

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Lyceum Theater
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 409 Main Street **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A
CITY OR TOWN: Clovis **VICINITY:** N/A
STATE: New Mexico **CODE:** NM **COUNTY:** Curry **CODE:** 009 **ZIP CODE:** 88101

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Anthony Slick 27 November 2006
Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 1.17.07
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	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: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: Moderne

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION: CONCRETE
WALLS: STUCCO
ROOF: ASPHALT
OTHER: GLASS

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

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1920-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1920; ca. 1946

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Boller Brothers, architects

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-14).

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 (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing
 1 13 664974 3808213 (NAD83/WGS84)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots 12 and 13 of Block 35 of Clovis Original Townsite, Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico.

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: David Kammer, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION: consulting historian

DATE: June, 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 521 Aliso Dr. NE

TELEPHONE: (505) 266-0586

CITY OR TOWN: Albuquerque

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 87108

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see attached *Clovis, New Mexico*, USGS quadrangle map)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-15)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: City of Clovis

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 760

TELEPHONE: (505) 769-7828

CITY OR TOWN: Clovis

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 88101

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Lyceum Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Description

Located in the heart of downtown Clovis, the Lyceum Theater constructed during 1919-20, is a two-story building with a concrete foundation, poured concrete walls and a vaulted roof masked by a stepped parapet. Typical of many theaters of its era, the building has a rectangular plan with two commercial spaces, one now used as storage, flanking a recessed entry. Paired French doors flank a ticket booth and open into a lobby. Doors at either side of the lobby offer entry into the auditorium with flanking stairs in the auditorium leading to a 120-seat balcony, a second story lounge, offices and restrooms. Seating approximately 480, the auditorium faces a large stage framed by an ornate columnar proscenium. The stage now extends forward from the proscenium, covering the former orchestra pit used during live stage performances in the 1920s and 30s. A fly tower rises above the stage, and the stage curtain dates to the opening of the theater. Although the design of the Boller Brothers firm for the theater included Mission Revival style details including a continuous tile hood over the second story windows, the façade underwent alterations during the mid-1940s. At that time a modicum of modernistic details and the inclusion of neon on a wall-mounted sign above the marquee altered the appearance of the façade. More recently, the window of the commercial space on the north side of the building has been filled and the one on the south side reduced in size. This alteration was softened by a restoration of the neon sign and the upper level façade and the theater's ornate interior. The building's integrity as a theater remains readily apparent with regard to its location and setting and design, materials, workmanship and feeling.

The Main Street of Clovis is a broad, brick-laid thoroughfare with a downtown commercial district extending perpendicularly seven blocks from the railroad to the Curry County Courthouse. Located along this street of largely one and two-story buildings are the Clovis Hotel, listed in the National Register, and two other pre-World War II theaters, the Mesa (1918) and State (1940). Situated in the middle of a block on two lots with an alleyway to the rear on which two fire exit doors open, the Lyceum Theater with its rectangular marquee and wall-mounted neon sign rising above the parapet is a readily discernable landmark along Main Street (Photo 1).

Consisting of a concrete foundation with a partially excavated basement at the front of the building as well as under the stage with the former space housing the heating unit and, formerly, a coal bin, the poured concrete building is two stories. Two replacement metal casement windows flank four original 15/15 stained-glass, wood sash double-hung windows joined by a continuous sill resting on decorative concrete brackets.

An example of the two-part commercial block discussed in the *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960*, the second story façade was altered in the mid-1940s. This occurred during a period when the owners also constructed the modernistic State Theater and, likely, reflects their desire to have the appearance of the older theater conform to changing norms for theater appearances (Hardwick)(Figure 7-1). As a result, the exterior of the Lyceum Theater displays modest modernistic details including a parapet with rounded stepping and three pilasters creating two bays into which the original four multi-light windows are divided. The vertical wall-mounted neon sign dating to the early 1930s alteration has been restored and remounted and is affixed to the

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middle pilaster.

A rectangular marquee extends over the sidewalk where railings have been added and bricks inlaid, bearing the names of donors who have contributed to efforts to restore the theater. The recessed entry is slightly inclined and inlaid with original black and white tile bearing the name "Lyceum Theater." Picture boxes containing notices for upcoming performances have been reapplied to the stucco walls flanking the entry. Paired multi-light doors lead to the lobby and flank a ticket booth accessible from the lobby. The lower walls of the booth consist of cut marble slabs and the upper windows are fixed. Commercial spaces, formerly a shoe-store and a café, flanked the recessed entry. The most conspicuous alteration to the building consists of an infill of the window and door of the former shoe store, now used for storage, north of the entry. The former café space south of the entry, functioning as a barbershop for approximately 35 years, has a replacement door and a smaller replacement window.

The plan of the interior is largely unaltered. The lobby walls are interspersed with marble slabs, and a broad frieze extends around the upper wall. During the 1930s a concession stand was added along the south wall of the lobby. Along the lobby wall a plaque commemorates the concert that John Phillip Souza and his band gave in the theater in 1928, during which they premiered Souza's composition, "The New Mexico March." Similar to other theaters dating to the 1910s and 20s in which both live performances were staged and movies shown, the projection booth is located on the ground floor in a space between the lobby and the auditorium. Doors flanking the interior wall of the lobby offer entry to the auditorium.

Access to the 120-seat balcony is from flanking split stairways located at the rear of the auditorium. The balustrade extending across the balcony is lined with a continuous brass railing. At the rear of the balcony is a second-story lounge with paired sets of restrooms recalling an earlier era in which restrooms were segregated. West of the lounge is a line of small office spaces and private rooms with windows facing on Main Street that were available to visiting celebrities. Chandeliers added to the lounge in the 1980s came from the late Senator Dennis Chavez's office and were reportedly installed in the lounge because it was the only public space in Clovis with sufficient height to hold them (Whyatt).

The auditorium is rectangular and seats approximately 480 people. Its wood floor is inclined and the aisles are carpeted. Eight pilasters topped with decorative terracotta medallions line each of the side walls, creating a series of bays decoratively detailed with framed fabric suggestive of a series of picture frames along each wall. A frieze lines the upper wall, yielding to a cove ceiling defined by a second ornamental molding. A drop ceiling has been added at the upper molding course as have replacement ceiling lights. A proscenium consisting of ornate plaster of Paris columns with verdant floral detailing frames the stage, which now thrusts forward covering the former orchestra pit. The original gold curtain with dark upper trim remains. Framed alcoves flank the stage offering access to the rear fire escapes.

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Lyceum Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Despite the infill of the north commercial space flanking its entry, the Lyceum Theater displays a good degree of integrity, especially in regard to its interior. The façade's conversion from Mission to modernistic details occurred during the period of significance and reveals the reaction of Clovis' principal theater owners to how the appearance of theater facades had changed by the mid-1940s. Softening the alteration, a recent restoration of the upper level façade and the neon sign, has returned the theater to its late 1940s appearance. At the same time, the largely unaltered interior of the theater offers the oldest remaining example in New Mexico of a large theater used for both live entertainment and motion pictures.

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Figure 7-1: Front Facade, 1933, Prior to c. 1946 Modernistic Update



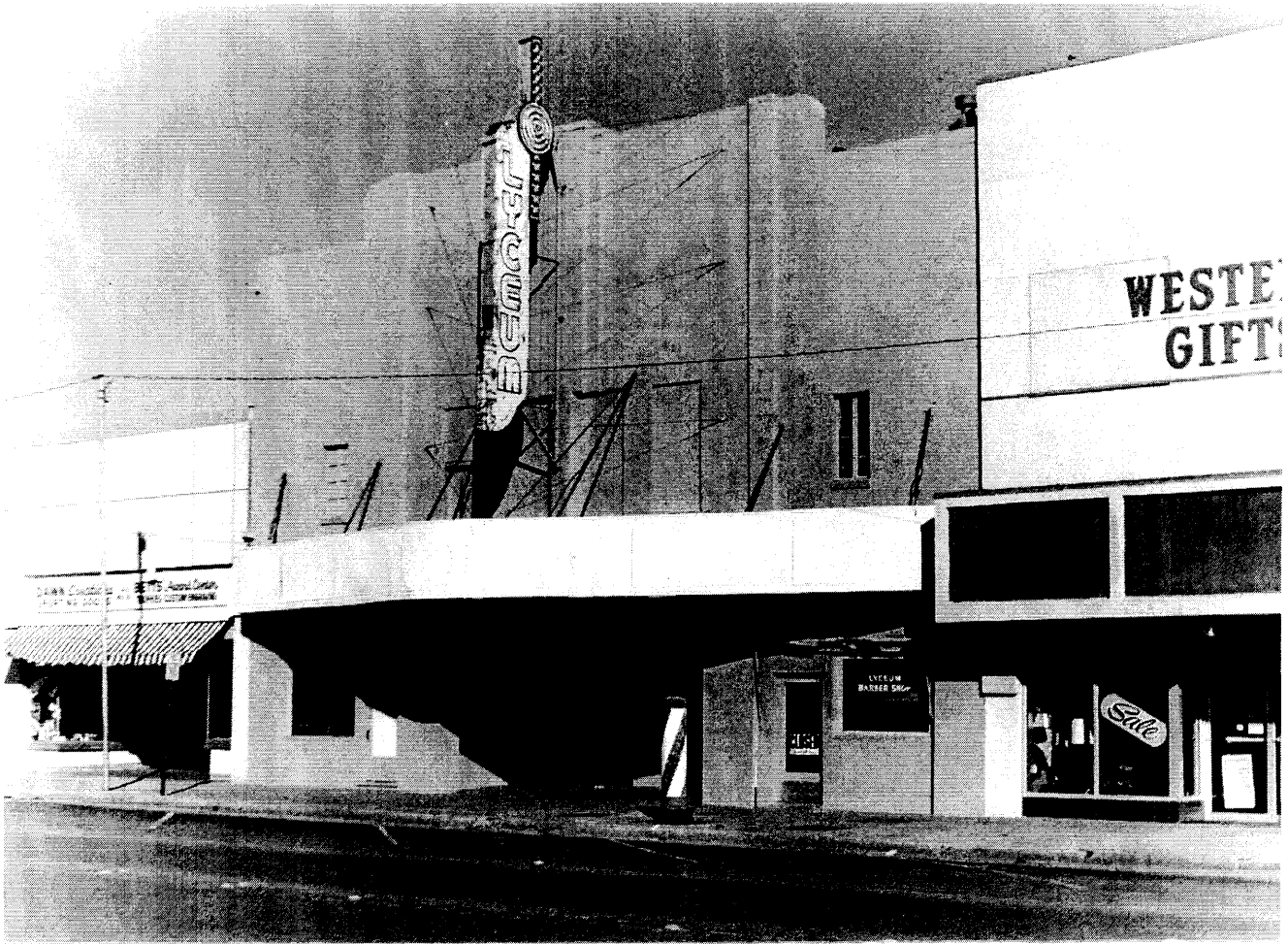
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Lyceum Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Figure 7-2: Entry, 1982, Prior to Removal of North Commercial Space and Façade Restoration



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Figure 7-3: Stage, 1982, Prior to Restoration



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Lyceum Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Statement of Significance

Dating to the platting of the Clovis townsite in 1907 and its subsequent emergence as a ranching and railroad center, at least one theater has operated within the community. The first theaters were of the nickelodeon variety supplemented by outdoor airdomes showing pictures during the hot summer months. By 1918 with the construction of the Mesa Theater, however, buildings constructed specifically to function as theaters began to appear along Main Street. Surpassing the Mesa in size and grandeur was the second Lyceum Theater constructed during 1919-1920. Designed by the Boller Brothers architectural firm of Kansas City for the Hardwick family, the theater had a capacity of about 600 and contained a large stage fronted by an orchestra pit so that it could accommodate both live stage shows and silent films. Envisioned by the Hardwicks as the “best performing stage west of Kansas City,” the theater became a gathering place within the community not only for films and entertainment by visiting celebrities but for local performances as well. Opening the nearby State Theater in 1940 with its modernistic details, the Hardwicks altered the façade of the Lyceum Theater following World War II, adding modernistic elements associated with the popular theater style of the era. The interior, however, remained largely unaltered so that today the interior and exterior of the theater together reflect design details spanning two generations of stylistic sensibilities within the period of significance. The property is eligible for listing under Criterion A, meeting the eligibility requirements of the *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Context

During its first decade, Clovis saw several efforts, some short-lived, to provide the growing town with movie and vaudeville entertainment. Typical of the nickelodeon theaters of the era, many of these venues were simply small spaces, sometimes located in the second story of a commercial building, and consisting of a screen, a projector, wood benches or seats and a ticket booth. In 1911, theater development in Clovis advanced with the opening of the first Lyceum Theater, a block south of the current Lyceum Theater.

Its owner, a Mr. Nimitz, sought to induce children to attend the movies by tossing nickels onto Main Street with those retrieving them admitted for free. Seeking to attract a higher-minded clientele than those who often attended nickelodeons, Nimitz named his new theater the Lyceum, derived from the Greek word denoting a hall or temple in which lectures were given. He also printed assurances in the *Clovis Weekly Journal* that his theater would show only “Motion Pictures that passed the Board of Censorship” and that “there will be no entertainment that would offend the most refined” (quoted in Hughes np).

Nimitz also contributed to a tradition that would continue in the second Lyceum Theater of making the space available to local community activities. These included providing space for the earliest organizational meetings to create a normal school in eastern New Mexico and creating a reading room for families of the Santa Fe Railroad, a major employer in Clovis.

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In the late 1910s Eugene F. Hardwick settled in Clovis and, and with his two sons, Russell and Charles, acquired interest in the Lyceum Theater (Twitchell 589). Assessing the growth of Clovis, which would reach a population of almost 5,000 by 1920, the Hardwicks concluded that the community could support an additional modern theater offering more amenities. Contacting the Boller Brothers architectural firm in Kansas City, they sought a design for a theater that could accommodate both live performances and movies. The result was the second Lyceum Theater begun in 1919 and completed in 1920. Local laborers and tradesmen undertook most of the construction (McAlavy 2).

Perhaps inspired by the Mission Revival details of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) Railroad's depots and baggage buildings as well as the Fred Harvey hotels located along AT&SF lines, the Bollers designed a façade that made modest use of Mission style details. Most apparent was the continuous hood, consisting of either clay tile or pressed metal "tile," extending across the second-story windows, a detail mirrored in the small ornamental hoods above each of the flanking commercial spaces on the first floor. The details of the interior, however, included little acknowledgement of the exterior's details, suggesting instead a modest use of classicism with marble slabs ornamenting the lobby walls, large framed bays appearing along the side walls, and ornate columns defining the proscenium.

Whether the Lyceum's stage fulfilled the Hardwick's goal of being the "finest stage west of Kansas City" is unknown. When it opened on September 21, 1920, however, the second Lyceum Theater became the centerpiece of Clovis' entertainment facilities, a position it held until the State Theater opened in 1940. Employing a rudimentary air-cooling system, the theater soon began to offer its patrons a range of new amenities. A nursery located in the building permitted parents to leave their children there while viewing a movie.

In an era when most theaters did not include refreshment counters, a source of income developed by theater owners during the Great Depression, the Lyceum Theater also began to offer midnight shows on Saturday (Hughes np). Theater staff served coffee and sandwiches prepared in a small kitchen located in the front basement and lifted to the lobby by a dumb waiter (Whyatt). In addition to attracting patrons with amenities, the Lyceum Theater also brought nationally known entertainers to Clovis. On November 14, 1928 John Phillip Sousa and his band gave a concert. Over the years, Tom Mix, Will Rogers and Gene Autry also appeared at the Lyceum (McAlavy 2).

So successful was the Lyceum that in the early 1920s Russell and Charles Hardwick acquired interest in the rival Mesa Theater. During this period they also contracted with Paramount Pictures to show that company's films, receiving handbills and posters that were distributed to local merchants for display in windows along Main Street. Advertising the theater in the city's business directory, the brothers described themselves as "builders and boosters of Clovis and Curry County since 1913," and urged the town's citizens to "take short vacations often at the Lyceum" (*Clovis City Directory*).

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In 1940, the Hardwick brothers, in partnership with Griffith Theaters of Dallas, undertook the construction of the State Theater. Reflecting the popular design details of current theater construction, the new theater offered a modernistic façade with a striking rounded glass block tower as its centerpiece. Following World War II, they also modified the façade of the Lyceum Theater, replacing the Mission Revival style details with the modernistic molded stucco façade that now appears six decades later.

As was the case with many downtown theaters that found themselves unable to compete with television and then the advent of video movies, the Lyceum Theater began to lose its audience during the 1960s. In 1969 Commonwealth Theaters purchased it but then closed it in 1974. After sitting vacant for eight years, the theater was purchased in 1982 by the City of Clovis. Using money from the city lodgers' tax and contributions made by local citizens, whose names are included in the bricks inlaid in the sidewalk in front of the theater, a local non-profit organization undertook restoration of the theater. The wall-mounted neon sign was removed, refurbished and reinstalled. Much of the interior, including the ornate finishes, were subsequently restored.

In recent years the theater has been used for live performances although much of the interior continues to require additional restoration. Listing the property in the National Register and an ongoing Main Street program aimed at revitalizing the downtown are regarded as two steps toward preserving the building.

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Bibliography

Clovis, New Mexico City Directory. Clovis: Disabled American Veterans, 1932.

Hardwick, Russell Jr. Interview with David Kammer, May 27, 2006. Mr. Hardwick is the son of Russell and worked at the Lyceum Theater during the early 1930s.

Hughes, Karen Lee. "Theater Merchants Kept Clovis Rolling in Movies." *Clovis News-Journal*, July 4, 1976.

McAlavy, Don. Letter and application for listing in the State Register of Cultural Properties submitted to Boyd Pratt at the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, November 28, 1982.

Stanley, F. *The Clovis, New Mexico Story*. Pampa, Texas: Pampa Print Shop, 1966.

Twitchell, Ralph Emerson. *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*. 5 vols. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1911-1917.

Whyatt, Anne. Interview with David Kammer, April 12, 2006. Ms. Whyatt has operated the Lyceum Barbershop in the Lyceum Theater building since the 1970s.

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Lyceum Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Photograph Log

Information pertaining to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Lyceum Theater

Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Photographer: David Kammer

Date: October, 2005

Location of negatives: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

Photo 1 of 2

Theater and streetscape

Camera facing southeast

Photo 2 of 2

Entry

Camera facing northeast