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**A Movie Theater With No Roof?!**



*The Madison Airdome Movie Theater about 1920*

What would you call a theater with no roof and no floor? The Airdome. That's what Wallace and Ralph Clark named Madison's first movie theater located at what is now 670 Boston Post Road across from Madison Hose company No. 1

When it opened about 1914, moviegoers paid 10 cents for a ticket and a folding chair which they set up on the dirt floor and waited for darkness when the show would begin – assuming it didn't rain. In that event they simply picked up their chairs and waited under the projection booth until the rain stopped. If it didn't stop they took a rain check and came back another time.

In 1916 the Clarks leased the building to Charles B. Eastman and Leland Hull and Albert Baisden who were the projector operators joined him a partners. Leland Hull recalled that being a projectionist was a tricky job. He had to crank the film through the projector by hand at exactly the right speed or the movie



wouldn't look right on the screen. When he had to change reels, slides were projected on the screen with messages such as "Just a Minute Please" or "Ladies Please Remove Your Hats".

Eastman, Hull, and Baisden improved the theater by adding a roof and a floor. In September 1921 the land and the business were sold to Frank and Louise Leimgruber. In the same year Charles Bonoff built the present movie theater then called the Menunkatuck Theater. The new building was larger than the Airdome and when it was not used for movies it served a basketball court until a sloping floor was added.

Perhaps in response to the new, larger theater the Leimgrubers discontinued the movie business and opened a shop in one half of the building and rented the other half to the A&P (more formally known as "The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company"). An addition was constructed on one side of the building and Leland Hull opened his electrical business which continued there until 1928 when his father J. Myron Hull built a new brick building on Wall street just behind the library.

In the same year the A&P moved into a new brick building just west of the former Airdome. In the years since the Airdome building with its characteristic false front has remained a Madison landmark serving each generation in new ways. For many years it was the "Yardstick", a fabric store, and more recently "Husky's" pet store and later "Its Reigning Whiskers & Paws".

In 2005 the original Airdome building was demolished and the present Aerodome building was erected in its place.

**Directions to the location of the Airdome Theater:** The present Aerodome building located at 670 Boston Post Road occupies the site of the Airdome Theater. No trace the Airdome remains.