
Point Pleasant Historical Society

History Term Paper



Box 1273 Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742

March 2008

Before the Multiplex, when movie going was a thrill

Let us take a tour of a few of the old movie houses from our area, most of them sadly gone now, but a few gloriously restored. Much of the information here is adapted from contributions to the website Cinematreasures.org, whose operators invite you to improve their site by adding your knowledge. Some local information is from our society's records and research.

Grove Theater

Arnold Avenue, Point Pleasant Beach;
Closed

Occupying what is now the Dollar General Store, the Grove was a movie house from 1920 until damaged by a fire in 1950. It was constructed as a freestanding building in 1920 by Alonzo Carver and Ralph Borden and its contours as a movie house can still be seen when viewing it from the rear parking lot. Borden also opened a United Cigar Store in the building, the beginnings of Borden's Stationery. The Grove occasionally had live events. One year cowboy actor Gabby Hays hosted the annual Miss Point Pleasant High School pageant.

Arnold Theater

Arnold Avenue, Point Pleasant Beach;
Closed

The Point Pleasant area movie house most remembered is this modest building still on Arnold Avenue. Although built just to show movies, it became the home of local live theatrical productions briefly in the early 80s before closing. It was converted into an office building and is now a gym and rehab center.

Lorraine Theater

Bridge Avenue, Bay Head; Closed;
Seated 300

This theater has been a mall known as The Shopper's Wharf since at least 1975. Originally built on pilings over Twilight Lake, the movie house was said to flood during some high tides. The projectionist ascended to his booth via a ladder attached to the outside wall.

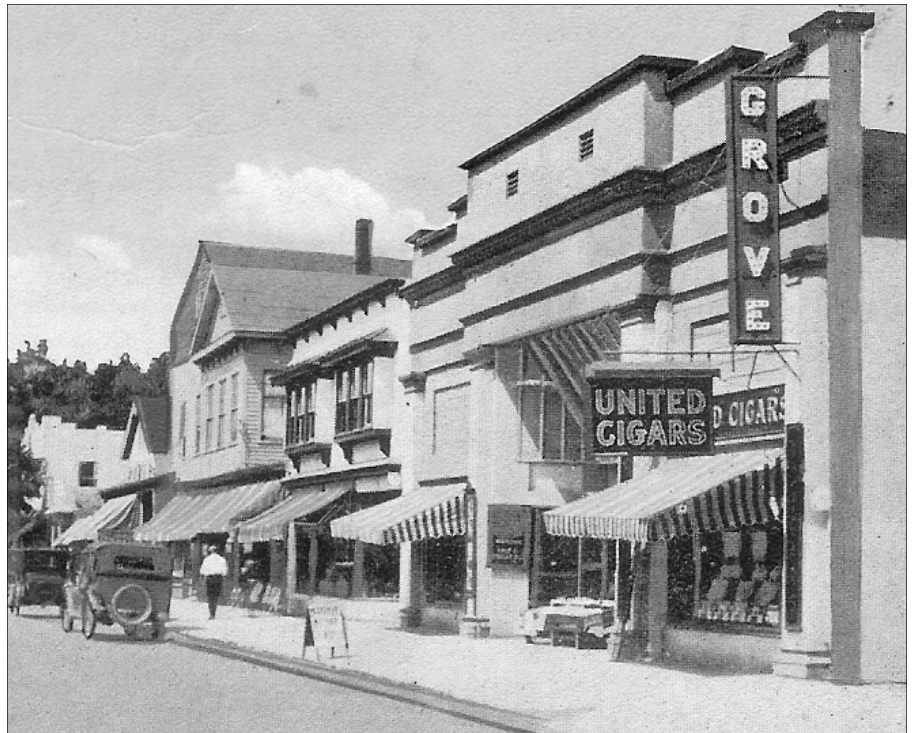
Alnquin Arts Theatre

Main Street, Manasquan; Open; Seats 594
Opened in 1938. Remained a single screen until closing in the 1980s. Sat vacant until 1992 when a non profit organization took it over. Reopened as a performing arts center in 1994. At the grand reopening, tickets were sold for the 1938 price of 15 cents for adults and 9 cents for children. The 1938 winner of the "name the theater" contest was present for the 1994 reopening. Also shows classic and first run movies.

Fly-In Drive-In

Route 34, Wall; Closed

On June 3, 1948 Edward Brown Jr., a former navy pilot, opened the first Fly-In



The Grove Theater on Arnold Avenue, Point Pleasant Beach, circa 1930

Drive-In Theater. There was room for 500 cars and 25 airplanes. The planes landed at an airfield next to the Drive-In, then they would taxi to the last row which was set up for planes. When the movies were over Mr. Brown provided a jeep to tow the planes back to the airfield.

Lavallette Theater

Grand Central Avenue, Lavallette;
Closed; Seated 200

This was a wonderful old theater, one of many that dotted the barrier island on the jersey shore and only opened in summer. In the 70's it would fill up with families at night and be a wild matinee place with kids on rainy days. No AC, but 2 giant fans under the stage. Sometimes on especially warm nights they would leave the side doors open. A neighbor had a flock of chickens or ducks and they would occasionally stroll through squawking. The longtime manger for over forty years was a guy named Jimmy Cagney – no not that Jimmy Cagney but a true character nevertheless. – Contributed by Dave Hosseini

Laurelton Motor Vue

Routes 70 & 88, Brick

The local Wal-Mart occupies this site where one of the last drive-ins in our area was built in the last 1950s. The theater featured a mechanized kiddy playground and free mosquito repelling incense coils.

Baronet Theatre

4th Avenue, Asbury Park; Style: Art Deco; Seats: 546

The Baronet opened in 1913 as the Ocean Theatre. It was renovated in 1953 by Walter Reade and was considered an Art Deco treasure. The auditorium seats

546 in the original recliner seats and has a stage with proscenium arch. The mirrored lobby with its huge Manley popcorn machine has been retained as original. The present owners since 1986 have recreated the theatre's late 1950's/early 1960's decor. – Contributed by Charles Van Bibber

Hudson's Garden Theatre

Boardwalk, Asbury Park; Closed

Hudson's Garden Theatre had a matinee at 3PM for 20 cents. Evening shows at 7:30 and 9PM were 30 cents. Smoking was permitted. On July 14, 1920, the Garden showed D. W. Griffith's "Scarlet Days."

Other Asbury Park Movie Houses:

Lyric Theater; Closed
Main Street; Demolished
Mayfair Theatre; Demolished
Paramount; Open
Rialto Theater; Closed
Savoy; Closed
St. James Theatre; Demolished

Belmar Cinema

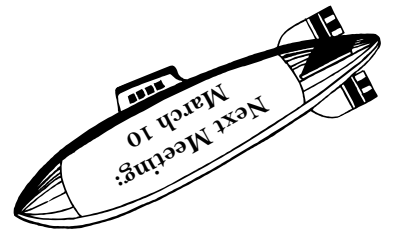
Main Street, Belmar; Closed

A small independent tucked away in a strip mall next door to an Acme supermarket, the Belmar Cinema did only marginal business as a second run house. The only real activity was during midnight showings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." A name change to Man Ray Cinema, and policy change to art films did nothing to improve business, and the theater closed in 1981 and the space was converted to retail.

Amboys Drive-In

Route 9, Sayreville; Demolished

The strange thing about the Amboys
(Continued on other side)



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Retiring curator says thanks

I wanted to thank everybody for the plaque that the Society gave me at the November meeting. I was surprised, honored and, frankly, touched – no other organization had ever presented me with a plaque before. The gift certificate to Charlie Brown's was also a pleasant surprise and one that Jeff and I promptly put to good use.

I appreciate your thoughtfulness and support over the years. Please continue to help those who are interested in organizing and developing our wonderful archives.

Kathy Heim

Help Wanted

The society is in need of a Recording Secretary. Please see President Jim Mallone if you can help. Thanks to our retiring secretary Dorothy Hatch for all her help.

Before the Multiplex

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Drive-In was that is was located near, and completely visible from the very busy Garden State Parkway and Route 9 highways. My Dad's story is that at some point they showed porn. As my Dad tells the story, when they were showing the porn, "Deep Throat", or whatever it was, it caused traffic jams. It was replaced by the now defunct 11 screen Amboy Multiplex. – Contributed by Irv

Beach Cinema

Also known as Palace Theatre; Main Street, Bradley Beach; Seats 520; Open

Last single-screen in full-time operation in area. Opened at Christmas 1925 as motion picture venue, had been stage house previously, built in 1915. – Contributed by Gary Crawford

Eatontown Drive-In

Route 35, Eatontown; Demolished; Operated by Walter Reade Theatres. One report: "Saw an ad announcing it's opening in April 1950: 'Free in-car heaters...Visit the Monkey Village.'"

Strand Theater

Clifton Avenue, Lakewood; Open; Renaissance Revival style; Seats 1484

The Strand was built for the Ferber Amusement Company in 1922 by Architect Thomas W. Lamb, to serve as a try-

At our March 10 meeting

The Antique Emporium's Clara Johnson

Check out your old, unusual, and just possibly valuable, stuff and bring something to our Monday, March 10 meeting. The Emporium's proprietor Clara Johnson will be our guest and she requests members bring one or two items for her to discuss. In this first gathering of the new season we meet at 7:30 P.M. at the Woman's club, 513 St. Louis Avenue.

out venue for Broadway shows before they actually went to Broadway. However, within a couple years of its opening, it began to host vaudeville shows and silent films, as well as the occasional play or musical. Among the stars who appeared included Burns & Allen, Milton Berle, and Ray Bolger. By the end of the 1940s, the theater was only showing films. It closed in the late 1970s.

In 1981, the vacant Strand was added to the New Jersey Register of Historical Places, and the National Register of Historical Places. Restoration began in 1992. Within a year, the theater reopened as a performing arts center, looking very much like it did when it opened 70 years before. – Contributed by Bryan Krefft, Jennifer Petmezas

Paramount Theater

Broadway, Long Branch; Closed, Restoring; Style: Atmospheric, Spanish Moorish; Seats 1722

Large and ornate theater in downtown Long Branch, currently used by Siperstein's Paints. Management of Sipersteins has recently expressed interest in restoring the Paramount as part of a renewal effort in the area. Much of the auditorium is intact, including much of the unique plaster decorations. – Contributed by Jim Thatcher

Brielle Circle Drive-In

Route 34, Manasquan; Demolished

Listed as operating in a 1951 movie guide as the Brielle Motor-Vue. Jack Nicholson would hang out here during his teen years (early 1950s). The circle for which it was named has disappeared. The site is now owned by the NJ DOT and is used to store materials.

Strand Theater

Boardwalk, Ocean Grove; Demolished

Located on the north end of the Ocean Grove Boardwalk, operated seasonally. A tiny theater tucked in between an amusement arcade and a block of souvenir shops and hot dog stands, it fell victim to a plan to build a senior citizens facility in 1977. The building was demolished; financing for the new project fell through, everybody lost. – Contributed by Jim Thatcher

Count Basie Theatre

Monmouth Street, Red Bank; Open; Seats 1600; Architect, William E. Lehman

The Carlton Theatre opened in 1927, featuring both movies and vaudeville. After a successful multi-decade run, the theater closed in 1970. Three years later, it was purchased by the Monmouth County Arts Council and renamed the Monmouth Arts Center. It was later renamed once again, as the Count Basie Theatre, after the famed Red Bank native and now features live performances. – Contributed by William Dahn

Seaside Park Theaters

The Colonial, Boulevard & Stockton Avenue, seating 505; The Strand, Ocean & Proctor Avenues, seating 487. Now demolished, both are listed as early as 1944 in trade magazines.

Ritz Theater

Atlantic Avenue, Spring Lake; Demolished; Seated 500. The Ritz boasted a majestic facade of Greek columns and a wrap-around veranda. Operated by the Walter Reade organization in the summers until the mid Seventies.

Community Theater

Washington Street, Toms River; Closed; Style, Colonial Revival; Seated 963; Listed as early as 1951 in trade publications.