

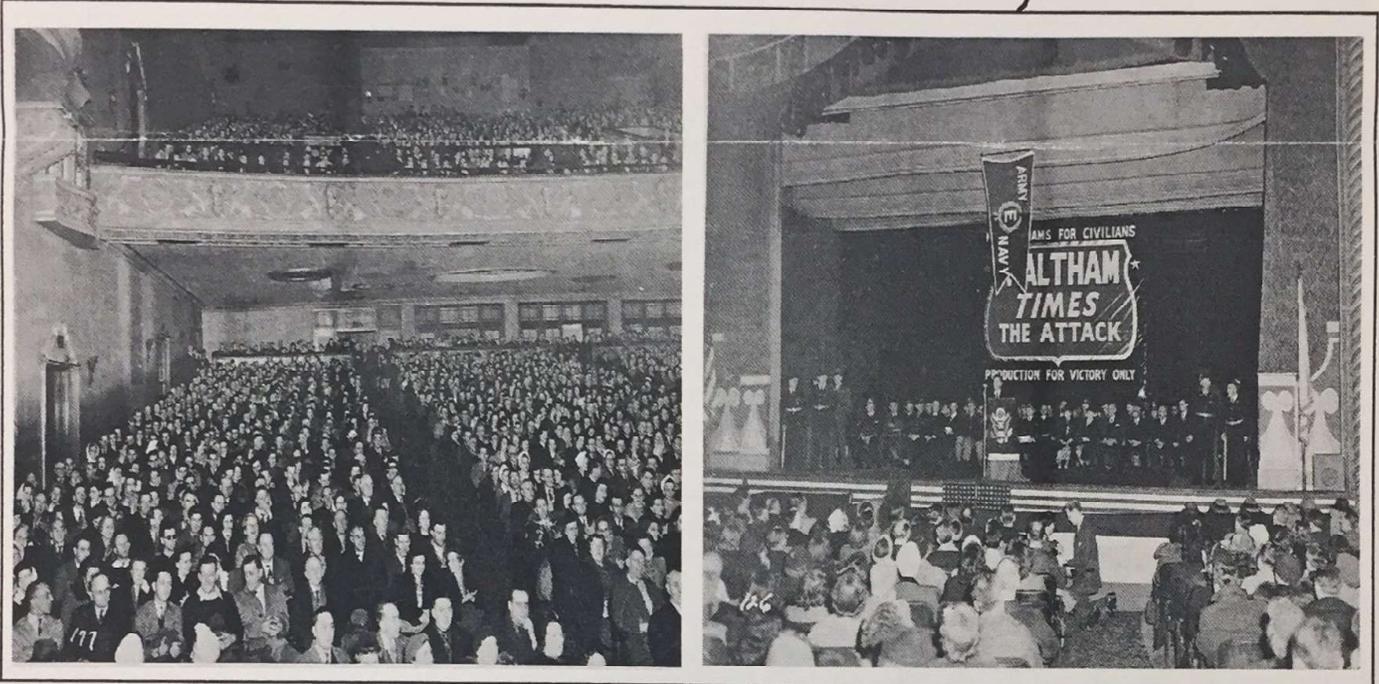
THE INNOVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHARLES RIVER MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY
Where Innovative Minds Meet

Volume II Number 7

Fall, 1997

The Fall and Rise of the Embassy Theater



The interior of the Embassy Theatre c1945. We believe the photos were taken for an E for Excellence Award Night. Further information about these two photographs would be greatly appreciated. Photos courtesy of the Waltham Historical Society.

Editor's Note: Tom Neville, a staff reporter for The News Tribune wrote this article about the demise of the Embassy Theatre for the Tribune's Centennial Edition in June of 1984. His story is reprinted, with some editing, with the kind permission of The News Tribune.

The Fall of the Embassy Theatre

"The once elegant stage and movie theater stood 44 years on its Moody Street pedestal. But time and a drastic decline in patronage caused its demise. All that remains now are a few heaps of rubble, a naked and vacant lot. The City of Waltham spent \$234,000 to buy the theater and the adjacent parking lot.

A special lighting effect gave the Embassy ceiling the illusion of clouds floating beneath a star-filled sky. It was one of few such effects in the region and four decades of movie patrons marveled at the interior charm.

Built in 1928, the Embassy had a brief heyday as a vaudevillian show place. Although the acts which appeared on the Waltham stage were not part of the theatrical hall of fame, they did bring laughter and tears to hundreds of post-war audiences. Silent flicks are also part of the Embassy's early life. In the 1930's the talkies came in and the Em-

bassy adapted. In those days movies were more than just an hour and half of visual entertainment.

The patrons would listen to an organ concert during intermission or mingle outside near the Charles River sipping free soda pop and puffing complimentary cigarettes while colored lights shone on the waterfall. What was once the spacious lobby of the Embassy is now a walkway for shoppers. Cars park where theater goers once relaxed in their orchestra seats. Seats went for 35 and 45 cents.

William E. Harnett has been manager through most of its four decades. He was there for the last show on February 1972, a leap year event. "*The Lady and the Tramp*," was the last feature to be shown. "It was one of the last suburban theaters to close its doors," lamented Harnett. James J. Tully was stage manager when it opened and at its closing. Also well remembered were J. Leslie Cahill, organist in the early years and John W. "Sam" Bosworth, who presided over Embassy as assistant manager.

Moody Street had other theaters also long gone. *The Rex Theater* was on the second floor of the AOUW Building in Hall's Corner in pre-Embassy days, offering silent movies at 6 cents per admission". *continued on page 2*

David Brand's Waltham Theater up the street opposite Mohican Market was great for serials and introduced the "free dishes" nights and amateur talent shows.

The Central Square Theater had a life of many years beginning in 1918. Its opening bill had Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., in "A Modern Muskeeler" and Fatty Arbuckle in "A Trip to Coney Island."

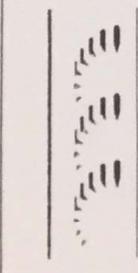
The Rise of the Embassy Cinema

The proposed project of the Ship to Shore LLC, doing business as Embassy Cinema, is eagerly awaited not only by Walthamites but movie-goers from the surrounding towns. The new Embassy Cinema's 18,000+ 6-plex, 900 seat complex, will be constructed at 18-24 Pine Street, the former home of The News Tribune. It promises to be a most compatible building with area site improvements that will include a new driveway on the west side of the drive from the Embassy Parking Lot between the cinema and 254 Moody Street. The new theater will not operate between 12:30 a.m. and 10 a.m.; and will meet all the requirements in relation to handicapped accessibility. The old chain link fence and retaining

wall, located on the west side of site will be removed and replaced with ground cover.

The movie houses will feature plush seats with cup holders, wall to wall screens and sound equipment to include Dolby Stereo in all of the auditoriums. JBL speakers, sub woofers and infrared listening devices for the hearing impaired, as well as digital sound. The Embassy Cinema will be one of the local theaters equipped so that all films can be shown, as they were intended to be seen. The Embassy will also feature an expresso bar along with a full-service snack bar. As well specializing in showing independent and foreign films the Embassy has decided that it will NOT show X-rated movies, according to the current rating system for motion picture films or the equivalent under any future rating system.

There will be ample parking at the new theatre due to the new \$2 million budget allocated for an extra 100-space parking deck on to the existing lot, making a total of 296 parking spaces. Kevin O'Neill, district manager for the Landmark Theatre Corp, the company that will be managing the new Embassy Cinema stated, "We are really hoping that our state-of-the-art theatre will be completed in the early part of 1998".



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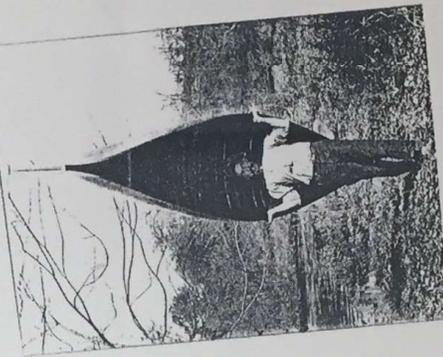
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The INNOVATOR is a publication of the Charles River Museum of Industry. We invite your comments: 154 Moody Street, Waltham, MA 02154. 617-893-5410. Fax: 671-891-4536.



The Charles River Museum of Industry is a truly wonderful place for children to visit and to learn of the major contributions Waltham made (and is still making) to the technological development of this country. The Museum, with its many machines and the mighty Steam Engine No. 1 of Waltham Fire Department, were great favorites of the children from the Allston-Brighton YMCA who visited us in the late summer (pictured above). Please call 893-5410 to arrange a field trip to the Museum.

Canoeing the Charles Images and Field Notes from 1902-1912



Ralph Frederick Perry

The Holiday Season is fast approaching, perhaps the Charles River Museum of Industry can help you with your shopping list

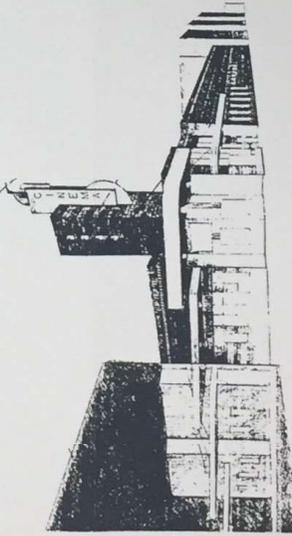
BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS - WE HAVE LOTS OF THEM

Canoeing the Charles

A truly wonderful book about the extraordinary adventures of Ralph Perry as he traveled and explored the beauties of the Charles River. Magnificent photographs printed from his glass negatives.

- Waltham Rediscovered • Superpower • Questions and Answers for Inventors • Canoeing the Charles • The Hidden Charles • Strategic Manufacturing • Becoming American/Becoming Ethnic • The Way Things Work • The Edison Effect • Cedar Hill Memories • The Answer Book About Robots

COME IN AND SEE OUR FINE SELECTION OR VISIT US AT 154 MOODY STREET, WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02154 OR CALL 893-5410 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Artist's rendition of the new Embassy Cinema, expected to be completed by early 1998.

Please Note:

The Charles River Museum of Industry's
 NEW AREA CODE is 781-893-5410

our address is still the same: 154 Moody Street, Waltham, MA 02154

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Looking for the perfect gift for that hard-to-buy person

The Holiday Season is fast approaching, and a most suitable gift, always in good taste, is a membership in the

Charles River Museum of Industry

Please send a Membership to _____

Address _____

Message on card to read: _____

Please send a Membership to _____

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Individual \$25.00

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Payable to: **Charles River Museum of Industry**, 154 Moody Street, Waltham, MA 02154

Look us up.....WWW.CRMI.ORG/~CRMI

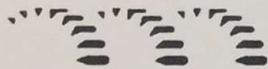
CRMI WISH LIST

The Museum is seeking donations for the refurbishing of a silk weave of the Boston Manufacturing Company. This beautiful and unique silk weave of 1890 needs major cleaning and restoration work. The cost is approximately \$400.

Please send contributions to:

Charles River Museum of Industry, 154 Street, Waltham, MA 02154.

We thank you for your thoughtful contribution.



**CHARLES RIVER
MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY**

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