



grand reopening in February 1938, testimony to the popularity of the Shadowland.

The Spadaro family name remained synonymous with “*Shadowland*” for just over 50 years, with all family members working in the theatre in one capacity or another until they closed the business in 1974. Ed and Marlene Jacobs of Greenfield Park purchased the building in 1980 and operated it as a movie theater until 1984. They sold it to *Cooperative Artists, Inc.*, a group of New York City professional artists. Under the direction of Ron Marquette, *Cooperative Artists* converted *Shadowland* into a playhouse, a “legitimate theater.” Although Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs later signed the building over to the theater company, forgiving a \$70,000 mortgage, the company was unable to survive financially.

A new nonprofit group was formed in 1987 with a community Board of Directors, continuing Marquette as Artistic Director. Marquette left at the end of the 1994 season to take on similar duties at the *Ulster Performing Arts Center* in Kingston and was succeeded by Bill Lebach until July 2000. The current Producing Artistic Director is William V. Morris.

Shadowland is now known throughout the area for its quality upscale theater productions. Each artistic director has left his own unique mark on the development of legitimate theater in the Ellenville-Wawarsing area. Finances are shaky at times, but the community believes in the theater’s value to the area. A combination of grants, corporate support, auctions, loans, innovative ticket packaging, and performance sponsorship, paired with community pride, has kept alive what the November 25, 1920, *Ellenville Press* called “the most popular place of entertainment ever conducted in this village.” And so it is in 2003.



(By the way, the spelling of “theatre/theater” in this article follows the practice of the times. *Shadowland* at its birth was a theatre (and, as a name, still is); after about the middle of the twentieth century, popular use chose theater more frequently. Either is correct, although theater has become the preferred generic spelling in the US, while theatre is still favored in Britain.)

For more information about the *Shadowland Theatre*, visit the local history collection of the **Ellenville Public Library & Museum, 40 Center St.**, which has a wealth of newspaper clippings, programs, and pictures. Just for fun, borrow the video copy of *Ellenville on Parade*, the late 1930s promotional film of Ellenville people and businesses created to be shown at the *Shadowland* and preserved through a New York State Council for the Arts grant awarded to the Library. For still more fun, make sure that summer 2003 includes attending at least one performance at the *Shadowland*. 



Editor’s Note: All photos and artifacts courtesy the Ellenville Public Library & Museum’s extensive collection, which also furnished articles and artifacts Mrs. Dumond used in her research.

Unfortunately, many of these photos had no dates on them. Using digital enhancement, after they were scanned into the computer, it was possible to blow up the images enough to pull partial clues from the movie posters in two of the above pictures! The Internet Movie Database (and sleuthing) filled in the missing pieces of the puzzle. (Opposite page, bottom) The McMullen Building, approx. 100 years ago, based on the clothing and the building details.

(Opposite page, top) A program from August 1923, though the movie had a Sept. 1922 release date. Did it take that long to reach here? (Top left) The poster for “Virtuous Liars” (released May 1924) suggests a 1924 or 1925 date for the photo.

(Lower left) This one was easy! A release date of July 1936 for the film suggests this photo was taken before the Nov. 1937 fire.

(Above) Thirty minutes of staring and the name Melvyn Douglas jumped out! The word lengths matched “I’ll Take Romance” in Douglas’s filmography; and co-star Grace Moore matched the other fuzzy name! The film was released just after the November 1937 fire, which suggests a 1938 showing after the Grand Reopening!

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