

## Colonial Theater

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The city where I lived had three first run movie houses near one another in down town. One The Warner, featured First Run movies by the company of the same name; another, The Shea, has a fix on Twenty Century Fox releases; the third, Colonial, covered the remainder, often Republic releases.

A Classmate from High School had become Assistant Manager at the Colonial In the fall of 1939. He interviewed classmates for work as Doormen, from those committed to College. Work there forty hours a week, thirty cents an hour, the going wage for almost every unskilled work those years.

Besides they were given a "spiffy" uniform, and the female ushers, High School beauties.

The Colonial Building occupied all the lot on which it sat. The rear of the Theater abutted the sidewalk of the west side of Peach Street, rising forty feet, the screen at the other (east) end. This allowed the seating to begin near Peach Street, gradually lower to the east, all audience having a clear view of the screen. The Projection Booth, centered, Street end. The decorated lobby was on the north side of the building. To entry, climb six steps, there a ticket booth immediately right, the main floor entry, left. That lobby also led to a stair case for admission to the balcony, which might be closed, depending of the expected audience. When a first run major movie was shown there would be a Doorman, each floor, and two ushers each floor.

The rear of the main entrance housed the Rest Rooms and an array of candy dispensing machines.

The Colonial Theater seated 918, was family owned, profitable. Employees were a Manager, Assistant Manager, two operators of the Projection equipment, doormen and ushers. Any employee immediately on a first name basis with others. There was little cause for not being pleased to work at the Colonial.

Double Features were not shown. In some weeks there might be two different films of three and four day duration. For all releases, there was a Newsreel, Comedy skits, human interest tales, no serials.

Something unique then, every customer was admitted, regardless of what was showing on screen. The audience most often entered at some point in the feature, remaining through that second viewing of the part already seen.

It was rare to be asked, "When does the Feature begin".

Then that "Smash" from a lesser studio, filling the theater day and night for weeks, until Management was obligated to mail the film to another city. Those days, little free time; only answer questions, help families with children, or that once-in-a-lifetime query. And never know how close the film was to conclusion. For then the Lobby was crowded, departing customers reactdeparting to the sidewalk, where even less space existed for milling around.

Jack was the first name of both Manager and his Assistant. Neither much older than the other employees. Thus the friendship.

Highlight memories?

Seeing a tear-jerker; finding on watching repeatedly there was little cause for tears; comedies remained funny on repetition.

The love affair between certain stars and the camera, was unusual. Those individuals was always appealing.

Hunan interest shorts, memorable for years.

These youngsters first glimpse into the complex celluloid world Hollywood created, to entertain, make money for Hollywood, all hidden participants, cast, even theater operators, doormen, and ushers.

That thirty cents an hour paid for my first, second, early-third college years.

