

## Saxe Theatre / Forum Cafeteria

1911, 1930, 1987

Built in 1911, the Saxe Moving Picture Theatre was the first structure in Minneapolis built as a movie theatre. The Saxe, built at a cost of \$150,000, was one of the most luxurious and ornate theatres in Minneapolis. The theatre seated 1,600 and was built in the Spanish Renaissance style.



I. SAXE THEATRE, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.  
Chapman & Magney, Architects

The exterior was faced in elaborate terra-cotta decoration with a four-season theme featuring pilasters, rosettes, and reset panels. Two thousand flashing lights pulsed on the exterior.

Chapman & Magney were architects for the building. They also designed the Calhoun Athletic Club, Grace Evangelical Church, and the Sumner Branch Library.

Inside, the theatre resembled a Spanish palace. The pipe organ cost \$10,000 and was the most expensive ever installed at the time west of the Mississippi. In addition to organ music, an orchestra accompanied

the silent films. The 1,500-seat theater was named for the Saxe Brothers of Milwaukee, owners of a small chain of midwestern theaters including the Minneapolis location.



MinneapolisStar,  
October 23, 1923

The Saxe name did not last. In 1914, the theatre's name was changed to the Strand Moving Picture Theatre.

The Strand became the premier movie theater in Minneapolis offering first run films.



Star Tribune, November 18, 1914

The marquee bore the name Strand until 1929, when the Forum Cafeteria Co. of Kansas City, Missouri signed a lease on the space, with the intent of converting the theater into a restaurant. It would be the company's

eighteenth location and a place where office workers, tourists, and shoppers stopped for inexpensive meals.

In 1929, the Forum Cafeteria Company purchased the building and enlisted its house architect, George B. Franklin, to convert the theatre into one of its cafeterias.

The Company spent \$275,000 on the remodel, creating a state-of-the-art kitchen and carving out a dining room on the street level, with additional seating on a mezzanine level. The exterior remained the same. The Forum Cafeteria opened in May of 1930.

The building's remodeled interior was in the Art Deco style, with ornate green tiles, black onyx, chandeliers, ironwork, mirrors, columns, sconces, and stained glass. Designs were etched in the glass depicting Minnesota scenes including pine trees, cattails, Viking ships, and panoramas of both local lakes and Minnehaha Falls.

The remodel included new equipment and a ventilation system. The interior was approximately fifty feet in width and 167 feet deep. A mezzanine allowed dining away from the crowds. The restaurant was designed to



Minnesota Historical Society

**SURE!**  
**Morning—Noon—and—Night**  
**FOR BREAKFAST**  
Large Bowl Oatmeal and Cream ..... 8c  
Strictly Fresh, Fried Egg ..... 5c  
Two Slices of Toast ..... 2c  
Block of Creamery Butter ..... 2c  
Our Famous Coffee, per cup ..... 5c

**A TUESDAY LUNCH HINT**  
Bowl of Vegetable Soup ..... 5c  
Hamburger Steak, Spanish ..... 10c  
Old Fashioned Baked Chicken Pie ..... 20c  
Our Special Baked Beans ..... 5c  
Large cut of Pumpkin Pie ..... 8c

**TUESDAY EVENING**  
Nice Lean Pork Chop with Cream Gravy ..... 10c  
Fancy Baked Potato ..... 7c  
Head Lettuce, Mayonnaise Dressing ..... 6c  
Piping Hot Biscuits, each ..... 1c  
Banana Whipped Cream Pie ..... 10c

**FORUM**  
**CAFETERIA**  
36 South 7th Street

Star Tribune, November 11, 1930

accommodate approximately 1,000 customers per hour, and it initially employed about 150 people.

Ten years later, following a fire, the space was again rebuilt. In 1940, the ornamental terra cotta facade was remade. It had been altered during the Forum's 1930 construction. Renovation of the interior expanded the number of customers to be served by five hundred per day.

In 1951, a kitchen fire closed the restaurant for a short time requiring some minor repairs.

The Forum chain, owners of the restaurant, went bankrupt in the 1970s. The Forum, however, operated until August of 1975. The Forum's business had slowed considerably, and plans were being made for redevelopment of the area.

In 1975, the City of Minneapolis gave the interior of the building historically significant status, but it did not so designate the exterior which had been altered over the

years. On March 16, 1976, preservationists were able to put the interior of the Forum on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Mpls Star, November 24, 1977*

A business partnership was formed to save the space, and Scotties on Seventh, a disco, subsequently opened in the space. [The Forum chain would not allow use of its name.] Scotties quickly evolved into an attraction. The Wolverines jazz band were regulars.

In 1979, the building was again threatened. City Center was planned, and Scottie's was within the project area to be demolished.

When the building was again threatened, preservationists won a lawsuit that required the developers to disassemble and store the 3,500-piece interior (which ultimately was reassembled a few feet from its original location). Unfortunately, the exterior was demolished.

In 1987, the space reopened as the Paramount Café. Minor alterations were made to the interior. The entrance was redone to bring in more light. A salad bar, soda fountain, and stage for a piano were added. After an unsuccessful run, the restaurant closed in August of 1989.

From 1992 through 1995, Mick's restaurant occupied the space. Mick's was an Atlanta based chain.

In 1996, Goodfellows, a highly rated restaurant, moved from the Conservatory to occupy the space. In 2004, it also closed its doors.



*Star Tribune, March 26, 1995*

## lights out – still

How sad is this? One of Minnesota's great architectural treasures — the glittering art deco glory formerly known as Goodfellow's — has remained dark for almost a year and a half. And while it doesn't have quite the same historical or culinary weight, it's a bummer that St. Paul's kitschy **Carousel**, the Twin Cities' only revolving restaurant, is calling it quits in March.

*Star Tribune, December 28, 2006*

In 2010, The Forum Restaurant opened in the space with Jim and Stefanie Ringo at the helm. Unfortunately, the Restaurant closed after less than a year of operation. During the Ringo's tenure, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission issued the couple an award for restoring and safeguarding the building's interior.

In 2014, the opening of Il Foro was announced by its developers. The space had been empty since 2011. Il Foro opened in 2015, and it closed in 2016.

By January of 2019, when Fhima's opened, it was the seventh entity to occupy the space since the Forum closed in 1975.



*Himspairport, December 31, 2021*

Fhima's Restaurant focuses on French-Mediterranean cuisine.

David Fhima was born in Casablanca, Morocco, one of seventeen children. He adapted his mother's techniques of cooking with a focus on French Mediterranean. He is known for his tagine method of cooking.

Fhima is also the owner of Mother Dough Bakery and Wine Bar and a concept destination to be created in the historic Ribnick Building in the North Loop.