. But other versions of sponsored cinema also played a prominent role at the exposition thanks to what *Billboard* called the “omnipresent motion picture screen with the machine busily grinding out what

the exposition exhibitor most desires to present to the public.”¹⁴¹ Almost all the major buildings at the PPIE hosted screenings, even the Palace of Food Products (in exhibits for the Heinz 57 company and the California wine industry) and Live Stock Congress Hall, which on a given day could show up to nine films, ranging from titles supplied by International Harvester to *Cheese Making in Wisconsin* and *Harvesting and Farm Life, Oklahoma*.¹⁴²

Moving pictures were particularly central in the Palace of Education and Social Economy, the sector of the PPIE dedicated, wrote Todd, “to improve the art of living, to teach the public the scientific value of life and time and human values.”¹⁴³ This palace featured displays covering pedagogical methods and educational institutions in, for example, Argentina, China, Missouri, and Gary, Indiana, as well as exhibits mounted by Progressive Era advocacy organizations, ranging from the Race Betterment Foundation and the Social Hygiene Association to the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage and the Children’s Bureau of the US Department of Labor.¹⁴⁴ Here, fairgoers could learn about home and foreign missionary efforts from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America as well as about the Montessori method—with Maria Montessori herself in attendance, overseeing the Casa dei Bambini, a demonstration classroom with seating for spectators behind a glass wall.¹⁴⁵

While visitors could witness the Montessori method in action or look down from a public gallery onto students in an actual classroom being taught penmanship, shorthand, and other business skills, exhibitors in the Palace of Education and Social Economy most often relied on an arsenal of media tools to achieve and promote what would come to be known in the following decades as “visual education”: “lectures, moving pictures, transparencies, stereomotorgraphs, charts, pamphlets, personal instruction, models, topographical maps, every conceivable sort of visual representation.”¹⁴⁶ Stereomotorgraphs, automatic projectors capable of holding up to fifty-two lantern slides, were put into service throughout the exposition, though these machines attracted nowhere near the same level of attention from the press as did the reliance on moving pictures. It was “by means of moving pictures,” declared a syndicated newspaper article, that the Palace of Education and Social Economy provided “adults as well as children . . . daily lessons in geography, social hygiene, physiology, chemistry, agriculture, horticulture and school system.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, in his account of the PPIE for the US Bureau of Education, W. Carson Ryan reported that “motion picture theatres assumed unprecedented importance at this exposition” particularly in the “education building,” where more than 90,000 feet of film were projected in two theaters built for general use and at dedicated screening sites within the multi-media exhibits of New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and California.¹⁴⁸

The Medal of Honor-winning Massachusetts exhibit, for instance, showed off the state’s commitment to vocational education and its care for the blind, crippled, and “feeble-minded” in daily screenings of 2,000 feet of film, as well as twenty-six sets of slides for two stereomotorgraphs, 180 charts, various display

cases, models with moving parts and electric lights, and seventy-two framed transparencies.¹⁴⁹ (On the second floor of the Massachusetts exhibit, lecturers for the United Shoe Machinery Company, based near Boston, screened *The Making of a Shoe* in a 250-seat theater.)¹⁵⁰ A different sort of betterment was on display at an exhibit detailing efforts to eradicate hookworm by the Rockefeller Foundation's International Health Commission. In this case, motion pictures were paired with photographs, charts, lantern slides, and more than twenty elaborate "life-like" models of magnified hookworms and children afflicted with this parasite.¹⁵¹ Exhibits like these led Todd to dub this building "the Palace of the New Knowledge"—exemplar of modern, practical pedagogy that relied on "every conceivable sort of visual representation," including, prominently, motion pictures.¹⁵²

By dedicating space for two general-purpose motion picture theaters, the Palace of Education and Social Economy encouraged exhibitors to make use of film.¹⁵³ These theaters offered a varied, rotating schedule of events, which could include, on a given day, a poetry reading, a lecture on "race betterment," and a film on schoolchildren in the Philippines (June 18) or films on the lead and gypsum industries and lectures on oral hygiene, child labor, and the Ford Motor Company's profit-sharing plan (September 11).¹⁵⁴ Special events and holidays warranted more thematically unified programming. Labor Day, for example, saw a number of lecturers covering labor-related topics, including "Work of the Consumers' League," "The Relation of the International Harvester Company to Its Employees," and "What the Government is Doing for Labor," though it is not clear whether any of these lectures were illustrated with moving pictures.¹⁵⁵ For Thomas Edison Day at the PPIE, the Palace of Education and Social Economy screened a full program devoted to Edison with films of "electrical and scientific experiments being conducted in the Edison laboratory," including "a motion picture demonstration of Edison's Bessemer converter, turning molten iron into steel" (but apparently no theatrical releases from the Edison Company were shown).¹⁵⁶

It was also in these theaters that members of the American Library Association watched motion pictures sponsored by the California Library Association, and popular lecturer Burton Holmes presented his travelogue on the Philippines. (Holmes subsequently returned to his profitable theatrical touring with a new illustrated lecture on the PPIE.)¹⁵⁷ The Palace of Education and Social Economy's theaters likewise hosted offerings as diverse as the Remington Typewriter Company's *The Story of the Typewriter* and *The Evolution of the Stenographer*, Ford's *Making of an American*, and a US government program that paired films about "the education of the negro and of the Indian and of agricultural education" with a live performance of "plantation melodies" by the Hampton Singers.¹⁵⁸

In addition to the two general-purpose theaters, California and New York relied heavily on moving pictures in the exhibits they mounted in the Palace of Education and Social Economy. From 11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, California screened a variety of films, all documenting successful "public educational activities" in

"certain progressive California communities," including a reel on the agricultural courses taught at the high schools of Imperial County and seven reels covering the Los Angeles school district from kindergarten to junior college, which won a PPIE Grand Prize.¹⁵⁹ Addressing visitors to the National Education Association annual convention held that year in conjunction with the PPIE, the head of California's Exposition Committee touted the state's films for showing "from a scientific standpoint how we are teaching the child to be ready to fight life's battles."¹⁶⁰ Todd concurred, calling the California educational exhibit: "a remarkable demonstration of what can be done by the cinema film to depict the development of such a constantly growing institution as a great educational system," enabling visitors "to inspect the whole school system of California from their opera chairs."¹⁶¹

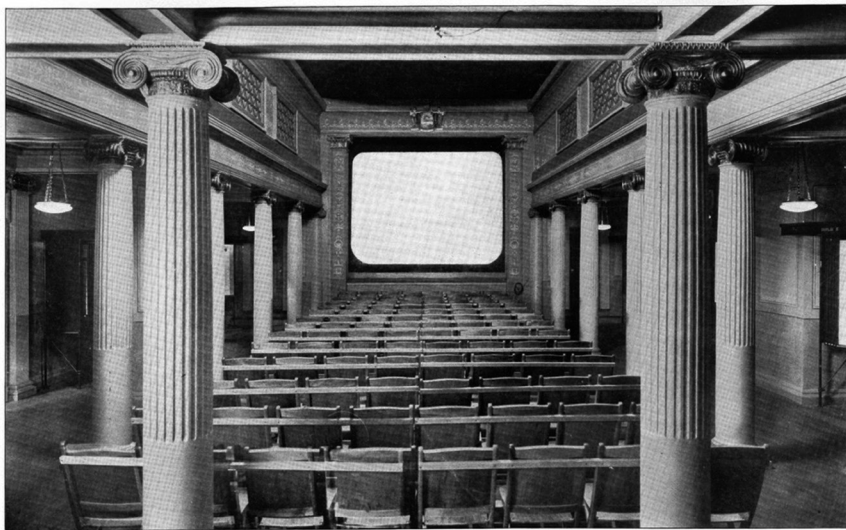
New York's extensive exhibit focused more on social economy than education. From early on in its planning process, New York's Panama-Pacific Exposition Committee emphasized the need to create exhibits that would "arrest and impress the vision" of fairgoers as a means of promoting the "commercial, educational, industrial, artistic, military, naval and other interests of the state and its citizens." To this end the committee insisted that "moving picture and stereo-motograph views should be used to the greatest possible extent" as part of New York's exhibits in the Palaces of Agriculture and the Liberal Arts—and most prominently in the Palace of Education and Social Economy, where New York would build a "Moving Picture Pavilion" (fig. 5.13). This "theatre of impressive dimensions and architecture" ended up resembling a sort of mausoleum or bunker with the façade of a courthouse or bank.¹⁶²

During the PPIE, "20,000 feet of views of the State and its institutions" were "in constant use," with New York's exhibit in the Palace of Education and Social Economy attracting almost five hundred thousand visitors, and the Moving Picture Pavilion drawing an average daily attendance estimated to be "not less than two thousand persons."¹⁶³ This theater offered daily screenings and lectures that extolled the state's varied contributions to progressive social economy. For example, "State Care of the Insane" was the subject of 2,500 feet of moving pictures, screened to complement the show cases, photographs, scale model hospital, stereomotorgraph, "multiplex" charts, and actual working hydrotherapy "appliances" on display. Each day in the Moving Picture Pavilion a doctor from one of the state hospitals delivered an illustrated lecture on "The Care and Treatment of the Insane" that began with slides, followed by moving pictures of the buildings and grounds, outdoor and indoor work, and recreational activities for the patients, including trolley rides. Other screenings in the theater highlighted the state's campaign to reduce infant mortality, the need for sanitary conditions on farms, and the work of health officers safeguarding the port of New York, as well as "motion pictures that mirrored the daily life of the inmates" in the state prison system.¹⁶⁴

At the same time, New York was also offering lectures and screening *Every Day Farming in the Empire State*, *The Origins of Asphalt*, *New York State Improved*



EXTERIOR — NEW YORK MOVING PICTURE PAVILION IN THE EDUCATION SOCIAL-ECONOMY BUILDING



INTERIOR — NEW YORK MOVING PICTURE PAVILION WHERE VIEWS OF EVERY SECTION OF STATE WERE SHOWN DAILY

FIGURE 5.13. New York Moving Picture Pavilion.

Highways, and various other one-reelers in a moving picture theater it had erected as part of its exhibit in the Palace of Agriculture.¹⁶⁵ In the Palace of Liberal Arts, yet another New York screening site figured prominently as a component of one of the PPIE's most popular attractions, an exhibit on the New York State Barge Canal, a massive public works project then nearing completion. Large working

models and oil paintings (one that measured ten by thirty feet in size) dominated this ambitious exhibit, which also featured colored lantern slides projected from a stereomotorgraph concealed inside a wall and motion pictures presenting excavation equipment and the construction and operation of the canal's locks. These films were shown within a space designed to replicate the lower entrance of a canal lock, one of the PPIE's most novel screening sites.¹⁶⁶

In some respects the US government's reliance on moving pictures at the exposition was similar to the strategy adopted by New York, with a "Government Motion Picture Room" located in both the Palace of Mines and Metallurgy and in the Palace of Machinery, which housed the extensive Navy and War Department exhibits. On a typical day, each of these theaters offered a separate program of screenings from 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. through late afternoon that included titles like *A Day in Baby's Life* and *American Sardine Industry* and films covering the work of the federal agencies responsible for the post office, "Indian schools," dam projects, naval training, and road construction. In addition, the government operated its main "lecture room" as part of its extensive exhibit in the Palace of Liberal Arts, with a focus on illustrated lectures, many of which were of a piece with the presentations at Land Shows and previous world's fairs, covering the Forest Service, reclamation projects, and road building.¹⁶⁷

NON-THEATRICAL THEATERS

Projecting moving pictures inside a facsimile of a canal lock, or two joined railway coaches, or a room decorated to look like a mountain were exceptions to the general rule at the PPIE, where the theaters almost always looked like theaters—of a quite specific design. Showing sponsored, free, regularly scheduled, publicly announced, informational moving picture programs that often included slides and relied on lecturers (but not on musical accompaniment or theatrically released films), these theaters were modest, safe, utilitarian spaces well-suited for delivering useful moving pictures at a large-scale public event. Found in virtually all the PPIE's buildings, these independently operated venues competed daily for patrons, without the need or the opportunity to cultivate regular customers and turn a profit and without the requirement of providing a change of program every day or every week (fig. 5.14).

Early in the planning process, the organizers of the exposition had recommended that states and foreign nations incorporate a purpose-built screening facility in their buildings and subsequently had carefully regulated how and where these pictures would be shown. When state PPIE commissions in Montana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Illinois found it difficult to convince legislators to appropriate funds for a state building, the exposition staff suggested using moving pictures to generate interest and revenue. As George Hugh Perry, the director of the PPIE's Division of Exploitation, explained to an Illinois state senator in March 1914:

We have recently evolved a plan here which I think you might find useful. It is working like a charm in other states. Briefly it consists of taking two or three hundred

feet each of moving picture films of big factories, stores, scenic points, hotels, resorts, fine residences, etc., and combine such scenes in an "Illinois State Reel." This reel is exhibited three or five times a day in a moving picture theatre provided in your state building.

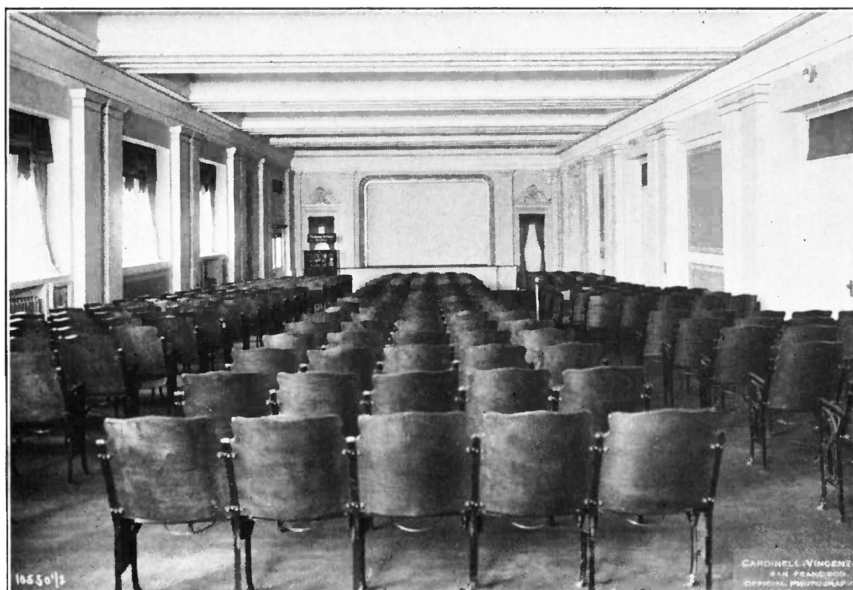
This plan solves two or three problems at once. In the first place it attracts a large number of people to your building (the show being given free). Second, it enables a great many interests and industries to get the benefit of advertising before large audiences. There are hundreds of men with fine homes. There are hundreds of hotels, great factories, big plants, etc., who would be very glad, either as a matter of pride or as a matter of advertising, to have such things exhibited.

The beauty of it is that we can take these pictures for you (or you can take them yourself) at a price approximately \$1.00 a foot which will cover all expenses. You can sell them to the advertiser at from \$8.00 to \$10.00 a foot. The excess money goes to your commission for the building fund.

I think you will see the merits of this plan at a glance. It has the advantage of combining every argument for state pride and patriotism with commercial benefits to the attraction of personal pride.¹⁶⁸

The Division of Exploitation did have some experience in this regard, having sent lecturers on tour with its own slides and moving pictures to drum up interest and help create the sense of the exposition as what Sabine Haenni calls a "media event."¹⁶⁹ According to Perry's plan, utilizing moving pictures in this quite formulaic manner makes perfect sense: they can generate significant upfront revenue, attract fairgoers to state buildings, and boost state pride while catering to the egos of prominent citizens. I have found no evidence, however, that officials actually monitored the motion pictures shown at the exposition, in stark contrast to the projectionists and screening sites, which were the subject of vigilant attention.

The most obvious concern was with the safety of the many theaters and the threat of fire. The PPIE's formal Rules and Regulations regarding the construction of "one story theaters and moving picture shows" adhered to the National Board of Fire Underwriters' code concerning clearly marked exits, prescribed aisle width, required lobby space, and the installation of automatic sprinkler systems.¹⁷⁰ The Engineer of Fire Protection continued to monitor the theaters once the exposition had opened, demanding at one point that Oregon, for example, provide in its booth a "fireproof rewind" set-up, buckets of sand and water, and "suitable film storage," and that Pennsylvania replace an operator who had twice failed a required examination.¹⁷¹ According to the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, this concern paid off: "each of the sixty theaters can justly claim the descriptive word 'model.' Projection, seating, ventilation, and the condition of the film itself, each is of high standard."¹⁷² *Moving Picture World* was probably correct in noting that in addition to the appeal of whatever appeared on screen, "a seat in a well-ventilated, comfortable auditorium" offered "pleasant relief" for folks roaming the exposition grounds and working their way through immense palaces.¹⁷³



MOTION-PICTURE THEATRE



FIGURE 5.14. Illinois and Pennsylvania theaters at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

Conforming to these safety codes and usually kept well under three hundred seats, the reasonably comfortable “model” moving picture theaters at the exposition were functional, one-floor, narrow, rectangular venues with few added decorative frills—closer to the interior of a respectable nickelodeon than to the more ornate multi-tiered theaters that had increasingly become showplaces for the movies by the mid-1910s. These utilitarian theaters occupied a quite different public space than the movie theaters found on small-town main streets or the commercial centers and residential neighborhoods of American cities. To reach the moving pictures screened by Oregon or Argentina, spectators entered distinctive, readily identifiable, free-standing buildings, which, like the films and lectures they provided daily, served to announce, evoke, and celebrate the sponsoring state or nation. Virtually all of the national pavilions and most of the state buildings were refined, monumental, and pretentious showpieces, decorated with carefully selected, symbolically rich representations of the homeland (in the form of paintings, dioramas, displays, craftwork, furniture, etc.). In addition, they often provided restaurants, restrooms, reception rooms, libraries, and museum-style galleries to beckon visitors.

Bolivia’s relatively small pavilion, to cite one striking example, was constructed in the style of a Spanish colonial church, to which were added reproductions of Incan monoliths flanking the entrance. A massive doorway opened onto a large landscaped open-air patio (modeled on a building at the famed Mint of Potosi), around which were located a motion picture theater and rooms displaying the nine hundred varieties of Bolivian wood, this nation’s agricultural resources, craftwork by the “aboriginal population,” and the skins of llama, alpaca, jaguar, and other indigenous animals. (Bolivia also had an exhibit in the Palace of Mines and Metallurgy.) Within the theater, films highlighted “Indian scenes” and “majestic ruins” as well as a “fine military review,” modern architecture in La Paz, the nation’s railroads, and its mining industry. A commentator in the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* observed that the displays and the overall design of the Bolivian pavilion are “vividly brought to mind as one steps into the salon and watches the motion pictures.”¹⁷⁴ States likely also aimed to evoke a sense of continuity between the building, the exhibits, and the films screened. With appreciably less flair than Bolivia, Massachusetts, for example, placed its theater in a space that included a Publicity Room designed to be a “clearing house of information” regarding the state’s industries, display cases filled with historic artifacts, a reception room with facsimiles of prerevolutionary furniture, and portraits, busts, and photographs of former governors, state dignitaries, and famed Massachusetts citizens like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Paul Revere.¹⁷⁵

While scholarship on the history of film exhibition has understandably focused on the technology, architecture, seating, amenities, and décor of the theater—the non-theatrical theaters at the PPIE point to another feature, what we might call the *location* of the screening site, which refers not to an identifiable address but to

what filled the immediately adjacent and wider surrounding space and to how the theater was accessed. I am not assuming that all spectators took the same route to a given theater, but rather that in all cases, a route was taken and space traversed and experienced. The precise placement of the Sunset Theatre in the Southern Pacific building, which I described earlier, reflects the significance of location, and so too does the placement of the small moving picture theater in Guatemala's building, where it was dwarfed by a four-hundred-seat hall that drew large crowds for marimba concerts.¹⁷⁶ Beyond what was proximate, the exposition's various screening sites were each situated in multiple spatial contexts. New York's Motion Picture Pavilion, for example, was part of a cluster of exhibits related to Social Economy, all arrayed within the themed environment of the Palace of Education and Social Economy, which was placed (safely) outside the exposition's Joy Zone, as were all the palaces, which were, in turn, all situated within the PPIE as an encompassing space with a distinctive physical design, certain rules of operation, and governing assumptions concerning progress, nationalism, international trade, technology, efficiency, and uplift. *Location* is an important, historically specific, variable when it comes to how moving pictures were actually put to use at the PPIE and other world's fairs. It is also equally relevant, I propose, for thinking about the role and significance of screening sites in conventions and large-scale shows in the 1910s—and, subsequently, in museums, shopping malls, and theme parks.

CONCLUSION

Useful cinema put into practice at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition was a prime example of what we can call *event cinema*, that is, the screening of moving pictures as part of a large, planned, organized, multi-faceted, short-term (or at least finite) public occasion. Beyond the significant scholarship on the presence of film at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, the world's fairs in Chicago (1933) and New York (1939), and later international expositions,¹⁷⁷ the history of event cinema through the twentieth century remains to be written, particularly if we take into account instances like the 1915 Alabama Equal Suffrage Convention where *Your Girl and Mine* was screened, the 1914 Cement Show held in Omaha, Nebraska, that featured motion pictures promoting the PPIE, and the Methodist Centenary celebration in 1919, for which was erected what was billed as the "world's largest motion picture screen."¹⁷⁸ While the function and relative prominence of moving pictures could vary considerably from event to event in the 1910s, the inclusion of screenings at these gatherings—and definitely at the PPIE—was at the very least a tacit acknowledgement of the value and the feasibility of moving pictures put to practical ends, a demonstration of cinema made useful.

This is not to say that the PPIE was innovative in its use of moving pictures. Event cinema predated San Francisco's international exposition, which shared less in this

regard with other world's fairs staged in the US than with the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition (1905), the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (1909), and land shows, events at which railroads and government agencies invested in dedicated screening sites, relied on the illustrated lecture as a presentational format, put a premium on publicity, and embraced an ethos of enlightened boosterism. The sponsors utilizing moving pictures at the PPIE relied on a similar strategy, which changed little if at all over the ten months that the exposition remained open.

Yet judging from the extensive press coverage and positive publicity generated (largely thanks to the exposition's Division of Exploitation)—as well as the sheer size of this event and the crowds it drew—multi-purpose, sponsored cinema in the US seemed to have crossed a threshold at the PPIE. Hundreds of thousands of feet of film screened in free, regularly scheduled, daily programs at fifty or seventy dedicated moving picture theaters erected within the exposition's palaces and many of its other buildings strikingly testified to the viability, visibility, and the status of cinema put to utilitarian rather than commercial entertainment purposes. It was the number of screens and the utility of the screenings at this monumental, high-prestige public event that registered for commentators, not any remarkably innovative or technologically sophisticated use of the medium. With very few exceptions, the many non-theatrical theaters at the exposition were as mundane as they were ubiquitous. That these theaters and the films they showed rarely qualified as spectacular attractions reinforced the sense that “educational” moving pictures (particularly when screened as part of a lecture) belonged among the palaces and government-sponsored buildings rather than the amusement concessions at the PPIE.

It could well have seemed that in the theaters operated by transcontinental railroads and those housed in state buildings and national pavilions, non-commercial cinema had found its calling and demonstrated its value as an alternative to or expansion of the American commercial film industry. For these non-theatrical theaters, the prime use of multi-purpose moving pictures was as a means of recording and delivering non-fiction information that told of economic progress, civic responsibility, natural wonders, and ostensibly enduring values, with the aim of generating for sponsors positive publicity and, perhaps, investment and profit. But apart from the theaters funded and operated by states, nations, and railroads, moving pictures at the PPIE were put to other uses—for example, as a means of corporate self-presentation and public relations by the likes of AT&T, US Steel, Ford, and US Gypsum. And judging from the available evidence, the theaters in the Palace of Education and Social Economy welcomed lectures with moving pictures that were socially engaged, advocated for change, and espoused progressive values—though the goal was as likely to be race betterment as improved institutional care for the “insane,” all within the broader mandate of bettering the lives of individuals, disadvantaged populations, and society at large. Thus, while the much acclaimed omnipresence of moving pictures at the PPIE did unquestionably

reflect the predominance of a relatively small range of powerful corporate and government sponsors, the exposition also provided evidence of other possibilities open to multi-purpose cinema in the 1910s and beyond, including various forms of civic, social, religious, or even explicitly political activism.

Moving pictures may have proven to be, in Frank Morton Todd's phrase, "a device exactly adapted to exposition purposes."¹⁷⁹ But even with all the publicity and high praise it received, the PPIE's version of event cinema, which depended on particular exhibition and programming practices, did not somehow dictate or direct the future of cinema outside the movie theater. As we have seen, moving pictures remained adaptable for other purposes, at other sites, by other sponsors aiming to reach much smaller, more targeted audiences than the largely well-off fairgoers moving from exhibit to exhibit at the exposition or the crowds curious about the opportunities of the Northwest.