

MONTEVALLO Main Street Memories

The Strand Theatre - Part 2

by Clay Nordan – Montevallo Historical Society

Eddie Watson was the entrepreneur and dreamer who rebuilt, expanded, and modernized the popular Strand Theatre on Main Street that his mother had opened in the same location in the early 1920's.

In an article announcing the grand re-opening in October of 1935, a writer for the *Montevallo Times* enthused that the movie house was now “the most attractive and up-to-date theatre in this section of Alabama”. In addition to doubling the theatre's capacity, Mr. Watson also constructed a small stage to use for live performances.



A few weeks following the re-opening, a local dance band, the *Bama Skippers* performed on-stage as a Saturday night feature prior to the weekend's featured movie.

Eddie became president of the Southeastern Theatre Association, whose influence helped him attract the major, first-run films to Montevallo, sometimes even before they came to Birmingham and Montgomery.



1961



STRAND THEATRE

MONTEVALLO, ALABAMA

1953

The updated Strand had 500 seats downstairs for whites and 100 seats for blacks in the balcony. Since the Strand's heyday was during state-law-mandated “Jim Crow” racial segregation, African-American movie patrons were required to enter the theatre through double doors to the right of the ticket booth and ascend a set of stairs to the balcony.

Probably the most memorable movie showing in the Strand's many years of operation was a four consecutive day sold-out engagement in 1959 of Cecil B. DeMille's **Ten Commandments**. Admission for adults was \$1.00.

Your leisure hours, properly spent, can make life richer, fuller, more meaningful for you.

Today, the motion picture screen is presenting such a marvelous variety of entertainment as to make more secure than ever the place it occupies in our daily lives as a relief from the trials and tribulations of home and school work.

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The
Strand Theatre

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MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, **THROWBACK THURSDAY**, a **Montevallo Historical Society** and **Montevallo Main Street** partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at www.historicmontevallo.org under “Local History”.