

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

NORMAN FILM MANUFACTURING COMPANY

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Norman Film Manufacturing Company

Other Name/Site Number: Norman Studios, Norman Film Studios

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 6337 Arlington Road

Not for publication:

City/Town: Jacksonville

Vicinity:

State: Florida

County: Duval

Code: 031

Zip Code: 32211

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Object: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: X

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

5

1

6

Noncontributing

___ buildings

___ sites

___ structures

___ objects

___ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 4

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Film Studio

Current: Religion
Work in Progress

Sub: Religious Facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Early 20th Century Commercial

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Wood

Roof: Composite Shingle

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**Setting**

Norman Film Manufacturing Company is located on the north side of Arlington Road in the Arlington neighborhood of Jacksonville, Florida. The Arlington neighborhood is situated along the southern side of the St. Johns River near where it meets the Trout River. The site occupies roughly half the block on the north side of Arlington Road. The main building of the site fronts Arlington Road which has expanded since the original construction of the studio. This resulted in a zero setback for the main building of the studio complex. The surrounding area is a mixture of commercial and recreational use buildings.

Building One: Exterior

Building one predates the rest of the site's structures and was originally built as a cigar factory.¹ This building was used as the headquarters for both Eagle Film Manufacturing Company and Norman Film Manufacturing Company. This two story building is wood frame in construction sheathed in wood German style siding. The building has brick pier foundations; wood lattice work fills the voids between each pier. The low pitched hipped roof is clad in composite shingles with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. There is a small brick chimney on the western side of the roof. The façade (southern elevation) of the building features a centrally-placed wood double-door entry that opens onto a small concrete porch with concrete and brick steps. The porch is topped by a flat wooden roof extension with exposed eaves similar to the roof of the building. The roof extension is supported by wood square columns. The double doors each feature one glass pane and are topped by a single transom window running the width of the doors. On the façade there are thirteen six over six double hung sash windows in wooden casings, six on the first floor and seven on the second. On the western elevation there are five six over six double hung sash windows, three on the first floor and two on the second. There is also one three over three double hung sash window on the second floor. The eastern elevation includes six, six over six double hung sash windows arranged symmetrically. The northern elevation of the building includes four six over six double hung sash windows on the first floor. These windows are flanked on either side by wood doors. Leading up to each door are wood stairs with wood railings. The second floor of the northern elevation includes five six over six double hung sash windows, a small wood door that previously led to a porch (no longer extant). There is one three over three double hung sash window in the western corner of the second floor of the northern elevation. On the main and the eastern elevation just above the roofline are two large "Norman Laboratories" signs consistent in appearance with the original signage.

Building One: Interior

The first floor of this building has six separate rooms, the main entrance opens directly into room two, which could have functioned as a lobby. (Figure 1) Room one in the southwest corner may have historically been used as a film editing space. (Figure 2) Room three runs the length of the eastern side of the building, its historic function is not definitively known. Room four that runs the length of the northern side of the building was historically used as a film drying space. (Figure 3) Room five is located centrally and was historically used as a film developing room. (Figure 4) Room six in the middle portion of the western side of the building contains a film vault that was used to store film reels. (Figure 5) The film vault room is constructed of brick masonry and thus is one of the best preserved rooms in the complex.

¹ Joel McEachin and Lisa Ranson, *Designation Application and Report Planning and Development Department of the City of Jacksonville*, (Jacksonville, 2014), 4.

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The second floor is accessed via a stairwell placed near the southwest corner and has eight rooms. Room one is located in the southwest corner and may have been used as a bedroom when the Norman family took up residence in the building in the 1950s. Room two is located along the southern elevation and may have been used as storage space. Room three is located in the middle of the eastern side of the space and was used as the projection room for the screening of silent films. (Figure 6) The projection room retains its original interior wall complete with viewing panels. (Figure 7) Room four located directly adjacent to the projection room was historically the screening room where all films were screened prior to their release. (Figure 8) The screening room retains the built-in projection screen at the western end of the room. (Figure 9) Room five is located in the northeastern corner, in the 1950s this room was used as a bedroom complete with a small bathroom; its use during the period of significance is unknown. Room six is located in the northwest portion and is adjacent to room seven. While the Norman family resided at the site these rooms were used as a dining room and kitchen. Room 8 is located on the western side and is directly adjacent to the stairwell. This room was used as a living space by the Norman family.

In the interior spaces some of the original floor boards remain however most of the floor is now plywood. Much of the interior wall cladding has been removed to make structural repairs. Throughout the building the framing still exists, along with many historic materials and some finishes, indicating the structure and flow of the original rooms. Once restoration is complete, original and in-kind materials will be returned. Considering that the layout of the rooms is still visible and the scarcity of this resource, the building retains enough integrity to reflect its historic use as a film production studio.

Building Two: Exterior and Interior

Building two was built after 1916 by Eagle Film Studios and housed the site generator. This single room wood frame structure is sheathed in wood German style siding. The building is supported by brick pier foundations with wooden lattice work covering the voids. The low pitched hipped roof is sheathed in composite shingles and features wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails. The structure is entered through a single wood door with a single pane glass transom light above. There are three wood steps and small wood railing leading up to the door. The door is flanked on either side by six over six double hung wooden windows. The northern elevation of the structure features two six over six double hung windows arranged symmetrically. The eastern elevation also has two six over six windows arranged on either side of a metal chimney. The chimney is supported by a small square brick foundation. The southern elevation also features two six over six windows arranged symmetrically.

The interior of the building is a single open space which houses the original electric generator and other mechanical items used to power the studio. (Figure 10) The interior walls had little cladding and what was there historically has been removed to make structural repairs leaving an exposed frame. The original floor boards have been removed and replaced by plywood. Considering the utilitarian nature of this building and the fact that it still houses the historic generator it retains sufficient integrity to reflect its historic use.

Building Three: Exterior and Interior

Building three is a wood frame building sheathed in wood German style siding. It is set on brick pier foundations. The hipped roof is clad in composite shingles with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The building is entered on the north elevation through a simple wooden door located in the western corner; there is a single pane transom light above the door. The building can also be entered through an off-center single wood door with a single transom light, located on the southern elevation. There are three wood steps and

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a small wood railing leading up to the north entrance. The fenestration of the building is markedly different from the other buildings within the complex. The façade features four paired six light sliding windows. There is a continuous band of paired six light sliding windows around the perimeter of the building, with eight pairs on both the eastern and western elevations and four pairs on the southern elevation. The interior of the building is a single open space with exposed rafters, wood flooring, and wood framed walls. This building historically served as the actor's cottage and dressing room for the studio.

Building Four: Exterior and Interior

Building four is of simple wood frame construction and sheathed in wood German style siding. The low pitch hipped roof is clad in composite shingles and features wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. There are two small equally spaced metal exhaust chimneys located on the center line of the roof. The building is set on a continuous brick foundation. The façade of the building features a large bay door flanked by two six over six double hung windows. In the corners are two wood paneled doors topped with single pane transom lights. Historically these doors were six over six double hung windows. Both the eastern and western elevations feature six symmetrically spaced six over six double hung windows. The rear elevation of the building has a bay door similar to the façade and is flanked by two six over six double hung windows. The interior of the building is one open space with exposed beams, wood floors, and exposed wood frame walls. Much of the framing has been replaced and is supported by numerous additional wooden beams. Historically this building was used as a garage and storage facility for the studio. It also housed a second extant generator that was used in conjunction with a no longer extant water tower.

Building Five: Exterior and Interior

Historically this building served as a set building and is now owned by the Circle of Faith Ministries. It is currently under use as a religious structure. This two story wood frame building has a low pitched hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves and historically was sheathed in wood clapboards. The north elevation of the building has eleven asymmetrically spaced two over two windows, six on the second floor and five on the first. There are two entrances, each entrance is topped by a wooden porch with a low pitched gable roof and wood support beams. The east entrance is accessed via a large ramp that fills much of the façade, the west entrance is accessed via three wooden steps. The east elevation has ten asymmetrically grouped two over two windows, five on each floor. The western elevation has no windows. Historically this building had numerous windows on each elevation to allow for natural light during filming, the east elevation had fifteen windows, eight on the second floor and seven on the first. The south elevation historically had two large two over two single hung windows equally spaced between two simple wood doors with single pane transoms. This building has undergone numerous restoration efforts due to vacancy, neglect, and termite damage. Due to its use as a religious structure, both the interior and exterior of the building have been modified to suit the needs of the congregation. The interior chapel area maintains much of its historic character; specifically with relation to massing, high ceilings, open floor plan, and second story balcony.

Integrity**Historic Appearance of site**

Four of the buildings within the site have been restored to their historic appearance with some minor differences. Several historic features of the main building are no longer extant. Prior to restoration efforts the

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main and northern elevations included small gable dormers that provided light and ventilation to the attic.² There were also three more six over six double hung windows, one on the second floor of the western elevation and two on the second floor of the northern elevation. The current appearance of this elevation includes a three over three window and a wooden door in their place. Historically the doors on the first floor of the northern elevation opened into small sheds, these sheds are no longer extant.³ Nearly everything in building two was restored to reflect its original appearance, all window and roof treatments reflect the original appearance of the structure. Building three was also restored to its original appearance, complete with fenestration details consistent with the historic function of the building. Building four historically was used as a garage and prop storage room, and historically had two additional windows on the façade where there are now two wooden doors. Building five historically served as the set building for the complex and historically had numerous windows on all elevations to allow for natural sunlight. The interior of the building was a large open space with a second story balcony. This building was historically used for both interior and exterior filming. Historic photos of the building indicate that there was also a large wooden outdoor set built near the southern elevation. The set building also historically featured a large canvas roll that featured painted scenes that could be changed by pulley-system. This system had deteriorated greatly by the time the Circle of Faith Ministries took ownership of the property and was removed from the building. Given the completeness of the studio and the fact that the National Trust has deemed the studio site as the only remaining silent film complex, Norman Film Manufacturing Company retains a high degree of integrity and presents a unique glimpse into the history of silent film.⁴

Contributing Site: Landscape Features

Historically a pool was located to the southeast of the main building. This pool was used extensively for filming water scenes. The pool has since been filled in and is no longer visible. During the restoration efforts for Circle of Faith Ministries the location was investigated to a depth of a few inches and the pool was found to be intact below ground and made of brick. Based on anecdotal evidence from community members it is possible that some Norman Film Manufacturing Company materials were put into the pool before it was filled with dirt. There is a potential for future archaeological investigation to reveal both the truth of these assertions and to reveal this historic resource. This archaeological resource is eligible for NHL consideration under Criterion A and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, because it dates to the period of significance and relates to the argument for the property's national significance as it is being nominated, it is considered a contributing resource.

A water tower was located to the northwest of building five; the tower itself is no longer extant, but its footings are still visible.

Restoration Efforts

Preservation efforts at the Norman Film Manufacturing Company site, today commonly known as "Norman Studios," began as early as 1993, according to a *Florida Times-Union* article covering the site's history. In 2000, there was "renewed interest" in the idea of preserving Norman Studios. Old Arlington, Inc., led by president Ann Burt, was the community group spearheading the preservation efforts, with the help of local

² Richard Norman. *The Flying Ace*, Film. Directed by Richard Norman. Jacksonville, Florida: Norman Studios, 1926. Black Film Center and Archive Indiana University. A still from this film shows the historic appearance of the main building of the complex, including the historic dormers.

³ Box 4, Richard E. Norman Collection, *The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁴ Barbara Tapa Lupack, *Richard E. Norman and Race Film Making*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 222-223.

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officials such as City Councilman Lake Ray and the city's historic preservation planner Joel McEachin. There was interest in the community to use the site as a museum and repository for Old Arlington, Inc.'s archives.⁵ There have been extensive restoration efforts since the City of Jacksonville acquired four of the five buildings within the complex. The buildings were vacant and neglected for a significant period of time and the lack of maintenance and extensive termite damage necessitated structural repairs and exterior renovations. The City of Jacksonville completed restorations such as selective demolition, masonry repairs, and reroofing.⁶ These restoration efforts were completed based on historic photos of the complex. Due to extensive termite damage much of the original wood material was replaced. These replacements were done with materials and profiles that matched the original appearance. These replacements include new window sashes consistent with the original configuration, new exterior siding, consistent with the profiles of the original building, and the preservation of the original roof profiles of all five buildings. All other restorations were also done in kind and reflect the historic character of the buildings. The renovations were carried out by Kenneth Smith Architects, Inc. in 2007.⁷

There are hopes for enhancing the site's museum and increasing educational and community-based programming, thereby preserving the legacy of Norman Studios through historic preservation and community revitalization efforts. The nonprofit, 501(c)(3) Norman Studios Silent Film Museum, Inc. is based out of the main Norman Studios building. The museum's mission is "To collect, preserve, and display artifacts, documents and histories associated with Florida's role in the development of the film industry with particular emphasis on Northeast Florida; to promote interest in and enjoyment of silent and early films and their histories; and to facilitate the growth of the motion picture industry via educational programs and materials."⁸

Norman Studios hosts "Silent Sundays," during which silent films are screened and funds raised from the film screenings go towards the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum.⁹ Site staff and stakeholders are also invested in partnering with scholars, filmmakers, museums, and others in order to educate people about the site and Norman Studios films.¹⁰ Site staff, community members, and other Norman Studios advocates hope that landmark status or other attention to the site's legacy will offer a multitude of future opportunities for programming and preservation of its rich history.

⁵ Jessie-Lynne Kerr, "Going to the Movies," *Florida Times-Union*, February 5, 2000, accessed March 15, 2015, http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/020500/nec_2015616.html#.VQYijGbTquh.

⁶ National Register of Historic Places, Norman Film Studios, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida, National Register #14001084

⁷ Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. *Eagle Film City (Norman Film Studios) Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission Designation Application for Landmark of Landmark Site*, March 26, 2014, 15.

⁸ "Mission: Mission Statement," Norman Studios, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.normanstudios.org/about/mission/>.

⁹ "Silent Sundays – A Florida Enchantment," Norman Studios, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.normanstudios.org/event/silent-sundays-a-florida-enchantment/>.

¹⁰ "Progress: A Sampling of the Top Accomplishments and Collaborations of the Norman Studios Over the Years," Norman Studios, accessed March 15, 2015 <http://www.normanstudios.org/about/progress/>.

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**Statement of Significance**

Norman Film Manufacturing Company is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with silent film history as a rare surviving example of an important property type, and for its role in the production of “race film” history in the United States in the early twentieth century. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is significant for its production and promotion of race films – moving picture films that utilized African American actors and that positively portrayed African Americans in non-caricatured roles. In an era and an industry which most often portrayed African Americans as lazy, silly, and with other demeaning characteristics, Richard E. Norman, a white filmmaker in Jacksonville, Florida, along with important and prolific African American filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux and William Foster, pushed back against those caricatures in films which featured all black casts. In the midst of *de facto* and *de jure* racial segregation and in the wake of the Great Migration, Norman’s films presented African Americans in visibly strong roles such as lawyers, bankers, pilots, police officers, and doctors. The films could be aspirational for some in their depiction of middle class life, or representational, by depicting African Americans as they saw themselves. The films, in their popularity, also challenged the idea of white supremacy and racial discrimination.¹¹ Norman Film Manufacturing Company is significant as an intact, silent film studio – a rarity within that context -- and highlights the history of the film industry as it transitioned from a dispersed industry with centers in New York and Chicago and Jacksonville to a centralized industry centered on Hollywood. Richard Norman’s contribution to African American film history is embodied in this complex of buildings, where quality race films were made and processed and from which they were distributed. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is the only remaining, complete, documented silent film studio that includes all elements of film production on a single site. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is a nationally significant site that is invaluable to the preservation of film, silent film, and race film history in the United States.¹²

The Development of Early Filmmaking

In 1878, Eadweard Muybridge created the first moving images with a sequence of photographs that depicted a horse in motion. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, notable developments in the film industry occurred in America and France. American Thomas Edison invented both the Kinetograph, the first moving image camera, and the Kinetoscope, which enabled the public to view the moving images. French inventors Auguste and Louis Lumière introduced the Cinématographe, a portable motion picture camera and projector. The first films produced by Edison and the Lumière brothers were usually less than a minute long and did not include a narrative. Instead, the films concentrated on movement, events, and people. In 1891, Edison’s short experimental film clip called *Dickson Greeting* was one of the first motion pictures. *Dickson Greeting* featured Edison’s engineer W.K.L. Dickson holding his hat and passing it from one hand to another.¹³ The Lumière brothers introduced the Cinématographe at the Grand Café in Paris on December 24, 1895 with a brief moving image of a horse and carriage.¹⁴ On December 28th, 1895, the Lumière film documentary *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) was shown at the Grand Café along with nine other Lumière films. Some consider the public screenings of the Lumière films in Paris to be the beginning of modern cinema.¹⁵

¹¹ Lupack, *Norman*, 5-6, 10, 27-28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 71, 223.

¹³ Justin McKinney, “From Ephemera to Art: The Birth of Film Preservation and the Museum of Modern Art Film,” *Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America Library*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2014): 296.

¹⁴ Shawn C. Bean, *The First Hollywood: Florida and the Golden Age of Filmmaking*, (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 2008), 15-17.

¹⁵ Deac Rossell, “A Chronology of Cinema, 1889-1896,” *Film History*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Summer, 1995): 139; Bean, 16.

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In 1902, Georges Méliès introduced the fictional tale *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). A year later, Edwin S. Porter released the western *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Both films were innovative for their narrative style. The audiences delighted in the artistry, the trick shots, and the costumes in the films.¹⁶ In 1915, D.W. Griffith presented the controversial feature length Civil War film *The Birth of a Nation*. Griffith is frequently regarded as the “father of film” for his pioneering filmmaking techniques such as the use of the close up and crosscutting.¹⁷ *The Birth of a Nation* was a commercial success. It was also powerful because it indicated that motion pictures had the ability to engage the emotions of an audience.¹⁸ *The Birth of a Nation* also served to inflame racial prejudice; its portrayal of African Americans as lazy, unintelligent, and threatening to white womanhood, and its casting of the Ku Klux Klan as a force for good did little but reinforce racial stereotypes and anger African American audiences. Nascent African American filmmaker William Foster sought to counter Griffith’s film with one that depicted African Americans in a positive light. His effort, *Birth of a Race*, fell behind schedule and suffered from creative changes that toned down the original message and added a new “patriotic” perspective as the Great War fever grew. It was delayed in production and wasn’t released until 1919. Another important African American filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux, in his own effort to counter *Birth’s* imagery, offered a differing view of African American experience and life. His 1920 film, *Within Our Gates*, offered up characters ranging from crooks to doctors and offers a hopeful and aspirational look at African American lives.¹⁹ But, like most race films, its audience, and thus its impact, was small.

In the 1920s, Americans flocked to the cinema. Estimates for the number of cinemas and other film-showing venues in the United States range from 16,000 to 22,000 by 1923.²⁰ Film stars such as Buster Keaton, Rudolf Valentino, Clara Bow, and Mary Pickford became household names.²¹ The decline of the silent film era took place in the late 1920s as films with spoken dialogue surpassed silent motion pictures. After sound films became popular with the release of the Warner Brothers feature film *The Jazz Singer* (1927), studios and theaters transitioned to sound technology. By 1930, most of the major studios in Hollywood no longer produced silent films.²²

During the silent film era, going to the movies was a form of escapism for the American public. The mood was heightened by the ambience of the opulent movie palaces and the dream-like air domes that were popular at the time. Marble columns, chandeliers, and fine paintings transformed a movie theater into a “dream palace.” Architects who specialized in atmospheric design used electric lights, plaster, and projection machines to create blue skies, twinkling stars, or drifting clouds. Seeing a film was a communal event and a chance to mingle with friends and neighbors. It was often a family affair and a special occasion that called for the audience to wear their best clothing.²³ As one film spectator described, “We thought silent movies were just an absolute thrill and something new. People didn’t think that it could possibly exist that you could sit in your seat and see something

¹⁶ Bean, 35-37.

¹⁷ McKinney, 301.

¹⁸ Donald W. McCaffrey and Christopher P. Jacobs, *Guide to the Silent Years of American Cinema*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 8, 137.

¹⁹ Richard C. Salter, “*The Birth of a Nation* as American Myth,” *The Journal of Religion and Film*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (October 2004): NP. <https://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/SalterBirth.htm> . Accessed 8/29/2015.

²⁰ Barbara Tewa Lupack, *Literary Adaptations in Black American Cinema*, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 92. Estimate of the number of African American owned or dedicated theaters ranged from 200 – 800 at the same period.

²¹ David J. Goldberg, “Rethinking the 1920s: Historians and Changing Perspectives,” *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (July 2007): 10.

²² McKinney, 309.

²³ Michael D. Kinerk and Dennis W. Wilhelm, “Dream Palaces: The Motion Picture Playhouse in the Sunshine State,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 23, (1998): 208-237; Gregg Bachman, “Still in the Dark-Silent Film Audiences,” *Film History*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (1997): 27, 29, 32.

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on the screen being projected.”²⁴ To the audiences, it seemed as if they were a part of the story that unfolded on the big screen. When the gang leader in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) pointed his pistol at the camera and fired it, the audience felt as if they were actually being shot.²⁵ When Pauline was placed in harm’s way in *Perils of Pauline* (1914), the audience members wondered if the damsel in distress would prevail. Attending a film was truly an entertaining pastime that allowed Americans to escape from reality for a little while.²⁶

Jacksonville’s Silent Film Industry

The rapid growth of the film industry is demonstrated by the widely-dispersed nature of production companies. Certain factors, though, created concentrations of the new industry – chief among these factors was the availability of trained actors. In 1908, New York City was recognized as the American film capital while Jacksonville, Hollywood, and Chicago competed for second place.²⁷ Although New York City was the film center, production companies were scattered all over the country. Thomas Edison operated his film company out of New York and New Jersey. Selig, Essanay and Kalem were based out of Chicago, and Lubin’s first studio was in Philadelphia. Eventually, Edison, Selig, Essanay, Kalem, Lubin, and dozens of other film companies maintained studios in Jacksonville as well.²⁸ Florida also attracted African American filmmakers; William Foster of Chicago, the godfather of African American filmmakers, “...headed to Florida, where Lubin, Pathé, Kalem and other licensed film manufacturers were making films. However, his films were mostly distributed in the Midwest” where he had established a reputation and a distribution system.²⁹

By 1913, Jacksonville, Florida had gained a reputation as the “Winter Capital” for both the wealthy and for the budding silent film industry.³⁰ Jacksonville drew visitors and participants of the film industry due to the warm weather, beautiful scenery, inexpensive property prices, abundant hotels, and low production costs.³¹ Additionally, Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway conveniently lured tourists, entertainers, and filmmakers from frigid New York to sunny Florida. The *Metropolis* newspaper advertised Jacksonville as being only twenty-four hours from Broadway’s renowned playhouses and theaters.³² The St. Johns River brought tourists and also transported film equipment, set materials, and costumes into Jacksonville. The river even played a role in movies as needed; it doubled as a swamp, the Nile, the Amazon, or the Mississippi River.³³

Jacksonville’s location accounted for much of the city’s allure but Mayor J.E.T. Bowdon was also influential in turning Jacksonville into a silent film center. The mayor advocated for the emerging motion picture industry and actively sought to make Jacksonville a filmmaking capital. In an open letter in the *Sunday Metropolis*, Bowdon called filmmakers and movie stars to Jacksonville. He offered a “hearty invitation” to them and touted the scenery, the sunshine, and the proximity to New York.³⁴ Jacksonville’s potential as a film capital was also marketed heavily in trade journals for the American film industry. In September of 1916, *Moving Picture World*

²⁴ Bachman, 27.

²⁵ Bean, 35-36.

²⁶ Bachman, 28.

²⁷ Kinerk and Wilhelm, 216, 218.

²⁸ Bean, 42-44, 65-69.

²⁹ Lupack, *Literary Adaptations*, 92.

³⁰ Lupack, *Norman*, 71.

³¹ Richard Alan Nelson, *Lights! Camera! Florida! : Ninety Years of Moviemaking and Television Production in the Sunshine State*, (Tampa: The Florida Endowment for the Humanities, 1987), 15-16.

³² Susan Doll and David Morrow, *Florida on Film: The Essential Guide to Sunshine State Cinema and Locations*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 9-11; Blair Miller, *Almost Hollywood: The Forgotten Story of Jacksonville, Florida*, (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2013), 4, 10.

³³ Bean, 8, 30; Miller 4.

³⁴ Richard Alan Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry, 1898-1930, Volume I*, (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1980), 164-165, 181-182; Miller 10, 14.

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stated, "On account of Jacksonville being only twenty-seven hours from New York, it is believed a number of companies now sent to the West Coast annually will be sent South which will result in a great saving in time and money to the producers."³⁵ In the same year, *Motography* magazine indicated that "Jacksonville, Florida is making a strenuous bid to become the motion manufacturing center of the country" and Mayor J.E.T. Bowden was named as the "forefront of the movement."³⁶ In a *Motography* article titled "The Call of Jacksonville," Walter R. Early pointed out that Jacksonville film producers enjoyed two more hours of sunshine a day than any other place in the United States. Early claimed, "All in all, there seems to be no place in the United States that offers the inducements to motion picture producers as this wonderful city of Jacksonville."³⁷

Between 1908 and 1918, a number of silent film studios answered the call and flocked to Jacksonville. By 1916, there were dozens of filmmakers operating in Jacksonville. Kalem became the first film production company in Jacksonville with their arrival in the winter of 1908 and 1909.³⁸ Kalem's 1908 film, *A Florida Feud; Or, Love in the Everglades* (1908) was the first feature film made in Florida. Kalem's success in Florida encouraged the arrival of other film companies. However, interest in Kalem's films diminished by World War I and their Jacksonville facility closed in 1917. By 1918, Kalem was out of business.³⁹ The Lubin Motion Picture Company, based out of Philadelphia, relocated permanently to Jacksonville in the winter of 1912-1913. In 1913, Oliver "Babe" Hardy began his film career at Lubin's Jacksonville studio. Lubin's time in Jacksonville was brief, and the studio closed in 1915. In that same year, The Vim Comedy Company of New Jersey took over Lubin's former studio. Two years later, Vim closed their doors.⁴⁰ Other notable film companies such as Biograph, Gaumont, Klutho, Selig, Thanouser, and Vitagraph also maintained studios in Jacksonville during the city's silent film heyday.⁴¹ In 1916, Eagle Film Company arrived in Jacksonville and purchased a building in Arlington that originally housed a cigar factory. Eagle Film Company expanded into several buildings and occupied the property until 1917. Richard E. Norman took over the Eagle Film Company complex in 1923. From that studio, Norman made several silent movies with all-black casts.⁴² During the silent era, film production was a precarious business and studios often came and went. While many of the other Jacksonville film studios rose and fell, Norman and his movie company made silent films throughout the 1920s and distributed them well into the 1930s.⁴³ The Norman Film Manufacturing Company remains the best example of an extant and complete silent film complex, showcasing the transition of silent film from centers like New York and Chicago to Jacksonville and then to Hollywood.

Jacksonville's time as a rival to Hollywood was short-lived. Several factors led to the end of Jacksonville's tenure as a filmmaking center. America's entry into World War I in 1917 negatively affected movie production. Additionally, in 1917, film industry advocate J.E.T. Bowden lost the mayoral election to conservative John W. Martin and public support for the movie industry in Jacksonville weakened.⁴⁴ Movie studios left the business altogether or relocated their operations to California.⁴⁵ In 1918 and 1919, an influenza pandemic caused movie theaters to close down, both in Jacksonville and across the nation. By 1918, almost all of Jacksonville's

³⁵ "New Company for Jacksonville," *Moving Picture World*, September 9, 1916.

³⁶ "Bids for Film Studios," *Motography*, February 12th, 1916.

³⁷ Walter R. Early, "The Call of Jacksonville," *Motography*, March 11th, 1916.

³⁸ Nelson, *Lights! Camera! Florida!*, 15-16, 26.

³⁹ Doll and Morrow, 2; Miller, 36, 40.

⁴⁰ Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry*, 156-160; Miller, 40-42.

⁴¹ Richard Alan Nelson, "Florida: The Forgotten Film Capital," *Journal of the University Film Association*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (Summer 1977): 10.

⁴² Lupack, *Norman*, 71, 118-119; Miller 67-71.

⁴³ Lupack, *Norman*, 160; Doll and Morrow, 14; Miller, 112-113.

⁴⁴ Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry*, 180-183; Bean, 93.

⁴⁵ Richard Alan Nelson, "Florida: The Forgotten Film Capital," *Journal of the University Film Association*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (Summer 1977): 17.

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filmmaking community had already vacated the city. The favorable economic and climactic conditions in California cemented Hollywood's role as the world's film capital.⁴⁶

Richard E. Norman and Norman Film Manufacturing Company

While Jacksonville's film industry declined and silent film companies went out of business all over the city, the most prolific decade of independent filmmaker Richard E. Norman's career was just beginning.⁴⁷ Richard Edward Norman was born in 1891 in Middleburg, Florida, to Richard Norman, Sr., a pharmacist, and Katherine Kennedy Bruce Norman. Richard Norman had two younger brothers named Kenneth Bruce and Earl Redding.⁴⁸ Norman began his lengthy career in the film industry in 1912 as a cameraman for Capitol City Film Company in Des Moines, Iowa.⁴⁹ In addition to his involvement with film production, Richard Norman was also a budding inventor. One of his first inventions was Pasi-Kola, a soft drink made with kola nut and the extracts of passion flower, peach, banana, orange, grape, lemon, and vanilla. He spent several years experimenting with the ingredients and creating logos and slogans for the beverage, but he abandoned his Pasi-Kola venture as he became more involved in the promising movie business.⁵⁰

Over the years, Norman's film company used several different names such as The Magic Slide Manufacturing Company, The Superior Film Manufacturing Company, and the Capital Film Manufacturing Company.⁵¹ While living in Des Moines, Iowa, Norman marketed himself as a traveling filmmaker and talent scout. He invited townspeople to perform in skits which he filmed and presented at local theaters for a cost, allowing ordinary citizens to see their friends and family members perform on the big screen.⁵² By 1915, Norman operated his production business out of Chicago as the Norman Film Manufacturing Company and he continued to create "Home Talent" films that featured local residents. To recruit stars for the photoplays, he publicized his business through a brochure entitled, "Have You Talent?" which included rave reviews from individuals who had previously acted in his town films.⁵³ One of his best known Home Talent movies was *Sleepy Sam the Sleuth* (1915), a comedy centered on the antics of two chicken thieves. Another was *The Wrecker* (1915-1919), a railroad drama which featured a train accident. Norman's Home Talent films were a successful venture and helped him gain a reputation as an independent film producer.

In 1916, Norman developed a feature film called *The Green Eyed Monster* (1916), which was inspired by his "Home Talent" film *The Wrecker* (1915-1919). In 1919, he remade the movie with a cast of black actors and began his productive career in "race films."⁵⁴ It is not known what inspired Norman to make films specifically for black audiences. While he may have had underlying altruistic motivations, as an experienced businessman and filmmaker he also likely recognized the money-making possibilities of delving into a previously underserved genre of film.⁵⁵ During the first decades of the twentieth century, the production of race films, or movies with all black casts, was an emerging market in the silent film industry. Race film producers like Norman Film Manufacturing Company of Jacksonville, Micheaux Film Corporation of Sioux City, Iowa,

⁴⁶ Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry*, 188-189.

⁴⁷ Richard Alan Nelson, "Florida: The Forgotten Film Capital, Florida": 17; Doll and Morrow, 12.

⁴⁸ Lupack, *Norman*, 34.

⁴⁹ Matthew Bernstein and Dana F. White, "'Scratching Around' in a 'Fit of Insanity': The Norman Film Manufacturing Company and the Race Film Business in the 1920s," *Griffithiana*, Vol. 21, No. 62-63 (May 1998): 81-127.

⁵⁰ Lupack, *Norman*, 35-37.

⁵¹ Business Cards for Various Norman Enterprises, Box 4, Folder 89, Richard E. Norman Collection, *The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁵² Lupack, *Norman*, 38.

⁵³ "Have You Talent?" Norman Film Manufacturing Company Brochure, Box 10, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁵⁴ Lupack, *Norman*, 52, 68, 72.

⁵⁵ Bean, 111, 115.

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Chicago and New York, and Lincoln Motion Picture Company of Omaha, Nebraska and Los Angeles were keen to capitalize on the genre's burgeoning popularity.⁵⁶ When Norman returned to Florida and bought the Eagle Film Studios property in the Jacksonville neighborhood of Arlington, he became one of the few independent manufacturers of race films to own his own studio.⁵⁷ By 1923, Norman distributed his films in 28 states and he "had men on the road at all times" who circulated the movies for him.⁵⁸ Norman distributed his films to small theaters across the country, even as far away as Los Angeles and Philadelphia. His films were also distributed heavily throughout the southern United States, with heavy concentrations in the states of Florida and Georgia. Many of the smaller African American run theaters also showcased vaudeville acts in conjunction with the screening of Colored Pictures.⁵⁹ Norman described his new studio as the "finest plant south of New York and the only one in Jacksonville or near Jacksonville."⁶⁰ In a 1924 letter to African American actor and magician, M.C. Maxwell, Norman boasted, "We are the only company making Colored Pictures owning and operating a completely equipped plant and we can make pictures consistently and cheaper than any other and produce at a profit if we can get talent."⁶¹

During his career, Norman made several films with all black casts including *The Green Eyed Monster* (1919), *The Love Bug* (1920), *The Bull-Dogger* (1921), *The Crimson Skull* (1921), *Regeneration* (1923), *The Flying Ace* (1926), and *Black Gold* (1928).⁶² One of the most well-known of the Norman films, *The Green Eyed Monster*, was filmed in Jacksonville and included a love triangle and a spectacular train wreck that allegedly cost \$80,000 to produce. Marketing materials for *The Green Eyed Monster* (1919) boasted that the film "in a subtle way suggests the advancement of the colored race along education and financial lines."⁶³ *The Green Eyed Monster* was well received by both black film critics and black audiences. *The Love Bug* was a comedic sequel to *The Green Eyed Monster*.⁶⁴ *The Bull-Dogger* and *The Crimson Skull*, westerns filmed at the 101 Ranch and the all-black town of Boley in Oklahoma respectively, starred famed rodeo performer Bill Pickett.⁶⁵ *Regeneration*, a romance film with a tropical island setting, was filmed in Jacksonville.⁶⁶ *The Flying Ace*, an aviation film set in World War I, was produced not only in Jacksonville, but was largely shot on location at Norman Film Manufacturing Company in Arlington. *Black Gold*, "A Thrilling Epic of the Oil Fields," was also filmed in Oklahoma.⁶⁷ *The Flying Ace* is the only full length Norman picture that survives today.⁶⁸

⁵⁶ Doll and Morrow, 12; Lupack, 18, 23; Sampson, 27, 44-45.

⁵⁷ Lupack, *Norman*, 10, 147. Others include the Paragon Pictures Corporation, located in Jamaica, Long Island, NY and the Ebony Film Corporation of Chicago. None of these studio facilities are extant.

⁵⁸ Richard E. Norman Letter to Jawitz Pictures, January 4, 1923, Box 9, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁵⁹ Theater Distribution Rolodex, Box 5, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*. Specifically the Dunbar Theater in Los Angeles and the Royal and Keystone theaters in Philadelphia. Theater Distribution List, Box 3, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁶⁰ Richard E. Norman Letter to C.W. Kramer, February 1925, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁶¹ Richard E. Norman Letter to M.C. Maxwell, August 29, 1923, Box 9, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁶² Lupack, *Norman*, 28, 225.

⁶³ Green Eyed Monster Herald, Box 10, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁶⁴ Lupack, *Norman*, 75, 80-82.

⁶⁵ Lupack, *Norman*, 86-92. Norman filmed much of *The Bull-Dogger* at the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch, a cattle ranch and the home of the 101 Ranch Wild West Show which featured Buffalo Bill Cody, Tom Mix, Will Rogers, and Bill Pickett. The location of the ranch is a National Historic Landmark, #73001560.

⁶⁶ Lupack, *Norma*, 97, 135.

⁶⁷ Doll and Morrow, 13; Lupack, 190.

⁶⁸ Richard Norman. *The Flying Ace*, Film. Directed by Richard Norman. Jacksonville, Florida: Norman Studios, 1926. Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

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When sound films overtook silent films in the late 1920s, Richard E. Norman attempted to keep up with the changing times by inventing film equipment that he called the Camera Phone. The Camera Phone was a “sound-on-disc” system which synchronized silent film with sound from a phonograph record. Norman spent his savings on manufacturing the Camera Phone, which he marketed and sold to silent film companies until new developments in sound technology and more sophisticated devices like Western Electric’s superior “sound-on-film” system caused Norman’s machine to become obsolete. Norman’s Camera Phone venture proved to be a gamble that strained his finances and made him unable to successfully adapt his film business to this new phase in the American film industry.⁶⁹ In the late 1920s and early 1930s, motion picture companies in Monrovia, Liberia in West Africa wrote to Norman and expressed interest in his silent films, particularly *The Flying Ace* (1926). The WER Company wrote, “We are especially interested because Liberia being a Coloured Nation, we are sure such pictures would meet with high approbation from the entire populace.”⁷⁰ Norman was also approached by the Heroh Motion Picture Company in Monrovia. He sent the company a list of his films along with marketing information about his Camera Phone equipment.⁷¹ While no business deal seems to have been reached, the Liberian interest in Norman’s films indicates just how far his race filmmaking reputation traveled. In the mid-1930s, Norman showed his silent movies on the road and made industrial films for the Pure Oil Company.⁷² By the early 1950s, Norman lived in Orlando, Florida and operated two movie theaters – The Famous in Winter Park and The Ace in Apopka.⁷³ In the 1950s, Norman retired and returned to Jacksonville. He resided at Norman Film Manufacturing Company, from which his wife Gloria operated a popular dance studio. Richard E. Norman died of cancer in Jacksonville in 1960 and Gloria Norman sold Norman Film Manufacturing Company in 1976. During his filmmaking career, Richard E. Norman witnessed the rise and fall of the silent film era and the emergence of modern film. Norman’s contributions to silent film in general and to race filmmaking in particular were significant to American film history. Norman’s studio still remains and symbolizes the legacy of his silent films. The studio is also a reminder of Richard E. Norman, the man, who was not only a filmmaker but was also an astute businessman.⁷⁴ From Pasi-Kola and “Home Talent” movies to the production of pioneering, stereotype-free race films, to the Camera Phone, Richard E. Norman signified the innovative, entrepreneurial American spirit.⁷⁵

Race Film History

The rise of the race film coincided with the Great Migration. During and after World War I, African Americans experienced economic and societal changes as hundreds of thousands of African Americans left their homes in the South and relocated to northern metropolises. From approximately 1915 and throughout the 1920s, locations such as Chicago, Detroit, Harlem, New York, and Philadelphia beckoned southern blacks to migrate North by promoting financial, educational, and leisure opportunities. The African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, encouraged the mass migration to the North through numerous advertisements and articles. The Great Migration and urbanization led to the development of a black middle class and a black consumer market. African Americans with disposable incomes were able to take part in social and recreational activities and amusements that had previously been unavailable to them. During that time, going to the movies became one of the most popular activities for African Americans living in urban localities. Furthermore, movie-going played a major role in constructing modern black life in the city. As the movie theater became a cultural institution in

⁶⁹ Nelson, *Lights! Camera! Florida!*, 24; Lupack, 159, 199, 204-205; Bernstein and White: 117.

⁷⁰ Letter to Richard E. Norman from S. Raymond Horace of the WER Company, October 28, 1935, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁷¹ Letter from Richard E. Norman to J. Pitman Harmon, Jr., of the Heroh Motion Picture Company, October 23, 1929, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

⁷² Lupack, *Norman*, 206-207, 216-217.

⁷³ Orlando City Directory, Orlando, Florida: R.L. Polk & Company, 1953; Lupack, *Norman*, 218.

⁷⁴ Jacksonville City Directory, 1956; Lupack, *Norman*, 221-223.

⁷⁵ Lupack, *Norman*, 68, 221.

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black society, theater owners and filmmakers recognized that black film audiences represented an untapped mass media consumer base. By 1921, there were hundreds of theaters that catered exclusively to black audiences, and there were dozens of independent film companies making movies for those audiences.⁷⁶

The first films to utilize African American characters, or even to feature them, typically portrayed them in as caricatures. Initially targeted at white audiences, early film makers soon discovered that all-black audiences would pay to see their films. These films portrayed African Americans in stereotyped roles in which they were buffoons eating chicken and watermelon, “humorous, lazy, shiftless, and stupid” and often were white actors in blackface. African-American characters also played roles such as the “Mammie,” “coon,” “Sambo Sam,” and other caricatured parts.⁷⁷ The explosion of new theaters in the first two decades of the twentieth century created a market for race films.⁷⁸ Many theaters throughout the country were segregated, relegating African Americans to less desirable seats such as in the balcony, or refusing entrance to African Americans entirely. Some theaters in the South made African Americans enter theaters from an alley or back entrance, or only allowed them in on special days set aside just for them. It was in this context of theater segregation that race films, or films that were made specifically for African American audiences, were created.⁷⁹

In 1913, William Foster became the first African American movie producer. His 1913 film, *The Porter*, was set in his hometown of Chicago, and countered the prevailing stereotypes by depicting hard-working railroad men with real-life problems and concerns. Foster was quick to call for African Americans to control their own destiny in films: “With the motion-picture here to stay, the Negro is sure to do his part of the work and certain to reap his portion of the reward.”⁸⁰ Another Black-owned company, Lincoln Motion Picture Company was among the first to defy these “humiliating burlesque and slapstick comedies”⁸¹ and create all-black cast films that portrayed African Americans in a positive light.⁸² Lincoln released its first film in 1916, *The Realization of a Negro’s Ambition*. This successful film set the stage for future Lincoln and other companies’ productions.

Another well-known producer defying racist stereotypes was African American producer Oscar Micheaux, who ran the Micheaux Film and Book Corporation, later called the Micheaux Film Corporation. Micheaux was originally from Illinois and later became a rancher on a homestead in South Dakota. He initially posed his film idea to Lincoln films, but he decided to make his own film when that deal did not work out. The film, *The Homesteader* (1919), was based on Micheaux’s book of the same name, and was a dramatized version of his experiences as a rancher. *Within Our Gates* (1920) was another early film produced by Micheaux, the film depicted a lynching making it highly controversial.⁸³ Micheaux Film Corporation was originally based in Sioux City, Iowa and Chicago, Illinois, with a later office opening in New York City.⁸⁴ In addition to centering his film production in New York and Chicago, he also filmed in New Jersey.⁸⁵ Micheaux minimized costs by frequently filming in friend’s homes and personal offices, and the films were lacking in technical quality.⁸⁶

⁷⁶ Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 2-3, 6-10, 102, 108, 114-119, 142-148, 155; Steven A. Reich, *Encyclopedia of the Great Black Migration, Volume 1: A-L*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 84-89, 350-351; Lupack, *Literary Adaptations*, 92.

⁷⁷ Lupack, *Norman*, 5-6, 27; Kisch, 132.

⁷⁸ John Duke Kisch, *Separate Cinema: The First 100 Years of Black Poster Art* (London: Reel Art Press, 2014), 132.

⁷⁹ Daniel J. Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 94.

⁸⁰ Sampson, 175.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸² Kisch, 132.

⁸³ Sampson, 27, 42-45.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁸⁵ Thomas Cripps, *Black Film as Genre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 26.

⁸⁶ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), 114-115.

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While African American filmmakers strove to produce quality films targeted at Black audiences, white filmmakers also saw the potential for reaping profits from this select audience. William Foster's vision of "the Negro reap(ing) his portion of the reward" was dimmed as he noted that whites inevitably "stepped in to grab off another rich commercial plum from what should be one of our own particular trees of desirable profit."⁸⁷ While many established white-owned film companies continued to exploit the African American audience with stereotyped films, other white-owned producers saw the benefit in following Foster and Micheaux's lead in producing quality films. One of the first was Reol Productions of New York City, which mined African American literature for themes.

It was into this environment that Richard Norman began his work in race films. Richard Norman of Norman Film Manufacturing Company was a white filmmaker who also challenged racial stereotypes by portraying African Americans in a range of positive roles through high quality film productions. African Americans in Norman films played the roles of "bank presidents, superintendents, advertising directors, engineers, doctors, captains, detectives, pilots, ranchers, lawmen."⁸⁸ Race films created by Richard Norman and other independent filmmakers promoted race consciousness, and they were often produced with the goal of promoting "racial uplift" by placing African Americans in professional roles.

Norman likely entered the race film industry after recognizing that a market for the films existed, and then recognized that African American audiences would likely turn out in larger numbers to movies that represented them positively. Captain Richard E. Norman, Richard Norman's son, has stated that there were business motives behind his father's work in race films, while also saying that his father wished to further racial relations and therefore had more idealistic goals in mind in his work. It is difficult to evaluate whether or not his motives were more altruistic, but Richard Norman likely saw a profit opportunity in race film during his home talent film travels.⁸⁹

The African American press played a large role in silent film and race film history. African American newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* called for support of race filmmakers who were portraying African Americans in a positive light, particularly artists such as Oscar Micheaux.⁹⁰ The *Chicago Defender* also voiced approval of white-owned film productions such as Richard Norman's *The Green-Eyed Monster* (1919), calling it "one of the most sensational features ever produced with an all racial cast" and explaining that the film "suggests the advancement of our folks along educational and financial lines."⁹¹ Over time, however, African-American newspapers became more critical of race films, especially when they were deemed to be low quality films.⁹² They also condemned negative portrayals of African Americans in films such as those produced by the white-run Ebony Film Corporation.⁹³ The May 12, 1917 *Chicago Defender* article "Ebony Film Cancelled: Phoenix Theatre Manager Refuses to Use Degrading Movie" spoke out against "the depraved ideas which a certain set of scenario writers have regarding the moral nature of our people... We want clean Race pictures or none at all."⁹⁴ Writer D. Ireland Thomas noted in the *Defender*, "The people are not flocking to the theater any more just because it is a race picture. They have to be shown that it is a good picture."⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Lupack, *Literary*, 80.

⁸⁸ Lupack, *Norman*, 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-12, 71-72.

⁹⁰ Pearl Bowser, Jane Gains, and Charles Musser, eds., *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 37.

⁹¹ "'The Green-Eyed Monster: Play With All Racial Cast Playing Week at States Theater,'" *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL), July 9, 1921.

⁹² Bowser, Gains, and Musser, 37-38, 40.

⁹³ Sampson, 56, 58.

⁹⁴ "Ebony Film Cancelled: Phoenix Theatre Manager Refuses to Use Degrading Movie," *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL), May

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African American newspapers often had close ties to race films, in that the same people worked for both industries. George Johnson, General Booking Manager for Lincoln Motion Picture Company films, worked closely with Tony Langston of the *Chicago Defender* in order to promote Lincoln films. D. Ireland Thomas, also of the *Chicago Defender*, worked closely with the Lincoln Motion Picture Company and managed the distribution for a Rosebud Film Corporation film. Similarly, Romeo Daugherty promoted Harlem entertainment and was *Amsterdam News* editor, and after being in touch with George Johnson, later got a job managing a Lincoln Motion Picture Company office.

African American films drew heavily from other sources of African American talent such as vaudeville actors and actors from African American dramatic stock companies and musical comedies. The Lafayette Players is a notable example of an African American dramatic stock company whose players often became race film stars.⁹⁶ Anita Bush founded the Anita Bush Stock Company in Harlem in 1915, and the company provided a great source of race consciousness and pride. The Anita Bush Stock Company evolved into the Lafayette Players Stock Company after the players moved from the Lincoln Theatre to the Lafayette Theater, and almost all of the original company members went on to act in film.⁹⁷ Lawrence Chenault, Anita Bush, and Lawrence Criner were all Lafayette Players that also starred in Norman films.⁹⁸ Famous African American star Bert Williams was a performer with the theatrical Ziegfeld Follies at the time of his film debut, and there were numerous other African American performers that got their start in vaudeville or musical comedy before working in film.⁹⁹

The race film industry was distinct from other film production industries for numerous reasons. Clearly, the content of the films and their audience was unique. Additionally, fewer theaters carried race films, and as a result there was much less of a profit base from the making of race films.¹⁰⁰ Richard Norma, in an effort to enlist Anita Bush as a star for one of his films (*The Crimson Skull*), wrote to her in 1921 and laid out the economics of race films in an effort to explain his lower salary offer: "as our picture will be produced for colored theaters only, it will have a possible distribution in about 120 theaters, 85% of which have an average seating capacity of but 250. These figures are no comparison with the 22,000 white theaters in which our product will find no market."¹⁰¹ Norman had been in the business long enough to have built up a reliable distribution system; other race filmmakers had to work harder to get their films distributed. The profits were small compared to the standard, white-oriented film market. For example, Oscar Micheaux, like Norman, handled his own distribution. In 1921, he "...had a distribution system in place that included 11 first-run houses that would pay rentals from \$400-\$2,000, additional houses in Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and numerous smaller theaters in the South and border states that would net between \$150 and \$500 on each picture, as well as alternative sites such as schools and Y.M.C.A.s."¹⁰²

Extensive publicity, outreach, and meetings with theaters were necessary to make a name in the industry and remain competitive. Studios used publicity stunts, or "ballyhoo" related to the show to generate audience interest. For example, Norman Film Manufacturing Company exhibited artifacts relating to the film's theme

12, 1917.

⁹⁵ Pearl Bowser and Louise Spencer, *Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 118. The quote is from 1922, in the midst of Norman's career as a race filmmaker.

⁹⁶ Sampson, 35, 39, 78, 185-186.

⁹⁷ Bowser, Gains, and Musser, 20 -21; Sampson, 185.

⁹⁸ Sampson, 26, 186. Sampson spells Chenault's first name "Lawrence," whereas the prevalent spelling in other sources is "Laurence." This is the same person, simply with an alternative spelling.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bowser, Gains, and Musser, 5.

¹⁰¹ Bowser and Spencer, 165.

¹⁰² Ibis., 115.

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(often exaggerating or faking a description of the prop's use) and provided live comedy shows performed by stars such as Steve "Peg" Reynolds. Production of hit movies such as *Regeneration* (1923) was also key to survival. Mirroring the practice of white films, several prominent race film producers and actors also began to realize the need for leading, recurring characters that would draw audiences to multiple films. At one point Richard Norman started development of a serial production, *Zircon*, that would hook audiences for multiple runs of the show. Clearly, ingenuity and shrewd business practices such as getting advance payment for films were necessary to survive in the film industry. Few creators of race films to owned their own studios; Ebony Film Corporation owned its Chicago Studio, and Paragon Pictures Corporation of Jamaica, New York had its own facilities, and Richard Norman owned not only his own studio, but also the manufacturing plant. Norman wrote letters stating that ownership of his own laboratory and studio made it cheaper to produce films, whereas others struggled to survive in the industry.¹⁰³ Norman, with his distribution network, also helped distribute other company's films, including those of Micheaux and of the North State Film Company.¹⁰⁴

It was challenging to make a profit in race filmmaking, and the unique characteristics of race moviemaking resulted in similar business tactics amongst those in the field. George Johnson, General Booking Manager for Lincoln films, used many tactics to boost distribution. One such tactic was to get smaller theaters, which did not have the resources for large film prices, involved in screening films. He would send two separate businessmen to the theater, one being the advance man who would make the deal, and the second would later arrive with the film and collect the profit after the screening. Then, the second businessman would move on to the next town where the advance man had already made a deal.¹⁰⁵ This tactic was necessary not only because of the slim profit margins involved in race filmmaking, but also because of the smaller theater and production companies' lack of access to film exchanges. These film exchanges were used by larger studios to repair, circulate, and store film reels, which were then distributed regionally.¹⁰⁶

Richard Norman used similar, inventive tactics in his production, such as sending out roadmen to book venues. Norman himself also traveled extensively, especially in the early days of his business, to drum up publicity and screens for his films. In the 1927, films began to be created in sound, leading to the demise of the silent film industry and Richard Norman's film production in particular. The only race film producer to survive the transition from silent films to sound films was Oscar Micheaux.¹⁰⁷

Jacksonville as a Microcosm of Race Relations in the United States

There were 48,194 African Americans living in Jacksonville by 1920, meaning that over half of the city's 91,558 residents were African Americans. African Americans were prominent in politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1880s through 1907, there was strong African American political representation, but fear from whites in the community resulted in measures aimed at curbing African American political participation.¹⁰⁸ Many of the African American political leaders during this time period were affiliated with the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, an important institution in the community.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Lupack, *Norman*, 102, 111-114, 118-119, 143, 146-147.

¹⁰⁴ Bowser and Spencer, 242 (note 64); Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grunderson, and Art Simon, eds., *Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film, Volume 1, Origins to 1928*, (Chichester: West Sussex, United Kingdom, 2011), 239.

¹⁰⁵ Sampson, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 157.

¹⁰⁷ Lupack, *Norman*, 179-180, 196-197, 205.

¹⁰⁸ Abel A. Bartley, *Keeping the Faith: Race, Politics, and Social Development in Jacksonville, Florida, 1940-1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 1-2, 5-6.

¹⁰⁹ Bartley, 6; Herman Mason, *African-American Life in Jacksonville* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1997), 68.

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After 1907, African American political participation vanished.¹¹⁰ James B. Crooks' book *Jacksonville after the Fire, 1901-1919: A New South City* attributes this change to district gerrymandering. A 1901 white primary law, segregation of streetcars, and exclusion in 1907 from "all but the most menial city jobs" also harmed racial relations in early 1900s Jacksonville.¹¹¹ Additionally, implementation of a poll tax and other ballot laws, and physical intimidation also prevented African Americans from voting. *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the well-known film that negatively portrayed African Americans, also fueled racial antagonism in the South.¹¹² Racial relations in Jacksonville became violent in the 1910s. In 1910 there were violent riots against black property following Jack Johnson's heavyweight victory, in 1914 president of the Colored Board of Trade commented on the high number of African American men shot by police officers, and lynchings of African Americans occurred in 1919.¹¹³ These conflicts were reflective of trends throughout the country; in 1919 there were race riots in over two dozen cities across the United States.¹¹⁴

Despite the violence of the period, there were many flourishing institutions of African American life in Jacksonville in the early twentieth century, including restaurants, businesses, funeral homes, churches, libraries, and more, as detailed in Herman "Skip" Mason, Jr.'s work *African-American Life in Jacksonville*. Jacksonville also had vocal African American newspapers such as *The Florida Tattler*, *Florida Sentinel*, *The Jacksonville Journal*, and the "Colored News" section of the *Florida Times-Union*.

Entertainment for the African American community included a variety of performing arts opportunities, particularly vaudeville shows, movies, swing music, and jazz. African Americans went to African American theaters or watched movies from the segregated balconies of other theaters.¹¹⁵ There was the Strand Theater, Globe, Frolic, and Air Dome, which were theaters on the prosperous Ashley Street.¹¹⁶ The Pix Theater in Eastside, Ritz Theater, Palace Theater, and Lincoln Theater were some of the others that existed over the years.¹¹⁷ In a letter to Mr. A. A. Fish on May 15, 1925, Richard Norman described the Strand Theater as a "large house" that "runs vaudeville."¹¹⁸ Norman tried to book a showing for the Frolic Theater in Jacksonville, but was unsuccessful when he "made the mistake in screening for them and they don't like it."¹¹⁹

In 1909 to 1912, laws were passed limiting entertainment on Sundays. Motion picture screenings were ultimately not banned, while vaudeville and other plays on Sundays were, but film censorship from the Woman's Club and closures during church on Sunday evening did affect motion picture screenings.

White audiences in Jacksonville also enjoyed motion picture entertainment after a sharp increase in the number of theaters in the early twentieth century, as well as the increasing prominence of film. Many of the theaters that once hosted vaudeville shows were converted into motion picture theaters.¹²⁰

Entertainment was also provided by numerous celebrity visits to the city over the years. African American aviatrix Bessie Coleman was one such celebrity who visited Jacksonville in 1926. She was scheduled to

¹¹⁰ Bartley, 7.

¹¹¹ James B. Crooks, *Jacksonville after the Fire, 1901-1919: A New South City*, (Jacksonville, FL: University of North Florida Press, 1991), 146.

¹¹² Bartley, 8, 104-105.

¹¹³ Crooks, 146.

¹¹⁴ Lupack, *Norman*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Crooks, 9, 15, 18, 104, 146.

¹¹⁶ Mason, 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20, 29; Crooks, 104.

¹¹⁸ R.E. Norman Letter to A.A. Fish, May 15, 1925, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Crooks, 103, 111-112.

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perform on May 1, 1926, when she was suddenly killed during a practice at Paxon Field in Jacksonville on April 30.¹²¹ Bessie Coleman corresponded with Richard Norman about filming her flying before her death. Instead, Richard Norman used the flying theme in his film *The Flying Ace* (1926).¹²²

The segregation of institutions and entertainment in Jacksonville exemplifies the segregated character of cities across the country during this time period. African Americans owned separate banks, hotels, and other institutions, including theaters, throughout the country as a result of segregation. While many of these institutions represented the thriving cultural life of African American communities, Jane M. Gaines explains that “Although some enterprising members of the black middle class would profit from the creation of white and black parallel institutions...in the end white capital cut deeply into the Negro market built by race movie producers.”¹²³

The Importance of the Norman Film Manufacturing Company and the Race Film Business

Norman Film Manufacturing Company’s operations in the race film industry occurred within the context of a segregated society. Film audiences were segregated through separate theaters, segregated theater sections, or segregated screening times. As a result, dissemination of these films beyond an African American audience was limited.¹²⁴ Richard Norman’s son, Captain Richard Norman, Jr. stated in a 2008 *Ledger* article that he has no knowledge of resistance in Jacksonville to Richard Norman’s films. Dr. Carolyn Williams, a University of North Florida professor of history, attributed this lack of resistance to segregation, which resulted in a predominantly African American audience for Norman’s films. Indeed, Richard Norman, whose letters to other filmmakers and distributors demonstrate his business acumen, must have seen the market for films catered to African American audiences and decided to pursue that source of profit, as had other white filmmakers.¹²⁵ Reol Productions was another white-owned race film company that did not present African Americans in caricatured roles. They went out of business earlier than Norman Film Manufacturing Company and exemplified the struggle and desire to earn a profit that was at the heart of the race film business.¹²⁶

Norman’s race films were among others during this time period that perpetuated values of the “Black bourgeoisie.” The films contained characters that were “well-educated, with high moral values, and strongly motivated to achieve success.”¹²⁷ Henry T. Sampson states that such films challenged movie stereotypes, not racial discrimination in America more broadly.¹²⁸ Indeed, many race film creators and members of the press promoted “black middle class values” because they themselves were of the middle class and hoped to foster racial uplift. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company film *Trooper of Troop K* (1916) is one example of a film in which the main character, Shiftless Joe, is transformed from “shiftless” to a hero espousing black middle class values.¹²⁹

Richard Norman was faced with challenging financial constraints and prevalent censorship in his work as a race filmmaker. As a result, there was little incentive for him to create films that were overtly radical, as they might

¹²¹ Mason, 44, 51.

¹²² Lupack, *Norman*, 167-168.

¹²³ Jane M. Gaines, *Fire & Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 102.

¹²⁴ Bowser, Gains, and Musser, 4.

¹²⁵ Correspondence and Censorship Records, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.*; Distribution Records, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.*

¹²⁶ Lupack, *Norman*, 29.

¹²⁷ Sampson, 86-87.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²⁹ Lupack, *Norman*, 19.

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not have been distributed widely nor screened without extensive censorship. Censorship was particularly stringent against African Americans films; Micheaux's attempts at challenging racism met with censorship and banned films. Micheaux's film *Within Our Gates* (1920), for example, addressed racial relations and depicted a lynching that censors feared would create race riots. The film also contained negative portrayals of ministers, a second reason it was met with criticism from censorship boards. Miscegenation was also heavily censored in films of this era, though censorship varied by location; censorship boards in different cities had different beliefs about what was appropriate for audiences.¹³⁰ Censorship boards were mainly composed of white, male members, though some African Americans, such as Reverend A.J. Bowling in Chicago, were on censorship boards. Members of the African American community also had differing opinions about what should be depicted on screen; *Within Our Gates* was controversial both within the African American community and outside of it, particularly because of the lynching scene.¹³¹ Richard Norman also worked extensively to placate censorship boards in the states where his films were screened. His correspondence indicates that censorship of certain films in states such as Pennsylvania was detrimental to profits.¹³²

Richard Norman's race film production was important in the industry because he owned his own complete studio complex. It was at this site that he not only filmed scenes but also processed the film in his laboratory. He had multiple buildings on-site to prepare for, execute, and technically produce the films. Few race filmmakers had comparable facilities. Oscar Micheaux rented equipment and space, including Selig Polyscope Company's studio, other unused film studios, and locations such as friend's homes where he could minimize costs.¹³³ While he had offices in several locations, he did not have the distinctive studio and production space that Norman did. Lincoln Motion Pictures Company similarly had headquarters but no studio owned by the company as did Richard Norman.¹³⁴

Norman Film Manufacturing Company is known to have produced seven race films: *The Green Eyed Monster* (1919), *The Love Bug* (1920), *The Bull Dogger* (1921), *The Crimson Skull* (1922), *Regeneration* (1923), *The Flying Ace* (1926), and *Black Gold* (1928). Three of these films were films and produced during the period that Richard Norman owned the studio in the Jacksonville suburb of Arlington.

Comparable Silent Film Studios

Around 1908 developments in the film industry, such as the creation of nickelodeons, resulted in an explosion in the popularity of films. New production companies popped up overnight, all with an eye in tapping this burgeoning market. This era also marked the cultural phenomenon of "movie stars" and the creation of lengthier feature films.¹³⁵ The heyday of silent film production arced upward during the 1910s and 1920s, but by 1930 the transition to sound film had ended the silent film era.¹³⁶

During the silent film era, hundreds of film production companies were created. Only a few film studios experienced lasting success; most studios had little staying power and merely "limped along," while an extensive list of small production companies quickly came and went. The most stable and productive companies were headed by shrewd businessmen who knew how to maximize profits; those studios without such leaders

¹³⁰ Bowser, Gains, and Musser, 5, 36.

¹³¹ Gaines, 241.

¹³² Correspondence and Censorship Records, Box 1, Richard E. Norman Collection, *Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*.

¹³³ Gaines, 113; Bogle 114-115; Lupack, *Norman*, 23-24.

¹³⁴ Lupack, *Norman*, 146-147.

¹³⁵ Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 26.

¹³⁶ McKinney, 309.

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and business strategies could not prevail.¹³⁷ *Twenty Years of Silents, 1908-1928*, compiled by John T. Weaver, lists hundreds of silent film corporations and distributors from this period, demonstrating the prevalence of film companies in the early 1900s.¹³⁸ Many of the silent film companies were fleeting, quickly going out of business in such a competitive field; Jacksonville's high turnover rate exemplifies this trend.¹³⁹ Few of these corporations operated out of fixed studios; most utilized rented space or filmed on-site or in *ad-hoc* spaces. Very few silent film studios remain today. Film production was heavily centered in cities such as New York City, Fort Lee, New Jersey, and Los Angeles that already had a cadre of theater actors available as talent.¹⁴⁰ Film production companies also headed to Florida in the winter to take advantage of warm weather and scenic views.¹⁴¹

Norman Film Manufacturing Company stands out among the few extant silent film studios. For the purpose of close comparison to Norman Film Manufacturing Company, sites used as silent film studios from 1908-1930 were analyzed and sites associated with race film production were surveyed.

The Flying A, a name for the American Film Company silent film studio in Santa Barbara, California, is one of the few extant studios from this time period. The green room of the site is designated as a Santa Barbara Landmark and was constructed in 1913.¹⁴² According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, American Film Company "produced nearly 1,000 silent films," though production at the studio ended by 1920.¹⁴³ The green room and dressing rooms were the only remaining portions of the studio left standing after the 1940s.¹⁴⁴ The studio/stage itself has been razed.

A & M Records Studio (Formerly Charlie Chaplin Studio) is a Historic-Cultural Monument of the City of Los Angeles.¹⁴⁵ This was originally the studio created by Charlie Chaplin and later became the site of A & M Records, Universal Music, and is currently the site of Henson Recording Studios.¹⁴⁶ The studio is located in Hollywood and was created when the First National Exhibitors Circuit, an organization of national theater owners involved in film distribution, convinced Charlie Chaplin to join their ranks in exchange for his own studio and advance money for future productions.¹⁴⁷ It was opened on January 21, 1918 and *Shoulder Arms* (1918), *The Kid* (1921), *The Gold Rush* (1925), and *City Lights* (1931) were among Chaplin's silent film creations following the opening of his studio. As the site of Henson Recording Studios today, it is unclear what elements of the recording studio retain the historic character of a film studio.¹⁴⁸ It is an important site for understanding the legacy of silent film in Hollywood and it produced films during the same period as Norman Film Manufacturing Company.

¹³⁷ Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*, (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 9, 46-47.

¹³⁸ John T. Weaver, *Twenty Years of Silents, 1908-1928* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1971), 508- 514.

¹³⁹ Miller, 40-42.

¹⁴⁰ Miller, 1; Lupack, *Norman*, 71.

¹⁴¹ Lupack, *Norman*, 68-69.

¹⁴² "City of Santa Barbara Designated Landmarks as of March 12, 2015," accessed April 19, 2015 <http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=17356>, 6.

¹⁴³ "DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE, GARDENS, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIVING," *Los Angeles Times*, accessed April 19, 2015 http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/home_blog/2012/02/flying-a-silent-film-studio.html.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "City of Los Angeles: Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) Report," *Department of City Planning*, accessed April 19, 2015 http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/HCM/dsp_hcm_result.cfm?community=Hollywood.

¹⁴⁶ "History," *Henson Recording Studios*, accessed April 19, 2015 <http://www.hensonrecording.com/history.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Koszarski, *History of the American Cinema Volume 3: 1915 to 1928* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 72-74.

¹⁴⁸ Bob Thomas, "Ghosts of the Kid and the Dictator Aroused by Sale of Chaplin Studio," *Milwaukee Journal* (Milwaukee, WI), January 27, 1954, accessed April 29, 2015 <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=P9BQAAAIBAJ&sjid=vyMEAAAIBAJ&pg=6401,5232470&dq=sid+grauman&hl=en>

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Sunset-Gower Studios in Hollywood housed Columbia Pictures starting in 1924. Harry Cohn, Jack Cohn, and Joe Brandt started a film company in 1918, and as they established themselves in Hollywood they became part of “Poverty Row,” an area where numerous small film companies started and many went out of business in the early days of the industry.¹⁴⁹ The company eventually gained greater success when it became Columbia Pictures Corporation. The silent film *That Certain Thing* (1928) with Frank Capra was the start of Capra’s career with Columbia Pictures, which soon transitioned to sound films.¹⁵⁰ Stages dating from about 1912-1913 no longer exist on the site, and following disuse in the 1970s the site fell into disrepair.¹⁵¹ Stages have since been added to the site in order to regain its use for filmmaking. However, it warrants inclusion as a site of silent film creation in the 1920s that is partially extant.

The Lasky-DeMille Barn in Los Angeles, California is a California Historical Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁵² In its early history, the barn was used for production of silent films in Hollywood by Cecil B. DeMille and Jesse L. Lasky, founders of Famous Players-Lasky, which eventually became part of Paramount Studios. The “National Register Registration Form” describes the barn as “the last surviving historical resource associated with the early establishment of the motion picture industry in Hollywood,” demonstrating the rarity of extant silent film resources in Hollywood.¹⁵³ The barn’s period of significance is from 1913- 1959, covering its use in the film industry. The Lasky-DeMille Barn was used as production and laboratory space for filmmaking, and was used after the transition to sound films.¹⁵⁴ It was originally a part of a larger studio complex and currently is not located on its original site.

In addition to sites in California, there are several extant silent film studios in New York State. Ithaca, New York’s Wharton Studios was created in 1914 by Theodore and Leopold Wharton. The studio created numerous film serials, including *The Perils of Pauline* (1914), *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914-1915), *Beatrice Fairfax* (1916), and *Patria* (1917).¹⁵⁵ Star Pearl White was in many of the Wharton Studios film serials including *The Perils of Pauline*, which “became the archetype of the silent American serial.”¹⁵⁶ The studio closed in 1920, and today it is used by the Ithaca Department of Public Works as a storage facility. The Ithaca Motion Pictures Project is fundraising and negotiating with the Public Works Department in order to renovate the studio and make it a silent film museum. A \$1.5 million plan to transform the site would preserve features of the original building.¹⁵⁷ Though the studio closed down by 1920, it is a notable example of silent film production during the 1910s.

The Paramount Studios Complex in Astoria, Queens is another extant silent film studio complex. The period of significance for the site is 1918-1966. The complex was originally the headquarters for the Famous Players

¹⁴⁹ Susan King, “Sunset Gower Studios, former home of Columbia, marks 100 years,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 2012, accessed April 30, 2015 <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/oct/15/entertainment/la-et-mn-sunset-gower-20121016>.

¹⁵⁰ James Chandler, *An Archeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 46, 58.

¹⁵¹ King, “Sunset Gower Studios, former home of Columbia, marks 100 years.”

¹⁵² “Cecil B. DeMille Studio Barn,” *State of California Office of Historic Preservation*, accessed April 19, 2015 <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/554>.

¹⁵³ National Register of Historic Places, Lasky-DeMille Barn, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California, National Register #14000034, accessed April 19, 2015 <http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000034.pdf>, 7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 11, 13-15.

¹⁵⁵ Eve Golden, 165, 168, *Vernon and Irene Castle’s Ragtime Revolution* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 166-168; Koszarski, 271-272.

¹⁵⁶ Koszarski, 271.

¹⁵⁷ Golden, 168, 175.; Michael Nocella, “Wharton Film Studio in Ithaca’s Stewart Park Gets Museum Charter,” *Ithaca Times* (Ithaca, NY), May 15, 2014, accessed April 30, 2015 http://www.ithaca.com/news/wharton-film-studio-in-ithaca-s-stewart-park-gets-museum/article_60985c32-dc2a-11e3-9a93-001a4bcf887a.html.

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Lasky Corporation which produced “over 110 feature silent films” involving a multitude of silent film stars.¹⁵⁸ In the late 1920s, the studio switched over to sound productions, and eventually changed its name to incorporate its association with Paramount. It is the largest studio complex on the east coast which had its beginnings in the silent era.

The Executive Office Building of Old Warner Brothers Studio is another extant site in film history. The “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form” filed for the Executive Office Building in 2002 lists its period of significance as 1923- 1938. The Executive Office Building was constructed in 1923 in Hollywood, California as the offices of Warner Brothers Pictures, located on the site of the Warner Brothers studio. Warner Brothers’ film *The Jazz Singer* (1927) is of great historical significance as the first film to sync the sound of dialogue with the movie, making it the first talking picture.¹⁵⁹ The studio buildings originally associated with the Executive Office Building are no longer extant.

Essanay Studios is a designated Chicago Landmark. The City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report for Essanay Studios describes the studio’s role in the film industry during its operation from 1907- 1917. The company was created by George Spoor and Gilbert Anderson, and Essanay was famous for its Bronco Billy westerns, comedy films, and melodramas. Francis X. Bushman, Beverly Bayne, Gloria Swanson, and Charlie Chaplin were in Essanay films, and famous screenwriters also wrote for Essanay.¹⁶⁰ This was a higher profile studio than Norman Film Manufacturing Company; acting in a Norman film was occasionally a stepping-stone for hopeful actors and actresses to later act for Essanay Studios or other more prominent production companies. Richard Norman used such incentives to recruit inexperienced actors for his films, particularly in his early days of producing home talent films prior to establishing his Jacksonville studio.¹⁶¹

These properties demonstrate that there are several extant sites associated with silent film history in the country. However, there are no other extant properties associated with the production of race films. The Norman Film Manufacturing Company was one of the few race film companies that operated out of its own studio. Other race film producers, such as Michieaux and Foster utilized rented space, or filmed on location in people’s homes. The few studios that were associated with race films are long gone: Paragon Pictures studio in Jamaica, NY has been replaced by housing from the 1940s; the location of Ebony Film Corporation’s studio in Chicago is now occupied by a convenience store; the Reol Productions offices in New York City has been lost to new, high rise construction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Norman Film Manufacturing Company is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with the overall history of film in the United States and with race film history in particular. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is notable for its promotion of films that positively portrayed African Americans in non-caricatured roles. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is a nationally significant as a rare, intact silent film studio and the only extant studio involved in race film production. It represents the efforts of filmmakers to counter the prevailing, stereotypical image of African Americans on film by presenting interesting stories and

¹⁵⁸ National Register of Historic Places, Paramount Studios Complex, Astoria, Queens, New York, National Register #78001897, accessed March 15, 2015 http://www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_view.asp?GroupView=7364, 6-7.

¹⁵⁹ National Register of Historic Places, Executive Office Building, Old Warner Brothers Studio, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California, National Register #02001257, accessed April 19, 2015 <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/02001257.pdf>, 2, 9-10.

¹⁶⁰ “Essanay Studios,” City of Chicago Landmark Designation Report, submitted Nov. 1989, reprinted March 1996, accessed March 15, 2015 <https://archive.org/stream/CityOfChicagoLandmarkDesignationReports/EssanayStudios#page/n14/mode/1up>, 4-5, 39, Appendix 1.

¹⁶¹ Lupack, *Norman*, 39.

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aspirational characters. While admittedly, the Norman Film Manufacturing Company's catalogue of race films is small, its reputation as a maker of quality race films puts it among the elite of the genre.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University (Indiana University, Bloomington)
 Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 1

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	17	442953	3355972

Verbal Boundary Description: Norman Film Manufacturing Company is a rectangular 1 acre site that encompasses one full property owned by the City of Jacksonville and a portion of the adjoining property, owned by the Circle of Faith Ministries. The site is bounded by Commerce Street on the north, Westdale Drive to the

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west, and Arlington Road to the south. The eastern boundary of Norman Film Manufacturing Company is delineated by a red line on the attached map entitled "Map 1, Norman Film Manufacturing Company."

Boundary Justification: The boundaries include the five studio buildings of Norman Film Manufacturing Company and the areas that included the water tower and pool which are no longer extant. These boundaries encompass the core of Norman Film Manufacturing Company during the period of significance of 1923-1930. The property was subdivided after the period of significance and public right of way has diminished the size and setbacks of the original property most noticeably on the southern boundary.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Anne Lindsay, Assistant Professor, Holly Baker, Graduate Student, Erin Montgomery, Graduate Student, Sarah Schneider, Graduate Student

Address: University of Central Florida
History Department
4000 Central Florida Blvd
Orlando, FL 32816-1350

Telephone: (407) 823-2422

Date: March 19, 2015

Edited by: Jim Gabbert
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1849 C St., N.W. (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2275

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM
September 17, 2015

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Figure 1: Room Two: Lobby or Entry (above)

Figure 2: First Floor, Room 1: Editing Space (below)

Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015



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Figure 3: First Floor, Room Four: Drying Space (above)
Figure 4: First Floor, Room Five: Film Developing Room (below)
Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015



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Figure 5: First Floor, Room Six: Film Vault
Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015

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Figure 6: Second Floor, Room Three: Projection Room
Photograph by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015

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Figure 7: Detail of Projection Room Viewing Panel (above)
Figure 8: Second Floor, Room Four: Screening Room (below)
Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015



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Figure 9: Detail of Screening Room Projection Screen
Photograph by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015

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Figure 10: Building Two Generator
Photograph by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015

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Figure 11: Exterior, Building One (above)
Figure 12: Exterior, Building Two (below)
Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015



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Figure 13: Exterior, Building Three (above)

Figure 14: Exterior, Building Four (below)

Photographs by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015



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Figure 15: Exterior, Building Five
Photograph by Erin Montgomery, January 28, 2015

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Figure 16: Historic view of studio, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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Figure 17: Historic view of studio, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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Figure 18: Historic view of studio, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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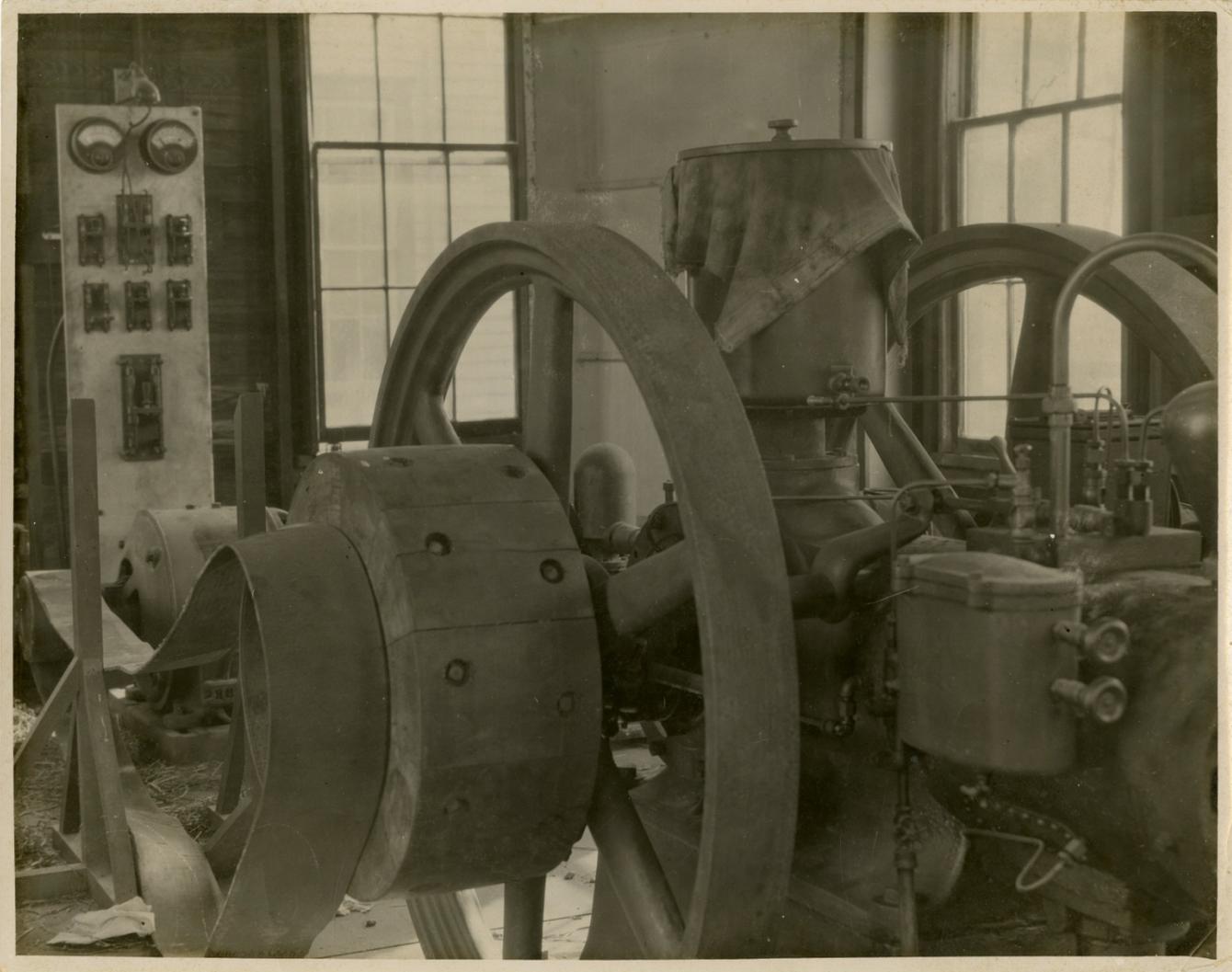


Figure 19: Building Two with generator, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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Figure 20: Historic view of studio, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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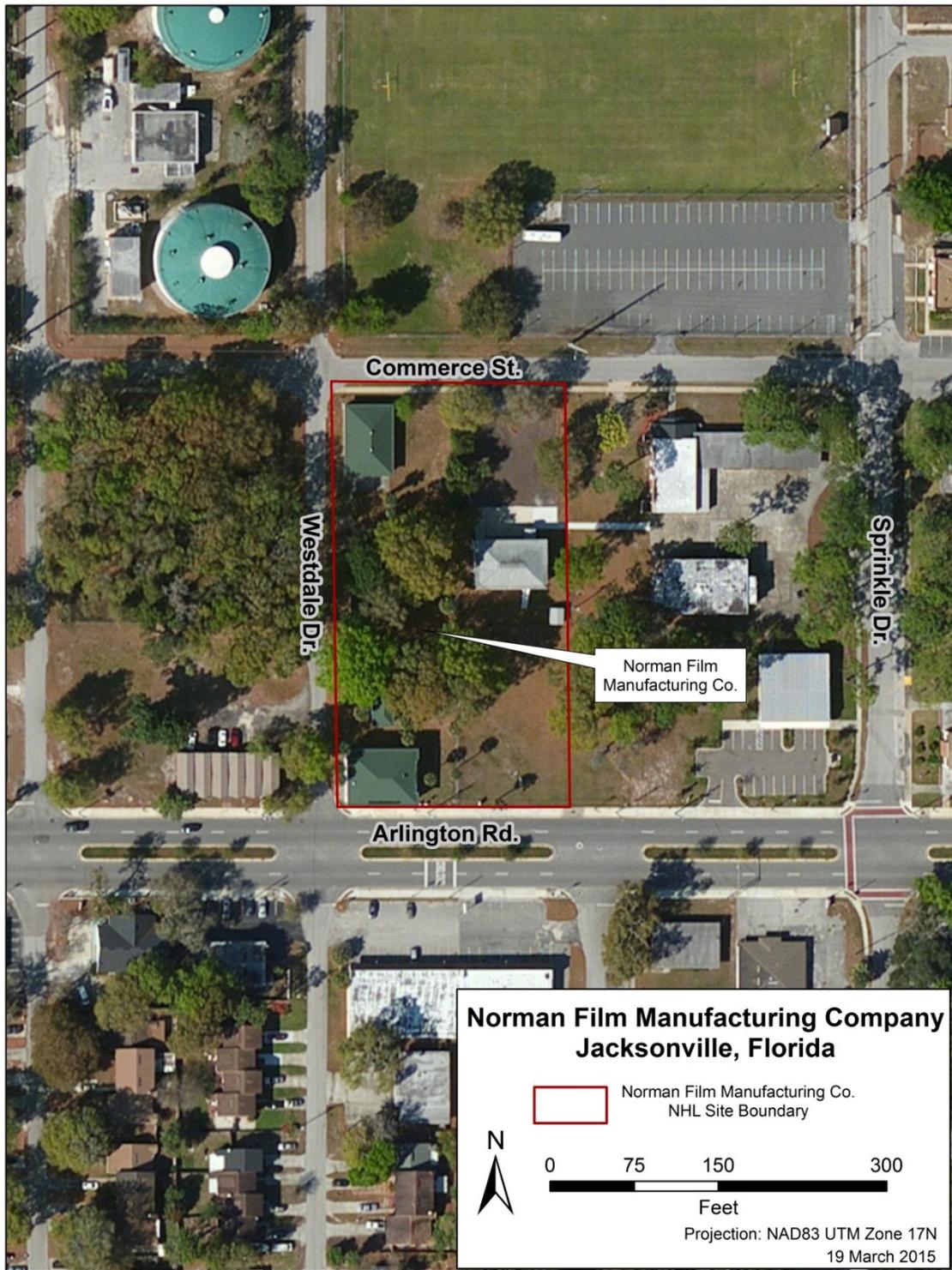


Figure 21: Historic view of studio, 1924
Courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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Map 1: Norman Film Manufacturing
Map by Erin Montgomery

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 17 442953 3355972