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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Central Theater

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 145 W. 15th Avenue not for publication

city or town Ely vicinity

state Nevada code NV county White Pine code 033 zip code 89301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones SHPO 6/17/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Patrick Anders Date of Action 8/5/93

Central Theater
Name of Property

White Pine County, Nevada
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
one		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
one		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof flat-wood decked asphalt roof-

other only 4 to 5 years old

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Percy and Warren Hull

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Central Theater
Name of Property

White Pine County, Nevada
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 1 | | 6 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 0 | | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ron James and Michelle McFadden
organization Div. of Historic Preservation date May 1993
street & number 123 W. Nye Lane, Room 208 telephone (702) 687-5138
city or town Carson City state Nevada zip code 89710

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Jerry Christiansen
street & number 557 Ely Avenue telephone _____
city or town Ely state Nevada zip code 89301

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Central Theater, constructed by P.W. and Warren Hull in 1939, has served as Ely's largest movie house from the time of its opening until February, 1993. Built in the Art Deco style, the theater now stands empty. The building's condition is good.

Located approximately six blocks from downtown and the White Pine Courthouse, the theater is situated on a corner lot of 15th and High Streets. Aultman Street, the main thoroughfare through Ely, is one block to the south. The neighborhood around the theater has various one- and two-story commercial and residential structures. The building has parking lots to the east and west; there are no other structures on the parcel.

The movie house is a tall, one-story rectangular brick building with the entrance and marquee at the southeast corner. Simple ornamentation on the exterior includes brick walls with recessed "columns," horizontal banding at the roofline and chevron "capitals," and a flat roof with a stepped parapet. The building rests on a concrete foundation. A marquee is suspended above the double-door entrance is also stepped and the neon sign "CENTRAL" rises vertically above the building from the marquee.

The interior has been modified by the addition of wood paneling and carpeting in the lobby, but the space retains its integrity. The original interior had "pastel tinting and designing by Hugo Claussen combined with thick carpeting and soft florescent lighting to produce a restful feeling." While the wall and floor surfaces have been covered, the curvilinear floor plan of the lobby, including the curved counter and round columns flanking it, remains intact. Recessed detailing in the ceiling echoes the floor plan below and carries through the Art Deco style to the interior. The auditorium is bisected by two aisles. The original ceiling, including shallow recessed panels and a large geometric sunburst motif in front of the screen, survives as do the walls.

The building may require asbestos abatement; however, with sensitive treatment to the lobby, the building will be easily brought back to its former glory.

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The Central Theater at 145 W. 15th Avenue in Ely, Nevada is significant under criterion A for its role in the local history of motion picture houses and under criterion C for its Art-Deco design.

Ely, a small nineteenth-century mining community, became the seat of White Pine County government in 1887. The town grew slowly for the next decade in the midst of the depression of the 1890s which caused statewide stagnation. With a turn-of-the-century boom in the copper mining industry, Ely grew into a major mining community. The ore body used by the local mine promised long-term economic stability for the community. Because of a promising future and of the fact that Ely was remote, it was necessary to build a town which would be self-sustaining and lasting, but tied as much as possible to the outside world.

The mining boom occurred just when the movie industry was initiating its role as an economic and unifying cultural force for the nation. The Capital Theater, constructed between 1913 and 1916, serves as a symbol of the early importance of the movie industry to small-town America and is being nominated separately. Because the City of Ely refused to grant Percy and Warren Hull, who ran the Capital Theater, an additional sixteen feet into the alley to accommodate a new type of projector, the brothers built the Central Theater on a larger lot off of the main street. The Central Theater is an excellent expression of the pre-War movie industry as it manifested in Ely. It serves as an expression of the expanding demand for movies even in a remote, relatively small town such as Ely.

Local newspapers and deeds indicate that the construction on the Central Theater began in 1939 for \$80,000 and that there was a grand opening of the facility on Saturday, March 29, 1941. Billed as "The Finest Theater in Eastern Nevada," the opening show was "Arizona," starring Jean Arthur and William Holden. The Hull brothers undertook the building of the 725-seat theater. One of the brothers, Percy Hull, was part of a consortium which commissioned the construction of the Capital Theater between 1913 and 1916. Local testimony indicates that M.T. Miller was the brick mason for this project. Coincidentally, he also served as brick masons for the Capital Theater. The Central Theater was closed on February 4, 1993.

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The Central Theater is also significant for its architecture. The simple, Art Deco style is unique in Ely as most of the commercial building stock dates to the first few decades of twentieth century. Indeed, only one other theater with this "modern" styling is known in Nevada's small towns - the Gem Theater in Pioche, which is also considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Central Theater displays many of the architectural features of Art Deco, including the geometric massing, the flat roof and stepped parapet and marquee, the variation in the brick to imply columns, and the horizontal banding at the roofline and chevron "capitals." Inside, the theater featured curvilinear spacing in the lobby, with a rounded counter, doors, and curves in the ceiling which echoed the shapes below, and indirect lighting; these were also characteristics of Art Deco.

The building survives as a testament to the importance of the movie theater in the 1940s and subsequently in small town Nevada, as well as to the desire of the builders to construct their movie house in the latest style. The community of Ely is currently working towards a solution to reopen the theater for the future enjoyment by its citizens.

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Bibliography

Russell R. Elliott, Nevada's Twentieth-Century Mining Boom: Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1966).

Other documents on file:

"Deeds and Mortgage agreements related to the Capital Theater" on file with the nomination, the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, Carson City, Nevada.

Ely Daily Times, issues from 1941, on file with the nomination, the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, Carson City, Nevada.

Helen J. Lewis, "Historical Summary of the Capital Theater" on file with the nomination, the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, Carson City, Nevada.

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Verbal boundary description

Legal parcel number 001-212-03.

Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the theater.