

Newsletter194

Keith's Corner/McGill News

January 27, 2023

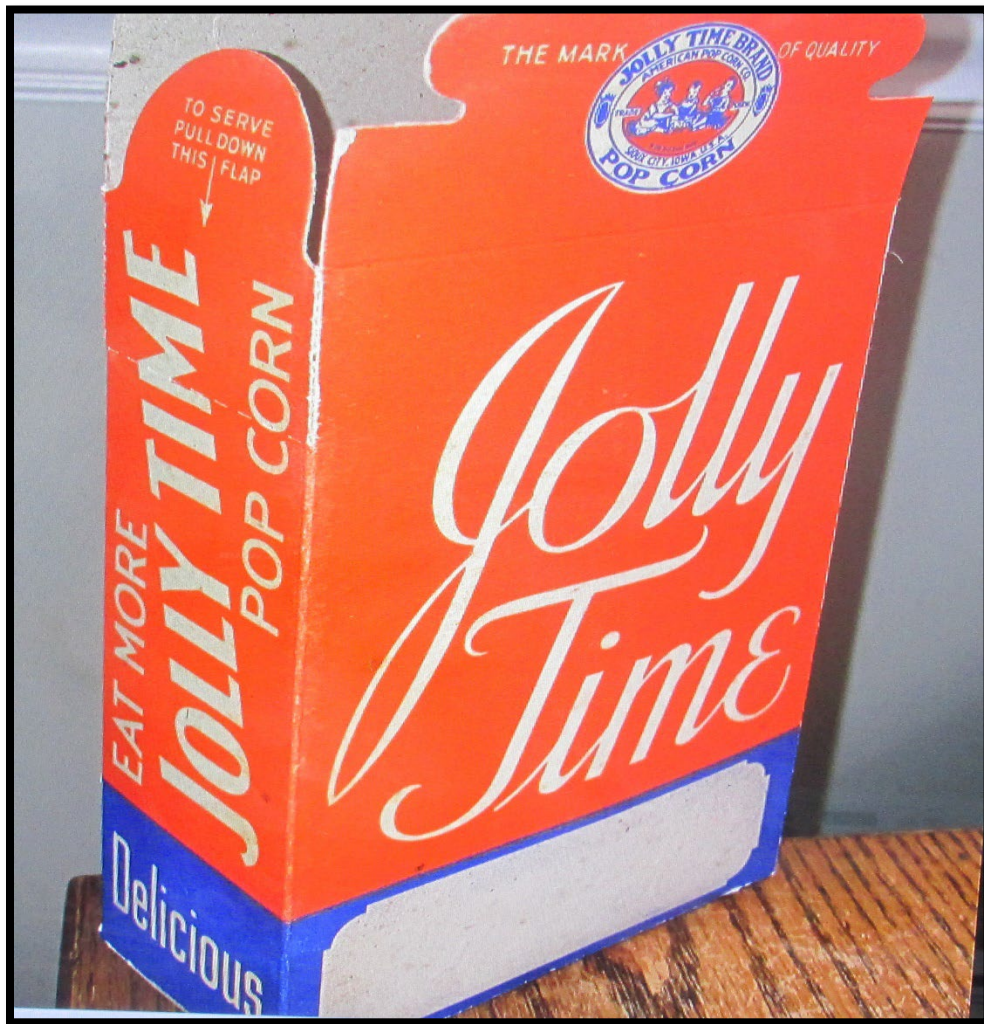
McGill Theater-Update

Last NL was about the theater's Saturday Matinee, so this week it will be the evening movies.

It was always fun to look at the theater flyer on the wall in our kitchen and see what movies were playing on each day of the month. Most movies were shown 2 days in a row and some of the bigger, more famous ones, would be there for 3 days. "Gone With The Wind" was one of the bigger ones. Another big one during WWII, was, "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" with Spencer Tracy. That was about the famous "Doolittle Raid". Amazingly, the co-pilot that flew with Doolittle lived until about a year ago.

Once, we heathens decided on a movie, the next step was to get our parents permission and then the final step was to scrounge up the money. We didn't have credit cards in those days. My parents would give my brother Paul and myself a quarter each for the ticket, a box of Jolly Time popcorn and a small soda.

I remember standing in line in front of the theater and then buying my ticket from the lady in the ticket booth. Then I went thru the big doors on the right and handed my ticket to Max ? (Mark) Blackham. Then a quick left turn over to the concession stand and stand in another line. I liked watching Mary Fields or one of the local gals putting the coconut oil, butter and popcorn kernels in the cooker at the top of the glassed in popcorn stand. Soon the popcorn would force the lid open and the gal would dump the hot popcorn out onto the pile at the bottom of the unit. Then she would scoop up the popcorn into a Jolly Times box. Notice the round flap. The info on it is—"to serve pull down this flap". This created a hole to shake out the popcorn a little bit at a time into your hand.



I can still smell the aroma and can hear the popcorn popping. Very comforting memories from years ago.

With our goodies in hand, we made it to a seat near some friends and waited for the show to begin.

First the lights would dim as a warning to get seated and then the lights would darken and the huge curtains on the stage would pull back to the sides. The audience would become silent and then the white filmy curtains would pull back, exposing the screen.

The first items shown were the 'coming attractions', which were short clips of the movies to be shown in the next few days.

Then would come the Newsreels, such as "the Movietone News", "The March of Time" some others, or a "Travelog" about a foreign place. Then the most important part—the cartoons.

Some nights during the WWII years, the curtains would close and the lights would come on again. Then Max or someone would go on stage and conduct a US War Savings Bond sale. This was to help pay for WWII costs. On these special nights, when you gave your ticket at the door, it was torn in half. Half went into a slotted box and one half was given back to you. After some bond sales Max would call for a volunteer from the audience to draw a ticket from the box. He would announce the winner. There were several drawings and several winners. The winners got a piece of dinnerware. These could be saved until you had a complete set. The big winners got a gravy boat or a large serving platter.

After that was over, the lights would dim, the curtain pulled back and a few moments later the filmy curtain was pulled back and the main feature started. It was always a ritual with the curtains and the lights.

When the show ended, the curtains closed and the lights were turned on and we headed for the exits. It was an experience that is now forgotten. We had just sat thru 2 hours of entertainment and forgot the war and any other bad things. Unlike TV where you watch so many ads during a movie that you can't recall what the heck the movie was all about. Our old McGill theater gave us many hours of pleasure with out irritating ads. We left relaxed and ready for the real world again.

I received an email from Geraldine Manning Mayes, saying that she worked the popcorn stand for May Fields. Any others in our readers.

James Reed emailed me that he remembered the "Movietone News".

McGill News



Some of the snow still left 1/28. Today 1/31 it was 15 below zero, with a wind chill of -32. Welcome to McGill weather.