

# A History of The Capitol Theatre Winnipeg, Manitoba



-photo: Manitoba Archives

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## ~ The Prologue ~

For many decades, beginning with its lavish and celebrated opening night in the dead of winter, 1921, The Capitol Theatre at Donald Street and Portage Avenue in the heart of Winnipeg's business, shopping, and entertainment district, was the crown jewel of the city's movie "palaces". That this fact is largely unknown by anyone who was born after 1940—just two decades after said lavish opening—is a function of the fact that while The Metropolitan Theatre located just down the street on Donald, for example, was essentially left alone by its owners once it had been built, Famous Players, which owned The Capitol, was unable to show similar restraint. While The Capitol had a business life of 69 years, its original state and splendour lasted barely 20 before its parent company began to make alterations—both minor and major—that would eventually see them abandon the Capitol entirely. In then end, the theatre that was built not only to compete with The Allen (The Met) down the street, but to intimidate the Allen Company itself into extinction, had been transformed from being as opulent a theatre as could be found, to as sad an example of the death of a movie-going era as any that has ever existed. The following is an account of how that happened.

## ~ Act 1 ~

Winnipeg was incorporated as a city in 1873 with a population of 1,869 people. The arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 brought a 30-year period of growth and prosperity unequalled in Canadian urban development. A flood of immigrants, high wheat prices, plentiful capital and improved farming techniques contributed to making Winnipeg the wholesale, administrative, and financial centre of western Canada.<sup>1\*</sup> Add to those advantages the fact that Winnipeg was situated in the geographical heart of North America (the 'bulls-eye' being at Rugby, ND just 3 hours by car to the south), and Winnipeg had the advantage of not only being a way-station between Toronto and the West, but also at the top of a shipping corridor leading into the heart of the US Midwest at Chicago. In fact, for a time, Winnipeg was known as "The Chicago of The North", enjoying both the prestige and profile befitting that title. It followed then, that Winnipeg also rose as a cultural centre that would become a key market for the marketing of the burgeoning motion picture exhibition industry during the final decade of that expansion.

Pursuant to that growth, The Allen Company was building "The Met" on Donald Street just south of Portage Avenue, targeting the opening for January of 1920. In a competitive response, Allen's chief competitor, Famous Players Canadian Corporation Limited ("Famous Players")—a merging of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation and Paramount Theatres Limited, formed by E. W. Bickell and N. L. Nathanson in 1918— would build its own palace within sight of The Met at the northeast corner of Portage and Donald, as part of its larger plan to erect a chain of fifty new theatres across Canada. In fact, according to a Heritage Winnipeg brief, Famous Players was not out merely to compete with The Allen Circuit. Rather, by following a pattern of announcing the construction of cutting-edge theatres in locations where the Allen chain was already building, it was Famous Players' goal to intimidate the competition as well. In addition, Famous Players parent company in New York was involved in film production under the Paramount name, and the Allan chain had been Paramount's prime Canadian distributor until the late teens. When Famous Players New York formed its affiliation with Famous Players

Canadian Corp., Allen's film source dried up, business fell off and, as heavily leveraged as they were with the construction of new theatres, the company quickly became insolvent. By 1923, Famous Players had acquired Allen's assets (including the three-year-old Met), and was on the way to a virtual monopoly in Canadian film distribution.<sup>2</sup>

It was into this highly competitive exhibition boom in Winnipeg (which was also about to see the entry of The Garrick Theatre's 2,000 seats into the fray) that The Capitol would be born; the first word of its impending arrival coming at a city council meeting on November 19, 1919 in a presentation announcement made by S.E. Richards. It is curious that if Famous Players' *modus operandi* was to intimidate its competition with grand announcements of new, state-of-the-art movie houses, Mr. Richards refused to disclose at the meeting which company would be building the new theatre, and stated specifically that the new theatre would be "devoted to vaudeville".<sup>3</sup> It is not known precisely when the stated use of the theatre changed from vaudeville to motion picture exhibition, but it seems likely that the announcement at the council meeting was intended as a competitive red herring, with Famous Players preferring to make a splashier (and therefore characteristically intimidating) announcement at a later date of its own choosing.

The architect of the Capitol was the prestigious North American theatre architect Thomas W. Lamb, whose designs leaned toward Italian Renaissance Revival detailing (Figs. 1<sup>4</sup> & 2<sup>5</sup>). Lamb became prominent in theatre design in 1913 after designing the Regent Theatre in New York City. His success continued with his designs of the Hamilton Theatre on Broadway in New York, and The Tivoli in Washington, DC. While there are few pictorial representations of the appearance of the original exterior of Winnipeg's Capitol Theatre, it is safe to conclude that it shared similar features to the buildings seen below, excepting one key variable: the Portage Ave. entrance—in existence from 1921 until 1964, and more desirable because of its frontage on the main commercial thoroughfare—was gained through the purchase of the existing Manitoba Building, which was then extensively remodelled, and therefore not built from the ground up to Lamb's creative ideal. In fact, the November, 1919 *Manitoba Free Press* story reported that the front of the building would be "four stories high, (and) built on the store and office plan (motif?)."<sup>6</sup> Further, Lamb was faced with the same infrastructure challenge that he had faced with his Capitol Theatre projects in Calgary and Vancouver, and at his Pantages Theatre in Toronto: an existing alley running between the fronting block and the main theatre block in the rear. He solved the problem as he did in the other locations, by spanning the alley with an enclosed bridge, which was apparently quite voluminous. In fact, the *Manitoba Free Press* noted that the lobby extended "half a block to the entrance to the theatre proper. (It could) house an entire audience so that no standing outside (would) be necessary for the waiting crowd." Once inside, the patrons were treated to a grand "marble and brass entrance like... a great depot."<sup>7</sup>

Fig. 1



*(Former) Hamilton Theatre, 3560-3568 Broadway, Manhattan. Built 1912-13; Architect Thomas W. Lamb-courtesy New York City Landmarks Commission*

Fig. 2



*The original rendering by T.W Lamb of the proposed Tivoli Theatre in Washington, DC – courtesy Horning Bros.*

While the exterior of the theatre might not have been as ornate as the above-pictured Lamb designs, the interior was noted as “among the finest Lamb theatres in Canada” when all 16 were extant, partly due to Famous Players’ commitment to spare little expense in its opening move to undermine the Allen’s Metropolitan effort just down the street.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the proposed cost of The Capitol was \$632,000; considerably more than Famous Players was spending on its other Canadian theatres, but somewhat less than the amount touted by a pre-opening advertisement of \$750,000: “Some show...\$375 a seat...ZOWIE! Multiply that by 2,000 (capacity of the new Capitol Theatre) and you have an idea what to expect when you walk thru (sic) the doors...”<sup>9</sup> (and considerably less than the \$1 million-plus final cost as reported by the post-opening night story in the *Manitoba Free Press*, which also numbered the patron seating at 2,200).<sup>10</sup>

Although the building construction had been delayed by a shortage of cement and structural steel, when the theatre did open, that same opening night crowd of over 2,000 people (with more having been turned away at the door) on Valentines Day of 1921 was treated to surroundings described in the *Manitoba Free Press* the next day:

“(The new theatre is) worthy of the term ‘distinctive’. At times, with the lights playing on the auditorium, it reminded one of the dreams of Fairyland. The dominating idea was to give expression to something different to anything that

has yet been seen in the picture houses of the country, and the architect, the builder and the designer have eminently been successful. Marble has been used unsparingly (and) mirrors also embellish the attractiveness of the lobby...New ideas greet one on every hand and the beaten path has been strictly avoided. Beauty, elegance, refinement and coziness were what appealed to all...the stage curtain...interprets a landscape, but with few figures, and might suggest 'Fairyland', the 'Garden of Eden', or some other idol of the imagination. It carries one into a new world, remote from the materialistic." (?)<sup>11</sup>

In fact, "the permanent stage, scenery and curtain were noteworthy, being designed by John Wenger, a Russian who was considered one of the leading artists of the day with an 'inimitable' personal stamp to his work."<sup>12</sup>

As for the specific detailing within the interior design of the room itself, a brief prepared by Heritage Winnipeg assembled the following from various sources:

"...Lamb has masterfully divided the auditorium into an extremely elegant space, with one part perfectly flowing into another...decorative detail, including a multiplication of...rosettes, medallions...cameos and griffins, is beautifully handled too, outlining and enhancing the main architectural lines in a light and delicate manner. The broad, dome-like ceiling (is) a prime focus of attention. A highly decorative secondary dome, saucer-like in its depth, graces the centre of it, while four ornate bands stretch from its edges to points at the back and side-fronts of the auditorium...The general design, including the fan-like seating arrangement...is thus totally unified..."<sup>13</sup>

"...in front of the proscenium arch on each side of the theatre were tall, gilt, round headed grills decorated by winged female figures. Similar figures were found throughout the plaster-work of the dome."<sup>14</sup>

"The lounge area itself was well-appointed too, wood and scagliola detailing, cove lighting, silk-cushioned lounge chairs...a smoking room and a ladies' 'retiring room'."<sup>15</sup>

While patrons were enveloped by this elegance and luxury of design, they also, as was the common practise in the movie palaces of the day, had every need and whim briskly and efficiently serviced by a staff of attendants attired in tunics of scarlet, navy blue or deep green (depending on their stations); all with gold braiding. It truly was a fantasy world that took the patron a world away from what lay just outside the front doors.

Finally, with a semi-circular stage and orchestra pit, at the rear of which was a very small screen—according to extant architectural drawings, it was perhaps 14 feet across—the final necessity was the theatre organ. In the case of The Capitol Theatre, it was a 3m/13r Warren, considered to be particularly large for a theatre organ, but appropriate to the scale of the Capitol auditorium. According to The Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society, "the Warren organ was built in Woodstock, Ontario in 1920 and was installed in the

Capitol Theatre in Winnipeg. In 1947, it was removed from that theatre by Herbert Park, a local engineer and collector who hoped to install it in a shed behind his home.”\*<sup>16</sup>

## ~ Act 2 ~

The removal of the Warren theatre organ in 1947 was not the first alteration made to The Capitol Theatre. As the film exhibition business continued to grow throughout the 1920’s, the facility was converted for sound. This likely occurred in late 1928 or early 1929, as part of a chain-wide adaptation noted by the Famous Players company history:

“On Sept. 1, 1928, Famous Players installed the first sound equipment in a Canadian theatre at the Palace in Montreal. Installation of similar equipment was carried out as rapidly as possible in the remaining theatres.”<sup>17</sup>

As the film business continued to boom, further upgrades were made—likely around 1930, and possibly as part of the renovation cycle that had brought sound equipment into the interior the year before. As part of this alteration, “both sides of the Manitoba Block were taken over for the entrance and a wider marquee erected, stretching across the building’s whole width.”<sup>18</sup> This was be the final expansion of the theatre. The next changes made would begin the long, sad desecration of this monument to the age of the movie palace.

Throughout the 1930’s, Winnipeg citizens suffered through the financial constraints demanded by the Depression years, and Winnipeg’s exhibitors were not immune to the downturn in business experienced across the industry. Although it could be logically argued that movie attendance would fall off to a trickle during the Depression, it actually fell off very little, likely (in part) because the need for escapism in those tough times was more acute than ever. However, this economic climate forced the motion picture exhibitors into an industry-wide lowering of ticket prices, and a business model that demanded ever more aggressive marketing of their houses.

Finally, beginning in 1941, after holding up through the Depression years, Famous Players, now forced to peer ahead into the uncertain business climate brought on by World War II, blinked. Perhaps in an effort to modernize the look of the theatre, Famous Players remodelled the lounges, entrances, and façade (in other words, the surfaces and structures that patrons would see first upon their approach and entry into the theatre). While the larger Portage Ave. façade and marquee—expanded just over a decade prior—remained intact for awhile longer, “the Donald St. façade, always inauspiciously lined with shop fronts and one modest-sized theatre entrance at the south end, was modernized in 1941...”<sup>19</sup> This “modest” entrance at the south end would later become the sole entry point into the theatre after another make-over in 1965.

The post-war years between 1945 and 1950 in particular, would see a rise in theatre attendance in Winnipeg commensurate with that felt throughout the industry, as movie-goers gradually found their way back to some semblance of a “normal” life. There was a large spike in movie attendance directly after the war as young service men and women arrived home and began the furious rounds of courtship that would lead to the population

explosion commonly referred to as “the baby-boom”. Because live performances hadn’t been a regular part of any theatre program since the advent of “talkies” in the late 1920’s, the orchestra pit and stage areas at the Capitol had become wasted space. Further, the suggestion could be posited that the social traditions of Winnipeg audiences had changed in the over two decades since The Capitol had opened. Where the social standing enjoyed by one in the theatre’s first decade of existence would have dictated a preference to be seated away from the common masses in the loge seating, by the post-war years, the movie experience was more geared to the common man, and therefore, a general seating area would have sufficed. In any case, according to the Heritage Winnipeg brief, “at some point before 1949, the orchestra pit had been eliminated, as well as a raised section of side loge seating running all the way from the front to the back of the main floor. (This explained the) awkwardness of the sidewall treatment, in which the paired engaged columns supporting the three decorative arches (did) not extend as far downward as might (have been) expected.”<sup>20</sup>

### ~ Act 3 ~

The remainder of the 1950’s and the beginning of the following decade saw the movie exhibition business as a whole, hit hard by the advent of television, which really took hold in the mid-1950’s. The business of the traditional movie theatre house was also assailed by the rise of the drive-in theatre, which in turn resulted from the growth of the car culture following the dawning of the new “suburban” culture. As moviegoers became more mobile—an adaptation necessitated by urban sprawl, and the increased distances of travel required between work, errands, and play in this changing civic infrastructure model—they were also presented by entrepreneurs with a vast new array of recreational options like sporting events, shopping, and the aforementioned drive-in theatre, all spread over a vast area. No longer were they forced to go ‘downtown’ to enjoy a night out. This paradigm shift was felt not only by movie theatres, but also by some of the peripheral businesses flanking the old movie houses, such as restaurants and retail establishments. Soon, many of those would begin to close their downtown locations and fold outright, or they were forced to adapt by following the business to the suburbs. This period was the heyday for example, of nightclubs and restaurants like The Paddock (at Portage and St. James St.) that had located themselves closer to the fringes of the former downtown area. As a result of this outbound movement, Winnipeg’s downtown began a slow deterioration, with the Odeon, Garrick, Met, and Capitol theatres all competing for an ever-dwindling number of downtown denizens.

Coupled with increasing competition from the outlying recreational choices during the late 50’s and early 60’s, was a subtle change in cultural attitudes and traditions. The days when gentlemen would dress in suit, tie and hat (always a hat), and ladies would dress in kind (complete with gloves) on any social outing were being left behind. It is surely a paradox that, while the start of the Kennedy Administration in 1960 marked the beginning of the vibrant, classy and well-dressed period known as ‘Camelot’, it was John Kennedy’s tradition-defying act of eschewing the requisite hat for his inauguration celebrations that is generally credited as marking the beginning of a general relaxing of social attitudes, and a gradual modernization of design, fashion, and décor.

It was as part of this shift from the old to the new which saw Famous Players elect to completely update the Donald St. exterior of the Capitol, creating the non-descript, ‘modern’ façade (Fig. 3<sup>21</sup>) that would be carried by the Capitol for the rest of its lifespan. This renovation of the western face of the theatre was completed and opened with a minimum of media fanfare. In addition to the simple caption that accompanied the newspaper photo below, the only other acknowledgement of the change to the look was a small footnote added at the bottom of programme advertisements on the movie page; ‘PLEASE NOTE—NEW CAPITOL ENTRANCE. DONALD STREET...JUST NORTH OF PORTAGE’

Fig. 3



*Newspaper photo touting ‘New Look for The Capitol’ (1965)*

-Winnipeg Tribune

### ~ Act 4 ~

Throughout its entire lifespan, The Capitol Theatre was able to maintain its status as a first-run house, but it was not immune to the general downturn in movie attendance over the course of the next 10 years. In that same time period, the conditions that had conspired to begin driving patron traffic away from the downtown businesses in general continued to do so. The downtown area also had to contend with the growing distaste on the part of movie goers to pay for their parking downtown, when over the previous few years they had slowly become accustomed to being able to park free at the suburban malls—many of which had their own theatres, like the Grant Park, Polo Park, and Garden City malls.

To combat this siphoning off of patron traffic to the suburbs, and in response to the growing phenomenon of the multi-screen movie house, Winnipeg’s downtown began to see the twinning of theatres. The Garrick had twinned in 1968, and was in the process of further dividing into four screens by 1979, and The Northstar on Portage Ave. at Donald St. had opened its twin screens in 1970. In a competitive response, and possibly out of an outright desperation to survive, Famous Players closed down the business and twinned



The Capitol in 1979. According to news article in the *Winnipeg Tribune* from March of that year (with accompanying photo Fig. 4<sup>22</sup>), the projected cost of the renovation to Famous Players was \$350,000. In designing the new configuration of the Capitol, Famous Players had been faced with a choice between dividing the house either vertically down the centre, or horizontally into the ‘over/under’ layout it finally elected to pursue. It seems arguable to the layperson that this drop-ceiling configuration was selected only because it was the cheaper of the options. However, Brian Cameron, the appointed Famous Players spokesperson for the project, was quoted as stating that the company was “doing its utmost to retain as much of the building’s architecture as possible, (adding that) it would have cost much less to split the theatre vertically, but its grandeur would have suffered.” For their part, Manitoba Historical Society officials “called the renovations ‘regrettable’, but agreed that Famous Players had picked the best way to renovate the building.”<sup>23</sup> However, this does not mean that the grand old theatre was not damaged by the work. In fact, according to Heritage Winnipeg, “the wide and extremely decorative entablature running around most of the Capitol’s auditorium was the most assaulted feature, being at the level where the new ceiling was tied to the walls.”<sup>24</sup>

Fig. 4



The Capitol theatre: Closed for renovations (1979) -Winnipeg Tribune  
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While no additional seats were added to the theatre in this reconfiguration, Famous Players hoped that by giving its audience a second choice of features, that it could increase the attendance beyond the 400-500 people it was currently drawing (about 1/3 capacity of the single-screen room at that time).<sup>25</sup> The “gala re-opening” of the complex—now renamed the Capitol 1 and Capitol 2—happened right on schedule on the weekend of June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1979, when the newly-appointed lobby (itself a recipient of some attention during the renovation) received patrons who had a choice between the features ‘Alien’ and ‘Players’.

### ~ The Final Act ~

While Famous Players move to twin the Capitol Theatre paid off for a time, the exodus of retail business from downtown was a movement that was beyond control. The Capitol theatre continued limping along while more and newer theatres opened out in the promised land of the suburbs (Kildonan Place, St. Vital Centre), and even—in a move that is still considered by many the result a naive notion that business could be lured back downtown—the new Portage Place Mall. If Famous Players was looking for an excuse to pull the Capitol off of life-support (and stop the financial bleeding that was doubtless happening) it was handed such an opening in 1990 when the City of Winnipeg closed the Amy St. steam plant, which had been the Capitol’s only source of heat through the many winters since that opening night almost 70 years before.

Faced with a choice between another overhaul of the theatre that this time would have had to include a newly-designed heating system before the coming of another winter, Famous Players elected to close down the one time icon of “The Golden Age of the Movie Palace”. Characteristically, the company did so without any fanfare, quietly shutting its doors in two stages during the week leading up to and including the Labour Day weekend of 1990. Following the final screening for the day of *The Two Jakes* (the sequel to John Huston’s *Chinatown*) on August 26<sup>th</sup> in the upper (smaller) theatre, staff permanently extended the velvet rope across the access stairway to the Capitol 2. A few days later, on Sunday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1990, following the final screening for the night of *Arachnophobia*, the remaining staff vacuumed the carpets, cleaned out the popcorn machine, and flushed the drink dispenser for the last time before grabbing a souvenir or two. They then—likely without any knowledge of the history of the place, and perhaps for many without much thought beyond which doors they might knock on next for work—flipped the switch that turned out the lights on one of the grandest, most opulent and splendid movie palaces that Canada has ever seen. Famous Players hadn’t even elected to keep the Capitol open for the entire long weekend.

### ~ Epilogue ~

While the passing of the Capitol went largely un-noticed by the citizens of Winnipeg, the event had been on the radar of local historians for weeks, if not months. In July, long before *Arachnophobia* had un-spooled for the final time, they had posted a letter to the office of then-provincial minister of culture and heritage, Bonnie Michelson, asking that her office lobby Famous Players to finance a basic level of maintenance on the building through the winter, until a buyer could be found who would convert it for some other use.

The minister's office however, did not share their sense of urgency. Unsatisfied with the lack of response, local historians organised a picket on a frigid night in late December to try to force the hand of Famous Players into hiring a consultant to investigate the possibility of saving the building, and to push the government to have it designated an historic artefact (thereby opening provincial coffers to aid in its upkeep). Famous Players relented, and agreed to hire a consulting firm to calculate the cost of effectively "mothballing" the Capitol with a basic level of maintenance behind its closed doors until a buyer could be found. While this drama played out, the Capitol remained boarded shut awaiting its fate (Fig. 4 <sup>26</sup>).

Fig. 4



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*Facade of The Capitol Theatre (circa. 2000)*

In June of 1991, the Capitol achieved Historic Commemoration from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (Parks Canada), and gained spot on list of Winnipeg's registry of historic structures. According to a consultant's report prepared by the engineering firm Roberts, Sloan, & Assoc. Inc., the cost of "mothballing" the theatre was pegged at \$120,000, which would establish proper heating. Thereafter, \$14,000 per year would be required to maintain the heat.<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to note that the proposal was dated February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1991—70 years to the day after the Capitol Theatre's magnificent opening night gala.

Although there was an ongoing effort to have this "mothballing" project implemented, it never happened, and the theatre continued to fall into disrepair as the cost of saving it mushroomed. According to a 2000 *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial contained in the Heritage Winnipeg brief, "in 1996, it was estimated that it would cost \$6.2 million to restore (the Capitol). It subsequently was found that the basement of the unheated structure had filled with water that turned into 'the biggest ice cube this side of the Rockies', according to one wag... More recently, it was found that the ceiling had collapsed to the floor, the result of a roof that had ceased to keep rain out..."<sup>28</sup> A mould problem had also developed in the years since the building's doors were padlocked, and the fact that asbestos had been used extensively in the original construction of the Capitol exacerbated the problem.

Over the years, potential saviours came and went, bringing with them proposals for alternate uses for the theatre, including a Bingo Hall, a book store (similar to the successful re-birth of another theatre of this vintage in Toronto), and—in a move that would have physically connected the two old business foes—a performing arts centre complete with an overpass spanning Portage Avenue that would have joined the Capitol with The Met. None came about.

Finally, in June of 2000, according to a story in *The Winnipeg Sun*, “a surge of interest from developers in downtown's vacant properties -- and a consultant's report that (said) the theatre (was) beyond repair -- forced the committee to de-list the Capitol from Winnipeg's registry of historic structures...”<sup>29</sup> sealing the fate of the now sad-looking white elephant the building had become.

For The Capitol Theatre, the end came with the swing of a wrecking ball during the first week of March 2001.

While efforts continue to revitalize downtown Winnipeg by attracting new businesses, they have created a contradictory by-product: the systematic demolition of the older, more majestic downtown landmarks. Mountain Equipment Co-op—which now occupies the same northeast corner of Portage Ave. and Donald St. that once was home to The Capitol’s marquee, entrance and lobby—is touted by civic officials as being a result of their efforts to attract new businesses into the downtown area. The True North arena project, which is expected to draw pedestrian traffic into the area to patronize the surviving businesses, required the razing of the stately and historic Eaton’s building, a visit to which was once a big event for any family spending an adventurous day downtown—a day that likely saw parents bring their kids across the street to the Capitol while they shopped and dined, or which saw families attend an evening feature together after gathering to rub for good luck, the foot of the statue of Timothy Eaton, founder of that also-defunct family empire.

Now, the drive southward on Donald St. from Ellice Ave. to Graham Ave. is one of the saddest imaginable for anyone who valued the once impressive facades and stately interiors that stood behind them, taking one past the empty lot where the Capitol once stood on the left, across Portage Ave. with the ruins of the Eaton’s building on the right, just across the street from the defaced marble exterior of the former Allen (Met) Theatre back on the left. Time only will tell if The Met, which did have the advantage (?) of being ‘mothballed’, will ultimately join Eaton’s and The Capitol or survive in a new form (although it too, is currently uninhabitable due to the same issues of mildew spores, asbestos and overall disrepair that sealed the fate of The Capitol).

Physically, The Capitol is not lost entirely. The Pantages Playhouse Theatre lobby now features two artefacts that were removed from the Capitol theatre. The angel statue that once stood in a stage-flanking alcove, and its accessory, an ornate wall fixture, were salvaged from the building just before its demolition and moved to the Pantages where they were restored and are now on permanent display.<sup>30</sup>

In the end, there is one concluding twist to the story of The Capitol Theatre in Winnipeg. In 1979, the federal government went so far as to order Parks Canada to photograph the interior, so that the photos could later be used to provide a record of the décor and ornamentation, should events ever conspire to permit their recreation. They didn't, of course. Those photographs however, are the closest anyone not fortunate enough to have experienced The Capitol in its prime can come to walking through those doors—existing now only in memory—on a Saturday evening, to be enveloped and enchanted by the sense that they have entered that fantastic, faded world now known as ‘The Golden Age of The Movie Palace’.

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### Reference Guide and Notes

1. City of Winnipeg online profile.  
([http://www.city.winnipeg.mb.ca/interhom/about\\_winnipeg/profile/historical\\_profile.stm](http://www.city.winnipeg.mb.ca/interhom/about_winnipeg/profile/historical_profile.stm)) \*According to the results of a Canadian census contained in the publication ‘*Winnipeg: An Illustrated History*’ by Alan Artibise (1977), the population of Winnipeg grew from 42,340 to 179,087 (+422%) in the 20 years ending in 1921, the year in which The Capitol Theatre opened to the public.
2. Heritage Winnipeg brief on the history of The Capitol Theatre
3. Manitoba Free Press, Nov.20.1919 p.16 (University of Manitoba Archives)
4. Fig. 1 Courtesy New York City Landmarks Comm. website  
(<http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/lpc/html/designation/summaries/hamiltonthtr.html>)
5. Fig. 2 Courtesy of Horning Brothers Developers, Washington  
(<http://www.horningbrothers.com/tivoli/history.htm>)
6. Ibid#3 p.16
7. Manitoba Free Press, Feb. 15.1921 p.17 (University of Manitoba Archives)
8. Ibid #2
9. Winnipeg Tribune Feb 10, 1921 p.14 (University of Manitoba Archives)
10. Ibid #5
11. Ibid #7
12. Capitol Theatre history section; Heritage Winnipeg website:(<http://www.mts.net/~heritag2/editorial.htm>)
13. Ibid #2

14. Ibid #12
15. Ibid #2
16. \*”Unfortunately, a job transfer to Ottawa and later ill health forced the cancellation of this ambitious plan. The Park family moved the organ parts to Ottawa over four years (1958 to 1961) and stored them in a couple of garages. The parts were later moved to their home, occupying most of the basement, closets, living room, garage and several outdoor lean-tos and sheds. Mr. Park passed away before seeing his dream of having the organ rebuilt and available to the public realized. In 1990, Mr. Park's widow donated the organ parts to the Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society... Finally in 1995, it was trucked to the O'Brien Theatre in Renfrew, Ontario, where it currently resides behind the screen of that house.”—Renfrew, ON web page. Sec. on The Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society (<http://renc.igs.net/~ric/ovtos/renorgan.htm>)
17. Famous Players Inc. website: ([www.famousplayers.com](http://www.famousplayers.com))
18. Ibid #2
19. Ibid #2
20. Ibid #2
21. Fig. 3 Winnipeg Tribune photo (no photographer credited) date of publication 10.1.65 Winnipeg Tribune Collection- call number: PC 18/4823/18-4026-002 © 1998-2001, University of Manitoba Libraries
22. Fig. 4 Winnipeg Tribune photo (no photographer credited) date of publication 3.22.79 Winnipeg Tribune Collection- call number: PC 18/2946/18-2246-001 © 1998-2001, University of Manitoba Libraries
23. Winnipeg Tribune 3.22.79 p.10 (University of Manitoba Archives)
24. Ibid #2
25. Ibid #23
26. Fig 4. <http://www.interlog.com/~urbanism/mowinn.html> From photo study called ‘Urbanism’
27. Heritage Winnipeg archives; from a letter to The Manitoba-built Heritage Network c/o Heritage Winnipeg from A.C Roberts of Roberts, Sloan and Assoc. Inc. Engineers & Project Mgrs.
28. Winnipeg Free Press editorial, 9.28.00
29. Winnipeg Sun story by Ross Romaniuk 6.1.2000 (Winnipeg Sun website archives)