

Orpheum Theater History

1005 Water St. New Bedford, MA

July 5th 1906

Charles O. Chartier purchases land and buildings from Henry E. Minkler for \$2,500.00
Chartiers sells property to the Club of French Sharpshooters for One Dollar

June 10th, 1907-12

Louis E Destremps is chosen as Architect

Work begins on building Theater.

April 15th, 1912

{same day Titanic sinks}

New Bedford Orpheum Theater opens

1913— 14

H.A. Chenoweth is hired as Theater manager, contract signed with the Orpheum Amusement Co. of Boston
Building has large ballroom and shooting range operated by the Club of French Sharpshooters. Theater opens with 1500 seats,

1927 Martin Beck of Orpheum Circuit merges with Benjamin Franklyn Keith and Edward Albee to form Keith—Albee – Orpheum Eventually these partnerships open over 400 theaters nationally
Warner Brothers releases first talking movie “The Jazz Singer”

1928—29

In one of the first hostile economic takeovers, Joseph Kennedy {Father of JFK}, bought 200,000 shares of Keith Albee Orpheum.

Eventually forcing out director E.F. Albee. Kennedy then made all contracts for any performers mandatory that they also must do radio . This was a severe blow to the devout vaudevillians and an advent to the increasing popularity of motion pictures
Radio Corporation of America {RCA} merges with The Keith Albee Orpheum conglomerate and Forms RKO { Radio Keith Orpheum}

RKO agrees to distribute Walt Disney films

1938 RKO releases “King Kong”

1941 RKO Releases “Citizen Kane”

In 1948 RKO fell under new management as millionaire Howard Hughes bought a controlling interest in the studio. His ‘micro-management’ of the studio would lead to its downfall. Hughes continued his systematic disruption and dismantling of the studio up through 1955 when he split it into two entities: RKO Pictures, Inc. and RKO Theatres, Corp. He then sold RKO Pictures to a subsidiary of General Tire and Rubber. In 1959 the name changed again to RKO General, Inc. RKO General was notable not for what they produced but what they released, a massive backlog of movies and shorts were all sent to television. Then, when the last film was out the door, the studio was up for sale again. In 1959 the physical studios of RKO were sold to Desilu Productions as a place to produce ‘I Love Lucy’ among other shows. Unfortunately though the trend that Hughes had started of dividing and selling portions of the company continued for the next thirty years.

12/14 1962 The City of New Bedford takes control of the Orpheum Theater

2/5 1968 The Club of French Sharpshooter sells the title of the Orpheum to Antone “Peaches” Demello for \$43,500.00-

10/1 1971 Rose Lesco purchases New Bedford Orpheum

11/28 1988 Lesco Realty, Robert H. Lesco, Lesco Quality Corp.

Robert Lesco, Robert H. and Sherry M. Lesco

12/1 1998 Ignacio Diaz, Mariam Morel Diaz and Guido Realty Trust

Light blue areas represent national Orpheum Circuit