

Headlines



Free Public Showing of The Rock Island Trail

April 4, 2006

The *Rock Island Trail* is a fictionalized account of the building of the Rock Island Railroad across Illinois and Iowa, based on a 1933 novel *A Yankee Dared* by F. J. Nevins. Forrest Tucker, who grew up in Iowa, stars as Reed Loomis, the builder of the railroad, who in no way resembles the actual builder of the railroad, Henry Farnam. The movie is a 1950 Republic Production in "Trucolor" starring Forest Tucker, Adele Mara, Adrian Booth, Bruce Cabot, and Chill Wills.

**Rock Island Downtown
Public Library**
401 19th Street, Rock Island,
6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 11, 2006

The viewing will begin with a short discussion of the movie: where it was filmed, how its portrayal of events relate to actual events of the time, and the 1950 premiere in the Quad Cities. The movie will then be shown in its entirety. The event is free and open to the public.

Facing opposition from steamboat interests and financial difficulties, Loomis manages to successfully bridge the Mississippi at Rock Island and eventually build the road all the way to the Missouri River. The film features the destruction of the original bridge by a steamboat and a visit to the river by Abraham Lincoln. If the background scenes in the movie look more like the Great Plains than Illinois or Iowa, that is because the movie was actually filmed in Oklahoma.

The 1950 Quad Cities Premiere of the *Rock Island Trail* was shown on April 27, 1950 with at the Fort Theatre in Rock Island, the LeClaire in Moline, and the Capitol in Davenport. Stars of the movie were in town for the event, along with a gaggle of other stars including Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, and John Wayne. The group started by posing for pictures in front of a vintage steam locomotive in the Silvis rail yards, then rode in parades through East Moline, Moline, Rock Island, and Davenport that attracted over 100,000 spectators and extensive live radio coverage. Bill Saal, a Republic Studio executive said of the event: "I've seen a lot of premieres in my time, Hollywood and otherwise, but I've never seen anything that could even hope to equal this one."

This event is sponsored by: Quad Cities Henry Farnam Committee and the Rock Island Public Library. For more information contact Curt Roseman, 309 764 6122 or croseman@usc.edu or call the library at 309-732-7323.