

RISSA MES

Marissa, Illinois Friday, December 14, 1951

New Owner Takes Over Gem Theatre

Finger and Degen Sell Picture Show After 27 Years To Tony Beninati, Pinckneyville Showman

The Gem Theatre, Marissa's only movie house, was sold this week by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Finger and Mrs. Sara Degen to Tony Beninati, Pinckneyville Theatre owner.

The Theatre has been under the Finger-Degen ownership the past 27 years, having been purchased from Mr. and Mrs. George Hamilton back in 1924 when it was located in the building occupied by the Clara June Shop.

The Fingers and Degens moved the theatre into the present remodeled building back in 1927 and in 1931 installed sound pictures.

The new owner, Mr. Beninati, is a well known theatre owner in Pinckneyville having been in the show business for the past 25 years. He has worked as manager for Fox and Paramount Theatres and comes from a family of Theatre owners.

His uncle, Dominic Fricina, heads the Fricina Amusement Co. which has a chain of 64 theatres over the country.

Mr. Beninati is married and has three children, Tonydon, Marguerite, "Sugar" and Brian. His daughter Marguerite is a national contest winner in baton twirling.

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Mr. Beninati said today that he intends to do considerable remodeling and hopes to make the Marissa Theatre one of the finest in any small town. He will continue to run top notch pictures and has already installed cushioned upholstered seats in the theatre with redecoration now in progress. Later the show will be enlarged with an entire new front and new cry room for children.

To Change Name

Mr. Beninati is looking for a new name for the theatre and will award the person or persons submitting the name chosen a year's free pass to the theatre. He asked that you write your suggested name and your name and address on a sheet of paper and hand it into the theatre box office.

The contest will close Saturday, Dec. 22, and a new name will be chosen from the suggestions.

New Manager

Leonard Stanford of Pinckneyville will move to Marissa with his mother and manage the theatre. He is 25 years of age, is a veteran of World War II and has had 5 years theatre experience.

Mrs. Sara Degen will continue as ticket seller along with other local employees.