ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book could not have been written without the help and encouragement of a number of individuals and cooperating agencies. First of all, I must thank Dr. Will Garrett-Petts for his on-going support in bringing this work to fruition. As the Director of the Small Cities Research Consortium, Will was able to see an opportunity for the publication of a book on the role that cinema played in the lives of people in smaller British Columbia communities. I was given latitude to shape the work in a manner that enabled me to create a feeling of verisimilitude—that is, readers are able to read the narrative and be transported to a particular time and place within a particular community and recall the impact of movies and the cinema on their lives.

Such reflections and opinions could not have become part of this work without the help of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) students and staff. Bronwen Scott provided numerous suggestions on the final shape and organization of the work. Without the considerable time and effort of TRU students Lara-Rose Duong, Eden Dovauo, Conrad Scott, and Emily Hope, the stories in this book would have never come about. Lara-Rose and Eden conducted numerous interviews with people all over British Columbia. Their research and interviewing skills were instrumental in helping create the tone of this monograph. Conrad has spent countless hours tracking down archival pictures and illustrations that have contributed greatly to the readability of the book. I must give a special thanks to Kathryn Gagnon, Curator of the Cowichan Valley Museum and Archives, who contributed insightful information about the cinema in Duncan. Emily Hope was also invaluable at Community-University Research Alliance Conferences, assisting me with presentations and stories about the book's progress.

Finally, in conducting this research I was made aware again of how little one knows about everything. The more I researched this topic, the more apparent it became how much others know about films and their impact on society. I am much richer for having listened to the many stories.

ISSN 1918-4492

INTRODUCTION

It is as if it were yesterday. Nineteen fifty-eight and a spring Friday evening at the Paramount Cinema in Lethbridge, Alberta—I was fourteen and the film was *The Vikings* with the most unlikely of Vikings (Tony Curtis and Kirk Douglas). Curtis' last medieval epic was *The Black Shield of Falworth* (1954) where he uttered that famous line in fine Brooklynesque fashion "yonda is the castle of my fodda." That is a film and a line easily forgotten.

But *The Vikings* is perhaps why I am writing this book, because there is a scene in the film with stirring music that is not so easily forgotten, at least for me—a Viking ship on its way up a fjord and in the background an energizing film score by Mario Nascimbene. I must watch that film once a month just for the music. When I think of that film I also think of the Paramount and the then-small-city atmosphere of Lethbridge—it is hard to separate the two. Had it not been for that film, I doubt that my love of films and teaching film history would have been realized. But those types of movie memories exist for others too, and that is what this book is primarily about.

Annette Kuhn, in her oral history of filmgoers during the 1930s, indicates that their cinematic experiences were profoundly and deeply felt. So much so that for many film patrons, they became life long emotional attachments. While many lifetime occurrences may have been erased from one's psyche, certain movies and cinemas seemed to remind or resonate with a particular period or moment in a person's life. The memories of cinema-goers in this book certainly reflect Kuhn's observation. For older generations, those memories of the golden years linger on in visits to the neighbourhood cinema and the Saturday afternoon matinee, going to the drive-in in the trunk of a 1956 Chevrolet, or having a root beer at the local A&W after the evening's show. Contemporary movie buffs, on the other hand, might think of film in reel-life terms. Kamloops, for example, is not only a place for movie-watching; it has become a place for movie-making.

Three major threads sustain the stories about films in *Cinema, British Columbia*. The first has a historical flavor and forms the book's primary narrative which enables readers to see how the community cinema played an important role in the lives of its citizens. The stories told by these cinema-goers remind us that rituals associated with going to the movies not only enriched the quality of their lives but also served as an archive of life experiences that were triggered by memories of being part of their local cinema.

The second theme is one of a common cinematic community lexicon. Although the cinema stories in this book are the product of far reaching places and various communities in British Columbia, the stories all seem to share a similar language. Whether one was watching *Gone with the Wind* (1939) in Prince George or *Double Indemnity* (1944) in Victoria, memories of those cinema visits recall the same rituals—the smell of popcorn, the grandeur of the theatres themselves, and being guided to ones seat by an usher or usherette.

The final seam within this story is not about movie watching, it is about movie making and how some British Columbia communities have become the location for movie production. The dreams of making movies in British Columbia have historical resonance as well, one that can be traced to the movie aspirations of Lloyd Champlain and his establishment of a small community called, believe it or not, Cinema, B.C. in the 1920s. His story is one that may provide both inspiration and caution for contemporary filmmakers about creating a "Hollywood North" in British Columbia.

These stories within the larger cinematic fabric of this book will help us see how the cinema serves an important cultural and economic link within the community and how in some fashion or another touches the lives of its residents.

These anecdotes have one common basis—they are memories, current and past, of cinema-related experiences that residents have cherished in small cities and communities in British Columbia. For some they are recollections, happy memories of times past, some imported from the locales of their youth, while for others they are hopefully prophetic glimpses of a cinematic future. But they all speak to one important thing: movies—whether watching them or being in them, have created lasting memories or impressions in their lives.

Recalling the importance of the cinema has had universal appeal. The Americans, understandably, seem to have had a lock on cinematic stories. Their commentaries have ranged from books and journal articles on the ornate architecture of movie-houses to the impact of such films as *Birth of a Nation* (1915), deemed racist propaganda, a theme which has been discussed at great length in academic chronicles. Other countries, too, have provided us with detailed accounts of cinema-related behaviour. In the United Kingdom, for example, film historians have recalled trends in movie attendance during the war years and other researchers have compiled data on the variety of films watched in mining communities in Wales. Such research titles have included *Temporary American Citizens: British Audiences, Hollywood Films and the Threat of Americanization in the 1920s* and *A Very Profitable Enterprise: South Wales Miners' Institute Cinemas in the 1930s.*

The stories that will make up much of this book have had a strong emotional, intellectual, and historical resonance with their authors. There is a tendency at times for academics to write about their subjects in a somewhat verbose style, but the enthusiasm generated by our story-tellers will most certainly negate that tendency here. Embedded in much of what people have said is a strong undercurrent of emotion and sentimentality that has been triggered by movie memories. For example, we probably have all succumbed to movie popcorn and the rich smell of butter. When I was teaching I use it to open my first film lectures of the term with the Twentieth-Century-Fox fanfare, music that seemed to provide an

emotional cue for my audience. Such rituals and notions have become a kind of cinematic reference point reminding us of the special association that we have with a certain time and place and film.

The inspiration for this book, outside the fact that little has been written about the cinema-going memories of Canadians, came, in part, from a fictional story that was serialized in the 1930 August-October editions of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The *Post* story by Margaret Weymouth Jackson uses the mythical tale of the local cinema in the small Indiana municipality of Hilltown to convey how the local cinema served as a cultural beacon for the community. The Llamarada, as the theatre was called, became a time capsule of community memories. And while the story is fiction it does resonate in some ways with smaller cities in the British Columbia Interior and on Vancouver Island, particularly from a geographical and cultural perspective.

Why might Jackson's story be a useful reference point for this study? Gregory Waller in *Imagining and Promoting the Small-Town Theater* mentions "The two-hundred-seat Llamarada Theater in Hilltown, Indiana, unquestionably stands as one of the most well-documented small-town movie theaters of the early 1930s. Owned and operated by a locally born and raised man who had been exhibiting films in Hilltown since the nickelodeon era, the state-of-the-art Llamarada was built in 1930 and managed to remain solvent throughout the Depression and independent despite the efforts of regional theater chains to dominate exhibition in the Midwest. From existing records, we know a good deal about the size and makeup of the Llamarada's staff, the managerial and programming policies of its owner-operator, and, most important, its audience and its place in Hilltown as "an institution, an important part of the community."[1]

That in itself would be enough to provide the historical and cultural framework for examining the small town cinema in British Columbia. But Waller also provides an interesting caveat to the Llamarada: "The problem—or at least the apparent problem—is that the Llamarada Theater and Hilltown, Indiana, are fictional constructs...That the stories are fiction does not negate their historical value—or, for that matter, that of the many other movie-related works of fiction published in the *Post* during this period. In fact, the Llamarada stories are an important, overlooked resource, which, when read in the context of the motion picture trade press, can help us analyze the small-town theater as concrete practice, business strategy, and culturally resonant myth."[2]

Jackson's story of the Llamarada Theatre might serve as a helpful orientation to our examination of small community cinemas, as it provides an opportunity to analyze the small town theatre both as a business practice and as a cultural cornerstone of the smaller community. Jackson's insights, while filtered through her imagination, seem to resonate with a city such as Kamloops and other smaller centres. A description of her mythical 1930s community begins with, "Hilltown is...nestled between green hills and a shining river, with the limestone mill and quarry lying on the outer edge of it...it was a place of its own, a little apart from the world."[3] While Kamloops residents might see those green hills in somewhat more muted tones, the limestone mill and river could easily be transposed to the Thompson River and the Kamloops Lumber mill.

We also need to keep in mind that while Jackson's Hilltown cinema is fictional, the manner in which she describes the cinema, its patrons, and its owner resonates in a very real way with the players you

will meet in our cinematic story—people such as Gerry Sellers, Cinema owner and cinema-goers Barb Kelly and Jean Huntly, who seem to use the same cinema language to describe their experiences. Waller observes: "[Jackson's] story...foregrounds the new organist (and his much-appreciated instrument), while another is set almost entirely in the projection booth and lays out not only the projectionist's serious work but also the intricacies of the Llamarada's sophisticated sound system. Both the musician and the projectionist-electrician are from Hilltown, as are the two perky usherettes in scarlet satin skirts and gold-brocaded jackets, as well as all the other members of this workplace family, young and old, male and female. No matter what motion pictures fill the Llamarada's screen, the theater is a local enterprise, emblematic of a certain faith in the Depression-proof saving grace of small-town small business, which here requires no urban intervention in the form of technical, aesthetic, or financial expertise."[4]

From a business perspective Jackson's fictional theatre seems to parallel a number of small town British Columbia cinema owners and managers. Waller comments about the Llamarada: "Presiding over the Llamarada with benign paternalism is white-haired Mr. McLaughlin, who has built his exhibition business from the ground up, plowing any profits back into the theater. His decency, kindness, and concern for his employees and for the community at large are demonstrated in each story, although we never see him participating in civic activities or opening the Llamarada for charity or public-service events. It is enough, Jackson implies, that McLaughlin knows and plays fair with his customers—that earns him and his employees a modest living and makes him ethically unimpeachable. 'Know[ing] the town' is McLaughlin's key to success, the result of years spent 'studying, wooing and winning Hilltown.' He buys the right films and arranges weekly schedules so as to 'catch' the many different audiences that comprise the town and its environs."[5] Might this description fit one of Vernon's cinema managers?

Hilltown's theatre would serve the community in a number of ways. This relatively new art form was a window to the outside world for film-goers. Newsreels and selected short features brought exotic and far-away places to the community. As Joan Lyons observed about the cinema in Salmon Arm during the war years, "The [film] broadcasts at the beginning of each movie, particularly during the war, were scary. We all knew people who were fighting over there, but didn't really have a clear concept of what was really happening, we just knew it wasn't good." Feature films also enabled Hollywood's "dream merchants" to recreate and invent the world for audiences in frontier films such as *Dodge Cit*y (1939) or muster up the age of chivalry in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). The Llamarada was a meeting place socially, but it was also a venue of the imagination, far removed from the glitz and glamour and so-called sophistication of the larger urban centres.

Jackson's story created a film-going culture where the difference between the metropolis and small town theatres was found in the down-to-earth demeanour of its audience—no "city slickers" here. The theatre's sense of identity was best measured, perhaps, in the relationship between owner and patrons: "promoted and, therefore, defined in terms of 'the good of the community.'"[6] The cinema in Hilltown became a catalyst for certain community behaviours. People came because there was a sense of belonging. That sense of belonging, as we will discover later, came with a sense of ritual associated with going to the movies—the route you took to get to the cinema, the people you associated with, all in all, they were part of a routine that years later would be recalled with warm memories.

This sense of place as we call it has changed considerably since young theatre-goers were emulating their favourite screen stars in the 1940s. In fact, the entire movie industry has changed, in part, because the delivery of films to the public has changed and the competition for the entertainment dollar is so much more competitive. That is why the focus of this work will have a more historical flavour—it will provide us with glimpses of the social and personal intimacies that the local movie-house provided for us and to the perception of life it created for smaller urban communities.

As the preceding comments suggest, the cinema in the small community served as the centre of civic life. But some film observers have argued that the contemporary cinema has lost its lustre, that watching movies at home is just like going to the Cineplex: why go to the theatre when you have a sophisticated entertainment centre in your own home? But going to the movies is special, a form of participation or spectatorship that differs significantly from the passive form associated with "living room movies." Susan Sontag bemoans this passing ritual: "For cinephiles, the movies encapsulated everything. Cinema was both the book of art and the book of life…it was from a weekly visit to the cinema that you learned (or tried to learn) how to walk, to smoke, to kiss, to fight, to grieve."[7] Mistakenly, however, she laments the demise of the cinema noting, "No amount of mourning will revive the vanished rituals—erotic, ruminative—of the darkened theatre." [8]

As our story unfolds, the memories of film-goers past and present will serve as an ethnographic and cultural link between yesterday and today. In small cities and towns across North America, the local theatre became the focal point of the community. The rituals associated with going to the cinema were both localized and foreign. New Canadians would bring fresh ideas and old memories about the theatre from their native lands—a legacy that in some ways would influence the evolution of local film societies. Those experiences would be integrated with the more localized cinematic institutions. Who can forget, for example, the theatre-usher in bell-hop-like uniform and white gloves guiding people to their seats? And what of the local drive-in theatres of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which served as a portal from adolescence to early adulthood? For others this experience would be as cinema owners or as contributors to the local film industry. By creating a feeling of verisimilitude, we will be able to connect with cinema-related stories that fashion for us an evening, a decade, and even a day in the life of the local movie-house.

A common thread emerges as we engage these cinematic memories—there appears to be a universal cinema language that people use. Older movie patrons speak about the ornate designs and atmosphere of the theatres—their almost cathedral-like splendour and spiritual intimacy. The refurbished Orpheum theatre in Vancouver is a throwback to those more ornate movie palaces. The Orpheum had opened its door back in 1927 and although its outer façade might have looked somewhat deceiving, it quickly earned the reputation as Vancouver's cinematic palace. By the 1950s, its neon marquee dominated along Granville Street, the cities main drag. Many film goers in our story recall the neon marquees as beacons leading them into another world.

On another level, seeing Jennifer Lopez or Robert Redford on Main Street Kamloops may give you a brief rush but I am not sure that making movies in a particular community or region is what ultimately provides or enhances community cinematic pleasure. Being part of a movie audience or talking

about a film seen at a movie festival are community activities that seem to resonate with people. Such memories and opinions are what really connect us to the movies. They are found in particular images and speech-ways that make up the film's message—they make us laugh, smile and cry. That is why they remain a part of us years later—they are indeed part of our own cinematic archives, visual images that remind us of key moments in our lives!

The Patricia Cinema in Powell River might be seen as a testament to these notions. One of the longest serving theatres in Canada, its website helps recall what the role of a movie theatre was in a smaller community.

In their essay *Pulp, Paper and People* (1988) Karen Southern and Peggy Bird mention "Powell River had its own silent theatre...where Stan Meade tinkled the ivories, and Bobby Scanlon opened the side door to the children without dimes. He was a well loved manager who controlled the rambunctious teenagers with kindness, and winked at the lovers who sat beneath the balcony."[9] Similar recollections of such cinematic "rites of passage" help make up this story about movie memories in British Columbia

This book, therefore, provides us with an opportunity to reminisce about the cinema culture of smaller cities and communities in British Columbia. As film-goers share their memories and experiences as part of this narrative it will become clear that movies and the cinema became a form of ritualistic behaviour—going to a Friday evening double-feature or hauling the family to a Saturday afternoon matinee. In short, it became a meaningful social and emotional reference point. Recalling a favourite film at the theatre harkens us back to a humid summer's evening, a meandering walk home along the river, or stopping for a malt along main street. The following chapters, therefore, will explore the small city cinematic culture through the voices and events of the people who have lived and shared its experiences.

CHAPTER ONE

Our Town

The cinematic vignettes from the past captured here would not have happened if not for that cozy theatre in a local neighborhood or that movie palace on Main Street. More than a half century ago, the local cinema was an exciting place. Television was not a household name nor was it a common home appliance and people viewed the local cinema in still somewhat magical terms. It was a venue that for a few hours a week enabled one to be part of a distant world. Once past the confectionary in the theatre lobby you were suddenly confronted with a spiritual silence and excited anticipation. The Capitol Theatre in then small-town Calgary was one of those cathedrals, much like the Orpheum on Vancouver's Granville Street. The Capitol's street façade was certainly deceiving—a small marquee faced Eighth Avenue. Once you bought your ticket you walked along a narrow, slowly rising entrance way to the foyer. From there it was a short walk to the Lodge seating which made up only a small segment of the 1570 seats. Most non-smoking patrons, however, took the stairs at either end of the lobby and descended into the main seating area—and what a revelation it was.

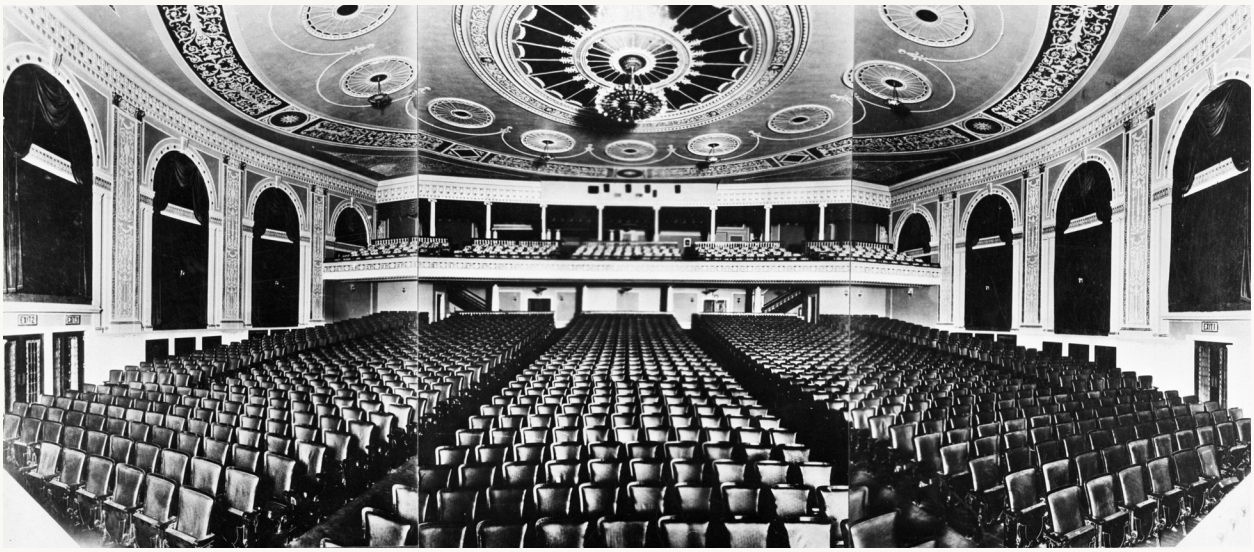


Photo #NA-1264-6, Interior of the Capitol Theatre, Calgary, Alberta. 1921. W.J. Oliver, Photographer. Reproduced Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

A sweeping panorama of seats awaited patrons separated from the long lower vestibule by Roman-like columns, perhaps four feet high, which backed against the last row of seats in the theatre. Ken Green of Vernon remembers the theatre well: "Going to the Capitol Theatre was a big deal because it was fancy. It had a huge lobby. When you walked up there, there were golden curtains and big urns and just those sorts of things. There was plush seating. There was a balcony and then the main floor. It was interesting because the architecture of the place—you went up these big stairs and then you went down again to the main floor. The balcony was on the level with that sort of ticket taking. It had carpets and the whole grandy stuff."[10]

As the photograph from the 1920s Capitol illustrates, the ornate ceiling was the theatre's focal point. While much of the theatre underwent later renovations, the ceiling withstood the ravages of time. Sadly, the Capitol closed its doors in 1972. The quaintness of smaller cinemas would soon be challenged by a greedier type of theatre—the cinematic "six pack."

The contemporary Cineplex seems to devour its patrons like some fire-eating pagan god, quickly swallowing the crowds into one of the many theatres that form the Cineplex's belly—mini-cinemas that all look alike. Ken Green's aversion to the modern movie-house is a physical one: "The screens are tiny usually. The sound is not good. Sometimes the sound from adjacent films dribbles over. They play them at a high volume and their sound deadening is not good enough. I forget the last time I went to the Cineplex and was confirmed in my disgust. Several years I think."[11]

As much as Ken laments the blandness of the contemporary cineplex, some communities have reinforced that notion of "back to the future." Gerry Sellars, manager of Vernon's Towne Cinema notes, "Another major effect in our business was the advent of multiplex theatres, because up until that point you had single screens in every little town. In cities like Vancouver you had maybe eight or ten single screen theatres. When Garth Drabinksy was Cineplex Odeon, when he first propagated the concept of multi-screen theatres, he didn't invent the concept, but he was the one that took the idea and really ran with it. What he did is he would take a theatre like ours here for example and he would split it into four or five auditoriums. Each one having thirty, forty, fifty seats. Maybe one would have seventy-five and that would be his big house. What he would do is he would split a theatre like this so that he had five or six streams of revenue and then he would show a different movie in each one."[12]

This type of industry concept had a dramatic effect on the smaller cinema owner. Gerry explains, "Now the impact on our industry was that traditionally you had two or three big hits in the summer. You might have the latest *James Bond* movie or maybe some other western starring John Wayne or whatever. Well when he did that, suddenly the Cineplex Odeon had literally used up all of the available films that were out there. I can remember this, this would be in the early eighties. I can remember. I was running a twin theatre and we had a small single screen across town. Suddenly there were no movies. No prints available. There were movies out, but there were no prints or copies of the movie because Cineplex Odeon was using them all. So what that created at first was a bit of panic. What are you going to do? Do you run soft-core porn? Literally, because you've got to survive. The bills that keep us open are horrendous."[13]

Gerry recalls that he was looking for a way to survive within the industry and yet still cling to the

notion that a neighbourhood or Main Street theatre could still survive: "So I can remember my booker calling me and saying, "Well there's nothing available, but there are a couple of films that we could bring in...there's an obscure distributor that's trying to bring in some Australian films." Up until that point, you never saw Australian films. You saw American films and occasionally you'd see things like the *Carry On Gang*, *Carry On Camping*, from Britain. It was the British films that were comedies. But Australian? Who knew that they even made them?"[14]

1986 was the year and the lifeline was in the form of an Australian actor by the name of Paul Hogan. As Gerry recalls, "So my booker phoned and she said, 'Well we've got one, it's supposed to be pretty good, it's called *Crocodile Dundee*.' She said, 'I'll send you the trailers for it and see what you think.' So she sent me a couple of trailers and I threw them up on the screen. Do you remember the scene where the guy's going to attack with a knife and he says, 'That's not a knife, this is a knife.' Well right then people howled when they saw the trailer. We booked the movie and we ran it and people lined up for weeks to see it. So we ended up with *Crocodile Dundee*, *Crocodile Dundee II*, *The Man From Snowy River*, if you remember that movie. Oh gosh, there was maybe six or eight... The *Mad Max* films with Mel Gibson when he was a kid, a young guy."[15] Gerry also has a soft spot for Aussie film tucker, one of his favourites being *Gallipoli*—a film that Gerry feels proves that film can be a teaching or learning tool: "Fabulous film. Mel Gibson at age maybe twenty-one or twenty-two years old."[16]

On another note Gerry believes that the monstrous mega-plex has changed the "movie marquee" forever, noting, "So that was the big impact multiplex theatres had on our industry. It created a vacuum for product. So independent people like Steven Spielberg and George Lucas and all those kinds of guys, all jumped in there because there was suddenly a market for their films. The whole North American market went from say, just as a number, two-thousand movie theatres to eighteen thousand because suddenly they were building ten-plexes and five-plexes and stuff. Instead of ten theatres in Vancouver, because you count theatres by screens not by actual front doors, so suddenly you had sixty theatres in Vancouver because you had ten-plexes and things like that."[17]

Over time, according to Gerry, the cinema business and the theatre venues themselves have had to adapt to the challenges of the times—in the thirties and the Depression, for example, running roller skating contests and ballroom dancing shows helped with costs. Gerry explains: "Well, this theatre [Towne Center] originated as the National Ballroom, so it wasn't a movie theatre at all. What it was—it was a live theatre and it was actually an annex to the original National Hotel. It used to sit down where Monashee's is now. Underneath our floors here of course there are hallways and rooms that go underneath all the shops right to where the National used to be. This was an annex so the National Hotel would have Little B catering down to the events. If there was a banquet going on. If you notice the original pictures down there, there were little alcoves along the sides of the room and then there were balconies just above those and there were tables and chairs there and then you had your main dance floor and then the stage. The dance floor could also be set up with ceiling and they would have plays and whatnot. During the Second War they entertained the troops here. All sorts of different things went on. Roller skating in the thirties, that sort of thing. Then throughout the Depression, I'm not sure if you are familiar with the Great Depression, but in 1930 through to 1938/39 it was always a struggle just to keep the doors open

because they were trying to put things in that would turn a dollar and in those days people did not have a dollar. A dollar was a ton of money. You talk to people who were kids in those days. If you got a dime a month for doing something that was incredible money."[18]

Attracting patrons with free give-away nights such as dinner-ware pieces was a popular promotional technique used by cinema managers and theatre chains. It seems that every film generation has had a gimmick or two that appeals to patrons. Such survival instincts were really just good business practices and they contributed to the closeness and familiarity of the community cinema. Gerry recalls similar ventures in Vernon that would put "cheeks in seats": "One promotion they had here in Vernon was called the Winky matinees. There was a Verna Bakery here in Vernon. Their little trademark was Winky who was a little elf and that was printed on all of their bread bags. The way it worked was, if the kids brought a bread bag with Winky on it, they got a free matinee. Now I don't know for a fact, but knowing the business, the theatre doesn't own the movie. They have to provide revenues back to the owners of the film, which would have been Paramount, Columbia, Fox whoever. So I am presuming that the Winky wrapper would have been returned to the bakery for some form of credit. Maybe a dollar, wouldn't even be a dollar back in those days. It probably would have been ten cents or something like that because this was in the fifties. But I still get people my age who come in and talk about the Winky matinees. It was certainly a successful promotion that impacted these people lifelong. It was fascinating to me. Great promotion and of course had a local basis because you wouldn't have the kind of transportation that you do today. You wouldn't have bread being baked in Burnaby at Weston's Bakery and have it delivered here. A very large percentage of moms would bake their own bread, but those that didn't would have been purchased the Vernon bakery product, which would have been Winky. Kids have moms."[19]

Put in perspective, movies and theatres have served the community and society well. Gerry observes, "Movies are important I think on a social aspect or events in general. I won't say movies only, whether it be live plays, symphonies, going to a fair, going to an auction or an antique show or things like that. You've got to get out. You've got to rub shoulders with your fellow human beings otherwise you become weird. You lose perspective on yourself, I think."[20]

Gerry's comments reflect an insider's perspective, but his experiences in the business do resonate with his customers too. Jean Huntley of Vernon feels that because of Gerry's tender, loving care of local cinema, a community bond exists between the Towne Cinema and its customers. So much so that she often boycotts first-run features at the local cineplex: "I like to wait until it's at the Towne Theatre. I like the Towne Theatre better. It's smaller. I found that with the Famous Players, sometimes you can hear the movie next door. If it's one of these loud, violent things. You are sitting watching another one and you can hear boom, bang, boom from next door. I also found it a very dirty theatre. I know Gerry, you know the owner of the Towne Theatre? I'll say to him, 'But you are bringing it in?' and he'll say, 'Yes, when it's finished at the other theatre.' So I wait. It's a lot cheaper too. You know you can sit in his theatre for three movies in a row for the same price. You just pay the one price. And it's informal. I like it much better."[21]

If you are getting the impression that the Towne Cinema has become something of a Vernon institution, you're right. The place is just chock-full of memories with old film posters, the type of music

played—certainly not "Iron Maiden." And for Jean it is a cinematic link to the past: "Now that's something you'd get in England, when I was starting to go to the movies. It would be a big treat, when you are six and to be taken to the movie...they would have the organ playing sometimes...It wasn't quite as far back as the ancient movies were. They had no sound so the music would be played by someone in the theatre... Every now and then you would go in while you were waiting for the movie to start and there would be somebody playing. You don't get that anymore."[22]

According to Jean, Gerry has tried to emulate that sort of thing: "Jerry does have really nice music playing on the radio station...He used to have shows as well, but he hasn't had them for awhile. I don't know what happened to those."[23]

For many, local cinemas became a key gathering place in their lives. In smaller centres they might have been located in the town square; Americans called it Main Street, U.S.A. Others might have referred to it as "the Hub," but whatever the town's gathering place was called, the movie house was magical. Kids would have had the run of the place at the Saturday matinee. In the evening a more formal audience would sit and enjoy the "first run" feature without a speck of popcorn in sight from the earlier day's happening. But the fact that it engendered a warm association with its patrons suggested the importance that it had for the community. It was easily recognizable to citizens and formed a core link within the district, close to the family drugstore with the soda fountain at the back. Across the street would have been a Five and Dime store or a Woolworth's. It is rare today to find such institutions working in tandem in the community centre.

Other parts of British Columbia also came under the spell of the local cinema. The downtown area of Nanaimo, British Columbia, sits alongside a natural harbour protected by two smaller outer islands on either side. Commercial Street in downtown Nanaimo was a bustling main drag in the mid-1950s. The Strand theatre located on Commercial still attracted patrons into the city core, as it had for generations. The following photographs serve as a testament to the street and the Strand's commercial evolution. The location of the Strand on Commercial in 1909 was in a movie establishment then called the Orpheum (see photograph below).

(left) Photo #C3-150, The Strand Theatre, Nanaimo. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives.
(right) The Orpheum Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. 1909. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

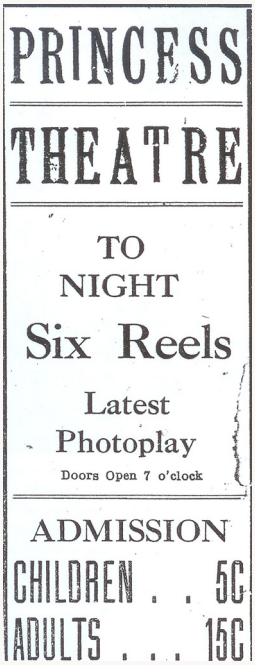
In the 1950s Nanaimo's downtown core was still a beehive of activity and enterprise, attracting citizens and traffic alike. The Strand's marquee was located next to Woolworth's and was visible to all. A large Ferry terminal sign suggested that this street corner was Nanaimo's busiest intersection.

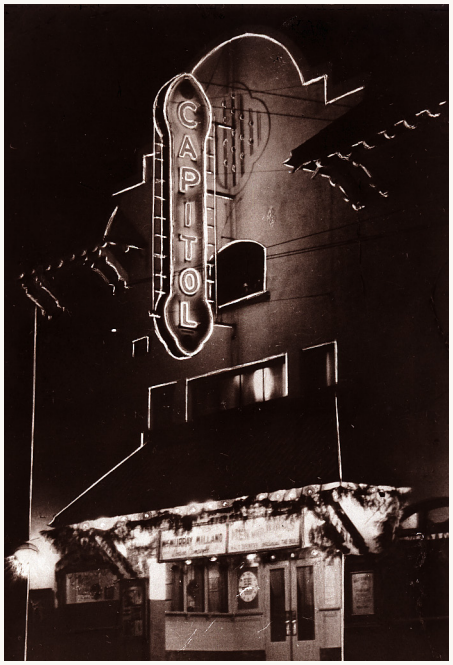
As in most urban centres large and small during this period, people went to the movies. The suffocating presence of the television set that would soon occupy suburban homes was still somewhat of a novelty. As well as the Strand, Nanaimo movie patrons had a number of other popular venues where they could catch a movie. There were two drive-in theatres if you preferred movies under the stars—the Starlight Theatre at Departure Bay or the Cassidy on the southern perimeter of the city. Cinematic fare varied but usually included the main show, a cartoon, and special or selected shorts. On July 2, 1951 at the Starlight, patrons who just happened to be watching the "movie!" were treated to Vancouver-born Yvonne De Carlo and Peter Ustinov in *Hotel Sahara*.[24] Those longing for some different type of action or perhaps hoping to recapture a moment from their youth would have on July 26th watched an Errol Flynn classic *Captain Blood* (1935).[25] But the genesis of the movie-house in Nanaimo went further back than the classical Hollywood fare.

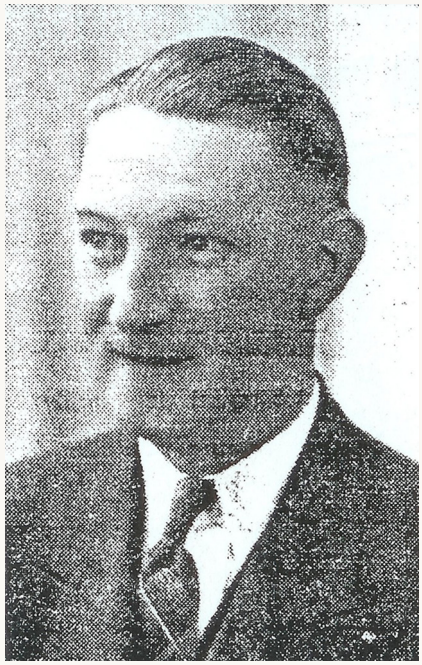
Commercial Street, Nanaimo, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

The theatre history of this mid-island centre had its origins in the 1890s. In 1894, the opera house was built with its mirrored foyer. Operas were held there on a regular basis and the populace usually attended in their Sunday best. By 1915 with moving pictures having captured the public's attention, one of the community's finest cinemas opened its doors on Bastion Street. This was the Dominion and it was equipped to show moving pictures and provided an excellent orchestra which contributed musical selections at all the showings. By 1927 the cinema's name had changed to the Capitol and it was equipped for the "talkies." Such entertainment fare varied in cost: in 1916, for example, watching a six-reeler might cost an adult 15 cents and a child a nickel.







(right) Theatre Stub, The Princess Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. Jan. 16, 1913. The Daily Herald. Reproduced Courtesy of the Nanaimo Community Archives. (center) Photo # C3-34, The Capitol Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives. (left) J. "Mel" Gow, Manager, The Capitol Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. Recreation, Family Files: Gow, Mel. Reproduced Courtesy of the Nanaimo Community Archives.

Some might have expected citizens to feel a sense of isolation from those big city slickers on the mainland. But for movie patrons that sense of isolation was changing. In 1934, for example, Capitol Theatre manager Mel Gow, in announcing his autumn policy, indicated that the Capitol will show all the bigger attractions directly after their first-run showings in Vancouver.[26] Features such as *Treasure Island* with Jackie Cooper and *Now and Forever* with Shirley Temple and Carol Lombard would be seen almost as quickly as their big-city counterparts.[27] The fact that the Capitol was seen as a magnet for an evening's entertainment prompted local entrepreneurs to get into the action as well. Hazelwood Fish and Chips shop in a 1939 advertisement reminded people that they were located right next to the Capitol Theatre.[28]

Gow's managerial and promotional expertise just didn't stop at the Capitol Theatre. He had opportunities to shake hands with Hollywood stars as well. Hollywood femme fatale Gail Patrick happened to stop by Nanaimo and pay Mel a visit: "Mel Gow, Manager of the Capital Theatre received

ISSN 1918-4492

a personal visit from Gail Patrick who arrived from Hollywood. The two had met in Nanaimo when she was part of the Canada War Bond Drive. Mel Gow introduced his one-day-old son, 10 pounds 10 ounces, told Miss Patrick his son's middle name was 'Patrick.' Miss Patrick replied she was very honoured to have her surname given to Mr. & Mrs Gow's baby son. Just before Miss Patrick left Nanaimo to return to Hollywood, sent an enscribed silver cup 'to Patrick from Gail Patrick.'"[29]

Nanaimo's business legacy was primarily coal and timber. Some considered that the city had a somewhat rough and tumble reputation, a perspective not entirely deserved. After all, this community had a thriving opera crowd over a century ago: a fact that diminished somewhat that "dockside" reputation. If one was to attach a city moniker then it would be as a working class community, and if, as film historians are apt to suggest that the cinema played an important socialization role within the populace, many of which were immigrants, then the local cinema and its public would have a strong association in Nanaimo.

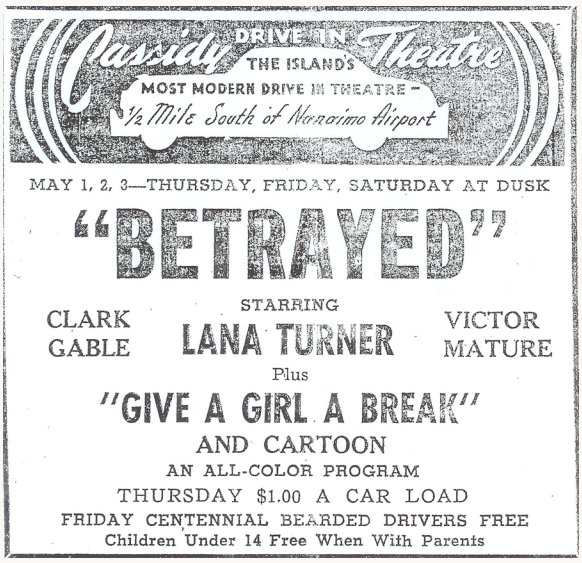
Taking the ferry to the British Columbia mainland was not an easy option for islanders in the first half of the 20th century. The Island bound steamers such as the Princess Elaine plied their way through the coastal waters between Vancouver and Nanaimo Harbour at snail-like speed. Departure Bay ferry service to the mainland was slow and much more sporadic when compared to today's standards of service. The result was that residents of the island made somewhat infrequent excursions over to the other side. In centres like Nanaimo, Duncan, and other island locales, the community culture, as Beth Shervy has observed about smaller towns, was more ritualistic and habitual—intimate and yet familiar in the context of personal associations. People probably saw and expected to see more of each other, resulting perhaps in comments such as, "Hey, I didn't see you at the movie Friday night," a reflection of a communal culture that has all but disappeared from contemporary urban centres and society.

The cinema on the island wasn't restricted to the larger centres; smaller communities such as Ladysmith and Cumberland were also serving the cinematic needs of their citizens. Contemporary movie trivia buffs might think of Ladysmith cinematically and burst out with "Pamela Anderson." And while it has a splendid little harbour and ocean front it certainly would not be mistaken as a venue for "Baywatch." It does, however, have a rich cinematic legacy.

Movie watching got an early start in Ladysmith. The first films were shown in the Masonic Hall and then later in the lower floor of the Oddfellows Hall. Louise Warren remembers the early days of cinema-going in Ladysmith just after the turn of the twentieth century. Warren describes Ladysmith as part of "a boom era in the early years of the century. The Smelter and Extension mines were running at full capacity, as well as the shingle mill and the foundry."[30] At this same time Warren recalls "the Haworth family came to Ladysmith from the Midwest United States. In 1909 they started a movie theatre in a building up the hill from a post office."[31] Good economic times saw the three theatres in the town doing well. But the rosy economy didn't last for long. Warren mentions that the area saw "a long strike in the mines plus the First World War. The theatre business, as did many other businesses, suffered financial losses"[32] And if the strikes and the war were not enough, the severe winter of 1916-17 saw heavy snows damage the new Rialto theatre. The Haworth family repaired and refurnished the cinema. According to Warren, "Jim Haworth operated as projectionist, and manager, which allowed the 'Rialto' to be run economically and successfully for many years."[33]

The Oddfellows Hall, 17 Roberts Street, Ladysmith, B.C. (Erected 1902, Burned 1932). ca. 1920s. The Ray Knight Artifact Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Ladysmith and District Historical Society & the Town of Ladysmith at the Ladysmith Archives.

In 1921, the Haworth family sold the theatre to Jack Warren of Port Alberni. When the Warrens took over the Rialto, a fellow by the name of Charlie Cadell was the house piano player, but according to Warren "he moved to Cumberland to take over the same job with Mr. Haworth, who had bought the theatre there."[34] Theatre owners seemed to be a close knit group on the Island and the "Warrens sold the theatre back to Jim Haworth in October 1925 and returned to Port Alberni where Jack Warren had another theatre."[35] Haworth's management of the Rialto continued through the depression until his construction of the new Rio Cinema on First Avenue which was eventually bought out by the Odeon chain in the forties.



Advertisement, The Cassidy Drive In Theatre, Ladysmith, B.C. Thursday, May 1, 1958. The Ladysmith Chronicle. Reproduced Courtesy of The Ladysmith and District Historical Society & the Town of Ladysmith at the Ladysmith Archives.

By the late forties and early fifties Ladysmith's cinematic tastes sought larger horizons that would be realized in the form of the drive-in theatres, a common sight in landscapes across North America. In Ladysmith in May of 1954 the new Cassidy Drive In was the talk of the town: on June 4, 1954,

The Ladysmith Chronicle reported that "on opening night about 350 cars were present with attendance increasing on following nights. Pictures will be changed three times a week."[36]

Brian Williams remembers going to the Cassidy in the mid-fifties. The drive-in featured all sorts of promotions at the time including events such as "a dollar a carload." Brian mentions, "I recall going to the Cassidy Drive In in the mid-50s with my mother, father, and older brother in our 1949 Studebaker pick-up truck. Mother would bake cookies for the event and take along a pitcher of Freshie. Two shows I recall were The African Queen with Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn and The Long, Long Trailer with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez."[37]

Further up the Island, Cumberland's cinema culture by the 1930s had fallen under the influence of Courtney theatre magnate E. W. Bickle and a new theatre was to be the community's showpiece with Bickle as its proprietor. The original Ilo-Ilo theatre had recently been ravaged by fire. Soon, a phoenix-like structure rising from its ashes and bearing the same name would form a new cinema that would grace Cumberland's Dunsmiur Avenue and it would be equipped with the latest talking machines.

Photo # C030-147, Dunsmuir Avenue, Cumberland, B.C. Reproduced courtesy of The Cumberland Museum & Archives.

The original Ilo-Ilo cinema had been erected in 1914 and had served its patrons faithfully. The following advertisement in a 1917 issue of Cumberland's *The Islander* displays the theatre's typical fare for the period.

In the July 18th *Islander* on page 1, the new theatre was a feature story with the article stating "The new moving picture palace known as the Ilo-Ilo Theatre was opened on Thursday evening with a moving picture programme showing the first instalment of the grat serial, 'Lucille Love, the Girl of Mystery,'

(right) Advertisement, The Ilo-Ilo Theatre, Cumberland, B.C. July 14, 1917. The Islander. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cumberland Museum & Archives. (left) Photo #C030-150, Ilo-Ilo Theatre, Cumberland, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cumberland Museum & Archives.

making part of five reels of pictures. A three-piece orchestra supplied the music and a large representative gathering attended the opening. Several were present who had never attended a picture show in this city before, the beauty and elegance of the new building having attracted their attention."[38] In contrast to the original theatre's offerings in 1917, the new Ilo-Ilo's premier film in July 1932 featured French star Maurice Chevalier.

The Smiling Lieutenant Advertisement, The Ilo-Ilo Theatre, Cumberland, B.C. July 14, 1932. Page Seven, The Comox District Free Press. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cumberland Museum & Archives.

Film historians often refer to the thirties and forties and early fifties as the "Golden Age of Hollywood," and it is clear that Island folk shared in that cinematic experience. You didn't have to walk along the big cities' neon corridors to see a feature film. In smaller centres like Cumberland it would be happily just a leisurely stroll.

If residents in places such as Cumberland and Ladysmith were enjoying their nights at the movies, other Islanders were doing the same too. Just under thirty kilometres down the road from Ladysmith, the town of Duncan's cinemas were a focal point of entertainment as well. Duncan is often referred to as the "City of Totems" and long before the *Star Wars* sagas made it to their theatres, the Duncan cinemas had experienced what might be called their own "Dark Side."

When one thinks of segregation, a small sleepy rural community in the rural southern U.S.A. might come to mind where local blacks, if brave enough, might have ventured into town to go to a movie. They would, of course, be confronted by

segregated seating in the theatre. You might ask what does this have to do with Duncan, British Columbia.

Duncan in the 1940s and '50s had its own form of segregation, one that had manifested itself at the local cinema. Duncan has a long history as a First Nations community. In 2008 it was host to the North American Aboriginal Games and featured many sporting and cultural events associated with "Native" culture. In Mid-Twentieth Century Duncan, however, cultural tolerance, in some cases, was found wanting.

Duncan historian Ian MacInnes recalls how segregation was part of the local cinema culture: "I'll have to admit that as children growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, my friends and I gave little if any thought to the policy that saw natives segregated in our local motion picture theatre. But of course the same could be said of any policy affecting them, for we then had virtually nothing to do with them. My first four years of schooling had taken place in a small school in Victoria, which could boast nothing in the way of ethnic diversity. Not only were there no natives enrolled there, but no one of any other ethnic minority either, so far as I could tell. All my classmates, especially in grades one and two, appeared to be of either English or Scottish descent. Of course since that city was then widely recognized as being 'a little bit of old England,' this was hardly surprising."[39] But by the latter part of elementary school Ian would be confronted by a dramatic change. In 1942 he moved a short ways up Island to the community of Duncan.

Duncan, B.C. ca. 1940s. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

In Duncan Ian noticed some interesting changes in the cultural landscape: "I began grade five at

ISSN 1918-4492

Duncan Elementary, but still not in the company of any natives. I used to see them on the street then, or in summer when swimming in the Cowichan River, but there were none at school...or at least none that I can recall. When I later began going to shows in Duncan, I naturally became aware of the policy that relegated natives to seats in the theatre's balcony. These were positioned above a section of plush lodge seats, which in turn lay behind the regular seats taken by the majority of patrons. My friends and I paid 15¢ for a regular seat then, and adults paid 20¢ more. Lodge seats fetched a princely 50¢, and were mostly considered worth it by those trying to impress a girl. I can recall being advised by someone then to avoid sitting too far back in the theatre, lest the Indians spit or throw something down from the balcony above. But I have to say in fairness that during the dozens of shows I attended there I never once saw that happen...or even heard of it happening."[40]

Ian also recalls that First Nations people were becoming more visible in mainstream Duncan society as well: "In 1948, I began grade eleven, when several native students were entering the public school system too. Whether there had been any there prior to that or not I really couldn't say, but if there were they must have been very few in number. I had heard it rumoured that a caste system existed within the native community, and the quality of those joining us then tended to confirm that rumour. These young people were clearly the brightest and best, the children of the incumbent chief and of band members of equal stature. Their social inferiors, shy by nature and lacking the necessary skills, might have had difficulty making friends and adapting to school routine, but the ones joining us made the transition easily and without perceptible difficulty. It soon became apparent that these new students were not only good-natured and friendly but interesting and intelligent as well, and friendships that would last a lifetime sprang up between them and many of those they met at school. As could be expected, native students soon began to accompany their white-skinned counterparts to movies at the local theatre. Their doing this might easily have given rise to an awkward situation, inasmuch as segregation was being enforced at the time."[41]

How did such assimilation affect segregation at the Duncan cinemas? Ian observes, "I don't know that this 'awkward situation' ever arose, at least not here in Duncan. As far as I have been able to learn from aging contemporaries, theatre management seems to have simply turned a blind eye toward the occasional native boy or girl there to watch a movie with their friends. And, I suppose other band members, used to trooping sheep-like to the balcony, simply continued to do so without demur...segregation was still being enforced here as late as 1949, but the flexible nature of the theatre's policy then suggests it had lost at least some of its former clout. Apparently it either quietly faded away or was rescinded within the next two or three years."[42] Ian recalls a story that perhaps sums up the Duncan segregation experience: "I did hear one story that claimed the theatre manager had capitulated to members of a baseball team when confronted with the ultimatum, 'either he [(a native)] sits downstairs with us or we all leave.' But I heard that from a single source only, and so think it could be merely the stuff of urban legend."[43]

Sally Smith of Duncan recalls her days as an usherette at the local Odeon theatre noting, too, that First Nations people were seated separately and that this separation of film patrons occurred well into the 1950s. Sally, who was in her mid-teens at the time, mentions that being an usherette in those days was hard work, and that one had to be pretty versatile; one minute you were taking people to their seats and

observing that the segregation policy was enforced, the next you were keeping an eye on the younger set and making sure they hit the right washrooms.[44] Summers were pretty hot in Duncan and according to Sally and her fellow usherette, Evanna Branting, serving treats between features kept them on their toes; ice cream bars were the major sales item and, no wonder, the Odeon lacked air conditioning.[45] Once the summer heat dissipated, popcorn returned as the favorite cinematic snack.

Evanna observed that the local cinema in Duncan during the early fifties was a cornerstone of the community—almost everyone in the town frequented the Odeon.[46]

Line-up for Walt Disney's Moon Pilot, Duncan, B.C. ca. 1969. Jay Powley Fonds. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

Many movie-goers of this period, whether in Duncan or elsewhere, have commented that cinema staff usually kept up a very professional appearance and Odeon employees it seemed to be were no exception. Odeon usherettes were issued work smocks when serving confectionary items and a more professional and formal attire when greeting patrons. The following photos show Sally in her formal uniform receiving her certificate of merit from a Duncan Alderman. Her award is noted in a short article that appeared in the local paper. Note the contrast between the work smocks and the formal usherette attire in the photos.

Sally's hard work had also earned the respect of her employer and she was awarded with a certificate of merit for her quality of service at the theatre. But all of those smiling faces and awards could not hide the fact that movie-watching in Duncan, for some, came with a price. Aaron Richard's article "Racial Segregation Enforced in Duncan" in the Sunday, December 17, 2006, edition of the *Valley News Leader Pictorial* rekindled memories of what the separate theatre seating was like. Richard reminded readers of

ISSN 1918-4492

July 24 1952

Local Usherette Presented With Courtesy Award

Miss Sally Townsend, popular usherette of the local Odeon Theatre, was awarded a certificate of merit on Tuesday evening for her courtesy, service and general efficiency. Ald. Jack Dobson, in the absence of Mayor J. C. Wragg, who is confined to his home with sciatica, made the presentation. Sally, a Grade XI pupil of Cowichan High School, lives with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Townsend, Mary Street, and works in the theatre at nights.

Her cheerful disposition and unfailing courtesy has attracted the attention of Mr. D. Griesdorf, manager of Odeon Theatres of Canada, who forwarded the diploma to Mrs. Maude Smithe, manageress of the local theatre, together with a letter and a pin in the form of a five-pointed star.

Ald. Dobson expressed his satisfaction that a local girl should be singled out as an example of courtesy for Canada at a time when so many considered it a sign of weakness or something to be scoffed at.

Mr. and Mrs. Townsend, members of the theatre staff and friends witnessed the presentation.

Alderman Jack Dobson awards a certificate of merit to Sally Smith (née Townsend), Usherette, The Odeon Theatre, Duncan, B.C. July 24, 1952. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

The ODEON THEATRES (CANADA) LIMITED

20 CARLTON ST., TORONTO 1, CANADA

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER
DAVID GRIESDORF

June 16, 1952.

Miss Sally Townsend,
Candy Attendant,
Odeon Theatre,
Duncan, B.C.

Dear Miss Townsend:

Please accept my warmest congratulations on the award of an Odeon Silver Courtesy Star for outstanding service and courtesy to Odeon patrons.

I want you to know that your efforts on behalf of the Company are greatly appreciated and it is my sincere wish that I may be able to extend my congratulations to you personally, in the not too distant future, for being such an excellent ambassador of goodwill for the Company.

Best Regards.

Sincerely,

DG/RG/mk

cc: Mr. E. Forsyth
Mr. G. Sutherland
Mr. E. Hayter
Mrs. C. Smithe

Letter of Recognition from David Griesdorf, General Manager, The Odeon Theatres of Canada, to Sally Smith (née Townsend), Usherette, The Odeon Theatre, Duncan, B.C. June 16, 1952. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

the culture of mid-twentieth century Duncan: "If you grew up in the Cowichan Valley you may remember the Odeon theatre on Station Street. It was a place where most kids went to hang out with their friends.

"Silver Star" Certificate of Merit awarded by The Odeon Theatres of Canada to Sally Smith (née Townsend), Usherette, The Odeon Theatre, Duncan, B.C. June 16, 1952. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

It was a place to have fun, to relax, to kick back and be entertained."[47] Richard tells us, however, although that was the way it should have been, it wasn't so for everyone. According to Richard, "Ruth Kroek and her sisters [were] Cowichan First Nations and the Odeon was a theatre where segregation was the norm."[48] Ruth recalls, "Our mother told us that if anyone asked us to move, we were to say 'no thank you, I'm fine where I am,' adding 'the usher would ask us to move and that's what we'd say. We'd stay down below with the white folks while all our cousins and friends were up in the Indian Balcony.'"[49]

It is not clear exactly just when segregation disappeared from the community. The theatre operated on Station Street from 1925-1984, and some Duncan residents believe that segregation met its official demise sometime in the 1960s. David Lowe, who grew up in the area, believed it was somewhat of a stigma for the community: "You knew it wasn't something that was ever discussed. I can't remember there being any signs or anything—it was just accepted."[50]

Ruth mentions that it was her mom's quiet militancy that set the tone for us: "My mother pounded into my head that we needed to stand up for ourselves…She told us 'you sit down where everyone else sits. You're Canadian. You need to be treated like everyone else.'"[51]

Richard mentions that the pall of segregation hung over other parts of the community as well, such as visits to the doctor's office. Ruth, for example, vividly recalls trips to the Doctor: "For years we when we walked to the doctor's office we would sit down in the waiting room with my mother and the

receptionist would come out and ask if we'd like to move to another room. My mother always said, 'no thank you, we're fine where we are.'"[52]

THE PICTORIAL 26 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2006
VALLEY

Racial segregation enforced in Duncan

SEPARATE SEATING: Local Native woman remembers well the balcony seats at the Odeon Theatre

AARON BICHARD
News Leader Pictorial

If you grew up in the Cowichan Valley, you may remember the Odeon Theatre on Station Street.

It was a place where most kids went to hang out with their friends. It was a place for most to have fun, to relax, to kick back and be entertained.

For Ruth Kroek and her sisters, it was a place to take a stand.

Kroek and her sisters are Cowichan First Nations, and the Odeon was a theatre where segregation was the norm.

"Our mother told us that if anyone asked us to move, we were to say, 'No, thank you. I'm fine where I am,' Kroek said. "The usher would ask us to move and that's what we'd say. We'd stay down below with the white folks while all our cousins and friends were up in the Indian balcony."

Understanding the Nations — Connecting the Two Cowichans

The theatre operated in its location on Station Street from 1925 to 1984 but it's unclear when the segregation officially stopped.

Dave Lowe grew up in the area and would frequently catch a flick at the old movie house.

"You know, it wasn't something that was ever discussed," he said. "I can't remember there being any signs or anything. It was just accepted.

"Women weren't allowed in the beer parlour and Natives sat up in the balcony at the Odeon."

While some non-Natives did venture up to the balcony, considering themselves daring and risqué, Kroek and her sisters never went up and joined their friends.

"My mother pounded it into my head that we needed to stand up for ourselves," Kroek said. "She told us, 'you sit down where everyone else sits. You're Canadian. You need to be treated like everyone else.'

"But how do you tell a child that a large portion of your country doesn't want you to participate?"

It wasn't just the theatre that segregated Natives from non-Natives in Cowichan into the 1960s.

"For years when we walked to the doctor's office we would sit down in the waiting room with my mother and the receptionist would come out and ask us if we'd like to move to the other room," Kroek said. "My mother always said, 'No, thank you. We're fine where we are.'

"When I was 12, I went by myself and sat down as usual. Eventually I stood up to go and see what was in the other room.

"It was a foyer with a few chairs. Not even a room but a hallway for the Native people."

Kroek said over the years, the line of segregation slowly became erased, thanks to people like her mother taking a peaceful stand.

"They were different times back then," she said, listing Nanaimo Indian Hospital and an Indian doctor who'd come to city hall as more examples of the division. "Today it would be called racist, institutional policies.

"I grew up believing there were no lines until I got older and realized there are lines.

"Thanks to my parents, I learned those lines aren't for me."

Aaron Bichard

Malaspina University College education counselor Ruth Kroek sits in her office at the school where in 1976 she was one of only 11 First Nations to have entered the post-secondary institute.

"Racial segregation enforced in Duncan," Duncan, B.C. Sunday, Dec. 17, 2006. The Valley News Leader Pictorial. Aaron Richard. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

You might find it difficult to believe as you drive through this picturesque Island community today that such notions held sway 50 years or so ago—but so it was. Over the years Duncan has evolved into a fine example of a multi-ethnic society, a community where such stories are a reminder of how times have changed.

The notion that "times have changed" certainly fits the work of aboriginal film maker Kamala Todd. A professional urban geographer, Kamala's interests in urban landscapes indirectly got her interested in film making: "It still didn't seem like what I was going to do. I did my undergraduate and my graduate degrees in urban geography because I'm really concerned about community and how we live in the city and how we live on the land. It just seemed like the logical way for me to deal with that. Then more and more it became clear that stories and whose stories are told, and aren't told, and whose images and histories and perspectives are visible. It just became clear that that was really a huge thing that needed to be taken on. I could do that by combining my knowledge of community and knowledge of looking at urban space, and that kind of thing, with film as a way of addressing those issues in a visual way. The reality is that media

is a hot, sexy thing that really appeals to a lot of people. It's a language a lot of people are familiar with and comfortable with, so if you can reach them in that way, you can potentially have a pretty big impact."[53]

Kamala definitely believes that the film medium can be a productive vehicle for telling and showing people stories and issues connected to the urban and community landscape: "I think it's easier and I think it can be a quicker impact, a quicker way of getting the message across. Some people will take the time to read. If you are lucky enough to get your issues raised by the media and print media then those can also have an impact. I think media is definitely a popular and powerful world these days. It surrounds us. In some ways it's also very competitive and hard to get your message out there when there's so much. But at least you are participating in a forum. Using tools that pretty much everybody is familiar with and so on. They can sit down for a few minutes and watch a short video or they can come across your show when they are flipping channels and that kind of thing. If people are committed to different issues then they will go to the festivals and they will get the documentaries to learn some of these things. Then of course if it's in an educational context—a lot of my mom's films are centered around schools and of course students love to watch films a lot of times. That can also have a big impact."[54]

Kamala's sense of social justice and responsibility were the catalysts for wanting to make people see what she felt, noting, "I didn't go to film school. Basically I learned hands on because I was given an opportunity to work for *First Story*—a newsmagazine style show here in Vancouver created by Jeff Bear that is different stories of issues and people here, mostly in Vancouver. He gave me the opportunity to look at some stories and issues on the show and that's how—very quickly because I guess it was already in me to figure out how to put a story together in a visual way and know the whole editing process. I loved it. I kind of went from there."[55]

Kamala's filmmaking is motivated by a desire for cultural inclusiveness, one that, as we have seen, was lacking in mid-twentieth century Duncan. She recalls that trying to find an Aboriginal cultural voice has not been easy—one only has to think of Ruth Kroek's mother's advice on segregation in Duncan. Kamala remembers her own frustrations: "I'd buy books from the 1950s and 1960s and try to read and see how that story was told. It definitely became clear very quickly and is just so glaringly obvious that voice and that story is just so blatantly excluding and erasing. It's just crazy to me that we are still so stuck in that and that's why you can have thousands and thousands of people arriving and living here, becoming citizens here, and never know and never have a sense of whose land they are on and that the people are still there. Knowing who the Nations are and what the languages are…Any of that, because it's just not visible in a major way."[56] She concludes, "I keep hearing from Aboriginal residents that they feel invisible. I said, "Yep, that's pretty common and it's pretty reflective of the way the city is and the marginalization of people. One way to address that really is to support people to tell their stories and make them feel like they have a voice. Video and public art are two most effective ways to do that."[57]

Kamala's cinematic work in Vancouver suggests that the journey towards Aboriginal inclusiveness is still not finished, but her film efforts are working towards making that quest complete: "Like I keep saying, to truly build inclusion and to truly not just say, 'Our First Nations,' which I encounter all the time. Every once in a while people will say, 'Our First Nations.' It's just such a limited role and such a limited

degree of shaping and decision-making that aboriginal people seem to have in general. Of course there's areas where good change is happening and people are genuinely listening and sharing power, but in terms of only thinking about B.C. and our culture. I don't see a lot of room yet being made for Aboriginal people to tell the story of who we are and to tell the story of who they are and what this land is all about and how we should be living here and all that...See I can't speak for everybody I know, but I think that's why a lot of the people I know get into film and art and even into law and planning and all these things. To make sure that kind of hold of dominant power that's held so long is challenged. That Aboriginal voices are in there."[58]

British Columbia over the years has generated variations on its cinematic cultures with its varied and unique stories. In the Mountain town of Revelstoke in the B.C. Interior, another cinematic way of life was emerging, one that at first glance might not have seemed possible. Revelstoke, by most urbane standards, might have been seen as somewhat of an isolated British Columbia community lacking perhaps in the more sophisticated amenities. The Rogers Pass was still a pipe dream early in the twentieth century and Revelstoke might have been viewed by some as a somewhat isolated and sleepy interior town—a mistaken identity, indeed, if one was to consider the influence of the community theatre.

The cinema got an early start in Revelstoke. Robert Tapping opened Tapping's Theatre in 1896 in what is now the City Furniture parking lot. They were the first moving images shown in the North Kootenay. By 1910 the Edison Theatre was running on the current site of Barton Insurance. One might think that a somewhat remote B.C. community would have had difficulty believing it could be part of mainstream cinema but surprisingly, Revelstoke was right up there with the larger urban centers. Hart Munro reminiscences about the competitive cinema business in the town around 1912: "I had the first radio in Revelstoke and it was built by Charlie Smith (then 19) from a set of parts which I imported from Chicago. Between Charlie and I we got the idea of starting a picture show and when a friend of his Wentworth Smythe or 'Wenty' as he was called found enough money to go partners with me, we bought the old Howson Furniture Store and installed a Powers 6 machine and about 400 kitchen chairs. There was already another theatre running (the Edison) but when we made a price of 25 cents (kids 10 cents) more than half of the business came our way and it was less than a year later we bought out the Edison for a song and renamed it the Empress. Then a funny thing happened. While the Star was making money every month under my direction, the Empress kept going in the hole and when my partner refused to close it down, I came to the conclusion that I was being had and I sold my interest to him at a small profit rather than look forward to a certain loss."[59]

A notice was circulated in the town on May 6, 1914, noting that a modern theatre would grace the community: "The Apollo theatre on McKenzie Avenue will open on Saturday under the management of A.G. Thiakison. The building which is 92 x 24 feet in size will be one of the coziest and best appointed in the province. It will contain 468 seats. The walls are tastefully colored and handsome shaded lamps hang from the ceiling. The lantern is already here and with the installation of the seats the theatre will be ready for service. The building which is heated from a furnace in the basement and is well ventilated is built of concrete and brick and is thoroughly fireproof. There are four exits and Mr. Thiaskison guarantees that only the best of films will be shown."[60] Not bad facilities for a seemingly out of the way location.

Revelstoke seemed to be enjoying its cinematic life and the war years of 1914-18 would reflect its movie vibrancy. The following exhibition dates and events over that four year period would reflect such activity:[61]

- September 23, 1914: Apollo Theatre showing pictures of the Revelstoke soldiers at the station leaving for Valcartier.
- October 28, 1914: Sacred Concert in aid of Belgian Relief Fund held at Empress Theatre, raising $96.00
- June 19, 1915: Rev Theatre to Reopen on Dominion Day. Charles E. Couche of the Rex Theatre Company of Salmon Arm, who was in the city on Thursday, intends to reopen the Rex theatre on July 1, as a moving picture show of the first class. A full orchestra which will include violin solos will be provided. The Mutual Master pictures will be exhibited. Animated Weeklies will be shown three times a week. Keystone comedies and *The Diamond From the Say*, an $800,000 production which will run for 15 weeks will be included in the program.
- September 8, 1915: J. Hay attends private showing of *The Fifth Commandment* at the Rex Theatre.
- January 20, 1916: *Birth of A Nation* coming to Empress Theatre along with a 30 piece orchestra.
- February 19, 1916: Entertainment evening held in honour of almost 50 recruits in training over winter months – At Empress Theatre – 5 piece orchestra.
- February 24, 1916: Review: A Patriotic Meeting and Concert held at the Rex Theatre: "The Rex Theatre was filled to the window sills and door jams last night with one of the most enthusiastic and patriotic audiences ever assembled in Canada…Rev. D.J. Gordon was the speaker of the evening…In his opening remarks he stated that he was not there to ask any man to shoulder any responsibility he himself was not prepared to assume. So far he had tried to do his part in this war, so far as giving his voice, his time and money were concerned, and if it were his fate, he was prepared to give his life, for he hoped to go overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. He was prepared to do all he could to crush German militarism, for if we failed in that, we failed in all…He wished to congratulate the Motherhood of this city and district for the supreme sacrifice they had made and were making in giving their sons for the cause of the Empire and freedom. What are men and women in Revelstoke going to do about it, shall you wash your hands of responsibility and stand by on the other side? I challenge you by all the priceless liberties and institutions of democracy that you possess, come forward to the call of the Empire. Your King and Country need you. Fall in!'"
- April 6, 1916: Official Canadian government film, "Canada's Fighting Forces" to be shown at Empress Theatre April 10th. One scene shows 40,000 Canadian troops being reviewed by HM the King.
- April 22, 1916: Empress Theatre presents, *The White Feather* or *The Man Who Stayed at Home*.
- September 23, 1916: Fire destroys Star Theatre and old Howson Block.
- November 11, 1916: M-H Selkirk School Honour Roll includes Joseph Daem, Frances Hay, Doreen Freeman. The children of the city schools are to hold a tag day on behalf of the churches of Belgium. Empress Theatre packed to the doors to hear Sir Herbert Ames, honourary secretary of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, deliver a stirring address on the work of the Fund. *The Birth of the*

Nation will be shown in December.

- September 21, 1916: Review: Mrs. Frances Reade is in charge of the musical part of the program featuring a male and female captain showing war pictures at the Empress Theatre on behalf of the Canadian Club. The female captain is a nurse. Mrs. Reade is to be accompanied in public for the first time by her husband, Revelstoke's youngest Lieutenant and a brand new Highlander.
- February 8, 1917: Review: A program for a concert in aid of the prisoners of War and Tobacco Fund called "Stop! Look! Listen!" to be presented at the Empress Theatre, is printed in the paper. The cast included Miss Agnes McGiven.

Over the four year period it was easy to see that the Revelstoke cinemas were kept busy, whether it was showing first run films such as *Birth of a Nation* or contributing in some way to the war effort.

By 1923, Revelstoke was well on its way to having movie venues that could compete very nicely with larger urban centers. The following announcement would reflect such cinematic sophistication: "August 1, 1923, ANNOUNCEMENT. The management of the Province Theatre (previously known as the Empress) wish to bring to the notice of the people of Revelstoke and vicinity that at very great expense the above theatre has been put in first class condition, with all the requirements, etc., of a modern playhouse. A solid cement foundation has been put in under the entire building, with fireproof concrete furnace rooms, etc., insuring safety as well as sanitation. The new projection room is of solid concrete throughout, with ample room for two of the very latest and most up-to-date projection machines, which will derive their source of light from the latest word in generator sets, known as a transverter, this piece of machinery alone costing over twelve hundred dollars. The projection will be in charge of Mr. Kirkham, who until recently has been employed in one of the big eastern theatres. Just as soon as shipment can be made there will be installed a superlite gold fibre screen of the type used in all of the large successful photoplay houses. The painting and decorating has been very ably carried out by Mr. C.C. Taylor of Boyle Ave. It is the intention to run nothing but the latest and best in photoplays, varied from time to time with high class vaudeville and road attractions, and if real entertainment value, combined with courtesy and service at all times mean anything to the people of this city, then the theatre's success is assured."[62]

Over the next few years the movie business would see some changes occur within the community. In a November 19, 1924 advertisement cinema business persons announced: "We wish to announce to the Revelstoke public that the Province and Rex Theatres have merged with the Amalgamated Theatres, Vancouver, and that in future the Province Theatre only will be operated. Mr. Dewees, of the Amalgamated Theatres, Vancouver, will have entire charge of all bookings, and is in a position to supply a better line of pictures than ever for Revelstoke. Some of the productions coming in the near future are: *Sundown*, big First National; *The Sea Hawk*, *Monsieur Beaucaire*; *The Covered Wagon* and all the other big pictures as they are released. Revelstoke Theatre Company."[63]

It may have seemed that in some respects the Revelstoke community was living a charmed life cinematically. That ended, however, on September 8, 1938 when a fire destroyed a local Theatre. The following record of the events about the fire indicates that the fire broke out in rear of the Province Theatre

on Friday at about 11:45, leaving the playhouse a total wreck:[64]

- Warren Cooper, Manager and his projectionist left building at about 11 am
- Fire may have been caused by carelessly thrown cigarette in lane behind theatre.
- Fire was well established when fire was discovered and alarm turned in.
- Fire brigade arrived within minutes. Took more than two hours to bring flames under control.
- Main interior of auditorium and roof were of sheet metal construction, making it difficult to get water into the flames, which spread to entrance area within a few moments.
- Long dry period of summer made structure an easy prey to flames. Concern for adjoining properties – saved by fire brigade.
- Costly projection equipment was saved – stored in fireproof projection room. Rolls of film not stored in room were destroyed.
- A container of inflammable film-mending fluid exploded near an upper front window above the outside verandah. A number of firemen were on the roof of the verandah when the explosion took place, the force of the explosion throwing two of them off their feet. Other firemen saved them from falling fifteen feet to the pavement. Received painful scorchings on their faces.
- Owned by WP Dewees Theatre Enterprises Ltd. of Vancouver. Warren Cooper had theatre under lease.
- Plans already underway to rebuild Columbia Hardware building as a theatre.

If smoking was seen as a fashionable on screen habit during the thirties, it seems to have literally carried over into the real lives of Revelstoke citizens as well—so much so that it cost them their local theatre.

The community would not want for a cinematic venue for very long. On September 16, 1938, it was announced that Revelstoke was to have a new cinematic destination and local residents would not be kept waiting long for their new cinematic digs. A record of the cinema's rebirth is recorded in the following release, dated December 29, 1938: "First Showing at New Theatre This Afternoon. Tonight Mayor W. Hardman Will Officiate at Important Civic Event.

Revelstoke's new theatre opened its doors this afternoon and the long-anticipated event found a large number of interested citizens waiting to avail themselves of the first opportunity to see the magnificent place of entertainment. The arrival of seats late Tuesday night found a large force of men in readiness to install them in order that the scheduled event might not be delayed. All night long as well as all day Wednesday the arrangements attendant on the opening proceeded apace. Just after the doors were thrown open, the spacious foyer was the scene of many interesting comments as each person entering took advantage of every moment to glimpse as much of the interior as time would allow. The opening will be appropriately signaled tonight by the presence of Mayor Hardman and Frank H. Allwood, president of the Board of Trade, and other civic dignitaries. Mayor Hardman will make an appropriate civic gesture and refer to the enterprise which enables Revelstoke to take its place with the foremost cities in the province in respect to picture house accommodation. With these preliminaries over, the audience settled back in

the luxurious chairs in the inviting surroundings to enjoy a first class picture, 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.' Before the day is out, succeeding performances will see a large number of additional citizens and visitors from the district avail themselves of the opportunity to patronize the new show. For some considerable time enquiries have been coming in from outside points as to the date of opening and there is every reason to believe that the opening of the theatre will result in a pronounced impetus to business generally around town. At this afternoon's performance, a number of theatre parties were in evidence and these made use of the new loges which are a new feature in local entertainment. An interested spectator of the opening scene was ex-mayor A. Pradolini who had charge of the contracting and created an enviable reputation for himself. The opening of the new show also signalized the end of the longest period without a moving picture entertainment in over 25 years. Since the old Province Theatre burned down shortly before midnight, September 8th Revelstoke has had to forgo the pleasure of moving picture entertainment.[65]

The community would have to wait until February 17, 1939 for a name for the refurbished cinema which was called the Avolie. Picked from over 150 names submitted in the contest, the winning name was submitted by Miss Kaye M.E. Harwood of Revelstoke: a take on Olive, Mrs. Cooper's first name. The cinema would age, just like many of is patrons. Its name changed in 1952 to the Roxy by new owner H.J. Stevenson of Prince George. In January 1984, the Roxy closed but like a cinematic phoenix would emerge again in June as part of the Landmark Cinema Chain.

Photo #Dickey Neg-92, The Avolie Theatre, Revelstoke, B.C. ca. 1940. Earle Dickey, Photographer. Reproduced Courtesy of the Revelstoke Museum & Archives.

The Roxy Theatre building was built on Mackenzie Avenue in Revelstoke in 1905 as Lawrence Hardware, and boasted a Victorian style facade. In 1938 it was remodeled as a theatre building, featuring the new Art Deco facade. The name "Avolie" was chosen through a contest and was a favourite of the owner Warren Cooper because it included an anagram of his wife's name, Olive.

- Cathy English, Curator, Revelstoke Museum & Archives

This interior shot of the Avolie Theatre in Revelstoke was taken shortly after the grand opening on December 29, 1938. Theatre owner Warren Cooper had ordered the seats from England and was concerned that they would not arrive in time, but they arrived safely via the Panama Canal about one week prior to the opening.

- Cathy English, Curator,
Revelstoke Museum & Archives

Photo #Dickey Neg-373, Interior, the Avolie Theatre, Revelstoke, B.C. ca. 1940. Earle Dickey, Photographer. Reproduced Courtesy of the Revelstoke Museum & Archives.

Another interior locale had also set its sights on establishing a cinematic culture of its own and would, for the most part, be indebted to a fellow by the name of Lee Morris. Born in 1870 in De Moines, Iowa, Morris eventually found himself venturing to Armstrong, British Columbia.[66]

Morris had what might be described as an eclectic interest in the arts and his experiences in Armstrong reflect that. He had married Bertha Docksteader, whom he had met in Spokane Washington and the couple ended up shortly afterwards living in California where Lee painted and his wife worked in a bakery.[67] They then returned to Armstrong because his wife's mother was ill. In Armstrong, Lee did live theatre, minstrel shows, and black face comedy.[68] He was also instrumental in the cinematic culture of the community. It is said that in many ways that he brought Hollywood to Armstrong: "No person in Armstrong's history was as interesting or enigmatic as Lee Morris...who brought the glamour of Hollywood to small town British Columbia...Although he did appear in silent films, his film credits are largely unknown. We speculate that Mr. Morris appeared in several films during his two years spent with the William Fox Production Company in Los Angeles, California, although his roles were largely uncredited."[69]

Morris managed the local entertainment centre in Armstrong early in the twentieth century. He operated the Armstrong Opera house before changing its name to the Avalon Theatre and was active in other entertainment ventures as well: "He entertained the community by screening silent films and staging minstrel shows. According to the Armstrong Advertiser, Lee's minstrel shows were huge successes and brought in lots of money to support the Red Cross and the Soldier's Home Comfort Club."[70]

After a fire destroyed the Avalon Theatre in 1919, Morris and his wife decided to move back to the United States, but they returned frequently to the Armstrong region as Bertha's family lived in the

area. Morris died in 1941 of "Involutional Melancholia" and is buried in Armstrong.[71]

175 miles southeast or so of the Northern Okanagan and the Revelstoke-Columbia River corridor begins the Kootenay region of British Columbia, an area that includes Trail on the western perimeter and the communities of Nelson and Cranbrook-Kimberly on the east. Residents of the region also recall interesting memories of both movies and the arts. Nelson is one of those towns that one might wake up in after being a sleep for twenty years and find that little has changed—there is something enchanting and romantic-like about the place. Maybe it is the greenery that cascades down to the city centre's edge or the restored facades of the city's stores and public buildings. But when one visits one can see why the film *Roxanne* was filmed there in 1986.

Edward Affleck remembers the early impact of cinema in the region: "Today the Kootenay population, urban and rural, has radio and television at its beck and call to while away those long evenings which arrive with the fall. Before the advent of radio and T.V., how did the population survive those evenings when no local dance or sports event offered? Few rural areas in the Kootenays had electric service before the 1930s, so after a couple of hours of reading, cribbage, or crokinole under the kerosene or gas mantle lamp, it was early to bed and early to rise in the country...In urban centres, however, the theatre provided a casual evening's entertainment."[72]

Entertainment tastes by the 1920s were changing and Affleck observes, "the touring companies offering plays, concerts or operetta, a prominent feature of pre-World War I years, had dwindled sadly, although the old Opera House on the southeast corner of Ward & Victoria Streets in Nelson still scheduled an occasional offering of...amateur groups, not only in Nelson, Trail and Rossland, but a1so in smaller centres such as Kaslo and Nakusp, continued to provide the odd evening's entertainment. For the most part, however, going to the theatre in the 1920s meant going to a silent moving picture. Townspeople from all strata of society attended silent movies habitually, deriving there from about the same amount of uplift as is obtainable from the typical T.V. show of today. There were silent movie addicts who seldom failed to attend the two changes of billing per week offered by each movie house. Prominent among the Nelson movie addicts was a young David Scott, who later was to achieve local fame as a dramatist and historian. The silent movie serials, a Saturday matinee feature, drew the same faithful audience from among the young fry which the "'talkie' serials drew in succeeding decades."[73]

Affleck, in particular, recalls the cinema orchestra pit and the theatre pianist, whose piano provided the background music for the film. Such music was a silent film mainstay, one that has been captured in photographs and in the movies themselves. Affleck mentions that "The diminutive but dynamic Jessie Gairns, nee McIntosh, at age 87 still plays a wicked Chopin waltz on her baby grand piano in her retirement home in Sechelt, B. C. In the 1920s her afternoons were spent teaching piano pupils in her studio above Margison's drug store in Trail, while for four hours each evening except Sunday she presided at the piano at 1320 Cedar Street, home of the Liberty Theatre."[74] Affleck provides an interesting quote: "'The successful cinema pianist had to have the reaction time of an auto-car racer plus an infinite talent for improvisation,' Mrs. Gairns recalls." She adds, "We were given no opportunity to preview each movie. Instead we were provided with a 'score sheet' which indicated that' in the forthcoming movie

sequence there would be, say, a storm scene, then a love scene followed by a'rilway locomotive bearing down on'the heroine lashed to the track etc. etc. An album of music, indexed by subject, e.g. 'storm' or 'Indians' was provided, but Heaven help the pianist who got embroiled in this album, as by the time she could flip over to the appropriate page of music, the scene on the screen .would have long passed her by. Improvisation was the name of the' game, although after the first 2-hour showing in the evening, I was usually able during the intermission to make a rapid selection from my own stock of music to play during the repetition of the film in the second two hours. My reputation was made early in the game when I succeeded in matching a filmed ballet sequence with a perfectly timed Strauss waltz."[75]

Gairns mentions that the job had its lighter moments, although it might be perceived as dark comedy and recalls the film the *Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney: "It was not a good move for the pianist to become too wrapped up in the plot of the film being projected on the screen... I had a series of nightmares after Lon Chaney's grossly disfigured face loomed up on the screen above me, and during the screening it was hard to retain the detachment necessary to play the piano."[76]

But perhaps it is best to hear what the locals had to say about the impact of the cinema in their community. Alan Ramsden remembers the impact of movies and the cinema in the seemingly pastoral community of Nelson. Alan worked at the local radio station for a time and also managed the Civic Centre. He recalls, "We had two theatres. The Capitol Theatre, which still exists, though the entrance is not the same. The entrance is on Victoria Street. But the theatre, the building itself, and the seats and everything are still there. It was built in 1927 and was operated by Famous Players. Built by a local entrepreneur named Green. Famous Players took on the franchise. When they built the Civic Centre, which was our big community complex, part of it was a theatre. The idea of the theatre was that it would be a combination of a movie theatre and a live theatre. So the building was a complicated thing designed by architects in Vancouver. It had a huge backstage, but for some reason, the front stage, to us local hicks, looked very big. When the National Ballet Company came here they were really disappointed. It had a big backstage."[77]

While perhaps not up to acceptable standards for ballet performances, Alan observed that the place "made a good movie showing place. The acoustics were excellent. Not quite as good as the Capitol Theatre. People said it had really good acoustics. I went to both of them. After they tried to run it locally, they finally decided to let Famous Players. Odeon Theatres, which were operating in Trail, along with Famous Players. There were two theatres in Trail. One was an Odeon, which was a franchise just like Famous Players. In Nelson the Famous Players made a deal. 'We'll operate both theatres.' So as a kid we always went to the Capitol because there was no other choice. The Capitol always had Saturday matinees. Every kid in town—that's where they went on a Saturday afternoon—the Capitol Theatre. Eventually the Civic had much more modern facilities and stuff."[78]

Promotion, as we have seen, has always been crucial to sustaining a viable cinema trade and Alan observes that the region was no different from other communities in that regard: "They did all those promotional things. For example, Wednesday night was china night. They would have a draw and you could win a set of china or a year's theatre tickets. They had all those sort of things. My wife's grandmother

used to go to that theatre every night and it got to the point that Mr. Hughes, who was the manager, and always was the manager, he finally wouldn't let anyone sit in the seat in one corner. It had a small balcony sort of thing. When you walked in the theatre you came up a grade to get up to this part and then the main section, the big section and the two side sections, were down there. There was a similar but smaller higher section. She always sat in there. He would not let anybody else but her. Every time the show changed she was there. She would never miss. He knew that he had a customer that was really advertising for him, literally, because she was there for every show."[79]

The Nelson cinemas had there own pecking order as well. Alan notes, "What happened was that they ran a lot of second rate stuff at the Capitol Theatre in order to keep it open. A lot of B-type movies. All the better stuff was shown at the Civic. The Civic would change its show—there would be a show on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. There would be another show on Thursday and Friday. Sometimes a special on Saturday. It had two or three changes, whereas the Capitol, quite often, would change it every night. That is they would have two shows, two B-movies. One of them would be different. Maybe the more popular one would be the same, so every night there would be a.... The Saturday matinee was always aimed at kids. There would be a western or something like that. Errol Flynn swashbuckler or that kind of thing. Always on Saturday afternoons for the kids."[80]

In some ways the Nelson theatres have served as a sort of "time capsule" for Alan—for others, perhaps, a sort of film history lesson, or cinematic "right of passage." Alan remembers the film *The Jazz Singer* (1927) with Al Jolson, noting, "I couldn't believe it because he sang not only *My Mammy*, but *Sonny Boy*. My father, who at one time had taken part in some sort of theatre stuff in England. You know how males played girl parts in *Penzance*? He knew every word, every line. Everything around that song. *I'm Called Little Buttercup*. I'm sure that's what he played. Then of course at home we always had phonograph records. I grew up with a very eclectic taste in records. We had superb Columbia records and Victor Red Seal records. Classics. I can still remember being sat down to listen to Largo and the classic classics. Things like *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, which the Lone Ranger snaffled for his music. Strange things like Bing Crosby singing *Wagon Wheels*. Eddie Cathurst singing his famous old songs. I remember seeing, but never hearing them because people in the neighbourhood...across the street from us for a while, they had a whole raft of Edison cylinder records. And a player."[81] Movies, music, and the cinema, it seems, were playing key roles in a person's socialization experiences.

The notion of socialization here is important because it is a link from one generation to the next and Nelson was committed to keeping this cinematic legacy alive: "In the early 1950s, before television became commonplace, there was a regional National Film Board office in the old Nelson post office (now City Hall)."[82] Films were promoted by a group of local enthusiasts which included Alan Ramsden (now president of the Kootenà'L Museum Association and Historical Society), longtime photographer Art Stevens, and retired postman Bill Leahy. According to Ramsden, "We constructed a big covered screen down at Lakeside Park and showed 16mm films there every Sunday night (Stevens was projectionist). In the winter we showed children's films at the Nelson Junior High School (Trafalgar). We never charged much—maybe fifty cents. After the NFB office moved from Nelson in the late 1960s, the films went to Selkirk College and the screens and projectors were rented out of a cupboard in an office at the Civic

Centre. Eventually, the equipment was donated to local schools."[83]

In these various British Columbia communities it wasn't so much that the cinema was the only show in town, it was, for many, that the movie-house became the contemporary equivalent of CNN and the Internet all rolled into one—that weekly visit to the cinema not only became a window to the outside world, it was also where you stole a kiss, were transported to other places real or imagined—it was for its occupants as Susan Sontag had suggested earlier, indeed "the book of art and the book of life."

The idea of a "window to the outside world" had very literal overtones for people living in more isolated communities. A religious mission group at the turn of the century saw as its mandate the need to serve the more isolated fishing and logging areas along the British Columbia southern coast: "The Columbia Coast Mission was founded in 1904 through the efforts of the Rev. John Antle, its first Superintendent by the Diocese of British Columbia and the Diocese of New Westminster....The Mission, with administrative headquarters in Victoria, B.C., was responsible for a geographic area straddling the boundaries of the Diocese of British Columbia and Diocese of New Westminster in the region of northern Vancouver Island, the adjacent islands and the mainland. Its mandate was to serve the needs of logging and native Indian communities on the coasts of Vancouver Island and the mainland, as well as to provide spiritual services. To fulfill its mandate the Mission operated ships, hospitals, old people homes, churches and planes. The social aspect of the ministry dominated under John Antle transforming gradually to become totally spiritual in 1981."[84]

Vessels supplied a variety of items and services: "One was a modern hospital with an operating room and up-to-date surgical equipment. The lounge included a stove, movie picture machine, radio, library, altar and organ; a wireless telephone allowed it to receive distress calls...The fleet of Mission ships and network of hospitals in Alert Bay, Rock Bay and Pender Harbour cost about $64,000 a year in 1931 to operate. Medical services were performed whether patients could pay or not, and during the Great Depression most people had little if any money to spare."[85] That movie projector, for many, became that window to the outside world.

Back on the Island, the war years also brought interesting cinema connections: "In November, 1939, Western Air Command moved to Victoria to allow closer liaison with Military District No.11 and in September, 1939, the Royal Canadian Navy at Esquimalt. No. 111 Coast Artillery Co-operation (C.A.C.) was mobilized with Avro 626 aircraft."[86] The Island had become a very active location during the war: "In its early days, the Patricia Bay facility was the third largest station in Canada. Approximately 10,000 military personnel passed through Pat Bay, and at any one time, 3500 could be enrolled in the operational training programs. Pat Bay was also a base for coastal patrol aircraft and fighter squadrons. This role was particularly important to the defense of both the US and Canada after Pearl Harbour."[87] Service personal, like most citizens were apt to spend some of their time at the movies. Surprisingly, the Island became a venue for movie production: "In 1944 the Royal Canadian Air Force West camp was the location for scenes shot for the movie *Son of Lassie*. The movie stared Peter Lawford and June Lockhart of *Lost in Space* fame. Peter Lawford played the role of an air force pilot who, with his stowaway dog, Lassie, is shot down over enemy territory. Of course Lassie is key to their escape."[88]

Such cinematic anecdotes, whether historical or contemporary, have in many ways conjured up images of the smaller community or city cinema. The town square in *Back to the Future* (1984) and the run-down theatre in *The Last Picture Show* (1971) have provided us with visual metaphors for the manner in which we view the community cinema.

Susan Sontag's grief on the demise of the local cinema as an important socializing tool can be mirrored in the image of an almost empty theatre in *The Last Picture Show*. For many of us, the memories of our movie-going experiences lie between those two images.

Such establishments have now been farmed out or relocated to other parts of the town, brought about because community priorities have been changed or altered. The neighborhood shopping mall replaced the city centre as a major community destination point and the modern Cineplex would play a major role in that cultural transformation. Across the street from the mall was the video store which was indirectly responsible for the multi-cinema evolution.

Changes in urban planning philosophy were probably the root cause of the developments that were influencing cinema-going—with the Cineplex perhaps being the major villain. By the early 1980s, families were just as happy to stay at home and rent a video as venture down to the local cinema. To offset this reduction in film attendance, the Cineplex concept would allow movie distributors to flood the market with feature films. For cinema-goers from an earlier generation it would be a shock to their cinema sensibilities. For upcoming generations it would be the only cinematic temple they would know.

Courtenay, B. C., can relate to such passings. The Palace Theatre came to terms with its own mortality on a quiet Sunday in April, 2008. The art-deco film house which had served the region since 1939 fell victim to what some observers might argue is the regional mall syndrome.

But the reality is that after almost 65-plus years serving the community, its location had become geographically and culturally irrelevant. Writing in the *Comox Valley Record* on April 21, 2008, Erin Halushak observes, "Originally named the E. W. Bickle Theatre after its founder, the local entrepreneur opened the theatre during the Second World War at a time where personnel of all three armed forces trained in the area." Bickle also saw his theatre as a useful propaganda venue and according to Haluschak, "to show support for both the war and his hero, Bickle had a photo of Winston Churchill installed atop the theatre marquee."[89]

Theatre-goers who attended the opening of the 500-seat cinema in 1940 at a price of 50 cents each were treated to Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable in *Boomtown* (1940), a rather aptly named title considering the Valley's influx of military recruits during the war years.[90] The Palace over time served its public well but the cinematic torch in the Comox Valley, like in so many other communities, moved on to be rekindled in a popular culture defined by its own cinema-going experiences, one far removed from a time when the Capitol was the only show in town.

Such notions are best summed up in the words of Joan McNamee: "Gratefully, 'movies' will always be with us, but the grandness of those beautiful theatres has slipped away with few remnants of their nostalgic edifices left to enjoy. Replaced by the aesthetically banal, multi complex theatre, packaged for

efficiency and profit, the theatres are now frequently located away from the city epicenter in malls of convenience, as an aside, in case you feel the need to escape the mundane consumer dragnet. It is difficult to argue that our communities are not diminished by this type of decentralization. Beautiful theatres like beautiful cathedrals leave us in awe of their grandeur, swept away by an elevated sense of human dignity and human enterprise."[91]

Photo #991.138.1, the E.W. Theatre, Courtenay, B.C. 1945. Reproduced Courtesy of the Courtenay and District Museum.

> Courtenay's E.W. Theatre opened on the main street in 1940. The theatre was named after local communications mogul E.W. Bickle who owned movie theatres, newspapers and a publishing company on Vancouver Island. Further adding to his sway over public opinion, Bickle placed a cut-out image of Winston Churchill atop the theatre marquee along with the quote "Give us the tools and we'll finish the job"—a call to support the war effort. The building was damaged by fire July 4, 2007, and demolished April 20, 2008.
>
> - the Courtenay and District Museum

In Victoria, the Oak Bay Theatre rekindled similar memories. Jean Sparks's earliest memories are of the Oak Bay cinema: "The original theatre was built in I think 1913 or something like that. Originally it was called the Avenue Theatre. The street car came out that far so people could get right off the street car and go to the theatre. They had vaudeville shows and silent films and so on there...You could have pictured it in the early days—it had green marble around the ticket booth and it had a fancy, wonderful chandelier hanging in the archway and so on....Again, it was a centre that would have drawn people not only from Oak Bay, but from the city. But then of course the city had other theatres and I think it was just maybe a bit too far out of town to flourish. The people of Oak Bay couldn't support it on its own. That's why it closed."[92]

Victoria's Britishness and so-called quaintness resonated with Ken Lane's love affair with the

cinema. Ken recalls, "I grew up in Oak Bay, which is separate from Victoria. There was Oak Bay Avenue which is sort of commercial centre there and it had a movie theatre called the Oak Bay Theatre. It was a non-chain. Oak Bay was much more British. It was very British. It ran lots of British movies. The first things you think of are those *Carry On* movies. The schedule in the movie window had the logo of the theatre. It was the Oak Bay Theatre so it had the Oak Bay symbol as an oak tree. It said, 'Temple of Refined Culture and Entertainment.'"[93]

Those memories of an earlier era in Victoria seem to be in marked contrast to a more contemporary cinematic culture in the British Columbia interior where older movie-goers seem to be in revolt against the modern Cineplex. Barb Hartley, like many other Vernon cinephiles, pays homage to Gerry and the Towne Cinema. Whether it has to do with cinematic nostalgia or it is generational thing, that cinema has forged a bond with the community—it has come to represent everything that the modern Cineplex is not: "I boycott the Cineplex. I support the Towne Cinema. I think that Gerry has done so much supporting the Film Society and of course the Film Society has made him lots of money. I don't know that he would have kept afloat if he had not, but he was very welcoming to them and they had not been treated very well at the Cineplex. I know, I was working over there one weekend when we were having a Festival. We were using several of their theatres and they got the movies mixed up and we asked them to please rearrange them and they said, 'No, it's an automatic machine and once we load the machines in the morning, that's how you get it.' The Film Society said, 'But you can't tell somebody who's come for a show at two o'clock that you made a mistake and it's been loaded into the machine the wrong way and it won't be showing until five.' The Towne Theatre has, like I said, always been much more obliging. Film Festivals and things go on there that tie the theatre up for days. He just, like I say, is very obliging and I see that for the sake of film."[94]

In the end, Barb's affinity for cinema in the so-called valley (Salmon Arm to Penticton) has created a sense of community. Barb mentions, "I can quite often persuade my husband to go, but I also have friends. I have two English girlfriends so they sometimes persuade me to go say up to Salmon Arm to see a movie or down to Kelowna, which I might not have thought about going. They know that that would be within my interest line. If it's going to be Shakespearean or something like that or if it's a travel. Another venue. So it's that that I often do. We carpool to go to Salmon Arm and when we go to Salmon Arm it's always the Salmon Arm Film Society offerings…If we go to Salmon Arm. Because we are all pensioners now, we have that reckless pension to throw around. We go up to Salmon Arm and have dinner and go to the show. We also go to their Film Festivals. On occasion we've actually even stayed overnight. If there was a movie we wanted to see late in the evening and then there was another one say at eleven o'clock Sunday morning that we were interested in, then we would do that."[95]

Terri Haggerty of Kamloops echoes fellow Kamloopsian Brian Mitchell's notion that films forge an emotional attachment with audiences: "Generally, it's the being entertained thing, but I love movies that have a story of hope or gives me that feeling that. I like the good cry movies. I went to *Schindler's List* and I cried for a week. I needed counseling after that movie, but I loved it because its history and it gave me knowledge. I like that, but I just found that devastating. I could just stay at home and watch the news and it would have the same—the news does that to me. But movies that give me that…there's still all this

good in the world. *I Am Legend* was a perfect example. I really loved that. Just the whole story around it."[96]

Many older cinema goers deplore the sterile atmosphere of mall multiplexes. They are in sharp contrast to the older cinemas built in the 30s and 40s. Those theatres had a life force of their own—smoke drifting down from the lodge above, filtering the projection light on its way to the screen. Smoke, haze, the smell of popcorn all contributed to your clothes hitting mother's wash because of the acrid smell. How many of the younger film audiences remember the square window at the back of the cinema? Gerry Sellars recalls, "I do remember many times the projectionist would have a problem of some sort and the movie would stop and everybody would whistle and stomp their feet because they were wooden floors and you could stomp your feet. It was boom, boom, boom. Yelling and screaming and such. The usher would be, 'One moment please,' and usually it was a situation where—in those days it was carbon-arc houses so you had a change over every twenty minutes. Which means that every twenty minutes, the projectionist in the booth was changing from one projector to the second one and back. If it was five films you had usually three changeovers. So to do a changeover he had two projectors, two outhouses and you would have to ignite one lamphouse."[97]

The local movie house it seems molded cinema-related rituals both inside and outside of the theatre. It might have been in the after-movie banter or the seat location you preferred in the cinema. They would be recollections that would stick with you throughout your life.

CHAPTER TWO

Cinema and Me

How many of us have used movies as a cinematic print or reference point for our personal histories? For some of us seeing *Star Wars* (1977) for the first time came the realization that films from a technical perspective would never be the same again. Others might have watched a film that changed their future: *Indiana Jones* (1982) might have got some people thinking about anthropology or archaeology as a career choice, and for those of us who can remember serials at the neighbourhood theatres on Saturday it was Flash Gordon versus Ming the Merciless.

On January 12, 1941, Mabel Beckman of South Branch, New Jersey, wrote to Cecil B. DeMille about his recently released film *Northwest Mounted Police* (1940), noting, "What a great opportunity you producers have to teach our young Americans the great fundamentals of clean living, truth, purity, and love. Your influence is greater than schools and homes."[98] Beckman's comments, while reflecting the social conservatism of the period, were also making a statement about the power of the cinema as an agent of socialization. As were many Americans of the period, Mabel Beckman probably visited the local movie houses on a regular basis.The process of socialization is one of the major cultural mechanisms that provide us with an overall value network throughout life. In a very broad sense it involves the interplay of historic and contemporary social factors that serve as life signposts, markers that might have been rooted in education, work, even in geographical orientations that might have influenced what we call a sense of place.

A question that you might ask, therefore, is how does such a term connect with cinema-going behaviour? Earlier I suggested that the cinema, for many of us, served quite literally as a cultural and geographical "cinematic take or cut"—our memories and experiences that were connected to going to the movies enabled us to easily recall specific moments in our personal histories. Beth Shervy observes that the pulse of a community builds along a socializing continuum: "The complexities of small-town life evolve over years and, in some cases generations of interaction with the same people in the same locations for the same reasons...almost to the point of ritual...The geography of an area also plays a role. People

interact with the surrounding landscapes as they do with neighbours. Residents of an area develop similar intimacies with streetscapes, curves in roads, even in bumps and sounds of railway crossings. Such habitual contact with people and landscape orders residents' lives and creates and reinforces one's sense of place (23)."[99]

Growing up in small town Calgary, Joan McNamee succumbed to such ritualistic notions: "Our lives can easily become part of something larger than ourselves when we go to the movies, a condition that transcends space, and moves us closer to what community really means. We come to recognize our own lives in the context of an "other. But the grandness of the old theatre buildings will always be my way of remembering how magical the movies really are. They continue to challenge my imagination and can move me to make connections with individuals whose lives may be far removed and different from my own. Not a bad kind of neighborhood to live in."[100]

Kamloops's Barb Kelly remembers her youth in Portsmouth England, memories that are chock-full of socializing experiences: "The Carleton is the theatre that I remember." According to Barb, "it was very ornate...there was an organ pit and usherettes with flashlights that escorted you to your seats." Another strong memory was talking about movies: "We walked everywhere, even when we rode our bikes. It was really a diversion so we could walk and talk with the boys—usually about the films. Bette Davis and Errol Flynn were my favourite actors—Davis was so dramatic and Flynn...well, he was so debonair—and that wicked grin! I can still remember the smells of the fish and chips shop around the corner from the Movie house—we called them 'chis and fips.'"[101]

Barb's infatuation with Mr. Flynn has an interesting British Columbia connection, albeit a sad one. The handsome Australian actor, best know for his role as the dashing outlaw of Sherwood Forest in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) passed away in Vancouver in 1959 at the age of 50, although some have suggested that because of his addiction to alcohol and drugs he looked closer to 60. A keen sailor (in his earlier days he spent a great deal of time on his yacht the *Cirrocco*), Flynn was in Vancouver to close a boat sale. Vancouver filmmaker Patrick Stalk recalls Flynn's death: "Flynn came to Vancouver in 1959 to sell his yacht to a local millionaire, George Caldough. He was accompanied by a 17-year-old girlfriend, called his 'protégé' in polite circles. Flynn's No. 1 priority, however, was having a good time, and during the week that he partied in Vancouver, he never got around to selling the boat. On the way to the airport, he wasn't feeling well—his back was giving him excruciating pain. The doctor treating Errol decided to invite his friends over...and the rest of the night Errol was regaling the folks with tales of Hollywood's golden age, but still not feeling well."[102] Stark adds, "Errol has to go to the bedroom to lie down and never wakes up—dies of a massive heart attack on the floor of an apartment in the west end."[103]

A postscript to Flynn's career is that while many saw him purely as a Hollywood heartthrob, many critics have claimed that behind those devilish good looks there was a very fine actor. One only has to see Flynn in *The Dawn Patrol* (1937) to recognize this fact.

Flynn's reruns were shown well into the fifties and many were second features at neighbourhood theatres and drive inns. The drive-in or "passion pit" was a popular cinematic destination in mid-twentieth century North America, a much more relaxed cinematic venue than the more formal British

establishments. Barb Hartley of Kelowna recalls, "Well it was much more informal and we'd all been playing tennis. We were all hot and sweaty sort of thing. We were all at the exactly same level. We'd pile in a car and it was such a social thing to do. When we'd go to the Kelowna Theatre, it had to be a very thought-out process. I had to catch the bus. I had to make sure I had enough money and that it was a show that would be of interest to me. I think lots of times we went to the drive-ins and it was more for the social event than necessarily the film."[104] Social might be putting it mildly! Barb recalls the seating arrangements at the drive-in might have been an issue: "I had a boyfriend who had a rumble seat and it always made me cranky because we would take other people, but because I was the girlfriend, I was expected to sit in the front. I couldn't sit in the rumble seat and that's where I really wanted to watch the movie from. Crazy."[105]

Barb also makes a point that that the attraction of movies "way-back-when" is not that much different from the current *People Magazine* adulation of celebrities: "I remember Doris Day and Rock Hudson. You talk about the cult of a celebrity nowadays, I think there was a couple of movie celebs even in those days. We all knew how to get addresses out of magazines to write to movie stars and have, supposedly, autographed photographs coming in the mail to us. I'd forgotten about that. Oh yes, I had a collection of various…yes it was movie celebs. It was like trading hockey cards I guess is for some kids nowadays. And those were 11x17 inch photographs. I certainly had Rock Hudson."[106]

But more than just the cinemas themselves—it was what the cinema and films engendered outside of the movie-houses. Barb Kelly mentions, "I don't know what we would have done without film because the next day my friends and I, on our way to school, we took our bicycles, we never rode. We just pushed our bicycles until all the boys would come over and say, 'Shall I push your bike for you?' and we would say, 'No,' but we would talk about the films. 'Did you see Bette Davis?' We'd discuss it all the way to school and then of course the trailers would tell you what the new films would be coming up in that particular cinema and we would say, 'Well I'm going to go and see so and so and so and so. Let's go next Saturday.' So we'd have something to look forward to."[107]

Barb's memories about going to the cinema were also about "star-watching." Ask any patron why they were there on any given night and they would say—"Bette Davis" or "Robert Donat" or "Vivien Leigh." The screen stars were the drawing cards, and it was the swashbuckling demeanour of an Errol Flynn that packed them in.

Barb Hartley, discussing cinema starlets of an earlier age, observes: "Olivia De Havilland. I remember Ingrid Bergman as being a star that we particularly enjoyed. I would really have to sit down and think about who those actors were. The movies that I enjoy now are often movies that I came to later like *Casablanca* and things like that."[108]

Marg Archibald of Kamloops recalls that one of her favourite films was a 1950s film that some cinephiles call a "weepie": "I remember seeing Carey Grant and Debra Kerr in *An Affair to Remember* and I cried for days over that. Yet somehow it seemed quite wonderful. It was like participating in it all."[109]

For Robin Ladrew a movie legend ignited his imagination—and it was, indeed magical: "Actually I think I can almost pinpoint my first movie memory, which was being taken to see a Disney movie by

my dad. I think it was *Bambi*. I'm pretty sure it was *Bambi*. It was pretty vivid. My dad took me to quite a few movies when I was a kid. I mean quite a few. I can remember several. *Peter and the Wolf*, stuff like that. It made big impressions on me."[110] Robin notes that these Disney films had an influence beyond the cinemas themselves: "I can remember, for example, quite vividly because we took photographs of it that have reminded me afterwards of staging a backyard play of *Sleeping Beauty* based on having gone to see *Sleeping Beauty*, the movie. My sister was the Princess and the Sleeping Beauty and another neighbour, we found the high gumboots for her, and she got to be the prince. I was the fat fairy. I remember doing this leap off the stairs at the front of the house pretending I was flying and stuff like that. We had somebody dressed up as the Wicked Witch. But it was inspired by that. The taking of the pictures of it was kind of unusual because that's the only taking pictures of a performance or something that we actually created that I have as a child."[111]

For others, movies became a "life altering experience." Merri Armstrong of Vernon remembers growing up in Toronto and her first experiences with moving pictures: "I think the first time I ever saw a movie I was about four or five. It wasn't in a theatre. It was at a person's home who was involved in the movie industry in some way. They had a copy of *101 Dalmatians*. We saw it on a screen with a projector at a birthday party. That was the first movie I ever saw and it blew my mind. Then I didn't go again for quite some time, I think until I was about twelve. Then I saw *How the West Was Won* and then I was hooked."[112]

How The West Was Won (1962) was a big budget western and it introduced film audiences to wide screen Cinerama. Cinerama involved splicing together three film strips for wide screen effect (four film strips: three for the images, and one for the soundtrack).

According to Merri, "In the theatre…It was believable. So I've been going to movies ever since."[113] She adds, "It was just so massive. It was such a mind-blowing thing because it was a huge screen. It wasn't one of those small screens that we have now. It was just so encompassing. I don't even like westerns now, but in the day it was just like…Jimmy Stewart on the screen. It was in colour or Technicolor or whatever it was. It was just so overwhelming. It was such a big deal to go, too. That was the other thing. It was like, 'Oh my god, I'm going to a theatre.'"[114]

It remains a vivid memory for another reason as well. As Merri recollects, "I think in the fifties, early sixties, at least for me, I came from a large family and it was expensive. We didn't do things like that. It was a real special event. It just added to the whole excitement of the whole thing."[115]

In a contemporary cinema culture where digitally created special effects take movie audiences to the stars and beyond, and which somehow almost trivialize a space-shuttle's journey around the earth, earlier generations saw the movies themselves as the ultimate technological experience—as if their special novels and historical tomes were coming to life on the screen.

In spite of film being, as Brian Mitchell of Kamloops suggests, an intimate and spiritual experience, watching a film in a theatre is a wonderful communal experience—something that is in sharp contrast to "home entertainment centres." Brian explains, "I would infinitely rather watch a film with people. And there's another level of it actually. Again this is probably crazy, but because I'm watching it with a group

of people that a certain number of whom one knows and is part of a community. Even if you don't talk about it afterwards, there's some kind of certain thing going on here. Something that we've all shared."[116]

People may watch movies in a crowd, but it is also a double-edged sword—we also internalize and interpret what we see. Perhaps this notion is in conflict with the belief that we see things in absolutes—in black and white. Brian would like to see his film audiences get past that type of mindset which might serve to inhibit opinion or cinematic criticism: "I would really like to have the opportunity to go further with these things because...We put on our film festival, our film society—we have just recently over the last year—a forum so people could talk about the film afterwards and it's had no uptake at all. No uptake. I wrote a couple of articles for it initially but then I broke my hip and got out of the loop for a while. We'll see how it takes off again this year. I'd really like for people to be able to share their feelings or their understandings or their observations or whatever about these films."[117]

Barb Hartley makes the point that film-gazing stimulates the mind—keeps your mind sharp, and makes you think: "Well these women don't want to discuss it as much as I want to, but I have since found a neighbour here that I go to films with and he, he especially likes the psychological ones. We can really natter on and on about those. I really appreciate being able to do that. I belong to a book club and I want to be able to, if I belong to the Film Society, to actually discuss the films and their techniques and content and if it's based on a book I want to know how closely do you think they followed the book and if they didn't, was it to the detriment of the film or did it work just fine?"[118]

It seems as if an entire generation in some way or another had their lives regulated by movies—impersonating favourite stars, acting out the movie in their backyard after seeing the film, perhaps even more importantly, seeing films as a learning experience. Columbia University film historian Marc Carnes in his book *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (1995) muses that many of us indirectly learned our history from the silver screen. Kamloopsian Margaret Archibald, born in 1946, remembers, "Even when I was a little kid, with my parents, we went to movies a lot."[119] Margaret recalls a family conversation as if it were yesterday: "My father would just say at the dinner table, it was this big code. He'd say to my mother, 'What do you think about a flick tonight my love?' We weren't supposed to know what that meant and of course we'd say, 'Oh mom, what's a flick?' What followed of course would be a night at the flicks." According to Margaret, "We went mainly to westerns or...there were lots of British war movies at that time. It was British war movies if it was dad picking. If it was mom picking it was something with Grace Kelly in it or something like that. We saw a lot of westerns."[120]

In a roundabout way, Marg felt that going to the movies was never a waste of time socially or educationally: "Well, all my life I've known more about movies than lots of people did. I've known more about England during the war. I learned a lot about England. I don't know if that's what's made me love movies. I don't know. But I love movies."[121]

Kamloops's Barb Kelly still likes to catch an older film on Turner Classic Movies as it too provides a cinematic window to the past—a means of rekindling earlier visits to the cinema. Barb recalls her school visits to the movies, in particular, *Lorna Doone*: "The teachers then were having us writing essays about different films and things, and composition. So we would go and see *Lorna Doone*. I don't know if you've

heard of that one. It was a marvelous film. We all had to read the book first of course, and then we went to see the film. It was my first big film that I remember seeing and of course the old favourites were Herbert Marshall, Bette Davis, Douglas Fairbanks and people of that generation. It was wonderful acting because they all went to the acting schools then. The same as in theatre, they would travel around the provinces or cities in my town and do their preparation. They did that with the films too. It was really quite interesting."[122]

David Nordstrom of Salmon Arm remembers the local cinema vividly as a socializing influence. It is safe to say that in some ways it would help shape his social and political attitudes later in life. Reflecting on his formative years in Armstrong, B. C., David notes, "My earliest film memories date back to the late forties, at the Armstrong movie theatre, now waiting to be restored to its original function. As a seven- or eight-year old, I attended *Bambi*, and my mother had to take me out in tears when the stag was shot. My antipathy to Walt Disney productions perhaps dates from that time!" Disney, according to David, could not "measure up to what [he] imagined."[123]

Politically, the cinema exposed him to values that he found repugnant. The news clips of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1952 made a lasting impression: "I had the misfortune of sitting beside a strongly 'Orange' member of the community, who shared horror stories about nasty Catholics who continued to be a threat to the sanctity of the Queen and the Empire!"[124] Such notions, he mentioned, were at odds with his own societal beliefs: "So the early impact of film watching on me, was (I'm sure) unintended, it contrasted so strongly with my membership of a cooperative farming community that it established a lifelong resistance to the values and morals portrayed."[125] So much so, that it influenced how David would respond to films in general: "I avoided Westerns, and my group of immediate friends and I would laugh heartily at the few Elvis Presley productions that we sampled."[126]

Gerry Sellars of the Vernon Towne Cinema would be pleased with the comments that have been made so far by our cinema-goers. His experience as an entertainment manager mirrors the life experiences of people like Barb Kelly and others—and his view of film's socializing influences came on a daily and professional basis. Like so many others in this story, his connections to the cinema began in his formative years: "Well, my earliest movie memory would be probably *They Came From Mars*, which was a science fiction movie. I do have the lobby cards for it actually out there in the lobby. I was about four years old at the time and in those days I lived in Prince George. We lived outside of Prince George. We didn't have a car so pretty much once a week we would walk into town to the theatre, usually on a local Saturday night. That particular movie, I don't know what it was rated in those days, but my parents took me. I was about four, I was born in 1950, I can remember just cowering in the seats because these things were really scary to a kid that age."[127]

Like many other smaller communities, Prince George had one or two theatres that catered to the public. Gerry recollects: "In Prince George there were two theatres, the Strand and the Princess. The Princess was kind of the less fancy one and that was where most of the matinees where held. We would line up for blocks back in those days. We are talking 1956/1957/1958 and would line up for blocks, literally. In our crowd there was about eight or nine of us and we had one kid who was fairly small for his

age so we would give him our quarters and he would go down where the billing met the sidewalk and he'd ease his way along through the crowd and pop up near the front because they would always sell out."[128]

Although television had made major inroads into the movie industry by the late fifties and attendance at the cinema was in marked decline, Gerry remembers that Prince George had not succumbed to this malaise: "Prince George unfortunately didn't get television until about 1960 or so. Basically it was the movies that we thrived on. In those days people weren't worried about kids as far as what they viewed. There was violence. You saw cowboys shot and killed. You saw Indians shot and killed. You saw people drown. I remember one guy, Errol Flynn drowning in quicksand. Slowly, one hand threw up. That was it. *Tarzan*. All sorts of things. It's just the way it was and it was totally accepted because we weren't as pampered as they are today."[129]

Another cultural quirk of the period was that some communities had instituted curfews—"a happy community is a safe community." Gerry elaborates: "In Prince George in those days it was a ten o'clock curfew so that made going to the movies somewhat of an adventure because you had to go to the movie and then you had to get home before ten o'clock because at ten o'clock a siren went off and if you were under the age of sixteen, and you were on the street, the police picked you up and they took you down to the police station and your parents had to come and get you. It was a major thing if you were out past ten o'clock. You had to sneak home, hide behind telephone poles if a car came and things like that. It was a bit of work. You didn't have kids on the streets on their bikes and stuff until all hours like we do today. So I'm in favour of that."[130]

It wasn't long until Gerry got his first job in the business and it was theatre under the stars: "My first job was in the theatre industry. I was maybe about twelve and I got a job washing windshields at a drive-in theatre. At the Startime Drive In in Prince George. Once again, it was one of those jobs where they divided the yard. The drive-in theatre is called a yard if you are in the business. They divided the yard up into three sections. It was about a seven hundred car drive-in. It was a big one. Each kid had his own section and what you did is you went to each car. It was like your windshield washing. This was a non-paid position by the owner of the theatre. The way it worked was you worked on tips. So people would say, 'Ya okay,' and then you'd wash their window. In those days the only road that was paved was the highway and maybe the main street of town so everything was covered in dust all of the time. It was fairly lucrative to do that. I can remember at one point being called into the manager's office because I was doing the other kids' section as well. I did my section and then as quickly as possible started on another section. Stuff like that. Greed. That was my first job in the theatre industry."[131]

Gerry, like other movie-goers, has seen the impact of the multiplex theatres today, but in the fifties it was a different kind of movie house: "Keep in mind that in those days, in the fifties, sixties and seventies, you didn't have multiplexes. Usually they were a theatre very much like this. This one is actually a little grander than the ones I remember as a kid. Usually the lobby was very small, the concession would be hardly bigger than this desk. It was pretty basic. Usually wooden floors in those days. A curtain across, no doors. They would draw a curtain across. One thing I do remember vividly, at least my impression as a kid attending matinees in Prince George, was that if a theatre sat seven hundred kids, they would sell eight

hundred tickets. Then the slightest thing you did wrong they would throw you out. If you ran around, if you threw anything and the usher caught you, you were thrown into the street or into the alley, depending on which door was closest. In those days you didn't go home and tell your parents because your parents would say, 'Well obviously you deserved it,' and off would come the belt and you'd get another. That's the way it was in those days. We didn't grow up to be axe murderers so it couldn't have been too bad for us. That was my impression—that they had sold out."[132]

As Barb Kelly mentioned earlier, love of film would remain with her all of her life. She immigrated to Canada after the war bringing her love of the cinema with her. The movie culture was different, more informal—people didn't seem to dress up. In fact, Barb said, "We went to the movies in pyjamas, of course meaning the drive-in theatre. When the children were younger...we usually packed them off in their bed clothes and we brought our own eats...When they were older we might treat ourselves to hamburgers and chips."[133] The pulse of movies and how they affect the community still resonate with her today. Barb laments the closing of North Kamloops's Skyway Theatre, a drive-in theatre that catered to "baby boomers" and the older crowd. A contemporary film culture more attuned to the internet and DVDs, she believes, contributed to its closure.

Kamloops's Joan McNamee grew up in Calgary in the late 1940s and '50s and her childhood memories also focused on going to the show. Of course, she did other things, but her weekends were for the movies. Calgary was small enough then that you could walk into town to the big theatres like the Grand, the Palace, and the Capitol or you could stay in your own neck-of-the-woods and patronize the Kinema, the Plaza, and the Tivoli. Joan remembers how grand the downtown movie palaces were and the spiritual hold that they held for her: "I went to the movies expecting to be transported to some other worldly place, past or present, where life was peopled by extraordinary characters and events, events that would be inevitably more exciting and interesting than my own, and I was never disappointed."[134]

For Joan, the movies and the cinema were sort of a parallel universe: "These grand buildings became one of the things I loved most about growing up during the post war years in the youthful, less self-conscious Calgary, Alberta. Attending the matinees on Saturday afternoons fueled a demanding, inexhaustible imagination and solidified my lifelong obsession and interest in movies, in their making, their message and why they mattered."[135]

Such experiences became part of her socializing process, so much so that the local theatre, in some respects replaced the school room as her lyceum. Joan elaborates: "With warm affection I recall the theatre where I watched my first moving picture. It was a dimly lit cavernous place, large and beautifully attired, intimidating yet compelling at the same time. Thick red carpets led up through a terraced entrance way with clusters of wide circular steps ending at an upper gathering lounge lavishly furnished with deep sofas and chairs, and dangling light fixtures that sparkled with intermittent light. Ornately carved walls and ceilings created a plush welcoming space to stop and catch your breath before entering the doors of the temple."[136]

Today, going to the theatre means getting there on time and finding your own seat. If you arrive

late and need to be seated—well, good luck—you are on your own. But it wasn't always like that. Joan recalls, "Guided to your seat by a flashlight carrying usher, the rows of comfortable chairs made a wide semi-circle around the front stage, each row from the stage back, a little higher than the one that preceded it, allowing for maximum viewing. Two wide aisles leading down to the stage separated the cluster of rows, dividing the temple into three unequal parts, the center area being the largest and most sought after location. I doubt I could recall with such detail, the first classroom I attended, or the school itself."[137]

Most of us today marvel at the ever-changing electronic technology—first it was movies on VHS, then DVDs, and now internet technology make films easily accessible in the palm of ones hand. Except for the "blockbuster" releases that occur on weekends and which usually attract a much younger cinema-going crowd, many people will wait to view movies at home or on the bus for that matter. Even the neighborhood video store is in danger of passing into history. But as Joan and others have indicated, there was a golden era way-back-when—a time when everyone went to and lived for the movies. Then, the cinema was a new source of technology, a cultural phenomenon that impacted a series of generations—serviceman taking their dates to the pictures, kids whooping it up at the Saturday matinee, and adults dressing up for an evening out. The connection between citizens and the cinema had seemingly created an almost a sacred bond.

Margaret Archibald also made an interesting observation about the cinema as it related to the community, one that perhaps speaks to changing movie cultures: "I spent one night out in Ashcroft. Ashcroft is a lovely, lovely little city, town, village, hamlet, whatever. But it doesn't have a movie theatre and I said to somebody, 'I would love to live here but I can't live where there isn't a movie theatre.' I'm not interested in videos. I'm not interested. I don't watch them."[138]

Like many others of an older generation "home entertainment centers" don't cut it. Margaret senses that the video culture of today lacks the magic of the cinema: "Films in a theatre truly remove you from your current experience. Wherever they take you depends on the film. Videos at home—the phone rings, you've got laundry that needs doing, and you may be watching with someone else who is going to... talk to you. As far as I'm concerned, it's a very shabby experience. It's really an unsatisfactory replacement for going to a movie."[139]

Eighty-four years young, Barbara Kelly of Kamloops puts it rather succinctly: "Movies were important to my quality of life and still are."[140] Barb lives in Kamloops's downtown core within easy walking distance of the local Paramount Theatre, and although a senior she still ventures out on the odd evening to catch a film. She picks up a coffee at the casino across the street from the Paramount, grabs a seat at the back of the theatre and settles into doing something that she has done all her life—enjoy a movie.

So young and old are finding seats at the movies. Older generations of movie-goers are almost whimsical about their movie experiences, and I guess that is to be expected, perhaps because those memories recall a sense of innocence—a period in lives unfettered by life's everyday problems and challenges. In some other ways it may speak to the type or better yet, the quality of films from an earlier era. It is easy to dismiss those older films because of the perceived stilted acting or the questionable lighting

as so many younger viewers are apt to do. But it would be difficult to argue about the creative genius of Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane* (1941), the noir influence of Billy Wilder's work with *Double Indemnity* (1944), or Carol Reed's underworld thriller, *The Third Man* (1949). Such recollections indicate that many of these movie memories have, in retrospect, become a sort of visual personal biography—that films seems to correspond with a particular moment or period in ones life. More so, these episodes seem to be key socialization points, events that would shape in some ways their attitudes towards movies and other forms of entertainment for the duration of peoples lives. It is easy to see why these older folks enjoyed their movie experiences. And for those younger audiences, well, their cinematic journey is just beginning.

ISSN 1918-4492

CHAPTER THREE

My Generation

Time has changed cinema-going tastes, it seems. Current audiences may seem somewhat more sophisticated in their film choices—but is that the case? Truthfully, audiences are products of the social and cultural influences or upheavals of their times and it would be a shame to compare them in absolute terms—each period and each generation provides us with special insights about the nature of the cinema and their audiences. If older generations recall watching films from another era with a sense of whimsy, it might be argued that our more modern audiences are perhaps responding to life as it is, rather than as it was. Their cinema-going experiences haven't yet become life's so-called signposts as they appear to be for some older generations—but they will! Contemporary audiences may appear to be more discriminating, but maybe it's because they have so much more to choose from their entertainment plate. Their cinematic palates, although fuller, may not be any more satisfying.

In the 1940s and '50s the popularity of the movie-house was measured by the waiting line-ups along the street. Outside the Capitol Theatre in Calgary long lines would cue in order to take in a first-run engagement—perhaps a DeMille epic or a popular musical. Invariably people chatted to pass the time, and as the demographics from the following photograph cue seem to indicate that patrons appeared to come from a variety of age groups, which is in sharp contrast to the younger "blockbuster"-driven crowds that make up contemporary audiences.

Barb Kelly remembers similar cinemas back in wartime England: "We lived about ten blocks away. Everybody walked everywhere in those days, or had a bicycle. Not many people had cars. It was a very ornate and beautiful cinema. Then, it was one of the up-to-date ones—plush carpets, people were allowed to smoke in the cinemas…There was a balcony and everything was very ornate with Christa lamps that looked like candles. The cinema we went to was called the Carlton. It was fairly new when we had moved there, to our house."[141] Barb's recollections bring to mind *Brief Encounter*, David Lean's 1945 film about a budding but illicit romance that had its beginnings at the cinema. As in Lean's story, which

featured an organist playing prior to the show, Barb remembers a similar experience: "At intermission the drummers would roll and from up out of the stage the organ would come and the organist would play. The usherettes would come around with trays around their neck with hot cups of tea and cookies. It was really fascinating, wonderful. Those were the days."[142]

Photo #NC-60-17, Line-up for movie at the Capitol Theatre, Calgary, Alberta. R. A. Bird, Photographer. Reproduced Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum & Archives.

Gail Saunders reminisces about growing up and going to the cinema in Port Alberni: "Well, in Port Alberni there used to be two theatres, both of them very, very old. Since I moved away from there they've converted one of them, the Capitol Theatre, into an actual theatre where they do small theatrical productions. Now when I go back there to visit I go into that one. It's got all the original seats and everything. I don't know when it was built. Maybe the 1930s?"[143] Gail perhaps senses that the city's residents have been spared the march of time: "The other one, the Paramount Theatre, that one was operating and still operates today. I have been back to it. I was back about three years ago when I was visiting there and it's exactly the same inside as it always was. Nothing modern in any way. That one probably would have maybe been built in the forties. You walk down steps to get into the lobby. There's a huge candy counter across the front. It's not a really elaborate theatre. It's got the original seats and everything."[144]

Gail remembers film stars such as Bette Davis, perhaps from *Now Voyager* (1942): "I really liked the old Bette Davis movies. I still watch some of those on television on Turner Classic Movies. The older ones. I like the plot lines in a lot of older movies. They were older even then and they are older now. Also the different culture that there was. What was acceptable in those days and what it looks like now when you look at them. I liked Fred Astaire movies. I still like Fred Astaire movies, dancing movies. Probably those two people kind of stand out for me. I've always liked them."[145]

Kamloopsian Joan Lyons recalls her cinema-going experiences in Salmon Arm during the war years and early fifties: "Margaret O' Brian was one of my favourite stars. I used to think I looked a lot like her and tried to grow pigtails but Hollywood never came knocking at my door!"[146] For people like Joan, going to the movies was a major part of their lives. The 1950s, according to Joan, "seemed like a golden age of movies, great variety and many stars that live on in our memories to this day."[147] And for Linda Perry of Vernon the movies were like a magical mystery tour "seeing people you'd never associate with. Places you've never been to. Situations you'd never be in. Especially in a small town, it takes you away just like a good book will take you away…Just getting a window into somebody else's life."[148]

Jean Sparks's thoughts, in some ways, serve as an introduction to Peggy Pasta's film memories, which in a manner of speaking serve as a bridge between the older and more contemporary film cultures. Growing up in Vancouver in the late 1940s and 1950s was a cinematic conditioning experience. She recalls, "Okay now this would be in the forties. So it was after the war because I was born in 1940 so I couldn't have been going to the movies myself up until I was seven or eight, when I went to the movies with my girlfriends and cousins. Sometimes they would add a little sing-a-long where you would follow the bouncing ball. You really did get a lot for your money you know. I think my mom used to give me a quarter and that covered the tram and the movie and the popcorn and all this kind of good stuff. It was quite good. The movies weren't as long then either. They were maybe an hour or an hour-and-a-half each. It was very entertaining, and of course you always tried to sit in the front row when you were little and if they had a scary thing on you just sat there and screamed your head off and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. I can remember going one time; I was a bit older, going to the *Bud Abbott Lou Costello Meet Frankenstein* or something like that. We just screamed. My girlfriend and I, we just started screaming and we never quit screaming the whole movie. I'm sure everybody else was maybe quite annoyed, but we had a good time."[149]

Peggy Pasta remembers that the community was different then—that Vancouver lacked that metropolitan culture, so it was easy and safe to get around. She remembers the cinemas not being close by: "We had to take the streetcar. When I think of it now, my daughter with her kids, they don't allow them to go anywhere without them. Me and my cousin or my girlfriend, we would just go on the streetcar all by ourselves. Go down to Commercial Drive, which is fairly busy street in Vancouver. Get our goodies and go, all by ourselves in Vancouver. Never thought anything of it. Nowadays you wouldn't dare do that."[150]

Although television was encroaching on the cinema's visual domain in the early fifties, going to the cinema still had its allure—much of which can be attributed to its seemingly mystical qualities. David Frampton, writing in *Filmosophy*, has observed, "Motion pictures are our thoughts made visible and

audible. They flow in a swift succession of images, precisely as our thoughts do, and their speed, with their flashbacks—like sudden up-rushes of memory—and their abrupt transition from one subject to another, approximates very closely the speed of our thinking."[151]

From Frampton's perspective, films might be seen as an extension of our very being, and it is not difficult to see them as not having an important impact in our lives. Movies and the cinema, as Barbara Kelly and others suggest, shaped their outlook toward life—they were a very meaningful socialization experience. Each generation, as time passes, of course, will cling to something that tends to be symbolic of that period. Surely, today's entertainment mediums as memories fifty years from now will be linked to blackberries and ipods, and they will probably seem as quaint to that futuristic generation as does the neighbourhood cinema to current movie-watchers.

Jean Sparks has vivid memories of her cinematic conditioning: "I think going to the movies was ten cents. I just remember having a coin in my hand and my mother dropping me off and doing her shopping while I went to the movies."[152] She adds that "It was packed every Saturday morning…Sometimes they had entertainment there…Clowns and puppets and that kind of thing. And then there was always a cartoon with a sing-along with the bouncing ball. Kids singing things like *You Are My Sunshine* and that kind of thing."[153]

Jean's western heroes also galloped across the screen later in the day with the likes of Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and the Cisco Kid: "I'm not quite sure exactly what time it (the matinee) started, but it was probably one o'clock. There might have been a morning one, I'm not sure."[154]

Maybe it had to do with old-fashioned values back in the 1950s era but Nigel Beatte recalls that his father worked at the theatre and that he spent a lot of time there with his dad. Nigel mentions that he had a soft spot for the candy counter, noting, "The most exciting thing that you could buy was the McIntosh Toffee. It would come in a package and then they would ask you if you would like it broken up or not. They would take a little silver hammer out and they would break it so it would be easier to eat when you were in the theatre…Eventually popcorn was added, but very reluctantly because of the mess that it made. Eventually orange soda was added. That was the only pop they ever had there."[155]

Nigel's father also seemed to manage the theatre as if were an extension of his home turf. Keeping the theatre clean between features was hard work, even more challenging at times was keeping the neighbourhood cinema quiet. Nigel recalls, "For the most part it was noisy. Those were the times where if you spoke in a movie you were thrown out. My father was known as the Hawk because he would stand at the back of the theatre. From the back of the theatre he could see anybody that spoke. If they spoke they were thrown out. One time one person didn't want to leave so the police came and threw him out, and that was for talking during the movie…It was a tough place."[156]

The other observation that our cinema-goers have made is that movie watching in the classical era was a classy affair. Barb Kelly notes, "My parents would go in the evening of course and they would always dress as if they were going to a theatre or opera. My mother would have a hat on. Quite different from today when people go in their jeans to be more comfortable. Yes it was quite an outing."[157] Barb adds that

her hometown of Portsmouth had other entertainment venues as well such as the opera house but it was the movie houses that attracted most of our attention: "Well when I was sixteen the war broke out, but we still had the cinema going and that was really our only outlet. We did have a few theatres in the part of the city that was difficult to get to. Often when you got halfway there the sirens would go and everything would come to a stand still...But the films were the really good things."[158]

Finding a seat was a much different experience as well. According to Barb,

> "Everybody could afford the films. And every seat was a different price. Up at the front it was very cheap. If you sat about ten or twelve rows back, they were more money. If you were way at the back, where the double seats were, that was quite expensive for us. It was like a shilling or something like that. If you went up on the balcony...it was called...not just the balcony. It had a nice name to it. You had to pay extra for that. All different then, but they were very lush."[159]

If patrons dressed differently for the cinema in those days it perhaps had something to do with the ambience of the theatre itself. Barb mentions that "Most of the cinemas had an attendant at the front. There were usually long steps, like four or five steps to go up to the beautiful big doors. And he was in an immaculate uniform. A commissionaire with a cap and gold aculeate and the gold buttons and white gloves. And he would stand there and open the doors and you had to queue to come into the cinema. It was only open a certain time. But everyone would queue to get the seat that they wanted or up in the balcony. Then you were allowed to go in and pay and then go in through the doors to find your seats. The usherette would meet you at the door with her flashlight—everything was dark—and the flashlight would show you the seat. This is your row, or whatever. It was really quite different from what we have today."[160]

Contrast such formal cinematic excursions with those of Barb Hartley in Kelowna in the 1950s: "I would have been in my teens and you had to catch the bus to go because I actually lived up in East Kelowna. It was whole afternoon adventure to go to the show."[161] There was also the issue of finances as she puts it: "It depended a bit on the money thing, if I had been babysitting. Because we lived out in the rural area, we had lots of other options. It wasn't like with the town kids—I'm sure that was more of their routine. It wasn't so much for us out in the rural area. But the other thing that I have to mention is the drive-in theatre...we would go to the local tennis court and play tennis on a hot summer evening and then as it was getting dusky we'd all pile in the car and go off to the drive-in theatre."[162]

Roz Burnell's interests in film began in Kelowna in the 1950s, and her cinematic socialization as with many others focused on movie classics including a certain witch: "[The] first movie I remember was the *Wizard of Oz*. I probably went with my mom and I got very scared at the Wicked Witch of the West... It must be the west because it's alliteration right? Wicked Witch of the West. I got really scared at that. In fact, I think I had nightmares and couldn't sleep and whatnot because I was really little. I think that was probably around 1950 or something like that."[163]

Those early years of movies put Roz on some pretty familiar ground: "There was the one and only theatre in Kelowna on Bernard." Stores in Kelowna would promote movies by providing cheap tickets: "If you shopped at certain stores they would give you tickets and it would be only a nickel or something to

go to the movies and they were usually westerns. *Hop Along Cassidy*, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers. And we'd meet our friends there. That was great."[203] Roz laments the passing of some certain traditions associated with those earlier film experiences: "Cartoons and we still miss those today. People of my age that went to the movies in those days always had cartoons and we had a newsreel…we'd get Donald Duck or Daffy Duck or Goofy and Roadrunner and Bugs Bunny…Then the main feature would come on. We don't get that anymore."[164]

Films such as *Westside Story* also appealed to Roz's cinematic instincts but she too, by the early seventies, began to succumb to the more seductive film festival fare. Film festivals, according to Roz, fostered a sense of community and interaction: "When I see them (festival patrons) the next day or two, I will always bring up, 'How did you like the film?' I will always bring it up and talk over whether we liked it, whether we didn't, what we liked about it, what we didn't. On and on and on it goes. I quite often tell my daughter when I email her or something so that she can maybe pick it up."[165]

The sixties saw a change in both movie-going behaviour and in the films themselves. The production code in Hollywood under the control of Joseph Breen had disappeared—riding shotgun on public morality didn't matter in the film industry anymore. The counter-culture of the sixties had indirectly influenced the film industry and by 1970 films had become an influential medium of change. Sex was no longer taboo on screen and movies were dealing with all sorts of social and political issues. In many ways, viewer tastes had changed as well. A shrinking world had made film the international language of entertainment, and international and local film festivals became part of community cultures. Coupled with the popularity of television, traditional film fare that had primarily been influenced by Hollywood had suddenly become more diverse.

How would these changes affect movie buffs? For one thing, baby-boomers and their children were seeing and reacting to films much differently. Interest in foreign and more avant-garde film-fare indicated a more sophisticated and varied film audience—an audience that was more educated, more tolerant of cinematic themes and newer genres.

Barb Hartley's affection for the cinema matured as well. Perhaps it was because of some time spent in Europe and the United Kingdom, but her cinematic interests became much more cosmopolitan: "I think if you live in Europe and you know about European things, even if I wasn't going all that often to movies, I was going to concerts or musical events. We weren't far from Liverpool and it was the days of the Beatles and was very much…"[166] Barb recounts an interesting episode: "In fact a funny story—one night my husband and I went to our local pub for a drink and were surprised at all the to-do. There was a young group of four young guys, very similar to the Beatles who were there. They took one look at my husband and I, and we were actually quite dressed up because this wasn't a pubby pub, it was an upper-end one on the front, which is the street in our town that faced onto the Irish Sea, so it's where the classier buildings were. Anyways, we heard later that these young guys looked at us, knew we were North American, picked that up, and wondered if we were scouts. They ended up playing to us for the whole evening on this sort of off-hand chance that maybe we were looking for young groups of four dudes playing original music. So we were doing a lot of that and movie-going wasn't really something that would have been singled out.

But it certainly was just part of cultural experience."[167]

Barb Hartley and Roz Burnell's cinematic experiences in the Southern Okanagan were mirrored, in some ways, by Margaret Collins in Kimberly, British Columbia. Margaret not only recalls the movies and cinemas themselves, but also her relationship with Canadian Actor Brent Carver of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* fame.

According to Margaret, her early cinematic memories were family affairs that eventually gave way to teenage independence: "it was mostly a family thing. When I got to be a teenager I went to the drive-in a few times. I had a curfew and it usually went past the time so movies were a thing that we generally did with families." Her early cinematic fare was what one might expect in a family setting and as she observed it was "Pretty tame stuff...I think the two that I went to at the drive-in were horror movies. I can't remember what they were, but they were horror movies."[168]

Margaret remembers that her early teen visits to the movies might be viewed as an adolescent "right of passage." She recalls, "I went as I was getting older when I was allowed to have a little bit of a later curfew. We went to the drive-in.... It was more just a group of kids hanging out. The only one I ever went to with a boyfriend was when I went with the boyfriend's family when I was quite young. I was only in grade eight then." And it was pretty reserved according to Margaret: "I can't remember what it was. We went out for dinner first and I can't even remember where the dinner was. I believe it was one of the burger joints or something. I had forgotten about the movie and date and everything, so all of the sudden these people showed up. I hadn't told my parents so we scrambled and for some reason, I don't know why, they never invited the family in. So here they were, sitting outside. It was the mom, the dad, a sister, an older brother, David, who was my date, and myself. We piled into the back. It was the mom, the dad, the daughter in the front and the two brothers and I in the back. We drove to Cranbrook, which was twenty-one miles away. I cannot remember the drive-in that we went to, but I remember we were sitting in the back seat and we had a little blanket. David was holding my hand under the blanket so it was quite romantic...We had to be careful because the parents were in the front seat and they were turning around and chatting all the time. It was very innocent."[169]

Margaret, like so many other movie watchers, had secret aspirations to meet their film idol, but unlike most—she did! It all happened rather innocently according to Margaret: "It was out at the lake. I think it was White Swan Lake. I'm not sure, but it was a summer camp and all of the kids were from as far away as Vancouver. I don't remember if there were any kids outside of B.C., but I was the only one from Kimberley. There were a few from Cranbrook. Brent Carver was one of them. I think he was from Cranbrook, but I'm not sure...Then there were a couple of other kids that I don't ever remember seeing anything happen with, except for Brent Carver. We had the summer school camp and they had a film crew come up from Vancouver who did a little blurb on us. I don't know whether it came on the news or whether it was done for a special because I never saw the actual filming. We were doing a production of Bye Bye Birdie. Of course Brent Carver was the star and I sang a little duet with him. It was a lot of fun because I played flute and there were other people. It was a whole musical kind of school, so there were some quartets, there was singing, there was acting. It was kind of fun. Brent is the only one that I that I

know of that went any further."[170]

This experience, according to Margaret, was almost like a dream coming true, because it made one believe in the theatrical fantasy of "what if." She recalls, "I don't think anybody even thought about whom was going anywhere. We were just having fun and he was the most talented as far as well-rounded. He seemed to get the top parts, but his personality and everything were such that everybody kind of enjoyed him. He was just a lot of fun. He was very friendly. He wasn't stuck up or thought…There were a couple of people there who thought—there was one little girl. I think her name was Louise. She was just a diva. She believed that she was going to be another Barbara Streisand. At that time they had little kerchiefs that were made with little flower petals that you tied around. She had one of almost every colour and she'd prance around and was quite upset when she didn't get the lead scene in the different productions. I don't ever remember hearing her go anywhere. Her attitude and Brent's attitude were completely different. He was just a sweetheart."[171] It is something that Margaret fondly remembers these many years later: "Anyways, it's interesting that someone who has touched your life for maybe two weeks out of your life is someone you go, 'Oh, hey.'"[172]

But movie tastes and experiences were also becoming more cosmopolitan and varied during this time. Brian Mitchell of Kamloops perhaps best illustrates the changing cinematic culture of the late '60s. A native of the Maritimes, Brian went to university in Halifax and indicates that in many ways his entertainment interests and values were a product of the period: "I went to university at one of the universities in Halifax…They had a film society showing 16mm films and I started going to see the likes of Gadar and so forth and so on and became infatuated with the medium. We would meet afterwards, after the films were shown and have a discussion. Of course, there's nothing like young enthusiasts of any description. I was young and enthusiastic and we all were. We were passionate…it was the sixties and there was all this stuff going on. It was just exciting, emotional, and thought-provoking."[173]

Looking back, Brian believes that those university experiences triggered his cinematic adventures, albeit that he had been hooked on movies at a much earlier age, especially the Westerns which he took in at the Saturday matinees.

Bruce Baugh of Kamloops perhaps best exemplifies a cinephile whose eclectic cinematic tastes were forged in the late sixties and early seventies. Bruce, now a university professor, grew up in Vancouver and mentions, "I started when I was very young. I would be very hard pressed to say which was the very first film I saw, but I think it was Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. The Wicked Fairy gave me nightmares. I think I was very young."[214] Bruce mentions that first exposure to the cinema was a family affair: "I'd go with family. I would go with my parents up until I was about twelve or thirteen years old."[174]

The changing cinematic culture of the sixties saw films being produced that 10 years before would have been off limits from a thematic perspective. Bruce remembers a number of these films might have shocked earlier generations of film-goers: "The first movie that I remember seeing without my parents, I went with a friend of mine and we had to have a note giving up permission because it was restricted, was *Bonnie and Clyde* and that was in 1967. That was the first really adult film that I'd seen."[175]

By the time Bruce reached university he was hooked: "I really started going to films frequently when I was in university. I'd go to films that were shown at the University of British Columbia. They had a film society and they would regularly show films, a lot of foreign films. That is where I saw *Last Tango in Paris*, for example. The *King of Hearts*, that's where I saw that. Then there were a number of repertory cinemas in Vancouver at the time. The first one being the *City Lights* over at the City Nights. It might have been City Nights actually, a play on *City Lights*. *City Lights* is a film by Chaplin. The theatre was down on Hastings Street in the downtown eastside. It's a little bit east of Gastown. It was a rough area, but not nearly as rough then as it is now."[176]

According to Bruce, the Gastown area was the place to go if you wanted to be fully exposed to a variety of films: "It was a great place to see all kinds of film. They would have Ingmar Bergman festivals. I saw Antonioni there, *Blow-Up, Superstizione*. Sometimes there were these really trashy films like the soft-porn erotica, *Emmanuelle*. It was very mixed...some more independent American films by Woody Allen. Woody Allen's early stuff—*Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask*, *Bananas*...films like that and old classics...Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*, Chaplin's *City Lights*. That was great. That was a great experience."[177]

Then June, 1977—a warm afternoon, perhaps in a cinema somewhere in Victoria, B.C.—the theatre darkens and the film credits appear on the screen..."A long time ago in a galaxy, far, far away."

Those words and those credits would influence how future generations would react to movies. Watching them, for many, would never be the same. Some would argue that digital technology would be the reason, but whatever the cause, a number of film historians would argue that *Star Wars* (1977) ushered in a new era in film watching and film making. If the classical Hollywood period provided older film-goers with wonderful cinematic memories—the seventies would be an initiation period for newer generations of film audiences.

As so many other movie-goers had commented in 1977, Robin Thornton was impressed: "Yes. I remember seeing the first one of those and just being blown away. I just thought it was the most amazing movie I'd ever seen in my entire life."[178] Robin added that it had everything: "The action and the excitement and the creativity. It was very creative."[179] That decade appeared to Robin to be somewhat of a cinematic renaissance: "I remember seeing *Gandhi*. I loved *Gandhi*, *Chariots of Fire*. I loved that movie. I've bought a lot of them."[180]

Up until now we seem to have categorized movie-going behaviour along generational lines but Robin's experiences seem to have broken that mould. Robin was born in Australia and to listen to her cinematic stories one might believe she invented the cinema, although her earlier years were not driven by movies: "I don't think I went to movies for quite a long time. I think there's a big, big gap there from when I was sixteen until, how old would I have been? I remember going in Lillooet. I lived in Lillooet from 1976 to 1980. And I was sixteen in 1945. So there's like a thirty-year gap in there.[181]

Robin recounts how a single movie impacted her love for movies—one that at first glance might seem to fit within her generation: "I went to university and I mainly went to plays. I sang in the choir and

sang in all these concerts. I was in Gilbert and Sullivan productions. So that sort of took over for movies. We hardly went to movies at all. I lived in California for two years. I don't think I went to a single movie there. Then we moved up into the country. I had children. I didn't ever go out anywhere. So it wasn't until I moved to Lillooet. I remember seeing a few movies there. It wasn't a regular thing."[182]

Then two films affected her, although from her perspective they had dramatically different affects: "I remember seeing the awful one where the alien came out of the guy's stomach. I felt so badly because I took my kids and they were young and they had nightmares for nights afterwards. I felt awful having taken them there. Then I remember going to Vancouver and seeing the ones with Luke Skywalker in them."[183]

Fast forward to the new millennium and Peggy Pasta and her husband still make a point of heading off to the theatre: "We usually go to the Towne Theatre because it's cheaper. As seniors we get in half price almost. We usually watch two movies for our four dollars, which is really good. Of course the popcorn costs us more than the movie does. We usually watch two. One time we watched three and I thought never again will I stay for three movies. I could hardly move when it was time to get up to go. We go about once every three months maybe. Something like that."[184]

Peggy mentions that going to a movie can still be a formal evening out such as having dinner at a restaurant—but like some (or should that be most Canadians) they end up at a national institution: "Usually, sometimes we'll stop for a coffee at Tim Horton's or something after. Generally we just go to the movie and go home…Usually it's quite late when it's over. In the summer it's nice because it's still light out when we get out. So we go home and we go for a walk when we get home because we've been sitting for four hours. That's about generally it."[185]

Small town movie watching in the summer seemed to reinforce another sense of ritual, and a meandering post-movie walk seemed to nicely fit the bill. Whether you lived in a small town or larger community, somehow those types of recollections served as anecdotal reminder of how much people enjoyed those visits to the movies.

IMAGE GALLERY

The Grove Theatre, Aldergrove, B.C. 1915. Reproduced Courtesy of the Alder Grove Heritage Society.

Otto and Johanna Kelm built the Aldergrove Theatre when they came from Alberta in 1948. A family-run operation with the usual mix of features, cartoons, westerns etc. Matinee admission was fifteen cents for children and twenty-five cents for adults. This was another theatre that could not compete with television and went bankrupt in 1955. The photograph is from 1951 showing "Darling How Could You" with Joan Fontaine, John Lund, and Mona Freeman.

- the Alder Grove Heritage Society

Photo # P3186, The Strand Theatre, Chilliwack, B.C. ca. 1928. Reproduced Courtesy of The Chilliwack Museum and Archives.

Photograph consists of a front ¾ view of the Strand Theatre, as it appeared at the corner of Wellington Avenue and Main Street. Large signs on the side of the building announce the movie of the day as Ben-Hur. Smaller posters on either side of the large open corner door are for the movies, Listen Sister and Foreign Devil.

The Strand Theatre was built at the corner of Wellington Avenue and Main Street, as a replacement for the Knight's Opera House, which was destroyed by fire. According to a November 1988 article in the Chilliwack Museum & Historical Society Newsletter, the Strand was the first theatre in Chilliwack to present sound pictures. Described by some as a small and "a bit of a flimsy building," the Strand was a popular theatre. Famous Player's replaced the aging Strand with the Paramount Theatre on Yale Road East in 1949. The Strand itself was transformed into a roller rink for a time. Ben-Hur was released in 1925, starring Romon Novarro and Francis X. Bushman. Directed by Fred Niblo, the movie was a silent epic about a heroic Jew battling Romans during the time of Christ. Immense sets and still-gripping action sequences appeal to spectacle fans, students of film history, and silent cinema lovers.

-Shannon Anderson, Heritage Records Manager, Chilliwack Museum and Archives

ISSN 1918-4492

First built around 1913, the building that is best known for being the home of Armstrong's Star Theatre was first a factory owned by Mrs. E. Francis of Victoria. By 1914, the building was sold to James Est. Duncan of West Bank, being transformed into a store for a brief few years at the same time. Tax Rolls further indicate that the building was transformed into a theatre by 1919 the same year that the original Avalon Theatre (previously known as the Opera House) located where Nelson's Glass stands today, burned down in a fire. Until 1923, this building was home to the new Avalon Theatre. Although Tax Rolls indicate that James Duncan owned the theatre until 1929, it is believed that the Okanagan Cinema Company purchased the building in 1923, changing its name to the Coliseum Theatre. The Okanagan Cinema Company, which was established in 1922, was based in Vernon, and had theatres in Armstrong, Enderby and Chase. A letter from November 1924 indicates that Mr. Carew and W.S. Atkinson owned and operated the company.

The Star Theatre, 2540 Pleasant Valley Blvd, Armstrong, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Armstrong Museum & Archives

The Okanagan Cinema Company continued to own the theatre until 1940. 1940 Tax Rolls indicate that Konst. Samol owned the theatre, having bought it from C.H. Smith and C.T. Lefroy. Mr. K. Samol had an auction sale at his farm one and a half miles north of Armstrong in 1943, suggesting that he left the Armstrong area around the same time. Tax Rolls indicate that in 1941 Frank Shepherd purchased the theatre, invested money in extensive renovations, and renamed it the Star Theatre. Frank and his wife Maggie owned the theatre up until the 1960s. Mr. Shepherd, in addition to owning the Star Theatre, was a bus driver for many years, and died on March 31, 1976, at Williams Lake. The Star Theatre's motto was "Where Projection Efficiency and Reproduction of Sound STILL Predominate." Admission in 1954 was 75 cents, 50 cents, and 25 cents for regular showings. More recently, the Star Theatre building has been owned by Peter C.H. Smith (in 1971) and in the '90s transformed into The Price is Right, a bulk food store.

-Sonja Hagland, Curator, Armstrong Museum & Archives

Photo #1998.1.12, The Paramount Theatre, Chilliwack, B.C. Image Courtesy of The Chilliwack Museum and Archives.

Photograph consists of a picture postcard view of commercial buildings and businesses along Yale Road East, looking towards Five Corners. Businesses visible in image are, left to right: Chevron Gas Station, Simpsons Order Office, Cunningham Drugs at Five Corners, Pickards, Chilliwack Post office, Paramount Theatre, George Coombes Radios & Appliances, and Auld-Phillips.

-Shannon Anderson, Heritage Records Manager, Chilliwack Museum and Archives

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #2001.10.2.9, Station Street, Duncan, B.C. 1969. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

Station Street looking northeast: image shows the Cecil Cafe at 75 Station Street and the Greenhaven Restaurant at 79 Station Street. There are cars parked along the streets, marking meters are visible.

-Kathryn Gagnon, Curator/Manager,
The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives

Photo #1993.12.1.3, Station Street, Downtown, Duncan, B.C. 1952. Rose Denz, Photographer. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

Station Street looking east, taken from the north side near Government Street in front of Kyle's Taxi. Other businesses are Why Kee Lee Shoe Repairs on the north side, and the Odeon Theatre. On the south is the IOOF Hall, Eatons, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Meats. The truck in the foreground is thought to be Nigel Kingscote's truck—a 1934 Chevrolet.

-Kathryn Gagnon, Curator/Manager,
The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives

Signage, Odeon Theatre, Duncan, B.C. 1962. Jay Powley Fonds. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #2001.10.2.10, Odeon Theatre, 127 Station Street, Duncan, B.C. 1969. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

Station Street looking northeast: image shows the front of the Odeon Theatre building at 127 Station Street. Large sign announces the feature presentations.

-Kathryn Gagnon, Curator/Manager, The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives

Photo #4359, The Isis Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

On the right is one of the first theatres in Kamloops to show moving pictures. Formerly known as The Empire Theatre, The Isis Theatre opened its doors to the public in 1910, after undergoing renovations.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, Kamloops Museum and Archives

Photo #2002.11.1.32, Bob Evans & Albert Greenhalgh, Duncan, B.C. ca. 1958. Bob Evans Fonds. Reproduced Courtesy of The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives.

Item consists of four boys two are holding bicycles. On verso is written: "Albert Greenhalgh and Bob Evans in front of the Capitol Theatre on Station St., in Duncan, BC. Theatre owned by the Baise family at that time. Matinee shows were ten cents and evening shows twenty-five cents, taken about 1958."

-Kathryn Gagnon, Curator/Manager, The Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives

Photo #6854, The Capitol Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. 1938. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

The boys of the celebrated Kamloops Indian Residential school's Fife and Drum Band parade down Victoria Street on an outing to the Capitol Theatre in anticipation of the opening of the movie Boys Town in 1938. The façade of the theatre, formerly known as The Empress, caught the public's attention with the addition of a sign of "liquid fire", as neon signs arrived on the streets of Kamloops.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, Kamloops Museum and Archives

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #1890, The Rex Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

The ostentatious entrance to the Rex Theatre ushered many movie-goers to its Seymour Street location, where it leased an auditorium from the Elks' Lodge, and opened to the public in 1927. The Rex Theatre is long gone, but the Elks' Lodge remains as a heritage building, in its original location at the corner of Third and Seymour.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, the Kamloops Museum and Archives

The Strand opened on Victoria Street in 1927, featuring "Spanish-style" architecture, a popular design in the 1920s. The new building prompted a member of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to exclaim, "It's a bright oasis in the desert!" By 1933, the motion picture theatre was renamed the Strand Tea Shoppe & Cabaret, an indication that there was an overabundance of cinema in Kamloops at the time.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, Kamloops Museum and Archives

Photo #6841, The Strand Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

Photo #6579, The Empress Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. ca. 1915. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

The Empress Theatre, with its grandiose facade, as it appeared circa 1915, at 314 Victoria Street. The theatre would later change ownership and become the Capitol Theatre in 1930.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, the Kamloops Museum and Archives

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #4082, The Paramount Theatre, Kamloops, B.C. 1955. Reproduced Courtesy of the Kamloops Museum and Archives.

"Abandon Worry All Ye Who Enter Here," was the sign that greeted the first visitors to the luxurious new Paramount Theater in 1955. The modern new cinema offered the ultimate in comfort, warmth and relaxation to residents of Kamloops who often found the older theatres to be cold and drafty, especially during the snowy winter nights. The Paramount, located at Victoria Street and Fifth Avenue, was also the first to include an extensive confectionary featuring, of course, popcorn, but also ice cream, soft drinks and packaged candy, to satisfy even the fussiest patron's sweet tooth.

-Susan Cross, Archivist, Kamloops Museum and Archives

The new Orpheum Theatre, Kimberley, B.C. ca. 1940s. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kimberley District Heritage Society.

Photo #KMA#7705, The Paramount Theatre, Kelowna, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kelowna Public Archives.

When the Famous Players Paramount Theatre at 261 Bernard Avenue opened on June 16, 1949, it offered the "most modern efficiency and dress," proud to announce that the "usherettes have very smart uniforms." W. Harper was Manager and Michael Hall was Assistant Manager. The single-screen theatre served the residents of Kelowna well over the years. As Kelowna grew, newer and larger theatres arrived. The Paramount Theatre decided in the early to mid-1990s to expand their theatre from one screen to three. The Paramount Theatre is still a popular entertainment venue in the downtown core of Kelowna.

- Donna Johnson, Archivist, The Kelowna Public Archives

Spokane Street, Kimberley, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kimberley District Heritage Society.

The old Orpheum Theatre (now recreated at the Sullivan mine), Kimberley, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kimberley District Heritage Society.

ISSN 1918-4492

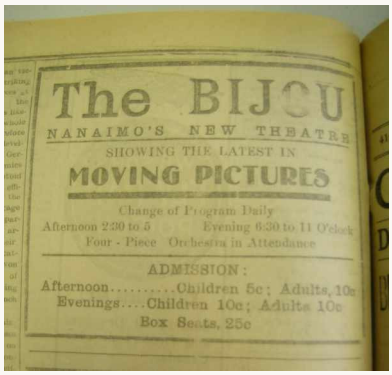


Photo # DSCN7799, Advertisement for The Bijou Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives.

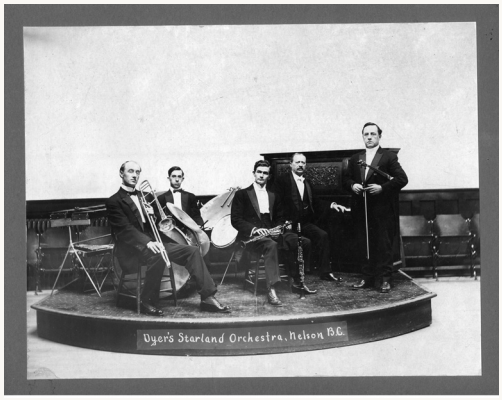
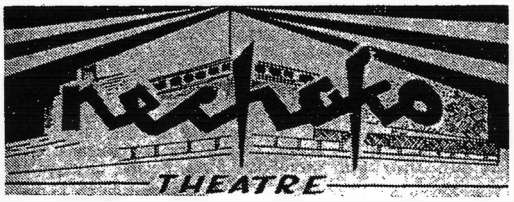


Image #1972.001.002 (NDV-DTVC Collection), Dyer's Starland Orchestra, The Starland Theatre, Nelson, B.C. ca. 1910-12. Reproduced Courtesy of The Touchstones Nelson Museum of Art & History.



Theatre Design, The Nechako Theatre, Kitimat, B.C. 1959. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kitimat Museum & Archives.

Nechako Theatre Design, 1959, from the Northern Sentinel Press newspaper.

- the Kitimat Museum & Archives

Photo #987.16.10, The Nechako Theatre, Kitimat, B.C. ca. 1960. Alex Campbell Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Kitimat Museum & Archives.

Exterior shot of Nechako movie theatre, showing original sign and marquee, decorated for Christmas.

- the Kitimat Museum & Archives

Nanaimo Theatres: The first moving picture theatre was the Crown Theatre on Commercial Street. The Orpheum Movie Theatre on Commercial Street opened in 1914, later named the Bijou. The Bijou was taken over by Famous Players in 1935 and renamed the Strand. The Dominion Theatre opened in 1915 on the corner of Bastion and Skinner streets. It showed first run moving pictures with an orchestral accompaniment. Hundreds of people were turned away when they showed Charlie Chaplin in Shoulder Arms. The Dominion Theatre changed to the Capitol Theatre in 1924 and started showing talking pictures. The opening feature was the musical Broadway Melody.

-David Hill-Turner, Curator, The Nanaimo Museum

Staff, The Capitol Theatre, Nanaimo, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Nanaimo Museum & Archives.

Left to right: Mr. Moore, Manager, Capitol Theatre; John McArthur, Advertising; Winnie Honeymoon, Usher; Sue McArthur, Usher; Grace Williams, Cashier; Colin McArthur, Senior Doorman; Bert Brown.

ISSN 1918-4492

Image #1994.107.001, W. Hilliard at the entrance to the Starland Theatre, Nelson, B.C. ca. 1920s. Reproduced Courtesy of The Touchstones Nelson Museum of Art & History.

Photo #P993.11.1.4112.16, The Strand, the Princess and the Star Time Theatres' float, Prince George, B.C. July 19, 1961. Wally West Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society.

Even rival theatres would come together in the festive spirit to promote a Blockbuster movie. The Strand, the Princess and the Star-Time Theatres all pooled their efforts together to create this float promoting the Ben-Hur Movie during the Simon Fraser Day Parade on July 19, 1961.

-Kristina Stark, Assistant Curator, The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society

This theatre was completed in 1915 on the corner of Third Avenue and Vancouver Street in downtown Prince George. It served the community well as a theatre and dance hall with additional space for offices. The theatre went out of business in the mid 1970s and the building was demolished in 1977.

-Kristina Stark, Assistant Curator, The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society

Photo #N993.11.1.72.1, The Princess Theatre, Prince George, B.C. February 16, 1947. Wally West Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society.

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #N993.11.1.5294.1, The Star Time Drive In Theatre, Prince George, B.C. 1963. Wally West Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society.

Located on the Ferry Avenue, the Star-Time Drive In Theatre, one of Prince George's first Drive-In Theatres, was a popular destination for moviegoers during the weekends. This theatre would disappear in the late 1970s with the commercial development along Highway 16 and Ferry Avenue.

-Kristina Stark, Assistant Curator, The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society

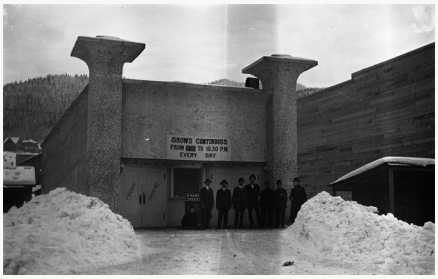


Photo #P991-60-5959, the Phenix Theatre, Prince Rupert, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives.

The Phenix Theatre was opened in Prince Rupert on September 5, 1910, by proprietor Arthur Heiney, a building contractor from Portland, Oregon, who had arrived in Prince Rupert two months earlier. Located at 825 Second Avenue, the Phenix was the first fire-proof building erected in the city.

- Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives

Photo #N993.11.1.971.1, the Princess Office Block, Prince George, B.C. January, 1951. Wally West Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society.

Photo #N993.11.1.5671.4, The Strand Theatre, Prince George, B.C. August 1, 1964. Wally West Collection. Reproduced Courtesy of The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society.

The Strand Theatre was a popular destination in downtown Prince George from 1926 to 1974. Located on the busy corner of Third Avenue and Dominion Street, it offered both motion pictures and live theatrical performances.

-Kristina Stark, Assistant Curator, The Exploration Place, The Fraser Fort George Museum Society

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo #JRW919, the Capitol Theatre, Prince Rupert, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives & the Museum of Northern B.C.

The Capitol Theatre opened on October 22, 1928. Built by brothers Paul and Mizak Aivazoff, the theatre was destined to become the focal point of screen and stage entertainment in Prince Rupert. During World War II some of the staging had to be removed to accommodate more seating. In 1948, the theatre reverted to showing movies exclusively, doing so until it closed in 1983. Today the building is used for office and retail spaces.

- Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives & Museum of Northern B.C.

The Westholme Opera House, built with a $35,000 investment by the Westholme Lumber Company, officially opened on February 28, 1912. It boasted 700 seating capacity, steam heat, electric lighting, opera chairs and billed itself as the "only first class theatre north of Vancouver."

- the Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives

Photo # LP984-29-1759-192, The Westholme Theatre, Prince Rupert, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of the Prince Rupert City & Regional Archives.

Photo # 1497, The Dreamland Theatre, Vernon, B.C. 1911. Reproduced Courtesy of the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

Vernon's first moving picture theatre opened in December of 1908. Following renovations in 1911, the Vernon News noted, "There is a large mirror at the exit so that ladies can see to adjust their hats before leaving. It is requested that ladies remove their hats when visiting this place of entertainment, and that men refrain from spitting on the floor."

- Barbara Bell, Archivist, Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

Vernon's second motion picture theatre opened May 29th, 1912. The Vernon News described it as "Vernon's new and up-to-date Picture and Opera House" featuring a "complete change of program every day," plus a "full 4-piece orchestra in attendance throughout every show."

- Barbara Bell, Archivist, Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

Photo # 1429, The Empress Theatre, Vernon, B.C. 1912. Reproduced Courtesy of the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

ISSN 1918-4492

Photo # 298, The Capitol Theatre, Vernon, B.C. ca. 1938. Reproduced Courtesy of the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

A crowd of 1,070 attended the November 7th, 1938 opening of Vernon's ultra-modern Capitol Theatre. According to the Vernon News "the sound reproduction was better than ever...the new air conditioning was enjoyed, the soft carpets, lights, mirrors, deep-cushioned easy chairs with ample room for those with extra long limbs—all were admired."

- Barbara Bell, Archivist, Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

The Oliver Theatre, Williams Lake, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin

The Oliver Theatre started out as a garage, built by Art Hillier in 1921. It was later turned into a movie house that accommodated close to 100 people who were seated on kitchen chairs on a level floor. As with many public buildings in the early days, the theatre was used for other functions. The Social Circle held whist drives to raise money for a hospital and on Sundays church groups held Sunday School classes. The theatre was located on Oliver Street (named for the Premiere) near the corner of 2nd Ave. Syd Western bought the Oliver Street Theatre in 1926. Western modernized and enlarged the old building in 1930 and put on a new front. In 1951 he built a new theatre beside the old building and in 1956 renamed it the Alston, a family name. There were still wooden chairs up front for kids but the rest of the audience had the luxury of upholstered seats and a slanted floor. The old theatre building was rented out for storage then later torn down to make way for a new building to house Cunningham Drug Store. The store later sold to Shoppers Drug Mart then was taken over by Merv's Men's Wear, then Tom Light's Sound of Music. Several businesses have come and gone over the years. Now on the corner is Kid's Kloset.

-The Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin

The Alston Theatre, Williams Lake, B.C. Reproduced Courtesy of The Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin

ISSN 1918-4492

CHAPTER FOUR

Hollywood—eh!

In spite of these rather interesting anecdotes about Canadian cinematic adventures, very little research has been done in this country and in British Columbia about the role that the cinema has played in people's lives. Compared to research done in other countries, Canadian scholars seem to have lacked the passion to pursue stories of this nature. Part of the reason Canadian writers have stayed clear of the topic is almost as a reaction to the subject matter being considered almost "too American."

A survey of recent scholarship on the subject shows that cinema-going behaviour has been well-mined in nations such as the U.K., Australia, South Africa, as well as in some of the Scandinavian counties. But for many Canadian authors, I suspect, the image or representation of the small-town cinema conjures up depictions of small towns in mid-America on muggy summer evenings with teenagers in bobby socks and jeans converging on the town square cinema. Coupled with this perspective is the notion that Canadians have had a tendency at times to be overly critical of America's somewhat suffocating political and social culture. Americans, however, do not have a patent on such sentiments. Some of our cultural zealots tend to be just as parochial, abhorrent of just about everything that smacks of Americana, such as those sentiments espoused by Canadian author Margaret Atwood, who refers to American cultural dominance as the "disease from the south."[186]

The truth of the matter is that for many cinema-going Canadians, our affinity for movies and the local cinema has been rooted in and continues to be influenced by Hollywood's cinematic culture. Even our urban growth has mirrored in many ways what has transpired in America, much of it dictated by urban sprawl which has left decaying city cores. Those somewhat intimate cinemas on Main Street with their 1930s art-deco façades were forced to close, replaced by a mall-conglomerated structure that we call the Cineplex.

The Towne Cinema in Vernon has also become home to the film society which in its own way has created a sense of community. Jean Huntley comments: "Because you go to the Film Society films, there are a lot of regular people there...When Gerry opens the door, for them to go home, they go out of one door and they are gone. They don't linger very much. Then the next lot comes in. That's when you talk

about the movie very often, to the people who are coming in to see the second playing of the movie. They want to know what it's like. We find that a lot of people don't read the review in the newspaper. They just come because it's the Film Society. They just know the title and the time and they don't always know what the movie is about. Dave puts the word out about what the movie is about. People just don't see it. They don't seem to read it."[187]

Linda Perry has been instrumental to the Vernon Film Society's success and she too mentions that the Towne Cinema has played an important role, noting that Gerry made the society feel at home at his venue: "Gerry has really welcomed us. He advertises for us. He puts us in his ads. He's got us on the marquee, he's got a permanent banner. He's really proud to say 'Home of the Vernon Film Society.' And we used to show on Sunday afternoons, which didn't work all that well because of skiing I think…Too many people skiing…We switched to Monday nights and our attendance has just gone like this…To the point where we used to show one movie a night and had to go to two because the crowds were too big."[188]

In the end, Gerry appears to have created a film culture where the cinematic torch is being passed from one generation to another for he still offers up the children's matinee which probably provides as much enjoyment for grandparents who enjoy the offerings through the sparkle of the younger generation's eyes. Jean Huntley concludes, "It's quite fun to watch them. Watch the children. *Harry Potter* movies. I'd always said I'd never go to a *Harry Potter* movie, but I'm going to them now. *Shrek* and things like that. The fun ones. And often I go here. If they have a matinee or something I'll go. But it's like Grand Central station. Gerry has free refills and the kids are running up and down and up and down, or the parents are going up and down, up and down. So while you are watching the movie there's this figure going by you all the time. It's a bit distracting."[189] But as Jean suggested—lots of fun!

Brian Mitchell of Kamloops was central to the creation of a film culture in his community as well: "I moved from Nova Scotia to British Columbia in my early twenties and came to Kamloops in 1975. When I came to Kamloops there was Film Society going and it started in 1972. I joined up immediately and then things unfolded over the years and I became the chair of the society. And quite, quite quickly after that, because of my own nature, skill sets, what have you—I took on the chair. I've been the chair since then, since the late seventies."[190]

Roz Burnell remarked how instrumental Brian was in creating a sense of cinematic community associated with the film festival scene in Kamloops: "The credit has to go to Brian because he started it. I came here in 1980 and right away we joined the Society, so I've been going for well how many years is that? It's a long time. They've moved around. They've gone from the Health Unit to the old Cariboo College to the North Shore and finally to their current place, so that's four places. But Brian has always been there, always pushing and encouraging and being the guru."[191]

Some might argue that the film festival crowd is for the artsy set—for the intellectual crowd, but Brian doesn't buy that argument, believing that watching movies is in many ways a personal enterprise: "Let me state where I am at now after all the years of watching films. What has happened over the years is that I have seen…Actually, I wonder if this has ever changed now that I think about it. I've never looked at it in terms of my whole life actually. As I said, I'm not a critic. I go to films and I love film because

there's, in all art I think, the potential for some form of transformation of the individual. When I see a film I get moved easily. I'm blue in the true colour scheme of things. Film moves me and I cry and I'm moved by these experiences, as I am in real life when I'm talking to somebody or sharing something deep. For whatever reason, I've seen dance and theatre and painting and such and so forth, but film has always been the one that..."[192] Brian pauses and then adds, "But for me, pleasures and the experience that I get from seeing film is more profound than all [of what] my literary friends have to say. My wife will hate me for saying that. But it's true. There's a direct access to something inside me that I experience when I see a film."[193]

Barb Hartley's interest in non-mainstream cinema probably was influenced by her European excursions. She noticed a change in her cinematic tastes on her returning home: "We lived in Vancouver and we were living on South Granville and we were going to the Stanley Theatre and the Ridge. I guess I've always liked to go to the movies, the small theatres that were showing the slightly different movies. I don't particularly like the violence of American movies. It was very easy to be steered into others. Subtitles don't bother me. Some people, if they have to read the message they will not go to it. We lived there for part of a year and then we came to Vernon and here was a Film Society."[194]

Her interest in film society fare is, in part, influenced by Barb's politics as well: "I still am not greatly sympathetic to a lot of American movies. Like I say, the violence really bothers me. I belong to Amnesty so our major effort of the year was to have that movie *War Dance*, which *National Geographic* was instrumental in the making. It's about the children in Northern Uganda who have never known life without war because they've been at war for twenty years. It was a stunning movie and often Amnesty films are too graphic for me. Even though I've belonged to Amnesty for twenty years, I don't go to lots of their movies. I already know too much about those things and I don't need to keep having that re-impressed. But this movie was the story of four youngsters and it's how they are being rehabilitated through the use of their tribal music, but also some of the introduced music. The filming was just stunning and it was an award-winner at Sundance. It's not just a casual movie and very thoughtfully made."[195]

Jennifer Singalet of Vernon, B.C., recalls that her cinema-going experiences began in Seattle, Washington, and that her movie socialization had been influenced by college and then film society associations: "It has been since Vernon. We used to go to the college when they had the Film Society on Friday nights. I think they were every other Friday or maybe even once a month. But yes I went faithfully. We always had a babysitter. It was our biggest kick out for my husband as well. So we've carried on. We've always done it. We used to go out to Salmon Arm and spend the weekend up there with friends with our kids. There was the odd film when it was still quite small. We took them (children) to any animated films and they loved it. They are now film-goers. They seek out the foreign films or the film festival."[196]

Jennifer remembers a Richard Harris film from 1963 called *The Sporting Life* (about a rugby player) and muses about the differences between the Hollywood and foreign film: "People have said, 'It's sugar-coated, Hollywood.' It's a sugar-fix sometimes. It's great. Our little sugar-fix, but I'm not satisfied at the end of it. There's really very little to discuss after. It's pretty predictable. It represents that part of North American society where consumers need to aspire to all this aesthetic stuff, but it glosses over any

condensed kind of underlying…Whatever is going on, Hollywood is very predictable I think."[197]

Foreign films for Jennifer have more "meat on the bone." Jennifer elaborates: "I love the sensitivity of the characters, the characterization that leads to the development of characters… It's not Hollywood-coated. It's not that perfect. I just think of it as skeptical."[198] More so, Jennifer believes that foreign films, at least from her perspective, provide a sense of realism: "There's an earthiness. There's a real quality of the canopy in the foreign films, explicitly real. It's natural. The stars are not filled up. They are not dressed up usually. It's very robust."[199]

In particular, Jean Sparks recalls, "I was influenced by those French New Wave Jean Paul Belmondo films. I was drawn to Roger Vadim. He's French. He directed *Barbarella* and the only reason I mention it is I lived in Europe for a year and my friend loved Jane Fonda and she ended up with this French director because of his film *Barbarella*. It was fabulous. He was married to Brigitte Bardo (sic). It was kind of funny because it was kind of that French kind of female icon kind of filming. They seemed to become a little bit more serious over the years. But that was kind of fun to watch."[200]

Jean was also influenced by the Cahiers du Cinéma crowd and directors such as Francois Truffaut: "I think it was Truffaut, I think he was a director who did *Billy* which is about a traffic jam. I think it was called…I think he did *A Man and Woman.* This is a long time ago, but I was drawn as a young person by the romance of it and everything. For me it was slowed down to a real pace. A real life pace. I love Truffaut."[201]

Susan Dixon of Kamloops also believes that her cinematic tastes have been refined because we are able to access a variety of films today. She notes, "Independent films and international foreign films that we get. They are just compelling….I guess there's an emotional and mental impact from the foreign films that we don't get from the Hollywood ones. Most of those we just can't even sit through. They (foreign films) make you think. They expose you to a lot of different ideas and different types of people."[202]

The commercial nature of those films is in sharp contrast to the film society fare which Robin Thornton found opened up a new window to a more exotic film culture. She remembers that they used to have them at the North Shore cinema and remarks how they were in sharp contrast to the "made in California" stuff: "I hate Hollywood. Most Hollywood movies I don't like. I just think they are a lot of crap, although every now and then you get a really good one. When I first moved to Vernon in 1986 they used to show the Film Society movies up at the college in the lecture theatre. They were 35mm with a little screen, black and white and a projector. I don't remember many of those at all. Once they moved into the main theatres they had the big screen and the colour and so on. I don't know if there were more movies being made or if we have more access to movies made in other countries now. I'm always interested in ones from other countries because I like to travel."[203]

Robin notes that "these documentaries and independent films are helping you stay connected with other cultures as well."[244] But don't think for one minute that Robin has given up on the more marketable commercial fare: "I don't only go to the Film Society movies. Some other good ones that I've enjoyed recently weren't Film Society. I went to see *Blood Diamond*, in which I thought Leonardo DiCaprio was

just amazing...I have to go see *Harry Potter* movies whenever they come out...*Harry Potter*, I don't know why. I think they are just so creative and interesting and different."[204]

Robin also has an affinity for Australian films: "Australians make some really good movies. If ever an Australian movie comes I make sure I get to see it. *Strictly Ballroom, The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and that one about the girl getting married... *Muriel's Wedding*?"[205] Although critics might not agree, Robin has a soft spot for an Aussie-type Western: "A real old one—*The Man from Snowy River*. It's a beautiful movie. It's a lovely movie. There's some beautiful shots of the countryside and horse riding. I can't remember the actual story, but the Snowy River is in the mountainous area between New South Wales and Victoria. I know there's a lot of horse riding through the countryside in it. Someone gets lost while they are chasing him. I've probably got it actually. It's a lovely movie. They just sort of become classics some of these movies and you could watch them over and over."[206]

Speaking of classics, it is hard for Robin not to forget those stars and stories from an earlier era: "The people who were then big stars, at the age that I was then, were Rita Hayworth, Bette Davis, Patricia Rock, Elizabeth Taylor, Robert Mitchum, Gary Cooper. *Gone With the Wind*. I loved *Gone With the Wind*. Clark Gable, Vivian Leigh. The chap that married Vivian Leigh who was also a Shakespearean actor. He was in *Wuthering Heights.* They were mostly black and white movies. He was also in *Rebecca*. You know I did see a lot more movies then I can actually recall seeing, even when I was younger. I don't think I went to movies much while at university, but I've seen a lot of movies."[207]

Robin's love of cinema has certainly bridged generations, and continents too:

> "Even...when I lived in Sydney. I would only have been ten or eleven then. I can remember collecting these pictures of film stars and playing these guessing games about them. We took a great interest in them, just the way they do now. Not so much their lives that intrigued us, but that they were famous and so beautiful and so talented and that sort of thing. I don't think we had rock stars then. I don't remember having rock stars then. Movie stars. I don't remember rock stars until the sixties. This would have been in, let's see, I was born in 1939, so it would have been between 1949 and 1956 or in there. That time frame. Marilyn Monroe. The chap that Elizabeth Taylor married, one of her husbands—Richard Burton. They were fine actors and actresses. The dresses intrigued me, the way they dressed. Their hairdos. I never really ever got into that myself, although I've always liked nice clothes. I never wore much makeup or anything or worried much about the hair. There's something about the glamour. I guess there's something about the glamour of it all. Now, the kinds of actors that will draw me to a movie are—I absolutely love that heart throb that just married Angelina Jolie...Brad Pitt. I remember seeing him in *A River Runs Through It* before he ever sort of got famous. He was just so gorgeous and that was such an excellent movie anyway. I've probably watched that movie several times."[208]

Robin believes that while Hollywood gets it right every once in awhile, there is a lack of depth overall to the films when compared to other types of fare: "The Australian movies really intrigue me because often you get the scenery and so on that gives memories of my living in Australia. But also I find in Australian movies, as opposed to Hollywood ones, and this is again the same thing that the Film Society movies, is that they are real people. They are not film stars leading these totally ridiculous lives. Even

though I like Brad Pitt and so on, I wouldn't love him if he wasn't also a good actor."[209]

One question that comes up periodically about community film festivals is Canadian film and content. Many film observers believe that Canadian film has engendered a very recognizable style—some say it might be the lighting, camera angle, or just plain bad acting. Those criticisms are usually directed at Canadian films of the late seventies or perhaps at the Canadian clunker of all time *Paint Cans* (1994). Roz Burnell has her own take on this notion: "I think I could pick out a Canadian movie pretty well right away without being told. I don't know what it is. I don't know what the quality is. Is it our accent? Is it our politeness? Is it our? I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is. Thankfully, however, the community film festival has moved beyond just promoting Canadian cinema."[210]

Back in the late twenties and thirties, films were serving up a new form and language of entertainment, one that soon would be international in scope. Earlier generations may have been weaned on Hollywood fare, but as we have witnessed, that is certainly not the case anymore. Whether it is the influence of film societies, or the fact that we are just a more visually literate culture, people seem to be very knowledgeable about and discriminating in their cinematic tastes.

CHAPTER FIVE

They Shoot Movies, Don't They?

Our movie musings so far have been the result of sitting in front of the silver screen, and most of the discussion so far has focused on the cultural and socialization aspects of the cinema in the smaller community. Before us, cinematic images that would last a lifetime were being hard-wired into our memory banks. But what about the creators of those moving images? We usually think of Hollywood or the United Kingdom as being the source of those memories. But that is not always the case. British Columbia has also become a destination for filmmaking, and some of our memories are part of a new home-grown cinematic culture, a culture that is breathing new life into the notion of a "Hollywood North."

Hollywood has in some ways both historically and contemporarily viewed Canada as a "Hollywood North," where Vancouver, Toronto, and Southern Alberta have become movie-making destinations. The reference to Hollywood North is, in fact, an interesting one from an historical perspective.

In the 1920s, the Canadian Government was not overly concerned about cultural nationalism to the extent that it is today, and therefore was not policing international and American production intrusions. Cinema Historians such as Michael Gasher have commented that Canada experienced its first production boom during that decade when Hollywood producers came north to make "quota quickies" in British Columbia.[211] Canada's commercial film industry at the time was virtually non-existent. The federal government by the late 1930s would choose to establish the National Film Board as the instrument of Canada's cinematic integrity.

By the latter part of the twentieth century Hollywood would rediscover making films north of the 49th parallel. A number of the *Superman* films of the late 1970s and early 1980s were filmed in and around Calgary. *Open Range* (2003) and *Legends of the Fall* (1994) were also filmed in the shadows of the Canadian Rockies. But British Columbia's Southern Interior has been on Tinstletown's radar as well. In fact, according to the British Columbia government, in 2007 the province ranked 3rd in film and television

production in North America after Los Angeles and New York. An *Unfinished Life* (2005) with Jennifer Lopez and Robert Redford, *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (2005) with America Ferrera, and *Deep Water* (2005) with Peter Coyote and Lucas Black were all filmed in the Kamloops region. During an interview with Jennifer Lopez on one of his television talk-show in September of 2005, David Letterman praised Kamloops for having "tremendous natural beauty" and said that "[his] life was changed when he saw the endless panorama of the rolling hills."

Letterman's geographical epiphany about the region might have resonated with Kamloops residents earlier in the twentieth century. Thespians were drawn to the Kamloops community as early as 1887, where the Wilbur Dramatic Company put on performances in their own large tent. The following year G. P. Raven built a performing hall over his west-end blacksmithy which showcased visiting professional and local talent. By 1897, plans were under way for a local opera house on Victoria Street. The opera house would provide a comfortable venue for performers such as The Harry Lindley Company. In 1902, Canadian poet E. Pauline Johnson was received with critical acclaim by Kamloops's audiences.

But perhaps the delight of watching local and visiting performers by Kamloops residents was giving way to the advent of the technological age. By 1910 the popularity of live theatrical performances would be challenged by a new art form. The intrusion of silent moving pictures such as Kalem Productions' *The Cattle Thieves* (1910) saw the decline of touring performers. On the horizon, however, was a connection that would serve as a dramatic foreshadowing of Kamloops's reputation for both cinema-going and cinema-making. That connection would be William Henry Pratt—known to most movie buffs as Boris Karloff. Karloff had been educated at Kings College London and suffering from a dose of wanderlust decided to hop a steamer heading for North America—in particular, Canada. According to Historian Greg Nesterhoff, "Karloff was born William Henry Pratt in a London suburb on 23 November, 1887. He was the youngest in a family of eight brothers, one sister, and one half sister. His father was a civil servant who was a tyrant at home; his mother was frail and ill. Both died young. William was expected to follow in the footsteps of his father and brothers and join the civil service, but his interest in theatre overshadowed his interest in school, and he was a disappointment to the family."[212]

Nesteroff suggests that Karloff's best way to exit the pressures of home and a future occupation was to set sail for elsewhere: "At 21, he decided to leave home, and chose his destination by tossing a coin: heads meant Australia, tails meant Canada. It came up tails, so in May, 1909, he sailed from England aboard the *Empress of Britain*, and landed in Montreal. He then went to the Toronto office of the Canada Company, with whom he had arranged a farming job. He was directed to Caledonia, and the farm of Terrance O'Reilly. O'Reilly, however, had never heard of Karloff, wasn't expecting anyone, and didn't want anyone. Reluctantly, Karloff was allowed to stay, but things didn't work out. After three months, he headed for Banff, where he found little work, then continued on to B.C. In 1910, he was in Vancouver, starving and broke, when by chance he ran into Hayman Claudet, a friend of his brother Jack. Claudet offered him food and money, and got him a job selling real estate."[213] Karloff's arrival in Vancouver would be the start of some interesting theatrical engagements in the British Columbia interior; connections that would eventually get him to Hollywood. But first he would have to audition for his future role in *Bride of Frankenstein*!

According to Nesteroff, "Karloff did something else in Vancouver in 1910, which has been completely forgotten: he got married. It's not clear if this was his first or second trip down the aisle; he eventually had six or seven wives, four of whom are enigmatic because he never talked about them. But a check of the B.C. vital events index reveals that on 23 February 1910, William Henry Pratt wed Grace Jessie Harding at Holy Rosary Cathedral. There's no question it's Karloff; his age, birthplace, and parents' names all match. The marriage was short-lived. On 8 January, 1913, Grace sought and obtained a divorce order on the grounds of adultery. Karloff had taken up with Margot Beaton, an actress with the theatre company he had by then joined. In fact, she may have been the leading lady's sister. Karloff, who did not appear in court, was ordered to pay his ex-wife's costs."[214]

Nesteroff mentions that Nelson and Kamloops both figure in Karloff's theatrical start: "He told a few slightly different versions of this story, including one quoted by Cynthia Lindsay: '*I was off on a survey party in the brush about 70 miles from Vancouver when I got this letter from an agent I had called in Seattle—Walter Kelly I think his name was—representing myself as an experienced English actor in Canada on a visit, who might be available…I'm sure the agent saw through the story, but actors were hard to get at the time. He referred me to the Jean Russell stock company in Kamloops…I left my axe in the middle of a tree and got the first train to Kamloops.*'"[215]

Nesteroff notes that in a 1953 interview he said: "*[I was] up in Kamloops, British Columbia, with a survey team, and suddenly I got a letter from this agent inviting me to join a theatrical company in Nelson. It had such a bad reputation that nobody would join it. That's why he sent for me. I made my first stage appearance playing the elderly husband in a play called 'The Devil' and Franz Mola in Nelson for $15 a week, just enough to exist on –if they paid you. As often as not they didn't. I was with that company two years and how we worked! We rehearsed all day and every day, and we played evenings in any sort of a barn or shack wherever we happened to be.*"[216]

And what of that stage and screen moniker? How did Pratt become Karloff? Nesteroff provides an interesting insight about the name change: "Boris Karloff claimed he took his stage name while on the train trip to join the Russell players. According to the actor: '*Karloff came from relatives on my mother's side. The Boris I plucked out of the cold Canadian air'*…But it's more likely the name came from a 1904 book by Harold MacGrath called *The Man on the Box*, which featured a character named Count Karloff. It was serialized in newspapers, adapted for the stage in 1905, and made into movies in 1914 and 1925."[217]

Time spent as an actor in the British Columbia Interior had proven to be an asset, and he had now found his forte. In 1930, Universal Pictures gambled on a film based on Bram Stoker's Dracula. He would soon return to Kamloops—but this time it would be as a star on the silver screen. Karloff's distinctive face of horror would grace many small neighbourhood and community cinemas over the next 30 years or so.

Those of us over fifty, probably with a great degree of nostalgia, mourn the demise of the smaller neighbourhood cinema. The contemporary Cineplex, however, is today's generation's cinematic domicile—although the internet and DVDs make up a much larger cinematic habitat. The question is whether these newer film environments and resources will create that same sense of intimacy that was once associated with the cosy movie-house just around the corner.

That intimacy, which for some seemed to be crucial to the socializing influence of the local cinema, was foreign to the aspirations of Lloyd Champlain. Almost a hundred years ago Lloyd had a dream—to establish a movie-making industry in British Columbia. He set up shop in the British Columbia Interior, incorporated a small community and called it Cinema, B.C., a village which he planned to devote to movie-making. Champlain's movie dreams had become a real community—staked out in the B.C. Interior between Quesnel and Prince George.

His dream, as all cinematic "dream Merchants" aspire to, was to make movies. He advertised in magazines and papers for people to come to Cinema and help him fulfill those desires, but those cinematic goals never came to fruition. They were noble aspirations to be sure, but in the 1920s and '30s travel logistics and the lack of a production infrastructure made his cinematic dream difficult to achieve. The phrase "going to the cinema," took on an entirely different meaning within Champlain's movie lexicon. Cinema was described in Wrigley's Directory of 1925 as a post office, general store, and Motion Picture centre. Branwen C. Patenaude in "The Rise and Fall of Cinema B.C." mentions that Lloyd Champlain was an American from Illinois seeking adventure.[218] In 1912 he signed on with the Pacific Great Eastern Railway as a veterinary surgeon charged with looking after the horses used in the railway's construction camps.[219] It would be short-lived; however, in 1915 the railway company ran out of money and Champlain out of work.[220]

Champlain was a romantic and optimist at heart, believing that the railway project would soon be back on the rails. Lloyd purchased some land, and invited his American niece to come up and live with him. Champlain also, it seems, had been fascinated with Hollywood and he literally gave truth to the notion of "life imitating art." Think of Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) and Champlain's Cinema, B.C. and it would be difficult to separate the real world from the imaginary! Champlain had made a tidy sum from working his land in 1920 and decided to spend some of the profits on a trip to California—more specifically, Hollywood.[221] There, his imagination unleashed, he soaked up all he could about the movie business and returned to his property with a plan to construct the hamlet of Cinema. The trip to California had infused his psyche with dreams of a "Hollywood North," probably the first one on record, and he began writing stories, shipping them back south with the hope that someone would take a gamble on his imagination and his locale. In almost evangelical style, Champlain began advertising for inhabitants who would make up the first census-taking of Cinema. He advertised in magazines such as the *Western Home Journal* (1924) with blurbs such as "Movie colony forming—will need men women, children...cooking, clerking," with the "kicker" being "that they may participate in the movies."[222] Some people responded seeing this opportunity as a "screen come true." In 1927, Cinema had 20 inhabitants, by the next year 50. As the years passed no movie was ever made—people soon decided that they would follow their dreams elsewhere and left. While Champlain's dream lived on in his imagination, it failed to produce concrete results and as late as 1931 no cinematic story was ever made there.

The evangelical nature of the place is best recalled from those who remembered Champlain as somewhat of an eccentric (to put it mildly) who they say was difficult to work with, tight with the dollar and personally intrusive, with a habit of asking personal questions to men about their lives—the goal of which was to glean as much possible information for movie scripts. A contemporary of Champlain, Donald

Van Buskirk, sheds some light on Champlain's peculiar character. Van Buskirk recalls that Champlain was somewhat slight in stature—and a perfectionist.[223] Wilfred Norn, another contemporary, was nine years old when, in 1926, he first became acquainted with Dr. Champlain. Norn remembers too, that Champlain was on the smallish side, his hair, perhaps, prematurely grey.[224] According to Norn, Champlain was somewhat quiet, which seems somewhat of a contradiction given his movie-making aspirations.[225] But it is clear from both that Champlain had a tendency to be somewhat obsessive. Champlain was hard working, tight fisted (people referred to him as weasel, but probably not to his face) and driven by a desire that his moving-making dreams would eventually come to fruition. Even as late as 1941, Van Buskirk recalls, his homestead in Cinema was geared to capitalizing on that one cinematic breakthrough.[226] Van Buskirk recollects that Champlain exhibited a somewhat erudite demeanour combined with a rather condescending nature, maybe standoffish.[227] According to Van Buskirk, Champlain was not very well liked—in part because of his compulsive nature.[228] He was driven by perfection, whether it was building a fence or a barn.[229] Van Buskirk believes that this habitual side of him was connected to film—that eventually when a film opportunity came calling, his little Canadian Hollywood would be up to the task.[230] This cinematic dream, Buskirk believes, was behind his story and script writing which dominated much of his waking hours.[231] He never gave up on his celluloid dreams.

His dreams of a Hollywood North did not, in the long run, materialize. Champlain died in Surrey, B.C., in 1965 when he was well into his eighties. Some believed he was ahead of his time as a movie entrepreneur—others might have seen him as a "dream merchant" with a tendency always to wake up before dream's end with an unfinished story!

If Champlain's dreams of filmmaking never really materialized, other film makers of the period would also try to make their mark in the industry. Early Canadian filmmaker Arthur David Kean might be seen as trail blazer for contemporary Canadian film makers. His work might also have served as a useful guide for more internationally acclaimed filmmakers, but that did not occur. Pierre Berton in his book *Hollywood's North* (1975) was highly critical in the manner in which Hollywood fashioned images of Canada and, in particular, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—something about outsiders controlling the image of a Canadian icon. This can be seen in films such as *Northwest Mounted Police* (1940) directed by Cecil. B. DeMille. DeMille might have been more attuned to the earlier work of Kean's cinematic representations of Canada in making his film. Mike Gasher provides some interesting insights about Kean, whose moniker "cowboy" was attributed to his work on the rodeo circuit: "Kean made his first dramatic feature in 1917 shooting scenes at the Penticton and Princeton rodeos...Kean's second feature film proved to be his most ambitious project and sadly, his swan song. The historical epic *Policing the Plains* was based on a popular history of the North West Mounted Police published by the Rev. R. G. MacBeth in 1922. Kean obtained the motion picture rights from MacBeth for $5000 in January 1924, then established a syndicate of more than forty thousand investors who agreed to finance a six-reel film budgeted at $40,000."[232]

Gasher states that the film had a recognizable Canadian feel to it, although one that would eventually be undermined by Hollywood's large shadows: "filmed on location in Vancouver and Green Lake, British Columbia, and Banff, Fort MacLeod, Standoff, and Wainwright, Alberta...*Policing the*

Plains played at Toronto's Royal Alexandria Theatre for just six days, from 19 to 24 December, 1927. The Toronto screening proved to be the film's only booking, and Kean blamed the American distribution chains for obstructing its further release."[233]

There is a belief that Hollywood business monopoly and combine activity made it difficult for Canadians to make their own films and Gasher observes that "Canada turned to Hollywood films with Canadian plots as a substitute for the—obviously—doomed domestic production. Hollywood responded magnificently."[233] Canada's "brief flurry of cinematic nationalism soon disappeared!"[234]

Kean will be remembered as an artist who was both keenly independent and creative and his cinematic and photographic work has become part of a Canadian folk culture representing iconic images of the Dominion in the form of trappers, Mounties, ranchmen, and of course, rodeo cowboys. Arthur David Kean was indeed a Canadian cinematic visionary whose work would pave the way and inspire others in their attempts to build a Canadian film industry.

Early filmmaking in British Columbia also had a more localized history, one that might be considered as documentary-like in nature. Vancouver at the turn of the century was quickly growing from the small hamlet or town of Coal Banks to a more sophisticated burgh of around 70,000 people. Most of us have probably viewed photographs of the dingy looking, timber-built community that served as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. But by 1907 an early cinematic visionary decided to record Vancouver's heart beat on film. Vancouver at the turn of the century was on the verge of 70, 000 citizens. A fellow by the name of William Harbeck of Seattle "set up a film camera at the front of a B.C. Electric Railway streetcar and on May 7 filmed the city's downtown streets. This is the earliest surviving film on Vancouver. Its discovery was something of a miracle: it was found in the basement of an abandoned theatre in Sydney, Australia! It had apparently been dumped there by movie house managers along with other movies no longer wanted. Some pieces are missing, and the entire film is just five minutes long, but those five minutes are valuable."[235]

The original *Vancouver Daily Province* newspaper reporting on the filming said the people of the city had been stricken with "kinetoscopitis."[236] The short reel captures "Granville and Hastings, along Westminster Avenue (now Main Street) and…Powell, Cordova and Cambie, Robson and Davie…a unique look at a Vancouver of a century ago. The streets are alive with people. We see in these flickering, silent images a city that has almost tripled its population in six years."[237]

Of course, much has changed with the Vancouver landscape since that time and I think many might argue that it was in the latter part of the twentieth century that film making in British Columbia experienced a sort of cinematic renaissance, one that Zoe Druick believes was tied to the cultural changes of the sixties. Maybe it was part Haight-Ashbury with a strong dose of expatriate Hollywood, but Vancouver was becoming very cinematically active. Druick in *Vancouver Cinema in the Sixties* comments that this growth was in part "connected to a growing sense of West Coast cultural specificity, with influential artists and cultural industries traversing the Pacific coast."[238] This observation does not ignore the fact, according to Druick, that "Although filmmaking in Vancouver dates back to the beginnings of film itself and has never really been halted, the decades between quota quickies of the decade 1928-38—made for

the British market—and the emergence of a full-blown Hollywood service industry in the 1980s are often seen as something of a wasteland for film production. However, a snapshot of independent production in Vancouver during the decade of the 1960s shows a vibrancy both inside and outside of cultural institutions. The upsurge in production in a variety of film styles reflected both a desire to make a mark on film culture in Canada, and a cross-pollination with other art forms in the dynamic and burgeoning local scene."[239]

Druick commenting on the social upheavals of the sixties notes that "The new de-localization of Hollywood played a role, for example, as did the Vietnam War, which created its migrant resisters. In short, a confluence of factors, international, national, and local, conspired to create in the city of Vancouver in the 1960s a number of productive groups of filmmakers working in different traditions and often in ignorance of each other. This substantial yet eclectic body of work forms Vancouver's diverse 1960s cinema."[240]

Druick places this evolution in an historical context: "In the years before the establishment of the Canadian Film Development Corporation (1967), which brought marked expansion of feature film production across Canada, only a handful of features were produced each year across Canada. Of this almost infinitesimal group of films, the consistent production of Vancouver filmmaker Larry Kent deserves note. His films *The Bitter Ash* (1963), *Sweet Substitute* (1964), and *When Tomorrow Dies* (1965) remain some of the most notable of the era. Made with shoe-string budgets, volunteer crews and UBC student actors, they are derivative yet compelling portraits of the confusion, dissatisfaction, and violence of life in Vancouver. Filmed in rooming houses, bars, and on the gritty streets of Vancouver's east side and set to Beat-style jazzy soundtracks, the films express a youthful exuberance and a quick condemnation of a world deemed to be already unacceptably compromised."[241]

The documentary nature of Vancouver's early years caught on film were well in advance of the dream makers who would create a cinematic empire in Southern California orange groves. But for many movie creators it is the notion of a "Hollywood North" that still resonates for some Canadian and foreign filmmakers. Like the dreams of Lloyd Champlain, or the independent streaks in the work of A. D. Kean, they are goals worth pursuing, but perhaps the aspirations of both Champlain and Kean might serve as a "cautionary tale." There is more to film production than "build it and they will come." British Columbia's sweeping panoramas have much to offer but the pragmatics of making the film production industry work in smaller communities still might be those same challenges that were obstacles to Lloyd Champlain such as building materials, supply networks, and transportation access and the funding difficulties that would plague Kean as an independent filmmaker. Perhaps this century will prove to be much kinder to filmmakers than were the early years of the Twentieth Century to Dr. Champlain and Arthur David Kean.

Across the water from Vancouver on Vancouver Island, Ladysmith might also be seen as a community with an interesting cinematic past that has managed to attract, from time to time, movie and television production crews. They seem to like the area, not that the community is in anyway identified as such in the production. The filming of a television series called *Eureka* in Ladysmith serves to reinforce this notion. The series starred Colin Ferguson as a federal U.S. marshal who gets stranded in Eureka, a small town in the northwestern part of the states composed of "supergeniuses" assembled by the government

to conduct top-secret research (18/10/Chronicle).[242] Andrew Cosby, the series creator mentions what attracted him to Ladysmith: "We drove all over Vancouver within the so called 'zone' and we kept seeing those photos of Ladysmith that I felt really fit the Pacific Northwest vibe" (11-6-2005 chronicle).[243] The following images reinforce the changes in the community identity.

Other community experiences with filmmakers tell of more intimate associations. Aspiring local actress Danielle Dunn-Morris recalls her excitement when she landed a role in the film *An Unfinished Life* with Robert Redford. While many Kamloops residents were excited that Hollywood stars were hanging out in the city, Danielle was pressing the flesh with the former "Sundance Kid," recalling her on-screen experience as Angie-the-Zoo-Keeper: "When I was first introduced to Mr. Redford, just before we shot the first scene, the First Assistant Director made it sound as if I didn't know who Robert Redford was. I stared and then laughed. Robert gave me a quick hug! A moment to remember! I never got to know Mr. Redford as he keeps very much to himself but it was thrilling to be given the chance to work with such a legend."[244]

Taylor Moore of Kelowna has fond memories of going to the movies too—his gaze, however, was not directed primarily on the actors. Taylor puts it this way: "my focus, when I was younger, was very much on the look of the film. I was very impressed by certain aspects or not impressed by certain aspects of the cinematography or the direction. Especially camera moves and techniques—they were a really big deal for me. Understanding how those were done at a younger age, this is before the steady-cam was invented. The cameras were still quite large at that time. How they would do really complicated moves in a small area with a big camera was always a very interesting thing for me."[245] So much so that Taylor would see this growing interest result in a life-long vocation: "I ended up going to film school at Ryerson in Toronto. We watched, ate, and lived and breathed film so there were a variety of things. I think people get inspired by different things with different types of films. For me, one of the large impetuses when I was at film school was a film called *Colinus Gotsi,* which basically is a film with no dialogue. It's a very, very unique film at the time. That had a big impact on me. I remember going with my European girlfriend and we would have long discussions specifically about that film. I look at how that film has influenced me now. There's still a variety of techniques that were used and people are having a very hard time trying to solve and trying to recreate. It was really groundbreaking at that time."[246]

Along with his formal cinematic training, Taylor believes that his curiosity about people, places, and things has profoundly influenced his sense of cinema. Film he believes can become a cultural and historical conduit: "I think there are certain native films that are becoming a lot more powerful like *The Runner* and that type of thing, it really helped aboriginal people understand where they come from a lot more. I think it really helps alright. I taught a film course way up north, in Northern B.C. to a native community. That was very eye-opening, to see their interpretation of what they were creating and their culture. That was a really good learning experience. I think that the key with film is for people to identify with the characters and its basic form."[247]

Taylor's nomadic years covered a lot of ground and water, and they helped forge his filmic philosophy: "I've been fortunate, or misfortunate, to live all over the place. From London, Ontario I then

went to film school in Toronto. I worked there for many years and saw a lot of films when I was there. Then I moved out to Vancouver and worked in the film business there. I saw a lot of films when I was there. There's a very good film scene in Vancouver and a lot of very good venues to see films in. I then moved to L.A. and saw a bunch of films there in amazing theatres. Then after that moved to Hawaii to work on a film, saw some films there."[248]

Along the way, Taylor decided that the British Columbia Interior was where he wanted to put down roots and as he puts it he did so in a somewhat unconventional manner: "Obviously there's quite a progress of time there, from probably 1988 to present 2008. Gee I think that's twenty years. There's been quite a migration. I think right now my film-going experiences are quite limited because I live in Summerland, which is a substantially smaller community. It's sort of half-way between Penticton and Kelowna. The theatre in Penticton is extremely bad. It's basically a modified bowling alley. It's a brutal experience. I went there once and I refused to go there again. On top of that, my girlfriend has a serious allergy to popcorn, to corn, so if she went to a movie theatre she would be very, very, very, sick. Her breathing basically shuts right down. To continue on our movie-viewing I've built a theatre at home, with a projector and a great big screen. So that's been really, really good for us to see movies at the scale that they kind of are respected. It's a fourteen-foot-wide screen, so it's a big screen."[249]

Having been part of other cinematic cultures, why did Taylor decide to make his "movie stand" in the Okanagan? His reasons were not just movie ones: "Well it has very little to do with film-making. It basically comes down to quality of life. I drove through here in 1988 and had never seen anything like this geographically. I saw how beautiful it was. My main motivation was to eventually work back here or get a sustainable living, which has its fair share of challenges because there's very little opportunity."[250]

Taylor's point is that although the British Columbia Interior has oodles of potential for making films—the landscapes, in particular—the bottom line for local filmmakers is still paying the bills. Hollywood film companies might have sought out British Columbia as a film making venue when the dollar was in their favour and they were getting comfortable tax concessions—but economic times have changed and Taylor notes that when it comes right down to it, it is a business and you have to survive: "You can shoot maybe four or five corporate videos a year and those really don't pay the bills. So I do a bunch of other things. I have another business that's an interactive business. I shoot stuff for people. I basically do interactive content for the web so that's kind of another way. But all are equally storytelling type of environments, they are just not linear."[251]

How did the locals react to his cinematic presence in Kelowna? Taylor said that the answer was a simple one, and he used the film *Fido* (an interesting dystopian drama with a somewhat retro quality) as an example: "People would go to see *Fido* because it was shot in Kelowna. So there's that. Another way was when I shot a whole bunch of footage for Tourism Kelowna. There was always a real interest in seeing that footage and, 'Wow, that's so beautiful. I can't believe that's our backyard,' kind of deal. There was a real interest with that and also being able to showcase that content to the rest of the world. This is our backyard. This is where we live. It's a beautiful place."[252]

But it is not only aesthetics, it is money too: "A large film brings a huge amount of money and

opportunity to the small towns. Look at the success and growth of the film industry in Vancouver. But also, and obviously we don't have the big city look, if you have something that is of geographical significance, which the Okanagan has more than enough, then the opportunity for production companies to come here (if it is sold properly), then it can really create a tremendous business and a tremendous opportunity."[253]

Taylor acknowledges that sometimes the cinematic cultures of larger centres can be somewhat suffocating when it comes to the "film credits." It may be filmed in Kelowna or Kamloops, but Vancouver gets the credit. Taylor elaborates: "with the film *The Hurricane*, there's the lawyer in the film who is based in Kamloops. He's involved in the film and again, at the end with the credits he's listed as working out of Vancouver, which he was at the time, but isn't now. I personally get frustrated with that because I think it pulls away our business and affects our economy in the sense that people would see a film and think, 'Oh, it says Vancouver. Let's go to Vancouver.' And they go there and it isn't. The landscape of Kamloops is very different from the landscape of Vancouver."[254]

Film's socializing influences also resonate strongly with Taylor. Somewhere, sometime, there is a film or an image that sticks. Film director Roland Joffe (*The Mission*, 1986) believes that film in many ways emotionalizes the cinematic experience and Taylor has some interesting observations that connect to Joffe's perspective: "On a personal level, a lot of it is to tell small, simple stories in a very elegant way that makes people have an emotional reaction to it. And that is the ultimate goal of film—to create an emotional reaction whether good or bad to what stimulus they are getting."[254]

Taylor draws on Leni Riefenstahl's infamous *Triumph of the Will* (1935) as an example:

> "That film alone motivated Germany to war. That says a lot about the power of a film. But also, when you look at citizen journalism right now, which is getting a lot of weight—whereby someone sees an injustice and they videotape it and they get it on You Tube and get a humungous response to that, either good or bad. So the medium carries a tremendous amount of power, both politically and emotionally and socially."[255]

Like many of the earlier observations made by cinema-goers, certain films just don't go away. For Taylor it is a woman with hair falling over her shoulders: "*Summer of 42* had a very big impact on me. Whoever the woman was in that, I must have watched that film ten times. It was a very interesting movie about a young man losing his adolescence shall we say, to the grace of an older woman. That was quite a great film."[256]

Whether Taylor plans to make a sequel to that film is not clear, but what is clear is that he believes that the British Columbia Interior can continue to be a Mecca for film production: "This area has some of the finest ranches and desert land anywhere. This is Napa Valley North. It really is. It is a truly beautiful place and it's the hidden jewel. Not so hidden anymore based on the housing prices. It is a beautiful place for a good six or seven months out of the year. You could shoot a western here with your eyes closed. There are just tremendous places to shoot. There's a huge old mine in the southwest Okanagan. It was mined for gold and stuff and it's just a tremendous character town. There's a lot of very interesting places location wise. The key plus is its tremendous amount of location."[257]

Taylor's enthusiasm for the development of the film-making industry in British Columbia's interior might be mirrored in that famous phrase from *Field of Dreams*—"build it and they will come." As Ernie Webber of Kamloops suggests, you need more than just the scenery and the talent. Ernie has a degree in professional photography and started his cinematic aspirations freelancing with the CBC and CTV. "Build it" according to Ernie means creating a local infrastructure: "Everyone is screaming to make it Hollywood North and it doesn't matter if it's Vancouver, Kelowna, Kamloops, it's not going to happen till we have the television series. Kamloops right now should be hosting a very good historical television series as well as a western comedy or something like this. That would be ideal in the areas surrounding Kamloops. Here we could have two series. With the two television series comes all the support services. As I mentioned, I worked on three films here. Every single film that I have worked on, five-ton trucks go down to Vancouver daily to pick up supplies. Everything from rollers for the dollies to gels for the lights, a cable here, something small, something big. We just don't have it here."[258]

Ernie's frustrations are bourne out by experience: "We may have the talent; we don't have the support services. Last year I was doing the *Atomic Train* over in Ashcroft and we wanted some clips for the barbed wire. Well the local hardware store brings in two dog clips a year for dog leashes and that's the best it could come up with. We've got to think, 'Okay, if we want the industry, we have to have the support to go around it.' We cannot think that just because we've got beautiful scenery something is going to happen. We've got to make it happen."[259]

But making it happen has a lot to do with it being a viable filmmaking destination point. Early in the twentieth century, Lloyd Champlain wanted Cinema, B.C., to become a home for filmmaking and his dream didn't materialize, in part because his cinematic dreams were a little ahead of the times in terms of transportation and technology. Contemporary film producers, if Ernie and Taylor are right, still face some of Lloyd's and other early filmmakers challenges, the main one being a viable support network and infrastructure—perhaps reinforcing a notion of a "film too far."

From another perspective, Kamloops resident Brad Haggerty believes that filming in smaller centres like Kamloops creates economic returns for the community, but he is not sure that it directly affects the populace overall: "I think it's good for some people, but I don't think it helps me out or any of the Average Joes. You are leasing out your property for a location. Actually when they filmed a movie here in Kamloops called *Cadence*, with Charlie Sheen and Martin Sheen, and Laurence Fishburne, I worked at Public's Own Market downtown. I was up at Mount Lolo up on the hill and we furnished all their dressing rooms up there. That benefited us at that time because we were supplying all the furniture. When Charlie Sheen was in town he rented a house up in Sahali and we furnished this whole place because they were here for three months. So some people. Catering companies. Different people that are directly involved in the movie I think it benefits."[260]

Brad also raises questions about locales such as Kamloops that end up as visual centerpieces for movies—they are really in most cases not about the region. A film made about Billy Miner, for example, was filmed in the area, and was also about the history of turn of the century Kamloops. *Cadence*, on the other hand wasn't and Brad comments that "because usually it's filmed in Kamloops and it's supposed

to be Montana. There's not really much to do as far as B.C. because in British Columbia you have so many different looks. It could be seven totally different places in the world. But no, I don't think B.C. or anything has anything to do with it."[261]

That notion is reinforced by audience reception. Kamloops film-goer Melissa Thomas observes: "I've only been to one where I kind of knew Kamloops was the main landscape and it was actually kind of annoying because I think I spent so much of the movie looking for familiar places that I didn't even pay attention to the movie, which ultimately was a testament of how brutal it was. It really was quite annoying. I kept trying to recognize everything and it was really only the last twenty minutes of the movie that you could even tell it was Kamloops. I thought it was kind of irritating, but that's the only one I've ever seen. I went in knowing it was filmed in Kamloops."[262]

Barb Hartley of Vernon also muses over the benefits of filming locally and reinforces a theme of mixed messages that film production brings to the community: "I don't really know the implications here in the valley, but I can't imagine it not helping out. I realize the problem local politicians get into... by being asked to support a film industry because they do know what the spin-off is when you bring film crews in. It also helps knowledge of your area to get out there. But if you are working with a limited number of tax dollars I can see what a struggle that is. I really wish that the provincial government was a little more on board. They take quite a bit off us in the way of taxes and they have a better chance. The local politicians have had so much offloaded on them to do locally that something like supporting the film industry is not so easily done. It doesn't take very long to be in Vancouver and see all the film crews working around the city to realize what an impact. Those people will have to eat food and be taken from A to B and stay somewhere, sleep somewhere. I think it would certainly be in the government's best interest to somehow weigh that out and balance it a little better."[263]

There is nothing wrong with nurturing such dreams, and perhaps an economic downtown could be a catalyst for the industry to grow again in British Columbia. In bad economies people look for a means to escape, and the movie theatre seems to help people dream their troubles away. Statistics suggest that in hard economic times, movie attendance goes up. When you think of British Columbia as a film-making context, the potential is overwhelming—high mountains (ala *Lord of the Rings*, shot in New Zealand), desert-like Mesas, coastal fjords, all within reach of smaller B.C. communities such as Gibson's Landing (remember *Beachcombers*), Ashcroft, and Hope (*Rambo*).

Much has been said about whether or not places such as the British Columbia Interior can become a viable movie making destination—that it can become a sustainable industry. Vicci Weller, Executive Director of the TNRD Film Commission puts small community film production potential in perspective, reinforcing the notion of "build it and they will come." She comments: "So when people say 'How big is Kamloops?' we say, 'Kamloops has seven or eight Starbucks,' and they say, 'You're kidding?' So that gives them a sense of how big we are. Okay, now what have they said? They have said it's great because you have the infrastructure and then you can go fifteen minutes and you are in the middle of nowhere with no signs of life. That's phenomenal. They like it because they can get different looks really close to a town centre, whether it's Cache Creek or Ashcroft. They like it here because they find the scenery very

breathtaking and beautiful. They like it here because it looks unspoiled."[264]

The Kamloops region seems to have the look that people want for a variety of movie stories. Vicci notes, "I've heard one director say, 'Bloody hell, it looks like High Chaparral.'" He was from England. They like it here because they find the air is different. It is crisper and cleaner because it's dry. They find it hot. They really like the fact there's a full-time film commission to help them. They find that to be an asset and that's blowing the horn. Especially when you get to difficult locations. One of the things we find, and it's a struggle, is we are always scouting when we look our worst, in the transition, when it's spring run-off. So we have to be quite tenacious and rent big four-by-fours to get into some of these locations. I've scouted on snow mobiles to get the location and to get the look. So they like our aggressiveness in that we want. They also find Kamloops really film friendly and the area film-friendly. Film-friendly means that 'Yes, we will go the extra mile for you.' 'Yes you can film here.' We start from yes and make it work. They really like the fact that the City of Kamloops is philanthropic in that their location fees are donated to either food banks or the United Way."[265]

From Vicci's perspective, aggressive marketing is a key ingredient in making the Thompson region an important filmmaking destination. She also adds an important caveat about filmmaking in the region, reminding us that while studios may film here, they are not necessarily here to promote the region—they are here to create cinematic stories: She observes: "When you are dealing with the studios specifically, there is no guarantee of any kind of credit. End of story. It is up to their discretion. Now there has been controversy about what we call so-called runaway productions. So they will keep it simple and say it was filmed in British Columbia. Or they will only go with the majority—filmed in Vancouver or British Columbia. That's the reality. Tough luck. If they want to generalize everything, there's nothing we can do about that. But, on the other hand, I have somebody who has passwords or whatever that goes into the Internet movie database where people do research on what movies are, who is in it, where you can check out anything. We'd put in the actual locations. So we may not get it on the big screen. Having said that, if you were to take a study and say how many people stayed to watch the very end of the credits to see where it's filmed, I would say maybe one or three percent of the audience does. If that. Maybe 0.5 percent because besides me, there might be another couple or a few, but not really."[266]

Vicci believes that in the final analysis it is money issue that brings people in—can we get the job done for the filmmakers? It may be filmed in Kamloops, but it is not about Kamloops: "The independents will give you better credit, but it's more of the location insiders that know where things are being filmed because it comes to dollars and cents. The good news is, Vancouver or British Columbia is the third largest film centre. The bad news is we double for everything else. Very seldom do you see Kamloops filmed for Kamloops. There was one script that was taking place and mentioned Kamloops. It was about a war bride and her husband who came back to Kamloops to run a fishing resort and the fallout of the war and how it affected him. Telefilm turned it down saying that period films weren't making money anymore. When we have Kamloops with Kamloops, we are always doubling. You are always trying to get the news out to the people that we are here and this is where we live."[267]

Lytton, B.C., just down the road from Kamloops, so to speak, has had an interesting film legacy

as well. While we might think of the locale in more contemporary movie-making terms such as the venue for *The Pledge* (2001) with Jack Nicholson, the town got its cinematic start much earlier. In 1925 the *Winds of Chance* was filmed here, with Ben Lyons, and Anna Nilsson. Much later, in the 1960s, another film was made in Lytton called *The Rainbow Boys* with Donald Pleasance (United Kingdom) and Kate Reid (Canada) in what one might call a co-Commonwealth production, given the stars nationalities.[268]

The Pledge was one of those movies that was shot in B.C., but in cinematic terms was set in Nevada. Lytton residents certainly would have gotten a rush seeing their community on film, particularity the image of a re-creation of one of the local gas stations. The set rendition was based on one of the town's earlier gas station edifices. Contemporary Hollywood filmmakers are very good at the production side of filmmaking but like many of their earlier brethren such as Cecil B. DeMille (remember *Northwest Mounted Police*, 1940) they have had trouble clearing Canadian customs when it comes to film stories and creditable locales.

Some Hollywood stars, however, seem to have made that border crossing much more easily. Rubbing shoulders with Hollywood stars doesn't necessarily mean money in the bank for the community, but perhaps there is a human quality that impacts the area in some small way. Brad Haggarty fondly remembers a meeting with Martin Sheen: "We were living downtown. They were in town filming the movie and Graham, my youngest at the time, was pretty small and he was out riding around the neighbourhood. There was a knock on the door and it was Martin Sheen with Graham. He thought he was pretty small to be running around the neighbourhood, so Martin on his way back to his hotel, stopped and dropped off my boy."[269] No wonder that Martin went on to become President of the United States!

Brad's wife Terry had what might be called a brief encounter with Hollywood—and it wasn't on Main Street: "I did meet the Sheens. I worked at the Keg at the time and they would come to the Keg. I didn't meet them, but I walked by the table and I didn't want to be one of those people, 'Can I have an autograph?' So I never bugged them. But I saw them. I get stupid star-struck. I don't even know if I would be able to have a conversation with them anyway. It's just kind of fun. It seems surreal when you have actors and actresses in Kamloops."[270]

Her other sighting occurred at a Kamloops health club: "I worked out at Gold's Gym for years and I'd go on my lunch every day. I was working out one day and I was in the mirror and...there was a woman (there's a ladies-only side) and there was a man in there. So I couldn't help but look at him and I was annoyed that there was a man in the woman's side, but then I realized he was a personal trainer. Well it was Jennifer Lopez. Then I couldn't help but stare at her the whole time I was working out. I was trying to be cool and not look at her. So that kind of thing is fun. I worked out with Jennifer Lopez."[271]

Most residents in smaller communities are supportive of the film-making industry and the economic and cultural support that comes with it. That support comes from a sense of pride and community spirit. Peggy Pasta of Vernon, while acknowledging the economic potential, also sees an opportunity to promote the beauty of the area: "I think it's great that the movie people are coming in. They did one here in Armstrong about a year or two ago I guess. It was kind of neat. I haven't seen the movie but a friend of mine saw it. It hired local people for the extras. So she said it was kind of neat to see people she knew in

the movie. I think it's kind of neat. We have the same quality of movie, it's just a different location. We have a lot of beautiful country here. They do a lot of movies in Vancouver and Calgary and Toronto."[272]

But Peggy too knows the value of a dollar, and realizes the film companies spend money in the community doing a shoot and that the economic climate will influence if they come. She notes, "Mainly... it used to be cheaper for them to come up here. I don't think it is any more. Our dollar has gone down."[273]

Throughout our cinematic journey most of the movie memories have involved movie watchers and movie makers, but others in the movie business, like Maurice Tessier, had a much different perspective—as a bridge between the two. His profession was that of a film projectionist, and although his work brought pleasure to countless thousands, it was in his words "a job." Maurice recalls: "First of all, it took me a long time to get to be a projectionist because Famous Players and Odeon were in the union and the union was very strict. To get in there it was hard. I had lots of friends in the movies. As a projectionist, I had a brother and they taught me...how to get in. That was in 1971. It took until 1978 that I decided to try for the first class license, like this one here. It was an independent. I couldn't get in the union because in the union it was good money, a strong union, and you had to have quite a bit of education."[273]

Sitting in a theatre is somewhat magical. All of sudden, the theatre darkens and light and moving images appear—the show begins. Today it is a highly computerized process, but it wasn't always. Maurice mentions that his job involved emotional highs and lows and in many cases was a "closed shop": "Most of them, the old-timers, had their sons of course. So I went to Merritt as an independent. In Merritt they had an independent theatre. When I went to see the owner he said, 'I can't let you work here...I've got to pay you, because the labour board won't let somebody work there for nothing.' He said he couldn't afford to pay me because he had a projectionist. So I tried again, this time he said, 'Well we'll do it this way. I'll give you a cheque and you give it back to me.' So we got past the labour board. Then that was okayed. Now I had to ask the projectionist if he would get me an apprenticeship. He agreed. His name was Fred Palmer. To get a license like this you had to give one thousand free hours before you could write your exam. So I did that, worked a thousand hours for free. I kept my job as a driver for a salesman...I was working for. I got in as a salesman."[274]

But Maurice was determined to get his union card or ticket and recalls: "On Saturday afternoon I would leave after work for Merritt. The show would start at seven o'clock until eleven at night in the winter because they had just one theatre. The other one was a drive-in theatre. In the summer, the drive-in would start at dusk until one and two o'clock in the morning. I would come home on Monday morning. Then I had my thousand hours. It was time for me to write my exam. I had lots of friends in Vancouver who were in the union that helped me."[275]

Sitting in a cinema, you take the images on the screen for granted, but in pre-computerized theatres, surviving in that projectionist booth involved a lot of time and stress: Maurice elaborates on sitting for an exam: "The exam was under Jack Walker, who was a fireman. The exam had to be under the fireman because of all the danger. There were two parts of the film. Oxytech was the one that didn't burn too good, but before that there was one that was just like gas and if they weren't very careful and made a mistake it would burn. Lots of theatres...in England there was four hundred people that died

in nineteen-something because of that. So they changed the film to acetate. It burned, but it did not explode." According to Maurice: "There were ten questions. The ten questions were A, B, C you know... Multiple choice. I think we had to know mechanical, optical, electrical and safety. When I was there, there were thirteen that wrote the test and only three made it. I was one of them."[276]

Passing the exam might have seemed that you finally were on that "yellow brick road" to success, but Maurice muses that perhaps life was never meant to be easy: "Two weeks later, I applied for a membership in the union and they were surprised. They figured I couldn't make it in the union. To their surprise they phoned Jack Walker, the fire chief, to see if it was right. Jack phoned me and said, 'What's going on? The union phoned me.' I said, 'Well, they don't think I can do it.' And I explained it to him. He said, 'Okay, I will fix that.' So he got me in. About a month later I got a call from the union that there was a job in Penticton in the drive-in."[277]

That "yellow brick road" saw a lot of highways and heartaches and for Maurice that meant making important decisions: "So that meant quitting my job here and I wasn't certain if I could make it. There was lots of worry about that. I quit my job and went there on the first of July. I got there two hours before show time. I didn't know anything about what kind of machine they had or setup. I met the manager, Herb Green. The projectionist there was a young man who had been there for two months and had a girlfriend in Vancouver. When you had a drive-in you had to work every night. There was no time off. So every night at the drive-in we had to be there at seven o'clock. He shook my hand and said, "Good luck. I'm going to Vancouver." So there I was all by myself."[278]

Maurice moved around the British Columbia Interior quite a lot—Vernon, Merritt, Penticton, and Kamloops, and with it the pressure of the "show must go on": "It was for my job, as a job. It had to be perfect. There was lots of stress in there too because there were so many people there and if something goes wrong, like it did...nobody else could come into the projection room. It was sealed to make it fireproof... If a machine breaks you had to fix it. You had to know how to fix it. You had to do all that. Stressful. Even if it looks easy, it was stressful because you never know if something would go wrong. The sound. You had to know how the sound. Then the focus. They changed to Cinemascope. Then you had to change different lenses in your machine in order to be able to show the Cinemascope because Cinemascope is taken with three cameras and then they bring them together. When they put in on the film, it's one film. The sound was very touchy because on the film there's a soundtrack that goes with it. It's a little light that shines on that soundtrack. That's what gives you...an Exciter lamp they call it. That's what gives you the sound. That light has to be right on it square. The light had to be perfect square on the soundtrack. If it was off a little, the voice was all scratchy."[279] Stuff audiences took for granted but the projectionist couldn't.

If Maurice makes the job of a projectionist sound complicated, it was—lots of machinery and parts, and technical terminology. You might not need a degree from M.I.T. but you needed engineering know-how, nevertheless. Maurice recalls one of those moments at—and you might have guessed—the Vernon Towne Cinema, with what are now part of projection equipment history: carbon rods. These functioned much like an arc welder. The lamp was started approximately three minutes prior to starting the projector to allow the light colour and the illumination to stabilize. The carbon rods were momentarily

touched together and then separated approximately 1/2 inch. The electricity would start to arc, burning the carbon and creating a white-hot plasma gas, which provided the very high intensity light, and a lot of heat. The aperture plates of the projectors that used the high powered arc lamps had to be water-cooled to prevent film damage. According to Maurice, a problem with the rods caused him some momentary grief: "It happened to me in Vernon at the Towne Cinema. I was showing *Popeye* and I had a bunch of kids in the afternoon. I got caught like that, the rod was getting burned, and burned, and burned and if it gets too close it would burn the holder. I said, 'What do I do, shut down or?' So I let it go as far as I could and when I started to lose the light I just changed it. So I cut off the film a bit. So the kids, I don't know if they ever knew that I'd cut that film in that part. I never had any complaints, but it happened to me."[280]

Enjoyment for some means stress for others. According to Maurice, "There was lots of tension. Another time in Northhills when I was working and the handle broke. You see you've got the lever. You know what's in there? To cut the light. You open it up and there's, from the other machine they called it, the Zipper. It's a magnetic thing that will shut off so fast and let the light go into the other one…you've got to open the vales. There's an arm on it and it broke. So what do you do? I sent the busboy. I said, 'Go and get me some Crazy Glue quick.' So he did and I put it there and it worked perfect."[281]

Maurice's observations about working the cinema projection booth remind us that there was a time when enjoying a film in your theatre seat meant hard and sometime stressful work for someone else—one that also required certified training. Over time technological innovations have changed how we view and talk about the movies. The projection booth as Maurice saw it is becoming passé, replaced by digital and fiber optic transmissions direct to the theatre. In fact, contemporary film aficionados are apt to download movies right off the internet. Future film story tellers will have different experiences to share about the movies they watched, and the impact of those visual narratives, I am sure, will be highly recognizable to their audiences—I-pods and newer technology will have replaced ornate theatres as their cinematic venues. Although twenty first century film and visual culture will be influenced by new technologies, people will probably react to these visual narratives in a manner not that different from the feelings and emotions that our story tellers have shared with you. They may not be the collective experiences of sitting in a darkened cinema and afterwards, a midnight stroll home; the next generation of visual communication experiences will be more private, more individualistic—but they too, as time passes might serve as window into their personal histories as well. We can only wonder what lies ahead for British Columbia's movie audiences and communities at the start of this millennium—whether watching or making movies.

CHAPTER SIX

It's a Wrap!

The cinema culture of a small community can take on many shapes and forms. Those of us with entrepreneurial interests probably would like to see the business or production side of films or filmmaking become more visible within the community or region—that perhaps the local area will become a destination point for the cinema business. But when you look at it, that aspect of the business affects only a few. The real pulses of the community are the people themselves, young and old, and it is the quality of their lives that resonate with most of our cinematic stories. Who knows what the cinematic culture has in store for communities in the twenty-first century but it seems that for many of us movies and the theatre forged some type of bond. It may have been in the post-movie banter or in the osmosis of the theatre's ambiance (cine-plexes not included) that touched our souls. They were in some fashion part of the community's life-support system. Perhaps the following photograph illustrates that although the years come and go and changes may occur in the urban landscape, such as altering the face of Vancouver's Granville Street for the 2010 Olympics, the marquees of the Odeon and the Vogue theatres remind us that the legacies of those cinemas live on both spiritually and physically, as if standing guard over our cinematic memories.

This book has been primarily a collection of the voices of movie-goers; people who no matter where they lived seemed to have spoken intuitively the same cinematic language. Whether they had set down roots in Kelowna or remember a movie from their childhood in Portsmouth, England, they recall such things as the decorativeness of the 1940s movie palaces, the long cues outside the theatres, and the cigarette smoke drifting down from the cinema's balcony. Others believed that with the proper logistical support and infrastructures, British Columbia's smaller communities would witness a movie-making bonanza. But Hollywood is Hollywood and although cities such as Vancouver have garnered fair chunks of the filmmaking trade, rural and small-town British Columbia does not appear to be the new Hollywood North—nor should it seem to be as such. The "cinematic highways" that lead to larger urban destination points will probably not materialize in the same way in smaller communities—that cinematic turnpike at best will be a side road, at least for the moment. But for most film audiences and moviemakers

that should not be seen as a road not taken. The "reel" Cinema, B.C., is still in the memories and dreams of local movie-goers past and present, and in film festival organizers and theatre managers who still believe movies are indeed pictures and words that still glow in the dark.

This narrative is a testament to that fact. Whether it be in the memories that film goers have of film comedian Harold Lloyd or of recalling an evening's stroll home from the Cumberland cinema, these stories tell us that British Columbians loved watching and making movies.

ISSN 1918-4492

FINAL CREDITS

1. Waller, Gregory A. "Imagining and Promoting the Small-Town Theater"
2. *Cinema Journal* - 44, Number 3, Spring 2005, p. 3.
3. Same as above, p. 3.
4. Same as above, p. 5.
5. Same as above, p. 6.
6. Same as above, p. 6.
7. Same as above, p. 16.
8. Sontag, Susan. "The Decay of Cinema." *New York Times* on the Web, Sunday, February 25, 1996.
9. Same as above.
10. Southern, Karen, and Peggy Bird. *Pulp, Paper and People* (1988) <http://www.patriciatheatre.com/history.htm>.
11. Green, Ted. Interview. April 23, 2008.
12. Same as above.
13. Sellars, Gerry. (month not specified), 2008.
14. Same as above.
15. Same as above.
16. Same as above.
17. Same as above.
18. Same as above.
19. Same as above.
20. Same as above.
21. Same as above.
22. Huntley, Jean. Interview. April 23, 2008.
23. Same as above.
24. Same as above.
25. Nanaimo Community Archives: Information Files.
26. Same as above.
27. Nanaimo Community Archives: Mel Gow Family Files.

ISSN 1918-4492

28. Same as above.
29. Nanaimo Community Archives: Information Files.
30. Nanaimo Community Archives: Mel Gow Family Files.
31. Warren, Louise. "An Historical Glimpse of Movie Theatres in Ladysmith." In *Ladysmith's Colourful History*, compiled by Viola Johnson Cull, Ladysmith Historical Society, 1885, Ladysmith Community Archives.
32. Same as above.
33. Same as above.
34. Same as above.
35. Same as above.
36. Same as above.
37. *The Ladysmith Chronicle*, June 4, 1954, Ladysmith Community Archives.
38. Williams, Brian. "Cassidy Drive-Inn" (not dated), *Personal Notes*, Ladysmith and District Historical Society, Ladysmith Community Archives.
39. "Opening of New Theatre," *Cumberland Islander*, July 16, 1914, p. 1.
40. MacInnes, Ian. "Theatre Segregation", August 2, 2009.
41. Same as above.
42. Same as above.
43. Same as above.
44. Same as above.
45. Smith, Sally. Interview at the Duncan Museum, August 13, 2009.
46. Same as above.
47. Branting, Evanna. Interview at the Duncan Museum, August 13, 2009.
48. Richard, Aaron, "Racial Segregation Enforced in Duncan," *Valley News Leader Pictorial* Sunday, December 17, 2006.
49. Same as above.
50. Kroek, Ruth. Quoted in "Racial Segregation Enforced in Duncan," *Valley News Leader Pictorial* Sunday, December 17, 2006.
51. Lowe, David. Quoted in "Racial Segregation Enforced in Duncan," *Valley News Leader Pictorial* Sunday, December 17, 2006.
52. Kroek, Ruth. Quoted in "Racial Segregation Enforced in Duncan," *Valley News Leader Pictorial* Sunday, December 17, 2006.
53. Same as above.
54. Todd, Kamala. Telephone Interview, 2008 (Month and day not specified).
55. Same as above.
56. Same as above.
57. Same as above.
58. Same as above.
59. Same as above.
60. English, Cathy. Curator, Revelstoke Museum and Archives: Historical Notes on Cinema.

61. Same as above.
62. Same as above.
63. Same as above.
64. Same as above.
65. Same as above.
66. Same as above.
67. Lee Morris Obituary, *Armstrong Advertiser*, January 9, 1941, Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Arts Society.
68. Lee Morris Synopsis (not dated), Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Arts Society.
69. Same as above.
70. Lee Morris Short Biography (un-authored and not dated), Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Arts Society.
71. Same as above.
72. Lee Morris Synopsis (not dated), Armstrong Spallumcheen Museum and Arts Society.
73. Affleck, Edward L. "The Silent Movie Pianist," *Personal Notes*, September 11, 1990.
74. Same as above.
75. Same as above.
76. Same as above.
77. Same as above.
78. Ramsden, Alan. Interview. June 18, 2009.
79. Same as above.
80. Same as above.
81. Same as above.
82. Same as above.
83. Same as above.
84. Same as above.
85. Anglican Archives at BC at http://aabc/WWW.angbc.archbc/display.ANGSYNOD-602.
86. Andrei Bondoreff, *Times Colonist*, March 22, 2009, from *Times Colonist* Online at http://www.timescolonist.com/news/mission+ships+provided+lifeline+west+coast/1416034/story.html.
87. B.C. Aviation Museum, Victoria, http://www.bcam.net/bc-aviation-museum-history,html.
88. Same as above.
89. Same as above.
90. Halushak, Erin. "Historic Demolition," *Comox Valley Record*, April 21, 2008, p. 3.
91. Same as above.
92. McNamee, Joan. "Movie Memories (not dated).
93. Sparks, Jean. Interview. April 29, 2008.
94. Lane, Ken. Interview. April 27, 2008.
95. Hartley, Barb. Interview.
96. Same as above.
97. Haggerty, Terri. Interview. February 8, 2008.

98. Sellers.
99. Beckman, Mabel. January 12, 1941 letter to DeMille offering her opinions on *Northwest Mounted Police, Northwest Mounted Police* Files, B563/F18, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Provo, Utah, 2002.
100. Shervey, Beth C. *The Little Theatre on the Square: Four Decades of a Small-Town Equity Theatre*, Southern Illinois UP, Carbondale, Illinois, 2000, p. 23.
101. MacNamee.
102. CURA Interview: Barbara Kelly, April 16, 2008.
103. CBCnews.ca website for Wednesday, October 11, 2006.
104. CBCnews.ca.
105. Hartley, Barb. Interview.
106. Same as above.
107. Same as above.
108. Kelly, Barb. Interview. April 16, 2008.
109. Hartley, Barb. Interview.
110. Archibald, Margaret. Interview. April 26, 2008.
111. Ladrew, Robin. Interview. April 24, 2008.
112. Same as above.
113. Armstrong, Merri. Interview. April 25, 2008.
114. Same as above.
115. Same as above.
116. Same as above.
117. Mitchell, Brian. Interview. February 29, 2008.
118. Same as above.
119. Same as above.
120. Archibald, Margaret. Interview. April 26, 2008.
121. Same as above.
122. Same as above.
123. Kelly.
124. Nordstrom, David. Interview. 2008.
125. Same as above.
126. Same as above.
127. Same as above.
128. Sellars.
129. Same as above.
130. Same as above.
131. Same as above.
132. Same as above.
133. Same as above.
134. Kelly.

ISSN 1918-4492

135. MacNamee.
136. Same as above.
137. Same as above.
138. Same as above.
139. Archibald.
140. Same as above.
141. Kelly.
142. Same as above.
143. Same as above.
144. Saunders, Gail. Interview. April 17, 2008.
145. Same as above.
146. Same as above.
147. Lyons, Joan. E-Mail Interview. December 12, 2007.
148. Same as above.
149. Perry, Linda. Interview. February 10, 2008.
150. Sparks, Jean. Interview. April 29, 2008.
151. Pasta, Peggy. Interview. February 20, 2008.
152. Frampton, David. *Filmosophy*. Wallflower Press, London U.K., 2006.
153. Sparks.
154. Same as above.
155. Same as above.
156. Beattie, Nigel. Interview. 2008 (month and day not specified)
157. Same as above.
158. Kelly.
159. Same as above.
160. Same as above.
161. Same as above.
162. Hartley.
163. Same as above.
164. Burnell, Roz. Interview. April 25, 2008.
165. Same as above.
166. Same as above.
167. Hartley.
168. Same as above.
169. Collins, Margaret. Interview. August 2009.
170. Same as above.
171. Same as above.
172. Same as above.
173. Same as above.
174. Mitchell.

175. Baugh, Bruce. Interview. 2008, (Month and Day not specified).
176. Same as above.
177. Same as above.
178. Same as above.
179. Thornton, Robin. Interview. April 21, 2008.
180. Same as above.
181. Same as above.
182. Same as above.
183. Same as above.
184. Same as above.
185. Pasta.
186. Same as above.
187. Gittings, Chris. *Canadian National Cinema*, Routledge, London, U.K., 2002, p.104.
188. Huntley, Jean. Interview. April 23, 2008.
189. Perry, Linda. Interview. February10, 2008.
190. Huntley.
191. Mitchell.
192. Burnell.
193. Mitchell.
194. Same as above.
195. Hartley.
196. Same as above.
197. Sigalet, Jennifer. Interview. April 21, 2008.
198. Same as above.
199. Same as above.
200. Same as above.
201. Same as above.
202. Same as above.
203. Dixon, Susan. Interview. April 17, 2008.
204. Thornton.
205. Same as above.
206. Same as above.
207. Same as above.
208. Same as above.
209. Same as above.
210. Same as above.
211. Same as above.
212. Gasher, Michael. *Hollywood North: The Feature Film Industry in B.C.* UBC Press, 2002.
213. Nesteroff, Greg. "Boris Karloff in B.C." *British Columbia History 39*(1): 16.
214. Nesteroff, p. 16.

215. Same as above, p. 17.
216. Same as above, p. 17.
217. Same as above p. 18.
218. Same as above p. 21.
219. Patenaude, Branwen C. "The Rise and Fall of Cinema B.C." *British Columbia History 38*(2): 2.
220. Same as above.
221. Same as above.
222. Same as above.
223. Same as above.
224. Patenaude, Branwen. Interview: Donald Van Buskirk, Dec. 16, 1981, T3922.000, B.C. Archives.
225. Patenaude, Branwen. Interview: Wilfred Norn, November 30, 1981, T3921.0001, B.C. Archives.
226. Same as above.
227. Buskirk.
228. Same as above.
229. Same as above.
230. Same as above.
231. Same as above.
232. Same as above.
233. Gasher, p. 29.
234. Same as above, p. 29.
235. Same as above, p. 29.
236. *BC Historical Society Newsletter 44*(4) (January, 2005). <http://www.vancouver-historical-society.ca/PDF/January2005.pdf>.
237. <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_1907.htm>.
238. <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_1907.htm>.
239. Druick, Zoe. "Vancouver Cinema in the Sixties." 1. <www.vancouverartinthesixties.com/essays/vancouver-cinema-in-the-sixties>.
240. Same as above, p. 8.
241. Same as above, p. 1.
242. Same as above, p. 6.
243. *Ladysmith Chronicle* (18/10/2005). Ladysmith Community Archives.
244. *Ladysmith Chronicle* (11/6/2005). Ladysmith Community Archives.
245. Dunn-Morris, Danielle. "My Moment with Robert Redford in *An Unfinished* Life." February 13, 2008.
246. Moore, Taylor. Interview. April 22, 2008.
247. Same as above.
248. Same as above.
249. Same as above.
250. Same as above.
251. Same as above.
252. Same as above.

253. Same as above.
254. Same as above.
255. Same as above.
256. Same as above.
257. Same as above.
258. Same as above.
259. Webber, Ernie. Interview. 2008 (day and month not specified).
260. Same as above.
261. Haggerty, Brad. Interview. February 7, 2008.
262. Haggerty, B.
263. Thomas, Melissa. Interview. April 20, 2008.
264. Hartley.
265. Weller, Vicci. Interview. April 14, 2009.
266. Same as above.
267. Same as above.
268. Same as above.
269. Lytton Museum and Archives, "Movies, Movies, Movies!," Issue 2, March 2000.
270. Haggerty, B.
271. Haggerty, Terry. February 8, 2008.
272. Haggerty, T.
273. Pasta.
274. Tessier, Maurice. Interview. February 1, 2008.
275. Tessier.
276. Same as above.
277. Same as above.
278. Same as above.
279. Same as above.
280. Same as above.
281. Same as above.
282. Same as above.