

Summary Information:

Collection Title: Joliet Theaters Collection

Collection Number: MSS.24

Date Range: 1895-1931, 1940-1986, 2001

Size: 2 Linear Feet

Location: RR.6.4, CO.OS.02, CO.OS.05

Creator: Rialto Square Theatre, Grand Theatre, Orpheum Theatre, Joliet Theatre, Mode Theatre, Piccolo Playhouse, Princess Theatre

Abstract: During the 1920's families began to move from rural areas closer to major cities in response to a new ease in transportation and suburban development. Movie palaces, theaters, and performance art were gaining popularity across the States during this same time period. Joliet was home to several such theaters including the Grand Theatre, Orpheum Theater, Joliet Theatre, Mode Theatre, Piccolo Playhouse, the Princess Theatre, and most prominently Rubens Rialto Square Theatre. The Joliet Theatres Collection contains programs, publications, advertisements, blueprints, and photographs relating to the history of these theatres.

Acquisition Information: This collection has been composed from various accessions relating to the history of various theatres in Joliet. There was no reasonable original order to these materials, so an order has been created for research purposes. All materials are appropriately labeled with their accession numbers, and more information regarding acquisition can be provided if requested.

Separated Materials: None

Citation: Item Description. MSS.24 Joliet Theaters Collection, Joliet Area Historical Museum. Box #, Folder #. Date Accessed.

Restrictions: None

Processed by: Kailee Lowry

Background Information:

History:

Movie palaces, theaters, and performance art gained popularity across the States during the 1920s. During this time period families began to move from rural areas to major cities in response to a new ease in transportation and suburban development. Theaters responded to these changes by developing new and inexpensive entertainment options. Located in densely populated and industrial cities, they were attended by young couples and families. Theaters offered not only films, but live vaudeville performances, and audial entertainment in the form of theater pipe organs and orchestras. Joliet was home to several such theaters including the Grand Theatre, Orpheum Theater, Joliet Theatre, Mode Theatre, Piccolo Playhouse, and the Princess Theatre.

The most prominent of Joliet's theatres, Rubens Rialto Square Theatre, opened in May of 1926. An effort of Joliet entertainment magnates of the Ruben family who owned and operated several small movie theaters in the town. They agreed that a brilliant theater, offering a broad range of entertainment in addition to films would make Joliet a mecca for people throughout the region. The Rialto was designed by architects Cornelius W. Rapp and George L. Rapp of the Chicago firm of Rapp & Rapp Architects. The Rialto is a prime example of the designs they produced midway through a prolific period stretching from 1919 to 1932. The work was completed by Kaiser-Ducett, one of the main contractors for the Chicago's 1933 World's Fair. Once the theater was completed, The Rialto quickly became the centerpiece in downtown Joliet.

Scope and Content Arrangement:

The Joliet Theatres Collection contains programs, publications, advertisements, blueprints, and photographs relating to the history and creation of various theatres in Joliet, most prominently Rubens Rialto Square Theatre. The collection is organized into 3 series based on types of materials and each series has been arranged chronologically. Series 1 and 3 have further been arranged into sub-series. The sub-series create a logical distinction between materials relating to Rubens Rialto Square Theatre and other Joliet theatres. There are not enough materials in the collection for individual theatres to necessitate their own series.

There are a number of oversized materials in the collection, primarily advertisements, photographs and blueprints. These materials have been listed in Series 4 of the collection and are listed in the finding aid with their original series number as well. All oversized materials are house in oversize storage drawer 5 located in the Curator's office.

Series 1: Event Program and Publications, 1895-1931, 1940-1986, 2001

Sub Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Sub Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Series 2: Rialto Theatre Restoration Records, 1980-1981

Series 3: Photographs and Prints, C. 1960-1980

Sub Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Sub Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Series 4: Oversized Materials

Related Materials:

Content Listing:

Series 1: Event Programs and Publications, 1895-1931, 1940-1986, 2001

Location: RR.6.4

Scope: This series contains programs, advertisements, theatre publications, and additional marketing

materials from theatres in Joliet. This series has been divided into two sub-series creating a distinction between materials relating to the Rialto Square Theatre and other Joliet theaters.

Sub-Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Sub-Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Sub-Series 1 has been arranged chronologically, and Sub-Series 2 has been arranged alphabetically.

Sub-Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Folder Title:	Folder #:	Box #:
Rialto Weekly Review, 1929	1	1
Siamese Twins, Daisy and Violet Hilton, Rialto Advertisement, 1929	2	1
Milk Fund Cooking School Programs held at Rialto Theatre, C. 1940-1960	3	1
Milk Fund Cooking School Ticket held at Rialto Theatre, C. 1940-1960	4	1
Jewel of Joliet Program, Will County Cultural Arts Association (1 of 2), 1977	5	1
Jewel of Joliet Program, Will County Cultural Arts Association (2 of 2), 1977	6	1
Rialto Theatre Event and Show Programs, 1977-1986, 2006	7	1
Rialto Theatre Season Programs, 1981-1996	8	1
Rialto Square Theatre Box Office Manual, 1982	9	1
Rialto Square Theatre Dedication Ceremony Program, 1983	10	1
Rialto 60 th Anniversary Program, 1986	11	1
Rialto 75 th Anniversary Pocket Calendar, 2001	12	1
Rialto Square Arts Association Publications	13	1
Rialto Theatre \$1.00 Tickets	1	2

Sub-Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Folder Title:	Folder #:	Box #:
The Grand Theatre Program, C. 1920	2	2
Hiawatha Program, Orpheum Theatre, 1916	3	2
Joliet Theatre Musical Programs, C. 1895	4	2
The Piccolo Playhouse Programs, C. 1920s	5	2
The Piccolo Playhouse Programs, C. 1960s	6	2
The Piccolo Playhouse Programs, 1965	7	2
Princess Theatre Weekly Movie News, 1924-1926	8	2
The Talkies: News of Paramount-Publix Theatres, Joliet, 1931	9	2

Series 2: Rialto Theatre Restoration Records, 1980-1981

Location: RR.6.4

Scope: This series contains materials relating to the 1980s restoration of the Rialto Square Theatre. On November 27, 1981 the Rialto rebranded a campaign to “Save the Rialto” was initiated by Dorothy Mavrich, president of the Cultural Arts Council of the Joliet Area, formerly known as the Rialto Square Arts Association. This campaign led to a rebranding of the Rialto from a vaudeville movie palace to a performing arts center, a change which formerly took place on November 27, 1981. As part of this rebranding Conrad Schmitt Studio of Wisconsin began restoration of the building in April of 1980 to restore the theatre to its original magnificence.

All materials in this series have been arranged chronologically.

Folder Title:	Folder #:	Box #:
Conrad Schmitt Studios, Rialto Restoration Program, C. 1980s	10	2
Rialto Restoration of Marquee Plan, 1980	11	2
Rialto Restoration Blueprints, 1980-1981	12	2
Rialto Restoration Correspondence, 1980-1981	13	2

Series 3: Photographs and Prints, C. 1960-1980

Location: RR.6.4

Scope: This series contains photographs, greeting cards, and prints relating to theatres in Joliet. Of note are a photographs taken by Rapp & Rapp Architects of the interior of the Rialto Square Theatre. This series has been divided into two sub-series creating a distinction between materials relating to the Rialto Square Theatre and other Joliet theaters.

Sub-Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Sub-Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Sub-Series 1 has been arranged chronologically, and Sub-Series 2 has been arranged alphabetically.

Sub-Series 1: Rialto Square Theatre

Folder Title:	Folder #:	Box #:
C.W. & Geo L. Rapp Architects, Rialto Photographs	14	2
Rialto Theatre Exterior Photographs	15	2
Rialto Theatre Interior Photographs	16	2
Rialto Theatre Greeting Cards	17	2
Douglas McCallum, “Rialto Square Theater” Sketch	18	2

Sub-Series 2: Misc. Joliet Theatres

Folder Title:	Folder #:	Box #:
The Old Orpheum Photographs, 1967	19	2
Mode Theatre Photographs	20	2

Series 4: Oversized Materials

Location: CO.OS.02, CO.OS.5

Folder Title:	Series #:	Box #:
Rialto Theatre Event Advertisements, C. 1970-1986	Series 1	OS.05
Backstage: Rialto Review, 1986	Series 1	OS.05
Rialto Restoration Blueprints, 1979	Series 2	OS.02
Rialto Diner Photograph	Series 3	OS.05
Rialto Organ Photographs	Series 3	OS.05
Orpheum Theatre Photographs	Series 3	OS.05