

*H.D.*  
**PRELIMINARY STUDY REPORT**  
*TEMPLE THEATER/ELF KHURAFEH COMPLEX*

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This report was researched and written for the  
Historic District Study Committee by  
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The time and costs associated with the preparation of this report are being provided by  
Neighborhood Renewal Services of Saginaw, Inc. as a means of supporting the preservation  
of Saginaw's historic resources.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

On February 9, 1998 the Saginaw City Council appointed the Historic District Study Committee. The charge of the study committee by that appointment, by the Saginaw Historic District Ordinance, and by its own determination, is to:

- 1) Determine those areas of the City of Saginaw that should be reviewed and studied and proposed as local historic districts.
- 2) Implement and supervise the completion of the requirements necessary for the establishment of a local historic district according to Section 2507 of the City of Saginaw Ordinance No. D-1418, "Zoning Code", and Section 399.203 of Michigan Public Act 169, "Local Historic Districts Act," as amended.

The following activities will be undertaken for each proposed historic district:

- i) Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within the district.
  - ii) Conduct basic research on the historic resources located within the proposed district.
  - iii) Determine the total number of historic and non-historic resources within the proposed district and the percentage of historic and non-historic resources. The study committee shall be guided by the selection criteria for evaluation issued by the United States Secretary of the Interior for inclusion of resources in the National Register of Historic Places, as set forth in 36 CFR 60.
  - iv) Prepare a preliminary Historic District Study Committee report.
  - v) Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendation to the Planning Commission, The Historic District Commission, The State Historic Preservation Office, The Michigan Historical Commission and the Michigan Historic District Review Board. Copies of the preliminary report shall be made available to property owners in the proposed historic district and to the general public.
  - vi) Hold a public hearing in compliance with the Open Meetings Act not less than sixty (60) calendar days after the transmittal of the preliminary report.
  - vii) Prepare and submit a final report with recommendations for the designation of the historic district to the Saginaw City Council, which may, at its discretion, act on the recommendation of the study committee.
- 3) Stimulate interest and increase public awareness of the city's historic resources.

Section 2507 of the City of Saginaw Ordinance No. D-1418, “ Zoning Code,” specified by the Historic District Study Committee, “shall contain a majority of persons who have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation, and shall contain representation from one or more duly organized preservation organizations.”

While specific members of the committee have changed since its establishment by City Council, the membership has retained those key characteristics.

#### STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Greg Branch, Chair	Creative Director, Prancing & Ewend Historic Home owner Local history buff and student of historic architecture Vice chair, Saginaw Historic District Commission Board member, Michigan Historic Preservation Network Member, Saginaw County Historical Society Member, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Thomas Mudd	Retired Teacher Historic Home resident Local historian and researcher Led campaign to relight the Saginaw “Bean Bunny”, one of Michigan’s largest neon signs Led campaign to move, restore and reuse the Cushway House, Saginaw’s oldest residence Member, Saginaw Historic District Commission Member, Saginaw County Historical Society Member, Michigan Historic Preservation Network Board Member, Saginaw Hall of Fame
Leslie Tincknell	Architect and partner in Wigen Tincknell Meyer & Associates, one of Michigan’s leading firms in the area of historic preservation Board Member, Saginaw County Historical Society
Dr. Evelyn Shields	Retired educator Historic Home resident Local historian and researcher Board Member, Saginaw Hall of Fame

## TEMPLE THEATER/ELF KHURAFEH COMPLEX

Preliminary Report researched and written by

Thomas F. Trombley

Neighborhood Renewal Services of Saginaw, Inc.

Past member of Study Committee

with the assistance of

Rebecca Smith Hoffman

Past Perfect, Inc.

### Boundary Description:

Land situated in the City of Saginaw, Saginaw County, Michigan, described as follows:

#### PARCEL ONE:

Lot 2, except the Southerly 25 feet, the Southerly 20 feet of Lot 10 and Lot 11, except the Southerly 25 feet, Block 17, HOYT'S PLAT, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 28 on page 303, Saginaw County Records.

#### PARCEL TWO:

Lot 1, the Southerly 25 feet of Lot 2, the Southerly 25 feet of Lot 11, and Lot 12, Block 17, HOYT'S PLAT, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 38 on page 303, Saginaw County Records.

North

Commonly known as 211 and 201 South Washington Avenue

### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire foot print of The Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh complex.

When it was constructed in 1927, the Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh complex was at the edge of the central business district in a transitional zone between the large scaled commercial structures and the residential structures of the northern residential neighborhood. The buildings demolished to make room for its construction included residential structures and small scaled commercial establishments. When the Temple complex was constructed, its scale, orientation and function clearly made it an extension of the business district to the south and isolated it from the remaining residences on the block and the residentially scaled Saginaw Club. Later construction and demolition have reinforced this independence. Although it is included in the Downtown Saginaw National Register District surveyed in 1980, the Temple complex's direct connection with the commercial blocks was severed by the demolition of the Morley Brothers Store c. 1980.

### Period of Significance

The period of significance for the Temple Theater complex is 1927-1952. The National Register of Historic Places uses fifty years ago as the closing date for the period of significance where activities that began historically continue to have importance. Events and activities occurring within the last fifty years must be exceptionally important to be recognized as "historic" and to justify extending a period of significance beyond the limit of fifty years ago.

### **DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION:**

Criteria of significance has been established by the National Park Service under which properties are judged to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These criteria are also used by the State of Michigan and the City of Saginaw in judging the eligibility of properties for historic designation. The National Register Criteria addresses the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture that is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, as:

- A: Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B: Association with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D: Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Properties are often significant for more than one criterion.

The Study Committee recommends the designation of the Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh complex as a local historic district under the following criteria:

The Temple Theater/Shrine Temple complex is historically significant under Criteria A in the area of entertainment. As a flagship of the W.S. Butterfield Theater Chain it was, for over fifty years, the most important entertainment venue in the Saginaw region and was noted throughout the state. Because of the remarkable degree of its preservation, in its design, staging and fittings, the building uniquely documents a crucial moment in American popular entertainment at the time that silent films and vaudeville were being superseded by "talking pictures." It was the largest and most substantial motion picture theater constructed in the City of Saginaw. Of the three major motion picture theaters, and over twenty neighborhood theaters constructed in Saginaw during the first half of the twentieth century, the Temple and the Court Street Theater, a small neighborhood theater, are the only ones that remain intact.

The Theater is significant under Criteria C as a mature and remarkably intact work of the Grand Rapids architectural firm of Osgood and Osgood. Further, the interior decoration of the theater is a rare unaltered example of the work of the Detroit firm of Tuttle and Clark.

### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

When the Temple Theater opened on July 27, 1927, *The Saginaw News Courier* put the event in perspective by comparing it with the dedication of the Academy of Music, a substantial East Saginaw theater which opened in 1884 and was destroyed by fire in 1914:

Opening of the new Temple Theater, splendid in the application of every resource of the theater Builder's art, recalls another day more than 40 years ago - when Saginaw witnessed a house which for its day, was just as striking an addition to the community as is the Temple.

The old Academy of Music was a noteworthy building when it was opened on December 16, 1884 and, in fact, was so greatly out of the ordinary for a city of this size in the wilds of Michigan that the stage fraternity looked at it as a sort of palace in the wilderness.

Much of the same spirit that was responsible for the Temple, a desire of a group of men to do something substantial for the city, prompted the building of the Academy.

The construction of the Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh complex was an important milestone in Saginaw's entertainment history. The Theater, the dominant element of the complex, was constructed at a pivotal moment in the history of popular American entertainment. Its screen and stage were an observer to the eventual supremacy of the motion picture industry in local and national popular entertainment. The physical design of the building records these changes in its design, staging and fittings.

Since the formal establishment of the city of East Saginaw in 1857, public meeting halls and theaters had been important centers within the cultural life of the community. The earliest theaters were a combination of ballroom, lecture hall and theaters. They were venues for a variety of popular entertainment. However, they ran competition with entertainment provided by saloons and popular, but less socially regarded establishments such as East Saginaw's Bordwell's Opera House.

Opened in 1884, The Academy of Music formed an anchor for an entertainment district which developed on North Washington Avenue in the late nineteenth century. Within a two-block area were located Bordwell's Opera House, the Academy of Music, the Municipal Auditorium, the Jeffers Theater and other supporting businesses. This area attracted the interest of the Jackson-based Butterfield Chain which started operating the Academy of Music in 1911. Shortly before that, they had acquired the lease for the Jeffers Theater. After the destruction of the Academy of Music by fire in 1917, they obtained a lease on the Auditorium.

The W.S. Butterfield chain was started in Battle Creek, Michigan about 1905 by Col. William Scott Butterfield. His first theater was a remodeled opera house which became Battle Creek's first stage devoted to vaudeville. Shortly after that he developed additional theaters devoted to vaudeville. By 1915 the W.S. Butterfield company dominated the vaudeville circuit in the state of Michigan, a position they were able to maintain by controlling eight of the most prominent cities in the state. By the time the Temple Theater was leased by the firm, they had expanded to fifty-four theaters throughout the state of Michigan, with seven of them located in Saginaw. Saginaw had the largest number of houses within the chain. Vaudeville acts first appeared in Saginaw at the Riverside Park Casino during the summer months in the late 1890s. The Jeffers Theater was

dedicated in 1902 and provided a non-seasonal home for vaudeville performances.

In 1915 a new vaudeville theater, the Franklin Theater opened in Saginaw. While dedicated to vaudeville, the original fittings of this theater included equipment for the projection of motion pictures. Michigan's first commercial motion pictures were shown in Detroit in about 1896. At first, motion pictures were viewed as novelties and nickelodeon-type films were almost certainly included at Riverside Park and the Penney Arcade on North Washington- early-twentieth century Saginaw places of popular amusement. By 1906 the Jewel Theatre was featuring both vaudeville and early motion pictures. The highly volatile nature of cellulose nitrate, used as a base for early film, made theaters particularly vulnerable to fire. The *Saginaw Daily Courier* reported how on July 3, 1906, the Jewel Theatre's feature, "The Convict's Escape," was destroyed by fire and how it altered the conclusion of the film: "the pursuit led through all manner of strange places. Strangest and most exciting of all, however, was the climax. The convict never got out of the marsh. He was cremated there, a fitting punishment." No one was injured and the theater was undamaged. By 1918 there were 15 theaters in Saginaw dedicated to showing motion pictures.

In the more than two decades which had passed between the introduction of moving pictures in Saginaw and the construction of the Temple, there had been a profound change in popular entertainment and the design of theaters.

*The Saginaw News Courier* states:

One who looks at the new Temple can hardly fail to compare it with the first motion picture theaters in Saginaw or anywhere else for that matter. They were, for the most part, remodeled stores, small, stuffy almost without ventilation and poorly equipped. Projection equipment was poor and so were the films. It was still thought that a movie theater must be totally dark and so it was at the risk of life and limb that one ventured down the dangerous aisles.

But that is all changed now, and the elaborate perfectly equipped theaters of which the Temple is an outstanding example, testify to the growth of the motion picture industry and its enthusiastic acceptance by the public.<sup>1</sup>

However, as accepted as movies had become, the Temple Theater, considered the most modern of theaters at the time of its construction, was designed to accommodate live performances and vaudeville. The first program at the Temple Theater included a feature film, 'Frisco Sally Levy', augmented by a vaudeville program of astonishing variety. In the advertising for this program, the theater's organ which is still prominently in its place at the south of the stage, is described as the "golden console". One of six organs made for the Butterfield chain by the Bartola Musical Instrument Company of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, the 11 rank, 975 pipe instrument has a wide range of sounds and is capable of producing special effects, such as thunder for silent movies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Temple Section", The News Courier 27 July 1927

<sup>2</sup>The Saginaw News, 28 April 1985

Ironically, in October of 1927, only three months after the Temple Theater opened, "The Jazz Singer", the first successful motion picture with a sound track, was released. While this innovation would alter the motion picture industry and render the Temple's "Golden Console" obsolete as an accompaniment to motion pictures, the Temple Theater would become and remain the dominant regional motion picture theater - a position it retained almost until the time of its closure as a commercial motion picture theater in 1976. Its screen featured the most important and popular films of the period. And while its stage was rarely used for the vaudeville-type performances for which it was constructed, a number of touring companies found it a successful venue for traveling productions.

When the Theater was constructed, it was leased by the W.S. Butterfield chain from the Elf Khurafeh Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S. under a thirty-year lease. The theater was constructed primarily as a public entrainment venue; however, it was conceived that the theater could be used by its developers, the Elf Khurafeh Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S. In fact they reserved the right to use the theater a certain number of nights a year for ceremonies. The clubhouse and theater were conceived in a way that they could be combined into one unit on those occasions.

The Elf Khurafeh Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S. is a division of the Masonic organization open to members of a certain rank and sects. It is an acronym for Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of Mystic Shrine which can be rearranged to spell A Mason. The national organization was formed in New York City in 1872. The Saginaw Chapter was founded about 1900 and originally met in the Saginaw Masonic Temple which was located on the east side of South Washington Avenue. The idea of erecting a separate clubhouse for this organization was first suggested in 1908.

### ARCHITECTURE:

The Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh Temple complex was designed by the architectural firm of Osgood and Osgood of Grand Rapids and constructed by The Henry C. Webber Construction Company of Bay City. The interior decoration was executed by Tuttle and Clark of Detroit. The building is steel framed with masonry curtain walls and reinforced concrete floors. The main facade of the building is on North Washington Avenue and is divided into two unequal sections. The northern club house portion of the building is three stories in height with an attic level. The ground floor is three steps above sidewalk level. The theater and retail portion is articulated on North Washington Avenue as being three floors with the ground floor starting at sidewalk level. The stage head is in the rear of the building and is the tallest element in the complex. The club portion of the building is set back from the sidewalk and is lower in height than the theater. Connecting the two main portions of the building is a connecting "hinge" which is set back further than the facade of the club. This portion of the building forms a passageway between the firewalls separating the two parts the building.

The exterior curtain wall is clad with tan brick trimmed with limestone. On North Washington Avenue the ground floor is sheathed in limestone on a granite base. The detailing of the two



buildings is complementary; however, slightly different interpretations of classical ornamentation are used. Period newspapers described the exterior of the "theater as classical and the club house as colonial design." The main facade of the theater section is divided into a tripartite arrangement with storefronts flanking the main entrance to the theater. The main entrance to the theater is the larger dominant bay. This arrangement is extended to the cornice by the use of corinthian pilasters. The fenestration emphasizes this division - on the mezzanine level there are three windows in the central bay and one in each of the side bays. In the uppermost level, a pair of now-covered ocular windows flank the main bay. Throughout the complex windows are metal casement units. On the main facade they have classically detailed surrounds. The current backlit, triangular marquee was installed in 1960 and replaced an elaborate lighted marquee which included a vertical sign which extended from the second to the third floors. Both marquees respected and emphasized the tripartite division of the front. The front detailing turns the corner onto Tuscola Street (the south side of the building) and extends the depth of the store front. The remainder of the south facade is divided above at the ground floor level by a limestone band. The second and third levels are treated as one unit. The expanse of brick wall is relieved by dividing the wall into panels relieved by a double soldier course of brick with limestone corner blocks. Other than a fire escape and three sets of emergency doors and a few small windows, no other openings pierce this wall. The massing and fenestration on the west side of the building reflects functional requirements of the stage and loading docks. The river facade of the building has historically been treated as a billboard - the current sign advertising the Shriners organization was painted in the early 1990s. Earlier versions of this sign advertised the theater. The north side of the building has an irregular fenestration pattern dictated by the interior arrangement of the club rooms.

The top of the wall on the North Washington Avenue clubhouse facade aligns with the cornice level of the theater. The corners of the building have limestone quioning. The main entrance is centered in the facade and is surmounted by a broken pediment. It is flanked by windows. The casement windows on the next two floors align with the pattern of the ground floor. The attic level has level limestone rondels.

The Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh complex house is an intact example of the mature work of the firm of Osgood and Osgood. The firm was started in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1880 by Sidney J. Osgood. While Sidney Osgood supplied designs for all catagories of buildings, he was recognized for his ability to design modestly scaled churches which could be erected within a tight budget. As a charter member of the Detroit Chapter of the AIA, he was a proponent of professionalism of the craft. In 1902 the firm's name was changed to Osgood & Osgood when his son, Sidney Eugene Osgood, a graduate of Cornell University, joined the firm. The firm continued to supply design for all types of buildings and made a speciality of designing Masonic buildings. They designed about 25 Masonic Temples located throughout Michigan with others located as far away as Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Richard Harms, "Churches, Temples, Courthouses and More: The architecture of Osgood and Osgood," The Grand River Valley Review, volume X, number 1: pp 2 -17.

The planning and design of the Temple/Shrine complex demonstrates the firm's mastery in translating their understanding of Masonic ritual into a built form. In the Temple Theater they successfully created a theater which could function as an independent vaudeville/motion picture house and could also serve as an adjunct to the Elf Khurafeh Shrine.

The interior of the theater was finished by the Detroit, Michigan firm of Tuttle and Clark under the direction of the original lease holder of the theater, the W. S. Butterfield chain of Battle Creek. William S. Butterfield stated:

The Shrine gave us a building that stands as a monument to the Order. Insofar as our end is concerned we have spared no expense, and we believe we have made the Temple the finest theater in the state outside of Detroit. It is a theater of which any city twice Saginaw's size might well be proud. Every comfort for the audience has been provided, every facility for presenting the programs in the best possible and most pleasing manner has been furnished . . . <sup>4</sup>

The interior is important for both the quality of the original design and execution and the remarkable state of its preservation. Unlike the interior of other theaters decorated by the Tuttle and Clark firm, such as the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor, the decorative scheme of the auditorium is almost completely intact - untouched since the firm completed its work in 1927. The newspaper account of the work describes the interior "The ceiling is very decorative and domed . . . The general treatment in the interior is one of refinement and in keeping with the exterior of the building . . . The decoration, furnishings and hangings are in subdued colors, featuring light blue and oriental combinations of colors although the design is more classical than oriental. They were done by Tuttle & Clark of Detroit". <sup>5</sup>

The sequence of entrance spaces include a vestibule, a two-story lobby flanked by a mezzanine and the second floor balcony. The lobby has a wainscot of scagliola treated to resemble unpolished blocks of dressed marble. Original railings, moldings and lighting fixtures remain intact.

While the interior of the auditorium was shaped by the functional requirements of the program, it was made to serve as a base for an elaborately conceived decorative scheme which was developed and applied over its surface. *The News Courier* described this scheme as "a new departure in theatrical architecture and decoration. It is based on a skillful blending of classical lines with a color-scheme carefully conceived and executed. Skilled artists planned the work, and expert painters and decorators carried it out. The result is a masterpiece of theater decoration, worthy of the fine building to which it is applied . . ."<sup>6</sup> This 1927 decorative scheme, based upon melding a variety of historical sources, remains intact. Even the draperies decorating the false private

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<sup>4</sup>"Temple Section", The News Courier: 27 July 1927

<sup>5</sup>"Temple Section", Saginaw News Courier: 27 July 1927

<sup>6</sup>"Temple Section", Saginaw Daily News: 27 July 1927

boxes concealing the pipes for the organ are original. The only notable losses are replacement of carpeting and seating on the lower level and replacement of the original stage curtain. (Original seating and carpeting is intact in portions of the upper balcony). All other portions of the theater's interior remain intact.

The W.S. Butterfield chain closed the theater in 1976. Since that time, the theater has been operated by a variety of commercial and non-profit groups. In 2000 the complex was sold to a private investor who defaulted on his mortgage. For the past year the building has been vacant. Currently the complex is being purchased by a developer who is interested in using tax credits and plans on making needed repairs and operating the Theater portion of the complex as a venue for a variety of programming.

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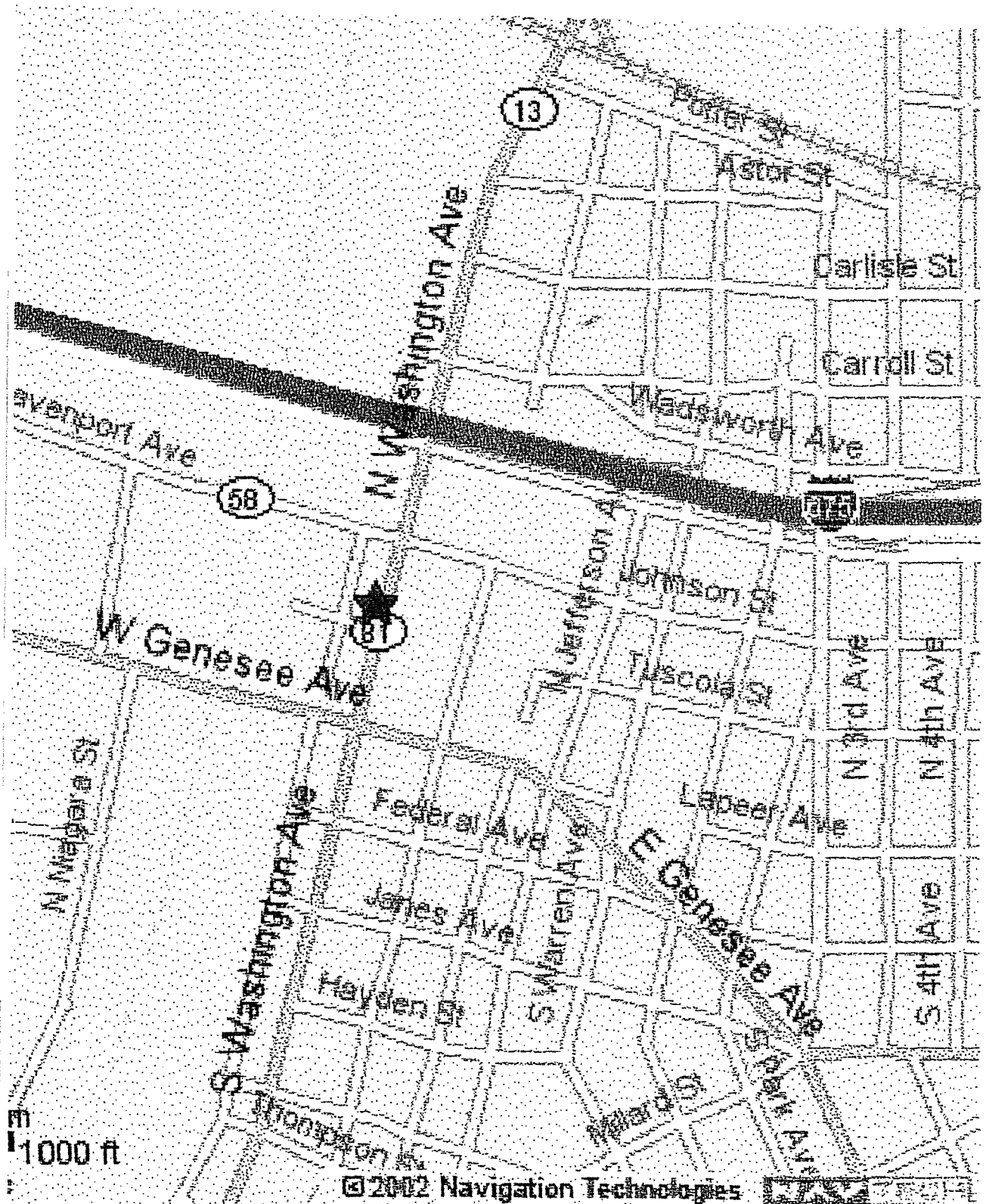
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Temple Section The Saginaw News Courier articles and related advertising

"When It came to Footlights, Academy, Jeffers Led Way." The Saginaw News. 6 July 1949

NOTE: When newspaper articles are cited without page numbers they are from the clipping file in the Eddy Collection of Hoyt Public Library.



N. WATER

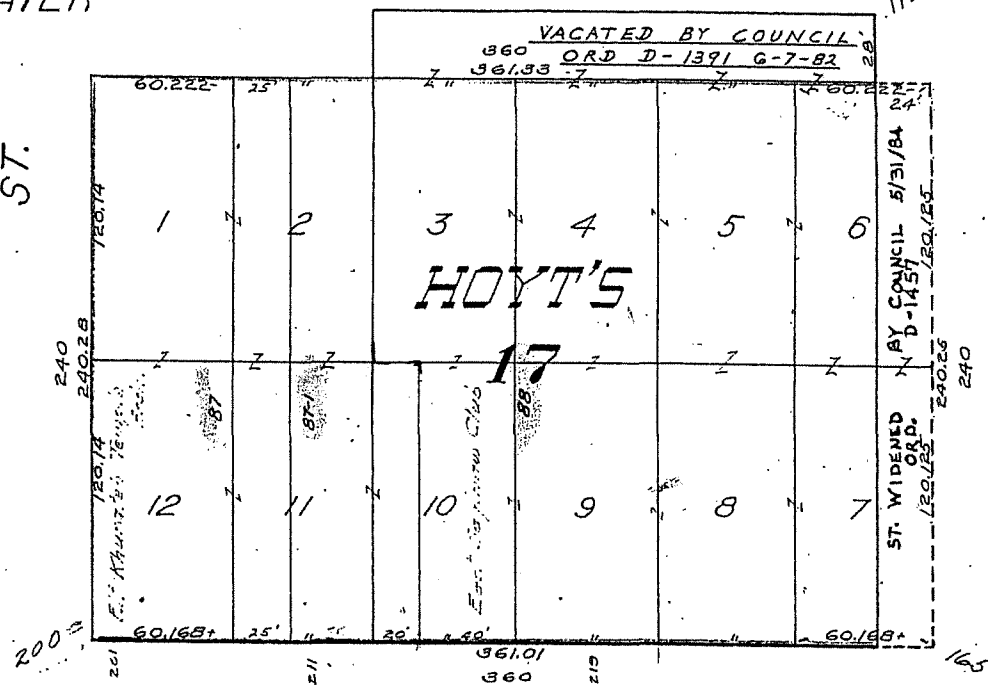
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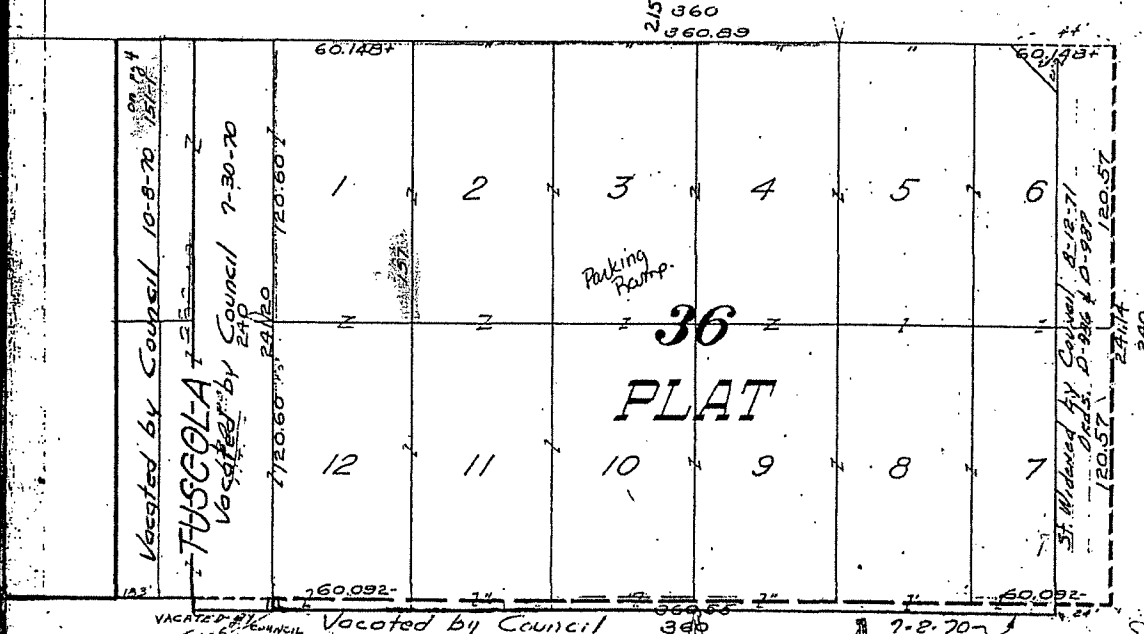


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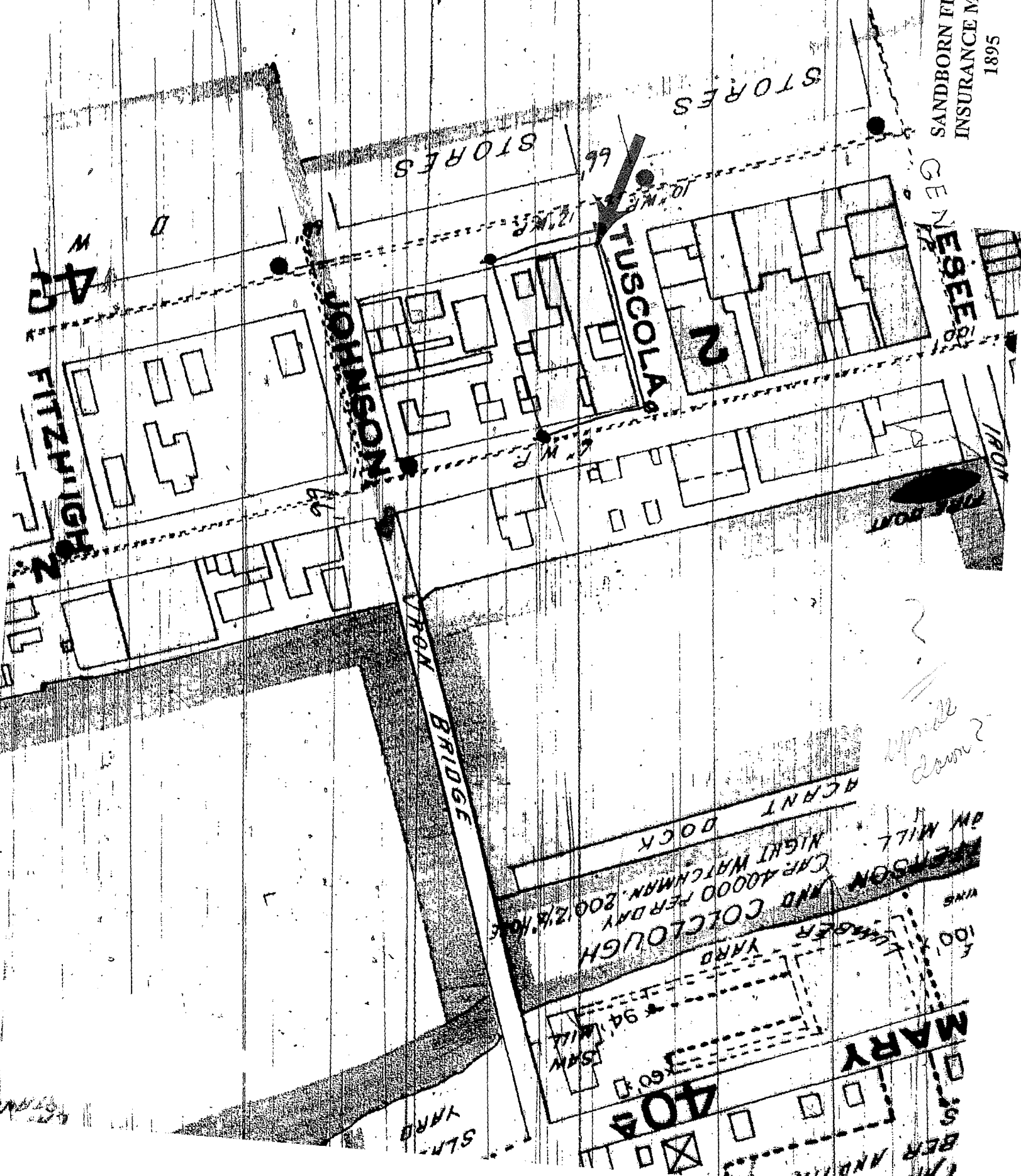


N. FRANKLIN

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SCALE 1"=60'  
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40  
FITZBRIGHT

JOHNSON

TUSCOLA

STORIES

IRON BRIDGE

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JOHNSON AND COLCLOUGH  
CAP 40000 PER DAY  
NIGHT WATCHMAN 200 1/2 HOURS

upside down?

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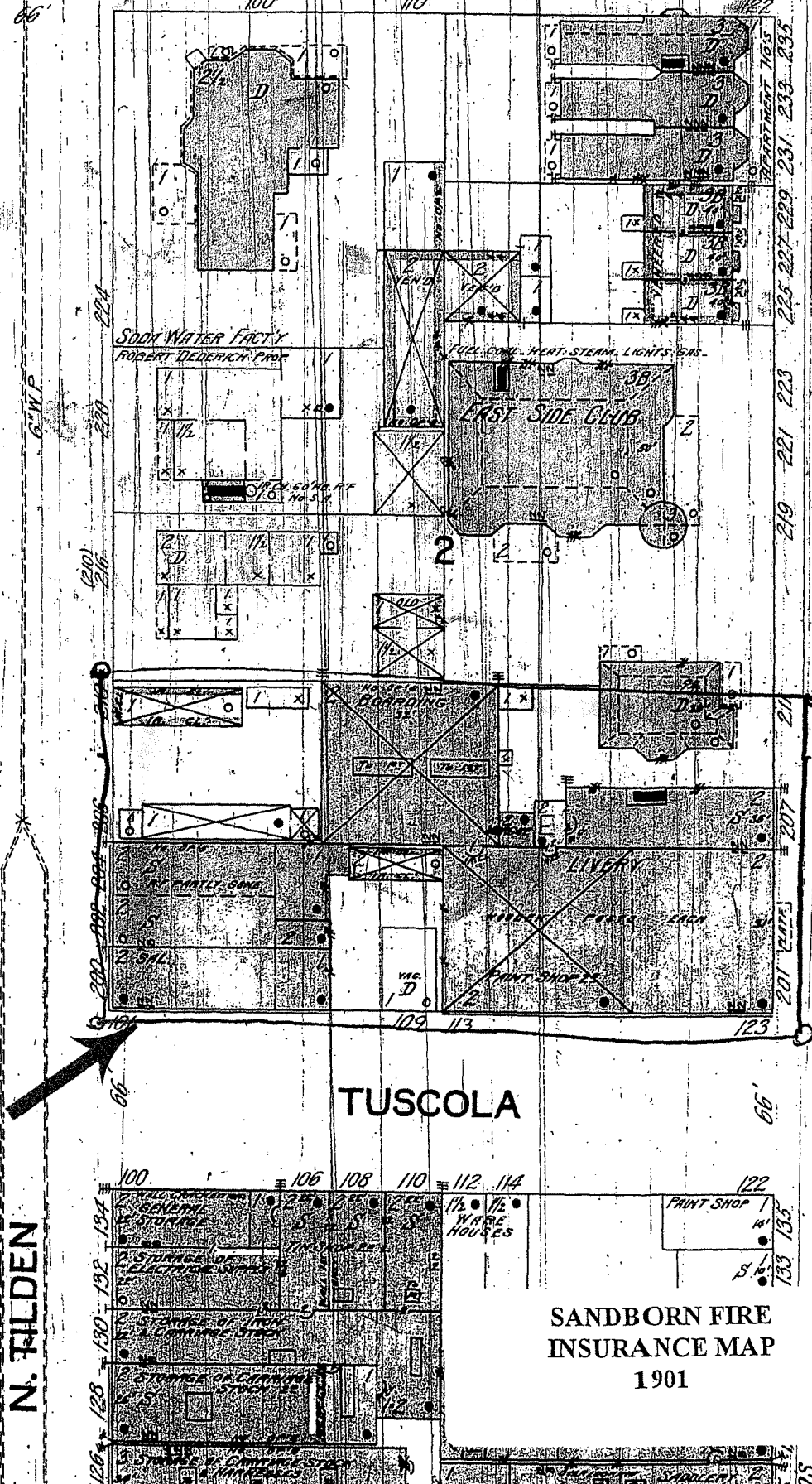
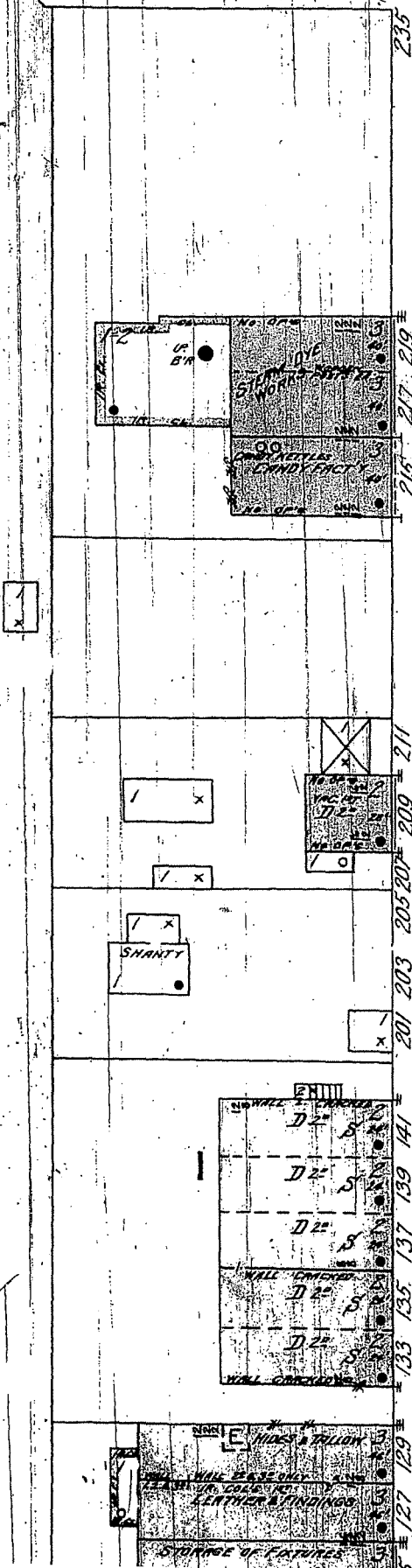
APPROACH TO BRIDGE

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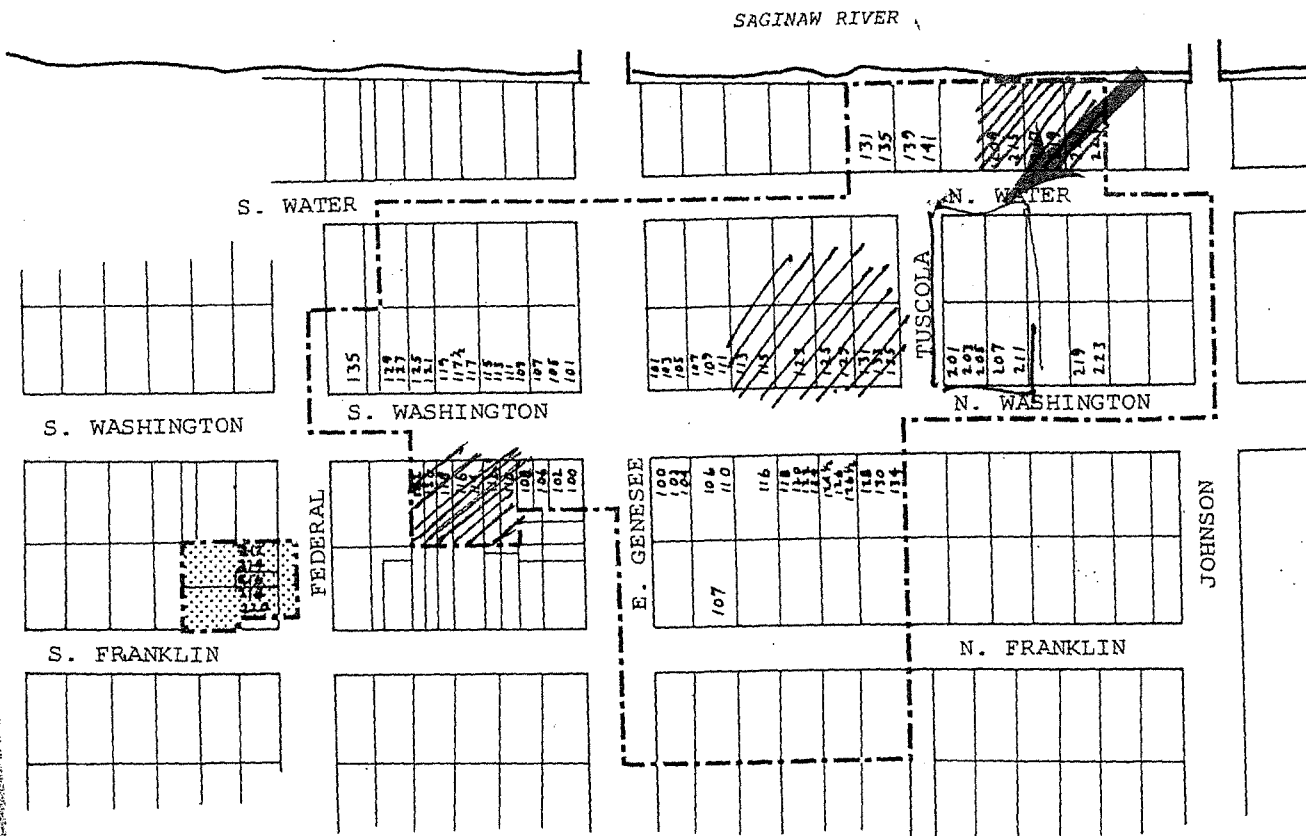
SANDBORN FIRE  
INSURANCE MAP  
1901

N. TILDEN





# DOWNTOWN SAGINAW SURVEY DISTRICT



SCALE: 1" = 250'



DENOTES BUILDING  
DEMOLISHED SINCE  
SURVEY WAS COMPLETED  
IN 1980

Figure 16

BOOKING

p. m.

ren 15c

W!

W!

PATSY RUTH MILLER—GLENN TRYON

For crying out loud, don't miss this one... It's the cat! It's the bee's knees! It's the snake's hips! It's a wow-wow! It's the wisest picture of the year!

Ladies all day

It's a Butterfield Theatre.

# The Largest Link in the Butterfield Chain of Splendid Theatres

Opens

## THURSDAY

July 28

Performances start at

1:30-3:30

7:15-9:15

The Temple-magnificent beyond words will open ~ Thursday bringing to Saginaw the jeweled splendor of ~ modern Theatre Magic on a background of soft silks, subtle lights, and regal velvets

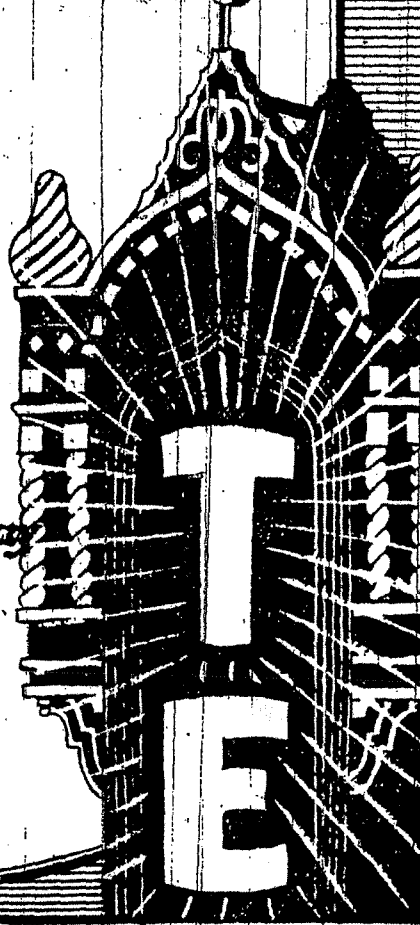
Not only has it beauty-but capacity as well, being the largest theatre in Michigan outside of Detroit ~

A combination Keith Vaudeville and feature Picture ~ policy, with a complete change of program on Sunday and ~ Thursday, will prevail at the Temple ~

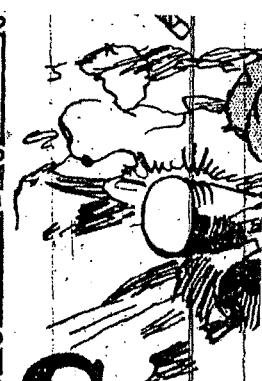
Prices for the opening day

All seats 50¢

children 25¢



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# SYD

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Bandit and  
Moonlit Solen  
Feast for the

## Everyt Classif

Saginaw News Courier 25 July 1938

# THURSDAY

at 1:30 - 3:30 - 7:15 - 9:15 P.M

With a Blaze of Glory comes the  
Opening of the Magnificent new

# TEMPLE

Theatre

The Inaugural Program

The Popular Favorites  
**MOSCONI BROTHERS**  
featuring the  
GIGOLO

**BOB MURPHY**  
Prince of Jesters  
Master of Ceremonies

Austin  
Mack  
**CENTURY  
SERENADERS**  
the  
myrical  
maniacs

news weekly  
on the Screen  
**SALLY  
O'NEIL**  
in a mirthquake  
comedy

**FRISCO  
SALLY  
LEVY**

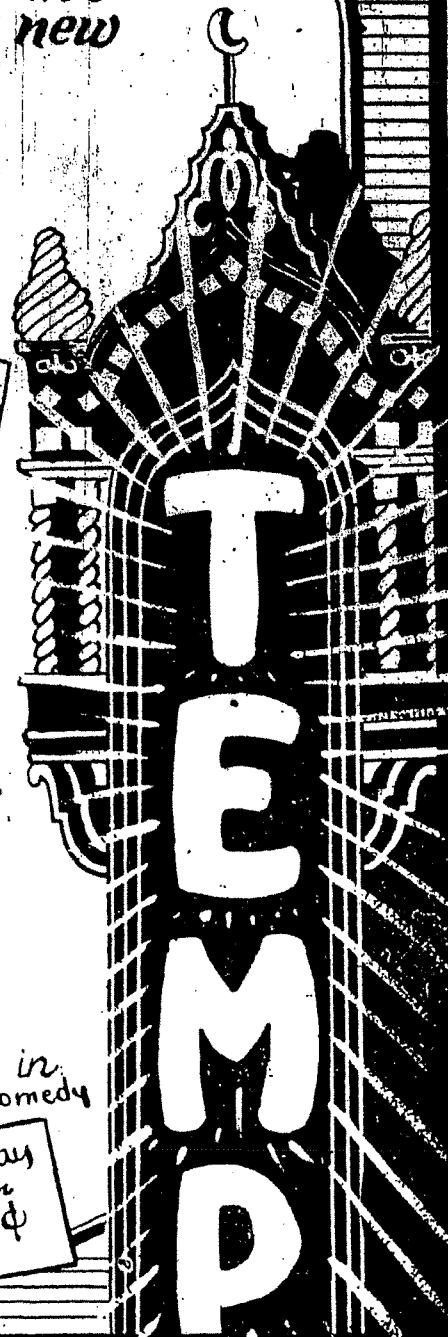


Hermine Gebesser  
at the  
Golden Console

Temple Augmented  
Orchestra under the  
direction of Joe Abbenante

**LUPINO LANE** in  
"Who's Afraid" Comedy

Prices for the opening day  
all seats  
**50¢**  
children  
**25¢**



FRANKLIN

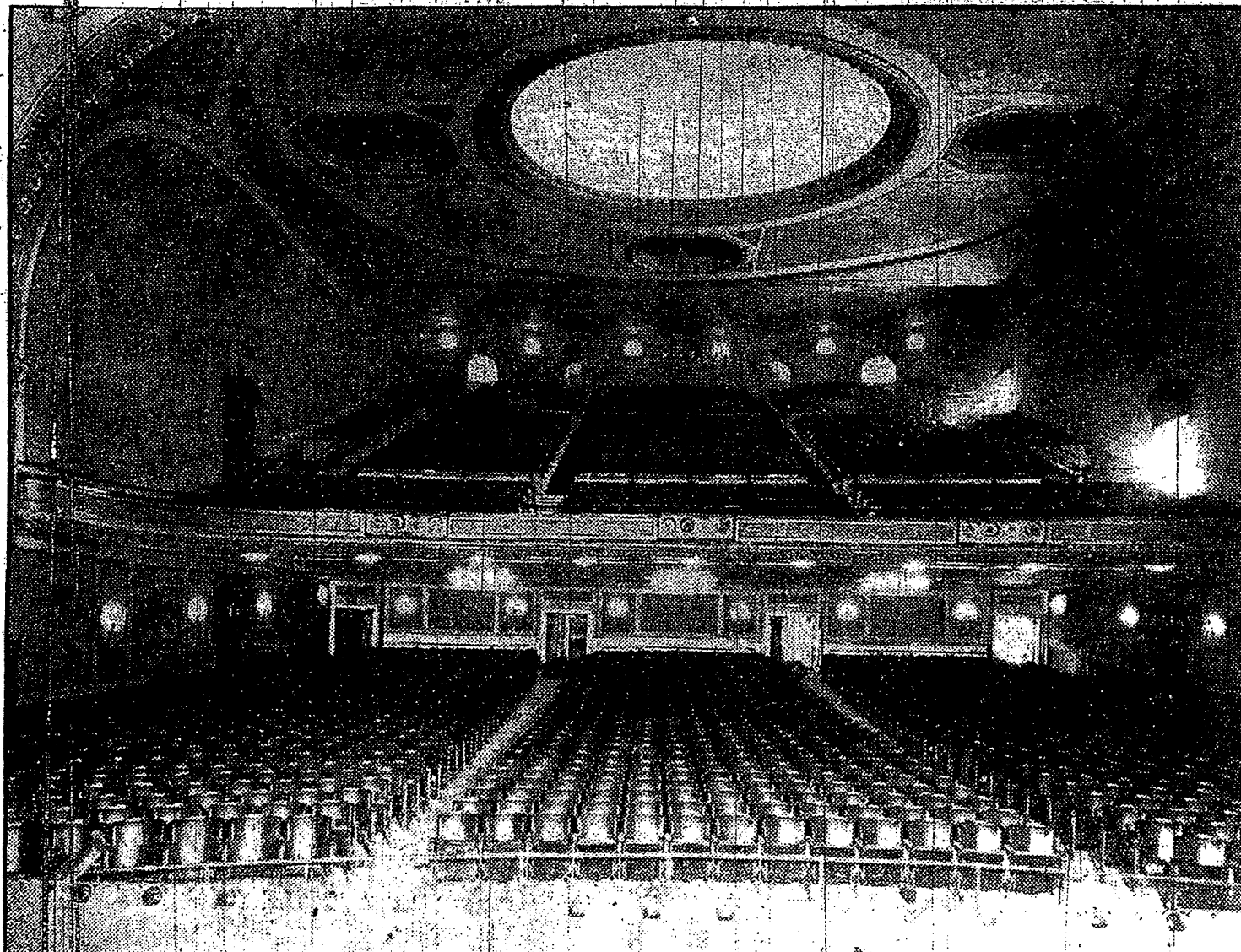


# THE SAGINAW NEWS COURIER

SAGINAW, MICH., WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1927.

## L OPENING OF TEMPLE THEATRE THURSDAY EV

*As the Temple Looks to the Actor on the Stage*



### Dimensions of New Theater Mystifying

But Anyway, It's Some Theater, So Never Mind the Figures:

Don Herold somewhere gives the dimensions of a book as "sort of high by not so wide by flat."

Something of the same terminology must be used in imparting statistical information concerning the new Temple Theater. Somebody must know how high it is to the ceiling, and how long the auditorium is, and how wide; and how many feet it is from the stage to the marquee, and so on. But that somebody has gone away, and an appalling ignorance is in the minds of those who are left.

Beyond stating vaguely that the house is "very large" they cannot help at all—and anyone can see that the house is large without being told. Al Gillis, manager of the theater, said it held 2196 people, and smiled happily, but when he was asked to bring it from people to feet (linear feet) intended, he said 4392 and went away quickly.

With the aid of a steel tape and a long stick one of the workers engaged in installing the stage equipment was able to give some definite dope on the stage dimensions. The stage is 50 feet wide—or is it high? At any rate, it's quite tremendous.

No one seemed to know how many men had been employed on the job, nor how many hours altogether they worked, nor how many pounds their combined energy could lift how many feet, or any of those interesting bits of information that go to humanize our knowledge of industry. Nor were they any more in the clear on the amount of material consumed, whether you regard it as a lump sum or measure it in carload lots.

We asked a foreman for his opinion on the last point. He spat reflectively.

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# MAGNIFICENT NEW BUILDING OUTCOME OF NEARLY 2

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*Looking Over the Stage from the Upper Balcony*

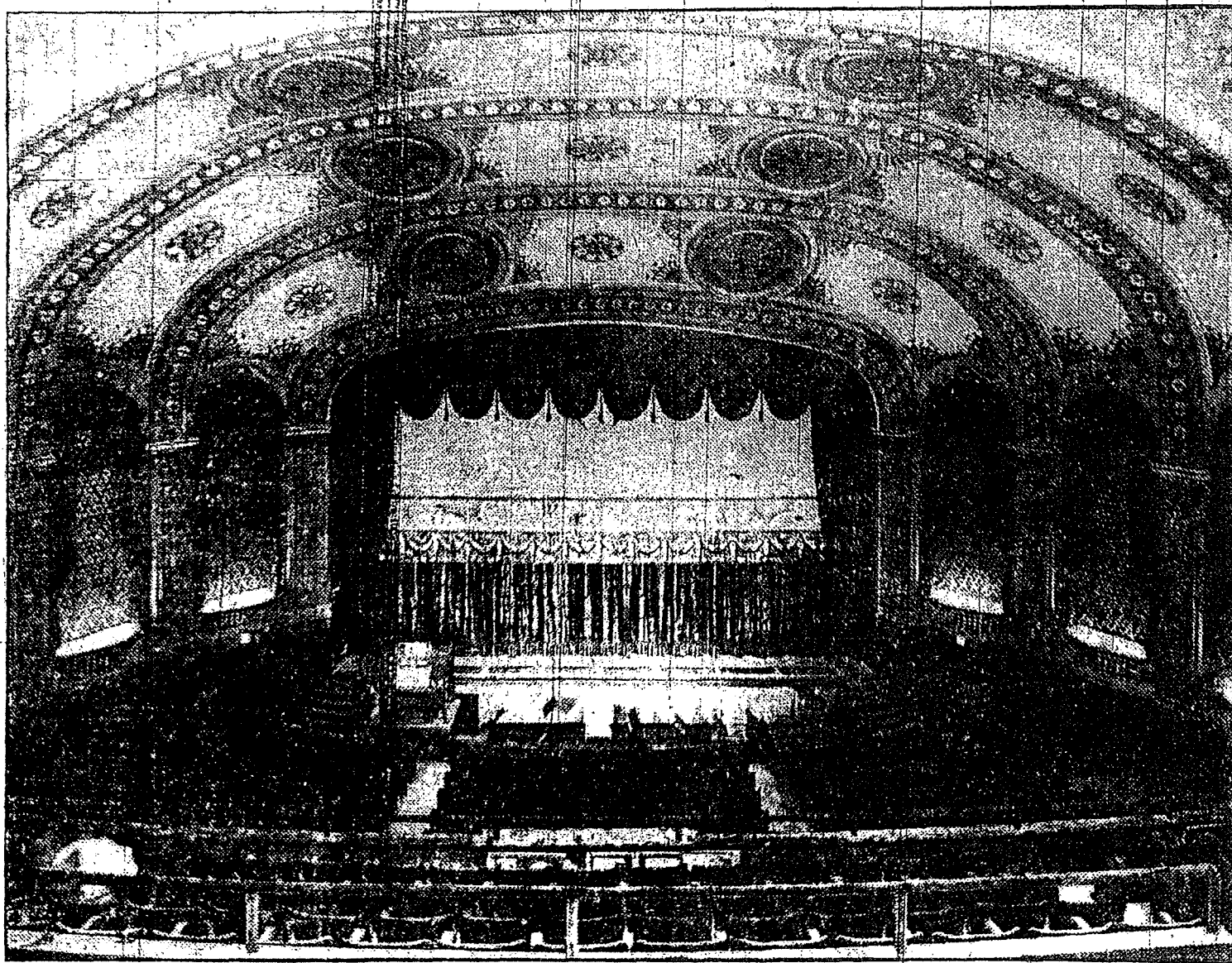
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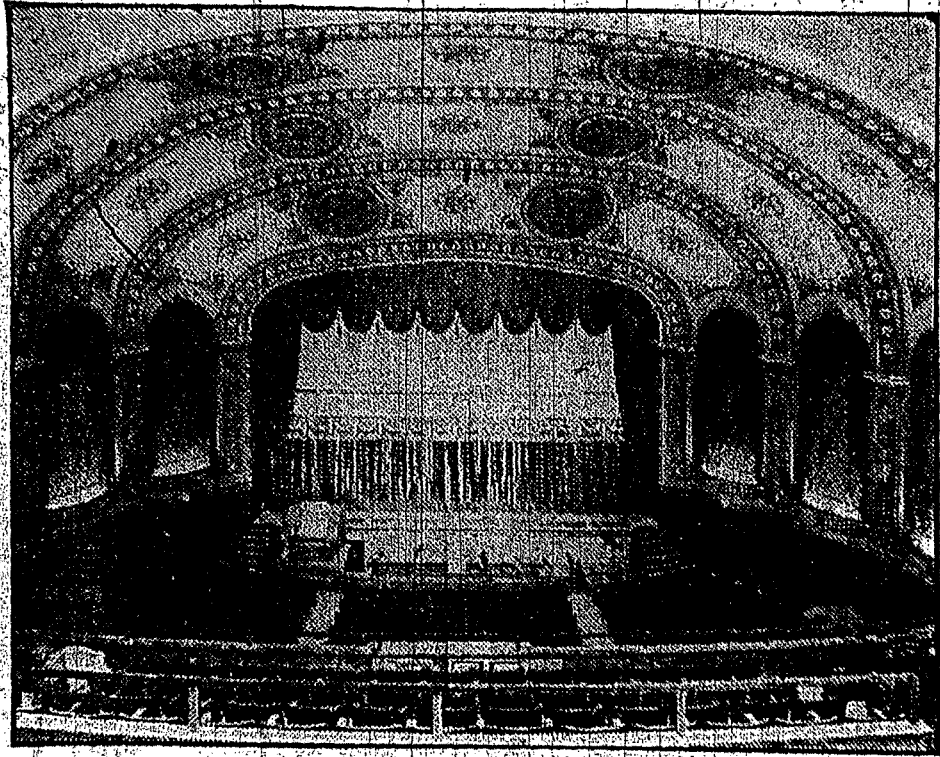
*The Saginaw News Courier  
27 July 1927*

*This*

Even Will Hays

L. Antom...

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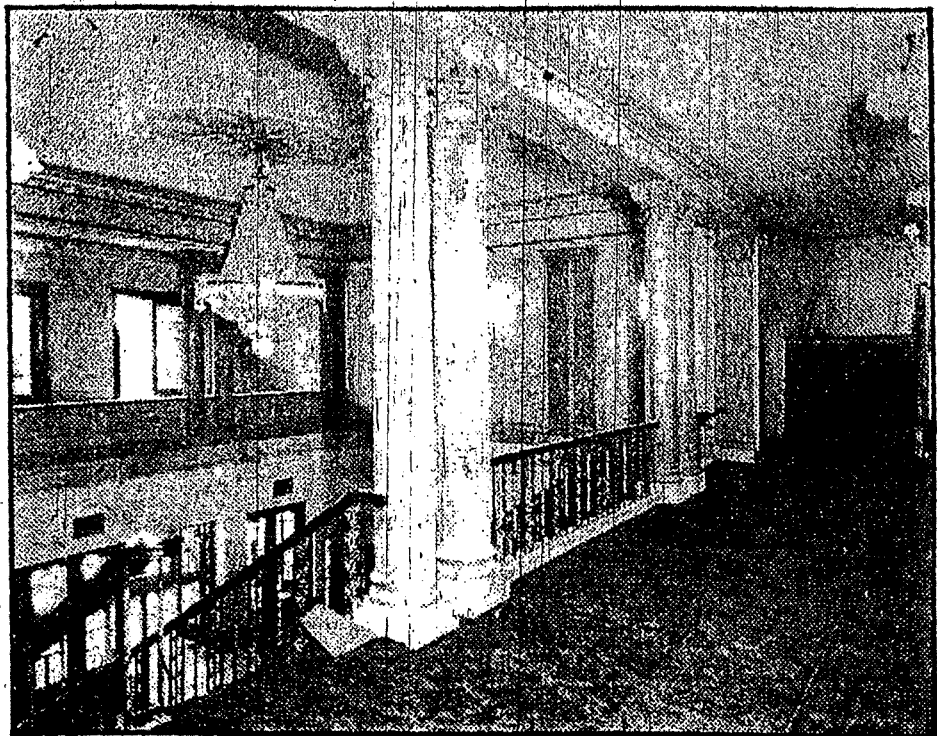


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The Sojinas News Courier  
 7/27/1927

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urer, in charge of the box office.  
with Mr. Ulrich as her assist-  
ant. Stage. Robert H. Scarth  
will be stage manager. A. J.  
Abberante will direct the orches-  
tra, while Miss Hermine Gebessler

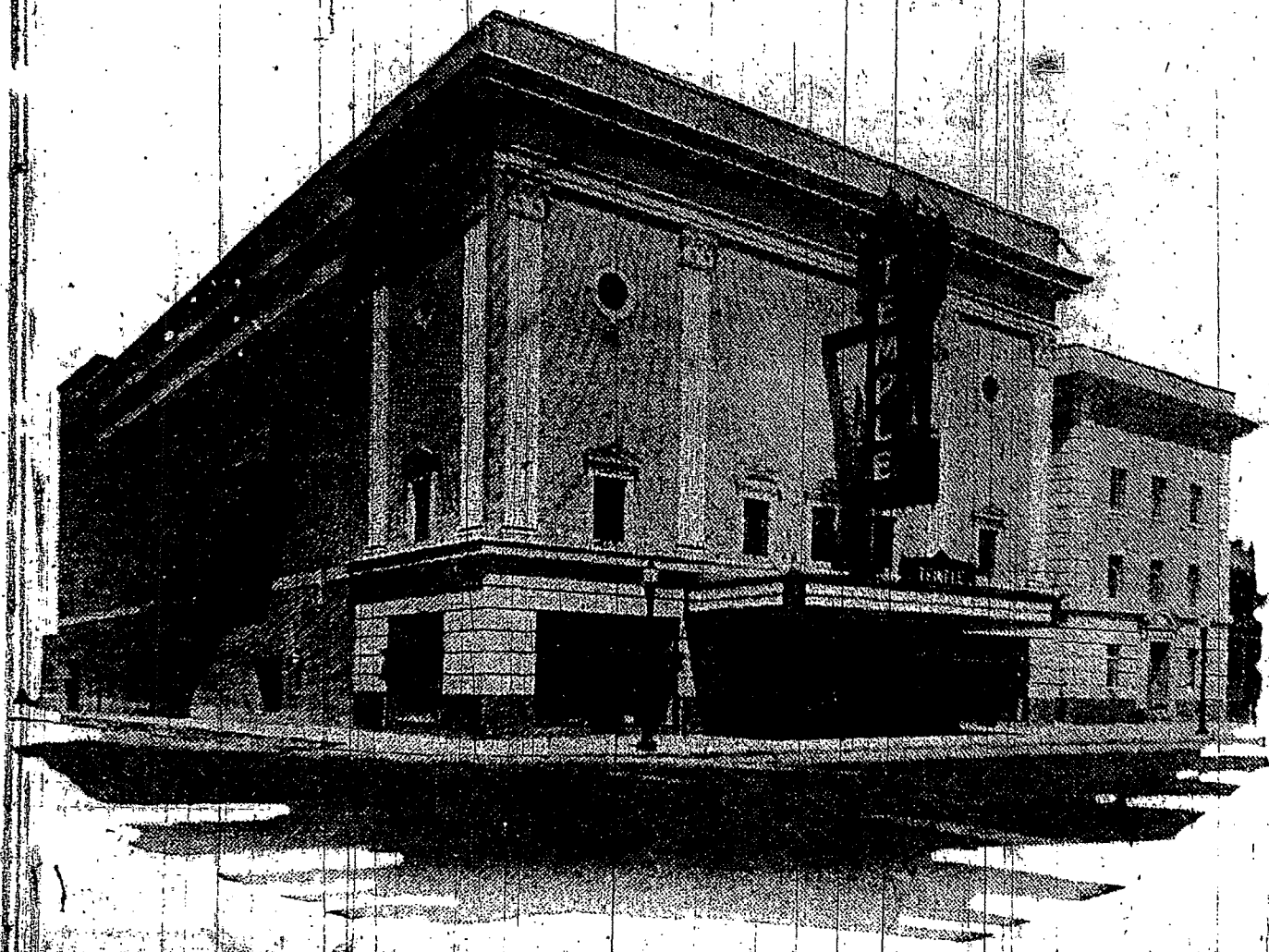
will be the organ soloist. Willard  
R. Thompson will be the superin-  
tendent.  
The stage crew, in charge of Mr.  
Scarth, will include Wilbert, F.

Smith, master electrician; William  
Dusibier, projectionist; Erwin Lutz,  
projectionist and Alec Weinecke,  
assistant projectionist.  
John Mansfield is doorman.

be four vaudeville programs, at  
2, 4:15, 7 and 9:15 o'clock. Pro-  
gram changes will be made Sun-  
days and Thursdays. The shows  
on Thursday, the opening day, will  
be at 1:30, 3:30, 7:15 and 9:15.

had charge of the furnishing of the  
theater; Elt Kur Shrine built  
it but, inside, the work has all  
been done by the lessees.  
"We have endeavored to give  
Saginaw a theater of which the  
city might be proud," said Col.  
Butterfield. "The Shrine gave us  
a building that stands as a monu-  
ment to the order. Insofar as our  
end is concerned, we have spared  
no expense, and we believe we  
have made the Temple the finest  
theater in the state outside of De-  
troit. It is a theater of which any  
city twice Saginaw's size might  
well be proud. Every comfort for  
the audience has been provided;  
every facility for presenting the  
programs in the best possible and  
most pleasing manner has been  
furnished. We hope Saginaw likes  
the Temple; we are confident the  
city will."

## Temple Theater is Fine Piece of Architecture



The Saginaw News 27 July 1927

## Building Main of First

For one night, at least, on  
Thursday, July 28, the play is not  
the thing. Fine as the initial of-  
fering of the new Temple may be,  
it will for once take second place  
to the house in which it is shown;  
for the people of Saginaw are go-  
ing to be more interested in their  
new theater than in the best enter-  
tainment the vaudeville stage and  
picture screen ever turned out.  
Completed at a cost of nearly  
\$1,000,000 after months of work,  
the Temple is declared by experts  
to be one of the finest theaters in  
Michigan. Disinterested inspec-  
tors agree with owners and build-  
ers in the statement that "there  
may be bigger theaters, but there  
are no better."  
Even in point of size the Temple  
is one of the largest ever built in a  
city of Saginaw's population, while  
equipment put into it are the best  
the workmanship, material and  
that could be obtained.  
The theater, designed by Osgood  
& Osgood of Grand Rapids repre-  
sents a new departure in theatri-  
cal architecture and decoration. It  
is based on a skillful blending of

# BUTTERFIELD DEMONSTRATES FA

D HERE  
Y 20 YEARS

*Organ Loft is Colorful Corner of House*

sted in Jeffers,  
paired Six  
Houses.

TOWN NOW

the Temple theater  
Butterfield. Theaters  
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Her Scott Butter-  
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gives Col. Butter-  
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No other has

And the Temple  
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Saginaw was the  
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ademy of Music, Mr.  
is played road shows  
in the municipal

He has not an ex-  
on that house, only a  
ement, but he pre-  
every road at

in Battle Creek.

Butterfield theater,  
the present imposing  
grown, was the old  
era house in Battle  
ity-one years ago, Mr.  
arted on what was to  
the most meteoric ca-  
trical affairs when he  
he Battle Creek opera



vaudeville theaters made Butter-  
field an important factor in book-  
ing, as he had eight of the best  
cities in the state in his circuit,  
and in the early days the actor

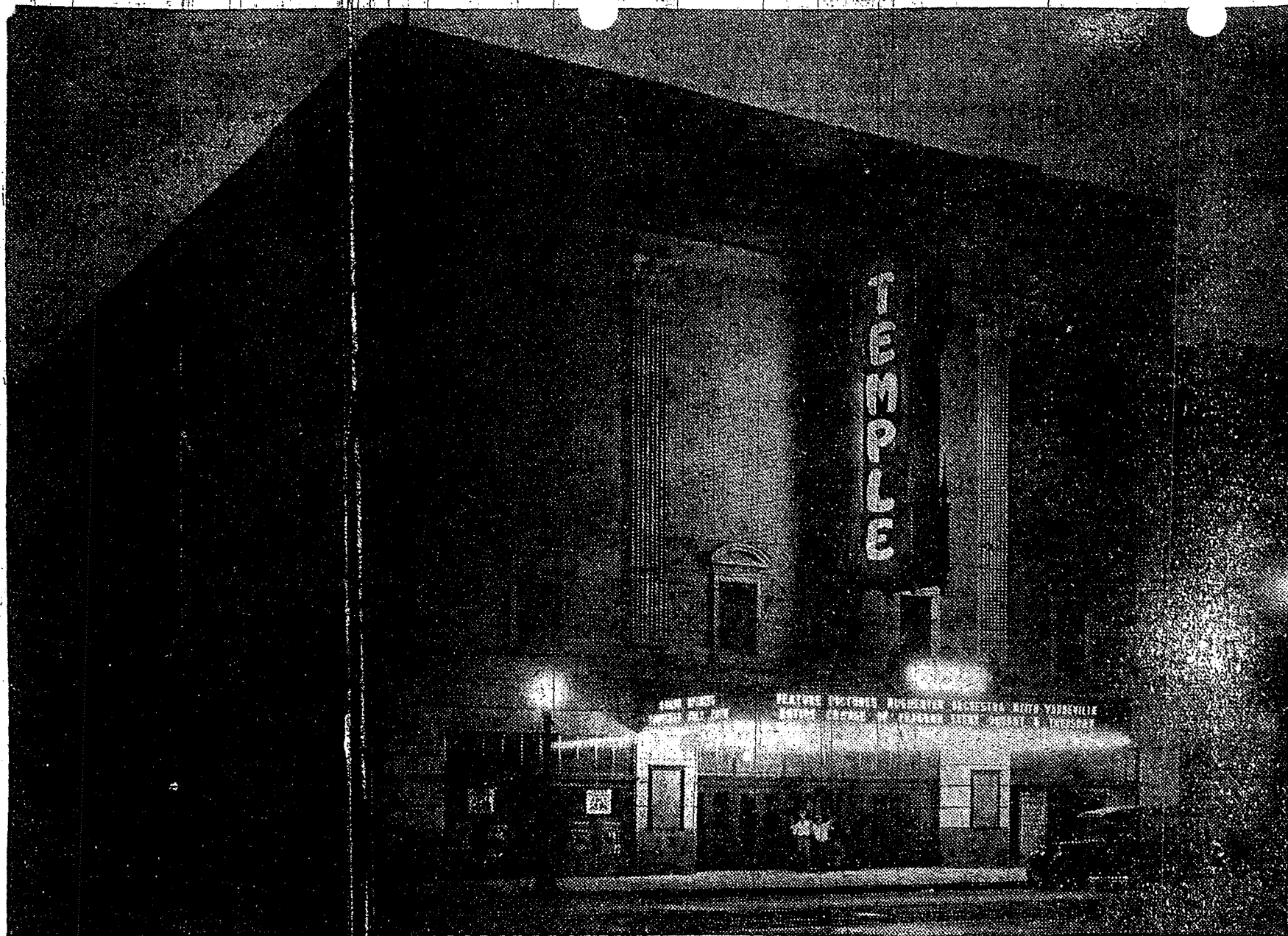
played a full week in each town.  
At that time, a circuit comprising  
eight cities, with small railroad  
jumps, as in Michigan, was a cov-  
eted prize for the struggling

vaudeville artist. All of the stars  
of those days played Michigan, and  
also many rising young artists  
who were later to blossom into  
stars and reach the heights in the  
theatrical profession.

*The Saginaw News Courier  
27 July 1927*

## Well Done!

### Shrine Temple Theater



*The Signal News Courier*

*The NEW TEMPLE THEATER Served by Consumers Power Comp*

**and The Wo**

**SAGINAW**  
113 S. JEFFERSON AVE.  
DAVID SEAMAN PRES.

necessary, but is always welcome  
and appreciated.



*Saginaw May Well be  
Proud of*

# The Temple Theater

SAGINAW'S MARCH OF PROGRESS

*The Saginaw  
New Courier  
27 July 1927*

all of the stars  
Michigan, and  
young artists  
blossom into  
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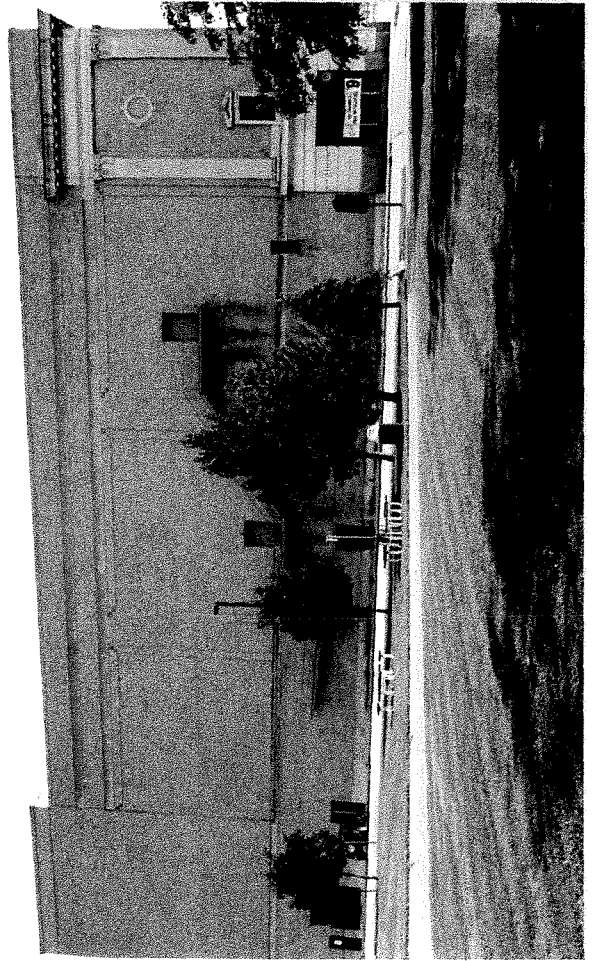
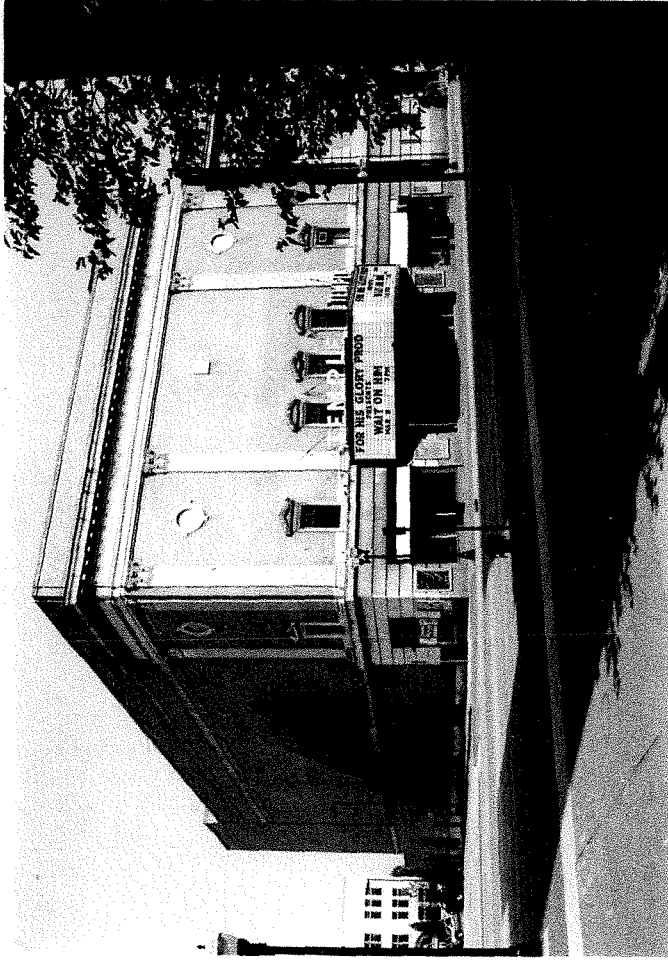




**NEW FACE**—Workmen today removed the Temple Theater's big vertical sign which had adorned the front of Saginaw's largest theater since July, 1927. About 900 light bulbs, plus neon tubing around each letter, provided illumination. It makes way for a modern marquee with letters three feet tall spelling Temple atop each side. John E. Swenor of Ferndale (below), one of the workmen, is shown sympathizing with a young pigeon which lost its happy home when the old sign was removed. Swenor carried the bird and nest to a theater ledge, where he hoped Mama or Papa Pigeon would take over. (Saginaw News-Photos) 3-11-40

**EXTERIOR OF  
ELF KHURAFEH/TEMPLE THEATER COMPLEX**

**PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN JULY 2002**



STATUS OF PROPOSED  
TEMPLE THEATER/ELF KHURAFEH COMPLEX  
HISTORIC DISTRICT

In conformance with the requirements necessary for the establishment of a local historic district according to Section 2507 of the City of Saginaw Ordinance No. D-1418, "Zoning Code", and Section 399.203 of Michigan Public Act 169, "Local Historic Districts Act," as amended. The following activities have been completed:

DATE	ACTIVITY
October 4, 2002	Preliminary Study report submitted to Required State of Michigan Agencies and City of Saginaw.
October 31, 2002	Report presented to Michigan Historical Commission. Report was accepted..
January 10, 2003	Report presented to State Historic Preservation Review Board.
January 28, 2003	Report Presented to City Planning Commission. Recommends that City Council establish Local Historic District. Hearing???
February 27, 2003	Public Hearing
	Submission of final report to City Council
<u>Pending</u>	City Council action





JOHN ENGLER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES  
LANSING

DR. WILLIAM ANDERSON  
DIRECTOR

November 22, 2002

Mr. Thomas Trombley  
Neighborhood Renewal Services of Saginaw, Inc.  
427 Atwater  
P.O. Box 1484  
Saginaw, MI 48605

Dear Mr. Trombley:

Staff members of the State Historic Preservation Office have reviewed the preliminary historic district study committee report for the Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh Complex Historic District in Saginaw, MI. A copy of our comments is enclosed. We offer these comments in order to assist communities to prepare final study committee reports that meet the requirements of Michigan's *Local Historic Districts Act* and that provides a strong legal basis for protecting historically significant resources.

The report was presented to the Michigan Historical Commission on October 31 and they accepted the report. It will be presented to the State Historic Preservation Review Board at their next meeting scheduled for January 10<sup>h</sup>. Should they have any comments, they will be forwarded to you.

The decision whether or not to designate a resource as a local historic district belongs to the local government, however, it is important for us to know when a local district has been adopted. Please send us a copy of the final study committee report and the historic district ordinance should the city choose to establish this district.

If we can assist you further, please contact Amy Arnold at 517-355-2729 or [ArnoldA@michigan.gov](mailto:ArnoldA@michigan.gov).

Sincerely,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer

BDC:ALA

Enclosure

**MICHIGAN HISTORICAL CENTER  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

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**Temple Theater/Elf Khurafeh Historic District, Saginaw  
Staff Comments, October 22, 2002**

This is a well-written report that provides a strong significance statement for the theater and meets the requirements for study committee reports set forth in Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended.