

Visual Histories
Amateur Film in New Zealand c.1923-1970

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Abstract

Many ordinary New Zealanders made amateur films between c.1923-1970. This thesis explores the types of films they made; home movies, community films and films made by members of amateur cine clubs. The discussion focuses on the making, showing and viewing of each of these types of films. Some were shown in private home or club situations, while other films were shown publicly. As a group of films and film practises they offer a valuable source of information on social and cultural history. Their construction differs from orthodox professional film and offers important alternate views of New Zealand society. The sub-genre of amateur film are numerous. Films discussed include newsreels and scripted narrative drama made by amateur cine club members either working alone or in groups. Others under discussion are local films, political films, mountaineering films, educational, instructional and promotional film. The influences on amateur filmmaking are considered: camera company marketing and amateur film manuals, the international amateur film movement and the competition focused cine club culture. The thesis uses four main collections to discuss aspects of amateur filmmaking. These are the films of James Osler of Wairoa, Frederick Thorn of Waiuta, Amos James Smith of Rangiora and Nancy Cameron of Whanganui, all held at the New Zealand Film Archive, Wellington.

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Abbreviations

ACL	Amateur Cinema League
ACW	Amateur Cine World
BFI	British Film Institute
FONZACS	The Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies
NFSA	National Film & Sound Archive
NZFA	New Zealand Film Archive

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Introduction

Amateur filmmaking was a popular leisure activity for many New Zealanders from the 1920s to the 1970s, yet little has been written on the subject. This thesis explores the large and diverse amateur film genre through three types of film: home movies, community films, and films made by amateur cine club members. These films form a part of the scope of this thesis that concerns amateur filmmakers, exhibition and spectatorship. This multi faceted approach is intended to provide a fuller understanding of amateur film practices, and reveal their significance and place in New Zealand's social and cultural history.

Amateur films first came to my attention through working on the New Zealand Film Archive's Last Film Search project, 1992-1999. Subsequently and currently they form an important part of film programmes I curate for exhibition around the country. Because of my work background this thesis is slanted towards archives and the activity of filmmaking and viewing rather than reception studies or analysis.

The time frame of this thesis begins in 1923, as this was the year the standardised 16mm amateur cine camera was released onto the world market. For the first time ordinary New Zealanders could record on film their families, interests, communities and fictional narratives; either working alone or as members of amateur cine societies, or clubs. The period most closely examined in this thesis is 1926-1955, and the majority of the films examined and discussed fit within this time frame. These years witness growth in the number of people making movies and the evolution and expansion of amateur cine clubs. From 1955–1970 amateur filmmaking continued to flourish, however cine clubs, partly because of the impact of television on leisure time, ceased to grow apace in the 1960s and their membership plateaued before their decline in the 1980s. The period c.1923-1970 frames the most popular period of amateur cine club and community filmmaking. Home movie making, conversely, did not decline c.1970. The activity was revitalized by the super 8 camera's introduction in the mid 1960s. However amateur film theorists regard the populist point and shoot camera, as significantly changing the form of the earlier and more

complex home movie. Super 8 is aligned to the equivalent of a photographic snapshot: repetitive, short, happy movies of the nuclear family. Therefore c.1970 is an obvious place to conclude this research.

The thesis questions central to this investigation are: what are these films, how do we define them, who made them, where and why were they made, what is significant about their content and style, what are their influences and how did different time periods effect their composition. Other questions relate to amateur film exhibition and spectatorship: how, where and to whom were these films shown, and what is known of their audience reception and memories of these occasions?

A central argument of this thesis is that amateur films provide a valuable source of visual evidence on social and cultural history in New Zealand, evidence not captured in the orthodox history of filmmaking and film exhibition in New Zealand. This thesis positions amateur film as offering an alternate view to films made for commercial or government purposes.

In New Zealand most professional film made between 1920-1970 were produced by the government and document New Zealand's official history. From the 1920s, through to the early 1930s Government Publicity Office films were made to promote New Zealand industries and tourism for international distribution. In 1941 the Labour Government established the National Film Unit (NFU) to produce newsreels supporting the war effort. Post war NFU newsreels and documentaries chart government initiatives, official occasions, and Maori culture for tourism purposes. These newsreels played weekly in New Zealand picture theatres until 1972. In contrast to government production, commercial film company output was tiny. These 'independents' made mostly (irregular) news magazines, promotional and industrial films from the 1920s onwards, and from 1950s – c.1970, documentaries and advertising.¹

¹ NFU made 459 Weekly Reviews and produced Pictorial Parades from 1950-1971. Figures taken from *New Zealand Film: An Illustrated History*, (eds.) Diane Pivac, Frank Stark and Lawrence McDonald, Te Papa Press in association with The Film Archive, Wellington, 2011, p.109 and p.130. Soundscenes made approx 24 in 1933. Ibid.p.98 Pacific Film magazines were made over a few years in the 1950s (NZFA Catalogue)

In the period 1923-1970 only 14 narrative feature films were produced in New Zealand compared to over 100 features over the same period in Australia.² In other countries where narrative feature film production was small, such as Canada, amateur films, once disregarded as a marginalised film practice are now claimed to be of great importance to national culture.³ Liz Czach writes that in the absence of Canadian features, 'it is imperative to look to other traditions of filmmaking practice as a crucial part of our film history.'⁴ Her argument is exemplified by the archival absence of narrative feature films. 'In a country where so little has been produced and so much lost, we need to save our cinematic heritage in whatever forms it can be found'.⁵

In New Zealand the experience is very similar, only half of the 14 narrative features produced in this period survive, the rest are lost or survive only as fragments. The argument follows that amateur films are important in New Zealand film history and the history of New Zealand on film. They are a major filmmaking practice where substantive content survives. The New Zealand Film Archive's (NZFA) collection contains 14,000 amateur film titles, making it probably the largest amateur film collection held by a national film repository anywhere in the world.⁶ In comparison Australia's National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA) holds 547⁷ and the British Film Institute (BFI) holds 2,260 amateur film titles.⁸ The reason why amateur films form a very large part of New Zealand's surviving film record from 1920s through to 1970 is largely accidental. It was initially the result of the New Zealand Film Archive's region-by-region Last Film Search project 1992-1999. Although the publicly expressed aim was to find missing New Zealand feature films and other professionally made productions on 35mm nitrate film (an unstable film stock used pre 1952), mostly amateur films were discovered in the nation wide search.

² New Zealand narrative feature productions are defined as being made in New Zealand by New Zealand producers. Figures are taken from Helen Martin and Sam Edwards, *New Zealand Film 1912-1996*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1997. Figures of Australian features are taken from Complete Australian Films - http://www.film.org.au/feature_allfilms.htm

³ Liz Czach, 'The Catherine Films: Rethinking our National cinema from an Amateur perspective,' *Take One*, Issue 38, July-Aug., 2002, pp.18-19

⁴ *Ibid.* p.18

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The Film Archive, 84 Taranaki Street, Wellington. <http://www.filmarchive.org.nz/> This is not suggesting that New Zealander's made more amateur films than anywhere else in the world, but that the NZFA's Acquisition and Selection Policy accepted them into the national collection.

⁷ NFSA catalogue online amateur is 547 and home movies as subset 258 nfsa.gov.au/nfsa/search

⁸ BFI catalogue online amateur and home movie titles are 2,260 bfi.org.uk/search/site/amateur+film

These amateur films held by NZFA outnumber professional films by 10,674 to 7,030 between 1920 and 1970.⁹ NZFA is the major film repository in New Zealand with a collection of 153,000 titles, dating from 1896 through to the present day. The collection includes amateur film, features, documentary, newsreels, advertising, television productions and copies of many Government film productions. The NZFA and Archives New Zealand¹⁰ (ANZ) are the two main film repositories in New Zealand. Archives New Zealand is the collector of the government record therefore their amateur film collection is very small.

International Amateur Film Historiography

A major theme in scholarly discussion presents a case of why amateur film is important and why it should be studied. American academic and filmmaker, Fred Camper writes:

The home movie is a form of cinema unlike any other. Its varied forms have different effects and implications than the narrative feature, the documentary, and the commercial travelogue. Its presence in our culture has been strong since the 1930s and pervasive in recent decades. Film historians should cease their worship of commercial narrative and open their eyes to “see” all the varieties of our medium.¹¹

Camper urged scholars to take note of the most popular of films, the amateur film, arguing that a complete history of film is unattainable unless the genre is explored, and not to do so is inexcusable.¹² Historian, Ryan Shand offers some interpretation of why the genre has been disregarded. He identifies the personal nature of amateur films as ‘distant from the master narratives of history’ and therefore separate from the ‘emphasis upon the cultural geographies of the nation.’¹³

⁹ NZFA catalogue fig. From 1920-1939 - 1,740 amateur films compared to 1,530 professional. From 1940-1959- 6,112 amateur films compared to 3,000 professional. From 1960-70 - 2,822 amateur films compared to 2,500 professional films. This does not include all amateur film, as not all have been catalogued.

¹⁰ Archives New Zealand, National Office, 10 Mulgrave Street, Thorndon, Wellington 6011, New Zealand <http://archives.govt.nz/visit/contact>

¹¹ Fred Camper, ‘Some Notes on the Home Movie’, *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol.38, No.3/4, Home Movies and Amateur Filmmaking (Summer-Fall 1986) p.6

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ryan Shand, ‘Amateur Cinema Re-Located: Localism in Fact and Fiction’, in Ian Craven (ed.) *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) p.156

This national cinemas focus has seen amateur film as outside film study concerns for the amateur is concerned with local representations, local knowledge and local priorities.¹⁴

The amateur film contains personal and local qualities in a similar way to other domestic records - letters, diaries, photographs and photo albums. They contain visual information on ordinary peoples' lives that collectively forms part of a national memory - different information, but arguably valuable as the 'master narratives of history.' The way amateur films represent the personal and the local (first person and community perspectives) over different time periods is an important part of this thesis.

While amateur films' personal and local perspective is a reason why the genre has been overlooked in traditional film history, there remains a view that ignores them because of their disengagement from the orthodox and commercial film. American film archivist Sam Kula states:

Films seen by millions were part of the culture and should be preserved as part of the public record. Films made by one person designed to be viewed by immediate family did not meet that criteria.¹⁵

Kula's position is from an archivist justifying a national archive's dilemma faced with a large film collection and the high costs of its preservation. However his limiting view of cultural importance allows no exploration of the amateur film genre by the historian, because they will be neither collected nor preserved by the archive. In fact in New Zealand Kula's criteria of popularity as a measure of cultural significance, would mean only a few recent New Zealand films would meet this definition amongst many American ones. I would also argue that as a form of filmmaking, home movies, and other types of amateur film are culturally significant, because of their widespread practice and exhibition.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sam Kula, Book Review Jubilee Book: Rencontres Autour des/Essays on Amateur film. *AMIA Newsletter*, No.41/42 Summer/Fall, 1998 p.34

A subject of debate in contemporary amateur film literature surrounds definitions of amateur film genre. Most debate has centered on a definition of home movies, the largest amateur film genre. While there is general agreement that home movies are made in the home, are of home or family, created by a family member, and viewed by the family, the specificity of the home movie is disputed. Film theorist Patricia Zimmerman and Richard Chalfen, a scholar of communications, connect the home movie exclusively to familial themes, as pictures of happy nuclear families. Chalfen's research conclusions find that home movies center on celebratory family occasions and do not 'document daily life',¹⁶ 'mundane activities and every day happenings do not get recorded.'¹⁷ Zimmerman argues that camera company literature was influential in shaping home movies to produce family narratives following a professional 'Hollywood' style. Other writers such as James M. Moran and Shand are critical of their 'ideology thesis,' which attributes too much attention to the role that familialism played in structuring home movies.¹⁸ In contrast, Ian Goode states:

The home movie shows the private life of the home, family or individual and intersects through home life with the outside world. While the family group is well represented within home movies it is not necessary for the definition, as 'not every home accommodates a family and not every home movie features a family.'¹⁹

Shand has considered the definition of home movies in terms of style. His conclusions are that home movies are 'unplanned, non-narrative and people appear as themselves in the films'²⁰. These theories are discussed further in chapter one, which considers home movies.

Other films discussed by Zimmerman are amateur film exhibited in the community mode. The community mode refers to the places or places where these films were exhibited and where the audience viewed them. Zimmerman identifies this diverse group of films as:

¹⁶ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, (Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) p.63

¹⁷ Ibid. p.69

¹⁸ Liz Czach, 'There's No Place Like Home Video' (review) *The Moving Image*, Vol.3, No.2, Fall 2003, pp. 114-116

¹⁹ Ian Goode, 'Locating the Family Film: The Critics, The Competition and The Archive', *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema* in Ian Craven ed. (Cambridge Scholars Publishing Newcastle on Tyne, 2009) p.182

²⁰ Ryan Shand, 'Theorizing Amateur Cinema', *The Moving Image*, Fall, 2008, p.157

ethnographic, industrial, labor, scientific, educational, narrative, travel, missionary, explorer, cine club, art and documentary forms produced for specialised exhibition in clubs, churches, and schools, and on lecture tours.²¹

Zimmerman positions these films as the opposite of the home movie, their content is not familial and neither is their audience family. Unlike the home movie, they are not dominated by Hollywood style scripted narratives and compositional form. Zimmerman hails the potential of community mode films for their freedom. They have an ability to tell stories from a position outside the dominant channels of representation allowing a history from below to surface, non-sanctioned, unofficial and uncensored.²² An example of this form of filmmaking is American avant-garde filmmaker Maya Deren, working in the 1940s, who was opposed to all that Hollywood embodied. Deren dispensed with conventional film narrative and the set scripts used in professional filmmaking. Deren is identified by Zimmerman as an ‘oppositional’ filmmaker. This thesis discusses New Zealand amateur films and filmmakers within the community mode, including examples of alternate and oppositional filmmaking.

Recently Shand has asked for an analysis of amateur film beyond ideological discourses on domestic and oppositional film.²³ His statement is directed at Zimmerman’s narrow view of home movies based on camera company marketing and amateur film manuals, and her ideological support of the community mode practice rather than analysis of these types of films. Shand calls for a new approach to the study of amateur film, one that provides an ‘evidential’ angle, the archivist’s hands on research and knowledge to be combined with the theoretical academic approach.²⁴ This is the approach I intend to follow.

²¹ Patricia Zimmerman, *Mining the Home Movie-Excavations in Histories and Memories*, (eds.) Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmerman, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008) p.9

²² Ibid. p.20

²³ Ryan Shand, ‘Theorizing Amateur Cinema’, *The Moving Image*, Fall, 2008, p.159

²⁴ Ibid.

Amateur Film Definitions and Audience

The amateur filmmakers under discussion in this thesis made films as a leisure pastime, and proudly identified themselves as amateurs. They did not seek to make a living from their filmmaking. Occasionally they worked on commission and now and again they charged admission to a film screening, but they were essentially nonprofessionals. Their amateur films were ‘not intended for viewing in professional audio visual circuits.’²⁵ While amateur cine societies had a distribution network it was not within a professional commercial film circuit.

To establish a definition of home movies, I have surveyed the NZFA’s film catalogue, using the term ‘personal record’, from 1920-1970. The term ‘home movie’ is not used by NZFA as a cataloguing term. Within these personal records a variety of subjects were selected and searched using the free text field in the NZFA’s catalogue description.²⁶ The categories are not mutually exclusive, so for example the term ‘baby’ may also be included under other subjects such as ‘children’ and ‘family.’ These figures relate predominantly to home movies, however because NZFA does not always separate out community film types or cine club productions, a small number of films that are not home movies will be included.

²⁵ The European Association for Amateur Film, (Inedits) quoted by Patricia R. Zimmerman in ‘The Home Movie Movement’ (eds.) Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmerman, *Mining the Home Movie Excavations in Histories and Memories*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008) p.9

²⁶ The NZFA catalogue record does not represent all personal records held by NZFA as not all are catalogued.

Figure 1 NZFA Catalogue Information of Subjects in Personal Record films 1920-1970

Subject	Number
Family	5300
Car	3853
Children	2992
Holiday	2871
Work	1159
Parade	1089
Travel	948
Baby	892
Party	884
Picnic	750
Wedding	635
Fishing	545
Racing	422
Rugby	375
Food	335
Sport	326
Birthday	264
Beer	257
Royal Tour	51
Funeral	36
Disaster	15
Politician	2

This table reveals a wide variety of subjects of interest to the home movie maker. The majority of films do relate to families and celebratory occasions. The next largest grouping is under holiday and travel, followed by leisure activities. These groupings follow Chalfen's survey findings. However there are also vital differences, Chalfen does not rate work in his study and there are many amateur films that contain scenes of work in this

table.²⁷ Similarly, community events do not figure in Chalfen's study, but there are significant numbers of parades in the NZFA collection. A small number of films show Royal tours, and very few are of politicians. In addition there are a small number of films documenting funerals or tangi, which again are not described by Chalfen.

From the evidence contained in the table I am defining home movies' central focus as the family. However home movies may also show community events, or dwell on particular interests of the filmmaker. The home movies examined in this thesis are discussed within the 'home mode', a term that Chalfen coined to describe forms of home based creative expression.²⁸ The home mode is the context for the private exhibition of home movies and other types of films, including commercial productions, (cartoons, newsreels etc) and it is where family and friends watch and respond to them.

Community films are the most varied group of films and they are located in a community of interests. Local films, made by filmmakers of local events for a local audience are discussed in chapter two. These films are identifiable in amateur film collections by the quantity of films depicting local events and the chronicling of occasions in an extended manner. Other community films under discussion include those of a political, scientific, educational, medical and promotional nature. These films are identifiable through their content and intent, for example a film of a surgical operation is obviously made for medical teaching purposes and not to be screened to the family. Community films were shown in halls, schools, marae, universities, clubs and Agricultural and Pastoral shows to a variety of interest groups and public audiences.

The third film category is a discrete grouping within the community mode, amateur cine club films. These include drama, documentary, travelogue, holiday and family films, uncut films (made without editing) and experimental films. Created for club competitions, they were made by either groups of club members or as solo efforts. They followed a professional model of filmmaking, using scripted narratives and sophisticated filmmaking

²⁷ Work, may mean workplace or work as an activity, therefore not necessarily paid employment.

²⁸ "Home Mode" production is defined and explored in Chalfen, "Cinema Naiveté", Chalfen, Richard, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987, p.87

techniques. Cine club productions were shown to club members at their meetings and were also publicly exhibited in halls and other venues throughout New Zealand. These films are discussed in chapter three.

The definitions outlined inform my views of individual collections and their intended audience. The thesis discusses definitions through each of the chapters, asking what is known of the collections and their exhibition, the intent of the filmmaker, what can be judged from these films' content, format, style, and technique that connect them to a particular genre. This is useful particularly when there are gaps in information on the circumstances of these films being made and displayed. Definitions are acknowledged in amateur film literature as difficult, because genres can overlap, for example family films are mostly home movies, but they were also a category in cine club competitions. Also amateur filmmakers themselves did not always confine themselves to a single sphere of filmmaking. This thesis discusses one filmmaker who made both home movies and community mode films.

New Zealand Amateur Film Historiography

New Zealand literature on amateur film has been slight, only 6 essays. The earliest essay by Lawrence McDonald and Virginia Callanan, 'Number 8 Super 8 - Amateur and Home Movie Making in New Zealand' was written in 1995 to accompany the NZFA exhibition of the same name. The authors (curators of the exhibition) noted the quantity of New Zealand amateur film, discussed its exhibition in the 'private sphere of the family network or cine club' and the amateur filmmaking technology that made it possible. These developments are placed within the 'changes in the structure and character of family life, the amplification of leisure time and the diversification of recreational pursuits.'²⁹ It concludes by noting that the films illuminate the 'minutiae of domestic and leisure activities', and their poignancy challenges an assumed 'way-we-were' mentality. The 'way-we-were' term refers to Paul Holmes' television programme of the same name.³⁰ The television programme presented clips drawn from official newsreels with nostalgic sentimentality. It bore little resemblance to the lives of New Zealanders recorded in home movies.

²⁹ Virginia Callanan and Lawrence McDonald, *Number 8 Super 8 - Amateur and Home Movie Making in New Zealand*, NZFA exhibition catalogue, 1995.

³⁰ *The Way We Were* (1996) TVNZ

Callanan subsequently wrote an essay on two amateur filmmakers: Lou Robertson, a trade unionist and Rudy Sunde, a left wing activist, who filmed during the 1951 Waterside Lock Out.³¹ The essay describes the films and I intend to add to the subject by discussing these films' exhibition.

Kathy Dudding wrote on amateur experimental filmmakers in *Leaving Home: From the Lounge Room to the Cine Lounge*.³² The title alludes to her identification of home movies made by T.K.S. Sidey and Ethel Garden in the 1930s and bringing these 'unintentional' experimental films forward by connecting them to international experimental film practice. Dudding's relevance to my research is her extension of home movie analysis beyond the traditionally family centred view of these films. Dudding, through close analysis of individual films identifies their creative and experimental qualities normally associated with artist's films.

Investigating amateur film's stylistic qualities was a theme in Tim Barlow's exhibition, *The Reel World: Home Made Movies*, held at NZFA in 2010. For this exhibition Barlow built an interactive miniature set containing hand-cranked cameras, projectors and tracking rails, from which the audience viewed the home movies. It referenced the qualities of amateur filmmakers' as craft-technicians, and experimenters who created in their leisure time a 'new art form'.³³

Barlow's subsequent thesis *Mobile Labour Beyond the Film Set*, explored the theme of the craft-technician positioning amateur film as an alternate view to the mainstream.³⁴

A recent publication of essays, *New Zealand Film: An Illustrated History*, has for the first time included amateur film in a history of New Zealand filmmaking. But although a beginning it is a slight mention: two 300 word sidebars and a few references in 'Non

³¹ Virginia Callanan, 'The New Zealand Film Archive/Nga Kaitiaki o Nga Taonga Whitiwhia', *Mining the Home Movie Excavations in Histories and Memories*, (eds) Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R Zimmerman, pp.231-234

³² Kathy Duding, *Illusions* 39, Winter, 2007 pp.4-8

³³ Tim Barlow, 'The Reel World: Home-made Movies', NZFA exhibition, July 7 - August 21, 2010

³⁴ Tim Barlow, 'Mobile Labour Beyond the Film Set', Master of Fine Art, Massey University, 2011

Fiction Films: Between the Wars' by Clive Sowry.³⁵ The limited discussion does not delve into the range and complexity of the amateur film genre. There is no mention of amateur cine club work, fiction and experimental films or spectatorship. Amateur film's existence post World War Two is unacknowledged, apart from Callanan's sidebar on 1950s filmmaker David Woodcock.³⁶ The other sidebar written by Dudding discusses unconventional New Zealand women filmmakers working in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁷

Within these New Zealand writings, there are hints of the diversity of amateur film. The essays reveal that the audience was not necessarily in the home - both the cine club, and the community audience are cited. This thesis seeks to expand these themes and reference others in international amateur film literature, which has been a growing field of film study. In the last ten years several books of essays have been published, and articles appear regularly in film history and film archive journals.

Methodology

This thesis discusses the practices of amateur filmmaking through three chapters. Chapter one covers the home movie/home mode, chapter two the community film/community mode and chapter three the cine club film/community mode. The central discussion involves a close reading of four amateur film collections made c.1926-1955 which illustrate the three types of amateur film under discussion. These are the collections of Amos James Smith, James Mitchell Osler, Frederick Thorn and Nancy Cameron. The filmmakers were chosen because they were all committed amateur filmmakers, and most produced a significant number of films over many years. This factor allows a more sustained study of themes, filmic style, technique and the relationship between filmmaker and subjects or communities. The collections are studied as examples of three different film practices and as collections made by individuals. Therefore the individuals are discussed within a

³⁵ Clive Sowry, 'Non-Fiction Films: Between the Wars,' *New Zealand Film: An Illustrated History*, (eds.) Diane Pivac, Frank Stark and Lawrence McDonald, Te Papa Press in association with The Film Archive, Wellington, 2011, p.79-101

³⁶ Virginia Callanan, 'Amateur Filmmaking', *New Zealand Film: An Illustrated History*, p.137

³⁷ Kathy Dudding, 'Women Amateur Film Makers', *New Zealand Film: An Illustrated History*, p.95 (This is a synopsis of 'The Feminised Flaneur', Dudding's presentation to the Film & History Association of Australia & New Zealand conference in 2008)

narrative of biographical information on the filmmaker and the social history of the regions at the time the films were made. Nancy Cameron's collection is discussed through her background as a cine club member, within a narrative about cine club history and culture. I believe that the chosen film collections' content and style are representative of the amateur film genre. I am not however claiming these films cover all aspects of amateur filmmaking. They are simply a sample of many film collections held by NZFA. In deciding on the core collections, I took into account several factors. All the collections chosen have a clear provenance. Family members have provided contextual information on the films and filmmaker, or were willing to do so. In most cases family members had a memory of the films original exhibition. This was essential to discuss their value to the family and inform discussion on spectatorship.

The four filmmakers are:

Amos James Smith, an engineer and inventor from Rangiora in North Canterbury who made home movies c.1925-1947 on a 16mm camera. Smith's films are carefully constructed records of family holidays – one of the main themes of home movies. His films explore his personal world shaped by his Methodism, work, wealth and family. Smith is representative of an early amateur filmmaker, who used his past photographic knowledge combined with filmic narrative and experimentation to make films that he printed and processed himself. Smith's films were regularly shown at family gatherings.

Fred Thorn was a storekeeper in the gold-mining town of Waiuta, now a ghost town, on the West Coast of the South Island. His filmmaking covered the years 1936-1940. He filmed the community of Waiuta, his family and leisure activities with his 8mm camera. Thorn's home movies are short, unedited black and white films. In many ways they represent the archetypal amateur film, non-narrative fragmented and diary like. Thorn was untrained in photographic conventions, and utilized a point and shoot movie style. His films show local people and are informative about ordinary daily life in Waiuta. They also reveal the relationship between Fred and other people, as there is much interaction between filmmaker and subjects. These films, one imagines, were made for Fred's home entertainment.

James Mitchell Osler and family ran the bakery in the town of Wairoa in Northern Hawkes Bay. Osler, a keen amateur photographer, bought a 16mm movie camera and made films c.1933-1946. He represents the unofficial film chronicler of local events in his community. He was very engaged in his community making a wide variety and number of films of civic occasions and events on local marae through pre war and war time period. He is known to have screened his local films above the bakery in Osler's Luncheon Rooms, sometimes known as Osler's Hall. Osler also made home movies; these concentrate on his grandchildren, and family occasions. Osler's films are unedited black and white and colour films. Both his home movies and local films are discussed.

Nancy Cameron, born Hale, was the first woman member of the Wanganui Amateur Cine Society. In 1946 she bought a 16mm camera and joined the cine society to learn how to use it. Cameron was a frequent winner of club prizes for her dramas and travelogues. Many of her cine club productions use her domestic life as the theme and star her children as actors. Her films are distinctive in her use of animation and are finely crafted black and white and colour films. Most of Cameron's films held by NZFA were made c.1946-1955, however she remained a member of the club until c.1967.

The methodology uses as its primary source the New Zealand Film Archive's collection of home movies and amateur films.³⁸ In addition I have accessed catalogue records and depositor files at NZFA.

New Zealand's amateur cine movement is discussed through reference to societies and clubs in Whanganui, Manawatu, Wellington, Otago and Auckland. Club literature and newspaper research has informed knowledge of these groups and their productions. Some of the films discussed no longer exist. The NZFA collection holds only a small number of cine club productions - less than 300 have been identified.³⁹ In the case of the Manawatu Amateur Society, minutes of club meetings and annual reports held by the Ian Matheson Archive, Palmerston North library have been a primary resource. The archives were also a major source of information on the Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Clubs.

³⁸ It is copies of these films (on dvd, vhs and digital files) that are my research source.

³⁹ NZFA identifies 288 films made by Cine Clubs in its collection. Results from Catalogue field accession notes.

A published history on the Auckland 8 movie club and a manuscript on the history of the Otago Cine Society have been useful in understanding these clubs' respective histories. The Kodak magazine, *Australasian Photo-Review* held at the National Library of Australia has provided information on advertising and the amateur cine movement more generally. Simon Sigley's thesis, 'Film Culture: its Development in New Zealand, 1929-1972' has been a key work in contextualising the amateur cine club movement in relation to other film groups, particularly the Film Society. Oral and video histories, and correspondence with amateur filmmakers families and friends have been a source of information not available from more traditional research resources.

Chapter One explores the home movie and its exhibition, primarily between 1923-1946. The chapter discusses the introduction of amateur film technology to New Zealand, camera company marketing strategies and amateur cine manuals' advice to home moviemakers. Zimmerman, Camper and Chalfen's research on home movie content, film exhibition and spectatorship are discussed. This information provides an introduction to the home movies of Amos James Smith, Frederick George Thorn, and James Mitchell Osler. Exhibition and spectatorship of home movies are discussed and the wide range of films shown in the home is explored. The questions this chapter asks are: what were their themes, how did amateur film literature affect their content and style, how were these films exhibited and what are the memories of these occasions.

Chapter two is concerned with community films and their exhibition both privately and publicly within the community mode. The main date range under discussion is 1930-1952. Local films made by James Osler and David Woodcock's taken in Russell in the 1950s and 1960s are discussed. Other types of community mode films are explored including Rudy Sunde's films made during the 1951 Waterside Lockout, and Tainui Robin's films of Canterbury Mountaineering Club activities. The questions this chapter asks are: why were they made, how do they compare with professional filmmaking of the era, what was the filmmakers connection to the community, what do we know of their exhibition and reception, in what way do these films provide an alternate view of history, what were their influences, and in what way are they an oppositional form of filmmaking.

Chapter three discusses amateur cine societies from their beginnings in New Zealand in 1928 through to the 1960s. The cine club audience and the public audience are explored.

Attention is given to the first amateur club productions made, the role of camera suppliers in setting up cine clubs, and how cine clubs connected to their local communities over different time periods. Cine clubs are contrasted with other film institutions, particularly The Film Society. The chapter explores the influence of the American Amateur Cinema League on New Zealand club culture and the establishment of the Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies in 1952. Films that won prizes in competitions are explored including Nancy Cameron's work as a member of the Wanganui Amateur Cine Society. Finally the role of clubs as a training ground for professional filmmaking in New Zealand is considered. The questions asked are: who were club members and what types of films did they make; what was the club connection to the community, where and how were these films exhibited, and what do we know of their reception.

Chapter one: It ‘Mirrors the world in your home’:

Home Movies and the Home Mode

A slogan used by the Pathe film company in 1925 alludes to the transformative vision of the amateur camera/projector - it ‘Mirrors the World in your Home.’⁴⁰ The mirror reflects the family back to itself and brings the world into the home through films produced by Pathe for home entertainment.⁴¹ Both the personal home movie and the bought international film were part of the attraction of home cinema. From the beginning film was portrayed as a medium to both record and watch.

This chapter examines the home movie and other films exhibited to family and friends at home. ‘Home movies’ took home and family as the main subject of movies, and as the place for home viewing. The main part of the chapter concerns the home movie collections made by Amos Smith, James Osler and Fred Thorn. Observations made by Chalfen and other scholars on home movie content and style are considered in reference to these collections. The chapter begins by discussing the history of amateur film technology, marketing and literature as a background to home movie making. Other types of amateur filmmaking, particularly cine clubs were also influenced by these factors, but the emphasis on family in marketing the technology means it has a special relevance to home movie making.

Amateur Filmmaking - New Technology

The 1920s, in the age of international modernity in technology, consumerism and cultural development, was the right climate for amateur movie making to flourish. By the 1920s New Zealand society was following these international trends, which led to a new interest

⁴⁰ *Amateur Photographer*, 30 Sept. 1925, xxv1, quoted by Clare Watson in ‘Babies, Kids, Cartoons and Comedies; Children and Pathescopes 9.5mm Home Cinema in Britain,’ Ian Craven, (ed.) *Movies on Home Ground; Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, (Newcastle on Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), p.65

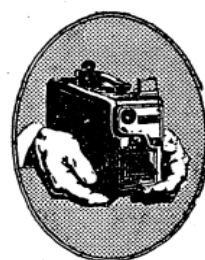
⁴¹ These were reduction prints of films shown in picture theatres. Glenn E. Matthews and Raife Tarkington, ‘Early History of Amateur Motion-Picture Film’, *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*, Vol.64, No.3 March 1955, p.112

in leisure pursuits by the middle class. Amateur cinematography became established when the camera companies, Kodak and Bell & Howell, standardised a universal film gauge for 16mm in 1923. The French company Pathe launched their equipment slightly earlier, the 9.5mm film projector in 1922, and the 9.5mm camera followed in 1923.

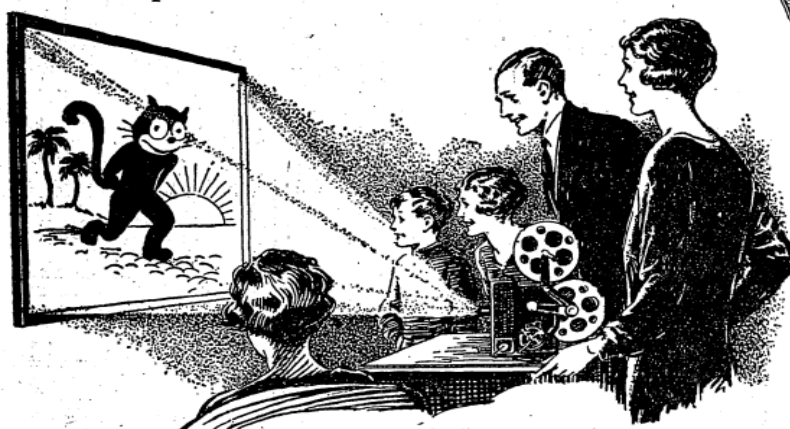
Within a year of their invention cameras were available in New Zealand. On 15 July 1924 *The Australasian Photo-Review*, announced 'the first shipment is here.'⁴² In December of the same year the advertising went further, 'the new shipments are here and any of the 'Kodak' Branches will be glad to demonstrate the outfit to you.'⁴³ By 1924 Kodak branches were operating in Christchurch, Auckland, Dunedin and Wellington.

Make your own Movies! CINE-KODAK

Cine-Kodak makes movies as easily as your Kodak or Brownie makes snapshots. No focussing, no tripod, no grinding crank. Just sight the pictures—push a lever—that's all! Movies you write and direct yourself—movies of your travels—sports—home life—the kiddies in action—priceless movies and close-ups of Mother. When the films are taken your work is done. Send them to us and we will develop them at no extra cost.



CINE-KODAKS
PRICES FROM
18 GUINEAS.



FREE!

Beautifully Illustrated sixteen page photogravure booklet, entitled "The Lure of Home Movies." A limited number of copies. Get yours early.

Figure 2: Cine-Kodak advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 31 May 1930, p.13, Papers Past, courtesy of National Library of New Zealand

⁴² *Australasian Photo-Review* Vol. xxx1 no.7, July 15, 1924, p.443

⁴³ *Australasian Photo-Review*, Vol. xxx1 no.12, December 15 1924, p.651

The Kodak advertisement (Figure 2) sums up the attraction of the new camera: no tripod, no focusing, no grinding crank. These innovations meant amateur filmmaking was a simpler and more spontaneous activity than in the past. All amateur cameras used reversal film, (there was no negative, the film in the camera was developed and printed) thus significantly reduced processing costs for the amateur filmmaker.⁴⁴ The upfront cost of the film stock included processing and printing, the filmmaker simply dispatched the film to the camera agent.

Both Pathe and Kodak sold projectors and also offered a range of movies to play in the home. Kodak advertised their Kodascope Model O with the tagline ‘instantly converts any room into a cinema! You merely connect up with the electric light socket and on comes Chaplin or Valentino...What splendid fun!’⁴⁵ To go with the projector was a range of films:

Kodak-Cinegraphs are short reels, approximately 100 feet of amateur standard 16 mm safety film, made from the most interesting and entertaining professional releases. They are sold outright, making possible the assembling of a diversified library, including in addition to amateur personal pictures, such subjects as dramas, comedies, cartoons, educational pictures, travels, and nature and topical subjects. All these are sold at 30/- per reel, which is little more than the cost of raw film.⁴⁶

Cine-graphs were also available for borrowing through Kodak Cine Libraries, ‘at a moderate cost.’⁴⁷

The Kodak Company held the largest market share of New Zealand amateur film equipment sales from the 1920s onwards. They actively promoted amateur cinematography through their branches and outlets nationwide. Kodak expanded its market with the invention of the popular 8mm movie camera in 1932. The 8mm camera was in the movie camera world the equivalent of the box brownie - small, light, and cheap.

⁴⁴ H.A Postlewaite, *Introduction to Cine*, (London, Fountain Press, 1958) pp.20-21

⁴⁵ *Auckland Star*, March 17, 1928, p.14

⁴⁶ *Australasian Photo-Review*, Vol. xxx 1111 no.9, Sep 15, 1927, p.417

⁴⁷ *Evening Post*, August 2, 1930, p.29

The attractiveness of amateur filmmaking increased too with the introduction of colour film in 1936.⁴⁸ Amateurs could make colour films before most professionals, although it was, 'a significant financial investment.'⁴⁹ In New Zealand film could be purchased through camera outlets and also at chemists.

The new technology was expensive. In 1930, a top of the range cine Kodak camera with velvet lined case, cost 33 pounds.⁵⁰ By comparison, a box brownie still camera retailed for between 11 shillings and 3 pence and 27 shillings and 6 pence for a superior model. The Kodascope Model O projector referred to above cost 18 pounds 10 shillings in 1928,⁵¹ a sum of money that would have bought a Chesterfield lounge suite at an Auckland Department store in 1928 and given the buyer 2 pounds in change.⁵² Cinegraphs for showing at home cost about 30 shillings each, and were advertised as costing only slightly more than raw stock.⁵³ Pathe 9.5mm equipment was less expensive as was Kodak standard 8mm yet even these cameras and projectors required a significant investment by the filmmaker. Harry Reynolds bought his 8mm camera in 1936 using savings from his job as a Post and Telegraph boy. The camera cost 12 pounds 10 shillings.⁵⁴ Because of the expense involved most home movies were made by relatively well-off members of the middle class. This did not change significantly until 1967 when the new cheap super 8 camera was introduced and the amateur film medium became properly democratised.

⁴⁸ Even before 1936, amateur filmmakers could make coloured films, using Kodacolor stock and a special projector to show colour effect. Kodacolor also known as lenticular film was available from 1928.

⁴⁹ Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005) p.193

⁵⁰ Rev. H.O. Fenton, 'London News and Doings', *Australasian Photo-Review*, Vol. xxxv11 no.10, Oct. 15, 1930, p.489

⁵¹ *Auckland Star*, March 17, 1928, p.14

⁵² Advertisement for Chesterfield suite, price 16 pounds and 10 shillings at W.Lambourne Ltd., Ponsonby. Auckland, *Auckland Star*, July 5, 1928, p.11

⁵³ Kodak raw stock came in reels that had a running time of approximately 3 minutes.

⁵⁴ *Sunday News*, May 16, 1971 (article in Reynolds file, NZFA)

Home Movie Marketing to the Family

The technological innovations of the 1920s coincided with a new wave of consumer culture, which emphasised leisure activities. Both Kodak's and Pathe's marketing campaign was aimed at individuals with disposable incomes who were encouraged to record their home and family life.

Kodak's cine camera print advertising appealed to people's control over recording their lives and interests:

Movies you write and direct yourself - movies of your travels - sports - home life – the kiddies in action - priceless movies - and close-ups of Mother.⁵⁵

Other Kodak advertising included short films shown at their outlets to promote the new product to their customers. In New Zealand an example was *Make a Movie Record of Your Children* c.1933: 'For 30/- you can make a home movie of your children.'⁵⁶ The titles are followed by images of charming children. Another advertising clip in the same film states: 'A KODAK gets the still picture - But the CINE KODAK gets the action', followed by images of a couple in eighteenth century costume re-enacting a lovers tryst. This scene is followed by romantic pictorial images of the seaside, a waterfall, and a tourist paddle steamer. The film promoted a vision home moviemakers could aspire to and, as Bernhard Rieger notes, Kodak was 'enabling amateurs to take records of their lives to enact a wide range of social fantasies in their private domain and under their exclusive control.'⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Auckland Star*, May 31, 1930, p.13

⁵⁶ F26711 *Personal Record*. Watson, *Make a Movie Record of Your Children*, c.1933, NZFA (incorrectly attributed as a Personal Record)

⁵⁷ Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005) p.193

CINE - KODAK

SIMPLEST OF HOME-MOVIE CAMERAS

*Make a Movie
of your Holiday*



Here's a new thrill for holidays—
Motion Pictures that you make your-
self.

Easy! Anyone can make good movies
with a Cine - Kodak. No focussing,
no tripod. Just sight the picture and
press a lever.

Fun! Every moment is exhilarating
—and afterwards there's the thrill of
seeing your movie flashed on your
own home screen.

Cine - Kodak films are finished by
'Kodak' without extra charge. In
a few days you have them back ready
to run on the Kodoscope.

You can buy and hire professional
films, too, to supplement your pro-
grammes.

Cine-Kodak Shows given free in up-
to-date demonstration theatres at
leading Kodak shops. Ask your
dealer.

Cine-Kodak prices from £10-10-0.

FROM ALL KODAK DEALERS and

KODAK LTD.

162 QUEEN STREET
AUCKLAND
(Opposite H.M. Arcade).

Figure 3: Cine-Kodak advertisement. Auckland Star, 15 January 1931, p.22,
Papers Past, courtesy of National Library of New Zealand

Women were targeted as potential consumers, and Kodak even produced a specially designed heart-shaped camera for the woman filmmaker. Another reason women featured in the advertising was to show how foolproof the cameras were. If a woman could work them, then anybody could. Kodak had used the same advertising device for still cameras forty years earlier.

While pictures of women operating film equipment were common, it is clear Kodak magazine articles on film technology and technique were largely directed at men. One of the earliest amateur film books, *The Taking and Showing of Motion Pictures for the Amateur* begins with this statement:

This book was prepared especially for the beginner in cinematography, for the man who wants to know which outfit to buy, and for the amateur who feels that he is not getting maximum results out of his equipment.⁵⁸

Essentially an instruction manual, it was written by J.R. Cameron a projection engineer, and explains to ‘the man’ the mechanics of cameras, film, lighting, and other techniques.⁵⁹ The book is insightful in revealing how a serious interest in amateur film technique was perceived as a male preserve. Women however did take up movie making but in smaller numbers than men, judging from the NZFA collection.

The movie camera and projector became the new desirable consumer items for middle class families. They were attractively modern and home movies were promoted as replacing out-dated still photography as this 1927 manual indicates:

The family photo album is now safely tucked away in the attic or spare room along with the oil lamp the music box and the old fashioned talking machine. It is no longer customary when conversation lags to hand the photo album to your visitors, today the family photographic records are kept in a little tin can and for presentation are run through a motion picture machine.⁶⁰

Home movie shows to family and friends became a modern ritual. This exhibition aspect created an event seen as far superior to passing the traditional photo album around. Home movies memorialized a child’s development over time. These moving pictures were seen as having a lasting importance to the family.

⁵⁸ James R Cameron, *The Taking and Showing of Motion Pictures for the Amateur*, (New York, Cameron Publishing Co., 1927) p.5

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.6

What will be the value of your baby's motion pictures, say 15 or 20 years from now? Think how you will be able to turn back the hands of time and live again in the days of the past. Any period of your youngster's past life may be recreated on the screen, carrying you back through the corridors of time, whenever and wherever you may wish it. Could the magic lamp of Aladdin do more?⁶¹

While the family was the primary subject promoted in advertising for the home movie, travel came a close second. Advances in land, rail and sea transportation had opened up mass tourism opportunities in the early twentieth century. Travellers and tourists were encouraged by camera companies to not only record still photographs, but also moving images of sights in New Zealand and overseas. Once captured on film, it could be re-lived later by the filmmaker and shared with family and friends at home:

Think of the pleasure to be derived from a screening of your round-the-world cruise while seated with your friends in your own living room, the whole trip may be lived over and over again whenever you feel like it; simply by pressing the little button on the projector.⁶²

Passenger liners encouraged amateur cinematography by installing film processing and printing equipment on board ship.⁶³ Some liners even screened the newly printed films to their passengers.⁶⁴ While tourists' films were shown at sea, their main exhibition venue was the home. These home movies functioned as a visual diary to be shown to family and friends as a record of what the traveller did (or, more accurately, what they wanted to show they did). Viewers could experience the power of film and are given 'a sense of witnessing an event.'⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid. p.8

⁶² Ibid. pp.7-8

⁶³ *Evening Post*, December 28, 1926, p.6

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnesses the uses of Image as Historical Evidence*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001) p.159

Amateur Film Literature

Kodak's magazine, *The Australasian Photo-Review*, was influential on the course of amateur filmmaking in New Zealand. It began as a magazine for still photographers, and in 1923 expanded its market to include amateur cinematography. Regular articles on cinematography were reprinted from American and British photography journals, giving Australasian subscribers the latest information. Technical advice on editing, titling, and lighting was provided along with articles on suitable subjects: pets, portraits and family holidays. The magazine advertised Kodak cameras, projectors, film stock and a multitude of gadgets useful for cinematography. Kodak held the major amateur cinematography market in New Zealand, and for this reason the magazine is likely to have been well read.

Besides *The Australasian Photo-Review* there was a range of other books and manuals on amateur filmmaking. In the 1920s it was possible to subscribe to international magazines, and be in touch with modern movements. New Zealanders subscribed to the American Cinema League journal *Moviemakers*, and the British journal *Amateur Cine World* (ACW), amongst others. The ACW, launched in 1934, was popular, judging by the published letters from New Zealanders asking for solutions to problems. These publications offered advice on cameras and other equipment along with a wide range of technical processes used in cinematography. Readers of these magazines included both cine club members and home moviemakers.

Although home movie making could be an independent activity, amateur film literature pushed a particular style of filmmaking. Zimmerman's research of American camera company literature from the 1920s indicates that they endorsed 'Hollywood style as the pinnacle of cinematic perfection.'⁶⁶ To achieve this perfection, home movies required pictorial composition, a narrative and continuity devices.⁶⁷ These instructions required family members to act out scenes of family life for the camera. The APR makes it plain that unedited, unscripted home movies, made with a hand held camera (rather than a

⁶⁶ Patricia Zimmerman, 'Morphing History into Histories' eds Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmerman, *Mining the Home Movies-Excavations in Histories and Memories*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008) p.279

⁶⁷ Ibid.

tripod) are undesirable. While family members are likely to have found pleasure in simply seeing themselves and each other on screen, the literature demands scripted narratives. By the 1960s amateur filmmakers were actively encouraged to add comedy to their films and ‘a message, any message joke or story.’⁶⁸ These filmmaking directives impose a level of artificiality on home movies, with little spontaneity of family behaviour allowed or freedom of experimentation by the filmmaker. Chalfen believes, and I share his view, that few home moviemakers followed manual directions, because they severely restricted spontaneity.

From the 1920s amateur film literature and camera company marketing promote the family as the subject for home movies. While Chalfen is dismissive of amateur film manuals impact on home movie’s style and structure, for example a narrative is not common, he finds home movies focus on celebratory family occasions. Chalfen along with Camper , identifies ‘the special family event and the ‘travel movie’⁶⁹ as primary subjects of the home movie. These subjects are also the ones that dominate amateur film magazines and camera company advertising. In contrast the home movies described in the next section of this chapter, contain not only the special family event and travel, but many mundane details of daily life that Chalfen suggests are not captured - food preparation, eating, dish washing and home repair.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Discussion of *How to Make Exciting Home Movies and Stop Boring Your Friends and Relatives* by Ed. Schultz and Dodi Schultz in R. Chalfen, ‘Media Myopia and Genre-centrism: The Case of Home Movies.’, *Journal of Film and Video*, USA. Vol XXXVIII Issue 3-4 Summer-Fall 1986, p.59

⁶⁹ Fred Camper, *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. xxxv111, Issue 3-4, Summer-Fall, 1986, pp.10-11

⁷⁰ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, (Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) p.62

Home Movie collections

The following home movie collections were all made between 1926-1946. They are the work of three movie practitioners, Amos James Smith, James Mitchell Osler and Frederick George Thorn. This early period of movie making has been suggested by one amateur film commentator as a particularly interesting one, since ‘amateur films made between 1923 - 1939 redefine cinema, they have experimental film qualities without narrative, but with strong compositional elements and great beauty.’⁷³

Amos Smith

The Amos James Smith collection comprises thirteen films made between 1926-1947 on 16mm. They have a combined running time of 95 minutes. Amos’s son, Leicester Smith deposited the collection at the NZFA in 1996. To Leicester I owe most of the following biographical information.⁷⁴

Amos James Smith (1891-1953) was born in Flaxton, in North Canterbury. He was the son of Moses and May Smith and worked as a youth in the family business supplying steam traction engines and threshing machines to local farms. Later he completed an engineering apprenticeship, and with his brother and father formed M. Smith & Sons in Rangiora. From c.1930 the firm specialised in selling and repairing motor vehicles, general engineering, manufacturing water pumps and later on washing machine manufacturing.

Smith is reputed to have owned the first car in Flaxton, an Overlander, and in 1923 he purchased a Studebaker.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, cars feature in nearly all of his films. Amos was a modern man, described by his son as ‘having a thirst for knowledge’.

In 1925 Amos sent away to America for a Bell & Howell camera.⁷⁶ The Filmo Model 70 was the premium 16mm camera of the period. Lighter and smaller than a Kodak camera,

⁷³ Guy Edmonds, ‘Associazione Home Movies, l'Archivio Nazionale del Film di Famiglia: An Interview with Paolo Simoni and Karianne Fiorini of Italy's Amateur-film Archive,’ *Film History* no.4, 2007, p.423-428

⁷⁴ F103785 *Interview with Leicester Smith and Sylvia Smith, 2006*, NZFA.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

and driven by a spring-motor it could be hand-held without the need for a tripod.⁷⁷ With it Smith used the German film stock, Agfa.⁷⁸

Amos developed his own black and white films in the laboratory he built onto his house in Albert Street, Rangiora. His laboratory contained bottles of chemicals and all the movie gear necessary to develop the 100ft to 400ft films. Using his American amateur cine manuals Smith built his own equipment. Overhead he installed large wooden drums to receive the drying developed films.⁷⁹ He colour tinted his own films by hand, even though it was possible to buy tinted colour stock. When colour film stock became available in mid 1930s, Smith sent his films to Melbourne for printing and processing.⁸⁰

Amos imported titling sets from America to add inter-titles to his films. These magnetic letters were filmed in an alcove, using between ten and twelve 100 watt bulbs. Leicester recalled that everything else in the house had to be switched off otherwise it would blow the fuses. Sometimes Amos would do the titling outside by sticking (magnetic) letters on the car. Once filmed these titles were inserted into the films, the films edited, and footage discarded.

Grandma's Dog Spot (c.1926) is the earliest of the films and pictures Amos's mother, (May) and her dog, Spot.⁸¹ The film is like a children's picture book, with rhyming inter-titles narrating the story. 'Grandma has a white dog whose name is Spot. And he's sometimes white and he's sometimes not.' Spot is the star of the film with the sleek 1923 Studebaker coming a close second. Spot stands on his hind legs and paws on the passenger window and Grandma passes him tidbits from the car. 'But he doesn't care for a bath at all.' Dashing Ralph (Smith), hoses the dog in the tin bath in the garden, and jousts to the camera. The film runs for just over three minutes and is beautifully made with an amber coloured tint. It appears to have been made for the enjoyment of Amos's three young children.

⁷⁷ Alan Kattelle, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979*, (Nashua, Transition Publishing, 2000) p.123

⁷⁸ F103785 *Interview with Leicester Smith & Sylvia Smith, 2006*, NZFA.

⁷⁹ Leicester Smith letter to Jane Paul, 14/7/1998

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ F26460 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James. Grandma's Dog Spot, 1926*, NZFA.

Most of Amos James Smith's films show his extended families' expeditions and holidays in the South Island. Leicester recalls that his father's movie camera always went on holidays, but his father did not plan out movies.⁸² He did not instruct the family on how to behave, or act out story lines as in the models given in amateur cine literature.

The motor car made exploration of the world beyond Rangiora possible for the entire family. The excitement of the journey is vividly illustrated in *Three Attempts To Get to Lake Sumner 1930-1932*.⁸³ Three spectacular journeys are documented, across rough roads, along riverbeds and through the mighty Hurunui River. Interspersed are pictorial shots, of the bush, tinted bright green, and a ravine, tinted deep blue. The Smith family expedition to Lake Sumner from Rangiora, was a journey of ninety miles. The first two attempts in 1930 and 1931 are unsuccessful. Of their 1931 trip, a title reads, 'We arrive at Lake Taylor at 12 o' clock having been 7 hours for 72 miles we decide to return.' On their final journey in 1932, the family reaches their destination. The film, evidently made over three years, has a running time of twelve minutes.

Leicester Smith has wonderful memories of those expeditions. As a child of eight or nine it was his job to help safely navigate the Studebaker out of rivers, by pulling the wire attached to the engine and guide the car to dry land. Sometimes the car's magneto would get wet and have to be removed, and the family would wait around for three hours for it to dry out. The family took with them a stove, and food including a side of bacon to have a picnic. On that final successful trip Leicester was at school, but the rest of the family took part.⁸⁴

In *Three Attempts to Get to Lake Sumner*, Smith uses home made inter-titles, hand written on a board describing the journey. The titles indicate Smith's free spirit approach to filmmaking, improvising without a letter set, and going to some trouble to do so.

⁸² F103785 *Interview with Leicester Smith and Sylvia Smith*, 2006, NZFA.

⁸³ F26457 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James, Three Attempts to Get to Lake Sumner 1930 - 32*, NZFA.

⁸⁴ F112375 *Personal Record. Smith [Leicester Smith Films & Commentary]* 2000, NZFA.

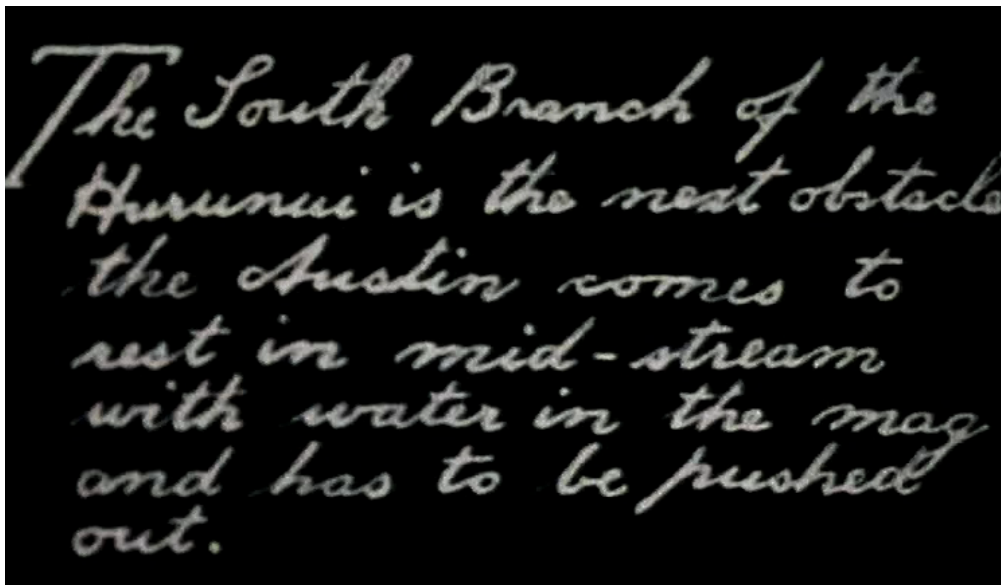


Figure 4: Personal Record Amos James Smith *Three Attempts to Get To Lake Sumner 1930-1932*, inter-title, NZFA.

Many of the home movies detail holiday destinations. *The Smith Family Journey to Pelorus River in 1929*,⁸⁵ shows the family staying at Goose Bay and Blenheim motor camps and visiting Pelorus and Hapuku. The film's descriptive intertitles describe the journey, and holiday occupations including the preparation of meals outside. There are 'Bacon and Eggs for Breakfast' cooked over an open fire. The inter-titles offer a commentary on family life, sometimes self-denigrating - 'Washing up - all lend a hand but the photographer', and referring to fishing, 'Ralph makes large catches - I don't think!' The films capture small details of holiday life, the women washing their faces and brushing their hair, and Amos's wife sewing up her husband's trousers while he was still wearing them. Tinted sepia, the film runs for eleven minutes.

Some films show Smith's engineering interest. In *Our Visit to Lake Coleridge and Harper River 1930*,⁸⁶ the dam's turbines and generators are filmed. The remainder of the film

⁸⁵ F26463 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James, The Smiths' Holiday to Pelorous River Christmas 1929*, NZFA.

⁸⁶ F26461 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James. Our Visit to Lake Coleridge and Harper River September 20 1930*, NZFA.

focuses on the Smith's home. Mabel Smith bicycles around the house and then climbs a ladder to paint the water tank. This scene is titled 'Everyone Works in our House, but my old man'.

The *Golden Wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Moses Smith, Rangiora 1935* is the only film shot entirely inside a domestic space.⁸⁷ By 1935 a film stock was available for use in filming interiors. The film shows the extended Smith family waiting in the hall way for the couple to arrive, then sitting down to celebrate over dinner. The black and white untitled film runs for almost three minutes.

There is a gap in Smith's output between 1939 and 1942, which can be partially attributed to wartime restrictions. This period also saw Leicester departing for wartime air force service and the daughters growing up. The impetus for making home movies had gone. The films post 1942 are much shorter, filmed on colour stock, and have not been given the same attention to detail as the earlier films.⁸⁸

There are no films of Smith's work on the threshing machine circuit, garage, or the wealthy market town of Rangiora where he lived. The only film relating to his church involvement is titled *Mother with Rev. Caston and Rev. Henderson*.⁸⁹ Henderson was the Methodist Minister at Rangiora from 1929-1934.⁹⁰ The film shows Mabel Smith and others farewelling the clergymen at Rangiora railway station. The film displays no intertitles.

Amos was a Methodist as were his parents and wife Mabel who was very involved in the Rangiora church and its activities. Amos loved going to the movies and occasionally (unbeknown to his extremely devout wife) would go to a Saturday matinee in Christchurch.⁹¹ Amos's own sophisticated filmmaking style may have been influenced by

⁸⁷ F26462 *Personal Record Smith, Amos James [Golden Wedding of Mr and Mrs Moses Smith, Rangiora, [1935] NZFA.*

⁸⁸ F26471 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James, Family Portraits c.1944, and F26473 Personal Record. Smith, Amos James, Smith Family in Auckland, 1947, NZFA.*

⁸⁹ F26472 *Personal Record. Smith, Amos James. Mother with Rev. Caston and Rev. Henderson, 1944-1947, NZFA.*

⁹⁰ F.A. Lane, *Light in the Clearing: A Historical Survey of Methodism in Rangiora including the Free Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, 1859-1965*, (Rangiora, The Trustees of the Rangiora Methodist Church, 1965), p.76

⁹¹ F103785 *Interview with Leicester Smith and Sylvia Smith, 2006, NZFA*

the movies he saw in Christchurch. While his penchant for viewing Hollywood pictures was kept secret because they were possibly morally unacceptable to strict Methodist beliefs, Smith's own movies, starring his own family were suitable for family viewing. The 'commercial film was possibly morally dubious, while the privately produced and consumed strengthened the private sphere.'⁹²

Smith was involved with the Band of Hope in Rangiora.⁹³ This was a non-denominational youth organization that had links to the Temperance and Prohibition movements.⁹⁴ Smith's involvement in the Band of Hope led him to making scenic images on glass slides. He showed these slides in magic lantern shows at Church Festivals to raise money for the Church.⁹⁵ The magic lantern slide was commonly used in the form of a lecture, an educational entertainment with a narrative. In a sense his amateur films are a progression on this, they too utilize photographic composition, the spectacle of colouring and pictorial narrative through intertitles, and Smith's own narrative at their exhibition to the family.

The films reveal a great deal about the Smith family and their leisure time. They were comfortably off and travelled regularly during the economic depression of the 1930s. While many home movies celebrate family milestones, a child's first steps, birthdays, weddings, apart from the *Golden Wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Moses Smith, Rangiora 1935*, the collection is conspicuous with their absence. The films are long (averaging nine minutes) and extremely well crafted portraits of family and places. While Smith's films are edited with a narrative through the use of titles and inter-titles, there is no suggestion he scripted or staged these films. The films instead are constructed around the family's holiday experiences, revealing incidents as they happened. Lastly the films can be seen as being shaped by Smith's Methodism with their wholesome family centered qualities.

Amos Smith and James Osler of Wairoa were of a similar age and made movies over a similar time period.

⁹² Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.194

⁹³ Phone conversation with Leicester Smith 20/10/10

⁹⁴ F.A.Lane, *Light in the Clearing: A Historical Survey of Methodism in Rangiora including the Free Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, 1859-1965*, p.46

⁹⁵ Ibid.

James Osler

James Mitchell Osler's films were made from c.1933–1947, the year before he died.⁹⁶ The Osler collection is one of the largest amateur film collections held by NZFA. The collection is particularly interesting as it falls into both the home and community mode of filmmaking. The family films in the Osler collection are discussed here, and the community films in the next chapter.

James Mitchell Osler was born in Perthshire, Scotland, in 1873. As a young man he left Scotland, travelling first to New York and then Australia to work on the goldfields as a baker. While in Australia he met and married Alice Robinson. In 1905 he came to New Zealand, living first in Auckland then moving to Wairoa. By 1907 he had set up his own business, Osler's Bakery and Luncheon Rooms. He and Alice had five children.⁹⁷ His obituary notes that he was well known within the Australasian Baking trade, and in Wairoa, was a member of Lodge Waikaremoana, and Court of Clyde, a patron of the Wairoa and District Highland Pipe Band, Highland Dancing Association, and Wairoa Bowling Club. In addition it commends his kindness, ready wit and keen sense of humour.⁹⁸

Wairoa was a farming service town for Northern Hawkes Bay, situated between Napier and Gisborne. The town had and still has a predominantly Maori population. In the 1930s the Oslers lived in Queens Drive, immediately behind their Bakery in Marine Parade.

According to Jim and Alice's granddaughter, Dorothy Montgomery, they 'were quite an isolated unit because there was no other relatives in Wairoa. They had to build their lives around their own family and work together.'⁹⁹ Jim chose Wairoa, 'because he loved the sea and fishing', and regarded Wairoa as 'the most beautiful spot in New Zealand.'

Close to Mahia he built an old bach, 'a lean to on anybody's land, and later he bought a section.'¹⁰⁰ Jim was a Presbyterian and friend of Labour Prime Minister, Hon. Peter Fraser,

⁹⁶ There are one hundred 16mm films, within seven video compilations with a running time of four hours.

⁹⁷ Osler children were, Agnes, Isobel (aka Put) Gemmell, James D. (Jim), William J (Bill) and Angus

⁹⁸ *Wairoa Star*, April 19, 1948, (no page no. received as clipping from Wairoa Museum)

⁹⁹ Interview with Dorothy Montgomery, F102844 *James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews*, September 2007, NZFA.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

(with whom he shared a Scottish heritage) and described contemporarily by a Wairoa resident as a ‘ladies man, labour man and liked his jot of whiskey’.¹⁰¹



Figure 5: The Osler family outside the bakery. Leaning on the car from left to right are Isobel, Agnes, Alice and James Osler. c.1935 Osler collection, NZFA.

Osler was a still photographer of note. He created a huge collection of 3,000 glass slides of his family, bakery business and community events in Wairoa.¹⁰² He developed the slides in his dark room and probably showed them to family and friends. His cinematography began c.1933, and from thereon took precedence over photography.¹⁰³

By this time, Jim had semi-retired from the Bakery, and had more leisure time. His granddaughter recalls he bought a movie camera when they became available. ‘Many times he would come around and have us turning somersaults, jumping and running around as he

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Quote from John Swan, Interview with Colin and Judy Whyte 2007 NZFA collection

¹⁰² The photographs became the property of Graham Osler (Jim Osler’s grandson). Since Graham’s death in 2007 they have been in the care of his partner.

¹⁰³ Interview with Dorothy Montgomery, F102844 *James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews*, September 2007, NZFA.

experimented and learnt the ropes.¹⁰⁴ This story might infer that the Osler grandchildren's role in these home movies was as, 'compliant family manipulated as props in a story by paternalistic filmmaker.'¹⁰⁵ However at the same time the children were displaying their skills, Osler was experimenting, which suggests he exerted less control over their play. The manner of Osler's filmmaking, with its short takes and lack of editing does not suggest these home movies are contrived in any way. In one film a mother smartens her child up, neatens her clothes and pushes her out towards her grandfather, while she ducks out of view of the camera. Osler does not just take a picture of the nicely presented child, but the spit and polish required to ready the child for the camera. There is nothing to suggest that Osler is attempting through these films to construct a picture of an ideal family.

Within the 37 home movies there are many simple, short (one - four minute) films of Osler grandchildren playing. They ride a homemade sea-saw in the backyard,¹⁰⁶ do cartwheels¹⁰⁷ and play ring-a-rosie games. The children display complete ease with the camera, alternatively engaging and ignoring Jim's presence. In contrast, their mothers show exasperation, hiding their faces, stepping out of frame, or shooing Osler away. There are celebratory occasions recorded, a wedding party standing outside the bakery, children's birthday parties and other family gatherings. In addition there are small details of daily life, a new grandchild is bathed in a tin bath.¹⁰⁸

In one film a car is stuck fast in the sand at the beach.¹⁰⁹ In frame is Isobel, (Osler's daughter) trying to release the stuck tyre and laughing to the camera. Other relatives lend a hand, and Osler comes to help. He has evidently placed the camera on a tripod and turned it on timer, so he too can be part of the movie. The movie ends with a play fight staged for the camera between daughter Aggie and Osler next to the car still stuck in the sand. In this scene, they utilize the camera, as Chalfen says by striking a pose and projecting

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005) p.194

¹⁰⁶ F49350 Osler Family Film Compilation 3: [1937] *Kids and homemade seesaw*, NZFA

¹⁰⁷ F50022 Osler Family Film Compilation 7: *Young Children Doing Cartwheels*, NZFA

¹⁰⁸ F50022 Osler Family Film Compilation 7: (1944) *Bathing Baby in Steel Tub, Line Fishing*, (1940) *Fishing*, NZFA

¹⁰⁹ F49878 Osler Family Film Compilation 6: (1936) *people at the beach, Attempts to move stuck car out of sand*, NZFA

themselves.¹¹⁰ Other films also show family intimacy and an underlying humour between filmmaker and subjects. These include movies of fishing expeditions, trips to the beach, young men partying¹¹¹, boating, school netball¹¹², lawn bowls¹¹³, and Alice chopping firewood.¹¹⁴

A group of films record Osler's trips overseas to Australia, England and Scotland.¹¹⁵ Made c.1935-1939 the films are a record of international travel, the culture of shipboard life, and places Osler and family visited en-route to the United Kingdom. Osler's overseas travel films are far longer than his other home movies. Collectively they have a running time of thirty minutes, which indicates that Osler put great store on capturing the sights he saw overseas, his home country and relatives as a record for himself and his family in Wairoa. Osler may have also taken his home movies to show relatives in Scotland. Osler's international travel was significant, while his travel in New Zealand was rare. There are just two films of holidays around New Zealand.¹¹⁶

Osler's home movies show no evidence that he used amateur film manuals. His films display little narrative structure with no titles or inter-titles or evidence of editing. Most are short sequences of family members, using close-ups, taken in natural surrounds, at home, or outside the bakery. Some are well photographed and show an eye for composition, others are fragmentary and use rapid pans. Osler's home movies are arresting because of the information they provide on family relationships and activities, daily life, travel and rural life in the 1930s and 1940s.

¹¹⁰ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, (Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) p.67

¹¹¹ F49878 Osler Family Film Compilation 6: (1937) *Beer drinking mates partying, fishing, 5 people sunbathing, launching and using rowboat, European males dressed in seaweed with makeshift spears, fire on beach, overcrowded rowboat*, NZFA

¹¹² F50022 Osler Family Film Compilation 7: *Schoolgirl Netball*, NZFA

¹¹³ F50022 Osler Family Film Compilation 7: (1944) *Bowls*, (1940) *Bowls*, NZFA

¹¹⁴ F49878 Osler Family Film Compilation 6: (1935) *cutting firewood*, NZFA

¹¹⁵ F49131 Osler Family Film Compilation 1: *Shipping, India (1939), Lifeboat Drill, Panama Canal (1936) Shipboard Activities, Australia, Scotland, Jellied Eels Store (1935) F49211 Osler Family Film Compilation 2: Australia Parade, City Scenes Sydney (1936) Train at Chaltern Station, Wangaratta, Fair Ground, Parade (1936) F49878 Osler Family Film Compilation 6: (1936) Brighton England, (1935) Scotland, (1936) Adelaide, (1939) shipboard activities, (1935) England*, NZFA

¹¹⁶ F20923 *Personal Record Osler, Auckland Street Scene, 1945* and F20924 *Personal Record. Osler, Mr. [Napier, Rotorua Thermal Area, Salmon Pond] 1939*, NZFA

Fred Thorn

The third filmmaker of interest in this chapter is Fred Thorn. Thorn, using an 8mm camera, made 25 films from 1936-1940.¹¹⁷ They have a total running time of 70 minutes. Fred's daughter, Frances Hunter, deposited the collection at NZFA in 1995.

Frederick Thorn (b.1908 -1943) grew up in Waiuta.¹¹⁸ His first job was at the Ikamatua sawmill and during the Depression he worked on a relief scheme constructing a water race.¹¹⁹ His parents ran a general store in Waiuta, which he took over and was running by 1936 when he began making movies. The year he bought the camera was also the year Fred and his wife, Violet, had their first, (and only) child Frances. Unlike the other filmmakers discussed, Fred used a 8mm camera, probably because it was cheaper than 16mm. Even so, Frances recalls her mother saying the movie camera purchase was an extravagance they could not afford.

The films are a record of Fred's life at Waiuta, a thriving gold mining town. Gold had been discovered in 1906 and by the mid 1930s the population of Waiuta was 400-500 people. The town's main employer was the mine, and Waiuta contained a range of businesses and services for the population. There were several hotels, a school with a roll of 60-70, a hospital, a Post Office, Police Station, and cinema and other shops. Families and groups of single men, who lived in the 'Red Huts' populated the town. Geographically isolated, Waiuta was sited at the top of a mountain range. Most people did not have cars and public transport was only available from Ikamatua, down a long steep road from the township. Frances remembers the community as being tight knit, people looked after one another. Life could be tough, especially for women, with few domestic facilities, and it was very hard to keep houses warm in winter. People made their own fun, it was family orientated.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ The films are on 5 compilations: F24031, F521, F55487, F24029, F24030, NZFA.

¹¹⁸ F195748, *NZFA Interview with Frances Hunter, 2009*, NZFA

¹¹⁹ Simon Nathan, *Through the Eyes of a Miner: The Photography of Joseph Divis*, (Wellington, Steele Roberts, 2010) p.22

¹²⁰ F195748, *NZFA Interview with Frances Hunter, 2009* NZFA.

The films capture the atmosphere of the town, the physical landscape and the people. There are glimpses of daily life, women boiling the copper, hanging out the washing and chopping wood. A man stands in his vegetable garden and on his verandah marrows and pumpkins dry. People stand in the street, and in the background rows of small houses and the single men's quarters are visible. One longer film shows a wedding in the town, with guests posing for the movie camera. There is a film of a rugby league game, a wheelbarrow race, a greasy pig chase and pillow fighting. The pictures reveal a close community with Frances the 'tot' being held by different people. It is as if Fred has passed her from his arms to someone else's to get his camera out. The films are, as Frances describes, 'good casual photos.'¹²¹

According to Frances, Fred was a big guy, a local axeman champion, and quite a tease. He was full of life, very outgoing and loved the outdoors. He kept his camera under the counter in the shop, and Fred would pull it out when something took his fancy to film.¹²² One such occasion was remembered by Tim White: 'Fred came out of shop and Tim who was the butcher boy was setting off delivering meat on his bike. He called out to Tim - who turned and Fred pressed the button - got you.'¹²³ In another sequence the camera focuses on a woman walking down the street with her shopping, she sees Thorn and turns her face away. He teases people with the camera, appearing unexpectedly and women shade their faces or run backwards or sideways to get out of camera frame. But there are other welcoming reactions to his filmmaking, with people smiling, dancing, and staging embraces for the camera.

These attitudes to the camera are noted by Camper: 'the subject, rather than ignoring the camera, actually poses for it, even to the extent of mugging [make faces] or waving at the lens; the filmmaker often interacts with this subject in turn.'¹²⁴ Sometimes Thorn took movies when the person was unaware of his presence; there is one memorable sequence of a drunken miner weaving his way up the street after visiting the hotel.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Tim White interview note 20/8/2010

¹²⁴ F. Camper, *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. xxxv111, Issue 3-4, Summer-Fall 1986, p.10-11

Thorn's style of filming is unlike the other filmmakers discussed. His camera is always hand held, the images are fragmentary, and there are no cinematic attempts at pictorial composition or continuity. Thorn uses short picture takes and rapid transitions, a style Camper and others note as a generic home movie style, with its use of 'highlights' in capturing family events. While Thorn does not concentrate on the family occasion, but the local happening, they are selective glimpses. Many filmmakers adopted this style because 'film stock was expensive, short films suited family intervention.'¹²⁵

The two longest films are of hunting expeditions. In one film, Thorn accompanied by the Robbie boys aged about 12 and 15 go deer hunting in the Ikamatua ranges.¹²⁶ The film shows parts of their expedition, the group having a rest and eating condensed milk out of the can, setting up camp and triumphantly carrying out the antlers. The boys play fight for the camera. The other hunting film, composed of short takes shows pig hunting and rabbit shooting.

Unlike Smith and Osler, Thorn's films contain no record of holidays or travel, apart from one film of a family expedition by car to Greymouth. This journey is filmed from the car, taking in the rough road and the landscape shifting within the camera lens.

Thorn appears in one his movies, doing the jigger cut at an axe cutting competition. It is possible he took this three-minute film by setting his camera on a timer or more likely passed the camera to someone else to film.¹²⁷

According to Frances, her father's camera was seized at the beginning of the war (she does not know who by) and there are no films made after 1940.¹²⁸ In 1942 Thorn died of peritonitis, eight years before the mine folded in 1951 and the town emptied. Frances was seven when her father died, and much of her knowledge of Thorn's filmmaking came

¹²⁵ Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005) p.110

¹²⁶ Dougie and Jimmie Robbie information from Frances Hunter, F195748 NZFA *Interview with Frances Hunter*, 2009, NZFA.

¹²⁷ Frances Hunter thinks Mick Brett, may have filmed this sequence. F195748 NZFA *Interview with Frances Hunter*, 2009, NZFA.

¹²⁸ F195748 NZFA *Interview with Frances Hunter*, 2009, NZFA.

through her mother, Violet. According to Violet, the family never owned a projector. This means that it is not possible to be categorical on where they were shown. Wherever they were screened would have required the use of someone else's projector. However I believe the home movie qualities of these films with their intimate views of family, friends, local people and events, combined with their fragmentary style, indicate their audience was more likely to have been family and friends rather than a wider community audience.

Waiuta in the 1930s was a lively populated town, yet there are no professional film records of the town's existence, and it is unlikely any were made. It is amateur filmmakers who have provided the only moving images of this place. Until I began this research I had presumed that Thorn was the only person in Waiuta during the 1930s with a movie camera. However, this was not the case, as Mick Brett, a miner, filmed community events in Waiuta as well as mining life. The two filmmakers provide an interesting contrast, as Mick's films focus on the mine, (some are taken underground) the workers, miners meetings and the like. Mick's films are longer, more structured and the picture image is superior to Fred's films as he was using a more sophisticated 16mm camera.

Also in Waiuta, there lived Czech photographer and miner Josef Divis. Divis took a series of glass plates on the place and the people in the 1920s and early 1930s. Amongst them is one of Fred, best man at of Louie Thorn and Tom O'Flaherty wedding c.1925. In the background are the roofs of the red huts, in Waiuta.



Figure 6: Wedding of Louie Thorn and Tom O’Flaherty c.1925, Josef Divis photographic collection BW-pl-440a 1/2-233353-G, courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library

The home movie collections discussed contain a breadth of subject, which encapsulates the filmmaker’s exterior life, interactions and social experiences. The filmmaker’s own particular interests are displayed. Smith’s fascination with the motorcar and industrial engineering, Osler’s work, social and recreational interests and Thorn’s community life. As Heather Norris Nicholson says, ‘they do provide a visual insight into the attitudes, manners and fashions of a period and evoke the atmosphere of an era.’¹²⁹

The Home Mode

The prominent place that the home movie has played in the lives of many families, not simply as a recorder of events, but in the way in which the making of, and showing of, home movies becomes an important family event in itself, has surely had a cultural impact of major, but hitherto largely unexamined, proportions.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Iola Baines and Gwenan Owan, ‘The Massive Mess of Memory’, *Journal of Film Preservation* 52/1996, p.7
¹³⁰ Fred Camper, *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. xxxv111, Issue 3-4, Summer-Fall 1986, p.10

Camper is correct in his statement; spectatorship of the home movie has been largely unexamined in social histories. It was an important family ritual in New Zealand as in other parts of the world. The numbers of New Zealanders who participated in home movie shows is unknown, however it is fair to say that home movie making and showing grew from a small elite pastime in the 1920s to a far more common pastime by the late 1960s. Home movie shows brought family members together to view and celebrate their shared past.

The reason for the great appeal of amateur movies is the fact they can be picture of the people in the audience. No special action is even necessary for people to look at pictures over and over again if they are of themselves. There may be a psychological reason for this, or it may be just the fact that everyone is just a little bit egotistical.¹³¹

This quote from a 1927 Kodak magazine, nicely describes the appeal of home movies to its audience. The spectators of home movies are enthralled watching themselves, their family, and scenes of their home environment. Like the viewing of family photos they are 'read with the context of the life nurturing its testimony'.¹³² Their emotive power is frequently noted in essays on home movies; they have a profound effect on family members, when shown in their original settings.¹³³

Whether recorded by a still camera or a movie camera, family images hold great significance to family members. Leicester Smith remembers with pleasure his father's home movies being shown after church on Sundays. The movies were projected on the wall at home to the family. Sometimes church people attended but mainly family.¹³⁴ Maisy Thwaites, a niece of Amos Smith recalls the films being screened on special family occasions, birthdays and Christmases in the Smiths' house. These occasions involving the extended family gave the Smiths an opportunity to share their holiday experiences and

¹³¹ 'Amateur Movies Assuming Important Role in Family Life', *Australasian Photo-Review*, Feb 15, 1927 pp.79-80

¹³² A. Bourdieu, R. Castel, J.C. Shambouedon and D. Schapper, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990) p.58

¹³³ Karen L Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann, eds., *Mining the Home Movie-Excavations in Histories and Memories*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008) p.148

¹³⁴ Ibid.

relive their own. 'Home movies captured the festive life- and made it possible to replay that life as a participant spectacle.'¹³⁵

Thorn's daughter did not see his films until she was grown up. In 1986 they were included in a documentary on Waiuta, *Ghost Town Ball*.¹³⁶ Frances recalls how emotional she felt viewing her father's films. She saw her father competing in a wood chopping competition and 'felt angry that I didn't know him, felt cheated'.¹³⁷ These images of Thorn on film now memorialize his physicality. She does not have a memory herself of this period of Thorn's life and the movies link her to the past. The films continue to mean a great deal, 'the movies are personal - all my relatives are on it'.¹³⁸ She feels very protective of them for this reason. Home movies may touch other families as well. Frances recalls that a woman came up to her on the occasion of the *Ghost Town Ball* being shown because it was her mother and father's wedding that Fred had filmed. Pat Cassidy and Kath Kennedy are shown being married in the Catholic church at Waiuta. The daughter had not seen the film before, and neither had two of the bridesmaids who were also at the reunion.¹³⁹ The impact of home movies goes beyond simply the family as they frequently show other families and individuals whose images are similarly poignant to their relatives. These may be planned scenes by the filmmaker or quite incidental. Home movies document many of life's changes and through images give the viewer an opportunity to reflect on the past. They hold 'particular significance as form of external memory'¹⁴⁰ by reviewing family rituals, and creating a 'spectacle of recollection.'¹⁴¹

The showing of films at home was a ritual. Many of the family members interviewed during my research recalled the projector being brought out on special occasions. Family members would sit in a darkened room, and the filmmaker who was always the

¹³⁵ Duncan Reekie *Amateur Cine Culture: The Hidden Continuity from the 1930s Experimental Film to 1960s Underground Cinema Subversion, The Definitive History of Underground Cinema*, (London, Wallflower Press, 2007) p.110

¹³⁶ F3618 *The Ghost Town Ball*, NFU, 1986 NZFA

¹³⁷ F195748, NZFA Interview with Frances Hunter, 2009 NZFA

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Dorothy Montgomery letter to Jane Paul 20/06/2004 (via Graham Osler)

¹⁴⁰ Duncan Reekie *Subversion, The Definitive History of Underground Cinema*, (London, Wallflower Press, 2007) p.111

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

projectionist would thread the projector with film. The audience would wait in anticipation until the projector threw the first image onto the screen. Over the noise of the projector, the projectionist would explain the context of the pictures, and the family would join in, adding comments and recollections. The shows varied depending on the personality of the filmmaker and response from the audience. Camper observes that a home movie screening, is often dominated by the narrator:

the filmmaker will tell jokes, make his own personal comments on the people and events, let pass many slips-of-tongue. In many cases home-movie narration has the same degree of randomness as the films themselves.¹⁴²

Each home mode viewing was potentially different, the film selection varied and the audience might vary slightly. Most of these shows were short, under twenty minutes, few over half an hour and feature length very unusual.¹⁴³

Within contemporary amateur film literature, there is discussion on what significance home movies have out of the home. Eric de Kuyper writes, ‘the home movie separated from its original setting tends to become a source of historical knowledge rather than a repository of shared experiences.’¹⁴⁴ Roger Odin shares Kuyper’s view: ‘the home setting provides a crucial role with the family participants active in all stages of the home movies production and involvement in providing the commentary.’¹⁴⁵

It is not possible now to recreate these shows, however James Osler’s home movies were shown to his grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives at Wairoa Museum in 2007 by NZFA. The home movies, all showing family members, were compiled onto DVD as a thirty minute programme and projected onto a big screen. Fifty Osler relatives (mainly from Wairoa, but also Gisborne, Napier, Whakatane and Auckland) gathered at the Museum to watch them. Some remembered seeing the films from their childhood, others of a younger generation had not seen them before. Those in the audience who watched

¹⁴² Fred Camper, *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. xxxvIII, issue 3-4, Summer-Fall 1986, p.10

¹⁴³ Duncan Reekie *Subversion, The Definitive History of Underground Cinema*, p.111

¹⁴⁴ Nico de Klerk, Mining the Home Movies-Excavations in *Histories and Memories*, p.150

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

themselves on screen, and knew the context, commented on their younger selves and their siblings and identified wider family, and friends. They recalled occasions shown in the films, teased each other on their baby looks and behaviour and laughed at almost everything. Afterwards they spoke of their delight in the occasion, seeing the films and being together as a group. Many found it very moving and were touched by seeing their grandparents and parents now from the perspective of being old people themselves. They responded to the films showing the town and wider community in a similar intimate manner. Their links with Wairoa are very strong, as most have lived there all their lives. The occasion was filmed by NZFA and the record is held at the Archive.¹⁴⁶

Osler's grandchildren who remembered watching his films in their childhood also remembered other films. These included Kodak Cine-graphs, a range of travelogues and cartoons available through the local Kodak dealer. A granddaughter remembered watching these films and others in the 1940s.

Now and again we would all go down to the 'house' to view his movies. Apart from Family and local movies he had some comic ones of a mouse and palm trees and Charlie Chaplin and Popeye.¹⁴⁷

Kodak advertised a selection in 1923, at the very beginning of amateur film production.

A library of film, made by the reduction of standard film for use in Kodascope, is therefore being arranged. By another year it is hoped to have several hundred subjects available for home projection.¹⁴⁸

The Kodak Cinegraphs advertisement 1927 listed a variety of cartoons, scenic and news films.¹⁴⁹ These include *Felix the Cat* cartoons, (Felix the cartoon character was a popular creation of the silent film era), *The Lindbergh Triumph* about Captain Charles Lindbergh, the American aviator and *Glimpses of New Zealand*, which were short versions of scenic

¹⁴⁶ F103784 NZFA Screening: James Mitchell Osler Screening Project, Wairoa, 27-30/5/2007, NZFA.

¹⁴⁷ Dorothy Montgomery in letter from Graham Osler sent to Jane Paul, 20/06/2004 NZFA deposit file.

¹⁴⁸ *Australasian Photo-Review*, Vol xxx no.11, Nov 15, 1923, p.555

¹⁴⁹ *Australasian Photo-Review*, Vol. xxxiv, no.11, Nov 15, 1927, p.52

films produced by the New Zealand Government Publicity Office films. In 1928, the same magazine offered more titles including the American travelogue of exotic places, *Burton Holmes's Travel Films*, and Empire Films, a series of films designed for exhibition in the British Empire and the *Eucharist Congress Film*.¹⁵¹ Advertisements for these film titles continued through to 1939. Popular silent features and shorts were also available, for example Charlie Chaplin titles.

From 1922 the Pathe company produced a wide range of titles for the home viewer. Educational and entertainment titles were available, including films of botanical oddities such as *The Pitcher Plant 192-*, cartoons of Mickey Mouse, and Royal Tours.¹⁵² Pathe's *News Reviews* provided international coverage and released regular reels covering WWII activities.¹⁵³ These films were available by purchase or from the Pathe lending library. The New Zealand agent for Pathe Cine Equipment was Ian R. Little Ltd., in Christchurch¹⁵⁴. This company was established in 1934, and its known to have provided a lending library from 1951 and possibly pre-war as well.¹⁵⁵

From the 1930s the American company Castle Films produced drama, animation, comedy and News Parades for the home market. The New Zealand importer of Castle Films was Photographic Wholesalers Ltd., part of the Kerridge-Odeon group, based in Auckland.¹⁵⁶ The Kerridge-Odeon group merger occurred in 1946.

Occasionally Kodak released a New Zealand news item such as *Scenes of the Ruins Caused by Disastrous Earthquake in Napier N.Z. on 3rd. Feb. 1931*.¹⁵⁷ This film held interest to New Zealanders and an international audience. Later on, A.H. Reynolds of Auckland produced his 'Movie Films of New Zealand in Beautiful Colour' series for the home market on 16mm and 8mm. Titles included *Thrills at the New Zealand Grand Prix*, *The Maoris*, *Rotorua's Wonderland* and *Colourful Waiotapu*. Nine 8mm films from the

¹⁵¹ *Australasian Photo-Review* Vol.xxxv, no.9, Sep 15, 1928, p.421

¹⁵² The NZFA collection includes these titles: *The Pitcher Plant*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Royal Tour*

¹⁵³ Information from Clive Sowry, email to Jane Paul, 24 September 2012

¹⁵⁴ Information from Clive Sowry, email to Jane Paul, 24 September 2012

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ F15338 *Scenes of the Ruins Caused by Disastrous Earthquake in Napier N.Z. on 3rd. Feb. 1931*

series were available for 4 pounds 4 shillings for 50ft reels (approximately 3 minute running time) and seven 16mm reels of the same titles for 8 pounds and 18 shillings.¹⁵⁸

In New Zealand, at least one photographic outlet operated a 'Home Movie Entertainment Service'. This was the case in Hamilton where Watson's Camera House was based in 1931. Watson's offered a service in one's home: 'We provide projector, operator, programme.'¹⁵⁹ The service meant the client could choose exactly what they wanted to view at a time that suited them, offering a new control over the medium.

Film programmes could combine a range of films together for a home experience. They might combine newsreels with comedy and a travelogue with a home movie. Each showing could be different with a range of films available to buy or loan.

Some amateur filmmakers made other types of film to be shown in the home. One example is the drama *The Saint in Onehunga* made in 1938 by Auckland schoolboys Tom Gibbs and Jack Monds.¹⁶⁰ *The Saint of New York* was a popular Hollywood movie, and the boys followed the story line in their own homegrown production. *The Saint in Onehunga* begins with the inter-title:

Dr Jacob Eismann alias the Scorpion released from DART MOOR slips quietly to Onehunga NZ with the Van Sturmer jewels and a secret Germ gas with which he intends to conquer the world.¹⁶¹

The fourteen minute long drama was filmed on 8mm which comparative cheapness allowed Gibbs and Monds to experiment creatively. *The Saint in Onehunga* was set around Onehunga and in the caves at Three Kings. It appears to have been made entirely for their own pleasure, and was screened in the home mode.

Amateur film literature encouraged accompaniment to silent films. One of the earliest publications recommends using music, preferably the piano, but if not available an

¹⁵⁸ A.H. Reynolds advertisement, Amateur Motion Pictures Official Bulletin of the Auckland "8" Movie Club Vol. 8-No.4,1956, p.5

¹⁵⁹ F28162 *Watson's Camera House, Home of Movies*, 193-, NZFA

¹⁶⁰ F26444 *The Saint in Onehunga*,1938 NZFA

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

automatic piano, victrola, or even a radio programme.¹⁶² A 1935 British manual advises on presentation, encouraging musical accompaniment from musical friends; twin turn tables, and disc sound effects from the cry of a new born baby to a train smash, but prefers the personal rather than mechanical accompaniment.¹⁶³ The more elaborate, mechanical accompaniment to films was favoured by cine clubs, and most home mode screenings were presented more simply by a narrator. The visual images were the dominant and fundamental aspect of home movies, which were 'essentially concerned with perceptible memory and documentation.'¹⁶⁴ They did not require elaborate accompaniment or synchronized sound because the narration by the presenter and interaction from the viewer personalised the occasion. Moreover recorded dialogue, or sound effects would have interfered with active audience conversation during the film.¹⁶⁵

After the Second World War the increase of 16mm sound projectors and mass production of sound prints undermined the availability of new silent prints. Some home movie enthusiasts invested in new sound projectors, and loaned sound prints from film libraries. Few home moviemakers made synchronized sound and picture films, this being more the preserve of cine club members, who were particularly interested in utilising new technology.

Home viewers could watch in their homes from 1923-1970 a wide range of films, including films shown at picture theatres, that they selected to suit their taste and family occasion. The film presentations in the home brought family together to watch themselves and each other, reflect on their lives, relive events and share memories. These special family occasions mixed personal home movies with news and fantasy from the outside world.

¹⁶² James R.Cameron, *The Taking and Showing of Motion Pictures for the Amateur*, New York, Cameron Publishing Co.,1927, p.66

¹⁶³ Charles Ottele, *The Cine-Amateurs Workshop*, (London, George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1935) pp.12-14

¹⁶⁴ Duncan Reekie, *Subversion, The Definitive History of Underground Cinema*, p.102 - 115

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p.109

Chapter two: The Community Film in the Community Mode

This chapter discusses the community film and its exhibition from the 1920s through to the 1960s. The films discussed cover a wide range of subjects including local events and political, educational, medical, agricultural, scientific and mountaineering topics. In addition some promotional films are discussed. These films of disparate content have a correspondingly disparate audience, and were shown in schools, universities, businesses, halls, and clubs, marae and Agriculture and Pastoral shows. Some of these films were shown privately to an invited audience, and others were shown publicly.

The first part of the chapter examines the work of two amateur filmmakers who made local films for local exhibition: James Osler, who was introduced in chapter one, and David Woodcock who made and showed films in Russell in the 1950s and 1960s. The rest of the chapter then considers examples of some specific types of community films.

Key themes of discussion focus on why these films were made, their content, style and exhibition. Consideration is given to whether these films, or some of them, offer an alternate or oppositional view to mainstream filmmaking. This is most fully considered in the discussion on Osler's films, which are contrasted to professional and official New Zealand film and the Hollywood films seen at the picture theatres in Wairoa.

Local Films

Local films are strongly represented within the NZFA collection. As described in Chapter one, films about local events were sometimes included in home movies, however they are more accurately included in discussion of the community mode where there is evidence to link their exhibition to community audiences. Discovering the circumstances of how local films were exhibited is not straightforward. Unlike films shown through established distribution circles, these films rarely appear in advertising or reviews in printed media. This is one reason why local film exhibition has tended to be overlooked in amateur film discussion. As British historians Mark Neumann and Janna Jones observed, 'the extent that amateur films circulated beyond small clusters of family and friends is usually

unknown.¹⁶⁶ Archives generally are far less interested in film exhibition than in the standard archival questions on provenance, date and content. The NZFA, for example, holds few details on where and how amateur films were shown. In James Osler's case, I obtained information on his films' exhibition from his relatives, and residents of his community. Some of this information links specific titles to their local exhibition; in other cases I have made judgements based primarily on the titles' local rather than family content and secondly their attentive style in documenting a subject which suggests they too were exhibited to local audiences. Osler's films were made 70-80 years ago, and most people who would have seen them are no longer alive. The memories of their exhibition have come from people who were children in Wairoa at that time. This research has extended our knowledge of these films and without it possibly many of these films would have been categorised as home movies rather than local films with a distinctly community audience.

James Mitchell Osler

James Osler made nearly seventy films of the Wairoa community from c.1931 – 1946. The films, now copied onto seven compilation tapes by NZFA with a running time of around three hours, give no clues on how the films might have been shown in Osler's lifetime.¹⁶⁷ The titles, dates and content of the films have been assigned by NZFA, with advice from local historian and former Mayor of Wairoa, the late Cliff Owen.

Figure 7 gives examples of the NZFA accessioning notes for some of the films on Compilation 4. The compilations contain a large number of film titles with subjects and dates following no particular order. The dates given are taken from the Kodak film stock production date, and are not necessarily the date the films were made - the films may have been shot later than the stock date indicates.

¹⁶⁶ Mark Neumann and Janna Jones, 'Amateur film and the rural imagination', in Robert Fish, (ed.) *Cinematic Countrysides*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007) p.233

¹⁶⁷ These films were assembled onto large reels by a video transfer operator before the films were received by the NZFA. The Osler collection is compiled onto 7 video tapes, which combine local films and home movies.

Figure 7: NZFA Accessioning notes for Osler Collection
(sample from Compilation 4)

Kopuawhara disaster funeral cortege [1938],
 Takitimu Whare Nui, the boat Tangaroa,
 Maori & Pakeha troops depart by rail [1942]
 Women soldiers marching, Soldiers relaxing in field,
 Army demonstrations for public in school yard [1940]
 Osler's Tea and Luncheon Rooms [1933]
 War veterans march, Anzac ceremony [193-]
 Race meeting [1936]
 Catching Railcar, Preparing Hangi, St. John's Exercise,
 Men Both Maori & Pakeha doing drill wearing white arm bands
 and civilian clothes - Home guard, [1944],
 Maori school girls performing dance,
 Newly Wed Soldiers & brides on Marae [1940]

Osler's filmmaking evolved from his still photography of local people and events extending his repertoire and allowing more spontaneity.¹⁶⁸ His subject matter ranged from natural disasters to civic occasions, to weddings and funerals on marae and small details of life in Wairoa. The films are not edited and do not use titles or inter-titles. Some are fragmentary and unexplained, short one minute actuality sequences of men driving stock, Maori children on horseback, and women picking flowers.

Zimmerman, in her one brief mention of American community mode films, notes local films as a post Second World War phenomenon: 'A time which impelled both experimental and regional filmmaking' and led to amateurs making 'films of family businesses, local parades, and regional industries, such as dairy farming in Wisconsin or ranching in Arizona.'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Dorothy Montgomery interview, F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews, Sept. 2007*

¹⁶⁹ Patricia R., Zimmerman, *Reel Families, A Social History of Amateur Film*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995) pp.108-109

The Osler collection shows that, in New Zealand local films were made before 1945 and date back to the early 1930s.¹⁷⁰ Osler's filmmaking began during the Great Depression. The depression saw national income fall, exports drop by 40 per cent and unemployment soar.¹⁷¹ In rural places with a large Maori population (like Wairoa), it is estimated by 1933 that 40% of Maori were unemployed.¹⁷² The Oslers, unlike many of their customers were likely to have been cushioned economically from the full impact of the depression by the fact that their bakery business provided an essential foodstuff. Around 1933 Osler bought his first movie camera.¹⁷³ It would have cost in the region of 30 pounds. Osler was in a rare and privileged position in having a movie camera at that time. It gave him a special status within the community, he became both unofficial photographer and cinematographer.



Figure 8: Osler Bakery, Wairoa c.1931 Osler collection, NZFA

¹⁷⁰ Ernest Collison from Waikare, North Waikato was making newsreels in the 1920s. These are held by NZFA.

¹⁷¹ Simon Sigley, 'Film Culture: its development in New Zealand, 1929-1972', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2003, p.88

¹⁷² Michael King, *Nga Iwi O Te Motu, One Thousand Years of Maori History*, (Auckland, Reed, 1997) p.80

¹⁷³ The earliest of Osler's films held by NZFA was made in 1933.

Wairoa in 1933 was recovering from two earthquakes. The first, in 1931, killed 254 people in Napier and Hastings and two people in Wairoa. The town centre, including Osler's Bakery sustained major damage. Roads around the district were badly affected. In 1932 another earthquake devastated Wairoa's main bridge and caused further damage. Osler's first film includes a brief view of the townscape and the newly restored Osler's Tea and Luncheon Rooms facade.¹⁷⁴

Osler's films from the 1930s onwards chronicle some important local events in Wairoa. There is a sense that Osler is consciously making a film record of the community he lives in, an activity he had previously undertaken through still photos. Many of the films are formal documentations of events whose style is similar to Zimmerman's description of American local films:

Lacking spectacle and often narrative, these films are extremely significant, because their regional visual vernacular circumvents the nationalization and homogenization endemic to Hollywood films.¹⁷⁵

Osler's films are particular to the district and his record of events is more intimate than professional news coverage. In 1938 another natural disaster hit Wairoa. A flash flood in the Public Works Department No. 4 camp at Kopuawhara, near Wairoa, resulted in the deaths of twenty one people.¹⁷⁶ Osler recorded the Kopuawhara workers' tangi. The film begins with a brief shot of a flower draped coffin on the back of a truck. This is followed by two cars and hundreds of people, their heads bared, walking four abreast along a Wairoa street followed by a long procession of cars. The final sequence includes a shot of Osler's delivery van in the procession. The black and white film is taken from a single position above the road and runs for a minute. The occasion was reported in the *Wairoa Star*:

Hardly a person in the district failed to turn out to pay his last respects to those men who lost their lives while engaged on the great task of releasing the East Coast from the isolation from which it has suffered for so long ... Five hundred men from

¹⁷⁴ F49211 Osler Family Film Compilation 2 *Osler's Tea and Luncheon Rooms 1933*, NZFA.

¹⁷⁵ Patricia R., Zimmerman, *Reel Families, A Social History of Amateur Film*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press), 1995, p.109

¹⁷⁶ F49131 Osler Family Film Compilation 1: Funeral Procession Wairoa, 1938, NZFA.

Public Works Dept. camps in the district marched including two hundred from Kopuawhara.¹⁷⁷

Cabinet Ministers, including Peter Fraser, and Robert Semple, Minister of Public Works, attended the occasion. All businesses in Wairoa were closed.¹⁷⁸

This disaster was also recorded in an Australian newsreel, *Cinesound Review 332: Wairoa NZ Flood Wipes Out Camp*.¹⁷⁹ This item, barely a minute in running time with sound commentary describes the scenes of devastation at the Kopuawhara construction camp near Wairoa in 1938. It does not include the funeral procession.

The later 1930s saw a period of economic growth in Wairoa beginning with the Labour Government coming to power in 1935, introducing policies to strengthen economic growth, and provide social security benefits for most New Zealanders.¹⁸⁰ Osler filmed Wairoa's development throughout this period. Short films record construction work in the area, including blasting tunnels out of rock faces to build the railway line.

Wairoa remained geographically isolated, due to, 'lack of roads and difficulty navigating the entrance to the Wairoa River'.¹⁸¹ A sandbar at the mouth limited navigation in and out of the river.¹⁸² Osler's film, *The Opening of the Wairoa Bar Earthmoving with Bulldozer and Horses to Create Water Channel*¹⁸³ made sometime in the 1930s is one of his most cinematographically realised films. Huge mountains of shingle frame scenes of workers with shovels and teams of draught horses and machines as they attempt to re-open the bar to allow boats to pass through the heads. The camera functions as an unobtrusive observer of the scene, there is no interaction between that filmed and the filmmaker. At five minutes duration, this film is longer than most and has powerful compositional elements and striking contrast in the photography.

¹⁷⁷ *Wairoa Star*, Feb 23 1938, p.5

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ F31341 *Cinesound Review 332: Wairoa NZ Flood Wipes Out Camp 1938*

¹⁸⁰ Kerry Pollock. 'Hawke's Bay places - Wairoa', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 26-Nov-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/hawkes-bay-places/10>

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Kerry Pollock. 'Hawke's Bay places - Wairoa', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 26-Nov-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/hawkes-bay-places/10>

¹⁸³ F49674 Osler Family Compilation 3, NZFA Collection.

Wairoa was heavily dependent on the ferry service that operated between Wairoa and Napier. Meat from Wairoa's freezing works was carried by boat and the Osler's bakery supplies were transported this way. Osler made a colour film of the main ferry, the *Tangaroa* en-route from Napier to Wairoa. Onboard, passengers lie on the deck as the boat travels from Napier, crossing the bar and landing at the jetty in Wairoa, nearly opposite to Osler's Bakery. The three minute film was made c.1936.

On 1 July 1939, the opening of the rail service took place:

Town and country gathered at the beflagged and decorated Wairoa station for the opening ceremony of the 97 mile Napier-Wairoa-Waikokopu portion of the Napier-Gisborne railway.¹⁸⁴

Osler documented the occasion. His film records the large crowds waiting behind rope barriers at the station, and a policeman walking back and forth. A group of press photographers are positioned to snap the arriving dignitaries. Children in the crowd stare at the camera, eager to be filmed. There is a brass band playing. Finally the dignitaries arrive in the, 'Standard rail-car, driven by the Hon. D. G. Sullivan, Minister of Railways'. They include Sir Apirana Ngata, and the Minister of Public Works Robert Semple who are met by the Mayor Mr. H. Harker.¹⁸⁵ After the press party photographs, a reception is held in town with kapa haka on the outdoor stage. Semple is filmed addressing the crowd. The four minute film is notable for its composition and photography.¹⁸⁶

Some films are likely to have been made in the course of Osler's working life. Osler travelled regularly delivering bread to outlying areas, such as Nuhaka, Mahia and Waikaremoana. Osler's also supplied bakery products to community gatherings and functions in the district. At the Wairoa Race Meetings for example Osler's ran a refreshment shop (this is shown in one of the racing films), and the races were yet another community occasion he filmed.¹⁸⁷ The bakery made wedding cakes, and a many-tiered and lavishly decorated cake is pictured at the wartime wedding reception of a Maori couple.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Volume 14, Issue 5 (August 1,1939) p.10

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ F50022 Osler Family Compilation 7 *Large Crowd at Railway Station to Greet Dignitaries, Maori Concert Party* (1938), NZFA

¹⁸⁷ F49878 Osler Family Compilation 1 *Horse Race Meeting* (1936), NZFA

¹⁸⁸ F49878 Osler Family Compilation 6 *Wedding* (1936), NZFA

Osler's film collection is notable for recording Maori and important Maori occasions. Most amateur film, apart from a significant representation of the Rotorua tourist domain, contain few images of Maori but they appear in Osler's films frequently, and many films focus on official occasions on marae, weddings and tangi. The circumstances surrounding how these films came to be made is not known. One possibility is that it was entirely fortuitous and that Osler simply took the opportunity to film while he was delivering bread or cakes to the marae, or working in the bakery set up on the marae, as in the film described below.¹⁸⁹ It is known from discussions with his grandchildren that Osler's camera went everywhere with him. Alternatively he may have been asked by Ngati Kahungunu marae or individual Maori to film these occasions. Osler was known in Wairoa area as the man with the camera. If he was specifically asked to film occasions, it is highly likely the films would have been shown later on the marae. Osler's 16mm projector was portable and he is known to have shown his films at a variety of public venues as well as at friends' private homes.¹⁹⁰ Alternatively, Osler may have recorded these occasions on his own volition in the same way he had recorded other important local events. The circumstances that led to his filmmaking may of course be a mixture of these reasons.

Sometimes the films themselves give an indication of Osler's authority to be filming on marae. The 1938 colour film, *Whare Nui at Takitimu Marae* documents one of the occasions associated with the opening of the marae.¹⁹¹ Takitimu was built on the Waihirere marae in Memory of Wairoa's Ariki-Nui, Sir James Carroll.¹⁹² Osler appears to be there in the capacity of official cinematographer. He positions himself with camera in front of the wharenuī. The film shows a brass band playing, a large gold sports trophy and lights strung out in front of the marae. Spectators watch as people enter the marae, speeches follow and a group of women in hockey uniforms are glimpsed. The camera, although in a very conspicuous position, is centered at some distance from the people. Half way through the film Osler changes position to take in the crowd and film the face of the wharenuī.

¹⁸⁹ Two thousand people attended the Memorial for Sir James Carroll at Takitimu Marae and additional facilities included the erection of a large bakery.

¹⁹⁰ Malcolm MacKay interview on F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews, Sept. 2007*, NZFA

¹⁹¹ Osler Family Compilation 3: *Whare Nui at Takitimu Marae ca1936*, NZFA

¹⁹² Angela Ballara, 'Tipoki, Te Hata - Biography', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10

The Memorial Hui for Sir James Carroll began on June 14 and ended on June 19.¹⁹³ Thousands of people attended including the King of Waikato, Koroki Tawhio and entourage.¹⁹⁴ Associated with the hui were sports events including a special race meeting at the Wairoa Racing Club. One of Osler's films of race meetings is probably connected to this occasion.¹⁹⁵ The fact that Osler filmed not one, but many events on marae, suggests that he was trusted to do so.

The outbreak of war in 1939 caused great social upheaval and many amateur filmmakers ceased production between 1939-1945. Osler however, continued making films and these are an important record of the period. Several wartime films show men leaving Wairoa by train and being farewelled by family and friends at the Railway station.¹⁹⁶ In *Maori & Pakeha troops depart by rail* [1942]¹⁹⁷ Osler films families and soldiers waiting for the train. Kit bags are strewn on the station platform, groups of people talk, a woman dabs a hanky to her eye and is then hugged by her soldier partner. The mixed emotions portrayed in the film stand in contrast to the wartime Government newsreels, where sadness and sorrow are notably absent from these scenes of farewell. In the newsreel, *Country Lads*, 1941, the commentary is patriotic, the leave-taking shows no signs of sadness, with soldiers smiling and waving from on board a ship hung with bunting, while the women stand by the wharf gates, smiling and waving back.¹⁹⁸

While Government newsreels were made under instructions to produce a particular narrative that supported official policy as part of the war effort, amateurs worked without these restraints. Amateur filmmakers, 'weren't controlling over their subjects nor were they controlled, and this meant they were likely to be more honest and not inclined to fake scenes, to appease the producer or simply to fit within time constraints.'¹⁹⁹ In Osler's films anything can happen, and because they are unedited everything captured on film is seen.

¹⁹³ *Wairoa Star*, June 17 1938

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ F50022 Osler Family Compilation 7 *Maori Horse Racing Meeting*, NZFA.

¹⁹⁶ F49674 Osler Family Compilation 5 *Military personnel at railway station, Steam train at station, (1943)* F49131 Osler Family Compilation 1 *Army Cook House & Soldiers Departure from Wairoa Railway Station (1940)* NZFA

¹⁹⁷ F49674 Osler Family Compilation 5 NZFA.

¹⁹⁸ F22701 *Country Lads*, 1941, NZFA.

¹⁹⁹ Peter MacNamara, 'Amateur Film as Historical Record - A Democratic History', *Journal of Film Preservation* Vol. xxv no.5 Nov, 1996

A film set probably on Taihoa marae must have been made c.1942 as there are women in Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) uniforms present on the occasion.²⁰⁰ Most probably the film is associated with Ngati Kahungunu soldiers leaving for military service. The film begins with a powhiri and is made with a hand held camera using rapid pans. The people standing in front of the wharenuī are therefore hard to identify.

Other wartime films are of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and trainee soldiers practising in the Wairoa High School grounds. The men train with bayonets, while the women practise fixing cars.²⁰¹ Government propaganda at the time encouraged women to contribute to the war effort. Service organisations established women's auxiliaries in the army, navy and air force. Osler himself was too old for war service, but became a member of the Home Guard. The Home Guard's training methods are shown in two short films made by Osler.²⁰² These Home Guard films set on the Mahia peninsula are likely to have breached war time regulations, forbidding filming of 'beach areas, where enemy landings were possible.'²⁰³

Another Osler film, that is not held by NZFA but is part of Wairoa mythology certainly breached wartime regulations.²⁰⁴ This is a film of the US Marine Corps practice landing near Opoutama in early October 1943.²⁰⁵ Opoutama was the base for an American camp during the war, an area chosen for its remoteness and sheltered waters.²⁰⁶ Malcolm MacKay knew the Osler family and recalls that Osler 'accidentally filmed (a landing) from Opoutama beach. The Yanks were annoyed, they confiscated his camera [and film].'²⁰⁷ According to Mackay the exercise went badly wrong and at 'Waikokopu eleven or twelve

²⁰⁰ Information received from audience at Takitimu Marae, 2007

²⁰¹ F49674 Osler Family Compilation. 5 *Women soldiers marching, Soldiers relaxing in field, Army demonstrations for public in school yard [1940]* NZFA

²⁰² Ibid. *Preparing Hangi, St. John's Exercise, Men Both Maori & Pakeha Doing Drill, Home Guard, 1944*

²⁰³ Ray and Cleone Hargreaves, 'Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club', Dunedin, 1999, p.4

²⁰⁴ American Navy codes and New Zealand Government wartime regulation, banned filming of military exercises.

²⁰⁵ Harry Bioletti, *The Yanks are Coming the American invasion of New Zealand, 1942-1944*, (Century Hutchinson, 1989) pp. 163-164

Denys Bevan, *United States Forces in New Zealand 1942 -1944*, (Alexandra, Macpherson, 1992) pp. 223-224

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ F102844 *James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews, September 2007*. Malcolm Mackay (11/9/2007)

Americans got drowned - a botch up.' Osler was imprisoned overnight, and never got the film back.²⁰⁸

In 2005 Osler's grandson made enquiries with US Military State Department, to establish its existence and ask for its return without success.²⁰⁹ The story of the landing is uncorroborated in publications on the Marines in New Zealand, but there was a similar shocking accident off the Kapiti coast in 1944.

Apart from his apparent tangle with the US Navy, Osler's filmmaking does not appear to have been badly disrupted by wartime restrictions. He continued to film throughout the war. His collection contains films made on stock produced each year from 1939 - 1945, except 1942. He may have stockpiled some unprocessed film in 1938, as there is evidence that he used this stock during wartime. Some of the stock he used was colour, which was harder to procure during the war years and a great deal more expensive.

Osler made many films of local parades c.1935-1946. MacKay remembers that Osler filmed the parades from the balcony of the bakery.²¹⁰ There were frequent parades for 'Carnival Week, Races, Young Farmers and the Annual Ball. [In a] place like Wairoa anything was an excuse to have a parade.'²¹¹ The Wairoa Carnival in 1938 was advertised in the local paper: 'Prizes awarded for best decorated float, car, trades display, most original display, best native display, best decorated bicycle and horse, fancy dress costume, grocer's shop and tobacconist.'²¹² Osler filmed at least one of these parades, placing his camera on a tripod across the road from the Luncheon Rooms with the bakery signage in the background.

Other parades filmed are associated with Anzac Day ceremonies.²¹³ *Anzac Ceremony [193-]* begins with army/navy brass band leading the parade. On the verandah of the

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Graham Osler e-mail to Jane Paul 12/3/2005

²¹⁰ F102844 New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews, Sept. 2007, Malcolm MacKay

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² *The Wairoa Star*, Jan 19, 1938, p.6

²¹³ Osler Comp. 3 *War Veterans March, Anzac Ceremony [193-]*, comp 4 *Parade Wairoa, 1944*, Comp. 4 *Anzac Parade in Park*, 1940, NZFA.

Luncheon Rooms, people lean out over the street. In the parade are veterans, girl guides and boy scouts. The parade concludes with kapa haka performances and official speeches from a stage in Wairoa's main street.

Osler's short untitled films are like a jigsaw and have required a great deal of research to identify occasions, places, people and dates. Even now, many are inadequately identified. NZFA programmes compiled from Osler's films have been shown publicly in Wairoa several times in the last ten years. They have also been shown at Takitimu marae and to local historians, family members and rest home residents at the Wairoa Museum. This process of re-showing the films in the community they come from has provided more information. An example is a film of two women picking arum lilies. The local historian knew where the film was set, and the grand daughter knew who the women were and why they were there. Apparently, Alice Osler and her daughter Aggie would pick flowers regularly to decorate the Osler's function room for wedding parties.²¹⁴

The lack of narrative in the films means they require contextual information to make sense of the occasions, places and people seen in the films. Conversely the lack of narrative brings a sense of realness, the sense that we are seeing a picture of a place and time, unmodified by cinematographic conventions.

Exhibition

Osler's relatives and friends remember his films being screened in the function room above the Bakery. Local people held celebratory gatherings, weddings, parties and twenty-firsts at Oslers. Originally there was a dance every Saturday night following the rugby. Masonic balls were held and many community organisations met there.²¹⁵ It was the hub of the community's social events. The room was known as Osler's Function Rooms or the Osler Hall. It was a large room with sprung floors and a verandah looking out over Marine Parade and the river. A grand staircase led from Marine Parade entrance upstairs to the room. 'It was beautiful, with the doors open and the lights reflecting on the river.'²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Dorothy Montgomery interview on F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews, Sept. 2007*, NZFA.

²¹⁵ *The Daily Telegraph*, July 30 1991, p.16

²¹⁶ F195752 NZFA "Osler Memories" Interviews with John Gemmell & Angus Gemmell

During the day it was the Luncheon Rooms, and in the evenings private functions took place. There was a screen and Osler's projector and as part of the evenings festivities Osler would show movies. It is very likely he gave a narration to his films, and possibly added background music from playing records.

Osler's films, it appears, were not normally shown as a separate event, but in conjunction with other festivities. The Wairoa newspapers from 1938 to 1940 reveal no advertising for Osler's pictures. However numerous gatherings at Osler's Hall are advertised in the local newspaper in 1940: Church Services,²¹⁷ a Farewell to Soldiers, Monster Dance with Mayfair Orchestra,²¹⁸ a Grand Mannequin Parade with proceeds to the Patriotic Funds²¹⁹ and a Hunt Club Ball with Lew Munro's Orchestra.²²⁰ The war years were a very active time for exhibiting amateur film. Wartime culture encouraged support of the military and it is likely Osler's films of soldiers departing Wairoa were shown in Wairoa. Filmmaking prohibitions during the war did not extend to restricting the exhibition of parades or farewells of troops.

Osler's hall hosted a mix of public and private occasions. Some of these were weddings. MacKay recalled seeing one of these films:²²¹

Old James [Osler] filmed this high-class wedding. Tables laid out and ... [the] Minister got up to say grace and of course you close your eyes and bow your head. Now someone donated a whole lot of oysters on plates and while grace was going on, this son of a very uppercrust local farmer reached over and took the oysters and put them in front of himself and took a plate of saveloys and replaced it. What he didn't know was the joker on the other side had his eyes open and saw what was happening [and you can see in the silent movie what he said through lip reading] and the oysters went back where they were supposed to be. All that was on film like keystone cops, ninety people with heads down - and this arm coming out. Those were sort of things we loved seeing.²²²

²¹⁷ *Wairoa Star*, Apr 26 1940, p.6

²¹⁸ *Wairoa Star*, Aug 5 1940, p.6

²¹⁹ *Wairoa Star*, June 26 1940, p.4

²²⁰ *Wairoa Star*, June 5 1940, p.6

²²¹ Wedding film not held by NZFA

²²² Malcolm MacKay interview on F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews*, Sept. 2007, NZFA.

The film was exhibited as was another of a fight at Moores Drapery.²²³ Mackay recalls:

[We] liked to see the one with the fight over the elastic at Moores Cash Drapery. It was just after the war and elastic was hard to get and a number of Wairoa women had a tussle in the drapery over it. Old James sneaked in and filmed a bun fight. [Afterwards] everyone wanted to know who were the upper-crust ones. James was pretty careful and didn't show it to too many people, because if you're in business you don't want to upset too many of your clients. Must be around or someone got rid of it.²²⁴

The wedding film and the drapery bun fight highlight the behaviour of certain members of Wairoa's 'upper crust.' While Osler was not deterred in filming these occasions, his position in society meant he did not want to jeopardise his social relationships in the community by showing it widely. An amateur filmmaker's work expressed 'images of communities circumscribed by the social relationship of their creators.'²²⁵

MacKay, as a child, remembers the films being screened at other venues including the Old Army Hall. 'Kids would go along to see if they could recognize anyone, but 9/10 couldn't, juddery, shadowy, but we knew where it took place²²⁶.' MacKay remembers these film screenings with delight because they sometimes showed people and places he knew.

Local films, such as Osler's, hold a unique place in New Zealand film exhibition culture. In New Zealand picture theatres in the 1930s and 40s, ninety percent of films were American narrative features.²²⁷ These films distributed by the major New Zealand exhibition chains - Fuller-Hayward, Amalgamated and Kerridge-Odeon were shown nationwide. In Wairoa there were two Kerridge theatres, the Gaiety and Regent. Hollywood was the cultural context for film exhibition from the 1920s. These films were 'supported by reviews,

²²³ Moore Cash Drapery film is not held by NZFA.

²²⁴ Malcolm MacKay interview on F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews*, Sept. 2007, NZFA.

²²⁵ Mark Neumann and Janna Jones, 'Amateur Film and the Rural imagination', ed. Robert Fish, (*Cinematic Countrysides*, Manchester University Press, 2007) p.233

²²⁶ Malcolm MacKay interview on F102844 *New Zealand Film Archive. James Mitchell Osler Family Interviews*, Sept. 2007, NZFA.

²²⁷ *Evening Post*, March 14, 1930, p.7

stories, gossip and advertising that appeared in the press and on the commercial ZB radio network.²²⁸

New Zealand on screen in the 1930s was practically nonexistent; four New Zealand feature Talkies were released, some Government tourist promotions and little else. Newsreel items about New Zealand or New Zealanders were uncommon, apart from occasional items in the Australian produced Fox Movietone News and Cinesound Review.²²⁹ In Wairoa apart from the Kopuawhara disaster item only a Saint John Baby Contest, made in 1940 of Wairoa babies posed in front of the camera was made and screened at the local picture theatre.²³⁰ Weekly Reviews of New Zealand content were shown in Wairoa from 1941, through Kerridge Theatres. These newsreels rarely included items on Wairoa, apart from one item detailing Government post-war initiatives for educating Maori farmers in 1949²³¹ (former members of the Maori Battalion) and a longer National Film Unit production in 1951 highlighting the impact of tuberculosis on Maori communities.²³²

In contrast to the sporadic professional film record of Wairoa, Osler's films provide a major record of Wairoa events from 1933 – 1946. His films chronicle a range of local, cultural and social events - subjects that extend the official newsreel fare and display a greater freedom of expression. Osler took pleasure at filming badly behaved 'uppercrust' people and appears to have ignored military restrictions on filming coastal areas during the war years. The films reveal a great deal about the community, its values and Osler's relationship to the community. As Shand states:

amateur filmmaking connotes longer-term investment, a continuity of engagement and a sharing of filmic outcomes, involving a kind of re-investment of significance within the local community.²³³

²²⁸ Simon Sigley, 'Film Culture: its development in New Zealand, 1929-1972', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2003, p.40

²²⁹ These Australian newsreels were distributed through New Zealand picture theatres.

²³⁰ *Wairoa Star*, April 17, 1940

²³¹ F820 *Weekly Review* 402 *Maori Rehabilitation...New Farms Beside Wairoa*, 1949, NZFA.

²³² F1844 *Tuberculosis and the Maori People of the Wairoa District*, 1952, NZFA.

²³³ Ryan Shand, *Amateur Cinema Re-Located: Localism in Fact and Fiction*, *Movies on Home Ground*, p.156

Internationally it has been suggested ‘that in the absence of indigenous commercial film industry, amateur films could constitute a national cinema.’²³⁴ ‘Such films articulate an alternative history, focusing on marginalized societies, persons and events.’²³⁵ The extent to which other amateur filmmakers in New Zealand made and showed local films is not known. However I believe there were many others, which further research will reveal.

One local filmmaker, David Woodcock, wrote of his filmmaking and exhibition in the *Amateur Cine World* letters to the editor column.²³⁶ Woodcock was an English immigrant, and amateur photographer. He ran a store in the Northland town of Russell during the 1950s and 60s and documented on film his local community. Woodcock’s collection of twenty 8mm films is held by NZFA. At first glance they look not dissimilar to many home movie collections. They show a variety of personal and local events, including his Four Square shop burning down, (he was away at the time and rushed back to film the spectacle) and the shop being rebuilt. There are films of the Russell dental clinic, Rawhiti marae and the Opening of Te Ti School. Woodcock captured on film the Royal Visit by the Queen to Otiria Marae, the Governor General at Long Beach, the Canadian Navy and RNZAF Camps in Russell and the Coronation Day Celebrations in the area.²³⁷ Woodcock writes in his letter to *Amateur Cine World*:

I brought an 8mm Kodak camera, projector, screen, titler, light meter, and a Chaplin short for 85 pounds two years ago [in 1952] until then I had been a keen still photographer...For local shows I pack projector and programme into a picnic basket and travel by push bike. I usually rely on wallpaper or a sheet to serve as a screen.

These films were of a variety of subjects including a:

... Maori community 25 miles away...and among other films I showed them a kodachrome record I had made of their own festivities a few weeks ago... [The audience responded with] laughter as they recognized each other.

²³⁴ Jan-Christopher Horak, Out of the Attic: Archiving Amateur Film, *Journal of Film Preservation* No.56 June 1998, p.50

²³⁵ Ibid. p.51

²³⁶ David Woodcock, Letters to the Editor, *Amateur Cine World*, February 1954, pp.1625-26

²³⁷ F85839 *Personal Record*. Woodcock, David H. *Compilation*, NZFA.

Woodcock, as a local filmmaker, replicates the original ‘early ‘cinema of attractions’ of people watching themselves on screen ... this is also ‘a cinema of interactions.’²³⁸ The Maori community had asked to see their film and Woodcock obliged.

Woodcock writes in his letter to *Amateur Cine World* that he had given eleven shows in the South Island. He appears delighted in the exhibition of his movies and the appreciative response they received. There is nothing to suggest in his letter that he was a member of a cine club. His films are untitled, and unedited, and it is probable his narration gave his films meaning at their exhibition.

The amateur filmmakers discussed were making and exhibiting local films. These local films chronicled the filmmaker’s local community. They act, as Burke says, to not only reflect but also extend social contexts. In some respects, their localism was the antithesis of modernity.²³⁹

Modernity was an influential impetus in amateur filmmaking. Amateur cameras were desirable and the projector brought the ‘world’ into family homes and community venues. Everything Hollywood had to offer could be loaned or purchased. From 1927, the American film company Fox promoted the use of 16mm for education purposes.²⁴⁰ While Fox’s focus was on its own commercial productions, its initiative created the right climate for amateurs to expand their practice and make films for educational and other purposes. By 1940 New Zealand schools were using film in lessons. Post war, the dropping of import restrictions led to more amateur film equipment becoming available. Amateur cine societies increased their public screenings and the Film Society began again. All these factors were an incentive for individuals to take up the practice of amateur filmmaking.

The next part of the chapter examines community mode films made by and for a community of interests. Films documenting the 1951 Waterfront Lockout and the Canterbury Mountaineering Club activities in the 1930s and 40s are explored as examples.

²³⁸ Edmonds Guy, ‘An Interview with Paolo Simioni and Karianne Fiorini of Italy’s Amateur-Film Archive’, *Film History*, Vol.19, No.4, 2007, p.425

²³⁹ Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991) p.159

²⁴⁰ James R. Cameron, *The Taking and Showing of Motion Pictures for the Amateur*, (New York, Cameron Publishing Co., 1927) p. 22

Political Films

During the 1951 Waterfront Lockout, Rudy Sunde, Lou Robertson and Basil Holmes filmed parts of the 151 day dispute. The Lockout ran from February 15 to July 15, and affected 22,000 waterside workers and other unionists. The films were made illegally under the draconian emergency regulations of the period, which imposed rigid censorship. Even reporting on the strike was against the law under regulation 4 of the Waterfront Strike Emergency Regulations 1951. The regulations gave police sweeping powers of search and arrest and made it an offence for citizens to assist strikers - even giving food to their children was outlawed.²⁴¹ The Army and Navy were brought in to work the wharves. Historian Dick Scott remembers the period as one where New Zealand reached the brink of fascism.

It was not the New Zealand we knew - it was an incredible time - strange to live in a country where you could be breaking the law by being overheard speaking.²⁴²

Rudy Sunde was 24 in 1951. He had a 16mm camera, which he had used to make a film of his father's orchard, and some wedding films for acquaintances. He says now, that making the films was almost by accident.

To be honest, my filming of the waterfront dispute was a bit accidental. I happened to be there and got the camera rolling. At that time, I was a member of the Progressive Youth League (an international youth movement set up in 1945 to fight fascism and work for world peace) and the League had a delegate (Betty Arya) going to the Berlin World Youth Festival. A gift was needed for the Festival and someone suggested a film of the League's activities in New Zealand. I had a 16mm camera available so Basil Holmes and I travelled to Christchurch and Wellington to film League activities there as well as the Auckland members. (The filming) happened to coincide with the '51 Lockout thus I was there to film the wharfies.²⁴³

²⁴¹ 'War on the wharves - 1951 waterfront dispute', URL: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/the-1951-waterfront-dispute/war-on-the-wharves>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 30-Aug-2012

²⁴² 'The Rage Cools after 50 Years,' *New Zealand Herald*, Dec. 14, 2000, p. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=165079

²⁴³ Rudy Sunde email to Jane Paul 7/06/2012, NZFA depositor file

Sunde disguised his movie camera under his clothes when he began filming the wharfies:

Initially I was a bit discreet with the filming. Once a wharfie questioned my credentials but I was able to convince him that I was on his side. Later on I was accepted into their ranks and filmed inside the Trades Hall, for example. The police did not see me or did not bother with me.²⁴⁴

Apart from Robertson, (a Dairy Union secretary, who Sunde did not know prior to 1951) Sunde thinks they were the only ones filming wharfies:

I used three cameras. I think that they were all magazine loading and all were 16mm. The first one belonged to my father – it was a Bell & Howell. The second one belonged to an uncle and it was a Kodak. Then I borrowed Lou Robertson's lovely turret head [Pathe] camera.²⁴⁵

The footage held by NZFA collectively titled, *Waterfront Lockout 1951*, runs for ninety minutes.²⁴⁶ It is a compilation of films primarily made at wharfie meetings, rallies, and marches. Jock Barnes head of the Waterside Workers Union features prominently, speaking at Auckland Trades Hall (after being released from two months in prison), outside the Magistrate Court and at other meetings around Auckland. The rallies feature placards, 'Women unite now for equal pay' and 'King George gets 2000 pounds, George King gets 2/5'. There is footage of the Auckland Railwaymen's Strike, and a Sydney Labour Day March.²⁴⁷ Most of the films are remarkably well made, with interior and exterior scenes. Sometimes it is obvious that in his footage, Sunde is a little furtive in filmmaking.

The dispute took place in a climate of Cold War suspicion. The opposing sides denounced each other as Nazis, Commies, traitors and terrorists. It polarised politics and split the union movement, leaving a bitter legacy that lingers to this day. The combatants could not

²⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ F10461 *Waterfront Lockout 1951*

²⁴⁷ Robertson shot the Australian footage. Sunde did not visit Australia. Rudy Sunde e-mail to Jane Paul 6/06/2012.

even agree on what to call the dispute – the employers and government described it as a strike, but to the waterside workers it was a lockout.²⁴⁸

Some of Sunde's footage of the dispute was included in *Story of Two Islands*.²⁴⁹ The film was made to screen at the 1951 World Youth Congress by Basil Holmes and Sunde. At the time, Holmes was a member of the Auckland Carpenter's Union, and a Member of the Communist Party as was Sunde who was also a member of Young People's Club and Progressive Youth League 1950/51. *Story* is a 16mm silent film with intertitles and a running time of twenty four minutes. Sound on film was too expensive for the filmmakers to use, so they wrote a commentary to accompany the film at screenings. The film begins with a message: NOTE - This Film Was Made Under The NZ Waterfront Emergency Regulations Bill. (This title Sunde believes was added post 1951, and was not on the original film). *Story from Two Islands* opening sequence reads 'A Report From the peace-loving youth of New Zealand to the youth of the World. But today we are burdened with the disease of racialism - cursed with the worst of housing.' This is illustrated with pictures of slum housing. 'The necessities of life are sought for in an atmosphere of... Wage rises; union meetings; union marches; wharf strikes... Heading youth's fight for peace is the NZ Progressive Youth League'. Young people are seen square dancing, and delivering pamphlets and petitions. 'Of course there are other forces not working for peace ... Our youngest generation receives the care and Protection of Progressive Women's Organization ... The decisive year, 1951 sees millions of young people uniting under the Peace Banner at Berlin.'

The film is briefly mentioned in *People's Voice*, the Communist party broadsheet, following the Berlin screenings. It is described as the, 'hit of the World Youth Peace Festival', and its 'simple realism and portrayal of Maori and Pakeha, through love and the sportsfield' was commended.²⁵⁰ The third World Youth Peace Festival took place in a cold war environment and real concern over the deployment of nuclear weapons.

²⁴⁸ 'War on the wharves - 1951 waterfront dispute', URL: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/the-1951-waterfront-dispute/war-on-the-wharves>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 30-Aug-2012

²⁴⁹ F23197 *Story from Two Islands*, 1951

²⁵⁰ *People's Voice*, August 22, 1951, p.3

The Festival was attended by 26,000 people from 104 countries. Back in New Zealand Sunde recalls the film's screenings in Auckland:

It would have been late in '51 before it was ready for screening. We showed it around Auckland to Peace Council meetings, also shown in the old Fabian Club Rooms at the bottom of Queen Street.²⁵¹ A copy was also given to Modern Films in Auckland to circulate through communist party networks.²⁵²

Every screening was complicated, as we had to transport the film projector, the screen, a radiogram with LPs (we had a sound track a microphone and PA system).²⁵³

A transformer was required to convert DC to AC.²⁵⁴ Pat Sunde (Rudy's wife) was the narrator at these presentations. Sunde was not particularly concerned over legal consequences to his filmmaking or their presentation. Kodak in Auckland processed the films without question.²⁵⁵

Mountaineering Films

Several mountaineering films were made by Christchurch amateur filmmaker, Tainui Robins, between 1929 -1949. Tainui Thomas Arthur Robins (1902-1989) was a member of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club, Alpine Club and Canterbury Winter Sports Club. Tainui (known as Nui) was Pakeha, but it was 'just the thing' to give children Maori names in this period.²⁵⁶ Robins, a manager at Red Paths Ltd., purchased a 16mm camera in 1929 and over the following twenty years recorded the activities of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club.

²⁵¹ Rudy Sunde email to Jane Paul 7/06/2012 NZFA depositor files

²⁵² F109308 *NZFA Interview with Rudy and Pat Sunde* by Shane Farrow and Jane Paul, 2008. NZFA Collection. Modern Films was incorporated on 24 March, 1954. NZFA deposit records

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Email Rudy Sunde to Jane Paul 6/06/2012 NZFA depositor files

²⁵⁶ Other names were Ngaio (Marsh) and Rata (Lovell-Smith) cited by Deryk Morse 25/9/2000 in letter to NZFA, Robins deposit file.

The Canterbury Mountaineering Club was formed in 1925, as a more egalitarian alternative to the British tradition of mountaineering with guides.²⁵⁷ Mountaineering was an exclusive gentleman's pursuit in Britain while in New Zealand climbers were predominantly middle-class professionals.²⁵⁸ From the 1930s to 1950s the Canterbury Mountaineering Club achieved a great deal, building huts in the Arthurs Pass, Rakaia, and Mount Cook regions, and climbing and exploring these areas.²⁵⁹ The Club even purchased a car so that members could travel easily to the Alps.²⁶⁰

Robins' films show Canterbury Mountaineering Club members carrying supplies into the mountains to build huts, driving cars up riverbeds and through rivers, fixing cars, modifying cars and tipping them over the bank and setting fire to them. Robin's films were made without titles or inter-titles and at screenings he provided a commentary, describing the events, and identifying people and places. The films were very popular amongst club members and at public lectures. In the 1970s Nui was recorded giving his commentary on the film *Cars to Carrington c.1939* to the Kennedy Lecture, a local annual event sponsored by the Canterbury Mountaineering Club.²⁶¹ The audio demonstrates his dry wit, punctuated by laughter from the audience. A section of the transcript follows:

In my youth we took three cars up the Waimakariri, from the Bealey hotel up to Carrington hut - twelve miles straight up the riverbed. No road, no track, nothing. Our first attempt was in 1938 in a Ford we bought for five pounds. It had no registration and no brakes, so we had to sneak up in the dark so no one could see us. On the steep bits on the way up to the Bealey we'd tie a rope onto one of the other cars as a safety precaution, to stop the Ford running away on us. It only got about a mile up the river from the Bealey. The clutch kept slipping - everything kept slipping - then the whole outfit caught fire and the hood got burnt off. We reckoned it suffered a lot of depreciation after that - it'd be worth only about thirty bob. So

²⁵⁷ John Wilson. 'Mountaineering - The age of the amateur', Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 2-Mar-09 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/mountaineering/6>

²⁵⁸ John Wilson. 'Mountaineering - Clubs and huts', Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/mountaineering/7>

²⁵⁹ Canterbury Mountaineering Club Historical Background, p.1 URL: <http://www.cmc.net.nz/history>

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Letter from Evelyn Robins to Bill Asher mentioning the Kennedy Lecture, NZFA deposit file, 8/11/95

we took off sufficient parts to recover our five pound and then pushed it over the riverbank.²⁶²

That excerpt and the following one, sum up the spirit of adventure of these young men.

Next time we tried to get a dodge truck up the river, in 1939. Got a long way with the Dodge - ten miles up the river, only two miles from our destination, Carrington hut. At that point the magneto ignition got wet and we stalled. Got her out with a rope. I got the mag out, dried it and put it back in, but I timed it incorrectly and the vacuum tank caught fire. I can see it now. We had all the cartridges for our guns on the floor and they kept exploding. We had to get out of it, up into the bush until all that business finished.

The Robins audio recording is an important clue to amateur film exhibition as these films accompaniment have rarely been recorded.²⁶³ It is also a reminder that what we see in these silent films is only part of the original film experience. The sound enhances the visual experience by giving names to the people and places seen in the films and providing a time frame of when activities took place. In Robins' recording made twenty years after the events there is another dimension, he makes the occasional aside to men pictured who had lost their lives during WWII. The commentary is in part a memorial to their passing.

Robins wrote of his mountaineering in 1940. Here he reflects on the Depression in 1930:

Days of plenty soon to be followed by the depression - the most difficult and critical time in the history of the dominion. But was it! This club was the child of the Depression. It was the expression of youth determined to live and achieve. The club prospered and the hut (Bottom Lodge) doubled its size and then extended again, No-one had any money. Everyone had energy.²⁶⁴

²⁶² F25153 *Personal Record Robins, Tainui, Kennedy Lecture* and combined with pictures F14078 *Personal Record Robins, Tainui, Cars to Carrington, 1938/39/40*, NZFA collection

²⁶³ F25153 *Personal Record Robins, Tainui, Kennedy Lecture*, Audio Cassette, NZFA collection

²⁶⁴ T. Robins, Bottom Hut 15-16 July, 1940 from the *Old Bottom Lodge Hut Book* by Alan Willis, NZFA

It is tempting to extend this sentiment to *Cars to Carrington* and other later films. The young mountaineers' reckless behavior can be seen as cathartic, they were on the verge of war and their future was unknown. This resulted in them revelling, breaking laws and regulations. If trees were in the path of their vehicles, well they would cut them down.



Figure 9: *Personal Record Tainui Robins Cars to Carrington*
1938/39/40 NZFA

The last section of the chapter describes a group of films made for education, science, medicine and agricultural purposes. These films have been defined as community mode films purely based on their content. I do not have any information on their exhibition or reception.

School Films

Schools were keen participants in amateur filmmaking. The private boys school, St Andrews College, in Christchurch saw the advantages of filmmaking early on:

When 16mm film became available for amateurs about 1930, the possibility of realizing school events was soon realized. T.J. Edmonds shot the first one in 1932, to raise funds for the school in the Depression.²⁶⁵

Thomas J. Edmonds was the founder of the Edmonds Baking factory and a well known Christchurch philanthropist.²⁶⁶ Screening films and charging admission was seen as a way to bring money into school accounts. The films from 1932 show athletics, cricket and a fete.²⁶⁷ Another film was made to celebrate the schools twenty-first anniversary in 1938. In 1946 the Old Boys Association not only established a film library for the school, but also voted ten pounds a year towards filming interesting (a typical day as a record) or important events at college (special occasions).²⁶⁸ These films include the *Visit of Sir Bernard Freyberg 1950*,²⁶⁹ and later on, the *Visit of His Excellency the Governor General Brigadier Sir Bernard Fergusson 12 June, 1964*.²⁷⁰

Other schools also made films. The earliest discovered is *The Flat Tragedy*, made by the Hamilton High School Bible Class in 1926.²⁷¹ Sixteen year old Avis Tietjens, a Hamilton High School student, directed the comedic drama.²⁷² The filmmaker was Ernest Collison,

²⁶⁵ St. Andrews College Film library, Compiled by F.A. Bull, 1966 intro p.1 NZFA

²⁶⁶ *Legacy of Thomas Edmonds, The Architectural History of Christchurch 8*, Published by Environmental Policy and Planning Unit, Christchurch, 1993, p.3

²⁶⁷ F13755, *St. Andrew's College Athletics and 1932 Fete*, NZFA

²⁶⁸ St. Andrews College Film library, Compiled by F.A. Bull, 1966 intro p.1 NZFA documentation collection

²⁶⁹ F13749 *Visit of Sir Bernard Freyberg 1950*, NZFA

²⁷⁰ F13745 *Visit of His Excellency the Governor General Brigadier Sir Bernard Fergusson 12 June, 1964*

²⁷¹ F17407 *The Flat Tragedy, 1926*, NZFA

²⁷² Avis is credited on film as Director. She is mentioned in *The Hamiltonian*, Dec.1926, Magazine of Hamilton High School, Vol. ix, as performing in another play at the school. She was born in 1910.

who lived near Te Kauwhata, in North Waikato. Collison made various dramatic films and newsreels that were shown at his local hall. *The Flat Tragedy* according to Ernest's son came about through his father's friendship with Florence Gilling, a bible class member who appears in the film. Florence and Ernest later married.

The Flat Tragedy is a story of heroism over villainy. Ray invites his lady friend, Rene, to tea at his flat. Unknown to the couple, Jack Nockhead follows them into the flat and assaults Ray. Ray passes out and Rene faints. Fortunately friends come to the rescue. Ray revives and deals to the villain, and all ends well. A cast of girls played all the roles and the film was presumably screened to the Bible Class.

Medical Films

University of Otago Professor of Medicine, Frank Fitchett initiated a film on hydatids in 1938, *Hydatids Disease and Prevention*.²⁷³ The Department of Hydatid Research, Dunedin Medical School, produced it. In 1940 the film was re-edited and the new film accompanied by an orator reading the script was circulated through Agricultural and Pastoral shows to a farming audience. Fitchett's film was made because many farmers were either resistant or hostile to the idea that common farming practices led directly to the spread of hydatids.²⁷⁴

Dr Whyte, head of the Surgical School Wellington produced a training film, *Squamous Celled Carcinoma of the Nose Diathermic Excision*, 1932-1940.²⁷⁵ The film follows the treatment of a woman with carcinoma, detailing procedures used in treatment including a diathermic excision and the fitting of a prosthetic nose. The film is fully inter-titled for student teaching purposes. Whyte also made a short film documenting an operation in 1929.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ F206502 *Hydatids Disease and Prevention*, 1938. Revised with commentary by Barry McConnachie, 1940, NZFA

²⁷⁴ NZFA depositor records

²⁷⁵ F23308 *Squamous Celled Carcinoma of the Nose Diathermic Excision*, 1932 NZFA

²⁷⁶ F6780 Whyte, Dr. David. [Family & Wellington Scenes] 1929-1938, NZFA

Promotional Films

Promotional or advertising films are not usually thought of as an amateur film genre. However some amateur filmmakers who were businessmen made films to advertise their own products. Ian MacEwan, from a family who manufactured pumps, made *MacEwans Manure Remover and Distributor* in 1930.²⁷⁷ The two minute film is an amusing demonstration of how to clean the cowshed with a vacuum pump dubbed the 'The Flying Banana.' Through a series of inter-titles, the product is endorsed; 'It Means! Sanitation and Superfine.' The manure is released onto a paddock from a tank mounted on a sledge that is towed by a horse. The farmer and his children ride on the back of the sledge. The advertising titles continue:

Distributor can be supplied with or without Sledge. Price is right, and it includes a trial made by one of our Experts. Complete particulars and price supplied on application. Manufactured and Distributed by J.B. MacEwan & Co Ltd.

The MacEwans had a factory in Auckland, and made another longer promotional film called *Pumps for Every Purpose* (c.1930).²⁷⁸ These promotional films were likely to have been created to show customers at Agricultural & Pastoral Shows.

Community mode films can be instructional or educational, as in the Otago University hydatids film. They are not concerned with local relevance for their appeal to an audience, but in using film to engage with a national audience on an issue or problem. Before film, the MacEwan's business might have used print advertising, but in an entrepreneurial manner they chose film. Film was modern, transportable and eminently suitable to engage a range of audiences.

²⁷⁷ F16419 *JB MacEwan Presents - Rugby Fourth Test Match England V New Zealand. MacEwan's Manure Remover and Distributor*, 1930, NZFA.

²⁷⁸ F16420 *Pumps for Every Purpose Part I*, J.B. MacEwan, 1930, NZFA.

As a group, community films are undoubtedly varied. They range from the scripted narrative drama made by Collison to the unedited chronicles of local life by Osler. The films were all made for audiences belonging to a community of interests outside the family and the cine club. In nearly all cases the filmmaker was a member of the same interest group. They were designed to inform, promote and sometimes to reinforce common bonds within the group. Community filmmaking continued through to the 1960s as evidenced by David Woodcock's films of Russell. These types of films offer an alternate view of New Zealand society covering subjects unrecorded by the professional filmmaker. Community filmmaking as an activity is rarely mentioned in contemporary amateur film literature, and certainly was not encouraged. However the films described show that amateurs went ahead and produced films for a wide variety of New Zealand audiences.

Chapter Three: The Amateur Cine Club: The Community Mode

The Amateur Cinema League nurtured a breed of filmmakers that has had little recognition from most observers, scholarly or otherwise. These were the amateurs who, using the same film, the same hardware as every other amateur, created films of ‘professional’ quality. Yet their films still carry the stigma of ‘home movies.’²⁷⁹

Amateur film historian Alan Kattelle is a staunch advocate of the ‘professional’ quality of cine club productions. He positions their work, as did cine club members themselves, as different and superior to ‘home movies’. Kattelle’s claim regarding the Amateur Cine League of America is discussed in this chapter in relation to the history of New Zealand Amateur Cine clubs from their origins in the late 1920s to the 1960s. The chapter examines the ways the clubs evolved in response to social, technological, political and economic conditions over this period, as well as the influence of the international amateur cine movement on New Zealand cine club culture. A selection of films made by individual club members and group productions from a range of clubs are examined to bring more depth of understanding to the making and exhibition of this genre of amateur filmmaking.

The New Zealand Amateur Cine clubs or societies were founded in the years following the establishment of the Amateur Cinema League in America in 1926. Most New Zealand clubs were formed either just prior to the Second World War or immediately afterwards. By this period, the 8mm camera was established in the market and there was a surge in amateur filmmaking. Club culture revolved around training and on film competitions based on genre: drama, documentary, travelogue, un-cut film etc. Films were judged on technique, structure and plot. Scripted narrative and sophisticated editing are hallmarks of these films, making them quite distinct from other types of amateur films. Club members watched and critiqued their colleagues’ film efforts, viewed other New Zealand club productions and international amateur film contest productions from both America and

²⁷⁹ Alan Kattelle, ‘Amateur Cinema League and its Films’, *Film History* Vol.15 No.2, 2003, p.243

Britain. Members were exposed to a range of ‘professional’ films through their own libraries, including documentaries, cartoons, and features. This explicit ‘hot-housing’ in film culture, members’ close social affiliation (some made films together or in groups) and their long term committed membership of clubs identifies and sets cine club members apart from other amateur film practitioners.

The First New Zealand Amateur Picture Club

The first evidence of a Cine Club in New Zealand comes from a film held by the NZFA titled, *Auckland Amateur Motion Picture Club Holds Its First General Meeting at the Auckland Advertising Club’s Room on November 10th 1927*.²⁸⁰ The informative title provides evidence of the club’s existence and an inter-title notes that Mr. E.W. Wilkinson was the first president of the club. The film shows the club’s first meeting, and a club picnic on 26th February 1928 which, as the inter- titles note, was held at Station Bay, Motutapu Island in the Hauraki Gulf. Jocular inter-titles describe the picnic, for example: ‘Two’s Company - but forty seven is a good family for a club only four months old.’ The pictures show well-dressed men and women disembarking from a boat, building a fire on the beach and boiling a billy. Curiously, none of these people hold or carry movie cameras. The film concludes by illustrating the club’s (unnamed) new drama production, set in a living room. A woman sits by a fire, knitting, a man enters the room, there is some conversation, which is not described in inter-titles, and another person comes into the room, but little further occurs. Viewers are told through inter-titles to: ‘watch out for it’.

It is probable the actors in the play were members of an Auckland Theatrical Society. Amateur theatrical companies were well positioned to make films, having experience in the production of plays. Made on 35mm nitrate film, the film has a running time of two and a half minutes. It was made by professional cameraman R. G. H. (Jim) Manley, presumably to advertise the club and its new drama at a picture theatre. Manley, today, is best known for his stunning archival footage in the documentary *Mana Waka*.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ F10448 *Personal Record Auckland Amateur Motion Picture Club Holds Its First General Meeting at the Auckland Advertising Club’s Room on November 10th 1927*, NZFA.

²⁸¹ *Mana Waka*, 1990, director Merata Mita. Manley was commissioned by Princess Te Puea Herangi to record on film the process of building seven waka for the 1940 commemoration of Waitangi.

This information is all that has been discovered regarding the Auckland Amateur Motion Picture club. Attempts to discover who was in it, what happened to it, and whether the production shown was completed, and on what gauge has so far not been uncovered. Perhaps the timing, the eve of the Depression, worked against the group flourishing.

International Amateur Cine Movement

The Auckland Amateur Motion Picture club promotional film alludes to the excitement of movie making and particularly the production of drama. The new pastime's popularity in America and Britain was reported in New Zealand newspapers in the 1920s and 30s. An article in the *Evening Post*, titled Home-Made Film Boom credits 'at least 100,000 people in Great Britain' as making amateur films.²⁸² The appeal of 'the new hobby' was linked to giving everybody the opportunity to show off their 'stuff' and discover whether they too might be 'another Ronald Colman or Greta Garbo'.²⁸³ The appeal of Hollywood stardom drew aspiring actors to movie clubs. In Britain the organisation behind amateur filmmaking was the British Amateur Cinematographers' Association. By 1930 the Association had close to 1000 members.²⁸⁴ The British club followed the American Amateur Cinema League's establishment in 1926. The Amateur Cinema League's aims were:

To increase the pleasure of making home motion pictures by aiding amateurs to originate and produce their own plays. Promote amateur cinematography as a national sport. Organise clubs of amateur motion picture makers and publish a monthly magazine.²⁸⁵

The League's magazine was launched as *Amateur Movie Makers*. After the first issue it became simply *Movie Makers*.²⁸⁶ The Amateur Cinema League championed amateurism. The inaugural editorial in the League's magazine written by Hiram Percy Maxim defined amateur filmmaking as:

²⁸² *Evening Post*, April 12, 1930, p.20

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Percy Maxim cited by Alan D. Katelle, 'The Amateur Cinema League and Its Films', *Film History*, Vol. 15, No.2., 2003, Indiana University Press, pp.238-239

²⁸⁶ Alan Katelle, *Home Movies a History of the American industry 1897-1979*, (Nashua, Transition, 2000) p.268

A means of communicating a new form of knowledge to our fellow beings, be they where they may upon the earth's surface ... the amateur has no necessity for appealing to mass interest. He is free to reproduce and record any action his fancy or the fancy of a friend may dictate.²⁸⁷

The Amateur Cinema League sought to create an international network of amateur filmmakers who were creatively free. They encouraged the formation of local clubs, offered advice on rules and invited members to send their films in for review.²⁸⁸ It is not known how many New Zealanders joined, apart from Maurice Barton, whose film 'Christchurch and other events' c.1927, carries the end-title 'Member of Amateur Cinema League'.²⁸⁹ Members received a subscription to *Movie Makers* and *The Home Movie Scenario Book*.²⁹⁰ This book included instructions on how to make photo-plays and 'Twenty New Plots for The Amateur Producer.' The plays are described as:

A series of separate but related scenes, connected with titles and inserts into a story with more or less of a plot, and building from a series of introductory scenes through increasingly important scenes, into a desired comic, farcical or tragic climax. In order to make a movie play, these things are necessary: (1) a director; (2) players; (3) technical helpers; (4) a scenario; (5) proper camera equipment; (6) a location, studio sets or scenery; and (7) lights or lighting equipment.²⁹¹

These directives move amateur filmmaking from a solitary pastime, as in home movies, to a more sophisticated group undertaking. The model outlined contains essential elements of the professional production: a scripted narrative combined with high production techniques. Readers of the Amateur Cinema League manual are encouraged to follow five scenarios in their productions. These are described as:

²⁸⁷ Alan D. Katelle, 'The Amateur Cinema League and Its Films', *Film History*, Vol. 15, No.2. (2003), Indiana University Press, p.240

²⁸⁸ Ibid, p.241

²⁸⁹ F33611 Personal Record Barton, Maurice [Christchurch etc] 1927

²⁹⁰ Morrie Ryskind and Charles F. Stevens and James Englander, *The Home Movie Scenario Book*, (New York, R.Manson, 1927), p.109

²⁹¹ Ibid.

(1) A woman's struggle for true love, (2) the devotion of a dog to its master, (3) the exhausting effects of modern life, (4) the foolishness of excessive thrift, (5) the struggle against fate, and so on.²⁹²

The scenarios reference themes of modernity, along with classic literary narratives.

Amateur Cine Club Productions until 1937

The earliest surviving New Zealand club drama follows the ACL scenario number 1: a woman's search for true love. *The Lady Gets Left* was a production made by the drama section of the New Zealand Amateur Arts and Literature Association in 1930.²⁹³ The Wellington-based Association began in 1928, and in 1929 a membership drive took place. The group ran thirty lectures on 'jazz to evolution, along with discussions, social evenings, play readings and original ballets'.²⁹⁴ In addition, the production of a film was planned:

Before long apparently the first amateur 'movie' to be produced in Wellington will be an accomplished fact. The New Zealand Amateur Arts and Literature Association proposes to form a novel sub-section within its drama section, one devoted to cinematography and the production of moving pictures. Scenarios have yet to be written and screen tests passed by those aspiring to screen fame, but it is expected that the idea will be taken up enthusiastically by members. The association already has one member who is an expert amateur cameraman and who owns a complete motion-picture apparatus.²⁹⁵

The Lady Gets Left was the result of these deliberations. The 16mm film was made in Lyall Bay at the homes of A. Crawford and T. Dawn. The cameraman was Roy Evans²⁹⁶ who later became a prominent figure in the Christchurch Movie Club.²⁹⁷ Isobelle Young wrote the scenario and the film was shown publicly on 20 August 1930.²⁹⁸

²⁹² Ibid. p.157

²⁹³ Founded in 1928 the Association's name was changed to the, Amateur Arts Society in 1930.

²⁹⁴ *Evening Post*, April 11 1930, p.5

²⁹⁵ *Evening Post*, September 12 1929, p. 8

²⁹⁶ *Evening Post*, August 21 1930, p.5

²⁹⁷ *Film Flashes*, Vol.1 no.3, 20 February 1951, p.7

²⁹⁸ *Evening Post*, August 21 1930, p.5

A cordial reception was extended to the Amateur Arts Society film, *The Lady Gets Left*, which was screened before a large and appreciative audience in Nimmo's Concert Chamber last night. The film is purely an amateur one, but it marks a successful attempt to produce a locally-made movie. On the whole the photography is good; it includes some live scenes of Lyall Bay, where the locale of the picture is laid. It reveals possibilities so far as future productions are concerned. The story itself is slight. It tells of the unsuccessful attempts by a young lady of Lyall Bay's elite to acquire a husband. She makes many advances in that direction, but without success. All her girlfriends manage to secure husbands, but Carmen's Prince Charming fails to appear, and she is left, not actually on the shelf, but sitting on a garden seat all by herself among the flowers. The producers term the picture a comedy-drama, but there is more comedy in it than drama. Nevertheless, for an amateur production, it is quite creditable.²⁹⁹

The films directors were A. Reeve, and C. Smythson who also appeared in the film as Janet Bugstreet.³⁰⁰ The characters have either mildly repulsive names, like Bugstreet or comedic ones like Pennington Sling-Inke, the author. The film, held by NZFA is peppered with witty inter-titles introducing the characters and mocking their social pretensions.

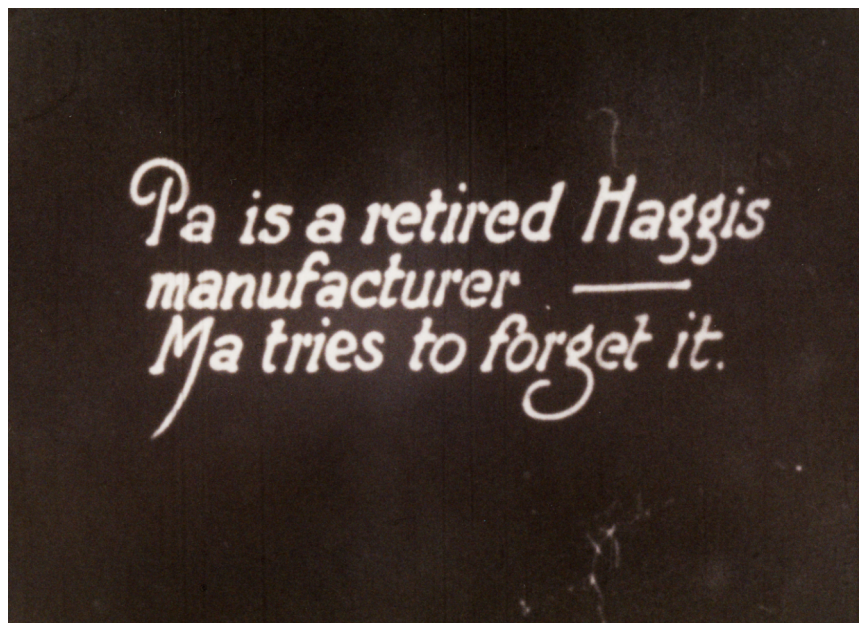


Figure 10: *The Lady Gets Left*, 1930 (inter-title) NZFA

²⁹⁹ *Evening Post*, August 21 1930, p.5

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

The extensive reviews attest to the film's popularity, and the show played for at least three nights in Wellington. As an attempt to enliven the Society and engender public recognition, it succeeded in its aims. The film had a running time of thirty minutes and both before and after the film's exhibition, vaudeville acts were performed.³⁰¹ These included songs, cabaret and tap-dancing and various humorous items.³⁰² This was a large amateur film production. At least eighteen people acted in the film or provided vaudeville acts at the film's exhibition.³⁰³

Soon another drama was advertised in Wellington:

N.Z. AMATEUR CINEMA LEAGUE "Presents the Initial Screening of the First 3 Reel Moving Picture to be produced in New Zealand by amateurs, "THE WINGS OF ROMANCE." Written and Produced in Wellington. NIMMO'S CONCERT HALL, TO-NIGHT. Admission 2s. Tickets at the door. Box Plan at Kodak's Ltd.³⁰⁴

The show was held on 10-11 September 1930.³⁰⁵ The advertising highlights the films superior running time, closer to feature length than *The Lady Get's Left's* thirty minutes. The film's attribution to the New Zealand Amateur Cinema League is the first reference to this organization discovered at this point. Although the extent of the League's connections with the American Amateur Cine League are not known, it is clear from the description of *The Wings of Romance* in press reviews that it follows a narrative structure and plot suggested by the ACL. The drama, written and produced by Robert F. Steele, follows the adventures of a young man who invents a safety device for an aeroplane. Aviation scenes were shot on location at Rongotai aerodrome. The production was reviewed favorably in the *Evening Post* on 12 September 1930:

³⁰¹ Ibid. p.2

³⁰² Ibid. p.5

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ *Evening Post*, September 10 1930, p.2

³⁰⁵ *Evening Post*, September 11 1930,p.5

The film for a local effort was highly creditable. The scenes were mostly taken indoors, with perhaps scarcely enough variation. The outdoor photography was excellent. The plot was strong and well defined (which is most unusual in amateur efforts), and made up for any defects in the acting, which, although uniformly good, was not distinctive enough.³⁰⁶

The film was a modern story, a romance between man and machine. From the limited information about the plot, it is clear that *Wings of Romance* was an original production. Technically more ambitious than the *Lady Gets Left*, the film included aerial sequences and interior scenes requiring special lighting. Information about the film is based solely on reviews, as the film no longer exists. Australian born Robert Steele performed all the major production roles. Steele was one of a handful of amateurs who later turned professional. He formed Robert Steele Productions and Neuline Films and was a prominent figure in New Zealand's independent film industry from the 1940s to the 1970s. While there is no further reference to Steele or the New Zealand Amateur Cinema League in the *Evening Post* during the early to mid 1930s, Steele is credited with an Auckland production made in 1931. Titled *Shattered*, evidence of the film comes solely from press reports as the film no longer survives. It was advertised as an 'Auckland Photo-Play of Love and War.' 'See and Hear All New Zealand Screen Entertainment.' and screened at the Town Hall's Concert Chamber in Auckland on 26 October, 1931.³⁰⁷

The main picture "Shattered," produced by Mr. Robert Fearn-Steele and interpreted by a local cast, dealt with the effect of the war upon a young man, and his reactions on returning to his home. The plot has been constructed carefully and the influence of the war on the impressionable young man is emphasised in a number of well acted scenes. The principal player is shown to be an entirely changed person in his character and leanings upon his return to New Zealand and he is not able to rise above the practices he acquired under the stress of warfare. Ultimately he is charged with murder and following his appearance in Court, depicted by convincing scenes, the story is brought to an effective climax. Unfortunately, the

³⁰⁶ *Evening Post*, September 12 1930, p 5

³⁰⁷ *Auckland Star*, October 26, 1931, p.14

dialogue was sometimes difficult to hear. Owing chiefly to the small size of the screen, and to frequent breakages, the action of the picture was not easy to follow.³⁰⁸

A review in the *Auckland Star*, notes the film has opened a short season, contains convincing and effective scenes, and that Mr. R. Fearn-Steele and Miss M. Woolcott head a talented local cast.³⁰⁹

Shattered critiqued the experience of World War One on New Zealand's returned soldiers. A controversial war, still fresh in people's minds for killing or injuring so many New Zealanders. It is noteworthy that in 1931 a New Zealand amateur film production was responsible for commenting on the devastating effects of World War One on New Zealand society and not a feature film.

Shattered advertised sound with its production. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw the arrival of Talkies from America and the first professional sound-on-film experiments begin in New Zealand. *Shattered*'s sound was unlikely to have been the new synchronized sound but probably created by using recorded sound on disc. The discs were played at the same time as the pictures, a practice that professional filmmakers used in the 1920s and some amateurs also adopted.

There is no evidence that the New Zealand Amateur Cinema League was involved in this production. However Steele's connection with the Wellington based ACL, his amateurism at this stage of his career and the fact that it was a group production makes it possible. *Shattered* was advertised with three accompanying short films.³¹⁰ One of these films, *Beautiful Waiheke*, was made by amateur filmmaker Alec Douglas Lambourne, who is identified by the *Auckland Star* the following year, as a member of an Auckland movie club.³¹¹ This raises questions on whether the Auckland movie club was connected to the production of *Shattered* in some way.

³⁰⁸ *N.Z. Herald*, October 26, 1931, p.14

³⁰⁹ *Auckland Star*, October 26, 1931, p.9

³¹⁰ *Beautiful Waiheke* is held by NZFA. The other films made by unknown filmmakers were *A Trip Through New Zealand* and *What a Night*. These films are not thought to have survived. *N.Z. Herald*, October 26, 1931, p.14

³¹¹ *Auckland Star*, November 17 1932, p.8

Lambourne, owner of the Three Lamps Department Store in Ponsonby,³¹² was one of a group of 80 amateur cinematographers who met at the Overseas League clubrooms in Auckland in 1932.³¹³ Robert Laidlaw, Managing Director of Farmers Trading Company, Auckland, was elected to the chair.³¹⁴ These club members were big businessmen and, as such, were likely to be cushioned from the worst effects of the economic depression. The other noteworthy point is the size of the meeting. It seems unlikely that a brand new club could have 80 members and it is possible the 1932 gathering may connect back to the elusive 1928 Auckland Amateur Motion Picture Club. These films and clubs are the only discovered references to Amateur Cinematographic Society work in New Zealand before 1937, when the movement became active again.

The Rise of Amateur Cinematographic Clubs and Societies 1937 -1939

Although amateur cine club productions were made in Auckland and Wellington in the late 1920s and early 1930s it was not until c.1937 that cine clubs and societies were formed in other places. This delay can be partly attributed to the 1930s Depression; it was not until the mid-1930s that economic growth and improving job security would have led more people to purchase ‘luxury’ goods such as movie cameras. The choice of cameras was also larger than ever before, with 8mm cameras now well established in New Zealand.

The written histories of the Otago Cine –Photographic Society and the Auckland 8 Club indicate that Kodak managers played a pivotal role in these clubs’ development. The cine camera extended Kodak’s existing market in still photography and the company was keen to promote it. Kodak’s Dunedin branch manager, Douglas Bostock Mackersey, a member of the Otago Photographic Society gave individual tutoring in cinematography to club members.³¹⁵ In addition, to stimulate interest in the new art, Mackersey showed amateur films of local events to Photographic Society members in 1932 and 1933.³¹⁶ As a result of these screenings some photographic society members and some amateur cinematographers met on November 29, 1937 at Kodak’s Dunedin shop to hold the inaugural meeting of the

³¹² Information from Robyn Larsen, Lambourne’s daughter, NZFA deposit files.

³¹³ *Auckland Star*, November 17 1932, p.8

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, ‘Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club, Dunedin’, 1999, p.2

³¹⁶ Ibid. These were films of a band contest, a visit by Kingsford Smith, and a Plunket Shield cricket match.

Otago Cine–Photographic Society.³¹⁷ When it began, the organisation had 30 members, 5 from the Photographic Society.

Kodak was also involved in setting up the Auckland 8 club. Two young men, Harry Reynolds and Ron Bowie, aspired to set up a cine club, and approached Kodak's Auckland assistant Bryce Tomkinson, for help.³¹⁸ By that time there were 30-40 8mm Kodak camera owners in Auckland and Tomkinson circularised all of them with the view to forming a club.³¹⁹ The publicity was effective and the Auckland 8 Movie Club was formed in 1938.³²⁰

In Wanganui, the camera agent for Bolex, Mr Alward, assisted the fledgling Wanganui Amateur Cine Society by offering them a venue for club meetings. Alward was the Cine Division Manager for the General Engineering Company and the cine society was allowed to use the company's theatrette.³²¹ Presumably, Alward hoped that this arrangement would see Cine Society members choose 16mm Bolex cameras.

The members of these late-1930s clubs were predominantly businessmen. The list of Auckland 8 Club members includes some of Auckland's biggest company owners, including Owen Winstone, Alex Harvey, S.G. Caughey and D.L. Nathan. Another member was general practitioner, Dr Lange (father of future Prime Minister, David Lange).³²² While the Auckland and Otago Cine-Photographic club members were primarily businessmen, clubs in smaller provincial centres tended to have a different membership. For example, founding members of the Wanganui Amateur Cine Society were mostly small business owners, farmers and a few professional men. From its beginnings, this club included two families where siblings and cousins were members.³²³ The attraction of cine

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making; A History of the Auckland Eight Movie Club 1938-1998*, p.3

³¹⁹ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making; A History of the Auckland Eight Movie Club 1938-1998*, p.3

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Nancy Cameron interview Helen Baylis c.1998 transcript p.2

³²² Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making; A History of the Auckland Eight Movie Club 1938-1998* p.7

³²³ Ruscoe and Fowler family were long term members of Wanganui Amateur Cine Society.

club membership involved not only filmmaking, but associated connections with family, business, and sometimes theatrical interests. Some club members had backgrounds in theatre, such as Bowie in Auckland. In 1936, he had a small role in Rudall Hayward's first talkie, *On The Friendly Road*.³²⁴ This production was developed by Auckland's Little Theatre Group, which Bowie was actively involved with pre World War Two.³²⁵

The Wanganui Amateur Cine Society was formed on January 22, 1937. A letter to Club President, Albert Tingey, from the Secretary, Arthur Wansbrough, comments, 'fancy the club being the first amateur cine club in New Zealand.'³²⁶ The club was not the first, as has been discussed earlier, but may have been the first club in this second wave of activity. Unlike most other cine clubs, the Wanganui club members initially used Pathe 9.5mm cameras.³²⁷ Club member Tyrell Ruscoe used 9.5mm, and printed and processed his own films and other club members' films at his home.³²⁸ The use of 9.5mm was rare amongst Cine Clubs; the only other club in New Zealand which predominately used 9.5mm was the Southern 9.5mm cine club. From 1945 some of the Wanganui members switched to 16mm, some to Bolex and others chose the cheaper second-hand gun-carrier cameras that were surplus to Army requirements after the war.³²⁹

On 30 June, 1937 the *Evening Post* reported the formation of the Wellington Amateur Cine Society. The article noted, '[the] club has a first-class assortment in the way of equipment' and had, 'held its first screen tests in preparation for a play.'³³⁰ The club's aims were, 'to bring those interested in amateur cinematography in contact with each other and to encourage the art and science of cinematography'.³³¹ These aims are very similar to the aims of Amateur Cine League. On the founding committee were two women, Miss McKenna (Secretary) and Miss Osborne.³³² The Otago Cine-Photographic Club also

³²⁴ Ronald Bowie-Biography/NZ On Screen <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/ronald-bowie?tab=biography>

³²⁵ Bowie was producer of *Anna Christie*, for the Little Theatre Co. in 1937. Auckland Star, April 24, 1937 p.5

³²⁶ Arthur Wansbrough to Albert Tingey letter 26/1/1937, Wanganui District Library collection

³²⁷ Cliff (C.S.) Fowler, Haldane and Enid Fowler. Using 9.5mm was the preference of the three Fowler family members NZFA deposit files.

³²⁸ Tyrell Ruscoe interview note 2/10/2010 NZFA deposit file

³²⁸ *Evening Post*, June 30 1937 p.20

³²⁹ Tyrell Ruscoe interview note 2/10/2010 NZFA deposit file

³³⁰ *Evening Post*, June 30 1937 p.20

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

included a woman committee member, Phyllis Scott, who was elected onto the committee in 1937.

Each club appointed a president, vice president, treasurer and editor for the club's newsletter or magazine. Members were predominantly camera owners, but family members were also encouraged to join. The Manawatu Amateur Cine Society offered a lay-by scheme for cameras so people could join and, 'learn the rudiments while paying off their purchase'.³³³ Clubs themselves invested in equipment for use by their members at meetings. Projectors and screens were essential and later sound equipment was purchased from club funds. However cameras were always individually owned by members.

Club meetings were held monthly or bi-monthly. They would begin with a lecture, then a screening of members' films, followed by the traditional cups of tea and a plate provided by the ladies.

On club nights discussions and demonstrations on titling, editing, gadgetry, lighting and movie making in general were popular. Experts were called in to lecture on new equipment and techniques.³³⁴

Clubs held competitions regularly and chose professional filmmakers to judge competitions whenever possible. Professional filmmaker Jack Welsh acted as judge on at least one occasion for the Otago Amateur Cine Society. On occasions, amateur filmmakers of note acted as judges for the Auckland 8 Club, including Alex Lambourne.³³⁵

Not long after these clubs were established some began giving public screenings. The Auckland 8 Club's first screening was of the inaugural flight of Empire flying boat *Aotearoa* landing, 'gracefully on the waters of the Waitemata'.³³⁶

³³³ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Minutes 15/7/40

³³⁴ Fifty Years of Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club compiled for 50th Anniversary 1988, pamphlet, p.3

³³⁵ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making; A History of the Auckland Eight Movie Club 1938-1998*, p.36

³³⁶ *Auckland Star*, August 30 1939, p.21

The *Aotearoa*, commanded by Capt. J.W. Burgess, had been flown from Southampton, England to Auckland on 16-28 August, 1939. Filmed by club members Bowie and Reynolds on Agfa stock and processed immediately by Beggs in Auckland, *March of Time* received news headlines and screened publicly for two nights.³³⁷ On August 30, 1939 the film was reviewed in the *Auckland Star*:

Before a crowded audience at the Fountain of Friendship Hall, Newton last night, the Auckland 8 Movie Club put on its first display at what the amateur cinematographer can do after a little practice ... It was claimed last night that the presentation of the pictures of the arrival of the *Aotearoa* constituted a record, not only for amateurs, but also for commercial films.³³⁸

March of Time beat the official 35mm newsreel by three weeks and its exhibition almost immediately contributed to its public appeal.³³⁹ The *Auckland Star* review was complimentary of its technical standard, noting the excellent pictures and, 'the artistic titling'.³⁴⁰ It also noted that the, 'sound arrangements and musical accompaniment added to the evening'.³⁴¹ The well attended public screenings and excellent review was a huge achievement for the Auckland club.

In contrast to the newsreel screened by the Auckland 8 Club, the Otago Cine club's first public programme was less topical and more diverse. A crowd of 350 people attended to see amongst others, three of the club's winning films from 1938 - G.S. Currie's *The Spirit of Christmas*, Phyllis Scott's *Where Grandeur Wins Supreme*, and Dr Walden Fitzgerald's *Royal Albatross at Otago Heads*.³⁴² The show was held on 6 June, 1939 at the RSA Hall. An *Evening Star* report highlighted C.E. Begg's world tour film. Begg, who was the managing director of Charles Begg & Co., provided a commentary with music and sound

³³⁷ Fifty Years of Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club compiled for 50th Anniversary 1988, pamphlet, p.3

³³⁸ *Auckland Star*, August 30, 1939, p.21

³³⁹ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making; A History of the Auckland Eight Movie Club 1938-1998*, p.25

³⁴⁰ *Auckland Star*, August 30 1939, p.21

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² None of these films are held by NZFA.

effects by R.W. Cook.³⁴³ The large crowd testifies to the success of the venture and the wide interest in cine club films.

New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies were active in public screenings from their beginnings. Apart from showing their own programmes some clubs showed international amateur cinema programmes. The Amateur Cinema League's 'Ten Best Competition' began in 1930.³⁴⁴ The British Institute of Amateur cinematographers Ten Best Competition started five years later. Before 1939 at least one programme was brought to New Zealand by the Christchurch movie club and distributed to other clubs.³⁴⁵ Amateur Cine Society members' interest in importing, distributing and viewing international films relates to a similar interest by Film Societies in New Zealand.

Film Society members were mainly intellectuals, described by Sigley as, 'an educated bunch who wanted to see world cinema, not just film from United States and England.'³⁴⁶ In 1931 the Wellington Film Society was established followed by branches in Dunedin, Christchurch, Auckland. Sister societies were established in New Plymouth, Wanganui and Hawera.³⁴⁷ A Federation of Film Societies was formed in 1934, to establish a circuit for film programmes and simplify the logistics of distribution.³⁴⁸ However this pre World War Two federation and its member societies failed due to lack of assistance from commercial film exchanges and difficulty in sourcing suitable films. The Federation of Film Societies ceased functioning in 1936.³⁴⁹ An article written by a Wellington journalist in the *New York Times* of 1937, credits the film society movement's brief establishment with 'stimulating' and enlarging 'the outlook of many amateurs' in New Zealand.³⁵⁰ The Film Society was resurrected in 1945. The difficulties the Film Society had in importing films, censorship control and fees proved later on to also be a problem for Amateur Cine Societies.

³⁴³ Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, *Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club*, Dunedin, 1999 p.4

³⁴⁴ Alan Kattelle, Amateur Cinema League and its Films, *Film History*, Vol.15 No.2, 2003, p.243

³⁴⁵ Reminiscence by Merv Fairbrother of watching the ACL Ten Best in 1938 *Film Flashes* no.25, 1953, p.4

³⁴⁶ Simon Sigley, 'How the Road to Life (1931) Became the Road to Ruin; The Case of the Wellington Film Society in 1933', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 42:2, October 2008, p.200

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.199

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ 'Amateur Hour in the Antipodes' by Quentin Pope *New York Times Times*, Aug 15, 1937, p.142

Amateur Cine Societies and Film Societies were both small organisations operating outside of commercial distribution networks. Their interests were not dissimilar and it is likely that some amateur cine society members were also members of the Film Society. The other organisation established in New Zealand pre-1939 to promote film use was the Film Institute. Established in 1934 in Wellington its aims were:

(1) To endeavour to educate public opinion to appreciate the value of the film for instruction and entertainment. (2) To promote the development of the film in education and culture. (3) To discuss and make representations in regard to censorship. (4) To co-operate with other centres with a view to forming a New Zealand Institute, which may link up with the British Institute.

This group, although not formally linked to New Zealand amateur cine societies, had sympathies in common. Both organisations were champions of 16mm film and the distribution of good film product. They shared concerns over censorship and the amateur cine societies also had links with the British Institute of Amateur cinematographers.

War years

The outbreak of war in 1939 effected the Amateur Cine Society movement in different ways. Some clubs went into recess due to members leaving for war service while other clubs flourished, taking an active role making films in support of the war effort. Those that operated through the war however suffered wartime restrictions on petrol making travel difficult and all clubs had problems in obtaining film stock, so output was reduced.

The Wanganui Amateur Cine Society went into recess throughout the war. The Wellington club went into recess at the beginning of the war but was reactivated in October 1943.³⁵¹

‘The club took on a new role in assisting the war effort at home’.³⁵²

³⁵¹ *Evening Post*, October 2 1943, p.4

³⁵² *Evening Post*, October 23 1943, p.2

New Zealand clubs were not alone in this transformation. In Britain, Amateur Cine Clubs made promotional films for airforce recruitment. The British magazine, *Home Movies and Home Talkies*, promoted amateur film shows during the war with the rallying call – ‘such hobbies as ours are an essential, if humble, part of the way of life for whose preservation we are fighting.’³⁵³

The Manawatu Amateur Cine Club continued operating, even though some members left for war service.³⁵⁴ Their focus was less on filmmaking and more on exhibiting programmes publicly.

Weekly screenings were given to army, navy, and airforce clubs as well as to the Maori Battalion while stationed in Palmerston North. Instructional films were shown to Home Guard units, National Blood Transfusion Society and many other organisations. The club participated during this period in local patriotic efforts by providing projectors and projectionists to Army and the Home Guard.³⁵⁵ During the war the club screened films at local churches in place of sermons.³⁵⁶

The Manawatu club membership grew from thirteen in 1938 to sixty in 1941.³⁵⁷ War did not entirely prevent normal club activities. Films were still made and competitions were still held. Rudall Hayward judged the 1940 Cup Competition and talked to Club members.³⁵⁸ In 1941 he returned and ‘gave a most interesting talk on his experience as a professional cinematographer.’³⁵⁹ Similarly Stan Andrews (from the National Film Unit) judged the Manawatu Cine Society’s Townsend cup in 1943.³⁶⁰ The films ranged from the standard fare to those of a patriotic nature. ‘Mr. Dawick and Waters screened films of pig hunting, combined with films of home guard activities.’³⁶¹ The club later also made films

³⁵³ Colin Ford, (ed.) *The Kodak Museum: The Story of Popular Photography*, Century Hutchinson Ltd. in association with the National Museum of Photography Film and Television, 1989, p.164

³⁵⁴ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Annual Report 9/8/43

³⁵⁵ K.V. Townsend, *Twenty-One Years of Progress (1938 -1959)*, Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Inc. Twenty-First Jubilee brochure

³⁵⁶ M.A.C.S. President Report (undated) ca1944

³⁵⁷ K.V. Townsend, *Twenty-One Years of Progress (1938 -1959)*, Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Inc. Twenty-First Jubilee brochure

³⁵⁸ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society committee meeting, 30/9/40

³⁵⁹ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society President’s Annual Report (11/8/41)

³⁶⁰ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Annual Report 9/8/43

³⁶¹ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Minutes 11/8/1941

of local Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan celebrations.³⁶² Wartime restrictions on filming military installations and scenes of potential use to an enemy did not apply to processions and parades. At the end of the war the Manawatu Cine Society stated that it had been a difficult time for the club and although there had been problems in 'procuring film, ability to travel, rising costs, and many other war time worries, the Cine Society has maintained and promoted an active interest in movie photography.'³⁶³

Founding member of the Auckland 8 club, Ron Bowie, was interned during the war years for his pacifist convictions.³⁶⁴ Released in 1945³⁶⁵ he did not rejoin the club, but 'went to work at a Kodak retail store in Auckland before joining Neuline Film Studios.'³⁶⁶ The club continued on throughout the war period, adapting to shortage of film stock by reducing film screenings,³⁶⁷ and adding musical recitals to club meetings.³⁶⁸ Kodak assisted the club during the war by giving 18 rolls of films per year.³⁶⁹ This film was rationed with members given reels on condition they make films of national interest.³⁷⁰ One patriotic film made in 1942 was Harry Reynolds' *Treasure Cove*, whose message was, 'Save empty bottles and assist the war effort.'³⁷¹ The procuring of film stock eased with the arrival of the Americans and a roaring trade grew through American base Post Exchange (PX) Stores.³⁷² The Auckland 8 club took programmes to military hospitals,³⁷³ and held public screenings.³⁷⁴ A membership increase led to the club shifting to larger premises in the Overseas League rooms in Queens Arcade.³⁷⁵

³⁶² Manawatu Amateur Cine Society Minutes 27/8/1945

³⁶³ Manawatu Amateur Cine Society President Report (undated) but ca1944

³⁶⁴ Following the war, conscientious objectors were barred from taking public service jobs and Bowie worked at Kodak retail store in Auckland. NZ On Screen: Ronald Bowie Biography web-site <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/ronald-bowie?tab=biography>

³⁶⁵ 'Defaulter's Appeals', *Evening Post*, 21 August, 1945, p.5 'R.J. Bowie was granted release on parole.

³⁶⁶ NZ On Screen: Ronald Bowie Biography web-site

³⁶⁷ *Fifty Years of Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Club*, Auckland, April, 1988 p.5

³⁶⁸ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, Auckland, Auckland Eight Movie Club, p.9

³⁶⁹ Ibid. p.23

³⁷⁰ Bragg interview note 9/7/2010

³⁷¹ F26699 Personal Record A.H. Reynolds, *Treasure Cove*, 1942

³⁷² Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, Auckland, Auckland Eight Movie Club, p.23

³⁷³ *Fifty Years of Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Club*, Auckland, April, 1988, p.5

³⁷⁴ Ibid. p.4

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

The Wellington Amateur Cine Society had its first meeting during the war on 5 October, 1943 at the Commercial Hotel.³⁷⁶ A report of the meeting shows members had informally continued community-based screenings after the cessation of the club in 1938.³⁷⁷

Enthusiasts however, have continued to serve the community in giving freely of their means of entertainment and education, and the extent of interest created has led to an organised body again being set up ... The society proposes to further the service for hospitals, patriotic purposes, and other worthy causes, and for its own members, of whom there are already more than in the original body, it is arranging meetings, lectures, and functions. Sir Harry Batterbee, the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom was the society's patron.³⁷⁸

Batterbee played an active role in the club. By November 1944 the club was three times the size of its 1938 membership.³⁷⁹ Batterbee spoke on the, 'valuable part played by film in the life of a nation'³⁸⁰ and encouraged Wellington Amateur Cine Society members to make films:

on the farm and in the factory, on the sports ground, at school and even in the office ... films that would bring home to everybody what the people of New Zealand were doing.³⁸¹

Batterbee's sentiments are not dissimilar to John Grierson's, who on his visit to New Zealand to advise the Government on establishing a National Film Unit, said – 'Show me your housing estates, your modern farming methods, show me in fact something about the people.'³⁸²

Batterbee also hoped that once peace came amateurs would exchange films between countries and members of the Empire would 'understand one another better.'³⁸³

³⁷⁶ *Evening Post*, October 2, 1943, p.4

³⁷⁷ *Evening Post* November 15, 1944, p.7

³⁷⁸ *Evening Post*, February 19, 1944, p.5

³⁷⁹ *Evening Post*, November 15 1944, p.7

³⁸⁰ *Evening Post*, March 18 1944, p.8

³⁸¹ *Evening Post*, August 15, 1945, p.9

³⁸² 'No More Scenery, Please!' N.Z. Listener, 10 May, 1940, p.12

³⁸³ *Evening Post*, June 2 1944, p.3

Batterbee showed members a variety of British documentaries supporting the war effort including Ministry of Information films *Naples is a Battlefield* and *Doing Without*.³⁸⁴

Similarly, wartime propaganda films from the American Legation were also screened to members.³⁸⁵ The newspaper reports of the time suggest that the Wellington Amateur Cine Society was less involved in making films during this war time period than in screening films:

Fifteen screenings a month were given at Wellington Hospital. Mr Huffam, society president said - 'when our servicemen began to return sick and wounded from the Middle East individual members were permitted to take their talkie picture equipment into the wards to show patients in bed pictures that took their minds away from their sufferings ... Shows were also held at Mowhai home, the Island Bay Convalescent home and the Central Park Hospital.'³⁸⁶

War Years – National Film Library and Film Society

The war years saw film widely used for propaganda purposes through the National Film Unit's production of newsreels. War propaganda film from Britain and America was also widely shown. Grierson, as a documentary filmmaker and Batterbee as a representative of the British Government both espoused a cultural nationalism in filmmaking, one that was grounded in an authentic local culture focusing on ordinary people's lives.³⁸⁷ The Film Institute promoted the use of film in schools, which led to the establishment of the National Film Library in 1942. Under Walter Harris's guidance, the National Film Library amassed contemporary and classic films, newsreels, documentaries and animation. Some of these productions were New Zealand made, including National Film Unit productions, and films from Government departments and industry.³⁸⁸ Other films came from overseas, with half coming from High Commissions and Embassies. Some British Ministry of Information films came via Sir Harry Batterbee.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ *Evening Post*, March 17 1945, p.6

³⁸⁶ *Evening Post*, November 16, 1944, p.5

³⁸⁷ Roger Horrocks, quoting Francis Pound in Introduction of *New Zealand Film an Illustrated History*, p.8

³⁸⁸ Simon Sigley, 'Film Culture: its development in New Zealand, 1929-1972', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2003 p.209

³⁸⁹ Ibid. p.207

Amateur cine clubs, including the Otago Cine Club registered with the National Film Library to loan documentary films for their members. The library was an important resource centre for the Amateur Cine Societies from the 1940s onwards. It supplemented club film fare and offered insight into a new range of professional film practices.³⁹⁰

The Wellington Film Society was reformed in 1945. The following year, a group to study practical filmmaking was formed, 'but does not appear to have been very active.'³⁹¹ In the same year, an Amateur Film Unit was formed out of a Workers Education Association class in film appreciation. Under director, Michael Forlong, they filmed Frank Sargeson's short story, *A Great Day*. Completed in 1947 it was screened to Film Society members the following year. 'Practical filmmaking, being now more properly the concern of the Wellington Cine Club, has not since figured among the Film Society's activities, although it has remained one of its interests.'³⁹²

Club Culture Post War

With the return to peace, club membership increased. Import restrictions were lifted and, 'camera shops started to push 8mm and 16mm movie cameras'.³⁹³ A Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies was established allowing more effective distribution of club films within New Zealand. The Federation also brought international amateur film programmes into the country for distribution giving members an opportunity to see a wider range of films. Women played a more vital role in clubs post war and clubs actively encouraged family participation.³⁹⁴ The boom time for most clubs were the 1950s through to the 1960s³⁹⁵ when television began to have a marked effect on club membership.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁰ Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, 'Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club', p.6

³⁹¹ Wellington Film Society magazine Sequence no.194, December, 1966, 21st Anniversary Issue p.13

³⁹² Ibid. pp.12-13

³⁹³ John Campbell e-mail to Jane Paul 24/9/2012

³⁹⁴ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, Auckland, Auckland Eight Movie Club.

³⁹⁵ Otago club's peak membership of 241 was in 1963. Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, *Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club*, p.15. Auckland 8 was early 1970s when stopped growing-John Campbell

³⁹⁶ Ibid. p.11



Figure 11: Wanganui Amateur Cine Society members 1957 at Tyrell Ruscoe's house. B. Ruscoe collection, NZFA

Securing a suitable venue for club meetings and screenings was a preoccupation for many clubs. In 1957 the Otago club secured a lease of its own little theatre in the Athenaeum building in Dunedin's Octagon which continued until the club folded.³⁹⁷ Smaller clubs held meetings at members' businesses or homes.³⁹⁸ In Whanganui members met at each others' homes, and in home-made theatrettes. Tyrell Ruscoe cut a hole through his kitchen cupboards, so he could place his projector in the kitchen and gets a good-sized picture in his lounge.³⁹⁹ Other members set up theatrettes in their homes. These home theatres were carefully designed, some had recessed speakers and curtained walls (to improve sound quality).⁴⁰⁰ The ambience of the venue was an important consideration for cine club enthusiasts.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. p.9

³⁹⁸ *Wanganui Midweek*, Feb, 25, 1998: John McDonald interview

³⁹⁹ Tyrell Ruscoe interview note September 24 2010

⁴⁰⁰ *Film Flashes* Vol.1, no.6, 22 May 1951, p1

Mrs. Fowler's front room became a theatre. Ces (Fowler) displayed his homemade screen, boxed in and curtained in russet-brown velvet plush. The latest films were threaded up and as the projector lamp switched on the room lights faded out and the curtains on the screen magically slip aside revealing the opening title, beautifully set up, with strong shadow effects and colored crackled background.⁴⁰¹

Post war, in an atmosphere of increased prosperity and greater leisure time, club membership grew larger and social activities increased. Occasions such as Field Days attracted members and their families. A Wellington Amateur Cine Society field day was attended by one hundred members:

Out came the cameras ... ice cream, soft drinks, a paddock as car park, a stream for bathing in, fine country for roaming and shooting in. There was technical advice on tap from experienced workers.⁴⁰²

Field days combined filmmaking activities of both an impromptu and formal nature with games and other entertainment. Sometimes members followed a script taken from another club, as in the Waverley Field Day on 11 April 1953, which used one from the Kinematograph Society of Sheffield England.⁴⁰³ The location names were changed from British to New Zealand ones. Besides field days interclub visits became more common post 1945. These visits gave members an insight into other clubs and provided an opportunity for the exchange of views and ideas. Visits from international cine club members who gave lectures and screenings were another feature of New Zealand club life.⁴⁰⁴ New Zealand members on occasions made reciprocal visits to clubs overseas. The Auckland 8 Club officially became sister club with a Los Angeles group in 1975.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰¹ *Film Flashes*, Wanganui Amateur Cine Society, Vol.1, no.3, 20 February, 1951,p.6

⁴⁰² 'Field Days' *Amateur Cinema World*, Sep. 1954, p.478 481

⁴⁰³ 'Outline Script' *Film Flashes*, 20 March 1953 p.4

⁴⁰⁴ Mr and Mrs Day, members of the Stoke on Trent Cine Club visit Wanganui club. *Film Flashes* 20 March 1953 p.6

⁴⁰⁵ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, p.6

Amateur Cine clubs in the years after 1945 saw an increase in the numbers of women joining. Nancy Cameron was the first woman member of the Wanganui Amateur Cine Society.⁴⁰⁶ She purchased a 16mm camera from the General Machinery Company in Whanganui, c.1945 and the salesman suggested she join the local Cine-Society, which met in the company's theatrette. At her first club meeting, members suggested that she, being the only woman, make the tea and wash up. Nancy was appalled. 'I'd joined to get away from washing up and kids, and learn how to use the damned thing!'⁴⁰⁷ Cameron aspired to make interesting films of a high technical standard. She relished opportunities to discuss and critique film.⁴⁰⁸ After Cameron joined, other women joined up, and the club pictures from the 1950s show a fairly even distribution of men and women.

The number of women joining led to clubs establishing Ladies Nights. The Auckland 8 club introduced a Ladies Night in 1950.⁴⁰⁹ The ladies provided the programme, and operated the projectors, frequently playing gramophone records or reel-to-reel tapes that were synchronised with the pictures.⁴¹⁰ The club's Ladies Night lasted until 1976 when "Invitation Night" was put in its place.⁴¹¹

Although women were a vital part of club life, they rarely held executive committee positions. Betty Birch was the exception, the first woman appointed as Auckland 8 President in 1969.⁴¹² Betty joined the club in 1957 because her brother was a member. Initially she had assisted him with sound recording, but eventually bought her own camera and took a full part in all club activities. Betty recalled her involvement with the Auckland 8 Club as, 'Happy times, enduring friendships and 42 years of precious memories.'⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁶ Nancy Cameron interview Helen Baylis c.1998 transcript p.2

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, p.5

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. p.11

⁴¹¹ Fifty Years of Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club compiled for 50th Anniversary 1988,

⁴¹² Birch was President from 1969-1973: Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, p.60

⁴¹³ Amateur Motion Pictures, Official Bulletin of the Auckland 8 Movie Club Inc., May 1998 Souvenir Issue - Diamond Jubilee 60 years 1938 – 1998, p.34

Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies

The Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies (FONZACS) was established in 1952. Prior to its establishment some clubs had swapped film programmes and the Christchurch Cine Club organised international amateur film programmes including the 'Ten Best' in 1951.⁴¹⁴ The formalisation of a parent body meant these activities increased. FONZACS aims were:

To act as the Official Body representing New Zealand in New Zealand National and International matters affecting Amateur Cinematography.

To represent, promote and protect the interests of its Member Societies in such a manner as the Federation may think fit.

To conduct a National Competition for all Amateurs, and members of Amateur Cine Associations in New Zealand and select from there the best film of the year.

To arrange exchange or loan of films with other New Zealand and Overseas Organisations.⁴¹⁵

The Federation was formed in Palmerston North at a meeting of eight cine club organizations. They were: Manawatu Amateur Cine Society, Hawke's Bay Amateur Movie Club, New Plymouth Amateur Cinematography Club, Waikato Amateur Movie Club, Wellington Amateur Cine Society, Wanganui Amateur Cine Society, and the Wairarapa Amateur Cine Club. The only South Island club member was the Motueka Movie Makers. Each club paid a subscription levy, with voting rights distributed per number of club members: 1-50 was one vote, 51-125 two votes and over 125 three votes.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ 'The Ten Best from the British Institute of Amateur Cinematography', *Wanganui Herald*, 1957, p.4

⁴¹⁵ Rules and Minutes of the Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Society Annual General Meetings (1952-1959)

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

By 1956 there were 18 member clubs and by 1962 the number had increased to 27.⁴¹⁷ The Auckland 8 Club is noticeably absent. They declined to join partly because they were a big club and regarded the subscription fee asked by the Federation (based on pro-rata to members) as too expensive.⁴¹⁸ The other reason they never joined was because they were proudly self-sufficient, they had links nationally and internationally with clubs and did not feel they had anything to gain by joining up.⁴¹⁹

FONZACS establishment made the logistics of distributing film programmes nationally and internationally easier for clubs. They were active in joining up with other amateur film organizations including the International Union of Amateur Cinema, U.N.I.C.A. A year after the Federation was established they assisted the ACL Ten Best to be shown in New Zealand.⁴²⁰ The ACL prided itself on the international composition of its programmes, and their corresponding variety of theme and genre. The 1953 Ten Best included an experimental film, a pictorial poem and a film of a ballet.⁴²¹ Apart from Ten Best programmes FONZACS were active in organising and distributing programmes to clubs from the British Amateur Cinema World, and the Photographic Society of America.⁴²² The Federation paid no hire fee for the loan of these films.⁴²³ The process of distribution was that the FONZACS film programme organiser viewed the films, checked their condition to make sure they were in a suitable state for distribution, and prepared a resume of the films for member societies. In addition FONZACS publicised club activities and assisted closer contact between member clubs.

⁴¹⁷ Letter from N.B. Bellringer, Secretary FONZACS to Censor and Register of Films, 2/11/62 Archives NZ. Ref AAA 6799 5/7/9 W4576. Members were Auckland Cine League, North Shore Movie Club, Dannevirke Amateur Cine Club, Gisborne Cine Club, Gore Cine Club, Greymouth Cine and Camera Club, Hawera Amateur Cine Club, Manawatu Amateur Cine Society, Hawke's Bay Movie Club, Marlborough Movie Club, Matamata Camera Club, Motueka movie Makers, Nelson Cine Club, New Plymouth Cine Club Inc., North Otago Photographic Society, Pahiatua Cine and Camera Club, Patea-Waverley Movie Makers, Rotorua Amateur Movie Club, South Canterbury Movie Club, Southern 9.5mm, Stratford Cine Club, Tauranga Cine Club, Te Awamutu Amateur Movie Club Inc., Waikato Amateur Movie Club, The Wellington Cine Club Inc., Wanganui Amateur Cine Society Inc., and the Wairarapa Amateur Cine Club

⁴¹⁸ John Campbell, Auckland 8 member e-mail 24/9/2012

⁴¹⁹ Oral history John and Pat Campbell and Betty Birch 2010, (unaccessioned) NZFA.,

⁴²⁰ *Film Flashes* no.25, August, 1953

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Letter from N.B. Bellringer, Secretary FONZACS to Censor and Register of Films, 26/4/63 Archives NZ. Ref AAA 6799 5/7/9 W4576

⁴²³ Letter from N.B. Bellringer, Secretary FONZACS to Censor and Register of Films, 29/10/62 Archives NZ. Ref AAA 6799 5/7/9 W4576

Amateur films were exempt from censorship when shown at club screenings. However if clubs wanted to show films publicly they were obliged to liaise with the censor. The New Zealand Censorship laws required individual clubs to submit films for rating. The process was expensive, requiring a fee and postage costs to Wellington, and there was generally a delay in processing. The Federation's involvement meant the arrangements were taken out of clubs' hands.

In the 1960s members of the Film Society were invited to Federation screenings. The international programmes of prize winning films were often not regarded as mainstream or of general appeal, but more of interest to a specialist with an appreciation of, 'lighting, angles, and the development of a theme'.⁴²⁴

Competition Films

Competitions were a core part of club culture. In 1958, Dennis Garrett, a New Zealand judge of amateur films, described how he looks for "oneness" in a film.

The maker must have something new to say, must look at his subject with a fresh eye. And I'm not willing to praise a film for good photography. I expect it. What the maker has control over, I expect him to be a craftsman enough to control. I'm pleased with fine craftsmanship but not if it's hollow, without that original flair, that artistic eye, that single clear purpose.⁴²⁵

Competitions were an important aspect of club life. The competition films made during World War Two focus on wartime themes, post war their focus is frequently family life and relationships. Many dramas in the 1950s and 1960s portray marital life. These pre-feminist productions, of a comedic nature portray wives as spendthrifts, spoilsports or just plain nags and complainers. *The Gardener's Dream* is one such drama about a hen-pecked husband retreating into a dream world, when his wife asks him to do the garden, instead of

⁴²⁴ Letter from N.B. Bellringer, Secretary FONZACS to Censor and Register of Films, 30/6/65 Archives NZ. Ref AAA 6799 5/7/9 W4576

⁴²⁵ Amateur Cine World, Oct. 1958, p.600

playing golf.⁴²⁶ The film uses a series of fantasy vignettes of perfect gardens while the husband lies in the offending long grass. Finely crafted, this film has a touch of irony in a way that many do not, such as the winner of the 1959 Federation of New Zealand Amateur Cine Societies Award, *I Go on a Head*. The story tells of a husband and wife shopping for hats in a milliner's shop. The husband reluctantly watches his wife try on outrageous hats. He is appalled by their price, desperately bored and starts talking to a shop mannequin. The wife finally settles on a lampshade hat and the couple leave happy.⁴²⁷ The film's message points to women's rampant consumerism and daffiness. Other films are comic tales of marital life, a husband literally tied to his wife to stop him straying after other women, a husband mixing his wife's wedding anniversary present of the fur coat she had desired with his secretary mistress's present of a dozen roses. These films are less alternate views than mini Hollywood narrative fantasies.

Nancy Cameron

A club member who won many local prizes in the 1950s was Nancy Cameron. Her films were technically inventive and original. She won the 1951 Wanganui Amateur Cine Society monochrome competition for her film of the local Karitane Home. The judge(s) are not named in the article, but were likely to have been fellow members of the club. They commented:

The opening animated title appropriately worked with a baby napkin and safety pins served as an admirable introduction, the sub-titles were neatly executed and informative, and a closing sequence incorporating "The End" was a felicitous finale to a first-rate film.⁴²⁸

In addition, the judges congratulated Nancy on her very fine interior shots and a remarkable shot using back-lighting from an undraped window to enhance detail on figures.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ F40385 *Personal Record*, Miles Maynard, *The Gardener's Dream*, c.1953

⁴²⁷ F51336 *Personal Record*. [Beddoe, Glynn] *I Go on a Head*, 1959

⁴²⁸ *Film Flashes* Vol 1 no. 9, 20 Aug 1951, p.4

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* p.5

The Karitane home in Wanganui approached Cameron and gave her a reel of unexposed film to make, 'one to attract Karitane nurses'.⁴³⁰ 'They were thrilled with it', said Cameron⁴³¹ but the Health Department considered the scene of babies being bathed in chipped enamel basins an inappropriate promotion of the Karitane home.⁴³² It is unclear whether Cameron always intended to enter this film in her club competition, or whether it was only because the film was unacceptable to Karitane that this happened. Either way the film indicates a social realist examination of the home significantly different from other Cameron films and from cine club work more generally. Cameron as a cine club member also made some films for the local Rose Society, who gave her unexposed reels of film in exchange.⁴³³ This commissioning of films from Cameron, suggests amateur filmmakers were in demand by local organisations. It also suggests cine club members were both engaged and receptive to their communities beyond the amateur cine club network.

Cameron's distinctive qualities were her sophisticated use of animation and her wry and perceptive commentary on life for women with children in the 1950s. *Mother's Ruin* begins with a title of a gin bottle and a pile of dirty dishes stacked in the sink. The film's narrative is ostensibly about playing knucklebones with the children, but its underlying message is the trials of housework and demands of motherhood.⁴³⁴ Set in the Cameron's house and garden the film stars Cameron's children, father and Nancy herself.

Bill Meets Bertie was made in 1953.⁴³⁵ The film stars Nancy's son, Bill who is stalked by 'Bertie the Germ'. Bertie was a character used in Department of Health advertisements to scare children into cleaning their teeth in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴³⁶ The film shows dental procedures undertaken on Bill, intercut with magic realism sequences using stop-motion animation of the Bertie puppet creature. The film follows an imaginative and amusing scripted narrative and is technically sophisticated. *Bill Meets Bertie* was very popular with local groups in Whanganui, and Nancy was called on frequently to show it at functions.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁰ Nancy Cameron interview c.1998, transcript, p.3

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ F39076 *Personal Record. Cameron, Nancy. Mother's Ruin*, 1953, NZFA

⁴³⁵ F39062 *Personal Record. Cameron, Nancy. Bill Meets Bertie*, 1953, NZFA

⁴³⁶ Dental care Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/dental-care/3/>

⁴³⁷ Nancy Cameron interview c.1998, transcript, p.3



Figure 12: *Bill Meets Bertie* 1953 One of Nancy Cameron's animated inter-titles, NZFA

Cameron was a frequent winner of Wanganui Amateur Cine Society club prizes. She won the Monochrome Cup in 1950, 1951 and 1953 and 1963.⁴³⁸ She won the Holiday Film Trophy in 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1956. One of these films is *The Grand Tour January 1950*, about a family holiday. It was made in colour and includes an animated opening title of a fish being caught from a boat.⁴³⁹ The film describes the places they visited and the people they saw en route to Kawhia, their time there at hot pools, investigating a Maori midden, and the return journey down the west coast of the North Island. This film was made for the cine club but was also shown repeatedly at home: according to Cameron, her children would say, if you show *Kawhia* again, we're leaving home.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Wanganui Amateur Cine Society cups are held by the Whanganui Museum.

⁴³⁹ F39167 *Personal Record. Cameron, Nancy. Kawhia - The Grand Tour January 1950*, NZFA.

⁴⁴⁰ Nancy Cameron interview c.1998, transcript, p.2



Figure 13: Nancy Cameron receiving a Wanganui Amateur Cine Society award c.1953, Bayliss collection, NZFA

While Cameron's films were well rewarded by her local cine club, there were instances where a film not rated in New Zealand received accolades in International Amateur Cine competitions. This happened with Arthur Richardson's experimental films, which received little attention within the Otago Cine Club but scooped seven international awards. Other International Amateur Cine award winners from the Otago Cine Club were Fred A. O'Neill whose animation film *Phantasm* was included in the British Ten Best of 1959.⁴⁴¹ Fred O'Neill also received a silver Oscar in 1960.⁴⁴² Fellow Otago club members Arthur Richardson, W.Clifford and L. McLeod all won amateur cine awards at Cannes in the 1960s and 1970s. One real disincentive to New Zealanders sending film to international competitions was the possibility of losing them en route. Richardson lost two films this way.⁴⁴³ He had sent the original films, and there were no back-up copies.⁴⁴⁴ The Auckland 8 club came up with an ingenious solution - they sent their competition films to Los Angeles via a friend who was an Air New Zealand pilot. The films traveled with the pilot and were personally delivered to the Los Angeles organisers.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ Amateur Cine World, May 1960 p.1214

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Richardson's missing films included *Carnival*, which won silver medal at Cannes Amateur Film Festival 1965

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with Arthur Richardson's daughter Joan Webster c1996, interviewer John Irwin, transcript, p.9 NZFA

⁴⁴⁵ Oral history John and Pat Campbell and Betty Birch, 5/11/2010 NZFA collection

Group Filmmaking and Public Screenings

Group filmmaking was a popular activity. In 1948 the Otago Cine-Photographic club collectively made a centennial film re-enactment of the Otago settlement. The film was screened widely, hired out to different groups and a copy given to the city.⁴⁴⁶ In 1951 the Auckland 8 club's Film Unit was established.⁴⁴⁷ This Unit filmed current events during the 1950s including the building and opening of the Auckland Harbour Bridge.⁴⁴⁸

Royal Tours were a popular subject for club group productions. The Manawatu Cine Society, Christchurch Movie Club, Auckland 8 Club and the Otago Cine-Photographic Club all made films of the 1953/54 Royal Tour. *The Royal Visit* made by the Otago Amateur Cine Club was a forty minute documentary, capturing the Queen's three days in Dunedin. The Department of Internal Affairs assisted the club by giving them three official passes, and the NFU gave them a second camera position at the Royal Concert. The color film was sent to Melbourne for processing and then to Denham Laboratory in England for copying. One copy was sound striped and a tape accompaniment was used for another print.⁴⁴⁹ The Otago Cine-Photographic Club president wrote to the Censor, asking permission to screen the film publicly. He assured the censor that the film was made in the best taste, and the Mayor has agreed to officiate at the premiere.⁴⁵⁰ Screenings held at the Dunedin Town Hall attracted 6,500 people.⁴⁵¹ The film was shown subsequently in other parts of New Zealand. This production is thought to have had a larger audience than any other New Zealand amateur film. The success of the venture encouraged the Otago Cine Club to make further joint productions of the Queen Mother's visit in 1958, and the 1963 Queen's visit involving ten cameramen.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁶ Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, 'Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club', Dunedin, 1999 pp.5-6

⁴⁴⁷ Val Simpson, *Sixty Years of Amateur Movie Making: A History of the Auckland 8 Movie Club 1938 - 1998*, Auckland, Auckland Eight Movie Club, p.5

⁴⁴⁸ Kevin Bragg interview notes, 9/7/2010

⁴⁴⁹ Sound striped – a magnetic sound track was added to the film after processing. A more sophisticated process than using a separate tape recording.

⁴⁵⁰ F28504 *The Royal Visit to Dunedin*, 1954. Letter from N.Stewart, President Otago Cine Club to Censor of Films 1/6/1954 Archives NZ Ref. iA83 37 8/19

⁴⁵¹ Amateur Cinema World, Dec., 1954 p.860

⁴⁵² Ray and Cleone, Hargreaves, 'Frame by Frame: A History of the Otago Cine-Video Club', Dunedin, 1999 p.6-10

Up until 1960, the Otago Cine Club held film seasons of their work, which included such films as *Travel by Cable Car*, *Star Garden Competition*, and *Operation Deep Freeze*.⁴⁵³ Similarly an Auckland 8 programme screened at the Auckland Festival of the Arts in the “Sky Room” of Milne & Choice in 1960 - three sessions a day.⁴⁵⁴ Other public screenings were held at the Fountain of Friendship Lodge on the corner of Symonds and Newton Rd. Visitors were so frequent that a charge of 6d (5c) was set.⁴⁵⁵

The Wanganui Amateur Cine Society also made films for public exhibition. John McDonald, a club member recalled these were of, ‘important events of the day like Trams to Buses, Rutland Fire and Rail Disasters’.⁴⁵⁶ Like the Otago and Auckland clubs these topical local items were recorded on film before the advent of nightly regional news television coverage.

From Amateur to Professional

In the Amateur Cine Club movement there are examples of members becoming professional filmmakers. Otago Cine Club member Fred O’Neill joined the National Film Unit and had a successful career as an animator. Ron Bowie, from the Auckland 8 Club, also joined the NFU, after working post-war at Reynolds and then at Neuline productions. Auckland 8 Club member Harry Reynolds set up Reynolds Photographic Movie Studio in the 1950s and later worked for television in its early years. Harry solicited amateur cine club members’ work for television items of topical events.⁴⁵⁷

While a few people did go on to professional careers, Auckland 8 Club filmmaker Betty Birch considered that even if there had been an opportunity to turn professional, most people wouldn’t have been tempted. ‘We liked being amateurs’, ‘it was lovely fun, the social side, we had a ball’.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ ‘60th Anniversary for Cine Club’, *Star Midweek*, 11 June, 1997, p.10

⁴⁵⁴ Amateur Motion Pictures, Official Bulletin of the Auckland 8 Movie Club, May 1998 Souvenir Issue - Diamond Jubilee 60 years 1938 – 1998, p.6

⁴⁵⁵ Auckland 8 Movie club: 50th Anniversary Celebrations, 1998, p.4

⁴⁵⁶ John McDonald, ‘Movie Club to Call it a Day,’ Wanganui Midweek Feb 25, 1998 p.19

⁴⁵⁷ Harry Reynolds letter in FONZACS newsletter May 1961, p.8

⁴⁵⁸ NZFA Interview with Auckland Eight Club members Betty Birch, John and Pat Campbell, 2010, interviewed by Jane Paul

American academic Melinda Stone argues in her case study of the San Diego Amateur Movie Club, that clubs were the major way people who were interested in making movies learnt techniques before University-based film courses began. Film technology was more complex than modern video (and digital) technology.⁴⁵⁹ Auckland 8 club member, Kevin Bragg believes this is true. Filmmaking was more challenging and also a more collaborative experience. The introduction of video and then digital formats meant filmmaking became more individualistic. Many of these formats are not compatible with each other and this has led to less collaboration between club members.⁴⁶⁰ Also New Zealanders do not join clubs in the way they had previously:

Young people now don't want to join clubs; they already have definite ideas and don't want to follow rules. Competitions have stopped, now work is shown for comment only.⁴⁶¹

The Auckland 8 club however continues on. Many have been members for 30 - 50 years. Most clubs have folded, the Wanganui movie club folded in 1998.⁴⁶² 'The club once had membership of over 60 but video changed all that - video enthusiasts are loners not club joiners'.⁴⁶³ The Otago cine club folded in 2009, citing lack of interest, after 60 years. Times have changed the, 'Federation has gone, many members are dying off, and there are not the numbers to make group films as had happened in the old days with six members to make a drama'.⁴⁶⁴

Amateur cine societies, and the films they produced are an important part of New Zealand's cultural history. As Kattelle notes cine club films are distinctly different from other amateur films. Their adherence to a professional scripted narrative form of filmmaking and high technical standards sets them apart.

⁴⁵⁹ Melinda Stone, 'If it Moves, we'll Shoot it: The San Diego Amateur Movie Club', *Film History Vol.15, No.2*, 2003 p.221-237

⁴⁶⁰ Kevin Bragg interview notes 9/7/2010

⁴⁶¹ Kevin Bragg interview notes 9/7/2010

⁴⁶² 'Movie Club to Call it a Day' *Wanganui Midweek*, 25 Feb.1998, p.19

⁴⁶³ Quote from John MacDonald, Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ F96706 interview *Otago Cine Video club members*

Cine club strengths include their capacity to make large group productions. They played an important role in training and supporting amateur filmmakers. People in all spheres of filmmaking, acting, scripting, filming and directing were assisted by clubs. Clubs provided an environment where films were shown, critiqued and rewarded. Social gatherings involving member's families was part of the culture.

New Zealand clubs appear similar to American clubs, which were set up to 'assist one another with their film projects, improve their craft and provide a regular audience for their productions'.⁴⁶⁵ However, perhaps unlike the American clubs, New Zealand clubs publicly exhibited their narrative drama, documentary and newsreels.⁴⁶⁶ These films as a group chart and illuminate many changes in New Zealand society.

⁴⁶⁵ Melinda Stone, 'If it Moves, we'll Shoot it: The San Diego Amateur Movie Club', *Film History* Vol.15, No.2, 2003 p.220

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. p.35 San Diego club, screened films at workshops, conferences and meetings with other clubs.

Conclusions

This thesis has examined a leisure activity that engaged many New Zealanders from the 1920s through to the 1970s. The films, filmmakers and cine clubs discussed indicate a little of the amateur filmmakers' experience, what they recorded and how the films were received by audiences in a variety of venues and communities around New Zealand.

Amateur film's significance to New Zealand history is in revealing detail of the personal, local and cultural life of many ordinary New Zealanders. They provide a unique source of information on twentieth century family and community life and cultural activity. The information they reveal is different from the output of commercial or government film that was rarely concerned with family life or activities and seldom engaged in recording local communities or their theatrical preoccupations. As a group of film and film practices they offer an alternative perspective to traditional documentary and feature film productions.

At the heart of the amateur film genre is the home movie. New Zealand home movies follow a pattern identified by Chalfen and Camper of documenting the highlights of family life, celebratory occasions and travel. The home movies discussed also reveal the more ordinary side of family life, that Chalfen claims are not covered in home movies, namely 'mundane activities and everyday happenings.'⁴⁶⁷ Home movies often make connections to the world outside home or family life, as Goode observes, and this is illustrated in Thorn's films of Waiuta. These films are an intimate visual record of people, places and events that connect the family to the community they live in.

The home movies discussed in this thesis match Shand's definition. They are 'unplanned and non-narrative and people appear as they are.' They seldom use a scripted narrative requiring family members to act in them. However, while home moviemakers did not plan out or script their films, some, such as Smith, were thoughtful about pictorial composition, and crafted their films through editing and adding descriptive inter-titles to create a narrative. In addition Smith experimented by colour-tinting sections of his films to

⁴⁶⁷ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, (Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) p.69

heighten the viewing experience. Smith's craftsmanship is indicative of other early home movie collections made in the 1920s and 1930s. Osler's and Thorn's films fit more comfortably within Shand's definition of home movies. They are neither scripted nor staged and are unedited without use of cinematic devices. However unlike Smith's films, whose viewpoint of people is observational, Osler's and Thorn's home movies are notable for their humorous interaction between subject and filmmaker. This is not to say people are not appearing as they are, but they perform for the camera as Chalfen describes in his analysis of home movies. The presence of a movie camera sometimes alters people's demeanour.

Home movies as a genre are complex. Many hold qualities of a spontaneous diary record of home or family life, of special and ordinary events. They are shaped by a range of factors: the relationship between subject and filmmaker, choice of subject, style, technique, the time period of their making, and the use of cinematic devices. Home moviemakers were frequently craft-technicians as Barlow observes. Many reveal through close scrutiny creative and experimental qualities that link them to art practices as Dudding notes.

Home movie exhibition was an important part of some New Zealand families' lives c.1923-1970. Commonly associated with special family occasions, the home movie show brought the family group together, to watch and enjoy their shared past and memories. The exhibition of home movies was sometimes combined with professionally made films ranging from cartoons to newsreels. These screenings gave middle class New Zealand families personally selected film views of the world from their lounges before television arrived in 1960. This is a small but important alternate view of exhibition that is not recorded in film histories in New Zealand.

Many of the observations made by Zimmerman about community mode films in America hold true in New Zealand. The local films made by Osler and Woodcock, tell stories from a position outside the dominant channels of representation and allow a history from below to surface. These filmmakers worked within the community recording and expressing some of the 'priorities of community existence.'⁴⁶⁸ The underground film culture of lone workers,

⁴⁶⁸ Peter MacNamara, 'Amateur Film as Historical Record-A Democratic History', *Journal of Film Preservation* 53/1996, p.42

not connected to cine clubs, chronicling local events for local audiences took place from the 1920s through at least to the 1960s in New Zealand. Zimmerman documents local filmmaking occurring post 1945 in America, but in New Zealand it started much earlier.

There is no international amateur film literature describing amateur filmmaker's public exhibition of local films. Zimmerman only mentions their making, so it is not possible to make any international comparison. In New Zealand the scarcity of press and archival information on the exhibition of local films confirms a need for archivists and historians to seek out more information on their exhibition. It is likely that other amateur filmmakers in New Zealand followed Osler's and Woodcock's local filmmaking tradition. These films have particular importance in film history as they represent an alternate local view to the largely American dominated film culture on New Zealand screens.

Community films as a genre are the most disparate: in their reasons for being made, their content, style and places of exhibition. The community films discussed in this thesis illustrate the movie camera's potential for amateur filmmakers. It was a tool used to record not only local communities but also political demonstrations and meetings, to document school events and medical procedures, to educate farmers and promote individual's businesses amongst other things. Stylistically these films vary as much as home movies do. They range from the detailed chronicle of local life, to the more fragmentary record, the edited film with inter-titles and occasionally a scripted narrative. These films were designed for neither a home or cine club audience, but an audience of associated interests, of a private or public nature. As discussed, films such as Tainui Robin's *Cars to Carrington* were narrated and this aspect was an important part of their presentation to audiences.

Zimmerman's example of a community mode oppositional filmmaker is Maya Deren, who was vocally opposed to Hollywood values and practices. There is no New Zealand equivalent of Deren in the 1940s or 50s or evidence of a New Zealand avant-garde film movement in that time period. Experimental films such as those made by Arthur Richardson occurred later in the 1960s and 70s. Oppositional films identified in this thesis are those made in opposition to government policy. These include the films made of the 1951 Waterfront Lockout, and Osler's unsubstantiated film of the Marine landing at Opoutama.

The first New Zealand amateur film club began soon after the Amateur Cine League formed in America. The three known amateur film dramas made in Wellington and Auckland in the early 1930s were relatively large productions, designed for public exhibition, that were well reviewed in the newspapers. The productions were undoubtedly inspired by ACL, but their stories were original and New Zealand focused. They link to New Zealand art and drama movements of the 1930s, rather than American ones.

New Zealand Clubs were responsive to social and political influences. They recorded and exhibited films of local events in the 1930s, at a time when professional newsreels were rare in New Zealand. Clubs actively supported the war effort in exhibiting films to community groups, and making films of community activities, such as Victory parades. Post 1945 more women joined cine clubs and particularly during the 1950s and 1960s amateur filmmaking in cine clubs and by individuals increased because of political and economic stability. Cine club dramas of the 50s and 60s reflect a variety of different directions - many dramas centre on home and family life and gender relationships which portray men as hen pecked and women as spendthrifts. In contrast Cameron explores the social pressures on women as mothers, documents the Karitane home in Whanganui, and makes a humorous animated drama on iconic Bertie Germ. Club members were evidently free to follow their own directions. During the 1950s there was a growth in the number and range of group productions made on local initiatives, such as the Opening of the Harbour Bridge in Auckland, as well as Royal Tours.

As Katelle has noted, cine club productions were quite different from other amateur films. They were produced using scripted narratives, and made to a high technical standard. Before University-based film courses, the cine club provided the main source of technical training in filmmaking. The club's formal competition-based structure enabled members' films to be critiqued by fellow members and sometimes professional filmmakers. In addition members were encouraged to watch a wide range of both amateur and professional film productions. Clubs provided a nurturing and supportive environment for many filmmakers, which went far beyond learning filmmaking skills. The long-term membership is testimony to the clubs' social importance. Nancy Cameron developed her filmmaking within this culture and created a range of creative and interesting drama and animation films.

Clubs were linked to their local communities, they exhibited their films publicly and some individual cine club members responded to community organisations requests to make films for them. The formation in 1952 of the Federation of Amateur Cine Societies, strengthened links between New Zealand clubs, and connected them more formally to American and British amateur film groups. The Federation's existence meant more programmes were distributed and New Zealanders engaged more in international competitions. Only a small percentage of amateur cine club members became professional filmmakers. The ones who did - Robert Steele, Ron Bowie, Harry Reynolds and Fred O'Neill brought significant knowledge from their cine club work to their professional filmmaking.

This thesis highlights how amateur filmmaking and viewing shifted from a predominantly home based private pastime in its early years in the 1920s to a more public club focused pastime in the late 1930s through to the 1960s before dying away in the 1970s as the advent of television impacted on club membership and private viewing returned to the home.

The relatively short time frame these films were made - a period of 50 years - gives them a special significance. As a group of films they bring another dimension of cinematic content and style to New Zealand's orthodox film history. They are the films of ordinary people, that share personal and local stories. Collectively they form a public memory. They add value and diversity to the NZFA's collection and offer historians further insight into New Zealand's social and cultural history.

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F49659 Osler Family Film Compilation 4: *Parade Wairoa, Preparing Hangi, St. John's Exercise, Men Both Maori & Pakeha doing drill wearing white arm bands and civilian clothes - Homeguard, (1944) Bowls, (1946) Large gathering having morning or afternoon tea, (1938) (1936) Maori Welcome, Large group of men trekking on horseback, (1939) Anzac Parade in Park, (1940) Maori school girls performing dance, Newly Wed Soldiers & brides on Marae, (1945) Kids on Lawn, (1939) Soldiers resting while on exercise, Soldiers at shooting range, (1935) Cooking & serving hangi.*

F49674 Osler Family Film Compilation 5: *(1943) Fun in a rowboat, Large crowds at races, Open air bar, (1946) Wairoa parade, Marching girls, (1939) Wairoa parade, Kapa Haka on outside stage, (1942) Military personnel at railway station, (1943) Military V.I.P.'s visit marae, Women dancing in paddock, Brass band, pageant, maypole, (1940) Womens Auxiliary Corp. marching, (1936) Fancy Dress parade, Old lady asleep in deck chair, Passenger liner, Arriving at the Port of Auckland, Ostler Tearooms and staff, Street parade.* F49878 Osler Family Film Compilation 6: *Brighton England, (1935) Scotland, (1936) Adelaide, (1939) shipboard activities, (1935) England, (1935, 1936 & 1937) bowling competition, (1936) people at the beach, Attempts to move stuck car out of sand, (1937) Beer drinking mates partying, European males dressed in seaweed with makeshift spears, fire on beach, overcrowded rowboat, (1935) cutting firewood, (1936) wedding*

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