

Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

February 2017



Office of the Secretary of State

A Movie Studio in Tacoma

by Emily Venemon, Olympia Branch Research Assistant

**MOVIE COMPANY
TO LOCATE HERE**

Weaver Productions to
Have Studio at Tit-
low Beach

(Continued From Page One)
have taken place, and as a result it
was announced Monday that construction
on a large, fully equipped and
absolutely modern moving picture
studio will begin at once.

The Titlow Beach studio will be 150
feet long and 100 feet wide, adequate
to accommodate four companies at one
time. This is larger than the average
Hollywood studio, which usually can
accommodate but three companies. The
site is a five-acre tract directly across
recreation from the Inland and the Bay
View Hotel.

Moving Out of Hollywood

It has been noticed during the last
few years that, for some reason, inde-
pendent producers of moving pictures
were beginning to move out of Holly-
wood. There will be, for instance,
about \$100,000 worth of pictures
produced in New York this year that

**Motion Picture Producer
Who Brings Studio Here**



H. C. Weaver

formerly were made in or around Los
Angeles. When some of the business
men and the Chamber of Commerce
of Tacoma learned that H. C. Weaver,
head of the H. C. Weaver Productions
of Hollywood, was in the Northwest
looking for a location for a studio, a
meeting was arranged.

As a result, Tacoma now is to get
the first real moving picture studio in
the Northwest, and Mr. Weaver has in-
corporated his company as a Washing-
ton corporation under the Washington
laws.

A group of more than 25 prominent
local business men have become finan-
cially interested in Mr. Weaver's cor-
poration to the extent of establishing
a fully equipped studio, and have as-
sisted him in every way possible to
facilitate the immediate construction
of the studio.

The five-acre site at Titlow Beach
was donated to the enterprise, and Ta-
coma lumbermen donated the lumber

uninitiated that it took constant sun-
shine to make a motion picture," Mr.
Weaver said. "This is not the case
any more. During the last few years
the industry has developed to such an
extent that artificial lighting produces
much better photography than day
light, and out-of-door situations be-
come more convincing when taken un-
der natural weather conditions through
the aid of artificial sunshine, than a
real sunshine is used. As a result
there has been developed a large as-
sortment of lighting equipment to
meet every condition.

"We will have a motor-driven gen-
erator that will develop 1,000 amperes
to be taken with our company to all
of its outside locations, which will
the lights and reflectors, will permit
us to make all of our outside shot
(with the exception of the few in
stages where panoramic effects are
needed) without dependence on sun-
shine. When one considers that a

Did you know Tacoma had its own movie studio back in the 1920s? Hollywood producer Harvey Cook Weaver incorporated H.C. Weaver Productions in 1924, hoping an independent movie studio would flourish in a new environment outside Los Angeles. Weaver had been a producer for around seven years at that point, working on popular pictures like *The Toonerville Trolley Series* and Charles Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*. His pitch to the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce was so successful that local businessmen donated a five-acre parcel at Titlow Beach to house the new studio, and local lumbermen donated the wood to build it. The \$50,000, nearly 19,000-square-foot space was equipped with a state-of-the-art lighting system. The studio partnered with the Selznick Picture Distributing Corporation to produce and nationally distribute three silent films: *Hearts and Fists* (1926), *Eyes of the Totem* (1927), and *The Heart of the Yukon* (1927).

The films were melodramas with a unique Pacific Northwest flavor. *Hearts and Fists* is the tale of a small lumber company's struggle to succeed despite its corrupt competitors. *Eyes of the Totem* is the story of a woman's fight to rebuild her life after her gold prospector husband is murdered. *The Heart of the Yukon* is about a young woman's quest to find her estranged father in an Alaska gold rush town. The films contain some of the earliest motion shots of Tacoma landmarks. *Eyes of the Totem*,

Clipping from *Unknown Newspaper*, 1924, H.C. Weaver Productions, Department of Licensing, Securities Division, General Application and Permit Files, Series AR-240-5-0-2, Washington State Archives.

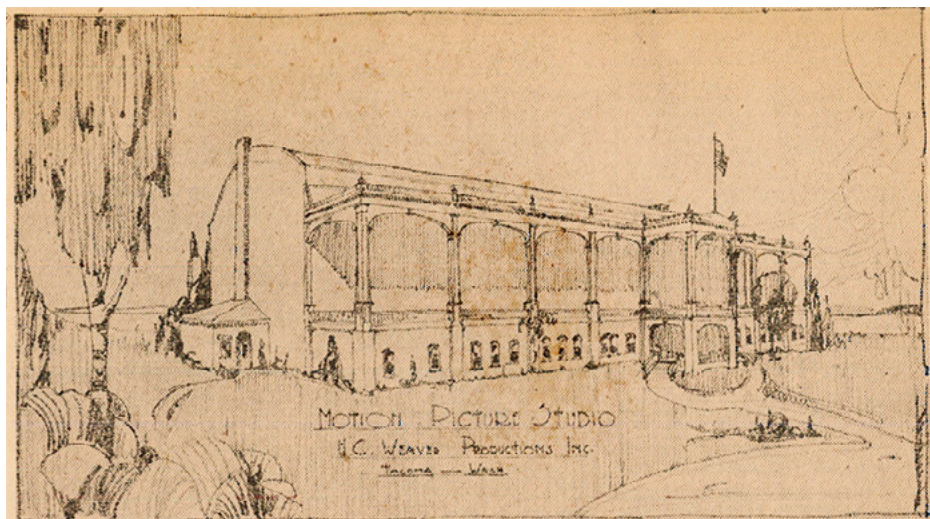
for instance, features a totem pole that has stood in Tacoma since 1903. Additionally, there are scenes that include glimpses of the grand Tacoma Hotel that burned down in 1935, and the film used the front of the historic Winthrop Hotel to create a Chinese cabaret of ill repute called "The Golden Dragon."

Unfortunately, despite local hopes and excitement, this studio was short-lived. The release of the first sound movie in 1927 marked the end of the silent movie era. H.C. Weaver Productions closed its doors in 1928, and the studio burned down in 1932.

According to census records, by 1930 H.C. Weaver was living in Manhattan and still working in the motion picture industry. He retired sometime in the late 1930s, and died in Los Angeles in 1943 at the age of 62.

For many years, silent film historians thought the three H.C. Weaver Productions pictures were lost. In 2014, however, a researcher found a copy of *Eyes of the Totem* in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. A group of historians and film producers calling themselves "Team Totem" restored and rereleased *Eyes of the Totem* in 2015. They are still on the hunt for the other two H.C. Weaver films. If you have any leads, contact Team Totem here: <http://www.eyesofthetotem.com/contact.html>

The Washington State Archives holds the articles of incorporation for H.C. Weaver Productions, as well as the company's Department of Licensing Securities Division file dealing with stocks and bonds.



Top—Architect's study of proposed shops to be erected by the Lumbermen's Improvement Company on the old Annie Wright Seminary site at Tacoma avenue and North 1st street. These shops are distinctive and unique in the Northwest. Lower—Sketch of the \$50,000 studio being erected at Titlow Beach by Weaver Productions, Tacoma movie company.

Clipping from Unknown Newspaper, Undated, H.C. Weaver Productions, Department of Licensing, Securities Division, General Application and Permit Files, Series AR-240-5-0-2, Washington State Archives.

No. 56477

Articles of Incorporation

OF THE
H. C. Weaver Productions

Place of business Seattle
Time of existence 50 years.
Capital Stock, \$ 202,000.00

State of Washington, ss.
Filed for record in the office of the Secretary of State MAY 24 1924
at 9:03 o'clock A. M.
Recorded in Book 136 Page 141-142
DOMESTIC CORPORATIONS

Franklin
Secretary of State.

Filed at request of
The Company, 1020 White Bldg
c/o Alexander, Bundy & Swale
Seattle, Wash.

Filing and recording fee, \$ 150.00
License to June 30, 19 24, \$ 50.00
Certificate mailed AUG 1 - 1924 to above address.
INDEXED. Compared.

21142. S. P. No. 1108—1921. Apprd. by Dept. of Efficiency.

H.C. Weaver Productions, 1924, Secretary of State, Corporations and Trademarks, Articles of Incorporation, Domestic Corporations, 1869-1960, Series AR3-6-0-8, Washington State Archives.