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Showing postings 1 - 16 of 16 in the thread: Gem Theatre.

Posting: Gem Theatre Poster: Larry Alton Date: 4 September 2008 2:18 PM	Posting 1
<p>My mother worked at the Gem theatre when Mr Hamilton did back in the 40's. Then George Haddad took over and I recall many different things and places back then. My mothers name was Alice and she also worked in bookeeping at Brown's Department store. Any other feedback would be enjoyed.</p>	
Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Poster: Steve Starger Date: 6 September 2008 12:28 AM	Posting 2
<p>Larry,</p> <p>My father managed Brown's for a while in the early fifties -- Joe Starger. He managed Benny's and Star Furniture before that, then bought Mac's United Cigar Store in 1955, ran it for 10 years.</p> <p>Re the Gem: I remember the popcorn machine in the small lobby. You put a paper bag over the dispenser chute, put in a dime, and got a bagful of popcorn. If you were agile, you could run your arm up the chute and jog some popcorn loose without paying. The Gem was a neat little theater, the "second" theater in town after the Capitol and before the Strand.</p>	
Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Poster: John Tormey Date: 6 September 2008 12:44 AM	Posting 3
<p>I remember a very heavy-set usher at the Gem who kept getting his name in the Chronicle.</p>	
Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Poster: Skipper Barrett Date: 6 September 2008 11:50 PM	Posting 4
<p>Steve, John Larry:</p> <p>Steve your remarks on The Gem sparked off some great memories of the days we used to hang out there when we had already seen The Capitol bill of fare as you may very well recall ole pal. You may remember a movie called SHE that played there on a Sunday PM in winter and how horrifying it was when the old queen of the underworld literally came apart from dead rot after 300 years...quite a scene that stays vividly in my mind's theatre these maybe 55 or more years. Film was made in 1930s if I recall. Must look up the director, cast soon. Wow.</p> <p>I remember Gem mgr Bob Hamilton. My dad Russ Barrett, who ran The Capitol for Warners Bros Studios, used to fill in for Mr Hamilton when he vacationed since both theatres were under the WB banner before 1948 when anti-trust laws made studios dispense of their theatres. The Capitol became a "Stanley Warner" theatre... a dummy name and ran by other people and The Gem continued on too under different management. Bob Hamilton had a great bulldog named Satch, who would often be at the Theatre with his wife, Bea Hamilton. They fed him ground meat from Mazzolas Mkt up Main St as I remember. Later my dad's asst mgr George Haddad became mgr of The Gem when Hamilton left, maybe about about 1953 or so.</p> <p>John, as I told you earlier in here I remember you and your sister dacing on The Capitol stage during Evelyn's MacFarlane's dance recitals...you wore a top hat and had a cane, as part of the act, right?</p> <p>Steve, there was a episode at The Gem with janitor Ernie Haddad and a cashier named Shirley...some raw verbal interchange in an argument they had ...to raw even for this Forum, but you may recall the laughs it has provided us ever since.</p> <p>Zowie.....</p> <p>Skipper Barrett</p>	
Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Poster: John Tormey Date: 7 September 2008 10:46 AM	Posting 5
<p>Skip: Right. My sister Carol and I performed in many recitals at the Capitol theatre. My first experience of having a professional dressing room was in that wonderful building. Have spent time in lots more since then. It was on the Capitol stage where I lost my voice singing "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody." 1951 or thereabouts. Les Foster, the band leader, saw my predicament and finished the song for me. Will never forget that man. That was my last recital.</p> <p>jt</p>	

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre
 Poster: Steve Starger
 Date: 8 September 2008 9:58 AM

Posting 6

Skip,

Yes, the Gem ran kind of second-run first-run flicks, if you get my meaning. SHE starred, I think, Randolph Scott and Helen Gehegan, who went on to be a senator or u.s.rep. from Maine and was vilified by Nixon as a Commie. I recently watched SHE on DVD. It's corny, but some of the effects are pretty cool for its time. I always liked that H. Rider Haggard lost world stuff.

I also recall a lousy costume flick at the Gem called "The Purple Mask," with Tony Curtis, and, of course, "The Black Shield of Falworth," with Curtis' immortal line: "Yonduh lies the castle of my fodda," in his best Bernie Schwartz Bronx-ese. ("I yam a singa of soongs." Bernie/Tony in "Spartacus." Bernie! Bernie!)

And all those clunky 50s monster movies like "The Giant Claw" and "The H-Man." You can see a lot of those old clips on YouTube. I'm getting hooked, man!

I don't remember the incident you refer to with George Haddad but I do remember he was kind of a jerk or at least acted like one.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre
 Poster: Larry Alton
 Date: 8 September 2008 1:37 PM

Posting 7

A lot of the things brought up here are true and some not so accurately. the name of the janitor as I recalled was Ernie Evershoski (I may have spelled it wrong) but George did not have a brother named Ernie. In fact I think he was the only child and took care of his mother until she passed on. George was eccentric at times but I wouldn't call him a jerk. He was a pretty smart guy and also managed the Windham diner at one time. I remember Stev's father Joe and he was a very pleasant person and he worked with my mother at Brown's and I remember when he took over the United cigar store. I also remember your older brother but not his name. Joe almost always had a good word for everyone and was always quick with a joke.

The biggest drawing movie at the Gem was the 1953 or 54 release of The Wild One with Marlon Brando. It played for 2 weeks.

Others that worked at the Gem were cashier Marilyn Gormley, Dixie Bennett, John Adamo (now a retired teacher).

Bob Hamilton died of a heart attack (his nickname was "Bones Hamilton") I don't know why though. His son was killed in a Buick convertible a few years before and was decapitated. The heavy guy John spoke of was Tony C. Another movie that drew a large crowd was "The Hitchiker". For the most part back then TV was very limited and crowds still enjoyed the movies. Not so true anymore.

Across the street basement of the Hooker House was a pool hall run by Homer Cloutier, Bobby Cloutier and they would often have all night poker games. In fact George Haddad was one of the following. Lots & lots of memories back there and more to follow as I can best recall.

Larry

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre
 Poster: Larry Alton
 Date: 8 September 2008 10:37 PM

Posting 8

I must recant the first name of the former janitor at the gem. It was bill evershoski. Also George might have had a brother that I was not fullt aware of. Welch's restaurant back in the 40's and even as late as 1952 had a lobster dinner for just \$1.00. Does anyone remember that?

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre
 Poster: Steve Starger
 Date: 9 September 2008 10:13 AM

Posting 9

Larry,

Thanks for the nice words about my dad. He was quite a guy, a natural-born storyteller and comedian who could entertain kids and adults for hours with his antics.

Maybe I was a bit harsh calling George Haddad a jerk, but I'm just remembering a couple of incidents when I was an adolescent (no details are necessary; too personal) involving him and that colored my opinion of him. If you know different, that's good.

My brother's name was Melvyn. He was about eight years older than I and was mentally -- and later physically -- challenged, as they say now, most of his life. It took a terrible toll on my family. He died about 4 years ago. Luckily he lived at a long-term care home near me and I was able to see him weekly after my parents passed. The staff there was terrific, and they knew Mel had an advocate in me. He was wrongly diagnosed in the "dark ages" of psychiatry as "mildly retarded." No way. He was very smart -- in grade school, kids used to copy off his English papers. These days, I think he'd be at least partially diagnosed as autistic with other complications. He loved movies, theater, and TV and could tell you the names of entire movie and Broadway show casts, as well as the directors, producers, writers, etc. But, like many with autism, there was no context for the information.

One positive memory of George Haddad for me, actually, involved my brother. Mel used to go the movies a lot, especially the Capitol. He was very slow to walk and usually sat by himself at a matinee, way over on the right side of the theater. One day, when he was in the lobby waiting for my mother to pick him up, I happened to be there and George let me know my brother was waiting. It was a nice thing to do, so, nothing's all bad or good.

The Surrell family ran Welch's back then. I remember them and the restaurant vividly.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 10
 Poster: John Boudreau
 Date: 9 September 2008 6:35 PM

Larry ,

It was Evashowski . He was quite a bowler at Lucky Strike on Main St. if memory serves . His kids Bill Jr. and Mike were both good as well and Captains of teams in the Junior League I bowled in for a time .

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 11
 Poster: Larry Alton
 Date: 9 September 2008 10:06 PM

Thanks for the last name correction. You were right, Bill was a very good bowler and he was really into it big time. I wonder if he is still alive.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 12
 Poster: Skipper Barrett
 Date: 10 September 2008 11:59 PM

Steve:

SHE lives on...and so dies THE KILLER SHREWS (we saw it at The C in 1959), BRIDE OF THE MonSTER with Lugosi and Tor Johnson (he looked like the wrestler The Swedish Angel circa 1955) and A BUCKET OF BLOOD about Hollywood beatniks who were murdered and made into in paper mache statues. Check out TCM on cable Friday nites at midnight or so...they all come up sooner or later. Last Friday nite I stayed up til 4am Saturday watching flicks on my BIG SCREEN TV.

Steve...it was janitor Ernie Haddad and the cashier Shirley, not George and that rollicky incident with the raw language. It was a lot of yrs ago, but we laughed like hell and had to turn away and head down Main Street busting a gut...funny stuff. And Tony Chasse and his parrot used to frequent The Gem if you recall...he always wore bright Hawaian shirts with birds and flowers...and who could forhget Choo Choo and George Junior Jr , all Main St fixtures who went to The Gem and Capitol. Remember the time Sonny Adams jumped off he Capitol balcony and broke his leg after Wmtc cops Red Vertefeuille and Hub Haddad chased him into the theatre...Big story in The Chronicle that day...

Larry Alton -- you are right I remember Bones Hamilton, aka Bob Hamilton. I met his son once before his accident, It was at our house up on Lewiston Ave when my mother had a birthday party for my pop Russ Barrett. Jesse Greer and others came...memorable circa 1950

John: that was a good show you and your sister put on that nite. Remember the spotlight on the 2 of you and lots of applause. I always sat in the front row of The Capitol , third seat over from left aisle.

Zowie.....

Skipper

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 13
 Poster: Steve Starger
 Date: 11 September 2008 10:42 AM

Skip,

Thanks for sorting out the Haddads. They're a big family name in Willimantic, as you well know.

Sure I remember those characters -- the Sonny Bolideau incident, George Junior Jr., et al, so many others. All helped to shape our burgeoning imaginations.

I don't have TCM, but I am a Netflix subscriber, so I'm getting all kinds of old flicks there. I'm also watching clips and entire movies on YouTube. This is sick, but I love it! THE KILLER SHREWS -- yeah, dogs with fake incisors attached, starring James Best, a classic Z-movie veteran.

See you in the movies, ol' buddy.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 14
 Poster: Steve Starger
 Date: 11 September 2008 10:43 AM

Skip,

I meant Sonny Adams, not Sonny Bolideau, another historic Willi denizen.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre Posting 15
 Poster: Larry Alton
 Date: 11 September 2008 10:11 PM

Steve, Skip;

I recall Sonny Adams and his love of the muscatel wines that he so lovingly cherished. I don't know if he's still alive or not but

somehow reflecting back as I recall he somewhat resembled Charles Manson with that beard and weird look in his eyes.

Skip:

Did you know a couple of the other ushers that worked at the Gem? How about Maurice Quiznell ? Bobby Sullivan ? I remember the from about 1950. I believe Francic Kelly was also an usher there.

Posting: Re: Gem Theatre
Poster: Skipper Barrett
Date: 2 January 2009 1:55 AM

Posting 16

Larry Alton, Steve Starger:

Larry - - I do not recall any names of ushers from The Gem other than those I mentioned earlier .. I knew George Haddad, Ernie Haddad, Bill Evashowsjy (and his brother Jocko, who would sometimes work for GH and was also a pin boy at Frank Barber's Lucky Strike alleys down the street) and earlier The Hamiton family at The Gem when I was a little kid visiting there with my pop Russell Barrett, who ran The Capitol. I remember Bob Hamilton's bull dog named Satch, who liked raw hamburgers. The Gem opened in 1913. Many years ago YANKEE magazine out of NH did a story on the theatre..it was fascinating, but I have forgotten most of what they said by now.

Steve -- Happy Nu Yr ole pal...hope to C U in June as planned when I return to Wmtc for 1959 WHS class reunion as a "guest". It is a cold nite out here in CA. Very heavy fog too. I am near the ocean now in Santa Barbara area and quite a shift away in climate from my 4 yrs of life in the CA desert near Palm Springs. Nice to be back on the coast...missed it. Great air and energy.

To life and to you all...A very good new year

SkipR