



Chicago Movie Palaces of Balaban and Katz

David Balaban

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The Balaban and Katz Theater Corporation perfected the "movie palace" concept in Chicago, reating an extremely popular pastime that contributed greatly to Chicago's cultural identity. The Balabans started in the movie theater business in 1908 by leasing the 100-seat Kedzie Nickelodeon on Kedzie Avenue. Balaban brothers Barney and A. J. dreamed of operating 5,000-seat movie palaces, so in 1916, they joined family friends Sam and Morris Katz to form the Balaban and Katz Theater Corporation. Their mission was to offer an unrivaled theater-going experience with the finest live performances and service. They built ornate theaters, such as the Chicago, the Uptown, and the Congress Theaters, filling them with fine furnishings, antiques, and artwork. Balaban and Katz produced live stage shows between the movies with the likes of Bob Hope, Louis Armstrong, and Benny Goodman. Sadly, only a few of these gorgeous theaters still stand today.

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