

MONTEVALLO Main Street *Memories*

The Strand Theatre

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In the days before Television, and even in the early days of TV before everyone owned one, the Strand was a popular place for nighttime entertainment. But on Saturday afternoons, local children were treated to a matinee consisting of cartoons, “serials”, “selected short subjects”, and usually a western, Tarzan movie, or other type of feature film that appealed to the younger set. Eddie Watson, proprietor of the Strand did not have room in the foyer of the theatre for the type of concession stand that we are accustomed to today. In fact, the only thing he sold besides movie tickets was popcorn. He had a portable popcorn popper that he would roll out of his storage room and set up right in the entrance. An attendant operated the machine and sold the popcorn in colorful paper bags for 10 cents each. The only thing to drink was water from a water fountain in the foyer.



Montevallo's Art Deco style movie theatre, the Strand, as it looked following a complete remodeling in 1935.



It was a treat for students from Alabama College to leave campus and the rigors of their studies to walk to Main Street to see the latest hit.

At some point, Mr. F. W. Rogan, in the building next door, realized that Mr. Watson was ignoring a significant market for candy and snacks from his youthful Saturday afternoon movie-goers, so he did something about it. In the 1950's, there was a door leading into Rogans at the corner of his store. Mr. Rogan installed a candy counter just inside the corner entrance to make it easy for kids to pop in just before the movie started and stock up on treats such as Sugar Daddies, Sugar Babies, Black Cows, Ike and Mike gingerbread cookies, Raisinettes, Goobers, Fireballs, Tootsie Rolls, M&M's, and Bazooka Joe Bubble Gum. Mr. Rogan had also installed a roaster for fresh peanuts right beside his candy counter, so kids could get a paper bag of warm peanuts for a nickel. By the end of Saturday's matinee, the floor of the theatre would be sticky with dropped candy and littered with peanut shells and popcorn.



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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”.