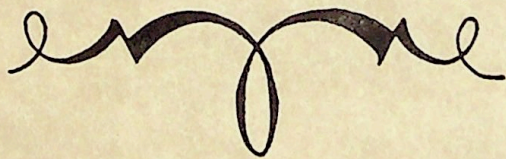




The  
STATE  
Theatre



J.H.S.

Kalamazoo, Michigan

BUD TAYLOR  
4525 MANZANITA AVE #239  
CARMICHAEL CA 95608

*Thanks  
For The  
Memories.*

A Tradition of Professional Service



**American  
Bank**

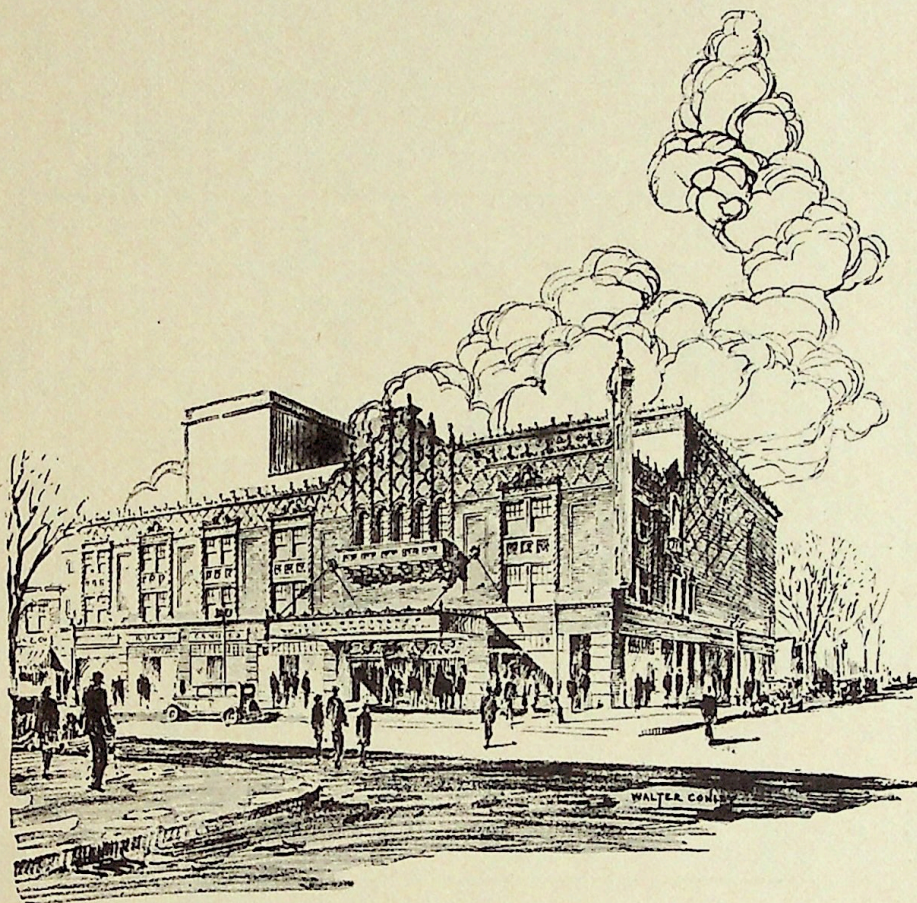
THE AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK  
AND TRUST COMPANY OF MICHIGAN  
Member FDIC



TO OUR MANY LOYAL FRIENDS  
IN KALAMAZOO AND NEIGH-  
BORING COMMUNITIES, WHOSE  
GENEROUS PATRONAGE HAS  
MADE ITS CREATION POSSIBLE, THE  
NEW STATE THEATRE IS RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED.

W.S. Butterfield

*In the hope that it will form a  
permanent addition to your  
library and aid in whiling  
away a pleasant reading hour,  
this book was conceived.*



## NEW STATE THEATRE BUILDING

Containing Shops, Offices  
and Theater Seating 2000



W. S. BUTTERFIELD THEATRES, Inc., Owners  
W. S. BUTTERFIELD, President

JOHN EBERSON, Architect  
HENRY VANDERHORST, Contractor

## State Theatre—Kalamazoo

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By TOM COBB, *Kalamazoo Gazette*

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*Stately and grand, on noble lines  
Rises a lovely edifice;  
The products of the world's best minds  
And best of workman's artifice.*

*Its yellow bricks in mellow tones  
Give hue of ancient temples Grecian;  
The subtle twisting of its stones  
Shows contours of the old Venetian.*

*Here is a wonderland for Alice  
Erected in stupendous style,  
Here is a vast and spacious palace  
Where kings and queens might spend a while.*

*Along the walls the carven traceries  
Show sculpture of the highest art,  
Delicate, soft, like Spanish laceries  
This structure beckons to the heart.*

*Beauty without is matched within,  
The halls are large and nobly planned,  
The furnishings are quite akin  
To the best products of the land.*

*This is a temple raised to mirth,  
Where dreams of romance effervesce;  
Where joy and pleasure have their birth,  
And sorrows turn to happiness.*

*The best that genius can create  
The finest things art has revealed  
Will be shown daily at the State  
The masterpiece of Butterfield.*

# W. S. Butterfield

**President**

**W. S. Butterfield  
Theatres, Inc.**

W. S. BUTTERFIELD was born in Connorsville, Indiana, but the family moved, during his early youth, to Columbus, Ohio, and, as stated by himself on several occasions, he was born a Hoosier, raised a Buckeye and is now a Wolverine by adoption.

His father, being connected with the Ohio State Journal, at Columbus, thought the boy would develop into a good newspaper man, and at 17 started him in this work. As he says, fortunately for him, the best theatre in those days, was the Grand Opera House located next door to the newspaper office, and through his ability to get passes, he became personally acquainted with the managers and secured the position of program boy which led him into the theatrical life. Very rapidly he passed from program boy to usher, to doorkeeper and then assistant treasurer, and at 21 became the treasurer of the only two theatres in the city of Columbus, Ohio, which were operated under the same management.

After two years experience there, he accepted a position at the old Academy of Music in Chicago, and spent the World's Fair year in that city, leaving to become road manager and agent (for 12 years) of the popular priced attractions then in vogue under the management of Charles E. Blaney and others. During his road experience he was part owner and manager for Rose Stahl, who afterward became a very successful star, and is well remembered for her "Chorus Lady" success. Born with the promoter's instinct, he was successful in 1904 in promoting the building of the Henry Boyle Theatre at Fon du Lac, Wisconsin; and, while there, watched the operation of one of the first ten cent vaudeville theatres in the middle west.

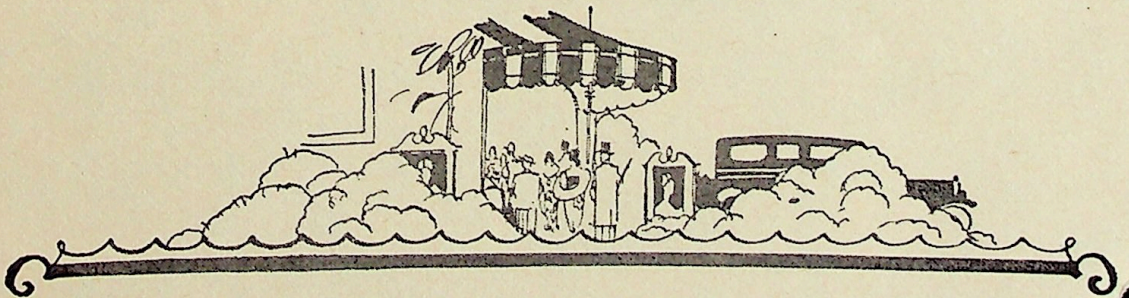
Realizing that there was a future for popular-priced amusement, he migrated to Battle Creek, Michigan, determined to build a circuit of theatres through the entire state, for at that time it was a virgin field. For 18 years his headquarters were at Battle Creek and the nucleus of the Michigan Circuit of Theatres was then established.

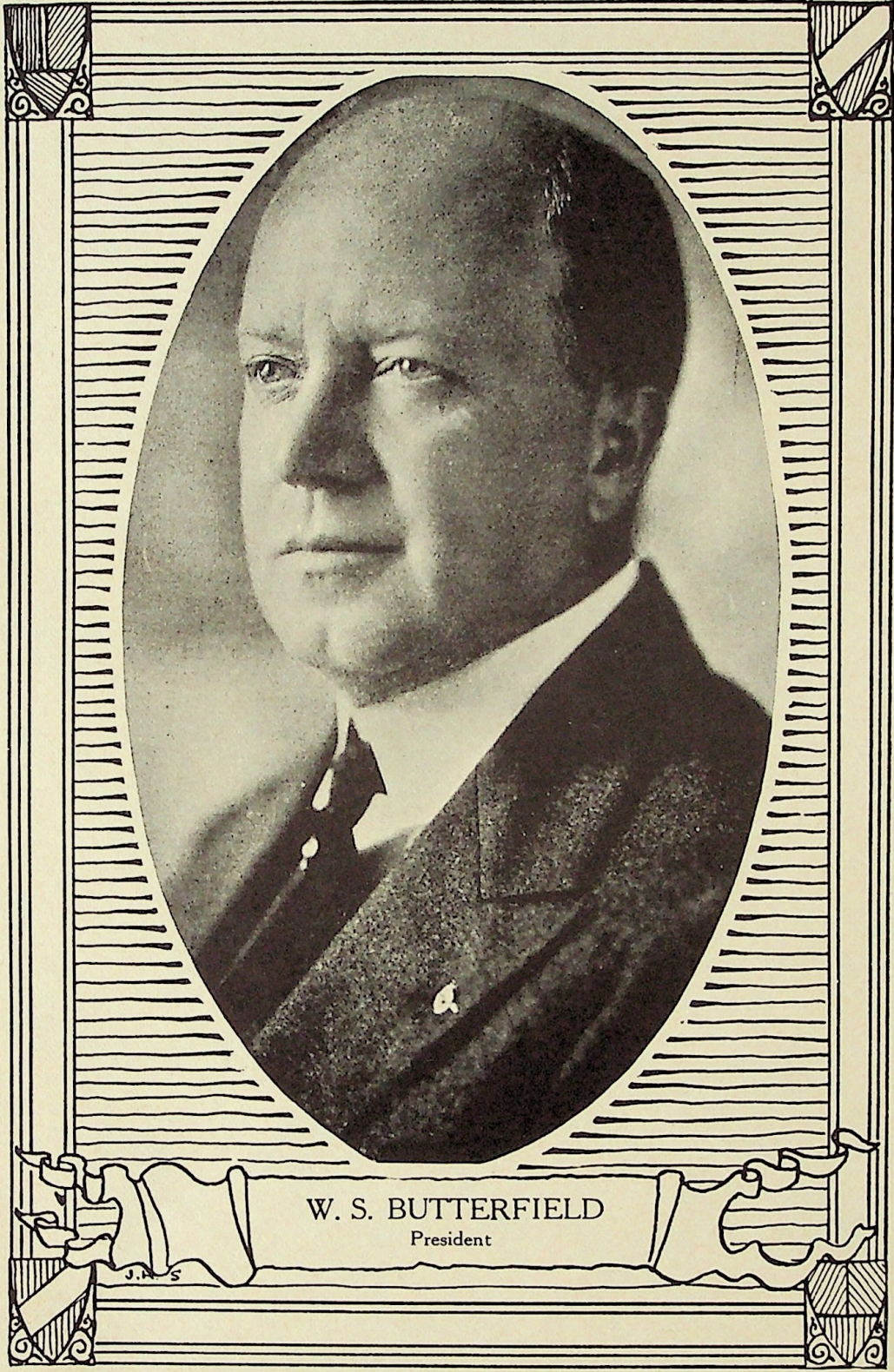
Through the growth of this circuit he found it advisable to move to the city of Detroit in 1924 and establish proper facilities for the buying and selling of theatre attractions, as well as the promotion of real estate.

He is president of the W. S. Butterfield Theatres, Inc., Michigan Theatre Company, Bijou Theatrical Enterprise Company, Lansing Arcade & Theatre Company, Consolidated Theatres, Inc., of Grand Rapids, and the Butterfield Realty Company, and in conjunction with his partner and associate, E. C. Beatty, directs the activities of these various enterprises.

Owing to the coincidence that he was the only Butterfield interested in actual theatrical management, his name and the Michigan Circuit of Theatres are well known in the theatrical world.

He is a member of the Vaudeville Managers Protective Association, the National Vaudeville Artists, Inc., International Theatrical Association, Friars Club of New York, Masonic Order, the Elks, and a lay member of most of the commercial clubs of the cities in which he operates theatres.





W. S. BUTTERFIELD  
President

J.H.S.

# **E. C. Beatty**

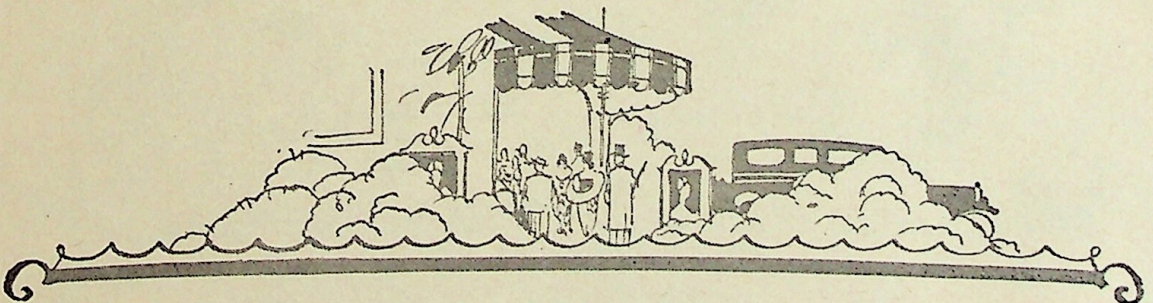
**General Manager  
W. S. Butterfield  
Theatres, Inc.**

**E.** C. BEATTY was born in Cortland, Ind., and after a grammar and high school education, went to the University of Kentucky, where he graduated. It was during college days that he secured his first knowledge of show business as he used to spend his summer vacations with the Gentry Brothers Circus in various capacities. During the regular college season, he would devote his Saturdays doing press work for L. H. Ramsey, who owned several theatres and bill posting plants in Kentucky and Virginia. When he graduated from the University, he immediately took over the press work for Mr. Ramsey's houses and managed the Hippodrome for him at Lexington, Ky., eventually working himself up to general manager of the circuit. After a few years he left Ramsey and entered into a partnership with I. N. Billington, in the operation of the Hippodrome theatre at Huntington, W. Va.

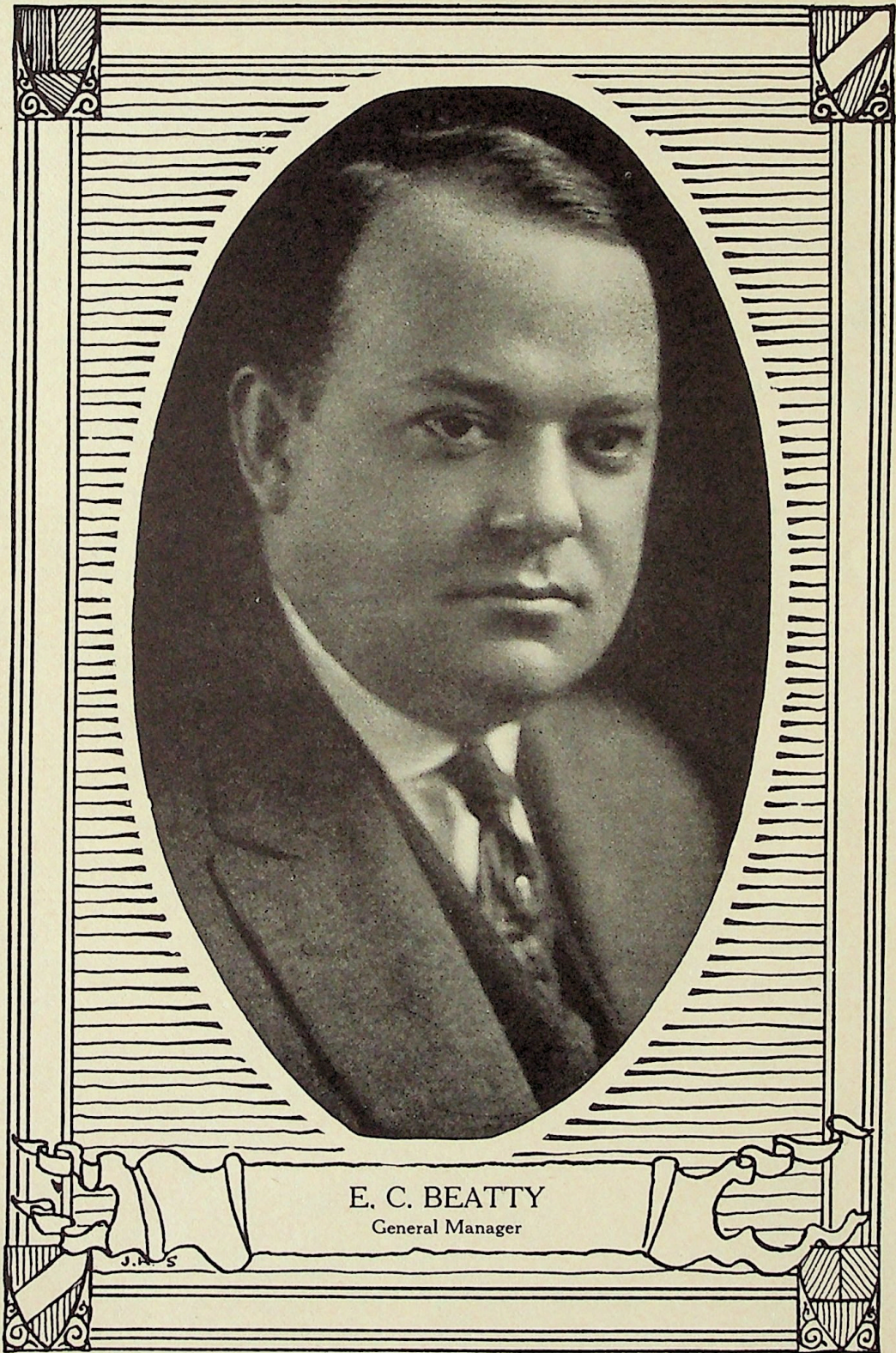
In 1911 he disposed of his interest in the Hippodrome and came to Michigan to work for W. S. Butterfield, who assigned him to Saginaw. Six months later he was transferred to Bay City and there managed the Bijou and Washington theatres for two years, after which he returned to Saginaw as the first manager of the New Franklin theatre, when Mr. Butterfield took it over.

Mr. Beatty's ability as a showman in these towns, so impressed Mr. Butterfield that he brought him to the main office in Battle Creek, where he worked in the general operation of all the Butterfield theatres. After proving his ability there Mr. Butterfield appointed him general manager of the circuit. This position he now holds.

Mr. Beatty is a keen buyer of entertainment, thoroughly understands human nature and seems to have a natural intuition for knowing what the people want in the various cities where there are Butterfield theatres.





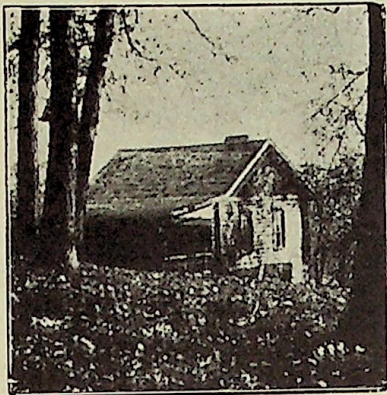


E. C. BEATTY  
General Manager

J.H.S.

# Kalamazoo

## Yesterday and Today



*Kalamazoo's First Residence, 1832*

*The cabin in this picture was the residence of Titus Bronson, the discoverer and first settler of Kalamazoo.*

WHEN in 1829 that sturdy pioneer and wise prophet of the future, Titus Bronson, first looked down from the hilltops upon the fertile valley of the Kalamazoo river, he wisely foresaw that this was the right location for the building of a city. He saw the timbered uplands and the rich bottomlands along the beautiful river, and sensed that here was the soil with that productivity which is of primary importance in the growth of a community.

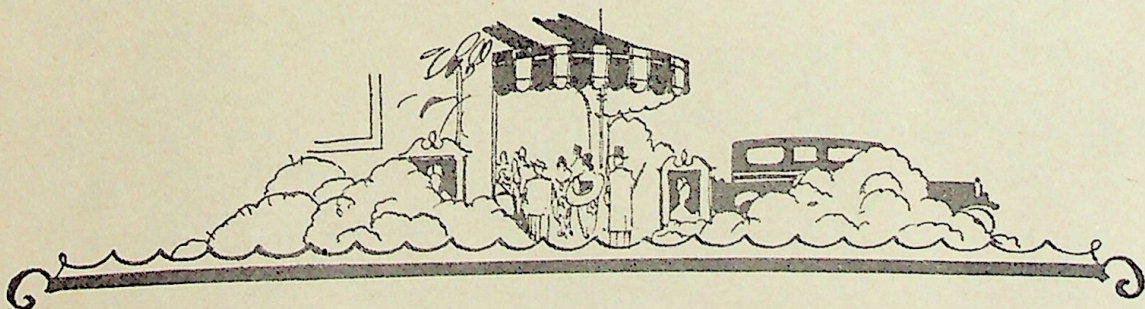
He settled here and others came. The settlement grew, became a village and then a city.

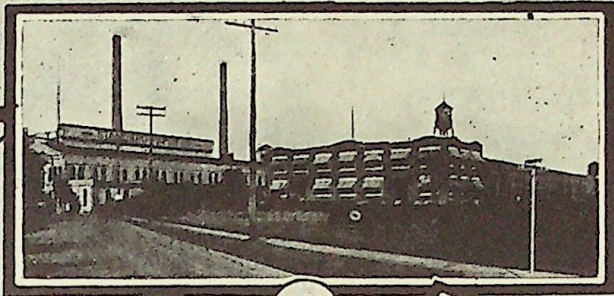
Present-day Kalamazoo, like Rome, is a city built upon hills but this has all happened in fairly recent years. It was a valley city upon the flat mucklands of the Kalamazoo river. But in the last quarter century a new city has sprung up. Industrial development has brought greatly added growth and substantial prosperity. The growth has pushed the community up the hills, over them and beyond them. This prosperity has fostered the building of artistic homes in charming hill-top and hillside residential districts.

While it is true that few cities of equal size offer such a diversity of industrial operations, the fertile lands around Kalamazoo also afford diversity of agricultural operations—a fact which does much to stabilize markets and insure food supplies at reasonable prices. It is known all over the world for its celery, paper mills and as the home of Western State Normal.

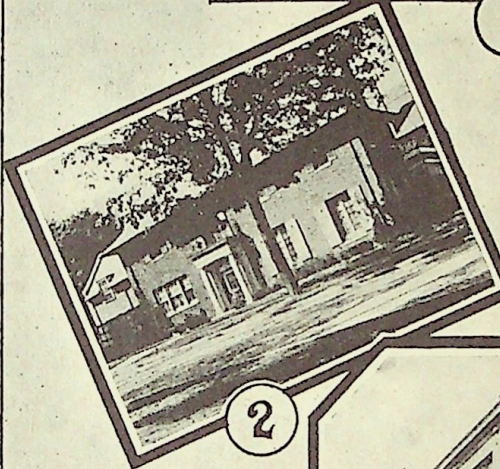
In a civic way Kalamazoo is well equipped, having fifteen parks, a municipal golf course and a fine tourist camp.

The Future of Kalamazoo is not written upon the shifting sands, but is carved deep in the rocks of stability and progress; of sound conversation and the spirit of steady unbuilding that overcomes all obstacles.

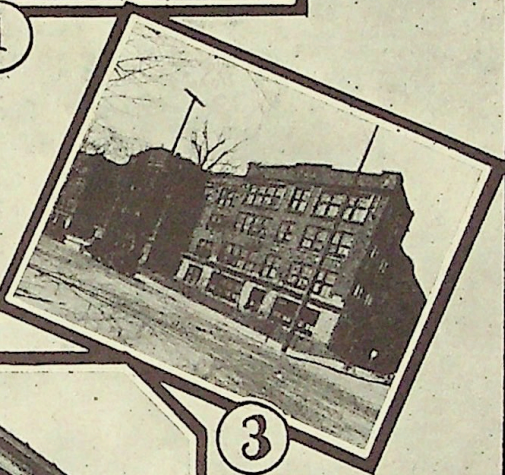




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2



3

### KALAMAZOO

- 1. Standard Paper Co.
- 2 Home of Henry L. Vander Horst
- 3 Central High School



### KALAMAZOO

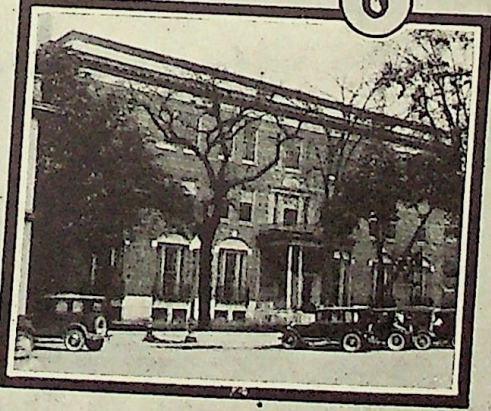
- 4. Hanselman Bldg.
- 5. Masonic Temple
- 6. Y.W.C.A. Bldg.

4

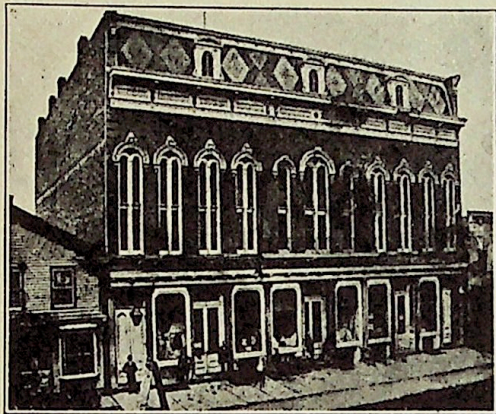
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6



# The Growth of the Butterfield Circuit



**HAMBLIN OPERA HOUSE**  
*The First Butterfield Theatre*  
*Battle Creek, Michigan*  
*Opened 1906*

THE HISTORY of the Michigan Circuit is closely intermingled with the activities of Col. W. S. Butterfield, as its entire expansion has been carried out under his personal direction.

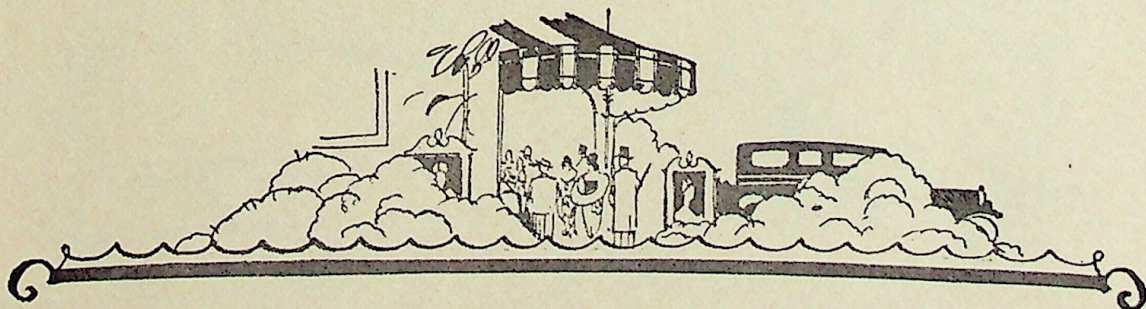
The "cradle" of the Butterfield Circuit was first rocked 21 years ago when the old Hamblin Opera House in Battle Creek (a second floor opera house) was remodelled into a popular-priced vaudeville theatre at a total cost of about \$1,000.00. Today a new, modernly constructed theatre in cities the size of Battle Creek costs in the neighborhood of \$600,000.00. This readily shows the growth of popular priced amusement.

It is said that this remodelled vaudeville theatre reminded one of the old Kohl & Castle Clark Street Museum in Chicago, with its many signs in front. Still Colonel Butterfield insists that it was the atmosphere of the theatre and the many advertising signs that induced patrons to climb the stairs to see the first real vaudeville performance in Battle Creek.

Realizing that the profits from one theatre of this type could never be very large, he assumed the attitude of the chain store operator, and immediately sought other locations, and through constant effort the Michigan Circuit, comprising 55 theatres has been developed.

In the early days, it was popular-priced vaudeville without motion pictures, although 21 years ago the motion picture was being very rapidly perfected for theatrical purposes. The first circuit of vaudeville theatres made Butterfield an important factor in booking, as he had eight of the best cities in the state in his circuit, and in the early days the actor played a full week in each town. At that time, a circuit comprising eight cities, with small railroad jumps, as in Michigan, was a coveted prize for the struggling vaudeville artist. All of the best stars of those days played Michigan, and the following acts have been checked from Mr. Butterfield's early books:

Marilyn Miller, who then was six or seven years of age, played with her father, mother and two sisters in an act known as "The Five



Columbians." The five of them received the magnificent salary of \$200.00 per week, out of which they paid their own railroad fares, baggage hauling, board, room and other expenses.

During the same days, Chic Sale, known as "The Rube," worked for \$65.00 per week, and now receives \$1500.00.

Ben Turpin, for years the famous cross-eyed comedian in the picture world, worked for the Butterfield Circuit for \$35.00 per week, and was glad to get it. It is said that his salary in the picture business was never less than \$1000.00 per week.

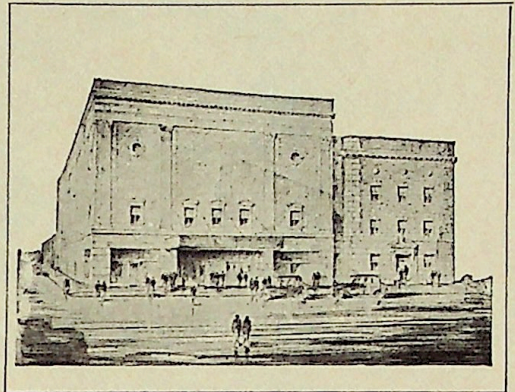
Sylvester, Jones & Pringle worked as a trio for \$125.00 per week, coming from California. They later called their act "That Quartet," composed of Sylvester, Jones, Pringle and Morrell. They were a sensation in the East and received as high as \$1500.00 per week.

Charlotte Greenwood and Great Richards, the Female Impersonator, also played the Butterfield Circuit in the early days, as did also such well known stars as Frank Van Hoven, Jack Donaghue, Rae Samuels, Clarke & McCullough, Patricola, Savoy & Brennon, Alf Grant, Dan Sherman and many others.

Two years after the introduction of vaudeville by Mr. Butterfield in Michigan, came the Motion Picture, and the building of theatres for Motion Pictures, thereby creating competition against vaudeville, and Mr. Butterfield admits that it took him five years to realize that the Motion Picture form of amusement had come to stay. In an effort to keep up with the ever-changing conditions of the amusement world, he accepted the inevitable and started immediately to create motion picture theatres, and the records disclose that he was one of the first to combine motion pictures with vaudeville programs to create what is known as the modern form of entertainment.

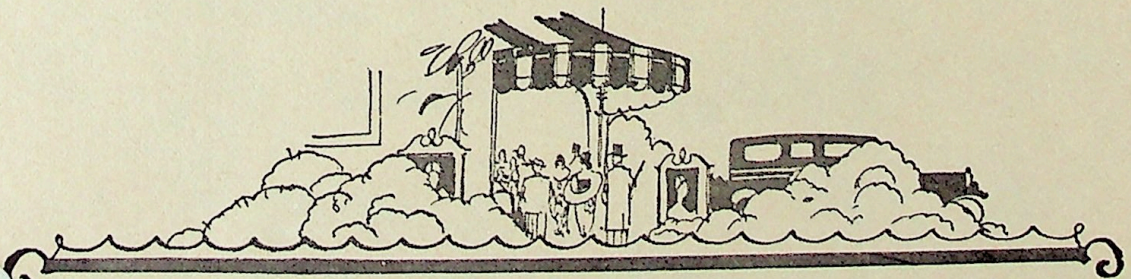
Most all the theatres are modern and were built during the past 21 years, in Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Bay City, Flint, Grand Rapids, Hillsdale, Ionia, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Niles, Owosso, Port Huron, Pontiac, Saginaw, Ypsilanti, Grand Haven, Muskegon. There are also five new modern theatres under construction at present.

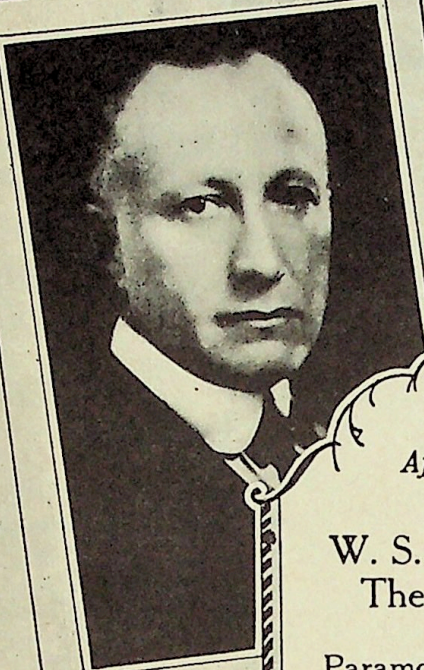
## *The Growth of the Butterfield Circuit*



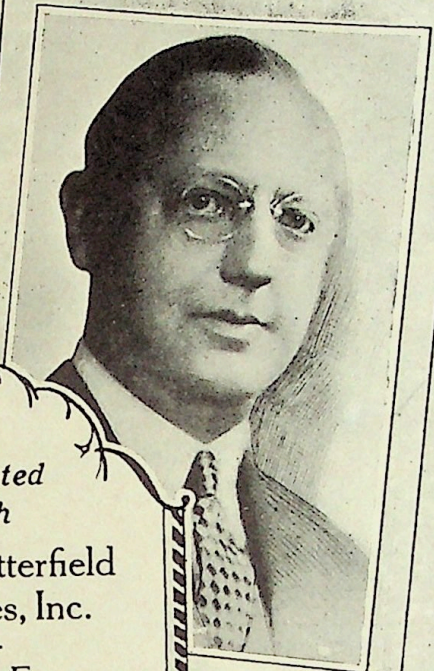
### *NEW TEMPLE THEATRE, SAGINAW*

*Another Butterfield House which will open the latter part of this month.*





ADOLPHE ZUKOR



JESSE LASKY

Affiliated  
with  
W. S. Butterfield  
Theatres, Inc.

Paramount-Famous-  
Lasky Corp.

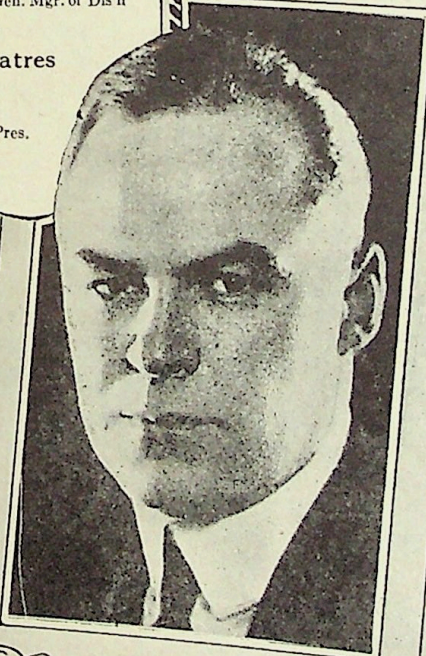
ADOLPH ZUKOR, . . . . President  
JESSE LASKY, . . . . Vice-President  
SIDNEY R. KENT, Gen. Mgr. of Dis'n

Publix Theatres  
Corp.

SAM KATZ, Pres.

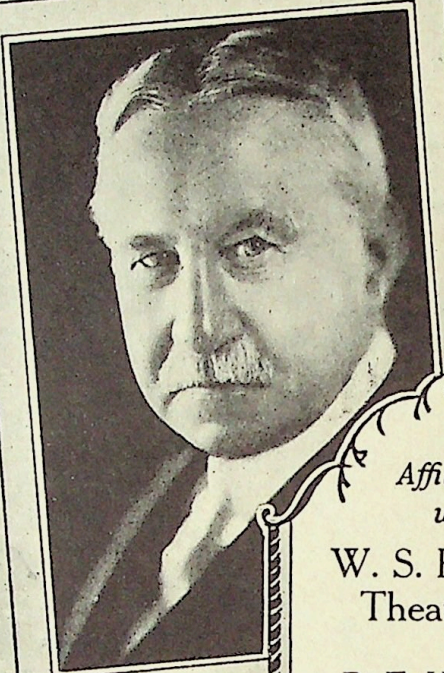


SAM KATZ

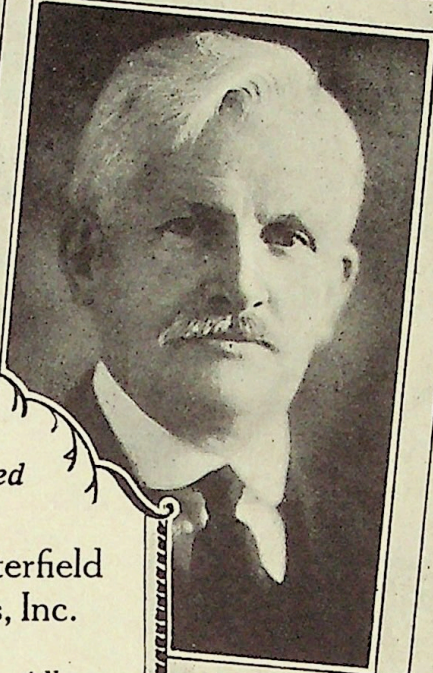


SIDNEY R. KENT





EDWARD F. ALBEE



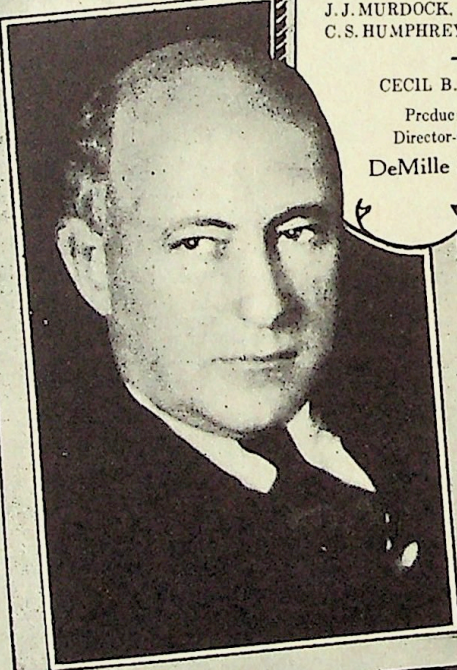
J.J. MURDOCK

Affiliated  
with  
W. S. Butterfield  
Theatres, Inc.

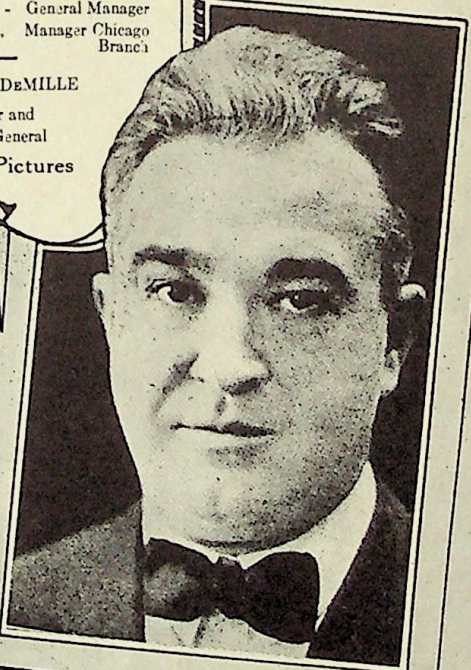
B. F. Keith-Albee  
Vaudeville Exchange

E. F. ALBEE, - - - - President  
J. J. MURDOCK, - General Manager  
C. S. HUMPHREY, Manager Chicago  
Branch

CECIL B. DeMILLE  
Producer and  
Director-General  
DeMille Pictures



CECIL B. De MILLE



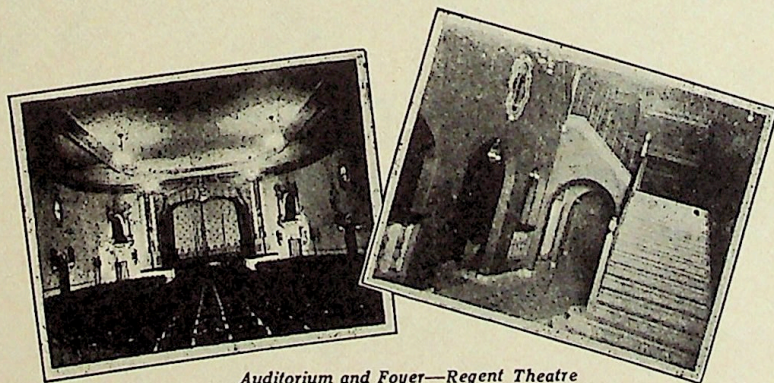
CLAUDE S. HUMPHREY



# The Growth of Keith-Albee Vaudeville

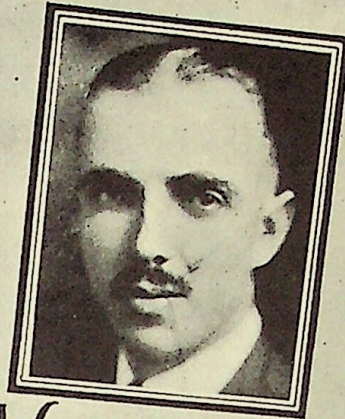
THE late Benjamin Franklin Keith and Edward F. Albee, the present President of the Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit, were the actual founders of the modern institution of Vaudeville. So it may be said that the birth of Vaudeville and the start of the Keith-Albee Circuit were coincident in Boston over 40 years ago. Both the idea and the institution emerged from the small "store show" next to the old Adams House in Boston in 1883, when and where the youthful Albee and Keith first met and decided to re-create and transfigure old-time "Variety" into a new and wholesome form of stage entertainment and to name it "Vaudeville." In 1889 Mr. Keith built Philadelphia's first vaudeville theatre—The Bijou—with E. F. Albee as manager. Four years later (1893) they invaded New York by way of the Union Square Theatre. In 1900 the show world was startled by the opening of the new B. F. Keith Theatre, Boston, at the then unprecedented cost of \$600,000. Rapidly thereafter new cities and towns in various eastern and middle-western states were added to the Keith-Albee Circuit.

The ideas which they had realized and the system which they followed and extended with such marked success, prompted other wise and capable showmen to follow in their footsteps, to emulate their methods, and in time, to co-operate and affiliate with them until at the present time Vaudeville is the most nation-wide, and also the most "national" form of American stage entertainment. Affiliated and co-operating with such great Vaudeville organizations as W. S. Butterfield Theatres, Inc., the Orpheum Circuit, and those of F. F. Proctor, B. S. Moss, Poli, The Stanley Co., and many detached but affiliating theatres, the Keith-Albee Circuit continues to exercise its sturdy influence in all the ramifications of that form of modern American amusement, from its own birthplace and original stamping-ground in New England, to the remotest cities and towns of the United States and Canada.



Auditorium and Foyer—Regent Theatre  
Flint, Michigan

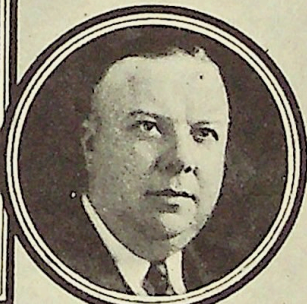
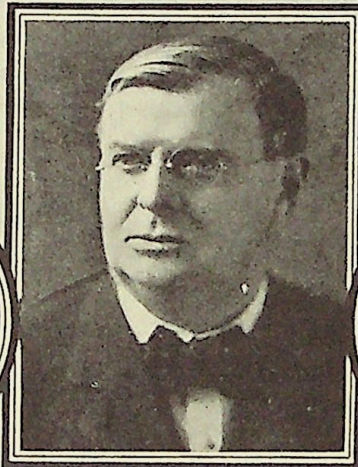




# OFFICIALS of the W.S. BUTTERFIELD THEATRES Inc.

Above-  
**Olive Cox**  
Assistant to the  
General Manager

Above  
**C.L. Kendrick**  
In charge of  
Promotion and Finance



**Boyle Woolfolk**  
Manager of  
Vaudeville Bookings

**E.C. Shields**  
Vice President

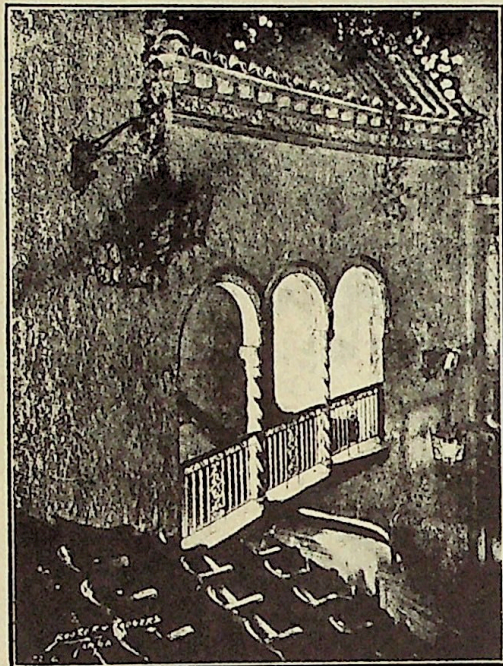
**J. O. Brooky**  
Manager of  
Picture Bookings



**E.T. Ryan Jr.**  
Assistant to  
the President

**G.S. Berger**  
Auditor

# A Personally Conducted Tour of the New State



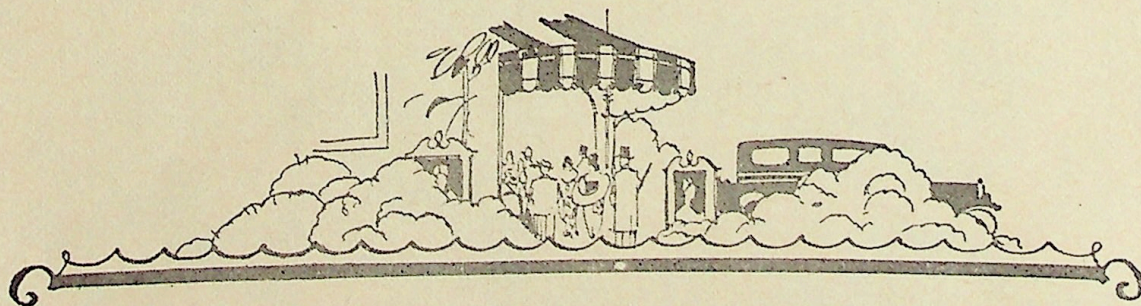
*The simple beauty of the Moors is amply represented in these balcony facades of the New State.*

THE STATE, designed by John Ebersson, the creator of new ideas in theatres, is of the "atmospheric" type, with the interior arrangement so designed that it will give the audience the impression of being seated in an outdoor amphitheatre. Particularly noteworthy is the treatment of the ceiling, which is domed, colored sky blue and made to resemble the heavens on a clear summer night, sparkling with myriad golden, twinkling stars with occasional fleecy white clouds passing across it. The effect is entrancing and is visible from the greater portion of the auditorium.

The State is conceived as a Spanish patio. The design is Hispano-Italian style which came into vogue during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabelle, who invited Italian architects to participate in the designing of some of the wonderful Spanish buildings erected during that period.

The theatre is incorporated in a block of small shops and offices with four merchandising shops on Burdick Street and the same number on the Lovell Street frontage. Above these on the second floor will be modern offices and all this has been carried out without detracting from the spacious beauty of the lobby and entrance to the theatre proper.

The first note of the Spanish motif will be gained in the unique construction of the box-office, which is modeled of quaintly designed wrought iron. From this point to the entrance of the main auditorium, the theatre gains in architectural grandeur until it approaches the splendor of an old Spanish castle. There are picturesque facades of sumptuous palaces, colonnades of graceful arches, romantic balconies, towers of ancient castles and a superb facsimile of an old Spanish cathedral window.



The mezzanine passages, lounge and rest rooms are furnished with splendid examples done in wrought iron, wood and old leather. Spanish and Italian pottery, terra cotta jars, old wrought iron and Venetian lantern top torcheriers, old brass and copper jugs, reproductions of old paintings, mirrors, drapes and richly embroidered hangings, copies of priceless Cluny weavings of old France.

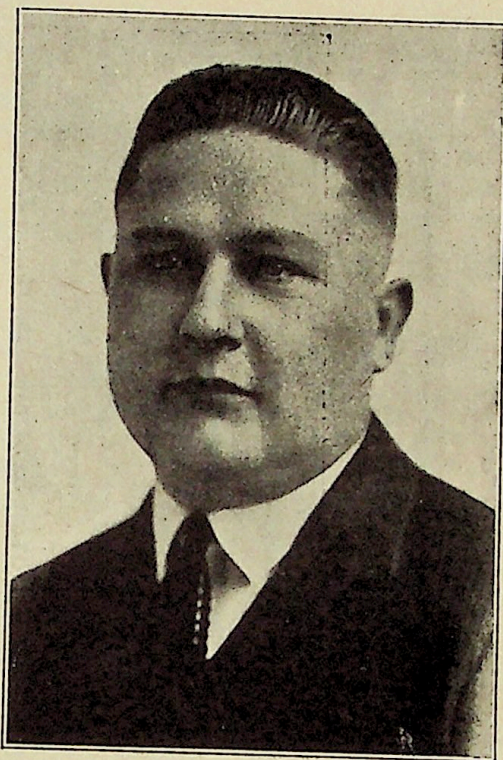
Passing to the equipments, most impressive is the Barton organ—whose beautiful tones are brought forth by a most capable organist. Excellent lighting is assured by the installation of a Major type switchboard which permits lighting effects of every conceivable combination—another important feature in an atmospheric type of theatre. Temperature is regulated by the B. F. Reynolds & Co. ventilating system. The State possesses a large and elaborately equipped projection booth, using high intensity arcs, and was furnished by the National Theatre Supply Co.

The Kalamazoo State was not built for today only, but constructed in the hopes that it might be a monument for years to come and a credit to the community even when the city is many times its present size. To that end the attractions which the theatre will present promise to be in keeping with the magnificence of the playhouse.

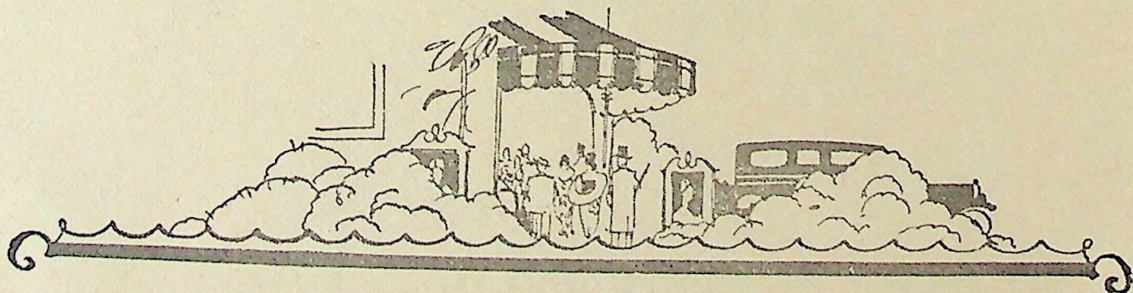
A combination vaudeville and picture policy will prevail at the State with a complete change of program each Sunday and Thursday. The biggest attractions on the Keith circuit will be offered on the stage in conjunction with the latest and biggest photoplays. No theatre in the state has a stage more completely equipped or of larger dimensions than the State, which is capable of successfully staging the largest productions on the road today.

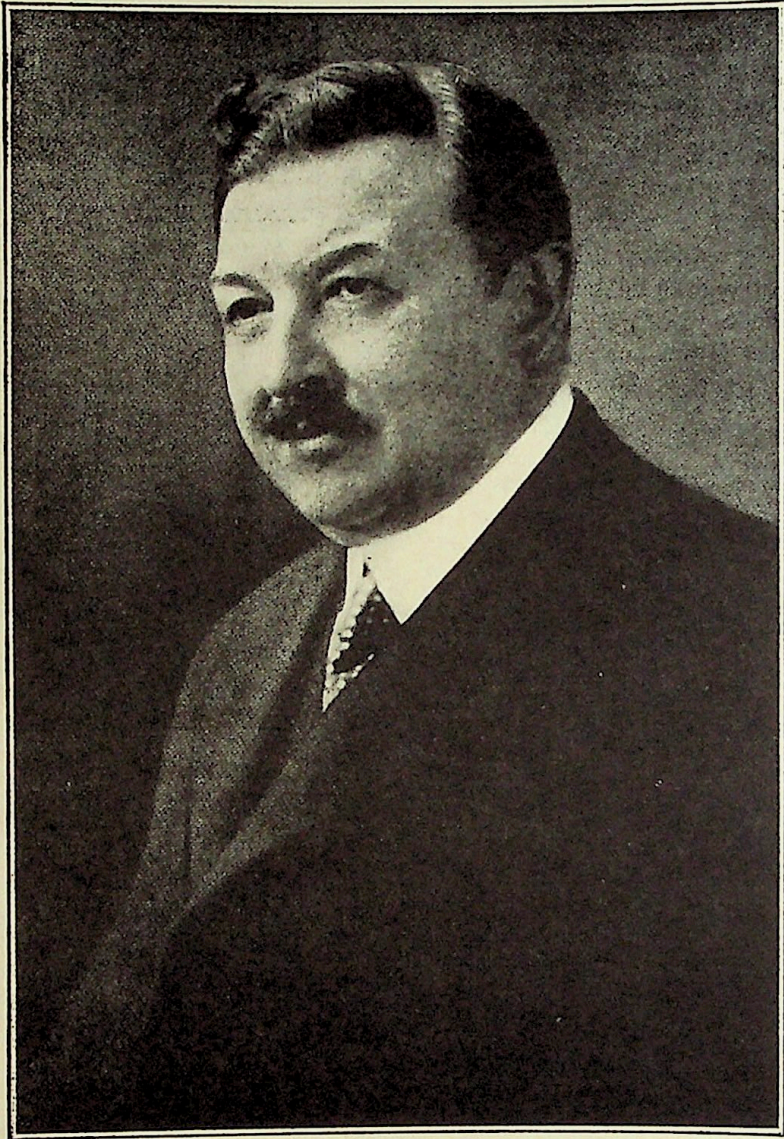
# The State

—Its Policy



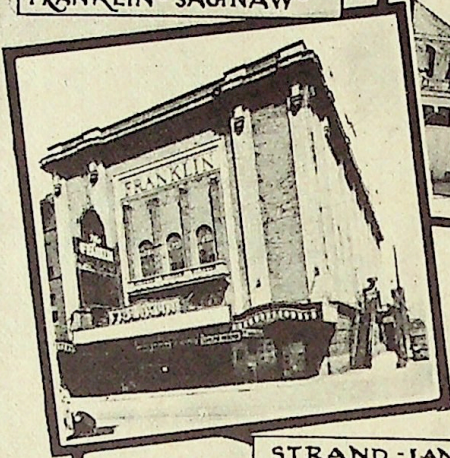
**PETER H. SCHAFER**  
*Resident Manager, State Theatre*



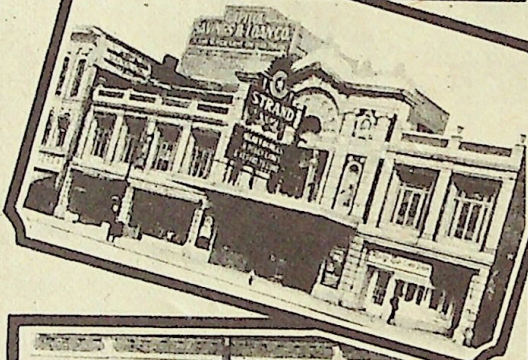


John Dersan

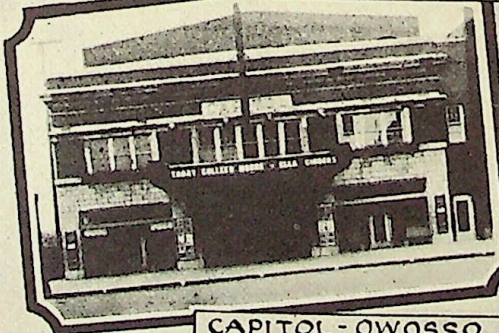
FRANKLIN - SAGINAW



STRAND - LANSING



STATE - PONTIAC



CAPITOL - OWOSSO

DESMOND - PORT HURON



## BUTTERFIELD PLAYHOUSES IN MICHIGAN

- ANN ARBOR—Arcade, Majestic, Michigan (under construction), Orpheum, Wuerth
- BATTLE CREEK—Bijou-Arcade
- BAY CITY—Columbus, Orpheum, Regent, State, Washington, Wenonah
- FLINT—Capitol (under construction), Garden, Palace, Regent
- GRAND HAVEN—Grand (under construction)
- GRAND RAPIDS—Isis, Majestic, Orpheum, Powers, Strand
- HILLSDALE—Dawn
- IONIA—Family, Regent
- JACKSON—Regent
- KALAMAZOO—Capitol, Regent, State
- EAST LANSING—State (under construction)
- LANSING—Capitol, Colonial, Gladmer, Strand
- NILES—Ready (under construction)
- OWOSSO—Capitol, Strand
- PONTIAC—Eagle, Oakland, Orpheum, Rialto, State, Strand
- PORT HURON—Desmond, Family, Majestic, Regent
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- YPSILANTI—Martha Washington, Wuerth



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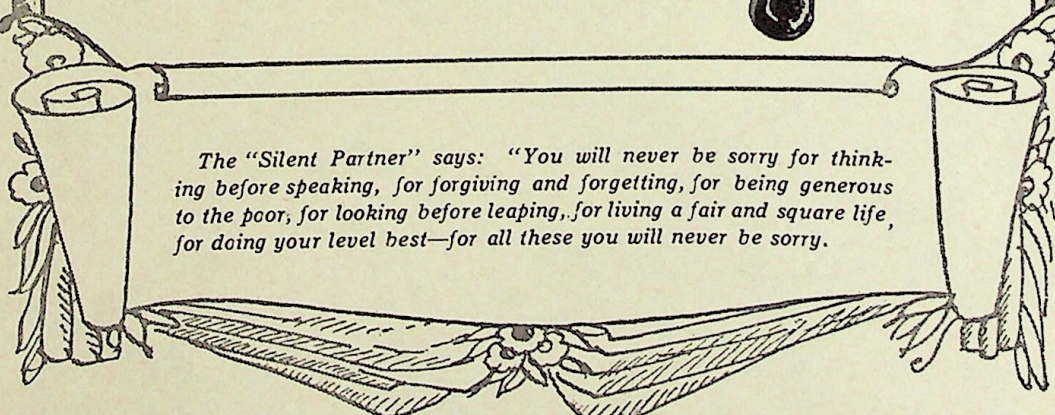
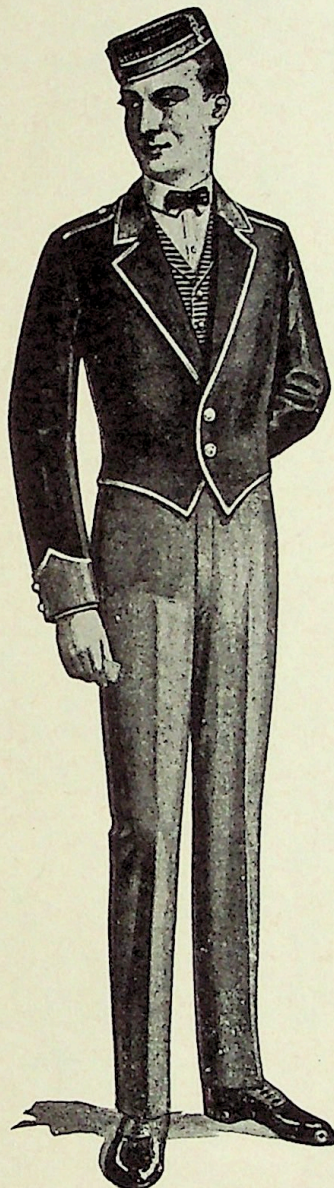
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## **KALAMAZOO'S SPANISH COURTYARD: THE STATE THEATRE**

**BY Jerry Alexander**

Welcome to the State Theatre for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of its Grand Opening on July 14, 1927. We hope you will enjoy the presentation of live stage acts and a silent-film feature, the entertainment policy which the State Theatre offered when opened. We thank you for your support of the months of planning and work which were necessary for these two evenings of entertainment. We also hope you will be satisfied by what we offer these evenings . . . and that you will encourage future presentations of this type in the State Theatre.

The younger members of our audience usually assume the State Theatre wasn't built to show motion-pictures . . . no theatre which has as much ornamentation as the State could have been built for "just movies". But, the State Theatre is a genuine "movie-palace"; in fact, the most intact of any movie-palace in the State of Michigan outside Detroit. Movie palaces are uniquely American—and reflect the tastes of the American public during the decade commonly known as "The Roaring Twenties"—that decade bracketed by World War One and the Great Depression: those hectic and carefree days of Prohibition, flappers, Babe Ruth, Lucky Lindy, the Teapot Dome Scandal, and seeming unlimited financial expansion.

Americans of the 20s wanted escape, and one of the means used were movies and the ornate structures they were shown in. The film-industry, having a keen feel for the tastes of the time, exhibited films in theatres of eye-boggling opulence and luxury—the movie palace. When attending these theatres, the average person could visit locations their bank-accounts wouldn't allow: the palaces of European royalty, the courtyards of Spain and Italy, the hashish dream world of the Orient, and even Paradise. It was all fantasy—just what the doctor ordered.

This phenomenon did not bypass Kalamazoo. The State Theatre, at the southwest corner of Burdick and Lovell Streets, was built during this unique era, and remains today a first-run film house of Kalamazoo. To anyone entering, one senses this theatre is different from the rest of the community. Yes, the State Theatre is a true movie-palace.

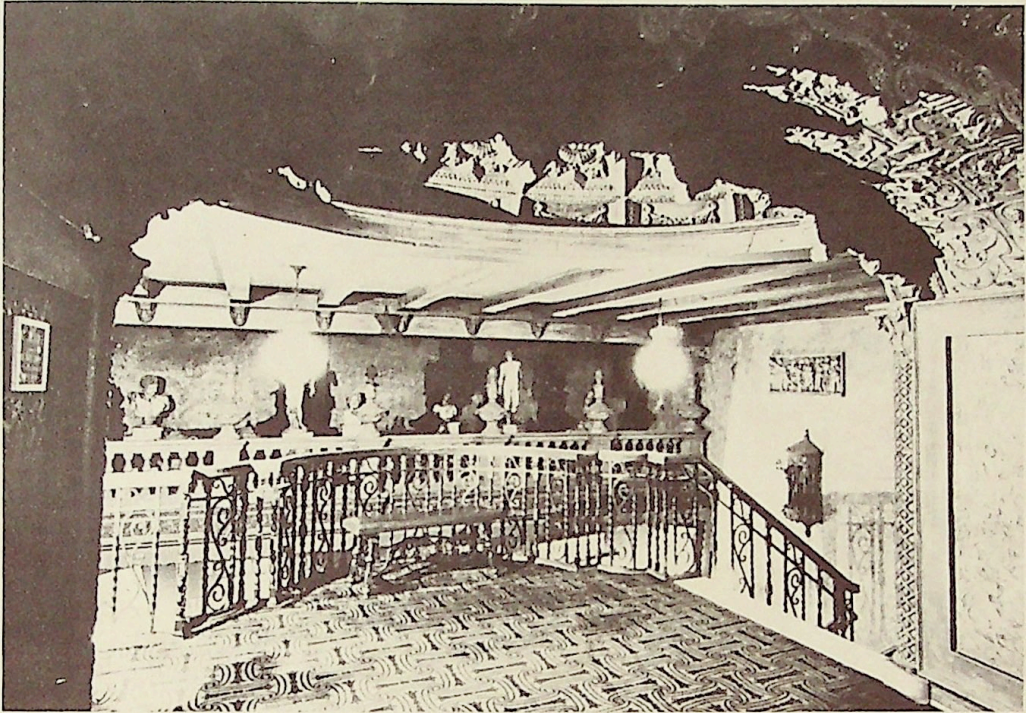
The State theatre today is a prime example of the "atmospheric" school of movie-palace design, created by John Eberson.

Eberson was born in Austria and, after receiving training in architecture and engineering migrated to this country. Eberson soon opened his own architectural office, and designed small theatre structures throughout the Midwest. Eberson was one of the first theatre architects to use a cantilevered balcony, which eliminated the bothersome support posts on the main floor. By the early 20's, Eberson had progressed to designing larger vaudeville and movie houses and, in January 1923, struck architectural gold with the opening of his first atmospheric theatre, the Majestic in Houston. Eberson had felt movie-palaces were becoming static in design, and sought a way to use the colors of the Mediterranean and inner courtyards of the Romantic architectural periods. An Eberson atmospheric theatre was characterized by: the audience sitting in a simulated garden or courtyard with a plain, dark blue ceiling with twinkling electric stars and moving clouds projected across this sky; the auditorium's side-walls were designed as building facades and garden walls; the windows of these buildings were lit from behind, and artificial trees and vines adorned the walls. For the remainder of the movie-palace era (which lasted until 1932), Eberson designed atmospheric houses exclusively. His designs were often imitated,





but never surpassed. Some other Ebersson designed atmospheric theatres near Kalamazoo included the Capitol in Flint; the Grand Riviera and the Riviera Annex in Detroit; and the Avalon, Capitol, and Paradise Theatres in Chicago. (All of these theatres have been demolished or are closed as theatres.) Another Ebersson atmospheric design, though not a theatre per se, is the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago (which still operates). John Ebersson died in 1954, after designing over 300 theatres.



Ground was broken for Colonel W.S. Butterfield's State Theatre in October, 1926. Nine months, and \$350,000 later, the Spanish-motif structure was completed. The auditorium was designed as a Spanish patio of the Hispano-Italian style which was in vogue during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. The first note of the Spanish-motif to the ticket-buying patron was the facade of the theatre structure and the three-story office building. Ornate terra-cotta design was used extensively on the exterior walls . . . topped by a cornice, again of terra-cotta, which skirted the building for its entire length along both Burdick and Lovell Streets. The original box-office continued the Spanish design, being modelled of terra-cotta and designed wrought iron. From the box-office to the auditorium's entrances, the architecture gained in grandeur as it approached the splendor of a Spanish castle. In the approaches through the entrance lobby and the orchestra and mezzanine foyers, the eye was captured by palace facades, colonades of arches, balconies, castle towers, and a Spanish cathedral window facsimile. Certainly not able to be overlooked were the many examples of pottery, terra-cotta jars, wrought iron and Venetian lantern topped lighting fixtures, painting reproductions, mirrors, wall-hangings, and numerous pieces of period-like furniture. But, it wasn't until the patron entered the auditorium with its 1805 seats, that the full magnificence of the Ebersson design assaulted the senses. The patron was now in a Spanish courtyard with trees and vines skirting the tops of the buildings surrounding him. When looking to the 56 foot high ceiling, one saw the blue sky with its constellations twinkling through the drifting clouds. (Even an amateur astronomer could easily spot the Big Dipper and the Polar Star in the middle of the extensive constellation layout.) Above the back reaches of the balcony, a trellis spanned the sky, inundated with clinging vines. (This trellis was more than decoration—it concealed openings for the ventilation system.) Along the walls of the auditorium were many torchiers and in the numerous niches were statues of classic Romantic design. Looking towards the stage, one saw a vast canopy topping the stage's proscenium opening, complete with a tiled roof and a series of grilled openings softly lit from within in amber colors. In the centre of this canopy, one saw a small balcony with a wrought iron railing containing still another Romantic designed statue . . . again softly lit in amber. As eyes moved back from the stage area and along the side walls, one noticed large building

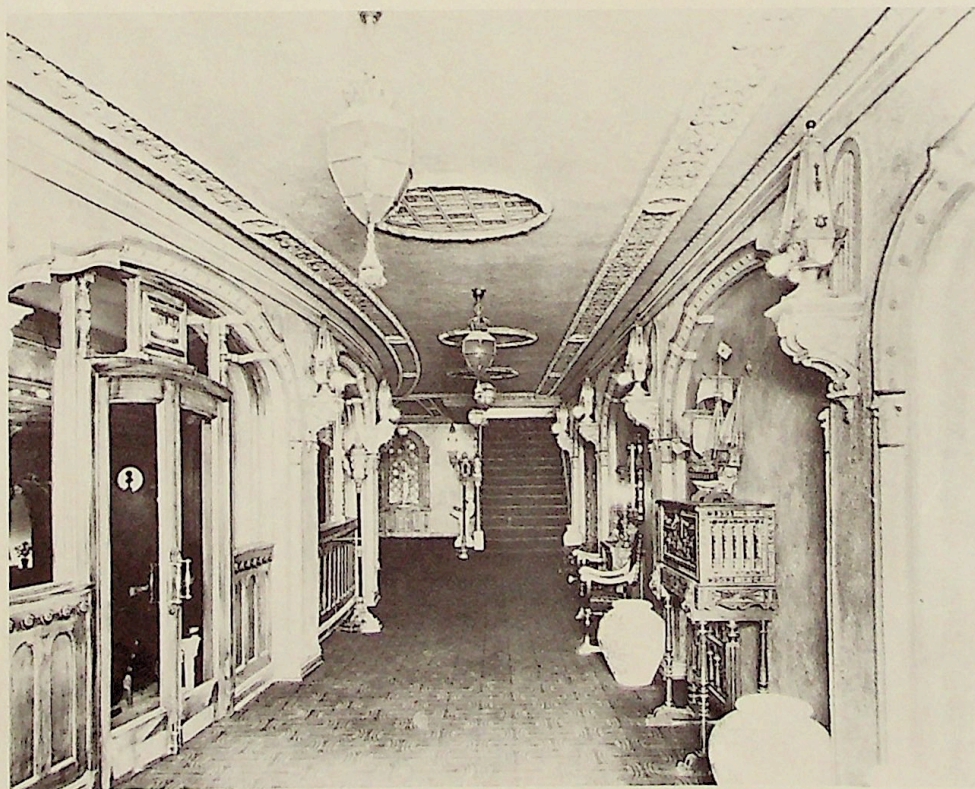
facades on either side of the auditorium and, at the second story level, large windows. Behind these two windows were the chambers for the 3-Manual, 11-Rank Barton theatre organ, a necessity in Silent-Film days. Underneath the organ chamber on the right one found a running fountain; also to be found were an occasional bench to allow the weary Spanish traveller a chance to rest, and maybe renew their appearance after forgetting about the many birds either in flight or perched snugly on landings of the buildings.

One of the highlights of the auditorium was the lighting and the many variations in tone and mood the lighting could elicit. All of the major fixtures and the facade windows and niches were amber lit; all of the lighting behind the building facades at the upper reached was blue. The remainder of the house lighting could be either blue or amber . . . or a combination of these colors. Over the east organ chamber was the sunrise effect . . . a gradual change from blue to bright white . . . and then back to blue again. A pilot board operator with a feeling of theatricalism, could give the patron a light-show—this in addition to the stage and screen presentations.

There was more to the State Theatre than its foyer and auditorium areas. Commercial space was available on the ground level facing both Burdick and Lovell Streets. There were two stories of office space available facing Burdick. The building's exterior was constructed in buff tapestry brick, with the ornate trim in terra-cotta. Ornamental trim was featured along the cornice of the structure; as mentioned before, especially noticed was the large arched area above the box-office entrance. And, always noted, especially after dark, was the large vertical sign at the corner of Burdick and Lovell which spelled out in bright incandescent bulbs, S-T-A-T-E.

This was the theatre in 1927. It remained virtually intact until 1964 when the vertical sign rusted out and came down. And, a tasteful remodelling of the theatre began. The exterior lost its ornamental cornices, the arch above the box-office area was levelled, the ground floor exterior received a new facade, and a new combination marquee/vertical sign was erected over the box office. The box office was modernized and the original entrance doors replaced.

The entrance lobby and foyer areas received the most alteration. The ornamental lighting was removed; the pottery, furniture, tapestries, and paintings were stored away. The Mediterranean paint scheme was covered by a coat of flat paint. The most notable alterations were the removal of the fountain on the mezzanine foyer level, the modernization of the rest rooms, and the complete removal of the full width balcony immediately above the entrance doors of the theatre. Where once this balcony contained statues, pottery, and artificial cypresses and vines—all this was removed and replaced with a peppermint-striped awning.

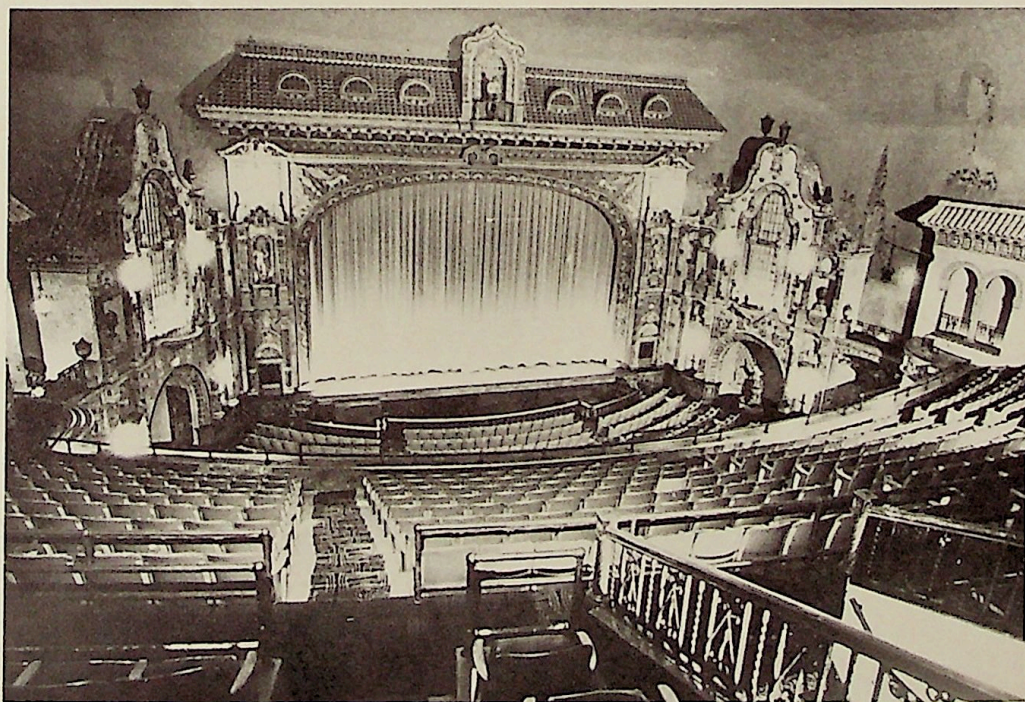


The auditorium remained virtually untouched. The few removals included the trees and vinery; the birds suspended from the ceiling; some of the statuary which graced the port-holes of the balcony rail and the organ grille areas; and the only painting done was those areas underneath the two organ chambers. New seating was also installed, this cutting the house capacity to 1589. (In 1974, the balcony was closed off from day to day usage, effectively cutting the house capacity to 845). Other casualties included the two cloud-machines and, in the early 70s, the stars and much ornamental lighting were cut off to save energy.

From its opening, the State Theatre has presented first-run film entertainment. But, even though today strictly a film house, live entertainment was presented for many years in addition to the screen entertainment. The backstage areas contain 14 dressing rooms; a virtually intact pilot board for lighting effects on stage and in the auditorium. The stage dimensions are 50 by 29 feet . . . and it is 61 feet from the stage floor to the grid iron.

The theatre opened with a combination vaudeville and feature film policy. Three acts from the Keith-Albee Vaudeville Circuit were presented along with a first-run film. The opening bill included Austin Mack's Century Serenaders, the Libby Dancers, and piano-comedian Ned Norworth. Orchestral forces to accompany the acts was provided by Don Warren and his Orchestra. The feature film was MGM's "Frisco Sally Levy", a film which hoped to cash-in on the popularity of Irish-Jewish comedies inspired by the long-running "Abie's Irish Rose"—it didn't. The organ accompaniment was provided by Al Gillickson, who made a guest appearance away from his usual assignment at the Capitol Theatre. The admission? Top price was 50 cents.

Vaudeville continued at the State until the Summer of 1929, when the first "talkie" was presented: Paramount's "The Wild Party" starring "The It Girl", Clara Bow. Vaudeville returned for a few months that fall, but was dropped again. The last gasp of vaudeville occurred in the fall of 1931 and the spring of 1932, but by then this form of entertainment was dead across the country. Radio and talking pictures had taken their toll. Even though by this time the talking picture had eliminated any box-office for a silent film, the State staff organist, Clarence Leverenz, continued at the console for intermissions featuring the popular sing-along with patrons singing merrily away (hopefully) while following the lyrics projected on the screen. The later house organist, Bud Taylor, took over from Leverenz in 1934 and continued until 1937. (The first house organist, Edith Ehrens played for the first year of the theatre—she was replaced by Leverenz in 1928.)



The State featured many stage attractions besides vaudeville in its early years. The selection of Miss Kalamazoo for the Blossom Festival and Dance Revues featuring the classes of Virginia Rucker were featured as well. Then, in 1934, the first of many touring companies were booked into the State for its Kalamazoo appearance. At that time, Marc Connelly's Pulitzer Prize winning drama, "The Green Pastures" was the first of many legitimate stage attractions which were presented at the State until the last presentation, Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance" was offered in late 1961. Other legitimate attractions included "Three Men On A Horse"; "Tovarich" (starring Eugenei Leonovich); "You Can't Take It With You"; Ethel Barrymore starring in "White Oaks" and "The Corn is Green"; "The Man Who Came To Dinner" starring Clifton Webb; Olsen and Johnson's "Hellzapoppin"; "Life With Father"; "Watch on the Rhine" with Paul Lucas; and "Harvey" starring James Dunne. (Supporting Dunne in this 1950 production were Jean Stapleton and Ernest Borgnine).

Musicals such as "The Student Prince"; "Blossom Time"; and "The Merry Widow" also were presented. More classically oriented attractions included productions of Verdi's "La Traviata"; the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo; and Jose Greco and his Spanish Dancers.

During the Big Band era of the 40's, many of the orchestras appeared at the State. Just a few of them were Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong (along with Jack Teagarden and Earl "Fatha" Hines); Tiny Hill; Russ Morgan; Ted Weems (and his vocalist at the time, Perry Como); "Scat" Davis; and Lawrence Welk.

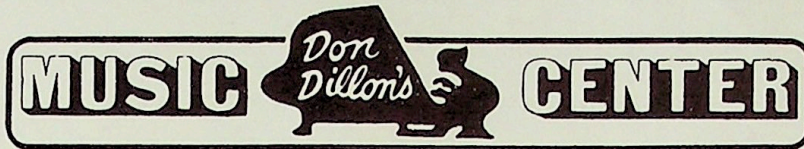
Many other nationally known personalities have appeared at the theatre: Victor Borge; Blackstone the Magician (for numerous appearances—the last time in 1950); George Goebel (then known as Georgie Goebel) as a member of the National Barn Dance Troupe; Joe Howard and his Gay 90's Revue; and, in vaudeville days, such as Edgar Bergan and Company (before Charlie McCarthy gained equal-billing); Howard, Fine and Howard (later known as "The Three Stooges"); and Nick Lucas.

The State Theatre still houses what today is a rarity, a theatre organ in its original installation. This Barton instrument was used regularly until 1937. Then, Bud Taylor came back in 1950 and played intermissions until the spring of 1951. The organ again fell silent, and remained in a gradually deteriorating condition until John Catherwood and William Mollema volunteered to rehabilitate the instrument in 1961. By the late 60's, the hard working pair again had the organ in playable condition, and the two alternated at the console on either Saturday or Sunday evenings. This well-received attraction continued until the spring of 1972. The last live entertainment booked at the State was in November, 1971. At that time, the organist of the Fox Theatre in St. Louis, Stan Kann, accompanied the Lon Chaney classic "The Phantom of the Opera". Since the spring of 1972, the Barton organ has not been heard publically as part of the presentations of the theatre. As with all entertainment, public response could encourage future silent-film presentations with organ accompaniment in the theatre. The Barton continues to be ready to use. (As you can tell from the use of the instrument for the 50th Anniversary Celebration to accompany Charlie Chaplin's classic "The Gold Rush".)

We hope this thumbnail sketch of the history of the State Theatre brings back memories to many of the members of the audience. To those who are unfamiliar with the State in the old days, we hope you have a realization of what the house presented in the past . . . and what could be presented in the future. What is the future for the State Theatre? Lyle Smith, President of Butterfield Theatres, has said: "It is our intention to continue to operate the State Theatre in the future . . . as a first-class, first-run theatre." Smith continued: ". . . in our opinion, Kalamazoo has the most vigorous and viable downtown of any community of like size in the Midwest, and we expect it will continue to grow and prosper."

The author hopes this 50th Anniversary celebration will encourage future uses of the stage facilities and theatre organ of the State Theatre. Even though Kalamazoo has a wealth of theatres with working stages, the State Theatre is unique—the architecture alone merits serious thoughts of preservation and possible restoration. Even though the theatre has yet to receive an official "Historic" or "Landmark" designation in the community, it has long unofficially had this status to the population of the area who have attended the State Theatre in the past 50 years. After all, where else in this area can one sit in a Spanish courtyard?

(Note: This is an expansion and somewhat modified version of an article which was written for the **Kalamazoo Review**, and which was published in April, 1976.)



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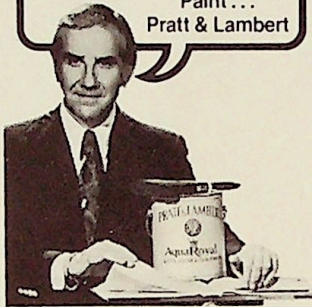


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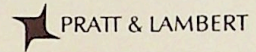
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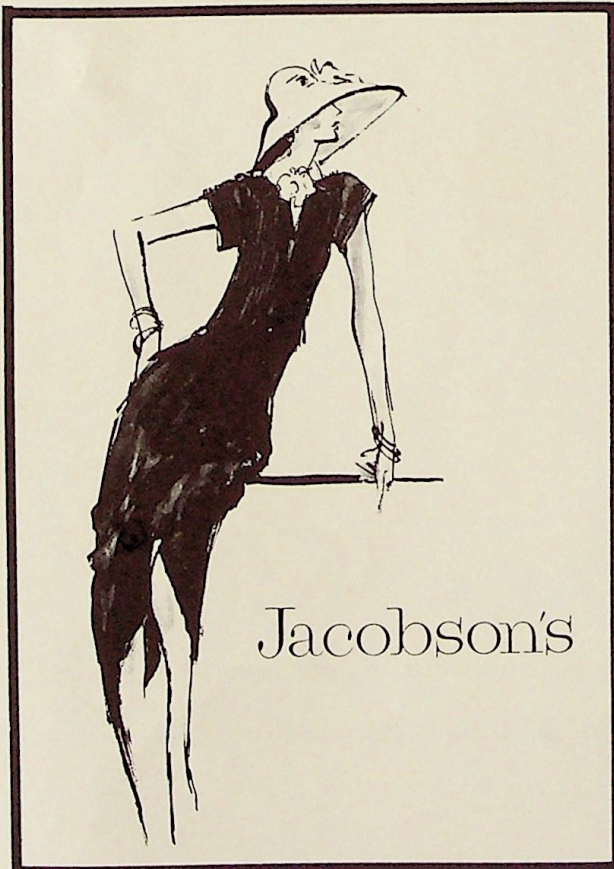
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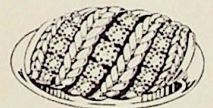
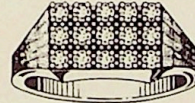
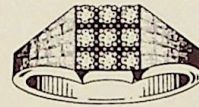
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*The materials used in this program match the materials used for the July 14, 1927 as closely as possible.*

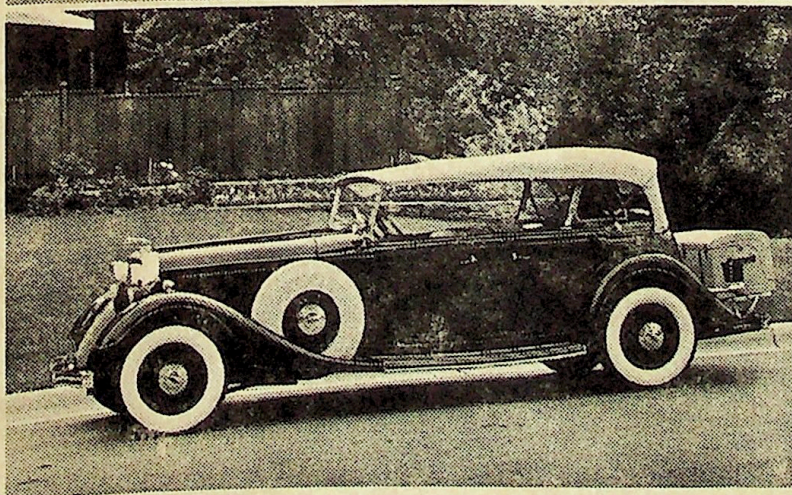
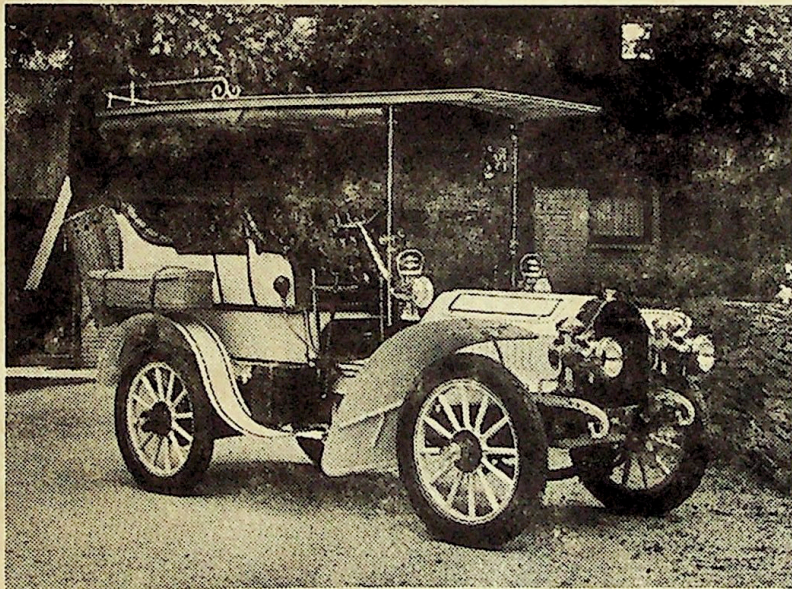
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