

HISTORY & FOLKLORE

From the Liberty County Historical
Commmission Walking Tour –

The Park Theater 1816 Sam Houston

In the early 1930s, Arthur Robert Milentz Sr., moved to Liberty from Glidden, Texas, where he had owned and operated a general store. His uncle, Carl Milentz, ran a movie theater in San Antonio and recommended his nephew move to Liberty to capitalize on the oil boom in the South Liberty oilfield. Despite having no experience in the movie business, Arthur Milentz purchased the American Theater, which was located in the current Ager building on Main Street (now the home of JAX). Mr. Milentz built the Park Theater in 1938 and ran both theaters until the American Theater burned down. The

Park seated 400 and included a separate entrance for the balcony section. Running a theater was a complicated business. Films were booked out of Dallas from various companies. The theater was open for business seven days a week, with different films shown on different days. Sunday was especially popular, with matinees starting at 2 p.m. and continuing into the evening. Forty to fifty bikes were usually parked out front beside the outdoor popcorn cart. Mr. Milentz also had theaters in Daisetta and Freeport, again to take advantage of the oil boom and the growth of Dow Chemical.

Arthur Milentz ran The Park until his retirement in 1963. At that time, his son, Bob Milentz (Arthur Robert Milentz Jr.), took over the theater and also operated the Milentz Drive-In, which had been built in 1952 and was located on Main Street near the turn to the current city park. When Bob Milentz retired in about 1975, his son, Ray Milentz continued operating the Park Theatre and the Milentz Drive-in until its sale around 1985. The John W. Cox family purchased and refurbished the old Park Theater in 1993. Renamed The Liberty Opry, it became a live music venue featuring Branson-style musical per-



Sadie and Arthur Milentz

formances including comedy, country, religious, and rock and roll. The first performance was held on June 25, 1993, and closed with the last show in June of 2021. The Opry closed permanently at that time. The Park Theater/Liberty Opry building is now occupied by the Shiloh Church, which offers weekly religious services for the community. ©Liberty County Historical Commission 2026



Above are Laura Ellen Thomason Tippit and Morgan McClelland Tippit at the time of their marriage in 1913.

American Theatre

Matinee Saturday, 2:00 p.m.
Matinee Sunday 2:30 p.m.

Wed.-Thurs., Oct. 21 and 22
Loretta Young and Don Amache in
“RAMONA”

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23
Gene Raymond and Ann Sothern in
“Walking On Air”

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
Charles Starrett and Joan Perry in
‘Mysterious Avenger’

Saturday Night Preview 10:30 O'clock. Sun.-Mon., Oct. 25-26
Will Rogers in
“Ambassador Bill”

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27
Robert Young and Florence Rice in
“SWORN ENEMY”

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From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, Thursday, July 11, 1963 – Celebrating 50 years of marriage this year are two well-known Libertyites, Laura Ellen Thomason Tippit and Morgan McClelland Tippit. He has been known in recent years as Liberty’s Chief of Police till his retirement. The photo above shows them as they looked in 1963.