Jamieson Film Company Equipment Division

HISTORICAL NOTE

Hugh V. Jamieson Sr.'s "Film Company" has, after nearly sixty years, become "Equipment Division," even though, paradoxically, there are no other divisions. The film company operations have ceased.

Jamieson Film Company Equipment Division was formed at Hugh Jamieson's instigation in 1967 as an outgrowth of his design and construction of processing machines for use in his own laboratory. The first machines built by the Equipment Division processed only 16mm Ektachrome and most of the sales were to the television industry. Today, the company builds machines for most of the formats and processes used in all branches of photography, machines which are in use in 31 countries on all the continents. Annual sales are in excess of $1,000,000 and are currently reported as increasing at a rate of 50%.

Hugh Jamieson, who started working with films as a college student in 1910, is Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Directors. He joined the SMPE in 1924 and is a Life Member. Hugh V. Jamieson Jr., who has been an SMPTE member since 1951, is Executive Vice-President of the Equipment Division. His brother, Bruce Jamieson, who joined the Society in 1955 was made a Fellow in 1970 (see *Journal*, p. 1130, Dec. 1970).

The "death" of the Jamieson Film Company has been described by one who felt personally bereaved by its passing. The *Journal* is indebted to *Advertising Age* for what is reproduced below.

Jamieson leaves the scene

Early movies to tv commercials – rise and fall of a film company

The Jamieson Film Co. has folded. Long active in tv commercials and promotional and industrial movies, the company and its colorful founder had a lively history—worth telling a little here.

BY SHELLY KUEHN

This is a corporate obituary. It is written so that the world can mark well the passing of an institution and know how it happened. The institution was in advertising.

Some of you in the business may not have known it well enough to weep, and perhaps there are even some who will gloat; but for those in the film business, or those like me, on the periphery, there is just enough nostalgia and auld lang syne to weep, just for one moment, at this closed curtain.

The Jamieson Film Co. that was most familiar to those in the advertising business is no more. Not buried, just no longer in the film production business. Thus ends 56 years in one fell swoop.

But wait a minute, Virginia. There still exists Jamieson Film Co. Just don't send them any more storyboards. Send them an order for a 16mm color processing machine, and they'll fill your order neatly. But the studio is gone.

I must hasten to add several points, to keep lawsuits at bay. First, only three-fourths of the Jamieson corpus is dead or divested elsewhere; the quarter that remains was formerly merely a division of the old Jamieson. It is to the former corporate whole that these final words are directed.

It's not unusual for a studio to close; in fact, there are very few biggies left. But let me tell you about Jamieson.

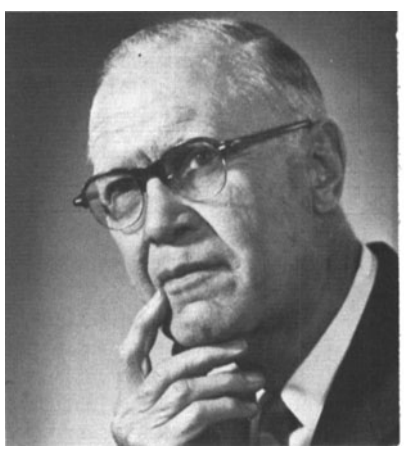
I never worked there. But for a while, I was sort of married to Jamieson, like a lot of other women whose husbands lived and breathed a job, and I knew how the old place could pulsate with life.

So I mourn the passing of a company and an industry whose evolution covered more than 60 years. This evolution concerns the johnny-come-lately upstart (the manufacturing division) doing in the pioneer (the studio/production facilities) and emerging the victor as the total company. Any future growth of Jamieson will be as a manufacturer and inventor, not under the bright lights of a sound stage.

I became particularly close to the Jamieson story when I interviewed Hugh V. Jamieson Sr., the founder, on the company's 50th anniversary in 1967, and learned about his early career. I found him fascinating then (my story ran in the company newsletter, which I edited) and he hadn't changed when I talked to him again this month about the tale I tell now. He was typical of the early day movie geniuses, the ones who did all, made all and were all, inventing the equipment they needed as they went along.

How to Make Movies in 1910

As one who helped mold the film industry, Jamieson Sr. got started soon after the turn of the century. He got interested in movies at the age of eight, when a motion picture came to his hometown of Burlingame, Kan., and dazzled him. His first venture with film came when he was in college in 1910; he and some friends borrowed $300 off the livery stable operator and set up a motion picture theater with rented folding chairs, a couple of reels of film and a projector. Jamieson was the partner chosen to go to Kansas City to learn the details of operating the projector. Four months later, the entrepreneurs sold out for $800. Success always leaves a good taste.



Hugh V. Jamieson Sr. in 1967.

Until Jamieson Film Co. became official in 1916, Jamieson Sr. was involved in all kinds of enterprises to make a buck—

Hugh V. Jamieson Sr. (right) took some of the first aerial motion-picture films in 1916 in Dallas. Pilot Lester Miller flew Jamieson over the SMU campus in his locally-built airplane.

selling Petrel cars, making projection screens of aluminum-painted oil cloth, analyzing fertilizer for Swift, and so on.

"I never got the motion pictures out of my brain," Jamieson recounted, "and about 1913, Edison came out with an article about a projector and a special nonflammable film for educational use, which he said would replace all school books.

"Well, I wrote Edison and gave him my pitch, and I started selling the Edison Home Kinetiscope to elementary schools." Twelve sales later, the factory burned.

Processing Film in a Bathtub

A little later, Jamieson bought a Williamson camera for $75 and started touring, making pictures, processing them in the hotel bathtub and showing them in the respective towns where they had been shot.

His scenario was simple. He booked two or three towns a week in the Midwest. After the initial booking, he aroused the townspeople's curiosity, and they arrived in droves to "have their pitchers took." Eventually he became sophisticated enough to create and film a brief melodrama in which the whole town took part.

During this time, Jamieson came up with his first money-saving device. To cut his processing costs, he made a wooden "X" studded with nails, which would hold 100 ft. of exposed film. The "spool" was then immersed and developed in a hotel bathtub. Jamieson still has his original wood and nail invention, crude, but very effective.

It was Christmas Eve, 1915, when Jamieson arrived in Dallas on another scheme, and it was some time the next spring that he "got hooked up" (as he colloquially recalled) with a sign company. The idea was to sell businesses on buying 60 to 100 ft. of film advertising for theater trailers. Thus began Jamieson Film Co.

The business took off, and Jamieson soon moved from its first location by the railroad tracks to a studio on Bryan St. in downtown Dallas. Asked about his first year's profits, Jamieson mulled a bit. "I don't remember what it was in 1916, but then there wasn't a difference between net and gross profit. It must have been okay, because the next year I bought my first car for $300, the only one I've bought on time."

Hugh Jamieson in a Flying Machine

The company grew, because Jamieson Sr. was a pioneer innovator. Some time in 1916, he thinks, Jamieson took aerial motion pictures from the wing of a homemade airplane over the Southern Methodist University campus in Dallas, one of, if not the first, aerial movies ever taken in the U.S. The wind was so strong, he recalled, that he could not even get his eye to the viewfinder of his Universal camera to frame the pictures he was taking as they flew through the air.

In the 1920s, Jamieson got involved in what was some of the first newsreel production. His first newsreel was made in Laredo, Tex., during the Washington's Birthday celebration. The big news of the moment was the smuggling of sugar by Mexican women, who hid it under their bustles to get it past customs officials. Ever on the spot, Jamieson filmed the arrest of the inveterate smugglers, and sold his first newsreel to International News and Pathe. From 1924 to '26, he was the official newsreel person for the Palace Theatre in Dallas, a project which was co-sponsored by the *Dallas Times Herald*.

Later in the decade, Jamieson was the first photographer ever to take sound pictures in federal court in Oklahoma City, during the sentencing of Machine Gun Kelley for the infamous Urschel kidnapping case. Jamieson later made a one-reel movie about the case, called "Hot Money," which premiered at the Sam Harris Theatre on 42nd St. in New York. After the premiere screening, the flick was rapidly removed by the management at the suggestion of New York mobsters who disliked the publicity. Jamieson still has a "Hot Money" movie poster, but he got substantially less for his efforts than the $250,000 ransom asked in the kidnapping.

In 1930, Jamieson received his first patent for inventing the triangle developer. Many other inventions, most not patented, had come before and were still to follow. Later in the decade, he would be the first independent producer to buy his own sound equipment, driving his purchase home from Hollywood in a van.

The First 'Bonnie and Clyde'

On into the 1930s, and, as a forerunner to today's "Bonnie and Clyde," Jamieson shot another one-reel film about Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, in which some of their more famous exploits were reenacted. Ted Hinton, the policeman who tracked the desperados for years and who was instrumental in setting up their ambush, played himself in Jamieson's movie.

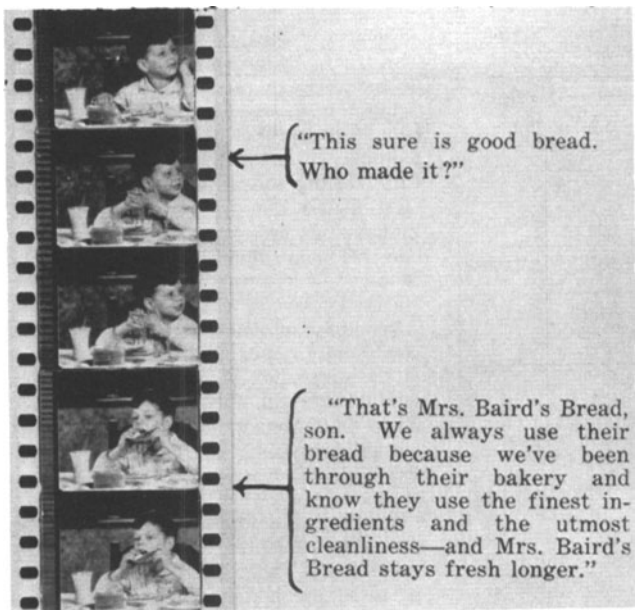
Jamieson Sr.'s foresight fell upon many things and many ideas. In 1936, when Dallas hosted the Texas Centennial celebration, Jamieson suggested that a movie about the festivities would be appropriate, but officials, who were headed by a former fraternity brother, declined to spend a cent on film. Jamieson went ahead and shot his own reel about the noted centennial and sold it on his own.

Necessity was always Jamieson's credo for invention. One of his early arc lights was made by cutting holes in the bottoms of metal mixing bowls; his first multiple 16mm color sound prints were made by stringing six cameras together on a single motor. That feat was done for Texas Gulf Sulphur in 1937, the first color industrial film Jamieson ever did, and the first 16mm industrial to be shot in Kodachrome.

When the company hit its 50th anniversary year in 1967, Jamieson had the distinction of being the oldest commercial film company still in continuous operation, and was the sole remaining independent studio that began at the same time as the West Coast movie industry. A lot of "firsts" had been racked up in those five decades by "the old man."

The Jamieson Sons Take Over

In the 1950s, Jamieson retired, leaving his sons, Bruce and Hugh V. Jr., to run the company: Bruce as administrative head, Hugh to duplicate his father's mechanical genius. Jamieson Sr. contin-



This early-day storyboard from Jamieson Sr.'s personal archives promoted Mrs. Baird's Bread, a big JFC client during the '50s. The voiceover was unsophisticated but direct.

ued to putter in the studio shop, and in 1959 received his second patent for creation of a 16mm color processing machine.

The company solicited business from advertising agencies, with stress on its total facilities—production capabilities, on-site lab and producer services to finish up the job. The Compleat Film Co., as it were.

Things really boomed for a while—sales soared, feature films were shot in or under the auspices of the studio, and there were even architect's plans and talk, as late as 1971, about building a new multi-stage studio. It either wasn't enough, or it came too late. Jamieson had become a top shop in the Southwest and the country. But in the late '60s, talented staffers began disappearing, trickling off to work elsewhere.

In 1968, when Jamieson was still making money hand over fist, the family-owned company sold itself for cash to Meisel Photochrome of Dallas, and became a wholly owned subsidiary of that publicly held corporation. Unfortunately for Meisel, that was the last year the company ever showed a profit.

Last May, Meisel sold the ailing Jamieson to Kreonite of Wichita, Kan., a privately owned still photograph equipment manufacturer interested in Jamieson's manufacturing enterprises. In September, the Jamieson film production division's assets were sold to Motion Picture Laboratory, Dallas. Announcing the end to employes on Labor Day, president Bruce Jamieson said, "We just sold some chairs, typewriters and cameras."

And that's how it goes sometimes with old, conservative companies. In films, Alexander in Colorado went down the primrose path ten years ago, Wilding folded its Chicago stage and moved to Detroit. And how many other independents have been forgotten? Who remembers Jam Handy?

So there's my tear. The Jamieson I knew is gone. Hopefully, the Jamieson that's left will continue its heritage of pioneering. #

Biographical Note

John G. Frayne at his 80th birthday party

John G. Frayne, a Past President and an Honorary Member of the Society, celebrated his 80th birthday 8 July 1974. In a letter to the SMPTE Executive Secretary, Denis Courtney, he spoke of the "flood of birthday greeting cards," and, noting that it would be difficult to acknowledge individually each card and note in the "avalanche of mail," he asked that his thanks be expressed in the pages of the *Journal:* "I was flattered to be remembered by so many of my old colleagues and I wish to thank them from the bottom of my heart for the many kind expressions embodied in the written notes."

John Frayne was born in the County of Wexford, Ireland (8 July 1894) of Anglo-Irish stock. His ancestors had fought in the Battle of Hastings (1066) on the side of William the Conqueror and Fraynes came to Ireland with the Norman invasion in 1170.

From 1912 to 1914 John Frayne attended Trinity College in Dublin and in 1914 he came to the United States where he continued his education in Ripon College, Ripon, Wis., where he received the B.A. degree in 1917. During World War I he served in the U.S. Signal Corps. Later he became an instructor in Mathematics at the University of Minnesota where he received the Ph.D. degree in 1922. From 1922 to 1928 he was Professor of Physics at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio; after leaving Antioch he became a Research Fellow at California Institute of Technology.

Dr. Frayne's long and distinguished career in sound recording began in World War I when he and certain other physics students were assigned by the Signal Corps to American Telephone and Telegraph Company to study the (then) new art of wireless telephony (radio). He, himself, credits his first steps along the road he was to travel in his profession to "two fortunate circumstances," the first being his assignment to the AT&T Laboratories and the second to his meeting (or rather re-meeting) with his World War I commanding officer (Major Nathan Levinson) in 1929 when he (Dr. Frayne) was at California Institute of Technology. Major Levinson, then in charge of the Hollywood operations of Electrical Research Products Inc. (ERPI), a subsidiary of Western Electric Co., formed to handle talking pictures, invited Dr. Frayne to join the engineering staff in Hollywood. In 1949 ERPI was renamed Westrex Corp. after having merged with another Western Electric subsidiary. Later Dr. Frayne became Engineering Manager. He remained with Westrex until his retirement in 1959.

Among Dr. Frayne's many technical contributions, two were recognized by the presentation of the Academy Award. In 1941 an Academy Award was won by the Integrating Sphere Densitometer developed by Dr. Frayne in cooperation with G. R. Crane; and, in 1953, Dr. Frayne and R. R. Scoville jointly received an Academy Award for their basic work on the intermodulation technique of distortion measurements. The on-going research is described in "The Analysis and Measurement of Distortion in Variable Density Recording," by Frayne and Scoville in the June 1939 issue of the SMPE *Journal* (pp. 648–673).

Other technical achievements (cited when he received the Progress Medal Award presented by the Society in 1947) included investigation of reproduced sound-film print noise as a function of negative and print density in the development of variable-density noise reduction; original investigation of light valve, phototube and printer gammas and establishment of relationships for their optimum use; studies and applications of light valves; investigation of sprocket-hole modulation; supervision and development of several improved recording and reproducing optical systems; and numbers of other achievements.

On that same occasion another important facet of his career was cited: "In addition to his technical achievements and the documenting of his work, Dr. Frayne has contributed in a broader sense by his sincere interest in the field of education . . ." For many years he was Chairman of the Education Committee and he was instrumental in promoting and activating the Society's educational program.

In 1941, Dr. Frayne received (with V. Paglarulo) the Journal Award for "The Effects of Ultraviolet Light on Variable Density Recording and Printing" (in the June 1940 *Journal of the SMPE*).

He received the Samuel L. Warner Memorial Award in 1959. The citation noted that ". . . his contributions span the technology of sound motion pictures from light valves and noise reduction to 70mm magnetic film recording and reproducing systems." Also cited