

## Bijou Theatre Photo Questionnaire

- Identify if you have a photograph, a postcard, or an illustration. What about the image reinforces this categorization?
- What do you see in this image? (It may be helpful to direct the students to look at the picture top to bottom and left to right, noticing every detail, or to encourage them to think about a tic-tac-toe grid superimposed on the image and think about each section independently so that they focus on the details rather than the overall impression.)
- What people are in this image? How many men? women? boys? girls? How old are they? What are they wearing? How are they positioned?
- What objects are in this image? Are they old or new? Are they well-cared for? Are they expensive or inexpensive? Handmade, from nature, or store-bought?
- Are there any animals in this image? If so, what do you notice about them?
- When do you think this image was taken? What year? What time of year? How can you tell? (**Teacher note:** the news clippings and the stories about the theater tell when the "tent" theater opened in December 1906, and when a new permanent building was opened in May 1912, so the only thing you know for sure is that it was taken after May 1912)
- What can you tell about the building or objects in this image and their relationship to any people in the image?
- What do you think is the relationship between the people in the image? What makes you think so? Are these people rich, poor, or in the middle? What do you think they do for a living? How can you tell? Are they happy? Do they like each other? What kind of life do you think they have? What details in the image lead you to draw these conclusions?
- What is your overall impression from this image? What is the "mood" of the image? If you didn't know anything else about these people or this place or this object other than what you see here, what would you conclude about them/it?
- What do you think happened right before this image was taken? right after? What would you imagine the rest of the day (before and after) was like, and was it a typical day?
- Why do you think this image was taken? What was the photographer's/artist's objective? What was the photographer/artist trying to convey? If it's a photograph, do you think this was a formal photo or a candid photo? What makes you think that? Do you think the photographer arranged/posed the people and things in this picture? What makes you think the picture was posed or not posed? If so, why do you think the photographer/artist posed them this way?
- What can you tell about life in the early 1900s by what you see in this image? Identify three things.
- What can you ascertain about going to a movie at the Bijou Theatre by looking at this image?
  - How much did a movie cost?
  - Who was their intended audience? Age? Income Level/Class? Gender? Race?
    - **Supplemental teacher background:** *Robert Allen: The Bijou Theatre appears to have admitted African Americans from its opening day. The experience of the Bijou and of downtown Wilmington more generally for African Americans, however, was very different than that for white Wilmingtonians. Following a social practice that had been in place in Wilmington for more than 25 years and would endure until the 1960s, Howard and Wells admitted African Americans only to a separate seating section. Like many other early downtown theaters across the South, the Bijou did not advertise its racial admission policy or refer to it in the newspaper ads. African Americans would have learned of it from direct experience and from that of their neighbors and friends - as a part of the rigidly*

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*segregated spaces that made up the social landscape of Wilmington in 1906-1907. ... The Bijous was the first commercial entertainment venue in Wilmington to admit African Americans to all performances.*

- Allen, Robert C. "Going to the Show." Documenting the American South. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2009. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/>.

Wilmington Morning Star (5/31/1912): Bijou Opened Last Night: reports the new theater included a balcony that could seat 200 colored people (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/content/2658>)

Supplements overview of segregation introduced in textbook: *A Journey Through North Carolina*, pp 282-287.

- What movies are being shown? (**Teacher note:** You can't tell from the photo, but the news clippings and advertisements provide additional information. This starts prompting students to think about how multiple sources can be used together.)
- How frequently are movies shown? (**Teacher Note:** You can't tell from the photo, but the news clippings provide additional information.)
- How long did a movie last? What did you get for your admission? (**Teacher Note:** You can't tell from the photo, but the news clippings and advertisements may provide additional information.)

**Supplemental teacher background:** Robert Allen: *Projectors were hand cranked, and the projectionist could speed up or slow down the action on the screen by "over-cranking" or "under-cranking." Percy Wells was the Bijou's first projectionist in its early days, and according to one recollection, was also a "spieler," providing a running narration and commentary for the brief one-reel (10 minutes or so) silent films he presented.]*

- How frequently do you think someone went to a movie?
- What construction material was the movie theater building made of? How would this affect the movie attending experience? (**Teacher note:** Teachers may want to remind students that the previous rendition of this building was a canvas tent with a sawdust floor.)
- Can you tell anything about the interior of the movie theater building? How was it outfitted? (**Teacher Note:** can't tell from the photo, but the news clippings may provide additional information)
- Do you have any thoughts / impressions regarding the purpose of the multiple doorways? (**Teacher note:** There could be a variety of reasons ranging from one door was an entrance and the other was an exit, or there may have been separate entrances for whites and African Americans).
- Where do you think this movie theater is located (e.g., in a city center, in the country, outside the city center)? (**Teacher's Note:** You can't tell from the photo, but you can tell from the Sanborn maps - not really part of this lesson, but as the teacher you might want to open up the Sanborn map and show them the location in the city. Also, this reinforces the use of multiple sources to draw a bigger picture.)

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- **Supplemental resource/teacher demonstration:** Bring up the Sanborn map for Wilmington for 1915 overlay year, zoom in on N. Front Street near the Bijou Theatre "ticket" icon. N. Front Street between Grace/Mulberry (on north) and Dock (on the south) was the center of the Wilmington business district. For a quick illustration/demonstration of the utility of the Sanborn maps, switch to the 1910 overlay year, and note the yellow image and the annotation: "Built of canvas and wood, sawdust floor"