



LOEWS THEATRES **New York 1928-30**

Part One **LANDMARK Syracuse**

ENGINEERING SERVICES

Eur Ing BRIAN ROBERTS CEng Hon.FCIBSE
Life Member ASHRAE

CIBSE HERITAGE GROUP



LOEWS/LANDMARK Syracuse

OPENED 1928

SEATING CAPACITY 2908

ORIGINAL OWNER Loews

**PRESENT OWNER SALT
Syracuse Area Landmark Theatre**

ARCHITECT Thomas Lamb

**HVAC&R Air Conditioned
York Ice Machinery Corporation CO₂ system**

STATUS In use after restoration

LIGHTING CONTROLS Westinghouse

LOEWS THEATRES

Marcus Loew

Marcus Loew



Born	May 7, 1870 New York City, New York, U.S.
Died	September 5, 1927 (aged 57) Glen Cove, New York, U.S.
Nationality	Austrian-American
Occupation	Film exhibitor
Known for	Founder of Loews Inc.
Title	President

(Wikipedia)

LOEWS THEATRES

Marcus Loew

Loew was born in New York City, into a poor Jewish family, who had emigrated to New York City a few years previously from Austria and Germany.^[1] He was forced by circumstances to work at a very young age and had little formal education. Nevertheless, beginning with a small investment from money saved from menial jobs, he bought into the penny arcade business. Shortly after, in partnership with Adolph Zukor and others, he founded the successful but short-lived Automatic Vaudeville Company which established a chain of arcades across several cities. After the company dissolved in 1904 Loew converted his share of the business into nickelodeons and over time he turned Loew's Theatres into a leading chain of vaudeville and movie theaters in the United States.

By 1905, Marcus Loew was on his own and his success eventually necessitated that he secure a steady flow of product for his theaters. In 1904, he founded the People's Vaudeville Company, a theater chain which showcased one-reel films as well as live variety shows. In 1910, the company had considerably expanded and was renamed Loew's Consolidated Enterprises. His associates included Adolph Zukor, Joseph Schenck, and Nicholas Schenck. In addition to theaters, Loew and the Schencks expanded the Fort George Amusement Park in upper Manhattan.



Marcus Loew in his office, ca.1914

By 1913, Loew operated a large number of theaters in New York City including the American Music Hall, Avenue A Theatre, Avenue B Theatre, Broadway Theatre (41st St.), Circle Theatre, and the Columbia Theatre in Brooklyn. Other Loew-operated theaters were the Delancey St. Theatre, Greeley Sq. Theatre, Herald Square Theatre, Liberty Theatre, Brooklyn, Lincoln Sq. Theatre, National Theatre (149th St.), Plaza Theatre, 7th Ave. Theatre (124th St.), Shubert Theatre, Brooklyn, and the Yorkville Theatre.^[2] Outside of New York, he managed the Columbia Theatre (Washington, D.C.)^[3]^[4] Columbia Theatre (Boston) and the Metropolitan Opera House (Philadelphia).^[2]

Loew found himself faced with a serious dilemma: his merged companies lacked a central managerial command structure. Loew preferred to remain in New York overseeing the growing chain of Loew's Theatres. Film production had been gravitating toward southern California since 1913. By 1917 he oversaw a number of enterprises: Borough Theatre Co., Empress Amusement Corp., Fort George Amusement Co., Glendive Amusement Corp., Greeley Square Amusement Co., Loew's Consolidated Enterprise, Loew's Theatrical Enterprises, Mascot Amusement Co., Natonia Amusement Co.,

People's Vaudeville Co.^[5] In 1919, Loew reorganized the company under the name Loew's, Inc.^[6]

In 1920, Loew purchased Metro Pictures Corporation. A few years later, he acquired a controlling interest in the financially troubled Goldwyn Picture Corporation which at that point was controlled by theater impresario Lee Shubert. Goldwyn Pictures owned the "Leo the Lion" trademark and studio property in Culver City, California. But without its founder Samuel Goldwyn, the Goldwyn studio lacked strong management. With Loew's vice president Nicholas Schenck needed in New York City to help manage the large East Coast movie theater operations, Loew had to find a qualified executive to take charge of this new Los Angeles entity.

Loew recalled meeting a film producer named Louis B. Mayer who had been operating a successful, if modest, studio in east Los Angeles. Mayer had been making low budget melodramas for a number of years, marketing them primarily to women. Since he rented most of his equipment and hired most of his stars on a per-picture basis, Loew wasn't after Mayer's brick and mortar business; he wanted Mayer and his Chief of Production, the former Universal Pictures executive, Irving Thalberg. Nicholas Schenck was dispatched to finalize the deal that ultimately resulted in the formation of Metro-Goldwyn Pictures in April 1924 with Mayer as the studio head and Thalberg chief of production.

Mayer's company folded into Metro Goldwyn with two notable additions: Mayer Pictures' contracts with key directors such as Fred Niblo and John M. Stahl, and up-and-coming actress Norma Shearer, later married to Thalberg. Mayer would eventually be rewarded by having his name added to the company. Loew's Inc. would act as MGM's financier and retain controlling interest for decades.

While immediately successful, Loew didn't live to see the powerhouse that MGM was to become. He died three years later in 1927 of a heart attack at the age of 57 at his country home in Glen Cove, New York. Reporting his death, Variety called him "the most beloved man of all show business of all time".^[7] He was interred in the Maimonides Cemetery in Brooklyn.^[8]

For his very significant contribution to the development of the motion picture industry, Marcus Loew has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 1617 Vine Street. To this day, the Loew name is synonymous with movie theaters.^[9]

(Wikipedia)

NOTE

Many of the following pages of information and illustrations are taken from the book "Movie Palace Masterpiece" by Alfred Balk (Ed), published by Landmark Theatre Foundation, Syracuse NY, 1998. The original source and photo credits are given followed by MPM, the initial letters of the book title. Many of these sources are not easily available, if at all, in the UK.

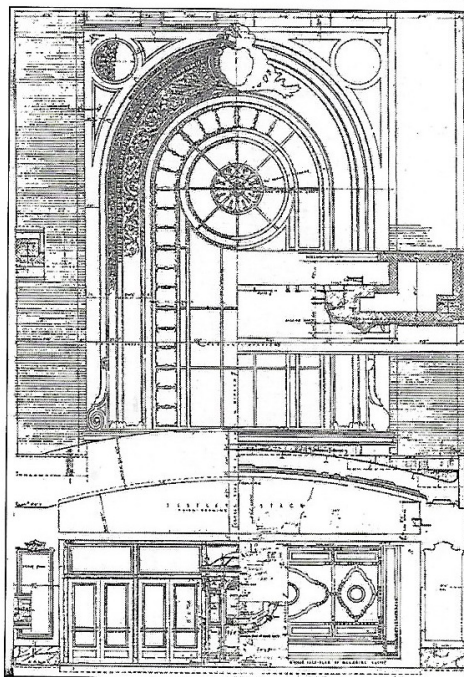
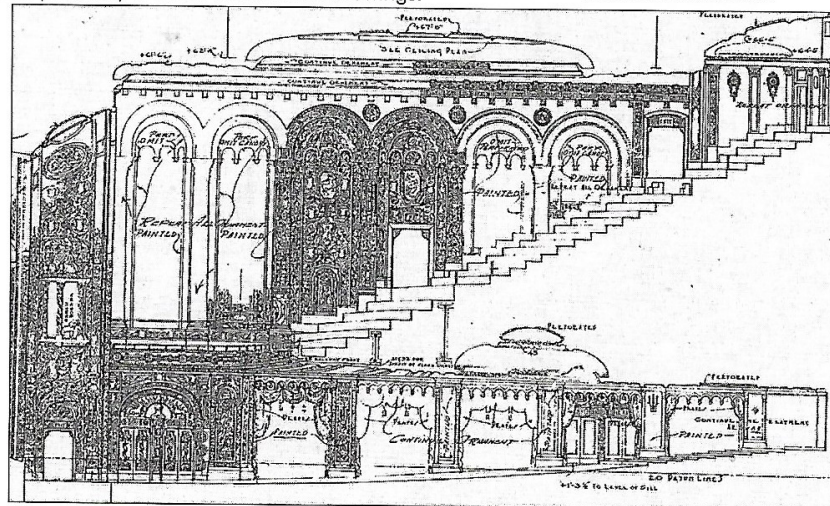
LANDMARK Syracuse

Blueprinting a Masterpiece

Given virtually a blank check by Loew, Lamb designed the city's largest and grandest movie palace, a meld of Hindu, Persian, and Oriental influences. Its 2,900-seat auditorium, with a sweeping curvilinear balcony, matched the height of the building's eight-story office wing. Its four-story, L-shaped lobby was framed by an overhead "Musicians Gallery," elephantine mural, massive mirrors, carved plaster pillars, diverse enclaves for lighting, and a "Grand Staircase" ascending in chandelier-lit splendor to the mezzanine "Grand Promenade." Heightening the opulence would be furnishings from two mansions, one that of the legendary Commodore Vanderbilt in Manhattan.

Samples (reduced) of Lamb construction drawings.

Landmark Theatre Archive.



(Landmark Theatre Archive from MPM)

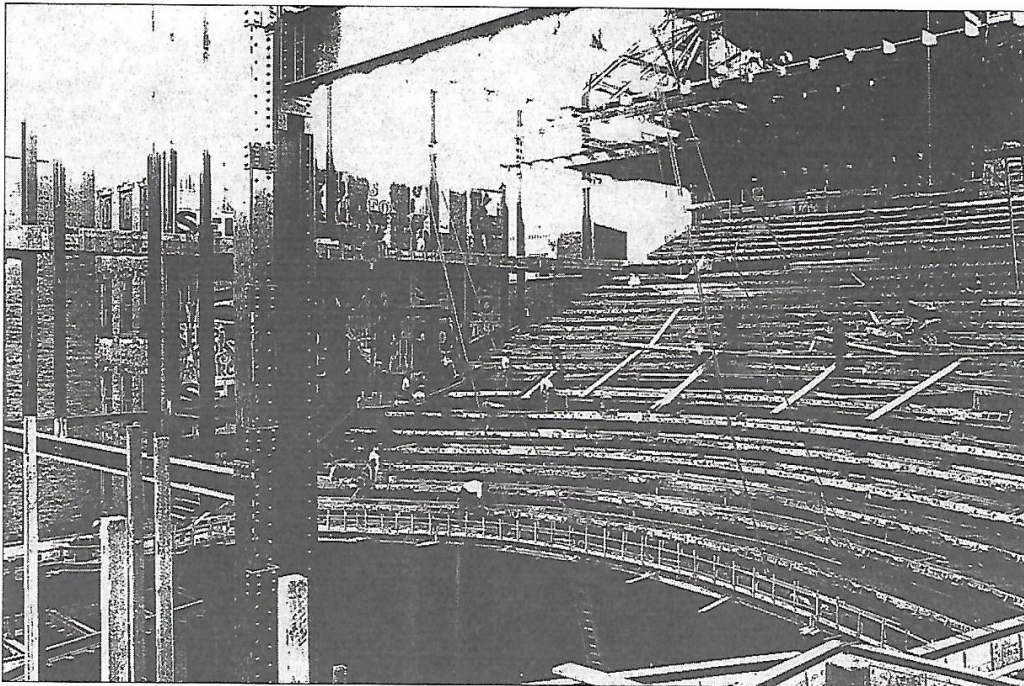
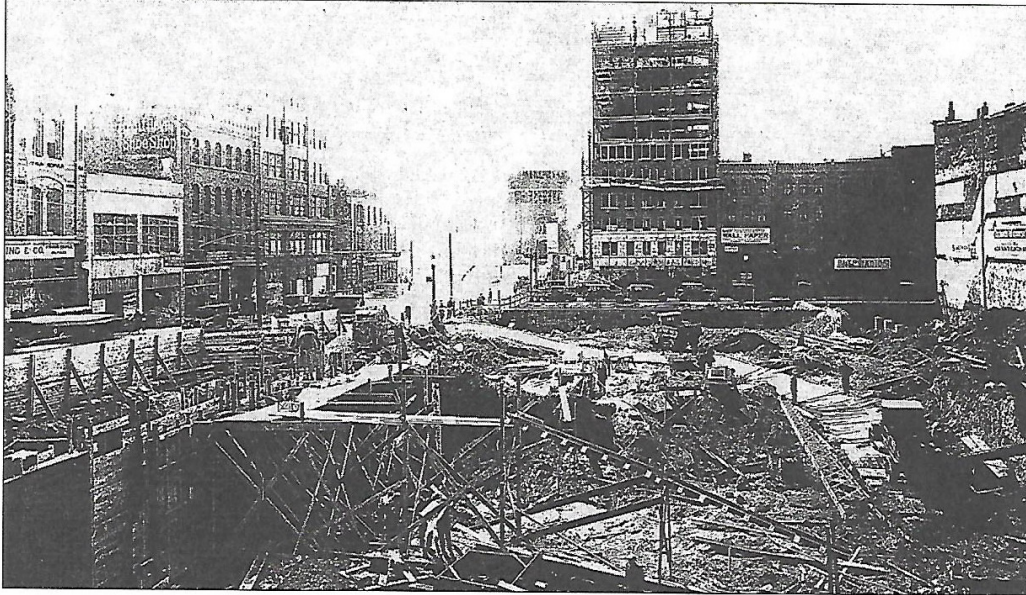
LANDMARK Syracuse

Constructing a Masterpiece

After site-clearing, ground was broken on March 25, 1927. Construction, costing some \$2 million, took eleven months. Loew, however, never lived to see the result. In frail health, he died of heart failure on Sept. 5, 1927. On the day of his funeral most theaters in the U. S. and Canada closed briefly, then reopened with an orchestral or organ tribute.

Construction-monitoring photos, for Lamb's New York office.

Landmark Theatre Archive.



(Landmark Theatre Archive from MPM)

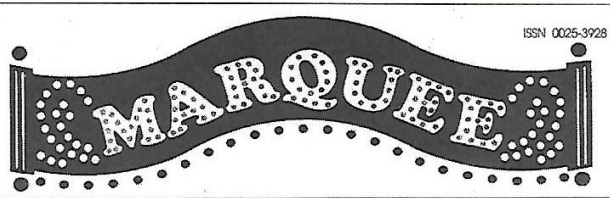
LANDMARK Syracuse



Photo provided by Onondaga Historical Association

(Cinema Treasures: Onondaga Historical Association)

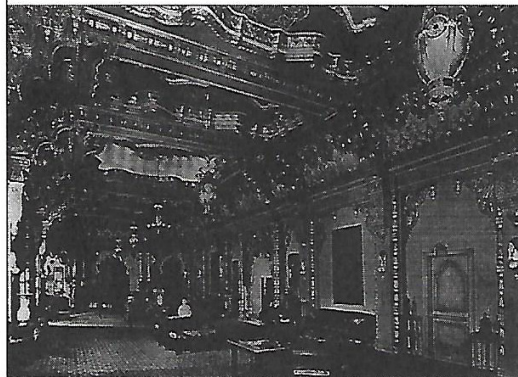
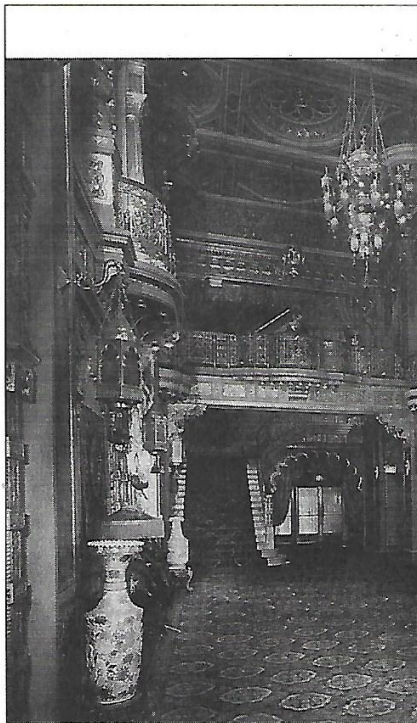
LANDMARK Syracuse



ISSN 0025-3928

Vol. 26 No. 4 THE JOURNAL OF THE THEATRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA FOURTH QUARTER 1994

Marquee Magazine, Fourth Quarter, 1994,
Theatre Historical Society of America, Elmhurst, Ill.



The L-shaped double lobby is quite similar in layout and function to that in Loew's Midland, Kansas City. The outer leg (far left) sets the auditorium behind the office block while separating orchestra and balcony traffic. A small portion of the celebrated mural is visible on the right wall.

The inner portion (above) accesses the main floor and far side of the balcony. As in the Midland, the two areas are complementary in treatment but not identical.

Permutations of the mezzanine promenade (left) appeared in Loew's 72nd St. and 175th St., New York.

LANDMARK Syracuse

GREAT AMERICAN CINEMAS

THE SYRACUSE AREA LANDMARK THEATRE

Syracuse, New York



The Syracuse Area Landmark Theatre in Syracuse, New York, provides a forum as magnificent as the films it was meant to showcase. The theater's opulent interior transported Depression-era patrons from their work-a-day world to the glitter and glamour of Hollywood, and today, continues its tradition of grand entertainment in a grand setting.

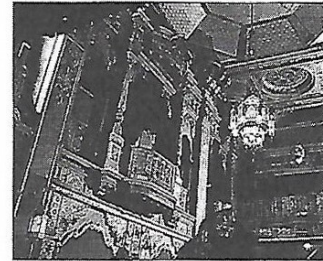
The theater was designed by architect Thomas W. Lamb and was christened Loew's State Theatre on February 18, 1928. Built at the close of the Roaring Twenties, Loew's State offered freewheeling audiences double bills of famous stage acts and first-run moving pictures. When the stock market crashed a year later, patrons continued to flock to the theater, where grandeur replaced despair.

The theater provided the ultimate escape. Often labeled Indo-Persian, architect Lamb further described the theater as "European, Byzantine, Romanesque — which is the Orient as it came to us through the merchants of Venice."

Audiences were ushered into Lamb's exotic world through the main lobby, which boasted a chandelier designed by Louis Tiffany for Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion, and the grandest of the theater's several huge murals. The Musician's Gallery, located over the front doors, featured quartet serenades as intermission entertainment during the '30s. Patrons who ascended the grand staircase reached the promenade lobby, where they delighted in find-

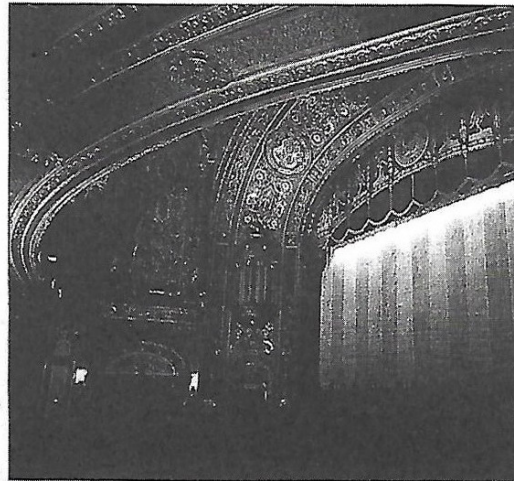
ing a fish pond with a Japanese pagoda fountain. The main auditorium, which houses 1,832 of the theater's 3,300 seats, was decorated in rich reds and golds and accented with wall ornaments throughout. The 1,400-pipe Wurlitzer organ offered its own exotic flavor, treating patrons to such sounds as a glockenspiel, marimba, bird whistles, hoof beats and surf sounds.

Crowds flocked to Loew's State throughout the Depression and World War II and yet, like so many other great movie palaces (including six razed in Syracuse), the theater's attendance began dropping steadily in the '50s. By 1975, it seemed that the



pride of Syracuse would fall prey to the wrecker's ball to allow for a parking/shopping complex. However, in 1977, a group of concerned citizens banded together to form the Syracuse Area Landmark Theatre, or SALT. SALT had the local landmark placed on the National Register of Historic Places, opening the door to government funding.

By the end of 1977, the group had acquired the theater and begun restoring its original splendor. Impressed with the dedication of the SALT volunteers and staff, New York State's Parks Commission began offering ongoing funding, as have Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse. Today, the theater continues its restoration and fund-raising efforts, while offering the Syracuse area a full schedule of live performances by the Syracuse Symphony, touring Broadway shows and a wide variety of renowned musicians. *MPM*
—B.A.R.



AMERICAN MOVIE CLASSICS MAGAZINE

American Movie Classics Magazine, March, 1991.

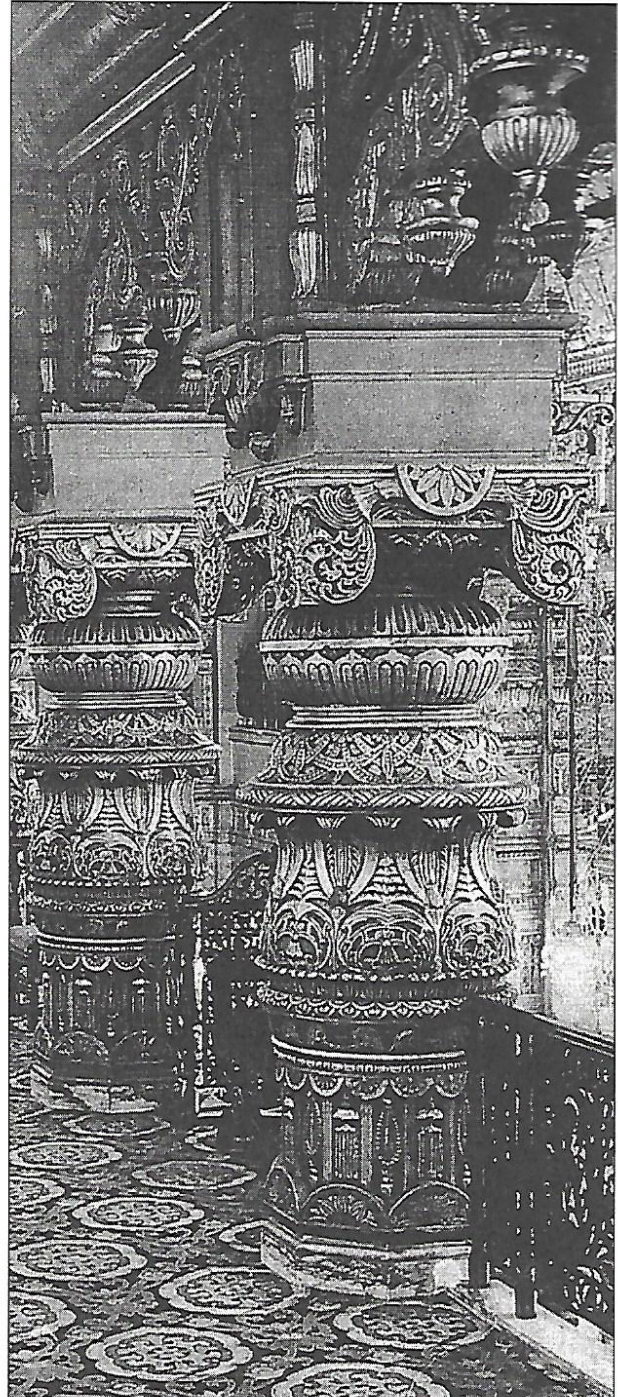
LANDMARK Syracuse

The Louis XVI and Italian Baroque designs soon led Lamb into more and more flamboyant experiments until, near the end of the Twenties, he had thrown purism to the winds in favor of Hindu, Chinese, Persian, Spanish, and Romanesque themes. An interesting illustration of this new mood was a series of theatres designed for the Loew chain. Loew's State in Syracuse, New York, was the prototype of three Oriental extravaganzas that made his early Adam efforts look like Quaker meetinghouses. The Syracuse theatre was opened in 1929, Loew's 175th Street Theatre in New York in 1930, and Loew's 72nd Street

"The Grand Foyer," wrote Lamb, in describing the theatre in Syracuse, "is like a temple of gold set with colored jewels, the largest and most precious of which is a sumptuous mural. It represents a festive procession all in Oriental splendor, with elephants, horses, slaves, princes and horsemen, all silhouetted against a deep-blue night sky. It is pageantry in its most elaborate form, and immediately casts a spell of the mysterious and, to the Occidental mind, of the exceptional. Passing on into the inner foyers and the mezzanine promenade, one continues in the same Indo-Persian style with elaborate ornamentation both in relief and in painting, all conspiring to create an effect thoroughly foreign to our Western minds. These exotic ornaments, colors, and scenes are particularly effective in creating an atmosphere in which the mind is free to frolic and becomes receptive to entertainment.

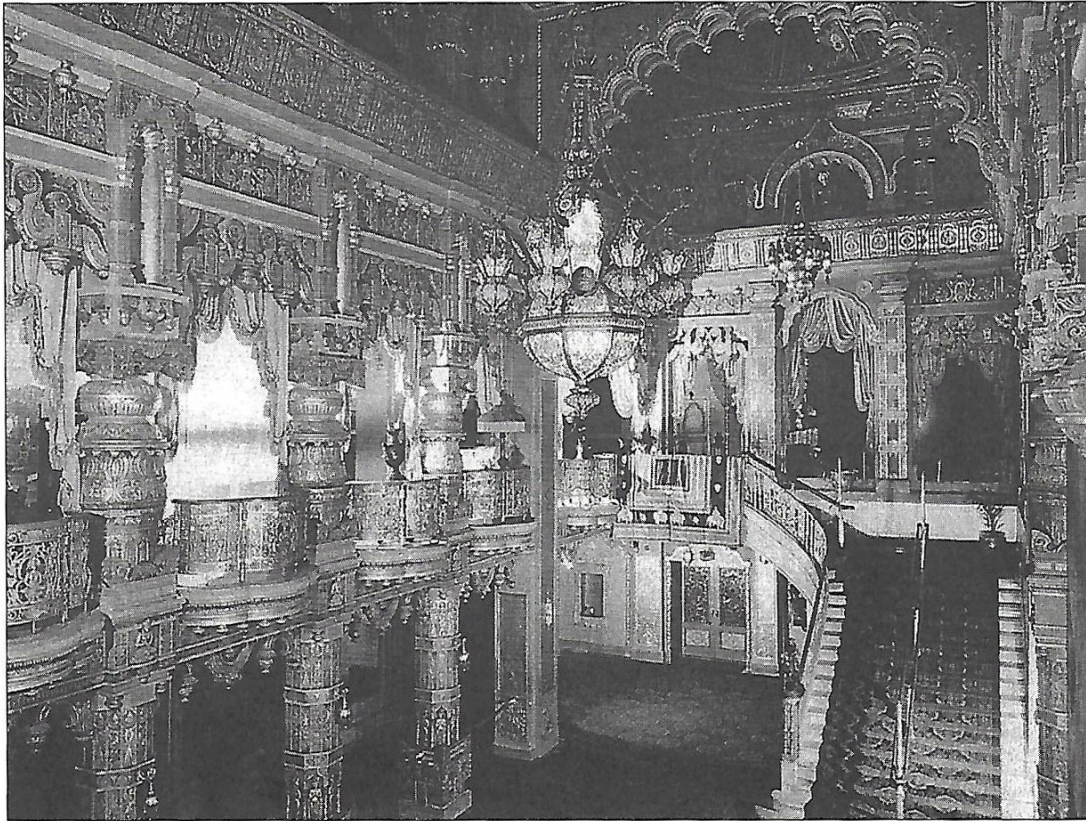
"The auditorium itself is also very much permeated by the Orient but it is not pure and unadulterated like the foyers and vestibules. It is the European Byzantine Romanesque, which is the Orient as it came to us through the merchants of Venice, those great traders who brought the East and its art back to Europe in their minds, as they brought the cargoes in their ships."

"The Best Remaining Seats," Ben M. Hall, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York.



Lamb leaned heavily on this column. It appeared first in Loew's State in Syracuse, later on 175th Street and 72nd Street in New York (see following pages) as did a number of other Hindu conceits off the same blueprints.

LANDMARK Syracuse



An extraordinary glass chandelier from the demolished Vanderbilt mansion found its way into the foyer of the Loew's State (1928) in Syracuse, New York.

Lamb's last great palaces are "permeated with a touch of the Orient—brightly colorful, emotional, and almost seductive" (*Motion Picture News*). The burnished bronze look of the Syracuse Loew's State (1928) was characterized by Lamb as "European Byzantine Romanesque, the Orient as it came to us through the merchants of Venice." Lamb was proudest of all of the grand foyer, "a temple of gold set with colored jewels."

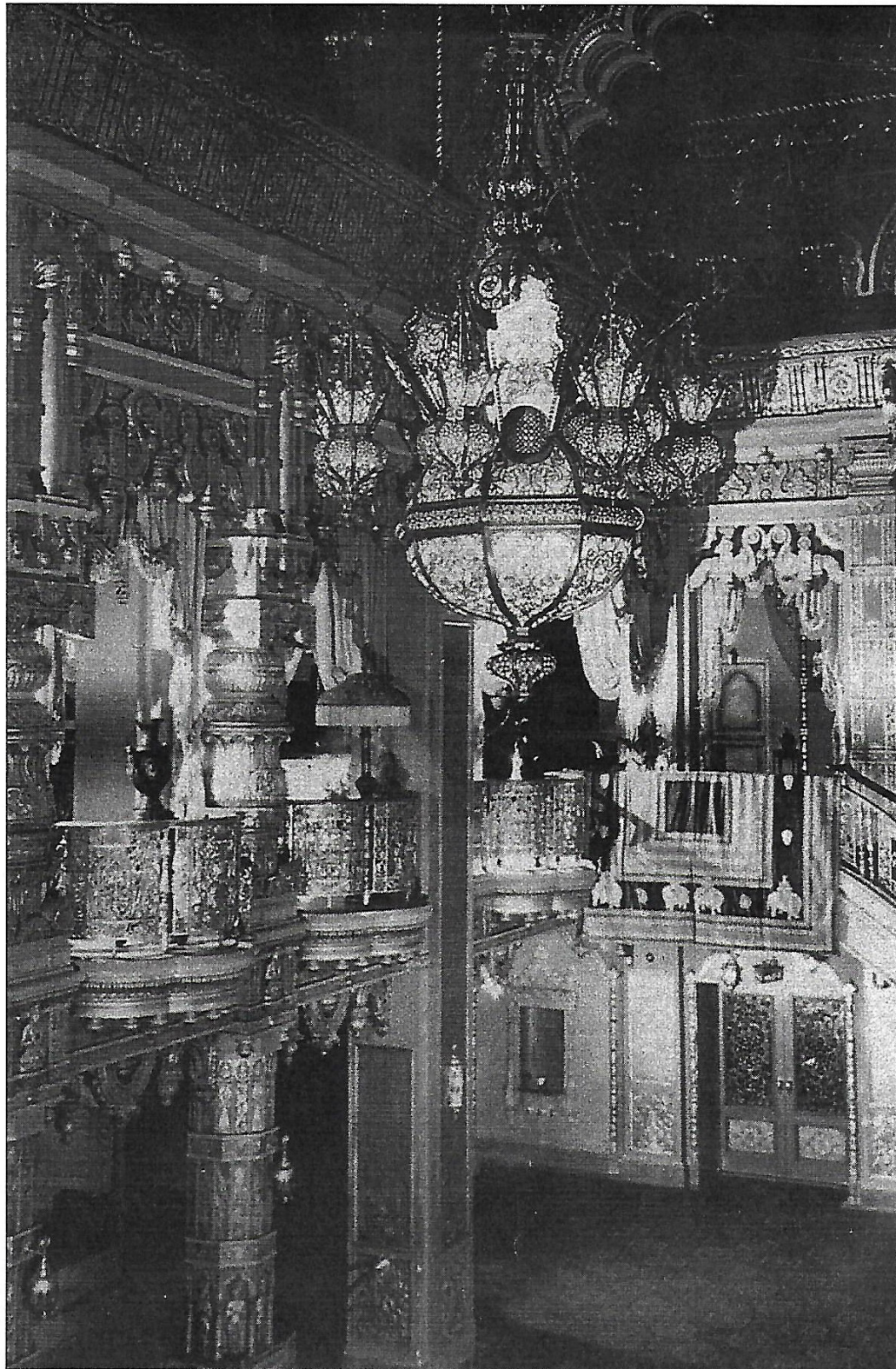
The chandelier that originally hung in the foyer was another item the Loew's organization had salvaged from Vanderbilt's townhouse. The great central pendulum of stained glass was surrounded by smaller sconces with the

same exotic bulbous form. Misguided concern during World War II that an enemy bombing of Syracuse might cause the chandelier to fall led to the fixture's removal. (It has since been sold in pieces, with orphaned sconces now on the living room walls of some American celebrities.)

Lamb hired Scottish craftsmen to do the theater's plasterwork ornament. The workers copied much of the design directly from scholarly works on Far Eastern architecture and art. The origin of the massive scrolled columns of the foyer can be directly traced to ancient columns from Hindu temples.

"American Picture Palaces," David Naylor, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York.

LANDMARK Syracuse

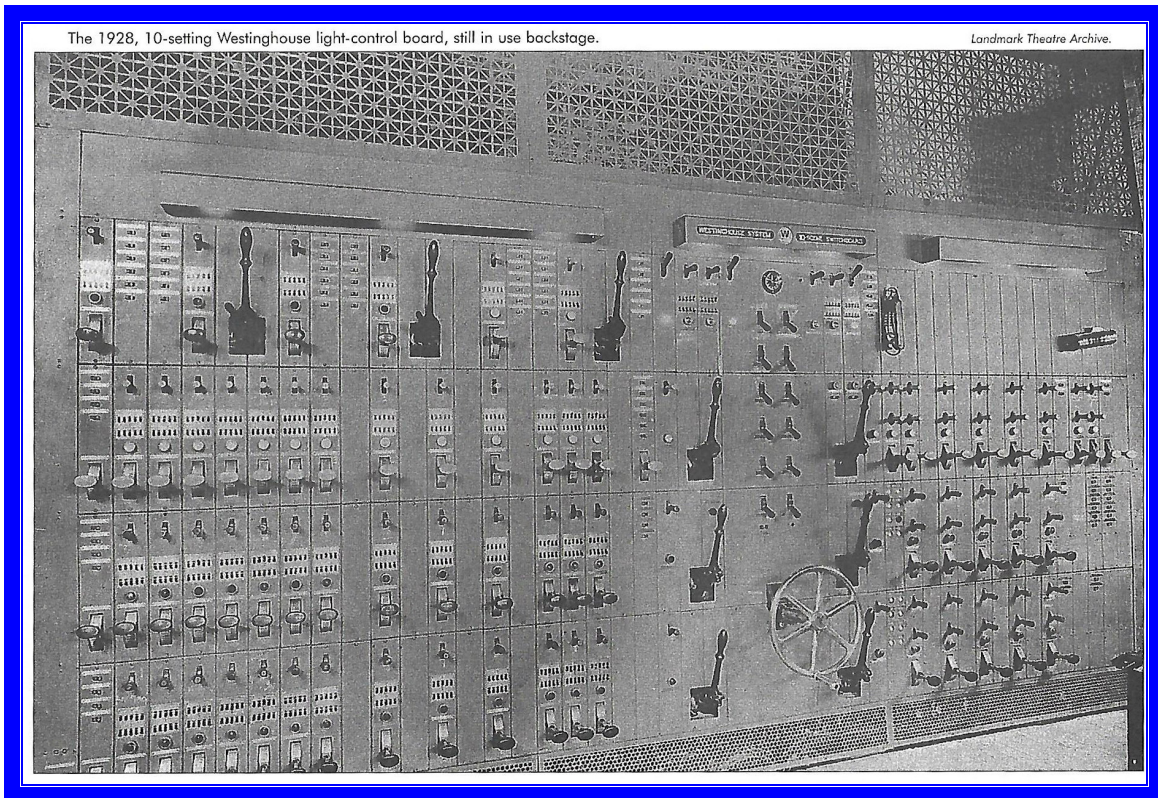


"Vanderbilt Chandelier" with Tiffany sconces before removal, from Musicians Gallery looking toward Grand Staircase.

Landmark Theatre Archive.

(Landmark Theatre Archive from MPM)

LANDMARK Syracuse

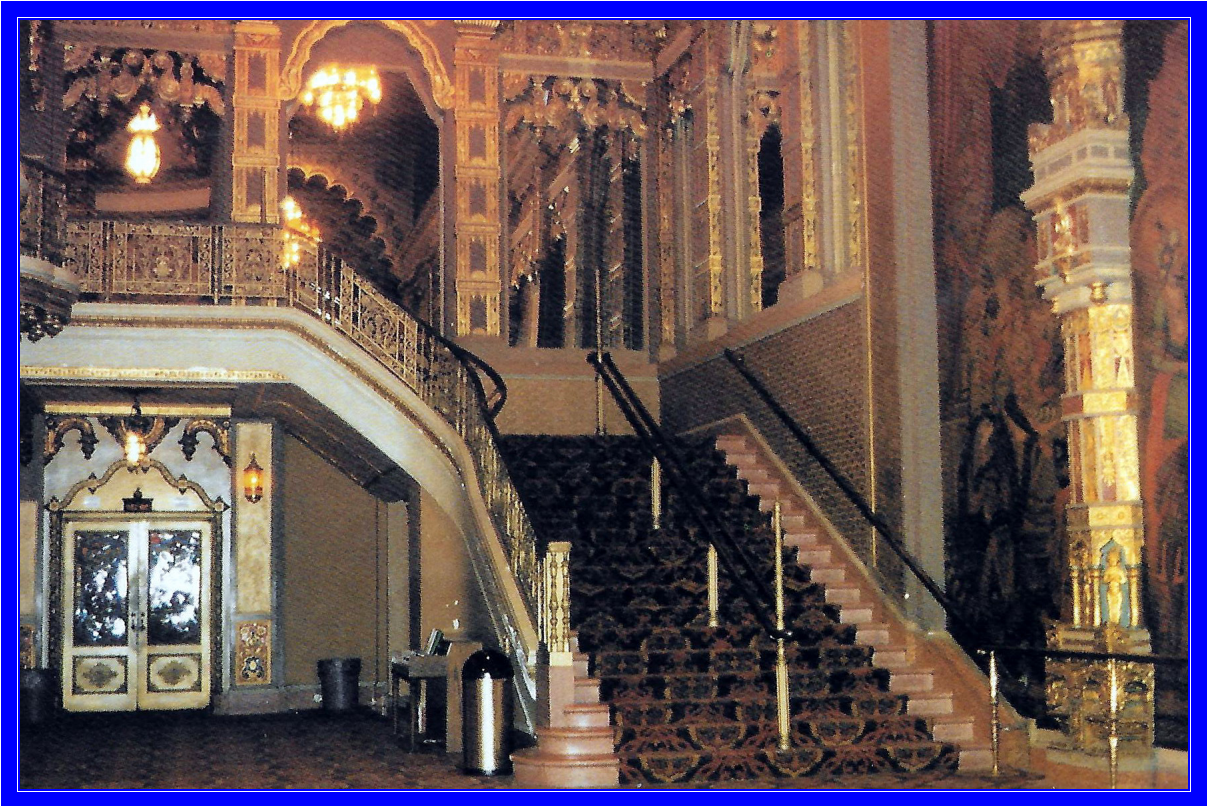


Westinghouse Lighting Control Board 1928 ((Landmark Theatre Archive from MPM)



Auditorium from stage (Photo James Scherzi from MPM)

LANDMARK Syracuse



Lobby Mezzanine main staircase (Photo Marie Ryan from MPM)



Grand Promenade (Photo James Scherzi from MPM)

LANDMARK Syracuse

Diverse lighting heightened “fantasy-palace” esthetics.

Lobby “Vanderbilt Chandelier” with Tiffany sconces, before removal.



James Foley

One of central fixtures, Grand Promenade.



Marie Ryan



Anteroom fixture, Grand Promenade Women’s Lounge.

Robert Reep

Selection of Lamp Fixtures (With photo credits from MPM)

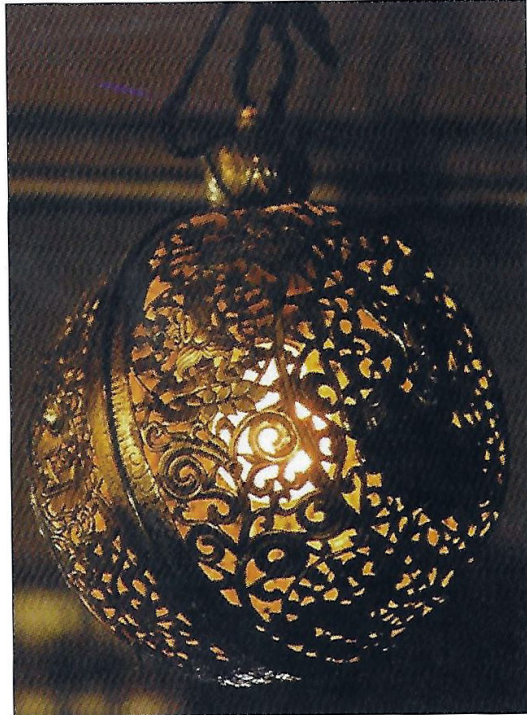
LANDMARK Syracuse

Lobby fixture variation.



Marie Ryan

Lobby fixture variation.



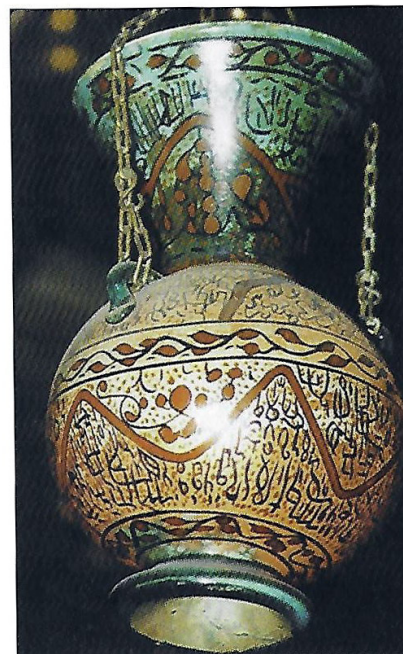
Marie Ryan

Grand Promenade aisle fixture variation.



Burdick and Spitzer

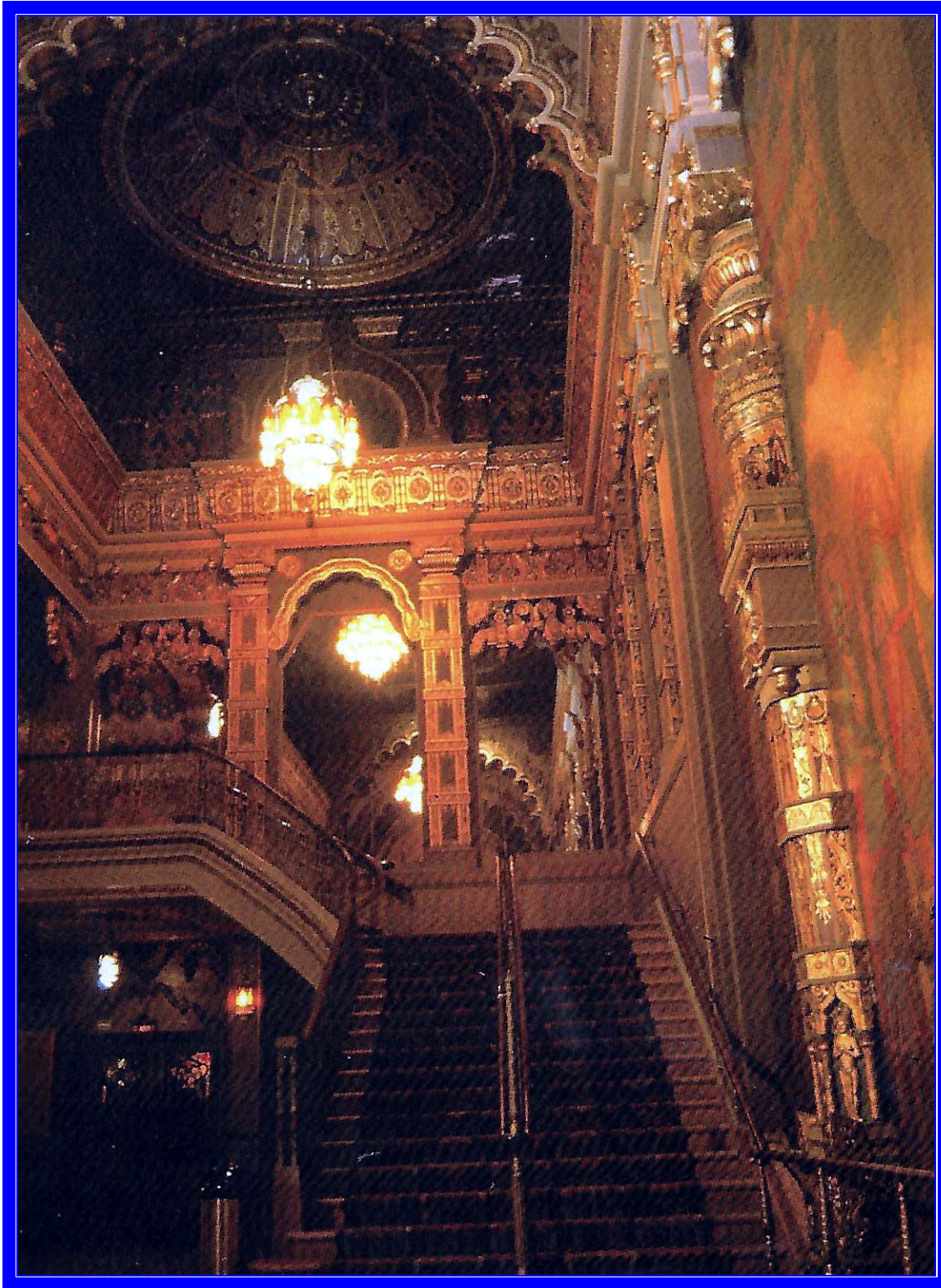
Grand Promenade fixture variation.



Marie Ryan

Selection of Lamp Fixtures (With photo credits from MPM)

LANDMARK Syracuse



Lobby Mezzanine- Grand Staircase (Photo Kerry Thurston from MPM)

LANDMARK Syracuse

LOEW'S

OPENING of LOEW'S STATE THEATER

TOMORROW—SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th—AT 11 A. M.

With a Modern Stage—An Open Box May Show the Glorious Results—Both Light and Appearance. Vastly Ceiling, Dining Rooms, and the Water Front a Beautiful Lot.

The quality of Loew's State Theater in Syracuse will be more than the surrounding theatrical town of the season. It will be an attraction that will not be forgotten for many years.

Part of the Type Shows This in the fact of their location, in the center of Syracuse. There are other large and beautiful downtown theaters, to be sure, but they were erected before any possible regard of class construction was accorded. Loew's State, regardless of what its patrons may be, is a definite step in the direction of a new era in a theater from nature. It always has been regarded as the standard, in most respects, in a theater from nature. It will surely be the first in its class in the neighborhood where the stage. Since the opening is so near the public will be able to see the new building and its location, but not leaving. In a word, the theater is a new and better one, and it is a pleasure to see the new line of things which are being done in a word of the new line, and they will be seen.

Special Arrangements for the opening will be made. The first and largest group in the vicinity, made by the local people, is the staff. "The State" will be a great success at 44 South Salina Street. The new line of things will be seen in the center of the city, and it is a pleasure to see the new line of things which are being done in a word of the new line, and they will be seen.

will surely be the first in its class in the neighborhood where the stage. Since the opening is so near the public will be able to see the new building and its location, but not leaving. In a word, the theater is a new and better one, and it is a pleasure to see the new line of things which are being done in a word of the new line, and they will be seen.

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CONGRATULATIONS and
BEST WISHES
to
LOEW'S STATE
Strand
WALTER D. SUNDWALL

CONGRATULATIONS
to THE PERSONS of
LOEW'S STATE
We extend to you the
greatest and very best wishes.
B.F. Keiffers

Best Wishes From
SCHINE'S ECKEL THEATER
Presenting
AL. JOLSON
The Great
Singer
Richard
Bartholomew
The Point
Lester Kid
The Great
Singer

*The Inspiration
of Music Lovers*

The Mighty
Vurlitzer
Organ
in
Loew's State

Success
in
Loew's State

VURLITZER

444 South Salina Street

Success to
Loew's State
in
Hotel Syracuse

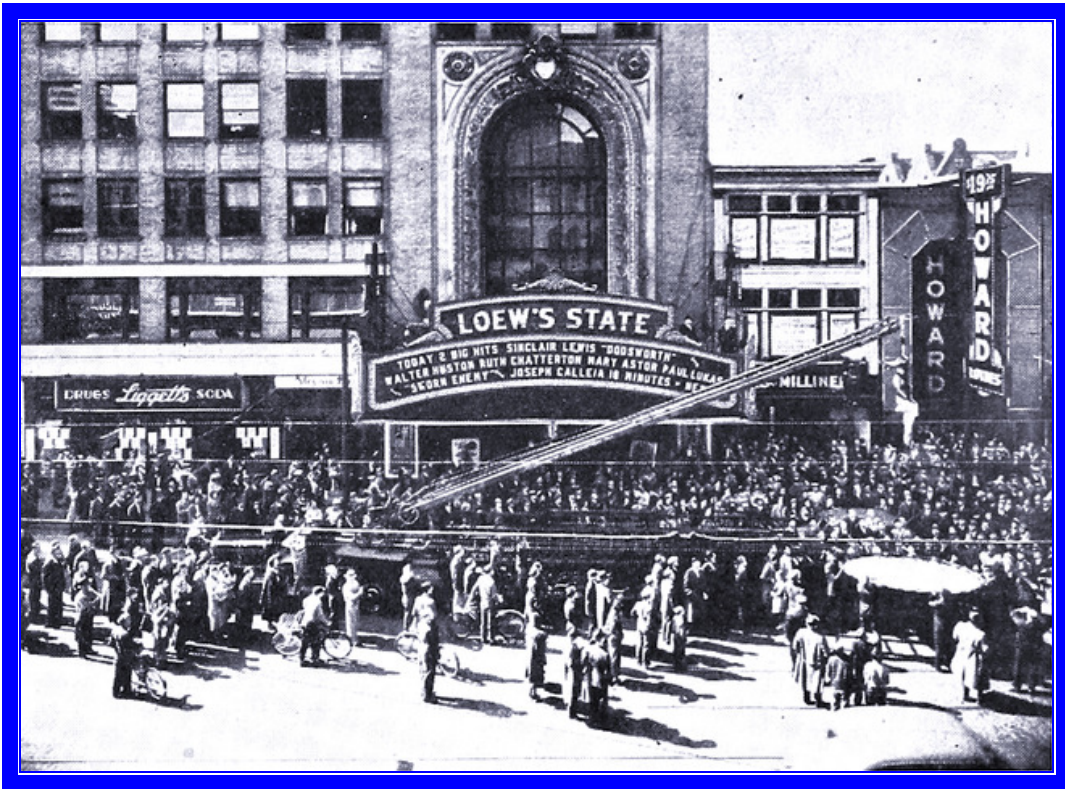
Best Wishes to
Loew's State Theater
THE ONONDAGA

Greetings to The
**New Loew's State
Theater**
The Jefferson-Clinton
Syracuse's Nearest Hotel

Welcoming
The New Loew's State
—125—
Artists and Personnel
The German Restaurant
110 East Jefferson Street
"The Value is in the Plate"

LOEW'S STATE
The Theater Beautiful
Is Equipped With Three Pianos Purchased from the
Clark Music Co
Including a
Mason & Hamlin
and a Heinen Bros. Ampico
Clark Music Co.
WELLESLE CLARK, Pres.
614 AND 6. SALINA ST.—2008 JAMES ST.
105 WASHINGTON ST., WATERLOO

LANDMARK Syracuse

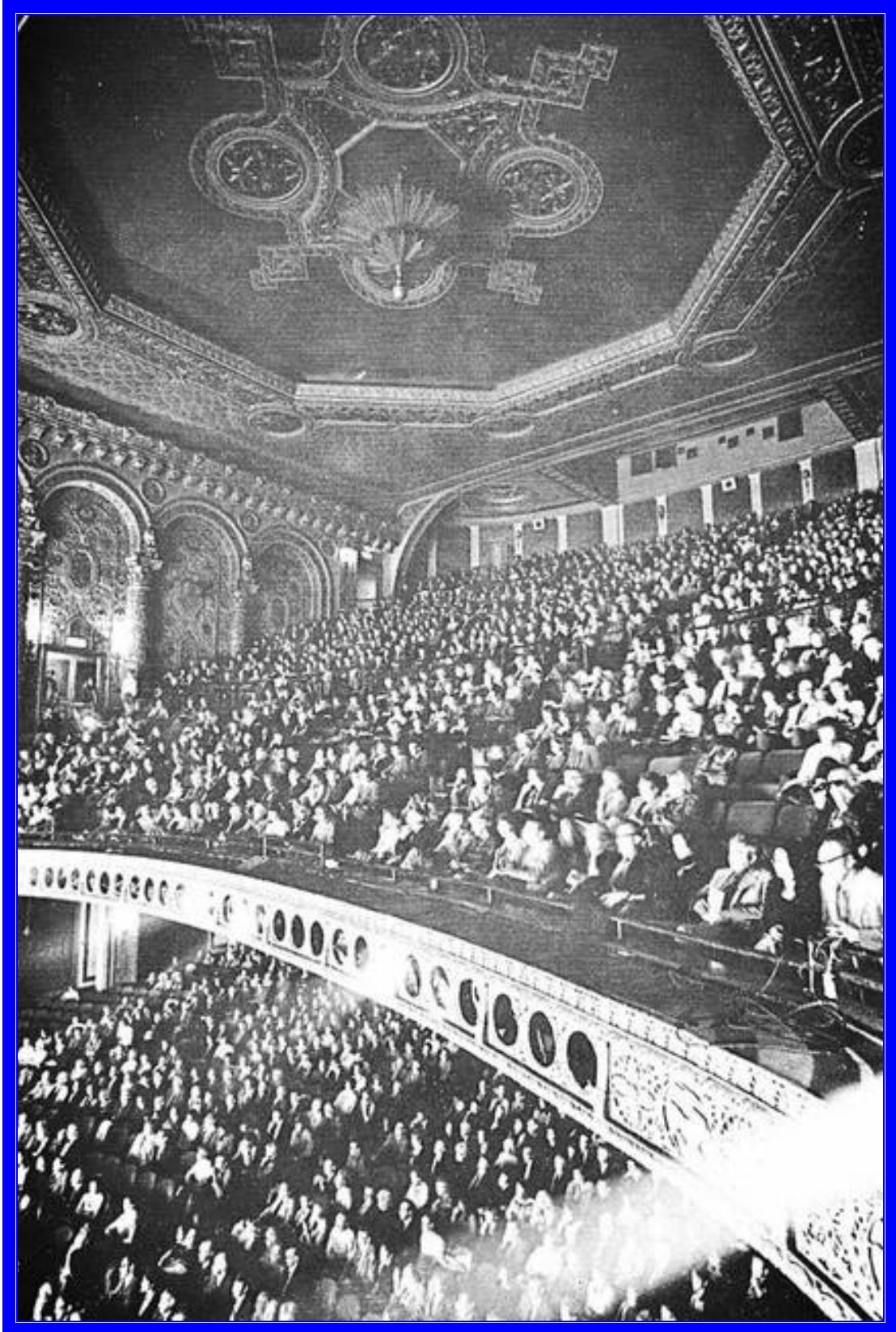


1936 (Cinema Treasures)



1949 (Cinema Treasures)

LANDMARK Syracuse



1960s (Cinema Treasures)

LANDMARK Syracuse

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Some Websites with Theatre and/or HVAC & R History

cinematreasures.org
hevac-heritage.org/e-books large
historictheatres.org



