

# 200 Honor Salt Lake City Organist

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A bygone era of silent movies in Salt Lake City was relived by Mrs. Emma Street, 2510-7th East, the person who played the background music for those "tear jerkers" for many years starting back in the early 1900's.

"Emma" as she is affectionately called by everyone who has known her for more than five minutes, was honored recently at the Organ Loft, 3330 Edison St., by more than 200 of her friends. They paid tribute to her 57 years of service and devotion as an organist in the theater and on radio and the stage.

### 2 YEARS INSTRUCTION

Her career was based on only two years of formal piano, instruction and a week of organ lessons.

At the age of 8 Emma was playing regularly for school marches. Then as she grew older - age 10 - she played her first performance as a substitute at the old Photoplay Theater located on the corner of 1st South and State.

### REASSURING FATHER

Her father, Ralph Oakley, was standing reassuringly in the rear of the theater. Emma was playing the beat as background for soldiers marching across the screen. She turned and could not see her Dad.

She stopped the march music and ran down the aisle very frightened into the arms of the wife of the theater owner. Emma was reassured and went back to the piano. She made such a fine impression with the moviegoers that she was given a steady job playing four hours, off two hours, and then back again for another four hours each Saturday and Sunday.

### MOVIE THEATERS

She played in many silent movie theaters including the Photoplay, Mcheseey, Beju, Elite, Kinema, State, Bungalow, Princess, Broadway, Star, Iris, Rand, Rialto, Empire, American, Victory, Lowe's State, Orpheum, Pantages, Capital and finally the Gem, where she remained for 15 years.

Emma still played as a feature solo organist four years after talking movies had arrived. She gained popularity here when she accompanied her organ playing with a tiny toy piano.

### ENDS CAREER?

It was in 1934 that her career in the Gem ended. "I remember the occasion as if it were yesterday" she said. "I had just finished playing the background for the newsreel when the house lights were turned on and W.E. Shipley, the owner, announced that he could no longer maintain the organ music.

Spring '65

"There were tears in my eyes and of many of the patrons as I left the theatre for it marked the end of an era and end of a lot of friends."

But Emma continued to play. Her many talents were in great demand and played at such places as Hotel Utah Roof Garden and Shay's Cafeteria.

She also was instrumental in drawing large crowds to the Mapleway Skating Rink.

She played for several years on live radio shows and since Lawrence Bray has built his famous Organ Loft and has reconstructed several theater organs there she has been a regular performing artist.

Emma loves to play. You can tell it the minute you walk into her apartment where she lives with her mother and cat, and judging from the response of her friends, they love to hear her.



EMMA STREET at the Larry Bray WurliTzer with the plaque received in honor of her 57 years as an organist. (Photo courtesy Salt Lake Tribune)

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