

## Historic Tahqua-Land Theatre, Newberry, MI.

Where did it come from?

Written by Paul Petosky



The State Theatre was built by Thomas Shimmens and constructed in 1929, opened in August of 1930. Costing \$60,000 of which \$30,000 was a bond issue, all sold to citizens of Newberry. Seating was for 400 and shows changed four times a week. Movies were shown daily until 1969 and were an important corner stone for the area.

In 1973 the badly deteriorated building was purchased by Fred Dunkeld. It was re-opened in August of 1974. The single-handed restoration was ongoing for three years, which was financed through the sale of his Alpine Farm in Mc Millan, MI.

With the State Hospital closing in 1990 the theatre was hit first and hardest. After struggling with yearly operating deficits for years, there was no other option but to close.

The prison, along with a substantial increase in tourism from snowmobiling, stabilized years of a declining economy. The present renovation is extensive and costly. Financing was procured through a bank in Grand Rapids and NETC of Marquette. To dispel many rumors, neither one dollar of local monies nor any grants have gone into this project.

In a story that appeared in The Newberry News, August 1930. "The News will issue a special edition Tuesday celebrating the opening night of the new State Theatre which takes place Wednesday, August 27th. The edition will be confined almost wholly to illustrations and write-ups of the new theatre and good-will advertising by the merchants of Newberry."

"The total cost of the State Theatre, store and apartment building is set at \$60,000.

The plans were prepared by D. E. Anderson, Marquette architect. The general contract was awarded to the Foster Construction Company of Milwaukee. Harvey Cameron, local contractor, had the lighting, heating and plumbing contract. The decorating of the auditorium, foyer and lobby, was done by the Strauber Company of Milwaukee. All other painting in the building was by John Nelson of Escanaba. The National Theater Supply Company furnished all the rugs, draperies and light fixtures. The ticket booth and display frames were furnished by the Lobby Display Frame Company of New York."

"The building is of brick and the tile construction with a cast stone trim. Its outside dimensions are 36x126 feet. Besides the front entrance to the theatre there are two rear exits opening into the alley. The lobby is 14x40 feet; the foyer, 11x32, and the auditorium 35x62 feet. The stage is 22 feet wide and 11 feet deep. The store on the north side of the lobby is 20x40 and will be occupied by "Bill" Johnson as a coffee shop. The living apartments which are over the lobby and store contain six rooms and bath and are equipped with an electric fire-place and other modern built in features."

The first four tickets are from the State Theatre. The 15-cent ticket is from the 1940s. The 20-cent, 50-cent and 90-cent tickets are from the 1950s. The 12-cent ticket is from the 1940 and was from the Nova Theatre in Newberry. This theatre has been closed down for many years. The State Theatre and Nova Theatre were the only operating theatres in Newberry.