

What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the 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 enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.

■ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Capitol concept comes to life

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



Entertainment has always been appreciated in Wagga in all forms. By the 1920s, picture theatres were gaining in popularity. Initially, movies were being shown in makeshift theatres; however, by the end of the 1920s, more permanent venues were under construction.

The "talkies" were overtaking the silent movies and many Wagga residents were so optimistic about their success that they obtained shares in the Wagga Capitol Theatre Limited, the aim of which was to build a picture theatre in Gurwood Street which would be named "The Capitol".

In July 1929, the contract was given to FL Walton Pty Ltd, a Melbourne firm, which had constructed the grand State Theatre in Sydney and it was anticipated the Wagga theatre would be built along the same lines. It was to be completed by December 1929.

The Wagga Capitol Theatre Limited ran into major financial difficulties. It already had a substantial first mortgage and by July 1930, a second mortgage had to be taken out to pay the builders. Shareholders lost money; the Great Depression did not help the situation and the building was not completed until December 1931.

Mr Jack Kouvalis had absolute confidence in the success of the theatre and secured a lease of the theatre for 20 years. He was quite a big theatre proprietor and had a chain of theatres throughout NSW, as well as other theatres in Wagga.

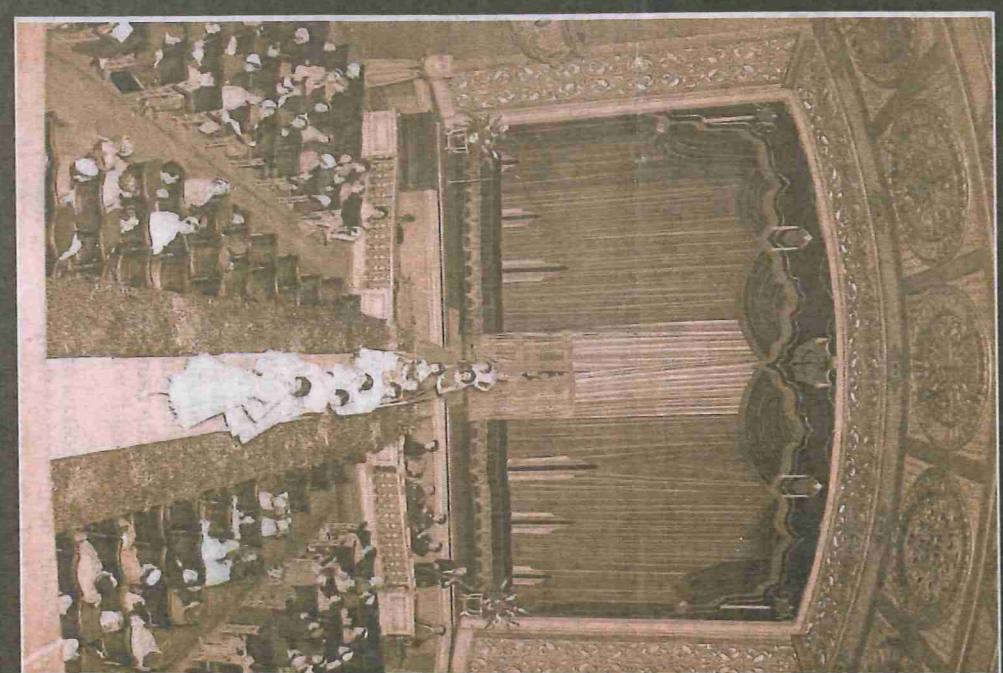
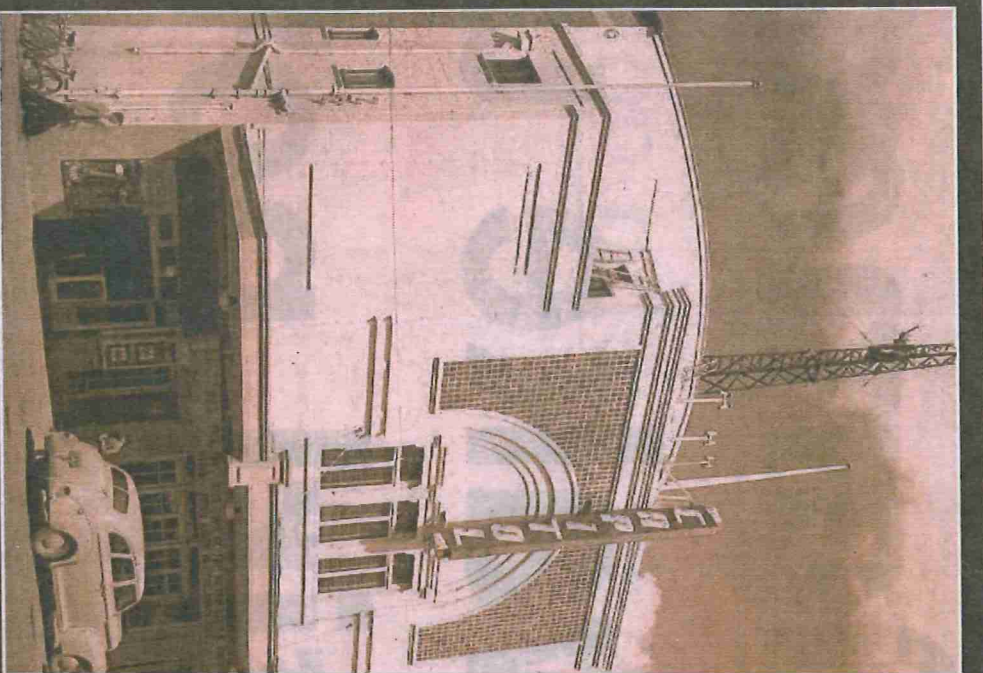
Mr Kouvalis proved to be correct in his prediction and the

Kouvalis for having the courage to proceed with this business venture, even with the high rental. The people who attended the opening night were totally overcome and "captivated" by the beauty and spectacle of the Capitol Theatre.

The patrons did not expect the splendour of the interior furnishings or the electric lighting system on the street frontage, where a beacon light had been installed and could be seen from quite a long distance. A huge chandelier was suspended from a dome in the middle of the building in the foyer and other chandeliers were placed in the stalls, lounge and dress circle. Mr Kouvalis was successful in his determination to have the very best to make the theatre individual and exclusive.

The latest equipment was acquired for "talkies" to be played, although the theatre was to be used for musicals and other forms of entertainment, such as fashion parades to raise money for charities. Management was also proud that "perfect sound acoustics, natural recording of the human voice" had been installed. Retriggered air in summer and artificial heating in winter was another incentive for attendance and it was proudly advertised as having "spring weather all the year round".

The opening night program was of a high standard. The all-Australian production *So This Is Australia*, a documentary describing a trip from Kalgoorlie to the Great Barrier Reef, was screened. Other features included the musical *The Pirates*, an all-colour film. The comedy starring Laurel and Hardy in *Hog Wild* and Sir Harry Lauder in *I'd Love to be a Sailor* were very popular, as well as the Fox Austin News which created much



Quinn's Pharmacy and also at Hunter Bros, where bookings were accepted.

Children were encouraged to attend the first Christmas Saturday Matinee to see Jackie Coogan in *Tom Sawyer*. Each child arriving between 2pm and 2.30pm was to receive a free Peter's chocolate ice-cream.

On December 19, 1931, federal election results were of the utmost interest and threatened to keep patronage at a low level. As an incentive to attract a large audience they were promised to be constantly informed of the progress figures.

Labor lost in favour of the new

Hopalong Cassidy, The Batman and Robin, The and Roy Rogers.

Adults were indulged many of the now classic including dramas, musicals and war stories.

The advent of the "v" caused a slight decline in goers, but the greatest success around the country was the emergence of television transmission on June with declining patronage Capitol Theatre found necessary to close it down April 10, 1965. The gra