



Peart, S. (1980). *The Picture House in East Anglia*. Lavenham Press Limited.

*Pages 22-23:*

*The pinnacle in the lives of many Norwich children was a weekly visit to the Victoria Hall in St Stephen's Street. On the trek up the street to Hunt's Yard, where the building used to stand, an added delight in going to the pictures was to buy cod roes from the fishmongers at the corner of Westlegate.*

*At the Victoria Hall, run by the London Picture Palace Company, two pence would buy a bare wooden seat, it was the immortal "flea-pit". There was condensation running down the distempered walls and the whole place smelt strongly of sweat, orange peel and urine. But the children loved it, especially as they received a packet of sweets on entering. Some of the more fortunate young patrons were able to supplement the cost of admission by obtaining unwanted complimentary tickets from shop-keepers in the neighbourhood who displayed the cinema's bill of fare. With one penny and a complimentary ticket a child could gain admission.*

*The Victoria Hall could seat four hundred but claims of six hundred being squeezed in are often recalled. The seating was mainly of long wooden benches and an attendant would come along with a long handled broom to push the children along the benches to make room for more on the end.*

*The projector clattered at the rear of the hall separated from the audience by a sheet of corrugated iron with an aperture to permit the beam of light to pass to the screen. The hero of the show was "Curly", the pianist, who accompanied the pictures and often attracted more attention than the artistes on the screen. Having entered the hall just before the commencement of the show he would graciously take up his position at the piano: light two candles adorning the instrument and proceed to play his signature tune, "Ching, Ching Chinaman". Sometimes he was able to finish before some bright youngster, a sure shot with a piece of cloth, would extinguish a candle. Curly continued to be a target for bits of orange peel if the film broke or was occasionally shown upside down. Generally he took it all in good humour and sometimes vented his feelings on the keyboard.*