

Spite Marriage (1929)

By John Bengtson, © 2004

Buster meets Dorothy in front of the east end of the Museum of Natural History at Exposition Park facing the Rose Garden.



A vintage photo of the museum and Exposition Park.



The cast and crew take a break filming the art museum scene in front of the Rose Garden in Exposition Park. Leila Hyams (seated, far left) appears in a fox hunting outfit, although she does not appear in the scene filmed here. She may have been dressed for a country club scene that was cut from the final film. To her right is Edward Earle, who plays Lionel Benmore. Director Ed Sedgwick is in the center. Between him and Buster is Ernie Orsetti, an outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals who had returned from the World Series to work for Buster. Notice Norman MacNeil, the musician on the silent film set, with an accordion, behind Buster.



The hand placing the wedding ring in this shot is a hand double standing in for Buster. Buster lost the tip of his right index finger in a childhood accident, and his shortened finger is plainly visible in other shots. Buster used a hand double for a similar wedding ring shot in his earlier feature film *Battling Butler*. Hand doubles were often used to film insert shots in order to allow the stars to go home a bit early, but in this case it may have been an artistic decision.



Lionel confronts Buster outside of the Hotel Carmel, located at 1451 Second Street in Santa Monica, on the corner of Broadway. Built in 1928, the hotel was brand new at the time, and is still standing today. I had originally thought that this setting might have been on the MGM backlot, especially since dozens of extras stroll by in the background. But the hotel is located immediately adjacent to the next scene where Buster runs up Second Street.



View of the Second Street entrance to the Hotel Carmel today.



After striking Lionel, Buster dashes past the Hotel Carmel lobby window.



The same lobby window today.



Buster continues to dash up Second Street from the Hotel Carmel, past the Pacific Hotel boarding house, at 1441 1/2 Second Street and the William Anderson Automobile Tops store at 1441 Second Street.



Buster races past the William Sinaberg Auto dealer at 1435 Second Street. Except for the Hotel Carmel, the buildings appearing in this scene were torn down to make way for a large parking structure.



Thanks to the higher resolution found on DVDs, I could read that this billboard was for an auto dealer located in Santa Monica. Once I knew to look in Santa Monica rather than in Hollywood or Los Angeles, I was able to track down the locations using old city directories.



This shot shows the MGM New York backlot, similar to angles appearing in *The Cameraman*.



Buster's taxi is shown driving up Pier A Street in Wilmington past the Coast Fishing Company located on the west side of Fries Avenue. You can read the sign in the background. This setting is located by Slip No. 5 of the Los Angeles Harbor.



The car now rounds the corner from Pier A Street onto Water Street along the former Catalina Steamship Terminal building in Wilmington.



This shot from the pier shows Mormon Island, part of the Los Angeles Harbor, in the background.



Stunt man Bobby Rose drives the car off the end of Avalon Street along side the Catalina Terminal. Although Buster was famous for performing all of his own stunts, MGM could not afford to risk its star for this shot. Buster was known to use a stunt double only one other time in the 1920s, when track star Lee Barnes pole-vaulted into a second story window for Buster when filming College.



This vintage view of the Catalina Terminal, no longer standing, shows the spot where the car drove into the north end of Slip No. 5 in Wilmington.



Scarzi (John Byron) runs along the dock, with the east side of Los Angeles Harbor Slip No. 5 in the background. All of the warehouses surrounding Slip No. 5, as appearing in Spite Marriage, have long since been demolished.



The four vertical lines coming up from the roof of the warehouse building are the legs of a water tower. The reverse side of this building, and the water tower, are visible during scenes from Charlie Chaplin's 1936 film Modern Times.



The yacht returns to the Catalina Terminal beside the same exact spot where the car plunged into the water. The towers of the Coast Fishing Company seen earlier appear in the background.



The taxi arrives in front of the Hotel Carmel on Second Street. In the center background are two buildings that still exist. A large tree now stands in place of the small bush near the curb.



The building with the three arches is the former Rapp Saloon, located at 1438 Second Street. Built in 1875, it remains Santa Monica's oldest masonry structure.



The former Rapp Saloon façade as it appears today.



The building to the right of the Rapp Saloon also still stands, and is currently the Second Street Market located at 1428 Second Street.



The present day Second Street Market.



Dorothy tells Buster that he's going to be seeing a lot more of her, as they re-enter the Hotel Carmel.



A similar view today.

