

Richard Blake, Reader Views

“Projected History: A Catalog of the National Stories Produced by Universal Newsreel, Volume One, 1929-1930” is a comprehensive compilation of information based on Universal’s textual records and microfilm documentation.

This and subsequent volumes of the series are compiled and edited by Phillip ‘Phil’ W. Stewart, retired U.S. Air Force officer, historical film consultant, and video and TV producer. Stewart is also an award-winning author of three previous books: “Battlefilm,” “War Wings,” and “America’s Film Vault.”

Phil focuses on the documented history of the U.S. and around the world as recorded by Universal Newsreel movie cameras. This edition contains all the stories nationally released during the first two years of production and distribution.

The Universal Newspaper Newsreel was released weekly on Monday during 1929 and 1930. The productions included highlights from the week’s news, thought to be important or entertaining, including such topics as: developments of the aircraft and shipping industry, beauty pageants, sports, politics, and celebrities. The format of the book includes short descriptions written at the time for the newsreel’s synopsis sheets. Stewart has also provided a comprehensive and exhaustive title and subject indices.

I enjoyed the frequent inclusion of “News Oddities” in the earlier editions. This was a kind of predecessor to “America’s Funniest Home Videos.” Another feature appeared by the mid-1930s which featured “News Paragraphs.” These were human interest stories with intriguing titles that captured my curiosity. The sketches

included catchy phrases like: “Stockholm, Sweden – Fancy Steppers meet” – Novel ‘hoofing’ features 10th anniversary of Folk Dancers’ League.” Volume 2, Number 95, Monday, November 24, 1930 included this holiday tidbit: “New York, NY– Turkey pluckers compete! Establish feather-denuding record of 30 birds in 50 minutes.”

Phil Stewart has created an important work. The book includes all the Universal Newsreel stories released nationally in the U.S. This is the first time that a Universal Newsreel story title, description, and availability have been compiled in one single reference work.

“Projected History” will quickly become recognized as an invaluable resource for students of film, U.S. and world history enthusiasts, genealogy aficionados, and by those involved in TV, video and multimedia communications services.