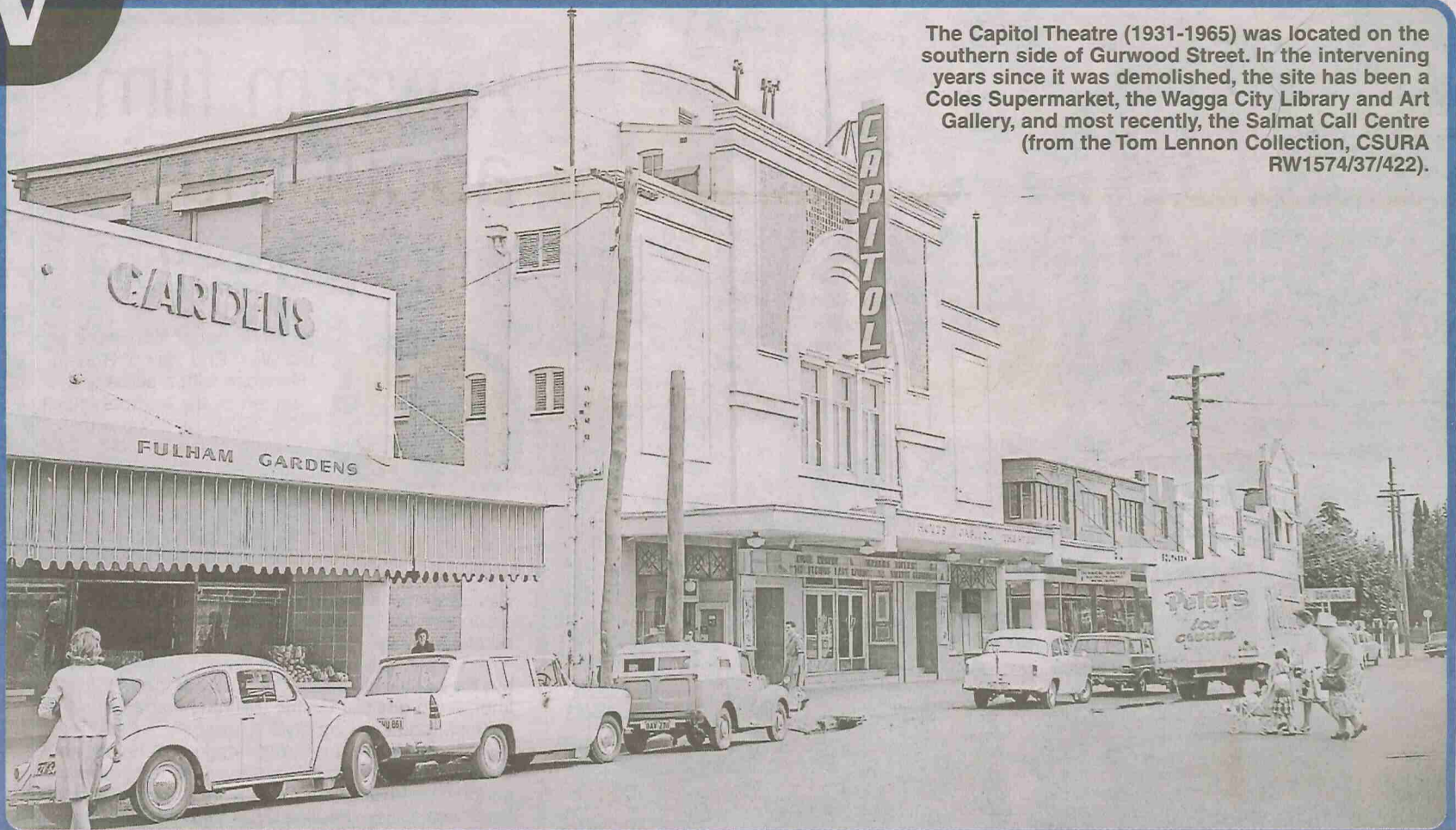


The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the Archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

The next Saturday opening will be on February 2, 2013, from 10am to 3pm.



The Capitol Theatre (1931-1965) was located on the southern side of Gurwood Street. In the intervening years since it was demolished, the site has been a Coles Supermarket, the Wagga City Library and Art Gallery, and most recently, the Salmat Call Centre (from the Tom Lennon Collection, CSURA RW1574/37/422).

Cinemas from Wagga's past

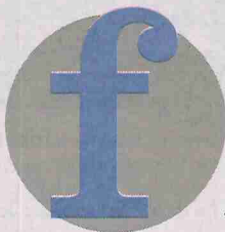
what you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Entertainment giants of Wagga (Part 1)

at the archives

Wayne Doubleday



From as early as the mid-1800s to the present day, the theatre has been one of society's most popular entertainment venues. Many of these giants have risen and fallen in Wagga – several without our notice. They are historic relics of our past and, whether they still stand or not, deserve to be

acknowledged as valuable participators in the development of our present culture and city.

The Plaza Theatre (1932-1997), built on the ashes of The Strand Theatre and seen here in the 1950s, had a rocky history but the building itself can still be seen in Baylis Street today, accommodating a number of businesses, including La Porchetta and Gelatissimo (from the Tom Lennon Collection, CSURA RW1574/50/492).



The Strand Theatre

KNOWN as one of Wagga's first picture theatres, the Strand Theatre was built in 1915 by local enterpriser Henry Campbell.

It was during this same year that the Great Southern Cross Theatre was also constructed. However, the Great Southern Cross would only enjoy a brief success; it later closed down in 1930.

The Strand Theatre was a luxurious and prestigious building, situated on the eastern side of Baylis Street between Forsyth and Thompson streets. It could hold up to 800 seats in its main hall, an extra 40 within two sets of seating boxes beside the proscenium and another 200 seats on the balcony situated on the outside of the Strand, just ahead of the stage. It also held two lounge rooms and a foyer.

During its early years, the Strand hosted numerous Commonwealth Government films that were produced by the War Office Cinematograph Committee. These films, such as *Australians in Action*, screened recorded footage of Australian soldiers as they fought in the war and quickly grew in popularity.

By 1929, the revolutionary invention of "talkies" had arrived. The Strand was the first theatre in Wagga to install the equipment for the latest and most radical technology of the time. And on September 9 that same year, the musical comedy

The Broadway Melody was shown at the Strand, becoming the first "talkie" to be screened in Wagga.

Unfortunately, The Strand's successes were to only last a few more years: the theatre fell to a tragic fire incident and burned down in 1932. Under the supervision of J K Capitol, a replacement for The Strand was built: the Plaza Theatre.

The Plaza Theatre and the Capitol Theatre

THE Plaza Theatre was built in the place of the Strand Theatre, which had burned down in 1932.

It was constructed under the supervision of J K Capitol and was opened soon after the Strand's bitter end. The new theatre cost a total of £30,000, with its mortgage being under the hand of Wagga Amusement Ltd.

Along with the Capitol Theatre in Gurwood Street (which had opened in December 1931), the Plaza was only one of the two theatres in Wagga. Due to the Capitol's smaller size, the Plaza enjoyed a longer success than the Capitol as the mid-1900s arrived.

In 1947, the Plaza joined the Capitol under the ownership of the company Hoyts and became Hoyt's Plaza Theatre. By then, Hoyts had been

given the permission to construct a drive-in, which would become the only one of its kind in Wagga. The drive-in was built on the remainder of what was once the Gumly Gumly airport and was opened on February 11, 1959.

With the arrival of television in the 1960s, theatres began to lose the public's interest. The Capitol shut down on April 10, 1965 and was demolished to make way for a supermarket. The Plaza lasted longer. The theatre closed down twice: the first time in 1978, and the second soon after its reopening in 1983.

The Plaza reopened in 1990, but as a twin cinema. It held a total of 585 seats on both its upper and ground floors and was owned by Box Office Promotions, an "umbrella" title for a rising chain of cinemas in the region. This time, the Plaza remained open for longer, but it eventually closed down after the arrival of the modern Forum 6 Theatre in 1997. Today, the La Porchetta restaurant occupies the building that was once the Plaza.

Compiled by Rebekah Lai

References: *Wagga Wagga – A History*, by Sherry Morris; *The Daily Advertiser*, 18 Jan 1924, 19 May 1942, 15 July 1942; *Remember the 1950s, '60s & '70s in Wagga Wagga*, by Patrick G. Byrnes; *The Street Names of Wagga Wagga*, compiled by William R. Ellis; Tom Lennon Collection, CSURA RW1574, Boxes 4/186, 37/42, 50/492, 52/498, 244/801.