

# Chicago Burns Again—a Movie Spectacle

## Film Retells Story of City

On page one of the picture section of this issue is reproduced in color one of the scenes of the new film spectacle, "In Old Chicago."

By GEORGE SHAFFER

Hollywood, Cal.  
FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND dollars' worth of ashes is what Twentieth Century-Fox studio has to show for eighteen months of research, three months of construction work, and eight weeks of camera production on its as yet uncompleted picture spectacle, "In Old Chicago."

That much money is what the studio expended to build Chicago of 1871, and then to arrange, with special effects, to burn it down.

The \$500,000 fire broke out in eight or nine different parts of the studio's 200 acres over recent weeks. Each time the blaze broke out it was carefully supervised by Los Angeles county firemen and "fought" by fire engines of ancient vintage, with the studio's own mechanized super-fire apparatus of 1937 standing by to quench any blaze that might really get tough.

The film "In Old Chicago" represents a vast pictorial background of great historical fidelity upon which the studio's writers have superimposed a plot. Lovers, villains, politicians, heroes, fighters, cowards, storekeepers, newspaper men, sailors, railroaders, farmers, brokers, slickers, and ordinary citizens answer to few true names. But many typical incidents of the era are covered.

Few pictures ever attempted by Hollywood represent so painstaking an effort by re-



The movies reproduce the Chicago Tribune building of 1871, which stood at the southeast corner of Madison and Dearborn streets. This is a scene from the film "In Old Chicago."



For the prolog of "In Old Chicago" the city of 1854 was reproduced. This is Dearborn street of that period as the movie scene builders have reconstructed it.



A street corner of Chicago in 1854. Part of this scene is reproduced in color on page one of the picture section of this issue.



The Illinois Central ticket office of 1871 as it appears in the film. In the foreground is the horse car employed in the picture.

for the studio bought the links to build Chicago. The burning of this 100 yards of outdoor murals undoubtedly was the most costly billboard bonfire in the country. But it made a great and realistic shot. To film the scenes of the fire crossing the river, the fugitives fleeing for the lake, and the roaring inferno that was Randolph, Washington, and State streets in October, 1871, the highest "parallels" ever used in picture production—four towers 165 feet tall—were erected along the shores of the "river" and "lake." It then was discovered that a barge would provide too unsteady a support for the battery of three cameras and tiers of sun arcs used in scanning the disaster from the water front, so a "dolly" (camera on

(Brian Donlevy) and Jack O'Leary (Don Ameche). O'Leary wins the election, according to the film, largely through the shrewd conniving of his brother, Dion O'Leary (Tyrone Power), whose political manipulating Jack had mistakenly supposed to be on the up and up.

Fifteen fire engines of an age and appearance fitted to 1871 were mustered for the great fire.

In the first eight weeks of shooting 1,100 extras were used. The most used in any one scene were the 500 in the Nineteenth Regiment armory election brawl. Twenty of these were picked stunt women, two of whom, Helen Holmes and Fritz Brunette, had been movie stars in their own right in the days of silent pictures. To outfit the extras quickly and properly a four-pole circus tent was set up adjacent to the studio's permanent wardrobe building, and it housed only the costumes for "In Old Chicago." Two other circus tents were put up near the Chicago street set to serve as dressing rooms.

Under the direction of Royer (Lewis R. Hastings), the studio stylist, costumes for the principals in the picture were all done in the studio wardrobe department from tintypes, fashion books, and illustrations of the day. Buckles, buttons, ruffles, ribbons, weaves, bustles, corsets, fur pieces, hats, shoe styles, lapels, suspenders, cravats, watches, gloves, horse harness, whips, dishes, silverware, even the correct names of advertised brands in advertising, all had to be reproduced in the studio's shops. Art Director William Darling accounted for this. When he and the wardrobe staff were finished, Alice Brady, Alice Faye, Phyllis Brooks, June Storey, Tyrone Power, Don Ameche, Andy Devine, Brian Donlevy, Tom Brown, and Bertor Churchill could have fitted into any tintype.

Miss Faye plays the part that had been assigned to Jean Harlow just before that star's death. The story of "In Old Chicago" has her as Belle Fawcett, a character not found in anybody's Chicago history except as a type. She and Tyrone Power are the moving spirits of "Dion and Belle's place."

When news got around that the studio intended filming this story with as much historic veracity as possible, thirty-two persons wrote the studio asserting that they had lived through the Chicago fire. Director King invited such of his correspondents as reside in this part of the country to come to the studio and view the reconstructed city before he burned it down. Cyrus M. Davis, 87, who was a Chicago merchant in 1871, said that the sets had recreated particular buildings and street corners with a fidelity that startled him. The budget of the picture was originally set by Darryl Zanuck, head of the studio, at \$1,500,000, but this sum already has been exceeded. The special effects for the fire alone, he said, cost \$500,000.



The burning of the Crosby Opera house in the great fire of 1871 as depicted in an old engraving. Scenes such as this are shown in the film.

search to patch together so much and such authentic detail. The studio had its head researcher, Rudolph Sternad, working for weeks under the suggestion and with the cooperation of the Chicago Historical society. But Sternad's trip to Chicago merely represented one high spot in about eighteen months' work. A staff at the studio had been collecting, discarding, and indexing material for that long in advance of the first camera work under Director Henry King.

and sheds, inhabited by gentlemen in tight pants, sharp traders, wagoners, ruffians, women with funny-cut jackets, and dignified men with tall, fuzzy hats. In this 1854 version of the mushrooming city the prolog of the picture was filmed. Through its muddy byways rumbled the wagon bearing Alice Brady, portraying the newly widowed Molly O'Leary and Molly's three stalwart young sons.

When the prolog sequence had been filmed the sets were re-

built to match the changes wrought by seventeen years of Chicago's astounding progress. Dirt streets were covered with a pebbly asphalt composition or relaid in cobbles. Tracks for horse cars were laid. One complete horse car line, with service consisting of one car, No. 1 of the "State and Randolph line," made a complete circuit of four blocks. In its four-block length this car line passes some thirty-four different buildings.

The headquarters of the Palmer house, the Field, Leiter & Co. store, The Chicago Tribune, the old Rice theater, the Manor house, the city hall, the Adams Express company, the Illinois Central, the Goodrich Shipping company, the Nineteenth Regiment armory, Benziger's book shop—all these, and hundreds more of the edifices which landmarked the Chicago of 1871, were transformed or erected. The city hall was in stone.

A triumph of the scene builder's art was the construction of a lake containing 1,865,000 gallons of water. This artificial lake, intended for the closing scenes of terror, will in the finished picture receive the refugees from the great fire when they flee into Lake Michigan.

A bascule bridge was built over the Chicago river, which flows for a couple of hundred yards, with quays, warehouses, and grain elevators on its banks. The bridge will go up when the big scene comes, to drop luckless fugitives into the water.

Altogether seven sets of heroic proportions have been put up for the picture. The one which had some eight or nine blocks of an actual city represented in its two and three story frame and brick construction is the largest scale effort of the kind seen by this observer in thirteen years of covering Hollywood.

Another of the seven sets provides a reproduction of "the Patch"—tough section of old Chicago—on the studio's north lot, more than half a mile distant from the "city of 1871." It covered five city blocks, including the house and shed at 137 De Koven street where the cow kicked over the lamp (if you take your history the way they are going to give it to you in this film).

But there are still more sets of old Chicago scattered in the ravines or up the sides of the knolls that dot Movietone City's



Thirty years before automobiles. A Randolph street corner of "In Old Chicago." In the carriage are Tyrone Power and Alice Faye.

expanse of "back lot." Some of them it was not necessary to burn, because the fire had already raged so long and extensively that their ashes were not needed.

A vast painted panorama of shops, roofs, and chimneys was erected outdoors on what had been the fourteenth green of the Westwood Hills golf course be-

wheels), operating on tracks laid in the lake bed, was built.

The interior settings were scattered through five of the studio's sound stages. One, illustrating the interior of the Nineteenth Regiment armory, was used as the scene of a great brawl in advance of a Chicago mayoral election between two fictitious candidates, Gil Warren

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Miss Tinée: I always read your column and generally enjoy it, but I am disappointed because you never print a story or picture of Nelson Eddy, but you do print those of actors and actresses who don't appeal half as much to the public as he does.

He is a fine actor and a great singer, and I know that I am not the only one who shares this opinion, so here's hoping my favorite movie critic doesn't let me down.

A sincere fan, GWEN RUSSELL.  
Editor's note: I certainly won't let you down—so here's a photo of Mr. Eddy and a bit of information about him. He was born in Providence, R. I., in 1901. He's 6 feet tall, weighs 173 pounds, and has blond hair and blue eyes. He was a tele-

phone operator, newspaper copy reader, and reporter before he went on the stage. Was taught singing by David Bispham, William W. Villonati, and Dr. Edouard Lippe. Sang leading baritone rôles for Savoy Opera company and also sang for Philadelphia Operatic society and Philadelphia Civic opera. Made New York debut in "Wozzeck." Studied in Dresden and Paris. Mr. Eddy made his movie debut in 1933, and films in which he has appeared are "Broadway to Hollywood," "Dancing Lady," "Student Tour," "Naughty Marietta," "Rose Marie," and "Maytime."

Dear Miss Tinée: The first time I saw James Stewart he became my favorite actor.

It seems strange that such a fine actor should receive so little attention from movie fans. I would like to see more pictures of him and also of Simone Simon. They were splendid in "Seventh Heaven."

Here's to seeing more "Seventh Heavens" with these two stars. E. T.  
Editor's note: And here's hoping James Stewart and Simone Simon see your letter.

Dear Miss Tinée: Please tell me something about Eleanore Whitney and Jane Withers. Thank you.

JEAN ZINN.

Editor's note: Eleanore Whitney was born in Cleveland, O. She weighs 98 pounds and has reddish hair and hazel eyes. As a child she was taught to dance by Bill Robinson. She went to New York and was given a stage start by Rae Samuels—appeared on vaudeville stage with her. After making personal appearances on radio programs with Rudy Vallee, Jack Benny, and others, she was given a screen test in New York and was immediately given a contract by Paramount.

Jane Withers was born in Atlanta, Ga. At the age of 4 she played on local vaude-

ville stage as mimic of stage and screen stars. Family moved to Los Angeles, and a short time later little Miss Withers appeared on several radio programs. She then played bit parts in motion pictures and after her rôle opposite Shirley Temple in "Bright Eyes" was given starring rôles.

You're welcome!

Dear Mae: To make a long story short, I am one of the many fans of Jack Haley. I have seen him in "Wake Up and Live" and I hope to see him in "Pick a Star" and "She Had to Eat." I think he is marvelous and his voice, well, words cannot express how I love it. So please, Mae, print something about him.

LOUISE S.  
Editor's Note: Well, here goes, Louise, with a little something about Jack Haley. He was born in Boston and educated in public schools there. Is married to Florence MacFadden and has a son, John Joseph Jr., and a daughter, Gloria. Before going into pictures Mr. Haley played on the legitimate stage and in vaudeville.