

The Trail of the Octopus

The history of the motion picture dates back to the 1890s, with the first true motion pictures beginning in 1900. The first successful permanent movie theater was the “Nickelodeon” in Pittsburgh in 1905. Before long cinemas were opening across the United States and serving as a popular past time.

Coppell was home to several movie theaters. In an interview conducted with Pete Wilson, Jewel Kirkland recalled that in 1918, movies were shown in a vacant store owned by Tom Harrison. For a time they were also shown in a makeshift tent theater with bleacher seats. Later, they were shown in a store on the corner of Bethel and Coppell Road.

One particular movie stood out in Jewel’s memory. It was a silent film serial titled “The Trail of the Octopus.” The film was a mix of suspense and mystery in which master criminologist Carter Holmes and the hapless Ruth Stanhope search for nine daggers that will help solve the mystery of the “Devil’s Trademark.” The film featured kidnappings, sorceresses, a Devil worshipping cult, and the mysteries of ancient Egypt.

One can only imagine how the sleepy, little farming town reacted to so much mayhem and derring-do.

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