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## **Ridglea Theater & Ridglea Village Office Building No. 2**

**(Theater Address: 6025 Camp Bowie Boulevard)**

**Fort Worth, Texas**

- **The Ridglea Village Office Building No. 2** was developed in 1947 by Arlie Clayton (A.C.) Luther on the south side of the 6000 block of Camp Bowie Boulevard. It followed the construction of the Ridglea Village Office Building No. 1 on the north side of the street. The primary tenant for the second building was Ridglea State Bank.
- **The Ridglea Theater**, with 1,500 “ultra-modern push back seats,” was run by Interstate Circuit and opened on Friday, December 1, 1950 with searchlights blazing on the front of the building and a gala party. It was the city’s largest suburban theater.
- **Spanish-Mediterranean style:** Like all buildings built by A.C. Luther in this section of Camp Bowie Boulevard the Ridglea Theater and Ridglea Village No. 2 Office Building were designed in the Spanish-Mediterranean style. The Ridglea Theater and two office spaces of Building No. 2 front Camp Bowie Boulevard. The theater has a dominant 70 foot stone tower that announces the arrival to the Ridglea neighborhood. The Theater was joined to the 3-year old Ridglea Office Building No. 2 during construction.
- **Exterior materials:** red tile clay roof, tan stone, wrought iron, balconies above the Theater’s marquee and along the second story of Ridglea Village Building No. 2.
- **Interior of Theater:** (1950’s description): Terrazzo flooring in lobby and public spaces, large-scaled murals painted in strong colors depicting the c. 1500 landing of Spanish explorers in California who are being followed by pirates. The Ridglea was the only theater in the state to have two proscenium arch drapes, one of a rich scarlet red and the other of gold. The drapes to the theater entrance were turquoise blue. The carpets in the auditorium and on the stairway were of a Spanish design in strong colors with red predominating. The Ridglea Theater opened with one of the most unusual theater rooms ever built, a large, sound-proof “cry room” for babies!
- **Opening gala for Theater:** The gala began at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, December 1, 1940 and during the evening “Pretty Baby” starring Dennis Morgan and Betsy Drake was shown. However, on the preceding Wednesday “All about Eve” with Betty Davis was shown as a test and on Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the public’s first movie was “My Blue Heaven” with Betty Grable.

- **Arlie Clayton (A.C.) Luther:** A.C. Luther came to Fort Worth from Florida in 1930 to build houses in the exclusive residential neighborhood of Westover Hills. The first company he formed was in 1933 with John E. Byrne called Byrne & Luther, Inc. After building a number of houses in Westover Hills, in the 1940's Byrne & Luther, Inc. and then Loffland-Luther Construction Company turned to the Ridglea area and built the iconic commercial buildings, the country club and some of the important residences in North Ridglea and Ridglea Hills.
- **Interstate Circuit Theaters:** (According to a *Fort Worth Press* article on November 31, 1949.) Karl Hoblitzelle, Interstate Circuit's president, was born in St. Louis where his first job was that of office boy with the St. Louis Fair. He later became the assistant to the director. At the time of the Ridglea Theater opening Mr. Hoblitzelle lived in Dallas and had worked his way up through the Interstate Circuit. In addition to his job with Interstate, Mr. Hoblitzelle was known as a philanthropist, art collector and symphony and opera enthusiast.

R.J. O'Donnell, Interstate's vice-president and general manager, started out as an usher in a Chicago theater. He rose rapidly to the theater treasurer and left that post to go to New York, where he became a figure in box offices along Broadway. He served as manager, artists' representative, director, booking executive and theater head prior to coming to Texas in 1924 as manager of Fort Worth's downtown Majestic Theater. It was not long after that that he was put in charge of managing all of the Hoblitzelle theaters.

To manage the new Ridglea Theater Interstate hired Clyde Allen, who joined the theater chain in 1930 as an \$8.50 a week usher at the Majestic. All of the Interstate executive officers from around the country attended the opening of Fort Worth's Ridglea Theater.