

= Rosendale Theatre =

The Rosendale Theatre is a three @-@ story , 260 @-@ seat movie theater and performance venue in Rosendale Village , a hamlet and former village in the town of Rosendale in Ulster County , New York . The building was opened as a casino in 1905 , and began showing films in the 1920s . By the 1930s , a stage had been installed for live vaudeville and burlesque acts . The casino was eventually taken over by the local government , and used to house the town 's fire department .

A tile setter , Anthony Cacchio Sr. , rented the building in 1949 and converted it into a movie theater ; it opened on February 18 , 1949 with a screening of the film Blood on the Moon . Cacchio owned the building outright by the mid @-@ 1950s . During this time , a severe flood damaged the Theatre 's interior , and all the equipment had to be replaced . In its early years , the Theatre showed about 300 different movies each year , making it unpopular with film distributors . Denied easy access to first run films , the Theatre turned to independent movies and art films , and eventually began exhibiting live performances . Cacchio 's entire family helped run the Theatre ; his wife Fannie sold tickets and determined the Theatre 's movie selection , while their sons Anthony Jr. and Rocco , and grandson Michael , ran the projector and eventually managed the day @-@ to @-@ day operation of the business .

After more than 60 years of continuous operation , the Cacchio family decided to sell the Theatre . Rather than sell to real estate developers , the Cacchios preferred to transfer the property to the Rosendale Theatre Collective , a nonprofit formed in late 2009 for the sole purpose of buying and preserving the Theatre . The group spent months raising funds for a down payment on the building , with the bulk of its money coming from small individual donations . About 60 fundraisers were held , and a large grant was provided by PepsiCo after the Theatre Collective ran a successful social networking campaign for the April 2010 Pepsi Refresh Project . The Cacchios transferred ownership of the property to the Theatre Collective on August 19 , 2010 . Since its purchase , the Theatre has had several equipment upgrades , including a move to digital cinema .

= = History = =

= = = Construction and early use = = =

The first building constructed on the site now occupied by the Theatre was reputedly a blacksmith shop , erected during the 19th century to service the town 's cement mills and the Delaware and Hudson Canal . The current three @-@ story structure was opened in 1905 as the Rosendale Casino . As a casino , the building doubled as a theater , screening movies in the 1920s on 16 mm film .

The following decade , the casino began exhibiting burlesque and vaudeville acts to draw crowds , and a raised stage was installed for the live performances . The building eventually became village property , and housed the town 's fire house . Known as Firemen 's Hall , the building was also used by the town 's fire department as a basketball court . Basketball was extremely popular in Rosendale in the 1940s . On Friday nights the Firemen 's Hall became a dance hall , and people would sometimes square dance in formal attire .

= = = Ownership by the Cacchios = = =

Anthony Cacchio Sr. , a tile setter from Poughkeepsie who bore a strong resemblance to filmmaker Otto Preminger , received permission to rent the building from the village 's mayor , who strongly desired a movie theater in Rosendale . Cacchio opened the former casino as a one @-@ room , 300 @-@ seat movie theater on February 18 , 1949 . Critics of the venture , wary of out @-@ of @-@ towners , claimed it would not be profitable , and that the Theatre (which the Cacchios pronounced " thee @-@ ate @-@ er " , with a long " a " sound) would be closed within six months .

Tickets were sold for 50 cents apiece for adults and 25 cents for children , and the first film shown

on opening night was a western , Blood on the Moon . Cacchio 's sons , Anthony " Uncle Tony " Cacchio Jr. and Rocco " Rocky " Cacchio , worked with him at the Theatre , serving as ushers on opening night , and eventually running the Theatre . Cacchio 's wife , Fannie , sold tickets to moviegoers . She had never held such a job before the Theatre 's opening , but continued to sell tickets and work at the Theatre for over five decades without requesting a single paycheck . The Theatre continued to house the town 's fire department for some time ; one Rosendale resident , Bill Brooks , later recalled walking around a fire truck to reach the bathroom .

The Cacchio family owned the building outright by 1954 , and in 1955 the Rondout Creek flooded , filling the Theatre with 3 feet (0 @. @ 91 m) of water and destroying its contents . The Cacchios took out loans and received relief funds from the government to rebuild . A new 35 mm projector and sound equipment were installed , along with " pull @-@ handle vending machines " . A popcorn machine was added , but broke down in 1965 and was not replaced . While most movie theaters at the time generated profit by selling concessions , Anthony Cacchio Jr. made the " daring move " of banning popcorn in the Theatre in 1964 because it was " too smelly , messy on the seats , and crackling paper bags disrupted quiet scenes " .

Anthony Cacchio Jr. was trained to operate the Theatre 's equipment by one of his employees , a union projectionist who left in 1966 to work at a different theater in Kingston . By 1980 , the cost of tickets was half that of competing , larger theaters , and annual attendance was between 40 @, @ 000 and 50 @, @ 000 people .

For several years following its 1949 opening , the Theatre would only screen a movie for two days , with double features twice a week ; about 300 different movies were shown each year . By rapidly introducing and removing movies from circulation , the Theatre became unpopular with film distributors , and was often forced to wait until after a film had been shown in nearby Kingston . This proved beneficial at times ; the Theatre screened Chariots of Fire the same week it won the 1981 Academy Award for Best Picture . To compensate for its lack of first run films , the Theatre began showing independent films , films by local artists , and foreign art films . Longstanding patrons , dissatisfied with mainstream , sensationalist cinema , were generally receptive to the " more eclectic stuff " . Avoiding first @-@ run films for several weeks also allowed the Theatre to pay distributors a lower percentage of its gross profits on each film .

Anthony Cacchio Sr. had had a stroke by the late 1990s , but continued to work at the Theatre . He wore a suit to work each day , including the day before his death in 1998 . That same year his grandson , Michael Cacchio , began to help run the Theatre . Michael Cacchio supported the introduction of live performances , and was the primary reason the Theatre began exhibiting art films , though his grandmother Fannie Cacchio remained the " power broker " who determined which movies were shown . She reputedly warned moviegoers if a film was of poor quality or obscene , and continued to work at the Theatre until her death in 2004 .

The history of the Theatre was documented in an 8 @-@ minute , 26 @-@ second film by four local teenagers . The four were attending a screening of Fahrenheit 9 / 11 at the Theatre , during which a member of the audience announced that it was Fannie Cacchio 's 93rd birthday . The teens , enrolled in a summer film camp , were seeking to create a documentary and decided to make the Theatre their subject . Filming took six weeks , wrapping around August 2004 . In what a Daily Freeman reporter described as " [p] erhaps the most precious moment " of the film , Fannie Cacchio got out of her son 's car and walked through the Theatre 's doors , two weeks before her death . The documentary was shown in 2005 , and again during the Theatre 's 60th anniversary celebration in 2009 .

By this time , the price of tickets had risen to \$ 6 each , and popcorn was available for \$ 1 per bag . Drinks , as well as brownies baked by Anthony Cacchio Jr. , were also \$ 1 each . The Theatre served as one of three screening locations for the Woodstock Film Festival , along with theaters in Rhinebeck and Woodstock . After years of resisting live entertainment , the Theatre allowed its stage to be used as a platform for a John Kerry rally on October 26 , 2004 . It was the first time there had been such an event in the building in over 55 years . By 2005 , live performances were commonplace at the Theatre . The acoustics of the building also made it suitable for musical performances , beginning in autumn 2006 with a jazz performance by Kevin Mahogany .

= = = Preservation campaign = = =

The unexpected November 2008 death of Rocco Cacchio prompted the family to sell the business . In November 2009 , a real estate developer offered to purchase the Theatre from the Cacchios , who sought between \$ 400 @, @ 000 and \$ 500 @, @ 000 for the property . A private local group , the Rosendale Theatre Collective (RTC) , had formed in October 2009 to purchase and preserve the Theatre . The RTC was advised by a committee of 17 people , which included actors Aidan Quinn , David Strathairn , Melissa Leo , Denny Dillon , Mandy Patinkin , radio personality Bruce Morrow , screenwriter Ron Nyswaner , and author Kim Wozencraft .

The group planned to raise a total of \$ 100 @, @ 000 for a down payment on the Theatre before a March 15 , 2010 deadline , raising \$ 13 @, @ 000 by December 9 , and reaching \$ 25 @, @ 000 by December 18 . New York State Assemblyman Kevin Cahill indicated support for the group in his January 2010 newsletter . Cahill had enjoyed the Theatre as a child , and urged the RTC to " hang onto the vintage candy machine at all costs " .

The Cacchios expressed a desire to sell the Theatre to the RTC rather than to developers , because the RTC consisted of friends of the family and other residents whom the Cacchios trusted to maintain and preserve the Theatre . To make the transfer of ownership easier , the Cacchios agreed to continue operating the Theatre until such a deal could be reached , and to assist in the operation of the Theatre after its sale to the RTC . By late February 2010 the RTC had raised \$ 45 @, @ 000 , and needed to reach a total of \$ 600 @, @ 000 . After a down payment of \$ 160 @, @ 000 , and paying the full cost of the property , the remaining funds would cover renovations to the building . Over \$ 8 @, @ 000 was raised in a silent auction on February 28 . More than 100 people attended the auction , including Congressman Maurice Hinchey .

By March 2010 the RTC had been approved as a 501 (c) nonprofit organization . The group managed to raise between \$ 55 @, @ 000 and \$ 80 @, @ 000 , less than half the amount required for the down payment , and the deadline was extended to May 15 . A benefit on March 28 was expected to raise \$ 5 @, @ 000 . One local newspaper , the Blue Stone Press , speculated that the RTC 's 501 (c) status would benefit the group financially . New York Times reporter Peter Applebome , feeling that " [o] ne of the best barometers of whether a small town has a pulse is the [condition of its] old downtown movie house " , speculated that the effort to preserve the Theatre bode well for Rosendale .

The RTC entered the Pepsi Refresh Project on March 1 , hoping to receive between \$ 5 @, @ 000 and \$ 25 @, @ 000 during the April competition . Created by PepsiCo in 2010 as a way to distribute \$ 33 million that would otherwise fund its Super Bowl ads , the contest sought to provide funding for community projects . The ten projects receiving the most votes would each receive \$ 50 @, @ 000 grants . By April , the RTC was courting large institutions , such as IBM , for funding . Other planned activities designed to raise funds in April and May were a series of potlucks , a writing workshop , a music benefit , an online auction , and a screening of rare 1970s films at activist Jay Blotcher 's house . Most of the RTC 's funding came from individual donations between \$ 25 and \$ 100 , and roughly 60 fundraisers were held in total .

The Theatre outpaced 362 other Pepsi Refresh entrants , and was in first place by the middle of April . The RTC attributed its success in the contest to its use of social networking services , notably Facebook . The group considered moving to a digital projector with the forthcoming grant to replace the existing projector , an expected cost of \$ 100 @, @ 000 . By late May , the group had won the April competition and was waiting for the Pepsi funds , before tendering a down payment on the Theatre , initially planned for June 10 . The closing date of the sale was pushed back to allow time to finalize the deal . In mid @-@ June , the Playback Theatre planned a benefit for the RTC in which improv actors would perform skits based on audience members ' stories of experiences they had at the Theatre .

= = = Ownership by the Theatre Collective = = =

That July , the RTC took out a \$ 385 @, @ 000 mortgage on the Theatre from two banks , the Rondout Savings Bank and the Ulster Savings Bank . After being run by the Cacchios for 61 years , the RTC assumed ownership of the Theatre on August 19 , 2010 . Announcing its intent to show the same kind of movies that the Theatre screened during the Cacchio 's tenure , the group also agreed to continue exhibiting live acts , continue participating in the Woodstock Film Festival , renovate the building , and add digital equipment . The second and third floors may be renovated and used for offices , and as space for rehearsals and performances .

The RTC secured a new retractable screen by October 2010 , from a New Windsor ? based entertainment supplier , to replace the fixed screen that had obscured access to the Theatre 's 15 @- @ foot (4 @. @ 6 m) stage . The new screen opened the stage by 20 feet (6 @. @ 1 m) , allowing live acts . Under the Cacchios , the screen had been replaced once a decade , with an engineer performing maintenance once every six months . Eight Behringer stereo surround sound speakers and two subwoofers were installed in the building in December 2010 . By February 2011 , the RTC also added a digital projector , a stage thrust , a server for digital programming , and a new phone system . The group announced plans to add a concession stand , an additional server , and an uninterruptible power supply . The group also intended to move the ticket booth outside during warm months .

In late February 2011 , Assemblyman Cahill helped the RTC secure a \$ 175 @, @ 000 state grant to pay for part of the \$ 250 @, @ 000 worth of renovations to the building . The renovations included improvements to the ticket and concession stands , and repairs to the Theatre 's lighting system , roof , ceiling , and bathroom . It would also allow the RTC to buy new curtains and wall coverings , and to restore the building 's exterior . That March , the town began applying for \$ 300 @, @ 000 to \$ 500 @, @ 000 in state grants to restore buildings on Main Street . The agency responsible for distributing the grants reported that the Theatre may be eligible for up to \$ 250 @, @ 000 in state funding to " help establish or expand [it] as a cultural or business anchor that is key to local revitalization efforts " .