

The Princess Theater

Originally built by Albert Sottile as an arcade with a deluxe soda fountain and leased to Eddie Riddock, this business failed and the site was converted into a movie theater.

On November 17, 1913 the Princess Theater opened at 304 King Street. From the beginning, the policy at the Princess was movies exclusively.

The first program according to announcement by Pastime Amusement Company was "three distinguished photoplays which the people of Charleston will find different because of the new mirror screen which has been installed at great expense. Souvenirs will be given to the children.

In dedicating to the people of Charleston our latest advent in the pursuit of pleasure, we do so with the full conviction that it represents the near ideal we have long strived to obtain.

We have been spurred on in doing better things by the constant loyal support accorded undertakings by the people of Charleston."

Not long after it opened there appeared an article in the *Indianapolis News* under the title "Movies and the Eyes." It described what the "ideal" movie theater should be. The management of the Princess Theater published a statement that assured their theater "represents the 'ideal' of what a moving picture theater should be, as set down by the standards of the journal of the American Medical Association:

August 29, 1915
News and Courier



Souvenir Postcard Photos
Of Popular Players Beautifully Hand Colored to be presented by
"Princess" To-Morrow
To the Ladies and Children attending,
Are on Exhibition to-day in lobby of "Wonderland" and "Princess" Theatres.
The Stars:
Edith Storey, Lillian Walker,
John Bunny, Mary Fuller,
Mary Pickford, Alice Joyce,
Arthur V. Johnson, Francis Bushman,
Kathlyn Williams, Ormie Hawley

Souvenir postcards would make a valuable addition to any theater history collection today.
February 6, 1914
News and Courier

"That licenses be issued only to such proprietors of these shows as are willing to abide by the following rules:

1st. To operate the machines by a motor, instead of by hand. To have an adjustable take-up or speed regulator and an automatic fire shutter, which renders more accurate the sequence of the individual images.

2nd. To use the arc light with the direct current, which is brighter and steadier than with the indirect current.

3rd. To have a proper screen, free from disagreeable and harmful glare. The so-called 'mirror-screen,' consisting of a mirror glass with

a frosted surface, seems to be one of the most desirable.

4th. To use no reels which have been in use over a month. Reels of an inferior quality, or which have become scratched from much use give poor definition.

5th. To allow at least three minutes intermission between the reels' (Shows)

It will be seen that the Princess is equipped in such a manner as the scientific paper above quoted, recommends for all modern theatres to be in order to protect the eye."

News & Courier
May 10, 1914

Orchestra

In 1914, the Princess Theater introduced a five piece orchestra to accompany the films and entertain with songs between features. The orchestra was under the direction of Theo Wichmann. They began playing every day at 3:30 p.m. and continued until 6:30 when they stopped to eat supper. At 7:30 the orchestra was back and played until the theater closed.

In July, it was announced that the Princess Theater had engaged the Varsity Quartette of the University of South Carolina to perform for three days. They appeared after each movie with voices that were described as "true and sweet." Members of the quartet were Dick Reeves of Charleston, E. H. Carpenter of Charleston, A. M. Paul of Beaufort, and J. L. Perkins of Darlington.

Baseball Scores

When the baseball games of the Charleston Sea Gulls began to cause attendance at the Princess to fall off, the theater announced that it would offer a "baseball bulletin service." One could enjoy the movie and still keep up with the scores as the game progressed. The "figures will be thrown upon the mirrorscope, so that all may read, while sitting under the whirling fans."

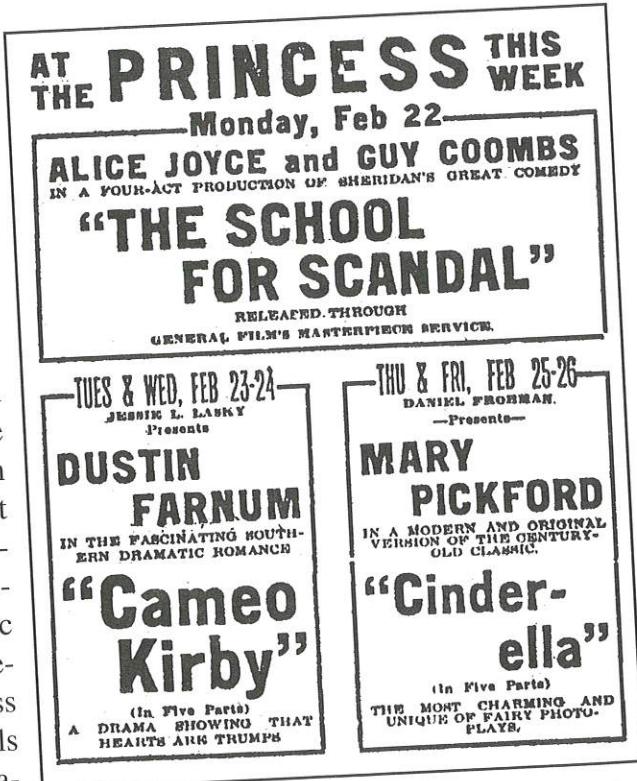
Promotion

Promotion has always been an important aspect of the movie business. When there were several theaters offering a variety of films, it was sometimes necessary for a manager to offer some additional enticement to get patrons into his theater. The Princess offered a clever promotion by the "showing of beautiful hand-colored photo slides of the children who won prizes in the recent Better Babies contest under the auspices of the Civic Club. The management of the Princess received many calls yesterday from patrons who weren't

able to attend, requesting that these photographs be shown again tomorrow and accordingly, slides of the babies will be thrown on the picture screen tomorrow."

Today

Today, the site of the Princess at 304 King Street is occupied by LeRoy's Jewelers. Mr. Marshall Berg owns the building and is sensitive to its historic background. While visiting the location some months ago, Mr. Berg enthusiastically described the architectural features of the Princess Theater that still remain. While these features are covered or not visible from the stores interior, they may someday be reclaimed and enjoyed.



February 21, 1915
News and Courier