A Brief History of DRAGONFLY CINEMA

www.dragonflycinema.com

Port Orchard's downtown movie life starts about **1915** when photographer Harry Ward turns a dream into reality and opens the **Star Liberty Theatre** at 731 Bay Street. Harry picked up a love of moving pictures during his travels across America before settling in Port Orchard. He is later known as The Photographer of Kitsap County. Harry runs the theatre for 5 years before selling it to Harry Howe, who sells a year later to J. A. "Uncle John" McGill, who renames it **McGill's Theatre** but later advertises it as **Liberty Theatre**.

Bay Street, Port Orchard, looking West, Mid to Late 20s, Community Theatre at Left
Courtesy Kitsap County Historical Society & Sydney Museum & Arts Association - Image 400.37b

The theatre building that at 822 Bay Street that **Dragonfly Cinema** occupies is constructed in **1925** by the Knights of Pythias through incredible effort on the part of their local lodge members in cooperation with John McGill. The Knights build this two story fireproof concrete building with all the modern amenities available at the time, putting a 500 seat theatre on the first floor and a lodge meeting area on the second floor. On **April 18th 1925**, the Liberty moves from 731 to 822 Bay Street, and it becomes the **Community Theatre**.

In **1928** Rex Thompson and J.G. Beckman buy the theatre from McGill and later rename it the **D&R,** after Thompson's twin sons, Don and Ron.

By **1965**, drainage and maintenance problems have hurt the theatre's image, and the **D&R** closes.

In **1980** a group of 13 downtown businessmen including Robert "Bob" Geiger recognize both the need to provide local entertainment and to keep people coming to downtown Port Orchard. He forms a corporation to buy the Knight's building and remodel it, investing $200,000 to fix its problems and make it look good again. It reopens as the **Plaza Twin Theatre**. Around **1996** Bob Geiger assumes full ownership and continues to run it until **2005**.

Far Away Entertainment leases the Plaza Twin and spends $50,000 to revitalize it and then opens it in **2007** as **Orchard Theater**, sometimes called **Historic Orchard Theater**. Lack of profit is cited as it is closed in **December of 2010**.

Now, Gryphon Shafer, with help from REEL Friends of Dragonfly Cinema, an open group on Facebook that supports cinema and other arts in Port Orchard, is pleased to welcome you to **Dragonfly Cinema**. The community spirit of the 1925 opening is back with the mission of providing entertainment, amazement and enlightenment from films that the big megaplexes may never run.

Bay Street, Port Orchard, looking West, Christmas Season about 1950   Courtesy Kitsap County Historical Society

by Jennifer Stone & Ron Potter, of REEL Friends. Photos by Harry Ward from the collection of Sydney Museum & Arts Association.