



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

The Round-Up (1920)



The *Round-Up*, filmed in 1920, starring Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, was the first feature film to be entirely on location in Lone Pine. This would be Arbuckle's first feature film and a change of pace from the comedies that made him famous. The film was based on a successful stage melodrama of the same name. The film turned out to be one of Arbuckle's biggest critical successes.

The *Round-Up* also featured Wallace Beery. The movie was written by Edmund Day and Tom Forman, directed by George Melford, and based on Day's play that was a huge hit for Roscoe Arbuckle's older cousin Macklyn Arbuckle and Julia Dean on the Broadway stage in 1907

When *The Round-Up* came to Inyo County by Chris Langley, Museum Film Historian

The local paper, *The Inyo Independent*, in its January 3, 1920 edition announced the arrival of a film company. "The Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle Motion Picture Company is in Lone Pine, where big preparations are under way for the production of pictures." This was before the construction of the Dow Hotel, built in 1923, specifically to accommodate the ever more frequent visits of film companies. At least some of the stars and director probably stayed at what is now called the Old Lone Pine Hotel on Main Street. Crews for the next three years could not get lodging in town and stayed in tents nearby or even up at the locations. The news article continued, "The hotel and lodging house accommodations in Lone Pine will be taxed to their utmost when all the company shall have arrived."



The relationship between Lone Pine and the movies was close from this point on. Joy Anderson, told local historian, Dave Holland for his book *On Location in Lone Pine* that a rancher named Al Gallaher first supplied horses and cattle and whatever else the companies needed to film. He moved on to Calistoga in the early Thirties, so it was then that her father Russ Spainhower took over almost all the movie work, earning him the title, "Mr. Movies," in the local area. Joy has several pictures of *The Round-Up* being made on the streets of Lone Pine and she assumes that the pictures were taken by her father so he must have been there and probably involved with that production on some level.

The local newspaper of the 1920's and 1930's clearly show Lone Pine to be an area that made a lot of its own entertainment. So you can imagine if the town is full of show people, what better to do for recreation than to have them put on a show. According to *The Independent*, that's exactly what they did do. The paper of January 17th announced "a classy, up-to-date vaudeville show for two nights later, by members of the Fatty Arbuckle Motion Picture Company." What an opportunity for fun and a break in the humdrum life in a small isolated town to have one of the greatest movie stars of the moment and his friends put on a show for you. The writer stated, "The talent in the Arbuckle Company for this sort of entertainment is said to be of a high order, and we have been informed that there will be something worthwhile doing every second at Lone Pine next Monday night."

No review followed, but we can only dream of having been able to attend that once in a life time event here. The entertainment to be provided by *The Round-Up* was not at an end, however. Slightly less than a year later, just before Christmas, the film played in Independence. "*The Round-Up* will be given

tomorrow night, Sunday, December 24, 1921 at the Independence Theatre. Two shows will be put on to accommodate the large number who will want to see the picture."

No mention is made of the fact the film had been made in the area a year before, but the writer is enthusiastic about the quality of the show. "***The Round-Up*** is best described as six reels of undiluted laughs and hair raising thrills, for it shows the corpulent comedian in comedy situations that characterized his former short funfests as well as a dramatic portrayal extraordinary."

Notes:



It is unclear why they came to the area, although there is evidence Paramount was not the first to be here. It appears that a film company was working in Death Valley in 1917. The local newspaper suggests other companies had been here to film scenes, but that ***The Round-Up*** would be the first feature film to be entirely on location in Lone Pine. Clarence Badger first bought property in the Lone Pine area in 1917 as well, although the original land purchased was not part of the land he would finally build his ranch on, now known as the Cuffe Ranch of Movie Fame. Tom Forman also starred in the film and had written the scenario used for the film. Forman

would later come back to the area to film ***The Virginian*** (1923)

Famous Players-Lasky Corporation was an American motion picture and distribution company created on July 19, 1916, from the merger of Adolph Zukor's Famous Players Film Company—originally formed by Zukor as Famous Players in Famous Plays—and Jesse L. Lasky's Feature Play Company. The deal, guided by president Zukor, eventually resulted in the incorporation of eight film production companies, making the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation one of the biggest players of the silent film era. Famous Players-Lasky, under the direction of Zukor, is perhaps best known for its vertical integration of the film industry and block booking practices. In September 1927, Famous Players-Lasky was reorganized under the name Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, later becoming the Paramount Pictures Corporation (now a division of Viacom).



Jess Lasky discussing "***The Round-Up***" with Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle in 1920