
Albuquerque Theatres

Preliminary Notes to Whet Your Appetite and Tempt You to Pick Up Where I Left Off

(Autobiography Volume Five)

Many moons ago I got curious about the various theatres and cinemas in Albuquerque. I went to the downtown library and started going through the old city directories and microfilms and found mouth-watering information. I excitedly showed this to a number of people and met absolute discouragement everywhere. After a short while I stopped. Well, it's now 33 years later and I finally decided it was time to start all over again. So on a brief trip back to Albuquerque I spent several hours over the 7th and 8th of November 2008 going through the city directories at the downtown library. Oh what fun!

Now, I have no energy to write my own book on this topic, so let's make it a collective endeavor. If you have any mementoes, photographs, memories, blueprints, architectural renderings, building plans, programs, business correspondence, interoffice memos, souvenirs, postcards, news stories, or any information at all, [please write to me](#) and together we'll work it in to a fuller narrative. Eventually this can be a wonderful book.



The oldest city directory available at the downtown branch dates from 1892. It has some tantalizing information about Oreste Bachechi, who, as we all know, was later instrumental in opening the KiMo Theatre:

Bachechi, Oresto, saloon, 309 W. Railroad avenue.

Dragons & Co., M., (M. Dragons and Orestes Bochechi,) saloon, 309
W. Railroad Avenue.

What we can gather from the above, obviously, is that Oreste was a saloon-keeper prior to going into show biz.

When we sift through the pages some more, we discover that there was only one building at the time that seemed to be functioning as a theatre, and it must have been called the Grant Opera House, at the northwest corner of Third Street and Central Avenue (formerly known as Railroad Avenue), either next door to or actually including Bachechi's saloon. As with most opera houses, it also contained various offices. Did it also include government offices, as so many opera houses of the time did? Was the opera house on an upper story? Was the stage raked? Was the auditorium floor level? Could it double as a convention hall or dining hall or dance hall? Did it have a horseshoe balcony? Did it have box seats? Were they adjacent to the stage to allow VIPs to be seen rather than to allow them to see the action on stage? According to an essay at <http://abq300.org/index.aspx?pk=220&temp=2> the seating capacity was 1,000 and it had been built by railroad man Angus Grant in 1883. According to the [Albuquerque Historical Society](#) its first show was *HMS Pinafore*, which opened on 11 November.

Caledonian Coal Co., N. B. Field, vice-president, Grant Block, W.
Railroad avenue and Third street.

Corry, Trevor, (Crawford & Corry,) Grant Opera Block.

Crawford, A. J., (Crawford & Corry,) Opera Block.

Field, Neill B., attorney at law, office Grant Block, res. 1201 Tijeras
road.

Grant Opera House, B. F. Davis, manager, cor. Third st. and
Railroad ave.

Hurd & Hite, proprietors and publishers The Times, Opera House
Block.

Hite, W. W., (Hurd & Hite,) res. 509 S. Second street.

Hurd, J. K., editor The Times, Opera Home Block, res. 114 S. Third
st.

Ilfeld Bros., (Louis and Noah,) jobbers and general merchants,
Grant Block, Third street, northwest cor. of Railroad avenue.

Ilfeld, Noah, (Ilfeld Bros.,) res. 523 W. Copper avenue.

Ilfeld, Louis, (Ilfeld Bros.,) res. 701 W. Copper avenue.

Kelly, Chas., clerk, (Ilfeld Bros.)

New Mexico Cattle Sanitary Board, Joe E. Samuel, president, G. L.
Brooks, secretary, office, Grant Block.

N. M. Live Stock Co., G. L. Brooks, secretary, office, Grant Block.

Times, The, Hurd & Hite, publishers, office, Opera House.

From the above we can see that B F Davis was the manager of the Grant Opera House proper. When we dig a little, we discover that he held other titles as well:

Davis, B., F., agt. A. A. & L. A. Grant, office, 314 W. Gold avenue,
res. 213 S. Fourth street.

Electric Light Company, B. F. Davis, sec. and treas., 314 W. Gold
ave.

Well, that's all the theatrical knowledge we can glean from the 1892 directory. Then there is a gigantic 20-year gap.

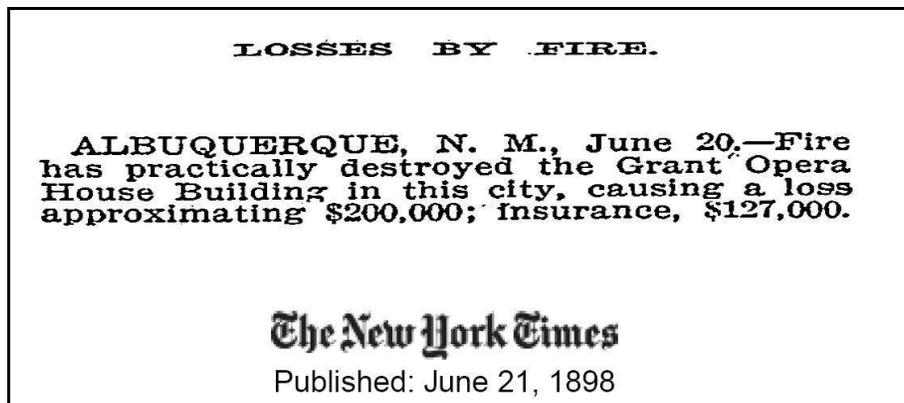
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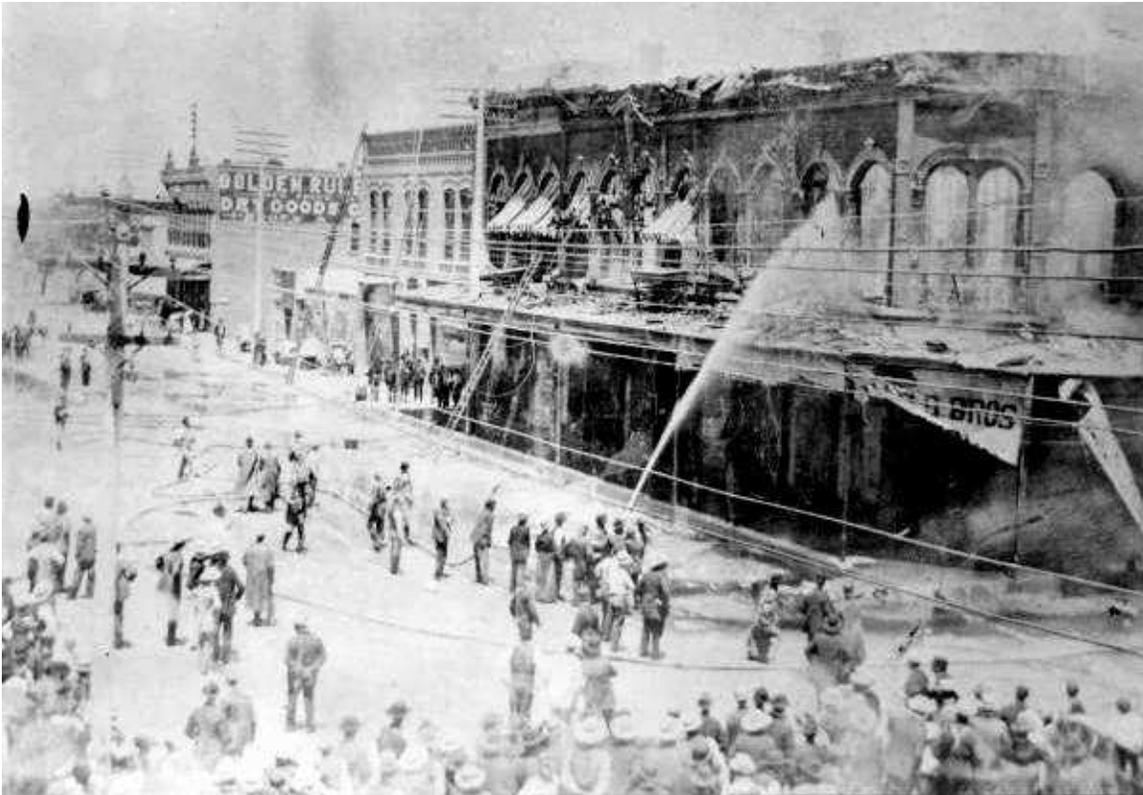
1912

Though the library is missing the 1912 directory, [Joy Fisher](#) has posted the business listings at the [USGenWeb Archives](#) page. What a wonderful resource! Let's see what we can learn.

First of all, there is no Grant Opera House anymore. There is a Grant building, but it is just a business block, not a theatre. What happened? A Google search reveals that the Grant Opera House had vanished in a fire on 20 June 1898. Even the *New York Times* made a mention of it:



The University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research has posted its Digital Collections on line, and among the photos is this heart-breaker, wrongly dated 1899:



The introduction to the directory is helpful after a fashion:

ALBUQUERQUE. Pop 15,000. Bernalillo county. Settled in 1880. It is located on the A T & S F Ry. (Three branches of this line terminate here the city being the junction for the southern line to Amarilla [sic] Tex the west line to Los Angeles and Santa Fe and the Chicago El Paso line. It is the largest city and the most important railroad and industrial center in the state of New Mexico and is situated in a comparatively thickly settled district with many suburban towns around it. It is located in almost the geographical center of the Sunshine state and for this reason enjoys many advantages. It is in the very heart of the "well country" and has a splendidly equipped sanatorium for the prevention and cure of tuberculosis. Albuquerque is conceded to be one of the most progressive cities in the west. Its citizens overlook no opportunity to add to its standing and prestige. It is the trade center for the growers of sheep, wool, cattle and for miners and ranchers and is also the logical center of the timber industry and the largest lumber plant in the United States is operated here. The railroad shops of the Santa Fe R R are located here and employ a large number of men. Albuquerque is a modern up-to-date city. Has electric light, water and gas plants, well-equipped fire department, an excellent police force, a first class electric street car system, public and private schools of the highest class, including the University of the State of

New Mexico, six solid banking institutions, a public library and many large wholesale and retail houses. The churches represent nearly every denomination and creed. There are 19 hotels, a good hospital, brick yards, 2 planing mills, a boom factory, 4 flour mills, a foundry, a theatre, several moving picture shows and many other places of amusement. Two ably conducted daily newspapers the Evening Herald and the Morning Journal and five successful weeklies, the State Democrat, the New Age, La Bandera Americana, El Mensajero, and La Opiono Publica and one semi-monthly the La Aurora are published. The principal shipments are lumber, flour and ore.

We have several listings of interest. The Bachechis are still in business:

Bachechi A O & Co (Leo Bonaguido, A O Bachechi, Eltone Franchinia), gen store 105 E Tijeras av.
CONSOLIDATED LIQUOR CO (INC), J D Eakin, Pres; G Giomi, Vice Pres; Chas Melini, Sec; O Bachechi, Treas; Wholesale Wines, Liquors and Cigars 121-123 N 1st s w cor Copper av.
(See p 112.)

There is also a theatre to take the place of the lost Grant Opera House:

Elks Theatre, Frank A Stortz mngr, S 5th cor Gold av.

We shall learn more about this below. In the meantime, there are a few listings for moving-picture shows:

Airdome Theatre, J H Houston mngr, moving pictures 300 N 2d.
Crystal Theatre, H E Sherman mngr, moving pictures 221 S 2d.
Hilling & Warden, mngrs Orpheum Theatre, 502 S 2d.
Orpheum Theatre Hilling & Warden mngrs, 502 S 2d.
Pastime Theatre, J T Sherman mngr, moving pictures 213 W Central av.

These two fellows have nothing to do with show business right now, but they will, soon enough:

Star Hay & Grain Co (Jno W Palmer, Smith H Seth), 224 N 2d.

Joseph Barnett will later come to prominence in the cinema world, but for now he's a saloon keeper, and it appears that he has something to do with the Barnett Building:

Barnett Jos, saloon 124 W Central av.
Kraft Julius E, dentist 1 Barnett bldg.
Thurston Alf B, dentist 1 Barnett bldg.
Frank Chas A, phys 4 Barnett bldg.
Spargo Walter W, phys 6 Barnett bldg.
Wroth Jas H, phys 6 Barnett bldg.
Burton Solomon L, phys 9 Barnett bldg.
Divine Frances, stenogr 10 Barnett bldg.
Equitable Life Insurance Society of New York, W S Patterson gen
agt, 10 Barnett bldg.
Jordon Oil & Development Co, W S Patterson sec, 10 Barnett bldg.
Pearce Jno F, phys 11 Barnett bldg.
Hickey Mayo E, lawyer 16 Barnett bldg.
DIAMOND COAL CO, T E POLLOCK Pres; F J Allison, Vice Pres;
M E Hickey, Sec and Treas; R R Pollock, Gen Mngr and Sales
Agt; Coal Miners and Shippers 17-18 Barnett bldg. (See front
cover.)
MONTOSA SHEEP CO, R R Pollock, Pres; T E Pollock, Sec and
Treas; J L Davis, Vice Pres and Mngr; 17-18 Barnett bldg.
POLLOCK ROBERT R, PRES Red River Land & Cattle Co and
Montosa Sheep Co, Gen Mngr and Sales Agt Diamond Coal Co,
17-18 Barnett bldg.
POLLOCK SHEEP CO, R R Pollock, Pres; T E Pollock, Vice Pres; C
O Robinson, Sec and Treas; 17-18 Barnett bldg.
POLLOCK THOMAS E, PRES Diamond Coal Co, Sec and Treas
Montosa Sheep Co and Red River Land & Cattle Co, 17-18
Barnett bldg.
RED RIVER LAND & CATTLE CO, R R Pollock, Pres; Cole
Raileston, Vice Pres and Gen Mngr; T E Pollock, Sec and Treas;
Cattle Breeders 17-18 Barnett bldg.
Rice Lucien G, phys 19 Barnett bldg.
Reidy Jno A, phys 21 Barnett bldg.
Moran Jno J, phys 24 Barnett bldg
Keim Wilson C, ins 26 Barnett bldg.
Cornell Harry B, lawyer 29 Barnett bldg.
Alameda Realty Investment Co, P Herbert Brame sales mngr, 32
Barnett bldg.
B PUBLISHING CO, PUBLISHERS The Southwestern, 33 Barnett
bldg.
CRAUN S VICTOR, MNGR Southwestern Correspondence
Schools, and Lawyer 34 Barnett bldg. (See p 107.)
SOUTHWESTERN Correspondence Schools, S Victor Craun Mngr,
34 Barnett bldg. (See p 107.)

Southwestern School of Trained Nurses, Cilius A Hansen supt, 34
Barnett bldg.

Hansen Cilius A, phys 34 Barnett bldg.

La Driere Jos L, architect 36 Barnett bldg.

Moore Hannah V, massage 38 Barnett bldg.

Yott E Lee Roy, music tchr 39 Barnett bldg.

International Correspondence Schools, Frank H Millen agt, 41
Barnett bldg.

Taylor Wm L, phys 44 Barnett bldg.

Starr Mrs Viola, dressmkr 45 Barnett bldg.

That's all we can do for now.

(Scroll down to the next page.)



1914

The next directory available at the downtown library dates from 1914, and in that one we learn more interesting things. We see that Oreste Bachechi and his relatives were still active in the saloon business, but that they had branched out somewhat:

SALOONS

Bachechi A O & Co, 300-304 N 1st

STEAMSHIP TICKET AGENTS

Bachechi A O & Co, 300-304 N 1st

There were further Bachechi listings as well:

BACHECHI ARTURO O (A O Bachechi & Co), h 404 N 2d, phone 582

BACHECHI A O & CO (A O Bachechi, E Franchini, L Bonaguidi)
dry goods, groceries, saloon, genl mdse N 1st ne cor Tijeras
av, phone 154

Bachechi Iola Miss, h 404 N 2d

Bachechi Maria Mrs, prop New Hotel, h 404 N 2d

BACHECHI ORESTE, treas Consolidated Liquor Co, r 404 N 2d,
phone 582

Burke Bud G, bkpr A O Bachechi & Co, rms 304 N 1st

Napoleon Nicolas, clk A O Bachechi & Co, h 1219 Barelas rd

New Hotel The, Mrs Maria Bachechi prop, 304 N 1st

Santori Atelio, bartndr A O Bachechi & Co, rms 524 S 2d

Tavasci Giacoma, clk A O Bachechi & Co, r 804 N 12th

Joseph Barnett by now had gotten interested in amusements, and added these to his collection. But first, let's look at the lucrative institution mentioned earlier. Now we know its name:

White Elephant, 124 W Central av

Brady John, bartndr White Elephant, r 223 S Edith

Ferguson Anthony (c), porter White Elephant, rms 411 W Lead av

Knodt Edward, bartndr White Elephant, rms 116½ S 3d

Schoenecker Louis A, bartndr White Elephant, rms 20 Grant bldg

Taylor Joseph C, mgr White Elephant, r rear 408 N 2d

WHITE ELEPHANT, Jos Barnett prop, 124 W Central av, Phone

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The address, of course, makes it interesting, since we know that a few years after the declaration of prohibition, Barnett demolished the White Elephant saloon and built the Sunshine Theatre in its place. So it might behoove us to take a look at the buildings around the White Elephant. When we do that we see the Lyric Theatre, the Lyric Rooms, a rooming house, and the multiple-suite Barnett Building:

CENTRAL AV W

119 Lyric Theatre

119½ Lyric Rooms

120 Natl Woolen Mills

121 Chaplin Wm

122 Myers Café

124 White Elephant

Wills & Anderson

near **State Natl Bank Bldg**

State National Bank

Rooms –

*1-2-3-4 Maron & Wood

*5 Dunn R G & Co

*6-7 Tull & Bakes

*8 Vacant

*9 Texas Bitulithic Co

2d intersects

200 Butt's Inc

200-2 **Barnett Bldg**

Lobby Williams E A (c)

Rooms –

...and that was followed by a lengthy list of renters, both residential and commercial.

If we look further through the directory, we see some more interesting items:

BARNETT JOSEPH, prop White Elephant and Palace Billiard

Parlor, pres Barnett's Amusement Co, rms Alvarado Hotel

Barnett's Amusement Co (inc), Jos Barnett pres, H E Sherman sec,

mgr, props Crystal, Pastime and Airdome Theatres 108 S 2d

PALACE BILLIARD PARLOR, Joseph Barnett prop, 116-18 S 2d,

phone 853

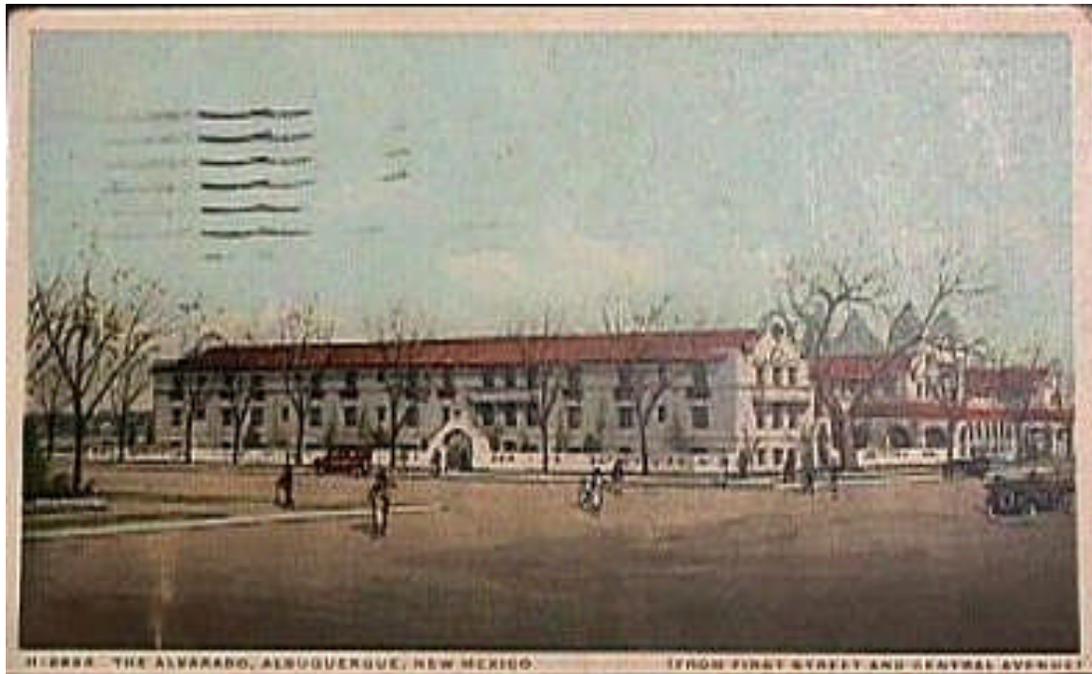
Sherman Horace E, sec, mgr Barnett's Amusement Co, r 515 W
Lead av
Williams Edgar A (c), porter Barnett bldg, r 315 E Mountain
Wroth James H, phys 6-8 Barnett bldg, r 500 W Copper av

So that means that Mr Barnett was running not merely his saloon, but also a billiard parlor and three cinemas. But why was he living in a hotel room? Did he not own his own home? Could he not have furnished his own apartment in one of his own buildings? Let's learn a little about the Alvarado Hotel (from the 1912 directory):

ALVARADO THE, FRED HARVEY Propr; J E Smithers, Mngr;
Santa Fe Depot.
HARVEY FRED, PROPR THE Alvarado and Curios Santa Fe
Depot.

And from the 1915 directory:

**ALVARADO HOTEL, Fred Harvey prop, J E Smithers mgr, W
Central av se cor S 1st, phones office 52, 101, exchange
connecting all rooms**



The Alvarado was a premier hotel, and Barnett's room was likely quite luxurious, but it would still be a rather strange place for someone of his profile to stay.

When we turn to the business listings, we see Joseph Barnett's three cinemas, as well as several others, listed under:

AMUSEMENT – PLACES OF

Airdome Theatre, N 2d ne cor W Tijeras av

Bowdich W E, 2d flr Elks Theatre bldg

Crystal Theatre, 219-21 S 2d

Elks Theatre, W Gold av sw cor 5th

Lyric Theatre, 119 W Central av

Orpheum Theatre, 500-04 S 2d

Pastime Theatre, 213 W Central av

Let's go through these one by one:

AIRDOME THEATRE

Airdome Theatre, N 2d ne cor W Tijeras av

That's the only listing. Barnett had taken it over from previous manager J H Houston. Its full address, as we learned above, was 300 N 2nd St.

CRYSTAL THEATRE

Crystal Theatre, 219-21 S 2d

Di Blassi Nicholas, musician Crystal Theatre

Crystal Theatre, Barnett's Amusement Co props, 219-21 S 2d

Fuhrmeyer Ernest G, musician Crystal Theatre, r 824 N 5th

Hoots James, mach opr Crystal Theatre, r 33 Barnett bldg

Hase Kate Miss, cashr Crystal Theatre, h 515 New York av

Montoya Andres, janitor Crystal Theatre, r 100 S 3d

Sgangini Leo, usher Crystal Theatre, h 631 S Broadway

Sullivan John L, stage mgr Crystal Theatre, h 216 N Arno

Zeigler Della Mrs, musician Crystal Theatre, h 506 W Tijeras

Let's not stop with Della Ziegler (her name was misspelled in the listing). When we look at the neighboring listings, we discover a little bit about her relatives:

Zeigler Elizabeth Miss, h 506 W Tijeras av

Ziegler William S, watchmkr S T Vann, r 506 W Tijeras av

*VANN SAMUEL T, jeweler, watchmaker and optician 214 W
Central Av, phone 123, r 1023 W Central av, phone 1655*

The above tells us something, though not too clearly. The existence of a stage manager tells us that it had a stage. A full-time janitor tells us that the establishment was sufficiently prestigious not to use the services of a cleaning agency. The Crystal was thus a mixed-use theatre/cinema. We'll learn a little bit more about it soon.

ELKS' THEATRE

Elks Theatre, W Gold av sw cor 5th
Bowdich W E, 2d flr Elks Theatre bldg
Bowdich W Earl, skating rink 2d fl Elks Theatre bldg, h 605 S
Broadway

**ELKS CLUB ROOM, Frank A Stortz mgr, 500-506 W Gold av,
phone 306**

**ELKS THEATRE, Frank A Stortz mgr, 500-506 W Gold av,
advance sale phone 19, box office phone 306**

SOCIETIES, CLUBS, ETC.

(Miscellaneous)

Elks' Club—500-506 W. Gold av. F. A. Stortz, mgr.

**STORTZ FRANK A, mgr Elks' Club and Elks' Theatre, r 715 W
Gold av, phone 143**

Now, it is clear that the Elks' Theatre was a legit house, operated by the Elks Society, and that it replaced the Grant Opera House. And, further, it was built in the traditional style of an opera house, with the entertainments on an upper floor which could double as a roller-skating rink. From that it follows that the auditorium floor was level, with free-standing folding chairs, and that the stage was raked. But how large was it, and what did it look like? [Mo Palmer, in *Albuquerque Then and Now*](#) (pp 46–47) tells us that the Elks' Theatre replaced the San Felipe Hotel after it burned in 1899. It was not until after the theatre was built and functioning that the building was expanded to include the Elks' Lodge. The Elks' Theatre stood on the site now occupied by the Dennis Chavez Federal Building (or, in Postalese, "DTS," for Downtown Station).

Thanks to the University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research and its "Digital Collections," we can get the smallest glimpse of the side of the building, from the back, if we strain our eyes. It's on the very right side of this photo, hidden behind the trees:



LYRIC THEATRE

Lyric Theatre, 119 W Central av

Cameron Frederick, prop Lyric Theatre, r 523 N 4th

Pishny Otto J, musician Lyric Theatre, r 207 W Tijeras av

Pope Henry, mach opr Lyric Theatre, rms 119½ W Central av

Smith James H, tkt clk Lyric Theatre, r 1010 S Arno

Spalding Cecelia Miss, musician Lyric Theatre, rms 119½ W
Central av

It is clear that the Lyric was a nickelodeon with a small stage, or perhaps no stage at all. In all likelihood it was a storefront nickelodeon, and the "Lyric Rooms" had been above it, under a different name, long before the storefront below had been carved out into the Lyric Theatre.

ORPHEUM THEATRE

Orpheum Theatre, 500-04 S 2d

Carty Clinton G, pres Orpheum Amusement Co, rms 418 S Arno

Orpheum Amusement Co, C G Carty pres, John Losh sec, John Seth
treas, props Orpheum Theatre, 500-04 S 2d

Losh had another job as well:

Losh John L, lino opr Lithgow Mfg Stationery Co, rms 512 S
Broadway

Orpheum Theatre, Orpheum Amusement Co props, 500-04 S 2d

Reed Burton E, mach opr Orpheum Theatre, h 418 S Arno

Reed Ray D, mgr Orpheum Theatre, h 418 S Arno

Seth John H, treas Orpheum Amusement Co, clk Star Hay & Grain
Co, h 322 S Arno

**Once again, let's not stop there. Let's take a look around
this John H Seth, and we'll learn about his family:**

Seth Eva M Miss, h 322 S Arno

SETH SMITH H, prop Star Hay & Grain Co, r 322 S Arno

We can discern something from this as well. With a president and treasurer, it is clear that the Orpheum was more than a mere nickelodeon. It was more prestigious, likely with a small vaudeville stage, and featuring more expensive pictures. Whether the stage presented third-rate vaudeville or maybe unit reviews or just local talent, I do not know, but I would guess there was some touring vaudeville. But the Orpheum would not have featured major Keith players, who did not appear at such small cinemas.



[Sandra Fye, *Historic Photos of Albuquerque* \(Nashville TN: Turner Publishing Company, 2007\), p 110, where it is revealed that the Orpheum was rebuilt from a burnt-out furniture store.](#)

PASTIME THEATRE

Pastime Theatre, 213 W Central av

Alvarez Adolfo, musician Pastime Theatre, r 507 W Central av

Ludes Lottie E Mrs, musician Pastime Theatre, rms 519 W Gold av

Moore George H, tkt clk Pastime Theatre, r 110 S Edith

Pastime Theatre, Barnett's Amusement Co props, 213 W Central av

Moore Williard B, mach opr, h 110 S Edith

Riebe Elmer, mach opr Pastime Theatre, r 106 S 6th

Elmer Riebe seems to have had a daughter:

Riebe Charlotte Miss, h 106 S 6th

Turner Gilbert L Mrs, cashr Pastime Theatre, rms 418 N 2d

And we can also learn a bit about Mrs Turner's husband:

Turner Gilbert L, waiter Sturges Hotel, rms 418 N 2d

Any cinema named Pastime was either a nickelodeon or a storefront nickelodeon. If there was any stage at all, it was minimal.

In addition to all of the above, we also find listings for musicians, though without any places of employment. Could they have worked at the various theatres around town? Especially the Elks' Theatre? And/or the Orpheum? Could they have worked at the various saloons and restaurants and clubs and banquet halls and hotel lounges? Could they have not had steady employment but simply wandered about from one establishment to another?

Badaracco Gregoria Miss, musician, h 320 W Tijeras av
 Chacon Pedro D, musician, h Mrs L W Chacon
 Cook Daniel J, musician, r 1003 Forrester av
 de Perez Carlos D, musician, h Old Albuquerque
 Donatti Giovanni, musician, h L M Donatti
 Donatti Luigi M, musician, r Old Albuquerque
 Farranti Carlo L, musician, rms 1401 W Mountain rd
 Ferratti Carlo, musician, rms 1007 S 2d
 Gable W M, musician, rms 302 Occidental bldg
 Gintner Michael G, musician, r 1601 N 2d
 Henderson Albert (c), piano player 312 WCopper av, rms 323 same
 Hoffman George C, musician, r 708 12th
 Jones Elizabeth, musician, h 711 S 3d
 Jones Orlando, musician, h 711 S 3d
 Marquez Manuel, musician, r 509 W gold av
 Martin William (c), piano player 312 W Copper av, r 214 W Tijeras
 av
 Michelbach Cora E Miss, musician, h Anton Michelbach
There's also a listing for her husband:
Michelbach Anton, millwright, r ss Plaza, Old Albuquerque
 Seratti Amadeo, musician, rms Pascual Cortignola
Let's look at the folks Amadeo Seratti rented a room from:
Cortignola Pascual, gardener, r ns Indian rd, 1 w 12th
Cortignola Pascual Jr, gardener, h Pascual Cortignola
 Wyatt Clyde (c), musician, rms 411 W Lead av
There's a listing for Clyde's wife as well:
Wyatt Lizzie (c), rms 411 W Lead av
 Zamora Ricardo, musician, h Feliciano Zamora

Ricardo was probably Feliciano's son. There's also a Feliciano M Zamora, who's probably related:

ZAMORA FELICIANO, painter and paperhanger, shop and residence, Mountain rd, Old Albuquerque, phone 1196
Zamora Feliciano M, lab, h 1723 S Broadway

And, even more fun, there's a stage manager, though we don't know where he worked. We can make an educated guess, though, that he worked at the Elks' Theatre, or possibly at the Orpheum or the Crystal:

Montoya Nestor Jr, stagemgr, h Nestor Montoya

And let's look at his father too:

MONTOYA NESTOR, managing editor La Bandera Americana, pres State Press Assn of N M, r 887 W Central av 15 W 15th, Old Albuquerque

(Scroll down to the next page.)



1915

And that takes us to the end of 1914. We can now move on to 1915. Let's see what the Bachechi family were up to:

BACHECHI ARTURO O (A O Bachechi & Co), r 404 N 2d, phone 582

BACHECHI A O & CO (A O Bachechi, Ettore and Ovido ranchini, Leonello Bonaguidi), dry goods, groceries, saloon, general merchandise 300-304 N 1st cor Tijeras av, phone 154

Bachechi Iola Miss h 404 N 2d

Bachechi Maria Mrs prop New Hotel h 404 N 2d

Bachechi Obaldo car repr Santa Fe

BACHECHI ORESTE, treas Consolidated Liquor Co, r 404 N 2d, phone 582

Biavaschi Joseph clk A O Bachechi & Co h 501 15th

Blair Howard L bkpr A O Bachechi & Co r 219 W Granite av

Bonaguidi Elvira Mrs cashr A O Bachechi & Co h 402 N 2d

BONAGUIDI LEONELLO (A O Bachechi & Co), r 402 N 2d

Lewis Ernest C clk A O Bachechi & Co h 521 W Silver av

Lewis Joseph G clk A O Bachechi & Co r 521 W Silver av

FRANCHINI ETTORE (A O Bachechi & Co), r 518 W Copper av, phone 1652

FRANCHINI OVIDO (A O Bachechi & Co), prop Mount Alton Rooming House, r same

New Hotel The, Mrs Maria Bachechi prop 304 N 1st

Ortiz Napoleon clk A O Bachechi & Co h 1113 N 1st

Boots and Shoes

BACHECHI A O & CO, 300-304 N 1st

General Merchandise

BACHECHI A O & CO, 300-304 N 1st

Saloons

BACHECHI A O & CO, 300-304 N 1st

Steamship Ticket Agents

BACHECHI A O & CO, 300-304 N 1st

We can also take another look at the Elks' Theatre:

ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETIES.

(Secret and Benevolent.)

Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

Albuquerque Lodge No. 461 – Meets 2d and 4th Wednesdays at Elks bldg. W. R. Walton, E. R.; F. A. Stortz, sec; C. A. Hawks, treas.

ELKS BUILDING, Frank A Stortz mgr, S 5th sw cor Gold

ELKS CLUB ROOM, Frank A Stortz mgr, Elks Building, phone 306

STORTZ FRANK A, mgr Elks Club and Elks Building, r 715 W Gold av, phone 143

Let's take a look again at Joseph Barnett's empire. At first glance, it seems that he's doing quite well indeed:

Baca Carlos porter White Elephant r 524 N Arno

Chavez Alonzo porter White Elephant rms 711 W Tijeras av

Cline Frank H bartndr White Elephant rms 304 N 1st

Gurrola Francisco porter White Elephant rms 317 S 4th

Wendell Frank R bartndr White Elephant r 514 N 3d

WHITE ELEPHANT, J C Taylor mgr, 124 W Central av, phone 166

WHITE ELEPHANT, 124 W Central av

Not only was Barnett still running his White Elephant, he was also maintaining his billiard hall:

Barnett Joseph prop Palace Billiard Parlor, pres Barnett's

Amusement Co rms Alvarado Hotel

Castillo Miguel D porter Palace Billiard Parlor h rear 1409 W Roma av

HENRY ARTHUR A, mgr Palace Billiard Parlor, rms A Grant Flats

Padilla Moises clk Palace Billiard Parlor h 524 Keleher av

[In the previous year, Moises was listed simply as "lab," a laborer, without any connection to the Palace Billiard Parlor]

PALACE BILLIARD PARLOR, Joseph Barnett prop, 116-118 S 2d, phone 853

Torres Lius clk Palace Billiard Parlor h 713 S 4th

And he still had his block:

Barnett Building 200-2 W Central av

And his theatre/cinema chain was also still thriving — perhaps. He sold off the Pastime but picked up another little cinema called the ‘B’:

Barnett’s Amusement Co (Inc) Joseph Barnett pres, H E Sherman
sec mgr, props The B, Crystal and Airdome Theatres 108 S 2d
Sherman Horace E sec, mgr Barnett’s Amusement Co r 515 W
Lead av

So let’s look at his establishments one by one, starting with the **AIRDOME THEATRE**:

Airdome Theatre Barnett’s Amusement Co props N 2d ne cor W
Tijeras av

Once again, that’s the only listing.

Then we can look at the brand-new **‘B’ THEATRE** (‘B’ must = Barnett), which has only a single listing:

B Theatre The, Barnett’s Amusement Co props 200 E Central

And finally the **CRYSTAL THEATRE**:

Crystal Theatre, Barnett’s Amusement Co props H E Sherman mgr
219-21 S 2d
Fuhrmeyer Ernest G violinist Crystal Theatre r 824 N 5th
Hase Kate Miss tkt clk Crystal Theatre h 515 New York av
Hoots James mach opr Crystal Theatre rms 508½ W Central
Montoya Andres janitor Crystal Theatre r 729½ S Broadway
Sganzini Leo usher Crystal Theatre h 631 S Broadway
Ziegler Della Mrs musician Crystal Theatre h 506 W Tijeras

Della Ziegler’s name is spelled correctly this time, but when we scrounge around, we discover that her husband’s name is still misspelled. But we learn something most interesting about him. Is it a coincidence that he works in a jewelry shop INSIDE the Crystal Theatre building? Was he perhaps an investor?

ZEIGLER WILLIAM S, jeweler, expert watch and Jewelry repairing, stone setting, all work strictly guaranteed 221 S 2d, first door south of Crystal Theatre, r 506 W Tijeras av

Now we can go back to the **PASTIME THEATRE**, under a new ownership, that of James Provas. As we search through the listings, we see that someone's name is misspelled, for Henry and Hugh are surely brothers:

Battas Henry film opr Pastime Theatre rms 213 W Central

Bettis Hugh B mach opr Pastime Theatre h 1665 N 4th

And there was a third brother as well:

Bettis Orlando M driver Bezemek's jersey Dairy r 1665 N 4th

Meyers John usher Pastime Theatre h 221 S 6th

Pastime Theatre, James Provas prop 213 W Central av

Provas Alexander tkt clk Pastime Theatre h 408 N 3rd

Provas Bessie Mrs h 408 N 3d

Provas James prop Pastime Theatre r 408 N 3d

Short Fletcher L usher Pastime Theatre h 208 N Walnut

[In the previous year, Fletcher was listed only as a "student."]

Sowell Bertha Mrs musician Pastime Theatre rms 723 N 2d

Trowell F James tkt tkr Pastime Theatre rms 309½ W Central

Weddell Ora Miss tkt clk Pastime Theatre h 318 W Silver av

Let's take a look at Miss Ora's mom and brother:

Weddell David D r 318 W Silver av

Weddell Margaret Mrs dressmkr h 318 W Silver av

[In the previous year, there was no mention of a Margaret, and the Weddells were living at 316 N 4th, without any employment information supplied.]

And now a look at Frederick Cameron's **LYRIC THEATRE:**

Cameron Frederick prop Lyric Theater r 523 N 4th

Johnson Irene Miss musician Lyric Theatre r 1415 S Arno

Moore George H tkt clk Lyric Theatre r 110 S Edith

Pope Henry B mach opr Lyric Theatre r 406 N 6th

And are there still unlabeled musicians floating about? Of course there are!

Albright Claude Miss vocalist h 121½ N 3d

Badaracco Gregoria Miss musician h 320 W Tijeras av

Bucklin George C musician r 315 N Arno

Chacon Pedro D musician h Mrs L W Chacon

And info on his wife:

Chacon Lucia W Mrs r Old Albuquerque

Chavez Alberto musician r Old Albuquerque

Colignianni Beppo musician rms 311 N Broadway

Cook Daniel J musician r Netherwood Park addn

And his relatives:

Cook Lynn R clk P O r Netherwood Park addn

*Cook Wanda K Miss wrapper Albuquerque Creamery h
Netherwood Park addn*

Cornelli Eliberto musician rms 1007 S 2d

Cosciusco Angelo M musician rms 209½ S 1st

Davis Dewey A musician h 619 N 1st

Davis Wilson J musician h 619 N 1st

de Perez Carlos D musician r Old Albuquerque

And his wife:

de Perez Piedad Mrs h Old Albuquerque

Devine James musician r Old Albuquerque

And his relatives:

Devine Nora Miss h James Devine

Devine Robert airbrake repr r Old Albuquerque

DeWolf Elsie Mrs musician rms 321½ W Central av

And her relatives:

DeWolf Beulah Mrs rms 321½ W Central av

DeWolfe Frank W news agt Fred Harvey rms 321½ W Central av

Dolde Frieda A Mrs musician h 705 S Broadway

And her relatives:

Dolde Margaret Miss clk Wm Dolde h 705 S Broadway

Dolde William genl mdse 210-12 S 2d r 705 S Boadway

Donatti Giovanni musician h Old Albuquerque

Donatti Luigui M musician r Old Albuquerque

Gambinni Roberto musician rms 314 E Grand av

Gintner Michael G musician r 1601 N 2d

Hoffman George C musician r 923 W Fruit av

Hueber Emil S musician rms 508½ W Central av

Johnson Charles (c) musician r 503 12th

La Bonti Carlo musician r San Jose

Marratti Enrico musician rms 723 East

Marratti Julio J musician rms 723 East

Palazinni Amadeo L musician rms 311 N Broadway

Parmassi Guido L musician rms 311 N 4th

Tishny Otto J musician r 619 N 1st

Whitson Floyd E musician h 505 N 2d

And all that, of course, leaves us with one serious question: What happened to the impressive **ORPHEUM THEATRE**? Had it already closed down? Well, one of its officers, John H Seth,

is still listed, as well as his boss and an employee. Let's take a look and see what we can deduce:

Seth John H clk Star Hay & Grain Co h 322 S Arno
SETH SMITH H, prop Star Hey & Grain Co, r 322 S Arno
Steward Walton (c) driver Star Hay & Grain Co r 312 N 3d

Indeed, when we look through the business listings, all we see is this:

Amusement – Places Of

Airdome Theatre, N 2d ne cor W Tijeras av
B Theatre The, 200 E Central av
Crystal Theatre, 219-21 S 2d
Lyric Theatre, 119 W Central av
Pastime Theatre, 213 W Central av

So I guess that was the end of that. When we look up the proprietor, Clinton G Carty, we see that he is no longer involved in show biz. Why did the Orpheum close? Was there simply not enough talent to fill its stage? That's not likely. More believable would be the poor choice of location. To thrive, a vaud house should be on or near Central, not five blocks away. But even that might not be a good reason for financial failure. Maybe the Crystal sucked all the Orpheum's business away? Perhaps a more-powerful capitalist had different ideas about what should be happening downtown and made an offer that Clinton G Carty simply could not refuse? I do not know.

Whatever the story was, the building remained, and it remains to this day, though it is unrecognizable. Currently it has been expanded and gutted and turned into an apartment building. A restoration would be prohibitive and would not be remunerative, but we should at least learn everything we can about this unusual theatre. Perhaps we should even build a small-scale model of it and trace every act and every movie that ever played there. This theatre intrigues me so much, because the people who created it tried so hard, but were in a bad position, and I won't rest until we uncover the entire story.

Just now, sifting through my storage locker, I rediscovered some photocopies I had made back in the mid or late 1970s at the downtown library when I was going through the microfilms. These were the old-type negative photographic-film-paper photostats. They looked lousy to begin with, and they degraded quickly. The smaller print has now become illegible. Thanks to the world of computer scanners, I can make them positive again, which helps a little, but they're still largely illegible. Let's take a look anyway and see what we can see.

(Scroll down to the next page.)

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ing Story
Theme: That

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FRESH EGGS - 10c
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The Pursuit of Pleasure
THE RETURN OF GENTLEMAN JOE
EDMUND F. COBB
THE WHITE AND BLACK SNOWBALL
THE GIRL AND THE MAIL BAG
TOMORROW - THE APACHES OF PARIS, FOUR PARTS

PASTIME THEATER TODAY
THE LOVE DRAMA THAT STARTLED TWO CONTINENTS
"THREE WEEKS"
FROM THE BOOK BY ELINOR GLYNN
PASSED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF CENSORS
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SPECIAL ADMISSION 10 CENTS
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White Potatoes 15c
Large Potatoes 10c
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THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE KOREAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE VIETNAMESE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE SINGAPORE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE MALAY EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE PHILIPPINE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE HAWAIIAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE TONGAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE SAMOAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE FIJIAN EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE ZANZIBAR EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE VANUATU EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE TUVALU EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE NIUE EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF THE TOKELAU EMPIRE
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THE WORLD'S FAIR PICTURES
THE 101 RANCH PICTURES
TEDDY SANDOW, THE LITTLE WRESTLING BEAR, MEETING TWO LOCAL BOYS
ADULTS 15 CENTS CHILDREN 10 CENTS

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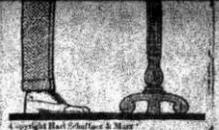
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AUCTION SALE

Really good stuff here. *Potash and Perlmutter* was a major stage show that had just gone on tour after two years on Broadway. The 'today only' vaudeville show included some movies: *The World's Fair Pictures* and *The 101 Ranch Pictures*. On stage was 'Teddy Sandow, the Little Wrestling Bear, Meeting Two Local Boys.' This was not the famed 'Strong Man' Eugen Sandow, but someone else who now is lost to history. [The Pursuit of Pleasure](#) is a bit mysterious, though the cast is certainly impressive. [Three Weeks](#) was adapted from Elinor Glynn's scandalous novel. Do any copies of this movie still survive? [The Return of Gentleman Joe](#)? [The White and Black Snowball](#)? No clue. But [The Girl and the Mail Bag](#), yes, that was a Tom Mix vehicle, filmed in Las Vegas NM by the Selig Polyscope Company! Wow! [The Apaches of Paris](#) had Arthur Housman in the cast. Oh I must see that — if it still exists. More about [The Escape](#) below.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN A Screaming Comedy
WM. S. HART In **PINTO BEN**, a Strong Two-reel Drama, showing Mr. Hart at his best
"Capers of College Chaps" A Tasty Comedy
TOMORROW AND MONDAY—WM. FARNUM
"THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE"
 A POWERFUL STORY THAT ALL SHOULD SEE.

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CRYSTAL TODAY AND TOMORROW **Don't Marry Until You See "The Escape"**

SEVEN PARTS. CONCEIVED BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST DIRECTOR D. W. GRIFFITH PRODUCER OF THE "BIRTH OF A NATION"
NO ADULT HAS THE RIGHT TO BE IGNORANT OF THE TRUTHFUL CONDITIONS TOLD IN THIS FILM
CHILDREN UNDER 16 NOT ADMITTED
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Another age restriction that I found wonderfully amusing. So what was *The Escape*? It was from a play by Paul Armstrong and directed by D W Griffith! It featured Donald Crisp and Blanche Sweet, and, best of all, Tammany Young! But alas, according to Wikipedia, it is a lost film. Drat!

Man of Wealth, Sends Mother From Room and Shoots Himself in Temple

Special Lay, bearing official Delegation to State Live-stock Show, Leaves Last Night

Special Lay, bearing official Delegation to State Live-stock Show, Leaves Last Night

SCREAMING COMEDY WITH MARIE DRESSLER AT CRYSTAL TODAY

Police nab pair charged with loot of auto at circus

ADDITIONAL POLICE FORCE TO BE PUT ON FOR WEEK OF FAIR

Commissioners give \$500 to state fair

NO QUORUM PRESENT AT COUNCIL MEETING

Text of council meeting report

MILLARD BROWNE DIES FOLLOWING BRIEF ILLNESS

Prominent Merchant's Head of Pioneer Grocery Firm, Passes Away at Las Vegas Home; Here Last Week

Text of Millard Browne's death

SCREAMING COMEDY WITH MARIE DRESSLER AT CRYSTAL TODAY

Police nab pair charged with loot of auto at circus

ADDITIONAL POLICE FORCE TO BE PUT ON FOR WEEK OF FAIR

Commissioners give \$500 to state fair

NO QUORUM PRESENT AT COUNCIL MEETING

Text of council meeting report

CRYSTAL TODAY AND TOMORROW Tillie's Tomato Surprise "Marie Dressler" Matinees at 2:15 and 3:30 o'Clock Nights at 7, 8:15 and 9:30 o'Clock Adults 15c Children 10c

B THEATER TODAY 'The Masked Dancer' 'The Old Actor'

PASTIME THEATRE TODAY 'The Great Question' 'Moral Weekly' P. Henry Jenkins and Mears THURSDAY LET US SEND A MAN TO THE STATE FAIR ROOFING

Oh this one is delicious! I had never heard of Tillie's Tomato Surprise, though I was certainly familiar with its predecessor, Tillie's Punctured Romance. Apparently only one of the movie's six reels still survives, and it is being held at the US Library of Congress. Unfortunately, I didn't scribble down the date of this newspaper. Phooey. You'll see that this newspaper reprinted the press release, but it has faded to illegibility in my copy. The Masked Dancer? No clue. The Old Actor? A three-year-old revival of a D W Griffith / George Hennessy short. The Great Question? No clue. Don't be fooled by the typo; the correct title was P Henry Jenkins and Mars. Sounds intriguing, yes?

1918

There's another gap in the downtown library's holdings, and the directories jump from 1915 to 1918. Now, before I could finish sifting through this one, the library closed and I had to catch my train. I only got through page 224. It is up to **YOU** to finish this job. And you'll have fun! Really. Reading a city directory cover to cover is far more entertaining than, say, memorizing a badly written history book in preparation for an exam at school.

Shall we be unimaginative and start once again with the Bachechi family?

Bachechi Arturo O buyer Bachechi Merc Co h 404 N 2d

Bachechi Bruno h 404 N 2d

Bachechi Dry Goods Co (Mrs Mary Bachechi Miss Armida
Bonaguidi) 115 E Tijeras av

Bachechi Mary Mrs (Bachechi Dry Goods Co) h 404 N 2d

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Kentucky Whiskies; Lucca Brand Pure Olive Oil; and all Steamship Lines

Bachechi Oreste pres mgr Bachechi Mercantile Co r 404 N 2d

Bachechi Otto car repr Santa Fe h 404 N 2d

Bonaguidi Armida Miss (Bachechi Dry Goods Co) rms 404 N 2d

Bonaguidi Hugo slsmn Bachechi Merc Co r 911 N 1st

Bonaguidi Marina Miss clk Bachechi Dry Goods Co rms 404 N 2d

Bonaguidi Mario blrwshr Santa Fe r rear 404 N 2d

Franchini Ettore slsmn Bachechi Merc Co r 518 W Copper av

Franchini Ovidio chf clk Bachechi Merc Co h 518 W Copper av

Gamerla Oreste slsmn Bachechi Merc Co rms 308 W Coal av

Let's take another look at the Elks' Theatre:

ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETIES.

(Secret and Benevolent)

Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

Albuquerque Lodge No. 641 – Meets 2d and 4th Wednesdays at Elks' home. P. T. Lonergan, E. R.; F. A. Stortz, sec.

Bloch Peter clk Elks Club rms same

ELKS CLUB, Frank A Stortz mgr, S 5th sw cor W Gold av, phones 305 and 944

Frishman Moise rms Elks Club

Thus we know that Frank A Stortz was the secretary of the Elks' Lodge as well as the Elks' Theatre. So how does that explain the listing below?

Albuquerque Filling Station Frank Stortz prop 423 W Central

It looks like Joseph Barnett is still active and still living in a room at the Alvarado:

Barnett Joseph pres Barnett Amusement Co prop Palace Billiard Parlor rms Alvarado Hotel

The Airdome is gone, but he still has **THE 'B' THEATRE:**

Anderson Loretta Mrs cashr B Theatre rms 415 N 2dBarnett Joseph pres Barnett Amusement Co prop Palace Billiard Parlor rms Alvarado Hotel

B Theatre Barnett Amusement Co props 200 W Central av Barnett Joseph pres Barnett Amusement Co prop Palace Billiard Parlor rms Alvarado Hotel

Frye Frederick W opr B Theatre rms 209½ S 1st

So now we know a little something. Now that we have not only the address, but also a hint of a vanishingly small staff, it appears that The 'B' Theatre was also a storefront nickelodeon.

And he still has the **CRYSTAL THEATRE:**

CRYSTAL ROOMS, Mrs S J Ryan mgr, 223½ S 2d, phone 459
Crystal Theatre Barnett Amusement Co props 219-21 S 2d

But something seems wrong when we look at the following two listings:

FUHRMEYER ERNEST G, sales mgr Weaver-Porter Motor Co,
rms 824 N 5th, phone 244
Fuhrmeyer's Orchestra E G Fuhrmeyer condr 824 N 5th

Ernest G Fuhrmeyer is no longer listed as working at the Crystal Theatre. He has his own orchestra, and, to pay the bills, he is also a sales manager at an automobile showroom.

Anyway, the **LYRIC THEATRE** is still around:

Cameron Frederick prop Lyric Theatre r 523 N 4th

And so is the **PASTIME THEATRE**:

Cooley Thelma Miss tkttaker Pastime Theatre rms 614 N 2d

Interestingly, another place of amusement has also made an appearance: The **IDEAL THEATRE**:

Donner Edward (Edward Donner & Co) rms 515 W Tijeras
Donner Edward & Co (Edward and Gisela Donner) props Ideal
Theatre 119 W Central
Donner George B prop Albuquerque Dental Supply & Laboratory
Co, mgr Ideal Theatre h 515 W Tijeras av
Donner Gisela Mrs (Edward Donner & Co) rms 515 W Tijeras

And, as ever, we still have various unidentified musicians meandering about, along with their relatives and spouses:

Bucklin George C musician rms 204 S 2d
Bustamante Soledad J musician rms 1314 N Arno
Caglioni Fideo violinist rms 314 E Grand av
Canales Federico M musician r Old Albuquerque
Carlsen Carl J musician rms 724 S 2d
Cordova Alcadio musician h Old Albuquerque
Cordova Faustino musician r Old Albuquerque
de Perez Carlos D musician h Old Albuquerque
de Perez Piedad M Mrs r Old Albuquerque
Devine James violinist r 1803 W Central av
Devine Florence Miss clk h 1803 W Central av
Devine Leslie student h 1803 W Central av
Devine Norah Miss h 1803 W Central av
Dolde Frieda A Miss musician h 705 S Broadway
Dolde Margaret Miss student h 705 S Broadway

Dolde Marian Miss h 705 S Broadway
Dolde William r 705 S Broadway
Ellis Frederick K musician r 210 S 6th
Faranta Beltran musician r Martineztown
Gabaldon Petronilo musician r 1102 Barelard
Garcia Fabiano musician h 1120 N Arno

(Scroll down to the next page.)



AFTERWORD

That's as far as I could get during my brief stay. But nonetheless I can reminisce.

SUNSHINE THEATRE



[As it originally stood, with the original marquee and without the upright.](#)
[Mo Palmer, *Albuquerque: Then and Now*](#)
[\(San Diego CA: Thunder Bay Press, 2006\), p 88.](#)

I first attended the Sunshine Theatre in 1972 or 1973 for *Gone with the Wind*. Originally the theatre had been designed by El Paso architect [Henry C Trost](#), though I don't know who the interior decorators were. Their work, though, was entirely lost when the ornate interior was stripped away and replaced with

a bland *art moderne* nothingness. That must have happened in the 1930s or early 1940s. The Hillgreen-Lane organ was long gone, sold to someone or other — to a military base in Roswell, if memory serves, and the organ chambers were so completely obliterated that it was impossible to see where they once would have been. The deep stage (40 feet? 50 feet?) was sealed off and the tilted bowl-shaped screen frame was bolted onto the floor just behind the proscenium. A few years later I searched through the microfilms to see if I could find any photos of the original décor, and found a little — very little. The exits flanking the stage were certainly more ornate in their original form — each with three Moorish arches, if memory serves. I'd love to see them put back that way. Some of the original vaudeville drops wended their way to the Rodey Theatre in the mid-1970s, though I was never able to take a look at them. I asked the Sunshine's then-owner Frank Peloso if I could get a tour of the stage, and he was confused. "Stage? What stage? There's no stage." I also asked the projectionist, and he had the identical reaction. Drat!

In 1981 the magnificent (though unoriginal) upright was taken down and sold to some museum somewhere. Terrible. And there was much talk of demolishing the building and putting up a public swimming pool in its place. That gave me nightmares for decades. A focus group was established: "Save the Sunshine." One night I called Edna Heatherington Bergman, who was in charge, and we chatted for a while. I mentioned to her that, "You know, there's a gigantic stage back there. It must be 50 feet deep or thereabouts. If you could restore that, we could get major touring Broadway shows to appear in downtown Albuquerque. It would be grand, and it would make money too. And there are acres of empty lots around for free parking. You couldn't lose with that arrangement." Edna agreed. She had never been on that stage, but she admitted that, "Lots of people have told me, 'You know, there's a stage back there.'" Well, it was a beautiful little conversation, and I have no memory at all why I didn't join the "Save the Sunshine" folks. Maybe I just couldn't physically get out to their meetings because I didn't have a car? I don't

remember. It must have been a good reason. No matter how good the reason was, though, I regret not having joined — especially now that I hear that the auditorium floor has been leveled (not with concrete, I hope!!!!) and that the building has been further remodeled. I walked by the other day and the exterior was a sad-looking specimen.



[The Sunshine Theatre with the added upright and newer neon marquee.](#)
[Sandra Fye, *Historic Photos of Albuquerque*](#)
[\(Nashville TN: Turner Publishing Company, 2007\), p 191.](#)

Is there anyone who would be interested in putting the Sunshine Theatre back the way it originally was when it first opened on the 1st of May 1924? [If so, please let me hear from you.](#) Thank you so much! Can I help with this? Well, not directly, but I'm a good brain-stormer and can put the most interesting people together to do the most interesting things.

KIMO THEATRE

[Mo Palmer, *Albuquerque Then and Now*](#)
[\(San Diego CA: Thunder Bay Press, 2006\), p 90](#)

I first heard about the KiMo from Ben Hall's path-breaking book, *The Last Remaining Seats*. So I begged and pleaded with my father to give me two dimes, which I used to ride the bus downtown and back to see if the building was still there. The bus deposited me right next to a building that, from all appearances, *must* have been the KiMo. I wandered about the streets looking for another building that may have qualified for the title, but there was no other. It had a gigantic neon marquee but no name anywhere; nonetheless, my mediocre powers of deduction proved correct. The building was beautiful. If memory serves, the two small storefronts at the front were still rented out and operational. And it turned out that the offices on the stories above the lobby were then the headquarters for Commonwealth Theatres; so when I got back

home I called their number and asked if I could get a tour. The answer was NO!!! TOO DANGEROUS!!!

Then on 1 February 1975 the KiMo re-opened, with huge advertisements in the *Albuquerque Journal*, and it was now a porno cinema. How disappointing. Why couldn't they have chosen to run silent movies or Fellini movies or at least to present boring lectures? I so much wanted to go in just to see the building, but at age 14 I would probably have been turned away. And even if I had managed to get in, with my luck the place would have been raided. "What are you doing here?" "I came in to look at the building." "Yeah sure, everybody came in to look at the building."

The KiMo's porno tenure was short-lived, perhaps only four weeks or so, and then it was shut down again, except for the storefronts and the Commonwealth offices above the lobby.

Two years later the Mayor and City Hall decided to revitalize downtown, which at the time was little more than a ghost town, and they arranged for numerous events on Saturday evenings. The locals voted to have the city purchase the KiMo, which was opened up for these Saturday-evening parties. The opportunity was irresistible. I walked in and ran up to the balcony (I love balconies) and saw a portable 16mm Bell & Howell projector in the loge running black-and-white silents that had been produced locally, probably back in the teens if not before. Fascinating! What was especially fascinating was that, just before this happened, I had had a

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**2nd Big Feature:
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Two-column six-inch ad in
The Albuquerque Journal,
1 February 1975, p A8,
which I reproduce here only because
nobody ever believed me.

dream about walking into a dark and decrepit movie palace and seeing silent movies being shown on a portable 16mm Bell & Howell projector placed in the loge. Well, things like that were on my mind, we have so many dreams, and when we factor in the law of averages... okay, it's really nothing spectacular. But it sure felt a bit spooky.

I took a careful look around. The theatre was in terrible condition. I looked through the projection booth — Brenkert bases, Simplex E-7s, Brenkert sound heads, and Brenkert Enarcs with, if memory serves, DC provided by a motor-generator set. I also seem to recall rusted RCA magnetic penthouses and an RCA sound rack with most of the components missing. The machines were all frozen and battered, and damaged frames of some porno movie were scattered about the floor — 16mm blown up to 35mm with triple frame lines. (I never again saw such an odd printing anomaly until two and a half decades later when I ran a 35mm blow-up of [*Céline et Julie vont en bateau*](#), which proved to be a three-hour exercise in the most excruciating boredom, but which concluded with one of the best pay-offs in all cinema history.)

All along the orchestra-level auditorium walls were acoustical tiles, installed shortly after the coming of sound, and they were decorated in a cheap manner,



with rather pathetic copies of Navajo and Hopi art. Someone with the downtown-rehab group had started peeling those tiles off to reveal frescoes underneath, and they were breathtaking! Gorgeous Navajo and Hopi artwork! My jaw dropped. I learned later that the murals of the “Seven Cities of Cibola” were by [Carl Von Hassler](#), and so I assume he did the frescoes as well. I found my way up to the organ chambers, which were surprisingly small. So I assume that the [Wurlitzer Style D SP \(opus 1667, installed 13 July 1927\)](#) was rather small. In the lobby was a display of vintage exterior and interior 8"×10" b&w photos, and they were all stunning. Comparing the magnificent edifice illustrated in those photos with the dilapidated wreck in which we were walking about offered a powerful lesson in the value of historical preservation.

The Kimo Theatre (right) in Albuquerque was a Boller Brothers' design that matched its locale. Longhorn skulls with electric light eyes bordered the proscenium, and Indian blankets took the place of the usual tapestries; the swastikas were Navajo, not Nazi.



The above comes from Ben M Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: Clarkson N Potter Inc, 1961), p 140. The color illustrations were all deleted from the cheap Bramhall House reprint of 1971. Note how small the house-right organ chamber is.

Later I heard that an architect, Harvey Hoshour, was busy restoring the building. I walked in one weekday and nobody stopped me. I found him, sitting quietly in the balcony, contemplating his surroundings. Harvey was a really nice fellow and was happy to chat with me. He told me some of what he was doing. He was going through the Boller Brothers' original blueprints and trying to strip away anything that was not original, and to replace anything that was now missing. But he would have to make a few compromises, for the original plans would not be up to present-day code. For instance, the mezzanine railing was too low, and the original lobby was too small. Well, okay, I could understand some compromises. He was also thinking about expanding the projection booth to extend across the entire length of the balcony, so that there would be room to add a lighting booth, a sound booth, and a pair of spotlight booths. Well, that's not original, but I certainly agreed that it would be a good idea — though it would have been a better idea to build them back into the offices above the lobby, behind the balcony. Oh well....

I think it was in January 1979 that I was brought in to the KiMo for a UNM project and worked only an hour or so before we discovered that it was only by clerical error that I was called in, as someone else had already been assigned my position. That freed me to head out to the SUB Theatre the next day and watch some Buster Keaton movies that Stan Brakhage was presenting. Then toward the end of the year I saw at the KiMo what is still to my mind the finest piece of theatre I have ever witnessed: *Numbered Days in Paradise, Part II*, by the [Red Mole Contra-Cabaret](#). The show would not have been nearly as effective in a well-cared-for theatre. It needed to be presented in a place that resembled a dark, gloomy, bombed-out garbage dump. The effect was beyond dreamlike.

Then I heard that the restoration work had finally begun, and before I knew it the announcement was rung out far and wide that the restoration had been completed! I went back in 1981 or thereabouts to see this much-anticipated restoration — and

I was horrified. How much of this was Harvey's work? How much of it was the crazed work of some insane bureaucrats? I didn't know, and I didn't want to know.

This is what I saw at that time.

- There had been talk of reconstructing the beautiful KiMo upright, which was so magnificently on view in those 8"×10"s. But this plan came to naught, for the stated reason that it was not in the Boller Brothers' original blueprints. Of course it wasn't in their blueprints! Uprights were created by sign companies, not by architects. The upright was original and should have been restored! Instead, a new KiMo logo was attached to the top of the reconstructed marquee, and though the reconstructed marquee was otherwise a reasonable replica of the original, the logo above it was most certainly *not* historical.
- Far worse, though, the gorgeous frescoes were obliterated when acoustical carpeting was glued over the auditorium walls. Irreplaceable art destroyed, lost forever, just because some 1980s audio-electronics engineer didn't understand 1920s acoustical design!
- The restrooms were removed and replaced with open spaces for hat and cloak rooms, leaving the building without any restroom facilities.
- The railings were raised not by the simple expedient of placing an extra six-inch platform underneath them, but by the needlessly laborious method of having iron workers lengthen each bar, stretching the turkey shapes out of proportion. That was "feeding the turkeys," they said. You could even see the welded joints!
- The lobby had been enlarged to meet newer building codes way back when, possibly as early as the 1930s. The outdoor open space surrounding the box office was reduced, and the lobby had grown outwards to the box office. This was not bad, not bad at all. It was not original, but it was not a violation of the original æsthetic design. The city, though,

wanted to restore the original outdoor space, and that necessitated enlarging the lobby in the opposite direction — into the auditorium! So the beautiful wooden doors were eliminated and the seating capacity was significantly reduced. Oh those doors! I can no longer remember if they were carved wood, or wood with beveled glass, or wood with leaded glass. Whatever they were, I do remember that they were gorgeous. But they were deleted and replaced with rather boring curtains and newer, smaller, absolutely bland and dull doors that belonged in a modern office, not in a movie palace.

- Regulations required that the building be wheelchair-accessible, and, as it was originally built, and as it had been remodeled later on, and as it had been rebuilt once again by the city, and as it remains to this day, the front doors were indeed wheelchair-accessible. Nonetheless, the building next door was attached and a gigantic archway was bashed into the wall for wheelchair-accessibility. Absolutely needless and a violation of the original design.
- Whoever restored the stage knew nothing about theatre. Rather than repair the flyloft (which had suffered a fire) and install new grid-irons and pulleys and pinrails, the stage was simply ceilinged-off at proscenium level.
- There were many photographs that showed the original proscenium design. It was strikingly original and completely unlike any other proscenium arch I've seen anywhere. Despite this evidence — which was prominently on display in the photos posted in the building! — there was no attempt to restore the original frescoed plaster molding around the arch.
- The orchestra pit, which had been filled in, was cut away again, but in the wrong place, and in the wrong shape and proportion.
- No one replaced the Wurlitzer organ.

- The dressing rooms, which had been obliterated decades before, were replaced with small and barely functional rooms.
- The enlarged projection booth had no porthole windows anywhere, and was therefore unusable.

I walked away devastated and never entered the building again.

Let's look on the bright side, though. Had the city not purchased and remodeled/ravaged the building, it would have been demolished by now to make way for a parking lot. (Future generations will look back upon us, gaze at our works, and express, in rapturous exultation, that it was *their* brilliant ancestors who built those splendid parking lots. They will be overawed.) The last time I looked at it, the building survived only in a terribly vandalized state, but at least it still stood! The basic structure was still in place, and most of the original æsthetics still survived. So there was theoretically no reason it could not be properly restored. And, as a matter of fact, it appears that some superior restoration was performed in the year 2000. Let's look at some examples I just now found on a Google search:





So the proscenium arch has been reconstructed (or mostly reconstructed)! Hooray! And they didn't even shy away from the Navajo (Dineh) swastikas! (By the way, yet one more reason to hate the Nazis is that they coöpted a beautiful prehistoric symbol and perverted it. Let us hope that the KiMo can begin to redeem it and place it back into its proper cultural context.) But if there's an orchestra pit below that platform, it's still not quite the right shape or size. And there's still no Wurlitzer, *and what happened to the organ chambers?!?!?* Compare the above photo to an original below.



Photo Courtesy Albuquerque Museum Photoarchives

Scanned from *The Albuquerque Journal*, Sunday, 7 January 1979, p D1

When we compare the photographs, we see that there have been some significant alterations — not only the elimination of

the organ chambers, but the restructuring of the walls and pilasters and the moving of the exit doors. Also, the painted pattern on the archway in front of and above the proscenium is different, and the proscenium arch is now against black, rather than against earth tone. How strange, and how sad!

The original seating capacity of 1,321 had long before been reduced, as it should have been. People in 1927 were not nearly as wide as they are now. More important, though, is the evidence drilled into the floors. I looked at the original seating layout, which could still be seen from the remnants of bolts in the concrete, and there was virtually no leg room. Even short slender people would have had trouble fitting in, and anyone in the middle of a row would have been trapped, since there was no egress save by literally walking on top of people. So it was only right that the seating capacity was reduced. But why was it recently reduced to 650? That seems a bit extreme, yes?

What else might have been done? Well, according to [Cinema Treasures](#), a lot. By the way, the City of Albuquerque now runs the KiMo's web site, which contains [a really nice historical essay](#). You can also take some ["virtual tours."](#)

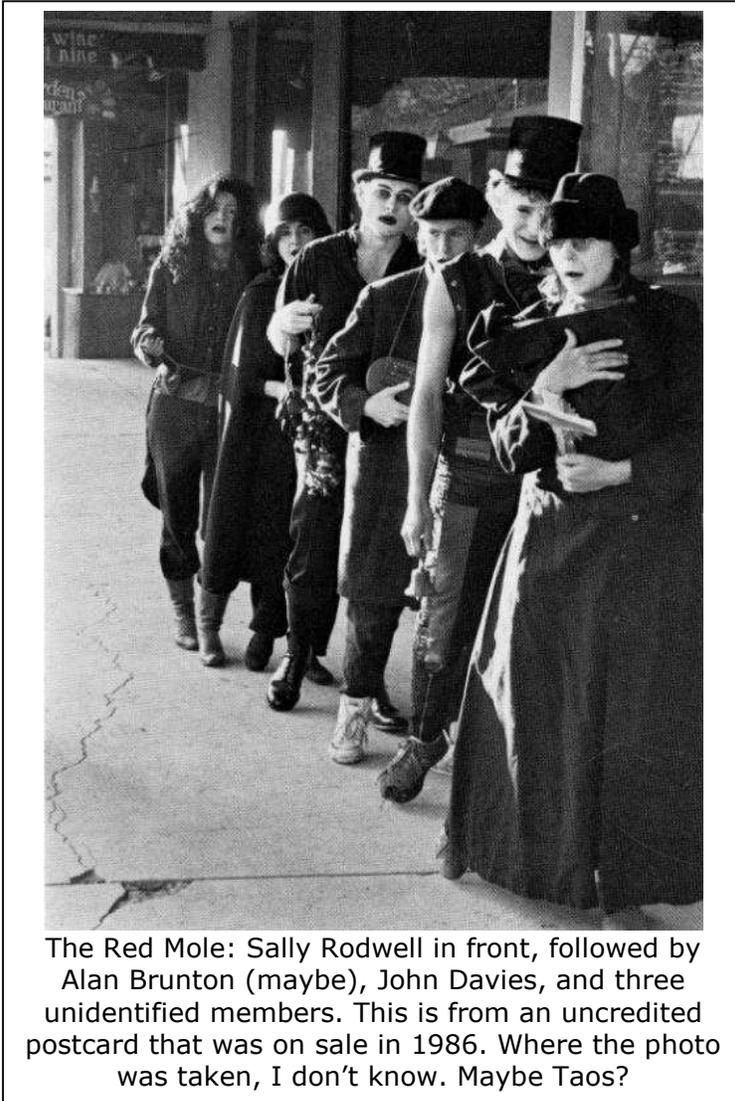
Can we hope that someone in City Hall turns out to be an architecture buff who just revels in the brilliant work of the Boller Brothers? And can we also hope that someone in City Hall is an organ buff who just adores Wurlitzers? If so, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could do even more to put the theatre back the way it originally was when it opened on 19 September 1927? What a beautiful thing that would be, yes? If there is any serious interest in doing this, [please contact me](#). I cannot work on this full time, but I would certainly like to have some involvement, however distant and minimal.

Ciao!

Ranjit



THE RED MOLE CONTRA-CABARET



The Red Mole: Sally Rodwell in front, followed by Alan Brunton (maybe), John Davies, and three unidentified members. This is from an uncredited postcard that was on sale in 1986. Where the photo was taken, I don't know. Maybe Taos?

Writing the above made me wistful about the [Red Mole Contra-Cabaret](#), a troupe that originally hailed from New Zealand. To put things into context, I have met and sometimes gotten to know all manner of celebrities in the sciences, in the humanities, and in the arts and entertainments — Wolf Mankowitz and his wife Ann Seligman, Jean-Claude Pecker, Steve Allen, James Randi, Ray Hyman, Carol Tavis, Tinto Brass, Nanette Fabray, Gore Vidal, Jim Prescott, Henry

Jaglom, Helen Mirren, and so many others I can't even think of them all. I've been perfectly comfortable around all of them (except for Gore, but as a personal idol he was a special case) and could chat with them as I would chat with anyone. Yet the only time in my life I was ever star-struck was after witnessing Alan Brunton, his wife Sally Rodwell, and their friend Deborah Hunt on stage for their performances of the Red Mole Contra-Cabaret.

Let's start at the beginning. Sadly, I missed *Numbered Days in Paradise, Part I*, when it played at the KiMo one Saturday night. I had not known about it. Early the following week the Red Mole appeared in Old Town, busking. A friend, John Hoffsis, who worked at the Treasure House with his parents, had no choice but to see them, and his description of their all-day antics in which they made spectacles of themselves I found off-putting. But then I walked to my theatre-lighting class at UNM's Rodey Theatre and saw the troupe finishing up their Q&A with the previous class — and I was sold, completely. They were so well-spoken, so imaginative, so intelligent, so perceptive, so insightful, so precise and clear and quick in their thinking. After all these years, I cannot remember a single word that any of them uttered, but I do recall that when I walked in [Deborah Hunt](#) was doing the bulk of the talking, and I was completely bowled over by her brilliance.

I had to see everything the Red Mole were doing and I had to know everything about them. I asked my father if he could pick me up the following Saturday night from the KiMo after *Numbered Days in Paradise, Part II*. He grunted and growled and seemed entirely hostile, but begrudgingly agreed. When I related that to John, he explained that, on the day I asked my father for this favor, the *Albuquerque Journal* had printed an angry letter from a reader who was complaining about the scene in *Part I* with two topless women whipping each other. I had not known about this — but my father did, for he read the letters to the editor religiously. Well, there was no explicit nudity in *Part II*, except by a very nervous local actress named Kimmy, though her stewardess's jacket never opened quite all the way. She had to sing a song and could barely get the words out. But she was a trooper and made it through to the end, earning a nice round of completely sincere applause that she probably thought was mere humoring. It was not. She had won us all over, and her trembling, cracking, shaking, low-volume voice made her all the more endearing.

The show entranced and ensorcelled me immediately, for it was indescribably dreamlike with most of the action choreographed to hypnotic live music and with nearly all the dialogue literally poetry, beautifully evocative poetry. Alan, deeply concerned about indigenous issues everywhere, had invented his own myths, which might as well have been actual myths of real native peoples, except that he made his much funnier, and he and his troupe would illustrate them with mimes and contorted dances and masks and puppets and props that almost looked like they came out of museum exhibits of tribal artifacts, and they would periodically pre-empt their stories to make pointless political announcements, such as the time that Deborah, alone on stage, came out carrying two placards, which she placed in the middle of the floor:

EDDY	KEN
AGAIN	REA

She stood between them and bellowed through an old-fashioned acoustical megaphone, beckoning the audience to “VOTE FOR HIM,” pointing at EDDY AGAIN, paused, then continued: “OR FOR HIM,” pointing to KEN REA. Then again: “VOTE FOR HIM, OR FOR HIM.” Pause. And then again, “VOTE FOR HIM, OR FOR HIM.” All of us in the audience just stared, dumbstruck. We didn’t get it at all. Finally she was done; she collected both signs, and then, fiddling about with them to get a better grip, momentarily reversed them, so that they read:

KEN EDDY REA AGAIN

And she carried them off, leaving the stage empty. It was bizarre, inexplicable, deliberately meaningless, and it got a good laugh. And then the show would go back to strange mythological themes with masks and puppets and strange, mime-like modern dances and hypnotic music and a scene taking place in the near future, with a cardboard-cutout car getting a fill-up at a 1930s-type cardboard-cutout gas pump that registered \$1,000 for 10 gallons.

The highlight of the play, for me, was the scene change half-way through. Scene changes are normally done by stage hands with the curtains closed. This one was done by the actors with the curtains open, and it was choreographed to an unforgettably haunting song called "Forbidden City." After I die, and after all the others in that audience have passed on, who will be left to remember that song? Why could this performance not have been preserved on film or videotape?

Also lodged in my memory, to the end of my days, is a mime set to music with a character played by John Davies being crucified. Various Red Moles dashed out into the audience and, without warning or explanation, started physically grabbing random members of the audience to join them on stage. I remember that one young woman was too nervous and resisted completely. Too bad. All the Moles needed was extra help to hold the prop steady and make sure that the cross and its crucified victim did not tumble to the ground.

What I saw that night was arguably the finest performance I have ever seen. Alan, Sally, and the Red Mole redefined the whole concept of theatre, seamlessly mixing poetry, absurdist

comedy, political commentary, mime, puppetry, surrealist film, dreamlike music, dance, audience participation, and cabaret into a new form that was entirely original. In *Part I*, which I had missed, they had even had fire-eating. Though the Red Mole's theatrical ideas came from everywhere and every tradition, they had a unified theme and a unified atmosphere. All the disparate elements, which would have been a jarring jumble in anyone else's hands, belonged together and were in perfect harmony. If you have not seen the Red Mole's brand of theatre, you cannot imagine it. And if you have seen it, no other theatrical works will measure up to it. In that one night, the Red Mole pretty much killed my interest in other theatrical works, except as historical source materials that I can use for research — exciting in their own way, but not exciting in and of themselves.

By the way, if you ever happen to find some of Alan's printed poetry, please be aware that it is not representative. His poetry must be spoken, by himself, in the context of a performance, for it to have its power and force and sense — and its deliberate senselessness. ([Here's one I just found on line.](#))

After the show I had an hour or so before my father would drive by to collect me. The audience had been quite small, and a number of people stayed around to chat with the performers. So did I. I spent my free hour backstage, during the striking of the set. I chatted a little with Alan, a little less with Sally, exchanged maybe three or four sentences with Deborah, and spoke a little more easily with the musicians and other cast and crew. Kimmy was nowhere to be seen; I guess she decided to make herself scarce out of a sense of dread embarrassment — if only she could have known how adorable she was.

Oh god was I nervous. I was intimidated. But why? I had been around brilliant people before and carried on normally. But I couldn't think of anything intelligent to say about what I had just witnessed. No comment of mine could possibly have contributed anything. I felt like a nobody in comparison to the Red Moles; yet, ironically, they were so unlike other

professional performers in that not a single one of them seemed to have any ego at all, or any sense of self-importance, or any sense that they were different from the people in the audiences who came to see them. They treated each audience member as a complete equal. But I did not see myself as an equal, and was overly deferential. My mistake. Nonetheless, I was tempted. Oh was I tempted. Should I? Should I? Should I ask if I could go on the road with them? I was trying to work up the courage to ask, but couldn't. After all, who was I? A nobody. What had I accomplished? Nothing. I had dabbled in lighting and sound and props and sets and whatnot, and I certainly had an interest in historic theatres, but I really had nothing to offer them. I never had any desire to perform, and I was not an artist of any sort. Yet I tried to work up the courage — at least to express my desire in a milder way, so that I would merely say that I wished I had the qualifications to ask if I could go on the road with them. As I was talking to one Red Mole after another, I kept trying to get up the nerve to say what was on my mind, but I never could. Too shy. Too reserved. Unable to say anything so bold, so outrageous. Yet to this day there is nothing — *nothing* — I would have wanted nearly as much. So now, after nearly three decades, I finally have the courage to confess to the world the secret I was too nervous ever to tell anyone before.

A year or so later the Red Mole presented a new show at the ballroom at UNM's Student Union Building, which was nearly as magnificent as their show at the KiMo, and even more poorly attended. The Red Moles didn't seem to worry in any way at all about poor attendance. If one person showed up, they would have considered that wonderful and would have given their all for that one person. They didn't seem to concern themselves about venue either — a palatial old theatre or an old-town street plaza or a tiny room in a gallery were all the same to them. They didn't need elaborate lighting or sound design. They just needed their strange costumes and make-up and dolls and masks and puppets and they were set. They didn't mike themselves (thank heaven!), but just projected their voices, the old-fashioned way, which is still the superior

way. Other performers insist upon specific types of venues to suit the shows and to attract the appropriate audiences. The Red Moles seemed to want to break down the barriers between high-class art and low-class entertainment, and put on performances that nobody would ever have expected at the particular venue. I wish I could remember more of the show. I remember that Deborah at one point played the wife who abandoned her husband, played by Alan, screaming that she was leaving him and all his possessions behind, “and you can keep the kid!” She angrily shoved an ugly blue doll into Alan’s hands and then stormed off. Alan was disgusted at the very sight and feel of the kid, grimaced, scowled, placed him on the floor at downstage right, walked to downstage left, drew a revolver, and demanded, gruffly, “Walk!” Half-way through the show the characters all metamorphosed, adopted an entirely new life, and began sowing corn. It was time for intermission, and I should have known not to expect a regular sort of intermission. After about 45 minutes of preposterous absurdities, they just stopped the show suddenly and Deborah gleefully turned to the audience: “Any questions?” And yes, there were questions. One person wanted to know why the Red Moles were sowing corn. Deborah had a sensible answer: because it’s a people’s food, a food that native peoples would eat. A young fellow asked about the symbolism on the backdrop. For instance, what was the relevance of the snail? Deborah won my heart, yet again, by giving the most sensible answer that could be given: she happened to be reading a book about sea animals at the time she was painting the backdrop, and so she decided to include a depiction of a snail. So much for hidden occult messages!

At this show they announced that they would hold a seminar in Santa Fé (at St John’s College?). A young married couple I did not know were in the UNM audience that night, we chatted, and without any hesitation they offered to drive me over. All the while I was somehow under the mistaken impression that it would be a day of lectures. Wrong! I had paid insufficient attention. It was a workshop, and everyone was expected to participate. Oops. I was too shy and self-

conscious and embarrassed to join in anything. Besides, I was in my dress clothes rather than dancewear or sweats, which I did not own. I was too timid and embarrassed to exchange more than a few sentences with those three people who struck awe into me and shattered me by their mere presence. To the end of my days I'll regret that I did not participate. It would have been the best learning experience of my life. Even so, during that day as a reluctant and all-too-self-conscious sort of voyeur, I had the best learning experience of my life. I got to see how those three radically different personalities fused to create the most amazing effects. Alan was completely laid back, but dead serious about his craft, and his specialties were narrative, myth, dialogue, and poetry. Deborah had a goofy sense of humor and saw the funny side of everything, but, like Alan, she was dead serious about her craft, and her specialties were masks and puppets. Sally, on the other hand, was intense. No nonsense for her. She had her definite ideas about which artistic ideas were right and which were wrong. To me it's all a matter of opinion, and what works for one person may not work for another. Not for Sally. One way was right, all the others were wrong, end of story. Her specialties, predictably, were visuals, movement, and dance. Of course, as a true team, the divisions of word, masks, and movement were not strict, and each contributed to all.

All the acolytes who showed up that day were given masks and puppets and put into surreal situations, and without hesitation, regardless of experience or talent, they all effortlessly began to create jaw-dropping spontaneous art. I was stunned. The experience — direct for the others, but vicarious for me — was profound. The basis for the seeming miracle, of course, was the total respect that the three Red Moles had for everyone in the audience and for all their admirers. Children misbehave when their parents misbehave. Students do poorly when their professors do poorly. But when instructors go into a project with absolute sincerity and an overpowering respect for their pupils, the result is wondrous, as it was that day.

What were the Red Mole trying to accomplish? To proselytize their brand of theatrics, so that others would take up the call? If so, that was well and good. They proved, beyond any question, that they could teach the technique to anybody at all. But theatre is more than technique; at its root level it is inspiration, and no one can teach someone else how to be inspired to create ideas. And, as far as I know, no one else on this planet has an imagination remotely like Alan's or Sally's.

I heard no more about the Red Mole for several years. I finished school. I got horrid, execrable jobs as a janitor and busboy and waiter and as a projectionist working for a pair of guys who turned out to be scumbag criminals, one of whom peddled drugs and boasted to me about how he bombed a restaurant for the insurance and tax breaks; he followed that up by using my Social Security number to put the cinema's expenses in my name, leaving me the utterly surprised recipient of delinquent bills and a threat of legal action. Finally I got a job on the midnight shift sorting mail at the main Albuquerque post office on North Broadway, where managers and supervisors specialized in cruelty. In late 1984, in an effort to escape the fascist oppression of that job, I transferred to the main post office in downtown Santa Fé, which proved to be even worse, and was easily one of the most miserable experiences of my life. Santa Fé itself in many ways was charming, though in other ways it was downright creepy — the palpable hatred felt by the minority whites for the majority Méxicans and Indians was truly disconcerting. Then, to my almost unendurable delight, I discovered that the Red Mole would appear there! I attended a show they put on at the NM Museum of Fine Arts on the outskirts of the city, and I snuck in a microcassette recorder to preserve at least the audio. I have no idea what ever happened to that tape. But I saw that I was not alone, and others openly carried in larger tape recorders with superior microphones. The Red Mole had a small but fervent following!

They also put on a show in a gallery (I think it was called the Variant Gallery) in downtown Santa Fé, where they had us all

sit on the floor. There was no place else to sit, because the Gallery was just that, a commercial gallery. It was small, and though it looked a little bit like an art museum, everything in it was for sale (and beyond my budget). So we sat on the floor, and we could see through the doorway into the back room where the Red Moles would switch props or change costumes or nurse the baby or do whatever else they had to do. The show opened with Alan Brunton doing a stand-up routine. I despise stand-up — except that one time. He was devastatingly funny, with the most intentionally awkward, upside-down sense of humor I have ever witnessed. The jokes were all topical, and would mean nothing to anyone who was not following local news at that time. But they were brilliant! I remember only one, which I repeated to a few people. Background: [Moncor](#), a bank based in southern New Mexico, had recently created a huge scandal and a state-wide panic when it declared bankruptcy in 1985. A separate item in the news, which caused a great deal of fuss and chatter about the water fountains and coffee machines in break rooms, was an enormous scandal in Roswell, in which federal agents claimed to have confiscated about eight million dollars' worth of illegal drugs from a previously unknown smuggling ring. I don't remember the details of either story, because they're really not worth remembering. Alan's version: "New Mexico, funny place! There's an eight-million-dollar drug bust in Roswell and what happens right after that? Moncor goes bankrupt!" Then the show started, and it was beyond bizarre. They had a brilliant theatrical device by which they got all of us in the audience to be, in effect, the natives of some remote island somewhere that had never had contact with civilization. How they did that, I don't remember. There was no audience participation *per se*; we didn't *do* anything. They just got us into that mind-set. And then, in mime, two government representatives landed in their ships. One was from the US and the other was from the Soviet Union, each recognizable by a mask, a robe, and a flag. And each representative — *entirely in mime!* — tried to convince us to choose one of them as a leader and to reject the other. What a life-changing sketch. We in the audience just wanted to tell both Uncle Sam and the Big Bear to get the hell

away from us and leave us alone. We wanted to drown them both in the ocean. And that, in a nutshell, is the essence of politics: it is irrelevant to people's personal and family and neighborhood lives except to the extent that it is disruptive and threatening. I've never been able to see politics in any other way since that night.

Alan wrote a monologue that surprised me in many ways. It was not laugh-out-loud funny; as a matter of fact, it was rather bitter and abrasive. That was unexpected because Alan was extremely gentle, the very antithesis of bitterness and abrasiveness. But he made a point that no other entertainer, to my knowledge, has ever made. Most Americans believe in astrology, and it is easy to see why. The astrology columns in the newspapers are flattering and people find them reassuring, and they are so vague that they cannot be proved wrong, though they can never be put to any practical use. The sincerest devotees actually adopt the characteristics that they believe they are supposed to possess, and thus more sensitive astrologers can guess a sincere devotee's "sign" with a fair degree of accuracy. It is rare for an astrologer or other fortune teller to make specific predictions, such as "three days from now your mother-in-law Sophie will surprise you by arriving on the 7:14 AM train from Peoria." The mystics who do make such predictions, of course, are usually wrong, but on the one occasion in a million in which they are right, they make a stunning impression. But back to the subject at hand: an astrologer or mystic will never, but *never*, tell a client that he is an obnoxious SOB who deserves to be hung from the nearest tree, no matter how true or even obvious that judgment may be. An astrologer must always use flattery and remark upon the client's emotional sensitivity. Alan recognized that blatant manipulation for what it was, and he played upon it by doing precisely the opposite, reading out a series of twelve horoscopes for the day, each more insulting than the last. It was brilliant, and it was brave, but I don't know if anyone else in the audience that night understood what he was doing or why.

The more I saw the Red Mole, the more timid I became about talking with them. First of all, I was still terribly ashamed about having attended their workshop as a voyeur rather than a participant, and lost face because of that. In retrospect, that was silly of me, because I'm sure they didn't care a whit about that. Secondly, I invariably attended their shows by myself, because not even one of my friends had the slightest interest. And attending a live show by oneself is a bit embarrassing, isn't it? Further, I was unduly afraid of being perceived as a groupie or a stage-door Johnny. But if I had had my wits about me, I would have spoken with them the way I spoke with anybody else, and in all likelihood I would have made friends with them quite easily. Many performers tire of their admirers and wish to protect themselves from them. The Red Mole took complete delight in their admirers and wished to converse with them. So I was still fantasizing about at least asking if I could chuck my wretched job and work for them instead — I was so hopelessly in love with their artistry, their wizardry, their poetry, their outrageous imagination, that almost nothing else mattered to me anymore. But I still couldn't do it. It would have been too much like proposing to a stranger. So, alas, I continued with my loathesome job at the Santa Fé Post Office. For one single reason, though, I'm glad I kept that job for a bit longer, for it enabled me to perform a single anonymous service for the Red Mole. I noticed that the Museum of Fine Arts had returned a postcard as "UNKNOWN AT THIS ADDRESS." The postcard had been addressed to Alan Brunton, Sally Rodwell, and Deborah Hunt. I violated federal law by scribbling on the card that Alan, Sally, and Deborah were members of the Red Mole and that the Museum management would surely know how to get it to them, and I dropped the card back into the Museum's PO box. I hope the card eventually made it to the Moles, who at the time were living as ex-patriates in Taos, New Mexico, a small city that Alan had fallen completely in love with.

That was all between 29 and 23 years ago, which certainly didn't seem like more than three or four years ago. Since that time I have accidentally found myself living in and around

Buffalo, in Colorado, and in California, and during those years I have had all manner of jobs, usually menial jobs, and a nonstop string of highly unusual, stranger-than-fiction life experiences that most people don't believe, which is why I seldom talk about them anymore. I completely lost track of the Red Mole, though I would occasionally talk about them to theatre fans, none of whom had ever heard of them. I tried to explain what they were like, but had to give up at the futility of the task. Finally, the above essay on Albuquerque convinced me that it was time to make some sort of contact again. Surely they were still around. I was sure that Deborah would have gone off her own way by now, but Alan and Sally would have gathered new artists around them, and I was certain they were still performing somewhere. And now that so much time has passed, and now that I've matured considerably, the timidity is all gone, and I should be able to carry on a normal conversation with them. The thought of sending them an email message was energizing, and I was looking forward to it. So I went onto Google to find their contact information and saw something that stopped my heart. [Alan Brunton](#) died in 2002 at the age of 55. The Red Mole had finished a show in Norway and had just landed in Amsterdam, a city that Alan loved so much, as the next leg of their tour. But then that never happened, for Alan suffered a fatal heart attack. How could that be? This is too unreal. His poetry and restless imagination were unique. His poetry and his restless imagination, along with his all-encompassing happiness, his gentleness, his optimism, his drive, should have kept him alive, shouldn't it have? How could he have died? At age 55? That is a cruel destiny, and it pierced me to the bone.

As an on-line memorial, Sally drew up his [résumé](#), and reading it is eerie. It is a list of works, performed years ago, of which there are few video or audio recordings. They were so ephemeral — Alan seemed to want them to be ephemeral — and yet to have seen them in actual performance was a life-altering experience.

Alan's passing was too much for me, and so I had to find Sally to write to her, to phone her, to talk with her, to visit her, though she would surely not remember me, as she would have had less than no reason to remember me. But that made no difference; she was open to anyone. Then, just a minute or two after learning about Alan's demise, I learned about [Sally's premature death](#). I broke into tears and didn't begin to recover for many weeks. When Sally died, their by-then-college-age daughter, Ruby Brunton, delivered a memorial for her mother, [which you can read here](#). It turns out that Sally, unable any longer to withstand the grief, took her own life four years after Alan died. It was a deliberate decision, which she planned well in advance and discussed at length with her daughter. I understand her decision, and I respect and honor it. But if only I had not been so timid, if only I had been friends with her, if only I had known, I would have done anything or given anything at all to change her mind. Anything. Never in my life have I been so devastated as I am now.

I feel ashamed that I did not get to know these people. And I feel even more horrible because if I had been a friend, maybe, just maybe, I could have made a difference. Alan and Sally are irreplaceable. They were theatre's bright spot, and nobody could imitate them. Perhaps in another two or three thousand years someone else will come along with a comparable imagination. Perhaps. In the meantime all we can do is reminisce with such aids as [Murray Edmond's memoir](#), which, with its accompanying photographs and captions, manages to give only the slightest hint of what a Red Mole performance was like. You'll get some small idea of the theatricality, of the surrealism, of the extravagance, of the political engagement, but not of the sinuosity and the seamlessness with which the various ideas so naturally fell together, nor will it give you any idea of the beautifully magical narratives (most theatre is narrative-challenged, but not Alan's!), nor will it give you any idea of the laugh-out-loud comedy or of the astonishing immediacy.

Oh how I wish I had visited them in Taos. Oh how I wish I had seen more of their shows. The moral — which is for **you** to follow, because it's too late for me — is simple: When you discover the life that you love, follow it. Do not fall back upon doing what you are expected to do. Do what your heart tells you. Be creative, constructive, helpful, imaginative, daring, giving. Don't give up. Don't take that suicide-inducing job that your family and peers require of you. Sacrifice the sure income and risk homelessness. And if and when you finally meet the people you wish were your family, please let them know.

Now I'm continuing to search on-line, and I see that there were indeed some sort of video records after all. In 1978 Sam Neill (the actor) and John Reid made a documentary called *Red Mole on the Road* for New Zealand's National Film Unit. If you look through [the résumé that Sally drew up](#), you'll see that there were some other records as well, and that Sally herself made a documentary called *Zucchini Roma: A Life in the Theatre* (1995). We must somehow find these! And we must rescue and preserve the trims as well.

Though I hardly knew the Red Moles, and though I so rarely had contact with them, it's as though my life was somehow balanced by theirs, although they certainly could not have been aware of it. Knowing that they were there, somewhere in the world, putting on some show or other, entertaining someone, changing people's minds, was sufficient to make me feel better about life. Sooner or later, I was sure, I would see them again, and in the meantime it was all right that I was somewhere else, occupied with other things. But now, with Alan and Sally gone, I feel completely lost. Everything is quieter. And sadder. My whole perception of time has suddenly changed. Until I learned the news, the 1970s and 1980s were just yesterday. Now they are a century ago. I never felt at all old until now.

Though I need to accept it, I still have difficulty believing that the Red Mole, which to me was the most brilliantly, sparkingly, stimulatingly *alive* thing I have ever

encountered, is now dead. And a large part of me is now dead along with it.

A search on the Internet showed me that at least [Deborah](#) continues — in Puerto Rico. She did this [Humanettes](#) performance and she also contributed the shadow puppeteering to a music video by Tego Calderón. Charming — and, for me, a little bit therapeutic.

My next step, what will it be? I don't know. After I begin to recover from the shock, I'll gather up the strength to complete the book I've nearly finished, and then I'll pack up and go somewhere. And do something. But this time it will be something creative — even if it kills me. Alan's unexpected death has crushed me. Sally's suicide is so shocking and distressing that I'm sure I'll never recover from it. Yet, strangely, I feel morally obligated to make something positive out of this pair of tragedies. And, somehow, I shall. It will be the only way I can repay the two people I admired so greatly.

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