

March 5-82

Mr. Don Carlson,
Theatre Editor
Kalamazoo Gazette
South Burdick St.
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

Dear Mr. Carlson;

Now that I am out of the state of shock regarding the possible loss of the State Theatre. I would like to say "Kalamazoo, don't be hasty and sorry later".

There are many cities that have lost such beautiful theatres who now wish they had them back. Also many cities have saved their theatres by means of the "Theatre Historical Society".

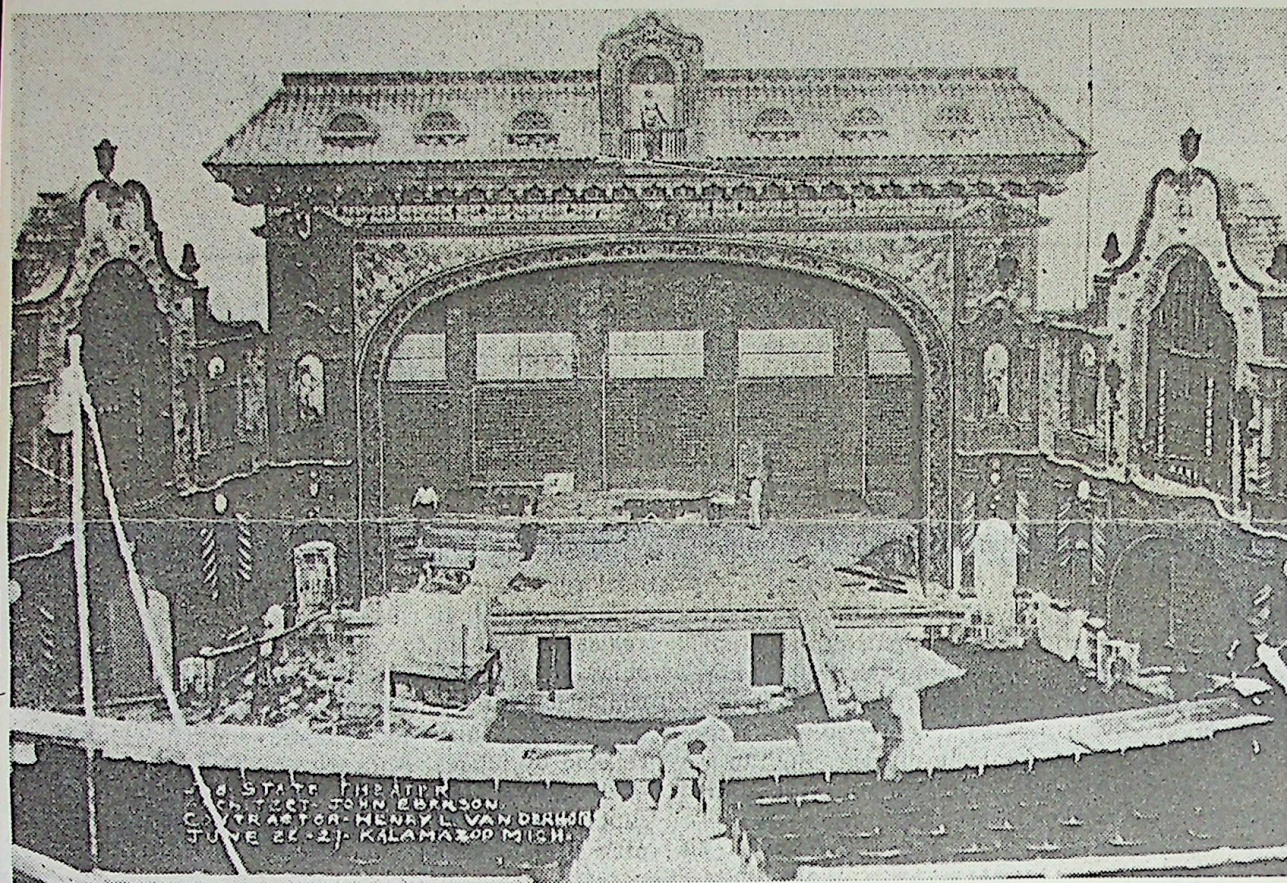
This type of architecture is no longer being taught and facilities for manufacturing such ornate design are no longer available. The price would be prohibitive in these times.

My successful career started at the State Theatre in Kalamazoo many years ago. I have always been grateful to Mr. Pat Heavey for his training and faith in me, and the cooperation of the staff who encouraged me to continue in the world of music.

The beautiful Barton organ was part of the show in the good old days. Both Col. Butterfield and Pat Heavey managed to keep the organ playing to entertain the patrons at the State longer than any other theatre in Michigan.

KALAMAZOO... Don't take the STATE THEATRE For granted. It is yours to be proud of and enjoy. Do Anything you can to save it.

"Bud" Taylor
Organist
4525 Manzanita Ave
Carmichael, Ca.
95608



STAGE AND AUDITORIUM ON STATE THEATER DURING CONSTRUCTION IN 1926
Famed theater architect John Eberson designed vaudeville and movie house

State

(Continued from Page A-1)

it could retain ownership of the structure and convert the theater space into stores and offices. That course seems unlikely in view of the expansion of retail and office space in the downtown area this year.

It has been known here for some time that the State has been living on borrowed time and a day of decision was looming for the theater to which a number of Kalamazoos have a strong emotional attachment.

Large midtown movie theaters, especially those of the "palace" variety, have all but disappeared in recent years, giving way to suburban and neighborhood theaters of from 200 to 400 seats. Twenty years ago there were only two theaters and two screens in Kalamazoo — the State and Capitol. Today there are 21 screens in eight theaters in the metropolitan area, and only two of those, the State and LeBijou, are in the central business district.

This decentralization of movie theaters has been spurred by a trend to play films in theaters that can offer film companies and

have performing space in Carver Center. There are also four other college auditoriums and several high school auditoriums in the metropolitan area.

The question now seems to be if there is any local use for the theater which has outlived its usefulness for both films and touring shows. The number of seats would not now sustain Broadway plays such as those presented at Miller Auditorium.

Ground for the State was broken in October, 1926. Nine months and \$350,000 later, the Spanish-motif structure with twinkling electric stars and a simulated garden courtyard was opened to the public.

Vaudeville shows and plays were presented for several years along with motion picture programs, but live shows ceased during Depression years. Since the early 1960s, it has been used only for movies, occasional meetings and civic events like the Exchange Club Christmas shows. Locally produced vaudeville shows and silent movies with organ accompaniment also were presented annually until this year.

The structure has an assessed valuation of \$312,000 with an annual property tax bill of \$22,530. Regular annual tax increases, and an annual heat bill of \$18,000 which is expected to double next year, were said to be prime factors in Butterfield's decision to appraise the theater's future at this time.

At one time, Butterfield owned or operated every theater in Kalamazoo. Ownership is now split among five companies: United Artists Theaters, (Westmain); General Cinema, (Maple Hill); Loeks Theaters (Plaza and Eastowne) and Bijou Theaters (Le Bijou) in addition to Butterfield. Butterfield also owns the Campus, which opened in 1966 and was the first new theater built here since the Uptown in 1938, the Beacon twin theaters and the metropolitan area's only drive-ins, the Douglas and Portage.

The last theater here to be closed and razed was the Capitol Theater on South Street in 1967 which Butterfield traded to the city as site for a parking ramp. The trade brought Butterfield property near the airport where it constructed the Beacon.

This decentralization of movie theaters has been spurred by a trend to play films in theaters that can offer film companies and distributors the longest possible run and theater operators their most profitable booking arrangements. Even more recently, theaters have been built in groupings of from two to six to reduce maintenance and labor costs and give patrons a choice of entertainment at one location.

Lyle W. Smith, president of the Southfield-based theater chain, which operates more than 65 screens in Michigan, confirmed that a decision as to the future of the theater at South Burdick and West Lovell streets will be made soon.

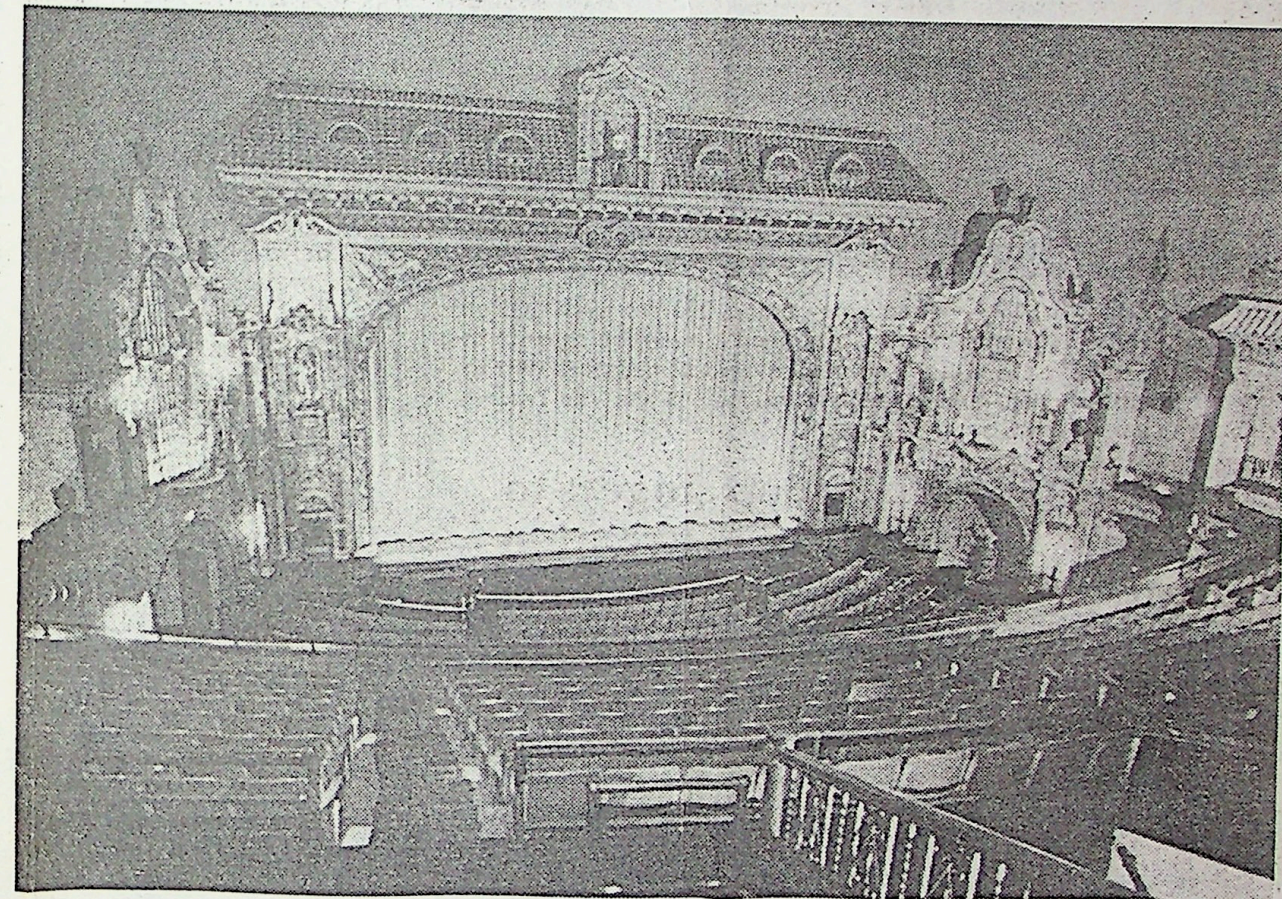
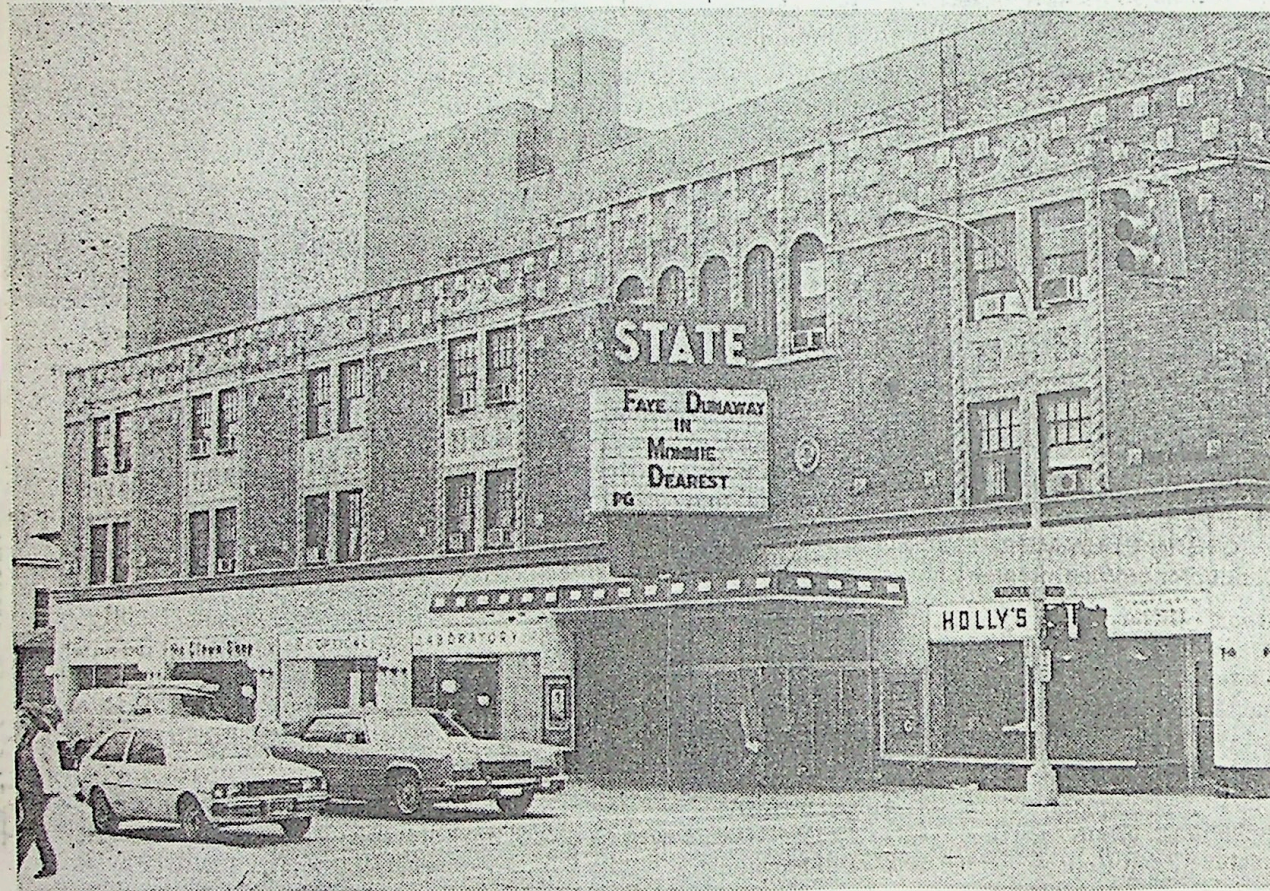
"It was a step we really hated to take," Smith said. "The State is an unusually beautiful theater, and Kalamazoo with its downtown mall and many arts and cultural activities is a most unusual city.

"We have been impressed by the love shown for this theater by a number of people who have been active in the past 15 years restoring its Barton organ, replacing lights, bringing back the theater's 'sky' with its stars and moving clouds and staging the annual vaudeville shows. We've probably delayed a decision longer than it was prudent to do so, but this was not the usual situation. We hate to see the State go as badly as anyone."

Smith also noted that several other of Butterfield's large downtown theaters, such as those in Ann Arbor and Jackson, have been sold to local government or are being operated by civic groups as performing arts centers.

He said he had hoped that the same thing might be done here, but that it had been pointed out to him that Kalamazoo already has extensive performing arts facilities such as the 3,550-seat Miller Auditorium at Western Michigan University, the 2,577-seat midtown Chenery Auditorium owned and operated by the Kalamazoo Public Schools and the 550-seat Civic Auditorium operated by the Kalamazoo Civic Players, who also

vaudeville shows and silent movies with organ accompaniment also were presented annually until this year. city as site for a parking ramp. The trade brought Butterfield property near the airport where it constructed the Beacon.



State Theater as it appears today with its ornate Spanish courtyard interior

This is the way Kalamazoo's State Theater can be remembered if its doors close forever. These are exterior and interior views of the late Col. W. S. Butterfield's one-time vaudeville-silent film, legitimate theater and later the city's leading

movie theater which has dominated the southwest corner of Lovell and South Burdick streets for over half a century. The Spanish courtyard motif is clearly visible in the picture on the right. No longer considered viable as a movie theater,

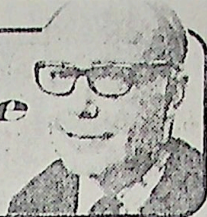
Butterfield Theater officials have confirmed that a final decision on the theater probably will be made shortly, but the outlook is not encouraging. Hopeful that some local civic or government

group can be encouraged to acquire and preserve the theater, the owners presently plan to continue its operation through the Christmas season. (See story on page A-1).

— Gazette photos (left) by Jerry Campbell and (right) by Robert Maxwell

Seat on the Aisle

By Don Carlson



There will never be another like the State

There will never be another theater in Kalamazoo that even comes close to the State. Now facing an uncertain future and likely to be closed in the next few months, southwestern Michigan's leading theater for a substantial part of its 54 years remains even in its declining years an impressive example of *the* golden era of stage and screen. Constructed at a cost of \$350,000, it couldn't be duplicated today for millions.

It was built in 1926 and 1927 when ornate architecture and decor for theaters were the vogue. In an era when "movie palaces" were opening almost daily, some were of Egyptian styling, others Chinese and Moorish.

The speciality of the State, which opened its doors on July 14, 1927, was Spanish motif of the Hispano-Italian style popular during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. It was a shining example of the best work by the Austrian-born theater architect, John Ebersson, who had created his first atmospheric vaudeville and movie house with construction of the Majestic in Houston, Tex., in 1923. Spanish courtyards were incorporated by Ebersson into the State with its sky of twinkling stars and moving clouds. Ebersson, who died in 1934 after designing over 300 theaters, also used the atmospheric design in the Grand Riviera of Detroit, Avalon and Paradise Theaters and Avalon Ballroom in Chicago.

The State's exterior is of buff tapestry brick with ornate terra-cotta trimmings, and some of the decoration — including a facade directly above the marquee — was removed in remodeling in 1964. That remodeling was carried out conscientiously, and the theater's architectural roots were not seriously disturbed, which is why the State is so unusual today.

For several years, vaudeville from the Keith Circuit and silent movies were regular fare, with orchestral accompaniment for vaudeville provided by Don Warren and orchestra. There was also a "house" organist for the theater's Barton organ.

When vaudeville died in the post-Depression years, the State began to offer many legitimate attractions with some of the biggest names in show business. The great Ethel Barrymore played there in "The Corn Is Green" and "White Oaks," Eugenie Leontovich in "Tovarich" and Clifton Webb in "The Man Who Came to Dinner.

Other touring shows included "Three Men on a Horse," "You Can't Take It With You," "Hellzapoppin" with Olsen and Johnson and "Watch on the Rhine" starring Paul Lucas. There were also musicals such as "Blossom Time" and "The Merry Widow," and the 1940s brought the "big band" — Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Russ Morgan and Ted Weems who had a vocalist by the name of Perry Como.

The end of the State may be said to have been sealed in the 1970s with the construction of theater complexes in shopping centers and suburban areas. But none of them ever will enjoy anything like the architectural distinction, popularity or fame that was the State's at its peak.

Perry Harley-Davidson, Inc.
579-581 Portage Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
Phone: (616) 342-0493



Thursday

Greetings!

I find that if I don't respond to letters right away, they don't get responded to at all!

I'm glad to hear that Betty has been bringing you up to date via the articles on the State Theatre happenings. The latest move by the court was to give Deering until July 6th to deposit \$6000 in a court escrow account if he wants a jury trial which he has asked for (of all things!) Frankly I thought that non-payment of rent was sufficient grounds for eviction but it looks as though he is going to try for the sympathy of the public in this matter. I spoke briefly with Duwain yesterday and he said he thought that Deering was probably going to put Unlimited Entertainment into bankruptcy as a stalling move so we'll see what happens!

I agree with you that Duwain Hunt is not smart enough to run an operation like this and make logical decisions that aren't based on emotion; but, what I do hope is that he is smart enough to realise this and hire someone who can do the job! Given the right arrangement, I would like the job; and I do mean the right arrangement. The whole situation would have to be funded adequately for at least 3 to 5 years with an endowment guaranteed to run it if it doesn't hold its own. Of course there would be no taxes if a non-profit organization ran it but there would be the maintainance and utilities which are no small item(s). I would like to get out of here after 20 years and I do think that I am qualified for the job (maybe over qualified!) but the trick is to find something to do that I can still continue the organ business also. This type of arrangement doesn't come along every day! The next logical question that I have been asking myself is - could I work with (notice I said with, not for!) Duwain. The answer is- yes, if the money and the arrangements were attractive enough. At any rate, all this is conjecture at this point and it is anyone's guess how this whole mess is going to come out.

I was sorry to hear of your neighbor's death. I know you were both fond of her and I'm sure you will miss her. I hope you get some new neighbors who are as nice when it comes to disposing of the property.

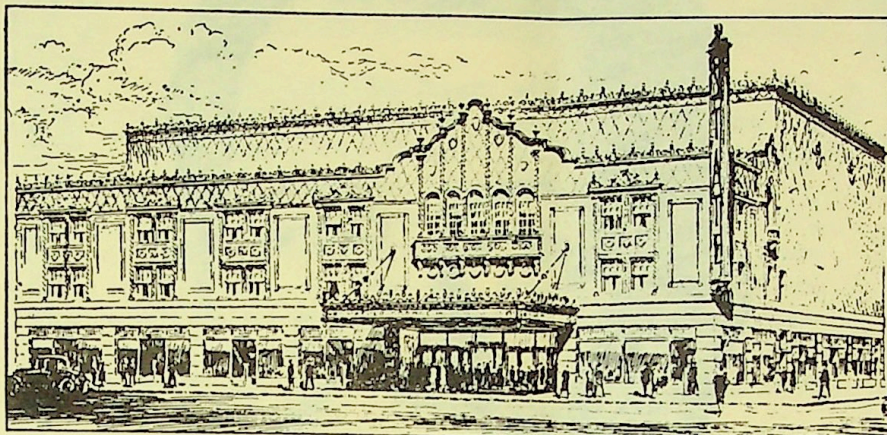
Sounds as though you're going to be busy in Detroit again for a while. Hope all goes well with that moving.

All for today,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill".

State Theatre

KALAMAZOO MICHIGAN



STATE THEATRE VAUDEVILLE ASSOCIATION

WKZO⁵⁹⁰
RADIO

PRESENTS:

DONALD O'CONNOR

& 6 VAUDEVILLE ACTS

JUNE 24TH & 25TH

A LIVE ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED

BY DON DILLON III

THE STARLIGHT STEPPERS CHORUSLINE

ORGANIST JIM LAUCK

AT THE BARTON PIPE ORGAN

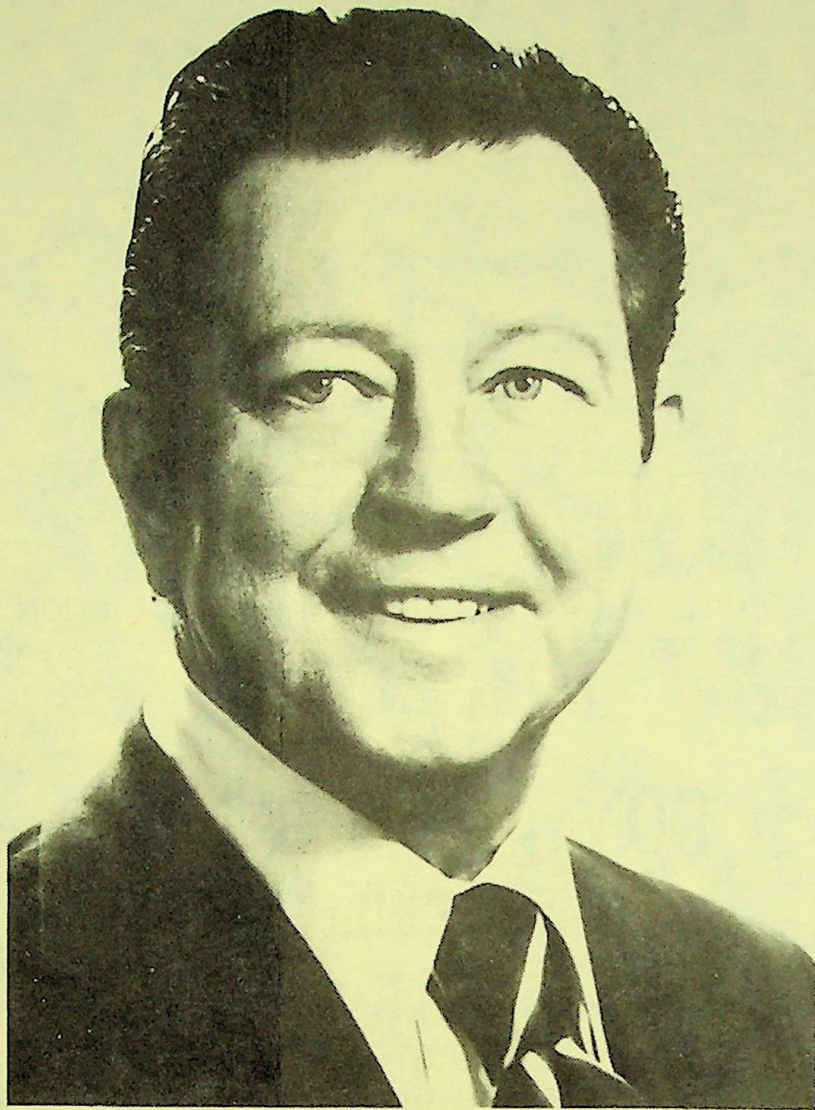
A CLASSIC SILENT FILM &

TRADITIONAL SING-A-LONG

AND

MC - WKZO'S JOHN MCKAY

BOTH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION



DONALD O'CONNOR

ADVANCE TICKET INFORMATION:

We are offering a special discount on advance tickets for this show to our patrons. Main Floor & Mezzanine (lower balcony) reserve seat tickets are \$8.00 for Adults and \$5.00 for Children under 12 and Senior Citizens. All upper balcony seats are \$5.00 General admission. This is a \$2.00 per ticket discount. Tickets go on sale to the general public on June 1st., so order you tickets now to get the **BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE!** We're holding them for you!

What is the Vaudeville Association?

The Vaudeville Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and use of the State Theatre, an atmospheric movie palace in downtown Kalamazoo, built in 1927.

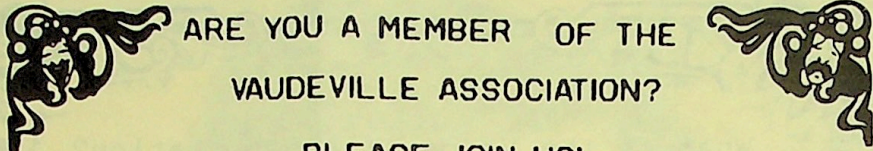
We began by organizing and planning the 50th Anniversary celebration in July 1977. We have continued to work to make the citizens of Kalamazoo aware of what an architectural gem the State Theatre is, and how important it has been in our entertainment and cultural heritage.

We spearheaded the "Save the State" campaign which resulted in local entrepreneurs purchasing the building in the fall of 1985 for restoration and revitalization.

What is the Association doing now the Theatre is Saved?

We are continuing to sponsor and produce live professional and amateur stage productions, screening of classic films and Organ concerts on the Theatre's Barton Pipe Organ, which we have helped to maintain and use for the last 10 years.

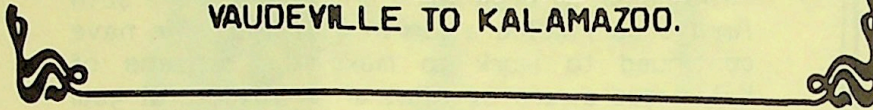
We feel that saving the building is not enough. We must use it and make it available for all of our citizens to enjoy. We are dedicated to preserving the heritage of the theatre by sponsoring good professional and amateur entertainment for Senior Citizens, Children and Families, in the tradition of Vaudeville, which once dominated the State Theatre's stage.



ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE
VAUDEVILLE ASSOCIATION?

PLEASE JOIN US!

YOUR FINANCIAL GIFT WILL BE USED BY THE ASSOC.
TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO BRING GOOD
PROFESSIONAL ENTERTAINMENT FOR SENIORS,
FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN THE TRADITION OF
VAUDEVILLE TO KALAMAZOO.



Membership/Contribution

Fiscal Year: October 1 - September 30

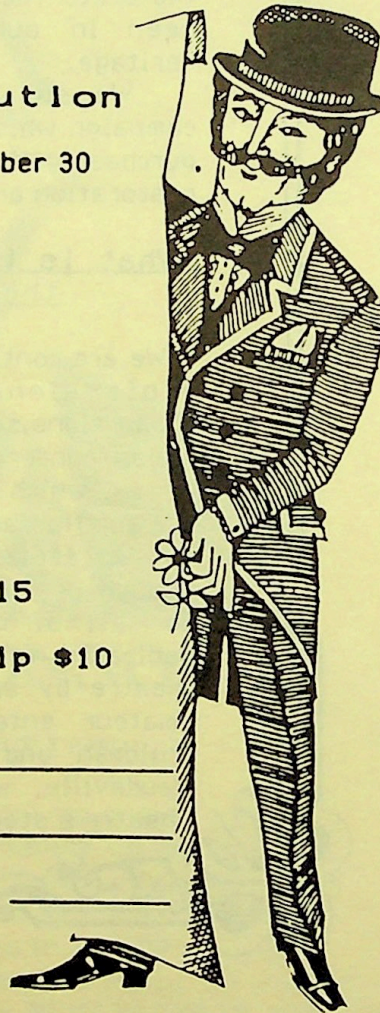
Check Category:

- Angel \$500 - \$1000
- Patron \$100 - \$499
- Donor \$50 - \$99
- Family Membership \$25
- Individual Membership \$15
- Senior/Student Membership \$10

NAME _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____



Dear Friends,

As a valuable and interested patron of the Vaudeville Association we look to you for support of the project dear to our hearts..the State Theatre Vaudeville Show.

It is important for each of us to recognize the part our heritage plays in our everyday lives. It is the legacy we live with, share with our family and friends and bequeath to future generations. It is particularly significant this year as the State Theatre is celebrating its 60th anniversary of continuous operation and the Vaudeville Association is celebrating its 10th anniversary. While your patronage and support are always appreciated, this endeavor cannot continue without financial backing to ensure the on-going process of restoration and preservation of good family entertainment at the historic State Theatre.

This year we are presenting a unique opportunity for those who would become Patrons for the 1988 Vaudeville Show. For a \$100.00 contribution you will be designated a "Patron '88", receive two free tickets to the Vaudeville Show on June 25, 1988 with special seating and recognition in the program as a Patron and an invitation to join Mr. Donald O'Connor and the Vaudeville Show company at a party following the performance.

By taking part in this worthwhile endeavor you will purchase a part of the past for the future, commit yourself in a viable manner to the importance of heritage and join a select group of individuals who value history and are proud to contribute to an community asset.

Send your check for Patronage '88 to Mrs. J. Williams, 3470 Oronoco, Kalamazoo, MI 49004 and your name will be added to the list of those already committed to positive action.

Sincerely,
Vaudeville Association

Duane Hunt
Duane Hunt, Executive Director

Vaudeville Association TICKET ORDER FORM

FOR ALL SHOWS, mail to: Vaudeville Association Box Office, P.O. Box 649, Comstock, MI 49041. Make checks payable to The Vaudeville Association and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Orders recieved with less than one week's time before an event, or without a return envelope, will be held at the box office for pickup before the performance.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Charge my MasterCard/Visa
(Minimum charge amount \$12.00.
Charges will not be submitted until
order is filled.)

Payment enclosed

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

EVENT	DATE	No. of Tickets	Ticket Price	Total

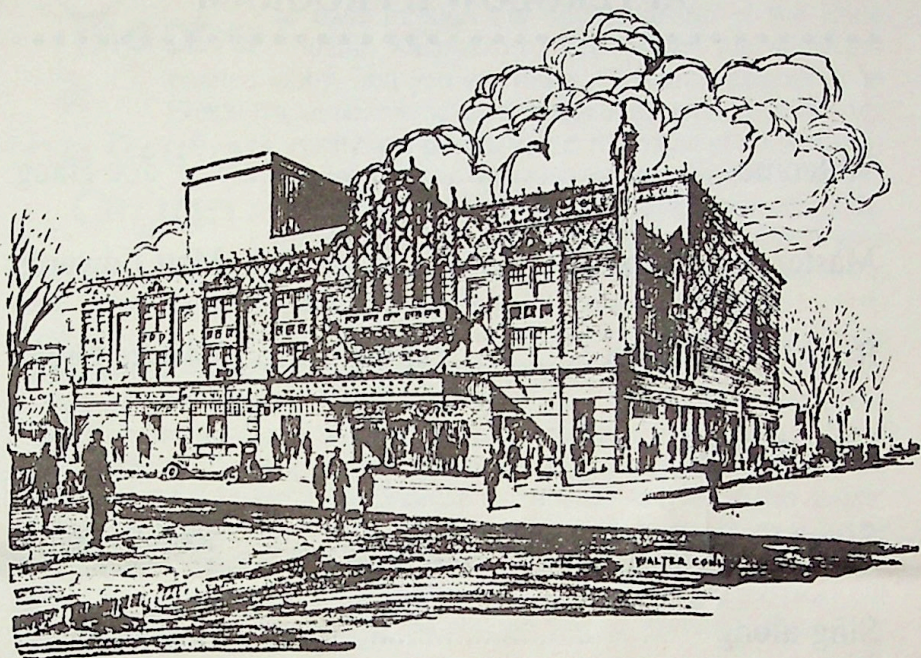
Advance Main Floor & Mezzanine
Adult Reserved Tickets \$8.00
Seniors & Children (UNDER 12) \$5.00
All Balcony Tickets \$5.00

State Theatre Vaudeville
P.O. Box 649
Comstock, MI 49041

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Comstock, MI 49041
Permit No. #4

State Theatre

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN



American Theatre Organ Society's
Southwest Michigan Chapter

PRESENTS:

ROB RICHARDS

at the

Barton Theatre Pipe Organ

July 8, 1989

7:00 P.M.

AFTERGLOW II PROGRAM

.....

Welcome	Joe Haug
Master of Ceremonies	Matt Edwards
ROB RICHARDS	at the Barton Theatre Organ
Intermission	
Silent Comedy Film	Rob Richards
Sing-along	Italian singer John Giardina, Leader
	Dorothy Butela, Slide Projectionist
Closing Remarks	Ken Butela
Finale	Rob Richards

the State Theatre & the Barton Organ

If you ever dreamed of relaxing in a romantic Spanish courtyard and being entertained as if you were royalty . . . then on July 14, 1927, your dream came true. Your expenses would surely be small, your pleasure great, and you would only have to pass through the ornate facade of the State Theatre, Kalamazoo. On through the richly appointed lobby, and you are there. Theatre designer John Ebersson's "atmospheric" design has lifted you from everyday reality and placed you in the midst of an Hispano-Italian fantasy. The terra-cotta, tapestries, mirrors, paintings, wrought iron, statuary, colonades of arches, balconies, and cove-lit niches have assaulted your senses and literally taken your breathe away. In the auditorium the twinkling stars and gently drifting clouds soothe you as you are entertained by first-class attractions beneath the tile-roofed proscenium. Vaudeville, stage shows, dance revues, movies (silent and talkies), drama, opera, ballet, big bands; it has all been presented here. . . . Although, today some appointments have been removed and painters have changed the decor in some areas of the building, the State's virtually intact auditorium is still reminiscent of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. And within this auditorium is still another breath-taker. . . . The house lights are dimmed, and a most magnificent chorus of music bursts forth from ornate grilles on each side of the courtyard. A golden spotlight pierces the night sky and picks out the rising artist and console of the Golden Voiced Barton Theatre Pipe Organ.

The State's 3 manual - 11 rank theatre organ was played on opening night by Al Gillickson. He was making a guest appearance away from his usual stint at the Capitol Theatre. The first House Organist, Edith Ehrens, entertained patrons for the first year and was replaced by Clarence Leverenz in 1928. Even though silent films gradually faded away, Mr. Leverenz was featured for sing-alongs until 1934 when Bud Taylor took over until 1937. The Barton then fell silent into disuse as a regular attraction until 1950 when Bud Taylor returned. Mr. Taylor played intermissions until 1951. Again the organ fell silent and deteriorated heavily. 1961 brought John Catherwood and William Mollema to the State volunteering to rejuvenate the Barton. When once again playable, they alternated playing intermissions on Saturday or Sunday evenings. This continued until 1972. In November, 1971, organist Stan Kann from the Fox Theatre, St. Louis, Missouri, accompanied the silent film classic "The Phantom of the Opera". Since the spring of 1972, the Barton had not been heard publicly as a part of the State's theatre presentations. That is, until the 50th Anniversary celebration of the State Theatre. In addition to many of the theatre's staging resources being utilized, the Barton accompanied the classic "The Gold Rush" starring Charlie Chaplin.

While the theatre pipe organ, in general, has been experiencing a revival in theatres, restaurants, and other public buildings all across the country, Kalamazoo is indeed fortunate to have a theatre organ still in its original installation. The State Theatre's Barton renaissance has been the work of John Catherwood, William Mollema, Bob MacNeur, John Ferguson, Max Brown, and Robert Pratt. Their unselfish labor is greatly appreciated and apparent as you listen to the Golden Voiced Barton today.

The rejuvenation continues under the supervision of James Lauck, local organ builder and technician, who is being assisted by members of the Southwest Michigan Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

The organ has been played in recent years by national artists including Father Jim Miller, Dennis James, Donna Parker, Ron Rhode, and Charlie Balogh. During this period the Barton has also been played by a number of Southwest-Michigan organists including Dale Zieger, William Mollema, James Lauck, Matt Edwards, Betty Darling, John Catherwood, Ken Butela, and Richard Barden.

The Barton originally had 11 ranks controlled from its ornate 3 manual console. Presently, there are 13 ranks playing. Below is a list of the organ's ranks of pipes, percussions and effects, and all of their locations:

MAIN CHAPTER

Tuba Horn
 Open Diapason
 Concert Flute
 Gamba
 * Vox Humana
 Chrysoglott

TRAPS

Snare Drum
 Bass Drum
 Cymbal
 Wood Block
 Castanets
 Tambourine
 Thunder
 Bird Call

SOLO CHAMBER

Tibia Clausa
 Vox Humana
 Clarinet
 Viol D'Orchestre
 Viol Celeste
 Oboe Horn
 Kinura
 * English Post Horn
 Xylophone
 Chimes

* Ranks added

CREDITS



Program Director Ken Butela

Lobby Organist Matt Edwards

Stage Manager Walt Britten

Assistant Stage Manager Don Welsh

House Manager Ione Higa

Promotional Designer Dorothy Butela

Publicity and Ticket Coordinator Janet Corstange

Barton Organ Restoration Manager James Lauck

Barton Organ Restoration Assistants Don Welsh
 Bob Noyes
 D. Maynard
 Joe Haug
 Bonnie Haug
 Janet Corstange
 Ken Butela

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

James Lauck, Organ Builder and Technician

Motor City Theatre Organ Society, Inc.

Marge Muethel

Dorothy VanSteenkiste

The State Theatre-

Roger and Jere Hinman, Owners

Kevin Brady, Theatre Manager

Keyboard World, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, for
furnishing the Yamaha organ console in the lobby

The Cathedral Church of Christ the King and
Cathedral Organist, Donalee Williams

Ushers and ticket takers

The following music stores for assisting in
promoting ticket sales -

Keyboard World, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids

Treva Reed Music

Don Dillon's Music Center

Believe in Music, Kalamazoo

The Printmill, Inc.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN CHAPTER OFFICERS

President

Joe Haug

Vice-President / Program Chairman

Ken Butela

Secretary / Treasurer

Bonnie Haug

Front cover illustration from Opening Night Program, July 14, 1927.

Final curtain may be near for the State

By DON W. CARLSON
Gazette Entertainment Editor

Time appears to be running out for Kalamazoo's 54-year-old State Theater, the last of outstate Michigan's regularly operating "movie palaces."

The Gazette has learned that the future of the opulent downtown playhouse is under final consideration by W.S. Butterfield Theaters Inc., which has owned and operated the 1,300-seat house since it first opened on July 14, 1927.

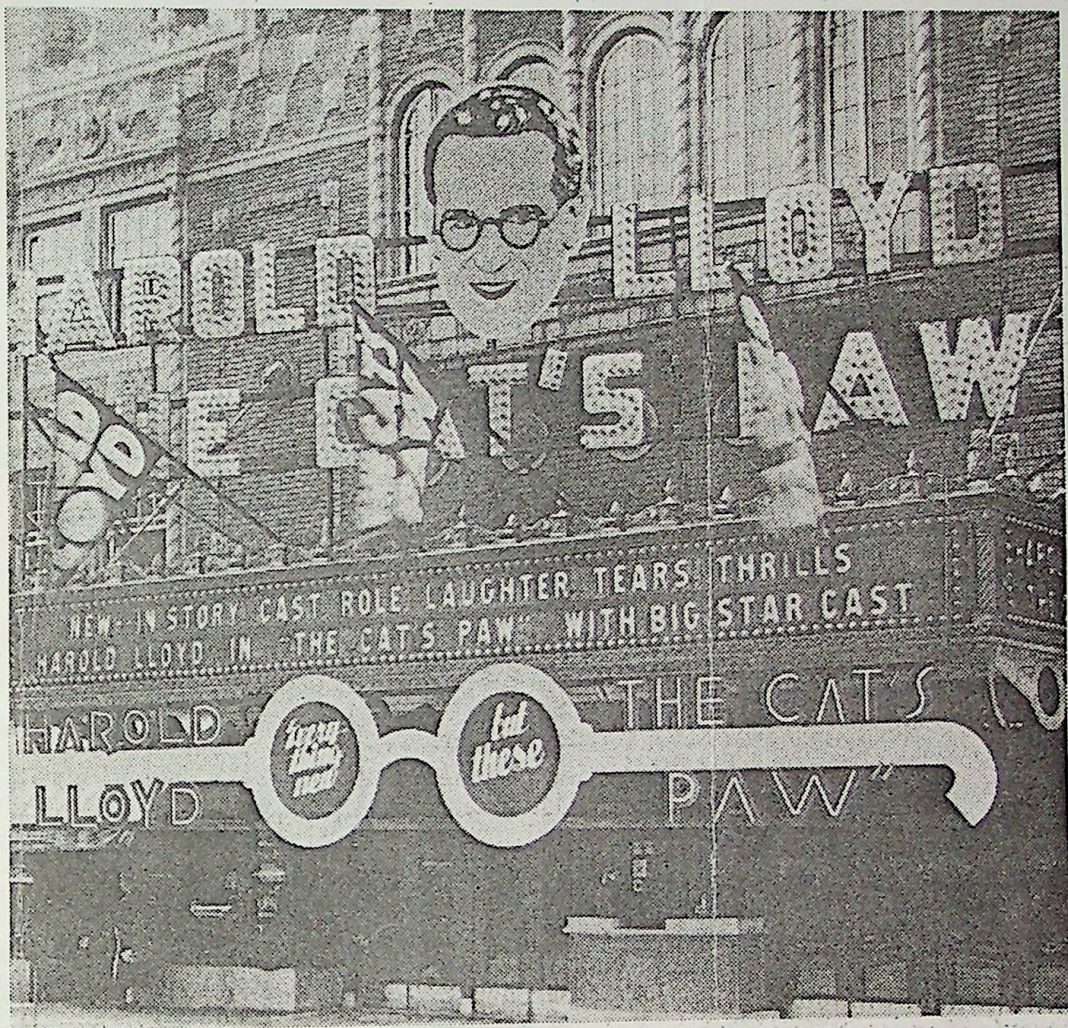
There won't be another

(See Page C-1)

The firm hopes to dispose of the property, which it believes is no longer economically viable as a movie theater, and would prefer to sell it to a government, civic or non-profit group.

Its purpose would be to preserve the elaborate interior decor of the theater, which remains to this day one of the leading Midwest examples of the "atmospheric" school of design created by architect John Ebersson.

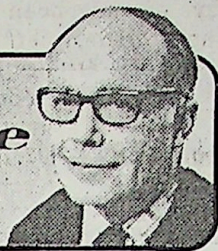
Lacking a sale in the near future, Butterfield probably will close the theater and then seek to dispose of the building, which contains eight stores and a number of offices on three floors. Or
(See STATE on Page A-8)



STATE THEATER WENT ALL-OUT TO ADVERTISE A HAROLD LLOYD COMEDY
This was in the early 1930s; the exterior was remodeled in 1964

Seat on the Aisle

By Don Carlson



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