

## Game Protection Association

Take notice that the land of Curragh Chase (part), Curragh Chase North (part), Tinnaculla (part), Ballynash (part) and Ballynamona (part) are **STRICTLY PRESERVED**.

Take notice also that the lands of Mr. Richard Millar and Mr. Fred Millar at Stonehall, Kilbreedy and Ballymacdonogh; the lands of Mr. Cliff at Kilbreedy and the lands of Mr. Paddy Shaughnessy at Castlegrey are **PRESERVED AS GAME SANCTUARIES** by the above Association.

Signed: **KARL JOHNSTON**,

Hon. Secretary.

(f3c)

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# SILENT AND SOUND: THE GRAND CENTRAL

By **RICHARD NAUGHTON**

**THE GRAND Central** Cinema closed its doors for the last time on Saturday night last.

It would not be fitting to let the occasion pass without recalling some of the highlights of silent and sound at this popular rendezvous, which served Limerick's entertainment needs so well for half a century.

As an entertainment centre it ranked next to the old Limerick Theatre Royal in the quality of its presentations and in length of service. The Theatre Royal served Limerick citizens loyally and well for some eighty years, and while stage shows predominated for almost all of that time, there were quite a number of film shows there for some years up to its destruction by fire in 1922.

The Grand Central Cinema, too, had its quota of the live theatre, but its policy from its beginning in the spring of 1923 was to bring to Limerick the finest screen productions in the world. How well it had succeeded two generations of patrons can testify.

But, as a community centre, the Grand Central outlived the Theatre Royal by many years. Long before the silver screen was sear of, the premises were used for religious ser-

vices, and it filled this function well into the present century.

In the 1870's, it was called the Independent Chapel; Sunday School sessions and church concerts were held there, and there, too, funeral services were held for deceased members of the congregation.

Paul Bernard took over the premises in 1922—then known as the Central Hall—and built the modern facade which served as a booking office, shop and foyer, on to the old church frontage.

One of the most remarkable films shown there in 1923, and which created a sensation wherever it had been presented, was "Blood and Sand." The hero was Rudolph Valentino who had already made a favourable impression by his acting in "The Sheik." In those days there were two performances at night, 7 o'clock, and 9 o'clock, and a matinee on Thursdays and Saturdays at 3.30. Remember the old Central phone number? It was Limerick 361.

While "Blood and Sand" was not the Central's first film, it certainly eclipsed in glory the few that had preceded it.

We said the Central had its quota of stage productions. One of the first of these, in the second week of May, 1923, starred Mike Nono, the man from Ennis, with the twinkling feet whose brilliant performances on the piano, whose racy and original anecdotes, quizzes and jokes and Irish dances made him the idol of Lime-

rick theatre-goers.

In its first year, cine-variety was a standard form of entertainment at the Grand Central. Mike Nono was followed by little Mike O'Hare of Dublin; by the local comedian A. B. Ash; by Hay Joy, whistler and dancer; by Hazel Elliot and her seven candles in an old May-day scene, introducing vocalism, dancing and instrumental items.

## Patsy

And then there was a week's special engagement of Chris Sylvester and Company in an Irish comedy sketch "Patsy." Harold Lloyd was the rage of the comedy screen in the early 1920's, and he made his first appearance at the Central in June, 1923, in "Grandma's Boy." Later that month we had Andre Knox in "Lord Arthur Saville's Crime," and another great performer, Lon Chaney followed with "Bits of Life."

But towering above the lot in those early months of the Grand Central's successes was D. W. Griffith's masterpiece "Intolerance" which has survived the test of time and is now rated as one of the immortal screen classics.

This mighty production had a cast of 25,000 men and women, and 7,500 horses took part in the marvellous chariot races along the Euphrates. The cast included some of the great names of the early screen—Constance Talmadge, Miriam Cooper, Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Bessie Love, Olga Gray, Mildred Harris, Margery Wilson, Vera Lewis, Carl Stockport, Tully Marshall, Joseph Hanaberry, A. D. Sears, Frank Bennett and so on. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Douglas Fairbanks paid tribute to the producers by appearing as extras in the mob scenes.

This great screen spectacle was followed by a return to the live theatre with a memorable series of plays by the oldest and most popular company then touring Ireland—the Carrickford Repertory Company.

Some of the well known artists were: Richard Carrickford, Breffni O'Rourke, Digby Hayes, Billy Raynor, Will Bowman, James Teer, Gus Malone, Humphrey Callaghan, Miss Lillian Carrickford, Miss Maira Breni, Miss Peggy Dorn, Miss Bridie O'Dea, Miss Bridget Welby, little Kathleen Bowman and Master Richard. Remember the plays? The week's run was "Moths," "The Touch of a Child," "The Lady Slavery," "A Chinese Romance," "My Old Irish Home" and "His Indian Wife."

So much for the opening months of the Grand Central. The years went by in happy progression, and forty-four years ago—September 1, 1929—Harry Pollard's production "The Show Boat" introduced in grand style the great new era of the talking pictures.

The special installations were made by Messrs. Clancy and O'Shaughnessy, electricians, of Limerick, under the supervision of R.C.A. Telephone engineers.

"The Show Boat," or the Cotton Floating Palace Theatre on the Mississippi, embraced beautiful views of the moonlit river, of cities, hamlets, of bright entertainments, with music and mirth. And here we were given many "talking songs" in which negro melodies were the leading feature.

We heard Helen Morgan singing "Bill" and "Can't Help Loving That Man;" Jules Bleedsoc singing "Old Man River;" Aunt Jemima and the Ziegfeld Plantation Singers rendering "Hey Feller" and "Come On Folks." The lyrics were written by Oscar Hammerstein and the music by Jerome Kern. There was a great deal of merriment and wholesome humour, and the audiences so thoroughly appreciated it all that "The Show Boat" ran for an extra week.

The proprietor of the Grand Central gave further proof of his enterprise by following "The Show Boat" with another celebrated talking picture "Nothing But The Truth," a comedy dealing with a young man who made a wager of 10,000 dollars that he would tell the truth for 24 hours. Richard Dix filled the role of the truth-teller, and others in the cast were Helen Kane, Louis John Bartels, Ned Sparks and Berton Churchill.

Big houses continued for "Interference," which featured William Powell, Evelyn Brent, Clive Brook, Doris Kenyon and Brandon Hurst.

This was the opening trio that set the talking pictures off to a great start at the Grand Central. It was the beginning of a great new era of entertainment, an era that will hold nostalgic memories for many of us.

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In order to carry out this programme it will be possible to offer the opportunity of subsidised supply only during one specified period in each area between now and 1975.

In those areas in which work under the Rural Electrification post-development programme has already been carried out, applications for supply will be invited by advertisements in local newspapers and posters displayed in prominent place.

This programme is designed to give supply to the greatest number of people in the shortest possible time. Its success depends on the co-operation of all who desire supply. In particular it is essential that application for supply should be made during the period which will be announced for each area.

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