



King's Theatre

Broadway, Stratford

1919

Use:	Movie Theatre	Historic Value:	3 out of 5
Materials:	Reinforced concrete	Architectural Value:	3 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	1 out of 2
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 3509 & Pt Sec 318 Tn of Stratford	Symbolic Value:	1 out of 3
		Rarity Value:	- out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	2 out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	11 out of 20



Stratford is the home of an important part of cinematography history. For a time the town could boast the existence of two separate theatres, a feat that was not common. Interestingly, it is the oldest of the two that still exists and is operational today.

In June 1916, there was a steering meeting held of Stratford Pictures and Amusement, the aim of which was to raise £8000 for the purchase of His Majesty's Theatre from Mrs Diamond. The first general meeting was held in October that year and plans were subsequently made for the removal and construction of a new building. In 1917 the name "King's" was approved and the Theatre was open and operating by 1919.

The theater has a unique cinematic history, as it was the first theatre in the Southern Hemisphere to play the 'Talkies' films, pictures with sound. On 1 April 1927, the publication of the 'Amusements' proclaimed: *'To-night at the King's Theatre the first public screening of the De Forest Phonofilm will be given and the public owe it to themselves as intelligent people intelligently interested in any event affecting their interests, to be present at the initial public demonstrations in the Southern hemisphere of the most remarkable scientific achievement of the last half-century.'*¹



In 1934 the Plaza Theatre was opened and thus began Stratford's time of two theatres running. Inevitably though, television took its toll and the King's Theatre was closed for a period of time while the Plaza flourished. However, in September 1969, it was decided to sell the Plaza Theatre (which was on the corner of Broadway and Regan Street where the Taranaki Farmers is now) and some of the seating from that theatre was to be transferred to the Regent (as the King's was called then). And so the King's

Theatre was re-opened in November 1969, after being remodeled and renovated throughout. The opening was celebrated with Broadway being spot-lit with coloured lighting and a parade of official guests rode in vintage cars along the street below. The Eltham Marching Girls and Stratford Pipe Band also processed along the street to the Theatre, where the Stratford Citizens Band was playing.

It seemed that the theatre would thrive again, and so it did for another 17 years. However, in 1986 it was decided they would shut their doors once more, if the patronage did not improve. This happened in September, and many thought that this may be the end of King's Theatre's proud 67 year history.

In March 1992 King's Theatre once again opened, and in November they received a Lotteries Board grant to the value of \$66,000. This money was awarded to renovate the Theatre. Construction was to include a new stage and dressing rooms, fire exits, and a foldaway movie screen. Also the façade was all repainted. In 1994, this was further improved with new toilet facilities being built under the auditorium.

Today, King's Theatre is still open to the public. It is in beautiful condition and is proudly carrying on the work it started 88 years ago.