

# Times Theatre construction underway

‘Everyone will have an armrest’ at the new theater

In 1940, you could catch “the big show” with the Browning Brothers Carnival on Columbia Street between Broadway and Second Avenue, with live pony rides, “roll-o-plane,” tilt-a-whirl and Ferris wheel. You could store your mat, fruits and vegetables at the Seaside Frozen Food Lockers at 729 Broadway in the Beacon Hotel.

Craft beer? Not back then, although you could “satisfy yourself” with a Blitz Weinhard and you could even tour the Portland brewery if you were so inclined. The Gearhart Golf Course opened three new holes — No. 2, No. 4, No. 8 — and you could play “all the golf you wish” after 5 p.m. for a mere 50 cents.

And one more addition came to the city with the “gala opening” of B.J. Callahan’s “beautiful new Times Theatre” at Broadway and Columbia on June 29. The theater debuted with Vivien Leigh’s “Waterloo Bridge,” billed as her “first film since ‘Gone With the Wind,’” co-starring with Robert Taylor and directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

The theater was one of three — along with the National at 318 Broadway and the Strand at South Columbia and Broadway — founded by Callahan in Seaside. Seaside’s “pioneer movie mogul,” Callahan was born in 1863 and lived 87 years that spanned stage, silent films, talkies and two world wars. He ran a Seaside theater called “The Critic” in 1909. The Strand screened its first silent film in 1916. After a remodel in 1925, replete with a \$15,000 pipe organ and seating for 360 people, the first talking films arrived in 1929. Callahan is probably the only theater owner in history to have instituted a “pay as you please” policy for patrons — an experiment quickly ended by the Northwest Film Board of Trade, which ordered a fixed admission charge. In 1922, that charge was 35 cents for adults and a dime for kids.

The Times Theatre was his crowning achievement.

The Times Theatre is “unusually attractive,” wrote the Signal in 1940, “built in the modern style of architecture. The interior is finished in bands of two shades of tan on the walls, with bands of green and rose on the ceiling. Indirect lighting effects will add to the beauty of the interior.”

For sound and projection, “there will be no finer theater in the United States.” In 1948 filmgoers could watch “I Wonder Who’s Kissing Her Now” and “The Perils of Pauline.” In 1952 Lana Turner starred in “The Merry Widow” while Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward starred in “David and Bathsheba.”

## Five decades

In 1956, Gregory and Pat Kershul, purchased the Sunset Drive-In from Harold Wright and Avery Combs. The drive-in was located on a 12-acre property north of Gearhart junction, now largely residential. The drive-in closed its doors in 1989.

Kershul, who died in 2016, was not a movie buff, his son Bill Kershul recalled. “He hardly



Interior of the original Times Theatre in Seaside.

## SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



watched any movies. Pretty strange to think of. He was a very outdoors type, hunting, fishing, golfing. But he was also an extrovert. I think that’s what made him so successful at the theater.”

The Kershuls bought the Times Theatre from the Callahan family in 1959.

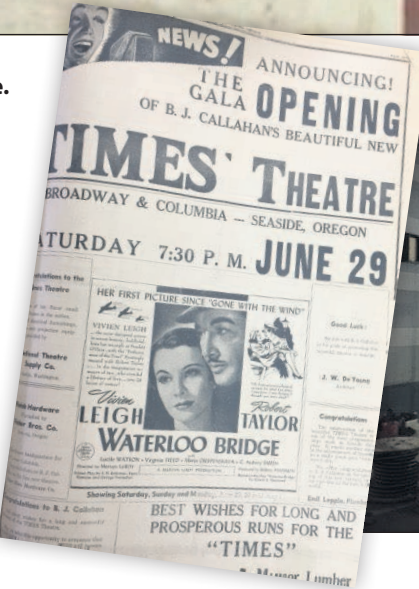
For decades, the theater was the place where parents could drop off their kids and feel safe that their kids were going to be safe. “If they were screwing around, he’d kind of discipline them — and in those days people were happy with that.”

Kershul, who worked in the theaters from 1960 to 1976, remembers “The Sound of Music” as one of the theater’s most popular films. When “The Poseidon Adventure” opened in 1972, there were lines around the block, he said. “That one was heavily advertised on TV and I remember the lines down the street past Bjorklund’s Furniture. It surprised everybody with the turnout.”

The Kershuls operated the Times Theatre until its lease to Don McMurdie of the McMurdie Theatre Company in 1979, Kershul said. “My dad just got tired with dealing with all the punks and the kids on the corner, trying to run the movie. Getting older, we want to do something else. The property became more valuable than the business.”

Seaside’s Robin Knoll was a projectionist and manager at the Times Theatre in the 1980s. He remembers a crowd of more than 400 for a double-feature of “Crocodile Dundee” and “Top Gun.”

“It was a place people depended on to be



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Left: Announcement of the Times Theatre gala opening in 1940. Right: Work underway at the Times Theater in Seaside.

able to have some entertainment,” Knoll said. “It lasted many, many years. At the end of the end of the ’80s, attendance was dropping a little, but, it was still fairly steady. People needed entertainment and they didn’t want to drive all the way to Astoria.”

Showings stopped when McMurdie decided not to renew the theater lease in 1989 and Kershul sold the building. “Batman” had a long run that summer before “Parenthood” finally unspooled as the theater’s last show on Oct. 12, 1989.

## A new start

Marketing director of TD&M Enterprises Marla Olstedt told members of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce in February of plans to expand Finn’s with outdoor seating. Looming even larger on the event horizon is the anticipated summer reopening of the Times Theatre as a movie theater and brew pub under the helm of Seaside Brewing co-founder Vince Berg. TD&M is the downtown entity behind Finn’s, Funland, Fultano’s, Fultano’s Pizza, Gearhart Bowl, Phillips Candy and Twisted Fish Steakhouse.

The theater will show second-run movies and special events like the Super Bowl and March Madness.

“A lot of people tell us the last movie they saw there, so we’re thinking a list of those a walk down memory lane,” Olstedt said.

Beer will be brewed in-house, and served to guests in theater-style chairs and 10 to 12 four-top tables. The former Tom & Larry’s Candy will serve as the kitchen area. Seating capacity is estimated at 350.

“The chairs will be more of a recliner type theater-style chair, than your basic movie theater uncomfortable who-gets-which-armrest what-do-we-do-here chair,” Olstedt said. “Everybody has an armrest.”

Owners hope for a summer premiere, although opening could be later in the year.

“Don’t hold me to it,” Olstedt said.

“My dad passed in the summer of 2016,” Bill Kershul said. “Not quite two years ago. It would have given him quite a thrill to see somebody do something with that place.”

“I’m going to be down there as soon as it opens, because I want to check it out.” Knoll said.

# And the day started out so well

‘My, what a lucky day I’m having,’ I remarked to my spouse. We had just come from the Casey Eye Clinic in Astoria where I’d just received news I am eligible for cataract surgery. You might wonder why I think learning I’m about to undergo surgery to have an artificial lens implanted is good, but if you’d been wandering around in blind fog for months, rubbing at your glasses, thinking they are smudged, you’d also be thrilled. I can’t get out of my head a near-miss accident in my car I almost had about a month ago. Cataracts are no joke. And guess what? The new lens they’re inserting will be my first bionic part.

The day just got luckier when we stopped by Holly McHone Jewelers in Astoria on Commercial Street. A pair of gold hoop earrings I’ve had since 1989 broke. Or one of them broke. The closure broke. Not snapped off, but bent. This happened once before and a jeweler in my old town of Katonah, New York, fixed the problem in a jiffy. I was hoping they might be able to do the same at Holly McHone’s and they did. The fix took place on the spot, barely giving me enough time to peruse their fine selection of extremely nice jewels. I follow her on Facebook and am often hypnotized by images of pearls, gemstones, wedding and engagement rings and custom designs. Plus it’s always fun to drop by if you’re a dog lover because Holly’s adorable poodle is often in the shop and, let me tell you, that dog is a love.

On a roll of good luck, our next stop was Astoria Cleaners. OK, this is a little bit of a story. Please try to be patient. Back in November I took a cashmere sweater

## VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



I’ve had for a long time in to be repaired. The sweater, which has some intricate embroidery across the shoulder blades, had developed some alarming rents in the armpits. I was told at the time it could be awhile before I could pick it up. They said they would call. To move this story along, I will say I waited until just before Christmas to make a timid inquiry. I was told they couldn’t find it; it was lost, and what did I want to do.

“I’ll just wait and maybe it will turn up,” I said. I thought it might have gone home accidentally with someone else and eventually they’d realize the mistake and return it.

So on this day, my lucky day, we hit the Astoria Cleaners. I mean, once you’re in Astoria, you might as well do all your errands. Lo and behold, after a bit of back and forth, the sweater was found, right where it was supposed to be, in the row meant for pickup. I practically cried with relief. I’m very sentimental about that sweater.

“How much do we owe you?” my husband said to the woman with the cool hair behind the counter. I’m always blown away by her hair, which is stylishly cut and a streaked with a blast of color against her natural gorgeous silver.

She waved her hand. “No charge,” she said.



EVE MARX/FOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

## What are you taking?

“My, what a lucky day I’m having,” I said again to my spouse.

Later that afternoon I was felled by the virus going ‘round colloquially known as “the crud.” As I write this, three days into my deep distress, I am on Tylenol, Alleve, and a prescription thing they gave me this morning at Urgent Care at Seaside Providence Hospital meant to help break up the cough. It says on the label to take once a day, but the pharmacist said it could be taken three times a day. Maybe I’ll try it twice a day to split the difference. The way my lucky day turned on a dime, I figure my bad luck catching this crud may turn as quickly, and by tomorrow I’ll be fine.

## LETTERS

### Vote for Orr

I first considered John Orr’s candidacy when asked to help him process the decision to run. I came to realize: John shares many of my values, he possesses appropriate skills and experience, and I believe he is running for the right reasons. I appreciate his passion and the seriousness with which he made this decision, and I admire the energy and care with which John is preparing and his willingness to seek the advice of others along the way.

During a recent interview, his opponent felt he needed to explain he is “like” a Democrat. Yet, it was obvious — from the moment he opened his mouth — John is a Democrat. His opponent also lamented: legislative tactics and campaign financing are “a game” and, as a career politician, he knows how to “play it.”

New to politics, John admits he is an independent thinker and career negotiator focused on finding solutions to Oregon’s funding problem. John wants to balance timber profit with water protection. He’s passionate about affordable housing and improving the quality of schools, human services and infrastructure. And John is asking donations from North Coast folks he’ll represent rather than corporations or special interests.

Join me in supporting John Orr for District 32 State Representative.

**Bill Van Nostran**  
Astoria

### Who knew?

All these years I thought it was just labor unions the GOP was afraid of. Turns out it’s the National Rifle Association and the loss of their campaign money, so I don’t expect much from Congress.

I’m not asking for much, but can we at least ban assault weapons? Let’s at least give victim’s a chance.

If these lunatics must stop and reload, we can at least keep the body count low. I don’t have much faith, but I can at least hope for some sanity.

**Steve Newell**  
Seaside

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