

"Perseverance and Perspiration"

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Spell A. A. Adams and Success

NEWARK—Men of the film industry delight in digging out success stories of young men, like Ted Gamble, who operated a theatre at 27. New Jersey claims another prodigy in A. A. Adams, who not only operated but owned his own theatre when he was only 21.

Literally starting on a shoestring, Adams' spectacular career reads like a Horatio Alger yarn. The Adams Theatre, one of Newark's leading houses, had been doomed to failure more than once before he bought it. Today his five theatres and other properties and holdings are valued between \$7,000,000 and \$8,000,000.

Not only this, but when it comes to raising money for war bonds or the March of Dimes or any other patriotic call, Adams is first and foremost. With 20 government citations for his work along these lines, no wonder a local reporter referred to him as "Almighty Arithmetic" Adams, though the two A's in his name stand for Adam Adam.

SINGLES AND BIG BANDS

Adams has his own theories regarding the show business. With returning GIs looking toward a future in the theatre business and with the boom in building just around the corner, it may be well to analyze the methods which Adams has adopted in his theatres.

Showmen in his area are familiar with his practice of running stage attractions along with single features at the Adams. His big band policy is identical to that used on Broadway. The same bands play at the Adams that play in New York.

The Adams is not run like any other in the district. Former owners had tried in vain to make it reap boxoffice returns with little success.

TERMS SECOND FEATURE A DETRIMENT

"I do exploiting of a picture only when necessary," Adams says emphatically. "I won't spend \$15,000 to have an elephant parade up and down the street in order to get my name in the papers."

The Adams as well as the Paramount, Newark, are the only houses to run single features. Stage attractions are used to fill out the bill at the Adams. At the Paramount theatre are travelogs and musical featurettes.

"A cofeature is a detriment to the other picture," Adams believes. Particularly in recent years, since producers have been curtailed in their output of really good films, he has found that his patrons would rather see a first-rate picture than two mediocre ones. "Perseverance and perspiration" is the success formula which this energetic business man offers to those who want to get ahead in the theatre game.

Starting out alone to make his mark in the

world, A. A. Adams came to the U.S. from Greece at the age of 14. He landed on Ellis Island, located in Jersey City and began shining shoes. The first year his earnings totaled \$64 after paying room and board.

Six years later in 1908, together with his brother Peter, whom he had sent for, he purchased a small nickelodeon in Paterson, which he operated until 1915. Those first years were a time of struggle and perseverance. For six years Adams went without wearing a collar because having laundry done was too expensive. Always frugal, every cent he could save was put toward the purchase of the theatre of his dreams.

He had, however, in ignorance, overlooked an important item—the money for a license to operate a theatre. On the day the nickelodeon opened, three cops came after him. Young Adams was in a predicament, lacking the necessary \$85. Matters were finally adjusted when the marshal allowed him to start running the show, but remained at the door taking in the nickels until there were enough to purchase the license.

KEEPING EXPENSES DOWN

Adams' first theatre had 290 seats. He had only five employees. He, himself, secured a projectionist's license and relieved the operator or the cashier when occasion demanded. He opened the theatre daily, cleaned it and put up the posters. Hiring a policeman was too expensive so he secured a policeman's badge to ward off the rough element.

In 1915, also with his brother, he built the U.S. Theatre in Paterson. Then in 1921 the Adamsons purchased the old Newark Theatre (now the Paramount) from Henry C. Minor and Max Spiegel. In order to do this, they borrowed \$500,000 from the Prudential Insurance Co. to cover part of the costs. In none of Adams' operations have any stocks or bonds been sold. He always has done business on a dollar-to-dollar basis and never trusted to luck to take a hand. He always has retained ownership in his own name.

The Newark Paramount was run as a straight motion picture house until 1924 when vaudeville was added. Vaudeville was discontinued in 1931.

MAKES WHITE ELEPHANT PAY

Adams purchased the Park Lane Theatre in Palisades Park, N. J., in 1928. He bought still another theatre in 1935 in Leonia, N. J. These two houses were his own. His brother Peter sold out his interests to him in the other houses in 1938.

When Adams purchased the Schubert Theatre, which is now the Adams, from the Prudential Insurance Co. in 1939, people laughed at him. The house originally was Keeney's Theatre and had later become the Schubert. Former owners had tried any number of gimmicks to make it pay. Both motion pictures and stage shows had been unsuccessful.

Adams was offered all sorts of advice, which he tried to heed, with the result that during the first six months he lost \$75,000. From then on he proceeded to run the Adams according to his own ideas. He initiated the policy of running a single feature in combination with stage attractions, and while the plan did not win instantaneous success it finally clicked.

Adams' two eldest sons now are in business with their father. A third son Peter, who attends the University of Pennsylvania, is ambitious to follow in his brothers' footsteps.

For a young man who wants to get into the show business, Adams offers the following advice: "Start at the bottom."

He is eager to help young men who are willing to commence as ushers for \$18 to \$22 a week. His three sons have all served in this capacity. In six months an usher may become head usher. He then progresses to captain. A year or two later may find him listed as assistant to the assistant manager, then as assistant manager and finally as manager. "After that," Adams advises, "he should get out and look for a business of his own."

Adams puts considerable money into newspaper advertising. He is among the most active men in his community when it comes to raising funds. He has been chairman of all the war drives as well as chairman of the special events committee of the Newark war finance commission and chairman of the Greek War Relief. He has also been active in the Red Cross and March of Dimes.

With his help he is very liberal. Not only do his employes receive large annual bonuses, but they also may receive additional weekly bonuses if a particular show has done better than average.

LOOKS FORWARD TO TELEVISION

Adams states that when television is here he will be the first to use it. "In 1928," he says, "producers were terrified at the talking pictures, which they felt would hurt business. Instead, the talkies have helped." In the same way he thinks television will aid the industry. He believes the theatre is the logical place for television, not the auditorium or pool room.

Adams believes there is opportunity for those who wish to build theatres if the right locations are picked. In many towns and cities there will be overseating, and many new theatres will fail as they did after the last war, but the best bet is to pick a town of 5,000 to 15,000 where there is no competition from circuits or large independent operators, he asserted.

Adams is married to the former Marie Johnson of Paterson and lives in Orange. Besides his three sons, he has a daughter who attends school in South Orange. When not in his office at the Paramount checking on his business, he finds time to raise chrysanthemums, nine inches in diameter, meantime making plans for theatres he anticipates buying in the future.