

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



982

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Ridglea Theatre  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 6025-6033 Camp Bowie Blvd. and 3309 Winthrop Avenue  
CITY OR TOWN: Fort Worth  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Tarrant CODE: 439

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
 VICINITY  
ZIP CODE: 76116

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.)

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer Date 11/1/11  
Signature of certifying official / Title  
Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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  
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain  
 See continuation sheet.

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 12.30.11  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Ridglea Theatre, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY**

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY**

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY**

| CONTRIBUTING | NONCONTRIBUTING |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1            | 0               | BUILDINGS    |
| 0            | 0               | SITES        |
| 0            | 0               | STRUCTURES   |
| 0            | 0               | OBJECTS      |
| <b>1</b>     | <b>0</b>        | <b>TOTAL</b> |

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0**

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A**

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** Recreation and Culture: theater  
Commerce/Trade: financial institution, specialty store

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** Work in Progress; Commerce/Trade: specialty store

**7. DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION  
WALLS Brick; Stone: Sandstone; Stucco  
ROOF Ceramic  
OTHER Stone: Sandstone

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-10)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 1950 Ridglea Theatre is a 2-story, Spanish Eclectic masonry building consisting of a theater and a bank/office wing. Detailing on the theater and bank/office wing includes painted brick and Palo Pinto sandstone walls and columns, balconies with shed roofs and heavy wood timber supports on the façade, and a tall stone tower with belvedere. The theater's marquee also has a Moorish-influenced design that compliments the building's architectural motif. Ornamentation in the theater's interior is also complimentary to the exterior's design through such details as original decorative wood doors, wood grilles, and the terrazzo floor and large murals covering three walls in the lobby. Red clay tile covers the roofs of the bank/office wing, as well as the roof of the front gable of the theater wing. The Ridglea Theatre comprised one of the four quadrants of the Ridglea Village, a retail and business complex developed by A. C. Luther between the early 1940s and mid 1950s, and was the primary shopping center for Fort Worth's west side during this time period. The Ridglea Theatre retains a high degree of architectural and historic integrity.

### Setting

The Ridglea Theatre is located on the south side of Camp Bowie Boulevard, a busy four and six-lane diagonal arterial that also functions as a segment of U.S. Highway 377. It is divided by a grassy median for much of its length. Immediately in front of the building is a small paved parking lot and drive. At the time that the Ridglea Theatre was constructed, there was a small, 1-story commercial building immediately to the east that housed a variety of retail tenants through the years. It is no longer extant. It and other buildings between the theater and eastward to Bryant Irvin Road (originally Guilford Road) have been replaced with a modern convenience store with self-service gas pumps and a detached car wash. There is head-in parking along the west side of the bank/office wing. This parking area fronts Winthrop Avenue which functions as a private street or driveway providing access to adjacent buildings. On the east side of the building and south of the convenience store is an asphalt parking lot that extends to Bryant Irvin Road. West of the Ridglea Theatre is a block of stores that dates from ca. 1954 but was radically altered ca. 1990. Sunset Drive has been cut through to Bryant Irvin Road where previously were located several small buildings. Three-story attached apartments were constructed south of Sunset Drive approximately 10 years ago. South and southwest of the apartments is the Ridglea Country Club and the adjacent Ridglea neighborhood, a residential district predominantly composed of Ranch and Modern style houses constructed between the 1940s and 1960s.

On the north side of Camp Bowie Boulevard are the other original quadrants of the Ridglea Village which were built in phases between the early 1940s and the mid 1950s by the same developer who built the Ridglea Theatre, A. C. Luther. These 1- and 2- story buildings were constructed of brick (painted pink) with red clay tile roofs of varying heights with balconies bearing wood or ornamental metal balustrades. The irregular setbacks and heights of the buildings add to the quaintness and village "feel" to the complex. The Spanish Eclectic style of the Ridglea Village set the architectural motif for the Ridglea Theatre as well as the Curzon Place (Luther) Apartments which are located behind (or north of) the Ridglea Village and front Winthrop and Curzon avenues. The apartments were also constructed by the same developer in 1949. The design of Luther's Ridglea buildings also influenced the design of other buildings not directly a part of his development, including the Ridglea Presbyterian Church (1957) at 6201 Camp Bowie Boulevard. North of the Ridglea Village is a neighborhood of Period Revival and Ranch Style houses primarily built between the 1930s and 1960s.

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Ridglea Theatre  
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### Exterior

The Ridglea Theatre faces north/northwest along the south side of Camp Bowie Boulevard, a west Fort Worth four- and six-lane arterial (and a segment of US Highway 377) divided by a narrow grassy median for most of its length. The façade is divided into two distinct portions. They are the theater wing on the left (east) and the bank/office wing on the right. Each is described in more detail below. The façade of the theater wing is approximately 70 feet wide. It is dominated by a tall stone tower that serves as a highly visible sign bearing the name "Ridglea" on two sides and by a massive, overhanging marquee that covers the entrances and ticket booth. The façade is primarily composed of a 2-story front-gabled bay. Its red clay tile roof has a moderate pitch and no overhanging eaves. The walls are primarily of irregular coursed Palo Pinto sandstone. Off-center on the right side of the second story is a shed-roofed balcony that abuts the stone tower. The shed roof is covered with red clay tile and is supported by timber posts. The balcony is surrounded by turned wood balusters. An original wood batten door provides access to the balcony. To the right of the balcony is a large rectangular niche or vent infilled with a cast grille in a repeating diamond pattern. Immediately below the balcony is the marquee. It is decorated with a Moorish-patterned design in red, turquoise and off-white. Neon lighting in geometric patterns run across the top and bottom borders of the marquee. The ceiling beneath the marquee sports red neon lighting in a floral design interspersed between rows of bare yellow light bulbs. The entrance is recessed from the front building line and is composed of four sets of paired wood doors with wood grilles over long glass panels. A continuous wide wood lintel surmounts the doors. Flanking the entrance and attached to the stone walls are display cases for movie posters. Each is surrounded by an ornate brass-tinted metal frame. At the northwest corner beneath the marquee is the ticket booth. It is three-sided with an irregular-coursed sandstone base and glass panels above. Red tile pavers cover the floor approaching the entrances. To the right of the tower is a 1-story wing. Its façade is covered with red Roman brick. In place of window openings there are two poster frames similar to those flanking the entrances. The wall is topped with a stepped parapet with cast coping and scrollwork at each step.

The theater's tower deserves a more detailed description. It was common for theaters of this era to have a tower or tall vertical sign but the Ridglea Theatre's tower is unique in that it is constructed of sandstone with details that compliment the building's Spanish Eclectic style. The 70-foot tower rises at the intersection of the second story balcony and marquee to the right and the 1-story wing to the left. The tallest portion of the tower consists of a square stone shaft. A narrow vent is located on the east and west sides of the shaft. The tower is terminated with a stuccoed belvedere with arched openings on each side. The belvedere is crowned with a hipped roof covered with red clay tile. Attached to the front of the square tower is a pentagonal tower that rises to a point just below the square tower's belvedere. This tower is tapered as it rises and is topped with a round stucco-covered cap that could be interpreted as a dovecot. It has a red clay tile roof, too. On two sides of the pentagon, the name "RIDGLEA" is spelled out vertically in neon letters and placed in such a manner that it is highly visible to automobile traffic approaching the theater from the northeast or southwest.

The bank/office wing is placed to the right (west) of the theater wing. It has a width of approximately 60 feet. It is primarily constructed of brick that is painted a pale pink (and has been painted since the building's completion). The bank wing is two-stories in height and has a hipped roof. The roof has exposed rafter tails and a wide overhang that covers a balcony. The balcony extends across the façade of the second story and wraps around the corner to the west elevation. Timber posts support the roof and a turned wood balustrade wraps around the perimeter of the balcony. Supporting wood beams beneath the deck of the balcony are exposed. There are four large window openings on the façade of the second story; the second window grouping from the right also contains a door that provides access to the balcony. Another window is located on the west elevation beneath the overhanging roof.

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Ridglea Theatre  
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The first floor of the bank façade has been altered. It has not been determined when the alterations occurred; probably after the bank vacated the building in 1974. Historic photos and sketches of the building indicate that the east portion of the façade wall was sheathed with irregular-coursed sandstone like that used on the theater and had a circular window or vent at its center. This area now contains a storefront with a glazed slab door and full-height storefront windows. The surrounding wall is of painted brick. The historic entrance to the bank was at the center of the façade and was flanked by wide, full-length sidelights. Today, there is a single wood glazed door with a divided picture window to the right. The window opening at the west end of the building and the window opening just around the corner on the west elevation appear unchanged.

### Other Elevations

Theater Wing: The east elevation is of brick and is mostly composed of the two-story auditorium wing. It has a length of approximately 197 feet. It faces an adjacent car wash and convenience store and the theater's parking lot. The roof of the auditorium wing is behind the wall's parapet and is not visible from the ground. There are no window openings on the east elevation but there are two fire escapes with metal doors at the level of the interior balcony. The first fire escape is located near the north end of the building. The second fire escape is located toward the center of this elevation and was installed when the balcony was extended in 1994. The rear (or south) wall of the theater wing is of brick painted white. There are two exits; one at the west end and one at the east end. A one-story mechanical room projects from the center of this elevation. It has a flat roof and no windows.

Bank/Office Wing: The west elevation faces Winthrop Avenue and an adjacent shopping center. It is two stories high and historically had a length of approximately 240 feet (Map 1). A stuccoed brick and stone partition separates the front section of this wing (previously described) and the remainder of the elevation. The west elevation is characterized by its red clay tile roof (with a hip-roofed blind dormer). Balconies extend the length of the wing. The eaves of the roof extend over the balconies and are supported by square stone columns constructed of the same Palo Pinto sandstone used on the theater wing. Ornamental metal balustrades run between the columns. Each of the balconies has been enclosed with glass to expand the second story offices. The balconies form a continuous arcade along the first floor. Beneath the arcade are six entrances typically consisting of a wood door with a large center panel of glass flanked by wide sidelights. Above the door and sidelights is a wide wood panel typically containing the name of the occupant. There is also a set of paired wood French doors that provides access to the lobby serving the offices on the second floor. Black metal lanterns attached to chains are suspended from the arcade's ceiling. The walk beneath the arcade is covered with red clay tile pavers. The brick walls are painted white.

1951 Annex (not nominated): A 1951 annex was constructed adjacent to the theater and bank/office building, but it is not included in this nomination, as it is not internally connected to the theater building and is distinctly different in materials and design from the theater and bank. It is approximately 190 feet long and 63 feet wide, and the roof has a slight overhang. It appears as if three second story windows on the south elevation of the annex have been infilled with glass block. Attached to the south end of the Annex is a polygonal-shaped one-story building. According to tax records, it was also constructed in 1951. It was not constructed in the Spanish Eclectic style and has a much more modern feel than does the Ridglea Theatre. It has a flat roof and is constructed of brick that is painted beige (like the annex). This building is not part of the proposed rehabilitation of the Ridglea Theatre.

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Ridglea Theatre  
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### Interior

Theater Wing: Passing through the entrance, one encounters a foyer that leads to the lobby. Recessed lighting is located directly above the entrance. To the right of the entrance is the manager's office. The ceiling of the foyer is lower than the ceiling of the lobby. The lobby's ceiling has geometric-shaped coffers with recessed lighting. The floor is covered with terrazzo "with a large Spanish design of ten different colors in the center" (*Ridglea News*, Special Ridglea Theatre edition, n.d. [ca. November 30, 1950], p. 2). Portions of the terrazzo were removed in 1994 during a remodeling of the interior when a kitchen was added in the lobby. The kitchen was recently removed. Along the west wall are the stairs that lead to a mezzanine. There is another set of stairs along the east wall that lead from the mezzanine to the balcony level. The stairs still have their original wood handrails. The handrails in the center of the stairs are supported by brass-tinted newels. A historic photo indicates that there was a banquette in the lobby at the base of the spandrel along the west stairs. It has been removed but a ghost line reveals its former location.

At the northeast corner of the lobby is an entrance to the tower. The men's restroom is located on the east (right) side of the lobby. The women's restroom is located off of an alcove on the same side of the lobby. Both the men's and women's restrooms retain their original doors (paneled wood doors with Spanish Colonial detailing) and may retain original tile on the walls and stalls. In the men's restroom, the wall tiles are black as are the partitions between urinals. The toilet stalls have white doors with a ziggurat shape at the top. In the women's restroom, the wall tiles also are black but the toilet stalls have pink doors. This room appears to retain its original mirror and possibly its vanity as well. It also has a small banquette. The floor tiles in both restrooms are not original. In the alcove that leads to the women's restroom is a long banquette. Above it is a wide section of wood grilles similar to those on the front doors. The wall behind the grilles has a painted landscape similar to that on the east wall in the lobby (described below).

The most outstanding features of the lobby are the larger-than-life murals that cover the west wall above the stairs, the wall above the foyer, and the east wall. The murals are in remarkably good shape. A section of the mural on the east wall has some damage as a result of the addition of the kitchen in the lobby in 1994 as well as some water damage near the ceiling.

The murals were designed by Eugene John Gilboe, a decorator who frequently designed and executed murals for the Interstate Circuit chain of theaters. The murals are in shades of red, gold and green set against a blue background. As stated in the special issue of the *Ridglea News* announcing the opening of the Ridglea Theatre, the murals "were inspired by the beauty of Ridglea, its buildings, and its unified architecture. Gilboe draws from the deep past, year 1500. His painting depicts the landing of the Spaniards, followed by pirates, on the shores of California" (*Ridglea News*, special Ridglea Theatre edition, n.d. [ca. November 30, 1950], pp. 12-13).

The scene on the wall above the entrance (the north wall) depicts a Spanish galleon in the left background being approached by a small craft with a skull and crossed bones on its sail. In the right foreground is a smaller craft being rowed and pulled toward the shore. It is filled with sailors and a large central figure of a bearded, white-haired male, who is perhaps giving thanks for the crew's safe arrival. The west wall (above the stairs) also features a galleon anchored near an island in the left background and a smaller sailboat filled with the pirates in the right foreground. The scene on the east wall is of an exotic landscape with a small tree and colorful flowers in the foreground and a mountain in the background representing the coast of California.

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The auditorium is an open space with two round metal columns (nonoriginal) supporting the balcony. The original seating in the balcony and first floor is no longer present. During the 1994 renovation, the elevation of the auditorium floor was altered from a sloping floor to one containing three different levels. The original stage and proscenium are present. The proscenium's walls are curved. Flanking the stage are exits that provide access to the rear entrances. The wall above each exit has a scallop shape that connects to the edges of the proscenium. Recessed lighting is located behind the scalloped forms. The "cry room" that was located in the northwest corner of the auditorium is no longer present. Elements of the original lobby concession stand were used in the construction of a bar on the west wall of the auditorium. The balcony was extended forward during the 1994 rehabilitation and divided in the middle by a wall. The end of the balcony was walled off at that time to create two separate theater rooms. These walls were removed in early 2011. At the rear of the balcony are concrete stairs that provide access to the projection booth.

Bank/Office Wing: The Ridglea State Bank was the original occupant for the storefront that faced Camp Bowie. As mentioned previously, the façade of the Bank/Office wing has been altered and now contains a second storefront. All original bank fixtures (except for the vault) have been removed and neither storefront contains much in the way of historic fabric although remnants of the terrazzo floor remain in the left storefront. A hint to the original appearance of the bank is given by the Winthrop Avenue lobby which provides access to the second floor offices. This lobby is located near the center of the west elevation and is accessed through paired French doors. The recent removal of glazed red tile on the floor revealed a checkerboard pattern of large white and light green terrazzo squares divided by narrow gold-tinted strips. A darker green terrazzo forms a border at the base of plaster walls and extends six inches up the wall. The current stencil pattern on the walls is probably not original. An elevator is located at the northeast corner. At the southwest corner of the room is a dogleg staircase. Between the window and the lower run of the staircase is a low limestone wall. The surface between the stairs and the window is covered with shell stone (this material was used throughout the bank as described in newspaper articles when the bank opened in 1950). A half wall between the legs of the stairs is also constructed of limestone and topped with shell stone. Brass-finished handrails line the stairs.

The second story of the Bank/Office wing is characterized by a wide central hallway that runs the length of the building. The hallway is carpeted with red tile edging on either side. Lining the hallway are a variety of office spaces as well as men's and women's restrooms. Some offices are marked only by a flush wood door. Others are surrounded by glass sidelights and fixed transoms and clerestories. Linoleum tile covered the office floors but has been removed or concealed in most cases.

### Proposed Renovations

The Ridglea Theatre, including portions of the bank/office wing, is being renovated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as part of a Federal Tax Credit project. The theater is being renovated for use as a multi-purpose performing arts venue in addition to showing films. The work began on the building in early 2011 and is anticipated to be completed in early 2012. Exterior work to be done on the building will be minimal. Work will include repairs to the marquee (including the chaser neon lights), rebuilding of the grid of letters on the tower (replicating the original 3-D plastic letters), repairs to the pavers under the marquee, and the addition of a door at the rear of the theater wing to provide access to the stage. Second story awnings along the west elevation of the bank/office wing have been removed and the glass along the balconies has been tinted with film to reduce sun exposure.

Interior work in the theater will include restoration of the terrazzo floor in the lobby. The murals will be cleaned, repaired and conserved. Interior neon lights will be replaced with LED lights with the same intensity and color. Remnants of the

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original concession stand will be used to construct a new concession stand and bar in the lobby that will closely resemble the original concession stand. The banquette formerly located at the base of the stairs along the west wall of the lobby will be reconstructed using portions of the original frame. The nonoriginal railing along the mezzanine above the lobby will be removed and a low plaster wall with wood railing and portholes similar to the original will be constructed. The current tiered floor arrangement in the auditorium will be retained with a seating capacity of approximately 650. The 1994 extension of the balcony will be removed because it obscures sightlines to the stage. This will also allow for the removal of the two nonoriginal columns beneath the balcony. The seating capacity for the balcony will be approximately 300. The original stage and proscenium will be retained and the stage will have the capacity to be enlarged through the use of a modular stage. Carpeting will resemble carpet used by the Interstate Circuit Company during the era that the Ridglea Theatre was in operation. A remnant of the historic drapery material will be used to closely replicate the original drapes.

Work on the bank/office wing will include renovations to the storefront immediately west of the theater. It will be converted to a bar and live music venue with a seating capacity of 150. The original terrazzo floor from the bank will be revealed, repaired, and polished. An investigation will be made to explore the possibility of creating an interior opening between the bar and the theater. Recent work has uncovered the terrazzo floor in the office wing's lobby. Paint and texture material will be removed from the terrazzo at the base of the lobby's walls.

The proposed rehabilitation of the Ridglea Theatre will allow it to once again function as an entertainment venue on Fort Worth's west side. Instilling new life into the building will enable new audiences and former patrons the opportunity to see and experience a rare surviving gem of Fort Worth's movie-going past.

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

Property:

- A** is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** 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** has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS**

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 has achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Entertainment/Recreation; Architecture; Art

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1950-1961

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1950, 1951

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT / BUILDER:** Pettigrew and Worley, Architects; Loffland and Luther, Builder/Contractor; Eugene J. Gilboe, Artist

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-25)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-26 through 9-27)

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- 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 Texas Historical Commission, Austin
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Ridglea Interests, Fort Worth; Historic Fort Worth, Inc., Fort Worth

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1950 Ridglea Theatre, on the west side of Fort Worth, Texas, is part of a commercial district developed between the early 1940s through the mid-1950s by A. C. Luther to serve the surrounding residential section, much of which he also developed. With a seating capacity of approximately 1,500, the Ridglea Theatre was Fort Worth's largest suburban movie theater and functioned as a theater for over 40 years. The property is nominated to the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment and Recreation as Fort Worth's largest single-screen suburban movie theater. The property is nominated to the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level as an excellent example of the Spanish Eclectic style as applied to a movie theatre and commercial building. Elements of the style found in the building include the stone and painted brick walls, wood balconies, ornamental iron work, and low-pitched roofs sheathed with red clay tile. The theater was designed by the Dallas firm of Pettigrew and Worley, which specialized in the construction of movie houses across the state from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. The Spanish Eclectic design of the Ridglea Theatre varied from the modernistic designs of the firm's other theaters of the era. The property is also nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Art, for the murals within the theater lobby designed by Norwegian-born Eugene John Gilboe, a noted decorator and muralist whose artwork adorned many buildings in Texas. They relate to the Spanish Eclectic theme of the theater building and the Ridglea Village as a whole, as they depict Spanish explorers arriving on the coast of California with pirates in close pursuit, a fitting subject for a venue intended to fuel the imaginations of its patrons. The period of significance is from 1950, the year the original theater and bank building was completed, to 1961, which acknowledges with the building's continued use as a suburban theater and bank.

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## Fort Worth and the Development of the West Side

A bluff-top site above the confluence of the Clear and West Forks of the Trinity River became the location of a military outpost on the North Texas frontier in 1849. Major Ripley Arnold named it Fort Worth in honor of his former military commander, General William Jenkins Worth, a hero of the Mexican War who had died earlier that year. The U.S. Army's occupation of the fort was short-lived and the military moved further west in 1853. A hearty bunch of settlers who had been attracted to the area because of the fort took over the abandoned buildings and set about making a viable town. In a rowdy election that involved vast quantities of whiskey, Fort Worth came out as the winner of an election in 1856 to select the seat of newly formed Tarrant County

Fort Worth's success was by no means secured and the struggling settlement actually lost population during the Civil War, dropping to as low as 175 residents. By the 1870s, the town was beginning to recover and was incorporated in 1873. During its formative years, Fort Worth served as the last stop for cattle drives before crossing the Red River into Indian Territory. The southern portion of its central business district earned the nickname of Hell's Half-Acre, where residents, cowboys and other transients could seek respite in the district's numerous saloons and brothels. The city's first railroad, the Texas and Pacific, reached Fort Worth in 1876. By the 1890s, Fort Worth was an established center for livestock packing-houses. As the city's population reached 26,688 by 1900, it was serviced by eight additional rail lines. With the arrival of the Swift and Armour packing plants in the early 1900s, Fort Worth became a major industrial and manufacturing center in North Texas with a service area that extended into far West Texas and beyond. As town boosters would like to say, Fort Worth was "Where the West Begins."

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As Fort Worth was becoming a *bona fide* city, the land west of the Clear Fork of the Trinity River existed as an open prairie dotted with farms and ranches. With its growth as a railroad center, land speculators began to look to areas on the periphery of the city for future residential development. In 1889, H. B. Chamberlin of Denver, in concert with other investors, including Robert S. McCart, Sr., a Fort Worth businessman, began acquiring thousands of acres of the west side's rolling prairie. The accumulation of land would eventually encompass approximately eleven and one-half square miles. Chamberlin had become wealthy developing the Mile-High city's Capitol Hill neighborhood and hoped to repeat this success in Fort Worth. He named the development "Chamberlin Arlington Heights" and hired Marshall R. Sanguinet, Fort Worth's most prominent architect, to bring the dream of a refined residential development to fruition. A plat for the addition was filed in 1890. For the most part, the initial plat and supplemental filings followed a traditional grid pattern that was bisected by a major boulevard, aptly named Arlington Boulevard. This boulevard ran in a northeast to southwest direction and would become Arlington Heights' "Main Street." Early improvements included the construction of approximately twenty houses designed by Sanguinet and his partners, the British-born architects (and brothers) Albert and Howard Messer, which were completed by 1892. Other improvements included the creation of Lake Como and an accompanying boathouse and pavilion. Also constructed was a powerhouse to run a streetcar line to the lake, making it a recreational destination. Ye Arlington Inn, a 2-story resort hotel was built approximately ten blocks north of the lake in 1892. Despite this impressive start, the financial panic of 1893 quashed Chamberlin's grand plans as did the burning of Ye Arlington Inn the following year. For the next two and a half decades, development in Arlington Heights was piecemeal at best.<sup>1</sup>

With the advent of World War I, the U. S. Army established Camp Bowie on leased property that included portions of the original Chamberlin development. Here, a temporary city that covered nearly 2,186 acres was quickly erected for the 100,000 soldiers who received training there. Although the camp was demobilized in 1919, the infrastructure that was put in place during the two years of its existence and the area's oil boom provided the spark for the residential development that ensued. Its famed boulevard was renamed "Camp Bowie Boulevard" and its brick-lined roadway became the west side's major arterial. Arlington Heights was among the eight or so suburbs that were annexed into Fort Worth in 1922. By 1930, Fort Worth had a population of 154,847.<sup>2</sup>

Other west side neighborhoods developed on the periphery of Arlington Heights in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Hi Mount Land Company developed Bunting, Mattison's and Rose Hill Additions beginning in 1906. To the north was River Crest, an area of substantial homes built by Fort Worth's professional and business elites that was developed around a country club of the same name in 1911. Nearby was the Hill Crest Addition, platted in 1912 by future Fort Worth mayor William Bryce, Duff Purvus and Alfred Crebbins. A hilly and wooded area to the northwest of Arlington Heights was developed in the late 1920s as Westover Hills. Strictly enforced deed restriction resulted in the creation of an exclusive residential community, one that exists to this day as a separately incorporated entity. Following the annexation of Arlington Heights in 1922, African Americans began to settle in greater number in the Como area

<sup>1</sup> *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Near North Side, West Side, Westover Hills* (Fort Worth: Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, 1988), 95; Jim Atkinson and Judy Wood, *Fort Worth's Hugh Deal: Unwinding Westside's Twisted Legend*, (copyright 2010), 4, available at <http://www.ruffbrickroad.com> (accessed July 4, 2011); Juliet George, *Fort Worth's Arlington Heights* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 13. Atkinson and Wood's work provides an in-depth analysis of the participants involved in the acquisition of land that compromised the Arlington Heights development. George's book provides an excellent overview of the development's growth.

<sup>2</sup> George, *Fort Worth's Arlington Heights*, 13-36.

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located adjacent to Lake Como, the former center of entertainment and recreation for Chamberlin's Arlington Heights development.<sup>3</sup>

### Development of Ridglea and the Ridglea Village

In December 1928, Fort Worth's City Plan Commission approved a plat for an addition to the west of Arlington Heights (and approximately six miles west of the central business district) to be known as the Ridglea Addition. The plat was developed by the firm of Anderson Berney Realty Company whose principals were Bernie L. Anderson, president, and Morris E. Berney, both prominent businessmen in the city. The Ridglea Addition was designed by the noted landscape architecture firm of Hare and Hare of Kansas City, Missouri. Unlike the grid pattern found in Arlington Heights, the design for Ridglea took advantage of the area's rolling topography and included curvilinear streets, a round-about at the intersection of three streets, islands at the juncture of other streets, open space for a park and a golf course at the south end. Bisecting the addition in a northeast to southwest direction was Camp Bowie Boulevard, the same major thoroughfare that served Arlington Heights. The addition, a substantial portion of which was initially platted for residential development only, was just outside of the city limits and was not annexed into Fort Worth proper until 1944. This action was challenged by many Ridglea residents but was upheld by the Texas Supreme Court in 1945.<sup>4</sup>

It took about a decade before development in the Ridglea area took off. A few houses, including some fairly large Period Revival style houses along Curzon Avenue (just north of Camp Bowie Boulevard), were built in the late 1920s and early 1930s. On August 8, 1941, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* announced that Morris E. Berney, F. A. Douglas, and J. A. Gooch had started work on a 600-unit housing development located approximately four blocks north of the 6100 block of Camp Bowie Boulevard. These houses, subject to Federal Housing Administration mortgage insurance, were to range in price from \$3,750 to \$12,000.<sup>5</sup>

Developer A. C. (Arlie Clayton) Luther (1897-1982) also recognized the potential of the Ridglea area for residential and commercial development. Luther, a native of Tennessee, moved to Florida after World War I where he made and lost money during that state's building boom of the 1920s. He came to Fort Worth in 1930 and achieved great success through the development of the west side's exclusive residential community of Westover Hills as well as the Crestwood Addition. He believed that to make the west side of Fort Worth a thriving section of the city, the area needed a first class commercial district. In ca. 1943, he opened the first unit of the Ridglea Village, located along the north side of Camp Bowie Boulevard near Winthrop Avenue. In 1947, the second phase of the shopping village was completed. This phase included an addition to the original building as well as the construction of another building on the south side of Camp Bowie Boulevard west of Winthrop Avenue. That portion of the Village on the north side of Camp Bowie was often

<sup>3</sup> *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Near North Side, West Side, Westover Hills*, 95-96, 189; *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Upper North, Northeast, East, Far South, and Far West*, (Fort Worth: Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, 1989), 6. Juliet George's *Fort Worth's Arlington Heights* includes information on the Como community.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson Berney Realty Co, Plat and Dedication of a Portion of 'Ridglea,' An addition to the City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas, Recorded January 30, 1929, Volume 1049, Pages 40-58, County Clerk's Office, Tarrant County Courthouse, Fort Worth, Texas; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 1, 1945 (morning edition) and June 14, 1945 (morning edition), AR406-7-134-28, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas, cited hereafter as FWSTC-SCUTA.

<sup>5</sup> *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Near North Side, West Side, Westover Hills*, 147; "Work Begun on First of 600 Homes for Ridglea," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 8, 1941 (evening edition), AR406-7-134-29, FWSTC-SCUTA.

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referred to as Ridglea Village No. 1 and the portion on the south side was called Ridglea Village No. 2. As a result of his travels in Europe as well as Florida and California, Luther selected a Spanish Eclectic style of architecture for the center, relying on the use of painted brick walls, red clay tile roofs, and balconies with ornamental metal or wood balustrades to provide a distinctive appearance. A few months prior to the opening of the second phase, Luther announced a major development plan that was to include the construction of a hotel, hundreds of apartments in the vicinity of the Ridglea Country Club, 1,156 moderately priced residences, three lakes, and a movie theater with 1,200 seats. Early plans for the theater called for its construction on the north side of Camp Bowie Boulevard adjacent to Ridglea Village No. 1. In June 1947, Luther estimated that he had 250 men working on the project but expected the number to increase to 1,000 by August. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* described it as the largest real estate development in Fort Worth representing a \$30,000,000 investment. The heart of the development was the Ridglea Village, which grew to become Fort Worth's premier shopping center and whose prestige remains to this day.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1949, ground was broken for the construction of another unit of the Ridglea Village on the south side of Camp Bowie Boulevard east of Winthrop Avenue. It was to house a theater and bank as well as office and retail space along Winthrop Avenue, a reversal of the original plan to place the theater on the north side of the shopping center. This unit on the south side of Camp Bowie was constructed on a plat called the Luther Quadrangle which was composed of land from the original Ridglea Addition and a portion of the Chamberlin Arlington Heights Addition immediately to the east. The Ridglea Village now extended to each of the quadrants bordering the intersection of Camp Bowie Boulevard and Winthrop Avenue. The Ridglea Theatre was completed in late 1950, with the grand opening of both the theater and the bank held on December 1, 1950. Like its predecessors, the theater and bank building was also constructed in the Spanish Eclectic style. The theater's 70-foot tower made it an instant landmark, not only within Ridglea Village, but also to motorists traveling along Camp Bowie Boulevard.<sup>7</sup>

The Ridglea Village set the architectural style for other buildings in the vicinity, even those not directly developed by A. C. Luther. These included a Safeway Store at 6332 Camp Bowie Boulevard constructed by Bilbig Brothers in 1951 and designed by Smith and Warder, and the Ridglea Presbyterian Church, constructed in 1957 at 6201 Camp Bowie Boulevard. In the immediate vicinity of the Ridglea Village, Camp Bowie Boulevard became home to the Western Hills Hotel and other shopping centers containing department stores and a variety of retail, commercial, and professional establishments.<sup>8</sup> For his role in the development of the Ridglea Village, the residential additions of Ridglea West, Ridglea Hills and Ridglea North, as well as the Ridglea Country Club in 1954, A. C. Luther was given the moniker "Mr. Ridglea" and named Man of the Year by the Ridglea Business and Professional Association in 1956.<sup>9</sup>

### The Rise of the Shopping Center

<sup>6</sup>"'Mr. Ridglea' Predicted More Growth for Area," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 14, 1974; John Paul Newport, Jr., "FW Loses a Pioneer Developer," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1982, pp. 31A and 33A; "Luther Developing 3,000 Acres . . ." *Fort Worth Magazine* 23 (June 1947): 9, 11; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 8, 1947 (morning edition) and October 9, 1947 (evening edition), AR406-7-134-39, FWSTC-SCUTA.

<sup>7</sup> Plat for Luther Quadrangle, Volume 1975, Pages 283-84, County Clerk's Office, Tarrant County Courthouse, Fort Worth, Texas.

<sup>8</sup> *Fort Worth Magazine* (August 1951): 15; See "\$5,000,000 Ridglea Area Units Planned," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 1, 1951 (evening edition), AR406-7-134-29, FWSTC-SCUTA.

<sup>9</sup> "Luther, Ridglea's 'Man of the Year,'" *Fort Worth Magazine* 32 (October 1956): 32; Newport, "FW Loses A Pioneer Developer."

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Several factors contributed to the rise in the construction of shopping centers across the country in the years following World War I. Households were finding they had more disposable income as a result of wage increases. This, combined with a general increase in the population, meant more dollars to be spent on consumer goods and services. Greater operating efficiency and self-service shopping meant lower prices which encouraged housewives to do work formerly done by clerks and delivery services. Population shifts from the farm to the city and from the city to the suburb coincided with a greater dependency on the automobile as the primary form of transportation. Once in the suburbs, shoppers were no longer willing to travel to congested central business districts that offered little in the way of convenient parking. Instead, they preferred to shop in leisure closer to their homes. With a variety of stores and services, shopping centers could offer one-stop shopping, making it easier to accomplish many errands at once.<sup>10</sup>

The proliferation of shopping centers across the country had a profound impact on the urban and suburban fabric of the American city, particularly in the years following World War II. Architectural historian Carole Rifkind noted in her book *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* that "Some 2,900 shopping centers had been built by 1958; 7,100 by 1963; 22,000 by 1980; almost 38,000 by 1990." The shopping center (and later the enclosed shopping mall) contributed to the decline of the central business district and ended its primacy as the city's retail and commercial center.<sup>11</sup>

As residential developments sprang up outside the city's core, real estate speculators followed the money and constructed concentrations of retail and commercial establishments designed specifically for the ease of the motoring public. These centers, generally under single ownership unified by a common architectural style, could vary in size and in the variety of services offered. A book published in the early 1950s on the design and operation of shopping centers divided them into three types: the neighborhood shopping center, the community shopping center and the regional shopping center. A neighborhood shopping center was "designed to serve a *minimum* of 750 families." Ideally, it was composed of a grocery store and drug store and service stores such as a drycleaners, beauty salon and a filling station. The community shopping center served a larger market than the neighborhood center and besides the stores listed above, it would also have numerous small specialty stores, a bank and a post office, perhaps a theater, and offices for doctors and other professionals. The regional shopping center was much larger than the neighborhood or community shopping center, covering 20 to 50 acres, and was described as the "suburban equivalent of the existing downtown shopping center." Besides all of the services mentioned above, the book recommended that regional shopping centers have at least one department store and preferably more, offering the shopper the ability to make comparisons between similar items. It should also be accessible by several major highways.<sup>12</sup>

Arguably, the Ridglea Village could be defined as a community shopping center. Although it did not have a grocery store, it had a theater, bank, numerous specialty stores and offices for businesses and professionals. There was not a department store within the Ridglea Village, although one was constructed adjacent to it in 1954 when the original component of Ridglea Village No. 2 at the southwest corner of Winthrop and Camp Bowie Boulevard was demolished. Being bisected by a major thoroughfare prevented shoppers from parking their cars and leisurely moving from one part of the shopping center to another, as they might in a regional shopping center.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation*, (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1951, third printing, 1956), 4-7, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Carole Rifkind, "A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture, (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 315.

<sup>12</sup> Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation*, 10.

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At about the time that the Ridglea Theatre was added to the Ridglea Village, the owner of a shopping center could expect that a theater would contribute between eight and fifteen per cent of the center's gross income from rent.<sup>13</sup> A movie theater's largest patronage was at night but morning and afternoon matinees could attract patrons throughout the day thereby supplying potential clientele for neighboring establishments. Attention-attracting features such as neon-lit marquees or impressive towers often made these buildings the most prominent in the centers. The Village Theater had a 3-story tower that was the dominant focal point in the Highland Park Shopping Village in Highland Park, Texas. Dallas's Lakewood (1938), Inwood (1947) and Wynnewood Theatre (ca. 1950), and Houston's River Oaks Theatre (1939) were among the most prominent buildings in each of the shopping centers in which they were located. But as the twentieth century progressed, the design of shopping centers evolved. The buildings became less ornamented and almost secondary to the ever-expanding parking lot. The shopping center's movie theater became less visually pronounced and began to blend in with its neighboring storefronts or buildings. Fort Worth's Wedgwood Theatre, constructed in the mid-to-late 1960s, was an example of a more modestly endowed shopping center theater.<sup>14</sup>

### The Ridglea Theatre and Ridglea State Bank

The Ridglea Theatre officially opened to the public on December 1, 1950. Even before its opening, local print media proclaimed it to be Fort Worth's "most modern and largest suburban theater." Much attention was given to its "Spanish Mediterranean" architecture, including its impressive tower, and the large murals in the lobby with their swashbuckling depiction of Spanish explorers arriving on the California coast with pirates in close pursuit. It was noted that the Spanish theme extended to the colors selected for the interior, notably the proscenium arch's rich scarlet red drapes with complimentary draw drapes of a peanut-colored hue. The entrance drapes were turquoise blue. The carpet in the auditorium and on the stairway was of a "Spanish design in strong colors, red predominating."<sup>15</sup>

Careful consideration had been given to the comfort of the patrons. The 1,500 push-back-style seats enabled patrons to remain seated as other patrons passed by them. Staggering of the seats from row to row allowed for greater visibility and cushy seats provided for more comfort. A soundproof "cryroom" enabled mothers with vocally unhappy children to view the movie from within a glass-walled room with little disruption to the rest of the audience. A state-of-the-art screen presented a "realistic approach to [the] third dimension" as a result of its "greater thickness, [molded] from one of the new plastic materials and the illusion of characters on the screen actually talking is furthered with the sound coming from behind the screen through thousands of small holes."<sup>16</sup>

The adjacent Ridglea State Bank also opened its doors on December 1, 1950. The bank was an affiliate of the Continental National Bank in downtown Fort Worth. George Thompson, Jr., the son of Continental National Bank founder, George

<sup>13</sup> Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> W. Dwayne Jones, "Highland Park Shopping Village" [Highland Park, Texas], National Historic Landmark Nomination Registration Form (designated February 16, 2000), <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NHLS/Text/97001393.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2011); For descriptions or images of the Lakewood, Inwood, Wynnewood and River Oaks Theatre buildings see *Dallas Morning News*, October 15 and 27, 1938, May 15, 1947 and February 5, 1950 and Anna Mod, "History in the Making," *Cite 68* (February 2006): 12; Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1987), 130.

<sup>15</sup> "Interstate's New Ridglea Theatre Set for Gala Opening Ceremony," *Fort Worth Press*, November 30, 1950.

<sup>16</sup> "Interstate's New Ridglea Theatre Set for Gala Opening Ceremony." For more information on the theater, see "Ridglea Theatre, Opening Section," *The Ridglea News* (n.d. [c. November 30, 1950]).

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Thompson, Sr., served as president of both banks. His wife, Beatrice, and Eugene Gilboe, decorator for the Ridglea Theatre and the creator of its murals, were credited with the design of the bank's interior. The *Fort Worth Press* noted that the bank's spacious interior (7,000 square feet of floor space) was finished in "light cactus green walls and sunlight yellow ceiling." The terrazzo floor was of green and tan squares. The glass door and large windows contributed to the interior lighting. The teller stations had a modern styling with the use of walnut paneling, Texas shell stone and black Formica trim. Bank executives' offices were partitioned by low walls of Texas shell stone, topped with marble and trimmed with ornamental iron. Also located in the facility were nearly 700 safety deposit boxes and a "substantial" vault with a seven inch-steel door. The need for so many safety deposit boxes was credited to the widespread purchase of war bonds during the previous decade and the growing awareness of the public of the importance of keeping such documents in a safe place. This was not only a convenient service for customers but also created another revenue source for the bank. The bank remained at this location until 1974 when it moved to a 12-story office tower a few blocks to the southwest.<sup>17</sup>

The U. S. Air Procurement Office was the first tenant of the second story of the bank wing. Other first floor tenants did not appear in city directories of the early 1950s but one known tenant was the "Cradle to College Shop." Operated by Pauline Bailey and Mrs. Willie Long Cowan, the store also had its grand opening on December 1, 1950. It sold clothing and accessories catered to infant and pre-school boys and infant to teen-age girls. The store was "artistically decorated in a combination of soft grey, green, tangerine and antique ivory."<sup>18</sup> One day after the theater, bank and the "Cradle to College" shop officially opened, an article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* announced that A. C. Luther intended to begin construction on another 2-story, 15,000 square-foot building adjacent to the theater. Construction of the building began a few months later.

### Interstate Circuit, Inc. and Movie Theaters in Fort Worth

The Interstate Circuit, Inc., the operator of the Ridglea Theatre, was one of the nation's largest theater chains during the first half of the twentieth century, operating theaters in Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. The circuit was started by Karl Hoblitzelle in 1905. Hoblitzelle worked in the office of the director of the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis where he was approached by concessionaires from the fair's midway about organizing a circuit of vaudeville theaters in the Southwest. Such a venture would have its share of risks as vaudeville in that section of the country often was associated with seedy saloons and dance halls, or conversely, with school and church programs. Hoblitzelle and his brother, George K., used their savings to start the Interstate Amusement Company. With the business located in St. Louis, the company opened its first theaters in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Waco, and San Antonio. They later expanded to Little Rock, Arkansas; Shreveport, Louisiana; and Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Ridglea Bank Opens Doors Tomorrow," *Fort Worth Press*, November 30, 1950; Fort Worth City Directory, 1949-1950, p. 1070 (Primary Source Media, Roll 0505142); "George Thompson Jr., Fort Worth Banker and Civic Leader is President of New Local Bank," "Ridglea State Bank Offers Complete Services," and "Bank Safety Deposit Boxes Available at Ridglea State" in "Ridglea State Bank Section," *The Ridglea News* (n.d. [ca. November 30, 1950]), pp. 1, 8 and 9, respectively (original copy courtesy Kristi Wilson [great granddaughter of A. C. Luther], Ridglea Interests, and Historic Fort Worth, Inc.).

<sup>18</sup> "Cradle to College Shop Formal Opening Set Dec. 1," Ridglea State Bank Section, *The Ridglea News* (n.d. [c. November 30, 1950]), p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> "Backbone of Entertainment—The City's Movies," *Fort Worth Magazine* 28 (November 1952): 19.

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Interstate's foray into vaudeville in Fort Worth started off on a grand gesture with the construction of the Majestic Theatre on Jennings Avenue near Twelfth Street in the central business district. Opening night was on November 27, 1905. Nothing in the city could compare with the Majestic Theatre. As described in theater historian Jan Jones' book, *Renegades, Showmen, and Angels* (TCU Press, 2006), the Majestic lived up to its name. "From the lobby's mosaic floors and sparkling clusters of crystal lights to the auditorium's proscenium and walls finished in understated tones of old rose, ivory, and gold, every aspect of the new theater's ornamentation was carefully crafted to suggest propriety and respectability." Such attention to physical amenities as well to the selection of attention-grabbing acts assured the theater's, and the company's, success. But competition from another house led Interstate to construct a new and much larger Majestic Theatre at the corner of Commerce and Tenth Street. Early reports indicated that the building was to cost \$200,000 with an additional \$100,000 to be spent on the interior. In an arrangement that would be familiar with patrons of the Ridglea Theatre forty years later, the new Majestic would share building space with another tenant. The new Majestic opened on August 28, 1911 and according to Jan Jones, remained Fort Worth's "most important theatrical venue" for the next 30 years.<sup>20</sup>

However, the rise in the popularity of motion pictures, or movies, had a profound impact on the entertainment industry in the first decade of the twentieth century and vaudeville was forced to adapt. Reportedly, in 1908, the Panther Vaudeville at 508 Main became the first movie house in Fort Worth to offer vaudeville acts as secondary features. By 1913, Interstate's Majestic Theatre was regularly offering motion pictures as a part of its line-up. In 1931, the Majestic closed its doors but reopened in 1933 as a second-run movie theater and occasionally hosted road shows. Downtown's Palace, Worth and Hollywood theaters had become the premiere movie palaces in the city and would remain at the top for many years.<sup>21</sup>

Movie theaters did not stay confined to the central business district. Neighborhood or what was termed "suburban" theaters mostly appeared on well-traveled thoroughfares in all sections of the city. Although these theaters might boast of the latest equipment and design, they typically were relegated to showing second-run movies as first-run movies were reserved for the major downtown theaters. The Parkway was Interstate's first suburban theater in Fort Worth, opening on November 27, 1935 at Eighth Avenue and Park Place on the city's Southside. Constructed at a reported cost of \$100,000, its architectural style was described as "ultra-modern" by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the advent of World War II and the material shortages immediately following the war, the decade of the 1940s was one of great expansion for the Interstate Circuit in Fort Worth. The Bowie, located on the famed Camp Bowie Boulevard in West Fort Worth opened on January 31, 1941 with a seating capacity of just under 1,000. The Tower opened in February 1942 in the Riverside district. The construction of the River Oaks Theatre, located in the west side suburb with the same name, began in September 1944 and it opened in the spring of 1945. It had a seating capacity of 601. The 750-seat Seventh Street Theatre was located west of downtown near Seventh Street's intersection with Camp Bowie Boulevard and was constructed at a cost of \$200,000. It opened in August 1948.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Jan Jones, *Renegades, Showmen, and Angels* (Fort Worth, Texas: TCU Press, 2006), 92-95, 111-17.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, *Renegades, Showmen, and Angels*, 101, 147-48.

<sup>22</sup> "Hollywood Premiere Arranged for Opening of New, Modern 1,200-Seat Parkway Theater," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 27, 1935 (evening edition) AR406-7-78-71, FWSTC/SCUTA.

<sup>23</sup> *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 31, 1941 (morning edition), February 20, 1942 (morning edition); September 10, 1944 (morning edition), May 1, 1945 (morning edition), August 26, 1948 (evening edition), AR406-7-85-149, FWSTC/SCUTA.

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In his book *Cinema Houston: Nickelodeon to Megaplex* (University of Texas Press, 2007) David Welling provides an intriguing overview of the carefully orchestrated design and construction process that Interstate had in place by the mid-1940s:

The decision to build a new theatre had evolved into an elaborate process, beginning with the executive department, which chose a location by considering suitability, population, and distances to neighboring theatres. The legal department cleared any restrictions and handled all legal documents, and real estate department closed the deal on the property. Decisions regarding building style, size, space usage, seating, parking, concessions, and additional retail space fell to the construction department. A separate purchasing agent was involved in the acquisition of everything from carpets and drinking fountains to ticket machines. Sound and air-conditioning engineers were involved in the process, as were the departments handling insurance, publicity and advertising, and booking, as well as finally, the house manager and staff. Simplicity had become a thing of the past.

The situation was a bit different with Fort Worth's Ridglea Theatre as the Luther organization retained ownership of the building and the building's exterior design, which influenced the interior's design, including that of the murals in the lobby, was dictated by the Spanish Eclectic motif found elsewhere in the Ridglea Village shopping center. As early as 1947, Luther was contemplating the addition of a movie theater to his Ridglea Village. But the special *Ridglea News* section devoted to the theater's opening attests to the existence of a multi-functional team responsible for the detailed planning and execution of the design and construction of the Ridglea Theatre.<sup>24</sup>

At the time that the Ridglea Theatre opened, the Interstate Circuit, Inc. operated 11 other theaters in Fort Worth and its suburbs. Four of these were in the Central Business District. They were the Hollywood Theatre, 408 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street; Majestic Theatre, 1101 Commerce; Palace Theatre, 113 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street; and the Worth Theatre, 312 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Neighborhood or suburban theaters previously mentioned that were still a part of the Interstate chain at that time were the Bowie, Parkway, River Oaks, Seventh Street, and Tower. Other Interstate houses included the Gateway Theatre, 4101 E. Lancaster Avenue and Varsity Theatre, 3006 E. Rosedale Street.<sup>25</sup>

Other Fort Worth and suburban theaters listed in the 1951 City Directory included the Azle Theatre, 2206 Azle Avenue; Belknap Drive In, 5709 E. Belknap; Como Theatre, 5531 Bonnell; Cowtown Drive In, 2230 Jacksboro Highway; Gem Theater, 6603 E. Lancaster; Grand Theatre, 1110 Fabons; Haltom City Theatre, 5603 E. Belknap; Heights Theatre, 4137 W. Rosedale; Ideal Theatre, 1408 Main; Joy Theatre, 1911 E. 4<sup>th</sup>; Liberty Theater, 1107 Main; Marine Theatre, 1438 N. Main; Morgan Theatre, 608 N. Sylvania; New Isis, 2403 N. Main; New Liberty Theatre, 108 E. 10<sup>th</sup> (office); Ritz Theatre, 909 Calhoun; Rosedale Theatre, 210 E. Rosedale; Sunset Theatre, 8110 White Settlement Road; TCU Theatre, 3055 S. University; Tivoli Theatre; 808 W. Magnolia; Village Theatre, 540 S. Cherry Lane; and the White Theatre, 3030 Hemphill. Some of these may have been little more than storefront theaters. Theaters such as the Grand, Rosedale and the

<sup>24</sup> David Welling, *Cinema Houston: From Nickelodeon to Megaplex* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2007), pp. 160-61; See "Ridglea Theatre Opening Section," *Ridglea News* [Fort Worth, Texas], n.d. [ca. November 30, 1950], (original copy courtesy Kristi Wilson, Ridglea Interests and Historic Fort Worth, Inc.).

<sup>25</sup> Morrison and Fourmy, *Fort Worth City Directory, 1951* (Dallas, Texas: Morrison and Fourmy, 1951), p. 1366; "Backbone of Entertainment—The City's Movies."

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Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Como catered to African American audiences whereas the Marine catered to the Northside's growing Hispanic population.<sup>26</sup> The Ridglea Theater was open to white audiences only, lacking the separate entrance and seating area for African Americans sometimes found at other Texas theaters during the Jim Crow era.

Through various partnerships with Paramount and independent theater operators, the Interstate Circuit became the largest theater operator in the Southwest. Smaller independent operators complained that major film studios such as Paramount favored the distribution of movies to theaters with which they were affiliated. Antitrust litigations against the studios resulted in a unanimous decision in 1948 by the U.S. Supreme Court that the practices of the studios constituted an illegal trust. A 1949 consent decree with the Department of Justice forced the studios to divest themselves of their theaters and thereby separate the distribution of films from the exhibition of films. Paramount split into two corporations, Paramount Pictures, Inc. which was involved in production and distribution, and United Paramount Pictures, which exhibited films. All of Interstate's theaters in Texas and New Mexico were combined under the ownership of United Paramount, Inc. During the divestiture stage, the circuit considering selling the Ridglea. But the Ridglea remained among the Interstate/Paramount holdings in Fort Worth. Among those theaters in Fort Worth that Interstate sold or withdrew operating partnerships were downtown's Majestic and Hollywood Theatres and the Varsity.<sup>27</sup>

The Ridglea Theatre was constructed at a time when fewer people were patronizing the movie theaters. Nationwide, movie attendance was at its peak from 1946 to 1948 when it was estimated that 90 million tickets were sold weekly at an average cost of .40 cents. By 1951, the first full year that the Ridglea was in operation, the weekly attendance was 54 million with the average ticket costing .53 cents. By 1957, 90 percent of U.S. households owned a television set which encouraged people to stay home. Despite the introduction of technical innovations such as wide screens and stereo sound, movie attendance continued to decline. Downtown and suburban theaters closed and were often replaced by big-box multiplex theaters, generally located elsewhere in the suburbs and along interstate or other heavily traveled highways.<sup>28</sup>

In 1970, Interstate and Texas Consolidated joined forces under the name of ABC Interstate, Inc. with the new firm operating 83 movie houses in Texas. By that date, Interstate was operating seven theaters in the Fort Worth market, five less than in 1951. The company still had a presence in downtown through the Worth and Palace theaters. The other theaters in the chain were the Seventh Street, Ridglea, Mansfield Drive-In, Gateway, and Wedgwood. The latter was a suburban theater constructed in the Wedgwood Village shopping center in southwest Fort Worth ca. 1968. On October 31, 1971 the company vacated the Worth Theatre leaving the Palace to function as the circuit's sole downtown's theater for a few more years.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Morrison and Fourmy, *Fort Worth City Directory, 1951* (Dallas, Texas: Morrison and Fourmy, 1951), p. 1366. The Grand Theatre, constructed in 1938 currently serves as a church. The Como and Rosedale theaters are not extant. The Marine, constructed c. 1918 as the Roseland Theater, is now owned by the City of Fort Worth and functions as a multipurpose venue focused on Hispanic arts and entertainment; Gayle Hanson, email correspondence with Susan Allen Kline, February 2, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> "Interstate Theatre Collection," <http://dallaslibrary2.org/texas/archives/07701.html> (accessed January 25, 2011); Welling, *Cinema Houston*, 174; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 26, 1951 (evening edition), March 4, 1951 (evening edition), January 30, 1952 (evening edition), November 23, 1952 (evening edition) and February 25, 1954 (morning edition), AR406-7-85-149, FWSTC/SCUTA.

<sup>28</sup> Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994): 163, 195.

<sup>29</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1970 and September 21, 1971; *Polk's Fort Worth (Tarrant County, Texas) City Directory, 1970*, (Dallas: R. L. Polk, 1970), p. 508.

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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Following ABC Interstate, the Ridglea was owned by Plitt Southern Theatres, Inc. and in 1987, Cinemark took over operation of the theater. The theater building was owned by the R. K. Maulsby Family Trust from 1991 to 2009. In 1994, the theater was renovated and operated under the name Ridglea Movie Grill. Alterations to the lobby included the addition of a kitchen for the preparation of light meals and snacks to be served during the presentation of movies. The auditorium's seats were removed and tiers of cabaret style seating were installed. The balcony was extended and partitioned to create two small theaters. In the late 1990s, new operators converted the theater to a live music venue with the ability to occasionally show movies. The theater was purchased in 2009 by Fixfunding, LLC of Dallas. For a while, it was feared that the building would be sold and razed to be replaced by a bank. Local preservationists and fans of the building protested the proposal. In December 2010, the theater and the bank wing were purchased by Jerry Shults. Renovation to the building commenced in early 2011. The Ridglea Theater Building became a local landmark a few months later when the Fort Worth City Council approved its designation as Highly Significant Endangered.<sup>30</sup>

The renovation of the Ridglea Theater will bring Fort Worth's largest suburban, single screen theater back to life as an entertainment venue. Most of the city's suburban theaters are no more. Some of have been demolished (Parkway, River Oaks, Seventh Street and TCU), adapted to other uses (the Bowie now houses a bank and the Wedgwood a church) or stand vacant (White/Berry Theatre).

### Architectural Significance of the Ridglea Theatre

The Ridglea Theatre is an excellent local example of the Spanish Eclectic style applied to a commercial building. It bears such hallmarks of the style as a low-pitched roof covered with red clay tiles, balconies of heavy timbers with wood balustrades on the façade and balconies and balconets with ornamental metal balustrades along the second story of the west elevation. The Spanish Eclectic motif is also carried out through the use of wood grilles on doors and in the interior of the theater, the Moorish-influenced design on the large marquee, and the 70-foot stone tower with belvedere. The designers of the building likely worked closely with A. C. Luther to insure that it blended with the architectural motif of the Ridglea Village.

The use of the Spanish Eclectic style for a suburban movie theater in Fort Worth was uncommon as most were of sleek modern designs. Spanish Colonial designs were popular for some large downtown theaters in Texas as well as others across the country during the era when movie theaters were often referred to as "movie palaces." The interior of San Antonio's Majestic Theatre (opened in June 1929) was opulently decorated much like a Spanish village.<sup>31</sup> The architectural firm that designed the Ridglea Theatre, Pettigrew and Worley of Dallas, was one of the premier designers of movie theaters in the state from the late 1930s to the early 1950s and designed many of the Interstate Circuit's theaters during this time. One feature that these theaters often shared with the Ridglea Theatre was the incorporation of a tower or tall vertical sign on the façade, either emanating from the marquee or located adjacent to it. These towers were often tall cylinders of futuristic design decorated with neon, particularly neon lettering spelling out the name of the theater.

<sup>30</sup> *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 17, 1993; Tarrant Appraisal District Real Estate Data for 6025 Camp Bowie Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas, [http://www.tad.org/Datasearch/re\\_powner.cfm?Account...](http://www.tad.org/Datasearch/re_powner.cfm?Account...) (accessed June 30, 2011); *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 1-7, 1994 (Tarrant Business); *Fort Worth Business Press*, December 10, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> S. Allen Chambers, Jr., *National Landmarks, America's Treasures*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 452. San Antonio's Majestic Theatre was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993.

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Ridglea Theatre  
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The principals of the firm Pettigrew and Worley were H. F. Pettigrew and John A. Worley. Among the theaters credited to the firms are:

- Lakewood Theater, Dallas (1938, extant)
- Lobo Theatre, Albuquerque, NM (1938, extant, no longer used as a theater)
- 1,300-seat theater, Tyler (ca. 1939)
- 700-seat theater, Bryan (ca. 1939)
- 1000-seat theater, San Antonio (ca. 1939)
- 1,700-seat theater, San Antonio (consulting architect, ca. 1939)
- Haskell Theatre (renovation), Dallas (ca. 1939)
- River Oaks Theatre, Houston (1939, extant)
- The Alabama, Houston (1939, extant, no longer used as a theater)
- Varsity Theater (renovation), University Park (1940, extant, altered, no longer used as a theater)
- 800-seat theater in San Marcos (1940)
- Strand Theatre, Dallas (1941)
- Santa Rosa, Houston (1946, demolished)
- Broadway Theatre, Houston (1947, demolished)
- Fulton, Theatre, Houston, (1947, demolished)
- Forest Theatre, Dallas (1949, extant, vacant)
- Wynnewood Theatre, Dallas (1950, demolished)

### Artistic Significance of the Murals in the Ridglea Theatre

The murals in the Ridglea Theater are significant at the local level as extant examples of historic decorative painting, and more specifically, a rare extant example of theater art in Fort Worth. They were the work of Eugene John Gilboe, a decorator and muralist who designed numerous murals and other examples of decorative painting for buildings across Texas. Although a complete survey of historic interior murals and decorative painting has not been undertaken for buildings in Fort Worth, the few documented examples cannot compare in scope and scale to the murals found on the walls of the lobby of the Ridglea Theatre. Gilboe's choice of Spanish sailors and pirates arriving on the coast of California is an example of epic storytelling with few rivals in Fort Worth.

In her book *Decorating Texas: Decorative Painting in the Lone Star State from the 1850s to the 1950s* (Texas Christian University Press, 1993), interiors historian Buie Harwood identified several buildings in Fort Worth that had examples of decorative painting executed between 1900 and 1950. These included the Wharton-Scott House (Thistle Hill) which contains examples of stenciling, infill painting, and freehand painting by an unknown artist or artists ca. 1904; St. Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church, freehand painting, date undetermined by an unknown artist; Blackstone Hotel, freehand by J. Buck Winn, ca. 1930s (painted over); Elks Lodge/YWCA, first floor lounge, stencil ca. 1928, artist unknown; Postmaster's Office, Main Post Office, six paintings on panels, created by Dwight Holmes and W. H. Baker in 1934; Texas and Pacific Building, freehand, artists unknown, ca. 1931 [this may be referring to the ornate ceilings in the waiting rooms of the Texas and Pacific Terminal]; U. S. Courthouse, Fourth Floor Courtroom, three freehand oil on canvas paintings by Frank Mechau installed in 1940 and titled "The Taking of Sam Bass," "Flags over Texas," and

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"Texas Rangers in Camp;" and Ridglea Theatre, freehand murals designed by Eugene Gilboe and executed in 1950 by his assistants H. R. McBride and Elizabeth Aikins.<sup>32</sup>

The paintings for the United States Courthouse and the Main Post Office were executed as part of New Deal art programs of the 1930s-early 1940s. The paintings in the Post Office were executed under the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) within the U.S. Treasury Department. The paintings in the federal courthouse were installed under the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. Contemporaneous with the Mechau murals and not included in Harwood's study is a mural of a kneeling Christ praying while disciples sleep in the background. This mural is located on the wall behind the altar in Morning Chapel CME Church, located at 901 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in downtown Fort Worth. It was painted by Pauline Belew in 1941 and retouched in later years. The building was constructed between 1934 and 1936 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.<sup>33</sup>

Of all of the murals and decorative paintings listed above, the murals at the Ridglea Theatre are notable for their size and subject matter. Although not based on an actual event or even a specific piece of literature or film, the subject of the theater's murals, Spanish explorers and pirates about to land on the coast of California, has a direct correlation to the architectural style of the theater building and that of the Ridglea Village. Indeed, a caption under a photograph of the murals that appeared in the section of the *Ridglea News* devoted to the theater's opening stated "The above mural was inspired by the beauty of Ridglea, the buildings, and the unified architecture. [Gilboe's] painting depicts the landing of the Spaniards, followed by pirates, on the shores of California."<sup>34</sup>

Eugene John Gilboe (September 23, 1881-November 14, 1964) was a native of Oslo, Norway. He trained at the Oslo Art Academy and reportedly with well-known English and German masters. He immigrated to the United States in 1900. He worked for prominent New York studios including Baumgartens, Rambusches, and Wilmer A. French Company. Before coming to Texas he completed projects in Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Duluth, and Seattle. A specialty was the creation of backdrops for theater stages.<sup>35</sup>

Gilboe came to Texas in 1933. One of his first jobs was working for Dallas architect George Dahl. Under Dahl, he served as the interior decorator for the library and auditorium at the University of Texas at Austin in 1933. By 1934 he was working with Dahl on plans for the Texas Centennial at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas. Studies he created for the grounds as well as the "'Court of Honor,' a 'Triumphal Arch,' the 'Plaza of States' and two different ideas for huge

<sup>32</sup> Buie Harwood, *Decorating Texas: Decorative Painting in the Lone Star State from the 1850s to the 1950s*, (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1993), 99, 101, 102, 103, 104. See also Carol Roark, *Fort Worth's Legendary Landmarks* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995), 142 and "CWA Art Selections to be Passed On," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 16, 1934. Additional information on the Frank Mechau paintings was supplied by Steve Kline, Historic Preservation and Fine Arts Officer, Region 7, General Services Administration, April 27, 2011, (copy in possession of Susan Allen Kline).

<sup>33</sup> Susan Allen Kline "Morning Chapel CME Church," [Fort Worth, Texas], National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Listed August 27, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Ridglea Theatre, Opening Section," *The Ridglea News* (n.d. [ca November 30, 1950]), pp. 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Buie Harwood, *Decorating Texas: Decorative Painting in the Lone Star State from the 1850s to the 1950s*, (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1993), 60. Examples of stage backdrops designed by Gilboe are available through the University of Minnesota Libraries website at <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/assests/Twin%20City%20Scenic%20Company%20Collection> (accessed January 29, 2011).

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entrance portals" were placed on display in the lobby of Dallas' Majestic Theater in October of that year. He continued working with Dahl supervising the artists and sculptors working on the project.<sup>36</sup>

From 1937 to 1940, Gilboe was in partnership with George A. Franklin in the firm Franklin and Gilboe Company. While working with Franklin, the two shared an office in the Melba Theater Building in Dallas, a fitting location for a company whose work included the design of interior decorations for theaters. He went into business for himself in 1940 and retired from business ca. 1954. He developed a close relationship with the Interstate Circuit and the Publix Theater Corporation and is credited with the interior decoration of at least 26 theaters in Texas. As of 1992, Buie Harwood had documented 35 buildings in Texas that Gilboe had decorated. Cities that contained Gilboe's work included Amarillo, Arlington, Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, Denton, Fort Worth, Galveston, Houston, San Antonio and Waco. The cost for his designs could range from \$2,000 to \$6,000.<sup>37</sup>

Below is a partial list of buildings known to have contained artwork or other forms of decorative painting and designs by Eugene Gilboe, some of which were not identified in Harwood's study:

- Esperson Building, Houston, ca. 1928, Biblical figure
- Main Building (formerly the Library) and Student Union, The University of Texas at Austin, stenciling, infill painting, freehand painting, 1933
- Continental Building, Dallas (Franklin & Gilboe)
- Lakewood Theatre, Dallas, 1938 (Gilboe directed the decoration of the building)
- Bowie Theatre, Fort Worth, 1940-41 (painted over/destroyed)
- Broadway Theatre, Galveston, subject: exotic landscape, freehand painting, 1947 (painted over)
- Garden Oaks Theatre, Houston, ca. 1947
- Santa Rosa, Houston, ca. 1947 (demolished),
- Campus Theater, Denton, ca. 1949
- Arlington Theater, Arlington
- Inwood Theatre, Dallas, 1947
- Circle Theater, Dallas, ca. 1947
- Andes Candies, Dallas, 1948
- Majestic Theater, Dallas (redecorated) 1948
- Forest Theater, Dallas, ca. 1949
- Ridglea Theater, Fort Worth, 1950
- 25<sup>th</sup> Street Theater, Waco, date unknown, chariot riders
- Esquire Theater, Amarillo, ca. 1948, cowboys on horseback (demolished ca. 1980)<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> "Majestic Lobby Display," *Dallas Morning News*, October 29, 1934; "E. J. Gilboe Dies at 83; Rites Today," *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1964.

<sup>37</sup> E. J. Gilboe Dies at 83," *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1964; *Dallas Morning News*, September 24, 1939; Harwood *Decorating Texas*, 81, 82, 83.

<sup>38</sup> Harwood, *Decorating Texas*, 81, 82, 83; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 31, 1941 (morning edition), AR406-7-85-149, FWSTC-SCUTA; *Dallas Morning News*, October 10, 1938, August 18, 1940, May 15, 1947, October 30, 1947, March 26, 1948, and October 6, 1948.

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The murals in the Ridglea Theatre are believed to be the only surviving theater murals in Fort Worth and are among a small number of surviving theater murals across the state. Interiors historian Buie Harwood noted that by the early 1990s, there were more than 20 "extant examples of movie theaters with interior ornamentation dating from the late 1930s through the early 1950s, with decorative painting dating to the time of construction." According to Harwood,

The best examples exhibit the work of Eugene John Gilboe and are located in Dallas and Houston. The buildings vary in size, character, form, balance, materials, and coloration. While the exterior design primarily borrows from the national architectural model, the interior composition changes according to a particular theme. In Texas, it is common to see western landscapes, fantasy images, foliage motifs, and exotic environments. Colors usually reflect subjects and themes as well as fashionable national trends. There is much variety in hue, value, and intensity.

The Ridglea Theatre and its murals are exceptions to Harwood's generalization. The theater's architectural design did not follow "the national architectural model" (i.e. modernistic design) although the murals do reflect Gilboe's tendency to use "fantasy images" and "exotic environments" which in the case of the Ridglea Theatre, were highly complimentary to the building's architecture. Regarding the Ridglea Theatre murals, Harwood placed them within the context of Gilboe's work by stating

Realistic in interpretation, the murals illustrate another of Gilboe's artistic accomplishments. Figures are the primary focus—frequently intertwined with a picturesque environment—and became a popular theme for his projects. Similar concepts appeared in the 25<sup>th</sup> Street Theater in Waco, with chariot riders, and in the Esquire Theater (ca. 1948) in Amarillo, with cowboys on horseback in stylized southwestern landscapes, as well as in the earlier Esperson Building (ca. 1928) in Houston, which includes a biblical figure standing by an ancient well. Often the perspective is flat with images overlapping to show depth. Although a variety of paints were available to him, Gilboe worked primarily in an oil-base medium.<sup>39</sup>

The Ridglea Theatre is nominated to the National Register at the local level of significance. It has historical significance under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation as the home to the Ridglea Theatre, one of Fort Worth's few surviving single-screen theater buildings and its grandest suburban theater. It functioned as a movie theater for over forty years. It is eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an excellent local example of the Spanish Eclectic style as applied to a theater/commercial building. It features many hallmarks of the style including masonry construction, a tower with arched belvedere, low-pitched roof covered with red clay tile, and balconies with wood and ornamental balustrades. The Spanish Eclectic style of the theater made it unique among Fort Worth's other suburban theaters (many of which have been demolished) as these were typically constructed in a "modern" style. The Ridglea Theatre is also eligible under Criterion C at the local level for the artistic significance of the Eugene John Gilboe murals located in the lobby of the theater. Placed on three walls of the lobby, the larger-than-life murals depict the exotic theme of Spanish explorers and pirates arriving on the shore of California. Theaters constructed between the late 1930s and early 1950s often had murals in their lobbies and/or the auditoriums. The murals in the lobby of the Ridglea Theatre are rare surviving examples of theater art in Fort Worth. The period of significance is from 1950 to 1961, which encompasses the year that the theater building was completed and its continued use as the home of the Ridglea Theatre and other commercial purposes. The year 1961 corresponds with the National Register's fifty-year guidelines.

<sup>39</sup> Harwood *Decorating Texas*, 60, 83.

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Ridglea Theatre  
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Ridglea Theatre  
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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** Approximately 3 acres

| <u>UTM REFERENCES</u> | <u>Zone</u> | <u>Easting</u> | <u>Northing</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1.                    | 14          | 648576         | 2622309         |

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** The nominated property includes the following lots in the Luther Quadrangle Addition, Fort Worth, Texas: Lots A1, A2A, A2A2, B, 3B and 3B1

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY** (with assistance from Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator)

**NAME / TITLE:** Susan Allen Kline, Historic Preservation Consultant

**ORGANIZATION:**

**DATE:** July 2011

**STREET & NUMBER:** 2421 Shirley Avenue

**TELEPHONE:** 817-921-0127

**CITY OR TOWN:** Fort Worth

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 76109

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see continuation sheet Figure-28 through Figure-29)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-42 through Photo-43)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** (see continuation sheets Figure-30 through Figure-41)

**PROPERTY OWNER**

**NAME:** Jerry Shults, Amy Lynn, Inc.

**STREET & NUMBER:** 5800 Maple Avenue

**TELEPHONE:** 214-654-0682

**CITY OR TOWN:** Dallas

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 75235

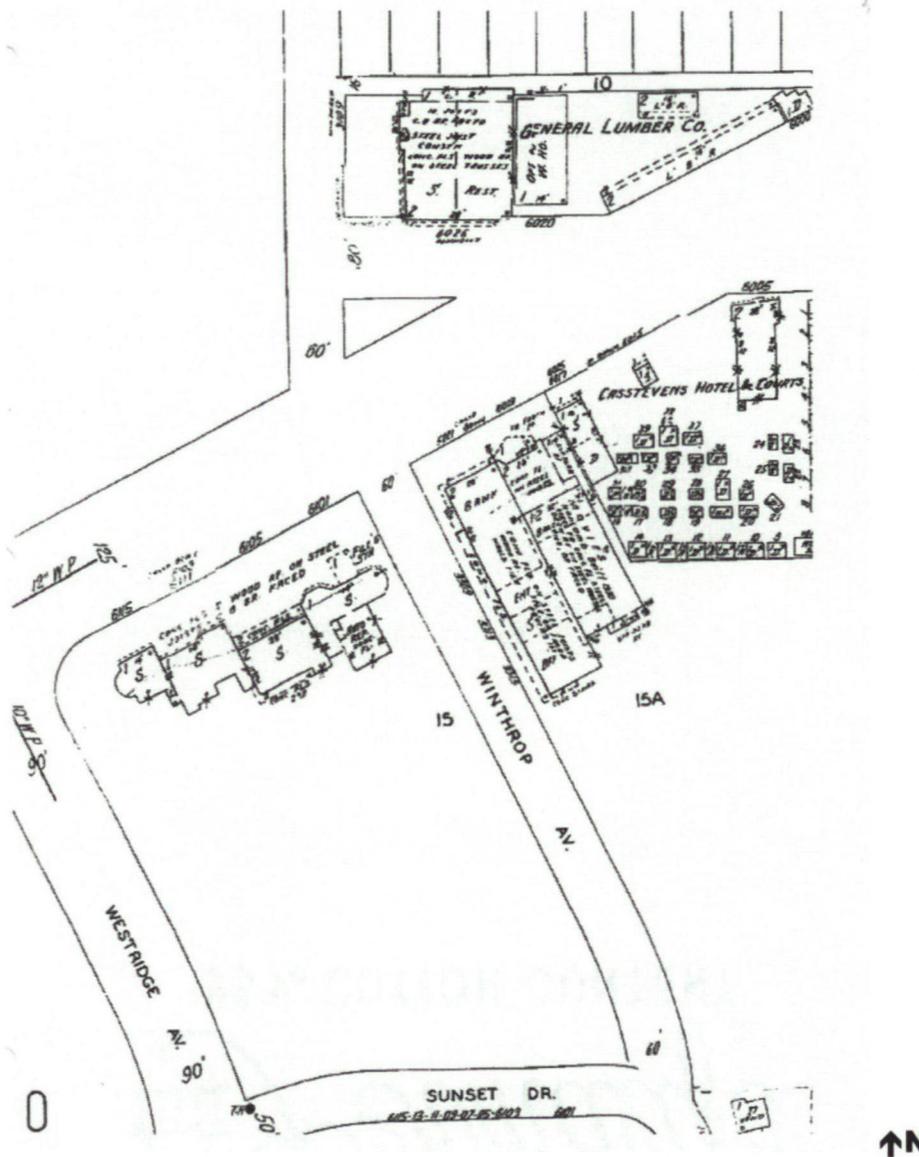
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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Fort Worth, Texas, Volume 4, Sheet 465, 1951, showing one of the original quadrants of Ridglea located west of the theater building. (no scale).



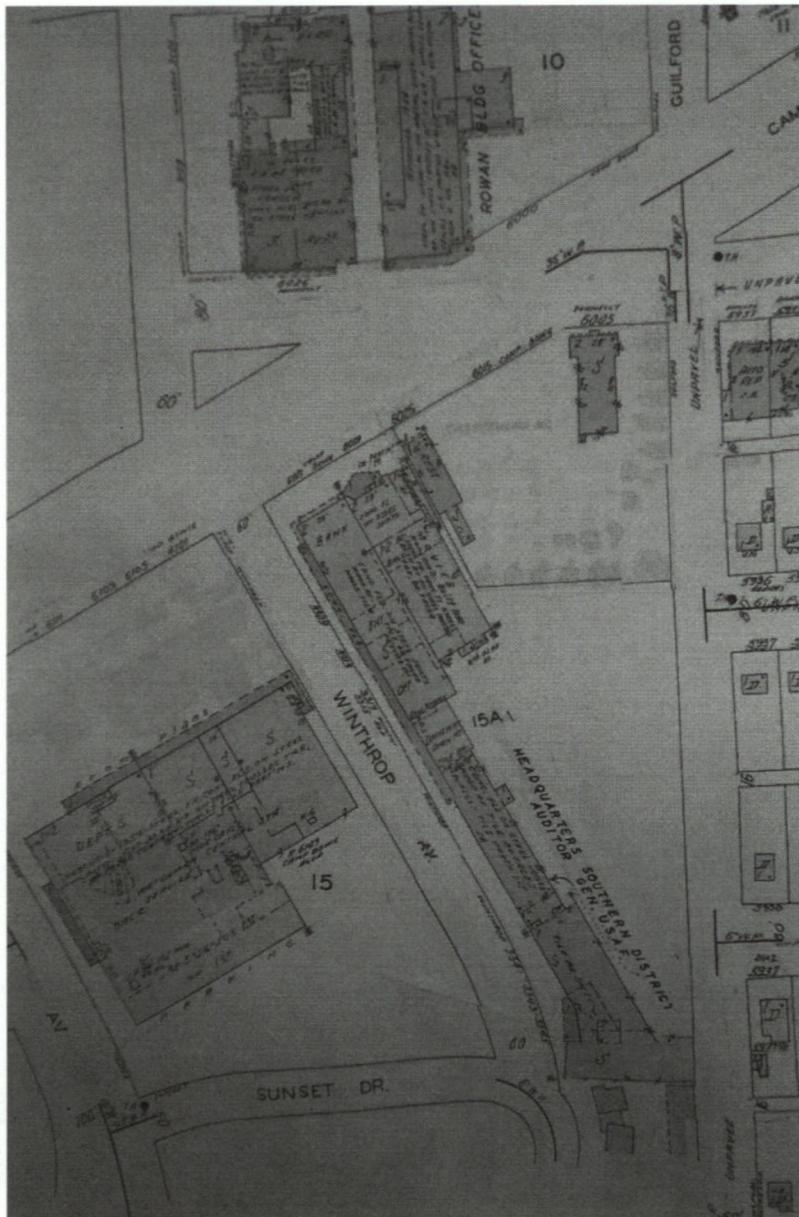
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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Fort Worth, Texas, Volume 4, Sheet 465, updated to ca. 1962. Note ghost of a 1- and 2-story building located at the southwest corner of Camp Bowie Boulevard and Winthrop Avenue. It was one of the four original components of the Ridglea Village. *Courtesy Historic Fort Worth, Inc. (no scale)*



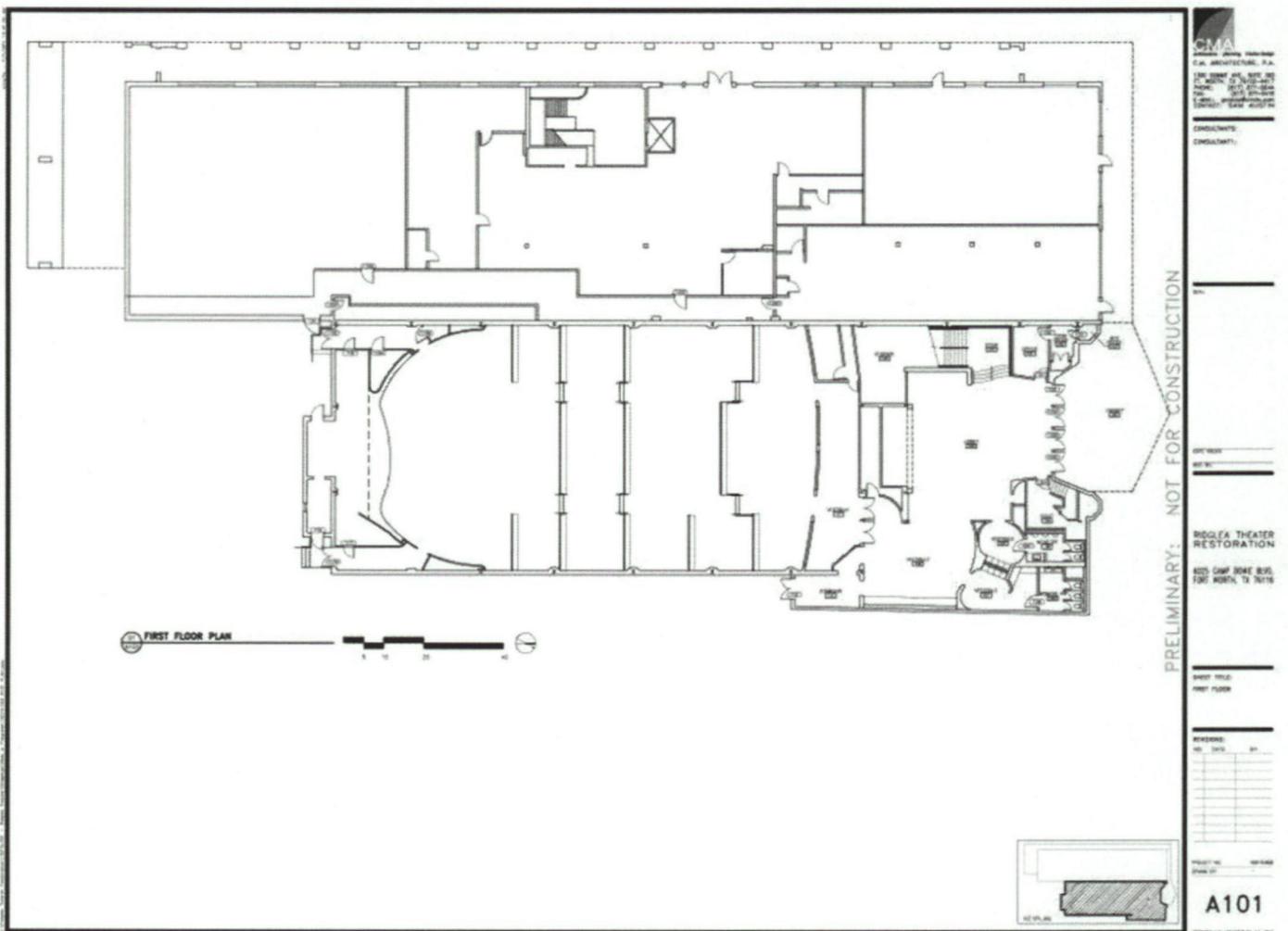
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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Preliminary plan, first floor, Ridglea Theatre and Bank Building. *Courtesy CMA Architects.* (no scale)





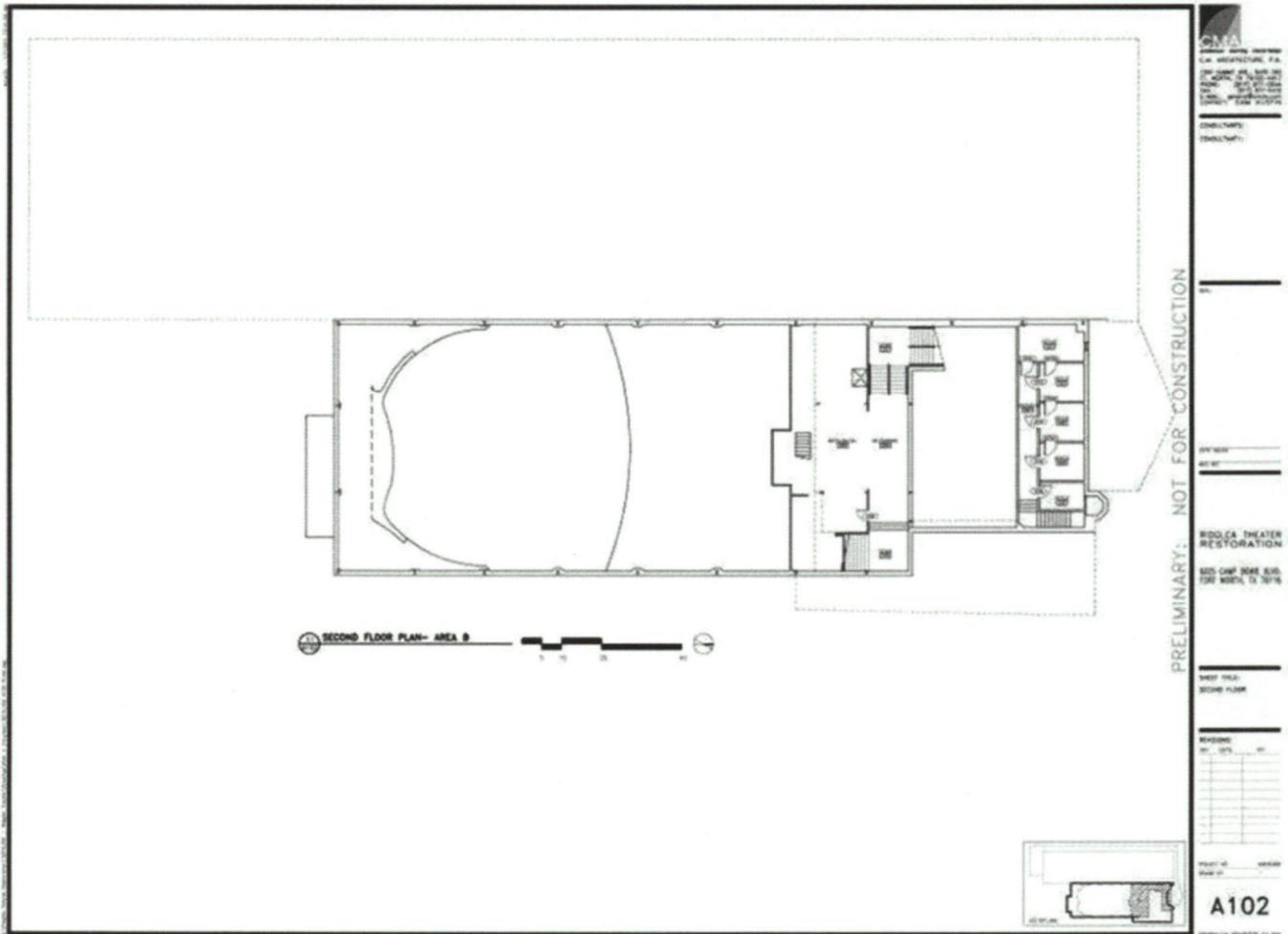
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Ridglea Theatre  
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Preliminary plan, second floor of theater - Area B (mezzanine level). *Courtesy CMA Architects (no scale)*





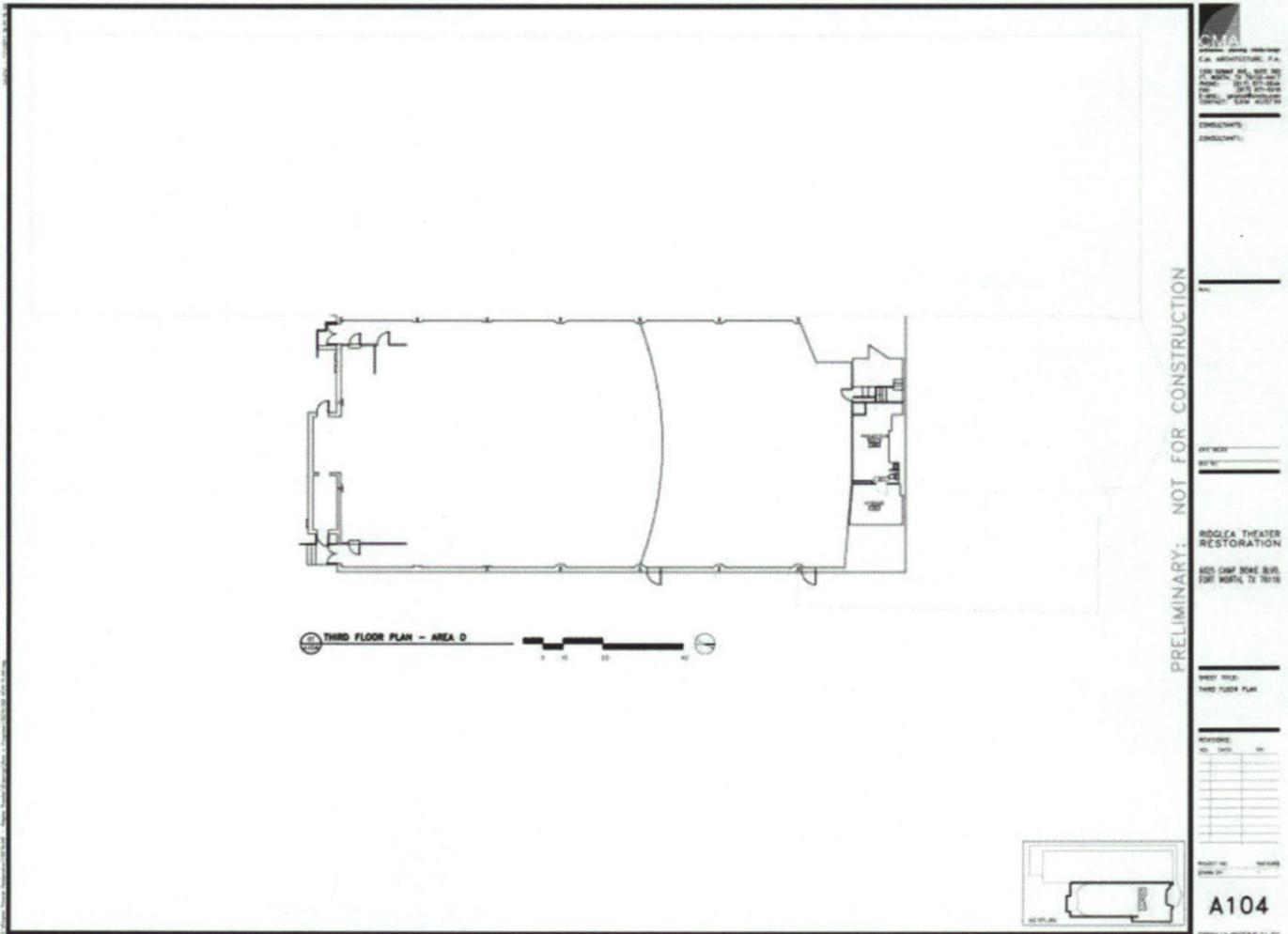
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Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Preliminary plan, third floor -Area D (projection booth). *Courtesy CMA Architects (no scale)*



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 35

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Ridglea Theatre, early 1960s. Box 27-b-5. *Courtesy Hoblitzelle and Interstate Theater Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 36

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Fans line up outside the Ridglea Theatre during "Batman" movie sneak peak preview, June 23, 1989. AR406-6 #8845. *Courtesy Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.*



Interior of the Ridglea Theatre, December 19, 1951. AR406-6-1-26-51. *Courtesy Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 37

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Interior, lobby from first landing of stairs along west wall, Ridglea Theatre, 1980s, showing lobby floor, original concession stand, portion of mural on east wall, and non-original lighting scheme.



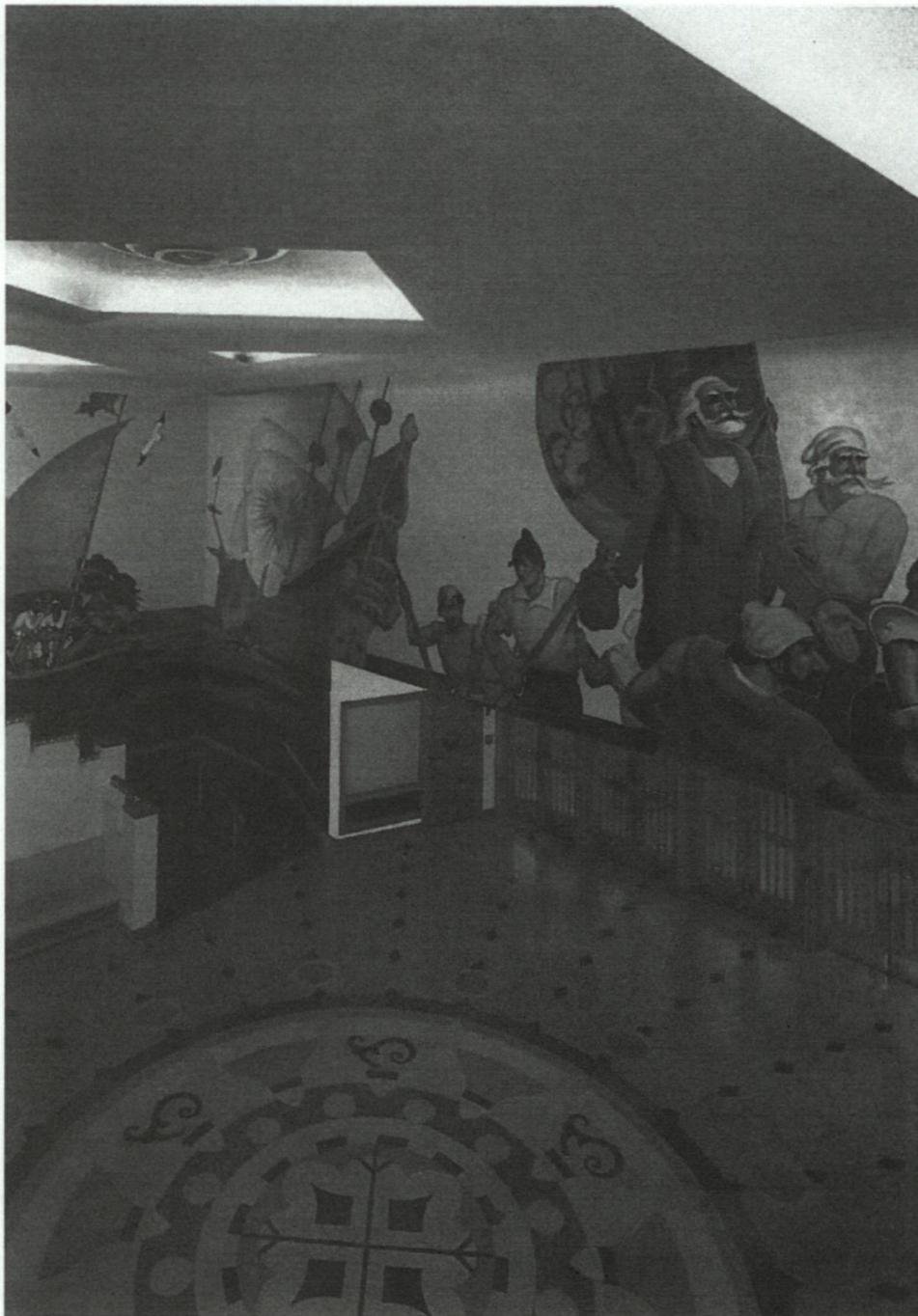
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 38

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Interior, view of lobby from mezzanine, Ridglea Theatre, 1980s, showing lobby floor, stairs, portions of murals on west and north walls, and non-original lighting scheme.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 39

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Cover of *The Ridglea News* special section on the opening of the Ridglea Theatre (not dated, ca. November 30, 1950).  
*Courtesy Historic Fort Worth, Inc. and Steve Wilson and Kristi Wilson, Ridglea Interests, Fort Worth, Texas.*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 40

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Photos of Eugene J. Gilboe's murals inside the lobby of the Ridglea Theatre. From *The Ridglea News* special opening section for the Ridglea Theatre (not dated, ca. November 30, 1950, pp. 12-13). The lower photograph in the advertisement shows the bank wing of the building. *Courtesy Historic Fort Worth, Inc. and Steve Wilson and Kristi Wilson, Ridglea Interests, Fort Worth, Texas.*

The above scenes are photographs of the colorful murals in the lobby of The Ridglea Theatre. The paintings were conceived and planned by Eugene Gilboe. Mr. Gilboe is one of Texas' foremost painters of murals. A number of his frescos adorn the walls of prominent buildings in the State of Texas.  
The above mural was inspired by the beauty of Ridglea, its buildings, and its varied architecture. Gilboe draws from the deep well, year 1950. His painting depicts the landing of the Spaniards, followed by pirates, on the shores of California.

# WELCOME

**We are proud to welcome the new businesses and U. S. Air Force Procurement Office to Ridglea. The Ridglea Shopping Village has been designed to serve the fast-growing western section of Fort Worth.**

**It is a pleasure for us to build and keep pace with the development of this great area.**

Ridglea State Bank  
Ridglea Theatre  
Cradle to College Shop  
Fritz Keller  
U. S. Air Procurement Office

**A. C. Luther Realty Co.**

A. C. LUTHER  
EARL WILSON, JR.  
J. T. LUTHER, JR.

EXCLUSIVE DEVELOPERS  
WESTOVER HILLS  
RIVERVIEW ESTATES  
CRESTWOOD  
RIDGLEA  
RIDGLEA NORTH  
RIDGLEA HILLS

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

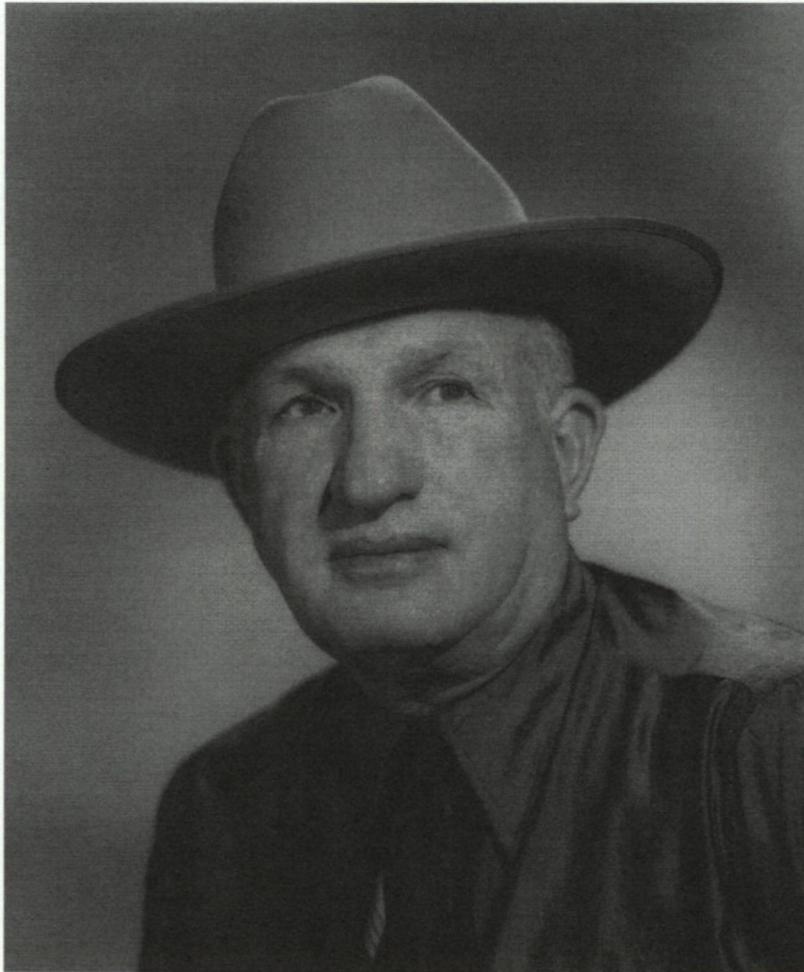
## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 41

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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"Mr. Ridglea," A. C. Luther (1897-1982), developer of the Ridglea Village shopping center and much of the adjacent area. *Courtesy Historic Fort Worth, Inc. and Steve Wilson and Kristi Wilson, Ridglea Interests, Fort Worth, Texas.*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 42

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

All photographs are credited as follows except as noted:

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas  
Photographed by Susan Allen Kline  
Location of digital files: Texas Historical Commission, Austin  
Printed on HP Premium Presentation Paper with HP Viverra ink

### Photo 1

Elevation: Façade (North elevation) of theater and bank/office wing  
Camera facing: Southeast  
April 3, 2011

### Photo 2

Elevation: Façade of theater  
Camera facing: Southwest  
April 3, 2011

### Photo 3

Elevation: Façade (north elevation) of theater and bank/office wing  
Camera facing: East/southeast  
April 3, 2011

### Photo 4

Elevation: Façade of theater (entrance)  
Camera facing: Southeast  
March 8, 2011

### Photo 5

Elevation: Façade of theater (close-up of marquee)  
Camera facing: East/northeast; Date March 8, 2011

### Photo 6

Elevation: West elevation of bank/office wing and annex  
Camera facing: South/southeast  
March 8, 2011

### Photo 7

Elevation: West elevation, arcade of bank/office wing  
Camera facing: Northwest  
March 30, 2011

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 43

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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**Photo 8**

Elevation: West elevation of bank/office wing  
Camera facing: North  
March 30, 2011

**Photo 9**

Elevation: East elevation of bank/office wing and south and east elevations of theater wing  
Camera facing: Northwest  
March 30, 2011

**Photo 10**

Elevation: Interior, theater lobby  
Camera facing: South/southeast; Photographer: Steve Kline  
June 24, 2011

**Photo 11**

Elevation: East wall of lobby with mural  
Camera facing: East/northeast; Photographer: Steve Kline  
June 24, 2011

**Photo 12**

Elevation: Interior of theater, mural on west wall  
Camera facing: Southwest; Photographer: Steve Kline; June 24, 2011

**Photo 13**

Elevation: Interior, detail of mural on west wall  
Camera facing: Southwest  
June 24, 2011

**Photo 14**

Elevation: Interior, auditorium of theater wing  
Camera facing: Southeast; Photographer: Steve Kline  
June 24, 2011

**Photo 15**

Elevation: Interior, lobby of bank/office wing  
Camera facing: Southeast; Photographer: Steve Kline  
June 24, 2011

**Photo 16**

Elevation: Interior, corridor of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of bank/office wing  
Camera facing: Southeast  
January 28, 2011



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre Building and area

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photos!

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CLOSED FOR  
RESTORATION  
OR AND RE-OPENING  
FALL 2011

CLOSED FOR  
RESTORATION  
OR AND RE-OPENING  
FALL 2011

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Tx - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre Building and Annex - 000

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co., TX  
photo 2



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 3



Closed for  
restoration.  
Watch for  
Grand re-  
opening, in  
Fall  
of 2011.

6025

TX- Tarrant County- Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre

Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX

photo 4



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
Photo 5



okioss  
OF PHOENIX  
77-0149  
BILL ABRESSETT'S  
SALON  
20 HAIR STYLING  
PERMANENT COLOR

INDLEA  
VILLAGE

LEGACY  
DAY

TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre Building and Area - 2006

Ridglea theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 6



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 7



THEATRE  
PARKING  
ENTRANCE

THEATRE PARKING ENTRANCE

TX - Tarrant County - Ridgela Theatre

Ridgelea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 8



TX - Tarrant County - Ridgley Theatre Building - photo 9

Ridgley Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 9



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co TX  
photo 10



TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre Building

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 11



TX-Tarrant County - Ridgley Theatre Building and

Ridgley Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 12



TX - Tarrant County - Ridgley Theatre Building

Ridgley Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 13



TX - Tarrant County - Ridgley Theatre

Ridgley Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 14





TX - Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 15



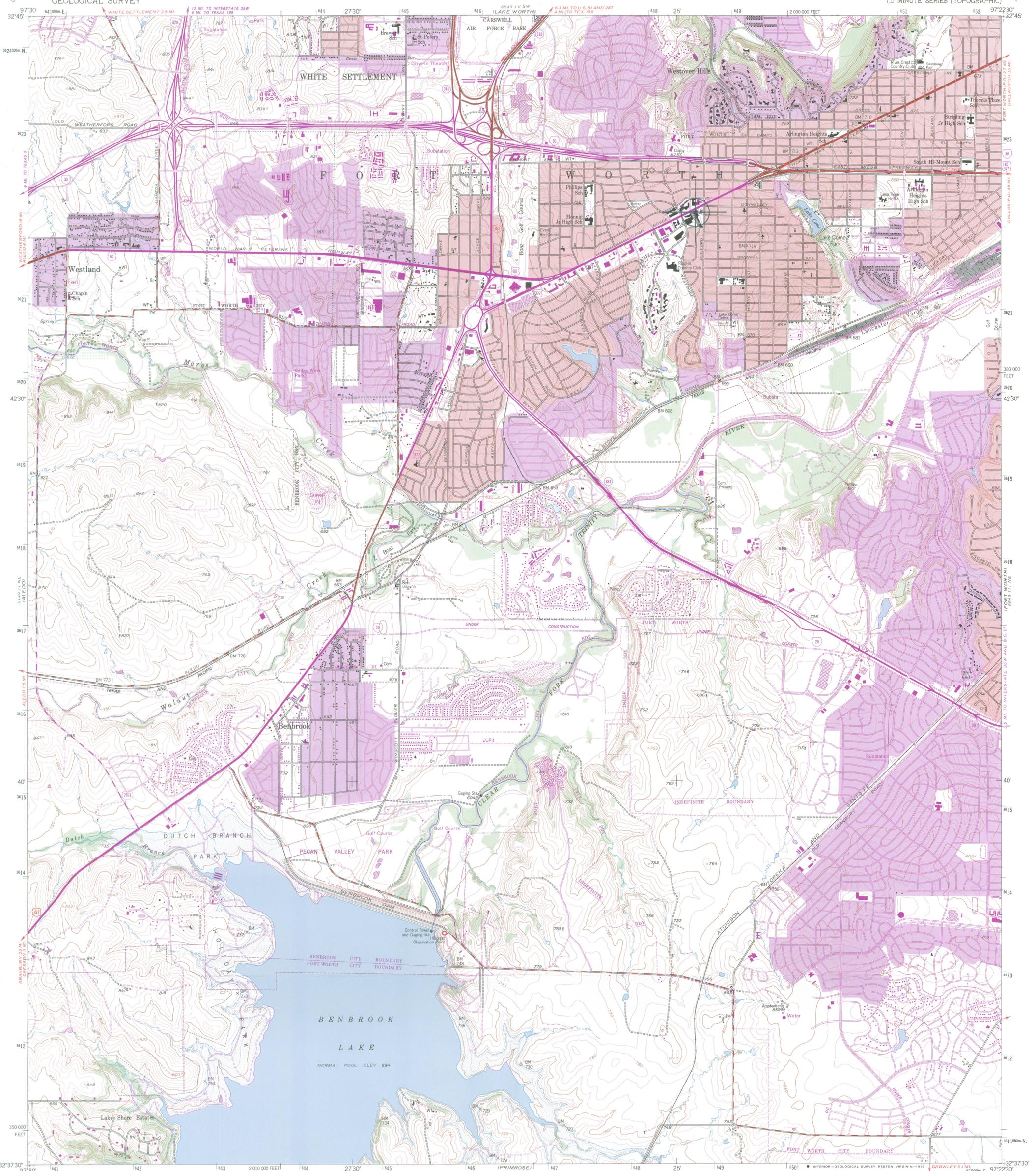
TX\_Tarrant County - Ridglea Theatre

Ridglea Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
photo 16

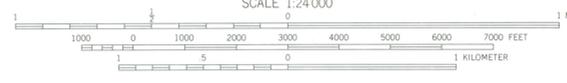
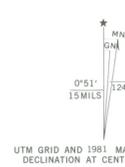
Ridgley Theatre  
Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. TX  
Zone 14 648576 E 3622309 N

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BENBROOK QUADRANGLE  
TEXAS-TARRANT CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and USCE  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1952-1954. Field checked 1955  
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on  
Texas coordinate system, north central zone. 1000-meter  
Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14,  
shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum. To  
place on the predicted North American Datum  
1983 move the projection lines 10 meters south and  
28 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern are subject  
to controlled inundation  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries  
of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from  
aerial photographs taken 1978 and other sources. This  
information not field checked. Map edited 1981  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



BENBROOK, TEX.  
N3237.5-W9722.5/7.5

1955  
PHOTOREVISED 1981  
DMA 6549 III NW-SERIES V862 I

3297-423

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ridglea Theatre

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Tarrant

DATE RECEIVED: ~~12/18/11~~ 8/2/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY:  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 45TH DAY: ~~1/04/12~~  
9.18.13

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000982

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Approved

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept  
REVIEWER Edson Beall DISCIPLINE History  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 9.18.13

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

RECEIVED 2280

OMB No. 1024-0018

AUG - 2 2013

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NPS Form 10-900

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building)  
Other name/site number:  
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & Number: 6025-6033 Camp Bowie Blvd. and 3309 Winthrop Avenue  
City or town: Fort Worth State: Texas County: Tarrant  
Not for publication:  Vicinity:

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 at the following levels of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 7/17/13  
Signature of certifying official / Title Date  
Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register  
 other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Public - Federal |

**Category of Property**

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

**Number of Resources within Property** (not including originally nominated building)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1            | 0               | buildings  |
| 0            | 0               | sites      |
| 0            | 0               | structures |
| 0            | 0               | objects    |
| 1            | 0               | total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** Commerce/Trade: office building, specialty store

**Current Functions:** Commerce/Trade: office building, specialty store

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Brick

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-7)

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

|                                     |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>A</b> | Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.                                                                                                                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <b>B</b> | Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <b>C</b> | 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. |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <b>D</b> | Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Community Planning and Development

**Period of Significance:** 1951-1961

**Significant Dates:** 1951 (construction of the Annex)

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Ridglea Construction Company, Builder/Contractor (Annex)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-9)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 9-10 through 9-11)

**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 (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property:** Approximately one acre added in this amendment to the 3 acres previously listed

**Coordinates** (latitude/longitude coordinates)

32.727628° -97.414068°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** Lots A2, A2A1, C1, 3C, 3D and 8 (for Annex and associated parking)

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary for the amended nomination for the Ridglea Theatre Annex includes all property historically associated with the buildings with the exception of the parking lot in front 3327-3345 Winthrop Avenue.

### 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Susan Allen Kline, Historic Preservation Consultant

Organization: NA

Street & number: 2421 Shirley Avenue

City or Town: Fort Worth

State: Texas

Zip Code: 76109

Email: sskline@sbcglobal.net

Telephone: 817-921-0127

Date: July 2013

### Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheet Map-13)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets Figure-12)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheet Photo-5)

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

**Photographs**

Ridglea Theatre Annex  
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas  
Photographed by Susan Allen Kline, June 2011  
Location of digital files: Texas Historical Commission, Austin

**Photo 1** (TX\_Tarrant County\_Ridglea Theatre Annex\_0001.tif)  
Elevation: West elevation of Annex  
Camera facing: Northeast

**Photo 2** (TX\_Tarrant County\_Ridglea Theatre Annex\_0002.tif)  
Elevation: West elevation of 3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue and Annex  
Camera facing: North

**Photo 3** (TX\_Tarrant County\_Ridglea Theatre Annex\_0003.tif)  
Elevation: East elevation of Annex and 3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue  
Camera facing: South

**Photo 4** (TX\_Tarrant County\_Ridglea Theatre Annex\_0004.tif)  
Elevation: East Elevation of Annex  
Camera facing: West/southwest

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas**

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**Property Description and the Goal of this Amendment**

The purpose of this nomination amendment is to increase the boundary of the Ridglea Theatre to include the historic annex that was built in 1951, immediately after the completion of the theater and bank wing. The annex was originally considered for nomination along with the theater in 2011, but vigorous objection by the owner of the annex led to its removal from the nomination prior to submission to the NPS. The new owner of the annex has requested that the annex be included in the boundary of the listed property.

The annex is not internally connected to the theater building but is in keeping with the transition to a more utilitarian design towards the rear of the complex. The annex is approximately 190 feet long and 63 feet wide, and the roof has a slight overhang. It appears as if three second story windows on the south elevation of the annex have been infilled with glass block. Attached to the south end of the annex is a polygonal-shaped one-story building. It was not constructed in the Spanish Eclectic style and has a much more modern feel than does the Ridglea Theatre. It has a flat roof and is constructed of brick that is painted beige.

While not architecturally distinctive, the annex was nevertheless a continuation of the commercial development of the overall complex, and contributes to the significance of the property in the area of Community Planning and Development. Together, the Ridglea Theatre Building and Annex comprised one of the four quadrants of the Ridglea Village, a retail and business complex developed by A. C. Luther between the early 1940s and mid- 1950s. The Ridglea Village was the primary shopping center for Fort Worth's west side during this time period. As a whole, the Ridglea Theatre and Annex Building contains a high degree of architectural and historic integrity.

**Annex (3327-3333-3337 Winthrop Avenue) and 3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue**

The Annex design is compatible to the theater wing and shares similar features such as a hipped roof covered with red clay tiles and brick walls that are painted (beige in this case). The roof has a slight overhang. The Annex connects to the south wall of the bank wing of the theater building at the second story. This portion of the Annex extends over the two-lane driveway that connects Winthrop Avenue with the parking lot on the east side of the building. There are two segmental arches above each drive. Above each arch is a long window opening with fixed panes and casement windows at each end. That portion of the building above the north drive is painted white, tying it to the theater building. The portion over the south drive is painted beige as is the rest of the Annex.

South of the driveway is an integral balcony with two full-height sandstone columns. Ornamental metal balustrades are located between the columns around the balcony. The main entrance to the Annex is located on the first floor and is recessed beneath the balcony. The rest of the Annex is stepped back from the balcony/entrance area. There are seven second story windows consisting of picture windows flanked by metal casement windows. These are fronted by balconets of ornamental metal. Similar windows or entrances are located directly below on the first floor. One entrance opening has been infilled with glass. The first floor windows and entrances are shielded by individual box awnings. It appears as if three second story windows on the south elevation of the Annex have been infilled with glass block.

The east elevation of the Annex is treated as a secondary elevation and therefore has less ornamental detail. It has windows similar to those on the west elevation but there are no balconets beneath the second story windows. A mechanical room that is approximately one-and-one-half stories is located near the center of this elevation. An asphalt parking lot is adjacent to the Annex.

Attached to the south end of the Annex is a polygonal-shaped one-story building. According to tax records, it was also constructed in 1951. It was not constructed in the Spanish Eclectic style and has a much more modern feel than

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

does the Ridglea Theatre Building and Annex. It has a flat roof and is constructed of brick that is painted beige (like the Annex). The four storefronts in this building have addresses of 3341A, 3341B, 3343 and 3345 Winthrop Avenue. The storefronts typically consist of slab doors of dark tinted glass flanked by dark-tinted full-height windows. They are recessed behind the face of the parapet wall, which is supported by brick piers. It also has an exterior partition wall constructed of the same Palo Pinto sandstone as that used on the Ridglea Theatre Building and Annex. The other elevations of this section of the building are also constructed of brick. Secondary entrances are located on all but the south elevation and short multiple-light windows are located on the east and south elevations. This building is not part of the proposed rehabilitation of the Ridglea Theatre Building.

The interior configuration of the Annex appears to have been altered as there is no central hallway on the first floor. The elevator lobby has a nonhistoric green marble tile on the floor. Boxed molding at the ceiling hides recessed lighting. The original flat ceiling has been replaced with a low-pitched ceiling. The configuration of the second floor appears to retain its central hallway but the walls and doors are probably not original. The ceiling has the same pitch, boxed molding and recessed lighting as those found in the first floor lobby.

The exterior of the Annex building has been slightly modified with the conversion of one secondary entrance to a window opening. Original storefronts of 3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue have likely been altered and original glass replaced with tinted glass. The building's exterior still conveys its function as an office wing and its subordinate but supporting role to the Ridglea Theatre Building.

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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### Statement of Significance

The Ridglea Theatre Annex is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as a component of the Ridglea Village complex of west Fort Worth, Texas. Originally composed of four quadrants centered around the intersection of Camp Bowie Boulevard and Winthrop Avenue, Ridglea Village was a commercial district/shopping center developed between the early 1940s through the mid-1950s by A. C. Luther to serve the surrounding residential section, much of which he also developed. The buildings within the Ridglea Village were unified by a common architectural motif and building materials. The Ridglea Theatre Building was constructed in 1950 and originally housed the Ridglea Theatre and the Ridglea State Bank as well as retail and office space for other entities. The Annex was constructed in 1951 and primarily served as an office building; first for a government agency and then for various professionals and businesses.

### Construction of the Annex

One day after the theater, bank and the “Cradle to College” shop officially opened to the public, an article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* announced that A. C. Luther intended to begin construction on a 2-story, 15,000 square-foot addition to the theater building. Although the Air Materiel Command’s procurement field office was just then preparing to occupy 10,000 square feet on the second floor of the theater/bank building, Luther stated that the agency would be given ““first refusal”” in the Annex. The new building would have a 160-foot frontage along Winthrop Avenue and would conform to the development’s Spanish-influenced architecture. It was to be constructed of reinforced concrete, brick and tile, and feature a red tile roof and air conditioning. The annex building was to attach to the second floor of the theater building and would “bridge over the driveway from Winthrop St. into the parking lot behind the theater.” A portion of the south wall of the theater building would be removed so that the main corridor on the second story would extend north-south the length of the two buildings.<sup>1</sup>

By late January 1951, Col. Beverly H. Warren, chief of the local office of the Air Materiel Command, was notified of the Air Force’s authorization of the lease of 15,000 square feet in the proposed office annex. With the guarantee of a major tenant, construction of the annex began a few months later. Records of the Tarrant Appraisal District reflect that the Ridglea State Bank Building Annex (now bearing the address of 3327-3337 Winthrop Avenue and the name Ridglea Renaissance Office Building) was constructed in 1951. Updated Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and city directories suggest that the Air Force had a presence in the bank building and annex into the late 1950s-early 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

Occupants of the first floor of the Winthrop Avenue side of the theater/bank building begin to show up in city directories in the mid-1950s. The 1955 city directory lists H. E. Dickey, accountant, and Fidelity Union Life at 3309 Winthrop Avenue. With the publication of the 1957 City Directory, there are occupants listed for the first and second floors of the theater building (represented as Ridglea State Bank Building in the directory) as well as occupants of 3327 Winthrop, listed as the Ridglea State Bank Annex.

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<sup>1</sup> “Luther Announces Addition For Ridglea Theater Building,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 2, 1950 (morning edition), AR406-7-134-42, FWSTC/SCUTA.

<sup>2</sup> “AF Authorizes Expansion of Field Office,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1951 (morning edition), AR406-7-100-136, FWSTC/SCUTA and “Ridglea Building Plans Approved,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 14, 1951 (evening edition), AR406-7-134-29, FWSTC-SCUTA; Tarrant Appraisal District information on 3341 Winthrop Avenue, Fort Worth at [www.tad.org](http://www.tad.org); Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, Fort Worth Texas, 1951, revised ca. 1962, original bound edition, Volume 4, Sheet 465, located at Historic Fort Worth, Inc., Fort Worth, Texas.

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

According to tax records, the 1-story building at 3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue was constructed immediately south of the Annex in 1951. However, occupants for these storefronts do not appear in city directories until 1957. Tenants included various commercial establishments and a medical clinic.<sup>3</sup>

The Ridglea Theatre Annex is eligible for listing in the National Register at the local level of significance in the area of Community Planning and Development as a component of A.C. Luther's Ridglea Village, a planned shopping and commercial center on Fort Worth's west side. The period of significance is from 1951 to 1961. This period encompasses the year that the annex was completed and its continued use for commercial purposes. The year 1961 corresponds with the National Register's fifty-year criterion at the time of the theater's listing in 2011.

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<sup>3</sup> Morrison and Fourmy, *Fort Worth City Directory, 1955*; Morrison and Fourmy, *Fort Worth City Directory, 1956*; Morrison and Fourmy, *Fort Worth City Directory, 1957*.

Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

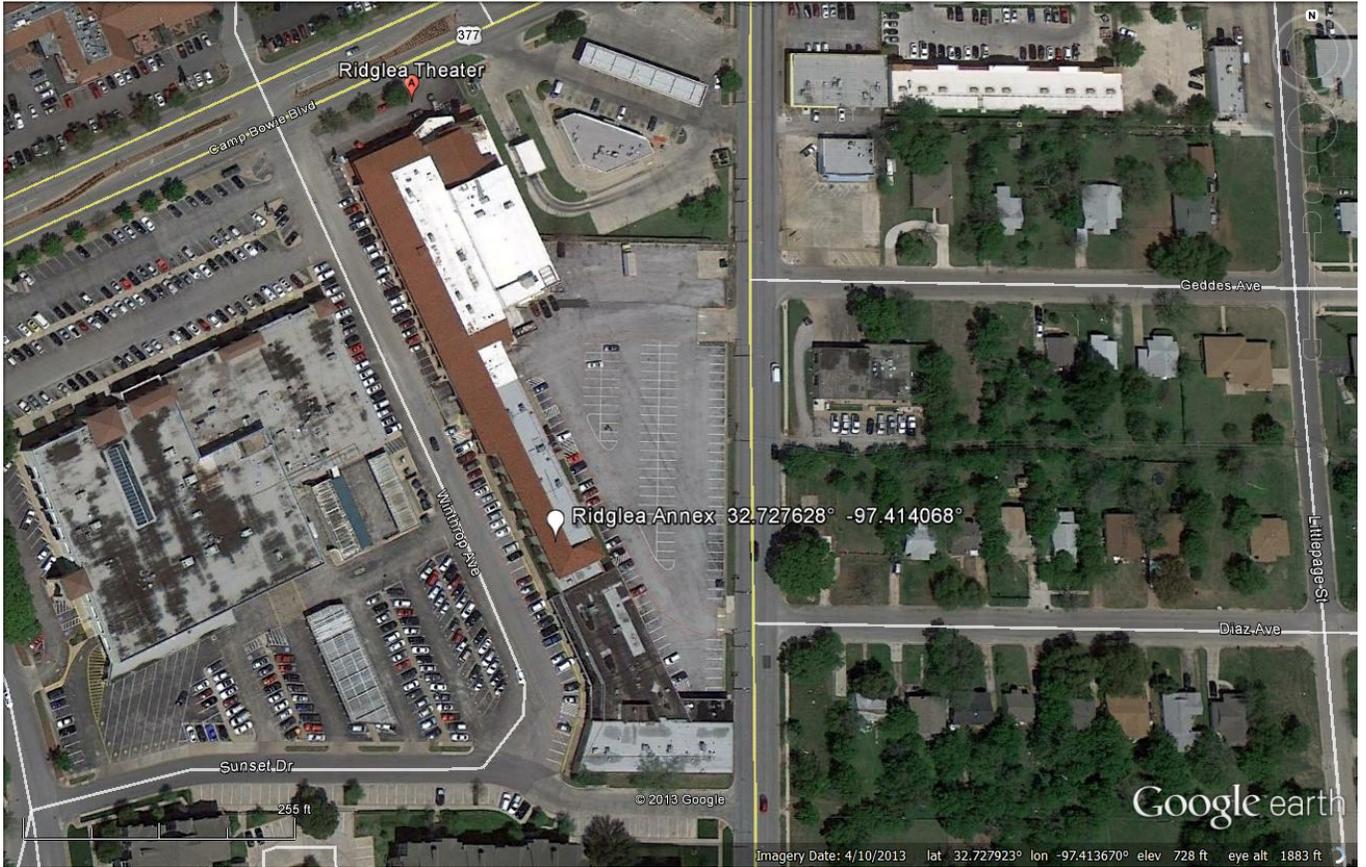
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Fort Worth, Texas, Volume 4, Sheet 465, updated to ca. 1962, showing addition of Annex and the southern 1-story building (3341-3345 Winthrop Avenue). *Courtesy Historic Fort Worth.*



Ridglea Theatre (amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Ridglea Theatre Annex  
Source: Google Earth, accessed July 17, 2013

32.727628° -97.414068°





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# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ridglea Theatre

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Tarrant

DATE RECEIVED: 11/18/11      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/12/11  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/27/11      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/03/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000982

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    12-30-11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

*real places telling real stories*



TO: Linda McClelland  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)  
Washington , DC 20005

FROM: Gregory Smith  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Ridglea Theatre, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

DATE: November 2, 2011

- The following materials regarding the Ridglea Theatre are submitted:

|                                     |                                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Original National Register of Historic Places form |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Resubmitted nomination                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Multiple Property Documentation form               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | _ Resubmitted form                                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Photographs printed from digital files             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Gold CD with TIFF photograph files                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Photographs printed from negatives                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | USGS map                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Correspondence                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Other:                                             |

COMMENTS:

- \_\_\_ SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- \_\_\_ The enclosed owner objections (do\_\_\_) (do not\_\_\_) constitute a majority of property owners
- \_\_\_ Other:



# Correspondence

associated with the Additional Documentation

11000982

**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*



TO: Edson Beall  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)  
Washington , DC 20005

FROM: Gregory Smith  
National Register Coordinator  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Ridglea Theatre (Amendment to include Annex Building), Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

DATE: July 17, 2013

The following materials are submitted:

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk.                                                                                                                              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the <u>Ridglea Theatre (Amendment to include Annex Building)</u> to the National Register of Historic Places. |
|                                     | Resubmitted nomination.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.                                                                                                                                   |
|                                     | Multiple Property Documentation form on disk.                                                                                                                                            |
|                                     | Resubmitted form.                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                     | Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.                                                                                                                                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | CD with TIFF photograph files and KMZ file                                                                                                                                               |
|                                     | Correspondence                                                                                                                                                                           |

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do\_\_\_) (do not\_\_\_) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

