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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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PATHE GIVES THREE THOUSAND MILES OF NEWS REELS TO
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Three thousand miles of news reels--the entire Pathe newsreel of fifteen million feet of negative from 1910 to 1930--have just been entrusted to the keeping of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library by Pathe News, Inc. At a reception held to celebrate the event in the Museum's penthouse yesterday afternoon (Friday, September 27) George J. Schaefer, President of RKO and Chairman of the Board of Pathe, Inc., presented the collection to John Hay Whitney, President of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library.

In presenting the gift, Mr. Schaefer handed Mr. Whitney a can of film containing, among other early news shots, footage of Theodore Roosevelt's return from an African hunting trip. Mr. Schaefer said in part:

"Down through three decades, Pathe News has preserved millions of feet of film, a faithful record of the march of the years. Yesterday it was news. Today it is history. This can of film, Mr. Whitney, holds one of the earliest newsreel pictures. It is symbolic of the birth of a great news organization. I am proud, on behalf of Pathe News, to turn it over to the Museum of Modern Art Film Library."

Mr. Whitney, in accepting the gift, replied:

"For the Museum of Modern Art Film Library and for myself, I thank both you and Pathe News, Mr. Schaefer. I believe that it is significant that this great film library is to become a part of the Museum of Modern Art. For I am sure that in turning over the Pathe archives to the Museum, you are preserving the most important record of a changing world."

Celebrities, film critics and members of the motion picture industry attended the reception, among them Ned E. Depinet, President of Pathe, Inc. and Vice-President of RKO Radio Pictures; John E. Abbott, Director, and Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library; Frank R. Donovan, Vice-President of Pathe; Walton C. Ament, General Manager and Editor of Pathe. Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art, who was recently

appointed as Co-ordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, flew in from Washington for the occasion.

The Film Library's acquisition of the Pathe newsreel assures the permanent preservation of a living record of our times. Covering the years between the founding of this first American newsreel company in 1910 and the transfer of the Pathe Company to RKO Pictures in 1931, the gift represents the largest and oldest collection of news reel material in the world. Furthermore, by the terms of the acquisition Pathe News, Inc. will every January turn over to the Film Library the total footage of each successive year since 1930, beginning in January 1941 with the news reels for the year 1931.

The three thousand miles of film in the Pathe gift record nearly every event of historic importance and preserve as well the fashions, fads and faces--famous and infamous--of the second and third decades of this turbulent century. Among the highlights of this visual history of the world are the Delhi Durbar in 1911; events and personalities of the World War; Mussolini's march on Rome--and a less formal shot of the Fascist leader wrestling with lion cubs; the 1924 putsch in Munich led by the unknown Hitler; the trial of the putsch leaders with one of them, von Ludendorff, leaving the Hall of Justice after being exonerated; the other, Hitler, sentenced to a year in prison, addressing his followers from a window; and innumerable other personalities and events.

Upon acceptance of the Pathe gift the Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, Miss Barry, said: "The news reel is a unique record of history. It is so recent that its beginning is within the memory of mature men and women today. During all the past millenniums of recorded history each succeeding generation has been able to look back on past times and people only through the eyes of artists, chroniclers and journalists. Now it will be possible for future generations, through examination of the miles of news reels deposited in the Film Library's archives, to see our age and every successive age as we have seen ourselves. The news reel is a document of unparalleled importance by which present and future scholars will be able to study the social history of the twentieth and succeeding centuries.

"Equally important in giving the news reel its pervasive

influence and historic importance have been the so-called 'fillers.' The filming of sports events has become one of the great crafts of modern photography, representing imagination as well as skill and patience. Fashions pass quickly, but they are instructive to the critical eye, and the feature news reel compilations such as Gilbert Seldes' 'This Is America' reveal the importance of the Pathe archives as a repository of the changing ideas and social stresses of the period from World War I to World War II. It is impossible to decide finally which is most significant, but later analysts may one day value the newsreel's transcript of the trivialities of the day even more than its power to call back the physical actuality of events and the physical appearance of celebrities."

Of the five great American newsreels in existence today Pathe is the oldest. It began as an offshoot of Pathe Freres, which was founded in France around 1899. Although scenic views and historic events have been filmed since 1895, originally they had no special classification as news or even as history but formed the main ingredients of early movie programs with their shots of presidents and kings, their views of Niagara Falls or Coney Island, speeding locomotives, demolition crews and so on. It was not until 1909 that a young man named Leon Franconi, watching the inauguration of President Taft in a snowstorm, conceived the idea of recording news events and presenting them in a weekly screen "magazine." Franconi was confidential interpreter to the early film magnate, Charles Pathe, and succeeded in convincing him that the idea would work. Pathe tried it out in France, the home of his producing firm, and in 1910 cabled Franconi to begin work on the same lines in America.

So it came about that the rooster of Pathe was the first news reel trademark--one which became familiar to every moviegoer in the world, though it has metamorphosed since 1910 from a bright red bird to the present gilded Gallic symbol which, in the early days of sound, emitted startling cries to stir the spectator from his apathy and prepare his nerves for the news of the day.

Franconi's first reel recorded a daredevil "stunt"--Rodman Law's nearly disastrous parachute jump from the top of the Statue of Liberty. His first big news story was the filming of the destruction of Galveston, Texas, by fire in 1912. These two items are typical of the staple material which has occupied the news reel ever since that

time. Each reel is built around events that make headlines, interspersed with novelties and oddities. After 1912 competitive news reels sprang up, but because Pathe was first in the field its coverage was for a long time the best, and almost every happening that has caught the imagination of the world in the past three decades is recorded on its reels.

This simultaneous, large-scale reporting has been made possible by a modern industrial organization as unique as the news reel itself. At the same time that the Pathe Review (later Pathe News) began in this country, companion reels--Pathe Gazette in London and Pathe Journal in Paris--were inaugurated. Soon a far-flung system of production and distribution spread itself across the world, with cameramen in every big city and news front. In recent years much of the news reel material has been bought from amateur cameramen all over the world, or, as in the case of news of the current war, is handed out by the propaganda departments of foreign governments.

The news reel focuses in its central offices, to which all the film flows, and it is the men who select what shall be shown that give these subjects shape and meaning. Pioneering Pathe has served as a training ground not only for many of the most important of today's news reel figures, but for men who have found celebrity in other fields. Emanuel Cohen, who was Pathe's editor from 1915 to 1926, when he resigned to found Paramount News, is today a studio executive. Terry Ramsaye, famed chronicler of the movies, served as editor from 1926 to 1931. Joseph P. Kennedy, today's ambassador to Britain, was president of Pathe for a while. But above and beyond them all is the unidentified news reel cameraman, famous even in anonymity, worshipped by small boys as a modern hero whose only peers are the aviator, the racing driver and the G-Man.