

STEEL CITY

2014 CONCLAVE THEATRE TOUR

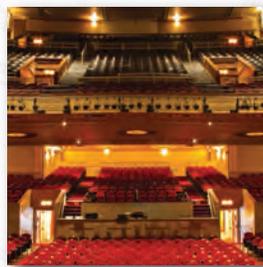
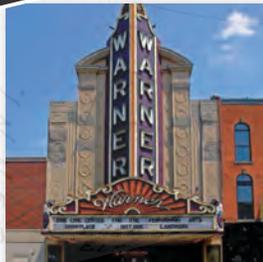
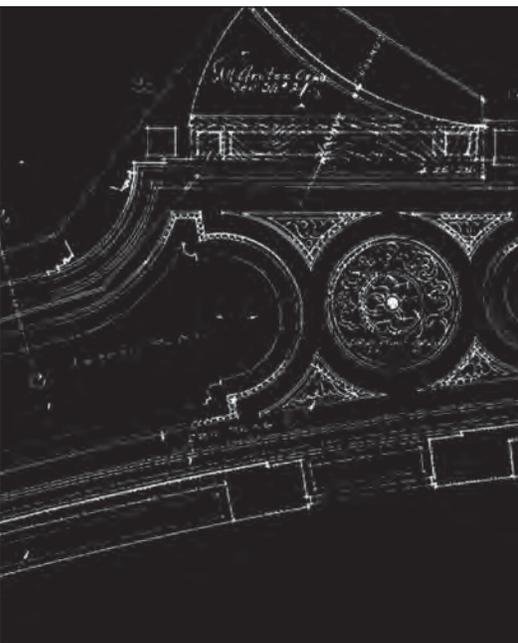


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CITY OF PITTSBURGH

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Office of Mayor William Peduto

Dear Friends,

I am thrilled that the Theatre Historical Society of America has selected Pittsburgh for its 2014 Conclave. Pittsburgh is a beautiful city, rich with arts and culture. Thanks to a legacy of community investment from well-known philanthropists – such as Carnegie, Frick, Heinz and a host of others – Pittsburgh is consistently recognized for its lively arts and cultural scene.

We are home to one of the nation’s most vibrant Cultural Districts that is thriving with beautifully restored venues. From the world-renowned Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which performs in the elegant Heinz Hall, to the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Dance Council and PNC Broadway Series all performing in the beautifully restored Benedum Center for the Performing Arts – and from contemporary and classical plays performed by the Pittsburgh Public Theater at the O’Reilly Theater, and concerts and plays at the beautiful Byham Theater, to the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, the Cultural District is most unique.

Take a ride on the historic inclines from Mt. Washington for a view ranked among the most beautiful in America. Stroll through the historic Market Square – a newly designed, European-style plaza, and head to Point State Park, the only state park located in an urban setting.

As you experience Pittsburgh, you will find that it is a revitalized city that has been transformed through job creation, impressive neighborhood development, and a thriving and innovative high-tech economy. Pittsburgh today is a growing city, a younger city, and an educated city. Now is truly an exciting time to be in Pittsburgh!

Once again, welcome! I hope that you enjoy your stay in Pittsburgh – a city that keeps surprising people from all over the world. Best wishes for a great meeting to all THS Conclave attendees!

Sincerely,

William Peduto

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Will Peduto".

Mayor
City of Pittsburgh

512 CITY-COUNTY BUILDING 414 GRANT STREET PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15219

Phone: 412-255-2626 ■ Fax: 412-255-8602





Welcome THS neighbors!

For those of you who have never been to Pittsburgh, I predict that you are going to be pleasantly surprised. Once known as the “Smokey City,” for its industrial past, Pittsburgh today, is that no longer. The cultural renaissance of Pittsburgh began in the mid-1950s and continues to this day through the activities of organizations like the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Some of the theaters you will be visiting are located in the downtown Cultural District. Thanks to the leadership activities of the Cultural Trust, led by President, Kevin McMahan, the area has been transformed with theaters, cabarets, art galleries, restaurants and other complimentary venues that have transformed downtown Pittsburgh into a local and tourism destination for entertainment.

Not just a cultural mecca, Pittsburgh is also home to the Steelers, Pirates and Penguins, along with the major corporations, H. J. Heinz Company, ALCOA, PNC Bank, Bayer Pharmaceuticals and United States Steel.

Pittsburgh has been called home by the following entertainers over the years, Gene Kelly, Shirley Jones, Michael Keaton, Zachary Quinto, Adolphe Menjou, Della Reese, Perry Como and Bobby Vinton, (from nearby Canonsburg) and golfer Arnold Palmer, (from nearby Latrobe.) Likewise, Andy Warhol, George S. Kauman and August Wilson called the ‘burg home. Pittsburgh is also the filming location of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*.

I grew up in Pittsburgh, and since I was an only grandchild, my grandfather

would always take me to theaters downtown. One weekend, it was a Roy Rogers double feature at the Barry Theater. The next, we would go and see a lavish M-G-M picture such as *Annie Get Your Gun* or *Showboat* at the Loew’s Penn (now Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts.) I remember another weekend we went to the Fulton, (now Byham) to see the latest Betty Grable musical, needless to say, my grandfather liked Betty Grable. We even saw Jerry Lewis, in person at the Stanley (now Benedum Center for the Performing Arts) before the showing of his first film without Dean Martin!

However, it was the experience at age seven, that changed my life—I saw my first play. It was a touring version of *Harvey* starring Joe E. Brown that played at the old Nixon Theater (which sadly was torn down to make way for the ALCOA building.)

I remember a sea of red velvet, polished brass and crystal chandeliers. It was said that the Old Nixon was the most opulent theater ever built in Pittsburgh. The Nixon’s stage was so large that it could accommodate a treadmill that helped provide the illusion of a chariot race in the stage production of *Ben-Hur*!

After the matinee of *Harvey*, I came home and immediately created my own version of *Harvey* in our basement. I assembled makeshift scenery and played all the parts. I knew then that I wanted to work in some form of theater. Many years later, I followed that dream and attended the Pittsburgh Playhouse School of the Theater and the University of Pittsburgh.

One day in 1967, I found myself being interviewed by Fred Rogers for a position on the new children’s program, *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. He hired me to be his production assistant and to play the part of the Speedy Delivery man, Mr. McFeely. That was 47 years ago and I am still delivering in *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*!

As we all gather here in Pittsburgh this year, I want to thank you, my fellow THS members, for all you do to support the work of the Theatre Historical Society of America. Together, we need to share the legacy of America’s historic theatres with the next generation and you are an integral part of that.

Although I won’t be able to attend every function this week, I will be at several and I hope I can meet all of my fellow members. Please say hello to me and share your theater stories—I’d love to hear them.

WELCOME AND SPEEDY DELIVERY!



-DAVID NEWELL
(AKA MR. MCFEELY)

(P.S. I will have photos of Mister Rogers and Mr. McFeely if you would like to have some to take back home to your neighborhood!)



Pictured. Nickelodeon Marker on Smithfield Street. Image courtesy James W. Kastner.

About Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Each city in America has their own tale to tell, and Pittsburgh's rise in our industrial history is no different. Its story of fortune and economic opportunity shine light on the history of the boom days of construction and the ongoing legacy that philanthropy plays today.

The region that is now southwestern Pennsylvania has drawn mankind from its earliest explorations. First settled over 16,000 years ago (as documented at Meadowcroft Rockshelter), the area was attractive to Native American tribes who led hunter-gatherer and agricultural lives. The coming of Europeans likely wiped out Pittsburgh's original natives; however, Iroquois and Algonquian tribes from the east moved in, along with traders and settlers. Both British and French realized the strategic value of the wilderness location at the forks of the Ohio, a meeting place to trade for furs with the Indians. After much contention (much of it involving young George Washington), the British established Fort Pitt at the Point. A small village known as "Pittsborough" sprouted around it.



The region's economy was largely agricultural through most of the 1700s, and its people fiercely independent. When the federal government attempted to tax local whiskey production, the new United States faced its first Constitutional challenge from Pennsylvania farmers during the Whiskey Rebellion. Because travel was difficult over the Allegheny Mountains, Pittsburghers learned to produce goods themselves. The largest industry emerging in the 1800s was boat building, followed by glass manufacturing.

Pittsburgh became known as the "Gateway to the West." Westward travel was even easier after 1811, when Robert Fulton launched his steamboat, the Pittsburgh-built New Orleans. The Pennsylvania Mainline Canal reached its terminus in Pittsburgh in 1830 and the Pennsylvania Railroad arrived in the 1850s, further facilitating migration. Pittsburgh was surrounded with reserves of coal, oil, clay, limestone, and natural gas. To supply iron for the War of 1812, foundries, rolling mills, and forges sprang up, and with their growth, Pittsburgh expanded and incorporated as a city in 1816.

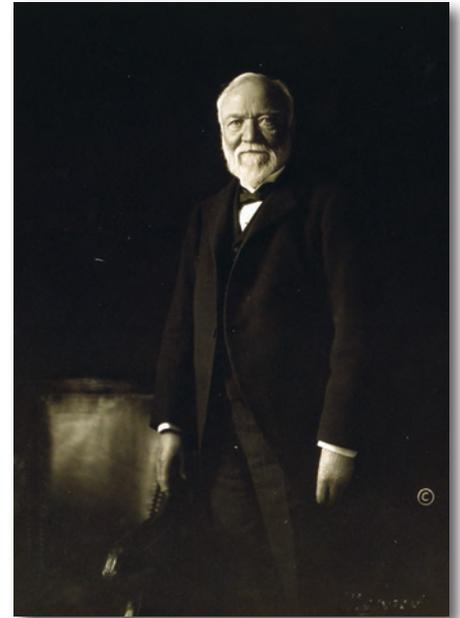
Pittsburgh earned the nickname "Smoky City" due to manufacturing, steamboats, and household heating, all fueled with coal. Other factories flourished as well, including textile mills. In the 1860s, Pittsburgh was the world's largest refiner of petroleum products and supplied much of the armament for the Civil War.

In 1875, industrialist Andrew Carnegie brought inexpensive, mass-produced

steel to the area—a revolution that continues to shape heritage and culture. Carnegie partnered with Henry Clay Frick, a self-made millionaire in processing industrial coke, an essential steel-making ingredient. Their partnership soured after the infamous Homestead Steel Strike, a lock-out that ended in 10 deaths and many injuries. Still, the Carnegie and Frick names are synonymous with philanthropic causes in Pittsburgh. Equally important were employers such as Westinghouse, Alcoa, Gulf, and Heinz.

In the late 1800s, Pittsburgh also became a banking center to keep up with the booming economy. Most people continued to live, shop, and worship in the self-sufficient communities where they worked, and the region retains distinctive neighborhoods, many still reflecting varied ethnic roots. A boom in social programs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries launched many hospitals and attempts to clean the city, but was hindered by a devastating flood in 1936, the Great Depression, and World Wars I and II.

After World War II, Pittsburgh concentrated on giving itself a make-over, including river cleanup and air pollution controls, and new building projects under the umbrella of Renaissance I. In 1970, the last baseball game was played at Forbes Field, while Three Rivers Stadium, along with the U.S. Steel Building, were completed. By the late 1970s, Pittsburgh's reign as the Steel City neared its end. Unemployment soared as the city leaders scrambled to reinvent the economy on a new base of service, health, education fields, high-tech, riverfront development; and tourism.

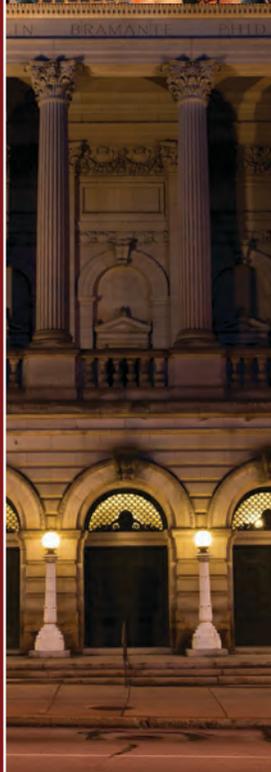


Renaissance II through the 1980s brought the city many of its signature skyline buildings such as Mellon Bank Center, One Oxford Center, and PPG Plaza. Pittsburgh today stands at the forefront of medical research and computer and robotics technologies, as well as a center for arts and culture, while retaining a sense of pride in its coal, steel, and ethnic heritage. §

*History of Pittsburgh
courtesy the Heinz History
Center, heinzhistorycenter.org.*

*Pictured:
(opposite page)
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1902, from the Library of Congress, Prints &
Photographs Division, [reproduction number, LC-DIG-pga-03733]
(above)
Andrew Carnegie, Industrialist and Philanthropist, image from the
Library of Congress, [reproduction number, LC-USZC2-6261]*

DAILY TOUR SCHEDULE



PREGLOW | MONDAY JUNE 23

Coaches depart the Omni William Penn at 8 am. Attendees will split into two smaller groups and visit Fallingwater and Kentuck Knob in alternating groups.

- 9:30am Arrive at Fallingwater or Kentuck Knob
- 11:30am Depart Fallingwater or Kentuck Knob
- 11:45am Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania and Lunch
Enjoy lunch on your own and explore the picturesque town of Ohiopyle.
- 1:15pm Depart Ohiopyle
- 2:00pm Arrive at Kentuck Knob or Fallingwater Tour
- 3:30pm Depart for Pittsburgh
- 5:00pm Arrive at William Penn Hotel

TUESDAY JUNE 24

Registration & Welcome in the lobby of the Omni William Penn Hotel from 1 - 6:30 pm.

- 2:00pm Downtown Walking Tour
Explore downtown Pittsburgh on this docent led tour.
- 6:00pm New attendees reception
Meet & mingle with other first-time attendees. Bob & Dolores Hope Room, Omni William Penn
- 7:00pm Reception & Silent Auction
Kick off Conclave with new and old friends at this opening night reception. Place a bid or two on items in the Silent Auction. Bob & Dolores Hope Room, Omni William Penn.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 25

Coaches depart the Omni William Penn at 8 am.

- 8:30am Arrive Oaks Theater, Oakmont
- 9:00am Depart
- 9:45am Arrive Casino Theatre, Vandergrift
- 10:45am Depart
- 11:30am Arrive Palace Theatre, Greensburg
- 12:10pm Depart
- 12:15pm Intermission
Lunch at the Supper Club, Greensburg
- 1:05pm Depart
- 1:25pm Arrive Geyer Performing Arts Center, Scottdale
- 1:55pm Depart
- 2:15pm Arrive Edwin S. Porter Theater, Connellsville
Annual Membership Meeting at the Edwin S. Porter Theater
- 2:15pm Depart
- 3:05pm Arrive State Theatre Center for the Arts, Uniontown
- 3:30pm Depart
- 4:15pm Arrive Carnegie Library Music Hall of Homestead, Homestead
- 5:00pm Depart for Omni William Penn
- 5:45pm Arrive at Omni William Penn
- 6:05pm Gateway Clipper Riverboat Tour (À la carte)
Group departs from Omni William Penn, Grant Street Lobby at 6:30pm for dinner on your own in Station Square, or transit map included in your welcome kit. Gateway Clipper boards at 7:45pm on the dot.
- 8:00pm

THURSDAY JUNE 26

Coaches depart the Omni William Penn at 8:30 am.

9:10am Arrive Strand Theater, Zelenople
9:40am Depart
10:20am Arrive Guthrie Theatre, Grove City
11:00am Depart
11:40am Arrive Academy Theatre, Meadville
12:10pm Depart
12:30pm Intermission
Lunch at the Riverside Inn, Cambridge Springs
1:15pm Depart
2:00pm Arrive Warner Theatre, Erie
2:45pm Depart
4:15pm Arrive Warner Cascade Theatre, New Castle
5:00pm Depart for Omni William Penn
6:00pm Arrive back at Omni William Penn
8:00pm Pittsburgh CLO's Footloose (À la carte)
Group departs from Omni William Penn at 7:15pm, or walking map included in your welcome kit.

FRIDAY JUNE 27

Walking tour of downtown Pittsburgh. Tour leaves the Omni William Penn at 9 am.

9:05am Arrive Nickelodeon Marker, Smithfield Street
Photo opportunity only.
9:15am Depart
9:30am Arrive Byham Theater
10:30am Depart
10:35am Arrive Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts
Annual group photo taken at Heinz Hall
11:35am Depart
11:40am Arrive Benedum Center for the Performing Arts
12:40am Depart
12:45pm Intermission
Lunch & Pittsburgh Cultural Trust presentation at CLO Cabaret Theater.
1:45pm Depart
1:50pm Arrive O'Reilly Theater
2:30pm Depart
2:35pm Arrive Harris Theater
3:05pm Depart
3:15pm Arrive Warner Centre
3:35pm Depart
3:45pm Arrive at Omni William Penn
7:00pm Andy Warhol Museum (À la carte)
Group departs from Omni William Penn at 6:30pm, or walking map included in your welcome kit.

SATURDAY JUNE 28

Coaches depart the Omni William Penn at 8:30 am.

8:45am Arrive Kelly Strayhorn Theater, East Liberty
9:15am Depart
9:20am Arrive McGonigle Theater at Central Catholic High School, Oakland
10:00am Depart
10:15am Arrive Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall, Oakland
10:45am Depart
10:55am Arrive Charity Randall Theatre, Stephen Foster Memorial, Oakland
11:25am Depart
11:30am Arrive Carnegie Music Hall of Oakland, Oakland
12:10pm Depart
1:00pm Arrive Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall, Carnegie
12:30pm Intermission
Lunch at the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall
1:00pm Depart
1:35pm Arrive Hollywood Theater, Dormont
2:05pm Depart
2:25pm Arrive Roxian Theatre, McKees Rocks
3:00pm Depart
3:15pm Arrive Garden Theater, Pittsburgh
Photo opportunity only.
3:30pm Depart
3:45pm Arrive Granada Theater, Pittsburgh
4:15pm Depart for Omni William Penn
4:30pm Arrive at Omni William Penn
7:00pm Closing Banquet
Join us for the last official activity of the week as we present our Annual Awards and recap the week. Bob & Dolores Hope Room, Omni William Penn.

AFTERGLOW | SUNDAY JUNE 29 (À la carte)

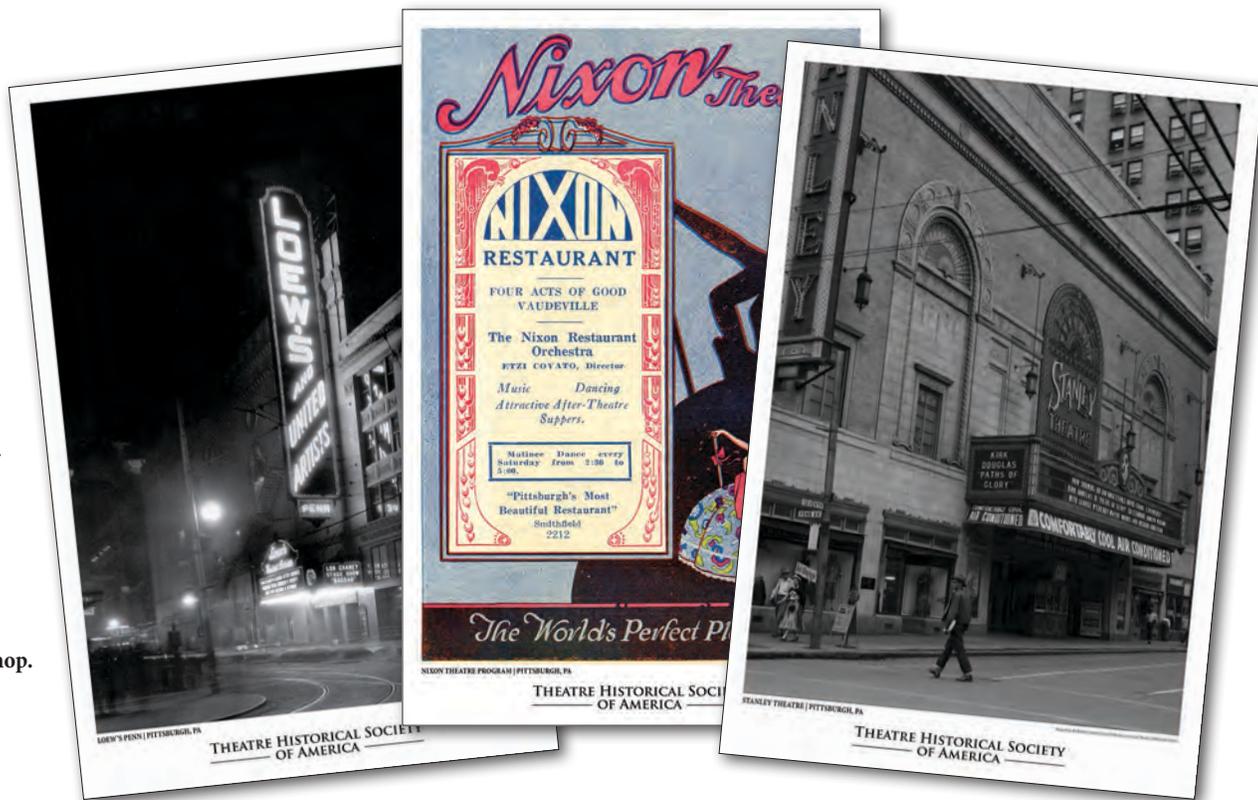
Coaches depart the Omni William Penn at 9:15 am.

10:00am Arrive at Pennsylvania Trolley Museum
12:00pm Lunch at Pennsylvania Trolley Museum
12:45pm Depart
1:00pm Visit to Sarris Candies Shop
1:30pm Depart
2:30pm Arrive at Kennywood Park
6:00pm Early Departure Kennywood
9:00pm Late Departure Kennywood

Pictured:
(left column, top to bottom) Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, Pittsburgh; Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall, Oakland; Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, Pittsburgh. (right column, top to bottom): Warner Theatre, Erie; Academy Theatre, Meadville; Carnegie Music Hall of Oakland, Oakland. Images courtesy each tour venue.

Take the memories home with you!

Order 20"x 30" poster-sized photo prints of Pittsburgh theatres from the American Theatre Architecture Archive online at historictheatres.org/shop.



The Saenger Theatre, New Orleans

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Shakespeare, The Tempest

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The Curtis Collection
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
David Newell
Demi Marie Barrett
Lloyd Huffman
Conclave Planning Committee

and all the venue owners, operators and staff that assisted in making the 2014 Conclave Theatre Tour successful.

Thank you for sharing Pittsburgh's theatre history with us.

Oaks Theater

Oakmont, Pennsylvania

OAKS THEATER

310 Allegheny River Boulevard
Oakmont, Pennsylvania

OPENED: November 18, 1938

ARCHITECT: Victor A. Rigaumont

CAPACITY: 700 (original) 430 (current)

The Oaks Theater opened on November 18th, 1938. At the time, it was one of two movie theaters in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, both owned by Steven Rodnenok. Rodnenok had moved to Oakmont some years before, and had taken over the Lehigh Theater, Oakmont's first theater, from its owner. He was constantly making upgrades and changes to that theater, but could never reach the point where he was entirely happy with it.

Out of this frustration, the idea to build the Oaks was born. He wanted to build a theater from the ground up, so he could make it just the way that he had wanted, instead of having to retrofit an already operational theater, like the Lehigh. The Oaks was designed to be the most current, and up to date theater in the area, with one of its biggest features being that it had air conditioning. It was billed as a "truly modern theater." The architect of the theater was Victor A. Rigaumont, who had designed several other theaters in the Pittsburgh area. Material was purchased from local services, including bricks used for the building purchased from Kittanning Brick, in Kittanning, Pennsylvania. The theater's seating capacity was close to 700 at the time of the opening, and now seats 430.

The opening of the theater was a big event in Oakmont. There was a whole night of ceremonies planned for its opening, kicking off with a parade on the main street of town that the theater sits on. The opening night feature was a film called *Letter of In-*



*tro*duction starring Adolphe Menjou. The Oaks became the popular entertainment spot in Oakmont, especially known for its children matinees.

The first major overhaul to the theater occurred in 1965, when Rodnenok updated the marquee to a more current look. He also moved the ticket booth inside the lobby, from its original location, outside the entry way of the theater. The theater stayed in the Rodnenok family for many years, passing from father to son, until the family sold the theater to the Mohatra family in 1985, when it became a second run theater.

The Mohatra family owned the theater until 2002, when the current owners purchased it. They lived in the Oakmont area, and had gone to the theater as kids. When they heard that there was a chance that the theater could be turned into something else, they purchased it to keep the Oaks tradition alive. They renovated the lobby, and restored it to a closer approximation to what the lobby had originally looked like, along with some audio and visual upgrades, and other cosmetic tweaks.

Today, the theater is again a first run theater, showcasing new and current releases, as well as classics, cult classics, and retro audience favorites.

For 75 years, the Oaks Theater has been a mainstay of the Oakmont community. It holds a special place in the hearts of many, and is fondly remembered. At a time when so many small theaters are closing, and the ones that are opening are cold and impersonal experiences, the Oaks strives to keep the idea and experience of the neighborhood theater alive. §

*History and images courtesy
Oaks Theater, theoakstheater.com.*

Casino Theatre

Vandergrift, Pennsylvania

CASINO THEATRE

145 Lincoln Avenue

Vandergrift, Pennsylvania

OPENED: June 8, 1900

ARCHITECT: James Allison

CAPACITY: 100 (original) 483 (current)

The Casino Theatre was built in 1900 in the Greek Revival Style. The theatre's most distinctive and historic feature is its temple front with four Greek Ionic columns. From its opening until 1927, the Casino hosted live entertainment and was a popular stop along the vaudeville circuit. Among its historic visitors during the past century are President William H. Taft, world boxing champion Bob Fitzsimmons, composer Hoagy Carmichael, the Lone Ranger, Tex Ritter and the Three Stooges.

In 1927 the Casino was remodeled as the area's largest movie theater. In the 1950s, the theater was converted to show wide-screen movies to compete with television. The first show was *The Robe*, a

Biblical spectacular. Many generations of local residents now reminisce about enjoying popcorn and movies at the Casino with friends, school groups, or that special someone. More than a few couples credit holding hands in the balcony of the Casino as the beginning of their long-lasting marriages.

In 1981, with the introduction of modern multiplexes to the area, the Casino could no longer attract sufficient audiences, and the theater closed its doors. A performing arts company briefly presented stage plays in the mid-1980s, but could not find financial success, and the auditorium's seats were removed and the theater was used for storage space. When the building was threatened with demolition in the late 1980s a community group spearheaded by high school English teacher Eugene Iagnemma organized and volunteered to restore the theater to a showplace for future generations, and also secured it a place on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

In 1992, the group formalized as Casino Theatre Restoration and Management, Inc. (CTRM), a non-profit corporation, and began restoration work. The nationally recognized architectural firm of McLachlan, Cornelius and Filoni, who restored Heinz Hall and the Benedum Center in Pittsburgh, were commissioned by CTRM to draw plans for the restoration.

Today, the Casino Theatre is once again enjoying the reputation and popularity of her heyday. Audiences from throughout the Alle-Kiski valley and beyond have filled the auditorium and enjoyed the wonderful entertainment and the unique atmosphere of a "real theatre" since the doors of the theatre reopened in 1995. §

*History and images courtesy
Casino Theatre, casinotheater.org.*



Palace Theatre

Greensburg, Pennsylvania

PALACE THEATRE

21 West Otterman Street
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

OPENED: September 2, 1926

ARCHITECT: Leon H. Lempert & Son

CAPACITY: 2,136 (original) 1,369 (current)

The Palace Theatre opened on September 2, 1926, as the Manos Theatre, the crown jewel in a string of the Manos family's vaudeville-movie houses in the region. Built at the then-extravagant sum of \$750 thousand, the Manos was considered the area's finest theatre.

In the 1920s, as well as today, Greensburg was Westmoreland County's center of business and cultural activity and supported many theatres throughout the early 1900s. Originally seating 2,136, the Manos Theatre provided the community with daily doses of vaudeville, silent motion pictures and road shows, accompanied by a magnificent Wurlitzer organ. A dome of red, blue, and green lights high in the theatre's ceiling would blink and flash to the music, similar to effects seen in

today's roller rinks.

In 1927, the film industry exploded and "talking pictures" became the rage. In 1930 Warner Bros. Theatres, Inc. of New York bought the Theatre from Manos Enterprises, though the latter maintained a management role for decades to come.

In 1973, the Manos Theatre was sold to Cinemette Theatres, Inc. of Pittsburgh. The theatre closed briefly as the company opened then-Cinemas IV at Westmoreland Mall, and Cinemette sold the Manos in 1977 to local businessman Carl V. Marinelli and his business partner Adelaide DelVitto. They changed its name to The Palace Theatre, and a year later, Mrs. DelVitto sold her interest in the theatre back to Mr. Marinelli.

In the late 1980s Mr. Marinelli considered selling the theatre to an out-of-state businessman who wanted to raze it for future development on the site. Then-Mayor Dan Fajt and Greensburg City Councilmen John Finfrock and Emil Peterinelli met with Mr. Marinelli to suggest a deal that

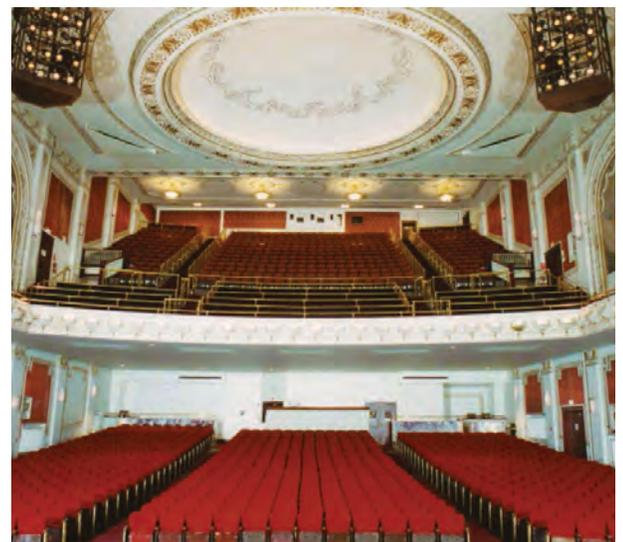
would save the theatre. Before arrangements were made, Mr. Marinelli passed away. Mayor Fajt and City Council, with the assistance of the Greensburg Area Cultural Council and other community leaders, worked with Mr. Marinelli's heirs to spare the Theatre from the wrecking ball.

City Council authorized the formation of the non-profit Greensburg Garden and Civic Center Inc. to complete the sale of the Theatre in 1990. The organization was renamed The Westmoreland Trust in 1992, then Westmoreland Cultural Trust in 2005. Its task was to turn The Palace Theatre into a self-supporting performing arts center.

Westmoreland Cultural Trust spearheaded more than \$18 million in Palace renovations since 1990.

Renovations included restoration of two of the Palace Theatre's three original murals based on French fairy tales and painted by artist Louis Grell from United Studios in Chicago. §

*History and images courtesy
Palace Theatre, thepalacetheatre.org.*



Geyer Performing Arts Center

Scottdale, Pennsylvania

GEYER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

111 Pittsburgh Street
Scottdale, Pennsylvania
OPENED: March 1, 1900
ARCHITECT: Andrew Geyer
CAPACITY: 375

The Geyer Theater was originally designed and built by Andrew Geyer, son of Henry Geyer (owner of the Geyer Hotel) in 1900. It had a seating capacity of 375 persons. Andrew operated as The Geyer Opera House from 1900-1912.

After a little more than a decade as turn-of-the-century opera house, on August 20, 1912 the building was sold to the recently incorporated Scottdale Theater Company. The main stockholders of the Scottdale Theater Company were Lee Godenson, J. Marks, F.W. Bynres, J.R. Byrnes, James Byrnes, and E.J. Buttermore. The operation of the theater remained in their control until February 2, 1926

and the building was recognized as The Scottdale Theater.

In February 1926 the name was changed to Strand and John Bixler was appointed manager. The Strand was one of the first in the area to be equipped with a Vitaphone system for the new “talking pictures” of the era. But despite the purchase of 310 new seats to keep up with audience demand, the theater had fallen on hard times.

In 1936 there was a reorganization of the Scottdale Theater Company and a new Board of Directors was elected. Times were tough, however, and on August 31, 1942 the theater changed hands once again. Current manager John Bixler purchased the theater and successfully operated it until 1969, when he closed the theater and leased it out sporadically until 1971 when the lights turned off for quite some time. For over a decade the theater

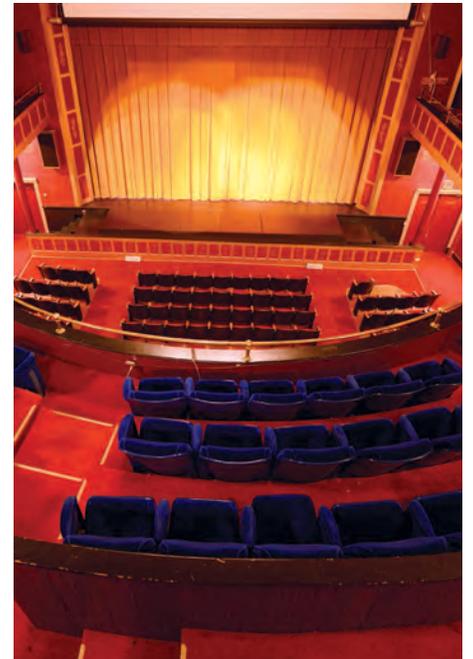
sat dark and quiet.

In April 1987 a group of citizens purchased the theater and began renovation. With the help of the traveling theater group Actors And Artists Of Fayette County, theater in Scottdale was reborn.

In 2006 Scottdale Showtime Inc underwent another reorganization and the theater’s board drew upon their history to call the theater The Geyer Performing Arts Center and also started producing shows to supplement the annual schedule of the resident theatrical company, Actors And Artists Of Fayette County.

The Geyer Performing Arts Center remains the owner of the building today and continues the tradition of hosting theatrical talent as it once did in its hey-day. §

*History and images courtesy
Geyer Performing Arts Center,
geyerpac.com.*



Edwin S. Porter Theater

Connellsville, Pennsylvania

EDWIN S. PORTER THEATER

201 East Fairview Avenue
Connellsville, Pennsylvania

OPENED: 1916

ARCHITECT: George W. Eckles

CAPACITY: 600 (original) 800 (current)

The Edwin S. Porter Theater which is located on the second floor of the Greater Connellsville Area Community Center at 201 East Fairview Avenue in Connellsville was originally constructed in 1916 to serve as the newly constructed Connellsville High School's auditorium.

The building which is quite substantial in size and structure was avant-garde in design for the time. The theater was built with a 600-seat capacity. Acoustically the theater was better than any theater in the surrounding area.

From 1916 to 1970 the theater had

been host to many events including graduation ceremonies, senior class plays, chorus concerts, award ceremonies, dance reviews. The high school was closed in 1970 to make way for the new Connellsville Joint High School and was doomed for demolition. In 1971 the building reopened as the Greater Connellsville Area Community Center. The theater was still in use from 1971 on but use was very limited and as time passed the theater had become run down and was in much need of a face lift and modernization of the heating system and the lighting and sound systems.

In 2010 with a grant through the Connellsville Redevelopment Authority, the theater was renovated. The theater currently has state of the art lighting and sound system and an updated heating system. Air conditioning was also an added feature to the renovation. At that time the theater was renamed the Edwin S. Porter Theater.

Porter, who was born in Connellsville on April 21, 1870, directed and photographed one of the milestones in film history with the first narrative film, *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903. He was a Thomas Edison cameraman.

Since the renovation was completed, the theater has been used for concerts, musicals, graduation ceremonies, beauty pageants, hosted a wedding ceremony in 2011, hosted free family movie nights, and has been the home of Conn Area Catholic School's many fundraising events.

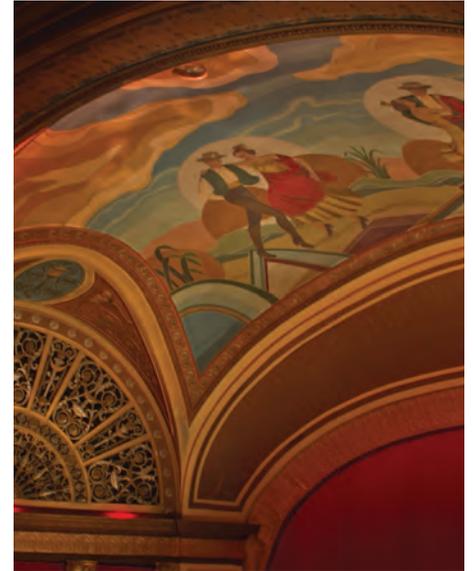
We see many events coming to the newly renovated theater. The future is definitely a bright one for the Edwin S. Porter Theater. §

*History and images courtesy
Edwin S. Porter Theater,
connellsvillecommunitycenter.net.*



State Theatre Center for the Arts

Uniontown, Pennsylvania



STATE THEATRE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

27 East Main Street

Uniontown, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 30, 1922

ARCHITECT: Thomas W. Lamb

CAPACITY: 1,900 (original) 1,404 (current)

The Penn Amusement Company commissioned Thomas W. Lamb, the pre-eminent theatre architect of the day, to design a “picture palace” for Uniontown. He is best known for his work in the 18th Century Robert Adam’s style of architecture and also for his fine acoustical planning. Construction began in 1921 with art designers from the Ingstrip-Burke Company of Chicago, decorating the interior of the Modern structure in the Adam’s style. The theme was that of “refinement of line and chasteness of ornamentation.” The artist in charge, Michael Tomlin, educated at the School of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia pronounced himself well satisfied, “It is better than I hoped, it is what I dreamed.”

Hailed as “the largest, finest and most

beautiful playhouse in Western Pennsylvania” the State Theatre opened to many accolades on October 30, 1922 showing silent movies, road shows, and presenting vaudeville’s finest acts from the B.F. Keith Circuit.

The State Symphony Orchestra held court in the pit with a \$40,000 Peloubet master organ accompanying the silent films to fit the mood. As the big band sound emerged, the State hosted some of the country’s greatest musical attractions including Paul Whitman, Glen Gray and the Dorsey Brothers.

The popularity of “talkies” signaled the end for in-house musicians and the end of vaudeville entertainment. Although the greatest names in Hollywood flickered across the screen, and epics such as *Gone With the Wind* drew packed houses, the State’s days as a movie palace were numbered. Television’s growing popularity and the movie theatre trend was turning to smaller auditoriums and multiple screens. Sadly, after 50 years, the State Theatre

closed in June of 1973.

After a number of years the theatre reopened as the State Music Hall, featuring country and western legends like Johnny Cash, Slim Whitman, Waylon Jennings and the Statler Brothers. The State Music Hall concept, though popular for a time, did not work out and the theatre closed again.

In 1988 the Greater Uniontown Heritage Consortium purchased the Grand Old Lady of Main Street and began presenting a series of professional, nationally touring productions ranging from Broadway musicals to big bands, symphonies, dance and dramatic performances and classic films. §

*History and images courtesy
State Theatre Center for the Arts,
statetheatre.info.*

Carnegie Library Music Hall of Homestead

Homestead, Pennsylvania



CARNEGIE LIBRARY MUSIC HALL OF HOMESTEAD

510 East 10th Avenue
Munhall, Pennsylvania 15120

OPENED: 1898

ARCHITECTS: Frank Alden
& Alfred Harlow

CAPACITY: 1,000

The Carnegie Library, Music Hall and Athletic Club of Homestead is a public library founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1896. It is one of 2,509 Carnegie libraries worldwide and the third of 1,689 built in the United States. Completed in November 1898, it is the oldest Carnegie library in continuous operation in its original structure in the U.S.

The building houses a library holding over 34,000 volumes, a 1,000-seat music hall, and an athletic club with a heated indoor pool. The Carnegie Library of Homestead is an independent entity; it is not a branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, which operates one main facility and 19 branches within the city of Pittsburgh.

Groundbreaking for the \$300,000 project took place in April 1896. The French Renaissance design was the work of Pittsburgh architects Frank Alden and Alfred Harlow. Renovations and modifications have not altered the original physical arrangement of the building, that of three separate facilities—library, music hall and athletic club—under one roof.

While Carnegie required communities to use public funds to subsidize the operation of his libraries, Homestead was one of the few exceptions. Operation of the libraries in Braddock, Homestead and Duquesne were originally funded by Carnegie's plants in those towns. After the sale of his business to U.S. Steel in 1901, Carnegie established a \$1 million trust to support the three facilities. In the 1960s, the Braddock and Duquesne libraries were turned over to the school districts in those communities by the Board of the Endowment for the Monongahela Valley. The Homestead library is now the sole beneficiary of Carnegie's gift.

USX Corporation, the successor to U.S. Steel, continued to provide major support until 1988, when the corporation terminated its regular donations and the Borough of Munhall assumed responsibility for the library. Despite the closing of the Homestead Steel Works two years earlier and the precipitous decline in employment and tax revenue, the library remained open and operational with grants secured by community volunteers and the investment income from Carnegie's endowment. The library's operating budget is \$850,000, not including capital expenditures — of which only \$650,000 came from government funding. Fundraising efforts, revenue from athletic club memberships, music hall rentals, and concession sales have maintained the library's viability. §

*History and images courtesy
Carnegie Library Music Hall of
Homestead, carnegieofhomestead.com.*

Strand Theater

Zelienople, Pennsylvania

THE STRAND THEATER

119 North Main Street
Zelienople, Pennsylvania
OPENED: 1914
ARCHITECT: Unknown
CAPACITY: 300

The Strand Theater was constructed and managed by Gioachino and Rosalia Sapienza in 1914. Gioachino and Rosalia were Italian immigrants seeking a new life and new opportunity in America and Zelienople. In order to blend in with their adopted community, they became known to friends and neighbors as Joseph and Rosalie. Joseph originally wanted to build a fruit market, but the local banker convinced him that the town really needed a theater. So two-thirds of the structure was dedicated to the Strand, and the remaining third was Sapienza's Fruit Market. The Strand featured silent films with live piano accompaniment as well as vaudeville-style shows on its small stage.

In 1939, the Strand underwent its first major renovation and the structure was dedicated entirely to the theater, albeit with a nearly exclusive focus on the motion picture medium. Joseph moved his fruit market across the street into what is now "The Silversmith Shoppe" and a tax preparation office. But the "Sapienza" name is still emblazoned across the top of the building's façade.

The Strand thrived as a social center for Zelienople and Harmony for decades, providing a destination for families to escape the drudgery and routine of rural life and to meet and enjoy a night's entertainment. But the Strand began to struggle when multiplex cinemas began dotting the suburban landscape. The theater became more of a drop-off point for parents to



leave their kids for an afternoon matinee.

But with increased pressure from the onset of the multi-plex and VCR era, the Strand could no longer compete. One night in the early 1980s, the Strand closed its doors.

THE STRAND THEATER INITIATIVE

The Strand Theater Initiative was created in 2001 as a nonprofit corporation to save the venerable old theater from the wrecking ball, with the goal of reviving the Strand as a cultural, education and community outreach center. Through private and public financial support, The Initiative purchased the Strand in 2002 and completed an exterior renovation in January, 2005.

The Initiative raised \$1.9 million toward its initial capital campaign and major renovations to the decayed theater were completed in July, 2009. Phase One of the renovation is complete, and the theater has been in operation since that time, presenting a variety of live programs as well as golden and contemporary Hollywood classic films.

One hundred years later, two more phases of construction are planned to create a state-of-the-art facility, capable of presenting full-scale, theatrical programs, with added parking and a multi-purpose center. §

*History courtesy the Strand Theater, thestrandtheater.org.
Images courtesy Elliott Cramer.*

Guthrie Theatre

Grove City, Pennsylvania

GUTHRIE THEATRE

232 S. Broad Street
Grove City, Pennsylvania
OPENED: August 1, 1927
ARCHITECT: Unknown
CAPACITY: 326

The Guthrie Theater was built in 1926 by John Guthrie as a vaudeville theatre and included an orchestra pit and a pipe organ.

When it was built in 1926, it seated 326 people. Reportedly, the interior décor was unique combining a number of design styles. The ceiling of the auditorium was “tented” with curtains, the walls featured a coat of arms and were hung with tapestries. The lobby featured a stone fireplace with an American eagle decoration, heavy furniture and curtains in the jazz age style. Later a large square white plaster screen was placed on the back of the stage to run silent films between the live shows. From there it grew into a movie theater.

From 1950-1955 the Guthrie was owned by Co-Operative Theater Service. In September 1956, Guthrie-Lee Theaters was incorporated by H. M. Carruthers and John Carruthers II, et al. From 1975 to 1980, Cinemette Corporation of America owned the business.

William DeMarsh owned the theater for a number of years, it was then acquired by James Ahonen.

In 2001, it was being operated William DeMarsh’s daughter, Lavonne Gilliland. Ahonen sold the business to Eric Thomas in 2002. Thomas began the process of restoring and updating the facility.

Today, the theater programs live entertainment as well as current motion pictures. §



*History from the Grove City Area Historical Society, grovecityhistoricalsociety.org.
Text copyright Dr. Ralph C. Packard.*

Images courtesy James W. Kastner.

Academy Theatre

Meadville, Pennsylvania

ACADEMY THEATRE

275 Chestnut Street

Meadville, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 1, 1885

ARCHITECT: J.M. Wood

CAPACITY: 600 (original) 460 (current)

Meadville's Academy Theatre was built in 1885. The institution was the dream of Ernest P. Hempstead, a news paperman by trade. Born on December 15, 1851 in Dimock, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, Hempstead attended schools in the Philadelphia area.

Hempstead first came to the Meadville area in January 1873 when he took the helm of the Crawford Journal as editor. He held several important offices during his time in Meadville, and was also a lover of art.

Hempstead presented the Academy of Music to the people of Meadville in 1885 as a testament to the great music and opera he knew the city to be capable of presenting. The building was designed by architect J. M. Wood. Wood stated he strove

to create a “new and beautiful Temple of Amusement—a credit to the city and an honor to its proprietor.”

The Academy Theatre was a popular opera house during the late 1880s. The theatre debuted Lillian Mortimer's *No Mother To Guide Her* in 1901. Mortimer was a prolific playwright during the time period, not only because she was a woman playwright but because her plays explored themes of violence, sexuality, and evil. Promotional items from this hit performance, the first of many for the Academy Theatre, are now on display in the Academy Theatre Gallery and Lounge.

The theatre continued to blossom and grow over the years, at one time hosting vaudeville shows and the first “talkies” in town. Through the years as audiences expanded and changed, the Academy did too. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the Academy Theatre was a movie house. Many locals recall sitting in the back row with their sweetheart or catching a matinee with friends.

After damage was done to the building due to a fire in the 1980s, the Academy Theatre closed its doors. But, a dedicated group of Meadville citizens refused to let this ar-

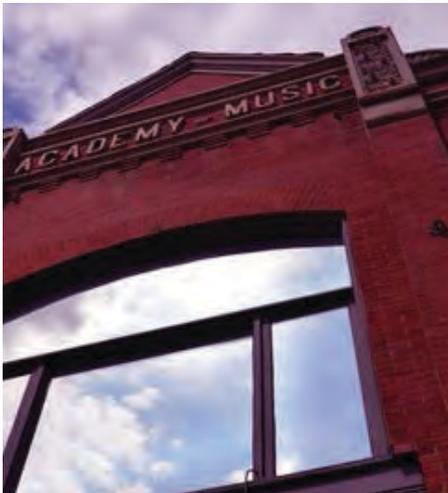
chitectural gem die. It wasn't long until the Academy Theatre Foundation was formed—a group whose sole purpose was to breathe life back into the venue.

In 1989 the Academy Theatre Foundation was established. A newly appointed board of directors began planning and solving the numerous challenges that the physical structure presented.

Though the structure had seen two other major renovations over the years, one in 1913 and one in 1957, it was not until the major renovation in the early 1990s that the theater was returned to its original glory.

With almost \$1 million in restoration and improvement work completed, the Academy Theatre once again shines like the gem that it is. Now celebrating its 129th year, the Academy Theatre is honored to continue to be a beacon of entertainment in Northwest Pennsylvania. §

History and images courtesy Academy Theatre, theacademytheatre.org.



Warner Theatre

Erie, Pennsylvania

WARNER THEATRE

811 State Street

Erie, Pennsylvania

OPENED: April 10, 1931

ARCHITECT: Rapp & Rapp

CAPACITY: 2,500 (original) 2,230 (current)

Since its grand opening, the Warner Theatre has established itself as a major cultural center for the region. Millions have passed by the freestanding ticket booth of solid bronze through the doors and stepped into the luxurious gold-gilded grand lobby.

Warner Bros., today one of the world's largest producers of film and television entertainment, commissioned the building of the Warner Theatre in 1929. Designed by the architectural firm, Rapp & Rapp, the theatre was constructed at a cost of \$1.5 million Depression-era dollars. Warner Bros. also appointed the world-renowned Rambusch Studios in New York City to decorate the interior.

When the Warner Theatre opened its doors April 10, 1931, more than 8,000 colored lights illuminated the 10-ton marquee that announced the feature film of the opening evening, *The Millionaire* starring George Arliss with James

Cagney. Excitement and wonder of the patrons about the palatial splendor of the breathtaking new showplace filled the atmosphere.

In its early history, the theatre hosted various traveling shows. As well as presenting the pick of the major film releases, the theatre became an important link in the vaudeville circuits of the 1930s. On November 8, 1931, the Warner formally initiated a vaudeville season.

The "Mighty Wurlitzer" organ that once rose out of the floor and into the corner of the orchestra pit, provided music for vaudeville shows and accompanied the early talking motion pictures. Warner Bros. eventually donated the organ to the Western Reserve Chapter of American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts in 1969. The Cleveland Gray's Armory Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, now houses the organ.

In 1971, Cinemette Corporation of America bought the Warner Theatre from the Stanley Warner Corporation. In 1974, the Erie Philharmonic had its first concert at the theatre. Since then, the philharmonic has continued to perform there.

Cinemette operated the Warner until 1976, when the late Erie Mayor Louis J. Tullio heard the chain might want to sell the theatre. With assistance from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the mayor negotiated a successful purchase of the building from Cinemette.

In 1977, the Erie Civic Center Authority was formed and given the physical and fiscal management of the Warner Theatre, also referred to as the "Center for the Performing Arts."

In 1981, the Broadway Theatre League began to bring in a series of top Broadway musicals performed by New York-based touring companies. Additionally, the Erie Civic Ballet Company began performing on the Warner's stage. That same year, the Warner was listed on the commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Inventory of Museums and Historical Places, and on April 13, 1982, it was placed on the National Register for Historic Places. §

History and images courtesy Warner Theatre, erieevents.com.



Warner Cascade Theatre

New Castle, Pennsylvania



WARNER CASCADE THEATRE

18 S Mill Street

New Castle, Pennsylvania

OPENED: February 2, 1907

ARCHITECT: Eckles Architecture & Engineering

CAPACITY: 99 (original) 30 (current)

Several years ago, a group of civic-minded people, led by Jerry Kern of New Castle, formed a non-profit, corporation named The Warner Film Center at the Cascade Theatre, Inc. The purpose of this organization is to pay tribute to the four Warner Brothers, Sam, Harry, Albert and Jack, who, in 1907 opened their first business, The Cascade Picture Palace Theatre, and to the community, of New Castle, Pennsylvania, “Where It All Began.”

The Warner Brothers Cascade Theatre was the inaugural step on a path that would eventually lead to a theatre, film distribution and motion picture production empire. The Warner Brothers opened the Duquesne Film Distribution Company in 1910 to supply the growing demand for feature films. They ventured into movie production by opening a movie studio in Hollywood in 1923. In the 1930s the Warners merged with the giant First National Theatre Company to become the largest movie exhibitors in the world. In 1942, they produced what many consider their greatest film, *Casablanca*.

Our non-profit corporation is dedicated to the history of these achievements and to the enrichment of the community, “Where It All Began.” The goal of the Historic Warner Cascade Theatre is to bring to life the Warner Cascade multi-plex theatre, museum and gift shop as a lasting tribute to the Warner Brothers and their

early film-making, as well as serving as a centerpiece for the rebirth of the downtown area of this once great city.

Visitors to the restored Cascade auditoriums will see articulated mannequins in period attire, a Warner brother turning the crank on a primitive Kinetoscope projector, and even little Jack Warner, who would sometimes be called upon to sing *O Sole Mio* between reels in order to chase people from the theater who may have overstayed their welcome.

The Historic Warner Cascade Theatre auditoriums One and Two will become loving restorations of the two original 100-seat Cascade auditoriums. Auditorium One will recreate the Nickelodeon, originally furnished with wooden chairs and a sparse décor. Auditorium Two will reflect what the brothers referred to as the “Gentry Room.” Contemporary ladies and gentlemen would pay twenty-five cents for the posh experience of viewing films while seated in plush parlor chairs amidst Victorian décor, vases of fresh flowers, and a Warner sister playing accompaniment on the family pump organ.

The original Historic Warner Cascade Theatre and adjacent Warner Vaudeville Theatre was designed by the Eckles Architecture & Engineering of New Castle. §

History courtesy Warner Cascade Theatre, warnercascade.org.

Images of the Warner Cascade, courtesy James W. Kastner.

Kelly Strayhorn Theater

East Liberty, Pennsylvania

KELLY STRAYHORN THEATER

5941 Penn Ave

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 31, 1914

ARCHITECT: Harry S. Bair

CAPACITY: 1,100 (original) 350 (current)

To enter the theater is to be in the presence of two creative and passionate spirits who, with their talent, tenacity, and love of their craft, provide inspiration for us today: famed dancer and Hollywood movie legend Gene Kelly, born and raised in East Liberty, and Homewood-bred jazz composer Billy Strayhorn. Their spirits abound in the young East End artists of today.

As the last of nine theaters from the 1950s heyday of East Liberty, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater has become part of the transformation of East Liberty into an extraordinary arts and entertainment destination.

In 1914, the Regent Theatre, a state-of-the-art 1,100-seat photoplay house, began screening America's favorite silent films. Designed by architect Harry S. Bair, The Regent featured a grand theater organ that provided live accompaniment to silent films. East End residents could catch Mary Pickford or Douglas Fairbanks at the Regent, and enjoy music, more films, and live performances at the many other theaters in the neighborhood, including the Camera-Phone, Enright, Harris Family Theatre, Liberty, Sheridan, and Triangle.

Over the decades, the Regent had its ups and downs, and was dark for long periods of time. The first reopening was held on July 18, 1965 following a \$175,000 renovation under Associated Theaters, a group led by Ernest Stern who also owned the Encore, Fulton (now the Byham), Gateway,

and Forum theaters in Pittsburgh. At this point the Regent's capacity was reduced to 850 to provide increased patron comfort for the first showing of *In Harm's Way*, with Kirk Douglas, John Wayne, and Patricia Neal.

In October 1979, the Regent closed again. By the 1990s, the Regent was poised for renewal, as was its East Liberty neighborhood. Pittsburgh's downtown cultural district was underway, but Pittsburgh needed another mid-sized venue to welcome small arts groups and community programs. The arts community gathered for a sneak peek fundraiser to support the possibilities, including a gallery of local stars provided by the East Liberty Chamber of Commerce.

In 2000, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that the Regent Theatre would have a new name in honor of Pittsburgh greats Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn. In 2003, the *New Pittsburgh Courier* reported that audiences were again "lining up on Penn Avenue."

By 2009–2010, the Kelly Strayhorn was in use more than three-quarters of the possible performance and rehearsals days as young performers, dancers, filmmakers, actors, musicians, community organizations, and audiences participate in the ongoing renaissance of East Liberty's performing arts center. §

*History and images courtesy
Kelly Strayhorn Theater,
kelly-strayhorn.org.*



McGonigle Theater

Oakland, Pennsylvania

MCGONIGLE THEATRE

4720 Fifth Ave

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: 1927

ARCHITECT: Link, Weber & Bowers

CAPACITY: 898 (current)

A visitor to Central Catholic High School cannot help but notice the imposing towers, the spire that seems to touch the sky, the pointed arches and the buttressed black-brick inlaid walls that make it a building of distinction—a designated historic landmark. In a point of style, Central Catholic is of Modified Normandy design. While most of the architectural features of the school carry this Normandy Gothic design—pointed archways, flagstone steps leading into the main entrance, side turrets—the interior is appropriately designed for academic instruction.

The auditorium makes up the entire east wing of the school. However, it is the auditorium interior that truly embodies and complements the characteristics of the

Normandy Gothic exterior. It is perhaps the architectural highlight of the school itself. As you enter the rear of the auditorium, you immediately gaze through a trio of pointed arches supporting the massive balcony. Under your feet continue the flagstone pavers as used at the main entrance.

The perimeter walls of the auditorium are built of brick. The overall color is dark red, with localized color variations. The plain brick walls are undisturbed by extraneous decoration. A herringbone pattern of glazed and unglazed, red and black brick are set in a bed of pigmented, lime based mortar. Decorative tiles produced by the Moravian Tile Works of Doylestown, Pennsylvania are placed at regular intervals. This simple device is sufficient contrast to the ordinary stretcher and header bond with its neutral cement mortar to add interest to expansive walls. Under the balcony, there are six plaster reliefs representing the academic disciplines of commerce, art, agriculture, chemistry, manufacturing and mining.

Looking toward the front of the stage, the proscenium arch is, like all the masonry openings, pointed. A plaster decoration of figures and foliage in the Gothic style forms a tympanum to bridge the proscenium arch. Seven muses in brilliant glass mosaic follow the path of the arch. Four large medieval chandeliers provide the ambient lighting for the main floor.

Stained glass windows filter the harshness of the outer light. The 16 windows represent the various countries from which the Catholic people of Pittsburgh migrated. Each window features the country's patron saint, seal and two of its most famous Catholic citizens. The smaller windows under the balcony colorfully feature the various patron saints of the dioceses and of academia. §

*History and images courtesy
Central Catholic High School,
centralcatholicchs.com.*



Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall

Oakland, Pennsylvania

SOLDIERS & SAILORS MEMORIAL HALL & MUSEUM

4141 Fifth Avenue

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 10, 1910

ARCHITECT: Palmer & Hornbostel

CAPACITY: 2,364 (current)

In 1891, some thirty years after the Civil War began, a committee of Allegheny County veterans organizations proposed the erection of a memorial honoring soldiers, sailors and marines from Allegheny County who had served in the Army and Navy of the United States in the war “for the suppression of the rebellion.” A referendum was passed by county voters in 1905 to fund the proposed \$1.25 million dollar project. The architectural firm of Hornbostel and Palmer was selected to design the Memorial, with Hornbostel employing a neo classic design inspired by the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in ancient Turkey. Construction began in 1908, and the Memorial opened to the public on October 10, 1910.

The powerful effect the Civil War had upon our country is reflected throughout the building. The names of 25,930 Civil War veterans from Allegheny County are cast in bronze on large plaques found lining the inner hallways of the Memorial. A 70’ x 18’ painting of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, the largest in the world, hangs above the Auditorium stage visible for all to absorb the impact of the immortal speech.

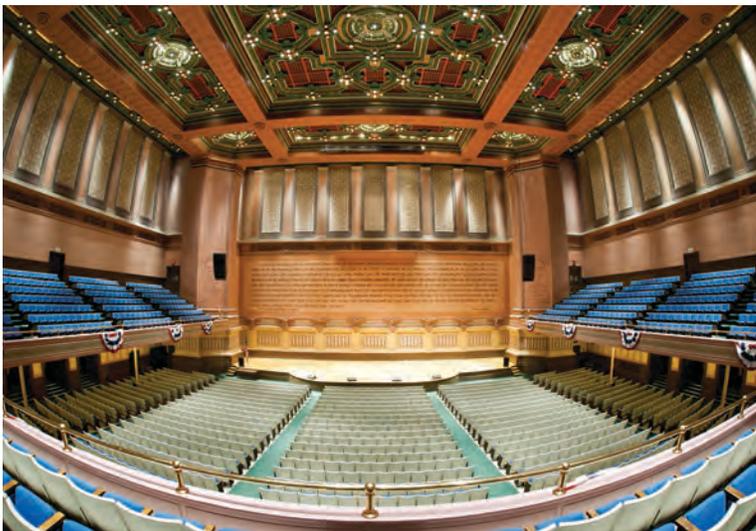
Through the years Soldiers & Sailors served as a gathering place for many Civil War veteran organizations, the most well known are the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Union Veteran Legion (UVL). Small chapters, or “Posts,” held their regular monthly meetings in the Gettysburg and Shiloh Rooms, and larger reunions and conventions in the 2,364 seat Auditorium or Grand Ballroom.

As the days of the Civil War men passed, veterans of subsequent wars took their place using Soldiers & Sailors for meetings and gatherings where their stories could be told. Today, the Memorial

stands in honor to all veterans from each branch of the military that have served in peace and at war.

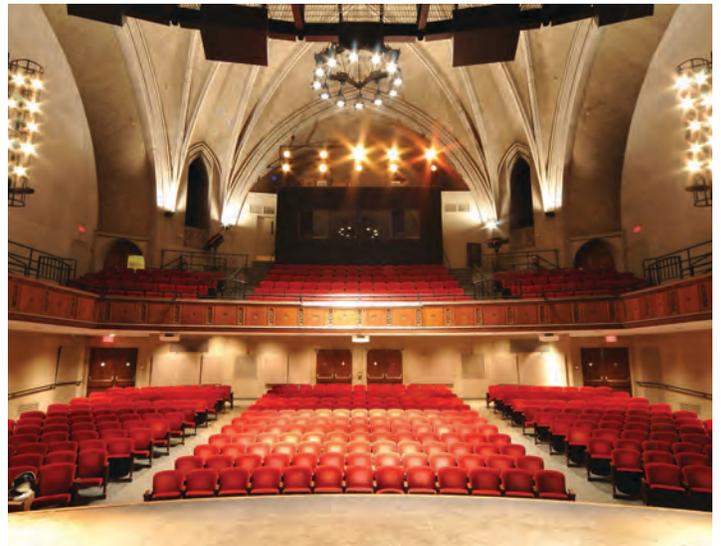
In 1999, Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum Trust, Inc. was established to maintain the memorial, operate the Museum, and create educational programs. Soldiers & Sailors, a nonprofit corporation, has established itself as a national landmark, offering a distinctive Museum, an intimate performance Auditorium, a breathtaking Grand Ballroom, and engaging programs honoring our veterans. §

*History and images courtesy
Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall
& Museum, soldiersandsailorshall.org.
Images © Christopher Rolinson*



Charity Randall Theatre

Oakland, Pennsylvania



THE CHARITY RANDALL THEATRE, STEPHEN FOSTER MEMORIAL

4301 Forbes Avenue

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: June 2, 1937

ARCHITECT: Charles Z. Klauder

CAPACITY: 600 (original) 477 (current)

In 1927, the concept for a memorial to America's first professional songwriter Stephen Collins Foster (1826-64), a Pittsburgh native, was promoted to the University of Pittsburgh by members of the Tuesday Musical Club, which spearheaded the initial fundraising efforts for the project. The University provided a portion of the quadrangle to be devoted to the Cathedral of Learning and Heinz Chapel for a structure commemorating Foster's life and works. Ground was broken on January 13, 1935, the 71th anniversary of the death of Stephen Foster. The building was dedicated on June 2, 1937, the University's 150th anniversary, and celebrated its 70th year in 2007.

Indianapolis pharmaceutical giant J. Lilly delivered the main groundbreaking address. He founded the Stephen Foster

Collection housed in the Memorial's library and museum wing, a 12-sided shrine commemorating the composer's life and works. Pitt's Center for American Music Library is also a public museum that contains a broad cross-section of American popular culture from the 1840s to the 1930s. Lilly, Andrew Mellon and other leading Pittsburgh citizens gave significant financial gifts to the building fund.

The original cost of the construction and materials was \$550,000 in 1935. The total cost of the 2003 restoration and technical upgrade was assessed at \$2.3 million.

Architect Charles Z. Klauder designed the structure in harmony with the Cathedral of Learning with a steel frame and the signature hand-cut Indiana limestone.

The ironwork on the Cathedral, Heinz Chapel and the Foster Memorial is the work of Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia. He designed the building's lobby and auditorium chandelier with the exception of the center lobby fixture added in restoration.

Charles J. Connick created the stained

glass work in Heinz Chapel and the windows in the Foster Memorial lobby and museum. Images of Beethoven and Shakespeare are featured in the lobby and lyrics by Stephen Foster can be found in the windows of the museum.

Engraved above the auditorium are themes to Foster's *Old Folks at Home* and *My Old Kentucky Home*.

The original "Foster Auditorium" had 600 seats; today's Charity Randall Theatre has 453 seats and 24 chairs (in the balcony boxes) for a total capacity of 478 plus spaces for wheelchair accessibility. The original downstairs Social Room was redesigned as the Henry Heymann Theatre in 2000. The Heymann seats 151 patrons, in addition to handicap access. Thus, the total capacity of both theatres still exceeds the original auditorium capacity by 28 seats. §

*History and images courtesy
Stephen Foster Memorial,
play.pitt.edu.*

Carnegie Music Hall of Oakland

Oakland, Pennsylvania



CARNEGIE MUSIC HALL OF OAKLAND

4301 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: 1895

ARCHITECT: Longfellow, Alden & Harlow

CAPACITY: 1,950

This early building was designed by architects Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, a firm based in Boston and Pittsburgh, whose plans were selected from the 102 drawings entered in a competition held by the Board of Trustees.

The 1895 building consisted of what is today the Library and the Music Hall, and where the two joined, to the rear of the Millie Hall on either side of the stage, were two large towers. The wings of the Library held the art gallery and the museum. With its roof of red tile, the early Carnegie Institute was inspired by the Italian Renaissance, then a popular style for the grand buildings of Europe and larger American cities.

In 1903, at Andrew Carnegie's suggestion and with an additional \$5 million from him, work was begun on an addition which expanded the building's acreage to nearly fourteen. Plans were drawn by Alden & Harlow, Longfellow having

withdrawn from the firm, and in 1907 the newly expanded building was once again feted and dedicated and opened to the public.

The twin towers of the Music Hall were gone, and the curved exterior of the early building was now encased in an opulent foyer with an elaborately carved and gilded 45-foot ceiling and colossal columns of green Tinos marble from Greece. The new building reflected the spirit of affluence that prevailed in the early 20th century. It all seemed designed to overwhelm.

Whatever the reason visitors come to The Carnegie, their first impression is of its physical presence. In 1988, when The Carnegie kicked off the Second Century Fund, many of the projects listed in the campaign involved maintaining, restoring, improving, or sometimes simply cleaning the jewel of the collection, the building itself. When the project was complete in the summer of 1990, people once again saw the elegance of the building as it was intended to be. Another project of the Second Century Fund

was the restoration of the Lecture Hall and the Music Hall.

When the Music Hall was first opened, it was the center of musical activity in Pittsburgh and the home to the Pittsburgh Orchestra, now the Pittsburgh Symphony, until 1910. There were weekly free recitals on the grand concert hall pipe organ from the month the Institute opened until the 1960s, and then periodic but less frequent recitals until the 1980s. With its nearly perfect acoustics and splendid rose and gilt interior, the Music Hall still draws performers in large numbers today. §

*History courtesy
Carnegie Music Hall of Oakland,
carnegiemuseums.org.*

*Images courtesy Carnegie
Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.*

Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall

Carnegie, Pennsylvania

ANDREW CARNEGIE FREE LIBRARY & MUSIC HALL

300 Beechwood Avenue

Carnegie, Pennsylvania

OPENED: May 10, 1901

ARCHITECT: Struthers & Hannah

CAPACITY: 780 (original) 450 (current)

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall has served its community since 1901. The Library was built with money provided by Andrew Carnegie. Although the famed industrialist's name is internationally associated with libraries and he ultimately went on to fund more than 2,000 of them, the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall (ACFL&MH) is one of only four endowed libraries built by the philanthropist in the United States. (The others are in Brad-dock, Homestead and the sadly demolished Duquesne Carnegie library.)

The ACFL&MH is further distinguished by the fact that the town it graces was named for Mr. Carnegie. In 1894, the two boroughs of Mansfield and Chartiers consolidated to become one: Carnegie. In return, the philanthropist funded a majestic building to house a library and performance venue for the new community.

The "Carnegie Carnegie" is a graceful, Italianate structure, situated prominently in a park-like setting in the center of Carnegie. As with only a few other historic Carnegie institutions, library does not adequately describe the facility. In addition to serving as a fine community library the ACFL&MH houses a reception hall, a gymnasium, a 450-seat music hall as well as its rare Civil War room. The acoustically excellent Music Hall is home to two resident performing arts companies, Carnegie Performing Arts Center, a

non-profit dance and drama school, and Stage 62, which performs four popular plays annually. Recent improvements to the facility have raised the profile of the Music Hall significantly, it is already well on its way to serving as an outstanding regional performance venue.

In 1981, the ACFL was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, one of only three buildings in the Chartiers Valley to bear this distinction.

The very mass, design and site of the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall were intended to convey prominence and permanence. So too was the \$93,000 with which it was endowed in 1901. Unfortunately, the ACFL&MH's income long ago proved inadequate, the endowment was spent down to meet operating needs.

In 1998 a coalition of business and community leaders, many of them members of the ACFL&MH's Advisory Board, formed the Chartiers Valley Partnership (CVP) and launched a capital campaign to restore the Library & Music Hall's historic facility. \$7.5 million has been raised to date. The building is structurally sound, accessible, weather-proof, and looks lovelier than it has in decades. Interior improvements have begun as well, including comfortable seats in the Music Hall, air conditioning in the Library, conversion of the old gym into vibrant and versatile programming space, and of course, the meticulous restoration of the Espy Post. The Library & Music Hall is vibrant and valued again. §

*History and images courtesy
Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall.
carnegiecarnegie.com.*



Roxian Theatre

McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania



ROXIAN THEATRE

425 Chartiers Avenue
McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania
OPENED: January 14, 1928
ARCHITECT: Marks & Kann
CAPACITY: 1,500 (original)

“Opening Monday Evening, January 14 at 8:15 o’clock The Roxian Theatre embodies all the current ideas in deluxe theater construction. It is of elegant beauty and unusual architecture. Equipment throughout is complete and modern. There are men’s and women’s lounges; a spacious and luxuriously furnished mezzanine floor, a large fully equipped stage and other accessories to service and comfort, such as a ventilation system which assures patrons of year-round comfort.

The Roxian has a capacity of 1,500 and its policy calls for pictures and stage presentations at moderate admission prices, with frequent changes of program. The theater will fill a long-felt need in the amusement life of McKees Rocks and its thickly populated surroundings.”

(From Pittsburgh Press Sunday, January 13, 1928 Roxian Theatre (McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania) of the Imperial Chain D.J. Selznick, President and Manager.)

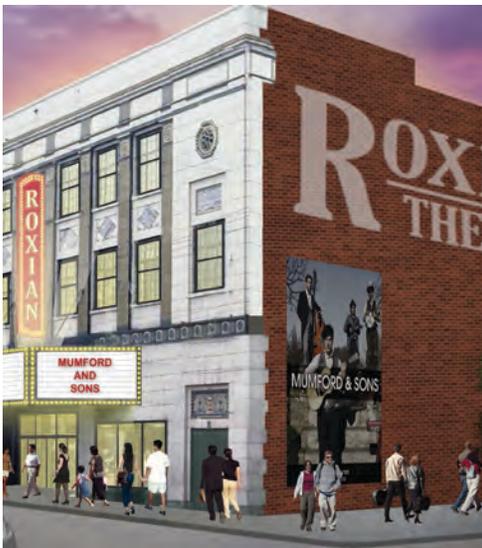
The Roxian Theatre closed in 1979. It was then converted to a concert venue known as the Emerald Room, which closed again in 2003.

The theatre is currently owned by the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation who is working with the Palmer Westport Group to bring this historic landmark back to life.

The team completed a feasibility study in the fall of 2013, a market assessment later that

year, and is currently working to develop a comprehensive master plan. The goal for this theatre is to redevelop the building into a mid-size concert venue while preserving the rich history that illustrates the thriving days of McKees Rocks. §

History and images courtesy McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation, mckeesrocks.com/blog.



Hollywood Theater

Dormont, Pennsylvania

HOLLYWOOD THEATER

1449 Potomac Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: 1932

ARCHITECT: Victor A. Rigauumont (remodel)

CAPACITY: 285 (current)

The building now known as the Hollywood Theater was possibly first opened in 1922 as Murray's Bowling and Billiards, became the Murray Theater in 1924, and was operated by the Murray family until 1926.

The theater was likely purchased in 1926 or 1927 by Stanley Theatres, remodeled by Charles R. Geisler, and renamed the Hollywood Theater.

The Hollywood was purchased by Warner Bros. in the late 1940s and gutted and rebuilt under direction of architect Victor A. Rigauumont. The new Hollywood was a deluxe second run venue, playing Warner, Universal, RKO, Disney and United Artists product, while the Harris South Hills, less than a mile away, (capacity about 1,300) ran Fox, MGM, Columbia and Paramount films.

The marquee of that era, containing literally thousands of bulbs and two glass attraction panels, was removed in the 1980s when the city widened the street and the glass tile of the lower façade was replaced with stucco.

Cinemette Theaters purchased all area RKO Stanley-Warner theaters, including the Hollywood, on July 19, 1973, and was later owned by Ernest and George Stern, whom owned and operated the theater until it closed on April 1987 with shows of Disney's *The Fox and the Hound* and *Frantic*. The Hollywood was then leased from the Stern family to Neighborhood Cinemas and reopened on June 1, 1990 with *Steel Magnolias*. After being operated as a dollar theater it again closed on April 2, 1995 with a showing of *The Brady Bunch Movie*. On June 1, 1995 Cinemagic reopened the theater with *Johnny Mnemonic* and the *Pebble and the Penguin*.

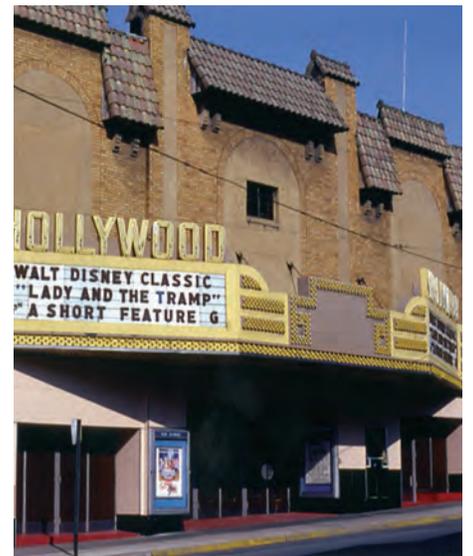
On Sunday, March 29, 1998, Cinemagic closed the Hollywood with a triple bill of *The Wedding Singer*, *The Borrowers*,

and the original *Twilight*. It was later rumored that the theater was acquired by the city of Dormont for back taxes and later sold to a group of private investors.

The Hollywood Theater remained closed from 1998 until 2007, when on April 6th a newly remodeled Hollywood was reopened by the Bradley Center (as a work project for at-risk youth). The Bradley venture closed in less than one year. A company called Motion Picture Heritage then reopened the theater in 2009 and it too closed in less than a year.

In 2010 a group of Dormont and South Hills residents banded together to discuss running the theater under a new nonprofit umbrella organization called Friends of the Hollywood Theater. On May 7th, 2011 the theater reopened. §

History and images courtesy
Hollywood Theater,
thehollywooddormont.org.



New Granada Theatre

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

NEW GRANADA THEATRE

2007 Centre Ave
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
OPENED: March 25, 1928
ARCHITECT: Louis A.S. Bellinger
CAPACITY: 1,500 (original)

The New Granada Theatre was originally built in 1927 as the Pythian Temple, by Pittsburgh's first African-American architect, Louis A.S. Bellinger.

The Pythian Temple was constructed as a Grand Lodge for the Knights of Pythias, a national fraternal organization dedicated to "friendship, charity and benevolence."

On March 12, 1927, the *Pittsburgh Courier* released the details of the project after an interview with Bellinger. "The second floor will furnish the city with a long-felt want. This floor will contain an auditorium with a gallery, ladies and gentlemen's lounging rooms, miniature stage with modern footlights, suitable for amateur productions and musical concerts. The auditorium has been so arranged that the floor can be easily con-

verted into a basketball court, with a clear 20-foot floor space of 6,000 square feet. Seating accommodations for 1,500 people have been arranged. The auditorium will be decorated in classical style, with myriad lights, finished walls, box seats, hardwood floor and a new innovation in seating arrangement. Entrance to the gallery will be through a fireproof foyer. Several modern office suites will complete this floor."

On May 20, 1937, the Pythian Temple reopened as the New Granada Theater in the form of a movie theater and concert hall. It is highly regarded as a historic African American cultural place in where music greats including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Billy Eckstein and Cab Calloway had graced the stage both in person and on film.

In 2010, a stabilization project was completed on the New Granada Theatre. This project involved masonry restoration, roof replacement and marquee storage. Potential reuse ideas include a performance area, a visual arts center, a museum, retail and office

space and a community gathering space. Community input and the results of a market study and cultural study will help to shape the future of the New Granada Theater. §

History courtesy The Hill Community Development Corporation, hilldistrict.org.

*Images:
(top) Granda Theatre, from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction number, 222978pu].*

*(bottom)
Granda Theatre, from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction number, 222979pu].*





The Pittsburgh Cultural District

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust has overseen one of Pittsburgh's most historic transformations: turning a seedy red-light district into a magnet destination for arts lovers, residents, visitors, and business owners. Founded in 1984, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is a non-profit arts organization whose mission is the cultural and economic revitalization of a 14-block arts and entertainment/residential neighborhood called the Cultural District.

The District is one of the country's largest land masses "curated" by a single non-profit arts organization. A major catalytic force in the city, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is a unique model of how public-private partnerships can reinvent a city with authenticity, innovation and creativity. Using the arts as an economic catalyst, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust has holistically created a world-renowned Cultural District that is revitalizing the city, improving the regional

economy and enhancing Pittsburgh's quality of life. Thanks to the support of foundations, corporations, government agencies and thousands of private citizens, the Cultural Trust stands as a national model of urban redevelopment through the arts. §

*History and images courtesy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,
trustarts.org*



Byham Theater

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

BYHAM THEATER

101 Sixth Street

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 31, 1904

ARCHITECT: Dodge & Morrison

CAPACITY: 2,000 (original) 1,767 (current)

Originally built in 1903 as the Gayety Theater, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust purchased this 1,300-seat venue in 1988. Then called the Fulton Theater, The Trust renovated and reopened the venue in 1991. The theater was renamed the Byham Theater in 1995, in recognition of a gift from William C. and Carolyn M. Byham. Today, the Byham Theater is home to a wide variety of performing arts, including dance, music, theater, film, and family-friendly events held throughout the year.

The Gayety ran for many years as one of the country's foremost stage and vaudeville houses, with appearances from such stars as Ethel Barymore, Gertrude Lawrence, and Helen Hayes. The venue boasted pressed copper cherubs painted with a bronze patina, imitation gold leaf, stained glass windows, plaster columns, and wainscot of scagolia, an

Italian faux marble technique. The entry vestibule showcases the original mosaic tile floor and the large original lighting fixtures are artifacts from the advent of electrical lighting. Backstage, the theater was one of the remaining few to use sandbags and hemp ropes to work the scenery rigging until 1999 when a modern rigging system was installed. In the 1930s, the theater was renamed the Fulton and became a full time movie theater.

Following the first of four planned phases of renovation, the Fulton was reopened in May 1991 and the old lighted Fulton marquee was restored by the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg. The second phase of renovations brought new restrooms, box office, marquee, an elevator, lobby improvements, and façade changes. In 1997, the Cherub Lobby was restored to its original splendor. The third phase of renovation in 1999 updated the theater rigging system, enlarged the orchestra pit, and provided new HVAC for the entire building. As funding becomes available, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust continues to enhance the Byham Theater

to address improvements in theater technology.

In 1993, The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust selected the renowned American muralist Richard Haas as the designer of the Haas Mural, which pays homage to Pittsburgh's steel industry. Richard Haas is best known for architectural murals and his use of the Trompe l'oeil style— an art technique involving extremely realistic imagery in order to create the optical illusion that the depicted objects appear in three-dimensions, instead of actually being a two-dimensional painting. The Haas Mural is painted on the Fort Duquesne Boulevard façade of the Byham Theater. The mural integrates the Byham Theater's doors and windows to create a visual experience. In a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette interview, Mr. Haas called the mural "one of the most complicated façades I've done." §

*History and images courtesy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,
trustarts.org. Image © Kevin Cooke.*



Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

HEINZ HALL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

600 Penn Ave

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: September 6, 1927

ARCHITECT: C. W. & George L. Rapp

CAPACITY: 2,669 (original)

2,740 (current)

For 45 years prior to the origin of the Loew's Penn Theater, the building that stood at this location was the Hotel Anderson. After 1900 the Anderson developed a somewhat seedy reputation, lost much of its appeal and met its demise.

Built on the same location as the Anderson, the Loew's Penn Theater was constructed in 1927. Motion picture magnate Marcus Loew hired the architectural firm of Rapp & Rapp to design the opulent movie house.

With the advent of television, declining attendance and the rising costs of maintaining such landmarks, the Penn Theater, in line with the nation's other great movie palaces, was forced to shut its doors in 1964. The building sat vacant for five years. Destined to be demolished to make way for a parking lot, the building was nearly destroyed until the Pittsburgh Symphony intervened. The Orchestra was searching for a new home, having outgrown Carnegie Music Hall and the Syria Mosque, and the economic advantages to recycling the well-constructed theater were clearly apparent. To explore the feasibility of using the building, Henry J. Heinz II and Charles Denby, President of the Pittsburgh Symphony Society, toured the old movie palace. Together they had the vision to look past the rundown interior

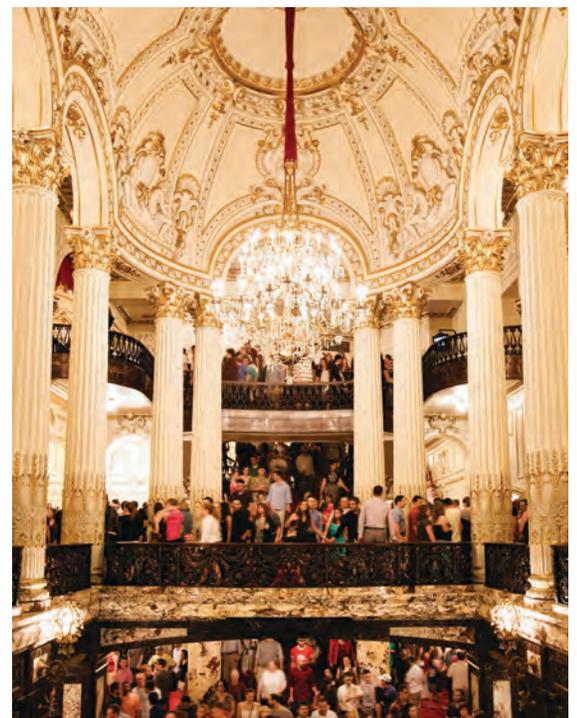
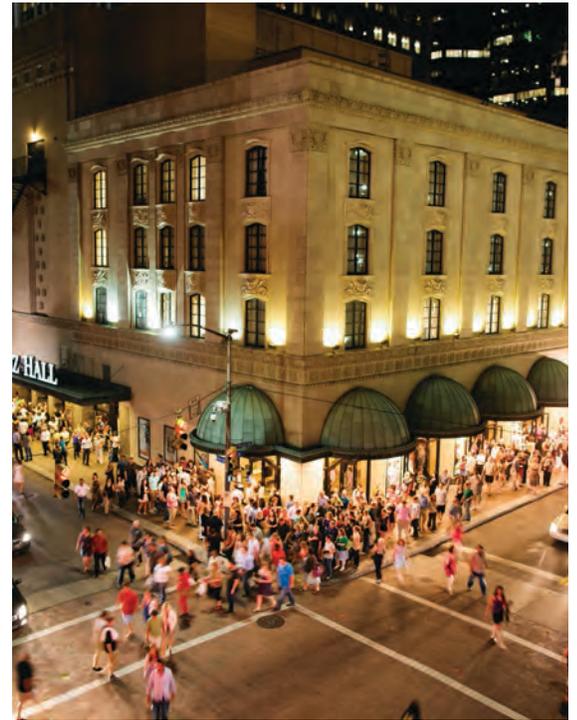
and see that with proper restoration the hall could be a brilliant cultural center. Along with Adolph W. Schmidt, President of the A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, and Theodore L. Hazlett, Jr., representing the Allegheny Conference and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, these men worked with the architectural firm of Stotz, Hess, MacLachlan & Fosner to begin the construction.

The \$10-million reconstruction took place over a three-year period, with much of the work completed by local craftsmen and artisans. Much of the basic architecture of the building remained unchanged from the original French Court style. September 10, 1971 was the Grand Opening of Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts.

During 1995, Heinz Hall underwent a four-month, \$6.5-million renovation. The grand reopening of the newly refurbished hall was September 15, Opening Night of the Pittsburgh Symphony's 1995-96 Centennial season.

Today Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts is owned by and remains home to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which performs more than thirty weeks of concerts in the Hall each season. §

History and images courtesy Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, heinzhall.org. Images © Joey Kennedy.



Benedum Center for the Performing Arts

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



BENEDUM CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

237 Seventh Street

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: February 27, 1928

ARCHITECT: Hoffman-Henon Co.

CAPACITY: 3,719 (original)

2,800 (current)

The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, a Pittsburgh Cultural Trust theater, is a focal point of Pittsburgh's Cultural District. The 2,800-seat theater is home to Pittsburgh Cultural Trust presentations. The Trust provides priority programming dates on the Benedum stage to Cultural District resident companies, and the venue is available on a rental basis to promoters and community groups.

The facility opened as the Stanley Theater on February 27, 1928. James Bly Clark, an early theater tycoon who assisted in the founding of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, financed the \$3 million project. The Stanley was billed as "Pittsburgh's Palace of Amusement." In attendance on opening night were Governor John S. Fisher, Mayor Charles H. Kline, and Adolph Zukor, president of Paramount Studios. Regular admission cost 65 cents—25 cents if you came before noon—and performances provided a welcome lift of spirits during the Great Depression. The theater was purchased and remodeled by the Cinemette Corporation in 1976. In 1977, DiCesare Engler Productions bought the Stanley and presented rock and roll concerts through 1982.

Following the renovation of the Loew's Penn Theater to Heinz Hall, the late H.J. Heinz II focused his attention

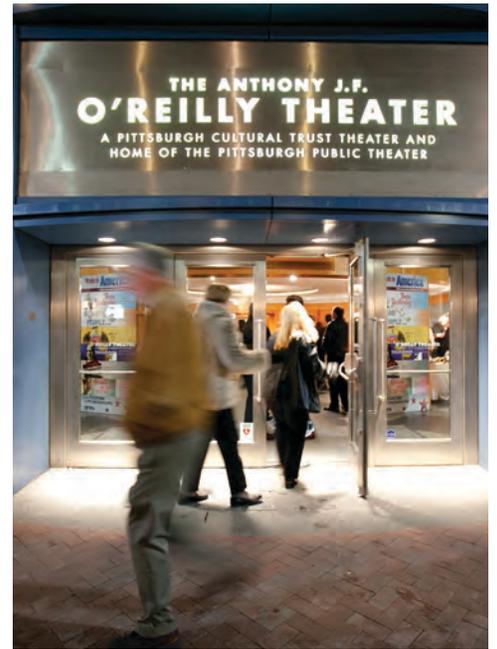
on the historic restoration of the Stanley Theater. This became the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's first project after its founding in 1984. The \$43 million restoration faithfully restored this cultural treasure to its 1928 opening night glory. By following the very strict restoration standards set by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Commonwealth Bureau of Historic Preservation, and the Historic Review Commission of Pennsylvania, the building is registered with the National Register of Historic Places. §

*History and images courtesy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,
trstartarts.org.*



O'Reilly Theater

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



The O'Reilly Theater

621 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
OPENED: 1999
ARCHITECT: Michael Graves
CAPACITY: 650 (current)

Sitting on the former site of the Lyceum Theater, one of the city's many vaudeville houses demolished after the 1936 St. Patrick's Day flood, the O'Reilly Theater is the fourth theater project completed by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. The O'Reilly was created with two purposes: to create a downtown home for Public Theater and to create additional venues for theater, music, and other performances.

Designed by world-renowned architect Michael Graves, the O'Reilly Theater is also the only downtown performance ven-

ue that features a thrust stage, surrounded by the audience on three sides. The theater features 650 seats and state-of-the-art theater technology.

The O'Reilly Theater was built at a cost of \$25 million. Major gifts to the O'Reilly Theater include a naming gift in honor of Dr. Anthony J. O'Reilly from Mrs. Chrissy O'Reilly and current and past senior executives of the H.J. Heinz Company, and the Helen Wayne Rauh Rehearsal Hall, named in memory of the Pittsburgh actress by her son, Richard E. Rauh. Pittsburgh Public Theater produces about 235 performances a year, making the O'Reilly Theater one of the city's most utilized venues. §

*History and images courtesy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,
trustarts.org. Images © Joey Kennedy.*

Harris Theater

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



HARRIS THEATER

809 Liberty Avenue

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: September 14, 1931

ARCHITECT: Unknown

CAPACITY: 194 (original) 194/178 (current)

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Harris Theater is one of the most active arts facilities in the region showing art films programmed by Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Formerly known as the Avenue and the Art Cinema, today, the Harris Theater represents a milestone in the redevelopment of Liberty Avenue. The Art Cinema was the first moving picture house in Pittsburgh to commercially show art movies until competition from other city theaters led to its conversion to an adult, pornographic movie house in the 1960s. As part of its mission to transform the Cultural District, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

purchased and restored the facility leading to further conversions of run-down properties along the Liberty Avenue corridor. With 194 seats for movies and 178 seats for live performances, the Harris Theater officially opened to the public on November 9, 1995.

The Harris was named through a gift from the Buhl Foundation after John P. Harris, co-founder of the Nickelodeon—the first theater solely dedicated to the showing of motion pictures—and a Pennsylvania State Senator. The Harris Theater features contemporary, foreign, and classic films. §

*History and images courtesy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust,
trustarts.org.*

Warner Centre

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

WARNER THEATRE

332 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
OPENED: March 7, 1918
ARCHITECT: C. Howard Crane,
Elmer George Keihler
CAPACITY: 1,980 (original)

When fire destroyed the Grand Opera House in the early morning hours of January 26, 1917, Pittsburgh's "Emperor of Entertainment," Harry Davis announced that he would rebuild immediately. From the ashes rose the new Million Dollar Grand which opened on March 7, 1918 with *Headin' South* and the comedy short, *Her Husband's Wife*.

Built on the spot where "pictures first moved" in Pittsburg(h) with Lumiere's Cinématographe in 1896, Harry Davis merged his chain of theatres, which included the Million Dollar Grand, with the Clark and Stanley chain in 1927, forming the Stanley Company of America. In 1930 the Grand became the Warner Theatre and retained that name up until its partial demolition in 1983.

Located just around the corner from where the Nickelodeon once stood, the Warner had its own list of other Pittsburgh firsts which included, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*—the first full-length animated film, the tri-state premiere of *Gone With The Wind*, and *Bwana Devil*—the first 3-D film.

In 1953, the Warner's flat screen was replaced with a curved screen and the Warner became Pittsburgh's Cinerama showplace with *This Is Cinerama*.

From the strains of the Million Dollar Grand's symphony orchestra to the screams of Warner Theatre patrons being hit by falling plaster during a Bruce Lee double-feature, this theatre of magnificence on Pittsburgh's Fifth Avenue lived for sixty-five

years.

Reborn in 1985 as Warner Centre, an urban shopping/entertainment complex, only the façade and altered outer lobby of the former theatre remain.

The heydays of the Warner Theatre and Centre, are frankly gone with the wind. §

*History and images courtesy
James W. Kastner.*



Garden Theatre

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



GARDEN THEATER

12 West North Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

OPENED: October 12, 1914

CLOSED: March 2007

ARCHITECT: Thomas H. Scott

CAPACITY: 770 (original)

1,000 (current)

Text taken from Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS, Report number HABS PA-1278. Images from from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction numbers, 132848pu and 132846pu].

Built in 1915, the Garden Theater was one of a growing group of North Side Pittsburgh neighborhood movie houses. Its builder, and first owner was David E. Park, Vice President of the Peoples National Bank.

Because of the similarity between “Park” and “Garden,” the latter was chosen as a name for the theatre, both as a pun on the name of the owner, and to avoid confusing it with the name of another of his properties, the Park Building, in downtown Pittsburgh.

In 1917, soon after the opening of the theatre, David Park died, and the property was inherited by his son, Lewis A. Park. In 1924, Park gave the title to the theatre to Bennett Amdur (shortened from the original Amdursky) who soon commissioned the Libman-Spanjer Company of New York City, after he had seen their work in the Bellevue Theatre in Pittsburgh. Amdur ran the Garden for over 50 years until his death in 1970.

After 30 days of mourning, the theatre reopened. After 1973 the Garden was faced with closing or showing adult films. It chose the later and remained in operation as an adult theatre until it closed in 2007.

Today, the city is still trying to work with developers to revitalize this historic area including the Garden Theater. §





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