UNION HOTEL
ROYAL THEATRE

Constructed: 1891-92
Address 121 East State
Present owner: Todd Braithwaite

The construction of the Lehi Sugar Factory in 1890-91 resulted in far-reaching economic benefits for the entire Intermountain West. Locally, more than a score of new businesses sprang into existence. And more than a half-dozen new commercial buildings were erected. One of the most glamorous was the Union Hotel on State Street. Thomas R.Cutler, Ira D. Wines and William E.Racker purchased the property from Mons Anderson in 1890. The 14 August 1891 "Lehi Banner" advertised for construction bids on the building, which was designed by Clements and Company of Salt Lake City.

The two-story building with basement, had stone steps and a handrail leading upwards into the lavish lobby. The fifteen sleeping rooms on the second floor were mostly occupied by traveling men heading south to other towns or railroad men staying over after their run. the kitchen and dining room area, to the rear of the lobby, prepared and served hearty meals.

The Union Hotel was more than a hostelry. Many social functions, including weddings, missionary reunions, and professional functions, were held in the dining room. After guests had eaten, the party could adjourn to the Lehi Commercial and Savings Bank Building, one block east, where a large ballroom was available for dancing.

Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company's central switchboard, operated by Birdie Stoddart, was in a portion of the building from 1892 to 1906. T.J. Wadsworth leased the Union Drug Store on the premises from 1892-97, in the former clothing room of the People's Co-op.

A.H. Gattis, representing Western Grocery Company of Kansas City and Denver, had a wholesale grocery business in this west room after Wadsworth

vacated the premises. A barbershop, operated by Sam Peterson, and a billiard room were in this location in later years.

Robert Stoddart and his wife, Ada, were the managers until the Union Hotel closed in November 1905. In August of 1908, Ira D. Wines bought Thomas R. Cutler, W.E. Racker, George Austin, and John Y. Smith's financial interests in the closed hotel. When the renovated building opened during the week of September 17th, it offered steam heat, electric lights, hot and cold water, sanitary ventilation, baths, and toilets. The large sample room which had formerly been the grocery store, was converted into a parlor, and the former bar area was remodeled into small sample rooms. A porch was also added to the front of the building, where guests could sit in the evening and watch State Street happenings.

Wines sold the Union Hotel to the People's Co-op in August of 1912. In 1914, the Co-op remodeled the building into the Royal theatre. The forty-by-eighty-seven-foot historic building was completely gutted and renovated to accommodate seven hundred seats--including 286 in the balcony. Though management's primary intent as to create a movie house, a large stage and orchestra pit (built of one hundred thousand bricks) was constructed on the north end of the structure.

This stage, designed to accommodate the scenery sets of the largest traveling troups, was fifty-five feet wide, thirty-one feet deep, and forty feet high.

Movies were not the only event at the Royal. Many high school plays, political rallies and vaudeville troups were held there. Wrestling and boxing matches--often promoted by the Lehi Fire Department--stirred betting men to a frenzy in the Royal.

In the summer of 1928 F.M. Houston purchased the Royal and National theatres from the People's Co-op. After a few months, John H. Miller purchased Houston's interest. He and his son Cliff continuously operated the Royal (except for a brief time during the Depression), until the senior Miller's death in 1950. The younger man continued to operate the theater until his retirement in 1976.

The Union Hotel/Royal Theatre building was then purchased by All Star Brake Distributors and until recently was used for a warehouse.