OMB Control No. 1024-0018
expiration date 03/31/2026

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Randolph Playhouse Theatre
Other names/site number: The Strand Theatre
Name of related multiple property listing**:**
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 11 South Main Street
City or town: Randolph State: VT County: Orange
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [X]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site	☐
Structure	☐
Object	☐

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:
Foundation: CONCRETE
Walls: WOOD, weatherboard
Roof: METAL

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Randolph Playhouse Theatre is a two-story, false-front theatre building located in the central commercial core of the Town of Randolph, Vermont. The wood-frame building was constructed in 1919 as a movie theatre and remains in use as a theatre to the present, 2026. The theatre's exterior materials and form are simple, with a rectangular plan that is oriented east toward South Main Street and a weatherboard-clad body above a concrete foundation, with a low-pitch gable roof with metal sheathing and modest classical eave returns. The primary focal point of the theatre building is a stepped, false-front façade, serving as a prominent visual cue for the commercial theatre functions within. The primary entry is centered upon this Main Street frontage, with an elegant wide ogee arch canopy marquee supported by graceful curved brackets overhanging an entry framed by movie poster displays with Art-Deco-style decorative molding. Secondary elevations are simple in form and fenestration, and a small, shed-roof extension extends from the rear of the building, housing a small apartment that was developed as an operator's residence in association with the theatre. The interior of the building is clearly defined by its programmatic function as a movie theatre, with a small lobby and ticket and concession booth leading to a single theatre space at the first level, with the metal sheathed projection booth at the second level. As an early twentieth century movie theatre that has continuously operated through over a century of community and technological evolution, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre possesses a high degree of integrity, with the theatre's central village location and setting, largely original design and materials, and strong sense of feeling, association, and workmanship presenting a cohesive and significant physical and contextual form.

Narrative Description

Contextual Site Overview

The Randolph Playhouse Theatre stands on a .41-acre parcel situated on the southern side of the central commercial core of the Town of Randolph. The building fronts South Main Street, with its false-front façade and elegant entry canopy presenting a notable commercial form along the streetscape. The building footprint covers the majority of the parcel with minimal open space between the sidewalk and adjacent buildings. On the sidewalk, immediately to the north of the building, a pedestal cast-iron theatre sign standing adjacent to the theater. While this is a later addition from c. 1980s, the sign functions as a prominent visual and community streetscape cue for the theatre. According to David Tomaszewski, a former theatre owner, the sign was repurposed from a historic period light standard elsewhere in Randolph Village's Depot Square area.[1] To the north, the primary commercial spine of Main Street presents a largely nineteenth and early twentieth century form, with dense development of brick and wood-frame commercial blocks and a smattering of infill development. To the south, east, and west, residential neighborhoods predominate, with a variety of nineteenth and early twentieth century revival residential forms on small lots creating a cohesive village setting. The mid-nineteenth century rail corridor of the Vermont Central Railroad runs east-to-west one block north of the theatre, with the corridor and associated passenger depot further anchoring the framing downtown village setting that defines the theatre's contextual setting.

Exterior Description

The Randolph Playhouse Theatre is a single-screen movie theatre located in the commercial center of Randolph, Vermont. Constructed in 1919, the wood-frame building stands on a raised concrete perimeter foundation and is underlain by concrete footings, with a dirt basement / crawl space. The building is simple and spare in materials and form with select ornamental details on the façade. It has a rectangular plan that is oriented east toward South Main Street, and a weatherboard-clad body with a low-pitch gable roof with metal sheathing and modest classical eave returns.

The primary focal point of the theatre building is a stepped, false-front façade that lines Main Street, serving as a prominent visual cue for the commercial theatre functions within. The primary entry is centered upon this Main Street frontage, with an elegant wide ogee arch canopy marquee lined with lightbulbs on the underside of the perimeter that is supported by graceful curved brackets. While the bracketing structure of the canopy arch is largely original, diagonally oriented scrolled brackets have been added to the original structure, adjoining it to a modern entry vestibule that extends from the main body of the building. This modern entry has a c.1990 two-door glass vestibule under a curved metal roof, filling the space beneath the canopy. The entry is flanked by movie-poster displays with Art-Deco-style decorative molding characterized by glass display cases crowned by smooth stepped molding and framed by banded pilasters.

[1] Personal Correspondence, David Tomaszewski, April 2024.

The secondary elevations are simple in form and fenestration, reflecting a largely utilitarian and functional form that is subservient to the Main Street commercial façade. On the Weston Street frontage, south elevation, the broad weatherboard wall is only interrupted with a single egress door protected by scroll-sawn bracketed pedimented gable with sun-burst motif, and a triple casement window for the rear apartment. On the north elevation, the wall is lined with a single secondary egress door and several 2-over-2 wood-frame windows, with the windows designed to provide ventilation for the pre-air conditioning-era theatre within.

As constructed, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre was developed with rear living quarters for the theatre's operator, as detailed in 1919 in *The Bethel Courier*, "Behind the stage are rooms which Mrs. Kate Brock, lessee will use as living apartments." This small operator's apartment remains a feature of the building, though it was expanded circa (c.) 1940. The expansion included the placement of a shed-roof addition that enlarged the apartment and extends from the rear, west side of the building, wrapping around the northwest corner of the original building mass. The apartment is accessed from the shed roof extension, with a door on both the west and north elevations. Reflecting the living functions within, fenestration along the rear, west, wall of the theatre building is irregular in form, providing light to rooms within. In addition, a small, cased opening for an attic ventilation fan is centered in the apex of the gable at the top of the west wall.[2]

While the overall exterior form and materials of the building remain much as constructed in 1919, several notable changes have affected the exterior material form of the building. Most importantly, the primary entrance has been augmented by placement of a vestibule extension, with a modern c. 1990s aluminum and glass double door entry overlain by a rounded canopy roof. This vestibule does not date to the historic period and is a modern alteration to the original theatre entrance (see **Figures 7, 14, 26** in Additional Documentation). Additionally, while the remainder of the commercial entry dates to the historic period, most notably the ogee arch canopy and the outermost supporting scroll-sawn brackets, historic period photographs indicate that the framing Art Deco theatre-poster display cases were added after construction, circa 1940s; although they are reflective of the theatre's significant period of development and contribute to its material significance. Of lesser import, the building's small number of windows date to a range of periods, though in original framing, with some sashes original to construction, most notably on the north wall, as well as a range of modern window sashes including vinyl sliders and other altered types, mostly on the rear apartment wall and on the commercial street frontage above the entrance where original window sashes have been covered with opaque panels with false muntins in the original window frames. Despite the replacement of window sashes, the original framing and fenestration pattern remains intact across all of the elevations.

Interior Description

The interior of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is defined by its programmatic function as a movie theatre, with the small c.1990 entry vestibule and small lobby with ticket and concession booth leading to a large single-screen theatre space. The projection booth is above the lobby on a

[2] *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1929, 1945: Randolph, Vermont*. (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1929, 1945).

second level in the front of the building. Like the exterior of the theatre, the interior is simple and spare in its design, reflecting a pragmatic and functional approach.

The interior lobby is small and rectangular in plan. Materials are simple and largely original, with vertical board walls, wood baseboards, plaster ceilings, and suspended brass historic period pendant light fixtures. Carpet covers the floor. A ticket and concession booth is located on the left of the entry, with a small window opening to the lobby. The concession room is small and square in plan, with utilitarian shelves lining the wall holding concessions and limited working countertops spanning the perimeter. The concession room is accessed by a wood panel door from the theatre.

The main theatre space is accessed from the lobby through two wood doors with five horizontal panels. The theatre is rectangular in form with sloped wood floors and defined by three banks of seating, with a wide central bay flanked by aisles and two diagonal wings of seating. The screen is supported by a wood stage with panel doors accessing a storage area beneath. It is important to note that the stage dates to the modern period, added in the late twentieth century, replacing and raising an original orchestra pit that underlay the screen area. Two exterior egress doors flank the screen and stage at the front of the theatre, an early recognition of the need for safe evacuation in the assembly space. Wood wainscoting defines the lower wall and pleated fabric wraps the upper two-thirds of the wall, dating from the latter decades of the twentieth century and added to improve sound quality. Battens create a grid pattern on the ceiling and round coves on the long north and south walls. The rear portion of the theatre retains original wood floors and the front section holds late twentieth century replacement wood floors, added at the time the orchestra pit was covered. Select areas of early theatre seats remain, possibly original, but the majority have been supplanted by modern theatre-style chairs. These early seats consist of a curved wood panel back and upswinging horsehair cushion with upholstered cover, likely replacement to original upholstery or leather. The curved wood and cast-iron frame arm-rest is accentuated with a decorative sunburst side panel with molded wood surround. Mid-twentieth century photographs depict these seats in place in the theatre, along with other scrolled cast iron forms that are no longer extant in the theatre, with early twentieth century replacement of seats evident (see **Figure 23**). Light fixtures and fans are also from the modern period, replacements for original fixtures that lined the theatre ceiling and walls (see **Section 8**).

The first floor restroom and second floor projection area of the theatre is accessed from the northeast rear corner of the theatre. The small restroom is similar in material treatment to the lobby, with wainscoting and wood trim finishes. The second level is accessed by a narrow utilitarian stairway that accesses the projection booth. This area has been slightly altered over time, as the theatre transitioned from film projection to digital projection (c. 2012). Of note, however, the original projection booth walls are sheathed in riveted metal panels, providing a fireproof enclosure for—at times flammable—film reels. Historic period archival research indicates that there was a projection booth fire at the theatre in 1930 after the performance of the "movie talkie *His First Command*," with the fire contained in the "all metal booth," and the patrons leaving "in an orderly fashion."[3]

[3] "Fire at the Strand Theatre," *Herald and News*, April 3, 1930.

The operator's apartment at the rear of the theatre building is two story in configuration, with a portion of the unit located in the c. 1940 rear extension. The apartment is accessed by two doors, one located on the rear of the building and one on the northeast corner, both located in the c. 1940 bump-out. The first level is characterized by an entry vestibule with arched opening leading to kitchen, with a narrow stair leading to second level bedrooms arranged in a compact railroad-style linear alignment. While the apartment is original to construction, interior finishes and the programmatic arrangement reflect an array of development periods, with the c. 1940 bump-out and kitchen largely modern in materials, with sheetrock walls and vinyl flooring, and areas of the second floor featuring limited original wood trim, particularly on the stairs and door surrounds. In addition to the mid-century expansion of the apartment, in the 1980s a portion of the first level of the apartment was used a video arcade, as detailed in the historic context, further altering material finishes, which reflect a modern and material form in the interior at the lower level.

Integrity

On August 7, 1919, *The Bethel Courier* published a detailed account of Randolph's recently opened moving picture house, providing an evocative snapshot of the Playhouse Theatre in its early days of operation:

> *Mrs. Mary Carr made the business venture, erecting the theatre at her own expense; no small enterprise in this day of high building prices…A marquis entrance faces Main Street. The interior arrangement comprises a lobby in the center of the front wall, on either side of which are rooms, the one to the left a ticket and private office and the one to the right containing toilets, a stock room and stairway to the booth. The auditorium is a spacious room with seats for 400 on an inclined floor, a pit for the musicians, and a small stage, backed by the screen. There are four exits…The seats in the hall are arranged in three sections, leaving two aisles. They are the comfortable type of collapsible bottom theatre chair…*

107 years later, in 2026, the Playhouse Theatre retains exceptionally strong physical and associational integrity to this period of development, conveying much the same form as that which welcomed the first movie-going patrons in the 1910s. The central village location of the building, embedded within the commercial heart of Randolph is expressive of the building's community-based commercial and entertainment functions. The vernacular commercial design of the building, with a stepped false-front, arched canopy, and prominent movie poster displays, remains strong and cohesive, presenting an evocative theatre form. Materials, both exterior and interior, reflect strong integrity, with only limited and compatible material alteration reflecting continuity of use over time. Through strong retention of design and materials, the early twentieth century workmanship of the building remains expressive and sound. Lastly, the active theatre space, framed by the commercial core of Randolph, reflects a setting, feeling, and association as a vital and evolving community theatre and entertainment venue for the community of Randolph and its environs, even as it has evolved through silent film to talkies, reel projection to digital projection. While the building has been adapted over time through a

succession of owners and in response to a succession of changing technologies and programmatic mandates, the operational space, architectural form, and vernacular theatre design remains sound and expressive of the period of significance for the theatre.

Character Defining Features

Character defining exterior features of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre include:

- The siting and orientation of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre that is embedded within the center of the village of Randolph.
- The simple wood-frame form of the building, with minimal fenestration and accentuated with a prominent Main Street false-front denoting theatre functions.
- The original theatre entry fronting Main Street, with an undulating canopy, marquee lights, decorative brackets, and a generous overhang. Note: the underlying vestibule of wood, aluminum, and glass is not considered character defining as it is not original or from the historic period.
- The movie display panels flanking the entry with Art Deco molding framing the entry. While these elements likely do not date to original construction, they were developed in the period of significance and are reflective of the significant theatre form of the property.
- Original materials, including the concrete foundation, wood siding, original windows, doors, and trim. Ongoing replacements to windows and select doors are not considered character defining.

Character defining interior features of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre include:

- The functional plan of the building that is defined by a distinct arrangement of entry lobby opening to a large theatre space.
- Original materials, including wainscoting, wood trim, plaster walls and ceiling, and remnant light fixtures. Any original material or design feature should be considered character defining. Note, while compatible, the stage does not date to the historic period and its form and materials are not character defining. Some elements of the original stage may exist behind the new stage construction and would be considered character defining if revealed.
- Remnant original theatre seats are character defining, with the later replacements compatible but not considered character defining. In addition, as the original 400 person seating arrangement has evolved though larger seats to a current 167 seats, the number of seats is not character defining as it has evolved though time.
- Functional space and metal wall paneling of the projection booth at the second level, although much of the configuration in this section is not considered character defining as it has been altered over time in the move from film to digital projection.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT

Period of Significance
1919-1967

Significant Dates
1943

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Sault, E.L.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Randolph Playhouse Theatre is significant at the state level of significance under Criterion A as Vermont's oldest continuously operating purpose-built movie theatre. In the area of entertainment, the theatre is a key representative of a defining early twentieth century social and architectural form once common in the state's community life during the period of significance that is now exceedingly rare in form and operation. As an early twentieth century motion picture theatre, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is also significant at the state level under Criterion C for its expressive and pragmatic early twentieth century theatre design, reflecting a spare and vernacular form that conveys important design and programmatic attributes of an early commercial single-screen motion picture theatre property type in the center of the Village of Randolph. This architectural and operational form once defined village streetscape patterns in early twentieth century Vermont, with much of this development effaced and obscured through the twentieth century. The period of significance for the Randolph Playhouse Theatre extends from its 1919 construction to 1967, the major period of programmatic development and long-term operational ownership in which the Randolph Playhouse Theatre was established as a key entertainment and social strand of Randolph's village form, an identity that has been nurtured through continuous theatre operations to the present, 2026.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Analysis under NRHP Criterion A: Entertainment

Under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is highly expressive of the rapid rise of motion pictures as key commercial and cultural touchstones in American and Vermont life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First displayed in adapted opera houses, town houses, theatres, and commercial spaces, the purpose-built "motion picture house," rapidly rose as a defining commercial property type in Vermont in the first decades of the twentieth century. During that period, Vermont's small and large regional centers developed with a patchwork of adapted and purpose-built movie theatres, common along village main streets by the 1920s. With successive eras of ongoing economic, cultural, and technological change, much of this foundational landscape was eroded through the twentieth century, with the advent of television and cable, the multiplex, digitization, and changing demographic patterns and lifeways shuttering early purpose-built, small-scale, community movie theatres across the state. As the oldest known surviving and continuously running early twentieth century motion picture house in the state of Vermont, with a continuous chain of operational ownership and high physical and associational integrity, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is a significant representative of the defining legacy of motion pictures in Vermont's community and cultural life, serving as a community-based entertainment and social outlet and "third space" for generations of residents in Randolph and its environs. While once common across Vermont—and in turn the nation's—communities, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre remains as a rare and evocative testament to the longevity and salience of the movie in American culture and design, continuing to serve the Randolph community with motion pictures to the present. The period of significance under Criterion A extends from the construction of the theatre in 1919 to 1967, the year in which long-time operators Jack and Gertrude Champlain sold the theatre, representative of the major period of programmatic development in which the Randolph Playhouse Theatre was established as a central and lasting community focal point in Randolph. As a rare representative of this key strand of Vermont's development, the theatre is significant under Criterion A at the state level of significance.

Analysis under NRHP Criterion C: Architecture

Under Criterion C, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is a significant architectural expression of the early single-screen motion picture theatre property type. As a rare example of a once-common property type in villages and towns across Vermont, the theatre is significant under Criterion C at the state level of significance. With its embedded location in Randolph Village, pragmatic and economical architectural and programmatic design, heightened street-fronting façade defined by an evocative theatre canopy marquee, single screen theatre plan, and simple operator's quarters, the theatre is a significant and intact architectural expression of a vital and increasing rare strand of foundational motion picture house development in the state. Designed and constructed in 1919 as part of the first wave of purpose-built moving picture house

development in Vermont, the physical form of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre has evolved through over a century of overarching technological and social change while maintaining its character defining and pragmatic theatre operation and design. As a type, period, and method of construction dating to the earliest era of purpose-built theatre development in Vermont, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is a broadly representative architectural and programmatic property type that is significant as a rare surviving architectural exemplar of a key area of theatre development in the state. The period of significance for the Randolph Playhouse Theatre under Criterion C extends from the building's 1919 construction to 1943, the span of time in which the theatre was constructed and then modernized as a defining architectural and entertainment resource in Randolph.

Discussion of Additional Criteria

The property is not being nominated under Criterion B or D. Under Criterion B, the building does not have any direct or important links to significant individuals, instead stewarded by a series of owners and patrons and expressive of the rise of entertainment and recreational culture in Vermont. Under Criterion D, the small village lot that the theatre is developed on was not archaeologically investigated as part of this documentation, though the record indicates that the lot was once developed with a residence, moved from the site to an adjacent lot when the theatre was constructed.[4]

Overview Contextual Development Narrative

> *The Age of the Moving Picture: The moving picture has come to be a habit among us. If there were no better proof of its vogue, the popular term "movies" would be evidence sufficient. People go to the movies; they go often; and everyone goes. The picture-houses are everywhere, upstairs, down cellar, in music halls, stores, warehouses, churches, schools, and whatnot…*
>
> *The Vermont Cynic,* November 15, 1913

> *New Strand Theatre Opens: Monday evening saw the opening exhibition of pictures in the new Strand Theatre, just completed. The auditorium was twice packed with town's people interested to see the new amusement hall and incidentally a strong photo play featuring William S. Hart, which brought much applause. Mrs. Mary Carr made the business venture, erecting the theatre at her own expense…Mrs. Kate Brock will manage the new Strand, showing the best pictures available at reasonable prices. Mrs. Brock has successfully operated the Star Theatre in DuBois and Gay's Hall the past three years and with the new and advantageously located place of exhibition she will give the best the patronage will warrant.*
>
> *The Bethel Courier,* August 17, 1919

[4] As documented in periodicals, the theatre was developed on, "The site of the house of C.C. Blodgett at the corner of Main and Weston Streets," with the, "Blodgett house moved to a site at the rear." "New Strand Theatre Opens," *The Bethel Courier,* August 7, 1919.

Opened in 1919, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre has continuously operated for over 107 years, bringing thousands of films spanning Beverly Bayne's 1924 *Age of Innocence*; Walt Disney's 1957 *Old Yeller;* and Maggie Gyllenhaal's 2026 *The Bride!,* to the community of Randolph in an evolving and steady cinematic tempo of American film and culture. Established in the foundational era of "moving picture" development, the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is at once an evocative and increasingly rare exemplar of the rapid rise of early "movie" houses in American and Vermont life, and a powerful testament to continuous social adaptation and technological change. As a community movie theatre, the Playhouse has evolved through a remarkable period of technological change, emerging from the era of silent films; surviving the meteoric rise of television in American life; maintaining its village-based form against the back-drop of the suburban-oriented effects of the automobile; and leaping from film reels to digital projection in the early twenty-first century. In addition, the Playhouse has born steady witness to immense cultural and economic evolution in Randolph and the state of Vermont at large, maintaining its community-based cinematic form through the twentieth century's multiple wars, economic downturns, and cultural realignments; the ascendence of the highway and accompanying fracture of small-scale village primacy; and the twenty-first century's advancing waves of digital media and social restructuring. Through this remarkable operational span, the Playhouse has maintained its defining material, cultural, and commercial form, embedded within the surrounding village of Randolph; providing cinematic respite to generations of movie-goers, with the dimmed lights, popcorn, and sweeping narrative of the evolving human condition cradled within the building's unassuming and vernacular form for generations of movie-goers.

Rise of the Moving Picture: To the Ordinary Mind This Would Seem an Impossibility

Like many technological advances, the rise of the "motion picture" reflected a diffuse array of societal preoccupations and mandates in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Foundationally, the technology rose in the wake of the telegraph and railroad, with the anchoring relational ribbons ushering in a marked shift in popular perception with the "annihilation of space and time."[5] From this experiential fissure, key concepts drove advancement of the moving picture, including the malleability of time and its perception, the primacy of science and technology in the reshaping of the natural world, and the advancing hand of industry in human life. By 1872, English-born landscape photograph Eadweard Muybridge—prolific documenter of the American west, was beginning his defining work on equine locomotion, photographing railroad magnate Leland Stanford's horses pounding down a Palo Alto track in the sunny expanse of California. By 1878, *The Horse in Motion*, displayed on Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope, presented a wholly impossible loop of time and movement through the "Electro-Photographic Investigation of Animal Locomotion," widely received across America and the world as a technological obliteration of the heretofore mystery of time and motion:

> *[Muybridge] had captured aspects of motion whose speed had made them as invisible as the moons of Jupiter before the telescope, and he had found a way to set them back in motion. It was as though he had grasped time itself, made it*

[5] Clare Pettitt. "The Annihilation of Space and Time: Literature and Technology," *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press; 2012), 550-572.

> *stand still, and then made it run again, over and over. Time was at his command as it had never been at anyone's before. A new world had opened up for science, for art, for entertainment, for consciousness, and an old world had retreated farther.*[6]

Through the 1880s and 1890s, the foundational notion of technologically bounding time took root across the globe's modernizing zeitgeist, with the French inventor Louis Le Prince presenting a 3-second moving picture the *Roundhay Garden Scene* in 1888; French photographers Auguste and Louis Lumière presenting their 46-second *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* on their Cinématographe in Paris in 1895; and American Inventor Thomas Edison patenting his Kinetograph and Kinetoscope in 1891, with his first successful demonstration at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1893. By 1896 Edison had acquired the Vitascope, originally patented by Thomas Armat, which allowed for projection to large audiences, ushering in the technological conditions for mass "moving picture amusements." In his focus upon the moving picture, Edison drew a straight line from Muybridge's scientific studies, placing the advancement of the moving picture in a broadly defined realm of science, history, and human development:

> *Some time ago it occurred to me that it might be possible to invent something that would do for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear—an instrument in fact that would faithfully record and reproduce practically all motion…I was also very much interested in the experiments of Muybridge, but all these were very crude and resulted in jerky motions. The eye is too quick for such photographs…My experiments with the Kinetoscope have been directed to these ends. First to mount the photographs and throw the pictures by means of a magic lantern upon a screen. Then, instead of looking through a peephole, a large number of spectators might watch the moving picture…This has been largely a work of sentiment on my part. I do not believe there is much money in it. But I believe it is in the interest of science and history. A great man will never die if his pictures and speeches are saved by the kinetograph and phonograph.*[7]

By 1898, the Zoopraxiscope, Cinématographe, Kinetoscope, and Vitascope were ceding to a dizzying array of patented technologies, all vying to define the surging phenomenon of moving pictures, as detailed in the *St. Albans Daily Messenger:*

> *Science is making the dictionary bigger every day…and now, the single invention for throwing pictures on screens has added dozens of new words to the language within the last year or two…Phantoscope, criterioscope, vitascope, cinematograph, biograph, kinematograph, wondorscope, animatoscope, vitagraph, panoramograph, cosmoscope, anarithmoscope, katoptikum, magniscope, zoeoptrotrope, phantasmagoria, projectoscope, variscope,*

[6] Rebecca Solnit. *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).
[7] "Inventor Edison's Latest," *Stamford Advocate*, March 10, 1894.

> *cinograph, cinnomonograph, hypnoscope, centograph, x-ograph, electroscope, cinagraphoscope, kinetoscope, craboscope, vitaletiscope, cinematoscope, mutoscope, cinoscope, animaloscope, theatograph, chronophotographoscope, motograph, kinetograph, rayoscope, motorscope, kinotiphone, thromotrope, phenakistoscope, venetrope, vitrescope, zinematograph, vitopticon, stinnetiscope, vivrescope, diaramiscope, lobsterscope, corminograph, kineoptoscope.*[8]

While in 1894, Edison had opined that, "he did not believe there was much money,"[9] in moving pictures, with the proliferation in technological advancements and the accompanying public fervor around motion pictures, by the close of the 1890s the commercial display of moving pictures had taken hold across a rapt audience, with American cities and towns displaying a growing number of features on an increasingly specialized array of devices.

In Vermont, as in most American locales, the moving picture was introduced to the public by traveling concerns, who filled town houses, opera houses, grange and social halls for highly publicized limited run events. In September 1897 in White River Junction, the Gates Opera House presented the "Alonzo Hatch Electro-Photo Musical Company," presented on, "The latest, Most Improved and Best of All Moving Picture Machines: The Animotoscope." The same year, the Barre Opera House presented, "The Centograph! Over one solid hour! Life size moving pictures!," with Burlington's Y.M.C.A Hall showing, "famous living pictures moving just like in life." By 1902, the cinematic fare was complexifying, as illustrated by the program offered at the St. Johnsbury Music Hall, where Lyman H. Howe presented:

> The GREATEST COLLECTION: Greatest collection of ***Moving Pictures*** ever seen in America. Seven great series of moving pictures, INDIA, JAPAN, ARABIA, AFRICA, SWITZERLAND, ENGLAND, and AMERICA. Actual living scenes of the Orient presented with thrilling realism. A grand series of scenes in connection with the CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII.[10]

While the Vermont public was initially introduced to the moving picture medium in familiar nineteenth century edifices—generally the town house, the opera house, and the social hall, by 1900 the singular and surging popularity of moving pictures undergirded the steady development of "amusement parlors," and "moving picture houses," often developed in repurposed commercial blocks and auditorium spaces and—increasingly frequently by the 1910s—purpose-built structures. By 1899, The American Biograph and Mutoscope Company of New York had opened an Amusement Parlor in a former shoe store in Barre, appearing as the Pavilion on Pearl Street in the 1905 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Barre*. By 1909, Montpelier's Main Street was lined with three "Moving Picture Houses," including the Massucco Theatre, established in a nineteenth century business block in 1908, located in the same building that currently houses the Savoy Theatre, re-established at the site in 1981. In Rutland, The Colonial and The Grand

[8] "Making a Bigger Dictionary," *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, February 15, 1898.
[9] "Inventor Edison's Latest," *Stamford Advocate*, March 10, 1894.
[10] "Gates Opera House," *The Landmark*, September 10, 1897; "Barre Opera House," *The Barre Daily Times*, April 12, 1897; "Music Hall," *The St. Johnsbury Caledonian*, September 10, 1902: "This Week," *The Burlington Free* Press, June 8, 1897.

Moving Picture Theatres faced each other across West Street, now VT Route 4, with the Colonial featuring bowling and a dance hall in addition to moving pictures, and the Grand including live Vaudeville as well. Through the first decade of the twentieth century, theatres emerged across the state, from Burlington's Church Street to St. Albans Main Street, creating a cohesive commercial and entertainment landscape that touched increasing numbers of Vermonters every-day lives and pastimes. Reflecting upon this surge, by 1913, *The Burlington Daily News* marveled upon the breadth of the burgeoning industry, noting:

> *$400,000,000 were spent by the American people on picture shows last year if the movie men at their New York exposition are telling the truth. 4 billion admissions are represented by that sum. At ten cents a head, each man, woman, and child in the United States would have to attend the movies 40 times to make up the staggering total…The "movies" have certainly prospered and they have deserved prosperity as no other entertainment has. They uniformly and monotonously give value received. Nearly everybody has a good word for them. Even the family dog likes them. They have succeeded not only because they are convenient and cheap but by dint of extraordinary effort to please, prodigious energy, remarkable ingenuity, and a large measure of honesty with the public.*[11]

Although broadly embraced by the American public, rural and urban alike, the newly ubiquitous entertainment medium was not without its period detractors, as surmised in *The Vermont Cynic* in 1913:

> *The moving picture has come to be a habit among us. If there were no better proof of its vogue, the popular term "movies" would be evidence sufficient. People go to the movies; they go often; and everyone goes. The picture-houses are everywhere, upstairs, down cellar, in music halls, stores, warehouses, churches, schools, and whatnot…In every latitude and under every sky occurs a succession of events, ceremonies, accidents, and incidents of diverse natures and they are no sooner fact than film. Few indeed are the things either in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth, that fail at some time or other to be food for films…The general effects may be now summed up briefly: It causes the physical deterioration of the race by depriving it of light, air, and exercise. It educates, but the character of education we have seen. It causes mental atrophy because it requires no mental effort. Last and worst, it gives thinking and reading another shove toward the land of long ago…It is a condition and not a theory that confronts us. The moving picture is here to stay…*[12]

[11] *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Barre, Vermont* (New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1905), Page 12; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Montpelier, Vermont* (New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1909), Page 4; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Rutland, Vermont* (New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1905), Page 16 and 22; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Saint Albans, Vermont* (New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1912), Page 5; "Moving Pictures," *The Burlington Daily News*, August 28, 1913.
[12] "The Age of the Moving Picture," *The Vermont Cynic*, November 15, 1913.

The Moving Picture in Randolph: From the Star Theatre to the Strand

Against this increasingly dominant societal and material backdrop of moving pictures in community commercial and entertainment life, by 1911 the Town of Randolph boasted a moving picture theatre, the Star Theatre, located first on South Main Street in the adapted Green Mountain Garage and subsequently in the DuBois & Gay Block, a nineteenth century commercial block located at the corner of South Main Street and Merchants Row.[13] The presence of a theatre in Randolph was in keeping with the general development of the property type across the state, with theatres emerging in small-to-medium size locales like Randolph, Hardwick, Bethel, St. Albans, and Richford throughout the period, extending the reach of moving pictures beyond Montpelier, Burlington, Barre, and other larger population centers. By 1915, Randolph's Star Theatre was one of 40 across the state, reflecting a geographically dispersed abundance that illustrated the commercial medium's rapid social and economic rise.[14]

As detailed in the *Herald and News,* at its outset, the Star Theatre aimed for a family-friendly ambiance, responding to broad contemporaneous concerns regarding moral rectitude that framed burgeoning movie culture:

> *The Star Theatre will open in the Green Mountain Garage Saturday night, April 8, with an attractive program that will include four reels of pictures. The management intends to have a place ladies and children will like to patronize and no pictures will be shown which the New York Board of Censorship has not passed upon and approved.*[15]

By 1912, accounts in the *Herald and News* indicate the theatre had assumed a prominent role in Randolph's community life, with a May 1912 benefit for the Vermont Teachers Retirement Fund selling 1101 tickets for a day's showing of films. The accounts also illustrate the wide-spanning and often highly localized context for moving pictures, with illustrations of Randolph itself providing much of the well-received cinematic fare for entertainment:

> *The moving pictures were very good indeed and in the afternoon, the intermissions were filled with choruses by the children from first to the fifth grades…Particularly interesting were some pictures taken of Randolph and Randolph people by L.T. Sparhawk…he explained the views as they were thrown on the screen and pointed out places and people who have changed a good deal since those pictures were taken. He appropriately prefaced his remarks by quoting, "Backward, turn backward, O time in thy flight; make me a child again for just tonight." First appeared two views of this village as it looked 50 years ago, showing Main Street…Onto the screen seemed to march the old Randolph*

[13] Research did not reveal the location of the "Green Mountain Garage" beyond that it was located on South Main Street, as such the precise location of the theatre, and whether the building housing it, remains extant is unknown.
[14] "Randolph," *Herald and News*, April 13, 1911; Note: In some periodicals from the time period, the Star Theatre is referred to as the "Pastime Theatre," see: "Randolph," *Herald and News*, August 19, 1915.
[15] "Special Announcements," *Herald and News*, April 6, 1911.

> *Cornet Band in full uniform…another revealed a party of children, in celebration of a tenth birthday…*[16]

Herald and News accounts in 1913 further illustrate the cohesive community role of the developing theatre, with Star Theatre proprietor F.J. Cantlin making the "generous offer to the school whereby it may increase the fund for the athletic field," through a three-reel fundraiser production of Charles Dickens' "Story of Martin Chuzzlewit."[17]

While the Star Theatre continued to operate through the 1910s, the years were characterized by several key changes. Importantly, by 1916 theatre proprietor F.J. Cantlin had been replaced by Kate G. Brock, a St. Johnsbury-born musician who moved to Randolph from Lebanon, New Hampshire to manage the Star Theatre. As detailed in the *Herald and News*, Brock was already well-versed in theatre management and cinema, having previously managed the Lyric Theatre in Lebanon:

> *F.J. Cantlin has sold his moving picture business and good will to Mrs. Kate Brock of Lebanon, N.H. Mrs. Brock managed the Lyric Theatre in Lebanon. The new owner has a wide experience in the moving picture business and is an accomplished musician, having directed an orchestra in Northern Vermont called Madam Brock's Orchestra for some time…*[18]

The acquisition of the Star Theatre by Brock was reflective of an important theme of development during the period, namely the relatively high proportion of women involved in the burgeoning motion picture industry. As detailed by cinema historian Jeffrey Klenotic, the moving picture industry in the early twentieth century was very much defined by women—both as consumers and family caregivers making discerning choices on attendance, and—critically—as owners, operators, and business managers:

> *Women's influence over film exhibition exceeded the audience. There were singers, musicians, and perhaps most importantly many businesswomen who as investors, proprietors, managers, and booking agents exercised considerable power over local contexts of reception. These women were known by name not only to their audiences and communities but also to other businesswomen (and men), to exhibitor trade-papers and associations, and to the network of industry representatives who sold and distributed films.*[19]

In her role as Manager, both of the Star Theatre in Randolph and the Lyric Theatre in Lebanon, Brock serves as an important illustration of the vital role played by women during the period of mass development of the moving picture industry, and—as detailed later in this context—the

[16] "Big Day at Star Theatre," *Herald and News*, May 30, 1912.
[17] "Special Announcements," *Herald and News*, February 27, 1913.
[18] "Special Announcements," *Herald and News*, November 9, 1916.
[19] Jeffrey Klenotic. "Roll the Credits: Gender, Geography, and the People's History of Cinema," *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 202-216.

pressures and fissures of the period against the back-drop of women's suffrage and a rapidly changing technological, commercial, and community sphere.

Through the late 1910s the Star Theatre continued to play a prominent community role under Brock's management. In February 1917, Brock, "gave an interesting talk on motion pictures," to the Randolph Parent-Teacher Association Meeting, "expressing a desire to show the best pictures possible," for the community—and most importantly—Randolph's students. Through the period, the Star ran a steady array of pictures, with a weekly patter of films exemplified by "the greatest western ever, 'Eagles Nest', and Raymond Hitchcock's 'Wonderful Wager'," playing on seven reels in March 1917; Kathlyn Williams and Wallace Reid in "Big Timber" in June 1918; and Mary Pickford in "Stella Maris" in December 1918. Through the period, Brock expressed a notable predilection for community collaboration, with a June 7, 1917 theatre program in the *Herald and News* proclaiming, "WE INVITE CRITICISM," atop film listings that included "Girl from Frisco", "Liberty", "Bluebird", and "Captain Courtesy".[20]

While the Star Theatre continued to advertise a varied program through 1918, the surrounding context of World War I, and increasingly the growing specter of the Spanish flu, shaped operations—dramatically curtailing viewership by September and October of that year. While a September 26, 1918, Star Theatre advertisement implored customers to come to the show and, "Keep the home fires burning for victory," with Pauline Starks in "Shoes that Danced" and "Pawn-Broker's Heart", directly above the advertisement, a notice from the Orange Southwest School District relayed concerning health news:

> *The local high and graded school is badly affected by the Spanish influenza. Monday morning 116 pupils failed to report and later in the week this number was increased. It has been thought best to discontinue school for the remainder of the week.*[21]

By early October, the theatre had been closed "to help stamp out the grippe;" remaining shuttered through November. Across the state, moving picture houses and public events were banned, with Vermont's Public Health authorities and local officials implementing sweeping restrictions on gatherings that shuttered theatres across the state.[22]

In early 1919, with the pulse of community life reviving from the close of war and the ebbing of the pandemic, the *Herald and News* reported a major business dealing on Randolph's South Main Street, with ground-breaking for a "Modern Motion Picture Theatre," to be managed by the Star Theatre's Kate Brock and developed and financed by another prominent Randolph businesswoman, Mary Carr:

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[20] "Parent-Teacher Meeting," *Herald and News*, February 8, 1917; "Star Theatre," *Herald and News*, June 20, 1918; "Star Theatre," *Herald and News*, December 26, 1918; "Pastime or Star Theatre," *Herald and News*, March 29, 1917; "Star Theatre Program," *Herald and News*, June 7, 1917.
[21] "Star Theatre Program," "Orange Southwest District Notes," *Herald and News*, September 26, 1918.
[22] "528 Cases of Influenza Here," *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, September 30, 1918; "Quarantine Established in St. Johnsbury," *The Burlington Free Press*, September 26, 1918; "Groton," *The Barre Daily Times*, September 27, 1918.

> ***New Star Theatre to be Built:*** *Two of our business-women have undertaken the venture of building and conducting a modern motion picture theatre in Randolph. Mrs. Mary Carr is the owner. The site will be the Blodgett premises at the corner of South Main and Weston streets, adjoining the O'Connor Block…The theatre will be 45 feet front by 75 feet deep, with a seating capacity of nearly 400. It will contain a single high story with basement. The floor will slope toward the screen and the seats will be of regular folding type. Besides the auditorium, with entrance, there will be two living rooms for the lessee, Mrs. Kate W. Brock. The building will be of wood, with a tasty decorated and illuminated front. The name Star Theatre will be preserved. Mrs. Brock, who has been conducting this enterprise in the DuBois & Gay Hall for several years, has agreed to lease the new theatre for a term of five years following its completion. The new structure will have the advantage of a convenient location on the ground. It will be patterned after the latest improved type of moving picture theatre. E.L. Sault is the builder. It will be completed about June 1 next. Some of our male residents might fairly draw a lesson from the example of these two energetic ladies.*[23]

The development of the new Star Theatre was not property-owner Mary Carr's first foray into the commercial realm of Randolph in the period. In 1908, Carr had spearheaded development of the "O'Connor Block," a prominent three-story commercial building located immediately north of the site of the new Star Theatre lot. The O'Connor Block, still standing and currently occupied by Napa Auto Parts at the first level, remains a key commercial building in the Village of Randolph to the present. Born in 1847 in Ireland, Carr had immigrated to the United States as a child in 1852, ultimately residing in Randolph by the 1860s with Uncle Michael O'Connor—who was engaged in New England railroad construction. By the late nineteenth century, Carr and O'Connor owned a reported 30 acres in downtown Randolph, a portion of which was ultimately developed with the O'Connor Block and the theatre building. By 1913, following O'Connor's death, Carr had one of the larger real estate portfolio valuations in the Town of Randolph, with the Grand List documenting an $8,000 holding—considerable for the time. At her 1919 development of the Star Theatre, Mary Carr was 72 years of age—illustrating a notable and evolving business acumen in a rapidly changing commercial and technological context in Randolph.[24]

The completed theatre opened August 4, 1919, with a showing of William S. Hart motion pictures. An account of the opening in the *Bethel Courier* gives a detailed portrait of the theatre at the time of opening—renamed the Strand Theatre at opening in a departure from the original intent of preserving the Star Theatre name:

> *Mrs. Mary Carr made the business venture, erecting the theatre at her own expense; no small enterprise in this day of high building prices…A marquis entrance faces Main Street. The interior arrangement comprises a lobby in the*

[23] "New Star Theatre to be Built," *Herald and News*, March 13, 1919.
[24] "New Grand List," *Herald and News*, June 5, 1913; *United States Census Records of 1900*: Vermont, Orange County, Randolph: Mary Carr; "Randolph: O'Connor Block," *Herald and News*, October 1, 1908; "Death of Mrs. Mary Carr," *Herald and News*, December 11, 1924. Note, Carr's obituary gives a birth year of 1844.

> *center of the front wall, on either side of which are rooms, the one to the left a ticket and private office and the one to the right containing toilets, a stock room and stairway to the booth. The auditorium is a spacious room with seats for 400 on an inclined floor, a pit for the musicians, and a small stage, backed by the screen. There are four exits…The seats in the hall are arranged in three sections, leaving two aisles. They are the comfortable type of collapsible bottom theatre chair. A color scheme of brown will be followed in interior decoration, the walls being finished in tinted plaster. There are windows on either side of the room, well toward the top to prevent draughts. Four indirect lighting chandeliers in the ceiling will furnish light in the evening when the pictures are not showing, while green house lights on the walls will burn constantly to avoid exhibiting to a dark house…Projection is made onto a pure white plaster screen, 16 feet by 12 feet framed with jet black. The screen is so located that the pictures may be viewed with comfort from all parts of the hall. In the pit, Mrs. Brock has installed a new Corona Solo Piano at a large expense. In the initial performance Monday evening, the music was excellent, following closely the pictures with clear, distinct tones. The hall will be heated by hot air and ventilated by fans overhead. The state authorities have pronounced the arrangements, ventilation, and sanitation correct in every detail, care having been taken to use the most modern practices of theatre building throughout.*[25]

The Strand Theatre's touted "modern practices of theatre building," reflected key concerns and contextual frameworks for motion-picture house design in the late-1910s as the industry was maturing. First, with the travails of the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic freshly centered in the public mind, modern practices of ventilation and circulation became key components of the movie house, in contrast to the first wave of theatre and amusement parlor development that often shoe-horned venues in existing and poorly ventilated spaces. Second, as the numbers of movie-goers grew, including women and children, the importance of lighting and spatial arrangement remained paramount, with operators keen on maintaining appropriate and seemly atmospheres for patrons of all ages and gender. Lastly, the technology itself represented a rapidly evolving canvas of modernity, with the Strand Theatre's projector, Corona Solo Piano, three bay seating sightlines, and large gleaming white plaster screen representative of a formalizing and standardizing moving picture industry in the period.[26]

From The Strand to The Playhouse: Randolph's Evolving Community Movie Theatre

While born of a highly localized partnership between Mary Carr and Kate Brock, both well-established Randolph businesswomen, only weeks after opening, the new Strand Theatre was buffeted by major change—illustrating the steadily evolving tenor of the nascent motion picture

[25] "New Strand Theatre Opens," *The Bethel Courier*, August 7, 1919.
[26] "Theatres are Closed," *The Moving Picture World*, October 19, 1918; "Architectural Outrage," *The Moving Picture World*," October 12, 1918; "Protecting Human Life," *Montpelier Evening Argus*, July 27, 1916.

industry in the late 1910s and 1920s. On September 11, 1919, a month after the theatre's opening, the *Herald and News* announced:

> *Mrs. Kate Brock has sold The Strand Moving Picture Theatre and business to Alfred S. Black, representing The Rutland Theatre Inc. This concern has a chain of theatres in Vermont and others in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. It is heavily capitalized.*[27]

Black's purchase of The Strand was part of a wave of consolidation spearheaded across New England during the period, with a decisive pattern of local ownership ceding to corporate consolidation, largely under Alfred Black. As researched by Jeffrey Klenotic, a leading New England cinema scholar, Black represented the increasingly aggressive arm of motion picture syndicates, who put a chokehold on film distribution through the period in a bid for large-scale commercial control of a growing and lucrative industry:

> *[Black] was busy with an aggressive campaign to acquire theatres in the New England region. Black had calculated that, in 1919, there were 6,500 theatres in towns of less than 5,000 population, and his plan was to bring 4,000 of them under his control…Black proceeded with the funds at his disposal and was so successful in persuading or frightening exhibitors that he soon had 30 or 40 houses in New England.*[28]

While the historic record is silent on the particulars of Kate Brock's rapid 1919 sale to Alfred Black—even after she had agreed on a five year lease with property owner Mary Carr, the likely scenario can be inferred from the broader historic record regarding Black's dealings in the period and in the region, which has been carefully studied by Klenotic in his analysis of Black and the industry as whole in the period. As summarized by one period moving picture exhibitor in Suncook, New Hampshire, "It looks to me like Mr. Black attempted to bully women." Similarly, Pauline Dodge, owner of a theatre in Morrisville, Vermont in the 1910s, summarized the Black purchase pitch this way:

> *Mr. Black had extended an offer to her and her husband, Harold, to buy their business and equipment at a fair price, but then went over their heads to obtain an option to buy the building itself from the owner, the Emmons…Mrs. Dodge charged that Black coerced the Emmons to sell by threatening to build a larger theatre next door. Black then offered the Dodge's a fraction of what he had proposed earlier, with the added caveat that the Dodge's other small theatres in nearby towns would have to be included in the deal…*[29]

Ultimately, Black's trail of contentious dealings provided fodder for one of the decade's most prominent antitrust cases involving the moving picture industry, *The Famous Players-Lasky Antitrust Case*, initiated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 1921 and concluding in a

[27] "The New Strand Management," *Herald and New*s, October 2, 1919.
[28] Jeffrey Klenotic. "Roll the Credits: Gender, Geography, and the People's History of Cinema," 209.
[29] Ibid, 210.

1930 Supreme Court Decision finding violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act (Paramount Famous Lasky Corp. v. United States, 282 U.S. 30). As summarized in the initial FTC complaint in 1921:

> *It is declared that in 1919 the respondents entered into a comprehensive plan of extending the corporation's activities by the acquisition of theatres, particularly in the key cities. In pursuance of this programme, the respondents conspired, the complaint alleges, with the Black New England Theatres, Inc., of which Alfred S. Black is President, to secure control of the distribution and exhibition of motion pictures in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts…*[30]

As an early victim of this "programme" of market domination, Brock's Strand Theatre is an evocative representative of both the defining role that women played in motion picture's early commercial, social, and community development and the pernicious strands of sexism that wound through the industry's maturation in the period, and its lasting effect, as thoughtfully summarized by Jeffrey Klenotic:

> *A notable aspect of the FTC meetings is that testimony given by men reveals a readiness to sell out, partly because they felt they could not compete with the larger interests, but also because they saw opportunities for new jobs in these organizations. The women's testimony, however, shows a willingness to defend livelihoods and communities against hostile take-over by outside interests. Nellie Dolan held on to her theatre in Dover, even as Alfred Black's partner threatened to build, and then built, a larger house on the same street that was undoubtedly designed to put her out of business. She even groomed her successor, Iona Redden, despite the challenges of obtaining quality films. Likewise, May Richardson, Lottie Pierce, and Minnie Humphrey could have sold out but instead chose to cultivate alliances and fight back…Even the Emmons, in Morrisville, Vermont, evidenced a split between Mr. Emmons, who wanted to sell, and Mrs. Emmons, who wanted to preserve local arrangements. As builders of community, these women recognized the value of their work on the local level. It is also possible that the women fought harder because the jobs offered to men were not offered to them, or if offered they were not perceived as holding real chance for advancement…Women in the 1920s were squeezed from consideration for top-of-the-line theatre management jobs because the corporations that ran studies, "imposed a masculinized model of professionalism," that required managers to attend national training schools and master technical projection skills, even though such skills had ceased to be the responsibility of the house manager…*[31]

Against this larger backdrop, after selling to Black, Brock returned to Lebanon, New Hampshire to reopen the Lyric Theatre, which she had operated prior to her arrival in Randolph. This effort appears to have been short-lived, and by February 1920 she had sold the business and moved to

[30] "Acts to Dissolve Big Lasky Concern as 'Movie Trust,'" *New York World*, September 1, 1921.
[31] Jeffrey Klenotic. "Roll the Credits: Gender, Geography, and the People's History of Cinema," 211.

Santa Cruz, California, with her adult daughter Elsinor Brock, where she continued to teach piano and perform in small-scale orchestras. Tellingly, and in keeping with the broader context of erasure of the role of women in the early motion picture house industry, while her 1941 obituary notes that she, "played the piano in her musical organizations at many social functions and dances, and continued her musical career by playing the piano in her orchestra," the obituary is entirely silent on the vital role she played in the development of the moving picture experience in Randolph and greater New England at the Star, Strand, and Lyric Theatres. Her story, partially gleaned by only archival fragments here, is vital to understanding the import and role of the development of moving picture theatres both in Randolph, and beyond. Further research into the broader context of female participation and leadership in the state's motion picture industry would provide further interpretive value related to this area of the theatre's contextual development.[32]

While ownership and management of the Strand Theatre business was assumed by the "Black Syndicate," in 1919, local businesswoman Mary Carr retained ownership of the building itself through her death from tuberculosis at the age of 77 in 1924. Following Carr's death, ownership of the Strand Theatre building, along with the adjacent O'Connor Block also developed by Carr, passed to Mary Carr's daughter—Carrie O'Brien and husband Edward O'Brien. Through the period of O'Brien ownership, the theatre was managed by a succession of operators, beginning with the Black Syndicate affiliated A.K. Hall, followed by V.W. Lindsey, James Bennett, Elmer Keyes, and M.T. Carr. Periodicals and advertisements from the period indicate that while the highly localized context for management under Brock had evolved to a more corporate context, the Strand remained a key community fixture and deeply embedded in the surrounding commercial landscape of Randolph. In addition to regular advertisements for the latest moving pictures, the *Herald and News* documented regular community-based specials, exemplified by a 1929 posting exhorting movie goers to dine and shop in surrounding Randolph businesses:

> ***Free Movie Ticket for the Strand Theatre:*** *The management of the Strand Theatre has made hundreds of friends and patrons in Randolph, and this plan has been inaugurated to bring new friends to this theatre which has established a record for high class photoplays. Patronize the following merchants who are distributing "2 for 1" tickets and procure a ticket for a Wednesday Evening's Enjoyment at the Strand's Big Productions: Victor A. Grant: The Best in Drug Store Goods; The H.M. Totman Co: The Old Reliable Florists; Randolph Motor Service Inc; E. Nixon: Merchants Row Jewelry, Watches, Clocks; E.P. Smith: Ladies and Girls Dresses, Harness and Shoe Repairing; The Thomas Store: Dry Goods, Dresses, Coats, Silk Hosiery and Underwear; Community Cash Store and Radio Shack; Tewksbury and Mayo: Complete House Furnishings, Wall Paper, Funeral Directors; Mitchell's Restaurant: The Home of Good Things to Eat; Tewksbury & Raymond: Everything Men and Boys Wear; F.L. Jerd's Market: Choice Meats of All Kinds, Pork Sausage made from Native Pig Pork.*[33]

[32] "Randolph," *Herald and News*, October 2, 1919; "Randolph," *Herald and News,* February 28, 1920: "Kate Gilman Brock Goss," *The Caledonian-Record*, June 21, 1941.
[33] "Free Movie Ticket for the Strand Theatre," *Herald and News*, March 14, 1929.

By 1929, the Strand was presenting the new "Talkies," with the Vitaphone production of "Singing Fool," drawing "a large number of people," and "State Street Sadie," presenting a "hair-rising but glamorous detective romance." Through the 1930s, the Strand presented a continuous run through the Depression, advertising "the magnificent scenery and background," of "Bird of Paradise" in 1932, "The delightful mirth and merriment," of "Adventures in Manhattan" in 1936; and the Hopalong Cassidy western "Range War," in 1939, along with a live show of "The Texas Ranch Girls." Of note, while the early years of the Depression cratered movie attendance nation-wide, and likely in Randolph, by 1932 ticket sales had risen across America, with slashed ticket prices, splashy advertising, and scores of new Hollywood films drawing the populace to theatres through the period in a form of affordable escapism that kept the industry afloat—and even growing—through the 1930s.[34]

In 1940, Barbara and Jack Robb assumed management of The Strand, changing the name from The Strand to The Playhouse, and ultimately buying the entire building itself from Carrie O'Brien, as relayed in the *Herald and News* on March 19, 1942—with the article noting the import of the business' first foray into unified management and ownership:

> *Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. O'Brien have sold to Mrs. Barbara H. Robb The Playhouse Moving Picture Theatre on South Main Street…The Playhouse, formerly known as The Strand, was built by Mrs. Mary Carr, Mrs. O'Brien's mother in 1919…The unified ownership and management of the property will be of permanent advantage to the capable and enterprising young couple who have taken it over…*[35]

Ultimately, the Robbs would only own the Playhouse for a short period, though long enough to "refinish, beautify, and otherwise improve the building," with the addition—among other interior upgrades—of prominent murals flanking the screen.[36] In January 1943, however, the couple sold the business and building to Jack and Gertrude Champlain, of Port Washington, Long Island, as detailed in the *Herald and News*:

> ***Local Moving Picture Theatre Sold:*** *Mr. and Mrs. John W. Robb, Jr. have sold the Play House, Randolph's only moving picture theatre, together with the theatre building itself, located on South Main Street, to Jack Champlain of Port Washington, Long Island…He plans to conduct the business along the same lines, which have been eminently pleasing to patrons and the community…The Robbs are vacating the Playhouse living apartment, Mr. and Mrs. Champlain are to occupy the apartment vacated…*[37]

[34] "Strand Theatre, Randolph" *Herald and News*, October 20, 1932; "Strand Theatre Presents," *Herald and News*, November 19, 1936; "This Week Friday-Saturday," *Herald and News*, September 28, 1939; "Strand Theatre," *Montpelier Evening Argus*, February 7, 1929.
[35] "Randolph News," *Herald And News*, March 19, 1942.
[36] Ibid.
[37] "Local Moving Picture Theatre Sold," *Herald and News*, January 14, 1943; "The Playhouse Purchased by Jack Champlain," *The Barre Daily Times*, January 18, 1943.

The Champlains would go on to steward The Playhouse through nearly three decades of development, cementing the theatre as an integral commercial and community social fixture in downtown Randolph and beyond through the mid-twentieth century. As reminisced by life-long movie-goer Marshall Amstrong, raised on a dairy farm in East Randolph and steeped in the experience of the Playhouse as a child in the 1940s, the Playhouse in many senses became the foremost community center for Randolph, a vital "third space" for the region's town and hinterland alike:

> *The Playhouse in the old days did a double feature on Friday and Saturday. They would do a western, that would be Gene Autry, or Roy Rogers or Hopalong Cassidy, and the feature would also include a detective picture like Charlie Chan and Sherlock Holmes, and they had the Bowery Boys, I remember my father didn't like them…*
>
> *It was good entertainment, when I was young we were on the farm, we did farmwork. I remember once they played a cartoon and in the cartoon they had a movie and it was out in the country on a farm, and in that cartoon they went to see the movie two-three times, well in that movie they're pitching hay and carrying buckets of grain…And in the cartoon someone said, "Why that's just what we do, why do you people like that movie?" Then, the character said, "We like it 'cause they're doing the work—not us!" That's what it was like…*
>
> *My parents liked it too, they liked Cary Grant, my mother liked Fred Astaire. My grandparents went too, they would have seen the Western movies the Playhouse showed…*
>
> *There was a fella always there…we called him Bean-Head. He went at two o'clock and stayed all day for all the shows. So we went to the 8 o'clock show, we had farm business, and this guy was seeing it for the 4th time that day. He had a cap pistol, and say Gene Autry or Roy Rogers or Hopalong Cassidy came on—they were the good guys, but when the crooked guys would come on he'd take his cap pistol and shoot at them from the front row. He was just a kid, Bean-Head, right about 12, and he'd just shoot that cap pistol.*
>
> *Jack Champlain bought it and he straightened it right out….He was an English teacher in the high school and they said if you go to the Playhouse don't say "ain't." He put a big sign up and he hired two deputy sheriffs, and they sat in the back. No more cap pistols! In the old days people brought beer in, too, so the floors were sticky but under Mr. Champlain, no more outside food or beverage. They sold Moxie, Coke, popcorn…Next door they had a bad restaurant with bad behavior, selling underage liquor and intoxication, and Mr. Champlain hired police to sit in front and read them the rules…and he ran that behavior right out…The Champlains had the "Golden Rule," No more beer, No more outside food, and No more cap pistols!" They made the whole thing look like new."*[38]

[38] Author Interview with Marshall Armstrong, February 3, 2026.

As observed by Marshall Armstrong, the Champlains spearheaded a number of key physical upgrades and alterations to the Playhouse through the 1950s and 1960s. Importantly, in 1954, a larger screen was installed, reflecting changing technologies and changing public expectations for movie houses at the dawn of the television age:

> ***Cinemascope Screen at Randolph Theatre:*** *Installation is being made today of a large, curved screen in the Playhouse which will accommodate cinemascope projection of movies. The new screen measures 21 feet by 15 feet and replaces the one measuring 9 ½ by 13 feet. Cinemascope makes lifelike realism possible without special glasses…The first film to be shown in Cinemascope is "River of No Return," which will be shown next week…*[39]

In the same period, the Playhouse installed an air-conditioning system, an enticement during the humid summer months in a period when few residences featured any climate-control:

> ***Jack Says****—At long last we've got hot, humid weather licked!! Mark Twain said, "Everyone complains about the weather but nobody does anything about it." But that was years ago…now with scientific know-how and engineering available, we have "done something about it." Our modern stream-lined air-conditioning system will furnish a constant supply of fresh, cool, clean air. No matter what kind of weather it may be outside, it will always be cool and refreshing in the Play House.*[40]

Several years later, in 1962, a series of changes to the theatre space—most notably the reconfiguration of seating to provide more leg-room—altered the viewing experience, changing the Playhouse from its original 400-seat capacity to a reported 288 seats, a number which has lessened to the present to a current 167 seats:

> *The Play House, long a favorite recreational spot in Randolph, has recently undergone improvements which are being met with hearty approval from patrons. The interior walls of the theatre have been redecorated in a pleasing tint of turquoise and new rubber runners have been extended down the aisles. The rows of seats, which are 38 inches apart, afford home-stretch comfort for complete relaxation. The attractive wall murals, long part of the theatre's décor, will be refurbished soon as part of the decorating program. These improvements are in keeping with the long-standing policy of Manager Jack Champlain in providing an attractive, quiet, and orderly atmosphere in which young and old may enjoy the pictures.*[41]

Accompanying this physical evolution, through the 1950s and 1960s, periodicals and archival records illustrate an evolving and intimate relationship between the Playhouse Theatre and the

[39] "Cinemascope Screen at Randolph Theatre," *Herald and News*, November 4, 1954.
[40] "Play House," *Herald and News*, May 28, 1953.
[41] "Improvements at Play House Please Patrons," *Herald and News*, March 1, 1962: "Playhouse," *Herald and News*, March 8, 1962.

surrounding community of Randolph—with the theatre and its operations serving as far more than an arena of commercial entertainment, and very much a center of community dynamism. Through the 1960s, Randolph's *Herald and News* regularly ran a cinema column, evidently authored by Jack Champlain, detailing both the films showing, and the ins and outs of "show business." Called "Behind the Scenes at the Playhouse," the column would one week detail, "a pivotal scene from 'Appaloosa,' finding Marlon Brando entering a church confession booth…" and one week discuss the box-office heft of "The King," noting, "If ever the term sure-fire may be applied in show business, it most safely belongs on the motion pictures which have starred Elvis Presley and have been directed by Hal Wallis."[42]

Under the Champlain's management, the Playhouse was a locus for a myriad of community fundraising efforts, sponsoring fundraisers for Randolph Little League with showings of Micky Mantle's "Safe at Home;" supporting the Randolph PTA with a special family feature of "Tomboy and the Champ;" and numerous other fund-drives. The community-based philanthropy was broad-reaching and touchingly specific, reflecting an evolving Randolph—with a 1962 fundraiser showing by the Altar and Rosary Society of Young People of the Catholic Church of "Hand in Hand," a "picture concerning two children of different religions and racial groups who encounter and solve the problems of mutual friendship," as well as a fundraiser for the newly-forming Braintree Historical Society with a showing of "Old Williamsburg, Virginia," followed the same year by a well-attended "Twist Tournament competition," paired with the popular matinee "Twist Around the Clock."[43]

The Playhouse was also site of a steady cycle of annual Randolph traditions, with free movie showings for the town's children on Town Meeting Day, as documented in 1963:

> *The Playhouse was site of free entertainment for youngsters on Town Meeting, with only 288 seats there was some grumbling and sitting on laps. Everyone had a good time, especially Jack, babysitter supreme for kids from 1 ½ to 2 years to 12…*[44]

The Playhouse's annual Children's Christmas Party also defined the era, with the children of Randolph and surrounding communities regaled with films, entertainment, and Santa Claus (aka often Jack Champlain) while their parents shopped in the surrounding commercial district of Randolph—indicative of the synergistic commercial aspirations of the Playhouse as a community-based movie theatre:

> *Santa put in his annual appearance at the Playhouse Theatre, and as usual was greeted with enthusiasm and cheers. 402 youngsters enjoyed the time-honored tradition, with many people who are now parents of children attending recalling the happy occasion when they were among the children looking forward to the*

[42] "Behind the Scenes," *Herald and News*, January 19, 1967; "Behind the Scenes," *Herald and News*, August 3, 1967.
[43] "Randolph Little League," *Herald and News*, May 31, 1962; "Movie this Weekend Sponsored by PTA," *Herald and News*, October 5, 1961; "Braintree Historical Society," *Herald and News*, August 16, 1962; "Hand in Hand," *Herald and News*, February 1, 1962; "Randolph Twisters," *Herald and News*, March 29, 1962.
[44] "Praises Theatre's Children's Party," *Herald and News*, March 14, 1963.

> *event. There was a 15-foot balsam tree and carols, and fun was had while the parents shopped in Randolph's businesses.*[45]

While much of the theatre's programming was targeted to the area's youth, the Playhouse also provided an arena for elders, with Jack Champlain establishing the "Golden Age Club" in 1961, a social club for Seniors hosted at the theatre. The club included transportation from the area's nursing homes, Tranquility and Eastern Star, with Champlain, "providing entertainment and community to these folks." A photograph from the Club captures Miss Lula Wilson, born in 1872 and, "the oldest lady in attendance," in front of the Playhouse (see **Additional Documentation Figures 21-23**). As displayed on the film boards under the marquee, the club had convened to watch "Days of Thrills and Laughter," a retrospective of the silent film era showcasing Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and a stream of the early motion picture greats who had defined the film experience of Ms. Wilson and others of the "Golden Age."[46]

Even as the Playhouse cultivated a prominent community role in Randolph and the surrounding region, by the close of the 1950s and into the 1960s, the theatre was buffeted by a profound cultural shift shaping American life: most notably the rapid rise of television. While the mass-marketing of television dates to the late 1940s, with the first TV sets appearing in the *Sears Roebuck Catalogue* in 1949, Vermont's first local broadcasting station did not emerge until January 1954, with the establishment of WCAX-TV in Burlington. As in the rest of the nation, the adoption of television in Vermont had a profound effect upon the established community institutions and lifeways of the state—affecting theatres, libraries, community organizations, and the general patterns of public and domestic life. As recalled by East Randolph dairy-farmer Marshall Armstrong of the period:

> *In Randolph, television came in slow. Maybe this one got a television, then that one, and sometimes someone would go to the person's house and you'd all watch, and little by little more people got TV and that kind of drove theatres out. Randolph stayed in business, but the theatre in Bethel closed, and others. Mr. Champlain had a knack of knowing what to show, like 500 films a year, but the TV changed things...*[47]

Marshall Armstrong's experience reflected that of the nation as a whole, with a reported one million television sets in use across the country in 1950 and an estimated 50 million by 1959, with 96 % of American households owning a TV by 1970. This shift had a profound effect upon the Playhouse, and thousands of other movie theatres across America, with the personalized cinematic opportunities of television undercutting the established primacy of the movie theatre. In many respects, it is likely that the growing specter of television undergirded much of the Playhouse's intense community focus during the 1950s and 1960s, with the Champlains likely motivated to maintain an intimate community connection in the face of the broad atomization of television. Regardless, even with the Champlain's concerted community efforts, by the mid-

[45] "Santa Coming to Playhouse Party," *Herald and News*, December 8, 1967.
[46] Archives of the Randolph Historical Society: Randolph Playhouse Photograph Collection; "Golden Age Club," *Herald and News*, August 3, 1961.
[47] Author Interview with Marshall Armstrong, February 3, 2026.

1960s business operations at the Playhouse were under strain, with declining patronage lamented in a series of articles, editorials, and Letters to the Editor in the *Herald and News*, culminating in an unsparing 1963 Letter to the Editor by Jack Champlain:

> *I wish to call to the attention of the folk of our valley something that I believe is quite important to everyone. Shall the Playhouse Theatre continue in operation or shall it "Go Dark?" True, this is just another business on Main Street in the sense of private ownership, and who am I to plead for financial support. However, as has been found in many situations such as Randolph, throughout the country, the loss of the only theatre has been of irreparable damage to property values, to the local merchants and manufacturers, and of most importance, to parents and families. Most theatres provide a place of entertainment for our children in a clean and supervised surrounding. You know where they are—and when they should be home. This is very true of your Playhouse. It is neat and clean, its seats are comfortably spaced, its equipment booth and the curved screen are the finest, courteous decorum is maintained so that all can enjoy the picture. Most importantly, the films shown are carefully selected with the good of all in mind—the obscene, the licentious, the sensational, the "Fast Buck" type are rigidly avoided. I cannot continue to operate with just the youngsters in attendance. The older folks should attend once in a while or better, make it a family treat.*[48]

Despite these entreaties, and the immense array of Playhouse-sponsored community events, by 1967, the Champlains had announced closure of the theatre, with the Playhouse's last film under Champlain ownership shown on December 4, 1967:

> ***Last Movie Shown at Play House:*** *The signs have come down above the Randolph Play House, the posters announcing coming movies are gone and the theatre from the outside looks deserted, and so it is. The last movie to be shown at the Play House before its doors closed permanently was, "The Greatest Story Ever Told" which played Sunday and Monday nights to large audiences. Words of appreciation from Jack Champlain, longtime owner of the Play House, drew quick reaction from the audience—which responded with "He's a Jolly Good Fellow." The movie theatre, once filled to capacity especially on weekends, has been an unprofitable business ever since the advent of television and, with the installation of cable TV recently, attendance has been reduced even further. Mr. and Mrs. Champlain have operated the theatre for the past 25 years.*[49]

[48] "Playhouse," *White River Valley Herald*, January 31, 1963; Douglas Gomery, "The Coming of television and the 'Lost' Motion Picture Audience," *Journal of Film and Video* 37, no. 3 (1985).
[49] "Last Movie Shown at Play House," *Herald and News*, December 7, 1967

In the days surrounding the closure, numerous articles appeared in local periodicals, recalling the decades of films shown in the theatre and bemoaning the loss, exemplified by a morose editorial from Randolph-resident M.W. McLaughlin:

> *Since Making Randolph our home, we have heard the expression, "Randolph, the Town on the Go." Going where? Shame on the responsible citizens of Randolph who are content to stand idly by and allow the Playhouse to fold. Alas, this necessary asset and valuable bit of community heritage will repose in the files of the Randolph Historical Society. This is a Town on the go?*
>
> *M.W. McLaughlin, Major, USMC Retd.*[50]

Longtime theatre operator and central fixture of Randolph community Jack Champlain died at the age of 69 only one year after closure of the Playhouse. The theatre—and its integral Randolph community identity—played a prominent role in his obituary, as it did in his life and that of his wife Gertrude:

> *In 1942 he came to Randolph and purchased the Playhouse, Randolph's movie theatre. He later also bought the Bethel movie house. At one time he also owned the Randolph Floral Corp. He retired from the movie business a year ago, closing the Randolph Theatre in December, 1967. Mr. Champlain was an active citizen and was a strong promoter of Randolph. He will be remembered for his annual Christmas Party for children at the movie theatre in Randolph with gifts for every child and a free movie. The local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts were also guests of the theatre during Scout Week. Mr. Champlain also promoted a Senior Citizens Club, with reduced rates at this theatre for those 60 years old and over...*[51]

The Show Goes On: The Playhouse into the Twenty-First Century

While the community of Randolph had mourned the loss of the Playhouse following the Champlain's closure in 1967, ultimately the shuttering proved only transient. By the late 1960s, the Playhouse had resumed operation under new owners, Arnold (Arnie) and Clara Hendin, who went on to own the Playhouse through 1988. As detailed in the *Bennington Banner* in 1969, the Playhouse was part of an eclectic Hendin business portfolio, which included "snowmobile sales, a housing development, and other exotic undertakings." Within this diversified business context, the Hendins largely delegated management of the theatre to a series of operators, including Dave Santi, George Rich, and Gail Osterberg, among others, through the 1970s and 1980s.

While the Playhouse remained open, the historic record indicates that its business and operations were at times tenuous during the period. In the early 1970s, Arnie Hendin hosted a church in the building, and by the early 1980s, manager George Rich was renting home videos from the space, with the theatre reflecting a hybrid business model that attempted to stride between the evolving

[50] "A Sad Day for Randolph," *News and Herald*, November 30, 1967.
[51] "Jack Champlain," The Randolph Playhouse Theatre, *The Times Argus*, November 21, 1968.

technological realm of home movies and the traditional form of the theatre. Within this context, by December 1985, the Playhouse had briefly shuttered again, as detailed in *The Rutland Daily Herald*:

> *With its wooden seats, wall murals, and hidden orchestra pit from the Vaudeville days, the Playhouse itself is a kind of time machine. Last December, after 66 years, the past gave way to the future at the Playhouse. Its audience eroded by cable TV and VCRs, the theatre closed down…[According to] building owner Clara Hendin, "The movie business has gone downhill everywhere because of video and because of cable TV…Cable came into this town shortly after we bought the Playhouse. Before that television reception here was poor, so there was a good chance they'd get cabin fever and go to the movies. Then came cable with eight additional channels—and it was much more fun to make popcorn and stay home, especially in winter. Compounding the problem were the soaring film rental costs and the fact that distributors now insist on longer runs with higher advance payments…You can't sustain a three or four week run in a town this size…I could have sold the property two or three times over the years, but I always thought it was important to have a movie theatre. I think it's good for the kids. I'm not sure how many kids come anymore but it's there if they want it. Something is missing in a community if there isn't a small theatre…"*[52]

As in the 1960s, however, the Playhouse's mid-1980s demise proved short-lived. By mid-1986, Gail Osterberg and son Leonard had petitioned Clara Hendin to re-open under their management, with the first movie played in the re-opened theatre fittingly "Back to the Future." As reported by Osterberg in the months after re-opening, "We've had a lot of families, I am very pleased to see a lot of parents bringing their children." As surmised by Clara Hendin, "What's playing isn't as important as just to get out, to be with your friends, it's a good place to be."[53]

By 1988, David and Tammy Tomaszewski had purchased the theatre from Clara Hendin, opening with Clint Eastwood's "Pink Cadillac" and ushering in yet another extended era of community continuity coupled with steady change at the Playhouse. Even as the Tomaszewski's retained the Playhouse's significant operational form, changing mandates ushered in a host of material and programmatic changes during the period. Most notably, at purchase, a State Fire Marshall inspection necessitated the fireproofing of the theatre's interior walls—coating Barbara Robb's early 1940s murals. By the early 1990s, the rear apartment had been converted to a video arcade—a draw for late twentieth century children and teens—and the sloped floor of the front of the theatre had been flattened and rebuilt to house pool tables, with the tables covered when films were shown. In the same period, the screen was replaced, again, with a new stage built to support it and the original orchestra pit covered. In addition, the majority of the theatre's original and early cast iron, wood, and horse-hair seats were removed, replaced with class-room chairs donated by the University of Vermont, with an adapted swinging desk arm fabricated to house an expansive cup-holder. On the walls and ceiling, acoustical tiles and drapery deadened

[52] "An Old Theatre Reopens," *The Rutland Daily Herald*, April 20, 1986.
[53] "An Old Theatre Reopens," *The Rutland Daily Herald*, April 20, 1986.

sound, covering much of the original wall finishing. In 1990, the couple also upgraded the theatre's sound, with a new spectral recording sound system and a THX system embedded behind the screen. Similarly, the theatre's two-projector carbon arc system was upgraded to an automated system, eliminating highly technical mid-movie reel change-overs that had long defined projection and warranted highly-specific operational expertise.[54]

Within this period of steady material adaptation and change at the Playhouse, the theatre remained a defining attribute of community life in Randolph, as recalled by longtime Randolph resident John Farrow, who was a frequent visitor with his young family in this period:

> *We started going pretty much as soon as we came to Randolph, it was a local theatre. It was always our night out as a family, we'd go have hamburgers, fries, and a milkshake, and watch a movie. It was the main entertainment in Randolph besides the pool hall and the bowling alley. We'd go to basically anything they played, it was our local event…A few times, because we'd go see whatever was there, I remember running out when it was too much, too scary. My son Zeke in particular, if it was too much we'd quickly exit and I'd run out of the theatre with him under my arm! But we were open to a wide range of movies because it was our local theatre.*[55]

Ultimately, John Farrow's son Zeke, squired to the evolving spectrum of films at the Playhouse as a child in 1980s Randolph, went on to study and work in the film industry. As relayed by his father, "Zeke became absolutely enamored with film." When asked if the Playhouse may have had a role in this formation, the answer was simple: "Yes, absolutely."

Greg Butler, another regular visitor during the period of Tomaszewski ownership and beyond, and another film industry professional with familial roots in Randolph, recalls the comfortable and creative dynamism of the Playhouse during the closing decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first:

> *The theatre was always a good way of seeing the town. What is playing, what is the movie or two that someone picked to say we're going to show this in Randolph. Sometimes it would be "Oh great, they've got a kid's movie, you know spring break is coming up, that's really good for everybody." Sometimes it would be, "Oh wow, that's an interesting choice, I wouldn't expect to see Woody Allen's less successful 1980s film being shown here, I wonder who thought of that." It was eclectic, some really good commercial and community choices and then some really interesting ones that showed that someone cares about film just for film's sake. It wasn't always commercial, but it wasn't always art house either.*[56]

[54] "History of the Playhouse Movie Theatre," The Friends of the Historic Playhouse Theatre, Inc, accessed online at Our History | Playhouse Movie Theatre, March 20, 2026.
[55] Author Interview with John Farrow, February 5, 2026.
[56] Author Interview with Greg Butler, March 10, 2026.

The Friends of the Historic Playhouse Theatre: A Playhouse for the Future

While the Tomaszewskis had addressed an array of technological advances in their operation of the Playhouse from the late 1980s to the 2010s, the rapid and unforgiving advent of digital projection represented yet another perilous crossroads for the Playhouse, drawing a theatre born in the silent-film era into an unknown future. The digital advance was something of a crisis for small theatres across America, with the cost of converting to digital projection from traditional reels steep and, often, unattainable for small theatre owners. In a crippling paradox, so too were the costs of not converting, with an escalating loss of access to film circulation and accompanying commercial obsolescence, as detailed in 2012 in film industry publication *Cineaste*:

> *It's no secret by now that the digital tsunami that has overtaken so many dimensions of our lives has transformed our relationship to the movies. Much of this transformation has long since been accomplished: when it comes to shooting and editing motion pictures, the scales tipped toward digital some years ago; and thanks to DVD, Blu-ray, and online streaming and downloading, the vast majority of cinematic consumption is taking place via TV's, computers, or other devices. But theatrical exhibition has been the last stronghold of the traditional film print—until recently in the nation's multiplexes, and even today in smaller theatres, going to the movies has meant gathering in a theatre where trained projectionists have heaved bulky 35mm celluloid or polyester-based film prints on to projection wheels or platters, and threaded them up on clattering, hulking, intricate machines that have changed very little over the past century. But the digital wave that has been looming over movie theatres for quite some time has finally broken, and the speed with which the transition is being enacted is remarkable –by the end of 2013, the major studios will have ceased creating film prints of new titles, and nearly all U.S. theatres are expected to have gone digital…*[57]

The establishment of the Playhouse Cooperative was largely born of this impending and potentially catastrophic digital wave, with the Tomaszewskis selling the Playhouse Theatre business to a cooperative group of community investors in 2012. The Cooperative, which included over 200 members from the community of Randolph and its surrounds, undertook extensive fundraising efforts to support the transition to digital projection, vital for theatre survival. Ultimately, the Cooperative also bought the theatre building itself, unifying the ownership and operation of the Playhouse under cooperative ownership. In 2019, the Cooperative transitioned to a new 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Friend of the Playhouse Theatre, established to pursue an arts and education mission framed by the Playhouse's one-hundred-year identity as a community-driven motion picture theatre.

As described by John Farrow, establishment of the Friends of the Playhouse was an integral element of a broad local movement in Randolph that sought to nurture the pulse of the

[57] David Bordwell, Grover Crisp, The Ferroni Brigade, et al. "From 35mm to DCP: A Critical Symposium on the Changing Face of Motion Picture Exhibition," *Cinéaste* 37, no. 4 (2012): 32–42.

community as the buildings, businesses, and culture of Randolph evolved into the twenty-first century:

> *In Randolph there is a lot of community effort in trying to figure out what kind of institutions we have, what we need and what we want. Even pre-Covid, a lot of the stores and businesses went out…Some say its the sign of the times, that people are more inclined to not go out, and we are trying to figure that out, because the Playhouse is our way to do that, and has been our way to do that. It can be dynamic, for families, special programs, older films, movies that relate to Vermont…In ways that only a local theatre can connect to people. This is the role of the Playhouse.*[58]

Within this community context, from the theatre's 1919 inception, the Playhouse has served as an evolving "third space" for Randolph, providing an evolving canvas where the community can come together, yet remain distinct, a space that is particular to Randolph and its lifeways and reflective of the national and international zeitgeist that frames our lives, as described by Greg Butler of the Playhouse:

> *It allows—and has allowed—a community to have a place to meet each other and enjoy together things that can be shared…Like watching a certain kind of film with other people, you can do that at home if you know them really well, but if you go to a theatre you can be with perfect strangers and whether you actually talk to them, which you might, or you might not, you are enjoying it with people who are there for similar reasons…I like that director, I didn't have anything else to do tonight, I like science fiction…A way to be on your own, but with others, and have the chance to, however you connect or don't…It's still not sitting at home, you're experiencing something together.*

That opportunity for connection—both through film and through community—has animated longtime Playhouse patron Marshall Amstrong, child of East Randolph and child of the Playhouse from his 1930s birth. As he reflects near his 90th year, "I'd rather go to a little movie house like the Playhouse than a big jumbo house." Marshall's brother, Larry Armstrong, who died in 2022 on the family farm, felt the same way, with the Playhouse part of the pulse of his life in its entirety, as reflected upon his death:

> *Larry attended school at the 1901 elementary school in East Randolph and the old brick high school in Randolph. Before and after school he did farm work…Larry had a very active last week of his life, on Sunday, Oct. 9 he went to the Playhouse and saw the Jay Craven movie "Martin Eden." He always enjoyed movies at the Playhouse. On Monday, Oct. 10 he went to the Farm Bureau Supper*

[58] Author Interview with John Farrow, February 5, 2026; "Playhouse Coop to Buy Main Street Theatre," *The White River Valley Herald*, September 24, 2015.

and Meeting at the East Bethel Grange. On Tuesday and Wednesday, he worked on hay behind the barn…[59]

Perched on the corner of South Main and Weston streets for 107 years, the Playhouse has intersected and united across generations. Across vast social, cultural, and technological change; through wars, births, deaths, community growth, retraction, and revival. Amidst this, the Playhouse continues to tell a broad and vital Vermont, and in turn American, story. From Kate Brock and her new Corona Solo Piano tucked under the newly finished plaster screen; to Bean-Head and his cap-gun on a Saturday afternoon with Hopalong Cassidy; to Jack Champlain on a snowy Vermont Town Meeting Day—babysitter supreme to the town's children; to the Tomaszewskis, carrying the Playhouse to the twenty-first century as heavy film platters and ribbons of reel ceded to a digital future. A single building weaving countless untold stories, where we can all share—for some hours—both a story of ourselves and the evolving magic of the motion picture.

The Architectural Legacy of the Moving Picture in Vermont: A Comparative Analysis

As detailed in this historic context, the ascendence of the motion picture industry was both a watershed cultural moment and a transformational canvas for the built environment and community form, with the technology precipitating new architectural and programmatic conceptions and designs across the state's communities. Studying the evolution of this architectural form in Vermont provides an important contextual lens upon both the shape of the motion picture industry during the period of development and the association of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre to this overarching developmental narrative. The following section situates the 1919 development of the Playhouse Theatre in the broader sweep of development of motion picture theatres in Vermont, underscoring the statewide significance of the resource as an early twentieth century purpose-built motion picture theatre. While the scope of this documentation does not include a detailed inventory of all the theatres developed in the state in this period, the analysis details the major contours of development to situate the significance of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre in the state of Vermont as a whole. The narrative is also intended to provide the foundations for a framing developmental narrative to support further study of associated resources across the state.

As detailed herein, in the motion picture industry's earliest phases of development in Vermont, the familiar forms of Vermont's existing community buildings—town houses, opera houses, and municipal buildings, were adapted for use by the burgeoning industry, with existing edifices across the state in both town and rural village settings housing limited runs of itinerant motion picture showings. Within this early development context, the existing physical fabric of the state's communities became ready motion picture theatres for an avid public, if only temporarily and within a larger portfolio of other community purposes. Within this broad context of cultural and programmatic adaptation and evolution, many of Vermont's extant nineteenth and early twentieth century community buildings stand as peripheral linkages to the cultural advancement of the motion picture, with the traditional nineteenth century forms an evocative building block

[59] Obituary of Laurence Armstrong, Randolph, Vermont, *White River Valley Herald*, October 13, 2022.

for the foundational era of motion picture development. The historic record is rife with limited run showings of late nineteenth and early twentieth reels across the state, from Bean Memorial Hall in West Fairlee in Orange County, to Waugh's Opera House in St. Albans in Franklin County. Importantly, a number of these adapted edifices continue to show film to the present, along with other types of performing arts programming, including the Barre Opera House (1899), Bellows Falls Opera House (1887, rebuilt 1926), Randolph's Chandler Music Hall (1907), Enosburg Opera House (1892), Middlebury's Town Hall Theatre (1883), and Woodstock Town Hall Opera House (1900), among others. As an assemblage, this range of adapted and multi-purpose forms is testament to the fluidity of the motion picture industry, as the rapid rise of film intermingled with other entertainment and community forms, both in the historic period and in the present. A number of these resources are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of downtown historic districts, as cited in footnotes below.[60]

By the first years of the twentieth century, as motion pictures evolved from a traveling curiosity to a highly popular recreational pastime, Vermont's village centers and larger towns were increasingly developed with dedicated motion picture or amusement houses, many of the earliest developed in adapted nineteenth century commercial spaces in central business districts and others in small-scale, purpose-built forms. As detailed by Vermont theatre historian Bob Blanchard, in its earliest proliferation the moving picture theatre was generally highly rudimentary in form, "Most were just empty retail storefronts where rows of chairs were set up and silent movies were projected on a wall, curtain, or screen…But once it became clear that movies were not a passing thing and there was the potential to make a lot of money from them, more substantial, purpose-built theatres were erected…"[61]

Against this solidifying backdrop, 1915 motion picture industry statistics in Vermont indicate the state was developed with approximately 40 motion picture theatres, spanning from Arlington to Derby Line, Northfield to Vergennes. This number grew through the 1920s, with over 100 movie theatres detailed in the state by 1930. Review of historic photographs, periodicals, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Mapping from across the state during the period presents a rich array of development in a wide range of forms in the state's community centers, from the stolid rusticated-block false-front of the 1908 Dreamland Theatre in Bellows Falls (converted to an American Legion post in the 1950s) to Winooski's c. 1908 Nickel Theatre, whose vernacular square mass was accentuated with Romanesque arches and street-fronting false-balconette (burned in the 1950s). [62]

[60] "West Fairlee," *Herald and News*, April 27, 1911; "Waugh's Opera House," *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, February 18, 1914; see National Register of Historic Places Listings: Waugh Opera House (NRIS AD80000335) Barre Opera House (NRIS 73000198), Bellows Falls Opera House (NRIS 82001706), Chandler Music Hall (NRIS 73000196), Enosburg Opera House (NRIS 78000235), Town Hall Theatre (NRIS AD76000223) Woodstock Town Hall Opera House (NRIS RS73000274); "Movie Theatres in Vermont," online database accessed June 20, 2026 at Movie Theaters in Vermont - Cinema Treasures.

[61] Bob Blanchard. *Lost: Burlington, Vermont* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2023), 105.

[62] "Theatres in Vermont," excerpted by Bob Blanchard in Burlington Area History: Motion Picture Theatres in Vermont, online forum accessed June 19, 2026 at https://www.facebook.com/groups/502280600349047; "Dreamland Theatre Home for Post 37, online article accessed June 19, 2026 at Dreamland Theatre home for Post 37 | The American Legion Centennial Celebration; "At Nickel Theatre Winooski," *The Burlington Daily News*, June

In contrast to the state's larger multi-purpose adapted edifices from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, small-scale moving picture houses of the 1910s and 1920s are poorly represented across Vermont, though once a very common element of the commercial form in towns and villages across the state. The drivers of erasure are manifold. First, with the rise of talking pictures in the mid-to-late 1920s, many silent theatres folded, unable to cross the technological divide from silent film. Second, the Depression and subsequent upheaval of war further winnowed the field, with the period witnessing closure of many small-scale storefront theatres and corresponding consolidation of ownership. Third, the rise of the drive-in movie theater post-World War II and the move to multiplex theaters in larger population centers put a marked competitive stress on the older and smaller single screen venues. Lastly, many theatres across the state were lost to the general maw of the modernizing tenor of twentieth century life: demolished, burned, altered and adapted to new use that obscure cinematic origins. Within this context, the state's first-generation theatres have been slowly removed, altered, and obscured across the state's village form, with members of each community sharing stories about the theatres of their childhood lost to one rupture or another. Against this backdrop, within the state's extant theatre portfolio, few known resources of this period remain operationally intact and expressive of the period of development, exemplified by vestiges including the currently-operating twin-screen Paramount Theatre in Barre, operating in an altered c. 1920 brick theatre form (historically Park/Paramount Theatre) that was bisected in the late-twentieth century; and Montpelier's Savoy Theatre, reopened in 1981 in the historic location of an early twentieth century storefront theatre developed in a nineteenth century business block (historically Massucco Theatre).

Within this generally obscured foundational physical context, the 1919 Randolph Playhouse Theatre remains as a highly significant and representative strand of this dynamic foundational development period in Vermont, with its purpose-built form reflective of a solidifying motion picture industry whose reach was increasingly broad across even the most modest of village streetscapes. As detailed herein, the architectural and operational retention of this form is rare in the state, and indeed the nation, and representative of a foundational period of development within the motion picture industry that has largely been effaced from Vermont's communities. This dual identity, with the theatre at once both highly representative archetype and rare anomaly, underscores the statewide significance of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre.[63]

While the transitional early phases of development of purpose-built theatres is poorly represented in Vermont as detailed above, the state's extant theatre building stock presents a more complete portrait of later moving picture theatre development, with a number of the state's most notable pre-World War II movie and performing arts theatres developed in the later 1920s and 1930s period. As a property type, these buildings were generally of a more substantial form than their 1910s and early 1920s counterparts, with some built solely for cinema and others housing a

30, 1910; "Movie Theatres in Vermont," online database accessed June 20, 2026 at Movie Theaters in Vermont - Cinema Treasures.

[63] Jeffrey Klenotic. "Roll the Credits: Gender, Geography, and the People's History of Cinema," 209. Savoy Theatre: See NRIS 78000246; "Movie Theatres in Vermont," online database accessed June 20, 2026 at Movie Theaters in Vermont - Cinema Treasures.

range of entertainment functions, including Burlington's Flynn Theatre (1930), Brattleboro's Latchis Theatre (1938), Montpelier's Capitol Theatre (1939), Morrisville's Bijou Theatre (1937), Middlebury's Campus Theatre (1937), Springfield's Avon Theatre (1936), St. Johnsbury's Star Theatre (1927), and St. Albans Welden Theatre (1937). Of note, a number of these 1930s theatres rose on the ashes of earlier motion picture houses, typified by Morrisville's Bijou, which replaced a c. 1910 theatre at the site, as well as Montpelier's Capitol Theatre, which replaced an earlier burned theatre at the site. The 1930s period also saw conversion of vaudeville forms to motion picture functions, most notably at Rutland's Playhouse Theatre (now Paramount Theatre), originally a lauded Vaudeville stop that was constructed in 1912 and converted to "talking" motion pictures in 1931. As typified in Rutland, by this time theatres were equipped with sound, with the earliest eras of silent film ceding to the "talkies" by the late 1920s and state of the art sound a key selling point in ticket sales, exemplified by Springfield's Avon theatre, which at its 1936 opening boasted, "the most modern and completely sound equipped theatre in Vermont."[64]

Built upon this substantial pre-World War II foundation, the movie theatre form in Vermont continued to evolve in the second half of the twentieth century, with the state's existing portfolio expanded with "Drive-In" forms through the late 1940s and 1950s, part of a wave of drive-in development in the United States that united twin strands of a surging automobile culture with increased leisure focus in the post-war period. By the mid-1950s, drive-ins emerged across the state, spanning from Northern Vermont's Derby-Port (1950) to the Fairlee Drive-In (1950) and Brattleboro's ParkWay Drive-In (1952). At present, only Colchester's Sunset Drive-In (1948) and the Bethel Drive-In (1954) remain in operation, representative of a long strand of attrition driven by soaring land values underlying the drive-in, changing consumer tastes, and the social siloization of the television through the twentieth century. Of note, while the Covid-19 Pandemic cratered theatres sales in the early 2020s, the period saw a surge of interest in drive-in theatres, representative of the unforeseen ways societal forces continue to shape the movie theatre and American culture.[65]

With the rise of television in the 1950s, the modernizing arc of the moving picture in many senses left the theatre and entered the home, with little substantial new theatre construction in the latter decades of the twentieth century. By the 1970s and 1980s, a pattern of "twinning" emerged across the state, with many of the state's existing early twentieth century single-screen theatres bisected from a single screen to two or even three screens, allowing greater variety in box-office offerings to keep pace with the cornucopia of the television. The late twentieth century also saw development of the "multi-plex" exemplified by Burlington's 1981

[64] See: Latchis Theatre (NRIS 83003225), Flynn Theatre (NRIS 83003206), Capitol Theatre (NRIS 78000246) Bijou Theatre (NRIS 07000196); Campus Theatre (NRIS AD76000223), Paramount Theatre (NRIS 80000387), Avon Theatre (NRIS 83003234), Welden Theatre (AD80000335); "New Avon Theatre at Springfield to be Opened Today," *Springfield Reporter*, August 13, 1936; "Star Theatre Opens Here," *News and Advertiser*, January 4, 1927; "Welden Theatre," St. Albans Daily Messenger, July 24, 1937; "Two Springfield Theatres Under Same Management," *Springfield Reporter*, June 25, 1936.

[65] "Movie Theatres in Vermont," online database accessed June 20, 2026 at Movie Theaters in Vermont - Cinema Treasures.

Nickelodeon 6 (Merrill's Roxy Cinema), itself closed because of declining attendance and the ravages of the Covid-10 Pandemic in 2024.[66]

Against this broad sweep of transformation and development, the single-screen, purpose-built 1919 form of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is at once universally resonant, representative of a broad sweep of cultural life that shaped life for generations of Vermonters, and exceedingly rare, allowing a clear glimpse from the twenty-first century into the complex technological, social, and architectural forces that underlay the transformative influence of movies and motion picture houses in Vermont's community life.

[66] Ibid.

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The Moving Picture World

New York World

News and Advertiser

The Rutland Daily Herald

St. Albans Daily Messenger

The St. Johnsbury Caledonian

Springfield Reporter

Stamford Advocate

The Times Argus

The Vermont Cynic

The White River Valley Herald

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Archives of the Friends of the Playhouse Theatre, Inc.

Archives of the Randolph Historical Society

Author Interview with Marshall Armstrong, February 3, 2026.

Author Interview with Greg Butler, March 10, 2026.

Author Interview with John Farrow, February 5, 2026.

Burlington Area History Forum

Cinema Treasures, online film database

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, multiple dates. Accessed from the Vermont Historical Society.

United States Federal Census Records of 1900

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Online Resource Center

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Weston Street Historic District, Survey No. 0909-130

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.14 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 44.921783 Longitude: -72.665231

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic property boundary includes the entirety of the 0.14-acre parcel that the Randolph Playhouse Theatre is developed upon, SPAN 507-159-13911.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The selected boundary includes the entirety of the historic property and its immediate contextual surrounds that reflects the building and its site through development and the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Polly Seddon Allen
organization: Independent Consulting Senior Architectural Historian
street & number: P.O. Box 215 / 69 Common Loop
city or town: Craftsbury Common state: Vermont zip code: 05827
e-mail: polly.s.allen@gmail.com
telephone: 916.201.1855
date: June 23, 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Randolph Playhouse Theatre

City or Vicinity: Randolph

County: Orange State: Vermont

Photographer: Polly Seddon Allen

Date Photographed: September 17, 2024, May 21, 2025, June 2, 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 22: South Main Street façade of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre, facing west toward Weston Street.

2 of 22: South Main Street façade of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre, facing north on South Main Street.

3 of 22: South Main Street façade of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre, facing south on South Main Street.

4 of 22: Detail of South Main Street façade of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

5 of 22: Detail of Randolph Playhouse Theatre entry canopy with modern entry extension.

6 of 22: Detail of Randolph Playhouse Theatre entry and movie poster displays.

7 of 22: South wall of the Randolph Playhouse Theatre, fronting Weston Street.

8 of 22: Detail of side door on Weston Street, Randolph Playhouse Theatre, fronting Weston Street.

9 of 22: Rear apartment unit lining west wall of Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

10 of 22: North wall of Randolph Playhouse Theatre, with apartment entry at rear.

11 of 22: Entry vestibule and ticket window, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

12 of 22: Facing out through ticket window, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

13 of 22: Candy shelving at ticket window, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

14 of 22: Overview of theatre space, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

15 of 22: Facing toward screen from seating area, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

16 of 22: Screen and stage. Area was once developed with orchestra pit in silent film era, infilled.

17 of 22: Examples of early chairs with sunburst motif, most replaced with modern seating adapted from a University of Vermont classroom.

18 of 22: Stairs from upper projection level, Randolph Playhouse Theatre.

19 of 22: Original metal-lined walls of projection booth, Randolph Playhouse Theatre. Now the theatre is developed with digital projection.

20 of 22: Attic of Randolph Playhouse Theatre with exposed roof-framing.

21 of 22: Randolph Playhouse Theatre Operator’s Apartment.

22 of 22: Randolph Playhouse Theatre’s Operators Apartment upper level.

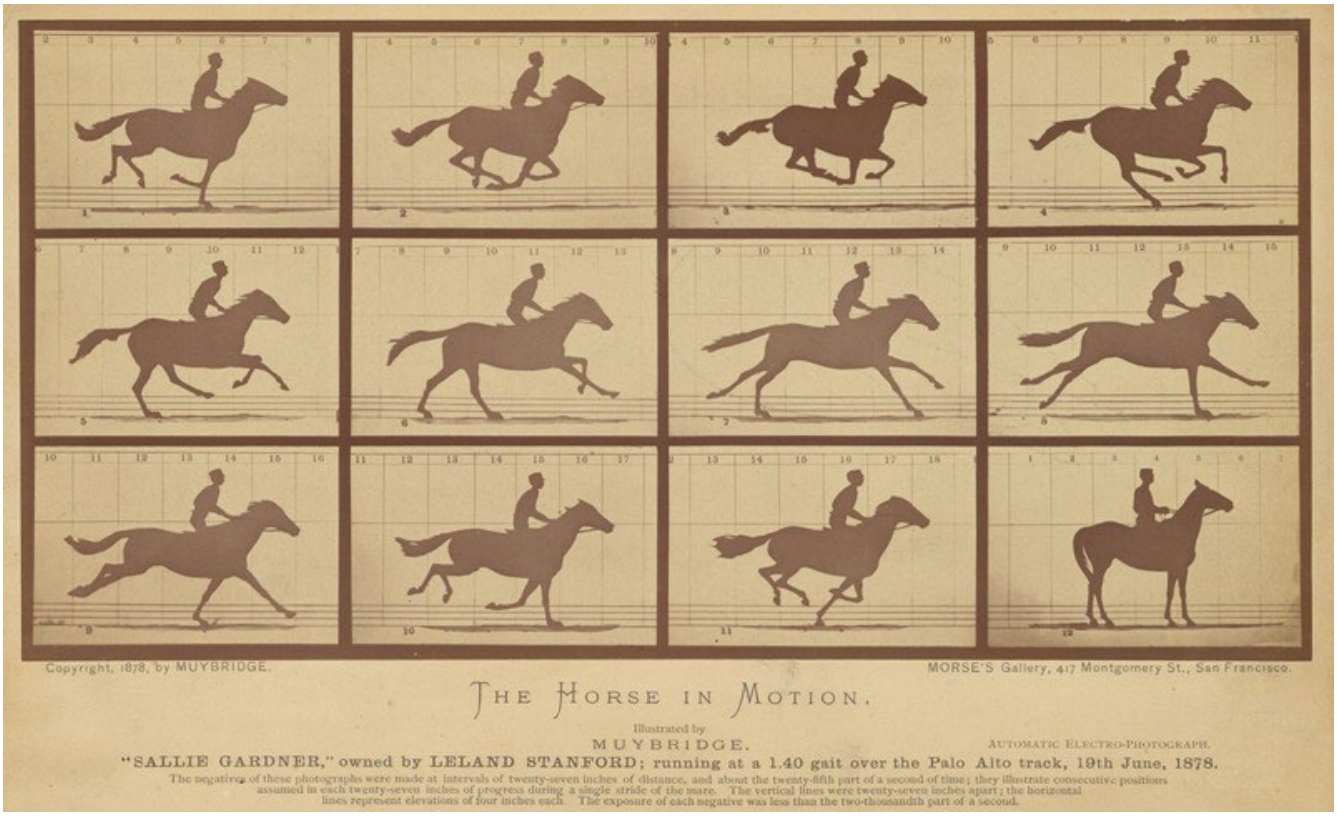


Figure 1: Eadweard Muybridge's 1870s equine motion studies launched an extensive inquiry into the documentation of movement and time, building the conceptual foundation for early motion picture development by Thomas Edison and others.
(Library of Congress)



Gates Opera House,
White River Junction.

Under the auspices of the Epworth League of the M. E. Church,

Wednesday Evening, Sept. 15,

The Alonzo Hatch

ELECTRO-PHOTO

Musical Company!

Presenting the Latest, Most Improved and Best of all Moving Picture Machines,

THE ANIMOTOSCOPE.

Come and see Edison's Wonderful Moving Pictures, showing Latest Choicest, and Best, American and Foreign Views.

Mr. ALONZO HATCH, Tenor.
Sig. GIACINTO EPIFANO, Solo Harpist

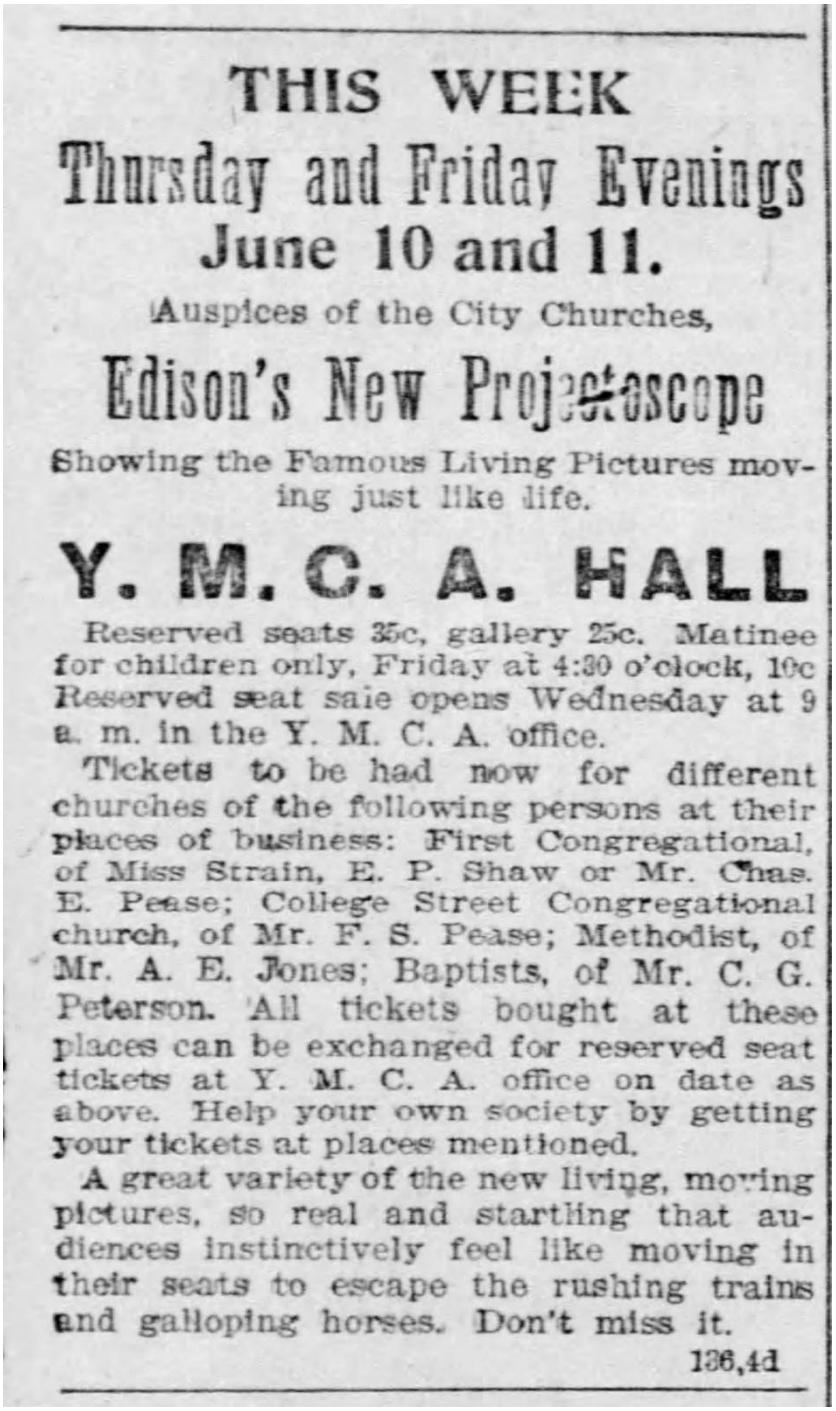
The Improved Edison Phonograph, with Norcross attachment and Latest Master Records. The Mammoth Trinopticon

Illustrated Songs.

Reserved Seats, - - 35 Cts.
General Admission, - 25 Cts.

Diagram of Reserved Seats at Bogle Bros'. Jewelry Store.

Figure 2: In the earliest era of motion picture development in Vermont, the state's opera houses, town houses, social halls, and performance theatres hosted a growing range of itinerant, limited-run productions, like this at the Gates Opera House in White River Junction. (*The Landmark*, September 10, 1897)



THIS WEEK

Thursday and Friday Evenings
June 10 and 11.

Auspices of the City Churches,

Edison's New Projectoscope

Showing the Famous Living Pictures moving just like life.

Y. M. C. A. HALL

Reserved seats 35c, gallery 25c. Matinee for children only, Friday at 4:30 o'clock, 10c Reserved seat sale opens Wednesday at 9 a. m. in the Y. M. C. A. office.

Tickets to be had now for different churches of the following persons at their places of business: First Congregational, of Miss Strain, E. P. Shaw or Mr. Chas. E. Pease; College Street Congregational church, of Mr. F. S. Pease; Methodist, of Mr. A. E. Jones; Baptists, of Mr. C. G. Peterson. All tickets bought at these places can be exchanged for reserved seat tickets at Y. M. C. A. office on date as above. Help your own society by getting your tickets at places mentioned.

A great variety of the new living, moving pictures, so real and startling that audiences instinctively feel like moving in their seats to escape the rushing trains and galloping horses. Don't miss it.

136,4d

Figure 3: The proliferation of motion pictures across the country and state was afforded by a growing number of technological advances, including Thomas Edison's "Projectoscope," advertised in Burlington, Vermont.
(*The Burlington Free Press*, June 8, 1897)



Pastime Theatre

Saturday, May 29

Matinee, 2:30, Evening 7:30,

The Famous Comedy Success

The New Wizard of Oz

Featuring the Famous Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Violet Macmillian as Dorothy of the Original Cast.

This picture has just closed a run in the big cities at 25, 35 and 50¢ prices.

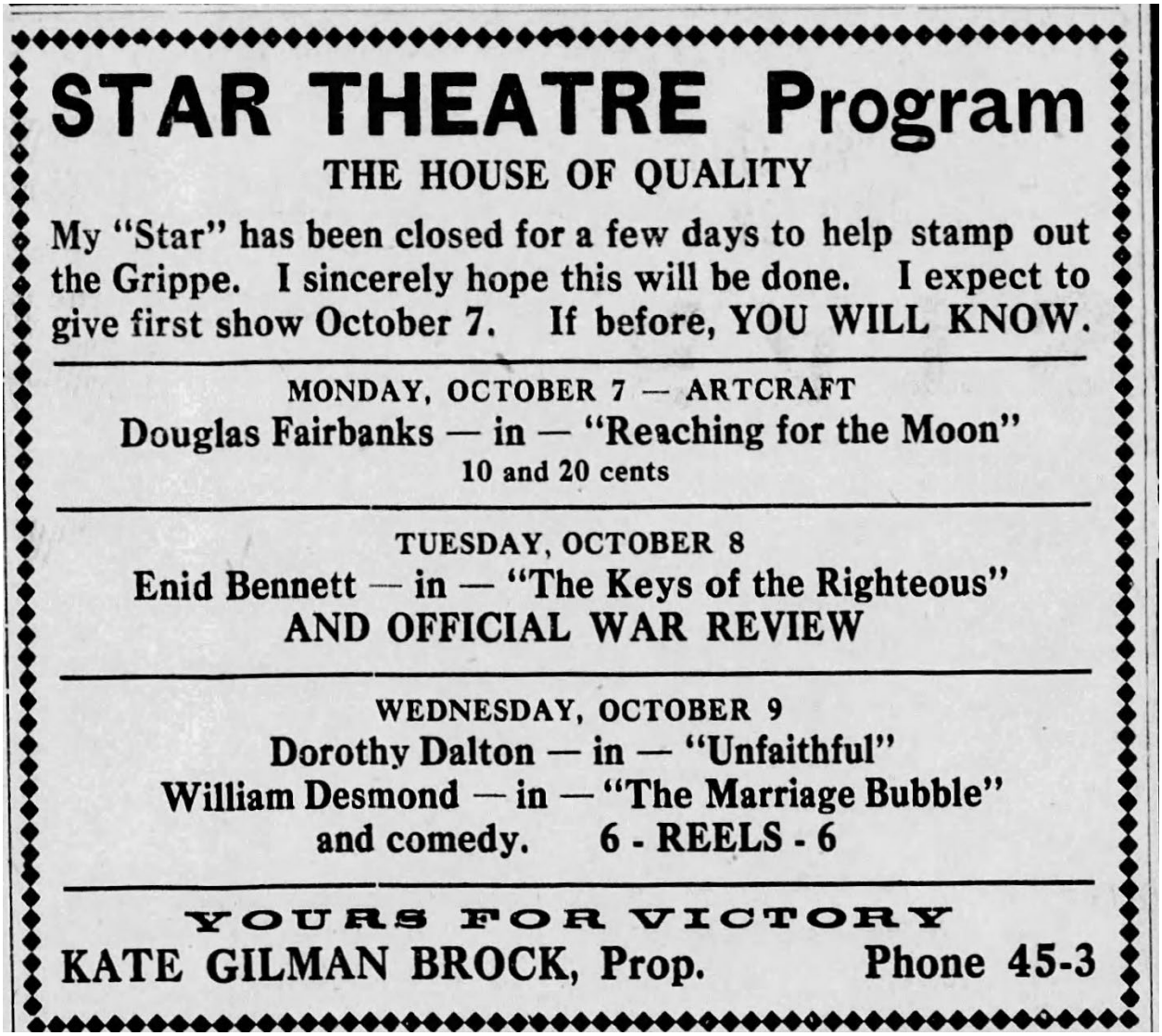
Matinee, 5 Reels, 5 and 10¢.

Evening, 9 Reels, 10 and 20¢.

These are the most expensive films I have ever shown in Randolph.

F. J. CANTLIN.

Figure 4: By the early 1910s, Randolph boasted a moving picture theatre, managed by F.J. Cantlin and later Kate Gilman Brock, by then named the Star Theatre. (*Herald and News*, May 27, 1915)



STAR THEATRE Program

THE HOUSE OF QUALITY

My "Star" has been closed for a few days to help stamp out the Grippe. I sincerely hope this will be done. I expect to give first show October 7. If before, YOU WILL KNOW.

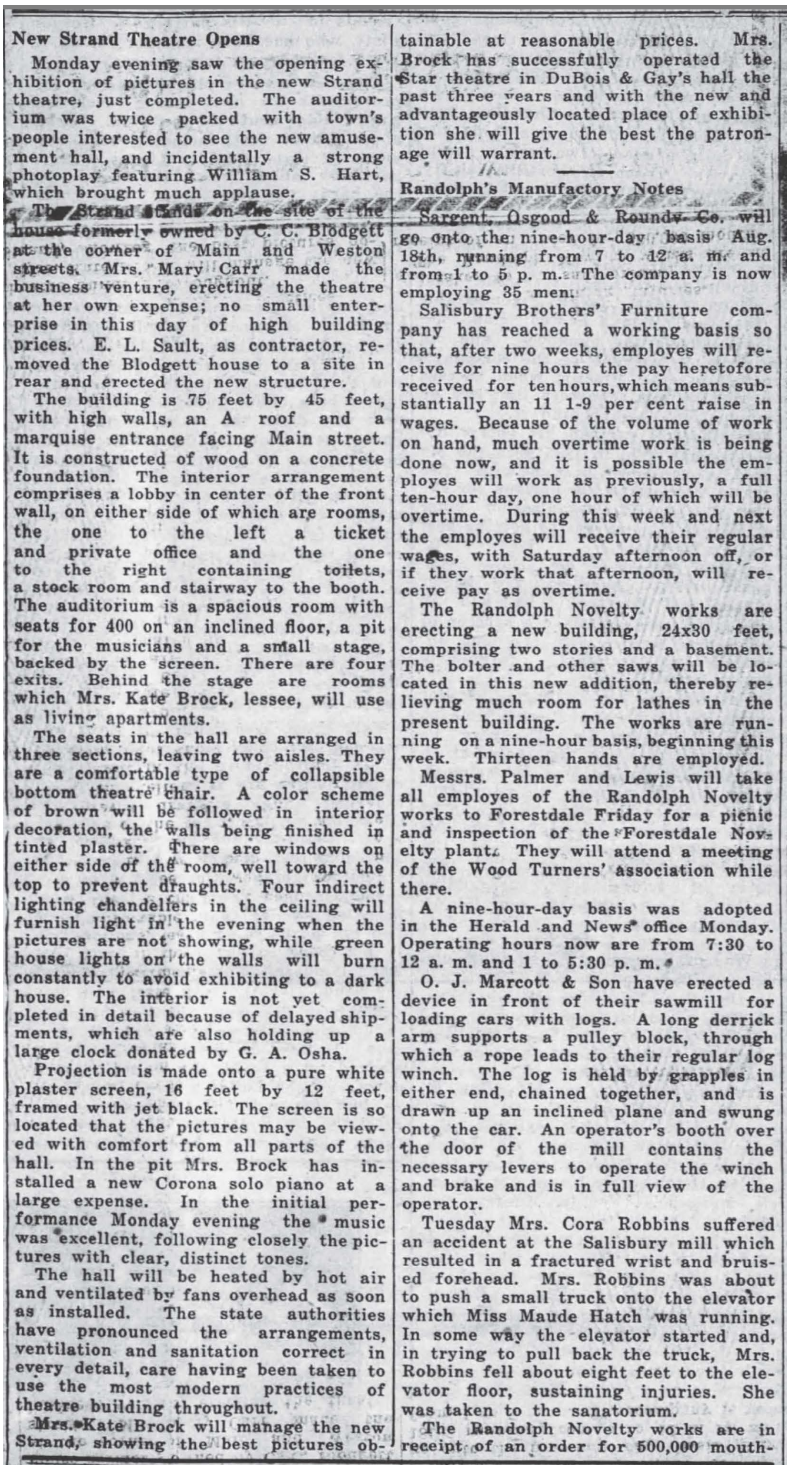
MONDAY, OCTOBER 7 — ARTCRAFT
Douglas Fairbanks — in — "Reaching for the Moon"
10 and 20 cents

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8
Enid Bennett — in — "The Keys of the Righteous"
AND OFFICIAL WAR REVIEW

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9
Dorothy Dalton — in — "Unfaithful"
William Desmond — in — "The Marriage Bubble"
and comedy. 6 - REELS - 6

YOURS FOR VICTORY
KATE GILMAN BROCK, Prop. Phone 45-3

Figure 5: By 1918, the Star Theatre was located in the DuBois & Gay Block on Merchant's Row and managed by Kate Gilman Brock. The influenza pandemic of 1918 shuttered the Star Theatre, along with theatres and public gatherings across the state.
(*Herald and News*, October 3, 1918)



New Strand Theatre Opens

Monday evening saw the opening exhibition of pictures in the new Strand theatre, just completed. The auditorium was twice packed with town's people interested to see the new amusement hall, and incidentally a strong photoplay featuring William S. Hart, which brought much applause.

The Strand stands on the site of the house formerly owned by C. C. Blodgett at the corner of Main and Weston streets. Mrs. Mary Carr made the business venture, erecting the theatre at her own expense; no small enterprise in this day of high building prices. E. L. Sault, as contractor, removed the Blodgett house to a site in rear and erected the new structure.

The building is 75 feet by 45 feet, with high walls, an A roof and a marquise entrance facing Main street. It is constructed of wood on a concrete foundation. The interior arrangement comprises a lobby in center of the front wall, on either side of which are rooms, the one to the left a ticket and private office and the one to the right containing toilets, a stock room and stairway to the booth. The auditorium is a spacious room with seats for 400 on an inclined floor, a pit for the musicians and a small stage, backed by the screen. There are four exits. Behind the stage are rooms which Mrs. Kate Brock, lessee, will use as living apartments.

The seats in the hall are arranged in three sections, leaving two aisles. They are a comfortable type of collapsible bottom theatre chair. A color scheme of brown will be followed in interior decoration, the walls being finished in tinted plaster. There are windows on either side of the room, well toward the top to prevent draughts. Four indirect lighting chandeliers in the ceiling will furnish light in the evening when the pictures are not showing, while green house lights on the walls will burn constantly to avoid exhibiting to a dark house. The interior is not yet completed in detail because of delayed shipments, which are also holding up a large clock donated by G. A. Osha.

Projection is made onto a pure white plaster screen, 16 feet by 12 feet, framed with jet black. The screen is so located that the pictures may be viewed with comfort from all parts of the hall. In the pit Mrs. Brock has installed a new Corona solo piano at a large expense. In the initial performance Monday evening the music was excellent, following closely the pictures with clear, distinct tones.

The hall will be heated by hot air and ventilated by fans overhead as soon as installed. The state authorities have pronounced the arrangements, ventilation and sanitation correct in every detail, care having been taken to use the most modern practices of theatre building throughout.

Mrs. Kate Brock will manage the new Strand, showing the best pictures obtainable at reasonable prices. Mrs. Brock has successfully operated the Star theatre in DuBois & Gay's hall the past three years and with the new and advantageously located place of exhibition she will give the best the patronage will warrant.

Randolph's Manufactory Notes

Sargent, Osgood & Roundy Co. will go onto the nine-hour-day basis Aug. 18th, running from 7 to 12 a. m. and from 1 to 5 p. m. The company is now employing 35 men.

Salisbury Brothers' Furniture company has reached a working basis so that, after two weeks, employes will receive for nine hours the pay heretofore received for ten hours, which means substantially an 11 1-9 per cent raise in wages. Because of the volume of work on hand, much overtime work is being done now, and it is possible the employes will work as previously, a full ten-hour day, one hour of which will be overtime. During this week and next the employes will receive their regular wages, with Saturday afternoon off, or if they work that afternoon, will receive pay as overtime.

The Randolph Novelty works are erecting a new building, 24x30 feet, comprising two stories and a basement. The bolter and other saws will be located in this new addition, thereby relieving much room for lathes in the present building. The works are running on a nine-hour basis, beginning this week. Thirteen hands are employed.

Messrs. Palmer and Lewis will take all employes of the Randolph Novelty works to Forestdale Friday for a picnic and inspection of the Forestdale Novelty plant. They will attend a meeting of the Wood Turners' association while there.

A nine-hour-day basis was adopted in the Herald and News office Monday. Operating hours now are from 7:30 to 12 a. m. and 1 to 5:30 p. m.

O. J. Marcott & Son have erected a device in front of their sawmill for loading cars with logs. A long derrick arm supports a pulley block, through which a rope leads to their regular log winch. The log is held by grapples in either end, chained together, and is drawn up an inclined plane and swung onto the car. An operator's booth over the door of the mill contains the necessary levers to operate the winch and brake and is in full view of the operator.

Tuesday Mrs. Cora Robbins suffered an accident at the Salisbury mill which resulted in a fractured wrist and bruised forehead. Mrs. Robbins was about to push a small truck onto the elevator which Miss Maude Hatch was running. In some way the elevator started and, in trying to pull back the truck, Mrs. Robbins fell about eight feet to the elevator floor, sustaining injuries. She was taken to the sanatorium.

The Randolph Novelty works are in receipt of an order for 500,000 mouth-

Figure 6: The opening of the new Strand Theatre by Mary Carr and Kate Brock was documented in detail by the local press, reflective of the theatre's community import. (*The Bethel Courier*, August 7, 1919)



Figure 7: The Earliest known photograph of the Strand Theatre, circa 1922. Note the marquee stating "Strand" above the entrance and movie selections: "A Virgin Paradise" (1921) and "Love's Boomerang" (1922).



Figure 8: The Strand Theatre was constructed by E. L. Sault, a diversified Randolph contractor, utilizing the latest technologies in development of "motion picture theatres." (*The Herald and News*, May 25, 1922)



STRAND

RANDOLPH
TONIGHT
All star cast with
MARY CARR in
"ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH"
"Flood and fire." Comedy in addition.

SATURDAY, MAY 16
Afternoon at 3, Evening, 7:15, 8:45
Fox Special
"TROUBLES OF A BRIDE"
Mile-a-minute feature. In addition Imperial Comedy and News.

TUESDAY, MAY 19
BILL CODY in
"THE FIGHTING SHERIFF"
Action and daring. In addition, Hurd Cartoon and "Riddle Rider."

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20
All star cast with
BEVERLY BAYNE in
"AGE OF INNOCENCE"
From the novel, "Duty and Love," China and women, passion and hate. News in addition.

2 DAYS
Thursday and Friday
May 21 and 22
Jack Holt, Earnest Torrence, Lois Wilson, Noah Beery in

From the novel, successor to "The Covered Wagon."
EVENING ONLY
at 7:15 and 8:45.
Prices, 10c and 35c,
Due to expensive cost of this production.

Figure 9: The Strand regularly advertised an array of showings through the 1920s, reflecting a broad transcendence of the motion picture medium.
(*Herald and News*, May 14, 1925)



Free Movie Ticket For The Strand Theatre

The management of the Strand Theatre has made hundreds of friends and patrons in Randolph, and this plan has been inaugurated to bring new friends to this Theatre which has established a record for high class photoplays.

Patronize the following Merchants who are distributing "2 for 1" Tickets and procure a ticket for a **Wednesday Evening's enjoyment** at the **Strand's Big Productions.**

VICTOR A. GRANT
The Best in Drug Store Goods. The Best in Drug Store Service.

THE H. M. TOTMAN CO.
INC., The Old Reliable Florists, Phone 35-2.

RANDOLPH MOTOR SERVICE, INC., Goodyear Tires, repairing, accessories, gas, oil.

E. NIXON, Merchants Row
Jewelry, Watches, Clocks, Books, Stationery, Watch and Jewelry Repairing.

E. P. SMITH, 51 Main St.
Ladies' and Girls' Dresses. Harness and Shoe Repairing.

THE THOMAS STORE,
D. L. Chadwick, Prop.
Triangle Shoes for the whole family. Dry Goods, Dresses, Coats, Silk Hosiery and Underwear.

COMMUNITY CASH STORE and RADIO SHACK
Groceries and General Merchandise, Radio Supplies, Atwater Kent Radios.

TEWKSBURY & MAYO
Complete House Furnishings, Wall Paper, Funeral Directors.

MITCHELL'S RESTAURANT
The Home of Good Things to Eat.

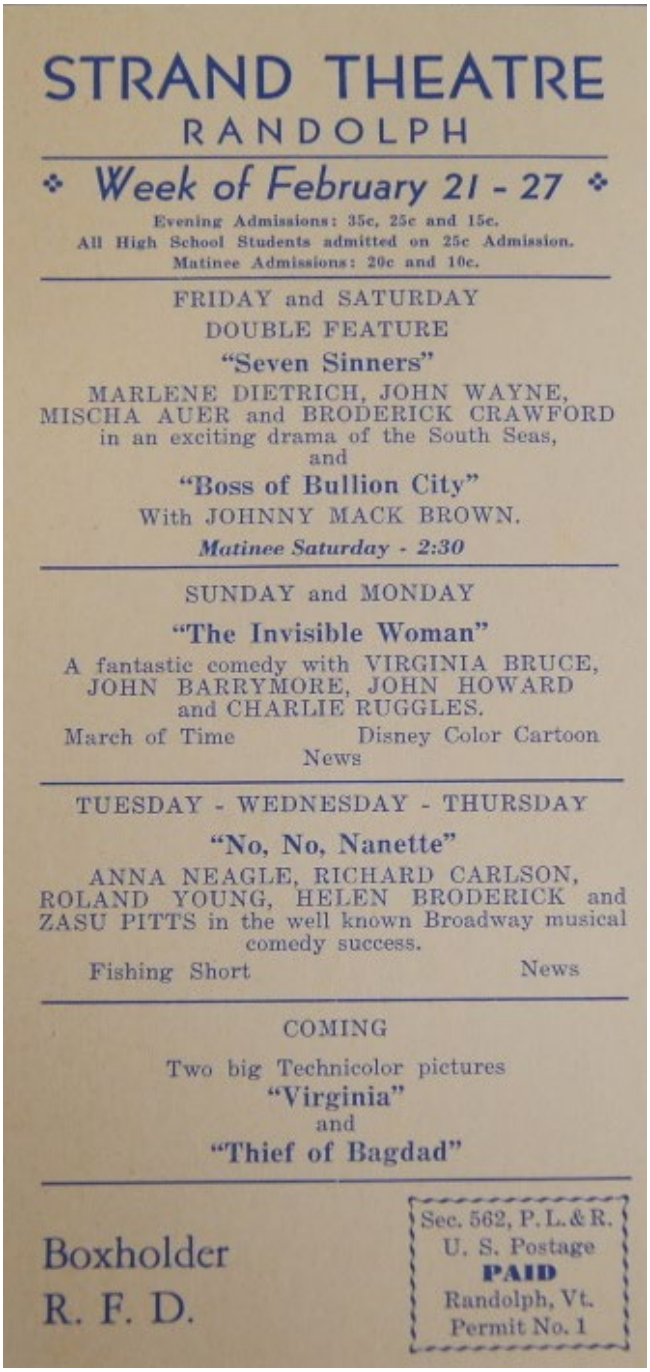
TEWKSBURY & RAYMOND
Everything Men and Boys Wear, Dry Goods, Trunks, and Bags, Phonographs and Records.

F. L. JERD'S MARKET
Choice Meats of All Kinds. Pork Sausage, made from Native Pig Pork.

Figure 10: As exemplified by this 1929 advertisement, the operation of the Strand Theatre was intimately tied to the surrounding commercial landscape of Randolph, with a synergistic relationship between the theatre and surrounding businesses.
(*Herald and News*, May 14, 1925)



Figure 11: Like many theatres across the nation, the years of the Depression did little to dampen movie-going, with the theatre offering a variety of "affordable escapism," that appealed to mass audiences, exemplified by this jaunty medley of film and live Western acts at the Strand. (*The Herald*, September 28, 1939)



STRAND THEATRE
RANDOLPH

Week of February 21 - 27

Evening Admissions: 35c, 25c and 15c.
All High School Students admitted on 25c Admission.
Matinee Admissions: 20c and 10c.

FRIDAY and SATURDAY
DOUBLE FEATURE
"Seven Sinners"
MARLENE DIETRICH, JOHN WAYNE, MISCHA AUER and BRODERICK CRAWFORD in an exciting drama of the South Seas,
and
"Boss of Bullion City"
With JOHNNY MACK BROWN.
Matinee Saturday - 2:30

SUNDAY and MONDAY
"The Invisible Woman"
A fantastic comedy with VIRGINIA BRUCE, JOHN BARRYMORE, JOHN HOWARD and CHARLIE RUGGLES.
March of Time Disney Color Cartoon
News

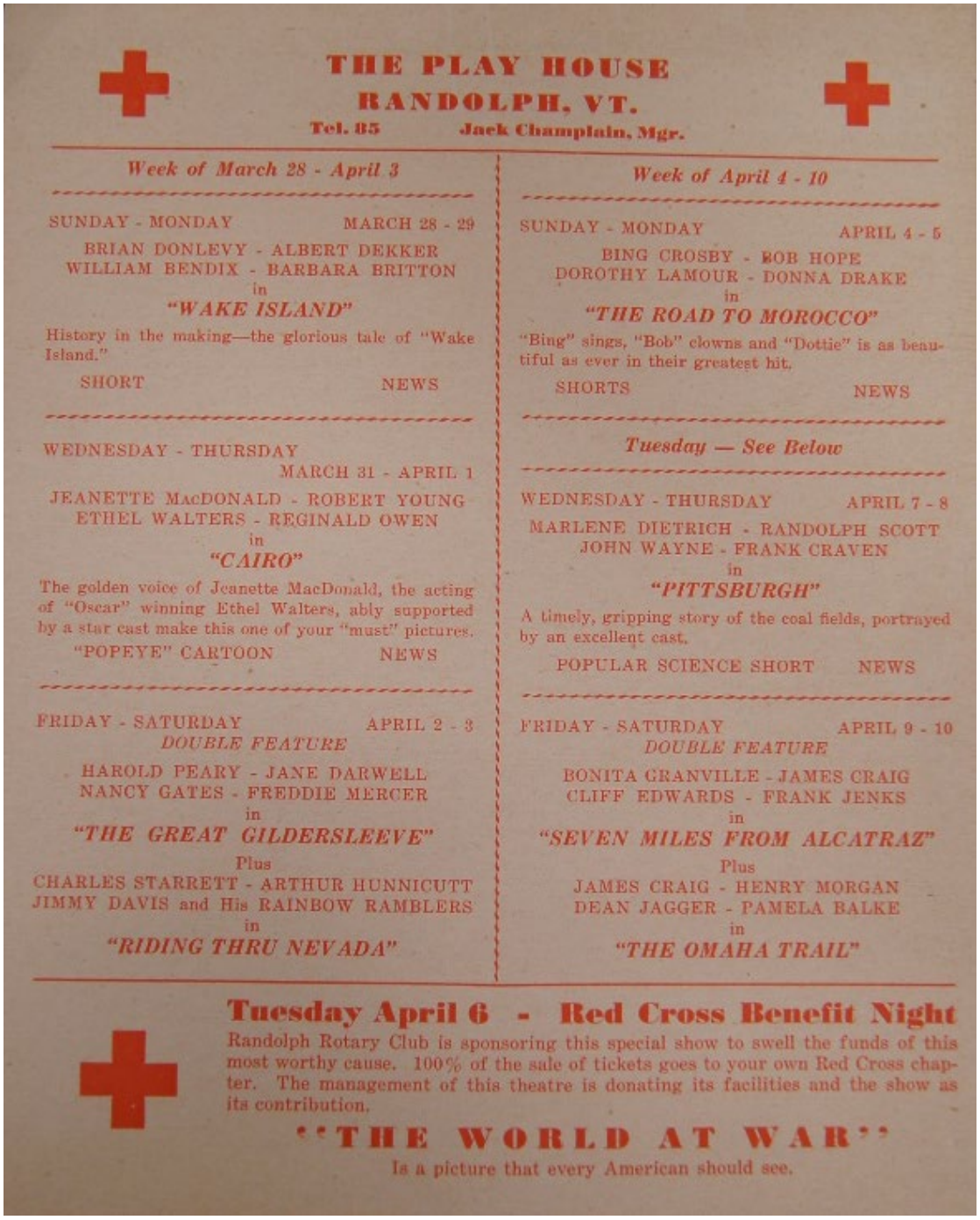
TUESDAY - WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY
"No, No, Nanette"
ANNA NEAGLE, RICHARD CARLSON, ROLAND YOUNG, HELEN BRODERICK and ZASU PITTS in the well known Broadway musical comedy success.
Fishing Short News

COMING
Two big Technicolor pictures
"Virginia"
and
"Thief of Bagdad"

Boxholder
R. F. D.

Sec. 562, P.L.&R.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Randolph, Vt.
Permit No. 1

Figure 12: Advertising included mailers, exemplified by this 1940 circular for the Strand. (Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, 1940)



THE PLAY HOUSE
RANDOLPH, VT.
Tel. 85 Jack Champlain, Mgr.

Week of March 28 - April 3

SUNDAY - MONDAY MARCH 28 - 29
BRIAN DONLEVY - ALBERT DEKKER
WILLIAM BENDIX - BARBARA BRITTON
in
"WAKE ISLAND"
History in the making—the glorious tale of "Wake Island."
SHORT NEWS

WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY
MARCH 31 - APRIL 1
JEANETTE MacDONALD - ROBERT YOUNG
ETHEL WALTERS - REGINALD OWEN
in
"CAIRO"
The golden voice of Jeanette MacDonald, the acting of "Oscar" winning Ethel Walters, ably supported by a star cast make this one of your "must" pictures.
"POPEYE" CARTOON NEWS

FRIDAY - SATURDAY APRIL 2 - 3
DOUBLE FEATURE
HAROLD PEARY - JANE DARWELL
NANCY GATES - FREDDIE MERCER
in
"THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE"
Plus
CHARLES STARRETT - ARTHUR HUNNICUTT
JIMMY DAVIS and His RAINBOW RAMBLERS
in
"RIDING THRU NEVADA"

Week of April 4 - 10

SUNDAY - MONDAY APRIL 4 - 5
BING CROSBY - BOB HOPE
DOROTHY LAMOUR - DONNA DRAKE
in
"THE ROAD TO MOROCCO"
"Bing" sings, "Bob" clowns and "Dottie" is as beautiful as ever in their greatest hit.
SHORTS NEWS

Tuesday — See Below

WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY APRIL 7 - 8
MARLENE DIETRICH - RANDOLPH SCOTT
JOHN WAYNE - FRANK CRAVEN
in
"PITTSBURGH"
A timely, gripping story of the coal fields, portrayed by an excellent cast.
POPULAR SCIENCE SHORT NEWS

FRIDAY - SATURDAY APRIL 9 - 10
DOUBLE FEATURE
BONITA GRANVILLE - JAMES CRAIG
CLIFF EDWARDS - FRANK JENKS
in
"SEVEN MILES FROM ALCATRAZ"
Plus
JAMES CRAIG - HENRY MORGAN
DEAN JAGGER - PAMELA BALKE
in
"THE OMAHA TRAIL"

Tuesday April 6 - Red Cross Benefit Night
Randolph Rotary Club is sponsoring this special show to swell the funds of this most worthy cause. 100% of the sale of tickets goes to your own Red Cross chapter. The management of this theatre is donating its facilities and the show as its contribution.
"THE WORLD AT WAR"
Is a picture that every American should see.

Figure 13: Upon purchase by Barbara and Jack Robb, the Strand Theatre was renamed the Play House Theatre, which ultimately became "The Playhouse."
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, 1942)



Figure 14: The Playhouse Theatre, c. 1942. As displayed under the marquee, the theatre was playing "The Magnificent Dope."
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society)



Figure 15: Jack and Gertrude Champlain purchased the Playhouse in 1943, cementing the identity of the theatre as a Randolph institution through 1967. The couple is shown here, at center, during a Boy Scout benefit. Note the portion of mural evident on the wall at left of screen, painted over in the 1980s by order of the Fire Marshall.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960)



Figure 16: The Playhouse Theatre Children's Christmas Party became a defining cultural institution for Randolph during the period of Champlain ownership, with Gertrude Champlain shown with Santa Clause in front of the theatre.
(*The Herald*, December 21, 1961)



Figure 17: The Playhouse Theatre Children's Christmas Party. As noted in *The Herald*, the event was a defining holiday affair for Randolph, "With many people who are now parents of children attending recalling the happy occasion when they were among the children looking forward to the event."
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960)

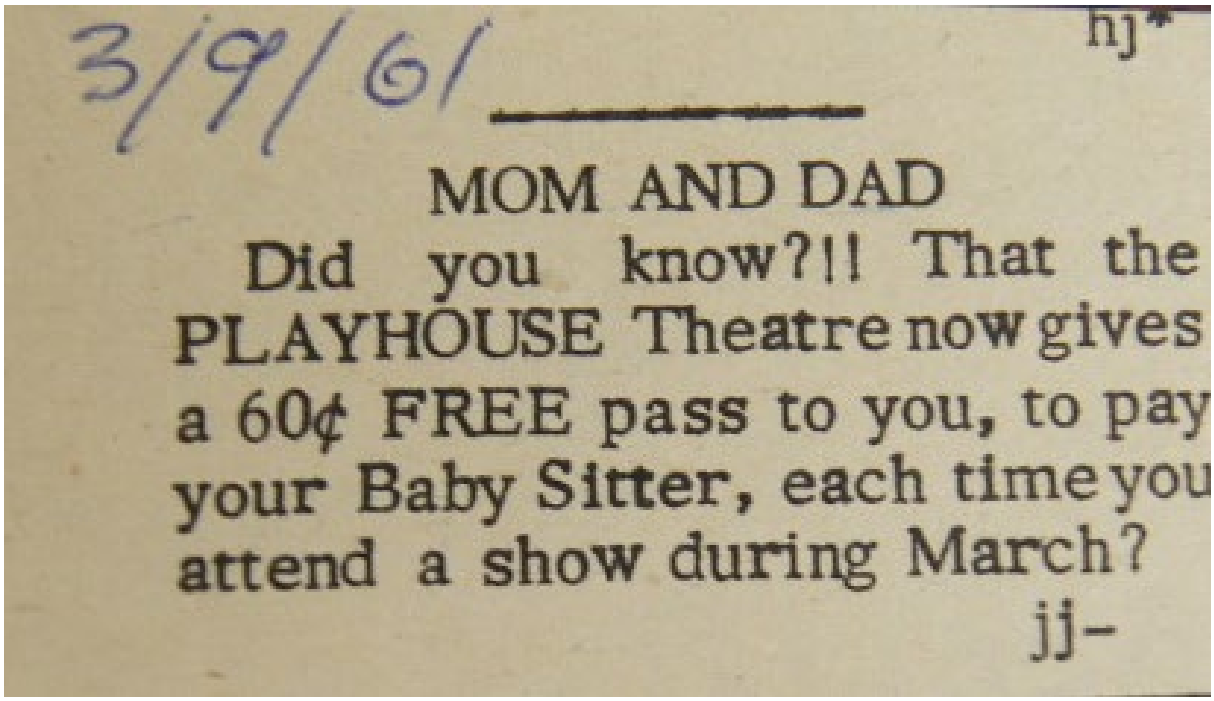


Figure 18: The Champlains were master marketers, vital in an era when the TV was supplanting the theatre across America.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1961)



Figure 19: The Playhouse offered community, fun, and film, exemplified by this puppy contest paired with the movie "Freckles."
(*White River Valley Herald*, February 23, 1961)



Figure 20: The Golden Age Club was developed by Jack Champlain for the community's elders, providing transportation from area nursing homes to attend the theatre, and open to all those over 65.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960s)



Figure 21: Mr. and Mrs. Carl Bass at a gathering of the Golden Age Club. (Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960s)



Figure 22: Mrs. Lula Wilson, noted on back of the photograph as the "eldest lady present" at a gathering of the Golden Age Club. Lula Wilson was born in 1872, the same decade Eadweard Muybridge conducted his studies of the horse in motion.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960s)



Figure 23: The Golden Age Club in the Playhouse Theatre. Note Lula Wilson, second from right in first row of attendees. Also note two types of early chairs, most of which have been replaced by modern classroom seating adapted for theatre use.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1960s)



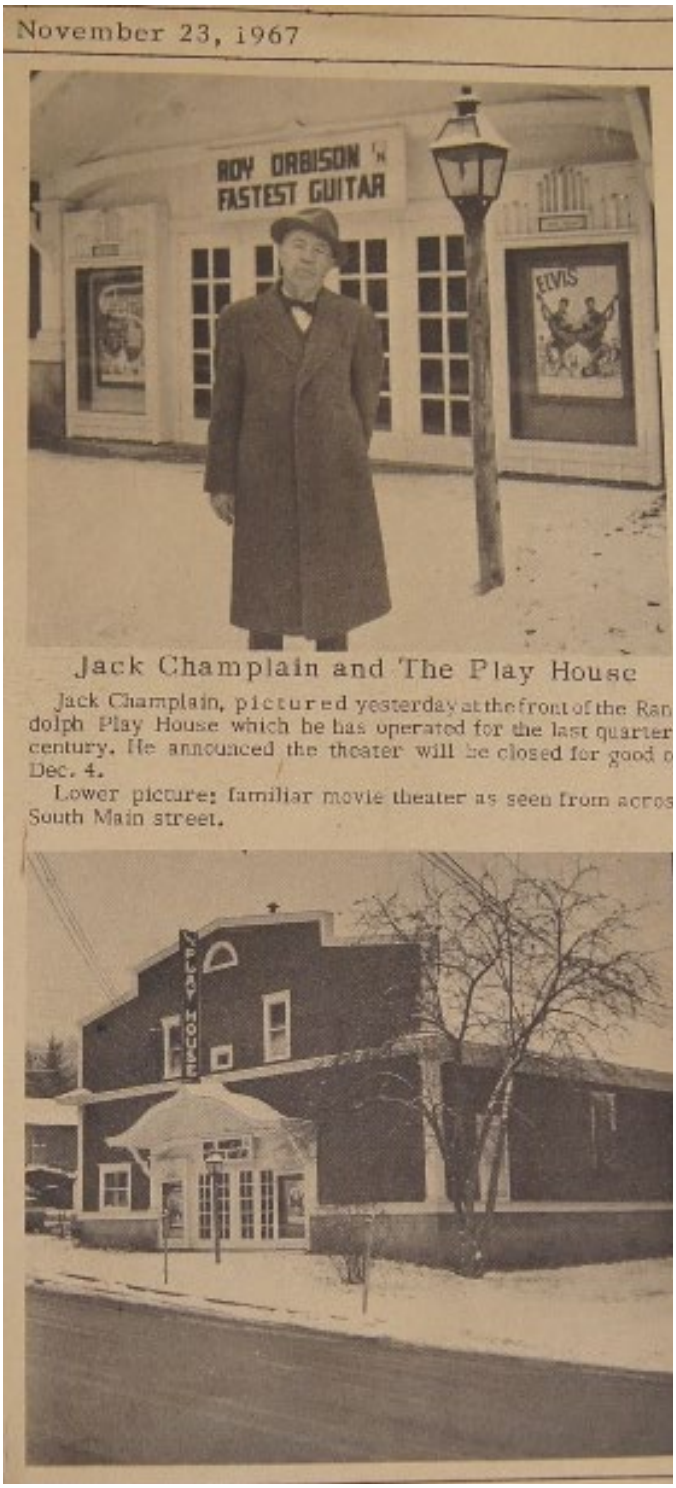
Figure 24: While considered a haven for Randolph's youth, the Playhouse under Champlain ownership was not without mature fare for a night out for the adults.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1963)



Figure 25: In 1953 the Champlains introduced air-conditioning, a technological draw in the generally pre-air-conditioned era.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, c. 1953)



Figure 26: The Playhouse Theatre, c. 1967
(Collections of the Friend of the Playhouse Theatre)


November 23, 1967

ROY ORBISON 'N
FASTEST GUITAR

ELVIS

Jack Champlain and The Play House

Jack Champlain, pictured yesterday at the front of the Ran dolph Play House which he has operated for the last quarter century. He announced the theater will be closed for good D Dec. 4.

Lower picture: familiar movie theater as seen from acros South Main street.

Figure 27: Faced with declining attendance in the late-1960s precipitated in large by the rise of television, Jack Champlain—above—announced the closure of the Playhouse. (*White River Valley Herald*, November 23, 1967)



Figure 28: Purchased by Arnie and Clara Hendin in the late 1960s, the Playhouse continued on, shown here with 1979's North Dallas Forty packing the house.
(Collections of the Randolph Historical Society, 1979)



Figure 29: Theatre Manager Gail Osterberg, lower, and father Daran Robertson, above, shown in the Playhouse in 1986. Two years later, David and Tammy Tomaszewski would purchase the theatre, owning the theatre through the 2010s when it was sold to the Playhouse Cooperative and ultimately the non-profit Friends of the Playhouse Theatre.
(*The Rutland Daily Herald*, April 20, 1986)



Figure 29: The Playhouse remains as Randolph's community theatre, 107 years on and counting.
(Collections of the Friends of the Playhouse Theatre)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.
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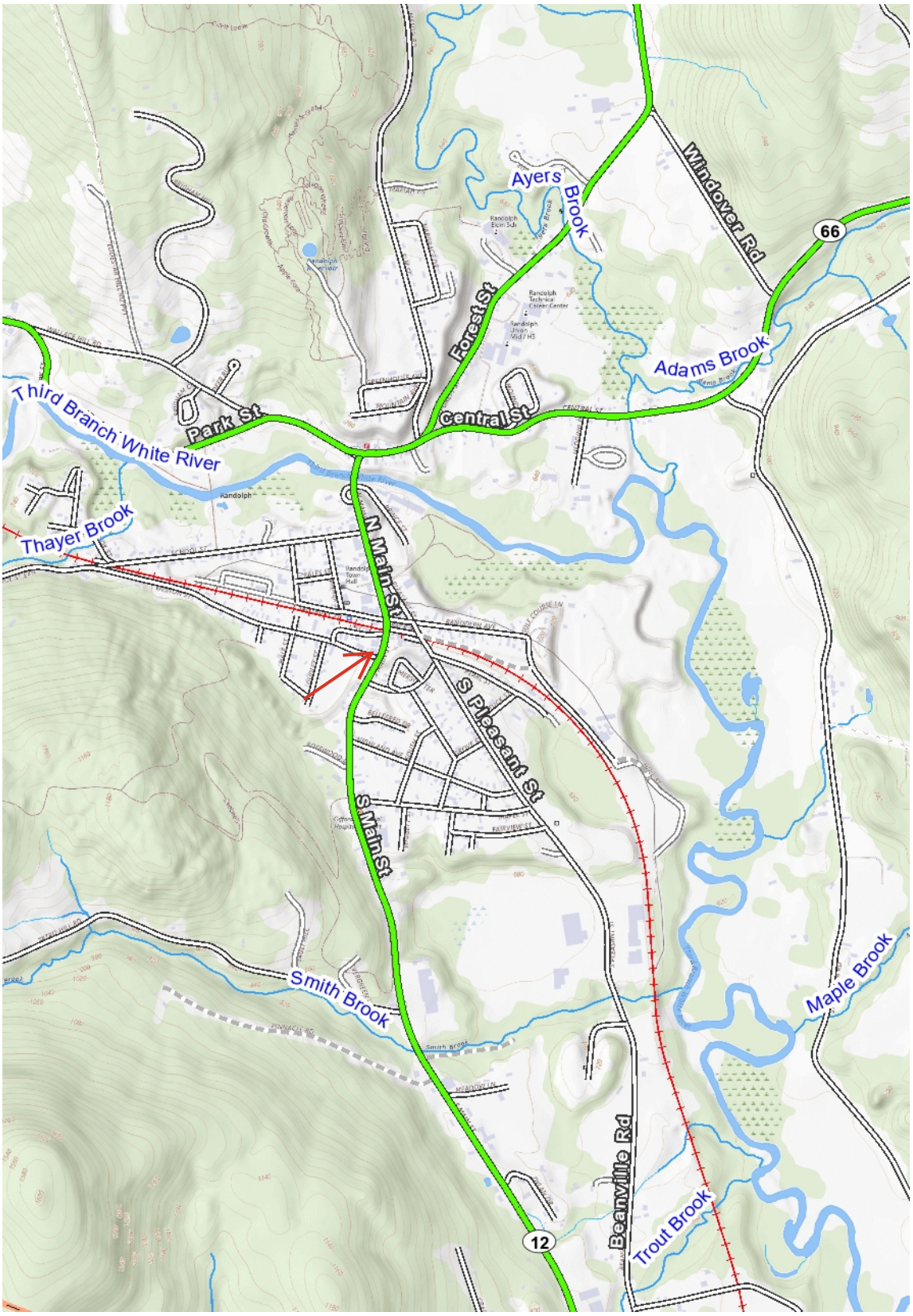
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Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

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VERMONT

Randolph Playhouse Theatre

11 South Main Street, Randolph, Orange County, Vermont





LEGEND

- Airports
- Mountains and Hills
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Roads - Public (VTrans)
  - Interstate Highway
  - US Highway
  - State Highway
  - Local road
  - Other road
  - Legal trail
- Roads - Private (E911)
- Driveways
- Rail Lines
- Town Boundaries
- County Boundaries

Historic Property Location
SPAN: 507-159-13911

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

0.64 0 0.32 0.64 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 1691 Ft. 1cm = 203 Meters

THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

1: 20,290

April 8, 2026

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VCGI

VERMONT

Randolph Playhouse Theatre

11 South Main Street, Randolph, Orange County, Vermont





LEGEND

- Airports
- Mountains and Hills
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Roads - Public (VTrans)
  - Interstate Highway
  - US Highway
  - State Highway
  - Local road
  - Other road
  - Legal trail
- Roads - Private (E911)
- Driveways
- Rail Lines
- Town Boundaries
- County Boundaries

Historic Property Boundary
SPAN: 507-159-13911

NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.

0.04 0 0.02 0.04 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere 1" = 106 Ft. 1cm = 13 Meters
THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

1: 1,268
April 8, 2026

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VCGI


PlayhouseFlicks.com
F S W TH 730 SUN 2
MANDALORIAN
GROGU
NAPA AUTO PARTS
SEE YOU AT THE MOVIES!



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_2 of 22


PlayhouseFlicks.com
F S W TH 730 SUN 2
MANDALORIAN
GROGU
NAPA AUTO PARTS
WARNING


playhouseFlicks.com
FS W TH 7:30 SUN 2
MANDALORIAN
GROGU


SEE YOU AT THE MOVIES!
RESERVED
PARKING
THE MANDALORIAN AND GROGU
ONLY IN THEATERS MAY 22



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_6 of 22



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_7 of 22



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_8 of 22



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_9 of 22

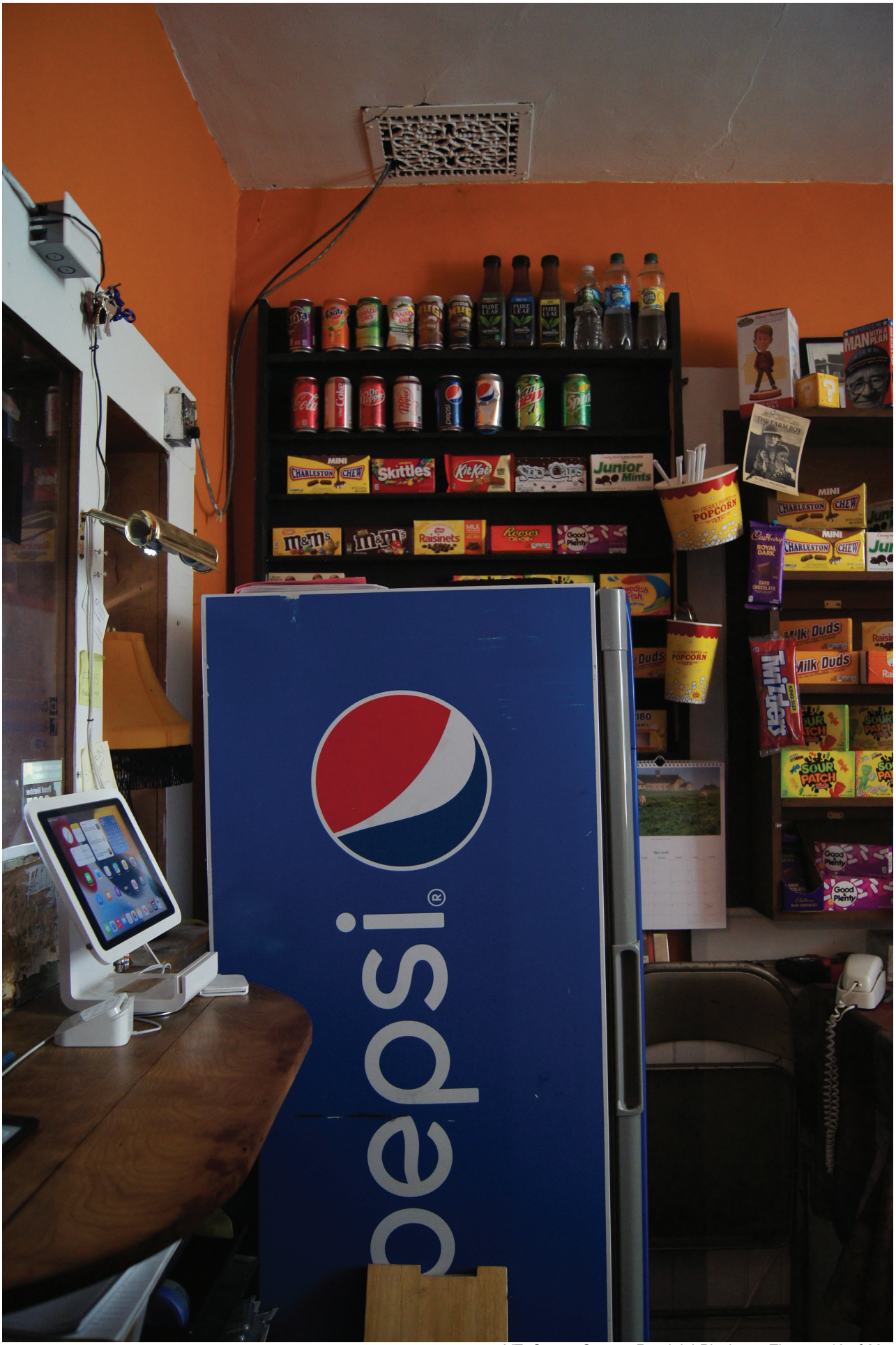


VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_10 of 22



VT_OrangeCounty_RandolphPlayhouseTheatre_11 of 22


BALANCE
WHAT YOU
EAT
DRINK
& DO


Pepsi
MINI CHARLESTON CHEW
Skittles
KitKat
Junior Mints
m&m's
Raisinets
Reese's
Good & Plenty
POPCORN
Milk Duds
Twizzlers
SOUR PATCH


EXIT
EXIT


PLAY HOUSE


EXIT






PLEASE KEEP DOORS
CLOSED WHEN
ENTERING AND EXITING.
DO NOT LOCK DOOR KNOB
DOOR CODE 3938





