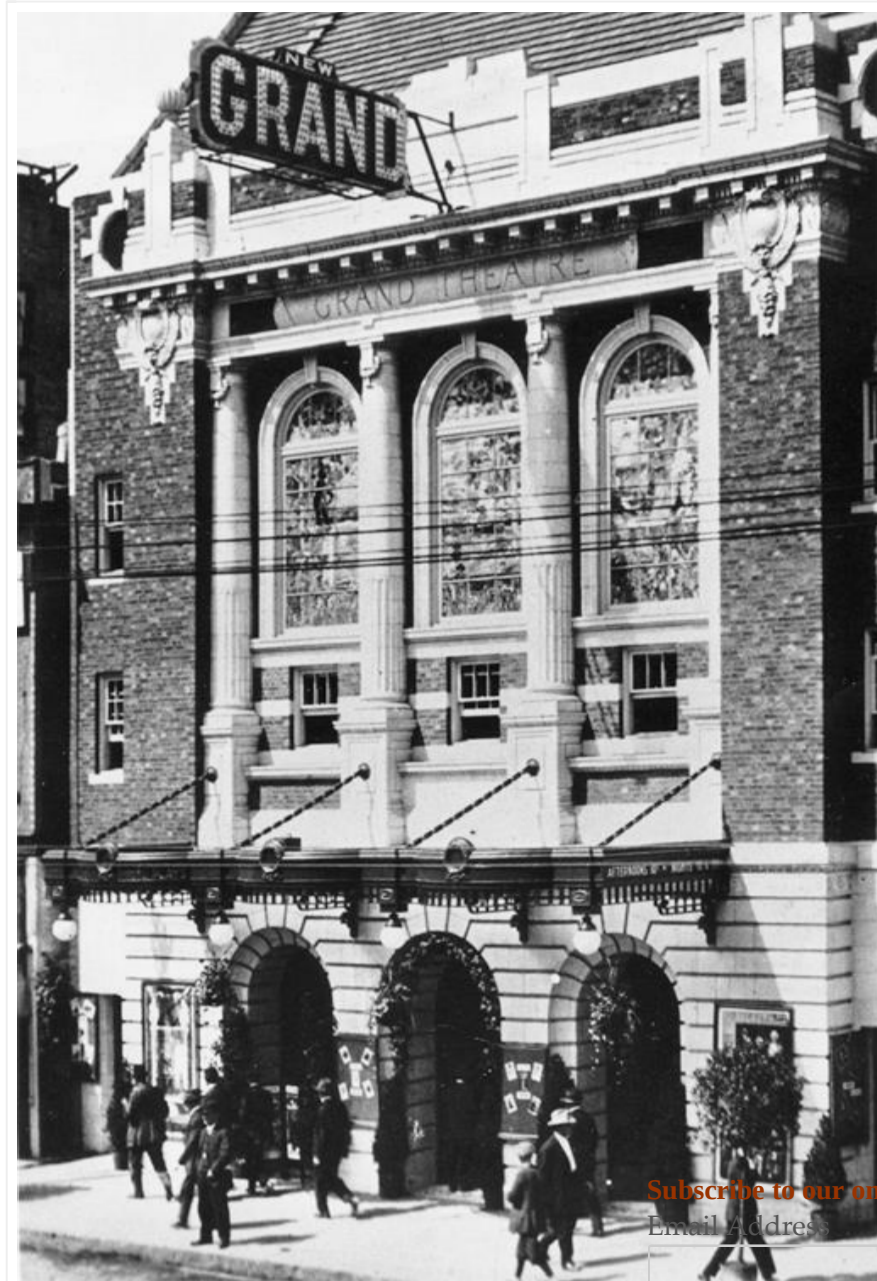


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## Grand (Lyric) Theater



The New Grand Theatre photographed between 1914 and 1922. (Image: Duluth Public Library)

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**213 West Superior Street | Architect: Wangentein & Giliuson  
| Built: 1914 | Lost: 1976**

Mose and Barney Cook’s New Grand Theatre opened at 213 West Superior Street on August 20, 1914, to praise from the Duluth Herald, which called the theater “one of the finest in the state in point of arrangement, architecture, and interior decorations.” Architects John J. Wangenstein and E. C. Giliuson called the brick and terra cotta building’s design “Modern French Renaissance,” but details included classical columns. Its steel-and-glass canopy covered arched mahogany doors with glass panels bound in brass. Its entrance vestibule featured high curved ceilings and carved marble paneling. When complete, the building cost \$100,000—over \$2.2 million today. The “new” in its name was likely to distinguish it from a previous Grand theater that operated at 5505 Grand Avenue in West Duluth in 1912.

The theater’s auditorium sat 1,200 patrons and its owners boasted that the seats were “of unusual comfort” and perfectly arranged to ensure there was not a bad view in the house. Its stage—forty feet wide and thirty-five deep—was equipped with seven sets of scenery. The stage’s fireproof asbestos curtain weighed 1,500 pounds and was adorned with a reproduction of Jean-Baptiste Corot’s “Dance of the Nymphs;” the proscenium arch was decorated with a painting of Apollo riding Pegasus. Fifteen private boxes ringed the theater above the house seats and below the balcony.



The community was proud of its new theatre.

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The New Grand's 1,500-pound asbestos curtain was adorned with reproduction of Jean-Baptiste Corot's "Dance of the Nymphs." (Image: Public Dopmain)

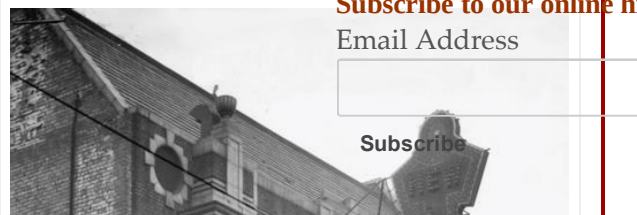
materials to  
the

project—lights, piano, hardware—took out a page in the *Duluth News Tribune* to congratulate the New Grand's opening and advertise their contributions. One ad simply read "Victor Huot had nothing to do with this building because he has been busy getting ready for the big rushes that will come naturally to him, both by ITS location and HIS excellent service." Huot operated a nearby confectionery and soda fountain.

Patrons were promised three vaudeville shows a day—a matinee and two evening performances—as well as "‘movies’ of the most approved manner." The theater also boasted a "children's playground." Since children under four were not permitted to attend performances, the facility included a nursery and playroom overseen by a matron; parents could drop off their children and enjoy the show.

Its manager, Edward Salter, boasted that all shows would cost just ten or twenty cents, but Salter was gone just months after the theater opened. Bookings were first arranged by the Sullivan-Considine vaudeville circuit, which primarily booked acts in the Pacific Northwest, then by the Western Vaudeville Association. According to a 1976 story in the *Duluth News-Tribune*, actor Pat O'Brien (*The Front Page*, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *Knute Rockne All American*, *Some Like it Hot*) met his future wife Eloise Taylor at the New Grand when she was traveling with the McCall-Bridge Players, but that would have been no later than 1922. O'Brien and Taylor were married in 1931, and ten-year engagements were extremely rare at the time.

The Grand struggled to compete with the Lyceum and Orpheum at drawing



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top-notch national acts. When vaudeville began dying in the 1920s, the Grand began dying as well. New life was breathed into the theatre in May of 1922, when the New Grand merged with the Lyric Theatre, which had been housed at 116 West Superior Street since 1917 (a Kresge store moved



The Lyric Theatre photographed in 1929.  
(Image: Jum Heffernan)

into the Lyric’s former location). The New Grand’s name changed to the New Lyric—and vaudeville became a thing of the past. The theatre was converted into a movie house that sometimes offered live music.

*(Scroll down to see photos of the interior of the New Lyric)*

The *Duluth News Tribune* warned former patrons they would not recognize the place: “entirely recarpeted, redecorated from pit to dome, new tapestries, hangings, and everything associated with first-class exclusive first-run photoplay house has been done to make the New Lyric Duluth’s finest photoplay theatre.” It reopened screening James Oliver Curwood’s *am the Law*, “unquestionably the greatest picture of the North ever made,” and a performance by “the Kilties,” a group of bagpipers.

According to Zenith City’s Jim Heffernan, a long-time entertainment reporter for the *Duluth News Tribune* and *Herald*, by the 1950s the theater was showing “second- or third-run double features” that cost adults a quarter; kids under twelve

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paid twelve cents. Popcorn cost a dime. The prices were nearly the same as Edward Salter had established in 1914.



The marquee of the Lyric being driven down Superior Street on its way to a scrap yard on June 24 1965, photographed by the Duluth herald's Earl Johnson. The marquee advertizes a show at the Nor Shor because the Minnesota Amusement Company owned both theaters, although the Lyric had been closed since 1959. (Image: Duluth Public Library)

The New Lyric closed its doors in 1959, when it was under the ownership of the Minnesota Amusement Company. In 1965 the *Duluth Herald* called the theater's marquee "an eyesore [serving] no purpose other than a roosting place for pigeons;" it was hauled to a landfill that same year.

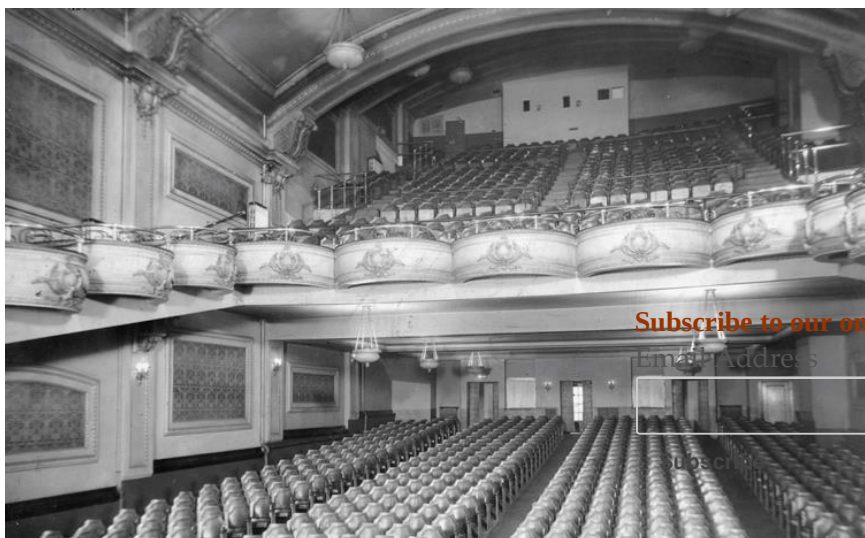
The building was allowed to fall further into disrepair. Although demolition was approved in 1972, Mayor Ben Boo allowed a delay requested by citizen groups who hoped to save the building. They developed no feasible plan, and the building came down in March of 1976, along with eight others. The buildings were replaced by the Normandy Mall, hotel, and parking ramp. Those buildings are now the Holiday Center and Holiday Inn.



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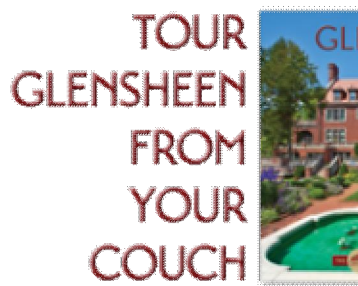
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Sources:

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