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## An Observation of the Strand Theater

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## An Observation of the Strand Theater

Figure 1

*The Strand Theater 1954*



*Note.* Provided by Broome County Historical Society, located on the Southern Tier Throwback website.

Figure 2

*The Strand Theater 2019*



*Note.* By Joela Falk, 2019.

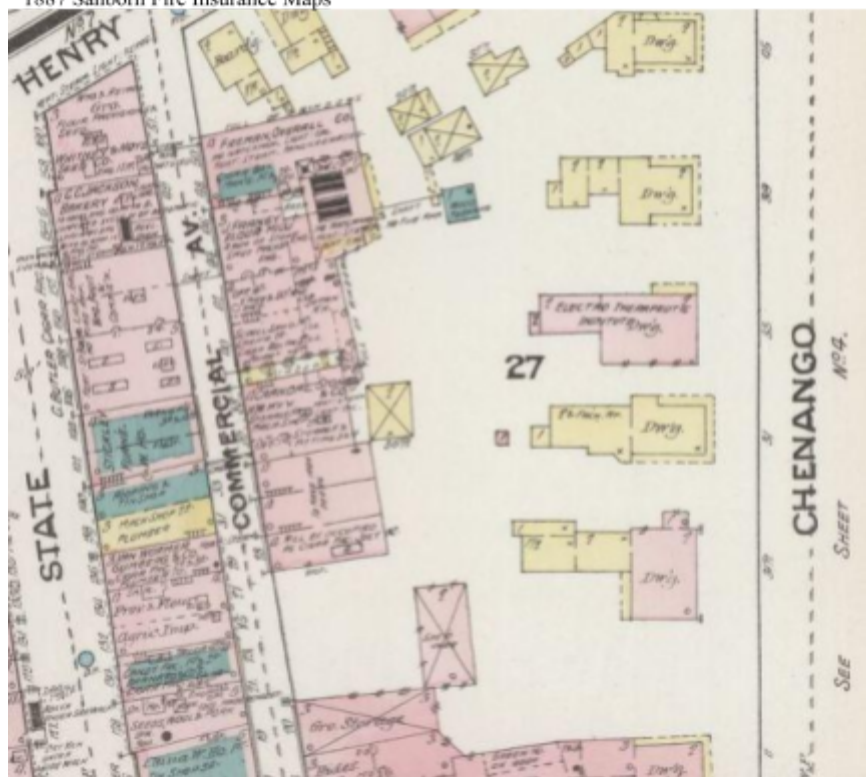
It was March of 1920 and the Strand Theater was having its grand opening, showing the black and white silent movie, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. The streets were bustling with thousands of people, all with 18 cents ready to go in their pockets. The theater was illuminated by red lights and the movie showings were proudly displayed. I thought I would see an old treasure, yet what I saw made the grandiosity of the Strand seem like a distant and possibly lost memory. The sign displaying the theater's name is now slowly falling apart, along with the bricks that keep the building together. The windows are covered in sheets, with little holes here and there exposing the dusty and torn apart rooms. It occupies a large portion of the block and is just one of the many buildings now deserted.

The Strand is one of seven parcels of land between Chenango Street and State Street. Most of the buildings are now vacant spaces, except for those that house the boutique and the printing house. Across from the theater is a cafe, a bar, and a Sentry Alarms store. On the blocks surrounding the theater are some of Binghamton's official buildings, like Broome County's Surrogate Court. There's diversity in the kinds of stores that neighbor the theater, yet business appears to be slow. The streets, like the buildings, are empty, and downtown Binghamton appears to be almost like a ghost town.

In 1887, Chenango Street, unlike its surroundings, had multiple dwellings. There were five main plots of land, all spread out. One of the plots, which appears to be in the same spot as the Strand, was an electrotherapeutic institute. In the early 20th century, the area around the theater appeared to be more

inhabited and in use. There were two more theaters on Chenango Street, the Riviera and the Star, and the whole block was filled. By 1922, the area was plotted as a commercial zone on the district map. With so many businesses on State and Court Street, the only thing blocking this boom were the people living there. To

**Figure 3**  
1887 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps



further advance business in Binghamton, residential spaces were replaced by the growing number of establishments. Economic prosperity did not last forever, as now almost all of the businesses on Chenango Street have closed down. Now, where there are empty lots, people once lived and had successful businesses.

Places will change to accommodate a constantly changing society. In a matter of almost 30 years, one street managed to change drastically. The entirety of Chenango Street, including the Strand Theater, have adjusted with the influx of people and new technology, as well as an economic downturn. Once

**Figure 4**  
1952 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps



*Note. Provided by the Library of Congress*

being a street where families and businesses were neighbors, it became part of an effort to commercialize the area. In 20, or even 10 years, the appearance of downtown Binghamton could look completely different, as change is the inevitable outcome of time and progress.

## References

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