

The Mayfair Theatre has Last Curtain Call April 9 1968

The last picture show was screened at the Mayfair Theatre, Thomas St., on March 30 and with the final curtain drop a further page was turned in the progressive history of our thriving city.

Masaga Investments, a Melbourne development company last week purchased the theatre including the Mayfair Arcade in Thomas St.

The same company also purchased the Bowl-A-Matic building opposite for \$145,000. No official statement as to renovations for either the Bowl or the Theatre and Arcade have yet been announced, however Mr. Gordon Norris, the purchasing agent, said a full statement will be issued shortly.

At the time of sale, the Mayfair Theatre was owned by Consolidated Theatres of Toorak and traded as Dandenong Theatres Pty. Ltd.

The last film shown was "Don't Make Waves" and "Pistolero of Red River" starring Glen Ford.

The first film was screened in the theatre on Tuesday April 15, 1924. Admission prices were 2/6d. and 5/- and 345 patrons attended. The entire proceeds of the screening was donated by the owner, Mr. Henry Leber, to the Dandenong Hospital building committee fund. The theatre was originally called "The Boomerang" by the owner as an enticement for patrons to come back again. At the time, screenings were held on Tuesday (Market day- a big draw) Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Mr. Leber, a Councillor in Dandenong for some 10 years, was a well known investor and businessman and his son Aaron, now of Toorak, who managed "The Boomerang" for his father before joining the army in W.W.2, could also remember when Mr. Leber Snr. conducted a clothing shop in the Boomerang Arcade, a few doors South of the Royal Hotel.

The first orchestra to play at the theatre in 1924, was Chandler's seven piece orchestra. The first projectionist was Mr. A Temple in 1928, followed by Mr. K Hansen in 1934 and Mr. Kassell in 1941.

Mr. Leber also built a number of shops, including where Miss Mc.Namara conducted her lingerie business. He first purchased land on the theatre site, the entire block, in 1923 and conducted his business here while commuting to and from Dandenong by steam train. His reason for building the theatre and shops was that he felt Dandenong had a great future potential.

In an effort to trace other features in the life of the Boomerang (Mayfair) Theatre, where thousands of people over almost 50 years, attended supper dances and screenings, speech nights, political meetings and similar functions, The Journal contacted Local historian, Mr Jim Swords, who had watched the original building under construction and had played in the vacant paddock near the theatre as a boy. Jim turned back the clock even further to the time when "West's Pictures" of Princes Bridge, Melbourne, conducted a circuit from Bairnsdale to Dandenong, culminating in screenings of silent movies in the Town Hall on Saturday nights. He also remembered Mr. Alf Delevante working the old machine from the floor at audience level and the children taking turns to turn the wheel by hand.

Jim also remembered one late Jack Griffith taking over the showing of the Town Hall picture shows after West's Pictures ceased business, prior to the "Boomerang" commencing with a new era of theatre entertainment in Dandenong. He remembered operating staff of the Boomerang and Mayfair Theatres, including Mr. A. Temple in 1928, Mr. Kassell in 1941 and his brother Bob Swords, who conducted the sweets and soft drinks kiosk at the theatre, before he left for overseas service. Other names included Mrs. Fleydell in ticket sales, Mrs. Eileen Storan, Mr. John Bellett, Mayfair manager, Mrs. Ruby Merrett who played piano between shows, "Spinks" the caretaker and billposter and Mr. G. Himbeck who was the last manager. Tom Blain's Orchestra played there for dances in days prior to W.W.2. All of these individuals helped to write the history of "The Boomerang" and "Mayfair's" history. Mr. Aaron Leber, son of the original theatre owner Mr. Henry Leber stated, with a hint of sadness, "I feel that with the demolition of the "Mayfair", an important Dandenong landmark will go".

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'Mayfair' Theatre Takes On 'New Look'

Film Producer's Surprise Visit To 'Mayfair'

Picture-goers at the "Mayfair" Theatre last Monday night were given a pleasant surprise when Mr. Pat Hanna, producer and director of the film "Diggers in Blighty" dropped in unexpectedly, and was introduced from the stage by Mr. Johnny Bellett, the theatre manager. After saying a few words on this hilarious Aussie film, Pat joined the audience in witnessing the product of his directing skill.



AUCTION SATURDAY, AUG. 9th COMMENCING AT 11 A.M.

IN THE DANDENONG TOWN HALL UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM NATIONAL TRUSTEES EXECUTORS & AGENCY CO. OF AUSTRALASIA LTD., 95 Queen St., Melbourne

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LOOKING DOWN TOWARDS THE ATTRACTIVE NEW STAGE FROM THE BACK OF THE

