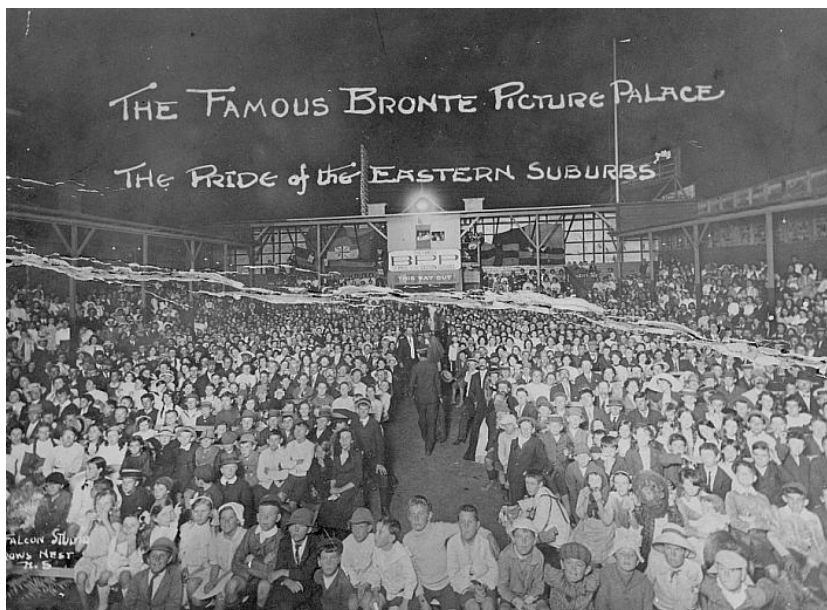


Bronte Picture Palace



The Bronte Picture Palace was a well-known local entertainment venue for four decades, spanning the decades from the silent movie era to post World War 11.

The story of Bronte Picture Palace begins in 1910 with two local businessmen John Bunyan and William J. Napier. Bunyan had been running a horse-drawn bus service into the city and after he gave up this business he had the large former horse stable site at his disposal. Napier, a Charing Cross newsagent, went into partnership to operate an open-air cinema in the former stable.

The cinema showed silent films, and prided itself on having all new releases, unlike many suburban cinemas whose program was filled with older films. Napier sold tickets to the cinema in advance at his newsagency.

The cinema's address was 82-90 Leichhardt Street. This part of Leichhardt Street has since changed its name and the current address of the former Bronte Picture Palace site is 340 Bronte Road, Charing Cross.

Later the business was sold to George Johnston and later again to Bill Thurston. The latter had the building renovated and ran it from 1921-1929, the end of the silent movie era. The effects of the Great Depression hurt local entertainment businesses, and when this combined with a slump in the movie business coincided it became the Bronte Palace Theatre, a venue for boxing, vaudeville and community concerts run by Les Shipp and Mr. Stewart.

With the advent of the 'talkies' it became a cinema again, operated by Kings Picture Show. In order for patrons to be able to hear the soundtrack, a roof for the cinema was built. The cinema seated 581 patrons, and had a complete change of program every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Saturday afternoons were devoted to children's matinees.

Hoyts Ltd. operated the Bronte Picture Palace from the end of World War II until its closure in 1950. Seven years later it was demolished and the site became a petrol station, today Kennards Hire occupies the site.

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