

JC couple refurbish theater

BELLEFONTAINE — A Jackson Center couple have started on refurbishing a Bellefontaine theater from a multi-cinema back to a single theater house and they hope to eventually have it declared a historical landmark.

Rodney and Becky Miller, who own the Elder Theatre in Jackson Center, as well as cinemas in Ada and Kenton, are attempting to renovate the Holland Theatre and return it to the days when plays and movies helped open the single stage in 1931.

The couple would like to create a unique attraction by having both an historical landmark that will be the site for stage and film productions.

Bought in 1994

The Millers purchased the 65-year old theater in November 1994 for \$125,000. The restoration project, which could take many years to complete, is being financed through several fund raisers. Miller said he may raise funds through film series and the sale of limited edition drawings of the Holland Theater.

Having discussed the project with the Logan County Historical Society, Miller may attempt to have the building declared an historical land-

mark. If approved, he could apply for grants to help defray the cost of renovation. He intends to consult with the state historical society concerning the project.

If the building becomes a historical landmark, Miller would have to follow preservation and restoration guidelines.

Currently, the theater has five separate cinemas. The Millers have made plans to remove four smaller cinemas to develop a single theater with 1,100 seats. Miller is trying to recapture the same spirit he felt when he first visited the Holland Theater. During a luncheon hosted by the Millers, he said the Ohio Theatre in Columbus provided inspiration for the restoration project. The Ohio Theatre took more than 10 years to be restored and has since become favorite attraction.

Dutch houses

The original design of the auditorium was designed to make the visitor feel as though walking down a street in Holland. Along the walls on either side of the rows of seats are facades of Dutch houses and windmills with blades which can turn.

There are lantern lights along the buildings and light in the windows. There are even tulips in the window boxes. One unique feature is a machine can create the effect of clouds just below the building. Another machine created a starlight effect on the ceiling.

Miller hopes to fix both systems in the near future.

The Millers have already renovated the Elder Theatre and the Kenton Showplace Theatre.