



BHC-MSS 0145

Guide to the Papers of Barry Goodkin on Bridgeport Theaters

By Meg Rinn

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Goodkin, Barry

Title: Papers of Barry Goodkin on Bridgeport Theaters

Dates: 1986-20210

Quantity: .5 linear feet (1 manuscript box)

Abstract: Barry Goodkin is a theater researcher who spent time focused on Bridgeport, Stratford, and Fairfield theaters. Within are original photographs, research, and newspaper articles on venues including the Palace, Majestic, and Bijou theaters along with the Downtown Cabaret Theater, Klein Memorial Auditorium, and others.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History:

Barry Goodkin is a theater researcher who spent some time focused on Bridgeport, Stratford, and Fairfield theaters. Indeed, Bridgeport has been the home of a number of theatres over the centuries. Not only was it the backyard of theatre mogul Sylvester Z. Poli, but Bridgeport was located between the theatre towns of New York City and New Haven. Theatre was one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, and Bridgeporters had an astounding selection of locations to choose from.

Two of the most important theatres in the city are the Palace (often called Poli's Palace) and the Majestic Theatres. Owned by Sylvester Z. Poli, the two theatres share a building and a city block, with the Savoy Hotel placed between them. The buildings themselves are in the beaux arts style, and were designed by Thomas Lamb. Opened in 1922, the theatres were originally for live programming - especially vaudeville. Major actors of the time period and upcoming stars performed in the complex, including Mae West.

In 1934, the complex was sold to Loew Theatres and began showing movies. The two theatres remained open until the 1970s, when they were closed. While 1975 did see both the Palace and the Majestic join the National Register of Historic Places and there have been numerous attempts to renovate the buildings over the years, the complex remains boarded up as of 2021.

The Downtown Cabaret Theater remains one of the most active in Bridgeport, with both adult and children's programming happening on a regular basis. Not far away is the Bijou Theater, which opened in 1909. It originally showed silent films and vaudeville, but has since been converted into a modern theater space. The Klein Memorial Auditorium was constructed in 1940, and has served in various capacities over the years including a speaking venue, theater, and concert hall.

Scope and Content note:

The bulk of the material focuses on Bridgeport theaters, with additional ones in Stratford and Fairfield included. Of note is the research material on the Palace and Majestic Theaters, considered the crown jewels of Bridgeport's various venues. The Bijou, Poli-Globe, Warner, Downtown Cabaret Theater, and others are also included. Research material ranges from clippings, correspondence, and personal notes. Photographs and slide film from the 1980s to the 1990s are also included, and are especially important for theaters like the Palace and Majestic as their various states of deterioration are key in restoration.

Arrangement Note:

Material was given to the Bridgeport History Center in a set of three binders. Original order was maintained.

Administrative information:

Provenance: 2016.15, gift of Barry Goodkin

Preferred Citation:

Papers of Barry Goodkin on Bridgeport Theaters (BHC-MSS 0145), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings*Personal names*

Goodkin, Barry

Subject tracings

Plaza Theater (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Majestic Theater (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Downtown Cabaret Theater (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Rivoli Theater (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Bijou Theater (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Klein Memorial Auditorium (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Shakespeare Theater (Stratford, Conn.)

Detailed box and folder listing

Box 1

1. Research. Palace and Majestic Theaters, 1990-2005
2. Research, 1986-2010
3. Research, 1986-2010
4. Research, 1986-2004
5. Research, 1986-2004
6. Slide film, 1980s
7. Photographs, 1980s-1990s