

Local filmmaker's work to open in Caldwell cinema

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CALDWELL - Unlike film producers who open their new movies in theaters and then release them later on DVD, Bumble Bee Productions initially released Roseland resident Jack A. Gordon's feature-length historical documentary, "The Bond Force Legacy," on DVD last June.

Now, after generating momentum for it through the summer and fall, the filmmaker will launch its limited engagement at the Caldwell Clearview Cinema 4 on Bloomfield Avenue at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 17 and again at that same hour Sunday, Dec. 18.

Five years in the making, Gordon's work covers Roseland's early years and, in the process, reveals the staggering drama surrounding the lives of those who once lived in the 245-year-old house he now owns and resides in with his wife, Anna, and daughter Alexandra: The historical Bond Force House at 88 Eagle Rock Ave., located halfway up the hill on the left, east of Roseland center.

Most motorists who zoom past the neat, yellow farmhouse set back 200 feet from the roadway are unaware of the story of betrayal, bigamy, abandonment, larceny, mysterious death, excommunication, and finally hope that lies behind the simple words engraved on the wooden historical marker hanging from a post near the curb.

Gordon's wife, Anna L. Kleshelskaya, a public school teacher in Milburn, is senior vice president of Bumble Bee Productions, the limited liability company she and her husband, who serves as its president, established for creating and distributing his documentaries.

She said they will donate one-half of the \$5 suggested movie admission fee to the Roseland Historical Society's

Centennial Celebration Fund, which Everett Leonard and his son, former Roseland Mayor and Councilman Richard N. Leonard, established to fund upcoming events commemorating the 100th anniversary in 2008 of the borough's breakaway from Livingston.

And, she added, anyone wanting a DVD of the documentary would be able to buy it at the theater on either of the screening days for an additional \$10. It sells at other times for \$14.99 plus \$4 shipping. The Gordon family likewise donates a portion of each DVD sale to the historical society's Roseland Centennial Celebration Fund.

Kleshelskaya says she and her husband also have established and maintain the 150-page, www.TheBondForceLegacy.com website to aid high school teachers and their students in history and media/technology classes. Among its features is information on local history, and a "how to" guide for those interested in conducting research for a similar documentary.

By day, Gordon is an attorney and managing partner of Kent, Beatty & Gordon, a Manhattan-based law firm on Park Avenue that litigates commercial cases and dispenses advice on executive compensation. By night and on weekends, he pursues his filmmaking passion, which also has produced a documentary on Sake, a Japanese wine made from fermented rice.

Using his well-honed lawyer's research skills to dig into stories that the four, founding members of the Roseland Historical Society recalled, Gordon traced the Bond and Force families through years of letters, deeds, banking records, court proceedings, tax receipts, photos, and the ledger of a local church, including an inscription in its stained-glass window.

He says he not only has corroborated the recollections of historical society founders Adele Rall, Everett Leonard, retired Professor Robert Bush, and former Roseland Magistrate George Flammer Jr., who all appear in the film, but, through his Bumble Bee Productions, he also claims to have settled a controversy that long has been buzzing among local historians.

The resolution comes through his film's narrator, who reveals the double identity of the esteemed, but duplicitous, local citizen, Jonathan Force III, who became a state Assemblyman, and who brought ruin to the family he plundered and abandoned for a woman 20 years his junior.

Daughter Alexandra Gordon, a college student, acts in the film in the role of that femme fatale, while Jack Gordon's film-buff friend from college days, Peter Engard Dietz, plays opposite Alexandra as her character's bigamist-paramour, who was old enough to be her father.

Tony Call, whose credits include dozens of documentaries on broadcast television, public television, including The History Channel, as well as many nationally broadcast commercials, narrates Gordon's film.

John Califra, who has scored the music for many PBS and HBO productions, plus actress-producer Lee Grant's documentary about actors Kirk and Michael Douglas, "A Father and Son, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood," composed the haunting score that graces Gordon's work.

It won't spoil it for potential moviegoers to know that the sole survivor of the tragic clan that once occupied Gordon's house, Annie Force, lived to age 95. She died in 1963 leaving a bequest to the borough she loved. Her gift blossomed into Roseland's nine-acre Bond Force Park located on Eagle Rock Avenue next to the firehouse.