



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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The history of movie watching in Fillmore is nearly as long as the history of the town itself.

The first “picture show” was shown in the old adobe church with power supplied by a gas motor and with light coming from a gas lantern. It was operated by George and Joseph Piper and Nephi Anderson. The movies were later moved to a large wood building owned by G.R. Huntsman that was located just south of his mercantile store across the street to the east of Pioneer Market.

In 1916 Noble Peterson and his wife Josie Melville Peterson built the first “picture show house” in Fillmore on the east side of Main Street between Center and First North. They eventually sold their interests to Melvin and Lillian Smart who operated the theater for a number of years. Mr. Smart had originally operated a move theater with Brigham Tomkinson in the Alcazar Amusement Hall. This building burned in 1917.

In 1920 Marvin and Lynn Peterson bought the Paramount Theatre from Mr. Smart and changed the name to the Lynn Theatre.

The Peterson's sold the building to Milo Warner in 1926 when he needed the location to enlarge his garage. The Peterson's built the Avalon Theatre and office building on the west side of Main Street in the middle of the block. In 1932 they sold their interest to Paul and May Rowley McBride.

The movie theater business made great strides since that first flickering movie in the old adobe meeting house. For years Jack and Edna McBride, the most recent owners, were constantly adding new advancements and improvements to their business.

It has been a year since the Avalon closed its doors. At that time a group of citizen volunteers put their collective heads together to determine what could be done to restore the theatre.

Avalon Theatre has finally been approved for the 501C3 status which means that it is now designated as a nonprofit INC.

Several steps had to be taken before the nonprofit status could be filed for. One of which was viability of the building. Collection of \$850 to file for the nonprofit status. Fillmore citizens, under the organizational skills of Silvia Cazares and Whitney Allred, donated delicious cakes, yummy cookies, and amazing treats of all kinds



which were sold in front of the theatre this past summer and at the Fillmore Arts Festival this past September. This effort resulted in earning sufficient funds to file.

Six months ago the paper work was submitted. Last week the citizen group known as “Fillmore Historic Main Street Inc.”, received the long awaited approval. Under this new designation all donations toward the restoration of this historic theatre can be tax deductible.

Another step in revitalizing the heartbeat of downtown Fillmore has begun. Any citizens who are interested can go to the Avalon Theatre Facebook page to volunteer skills or to simply see what is happening next.

Thanks to Kris Ewert for keeping us up-to-date on this effort to preserve the historical past of this grand old building.