

Congratulations to ROXY THEATRE and the GREGORYS



The New Roxy Theatre

On Opening of Modern New Theatre In Acton



Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Gregory

Recollections of Motion Pictures As Seen in Acton

BY G. A. D.

With the closing of the old picture show on Tuesday and the opening of the new Roxy in Acton to-night, many recollections crowd around the motion pictures in Acton and may we express on readers these are just recollections, perhaps intimate and personal in some cases and dates have not been checked but taken from memories.

It must have been about forty-five years ago that the first motion pictures we recall were seen in Acton. Up to that time, the magic lantern with its colored slides was popular at church entertainments and in the town hall shows. Might have been forty-seven years ago that the Laing Bros. introduced the motion pictures at a Christmas Concert in the then Methodist Church. The picture we recall most vividly was that of horses being rescued from a burning barn. The pictures were pretty jumpy and flickered a lot but they thrilled. From then on we had travelling pictures in the town hall and always the illustrated songs that accompanied the motion picture shows.

The Nickel Show

About forty years ago Morris Saxe had the late Wm. Johnstone erect for him a frame building on the present site of the Symon Hardware store. Chairs were provided for seating and the projection room was over the ticket office and front entrance. Acton had its first nickel show. There one could go and spend a whole evening for five cents. There must have been four or five shows a night each concluding with the popular illustrated song by various local vocalists. The show of course had to have a piano player for between shows and the song accompaniment and we recall Harry Goulette as one of the early masters of the keyboard at the "Nickel Show." Mrs. Byrne played for

many years before the advent of the talkie.

If memory serves right, Morris Saxe sold the show to the late Harry Holmes who operated it for some time. Many of you won't believe it but Harry Junior, perhaps better known as "Bunk" became the soloist for the illustrated song with Harry Goulette at the keyboard and considering the rush rehearsal they had between the time at the park with lacrosse and baseball, they made a pretty good team.

We think that Mr. Holmes sold to Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Gregory about thirty-six years ago but again we only have a memory guide. The show was still operating in the original building. But it wasn't long until the Gregorys made plans for better facilities for Acton and in 1915—February to be exact—the New Wonderland, erected by Mr. Fred Secord, was opened to the public with Mary Pickford playing in a five part famous players feature. The price of the show was still 10c for adults and 5c for children. The building was described as one of the finest for small towns in the province.

For these thirty-six years the show business has been with Mr. and Mrs. Gregory. Aggressive and alert the Gregorys secured the theatre in Georgetown and later in Oakville. On one or two occasions the business was sold to strangers, but always the Gregorys bought back the business that had been their first venture. We think many times there was a lot of sentiment attached to the business in Acton for both of them.

Then Came the Talkies

In 1929 and 1930 the talkies were quite popular and so the Wonderland Theatre was remodelled and enlarged and the new equipment for talkies installed. The opening night for this place of changing entertainment was Tuesday, Dec-

ember 23rd, 1930 and Acton had an up-to-date theatre now known as "The Gregory Theatre." The new arena had opened the year previously and the depression followed for several years and business of all kinds suffered.

Another New Building

It was not surprising that last year in keeping with Acton's growth Mr. Gregory should undertake to build a new, larger theatre in Acton. Last fall he sold out his theatre interests in Acton, Georgetown and Oakville to Associated Theatres, Limited and in his arrangements had a new building planned for Acton. To-night the Roxy Theatre opens in Acton. Again Acton has one of the most modern theatres in the province. Running through this history you'll note that in this rapid growing business, modern buildings do not last over many years. The old show building will be changed and made into modern store buildings by Mr. Gregory.

To-night marks another milestone in the history of motion pictures in Acton. There's justified cause for congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Russell Gregory, who have guided its growth here for over thirty-five years. There's also good reasons for appreciation to the new management of Associated Theatres on the enterprise in this new building and the effort to meet the demands for entertainment for the folks of Acton and the district. May we, too, who have had the privilege of watching this motion picture development in Acton during these forty or more years, add a personal note of congratulations to the Gregorys and the Associated Theatres and the Acton Management.

Other Acton business men join in these congratulations and make public acknowledgement in this issue.

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