



## Once Famous Film Star Now Clerk In S. F. Hotel

"Bronco Billy" Anderson Quit Movies With Fortune; Writing May Be Next Career

"WHATEVER became of 'Bronco Billy' Anderson?" is a question often asked when the old-time movie and theatrical fans gather.

He was the swaggering, gun-toting bronco-busting hero of two decades ago; the man who controlled the destinies of the old Essanay studios, when movies were in their infancy. It was "Bronco Billy," Gilbert M. Anderson, who first saw the possibilities of such world-famed stars as Charlie Chaplin, Gloria Swanson, the Talmadge sisters, Mabel Normand, Pearl White, and others too numerous to mention.

He started them on their road to fame early in the century when he, in company with George K. Spoor, started the old Essanay pioneer flicker factory at Niles, California.

Spoor was the "S," and Anderson the "A," of that historic company.

The answer to the question was found recently when an inquiring reporter, acting on a tip, dropped into a hotel in San Francisco.

Anderson has a job, but it is nothing like the old days when he controlled the destinies of thousands of studio workers. His present position calls for simple duties such as answering the telephone, bossing the bell boys and chatting with the rather elderly people who make this quiet, family hotel their home.

For all his present humble surroundings, Anderson makes it evident that he does not entirely consider himself a back number.

A little disconcerted at first when his identity was established, he finally consented to give a short interview. He talked of the old days when he was the glamorous hero of every red-blooded American youngster.

A battered typewriter sat on a massive desk and piles of manuscript lay haphazardly about the room. Anderson was not enthusiastic about telling his plans for the future, but, as he once was a writer as well as a producer, manager and actor, it is to be surmised that he is planning a comeback as a scenario writer.

He had some interesting remarks to make on the future of Western pictures, in which he formerly held the supreme position.

"There is no doubt," he said, "that they are due for a new era in a more elaborate form. The modern talking pictures have reached a degree of perfection which we never dreamed of in the old days. However, they lack something of the verve and spontaneity of our earlier efforts."

"It is my opinion that a great deal can be done with Western pictures if the right director is found and allowed to carry out this system, with certain improvements."

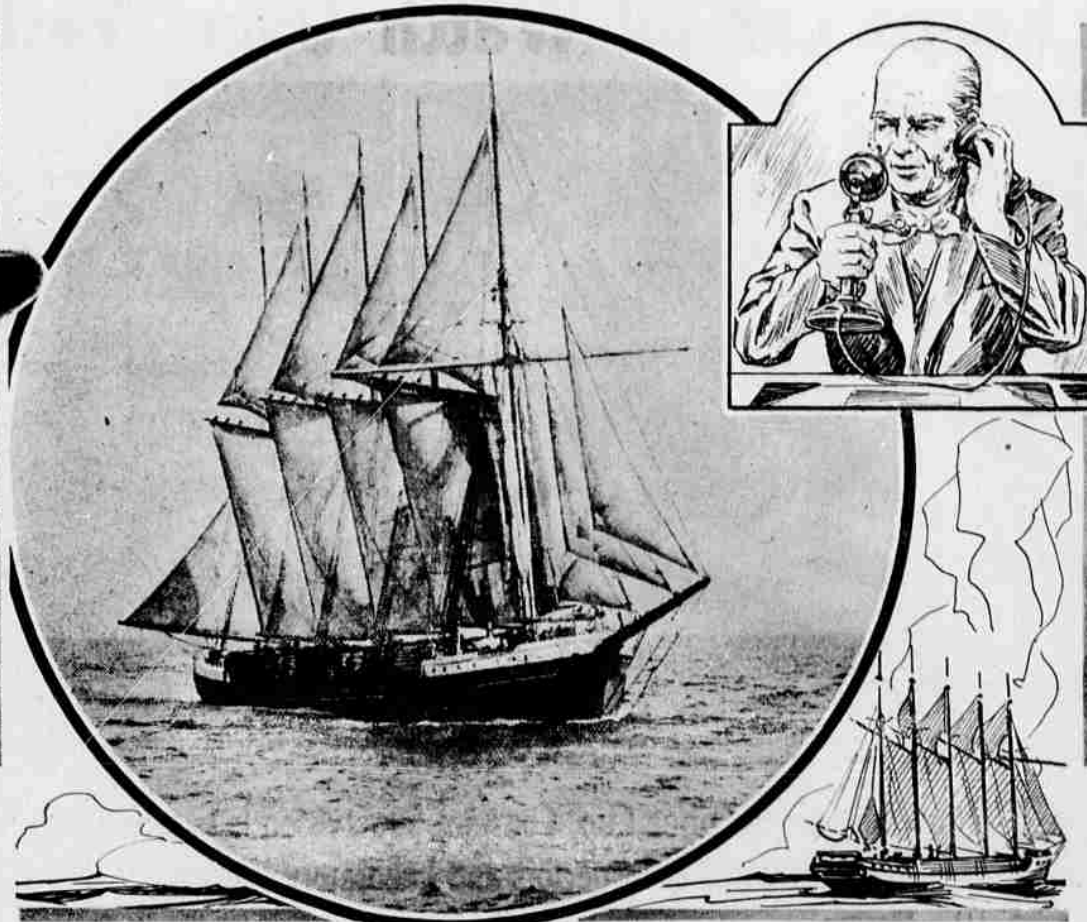
Anderson's long association with the motion picture and theatrical business has been fraught with many disillusionments and disappointments.

Even before the turn of the century Anderson was working with Thomas Edison in the laboratory which was to produce the first motion picture.

During the years 1906 to 1916 he was virtually in control of the Essanay studios. At the end of that time he gave up his interest to enter the field of theatrical production. He was reputed to be worth in the neighborhood of \$2,000,000.



"Bronco Billy"



Inspiration for Peter B. Kyne's series of "Cappy Ricks" stories was Captain Ralph Peasley, shown above with Mrs. Peasley and their favorite ship, the Vigilant. Yes, Captain Peasley is the real life counterpart of Kyne's beloved "Matt Peasley," but he's retired from the sea now rather than take a command in steam.

## Exploits of Captain Peasley Rival 'Cappy Ricks' Tales He Inspired

Reports of Sailing Vessel Master Made 25 Years Ago When Peter B. Kyne Was a Shipping Clerk Were Foundation For Novelist's Famous Series of Sea Yarns

MEET Captain Matt Peasley, resourceful and two-fisted skipper of the "Blue Star" fleet—in real life Captain Ralph E. Peasley, of Aberdeen, Washington.

Peter B. Kyne pictured Peasley exactly as he is—stalwart, keen of eye, vigorous, friendly and a masterful sailing man. When you read Kyne's "Cappy Ricks" stories of romantic Pacific Coast shipping, you get a perfect view of Captain Peasley, even as he is today.

The tall mariner has quit the sea—temporarily, at least—but if the sailing ships were abroad again the chances are he would be right back at his old command. Not even Mrs. Peasley could keep him ashore. In fact, Mrs. Peasley probably would go along!

It has been quite awhile since Captain Peasley and Peter B. Kyne first met, but the passing years have served only to enhance Kyne's "Cappy Ricks" characters and build around Captain Peasley an admiring aura of fame and popularity that makes him a chosen man wherever he goes.

In his home region of Grays Harbor, he is a favorite without reservation. Shortly after he retired from the sea he ran for port commissioner and was elected by an enormous majority. Right now he is serving the state as district inspector for the liquor control board—and that is a job that requires as much application and hard work as running a ship. Only recently the Aberdeen Pioneers Association elected him president for 1936.

IT MAY have been Peasley who gave Kyne his first real start in the writing game. The skipper does not know. He does know that he first knew Kyne some 35 years ago when the future author was clerk or secretary in the main office of Dolbeer and Carson, San Francisco shipping firm, and Peasley was skipper of one of the company's windjammers.

Among Kyne's many duties at that time was to peruse reports sent in by the fleet masters. He was immediately attracted by Captain Peasley's. They were of such concise and original nature that in them Kyne found inspiration and subject matter for what ten years later flowed from his pen as the story of Matt Peasley, Cappy Ricks and the latter's beautiful daughter.

"Aw, they call me Matt wherever I go, all right," said Captain Peasley, "but Kyne's stories are mostly all fiction. No skipper could be as good as that fellow Matt. No shipowner could have so much fun as Cappy Ricks, but that isn't saying we don't like to read about them. I know Mrs. Peasley and I do."

As depicted in Kyne's novel, Peasley's marriage to the shipping magnate's daughter was a romantic event, and as it applies to the real Captain Peasley's marriage it is not wholly imaginary. Mrs. Peasley's father was Captain James Dalton, prominent in Grays Harbor lumbering and shipping circles, and she grew up among sawmills and ships.

They were married in 1903, shortly after a great fire leveled the business district of Aberdeen. Captain Peasley had brought the schooner *Wawona* into Willapa harbor for a cargo of lumber, and while she was burdening there the skipper went by train to Aberdeen to claim his bride. Their

wedding trip consisted of a brief train journey to Seattle—two days or so—and then they headed for home. At Gate City they separated, Captain Peasley taking another train to Raymond, whence he sailed the following day. At that time he was sailing the *Wawona* in the coastwise trade, but, at that, it was six weeks before he saw his bride again.

IT WAS some years later that Mrs. Peasley tired of sitting at home waiting, and decided she would go to sea, too. So with him she went, and for nearly two decades the Peasleys sailed together—to Honolulu, to Callao, to Newcastle and a host of other ports of the Pacific.

"Yes," said Mrs. Peasley, "I was a poor sailor at first. But I got so I could 'take it' with the rest of them. I can remember one time when we were standing out to sea at Cape Flattery. It was so rough that every sailor aboard was more or less sick, but not I. That was after I had gotten my sea-legs."

Captain Peasley sailed many windjammers in his 40 years on the Pacific. Among them were the four-master *Mary E. Foster*, the schooner *Fred J. Wood*, the schooner *Louis*, first five-master on the Pacific Coast and named after Louis Simpson, San Francisco ship and millowner; the *Wawona*, *Mel-ancton* and *Vigilant*, and many others.

Of them all, both Captain and Mrs. Peasley like the big, fast-stepping schooner *Vigilant* the best. They took this finely appointed five-master on her maiden voyage in 1920 and sailed her for nine years, mostly in the Honolulu lumber trade. She is still operating between Bellingham, Wash., and Honolulu. When the E. K. Wood Lumber Company of Bellingham and Hoquiam sold her some six years ago, the firm offered Captain Peasley a steam command, but he would not take it. He retired rather than go in for steam.

In his four decades as a sailing man on the Pacific, nearly 35 years of which were as master, Captain Peasley never had a wreck. He came close once on a reef off the coast of Australia, and another time in a boisterous blow inside the Straits of Juan de Fuca, but both times good seamanship cheated the sea of its prey.

BORN in Maine, Captain Peasley comes of a long line of seafaring men. Like his ancestors, he went to sea at a tender age and at 22 he was entrusted with his first command. Most of his seafaring life he spent on the Pacific, and to South Africa he went only in Kyne's imagination, there to further the "Blue Star" line's interests by subsidizing that redoubtable person called "All-Hands-and-Feet."

The roughest sea Captain Peasley ever experienced was in late January, 1921, when he was a few hundred miles off the coast of Washington with the schooner *Vigilant*. A hurricane blew up, the same storm that felled billions of feet of Western Washington timber.

The log of that voyage tells a vivid story of a tumultuous sea after the barometer skidded to 29.01 and a gale of 100-mile intensity raged for four hours. Mrs. Peasley was along, and she says it was a harrowing experience, although the stout *Vigilant* survived without great damage.

Recently the sturdy *Vigilant* was reported long



overdue in a bad storm. En route to Honolulu from Seattle, she was out 53 days before word was heard on the Pacific Coast of her. Captain Peasley's faith in the staunch craft was vindicated, however, when she limped into port, pretty well battered, but still sailing. A couple of seamen were hurt in the raging seas which smashed over the *Vigilant*.

On Grays Harbor there are legendary tales of windjammer skippers who sailed their ships right up to the docks at Hoquiam and Aberdeen. That is a matter of some 12 miles of what was then tortuous channel. It is not all legend. Twenty years ago Captain Peasley sailed the schooner *Fred J. Wood* over the bar and almost up to Hoquiam.

"I could have warped her up to the dock at Blagen's mill, I think," said Peasley, "but the dredge was squatted right in the middle of the channel at Grays Harbor City and we had to let the tug-boat hook on. That tug had tried to keep up with us all the way from Westport, and believe me, we gave them a race!"

CAPTAIN PEASLEY is a vigorous man, young-looking and with ever a twinkle in his keen eyes. He stands about six feet three inches and has the straight figure of youth. His famous mustache and shock of black hair are but slightly touched with gray. Before he started on his new job with the state liquor control board he was a faithful attendant at meetings of the Aberdeen lodge of Elks, where a special seat was always his.

Before the war he and Kyne met occasionally, but for many years now the famous writer and noted mariner have never crossed trails. If and when they do, there should result an interesting reunion and a fine picture for the newspapers.



BUD: Now our first contestant. A little closer to the microphone please—you're not very tall.

AMATEUR: I'm a little short this week—but I'll be all right payday.

BUD: That was a quick comeback, young lady. Ever been on the air before?

A.: Once, February twenty-ninth.

BUD: Leap Year day, eh? All right, if you do well today, I'll see that you get a chance to broadcast every February twenty-ninth.

A.: I'd love steady work, but I couldn't plunge into it like that. Maybe I'd better get my experience gradually.

BUD: If you're going to be a radio star you might as well get used to it.

A.: I couldn't get material together that fast. It's no snap grinding out jokes Leap Year in and Leap Year out.

BUD: Don't worry, the public mind turns over every three years. That means you have a year's grace and can use the same gags over and over.

A.: Just like professionals?

BUD: Sure. If your stuff becomes well seasoned you might even get a sponsor.

A.: I'd rather use new gags and retain my amateur standing.

BUD: As you like. Tell me, are you married?

A.: No, it's just mike-fright that makes me look so sad.

BUD: Come now, this is Leap Year—your big chance to take a husband.

A.: Whose husband shall I take?

BUD: I mean, pick out a young man and pop the question—a quick wedding is half the battle.

A.: Not for me, life's too short.

BUD: Married people live longer.

A.: No they don't—it only seems longer.

BUD: Anyway, think it over. If you get to be a radio star it will be great to tell your children about it in later years.

A.: I'd rather stay single and tell my grandchildren how much fun I had!

Sound: BONG!