

Pictures of the Past

Dibble enjoyed long career

Pop Dibble - Pioneer Movie Man

John Pierce Dibble, son of Richard and Betsey (Brockway) Dibble, was born at the Dibble Homestead on Paved Street in 1853. The homestead, belonging to his grandfather Timothy Brockway, was built about 1762 and still stands today at 137 Leete's Island Road. At the age of 12, John became interested in motion pictures when he witnessed a magic lantern show at the Paved Street School. He soon began a 70-year career in the industry.

The early motion picture machines developed about 1872 used glass plates and machinery that was heavy and cumbersome. John would become well-known as "Pop Dibble" and with his brother Frank took his show on the road carting his equipment on horseback. In 1876 the first motion picture ever shown in New Haven was shown by Pop Dibble at the Crown Street Music Hall.

Thomas Edison invented the kinetoscope utilizing celluloid continuous film in 1894. Pop Dibble pur-

chased his second move machine in 1896 directly from Edison in New Jersey and it was the first kinetoscope brought to Connecticut. His first show on the new machine was given in Branford that year to a large audience at the Town Hall.

At the age of 64, John Dibble returned to live in Branford and became the manager of the Park Theater on Main Street. With his experience in the industry he obtained the newest features including reels from the great Baltimore fire and film taken at the front during World War I. In 1915 the great masterpiece of motion pictures was shown at the Park Theater "Ten Nights In A Bar Room." Pop Dibble retired in 1938. He would remark that he thought the new movies with sound were just a fad because people would rather look at the pictures and talk to each other. Pop Dibble, movie pioneer, died in 1943 at the age of 89.

Jane Peterson Bouley

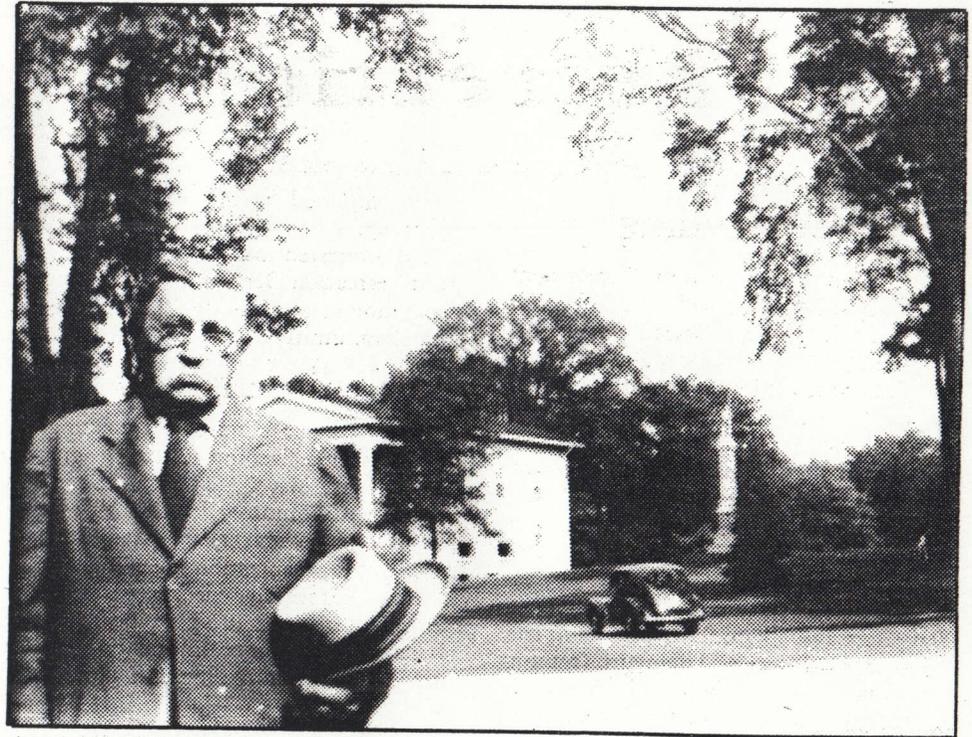


Photo by Charles Augustus Blackstone
JOHN "POP" DIBBLE at the age of 84 standing in front of the Town Hall. The photo is courtesy of Pearl Blackstone Milne.