



## 15th Annual Northeast Historic Film Summer Symposium

### *Wunderkino IV*

## Visions of House and Home

July 24-26, 2014



*Wunderkino* (“wonder-cinema”) are moving images that ignite our curiosity and engagement and help us to rethink questions of creativity, complexity, rarity and the multiple uses and understandings of amateur and non-commercial films. “Wunderkino 4: Visions of House and Home” focuses on understanding how amateur and non-theatrical films offer insight into daily life, domesticity, and the quotidian activity that has often been dismissed as *mise en scène*. How does the performance of domesticity size or resize the frame? What activities define house and home on film? How do notions and conventions of home frame regions, communities, and people in amateur films, industrial films, and educational films? This year’s theme is an effort to draw upon the wide range of approaches that scholars, artists, filmmakers, and archivists bring to the study and use of amateur and non-theatrical film.

## SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS

### Thursday, July 24<sup>th</sup>

7:00 p.m. Opening Reception, Alamo Theater

8:00 p.m. Screening, Alamo Theater

*SIDE BY SIDE* sponsored by FOXHOLLOW STUDIO EXPRESSIVE ARTS

<http://sidebysidethemovie.com/>

[Admission included in Symposium registration]

### Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>

8.30 a.m. Registration, Coffee, and Conversation, Alamo Theater Lobby

9:00 a.m. *Amateur Film/Amateur Video: Transatlantic Collision, Correlation and Theory*

Graeme Spurr, University of Glasgow, William O'Farrell Fellow



*Richard G. Rockefeller Collection, NHF*

Emerging from my NHF fellowship last year, this presentation will compare three case-studies based in collections that traverse amateur film to video. First, a transatlantic skirmish between amateur film institutions played out in their affiliated journals in the early 1950s showcases a unique historical interaction between two international amateur movements; second, a study of cross-Atlantic disillusionment and denigration of early amateur film and video reveals correlating opinions on technology at different stages of development in the late 1960s; finally, a comparison of the Lumiere Home Movie and Archie Stewart collections in the late 1980s and early 1990s illustrate video theorist James Moran's claims concerning his taxonomy of the 'home-mode' for the magnetic medium. All three case studies extend

the under-explored and emerging historiography of amateur film and video.

10:00 a.m. *How to Build a Home: Dick Proenneke's Experimental Domesticity*

Oliver Gaycken, University of Maryland, College Park



*'Alone in the Wilderness' (Dick Proenneke/Bob Swerer, 1969/2003)*

Richard Louis “Dick” Proenneke took to the woods at Twin Lakes, Alaska, in the summer of 1967. He went to live alone, taking with him an initial supply of nonperishables, tools for constructing a cabin, and, perhaps surprisingly, a 16mm camera.

Proenneke built the cabin over the course of his first year in Alaska, using only the hand tools he had brought with him, and documenting his progress with the 16mm camera as well as in his journal.

Proenneke lived in his cabin for the next thirty years, taking occasional trips to the lower 48 to visit

family, but primarily maintaining his solitude and contributing amateur scientific observations of the weather and wildlife via a network of

correspondents. After Proenneke’s death, a friend assembled some of his footage into several films that have been released in a variety of formats. This talk will focus on how to understand the inclusion of cinema in Proenneke’s home-building activities, locating it at the confluence of amateur filmmaking, natural-history documentary, and experimental cinema.

11:00 a.m. *The Dig House: Amateur Film as Artifact*

Michael McCluskey, University College London



*Photo courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society*

When John Pendlebury became the director of an excavation site in Egypt at the age of twenty-six, his colleagues wondered if he could handle the demands of the dig and its associated responsibilities. What they found was that Pendlebury was not only an able archaeologist, but also an ardent modernizer keen on including film as part of the radical new processes he introduced to excavation. As director of the dig at Tell-al-Amarna, Egypt from 1930 to 1933, Pendlebury oversaw the production of over six-hours of film footage that captures daily activities on site. While some of the sequences record the work that went on among these British archaeologists, local workers, and Cairo Museum officials, many shots show the leisure activities that Pendlebury encouraged as team-building experiences. The films, then, tell us about several

complex and overlapping interactions: between archaeologists and artifacts, British subjects and local cultures, modernity and antiquity. And the main setting for these exchanges was the dig house. As artifacts from the site, the Pendlebury films provide us with material to mark these divisions and to study the activities that attempted to overcome them. In this paper I use the films to analyze interactions between the British and local workers—and among the archaeologists themselves—and insist that filmmaking was a means of control over cultural identity and forms of communication. More broadly, I argue for the inclusion of excavation footage in ongoing studies of amateur film/home movies, an expanding field that until now has not included this rich material. As the study of film is filled with metaphors pulled from archaeological

practices—from ‘change mummified’ to ‘excavations in history and memories’—these films, I contend, can help us to further our understanding of amateur film as social practice and cultural artifact.

**12:00 – 1:30 LUNCH Alamo Lobby**

**12:30 p.m.** Archive tour with David Weiss: meet at the stairs adjacent to the Alamo lobby

**1:30 p.m. *Life and Death of a Cave City: Documenting the Failures of a Futurist Society***

**Brian Real**, University of Maryland, College Park

*Life and Death of a Cave City* is an aesthetically fascinating work and one of a very small number of Marshall Plan films shot in color. A cameraman from the British arm of Technicolor employed the Monopack system, which was a 35mm version of Kodachrome reversal film. The effect of this is disorienting, showing the beauty of a city in the Italian region of Matera that reflects the architecture and culture of prehistoric civilization, while the narration details the devastation of life without electricity, where the infant mortality rate was in excess of forty percent. This tension between the beautiful and primitive would later make Matera the ideal shooting location for a number of films, including Pasolini's *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, the 2006 version of *The Omen*, and the film adaptation of Carlo Levi's autobiographical book, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945), about of Levi's one-year exile to Matera in 1935 as punishment for protesting the Fascist government's invasion of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia). *Life and Death of a Cave City* is a complex vision of domesticity. It simultaneously celebrates and condemns traditions, with the beauty captured by the camera often contradicting the central theme of the work. While the film argues that there are solutions to the problems the narrator presented, some residents' resistance to relocation and new problems that emerged in the new dwellings show that there's truly no place like home.



*The 'Life and Death of a Cave City,' National Archives of the U.S.*

**2:30 p.m. *The Home of the Future in the World of Tomorrow***

**Caitlin McGrath**, University of Maryland, College Park



Of all the futuristic visions offered up by the 1939 New York World's Fair, one of the most popular sights was the house of the future. Exhibits on the topic abounded, from commercial to industrial to governmental glimpses of what domestic life might look like, designed by some of the brightest minds in industrial design and architecture. What did “home” mean in the World of Tomorrow? How did it imagine the domestic sphere in the future? The 1939 New York World's Fair was broadly conceived as a space for the United States and other countries to showcase their technological achievements. In this environment, with

so much emphasis on advances in science, architecture, technology, art and design, how did the personal space of the home appear? And how was film a part of this vision? The spectrum of films about housing at the Fair allows for an appreciation of the Fair's expansive notion of house and home. These national and international conceptions of domesticity and home life provided a myriad of viewpoints on a universally relatable but protean theme.

**Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup>**

8:30 a.m. Registration, Coffee, and Conversation Alamo Theater Lobby

9:00 a.m. ***The Viking Video Productions Collection: Constructing Visions of Maine's Rural Identity***

Gemma Scott, University of Maine



*Viking Video Production Collection,  
Northeast Historic Film*

Viking Video Productions, named after the Caribou Technical Center mascot, was the second high school vocational program of its kind in Maine. Under independent filmmaker Brenda Nasberg Jepson's direction the program flourished for a decade, including award winning short films, and fostering a generation of students to experience media production as education. The far reaching goals of the program were a struggle to maintain, however, in an environment of constant competition for resources, and lack of support for a method of teaching that encouraged students to move outside the traditional classroom and local philosophies

about work life. In this presentation I will reveal the successes and challenges of constructing moving image visions of home in the context of rural public education in Maine

10:00 a.m. ***Conversations in Maine: The Schoolhouse on Sutton Island***

Brian Graney, Black Film Center, Indiana University



*Photo by Chrissie Nevius*

Beginning in 1968, Detroit activists Grace Lee and Jimmy Boggs became regular guests of Lyman and Freddy Paine at the Schoolhouse, their summer home on Sutton Island in Maine. The four of them are credited as coauthors of the book that emerged from their time together, *Conversations in Maine: Exploring our Nation's Future*, published in 1978. For decades, the Paine home continued to host summer gatherings of the surviving core group and other guests, including radical activists, community organizers, artists, and scholars. One of these guests, filmmaker Frances Reid (*Long Night's Journey into Day*), captured hours of footage documenting the community, environment, domestic activities, and impassioned discussions at the Schoolhouse during the summer of 1987.

**11:00 a.m. *Home on the Plantation: Rural Mississippi Home Movies and Life Beyond the Family***

**Ashley Smith**, Stockholm University



*Lytle Collection, University of Mississippi Libraries' Home Movie Collection*

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Mississippi cotton plantations were on the cusp of mechanization. The Home Movie Collection at the University of Mississippi's Department of Archives and Special Collections features amateur films that capture this gradual shift and how it affected daily life on Delta cotton farms. Some activities, such as breaking the ground or ginning were carried out mechanically, while other processes, such as planting seeds, chopping cotton plants, or harvesting the crop required manual or mule-driven labor. These plantations continued to be dependent on a sharecropper workforce in order to function on a sustainable level. Using selections from the Lytle and Gary family films, part of the University of Mississippi's holdings, I argue for an expanded definition of "home" that explores rural farming households in the early-

to-mid twentieth century as counterpoints to the iconic suburban nuclear families that often dominate home movies of the same period. Rather than being strictly family oriented, amateur films from the Lytle Collection and the Gary Collection display a vision of home that is not a retreat from the public life of work and sociability but instead feature cotton farming as an integral part of family life.

**12:00 – 1:30 LUNCH Alamo Lobby**

**12:30 p.m.** Archive tour with David Weiss: meet at the stairs adjacent to the Alamo

**1:00 p.m. *Working in the "People's House": The Nixon Staff Super-8 Collection***

**Katrina Dixon**, Independent Archival Researcher

**Brian L. Frye**, University of Kentucky College of Law



*The Nixon White House Staff Super 8 Motion Picture Film Collection, Roll S-32, Nixon Library*

Between 1969 and 1973, Nixon aides H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and Dwight Chapin filmed more than 500 reels of Super-8 home movies while working for the President. They documented everything from official events and diplomatic travel to Nixon's private meetings and their own routine workdays. When Nixon resigned, Congress nationalized all of the documents created by the Nixon White House, including the Super-8 films. Those documents became the most comprehensive record of a presidential administration that has ever existed. Scholars have focused on the documents that provide evidence relevant to Nixon's abuses of power, like the secret White House tapes. But they have ignored documents that do not relate to Nixon's abuses of power, like the Super-8 films. Accordingly, the Super-8 films were largely forgotten, until they were used as

the basis for the recent documentary film *Our Nixon* (2013). The Nixon Staff Super-8 Collection is a relic of the squarest of square America, and a reminder that most people *were* square. These home movies provide an intimate portrayal of the people who do the work of the People's House; the private, quasi-domestic realm of the White House staff is opened wide, challenging our previous conceptions of life in the Nixon White House.

**2:00 p.m. *"I Might Recommend Installing A Peephole": Navigating the Space of Home in Law Enforcement Training Films***

**Travis Wagner, University of South Carolina**



*"Crime in the Home (1973) Courtesy of University of South Carolina's Moving Image Research Collections"*

Law enforcement training films consider a variety of subjects from simple traffic regulations to the expectations of testifying in court. In theory, these films existed to better help police officers and persons within law enforcement in their work, almost always concerning aiding their respective communities. Of course, any person who has viewed one of these films realizes that with time their messages have become dated, in some instances being endearing and at other times quite problematic. This proves particularly fascinating when considering the space of home within these films and how their construction of the personal

space is treated quite differently, considering the specific training objective of these works. Indeed, the way the space of the home is treated is

distinctly different contingent upon whether or not the objective of the police force is to protect the home in question, or to enter it upon suspicion of criminal activity. It is the purpose of this presentation to look at the ways in which the home is dealt with differently through constructions of narrative, as well as the ways in which editing and cinematography compose the home as a space to either be occupied or be protected. While the presentation will briefly speak about the law enforcement training film in general terms, it will specifically compare the home in two such films.

**3:00 p.m. *Father Knows Best: The Home as the Complete Archive***

**Dino Everett, Hugh Hefner Archive, University of Southern California**

Often the home film archivist is brushed off as nothing more than a collector, as if collectors have no knowledge or expertise to offer. Large film archives have existed in their own little bubble for so long that it is hard for them to imagine that others have been doing it even longer. But all archives can learn a great deal from the amateur who has always put equal emphasis on the equipment as on the films. In part this was necessary to play back the material held in the home, but also because there was an understanding that the film did not move without the equipment so therefore the two are eternally tied together. The home archivist solved problems by creating their own splicers and printers, perforators and slitters, in order to shoot, duplicate and preserve films on unusual gauges when commercial entities ceased to support such ventures. The big archives have always simply copied the material over to the easiest current carrier. The home archivist modified equipment for playback, or even to recreate processes such as kinemacolor. Much can be learned by acknowledging these home film and equipment archivists who have been quietly taking care of the moving image heritage since the very beginning.

## Saturday Cont'd

### 6:00 p.m. Symposium Sendoff

A garden party/dinner at the historic Linwood Cottage one block north of the Alamo, at 101 Main Street in Bucksport.

Traditional Maine Fare —lobster, blueberries--and exciting vegetarian delights

Cocktails at 6pm with dinner to follow

