

Mesa Theater Demolition Reaching Stages



THE FIRST FEW swings were taken at the Mesa Theater building, Crenshaw Boulevard and Slauson Avenue, Friday as workmen began the demolition of the structure which has been a landmark since 1926. The theater has welcomed more than a quarter of million moviegoers since its opening. A new shopping complex built around a service station will be started in about two months following the clearing of the land.

Mesa Theater Demolition Closes Era in Crenshaw

The final curtain is slowly descending on the Mesa Theater building as workmen are currently demolishing the structure which has stood as a landmark at Crenshaw Boulevard and Slauson Avenue since 1926. The building, constructed in the days of the "flivver" and Model T, is giving way to a modern, ranch-style, three-bay service station.

A spokesman from Shell Oil Company, land owner and developer, reported Friday that a small commercial complex composed of a "few" businesses will also occupy the land.

"Our real estate department is currently negotiating for additional businesses in the center," he said. "The corner will be dominated by our service station designed after the draw-

ings that won a special commendation from Los Angeles Beautiful last year."

The theater once stood as a southern Los Angeles outpost and carried on its sentry duties as the city grew out to and past it.

Its "heyday" came during the vaudeville years when famous vaudevillian performers sang, laughed and bounded across its stage. Vaudeville died, the "flicks" and their pianos gave way to the sounds of "The Great Train Robbery" and the Mesa's walls echoed with the sounds of war, Indians, music and, of late, youthful screams.

The boom years never returned to the Mesa as during the late 1950's the theater began running in the red. Newer movie

houses and problems with juvenile delinquency were blamed for the demise of theater which hosted more than a quarter of a million persons in its 37-year history.

Finally in September, 1963, Fox West Coast Theaters closed the doors on the theater. An era in moving-going and in Crenshaw's history had come to a close.

Then seven months later, in April, 1964, the Mesa Theater hosted its final attraction — a fire gutted the interior of the 100 x 300 foot structure.

Today, the walls are falling and with them go an historical chapter of movies and Crenshaw. It won't be too long before the query will be, "Wasn't there a theater once.?"