

P-234

W.E. Jones Theatre Collection, 1916-1933

Repository:

Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Span Dates:

1916 – 1933

Extent:

1 letter box; 1 oversize box, 1 folder

Language:

English

Abstract:

W.E. Jones was a theatre manager in San Diego and Los Angeles who was associated with several theatres between 1916 and 1933 particularly the Pickwick and Superba in San Diego, and the Superba and Largo in Los Angeles. The W.E. Jones Theatre Collection is comprised of individual photographs as well as a scrapbook of clippings and photographs which focus on stage sets and lobby displays for various films—mainly Universal films of 1920. There are a few photos of other theatres such as the Cameo and the Rampart for which an association with W.E. Jones could not be determined.

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Preferred Citation:

W.E. Jones Theatre Collection, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

Related Holdings:

P-26 Motion Picture Collection

GC 1146 Theater Programs Collection, ca. 1893-1958

GC 1155ov Theater in Los Angeles Scrapbook, 1886-1924

Historical Note:

Little information could be found regarding any of the theatres pictured in the collection except that they existed between 1916 and 1933. The Superba Theatre in Los Angeles was located at 518 S. Broadway, which later became the site of the Roxie Theatre in 1932. (The Roxie was the last of the great movie palaces to be built because the Los Angeles movie audience developed a preference for Hollywood Boulevard venues like Grauman's Chinese and the Egyptian theatres. The Roxie was later converted to retail shops.)

The Cameo Theatre was built in 1910 at 528 S. Broadway—very near the Superba. It was built by impresario and early filmmaker William H. "Billy" Clune. Clune produced his own films and distributed them to his theatre chain. His production facility, Clune Studios, is still located on Melrose Avenue although it has since gone through a series of name changes and is now called Raleigh Studios. The Cameo Theatre itself was converted to retail shops.

It is not known the years of operation for the Largo Theatre in Watts, but the newspaper clippings in Jones' scrapbook concern this theatre in the 1930's.

It is not known when W.E. Jones first arrived at the Pickwick in San Diego, but by 1918, he had been on its staff for several years. In 1918, he became the house manager for the Superba Theatre in San Diego, which was owned by the Broadway Amusement Company. Jones managed both the Pickwick Theatre and the Superba Theatre in San Diego before relocating to Los Angeles.

In May of 1920, Jones was hired by Sid Grauman as an assistant to house manager Bob Blair at the Rialto in Los Angeles. Apparently, he did not work long at the Rialto, for by July of the same year he had become the new manager of the Superba in Los Angeles, having been summoned by C.L. Theuerkauf to be its managing director. Assisted by designer and assistant manager Nobel Hearne, Jones became known for the Superba's unusual lobby designs, big symphony orchestra, and extensive advertising campaign. (A common promotional activity at the Superba was to have the ushers dress in garb appropriate to the current film, for example wearing kimonos for the picture "A Japanese Nightingale.")

The Superba Theatre was controlled by the Universal Film Company which produced such scintillating films as "Shipwrecked Among Cannibals." This particular film was described in a newspaper column as "...photographed in the jungles of Dutch New Guinea by two Los Angeles men who threw their lives on the wheel of destiny to bring back the intimate glimpses of the man-eaters in their native haunts..." Another film of 1920, "Pink Tights" received much attention when Jones staged a parade on Broadway from First to Ninth Streets "...headed by a band and followed by camels, elephants, rumbling wagons, calliope, a dainty little lady in pink tights..."

In December of 1921, Jones returned to the Superba in San Diego continuing with his eye-catching and imaginative advertising campaigns. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Jones managed first the Arroyo Theatre and then the Tower, both in Pasadena.

By 1933, Jones was managing the Largo Theatre, “the brightest spot in Watts since the erection of its modernistic Neon marquee...” (October, 1933). The Largo was located at 1827 E. 103rd Street. To provide incentive for visiting the theatre during these Depression years, the Largo publicized raffles, free turkeys at Thanksgiving, free bags of groceries every Wednesday night, free hams and bacon, and a food benefit matinee before Christmas where theatre patrons were encouraged to bring food for the barrels in the lobby. The donations would then be converted into food baskets for local families through service clubs and women’s organizations.

Some of the films shown at the Largo at the time included “Baby Face” with Barbara Stanwyck and George Brent; “Hold Your Man, with Jean Harlow and Clark Gable; and “Supernatural” with Carole Lombard. The latter movie was described in a clipping from August 1933 as “...the spirit of a demon and an angel, alternately the female ‘Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,’ the story of a woman enslaved to conflicting emotions.”

Jones’ association with the Cameo and the Rampart could not be determined.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection consists of one box of thirty-eight photographs and one forty-one page scrapbook of photographs and clippings. Most of the individual photographs are of lobby displays and stage settings for films at the Superba Theatre in Los Angeles. There are several photographs of ushers at various theatres who often dressed in costume appropriate to the current film. One such item is a photograph of the San Diego’s Superba Theatre in which six female ushers are standing in front of a marquee dressed as “farmettes” advertising Charlie Chaplin’s “Sunnyside.”

The scrapbook is comprised of loose, very acidic pages on which photographs and newspaper clippings have been pasted. Some of the photographs have come loose and have been subsequently placed in mylar sleeves but left within the pages of the scrapbook.

Many of the photographs are similar to those in the box of individual photographs; but many exist only in the scrapbook, particularly those on the first few pages which portray the Pickwick Theatre in San Diego. Photographs in the scrapbook depict stage sets for films as “Cosack Whip,” “Civilization,” and “Kura San,” among others. Most of the newspaper clippings pertain to W.E. Jones as manager for the various theatres or to the motion pictures being shown there. Most of the clippings are not identified by newspaper name, however many include dates.

Theatres referred to in the scrapbook include the Pickwick and the Superba in San Diego; the Superba in Los Angeles; the Largo in Watts during the Depression years; and the Arroyo in Pasadena. One of the newspaper clippings from the early 1930s concerns the Arroyo Theatre where “...talking pictures will be installed in about 15 days...”

Container List:**Box 1**

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1.	Cameo Theatre, Los Angeles, 1924—Ushers
1a.	Electric Theater, “The Passion Play,” ca. 1905
2.	Largo Theatre, Los Angeles (Watts), 1933—“Hold Your Man,” [Jean Harlow, MGM]
3.	Owl Drugstore, Los Angeles, 1920—“Shipwrecked Among Cannibals,” [Universal]
4.	Rampart Theatre, Los Angeles, c1928—“Fazil,” [Fox]
5.	Rampart Theatre, Los Angeles, c1928—“Fazil,” [Fox]
6.	Stage, Curtain Design
7.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Exterior
8.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Exterior
9.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Lobby
10.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Lobby
11.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Lobby
12.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Lobby
13.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Prologue
14.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Breath of the Gods,” [Universal]—Ushers
15.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Devil’s Passkey,” [Universal]—“The Thinker”
16.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Locked Lips,” [Universal]—Exterior
17.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Locked Lips,” [Universal]—Lobby
18.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Pink Tights,” [Universal]—Lobby
19.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Pink Tights,” [Universal]—Stage
20.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Pink Tights,” [Universal]—Stage
21.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Pink Tights,” [Universal]—Stage
22.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Pink Tights,” [Universal]—Street
23.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920 [Quinn’s Superba]
24.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Red Lane,” [Universal]—Exterior
25.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Red Lane,” [Universal]—Lobby
26.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“The Red Lane,” [Universal]—Stage
27.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Shipwrecked Among Cannibals,” [Universal]—Actors
28.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Shipwrecked Among Cannibals,” [Universal]—Exterior
29.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Uncle Tom’s Caboose; Wanted at Headquarters,” [Universal]
30.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Under Crimson Skies”, [Elmo Lincoln, Universal]—Exterior
31.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Under Crimson Skies”, [Elmo Lincoln, Universal]—Exterior
32.	Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—“Under Crimson Skies”, [Elmo Lincoln, Universal]—Exterior

33. Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—"Under Crimson Skies", [Elmo Lincoln, Universal]—Exterior
34. Superba Theatre, Los Angeles, 1920—Ushers
35. Pickwick Theatre, San Diego, c1915—"The Blue Mouse," [Madge Lessing]
36. Superba Theatre, San Diego, c1920—Fashion Show
37. Superba Theatre, San Diego, 1921—"School Days," [Wesley Barry, Warner Brothers]
38. Superba Theatre, San Diego, 1919—"Sunnyside," [Charlie Chaplin]

Box 10v

Scrapbook

<u>Page</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	4 photographs-Pickwick, 1916—"Heir to the Hoorah," "Soul of Kura San," "The Foolish Virgin"
2	Newspaper clipping-Pickwick, 1916—"Anton the Terrible"
3	3 photographs-Pickwick—"The Common Law," "Civilization"
4	8 photographs-Pickwick, 1916—"End of the Rainbow", "Bugler of Algiers," "Cosack Whip," "Truant Soul," "Broken Fetters"
5	3 photographs, 3 newspaper clippings-Pickwick, 1916—W.E. Jones, "Heart of the Hills," "War Brides," "The Crisis"
6	8 photographs-Pickwick—"Seventeen," "Bought and Paid For," "The Libertine," "The Chaperone," "Ne'er Do Well," "Price of Silence," "Broken Fetters," "Prince of Graustak"
7	Page from <i>Motion Picture News</i> regarding "The Breath of the Gods"
8	5 newspaper clippings-Superba, 1920—W.E. Jones, "Locked Lips," "The Red Lane," "Shipwrecked Among Cannibals," Lt. Ormer Locklear
9	10 newspaper clippings-Superba, 1920—W.E. Jones, "Human Stuff," "Hearts of Men"
10	8 newspaper clippings-Superba, 1920—W.E. Jones, George Evans, "The Red Lane," "The Breath of the Gods," "Locked Lips"
11	4 newspaper clippings-Superba, San Diego, 1919-20—"Sealed Hearts," "The Romance of Tarzan," "Upstairs and Down," "To God's Country"
12	9 clippings (2 from <i>Motion Picture News</i>)-Superba, San Diego, 1919-20—W.E. Jones and new triple bill policy, Japanese guests, "Forbidden City," "Shoulder Arms"

- 13 3 newspaper clippings-Superba, San Diego, 1917-W.E. Jones, "A Japanese Nightingale"
- 14 2 clippings from *Motion Picture News*-Superba, San Diego, 1919—"Crimson Gardenia," "Sunnyside"
- 15 2 clippings from *Motion Picture News*-Superba, San Diego—W.E. Jones, "Upstairs and Down"
- 16 4 newspaper clippings-Superba, San Diego—W.E. Jones, "The Japanese Nightingale," "School Days"
- 17 3 photographs-Superba, San Diego—"Crimson Gardenia," "Morals," "Heart of the Sunset"
- 18 5 photographs, 1922—"The Sawmill," "The Mysterious Rider," "The Red Red Heart"
- 19 3 photographs-Superba, San Diego, 1918—"The Sawmill," "Ace High"
- 20 3 photographs-Superba, San Diego, 1918—"Ace High," "School Days," "Sunnyside"
- 21 2 photographs—"Toton," "The Reason Why"
- 22 2 photographs—"In Old Kentucky," "The Probation Wife"
- 23 2 photographs—"The Isle of Conquest," "Leave It to Susan"
- 24 2 photographs—"Sis Hopkins," "A Man's Fight"
- 25 1 photograph—set of "Romance of Tarzan"
- 26 2 photographs—"To God's Country," "Upstairs and Down"
- 27 1 photograph—"Romance of Tarzan," 1 newspaper clipping—"Ace High"
- 28 1 photograph—"Romance of Tarzan"
- 29 2 photographs—"Sealed Hearts," "The Isle of Conquest"
- 30 1 photograph—"Romance of Tarzan," 5 newspaper clippings-Superba, 1921—W.E. Jones, "Nearly Married," "The Japanese Nightingale," "The Forbidden City," "The Hearts of Men"
- 31 1 photograph, 1919—"A Man's Fight"
- 32 2 photographs—"A Midnight Romance," "To God's Country"

- 33 2 photographs, 1919—"A Man's Fight," "Hearts of Men"
- 34 2 photographs—"A Midnight Romance," "The Reason Why"
- 35 2 photographs—"A Midnight Romance," "Toton"
- 36 2 photographs, 1919—"A Man's Fight," "Hearts of Men"
- 37 Page from *Motion Picture News-Superba*—"The Red Lane"
- 38 13 newspaper clippings, 1920—"Under Crimson Skies," "The Devil's Passkey," "Shipwrecked Among Cannibals," "Wanted at Headquarters"
- 39 1 photograph, 1918—"Shoulder Arms"
- 40 2 photographs-Superba, San Diego, 1919—"The Probation Wife," "Sealed Hearts"
- 41 41 newspaper clippings on many pages glued together, 1920-33—"The Breath of the Gods," "Under Crimson Skies," "The Devil's Passkey," "Shipwrecked Among Cannibals," "School Days," "Pink Tights," "Once a Plumber," "Wanted at Headquarters," "Sundown Slim," "The Red Lane," Edna Mae Enos, W.E. Jones, and the Superba, Arroyo Theatre, Largo Theatre
- 42 6 newspaper clippings-Largo, 1933—W.E. Jones, "Song of Songs"

Folder

- 1 Acorn Press publicity advertisement