

Avalon

THEATRE FOUNDATION

HISTORY



THE AVALON CORNERSTONE PROJECT

The foundation of great things to come!

AvalonTheatreFoundation.org



Community theaters have been a cornerstone of civic life throughout history. From countryside to city, they've played host to events ranging in scope and style from comedic acts to Shakespearean plays and from symphonic performances to rock-'n-roll concerts — and in so doing have brought the wider world to our own doorstep. The elemental bonds of shared experiences, fond memories, and timeless storytelling have cultivated community strength and stability from our earliest beginnings. The Avalon Theatre is Grand Junction's own community gem, cherished by over five generations of Grand Valley residents dating back to its vaudevillian roots. Today, this historic treasure is uniquely positioned to return even greater dividends to our community.

The Avalon Theatre Foundation was formed in the early 1990s with the mission of historic preservation, generational heritage, and continued commercial operations. Its mission remains the same today but with an added sense of responsibility and vision.

The Avalon Cornerstone Project is a capital fundraiser to renovate and expand the facility, making it capable of accommodating a wider range of uses that will support improved commercial, cultural and community benefits to the Grand Valley.

For more details about this exciting community project and how you can get involved, visit our website AvalonTheatreFoundation.org or call 970-683-8778.

1922
Avalon Theatre
construction begins

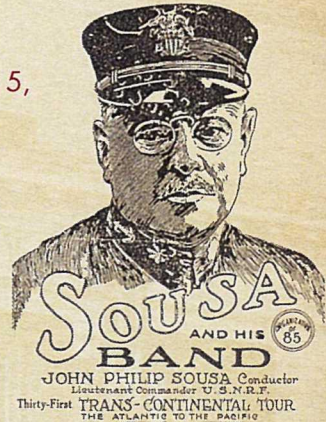
1923
January 5th
Opening Night

1924
Singer, comedian &
actor Al Johnson performs

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The preservation of our heritage and this historic building is a responsibility and privilege supporters of The Avalon Theatre are proud to accept.

When the Avalon opened its doors on January 5, 1923, The Daily Sentinel called it, "a playhouse of which any city many times larger than Grand Junction would be very proud." The theater hosted many famous entertainers, from soprano singer Lucy Gates on opening night to acts such as Harry Houdini and John Philip Sousa. The Avalon remained the cultural and entertainment center of western Colorado for decades.



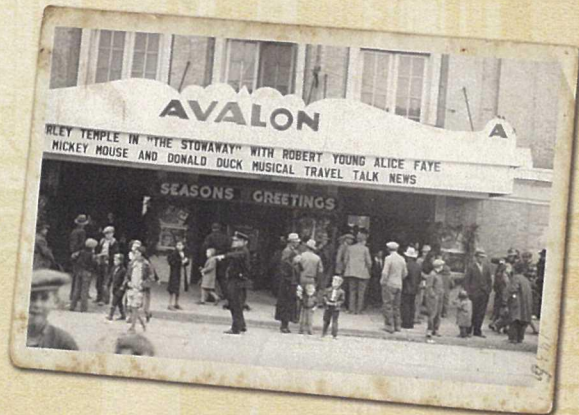
THE AVALON MATINEE & NIGHT DEC. 12, 1923

THE ORCHESTRA FOR THE AVALON

Contract Closed With Glen S. Schrader and Earl Blackstone for Musical Organization for the New Playhouse.

Yesterday an arrangement was perfected between the manager of The Avalon Theatre and Glen S. Schrader and Earl Blackstone whereby the popular Schrader-Blackstone orchestra will become the orchestra of the new theatre and after it takes up its new work on November 1, will be known as THE AVALON ORCHESTRA.

Though a small, rugged, railroad town, Grand Junction became well acquainted with live theater. As the mid-point on the train route between Denver and Salt Lake City, high-caliber touring companies were familiar faces to the Western Slope.



1936
Shirley Temple
performs

1947
Avalon reopens
as the Cooper Theatre



underprivileged children during the Great Depression. Many local high schools used the theater for graduation ceremonies, and some of the top performers and music acts of the day tread the boards of the Avalon's stage.

By the 1940s, however, things began to change. The Avalon was sold to the Cooper movie theater chain, and the building was remodeled. The beautiful façade was covered over, and The Avalon became a movie house. By the mid-1990s, what was once the crown jewel of Grand Junction had fallen into shambles. The City of Grand Junction was forced to take over the building in lieu of taxes. A historic preservation movement eventually raised enough private funds to restore the exterior of the building to its original glory, leaving the interior largely unchanged. Today The Avalon is listed on the City of Grand Junction Register of Historic Sites.



1994

Purchased by the City of Grand Junction for the benefit of the community

1995

Restoration to 1923 facade completed

1998

Bricks Fundraiser Campaign begins

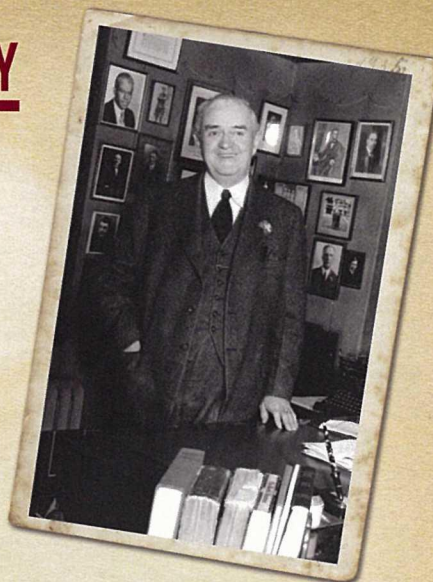
1999

First performance at the Avalon Theatre by the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra

THE WALTER WALKER STORY

“With the completion of the Avalon, Grand Junction has realized a long-cherished hope, and a need long felt throughout this section of Colorado has been filled.”

Walter Walker
Founder, Avalon Theatre



The idea of a new, state-of-the-art community theater was the brainchild and passion of The Daily Sentinel publisher Walter Walker. As a kid growing up in Marion, Kentucky, before the turn of the century, Walker took an interest in the entertainment business and began booking speakers and entertainers to perform in his hometown. He had a knack for the business and brought that skill with him to Grand Junction in 1903.

A vigorous supporter of the arts, Walker pictured a grand performance and movie house for his new community that would be a source of entertainment and community pride. He also believed that newspapers had a civic obligation to help bring cultural offerings to their communities.

After years of bringing in speakers and entertainers to various playhouses in Grand Junction, Walker felt the time was ripe for a more professional entertainment venue. He used his newspaper to generate massive public support for the project and persuaded area business leaders to invest in a state-of-the-art theater. Walker and his investors collected \$100,000 and in 1922 constructed The Avalon Theatre, designed for both film screenings and live acts.

The Avalon Theatre Foundation was established more than 70 years later, but today we honor the late visionary with our brand — our logo is Walter Walker’s actual handwriting.

2009

City of Grand Junction, Downtown Development Authority & Grand Junction Symphony enter partnership to renovate the Avalon Theatre

2011

Grammy-award winning singer/songwriter Colbie Caillat performs to a sold-out crowd on October 15

Images courtesy of:

City of Grand Junction, Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, Museum of Western Colorado, Colorado Mesa University