

**Movie-Going on the Margins:
The Mascioli Film Circuit of Northeastern Ontario**

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JESSICA LEONORA WHITEHEAD

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Abstract

Northeastern Ontario film exhibitor Leo Mascioli was described as a picture pioneer, a business visionary, “the boss of the Italians,” a strikebreaker and even an “enemy alien” by the federal government of Canada. Despite these various descriptors, his lasting legacy is as the person who brought entertainment to the region’s gold camps and built a movie theatre chain throughout the mining and resource communities of the area. The Porcupine Gold Rush—the longest sustained gold rush in North America—started in 1909, and one year later Mascioli began showing films in the back of his general store. Mascioli first came to the Porcupine Gold Camp as an agent for the mining companies in recruiting Italian labourers. He diversified his business interests by building hotels to house the workers, a general store to feed them, and finally theatres to entertain them. The Mascioli theatre chain, Northern Empire, was headquartered in Timmins and grew to include theatres from Kapuskasing to North Bay. His Italian connections, however, left him exposed to changes in world politics; he was arrested in 1940 and sent to an internment camp for enemy aliens during World War II. This dissertation examines cinema history from a local perspective. The cultural significance of the Northern Empire chain emerges from tracing its business history, from make-shift theatres to movie palaces, and the chain’s integration into the Hollywood-linked Famous Players Canadian national circuit. Mascioli’s unique links to Italy had always been his advantage in expanding business opportunities peripheral to the economic development of Canadian resource staples. The case of Mascioli presents a complicated dynamic between local and mass popular cultures, here intersecting with studies of Canadian culture and histories of the Italian immigrant diaspora. In bringing movie-going to the geographic margins of Canada’s resource economy, he drew upon Italian ethnicity to consolidate a powerful position regionally, which ultimately left him exposed to interventions by government and big business.

Acknowledgments

My dissertation is dedicated to three pivotal figures in the development of this research: my grandfather Valerio Bellini, film exhibitor and collector David Dymond, and Leo Mascioli. My grandfather and his stories of building the Empire Theatre is what influenced me to start this project. David's collection of the original theatre records is the basis for much of this study. Finally, Leo's fascinating history and his lasting legacy is why I have spent the last five years studying this case. Their stories of struggle and love of movie theatres is what inspired my work, and this dissertation is dedicated to their memories.

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Chapter One: Northern Empire Theatres

Being Italian: The Fall of Leo Mascioli

As a child, I would often go to the movies with my Italian grandfather, my *Nonno*, in Sudbury, Ontario. My favorite memory of going to the movies with him was seeing James Cameron's *Titanic*. At first, my Nonno did not want to take me because he told me that he already knew how the movie was going to end, but the film was playing at the Empire Theatre, and he would never pass up a chance to take me there. Every time he took me to the Empire Theatre, he would tell me about how he had helped to build it and the long hours he had worked doing the interior brickwork (Figure 1). In building this theatre, he was employed by Leo Mascioli, a local success story for the Italians of Northeastern Ontario. My Nonno often told me that when he was a young man, Italians were treated as second-class citizens, and Leo was a figure of admiration for the young working-class Italians in the region. When Leo went to Sudbury to turn the old Grand Theatre into the Empire Theatre, he had already experienced for himself the worst of what being Italian in Canada could mean. Despite his great success as the man who brought the movies to Northeastern Ontario, Mascioli was arrested in 1940 and sent to an internment camp, charged as an enemy alien.

On June 10, 1940, in Timmins, Ontario, the headline in the town's newspaper, *The Porcupine Advance*, was "Italy Declares War," which was a common headline across Canada that day. In response to the declaration of war, the RCMP conducted mass arrests of Italians across the country. Italians made up the third largest ethnic group in Timmins

in 1941.¹ This large Italian population soon came under suspicion of federal and even local authorities. Anyone could be deemed an enemy, and the police chief in Timmins, Leo H. Gagnon, advised the townspeople to disclose any suspicion of subversive activities to the police.²

The Timmins Daily Press and *The Porcupine Advance* did not report until June 13, 1940, that local Italians were arrested in the nationwide roundup. The short news stories published in both papers did not include any names of those arrested, nor did they report that one of Timmins's most prominent Italian citizens, Leo Mascioli, was detained by the RCMP. Leo Mascioli was one of the original Timmins pioneers; he had built a theatre empire in the mining communities of Northeastern Ontario, as well as a successful construction firm, hotels throughout the region, and an automobile shop in Timmins (Figure 2). Although he had been in Canada since the early 1900s, he still had ties to his home country of Italy. He travelled back to Italy to find a wife, then to bury his wife, and to care for his ailing mother. He also maintained business ties to the country and was knighted by Mussolini for his charitable work in the Italian community. Between June 10 and June 13, 1940, Leo was charged as an enemy alien, held in a horse stable in Toronto, and then eventually transferred to an internment camp where he was to spend the next year of his life. Although he was released after a year and was able to regain control of most of his assets, after his internment he never returned to the town of Timmins. He also stopped managing his theatres, and the national chain of Famous Players Canadian Corporation would take a more active management role after the war.

¹Kerry M. Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in Northeastern Ontario* (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2006), 111; citing the Canadian Census.

²"Timmins Italians Meet to Proclaim Loyalty to Canada and the Empire," *The Porcupine Advance*, June 10, 1940, 1.

Mascioli's arrest and internment is partly a personal story for me because, like Leo Mascioli, my Nonno was also detained by police. While he was not sent to an internment camp, he vividly remembered being fingerprinted and threatened by authorities. My Nonno came to Canada when he was just two years old, but in June 1940, he was treated like a foreign enemy. He never forgot this treatment by police, which had a profound effect on his life. After the war, he stopped speaking Italian in public and refused to speak to his children or grandchildren in his mother tongue. One continued connection to his Italian heritage was his veneration of Leo Mascioli. My Nonno grew up on a farm outside of Timmins and his exposure to the prosperous Leo Mascioli and his beautiful theatres gave him hope that he could also be successful. He would later form a bond with Leo when he worked for him in Sudbury after the war. My Nonno remembered that Leo took great pleasure in cooking pasta for the men while sharing stories in Italian and drinking wine.

Leo Mascioli built a successful business pairing cultural and business practices from Italy with the economic realities of Canada. His theatre chain was founded on the *padrone* system, which dominated early immigrant labour relations for Italians in North America. The Italian word *padrone* means both boss and master in English, and under this system, men like Mascioli were paid by companies to facilitate the settlement of labourers, particularly in remote regions. Once the workers were living in a town, the padrone then supplied—and profited from—other aspects of the workers' lives, including housing, meals, and in the case of Mascioli, also their leisure time. The padrone was not merely a labour agent but these men were also community leaders. Because of Timmins's remote location, Mascioli had an even more prominent position in the town, and

according to popular lore he was described in Timmins's first census as the "boss of the Italians."³

In many ways, Northeastern Ontario was Canada's "wild west," not least because the town of Timmins was the site of the longest sustained gold rush in North America. The Hollinger mining company needed cheap labour, which Mascioli provided. In other sites of Italian immigration, a strong link between work, church, home, and culture helped to build "economic ethnic niches."⁴ In the geographically isolated case of Northeastern Ontario, the economic-ethnic niche was especially tight, which translated into Mascioli controlling numerous business holdings because of his control of the labour market. Mascioli not only had financial control of the Italian community but he was also a leader in its religious and political life. Mascioli helped to build the Italian-Catholic parish church and his statue still greets parishioners today. He was also the political leader of the community, and he played a role behind the scenes in local, provincial, and federal elections. Leo and his brother, Tony, were the unquestionable leaders of the Italian community in Timmins, and Tony even acted as the *de facto* Italian Consular General for the town's sizable number of migrants from Italy.

This study focuses especially on the business history of Mascioli's movie theatres. Northeastern Ontario, being on the margins of the country, developed a unique cinema culture because the geographic remoteness of the area was juxtaposed against the economic centrality of its communities as places central to Canada's development of

³ Interview with Author, July 23, 2015.

⁴ See: Jordan Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010); John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

mining and natural resources. As cinema-going became standardized and theatre chains became national in scope throughout the 1920s, Mascioli's small regional chain remained independent for more than a decade longer than most other theatres. Mascioli did not make a deal to integrate with the dominant Famous Players Canadian until 1937. Even then, management remained local at first; it took the wartime internment of Leo Mascioli in 1940 for the role of his son, Dan Mascioli, to transition into merely that of an employee working for Famous Players Canadian Corporation. In many ways, this story encapsulates the wider history of Canadian movie theatres' consolidation with that predominant theatre chain. Created in 1920, Famous Players Canadian was controlled and eventually wholly owned by Hollywood's Paramount Pictures, part of the vertically-integrated system controlling all aspects of cinema's production, distribution, and local exhibition.⁵ In this process of corporate standardization, local showmen across North America were essentially turned into middle management for larger national chains. This dissertation will provide a detailed analysis of Mascioli's business records in order to show the evolution of his chain within that larger process that was happening across North America, paying particular attention to the differences in his business before and after the deal integrating with Famous Players Canadian and Paramount.

In some ways, this business history stands as a typical example of how vertical integration of local theatres and regional chains happened, as the daily routines of

⁵ Henceforth I will use "Famous Players Canadian" unless context warrants greater clarity. The Famous Players Canadian theatre chain was only indirectly connected to Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, the Hollywood studio whose films were distributed by Paramount Pictures. Paramount's distribution franchise in Canada commanded arms' length control of Famous Players Canadian theatres from its creation in 1920, but Paramount took direct control of Famous Players Canadian only in 1930 through a stock swap of the profitable Canadian theatre chain's shares for the debt-ridden U.S. parent company's shares. See: Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 22-45.

Mascioli's theatre business were conducted in much the same manner as those of similar showmen elsewhere in Canada and the United States. Other aspects of his story are unique, elevating this work beyond a simple case study of local integration into the Hollywood system. Yes, like others, Mascioli was an immigrant entrepreneur who built a regional chain, eventually modernized it, and sold out to the Hollywood-owned chain.⁶ Unlike others, however, he built his chain as part of his work as padrone in Timmins, and then lost it because those ties to Italy suddenly redefined him as a wartime enemy despite three decades' of work building the economic resources of the country. One key question that I will explore is how Mascioli's role as an Italian immigrant showman helped to facilitate his rise and his demise.

His ethnicity cannot be separated from the other unique aspect of the case study: the remote location of Timmins. The city's status as a resource-based "company town" relying on immigrant labour, and its place on the geographic margins ensured its padrone would be relatively central to the cultural life of the city. As a remotely located mining town, Timmins does not fit neatly into the urban-rural dichotomy based simply on its population and economy. Although it was geographically peripheral, Timmins was not rural. The same remote location meant it was not really urban, in the sense of being metropolitan, despite having the population and demographics of a substantial, mid-sized city. The town also had a multiethnic population that came in different waves of

⁶ Immigrant showmen started many chains, which would later become part of larger circuits. In Canada, Jewish showmen originating from Eastern Europe and Russia started many regional chains. For example, the eventual president of Famous Players Canadian, Nathan L. Nathanson, and his rivals, the Allen Family (who had the largest theatre chain in Canada before the creation of Famous Players Canadian), both immigrated from what was Russia to Canada through the United States. More notable Russian-Jewish showmen were Nate Rothstein, founder of Rothstein Theatres out of Winnipeg, Samuel Bloom and Samuel Fine, founders of the Bloom & Fine Theatres in Toronto. In Montreal, Greek immigrant George Ganetakos ran one of the largest chains, United Amusements.

migration. Most of the early settlers in the town were French and English Canadian with First Nations peoples living on the periphery. Italians, Ukrainians, and Finnish immigrant workers were later brought in to work in the mines, and there was also a small Chinese population in the town. Timmins's population rapidly expanded between 1921 and 1941 from 3,839 to 29,140.⁷ Even though by the 1940s Timmins was the size of a small city in Canada, the population did not have access to the same amenities as comparable towns in the south because of its remote northern location.

The importance of film to the town of Timmins was somewhat similar to another remote gold mining town, Dawson City, Yukon. In both places theatres became outlets for connecting the isolated populations with wider popular culture. Similar to the Porcupine gold rush, the Klondike gold rush created a mass influx of people to Dawson City, with more than 100,000 people coming and going from the town soon after gold was discovered in 1896. By 1898, Dawson City had more than 40,000 inhabitants with a highly profitable business for vaudeville and dance halls. At the turn of the century, the famous dancer Klondike Kate opened the Orpheum Theatre with her lover and partner, Alex Pantages, who would later start a successful circuit of vaudeville and moving picture houses across North America.⁸ Unlike Timmins, the Klondike gold rush was short-lived. By 1901, the population of Dawson City had dropped to 9,142, and by 1911 there were only 611 inhabitants, yet a few of the existing vaudeville theatres like the Orpheum Theatre and the Family Theatre continued to show film to the dwindling

⁷ I am relying on population figures published in *The Porcupine Advance*. For these figures see: "Timmins Population 3,839," *The Porcupine Advance*, January 16, 1922, 7. "Timmins Population Down Over 4,000 From Last Year," *The Porcupine Advance*, October 21, 1943 (second section), 1. The population in Timmins hit a peak in 1941 due to a boom in mining and in the following years began to decline as mining production declined.

⁸ See: Taso G. Lagos, "Forgotten Movie Theater Pioneer: Alexander Pantages and Immigrant Hollywood." *The Journal of Modern Hellenism* 32 (2016): 96–114.

population.⁹ Dawson City became famous in film history for the recovery of hundreds of lost silent films, buried under the town ice rink in the filled-in swimming pool. Dawson was the last town on the Canadian film distribution circuit. Each fall Dawson received enough films to last the entire winter, supposedly to be returned southwards in the spring. In fact, the films were never returned, and instead were stockpiled for years to create an accidental silent film archive. Recently, the documentary *Dawson City: Frozen Time* explored the 533 silent films eventually recovered and preserved. Many of these films had been previously lost and provided an invaluable resource to film historians.¹⁰

Connected by daily train to Toronto, the theatres in Timmins had to return their rented films, and there is no treasure trove of historic cinema. My research, however, depends upon a unique trove of invaluable business records from Mascioli's Northern Empire chain, including the original financial records and business contracts. A former manager in the 1970s at Mascioli's Victory Theatre, David Dymond, saved more than a dozen original volumes of financial records that he found in storage while working at the Victory Theatre. Dymond himself is now deceased, but his family lent these records to me to conduct this research. Described in detail in later, these existing archival documents provide unparalleled insight into the business operations of a regional theatre chain. By utilizing these records, I am able to provide a new understanding of the Canadian film business through a history of the Mascioli chain and its business

⁹ Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison. *Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon* (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2017). For information of movie theatres in Dawson see: Michael Gates, "The Mystery of the Orpheum Theatre Part 2," *Yukon News*, Mar. 18, 2016. <https://www.yukon-news.com/letters-opinions/the-mystery-of-the-orpheum-theatre-part-2/>

¹⁰ For more information on the film and the importance of the find see: Richard Brody, "The Secrets of Silent-Film Footage Found Buried in the Earth," *The New Yorker*, June 15, 2017. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-secrets-of-silent-film-footage-found-buried-in-the-earth>; Sam Kula, "Rescued from the Permafrost: The Dawson Collection of Moving Pictures," *Archivaria* 8 (1979), 141–148.

throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Before I discuss research methodologies and provide the overall outline of the dissertation, allow me two brief explorations of the literatures I am drawing upon in film history and Italian-Canadian studies. Covering these foundational texts early, in the introduction, will help me properly contextualize my methodological and organizational choices in the remainder of the dissertation.

Cinema and Modernity: The Social History of a Cultural Industry

The historical turn in film studies rejects the determinant or restricted definition of technological or aesthetic aspects of film, and instead includes or focuses on social and institutional histories of cinema cultures. With this shift away from film analysis, studies of cinema that highlight the economic and social conditions of film exhibition and reception often look beyond the conventional focus on the history of cinema in metropolitan centres. This approach is closely aligned with cultural and social history and is influenced by the groundbreaking work of Roy Rosenzweig, whose history of workers' leisure in a small industrial town in Massachusetts influenced a series of American film scholars to explore local working-class popular culture. Film historians have similarly explored the social conditions that facilitated the rise of film, the effects of film on populations, and the economic histories of film businesses. A central concern in the United States is how movie theatres became mechanisms of a singular standardized leisure industry. Often modeled on middle-class bourgeois respectability, cinema-going and many other forms of twentieth-century mass consumption transformed how working-class peoples spent their leisure time. The process of changing working class leisure is known as embourgeoisement, and cultural historians like Lizbeth Cohen have tested this theory on historical populations. Cohen's work on Chicago demonstrates how immigrant

and working-class audiences' regular attendance at the movies did not fundamentally change their behavior, largely because ethnic audiences would often attend ethnic theatres, and working-class audiences neighbourhood theatres.¹¹

Film historians have also looked at embourgeoisement in relation to early cinema immigrant audiences, but most of these studies have focused only on New York City. Judith Thissen argues, like Cohen, that embourgeoisement was a complicated process that is hard to clearly trace. Thissen, in her work, found that up until 1913, immigrant audiences tended to view cinema in mixed-billed shows that included traditional music and performances.¹² While Thissen has shown that Jewish audiences maintained cultural practice in Yiddish theatres, Giorgio Bertellini also found the same phenomenon with Italian theatres in New York. As with the Yiddish “vaud-pic” theatres, there were Italian *cafés-chantants* in New York, where Italian plays, operettas, circus acts, and films were shown to almost exclusively Italian audience.¹³ The debate over the embourgeoisement of ethnic audiences captures an important question, but the issue still has mainly been studied in relation to large American cities like New York and Chicago.

Another important question in cinema history is film's conceptual, experiential, and aesthetic connection to modernity.¹⁴ Scholars such as Ben Signer and Tom Gunning argue that the modern experience led to a predisposition toward strong sensations that was reflected in early film. Gunning and André Gaudreault developed the theory of the

¹¹ See: Lizabeth Cohen, “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots: The Experience of Chicago Workers in the 1920s,” *American Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1989): 6–33.

¹² Judith Thissen, “Beyond the Nickelodeon: Cinemagoing, Everyday Life, and Identity Politics,” in *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception*, eds. Gregory Waller and Ian Christie, 45–65 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

¹³ Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 86, 261.

¹⁴ This connection can be traced back to Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

“cinema of attractions,” which proposed that the editing techniques and lack of narrative of early films resulted in the constant attraction of the viewer’s gaze.¹⁵ Ben Singer codified the modernity thesis as having three main tenets: (1) cinema reflected modernity, (2) cinema was part of the process of modernity, and (3) cinema was a consequence of modernity.¹⁶ As part of the third tenet, Singer further proposed that the human “perceptual mode” changed in the modern era. Essentially, the modernity thesis argues that cinema reflected the fragmentation and spectacle of modern life and marked a shift in human behaviour.

For most places and most audiences, the meaning of their practice of cinema-going can only be imputed between the details of the business history of the commercial theatre. A key reason to refocus the social study of cinema on the development of exhibition circuits and the business history of the industry is the difficulty in determining how historical audiences’ perceived early cinema. Consider another debate within the field of film history about how early audiences experienced cinema. Popular histories of film had claimed the novelty of early films quickly wore off, leaving moving pictures unpopular with audiences, used as a “chaser” to signal people to leave their seats at the end of a vaudeville performance. Charles Musser and Robert Allen engaged in a pointed debate on the “chaser theory.” The most convincing evidence about the unpopularity of early film was Charles Musser’s analysis of Edison’s and Biograph’s financial records,

¹⁵ Tom Gunning, “Early American Film,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, eds. Pamela Church Gibson, W. John Hill, 258 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 102.

which showed a decline in profits from 1900 to 1903.¹⁷ Allen countered that it was impossible to prove the universal unpopularity of film across the United States. One of the issues surrounding their debates over the “chaser theory” was the question of whether it was possible to really understand the motivations of historical audiences.

Along with the modernity thesis and chaser theory, another point of contention that has shaped the social history of cinema has to do with what Robert Allen characterizes as “Manhattan Myopia,” or the oversaturation of studies that are focused on urban film exhibition. Allen disagreed with the characterization that film-going practices of people in Manhattan were typical across the country. Because more people lived in rural locations, he argued that studies of small town, local film-going were actually more representative of the entire nation. By looking at the evolution of modern film-going in the context of small towns and rural locations, we are able to understand more fully how the business of film evolved as well as how people from different areas experienced film.

There are several studies on small town movie-going particularly in the United States. One of the first books to focus on rural film-going was Kathryn Fuller-Seeley’s *At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*, a social history of movie-going in small-towns across the United States. Fuller-Seeley focused on how the evolution of exhibition was very different in rural populations than in urban areas. In small town USA, exhibition was originally dominated by travelling exhibitors instead of the nickelodeons that were found in urban centres. As Fuller-Seeley has shown in her work, these shows were longer, more elaborate, and expensive than programming found in cities. She also examined the diverse responses to the development of the

¹⁷ Charles Musser and Robert C. Allen. “The Chaser Theory,” *Studies in Visual Communication* 10, no. 4 (2017): 35.

industry and purpose-built theatres in non-urban areas throughout the United States, and the cultivation of small-town movie fans by the industry. Gregory Waller is also an early adaptor of rural cinema studies in his book *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930*, which examines the unique conditions of film exhibition in the south, where theatre circuits were split along racial lines.¹⁸ There were also divisions in communities about the very existence of theatres in many southern towns because of concerns surrounding the morality of theatres.

Many of the studies done on rural cinema-going take the everyday experiences of local audiences into account to test debates and theories within the field. Fuller-Seeley, for example, edited a collection of local case studies that address theories like the modernity thesis to show how early rural audiences did grapple with modernity through their exposure to film.¹⁹ Most studies on the modernity thesis initially explored metropolitan centres like Paris and New York, and connected cinema to the *flâneur* through Walter Benjamin, who first linked cinema to spaces such as arcades and department stores, railway stations, world's fairs, and variety theatres. Ronald Walters pointed out that the specific experiences of immigrant working-class audiences were not addressed in modernity theory. He writes that the immigrant experience in cities like New York was not that of the *flâneur*, taking in the spectacle of urban fragmentation, but rather one of community, ethnic allegiances and institutions, religious life, family bonds, and

¹⁸ This is also explored by Fuller-Seeley in *At The Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

¹⁹ See: Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and George Potamianos, "Introduction: Research and Writing the History of Local Moviegoing," in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, 12 (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008). Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Modernity for Small Town Tastes: Movies at the 1907 Cooperstown, New York, Centennial," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, ed. Richard Maltby et al., 280-294 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

selective use of commercial popular culture for personal and group ends.”²⁰ The critique is important generally, for in isolating the absent experience of the working-class immigrant, Walters inadvertently highlighted the relative absence of knowledge of historical experience altogether, beyond the writings of journalists, reformers, artists, and other flâneurs.

As Ben Singer notes, the modernity thesis can be expanded beyond audiences, but it still is most often used in works focused on textual analysis and reception. Walters argues that because of the problematic nature of the current conception of the modernity thesis, film scholars should instead focus on how modernity led to “processes of consolidation, bureaucratization, professionalization, specialization, and globalization.”²¹ Despite this call from Walters, no one has yet explored the modernity thesis in relation to the business history of the film industry and how this industry evolved into the classical Hollywood era of the 1930s and 1940s. Modernity is produced in part through business accounting, and can be traced through examining business records.²² In my research into the Mascioli chain, I will look at the modernity thesis in relation to the financial organization of the business and the company’s evolution over a forty-year period. In the case of the Mascioli chain, the business rapidly evolved through a combination of pre-modern Italian business practices paired with American corporatism.

As Judith Thissen writes in the introduction of *Cinema Beyond the City*, an important concept for empirical studies on rural cinema is the concept of the “second

²⁰ Ronald G. Walters, “Conclusion: When Theory Hits the Road,” in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, 257 (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

²¹ Ronald G. Walters, “Conclusion: When Theory Hits the Road,” 256–257.

²² See: Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

birth of cinema,” in which Gaudreault and Marion, who first used the term, posited that the subsequent industrialization of the film business cannot be separated from the technological birth of the medium.²³ In this sense, tracing the institutionalization of cinema can begin with a history of a regional chain such as Mascioli’s. Paul Moore points out that the advent of the movie theatre is peripheral to the original second birth of cinema argument, but it was through the building of theatres that the international industry was institutionalized.²⁴ The process of industrialization during the second birth of cinema would facilitate the rise of business ventures such as Mascioli’s within the film industry in Canada, and their vertical integration into the Hollywood system.

In order to understand how modernity, or the second birth of cinema, shaped the industry in Canada, I will look at the history of one regional chain to understand both what is typical about it and what is unique. While larger studies of national scope concerned with the early development of the industry as a whole are important, my local study of the Mascioli chain will shed new light on the history of industrial of film in Canada, and it will be able to show how the film business was different from other industries. Richard Koszarski critiqued the view that the film business can be seen as an “industrial machine . . . exactly like the industries of automobile, clothing, food products, or any manufactured product.”²⁵ Nevertheless, as Richard Maltby argues, there have been

²³ Judith Thissen, “Introduction: A New Approach to European Cinema History,” in *Cinema Beyond the City*, ed. Judith Thissen (London, UK: Palgrave, 2017), 2; André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “A Medium is Always Born Twice . . .” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 3–15.

²⁴ See: Paul S. Moore, “The Grand Opening of the Movie Theatre in the Second Birth of Cinema.” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 11, no. 2 (2013): 113–125.

²⁵ Richard Koszarski, “Introduction: Movie Business.” *Film History: An International Journal* 19, no. 3 (2007): 211–212. Also cited in Richard Maltby, “How Can Cinema History Matter More?” *Screening the Past*, <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/22/board-richard-maltby.html>

very few business histories of the industry to justify this claim.²⁶ By looking at a regional theatre chain and its business records, I will be able to explore the unique attributes of film exhibition and the cultural impact of movie theatres.

In more recent years, there have been many local cinema history projects, particularly from European scholars, which have deviated from the social history case study typified by concerns about the homogenizing influence of American mass culture and modernity. The “European” model seeks instead to understand how distinctive film cultures developed within countries, cities, and rural towns based on religious, ethnic, and cultural divisions. Most of these studies have been longitudinal studies that combine data from several different towns, cities, and even countries, notably in Flanders, Belgium, conducted by Meers, Biltereyst, and Van De Vijver.²⁷ An important aspect of these studies is that the relationships between the urban and rural are examined as well as how distribution networks worked in individual countries—and rural cases are not studied in isolation to urban centres. There is also a movement to understand more globally how rural towns became part of larger film distribution, and one of the most significant cases is Deb Verhoeven’s study of Italian and Greek exhibitors in Australia.²⁸

The history of exhibition practices in a mining community like Timmins provides key insights into how film was integral to cultural integration, as well as how

²⁶Maltby, “How Can Cinema History Matter More?”

²⁷ For example: Philippe Meers, Daniel Biltereyst, and Lies Van De Vijver. “Metropolitan vs Rural Cinema Going in Flanders, 1925–75,” *Screen* 51, no. 3 (2010): 272–280; Lies Van de Vijver and Daniel Biltereyst. “Cinemagoing as a Conditional Part of Everyday Life: Memories of Cinemagoing in Ghent from the 1930s to the 1970s.” *Cultural Studies* 27, no. 4 (2013): 561–584; Lorena Frankenberg and José Carlos Lozano. “Memories of Films and Cinema-Going in Monterrey, Mexico,” in *The International Encyclopaedia of Media Studies*, ed. Fabienne Darling-Wolf, 179–199 (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

²⁸ Deb Verhoeven, “Italian Cinema in Myrtleford: A Wider Context,” in *Parlato in Italiano: The Heyday of Italian cinema in Myrtleford in the 1960s* (Myrtleford: Myrtleford & District Historical Society Incorporated, 2012); Deb Verhoeven, “Twice Born: Dionysos Films and the Establishment of a Greek film Circuit in Australia,” *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1, no. 3 (2007): 275–298.

the industry evolved. My work focuses on film exhibition rather than film production, the margins of the country rather than the centre, and the business of the industry rather than its reception. I also am cognizant of the European model of cinema history, which argues that small-town theatres should not be studied in isolation precisely because the relationship between the centres and peripheries is an important, understudied aspect of exhibition studies.²⁹ My analysis of the Mascioli chain will look at the chain's larger relationship with the national industry and how the theatres interacted with the film exchanges located in Toronto. I will look at the modernization and expansion of the Mascioli chain from informal exhibition in 1910 to its integration with the Famous Players Canadian circuit in the 1940s and 1950s. I will also examine how movie theatres influenced immigrant audiences in smaller communities without specific ethnic theatres and test the embourgeoisement theory in relation to immigrant audiences without access to specialized ethnic theatres. This close analysis is important because local cinema was a method of self-recognition in the national industry of motion pictures. Movie houses represented a way for dominant cultural practices to infiltrate peripheral rural areas, and my study will be the first to explore Mascioli's movie houses and their relation to the history of film exhibition in Canada as a whole.

An Overview of Film Exhibition Studies in Canada

While no other published studies in Canada have conducted a history of a singular theatre chain, many studies have looked at the political economy of the Canadian film business. Canada as a country can be considered peripheral as there is a long history of relying on

²⁹Judith Thissen, "Early Cinema and the Public Sphere of the Neighborhood Meeting Hall: The Longue Durée of Working-Class Sociability" in *Beyond the Screen: Institutions, Networks and Publics of Early Cinema*, ed. M. Braun et.al. (London, UK: John Libbey, 2012), 298.

foreign content, and scholarship within Canadian film studies explores this unequal power relationship. The basis for exhibition studies in Canada is the work of Peter Morris whose book *Embattled Shadows* explored the reliance on foreign films from the early days of the industry to the modern era. Morris traced Canada's reliance on foreign media to the lack of a historical entertainment structure, as he claims there was not a domestic vaudeville tradition in Canada. Canada's small population spread out over such a vast landmass made it untenable for a nationalized film industry to evolve. The United States, on the other hand, was able to build a nationalized film industry by the second decade of the twentieth century with vertically integrated film companies and theatre chains.

Through his careful historical research into early exhibition practices, Peter Morris inspired a whole generation of film historians with his focus on how Hollywood came to dominate the film industry in Canada. The development of Paramount controlled Famous Players Canadian was of great significance to this history. Morris's student Kirwan Cox carried on the tradition of studying Famous Players Canadian and published two important works on the company's history.³⁰ Paul Moore and Robert Seiler have also contributed to this literature with articles about Famous Players Canadian founder Nathan L. Nathanson and the tactics he used to build a national exhibition circuit.³¹ The emergence of Famous Players Canadian as the first and only vertically integrated chain until the formation of Odeon has become a touchstone of

³⁰ See: Kirwan Cox. "Canada's Theatrical Wars-The Indies vs. the Chains." *Cinema Canada* 56 (1979): 47–53; Kirwan Cox. "Hollywood's Empire in Canada: The Majors and the Mandarins Through the Years." *Cinema Canada* 22 (1975): 18–22.

³¹ Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 22–45; Robert Seiler, "Nathanson, Zukor, and Famous Players: Movie Exhibition in Canada, 1920–1941," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 59–80.

Canadian film studies, but no study before this one has looked at the process of vertical integration at the local level.

Most other studies concerned with the history of film exhibition in Canada, like Morris's, have explored exhibition only in the context of how Hollywood came to dominate movie screens in Canada and inhibit domestic film production. In the 1990s, several book-length policy studies grappled with the effects of Hollywood on the film industry in Canada with a view to advancing the development and efficacy of government film policies.³² Each of the books by Pendakur, Jarvie, Dorland, and Magder looked briefly at how local film exhibitors rarely supported the production of Canadian film and barely showed what few films were produced. Paramount's direct ownership of Famous Players Canadian is a continually looming problem, alongside effective political lobbying by Hollywood through the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association. All of these studies looked in depth at the political economy of the industry and focused on the national industry as a whole in relation to policy, politics, and economic integration with Hollywood corporations. With a foundational, nationalist concern for cinema as a creative industry, these works only focus on the business of exhibition for its impact on the political economy of Canadian filmmaking, rather than seeking to understand the audience or the context of local cultural practices.

³² See: Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Ian Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920–1950* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michael Dorland, *So close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films*, Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

This approach has been labelled the “policy reflex” by Ira Wagman, who notes it applies widely to communication studies in Canada across all media.³³

In contrast to the earlier “policy reflex” in Canadian film histories, more recent studies have begun to look at historical case studies of film cultures in Canada. A foundational text is Zoë Druick’s 2007 book *Projecting Canada*, which examined the policy, history, and film production of the National Film Board. While Druick still looks at policy, she provided a holistic study of the National Film Board and examined how the organization fostered a specific Canadian film culture.³⁴ Another recent example is Monika Kin Gagnon and Janine Marchessault’s book *Reimagining Cinema: Film at Expo 67*, which looked at how the expo helped to reshape not only Canadian film, but also exhibition.³⁵ Case studies of Canadian exhibition practices are a key element to this new Canadian film history with important contributions from Peter Lester and Louis Pelletier.³⁶

Another influential figure in Canadian film exhibition studies, already discussed above, is Paul Moore, who utilized newspaper accounts and archival records to demonstrate the emergence of movie-going culture and how going to the movies

³³ Ira Wagman “On the Policy Reflex in Canadian Communication Studies.” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 35, no. 4 (2010): 619–630.

³⁴ Zoë Druick, *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's Press, 2007).

³⁵ Monika Gagnon and Janine Marchessault, eds. *Reimagining Cinema: Film at Expo 67* (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

³⁶ For example: Louis Pelletier, “Early Quebec Actualities and the Ephemeral Meaning of Moving Images in the Transitional Era,” in *Cinephemera: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada*, eds. Zoë Druick et al.; (Montreal QU: McGill-Queen's Press, 2014). Peter Lester, “Sweet Sixteen Goes to War: Hollywood, the NAAF and 16mm Film Exhibition in Canada During WWII.” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 19, 1 (2010): 2–19.

became connected with identity and even citizenship.³⁷ Moore has focused on the importance of early exhibitors in the proliferation of cinema across Canada, and how film was used in the creation of Canadian nationalist sentiment in Toronto during World War I.³⁸ His work provides a sociological look at the history of film exhibition in Canada. While my work is certainly influenced by Moore, this dissertation will more explicitly explore the political economy of film exhibition in relation to a single exhibition circuit.

Individual film exhibitors are especially important in Canadian film history as they provide key insights into the development of the industry in Canada. As Peter Morris and Paul Moore argued, because there was no early internal film industry in Canada, early Canadian film history is entirely based on exhibition practices. Thus, any history of film in Canada must focus on local exhibitors. The story of Leo Mascioli is a mechanism to explore practices of early peripheral exhibitors, the impact that vertical integration had on these exhibitors, and finally how immigrant film exhibitors faced discrimination based on their precarious national identities. As discussed above, film-going in small towns and rural locations has become an important area of research in recent cinema history. In Canada, there have been a couple examples of studies from Gregory Canning and Charles Tepperman who have both explored movie-going in small towns.³⁹ However, all of the

³⁷ See: Paul S. Moore, "Mapping the Mass Circulation of Early Cinema: Film Debuts Coast-to-Coast in Canada in 1896 and 1897." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, No. 1 (2012): 58–80.

³⁸ Paul S. Moore "Movie Palaces on Canadian Downtown Main Streets: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver." *Urban History Review*/ 32, No. 2 (2004): 3–20. Paul Moore, "Nationalist Film-going without Canadian-made films?" in *Early Cinema and the National*, ed. Richard Abel et al. (John Libbey Publishing, 2008), 155–163. Paul S. Moore, "The Social Biograph: Newspapers as Archives of the Regional Mass Market for Movies," in *Explorations in New Cinema History*, ed. Richard Maltby et al. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 263–279.

³⁹ See: Gregory Canning, "Moving Pictures at the Opera House: The Introduction of Motion Pictures to the Town of Truro, Nova Scotia, 1897–1914," in *Rain/Drizzle/Fog: Film and Television in Atlantic Canada*, ed.

Canadian studies have only looked at small towns with monoethnic populations and agrarian-based economies. As a mining town, Timmins is somewhat of an anomaly in the context of rural exhibition studies because of its population and economy. Timmins was not entirely rural, because of its population and demographics, but it was also not urban because of its remote location. In my exploration of the Mascioli's chain, I will focus not only on the business history of the chain but also the sociological context of Mascioli's Italian ethnic identity. I am thus able to examine how immigrant audiences in Timmins interacted with popular culture and how these interactions were different than in cities.

Italians in Canada and the Padrone Labour System

Although this dissertation is primarily focused on the history of Mascioli's cinemas in Northeastern Ontario, his Italian identity and internment play a pivotal role in both his businesses and his life in Timmins. Let me reiterate that I will next provide a methodological review and overview of the dissertation; however, the broad context of early Italian migration to Canada is important to explain first. Before delving into the details of his theatre businesses in the remainder of the dissertation, allow me to provide a foundational overview of the context for Italian immigration to Canada and the particularities of Italian migrant labour in the exploitation of Canadian resource industries. Mascioli's Italian identity cannot be separated from his businesses because it was through his status as the leader of the Italian community that he was able to build his Northern Empire Theatre chain. Mascioli's role as Timmins's padrone—labour agent, but also cultural liaison—also gave him access to a labour force that would help build his theatres.

Darrell Varga (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2009), 47–67; Charles Tepperman, "Digging the Finest Potatoes from Their Acre: Government Film Exhibition in Rural Ontario," in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 130–149.

These workers would later become his patrons at his movie theatres as he transitioned from padrone to showman. Unlike many other padrones, Mascioli evolved and diversified his business interests, but his early role as an Italian padrone forever influenced his life and work in Timmins. Although the padrone system had made Leo the leader of the Italian community, which was beneficial for his businesses, it also ultimately led to his downfall because being Italian was criminalized during World War II. The literature on the Italians in Canada, the padrone system, and the internment of Italian-Canadians provide a basis for my understanding of his social role in the town and how this affected his theatres.

The padrone system was adopted in North America by many early businesses as a method of finding reliable and cheap labourers to work in previously unpopulated areas during the industrial expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term *padrone* had been used to describe not only ethnically Italian labour agents but also Greek, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican labour agents working in North America. According to Gunther Peck, this antiquated labour system had been used in Italy for hundreds of years and was adopted in North America largely to combat anti-slavery laws that were impeding profits.⁴⁰ Companies paying to bring foreign laborers to the United States and Canada had no means to prevent these workers from leaving for better work opportunities upon their arrival. Padrones were contracted by companies to provide these foreign labourers and ensure they would work for the entirety of their contract. In Canada, most of the Italian migration to the country was part of this padrone system, and Italian

⁴⁰ Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880–1930* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49–50.

labourers made up a significant portion of workers in the mining and railway industries in this country.

Leo Mascioli was part of the first wave of Italian migration, and between the years 1880 to 1915, more than thirteen million Italians emigrated, making this the largest voluntary migration in world history.⁴¹ Italian migration can be characterized as having three distinctive phases: (1) the classical period between 1876 and 1914, (2) the low emigration period between the two world wars, (3) the period of renewed migration, from 1946 to 1976.⁴² The vast majority of migration during the classical period was largely due to North America. Robert F. Harney points out that migration during the classical period to Canada was distinctive from migration to America, because of the temporary nature of the Italian workers' contracts in Canada. Canada received fewer Italian immigrants than the United States because of concerted efforts by both the Canadian and Italian governments to discourage Italian immigration to Canada.⁴³ Thus, the majority of Italians in Canada were temporary migrants who often became trapped in what Harney describes as long-term sojourning.⁴⁴ Most of the work done on Italian migration to Canada has consisted of several studies of Italian communities in Canada's larger cities.⁴⁵ While some Canadian studies have focused on the first wave of Italian

⁴¹ Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, and Stephanie Malia Hom, eds. *Italian Mobilities* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 1.

⁴² Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Italian Diaspora, 1876–1976." *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (1995): 114–22. Quoted in Gabriella Colussi Arthur, "Zoppola, Zoppolani and Migration to Western Canada: a Sample Study." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 33, no. 1 (2012): 108.

⁴³ Robert F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885–1930." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 11, no. 1 (1979): 32.

⁴⁴ Harney, "Men Without Women," 31.

⁴⁵ For studies of Italians in Canada's larger cities, see: Bruno Ramirez, "Montreal's Italians and the Socio-Economy of Settlement, 1900–1930: Some Historical Hypotheses." *Urban History Review* (1981): 39–48; Robert F. Harney, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism," *Labour*, 4 (1979): 57–

migration, many others have looked at the third phase of migration after World War II, which accounts for the majority of the current population of Canadians of Italian descent.⁴⁶

The *padrone* system was the basis for the early Italian immigrant experience, but the effects of this system have yet to be studied in relation to the evolution of Italian communities. The first studies about the *padrone* system come from the United States, starting in the 1960s with the work of H. S. Nelli, with subsequent books on the topic being published from the 1970s to the 2000s.⁴⁷ Although there are several works on the early *padrone* system in North America, according to both Donna Gabaccia and Victor Greene, how *padrones* affected the later development of the Italian middle class and influenced community leadership and political activism are topics that have not been fully studied.⁴⁸ Essentially, the scholarship on *padrones* often explores their early roles

84. Gabrielle Scardellato, "A Century and More of Italians in Toronto: An Overview of Settlement." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 28, no. 1 (2007).

Jordan Stanger-Ross, *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Brian Douglas Ross, "In the Company of other Italians: Voluntary Associations in Winnipeg's Italian Community" (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1983); John Spina, "Winnipeg's Little Italy: The Commodification of Ethnic Heritage." *Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays* 4 (2001): 172–185. Clifford John Jansen, *The Italians of Vancouver: A Case Study of Internal Differentiation of an Ethnic Group* (Toronto, ON: Institute for Behavioral Research, York University, 1981).

⁴⁶ John Zucchi, "Italians in Canada," in *Encyclopaedia of Diasporas* (New York, NY: Springer, 2005), 864–874.

⁴⁷ See: Luciano J. Iorizzo, "The *Padrone* and Immigrant Distribution," in *The Italian Experience in the United States*, ed. Silvano M. Tomasi et al. (Stanton Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies 1970): 43–75; George E. Pozzetta, "A *Padrone* Looks at Florida: Labor Recruiting and the Florida East Coast Railway." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1975): 74–84; Gunther Peck, "Divided Loyalties: Immigrant *Padrones* and the Evolution of Industrial Paternalism in North America." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 53 (1998): 49–68; John V. Baiamonte, "Community Life in the Italian Colonies of Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana, 1890–1950." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 30, no. 4 (1989): 365–397; Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: *Padrones* and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880–1930* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴⁸ Donna Gabaccia, "Italian History and gli Italiani nel Mondo, Part I." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1997): 54.

in the male-centric work camps, but does not often focus on what happened to padrones as the communities developed into permanent settlements.⁴⁹

The industries surrounding the extraction of staples products often allowed padrones to become powerful figures who were venerated by their workers and families. As with the American examples mentioned above, the studies in Canada have tended to look at the early role of padrones. The padrone system in Canada was fully studied by R. F. Harney, both the system itself and individual padrones, specifically Antonio Cordasco and Alberto Dini of Montreal. R. F. Harney argued that the padrone system in Canada was developed out of the labour realities of the companies involved in resource extraction who needed a docile and mobile work force. He described the characteristics of this desired work force as being:

...free from the taint of unionism and willing to be shipped to remote northern sites, a work force which tolerated exploitation at those sites in order to make ready cash, and which required no maintenance on the part of the employer during the long winter months.⁵⁰

Harney maintains that while the padrone system was certainly exploitative of workers, padronism fulfilled a function for the migrant workers, and inherent to the system was also a code of ethics that created bonds within the community. As Harney mentions, most of the protests against the padrone system came from social workers and labour activists and not the migrant labourers themselves. For example, Antonio

⁴⁹ The exception would be Victor R. Greene, *American Immigrant Leaders, 1800–1910: Marginality and Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

⁵⁰ Harney, “Montreal’s King of Italian Labour,” 61.

Cordasco was referred to as the “King of the Workers” by the Italians in Montreal, and they actually crowned him in an elaborate ceremony.

While metropolitan padrones like Antonio Cordasco are commonly recognized figures, “local” padrones like Leo Mascioli are not often written about. To be clear, there are a few case studies that touch upon the local Italian labour agents in Canada, but these works do not examine the padrones’ later roles in the towns.⁵¹ Mascioli, like Cordasco, was also seen as a leader of the community and was referred to as the “boss of the Italians,” but through his theatre business, he became Canadianized. In his early days in Timmins, Leo Mascioli provided strike-breakers for the Hollinger Mines company, and he was even arrested in 1912 during a strike (for assault).⁵² While he worked closely with Hollinger Mines, he also helped the local Italian community and was the point of contact when workers or their families were facing problems. His role as the showman of the North helped to effectively integrate him into the power elite because his theatres provided wholesome entertainment to the immigrant workers.

Although padrones were powerful figures, their Italian ethnic identity often hindered their acceptance into the white Anglo-Saxon power structure. The fluid nature of the first wave of Italian migration contributed to the marginal identity of many Italians, and Italians were often identified as criminals and buffoons in both newspapers

⁵¹ See: Franca Iacovetta, “Ordering in Bulk: Canada’s Postwar Immigration Policy and the Recruitment of Contract Workers from Italy.” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11, no. 1 (1991): 50–80; Gabriella Colussi Arthur, “Zoppola, Zoppolani, and Migration to Western Canada: A Sample Study.” *Quaderni d’italianistica* 33, no. 1 (2012); Gabriele Scardellato, “Friulians in Trail, BC: Migration and Immigration in the Canadian Periphery,” in *An Italian Region in Canada: The Case of Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler, 103–120 (Toronto, ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1998).

⁵² Abel, *Changing Places*, 124.

and in films.⁵³ Southern Italians were considered racially inferior, and they suffered discrimination in both the United States and Canada. Italians, widely considered to be inferior to other European settlers, were banned from certain areas and were even lynched in the southern United States.⁵⁴ Thomas Guglielmo argues that there was a distinction between race and colour, and Italians were ultimately deemed to be white in colour but at the same time racially inferior.⁵⁵

The discrimination faced by Italians during World War II did not appear in a vacuum, and discrimination of Italians in Canada had been institutionalized for some time. From the beginning of Italian migration, these workers were deemed undesirable by the Canadian government. As Harney and other scholars studying the history of Italian immigration in Canada have pointed out, Canadian government policy aimed to dissuade permanent settlement by Italians. In fact, in Canada, immigration policy enforced ethnic identity, and even if a person was born in Canada and spoke the language, border agents would identify Eastern and Southern European immigrants by their ethnic backgrounds.⁵⁶ In the Naturalization Act of 1914, an amendment was included that citizenship could be stripped due to disloyalty, and this was enforced

⁵³ For an analysis of Italian portrayals in early film see: Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁵⁴ See: Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Sicilian Immigrants in the American South, 1886–1910," *American Nineteenth Century History* 3, no. 1 (2002): 45–76; Jean Ann Scarpaci, "Immigrants in the New South: Italians in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1880–1910." *Labor History* 16, no. 2 (1975): 165–183.

⁵⁵ See: Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵⁶ Evgeny Efremkin, "Canada's Invisible Nationality Policy: Creating Ethnicity, Managing Populations, Imagining a Nation." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 24, no. 2 (2013): 269.

during both World Wars against citizens who were suspected of being part of the “fifth column.”⁵⁷

World War II had a deep impact on the Italian immigrant population, and Donna Gabaccia, borrowing Rudolph Vecoli’s phrase, notes that World War II turned Italians “from immigrants to ethnics.”⁵⁸ In both Canada and the United States during World War II Italians faced organized discrimination by government forces, including careful monitoring, special restrictions, and arrest and internment of Italian-born citizens. Unlike the Japanese interment, which to be fair did affect a larger percentage of the Japanese-Canadian population, the interment of Italians in Canada and the United States is not widely remembered and has been dubbed the “secret” and “unknown” interment by American scholars.⁵⁹ The organized discrimination of Italians in the United States began after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and followed a similar pattern to the campaign against Italian-born Canadians by the Canadian government that had begun on June 10, 1940, the day Italy declared war on the British Empire.

Two major academic works directly address the Italian internment in Canada. The first is *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State* and the second is *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*. Bruno Ramirez, in his chapter on Montreal Italians in *On Guard for Thee*, argues that the internment of ethnic minorities in World War II constituted a war against ethnicity. In contrast, some

⁵⁷ Efremkin, “Canada’s Invisible Nationality Policy,” 289.

⁵⁸ Donna Gabaccia, “Italian history,” 55.

⁵⁹ See: Stephen R. Fox, *The Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans During World War II* (Woodbridge CT: Twayne Publishing, 1990); Lawrence DiStasi, ed. *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2001).

of the contributors to *Enemies Within* argue that the government may have been justified in imprisoning several of the Italian internees as they did have links to fascism. *Enemies Within* attempts to address the discrimination of the Canadian government's war policy while also counteracting the narrative of many Italian-Canadian groups that the Italian interment was akin to the Japanese internment.⁶⁰ In fact, Franca Iacovetta and Roberto Perin, in the introduction of the collection, point out that the Canadian government's treatment of Italians overall was less severe than the rest of the English-speaking countries involved in the war. In 1941, the population of Canadians of Italian origin was 112,000, and 600 were sent to internment camps. In contrast, Australia interred 5,000 Italians, and their population of people of Italian origin was only 35,000. Four thousand Italians were sent to internment camps in the UK. While the United States had the largest Italian population in the English-speaking world, they only interred 250, but they did relocate 10,000 Italians from the west coast of the country after Pearl Harbor.⁶¹

In the 1990s there was a redress campaign started by Italian-Canadian groups to shed light on the internment of Italian-Canadians. Out of this movement several popular histories were written, and even a documentary produced by the National Film Board (NFB) called *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*. More recently two edited collections, called *Beyond Barbed Wire: Essays on the Internment of Italian Canadians* and *Behind Barbed Wire: Creative Works on the Internment of Italian Canadians*, were published. Both of these works were published in partnership with a Toronto Italian organization,

⁶⁰ Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe. *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (Toronto, ON University of Toronto Press, 2000), 6.

⁶¹ Iacovetta et al. *Enemies Within*, 12.

the Columbus Centre, and chapters were written by family members of internees and amateur historians who focus on the injustice of the internment and the innocence of the internees. The Columbus Centre also has a website dedicated to the memory of the Italian internment that has oral history interviews with families and donated documents and pictures from internees.⁶²

According to Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca, the Italian-Canadian redress campaign not only obfuscates the fact that many internees were in fact fascists, but also attempts to present the internment as an atrocity, and they cite comparisons by some to the Holocaust.⁶³ Iacovetta and Ventresca propose the idea that Italian-Canadians have an “ethnic inferiority complex,” which was first addressed in Robert Harney’s work on the previous campaign by the Italian community in Canada to “re-Italianize” John Cabot (aka Giovanni Caboto).⁶⁴ Iacovetta and Ventresca further argue that the majority of Italian-Canadians upset by the internment arrived in the country after World War II and have developed a false collective memory. Ultimately, while Iacovetta and Ventresca make some compelling points on the redress movement, they largely ignore the many oral history testimonies that prove that there was a deep impact to Italian-Canadians during World War II.

In writing about the Italian internment in Canada, I am cognizant of the criticisms by Canadian historians of the redress campaign, but I also recognize that the Italian

⁶² See: “Italians as Enemy Aliens,” <http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/>

⁶³ Iacovetta, Perin, and Principe. *Enemies Within*, 395. They reference an interview with students from York University, who compared the Italian internment to the treatment of Jewish people by the Nazis.

⁶⁴ Iacovetta, et al. *Enemies Within* 398. Also see: Robert F. Harney, “Caboto and Other Parentela: The Uses of the Italian-Canadian Past,” in *Arrangiarsi. The Italian Experience in Canada, Montreal, Guernica*, eds. Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino (Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1989), 37–61.

internment did have a deep impact on the first wave of Italian immigrants, which has not been examined well enough in the scholarship. I do not attempt to imply that the Italian internment had a deep and lasting impact on all Italians currently living in Canada, as I do not have enough data to make that claim. However, in this work, I do make the claim that the events on June 10, 1940, did have a lasting impact on both the local Italian community and the city of Timmins. It also had a lasting impact on film exhibition in the region, as Famous Players Canadian was able to use Mascioli's internment to take a more active role in the management of his theatres. While Italians did face discrimination in the classical period of Italian migration, Leo Mascioli was accepted as a member of Timmins society during this early period because of his business success, and it was not until World War II that he faced organized discrimination from government forces. I argue that this organized discrimination not only affected the Italian population in Timmins but also Mascioli's businesses.

The literature on Italian-Canadians provides an important basis for many aspects of this study, and this work, in turn, will be an important addition. While there are several studies on padrones no one has looked at the evolution of a padrone and how this specialized role might have both helped and hindered their later businesses. Mascioli built his empire on the padrone system, but, again, was in many ways Canadianized through his theatres and transformed himself into a capitalist success story. However, he was never able to separate himself from his role as the padrone of Timmins, and his Italian ethnic identity contributed to his later downfall. The debates surrounding the internment of Italian-Canadians will also play an important role in this

work as I argue that the interment had a profound effect on both Mascioli's businesses and the entire community of Timmins.

Methodologies and Sources for "New Cinema History"

Leo Mascioli, like many showmen, had a Horatio Alger "rags to riches" story. From humble beginnings, he used his connections as a labour agent and community leader to build a fruitful business empire. His theatres became powerful integration spaces for the immigrant workers in Northeast Ontario to be exposed to American popular culture. This dissertation looks at the evolution of one regional chain, paying particular attention to the business operations and cultural significance of the theatres to the town of Timmins. My aim in describing the operations of the Mascioli chain is to shed light on the larger story of film exhibition and distribution in Canada, and my microhistory of the Mascioli chain will look at how the town of Timmins became integrated into the nationalized system of cinema-going. In order to conduct this study, I turn to a methodology found in new cinema history.

A microhistory is distinctive from other types of historical research because it uses a singular case to explain a whole system.⁶⁵ A microhistory differs from a local history or a biography because it reflects analytically upon the larger social systems outside of the local case. I propose that the evolution of the Mascioli chain is not only an interesting story, but provides new insights into the history of film exhibition, distribution, and reception in Canada. By closely analyzing the operations of the Mascioli chain, this study will explore the entire system of modern Canadian film exhibition. This unique

⁶⁵ See: Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi. "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It." *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 10–35; Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography." *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001): 129–144.

approach pairs the political economic tradition found in Canadian film studies with the social research of small town theatres found in new cinema history.

My microhistory of the chain is rooted in a long-standing Canadian approach to film history defined through the political economy of the cultural industry. A focus on the wider political economy is rarely used in local cinema histories; instead, the conventional approach of film exhibition histories in the United States defines “culture” as local, and observe how heterogeneous local practices recede with the homogeneity of Hollywood control and the imposition of a mass market.⁶⁶ European scholars of film exhibition more often define local communities through religious factions, akin to ethnic folk cultures, observing how traditional ethnic groupings are sustained and extended into cinema cultures, in contrast to American homogenization.⁶⁷ The Mascioli case complicates and bridges both approaches by beginning with the Canadian tradition of attending first to the political economy of media and communication. On the other hand, Canadian film history typically begins with a focus on the creative industry of film production rather than local practices of exhibition and reception. Here, instead, I am defining local film culture as an extension of the political economy of the Porcupine region. By combining a Canadian political economic lens with the study of local film cultures, my work will not

⁶⁶ For example: Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2008); Robert C. Allen, “Race, Region, and Rusticity: Relocating U.S. Film History,” in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, eds. Richard Maltby et al., 25–45 (Exeter UK: University of Exeter Press, 2007); Gregory A. Waller, “Imagining and Promoting the Small-Town Theater,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 3 (2005): 3–19; José Carlos Lozano, “Film at the Border: Memories of Cinemagoing in Laredo, Texas,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 35–48.

⁶⁷ For example: Philippe Meers, Daniël Biltereyst, and Liesbeth Van de Vijver, “Memories, Movies, and Cinema-Going: An Oral History Project on Film Culture in Flanders (Belgium),” in *Film-Cinema-Spectator: Film Reception*, vol. 24, no 1 (2010): 319–337. Daniël Biltereyst, “‘I Think Catholics Didn’t Go To The Cinema’: Catholic Film Exhibition Strategies and Cinema-Going Experiences in Belgium, 1930s–1960s,” in *Moralizing Cinema: Film, Catholicism, and Power*, ed. Daniel Biltereyst et al., 255–271 (London, UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2015).

only look at how film was received in remote mining regions, but also how Mascioli's theatres were integrated into the wider exhibition and distribution networks in Canada. Despite distinctions with typical concerns found in American and European cases of local film histories, my research is closely informed by an emergent school of "new cinema history."

To account for experiences of historical audiences, scholars in new cinema history typically consult with several different sources including government records; lawsuits; surviving business records; newspapers; film, trade, and fan magazines; and oral history testimony. The use of a variety of archival records is especially typical in studies looking at rural regions and immigrant audiences. For example, Robert Allen used fire records to determine that there were, in fact, fewer nickelodeons in immigrant areas than previously thought and that early film exhibition in New York City was primarily focused on middle-class audiences.⁶⁸ For the study of small-town theatres, scholars like Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Gregory Waller have looked at a variety of local sources including city records and newspaper accounts in order to describe the central roles theatres played in small towns and their cultural significance. In Waller's work, he paid particular attention to ownership and theatre management, design, and programming records in order to examine the local interactions with mass culture and the possible impact of specific community concerns surrounding film-going. Waller writes that "before we can make any claims about the capacity of local communities to resist or customize mass culture,"

⁶⁸ Robert C. Allen, "Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan 1906–1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon." *Cinema Journal* 18, no. 2 (1979): 2–15.

we need to find out how “commercial entertainment was packaged, promoted, and consumed locally.”⁶⁹

The use of previously ignored archival records such as fire maps, programming records, and architectural plans has become an important part of new cinema history research, and these documents have provided new insights into the history of theatres and historical audiences. Many of the debates in the field, from the modernity thesis to chaser theory, have revolved around the use of empirical evidence like archival records.⁷⁰ Ultimately, a key research methodology for scholars in new cinema history is to accumulate records from multiple sources in order to build a comprehensive database related to film exhibition, which includes information on theatres, exhibitors, and the types of films shown over a certain period. There have also been recent calls to use the accumulation of data from all of the comprehensive microstudies in the field in order to compare cinema-going in communities from across the globe.⁷¹

Recent studies have created digital archival databases related to both regional and global cinema-going practices. Robert Allen’s “Going to the Show” project has created a digital library of all records related to movie-going in North Carolina, including local city directories, fire maps, local newspapers, financial ledgers, and movie theatre post-cards.⁷² Jeff Klenotic created the Mapping Movies database, which traces the development of film with the use of geographic mapping software; his dataset draws on several different

⁶⁹ Gregory Albert Waller. *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern city, 1896–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), xvii and xiii.

⁷⁰ For a good overview see Judith Thissen, “Oy, Myopia! A Reaction from Judith Thissen on the Singer-Allen Controversy.” *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 4 (1997): 102–107.

⁷¹ See: Daniel Biltreyest and Philippe Meers, “New Cinema History and the Comparative Mode: Reflections on Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures,” *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 11 (2016): 13–32.

⁷² Robert C. Allen, “Docsouth: Going to the Show,” <http://gtts.oasis.unc.edu/>

archival sources including newspapers, trade magazines, and city records.⁷³ Deb Verhoeven has created both historical and contemporary databases for movie-going in Australia.⁷⁴ For her mapping movie project with Kate Bowles and Colin Arrowsmith, they combined datasets from two separate projects: Bowles's work on rural Australian theatres and Verhoeven and Arrowsmith's on Greek theatre operators in Melbourne, Australia. There have been calls for more collaborative data sharing projects, and Paul Moore's Circuits of Cinema project is an example of new cinema history scholars collaborating by sharing regional film exhibition datasets in order to build an international database.⁷⁵

Along with archival and database creation, another key feature of new cinema history methodology is the use of oral history testimony. One of the most well-known of these projects is Annette Kuhn's ethnographic investigation into UK audiences in the 1930s, which demonstrated that the social experience of going to the movies was often more important than what films were shown.⁷⁶ Recent projects in both Belgium and Italy explored the habits of historical cinema audiences.⁷⁷ A key method of all of these studies

⁷³ See: Jeffrey Klenotic, "Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema," *Explorations in New Cinema History*, ed., Richard Maltby et al., 58–84 (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

⁷⁴ Deb Verhoeven, Kate Bowles, and Colin Arrowsmith, "Mapping the Movies: Reflections on the use of Geospatial Technologies for Historical Cinema Audience Research," in *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research-An Overview*, Michael Ross et al., 69–81 (Norman, OK: Transcript Press, 2009); Deb Verhoeven, "Visualising Data in Digital Cinema Studies: More Than Just Going Through The Motions?" *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 11 (2016): 92–104.

⁷⁵ Paul S. Moore, "Circuits of Cinema: Mapping Itinerant Shows," <http://psmoore.ca/visualizing-space-of-itinerants/>.

⁷⁶ Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London, UK: IB Tauris, 2002). Also see: Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*. (London, UK: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁷ See: Meers, Biltreyst, and Van de Vijver, "Memories, Movies, and Cinema-Going;" Biltreyst, "I Think Catholics Didn't Go To The Cinema': Catholic Film Exhibition Strategies and Cinema-Going Experiences in Belgium, 1930s–1960s;" Daniela Treveri Gennari, "If You Have Seen It, You Cannot Forget! Film Consumption and Memories of Cinema-going in 1950s Rome." *The Historical Journal of Film Radio and*

is to ask a series of questions to a randomly selected group of participants who have indicated that they went to the movies during a certain time period and in a particular geographic location. Participants in these projects are asked about key memories of going to the theatre as well as their typical weekly schedule for seeing films. Many of the interviews are semi-structured and allow the interview subjects to lead the interview based on their own recollections of attending movie theatres. Much has been written about the problems with ethnographic and oral history approaches, and it can be effectively argued that because of the unreliability of human memory these interviews should be used as supplements to research projects.⁷⁸

The combination of oral history, archival research, and newspaper analysis is typical in new cinema history. In finding a methodology for historical audience research, Biltreyst, Lotze, and Meers advocate for a mixed-methods approach. These authors reflected on the research design of their previous historical audience projects, which all included a three-step process: (1) determining the location of all theatres in a particular town (2) recording the programming at the theatres (3) conducting interviews with townspeople about their cinema-going memories within semi-structured interviews.⁷⁹ Interpreting interviews tends to be a difficult task and Biltreyst, Lotze, and Meers found that memories are often selective and tied to particular social groups. Many of the above mentioned studies have employed coding and qualitative interview analysis software, but

Television, vol. 35, Issue 1 (2015); Daniela Treveri Gennari, and John Sedgwick. "Memories in Context: The Social and Economic Function of Cinema in 1950s Rome." *Film History: An International Journal* 27, no. 2 (2015): 76–104.

⁷⁸Daniël Biltreyst, Kathleen Lotze, and Philippe Meers, "Triangulation in Historical Audience Research: Reflections and Experiences from a Multi-Methodological Research Project on Cinema Audiences in Flanders." *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 698. Quoting Ronald J. Grele, "Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks et al., 38–52 (London, UK: Routledge, 1998).

⁷⁹ Grele, "Movement Without Aim," 699.

other studies have used more typical forms of ethnographic and historical interpretation of interviews.

With all of these studies in mind, my project was organized in different research phases. The first phase was to conduct archival collection of any materials related to the Timmins theatres, including provincial and federal reports, city directories, business records, newspaper reports, and advertising. The second phase was to conduct semi-structured interviews (See: Appendices A and B) with the local population relating to memories of going to the cinema and Leo Mascioli. The third phase was interpreting my sources by recording the available business data and theatre programming information onto spreadsheets. The data contained in these spreadsheets provided information on expenditures, profits, and programming at the theatres. After transcribing my interviews, I coded the text based on key themes in this study: movie-going habits, types of advertising and promotions, types of films played at the theatre, interethnic relations at the theatre, and the Italian internment.

My interviews were used to help give context to the different historical periods for the Mascioli film chain, and I conducted thirty-five interviews with both members of the local community and descendants of Leo Mascioli. Interview subjects were selected based on age and were limited to people who went to the theatres in Timmins during the height of the Mascioli chain from 1930 to 1950. Most of my interview subjects were selected from participants at the retirement community centres as well as people referred to me by the library and museum. Because of the nature of this specific age demographic in Timmins, I had an over representation of women and my interview subjects were all of European descent. The 2016 Timmins census showed that the aging female population is

much larger than the male population in Timmins. For example, in the category eighty-five years or older there are 350 women and only 150 men living in the town.⁸⁰ The largest non-European demographic in the city of Timmins is people who identify as Aboriginal, at 8 percent of the population (out of this population, 2.7 percent are Registered Treaty Indians and 4.4 percent identify as Metis).⁸¹ Only 12.8 percent of the First Nations population is over the age of sixty-five, and unfortunately, I was unable to come across any interview subjects who openly identified as Aboriginal at the retirement centre and none were referred to me by my local contacts. An understudied area of research is how Aboriginal peoples were treated at movie theatres in Canada, and I hope to later include more of these important voices in future projects.⁸²

The two local Timmins newspapers, *The Porcupine Advance* and *The Timmins Daily Press*, were also primary sources for this project. There is an online catalogue of headlines from *The Porcupine Advance* at the website www.ourontario.ca. Several recent historical studies have cited *The Porcupine Advance*, and as Ian Milligan has pointed out, digitized newspapers are more likely to be used in studies because of their ease of use.⁸³

⁸⁰ Statistics Canada, 2017, “Timmins [Population centre], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table). Census Profile 2016 Census.” Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, May 3, 2017.

⁸¹ Government of Canada Statistics, “Timmins (CA) - Focus on Geography Series - 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).” Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, April 13, 2016. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/Fog.cfm?lang=E&level=3&GeoCode=586>

⁸² In the context of the United States, there are several studies that look segregation and discrimination at movie theatres. For example: Gregory Albert Waller, *Main Street Amusements*, 1995; Arthur Knight, “Searching for the Apollo: Black Moviegoing and Its Contexts in the Small-Town US South,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, ed. Maltby et al., 226–242 (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011); Cara Caddoo, *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Modern Black Life*. Harvard University Press, 2014. In the context of Canada, the case of Viola Desmond who was a black woman denied entry in the “white only” section of a movie theatre was noted by Paul S. Moore, “Movie Palaces,” 2004; and the case is explored more in depth in Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁸³ See: Ian Milligan, “Illusionary Order: Online Databases, Optical Character Recognition, and Canadian History, 1997–2010.” *Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (2013): 540–569.

Even though *The Porcupine Advance* is not fully digitized, the searchable database makes it an excellent resource for scholarship in the region. I also consulted *The Cobalt Nugget*, *The Temiskaming Speaker*, and *The Sudbury Star*. None of these newspapers have digitized databases, so I searched through them manually on microfilm at the Ontario Archives. *The Sudbury Star* has a searchable paper index that I consulted at the Sudbury Public Library.

In addition to newspapers, I also looked at film-trade publications. The American trade papers treated Canada as part of their domestic market, and I found several mentions of the Timmins theatres. There were also stories about Leo Mascioli and his partner, Pete Bardessono. The American trade papers are available online through *The Digital Media History Library*. There were also three Canadian trade papers, *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, *The Canadian Motion Picture Exhibitor*, and *The Film Weekly*. These papers are only available on microfilm at the Toronto Reference Library, and because there is no searchable database, it is more difficult to find mentions of the Timmins theatres in these papers. For the Canadian papers, I used specific date ranges to try to find mentions about notable events at the Timmins theatres.

The basis of my study is archival documents, including court cases, regulatory files, and theatre plans. In order to find these documents, I explored federal, provincial, and municipal archives across the country. The two most comprehensive resources were the Theatre Regulatory files, located at the Ontario Archives, and the files related to the Italian internment, located at Library and Archives Canada (LAC). One of the most important files at LAC for this project contained the trove of records kept by Price Waterhouse, which included many documents pertaining to the theatres including original

contracts with Famous Players Canadian, financial records, and letters from business associates. There is also an online archive in Toronto containing documents and interviews about Leo Mascioli's internment called the *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II* archive. Members of the Mascioli family also provided me with documents that contained trial transcripts.

As mentioned earlier, one of my most important pieces of archival material is the collection of accounting books from the Timmins theatres. These books were donated by Greig Dymond whose brother David was the manager of Mascioli's Victory Theatre and later owned and operated the former Mascioli Empire Theatre in New Liskeard. These account books show each theatre's earnings and will be used to explore the popularity of these theatres and how the Famous Players Canadian takeover and Mascioli's internment affected the revenue of the theatres. I also consulted programming ledgers from the Timmins Museum and the David Dymond collection, which included information about the Goldfields Theatre and Palace Theatre. These programming ledgers will be used to analyze the types of films shown at the theatres.

Chapter Organization

Given that I am arguing that the Mascioli chain provides a unique understanding of the business of film, my chapters reflect the overall evolution of the business, and how the town of Timmins was impacted by each evolution of the Mascioli chain. Chapter Two explores the development of Northeast Ontario, and the rapid expansion of the leisure industry in the mining communities of the area. During the turn of the century, the resources found in Northeastern Ontario became the catalyst for the province's economic development, and many early Canadian industrialists built their fortunes in the region. In

building the mining and forestry industries, these early companies relied on cheap foreign labour, and this chapter will explore Mascioli's role as the region's padrone. I explain in this chapter how his position as Timmins's padrone facilitated his later theatre empire. In order to address Mascioli's impact on Timmins, I look at how his theatres fundamentally helped to shape the culture of the town. This chapter will also explore how the early chain was formed and how Leo and his business partners were able to succeed while other theatres in the region failed. In this chapter, I argue that the pairing of Mascioli's old-world business practices with the knowledge that his partner, Pete Bardassono, had of American corporatism and promotion is what led to the early success of this regional chain.

With each theatre Mascioli expanded, ultimately culminating in the Palace Theatre built in Timmins in 1936, which was the first fully modern northern movie palace. Chapter Three offers an in-depth analysis of the Mascioli chain and its integration into the national Famous Players Canadian circuit. In this chapter, I use the original theatre ledgers from this era to explore the changes in the company's financials before and after vertical integration as well as the film programming. I will also compare statistics from the Timmins theatres with the national averages for theatres in Canada in order to assess the impact of vertical integration on the Timmins theatres in relation to the rest of Canada. In this way, the chapter shows how regional chains were integrated into the wider distribution and exhibition circuits in Canada. My analysis of the business records of the Mascioli chain provides a unique perspective on vertical integration, and this chapter argues that, at least initially, the deal was beneficial for the chain.

Chapter Four explores how the fine balance between Famous Players Canadian and the Mascioli chain was destroyed with the fall of Leo Mascioli during World War II, following his arrest and internment. I argue that it was not until Mascioli's internment that the deal with Famous Players Canadian started to negatively impact the operations of the chain. This chapter examines how Famous Players Canadian was able to effectively integrate the chain through court cases, regulatory boards, and a conservatorship under Price Waterhouse. It also looks at the memories that the people of Timmins have about their cinema-going habits during the 1940s, and how these turbulent political years affected movie-going in the town. Even though Mascioli was considered an enemy alien, his theatres continued to thrive under the management of his son Dan Mascioli and the oversight of Famous Players Canadian. Although the theatres continued to make more money each year at the box office, the increased involvement of Famous Players Canadian caused expenses to equally skyrocket, thus negatively affecting profits during these years.

My concluding chapter will focus on Mascioli's life after his internment and his continued work in the theatre business in Northeastern Ontario. Out of all of his business operations, hotels, cars, and construction, the theatre business kept him occupied in his later years. Although he never went back to Timmins, he divided his time between Toronto and Sudbury and built another Empire Theatre there. As mentioned above, the theatres in Timmins continued to be managed by his son, Dan Mascioli. Finally, the chapter addresses Mascioli's death, the eventual closure of all his theatres, and the impact of the Mascioli chain's legacy on both the region and film exhibition in Canada.

In sum, this work will be a microhistory of a regional chain, which will provide new insights into Canadian film exhibition and distribution as a whole. Leo Mascioli is an example of an immigrant showman who used his old-world role as a padrone to build a modern theatre chain, which provided wholesome Hollywood entertainment to the immigrant workers who were brought to Northeastern Ontario to work in the mining and forestry industries. The film business was tied to Hollywood with vertically integrated circuits, with the first being Famous Players Canadian. The evolution of theatre chains like Mascioli's Northern Empire Theatres from the early days of exhibition to vertically integrated circuits has never been closely studied in Canada. I will also demonstrate, through my oral history testimony, the importance of theatres to the cultural life in remote areas like Timmins. In fact, as the next chapter shows, theatres fundamentally shaped how people spent their leisure time in Timmins and turned the towns in the region into family friendly communities.

Chapter Two: From Blind Pigs to the New Empire Theatre

The Opening of the New Empire Theatre

The first modern theatre in Timmins, the New Empire Theatre, opened to much fanfare on October 23, 1916. With the war effort underway, the local Red Cross organized the opening, and the theatre was decorated with Canadian flags. The women of the Red Cross acted as ushers dressed in their white uniforms, and all of the opening night proceeds went to support the war effort.⁸⁴ The opening of the New Empire Theatre was reflective of the cultural change that occurred in the first two decades of the century, which fundamentally shifted how the people of Timmins spent their leisure time. For the new mining town with its growing population, World War I marked the start of an evolution to a more respectable and mainstream form of mass leisure. Like other mining boomtowns, the early town of Timmins was at first populated primarily by young men, unmarried or on their own. Their leisure happened at illegal drinking establishments known as “blind pigs”—billiard halls and other clubrooms where gambling happened, and there were also brothels. These earlier forms and spaces of leisure would slowly be replaced over the next two decades with more acceptable forms of entertainment like movie theatres. The immigrant miners who largely populated the town also became more fully integrated into Canadian society during this era, and movie theatres played a large role in creating patriotic Canadian citizens.

This chapter will look at how the Mascioli theatres helped shape cultural life in the town. As discussed above, the New Empire Theatre was built by Leo Mascioli and

⁸⁴ “Opening of New Theatre Receipts Donated to Red Cross,” *The Porcupine Advance*, October 25, 1916, 1.

Pete Bardessono, partners in what would become Northern Empire Theatres. Despite their Italian heritage, they positioned the company as patriotic. Even before World War I began, they named all of their theatres “Empire,” and Pete even fought in the war for Canada. During World War I, the New Empire Theatre helped to integrate the multicultural audience into Canadian cultural practices, and the modern theatres that they built across the region during the war helped to civilize the rugged mining communities of Northeastern Ontario. This civilization process was accomplished with theatres replacing the blind pigs and brothels as the main source of entertainment starting in the 1910s.

In 1915, Leo and Pete expanded their theatres to other towns, thus beginning the growth into a modern theatre chain that would cover the under-serviced area of Northeastern Ontario. While the resource communities of the Northeast were booming, there were not yet any major theatres in the region. I propose that the success of the chain was rooted in its adoption of modern business practices and corporate structures, part of the early twentieth-century managerial revolution that shaped corporate capitalism in North America.⁸⁵ The creation of the corporate capitalist structure in the United States changed the retail economy from one based on local merchants to one that relied on national corporations to deliver goods and services to localities across America. Like other branded products, moving pictures could only be obtained through licensed wholesalers, and Leo and Pete needed to deal with American-linked distributors based in Toronto, who would effectively connect their chain with wider distribution networks.

⁸⁵ See: Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870–1920* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Their partnership combined Pete's knowledge of American corporatism and promotion with Leo's knowledge of construction and access to labour.

The first part of this chapter will look at the history of the Northeast Ontario region, and how mining and resource development created conditions for the rise of the Northern Empire Theatre chain. Since the region is a peripheral resource centre, a starting point is its metropolitan relationship with Toronto as the provincial capital and financial centre. I will frame this core-periphery relationship through the "staples theory," key to understanding both the history of the town and the development of the Mascioli chain. I will also review the programming at the theatres during the 1910s and 1920s in order to understand the movie-going experience during this era in relation to typical films booked in similar theatres across North America. I argue in this chapter that the success of the Mascioli chain was based on the partnering of Mascioli's role as the town's padrone with Bardessono's knowledge of American corporatism and advertising strategies. Others had tried and failed at starting theatre chains in the region, and Mascioli's success was rooted in his ability to build theatres quickly with little expense, and effectively advertise. While Mascioli was not comfortable with English, Bardessono was born in the United States and relished giving interviews to both local newspapers and the American trade papers. These two diametrically opposed partners helped to build the chain as the only successful group of movie houses in the region. I also argue that the other reason for the chain's success is that film exhibition was seen as a wholesome alternative by the controlling interests in the town. In the 1920s, there was a concerted effort by the mining companies and local politicians to turn these communities into family friendly towns. Mascioli's

theatres provided a controllable type of leisure for the immigrant workers, which also proved beneficial for social reformers.

Staples Theory: From the Periphery to the Core

The formation of the Mascioli chain can only be understood through the unique economic conditions of the region and its history. The history of Northeastern Ontario has often been told through the lens of the history of staples production and how the region contributed to the overall Canadian economy. The resource based economy that was created in the region led to ethnically diverse company towns, which had inter-ethnic competition and social stratification. The planned communities of the region had clear ethnic and class divisions. The specific conditions of the economy and culture in the region contributed to Mascioli's early success. The programming at his theatres appealed to the different ethnic labourers while also gaining the approval of the management class who were concerned with the uncontrollable leisure options available in the early communities. The cultural and economic history of the region provides an important basis for my study.

The history of Northeastern Ontario is rooted in its status as a doubly marginal region. Canada itself is deemed a marginal nation, and Northeastern Ontario is a marginal part of Canada. Harold Innis is perhaps the most important figure in understanding the idea of Canada's marginality.⁸⁶ According to Innis, Canada became tied to the production of raw materials, which made it dependent on manufacturing centres first in Europe and then in the United States. One of Innis's central works, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, traces

⁸⁶ For an in-depth discussion on the role of Innis's work in the context on Canada's marginality, see: Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

Canadian dependence on foreign interests in the fur trade from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. Innis argued that “the economic history of Canada has been dominated by the discrepancy between the centre and the margin of Western civilization.”⁸⁷ Many scholars have linked staples theory to Wallerstein’s world systems theory, and they see Canada as a semi-peripheral nation that exports natural resources to core countries like the United States or Great Britain.⁸⁸

Much of the scholarship focused on Canadian resource economies is rooted in staples theory, and many works have expanded on the theory with what is called the heartland-hinterland divide.⁸⁹ The heartland can be characterized as what Yeates called “main street Canada,” which comprises the region from Windsor up the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City.⁹⁰ This heartland has now expanded to include any community within an hour of a population centre of 500,000 people or more.⁹¹ The hinterland, on the other hand, can be characterized as dependent on staples production. Staples products that are extracted in the hinterland are then transported to the core region creating an unequal power relationship. The heartland-hinterland divide has also

⁸⁷ Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 385.

⁸⁸ See: William Easterbrook and Mel Watkins, *Approaches to Canadian Economic History: A Selection of Essays* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1984); Christoph Stadel, “Core Areas and Peripheral Regions of Canada: Landscapes of Contrast and Challenge,” in *Estudio de Casos Sobre Planificación Regional*, ed. José Luis Luzón Benedicto et al. 13–30 (Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions, 2009); Arn Keeling, “‘Born in an Atomic Test Tube’: Landscapes of Cyclonic Development at Uranium City, Saskatchewan.” *The Canadian Geographer* 54, no. 2 (2010): 228–252.

⁸⁹ Larry McCann and Angus Gunn, *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1982).

⁹⁰ Maurice Yeates, *Main Street: Windsor to Québec City* (Toronto: Macmillan Press, 1975).

⁹¹ Mario Polèse and Richard Shearmur, “Why Some Regions Will Decline: A Canadian Case Study with Thoughts on Local Development Strategies.” *Papers in Regional Science* 85, no. 1 (2006): 25.

facilitated the creation of regional economies, which has caused economic dependence in many communities.⁹²

Innis argued that different staples products helped to shape distinctive regions in Canada. For example, the cod trade shaped the economy of the maritime region and the fur trade shaped the economy of central Canada. The region of Northeastern Ontario originally was sparsely populated by European settlers (or as Innis would call them, migrants), and the production of staples brought an influx of European settlers to the area.⁹³ The mining and paper industries facilitated the creation of settlements. The newly built towns in the region were built around the production of staples, and a specific regional economy evolved. In fact, single-sector communities are a key feature for regions that are reliant on staples production. Often these communities are built surrounding a central company that controls the extraction of natural resources. A central theme in the scholarship of single-sector communities is the historical development of what are known as company towns.⁹⁴ Company towns are a feature of single-sector communities, and most studies look at how the towns themselves not only shaped work life but also leisure time and social activities.⁹⁵ Many company towns did

⁹² See: Michael D. Ray, R. H. Lamarche, and Maurice Beaudin, "Economic Growth and Restructuring in Canada's Heartland and Hinterland: From Shift-Share to Multifactor Partitioning." *The Canadian Geographer*, no. 3 (2012): 296–317; Geoffrey R. Weller, "Hinterland Politics: The Case of Northwestern Ontario." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 10, no. 4 (1977): 727–754.

⁹³ Innis later wrote on the expansion of Ontario's staples industries in *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ontario From Outpost to Empire* (Toronto, ON: Ontario Historical Society, 1967).

⁹⁴ See: John S. Garner, ed., *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992); Neil White, *Company Towns: Corporate Order and Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Ajay Agrawal, Iain Cockburn, and Carlos Rosell, "Not Invented Here? Innovation in Company Towns," *Journal of Urban Economics* 67, no. 1 (2010): 78–89. Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: the Design of American Company Towns* (London, UK: Verso, 1995).

⁹⁵ Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

not allow for private land ownership, and either there were company-owned recreation centres or entertainment was provided on the fringes of the towns.⁹⁶

Although Innis's work has largely fallen out of favour with contemporary scholars of political economy, the development of staples production in Canada and its impact on regional development is still a central theme in many histories.⁹⁷ H. V. Nelles's *The Politics of Development* traces the history of the staples industries of forestry, mining, and hydro-electric power in Ontario, including the creation of what Innis first termed as "Empire Ontario."⁹⁸ In this new pattern of industrialization linked to northern resource extraction, Southern Ontario was characterized as "Empire Ontario" while the resource communities of the North were seen as "New Ontario."⁹⁹ Following Innis's theory on the development of regional communities, the resource industries in "New Ontario" helped to create a distinctive culture in the area.

The Ojibwa, Cree, and Algonquin first inhabited the region, and during the fur trade there were posts built near Temiskaming and Abitibi in 1682.¹⁰⁰ Large-scale resource extraction went beyond fur trading by the 1840s when the forestry industry started. In 1883, the Canadian Pacific Railway connected Sudbury to Montreal and Ottawa, and in 1886, the Ontario government began to build railway links northwest of

⁹⁶ Neil White, *Company Towns: Corporate Order and Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 64.

⁹⁷ See: Robin Neill, "Defence of the Staple Thesis of Canadian Economic Development," http://people.upei.ca/rneill/web_papers/staple_theo.html

⁹⁸ Henry Vivian Nelles, *Politics of Development: Forests, Mines, and Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849–1941*. Vol. 200. (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2005), 51.

⁹⁹ See: Michel Beaulieu, "A Historic Overview of Policies Affecting Non-Aboriginal Development in Northwestern Ontario, 1900–1990," in *Governance in Northern Ontario: Economic Development and Policy Making*, eds. Bob Segsworth and Charles Conteh (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 94–115.

¹⁰⁰ Abel, *Changing Places*, 18.

Sudbury into the Porcupine area where Timmins was eventually settled.¹⁰¹ The railway continued to expand, and by 1905 there were four separate train lines either planned or built in the region.¹⁰² Once the train lines were built, both mineral and paper production flourished, and the same train lines that were used to transport mineral resources from Northeastern Ontario to Toronto were also later used to transport cultural products like films from Toronto in order to provide entertainment to the workers in the region. Interestingly, the original First Nations tribes had a similar exchange with southern tribes as they exported copper and silver jewelry and in return received pottery and pottery making techniques.¹⁰³

Geographic and historical studies of Northeastern Ontario largely focus on the development of mining, company towns, and the immigrant labourers who populated the area.¹⁰⁴ Mining companies first came to Sudbury in 1886 to extract copper, and then silver in 1904. The first big mining “boom” was in what became known as the town of Cobalt when workers discovered silver during the building of Temiskaming and the

¹⁰¹ Abel, *Changing Places*, 43.

¹⁰² As Abel notes the building of the train lines was a complicated process with many delays and politicking

¹⁰³ Abel, *Changing Places*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ See: Olivia Saarinen, “Single-Sector Communities in Northern Ontario: The Creation and Planning of Dependent Towns,” in *Power and Place: Canadian Urban Development in the North American Context*, eds. Gilbert A. Stelter et al., 219–264 (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Ian Walter Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900–1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Nancy M. Forestell, “Bachelors, Boarding Houses and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multiethnic Mining Camp, 1909–1920,” in *A Nation of Immigrants, Women, Workers and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s*, eds. Franca Iacovetta et al., 251–291 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880–1929* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 143–163; Stanislao Carbone, “In Search of a Better Life: Emigration to Thunder Bay from a Small Town in Calabria.” *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 34, no. 2 (2002): 139–142. Marc Metsaranta, *Project Bay Street: Activities of Finnish-Canadians in Thunder Bay before 1915*. (Thunder Bay, ON: Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society, 1989).

Northern Ontario Railway in 1903.¹⁰⁵ The next boom was in the Porcupine in 1909 when gold was found. In all of these areas, mining companies built settlements near the worksites. In Sudbury, an adjacent town called Copper Cliff was created for workers. In Cobalt and in the Porcupine settlements were also built surrounding the mines. Within the relatively small geographic area of Northeastern Ontario, there were twelve settlements created, largely to house labourers working in the mining and paper industries. Some of these locations were completely controlled by a single company, such as in Iroquois Falls; some had privately owned land, like in Timmins; and others, like Ansonville, remained independent from resource companies.

A key feature of these communities was the ethnic makeup of the towns, which were largely made up of Italian, Ukrainian, and Finnish workers who migrated to Canada for these specific jobs. As mentioned in Chapter One, at 6.2 percent of the city population in 1931, Italians made up the third largest ethnic group after English and French settlers, based on census records, surpassing the sizeable Finnish community. A third important ethnic group in the town was the Ukrainians, who were as numerous as the Italians in the 1921 census but whose numbers diminished proportionately as the city's population grew, at which point Italians consistently made up the largest group after the English and French.¹⁰⁶

Social histories of the region focus on indigenous peoples, workers, and women in relation to mining but as a matter of labour and everyday life rather than in terms of

¹⁰⁵ It is important to note that most of these mineral deposits would have likely been known to the First Nations communities.

¹⁰⁶ These are figures based on Canadian census records and also published in Abel, *Changing Places*, 111.

economics and settlement.¹⁰⁷ In the 1980s, a project was commissioned in Timmins by Gerald Gold, whose students utilized both archival and oral history methodologies to examine the different ethnic communities in Timmins and the gold mining industry in the town.¹⁰⁸ They found that ethnic groups in the town had competing interests, and Peter Vasiliadis, who published a book on the project, focused on how interethnic competition negatively influenced labour organization in the town. His work, which includes significant oral history testimony collected during the project, is an important basis for my own study. Following the Gold Timmins project, historian Nancy Forestell wrote several pieces on gender relations in Timmins, again largely drawing upon oral history and archival accounts.¹⁰⁹ Finally, Kerry Abel wrote a monograph on the history of the Porcupine district focusing on both the immigrant communities and native peoples. Her work centred on the development of communities in the region, and like

¹⁰⁷ Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, "The New North in Canadian History and Historiography." *History Compass* 6, no. 2 (2008): 639–658.

¹⁰⁸ See: James Louis DiGiacomo, *They Live in the Moneta: an Overview of the History and Changes in Social Organization of Italians in Timmins, Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Institute for Behavioural Research, York University, 1982); James Louis DiGiacomo "The Italians of Timmins: Micro and Macro-Ethnicity in a Northern Resource Community." MA Thesis (social anthropology), York University, 1982; Lawrence, Lam, 'The Whites Accept Us Chinese Now': *The Changing Dynamics of Being Chinese in Timmins*, (Toronto, ON: Institute for Behavioural Research, 1983); Peter Vasiliadis, *The Truth Is Sometimes Very Dangerous: Ethnic Workers and the Rise and Fall of the Workers Cooperative in the Porcupine Camp* (Toronto, ON: Institute for Behavioural Research, 1983); Peter Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth: Interethnic Competition in a Northeastern Ontario Goldmining Centre* (New York: ams Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁹ See: Nancy Forestell, "All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Gendered Dimensions of Work, Family and Community Life in the Northern Ontario Goldmining Town of Timmins, 1909–1950," (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1993); "Women, Gender, and the Provincial North," in *Northern Visions*, ed. Kerry Abel et al., 107–116 (Peterborough, On: Broadview Press, 2001); "You Never Give Up Worrying": The Consequences of a Hazardous Mine Environment for Working-Class Families in Timmins, 1915–1950," in *Changing Lives*, ed. Margaret Kechnie et al., 198–212 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996); "Bachelors, Boarding-Houses, and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multi-Ethnic Mining Camp, 1909–1920," in *A Nation of Immigrants* ed. Iacovetta, et al., 251–291 (Toronto: University Toronto Press, 1998); "The Miner's Wife: Working-Class Femininity in a Masculine Context, 1920–1950," in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Kathryn McPherson et al., 139–157 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

my own project is a microhistory, which explores how the region impacted larger trends in Canadian cultural history.

The region of Northeastern Ontario is an important case study because so much of Ontario's culture is unknowingly linked to the area. As Kerry Abel writes in her introduction for *Changing Places*:

This subregion deserves to be better known, for its history has always been directly connected to events that made Canada what it is today. If you read a newspaper, wear gold jewellery, appreciate Canadian figure skating or hockey, have heard (or heard of) Shania Twain, live in a planned community, or have had occasion to bewail the policies of the Bank of Canada, your life has been affected by this region.¹¹⁰

Timmins, despite its remote location and origin as a company town, was able to foster a diverse and vibrant community that not only was the birthplace of Shania Twain and famous hockey players and figure skaters but also of Gordon Thiessen, the sixth governor of the Bank of Canada, and Nobel-winning economist Myron Scholes. Timmins was also where newspaper baron Roy Thomson got his start. In fact, Leo Mascioli helped Thomson rent the building where he started his first newspaper.

Timmins, like many company towns, was able to create a vibrant consumer culture, which was the basis for several successful businesses like the Mascioli chain and Thomson's *The Timmins Daily Press*. Despite relying on a single resource industry, company towns often have some diversification in their economies, which allows consumer businesses to develop. In an analysis of single-industry communities in Canada, Randall and Ironside concluded that these towns have more diversified

¹¹⁰ Abel, *Changing Places*, xxii.

economies than previously thought. Aggregated data from 1971 to 1986 showed that the labour market in Canadian mining communities had an equal amount of jobs in consumer services and public administration compared to occupations surrounding the dominant resource.¹¹¹ Although it is important to note that in many ways these numbers agree with Innis's staples theory, because manufacturing jobs are almost non-existent in single-industry towns.¹¹² In essence, service and government jobs help to diversify the economies of company towns.

In the case of Timmins, although mining comprised a large portion of the jobs, there was a large consumer goods industry that grew to support the burgeoning community. Leo Mascioli was not only a conduit for Italian labourers to work in the mining industry; he employed people in his theatres and hotels. He also helped fund other burgeoning industries in Timmins, including helping Roy Thomson's rise as a media baron, as mentioned above. Both Timmins and Leo Mascioli are peripheral figures in the history of Canada but both have played a central role in the development of Ontario as Canada's most populous and wealthiest province. In fact, the natural resources of Northeastern Ontario were fundamental to the development of the Ontario economy. It was within this resource economy that Leo was able to build a successful enterprise based on his early role as the town's immigrant labour agent—its padrone.

The Padrone of Northeastern Ontario

Leo Mascioli was an exceptional and almost mythical figure to the people of Timmins. Origin stories for businessmen like Mascioli are not uncommon, and his fantastical

¹¹¹ Randall and Ironside, "Communities on the Edge," 27.

¹¹² Randall and Ironside, "Communities on the Edge," 27.

biography was first published in a commemorative issue of *The Timmins Daily Press* dedicated to Mascioli Industries in 1939. The headline of this issue read: “Career of Mascioli Reads Like a Stranger Than Fiction Novel.” The article detailing Mascioli’s biography said that the “theme of a Horatio Alger novel typifies the life of Leo Mascioli who this month celebrates his thirty-fifth anniversary of enterprise in Northern Ontario. For the Mascioli story follows the hero through from bootblack to tycoon.”¹¹³ Son of a contractor, Leo grew up in a middle-class area of the town of Cuccollo in the Abruzzi region of Italy. *The Timmins Daily Press* reported that he first travelled to America at the age of nine with a family friend who he charmed into pretending to be his father for the voyage. Mascioli would later start his career in North America as a bootblack in Boston. He soon helped informally organize his fellow Italian labourers to travel as a group to Eastern Canada to work for the Marconi station in Nova Scotia. After a period spent in the Maritimes, he travelled to Cobalt in Northeastern Ontario during its silver rush, finally settling in the Porcupine district in 1911 at the start of its gold rush. Soon after he arrived, the camp was almost destroyed by a devastating fire.¹¹⁴

Like with the overall history of the region and how it has previously been written about, it is important to understand Mascioli’s role as the town’s padrone as well as the history of labour relations in the town. Mascioli’s theatres were successful because he had access to cheap labour and the support of the elites of Timmins who helped him gain access to land, building, and operation permits. Mascioli was able to become a power broker in the town because he was able to provide the mines with cheap and compliant

¹¹³ “Career of Mascioli Reads Like a Stranger Than Fiction Novel,” *The Timmins Daily Press*, March 27, 1939, third section, 1.

¹¹⁴ “Northern Ontario Swept by a Roaring Wall of Fire,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 12, 1911, 1.

workers. His theatres would be supported by the elites in the town not only because of his support of the mines during the Porcupine gold strike of 1912, but also because they were seen as a way to civilize the uncontrollable working classes whose continual labour disruptions were making the mines unprofitable.

Italian labourers were of great importance to the development of the mining communities in Northern Ontario because they were cheap and considered less radical than other ethnic workers. In Northern Ontario the vast majority of temporary seasonal workers in the mines were Italian, so that “in the summer months, more Italians were in the bush north of Sault Ste. Marie than all of Southern Ontario.”¹¹⁵ Italian labourers had a reputation for being cheap and for lacking labour organizational skills, which was why the mining companies desired them. Leo Mascioli drew on his previously acquired labour organization skills to act as a key conduit for the Italian labour market in the North, and he would later use the skills that he learned in building this labour circuit to build his theatre chain. As discussed in Chapter One, many of the characteristics of a *padrone* can be applied to Mascioli because he paid for workers to come over from Italy, and in turn they worked for him for a period of time until their debt was paid off. The *padrone* labour system was particularly important for the mining companies in their ongoing struggle to prevent labour disruptions. As Innis’s work points out, it was the large numbers of foreign labourers in the camp that prevented successful strikes from occurring in the mining communities of Northern Ontario.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Robert F. Harney, *Italians in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978), 9. Because of harsh weather conditions construction work was almost exclusively done during the summer months.

¹¹⁶ Harold Innis, *Settlement and the Mining Frontiers* (Toronto, ON: Macmillan, 1936), 353.

It was Mascioli's role as a labour agent that shaped his later business empire. Mascioli was one of many entrepreneurs who took advantage of the burgeoning resource economy in the area. With his Italian labourers, he helped to build the town of Timmins, and he also started several successful businesses. Mascioli not only worked with the mining companies, he also worked with lumber companies to bring in French Canadian bushworkers to the area.¹¹⁷ Even though Timmins permitted private land ownership, the mining companies essentially controlled most aspects of life in the towns in order to stop what they deemed radical labour organization. Mascioli's close relationships with the resource companies made him a trusted man in the region, and this would lead to further business opportunities

Mascioli's role in the town can be placed within the wider history of the Northeastern region and the contentious relationship between the mining companies and workers in the area. As discussed earlier, the history of the settlement of Northeastern Ontario occurred mostly in the twentieth century, and the first big mining boom was in the town of Cobalt after the Temiskaming & Northern Ontario Railway was constructed in 1903. In Cobalt, Mascioli worked for the O'Brien Mine and helped build the tramway from Cobalt to Haileybury. He also most likely provided workers for the mining companies, starting as a labour agent there. The early mines in Cobalt were largely small operations led by independent entrepreneurs.¹¹⁸ It was this first mining rush of "rich man" camps that created a whole generation of prospectors, miners, and businessmen that

¹¹⁷ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 178.

¹¹⁸ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 32.

would help build the future mining towns throughout the area, built by corporations with large amounts of capital and using a large cheap labour force.¹¹⁹

The problematic relationship between workers and mining companies in the region can be traced back to the Cobalt strike of 1907, which pitted *The Cobalt Miners Union Local 146* of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) against the mining companies. The WFM was associated with the Industrial Workers of the World (ISW) and had chapters in mining towns across North America, with most of the chapters located in the Western United States and British Columbia. This union was started in the American West, and was formed in a time of violent conflict between workers and mining companies known as the “labour wars.”¹²⁰ The WFM was a radical union that was heavily influenced by Marxist doctrine, and incorporated violence into what they saw as class warfare.

In 1906, the Cobalt Miners Union was formed as a means to counteract increasingly difficult labour conditions. In response to the union, the Cobalt mining companies formed the Temiskaming Mine Managers Association. This action resulted in the strike in July of 1907 when the Mine Managers Association, without consulting with workers, changed the wage scale, which largely decreased the miners’ pay. The strike was unsuccessful and short-lived but during the strike WFM organizers heavily criticized the mine owners with outlandish claims that managers were squandering money by

¹¹⁹ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 33.

¹²⁰ For more information on violent labour struggles in the American West see: Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) and Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph Anthony McCartin. *We Shall Be All: a History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

taking baths in milk and wine.¹²¹ The mine managers in turn took a hardline approach to workers that were involved in the strike and brought in unskilled labourers to replace the strikers.

The original workforce in Cobalt was made up of English, American, and French settlers, but the strike of 1907 brought an influx of Finnish, Italian, and Ukrainian unskilled labourers to take over from the original skilled and unionized labour force. The immigrant workforce worked for less money and longer hours than Canadian or American workers. The influx of Italian immigrant labour after the strike of 1907 caused an investigation by the Italian government in 1909 that reported on the deplorable conditions for workers.¹²² Consequently the strike resulted in both a contentious relationship between workers and the mining companies as well as a divide between workers. Peter Vasiliadis argues that the conditions after the 1907 strike resulted in unique divisions during the later formation of the Porcupine Camp. He writes:

Few other regions of Canada were to become so quickly divided economically, between capitalist English and French Canadians and proletarian ethnics, and politically, between a powerful Anglo–Franco authority structure and ethnic communities whose access to economic and political power was restricted by these same structures. The factors which brought about this division were the reactions of English and French Canadians to what they came to perceive as intrusions against their majority status and dominant group power as well as the response of immigrants who went from being sojourners to supporters of ethnic and class interests. This was the key alteration that occurred in the formative period of the Porcupine Gold Camp.¹²³

Another formative experience for the early Porcupine settlements was the large fire of 1911. This fire destroyed the original camp, and the official death count was

¹²¹ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 34.

¹²² Harney, *Italians in Canada*, 10.

¹²³ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 35.

seventy-three, but some sources put the final death toll at two to three hundred people.¹²⁴ The original town site that was destroyed was closer to the current town of South Porcupine, six miles away from the two largest mines, Dome and Hollinger. Dominant business owners, Noah Timmins and Fredrick Schumacher, saw the fire as an opportunity to relocate the workers, and after the fire they bought large tracts of lands near the Hollinger and Dome mines to help create the towns of Timmins and Schumacher. Fred Schumacher was an American investor who bought land surrounding the major mines in the area, which he would later sell for a large profit. Noah Timmins was the son of a prospector, fur trader, and the owner of the Timmins General Store in Mattawa, Ontario, which is located about 400 kilometres south of the town of Timmins. In 1910, Noah, with five other partners, incorporated Hollinger Mines, and he would go on to be involved in several other mining ventures in both Ontario and Quebec.

Timmins was created to house workers from the Hollinger mines, but unlike many company towns where companies directly controlled the land, Timmins had a private land owning system, and Noah Timmins sold land to several early entrepreneurs, including Leo Mascioli. Even though the company did not officially control the town and there was an elected town council, Hollinger essentially oversaw everything that happened in the town. For example, Hollinger's managers elected the Timmins Board of Education during secret elections held every New Year's Eve at midnight.¹²⁵ The mine also had a large role in who was elected to town council and the contracts awarded to companies. So even though there was private land ownership, Timmins was still very much controlled by Hollinger Mines.

¹²⁴ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 37.

¹²⁵ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 38.

The tight control that Hollinger had on the town would result in labour relations that were similar to those found in Cobalt, where there was a divide between the management class and the labourers, which would result in labour disruptions. After their defeat in Cobalt, the WFM continued to be involved in the region and agitated for violent class struggle between workers and mining companies. On April 23, 1910, the Porcupine Miners Union was formed, which was local 145 of the WFM. When gold was first mined in the Porcupine district, the mining companies paid higher wages because of how difficult it was to travel to the area; however, in 1912 the TNO Railway expanded to the edge of the camp making it more accessible. After this railway expansion, the mine managers decided to cut wages in the summer of 1912. The strike of 1912 was caused by both this wage decrease and because the mines required workers to work longer than hour-hour shifts. Even before the strike started, the Ontario government was investigating the implementation of an eight-hour workday for miners, but unions did not trust the special interests of the mining companies, so the Porcupine strike was seen as a way to help implement new regulations. Both sides took a hardline approach, and the WFM continued with the same class warfare rhetoric that was used during the Cobalt strike. The mining companies, in turn, refused to meet with union representatives, hired Thiel detectives, and worked with Leo Mascioli to bring in Italian strike-breakers.

It was his role in preventing labour disruptions that solidified Mascioli's position in the town, as he worked closely with Hollinger during the strike. Mascioli made a deal with Hollinger to keep the mines running, and it was rumoured that he brought many men

from his village in Italy to do so.¹²⁶ He also had connections with the larger padrone network in Toronto and Montreal, which helped him to provide strike-breakers.¹²⁷ During the strike Mascioli played an active role and was even arrested for assault.¹²⁸ The tensions of the strike culminated on December 2, 1912, when the striking workers came to confront the strike-breakers at the Goldfields Hotel. A large brawl broke out in the street and the Thiel detectives started shooting into the crowd and even tried to shoot the mayor, W. H. Wilson. The miners won some sympathy and court victories but in the end, after 208 days on strike, their victories were negligible. However, the Ontario government did pass legislation shortly after the strike that limited mine work to eight hours per day.

In the annual Hollinger report of 1912, the company's account of the strike was recorded. According to the company, the strike started unexpectedly on November 15, 1912. Shortly after the start of the strike Hollinger abandoned its boarding houses in Timmins, and it hired what they called "special police" to "protect the men and property."¹²⁹ Hollinger reported that the union was unjustified in starting the strike because its working conditions were better than other mines in Ontario. Hollinger paid \$3.25–\$3.75 for skilled labour, \$2.50–\$3.00 for unskilled labour, and housing was provided for \$0.60 a day. Miners worked nine-hour shifts and workers in the mill had eight-hour shifts. The Hollinger report was published on March 9, 1912, when there were twelve thousand men working in the mines, five hundred of these men were part of the original labour force. Many others had left, but at that point there were one hundred and

¹²⁶ Charlie Angus and Louie Palu. *Mirrors of Stone: Fragments from the Porcupine Frontier* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001), 18.

¹²⁷ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 71.

¹²⁸ Abel, *Changing Places*, 124.

¹²⁹ *Second Annual Hollinger Report* (Timmins, ON: Hollinger Mines, 1912), 15.

fifty men still on strike who were labelled “malcontents and professional agitators” by Hollinger. It was hoped that the government would “rid the district of this undesirable element,” because the strike had already cost the company \$100,000, which was largely because of the costs of hiring outside labour.¹³⁰ Presumably these were Leo Mascioli’s men, but he is not mentioned in the report.

In my interviews with members of the Timmins population, many people mentioned Mascioli’s role as the local labour agent, and almost all of my Italian respondents had ancestors who had worked for Mascioli. The former editor of *The Timmins Daily Press*, Gregory Reynolds, described the history of Mascioli in the region, saying:

Mister Mascioli came here—he was a business man—he saw an opportunity to provide labourers to the mines, so that’s how he got listed in the city—the town of Timmins’s first census—Leo Mascioli, boss of the Italians.¹³¹

It was this role as the “boss of the Italians” that facilitated Mascioli’s rise in the town and would later help him build a hotel and theatre chain. Mascioli seems to have been successful in business from his earliest days in Timmins, and the 1912 tax role reflects that he was a wealthy man and owned a significant amount of property. He is listed as a freeholder, and his total property assessment was \$3,610, which equivalent to about \$89,000 today, adjusting for inflation.¹³²

According to Peter Vasiliadis, it was Mascioli’s role in bringing in strike-breakers that contributed to his success, because the mining companies rewarded him with work

¹³⁰Second Annual Hollinger Report, 15.

¹³¹ Interview with author, July 23, 2015.

¹³² Town of Timmins Collector’s Roll 1912, Ontario Archives. F-1958-1-0-1.

contracts and land.¹³³ In 1913, the town of Timmins lacked a proper water distribution system, and the Ontario Board of Health decreed that the town needed to build a waterworks system.¹³⁴ The company hired to carry out the work was the Canadian Mining and Finance Co., which had a controlling interest in Hollinger Mines.¹³⁵ The contract between Canadian Mining and Finance Co. and the town of Timmins provided that the company could contract out elements of the labour, and Leo Mascioli was named as the subcontractor in the deal. Mascioli's team of workers also helped to build the town's sidewalks, which still bare his family name. With his role in building parts of the town's infrastructure established, he also turned to providing parts of the town's entertainment. Mascioli was awarded some of the first parcels of land on the main street of Timmins, which were sold to him by Noah Timmins. It was on this land that Mascioli started his theatre business. While there were already theatres throughout the Northeast, Mascioli would help usher in a new form of standardized entertainment. *The Timmins Daily Press* would later credit him as bringing "wholesome entertainment" to the mining towns in the region. As noted above, this type of regulated entertainment was seen as a way to civilize the "malcontents" who had supported the costly strikes in both Cobalt and Timmins.

Regulation and the Theatres

As mentioned above, shortly after the Porcupine Gold Strike of 1912, the Ontario government put into place new legislation limiting work for miners to eight hours a day, which was part of a larger trend improving labour conditions across North America. Roy

¹³³ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 84.

¹³⁴ "Bylaw 28 to authorize construction of a waterworks system," December 15, 1913, 1.

¹³⁵ Arthur A. Cole, *The Mining Industry in Northern Ontario* (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1915), 10.

Rosenzweig's pioneering social history of the industrial town of Worcester, Massachusetts, argued that legislation to decrease working hours had the impact of essentially creating the conditions for the mass leisure industry. While increased leisure time and disposable income were important in creating an entertainment industry, licensing, censorship, and regulatory bodies were also key to the development of consumer culture. Rosenzweig traced how leisure evolved from small neighbourhood saloons, which largely existed outside the capitalist system, to a completely monetized and commercial system with movie palaces and amusement parks. Early immigrant communities initially fashioned local leisure practices out of traditional pastimes from their homeland, such as *shebeens*, which were unlicensed home liquor establishments in the mid-nineteenth century amongst Irish workers in Worcester.¹³⁶ These informal "grog shops" were often owned and operated by women, and traditional cultural practices were often ritualized in these drinking establishments. For example, "treating" was an important cultural practice where patrons and even the owners would buy each other drinks, which fundamentally challenged the capitalist system.¹³⁷

Informal business operations like *shebeens* came under harsh scrutiny by government officials, and bureaucratic regulation was developed across North America that facilitated the rise of a formally regulated entertainment industry. In Northeastern Ontario, too, as mentioned above, there were unlicensed liquor establishments known as "blind pigs" that catered to specific ethnic groups and incorporated cultural practices much like the *shebeens*. The term "blind pig" was a slang term used in the United States and Canada in reference to establishments that sold illegal alcohol. Blind pigs were very

¹³⁶ Roy Rosenzweig. *Eight Hours For What We Will*, 41.

¹³⁷ Roy Rosenzweig. *Eight Hours For What We Will*, 49.

popular in Northeastern Ontario because both the Mining Act of 1906 and the Ontario Temperance act of 1916 banned legal dinking in mining towns. A report from *The Cobalt Nugget* in 1912 reported that blind pigs were the primary source of recreation and that there were as many as ninety blind pigs in the Porcupine district.¹³⁸ During the 1910s both local and provincial regulations were enacted that would lead to the rise of industrialized entertainment in Timmins and the disappearance of unregulated entertainment.

Regulating mass entertainment was equally of concern to reformers and police in Toronto, which led to province-wide regulations that applied to the Porcupine as well.¹³⁹ In Ontario in 1911 the Theatres and Cinematographs Act created the first government film censors in Canada. The provincial regulation of going to the movies had an effect on both the type of films shown but also where movies could be exhibited. This act had two clear purposes. First, the law continued existing regulations over the fire safety of structures used as moving picture houses, but second, it created a new government oversight over the type of films that were exhibited. The legislation created a licensing system that forced exhibitors to register, pay fees, and, after an amendment in 1913, have their theatres inspected. The Act also set up a Board of Censors that had to approve of every film screened in Ontario and made it illegal to show any film not approved by this board.

In addition to provincial licensing and fees, municipalities could also regulate and control amusements. In Timmins, the earliest bylaws regarding amusements date back to 1912. The first of these amusement bylaws required licenses for billiard halls, bowling

¹³⁸ Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs," 266.

¹³⁹ Moore, *Now Playing*, 113–153.

alleys, tobacco shops, and shooting galleries, along with the selling of unfermented wine and carbonated drinks, patent medicine or jewellery, and for exhibiting singing or “Punch and Judy” shows.¹⁴⁰ The licenses for amusement structures like billiard halls and bowling alleys included provisions that prohibited gambling, prostitution, and/or the sale of oysters and mussels. There was an additional bylaw specifically for theatres showing moving pictures and vaudeville acts, which also dates to 1912. This bylaw was primarily concerned with immorality and prohibited immoral shows, immoral images in the theatres, or immoral writings. What was considered “immoral” was not defined in these bylaws, giving authorities a vast amount of leeway in enforcement. There was also a specific licensing fee for theatres showing moving pictures, which was twenty-five dollars a year, and vaudeville performances required a fee of five dollars a night. These bylaws were enforced with threats of revoking licences and/or levying fines. In other words, if local authorities deemed a moving picture presentation immoral, they could shut down the theatres and force operators to pay penalties.

In the context of the rise of the Mascioli cinema chain, the regulation of theatres helped to facilitate the rise of an organized professional movie theatre chain in Northeastern Ontario, one requiring financial and political relations with multiple levels of government, in addition to the business of renting films and exhibiting them to audiences. In the earlier days of cinema, film was exhibited in many different types of locations, including formal social halls and makeshift commercial sites; with provincial regulation, purpose-built theatre spaces would become the dominant way that films were exhibited in Canada. In Northeastern Ontario, the evolution of theatres reflects this

¹⁴⁰ “Town of Timmins By Law number 4 on regulating certain callings and trades,” March 25, 1912.

change. In the early years of Timmins, there were several makeshift theatres and many were not contained in the public record because of their temporary nature. By the end of the 1910s, moving picture houses started to be constructed and purpose-built theatres that showed moving pictures were identified in the local papers. The following section concentrates on early film exhibition in the region and how it began to evolve in the 1910s. There were several other exhibitors who tried to gain success in the region, but they all failed because they lacked the resources that Mascioli had, not least his institutional support from the mining companies.

Early Movie-Going in the Northeast and Homosocial Leisure Culture

Entertainment first started to become industrialized in the nineteenth century with the corporate organization of vaudeville circuits across North America. During this time, there was a drive to increase the productivity of live entertainment: first by having large-size theatres, then by forming chains of theatres, and finally by forming centralized booking offices that routed the different acts in the most efficient and profitable way through the development of circuits.¹⁴¹ Film exhibition was a continuation of this vaudeville system, in part because the predominant metropolitan site for cinema was as the “chaser” at the end of vaudeville and theatrical bills until the rise of converted storefront nickelodeons, beginning in 1905—in Ontario the generic term was “theatorium” or simply “nickel show.”¹⁴² Moving picture programs lasted about an hour and repeated continually; they interspersed three or four short one-reel films with one or two illustrated songs and perhaps a small-scale stage act. This was sometimes described as vaudeville,

¹⁴¹ Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised: The Emergence of the International Film Industry, 1890–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 165.

¹⁴² It is important to note that in Canada, the term Nickelodeon was not used (as first noted by Moore).

but of a distinctly small-time character compared with the major corporate circuits. At the picture show, film solidified itself as a separate amusement and began its “second birth” as an institution unto its own.¹⁴³

The earliest film exhibitors in Canada exemplified Victorian entrepreneurship that aligned technological advances with laissez-faire capitalism.¹⁴⁴ The Holland Brothers were franchise license-holders for the early motion picture device, the Edison Kinetoscope, and then the Edison Vitascope. While many European countries have an “inventor” who introduced a machine independently from Edison, film in Canada began with a dependent relationship with the United States. Even in the silent film period when costs were relatively cheap, Canadian exhibitors could “raise capital at the local level—small merchant capital—to produce films, set up distribution offices, and build theatres, but would be swamped by the combined forces of industrial banking from the United States.”¹⁴⁵ Canadian capitalists would sometimes invest in the emerging industry but usually only in companies with structural ties to the United States.¹⁴⁶ As with other products operating branch-plants in Canada, when the U.S. border acted as a complication against the extension of American film industry practices in the north, companies simply integrated Canada into their business operations by outright ownership of Canadian subsidiaries.¹⁴⁷

A distinguishing feature of small-town and rural filmgoing was how long it took for purpose-built theatres to come to remote regions. While nickelodeons started to

¹⁴³ Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, *American Movie Audiences: From The Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London, UK: BFI, 1999), 2; André Gaudreault, and Philippe Marion. “A Medium is Always Born Twice...” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 3–15.

¹⁴⁴ Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, pp-3–5; as quoted in Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams American Control*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams American Control*, 45.

¹⁴⁶ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams American Control*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Moore, *Now Playing*, 98.

appear in metropolitan areas in 1905 and 1906, many smaller towns and peripheral areas went without dedicated movie theatres until the 1910s. In large cities such as New York, there would be specific ethnic theatres where ethnic vaudeville and later film would be shown.¹⁴⁸ In rural regions there was not the same level of choice, and the various different ethnic groups went to vaudeville halls and nickelodeons together. The earliest mentions of film in the region were in Sudbury and North Bay, both in 1897. In May 1897, a travelling show came to North Bay naming itself after the Cineograph projector, and later in the month another show came to Sudbury called the Canadagraph.¹⁴⁹ In 1904, the London Bioscope Living Canada films were shown in Sudbury. These films were made by British filmmaker and exhibitor F. Guy Bradford and his assistant Joseph Rosenthal. The films shot in 1902 were part of the Living Canada series commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

It is hard to determine the type of film programming available in the mining communities of the Northeast because there are not many newspapers that predate 1905 in the archives. One of the earliest newspapers in the region is from the town of New Liskeard, which, since 2004, is now part of the amalgamated city of Temiskaming Shores. Paul Moore discovered periodic early picture shows in New Liskeard, and in 1907, there was a weekly circuit from North Bay to Englehart with shows likely presented in Cobalt, Haileybury, and New Liskeard along the way, one night at each place weekly.¹⁵⁰ A supplement from *The Temiskaming Herald*, from February 1905, includes a list of all of

¹⁴⁸ See: Judith Thissen, "Jewish Immigrant Audiences in New York, 1905–14," in *American Movie Audiences: From The Turn of the Century to the Early*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, 25 (London BFI, 1999).

¹⁴⁹ Paul S. Moore, "Mapping the Mass Circulation of Early Cinema: Film Debuts Coast-To-Coast in Canada in 1896 and 1897," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 68.

¹⁵⁰ From newspaper reports shared with author.

the notable buildings in the town, and no theatre is listed. The only noted amusement place was a bowling alley and billiard hall located in the Hotel Canada. I did not find any references to theatres until 1908 in New Liskeard, and these ads only contained information about vaudeville shows, which was typical for Canadian newspaper theatre advertisements at the time. The Orange Theatre on March 27, 1908, advertised a vaudeville show that “contained mechanical effect and was free from vulgarity.” There was also an ad on March 27, 1908, about a prize fight held at the Wonderland Theatre. The ad indicated that the fight would not interfere with the regular performances, but it did not list what the program of these performances was.

Before Leo Mascioli came to Timmins to build his theatre empire, he was in Cobalt during the silver rush. It is not known if he had any involvement with film exhibition at that point in his career, but he must have been influenced by the mining town’s vibrant leisure culture during its silver rush. Cobalt during the 1910s was a booming mining town with five theatres. The Orpheum, Lyric, Empire, and Idle Hour theatres all had a combination of vaudeville and film programming, with ads for the Bijou promoting a program consisting only of moving pictures. In Cobalt, workers lived adjacent to the mines, and while mining companies created social clubs that showed moving pictures, musical shows, and public lectures, miners would often take the streetcar into town on Saturday nights.¹⁵¹ The downtown of Cobalt was filled with restaurants, poolrooms, saloons, burlesque halls, oyster bars, shooting galleries, brothels, and theatres. Because of the Miners Act, which did not allow for the sale of intoxicating liquor near mines, there were also several bootlegging underground establishments in the

¹⁵¹ Doug Baldwin, “A Study in Social Control: The Life of the Silver Miner in Northern Ontario.” *Labour* 2 (1977): 99.

town.¹⁵² It is important to note that there were still legal saloons but they could only sell Star Beer, which had 2 percent alcohol. To purchase legal alcohol, miners would have to travel to licensed hotels in the nearby town of Haileybury, Ontario.

The Cobalt Nugget microfilm starts with the year 1908 but is sporadic, and the first references to theatres that I was able to find were from 1910. The year 1910 was a defining year for film in Cobalt because the theatre business expanded with several new theatres that showed both films and vaudeville shows. On January 17, 1910, the Empire Theatre had its grand opening in the town. The advertisement listed numerous vaudeville acts including Edward Chandler who was described as a “refined Irish comedian, club swinging and wooden shoe dancer,” and the “latest New York Moving Pictures and Illustrated songs” were also advertised. The headline the next day in *The Cobalt Nugget* was: “Hundreds Were Unable to Get into Crowded House on Opening Night.” *The Cobalt Nugget* reported that the opening night festivities went on for six hours and did not end until two o’clock in the morning. The Empire Theatre was located on Lang Street along with most of the theatres in the town. Lang Street was situated in the poorer section of the town, and there were several bootlegging establishments on the street.¹⁵³

The majority of the amusements were vaudeville acts in the town and film was always part of a larger show. There were also “illustrated songs” as part of the regular program. The illustrated song was used as an interlude between films so that films could be rewound. They were also a mechanism to circulate popular music before the advent of the radio. The illustrated song was always advertised in tandem with photoplays in the weekly ads for the theatres. Illustrated songs and film both had a reduced priority

¹⁵² The only licensed liquor providers were hotels in the nearby town of Haileybury, Ontario.

¹⁵³ Doug Baldwin, “A Study in Social Control,” 102.

compared to vaudeville in the advertisements found in *The Cobalt Nugget*. As was the case in New Liskeard, vaudeville acts were also named in the advertisements while individual film names or songs were not.

The two main vaudeville theatres were the Lyric Theatre and the Orpheum Theatre. Both theatres predominantly showcased vaudeville acts but also showed moving pictures. The Lyric Theatre was listed as a location for travelling vaudeville acts in the 1909 edition of *Variety*.¹⁵⁴ In March 1910, a large stage production called the “Royal Chef” was put on by an acting troupe from New York at the Lyric Theatre. The Orpheum Theatre was the main rival for the Lyric Theatre, and in March 1910, *The Cobalt Nugget* reported that W. B. Naylor, who was the owner of a North Bay hotel, had signed the largest theatrical deal in the North. Naylor was reportedly acting for a large unnamed Montreal syndicate and leased the Orpheum Theatre with an option to purchase. It was reported that the syndicate would help remodel the theatre, making it a “first class theatre bringing attractions that used to come no further north than North Bay.” *The Cobalt Nugget* reported that the Orpheum Theatre would continue to act as a vaudeville and moving picture house but would have better quality attractions. *The Cobalt Nugget* claimed the new pictures shown at the Orpheum Theatre were “the best thrown on a canvas,” and each film would last twenty-two minutes.

Another Italian exhibitor, Anthony Giachino, is the best remembered early theatre operator in Cobalt, and he not only exhibited films but also produced films in the area. In an article from the *Motion Picture World* from October 28, 1916, they reported that Anthony Giachino was “probably the oldest man in point of connection with the industry

¹⁵⁴ “Out of Town,” *Variety*, 1909, 20.

in Northern Ontario.” It also reports that he opened up the Bijou Theatre in March 1910 and the New Grand Theatre in 1914.¹⁵⁵ Giachino also opened a theatre in Haileybury, which was closed in 1916 due to unfavourable conditions.¹⁵⁶ *The Cobalt Nugget* advertised the opening of the Bijou Theatre with a small article on March 10, 1910. This article indicated that the Bijou would only show photoplays and illustrated songs, that it would join the other theatres on Lang Street, and that Mr. Giachino was the proprietor. Unlike the Lyric Theatre and Orpheum Theatre, the Bijou Theatre did not regularly advertise its programming, other than the brief mention of the opening on March 10, 1910—the new playhouse was not covered like the other theatres, which all had regular columns on page 5 of the newspaper.

When specific films at any of the theatres were advertised they were shown at least a few months after they played in other locations, but were nevertheless often fairly recent releases. On January 21, 1910, *The Cobalt Nugget* reported that the *Johnson Ketchel Fight Picture* would be shown at the Idle Hour Theatre. The fight was conducted on October 16, 1909, and was shown throughout the United States in November 1909, and it premiered in Vancouver on December 10, 1909. Despite the fact that Cobalt was a booming mining town with a popular vaudeville industry because of its location, it did not receive films at the same time as larger, more central communities. Although the *Johnson Ketchel Fight Picture* did play only one month after playing in Vancouver, which indicates that Cobalt was not as remote as some communities.

¹⁵⁵ “Giachino Building Another Theatre,” *Moving Picture World*, October 28, 1916, 561.

¹⁵⁶ “Canada,” *Motion Picture News*, Jan–Feb 1916, 1212.

In 1919, *The Moving Picture World* published a report on the unique problems in showing films in the Canadian North, which focused on theatres in the Temiskaming region. The report mentioned that programming at the theatres was not the typical five reel productions, which were becoming the norm in most theatres across North America, and instead they showed two reel subjects of “ancient vintage.” The theatre also exhibited out-dated newsreels, and it was reported that “release dates are of no consequence to these Northerners.” The makeup of the audience was described as multicultural including “Indians, French, English, and Italians.” The article also notes that the theatre operators in the area did not regularly advertise in newspapers and instead relied on word of mouth or printed postings in local stores and trading posts.¹⁵⁷ The problems described in this report were clearly found in the theatres in Cobalt and would also be found in the early theatres in Timmins.

Despite the popularity of theatres in Cobalt in both the case of W. B. Naylor’s Orpheum Theatre and Anthony Giachino’s theatres, a successful regional chain did not evolve from the theatres in the town, most likely due to the fast decline or bust of the Cobalt silver rush. Much like Dawson City, Cobalt had a fast rise and decline with the population figures declining from 10,000 in 1909 to 5,638 in 1910. Naylor and his Montreal syndicate most likely pulled out of the Orpheum Theatre not long after the bust. Giachino did remain in Cobalt, but his lack of revenue must have influenced the shuttering of his expansion in nearby Haileybury. Giachino, while a popular figure in the town, did not have the same connections that Mascioli was able to cultivate in his role as a labour agent working for the mining companies. The other difference with Giachino

¹⁵⁷ W. M. Gladish, “Where the Lights Are Northern,” *The Moving Picture World*. March 8, 1919, 1325.

was Mascioli's ability to find non-Italian partners and financiers to help fund his later expansion.

Despite the problems of showing film and the lack of advertising in newspapers, early shows were of great importance to the communities of Northeastern Ontario. As Paul Moore points out:

Having a local encounter with cinema, and having local scenes filmed, was thus linked to being modern and civilized—a way of marking how this part of Canada was settled by people other than First Nations communities.¹⁵⁸

The early shows that exhibited both local and international films helped to shape these mining communities and the immigrant populations of the region. It is important to note that the unregulated theatres in Cobalt in the early twentieth century were not ideal in integrating immigrant working class audiences. The early theatres in Cobalt were located on the infamous Lang, which was also populated with illegal drinking establishments and brothels. These types of theatres did not have the same level of support that Mascioli would later garner for his theatres.

Early Theatres in Timmins

Mapping early film exhibition in Timmins, like the rest of the region, is difficult because of the lack of newspaper sources. *The Porcupine Advance*, which began in March 1912, was Timmins's only early paper, but copies are lost for the years 1913 and 1914. In 1912 there are two theatres advertised in the newspaper, the Rex Theatre in the first half of the year and the Majestic Theatre in the latter part of the year. The Rex Theatre and the Majestic Theatre showed vaudeville acts and photoplays, and neither was owned or

¹⁵⁸ Moore, "Mapping Mass Circulation," 59.

operated by Leo Mascioli. Both the Rex Theatre and the Majestic Theatre regularly had small advertisements on the last pages of the newspaper predominantly highlighting vaudeville acts rather than film titles, similar to the early theatres in Cobalt. The Majestic Theatre was billed as “The House of High Class Photoplays” and the Rex Theatre was billed as “The Home of Refined Amusement.” Advertisements for the Rex Theatre disappeared in the latter part of 1912 while those for the Majestic Theatre continued until the end of the 1912 edition of *The Porcupine Advance*.

Both the Rex Theatre and the Majestic Theatre were located in South Porcupine, which is adjacent to Timmins. A travelling showman named Charlie Stevens managed the Rex Theatre, and James Fera was the owner and operator of the Majestic Theatre. Diane Armstrong, a reporter for *The Timmins Daily Press*, has done extensive research on the early theatres in the campsite in her weekly history columns in the newspaper. She found that the Majestic Theatre was used as not only a movie and vaudeville house but also as a church and a place for town meetings. As in Cobalt, fight pictures were very popular, and the theatre employed a drummer for these pictures. Local musicians would provide sound effects for the silent films, and the theatres also had piano players. One of Mascioli’s later employees, Gene Colombo, played the piano at these first theatres in South Porcupine.¹⁵⁹

The manager of the Rex Theatre, Charlie Stevens, practiced numerous gimmicks that were common in theatres across North America.¹⁶⁰ One of his most intriguing was a “Give a Baby Away” contest in August of 1912. The contest was first advertised on August 16, 1912, with an article in *The Porcupine Advance* reporting that a live baby

¹⁵⁹ Email from Diane Armstrong to author dated August 8, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ For more information about common contests see: Jessica Leonora Whitehead, “Local Newspaper Movie Contests and the Creation of the First Movie Fans,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 22 (2016).

would be given away at the theatre. It was reported by the newspaper that the management of the Rex Theatre was well versed in theatrical advertising and they were regularly conducting novelty stunts. The baby contest was the latest in a series of these stunts, and the newspaper reported that at the Monday night show, the manager would give a live baby away to the person with the winning coupon. This type of contest was not an anomaly, and was not the only example of a baby giveaway contest in Canada.¹⁶¹ In an interview with Nat Taylor, the founder of Cineplex, he referenced that an “old time showman” named Charlie Stevens ran a baby contest in Kitchener where a pig dressed as a baby was given to the contest winner.¹⁶² It is very likely that this may have been the same Charlie Stevens because Nat Taylor, who was born in 1906, said Charlie had been in the business most of his life.

Similar to theatres in Cobalt and New Liskeard, the early theatres in Timmins directly targeted the large male population employed in the mining camps. Nancy Forestell posits that a homosocial leisure culture was found in northern towns, shaped by the all-male working conditions and boarding houses. This distinctive public male culture helped to create leisure activities that revolved around pursuits such as drinking, gambling, prostitution, and fighting.¹⁶³ Fight pictures and even live boxing matches were a very popular part of the entertainment in the early years of the theatres in Timmins. How Timmins’s leisure culture was distinctive is an important research question. In order to examine this question, I have conducted a careful reading of the early articles in *The*

¹⁶¹ See: Gregory Canning, “Moving Pictures at the Opera House.”

¹⁶² Nat Taylor Interview, Picture Pioneer Archive, Tape 4.

¹⁶³ Forestell, “Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs”, 264.

Porcupine Advance in order to explore the cinema-going culture in the first years of Timmins's existence.

There have not been many studies of cinema-going in Canadian small towns, but Paul Moore's typology for Canadian newspaper coverage during the emergence of nickelodeons is important to keep in mind. Moore found that newspapers in small communities tended to cover film as a routine part of the town's events and had fewer ads than small cities, while larger cities like Toronto only reported on nickel shows when something exceptional happened like a fire. In 1912, Timmins could be classified as a village in Moore's typography as it had four thousand people or less. This type of newspaper had a much higher likelihood of having noteworthy mentions of theatres, which were often included in the "News in Brief" section. Although there were periods when the Rex Theatre and the Majestic Theatre were sometimes covered closely, the coverage was not consistent. Regular coverage about theatres did not occur in Timmins until 1915 when Mascioli's Empire Theatre was advertised and covered daily.

Without the availability of archived newspapers, it is impossible to exactly determine when Mascioli's first Empire Theatre opened. A later history of Mascioli Industries, written by *The Timmins Daily Press*, describes the first Empire Theatre opening in 1912. *The Timmins Daily Press* reported that the first Empire Theatre opened in the back of a general store on Third Street near where the Palace Theatre would later be built. The first makeshift theatre had old kitchen chairs and used an old, unreliable Edison projector. According to an interview with Pete Bardesson, the first night they had sixteen patrons who each paid twenty-five cents, and they made four dollars in

profits.¹⁶⁴ In 1912, the average daily wage for miners was two dollars per day, so twenty-five cents for a ticket was deemed a fair price according to Pete. The early theatre company was made up of Pete Bardessono and Leo Mascioli with two other short-lived business partners named W. P. Navarre and J. T. Watson. A.E. Gentile and Gene Columbo were also involved in the early business. Norm Mascioli, Leo's nephew, told me that Leo also projected films around the camps on transportable screens in the early days.

In 1913, a more permanent Empire Theatre was constructed across the street on Third Street. This theatre was described as being where Eaton's Groceria was, and after studying the city directories, I determined it was most likely located where the current Coffee Warehouse is in Timmins. Leo was quoted in *The Timmins Daily Press* history as saying that the second Empire Theatre was poorly constructed and had to be rebuilt. I found an article in *The Porcupine Advance* where it was reported that the theatre was remodelled in 1923. The theatre became known as the Old Empire Theatre when the New Empire Theatre was constructed in 1916.

As mentioned above, the 1913 and 1914 editions of *The Porcupine Advance* have been lost, and by the 1915 edition, the earlier theatres have disappeared and only Mascioli's Empire Theatre had consistent advertisements. There is a marked difference in how the Empire Theatre is advertised compared to earlier theatres. In reviewing the papers from 1912 and those from 1915, it is clear that Mascioli's Empire Theatre engaged more directly with the local community than the earlier theatres. On the front page of *The Porcupine Advance* there was a regular column about the coming attractions at the

¹⁶⁴ "Four Dollars Receipts At First Movies Here," *The Timmins Daily Press*, March 27, 1939 (third section), 1.

Empire Theatre. This type of column is in line with the larger history of theatre advertising in newspapers, and Moore points out that there was a shift in articles and advertising of theatres in the mid-1910s, and it was during this period that newspapers began to cover theatres more closely.¹⁶⁵ While the Empire Theatre of 1915 clearly had more advertising and organization there was still some commonality with the earlier theatres. The Empire Theatre continued to show fight pictures and have live fighting events. Live fights occurred regularly at the Empire Theatre on Saturday nights because patrons would not have to get up for work the next day.¹⁶⁶

In 1915, there were possibly three theatres in Timmins, but it is hard to determine the exact operations because only the Empire Theatre was regularly advertised in the newspaper. Kings Theatre was occasionally advertised in the paper and there was a re-opening ad for it on October 29, 1915. The article, in conjunction with the re-opening notice, mentioned that the theatre was situated behind a staircase and many people did not know that it was a theatre. In 1917, it was later advertised as a “parlour of amusements” with billiards and bowling, so it appears that its time as a theatre was short-lived. The other possible early theatre is the Royal Theatre. It was mentioned in the *Toronto Sunday World* as part of an ad for the serial *The Black Box* as the location in Timmins that was showing the many episodes of the film.¹⁶⁷ This could have been a misprint, as I was not able to find any mentions of the Royal Theatre in *The Porcupine Advance*.

Even though Mascioli’s theatres had regular advertisements and news stories in 1915, he had to grapple with getting films to the remote area. In December 1915, *The*

¹⁶⁵ Paul Moore, “The Social Biograph,” 271.

¹⁶⁶ Forestell, “Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs,” 264. Forestell citing article in *The Porcupine Advance*, September 3, 1915.

¹⁶⁷ “See the Black Box at These Theatres,” *Toronto Sunday World*, March 14, 1915, 48.

Porcupine Advance published a reflection on the year's programming at the Empire Theatre. While the newspaper commended the theatre for the excellent films shown over the past season, the article noted that some of the films were in poor condition. This was blamed on the fact that the management had to rely on an "exchange in Toronto."¹⁶⁸ Because producers could not keep up with demand, films were rented, and distribution exchanges were formed that rented films to exhibitors at a flat rate.¹⁶⁹ In a 1916 article from *Motion Picture News*, it was reported that the theatres in Timmins used the Universal Service Exchange.¹⁷⁰ Despite a demand for Canadian-made films and some Canadian film companies, almost all Canadian film exchanges were subsidiaries of American companies or signed exclusive franchise deals with American distributors.

The early days of cinema-going in the Porcupine region can be characterized as having temporary and haphazard exhibition spaces that were hastily constructed and multifunctional. These early theatres played both small-time vaudeville and other live-performance acts, and sometimes were not even built to serve as theatres. The first Empire Theatre was in a general store, and King's Theatre was not even visible from the street, situated as it was behind a staircase. These early spaces in Timmins showed vaudeville, illustrated songs, and even functioned as dance halls. With government regulation of theatres and the development of chains, the experience of going to the show would drastically change by the end of the 1910s with the building of the first dedicated movie house, the New Empire Theatre in 1916. At the start of the new decade, Mascioli and his partners would build their chain, Northern Empire, in towns across the Northeast.

¹⁶⁸ "Empire Theatre Coming Attractions," *The Porcupine Advance*, December 23, 1915, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, 47.

¹⁷⁰ "Directory of New Theatres," *Motion Picture News* (Jan–Feb 1916), 1212.

Starting with the New Empire Theatre, Mascioli fundamentally changed how people were entertained in this region as he brought them for the first time modern standardized entertainment.

The New Empire Theatre

The Porcupine Advance first reported on June 14, 1916, that a “model play house” would be built in Timmins, Ontario, and that it would be the finest theatre in the North. The proposed theatre was reported to have 900 seats with a first class stage and a \$400 “satin fibre screen.” The theatre was built by the architect J. Joannis and reportedly cost \$30,000 to build.¹⁷¹ The early coverage of the theatre largely focused on the technical innovations of the building, the outside specialists brought in, the cost, and the significance of the building to the town of Timmins. In the opening coverage, *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the theatre would rival any in the North, and was comparable to new theatres in Toronto. This coverage is distinctive from that pertaining to any of the other moving picture theatres in the region as there were regular articles on the building and opening of the theatre.

The theatre opened on October 23, 1916. As mentioned in the introduction, the opening of the New Empire Theatre was an important event in Timmins that was headline news. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that six hundred people were seated for the opening event but countless others were turned away. The opening event had several live musical acts including the Gold Dust Male Quartet and Mr. and Mrs. Appel who sang “The Rosary” and “Ava Maria.” The opening photoplay was *Naked Hearts* from Universal’s Bluebird Photoplays. This was a five-reel picture based on the Tennyson’s

¹⁷¹ “The New Empire Theatre Will be a Modern Playhouse,” *The Porcupine Advance*, June 14, 1916, 1.

love poem “Come into the Garden Maud,” that had first been released in the United States in May of 1916.

One of the major themes addressed in the coverage of the New Empire Theatre’s opening was that it was a modern theatre that demonstrated Timmins’s evolution. *The Porcupine Advance* spent a significant portion of the coverage discussing the innovative equipment and attributes of the building. The new theatre was said to have all the latest theatre innovations including a large stage, fire extinguishers, a Dunham heating system, opera chairs, an air purification system, and the latest motion picture projector. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the theatre was “second to none this side of North Bay.” The theatre was also Timmins’s first three-storey structure and according to the newspaper, the building itself was a great accomplishment for a town that had only existed for six years.

Another important part of the coverage was about the importance of a modern theatre like the New Empire Theatre to the town of Timmins, which was a theme that was repeated when the Palace Theatre opened twenty years later. According to *The Porcupine Advance*, the New Empire Theatre would give the citizens of Timmins a place for amusement and entertainment, which the town was in desperate need of. As discussed above, the early entertainment options in Timmins revolved around brothels, blind pigs, and billiard halls. The introduction of modern cinemas would fundamentally shift how the people of Timmins spent their leisure time, and the start of this change can be traced to the opening of the New Empire Theatre.

The opening of the theatre was also a mechanism by which to expose immigrant miners to Canadian patriotism. Movie theatres during World War I in Canada became

patriotic spaces, and the theatres in Timmins similarly helped to indoctrinate the immigrant miners into Canadian patriotism.¹⁷² During the opening, the head of the Timmins Red Cross, Dr. John Archibald McInnis, acted as the master of ceremonies, and he scolded the people of Timmins for not giving enough money to support the war effort. In his speech he told the audience it was their patriotic duty to give more money, saying, “The people of Canada can hardly realize there is a war going on, and I think that your little *mite* that you should give this evening will be rewarded a hundred fold to our boys who are sacrificing their lives and homes to fight the battles of the Empire.”¹⁷³ This backdrop of increased Canadian patriotism was undoubtedly beneficial to Mascioli and his partners’ endeavours to expand their Northern Empire Theatre chain throughout the region.

World War I: The Expansion

World War I had a positive impact on Mascioli’s theatre business and the Empire Theatre chain would become strongly associated with the patriotic fervour of the country. Despite the fact that both Mascioli and Bardessono were Italian, they were able to position the chain as operating patriotic theatres. Both the Old Empire Theatre and New Empire Theatre held regular events to support the war effort. During World War I in Canada, many non-native Canadians were seen as suspect during this time of intense wartime patriotism, but Mascioli and other Italians in Timmins used the war to help prove their loyalty to Canada.

¹⁷² See: Moore, “Nationalist Film-Going without Canadian-Made films?,” 155–163.

¹⁷³ “The New Empire Theatre Will be a Modern Playhouse,” *The Porcupine Advance*, June 14, 1916, 1.

At the outbreak of the war in July 1914, Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austro-Hungary but remained neutral. Italy did not enter the war on the Allied side until May 1915. According to Peter Vasiliadis, by World War I there was a clear divide between English Canadians and immigrant workers, which was based on ideas of whiteness. In Timmins, as with many areas in Canada, Italians along with other ethnic groups were not seen as white.¹⁷⁴ Vasiliadis notes that men like Leo Mascioli and his later partner Charles Pierce, who was of Russian-Jewish origins, were able to transcend these ethnic divides based on their business acumen. Vasiliadis argues that even before the entrance of Italy onto the side of Britain, Italians were not seen as enemies in Timmins, as other ethnic groups were, because of their lack of labour organization and their high enlistment rates during the war.¹⁷⁵ This enlistment increased after May 1915 with many Italians also joining the Italian army to fight against the Triple Alliance. On September 3, 1915, *The Porcupine Advance* reported that more than thirty Italians working in the Porcupine Gold Camp had been called up to fight for Italy. In the annual report from Hollinger from 1915, it further stated that several workers were lost due to the war, and the report specifically mentions that several employees left to fight for the Italian army, including Mascioli's associate Andy Gentile.¹⁷⁶

One patriotic advertising strategy for the Empire Theatre was to hold benefit nights for army recruits. On October 22, 1915, one of these events was held to honour the new recruits that were leaving the Porcupine for the war. The headline in *The Porcupine Advance* was, "When Empire Theatre at Timmins Was Packed to Overflowing" and the

¹⁷⁴ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 87.

¹⁷⁵ Vasiliadis, *Dangerous Truth*, 90.

¹⁷⁶ *Fifth Annual Hollinger Report* (Timmins, ON: Hollinger Mines, 1915), 7.

article described a large sendoff for the soldiers. The newspaper reported that the theatre operators were not content with only showing the usually good films but also added singers Slim Haliwell and Kel Gamble, who sang the popular song “I’ll be Leaving in the Morning, Mollie Darling.” The event raised \$850 for the recruits, and *The Porcupine Advance* concluded that “everyone went away more than pleased and with words of commendation for the management of the theatre for the generosity and patriotism which they show on all occasions of public interest.”

Patriotism became synonymous with the Empire Theatres in Timmins, and patriotic shows and promotions both ran at the theatres. World War I had a significant effect on the Canadian film industry, as there was a movement away from American-produced films. The patriotic fervour caused by the war helped to create a climate where American films that had excessive shots of American flags were banned by censorship boards, and thirty Canadian film companies were created between 1914 and 1922.¹⁷⁷ The Canadian government also got involved in increasing the proliferation of patriotic films through the Motion Picture Committee of the Food Controller.¹⁷⁸ There were also more British films exhibited, and the Canadian newsreel business took off and became a staple in shows during this period. Despite the increase in Canadian productions and more Allied-produced films exhibited, the overarching structures of distribution remained the same, with American companies still controlling the exchanges and the vast majority of films shown in Canada remained American-made.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams American Control*, 51.

¹⁷⁸ See: Cox, “The Rise and Fall of the Allens,” 44–81.

¹⁷⁹ Moore, “Nationalist Filmgoing without Canadian-Made Films?” 155.

The nationalistic practices of exhibitors during World War I was wide-spread across English-speaking Canada, and exhibitors would routinely run war funding initiatives wherein the box office was donated to the war effort, and they would even hold recruitment drives. Both of these efforts were routine at the Old Empire Theatre and New Empire Theatre in Timmins. Paul Moore proposes that this effort on the part of Canadian showmen constituted a sense of national identity without the need for them to show only Canadian or Allied-made films.¹⁸⁰ Moore writes:

The act of movie-going, of gathering as a mass public, demonstrated how the new mass culture effectively enfranchised those without formal citizenship. Juveniles, women, and foreign-born were welcome to join the mass public, facilitated by the patronage of the city's showmen working collectively to make movie-going a form of practical patriotism.¹⁸¹

In Timmins, it was World War I that helped transform cinema-going, and it was during this time that the Empire Theatre chain was formed and expanded from one small theatre in Timmins to several theatres both in Timmins and in the surrounding communities.

Pete Bardessono and American Corporatism

The story of the Northern Empire chain is one of how two men used their different skills to build a business that spanned the Northeastern region of Ontario. While other exhibitors like Giachino in Cobalt attempted to build unsuccessful chains in the region, Leo and Pete were able to build their chain with a combination of the old and new world. They used Leo's access to labour and his construction expertise, combined with Pete's knowledge of American business and self-promotion to solidify the chain in the region.

¹⁸⁰ Moore, "Nationalist Filmgoing without Canadian-Made Films?" 158.

¹⁸¹ Moore, "Nationalist Filmgoing without Canadian-Made Films?" 158.

In fact, in the American trade press Pete Bardessono was identified as the proprietor of the New Empire Theatre in *The Moving Picture Weekly*, Universal's house paper for exhibitors and fans interested in its films. Bardessono had a telegram published in the magazine on the popularity of Universal-produced Bluebird Photoplays.¹⁸² Bardessono wrote, "Bluebird's *Three Godfathers* played to capacity houses. Shoot us all the Bluebirds you can. They get the dough." Pete clearly played an integral role in the theatres' distribution deals, and his name is mentioned several more times than Leo's in American film trade papers in 1916. Perhaps this was simply because he wrote the regular updates about their business news in Northern Ontario, but at least once he was noted as the manager of their theatre operations.¹⁸³

Pete Bardessono remains largely an enigma in the history of the Northern Empire Theatre chain. During the early years, he played a large role in the business and was more closely identified with the theatres, but by the late thirties and forties, Mascioli was the face of the theatre chain and is now the person most remembered in Timmins as the showman of the North. However, it is clear that in the first years of the theatre chain, Pete played an integral role in advertising within the operations. Pete was particularly involved in promoting the chain in the press during the War, and his eventual service in the army helped to brand the theatres as a patriotic business.

Oliver Zunz proposed that corporate capitalism split the educated middle class into two groups: the independent entrepreneur and the salaried professional.¹⁸⁴ In the

¹⁸² Note that a Bluebird Photoplay also played at the opening of the New Empire Theatre, as mentioned above.

¹⁸³ "New Theater for Timmins, Ont.," *Moving Picture World*, August 5, 1916, p. 927.

¹⁸⁴ See: Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

development of the Northern Empire Theatre chain both Pete Bardessono and Leo Mascioli played key roles in its shift from a local to a regional chain. Leo and Pete, while partners, represent different types of businessmen. Leo was in many ways the independent entrepreneur who started several businesses throughout his long career and had a difficult time integrating into larger capitalist structures. While Pete also created his own businesses, his career is more closely related to a salaried professional, as he was more apt to work for others. He also seems to have built relationships very early on with larger American distributors and worked to integrate the chain into these distribution networks. While Leo was from the old world, Pete, despite his Italian heritage, was decidedly a product of American culture. Before arriving in Canada, he worked as a clerk and was a trained accountant, which contributed to the success of the Northern Empire Theatre chain.

Pete Bardessono was born on March 24, 1883, in Iron Mountain, Michigan, to Palmira Bardessono. I was able to find several mentions of Palmira in the manifests of alien passengers from records on ancestry.com, and the earliest one was from 1904 where Palmira was travelling to Turin with two of her children, Adelina and Charles (who was listed as Carlo in the manifest). This manifest lists that Palmira was a merchant and that she first came to America in 1881 and lived in Hibbing, Minnesota, on Linden Street. It states that her son paid for her ticket and that Charles, who was nine at the time, was the only family member carrying money and that he had five hundred dollars. The family was also listed as living in Hibbing, Minnesota, in the 1900 census. According to census records Pete's mother was widowed, she was listed as a saloon owner, and Pete was listed

as a RR Freight Clerk. Palmira's involvement in the saloon business may have been because her relative John Scavarda owned a wholesale liquor business and her two children, Adelina and Charles, attended his funeral in 1948.¹⁸⁵ This wholesale liquor business closed in 1918, and it does not appear that Palmira stayed in the saloon industry long because in the 1910 census, she was listed as a proprietor of a confectionary and Pete was listed as the clerk of the confectionary. In 1909, Pete was listed as a real estate investor in an advertisement from Duluth.¹⁸⁶

Pete came to the Porcupine around the same time as Leo Mascioli and opened up the Bunk House Saloon. According to *The Timmins Daily Press*, this saloon is remembered as "where the ragtime kid was the best in town and the wares offered for sale by the establishment were the best to be had," including what the paper called "Seegars for discriminating gentlemen."¹⁸⁷ According to local lore Pete sold more than just drinks at his saloon and also ran a brothel. His niece Jo Lee Mascioli Mansell recalled that Pete was an adventurer who came from a family of successful people. She stated that Pete's brothers were both very enterprising: her uncle Amy was an editor at the *Chicago Tribune* and her other uncle, Charlie, was a successful real estate mogul in Minnesota. According to Jo Lee, her uncle was originally a bootlegger and saloon-keeper, but he got into the theatre and hotel business when he realized the culture of the gold rush towns was changing and that providing alcohol would not be as profitable.¹⁸⁸

Pete was drafted into the Canadian army on January 21, 1918, and left for Europe on February 1, 1918. On his draft card, Pete's occupation was listed as an accountant and

¹⁸⁵ "John Scavarda Dies Saturday at His Home," *The Bessemer Herald*, September 2, 1948, 1.

¹⁸⁶ "For Sale Ten Acre Tracts" *The Virginia Enterprise*, Friday, Oct 15, 1909, 4.

¹⁸⁷ "Bunk House Saloon," *The Timmins Daily Press*, March 27, 1939, third section, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with author, June 1, 2016.

train dispatcher, and it was recorded that he spoke three languages. It was reported in *The Porcupine Advance* that while Pete was away in Europe, Gene Columbo took over his role as manager at the theatres. During his time in the military, Pete sent telegrams to *The Porcupine Advance* and his exploits were regularly published. On February 6, 1918, it was reported that Pete was transferred into the Machine Gun Service and that he was being trained as an officer, but according to his military record he was a private. Pete was sent to the Witley Camp in England, along with fifty other men from the Porcupine, where he trained for the telegraph service. On April 3, 1918, Pete wrote to *The Porcupine Advance* about his arrival in the Witley Camp and said: "I am Jake on the wire. Never felt better in my life. Feel like a two-year old colt . . . The only trouble is that there are no 'blind pigs,' - they are all wide awake."¹⁸⁹ Although Pete owned a legal saloon that would have sold only temperance beer that had 2 percent alcohol, it seems he may have run his own blind pig or at least was a frequent customer.

In my interviews with the Timmins population, Pete was remembered for being a ladies man and a man who liked to partake in drink. This collective memory of the older residents of Timmins is corroborated by the messages sent by Pete to *The Porcupine Advance*. In essence, Pete embodied the drinking culture of the camp of the 1910s. When he was on leave in Scotland, in July of 1918, he sent another message to *The Porcupine Advance* about his exploits in Europe. The headline read: "Pete Admits That He Likes The Scotch," and the reporter described a letter he received from Pete as being both typical and interesting. In the letter, Pete wrote, "A fellow can get anything here from a good time to six months in the hospital." Pete was officially discharged from the military

¹⁸⁹ "About 50 Men in Witley Camp: Corp. P.M. Bardessono Sends Interesting Note from England," *The Porcupine Advance*, April 3, 1918, 1.

on July 6, 1919. He stayed in Europe for a time after the war ended in November of 1918, and there was a report on Pete's whereabouts on March 26, 1919. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that he was on leave in Glasgow and reported to be "fine and fuzzy."¹⁹⁰ In Pete's medical records from his time in the military, it indicates that he needed medical attention twice—once for the mumps and another time for a case of gonorrhoea.

Pete's enigmatic personality seems to have been helpful in creating the early chain as his colourful quotes were often published in both the local press and American trade press. In an interview with Norm Mascioli, he stated that his uncle was not entirely comfortable with written or spoken English, especially in these early days, and it was the American born Bardessono who took on the role of company spokesman.¹⁹¹ While Mascioli was the immigrant pioneer, Bardessono, despite his colourful personality, was an educated man who was a trained accountant, former clerk, and seasoned business owner and landowner. Pete appears to have spearheaded the early acquisition of theatres. Pete was listed in *The Porcupine Advance* as acquiring the theatres in Cochrane and Kapuskasing, and was listed as the manager of both these theatres. With his brother Charlie, he also had a controlling interest in the theatre company. In the original theatre books from the 1930s, it lists Pete and his brother as having a slightly larger amount of shares than Leo and his brother. Pete and Charlie had a combined total of 560 shares while Leo and Tony had a combined total of 555 shares of Timmins Theatre Limited in 1933.

In the business histories of early corporations in North America, it is theorized that early corporate business owners had certain features, and one was a total pursuit of

¹⁹⁰ "News In Brief," *The Porcupine Advance*, March 26, 1919, 8.

¹⁹¹ Interview with author, July 8, 2015.

capital that was completely separated from traditional morality or religion. Weber believed that American capitalism was unique in that the iron cage of rationality caused the society to be stripped of “all ethical and religious meaning.”¹⁹² Leach explores this notion of the lack of a religious ethic in American society, and argues that religious institutions were actually shaped by American capitalism. Leach also asserts that American capitalist culture can be defined as having no connection to “religion in any conventional sense.”¹⁹³ Throughout the book, Leach focuses on John Wanamaker, who opened one of America’s first department stores and is considered a pioneer of modern marketing techniques. For Leach, Wanamaker was a conduit to explore the unique characteristics of American religion that is intrinsically tied to capitalism. It is interesting because Wanamaker comes from the Calvinist tradition, but Leach demonstrated that in Wanamaker’s life he maintained a strict separation of his religious attitudes and his business. This is a common trend amongst the business elite of the era and according to Leach, these business leaders easily abandoned religious ideals in the pursuit of money and power.

While Mascioli maintained a strong connection to his Catholic faith and even loaned one of the theatres to the church, Pete, on the other hand, was not held back by conventional morality or religion, and accumulation of wealth was his brand of religion. Mascioli and Pete were diametrically opposed. Mascioli always lived an unassuming life and *The Timmins Daily Press* wrote in 1939 that he was an unostentatious man. He lived a modest life and his biggest joys were to cook and play cards with his Italian workers.

¹⁹² Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing, 1998), 124.

¹⁹³ William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, NY: Random House, 2011), 3.

Despite the fact that Leo and Pete were both of Italian descent, their Italian identity manifested in very different ways. Pete did not seem to be connected to his Italian heritage and was not associated with the Italian groups in the town. Leo, on the other hand, maintained a constant connection to his Italian heritage and was a key figure in the Italian community. In an article from 1918, it was first announced that an Italian club would be formed in Timmins, and Leo would play a role in the different Italian societies throughout the years. The Italian band of Timmins that played outside the theatres was also connected to Mascioli, and Leo's brother, Tony, was a member. Leo maintained constant ties to Italy: he married a woman from his village and had a traditional Catholic family life while Pete lived a modern lifestyle that was often in direct opposition to Mascioli's values as an Italian Catholic businessman and pillar of the community.

Modern Leisure in Timmins

The leisure culture of Timmins drastically shifted as the town evolved. Nancy Forestell argues that the earlier homosocial leisure culture of the 1910s was dismantled in the 1920s as the mining companies tried to make the former campsites into family friendly communities.¹⁹⁴ It was during this period that the blind pigs and brothels decreased; married men began to take part in family-centered recreation, and single men began interacting more frequently with single women in social settings.¹⁹⁵ This new type of wholesome leisure time made the movie theatres the perfect setting for both married and single people to interact and be entertained. I would argue that this evolution of leisure culture did not start in the 1920s, but instead can be traced back to World War I. The

¹⁹⁴ Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs," 253.

¹⁹⁵ Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs," 253.

raucous worker culture of the 1910s was not something that was approved of by Timmins ruling class, despite Forestell's claim that it largely turned a blind eye in the early era. In fact, in 1915 there were several editorials in *The Porcupine Advance* about the dangers of the "loose culture" in Timmins during World War I.

In 1915, *The Porcupine Advance* published a report from the *Ladies Home Journal* that movies were proving an important weapon against the problems associated with saloons. According to the article:

Before the advent of the 'movie' a workingman knowing that he would find his wife tired out and cross after a day's work, his children unkempt, and his house in disorder, preferred the saloon and dropped in for a social hour....Now, with his appetite whetted for an evening at the movies, he finds his wife cheerful when he gets home, his dinner ready, his children dressed up: all are ready for father to take them to the "movie." And the expense is exactly the same, with this difference: The man realizes he is better fitted for his job the next day, and his home is a more cheerful place to come back to at the close of the day.¹⁹⁶

Consequently, the movie theatre was a mechanism to help fight the blind pigs that populated the region, and with a proper movie theatre like the New Empire Theatre, institutions like *The Porcupine Advance* could advocate for, support, and promote a new type of leisure culture.

The year 1915 also had a drastic effect on how the Empire Theatres were marketed to the public. As mentioned above, the reporting on theatres drastically changed in 1915, and reports about the Empire Theatre were regularly found on the front page and one could consistently read stories about the "high class" shows at the theatres. The year 1915 also marked a time of expansion for the Empire Theatre chain, and on September 24, 1915, *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the Empire Theatre chain had taken over a

¹⁹⁶ "Movies Proving Strong Opposition to the Saloon," *The Porcupine Advance*, October 29, 1915, 1.

theatre in Cochrane. As was common in the articles about the Empire Theatre chain, *The Porcupine Advance* waxed poetic about the success of the business:

The people of the claybelt town will no doubt appreciate the efforts of the new management, who, as they have repeatedly demonstrated at their Timmins house, are not content to rest upon the laurels of past achievement but are continually on the alert for newer and better ideas to please and satisfy the crowds who nightly enjoy the refined programmes provided.¹⁹⁷

The mining companies wanted to change the image of the town site from one populated by single male workers in boarding houses to a family friendly town with wholesome entertainment. Essentially, as the town began to modernize so too did the theatres, and it was Leo and Pete who capitalized on this era of innovation. Having conduits for entertainment was not only important in modernizing the town but it was also thought that it would curtail labour organization. Most of the mining companies developed entertainment clubs, but there is no doubt that they approved of Pete and Leo's modern theatres that showed Hollywood-produced fantasies to their workers.¹⁹⁸

By the 1920s, the town demographics drastically changed and women and families became more prevalent as the boarding-house culture of the 1910s began to disappear. This rapid shift can be shown in a comparison between the population figures from the census of 1911 compared to the census of 1921: In 1911 there were 1023 males to every one female in the Porcupine district and by 1921 this changed to 163 males for every 100 females.¹⁹⁹ It was during the 1920s that Hollinger made more of a concerted effort to make the town habitable to workers with families and invested in initiatives that

¹⁹⁷ "Cochrane - Theatre in Cochrane sold to Empire Theatre of Timmins owners," *The Porcupine Advance*, September 24, 1915, 5.

¹⁹⁸ In fact as mentioned later in this chapter, Hollinger Mines sold land that was used to build more theatres in the town.

¹⁹⁹ Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs," 256.

would do so including opening up the workers' hospital to families. Before 1925, only workers could be seen at the hospital and women and children would have to go to the hospital in Haileybury, which was 220 kilometres away.²⁰⁰ Nancy Forestell, in her work on Timmins, asserts that Hollinger during the 1920s rapidly transformed Timmins into a "family town" by starting preferential hiring practices for married men, building company housing that was rented to workers at a reasonable price, and by opening a company store that had discounted prices.²⁰¹

The expansion of the Empire Theatre chain to other towns in the region was part of a movement towards corporatism for the company. Not content with simply having one theatre in Timmins, Pete and Leo, along with their other partners, decided to expand early in the formation of the company. There is no doubt that Pete's knowhow of American corporate structures, with his background as an accountant and clerk, must have helped to professionalize the company. In 1921, Northern Theatres was officially incorporated, and the company began building several more theatres throughout the region. After his return from Europe, Pete spearheaded the expansion that would make both him and Leo very wealthy men. The two men also collaborated with other local businessmen, and an early partner, Charles Pierce, owner of the hardware store, had 558 shares in the new company.

Pierce is already noted as a partner with Mascioli and Bardessono in 1916 in a *Moving Picture World* report about building the New Empire.²⁰² His formal addition as

²⁰⁰ Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs," 258.

²⁰¹ Nancy Forestell, "The Miner's Wife," 142. Before the building of company housing and stores the cost of living in Timmins was untenable due to the exorbitant costs of housing and food which was 27 percent higher than Toronto in 1916.

²⁰² "New Theatre for Timmins, Ont.," *Moving Picture World*, August 5, 1916, p. 927.

one of the controlling partners in 1921 confirms the interethnic organization of the film business. As mentioned above, Charles Pierce was of Russian Jewish origins and had close relations living in Montreal and in the Northeast of the United States. According to records from Ancestry.ca, he was born in Lithuania in 1866 and immigrated to Quebec with his family in 1880. Members of the Russian Jewish community, also note above, started many of the early theatre chains in Canada and were very involved in the earliest distribution exchanges. In fact, the president of Famous Players Canadian, Nathan L. Nathanson, was born the same year as Charles in a Lithuanian town about forty-seven kilometres south of where Pierce was born. Charles seems to have played a large role in dealing with the distributors in Toronto, and as I will explore more fully in Chapter Three, he played a role in the negotiations with Famous Players Canadian. By including Charles in their company, Leo and Pete not only raised capital but they were also able to tap into another immigrant network that would help their business.

Although the town did evolve in the 1920s, the bachelor culture of the 1910s did not entirely disappear, and according to Forestell it was not until the 1940s that Timmins could be characterized as adopting the nuclear family dynamic.²⁰³ The 1920s and 1930s constituted an in-between era for the town where the previous “wild west” culture coexisted with the new family-centred culture. The movie houses of Leo and Pete capitalized on the changing population while also maintaining some of the features of a frontier movie house. They still showed live shows, fights, and midnight performances but now also included children’s matinees and shows that would appeal to women.

²⁰³ Nancy Forestell, “The Miner's Wife,” 142.

Going to movies became increasingly popular in Timmins in the 1920s, so much so that the Old Empire Theatre continued to operate in order to deal with the large crowds. On April 6, 1921, *The Porcupine Advance* had a headline on the front page that read, “To Accommodate Picture Enthusiasts,” and this article reported on the increased popularity of movie-going in the town and the rapid expansion of the Northern Empire Theatre chain. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the New Empire Theatre was so crowded each night that the company was forced to program two shows a night, “just like in the cities,” and the Old Empire Theatre would reopen and feature western pictures, serials, and special adventure pictures. The New Empire Theatre, on the other hand, would no longer show serials, but solely feature “select specials, high class comedies, special features, and news specials.”

In the early 1920s, the Old Empire Theatre was used as a second-run theatre providing cheap entertainment, and the theatre did not run regular ads in the newspaper. The New Empire Theatre catered to a “higher-class audience” and had newer feature length films. In 1923, the Old Empire Theatre was rebranded again as a remodeled picture house with both a new exterior and interior built by Leo Mascioli’s construction crew. As he said in a later interview with *The Timmins Daily Press*, the original Old Empire Theatre was an “ungainly building” that needed to be pulled down and reconstructed. *The Porcupine Advance*’s article about the re-opening of the Old Empire Theatre is of particular note because it is the first time that Leo, not Pete, was listed as managing any of the theatres. After the remodel, the Old Empire Theatre started to run ads alongside those for the New Empire Theatre.

Gene Columbo took over management of the New Empire Theatre while Pete, according to *The Porcupine Advance*, would “have his time well taken up and his work well cut out for him in superintending the several theatres under Northern Empire ownership.” The theatres listed under the new chain in this article were two in Timmins, one in Cochrane, and another in Kapuskasing. In February 1921, Pete travelled to Cochrane to purchase the Rialto Theatre, which was renamed the Empire Theatre. In April 1921, Pete also travelled to Kapuskasing to open a new theatre. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the new theatre cost \$20,000 to build and would seat 500 people.

During this period the chain also continued expanding to nearby towns, and a new theatre was built in Shumacher, which is directly adjacent to Timmins. The Maple Leaf Theatre was built in 1924, and while it was not identified as being connected to the Empire Theatre chain in the newspaper reports, in the chain’s financial records for 1933, it was included as an asset. *The Timmins Daily Press* also reported the Maple Leaf Theatre was connected to the chain in their 1939 history of Mascioli industries. The Maple Leaf Theatre had 416 seats and was built by Sol Shankman. The theatre was described in *The Porcupine Advance* as presenting high-class pictures and being equipped with the “most modern systems of heating and lighting.”

The year 1924 marked another important year in the life of the chain as the Goldfields Theatre was built and a second company—Timmins Theatres—was formed. *The Porcupine Advance* first reported the building of the Goldfields Theatre in early October 1924, and the article indicated that the theatre would open by Christmas and

have 1200 seats.²⁰⁴ The theatre opened on January 5, 1925, and it was another modern theatre with a beautiful artifice. Throughout his career, Mascioli would have an office in this theatre, and it was there that the company of Timmins Theatres was formed. Mascioli was president of this company with Charles Pierce as vice president and Pete Bardessono acting as secretary treasurer. Frank Byck and Nick Blahey were directors and Gene Columbo acted as the general manager.

After the opening of the Goldfields Theatre there were three theatres owned and operated by Leo and Pete in Timmins. The Old Empire Theatre, New Empire Theatre, and Goldfields Theatre all populated Third Avenue in downtown Timmins. In addition to these theatres, Empire Theatres were in operation in Cochrane and Kapuskasing. Throughout the 1920s, at least two of the three theatres built by Leo and Pete were always in operation in Timmins, and sometimes all three had programming. As was commonplace at the time, the theatres would often close because of fires in the projection booths. There were fires in both the Goldfields Theatre and New Empire Theatre, and while they were being fixed, the Old Empire Theatre was reopened.

Film Programming at the Theatres

In order to understand the historical audience in Timmins, I have looked at the theatres' programming from the 1910s through the 1920s. As previously mentioned, the archiving of *The Porcupine Advance* is incomplete for the early 1910s, so I am lacking information for those few years. For each year, I looked at what was playing at each theatre at Christmas and Easter because these were two of the most profitable times of the year for

²⁰⁴ "Theatres - New One Being Built in Timmins on Third Avenue, Opposite the Queen's Hotel," *The Porcupine Advance*, October 8, 1924, 12.

theatres across North America. From 1912 to 1928, I recorded the films and vaudeville acts that played at each of the theatres during these crucial holidays. In Timmins, both of these holidays were usually large events at the theatres with full-page ads celebrating the programming for the holiday shows. During Christmas, a Santa Claus would often be a part of the holiday programming, and there would often be some type of musical act during the Easter season. The movies that were shown during the holidays were also special, and very often old favourites were brought back to the theatres, or there would be a religious theme to the films shown.

Christmastime became one of the most important times of year for the consumer culture of the twentieth century. Something that sets Timmins apart from other cities in Canada is that the theatres in the town became central to Christmas consumer celebrations. In larger cities like Toronto and Winnipeg, information about the movie theatres was relegated to the picture pages, and during the holidays, there was not significant extra advertising. In these larger cities, the department store Eaton's was central to the Christmas advertising and would have large full-page ads. In Timmins, in the Christmas edition of *The Porcupine Advance*, the theatres were central to the Christmas-themed advertising and would often have full-page ads. Easter was also an important consumer holiday, and again, the Timmins theatres would have significant advertising for it as well, which differed from theatres in larger cities in Canada. From analyzing the differences in advertising, it appears that movie-going in Timmins was far more important to the population and more closely linked to consumer culture than in places like Toronto.

In order to analyze the theatres' programming during these years, I recorded the name of any film mentioned in the ads (including shorts) for Christmas and Easter from 1912 to 1930. I used this list to compare when the same films or vaudeville acts played in the larger cities in Canada. For each film, I consulted the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com) for the release date and then searched *Proquest Historical Newspaper Database*, which includes the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*. Because these two Toronto papers were among the first digitized in the 1990s, the text recognition is poor and search functions are not very accurate, and I was unable to find a majority of the films in the database using keyword searches. If a film could not be found in the Toronto papers, I searched Newspapers.com, which includes Canadian newspapers in this period from Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Ottawa. Because these newspapers were digitized more recently, the search results are much more thorough, and I was able to find all of the films (except for a few shorts) in at least one Canadian paper.

As was the common practice at the time, films were not usually advertised in Timmins in 1912 and only the vaudeville acts were named. As mentioned earlier, this was a common practice in Canada, and Paul Moore points out that film did not take predominance in Toronto until 1916.²⁰⁵ Most of the vaudeville acts from 1912 proved impossible to find in the newspaper database except for Tom Eck's Bicycle Girls, which performed at the Majestic Theatre in December 1912. I found evidence that this act also performed in the United States in 1912 in Pennsylvania and Ohio, but was unable to find any other mentions of it in Canada. The act involved Tom Eck, who was a famous bicycle racer, with a troop of female bicycle racers, and it included a stunt where the

²⁰⁵ Moore "Movie Palaces," 8.

female racers would race men in the town.²⁰⁶ Tom Eck was Canadian and there were several other stories in the Canadian press about him, as well as an advice column in the *Winnipeg Tribune* in 1912 that mentions his female act, but there is no reference to the act was ever being performed in Winnipeg.²⁰⁷ Once the Empire Theatre started advertising in 1915, the vast majority of holiday films each year received top billing over the vaudeville acts. After 1915, the only vaudeville act to receive top billing during the holidays was the American musical group, the Alexander Trio, which played at the New Empire Theatre for Christmas 1921.

Despite Mascioli's role as the town's padrone his role as a theatre operator was standard, and the theatres had typical programming with Hollywood films playing nightly. All but one of the films that played at the theatres during the holidays were from Hollywood. The only non-Hollywood film was the 1923 British silent drama *I Will Repay*, which played in Timmins during Easter of 1925. Out of approximately fifty films shown during this period, only two were set in Canada and both of them were American productions. The first Canadian-themed film to be screened was the 1925 *The Calgary Stampede*, which was shown in Timmins during Easter of 1926. The advertisement indicated that the film would be shown after an unfortunate delay, and it was scheduled for four days. Universal Pictures produced this film with parts of it shot in Calgary. The other Canadian-themed film that played during Christmas of 1928 was *Red Riders of Canada*. This film was originally released in April 1928 by FBO Pictures Corporation.

²⁰⁶ I found several mentions of this act searching Newspaper.com and Newspaper Archives. Most of the mentions are from February 1912.

²⁰⁷ "Tom Eck Says a Well Trained Athlete Should Not Go Stale," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, January 13, 1912, 16.

During the twenties, different theatres in the town were open each year. From 1919 to 1923, only the New Empire Theatre ran regular advertisements. From December 1923 to the end of the decade, the Old Empire Theatre was used periodically. Both the Goldfields Theatre and the New Empire Theatre were also in operation for most of the decade, but as mentioned above there were two fires that temporarily closed both theatres. Generally, the New Empire Theatre and Goldfields Theatre played films that were more current while the Old Empire Theatre played older films. The Maple Leaf theatre in Shumacher was also in operation during this period, but only once advertised during the holiday season in *The Porcupine Advance*.

The vast majority of the films that played during the holiday season had already played in the larger city centres. Many of them were shown in Timmins anywhere from eight months and several years after they were first screened in other locations. In every case that a date was found for a screening in Toronto, the film played in Timmins about eight months to a year later (but in some cases, it took longer). Typical examples are the films *Dick Turpin* and *Orphans of the Storm*. *Orphans of the Storm* played for the first time in Timmins during Christmas of 1922 (the film would also be the Christmas film again the following year), which was eleven months after its release in Toronto. *Dick Turpin* was the Christmas film in Timmins in 1925, and this was eight months after its release in Toronto. I was unable to find any examples of a film playing in Timmins before, or even less than eight months after, a Toronto release.

In a comparison to other cities, Timmins was more closely aligned with release dates in Winnipeg and Ottawa than Toronto. Many of the films shown in Timmins were shown three to four months after they were shown in Winnipeg, and sometimes they were

even played at the same time or even before. There were three cases of films being shown in Timmins before Winnipeg. In 1919, the Christmas film was the western *Riders of the Law*, which played in Winnipeg one month later. *One Exciting Night* was the Easter film for 1923, and again it played one month later in Winnipeg. In 1923, the Ernst Lubitsch film *Rosita* played in both Timmins and Winnipeg at Christmas. In comparison to Ottawa, many films were shown in Timmins three to four months after Ottawa. There was only one case of a film playing in Ottawa after playing in Timmins. *The Calgary Stampede* was the Easter film for 1926, and this film did not play in Ottawa until August of that year. *The Calgary Stampede* had played in Winnipeg three months before being shown in Timmins showing the complicated trajectory of some films.

As mentioned above, all the films shown were from Hollywood, but there were several different genres that were played during the holidays. I found that a significant portion of the films that played in Timmins were western or adventure type films. Out of all the films played during the holidays, 42 percent can be identified as action films (Figure 3). This was the largest percentage of any type of film played at the theatres, which indicates that the tastes of the male audiences were still very important at the Timmins theatres in the 1920s. The second most popular genre of film at the holidays was drama, at 22 percent, and then comedy at 14 percent.

Another common type of film during the holidays was anything by D. W. Griffith. On three separate occasions, Griffith's films played during the holidays in 1919, 1922, and 1923. *Birth of a Nation* played during Easter of 1919, and this was at least the third time the film was shown in Timmins during the 1910s. This racist film maintained its popularity years after its release in 1915, and Timmins was one of several places to

screen the film during Easter of 1919; another was Dubuque, Iowa.²⁰⁸ For Christmas of 1922 and 1923, *Orphans of the Storm* played at the theatres. *Orphans of the Storm* was a very popular film that was released in 1921 but continued to play in theatres across North America in 1923, including in Ottawa in March of that year. In 1923, the 1922 feature *One Exciting Night* played during Easter. Griffith films, of course, were extremely popular globally, and the fact that they were shown regularly at the theatres shows that the film-going tastes in Timmins were similar to the rest of Canada.

Another common occurrence at the Timmins theatres was that many old favourites were brought back during the holidays. In addition to *Birth of a Nation* and *Orphans of the Storm* being rescreened after they were first released, the films *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, *The Count*, and *Les Miserables* all played in Timmins a decade after they were released. *Tillie's Punctured Romance* played in Timmins during Christmas of 1926, *Les Miserables* played at Easter 1928, and *The Count* played during Christmas of 1928. In the case of *Les Miserables*, I found that a revival played in Winnipeg at the same time, but in the case of *Tillie's Punctured Romance* and *The Count*, it appears that these films did not play elsewhere in Canada as part of a new tour. The playing of old favourites was almost exclusively done during Christmas, and in comparison with other holidays, there was only example of a repeat screening of a favourite film during Easter

Conclusions

The twenty-year period from 1910 to 1930 were defining years for the chain. Early film exhibition in the area influenced the later cinema-going experiences of the Timmins

²⁰⁸ For more information on the controversy surrounding the film see: Melvyn Stokes, D. W. Griffiths *The Birth of a Nation: A History of the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).

population. Northeastern Ontario was always an area, despite the wealth of the mining communities, that had difficulty getting access to current entertainment. The towns were filled with “blind pigs” and brothels and had a deeply ingrained working-class drinking culture. The 1920s was not only a period of expansion of the Northern Empire Theatre chain. It was also during this period that both the town of Timmins and its movie theatres evolved from places of male immigrant labourers and haphazard theatres to a fully established Canadian town with purpose-built theatres that provided regulated and standardized entertainment. Many others had tried to develop a regional chain in the Northeast but were hindered with difficulties in accessing films and the boom and bust nature of many of the towns. Timmins provided Mascioli a stable base for his chain because of the sustained nature of mineral production from the Porcupine Gold Rush.

As a part of “New Ontario,” it was the resources mined in Timmins that helped fund the development of the province. Resources were shipped to Toronto and in return consumer items and entertainment were shipped from Toronto to Timmins. Leo Mascioli became an important conduit in the town as he provided cheap and reliable labourers to the mines and then provided these same workers with entertainment products from Hollywood. Leo was able to build his theatre chain from his role as the town’s padrone. Not only was he able to use his workers in building the theatres, he also had the support of the Timmins elites because of his role in the Porcupine Gold Strike. Leo’s theatres were seen as an important part of reforming the town’s culture. This culture in the town had led to a violent strike, and there is no doubt that the management at the mines saw Leo’s theatres as a mechanism to help curtail further labour disputes. The Mascioli

theatres provided nightly wholesome Hollywood entertainment to the workers and their families.

The success of the business was largely rooted in the personas of Mascioli and his partners. The partnership between the old-world Leo Mascioli and the new-world Pete Bardessono was ideal in selling the Northern Empire Theatres to the towns in Northeastern Ontario. Pete used his know-how of American business organization and promotion to structure the business, while Leo used his access to cheap labourers and construction knowledge. The partnership would later include Charles Pierce, who had connections with the Russian-Jewish community, into its ranks. Member of the Russian-Jewish community were deeply involved in film distribution in the country, and the next chapter will explore how Charles was used to negotiate with Famous Players Canadian. This inter-ethnic partnership helped Northern Empire Theatres to grow across the region as well as get access to film products in Toronto.

Chapter Three: The Movie Palace of the North

The Opening of the Palace Theatre

On the night of February 10, 1936—in the mining community of Timmins, Ontario—the Palace Theatre opened during one of the coldest nights of the year with the temperature dropping to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit.²⁰⁹ Despite the cold weather, the opening night attracted more than 1,300 patrons, which *The Porcupine Advance* reported was the largest single gathering in Northern Ontario. “A perfect opening, for a perfect theatre,” was the assessment of the newspaper, which also reported that hundreds of people had been turned away.²¹⁰ The opening night program included a fourteen-piece orchestra as well as several local musical acts. Timmins’s most prominent citizens attended, and the head of the Timmins Board of Trade, W. O. Langdon, acted as master of ceremonies. During his introduction, Langdon read out congratulatory telegrams sent to the proprietor of the theatre, Leo Mascioli, from several Hollywood stars, including Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, and William Powell. As Kathryn Fuller-Seeley points out, small-town theatres became inadequate in the age of consumer culture, and many exhibitors tried to build mini-movie palaces to compete with the palaces in larger cities but often failed to fend off the threat.²¹¹ Mascioli was able to transcend his status as small-town operator by building a movie palace in Timmins that would rival the movie palaces in the big city, but it came at a huge cost.

²⁰⁹ “Temperature Last Night Was 22 Below,” *The Porcupine Advance*, February 13, 1936, 1.

²¹⁰ “Auspicious Opening of Beautiful Palace Theatre,” *The Porcupine Advance*, February 13, 1936, 1.

²¹¹ Fuller, *At The Picture Show*, 1996.

The Palace Theatre was now the largest theatre in Timmins, with 1,248 seats, and was comparable in size to movie palaces in larger cities elsewhere in Canada.²¹² Leo Mascioli and his partners spent more than \$100,000 on construction costs and brought in master plaster-workers from Montreal to bring a European aesthetic to the theatre (Figure 4).²¹³ The opening of the Palace Theatre reflected the full transformation of Timmins, Ontario, from a mining camp to a modern town. Timmins was no longer simply a remote mining town, and its economy continued to grow, making it attractive to national chains. With the opening of the Palace Theatre, the town of Timmins became fully integrated into the modern entertainment industry with its Hollywood feature films, opulent movie theatres, and vertically integrated movie circuits. Shortly after the opening of the Palace Theatre in 1937, Leo Mascioli signed a deal with the national Canadian circuit, Famous Players Canadian, which was the result of months of tough negotiations between the two companies over who would control film exhibition in the region. These negotiations started shortly after the opening of the Palace Theatre, which was clearly a catalyst for both companies. For Northern Empire Theatre chain, the construction of the Palace Theatre had driven the company into financial trouble because of the high costs, and for Famous Players Canadian, acquiring large first-run theatres was part of their existing business practice.

This chapter will draw on the financial records of the Mascioli chain from 1933 to 1937 in order to explore the impact on the business during the early integration into the national circuit. The original financial ledgers were salvaged by a former Famous

²¹² For a discussion of movie palaces in Canada's three largest cities see: Paul S. Moore, "Movie Palaces," 2004.

²¹³ "Plaster Modeling of Special Interest," *The Porcupine Advance*. February 10, 1936, 7.

Players Canadian employee, David Dymond, and they are one of the most complete sets of theatre financial records available in Canada.²¹⁴ To supplement these records, I have incorporated newspaper accounts, archival records, and interviews with the people of Timmins about their memories of the theatres during this period. I have also incorporated the original programming ledgers from the Goldfields Theatre and Palace Theatre in order to assess the types of films played during the 1930s and how they evolved during this decade.

The result of my analysis of the chain during its first years of vertical integration with Paramount through Famous Players Canadian differs from the standard narrative found in Canadian film studies. Most industrial histories of the film exhibition industry in Canada conclude that many local exhibitors were forced out of the business during the process of vertical integration, or lost their independence when coerced into selling.²¹⁵ American studies of local cinema offer a more nuanced approach than many Canadian studies. For example, Jeff Klenotic, in his study of the Paramount-Publix movie palace in Springfield, Massachusetts, found that even though Publix used standardized programming and brought in outside managers, they tried to appeal to local townspeople and even helped improve the town's economy.²¹⁶ Although I do not dispute the claim that vertical integration had a negative impact on many independent exhibitors both in

²¹⁴ As mentioned in the introduction, Greig Dymond donated the ledger books for this project. Greig's brother, David Dymond, salvaged these books from the Victory Theatre in Timmins in the 1980s when he was the manager of the theatre. David worked as a manager at Mascioli's Victory Theatre in the early 1980s and later bought and operated a former Mascioli theatre called the Empire in New Liskeard, Ontario, from 1982–2012.

²¹⁵ See: Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, 1990; Seiler, "Nathanson, Zukor, and Famous Players," 2006; Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign*, 1992.

²¹⁶ See: Jeffery Klenotic, "From Mom-and-Pop to Paramount Publix: Selling the Community on the Benefits of National Theatre Chains," in *Watching films: New Perspectives on Movie-going, Exhibition and Reception*, eds. Karina Aveyard and Albert Moran, 189–209 (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013).

Canada and the United States, in the case of Timmins, the acquisition of the Mascioli chain by Famous Players Canadian helped to further the local owners' local goals—it was not just a simple takeover of a theatre chain. Vertical integration did not negatively affect companies that were already deeply embedded in a modern capitalist system. In Timmins, Mascioli had already created a modern, corporate chain using a modern management style with the help of Pete Bardessono, and this regional corporation was easily absorbed into the larger Famous Players Canadian circuit for mutual advantage, not least the mutual benefit of dividends and profits.

The deal with Famous Players Canadian stabilized the company's finances and allowed them to remain largely independent. There are two reasons the acquisition of the Mascioli chain was originally beneficial for the company: first, Mascioli essentially used Famous Players Canadian's own coercive negotiation tactics against them, and he was able to cut an advantageous deal; second, the remote location of the theatres kept Famous Players Canadian at arm's length in the routine, daily management of the theatres. My investigation into both the financial and programming records demonstrates that the details of business operations essentially remained consistent at the theatres after the deal with Famous Players Canadian, and my interviews with the people of Timmins show that the acquisition of the theatres did not have an impact on movie-going in the town.

The Modern Firm: The Transformation of the Mascioli Chain

As explored in the first chapter, new cinema history is often concerned with the industrial history of film and its social impact. This industrial history is very much tied to vertical integration and how Hollywood came to dominate all branches of the industry.

Vertical integration created a business that was largely controlled by Hollywood distributors. When partnered or sold to a national chain, independent showmen like Mascioli became integrated into that larger corporate structure that was rooted in movie studios' direct ownership of production, distribution, and theatre chains, aligned in a straight—vertical—line of control. In Timmins, the full integration of the Mascioli chain into this larger film industry did not occur until 1937 when the chain signed with Famous Players Canadian, but as shown in the previous chapter, the Northern Empire chain already had contractual deals with distributors in Toronto to supply its product.

Alfred Chandler was a key business historian who examined how American companies transformed from single-unit producers to large conglomerates that combined mass production with distribution. The “Chandlerian firm” was a multi-divisional company that was overseen by a managerial hierarchy and evolved during the industrial era. Historically, managers of companies were owners or shareholders, and it was through the development of the “Chandlerian firm” in the twentieth century that outside managers became integral to the operation of multi-divisional corporations.²¹⁷ Chandler’s influential history of modern business ideals traced the development of this type of firm by first looking at the owner-operated plantations in the American South and then turning to railroad companies to see how these businesses helped to create the modern firms through mass distribution of products. The department store was one of the first of these large companies to grow out of the mass transportation of goods. As companies grew, they began to control other production and distribution companies, making firms multi-divisional. Chandler looked at the management structure of the largest firms in America,

²¹⁷ Peter Cappelli, “The Rise and Decline of Managerial Development,” *Industrial and Corporate Change* 19, no. 2 (2010): 510.

such as Standard Oil, General Electric, U.S. Steel, and DuPont, in order to examine how the overarching structure of the multi-divisional firm was operationalized. While Chandler did not explicitly study the film industry, Douglas Gomery compared the vertical integration of the American film industry to a Chandlerian firm, and he also argued Hollywood film companies used this type of business organization to dominate global markets.²¹⁸

As with other brand-name consumer goods, film was part of the standardization of mass-marketed products, and the advent of theatre chains is connected to the creation of a consumer society generally. As historian Susan Strasser writes, twentieth century capitalism can be characterized by “the transformation of culture, from ideas and lifestyles based on local relationships and regional manufacturing to those contingent on mass production and a national market.”²¹⁹ Consequently, towns and cities that previously had distinct local cultures changed with the introduction of mass retail practices. Film was only one product in the overhaul of the North American economy with the introduction of mass consumer products and chain stores. Following the creation of national firms, branded stores and theatres came to cities and towns across the country. Department store chains were historically some of the first of these national chains.

One of the most important aspects of the development of a consumer culture was the department store. In Canada, three department store chains came to dominate in bigger cities: Eaton’s, Hudson’s Bay, and Simpson’s. Unlike major American department stores, these Canadian department stores operated as national chains and also relied

²¹⁸ See: Douglas Gomery, “US Film Exhibition,” in *American Film Industry*, edited by Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

²¹⁹ Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

extensively on mail order and small branches to service almost the entire country. Eaton's was the world's eighth largest retailer based on the operation of only forty-seven stores in the 1930s, far fewer than five-and-dime or grocery chain stores in the United States. The relatively small number of stores hides how Eaton's success was rooted in their mail order business. In comparison to the number of stores, in 1930 Eaton's had one hundred local mail-order offices in towns dotted across the country.²²⁰ Beyond the reliance on catalogue sales, another unique feature of Canadian chain stores was their brand's ability to become part of Canadian identity on a national scale. Eaton's and Hudson's Bay, in particular, became "Canada's stores" and were seen as an integral part of Canadian culture.²²¹

Not unlike what theatre owners would later do, local shopkeepers adopted many of the same practices of chain stores and even entered into partnerships as a means to survive the introduction of mass merchandizing in the country.²²² In this sense, towns like Timmins that had previously been dominated by local entrepreneurs became integrated into the larger consumer society during the evolution of consumer goods in the twentieth century. This evolution in local businesses led to several local industries in towns and cities either disappearing or becoming integrated into national chains. Therefore, the creation of a national theatre chain in the 1920s was part of a larger trend in the Canadian economy. The motion picture industry also lent itself to a nationwide theatre chain because Hollywood companies were already involved with production, distribution, and

²²⁰ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 13–14.

²²¹ This is the central argument in Belisle, *Retail Nation*.

²²² See: David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

exhibition on a national scale across the United States. While there was legislative and popular sentiment against chain stores pushing out “mom and pop” stores, particularly in the United States, the theatre industry was different because it still allowed (indeed needed) small theatre owners to continue to operate as second- or third-run options in the majority of less-profitable smaller towns and rural areas. Hollywood’s directly owned theatres were predominantly larger, first-run movie palaces in prime metropolitan locations that charged a premium ticket price and reaped a disproportionate amount of the industry’s profits. While other industry’s chain stores could undercut small town stores in price because of economies of scale, industry-owned theatres generally charged more than independents because of their exclusive franchise for first-run files.²²³ The creation of a national Canadian theatre chain that focused on first-run theatres, like the Palace Theatre, was a natural extension of what was happening concurrently in the United States.

Famous Players Canadian was started as a partnership between Paramount’s Adolph Zukor and Toronto-based showman Nathan L. Nathanson. In 1918, Adolph Zukor started on a theatre “buying spree” after securing financing from Wall Street, in a bid to counteract the emerging competition of Associated First National, an allegiance of exhibitors who had begun production with some of the biggest stars.²²⁴ Before the creation of Famous Players Canadian, the Allen family chain became by far the largest theatre circuit in Canada from 1917 to 1919, building new movie palaces across the country on the basis of their Paramount distribution franchise for Famous Players-Lasky productions. To establish direct control of theatres in Canada, Zukor first approached the Allens to become partners, but they refused. According to census records, Jules Allen

²²³ Jeffery Klenotic, “From Mom-and-Pop to Paramount Publix,” 2013.

²²⁴ Douglas Gomery, “US Film Exhibition,” 219.

lived directly beside Nathan L. Nathanson on St. Andrews Gardens in the very wealthy Rosedale neighborhood in Toronto. The two men were the only two families of Russian-Jewish decent on their block.²²⁵ Allen and Nathanson were apparently friendly, and perhaps when Nathanson heard that the Allens rejected Zukor's deal, he started negotiations to become partners with Paramount. In 1919, the Allens lost the Paramount franchise and instead aligned with First National. Famous Players Canadian was started on February 5, 1920, with Nathanson at the helm. The company began a building-boom of new Capitol movie palaces, backed by preferential treatment from a new group of Paramount distribution branches across Canada established by Zukor himself.²²⁶

Famous Players Canadian soon came to dominate the movie exhibition industry in Canada and quickly surpassed the Allen circuit, buying most of their assets in 1923, and also acquiring many other small-chain and independent theatres across the country. A key aspect of the history of Famous Players Canadian's expansion across Canada was Nathanson's ability to coerce independent exhibitors into partnership agreements. Nathanson had three main tactics in getting exhibitors to sign with him: first, in his exclusive control of vaudeville booking contracts, Nathanson would prevent live acts from playing in non-Famous Players Canadian theatres—as important as limiting access to films, recalling that the 1920s were still the silent-film era; second, he would build or begin plans to build new theatres near independent theatres in order to undercut their businesses; and third, he would lure exhibitors into signing contracts by telling them that they could rent Paramount films at a much lower rate—and implicitly threaten to cut

²²⁵Data from Ancestry.com, 1921 Census of Canada.

²²⁶See: Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no.2 (2003): 22–45.

their supply if not.²²⁷ By 1930, Famous Players Canadian owned 207 out of the 1,108 theatres in Canada—almost all of the largest and most profitable first-run downtown theatres in every major city.²²⁸ Along with acquiring theatres, Famous Players Canadian implicitly came to dominate distribution. In Canada, there were ten distribution companies of considerable size around 1930, and there were no independent Canadian distributors that were not affiliated with a foreign producer.²²⁹ In addition to being president of Famous Players Canadian, Nathanson also headed a company called Regal Films, which eventually distributed films by MGM and other studios—in total, 36 percent of all films in Canada around 1930.²³⁰ Block booking, where a theatre had to contract for an entire season with a distributor, came into practice in the 1920s in Canada, which resulted in those theatres that were affiliated with Famous Players Canadian having an advantage over independent theatres because they always had preference to pick the newest, best films, while independents had to select from a predetermined list for an entire season.²³¹

Famous Players Canadian was a multi-divisional corporation that was organized under a managerial hierarchy that was ultimately controlled by Adolph Zukor. In the 1930s, Nathan L. Nathanson was the president, and the theatres were split up into divisions with managers. There were also subsidiary companies that acted as division managers for certain regions. In many cases, it was Famous Players Canadian subsidiary companies that would acquire theatres, and in Ontario many theatres were managed by

²²⁷ Seiler, “Nathanson, Zukor, and Famous Players,” 64.

²²⁸ Peter White, *Investigation into an Alleged Combine in the Motion Picture Industry in Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1931), 13.

²²⁹ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, 67.

²³⁰ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, 69.

²³¹ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, 76.

Nathanson's associate Oscar Hanson who operated both Associated Theatres and Hanson Theatres. By 1936, Hanson controlled eighteen movie houses for Famous Players Canadian in Ontario. Individual theatres were often managed by Famous Players Canadian managers who oversaw the day-to-day operations of the theatres, but Famous Players Canadian also signed partnership agreements with former independents who would often continue managing the theatres. As Louis Pelletier points out in his work on Montreal exhibition, the process of vertical integration was not a simplistic take-over of the market, and that while Famous Players Canadian was able to quickly takeover film distribution, local exhibitors who knew the tastes of communities were more adept at selecting successful programming.²³² Partnership agreements with already existing and successful movie houses also helped Famous Players Canadian expand into most Canadian regions by the 1930s.

The business practices of Famous Players Canadian came under government scrutiny, and just like the anti-trust investigations in the United States, the Canadian federal government ordered an investigation into an alleged "combine" in the motion picture industry.²³³ In 1930, a commission, led by lawyer Peter White, was convened by the prime minister of Canada to investigate the monopolistic practices of the motion picture industry in Canada. White published a report known as the "White Commission." In this report, he concluded that a possibly illegal combine had existed in Canada since 1926 between the American distributors, Regal Films, and Famous Players Canadian. In

²³² Louis Pelletier, "The Fellows Who Dress the Pictures: Montreal Film Exhibitors in the Days of Vertical Integration (1912–1952)." PhD diss., Concordia University, 2012, 111.

²³³ For the United States anti-trust investigation and legislation see: W. D. Phillips "A Maze of Intricate Relationships": Mae D. Huettig and Early Forays into Film Industry Studies." *Film History: An International Journal* 27, no. 1 (2015): 135–163; Paul McDonald, Emily Carman, Eric Hoyt, and Philip Drake, eds. *Hollywood and the Law* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

1932, a court case against the combine was brought in front of the Ontario Supreme Court, which exonerated the companies, deeming their business practices legal under Canadian law because the legal test was the impact of costs for the public. The court ruled that the combine did not negatively affect consumers because ticket prices did not increase during the years of the combine.²³⁴ Using the combined, vertical integration of production and distribution in Canada to coerce competitors into exhibition agreements was within the legal realm of profit-driven competition. As a result, unlike the United States in later years, the film industry's uncompetitive practices in Canada were allowed to continue until the 1990s; however, the industry did receive a lot of bad press spearheaded by "independent theatre crusader" and editor of *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, Ray Lewis.²³⁵

In order to trace the effects of vertical integration on the town of Timmins, I have turned to organizational studies to inform my analysis. A historical organizational study uses historical data, methods, and knowledge in constructing an analysis of a historical business.²³⁶ Maclean, Harvey, and Clegg have constructed a typology for historical organization studies that includes four types of studies: evaluating, explicating, conceptualizing, and narrating.²³⁷ The typology that fits with my study is narrating as I am explaining the origins of a particular phenomenon. In this case, I am narrating the process of vertical integration at the local level by looking at the historical business records of the Mascioli chain. As Maclean, Harvey, and Clegg explain, metanarratives and

²³⁴ See: Seiler, 'Nathanson, Zukor, and Famous Players' for more details.

²³⁵ See: Jessica L. Whitehead, Louis Pelletier, and Paul S. Moore (forthcoming). "The Girl Friend in Canada: Ray Lewis and The Canadian Moving Picture Digest (1915 – 1957)," in *Mapping Movie Magazines*, edited by Daniel Biltreyst and Lies Van de Vijver (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan).

²³⁶ Mairi Maclean, Charles Harvey, and Stewart R. Clegg, "Conceptualizing Historical Organization Studies," *Academy of Management Review* 41, no. 4 (2016): 609.

²³⁷ Mairi Maclean et al., "Conceptualizing Historical Organization Studies," 617.

microhistories are important in historical narrative studies as microhistories “recognize the importance of the daily encounters that sustain a social reality and the power relations these engender.”²³⁸ By looking at one small case study, I am able to do an in-depth analysis of the financial effects of vertical integration on a chain based in a non-urban centre.

The Business Records: How the Chain Expanded, 1933–1936

The 1930s marked continued progress for Mascioli, and his theatre chain became a multi-unit business with the formal creation of a new company, Timmins Theatres Ltd., gathering the theatres in the city of Timmins. Northern Empire Theatres became technically only the chain’s theatres in towns outside Timmins, each of these theatres still called the Empire Theatre. Unfortunately, most of the records from Northern Empire Theatres seem to be lost, with the surviving ledgers only recording the business operations of Timmins Theatres. What can be pieced together from surviving documents is that Northern Empire Theatres was owned by the two Mascioli brothers with Andy Gentile, while Timmins Theatres had three majority shareholders: Leo Mascioli, Pete Bardessonno, and Charles Pierce.

The first business records available start in 1933 and record the general accounts of Timmins Theatres Ltd., the real estate holdings and the tax records for both Timmins Theatres and Northern Empire Theatres, as well as Leo Mascioli’s personal accounts. All of these records are separated into different ledgers reflecting the separate business entities. There is also an additional auditing ledger that summarizes the financial profile of Timmins Theatres from 1937 that was presumably prepared during the deal to affiliate

²³⁸ Mairi Maclean et al., “Conceptualizing Historical Organization Studies,” 623.

with Famous Players Canadian. These early records from Timmins Theatres do not include daily box office receipts, only monthly transfers from the theatres, but I calculated annual profits from isolating shareholders' dividends each year. The auditing ledger did contain aggregate box office information from the early 1930s.

One of the only ledgers to include information from both the central Timmins Theatres and the theatres in other towns under Northern Empire Theatres was the ledger recording the real estate holdings, which detailed how both companies were buying property and building theatres throughout the North. In 1930, new Northern Empire Theatres were built in South Porcupine, Ansonville, and New Liskeard. In 1930, the Maple Leaf Theatre in Shumacher was bought by Northern Empire Theatres and closed for a few years until a new theatre was constructed, opening in 1934. Back in the city, Timmins Theatres purchased four properties in 1932 on or adjacent to Third Street, which was and still is the main street where both the Old and New Empire Theatres were located. In some mining towns, such as Cobalt, early theatres were located in the "rough" part of town, but the theatres in Timmins were always located downtown at the centre of public life and shopping. One of these four Timmins Theatres deals was purchasing the land of the Empire Theatre block from Leo Mascioli. The company also bought downtown land from Hollinger mines. For one of the properties, John Carnovale made the entire down payment, another successful Italian businessman who was known for loaning money to members of the Italian community. The properties were paid off in regular installments over the 1930s.

As an independent entrepreneur Mascioli was never satisfied with only focusing on theatres. Along with his hotels, automobile shop, and construction company, Timmins

Theatres expanded to include other amusements. In 1932 the company purchased land on the Mattagami River known as Timmins Park. In the summer of 1932, *The Porcupine Advance* reported that Leo Mascioli was building a swimming pool on the Mattagami River as part of the park's development.²³⁹ A further entry in the real estate ledger details that this swimming pool property was sold in 1937 to Walter P. Wilson for \$6,330.60. Walter P. Wilson owned the Riverside Pavilion, which was a local dance hall, and had been arrested in 1927 on suspicion of gold smuggling.²⁴⁰ In addition to the pool, Leo Mascioli also owned and operated the town's bowling alley in 1930s.

The chain also expanded its operations buying property in North Bay in October 1936, a larger city, halfway to Toronto from Timmins. Shortly thereafter, in November, Leo Mascioli commissioned architectural plans, and in December construction costs were registered in the general account book.²⁴¹ In December 1936, there was also a notation in the ledgers that a lawyer was retained for an "option at Brantford," which is a city in Southwestern Ontario, a great distance from Timmins. Both of these cities already had Famous Players Canadian theatres, and the buying of these properties appears to have been a tactic as part of the negotiations with the company, which will be explored later in this chapter.

The accounting books reveal that Timmins Theatres' revenue consistently increased over the 1933–1936 period, going from \$26,757 in 1933 to \$100,374 in 1936, nearly doubling yearly with an average annual increase of 91.7 percent (Figure 5).

²³⁹ "Leo Mascioli Builds a Swimming Pool by the Mattagami Bridge," *The Porcupine Advance*, June 9, 1932, 1.

²⁴⁰ Walter Wilson Arrested for Highgrading," *The Porcupine Advance*, Jun 30, 1927, 1.

²⁴¹ Bay Theatre Plan, November 1936, RG series 56–10 container B308194, Ontario Archives, Toronto, ON.

Initially, the company made most of its income from renting stores that were attached to the theatres. Several respondents recalled how Leo always built his theatres with stores attached so he could diversify his profits and make full use of downtown property. The general account ledgers did not record the monthly ticket sales from the theatres, instead including total transfers of funds from each of the theatres. From 1933 to 1935 the theatre that brought in the most money was the New Empire Theatre. In fact, in 1934 the New Empire Theatre transfers were the largest single source of income for the company, amounting to \$16,000 that year, while the Goldfields Theatre only transferred \$5,000. The revenues changed with the opening of the Palace Theatre in 1936, as it quickly became the most profitable among them, with the New Empire Theatre taking a drastic decline in revenues, leaving the Goldfields Theatre a steady second generating profit for the company.

The change in theatre revenues over the years is reflective of how the cinema-going tastes of the Timmins population evolved. While it was a modern structure, the New Empire Theatre did maintain some of the earlier practices of the first theatres. It had regular vaudeville acts and played silent films, and both the Goldfields Theatre and the Palace Theatre played more current sound features. The increased popularity of the Goldfields Theatre and the Palace Theatre reflected the desire of the Timmins population to have a movie-going experience that was akin to that in the city. A majority of my interview subjects described how the Palace Theatre changed the cinema-going practices in the town, as attending movies there became a weekly event and a treat for which the townspeople would dress in their best clothes.

The business records demonstrate that although the company increased its income over the period of 1933 to 1936, expenses for the expansion made the company mostly unprofitable in 1935 and 1936 because of real estate and construction costs. In conjunction with the real estate deals, construction costs made up a bulk of the company's expenditures over the period of 1933 to 1936, including \$107,299 that the chain spent on the construction of the Palace Theatre. In order to complete its construction, the company had to take out several bank loans that totalled \$29,000 by 1936. Construction had just begun on the North Bay Theatre, potentially an even more expensive undertaking, with the first month of construction already costing the company \$4,553 at the very end of the ledger in December 1936.

The change in shareholder profits also reflects the unstable finances of Timmins during the 1930s. In 1933, the shareholders had made a combined profit of \$13,522, and this had increased in 1934 to a combined profit of \$17,160. These profits drastically fell in 1935 during the construction of the Palace, when only \$3,760 was paid to the shareholders. In 1936, with North Bay now underway, the combined profits were still low at \$4,160 (Figure 6). As an independent chain in a remote region of Canada, the company was having a difficult time maintaining profitability during its rapid expansion. The increased expenses such as real estate payments and construction costs that came with expansion were making the financials of the company increasingly untenable.

In Canada, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics accumulated and published information on businesses across the nation starting in 1918. The Bureau first started publishing information on the motion picture industry in 1930, gathering information from every movie theatre and film distributor in Canada and publicly releasing national

aggregates, divided by province and region. The exhibition data included the total box office, number of theatres, number of employees, and average employees' wages. All of this data was also organized by provinces and is further provided for larger cities. In Ontario, the data is divided into categories for Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, London, Windsor, and "Other Places." From 1933 to 1936 the overall rate of increase in national box office rose steadily each year, up 2 percent in 1934, up another 7 percent in 1935, and rising fully 9 percent in 1936 (Figure 7). It is interesting to note that in 1934, while there was an increase in box office receipts nationally in Canadian theatres, this was the worst year in terms of profits for Hollywood.²⁴² In isolating the "Other Places" data from Ontario, which included non-metropolitan areas like Timmins, there was an even higher annual increase in box office revenue throughout the 1930s, between 5 and 7 percent yearly in 1934 and 1935, and a big jump of 14 percent increase in 1936, largely due to an increase in ticket prices that year.²⁴³

In comparison to these Canada and Ontario Statistics, the Timmins Theatres' box office was more volatile. From 1933 to 1934 there was a 6 percent drop in the box office, but then there was a 13 percent increase in 1935, and a 35 percent increase in 1936 (Figure 8). And, while there was also an overall steady increase in Ontario's non-metropolitan theatres, Timmins Theatres still increased at a much faster rate in 1935 and 1936 than the rest of the province. Thus, while the overall box office was increasing in Canada, the box office at Timmins Theatres was increasing at an even faster rate, even as the company's total profits were stretched thin by construction costs.

²⁴² Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Shirley Temple: Making Dreams Come True," *Glamour in a Golden Age: Movie Stars of the 1930s*: 48.

²⁴³ *Motion Picture Statistics 1936* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1937).

National statistics again reflect a steady increase in wages in tandem with the increase in box office revenue throughout the 1930s. Wages for Timmins again are far more erratic, with noticeable drops in 1935 and a sudden increase in 1936 with the Palace open (Figure 9). Nationally, wages slightly decreased in 1934 by 3 percent; in 1935 wages increased by almost 13 percent; and in 1936 wages increased by 2 percent (Figure 10). Timmins had the same 3 percent decrease as theatres nationally in 1934, but wages continued to decrease in Timmins in 1935 by 5 percent, and went back down again after the aberrant increase in 1936 of almost 19 percent. When comparing the wages in Timmins to the national averages, it is clear that as the chain was rapidly expanding so were the wages paid to employees. The opening of the Palace Theatre caused a 19 percent increase in wage expenditures for the chain, which was another added cost to the price of expansion. Timmins Theatres, like many other independent chains, was struggling to meet the costs of expansion. It was this same financial situation that caused independent theatres and chains across North America to sign partnership agreements with larger monopolies like Famous Players Canadian.

What Played at the Theatres: 1930–1936

The development of an organized classical Hollywood industry was solidified in the 1930s, and a key feature of this industry was a standardized film program that was sold to exhibitors across North America. The advent of pre-programmed films developed as part of the overall industrialization of the film industry, and distributors would sell

blocks of films to exhibitors, which, as mentioned above, were called block bookings.²⁴⁴ With block booking, theatres in regions across the continent would have access to a wide variety of films, and most theatres would have nightly programs that included some combination of a feature, a two-reel comedy, a single, and a newsreel. Another component of block booking was the inclusion of double features, which would pair one prominent picture with a less desirable feature.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the development of centralized distribution companies in the 1910s was an important part of the development of movies into a big business with modern management techniques. The first nickelodeons needed to regularly change films as it was not cost effective to purchase individual film reels, and film exchanges were created to lease films at one-fifth the purchase cost.²⁴⁵ After the introduction of the feature film and larger theatres, Paramount Pictures combined eleven existing exchanges into a single distributor that serviced all of North America. With the advent of national distributors, certain practices became commonplace. Block booking in particular allowed companies like Paramount Pictures to sign profit sharing contracts with local theatres, and these theatres would then be sent a set program to block off for an entire season of films.

There have been several studies on block booking, and an important contribution is Andrew Hanssen's *The Block Booking of Films Reexamined*, which explores the evolution of this practice. Hanssen argues that the previous perception of block booking,

²⁴⁴ For an in-depth economic discussion on the development of the Hollywood system see: Janet Staiger, "The Hollywood Mode of Production, 1930–1960," in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, eds. Bordwell et al., 309–338 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

²⁴⁵ Andrew F. Hanssen, "The Block Booking of Films Reexamined," *The Journal of Law and Economics* 43, no. 2 (2000): 402.

namely that it was used by film companies to force exhibitors to buy films they did not want or allow them to reject certain films, is not in fact backed up by the data.²⁴⁶ Hanssen analyzed the theatrical exhibition data from several Warner Brothers theatres across the United States. He determined that when put into practice, block booking in fact allowed for flexibility on the part of the exhibitor and, instead of being a parasitic practice, it can be seen as an efficient method of renting films that did not necessarily negatively affect exhibitors.

Since the beginning of film exhibition in the Porcupine region, theatre owners had to make deals with the film exchanges in Toronto. By the 1930s, the theatres in Timmins were playing the same standardized programs that were shown across Canada. From examining *The Porcupine Advance* in the 1930s, I can determine a few things about the types of films that frequently played in Timmins. For example, one of the most popular stars in the town was Eddie Cantor, whose films were played at both the opening of the Palace Theatre and the reopening of the New Empire Theatre. When the New Empire Theatre reopened on November 26, 1930, his film *Whoopie* played, and this film continually played at both the Goldfields Theatre and New Empire Theatre throughout the 1930s. Eddie Cantor's film *Strike Me Pink* was the feature chosen for the opening of the Palace Theatre. Although looking at the newspaper can provide me with some insight into the tastes of the people of Timmins, it does not give me a complete picture of what was shown at the theatres and how the chain evolved during the 1930s. While Eddie Cantor films remained a constant, I wanted to track the types of film shown at the theatres

²⁴⁶ Andrew F. Hanssen, "The Block Booking of Films Reexamined," 422.

during this transformative decade to assess the standardized film program shown in Timmins before the deal with Famous Players Canadian.

In order to track the film programming in the 1930s, I have conducted an analysis of the original booking ledgers from two of the theatres. There are two surviving programming ledgers at the Timmins Museum from the Goldfields Theatre (starting in April 1930 and going to February 1936) and the Palace Theatre (starting in March 1936 and going to June 1938). These ledgers record each film that was shown as well as details of the standardized nightly program, which included a feature, a two-reel comedy, a single, and a newsreel. The following analysis looks at the distribution companies for each film that played at the Timmins theatre in order to determine if the types of films shown at the Timmins Theatres changed before and after the contract with Famous Players Canadian. For this section of my analysis, I looked at the entirety of the Goldfields Theatre's books and the first year of the Palace Theatre's books. I also conducted a subsequent analysis on the last two years of the Palace Theatre's books, which is discussed below, in order to compare the programming before and after vertical integration with Famous Players Canadian.

The booking ledgers record films in the categories of (a) features, (b) two-reel comedies, (c) singles of any type, and (d) extras, such as newsreels and cartoons. In the 1930s, most nights at the movie theatre included a full program of one of each category. I will analyze each of them separately for each distributor, giving the most attention to features to start. For each type of film and distributors, I also looked at the special notations that were written in the margins of the books. Not surprisingly, the feature film was the most consistent part of the standard program at the theatres, and there were more

details in the features column as to the film's trajectory, compared with the other types of films. There were also sometimes notes as to how much a film cost. For example, in September 1930 it was noted that for the feature film *Good Intentions*, Timmins Theatres paid \$150 in two installments. In 1930, \$150 was a significant amount of money and with inflation would today be worth about \$2,206.18. Given the expense for just one film, operations for the circuit were incredibly expensive. The auditing ledger from 1937 includes the film rental costs from 1932 to 1935. During those years Timmins Theatres was averaging \$30,000 each year in film rental costs, more than \$200 weekly per theatre, given the company then had three theatres in the city, but many times only two theatres open.

I also discovered some trends about in the handling of prints from the various film distributors in Toronto. When a film was in bad condition, it was returned and the rental amount seems to have been reimbursed. For example, in October 1930, a forty-dollar credit was given for the feature *Vengeance* and in January 1931 the film *Holiday* arrived in bad condition and was "returned to collect." It was also sometimes recorded where the film was from and where it would be sent to next, if the film was a Timmins exclusive. I found that many of the features were sent to Mascioli theatres in Ansonville or New Liskeard after they played in Timmins, and sometimes films would be sent to the Classic Theatre in Cobalt, even though it does not appear that Mascioli had an interest in that theatre. The films were also exchanged between the Goldfields Theatre and New Empire Theatre, and very often they would be sent back to Toronto directly after playing in Timmins. It appears that Timmins was often the first stop for many feature films playing in the Northeast region, and there were several films exclusive to the Timmins Theatres.

As in Canada as a whole, the vast majority of the feature films shown at both the Palace Theatre and the Goldfields Theatre were from American distribution companies. As noted above, from 1930 to 1931, 91.3 percent of films shown in Canada were from American distributors, with Famous Players-Lasky (Paramount) and Regal Films (MGM) making up 36 percent of all film shown in Canada, both linked to Nathanson and giving preferential treatment to Famous Players Canadian theatres.²⁴⁷ The record books from the Goldfields Theatre indicate that even more American features played in Timmins than the national average. When isolating the feature films for 1930–1931, the percentage of Lasky and Regal films that played at the Goldfields Theatre was 38 percent, slightly higher than the national average. Nearly a quarter of the feature films at the Goldfields Theatre were from Lasky, with another 15 percent from Regal. Between the years 1930 and 1936, fully 98 percent of the feature films that played at the Goldfields Theatre were from American distributors, with 42 percent of the films from Regal or Lasky (Figure 11, noting Lasky is renamed Paramount in this period).²⁴⁸ From March 1936 to December 1936, every single one of the features shown at the Palace Theatre was from an American distribution company, with 40 percent from Regal and Paramount alone (Figure 12).

Although Hollywood's predominance remained unchallenged over the six-year period, the distribution companies did change over the years. In 1930, there were ten film exchanges listed in the books of the Goldfields Theatre: Lasky (Paramount), Regal

²⁴⁷ Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, 69.

²⁴⁸ These figures represent a list of all the distributors for each feature film from the two original booking ledgers. Also, note that the name Lasky disappears from the record book in March 1932, and Paramount was first listed in January 1932. The disappearance of Lasky and appearance of Paramount seems to reflect the 1930 name change of Paramount Famous Lasky Corp. to Paramount Publix Corp (See: 'Visits to the Great Studios: A Personally Conducted Tour of the Paramount Lot' (1930), *The New Movie Magazine*, vol. 2. no. 4, October, 86–89).

(MGM, Pathé and others), Fox, Warner, Columbia, United Artists, RKO, Universal, First National, and Sono Art (later part of Monogram). In 1931, several of the film company names or affiliations changed slightly to include Vitagraph (formerly Warners), Pathé-Regal (separate from Regal), and EDUC-Sono Art.²⁴⁹ In 1932, Lasky is formally renamed Paramount, and the Warner exchange is renamed Vitagraph in Canada; of course the films themselves still carried their Hollywood trademarks whatever the name of the Canadian distributor.²⁵⁰ For some unknown reason, Regal was drastically decreased in 1932 for feature films shown at the Goldfields Theatre, even when combining Regal-Pathé and Regal-MGM, all together only about 5 percent, but rebounding in later years. In October 1933, Empire first appears on the books for the theatre, the first British distributor listed in the ledgers. By the end of 1933 the distribution companies started to remain consistent, and no new companies were added in the rest of the decade.

The most popular distribution company for features changed over the years but companies controlled by Famous Players Canadian were always the most screened. In 1930, the most popular film company was Lasky (Paramount), Fox was the second, and then Warner was third. In 1931, Lasky again was the most popular film company, and Regal (MGM) tied with Fox. In 1932, Lasky renamed Paramount remained the most popular company, Fox continued to be second, and Warner renamed Vitagraph was again the third most popular distribution company. In 1933, Regal-distributed MGM films come to the fore with a majority feature films shown at the Goldfields, followed by

²⁴⁹ In 1931 when *Birth of a Nation* played in December 1931 the film company that was listed was Birth of a Nation Syndicate.

²⁵⁰ Warner Brothers is listed as being distributed by the Vitagraph offices in Ontario according to the *Film Daily Yearbook* of 1935.

Paramount and then Columbia. In 1934, Regal was again the most popular, still followed by Paramount but then Fox third, and this year the British distributor Empire increased dramatically with 5 percent of the films played. I combined the data from 1935 and 1936 because there are only two months of 1936 documented in books and, once again, Regal and Paramount accounted for the bulk of the features played. A significant difference for 1935 and 1936 was the sudden predominance of United Artists features, which became the third most popular company.

Many two-reel comedies were a regular part of the programming, but less common than features often playing for one night only although occasionally replacing the feature. As with the features, the distribution of two-reel comedies was dominated by Famous Players Canadian controlled companies. Forty-five percent of the two-reel comedies that played over the six-year period were from Regal, with a further 23 percent from Lasky or Paramount. Of the other film companies, Vitagraph's Warner films had the largest share with 10 percent of the two-reel comedies played. As with the features, two-reel comedies would sometimes have to be returned because of damage. For example, the Lasky comedy *The Hold Up* was sent to the Goldfields Theatre from the Classic Theatre in Cobalt, and it was noted in the ledgers that the fan sprocket holes were broken when the film arrived. In comparison with the features, more of the two-reel comedies were sent from other locations in the region, and there were not many notations about two-reel comedies being sent to other towns after playing in Timmins. Thus, it appears that unlike features, Timmins was not the first stop in the region for two-reel comedies on the distribution circuit.

Problems faced by Timmins theatres included films arriving late on the train from Toronto or not arriving at all. In an interview with a former manager of one of the Mascioli theatres in Schumacher, he told me that he would go to the train station each day to pick up new films and forward films to other locations.²⁵¹ He said that this was a stressful experience because they were often fearful that the films would not come and they would have nothing to show. He worked at the theatre just one summer and always had every film delivered, but he said that other managers experienced not having the films arrive when they should have. I found one example of a film not arriving on time in the ledgers: in June 1931, the Lasky two-reel comedy *The Big Splash* arrived late and had to be played as a matinee the next day.

Singles were one-reel films of any genre, but not “extras” such as newsreels or cartoons, which I analyze next. Singles consistently made up part of the program, too, either as part of a full set program alongside a specific feature or as a separate part of a different combination. As with the two-reel comedies, most singles played for one night only at the Goldfields Theatre, consistently sent from first playing at the New Empire Theatre. Again, late shipments were also a problem and were often noted in the ledgers. Over the six-year period, 850 one-reel singles played at the Goldfields Theatre, more than any other type of films. Regal was the most likely company to provide singles to the Goldfields Theatre at 26 percent, Columbia was second at 20 percent, and Paramount was third at 17 percent.

The extras that made up part of the program were most often newsreels, but other types of extras were also played, such as cartoons. Most of the newsreels came from

²⁵¹ Interview with author, July 8, 2015.

Toronto, but sometimes they came from North Bay, and they were most often shipped to Ansonville after playing in Timmins. Paramount News was the supplier of most extras at 34 percent, followed by Universal News at 25 percent, Fox News at 24 percent, Lasky at 7 percent, and non-newsreel “extras” at 11 percent. The types of newsreels to play at the theatres changed over the years. Before 1933, most of them came from Lasky and Fox, and after 1932 from Paramount and Universal.

Although Hollywood films made up the vast majority of the film programming, live acts that showcased local talent were also still scheduled on a weekly basis at the Goldfields in the early 1930s. These shows often consisted of Italian, French, and Ukrainian bands performing for the audience. There were sometimes special acts, by either local or travelling performers. Several of my male respondents remembered seeing burlesque shows, which they referred to as the “forbidden strip shows,” and according to interview subjects, Gene Columbo’s band would play for the dancers. One respondent, in an interview on July 19, 2015, mentioned that these acts were never advertised as strip shows but were billed as “seasonal entertainment” on the marquee; for my part, I was unable to definitively prove these shows from the programming ledgers. One notable live show that was put on at midnight on October 16, 1930, was called “Kraus in the North Pole.” The show’s title indicates that it may have been a burlesque show, but *The Porcupine Advance* advertised it as a silent picture about the North Pole.

Along with live acts, midnight shows were also a regular part of the programming, and in the early 1930s midnight shows were scheduled more often than matinees at the Goldfields Theatre. Midnight performances were particularly common on Sunday nights

as a way to get around legislation that banned film screening on Sundays in Ontario.²⁵²

A Timmins resident interviewed on July 19, 2015, remembered this fact and said about the midnight shows:

Now, you're not supposed to be open on Sunday, so they would have midnight movies that started at one minute after midnight on Sunday night, and the guys would buy Mickeys, so they could spike cokes at the theatre and drink and yell and hoot at the screen. And I went to dozens and dozens of midnight movies, even when I was in high school. So, you got to bed at two-thirty or three o'clock in the morning. When you're young, it doesn't matter.²⁵³

The midnight shows and live acts that first became popular in the 1930s would remain a constant feature at the Timmins theatres into the 1950s. In fact, memories of midnight movies were one of the most commonly shared memories amongst my interview subjects.

The Opening of the Palace Theatre: Changing Consumer Culture in Timmins

The opening of the Palace Theatre was a significant event that ensured Timmins was fully integrated into the modern consumer culture and entertainment industry. No theatre event in Timmins before or after the opening of the Palace Theatre garnered this type of attention, and *The Porcupine Advance* dedicated an entire edition to the opening. On February 10, 1936, the paper was filled with both articles and ads from other companies in town specifically congratulating Leo on his accomplishment of opening the theatre. According to one of these ads from Sam Bucovetsky, the Palace Theatre made Third Ave and Pine Street “The Crossroads of Commerce for the Porcupine District.”²⁵⁴ The Palace Theatre was not only a reflection of Leo Mascioli and Timmins Theatres but it was also a reflection of the evolution of the town of Timmins from a makeshift gold camp to a

²⁵² For more information on film censorship laws in Ontario see: Pierre Véronneau, “When Cinema Faces Social Values: One Hundred Years of Film Censorship in Canada,” in *Silencing Cinema*, eds. Daniel Biltereyst et al., 49–62 (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁵³ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 15, 2015.

²⁵⁴ “Congratulations Leo Mascioli & Associates,” *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936 (section 2), 8.

vibrant and wealthy mining epicenter that had theatres just as urbane as any city's. As Leo Mascioli put it, quoted in *The Porcupine Advance*: "For years we have planned—for months we have labored—to bring the people of the district this Palace of entertainment."²⁵⁵

The opening of the Palace Theatre was part of the larger evolution of the town, which modernized many of the businesses and integrated Timmins into a larger global consumer culture. Retail was revolutionized in the twentieth century, and local shops were integrated into franchises or were replaced entirely with chain stores. This process occurred more slowly in Timmins than the rest of the country because of its location. Another unique feature of local business in Timmins was that small business owners who started during the Porcupine Gold Rush were able to maintain successful operations because of their status as "Timmins Pioneers." The early entrepreneurs in Timmins built close relationships with both the mining companies and the town council and had a higher social status than small business owners in other parts of the country.

Mascioli was one of several pioneer businessmen who had parlayed their early success in the camp into diversified business interests throughout the region. Mascioli's business partner, Charles Pierce, owned several hardware stores and had investments in both the theatre chain and other lumber and mining companies throughout the region.²⁵⁶ Sam Bucovetsky was another Timmins pioneer who started a clothing store chain with outlets in Schumacher, South Porcupine and Kapuskasing, and Rouyn and Noranda in nearby Quebec. While these early entrepreneurs were able to maintain their regional businesses, by the 1930s some other national chains had reached Timmins. In 1934 there

²⁵⁵ "The Palace Theatre Bids You Welcome," *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936 (section 2), 8.

²⁵⁶ Kerry Abel references Charles Pierce's interests in mining and lumber in *Changing Places*, 134.

was a *Timmins Merchants Shopping Guide* published in *The Porcupine Advance*, which shows the expansion of retail options since the early days of the gold camp. There were sixty-eight stores classed as grocery stores, fifteen garage and service stations, seven ladies-wear shops, and eleven tailors. There were also five department stores listed in the guide: F.W. Woolworth, T. Eaton Co., Dominion Stores, A&P Stores, and Pioneer Stores.²⁵⁷ One local pharmacy, Sauve's, was also listed as a Rexall store, which was part of a franchise based in the United States.²⁵⁸

Another event in the 1930s that helped develop the consumer culture in the town was the introduction of radio, which was facilitated by another northern industrialist, Roy Thomson. Roy Thomson came to Northern Ontario in the 1920s selling radios and other appliances, and his biographer wrote that his first introduction to Mascioli was when he sold him a faulty ice machine for the Empire Hotel.²⁵⁹ Despite this inauspicious introduction, the two men would become involved in a business relationship, and Mascioli helped Thomson with his first newspaper, *The Timmins Daily Press*. According to Karen Abel, Roy Thomson first decided to start radio stations in the North because, as a radio salesman, he was making very few sales due to the lack of local radio stations. In 1930, Roy Thomson started CKAT in North Bay by acquiring the license for the station from the Abitibi Power Company.²⁶⁰ In 1933, in conjunction with the opening of *The*

²⁵⁷ Karen Bachmann, "HISTORY: Looking back at 1934 in Timmins," *The Timmins Daily Press*, <http://www.timminspress.com/2014/09/05/history-looking-back-at-1934-in-timmins>

²⁵⁸ For more information on the Rexall franchise, see: Mickey C. Smith, *The Rexall Story: a History of Genius and Neglect* (London, UK: Informa Healthcare, 2011).

²⁵⁹ For more information on Thomson and Mascioli's relationship see: Russell Braddon, *Roy Thomson of Fleet Street*. London, UK: Collins, 1965.

²⁶⁰ For more information on the history of the station see: "Station history: CKAT-AM," History of Canadian Broadcasting, https://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing_and_histories/radio/ckat-am

Timmins Daily Press, Roy Thomson launched Timmins first radio station, CKGB.²⁶¹ Despite Mascioli's fears of competition from the radio station, the radio actually helped advertise the theatres and eventually the manager of the Palace Theatre, Frank Colemeco, had a weekly radio show discussing what was playing at the theatres. With the introduction of chain stores like Dominion and Eaton's and the first radio station, CKGB, Timmins became a fully modern town with a vibrant consumer culture. Lizabeth Cohen argues that the development of twentieth-century consumer culture created consumption practices that were akin to citizenship.²⁶² In this sense, the people of Timmins became part of the larger Canadian culture that was developed during this period, and the opening of the first movie palace in the town was a clear reflection of the full integration of the rugged mining town into the wider Canadian culture.

The coverage of the Palace Theatre's opening included a mixture of advertisements and stories about both the local Timmins companies and larger national corporations who helped support the opening. Some of the local businesses that advertised their involvement with the theatre were the delivery company Star Transfer, Sam Bucovetsky's clothing store, Northern Cement Brick Block and Tile Company, Commodore Restaurant, A. J. Shragg Ladies Wear, and the Goldfields Drug Company. Another northern chain, George and Taylor Hardware, based in New Liskaerd, also took out an advertisement in the paper. It appears that the town's chain stores, like Woolworths and A&P, did not take part in the opening celebrations, as they did not have

²⁶¹ For more information on the history of the station see: "Station history: CKGB-FM." *History of Canadian Broadcasting*. http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing_and_histories/radio/ckgb-fm

²⁶² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 408.

ads in the newspaper, although other national companies did take out ads, including Toronto Carpet Co. Limited, Westinghouse Mazda Lamps, and the Cooksville Company Limited. The companies that congratulated Leo Mascioli on opening the first Northern movie palace furnished the movie theatre with the best carpets, curtains, chairs, and hardwood found in the North. In these advertisements there was a direct appeal to the townspeople to buy these fine products so that their homes could be as nice as the town's movie palace.

The coverage of the theatre's opening revealed many aspects about Timmins Theatres' relationship with the wider entertainment industry. There were ads with accompanying articles on Paramount Pictures and MGM. The two articles describing Paramount and MGM pictures included a list of the stars at each studio and the upcoming pictures from each studio that would play at the Palace Theatre.²⁶³ As noted above, several Hollywood stars, like Douglas Fairbanks and Clark Gable, sent telegrams to Leo Mascioli that were published in *The Porcupine Advance* celebrating the opening of the Palace Theatre. One of the reasons Hollywood became such a dominant force globally was this strategy of marketing to local audiences. Through the newspaper reports, the people of Timmins felt connected to the Hollywood industry and its stars.

Not only would the best Hollywood films play at the Palace Theatre but also British films would be screened. *The Porcupine Advance* reported on the importance of British films in the opening coverage of the Palace Theatre. According to the article, British films were important because many of the productions would be filmed in Canada, and John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, the governor general of Canada, directed one

²⁶³ "Paramount Features to Play the Palace," *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936 (section 2), 7; "Great Screen Stars to Come in MGM Pictures," *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936, section 2.

of the films that would be screened at the Palace Theatre.²⁶⁴ British films during this period were marketed as being nationalistically Canadian because of our status as a Commonwealth country and the lack of a robust internal Canadian film industry in English Canada. The promotion of British film was a way for theatres to appeal to nationalistic sentiment while not actually having to invest in Canadian film.

The amount of coverage that *The Porcupine Advance* gave to the other businesses involved in the opening of the Palace Theatre is indicative of the integration of the theatre business within the larger Canadian consumer culture. Now the people of Timmins could order the same hardwood floors, tiles, and carpets from Toronto that were in the Palace Theatre. Third Street was also now populated with local enterprises like the Palace Theatre, Goldfields Theatre, and the Empire Theatre along with an ordering outlet for Eaton's, a Dominion Grocery store, and several local stores for consumer goods, including two hardware stores and several men's and ladies apparel shops. By the 1930s, Timmins was becoming integrated into the larger economic structure of the country, and soon the theatres would officially join the larger Hollywood film industry.

Even before the opening of the Palace Theatre, Timmins Theatres had been involved with the promotion of motion picture industry in the town. In 1932, Timmins Theatres collaborated with Metropolitan Motion Picture Co. to make films highlighting businesses in Timmins. *The Porcupine Advance* reported that the Metropolitan Motion Picture Company made several films in the region including *The Golden Romance of Northern Canada*, which was also screened at the Timmins theatres. It was also reported that the company was based out of New Liskeard, but I was unable to locate any

²⁶⁴ "Many British Films to Show At Palace," *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936 (section 2), 5.

Canadian companies with the same name in Ontario. I was able to find an educational film company called the Metropolitan Motion Picture Company based in Detroit.

There were several stories about the film *The Golden Romance of Northern Canada* in *The Porcupine Advance*, which recounted the progress of the shoot. The film was originally shot in February of 1932, but most of it had to be reshot in March due to a faulty camera, and it did not premiere at the theatres until July. There is one copy of a movie about Timmins at the Timmins Museum with a date listed as 1928. Based on the description of the film from *The Porcupine Advance*, this film appears to be the same one described in the newspaper because it showcased several of Timmins's businesses—although there might have been several of these types of local films financed by Timmins Theatres. Having a connection to the local community was central to the selling of film as an entertainment pastime. Even though the theatres almost exclusively played Hollywood films, it was always very important to highlight local culture through band performances, contests, and these types of local movies. It was essential during the process of vertical integration that national chains absorb the local elements of the main-street theatres. In the case of Timmins, Famous Players Canadian accomplished this by keeping the management of the theatres the same in the early years of the contract.

Becoming Part of the Famous Players Canadian National Chain

The region of Northeastern Ontario was one of the only locations in the large province of Ontario where Famous Players Canadian did not have a significant presence.²⁶⁵ With the opening of the Palace Theatre, the theatre empire of Leo Mascioli and his associates drew

²⁶⁵ Famous Players Canadian had theatres in the larger communities of Sudbury and North Bay but none in the cluster of resource towns around Timmins.

the attention of Famous Players Canadian. According to several interviews, it was shortly after the opening of the Palace Theatre that Famous Players Canadian started to exert more pressure on Mascioli to sign a deal, and the archival evidence corroborates this because six months after the opening of the Palace Theatre, Famous Players Canadian filed plans to build a theatre in Timmins.²⁶⁶ In addition to being attracted to the Palace Theatre, Famous Players Canadian was also likely threatened by the Mascioli chain's expansion into their territory, given the company's plans for a theatre in North Bay and its ongoing exploration into the possibility of expanding into Brantford. Both cities had Famous Players Canadian theatres, and the ever-growing Mascioli chain must have been a threat.

Mascioli also had reasons for wanting to sign a deal with Famous Players Canadian—and one of the most pressing was gaining access to first-run films. Gregory Reynolds, the former editor of *The Timmins Daily Press*, told me in an interview that Leo Mascioli signed the agreement with Famous Players Canadian in part because of the cost of paying for first-run films. According to Reynolds, Mascioli was able to pay for first-run comedies but not features, and it would often take months for first-run feature films to get to Timmins.²⁶⁷ Reynolds claims this did not have a huge effect on business because the people of Timmins did not know that films were showed in major cities in Canada before coming to Timmins. In addition, because Mascioli controlled all of the theatres in the town, there was no competition. Reynolds said, “We didn't know that it had been out for two months and shown in Toronto and Montreal and Vancouver and we were getting

²⁶⁶ Records demonstrate that Famous Players Canadian filed plans to build a theatre in Timmins in October 1936, six months after the Palace Theatre opened.

²⁶⁷ This assertion by Reynolds is backed up by analysis from Chapter Two on the programming during the 1920s.

it two months later. It didn't matter to us because there was no competition."²⁶⁸ Although the lack of first-run films did not initially affect the business, because of the lack of competition, it would have been disastrous if a Famous Players Canadian theatre that showed newer releases was built in Timmins.

Nathanson, in fact, did make plans to open up a rival theatre in October 1936, six months after the Palace Theatre opened. October was also the same month Mascioli bought property in North Bay. Nathanson used a subsidiary company, Hanson Theatres, to submit plans for a 1,000-seat theatre called the Granada Theatre.²⁶⁹ One respondent, reflecting on the tactics used by Famous Players Canadian at the time, remarked that Famous Players Canadian attempted to “put the squeeze on Mascioli.”²⁷⁰ The plans for the Granada Theatre seem to have been a catalyst in the partnership agreement because in November of 1936, one month after the plans were filed, Charles Pierce expensed a trip to Toronto, most likely as part of negotiations. Timmins Theatres' filing of plans for the North Bay Theatre in November 1936 was likely also part of these negotiations—a ploy to put Timmins Theatres in a stronger position.

In an interview conducted by researcher James DiGiacomo, Frank Colamecco reflected on the deal with Famous Players Canadian, saying:

In 1937 Famous Players came into the picture with Timmins Theatres and they became partners. This was due to the fact that Famous Players was going to be our opposition here in Timmins. Rather than fight, Mascioli Enterprises and Famous Players got together. You see Famous Players had started a theatre

²⁶⁸ Gregory Reynolds, interviewed by author, July 23, 2015.

²⁶⁹ Granada Theatre Plans, October 1936, RG series 56–10 container B308194, Ontario Archives, Toronto, ON.

²⁷⁰ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 20, 2015.

here and Mascioli had started one in North Bay so they decided to become partners.²⁷¹

It appears that the partnership developed as part of a truce between the two companies. Ultimately, neither wanted to be in competition, but the purchasing of rival theatres was an effective negotiation tactic for both companies.

The contract between the two companies was signed in January 1937 and stipulated that the partnership would begin in March of 1937.²⁷² Famous Players Canadian did not publically take over the theatres, which could have been a move to limit the exposure of their monopoly, which as mentioned previously had come under government scrutiny with the White Commission. On March 23, 1937, it was reported in *The Motion Picture Daily* that Hanson Theatres Corporation acquired the six “Mascioli Brothers” theatres in Northern Ontario.²⁷³ The company was not in fact sold but entered into a partnership agreement, which again was common during vertical integration. What wasn’t common was that there were three contracts involved in this agreement: one was between Famous Players Canadian and Timmins Theatres, the second was between Famous Players Canadian and Northern Empire Theatres, and the third was between Famous Players Canadian and Hanson Theatres, giving Hanson the rights to oversee the contract that was signed between Famous Players Canadian and Timmins Theatres.

²⁷¹ Interview with Frank Colamecco, conducted by J. L. DiGiacomo.

²⁷² Contract agreement between Famous Players Canadian, Hanson Theatres, and Timmins Theatres, January 30, 1937, Leo and Antonio Mascioli file, pages 536– 546, RG series 117–A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷³ “Hanson’s Total Now 24,” *The Motion Picture Daily*, March 23, 1937.

As they did in the United States, Famous Players Canadian used a Standard Exhibition Contract as part of their agreements with exhibitors.²⁷⁴ The investigation by the federal government into the monopolistic practices of Famous Players Canadian, known as the White Commission, investigated the contracts used by Famous Players Canadian in 1926, 1928, and 1930. The first two contracts were almost identical to the American Standard Exhibition contract, and it was not until 1930 when the Canadian Standard Exhibition Contract was adopted.²⁷⁵ According to the White Commission, the Canadian Standard Exhibition contained ten common features:

1. Prices and Payment on a percentage basis: Theatres that were Famous Players Canadian affiliated theatres were able to rent films on a percentage basis.
2. Protection: This clause made exhibitors promise not to exhibit films outside of run or protection period.
3. Delivery and Return of Prints: This clause in the contract guaranteed that Famous Players Canadian and the exhibitor would both send and return films in a timely manner.
4. Assignment of Contract: This clause stipulates that the contract could not be assigned to another party unless agreed upon by both parties. Although this clause also stipulates that an exhibitor could sell their shares to another party without written agreement from Famous Players Canadian.
5. Selection of Dates: This clause stipulates that Famous Players Canadian had to give exhibitors fifteen days' notice in advance of a film being available for

²⁷⁴ See: Richard Maltby, "The Standard Exhibition Contract and the Unwritten History of the Classical Hollywood Cinema." *Film History: An International Journal* 25, no. 1 (2013): 138–153.

²⁷⁵ The White Commission report notes that the 1926 and 1928 Standardized Exhibition Contracts used the American Standardized Exhibition Contracts with Canadian amendments written in using hand writing, 190.

- exhibition. The exhibitor was required to respond within fourteen days to select the exhibition dates within a four-week period.
6. Minimum Admission Charge: Exhibitors were not allowed to charge a fee lower than ten cents.
 7. Advertising Accessories: All advertising materials needed to be leased through Famous Players Canadian.
 8. Delay in Performance: This clause deals with the types of situations that could cause a delay in performance and the process.
 9. Acceptance of Application: For each film, exhibitors had to sign a new contract.
 10. Arbitration: This clause allows for an arbitration of disputes that arise over the contract and sets up the rules and regulations for how this would be set up.²⁷⁶

The Timmins contract does not appear to be similar to the one described in the White Commission. The first contract stipulates that Famous Players Canadian would supervise the operation of the three Timmins theatres—the New Empire Theatre, the Palace Theatre, and the Goldfields Theatre—and would pay Timmins Theatres \$2,500 a month for the use of them. Timmins Theatres, in return, paid Famous Players Canadian a booking fee of \$50 per week for the Palace Theatre, \$25 per week for the Goldfields Theatre, and \$25 per week for the New Empire Theatre. All profits would be divided, and the exact words in the contract are “share and share alike.” There was another caveat in the contract that transferred the proposed Granada Theatre to Timmins Theatres and, in

²⁷⁶Peter White. *Investigation into an Alleged Combine in the Motion Picture Industry in Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1931), 195–205.

return, Timmins Theatres would transfer their proposed theatre in North Bay to Famous Players Canadian. Despite the report in *The Motion Picture Daily* that all of Mascioli's theatres were procured by Hanson Theatres, the deal between Famous Players Canadian and Mascioli's second theatre company, Northern Empire Theatres, did not give either Famous Players Canadian or Hanson operational control. Instead, this contract gave exclusive booking rights to Famous Players Canadian for Mascioli's four other theatres in Ansonville, New Liskeard, Schumacher, and South Porcupine, which made them second-run to the three central theatres in Timmins.

The Timmins contract seems to differ from the Canadian Standard Exhibition contract in several ways. The booking fee, mentioned in the Timmins contract, did not appear to be based on percentages and instead there was a flat booking fee of \$50 a week for the Palace Theatre and \$25 a week for both the Goldfields Theatre and the New Empire Theatre. There were also no clauses regarding the delivery and return of films, the assignment of contracts, selection of dates, minimum admission charge, advertising accessories, delay in performance, and acceptance of application or arbitration in the Timmins contract. The only mention of protecting the run of the film was in the Northern Empire Theatre contract, which stipulated that they were only allowed to show films after they were screened at the Timmins theatres.

There were several additional stipulations in the contracts that made the deal advantageous to Mascioli. One major clause was that Famous Players Canadian agreed to pay for the heating and ventilation system not only for the theatres but also for the attached stores. There were also caveats in place to protect both companies if any of the theatres had to close in case of a catastrophic event such as a fire. The contract stipulated

that in the event that the theatres were destroyed or needed to stop operating: “because [of] structural defects, equipment problems or because of a government closure,” Famous Players Canadian would continue to pay \$1,400 a month for the Palace Theatre and \$550 a month each for the Goldfields Theatre and the New Empire Theatre.

It is my contention that the contract differed from the Standard Canadian Exhibition contract because Mascioli was able to negotiate a better deal than many other exhibitors. He did this by attempting to build theatres in Famous Players Canadian’s territory, and he sent Charles Pierce to Toronto to negotiate with Nathanson. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Charles Pierce was born in a Lithuanian town not far from where Nathanson was born, so the two men must have connected over their same cultural heritage, and may have even had even further connections as the Russian-Jewish community in Canada was close-knit.²⁷⁷ Another reason for the beneficial contract could have been from the fallout of the White Commission. Even though Famous Players Canadian was legally allowed to keep their monopoly, they did receive bad press for their parasitic business practices. This bad press was likely the reason that Hanson Theatres was identified in the deal through press accounts, and could also be why the Timmins contract differed from the contract published in the White Commission. Finally, while Timmins was a growing and prosperous city it was also very far from Toronto, and it does not appear that initially Famous Players Canadian wanted to be closely involved in their operations.

Even though the contract stipulated that Famous Players Canadian would supervise the theatres, the management of the theatres does not appear to have changed

²⁷⁷ See: Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto, Ontario: Stoddart, 1997).

during the early years of the contract. Frank Colemeco and Gene Columbo continued in their role as managers of the theatres, and Mascioli controlled the day-to-day operations. The theatre regulatory files at the Ontario Archives indicate that from 1937 to 1940, regulatory infractions were directed towards Timmins Theatres not Famous Players Canadian. For example, when a new fire exit needed to be installed at the Palace Theatre, the inspection branch wrote to Timmins Theatres, and Gene Columbo replied that the work would have to wait until Mr. Mascioli returned from Italy because he needed to supervise all construction work on the theatres.²⁷⁸ Frank Colemeco, the manager of the Palace Theatre and the Goldfields Theatre, would also take creative measures in his management of the theatres. The projectionist laws in Canada required special licensing, so it was difficult to get enough operators in Timmins who met the requirements. An interview subject recalled that when a projectionist got sick, Frank would have them run back and forth between the Palace Theatre and Goldfields Theatre.²⁷⁹

The majority of those I interviewed did not remember the Famous Players Canadian takeover, and this quote sums up their sentiments: “I don’t remember the changeover at all. It wasn’t important to me.”²⁸⁰ Ultimately, despite the power struggle, Mascioli for all intents and purposes still controlled the theatres, and it was mutually beneficial for both parties to sign a deal. For Mascioli, the increased costs of building bigger and better movie theatres made his company less than profitable in the early 1930s, and for Famous Players Canadian it was important to gain a presence in this region that was growing quickly due to the booming mining industry. One thing that did change after

²⁷⁸ Timmins Theatres 1938 letter, Palace Theatre File, RG series 56–9 container B247531, Ontario Archives.

²⁷⁹ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 19, 2015.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 23, 2015.

the deal was how the account records were kept. The business records from the post vertical integration show a higher level of both financial organization and profit-making.

The Business Records Post-Vertical Integration

How the accounts were recorded changed after the partnership agreement with Famous Players Canadian. Starting in 1937, the ledgers contained the general account and included payroll costs and profit-and-loss accounts from each of the theatres. The relatively simplistic books of the early company were replaced with a standardized accounting system that was overseen by the Hanson film company. In a memo from the accountant for the Mascioli businesses, it states that Hanson Theatre Company did all accounting for the theatres.²⁸¹ The new accounting practices were also mentioned in the 1937 contract with clauses fourteen and fifteen stipulating that proper records were to be kept and each year an auditor would analyze the accounting books. The standardization of the books was reflective of a new business model that would increase profits for the company and stabilize its financials.

The revenues of the theatres also rose dramatically after the partnership agreement. In 1937, the annual yearly income from just the theatre operations rose to \$103,512. Previously the company's revenue was combined with rental income from the stores attached to the theatres, and isolating the theatre revenue shows an impressive increase. The revenue for just the theatre operations was \$72,640 in 1936, \$48,400 in 1935, \$21,000 in 1934, and \$10,500 in 1933. That amounts to a 700 percent increase over the

²⁸¹ Accountant Report, July 18, 1940, Leo and Antonio Mascioli file, pages 256–257, RG series 117–A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835, Library and Archives Canada.

four-year period, and there was an increase of 42.5 percent between 1936 and 1937, after the deal was signed.

The Palace Theatre contributed a significant amount of the new theatre revenues, and in 1937, there was a total of \$71,432 transferred into the trust account for the theatres. The total breakdown of the Palace Theatre's profits and losses reveals that the theatre had the largest profit margin throughout the year of any of the theatres. The Goldfields Theatre was the second most profitable theatre in 1937 and transferred a total of \$31,452 into the trust account. The New Empire Theatre, which had been the most profitable theatre before the opening of the Palace Theatre, decreased its revenue drastically in 1937, and only transferred a total of \$626 to the general account. After 1937, the New Empire Theatre consistently ran at a loss. The Palace Theatre became the dominant income earner for the chain after the deal, and the people of Timmins paid the extra ticket prices to see films at the Palace Theatre rather than attend older films at the New Empire Theatre.

Both companies did well under the new financial organization of the company. Timmins Theatres made \$65,541 in transfers to the trust account: \$25,000 under the rental agreement and \$38,500 from the share of the profits. A further \$1,941 was transferred to Timmins Theatres on "account for the inventory." Hanson Theatres also made a significant amount of profit and received \$38,500 in profit sharing. It is clear that the deal was advantageous to both companies as Timmins Theatres now had financial security and Famous Players Canadian made profits while remaining at arm's length for the actual operations of the theatres. With the increase in profits, there was also an increase in the box office in 1937, and the theatres made a total of \$186,283.47 in box

office receipts, which was a 2 percent increase from the previous year. The opening of the Palace Theatre in 1936 had a larger impact on ticket sales resulting in a 35 percent increase at the box office. According to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, in 1937 the national box office increased by almost 10 percent. After the deal with Famous Players Canadian the increase in box office revenues for Timmins Theatres was actually below the national average. While the deal did not increase the audience for films in Timmins, it did help to stabilize costs with regular rental payments and lowered film costs.

The Famous Players Canadian accounting book for 1938 seems to be lost, and there is only an account book from the Timmins Theatres General Account. The 1938 book is organized differently than the book from 1937 and looks similar to one of the earlier account books, so it appears that Timmins Theatres continued to keep separate accounts at least in this year. In 1938, Timmins Theatres made a total of \$106,408, and \$87,502 came from the trust account that comprised the share of the profits and the payments from Hanson Theatres. Timmins Theatres also made \$18,886 from store rentals in the theatre block. The shareholders of Timmins Theatres made \$34,350 in dividend payouts, and Mascioli Construction made a total of \$28,259 in building what was then called the Granada Theatre. Mascioli Construction was also paid a total of \$2,150 for small miscellaneous repairs done throughout the year on the other theatres.

In the auditing ledger there is a section for film rental costs and advertising for the New Empire Theatre and the Goldfields Theatre. As mentioned above, from 1932 to 1935 Timmins Theatres was averaging \$30,000 each year for film rentals with small fluctuations each year. In 1933 and 1935 there were slight increases of about 5 and 6 percent, and in 1934 there was a small decrease of 6 percent. There was a sharp decrease

in film rental costs in 1936, by 62 percent. The film costs continued to decrease drastically after the deal by a further 84 percent in 1937 and 93 percent in 1938. In 1938 the film costs were just \$150, which was a 99 percent decrease from the beginning of the 1930s (Figure 13). So while the deal with Famous Players Canadian did not increase the box office it did decrease film rental costs.

In the auditing ledger, there was also an amount recorded each year for advertising throughout the 1930s. The advertising expense was also tied to stationary costs, but it is notable that advertising steadily increased in the early 1930s with a slight dip in 1934 that was similar to all other expenses. In 1938, after the deal with Famous Players Canadian, there was a significant decrease in advertising costs, which indicates that Famous Players Canadian must have shouldered some of those costs.²⁸² Despite the decrease in advertising costs after the deal, the chain was still involved with local advertising initiatives. An interesting new expense in 1938 was to a company called “Treasures of Ontario.” There were three expenses to this company, the first two were in May when \$25 was spent for a “Licence of Occupation,” and then \$2 was spent for an “annual filming fee.” The most notable expense was \$918 in June for the “1937 corporation tax in full.” It seems that this was a subsidiary filming company that might have been owned by Timmins Theatres. I was not able to find any mentions of a Timmins movie in 1938 but I did find evidence that the company was involved with creating a film about Timmins in 1932, as mentioned above. It appears that after the deal

²⁸² The first year that advertising costs were calculated in the general accounting books was 1938. The total number of money spent on advertising was \$125 and most of the ads were bought in *The Timmins Daily Press* and *The Porcupine Advance*, but they also advertised in *The North Bay Nugget*, *The Sudbury Star*, and *The Might Directories*. Other ads were also taken out in *The Jewish Sentinel* and several Catholic publications and church bulletins. The company also bought a three-year subscription with ads in *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest* for \$5.

with Famous Players Canadian, Timmins Theatres was still very much involved with local promotions but was able to pay less in advertising costs.

Along with a decrease in film rental costs and advertising, another beneficial financial development for the chain post deal was the decrease in labour costs after the contract was signed. On a national scale, theatre wages consistently comprised roughly 17 percent of annual revenue. In contrast, the Timmins theatre ledgers demonstrate that the proportion of income spent on theatre wages decreased between 1933 and 1937, from the standard 17 percent to 10 percent by 1937. At the moment of vertical integration with Famous Players Canadian in 1937, the Mascioli theatres were making more money than ever before and losing less of their revenue to wages, film rental costs, advertising, and labour. In these early years of the deal, the Timmins Theatres's partners still maintained their control of the theatres, and played an active role in their continued dealings with Famous Players Canadian.

During the first years of the deal the partners made semi-regular expensed trips to Toronto. In 1938, there were several trips to Toronto expensed by Leo Mascioli, Pete Bardessono, and Gene Columbo. In January, Leo Mascioli charged \$100 to the accounts when he took the first of these expensed trips. In March, June, and September, Gene Columbo expensed trips to Toronto totaling \$500. In November, Pete Bardessono made another trip and expensed \$250. The back and forth trips to Toronto by the top executives of the company demonstrated that there was a close relationship between the Timmins and Toronto partners during this time period.

Ultimately, the partnership was beneficial for both companies. The deal provided the Mascioli chain with financial stability and the deal was profitable for Famous Players

Canadian under their subsidiary Hanson Theatres. Timmins Theatres continued to thrive under the deal and two more theatres were built in by the company, the Broadway Theatre in 1941 and the Victory Theatre in 1947 (Figure 14). The most significant impact on the company's profits was the opening of the Palace Theatre, but the deal with Famous Players Canadian helped to make the theatres profitable, and the deal most importantly helped to stabilize expenditures like labour and film rental costs. Unlike the standard narrative of the large conglomerate pushing out a small-town theatre operator, Mascioli Enterprises thrived under the deal, and Mascioli was now able to make even more money by hiring his construction company to build new theatres and make repairs. While the business thrived, the theatre operations remained largely the same.

While Mascioli was able to thwart a rival Famous Players Canadian theatre, competition finally arrived in Timmins in 1938 with what was promised to be a French-language cinema. The Cartier Theatre opened in November 1938 to more muted coverage than the Palace Theatre, but it was still heralded as an achievement because the Cartier Theatre was the first air-conditioned theatre, and it allowed patrons to smoke throughout the theatre.²⁸³ Henri Trudeau and Louis Rousseau built the Cartier Theatre at the foot of Third Street with the intention that the theatre would be the first of a French-language chain in the region, and the two men later opened up the La Salle Theatre in Kirkland Lake in 1939.²⁸⁴ The opening of a rival theatre in Timmins did not seem to affect the Mascioli theatres' earnings, and the Cartier Theatre was eventually absorbed

²⁸³ "Another Handsome Theatre in Timmins," *The Porcupine Advance*, November 7, 1938 (second section), 1.

²⁸⁴ "Soucie Opens LaSalle At Kirkland Lake," *Boxoffice*, March 11, 1939, 91. Rousseau and Trudeau were also partnered with J.O Scott of Weston Theatres (chairman of the Independents Theatre Association) and organized a booking syndicate for six theatres in Ontario (see: "Toronto," *Boxoffice*, March 18, 1939, 90). According to Pendakur this syndicate was one of the only examples of an organized threat to Famous Players Canadian dominance (*Canadian Dreams American Control*, 103).

into the Famous Players Canadian–Mascioli operations in March of 1941 with Frank Colemeo taking over management of the theatre. The failure of a French language cinema despite the large French Canadian population in the area points to the popularity of Hollywood's standardized programming, which was commonplace at the other Timmins theatres.

What Played at the Theatres after Vertical Integration, 1936–1938?

The Palace Theatre had programming each day, including a matinee and evening show. There was also a weekly midnight performance every Friday. In the months right before the deal with Famous Players Canadian, from March 1936 to December 1936, one hundred and seventeen features played at the Palace Theatre. The vast majority of the features that played that year were from Regal (MGM and others) at 22 percent, and Paramount at 18 percent, for a combined total of 40 percent. Fox was the third most popular film company at 16 percent. For each month the average number of features shown was twelve, with period from October to December having the most features, at fourteen per month, and June having the least, at eight features that month.

Before the deal there were fewer two-reel comedies shown at the Palace Theatre, and the vast majority, at 52 percent, were from Regal. Vitagraph was the second most popular film company at 35 percent. On average, only two, two-reel comedies played each month, and the most two-reel comedies played in December, with five playing that month and zero played in April and May of 1936. Singles were far more popular than two-reel comedies, and in 1936 a total of 143 singles played from March to December. There was an average of fourteen singles playing at the theatres each month. Extras continued to be a popular part of the standard program, but now only newsreels, and not

cartoons, played as extras, a change that continued after the deal. Fifty-one percent of the newsreels were from Universal News and 49 percent from Paramount News before the deal with Famous Players Canadian.

The following is an analysis of the differences in the film programming after the contract with Famous Players Canadian. The programming ledgers that I had access to contained information from January 1937 to June 1938, with one month missing for September 1937. The deal with Famous Players Canadian did not seem to change the types of films shown at the theatres, and after the deal was signed, 97 percent of the features shown at the Palace Theatre were from American distributors. Thirty-seven percent of the features were from Paramount and Regal, which is actually a slight drop from the pre-contract days when they accounted for 40 percent in 1936 (Figure 15). Other than Paramount and Regal, the third most popular distributor was Fox. As mentioned above, in the nine months before the deal was signed only American films were played at the Palace Theatre, but after the deal the British distributor Empire re-emerged and made up 3 percent of the feature films played.

A significant change after the deal was the increase in features each month. Before the deal, an average of eleven features played each month at the Palace Theatre, which increased to sixteen in 1937 and 1938. There were also increases in other parts of the programming and even the number of live acts that preformed increased slightly from 1936, and there were three performances listed in 1937 and 1938. In April of 1937, a live conjoined twins act (known in the day as a Siamese twins act) was performed at the Palace Theatre twice. There was a *Shrageess* fashion show with Canadian film star Deanna Durbin on May 12, 1938. The two-reel comedies also changed after the deal, and

Vitagraph became the most popular film distributor listed; the British company Empire became the second most popular two-reel comedy provider, and Regal dropped its share to 22 percent of two-reel comedies shown. Singles did not significantly change after the deal. Newsreels did change: before the deal Fox News and Paramount News were interchangeable and in the beginning of 1937 Paramount News played until October when Fox News replaced them. The distribution after the deal was 27 percent Fox News, 23 percent Paramount News, and 50 percent for Universal News.

The accounting books after the merger with Famous Players Canadian included the box office for each of the theatres. The most profitable week for the Palace Theatre was the week of July 3, 1937, which was the Dominion Day weekend and the total receipts were \$3,894.04. The features that played at the Palace Theatre that week were *A Star Is Born*, and *Wake Up and Live*. There were also the shorts and two-reel comedies *Circus Days*, *Polo Joe*, *Torture Money*, and *Empire's Hour of Glory*. The newsreels that week were from Paramount and Universal news. Both *Wake Up and Live* and *A Star Is Born* were first released in April of 1937, the former on April 23 and the latter April 30. In Canada, *Wake Up and Live* opened in Montreal the week of May 8, 1937, and was the third top grossing film with \$9,500 gross profits. *A Star is Born* was one of the top films of the year according to critics in *The Film Daily Yearbook*, and it opened in New York at the RKO theatre with a stage show that made \$101,000. When it opened in Montreal the week of May 15, it was the top-grossing film with \$13,500 in gross profits. The Dominion Day long weekend, known today as the Canada Day long-weekend, was a statutory holiday. In Canada, the long-weekends in summer are often associated with

cottaging and outdoor activities. In Timmins, going to the movies appears to have been one of the most popular activities for families to take part in, especially during a holiday.

The most profitable week for the Goldfields Theatre was the week of September 3, 1937, which was the Labour Day long weekend. The total box office for the week was \$1,740.13. Shows played on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and there was a children's matinee on Saturday and a midnight show on Sunday. The programming at the Goldfields Theatre for that week included *Roaring Lead* on Monday, a double feature of *Girl from Scotland Yard*, and *Once a Doctor* on Tuesday and Wednesday, and *Pepper* on Thursday and Friday. Both *Roaring Lead* and *Pepper* were films from 1936 and neither was particularly successful. As with the most successful week at the Palace Theatre, holiday weekends in the summer were particularly profitable for the theatres. In both cases, it seems that it was the holiday rather than the specific films that drew people to the theatres.

As mentioned above, midnight shows at the Palace Theatre were every Friday, and there were often additional midnight shows throughout the week. All of my interview subjects vividly remembered going to midnight shows at the Palace Theatre. The first midnight shows in Timmins were shown in the 1920s to miners working on shifts (Figure 16), but it appears from my interviews that at least by the 1940s, midnight shows appealed more to the town's teenagers.²⁸⁵ A few of my interview subjects worked at the theatres and had memories of working at the midnight shows. One interviewee was an usherette and remembers that she would get to work at 11 o'clock at night and would get

²⁸⁵ Nancy Forestell notes that in the early days of the town the first Empire Theatre would have late night programming on Saturday nights because miners did not usually work on Sundays.

home around 2 o'clock in the morning.²⁸⁶ Another worked as an usher and remembered that sometimes they would have all-night horror nights that would start at midnight and not end until dawn. He said, "Yeah, they would start at probably midnight, we would open the doors and we would have like five features. So it'd run midnight to dawn."²⁸⁷

During my interviews, several people remembered going to the midnight shows as part of the courtship process in Timmins. One female respondent, when prompted about her memories of the midnight shows stated, "Oh yes, as young couples we often went to the midnight show, because we didn't have to get up early on Sunday morning, so it was always a nice date to go on."²⁸⁸ The theatres became the sites of social interaction for young people, and most of my respondents remembered the theatres, particularly the midnight shows, as being an important part of cultural life in the town. The programming for the midnight shows was often a scary film according to many of my respondents. One interview subject vividly remembered being very scared and said: "And we'd go to this midnight show and that's where we got the scary stuff. And you'd vow you'd never go again, because you have to come home at 1:30 in the morning."²⁸⁹ Other interview subjects remembered that horror midnight shows would often include a live act. One interview subject remembered that minstrel would sometimes be part of horror night. He said:

They used to have horror shows on a long weekend. Horror night and it would start at midnight and then they did the unthinkable . . . Not a movie but they

²⁸⁶ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, September 18, 2015.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 21, 2015.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Timmins Resident, interviewed by author, July 23, 2015.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 15, 2015.

would bring up minstrel shows which is certainly not acceptable today but they had the minstrel shows with the guys and all their faces blackened.²⁹⁰

A live horror act that played at the Palace Theatre before the deal with Famous Players Canadian was “El-Wyn’s Midnight Spook Party,” which was performed on October 2, 1936. The “El-Wyn’s Midnight Spook Party” was first developed by the magician El-Wyn in 1929. The performance would include ghostly apparitions, moving objects, and spooky sounds. These types of “spook shows” became the most popular live acts at theatres during the 1940s and 1950s.²⁹¹ El-Wyn performed his show across North America throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and I found several ads from Winnipeg and British Columbia newspapers advertising the show. It appears that at least in Canada a horror film was also screened for the audience as part of the show. One month after it was shown in Timmins, El-Wyn’s Midnight Spook Party was performed in Winnipeg on November 1936, which probably indicates that the show had a westward trajectory across the country.

Even as the local chain was absorbed into the national chain, there was a clear consistency in the programming at the theatres, and as with the financial records there was little change after the merger with Famous Players Canadian. The only noticeable difference in the first years of the deal was that more features were screened, along with slight changes in the most-played film companies. Although only Hollywood films played at the theatres, the live acts and midnight shows helped to facilitate collective cultural practices in Timmins that made the theatres multi-purpose structures. The

²⁹⁰ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 15, 2015.

²⁹¹ Beth A. Kattelman, “Magic, Monsters, and Movies: America’s Midnight Ghost Shows.” *Theatre Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 24.

different ethnic enclaves were represented in musical events, and theatres continued to host live events.²⁹² The deal with Famous Players Canadian was successful because the local cinemas in Timmins remained consistent with programming and management. In these early years, the people of Timmins did not even know that Famous Players Canadian was involved in the theatres.

Conclusions

The integration of the Mascioli film chain into the larger national circuit helped to fully realize the modern consumer culture that had evolved in Timmins during the 1920s and 1930s. This cinema-going culture of Timmins, Ontario, was distinct from that of other small towns because the geographic location and cultural makeup of Timmins was neither fully rural nor fully urban. Although the people of Timmins lived in a remote location and did not have access to first-run films, they had beautiful, modern theatres including their very own movie palace. The theatres in Timmins evolved out of a male working-class culture that shifted in the 1920s. As the town became modernized, so too did the theatres, and the Palace Theatre was the culmination of the hopes and dreams of the people of Timmins to have the same leisure activities as people living in the centre of Canada.

Because of the town's remote location, an independent exhibition company was allowed to develop during what was a period of fierce competition between Famous Players Canadian and smaller independent companies in most other parts of the country. Despite its remote location, Timmins had a large population growth in the 1920s and

²⁹² For more information on the legality of burlesque shows in Ontario see Lindsay Campbell, "A Slub in the Cloth: R. v. St. Clair and the Pursuit of a Clean Theatre in Toronto, 1912–13," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2000):187–220.

1930s, and there were both the finances and the ability to build theatres that would rival those of the cities. Because of this, Famous Players Canadian wanted to integrate the Mascioli theatres into their circuit, but due to the remote area, they did not interfere with anything other than the financial structure of the company in the early years of the contract. From my interviews, it is clear that very few people remembered that Famous Players Canadian was involved in the theatres, but everyone remembered Leo Mascioli as the picture pioneer of the North. Rather than interfere with the cinema-going practices of Timmins, vertical integration helped the theatres to thrive and grow. The positive impact of vertical integration was not only because of the remote location of the chain, but it was also due to the aggressive negotiation tactics employed by Mascioli. In these negotiations, Mascioli essentially copied Nathanson's playbook by planning rival theatres in Famous Players Canadian's territories of North Bay and Brantford. Mascioli countered every move by Nathanson, and this led to a beneficial partnership agreement for Timmins Theatres, which gave the company financial stability while maintaining its independence.

My organizational study of the Mascioli chain's programming and financial records provides insight into how standardized industrial practices like block booking affected theatres at the local level in Canada. This has not been thoroughly examined, particularly in the context of non-metropolitan theatres. It appears from my interviews with family members and former business associates of Mascioli that he was not particularly interested in the types of films shown at the theatres, but was more interested in finding a reliable distributor who would give him films at a good price. From my analysis of the film-booking ledgers, not much changed in the types of films

shown at the theatres before the deal with Famous Players Canadian, but the reliability of film rentals and regular rental payments was fiscally good for Timmins Theatres.

Another key question I had is how the change in the programming at the theatres reflected the cinema-going tastes of the Timmins population and their desire to have similar film programming to what was found in the cities. While it was a modern structure, the New Empire Theatre did maintain some of the earlier practices of the first theatres. It had regular vaudeville acts and played silent films well into the late 1930s. Both the Goldfields Theatre and the Palace Theatre played more current features and had standardized programs. The evolution in the film programming of the Goldfields Theatre and the Palace Theatre shows the desire of the Timmins population to have a movie-going experience that was akin to that in the city. A majority of my interview subjects described how the Palace Theatre changed the cinema-going practices in the town, as attending movies there became a weekly special event where people would wear their best clothes.

The integration of the Mascioli chain into the larger nationalized circuit of Famous Players Canadian did not necessarily change how the people of Timmins went to the movies, but it did have a beneficial effect on the theatre business in the town. A comparison of the theatre books pre- and post-integration demonstrates that profits increased substantially. In part, this was due to the popularity of the Palace Theatre, but the increase of profits was also due to the lowered cost of film rentals, advertising, and labour costs. The deal also provided Timmins Theatres with security because of the consistent rental payments from Famous Players Canadian. In the case of Timmins, vertical integration had a positive impact on exhibition, and Timmins Theatres continued

to build theatres in Northeastern Ontario towns after the deal, providing wholesome entertainment to the remote northern towns of the area. Unfortunately, this fine balance of power between the two companies would derail during World War II. The next chapter will explore Mascioli's downfall during World War II, and how this affected his theatres.

Chapter Four: The War Years

The Opening of the Broadway Theatre

On July 20, 1941, another modern Northern Empire theatre opened in Timmins, Ontario, but this time the coverage in the city's two newspapers was more muted than it had been for the openings of Timmins's early theatres. While the opening of the Broadway Theater was not front page news, *The Timmins Daily Press* did devote an entire second section on July 20, 1941, with the headline: "Luxurious Broadway Theatre Opens Tonight," although *The Porcupine Advance* only had a small article about the opening of the theatre the day before, on June 19, 1941. In this article, *The Porcupine Advance* reported on the theatre's new RCA sound system and its modern screen but did not include the same level of detail as it had for the monumental openings of the New Empire Theatre and Palace Theatre, explored in Chapters Two and Three, when the paper included pages of sponsored articles dedicated to the theatres' modern equipment and decor.

Another significant difference between the opening of the Palace Theatre five years prior and the opening of the Broadway Theatre was that Leo Mascioli's picture and his name were strangely absent from the newspaper reports. The showman featured in the newspapers was a manager brought in from Sudbury: Lorne Moore.²⁹³ This dramatic shift in coverage reflects the changing dynamic of cinema-going once again in Timmins. Famous Players Canadian was now effectively in control of the theatres, and Mascioli was no longer identified as the showman of Northern Ontario in the press. The change is dramatic compared to the story of the Mascioli chain in Chapter Three, where I had

²⁹³ Lorne Moore had been working in some capacity with Hanson Theatres before his appointment as manager to the Broadway Theatre because he is listed as a co-signer for cheques in the original contract.

concluded that the management did not change under the deal with Famous Players Canadian. The careful balance of power between the two companies in the 1930s came undone in the 1940s. The catalyst for this power shift was Mascioli's Italian identity and role as the town's padrone. While this role had established Mascioli's rise to power in the early gold camp, his Italian ethnicity would now lead to his downfall during World War II. Because of the war, Italian ethnicity was criminalized, and the Defence of Canada regulations labelled all Canadians born in Italy as "enemy aliens." Leo Mascioli was detained in an internment camp for the duration of the war, losing control over the management of his chain of theatres.

The opening of the Broadway Theatre coincided with Canada's involvement in World War II, and most of the coverage of the opening revolved around the patriotism of the theatres. The opening film was *It's in the Air*, a comedy about the Royal Airforce starring British comic actor George Formby. *The Timmins Daily Press* reported that the new theatre would co-operate in all the war activities with special events to raise money and awareness for the war effort, and that any war organization would be given the use of the theatre free of charge. *The Timmins Daily Press* also clearly indicated the importance of the nationalized theatre industry in the war effort under the direction of Famous Players Canadian and in particular Nathan L. Nathanson. On June 20, 1941 *The Timmins Daily Press* printed that: "Mr. Nathanson's untiring efforts and the enthusiasm of theatre executives and staffs has made the theatre industry in this country second to none in voluntary support of all worthwhile charitable and government war work."²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ "Broadway Theatre Opens," June 20, 1941, *The Timmins Daily Press*, Second Section, 3.

This chapter will explore the drastic wartime change in the theatres in Timmins and how Famous Players Canadian came to effectively remove the Mascioli brand from the theatres as they took over much of the day-to-day management. This evolution was directly connected to Mascioli's arrest and internment under the Defence of Canada Regulations. Mascioli's internment left a power vacuum in the control of the town's theatres that would culminate in a lawsuit with several competing interests fighting to gain control of the Broadway theatre while still under construction, and also maneuvering with the government over wartime trusteeship of the theatres. Ultimately Famous Players Canadian won this battle. After his internment, Leo Mascioli never returned to Timmins. I argue in this chapter that Mascioli's internment was the catalyst for Famous Players Canadian to take more control of the company—the opportunistic power vacuum caused by his absence rather than the vertically-integrated contractual partnership discussed in the previous chapter. This takeover helped to increase the box office receipts, and it was during these years that popular Canada-wide promotions like Foto Night and Dish Night were introduced. Although these promotions which reflected the audience's pleasure and amusement are at odds with the serious matter of Mascioli's internment, I include them in this chapter to emphasize the deep irony of corporate control of the theatres deriving from Leo's personal tragedy. Despite the increased popularity of the theatres, the expansion of Famous Players Canadian's role in the theatres caused expenses like film rentals to skyrocket, ultimately decreasing the local chain's profits while sending a higher proportion of the box office to Hollywood-controlled distributors. The Northern Empire chain started a slow decline in the 1940s, which can be traced back to the year before the opening of the Broadway, when Italy declared war against the British Empire.

Italy Declares War

On June 10, 1940, most major daily newspapers in Canada ran the headline “Italy Declares War,” and in cities and towns across the country, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), under the Defence of Canada Regulations, rounded up Italian immigrants. These regulations suspended habeas corpus and allowed the imprisonment of suspected enemy aliens. The Italian community in Canada grew dramatically in the twentieth century, and by 1940, there were more than 100,000 Italians living in Canada with several “Little Italies” across the country. As discussed in earlier chapters, Italians were not only found in large cities like Toronto and Montreal but were also well represented in resource communities, because Italian labour was integral to the development of the mining industry in Canada. The Italian population in Timmins was 3,000 strong by 1940 when several of Timmins’s Italians were arrested on June 10, 1940. Some, like my grandfather, Valerio Bellini, were only brought in for questioning, but six men in the town were accused of being “important members of the *Fascio* in Canada” and interned.²⁹⁵ The Mascioli brothers were two of the Italians arrested that day, and their arrest sent shockwaves throughout the town.

The internment of Italians in Canada remains largely a footnote in Canadian history. As mentioned in Chapter One most works on the internment of foreign-born Canadians during World War II have focused on the internment of Japanese-Canadians, which was more widespread than the Italian internment and which displaced tens of thousands of people.²⁹⁶ Starting in the 1980s, some Italian-Canadian scholars began to

²⁹⁵ *Fascio* was the term used in government documents to identify supporters of Italian fascism in Canada.

²⁹⁶ For some notable works on the Japanese internment see: Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Co,

explore the Italian internment. Bruno Ramirez looked at the lasting impact of the internment on the Italian community in Montreal, while John Zucchi and Robert Harney looked at how fascism was not a popular political ideology among Italians in Toronto.²⁹⁷ Not long after these academic works were published, Italian-Canadian groups began publishing and producing documentaries on what they described as “the forgotten internment.”²⁹⁸

As mentioned in Chapter One, works produced by Italian-Canadian groups were the basis for a redress campaign that worked to have the injustice of the Italian internment recognized by both government officials and the wider Canadian population. Some of the claims of this redress campaign drew the attention of Italian-Canadian academics who began to examine more closely the connection of the Italian-Canadian community with the global fascist movement. In 1999, Angelo Principe published the book *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years—The Italian-Canadian Press: 1920–1942*, which examined the Italian-Canadian press and its support of Mussolini and fascism.²⁹⁹ In 2000, *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* was published, which is the

1981); Roy Miki. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*. (Richmond, BC: Raincoast Books, 2004); Namiko Kunimoto, “Intimate Archives: Japanese Canadian family photography, 1939–1949.” *Art History* 27, no. 1 (2004): 129–155; Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela H. Sugiman, *Witness to Loss: Race, Culpability, and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017).

²⁹⁷ Bruno Ramirez, “Ethnicity on Trial: The Italians of Montreal and the Second World War,” in *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939–1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan Kordan, and Lubomyr Luciuk, 71–84 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Committee for the Second World War, 1985); John E. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875–1935*. (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 1988); Robert F. Harney, *Italians in Canada*. Vol. 78, no. 1. (Toronto ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978).

²⁹⁸ For nonacademic perspectives on the Italian internment see: Mario Duliani and Antonino Mazza. *The City Without Women: A Chronicle of Internment Life in Canada the Second World War* (Hamilton, ON: Mosaic Press, 1994); Licia Canton, Domenic Cusmano, Michael Mirolla, Jim Zuccherro, eds. *Beyond barbed Wire: Essays on the Internment of Italian-Canadians* (Toronto, ON: Guernica, 2012); *Barbed Wires and Mandolins*. Dir. Nicola Zavaglia. National Film Board, 1997; *Il Duce Canadese*. Dir. Giles Walker. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2003.

²⁹⁹ Angelo Principe, *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years: The Italian-Canadian Press, 1920–1942*. (Toronto ON: Guernica Editions, 1999).

most comprehensive work about the Italian internment. In the introduction to the book, the authors specifically address the Italian-Canadian redress campaign and, as mentioned in Chapter One, argue that they have over exaggerated the impact of the Italian internment and obfuscated the popularity of fascism within the Italian community.³⁰⁰

In this chapter, I will contradict this assessment and will argue, instead, that in the case of the Mascioli brothers their internment was unjustified and that it did have a lasting impact on the Italian community in Timmins. While the brothers did have some ties to fascist organizations, this was the result of their unique role as labour agents in the Italian community in Timmins. The case of the Mascioli brothers provides rich documentary evidence because not only do the reports about the brothers by the RCMP exist, but so too do newspaper articles, papers related to their legal defence, and testimony from their family members. This chapter will address the legitimacy of the internment through an examination of this case and explore how and why certain Italian-Canadians were targeted. I argue that, while it is clear that the Italian government did try to infiltrate Italian organizations and build relationships with them, there is no evidence that membership in these clubs or dealings with the Italian consulate would automatically make someone a danger to Canadian society.

In the case of the Mascioli brothers, their arrest can be connected to the dynamics of the pre-war Italian community in Canada. Despite the growing population and ascendency of some Italian entrepreneurs, the Italian community in Canada was still not

³⁰⁰ Franca Iacovetta and Roberto Perin. "Italians and Wartime Internment: Comparative Perspectives on Public Policy, Historical Memory and Daily Life," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe, 6 (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

fully integrated. There was a significant population of uneducated labourers who maintained both financial and familial ties to Italy. Successful Italian businessmen like the Mascioli brothers had specialized roles and acted as intermediaries and leaders to this Italian population. The government's investigation and detention of the brothers was largely based on their role as the padrones of Timmins's Italian community.

From the beginning of the Italian community in Timmins, the Mascioli brothers helped to organize the community around its shared Italian heritage. Leo hired an Italian band to play outside his Empire Theatre, and this band was described as a credit to the camp in *The Porcupine Advance* on page 8 of the August 13, 1915, edition of the paper. The first mention of an Italian club I found was on May 22, 1918, where, on page 2, *The Porcupine Advance* reported that a fraternal Italian club was being organized in Timmins with the objective of the "general improvement and advance of the members." This club was most likely the Comete Cavurre club because, according to testimony given by Tony Mascioli, that was the only early Italian club in Timmins, and it was disbanded in 1930.³⁰¹ On March 21, 1938, on page 1 it was reported in *The Porcupine Advance* that Mascioli was involved in building the Italian hall in Timmins.

There was no Italian consulate in Timmins, and Tony essentially acted as the de facto Italian consular in the town. Tony would later testify that he was a go-between for the consulate located in Sudbury and the less educated Italians living in Timmins, who had to deal with things like deaths and property back in Italy. He would communicate instructions from the consulate and write letters on their behalf.³⁰² It appears the Italian

³⁰¹ The testimony given on July 22, 1940, said that Tony was a member of the club ten to fifteen years ago, but that it was a short-lived group.

³⁰² Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, page 6 (provided to author by the Mascioli family).

consulates in both Toronto and Sudbury used the Mascioli brothers to help foster a sense of national pride for the diasporic community in Timmins. A large part of the Masciolis' role in the town was as community organizers, so when the Italian consulate wanted to hold events in Timmins celebrating Italians, they contacted Tony for help. For example, Tony helped organize a parade honouring the Italian explorer Giovanni Caboto in 1935 and a charity drive to raise money for the Italian Red Cross during the Ethiopian campaign.³⁰³

The RCMP Investigation into Enemy Aliens

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Mussolini's regime had support from several segments of the Canadian population. Many of Canada's daily newspapers printed positive stories on the regime in Italy. In addition, members of Canada's elite travelled to Italy and openly praised Mussolini's leadership.³⁰⁴ It was not until 1936, after the invasion of Ethiopia and fears of homegrown fascist regimes, that the mood in the country began to shift. According to Angelo Principe, the Canadian election of 1935 was a major catalyst in the decline of popular support for Mussolini. Harry S. Stevens' Reconstruction Party was apparently supported by Italian fascists who came up with the slogan "Mussolini in Italy—Stevens in Canada."³⁰⁵

Even though the RCMP was monitoring Italian fascist organizations in Canada as early as 1926, it was not until 1936 that the RCMP began to compile detailed information on the activities of fascists in Canada, including the recruitment being done by Italian

³⁰³ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, page 11.

³⁰⁴ Angelo Principe, "A Tangled Knot: Prelude to 10 June 1940," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe, 31 (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Principe cites the *Telegram Newspaper* article "Fascists Seek Stevens for 'Duce' of Canada," *Evening Telegram*. Friday Sept. 27, 1935.

³⁰⁵ Principe, Angelo. "A Tangled Knot," 31.

consulates.³⁰⁶ The policy of interning Italians was discussed in a series of RCMP reports in the spring of 1940, which contained recommendations from a committee that was comprised of N. A. Robertson, J. P. MacNeill, and E. W. Bavin and reported to the minister of justice, Ernest Lapointe. This committee submitted a report on May 29, 1940, with recommendations on what to do about the Italian population in Canada in the event that Italy declared war on the British Empire.³⁰⁷ The committee provided two lists, one of Italian nationals and another of naturalized Canadians. The list of naturalized Canadian citizens was composed of people who were deemed important members of the *Fascio*, and it included Tony and Leo Mascioli.

The committee recommended that all Italian nationals who were members of the *Fascio* be detained, but that naturalized Canadian citizens should be examined on a case-by-case basis. They deemed it unnecessary to detain people based solely on membership in the *Fascio* because many possibly joined under coercion and were not actually disloyal to Canada. They concluded that naturalized Canadians should only be detained based on prima facie evidence of disloyalty, and it recommended that all members of the *Fascio* be investigated for past conduct that would indicate that the person would be a danger to public safety.³⁰⁸

The evidence that was compiled by the RCMP against Italians was not only concentrated on members of the *Fascio*; the RCMP also investigated Italian social clubs that they believed were linked to the fascist regime. The RCMP put together a dossier on

³⁰⁶ Principe, Angelo. "A Tangled Knot," 79.

³⁰⁷ Memo to Minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe, May 29, 1940, RG series 18. Volume Number: 3565. File number: 19-2-3, *Library and Archives Canada*.

³⁰⁸ Memo to Minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe, May 29, 1940, RG series 18. Volume Number: 3565. File number: 19-2-3, *Library and Archives Canada*.

the Sons of Italy on August 26, 1940. The dossier contained a number of translations of documents that the RCMP claimed showed “beyond any possible doubt that this Order, whose main function is that of a benevolent society, has been engaged in furthering the cause of the Italian *Fascio* in Ontario and was under the complete dominion of the Fasciati under the direction of the Italian Consular Authorities” and that “membership in the Order of the Sons of Italy is tantamount to membership in the *Fascio*.”³⁰⁹ Further evidence used against Italians came from a report, submitted by an examiner, from the Bordeaux jail in Montreal, where fifty-three internees were questioned without legal counsel. According to the report, secret agents informed the examiner that out of the 150,000 Italians in Canada, 3,500 were fascists. This report advocated for internment without trial of Italians connected to fascist groups because it would scare others from acting and make those loyal to Canada feel safe.³¹⁰

The RCMP largely relied on informants and secret agents in their investigation of Italians. The list of the important members of the *Fascio* in Canada can be traced back to contact agent number seventeen who was working undercover with the Italian vice consulate, “Casa D’Italia,” in Toronto. The agent claimed that all documents pertaining to fascist groups in Canada had been sent to the consulate in Toronto. Agent number seventeen was taken into a room in the consulate, which apparently contained thousands of documents, and saw a list of all of the fascist leaders in Quebec and Ontario.³¹¹ He was

³⁰⁹ Report on Sons of Italy, August 26, 1940, MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 54, *Library and Archives Canada*.

³¹⁰ Report from Bordeaux Jail, September 5, 1940, MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 54, *Library and Archives Canada*.

³¹¹ Memo, May 15, 1940. MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 54, *Library and Archives Canada*.

said to have memorized this 117-person list after reading it once, and this was the list used to arrest and intern people on June 10, 1940.³¹²

The Case Against the Mascioli Brothers

The list containing the important members of the *Fascio* did not contain any specific evidence on why the Mascioli brothers were included. Most of the specific charges against the brothers can be found in the case files of their trial as well as in their defence records, which were provided to me by the Mascioli family. The *Defence of Canada Regulations* allowed the internees to request a hearing thirty days after their arrest. Leo's son, Dan Mascioli, was the first Timmins-born barrister, and he put together an impressive legal team to defend his father and uncle with law firms in both Toronto and Ottawa. This legal team included Canadian war hero Major Everett Bristol. Dan was also able to garner support from some of Timmins's most prominent citizens including newspaper baron Roy Thomson and Ausin Neame, who was the president of the Canadian Legion. Former superior justice from Alberta J. D. Hyndman was appointed to adjudicate many of the Italian internees' cases, and he heard the case against the Mascioli brothers in July of 1940 at the Petawawa internment camp. The main evidence presented to the judge were fascist membership cards found in Tony's possession, information on both brothers' involvement with the Italian consulate and Consular General, and their organizing of an event in support of the Ethiopian war effort.

Leo Mascioli's testimony does not survive, but the Mascioli family provided me with Tony Mascioli's testimony. Tony testified that there was not a fascist organization in

³¹² Memo, May 15, 1940. MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 54. *Library and Archives Canada*.

Timmins but that, in 1934, several Timmins's Italians were sent membership cards from the consulate. Tony testified that this was because many people wanted to go back to Italy to visit family and conduct business. The consulate sent fascist membership cards to Tony to distribute and told him that these cards would give special privileges to those travelling in Italy. The brothers' trip back to Italy in 1938 to visit their sick mother seems to have been a major catalyst for their continued association with fascist groups in Canada. Tony testified that he contacted the consulate in Ottawa before this trip because they were worried about being conscripted into the Italian army upon returning to Italy. They also received a letter of introduction that would allow them to do business in Italy.³¹³ He also testified that the only time they ever gave a fascist salute was when they were in Italy, because it was mandatory, but that they were very unhappy with the conditions they saw on their trip and that after going to Italy, they did not think that Mussolini was a good leader.

Because of the brothers' position as industrialists, they held staunch anti-communist sentiments that were largely based on their experiences with organized labour in the town of Timmins. Leo's involvement in providing strike-breakers for the Porcupine strike of 1912 had left him with an assault charge. Throughout their time in Timmins, both brothers opposed the Communist Party members of the Timmins council, and this opposition to communism was one of the reasons Tony first joined the fascists. When Tony was directly asked why he joined the fascists, he said, "I thought it was anti-communist—Then we were told that nobody except those of the very best reputation

³¹³ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 10.

could join it so we fell for it and thought it was a good thing to belong to.”³¹⁴ He also said that they were assured that joining the fascists would not interfere with their loyalty to Canada: “The first thing we were told [was] that all Italians living in a foreign country had to be good loyal citizens of that country.”³¹⁵ Tony further testified that in 1939 an agent of the Italian consulate, T. Mari, came to Timmins in order to organize the Sons of Italy, which he also joined. Tony testified that T. Mari told them that the society had a charter from the Ontario provincial government and, again, he was assured that his membership would not interfere with his Canadian citizenship.³¹⁶

Tony Mascioli’s testimony also points to the difficult position many Italian-Canadians were in after the declaration of war by Italy. Tony told the judge that when he joined the fascists, Britain and Italy were allied and his only intention in joining was to maintain ties to the Italian communities in both Timmins and in Italy. He was asked by the examiner, “I suppose you really never thought that Italy and England would be fighting against one another?” He answered, “When I heard the news it broke my heart.” He was then asked, “Would you help Italy now.” He answered, “It is a pretty hard question to answer. I swore allegiance to this country, but I wouldn’t like to shoot my mother, but if it came to the worst I would have to go and fight against my mother.”³¹⁷

Leo Mascioli had very little involvement with the Italian consulate, but his position as the leader of the Italian community placed him in contact with Italian consular generals when they came to town. For example, his hotels were used for banquets when the Italian consular general made official visits to Northern Ontario. He was also invited

³¹⁴ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 10.

³¹⁵ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 10.

³¹⁶ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 2.

³¹⁷ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 21.

to special gatherings, like a two-day hunting trip with the head of Hollinger Mines and the Italian consular general. Leo was also not an active member of any fascist organization. He was sent a membership card from the consul in 1934 but never signed or kept it. He did have another membership card for his trip back to Italy in 1938 but again did not keep or sign any declaration in support of the Italian fascists. Because of Leo's prominence in the Italian-Canadian community, in 1932 he was made a cavalier of the Order of the King of Italy and was promoted to the rank of officer in 1937, which was purely a symbolic position.

By 1936, it appears that both brothers had reservations about the government in Italy but were attempting to placate the Italian government officials because of their role as leaders of the Italian community in Timmins. The brothers also had family still living in Italy, which also put them in a difficult position in dealing with the consulate. It seems that they often did the bare minimum to placate the Italian authorities. In 1936, the Italian consulate and the North Bay fascists wanted to hold a celebration in Timmins for the Ethiopian victory. Tony testified that they did not want to show public support for this event so he decided against holding the rally at one of the Mascioli theatres and instead suggested it be held at a skating rink and not advertised in the newspaper.³¹⁸

The Masciolis' involvement with the Italian consulate and the support of Italian clubs seems to be rooted in two desires on the part of the brothers. One was to help the Italian community in Timmins. In his declaration, Roy Thomson credited the Masciolis for encouraging the Italian community to be law abiding through their support of social

³¹⁸ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, December 4, 1940, 14.

clubs and charity events.³¹⁹ It was argued in the brothers' defence that any involvement with fascist organizations was because of their desire to create community groups for Italians. Most other ethnic groups in Timmins had some sort of official club, so when the Italian consulate helped to organize clubs like the Sons of Italy, the Mascioli brothers were naturally involved because of their role in the town.

Tony testified that consulate officials rarely visited Timmins, and the only way to contact the Italian consulate was to write to the consulate representative in Sudbury. Since very few of the labourers could write, it fell to Tony to help people make contact with the representative in Sudbury. He later noted in his second trial that he had been working with the Italian consulate for twenty years.³²⁰ He also testified that he attempted to get a representative sent to Timmins but one never came, so that is why he continued in this role for so long. Because of his role as the de facto consulate representative in Timmins, Tony was the point person in the region when the consulate in Toronto was attempting to gain support of the fascist regime in Canada.

The other main reasons for the Masciolis' involvement with any Italian fascist organizations were business and politics. The Masciolis' role in Timmins gave them the power of the Italian vote. The Masciolis' power was largely rooted in the Italian community's support for them, so it was important for them to be seen as helping the Italian cause. In his testimony, Tony Mascioli stated that his involvement with supporting Italy in the war with Ethiopia was to maintain support of the Italian community. The following is an exchange about sending gold in support of the Ethiopian war:

³¹⁹ It should also be noted that Roy Thomson was indebted to Mascioli who was the guarantor on a loan for \$6,158 according to the Price Waterhouse records.

³²⁰ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, December 4, 1940, 14.

Tony: Yes we had to keep up with the Italian people for political reasons. The election campaigns came up pretty often.

Consul: You mean elections in Canada?

Tony: Yes.

Consul: Was it the Italian Consul that wanted you to send gold?

Tony: Not so much the Italian Consul as the Italian papers.

Consul: So you did it because of business reasons?

Tony: Yes, for business reasons.

Consul: You did not want to offend the Italians who really wanted to help Italy?

Tony: That is correct.³²¹

The Mascioli brothers had to carefully negotiate their dual identities as both Italians and Canadians. Their role as leaders of the Italian community in Timmins made it impossible for them to not support incentives that had popular support within the Italian community in Canada, like supporting the Italian Red Cross during the Ethiopian campaign.

Because of Tony's testimony and the defence statements, Hyndman ordered the brothers released.³²² Hyndman, in his decision about the case, was particularly concerned about the lack of evidence, and he noted that this was common in many of the cases against Italians. He felt that this case was representative of how the government was overstepping its authority in many of the cases. He wrote:

In my view, some satisfactory concrete evidence should be required . . . I am bound to say that in many cases that have come before me, more especially amongst the Italians, I have found little or no evidence to infer evil intent,

³²¹ Testimony of Tony Mascioli, July 22, 1940, 5.

³²² The brothers were released on February 14, 1941, but Tony was arrested again in September of 1941 and was released again in October of 1941.

beyond the bare fact of membership in associations such as the Fascio, Dopolavaro, Casa D' Italia, Sons of Italy, etc. . . . There is no doubt that these men were connected in one way or another with Italian organizations, but I am satisfied this was principally because of the fact that they were pioneers of Timmins and have been, in fact, the most prominent of the Italians in the community, looked up to by others in many respects . . . it seems to me that it must be regarded as altogether improbable that they would be guilty of subversive acts.³²³

Hyndman was particularly concerned that the government was using membership in fascist organizations as a reason to imprison Italians, which was against the original recommendations on the Italian internment sent to Minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe. Other internees from Timmins were also arrested based solely on membership in what the RCMP deemed fascist organizations. For example, Francesco De Critico was a building contractor who did not belong to the *Fascio*, but he was a member of the Sons of Italy group in Timmins. De Critico, like the Mascioli brothers, came to the North in the early 1900s and had never been in trouble with the law. The Catholic priest in Timmins, Father Fontana, sent a letter recommending his release and said that De Critico was an “honest labourer and as far as I know a good citizen who is very poor and spent thirty-three years in Canada.”³²⁴ Hyndman wrote in relation to the case: “[I] don’t think [there is] any good reason for this man’s internment—[he] seems [to be a] very decent man.”³²⁵ In the case of both De Critico and the Mascioli brothers, the government imprisoned men that had lived in Canada for decades with no evidence that they were involved in planning subversive

³²³ Case Recommendations for Leo and Tony Mascioli. January 25, 1941. MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 53. *Library and Archives Canada*.

³²⁴ Case Recommendations for Francesco De Critico, March 20, 1941. MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 53. *Library and Archives Canada*.

³²⁵ Case Recommendations for Francesco De Critico, March 20, 1941. MG series 30 Volume Number: 14 File Number: 53. *Library and Archives Canada*.

acts. The arrest of these types of men from Timmins had a significant impact on the Italian community.

The Effects on the Town of Timmins

In the book *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, one of the criticisms put forth of the Italian-Canadian redress campaign was that it was overestimating the impact on Italian-Canadians.³²⁶ Through researching the case of Leo and Tony Mascioli, however, I can say that there is evidence that the Italian internment *did* have lasting effects on the town of Timmins. This is true both in the historical record and in the memories of the current residents. They were all well acquainted with the Mascioli brothers whose arrest sent shockwaves throughout the community. The Masciolis were considered the most respectable Italian citizens in the town, so their arrest made many Italians fearful that they, too, would also be arrested. Gregory Reynolds, in his interview with me, said he felt that the Mascioli brothers were arrested by the government to send a message to the other Italians in the town: “We had a very large Italian community and why did they take on Mister Mascioli? Well, it was some sort of warning: stay in line or we’ll put you in jail, too. One way to scare people. If Mister Mascioli was in jail, anybody could be put in jail. It made everybody conscious.”³²⁷ The arrest of the Mascioli brothers was a defining event for Italians in Timmins because now men and women who had been living in Canada for decades had to prove their loyalty.

The day after the brothers were arrested on June 11, 1940, a rally was held in the Goldfields Theatre with the local Italian community. Five hundred Italians packed the

³²⁶ Iacovetta and Perin, “Italians and Wartime Internment,” 7.

³²⁷ Interview with Author, July 23, 2015.

theatre that day, and the meeting and speakers included the acting mayor, William Wren, Councilor William Roberts, Father Fontana— the Catholic priest, and, most importantly, Dan Mascioli, Leo Mascioli's son. It was pointed out at the rally that several Italians had fought for Canada in the previous war, including Mascioli's business partner Pete Baradsono. The article in *The Porcupine Advance* on June 10, 1940, reported that Pete not only fought in the war but also opened up the basement of his house to the Red Cross for the entirety of the war.

The reason for the rally was to demonstrate the loyalty of Italians in the town. *The Porcupine Advance* printed the emotional speech given by Dan Mascioli at the rally pledging his loyalty and that of the Italian community to the crown:

This Canada, to which many of you have come from Italy and where you have built your homes, can only be a haven so long as the British Empire is united and supreme. We must have no disaffection. If you have a well-grounded suspicion of the activity of subversive elements report it immediately to the authorities.³²⁸

This dramatic act of loyalty a day after the arrest of his father was not only to help with the ethnic tensions in the town but it was also Dan's way of trying to save his father's northern business empire. Dan also took part in the resolution, which was passed at the end of the meeting that pledged that the Italians in Timmins were loyal to the crown and were willing to protect Canada as part of the British Empire. This rally was also held to help alleviate the fears of the community of reprisals and Acting Mayor Bill Wren asked the crowd to "be patient and bear with misguided individuals who might utter careless or

³²⁸ "Timmins Italians Meet to Proclaim Loyalty to Canada and the Empire," *The Porcupine Advance*, June 10, 1940, 1.

insulting words.”³²⁹ He urged the crowd to ignore these types of attacks and not engage in violence. It was clear that Italians were not only under threat by local authorities but also by other members of the community who now deemed them enemy aliens rather than citizens.

Despite the pledge of loyalty by local Italians and the urging of calm by local authorities, there were several acts of violence toward the Italian community during the war years that were mostly the result of harassment by the Canadian military regiment—called the Algonquin Regiment—that was stationed in Timmins. A local Timmins resident who I interviewed for this project had vivid memories of violence at the hands of the Algonquin Regiment:

Every Friday night the Algonquin Regiment come [sic] marching down the street. If anybody was on the street, they would—there’d be a fight—something was going to happen. And I can remember being very young, and my dad taking us upstairs into the house, and he’d stand at the window with a shotgun, because he didn’t know what was going to happen.³³⁰

The tensions with the Algonquin regiment culminated on September 5, 1940, with a violent attack on the Italian neighborhood by the soldiers. Soldiers from the regiment savagely beat three men while screaming racial epithets before being stopped by the local Timmins police.³³¹

³²⁹ “Timmins Italians Meet to Proclaim Loyalty to Canada and the Empire,” *The Porcupine Advance*, June 10, 1940, 8.

³³⁰ Interview with author, July 15, 2015.

³³¹ The riot was described in *The Timmins Daily Press* the day after it occurred on September 6, 1940; and there is an account of the riot in James L. DiGiacomo’s book *They Live in the Moneta: An Overview of the History and Changes in Social Organization of Italians in Timmins, Ontario* (Toronto: Institute for Behavioural Research, York University, 1982, 29), but it is described as being in 1939, which is most likely an error.

Not only did the Italian community face violence but several hundred members of the Italian population had to register with the authorities. The *Defence of Canada Regulations* stipulated that all individuals over the age of sixteen who were born in a country at war with the Dominion were to surrender all firearms by June 20, 1940, and register their names with the RCMP. My grandfather, Valerio Bellini, lived on a farm outside Timmins and came to Canada at the age of two. He was a teenager in 1940 and vividly remembered being brought in for questioning and being continually harassed during the war by authorities. His family was forced to relinquish their shotguns, which were used for hunting small game that would supplement their meager food supply.

Many Timmins Italians were in fear of the authorities, considering them fascist sympathizers, and they became secretive. One interview subject described how his Italian father hid the fact that he was listening to Italian-language radio during the war. He said:

I guess so. I think people were on pins and needles at the time. During the war, they even were cautious with the radio because I know when my dad in the evening would listen to the news and he'd get into short wave with the big four monitor radios. And he'd clicked—he pulled down the blinds and lowered the volume, it was always thought that somebody's going to be listening and they're going to be perceived that you are favouring fascism. So they were just very careful of what they did.³³²

Ultimately the experience of World War II had a significant effect on Timmins Italians. Most activities in the town soon revolved around demonstrating Canadian patriotism and nowhere was this more prevalent than at the movie theatre.

Leo and Tony Mascioli were not the only film exhibitors from Northern Ontario to be interred. Bob Stevens, the owner of the Regent Theatre in Sudbury, was also detained; he had changed his name from Roberto Stefanizzi. Stevens came to Canada in

³³² Interview with author, July 15, 2015.

1907 and had been a naturalized citizen since 1923. He was accused of having anti-British sentiments by unnamed informants, who claimed that he told them he could show all of the Hitler pictures he wanted in his theatre.³³³ Arrangements for his arrest were made on August 22, 1940, after he had been hospitalized for intoxication, according to the RCMP report, and he was not taken into custody until August 24, 1940, based on medical advice.³³⁴

It is not known how many film exhibitors were sent to internment camps during World War II, but there is no doubt that the government was fearful of subversive elements disrupting the pro-war propaganda that was presented at Canadian movie theatres. The fear that film exhibitors were subversive actors had happened elsewhere as well, and Ross Melnick found evidence that immigrant showmen had also been threatened with internment during World War I.³³⁵ Movie theatres were used to gain the support of the Canadian population during both World Wars, and it was perhaps understandable that movie theatre operators would come under particular scrutiny. Because of the suspicion that Mascioli was under after his arrest, it was important that the theatres continued showing support for the local community. With the help of Famous Players Canadian, the theatre continued to run promotions that appealed to the local community. The management also took part in cross-Canada initiatives like the Win the War Campaign.

³³³ Re: Roberto Stefanizzi Bob Stevens Sudbury, ON. series 18 Volume Number: 3565. File Number: 19-2-3. *Library and Archives Canada*.

³³⁴ "Roberto Stefanizzi Sudbury Regent Theatre." RG series 18 Volume Number: 3565. File Number: 19-2-3. *Library and Archives Canada*.

³³⁵ Ross Melnick, *American Showman: Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel and the Birth of the Entertainment Industry, 1908–1935*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 158.

Promotions and the Modern Audience: Memories of Movie-going

Many wartime promotions were simply entertaining rather than serious or patriotic, inspired by contests begun in the theatres across the United States and Canada in the 1920s. Despite nationalist campaigns and the daily news of battles, much fun and amusement happened at the theatres while Leo was in the internment camp. If anything, Famous Players exploited their direct control by ramping up the use of give-aways and prizes as part of wartime movie-going. Not only in Timmins but across Canada and in the U.S., main-street theatres in small towns appealed to local audiences by running promotions aimed specifically at rural and smaller-city movie-goers. These promotions, like the Timmins movie, would also highlight the town and other businesses. Many theatres ran contests that while national in scope would appeal to the local moviegoer. As noted by several scholars, contests and promotions were more popular in small towns than in cities.³³⁶ Local promotions were mechanisms of integrating communities across North America into the wider Hollywood system.³³⁷ By promoting and popularizing the act of movie-going, local theatres were able to build an audience. By the 1930s and 1940s, an important segment of this audience was related to children, and special children's programming became commonplace.

Starting with the opening of the Place Theatre, the Mascioli chain started to actively target children in all of their promotions. While the opening of the Palace Theatre was an adult's only event, there were two dedicated after-school matinees

³³⁶ Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Dish Night at the Movies: Exhibitors and Female Audiences during the Great Depression," in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method*, eds. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin, 246–275 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), Paige Reynolds, "'Something for Nothing' Bank Night and the Refashioning of the American Dream," in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, 208–230 (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

³³⁷ Whitehead, "Local Newspaper Movie Contests and the Creation of the First Movie Fans," 2016.

during the first week of operation for children showing the same feature of Eddie Cantor in *Strike Me Pink*.³³⁸ This special matinee for children during the opening of the Palace Theatre is reflective of the modernization of the theatre business in the town that had been fully realized by the 1930s. From the beginning, the Palace Theatre had dedicated matinees for children, and a common memory for the majority of my respondents was attending special children's events at the Palace Theatre. The changing audience of the 1930s marked a significant evolution, from miners in the early days to now children, which would only become more evident in the 1940s.

Many of my interview subjects had fond memories of child-centered events at the theatres during the war. Starting in the 1920s the theatres organized regular "children's matinees," and these matinees evolved into children's clubs throughout the golden age of movies in Timmins. My interview subjects remembered regular children's programming initiatives on Saturdays including a special club for cartoons. The appeal to children of Timmins Theatres is consistent with exhibition practices across North America, as children contributed to a significant portion of ticket sales. In Timmins, it is clear from my interviews, that going to the show was a regular part of childhood and that most interview subjects attended the theatre at least once a week as children.

The integration with Famous Players Canadian allowed Timmins Theatres to grow their audiences through the use of national promotions. Following the deal with Famous Players Canadian, Timmins Theatres became part of a larger network of theatres that were well versed in the use of promotions and gimmicks that were used by all Famous Players Canadian theatres. One of the first promotions to be introduced in

³³⁸ "Two Special Matinees." *The Porcupine Advance*, February 10, 1936, section 1, 5.

Timmins after the deal with Famous Players Canadian was Dish Night. Dish Night was a promotion that involved giving away a piece of flatware, and the contest was primarily run at the Cartier Theatre, according to my interview subjects. When asked to describe their most vivid memory of attending the theatres, most people remembered promotions with Dish Night being the most common fond memory. Several interview subjects described that on Monday and Tuesday nights, for an extra fee, you were able to receive a piece of flatware or china. The following is a description of both the process and draw of Dish Night from an interview subject:

You bought your ticket, let's just say it costs you seventy-five cents to get in, well, maybe for another fifty cents, you would get your choice of a knife, fork, or spoon. So you kept track of what you had so that you might build up to say a serving of eight or a serving of ten. So you can imagine how many weeks you had to go to pick these things up . . . It was another excuse to go and then [at] another point they did the same thing with cups and saucers and dishes [so] that you could build up a set of dishes the same way. It took you a long time to build it up but it drew you to the theatre every week because you had a different thing that you could pick up each week.³³⁹

Dish Night was a promotion first used in the United States to counteract the dwindling ticket sales during the Great Depression, which hit small town theatres the hardest. Dish Night particularly targeted women in smaller communities.³⁴⁰

As in the United States, Dish Nights in Timmins had a gendered dynamic and most of my female respondents had fond memories of it. Most of my female interview subjects remembered that the promotion helped many women in the town to build their trousseaus. One respondent, when asked why she would attend Dish Night at the Cartier Theatre, said:

³³⁹ Interview with Timmins resident, interviewed by author, July 15, 2015.

³⁴⁰ See: Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Dish Night at the Movies."

We used to attend there because as you were growing up and you were getting ready, getting your dowry ready, you needed to get dishes and stuff. And the Cartier used to have offers where you went and for admission you'd get a plate, perhaps a teacup. So you know we started some of our early collections with them.³⁴¹

It is interesting to note that the Cartier Theatre was most remembered as being the theatre that showed country and western movies, so it is fascinating that this was the theatre chosen to start a promotion like Dish Night.

Both independent theatres and chains in Canada used promotions like Dish Night. In an interview with Nat Taylor, the founder of Cineplex, he described the importance of promotions to the theatre industry in Canada. Barry Allen further mentioned Dish Night as a successful cross-Canada promotion. Interestingly, in the United States, many larger chains did not allow promotions like Dish Night, and the promotion was maligned in the trade press. Fuller-Seeley even describes how the film industry tried to ban Dish Night in the New Deal National Recovery Act, which caused members of the pottery industry to protest and testify before the NRA code writing committee.³⁴² A compromise was reached and the final act included a provision that banned Dish Night in communities if 75 percent of exhibitors were against it. This provision essentially banned the practice in areas that were controlled by larger chains, leaving the practice intact in smaller communities.

Across Canada, however, Dish Night became so popular that in 1939 *The Film Daily* reported that promotions were getting out of hand. On November 22, 1939, *The Film Daily* published a report that “premiums” were becoming an industry-wide problem

³⁴¹ Interview with author, July 15, 2015.

³⁴² Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, “Dish Night at the Movies,” 258.

in Ontario with fierce competition amongst exhibitors.³⁴³ The report notes, for example, that one theatre was running a Dish Night five days a week, and that the promotions were eclipsing the films in newspaper advertisements. Financially, the Dish Nights did not make sense, and *The Film Daily* reported that even with the service charge of ten cents, the net admission profits for Dish Night were just thirteen cents per ticket sold.

Despite these reports in *The Film Daily*, Dish Night appears to have been a large draw for the audiences and the promotion was mentioned in twenty out of my thirty-two interviews and was remembered the most by my female interview subjects. I have found evidence of Dish Night at the Timmins theatres until the 1950s, but the promotion was briefly banned during the war. According to a report in *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board suspended Dish Night in September of 1941 because of a shortage of ceramics and cookware due to the war. It appears from this report that this was a temporary ban, and I found evidence of Dish Night at the Timmins theatres throughout the 1940s and 1950s.³⁴⁴

There were several cross-Canada initiatives during World War II to gain support of the Canadian population for the war, and as was the case during World War I, movie theatres were sites of patriotic campaigns. One of these campaigns was called the Win the War Campaign, which sold War Saving Stamps at movie theatres across Canada. One month after the Mascioli brothers were arrested, *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest* reported on the success of this campaign. The colourful editor of *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, Ray Lewis, wrote, “The Palace at Timmins, Emmit Stark,

³⁴³ Premiums, Giveaways Acute Industry Problem in Ontario, *The Film Daily*, November 22, 1939, 1.

³⁴⁴ “Administrator of Sundry Items Prohibits Chinaware Given Away.” *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, September 5, 1941, 4.

manager, and Lorne Moore, representing Mascioli and Hansen interests, sold \$8026 for 1252 seats.”³⁴⁵ This was the most money of any theatre on the list and it was reported in the coverage of the opening of the Broadway theatre that Timmins theatres came in fourth during the war stamp campaign.³⁴⁶

Many of my interview subjects who had memories of going to the theatres during World War II particularly remembered the war bond drives at the theatres. They also remembered contests that were associated with the war effort, specifically Foto Night. One of them described in detail his memories of the Foto Nights that were often held at the Broadway Theatre:

During the Second World War, the Broadway was open, but it had a break in the movie where they would ask you to buy [war bonds] and then they introduced Foto Night. Foto Night was—they give out the picture of a movie star and they would promote the other theatres in town, but there was some sort of prize attached to this Foto Night you could win that with \$1. Every night they stopped the movie and the manager would get up and make a pitch, or the chairman of the war bond drive in Timmins would make a pitch to buy war bonds.³⁴⁷

Foto Night does not appear to be directly connected to the war effort, but the above interview subject was possibly confused as it was predominantly used as a promotion during the war years at the theatres in Timmins. However, I did find evidence that during the war, there was often a donation to the war effort in conjunction with Foto Night. In fact, it was often reported in *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest* that proceeds from the draw would go towards the purchase of war bonds. For example in

³⁴⁵ “Ray Presents,” *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, July 27, 1940, 3.

³⁴⁶ “Broadway Will Cooperate In Local War Activities,” *The Timmins Daily Press*, June 20, 1941, 3.

³⁴⁷ Interview with author, July 23, 2015.

1942 the winner immediately used the cash prize of \$900 from the Regent Theatre in Vancouver to purchase war bonds on stage.³⁴⁸

Similar to Dish Night, Foto Night was a cross-Canada promotion that was used to increase attendance at theatres. Foto Night appears to be very similar to an American promotion called Bank Night, which was popular during the great depression. Bank Night, like Foto Night, used a cash prize to lure audiences to theatres. Interestingly, in the United States, Bank Night was used primarily in independent theatres, but in Canada Foto Night was a promotion used in Famous Players Canadian theatres.³⁴⁹ I found that Foto Night was promoted in their theatres across Canada throughout the late 1930s and 1940s. The promotion, as indicated in the above quote, was one that included a purchase of a \$1 ticket and a draw for a cash prize. In Timmins, this promotion was often done at the Palace Theatre with a cash prize offered in the movie ads. *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest* reported that by 1941 the average prize for downtown theatres was \$725 and suburban theatres offered as much as \$500.³⁵⁰

Foto Night came under criticism and there were several lawsuits over this specific promotion. In Ontario, Foto Night came under scrutiny by authorities as an unlicensed lottery in 1939, and the police raided the Radio City and Allenby theatres in Toronto.³⁵¹ Fay Pete Barns, who was from Texas, was the creator of Foto Night and he was charged in conjunction with Mesho Triller, the vice president of Associated Theatres Limited, which was a subsidiary of Oscar Hanson's with ties to Famous Players Canadian. The case was heard in October 1940 and the jury ultimately decided

³⁴⁸ Jack Droy, "Vancouver," *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, March, 21 1942, 15.

³⁴⁹ For more on Bank Night see: Paige Reynolds, "'Something for Nothing,'" 2008.

³⁵⁰ Jack Droy, "Vancouver Notes." *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*. December 6, 1941, 5.

³⁵¹ "Foto Night Challenge In Toronto Test Case," *The Film Daily*, December 5, 1939, 2.

in favour of the defendants that Foto Night was not illegal. Even with the victory in court, *The Canadian Motion Picture Exhibitor* reported that the Independent Theatres Association would continue to fight Foto Night in Ontario. This was because it was financially hard for independents to compete with the larger chains' cash prizes.³⁵² The Independent Theatres Association lodged several legal appeals against the promotion in the early 1940s in Ontario.

Another common memory amongst my interview subjects was the newsreels that played during the films. Newsreels were a lifeline to the still remote area of Timmins. One interview subject described his memories of mothers ritually attending the theatre each night during the War to see if they could see their sons in the newsreels.³⁵³ Another interview subject vividly described the importance of newsreels during the war:

So, the movies started with a newsreel, which brought us—since my memory is going to the Second World War—it brought us the news of the war and the world—and remember, we didn't get the road to Toronto until 1929. So, even in 1944, we were still relatively isolated. The road ended here, the railroad ended here, there's nothing west of Timmins at that time, it's just bush. So, you go to the movies for entertainment, but you also during the war went to the movies to see the newsreels which were quite long—like 10 minutes. So, I remember that because I knew a lot of the young men around my area who were fighting in the war.³⁵⁴

As indicated in the above quote Timmins was still remote and the movie theatres were used as a means to connect to the larger Canadian community. While Famous Players Canadian had largely left the operations of the movie theatres up to Leo Mascioli and

³⁵² “The Legality of Foto-Nite” *The Canadian Motion Picture Exhibitor*. May 15, 1941, 1.

³⁵³ Interview with author, July 19, 2015.

³⁵⁴ Interview with author, July 23, 2015.

his partners during the first years of the contract, now with the war and the internment, Famous Players Canadian increasingly took a more active role and would fight to control the theatres in Timmins.

The Fight for Control of Timmins Theatres: Court Cases and Contracts

Recall from Chapter Three that the Mascioli Film chain was absorbed into the Famous Players Canadian circuit in 1937 and was originally granted autonomy over its operations in the early years of the contract. This relationship, however, would become strained during the war years when the Mascioli brothers were interred. First Oscar Hanson, who oversaw the contract, would attempt to gain more control over the theatres and then Famous Players Canadian started a legal battle with the newly formed Odeon theatres to gain control of film exhibition in Timmins. This legal battle culminated with professional Famous Players Canadian managers from outside Timmins taking over the management of the theatres.

World War II coincided with the dramatic split of Nathan L. Nathanson, the president of Famous Players Canadian, from that company when he left it to form a rival circuit, Odeon theatres. Interestingly, the newly opened Broadway Theatre would be the site of the first legal battle between these two companies. As outlined in Chapter Three, the operations of the theatres were largely unchanged during the first years of the partnership agreement, but it was through the internment that Famous Players Canadian was able to gain more control over the theatres. They accomplished this by sending Famous Players Canadian managers to Timmins as well as rebranding the Timmins theatres as “Famous Players” theatres in advertisements and in the newspapers.

The government records indicate that from the day Mascioli was arrested, representatives of Hanson's Theatres were in touch with government authorities and were trying to take over the operations of the theatres from the Mascioli family. In a memo dated June 13, 1940, a government representative reports that Mascioli was taken into custody the day prior, and the RCMP were immediately contacted by Hanson's lawyer Karl Lawson. Lawson reported to the government that a representative of Hanson was sent north "to look after the theatres."³⁵⁵ There was an earlier memo, dated June 12, recounting a conversation with Oscar Hanson, wherein Hanson gave information on Mascioli's assets and stated that Hanson jointly ran all the theatres including Northern Empire Theatres—a statement that was false based on the contracts. Hanson also alerted the government that the representative that he sent to Timmins had met with a hostile reception.³⁵⁶ In the internment records, it is clear that the government supported increasing the power of the Hanson Theatre Company, and there are various memos stating that Hanson should now control the management of the Timmins Theatres. A memo dated August 22, 1940, also indicated that Hanson Theatres should receive a retainer for their increased role.³⁵⁷

These government actions helped to change the operations of the theatres, with representatives of Hanson Theatres acting as managers for the theatres once the companies fell under government control. The newly subdued Mascioli chain was now effectively under the control of Oscar Hanson who would play an integral role in the newly developed Odeon circuit. On May 1941, both Hanson and Nathanson resigned

³⁵⁵ "Memo Re: Mascioli, June 13, 1940," RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835.

³⁵⁶ "Memo Re: Mascioli, June 12, 1940," RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835.

³⁵⁷ Memo Re: Mascioli, August 22, 1940, RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835.

from Famous Players Canadian and went to work with Natanson's son Paul to build the rival circuit. Ray Lewis, in her column in *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, wrote: "Mr. Paul Nathanson and Mr. Hanson have both been actively engaged in securing theatres for the new theatre circuit called Odeon Theatres... No one would attempt to build a five million dollar theatre enterprise without a valuable franchise to support it."³⁵⁸ On May 8, 1941, *The Motion Picture Daily* reported that all of Hanson's theatres would be transferred to Odeon.³⁵⁹ In August, Famous Players Canadian started its first of a series of lawsuits over the new Odeon chain. This first lawsuit involved the acquisition of the Broadway Theatre in Timmins by Hanson who transferred the shares of the theatre to Nathan Nathanson's son, Paul Nathanson.

The records from the actual court case comprise a complicated series of documents, which reveal that the case concentrated on a dispute over the controlling shares in both The Cartier Theatre and The Broadway Theatre. The Ontario Supreme Court file on the case consists of fourteen separate documents. The documents range from August 1941, when the case was first filed, to November 28, when all parties agreed to dismiss the case. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of evidentiary material in the documents. All that is contained in the trial documents are the statement of claim, the defence statements, replies to the defence, notices of appearances with no testimony, and notices of changes in the solicitors. Despite my initial disappointment at finding so little, there were important discoveries contained within the documents. Namely, the documents demonstrate some of the complex structures employed by Famous Players Canadian in acquiring theatres. Various subsidiary companies run by Oscar Hanson and

³⁵⁸ "Ray Presents," *The Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, May 17, 1941, 3.

³⁵⁹ "Hanson Resigns As Circuit President Theatres to Odeon," *The Motion Picture Daily*, May 8, 1941, 1.

Paul Nathanson were involved in the process, which allowed Odeon to acquire theatres originally contracted to Famous Players Canadian.

In the statement of claim filed on September 26, 1941, Famous Players Canadian cited their original contract with Timmins Theatres Limited as evidence that Oscar Hanson illegally acquired the Broadway theatre for Paul Nathanson. They claim that on October 15, 1940, Famous Players Canadian sent R.W. Bolstad, who later became the vice-president of Famous Players Canadian, to Timmins to acquire the two new theatres, the Cartier Theatre, and the proposed new theatre called the Broadway Theatre.³⁶⁰ He met with Mascioli's son, Daniel, and according to the court documents, Daniel Mascioli was interested in signing another deal with Famous Players Canadian.³⁶¹ Hanson was then tasked to complete the deal under Nathanson's instructions, and Hanson procured the shares of the Broadway Theatre, but instead of signing them over to Famous Players Canadian, he transferred them to Empire Universal Ltd., which was run by Paul Nathanson.

There were three separate statements of defence by each of the defendants constructing a similar story. These defence statements claim that Hanson was instructed to purchase the shares but did so with \$10,000 from his own company, Associated Theatres, and loaned a further \$85,000 from Empire Universal in order to purchase the shares of the Broadway Theatre.³⁶² As evidence, the defence provided two letters to R. W. Bolstad, asking him to pay for the shares, and apparently Famous Players Canadian never

³⁶⁰ Statement of Claim, Famous Players Canadian v Empire Universal Films Limited, Associated Theatres Limited, Oscar R Hanson, Broadway Theatres. August 18, 1941, 2–3.

³⁶¹ Reply to Demand of Particulars. Famous Players Canadian v Empire Universal Films Limited, Associated Theatres Limited, Oscar R Hanson, Broadway Theatres. August 18, 1941, 1–2.

³⁶² Statement of Defence, Famous Players Canadian v Empire Universal Films Limited, Associated Theatres Limited, Oscar R Hanson, Broadway Theatres. August 18, 1941, 1–2.

replied to these letters. Associated Theatres claimed that Empire United wanted a repayment for their loan so they transferred the shares to them, and Empire United repaid them the \$10,000 Associated Theatres had spent on the transaction.³⁶³ Empire United claimed that they had fulfilled all obligations to the plaintiff and were willing to transfer the shares to Famous Players Canadian if they reimbursed them for the costs of procuring the two theatres.

In their reply to these allegations, Famous Players Canadian states that the instructions were to buy the shares for \$5,000, which was in excess of their cost, not the \$96,000 the defendants claimed.³⁶⁴ This statement indicates that this lawsuit may have been a negotiating tactic between both parties over the cost of the shares of the Broadway Theatre. A second lawsuit that I looked at was filed in 1942, which provided a deeper understanding of the power struggle between Famous Players Canadian and Odeon. In this lawsuit, Famous Players Canadian sued Nathan Nathanson, his son Paul, and Oscar Hanson and accused them of committing a large-scale conspiracy. This conspiracy involved many circumstances that were similar to the Timmins case, and in the statement of claim Famous Players Canadian accused Nathanson and Hanson of orchestrating deals for Odeon while they were employed by Famous Players Canadian by encouraging theatre operators who were already signed with Famous Players Canadian to sign new deals with Odeon instead of Famous Players Canadian.³⁶⁵

³⁶³Reply to Demand of Particulars, Famous Players Canadian v Empire Universal Films Limited, Associated Theatres Limited, Oscar R Hanson, Broadway Theatres. August 18, 1941, 4–5.

³⁶⁴Reply to Demand of Particulars, Famous Players Canadian v Empire Universal Films Limited, Associated Theatres Limited, Oscar R Hanson, Broadway Theatres. August 18, 1941, 1–2.

³⁶⁵Statement of Claim, Famous Players Canadian v Paul Nathanson et al., September 16, 1942.

The Timmins lawsuit was settled in November 1941, apparently after Paul Nathanson transferred ownership of the Broadway to Famous Players Canadian. The lawsuit itself does not contain this information as the dismissal agreement just states dismissed without costs, though the trade journal accounts did indicate Famous Players Canadian decidedly won the case.³⁶⁶ *The Porcupine Advance* did not directly cover the lawsuit, but there was a front page story on November 27, the day before the settlement order was filed in court. The story reported that Famous Players Canadian's Stanley Andrews, a Famous Players Canadian manager, arrived in town to take over the operations of the Broadway Theatre from Lorne Moore who would move to Kingston to work at an Odeon theatre. It is interesting to note that again Mascioli was not mentioned in any of the press accounts, reflecting once again his fall from power after his internment.

The Financial Records During the War Years

There are ledgers containing the financial records for the theatres from 1940–1944, and each book includes the weekly income from each of the theatres, the profits and losses, and the wages. They are clearly the professional account books that were overseen by accountants hired by Hanson Theatres/Famous Players Canadian. The books are separated into several accounts: the trust account, profits and losses, and wages. The trust account contains the monthly transfers from each theatre, the rental fee that was paid to Timmins Theatres, and the profit-sharing between the two companies. The profits and loss section has a more comprehensive breakdown of the box office and expenses for each theatre.

³⁶⁶ "One Round for FP," *Motion Picture Herald*, November 29, 1941, 8.

Along with the accounting ledgers from the theatre, I also have an audit from the Price Waterhouse file for Mascioli enterprises, which outlines the amount made at the theatres in 1939 as well as the individual earnings of Leo Mascioli. The audit of the theatre earnings for 1939 is organized differently than the historical accounting books as it includes a clearer breakdown of all income and expenses, including the net admissions and the union versus non-union salaries, which are both not recorded in the original accounting records. It appears that the accounting book from 1939 was sent to Ottawa as it is missing from the set of ledgers in my possession.

Price Waterhouse made a chart summarizing the financial activity for 1939. This document lists the income as being from two sources: “net admissions” and “miscellaneous.” The net admission breakdown was a total of \$52,725.20, with the New Empire Theatre making \$11,021.60, the Goldfields Theatre \$12,257.05, the Palace Theatre \$29,447.35, and the miscellaneous income was \$230.73, mostly coming from the Palace Theatre. The highest expense was film rental with \$11,187.68 for features (\$7,996.18 for the Palace Theatre) and \$1,637.75 for shorts (\$905 for the Palace Theatre), which was significantly more than what was recorded in the auditing ledger discussed in Chapter Three. The next highest expense was from salaries, with \$2,7774.50 being paid for union workers and \$4,988.57 for non-union workers. Promotion also was a significant expense, with \$1,878.88 being paid towards prizes and gifts, \$499.50 for newspaper advertising and \$882.44 for miscellaneous advertising.³⁶⁷

The report on the individual earnings of Leo Mascioli demonstrate that after his earnings from the hotels, the theatres made up his second-most profitable area of income.

³⁶⁷ “Goldfields and Palace Account,” *Library and Archives Canada*. RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835, 000562.

In 1939, Leo made a total of \$30,299.95 including his income from the theatres. He made \$6,630 from dividends from Timmins Theatres and \$1000 from Northern Empire Theatres. He also earned a wage from both companies—his wages from Timmins Theatres was \$1,300 and his wage from Northern Empire Theatres was \$2,400.³⁶⁸ The income from the theatres also made up a significant amount of Tony Mascioli's earnings. In 1939, he made a total of \$16,701.06 and \$1,195 was from the dividends from the theatres (both Timmins and Northern Empire Theatres)—\$1000 from Northern Empire Theatres, \$195 from Timmins Theatres, and his salary from Northern Empire Theatres was \$6,000.³⁶⁹

The financial records show that the revenues from the theatres continued to rise in 1940. In 1940, the three theatres transferred a total of \$79,600 into the trust account with the Palace Theatre bringing in \$37,487 and the two other theatres making combined profits of \$42,112. The New Empire Theatre transferred the most money of the two theatres with \$21,794 and the Goldfields Theatre transferred \$20,318. The most profitable month for the theatres was in April, which saw a combined profit of \$10,060 from all three theatres. The payouts and share of profits was \$81,000. Both companies made \$25,900 in profit sharing, and Timmins Theatres made an additional \$30,000 for its monthly charges.

Despite the fact that many of my interviews claimed that the internment did not impact the business, the trust account transfers did drop in May and June of 1940. In April of 1940, the combined transfers of the theatres was \$10,060, the most profitable

³⁶⁸ "Leo Mascioli Income," *Library and Archives Canada*. RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835, 000575.

³⁶⁹ "Tony Mascioli Income," *Library and Archives Canada*. RG series 117-A-3. Volume/box number: 642. File number: 2835, 000566.

month of the entire year, but in May the transfers dropped to \$1,913 and in June they were \$3,717. These two months had the lowest transfer amount for the entire year. The transfers did steadily increase over the summer and were back up to the \$10,000 range by September. There may have been other reasons for this two-month decline in transfers, but since the decline coincides with the negative rhetoric against Italians as “enemy aliens” in May and June of 1940, it is reasonable to assume that this had a temporary effect on the theatre operation. In a letter to his father dated January 19, 1941, Dan Mascioli stated that the theatres remained profitable and that the profits were about the same as in 1939.³⁷⁰ Therefore, it seems that any impact the Mascioli brothers’ internment had on theatre revenues was temporary.

Similar to the book from 1937, the accounting ledgers from 1940–1941 have separate sections for the trust accounts and the profits and losses from each theatre for each month in the year. In 1940, in January to February, the total profits from all three theatres were \$9,042.46. From March to April, the theatres made \$10,762.33, and from May to June, profits decreased to \$6,708.26. By the end of 1940, the total profit of all three theatres was \$50,493 with the total box office receipts totalling \$208,972.76. It appears that while total profits went down, the box office did increase significantly from the 1937 number of \$186,283.47. Increased film rental costs and overall expenses caused this profit decrease. In 1940, the company paid a total of \$65,267.58 in film rental costs, which is a large increase of the rental costs from the 1930s, and their overall expenses for 1940 was \$158,479.74.

³⁷⁰ Letter from Daniel Mascioli to Leo Mascioli, January 19, 1941, courtesy of Paula Mascioli.

Along with a decline in profits, there was also a change in the disbursements of the theatres. Starting in February 1941, Famous Players Canadian began showing a monthly charge listed and Hanson's share of the profits stopped in March 1941, and in May 1941, Famous Players Canadian started to share in the profits instead of Hanson's theatres. We know that the Cartier Theatre was originally operated by Trudeau-Rousseau Ltd. and was acquired by Famous Players Canadian in March 1941. Frank Colemeco managed the Cartier Theatre, along with the other Timmins theatres, after this acquisition. In the trust account this was noted, and from March 1941 forwards Famous Players Canadian was paid a monthly charge for the Cartier Theatre in the amount of \$883.59.

In 1941, the theatre trust account drastically declined to \$2,598, and each month's transfers averaged \$216. The accounting changed dramatically this year and only money from the Palace Theatre's operating account was transferred. Another new development in the account books was that Northern Empire Theatres now transferred a monthly amount into the trust account. The Palace Theatre operating account averaged \$126 per month and the Northern Empire Theatres averaged \$90. There was also now no longer a monthly transfer to Timmins Theatres of the profit shares or a monthly rental payment listed in the accounting books. In 1941, the Cartier Theatre was now included in the profits and losses section, and this year the Goldfields Theatre, Palace Theatre, New Empire Theatre, and Cartier Theatre were in operation. The total box office receipts increased to \$240,957.02 but there was a larger decline in profits, with the theatres only making combined total profits of \$18,124.18, which was again was due to film rental costs, which rose to \$87,617.01 and the overall expenses for that year were \$222,832.84.

A new manager took over from the Italian-Canadian manager that was listed in the 1938 accounting ledger. The ledger indicates that H.G. Bridger started one month after Mascioli was arrested in July of 1940. This seems to be part of the overall initiative by Famous Players Canadian to take more control of the theatres in the 1940s, which would decrease the profits for the company. Now the company was having to pay more money in film rental costs as well as pay more in expenses, including paying for Famous Players Canadian's managers to oversee the theatres. While the popularity of the theatres remained, as evidenced by increased box office sales at five theatres, the war years decreased the company's profits with the increased involvement of Famous Players Canadian.

The records from 1942 to 1944 show a continued increase at the box office, which again was eclipsed by expenses and film costs. All five theatres continued to operate over these two years. In 1942, the box office increased to \$264,514.98 and profits increased to \$34,261.90, but overall expenses also rose to \$250,426.60 with film costs totalling \$89,416.30. In 1943 the box office decreased to \$230,272.41 and total profits also decreased to \$19,605.67. Film rental costs dropped to \$71,936.45 and expenses decreased to \$224,365.81. In 1944, the box office increased to \$267,677.78 with total profits increasing greatly to \$45,787.89. This increase in profits was largely due to a drop in film costs, which were \$70,019.79 and operating costs also dropped to \$221,889.89. Once again the financial records demonstrate that while the theatres continued to bring in money, operating costs were negatively affecting profits.

In comparing the financial situation in Timmins to the rest of Canada, I once again consulted the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Nationally the theatre revenues

increased significantly in 1940 and 1941, further demonstrating that the decline in profits from Timmins was due to the increased involvement of Famous Players Canadian. According to the 1941 report, 1941 was the year that Canadian theatres completely rebounded from the decline in profits between 1930 and 1933. In Ontario, both household per-capita spending and box office receipts for the first time surpassed the numbers from 1930. Throughout the war, revenues at the theatres continued to increase. Between 1940 and 1944 the national Canadian box office increased by 42 percent. Interestingly, there was a smaller increase at theatres in Ontario with only a 10 percent increase in the box office in the province. In Timmins, if you isolate just the box office, there was a 28 percent increase, which was below the national average but higher than the average box office increase in Ontario. The Timmins numbers show that while the box office was increasing at a higher rate than the provincial average, the theatres were becoming less profitable because of the increased control of Famous Players Canadian, thanks particularly due to the rising cost of film rentals under its management.

Conclusions

The internment of Italian-Canadians remains a complicated part of Canadian history. While it is clear that the Italian government was attempting to foster support among Italians living abroad, there is little evidence that members of these fascist-sponsored organizations were involved in subversive acts. It is also clear that many of the people whom the RCMP deemed “important members of the *Fascio*” were only tangentially involved in any fascist organizations. Leo and Tony Mascioli, while somewhat involved with Italian officials because of their role in Timmins, were not a threat to the safety of Canadians, and their internment was not justified.

Prominent members of the Italian community, like Leo and Tony Mascioli, were in very difficult positions because of their role as leaders of a diasporic community. While today it is easy to recognize that membership in a fascist organization in Canada would be viewed negatively, it is important to remember the context of Italians living in Timmins and what they would have known about the fascist regime in Italy. At the time, there were several positive news stories about Mussolini's regime. Given Timmins's remote location, the Mascioli brothers would have been exposed to even less information on the principles of the fascists. As Tony testified at his trial, he was told by the consulate that membership would give him special benefits in business and would not interfere with his loyalty to Canada. It is clear from Tony's testimony that he was not well aware of the doctrine of the fascists.

The major reasons behind the Masciolis' involvement with fascist organizations were to help the Italian community and to maintain their business and political ties. The brothers' role as the padrones of Timmins helped build a business empire. They had to maintain their support of the community as well as good relations with the consulate to help their businesses. Their role as the leaders of Timmins's Italian community placed them in a difficult position of having to placate several different factions, and their involvement in organizing fascist events in the town was minimal. It is clear that Tony did have some role in helping the consulate and the fascist organizations, but Leo had very little involvement. Leo did not directly organize any events, and he was not an active member of the *Fascio*. The *Defence of Canada Regulations* were supposed to protect the Canadian public, and the committee in charge of crafting the policy claimed that membership in the *Fascio* would not be the sole reason for internment; instead, there

must be evidence that naturalized Canadian citizens were a danger to public safety. Clearly, the RCMP did not abide by this directive in the case of the Mascioli brothers because there is no evidence that they were ever a threat.

In the case of Timmins, it is also evident that the internment of Italian-Canadians had a lasting impact on the Italian community there. As I have touched on throughout this dissertation, my grandfather was a teenager in Timmins in the 1940s, and a story that was frequently reiterated at our family table was of his experiences during the war and how authorities mistreated him. He remembered being repeatedly brought in for questioning and accused of crimes he did not commit. Because of his experiences, he stopped speaking Italian and refused to teach his children the language. I found from speaking to other elderly Italians in Timmins that his story was not an uncommon one. Through my research, I have found that not only did people have terrible memories of the war years in Timmins but there is also other documentary evidence of the discord. The violence against Italians during the war years in Canada is still an understudied area of research, but it is clear that in Timmins, Italians were subject to violence at the hands of the Canadian military. It is my hope that there will be more research done into other Italian communities in Canada to learn how they experienced the war years and the *Defence of Canada Regulations*.

The war also helped to fully integrate the Mascioli chain into the Famous Players Canadian circuit, as the conservatorship by Price Waterhouse was used by Famous Players Canadian to gain more control of the theatres. The war was a powerful marketing tool for the theatre business and promotions like Foto Night and Dish Night helped to drive up the box office receipts for each year. It appears that the split between Nathanson

and Famous Players Canadian also had an impact on the theatres in Timmins. Because of the lawsuit, Famous Players Canadian managers took a more active role in the theatre operations. With this increased control, the operating costs for the theatres began to skyrocket. In the early days of the deal, labour costs and film rental costs decreased, but as Mascioli lost more power over the theatres, Famous Players Canadian required the company to pay them more.

World War II was the catalyst that allowed Famous Players Canadian to take a more active role in the business. First Hanson's and then Famous Players Canadian's managers took over the operation of the theatres. After his release from the internment camp, Mascioli never returned to Timmins though his family still maintained shares in the theatres, and Dan Mascioli and Frank Colemeo continued to act as managers. After the first five years of the contract, Mascioli's name was no longer associated with his theatre chain; instead, the theatres became fully branded as Famous Players Canadian theatres. Unlike the standard narrative about vertical integration and small town exhibitors, it was not the original contract of 1937 but rather the conservatorship of Mascioli's businesses by the Canadian government that ended Mascioli's long reign as the movie mogul of the North.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

The Last Empire Theatre

On July 1, 1950, Leo Mascioli's final Empire Theatre opened, but it wasn't located in the Porcupine gold mining region. After his wartime internment, he built his last theatre in the nickel mining city of Sudbury, Ontario. In building the Sudbury Empire Theatre, Mascioli converted one of the oldest opera houses in the region to a modern duplex movie theatre, the first twin theatres in Northern Ontario, and preformed his last act as the movie theatre mogul of the North. The Grand Opera House first opened in 1908 and was Sudbury's first substantial theatre according to *The Sudbury Star*. The original Grand Opera House was designed by architect Billy Harland to mimic the Grand Opera House in Toronto. The Grand Opera House was used to present motion pictures, and by the 1930s was retrofitted for sound. Leo Mascioli bought the theatre in 1948 for \$150,000 and embarked on a \$100,000 renovation project, which also added a second theatre to the site, thereby turning the opera house into Sudbury's first duplex—one of the earliest twin-screen theatres in Canada.³⁷¹

Despite being one of Sudbury's largest movie theatres, the Grand Opera House had been deemed hazardous by the Ontario Theatre Inspection Branch which warned that its license would be revoked because of its dangerous wood interior and balcony. In a letter dated April 12, 1938, an inspector wrote about the theatre: "The Grand Theatre is a brick building with an interior practically all of wood construction, including a balcony. It

³⁷¹ The second screen at the Empire was named the Plaza Theatre, opening in June 1951. Only two other theatres had added second screens earlier: Allen's Premier Theatres at the Hollywood in Toronto opened August 1947, and Nat Taylor's 20th Century Theatres at the Elgin in Ottawa, opened December 1947. Just months after the Elgin's opening, Taylor sometimes programmed different pictures on each screen, "inventing" the multiplex.

is classified among the more hazardous in the province and the department is of the opinion a complete renovation is long overdue.”³⁷² *The Sudbury Star* reported that Leo Mascioli completely gutted the interior and an addition was added to the back of the theatre. According to *The Sudbury Star* the renovation project reflected the “never ceasing progress” of Sudbury. Once again, Leo Mascioli was hailed with modernizing entertainment in Northeastern Ontario.

I argued in Chapter Four that Leo’s internment had a deep impact on his life and, thus, that he never returned to the town of Timmins. It appears that his new project of renovating the Grand Theatre gave him a renewed sense of purpose after his feelings of deep betrayal in Timmins. As discussed in the introduction, Leo became very close to the Italian workers on the project, including my grandfather, and it appears that in many ways Leo recreated his early days in Timmins during the renovation project and worked closely with the men on a daily basis. Once again Leo was able to relish his role as the padrone of the North and built close bonds with his Italian workers. Throughout his life my grandfather was fiercely loyal to Leo Mascioli and venerated his memory.

The opening of the theatre in Sudbury was another great success in the career of Leo Mascioli. The new theatre had 1,229 seats and was particularly inclusive with a special entrance for those in wheelchairs. It was also reported that the management would provide special headphones for people hard of hearing, showing once again Mascioli’s ability to cater to an ever-evolving audience. The opening of the Empire Theatre in

³⁷² Letter from the Chairman of the Ontario Board of Censors to the Executive Assistant to the Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, April 12, 1938 (RG 56-9-0-69-12), <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/travelling/documents/ontario-movie-theatres.pdf>

Sudbury was reminiscent of the opening of the Palace Theatre, and Mascioli maintained his tradition of donating the opening proceeds to charity. As with the Palace Theatre, all of the businesses that had a hand in the theatre renovations took out ads in a special newspaper supplement congratulating Leo Mascioli on his latest achievement. *The Sudbury Star* wrote, the opening of the Empire Theatre was “the latest chapter in one of the North’s greatest success stories,” and once again Leo was hailed as a great pioneer hero by the newspaper.

The Death of Mascioli and the Decline of Northern Empire Theatres

One year after the opening of the Empire Theatre in Sudbury, Leo Mascioli died in Toronto on April 24, 1951. He was buried in Timmins despite his parting with the town following his internment. His death was heralded as a tragic loss, and Mascioli was once again memorialized as a pioneer hero in Timmins. The funeral procession was one of the largest the town had ever seen, and hundreds of people lined the streets leading to Leo’s opulent pantheon-like monument in the town cemetery. The life and death of Leo Mascioli, and the rise and fall of his theatre empire, is an important story not only to the people in Timmins but also to the history of film exhibition in Canada. Although Leo died, his theatres did continue to operate in the North.

After Leo’s death, the Northern Empire chain was taken over by his son Daniel, who continued the partnership with Famous Players Canadian. The theatres in Timmins continued to be the centre of entertainment life in the town until well into the 1960s when the theatres began to close, one by one, as part of the massive decline in the theatre business throughout the country. A former sales manager for RKO and co-founder of Landmark Cinemas, Hector Ross, stated in an interview that there was a decline in non-

metropolitan theatres that he attributed to both the introduction of television and the post-war building of better roads.³⁷³ This decline in movie theatres would lead to another shift in entertainment consumption, comparable to the transition from vaudeville to movies. People were now consuming different types of media and were able to travel outside of their small towns more easily to consume media in larger cities and towns.

The national decline in movie-going was perhaps more prevalent in the mining communities of the Northeast because of an overall economic decline in the area, which was reflected in a decline in consumer culture in the town. Not only did the theatres start to close, so too did the other stores that populated the downtown. While small businesses were able to survive in Timmins during the rise of chain stores, they were no longer able to survive during the postmodern economic decline. As discussed in Chapter Two, single-sector economies that were created around the production of a staples resource tend to experience distinctive boom and bust periods. The initial boom of well-paying jobs and an expanding economy is short-lived in most mining communities with many years of decline after the initial boom reaches its peak. Furthermore, the postindustrial era in North America has seen a decrease in low-skill jobs in industries like mining and forestry with the introduction of machine-based labour alternatives. These are the two main reasons for what has been described as the “shrinking mining” city of the modern era.³⁷⁴ In the shrinking mining town not only is there an economic decline but also a decline in the population.

³⁷³ Hector Ross interview, Picture Pioneers Archive, Tape 2.

³⁷⁴ See: Cristina Martinez-Fernandez, Chung-tong Wu, Laura K. Schatz, Nobuhisa Taira, and José G. Vargas-Hernández, “The Shrinking Mining City: Urban Dynamics and Contested Territory,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36, no. 2 (2012): 245–260.

In Canada as a whole, the economic decline in mining communities can be seen as part of the evolution in staples economies. The reliance on staples production has several phases in each community with the mature staples phase being characterized as having: “substantial natural resource depletion, increasingly capital and technological intensive resource extraction from lower cost staple regions, the transformation from pure extraction to increased refining, and secondary processing of resource commodities.”³⁷⁵ As a mature staples economy continues there will be a shift in jobs from resource extraction to the service industry and then the creation of a post-staples economy, which is characterized by the decline and disappearance of resource-based communities.³⁷⁶ Canada currently is characterized as moving towards a post-staples economy with the disappearance and decline of many of the country’s resource-based economies.

There have been several articles and government reports focusing on the economic and population decline seen in Northeast Ontario. The region has been deeply affected by the changing staples economy, and out of the nineteen communities in the region, all faced drastic population decline from 1991 to 2011.³⁷⁷ In recent decades, the surviving communities have transitioned their economies to ones that no longer rely solely on mining, and successful towns have largely relied on new public sector employment to diversify their economies.³⁷⁸ An interesting element of the economic

³⁷⁵ Adam Wellstead, “The (Post) Staples Economy and The (Post) Staples State in Historical Perspective,” *Canadian Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (2007): 12.

³⁷⁶ Wellstead, “The (Post) Staples Economy,” 12.

³⁷⁷ Clare Mitchell and Kendra O’Neill, “Tracing Economic Transition in the Mine towns of Northern Ontario: An Application of the “Resource-Dependency Model,” *The Canadian Geographer* 60, no. 1 (2016): 98.

³⁷⁸ Mitchell et al “Tracing Economic Transition,” 91. For more information on Canadian Government’s policy in Northeast Ontario see: Charles Conteh, “Policy Implementation in Multilevel Environments: Economic Development in Northern Ontario,” *Canadian Public Administration* 54, no. 1 (2011): 121–142

transformations of northern mining communities is how economic transformation affects the social structure and cultural life in the towns.³⁷⁹

Timmins first experienced economic decline following World War II with fixed gold prices and a lessening of gold reserves. From 1940 to 1960, gold production decreased in Timmins by 13.5 percent.³⁸⁰ This had a significant impact on both the population and economic growth in the town. There was an aging and stagnant population with fewer working people, and the number of retail stores began to decline from 282 in 1951 to 261 in 1961.³⁸¹ This first decline was only temporary and in 1963 new mineral deposits were discovered in Kidd Township, which is adjacent to Timmins, and there was another brief boom in the town's economy. However, this boom did not significantly increase the population or number of retail stores. In more recent years, the town's population declined 9 percent from 1991 to 2011.³⁸² The first boom period in the town, shortly after gold was first discovered, was a longer, sustained rush, and the later ebbs and flows of mineral extraction in the town was unlike the stable economy of the 1920s and 1930s.

Not only were the economic conditions changing in Timmins, but as I argued in Chapter Four, Famous Players Canadian increased involvement in the theatres caused a decrease in profits, which would only get worse after the war. During the war, Famous Players Canadian was hindered in the amount they could charge for film rentals because

and Mary Ann Beavis, Eileen Goltz and O. W. Searinen, *Municipal Development in Northeastern Ontario: Copper Cliff and Sudbury*. Institute of Urban Studies, 1991.

³⁷⁹ Clare Mitchell and Kendra O'Neill, "Tracing Economic Transition," 93.

³⁸⁰ Joe G. Torlone, "The Evolution of the City of Timmins: A Single-Industry Community," MA Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1979, 54.

³⁸¹ Torlone, "The Evolution of the City of Timmins," 65.

³⁸² Clare Mitchell and Kendra O'Neill, "Tracing Economic Transition in the Mine Towns of Northern Ontario: An Application of the "Resource-Dependency Model," *The Canadian Geographer* 60, no. 1 (2016): 98.

of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. In 1947, Hector Ross worked as a salesman in Toronto for RKO and was sent to Timmins to broker a new rental agreement for Famous Players Canadian. In his interview for the Picture Pioneers Archive, Ross recalled how he was informed that the Wartime Prices and Trade Board regulations had been dropped while in Timmins, and “he did a number” on Dan Mascioli.³⁸³ In fact, his deal was so advantageous to Famous Players Canadian that he received a congratulatory telegram from the headquarters in New York. With the absence and death of Leo, Famous Players Canadian was able to continue to gain the upper hand in negotiations, which would continue to decrease the company’s profits leading to a decline over the next few decades.

Memories of the Decline and Closure of the Theatres

Many of my interview subjects reflected on the decline of the theatres and the changing entertainment life in the town starting in the 1960s and early 1970s. One by one, each of the theatres closed, with the Palace Theatre being the last to close, leaving Timmins without a theatre until the opening of a multiplex called the Cinema Six in 1988. In the last years of the Palace Theatre, it ran without heat, and downtown Timmins, where the theatre was located, was full of closed and abandoned buildings. Downtown Timmins, like many industrial towns, faced a crisis of shuttered businesses as the population’s tastes in shopping and entertainment consumption began to change.

Most of my interview subjects noticed that the theatres started to decline after television became a more popular form of entertainment, with Timmins’s first television station starting to operate in 1956. The early years of television in Timmins did not provide much competition for the theatres because, one interview subject remarked, there

³⁸³ Hector Ross interview, Picture Pioneers Archive, Tape 1.

were only a few channels. According to this subject, the children's programming at the theatres, including Saturday morning cartoon clubs, was far more attractive for children than the programming on television.³⁸⁴ Many interview subjects told me that when television first started, programming did not start until 4 p.m., and movies were never shown on the early television stations, so television did not initially change their cinema-going habits. As was the case with radio, the introduction of television merely provided another means of advertising the theatres, and again, Frank Colemeco had a weekly television show about the theatres.

Television did not seem to have an impact until well into the 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the economic decline in the town and the introduction of more comprehensive television programming. One interview subject had this to say about the evolution of television consumption:

Well, television brought the demise of the theatres and it's—once TV came, people sat and watched anything and everything. We started with Channel 6, they added Channel 3 and they added Channel 9. Channel 6 and Channel 3 were English, Channel 9 was French. That was it. And people were glued to the TV sets. If you walk down the street at night, you'd see the glow from the TV sets, back then it was Zenith TVs that had a halo around the screen that lit up. From outside you could see this light kind of flashing. So you knew everybody was pretty well watching television.³⁸⁵

With the increase in television programming and the decline in the overall Timmins economy, the theatres became a less popular form of entertainment for the younger generations in the town. Many people interviewed described how more children and young adults went to the theatres, because once employed, people did not have the time

³⁸⁴ Interview, July 21, 2015.

³⁸⁵ Interview with author, July 21, 2015.

to attend the movies. My interview subjects also noticed that there was a clear difference in the generation raised with television, as they did not have the same response to the magic of the movies. Previously the theatres had been the only places that had initiatives like kids clubs, but in the 1970s and 1980s there was more sports programming and extra-curricular activities organized for children in Timmins.

Reflections and Conclusions

The story of Leo Mascioli's theatre chain is an important addition to the existing research in new cinema history because of the unique attributes of Timmins, Ontario, and the Northern Empire Theatre chain. The size, multicultural demographics, and wealth of Timmins in the 1920s to the 1940s were similar to a small city, but because of its location and status as a mining community, the town has more in common with rural locations. In terms of film-going, there was an ongoing struggle for the people of Timmins to have the same movie-going experience as those in metropolitan centres. Movie theatres were the main source of entertainment before the introduction of television, and the Mascioli theatres played an important role in the cultural life in the town.

Mascioli was part of a larger trend of immigrant film exhibitors in North America. As discussed throughout this dissertation, Mascioli's success rested on his status as the padrone of Timmins. In his role as padrone, he had access to a cheap labour force and the mining companies supported his businesses. Because of his role in the town, he was also able to transcend his Italian status and was accepted into the western European ruling elite. Many other immigrant exhibitors catered to particular ethnic niches, but because

Timmins was a frontier town, all ethnic groups intermingled at Mascioli's theatres.³⁸⁶ Mascioli's success was rooted in his ability to appeal to a wide audience with a standard Hollywood program, but he still incorporated many elements of his Italian ancestry into his theatres including in their design and the live entertainment performed at his theatres.

How the Hollywood distribution model came to dominate film exhibition across the globe is a question that has been examined by several scholars in cinema history through case study research of both small towns and rural settings. However, no studies to date have focused on how towns like Timmins, a non-metropolitan frontier town, were integrated into the larger business of film exhibition. Film, like other goods in the twentieth century, became industrialized and almost all film exhibition in Canada was tied to Hollywood through distribution branches and chains like Famous Players Canadian. The interactions between regional chains and the larger Famous Players Canadian circuit is another understudied area that I focused on in this research. In my work, I have shown that these interactions were often complicated and consisted of ebbs and flows between competing interests, not a single matter of dominance from outside.

My access to the original accounting ledgers proved invaluable to this project, as I was able to trace the development of a small chain and its integration into the larger Hollywood system. With these records, I was able to look at how a small chain's finances changed before and after vertical integration as well as how the accounting practices evolved. Ultimately, these records showed that the rapid expansion of the early years of the chain was difficult to maintain financially, especially due to construction costs in the 1930s. Although some of the shortfall in cash came from buying real estate as collateral

³⁸⁶ As noted in the introduction it is not known how First Nations peoples were treated at the theatres and if they attended with the other ethnic groups.

against Famous Players Canadian, integrating with the national chain helped to stabilize Northern Empire's finances. After Mascioli's internment and the trusteeship to Famous Players Canadian, the deal was no longer a stabilizing force and, instead, operating costs skyrocketed. My organizational study of the company's financial records narrates the process of vertical integration, and I determined that an initially mutually beneficial arrangement turned negative for local interests with direct management by Famous Players Canadian because of increased operating costs. As a profit-driven company that would indirectly benefit from increased film rentals, Famous Players Canadian shifted policies to make more profits from the Mascioli chain in the 1940s, leaving fewer dividends for local investors.

The original programming information from the theatres also provided insight into the types of shows presented at the theatres. Standardized Hollywood programming dominated cinema-going in Timmins, but theatres did showcase local culture through live shows and raucous midnight programming for mine workers. While the deal with Famous Players Canadian did not affect the programming at the theatres, the integration of the chain into the wider circuit did cause the theatres to run cross-Canada promotions like Dish Night and Foto Night. These competitions appealed to the local population and were the most remembered events of my interview subjects in conjunction with the children's cartoon clubs, which was also a Famous Players Canadian initiative. Local small town managers like Frank Colemeco in Timmins used these promotions to appeal to local audiences, and people had visceral memories of taking part in the promotions at the theatres, particularly women who built their trousseaus with plates from Dish Night.

The Mascioli chain grew out of the unique conditions of the mining communities of the North and the business acumen of Leo Mascioli and Pete Bardessono. These two men were successful in pairing Mascioli's role as the town's padrone and Pete's background as an American accountant. Even before the chain's integration with Famous Players Canadian, the two men were able to brand their theatre chain as a Canadian institution with the name "Empire." The chain was part of a larger movement to tame the wild frontier towns of the Northeast and replace the brothels and blind pigs that used to be the sole source of entertainment. The Northern Empire chain provided what the mining companies considered wholesome entertainment to the immigrant miners and helped to make the town of Timmins a community for families instead of a town overpopulated with single men. In the case of cinema-going in Northeast Ontario, it is clear that the theatres did fundamentally change the culture of the town. The process of embourgeoisement of working class people in Timmins was gradual, occurring throughout the 1920s, and the theatres played a key role in this process. By the 1930s, the professionalized chain made packaged Hollywood entertainment desirable to the population.

My research should help to usher in more research into the organizational history of the film business in Canada, paying particular attention to the theatre business outside of large cities. I provided a careful microhistory of one regional chain and how it evolved from a small screen in the back of a general store to the Palace Theatre, and eventually the chain's absorption into the vertically integrated Famous Players Canadian. My five years of researching film exhibition in Northeast Ontario have given me a unique perspective on the future of new cinema history in Canada, and I am hoping to continue

researching the business history of film exhibition and distribution. Of particular interest is a more careful look at Famous Players Canadian's distribution network and how other small chains were integrated. While there have been several studies that have looked at Famous Players Canadian from a national policy perspective, a comprehensive business history of the company has never been conducted.

In the introduction I noted that a key debate within cinema history centres on how early film was shaped and influenced by modernity. My focus on the business history of exhibition in Northeast Ontario demonstrates how film exhibition helped shape the town's connection to consumer and popular culture. The rise of theatres in Northeast Ontario was part of a larger modernization process. Initially small-scale, the region's theatre business became part of a globally-organized capitalist industry. The history of the Mascioli chain is, in many ways, reflective of the larger history of film exhibition in Canada, but the case is also unique because of the specific attributes of Timmins and because of how Mascioli's ethnic identity helped him to build successful businesses even as it would ultimately lead to his downfall.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the theatres played a significant role in the early development of the Timmins townsite. The homosocial culture that revolved around entertainment pursuits like gambling, prostitution, and drinking was considered undesirable by the local authorities. The theatres played a key role in shifting the culture and creating family-friendly entertainment in the town. They also helped to indoctrinate immigrant miners with Canadian nationalism, using several patriotic initiatives during World War I. In fact, it was the patriotic fervour that helped fuel the expansion of the Northern Empire Theatre chain. Leo and Pete brought movie houses to mining

communities throughout the North, providing information through newsreels and also helping to create a singular culture that was based on selling the Hollywood dream to those living in these remote regions.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the modernization process included becoming part of the national distribution network, which meant signing a deal with Famous Players Canadian. The Palace Theatre was the culmination of the chain's rapid growth in the 1920s and 1930s, and this was the first time the people of Timmins had been exposed to a movie palace that was equal to any in Toronto. This first northern movie palace attracted the attention of Famous Players Canadian, which originally tried to coerce Mascioli into signing an agreement by building a rival theatre in Timmins; but the northern chain proved to be tough negotiators and they were able to strike an advantageous deal. The deal with Famous Players Canadian did not change how the people of Timmins went to the movies, but it did provide financial stability to the business.

Ultimately the modernization of the theatre chain would lead to Mascioli's decline, and his Old World business style would be deemed criminal during World War II. His role as the town's padrone made him an enemy alien, which, in turn, changed how the theatres were managed. Famous Players Canadian employees now had a hand in the operations, and Mascioli's son took charge of the business. Mascioli never returned to Timmins and was no longer the movie mogul of the North. Despite this setback, Mascioli continued to build modern theatres, and when he died, his body was interred in a giant tomb in the Timmins graveyard. After his death, Famous Players Canadian remained in control of the Timmins theatres, which began to close coinciding with the slow decline of the Timmins mining economy.

The case of the Timmins theatres maps how modern corporate management, popular culture, and politics shaped the theatre business in Canada. As the theatres became integrated into the larger business of Hollywood, the citizens of Timmins were also integrated into mainstream Canadian culture. The story of cinema-going in Timmins is not that of the flâneur walking through the Paris arcades to the theatre, but of miners and their wives and children being exposed to wholesome entertainment and how small towns were integrated into larger capitalist networks. The cinema was not necessarily a reflection of frenetic modernity, but was a means of cultural indoctrination into the modern Canadian state with its close ties to American capitalism and its corporate structure.

Figures



Figure 1: Valerio Bellini's photos of his work on the Empire Theatre in Sudbury

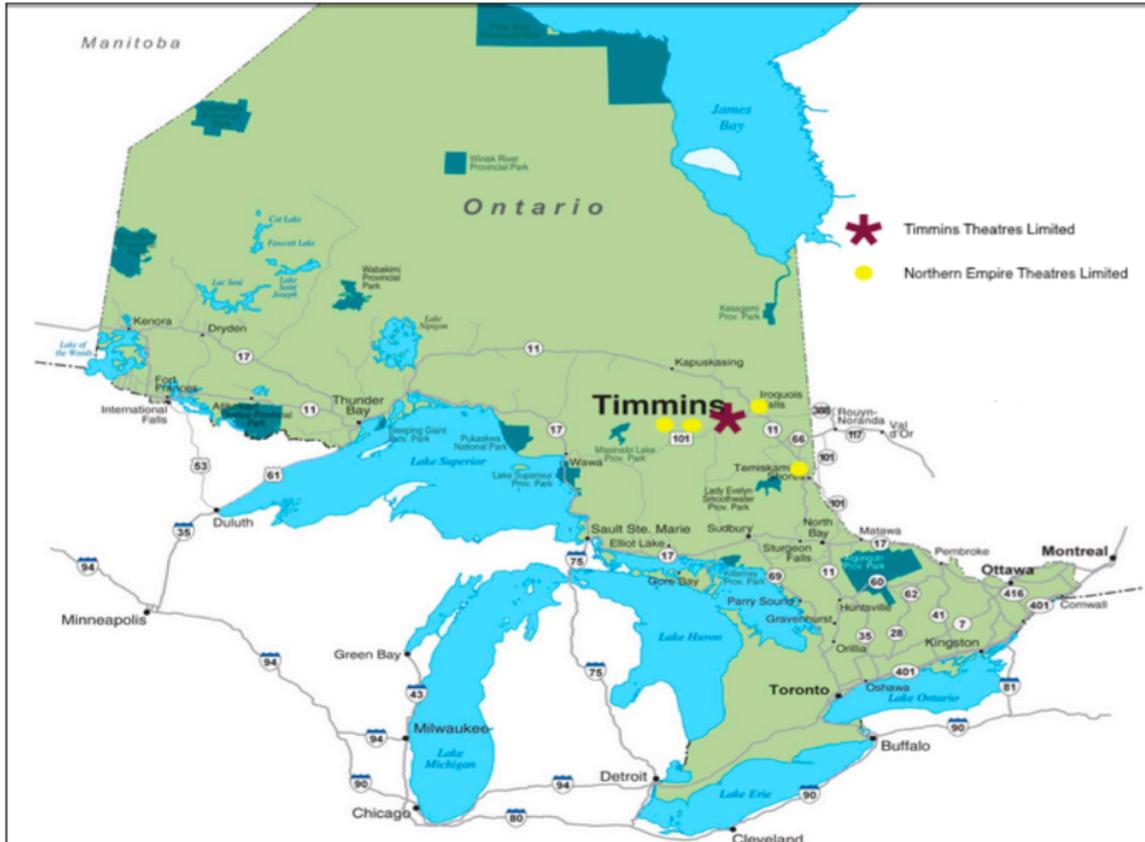


Figure 2: Map of Timmins Theatres and Northern Empire Theatres

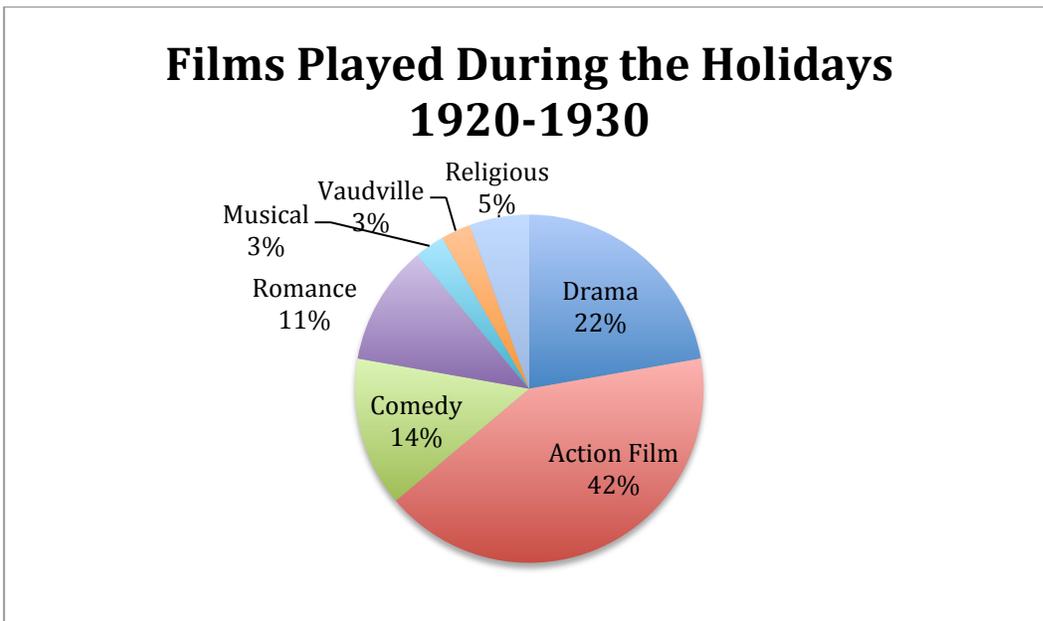


Figure 3: Chart of Films Played During the Holidays 1920–1930



Figure 4: The Palace Theatre Box Office (1947). RG series 56-11 Ontario Archives

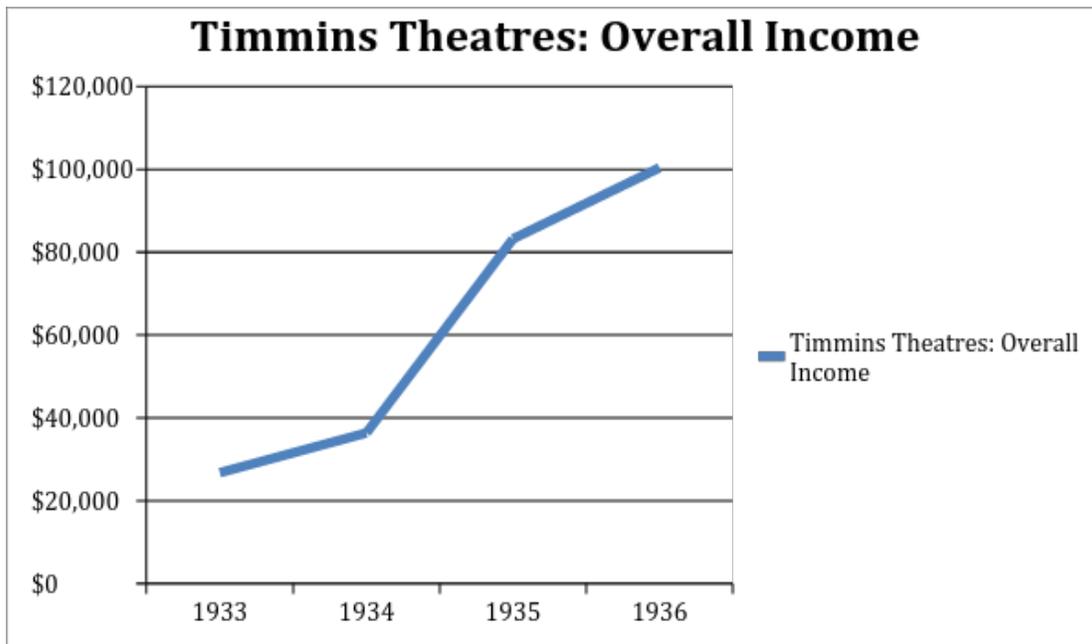


Figure 5: Graph of Timmins Theatres' overall revenue from all operations from 1933 to 1936

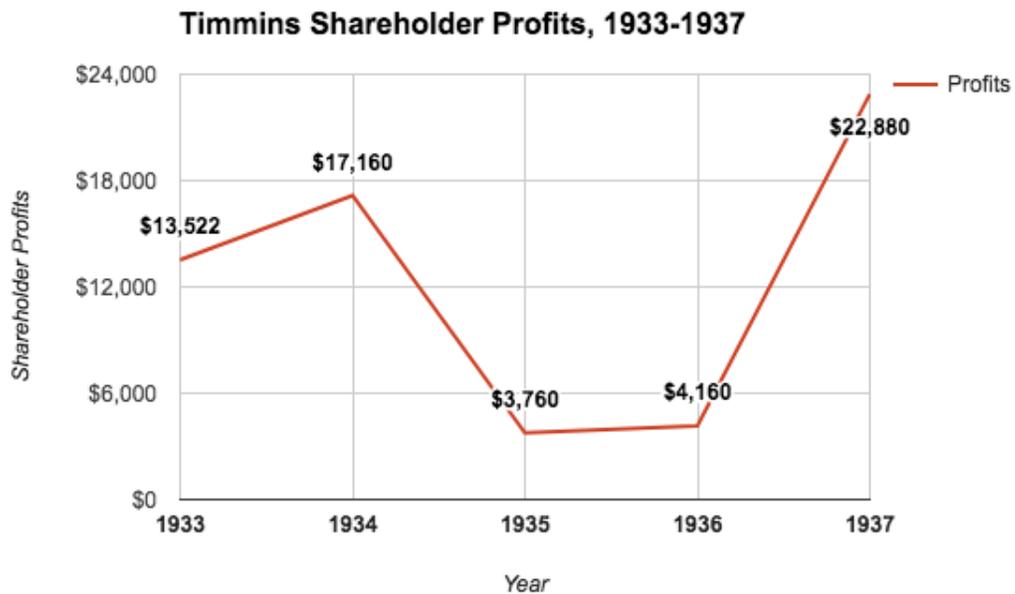


Figure 6: Graph of Shareholder Profits, 1933-1937

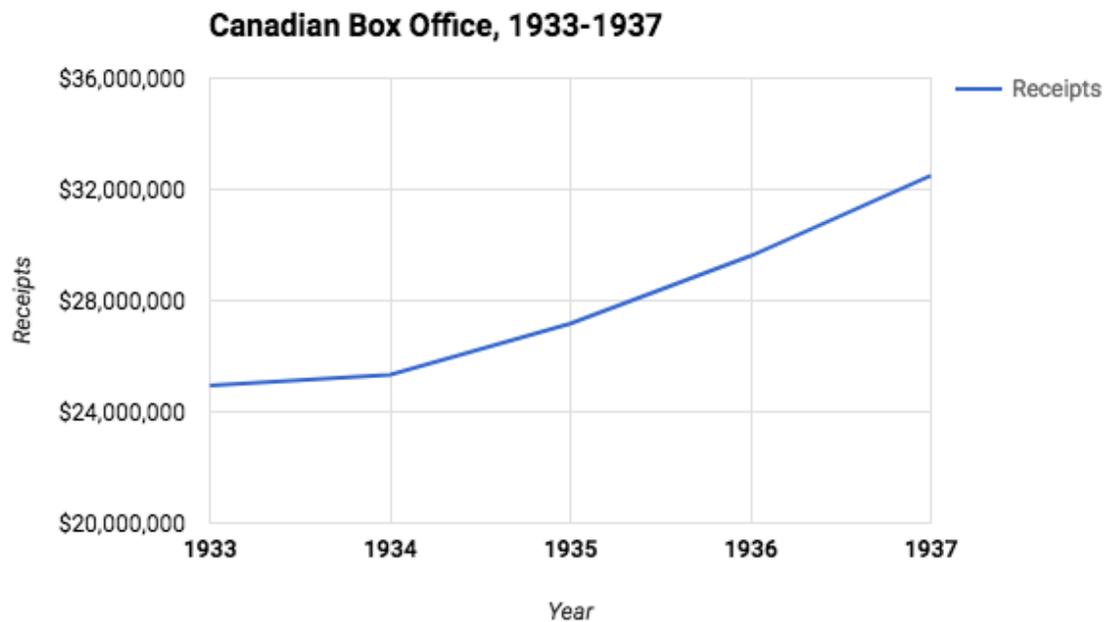


Figure 7: Graph of Canadian National Box Office 1933–1937

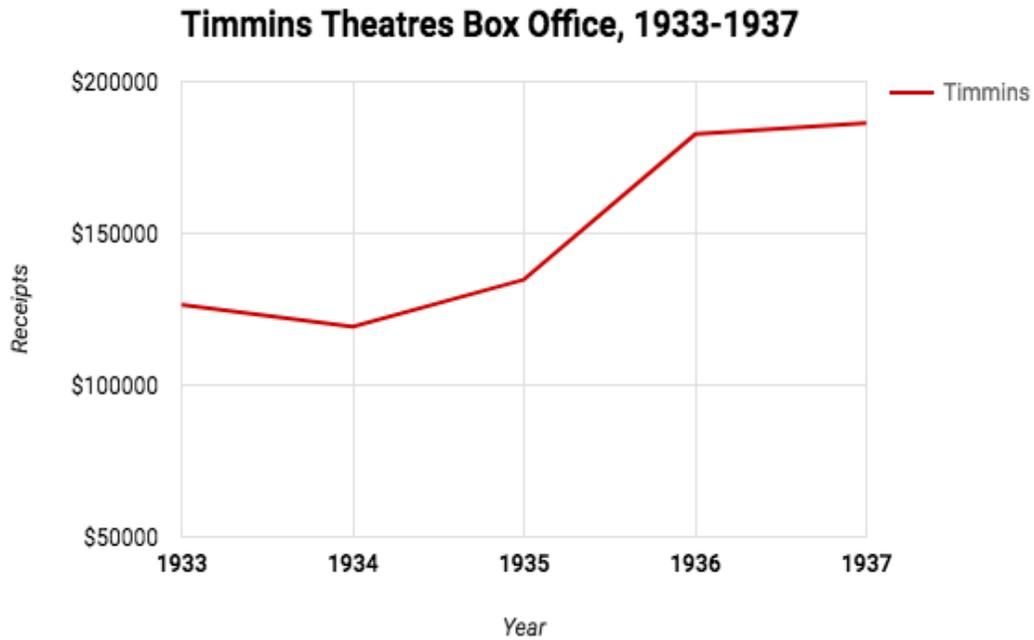


Figure 8: Graph of Timmins Theatres' Box Office Earnings 1933–1936

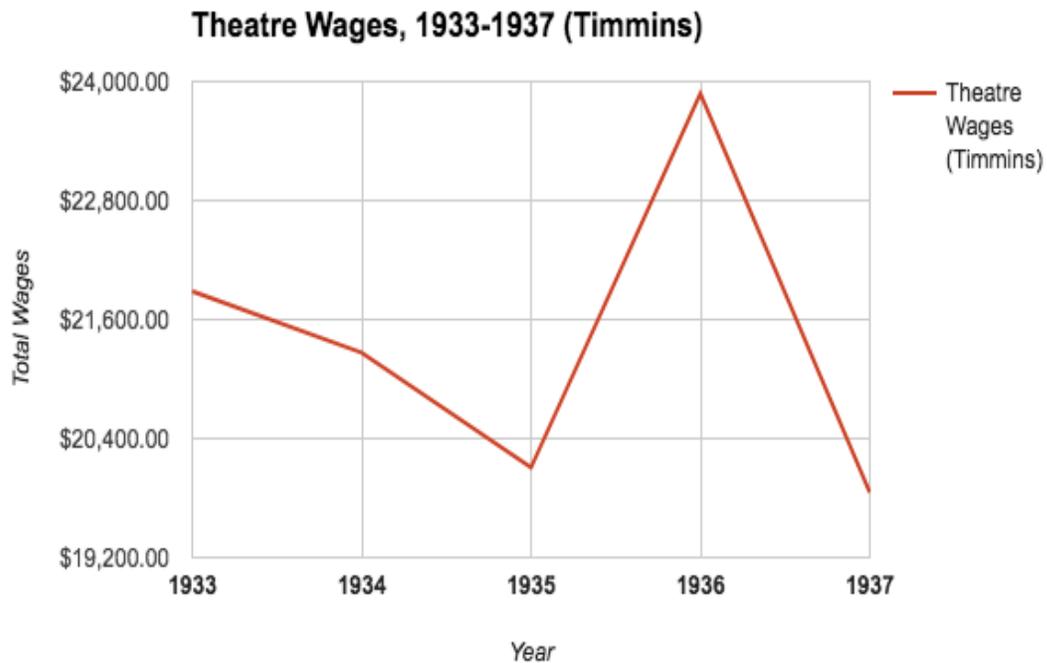


Figure 9: Graph of Wages from Timmins Theatre 1933–1937

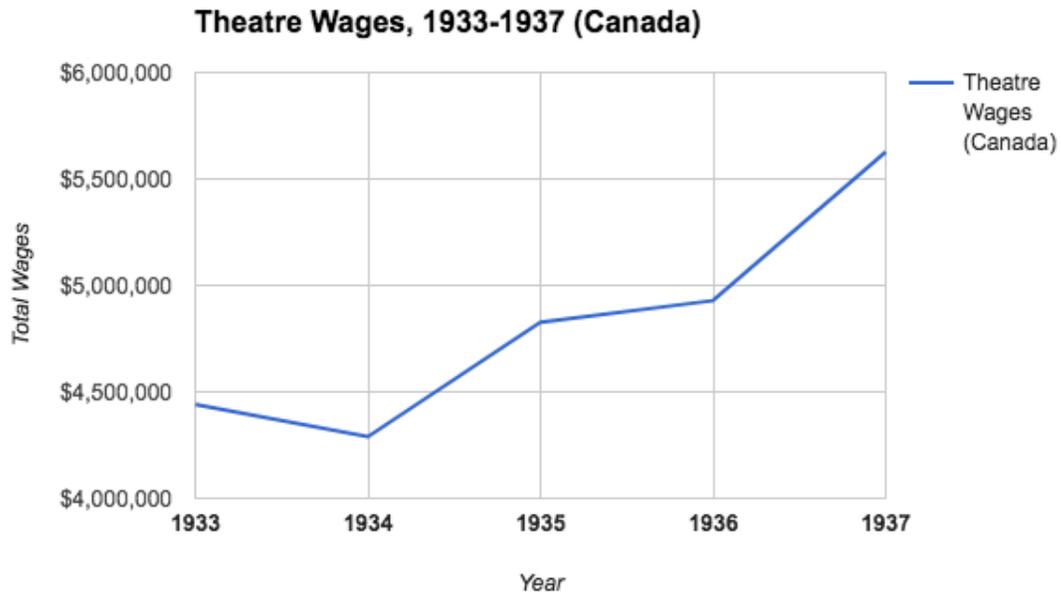


Figure 10: Graph of National Theatre Wages, 1933–1937

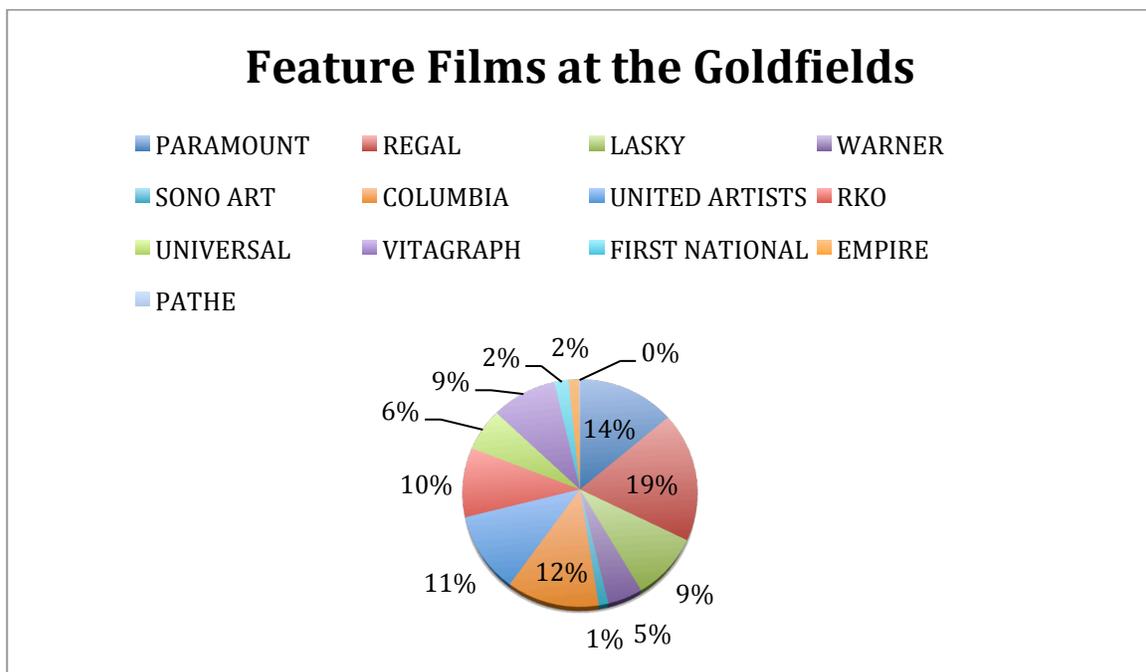


Figure 11: All Feature Films shown at the Goldfields Theatre from April 1930 to February 1936

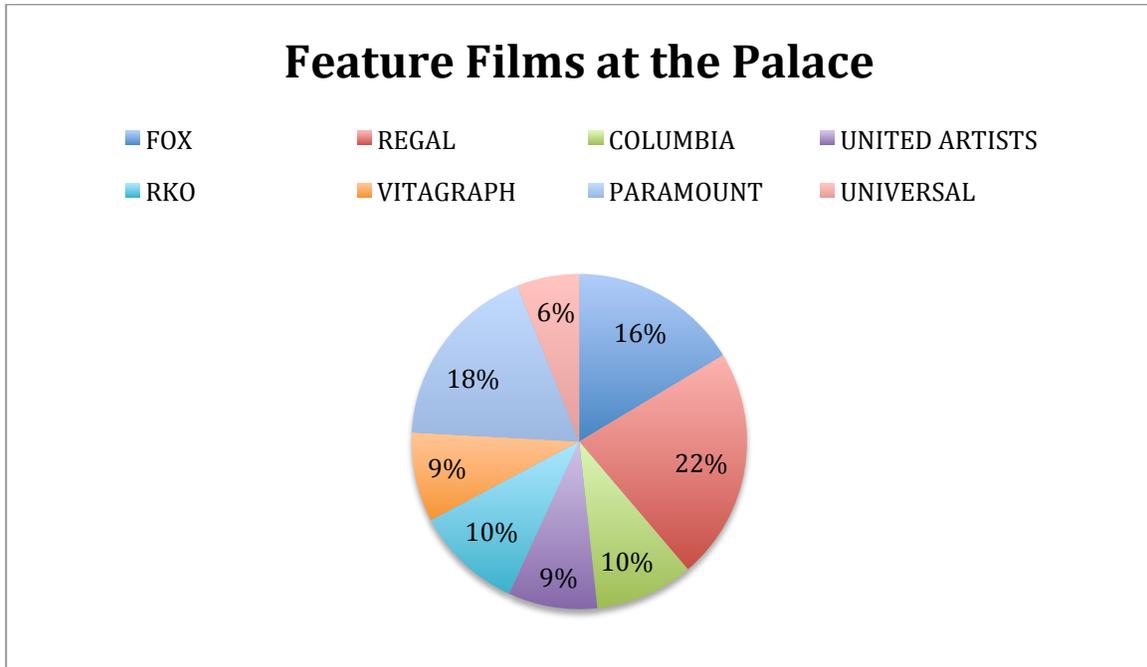


Figure 12: All Feature Films shown at the Palace from March 1936 to December 1936 before the contract with Famous Players Canadian

Film Rental Costs

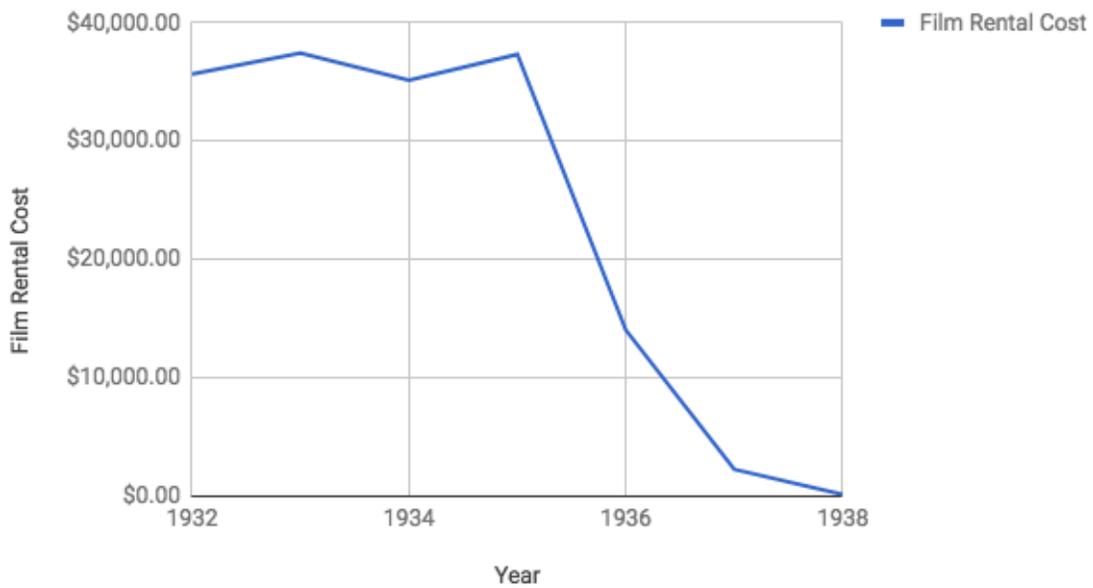
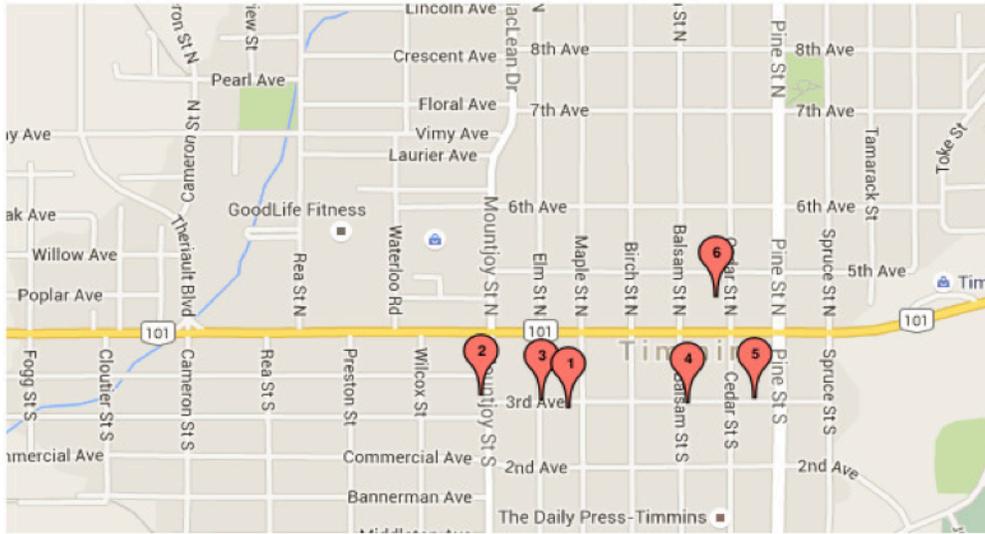


Figure 13: Graph of Film Rental Costs, 1932–1938



1. Broadway Theatre
71 3rd Avenue
Timmins, Ontario, P4N 1C2



2. Cartier Theatre
57 Mountjoy Street South
Timmins, Ontario, P4N 1S6



3. Goldfields Theatre
47 3rd Avenue
Timmins, Ontario



4. New Empire Theatre
165 3rd Avenue
Timmins, Ontario, P4N 1C7



5. Palace Theatre
221 3rd Avenue
Timmins, Ontario, P4N 1E1



6. Victory Theatre
33 Cedar Street North
Timmins, Ontario, P4N 6H8

Figure 14: Map of the Timmins Theatres

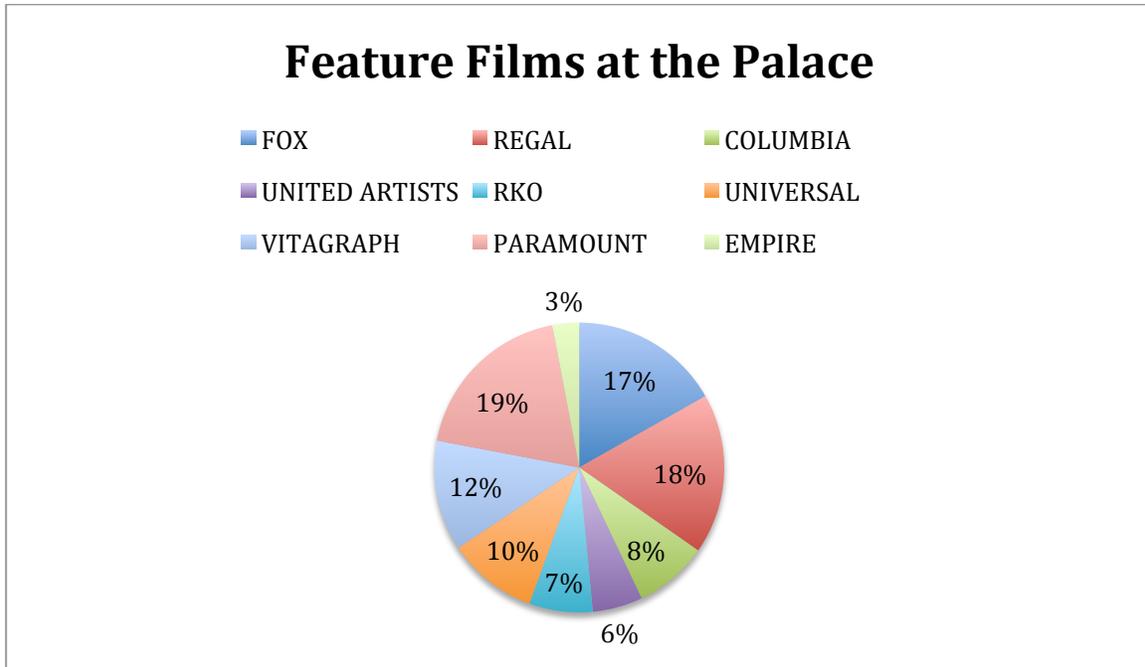


Figure 15: All Feature Films that played at the Palace from January 1937 to June 1938 after the contract with Famous Players Canadian

NEXT WEEK

Mon., Tues., Wed., Dec. 16—17—18

“Behind That Curtain”

Warne Baxter, Lois Moran, Gilbert Emery

A Love Mystery Drama of Scotland Yard

LONDON'S NEW SENSATION!

COMEDY “ASK DAD”

All Talking Mirthquake

TAKE NOTICE—For the benefit of the men folks who are working on the 3 to 11 p.m. shift we will run a Midnight performance commencing at 11.30 **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13th** showing **“SYNCOPIATION”** Tell Your Friends.

COMING! in the order as follows:

“SHOW BOAT” “BROADWAY” “BROADWAY SCANDALS” “TANNED LEGS” and “THE VIRGINIAN”

Figure 16: Ad from The Porcupine Advance from December 1929 Advertising Midnight Shows to shift workers.

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Appendix A

Family and Acquaintances Interview Questions

My interviews with family members and business associates were semi-structured conversations concentrating on the operations of Mascioli's theatre business and family folklore about Mascioli's persona.

1. I started my interview asking subjects to recount any memories about Mascioli's businesses.
2. I then asked about Mascioli's relationship to other businessmen and businesses in the town
3. I asked about the everyday operations of the theatres and Mascioli's day-to-day involvement with the theatres.
4. I asked subjects about Mascioli's personality and how this contributed to the popularity of his theatres
5. I asked subjects about Mascioli's connection to other theatres and chains, specifically Famous Players, Odeon and Oscar Hanson's chain.
6. Finally, I asked what happened to the theatre chain after his death.

General Public

These interviews were more structured with a set of six questions with the first assessing eligibility

1. Where were you living before 1952 and did you attend the cinema?
2. What is your most vivid memory of going to the show?
3. Can you list all the theatres in the town and how where they different from each other?
4. How was going to the theatre different to other local amusements?
5. Do you remember Leo Mascioli? If so, what are you memories of him?
6. Did you know he was imprisoned during the war and do you have memories of this?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Date:

Study Name: Movie-Going on the Margins: The Mascioli Film Circuit of Northeastern Ontario

Researchers: Primary Researcher: Jessica L. Whitehead
Supervisor: Paul Moore

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of my research is to study early film and exhibition practices in Northern Ontario. Specifically I will be focusing on Leo Mascioli and his Northern Empire theatre company. I wish explore the memories of his theatres and his persona as a northern showman.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: I will ask a series questions and tape your answers. The interview will take approximately 10-20 minute.

Risks and Discomforts: We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: The benefits of this research will be to document the life of Northern Ontario businessman Leo Mascioli and his theatres, which has largely been left out of the historical record.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence your relationship with the researchers or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: Unless you choose otherwise all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The interview will be recorded to provide data for the study; however, your name will not be included unless you give your consent. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information. The tapes will be kept and donated to the Timmins Museum after a period of 10 years. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

-----By initialing here I consent to have my name recorded for the project and possibly appear in the final publication. I understand this is completely voluntary and I can withdraw my consent at any time.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Paul Moore either by telephone or by e-mail .This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee; York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in Movie-Going on the Margins: The Mascioli Film Circuit of Northeastern Ontario conducted by Jessica Whitehead. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____
Jessica Whitehead, Principal Investigator

Date _____