

Construction Break

Colonial Theater Connected To First Electric String Christmas Lights

Bonnette, Page & Stone is part of the ongoing renovation of the historic Colonial Theater in Laconia, New Hampshire. One of the many things we enjoy about working on historical construction projects are the stories shared with us by those with past connections. Historic structures being given a second chance to be brought into the present can evoke numerous emotions and reactions, and spark memories to be shared. A Lakes Region native shared with us a memory he had of the theater manager who kept a friendly but acute eye on everything taking place there.

Recently we had the pleasure of learning of a fun story, just in time for the holiday season, that involves that same theater manager. Did you know the Colonial Theater has a connection to the invention of the first string of electric Christmas tree lights? It's true! Stories credit the Colonial Theater's Executive Theater Manager Ralph E. Morris with the invention of wired miniature Christmas tree lights in 1911. Mr. Morris served as the Manager of the Colonial Theater from 1933 until 1965.

Prior to his employment with the Colonial Theater, Morris, a Massachusetts resident who relocated to Laconia, worked at the New England Telephone & Telegraph Company. The telephone switchboards at that time utilized small flashlight-sized bulbs to light up the boards and indicate which number was being called. Some stories say the

invention was a result of Ralph's toddler son, Leavitt, nearly setting the family Christmas tree and house on fire after knocking over a lit candle. This was far too common an accident back in those days. Morris was determined to create a safer way to illuminate the tree and parlor area of his home without the use of candles. During the next year, he spent hours soldering the small light bulbs, similar to what was used at the telephone company, to strands of wire. He used pieces of colored crepe paper and formed covers to place over the light bulbs creating colored light. The next Christmas, he surprised his family and friends with a beautiful gift of yellow, orange, and green electric lights decorating the family tree and parlor.

For many years, it was believed by Morris, his friends, and family that he was the inventor of the first Christmas tree lights. However, they were not aware the first iteration was invented in the late 1800s by the vice president of Thomas Edison's electric company, Edward Johnson. Johnson resided in one of the first neighborhoods in New York to be



Photo courtesy of The Laconia Historical and Museum Society

Ralph E. Morris served as The Colonial Theater's Executive Theater Manager from 1933 to 1965.

wired with electricity. One evening, while setting up the family Christmas tree, he hand-wired 80 incandescent electric bulbs covered in red, white, and blue paper on his tree, connected them to a power source—and voila!—the first electrically lit Christmas tree was created.

An estimated 150 million light sets are sold in America each year which light approximately 80 million homes each holiday season (according to a Dec. 15, 2016 blog posted by *HolidayLEDS*). We have come a long way since the days of hanging candles on a tree (thankfully!)

continued on page 4





Grins & Giggles

A police officer was interviewing a bank teller after the bank had been robbed three days in a row. The officer asked, “What did he look like?”

The teller responded, “He looked better every time he came here.”

A man is wandering through the desert with his horse and his dog. After several hours under the heat of the sun, the dog sits down and says: “That’s it. I’m not taking another step until I get some water.”

The man gasps and says: “I didn’t know dogs could talk.”

The horse looks at the man and says, “Me neither.”

A retired man went to the doctor and said, “Doc, I ache all over. Everywhere I touch it hurts.”

The doctor replied, “OK. Touch your elbow.” The guy touched his elbow and winced in genuine pain.

The doctor, surprised, then said, “Touch your head.”

The guy touched his head and jumps in agony. The doctor asked him to touch his knee and the same thing happened. Everywhere the guy touched hurt a lot.

The doctor was stumped and ordered a complete examination with full-body X-rays. He told the man to come back in two days.

Two days later the man came back and the doctor declared, “We’ve found your problem.”

“Oh, yeah? What is it?” asked the retiree.

“You’ve broken your finger.”

The MBA: Is It A Wise Career Investment?

An MBA degree can certainly enhance your skills, but it represents a substantial investment in time and money. Is the sacrifice worthwhile? If you’re contemplating the pursuit of an MBA, consider these factors:

- **Goals.** What do you hope to accomplish with your degree that you can’t do now? Be clear on your expectations before taking the plunge. Are you looking for increased career options, higher pay, or a new academic challenge?
- **Alternatives.** Find out whether you may be able to achieve any of your goals through some other route: training programs, individual college courses, independent reading, etc.
- **Obstacles.** Take an honest look at your career prospects and how an MBA will affect them. If your age has been a barrier to advancement, for example, how will an MBA help you contribute more to an employer?
- **Finances.** Does your employer offer tuition reimbursement or any other kind of financial support for education and professional development? Find out what kinds of loans or other financial assistance may be available to you.
- **Programs.** Not all MBA programs are alike. Do some research to find out which ones meet your specific needs.
- **Advice.** Don’t make a big decision like this without seeking some advice first. Talk to business school officials as well as alumni of the programs you’re considering. Find out as much as possible about how an MBA can change your life and your career.

“Don’t make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can’t take their eyes off you.”

—Maya Angelou

Find Greater Passion At Work And In Life

What can you do to be more productive and passionate about your work and your life? Good question. The answer can be found in asking these questions at the beginning of every day:

- Why is it vital for me to involve myself in my work fully and passionately today?
- How can my attitude affect the way I respond to stressful situations?
- When do I feel most passionate: When I’m working with a customer, solving a problem for a family member, working on a project for myself, or some other time?
- Where can I best put my passion to work? With colleagues? Customers? My family?
- With whom do I need to spend time in order to do my best work?
- How can I effectively align my interests and passion with what I have to do today?
- Who am I called upon to be today to best express my passion for life and work?

What Feeds Your Inspiration?

Where do you find your inspiration? The *Refinery29* website surveyed its readers on where and when they feel most creative. Here’s what they said:

• At night	62%	• Nature sounds	33%
• Daytime	38%	• Salty snacks	52%
• In a coffee shop	35%	• Sweet snacks	48%
• At home	65%	• Running	55%
• Outside	77%	• Yoga	45%
• Inside	23%	• In a group	28%
• Listening to music	56%	• Alone	72%

Create A Spirit Of Innovation On Your Team

Sparking innovation in a team or organization depends on a number of factors. Concentrate on these to get the most from everyone's creativity:

- **Challenge.** Bored people don't come up with great ideas. Look for tough problems to solve or difficult projects to accomplish—as long as they're not too overwhelming.
- **Autonomy.** Allow as much freedom as possible to get things done. People are more creative when they can make their own choices.
- **Recognition.** Make sure to praise good ideas when you hear them. Even if they don't work out, you'll reinforce people's innovative spirit.
- **Debate.** Encourage open discussion. Don't let meetings run too long or turn into arguments, but do make sure everyone feels free to explore ideas honestly.
- **Support.** Team members should help each other develop their ideas. The more support people feel, the more eager they'll be to make suggestions.
- **Collaboration.** Ideas may come from individuals, but they usually require a group effort to bring to life. Establish common goals so everyone feels a stake in coming up with the best ideas and making them work.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



How To Compose Emails That Readers Will Actually Open And Respond To

The ability to ensure that your emails get opened and read is becoming increasingly important in today's communication-heavy business environment. You'll boost responses—and your career—by following these tips from the *Fast Company* website for writing subject lines that get attention and action:

- **Don't ask questions.** Phrasing your subject line as a question reduces the open and reply rate, especially if the reader doesn't know you. Recipients may feel put on the spot if they're already busy, and delete your message or save it for later.
- **Get to the point.** Skip personal greetings like "Hi, Bill" in your subject lines. Again, if people don't know you, attempts at familiarity may turn them off. Use personal material in the body of your email, but use the subject line to describe a benefit up front.
- **Use numbers.** Readers tend to trust hard data, so putting numbers in your subject line will usually catch their attention and increase open and reply rates. Metrics offer credibility that most people will respond to.
- **Use capitals.** No, don't go for ALL CAPS in your subject lines, but capitalize key words: "Increase Your Profits" instead of "Increase your profits." This conveys authority and gives your email a more formal tone that recipients will respond to.

Odd Jobs Of Future Famous Writers

Few great authors spring up overnight. Most work odd jobs while they struggle to create. *The Literacy Site* shares stories of these writers before they became famous:

- **Langston Hughes.** The would-be poet worked as a busboy at a prestigious Washington, D.C. hotel. One day the well-known poet Vachel Lindsay came to lunch, and Hughes worked up enough courage to show her some of his poems. Lindsay was impressed by his talent, which led to him being discovered and going on to lead the Harlem Renaissance.
- **Kurt Vonnegut.** The future author of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and other classics owned the first Saab dealership in the U.S. He went on to serve in the United States Army during the World War II, which had a major impact on his later writing career.
- **J.D. Salinger.** Before breaking onto the literary scene, the author of *The Catcher in the Rye* and other classics worked as entertainment director on a Swedish cruise ship.

Speed Limit

A state police officer parked by the side of the highway spotted a car driving only 22 miles per hour. He started up, turned on his lights, and pulled the car over.

As he approached the car, he saw the driver was an elderly woman with three friends, one next to her in the front seat and two in the back. "What's the matter, officer?" the driver asked. "I wasn't speeding."

"No, ma'am," the officer said, "but you were driving much lower than the speed limit, and that's just as dangerous."

"But the sign back there said 22," the woman said.

The officer chuckled and explained that 22 was the route number, not the speed limit, which was 65. Embarrassed, the woman apologized and thanked the officer.

Then he peered into the car. "Ma'am, are your friends all right? They all seem a bit frightened."

"Oh, they'll be all right in a minute, officer. We just got off Route 119."

New Faces At Bonnette, Page & Stone



Kristin O'Brien

BPS is pleased to welcome Kristin O'Brien, Matt Angell and Tim Buckley to its growing team. Kristin O'Brien joined the company in September as Director of Marketing. In this newly-created role, O'Brien will apply her communication skills, relationship building experience, and community networking connections to help expand BPS as a leader in the construction industry throughout New Hampshire. Kristin brings more than 25 years of sales and marketing experience to her new role. She is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the Whittemore School

of Business. A Lakes Region native, she is actively involved in the New Hampshire community, volunteering for events and organizations.

Matt Angell joined BPS in July as an Estimator. Angell has been involved in the construction industry since 2012. He is a graduate of New Hampshire Technical Institute and holds a degree in Architectural Engineering. In his role, he will apply his knowledge and experience in estimating to gather proposals, blueprints, specifications, and related documents, as well as estimate labor, materials, and time requirements necessary to complete a project.



Matt Angell

continued below



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Tim Buckley

Tim Buckley joined the team in May as the company's Accountant. Buckley brings more than 35 years of accounting and bookkeeping knowledge and experience to the company. He is a graduate of Boston College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics. In his role, he will oversee the company's financial data, manage accounts payable and receivable, and perform daily accounting tasks such as monthly financial reporting.

"We are very excited to add Kristin, Matt, and Tim to our expanding team. These individuals each offer specific talents that will help elevate BPS to the next level. We are excited to see what the future holds for them, for our customers, and for BPS," said Keith McBey, President at Bonnette, Page & Stone. Welcome to the BPS team!

Lights... *continued from page 1*

and are grateful for the out-of-the box thinking of Mr. Edward Johnson and Laconia's own, Ralph E. Morris.

From all of us at Bonnette, Page & Stone, we wish you and yours a joyous holiday season, and a happy and healthy New Year. We hope you enjoyed this story!

For more information about Bonnette, Page & Stone please visit our website www.bpsnh.com and follow us all year long on Facebook at facebook.com/bpsnh.

To our best knowledge, the above is all factual. However, if there is anything incorrect that has been noted, we welcome you to contact us and let us know! Thank you to the variety of sources used to research this information including: Smithsonian Magazine, HolidayLEDS Blog, Warren Huse, and The Laconia Historical and Museum Society.

Considering a project? Give us a call at 603.524.3411 to explore concepts, ideas and feasibility or just stop in and say hello, the coffee is on us...

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