

"Carroll Theater Opened in 1937"

Carroll County Times Article for 29 July 2001

by Jay A. Graybeal

The Carroll County Arts Council's redevelopment of the former Carroll Theatre on W. Main St. in Westminster opens a new chapter in the history of the building. The Art Deco style movie theater opened on Thanksgiving Day 1937; a highly detailed description of the building appeared in the November 26th issue of the Democratic Advocate newspaper:

"The modern Carroll Theatre opened to the public on Thanksgiving Day. This theatre is in all respects the most completely modern building in this city. The exterior presents an imposing picture in itself and the first story front is finished in black cerra glass, and the second story in yellow tile brick. The ticket booth is also done in cerra glass. There will be a store room on either side of the foyer, and each will be 17 feet wide, 25 feet long, with a four foot show window. The spacious lobby has a composition floor of terrazzo. An interesting feature of the lobby is a friese, on about a foot slant from the walk to the ceiling. This friese has a varicolored modernistic design and the design itself was originated by the architect, Oliver B. Wright. Another feature of the foyer is electrical signs which will be used to show the coming attractions. These signs will have a cardinal velvet backing, and a soft, indirect lighting effect.

The auditorium is spacious and artistic. The walls are completely finished in a rose off-shade with highly-glossed deeper rose at the bottoms. There is a deep rose panel at the top of the wall near the ceiling. A two-tone combination of baby and powder blue makes a striking effect, with a thin cream design. The leathered upholstered seats will be of mulberry color, and leather composition. There will be 850 seats. There is a large stage with a modernistic panel with the color effects around it. An especially made curtain and cyclorama will be used to diffuse the lighting effects, and apparently change the color of the curtain. A mix of brown design of harmonious colors will be placed. There will be lavatories and a ladies' dressing room, fully furnished, also on the first floor.

The walls of the building will be fireproof. The second floor has five offices, eleven by twenty feet, all facing on Main street. These offices may be used as suites or separately. There are also lavatories on the second floor. The projection room is interesting. There are two large projection machines. An experienced operator will be in charge. Everything, even the door of the room, is fireproof. Next to the projection room is the managers' office. This has an outlet into the theatre, so that at all times, he may inspect the pictures which are being shown. This theatre will be the only one in Westminster to have afternoon performances. These matinees will begin at 2 o'clock and the shows will run continuously. A fine array of pictures have been booked. The manager of the theatre will be Alvin Dohme, who is now residing on the Shriver property at Union Mills."

The titles of the earliest films shown at the Carroll Theatre can be found in period newspaper advertisements. A December 3, 1937 ad in the Advocate announced the weekly schedule which included, Double or Nothing starring Bing Crosby and Martha Raye; The Life of the Party starring Joe Penner and others and The Lives of a Bengal Tiger starring Gary Cooper. Each showing also included shorts such as Charlie McCarthy in At the Races and newsreels. Admission to matinees was fifteen cents for adults and ten cents for children. Night showings cost adults a quarter; children still got in for a dime.



A group of moviegoers posed in front of the Carroll Theatre, 91 W. Main St. in Westminster, in 1941. The tag line for the movie, "The Little Foxes," starring Bette Davis and Herbert Marshall, was "the film version of the stage hit, as the ruthless beauty whose ambition spelt the doom of three men." The Carroll Theatre opened on Thanksgiving Day 1937. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of John Byers.