

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 13 1978

DATE ENTERED

JAN 29 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The Indiana Theatre

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

134 West Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

VICINITY OF

11th

STATE

Indiana

CODE

018

COUNTY

Marion

CODE

097

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple (See continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City County Building

STREET & NUMBER

200 East Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE

Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1970

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

DESCRIPTION: EXTERIOR, General The Indiana Theatre is a six-story concrete framed structure, with side and back walls of unadorned red brick and facade of white glazed terra cotta. The facade is divided into three structural bays, with relatively plain outer bays flanking an effusively decorated central bay. The high relief ornament in the central bay reflects Spanish Baroque architecture made popular by the Panama-California Exposition of 1916.

First Floor Level: below a projecting marquee, the three structural bays appear as wide rectangular openings separated by terra cotta sheathed piers. In the left bay the Theatre entrance contains a central semi-octagonal ticket booth of windows framed in wood over a dado of decorative tile; the central bay contains a shop; and the right bay contains a smaller shop and the lobby-entrance to the sixth-floor Indiana Roof Ballroom.

Marquee: The marquee is of low profile and extends the entire width of the facade. Like the facade, it is divided into three bays defined by rectangular panels framed with Ionic capitals and supporting scrolled pediments with projecting volutes. (Photo 1)

Central Bay, Main Facade: The main portion of the facade begins at the level of the marquee. Simple side bays, identical in design, flank the central bay which is encrusted with ornament in the Churrigueresque manner of Spanish Baroque architecture. The three-story central arch is made up of convex and ogee segments, terminating in a concave arch. The top of the central arch is defined by an architrave which follows its complex curves; at its top is a diamond-shaped portrait medallion of Christopher Columbus. (Photo 3 & 4) The architrave is supported by a pair of identical three-story columns which flank the window opening. Another pair of columns frames each outer edge of the central bay. (Photo 3) All columns terminate in elongated Corinthian capitals. Tall, narrow panels between the paired columns contain three levels of small windows, with different decorative motifs at each level: second floor, conventionalized floral ornament; third floor, portrait medallions; fourth floor, windows treated as niches with semi-round corbeled shelves below and ornamental conchas above. Above the fourth story windows is an entablature borne by the columns, (Photo 3). The entablature frieze contains foliate ornament surrounding a central shield. The cornice terminates in a volute at its inner end, with a projecting volute at its center. Above this is a wide, double frieze, through which column lines continue as decorative supports. The lower frieze is filled with foliate and floral ornament; the upper frieze is treated as a miniature arcade, with round-headed arches supported by spiral colonettes. Each arch contains a cartouche and shell top. (Photo 4) The cornice above this point is broken forward over each of the four columns, and at its center forms the lip of a projecting corbeled shelf. Above this level the "frontispiece" narrows to the width of the central arch and contains a central niche framed by a compound-curved architrave. (Photo 5) The niche, semi-circular in plan, is topped with an ornamental concha; to either side is a round portrait medallion on an ornamental field depicting, to the left, King Ferdinand of Spain, and to the right, Queen Isabella. Above these is another entablature which is visually connected to the molding defining the top edge of the two side bays. The entablature contains an ornamental frieze with royal griffins and swans, topped by four flaming light standards and foliate cresting, with a shield and urn of pomegranates resting on a bulls head atop the very center.

Side Bays, Front Facade: The outer bays of the facade are identical to one another and are starkly simple in contrast to the central bay. Three vertical rows of windows are set into tall slots slightly recessed behind the flat wall plane. An ornamental concha tops each window slot. A raised molding connects with the wide double frieze

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The current legal owners of record are:

Greater Indianapolis Amusement, Inc. ✓
 c/o Fourth Avenue Corporation
 Suite 356, Lincoln Federal Building
 Louisville, Kentucky 40202

National Bank of Greenwood ✓
 300 S. Madison
 Greenwood, Indiana 46142

Bertha S. Favre ✓
 300 S. Madison
 Greenwood, Indiana 46142

Gertrude Rauch ✓
 c/o John G. Rauch
 20 North Meridian
 Indianapolis, Indiana

Donald Alan Rothbaum ✓
 1638 Brewster Road
 Indianapolis, Indiana

Handwritten notes:
 City of Indianapolis
 Dept. of Public Works
 12/12/78

Acquisition by the City of Indianapolis is currently under consideration.

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7. DESCRIPTION, CONT.

of the "frontispiece" of the central bay and terminates the window slots on either side. (Photo 3) Over each central row of windows is a raised panel framed by scrolls and rope moldings; the left ornament is in the form of a shield; and the right, a sundial with bronze gnomon and numerals. Flanking these, above each of the side rows of window openings, is a tall, plain, semi-circular niche with a projecting cap. The molding terminating the parapet supports a series of four urn-based flame carvings with a larger urn-based flame carving at each outer corner of the building.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Basement is of exposed concrete construction, with numerous square columns supporting the ceiling joists. Originally bowling and billiards were offered in this space but were discontinued in 1958. First Floor: across the front of the building are the Theatre entrance lobby, two shops, and the elevator and stair lobby for the sixth-floor Ballroom. Spanning the full width of the structure to the rear are the main lobby of the Theatre and behind it the auditorium and stage. Second Floor: the front of the building holds the men's lounge, women's lounge and a check room, originally the "Castillian Cosmetic Room." These lounge spaces open into a mezzanine ambulatory which surrounds the main lobby. At the other side the ambulatory opens into the lower level of the Theatre balcony. Third Floor: The front of the building occupy the rear. Fourth and Fifth Floors: at the front of the building these floors contain a pair of check rooms which service the Ballroom above. They run almost the full width of the building, having at the east end an elevator lobby, and at the west end the main stairway. Sixth Floor: Space above the check rooms is occupied by the lobby of the Indiana Roof Ballroom, reached by the stairs at the west end. Since elevators do not run above the fifth floor, this corresponding area on the sixth floor is used as the Women's Lounge. The remainder of the floor extending over the auditorium and stage of the Theatre is occupied by the Ballroom itself, with small orchestral stage directly over the Theatre stage. Dressing rooms are found behind the orchestra stage. The dance floor is surrounded by a promenade; a large serving kitchen is located in the northeast corner. The ballroom is surrounded by an oval balcony.

DECORATIVE TREATMENT OF INTERIOR SPACES

Entrance Lobby: floor is travertine marble with side walls of polished travertine, composed of three shallow blind arches framing bronze display panels. Front and rear walls each contain four pairs of double doors. The ceiling, the most elaborate in the building, is made of molded plaster forming interlocking banding octagonal coffering and pendants. All is polychromed in red, green, blue and gold. Two ceiling beams are supported at either end by owl and griffin-decorated corbels.

Main Lobby, Grand Stairs and Mezzanine Promenade: The Main Lobby, a long rectangular space extending the full width of the building, is entered near one end from the Entrance Lobby. The room, 2½ stories high, is surrounded at the second floor level by a Mezzanine Promenade which looks into the Main Lobby through an arcade of window-like openings. The walls from floor to mezzanine dado level are of finely laid and polished travertine ashlar. Above this point, they are of heavily textured plaster, painted antique gold. The entablature at the top of the wall consists of an ornamented

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Decorative Treatment of Interior Spaces, Cont.

frieze broken by polychromed shields at the bearing points of six transverse ceiling beams and a boldly projecting cornice edged in egg-and-dart molding. The ceiling is a tri-planar vault with plaster decoration effectively imitating antique wood construction. (Photo 6) It is divided into seven bays by double transverse beams; six bays are subdivided into seven panels, ornamented with polychromed patterns in red, green and yellow on a dark brown ground. Projecting from the cornice at the base of each transverse beam is a corbeled grotesque head. In the center bay, the paneled treatment is replaced by elaborate coffering.

The lower story of the west lobby wall is recessed, and the Mezzanine Promenade is carried across that end of the room on a low, wide segmental arch with corbeled brackets at each end. In the center of the recessed wall portion is a two-tiered fountain of green Rookwood tile in a basin of multi-colored tile, the whole set within a mirrored niche and framed by a Moorish arch. (Photo 7)

At the main lobby's east end is the Grand Stairway. This freestanding stairway rises double width to the landing where it divides and continues to the north and south, connecting with the Mezzanine. (Photo 6) The steps are of black terrazzo, now carpeted, and the railings are low, solid walls of travertine, unornamented on their inner faces but decorated to resemble stone steps on outer face. Newel figures of gilded plaster represent grotesque breasted animals. On the landing wall is a large painting of the Taj Mahal by the noted Indiana artist, Randolph LaSalle Coats, set within an elaborate frame in the Spanish manner, with floral ornament, portrait heads and spiral engaged columns supporting a broken cornice with central niche, finials and scrolls.

As in the ceiling the long side walls of the lobby are divided into seven bays, the central bay being the most highly decorated. On the auditorium side a central Mezzanine opening has a decorative arch with a frame of twisted columns and floral ornament. A shell-shaped overarch which rises to break above the cornice of the room (left side, Photo 6) is richly ornamented with heavy molding and finials. At the lower level beneath this central opening, there is a window containing decorative wrought-iron screen set over a multi-colored tile dado which looks into the auditorium. The central bay on the street side contains at the first story level a leaded mirror in an arched frame above a tile dado. The Mezzanine opening is rectangular, framed in carved stone, at either end are four twisted colonettes supporting a lintel on which is inscribed "Indiana" between two shields. A railing supported by two pairs of elongated brackets bears a pair of portrait heads in high relief.

At the extreme western end of the street-side wall are the four pairs of double doors to the Entrance Lobby. Each pair of doors is set beneath a compound-curved arch supported by a single twisted colonettes, each topped by a projecting plaster sculpture of a female kangaroo with a baby kangaroo in her pouch. The imported Spanish decorative tile used in the Lobby is notable as are the several Majolica urns in wrought iron holders that are placed throughout the space.

The tunnel-like Mezzanine Promenade which overlooks the Lobby through a series of colonnaded opening on three sides passes behind a solid wall rising from the stairway landing. The ceiling of the Promenade is an elliptical barrel vault which meets the

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Interior Decorative Treatment, Cont.

walls, without a break, (Photo 8) The whole is painted a dull gold. Along the street-side wall of the Mezzanine Promenade are three arched openings: to the Men's and Women's Lounges and to the Check Room. On the west end the Mezzanine Promenade contains a flat ceiling and opens into the Lobby space through a double row of spiral columns. (Photo 9)

Auditorium, Proscenium, Organ Screens, Balcony and Curtain. The Auditorium of the Indiana Theatre is roughly square in plan with straight, parallel side and rear walls. The front corners of the square contain exit halls, stairs and organ pipe chambers; the walls of these spaces project at an angle from the proscenium wall. There is a single balcony of very large seating capacity extending over the rear of the Auditorium and above the Main Lobby. Over most of the Auditorium the ceiling is flat and level, an unusual feature made necessary by the location of the Ballroom above. At the rear portion of the balcony, the ceiling vaults higher to allow for the topmost rows of seating.

Auditorium decoration follows Spanish Churrigueresque motifs established on the facade. The Proscenium enframingent, virtually filling the front wall of the auditorium, is the most elaborate ornamental treatment in the building. The opening is spanned by a wide compound-curved arch above the apex of which is a small projecting ornamental shelf upheld by a monkey-faced grotesque figure. The shelf in turn supports a tall spiral finial which stands before a semi-circular traceried screen topped by a row of shields, scrolls, finials, cornucopias, griffins and a portrait bust. (Photo 10, 11, 12). Decorative treatment continues in a similar fashion entirely across the wall with tall finials, cresting, portrait medallions, full-length human figures and heraldic crests. At the center, this decoration extends all the way to the ceiling where it is silhouetted by concealed lighting. Behind it the wall is decorated with molded polychromed plaster in geometrical patterns. The sides of the Proscenium arch frame three tiers of portrait statues, three-quarters life size, forming two vertical rows on either side. (Photo 12) The figures are set in front of screens on elaborate corbeled bases and are separated by pilasters. Figures depict Spanish knights, grandees and nobles. Removal of the "Cinerama" screen has once again brought these figures into view.

The theatre originally had a bold multi-colored house curtain, probably of painted velvet, which was a powerful contrast to the delicate Spanish Churrigueresque spires of the Proscenium. Having three design panels, the curtain depicted emblems of the King of Spain, Aragon and Castille, with a central panel depicting a frontier scene of Indiana's early settlement.

The side walls of the Auditorium are scored and painted in imitation of travertine ashlar below a cornice line set approximately three-quarters the height of the wall (Photo 11). An elaborate entablature is topped with a cresting of finials and foliate scrolls. Above, the polychromed diaper pattern of the Proscenium wall is continued. Large round-headed arches on either side conceal organ pipes flanked by engaged columns terminating in octagonal Corinthian capitals. A foliate molding on the wall decorates its line of junction with these columns (Photo 13). Above the entablature over the arch is a high ornamental parapet with three knightly statues

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Interior Decorative Treatment, Cont.

in screened arches separated by ornamental pilasters. At the top of this composition is a portrait medallion enframed with shields, flowers and topped with a finial flambeau. Within the large round-headed arches which conceal organ pipes are grilles of slim spiral balusters surrounded with banded ornamentation. An ornate floral-scrolled frieze is topped by a crested cornice and festooned central cartouche; below is a wider frieze containing four portrait medallions. The tympanum is an elaborate openwork screen. The spandrels above the arch are filled with foliate ornament surrounding a portrait medallion. In front of each Organ Screen is a large urn of open scrollwork set on a high semi-octagonal pedestal; the urn is lighted from within. Each large urn is supported by four "feet" which are sculpted life-size dachshunds. (Photo 14) The pedestal for the urn extends the full width of the organ screen and is composed of plain cornice and base with dado filled with decoration. This elaborate texturing of foliate ornament is repeated across the front of the balcony railing (Photo 11) where to it are applied a series of cartouches alternating with 33 round openings for stage flood lights.

The Auditorium side walls above the balcony are of heavily textured plaster painted dull gold and set with architectural elements: niches, windows, etc., some purely decorative and some functioning as ventilating grilles. The rear wall is also of heavily textured plaster and is broken forward at its center for a projection booth. The side walls below the balcony are treated as five-bay arcades of low compound-curved arches supported by square piers.

The ceiling of the Auditorium is of heavily textured plaster painted antique gold. Diagonal rows of openwork plaster, some flat and some 3-dimensional and basket-like contain ventilating grilles and lighting fixtures. (Photo 10) Between these grilles running transversely to the auditorium, is a series of narrow serpentine bands of foliate ornamentation creating a wave-like pattern. Below the balcony the ceiling is divided into several panels by a pattern of beams. Most of the seating has been removed from under the balcony to make way for a free-standing projection booth used for "Cinerama" projection.

Indiana Theatre Roof Ballroom, Decorative Treatment. The Indiana Theatre Roof Ballroom is entered independently from the Theatre at the east end of the building. A small entrance lobby on the first floor has walls of polished travertine holding several bronze display boards. The ceiling is similar in treatment to that in the Theatre's outer lobby. Two elevators connect to the Ballroom as does a stairway ornamented at lobby level with a newel figure in the form of a monkey. Entry to the Ballroom is made through checkroom on the fourth and fifth floors, the highest levels serviced by elevators. From the west end of the checkroom a stairway with marble treads and multi-colored ornamental tile risers leads to the sixth floor Ballroom Lobby. The major ornamental feature of the Ballroom Lobby is a large, shallow niche ornamented in Churrigueresque fashion with a shell top, portrait medallions, scrolls, shields and polychromy. This is located at the center of the south wall, opposite the entrance to the dance floor. To the west of the Lobby entrance is the Men's Lounge; to the east, the Women's Lounge, opposite the stairway.

The walls of the ballroom resemble the exterior walls of buildings surrounding a square. The room is entered through a series of four wide arches with compound-curved tops.

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Indiana Theatre Roof Ballroom, Decorative Treatment con't.

Opposite the entrance at the north end, is the orchestra stage. The wood of the dance floor is laid out in concentric elliptical patterns so that dancers will not move cross-grain as they circle the dance floor. The Ballroom space is a wide two-story oval surrounded on the lower level by an arcaded promenade paved with flagstones one step up from the dance floor. The orchestra stage is flanked by two towers, one round and one square, with small windows at the first story and arched openings to small balconies at the second level. (Photo 15) Between the two towers over the stage, is a proscenium opening with a small projecting tile roof; an extended stage semi-circular canopy has been added to match the proportion of the extended stage. From the canopy hangs a draped "silk" curtain.

The perimeter of the Ballroom at first story is an arcade of textured plaster piers supporting segmental and round-headed arch forms; the piers have imitation wood lintels with small window openings. Above is a balcony deck surrounded by a simple iron railing. At the rear of the deck against outer walls of the room, the treatment is that of an upper story building facade with simple window and door openings and the overhang of an imitation tile roof. Four pavilions enclose the deck with tile roofs or parapet walls. Altogether the arrangement seems less a room and more a movie set for a Spanish courtyard. As a final touch the ceiling, a low elliptical dome, is painted a deep blue and studded with tiny electric "stars". Originally, four effect projectors created "clouds" which moved across that romantic midnight "sky". The decorative treatment was suggested by a dance tune, "In a Little Spanish Town", made popular by Paul Whitemen during a European tour in 1926.

Aside from the main entertainment provided by the Ballroom and Theatre, the Indiana Theatre contained a lucheonette, soda fountain, candy shop, tobacco shop and barber shop. The soda fountain, since removed, featured multi-colored Spanish tile counters and red leather wainscoting which, combined with black leather-upholstered chairs, carried the theme of a Spanish town. Both the sweet shop and soda fountain were located on the Ballroom level.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | |
|--------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--|
| —PREHISTORIC | —ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | —COMMUNITY PLANNING | —LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | —RELIGION | |
| —1400-1499 | —ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | —CONSERVATION | —LAW | —SCIENCE | |
| —1500-1599 | —AGRICULTURE | —ECONOMICS | —LITERATURE | —SCULPTURE | |
| —1600-1699 | X ARCHITECTURE | —EDUCATION | —MILITARY | —SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | |
| —1700-1799 | X ART | —ENGINEERING | —MUSIC | X THEATER | |
| X —1800-1899 | —COMMERCE | —EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | —PHILOSOPHY | —TRANSPORTATION | |
| —1900- | —COMMUNICATIONS | —INDUSTRY | —POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | —OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | —INVENTION | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES **1927** BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Rubush & Hunter**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the mid-1920's the Circle Theatre Company, made up of prominent Indianapolis business-men and affiliated with national motion picture chains, decided to build a movie palace to supplement the small Circle Theatre located on Indianapolis' Monument Circle. Among the directors of the Company were architects Preston C. Rubush and Edgar O. Hunter; their firm (Rubush and Hunter) had designed the Circle Theatre in 1916, and the Company decided to use their talents again in this venture. Rubush and Hunter were prolific architects, with numerous Indianapolis commissions. Rubush and Hunter chose the William P. Jungclaus Company, Inc., an Indianapolis firm still in business today, as general contractor for the Indiana Theatre project. This firm was noted in the 1920's for hiring only Indiana labor, and received high praise for its technical skill, attention to detail and craftsmanship in carrying out Rubush and Hunter's elaborate plans for the building. The firm's choice of subcontractors played a significant role in achieving the final product. Among them was the F.E. Gates Marble and Tile Company, which supplied travertine marble and terra cotta. Gates is an important figure in the development of the terra cotta industry in the Midwest; his American Terra Cotta Company of Terra Cotta, Illinois, frequently supplied architect Louis H. Sullivan with intricately modeled ceramic ornament. Gates' company in Indianapolis utilized architectural sculptor Alexander Sangernebo's designs for facade ornament. Another subcontractor of importance in the Theatre project was William Herman & Sons, and Associates. This firm prepared all interior plaster work including friezes, figures and ceiling panels as well as custom wood work and furniture. Working in a studio converted from an old Schoolhouse on Indianapolis' south side, most of the decoration was designed by a German, Joseph Wollenborg, whose initials, "J.W.", appear sporadically throughout the interior. Wollenborg's designs included that of the proscenium arch, organ grilles and Indiana Roof Ballroom friezes.

Along with artistic detail, certain mechanical features of the Theatre project are of note. One feature proudly advertised on Opening Night was the \$100,000 "weather system", installed by the Freyn Brothers of Indianapolis. The system produced "perfectly conditioned air, purified through a water curtain, chilled to exactly the right temperature." Such air conditioning features were popular in movie palaces of the 1920's, frequently offering the first controlled environment in the city. Another technological advance was apparent in the sixth-floor Ballroom, where a "sea breeze" was provided for dancers by passing outside air over iced salt water in the summer and warmed salt water in the winter, heightening the effect of being in a "Spanish town". The ventilation device reportedly made a complete change of air every thirty seconds, eliminating smoke and maintaining a fresh atmosphere. The ballroom floor was also an interesting construction feature, designed to be "easy on the feet" through the use of an unusual overhead suspension rigging system.

Opening Night and other Historic Events at the Indiana
 With an investment of \$995,000 in the Indiana Theatre and \$505,000 on interior treatment, the Circle Theatre Company planned a gala Opening Night "Inauguration" for the building. More than 3000 patrons arrived at 7:00 on Saturday, June 18, 1927, to inspect the Theatre,

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A.C. Morrison and L.P. Wheeler, Unpublished H.A.B.S. Manuscript, Indiana Theatre, 1977
 Gene Galdson, Indianapolis Theaters from A to Z, 1976
Indianapolis Magazine September 1975, December 1976.
Indianapolis Times: 10-16-51; 9-21-58; 9-21-61. Indianapolis Star: 1-23-27; 6-5-27;
 6-11-27; 6-18-27; 9-11-27; 12-19-27; 12-19-33; 8-28-60; 9-14-60; 9-7-69.
Indianapolis News: 9-2-27; 1-22-30; 9-10-76; 9-25-76; 11-4-76.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

QUADRANGLE NAME Indianapolis West QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----------------|-----------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 1 6 | 5 7 1 1 8 7 1 0 | 4 4 1 0 2 0 6 0 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Cynthia Durko Lynch and James L. Kalleen III

ORGANIZATION
Historic Lanmarks Foundation of Indiana DATE
January 21, 1977

STREET & NUMBER
3402 Boulevard Place TELEPHONE
317-926-2301

CITY OR TOWN
Indianapolis STATE
Indiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X STATE _____ LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE [Signature] DATE 6/6-78

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer DATE _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER [Signature] DATE 1/29/79

ATTEST: Bill Labovice DATE 1/29/79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION [Signature]

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Historical Background, Cont.

exploring the interior for one hour prior to the multi-media Inaugural ceremonies. Those who were unable to purchase tickets listened to the festivities on local radio. In attendance at the opening were the Governor of Indiana, Mayor of Indianapolis, film executives, motion picture stars, and the elite of Indianapolis. After oration and ceremonies in which the Theatre was praised for being, "Designed by Indiana architects, erected by Indiana builders, decorated with artwork done by Indiana artists and constructed wherever possible with Indiana materials." The entertainment began with serious music performed by the Indiana Symphonic Orchestra; a stage show, "The Inaugural Banquet", featuring actors seated onstage in a lavish dining hall set; on film, the news of the world and a "short", "Pioneer Days", which illustrated Indiana's early history; a medley of popular songs on the grand, three-manual, 17 rank, Barton organ by Theatre organist, Harold Ramsey; and the feature movie, "The Prince of Headwaiters", starring Louis Stone who was in attendance that evening.

The policy of the Theatre, "Only the Best", was reflected in promotional advertisements which pointed to the elegance, technological advancements and local pride which the Indiana Theatre exemplified. The interior was furnished with custom lighting and decorative accessories (Photos 8 & 9), many imported from Spain. Praised also were the many pleasures one could pursue within the four walls of the Theatre building: bowling and billiards, a luncheonette, soda fountain, candy shop, tobacco shop and barber shop. The Theatre was a first-run movie house and concert hall for many years. In the early days, a typical performance might begin with an organ medley (Harold Ramsey and Dessa Byrd were house organists until the mid-1930's) followed by an orchestral selection. Stage productions were frequent as well, with sets designed in the Indiana Theatre art department on the third floor; choreography was provided by the chorus line maintained as part of the Indiana staff. Following the live entertainments would come the movie feature. By late 1933, as a result of the depression, the Indiana went to a straight movie policy, abandoning their lavish pre-movie entertainment features for double-feature pictures.

Throughout the decades the policy, "Only the Best", continued to be enforced as the Indiana maintained high standards and kept up with modern advancements in cinema. In 1928, sound equipment was first used; in 1952, it became the first theater in the state to install closed-circuit television and to install equipment for showing "3-D" movies; in 1953, the Indiana became the first theater in the state to use wide screen projection when it installed a Panoramic full-stage screen and added 23 loud speakers for stereophonic sound; finally, in 1960, the Indiana was first to be equipped for "Cinerama", the equipment for which necessitated the construction of a projection booth on the main floor of the Auditorium, eliminating more than 1,500 seats, and the construction of a curving screen (Photo 10) in front of much of the ornamental plasterwork. The theater continued to operate until 1975 when, suffering financially from suburban competition, it closed.

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Historical Background Cont.

The Indiana Roof Ballroom saw a similar series of modifications. Patterned after the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, the Roof Ballroom was capable of accomodating several thousand patrons. Operated almost from the beginning as a facility separate from the Theatre itself, it offered dancing five nights a week during the early years. During the 1940's and through the 1960's, the Ballroom was rented out for special occasions, with bands hired for high school "Proms" or for the Annual "500" Festival. During these years, the dance floor began to give way to seating space, when tables were added. In 1972, the Theatre building was converted into a convention facility: bowling alleys were removed from the basement and a new, \$65,000 kitchen facility was installed on the sixth floor. The Roof Ballroom, at the time of these changes, was the only large downtown meeting facility available, used for many banquets and convention functions.

The Indiana Theatre is currently being considered for adaptive reuse.

The Indiana Theatre can claim significance in no less than seven separate areas:

1. The architectural design and execution of the Indiana Theatre makes a significant aesthetic statement and is an example of the best of exoticism in America.
2. The building is significant in that it represents the collaboration of many talented artists and craftsmen in Indianapolis in the 1920's, among them sculptors Alexander Sangernebo and Dante Gaspari and painter, Randolph LaSalle Coats.
3. The building is an example of the architectural design expertise of the Indianapolis firm, Rubush and Hunter.
4. When constructed in 1927, the Theatre exemplified the height of theater technology and, through the years adopted each advance in cinema technology.
5. The Indiana Theatre stands today as the only reamining link with a long history of entertainment facilities located near Washington Street's intersection with Capitol.
6. The Indiana Theatre was the site of many notable performances and its fifty year history is linked with the history of entertainment in the 20th century.
7. The lively white glazed terra cotta facade was the product of the F.E. Gates Marvle and Tile Company, a firm significant to the history of the Midwest terra cotta industry.

Each of these statements is expanded below.

1. The architectural design and execution of the Indiana Theatre makes a significant aesthetic statement and is an example of the best of exoticism in America. According to an unedited manuscript of the "Historic American Buildings Survey, "Relating to Spanish Colonial Revival in the United States which reached its height in 1925, the Indiana Theatre, with its Churrigueresque, white terra cotta facade, is a major example of great moving picture theaters of that decade of the 20th century." This ornate building is outstanding in its detail, which reflects an accurate interpretation of the Churrigueresque: the lively central bay is artfully balanced by subdued side bays, the

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Significance, Cont.

whole an intricate and pleasing composition. The interior of the Indiana Theatre offers a blend of exotic influences (from German dachshunds to Indian temples) and was masterfully created with spaces on both a grand and an intimate scale. Reflecting the interest in jazz dance bands in a way seldom found in other theaters, the Indiana is unusual in that it incorporates a large ballroom six floors directly above the auditorium: this Spanish flight of fantasy predated the Atlanta Fox Egyptian ballroom by two years. However; the best interior treatment is found in the auditorium itself, where the proscenium enframing virtually fills the front wall of the room with a filigree of foliate ornament and figures both realistic and imaginary. This grand space with its accompanying Lobby and Mezzanine Promenade presents an atmosphere unmatched anywhere in Indianapolis today.

2. The building is significant in that it represents the collaboration of many talented artists and craftsmen in Indianapolis in the 1920's:

Alexander Sangernebo was an architectural sculptor and chief designer for the F.E.Gates Company at the time of the Indiana Theatre commission. Of Finnish or Russian birth, Sangernebo came to America in 1888 after studying art in St. Petersburg, Hamburg and Paris. He settled in St. Louis, where he was engaged in various lines of interior decoration; during his years there, Sullivan's Wainwright Building and Burnham and Root's Francis Whittaker Mansion were under construction: one might speculate on Sangernebo's involvement in those projects. It is certain that he left St. Louis for a position with the Indianapolis Terra Cotta Company, hence an assumption that he had experience with that medium while in Missouri is not outlandish. Once in Indianapolis, Sangernebo's creative hand was to be found on the best structures in the city. In cut stonework-- The Columbia Club, St. Mary's Church, The Traction Terminal Building (Burnham & Root), and the Guaranty Building, to name but a few; in terra cotta--The Athenaeum, Y.W.C.A., L.S. Ayres Company Building, the Indiana Theatre and others; interiors with stucco ornament modeled by Sangernebo--Old City Hall, The Elk's Club, The Guaranty Building, and William H. Block Company. Sangernebo's drawings for ornament were familiar to Chicago terra cotta companies as well. Sangernebo died at the age of 73 in 1930, having completed the complex terra cotta ornament of the Indiana Theatre in his 70th year.

Dante Gaspari was Alexander Sangernebo's assistant. Gaspari had been a sculptural apprentice during the preparation of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893; when his work there was completed, he came to Indianapolis, meeting Sangernebo and forming an artistic collaboration that would last Sangernebo's lifetime. Dante Gaspari was the model maker at the Indianapolis Terra Cotta Company, and transformed Sangernebo's architectural ornament from drawings into three dimensions.

Randolph LaSalle Coats was an eminent Indiana portrait and landscape painter born in Richmond, Indiana in 1891. Trained in Indiana and Cincinnati, Coats was an artist and teacher. Traveling Europe in 1922, Coats returned to encourage

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Significance, Cont.

American artists to record the beauty of this country. Coats maintained studios not only in Indianapolis but also on Cape Cod and in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina where he painted landscapes, marines and figures. Coats contribution to the Indiana Theatre project is the mural painting of the Taj Mahal on the stair landing in the Main Lobby.

3. The building is an example of the architectural design expertise of the Indianapolis firm, Rubush and Hunter. Preston C. Rubush and Edgar O. Hunter were both born in Indiana; they formed their partnership in 1904 in Indianapolis. Among their numerous commissions in the Capitol City were: Masonic Temple (1906), City Hall (1910), Murat Temple (1910), Buckingham Apartments (1911), Indiana State School for the Deaf (1911), Circle Theatre (1916); Hume-Mansur Building (1911), Columbia Club (1925), Architect's and Builder's Building (1910 and 1928), The Circle Tower (1930), Coca-Cola Bottling Company (1931), American Central Life Building, H.P. Wasson Building Remodeling, and the Thornton Levey Printing Company. The architectural firm was adept at almost any architectural style, those mentioned above ranging from Neo-Classical to Far Eastern to Art Deco to Chicago Commercial styles. The Spanish Baroque style of the Indiana Theatre was not repeated in other structures; for inspiration, Rubush and Hunter pursued the many books on Spanish architecture that were in the firm's possession. Both men had long careers in architecture, spanning nearly fifty years.

4. When constructed in 1927, the Indiana Theatre exemplified the height of theatre technology and through the years adopted each advance in cinema technology. The largest theater ever built in Indianapolis, it contained multi-entertainment facilities including a fully-equipped stage for live productions, bowling lanes, billiard tables, restaurants, and a ballroom for dancing.

The ornate and exotic interior made it a true "Movie Palace", a reflection of the flamboyant 1920's.

At least three mechanical devices were considered to be engineering advancements:

The building's unique ventilating systems made it one of the first structures in Indianapolis to have a controlled environment in winter and summer.

An elevator lift in the orchestra pit allowed for a symphonic performance at stage level or floor-level orchestral accompaniment.

The Barton organ was, likewise, mounted on a combination turntable-lift which allowed great flexibility in organ positioning.

The Indiana Theatre was the first in the state to have stereophonic sound, panavision, 3-D projection, closed-circuit television and Cinerama facilities.

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Significance, Cont.

5. The Indiana Theatre stands today as the only reminder of a long history of entertainment facilities on Washington Street at Capitol Avenue. As early as 1823, "The Doctor's Courtship, or the Indulgent Father" was presented at Major Carter's Tavern on Washington Street opposite the Courthouse. In 1843, on a lot immediately to the east of the site of the Indiana Theatre, stood Gaston's Wagon Shop, where the New York Company of Comedians performed by candlelight. In 1851 the Indiana Grand Lodge of Masons completed Masonic Hall at the Southeast corner of Washington and Capitol. For many years this Hall was a place of public entertainment which included theatrical productions, lectures, concerts and panoramas. Such notables as Abraham Lincoln (1859), Henry Ward Beecher, John B. Gough, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Adelina and Carlotta Patti lectured or performed in Masonic Hall. In 1858 the Metropolitan Theatre was constructed on the lot to the immediate west of the future site of the Indiana. This theatre--the first actually constructed for the sole purpose of theatrical performances--operated under the names of The Park, The Strand and, finally, the Capitol, until its demolition. Finally, on the site of the Indiana Theatre, Washington Hall was built.

6. The Indiana Theatre was the site of many notable performances and its fifty year history is linked with the history of entertainment in the 20th century. On staff with the Indiana in the early years were organists Harold Ramsey and Dessa Byrd; orchestra conductors Mikhail Stolarevsky and Charlie Davis, whose lead vocalist Dick Powell, was soon "discovered" by Hollywood and became a motion picture star. Independent stage shows appeared throughout the 1930's, including Kate Smith, Ray Bolger, Helen Kane ("The Boop-Boop-a-Doop Girl"), Eddie Cantor, Burns and Allen. It is said that "every" big band leader of the 1940's and 1950's at one time or another brought his group to perform at the Indiana, excepting Glenn Miller. As late as 1958 Benny Goodman played here with his concert jazz band.

7. The lively white glazed terra cotta facade was the product of the F.E. Gates Marble and Tile Company, a firm significant to the history of the Midwest terra cotta industry. Terra cotta was manufactured in the Indianapolis region as early as 1867, when H.N. Glover took advantage of the abundant white clay which lay directly over coal deposits near Brazil, Indiana. As well as being used locally, this fine clay was shipped by rail from Indiana to Chicago terra cotta companies. Glover's company was reorganized as the Indianapolis Terra Cotta Company in 1883, under which name it operated until Gates (owner of the American Terra Cotta Company of Chicago), purchased it in 1918. Alexander Sangernebo came to Indianapolis in the mid 1890's until his death in 1930. The long history of terra cotta in the Indianapolis region, and the long association of Gates with the terra cotta industry in Chicago and, later Indianapolis, both figure greatly in the development of the Midwest terra cotta industry.