

LOCAL HISTORY

The 1917 Santa Cruz suffrage film

By Ross Eric Gibson

Wm. D. Dalton and Edward Ferguson established a movie studio at De Laveaga Park in 1916, but their series of short comedies couldn't find distributors in a saturated market. Dalton's father-in-law, boardwalk-founder Fred Swanton, decided the new trend for quality feature-length films had more public demand, so Swanton courted Hollywood's leading directors. Santa Paula studio head Willis Robards said he'd come, on condition Swanton's backers could

guarantee a \$20,000 budget for their first feature film.

When eight potential investors met at San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel, they were at first dismayed to learn Robards would make a women's suffrage film, a genre long known either for belittling farce, or preachy melodrama. But the screenwriter was actor-playwright Hal Reid, well known for hundreds of scripts for stage and screen, including a number of high-profile Cause films "ripped from the headlines." Reid's family was a theatrical dynasty, his son being Wallace Reid, movie idol in

well-known blockbusters, married to Dorothy Davenport, a playwright noted for starring in quality Prestige films.

Reid had already made a 20-minute suffrage film in 1912, with cameos from 10 famous suffragists, a film still shown at suffrage meetings. But his brilliant idea for this new film was to set it in the future after suffrage had been achieved. It told of a woman judge elected first woman governor, who then faced a dilemma of either following the law, or following her heart. The theme was more a

FILM » PAGE 4



Scene on Front Street, shows the dome of the Leonard Building, and a flag at the old City Hall (now the Museum of Art and History).

CONTRIBUTED

EDUCATION

Mount Madonna School has successful in-person instruction

The school has been successfully teaching students in-person for two months



PHOTOS BY SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Mount Madonna Director of Upper School Shannon Kelly teaches Values in World Thought to the school's seniors. A number of private schools in Santa Cruz County, including Mount Madonna, are offering in-person instruction with COVID-19 safety measures in place. While a handful of Mount Madonna School student's families have opted to learn remotely, 154 of the school's kindergarten through 12th graders are taking all classes in tents or outdoors where students and teachers stay at least 6 feet apart and each student's temperature is taken upon arrival each day.

By Ryan Stuart

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WATSONVILLE » Mount Madonna School in Watsonville is leading the charge in the return to in-person learning in Santa Cruz County.

The private school returned to in-person instruction Sept. 8 with both indoor and outdoor learning spaces. It set up approximately 19 classrooms in tents outside and purchased extra school buses to create opportunities for social distancing even before the first bell rings.

"Well, certainly it's a lot of hard work," said Mount Madonna Head of School, Ann Goewert. "There's lots of communication and transparency. We've really went above and beyond."

Despite reopening a K-12 school in the middle of a pandemic, Mount Madonna has run into only one problem that forced its students back into distance learning for a short while, said Goewert. Unhealthy air quality as a result of the CZU



Signage at the entrance to Mount Madonna School reminds students about the health precautions necessary to keep safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

August Lightning Complex fire made on-campus operations difficult.

"The one thorn that was in our side for a while was the air quality," Goewert said. "We promoted, 'We're learning outdoors,' then the fires started. There were three to four days this year where we had to pivot to remote

learning because the air quality was so poor."

Goewert attributes the school's success to smaller class sizes, as well as the move to outdoor learning. The outdoor spaces allow Mount Madonna to space students out better than indoor classrooms do, she said. "Most of the learning takes

place outdoors," Goewert said. "We were able to space the kids, so they were physically distanced and lots of air circulation."

Students have been required to wear masks and social distance while on campus. However, these mandates have been harder to enforce than expected, Goewert said, but not in the way most faculty and parents had expected.

"Initially so many families were concerned about the masks. Turns out the masks aren't the issues, it's the distancing," Goewert said.

Mount Madonna understands the concerns of some parents and chose not to force in-person instruction during the pandemic. Some parents have already chosen to keep their children in distance learning and the school has found a way to accommodate them.

Other schools in the county have expressed that if parents want to keep their children in distance learning, then

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NAME DROPPING

Alzheimer's walk raises \$178,000

Santa Cruz Sentinel

The Walk to End Alzheimer's participants walked individually and in small groups to help raise \$179,000 on Sept. 26 according to a release from the Alzheimer's Association.

"I'm so proud of what we've been able to accomplish this year," said Gabrielle DiMariano, walk manager for the Santa Cruz Walk in a prepared release. "With the help of our sponsors, teams, and donors we are committed to raising funds to find a cure for Alzheimer's Disease."

Alzheimer's Disease is the second leading cause of death in California and is the country's most expensive disease to treat.

To donate, visit act.alz.org/SantaCruz2020.

Jacob's Heart receives grant

Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services received a \$10,000 grant from the Sharks Foundation in partnership with Kaiser Permanente in coordination with the November Hockey Fights Cancer campaign.

The \$10,000 grant will directly support Jacob's Heart's Full Hearts Grocery Program which delivers groceries and meals each week to the homes or hospital rooms of families during treatment and for up to six months after treatment ends.

On Thursday, members of the Sharks organization packed grocery bags at Jacob's Heart's Watsonville Family Center for delivery to families. Additionally, team mascot S.J. Sharkie and former Hockey Fights Cancer Night participant and Jacob's Heart client Cole Rossi were to make a special delivery of groceries to one Jacob's Heart family.

Nguyen joins Bay Federal

Bay Federal Credit Union has hired Scott Nguyen as its new assistant vice president of collections.

Nguyen has nearly 20 years of experience in the financial services and collections industry, with a successful track record on implementing new technology to improve efficiencies.

Poly names new execs

Poly, formerly Plantronics and Polycom, announced Nov. 2 that Lisa Bodensteiner and John Goodwin have joined the senior

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Walk

FROM PAGE 2

executive leadership team of CEO and President Dave Shull.

Bodensteiner is executive vice president, chief legal and compliance officer and corporate secretary. She has previously served leadership roles at companies in renewable energy, technology and manufacturing. Bodensteiner was a principal at real estate company MDAC LLC and was also previously at SunPower Corp., First Solar Inc. and OptiSolar Inc.

Goodwin becomes senior vice president, public affairs. Goodwin is a seasoned executive in public affairs, communications and marketing expertise, according to a Poly new release. He most recently served as vice president of corporate communications at TiVo. Prior to that, he was head of marketing and vice president of communications for the

Weather Channel television network.

Brian Saxton named to post

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District introduced Brian Saxton as director of human resources, according to a release from the district. Saxton was approved at the Oct. 14 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Saxton has been with the district since 2002 as an assistant principal, middle school principal and elementary school principal. He earned a bachelor of arts in physical education and a teaching credential from Humboldt State.

Saxton brings 18 years of administrative experience to the human resources department position.

Got a story to tell, an event to report, an award to announce? Tell Name Dropping. Email [NameDropping@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:Namedropping@santacruzsentinel.com). Name Dropping is published Sundays and Mondays in the Sentinel.

Film

FROM PAGE 2

study of the enfranchised woman's competence, and if power compromised her femininity. It was inspired by Oregon appointee Carolyn B. Shelton as acting governor for two days in 1909, during a transition of power. The title "Mothers of Men" recalled that mothers brought all voters into the world.

Santa Cruz filming

Two of the film investors were Bruce Sharp and Frank G. Wilson, who had just completed the Piedmont Court luxury apartments at High and Highland streets. The building was still largely unoccupied, so they offered it to house most of the cast during filming in 1917. Dorothy Davenport was the highest paid actress in Hollywood at the time (\$300a week), but as a suffragist, she gladly took a pay cut to do this film. She and her husband stayed at the Casa Del Rey Hotel, although Wallace did not appear in the film except as an uncredited driver.

When Reid arrived in Santa Cruz, he looked up his friend, Bill Davis, who'd been an actor at the prestigious Boston Museum Theatre, and performed with Reid in his own plays. Davis now headed the "Davis & Bossert Song Mart" at Pacific and Locust streets, writing songs with Prof. Henry Bossert, the pit band conductor at downtown's Unique Theatre. Davis, Bossert's band, and most of the investors, were given cameos in the film's wedding banquet, staged in the Piedmont courtyard, where school girls danced around the tinkling fountain.

Director Robards played Davenport's love interest, while Reid played the editor of a tabloid newspaper, running a mud-slinging campaign against Davenport's candidacy. His newspaper office was a Mission Street brick building facing Holy Cross Plaza. A false facade was placed on the building so it could be bombed. Fearing danger to the neighboring Mission Hill and Holy Cross schools,

classes were dismissed. Yet now the students gathered as close as possible to see the bombing, so the blast-force was reduced. A Santa Cruz fire truck and ambulance arrived, causing some who happened on the scene to think it was a real emergency.

The film's daily activities were documented in more than 160 daily articles from three local papers. Reporter Corina Wood was in the courtroom crowd, where elderly Sentinel reporter Josephine Clifford McCrackin played a part. Newspaper boys in the film sold papers from pouches marked "Santa Cruz Sentinel." Hundreds of Santa Cruzans were used as extras, from anonymous crowds and groups of children, to 58 identified politicians, merchants, policemen, and musicians.

Several interior sets were built at De Laveaga Park, but most of the scenes were filmed on location throughout Santa Cruz City. Backdrops include Cooper Street courtroom, sheriff's office, County Jail, Pacific Avenue, Front Street, Chinatown, Boardwalk Grill, Casa Del Rey Hotel lobby, Fred Swanton's house, the Golden Gate Villa on Beach Hill, and West Cliff Natural Bridges. The only scenes outside Santa Cruz were the State Capital Building in Sacramento, and a parade in Berkeley.

New York debut

The hour-and-a-half film had two sneak previews in San Francisco, taking advice to improve the pacing by cutting 18-minutes. It was then given its world premiere at the Santa Cruz Unique Theatre (north of today's Del Mar Theater site). Even with a higher-price ticket, the showings July 16 & 17, 1917, drew 5,000 people, equal to half the population of the town. It was then released across the country through a series of regional State Rights distributors. Robards hoped to sell all rights when he got to New York City.

In October, Robards gave a special showing to New York suffrage leaders, who were conducting a campaign to gain statewide suffrage. They said they liked the film, but

felt the Prohibition angle was a burden, as they preferred to tackle one issue at a time. So Robards cut the film down to just over an hour, eliminating the prohibition politics. The film opened Saturday Nov. 3, with state suffrage passed on Nov. 7. Yet the film continued its New York run through Jan. 12, 1918, because New York had entered the post-suffrage future the film depicted.

In 1920, "Mothers of Men" was sold, given minor edits to reflect the new realities of Prohibition and Suffrage, and retitled "Every Woman's Problem," asking if a woman's loyalty was first to her husband, or her job? Released March 15, 1921, its wider circulation saw it treated as a new movie by most, even though its author Reid had died May 22, 1920, and it was still in circulation when Robards died Nov. 3, 1921.

Restoration

In 1994, I wrote an article for the San Jose Mercury-News on this film, noting wistfully that since most of it was filmed locally, it was practically a home movie of Santa Cruz places and people. I asked if anyone knew if the film survived, but received no response until I'd almost forgotten about it. In 1997, UC Santa Cruz film student and Santa Cruz native James Mockoski called, and said he'd contacted archives in Russia, Holland and England, but none had a copy of "Mothers of Men." Yet when he asked if they had "Every Woman's Problem," the British Film Institute in London said yes!

Mockoski asked UCSC film professor and author Shelley Stamp if she knew of a way he could obtain a copy. She used her connections with the UCLA Film & Television Archives to gain international authorization to make a video for study purposes, and local entrepreneur George Ow Jr. donated the purchase cost. Mockoski and I formed the Central California Film Archives to study and collect local film history, and showed several of these at the Nickelodeon to live music. But our collaboration

ended as I got involved in saving the Del Mar Theater, and he did film restoration at UCLA Film Archives, then restored silent film tints at the David Packard Stanford Theater lab in 2002. Mockoski ended up working at American Zoetrope studios for Francis Ford Coppola as archivist, establishing their film archive, library and film vault, and the company's museum exhibits. Mockoski restored such towering classics as "Apocalypse Now" and its directors cut, plus "The Outsiders," and "The Conversation," as well as doing post-production work on several Zoetrope films.

In 2015, Mockoski sent me recently found sheet music promoting the "Mothers of Men" film, along with articles he'd found. With his film restoration experience, Mockoski felt he was finally in a position to return to our dream of restoring the film. I sent him our videotape and the material I'd collected. He reconnected with Shelley Stamp to join our team, along with film preservationist Robert Byrne, president of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. The British Film Institute granted its permission for the restoration, revealing the film had tinted scenes. I wrote a 197-page report for our team on the film's history, versions, and context.

The film had its restoration debut in 2016 at the Castro Theater, for the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. Its Santa Cruz restoration debut was at the Del Mar Theater. Both included live music by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra, and opened with the song written for the film.

See it

The film can be seen for five days on the San Lorenzo Valley Museum website at slvmuseum.com, courtesy of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. It's part of the museum's suffrage exhibits, that include: "Portraits of Persistence," and "She Can Handle Both."

Ross Eric Gibson is a former history columnist for the San Jose Mercury News and Santa Cruz Sentinel.

School

FROM PAGE 2

they need to be prepared for schedule and teacher changes. Mount Madonna has found a way around that.

Technological advancements have allowed Mount Madonna to integrate distance and in-person learning into the same class. Students learning from home are able to join their classmates via a video call and learn in real time with their in-person peers.

Goewert said there were struggles integrating distance learning with in-person instruction, at first. However, the school has had more than two months to smooth out wrinkles in the system.

"Once you have those issues solved, then the remote instruction with the in-person learning is smoother," she said. "They can certainly engage with one another in a way that's safe for all students."

Public and charter schools in Santa Cruz County are planning to offer in-person

instruction, as well, with some even offering in-person small group instruction outdoors since October. Private schools like Mount Madonna have been helping with that transition.

"The private schools meet weekly with Dr. Faris Sabbah," Goewert said. "We have shared over time what we have been doing. It's a very mutual relationship. We've shared insights of what has worked and what doesn't work."

Sabbah is the Santa Cruz County superintendent of schools and has been working with all the districts in the county to come up with a safe return to campus plan, including the small group sessions.

"One important thing to keep in mind is most of the private schools that have opened up have a very small class size count which resembles the small group cohort model," Sabbah said in a Town Hall meeting via zoom on Nov. 2.

Public schools plan to transition to a hybrid in-person schedule at the start of the next semester.

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