

A Tale of Two Theatres: Discourse and Outcome in Preservation Attempts

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore the historical context and newspaper portrayals of the 1973-74 campaign to preserve the Capitol Theatre of Halifax, Nova Scotia and the 1982-83 campaign to preserve the Imperial Theatre of Saint John, New Brunswick. Discourse analysis is used to examine the collected newspaper articles in order to understand the arguments and values displayed in the texts. The main research question is aimed at discovering why the campaign for the Capitol failed where the Imperial attempt succeeded. It is argued that the time difference played a key role and that the context in each city during the campaigns impacted whether or not various groups and individual citizens supported it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The planning of our cities is something many people never become involved with. The meetings of city council where planning decisions are made can seem remote and foreign to everyday life. However, there are certain times when individuals outside of official urban planning choose to become involved because one cause or another speaks to them and encourages them to act. Where there is a cause to support, there is likely a debate, often times a controversial one. Where there is a controversy, there is the media - always looking for the next story that will capture the attention of their audience. A lively debate can fill a television program, a radio interview, or the pages of a newspaper.

There is a vast (old and new) discourse concerning one element of urban planning which this paper explores - built heritage/cultural preservation versus new development. The stories of two particular buildings which are very much a part of that discourse will be outlined through archival and published sources of their history and contexts. Through the accounts found in newspaper articles, the disputes surrounding the fates of these two buildings will be investigated.

The stories of the Capitol Theatre of Halifax, NS and the Imperial Theatre of Saint John, NB share many parallels. Both were built in the early 1900s on the sites of older theatres. Both were owned - at least in part - by the theatre company Famous Players for a period. They housed many of the same live acts and films. They went through many of the same adaptations as each tried to cater to the changing trends. These theatres provided venues for cultural expressions of the community through the

performers, the audience members, and other key players. In the later half of the 20th century, both suffered from a decrease in patronage. It is here the stories diverge. As the Capitol Theatre became less and less profitable, it was sold and slated for demolition. A community group ran a campaign and tried to save it, but in 1974 it was demolished. The Imperial Theatre was also sold and eventually plans were made for major renovations that would greatly change its character and function. A community group was formed in order to buy it back and retain it as a theatre with its original design. This group was successful in their campaign and the purchase was made final in 1983. The Imperial was even designated as a National Historic Site of Canada.

The overall research question investigated below is why the stories of these two theatres saw such different endings. Other points of interest include how the media - specifically newspapers - portrayed the campaigns for the theatres and how the context of the day in each city might have impacted the circumstances surrounding each theatre. By exploring such questions and comparing the case studies, this thesis contributes to the larger discourse of preservation and development, and public controversy and citizen movements in the media from an anthropological perspective.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL RELEVANCE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Before launching into my own project, I will lay out some of the arguments for studying society and culture through the built environment in order to establish the significance of my study to anthropology. Also, I will give a brief review of a selection of

other studies which have analyzed circumstances around other preservation attempts of various historical buildings or sites around the same time period as my case studies - the late 20th century.

Broadly speaking, the subject-matter of this thesis falls under the category of urban studies, but with a focus on the built environment and its relation to people from an anthropological perspective. Gregory Ashworth specializes in urban studies with a focus on heritage planning (Peace Conference 2012). In one article, Ashworth (2011) explains that the built environment has been a result of human needs throughout most of our existence; its sole purpose was to serve our needs (2). The fact that today, the built environment now has intrinsic values, which are separate from their utility values, is a relatively recent phenomenon in terms of human development (Ashworth 2011:2). As more and more people wanted to preserve, the question of how to decide what heritage really is and what cities should preserve became an issue and remains one today (Ashworth 2011:11). Who pays, who benefits, and who decides in these matters? Who is the city for?

It is very possible to learn elements about a society through their built environment. The built environment is both a product of, and a mediator between, social relations and cultural values (Knox 1991:182). Understanding those social relations and cultural values requires interpretation with description; a description of an object or an event will be illuminated when paired with an interpretation of the culture behind the material or event (Ley 1985:417). In other words, the context is key. With this in mind, a

Careful reading of a city's built environment might uncover values towards "heritage, ecology, social relations and a mass culture", as well as illuminating the city's social classes and historical conditions (Ley 1985:419). Theories of the physical environment embodying cultural abstracts fall under material culture studies. One scholar, Tilley (1999) discusses how physical things can become symbolic representations of society and culture. He addresses architecture and how the structure of homes among the Batammaliba of West Africa are metaphorical for their social order (Tilley 1999:40-49). In another book, Marcus (1995) discusses the symbolic and emotional relationship between people and their homes in North America. She explains how people are very aware of the messages a certain type of home can communicate depending on its style, decor, size, location and other elements (Marcus 1995:11-12). Even Bourdieu argued that inhabited space, including the house, is an objectification, through the "divisions and hierarchies it sets up between things, persons, and practices", of the arbitrariness and intangibles of culture (1977:89). Buildings provide a concrete entity which through metaphor helps to organize and understand reality (Bourdieu 1977:89; Grassby 2005:591-593; Tilley 1999:41). And just like a home-buyer might seriously consider the message communicated by a future home, an individual or company will likely consider the message communicated by the style and location of their business or government establishment when building it. This was a topic discussed in a material culture course I was in - we talked about the intents different companies or organizations might have when building something in a particular way. Saint Mary's University is an example. The

stone exterior of the McNally Building evokes something very old - much older than the building actually is. By evoking an older feeling, it can make a building seem more established, as if it has been around for an extended period of time, giving it more validity than perhaps a newer-looking building (class notes, Introduction to Material Culture, April 3 2014). Both of the theatres discussed below were built in very deliberate styles; both of these styles also evoked something very old and established. One was built after a style of the Italian Renaissance, while the other was built in a Medieval castle theme.

A careful reading of the media in a city can also illuminate similar things to the materiality of architecture. The media are critical and influential in the construction of knowledge among the people they engage with (Hay and Israel 2001:108). In media, including newspapers as in the discussion below, complex events of the day are “encapsulated” by being simplified into widely understood forms and are then “translated” into different rhetorical styles depending on the intent as well as already existing cultural ideologies (Hay and Israel 2001:113). When it comes to community issues, including planning efforts, the media’s presentation of the pros and cons can play a major role in the public’s acceptance or rejection of any proposal (Mott 1973:117).

There are numerous studies of other heritage buildings and preservation attempts. One paper discusses an heritage district called Old Strathcona, which represents the highest concentration of original construction in one area in Edmonton with some of the buildings dating back to 1891 (Wall 2002:29-30). Post World War II (WWII) era began

urban renewal in Edmonton, like in many other places, but for a time Old Strathcona was left untouched. However, in 1971 the city proposed a new freeway that would go right through this old urban village (Wall 2002:30). A citizen organization, the Strathcona Historical Group, fought against this and petitioned the city to designate Old Strathcona as a conservation district to save it from growing development (Wall 2002:30). In 1974, the city council decided it would be worth saving the area because it would “stimulate private investment and retail rehabilitation” (Wall 2002:30). The area was officially recognized as a heritage district and funding from the city and the province flowed in for the newly formed Old Strathcona Foundation (Wall 2002:31). Additionally, the Heritage Canada Foundation adopted Whyte Avenue - the focal point of Old Strathcona - as its first Main Street project (Wall 2002:31). Over the next 20 years, the district had many ups and downs. Old Strathcona as a conservation district presented some controversy and the Foundation was much criticized at times (Wall 2002:31-33). By the 1990s however, the area had assumed a more comfortable position and conflict had subsided (Wall 2002:35). Whyte Avenue became a mix of the old and new; there were new modern chain stores but many of the old buildings were still there as well (Wall 2002:36). By this time, the street embodied both cultural heritage as well as present cultural values (Wall 2002:36). The author’s main argument by the end of the study is that the built environment is inseparable from a community’s ongoing identity and that heritage conservation movements serve as a medium for statements about the “nature of community” (Wall 2002:38).

Another study from the West coast is of Fairview Slopes, a 24-block area, laid out in the early 20th century, near present-day downtown Vancouver (Zacharias 1997:33). With the economic decline after WWII, Vancouver in the 1960s saw attempts to boost the economy through revitalization and plans for a “forest of towers” (Zacharias 1997:33). The Slopes did not benefit from the surrounding development and in the early 1970s this “urban backwater” was mapped for new development too (Zacharias 1997:34). But more than half of the buildings in Fairview Slopes predated World War I (WWI), making it one of the oldest areas in the city and various citizens fought to save the area from development (Zacharias 1997:34). Plans for development in the Slopes were called off, but surrounding redevelopment continued, edging closer and closer to the historic village and as land prices in the downtown area of Vancouver rose, Fairview was becoming increasingly attractive for new development (Zacharias 1997:34-35). Unlike the example above in Edmonton, by the 1990s, almost the entire neighbourhood of Fairview Slopes had succumbed to development and the character of its early days were lost (Zacharias 1997:35).

For an example of successful preservation attempts, Newport, Rhode Island deserves a look. In 1965, the city of Newport enacted its first historic district zoning ordinance and established its first local historic district (Anderheggen 2010:22). This ordinance was enacted at a time when, like in many other cities after WWII, revitalization attempts were beginning to plough through the city (Anderheggen 2010:23). The author argues that Newport’s planning staff and elected officials were “forward-thinking” by

putting such laws into place to protect the historic architecture so early on; they recognized the potential threat of urban renewal and acted sooner than many other cities did in protecting their built heritage (Anderheggen 2010:23). With bicentennial celebrations coming in 1976, Newport used its historic sites to transition to a tourist driven economy - and it remains as one today (Anderheggen 2010:24). By the late 1980s, the historic district boundaries were greatly enlarged and today over half of the city is now protected by the local preservation law (Anderheggen 2010:24). Anderheggen (2010) goes on to explain problems that have developed with so large a preservation area since the beginning of the 21st century, but it was still a good example of built heritage preservation in the late 20th century (25-32).

Another American example, Old North St. Louis in Missouri shows yet again, community driven preservation. Preservation in the area started in 1980 when a group of citizens formed a homeowner's organization called the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group (Baumann et al 2008:71). Located just north of downtown St. Louis, this historical urban village had been a victim of post-war urban renewal projects. In the 1950s, highway construction destroyed ten blocks including several churches that “served as community anchors” (Baumann et al 2008:71). In 1984 the group campaigned, successfully, to have the neighbourhood added to the National Register of Historic Places and started sponsoring tours of historic homes in the area (Baumann et al 2008:71). The group also went on to purchase, rehabilitate, and sell some of the historic homes (Baumann et al 2008:71). The author goes on to discuss the main theme of the paper

which was a very successful public archaeology program in Old North St. Louis in the 2000s which was only made possible because of the earlier preservation attempts (Baumann et al 2008:70-87).

Another case study shows an example a little different from the others. In her article, Ryberg (2012) discusses urban renewal in Philadelphia. She argues that in Philadelphia, the preservation and historic district designation of the late 20th century came about not by preservationist groups, but at the hands of city planners themselves (Ryberg 2012:194). There were still many typical losses of some built heritage through urban renewal, but early on city planners used historic preservation of particular sites to boost the rehabilitation of the city core (Ryberg 2012:194). Philadelphia's Planning Commission conserved different areas out of a desire to reduce implementation costs and modernize the city without destroying its character (Ryberg 2012:196). Unfortunately, Ryberg (2012) says, their's was a narrow view of history and only Colonial-era historic buildings were considered assets; much of the later architecture was in fact lost (207). The author's main point in the end is that the dichotomy of preservation versus demolition is at times too simple, and that it should not always be regarded as a black and white issue (Ryberg 2012:207).

Of course, I would be remiss to leave out the examples which in fact come from the same cities I am using for my own case studies - Saint John and Halifax. For Saint John I found two theses - by Ronald Roy (2006) and Colin Whitcomb (1986) - which cover different details of urban renewal and preservation in the city during the latter part

of the 20th century. As for Halifax, I found a few more studies all about urban renewal, development, and preservation. One is a thesis, as well as a follow-up paper by Lachlan Barber (2006 and 2013); another is a paper prepared for the Heritage Trust by Claire Renwick (2009); as well as a book by Jill Grant (1994) and another by Elizabeth Pacey (1979). All of these studies are addressed in the chapters below in some form so I will not linger on them here.

The existing literature on urban planning and preservation attempts of the late 20th century is fairly extensive, and as can be seen in the above examples, many of the case studies share similarities. In most cases, major urban renewal began during economic decline after WWII and subsequent citizen-run organizations were formed to save the built heritage.¹ The case studies I have chosen for this thesis also demonstrate the same two factors. However, the discussions below are unique in showing two contrasting cities where preservation attempts failed in one but succeeded in another. Additionally, the bulk of analysis comes through newspaper articles. The comparison of these contrasting case studies through newspapers will provide a novel perspective on the discourse of preservation attempts. Also, the positions described above from material culture and media studies demonstrate that this kind of study does in fact present another way to contribute to anthropological learning. This thesis unites urban planning and built environment studies with media analysis. Studying the relation between society and the built environment - specifically heritage conservation movements - through the media,

¹ My literature review has been limited to a selection of North American examples and the similarities seen between these studies may or may not appear in other parts of the world.

could help better understand the “cultural and sociopolitical manifestations of urban lives and everyday practices” which are bound up in the ‘city’ (Low 1996:384). The built environment presents a constant, pressing necessity to “contemporary decision-makers, who must demolish and replace or preserve and adapt” (Ashworth 2011:2). Built heritage is thus important to study for purpose of helping to shed light on such decisions and to understand why planning choices are rejected by some and accepted by others. “Material culture does not just exist. It is made by someone. It is produced to do something. Therefore it does not passively reflect society – rather, it creates society through the acts of social agents” (Hodder and Hutson 2003:6).

DATA

In the chapters below, I lay out the history of theatre in Saint John and Halifax leading up to the stories of the theatres in question, the Imperial and the Capitol. I then go on to cover some of the social context, in relation to planning and heritage, contemporary to the fate-deciding moments of the theatres. This historical and contextual information was taken from newspaper articles, published histories, electronic sources, government documents, and other theses. The main discussion comes through an analysis of the newspaper articles specific to the fates of each theatre.² These articles were found mostly in archival collections. For the Saint John case study, some articles about the history of

² There are a large number of newspaper articles that will be referenced. Each article for each city has been assigned a number according to the order in which they appear in the body of the text and will be referenced by that number. For example a article from Saint John will be referenced as ‘SJ #’ and one from Halifax will be referenced as ‘H #’.

the Imperial Theatre were found by searching through the card catalog in the Saint John Regional Library Archives. As for the articles which cover the fate of the Imperial, these came from an already assembled collection of just such newspaper articles. As such, it should be noted that the discussion below of these particular articles likely does not include the entire coverage of the story, but rather a segment of the discourse which was deemed worthy of preservation at the archives. For the Halifax case study, the sources for the newspaper articles are a little more broad. By searching through the card catalog at the Nova Scotia Archives, I found some articles covering the history of the Capitol Theatre as well as some articles specific to the fate of the theatre. Like with the Imperial, the Nova Scotia Archives has a collection of articles particular to the fate of the Capitol, all of which are included below. Additionally, Cynthia Henry published a book in 2000 which contains articles all about the Capitol Theatre from its grand opening to its sale and demolition, which she found by going through newspapers at the Nova Scotia Archives. This book had a few more articles relative to the theatre's fate which I had not found elsewhere and was able to include in the analysis below. Although the representation of newspaper articles for the fate of the Capitol are slightly more comprehensive than that of the Imperial, it is still possible I have not included the full coverage of the story. It does, however, include what was considered important enough to be preserved in specific collections, one at the Nova Scotia Archives and one in Cynthia Henry's book.

In addition to the data sources described, I conducted four interviews. I interviewed two people in Saint John and two in Halifax. The purpose of these interviews

were twofold. First, I wanted the opportunity to be able to have an open discussion about heritage and planning issues with people who had actually been involved with such things. Second, even though interviews were not to be the focus of the thesis, I felt the interviews would provide a good supplement to the discourse of the newspaper articles. For Saint John, I started by emailing a local historian and friend, David Goss. David has published some of his own historical work and has conducted historical ghost tours in Saint John for many years. I used to help with the tours as one of his actresses in his storytelling. Shortly after emailing him, I went to Saint John to collect data from the Saint John Regional Library. As I sat at a table pouring over two historical accounts of the Imperial Theatre, another researcher noticed what I was looking at and he asked what I was working on. It turned out that this gentleman had helped provide information for the historical accounts I was looking at and that he had been involved in the efforts to save the Imperial Theatre in the 1980s. This man was Harold Wright, who I quickly learned was a local historian like David, that they were friends and that they had worked on different projects together. Both men have been involved with heritage efforts over the years and while David was aware of and on the periphery of the Imperial Theatre campaign, Harold was directly involved with it. Thus, this duo made the perfect candidates for my Saint John case study interviews.

At the suggestion of one of my committee members, I emailed the President of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, in order to find interviewees for my Halifax case study. Through this process I was able to get into contact with Bill Jordan, a local lawyer

who was involved with the efforts to save the Capitol Theatre in the 1970s. Because of his direct involvement, his was a very informative interview. The other interview I did in Halifax was a little bit different. One of the sources I found early on in my research was a thesis by Colin Whitcomb about heritage preservation. When one of my committee members saw this name, they told me that Colin was now in fact the Vice President of a development company, the Hardman Group Limited, in Halifax. I found it intriguing that as a graduate student Colin had written about heritage preservation and downtown revitalization and now he had become a developer. I wanted to hear a little bit about his views of both the preservation side and the development side. Colin's interview was not as pertinent to the specifics of my thesis as the other interviews, but my conversation with him certainly helped me to understand both sides a little more.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In order to develop a relevant discussion of the data as described above, the investigation below has been very much inspired by discourse analysis. 'Discourse' has a variety of definitions. Discourse analysis has been employed in multiple ways by different scholars and is extremely diverse, making it difficult for students to follow one line of thinking (Langer 2000:9; Richardson 2007:21). Taking ideas from a number of theorists however, I have assembled a working definition for the purpose of this thesis. A discourse should be seen as a unit of language longer than one sentence (Richardson 2007:22), arranged into strands based on topic over time (Jäger 1993:153 as referenced

by Langer 2000:9-10) and is best studied through both linguistic and social lenses (Langer 2000:9; Van Dijk 1997:6). In the subsequent chapters, I will analyze two such discourses - the discourse concerning the proposed (and eventual) demolition of the Capitol Theatre and the discourse concerning the rehabilitation of the Imperial Theatre. Each individual newspaper article and interview will be regarded as a fragment of the larger discourse.

The last part of the definition explains how to best study discourse - through 'linguistic and social lenses'. These two sides of analysis can be referred to as structuralist and functionalist (Richardson 2007:22,23). The structuralist perspective of discourse refers to the linguistic patterns - such as the syntax and lexicon - as well as the rhetorical characteristics, and discursive strategies; it tells us *what* is in the text and the *style* of it. The structure of discourse and language provides grammatical rules for *how* to speak or write and it helps to study how words are arranged into meaningful texts.

The best way to describe the functionalist perspective of discourse is through five assumptions about language as laid out by Richardson (2007): "language use is always active", "language is social", "language use enacts identity", "language use has power", and "language use is political" (11-13). Even though the structure of language provides rules (such as word order, or different styles of discourse), these are such that there is a wide array of possible options, in word choice for example, which can satisfy the rules. This leaves room for individuality between creators of texts and Richardson's five assumptions about language. Studying the function of discourse helps to determine *why* a

proposition was produced in the style we find it in, what people are really *doing* through that proposition (intentional or not), and what *effect* it has on other people, all within a social context.

Whereas the structuralist perspective aims primarily at delineating the *production* of discourse, studying the function of discourse illuminates both the production and the *consumption* of it; the consequential decoding of that text by the audience. Individuals have culturally/historically shared schemas, or scripts, which tell us what behaviour to expect from people of the same culture (Cameron 2001:10-11). This allows readers of a text to make sense of discourse "through their social knowledge" (Cameron 2001:10-11) and people can generally infer the meanings originally intended in a message. However, communication does not always work this way and often individuals can interpret any given message in different ways. Studying the social context of a particular discourse can help explain why this happens. In the current project, most of the analysis will focus on the production of the discourse. Newspaper articles represent discursive productions, but do not provide records to show how each person who read the paper interpreted and reacted to it. However, a few articles of those assembled were actual responses to earlier articles, so this will provide data for a minimal analysis of the social interaction of these texts.

There are four main elements often explored which can help see the overlapping concepts of the structural and functional perspectives. The terms used here come from Van Dijk (1997:6,7) and each borrows concepts from Maclean (1981:63) and Richardson

(2007:45). They are: action, power, ideology, and context. Under the heading of 'action' the perspective (producer/consumer), content (what is being presented, and the techniques being used), intentionality, and implications can be explored. The concept of 'power' explores such ideas as "the power of social practices on production, the power of texts to shape understandings...and the power of people to reproduce or transform society" (Richardson 2007:45). The next term, 'ideology', can explore the systems of belief developed to solve problems and coordinate social practices (Van Dijk 1997:26).

The data shown in the case studies below has gone through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Although not using all of the complexities of discourse analysis as described above, it has influenced my interpretations and ideas as I have worked through the data. The quantitative analysis will provide the structuralist view and the qualitative analysis will provide the functionalist view. For the quantitative analysis, each newspaper article was typed into an electronic document. Then I was able to plug this data into an online word frequency counter by Text Fixer to see the frequency of words in all of the Halifax articles and all of the Saint John articles, each as one corpus.³ I also used an application called Preview in order to check these counts and to find phrase counts of two to three words. Additionally, this application allowed me to do counts in individual articles so I could see, for example, how many of the articles actually contained the counted words. This made it possible to see how often different types of words and

³ For the word frequency counter tool I used follow this link: <http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>

phrases came up in order to better understand what was emphasized by the articles.

Tables are shown below of these word and phrase frequencies.

The qualitative analysis will involve a discussion of the information shown in the tables in order to get a fuller picture of the attitudes displayed in the newspaper articles.

There will be some further interpretation of the text in more detail which, for me, has been influenced by the things I have read about discourse analysis as discussed above. A portion of the analysis for each case study will be in relation to the historical context contemporary to the time period covered in the newspaper articles. Some possible connections between the context and what was happening with each theatre, as described in the newspaper articles, will be discussed. Finally, each of the interviews will be brought into play for a little more insight as to the events surrounding each case study.

The final chapter provides a look at the similarities and differences between each case study. This will lead into a discussion again of context. The contexts already discussed in the earlier chapters will be compared here. This final discussion will reveal some of the cultural values shown in the data and the most probable reasons for why the two theatre buildings succumbed to their different fates.

SETTING THE SCENE

It is quite likely that the first theatre in Canada was the New Grand Theatre of Halifax, Nova Scotia, built in 1789 (Mattie 2006:para 1). After this time there is evidence of theatres appearing all over Canada. In the 19th century many of the theatres were in

combination buildings - one building with multiple sections for different functions (Mattie 2006:para 2). There were more obscure theatres on top of taverns and shops (Mattie 2006:para 3). Additionally, there were many buildings that were used for double duty; their primary purpose might have been a school, a church hall, or a sports arena, but during their off-hours they were used for dramatic productions (Mattie 2006:para 5). The 20th century brought more and more theatres as transportation networks, notably railway, increased the availability of touring productions and the growing size and scope of legitimate drama inspired more ambitious theatre building (Mattie 2006:para 7). In the first part of the 20th century, vaudeville theatre and movie houses were gaining in popularity and there was huge growth in the film industry (Mattie 2006:para 11; Pratley 1987:18,19).

Many American entrepreneurs came to Canada to get into the film business and the first of these were the Allen brothers, from Pennsylvania, who came in 1906 (Pratley 1987:19). Not long after this, N. L. Nathanson, from Minneapolis, came to Ontario hoping to enter the food industry, but becoming interested in theatre he instead tried to make a deal with the Allens, who refused (Pratley 1987:19). In 1916, Nathanson was able to form his own theatre company which in 1920, upon a deal with the leading film producer in Hollywood at the time, became the Famous Players Canadian Corporation (Pratley 1987:20). Soon after this, the Allens sold out to Nathanson and by 1930 Famous Players was buying up every first-run theatre, and most second-runs, in the country

(Pratley 1987:20).⁴ Famous Players' monopoly on theatre throughout the 20th century had an adverse effect on live performance, which they curtailed by prohibiting live shows in their theatres (Mattie 2006:para 21; Pratley 1987:20,21). Almost every theatre not owned by them had to turn to showing mostly motion pictures because Famous Players' success had made film so popular (Pratley 1987:21). It was not until the 1960s when film hype died down that Famous Players brought back live shows, but this was still minimal and with the introduction of their newer, more modern, smaller theatres in the 1970s, the cinemas again trumped live theatres (Pratley 1987:21). Famous Players undoubtedly had an impact on the theatre business at large, and we can see a portion of that in the case studies below.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the desire to preserve had grown enough that government agencies were created to start the process of listing what should be preserved (Ashworth 2011:6). However, the concept of preservation was not at the forefront of city planning until much later (Coke and Brown 1976:98). Throughout the first half of 20th century the general public consented to government land use policies which ensured economic growth (Coke and Brown 1976:98). The 20th century also brought a "stronger emphasis on human, rather than economic, values" and by the 1960s and 1970s many were questioning the value of growth and development (Coke and Brown 1976:98). At least in Western countries, protective legislation for the preservation of historic buildings

⁴ First-run theatres were theatres that showed mainstream film during their initial new release period. Second-run theatres were discount theatres that showed films after they left the first-run theatres.

was slowly being adopted and a preservation movement among different groups of the public was on the rise (Ashworth 2011:9; Hurley 2006:26).

Through the mid 20th century, Canada's city cores were on an economic decline (Roy 2006:1-3). Suburbanization had led many of the middle to high income families away from the city centres and the economy dropped after WWII. Urban renewal and modernization attempts were made in hopes of helping the economy and city life (Grant 1994:57; Roy 2006:1-3). These efforts sometimes led to negative social effects and "entire communities were lost to the wrecking ball" (Barber 2013:100; Roy 2006:1-3). The 1970s heralded urban growth and city centres were deemed best suited for mega-structures and large office towers (Grant 1994:62-74; Roy 2006:3). At the same time, a heritage movement, began to grow in response to the many losses (Roy 2006:5). The 1980s brought new feeling to urban revitalization which valued restoration of historic buildings and city blocks and tried to bring those middle to high income families back to the downtown core (Grant 1994:74-82; Roy 2006:5).

Chapter 2: The Imperial Theatre, Saint John

THE HISTORY

The first theatre building in Saint John, New Brunswick was the Dramatic Lyceum. The performing arts were popular before this, but the Lyceum was the first building built for the sole purpose of functioning as a theatre (Smith 1981:63). Opened in 1857, it was located on King Square in the city centre (Hunter 1986:335). The construction of the theatre was arranged by the head of a New York theatre company, J.W. Lanergan, after he saw how successful theatre could be in Saint John during a tour there (Armstrong n.d.:21). In 1870 and 1872 two more theatres opened: Lee's Opera House and the Academy of Music, a grand and sophisticated theatre (Hunter 1986:335). Tragically, the Saint John fire of 1877 wiped out all three theatres (Armstrong n.d.:22; Hunter 1986:335). From the ashes of Lanergan's theatre the Imperial Theatre would eventually rise. In September of 1913 the Imperial had its grand opening; the 1800 seats were jammed full (SJ 1). The theatre went on to bill itself as "Eastern Canada's Premier House of Entertainment" (Hunter 1986:338) and was lauded as the largest stage theatre in the Maritimes (SJ 1).

The construction of the theatre was made possible by Saint John native, Walter Golding, a "pioneer" of the moving picture-vaudeville industry east of Montreal (SJ 2). In the late 1880s, the Keith-Albee company, a New York city vaudeville chain, leased the Nickel Theatre in Saint John - originally a performing arts venue for local artists - to try

their hand at vaudeville in the Maritimes (SJ 5). When it became clear their Maritimes experiment was failing because of the high cost of transporting performers to the theatre, they brought in film to help pay the rent (SJ 5). In 1907, the company called Walter Golding and asked him to manage their Nickel Theatre (SJ 3). After some time, Golding approached the Keith-Albee company about building a grand theatre in his city and they said, “we seldom, if ever, build in the sticks” (SJ 5). Eventually however, they were convinced. They purchased land on King Square and built a \$100,000 theatre (SJ 5). Golding managed the Imperial until his death in 1945 (SJ 1).



Figure 1 - Grand Formal Opening of Imperial: The first page of the Imperial Theatre’s grand opening program. (Saint John Regional Library Archives 1913)

The Imperial went on to delight many different audiences over the following years with its vaudeville entertainment and silent movies. The theatre had an orchestra

pit, to provide live music accompaniment to the silent films; Golding was one of the first to use this technique (SJ 2). In this time, when actors and actresses travelled all over, few acts missed the Imperial; it housed performances by people from New York, Boston, Los Angeles, England, France, Germany, and more (SJ 2). When WWI began, the Imperial did its part. As a recruiting centre it provided the space to enlist three regiments, entertainment was free for members of the forces and their families and the theatre raised \$140,000 in war bonds (SJ 2; SJ 4). When coal was short in supply and the Imperial impossible to heat, films were shows outside on the front of the building (SJ 2; SJ 4).



Figure 2 - The Imperial After WWI: The Imperial Theatre in 1920 before any major changes happened to the building. (Heritage Resources #3055)

After WWI, in 1929, with the increasing popularity of film, the Keith-Albee Company leased the Imperial to the growing cinema company, Famous Players, who rebranded it as a movie theatre, with all the necessary technology for the novelty of talking pictures. The new name “Capitol” was erected on the building (Armstrong n.d.:53; Hunter 1986:339). With these changes the orchestra had to go and live performances became rare (SJ 2). When WWII shook the world, the theatre (at that point the Capitol) played the same role it had in WWI (SJ 2). The final major live performance housed in the then-Capitol Theatre was in 1952 (SJ 1). Not every theatre could compete with the rising popularity of television, and in an attempt to keep their Saint John enterprise afloat, Famous Players had built a newer, modern theatre in 1948, directly across from the Imperial-Capitol on King Square - the Paramount Theatre (Armstrong n.d.:58). More patrons flocked to the Paramount, and in 1957 the Imperial-Capitol closed its doors to film and dramatics (Armstrong n.d.:58). The Davis sisters, two women dedicated to religion, bought the theatre for \$166,000 and donated it to the Full Gospel Assembly, a Pentecostal church, to be used as a meeting house (SJ 1; Imperial Theatre 2013).

Over the next couple of decades, the building housed various church meetings and its days as a theatre became only vague memories. Harold Wright (unpublished interview, December 20, 2013), a Saint John native, remembers going to the Full Gospel Assembly as a child; his sister took him there for Sunday school growing up. Wright grew up to become a lover of history and still does much research today on various interests related to his city. In 1982, he started researching the cinema history of Saint John. Of course,



Figure 3 - The Full Gospel Assembly: The Imperial-Capitol in 1983 as the Full Gospel Assembly, before the Bi-Capitol Project Renovations. (Heritage Resources #14406)

this research brought him back to the Full Gospel Assembly. He got permission to look throughout the building, accompanied by some of the church leaders. In their conversation during his visit, the leaders talked about the fact that in order to keep using the building they would be renovating it to fit their needs better. Wright felt it would be a great loss if the building were seriously altered from its original design, and so he started to tell his friends involved with heritage about the church's plans for the building.

Since the 1970s the fact that Saint John “had no home for the performing arts” had been surfacing as a vital issue and one solution that had been discussed was to buy back the Imperial-Capitol (Market Square Cooperation 1988:8). This apparent issue is

supported by the newspaper articles discussed below as well. In the 1970s, the Market Square Development project was being worked out as a downtown development project. Another solution discussed for a time was a new theatre that would be built as part of this project (SJ 6). Such a theatre was estimated to cost about 6 million dollars to build. The federal government said Saint John should abandon this notion and instead look to the old Imperial-Capitol, which they believed would provide less expensive option (SJ 6). Still, nothing much came of these discussions until Saint John native Jack MacDougall came along. MacDougall, involved with the heritage movement, heard the discussions started by Wright about the church's plans for the building, as well as the desire among the community for a performing arts venue (unpublished interview, December 20, 2013; Market Square Cooperation 1988:8). MacDougall decided to visit the building. Three days later he was meeting with the church leaders of the Full Gospel Assembly to discuss purchase of the theatre (CBC News 2013b). Through MacDougall, the Bi-Capitol Project Incorporated was officially established in October 1982 for the purpose of purchasing, rehabilitating, and operating the theatre (Market Square Cooperation 1988:8). In November, 1982 an agreement was made with the Full Gospel Assembly: one dollar was given as a down payment with a promise of a further \$999,999 in one year (Imperial Theatre 2013; Market Square Cooperation 1988:8). Over the next year of fund-raising the Bi-Capitol Project actually raised \$1,135,000. Purchase of the building was made final in December 1983 with an agreement that the Full Gospel Assembly had twelve months to vacate the building (Market Square Cooperation 1988:8). In 1985 the Imperial was



Figure 4 - One Million Dollars: Jack MacDougall, Dr. Tom Condon, and Dr. Jobe Hawkes (left to right) celebrating the success of the Bi-Capitol Project in 1983. (Heritage Resources #14405)

recommended and subsequently declared, a National Historic Site (Hunter 1986:333).

Extensive renovations took place on the building over the succeeding years to return the theatre as closely as possible to its original design. Finally, in May 1994 nearly 100 local performers took to the stage in two galas, officially declaring the Imperial reopened (SJ 1).

CONTEXT AND THE MEDIA

The questions at this point in order to help understand the process the Imperial went through are: what was happening in Saint John leading up to the Bi-Capitol Project

which influenced the proceedings, and what kind of portrayal and information did the media (newspapers) provide of the project? Even before MacDougall became involved and the Bi-Capitol Project created, the newspapers had already started following the story. One example (SJ 6) comes from 1977. The bulk of the article is actually about a development project for a centre called Market Square, yet the title of the article is, “To Revive Capitol Theatre?” (SJ 6). Only two short paragraphs touch on the “old Capitol Theatre”, with the rest of the page and a half article discussing the development project. Why would the title reflect such a small portion of the article? Perhaps this headline was suggestive of the popular conversations and interests of the day; after all, there were more articles about the theatre before the Bi-Capitol Project officially existed. These articles from before the project show the initial desire to bring the theatre-turned-church building back to its original purpose. Discussion of these articles and more are below, but first, a little more context should be outlined.

From the mid 1950s to mid 1970s, the city of Saint John invested heavily in what was then called slum clearance (5000 residents were displaced), public and private housing development, transportation, infrastructure and industrial expansion (Marquis 2010). One significant effect of the urban renewal was that “modernist redevelopment replaced historic buildings with utilitarian, uniform structures of concrete and steel” (Marquis 2010:para 5). During this time of intense urban clearance advocates for built heritage formed the first Saint John Heritage Trust in direct response to the demolition of the Hazen House, a pre-Loyalist home and the oldest building in Saint John

(Roy 2006:19). Around the same time the old Union Station, a majestic railway station from 1933, was also demolished, which Wright feels was another motivating factor, like the Hazen House, towards a new heritage preservation movement. Eventually, based on the successes of other cities - like the Historic Properties in Halifax - Saint John started to see heritage conservation as a possible tool for revitalization. In 1977 the city hosted a conference on preserving old buildings for the province (Roy 2006:25). At the conference a significant point was discussed. Saint John had numerous areas, at that time, where buildings had been demolished, but the reality was, there were “no pressures to build anything on these sites [the demolished areas]” (Community Planning Association of Canada 1978:3). The other major point at the conference was an argument for the economic viability of heritage conservation and reuse; it simply made economic sense (Community Planning Association of Canada 1978:20). Soon after the conference, talk began of creating a preservation district in order to protect some of Saint John’s architecture. The proposed area consisted of 20 blocks in the downtown area including mostly residential land as well as a part of the central business district. The designation of this 20 block area was promoted as a method for revitalization of the city centre (Roy 2006:28,32).

At the same time that the Bi-Capitol Project was fundraising for the purchase of the theatre from the Full Gospel Assembly, Saint John was beginning something important. The years 1983, 1984, and 1985 were to be full of bicentennial celebrations. In 1783 the Loyalists first landed in Saint John about where Market Square is today

(Lawrence 1883:4). In 1784, Nova Scotia was partitioned and the province of New Brunswick was born (Lawrence 1883:6). And in 1785, the communities that had grown from the first Loyalists were incorporated as the City of Saint John (Lawrence 1883:8). The players who created the Bi-Capitol Project recognized the importance of the bicentennial years and the positive impact the celebrations would potentially have on their fundraising efforts. This is reflected in the name they chose for the project. ‘Bi-Capitol’ was a play on words, using the ‘bi’ prefix to honour the bicentennial years (Harold Wright, unpublished interview, December 20, 2013).

“We have an architectural history, a record in stone, brick and wood of people’s aspirations and ambitions at different times and under different conditions for roughly 200 years. It is the totality of that process, the record of that process over the years that is important and worth preserving” (Community Planning Association of Canada 1978:4). This quote, from the 1977 conference, succinctly conveys the feelings of people involved with the growing heritage movement in Saint John through the 1970s-80s. In the face of the bulldozer, which had been very active during the two previous decades, and the excitement of planning for the upcoming bicentennial celebrations, there was a growing sense of pride for the many old buildings the city had to represent its past, as well as a clear sense of urgency to save that past for future generations (Community Planning Association of Canada 1978:4; Whitcomb 2006:17). The 1977 conference suggests that issues of planning in relation to the preservation of old buildings was prominent in the city. Additionally, in separate interviews, both David Goss and Harold Wright agreed that

the timing for the purchase of the Imperial Theatre was just right; the context of the period contributed greatly to the willingness so many people had to donate (time and money) to the Bi-Capitol Project (David Goss, unpublished interview, December 27, 2013; Harold Wright, unpublished interview, December 20, 2013).

Nineteen newspaper articles constitute the data below. These articles date from 1977 to 1983. As stated in the introduction, these articles were typed electronically to help in creating some tables, which can be found below. The total word count for the text of these nineteen articles combined was 11,038, just over half of which were primary words according to the online program used to help with the word counts. The first few articles concern possibilities of purchasing the old Imperial Theatre from the Full Gospel Assembly. These articles mostly address the attempts of a city organization - the Central Business Development Corporation (CBDC) - to make a deal with the Full Gospel Assembly for the buildings (SJ 7 - SJ 9). The deal was unsuccessful and the rest of the articles cover the story of the Bi-Capitol Project from the one-million dollar agreement to the final purchase in November 1983 (SJ 10 - 24). All of the articles are positive in tone towards the acquiring of the Imperial. Even the articles written about the failed purchase deal between the CBDC and the Full Gospel Assembly still spoke positively about the idea of buying the old building; CBDC simply had not been willing to pay the one-million dollar asking price, but restoring the building as a theatre still seemed a desire. The primary discussion below addresses information presented in a series of tables which show the frequency of significant words. In the tables, each cluster of words is followed

by a number which represents how many times those terms appeared in the newspaper texts. That number in turn is followed by a number in brackets representing how many individual articles the terms were in.

The first table I will discuss briefly. This table shows terms used in reference to the Imperial Theatre, which are understandably high in frequency. This table shows that

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| theatre / Capitol / Capitol Theatre | 106 | (19) |
| the building / the church building | 45 | (15) |
| old Capitol / old Capitol Theatre / the old building | 17 | (11) |
| Imperial / Imperial Theatre | 10 | (6) |
| former Capitol Theatre | 6 | (6) |
| total | 184 | |

Table 1: Imperial Theatre (SJ 6 - SJ 24)

there was at least one kind of reference to the Capitol in all nineteen articles. To be clear, the term building, and other general terms like it in more tables below, was counted by looking at the context to see when ‘building’ was actually being used to refer to the Imperial Theatre, not just any building. The use of the adjective ‘old’ when referencing the theatre was used in eleven articles. This adjective is important because it shows a recognition of the building as an historical object. It is interesting to see that the majority of references to the theatre were the ‘Capitol’ theatre; the actual title of the Imperial was only used ten times in six articles. This is not surprising though considering the history of the theatre. Most people reading these newspaper articles would have only remembered the theatre as the ‘Capitol’ before being sold to the church group. The newspapers used

the more recognizable term, the ‘Capitol’, which would help people better remember what this building had been before being a church. Below is a second table which highlights references to locations. Understandably, the highest number of location words were related to the city of Saint John; every article referenced the city more than once. Halifax is also in the table because of one article which discussed a meeting Jack MacDougall had with a group of volunteers in Halifax who wanted to help with the campaign to purchase the Imperial.

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----|------|
| Saint John / the city / city | 127 | (19) |
| Market Square | 13 | (2) |
| Halifax | 11 | (1) |
| King Square | 10 | (10) |
| downtown | 6 | (2) |
| New Brunswick | 3 | (2) |
| total | 170 | |

Table 2: Location (SJ 6 - SJ 24)

The next table shows two columns of words. The first shows terms all to do with the fund-raising campaign to purchase the Imperial. The second contains terms relating to this, but more specific to the Bi-Capitol Project. These were the next big topics throughout the articles - the Bi-Capitol Project and the campaign to raise one million dollars. The need for the million was a pressing matter, the Bi-Capitol group had to have the money within the year for the deal with the Full Gospel Assembly, so it would make sense that the newspaper articles kept going back to the matter of money again and again. In eight different articles, the text recognized different contributions/donations made for

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|-------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| million / money / price | 63 | (15) | Bi-Capitol / project / Bi-Capitol Project | 97 | (15) |
| buy / purchase | 35 | (9) | group | 14 | (5) |
| raise / raised / fund-raising | 39 | (13) | benefit concerts | 12 | (6) |
| contribution / donations | 28 | (8) | organization / Bi-Capitol organization | 2 | (2) |
| campaign | 24 | (9) | his group / his organization | 7 | (2) |
| raise one million | 6 | (6) | March | 12 | (6) |
| fund-raising campaign | 3 | (2) | meeting | 10 | (6) |
| total | 198 | | total | 154 | |

Table 3: Purchase of the Imperial Theatre and the Bi-Capitol Project (SJ 6 - SJ 24

the campaign and at multiple times explained how readers could contribute as well. Of course, the Bi-Capitol Project organization provided the only ways for citizens to make contributions, so they are consistently referenced to throughout the newspaper articles. There were benefit concerts advertised in the articles as another way for people to contribute and a major fund-raising day planned for March was discussed in six different articles.

For the next table I looked at word counts and the context of the words to ensure their meanings. All of the terms in this table were used in the newspaper articles in very positive ways to promote the support of the campaign for the Imperial Theatre. The articles used words like ‘community’, ‘local’, and ‘public’ in about half of the articles. By emphasizing the ‘community’, the newspapers were able to show how this was a project for everybody, that the ‘community’ as a whole would benefit. The table also shows some emotional words like ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘happy’, which appeared in ten different articles.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| community / local / public | 38 | (10) |
| support / give | 36 | (11) |
| enthusiastic / exciting / excited / happy / hope | 28 | (10) |
| volunteer / volunteers | 14 | (6) |
| cultural | 9 | (4) |
| chandelier | 8 | (1) |
| historic | 3 | (3) |
| landmark | 3 | (3) |
| total | 139 | |

Table 4: Supporting the Imperial (SJ 6 - SJ 24)

Additionally, it is here that we finally see terms like cultural and historic, though they only come up in a few articles.

The next table shows people significant to the project and their frequencies. Jack MacDougall was the highest referenced name in the articles, which was not surprising considering he was the one who spearheaded the Bi-Capitol Project. The only ‘opposition’ in a sense was represented by Norman Murray, the chairman of the Full Gospel Assembly. The board members of the Full Gospel Assembly had their own plans which they wanted to carry out with the Imperial to make it suit their needs. If the million dollars had not been raised, the theatre would have been altered much from its former design. Dr. Thomas Condon was also significant as the second chairman to MacDougall on the Bi-Capitol Board of Directors. Barbara Schermerhorn was the chairman of the CBDC, who were significant in making the first attempts to make a deal with the Full Gospel Assembly.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Jack MacDougall / Mr. MacDougall / chairman / coordinator | 61 | (13) |
| Norman Murray / Mr. Murray / chairman | 17 | (6) |
| Dr. Thomas Condon / Dr. Condon / chairman / president | 15 | (5) |
| Barbara Schermerhorn / Mrs. Schermerhorn / chairman | 11 | (3) |
| Francis Balemans / Mr. Balemans | 5 | (1) |
| total | 109 | |

Table 5: People (SJ 6 - SJ 24)

Another table below shows some of the other organizations mentioned throughout the newspaper articles. Of course, the Full Gospel Assembly comes up many times as the owners of the Imperial Theatre at the time. A number of high schools, the University of New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Museum and Theatre New Brunswick were all mentioned at different times as contributing to the campaign in different ways. The Admiral Beatty Hotel was significant as they provided a free office space to the Bi-

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Full Gospel Assembly / the Assembly | 46 | (15) |
| [various local] high school(s) | 26 | (5) |
| Central Business Development Corporation / CBDC | 17 | (4) |
| Admiral Beatty Hotel / the Beatty | 17 | (5) |
| Irving | 7 | (2) |
| University of New Brunswick | 3 | (3) |
| New Brunswick Museum | 2 | (2) |
| Theatre New Brunswick | 2 | (2) |
| total | 120 | |

Table 6: Other Organizations (SJ 6 - SJ 24)

Capitol Group. And in the end, Irving was a major contributor, who without, the campaign likely would not had been successful.

Much of the high word counts above show the main intent of the production of the texts: to encourage any and all to donate funds to the Bi-Capitol Project. The discussion below addresses some of the articles in more detail to help better understand what was happening.

The first article (SJ 13) from immediately after the signing of the agreement with the Full Gospel Assembly comes from November 1982. Scattered throughout the article were the various ways a person could donate to the project as well as the many organizations (including the New Brunswick Museum and a number of high schools throughout the community) which had already committed to helping the project in different ways. By describing these organizations and what they were committed to do, the author conveyed a sense of community. 600 supporters were at the campaign kick-off and the project to purchase the theatre was represented as something worth being a part of because everyone was doing it (SJ 13). This is an example of an appeal to the majority. MacDougall was quoted as describing the theatre building as “a cornerstone of Saint John’s history”, which showed some recognition of the historical value of the building on MacDougall’s part (SJ 13). This article also stressed the time limit under which the agreement to purchase the theatre fell and that if one million dollars was not raised in one year - and three-quarters of that in a trust account in nine months - the contract would be

void, and they would not be able to obtain the building (SJ 13). This deadline of the project was continually highlighted in other articles, creating a feeling of urgency.

Another article (SJ 14), published soon after the downpayment was made in November, showed more of the intent behind the production of the text - to find financial support. Even the title reflected it: "Bi-Capitol Project Campaign Gets \$10,000 Pledge". The article began by telling the reader about businessman Francis Balemans, who made the pledge. He was quoted, "I'm doing it because I hope it will encourage others to come forth and support the campaign" - he clearly believed he could make a difference (SJ 14). The text explained how Balemans bought a post office from the city for \$5000 because, he said, "I know a good deal when I see it" (SJ 14). And he believed that purchasing the Imperial-Capitol was a good deal too (SJ 14). It also mentioned that Balemans owned stands in the City Market and apartment buildings in the city. Balemans emphasized that he felt supporting the project made good business sense, because it was something that would "improve the city" (SJ 14). The way the article was written set up a sort of authoritative figure which readers might have been persuaded to believe. Balemans was portrayed as a good businessman. The text implied that if he said it was a good deal, it had to be a good deal. Now, to the typical reader this might have sounded like a great cause, but there was nothing they could do to help because most people do not have the money to make such a pledge. It is at this point in the article, however, that one sees a strategic shift. Instead of making the campaign something only businessmen can invest in, the article next gives the reader information on how to take part in the "good deal"

Balemans describes on a more reasonable level. An upcoming benefit concert at the Delta Inn was much more affordable at only \$6.50 per person, and one dollar for campaign buttons being sold by high school students would have been a contribution that almost anyone could pay to support the Bi-Capitol's growing enterprise (SJ 14). This article represents a part of the discourse that tried to convince other businessmen to contribute and other citizens to do their part.⁵

In the new year, January 1983, another article talked about the "campaign like no other" (SJ 15). It announced a 2-week fundraising effort planned for March that would culminate in a Bi-Capitol Day (SJ 15). The article quoted Dr. Thomas Condon, chairman of the board of the project, "I want to stress this is a project of Greater Saint John" (SJ 15). The article emphasized the importance the project had to the community at large and that anyone could and should contribute (SJ 15). When asked how it would be possible to raise one million dollars, Dr. Condon made a logical point, explaining that there were 120,000 people in Greater Saint John and that if each of them only donated ten dollars, that would be more than enough (SJ 15). So again, we see here an article displayed a sense of community about the project. Dr. Condon made an argument for purchasing the theatre, that Saint John had no centre for the arts and the Imperial-Capitol would provide this. He said that because the city had no real live theatre, things were passing by and local talent had no opportunity to develop (SJ 15).

⁵ Refer to Appendix B to see an image of the full SJ 14 article.

The next month, an article appeared which reported support from Halifax for the Bi-Capitol Project (SJ 16). MacDougall met with a group of volunteers there and when he got home received a cheque in the mail for \$100 towards the campaign (SJ 16). Neptune and Dalhousie both voiced support, saying that they would hold benefit concerts, to raise awareness and money (SJ 16). MacDougall was quoted, “get them talking first, and then they’ll start donating money” (SJ 16). The article showed the main intent behind many of the texts - to raise money. The article ended with a hope that the project might be able to get PEI involved as well (SJ 16).

One particularly interesting article came from March 1983, a few months into the campaign (SJ 17). In an “unprecedented” and “unpartisan” effort, the three major political parties in Saint John united for the cause. The text explained that the presidents of the New Democratic Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Liberal Party agreed to co-ordinate the organization needed to facilitate door-to-door canvassing across the city (SJ 17). The article explicitly said that this was not a partisan activity and the New Democratic Party president was quoted saying, “it is *one* Bi-Capitol organization”, emphasizing that political differences were not to play any role in supporting the project and that their acts were not political moves (SJ 17). Upon analyzing the text to ‘read between the lines’, it would stand to reason that this was not purely apolitical. The political parties would have been acutely aware of the growing campaign and the investments of emotion, time and money many of their citizens were making. It would not have been entirely favourable for them to ignore it, especially if one party had

participated while the others did not. Another article highlighted the efforts of another interesting unification (SJ 20). This article came later in the same month, just before what was to be Bi-Capitol Day on March 27th. Bi-Capitol Day was the focal point of the campaign: one special day was set aside for people to focus on the project and participate in many fundraisers. The article was informing readers that all five major cab companies in Saint John would be offering free rides on March 27th to and from the 13 contribution centres that would be set up for that day at grade schools throughout the city (SJ 20). MacDougall stressed the novelty of these collaborations, “It's the first time anything like this has been done in the city. We have all three political parties organizing the canvassing for the city and now the taxi companies are co-operating to help the project. I think it has pulled people together as never before” (SJ 20). Again we see here an appeal to the majority and emotion; the project was represented as a *cause* that people felt strongly enough about to put differences aside and the sentiment portrayed was that the readers should too.

Another common element found in many of the articles about the campaign is a personalization of the story, using Jack MacDougall as a central figure. He was said to be spending most of his time on the project (SJ 14) and was praised in a number of the articles for making the project happen in the first place. One article in particular focused on MacDougall's story (SJ 18). It told, in detail, of the night he made the decision to do something about the theatre. It then expanded on what happened the following day when he met with the Full Gospel Assembly's chairman, Mr. Murray. When Murray made it

clear that they would not sell the building for less than one million dollars, MacDougall said, “sold - I have one dollar. I’ll take it to the people of Saint John to raise the money” (SJ 18). This last part illuminates MacDougall’s belief in the historical value of the building, a belief he had in his community and perhaps in his own power to influence them positively towards the project (SJ 18).

In November 1983, the fund-raising project was successful. There were 2000 project organizers and supporters at a celebration event at the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre (SJ 22). Dr. Condon, the chairman of the board of directors for the project, announced that they had successfully raised over and above the required \$1,000,000 (SJ 22). This article highlighted many of the groups that had contributed over the year including the student body of UNBSJ who had bought one of the thousand dollar seats in the theatre to support the campaign. The Mayor, Elsie Wayne, was quoted saying, “It’s wonderful that this has pulled the city together” (SJ 22). In another article from the same day, it was revealed that Irving had donated (SJ 23). As of September the project’s efforts had brought them up to \$650,000 and they were struggling. Then in October, Irving pledged \$350,000, putting the final sum over the top. The last article in the paper that day covering this story brought it back to the personal touch of Jack MacDougall again, where he was quoted saying, “I never had any serious doubts we would make it...I feel in my heart it was a good deal. I feel also that a lot of people agreed with me” (SJ 24). On that final note, MacDougall’s ideologies, or beliefs, about community and heritage were showcased once more and the same ideologies were supported through the

roughly 70-80 percent of the population of Saint John who supported the Bi-Capitol Project in their own ways (SJ 22).

As seen by the above, the articles in this case study were true advocates for the campaign and it is likely that such positive news articles played a role in themselves. These articles helped to keep momentum going with the campaign and continued to encourage community action.

Chapter 3: The Capitol Theatre, Halifax

THE HISTORY

Today, looking down Spring Garden Road, past Saint Mary's Basilica, onto Barrington Street, it is hard to miss the high-rise, angled facade of a modern-industrial designed multiplex. The Maritime Centre was commissioned by the telephone company, Maritime Tel and Tel. Most of the building contains office spaces for the company, and the few bottom floors contain a menagerie of businesses. There are a few small shops, some fast food places, a dinner theatre, a dance studio, and a couple of other businesses. The building is certainly used by many different people; it serves many. What many people do not realize though, is how controversial the erecting of this building was in the 1970s. People who remember those days still have strong feelings about it, something reaffirmed by my interview with Bill Jordan (unpublished interview, January 10, 2014).

Until 1789, most theatricals in Halifax were performed in a room at what was called the Pontac Inn. When growing audience would no longer fit, the New Grand Theatre was built - the first building built specifically as a theatre in Halifax (H 1; Mullane 1926:2,3). As the popularity of dramatics became apparent, other theatres quickly followed. These were not original theatres but rather conversions of old buildings and each opened as an earlier one closed (H 1). The New Grand Theatre was eventually appropriated for use as a school. The next big theatre did not come until 1846 (H 1; Mullane 1926:10,18). This theatre - called the Theatre Royal, the Spring Garden Theatre,

and later Sothern's Lyceum - was located on Queen Street, just north of Spring Garden Road. It was conversion of an old hay barn (H 1; Mullane 1926:18). In 1868 a rival opened becoming the main theatre in the city, the Olympic Theatre, which was originally built for public meetings and conferences (H 1; Mullane 1926:ii). This was still not enough though and many theatre-goers wanted a real theatre; a theatre built as a theatre, like the old New Grand Theatre.

In 1873 tenders were opened and soon a contract was awarded to Mr. John Crowe for the building of the Academy of Music for \$15,977 - to be built on Barrington Street, where the Maritime Centre high-rise stands today (H 2). Four years later the Academy had its grand opening concert hosted by the Halifax Musical Union, featuring, along with Haligonian musicians, instrumentalists from Boston (H 3). The Academy was more luxurious and better equipped than any theatre previously found in Halifax (H 4). Many local and visiting artists performed at the Academy. One newspaper article contained the reminiscences of Leonard R. Johnstone, a radio star based in Hollywood, who was from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. He said, "The old Academy of Music still haunts me....Many picture actors out here appeared in the Academy of Music sometime or other" (H 5). Johnstone was in any radio announcer's dream city, Hollywood, and yet he still missed the old Academy of Music. Over the next few decades, other theatres were opened, but the Academy remained the centre for legitimate theatre and was the only one of the Halifax playhouses that had actually been built and designed as a theatre until the Strand Theatre opened in 1915 (H 6).

In 1918, the Academy of Music changed its name to the Majestic Theatre, with the publicity title The Perfection Playhouse (H 7). A newspaper article stated, “If Halifax, on the reconstruction days of the wave, is going in for a larger, better and more beautiful city, why shouldn’t the oldest theatre join in the movement and begin with itself by beautifying its progress and by increasing the scope of the appeal of its attractions?” (H 7). The article goes on to say that the new name, along with recent renovations of the theatre, was to be the beginning of a new chapter for the theatre, one that would bring more and more patrons into its grand hall. However, the 1920s brought a decline in live performances as movies became increasingly popular. For a time, both the Strand and the Majestic kept drama alive in the city, until 1927 when the Famous Players Corporation bought the Majestic (H 6). Two years later the theatre closed and was taken down to make way for a newer, more modern theatre that would cater to talking film. This was the Capitol Theatre. With the closure of the Majestic, the Strand (which had been renovated and renamed the Garrick Repertory Theatre) was the sole live theatre, but live acts no longer drew the crowds they once did and it too had to turn to the film industry to stay in business (H 6; Neptune 2013:para.2).

On October 31st, 1930, the Capitol Theatre had its grand opening during which they showed a brand new film called “Old English”. A paper from that day, *The Halifax Mail* had only 12 pages, and 10 of them talked about the Capitol. The paper had headlines such as “The Greatest Event in Nova Scotia’s Theatrical History”, “Colorful Scene at Capitol Opening”, “New Theatre is Finest in Canada”, “Work of Contractors is Praised”,



Figure 5 - Grand Opening of Capitol: The first page of the Capitol Theatre's grand opening program. (Nova Scotia Archives, 1930)

and "Capitol is Real Asset to Halifax" (H 5). The Capitol was one of the many 'atmospheric' theatres at the time owned by Famous Players. They hired architect Murray Brown to build the Port Hope Capitol Theatre, designed in a Norman castle theme; the Saskatoon Capitol Theatre, designed in a Spanish theme; and the Halifax Capitol Theatre, designed in a medieval castle theme (Parks Canada). The Capitol was one of the main downtown attractions in Halifax for most of the theatre's time. It was the perfect venue for a menagerie of arts and entertainment. It mostly showcased films on the big screen, but housed live performances as well.



Figure 6 - Street View of the Capitol: The entrance to the Capitol Theatre, taken from the bottom of Spring Garden Road. (Nova Scotia Archives, n.d.)

In 1949 Famous Players opened a new cinema theatre further down on Barrington Street toward Sackville Street, called the Paramount (H 9). This theatre was advertised much the same as the Capitol and had all the newest equipment for the best possible film presentations (H 9). Later in 1963, after some major fundraising and renovations, the Garrick cinema was reborn as the Neptune Theatre, returning to a live performance venue (H 6; Neptune 2013:para.5,6). Ten years later, the Capitol Theatre could no longer compete with the better equipped Paramount cinema and the Neptune Theatre. Famous Players saw a better business venture in the sale of the property rather than trying to keep the theatre running alongside their profitable Paramount Theatre. Thus, in November, 1973 they sold the Capitol Theatre to Maritime Tel and Tel (H 10). Part of the sale

agreement was that the telephone company had to demolish the theatre and no theatre could operate on the land for 21 years (H 10). It is clear from the newspaper articles discussed below that there was at least a portion of Halifax citizens who were upset over this decision. Also, Bill Jordan's involvement with heritage at the time placed him in the middle of this controversy. Efforts were made to save the theatre from the wrecking ball over the next year. However, the attempt to save the building was unsuccessful and on May 11, 1974 the first bulldozers began their destruction of the Capitol Theatre (H 11). Jordan was a part of the group created to save the theatre and he saw first-hand many of the people who were very upset about the loss of a "beautiful theatre" (unpublished interview, January 10, 2014).

CONTEXT AND THE MEDIA

The following section explains in some detail the broader social context leading up to the sale of the Capitol Theatre to Maritime Tel & Tel in 1973 and analyzes newspaper articles concerning the sale and eventual demolition of the building. In a recent paper on redevelopment in Halifax, Barber (2013) says, "Heritage, as it is known today, was constructed in part as a reaction against a modernist planning regime that was perceived as a threat to the symbolic value of historic buildings and landscapes" (99). This short sentence provides a basic recap of the rise of the heritage movement in Halifax. To put it in perspective, let us highlight the main points that led to the movement.

After WWII, Halifax fell into economic recession and the city began searching for ways to stimulate growth. Expansion in construction and real estate were embraced and plans for urban renewal were developed (Barber 2013:99). By the mid-50s, Halifax was prospering economically and so the proposed plans began to move into action (Renwick 2009:25).

In 1957, the city hired a professor of urban planning from the University of Toronto, Gordon Stephenson, to prepare a report of recommendations for renewal strategies (Grant 1994:57). The report recommended the removal of blighted neighbourhoods for modern development, while also emphasizing the historic importance of Citadel Hill and the human scale of the city's character (Barber 2013:99). Halifax accepted the report wholeheartedly, though the first major project it led to seemed to ignore the historical points. This was the Scotia Square project, which meant the relocation of 1600 residents and the levelling of eight blocks of land downtown (Barber 2013:99; Grant 1994:57). Until the towers at Scotia Square rose towards the sky, people in Halifax had taken the historic view from the Citadel for granted; many assumed the view would always be there as a reminder of the past (Pacey 1979:28). After Scotia Square, more high-rise developments went up, and by the end of the 1960s, concern over the view from Citadel Hill became apparent (Pacey 1979:31). The view from Citadel Hill is unavoidably linked to the original function of Halifax - to guard British military strength and to offset the power of the great French fortress at Louisbourg (Pacey 1979:11). At the same time, a new concern was growing over some waterfront buildings,

which had officially been recognized by the Canadian government in 1963 as historically significant (Renwick 2009:1). A large interchange project was being developed. The first stages (announced in 1969) would mean the demolition of the fronts of three waterfront buildings (Grant 1994:63; Renwick 2009:29). So fast and bitter was the public reaction that within a month the council repealed their decision and cancelled the project.

By the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, there was a new feeling in the air as various citizens sought to impact city planning. Grant (1994) effectively termed this the “participation era” (62). Between 1968 and 1978, there was a constant struggle as the municipal government tried to reconcile business and development interests with the growing interest in heritage preservation (Barber 2013:101). 1970 started off with a bang through a large, all-encompassing conference on urban planning, funded by the province (Barber 2013:101; Grant 1994:63). The conference, called Encounter on Urban Environment, was designed for anyone of the public to be a part of it; all were encouraged to voice their opinions (Hartnett 1970). The Encounter week left “a pervasive sense of pride - pride in the city’s heritage, in its tolerance, and...in its future” (Cameron 1983:173) and “citizen action and participatory democracy received a real boost” (Grant 1994:63). Meanwhile there was still something to be done about the waterfront buildings. They had been saved from the interchange but there was disagreement regarding what should become of them. When the city began addressing the issue, “ideological beliefs about the role of ‘older’ buildings in the city began to polarize conservationists...and developers” (Renwick 2009:27). In the early 1970s, the waterfront buildings were

designated as an Urban Renewal District. Restoration work started on them in June 1973 which was mostly finished by summer 1975 and called Historic Properties (Renwick 2009:33). At the same time, there was still the ongoing debate over the view from Citadel Hill. After enough citizens had made it clear that the view was important to them, a council meeting was held in 1972 for the public to attend so as to specifically address the view (Pacey 1979:40). Around this time the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia - founded in 1959 - also became heavily involved in preserving the view (Pacey 1979:41). The next two years were full of debates. On January 16, 1974 Pacey and Pacey presented an interesting paper on the tax revenues from new developments at another public hearing about the views from the Citadel. In the paper they sought to answer whether or not the tax revenues from new development in Halifax in 1973 was greater than the costs of new development or if new development resulted in lower taxes for city taxpayers (Pacey and Pacey 1974:3). Their detailed economic analysis of the situation shows that the cost of new development to the city was 17.5% greater than the tax revenue for 1973 and that taxpayers were subsidizing the city's new development (Pacey and Pacey 1974:13). In light of this information, the authors suggest that new development in the city must be examined carefully and that environmental considerations, including the views from Citadel Hill, should be the deciding factors when approving new projects in the future (Pacey and Pacey 1974:1). Later that month on January 31, city council finally voted in favour of a view planes by-law that would protect the historic view, maybe not perfectly, but in large part (Pacey 1974:120). The new by-law was followed throughout the year

with appeals by various interested parties who did not want to be restricted by this. There were development projects already on the books which did not want to change their plans (Pacey 1974:123). One of these was the plan for the Maritime Tel & Tel building that was to replace the Capitol. As the project start date drew closer, it became clear that the building was in fact going to impact the view, despite the fact that the company's president, Gordon Archibald had specifically said they would be respecting the view (Pacey 1974:126). Ultimately, the building was allowed as long as it was not parallel to the view plane, which is why the two towers sit at what seems an odd angle relative to the street today - this angle kept Georges Island in view from the Citadel (Pacey 1974:126). That year planning was a hot issue in the municipal election, "Whereas politicians and planners at the turn of the decade saw themselves as the ones with the responsibility to plan, by mid-decade all parties saw citizen input as a vital part of the process" (Grant 1994:70).

It is apparent from the above scenarios that the 70s were indeed a 'participation era' and that the social atmosphere in the city was starting to favour citizen input in urban planning. It would make sense then, that when the sale and demolition of the Capitol Theatre was announced, those who were upset by this would have felt compelled, indeed justified, in their right to oppose the plans. After all, they had been told at Encounter that their opinion mattered. As such, from the time of the theatre's sale to its demolition, the newspapers were quite full of the Capitol controversy (alongside the ongoing debate over the views from Citadel Hill). Thirty-three articles were found covering the story within

the seven month time frame, from the sale of the theatre to MT & T to the demolition of the theatre (H 10 - H 42). As stated in the introduction, these articles were typed electronically to help in creating some tables, which can be found below. The total word count for the text of these nineteen articles combined was 11,939, just over half of which were primary words according to the online program used to help with the word counts. A key style used in almost all of the articles is intertextuality, as writers consistently quote others and are often responding to other comments. It is interesting to note that the majority of the articles were produced within the first three months after the sale and that later, articles became much fewer and farther between. Does this indicate that, at least from the perspective of the newspapers, for as much attention as the theatre and its story drew in the beginning, people were losing interest as time went on? One of the theories Bill Jordan felt strongly about with regards to the efforts to save the Capitol was that there was too much going on in the heritage movement all at the same time. He felt that people were simply burn out and there was not enough “man-power” to support all of the preservation efforts. Perhaps this theory of his is related to the decrease in newspaper articles on the Capitol over time?

What is particularly helpful with these articles on the Capitol is that almost half of them are letters ‘to the editor’, which give a perspective different from that of journalists. These letters ‘to the editor’ also provide another indicator that interest in the theatre was perhaps diminishing as time went on because, just like the regular articles, almost all of the letters appeared in the first three months. As for the general themes and feelings of the

articles overall, things were varied. A few of the articles were supportive of the proposed demolition, while a couple seemed rather neutral, but the majority were in support of saving the theatre from the wreckers. The consensus among the authors and commentators who were in favour of demolition was that the loss was regrettable, but simply not worth the money and effort to save and restore the Capitol Theatre. Most of those who wrote against the demolition, produced tones of anger with a heavy appeal to emotion. The one main purely logical argument made for saving the theatre was that Halifax needed a cultural centre and this building - in its prime location - could be incorporated into a “public multi-use cultural complex” (H 26). The tables created below and the more detailed discussion will show evidence for these statements.

The first table shown here gives all of the references to the Capitol Theatre. This shows the obvious main topic of discussion, the theatre itself. Similarly to the Saint John articles, the ‘old’ adjective here shows a recognition of the history of the building.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Capitol / Theatre / Capitol Theatre / Cinema | 225 | (33) |
| Capitol building / theatre building | 11 | (8) |
| old Capitol / old theatre / old Capitol Theatre | 8 | (6) |
| Capitol Centre | 4 | (2) |
| total | 248 | |

Table 7: Capitol Theatre (H 10 - H 42)

Another high word count comes from references to location. The next table gives these counts. References to Halifax are the highest, with the ‘downtown’ next. Also, Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road are main points.

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----|------|
| Halifax / the city / city | 104 | (33) |
| downtown | 24 | (12) |
| Barrington Street | 18 | (12) |
| Nova Scotia | 13 | (12) |
| Spring Garden Road | 10 | (8) |
| metro | 9 | (6) |
| total | 178 | |

Table 8: Location (H 10 - H 42)

There are three main people that appear again and again in the articles and they are in the next table. The most discussed is Gordon Archibald, the president of MT & T. The next is Walter Plaut, the coordinator of the Save the Capitol group. The third person, Kenneth Halpern only comes up in three articles, but he is used as an authoritative figure to support the argument for preserving the Capitol, so he is still significant.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Gordon Archibald / Mr. Archibald / the president | 31 | (8) |
| Walter Plaut / Mr. Plaut / co-ordinator | 14 | (7) |
| Kenneth Halpern / Mr. Halpern | 10 | (3) |
| total | 55 | |

Table 9: People (H 10 - H 42)

The next table represents terms used in relation to MT & T as well as Famous Players Corporation. Direct references to MT & T followed by terms for development and their office building. References to Famous Players rank next. After that is destroy/ destruction which came up in twelve articles which talked about MT & T destroying the Capitol. After this is the agreement/contract between MT & T and Famous Players which

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Maritime Tel and Tel / Maritime Telegraph and Telephone / the company | 53 | (26) |
| construction / development / developers | 50 | (24) |
| office building / high-rise office tower | 34 | (19) |
| demolition | 34 | (21) |
| Famous Players | 26 | (15) |
| destroy / destruction | 20 | (12) |
| agreement / contract | 16 | (7) |
| regret / regrettable | 5 | (5) |
| total | 238 | |

Table 10: MT & T and Famous Players (H 10 - H 42)

was the topic of seven articles, which all talk about the part of the agreement which technically meant MT & T *had* to demolish the Capitol. Last is the term regret/regrettable, which appeared in five articles that talked about the regrettable, yet necessary demolition of the Capitol.

The next table covers the other side; terms relating to supporting the Capitol and the Save the Capitol Society. References to the actual society are highest, with emphasis on the public and the community next. Term recognizing the historical value and the need to preserve follow next, appearing in fifteen articles. The next high count words are references to the main argument various articles made for saving the Capitol: that it could be transformed into some sort of multi-cultural/multi-use centre for the city. Campaign and project refer to the efforts being made by the society to save the theatre. The words landmark and hope are both positive terms in favour of the preserving the old Capitol.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Save the Capitol Society / the society / the committee | 32 | (16) |
| public / public meeting / public awareness | 28 | (6) |
| citizens / community | 23 | (20) |
| historical / historic / heritage / preservation / preserve | 23 | (15) |
| multi-use facility / multi-cultural centre / cultural centre | 17 | (16) |
| campaign / project | 15 | (5) |
| landmark / landmarks | 10 | (4) |
| hope / hopes | 9 | (5) |
| total | 157 | |

Table 11: Supporting the Capitol and The Save the Capitol Society (H 10 - H 42)

The first article announced the sale of the theatre to Maritime Tel & Tel (MT & T). It was also the first example where there was a sentiment of regret over the loss. The president of MT & T, Gordon Archibald, was paraphrased saying that it was regrettable that a “fine and somewhat gracious theatre like the Capitol must come down”, but that the company was committed to contributing to modern architectural standards for downtown Halifax (H 10). Archibald was trying to change the focus of the business deal from loss to gain; he wanted people to focus on the “major contribution” MT & T would make to the architecture in the downtown area (H 10). However, the focus was indeed on the loss of the Capitol for many people. Even in the same paper on the same day, one finds the first of the letters ‘to the editor’ entitled, “Beautiful Theatre” (H 12). In this piece, W.M. Lockwood wrote that they had been all over the world and had never seen a theatre more beautiful than the Capitol. Lockwood went on to describe the theatre’s beauty and lamented what would be the loss of a “work of art” for a “high-rise monstrosity” (H 12).

Lockwood ended by suggesting that Ottawa be contacted to help save one of the city's "really beautiful buildings" (H 12). The phrases 'work of art' and 'high-rise monstrosity' make clear Lockwood's negative feelings towards the proposed office building and the unsightly appearance it would offer. This argument of aesthetics, truly an emotional response, surfaces again and again. Another article 'to the editor' showed a stark display of anger and emotion. Titled, "Prevent such insanity", the author described absolute shock at the proposed demolition, and asked, "have we gone off our rockers?" (H 14). Obviously upset, the author wondered how much the city would have to lose before Haligonians would wake up and start doing something about it (H 14).

The first article to express positive judgement towards MT & T's plans came from a businessman, Donald Mahon, who was a member of the Spring Garden Area Business Association. His main point was simple enough, that the office building would provide a boost to the business sectors in the Spring Garden Area and that the association felt it will benefit the city (H 16). He also suggested that the businesses of Barrington Street would most likely feel the same way. When people attended the theatre, Mahon said, "it's a dead area, no one is doing any shopping"; he implied the office building would have the opposite effect (H 16). Immediately, there was a response to Mahon. Cyril Gill said he couldn't believe he had read the article, especially the statement about the theatre being 'a dead area' (H 17). In criticism of this argument, Gill wondered what was meant by it. Did this mean that once the theatre is demolished, "ex-theatre goers" like Gill would suddenly start shopping more in the Spring Garden area (H 17)? And, Gill asked, was there a

“direct correlation between the presence of a telephone building and a high retail trade?” (H 17). Evidently frustrated, he explained that even though there was a society (described below) ready to fight against the destruction, it was a “useless battle” (H 17). Gill was quite harsh on the businessman’s letter and finished the piece disgusted at the removal of one of “Halifax’s finer touches” (H 17). Soon after this, another citizen wrote ‘to the editor’ agreeing with Gill’s sentiments (H 18).

Why did Mahon bother to write about the controversy? His was not an appeal to emotion, but it was what he felt was a logical argument in favour of good business sense, whether or not Gill agreed. Those very emotional writers who shared their disdain for the MT & T plans were likely hoping that they might stir the emotions of others and something might be done to stop the demolition. What then, was Mahon’s? It makes sense that he, just like the angry authors against the demolition, would want to persuade others to adopt his perspective. Just like some people did not want to lose a ‘beautiful theatre’, Mahon did not want to lose what he thought would be a good business opportunity. He was, of course, writing to other businessmen.

There is perhaps something a little odd about the early letters ‘to the editor’ against the destruction of the theatre. For as much disappointment about the situation as the text showed, authors often wrote as if trying to save the theatre was already a lost cause. Surely this kind of attitude could not have been conducive to actually accomplishing what they wanted - to stop the demolition.

There was, however, a group of interested residents who ultimately came together for that purpose. They called themselves the Save the Capitol Society (H 19). In the beginning of December 1973, Walter Plaut, their coordinator, wrote an article introducing the society (H 19). In it he described a public meeting that filled the auditorium at the School of Architecture on Spring Garden Road, to discuss the fate of the Capitol (H 19). Forty-six people signed a list to say they were willing to help and sixteen stayed behind to form an official committee. Among the committee members there were a “professional photographer, a secretary, a lawyer, and other experienced individuals” (H 19). Plaut presented some of the facts concerning the recent sale, including the part of the agreement that Famous Players required MT & T to demolish the theatre, in which case Plaut said that if citizens were successful in blocking demolition, ownership might “revert back to Famous Players” (H 19). In this article he also gave reasons for saving the theatre; reasons that he likely hoped would appeal to more people. He explained that continuing to use the theatre and updating it would contribute to nightlife and weekend activity which he said the downtown “currently lacks” (H 19). Whereas the office building would increase rush-hour traffic and block the view of the harbour from Spring Garden (H 19). Plaut was of course in favour of saving the Capitol Theatre and whenever he wrote to the newspapers, it was always with the intent of spreading awareness and convincing more people to help save the theatre. He believed that there was a “consensus among the general public in opposition to the destruction of the Capitol Theatre” (H 19).⁶

⁶ Refer to Appendix B to see an image of the full H 19 article.

His writing showed that he always believed it was possible to save the theatre. In an earlier letter ‘to the editor’ Plaut argued that the city could intervene despite their claims of powerlessness in the situation. He said the city could “easily declare a city-wide moratorium on demolition” and they could have required public approval before anything could be destroyed (H 13). Of course, this did not happen. Later, another article by Plaut said that the campaign was “gaining momentum” and he was encouraging others to join the society or think of other ways to help save the theatre “for our future generations” (H 20). Even though Plaut described the auditorium at the School of Architecture as full, another article emphasized that the group of people active in the campaign to save the theatre had a “chronic shortage of manpower” and that time was running short (H 21). And this was also something Bill Jordan emphasized, he felt there were too many preservation fights at the time and not enough people fighting them.

The next article to favour the MT & T office building in place of the Capitol came mid-December from another businessman, David Jones, executive manager of the Downtown Businessmen’s Association (H 22). Similar to the comments made by Mahon, Jones stressed the positive impact “1000 workers on a Barrington Street location” would have on business and revitalization (H 22). He also made an interesting observation about the lack of “relevant citizen bodies” amongst the voices fighting for the Capitol, specifically noting the absence of the Community Planning Association of Canada, Downtown Committee, Landmarks Commission and Heritage Trust (H 22). Like Mahon before him, Jones’ intent here was to show people the potential benefits that would come

with the proposed office building. In addition, he used the lack of attention from certain organizations to support his position. The inference is that if these authoritative groups on planning and heritage were not involving themselves in the controversy, saving the theatre could not have been something worth the effort. Plaut then responded to Jones in another letter 'to the editor' in which, among other things, he addressed the absence of 'relevant citizen bodies' in the protest (H 23). He stated that as far as the Downtown Committee were concerned, Jones was wrong - the man who organized the first public meeting at the School of Architecture for the Capitol, David Lachapelle, was a member of the Downtown Committee. As for the others, Plaut said that the Heritage Trust worked under a belief that history stopped in 1899 and the Landmarks Commission included among its members the president and chairman of the board of MT & T (H 23).

Later in December came an article that discussed whether or not the Capitol was worth the money and effort to turn it into a cultural centre for all kinds of events, as the Save the Capitol Society had been suggesting (H 25). The author explained that the theatre had deteriorated and the money needed would require financial support from all levels of government, as well as support within the local community (H 25).

Additionally, the author argued that the Capitol simply would not work as a modern theatre; the auditorium was too big and it was built at a time when the science of acoustics was new (H 25). The text asked, who would choose that over the Dalhousie Rebecca Cohn theatre, built more recently and with excellent acoustics (H 25)? But in early January, David Lachapelle wrote a short article pointing out four things that would

be lost with the demolition of the Capitol: a movie theatre that was the “best loved and most interesting in Maritimes”; a showplace for a wide array of performances; the largest auditorium in Halifax; and an “an element of vitality, an attractor of people into an often lifeless urban core” (H 27).

Mid-January, 1974 brought two articles against the campaign to save the Capitol. The first talked about a “wave of nostalgia” that went through the community when the announcement was first made about the sale of the theatre and the subsequent Save the Capitol Society which had been active since (H 29). However, it went on, MT & T had made it clear that under their agreement with Famous Players they were required to demolish the theatre and that the theatre company only sold the Capitol because “it was no longer being well patronized” (H 29). The article, making a logical argument, noted that theatre houses operate on patronage, not nostalgia. As for the suggestions by various citizens and the society that MT & T could have incorporated the theatre into their own plans, the author said this was illogical, even if one forgot the stipulation requiring demolition. Firstly, the writer explained that for MT & T to keep the theatre would be to depart radically from existing policy for the operations of public utilities and, secondly, what would shareholders have thought about “an incursion into a field which even the experts no longer view as profitable” (H 29). Finally, the author ended with one alternative - acquisition of the theatre by a community group. But he again argued, that

was “neither likely nor desirable”; if Famous Players was no longer interested, how could a community group make this enterprise viable (H 29)?⁷

The other article came a week or so later and was written by Mike Graham, who revealed that many of the beautiful decorative features inside the theatre were cheap imitations: plaster instead of mahogany and panelling instead of hardwood, for example (H 30). The manager of the theatre, Larry Kennedy, explained that the theatre was a “monstrosity” to heat and the former board chairman of Halifax Symphony Orchestra said she found the Capitol acoustically poor and nowhere near the quality of the Rebecca Cohn (H 31). In a response letter to Graham’s comments, another writer said that people should be recycling and that to demolish the Capitol would be “inefficient and low quality urban planning and development” (H 31). Graham then wrote again at the end of January saying that cities often needed to decide which buildings to save and that there were some key factors about a building to help make decisions: the age, its architectural value, its role in city’s history, the economic costs, its condition, the reason for possible destruction, and the nostalgia (H 33). Graham simply felt that the only one of these factors the Capitol met was nostalgia, which was not enough (H 33).

In the beginning of March, there was an article written in favour of saving the Capitol that used an authoritative figure to help support the case. The staff reporter, Dan Remington, wrote about Kenneth Halpern who came to Halifax to give a lecture called “Urban Design by a Public Agency” (H 34). Halpern was the director of Times Square

⁷ Refer to Appendix B to see an image of the full H 29 article.

special zoning district and thus responsible for urban planning in the downtown of New York City. Remington noted that Halpern had done extensive work saving theatres in the Broadway district. About the Capitol, Halpern said, “it’s all Halifax has and the city cannot really afford to lose it” (H 34). Halpern declared that even though the Capitol may not be an historical landmark, it was a cultural one and “you just can’t destroy that” (H 34). When it was explained to Halpern that MT & T had made it very clear that as a public utility they were not allowed to operate a theatre, he said they should give the theatre to the city as a “cultural trust”, lease it back to Famous Players, or sell it to the city as a museum-cultural centre because “there is a need to save it” (H 34). Halpern obviously was passionate about his job and seeing the threat to the Capitol in Halifax brought that out. However, the only real argument he made was that it was a ‘cultural landmark’. Though it may not be as obvious, Halpern, like many of the others described, was making an appeal to the emotion. Remington then took Halpern’s words and used them in his writing to support the theatre, emphasizing Halpern’s work in New York; he used Halpern’s position as an authoritative one, likely hoping that more people would be swayed by this New Yorker’s words.

On April 11th, exactly one month before the demolition day, another article appeared in support of the Capitol. The piece made obvious the author’s disdain for MT & T, as he made them look rather two-faced (H 39). Now, the text said, with time almost out MT & T officials were suddenly saying that they had no objection to retaining the theatre in their building (H 39). “We would certainly consider any serious proposal that

involved retention of the theatre”, said Jack Gale, information manager - quite a different tune than the one sung prior to this point (H 39). The author (the author’s name does not appear on the article) said that the company was now saying they would renegotiate their agreement with Famous Players, but only if they got a serious proposal to retain the theatre. The author went on, implying that this was just talk because when MT & T made calls for proposals, they had very specifically said that the theatre had to be demolished and so, of course, no developers came forward with any such plan to keep the theatre (H 39).

In May, only a couple of days before the demolition, Kenneth Halpern wrote his own letter ‘to the editor’ making a bold statement that tearing down the Capitol would be “comparable in my opinion to painting Da Vinci’s Last Supper white, so that we can give some one man, or group of men (women seem to have more sense) the right to hire their own favourite artist to paint that important space and then use it for their own commercial interests” (H 41). Halpern’s language here and the comparison to Da Vinci made clear how strongly he felt about saving this old theatre, and again it was an appeal to emotion. He ended with a basic plea that people not give up, saying “it can be done” (H 41). Finally, two days later, on May 11th, the newspaper reported the first blow of the wrecking ball to the Capitol Theatre (H 11). A picture in the paper on May 13th of the partially torn down building displayed the headline, “End of an Era” (H 42).

Chapter 4: What Made the Difference?

This section will analyze the similarities and differences between the two case studies based on the information already cited in the discussions above. Early on, our stories only have two main differences: when and why they were built. The Imperial was built in Saint John in 1913, a time when film was in its infancy. The Imperial was built specifically to accommodate live performances. The Capitol, in Halifax, came later in 1930 when film was taking over the theatre industry. It was built by Famous Players to be a cinema, it was not meant for live acts. In 1929, Famous Players had rented the Imperial Theatre and rebranded it as a cinema, naming it the Capitol Theatre. For the next couple of decades, the two theatres shared the same name, the same owners, and the same purpose, as cinemas. In 1948 and 1949, Famous Players opened Paramount Theatres in Saint John and Halifax. Both of these Paramounts were built relatively close to the two Capitol theatres, with updated film equipment, and a smaller style, the new trend for movie-theatres. With the competing Paramount Theatres, both of the Capitols suffered from a loss of patronage, but that loss effected the Saint John Capitol first.

From this point the theatres' paths begin to diverge. Famous Players closed the Saint John Capitol in 1957 and sold it to a church, the Full Gospel Assembly, who wanted to use the building for their services. As for the Halifax Capitol, it stayed afloat longer, but by 1973 Famous Players decided to sell the theatre because it was no longer being well patronized. Whereas the Saint John theatre was bought by a group that wanted to use the building, the Halifax Capitol was bought by MT & T, who wanted the land - not the

building - for their purposes. Also, the earlier closing of the Saint John Capitol meant that Famous Players did not try to prevent competition by requiring demolition like they did with the sale of their Halifax Capitol. Over the next seven months, a community group undertook a campaign to save the building, but in May 1974, it was demolished. In 1982, a similar campaign was taken up by a community group in Saint John to purchase the Saint John Imperial-Capitol from the Full Gospel Assembly who were going to make major alterations to the building if they kept it.

The two campaigns, and the newspaper reports of them, provide the most interesting comparison. Just before each campaign however, there are some contextual similarities and differences to point out. Through the 1960s and 70s, both cities were experiencing a growing heritage movement. Multiple buildings and city blocks had been lost in both cities during revitalization efforts before certain citizens began to realize that they wanted a say in what was happening in city planning. In 1970, Halifax had a well-publicized conference all about urban planning, with an emphasis on public participation. Later, in 1977, Saint John hosted its own conference to involve the public in planning, but this conference was specifically focused on heritage conservation. Citizen participation in planning and attitudes towards preservation developed through the 60s and early 70s for both cities and it was not until end of the decade that there were more established concepts of heritage preservation and legislation to protect built heritage.

One of the most obvious differences between the newspaper articles covering each city's campaign is the portrayal of the pros and cons. In Saint John, all of the articles

leading up to the final purchase of the Imperial from the church were positive reports of the story, consistently in favour of the campaign. In Halifax, there were both positive and negative articles directed towards the efforts to save the Capitol Theatre from the demolition plans. Additionally, Saint John's 1982-83 campaign for the Imperial received a real boost from the bicentennial celebration that had started at the same time. In the 1973-74 Halifax campaign for the Capitol, no such celebrations were happening. What was happening in Halifax at the same time as the theatre campaign were other major efforts to save the city's heritage, like the fights for the waterfront buildings and the views from Citadel Hill. As mentioned above, Bill Jordan recognized the many heritage battles as a crutch to the Capitol's situation; perhaps if there had not been as many other preservation movements happening at the same time, more people would have stood up for the Capitol.

Additionally, the economic prospects of developing a site, such as the one where the Capitol Theatre stood at the bottom of Spring Garden Road, had great potential; it was a prospering business district. Perhaps, there was not as much economic potential for the site of the Imperial Theatre in downtown Saint John. This was something brought up in my interview with Colin Whitcomb (unpublished interview, November 27, 2013). Having grown up in Saint John and studied the downtown area in university, he agreed that during the time period of my study, there was not a lot of significant economic or development growth. There was nobody in line for the land the Imperial occupied. However, in the case of the Capitol, MT & T had been renting an office space in the

Capitol building for years; it was obviously a good location for them. When the land became available, it only makes sense they would have wanted to make a deal with Famous Players.

In the newspaper articles discussed above, we learn some of the arguments made for saving each theatre and some of the groups who supported the campaigns. In both cities, one of the main arguments made for saving the theatres was that there were no other good theatres and each city needed a cultural centre. This argument rang true for Saint John. In Halifax however, this was countered by the argument that the city had the Rebecca Cohn Theatre at Dalhousie University which was a relatively new theatre and a theatre built specifically for live acts.

In Halifax, there was enough support for the Capitol Theatre that a community group, the Save the Capitol Society, was formed soon after the sale and demolition plans for the theatre were announced. However, there were key groups in the city who did not provide any support. The business associations in the area where the Capitol was made it clear early on in the campaign that they were in favour of the demolition and MT & T's plans. Also, two very active groups in heritage management, the Heritage Trust and the Landmarks Commission, never stepped in on the Capitol controversy in any way. And the campaign never had any political or government support. In Saint John a community group was created, the Bi-Capitol Project. Very early in the project, a prominent businessman in the city made a large contribution to the campaign, which might have led other businessmen to come forward as well. Additionally, the three main political parties

in Saint John put aside their difference for the campaign and provided their full support of saving the theatre. Towards the end of the campaign Irving, the Saint John based company, donated \$350,000 to the Bi-Capitol Project. No such large donations came to the Halifax campaign.

Perhaps one of the most important differences between the case studies was the support each theatre had or did not have from various city groups. More support from prominent groups in Halifax likely might have influenced more individual citizens to act as well. However, biggest difference was the timing. Throughout the 70s, concepts of heritage were still growing. The sale of the Capitol came at a time when the movement was still young and in its infancy, in a fast-growing city, there were many causes to support. As said before, two very large projects were happening at the same time as the Capitol controversy, the waterfront buildings and the views from Citadel Hill. Many individuals and groups advocated for these heritage sites and they were both relatively successful. With so much going on, people could not do everything; there was simply not enough manpower. In Saint John however, the threat of major alteration to the Imperial and subsequent campaign to buy it for the city came nine years later. The difference in time here meant that the heritage movement was more developed and more groups were in favour of it as a revitalization tool. And perhaps more significantly, the campaign to buy the theatre coincided perfectly with the city's bicentennial celebrations which elevated the value and pride in heritage.

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Turn to page 79 for the Saint John newspaper article references and page 82 for the Halifax newspaper article references.

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SJ 2

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SJ 3

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SJ 4

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SJ 5

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SJ 7

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SJ 8

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SJ 9

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SJ 10

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SJ 23

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H 5

Nova Scotia Archives
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H 6

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H 7

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H 8

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H 9

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H 11

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H 12

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H 13

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H 14

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H 15

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H 17

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H 18

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H 23

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Walter Plaut

A Capitol Centre.

H 24

Nova Scotia Archives

MG 1 Vol 1458

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H 25

Nova Scotia Archives

MG 1 Vol 1458

1973 The Capitol as a cultural centre - or restored to mock-Tudor. December

H 26

Nova Scotia Archives

MG 1 Vol 1458

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H 27

Nova Scotia Archives

MG 1 Vol 1458

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H 28

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
David Lachapelle
1974 [title missing] The 4th Estate, January

H 29

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
1974 No Viable Alternative. January 9

H 30

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Mike Graham
1974 Light of day reveals Capitol theatre is mostly plaster and panel board, not mahogany. The 4th Estate, January 17

H 31

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Capitol theatre is sound and should be preserved.

H 32

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Charles Perry
1974 Save Capitol group will present its proposal to council. January

H 33

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Mike Graham
1974 Capitol should be allowed to die. The 4th Estate, January 24

H 34

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Dan Remington
1974 Capitol Theatre cultural landmark. March 7

H 35

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
1974 He Wasn't There. March 12

H 36

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
1974 Council keeps out of Capitol controversy. March 30

H 37

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
1974 Toured...the theatre. April

H 38

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
John Demings
Capitol one of last of elegant theatres.

H 39

Nova Scotia Archives
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H 40

Nova Scotia Archives
1974 Trizec plan rings bell with MT and T. Mail Star, April 25

H 41

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 1 Vol 1458
Kenneth Halpern
1974 It can be done. May 9

H 42

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Appendix A: References for Figures

Figure 1

Saint John Regional Library Archives
1913 Grand Opening of Imperial Theatre

Figure 2

Heritage Resources
#3055
1920 Imperial

Figure 3

Heritage Resources
#14406
1983 Full Gospel Assembly

Figure 4

Heritage Resources
#14405
1983 One Million

Figure 5

Nova Scotia Archives
MG 100 Vol 150 #26
1930 Souvenir Program for Capitol Theatre

Figure 6

Nova Scotia Archives
Paul Mitcheltree Collection #1
N.d. Entrance to Capitol Theatre, Spring Garden Road

Appendix B: Images of Selected Newspaper Articles

SJ 14:

EVENING TIMES-GLOBE

NOV. 18, 1982 p.25

Bi-Capitol Project Campaign Gets \$10,000 Pledge

The nine-day-old Bi-Capitol Project fund-raising campaign to buy the former Capitol Theatre building for use as a performing arts centre is "going very, very well," campaign chairman Jack MacDougall said Wednesday.

Mr. MacDougall said it was difficult to say how much money has been raised or pledged toward the \$1-million purchase price because different groups of fund-raisers are looking after their own funds, but estimated it would be in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 range.

But that was before the campaign got a major boost late Wednesday afternoon when businessman Francis Balemans said he was pledging \$10,000 toward the project.

Mr. Balemans was reluctant to make his pledge public "because I don't want to come off looking like a hero. I'm doing it because I hope it will encourage others to come forth and support the campaign."

Mr. Balemans, the man who recently bought the Old Post Office building from the city for \$5,000 because he said he knows a good deal when he sees it, said he believes purchase and restoration of the old Capitol is a good deal for the community.

"I think we need it in Saint John and it will help a lot of businesses," he said. "I have a stand in the City Market and apartment buildings in this city and maybe it will attract people from outside to come here and spend their money."

Mr. Balemans encouraged other businessmen to contribute to the project because they will get the benefits down the road. "I think a lot of stores will benefit," he said. "It's right up-town."

He said he didn't want any self-glory from his donation because he feels it is a duty, and good business sense, to support things that will improve the city. "If we don't do anything, what will be left?" he asked.

Mr. MacDougall hailed it as an early pace-setter in the campaign, and the spirit it showed as the kind of spirit he hopes catches on among others.

"This is definitely a big boost," he said. "we're very grateful to Mr. Balemans. It's very nice when someone steps forward and says, 'Here', without us having to plead with them. We hope that kind of spirit catches on."

The fund-raising campaign to buy the King Square South landmark from the Full Gospel Assembly is a race against the calendar.

An agreement signed with the church at a Nov. 9 campaign kick-off held in the 1,400-seat building calls for the Bi-Capitol group to raise the \$1-million in a year, three-quarters of which must be in a Royal Trust Corporation trust account by July. A further three months is allowed to find the balance.

Meanwhile, the Full Gospel Assembly will have full use of the old theatre — which it bought in 1957 — for religious services.

Mr. MacDougall, who is devoting most of his time to the campaign, said several public fund-raising events are on tap.

The next fund-raiser is set for 8 o'clock tonight when the Reversing Follies revue is performed at the Brunswick Delta Inn. Tickets are on sale at Brunswick Square and the door for \$6.50. The revue, starring local players, played at the hotel all summer. Mr. MacDougall said the hotel is providing the venue free of charge so that all receipts from tonight's play will go into the Bi-Capitol project.

CONTINUED...

SJ 14 continued:

The Evening Times-Globe

... CONTINUED | NOV. 18, 1982 p. 25

Meanwhile, he reports the sale of \$1 and \$5 booster buttons for the campaign — being carried out by students from five local high schools — is booming. "The kids are selling them like hot cakes," he said.

Other fund-raising events in the works include a Howard Brook Band and The Pleasers concert at the Saint John High Dec. 1, a Friends of Music benefit concert Dec. 19 at St. Peter's School and a four-night stand in January by Season Stock at the Delta presenting three one-act plays. No dates have been set for that event.

Mr. MacDougall encourages those wishing to make donations to send them to the Bi-Capitol Project Inc., c/o Admiral Beatty Hotel, Room 326, Saint John, N.B. E2L 4R5. Ticket or other campaign information can be obtained by calling the project office at 696-3322.

ETC NOV 1982
 Donations of \$20 or more will be placed in a trust and returned to the donors if the campaign does not achieve its objective, while smaller donations will be used for expenses of the campaign.

Tax receipts will be issued to donors once the goal has been reached and title to the building transferred.

H 19:

The Journalist

December 6, 1973

The Capitol Theatre:

The battle to save it begins

By WALTER PLAUT

The campaign to save Halifax's Capitol Theatre from demolition and retain it as a multi-use downtown facility is gaining momentum.

A public meeting held recently to discuss the issue almost filled the lecture hall at the School of Architecture on Spring Garden Road just up from the Capitol, and 46 people indicated their willingness to work on the campaign by putting their names, addresses and phone numbers on a list circulated during the meeting.

Sixteen people remained after the meeting to form a working committee to enlist public support, investigate ways of halting demolition, develop alternative uses for the theatre, and contact various agencies, groups and individuals who could help with the project.

Committee members include a professional photographer, a secretary, a lawyer and other experienced individuals.

Participants at the public meeting suggested that the Capitol be used as a live

theatre, concert hall, convention centre, dance theatre, multi-cultural centre, National Film Board theatre, and for noontime programs such as those sponsored at the Grand Parade during the summer by the Downtown Halifax Business Association.

The theatre, which was recently sold to Maritime Telegraph and Telephone (1520 Hollis Street), by Famous Players Ltd. (130 Bloor Street, West, Toronto), had a seating capacity of 1980 before a summer rearrangement reduced this to 1657 seats.

Famous Players is turning their other Barrington Street movie theatre, the Paramount into a twin theatre. Perhaps that's where those extra seats from the Capitol went.

LEASE BACK

MT & T, which owns several buildings adjacent to the theatre bought the Capitol Building for a price reportedly close to the \$545,000 assessed value. The Capitol Building includes the theatre, two store fronts, the vacated South Gate tavern premises, and an upstairs office space which the phone company has been renting from Famous Players.

According to an MT & T executive, the private utility wants to tear down the building and sell the land to a developer who would build an office block on the site and lease it back to the phone company.

It has been reported that Famous Players' sale to MT & T is conditional on the theatre being demolished, and that the Public Utilities Board approved purchase by the phone company on condition that the property be used by the utility. Thus it is possible that ownership might revert back to Famous Players if citizens are successful in blocking demolition.

At present the deedholder of any building in the City of Halifax can get a demolition permit from the City Building Inspector merely by having liability insurance in the amount of \$50,000--to pay for any property damage or personal injury arising during demolition--and by paying a \$50, fee for closure of the City sewer line.

Additional permits, free of charge, are required for demolition by mechanical means and for constructing a pedestrian coverway if the property is near the street.

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H 19 continued:

There seems to be a consensus among the general public in opposition to the destruction of the Capitol Theatre, with its unique interior, stage dressing rooms, good accoustics, large seating capacity, and central location. It's extended use as a public facility would contribute to the night life and weekend activity which Halifax's downtown currently lacks.

A large telephone company office block on the other hand, would increase rush-hour traffic and tran-

sit problems, block the view of the Harbour from Spring Garden Road, and add to the monotony of the area at the expense of a unique facility which all Haligonians and visitors could enjoy--an asset which would be prohibitively expensive to replace.

If you would like to help save the Capitol Theatre from the wreckers, phone or write immediately, your ward's City Council member, the Mayor, or--if you live outside Halifax--the newspapers and radio stations.

Spread the word to your friends, colleagues and groups.

You'll probably meet some people who quit before they start by saying it's a lost cause. But it is quite possible for us to not only retain the Capitol Theatre but also get an ordinance passed which gives City Council--and the public--some control over the destruction of property.

And, of course, you can always run for Council yourself in next fall's election.

H 29:

cannot thrive unopposed.

6 HALIFAX, CANADA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1974
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No viable alternative

When, last year, Famous Players sold the Capitol Theatre building to the Maritime Telegraph and Telephone Company, one of the conditions of sale was that the 43-year-old "movie house" be razed preparatory to construction by the telephone company of a new office building.

The report that the one-time "Showplace of the Maritimes," decorated in Hollywood's 1930 idea of a mediaeval castle, was soon to fall to the wrecker's swinging steel ball, sent a wave of nostalgia throughout the community.

Nostalgia is popular in these troubled 1970s. Not surprisingly, a number of Haligonians formed a group with the object of preserving the theatre.

Since that time the Save the Capitol Society has been active, investigating the legal and financial aspects of the transaction and looking into the historical importance of the doomed theatre in relation to the city. They are guided by a resolution which calls for development of a "public multi-use cultural complex" on the site, incorporating the existing theatre facilities.

Maritime Tel and Tel president Gordon Archibald to the contrary, this is a "responsible group" — legally incorporated last November under the laws of Nova Scotia.

On several occasions Maritime Tel and Tel has explained that the company is bound by its agreement of purchase with Famous Players to demolish the Capitol Theatre. Famous Players had only been willing to sell the building, said Mr. Archibald, because it was no longer being well patronized.

It has been suggested that it might be possible for MT and T to incorporate the theatre into their new office building plans. This, of course, would mark a radical departure from public utility policy which would prohibit this as the law now exists, for MT and T is in the communications business. One wonders how the thousands of shareholders throughout the Maritime Provinces would feel about an incursion into a field which even the experts — Famous Players — no longer view as profitable.

It is regrettable that the Capitol Theatre is to disappear. But a theatre operates on patronage, not nostalgia. The trend today is towards small theatres. Within recent months the Paramount has been divided into two theatres. The other downtown showhouse, the Scotia Square Theatre, is also small by the standards Halifax knew in the days when the Capitol was called a "movie palace."

Since those days, it might also be recalled, other popular downtown movie theatres have disappeared, notably the Family and the Garrick (now Neptune).

MT and T president Gordon Archibald has said, categorically, that there is no alternative to demolition of the Capitol Theatre. Here he may be wide of the mark. There is an alternative, it would appear — acquisition of the theatre by a community group which, if legal hurdles were cleared, would have to be prepared to operate it as a financial venture.

That, we suggest, is neither likely nor desirable. If Famous Players of Canada is no longer interested, how could an independent group of citizens make the operation of the theatre a viable one? As for the suggestion that there be major participation, financially, by the City of Halifax, it should be out of the question.



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