



Mount Clemens Public Library

Local History Sketches

Mount Clemens Goes to the Movies: *The Mount Clemens Story*

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During the Korean War, movie fans across the nation were introduced to Mount Clemens, Michigan, courtesy of a documentary short filmed by the Air Force and distributed as a movie trailer to theaters nationwide.



The Bath City's road to the silver screen began in June, 1950, when Benjamin Sternberg of the President's Committee for Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces visited Mount Clemens and met with members of the Board of Commerce on the

matter of military morale. As a result of Mr. Sternberg's visit, three articles were written by local newspaperman Desmond A. Arnsby, who communicated to the local citizenry the need to care for the morale of area service personnel. Only a week after the publication of Arnsby's series, civic leaders met and formed the Mount Clemens Military-Community Relations Committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Joseph Blundo.

The town's swift assumption of responsibility for the welfare of servicemen drew attention in high places, and Mount Clemens became a model for other military communities to follow because it had established the first active military relations committee.

Mount Clemens' efforts were repaid when the Public Information Office of the United States Air Force decided to make a film on the subject of hospitality toward airmen. Five military towns were in the running to serve as the subject and locale of the movie, and Mount Clemens was ultimately chosen.



*Air Force officials arrive at the Jewel Theatre in Mount Clemens for the world premiere of *The Mount Clemens Story* on August 13, 1951. (Monitor-Leader photo courtesy of the Macomb Daily)*

Filmed on location in June of 1951 by the [Jerry Fairbanks Studio](#), The Mount Clemens Story was narrated by Desmond A. Arnsby, and "starred" numerous local citizens including Walter G. Fenton, Pansy Bell, Albert A. Wagner, and children from the nearby Sigma Gamma Hospital. The opening scenes of the movie showed a picnic hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Mount Clemens, followed by shots of other social events in which base personnel were involved. Frank J. Munt's Chris-Craft Maridic II was used for filming cruise scenes on the Clinton River. The religious aspect of the city-base relationship was represented in the film by Dr. Frank McCoy Field, pastor of First Methodist Church, who is seen in the movie greeting airmen on the front steps of his church after a service.

On August 13, 1951, the premiere of *The Mount Clemens Story* was held at the Jewel Theater in downtown Mount Clemens. Chief among the dignitaries attending was [Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt S. Vandenberg](#), who also dedicated a new housing project at Selfridge, named Vandenberg Village in honor of the general's late uncle, [Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg](#) of Michigan. Gen. Vandenberg said that the Bath City had been chosen for the film because "Mount Clemens has always welcomed servicemen with wide-open arms." Other notable guests among the 1,300 who attended the premiere were Dale McIntyre of WJR, master of ceremonies; Dr. Philip T. Mulligan, mayor of Mount Clemens, and Col. James R. Gunn, commander at Selfridge Air Force Base.

For more information, we recommend:

- *The Mount Clemens Story* [videorecording]. Hollywood, Calif. : Jerry Fairbanks Productions, 1951.
- "Cold Shoulder a Poor Welcome for Cold War GI," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 13, 1950, p.1.
- Arnsby, Desmond A. "Apathy of Public Makes Lonely Airman Feel Lost in Strange Town: Presidential Committee Hopes to Improve Civilian-Military Relations," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 14, 1950, p.1.
- Arnsby, Desmond A. "Military Turnover in Manpower Traced to Personal Hazards of Life," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 15, 1950.
- Arnsby, Desmond A. "B. of C. Backs Meeting to Pave Way for Lonely U.S. Airmen," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 16, 1950, p.3.
- "Civilian and Military Leaders Ratify New 'Friendship Pact,'" *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 21, 1950, p.1.
- "Warm Hospitality Offered to Personnel at Selfridge," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, July 18, 1950, p.1.
- "Plan Movie-Short on City's Role in Air Base Life," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, May 2, 1951, p.1.
- "What Movie of City is All About," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 4, 1951.
- Arnsby, Desmond A. "'Mount Clemens Story' Built Around Civil-Military Relationships," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 5, 1951.
- Arnsby, Desmond A. "Weather, Public Cooperation Vital to 'Mt. Clemens Story,'" *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, June 6, 1951.

JEWEL THEATER
 CONTINUOUS SHOWS
 STARTING 1:45 DAILY
 FREE PARKING

TONIGHT ONLY
 Open 7 P. M.

"The Mount Clemens Story"

Featurette Made
 in Mount Clemens

World Premiere!

See Your Mt. Clemens Friends
 and Selfridge Airmen in the
 Movies!

Shown at 8:10 Only

We're Sorry!

Due to conditions beyond our control, "The Mount Clemens Story" will not be shown the rest of this week as previously announced. However, it definitely will be shown at the Jewel Aug. 26, 27, 28 and the Macomb Aug. 30, 31 and Sept. 1.

- "Many Top Dignitaries to See Film Premiere," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, August 10, 1951, p.1
- Potisek, John. "Village Dedication, Premiere, Highlight AF Chief's Visit," *Mount Clemens Daily Monitor-Leader*, August 14, 1951, p.1.