

# Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 4

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

## The Art Issue

OUR ANNUAL  
**GALLERY GUIDE  
RETURNS!**

**Bones, art,  
and history at  
A PAINTER'S  
FREEPORT ABODE**



**AN ARTIST  
WITH AN EDGE,  
at home  
in industrial  
Rockland**

**The Alna Store  
takes the  
CULINARY WORLD  
BY STORM**



In 1936, the Waldo Theatre opened in Waldoboro, Maine. Snowflakes fluttered in the air as families piled out of their cars and into the warm glow of the foyer, eager to see Bing Crosby's comedy, *Pennies from Heaven*.

Legendary theater architect Benjamin Schlanger, who would go on to be involved in projects including the Sydney Opera House and Metropolitan Opera House, designed the theater. Schlanger designed the space to celebrate the big screen, with seating that gently sloped back, providing excellent viewing for every audience member. Removing decorative elements from around the focal point, Schlanger wanted people to celebrate watching films.

"He was all about the person sitting in the seat and not being distracted," says Barbara Boardman, head of the building committee for the theater's restoration project. "And he was all about exploring the edge of the screen. He wanted it to be more like you're in the world of the movie, rather than looking at a box with an image."

The outside of the building was designed in a Greek Revival style, while inside, it was minimalist and functional with occasional nods to Art Deco. For decades, the Waldo provided the midcoast community with a space for what the Waldo Theatre Executive Director Susan Hodder calls "a third place."

"The home is your first place," she explains, "Work is your second place, and people used to have a third place where they could gather, a place they could feel at home and comfortable and socialize that wasn't centered around a meal necessarily."

With the advent of television, families began to stay home instead of going out to the movies. A few revivals took place over the 20th century, but by 2017, the building had suffered significant



SUSTAINABLE

# Lights, Camera, In Action Again!

*An historic theater was restored thanks to the efforts of the local community*

BY KIRSTEN LIE-NIELSEN

hope to renovate and expand the concessions area."

In its heyday, the theater hosted star-studded acts, including Judy Collins and John Waters. Today, musicians who perform at the Waldo remark on its acoustics, which many have said are the best they've ever performed with. The first live performance since the remodel took place in 2021, and in 2023, attendance doubled from the previous year with acts such as the returning Judy Collins and Patty Griffin.

"We are very proud of the fact that we're sparking an economic renaissance in downtown Waldoboro," Hodder adds. The town, divided by Route One on the way up the Maine coast, is now home to a successful microbrewery, a cafe, an inn and wine bar, and more expanding businesses.

As it did in 1936, the renovated Waldo Theatre is once again creating a gathering place for citizens and visitors of Waldoboro.

**LEFT:** Seating at the theater was designed to provide an ideal viewing experience for motion pictures. **ABOVE:** Photo from the 1981 remake of *Pennies from Heaven*. The Waldo Theatre opened in 1936 with a screening of Bing Crosby's original musical comedy.



Photo (above): Glasshouse Images / Alamy Stock Photo. Photo (below): Hannah Hoggatt.