



Beacon Journal photos by Ott Gangl

After 50 years of first runs, Market Avenue theater is empty

Curtains

Canton's Palace Theater closes its doors

By PAT NORMAN

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CANTON — With Hollywood's brightest stars and first-run movies, the lavish Palace Theatre has been a major entertainment showcase here for 50 years.

But faced with dwindling crowds and rising prices lately, the Palace, one of few remaining "Radio City" type theater, has been forced to close its doors. Its last feature film was the x-rated "The Boob Tube."

James Ink, 76-year-old owner of the theater at 605 N. Market Ave., said Wednesday that the death of the Palace is related to other business problems in downtown Canton.

"All downtown properties are in trouble," said Ink, who inherited the Palace from his father, Harry Harper Ink.

Harry Ink died several months before the theater opened. In a full-page newspaper ad announcing the Palace's completion, his wife and children said, "In the loving memory of Harry H. Ink, we present the fulfillment of his dream."

UNTIL RECENTLY, Ink said, the Palace — noted for the many furnishings that were selected from European castles — WAS "a most marvelous investment. I'm not crying. It went way beyond my expectations."

Ink, 1408 10th St. NW, is not sure about the future of the Palace.

but thinks it would be "foolish" to try to lease it in a downtown market that has soured.

The hard times that set in are a far cry from the days when theaters like the Palace with their big, important stages were in vogue. With its closing and that of the Plaza Theatre soon, only the Ohio Theatre will be left downtown.

A stroll down a narrow hallway at the Palace testifies to the earlier heydays. On the walls are pictures of some of the stars that Manager Ralph Russell said graced the big stage — people like Rhonda Fleming, Desi Arnaz and Cab Calloway.

The most popular movie the Palace ever ran was "The Sound of Music," which was shown for 42 weeks, Russell said.

SINCE 1967, when the theater's original organ was fixed, Orrville organist and repairman Steve Brown has given weekend concerts.

However, the variety of entertainment did not draw enough patrons to pay the bills.



Statue in lobby