

BY PAUL DORPAT

Times Square Classic

THIS WEEK'S CLASSIC OF Times Square is almost a potboiler. Well-copied and well-studied, even the moment of the photographer Asahel Curtis' recording is known: Oct. 11, 1927, and, judging by the long shadows, sometime around closing time.

It doesn't require an honoree of the American Institute of Architects to figure out what is so appealing about this image. Start with its centerpiece, the Orpheum Theater. Most likely Curtis was preoccupied with this palace, which opened in 1927. As the multistoried sign on the roof proclaims, the Orpheum offered both vaudeville and films. But with the introduction of "talkies" that year, the future of stage acts here and at other venues was bleak. Reading the marquee, "Varness, the IT girl of Vaudeville" and "Beatrice Joy in Dances on Broadway" may never have returned here.

Two of Seattle's terra-cotta landmarks enter from the sides: the Times Square Building on the left and the lower stories of the Medical-Dental Building on the right. The former was home for The Times from 1916 to 1931; the latter, built in 1925, is still the professional home of many physicians. (Far right is a sliver of the Frederick & Nelson Building, built in 1918.)

It is the diagonal of Westlake Avenue that creates these opportunities for landmarks to greet each other across intersections made interesting by their irregularity. First proposed as early as the mid-1870s, Westlake was finally cut through in 1906. Here at Times Square the city's layout was made doubly engaging by its shift at Stewart Street. ©

Paul Dorpat's two-hour videotape on Seattle's early history, "Seattle Chronicle," is \$29.95 from Tartu Publications, P.O. Box 85208, Seattle, WA 98145.



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Photographer Asahel Curtis took this view of Times Square in 1927 soon after the opening of the Orpheum Theater.



PAUL DORPAT

The contemporary view, photographed at Fifth Avenue and Pine Street one block south of the historical view, features as its centerpiece the Westin Towers at the site of the old Orpheum Theater. On the left is the Monorail, which with the construction of the Westlake Mall was routed to Fifth from its old terminus on Westlake. Frederick & Nelson is on the right.