

TALKING PICTURE
EQUIPMENT

Norman Laboratories

CHEMICAL SPECIALTIES
MOTION PICTURES



ARLINGTON, FLORIDA

For Immediate Release

February 22, 2006

Contact: Devan Stuart
Chair, Norman Studios Silent Film Museum
904.742.7011 / dstuart7@bellsouth.net

Capt. Richard Norman
850-508-6636

Black History, Film History One and the Same in Northeast Florida *Silent film studio among first to produce "race films" to be preserved, reopened as a museum and community center*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Nearly a century after its cameras began rolling, the nation's only surviving silent film studio complex - and one of the first to embrace and promote African-American involvement in the entertainment industry - is preparing for its second stint in the spotlight. Following a massive restoration project, developers of the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum plan to reopen late filmmaker Richard Norman's 1916, Jacksonville complex as a silent film museum, community center and tribute to black cinema.

Along with Oscar Micheaux and the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, Norman was among the first to produce films starring African-American actors in positive roles and employing them as crewmembers. Between 1920 and 1928, Norman's company produced six feature-length films as part of a movement to establish an independent black cinema at a time when blacks were stereotyped and demeaned in mainstream movies. In Norman films like "The Flying Ace," "The Bulldogger" and "Regeneration," black characters were aviators, cowboys, heroes and lovers.

"My father was disheartened about the state of race relations at the time, both in real life and in the movies," says Capt. Richard Norman, Jr., who lives in Tallahassee. "And he saw an untapped market. So, he set out to help give the black community a stronger place on film, behind the cameras and in the theatres."

Today, Norman's complex stands in decades-long disrepair. But that soon will change. In 2002, the city of Jacksonville bought property holding four of Norman's five buildings. Workers will break ground on exterior renovations to the four buildings this fall, utilizing just over \$650,000 in grant funding. Next up is a major fundraising campaign to cover the purchase of a fifth Norman building, which has been meticulously restored by its current owners, Circle of Faith Ministries; and a search for descendants of the actors and crewmembers who worked on Norman's films for participation in a documentary.

Long term plans for the complex include a silent film museum and community center offering a venue for independent filmmakers to screen their projects, industry-related workshops, and a summer camp designed to teach economically disadvantaged children about film career choices.

A JPEG rendering of the planned renovations to the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum, designed by Jacksonville's Kenneth Smith Architects, is available. Contact Devan Stuart at dstuart7@bellsouth.net or (904) 742-7011.

Additional informational sources:

- Indiana University, Black Film Center/Archive, Richard Norman Collection, www.indiana.edu/~bfca/collection/special/norman.html
- JacksonvilleStory.com, www.jacksonvillestory.com/People from H through Z.htm