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Out of the Archives

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Office of the Secretary of State

A Movie Studio in Tacoma

by Emily Venemon, Olympia Branch Research Assistant

**MOVIE COMPANY
TO LOCATE HERE**

Motion Picture Producer
Who Brings Studio Here

Weaver Productions to
Have Studio at Titlow Beach

(Continued From Page One)

It was announced yesterday that construction on a large, fully equipped and air-conditioned motion picture studio will begin at once.

The Titlow Beach studio will be 150,000 square feet in size and will accommodate four companies at one time. This is larger than the average studio, which is usually built to accommodate but three companies. The site is a five-acre tract directly across from the Jagoon and the Bay View Hotel.

Moving Out of Hollywood

It has been known during the last year that, for some reason, independent producers of moving pictures have been leaving the Motion Picture Center of the world, Hollywood. There will be, for instance, about \$10,000,000 worth of pictures produced in New York this year that

Are You Blonde or Brunette?

THE hair that sets men dreaming, whether it be blonde, brown or brunette, is the hair that gleams and shimmers with a radiance that works a spell.

Fifth Avenue hairdressers give that radiant beauty to the hair of women of fashion by using a touch of henna in the shampoo.

HENNAFOAM SHAMPOO contains just the right touch of henna, rightly prepared. It permits you to use this treatment, at a fraction of the cost, to make your own hair beautiful.

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

As a result, Tacoma now is to get the first motion picture studio in the Northwest, and Mr. Weaver has incorporated his company as Washington Picture Productions, and has a fully equipped studio, and have adapted him in every way possible to the needs of the business of running a studio.

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

uninitiated that it looks constant sun shine to make a motion picture," Mr. Weaver said. "This is not the case now, however, during the last few years the industry has come to a point to a extent that artificial lighting produces better results than the natural sunlight, and outside-sunny situations become more convincing when taken up with the aid of artificial sunshine, as real sunshine is used. As a result we will have a large assortment of lighting equipment to meet every need.

"We will have a motor-driven generator that will develop 1,000 amperes of current, which will be used for all of its outside locations, which will be lighted with reflectors, which will permit the use of the natural sunlight (with the exception of the few instances where motion picture effects are needed) without depending 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."

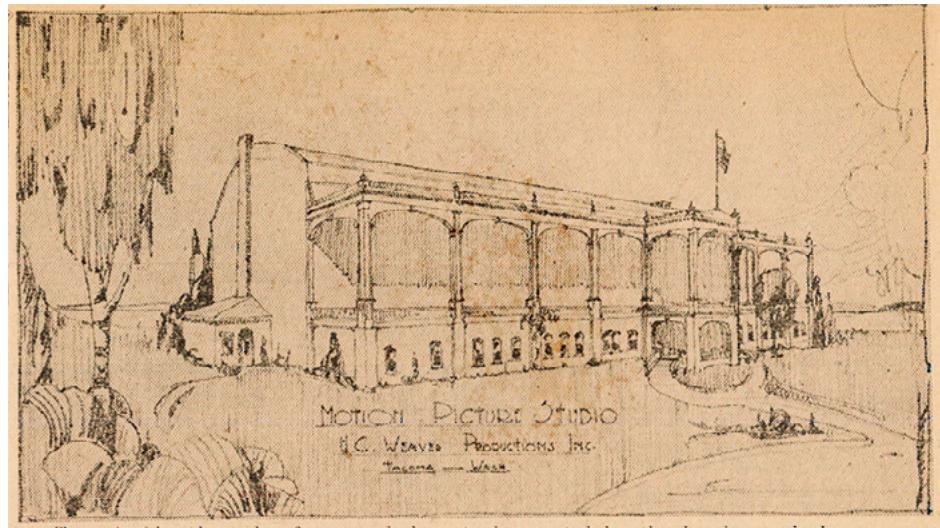
Unfortunately, despite local hopes and excitement, this studio was short-lived. The release of the first sound movie in 1927 marked the end of the silent movie era. H.C. Weaver Productions closed its doors in 1928, and the studio burned down in 1932.

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.

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.



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.

