

"MOTION PICTURE NEWS"  
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First National Studios Burbank, Cal.  
**NOW OPEN**



**The Open Doorway to the Stars**



# First National Pictures pic



## in the Star-Spangled



# sent all the greatest stars



## THE GREATEST STARS ON EARTH!

**M**ILLION dollar names put First National ahead of the industry—leading in tried and tested performance pictures! Hit after hit—week after week—52 absolute big business weeks in the First National year! The nation is First National for backbone product. It's a banner year—wherever the

### STAR SPANGLED BANNER GROUP

plays, they'll stand up and cheer!

First in Stars!  
First in Stories!



First in Hits!  
First in Fame!

# BANNER GROUP -



# The Keenest Production Brains



Charles Rowland



John McCormick



Robert Kane



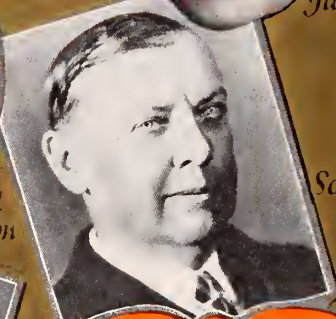
Al Rockett



Ray Rockett



Earl Hudson



Sam Rork



George Fitzmaurice



Alfred Santell



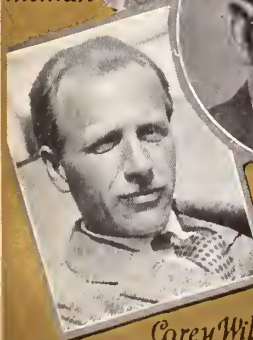
John Francis Dillon



C. C. Burr



Henry Hobart



E. M. Asher



Carey Wilson



Charles R. Rogers

**There's a Showman  
Producer Behind  
Every First  
National Picture!**

**And a box office Director  
dictates every scene!**

Every one a leader —  
every one a man who  
knows what it takes to  
keep theatres at capacity! That's why there's  
never a once-in-a-  
whiler in the First  
National line up—consistent, sure-fire, big  
business product that  
makes e-v-e-r-y week a  
profit week—e-v-e-r-y  
week in the year!

**The Star Spangled  
Banner Group  
Leads the Industry!**



Lothar Mendes



Bulbani



Howard Higgin



Charles Brabin



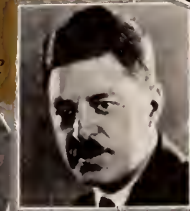
George Archainbaud



Harmon Weight



Richard Wallace



Alfred E. Green



Sidney Chalkin

are all **FIRST NATIONAL**





Facade of the administration building at the Burbank studios of First National, done in Spanish style of tan stucco and red tile

# Burbank Studio Culmination of First National's Progress

**C**HANGE is the keynote of the motion picture's history. No business alters its complexion so rapidly—no industry demands such constant alertness to maintain leadership. The motion picture company which does not keep step from day to day with the steady change going on in the demands of the business soon falls behind and is lost sight of. Powerful corporations have risen, prospered and fallen, all because of their failure to adjust themselves properly to the shifting bases of an industry unique in its demands.

From the organization of First National Exhibitors Circuit, Inc., in 1917, to the building of the \$2,000,000 studios at Burbank, Calif., in 1926, is a long and interesting trail—not only in point of time (for nine years is a long time in this shifting industry), but in point of the interesting progression of changes which the steady progress of the corporation has involved.

There was no lack of scoffers in 1917 when a little group of exhibitors, strong in their own territories but with practically no knowledge of national distribution, undertook to enter the field in competition with the strongest companies to assure for themselves and for exhibitors everywhere a steady supply of first-class product, regardless of threatened monopolistic conditions—but there are no scoffers today when First National throws open the doors of the mightiest and most modern studio yet built, to maintain that same steady supply of worthwhile product under conditions which now demand that First National produce a certain share of its own product and in its own studio. Just another move to keep step with the needs of the industry.

**W**HEN First National was formed on April 25, 1917, the purpose of the original franchise holders was to assure the availability of a plentiful supply of first-grade product, suitable for showing in the important first-run houses which they controlled, regardless of any threatening moves on the part of certain menacing interests. It was felt that this could be done through the supplying of adequate distribution to independent producers, who were then virtually without a channel for the marketing of productions of any magnitude. First National, it was felt, could function best as a

cooperative, exhibitor-owned organization, engaging in no production, but affording impartial and thorough distribution to any producer who could meet the quality demands of the group.

The men who made possible the fulfillment of this dream—the 26 original franchise holders, who dug down in their pockets for their proportionate share of the negative and print cost on each picture and who distributed the program in their respective territories—included N. H. Gordon (Boston); Jake and Otto Wells (Charlotte, N. C.); Jones, Linick and Schaefer (Chicago); Swanson and Nolan (Denver); A. H. Blank (Des Moines); John H. Kunsky (Detroit); Robert Lieber (Indianapolis); T. L. Tally (Los Angeles); Col. Fred Levy (Louisville, Ky.); Thomas Saxe (Minneapolis); Frank Hall (New Jersey); E. V. Richards, Jr. (New Orleans); J. D. Williams (New York City); Samuel Rothafel (New York City); H. O. Schwalbe (Philadelphia); Rowland and Clark (Pittsburgh); William Sievers (St. Louis); Turner and Dahnken (San Francisco); Jensen and Von Herberg (Seattle); Tom Moore (Washington, D. C.); E. H. Hulsey (Texas); Brouse and Stapleton (Eastern Canada); W. P. Dewees (Western Canada); Emanuel Mandelbaum (Cleveland).

These men, with the few State Rights exchanges already operated by members as a nucleus, obviously covered the strategic points of distribution in the United States and Canada, but there was open skepticism on every hand concerning the successful functioning of the members as one group. Where, said the wise ones, could product be found to compete with that offered by powerful rivals? How could a group of men scattered about the country and with little in common successfully conduct a highly specialized business on a national scale? How could financial expenditures be allocated in a manner to suit each member? The opinion in many quarters was that these things could not be done, and the prophets gave First National but a short while to live.

**D**ESPITE these pessimistic forecasts the men in charge went ahead with their plans. Offices were opened in two small rooms at 18 East 41st Street, New York City, with a staff of four persons. The first

picture to be acquired was "On Trial," an Essanay production.

Then came a move that completely eclipsed the sensation created by the original formation of First National—the signing of the Famous "Million Dollar Contract" with one Charles Spencer Chaplin. This was hailed as another preposterous move—but none could deny that First National was in a position to deliver a number of sure-fire attractions as a result of the contract.

Nevertheless, there was the immediate future to worry about, and things moved slowly for a time, of necessity. Two other pictures were acquired during 1917, "Daughter of Destiny" and "Alimony."

A critical period developed as the time for the annual meeting in April, 1918, drew near. Progress had been all that could be expected, but would the franchise holders—exhibitors rather than men familiar with distribution—realize this and be willing to carry on?

Fortunately, just at this time a rapid sequence of events changed the entire complexion of the situation and left little doubt as to what the franchise holders might think. First National obtained for distribution two of the outstanding box-office successes of the year, "Tarzan of the Apes" and "My Four Years in Germany." These went into the Broadway and Knickerbocker theatres respectively, where they played to capacity business. The very day before the opening of the annual meeting, Chaplin's first picture under his contract, "A Dog's Life," made its bow at the Strand Theatre and registered a sensation.

As a result the visiting franchise holders had such tangible evidence of the sound judgment being displayed in making up the releasing program that they returned home with full confidence in the future of the company.

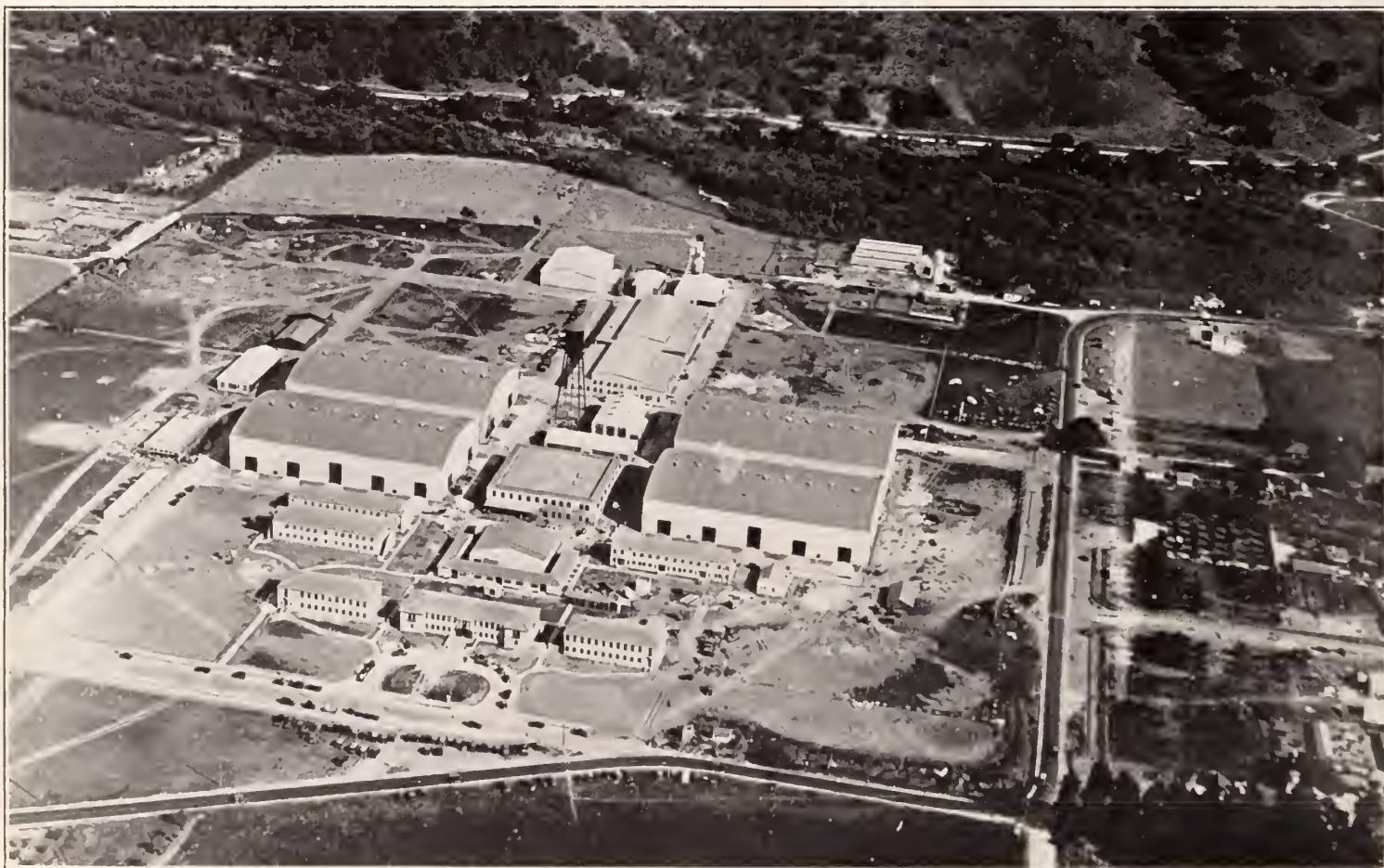
The next star to be placed under a First National contract was Anita Stewart, who was signed in the summer of 1918. Chaplin delivered his second picture, "Shoulder Arms," which still ranks as one of his greatest. "Pershing's Crusaders" came just at the right moment and scored a triumph.

A few weeks later the roster of stars was brought up to full big league strength





Attractive entrance to the administration building at the Burbank First National studios, showing the handsome style of architecture, the inlaid tile decoration and the landscape gardening with which the buildings are being surrounded



Airplane view of the \$2,000,000 First National studios at Burbank, Cal., giving some idea of the vastness of the project and the amount of construction involved





Robert Lieber, president of First National



Richard A. Rowland, general manager of First National Pictures, Inc.

with the acquisition of Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge and Constance Talmadge.

Three Mary Pickford vehicles were delivered in following months, "Daddy Long Legs," "The Hoodlum" and "Heart of the Hills," all outstandingly popular.

**D**URING 1918 outside interests made persistent efforts to weaken and disrupt the First National organization. This succeeded in but one instance, but this one case convinced members that the time had come for the first change in the form of organization, so that measures might be adopted which would prevent any territory passing into the control of alien interests.

Long and careful consideration was given the problem and in the fall of 1919 the members of the circuit, aided by the best lawyers available, drew up plans for reorganization and refinancing along lines that would insure uniform accounting, centralized and uniform sales, distribution and exploitation. A committee of five was appointed to work out details.

As a result, in November, 1919, First National Exhibitors Circuit gave way to Associated First National Pictures, Inc. The stock of the company was placed in the hands of five voting trustees, elected by the entire membership, with full control over the transference of stock vested in them. The men elected were Robert Lieber, Indianapolis; N. H. Gordon, Boston; J. G. Von Herberg, Seattle; Fred Dahnken, San Francisco; and Moe Finkelstein, Minneapolis.

Shortly after the meeting, N. H. Gordon, J. D. Williams, H. O. Schwalbe and E. Bruce Johnson toured the country obtaining the signatures of the original franchise holders to the new agreement, preparatory

to a meeting in Atlantic City in January, 1920. At the conclusion of a series of conferences all the territories were signed up with the exception of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Experience had shown that central control was needed to bring about uniform policy and practice in the releasing of the program, which could not be accomplished under local handling, so with the formation of Associated First National complete control of all the exchanges was centralized in the home office.

Having progressed thus far and proved that exhibitor co-operation in distribution was possible, the franchise holders decided that a broadening of the franchise idea, to take in a larger number of exhibitors, would strengthen the organization and extend its benefits throughout the industry. Conferences with this end in view were held between January and April, 1920, and at the annual meeting in Chicago a complete sub-franchise plan was presented to the stockholders and received their enthusiastic endorsement.

**I**N November, concurrently with the time for release of "The Kid," sub-franchises were offered to exhibitors, and the response was immediate. An intensive campaign was carried on, and ultimately some 3,500 exhibitors were enrolled as sub-franchise holders.

Difficulties had arisen with Chaplin, meanwhile, over the terms upon which "The Kid" was to be released to exhibitors, but these were ironed out and the picture placed in circulation in February, 1921. Charles Ray was added to the roster of First National stars.

During 1921 a difficult situation arose. The sub-franchise plan had extended the scope and strength of First National, but it had also increased the number of men who might be affected by adverse propaganda and made dissatisfied by opposition interests. This came about in some cases, and First National might have been wrecked from the inside had not wise and prompt action by the executives headed off the danger.

A "get-together meeting" was held in Chicago in October, attended by approximately one hundred delegates elected by the sub-franchise holders. The cards were laid on the table, and for four days all of the important actions of the company were freely and openly discussed. A rousing vote of confidence was given the executives.

Any remnants of dissatisfaction were dispelled by President Robert Lieber's announcement that any sub-franchise holder who wished to withdraw might do so, provided that he was not in arrears under his agreement.

Conditions were again changing, and a considerable number of sub-franchise holders withdrew under the terms offered, due to local conditions, and harmony once more reigned.

While these organization changes were taking place, First National continued to strengthen its line-up of releases. The first Constance Talmadge vehicle, "A Temperamental Wife," had arrived in September, 1919, and Norma's initial contribution, "A Daughter of Two Worlds," in January, 1920. In September, 1921, all of the released pictures of the Associated Producers (Thomas H. Ince, Mack Sennett, Marshall Neilan, Allan Dwan, Maurice Tourneur and J. Parker Reid) were taken over



and another contract was signed with Ince and Sennett for new product.

The year of 1921 also brought other important additions to the program. In April, Sol Lesser signed with First National for "Peek's Bad Boy," starring Jackie Coogan. A contract with Richard Barthelmess followed, under which he delivered "Tol'able David" in November. During the same year agreements were closed with Louis B. Mayer for the John M. Stahl productions and with Joseph M. Schenck for the Buster Keaton pictures.

SO 1922 found First National accepted in the trade as not alone the expression of an ideal and unique method of distribution, but as an industrial giant—an outstanding force in the business. The men who had brought it along to this point from its inception felt the need of an executive familiar with national distribution as well as the needs of the exhibitor and cast about for a suitable man.

They found him in Richard A. Rowland, who, after years as a successful theatre

executive, partner in the Rowland & Clarke Circuit of Pittsburgh, had organized Metro and remained president of it until its sale to other interests.

Rowland stepped into office as general manager—but we will let him tell the story from that point:

"When I came into First National, I found a wide variety of product being released, all from independent sources. Some of the pictures were excellent, some of them were fair—and in order to make up a full schedule it was necessary to accept some product that was distinctly mediocre. Schenck was giving us first-class pictures; so was Ince; so were a few of the others—but some of the product needed to complete the schedule was anything but satisfactory.

"Gradually I became convinced that First National, to maintain a consistently high standard, must make a certain amount of product. I didn't favor making all of the pictures we released—I don't today—because I don't think any one man or one organization can make all

the pictures we need and make them right.

"What I wanted to do was to replace the mediocre product on our schedule with pictures of our own. I knew they couldn't be worse and hoped that they might be a great deal better.

"Also, I wanted to build up and develop some stars of our own—stars that would be a definite asset to First National and whom we could keep under the First National banner, once we had built them up.

"First National, up to that time, had been solely a distributing organization for outside product and producing meant a radical change of policy. Naturally, there was some little skepticism.

"It was necessary, first of all, to convince the directors and franchise holders that we could make pictures successfully. As president of Metro I had largely kept my hands off production, respecting the tradition that there was some great mystery or secret about picture making—although I believed then, as I believe now, that that idea was pure bunk.



Views of the \$2,000,000 First National studios at Burbank under construction, including the dressing rooms, the cutting and projection rooms, the carpenter shops and the four dark stages, which may be seen in the background of all four pictures, showing how all of the departments are grouped around the stages





John McCormick, general manager of West Coast production for First National

"All that a man needs to make successful pictures is a show 'slant' and a realization of the value of money. Showmanship and sense—nothing mysterious about that.

"That idea that some secret, God-given gift is necessary to picture making was so widely current that, naturally enough, the franchise holders were not at all sure that we could produce suitable features. I said: 'Boys, let's make just one picture on a modest scale and see what we can do. Then you can decide whether or not you want to go ahead.' They agreed.

"We went ahead and made that first picture, 'Mighty Lak' a Rose.' It was a success, and smashed the bunk about the mystery of picture making. Soon we were launched on the group that included 'The Sea Hawk,' 'Flaming Youth,' 'The Lost World' and 'Black Oxen'—pictures that made screen history. We had proved that ordinary, commonsense mortals with showmanship instinct could compete success-

fully in picture making with those who made a great mystery of it.

"I have said that a man, to make successful pictures, must have both the showman's 'slant' and a sense of the value of money. That is because it is not enough that he make good pictures—he must make good pictures 'at a price.' A picture which would be a success if made at a cost of \$200,000 might be a failure if \$300,000 were spent in filming it.

"That has been the keynote of our effort—good pictures at a price. They must be good, but they must not cost too much.

"After producing for a time on the West Coast, we brought a portion of our production to New York because we felt that certain pictures could be made here to better advantage.

"All this time we were producing in rented studios and were cramped by lack of space. We needed more stages and we needed a large lot where we could build sets and leave them standing. Plenty of space offers the biggest chance for economy of anything in picture making. It became obvious that for economy and efficiency we must have more studio space, either in New York or on the West Coast.

"Plans for both were under consideration, though nothing was being done, when the United Studios were suddenly sold, forcing us to immediate action. The result was the decision to build the studio at Burbank—and we decided to build it right, benefiting by our own experience and that of other companies with their studios."

ONCE a decision had been reached to build on the West Coast, the problem of a site became paramount. Real estate values have progressed far from the early days, when ten or fifteen thousand dollars would take care of the purchase of a large tract. Appreciation in value has been rapid in the past, and has played an important part in the expansion of many companies, but this appreciation will be less noticeable in the future in the well-developed sections.

First National wanted, above all, a large tract of land on which there would be ample space for all the facilities which might be needed for many years to come. That meant, necessarily, getting away from the area where property is priced on a residential lot basis.

Rowland explains the selection of Burbank as follows:

"We took Hollywood as the geographical



M. C. Levee, general executive manager of the First National studios at Burbank

centre of production. Hollywood itself we did not consider suitable, for the reason that real estate values are very high, and since the city is growing rapidly there can be no telling what building restrictions may arise in the future.

"In every direction we went from Hollywood, except one, we ran into a highly developed sector—but in that one direction, toward the hills, we found Burbank. The moment I saw the present site, I exclaimed: 'What a perfect setting for a studio!'

"The widening of Cahuenga Pass to allow for an 80-foot boulevard made Burbank an easy 10-minute drive from Hollywood. The section was relatively undeveloped and real-estate values were at a sensible level. That meant that we could have room enough to build as we wanted to, with a surplus for future expansion. We were convinced that in Burbank we had found our ideal site.



The row of administration buildings under construction at the First National Burbank plant. These buildings, now complete, will house the executives, producers, directors, writers and casting department





Some conception of the vast area and height of the four stages at the First National Burbank studios may be gained from this view of one of the stages under construction. The floors are so solidly built that trucks may be driven in on them with materials

"We purchased three tracts, totaling 62 acres, and began building. At the same time, at the United Studios, we began work on a group of pictures. When that group was finished and a new one started, the units were housed in the new studio at Burbank—in other words, the studio was completely erected while one group of pictures was being filmed. From the turning of the first spadeful of earth to the commencement of production at Burbank, only 72 days elapsed, marking a new record in studio construction.

"The fact that we were able to transport men and materials to Burbank and put the studio up in record time is the best proof of the accessibility and convenience of the site.

"In laying out the plant at Burbank the effort was made to build a model studio—one that would take advantage of everything which our own experience indicated was necessary, and which would avoid the mistakes which we had seen others make.

"Fortunately, we were not handicapped by limited space, and could lay out the plant the way we wanted it. Virtually all of the other studios have grown up, building by building, and the general arrangement is far from efficient. We had the

advantage of starting with a clean slate and each building has been placed where it will be most convenient. In addition to that, we have laid it out in such a way that future stages and buildings can be just as conveniently placed. This allowance for future needs is unique in studio planning and we could not have done it had not the site been so favorable in every way.

"Although the Burbank plant has been built economically, it is a thing of beauty. The natural setting is perfect, and I can imagine no greater inspiration for a writer, for instance, than to sit in his office at Burbank and look out over the foothills. That setting has been taken advantage of in every way possible in laying out the general plan, and the buildings are in a uniformly attractive style of architecture.

"As you approach the studios from the boulevard in front, you find the administration building, the one housing the producers, another for the directors, and the casting office. Back of these are the dressing rooms, the shops, the property and wardrobe departments, and so on, and to the rear of these are the large stages themselves. Behind the stages is a large, open lot, where we will put up sets and can leave them standing. Here will be built three

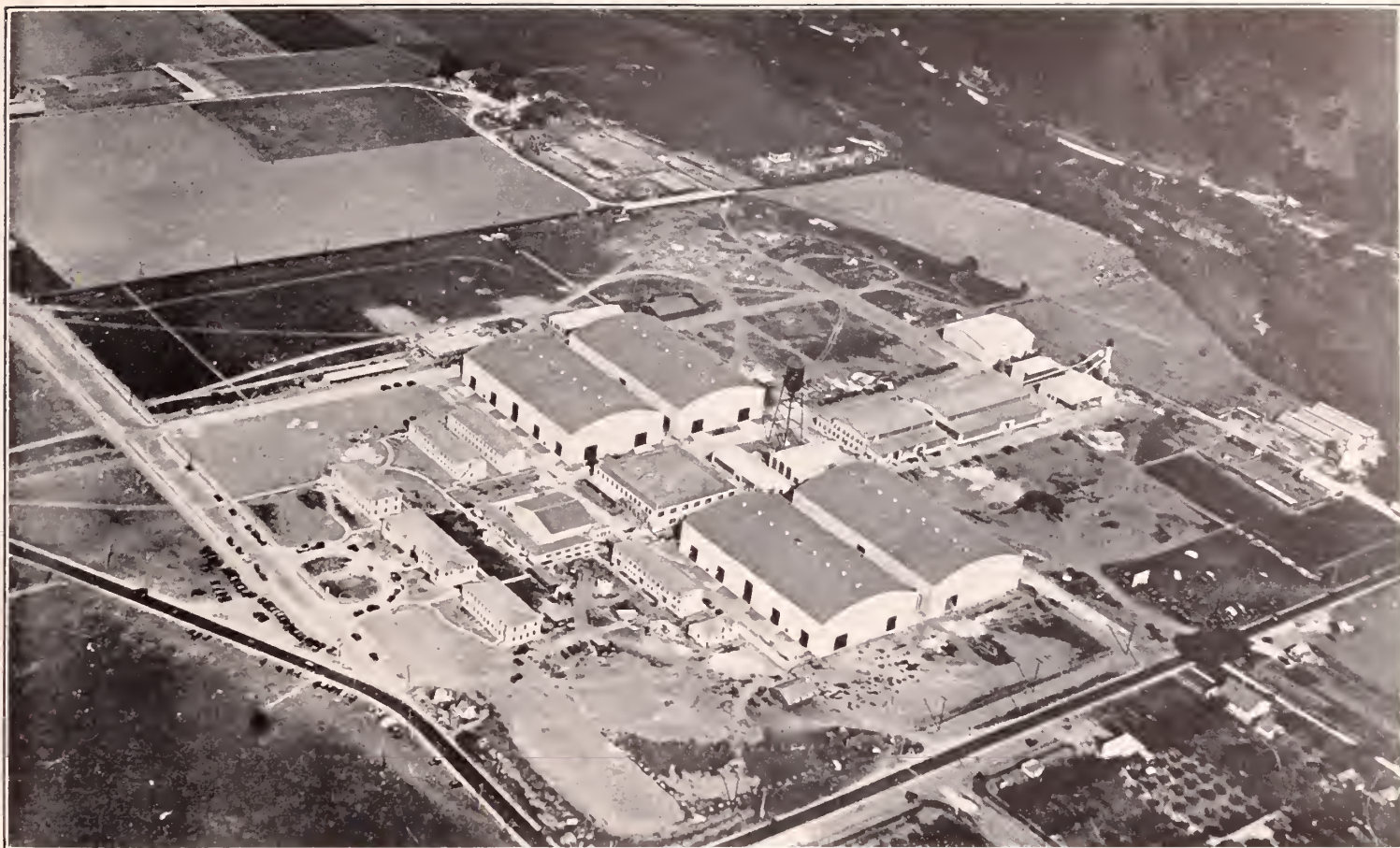
streets, which will serve for street scenes of all sorts. Sets can be repainted and altered and used over indefinitely.

"As I have said, you must not only make good pictures but you must make them at a price. The room we will have at Burbank will be a big move in the direction of economy. When you have to tear down each set as you finish with it, to make room for another that must go up, your set cost is high. When you can leave them standing, to be redressed and repainted, you can sometimes save as high as 80 per cent. of set cost, and at absolutely no sacrifice in quality or screen value at any point.

"We feel that we have at Burbank what represents the ideal studio of today. We are only ten minutes from Hollywood, and can get anything we need quickly until we are able to supply it ourselves. Our investment in real estate is very moderate, and values at Burbank are already rising rapidly, so that our site is bound to appreciate heavily in value over a period of years. Everything about the studio represents sound common sense, and picture making there will be on the same basis.

"Burbank is a good studio—at a price; and we are making and will continue to make there good pictures—at a price."





Bird's-eye view of the Burbank studios of First National, showing the central placing of the four stages in the center of the lot, and the space provided for four more in an equally convenient position when the need for them arises.

## Detailed Story of the New Burbank Studio

By R. L. Russell  
(Construction Engineer)

ON a site where alfalfa grew four months ago now stands the newest and largest motion picture city—the Burbank First National Studios, erected by the Austin Company of California under the supervision of John McCormick, general manager of West Coast production, and M. C. Levee, general executive manager.

The new studio at Burbank comprises twenty-three huge buildings containing over 350,000 square feet of floor space, besides the various bungalows, sheds and minor buildings. All the buildings are of old Spanish architecture.

The remaining ground is held for future expansion, for temporary street, village and other "sets," and for location work. It includes flats, a river bottom and wooded hills.

Within the permanent part of the studio are several miles of concrete-paved streets, all heavily reinforced to support not only the heaviest trucks, but even artillery, should the filming of war pictures at any future date call for it. There are six main streets, fifty feet wide; four smaller streets and a number of paved alleys.

Within the grounds is a parking station for employees' cars, capable of taking care of the machines of the entire studio personnel.

The entire forty-eight acres of permanent building space is enclosed by a high ornamental metalwork fence, on two sides facing the streets, and on the remaining

sides by wire and ornamental board fences. The entire street frontage of the studios is covered by lawn and landscape gardening, and the buildings seen from both streets are very pleasing to the eye.

THE administration buildings are occupied by the chief executives, by business managers and production heads of various units; the accounting department; the publicity department; the telephone exchange, the telegraph office, scenario writers' offices and directors' private offices.

The part of a motion picture studio around which all others revolve as the spokes of a wheel around the hub, are the stages upon which three-fourths of the average production is filmed. Therefore the central positions on the big First National lot are occupied by the four mammoth stages already built, and the space for four more which will be erected when further production activities require them.

The system of overhead tramways, and block-and-chain methods of handling the heavy mercury-vapor lights and sun-ares not only facilitates the use of this electrical equipment and saves time, but it also prevents accidents caused by falling light apparatus.

The floors, in themselves, are an innovation. They are built so heavily that a truck of any weight may drive over them and deposit its load wherever it is needed on the floor, instead of backing-up to one of the doors and unloading there. One of the two huge doors in each wall of each stage has a cement apron to allow trucks

and "mules"—the slang term for little gas and electric tractors used in the studio—to enter the buildings.

On one side of the stages are the three dressing-room buildings. These, in common with every other building on the ground, are Spanish in style, and made of stucco of a soft brown tint. They are two-story structures, one containing twelve star suites of two rooms each on the ground floor, and twenty-four single dressing rooms on the upper floor; the others containing single rooms and general rooms. Every room is fully equipped, well lighted and heated, and nicely furnished. The dressing room buildings cover a ground space of 124 feet by 33 feet each.

Equally handy to the stages is the property and wardrobe building. This is one of the larger buildings in the studio, being one hundred and twenty feet square, and two stories in height.

BETWEEN the stages and the administration buildings is a collection of structures connected in function with each, inasmuch as it houses on the side nearest the executive and directors' offices of the latter, the film cutting rooms and projection rooms; and nearest the stages, the cameramen's dark rooms and camera vaults, the still photograph printing and developing laboratory, and a portrait gallery.

In this group is one large building that measures 75 by 111 feet. It contains the projection rooms, three in number, each of which is a miniature theatre; the well-equipped art portrait gallery, where a portrait specialist makes photographs of the



players; the camera rooms, and incidentally, the studio barber and manicure shop.

The entire southern part of the enclosure is devoted to other mechanical departments of the production work. Here is to be found the carpenter shop, with its benches, machinery, tools and a large force of men. In an adjoining building, the metal working shop—a sort of super-smithy—and the plaster casting shop, where everything of this nature from making imitation brick wall sections to fine casting and sculpture work goes on.

Another vitally important part of any large motion picture studio is the electrical shop and generator plant. All massive, stationary electrical equipment at First National Studios is housed in a single large building, 58 by 75 feet in floor area and 30 feet in the clear, inside height. There is space here for a battery of twelve generators, but this is a provision for future expansion only, as but a third of this number is needed to supply the entire studio at present.

The electric lighting and power system at this time handles electricity of 33,000 volts delivered by the Southern California Edison Company, reducing it by transformers to the required voltages of 220 and 110. Twenty billion candlepower is available; in other words, current more than sufficient to supply a city of 10,000 population.

**H**HEADQUARTERS of the mechanical departments, and the transportation department, are in the Planning Department Building, 120 feet square, in the center of

this group of structures. This includes also sheet-metal shops, the mechanical equipment storage shops, the timekeepers' headquarters, and the studio hospital.

A garage building, fully equipped and manned by expert auto mechanics, takes care of the transportation cars and others on the lot as the need arises. It is 40 by 100 feet in area, and has its own gasoline and oil station.

Behind the carpenter shops and other mechanical buildings are two lumber sheds, each 30 by 50 feet; a lumber storage shed 24 by 75 feet, and a saw mill and planing mill, housed in a building 60 feet square. Connected by suction pipes with all the woodworking shops is a huge incinerator, which also has a mechanical belt feed from a dump hopper into which general rubbish is thrown from trucks.

Toward the far corner of this group is a scene dock where large units of scenery are stored for future use. This structure is 80 feet wide and 100 feet long. At the outpost of all the buildings is another shed, of similar proportions, where wreckage of used sets is stored for future salvaging.

Another structure that must not be overlooked, so constant is the demand for what it supplies, is the studio greenhouse, 40 by 100 feet in measurement.

In the course of the work, which was finished just one month ahead of schedule, several new records in industrial construction were established. Each of the four huge stages, measuring 240 x 135 feet was framed complete within three working days. On stage No. One, 40,000 feet of roof

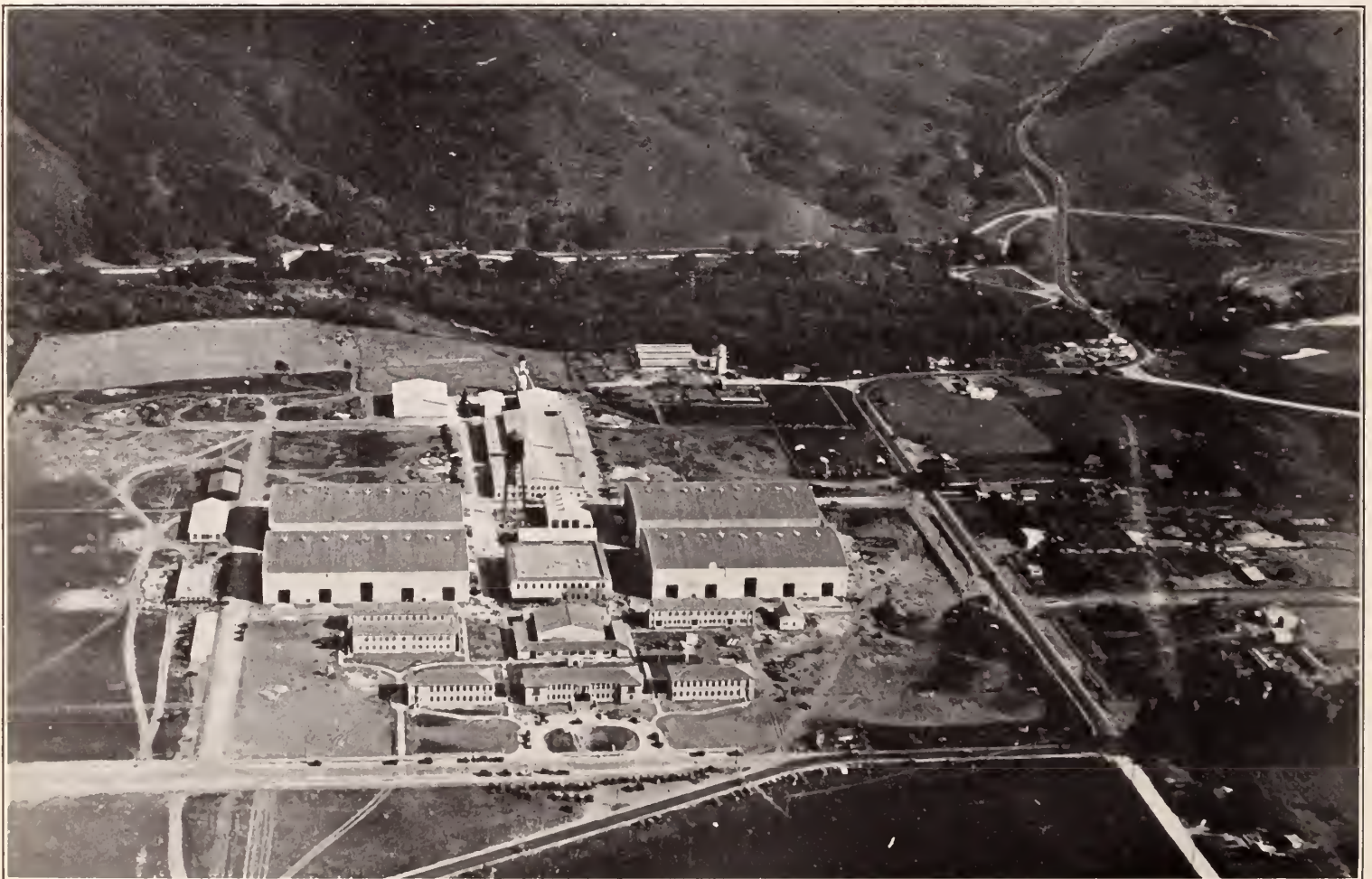
sheathing was erected and laid in three and a half hours and 35,000 feet of sub-flooring was laid in a little over four hours.

The big bowstring trusses for the stages, measuring 136 feet, the largest of their kind ever constructed in the West, were erected at the rate of nearly one an hour. In the construction of the three Administration buildings the excavations were made and the foundations completed within twelve working hours from the time ground was broken. These structures were framed complete in three days.

**A**N idea of the size of the plant can be gained from the fact that three million feet of rough lumber, or 150 carloads, was required. In the electrical system six miles of underground conduit, 20 miles of lighting wire and 10,000 feet of telephone wire was consumed. Twenty-five thousand feet of steel sash, or three carloads, was used in the mill buildings, while dressing-rooms and offices required between 500 and 600 steel casement windows.

In spite of the fact that "dark" stages are now used exclusively in motion picture studios a large amount of glass is used in the construction of a modern film city. In the erection of the plant, over 50,000 square feet of glass was used.

Each stage measures 137 x 240 feet. The buildings have been designed so as to greatly facilitate the taking of indoor scenes and the huge floor area makes it possible for several production units to work on the same stage. A 35-foot clear height from the floor to the bottom truss gives ample room for the tallest sets and for the arrangement of overhead lights.



Airplane photo of the First National studios at Burbank, showing in the foreground, Rowland Avenue and the row of administration buildings, in the rear of which are the various departments, the stages, and the lot



# Leading First National Production Personalities

## *Lewis Stone and Lloyd Hughes*

TWO of the outstanding players developed by First National, and who will work in the new Burbank studios, are Lewis Stone and Lloyd Hughes. Both have appeared as leading men in First National productions, but they offer a striking contrast in type—Stone representing the polished, mature man of the world, while Hughes is the typical two-fisted American young man. Recent releases in which Lewis Stone has appeared include "The Girl from Montmartre," "Easy Money" and "Old Loves and New." Hughes' latest roles have been in "Irene," "Fast Steppers" and "Ella Cinders."

## *Warner Oland*

FOR many years the real ability of Warner Oland was not fully realized by many, half hidden as it was by the melodramatic nature of the serials in which he appeared. Even in serials, however, his work was distinguished by rare subtlety and consummate artistry. Oland is a master of character make-up and his portrayal of oriental types, in particular, has been distinguished by an absolute fidelity to the original. His most recent screen engagement has been for an important role in "Twinkletoes."

## *Ben Lyon*

THIS popular young First National player has been kept very busy the past year, alternating between productions for Robert Kane and First National. He has recorded a steady advance, both in box-office popularity and in the character of his work. Recent appearances have included "The Savage," "The Reckless Lady" and "The Great Deception." His next release is "The Prince of Tempters." He is now preparing to start work in "Not Herbert," based on the Broadway stage play of the same name.

## *Jess Smith*

THE youngest executive producing for First National release is Jess Smith, who is a veteran despite his years. His record goes back to the old Lubin days in 1914. For the past six years he has been one of the most successful managerial agents, bringing to the screen such new faces as Dorothy Mackaill, Ben Lyon, Pauline Garon and Glenn Hunter. He has now purchased for production the Broadway success, "The Poor Nut," which ran in New York for ten months and has just started off brilliantly on a Chicago run.

## *Dorothy Mackaill*

AN outstanding feminine player developed almost wholly in the realm of First National productions is Dorothy Mackaill. This charming young English girl, who has been on the screen for only a few years, has advanced steadily in popularity as her work has grown in charm and artistry. She appeared in the first picture to be made by First National, "Mighty Lak' a Rose," and was placed under contract shortly after. Her most recent release is "Subway Sadie," in which she scores a personal triumph. She is now working in "The Charleston Kid."

## *Ralph Hammeras*

THE all important work of the miniature and trick department, which makes possible many scenes and effects which would otherwise be difficult or out of the question, falls on the shoulders of Ralph Hammeras, so far as the New York studio of First National is concerned. Hammeras played an important part in the production of "The Lost World," and was instrumental in solving some of the knotty problems encountered. A former artist, he developed the illustrated art title and later the method known as "glass work," on which he holds an important patent.

## *June Mathis*

APPROPRIATELY enough, the first production to be started at the Burbank studios of First National was a June Mathis production, "The Masked Woman," which has now been completed. Miss Mathis has been a vital force in film production for years. First as an actress and later as a continuity writer she made an important place for herself, but it was her work in connection with "The Four Horsemen" that placed her in the front rank of writers and editorial supervisors. Now, with First National, she has an opportunity to give full rein to her abilities, which were displayed most recently in "The Greater Glory." "Here Y' Are Brother" is next.

## *Frank Capra*

PROBABLY no class of work makes severer demands upon the director than comedy work. Comedy is usually filmed rather than written, and the director must play an important part in evolving the gags and situations. Dramatic work may succeed in varying degrees, but comedy is either funny or not funny, and on that test the comedy director stands or falls. One of the fastest rising men in this field is Frank Capra, the megaphone wielder of the Harry Langdon organization. He has just finished directing Langdon in "The Strong Man."

## *Carey Wilson*

SEVERAL veteran scenarists occupy positions of great importance in the First National production lineup at the present time, one of the most prominent of whom is Carey Wilson, who first gained a knowledge of motion picture requirements in the sales department. He has been equally successful as an adaptor and as the author of original screen stories, and has held important editorial positions. The first of a series to be produced under his management at First National is "Men of the Dawn." He will also adapt "Midnight Lovers" and "Ladies at Play," and has done an original for Colleen Moore, "Orchids and Ermine."

## *Sam Hardy*

ALTHOUGH he is freelancing, Sam Hardy has been in such constant demand by First National and Robert T. Kane that he has been rushing from picture to picture, almost without a breathing spell. His likeable personality and rare sense of comedy, combined with genuine ability as an actor, have brought him recognition as a distinctive figure. His more re-

cent pictures in which he has walked off with spotlight honors include "The Halfway Girl," "Bluebeard's Seven Wives," "The Savage," "The Great Deception," and "The Prince of Tempters."

## *A. L. Rockett*

SOUND common sense is the basis of A. L. Rockett's success as a producer. His knowledge of production is thorough and far-reaching, the result of many years' experience with leading companies and a period as independent producer in association with his brother, Ray Rockett, which culminated in the filming of "Abraham Lincoln." This led to his connection with First National, where his first production, "Puppets," showed the wisdom of the move. He repeated this success in "Subway Sadie" and is now making "The Charleston Kid."

## *Robert T. Kane*

FEW independent producers have achieved the spectacular, consistent success which has attended the efforts of Robert T. Kane in producing for First National release. He has displayed a remarkable instinct for box-office angles, combined with a shrewd sense of production values. The list of successes has included "The New Commandment," "Bluebeard's Seven Wives," "The Reckless Lady," "The Dancer of Paris," "The Wilderness Woman" and "The Great Deception," while a special, "The Prince of Tempters," has just been completed.

## *Lothar Mendes*

THE best in European technique, plus the finest American resources, is being brought to the screen by Lothar Mendes, leading German director, under contract to Robert T. Kane, who has just completed "The Prince of Tempters," his first production here. Mendes is thoroughly schooled in European methods, and is applying the best and most suitable of them to his work, but he is keenly alive to American box-office demands and point of view. Those who have seen his first picture declare that he has succeeded admirably.

## *C. C. Burr*

CLOSELY coupled with the success of the Johnny Hines comedies is the personality and ideals of the man who has piloted Hines from the days of two-reel comedies to the present features. Sound showmanship has been the keynote of Burr's efforts, who has seen to it that the Hines comedies have appealed to the greatest possible number of persons. Vulgarities and suggestiveness have been completely taboo, and each Hines picture has been a clean, entertaining story of American youth and its triumph over obstacles. "The Live Wire," "Rainbow Riley," and "The Brown Derby" are recent releases, while "Stepping Along" is in production.

## *Johnny Hines*

SOMETHING of a unique place among comedians of the screen is occupied by Johnny Hines, who represents the typical American youth—breezy, resourceful and unfailingly optimistic. His climb has been steady, from the two-reel "Torehy" comedies to feature-length comedies on the in-



dependent market, and now a First National release. "The Live Wire," "Rainbow Riley," "The Brown Derby" and "Stepping Along" (in production) are his latest vehicles.

### Howard Higgin

ONE of the most reliable and consistent of the directorial aces of the day is Howard Higgin, who has contributed notably to the First National program the past year. After years of successful scenario writing, which gave him a sound knowledge of screen values and construction obtainable in no other way, Higgin took up the megaphone, and consistent success has attended his efforts since that time. He is now directing "Not Herbert" for First National. Other recent productions include, "In the Name of Love," "The New Commandment," "The Reckless Lady," "The Wilderness Woman" and "The Great Deception."

### Ray Rockett

ASSOCIATED with his brother, Al Rockett, over a period of many years, including their joint production of "Abraham Lincoln," Ray Rockett is now also producing for First National. His first to be completed is "Paradise," recently shown, which establishes him definitely as an outstanding production executive. He is now about to start "Not Herbert," which will be followed by a special, "Head of the House of Coombe," and "The Crystal Cnp." Ray Rockett is regarded as one of the sanest and most reliable of producers.

### Jack Mulhall

ONE First National player who may be counted upon for reliable, consistent performance is Jack Mulhall, who has appeared in leading roles with several of the First National feminine stars. Mulhall turned to the screen at an early age and was almost immediately successful. One of his best recent performances was in "Classified," which won him considerable critical and public acclaim. He then came East to appear in "Subway Sadie," where he again scores. He is now working in "The Charleston Kid," after which he returns West for "Orchids and Ermine."

### Svend Gade

ALTHOUGH his fame in Europe was as an art director, and it was a mission of this sort in connection with a stage play that brought him to this country, Svend Gade has demonstrated here that his ability in the field of direction is equally great. He has brought to his work in motion pictures, including the memorable "Siege" and several Mary Philbin vehicles, a rare sense of pictorial values and lighting. His current productions are "The Blonde Saint," which he is now directing for Sam E. Rork, and "Into Her Kingdom," likewise for First National.

### Ken Maynard

UNDER the management of Charles R. Rogers, Ken Maynard is appearing in a series of Western productions for First National release which should make Western history. Each is being produced with

the same care that would go into a feature of any type, and they are not characterized by the cheapness and lack of story which is typical of the routine Western. Maynard's personality is tremendously likeable. "Senor Daredevil" is his first for First National.

### Harry Langdon

FEW comedians have recorded as rapid or as sure a rise to featured rank as has Harry Langdon. A graduate of the school of vaudeville, it did not take him long to find himself in the newer medium. His appearance in two-reel comedies was so outstandingly successful and attracted such widespread attention, that it was only a step from this to Langdon's own company to produce feature-length comedies for First National release. The first was "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," which has now been followed by "The Strong Man."

### Francis X. Bushman

FEW players have maintained their screen popularity as steadily as Francis X. Bushman. Had his fame not been based upon genuine ability as an actor, he would have dropped from sight after the few years which constitute the film life of a screen idol, instead of which he has gone on steadily to increasing triumphs. As Messala in "Ben-Hur," he walked away with a lion's share of the acting honors, while as the theatrical director in "The Marriage Clause" his work ranks as one of the outstanding performances of the year. He appears in "The Lady in Ermine" for First National.

### Colleen Moore

ONE of First National's objects in starting its own production was the development of its own stars, and in no case has it been more remarkably successful than in the case of Colleen Moore. Her rise has been phenomenal but steady, and has been aided by able story selection and every production resource. Her comedy gift, plus a likeable personality and charm, have placed her solidly among the most popular feminine stars. Her first production for First National's Banner Group will be "Twinkletoes," to be followed by "Orchids and Ermine."

### Sam E. Rork

VETERAN showmanship combined with a sound knowledge of what the public wants has made the career of Sam E. Rork as a producer eminently successful. Such pictures as "Ponjola," "Inez from Hollywood" and "The Talker," displayed Rork's ability to assemble all the elements needed for an outstanding production. His most recent release is "Old Loves and New," based on "The Desert Healer." He is now completing work on the West Coast on "The Blonde Saint," adapted from the popular novel by Stephen Whitman.

### Winifred Dunn

FULL recognition of the tremendous importance of properly prepared continuity is given at First National, and every effort has been made to obtain the best scenario talent available. As far as pos-

sible, each story is being adapted to the screen by the writer best qualified to put that particular story into screen form. Illustrative of this is the selection of Winifred Dunn to adapt "Twinkletoes" to the screen for Colleen Moore. Miss Dunn is the author of "Sparrows," a Mary Pickford original.

### Kenneth Harlan

ONE of the most consistently popular of screen leading men is Kenneth Harlan, whose appearance and physique make him an ideal foil for a feminine player. His screen record includes Metro, Thomas H. Ince, Lois Weber, several pictures with Constance Talmadge, Warner Bros., and a number of productions for Preferred. He appears as Chuck Lightfoot in "Twinkletoes" for First National.

### Albert Rogell

AS Ken Maynard's director, filming a series of special Western productions for First National release, Albert Rogell has distinguished himself among the men making this type of feature. The usual cheap Western was not enough for First National, and Rogell has set himself the task of producing Westerns as fine in their way as any type of production. His success was demonstrated in "Senor Daredevil," and will be again in "The Unknown Cavalier" and "Flame of the Border."

### J. N. Wilson & "Pat" McKenna

IN line with the growing tendency toward original screen stories, developed for the screen alone, First National has purchased for a forthcoming Colleen Moore special the story "It Could Have Happened," by Jerome N. Wilson, which will be novelized by Agnes "Pat" McKenna (Mrs. Wilson). This strong story team, which has been specializing in powerful screen tales, based on big themes and soundly developed, has just completed the adaptation and treatment of Richard Barthelmess' forthcoming production for First National release.

### George Archainbaud

BEGINNING his career as a director in his native France, and first coming here to direct for a French company, George Archainbaud occupies a firm position to-day in American directorial ranks. He directed a great many pictures for Selznick, including "The Common Law" and "One Week of Love." He was one of the first directors to be brought East by First National. His last three pictures are "Men of Steel," "Puppets" and "Men of the Dawn."

### B. P. Fineman

ANOTHER of the young producers playing such an important part in the studios of to-day is B. P. Fineman, who has one of the units at the new Burbank studios. Fineman made a brilliant reputation for himself while in charge of the F. B. O. studios, where he delivered remarkable results on that company's program. Now, producing on a larger scale for First National, he is accomplishing even greater things. His productions for First National are "Forever After" and "Ladies at Play."