



Shaw's Hall on West Avenue in Fairport village, also known as Shaw's Opera House, The Bijou, The Bijou Dream, and the Rivoli, is perhaps best remembered as Fairport's first movie house. The original single-story building was moved from a location north of the canal in 1854. It was enlarged when the old meeting house belonging to the Congregational Society was moved from East Church Street and built into the structure. Subsequently a second story and balcony were added and the building was faced with brick. The ground floor housed at various times Billy Kershaw's harness shop, Hollender & Scoville's grocery store, a dressmaker, L.M. Shaw's "undertaking parlor," an auto parts store, Mrs. Chadwick's and Miss Lee's hat shop, and Jensen's (later Gerald Williams') hardware store. Before movies, the second story was a large meeting room capable of holding up to 450 people. As the largest meeting place in the village it was the place for revival meetings, lectures on prohibition and temperance, dances, vaudeville shows, other public meetings and voting. Two early vaudeville productions were "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and "True Blue," a Civil War drama put on by the members of American Legion Slocum Post 211. The productions were necessarily small ones as the stage could accommodate no more than a four-person act. One account of village elections notes that the "Republican leaders and the Democratic 'Big Four' lined up the patriotic voters and marched them to the ballot box where they made sure they voted the right ticket and deposited it before they were given

a card, which when presented to the pay-off man, drew \$1 or \$2 depending on the real need of additional votes.”

Silent movies arrived in town about 1906 when the theater was run by Charles Aldrich and Hollis Shilling. Patrons climbed the one set of stairs to the theater and often had to wait while the patrons from an earlier show exited via the same stairs. In the 1920's there were movies six days a week and an occasional vaudeville act. Movies continued to be shown there probably until the mid-1930's.

The stage featured a gold hand-painted curtain with a pastoral scene in the center surrounded by advertisements paid for by local merchants. For \$15 advertisers could tell patrons waiting for the movie to “Call on Percy & Clark for your hardware needs,” or to “Come in for a bite at C.W. Lathrop's.” A.G. Filkins promoted his automobile supplies and The Sugar Bowl offered choice confections and ice cream. George Slocum touted insurance and John D. Webb promised pure food in his market.

An old piano provided background music for the movies, at first to cover the noise of the projector and later to set the mood: soft for love scenes, louder for war scenes. The piano was located in a small pit in front of the screen so the accompanist could watch the film. Pianist Grace Drew said the goal was to “keep the music in the background – you were the accompanist, not the main attraction.” The projection booth was suspended from the ceiling near the street end of the building. The projectionist climbed a steel ladder to reach his perch from which he could see the entire hall with its cloth covered panels and gold woodwork, its two-light candelabra, the rows of seats, the stage, the pianist, the customers, and the curtain.

Shaw's Hall was razed in 1975 as part of Fairport's urban renewal projects, leaving behind its long history.