



Downtown Chicago's Historic Movie Theatres

Konrad Schiecke

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The story of downtown Chicago--its early development, later struggles, and current restoration--is mirrored in the history of the theatres that occupied its streets. This vivid chronicle tells the tale of the Windy City's theatres, from mid-nineteenth century vaudeville houses to the urban decline and renewal of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Discussed are the rebuilding efforts after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the first nickel theaters showing "moving pictures," the ornate silent movie palaces, the move to "talkies," the challenges of the Great Depression and the introduction of television, and urban decline. Today, Chicago has preserved some of its most historic movie palaces, landmarks of cultural vibrancy in its reawakened downtown. With nearly 200 photographs from the Theatre Historical Society of America, this work brings to life all of the theatres that have enlivened Chicago's entertainment district, reflecting the transformation of downtown Chicago itself.

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