

Pennsylvania Theaters: A Historic Context



Prepared for the
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Harrisburg, PA 17120

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Introduction

For centuries, people have been going to the theater for entertainment. Traditionally, the entertainment was live, and not until the last century were films a competition. Regardless of the media, specific forms of buildings have been designed and created to host live performances and films. Theaters play an important role in the cultural landscape. They also reveal something of the social landscape of an area. Traditionally, only in areas where there was wealth and people with leisure time did theaters appear.

Boroughs, cities and neighborhoods across the Commonwealth house buildings which illustrate the history of theater from its early days of drama, opera, and vaudeville, to modern movies. The state showcases grand movie palaces, as well as small town, non-descript theaters with hardly any decoration. From early days, Pennsylvania has played a role in the history of theaters, particularly motion pictures.

Pennsylvania theaters vary in their styles, size, conditions and current uses. Few opera houses serve their original purposes. Many now sit boarded up, or have been renovated for alternative use, such as apartments and shops. Few of the formerly grand movie houses have been restored to their original glamour; many have even been torn down. Smaller city and borough theaters range from demolished to now being sites of adaptive reuse projects. Occasionally, some of these have been either completely renovated or restored. There are also many projects in the works: people with a love of independent theaters work to re-open long-closed theaters in downtowns across the state. Regardless of the condition of these theaters, they undoubtedly represent an important component of Pennsylvania's history.

Early Pennsylvania Theaters

It did not take long for theaters to appear in larger cities in America during the eighteenth century. Philadelphia notable hosted its share of "first" theaters in the country. In 1749, the first theater was a temporary playhouse in Philadelphia on Pine Street. Then in 1759, a hall was built in Society Hill. The year 1766 brought with it the Southwark, the first permanent theater. In keeping with the

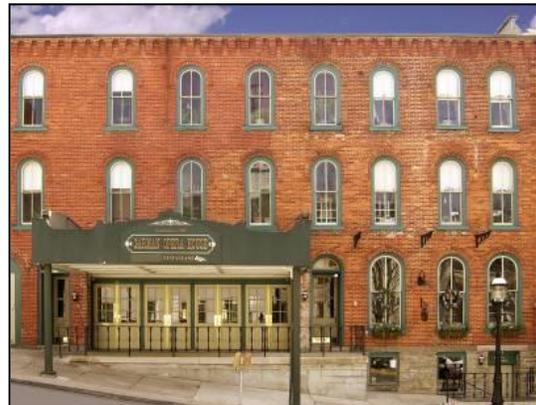
architectural tradition of the Pennsylvania Dutch, the building looked like a meeting house with a bell tower - very simple in form.¹

In 1791, construction began on the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, which lasted two years; however, it did not open until 1794 due to an outbreak of the plague.² The theater resembled the Theatre Royal Bath, and it could house over 2,000 patrons. It later burned down, but the owners rebuilt it in 1862, seven blocks from its original location. Across the state, in 1832 Pittsburgh received its first permanent theater.

The Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, which opened in 1809, is recognized as the oldest continually operating theater in the United States. Other theaters and opera houses appeared across the state, primarily in cities which had a population large enough to support them. Some opera houses across the state include Mozleys Opera House in Muncy, the Temple Opera House in Lewistown, the Garman Opera House in Bellefonte, the Mansfield Opera House in Mansfield (burned 1913), the Lock Haven Opera House (torn down 2005), and the Renovo Opera House in Renovo (destroyed in 1889 flood).



Mozleys Opera House, Muncy, Lycoming County



Garman Opera House, Bellefonte, Centre County

¹ Mullin, Donald C. *The Development of the Playhouse*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 118.

² *Ibid.*, 119.

Edwin Booth is credited with creating the standard form for theaters, which continues to this day.³ Booth's Theatre, which opened in New York City in 1869, contained many of these elements, such as a flat stage, elevators in the stage floor, wings held by pegs in the floor which could then be moved about, and central heat.

Vaudeville

After the Civil War, a new type of entertainment evolved: vaudeville. Prior to the war, entertainment was found in taverns or music halls acts where circus performers and traveling minstrels performed. These productions gradually evolved into a more standardized "show" format. Vaudeville is characterized by a series of acts, including acrobatics, jokes, comedy and drama skits, song and dance, and novelty acts.

The term vaudeville became popular after 1871, with the introduction of "Sargent's Great Vaudeville Company" of Louisville, Kentucky. Soon, others were using the term in their own acts, and it soon came to denote a style of entertainment that would go on to grip the country for the next five decades.

At first, the audience was men; the only women in the room being servers or prostitutes. It was bawdy entertainment, not fit for the family. Eventually, many managers realized they were losing an important audience, women. Some managers cleaned up their matinee shows and eliminated the smoking, drinking, and cussing, which made them suitable for ladies.⁴

In 1881, Tony Pastor mandated that *all* of his shows at his New York City theater be family friendly, not merely the matinees. This soon caught on with other theaters as well. Then in Boston in 1885, Benjamin F. Keith and Edward Albee introduced the idea of a continuous show, in which acts ran continuously from 10:00 AM until 11:00 PM. This provided shift workers the opportunity to be

³ Ibid., 131.

⁴ Allen, Robert C. *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*. New York: Arno Press, 1980, 25.

entertained at any time. The country was undergoing a social metamorphosis, as the emergence of more white collar workers meant more leisure time to enjoy entertainment. Additionally, travel became easier with the railroad, allowing troupes of entertainers to go from city to city.

Keith, who opened the Bijou Theatre in Boston, is often credited with being the “Father” of American Vaudeville. Keith is known for stressing a clean, family friendly atmosphere in which ladies and children would feel comfortable. His policy against cussing and coarse material was strictly enforced, and his clean atmosphere of entertainment proved to increase his audiences and gained the support of such institutions as churches, thus enabling him to expand his show and begin touring nearby areas.

Soon afterwards, others were imitating Keith. Troupes of vaudeville entertainers traveled the country. Vaudeville houses were built to meet their needs. In the early days, only larger cities and towns housed theaters, but by the decades end, smaller towns joined the ranks with their own theaters. During vaudeville’s heyday (1895 to 1900), the number of vaudeville theaters increased 12 percent annually, and in the following five years there was another significant rise.⁵ Many of the theaters were very ornate, promoting the idea of escape for patrons, as well as the thought that they were enjoying the wealth of their new found middle class status. These opulent standards began with Keith’s “de luxe” New Theatre in Boston, which he styled after southern European palaces. Keith later opened the Randolph Theatre on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, and the State Theatre in Uniontown.

By the 1890s, there were booking offices scheduling shows across the country. In 1900, Keith and his partner, Edward Albee, organized with other theater owners to create the United Booking Office (UBO). The UBO booked acts in theaters across the country, and was a formidable operation. Any act that hoped for success had to book with UBO, and provide a five percent commission to them as well.⁶

⁵ Allen, Robert C. *Vaudeville and Film, 1895 to 1915: A Study in Media Interaction*. (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 36.

⁶ Kibler, M. Alison. *The Keith/Albee Collection: The Vaudeville Industry, 1894-1935*. <http://lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/Msc/ToMsc400/MsC356/kibler.htm> (accessed February 15, 2007).

Vaudeville began as something for the upper and middle classes. The vaudeville circuit grew, as did the number of theaters across the country. If a town was positioned along a railroad line, it often became a stopping point for big name acts. Such was the case for the Temple Theatre in Ashland, Schuylkill County, or the Garman Opera House in Bellefonte, Centre County. Acts including Harry Houdini, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny and Charlie Chaplin are just a few of the noteworthy figures to perform at these respective theaters.

Many former vaudeville houses still stand today, with some even continuing in operation. A few of



Temple Theater, Ashland, Schuylkill County

these include the Roxy in Northampton, the Tower Theater in Upper Darby, the Keswick Theater in Glenside, the Benedum and Byham Theatres in Pittsburgh, the State Theater in Uniontown, the Civic Theatre in Allentown, the Garman Opera House in Bellefonte, and the Barrow Civic Center in Franklin. Others that stand, but no longer operate as theaters include Mozleys Opera

House in Muncy and Ashland's Temple Theater.

Scranton, Pennsylvania was a major stop along the vaudeville circuit and purportedly had one of the toughest audiences. As a result, new acts were often sent to Scranton first sometimes to the Poli Theater as a test before playing New York and going onto the national circuit. As a result of Scranton's audiences' reputation, vaudeville acts began to say "If you can make it in Scranton, you can make it anywhere!"⁷

⁷ Houdini Museum. *Entertainment & Shows in the Scranton and Poconos Mountains in the Poconos*. <http://www.pocono.org/theater.html> (accessed February 15, 2007).

The addition of an opera house in town also signified economic prosperity and culture. A town that was significant enough to attract traveling entertainers had a certain sophistication. Ornate and glamorous theaters contributed to this perception. Owners also believed that the more ornate the theater, the more refined an audience it would attract.⁸ It was not unusual for owners to construct theaters in Beaux Arts or Exotic Revival styles, both of which are very sumptuous and flashy. Murals and gilded moldings decorated the interiors, with grand, sometimes marble, staircases leading to the second level. The Temple Theatre in Ashland is a fine example with all the walls and ceilings being pressed tin, and each room and wall different motifs.



**A Beaux Arts vaudeville house/movie theater:
Pine Grove Theatre, Pine Grove, Schuylkill
County**



Pressed tin wall covering and ceiling medallions in the Ashland Theater, Ashland, Schuylkill County

⁸ Valentine, Maggie. *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 18.

To cater to their patrons, theaters began to offer services such as babysitting and refreshments.

These items made the audience feel pampered and helped them to escape from their everyday lives of work and familial duties.



Fulton Opera House, Lancaster City, Lancaster County

warehouse.⁹ Still other opera houses sit almost vacant, such as the three-story Temple Theatre in Ashland which has tenants on only the first floor. Mozleys Opera House in Muncy has vacant storefronts and some apartments on the upper floors. Many other historic opera houses are no longer standing. The opera house in Lock Haven was torn down due to irreparable deterioration. The Chester Street Opera House in Philadelphia was torn down and the Mansfield Opera House burned down in 1913.

The Fulton Opera House in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (1852) is one of the few theaters with National Historic Landmark Status. The theater has been restored to its former glory, and continues to feature performances today. The Mauch Chunk Opera House in Jim Thorpe continues to operate, though it is not restored like the Fulton. It also has not operated continuously as a theater over the years, having a stint as a ladies' bag



Mauch Chunk Opera House, Jim Thorpe, Carbon County

Movies

⁹ *The Mauch Chunk Opera House: History*. <http://www.mauchchunkoperahouse.com/> (accessed February 15, 2007).

Thomas Edison produced the Kinetoscope in 1889, which showed the first moving pictures. The Kinetoscope was a self-contained device which held a projector in a cabinet that could show approximately 50 feet of film — or about a minute of a movie — to a viewer who peered through a small hole. These films were short vignettes featuring everyday events, such as a girl dancing, a horse eating hay, or a man sneezing.¹⁰ The mere feat of seeing a moving picture of these common events while staring into a box filled the storefronts that housed them. Thus arose the penny arcade, named for the cost of viewing one of these spectacles.

Penny arcades produced a great demand for more films and an efficient way of showing them. In fact, the films were so popular, they often ran until their sprockets wore out.¹¹ Edison realized that if the projector could be freed from its box and the film projected onto a larger space, say a wall or sheet, thereby allowing more people to view it and operators to make more money.

The new projector came about in 1895, created by inventors in the United States and Europe almost simultaneously. Edison was involved again, but this time as the marketer. Thomas Arnat developed the machine, and named it the Vitascope. While the audience was fascinated, they were also terrified. Two of the first films which were shown were waves breaking at a beach and an oncoming locomotive. Both films had the audience fleeing in panic as they thought they would be swept away or run over.¹²

Penny arcade owners now had the means to show films to many people at once, thus increasing their revenue. They merely had to section off part of their already existing “theater” and provide seating.

Little evidence of penny arcades remains in Pennsylvania. Since they could operate in a storefront, specific buildings do not exist. Many did not last long; some for a few years, others just a few

¹⁰ Nagel, Sheldon. “The Dream Factory: The Story of the American Film Industry.” In *The Evolution of Mass Culture in America – 1877 to the Present*. Ed. Gerald R. Baydo. <http://www.mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg12043.html> (accessed May 22, 2006), 1.

¹¹ Beaupre, Lee. “How to Distribute a Film”. In *The Hollywood Film Industry*, Ed. Paul Kerr, (London/New York: Routledge + Kegan Paul) 187.

¹² Nagel, 2; Valentine, 17.

months. The Amus-U Penny Arcade in Lewistown opened its doors on August 24, 1906. By November 21 of the same year, the business had closed.¹³ This was due not to poor business, but rather excellent business. Owners quickly decided to move beyond penny arcade, and try their hand at the “electric theater,” or movie theaters.¹⁴

Vaudeville theaters were some of the first places to introduce the American public to motion pictures. Vaudeville show managers always sought new acts for their shows, and films were an easy addition. Films were a novel idea at the turn of the century, and soon short films were part of many vaudeville programs. Film was not seen as threatening; vaudeville managers and theater owners believed it would be a passing fad. Little did they know that the introduction of films would help end their industry.

The first time a motion picture played at a vaudeville theater was on April 23, 1896 at Koster and Bial’s Music Hall at Union Square in New York City. The crowd loved it, doubling the theater’s attendance. Other vaudeville theaters soon followed suit.¹⁵ Vaudeville houses adapted to the introduction of motion pictures, adopting them into their acts as fillers and openers. Soon they became a mainstay and were placed in the coveted middle acts (the opening and closing acts were considered too noisy and disruptive with people entering and exiting).

While vaudeville incorporated films into their shows, separate movie houses were opening to show films exclusively. The showing of moving pictures could be done in a much less fancy atmosphere for cheaper admission. A storefront could be converted into a theater with a projector, blank wall, chairs, and if necessary a curtain.

¹³ Fagley, Paul. *Saturdays at the Shoot “N” Juke*, 2006, <http://www.embassytheatre.org/> (accessed March 29, 2007).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Valentine, 28.

In 1900, vaudeville performers associated with Keith and Albee and the UBO went on strike. With fewer people to perform acts, the theaters relied more heavily on the mechanized motion pictures, thus increasingly engaging people into the wonders of cinema.¹⁶

Nickelodeons

Pittsburgh is often credited with the first nickelodeon, as these storefront theaters came to be known. Other scholars, however, note that stand alone movie theaters existed in New Orleans and Los Angeles, and that the term nickelodeon — derived from the admission price and Greek term for theater — was being used as well.¹⁷ This is not to say, however, that Pittsburgh's nickelodeon did not play an instrumental very important role in movie theaters' history in the United States.

On June 19, 1905, John Harris opened his nickelodeon on Smithfield Street in Pittsburgh. Harris and his brother-in-law, Harry Davis, produced vaudeville shows and screened the first motion picture in the city in 1897.¹⁸ According to the legend, Harris saw the stacks of films that had accumulated in the storerooms of the vaudeville theaters and was inspired to open a place that would show only films. Davis had a vacant storefront on Smithfield Street and so the two set up shop. Films began showing at 8 AM and continued until midnight. The silent films accompanied by a piano were about 15 minutes in length.

The results were better than anyone expected. Opening day drew in 450 patrons and by the second day more than 1,500 people stood in line to watch films. Within two months of the opening, Harris invested \$7,000 in a new frontage for his theater.¹⁹ Within two years, Harris had 15 theaters in

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ McNulty, Timothy. "You Saw it Here First: Pittsburgh's Nickelodeon Introduced the Moving Picture Theater to the Masses in 1905." *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. June 19, 2005. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05170/522854.stm> (accessed February 15, 2007).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Robinson, David. *From Peepshow to Palace: The Birth of American Film*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 90.

various cities. The theaters were open for 15 hours at a time, and ushers in uniforms greeted theater goers. This was the birth of the modern movie theater.

Soon, other nickelodeons opened up around the city and nation. One year after Harris' opening, 42 nickelodeons operated in Pittsburgh.²⁰ Within two years, more than 2,500 nickelodeons showed films across the United States. At first, nickelodeons were almost a "get-rich-quick" scheme as it took little capital to open one, and their popularity ensured a heavy return. Common names for them included Nickolette, Dreamland, Theatorium, Pictorium, Jewel, Electric, Majestic, and Bijou Dream.

Like Harris' nickelodeons in Pittsburgh, many nickelodeons opened in vacant storefronts, dance halls, or pawn shops. Nickelodeon owners easily converted these into theaters with the simple addition of chairs, a screen, and a curtain or paint to block out the light. The relative ease of this new business enabled many to open in a short period of time. It was not until later that owners built theaters specifically to show the short films. Pittsburgh, in particular, had an explosion of theaters at the turn of the century. By 1906, Pittsburgh had over 100 nickelodeons; by 1907, this number totaled nearly 300.²¹

Nickelodeons could not run enough movies to amuse their audiences. Owners had to change them often to keep people returning, so they were reluctant to purchase them outright. Instead, they swapped them with other theaters or rented them, thus allowing for cheaper film acquisition costs. The more a film was shown, the more the physical quality of the film deteriorated; lesser quality films rented for less, thus owners could rent more of them.²²

Nickelodeons provided an economical way to entertain the working man. Costing only a nickel and being short in duration, they allowed the working class to relax inexpensively, for a short time, before returning home. In areas such as Pittsburgh's steel mill district, or in coal mining regions, they became a popular way to blow off steam at the day's end. Shows began after shifts ended in order to

²⁰ Robinson, 90.

²¹ Sharp, Denis. *The Picture Palace*. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969) 30.

²² Beaupre', 188-189.

capture those who needed to relax. Nickelodeons were often placed around saloons and bars, thus creating an entertainment district. Nickelodeon shows also appealed to the immigrant workers, who did not always understand English. The silent movies with exaggerated emotions and gestures were easy for them to understand, adding to the popularity of the shows.

Eventually, theater owners began to employ three “rules” to prevent their shows from catering specifically to immigrants: They did not book shows too heavily geared towards one audience; they did not permit ethnic vaudeville acts; and finally songs in foreign languages were banned.²³

NICKELODEON ARCHITECTURE

Over time, nickelodeons’ architecture evolved from mere storefronts to something resembling later theaters. The windows and door frames were often removed, creating a recessed entry which drew people into the theater before they stepped off the sidewalk. Also, windows sometimes turned inward, creating the walls of the recessed area where posters advertised the current films. The box office was centrally located at the back of the area, with flanking entrance doors into the lobby. Later, the ticket booth moved to be in line with the sidewalk, thus enticing people on the street to buy a ticket for a show.²⁴

Another architectural evolution was for the nickelodeons to resemble vaudeville emporiums.²⁵ Owners wanted to draw in the middle class, who had been reluctant to patronize the small theaters, and they thought that creating a more inviting place might attract them. This coincided with the creation of longer movies, which required more comfortable places to view them. To create more impressive and upscale theaters, owners added accents such as potted palms, gilded marquees, plasterwork, cut-glass mirrors, marble, mahogany, and brass details. Other elements included sloped floors for a better view line, and an orchestra pit and organ. Most floors were wood, as carpeting was thought to be unhygienic.²⁶ Exteriors might now often included large, lit marquees and poster

²³ Merritt, Russell. “Nickelodeon Theaters 1905-1914: Building an Audience for the Movies.” In *The American Film Industry*. Ed. by Tino Balio. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 67.

²⁴ Valentine, 25-27.

²⁵ Merritt, 60-61.

²⁶ Robinson, 147.

frames advertising the current show. They also employed “professors” and preachers or world travelers to speak before the shows for more entertainment and to discuss the film.²⁷ Owners strategically placed theaters at the edge of white collar shopping districts to draw in the upscale shopper, or entice the nearby blue collar worker to see a movie as well.

The boom of nickelodeons was not without its problems. First, the celluloid films they showed were highly flammable. The projectors did not get a chance to cool, easily creating sparks and igniting the film. Often the only exit from the auditorium was beyond the projectors. This problem began to lessen in 1910, when cities implemented codes which demanded more than one exit, and that projectors be in enclosed rooms.²⁸ Other problems were social and moral in nature. Some worried about children watching too many movies, with their violent and sexual themes. Another concern was women and men in close quarters in the dark. Finally, xenophobia was on the rise, the middle class did not enjoy mixing with the new immigrants who frequented the theaters.

The nickelodeons’ heyday lasted only nine years, from 1905 to about 1914. Gradually, they began to disappear, as they no longer could compete with the film companies’ newly constructed, ornate movie palaces. Slowly, small theaters reverted back to storefronts along cities’ streets.

Early Movie Making

Early films were short due to lack of technology. By 1900, 250-foot-long strips of film allowed for three to four-minute-long movies. Longer movies meant there could be something of a plot, thus needing writers, directors, and actors.²⁹

Thomas Edison’s company produced the first “feature length” film. In 1903, they produced “The Great Train Robbery” by Edwin S. Porter. A true blockbuster, the film ran 18 minutes long, used 740 feet of film, and had been shot in a studio and on location in New Jersey.³⁰ Exhibitors and the

²⁷ Merritt 62.

²⁸ Valentine, 28.

²⁹ Nagel, 2.

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

audience wanted more, and film making began in earnest. By the 1910s, movie making as we know it began to take off. With more movies being produced, a greater number of theaters were needed.

In 1903, the Warner brothers opened their first theater in New Castle, Pennsylvania near the Ohio border. Brother Harry managed the theater, while Sam ran the projector and Jack sang. Though they had a difficult time obtaining films to show, they ultimately made money at their venture,³¹ and by 1913 they had opened Warner Features in New York State. By 1918 they were making their first Hollywood film. From their humble roots in New Castle, the Warner brothers went on to become giants in the film industry. Interestingly, the big three, Adolph Zukor (Paramount), Carl Laemmle (Universal), and Warner Brothers (Warner) all got their starts with small nickelodeon theaters.

In the decade between 1910 and 1920, the number of movie houses in the United States increased to over 25,000 with an average daily attendance of six million people.³² This includes those vaudeville theaters which doubled as movie theaters. Theaters which showed only movies were called “pictureplay theaters.”³³

Early on in the movie industry, a few businesses came to dominate moviemaking and distribution. This began with Keith and Albee’s creating their Film Booking Office (FBO). Film booking was a natural progression for Keith and Albee, as their UBO, which booked vaudeville acts, was already the most prominent booking system in the country. Soon Keith and Albee had four movie studios and 300 theaters.³⁴ Eventually, other early studios beat out FBO, including Fox Theaters, Loews (which owned the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio), Warner Brothers, Paramount, and RKO. Independents tried to compete against these powerhouses, but few were successful. The studios monopolized the industry, from the bottom of making the films to the distribution and exhibition in theaters at the top. The studios controlled the actors, scripts, directors, making of the entire movie, distribution of

³¹ Warner, Harry M. “The Story of the Vitaphone.” In *The Community and the Motion Picture: Report of the National Conference on Motion Pictures Held at the Montclair, New York City, September 24-27, 1929*. Reprinted by Jerome S. Ozer, 1971.

³² Sharp, 70.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Balio, 16.

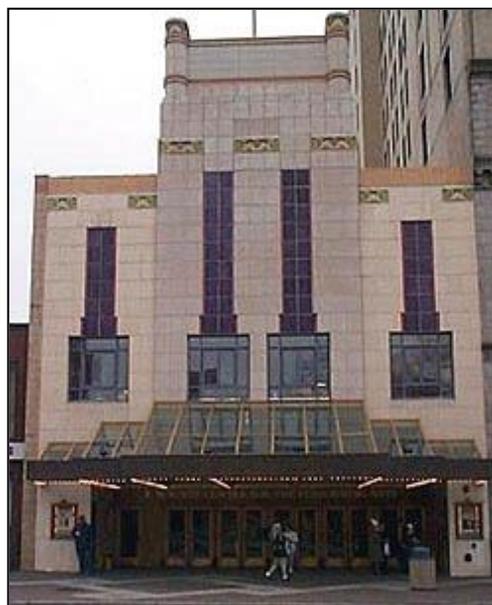
the films, and also built and maintained some of the theaters where they exhibited the films. This practice, called vertical integration, successfully eliminated the little guy. Independent theaters could not get films to show and often went out of business as a result.

LOCAL CHAINS

Though the industry was primarily dominated by large studios, a few smaller, regional companies existed, and some were quite powerful. The Philadelphia-based Stanley Company of America was the largest operator of movie theaters in the United States in the 1920s. Founded in 1897 by the Mastbaum brothers and named for brother Stanley, this company either owned or was very influential over all the theaters in and around Philadelphia and throughout eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. All theaters had to have “good will” of the Stanley Company to be successful.³⁵ The Stanley Company also built two movie palaces in Philadelphia, the Stanley, and Pennsylvania’s largest theater, the Mastbaum (torn down in the late 1950’s). In 1928, Warner Brothers purchased the Stanley chain of theaters, along with their music and publishing houses.³⁶

Stanley Company worked as a distributor of films to the area. It had to power to acquire the films “in bulk” from the studios, and then distribute them to local theaters. Since many smaller theaters could not easily acquire films, especially newer, more popular ones, they had to use, and be nice to, the Stanley Company to be successful.

Michael E. Comerford was a Pennsylvania native, born in Heckscherville in Schuylkill County, but grew up in Larksville near Wilkes-Barre. He later settled in Scranton, where his company, Comerford Amusement



F.M. Kirby Center, Comerford’s Flagship Theater, Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County.

³⁵ Hampton, Benjamin. *A History of the Movies*. (New York: Covici-Friede Publishers, 1931), 252.

³⁶ Balio, 17.

Company became headquartered. Comerford Amusement operated theaters across Pennsylvania and into New York from their Scranton base. In 1944, they ran 88 theaters, some of them under the circuits of Comerford Publix Theaters Corp., Kallet Theaters, Berinstein Circuit, and Fays Circuit.³⁷

The company's flagship theater, the Comerford, was located in Wilkes-Barre. The 1928 Art Deco/Moderne theatre was one of the town's three movie palaces and the only one still standing today (now operating as the F.M. Kirby Center).



Carlisle Theatre, Carlisle, Cumberland Co.

Other Comerford Amusement theatres in Pennsylvania include the West Shore Theatre in New Cumberland, the Carlisle Theatre in Carlisle, the Capitol (Community Arts Center) in Williamsport, the Capitol (Mauch Chunk Opera House) in Jim Thorpe,

the Rialto and the Strand in Sunbury, and the Lyric in Shenandoah. (See Appendix A for list of Comerford Theaters).

Comerford also dabbled in movie making. Comerford Amusements created the short film *The Inauguration of Governor Fisher*, a newsreel shown in theaters in 1927. Among his many accomplishments, Comerford founded the Motion Picture Theatre Owners of America, was the director of the Scranton Chamber of Commerce, and the President of the Amalgamated Vaudeville Agency, a vaudeville booking agency. Comerford Amusement sold to Paramount in 1930, but when Paramount declared bankruptcy in 1933, Comerford returned to help run the business. In 1949, Comerford and Paramount had to dissolve their partnership, as a result of the anti-trust settlement. In May of 1954, Comerford Amusements ended when Comerford sold 54 of his theaters to Paramount-Publix Corp for a reported \$20 million.

There were also smaller, more localized Pennsylvania chains. The Harry Chertcoff Chain, based at the King Theater in Lancaster operated in the Lancaster and Harrisburg area. Mid-State Theaters, Inc., based in Clearfield owned and operated throughout Montour, Mercer, and Clearfield Counties

³⁷ Film Daily Yearbook, 1944.

and north central Pennsylvania. Johnstown was home to Ideal Amusement Company, which had theaters in Altoona, Johnstown, and Juniata. Rivoli and Hollywood Theaters overlapped in an area with Ideal Amusements, which included Johnstown and Altoona, and also Ebensburg and Cresson. William Goldman Theaters hold stretched across the southeastern portion of the state from Philadelphia to York. Mervis Theaters operated primarily in Pittsburgh. Harrisburg-based Mark Rubinsky Theaters ran throughout south-central Pennsylvania, from Williamsport to Dallastown. And Harris Amusement Companies operated theaters around Pittsburgh (See Appendix A).

The monopoly of studios created a hierarchy of theaters, or houses, which detailed where certain movies could play. The “de luxe” theaters showed first run films, could usually be found in a central business district of a city. The deluxers, as they were also called, had seating capacity in the thousands, specialized in the public’s comfort, had air conditioning, and were close to public transportation.³⁸ The “super” was similar to the “de luxe,” but featured the latest architectural fashion. It, too, showed first run films. Both the de luxe and super became *the* movie palaces.

Neighborhood theaters, or second runs, were located in residential areas. Though they seated smaller audiences, they could be just as ornate as de luxes or supers. Neighborhood theaters did not have the live entertainment often found at others, and while they might show first run movies, it followed the downtown theaters’ premieres.

Finally, there were the third and fourth run theaters, also called subsequent run or subrun theaters, which showed certain genres of movies, like westerns,³⁹ often in the seedier parts of town.⁴⁰

Movie Palaces

Studios created “picture palaces,” as the grand movie theaters of the 1910-1920s came to be called. The first luxury movie theater, the Regent, opened in New York City in 1913. The following year,

³⁸ Balio, 26.

³⁹ Valentine 54-55.

⁴⁰ Beaupre?, 190.

the Strand, dubbed the first movie palace, opened on Broadway.⁴¹ During this time, cities began enacting codes to govern theater buildings. In Pennsylvania, for example, balconies were forbidden, and mechanical ventilation was required in the auditorium.⁴²

Singer states that the palaces were a result of the longer, “feature length” movies the studios began producing.⁴³ The longer viewing times required more comfortable seating. Also, the higher quality films demanded a higher quality viewing experience, hence the plush, elaborate palaces.

Movie palaces were an American urban phenomenon.⁴⁴ Approximately 1,000 palaces operated in cities across the country in their heyday. Gomery defines a palace as a large theater that showed films and had live acts, had a minimum of 1,500 seats in a fan-shape auditorium, and “nonfunctional decoration.”⁴⁵ These tended to be located in cities with over 100,000 people. In 1930, only five Pennsylvania cities had populations greater than 100,000: Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton.⁴⁶ Each of these cities had movie palaces. Across Pennsylvania, 98 theaters contained over 1,500 seats each, the majority of which were located in towns significantly smaller than 100,000. The Philadelphia suburb of Glenside had a population of 1,801 and its Keswick Theatre seated 1,680. The largest theater in Pennsylvania was the Mastbaum in Philadelphia, which seated 5,000.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Sharp, 73.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Singer, Ben. “Feature Films, Variety Programs, and the Crisis of the Small Exhibitor.” In *American Cinema’s Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*. Eds. Charlie Kiel and Shelley Stamp. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 88.

⁴⁴ Gomery, Douglas. “The Picture Palace: Economic Sense or Hollywood Nonsense.” In *The Hollywood Film Industry*, Ed. Paul Kerr. (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 206.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ US Census. 1930. *15th Census of the United States-Population*. Vol. 3, part 2. http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/10612982v3p2_TOC.pdf (accessed March 28, 2007), 666-674.

⁴⁷ Film Daily Yearbook, 1932.

Philadelphia had the largest number of movie palaces, with 38 in the city in 1932. Irving Glazer's *Philadelphia Theaters* (1994) covers this topic in much detail. Pittsburgh followed with eleven. Reading, with a population of 110,000, had seven, the smallest with 1,700 seats, and the largest with 3,000.⁴⁸

Pennsylvania saw steady growth in its number of picture palaces, or at least those theaters with over 1,500 seats (unfortunately it was not possible to note the auditorium shape and decoration of all the larger theaters). In 1925 only 69 theaters had 1,500 seats or more. By 1931 there were 103. After a slight decline to 98 in 1932, their numbers rose to 105 by 1935. Between 1937 and 1941, their numbers peaked at 111 across the state (Appendix B).⁴⁹ Consistently Philadelphia had the highest number of theaters.

Pennsylvania's larger cities, like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, and Wilkes-Barre and Scranton had the grand movie palaces, some of which could seat thousands. Smaller towns had less grand versions, though not technically movie palaces, they were similar in concept. They may have lacked 6,000 seat auditoria, marble staircases, and the feeling of being in a French palace garden, but they were nevertheless ornate, exotic places for the public to escape and watch a film.

MOVIE PALACE ARCHITECTURE

The movie palaces were large, glamorous theaters with exotic architecture borrowed from places like Egypt, Orient, and Europe. Theater architects focused on two architectural trends in palaces: the hard tops or period revival, and the Atmospheric. The hard tops, so called for their "plain" ceilings, exhibited Beaux Arts, French Baroque, Chinese and Oriental Revival Styles. The Atmospheric featured a sky painted on the ceiling and the illusion of being outdoors, such as in a palace garden. The Atmospheric was made popular by John Eberson, a prominent movie palace architect.⁵⁰ From the moment people lined up on the sidewalk, theaters whisked them away to another world for a while.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Film Daily Yearbook*, 1925, 1931, 1932, 1935, 1937.

⁵⁰ Valentine, 54.

The studios expanded on the idea of escapism in movies to include the viewing venue. They enticed people to escape their everyday lives by visiting grand, exotic palaces, to be entertained for a few hours. Movie palaces began creating an atmosphere before patrons even entered the building. At the sidewalk, the grand designs began under the elegant marquees and stretched towards the sky via sign towers. No singular style dominated palace architecture, but rather served as representations of various high styles, made to be so elaborate as to make the patron feel as if they were entering a glamorous world for a short while.

The architecture often began at the sky, where the sign tower reached. The theater's name could be seen for blocks as it reached skyward, sometimes over the tip of the theater building itself. The façade was generally ornate, two-stories tall, and quite often narrow with windows on the second level, belying the enormous lobby and auditorium behind.

Marquees extended over the sidewalk, providing shelter as well as advertising for the current feature. Often the theater's name was again on the marquee, usually a smaller version of the tower's. The box office might be a stand alone octagonal or hexagonal structure, centrally located under the marquee in the recessed outdoor "lobby" on the sidewalk. Gilded poster frames lined the walls, promoting the current and upcoming features. The sidewalk was sometimes tiled in mosaic, or featured decorative designs drawing people into the building.

Upon entering, patrons strolled through a promenade that led them to the interior lobby. The promenade stretched the length of the flanking commercial buildings, allowing people to enter the wider theater portion at the back of the stores. Sometimes the promenade was enclosed, while others had the adjacent stores' doors and picture windows lining the walk. High ceilings, usually two stories, were often painted or decorated in the style of the theater.

The lobbies of the palaces were grand affairs: wide open spaces with gilded ornamentation. Terrazzo floors shined under the lights of chandeliers. A pair of marble staircases with ornate balustrades might lead to a second-floor lobby, where one could view painted scenes on the ceiling or ornate plaster ceiling reliefs more clearly.

Restrooms contained lounges as well as bathroom facilities. Ladies' rooms had a powder area, while the men's might have easy chairs.

The auditorium would be a huge expanse of seats. Rows were spaced closer together than they are today, allowing less leg room. Along the aisle, the sides of the seats would be ornately decorated, featuring a design that tied into the theater's overall style. Ashtrays were also not uncommon.

The walls of the auditorium might feature murals, or else gilded columns and sconces. Almost every inch of the walls was decorated, from paintings to gilding to plaster reliefs. A central dome often topped the ceiling, as ornate or more so as the walls, and from it there might be a large crystal or cut glass chandelier hung to illuminate the room. The dome could always been better seen from the balcony which extended over the first floor.



Granada Theatre, Beaver Falls, Westmoreland County

The screen and stage would cover the width of the building and be framed by an ornate proscenium arch. If the screen were recessed, the proscenium would extend outward in layers, drawing the eye to the action on the screen. Painted curtains covered the screen until it was time for the show.

Pennsylvania did not have many Atmospheric theaters during this period, and less than a handful now remain. The Boyd Theatre in Easton (1931) was demolished, as well as the Circle in Philadelphia (1929), the Embassy in Reading (1931), the Erlen in Philadelphia (1930), and the John P. Harris Memorial Theater (1928). The Granada Theater (1931) in Beaver Falls, stands vacant at the time of this writing.



Warner Theatre, Erie, Erie County

MOVIE PALACE ARCHITECTS

Movie palace architects tried to outdo one another in their ornate, glamorous creations. Three architectural firms dominated palatial architecture across the United States: Rapp and Rapp, John Eberson, and Thomas Lamb. Pennsylvania has theaters from each of these. Rapp and Rapp designed Pittsburgh's Loews Penn

Theater (now the Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts) in French Baroque style, the Warner Theatre in Erie, also French Baroque in style, and the Warner Theatre in West Chester, which unfortunately has been partially demolished and totally renovated.

Eberson's theaters in Pennsylvania include the Butler Theatre (demolished); the John P. Harris Memorial Theatre in McKeesport (demolished by fire), the Yeadon Theatre (closed), the Colonial and Leader Theatres in Philadelphia (demolished and closed), and the Perry Theatre in Pittsburgh (closed). Eberson's theaters tended to be more modern in their architecture, using Art Deco, Atmospheric, and Art Moderne styles.

Lamb's theaters included Colonial (later remodeled by Eberson, and now demolished), Trans-Luxe (Eric's Place, later remodeled by W.H. Lee and now closed), Fox (demolished), the Kent (demolished) and State Theatres in Philadelphia (demolished), and the State Theatre Center for the Performing Arts in Uniontown (open).

One prominent Pennsylvania architect of this time was William Harold Lee of Philadelphia. Lee grew up in Shamokin in central Pennsylvania, and graduated from Shamokin High in 1905. After a year at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, he returned to Pennsylvania to study at the University of Pennsylvania. Lee apprenticed with Furness & Evans in 1910, and in 1912 established his own firm in Shamokin. Lee opened an office in Philadelphia in 1919, and two years later merged with the two firms of A.A. Ritcher and H.I. Eiler to create Ritcher-Lee Company.

Lee designed buildings at Temple University and Franklin and Marshall College, but his theater designs earned him his reputation. He designed numerous theaters in Philadelphia and its suburbs, including Wayne, Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Jenkintown, Lansdowne, Narberth, and Norristown. Scattered across the eastern half of the state are/were other theaters in New Cumberland, Shamokin, Gettysburg, Reading, Mt. Carmel, and Harrisburg. New Jersey also has a collection of Lee's theaters. Few of his theaters are still standing or in operation. The West Shore Theater in New Cumberland still operates on weekends; the Majestic Theater in Gettysburg recently underwent a restoration and reopened to the public in its former grandeur; the Narberth Theater still operates; the Bryn Mawr is open during restoration; the Anthony Wayne Theatre still serves the residents of Wayne; the Hiway Theatre in Jenkintown was recently renovated and no longer retains its former glory, but still shows films.

H.C. Hodgens and A.D. Hill in Philadelphia were also notable theater architects in Pennsylvania. They designed theaters in Philadelphia mostly, but did branch out as far as Lewistown, for the Embassy Theatre. Their Philadelphia theaters include the Admiral Theatre, the Cambria Theatre, the Clearfield Theatre, the Fern Rock Theatre, the Frankford Theatre, the Franklin Theatre, the Gem Theatre, the Hippodrome Palace Theatre, the Remy Theatre, the Roosevelt Theatre, and the Tower Theater in nearby Upper Darby. The Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project cites the firm as having been awarded contracts to design many more theaters, including the Bala Theatre in Bala-Cynwyd.

Main Line Theaters

The suburbs of Philadelphia are home to many stunning movie theaters, many of them still in operation. An impressive collection of them lie along the Pennsylvania Railroad's (PRR) Main Line, which was developed by PRR in the 1870s-1880s. PRR laid tracks through the countryside west of Philadelphia, and as it did so, it planned communities through which the tracks would pass, often purchasing prime real estate near the stations' location. Sometimes as they planned the town, they dictated the prices of lots and buildings, thus ensuring that only a certain class could afford to live there.



Bryn Mawr Theatre, Bryn Mawr, Montgomery County

Bala Cynwyd was aptly named the Egyptian, for its wonderful Egyptian Revival architecture. This 1926 theater's auditorium was split into three at some time, but retains much of its original detailing and continues to show films.

A demand for entertainment came with the wealth of the residents along the Main Line. Movie theaters were built in the towns of Bala Cynwyd, Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Narberth and Wayne. The Beaux-Arts style Bryn Mawr, originally named the Seville, opened in 1926. In 1977 the auditorium was twinned, and though currently undergoing restoration, it continues to show movies today. The Bala Theater in



Bala Theatre (the Egyptian Theater), Bala Cynwyd, Montgomery County



Cornice detail on the Bala Theatre

Ardmore had the Palace Theatre (1919, Exotic Revival) and the Ardmore Theater (1925, Beaux Arts), neither of which function as theaters today. The Narberth Theater (1927), which still shows movies, was recently twinned, but retains some of its architectural details. The 1928 Anthony Wayne Theatre in Wayne still operates in the center of the shopping district. Renovators attempted to keep some of its original architectural details, while adding additional auditoria with stadium seating in the rear of the building.



Narberth Theatre, Narberth and the Anthony Wayne Theatre, Wayne, Montgomery County

Additional theaters of note, but not on the Main Line include Lansdowne and Ambler. The 1927 Spanish Revival Lansdowne no longer operates as a theater. The Ambler Theater recently underwent renovation and restoration. The 1928 Moorish Revival theater, which continues to show films, recently had its auditorium split into three, with two being modern, and the third restored to its 1928 glory.



Ambler Theatre, Ambler, Montgomery County

Such a clustering of grand 1920s movie houses is not seen elsewhere in Pennsylvania. Cities and larger towns often had more than one theater, but few remain or retain so much of their historic integrity as have the suburban Philadelphia theaters.

Other Trends

Another trend during the movie palace era was for theaters to be housed in fraternal lodges. Brotherhoods like the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks or the Loyal Order of Moose realized they could supplement their lodges with funds from an in-house theater. Some of these were rather ornate, like the Elks Theater in Mahanoy City. This 1916 Beaux Arts building has an intricate terra cotta façade, and the upstairs lodge rooms are relatively intact with significant detailing. Others, like the Elks Lodge in Middletown (1911) and the Moose Lodge in Elizabethtown (1928) were not as elaborate. Unfortunately, few have operating theaters, and the auditoria have been significantly altered.



Elks Theatre detail, Mahanoy City, Schuylkill Co.

Movie palaces comprised only a small fraction of theaters across the country. Theaters with 200 seats existed, but they tended to be overshadowed by the grander palaces. Smaller theaters suffered as a result of the palaces. Smaller theaters preferred the shorter films, which had previously been the norm. These cost less and could be turned over more often, resulting in a broader audience base. Longer films cost more and theaters had to keep them for more time to make them pay off, but smaller audiences lacked the audience base to make this economically feasible.⁵¹

With this in mind, smaller theaters had four options: keep the same programming; enhance their program by providing nicer amenities like plusher seats and ushers; create feature programs from cheaper, second run films; or they could go out of business.⁵² Some went out of business, but many others adapted and kept their audiences entertained.

The End of Silence

In 1927, Warner Studios released *Jazz Singer* featuring Al Jolson. This film is credited with being the first “talkie,” but sound in movies was nothing new. A 1926 film, *Don Juan*, featured a musical score and sound effects, but no speaking.⁵³ Other movies had music or little bits of sound, but the *Jazz Singer* was a turning point. Once the audiences saw it, they demanded more of the same and the era of silent films drew to a close. By 1930, almost all Hollywood studios were producing movies with sound.⁵⁴

At this point, existing movie theaters lacked the equipment to show movies with sound. Owners had to make adaptations, and they could not be made fast enough. By 1929, the lack of sound in a theater resulted in its demise. Only those located in isolated places could make do without audio, but

⁵¹ Singer, 89; Putnam, Michael. *The Silent Screen*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1999), 8.

⁵² Singer 89.

⁵³ Crafton, Donald. “The Talkies: American Cinema’s Transition from Sound, 1926-1931.” In *Part of History of the American Cinema*, Ed. Charles Harpole. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993) 15, 11.

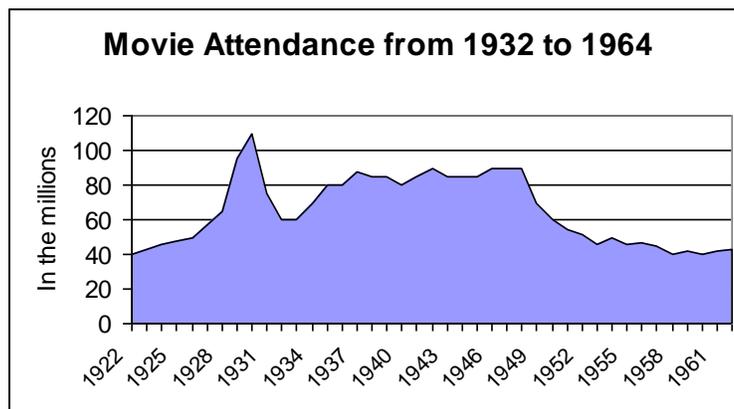
⁵⁴ Valentine, 69.

even then people would travel a distance to see one with sound.⁵⁵ The installation of sound equipment proved a great investment for theaters, one which they could not afford to make. The *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures* shows that in 1931, of the 1,271 theaters in the state, 970 were wired for sound. In 1932 it increased to 1,070, and to 1,099 by 1933. The “unwired” theater numbers steadily decreased from 301 to 122 to 109 respectively.⁵⁶

Sound in theaters brought about physical changes in the theaters. Fabric draped on walls and carpeting, as well as upholstered chairs helped absorb the sound and prevent echoing. Additionally, air conditioners now had to be extra quiet.⁵⁷

The Great Depression

By 1929, the “golden age of movie palace architecture was closing”⁵⁸ but studios continued to build the large, grand theaters. In 1929, the Great Depression hurt the movie industry and its audience, but the damage did not appear until after 1930, when movie attendance was its highest at 110 million people. From 1930 to



1932, attendance at theaters dropped from 90 million per week to 60 million,⁵⁹ while the number of operating theaters declined from 22,000 to 14,000.⁶⁰ Some of the new palaces that opened only two to three years earlier closed their doors. Those that remained open did so by trimming costs and

⁵⁵ Crafton, 255.

⁵⁶ *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures*. (New York: Film Daily, 1931-1933).

⁵⁷ Crafton 255.

⁵⁸ Sharp, 81.

⁵⁹ *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures*.

⁶⁰ Doby, Hal. “A History of the American Movie Palace.” In *The Atlantic Fox Theatre*, 2005, <http://www.whitenberg.de/FoxTheatreAtlanta/Palacehistory.html> (accessed February 21, 2007).

adapting to new methods. Originally, shows in movie palaces incorporated live acts and a movie. The live acts were one of the casualties. By eliminating these, theater operators paid fewer salaries and freed up time, allowing for a second showing of the film and increased revenues. This was the forerunner to the way theaters operate today.

Theaters also began to drop previously offered amenities. Gone were nurseries, military ushers, and restroom attendants. Women replaced men in some positions because they could be paid less.⁶¹ By 1932, the number of workers in theaters dropped from 130,000 in 1929 to 87,000.⁶²

Theaters began holding promotions to draw people to the theaters. At this time, double features became popular. Dish night was another promotion, wherein a patron would receive a piece of dinnerware. This was quite a prize in an era when many people did not have dishes, bringing them back each week to collect a full set. Other theaters held raffles giving away money or groceries, had blonde nights, the Mickey Mouse Club, midnight movies, and gave away free lunches and cigarettes. Theaters also dropped ticket prices, offered a bargain night when prices were lower, and family night when an entire family could attend for one flat rate. At the Anthony Wayne Theatre in Wayne, outside of Philadelphia, owner Harry Fried drew names to give away tickets. In West Chester, the Garden Theatre drew in children with free rubber balls, candy bars, and other novelties, and by offering the “Children’s Lucky Pass” which knocked a nickel off their admission.⁶³ Meanwhile, the Rialto and Warner theaters in town offered a nickel discount for the first 300 people, and the raffle of a Leonard electric refrigerator and Westinghouse radio.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Valentine, 91.

⁶² Balio, 15.

⁶³ Pasquarello, Michael. *The Great Depression and Its Effects on the Movie Theatres of West Chester, Pennsylvania*. West Chester University, 2005. <http://courses.wcupa.edu/jones/his480/reports/dep-movie.htm> (accessed February 22, 2007).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Warner Brothers brought back live entertainment for its movie audiences in Pennsylvania in an effort to keep its small-town theaters full. They also had bands, chorus girls, and comedians come to a theater for one to three day stands.⁶⁵

CHANGING STYLES AND MATERIALS

The demise of the movie palace and the change in the architectural style of theaters also resulted from the Depression. Gone were the opulent, grandiose replicas of European palaces and cities. Various theories exist as to the demise of the movie palace. David Naylor speculates that the palaces were now wasteful expressions of wealth, unwanted reminders during the hard times of the depression; also, that the public was tired of European influence. Maggie Valentine suggests the exoticism of the theaters, which also related to the exoticism of the technology of films, was no longer necessary now that the novelty of films had passed. Doby suggests the transition to Art Deco style was due in part to it being a cheaper construction style, and also the public was looking towards the future and Art Deco symbolized a modern, futuristic and hopeful future, a dream which was desperately needed at the time.⁶⁶ The first Art Deco Palace was the Hollywood Pantages (1930), but the most famous is Radio City Music Hall in New York City (1932). Streamline Moderne was on the heels of Art Deco. Both of these modernistic styles made sleek looking, modernistic theaters, that mirrored the styles of the day.

The 1930s featured some of the grandest examples of Art Deco theatre styles, although this style continued to be seen for the next two decades. Art Deco palaces in Pennsylvania included the Boyd Theater (vacant), the Alden Theater (demolished), the Broadway Theater (demolished), the Earle Theater (demolished), the Grand in Philadelphia (adaptive reuse); the Melrose Theater in Pittsburgh; and the Comerford Theatre in Wilkes-Barre (now the F.M. Kirby Center).

Other smaller theaters, not quite palaces, also adopted the Art Deco style, many of which



Roxy Theater, Northampton, Northampton County

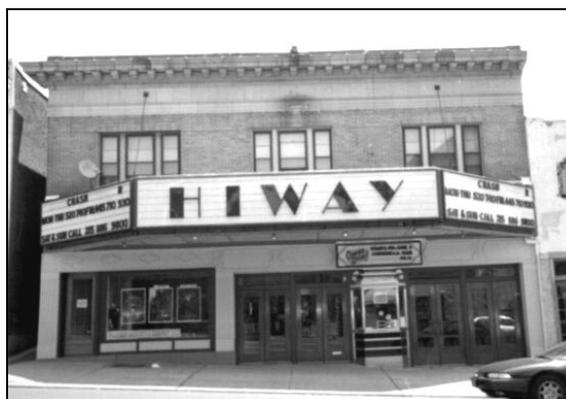
⁶⁵ Balio, 27.

⁶⁶ Doby. 2005

today still stand. Some of Pennsylvania’s smaller Art Deco treasures include the Anthony Wayne Theatre in Wayne (still operating); and the Warner Theatre in Chester (adaptive reuse); the Roxy in Northampton (still operating); the Roxy in Lock Haven (still operating); the Strand in Hamburg (still operating); the Rowland in Philipsburg (still operating); the Carlisle Theatre, and the Hiway in Jenkintown (still operating).



Roxy Theatre, Lock Haven, Clinton County



Hiway Theatre, Jenkintown, Montgomery County

With new styles came new materials. Architects covered theaters with sleek new glass facades, such as Vitrolite, Carrara, and Sani-onyx. Structural glass, as it was called, was as durable as marble at a fraction of the cost.⁶⁷ Though first only available in black and white, soon architects had a palette of colors from which to choose. The sleek glass soon adorned many of the new, and newly renovated theaters, and continues to hold up through today.

In the years following 1929’s Black Friday and the subsequent Depression, theater construction slowed but did not stop. The cost of building actually dropped almost 20 cents per square foot from 1929 to 1931, to 25 ½ cents to 35 cents, down from 35 to 55 cents. In Pennsylvania, building a sound theater with air conditioning (meaning heating, cooling, or air circulation), but no refrigeration,

⁶⁷ Thornton, Rosemary. “Vitrolite, Carrara & Sani-onyx: Sleek, colorful glass tiles defined the very notion of “modern” in the 1920s & 30s” *This Old House Web*, <http://www.oldhouseweb.com/stories/Detailed/12237.shtml> (accessed July 12, 2005).

for a 1,300 seat theater cost approximately 27 cents per square foot, or \$113 per seat. A 1,840 seat theater with refrigeration cost 30 cents a square foot, or \$165 per seat.⁶⁸

A 1931 article by theater architect John Eberson recommends architects and theater builders keep certain priorities when building a theater.⁶⁹ First was the location, which for the smaller “palaces” should be in the commercial section of the neighborhood. The picture, acoustics, and projection were the next most important, followed by seating comfort and the visibility of the screen. Having good air conditioning was also a must. Lastly were the decorations, which should not be “forced.”

The following year in 1932, Eberson was full of ideas for “re-constructing” and creatively updating theaters due to a need for “conservation of assets.” Ideas ranged from minor items - replacing door pulls and installing new decorative lighting fixtures, and changing color schemes - to larger projects like eliminating box-tier seating and widening the proscenium. Atmospheric modifications were also considered and applied when possible. Also, careful attention was paid to paint selection. Blue “uplifts, releases the nerve tension of audiences especially following a tragic picture, has therapeutic value beneficial to the mind and nerves.” Orange and “myrtle” green were next in popularity. Red and purple were said to never be used. “Comfortable seats and carpeting is a must, and carpeting should be “fiery and warm colors” and the “patterns selected should show repeats in small units to enable proper cutting and sewing in narrow aisles, around curves and at stairs.”⁷⁰ Tapestries were considered an excellent decoration, though mirrors and glitter were ignored.

Rising out of the Depression

Despite dazzling new theaters with modern architecture, studios had a difficult time recapturing the audience it had before the Depression. Though there was a gradual increase, the next jump in

⁶⁸ Eberson, John. “The Standard Theater.” In *The 1931 Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures*. (New York: Film Daily) 1931, 907.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 909.

⁷⁰ Eberson, John. “Re-Construct in 1932”. In *The Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures*, (New York: Film Daily) 959.



Angela Theatre, Coaldale, Schuylkill County

attendance occurred in the late 1930s with the advent of color films. Color in films was not new; the first color film was *The Gulf Between* from 1917, but the color process was tedious and expensive. Over the next decades studios produced few color films, as it was easier and cheaper for studios to stay with black and white. In 1937, Disney's color cartoon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* premiered. Then in 1939, Technicolor mastered a cheaper way to make color live-action films. That same year MGM released two American classics in Technicolor, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*. People began returning to the theaters in force. Yet people were not returning to the

downtown movie palaces. Instead, they patronized the newer, closer, smaller neighborhood theaters that began to appear.

The 1920s saw the rise of suburbs around many of the larger cities. During the Depression, people did not want to travel as far. The theaters were much simpler, less ornate than the expensive palaces to build. They offered a smaller auditorium, a lobby that lacked chandeliers, and no stage or orchestra pit. These theaters ran first-run movies as well. Many of them adopted the Art Deco or Moderne styles. Some Pennsylvania neighborhood theaters include the Carlisle Theatre, the King Theater in Lancaster, the West Shore Theater in New Cumberland, the Ritz Theater in New Holland, the Ritz Theater in Muncy, and the Angela Theater in Coaldale.

The rise in the number of smaller neighborhood theaters forced Hollywood to produce more movies. Suddenly, there was not enough entertainment. Many movie houses in smaller towns could not subsist on one movie per week, as a large city theater could do. Instead, in order to keep people coming, they had to offer two to three different films per week.⁷¹ Thus, the smaller production companies, like Columbia, Universal and United Artists began producing more movies to supply

⁷¹ Putnam, 10.

theaters with more viewing material.⁷² Some say this resulted in poor quality movies, those quickly made as “fill”. Regardless, it worked and people kept returning to see more films.

World War II

When the United States entered World War II, the government needed to be persuaded to keep movie theaters operating. Resources were scarce around the country, including those for making, printing, and distributing movies, as well as for running theaters. Additionally, the government commandeered projectors and sound equipment to show training films. Theater owners worked to keep the theaters open as the government threatened to close them. Architect John Eberson was appointed to the War Production Board, and he stressed the importance of keeping the theaters open and showing films during war time to keep up the public’s morale.⁷³ The government used the theaters to promote the war to those at home and sell war bonds. Some of the largest bond drives were linked to free movie days: the movie was free if one bought a war bond.⁷⁴ Newsreels were typical, and they kept people informed. Also, the movies being made in Hollywood had pro-American and pro-war themes.

Resources for theater improvements were scarce at this time. Though just as during the Depression, theaters had to renovate to modernize their looks and keep audiences. During the war, up to 85 million people saw a movie in a week’s time.⁷⁵ New theaters could only be built with permission from the War Production Board, who rationed out materials during the war. Since materials were limited, styles and design were simple.

The few theaters built during the war featured facades of structural glass, brick, tile and metals. This “modernized” look was easy to maintain, but also allowed for easier upgrades when money and resources again became available. The same simplicity and “modern” look appeared in the

⁷² Balio 5.

⁷³ Valentine, 129.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

auditorium and proscenium. Gone were the decorative plaster and murals. Instead, paint and fabric now sufficed.⁷⁶

At this time, most importantly, theaters had to be built near public transportation. The automobile suffered from wartime the gas rationing, leaving people at the mercy of public transportation. New theaters tended to be built in areas near war production plants, which had many people living within close proximity.⁷⁷

The Age of the Automobile

After World War II, the building of new theaters was slow to take off. The government allocated materials to build houses for the returning GIs. When theaters again began to be built in earnest, they underwent another stylistic change. Unlike just a few years earlier, theaters no longer had to be within walking distance, nor along a mass transit line. The age of the automobile was beginning. Theaters began to cater to those in cars.

Theater styles again changed at this time. The buildings themselves became more squared and less streamlined, using bold lines of Moderne style architecture. They tended to use glass, which let in the light and was a cheaper building material. Other popular materials included vermiculite, Formica, as well as fiberglass, and aluminum.⁷⁸ Black lights created unique effects, illuminating the graphics that now lined prosceniums.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Showman's Trade Review. "Theatre Built at Dawn of Modern Trend Reflects Planning for Future Comerford, Wilkes Barre Still Advanced in Style Alter 7 Years Service." Referenced by Ed. John Cardoni Jr. Comerford Theatre, Wilkes Barre, PA, 1945, <http://martinmc.home.mindspring.com/reviews/comerford.html> (accessed July 5, 2005).

⁷⁸ Valentine, 145.

Parking was a must for theaters, and now the fronts of theaters were designed to be seen by car. Gone were the vertical towers advertising the theater's name. Now the names were incorporated into the marquee, making it easier to read as one drove by.⁷⁹

1948 was an important year in the film industry. This was the year that the U.S. Supreme Court broke up the monopoly that the Big Five studios had held for decades. The Court ordered that the studios give up the theaters they held, as it was unfair competition for the independent little guy struggling to compete; thus ended the vertical integration which had gripped the industry from its inception.

Many theaters suffered as a result, as studios had previously subsidized them to make them economically feasible. Many of the theaters closed, or were sold shortly afterwards. Theaters also raised the price of admission, and some say it was for poorer quality films as well.⁸⁰

The movie industry devised gimmicks to draw a large audience. Some of these included 3-D and Cinerama. Cinerama projected wider movies. To incorporate the new screen and sound equipment needed to show the movies, theaters tore out prosceniums and their surrounding murals.⁸¹

DRIVE-IN THEATERS

The 1950s also saw the growth of the drive-in theater. The first drive-in was built in 1933 in Camden, New Jersey.⁸² The idea saw slow growth through the 1940s, and then it exploded after the war. Gasoline rationing was lifted, and people could enjoy their cars again. Also, constructing drive-ins was cheaper than constructing theaters. Drive-ins were built on cheaper land at the edge or outside of town. Minimal building and landscaping was required. A screen, concession stand, projection booth and fencing, and minor landscaping with rows with slight ramps for a car to park on were needed.

⁷⁹ Valentine, 147.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

⁸¹ Ibid., 168.

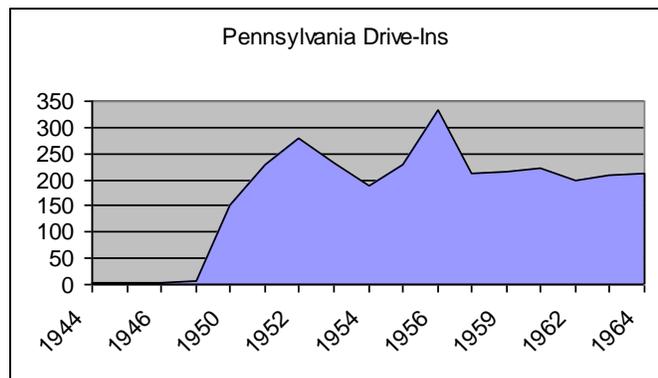
⁸² "The Drive-In Theater History Page" <http://www.driveintheater.com/history/1930.htm> (accessed February 17, 2007).

Pennsylvania was home to the second drive-in theater in America. Shankweiler’s Drive-In Theater opened April 15, 1934 in Orefield near Allentown.⁸³ Though this drive-in has seen the rise and fall of its kind, it continues to operate today, earning the title of the country’s longest running drive-in theater.⁸⁴

Drive-ins became a social phenomenon. Families enjoyed them because they could view a movie together, and the kids could get a little rowdy in the car without disturbing others. Teenagers liked them because they gave them privacy in the cars.

The popularity of drive-ins hurt the traditional downtown and neighborhood theaters. With automobiles, people were no longer were at the mercy of public transportation or had to be within walking distance of their homes. The automobile began a trend that continues to this day. After the 1950s and the surge in the drive-ins’ popularity, theaters moved out of the business districts. They went further and further away from the traditional downtowns and neighborhoods, requiring automobiles to get there. This coincided with the rise of suburbs occurring around the nation. As people moved out of the traditional neighborhoods and downtowns, so did businesses, including theaters.

The number of drive-in theaters in Pennsylvania steadily increased through the early 1950s, until it hit its peak at 332 theaters in 1956. By 1964, there was a slight decline, though there were still 211 drive-ins around the state.



⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.; *Shankweiler’s Drive-In*. <http://www.shankweilers.com/> (accessed February 15, 2007).

At-Home Entertainment: Television

Television proved to be another blow to the film industry and the theaters at this time. Between 1947 and 1957, 90 percent of the American population brought a television into their homes.⁸⁵ People were enamored with their televisions. Theaters tried to compete by showing television in the auditorium, and by providing television viewing lounges.⁸⁶ The 1953 through 1958 *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures* lists eight (with nine in 1957) Pennsylvania theaters that had television equipment: the Stanley in Chester; Sheas and Warner in Erie; the Royal and Stanley in Philadelphia; and the J.P. Harris, Penn, and Stanley in Pittsburgh.⁸⁷

As television kept the movie audience at home, theaters tried to find new amenities, such as the concession stand. Early on, some eating was allowed, but when patrons became too messy, theaters banned “eatables” entirely.⁸⁸ The cost of making popcorn and serving soft drinks was relatively inexpensive to the theaters, but they could charge prices to make up for their loss of audience. They also discovered other tricks, like salting the popcorn to make people buy more drinks. Theaters removed auditorium seating to increase lobby space for concessions and began focusing on this area as a place to decorate, while the exteriors and auditoria remained plain. The emphasis on concession stands in the lobby continues today. In 1959, concessions made 20 percent of the profit in theaters. In 1989, they accounted for 80 percent of them.⁸⁹

Theaters adapted to television’s competition by increasing the size of the screens. They became wider as studios used new lenses for filming, a wider gauge film, multiple cameras to get the wide angles, and cropped the tops and bottoms of the picture.⁹⁰ The necessary wider screens resulted in the loss of proscenium arches in theaters.

⁸⁵ Doby 2005.

⁸⁶ Valentine 165.

⁸⁷ *Film Daily Yearbook*, 1953-1958.

⁸⁸ Fagley.

⁸⁹ Valentine 176.

⁹⁰ Cowie 246.

Demolitions and Revivals

In the 1960s and 1970s, movie theaters continued to move away from downtowns and into the suburban shopping malls that sprang up around the country. Downtown and neighborhood theaters suffered greatly, many ceasing to show first-run movies and/or closing. Though some received second life showing X-rated films, many were demolished during this period. It was the tail-end of urban renewal in the United States, and some saw the theaters as economic and social eyesores. Some of them became dilapidated after years of vacancy, and developers and town officials realized that it was easier to tear them down rather than fix them up. Others were demolished after they closed due to lack of audience. The downtowns in which many of these theaters existed no longer had the people to support it economically after people moved out to the suburbs.



**King Theatre Apartments,
Lancaster, Lancaster County**



**Paxtang Gymnastic Center, Paxtang,
Dauphin County**

The 1960s and 1970s saw the closing of many historic theaters. They could no longer compete with the multiplexes opening in the suburbs and in shopping malls. Some theaters went vacant, others were converted to new, innovative uses, while many others met with the wrecking ball, to become a parking lot or a chain drug store.

Others received new life as a new type of business. The Paxtang Theatre outside of Harrisburg became a gymnastic studio; the Warner Theater in West Chester lost its auditorium and became the offices of the Philadelphia Inquirer; the Manheim Theatre in Manheim and the King Theatre in Lancaster became apartments; the Palace Theatre in Lower Merion Township is now Party Land; the Temple Theater in Kane became a roller rink; the Joy Theater in Mount Joy at one time held a skateboarding park; the Palace Theater in Lansford is now the Palace Restaurant; the Ardmore Theater in Lower Merion Township is now a sports club; the Rialto in Williamsport is now

a church; and the Ritz Theatre in New Holland is now a night club. With these adaptive reuse projects, it is common to see remaining architectural elements. In many cases, the building still *looks* like a theater, with a tower and/or a marquee. Sometimes a box office or poster frames are still attached to the building. Stages and proscenia might still stand in the auditoria, and smaller elements like bathroom signs might remain over the doors.



Philadelphia Sports Club, Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County



Partyland, Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County.

Other theaters were lost for good. Hardest hit were Pennsylvania’s larger cities, which held the highest number of theaters. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia lost many of their grand palaces and neighborhood theaters. Appendix C contains a partial list of some of Pennsylvania’s “silent screens.”

In the mid 1970s, the public began to realize that the theaters being torn down were irreplaceable, and around the country, people began working to save these historic theaters. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, theaters began to be restored, some to their original glamour. Some such theaters in Pennsylvania include the Community Arts Center (Williamsport), the Majestic (Gettysburg), the Hershey Theatre (Hershey), the Strand (Zelienople), the Carlisle Theatre (Carlisle), the Allen Theatre (Allentown), the Capitol Theatre (Chambersburg), the Sovereign Majestic Theatre (Pottsville), the Strand Theatre (Hamburg), the Angela Theater (Coaldale), Pine Grove Theatre (Pine Grove), Campus Theatre (Lewistown), the Elks Theatre (Middletown), the County (Doylestown) and the Warner Theatre (Erie), to name a few. Others sit vacant, such as the Joy Theatre (Mt. Joy), the Granada (Beaver Falls), the Blair Theatre (Hollidaysburg), the Temple Theatre (Ashland), the Hanover Theater (Hanover), or the Boyd Theatre (Philadelphia), the last picture palace in the city.



Sovereign Majestic Theatre, Pottsville, Schuylkill County



Joy Theater, Mount Joy, Lancaster County



Blair Theater, Hollidaysburg, Blair County

While some theaters enjoy a full restoration, others are renovated to bring the theater up to modern day standards, including stadium seating, coffee bars, and additional auditoria to show more movies. Regardless, the historic theaters are again screening films and hosting live performances, and people are returning downtown to enjoy them.



Hanover Theater, Hanover, York County

Conclusion

For centuries people have gathered in one place to be entertained, a social and cultural phenomenon that continues despite the ability to view many items in the privacy of one's own home. There is something about the shared experience that keeps people returning. Though attendance is at a record low at this time, millions of people continue to attend shows, both live and film, proving a continuing demand.

Pennsylvania's history makes it unique in that it has a long theater history, and houses some of the oldest theaters in the United States, few of which are still operating today. The Commonwealth is credited with the first nickelodeon, the second drive-in, and the beginning ground for Warner Brothers. Pennsylvania's numerous municipalities gave rise to hundreds of downtown theaters, ranging from movie palaces to neighborhood theaters.

Theaters across the state mirrored the ever evolving trends of the country. When the industry did well, new theaters appeared. During the Great Depression, many Pennsylvania theaters shut their doors. Famed theater architects created masterpieces in Pennsylvania in the latest architectural styles. During the material shortages in World War II, Pennsylvania theater owners remodeled to remain modern, and afterwards, took advantage of new materials created during the war to create sleek, modern looking theaters. Finally, in the 1960s, like the rest of the country, Pennsylvania's theaters began to decline.

Pennsylvania's downtown and neighborhood theaters have seen a decline over the last half of this century. While many have been lost, others continue to operate and provide a unique movie experience from today's multiplexes can provide. Decades ago, in the 1920s, when feature length films debuted, many thought the demise of the small theater was eminent. The same is stated about today's small independent theaters, yet like those before them, they continue to operate and prove naysayers wrong.

Fortunately, Pennsylvania has a good collection of existing theater buildings that represent most of the eras, and styles of theaters. The Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia and the Fulton Opera House showcase the eighteenth century's notion of theaters. The Warner Theatre in Erie is a movie palace the public can still visit. At the Angela and Carlisle Theatres patrons can still go see a movie in a "downtown."

Attending a movie or show at a downtown theatre provides an experience not found by seeing a movie at the multiplex. These are often owned and operated not by large corporations, but by mom-and-pops, or non-profit groups with an interest in the arts and keeping their downtowns alive. Theaters have always played an important role in keeping downtown areas vibrant, particularly at night and on weekends when those working 9-to-5 in offices Monday through Friday have gone home. When people and businesses, including theaters, began moving out of the downtowns in the 1970s, the downtowns suffered. Today, in a collection of towns across Pennsylvania, theaters bring life back to downtown at night and on weekends again, just like century.

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APPENDIX A

Theater Chains in Pennsylvania

(Data obtained from the 1925 and 1944 *Film Daily Yearbook*)

G. W. Bennethum (Philadelphia)

City	Theater Name
Philadelphia	Felton
	Overbrook
Pittstown	Lyric
	Hippodrome
	Opera House
Reading	Pictureland
Allentown	Victor
	Franklyn
York	Scenic
	Hippodrome
Lancaster	Strand
Coatesville	Felton
	Opera House

Ben Browsky Theaters (Philadelphia)

City Name	Theater Name
Philadelphia	Gladstone
	Gem
	Rex
	Southern
	56th St.

Carr and Schad (Reading)

City	Theater Name
Reading	Strand
	Colonial
	Arcadia
	Princess
	San Toy
	Lyric
	Schuylkill Ave.
Lebanon	Capitol

Comerford Theaters (Scranton)

City	Theater Name
Avoca	Palace
	Pleasant Hour
Bloomsburg	Capitol
	Columbia
Carbondale	Irving
	Majestic
Carlisle	Comerford
	Strand
Danville	Capitol
Dickson City	Rex
Dunmore	Orient
	Garden
Duryea	Pastime
Edwardsville	Grand
Enyon	Enyon
Forest City	Freedman
Forty Fort	Forty Fort
	Institute
Hawley	Ritz
	Dreamland
Hazleton	Capitol
	Feeley
	Grand
Honesdale	Lyric
Jersey Shore	Victoria
Kingston	Kingston
Lebanon	Capital
	Colonial
	Jackson
Luzerne	Luzerne
Mauch Chunk	Capitol
Milton	Capitol
Northumberland	Savoy
Old Forge	Holland
Olyphant	Granada
	Ferguson
	Opera House
Parsons	Parsons
Pittston	American

	Roman		Orpheum
	Hippodrome		Penn
	Hollywood		Savoy
<i>Comerford Theaters Continued</i>			Sterling
Plymouth	Hippodrome		Strand
	Star	Williamsport	Capitol
	Palace		Keystone
	Rialto		
Sayre	Sayre		
Scranton	Bell		
	Capitol		
	Comerford		
	Family		
	RCA		
	Gem	Shamokin	
	Globe		
	Green Ridge		
	Jackson	Tamaqua	
	Leader	Bloomsburg	
	Manhattan		
	Orpheum		
	Palace		
	Park		
	Period		
	Regent		
	Rialto		
	Riviera		
	Roosevelt		
	State		
	Strand		
	Victory	Mount Joy	
	West Side	Steelton	
Shenandoah	Lyric		
	Strand		
Selinsgrove	Stanley		
Sunbury	Rialto		
	Strand		
	Victoria		
Throop	Throop		
Towanda	Keystone		
Wilkes-Barre	Alhambra	Jermyn	
	Bijou	Mayfield	
	Capitol	Simpson	
	Comerford		
	Grand Opera House		
	Hart		
	Irving		
	Liberty		

Chamberlain Amusements (Mt. Carmel)	
City	Theater Name
Mt. Carmel	Theatorium
	Valentino
	Victoria
Shamokin	Victoria
	Family
	Strand
Tamaqua	Victoria
Bloomsburg	Victoria

Harry Chertcoff Circuit (Lancaster)	
City	Theater Name
Elizabethtown	Moose
Lancaster	Strand
Lebanon	State
Lemoyne	Lemoyne
Lititz	Lititz
Middletown	Elk's
	Majestic
Mount Joy	Joy
Steelton	Standard
	Strand

Luke Farrell Theaters (Carbondale)	
City	Theater Name
Carbondale	Majestic
	Victoria
	Ideal
Jermyn	Peoples
Mayfield	Mayfield
Simpson	Neutral

Sam Friedman Theaters (Sharon)

City	Theater Name
Sharon	Luna
Sharpsville	Colonial
Jamestown Grove	Gem
City	Family
Farrell	Capitol

William Goldman Theaters, Inc.
(Philadelphia)

City	Theater Name
Hanover	Park
Philadelphia	Band Box
	Erlander
	Karlton
	Keith
	News
	Vernon
Pottstown	Hippodrome
	Strand
Victor	
Upper Darby	Terminal
York	Hiway

Harris Amusement Companies
(Pittsburgh)

City	Theater Name
DuBois	Harris
Huntington	Clifton
Jeanette	Harris-Manos
	Harris-Jeanette
	J.P.
	Pittsburgh Harris
	Harris-Beechview
	Harris-Denis
	Harris-Family
	Harris-Liberty
	Harris-Perry
	Harris-Newsreel
	Harris-Northdale
	Harris-Senator
Reynoldsville	Harris-Adelphia
St. Mary's	Harris
	Family

Ideal Amusement Co. (Johnstown)

City	Theater Name
Altoona	Lyric
Barnesboro	Vernon
Cairnbrook	Vernon
Conemaugh	Penn
Johnstown	Ideal
	Laurel
	Rivoli
	Roxy
Juniata	Juniata

Indiana County Theaters Co., Inc.
(Greensburg)

City	Theater Name
Blairsville	Manos
City	Empire
Latrobe	Manos
	Grand
	Grand
	Olympic
Vandergrift	Casino
	Arcadia
	Manos

W.P. McCartney (Punxsutawney)

City	Theater Name
Punxsutawney	Majestic
	Jefferson
Ridgway	Strand
Indiana	Ritz
	Grand

F. McGowan (Blairsville)

City	Theater Name
Blairsville	Grand
	Regent
	Richelieu
Iselin	Rex
Lucerne	
Mines	Rex
Ernest	Rex
Indiana	Indiana
Punxsutawney	Alpine

Mervis Theaters (Pittsburgh)

City	Theater Name
Aspinwall	Embassy
Pittsburgh	Paramount
	New Elliott
	New West
	End
	Rialto
	Roosevelt

Rivoli & Hollywood Theaters (Altoona)

City	Theater Name
Altoona	Rivoli
Beaverdale	Rivoli
Colver	Rivoli
Cresson	Rivoli
Ebensburg	Rivoli
Hastings	Hollywood
Johnstown	Hollywood
Portage	Rivoli

Mid-State Theaters, Inc. (Clearfield)

City	Theater Name
Bellefonte	Plaza
	State
Clearfield	Lyric
	Ritz
Coalport	Dixie
Curwensville	Rex
Houtzdale	Sherkel
Madera	Madera
Montgomery	Eagle
Stoneboro	Stone
Watsonstown	Watson

Roxy Theater Circuit (Lock Haven)

City	Theater Name
Downingtown	Roosevelt
Ephrata	Main
	Roxy
Lewisburg	Campus
	Roxy
Lock Haven	Roxy
	Martin
Meyersdale	Roxy

Fred G. Nixon Nirdlinger (Philadelphia)

City	Theater Name
Philadelphia	Nixon-Grand
	Rivoli
	Belmont
	Coliseum
	Cedar
	Jumbo
	Locust

Rowland & Clark (Pittsburgh)

City	Theater Name
Pittsburgh	Liberty
	Savoy
	Manos
	Blackstone
	Regent
	Arsenal
	Belmar
	Plaza
	Strand
	Arcade
	State
Erie	Strand
	State
	Perry
New	
Kensington	Star
	Liberty
Braddock	Capitol

Mark Rubinsky Theaters

(Harrisburg)

City	Theater Name
Dallastown	Lyric
Harrisburg	Capitol
McClure	Star
New	
Philadelphia	Lyric
Newmanstown	Lyric
Newville	Newville
St. Clair	Hollywood
Williamstown	Academy
	Lyric

Iris
 Harrowgate Ridge
 Manheim
 Lafayette
 Rivoli
 Ruby
 Savoy
 Sherwood
 Somerset
 Stanly
 Strand
 Victoria
 Karlton
 West Allegheny

Wishart
 Berwick
 Conshohocken

Stanley Company of America

(Philadelphia)

City	Theater Name
Philadelphia	Alhambra
	Allegheny
	Aldine
	Arcadia
	Baltimore
	Broad St.
	Casino
	Broadway
	Capitol
	Cross Keys
	Colonial
	Gem
	Darby
	Empress
	Family
	58th Street
	Franklin
	Globe
	Greta
	Northern
	Imperial 60th St.
	Imperial 2nd St.
	Lehigh Palace
	Logan
	Palace
	Princess
	Regent
	Auditorium
	Globe
	Stanton
	Star

Palace
 Opera House
 Grand and
 Washburn
 Washington
 Easton
 Colonial
 Third St.
 Harrisburg
 Victoria
 Lancaster
 Grand
 Norristown
 Garrick
 Grand
 Plymouth
 Broad
 Reading
 Capitol
 Scranton
 Strand
 Shenandoah
 arcade
 South
 Grand Opera
 Bethlehem
 House
 Palace
 West Chester
 Grand
 Rialto
 Idle Hour
 Allentown
 Regent
 Bristol
 Forest
 Reading
 Capitol
 Northampton
 Lyric
 Chester
 Lloyd
 Wilmington
 Majestic
 Queen

A. Wax (Philadelphia)

City	Theater Name
Philadelphia	Royal
	Stratford
	Keystone
	Bellevue
	National

A.C. Werner (Reading)

City	Theater Name
Reading	Rialto
	Royal
	Rivoli
	Victoria
	Rex

West Pennsylvania Amusements

(Pittsburgh)

City	Theater Name
Pittsburgh	Diamond
Beaver	
Falls	Regent
	Grand
Millvale	Grant
Braddock	Braddock
Sharpsburg	Main

Wilmer & Vincent (Allentown)

City	Theater Name
Allentown	Hippodrome
	Orpheum
	Lyric
	rialto
Easton	Colonial
	Opera
	House
Reading	Hippodrome

Appendix B
Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania

1925

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Allentown (94,600)	Colonial	2,000	Philadelphia	Sixty-Ninth St.	1,700
Allentown	Lyric	1,600	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown	Orpheum	1,500	Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
Allentown	Rialto	2,000	Philadelphia	Stanton	1,500
Allentown	State	2,000	Philadelphia	University	1,800
Altoona (67,000)	New Victoria	2,300	Philadelphia	Waverly	1,600
Altoona	Strand	1,600	Philadelphia		
Bethlehem (64,400)	Colonial	1,700	Philadelphia	William Penn	2,500
Carbondale (18,640)	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	Wynne	1,800
Chester (70,400)	Edgemont	2,400	Pittsburgh (63,7000)	Grand	2,200
Coatesville (16,800)	Y.M.C.A.	1,800	Pittsburgh	Loew's Aldine	1,800
East Greenville (1624)	Grand	1,624	Pittsburgh	Penn	4,000
Greensburg (16,200)	Manos	2,000		Sheridan	
Harrisburg (84,600)	Majestic	1,500	Pittsburgh	Square	2,200
Harrisburg	Orpheum	1,500	Pottstown (17,431)	Strand	1,500
Harrisburg	Regent	1,600	Reading (112,707)	Capitol	2,100
Hazleton (36,800)	Capitol	2,000	Reading	Colonial	1,800
Johnstown (72,200)	Cambria	1,800	Reading	Penn	1,500
Lancaster (57,100)	Capitol	1,600	Reading	Strand	1,700
	Fulton Opera		Roxborough	Roxy	2,000
Lancaster	House	1,500	Scranton (142,266)	Capitol	1,600
Lansdowne (4,797)	Lansdowne	1,500	Scranton	Poli's	2,200
McKeesport (46,781)	Hippodrome	1,500	Scranton	West Side	1,500
Mahanoy City (15,559)	Hippodrome	1,500	Shenandoah (24,726)	Lyric	1,500
Philadelphia (2,007,000)	Astor	1,500	Washington (23,300)	Capitol	1,700
Philadelphia	Broadway	2,000	Wilkes-Barre (78,300)	Capitol	2,200
Philadelphia	Colney	2,000	Wilkes-Barre	Palace	2,400
Philadelphia	Colonial	2,400	York (47,512)	Strand	2,000
Philadelphia	Cross Keys	2,000			
Philadelphia	Dunbar	1,500			
Philadelphia	Earle	2,750			
Philadelphia	Fox	2,400			
Philadelphia	Fox	100			
Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600			
Philadelphia	Globe	1,500			
	Grand Opera				
Philadelphia	House	3,100			
Philadelphia	Imperial	1,500			
Philadelphia	Keystone	1,800			
Philadelphia	Liberty	1,500			
Philadelphia	Liberty	1,800			
Philadelphia	Logan	1,850			
Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870			
Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,800			
Philadelphia	Park	1,800			

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania
1931

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown (92,052)	Colonial	1,968	Philadelphia	Circle	2,500
Allentown	Lyric	1,500	Philadelphia	Earle	2,750
Allentown	Rialto	1,910	Philadelphia	Empress	1,500
Altoona (67,000)	New Victoria	2,300	Philadelphia	Erney	1,500
Altoona	Strand	1,500	Philadelphia	Fay's	1,800
Bethlehem (64,400)	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Fox	2,457
Braddock (19,332)	Capitol	1,600	Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600
Butler (235,078)	Harris-Majestic	2,000		Grand Opera	
Carbondale (18,640)	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	House	3,100
Chester (58,963)	Stanley	2,400	Philadelphia	Kent	2,000
Chester	Washington	1,700	Philadelphia	Keystone	1,800
Coatesville (16,800)	Y.M.C.A.	1,800	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,500
Drexel Hill	Waverly	1,562	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,800
Easton (34,328)	Seville	1,900	Philadelphia	Lindy	1,500
Easton	State	1,824	Philadelphia	Logan	1,850
Erie (115,922)	Perry	1,500	Philadelphia	Mastbaum	5,000
Etna (7,492)	Harris	1,620	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870
Greensburg (16,200)	Manos	2,000	Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,800
Harrisburg (80,284)	Regent	1,600	Philadelphia	Park	1,800
Harrisburg	State	2,074	Philadelphia	Parkes	2,000
Harrisburg	Victoria	1,798	Philadelphia	Rexy	2,063
Hazleton (39,078)	Capitol	2,000	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Hazleton	Feeley	1,600	Philadelphia	Sedgewick	1,600
Homestead (20,156)	Stahl	1,800	Philadelphia	Standard	1,500
Johnstown (72,200)	Harris-Majestic	1,500	Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
Lancaster (57,100)	Capitol	1,600	Philadelphia	Strand	1,500
Lancaster	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Tower	3,300
Lansdowne (8,370)	Lansdowne	1,500	Philadelphia	Upton	2,500
McKeesport (54,633)	Hippodrome	1,500	Philadelphia	Wynne	1,763
Mahanoy City (14,801)	Victoria	1,500	Pittsburgh (669,742)	Davis	1,900
Mt. Carmel (7,963)	Victoria	1,600	Pittsburgh	Aldine	1,800
New Kensington			Pittsburgh	Fulton	1,800
(16,742)	Ritz	1,600	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,719
Norristown (35,837)	Norris	2,500	Pittsburgh	Penn	4,000
Oil City (22,042)	Latoria	1,600	Pittsburgh	Rexian	1,500
Olyphant (10,763)	Grenada	1,700		Sheridan	
Philadelphia (1,964,430)	Alhambra	1,900	Pittsburgh	Square	2,040
Philadelphia	Allegheny	3,000	Pittsburgh	Stanley	3,886
Philadelphia	Astor	1,500	Pittsburgh	Warner	1,980
Philadelphia	Boyd	2,500	Pittstown (18,250)	American	1,985
Philadelphia	Broadway	2,000	Plymouth (16,546)	Shawnee	1,942
Philadelphia	Byrd	1,800	Pottsville (244,276)	Capitol	2,603
Philadelphia	Carman	2,300	Reading (110,289)	Astor	2,600
Philadelphia	Colney	2,000	Reading	Capitol	2,093
Philadelphia	Colonial	2,400	Reading	Colonial	1,800
Philadelphia	Cross Keys	2,000	Reading	Park	1,500

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Reading	State	1,228
Scranton (143,428)	Capitol	1,794
Scranton	Poli's	2,200
Scranton	Ritz	1,720
Scranton	Strand	1,542
Scranton	West Side	1,500
Shamokin (20,275)	Victoria	1,600
Uniontown (19,459)	State	1,500
West Chester (12,331)	Warner	1,640
Wilkes-Barre (86,507)	Capitol	2,000
Wilkes-Barre	Irving	1,556
Wilkes-Barre	Penn	1,953
Wilkes-Barre	Poli	2,400
Williamsport (45,695)	Capitol	2,421

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania
1932

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown (92,052)	Lyric	1,500	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,500
Allentown	Rialto	1,910	Philadelphia	Lindy	1,500
Altoona (81,503)	State	1,800	Philadelphia	Logan	1,850
Altoona	Strand	1,500	Philadelphia	Mastbaum	5,000
Bethlehem (57,773)	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	New Penn	2,500
Bethlehem	Globe	1,600	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870
Carbondale (20,036)	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	Ogantz	1,750
Chester (58,963)	Stanley	2,400	Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,800
Chester	Washington	1,700	Philadelphia	Oxford	1,600
Coatesville (1,221)	Y.M.C.A.	1,600	Philadelphia	Park	1,800
Drexel Hill	Waverly	1,562	Philadelphia	Parker	2,000
Erie (115,922)	Perry	1,500	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Erie	Warner	3,500	Philadelphia	Roxy	1,800
Glenside (1,680)	Keswick	1,680	Philadelphia	Sedgewick	1,600
Greensburg (16,387)	Manos	1,500	Philadelphia	Sixty-ninth	1,796
Harrisburg (80,284)	Regent	1,600	Philadelphia	Standard	1,500
Harrisburg	State	2,074	Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
Harrisburg	Victoria	1,798	Philadelphia	Stanton	1,500
Homestead (20,456)	Stahl	1,600	Philadelphia	State	3,059
Johnstown (66,983)	Ritz	1,775	Philadelphia	Strand	1,500
Lancaster (60,596)	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Tower	3,300
Lansdowne (7,782)	Lansdowne	1,633	Philadelphia	Uptown	2,500
	Harris Walnut		Pittsburgh (66,742)	Aldine	2,000
McKeesport (54,633)	St.	1,984	Pittsburgh	Columbia	1,900
	J.P. Harris		Pittsburgh	Enright	3,300
McKeesport	Memorial	2,200	Pittsburgh	Fulton	1,800
Mahanoy City (14,801)	Victoria	1,500	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,500
Mt. Carmel	Victoria	1,600	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,520
Norristown (35,837)	Norris	2,500	Pittsburgh	Liberty	1,600
Oil City (22,042)	Drake	1,875	Pittsburgh	Penn	4,000
Philadelphia (1,964,430)	Boyd	2,500	Pittsburgh	Schenley	1,800
Philadelphia	Broadway	1,800	Pittsburgh	Stanley	3,886
Philadelphia	Carman	2,300	Pittsburgh	Warner	1,980
Philadelphia	Colney	2,000	Pittston (18,250)	American	1,985
Philadelphia	Colonial		Plymouth (16,546)	Shawnee	1,942
Philadelphia	Cross Keys	2,000	Pottsville (24,276)	Capitol	2,603
Philadelphia	Earle	2,750	Reading (110,289)	Astor	2,600
Philadelphia	Erlem	1,700	Reading	Capitol	2,093
Philadelphia	Fay's	1,800	Reading	Colonial	1,800
Philadelphia	Forum	1,700	Reading	Embassy	3,000
Philadelphia	Fox	2,457	Reading	Park	1,500
Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600	Reading	Rajah	2,093
	Grand Opera		Reading	Strand	1,700
Philadelphia	House	3,100	Scranton (143,428)	Capitol	1,794
Philadelphia	Kent	200	Scranton	Rialto	1,720
Philadelphia	Keystone	1,800	Scranton	Strand	1,542
Philadelphia	Liberty	1,800			

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Scranton	West Side	1,975
Shamokin (25,863)	Columbia	1,788
Uniontown (19,459)	State	1,500
West Chester (12,331)	Warner	1,640
Wilkes-Barre (86,507)	Capitol	2,009
Wilkes-Barre	Irving	1,553
Wilkes-Barre	Penn	1,953
Williamsport (45,695)	Capitol	2,421

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania
1935

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown (92,052)	Colonial	1,968	Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600
Allentown	Rialto	1,910		Grand Opera	
Altoona (81,503)	State	1,800	Philadelphia	House	3,100
Beaver Falls (7,140)	Granada	1,600		Keiths	2,300
Bethlehem (57,773)	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Kent	1,910
Bethlehem	Globe	1,600	Philadelphia	Keystone	1,800
Carbondale (20,036)	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,586
Chester (58,963)	Stanley	2,400		Midway	2,780
Chester	Washington	1,576	Philadelphia	Logan	1,924
Coatesville (1,221)	Y.M.C.A.	1,600	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870
Conneaut Lake (320)	Temple of Music	1,500	Philadelphia	Ogantz	1,750
Drexel Hill	Waverly	1,562	Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,693
Easton (34,328)	Boyd	1,800	Philadelphia	Oxford	1,600
Erie (115,922)	Warner	2,585	Philadelphia	Park	1,735
Glenside (1,801)	Keswick	1,680	Philadelphia	Parker	2,000
Greensburg (16,387)	Manos	1,856		Rexy	2,063
Harrisburg (80,284)	Regent	1,600	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Harrisburg	State	2,074	Philadelphia	Roxy	1,800
Harrisburg	Victoria	1,798		Roxy-Mastbaum	4,683
Hazleton (39,078)	Capitol	2,344	Philadelphia	Sedgewick	1,636
Homestead (20,156)	Leona	1,600	Philadelphia	Sixty-ninth	1,796
Johnstown (66,983)	State	1,775	Philadelphia	Standard	1,500
Lancaster (60,596)	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
Lansdowne (7,782)	Lansdowne	1,633	Philadelphia	State	3,059
	J.P. Harris		Philadelphia	Strand	1,690
McKeesport (54,633)	Memorial	2,060	Philadelphia	Tower	3,300
Mahanoy City (14,801)	Victoria	1,500	Philadelphia	Uptown	2,146
Mt. Carmel (7,963)	Victoria	1,600	Pittsburgh (669,742)	Wynne	1,653
Norristown (35,837)	Norris	2,500		Aldine	2,000
Oil City (22,042)	Latonia	1,600	Pittsburgh	Alvin	2,000
Philadelphia (1,964,430)	Alhambra	1,699	Pittsburgh	Davis	1,823
Philadelphia	Allegheny	2,858	Pittsburgh	Enright	3,300
Philadelphia	Boyd	2,338	Pittsburgh	Fulton	1,800
Philadelphia	Broadway	2,183	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,500
	Byrd	1,800	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,520
Philadelphia	Carman	2,000		Kenyon	1,636
	Circle	2,991	Pittsburgh	Penn	3,500
Philadelphia	Colney	1,952		Pitt	1,600
Philadelphia	Colonial	2,552	Pittsburgh	Schenley	1,722
Philadelphia	Cross Keys	2,123	Pittsburgh	Sheridan Sq.	2,034
Philadelphia	Earle	2,750	Pittsburgh	Stanley	2,886
Philadelphia	Erlem	1,700	Pittston (18,250)	Warner	1,800
Philadelphia	Fay's	1,800	Plymouth (16,546)	American	1,985
Philadelphia	Forum	1,700	Pottsville (24,276)	Shawnee	1,942
Philadelphia	Fox	2,457	Reading (110,289)	Capitol	2,603
				Astor	2,485

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Reading	Capitol	2,093
Reading	Colonial	1,800
Reading	Embassy	3,000
Reading	Park	1,500
Reading	Rajah	2,903
Reading	Strand	1,700
Scranton (143,428)	Capitol	1,791
Scranton	Ritz	1,720
Scranton	Strand	1,542
Scranton	West Side	1,975
Shamokin (25,863)	Victoria	1,600
West Chester (12,331)	Warner	1,640
Wilkes-Barre (86,507)	Capitol	2,009
Wilkes-Barre	Irving	1,553
Wilkes-Barre	Penn	1,953
Williamsport (45,695)	Capitol	2,421

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania
1937

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown	Lyric	1,500	Philadelphia	Fay's	1,800
Allentown	Colonial	1,968	Philadelphia	Forum	1,777
Allentown	Rialto	1,910	Philadelphia	Fox	2,457
Altoona	State	1,800	Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600
Altoona	Strand	1,500		Grand	
Beaver Falls	Granada	1,600		Opera	
Bethlehem	Boyd	1,500	Philadelphia	House	3,000
Bethlehem	Globe	1,600	Philadelphia	Holme	1,690
Braddock	Capitol	1,500	Philadelphia	Imperial	1,500
Carbondale	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	Kent	1,910
Chester	Stanley	2,444	Philadelphia	Keiths	1,662
Chester	Washington	1,700	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,550
Coatesville	Y.M.C.A.	1,600	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,500
	Temple of		Philadelphia	Logan	1,850
Conneaut Lake	Music	1,500	Philadelphia	Mastbaum	4,692
Drexel Hill	Waverly	1,562	Philadelphia	Metropolitan	2,750
Easton	New Boyd	1,800	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870
Erie	Warner	3,500	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,800
Etna	Harris	1,546	Philadelphia	Ogantz	1,750
Glenside	Keswick	1,680	Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,693
Greensburg	Manos	1,500	Philadelphia	Oxford	1,600
Harrisburg	Majestic	1,200	Philadelphia	Park	1,800
Harrisburg	Regent	1,600	Philadelphia	Parker	2,050
Harrisburg	State	2,074	Philadelphia	Rexy	2,063
Harrisburg	Victoria	1,798	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Homestead	Stahl	1,600	Philadelphia	Roxy	1,800
Johnstown	Ritz	1,775	Philadelphia	Sedgewick	1,600
Lancaster	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Sixty-ninth	1,796
Lansdowne	Lansdowne	1,662	Philadelphia	Standard	1,500
	Harris		Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
McKeesport	Walnut St.	1,984	Philadelphia	Stanton	1,500
	J.P. Harris		Philadelphia	State	3,030
McKeesport	Memorial	2,200	Philadelphia	Strand	1,690
Mahanoy City	Victoria	1,500	Philadelphia	Tower	3,300
Mt. Carmel	Victoria	1,600	Philadelphia	Uptown	2,146
Norristown	Norris	2,500	Philadelphia	Wynne	1,653
Oil City	Drake	1,875	Pittsburgh	Aldine	2,000
Oil City	Latonia	1,600	Pittsburgh	Alvin	2,000
Philadelphia	Alhambra	1,699	Pittsburgh	Casino	1,600
Philadelphia	Boyd	2,338	Pittsburgh	Davis	1,823
Philadelphia	Broadway	1,800	Pittsburgh	Enright	3,300
Philadelphia	Carman	2,000	Pittsburgh	Harris	1,500
Philadelphia	Circle	2,991	Pittsburgh	Penn	4,000
Philadelphia	Colney	1,985	Pittsburgh	Schenley	1,642
Philadelphia	Colonial	2,552		Sheridan	
Philadelphia	Cross Keys	1,995	Pittsburgh	Square	2,034
Philadelphia	Erlem	1,700	Pittsburgh	Stanley	3,789

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Pittsburgh	Warner	1,980
Pittston	American	1,985
Plymouth	Shawnee	1,942
Pottsville	Capitol	2,603
Reading	Astor	2,485
Reading	Capitol	2,093
Reading	Embassy	3,000
	Loews	
Reading	Colonial	1,800
Reading	Park	1,500
Reading	Rajah	2,903
Reading	Strand	1,700
Scranton	Capitol	1,791
Scranton	Rialto	1,720
Scranton	Strand	1,542
Scranton	West Side	1,975
Shamokin	Columbia	1,600
Sharon	Columbia	2,399
Uniontown	State	1,500
West Chester	Warner	1,640
Wilkes-Barre	Capitol	2,009
Wilkes-Barre	Irving	1,553
Wilkes-Barre	Penn	1,953
Williamsport	Capitol	2,421

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Picture Palaces in Pennsylvania
1941

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats	City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Allentown	Colonial	1,968	Philadelphia	Cross Keys	1,995
Allentown	Rialto	1,910	Philadelphia	Earle	2,770
Altoona	State	1,800	Philadelphia	Erlem	1,700
Altoona	Strand	1,500	Philadelphia	Fay's	1,800
Beaver Falls	Granada	1,600	Philadelphia	Forum	1,777
Bethlehem	Boyd	1,500	Philadelphia	Fox	2,457
Bethlehem	Globe	1,600	Philadelphia	Frankford	1,600
Braddock	Capitol	1,500	Philadelphia	Holme	1,690
Butler	Butler	1,500	Philadelphia	Imperial	1,500
Carbondale	Irving	1,600	Philadelphia	Kent	1,900
Chester	Stanley	2,444	Philadelphia	Keiths	1,662
Chester	Washington	1,700	Philadelphia	Keystone	1,884
Coatesville	Y.M.C.A.	1,600	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,662
Conneaut Lake	Temple of Music	1,500	Philadelphia	Liberty	1,550
Darby	Parker	2,050	Philadelphia	Logan	1,920
Drexel Hill	Waverly	1,562	Philadelphia	Mastbaum	4,692
Easton	New Boyd	1,800	Philadelphia	Metropolitan	2,750
Erie	Warner	3,500	Philadelphia	Midway	2,780
Etna	Harris	1,546	Philadelphia	Nixon	1,870
Glenside	Keswick	1,680	Philadelphia	Nixon Grand	3,000
Greensburg	Manos	2,000	Philadelphia	Ogantz	1,750
Harrisburg	Regent	1,600	Philadelphia	Orpheum	1,693
Harrisburg	State	2,074	Philadelphia	Oxford	1,600
Harrisburg	Victoria	1,798	Philadelphia	Park	1,657
Homestead	Leona	1,800	Philadelphia	Rexy	2,063
Johnstown	State	1,900	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	2,000
Lancaster	Colonial	1,500	Philadelphia	Roxy	1,800
Lansdowne	Lansdowne	1,662	Philadelphia	Sedgewick	1,636
McKeesport	Harris Walnut St.	1,984	Philadelphia	Sixty-ninth	1,796
	J.P. Harris		Philadelphia	Standard	1,500
McKeesport	Memorial	2,200	Philadelphia	Stanley	3,000
Mahanoy City	Victoria	1,500	Philadelphia	Stanton	1,500
Mt. Carmel	Victoria	1,600	Philadelphia	State	3,030
New Castle	Cathedral	3,000	Philadelphia	Strand	1,690
Norristown	Norris	2,500	Philadelphia	Tower	3,300
Oil City	Drake	1,875	Philadelphia	Uptown	2,146
Oil City	Latonia	1,600	Pittsburgh	Casino	1,600
Philadelphia	Alhambra	1,699	Pittsburgh	Enright	3,300
Philadelphia	Allegheny	2,856	Pittsburgh	Loew's Penn	4,000
Philadelphia	Boyd	2,338	Pittsburgh	Schenley	1,642
Philadelphia	Broadway	1,800	Pittsburgh	Senator	1,600
Philadelphia	Byrd	1,800	Pittsburgh	Sheridan Square	2,034
Philadelphia	Carman	2,000	Pittsburgh	Stanley	3,789
Philadelphia	Circle	2,991	Pittsburgh	Warner	1,980
Philadelphia	Colney	1,985	Pittston	American	1,985
Philadelphia	Colonial	2,552	Plymouth	Shawnee	1,942

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

City (Population)	Theater	# Seats
Pottsville	Capitol	2,063
Reading	Astor	2,485
Reading	Capitol	2,093
Reading	Embassy	3,000
Reading	Loews Colonial	1,800
Reading	Park	1,500
Reading	Rajah	2,903
Reading	Strand	1,705
Scranton	Capitol	1,791
Scranton	Ritz	1,720
Scranton	Strand	1,542
Scranton	West Side	1,975
Shamokin	Victoria	1,600
Sharon	Columbia	1,621
Uniontown	State	1,500
West Chester	Warner	1,640
Wilkes-Barre	Capitol	2,009
Wilkes-Barre	Irving	1,553
Wilkes-Barre	Penn	1,953
Williamsport	Capitol	2,421

Appendix C
List of Demolished Theaters

Municipality	Theater	Municipality	Theater
Allentown	Colonial		
Aliquippa	Strand		John P. Harris
Altoona	Penn	McKeesport	Memorial
Bethlehem	Globe	Millersburg	Band Box
Bradford	McKean	Millersburg	Sky
Bridgeville	Galaxy	Mt. Carmel	Victoria
Brownsville	Plaza	North East	Keller's
Butler	Butler	Norristown	Norris
California	Capitol	Norwood	Manor
Cambridge Hills	Rose	Orwigsburg	Orpheum
Camp Hill	Hill	Philadelphia	Alden
Carbondale	Irving	Philadelphia	Alhambra
Carmichaels	Lund	Philadelphia	Astor
Charleroi	State	Philadelphia	Avenue
Chester	Stanley	Philadelphia	Avon
Conshohocken	Riant	Philadelphia	Bell
Coraopolis	Fifth Avenue	Philadelphia	Belmont
Darby	Darby	Philadelphia	Booker
Donora	Liberty	Philadelphia	Breeze
DuBois	Avenue	Philadelphia	Broadway
Easton	Boyd	Philadelphia	Byrd
Ellwood City	Manos	Philadelphia	Capitol
Ephrata	Main	Philadelphia	Carman
Erie	Shea's	Philadelphia	Cedar
Fairchance	Louis	Philadelphia	Center
Forest City	Family	Philadelphia	Colonial
Forest City	Freedman	Philadelphia	Coyuga
Freeland	Rialto	Philadelphia	Crescent
Harrisburg	Senate	Philadelphia	Crest
Harrisburg	Uptown	Philadelphia	Doris
Hatboro	Budco	Philadelphia	Earl
Hazleton	Alton (fire)	Philadelphia	Earle
Hazleton	Capitol	Philadelphia	Erlanger
Hazleton	Family	Philadelphia	Erlen
Hazleton	Feeley	Philadelphia	Eureka
Hazleton	Grand	Philadelphia	Fairmount
Hazleton	Palace	Philadelphia	Family
Hazleton	Roxy	Philadelphia	Fans
Indiana	Manos	Philadelphia	56th Street
Lancaster	Pacific Theater	Philadelphia	Forepaughs
Lansdale	Lansdale	Philadelphia	Fox
Mahanoy City	Family	Philadelphia	Frankford
Mahanoy City	Victoria	Philadelphia	Globe
McAdoo	Palace	Philadelphia	Goldman

PENNSYLVANIA THEATERS: A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Philadelphia	Grant/Dell	Philadelphia	Unique
Philadelphia	Hill	Philadelphia	Victoria
Municipality	Theater	Municipality	Theater
Philadelphia	Hippodrome Palace	Philadelphia	Walton
Philadelphia	Howard	Philadelphia	West Alleghany
Philadelphia	Ideal	Philadelphia	Wishart
Philadelphia	Italia	Philadelphia	Yorktown
Philadelphia	Jackson	Pittsburgh	Arcade (fire)
Philadelphia	Kent	Pittsburgh	Arcadia
Philadelphia	Keystone	Pittsburgh	Arsenal
Philadelphia	Lenox	Pittsburgh	Casino
Philadelphia	Liberty	Pittsburgh	Century-Family
Philadelphia	Little	Pittsburgh	Metropolitan
Philadelphia	Lorraine	Pittsburgh	Model
Philadelphia	Mastbaum	Pittsburgh	Nixon
Philadelphia	Merben	Pittsburgh	Northside
Philadelphia	Midway	Pittsburgh	Novelty
Philadelphia	Milgram	Pittsburgh	Palace
Philadelphia	New Garden	Pittsburgh	Schenely
Philadelphia	New Penn	Pittsburgh	Sheriden Square
Philadelphia	News	Pittston	Roman
Philadelphia	Nixon	Pottsville	Capitol
Philadelphia	Ogontz	Pottsville	Hippodrome
Philadelphia	Orpheum	Reading	Astor
Philadelphia	Palace	Reading	Embassy
Philadelphia	Palur	Reading	Loew's Colonial
Philadelphia	Park	Reading	Park
Philadelphia	Pearl	Reading	Warner
Philadelphia	Plaza	Rochester	Oriental
Philadelphia	Princess	Scranton	Strand
Philadelphia	Randolph	Shamokin	Capitol
Philadelphia	Rex	Shamokin	Majestic
Philadelphia	Rexy	Shamokin	Victoria
Philadelphia	Rittenhouse	Tamaqua	Victoria
Philadelphia	Rivoli	Uniontown	Manos
Philadelphia	Rockland	Wesleyville	Penn
Philadelphia	Roxy	Wilkes-Barre	Hart
Philadelphia	Ruby	Wilkes-Barre	Irving
Philadelphia	Savoy	Williamsport	Karlton
Philadelphia	Sherwood	Williamsport	Keystone
Philadelphia	Standard		
Philadelphia	Stanley		
Philadelphia	Stanton		
Philadelphia	State		
Philadelphia	Strand		
Philadelphia	Startford		
Philadelphia	Studio		
Philadelphia	Sun		