

OSCAR MICHEAUX SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Volume 10, Fall 2001

"Oscar Micheaux and his Circle" World Premiere

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto Includes Touring Package as Part of 2001 Program in Italy



In this issue. . .

- 2 Le Giornate Program
- 4 Sacile: The Garden of Venice
- 5 Accommodations in or near Sacile
- 6 A Celebration in Great Bend
- 8 Memories of "Megory"
- 10 Real to Reel: Black Life in Cinema Symposium
- 13 Oscar Micheaux and his Circle
- 14 Minutes of Oscar Micheaux Society Annual Meeting
- 15 Bibliography Update

Oscar Micheaux and his Circle, a touring package of rare films and film footage by Oscar Micheaux and other African-American filmmakers of his time will have its debut during the 20th Giornate del Cinema Muto (Pordenone Silent Film Festival) in Sacile, Italy October 13-20, 2001.

The premiere of the touring package accompanies the publication of the long-awaited *Oscar Micheaux and his Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era*, edited by Pearl Bowser, Charles Musser, and Jane Gaines and co-published by the Giornate del Cinema Muto and the University of Indiana Press. Oscar Micheaux and his Circle will be part of a larger program which includes Japanese Cinema and a D.W. Griffith retrospective.

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto

The Giornate del Cinema Muto is unique as the world's only festival devoted exclusively to silent cinema. Originating as an intimate local gathering, the festival has developed into an international cul-

tural event, regularly attracting upwards of five hundred visitors from across the world, ranging from academics, archivists and critics to private enthusiasts and collectors.

In addition to being a once-a-year, week-long festival of marathon screenings, the Giornate also assists in the process of recovering and restoring silent films. Through contacts made at the Giornate, lost films have been rediscovered, orphan reels have been identified, and chance personal encounters have led to restoration projects. In addition, the rediscovery, in Pordenone, of the film artists of Tsarist Russia and of the creative genius of the clowns of pre-1914 Italian cinema have brought about revisions of the accepted version of movie history.

A special quality of the Giornate is that the organizers are always conscious that the films were originally made to entertain, delight and astonish, and that these aspects must be respected above all. The films are presented under the best conditions, with ideal projection, at correct running speeds, in the best prints

available, and accompanied by the kind of high-quality live music that their original audiences would have heard.

The original home of the festival, the Cinema Verdi in Pordenone, was a splendid picture palace from the great post-war era of Italian cinema-going, a show-piece of high-50s architectural style. While the Cinema Verdi is closed for redevelopment, the festival is being held in nearby Sacile, where it can make use of the Teatro Zancanaro, a well-equipped modern auditorium, and the Teatro Ruffo, a more parochial cinema.

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto registration is free, but a donation of \$100 is suggested. Opening and closing night screenings require tickets which can be purchased for about \$10.

Oscar Micheaux and his Circle Project

The Oscar Micheaux and his Circle Project, a touring package prepared by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser, has several broad, inter-related goals:

1) to focus attention on the surviving works of African-American filmmakers and more generally on race cinema (films made for black audiences in the United States) of the silent era;

2) to foster the preservation, restoration, distribution and exhibition of these race films—where possible in their original format—but also to encourage their broad dissemination in video and digital formats using high quality film masters;

3) to encourage scholarship and discussion about these films so that they will receive the respect and understanding they deserve;

4) to strengthen the vitality of our African-American cultural heritage and to change the ways we view American and world cinema (and so twentieth-century culture more broadly) in light of these achievements.

In many respects this has been a vital but modestly budgeted undertaking, dependent upon the cooperation and good will of many individuals and institutions (and will continue to depend upon their generosity as we move forward with the touring program).

Program 1

Happy Though Married, 1920. 35mm, 10 min. Includes footage of Micheaux

Within Our Gates, 1920. 35mm, 5,935 ft. Micheaux Film Corporation

Program 2

A Pictorial View of Idlewild, 1927. 35mm, 2,234 ft. Chicago Daily News Film Service.

The Symbol of the Unconquered, 1920. 35mm, 3,852 ft. Micheaux Film Corporation

Program 3

[Zora Neale Hurston], 1927-29. 16mm, (selected 100-foot rolls).

The Flying Ace, 1926. 35mm, 5,005 ft. Norman Film Manufacturing Company



Program 4

Body and Soul, 1925. 35mm, 7,700 ft. Micheaux Film Corporation.

Program 5

Hell-Bound Train, c. 1930. 16mm, c. 20 min. James E. Gist, Jr. with Eloise King Patrick Gist

Ten Nights in a Bar Room, 1926. 35mm, 4,559 ft. Colored Players Film Corporation.

Program 6

The Scar of Shame, 1929. 35mm, 8,023 ft. Colored Players Film Corporation.

Program 7

Eleven P.M., c. 1929.

35mm, 5,103 ft. Maurice Film Company.



Japanese Silent Cinema

Provisional format for the program, as proposed by curator Hiroshi Komatsu.

1. On the Borderline of Fiction and Non-fiction
2. The Tradition of Shinpa Play
3. Film Productions in the Kansai Region after the Great Kanto Earthquake
4. Gendaigeki, the New Genre
5. The Masters: Mizoguchi, Ito, Kinugasa, Saito, Ozu
6. Last Silents
7. Special Event with Benshi and Live Music

The Griffith Project, 5: Films Produced in 1911

Fifth installment in the multi-year D.W. Griffith retrospective.

Group 1

Fisher Folks
His Daughter
Conscience
Was He a Coward?

Group 2

Teaching Dad to Like Her
The Lonedale Operator
The Spanish Gypsy
The Broken Cross

Group 3

The Chief's Daughter
A Knight of The Road
His Mother's Scarf
The Two Sides

Group 4

In The Days of '49
Enoch Arden (Part 1)
Enoch Arden (Part 2)
The New Dress

Group 5

A Romany Tragedy
The Crooked Road
The Primal Call
The Indian Brothers

Group 6

The Blind Princess and the Poet
Fighting Blood
The Last Drop of Water
Bobby, The Coward

Group 7

A Country Cupid
The Ruling Passion
The Rose of Kentucky
The Stuff Heroes are Made of

Group 8

Swords And Hearts
Dan, The Dandy
The Squan's Love
The Eternal Mother

Group 9

The Making of a Man
Her Awakening
The Adventures of Billy
The Long Road

Group 10

The Battle
Love in The Hills
Through Darkened Vales

Group 11

A Woman Scorned
The Miser's Heart
The Failure
As in a Looking Glass

Group 12

A Terrible Discovery
The Baby And The Stork
The Voice of The Child
For His Son

Group 13

The Old Bookkeeper
Billy's Stratagem
A Blot in The 'Scutcheon
The Transformation of Mike

Group 14

The Root of Evil
The Sunbeam
A String of Pearls

Very Special Closing Event

Napoleon Vu Par Abel Gance

New restoration

Saturday, Oct. 20, Udine

Teatro Nuovo Giovanni da Udine

The Theatres

Regular attendees of the film festival all mourn the passing of the Cinema Verdi; however, Sacile offers ideal new possibilities with theatres that are rich in both local and cinema history.

The Teatro Zancanaro is the principal venue. With 700 seats, it is a tribute to the vision of one remarkable man, Vittorio Zancanaro (1863-1945), who is regarded as a kind of spiritual patron of the Sacile Giornate. He was the son of a landed family who arrived in Sacile in the latter part of the 19th century. Sacile's original theatre, the Teatro Sociale, had fallen into disrepair by the beginning of the century and was condemned as unsafe. Zancanaro conceived the plan of a "Politeama" which would serve for opera, theatre, cinema, lectures, boxing matches, dances and any other social or cultural events.

The Politeama Zancanaro opened in November 1911, and from the start included films in its repertoire. The building was severely damaged in the bombardments of 1917 and reconstructed in 1921. It suffered damage in the earthquake of 1936 and was again remodelled after the second World War. In 1988, the Zancanaro was acquired by the civic administration, who embarked on a complete restoration. The theatre, with its beautiful renewed auditorium, state-of-the-art technical facilities, and the portico based on the one originally added in 1914, was reopened in autumn 1997.

The Teatro Ruffo is a parochial cinema very much in the style with which we are familiar from *Cinema Paradiso*. It was opened as the Salone Ruffo in 1908 by the ecclesiastical authorities of the town, to compensate for some of the shortcomings of the already crumbling Teatro Sociale. Several times remodelled, it continues to provide a second cinema for the town.

Getting There...

The invasion of the Giornate will place a severe burden on the hotels of Sacile, which at full capacity could only house about a fifth of the expected guests. Giornate organizers are confident, however, that rooms can be found for everyone within a 10-mile radius, and are also seeking private accommodation within the town. They guarantee adequate shuttle services to serve the hotels in Pordenone (see list of hotels); therefore guests staying there need not be uneasy. Alternatively, there are easy rail connections between Sacile and Pordenone. For guests with their own cars there is a choice of excellent country hotels within the same 10-mile radius. There are no camping facilities available.

Hotels

To help you make your own booking, the next page includes a list of hotels in Sacile and nearby.

Eating

Sacile offers (at the latest count) 20 restaurants, trattorie and pizzerie; 30 bars, 3 pubs and 8 gelaterie and pasticcerie.

Buses (Pordenone-Sacile)

A shuttle service to the Pordenone hotels will be timed to coincide with program starts, and projections will not begin until the arrival of the coach at Teatro Zancanaro. There will also be intermediate service throughout the day.

Trains

The railway station is a few minutes walk from the center and offers a frequent service to Orsago, Fontanafredda and Pordenone. The journey to Pordenone takes between 8 and 12 minutes. For further details, you can visit the official site of the Italian Railways: www.fs-on-line.com/

Sacile The Garden of Venice

Sacile acquires a distinctive charm and beauty from its situation as a natural island formed by the river Livenza. The town itself is divided by the canale della Pietà, and its various waterways are crossed by ten bridges. Historically the river provided an important commercial link with Venice and the sea; and the manner in which the river encloses the town gave it its name (from the Latin "saccus," a bag).

The heart of the town, as it has been since mediaeval times, is the handsome Piazza del Popolo, of roughly semi-circular form. The piazza is dominated by the Loggia municipale (town hall) originally constructed in 1543 but continually modified over the centuries: from 1785 until 1911 it housed the town's theatre.

To the north-east of the piazza, at the



beginning of the viale Zancanaro, is the Palazzo Flangini Biglia, of 1577-80. Henri III of France, Maria of Austria and Napoleon are among the historic personalities who were guests of the palazzo through the centuries; in 1999 the Giornate del Cinema Muto inherited that privilege. Beside the palazzo stands the Teatro Zancanaro, the principal venue of the 1999 Giornate. The opposite end of the piazza leads to the Borgo di San Gregorio and the ex Chiesa di San Gregorio, built in 1519, which was the location of the 1999 Film Festival.

The Palazzo Ovio Gobbi, with its exquisite interior stucco work and decorations of the school of Tiepolo serves as the canonical house and as a library and centre for bible studies, the Palazzo Gobbi will also host some of the activities of the Giornate. In the shadow of the Campanile is the Teatro Ruffo, which provides the Giornate's second screen.



Accommodations

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto Lodging in or near Sacile, Italy

Price range is for single room with bath to double with bath

DUE LEONI, Sacile
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-788111
Fax (+39) 0434-788112
Web site:
www.hoteldueleoni.com
L. 160,000 - 210,000
(w/breakfast)

ITALIA, Sacile
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-70351
Fax (+39) 0434-781678
L. 70,000 - 100,000

CA' BRUGNERA, Brugnera
8 km from Sacile
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-613232
Fax (+39) 0434-613456
Web: www.struinfo.it/cabrugnera/cabrugnera.html
Special Price for Fest Guests:
L. 10, 000 - 150,000
(w/breakfast)

TONI, Brugnera
Star rating *
Tel. (+39) 0434-623010
Fax (+39) 0434-613486
L. 50,000-80,000

CIASA DE GAHJA, Budoia
15 km from Sacile
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-654897
Fax (+39) 0434-654815
Web: www.ciasadegahja.com
L. 110,000-150,000

CASA DAMIANI, Caneva
5 km from Sacile
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-799092
Fax (+39) 0434-799333
L. 140,000- 200,000
(w/breakfast)

AL CASTELLO, Caneva
Star rating *
Tel. (+39) 0434-79022
L. 50,000- 85,000

NAONIS, Cordenons
16 km from Sacile
Star rating ***
Tel. (+39) 0434-541014
Fax (+39) 0434-542754
L. 80,000- 120,000
(w/breakfast)

ALBERGO CRISTINA
Cordignano
7 km from Sacile
Star rating *
Tel. (+39) 0438-998633
L. 55,000- 80,000 (w/breakfast)

AL PARCO, Fontanafredda
5 km from Sacile
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-99125
Fax (+39) 0434-99032
L. 70,000- 100,000

LUNA, Fontanafredda
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-565535
Fax (+39) 0434-565537
Web: www.emmeti.it/Hluna
L. 100,000-140,000
(w/breakfast)

GIGI, Fontanafredda
Star rating *
Tel. (+39) 0434-99010
Fax (+39) 0434-566224
L. 70,000- 100,000

HOTEL VILLA LUPPIS
Rivarotta, 20 km from Sacile
XVI century monastery turned into country house
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-626969
Fax (+39) 0434-626228
Web site: www.villaluppis.it
Special price for fest guests
L.180,000-310,000
(w/breakfast)

BEL-SIT, Porcia
10 km from Sacile
Star rating *
Tel. (+39) 0434-921100
Fax (+39) 0434-921168
L. 50,000-80,000

PALACE HOTEL MODERN
Pordenone, 12 km from Sacile
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-28215
Fax (+39) 0434-520315
Web: www.eahotels.it
L. 125,000-190,000
(+ L. 20.000 buffet breakfast)
Suite room: L. 250,000

VILLA OTTOBONI
Pordenone
Star rating * * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-208891
Fax (+39) 0434-208148
Web: www.geturhotels.com
L. 147,000- 189,000
(w/breakfast)

DAMODORO, Pordenone
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-361803
Fax (+39) 0434-361803
L. 90,000- 140,000
(w/breakfast)

MINERV, Pordenone
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-26066
Fax (+39) 0434-29748
Web: www.hotelminerva.it
L. 110,000-185,000
(w/breakfast)

PARK HOTEL, Pordenone
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-27901
Fax (+39) 0434-522353
Web site: www.bestwestern.com
L. 140,000-220,000
(w/breakfast)

RESIDENCE ITALIA
Pordenone
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-27821
Fax (+39) 0434-522035
Web: www.paginegialle.it/resitalia-01
L. 95,000- 140,000
(w/breakfast)

SANTIN, Pordenone
Star rating * * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-520443
Fax (+39) 0434-520362
Web site: www.HotelSantin.it
L. 108,000-160,000

MONTEREALE, Pordenone
Star rating * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-551011
Fax (+39) 0434-551011
L. 70,000- 110,000

RESIDENCE MEUBLÉ
Pordenone
Star rating * *
Tel. (+39) 0434-365160
Fax (+39) 0434-365040
L. 80,000- 130,000
(w/breakfast)

VILLA GIUSTINIAN
Portobuffole'
20 km from Sacile.
Beautiful XVII century villa in Sacile
Altitude: 25 m
Population: 17,484
Website:
http://www.lineit.com/sacile/

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
One dollar = 2,127 lira

The festival organizers are working to increase the number of bedrooms available in Sacile, and Mayor Fasan has pledged herself to find ways to house a majority of guests in private accommodation. (Those few who did stay in private accommodation in Sacile last year were generally delighted by the experience.) Pordenone will provide the principal out-of-town accommodation, with direct express buses and a central pick-up point.



A Celebration in Great Bend

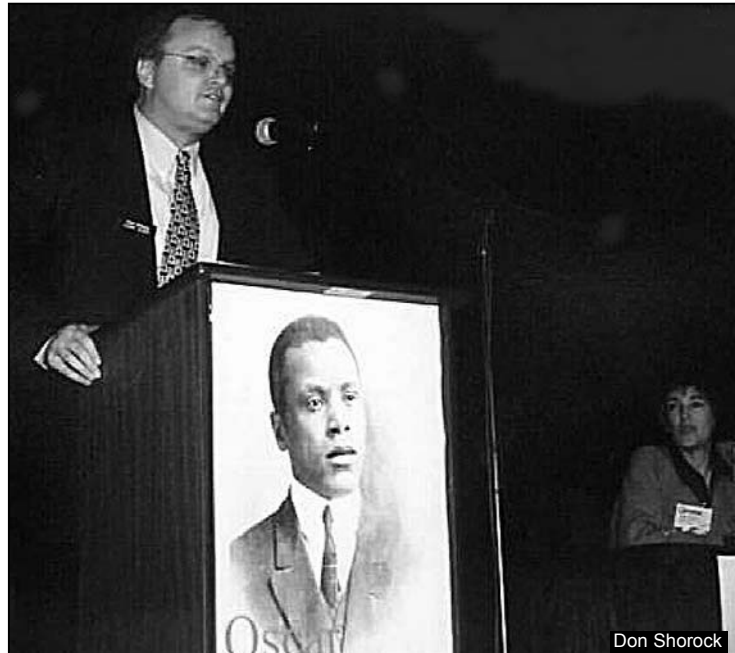


By Michael Unthank

When Oscar Micheaux passed away in North Carolina in 1951, a train returned his body to his family home of Great Bend, Kansas. Over the weekend of March 24–25, Great Bend played host to a major celebration of the life and work of Micheaux. When I heard about the event, I knew immediately that I would attend. I had no intention of traveling by train. I worked out an itinerary with my traveling partner Pearl Bowser, a Northwest flight out of JFK with a change in St. Louis. Our destination would be Wichita, a two-hour drive from Great Bend. Seemed simple enough, but getting there by jet aircraft wasn't nearly as simple as we hoped. As it happens, the train would have been a wiser decision, less stress and we might have saved a few hours. We made it though, and were greeted by beautiful weather and our warm and wonderful hosts who transported us to Great Bend, launching us headlong into an unforgettable weekend.

The Oscar Micheaux Golden Anniversary Memorial Celebration was the brainchild of Great Bend Attorney Martin Keenan, and was organized with the active support of the Barton County Arts Council. According to Keenan, "Micheaux died in obscurity and, although he was interred in the Great Bend Cemetery fifty years ago, his grave had no tombstone until 1988. This celebration is an opportunity for Great Bend to give long overdue

recognition to this son of Kansas." The celebration attracted hundreds of participants from as far away as Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Seattle, Chicago, South Dakota and various parts of Kansas. A large number of Micheaux's relatives came to recognize and pay respect to the Micheaux legacy. This contingent



Festival organizer Martin Keenan delivers welcoming remarks

was headed by Micheaux's second cousin, Harley Robinson, Jr. of Los Angeles. Robinson stated, "This is the time and Great Bend is the perfect place for this memorial event. I'm very gratified to see so many people are coming to know Oscar and have felt so compelled to come to the celebration. I see folks of all ages and colors. I've made it my mission to do all I can to make sure Oscar gets the recognition he deserves in his own home, not just for us but for the children who come after us. It's important that they know what he accomplished."

Entering the lobby of the Great

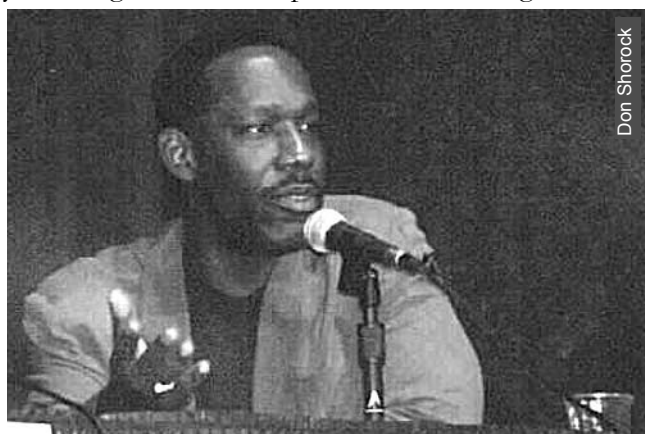
Bend Holiday Inn we were faced with a crowd of unruly visitors. Sensing our discomfort, Marty reassured us that there was nothing to be concerned about — all of these folks were here for the Micheaux Celebration. Sure enough, I looked around the room and started recognizing the faces of well-known Micheaux scholars and celebrities who had also been invited by Marty to speak as part of the event. There was Professor Charlene Register of UNC (dressed in spotless white), Professor Ronald Green from Ohio State, actor James McDaniel of "NYPD Blue," and Professor Jane Gaines of Duke University. Mixed in with these were some folks from South Dakota — Alis Veren and Richard Papoucek, the Micheaux fanatics who were largely responsible for creating the annual Micheaux Film Festival held in Gregory, SD, where Micheaux spent his homesteading years around the turn of the

century. Gathered in this small space, these folks were causing a lot of confusion. I noticed a look on the desk clerk's face that was close to panic. I decided to quietly urge them to move to the hotel bar where they might be able to calm themselves down.

By Saturday morning the great weather had given way to clouds, cool temperatures and snow flurries. We made our way over to Great Bend's restored Crest Theatre where we found a full house and an electrified atmosphere. The program began with a screening of Pearl Bowser's *Midnight Ramble: Oscar Micheaux and Race Movies* followed up with an open

discussion. Later in the morning, attendees got a look at Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1919). Scholars Charlene Regester, Ronald Greene, James Leichter and Eric Monder filled Saturday afternoon with stimulating and provocative presentations and discussions. Finally, David Strain, Publisher of Dakota West Books, gave a talk on Micheaux's experience as a homesteader in South Dakota.

James McDaniel, who plays Lieutenant Arthur Fancy on "NYPD Blue," told of reading a brief magazine article on Micheaux some twenty years ago that inspired him to take his passion for acting seriously. Now a nationally known and respected performer, McDaniel credits Micheaux as a role model. He has made it a "high priority" to support all efforts to recognize Micheaux as an important artist and trailblazer for the African-American filmmakers who are coming along today. On Saturday evening, McDaniel spoke to a standing-room-only



James McDaniel

crowd at the Crest to shed some light on the challenges that African Americans face in dealing with today's Hollywood.

A memorial for Micheaux was held at his gravesite in the Great Bend Cemetery on Sunday morning. After several hours of inspired gospel performances by folks

from Great Bend and around the region, attendees moved to the cemetery for the re-enactment of a Buffalo Soldier Honor Guard Salute that set the stage for the laying of the wreath. It was a poignant scene, a gray Kansas sky releasing an even snowfall of light, gentle white flakes. Emotions were high as Harley Robinson, Jr. and the Honorable David Haley, State Senator from Kansas City (and Alex Haley's nephew) addressed the group. The afternoon was spent at the Crest for a presentation by writer/director Kevin Wilmott who showed a brief clip of his film *Ninth Street* and talked about the challenges of independent filmmaking today.

The weekend reached a crescendo with the "Other Oscars," a silent auction fundraiser and dinner held at the Golden Belt Country Club. Attendees were in high spirits for the festivities, which were appropriately timed to coincide with Hollywood's Academy Awards presentation that could be seen on video monitors placed throughout the ballroom.

I was still snoring on Monday morning when Pearl rang my room to tell me that we were about to miss our flight. "What? I just got to sleep," I moaned into the phone. "Get up," she ordered. "Let's go!" When I got to the lobby, I noticed that the scene was identical to the one that happened just 72 hours earlier — scholars arguing, folks connecting and re-connecting, desk clerks collapsing. I realized that the event was about more than Micheaux; it was another important step along the road to our full recognition of our history and culture. This was a celebration of the genius, tenacity and courage of the African-American artist and the impact of the artist in America and throughout the world.

Marty Keenan approached me with a warm Kansas smile and eyes that reflected his exhaustion and relief that the event had reached a successful conclusion. "Thanks for coming," he said. I responded, "I wouldn't have missed this." I mentally noted that I nearly had missed it and why. I vowed that the next time I get the chance I will take the train to Great Bend.

A sample of the Oscar Micheaux note cards created by Micheaux descendant Debra Shuber. They can be ordered from:

Deb's Creative Services
Personalized Cards & Gifts
Wichita, Kansas
(316) 721-5019



Memories of "Megory:" A Journey into Mischeaux Country

Dana F. White

Professor of History, Emory University

The wind from nowhere blew in low-flying storm clouds that all but obliterated the landscape before us. Within seconds a driving rain, pounding our windshield with fire-hose force, turned to mothball-size hail. Halfway between Burke and Gregory, South Dakota on June 6, 2001 (the fifty-third anniversary of D-Day in Europe), we surrendered to the elements and retreated to the verge of the road, waiting for Nature to determine our course.

Our journey to Gregory began at a National Arbor Day Foundation conference in Nebraska City, about 50 miles south of Omaha. On the advice of three authorities on the area—all natives of that state—we mapped out a "blue highways" tour of Nebraska on into South Dakota in preparation for our excursion into Mischeaux Country. All roads traveled were well maintained, free of traffic lights and, except for brief stretches of inevitable connecting interstates, also sprawl-free.

Route 77N, which we accessed from I-80 (our brief—and only—stint of freeway driving), carried us due north, through rich and varied farm country. At 15W, we ventured due west and encountered the topographic region designated the "Rolling Hills," along which we sailed, mimicking the motion of a boat on gently swelling waves. Merging with 275W, we descended into our next topographic region, the "Plains." Pointing north again, we joined 14N and were soon back once more in the "Rolling Hills." Just south of the South Dakota border, we turned west along 12W, which we followed to 11N, which became 18W once we had crossed the state line.

Along the way, Nebraska's small cities—Fremont and Norfolk, both with populations just over 20,000—gave way to tiny towns—Verdigre, Niobrara,

Verdel, and Monowi—with populations ranging from the low 100s to an absolute low of 6. South Dakotan place names—Bonesteel, Herrick, Burke, and Gregory—were equally distinctive, as well as comfortably familiar to readers of *The Conquest*, *The Homesteader*, and *The Wind from Nowhere*.

Our 400-mile trek into Mischeaux's "Great Northwest" provided us both the time and space to effect a transition from urban to rural America, from metropolitan sprawl to sprawling frontier. Somehow, motoring across the Great Plains at speeds of 75-80 mph impart-

ed a sense of "slowing down," a transition from "clock time" to "real time," sans such "technological improvements" as e-mail, voice-mail, cell phones, and pagers. We felt ourselves better prepared to meet Mischeaux on his own turf, at his own terms.

We were welcomed to Mischeaux's special town by two special "Gregoryite:" Richard Papousek and Alis Veren. At Napier's Emporium at 520 Main, the organizers of this year's annual Oscar Mischeaux Film Festival shared with us pro-

grams, photographs, and memorabilia from earlier festivals (held at Gregory every August since 1996). They also introduced us to newspaper and magazine articles about the man and his environment, early editions and reprints of his novels, as well as works specific to the Rosebud region.

Later, Richard drove me to the Oscar Mischeaux Homestead, at the edge of town, which has been constructed to the specifications described in *The Conquest* by members of the Gregory County Historical Society. Here, as we wandered about the site, my guide discussed the coming (and going) of the railroad, the composition of the founding community, and the challenges of farming on this arid land bordering the 100th Meridian—once believed to be the starting point for the "Great American Desert." Under what Larry McMurtry has described as "one of the most generous skies in the

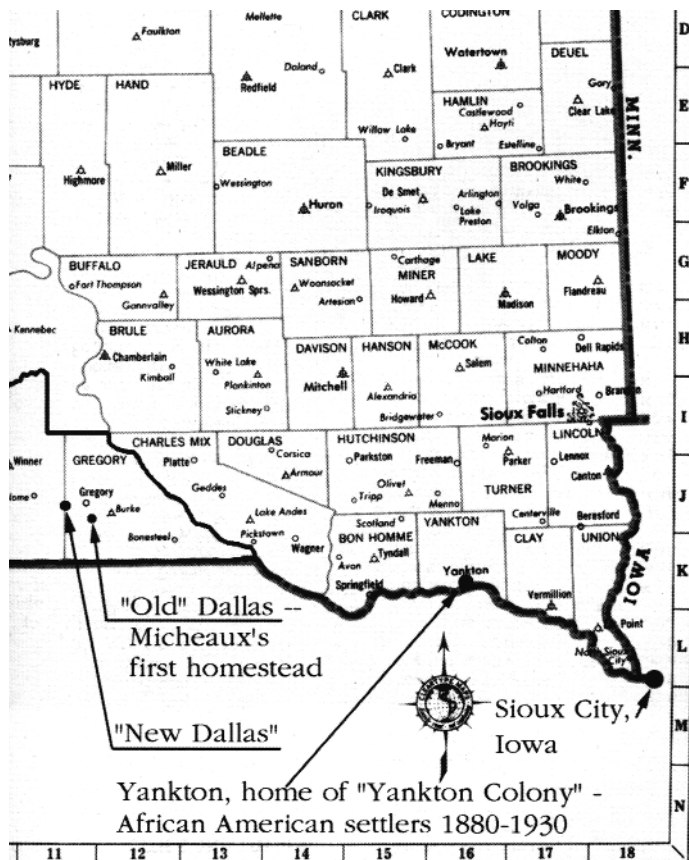


Main street of Gregory, South Dakota
(Mischeaux's "Megory") in 1907

world,” I pondered its influence upon the young Micheaux. “To those not attuned to their subtleties the plains are merely monotonous emptiness,” McMurty wrote in *Crazy Horse* (1999). “But to those who love them, the plains are endlessly fascinating, a place where the constant interplay of land and sky is always dramatic; gloomy sometimes, but more often uplifting.” In fact, uplifting enough to be the setting for a life’s work of novels and feature films about them.

We concluded our day in Gregory with dinner at The Homesteader (where else?) with Alis and Richard, and spent the night at The Orchard—our Big House on the Prairie. On the next morning, after ritual picture-taking and the packing of souvenir T-shirts and books, we turned west for Crazy Horse Country.

Our memories of Gregory are many, the lesson learned singular: the awesome power of the Plains and its inevitable influence on Micheaux. As there are said to be few atheists in foxholes, there can be few genetic determinists under the South Dakota skies—especially during a hail storm, under a tornado alert. Environment alone might not determine, but it certainly influences—especially the singular environment that was Oscar Micheaux’s “Great Northwest.”



News of Interest

The **Kansas Silent Film Festival** in Topeka, Kansas will screen Micheaux’s *Body and Soul* (1924) as part of their festival during Black History Month in February, 2002. For more information contact Jim Rhodes at jrhodes@tscpl.lib.ks.us.

Oscar Micheaux was recently inducted into the **South Dakota Hall of Fame**. A banquet honoring inductees will held be this fall. For more information on the Hall of Fame see <http://www.sdhalloffame.com>

New and improved! See <http://www.shorock.com/arts/micheaux/> created and maintained by Don Shorock. It has the most comprehensive information of Micheaux events including the Golden Memorial Celebration in Great Bend, Kansas, as well as genealogical information and photographs of Micheaux’s family.

Micheaux’s *Body and Soul* (1924) and *Within Our Gates* (1924) were screened as part of a conference entitled **Frame by Frame: Black Silent Film** presented by the **Des Moines Art Center** in Iowa. Other screenings included *Scar of Shame* (Peregrini, 1927), *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Vitagraph, 1910), *A Natural Born Gambler* (Biograph, 1916), plus *Two Nights of Vaudeville* (1917) and *Spyin’ the Spy* (1918), both by the Ebony Film Co. of Chicago. Speakers included Corey Creekmur, Charlene Regester, and Dick Abel.

Errata: In our last issue, we incorrectly attributed “Modern Day Pioneers on the Prairie: A Review of the South Dakota Micheaux Film Festival.” The correct author is **Alis Veren**. We also misspelled the name of **Zeinabu irene Davis**. We regret both errors.

Real to Reel: Black Life in Cinema Symposium

"Hustlin' Race, Pimpin' Blackness: Selling the Soul/s of Black Folk"

by R. Goldman Vander, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Comparative Literatures, UNC-Chapel Hill

April 5-7, 2001, the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill hosted the Real to Reel: Black Life in Cinema symposium titled "Hustlin' Race, Pimpin' Blackness: Selling the Soul/s of Black Folk." It was the first cinema studies symposium to be sponsored by the department, and the first black cinema studies conference to be held on the campus since the late 1980s, convening approximately 52 scholars from across the nation and abroad to participate in panel discussions and plenary sessions. Filmmakers from Cameroon, Cuba, and the United States also participated in the symposium with film screenings and discussions of their works that focused on the black presence within international contexts. Given the nature of the symposium and its timeliness, the program was sponsored by a number of UNC departments and Duke University's Film & Video Program.

In organizing the symposium, members of the planning committee approached the project from a threefold perspective: 1) to illustrate the depths of Black Studies at the university both within and outside of the immediate department of African and Afro-American Studies, 2) to illuminate the broader community of cinema studies scholars in residence at the university and across the Triangle area, and 3) to intersect the two disciplines to reflect their growing currency within the academy. Working within the paradigms of these perspectives, the planning committee ultimately sought to illustrate how Black Studies and Cinema Studies, conjoined, operate from critical and theoretical perspectives to address key issues confronting the black community, as those issues are created and depicted in films.

The symposium kicked off Thursday evening with a reception at Morehead Planetarium, which was immediately followed by a special screening of Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul*. In honor of the symposium and the film screening, noted North Carolina jazz pianist Chip Crawford composed and performed a new score for the film, which was introduced by Pearl Bowser, of African Diaspora Images. Immediately following the screening, Bowser facilitated a Q&A session on the film and on Micheaux's work in general.

On Friday, the first full day of the symposium, scheduled panel discussions addressed an array of issues concerning the various representations of black life in

cinema. Some of these panels included discussions on the transformation of history in film featuring cinema scholars such as Dr. Bishetta Merritt of Howard University and Francis Gatewood of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, an interrogation of the "rural ideal" as the "location of black culture," "reconfigurations of race in science fiction and fantasy films," and the commodification of the black male body in cinema. Of special interest on Friday's schedule was the session "Livin la Vida Negra: Black Life in Latin American Cinema," where Eli Bartra and John Mraz, visiting scholars from Mexico, broadened the symposium's discussion to interrogate "blackness" and "history" from outside an American perspective. Friday evening's film screening and discussion focused on Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Aristotle's Plot*, a satirical critique of modern cinema.

Saturday, the final day of the symposium, began with a special session on "Early Black Cinema." Moderated by Pearl Bowser, the session included presentations by noted Cinema Studies scholars Jane Gaines (Duke University), Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago), and Charlene Regester (UNC-Chapel Hill). Throughout the course of Saturday's program, sessions included panel discussions on the "erasure and marginalization of black life in cinema;" "gender, memory, and sexuality in *Eve's Bayou*;" (moderated by Wahneema Lubiano of Duke University) and "black sexuality in cinema." African American documentary filmmaker Reggie Life screened and discussed *Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan*. Also of interest on Saturday's program was the black sexuality panel, "Menage-a-trois: Black Sexuality, The Camera, and the Spectator's Gaze," which featured presentations by Kara Keeling (UNC post-doctoral fellow) and Patrick Johnson (Northwestern University). Both Keeling and Johnson had participated in the Black Queer Studies component of the New Millennium Conference held at UNC during the previous Spring, 2000 term.

This panel, along with several others, reinforced the fundamental premise that discussions of black life must be inclusive of all areas of experience including gender, class, and sexuality, to name a few. The final session on Saturday was a round-table discussion among presenters, moderators, and audience members facilitated by Houston Baker (Duke University). This session, working with the symposium's title, "Hustlin' Race, Pimpin' Blackness: Selling the Soul/s of Black Folk," served as the summary session for the symposium. Joining Baker in facilitating the discussion were Patrick Johnson and Michael

Gillespie (Duke University). During this session, the discussion ranged from how black life had been co-opted for the purpose of cinema, to individual experiences with movie going and struggles to find accurate and meaningful representations of the self in cinema. Closing the symposium were special screenings of Afro-Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando's *Eyes of the Rainbow* (film on Assata Shakur) and the 2001 release *Raíces de mi Corazón* (*Roots of my Heart*) about the 1912 massacre of 6,000 members of the Independents of Color political party).

Although UNC is not academically known for specializing in Cinema Studies, there exists a wealth of scholars in various departments whose research areas are, in fact, aligned with the discipline. Ideally, many at the university and other institutions, hope that the Spring, 2001 symposium will serve as the catalyst for more programs of this nature. To view a copy of the symposium program on line visit: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/afriafam/rtrinfo.html>



Wahneema Lubiano, Duke University, moderated a panel on "Gender, Memory, and Sexuality in *Eve's Bayou*."

Conferences

Florida State University 27th Annual conference on Literature and Film. Tallahassee, Florida, January 24-26, 2002. "Master Narrative and Faultline Stories." For more information see website: www.learningforlife.fsu.edu/complit or contact Sheryl Kormandy, Conference Coordinator, Center for Professional Development, Florida State University, 555 West Pensacola St., Tallahassee, Florida 32305-1640, Phone: (850) 644-2118, FAX: (850) 644-2589, Email: skormondy@cpd.fsu.edu. Deadline for submissions is October 1, 2001.

Society for Cinema Studies. Denver, Colorado, May 23-26, 2002. "Plenary: Cinema Studies in a New Media Age." As a new century begins, the medium of "film" has become embedded in the new technologies that surround it. The discipline of "cinema studies" was defined around the history and theories of the cinematic and the perimeters implicit in its name have delimited its object constraints as it expands to include other moving image media—video, television and (now) computer technologies. The rapid and global reach of new media challenges us as teachers and scholars to find new ways to understand how all media mediate our understanding of culture and society. Submissions deadline: October 1, 2001. Jane Dye, SCS Administrative Coordinator, 640 Parrington Oval, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019-3060. SCS website: <http://www.cinemastudies.or>

Domitor Conference. Montreal, Canada, June 2002. The Conference will provide the opportunity to reflect on technology and its impact on the devices that determine the production, exhibition, and reception of moving images. Paper topics include: The relations between the technology of cinema and the art of narration, the impact of the new technology on other media, and specific material and technical properties that characterize cinema. The call for papers deadline was September 8, 2000. For more information contact Karine Martinez, coordinator, Fax (514) 343-2393, karinem@cam.org.

Renew your Subscription to the Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter. . .



Send your check with this form to the *Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter*, Duke University Film & Video Program, 104 Crowell Hall, Box 90671, Durham, NC 27708. Cost is \$10 per year domestic, \$15 international.

Name _____

Address _____

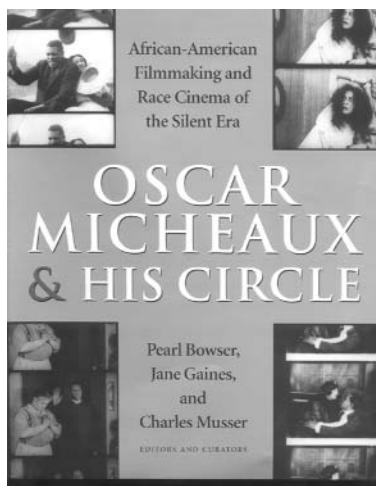
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Institutional affiliation _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Oscar Micheaux & His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era

The Long-Awaited Book is Here!



Oscar Micheaux —the most prolific African-American filmmaker to date and a filmmaking giant of the silent period—is finally awarded his place in history with this collection of important essays.

To some a genius and to others a huckster, Micheaux stirred controversy in his time as he confronted such issues as lynching, the KKK, black-white relationships, passing, corruption among black clergymen, and racial self-hatred. These films spoke to black moviegoers in ways that were completely different from Hollywood pictures.

Contributors focus on Micheaux's surviving silent films, his fellow producers of race films, who alternately challenged or emulated his methods, and the cultural activities that surrounded and sustained these achievements. New light is shed on the feature filmmaking of Richard Maurice (Detroit), David Starkman and the Colored Players Film Corporation (Philadelphia) and Richard Norman (Florida) as well as the stardom of Evelyn Peer, Lucia Moses, Paul Robeson, Charles Gilpin, and Lawrence Chenault. Shorter films shot in 16mm by ethnographer

Zora Neale Hurston and religious reformers James and Eloyce Gist (Washington, DC) fill out the complex picture of an era.

Authors examine Micheaux's films (and novels) from a range of perspectives including his radical aesthetic strategies, his uses of stereotypes, his powerful critiques of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and Eugene O'Neill's race plays, his radical uses of other texts (notably the novels of Charles Chestnutt), and his work with genres such as the Western. The relationship of Black film with the stage (particularly the Lafayette Players) and the Black Press, issues of underdevelopment, and a genealogy of Micheaux scholarship, as well as extensive and accurate filmographies give a richly textured portrait of this era that will fascinate the general public as well as scholars in the fields of film studies, cultural studies, and African-American history. This readable set of discussions is a superb reference work lavishly illustrated with rare photographs.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: OSCAR MICHEAUX AND RACE MOVIES OF THE SILENT PERIOD by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, And Charles Musser

I. OVERVIEWS

BLACK SILENCE AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION by Clyde R. Taylor

THE NOTION OF TREATMENT: BLACK AESTHETICS AND FILM, based on an interview with Peter Hessli and additional contributions from

Pearl Bowser by A. J. Jafa

FROM SHADOWS 'N SHUFFLIN' TO SPOTLIGHTS AND CINEMA: THE LAFAYETTE PLAYERS, 1915-1932 by Sr. Francesca Thompson

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESS AND RACE MOVIES, 1909-1929 by Charlene Regester

II. OSCAR MICHEAUX

OSCAR MICHEAUX'S *WITHIN OUR GATES*: THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ALTERNATIVE VISIONS by Michele Wallace

***WITHIN OUR GATES*: FROM RACE TO MELODRAMA TO OPPORTUNITY NARRATIVE** by Jane Gaines

OSCAR MICHEAUX'S *THE SYMBOL OF THE UNCONQUERED*: TEXT AND CONTEXT by Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence

TO REDREAM THE DREAMS OF WHITE PLAYWRIGHTS: REAPPROPRIATION AND RESISTANCE IN OSCAR MICHEAUX'S *BODY AND SOUL* by Charles Musser

BLACK PATRIARCH ON THE PRAIRIE: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND BLACK MANHOOD IN THE EARLY NOVELS OF OSCAR MICHEAUX by Jayna Brown

TELLING WHITE LIES: OSCAR MICHEAUX AND CHARLES W. CHESNUTT by Corey Creekmur

III. MICHEAUX'S CONTEMPORARIES

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES: *THE FLYING ACE*, THE NORMAN COMPANY, AND THE MICHEAUX CONNECTION by Phyllis Klotman

COLORED PLAYERS FILM CORPORATION

An Alternative to Micheaux by Charles Musser

Lost, then Found: The Wedding Scene from *The Scar of Shame* (1929) by Pearl Bowser

RICHARD D. MAURICE AND THE MAURICE FILM COMPANY by Pearl Bowser and Charles Musser

CINEMATIC FOREMOTHERS: ZORA NEALE HURSTON AND ELOYCE KING PATRICK GIST by Gloria J. Gibson

**APPENDIX A
THE REEMERGENCE OF OSCAR MICHEAUX: A TIME-LINE AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY** by J. Ronald Green

**APPENDIX B
AN OSCAR MICHEAUX FILMOGRAPHY: FROM THE SILENT THROUGH HIS TRANSITION TO SOUND (1919-1931)** compiled by Charles Musser, Corey Creekmur, Pearl Bowser, Charlene Regester, Ron Green, and Louise Spence

**APPENDIX C
A COLORED PLAYERS FILM CORPORATION FILMOGRAPHY** compiled by Charles Musser

**APPENDIX D
NORMAN FILM MANUFACTURING COMPANY: PRODUCTION AND THEATRICAL RELEASE DATES FOR ALL-BLACK-CAST FILMS** compiled by Phyllis Klotman

BIBLIOGRAPHY compiled by Kristen Barnes, Jane Gaines, Fred Neumann, and Hank Okazaki

Minutes of the Oscar Micheaux Society Annual Meeting

The meeting was held at the Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., site of the Society for Cinema Studies conference, on May 26, 2001. Jane Gaines, Charlene Regester, Corey Creekmur, Matthew Bernstein, Ellen Strain, Louise Spence, Laurie Rabinovitz, Daniel Bernardi, Frances Gatewood, Hye Chong, Marie Travis, Brian Taves, Robert Silberman, Jan Loveland, and Jacqueline Stewart were present.

Web Page

Fiona Barrett (Brown University) has received a grant to redesign the Oscar Micheaux Society website.

Great Bend, KS report

Oscar Micheaux's Golden Anniversary Memorial Festival was held this March in Great Bend, KS, where Micheaux is buried. In addition to scholars Jane Gaines, Charlene Regester, and Pearl Bowser, actor James McDaniel and Michael Unthank were in attendance. McDaniel is continuing to develop a feature film project about the life of Oscar Micheaux for HBO.

Distribution Information for VHS & DVD

The next regular edition of the Micheaux newsletter will include an update on the availability of Micheaux films on videotape, perhaps with an evaluation of the tapes released by Grapevine.

Corey Creekmur announced that Micheaux is now on DVD! Two Micheaux films are featured in the Library of Congress collection "Origins of the Moving Picture."

Book News

Congratulations to Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence for receiving the Theater Library Association Award for their groundbreaking book *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press, 2000)

Indiana University Press will soon publish *Oscar Micheaux & His Circle*. They have offered to update distribution information for films included in this program on the Indiana University Press website.

New publications include Anna Everett's *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949* (Duke); *Oscar Micheaux & His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era* (Indiana) edited by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser; and *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton) by Linda Williams

Pordenone Silent Film Festival: Sacile, Italy, October 13-20, 2001

This year's festival will feature the program "Oscar Micheaux & His Circle," a touring package prepared by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser to accompany the book of the same title. We discussed numerous logistical aspects of the festival. The festival website gives more detailed information about the scheduling of screening and accommodations and local transportation. Registration is free, but there is a suggested donation of \$100 and the opening and closing night screenings require purchase of tickets (around \$10 each). Previous attendees (Charles Musser, Lauren Rabinovitz, Daniel Bernardi, Louise Spence) reported that airfare to Venice can run between \$500-\$700 (more expensive from the West Coast). We discussed our hope that relatives of Oscar Micheaux will be able to attend this historic event. Jane Gaines will follow up with the festival organizers to find out about coordinating arrangements.

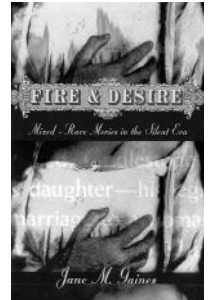
— Compiled by Jacqueline Stewart

Bibliography Update



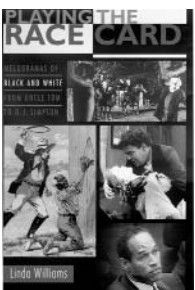
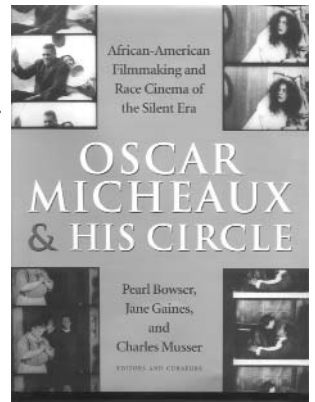
Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences. Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence. (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2000). Concentrates on the first decade of Micheaux's career, placing his work firmly within his social and cultural milieu. Provides a close textual analysis of his surviving films (including *Symbol of the Unconquered*, *Within Our Gates*, and *Body and Soul*), and highlights the rivalry between studios, dilemmas of assimilation versus separatism, gender issues, and class.

Fire & Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era. Jane Gaines (University of Chicago Press, 2000). Critically examines the intersection of race and desire in early cinematic representations and literary texts such as the works of Oscar Micheaux and James Baldwin's writings. Includes Gaines's well known essay on *Within Our Gates* as a political response to *Birth of a Nation* and addresses the politics of class and color in *Symbol of the Unconquered*.



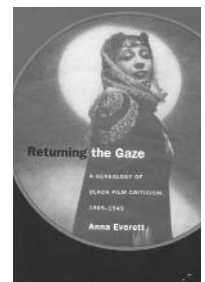
Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux. J. Ronald Green. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000). Green examines Oscar Micheaux's impressive legacy in commercial cinema. Between 1913 and 1951 he wrote, directed, and distributed 43 feature films, more than any other Black filmmaker in the world, a record of production that is likely to stand for a very long time. His efforts produced a nuanced body of films, boldly and repeatedly treating controversial topics that faced white censorship time after time: white mob and Klan violence, light-skin-color fetish, white financing of Black cultural productions.

Oscar Micheaux and His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era. Edited by Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser (Le Giornate del Cinema Muto and Indiana University Press, 2001). A collection of essays on Oscar Micheaux and other African American filmmakers of the silent era, compiled by scholars who attended the Micheaux and His Circle conference at Yale University in 1995. Essays include work by: Clyde Taylor, Jane Gaines, Phyllis Klotman, Gloria Gibson, Corey Creekmur, Louise Spence, Pearl Bowser, Charles Musser, J. Ron Green, Charlene Regester, Sister Francesca Thompson, Jayna Brown, and Michelle Wallace.



Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson. Linda Williams (Princeton University Press, April, 2001). Images of black men suffering at the hands of whites and of white women sexually threatened by black men have long been burned into the American conscience through popular entertainment, and continue to influence Americans' understanding of race. Williams explores how these images took root, beginning with melodramatic theater, where suffering characters acquire virtue through victimization.

Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949. Anna Everett. (Duke University Press, 2001). Culling black newspapers, magazines, scholarly and political journals, Everett corrects the notion that black critical interest in cinema began and ended with the press campaign against *Birth of a Nation*. As early as 1909, black newspapers addressed cinema as a corrective to theatrical minstrelsy, and drew attention to both the callous exploitation of lynching footage and the varied work of film entrepreneurs.





The Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter is dedicated to providing a medium through which we can promote discourse, debate, and discovery about filmmaker and novelist Oscar Micheaux and others who were active in early African American cinema. Unfortunately, much of their work remains inaccessible. It is through this medium that we hope to provide an avenue for inquiry into Micheaux and others who contributed to early African American cinema. *The Oscar Micheaux Newsletter* is a publication of the Film & Video Program at Duke University. We welcome your contributions, questions, and comments. Information and articles for editorial review should be sent to:

The Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter
Duke University Film & Video Program
104 Crowell Hall Box 90671
Durham, NC 27708-0671

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please send your Name, Address, Phone Numbers, Fax Numbers, and your E-mail Address, along with your check or money order, to the above address. Subscription cost is \$10 in the U.S. and \$15 abroad. Make checks payable to "Film & Video Program Micheaux Newsletter."

Editors: Charlene Regester (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) and Jane Gaines (Duke University)

Guest Editor & Designer: Lisa Poteet
Editorial Assistant: Nadia Mazhar

Film & Video Program
Duke University
104 Crowell Hall
Box 90671
Durham, NC 27708-0671

Address Service Requested

<p><i>Bulk Rate</i> <i>PAID</i> <i>Durham, NC</i> <i>Permit #60</i></p>

Oscar Micheaux and his Circle Touring Package

World Premiere: Sacile, Italy

October 13-20, 2001

Website: <http://cinetecadelfruili.org/gcm/>

