

Revitalization of the Lewis Street Playhouse Community Theater – “Promotion of the Arts”

The Canton Community, like many small towns in the mid-west, had an opera house of late nineteenth century vintage. The red brick structure had several floors and went through a number of physical changes to become the Canton movie house by the mid-twentieth century. The building and the entertainment venue both diminished as small town movie houses became no longer profitable throughout the nation. During the time that many towns were demolishing their theaters, local citizen, Jim Crenshaw, purchased the dilapidated Canton building. His motivation was based on his fond childhood memories of attending movies in the theater and the hope that his children might sometime enjoy the same experiences he had.

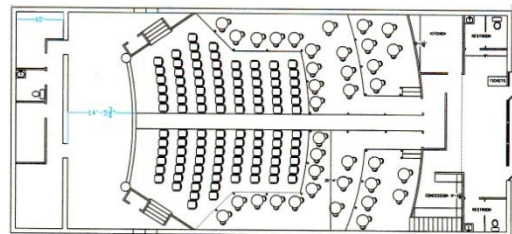
Canton has always been blessed with a college that makes its facilities available for various events. However, some citizens realized that the town had no center that could be available for a wide variety of events that define the quality of life in the community. People would benefit from a place to come together as a community.

If the Canton Community Betterment Group (CCBG) has a corner stone project, it would be the restoration of the Lewis Street Playhouse Community Theater. After participating in the Randy Gray study “Canton Downtown Vision and Development Strategy”, the community listed restoration of the downtown theater for movies, plays, and local events as critical for revitalizing Canton.



The community needed to do the following:

1. Secure a Neighborhood Assistance Program for a Missouri income tax credit grant in the range of \$250,000.
2. Raise local contributions to supplement the tax credits.
3. Redesign and build the interior to be more useful for a wide variety of activities and accommodate modern media technology while keeping the sense of Art Deco architecture of the movie theater.
4. Develop a management structure that would keep the project active and focus on fulfilling its goal.



Scope community involvement and discovery:

Over one hundred and fifty people were involved at different stages in making this project come together and be successful. Some gave money. Some gave time. Others had special skills to contribute to the effort.

Lynn Fox was not only a member of our community and the CCBG but also a Senior Advisor to the Federal Reserve Board. She assembled a team to write the initial tax credit grant and assigned tasks to make sure the grant completed on time. We were successful. Dell Ann Janney worked to establish Culver-Stockton College student involvement and to provided a valuable college connection.

A drive to get financial support was successful as people “bought” seats for the theater in their family’s name. Some went together to buy a popcorn machine. Others made cabinets for the concession stand or just gave money for the effort.

Jeff Janney, a local developer and contractor, determined renovation requirements and construction costs. Jeff created the design which accommodates an innovative multi-purpose facility. Using the facility to its broadest effect meant involving a variety of constituents including partnerships with the college for the movies, with the Canton Festival Theater for the plays, and with a subcommittee to develop events specifically for the space.



In accordance with the Missouri Community Assessment Program (MoCAP), the CCBG crafted its plan for the development of The Lewis Street Playhouse . The Canton Area Arts Council (CAAC) and the CCBG developed a partnership so that the Canton Festival Theater (one of the oldest summer festival theaters in the state) found a home in the Playhouse. The CCBG decided that the project would follow CCBG recommendations but be housed under the jurisdiction of the CAAC. This arrangement allowed the CAAC to expand the arts program and enhance the community.





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Thursday, July 14, 2011

Canton Festival Theatre murder mystery dinner

The Canton Festival Theatre will present a murder mystery dinner theatre production on August 6 and a dessert matinee on August 7 at the Lewis Street Playhouse. Ticket information will be available in the coming weeks.

The setting for the mystery will be the Golden Eagle Showboat Dinner theatre where the company is in the middle of the 1986 summer production of David Steinbeck's "Harts and Flowers."

The cast (captured in a video performance from the actual Golden Eagle show) has romped through the opening act

of Steinbeck's melodrama when suddenly there is a gunshot. The blackout that follows can mean only one thing: murder.

Theatergoers will be part of the mayhem that follows as Col. Amos Hart deputizes the entire room to help solve the mystery. There is a need for six special assistants for each show. These volunteers will be witnesses to the dastardly murder and will receive special instructions for preparing their depositions. Volunteers need to be comfortable with improvising answers to audience questions, based on the special instructions.

For those who love a mystery and want to enhance the dinner theatre enjoyment by being part of the show, contact Carol Mathieson at (573) 288-

3929 or at cmathieson@culver.edu to be a witness. The first six callers for each performance will be cast.

KEEPING COOL



Photo by Allen Searson

Tournear Roofing Co. of Quincy, IL installs a new air conditioning unit on the roof of the Lewis Street Playhouse.