

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

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National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Congress Theater

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

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

2. Location

Street & number: 2117-2139 North Milwaukee Avenue

City or town: Chicago State: IL County: Cook

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B x C ___ D

 _____ Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy SHPO Illinois Historic Preservation Agency State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	<u>7/20/14</u> _____ Date
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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:)

Joe Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

1-6-17
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION
AND CULTURE /
Theater

DOMESTIC /
Multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION
AND CULTURE /
Theater

DOMESTIC /
Multiple dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th and 20th
CENTURY
REVIVALS /
Italian Renaissance

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Congress Theater is located at 2117-2139 North Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood approximately four miles northwest of the city's Loop central business district. The Congress Theater is a large-scale theater and multi-residential building consisting of four attached structures, including the large theater facility with entrances on both North Milwaukee Avenue and North Rockwell Street and three three-story retail and apartment blocks with separate entrances. The complex fully occupies an irregularly-shaped lot at the northeast corner of North Milwaukee Avenue and North Rockwell Street, which spans one quarter of a city block in size. The building's primary façade and theater lobby entrance face southwest onto Milwaukee Avenue which serves as a major commercial and entertainment thoroughfare for Chicago's Northwest Side. Another primary street-facing elevation with a secondary theater entrance faces west onto Rockwell Street. The building is lined along its east and north ends by narrow public alleys.

The primary façades of the theater block and apartment blocks face Milwaukee Avenue and Rockwell Street and are lined in concrete sidewalks. Secondary perimeter facades, which are highly utilitarian in character and minimally visible from the street, face paved public alleys to the

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north and east. Tertiary elevations of the theater block and apartment blocks, which are also highly utilitarian and character and which are not visible from the street, face the three paved interior service alleys.

Narrative Description

Exterior

South Elevation

The Congress Theater's primary façade, facing southwest onto Milwaukee Avenue, is dominated by the four story-high theater entrance pavilion, a symmetrical Italian Renaissance Revival-inspired composition with a dark granite water table and a one-story grey ashlar terra cotta base housing three bays of original bronze and glass entry doors. Atop a mid-century marquee that cantilevers out over the sidewalk, the upper three-story temple front is clad in six Corinthian pilasters, relief spandrel panels, an ornate entablature and dentiled pediment with inset decorative relief figures, all of grey terra cotta. Set between the pavilion's pilasters are five elongated Renaissance Revival style arched windows with original glazing trimmed in green terra cotta permit light into the theater lobby within.

The Congress Theater's Milwaukee Avenue marquee and blade sign, historically two of the building's most prominent visual features, have been altered by previous owners. The Congress Theater's original marquee, which cantilevered out over the primary Milwaukee Avenue entrance, was removed in the mid-twentieth century by previous owners and replaced with a painted metal marquee that is trapezoidal in plan with metal bands perforated with exposed electric lights and non-historic centered signage panels. The bottom ceiling of the current marquee is likewise a painted metal panel with exposed electric lights. Though the marquee appears to be structurally sound, its metal panels are rusted and deteriorated. The Congress Theater retains a portion of its original steel blade sign armature, which is centered just above the Milwaukee entrance and marquee and is anchored into the theater lobby pavilion facade and roof. The blade sign's original illuminated "CONGRESS" lettering is now missing and its blade sign armature cut down to approximately half its original height.

Flanking the Milwaukee Avenue theater entrance pavilion are three three-story retail and apartment block, all with flat roofs. East of the entrance pavilion is the east block (Apartment Block #1), containing eight ground level retail spaces with recessed storefronts simply detailed with white terra cotta surrounds. The three-story "L" shaped block west of the entrance pavilion (Apartment Block #2), extending west along Milwaukee Avenue before turning north along Rockwell Street, contains two ground-level retail spaces with similar exterior detailing. The upper two floors of both apartment blocks are clad in brown brick with decorative brown brick spandrels and stone and terra cotta trim and cornice work. The upper levels are regularly fenestrated with non-historic aluminum windows, some trimmed in Renaissance Revival style terra cotta double arches.

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Each of Milwaukee Avenue's two apartment blocks has a single street-facing entry. Painted wood framed entry assemblies are recessed from the face of the building. The entry at Apartment Block #1 fronting Milwaukee Avenue retains deteriorated wood and glass doors with non-historic door hardware; Apartment Block #2 facing the corner of Milwaukee Avenue and Rockwell Street has a non-historic metal door. Each entry has a ramped exterior threshold of black and white mosaic tiles and doors flanked by glass sidelights and upper glass transoms.

The ground floor of the Congress Theater's apartment blocks house former retail spaces accessed by storefronts systems that are either non-historic replacement systems, or are deteriorated and fragmentary original systems. The building's 16 storefronts are, for the most part, regularly spaced along the two primary street facing elevations. Non-historic storefronts at Apartment Block #2 fronting Milwaukee Avenue and Rockwell Street are composed of painted wood and steel systems with lower bulkheads (today clad in wood and concrete though the original cladding material is unknown). Original storefront components remaining at Apartment Block #1 along Milwaukee Avenue are deteriorated and fragmentary. These storefronts are composed of a lower bulkhead (today clad in wood and concrete though the original cladding material is unknown), a center fixed window system framed in wood with metal cladding, and upper wood transoms. Original Milwaukee-facing storefronts have center recessed doorways, some with original painted wood doors with ramped entry thresholds featuring black and white mosaic tile. Some storefronts retain original painted wood ceilings.

An original painted metal smokestack is located at the northwest corner of Apartment Block #1 along the east exterior wall of the theater lobby pavilion.

West Elevation

The Congress Theater's secondary entrance along the west Rockwell Avenue elevation is composed of a recessed painted wood door system with an original arched three-part transom. The missing original double doors below were replaced by previous owners with non-historic metal and glass storefront doors. Terrazzo tiles are located at the Rockwell entry threshold. The massive theater auditorium, clad in common brick with a barrel vaulted membrane roof set between stepped front and rear gables, is set toward the north end of the lot and is mostly enclosed and hidden from street view by the four-story Milwaukee Avenue entrance pavilion and three-story apartment blocks.

To the south of the Rockwell Street theater entry is an opening into the service alley between Apartment Block # 3 (to the north) and Apartment Block #2 (to the south). This opening is infilled with a deteriorated painted wood trellis system with operable gates. This non-historic trellis gate system was installed by previous owners.

The northwest block consisting of Apartment Block #3, extends north along Rockwell Street and contains seven retail spaces with similar exterior detailing. The upper two floors of the apartment block mimic the other two apartment blocks along Milwaukee Avenue, with brown brick cladding

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and decorative brown brick spandrels accented with stone and terra cotta trim and cornice work. The upper levels are regularly fenestrated with non-historic aluminum windows, some trimmed in Renaissance Revival style terra cotta double arches. Separating Apartment Blocks #3 and #2 along Rockwell Street is an original theater side entrance at ground level along with a false façade masking an internal service court; this side entrance displays a cartouche with the intertwined letters of “L” and “T,” a reference to the original building owners, movie theater operators Lubliner & Trinz.

Each of Rockwell Avenue’s two apartment blocks has a single street-facing entry. Painted wood framed entry assemblies are recessed from the face of the building. The entry at Apartment Block #3 fronting Rockwell Street retains deteriorated wood and glass doors with non-historic door hardware; Apartment Block #2 facing the corner of Rockwell Street and Milwaukee Avenue has a non-historic metal door. Each entry has a ramped exterior threshold of black and white mosaic tiles and doors flanked by glass sidelights and upper glass transoms.

The ground floor of the Congress Theater's apartment blocks house former retail spaces accessed by storefronts systems that are either non-historic replacement systems, or are deteriorated and fragmentary original systems. The building’s 16 storefronts are, for the most part, regularly spaced along the two primary street facing elevations. Non-historic storefronts at Apartment Block #3 and Apartment Block #2 fronting Rockwell Street and a small portion of Milwaukee Avenue are composed of painted wood and steel systems with lower bulkheads (today clad in wood and concrete though the original cladding material is unknown).

North, East, and Service Court Elevations

The building’s north and east alley-facing elevations are clad in common brick, are very minimally fenestrated, and are utilitarian in character. Three internal service courts are located off of the north and east alley-facing elevations and the west street-facing elevation. All three internal service courts are faced in common brick, regularly fenestrated, and utilitarian in character with mechanical equipment and late twentieth century metal and wood decks and egress stairs. The Congress Theater has three wall-anchored metal fire escape systems, located along the north and east alleys, and within the interior alley of Apartment Block #3. Three narrow interior service alleys are located in the spaces between the theater block and the three apartment blocks. These interior alleys contain non-historic wood, concrete, and metal stairs and decks are utilitarian in character and primarily used for egress.

Interior

The Congress Theater’s interior is an elaborately detailed series of spaces, featuring decorative terrazzo, stone, and intricate plasterwork. Entering the theater along Milwaukee Avenue, visitors cross through a small one-story outer vestibule with a glazed roof and two marble and gilt iron box ticket booths. The four-story tall main lobby beyond retains its original arched ceiling and is decorated with green and white checkerboard terrazzo floor tiles; black, gray, and light brown marble wainscoting, Italian Renaissance Revival Style wall moldings, and vaulted decorative

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plaster ceiling. The space retains its grand staircase, with its original terrazzo steps and cast metal railings, its original wall sconce lighting, and two original iron and glass chandeliers.

Beyond the main lobby, first and second floor inner “concourses” (as named in the original plans) decorated with original plaster ceilings and French wall molding give access to the Congress Theater’s auditorium, an immense space with a 55 foot-wide proscenium arch along its north wall flanked by semi-circular projecting bays that originally housed organ pipes. The first floor of the auditorium gently slopes from the north proscenium and sunken orchestra pit up to the inner lobby to the south and originally sat 2,114 people. Ringing the auditorium’s first floor orchestra level, the second floor balcony originally sat 790 and is encircled by arched niches. A third floor former projection booth area saw additional openings added along the auditorium’s south wall. Capping the auditorium is a three-tiered coffered saucer dome with two smaller domes located at the ceiling’s south end.

Typical of early twentieth century movie palaces, the auditorium is decorated with elaborate plaster- and metalwork in an exuberant Renaissance Revival style. All walls and ceiling surfaces are thickly detailed with plaster ornamentation including foliate motifs, swags, urns, fans, and rosettes. Balcony entry doorways are set within frames detailed with spiral columns supporting decorative cornices. The auditorium also retains original iron and glass sconce lighting on both first and second floors.

The interiors of the store and apartment blocks in the building’s east and west blocks are separated completely from the theater facility. Altogether there are 10 ground level retail spaces, all vacant, and 56 second and third floor studio and one-bedroom apartment units. The apartments are accessed by street-facing residential entrances with internal stair cores. Double-loaded residential corridors containing some original French molding and wood resident door assemblies open into apartments that have seen some changes to fixtures and finishes.

Milwaukee Avenue Vestibule and Lobby

The one-story vestibule connects the Milwaukee Avenue entrance with the four-story main lobby. The vestibule has raked green and white checkerboard terrazzo tile floors, marble clad walls, and a painted cast metal ceiling frame that originally housed glass but now houses non-historic painted plywood. The ceiling also has non-historic glass and metal light fixtures that differ from those proposed in the original drawings. Both east and west ends of the vestibule have historic radiator grilles flanking painted poster signs with overhead lighting. The north wall of the vestibule is lined in painted metal and translucent glass doors with historic hardware similar to the Milwaukee Avenue entrance doors. Also along the north wall are two marble and gilded metal ticket booths topped with exposed electric light bulb outlets. The ticket booths are accessed by painted metal and glass doors. The ticket booths house deteriorated shelving and cabinetry.

Along with the auditorium, the four-story tall Milwaukee Avenue lobby, which served as the building's main entrance lobby, is the Congress Theater's most significant character-defining space. It is rectangular in plan with a semi-circular apse at its north end. At the north apse, the

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lobby connects to the first floor theater concourse through lobby level archways, and to the second floor theater concourse by a large Baroque stair that acts as the lobby's primary visual feature. The lobby floor is lined with green and white checkerboard terrazzo floor tiles that slope up at the north end of the space.

The lobby's east, west, and north apse wall are lined with a six foot-high base of highly brecciated black, gray, and brown marble that hides mechanical ductwork behind it. The marble base is topped with flat radiator grilles (not visible from ground level) and painted plaster base trim. The upper walls at the east and west walls are lined in wide painted plaster pilasters with decorative capitals that act as spring points for painted plaster groin vaulting detailed in the lobby's barrel vaulted ceiling. Eight original decorative sconce light fixtures are anchored at the eight east and west pilasters. The pilasters are flanked by painted plaster columns that frame painted flat plaster archways. The south ends of the east and west walls above the one-story vestibule have flat plaster walls with painted metal radiator grilles atop unadorned plaster ledges.

The south end of the lobby houses the one-story high Milwaukee Avenue vestibule. Above the vestibule at the lobby's south wall are five sets of double-arched Renaissance Revival style window openings housing original painted wood windows. The windows are flanked by painted twisted columns and painted plaster piers and topped by a highly detailed painted spandrel area with a painted center medallion.

The lobby's north apse also has a high marble base with two low archways that connect the lobby to the first floor lobby. Between these archways is the lobby's most distinctive visual feature: a wide Baroque staircase with terrazzo treads, risers, and landings; painted wrought iron railings; and painted wood handrails. The stair's wide center flight terminates in a center landing with a tall archway infilled with non-historic textured plaster and a non-historic painted mural. The stair landing's archway is flanked by plaster pilasters and two original decorative sconce light fixtures. The stair splits at this center landing into two narrower east and west flights that terminate in curved landings that cantilever over the north apse's ground level archways. Doorways at the east and west landings connect north up terrazzo steps to the second floor theater concourse; these doorways have highly decorative painted plaster surrounds and upper painted plaster medallions.

At ground level, the center stair has marble walls with plaster stringers. A narrow corridor below the center landing has three original painted wood doors that connect to highly utilitarian office and storage areas and stair down to the basement. The lobby also retains its original barrel vaulted ceiling with highly decorative plaster detailing and two large original chandeliers; a large non-historic fan is located at the center ceiling bay in a location originally intended for a chandelier though it is unclear whether a chandelier was ever installed.

Rockwell Street Lobby

The one-story tall Rockwell Street lobby is located southwest of the auditorium and connects the secondary Rockwell Street entrance to the first floor theater concourse. The lobby is overall rectangular in shape with raked terrazzo tile floors. The walls are of painted flat plaster walls with

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painted wood base trim, painted frieze ceiling trim, painted corner columns, and painted radiator grilles. The lobby has a painted flat plaster ceiling with an original pendant light fixture.

The original Rockwell Street entrance along the west wall retains an original outer frame and transoms with non-historic entry doors. A painted trimmed archway along the east wall connects the Rockwell Street lobby to the first floor theater concourse. A transition space between the two spaces has two plaster trimmed wall alcoves with flat plaster infill.

The Rockwell Street lobby's primary visual feature is the stair along its north wall that connects the lobby up to the 2nd floor theater concourse. The stair has terrazzo treads, risers, and landings; a painted stringer; a painted wrought iron railing with a painted wood handrail; and a painted wood wall-anchored handrail. The utilitarian storage space below the stair is enclosed with painted metal grillwork and accessed by a painted wood door.

First Floor Concourse

The two small archway corridors that connect the Milwaukee Avenue lobby to the concourse have ramped floor transitions of painted concrete, originally carpeted. The small corridors have painted wood wall bases and painted flat plaster walls and ceilings. The small east corridor ceiling retains an original pendant light fixture.

The small corridors connect the Milwaukee Avenue lobby to a crescent-shaped first floor theater concourse that provides access through original doorways to the auditorium to the north, and through a plaster cased opening to the Rockwell Street entrance to the west. The theater concourse has painted concrete floors, originally carpeted. The walls have painted wood wall bases and painted flat plaster walls with painted French molding and painted radiator grilles. The low barrel vaulted ceiling is of painted plaster and is unadorned except for original pendant light fixtures.

The north wall of the first floor theater concourse is lined with eight recessed door openings into the auditorium. The openings retain their original painted single panel wood double doors and original pull hardware. Most doorways retain original auditorium aisle signage anchored above them. The south wall is lined with original door openings housing highly utilitarian painted metal egress and closet doors as well as replacement restroom doors with original restroom signage anchored above them. The center of the south wall retains an original arched alcove flanked by non-historic painted tilework; the alcove originally housed a water fountain that is now missing.

The first floor theater restrooms are located in a separate two-story building block southeast of the first floor theater concourse. The restrooms retain fragments of original tile flooring and former lounge ceiling trim. Overall, however, the restrooms are highly utilitarian in character, have been heavily altered by previous owners, and retain little to no character-defining historic features.

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Second Floor Concourse and Office Space

The Congress Theater's second floor houses a crescent-shaped theater concourse connecting the two lobby stairs and the auditorium's second floor balcony. A utilitarian business office is located at the west end of the concourse. The two small corridors that connect the Milwaukee Avenue lobby stair landing to the second floor theater concourse have terrazzo paved floors and stairs with terrazzo treads and risers and painted wood wall-anchored handrails. The small corridors have painted wood wall bases and painted flat plaster walls and ceilings with decorative trim and medallions. Painted wood doors connect to utilitarian bathroom and storage spaces. These corridors retain original light fixtures that are missing original globes.

The small concourses connect the Milwaukee Avenue lobby to a crescent-shaped 2nd floor theater concourse similar in footprint and appearance to the first floor theater concourse below. The 2nd floor theater concourse provides access through eight original doorways to the auditorium balcony to the north, and through a plaster cased opening to the second floor office to the west. The theater concourse has painted concrete floors, originally carpeted. The walls have painted wood wall bases and painted flat plaster walls with painted French molding and painted radiator grilles. The flat plaster ceiling is of painted plaster and is unadorned except for original pendant light fixtures.

The north wall of the second floor theater concourse is lined with eight recessed door openings into the auditorium. The openings retain their original painted single panel wood double doors and original pull hardware. Most doorways retain original auditorium aisle signage anchored above them. The south wall is lined with original door openings housing highly utilitarian painted metal egress and closet doors and replacement restroom doors with original restroom signage anchored above them. The center of the south wall retains an original arched alcove with a historic marble water fountain.

The second floor office is located at the west end of the second floor theater concourse, and is accessed by a transition space that contains the upper flight of the Rockwell Street lobby stair with original wrought iron railings and a painted wood handrail. A painted wood door connects this space to the one-story tall second floor office which, compared to the opulent adjacent theater spaces, is highly utilitarian in character. The office is overall trapezoidal in shape with painted concrete floors; flat plaster walls with painted wood base, window, and door trim; and a flat plaster ceiling. In the office's southeast corner, a painted wood door connects to a small closet.

The second floor theater restrooms are located in a separate two-story building block southeast of the second floor theater concourse. The restrooms retain fragments of original tile flooring and former lounge ceiling trim. Overall, however, the restrooms are highly utilitarian in character, have been heavily altered by previous owners, and retain little to no character-defining historic features.

Auditorium Interiors

The Congress Theater's auditorium is the building's largest and most spatially complex interior space. Trapezoidal in shape and six stories in height, the auditorium originally accommodated

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2,900 people. The auditorium features a 55 foot-wide stage with decorative proscenium along the north wall, a raked ground floor with defined side aisles and steeply ramped exit corridors that slope up to the south wall, and a U-shaped, tiered balcony that encircles the space on the east, south, and west walls. The auditorium is capped with a highly decorative plaster ceiling displaying three-tiered coffered saucer dome with two smaller domes located at the ceiling's south end. Access to the auditorium space is along the south wall at the first floor and balcony levels. Original seating is no longer extant; the ground floor holds some non-historic fixed seating in the southeast corner as does the balcony. Original carpeting has been replaced with non-historic concrete which compromised the auditorium's historic air delivery system. Despite these alterations, the auditorium retains almost all of its highly detailed original decorative plaster in the Renaissance Revival style which adorns most surfaces, as well as original light fixtures. The ceiling's paint scheme appears to be another original feature.

The stage and proscenium at the north end of the auditorium is its primary focal point. The proscenium is composed of lavishly ornamented plaster that has been painted gold with red and green embellishment. The proscenium fills the entire height of the north wall, and is framed by rope molding and pairs of engaged Corinthian columns. The interior frame of the proscenium is defined by rope molding and faced with alternating rectangles and circles painted red and green. The shapes are further embellished with comedy and tragedy masks associated with dramatic performances (in the circles) and musical instruments (in the rectangles). A cartouche with a figurehead is located at the center of the interior frame. This frame is surmounted by a running course of corbelled Roman arches enhanced by alternating red and green rectangles at their bases and semicircles in the tympanum surfaces; these are supported by acanthus leaf modillions. A corbelled cornice caps the proscenium. A non-historic wood panel that has been painted red with gold trim hangs below the interior frame of the proscenium, hiding the curtain. A screen originally dropped from the fly space above the stage for film showings. The utilitarian wood stage is accessed by two non-historic wood stair enclosures at each end. The sunken orchestra pit remains in its original location centrally located at the south end of the stage; it no longer retains its original railing and now features a raised plywood deck set atop a concrete slab and concrete walls. Two small stairways, which connected the orchestra pit to the basement area below the stage have been filled.

Flanking the proscenium on the east and west walls are organ pipe lofts disguised by ornate domed oriel screened balconies. These oriels are supported by three corbels, extend from the balcony level to the proscenium height and feature the same ornate painted plaster that characterizes the lavish proscenium. The plaster is predominantly gold with red and green accents. Five Roman arches with attenuated Corinthian columns divide the organ screens; these are framed by engaged Corinthian columns and surmounted by projecting multifoiled arches with painted spandrels. Red and green painted geometric friezes and gold painted corbelled cornices support the two-tiered domed roofs of the oriels. The organ screens remain mostly intact, though some plaster panels are missing; the entire lower area of the screen on the western wall has been replaced with matching Styrofoam features. The organ pipes have been removed. Access to the organ lofts is facilitated from the balcony through doors on the southern side of the lofts. The door openings are trimmed with gold painted plaster that forms paired arches at the top. A pair of attenuated Roman arches

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encompassed within a larger arch extends from the top of the doorway to the tympanum of the arched wall, giving the impression of a Renaissance window. Rope molding and floral panels form the plaster embellishment of these entries. Beneath the oriel organ lofts two segmental arches trimmed with gold plaster rope molding and painted arches lead to egress corridors servicing the public alley to the east and an interior service alley to the west. These egress corridors have steeply ramped concrete floors that slope up to the east and west, respectively, flat plaster walls with painted base trim and radiator grilles, and plaster ceilings. The walls are lined with utilitarian painted egress doors and narrow doorways connecting to backstage areas.

The lavish treatment of the proscenium and organ lofts extends around the balcony and along the auditorium walls. The balcony is wrapped in a low railing wall that steps up along the eastern and western sides to accommodate the raked floor until it meets the portion of the balcony that extends from the southern wall. The balcony rail walls feature elaborate gold, red, and green painted plaster panels with egg and dart molding running along the base and alternating motifs of flowering urns and paired birds framed by geometric square and diamond borders. The balcony wall is capped with gold-painted wood rails. The plasterwork of the balcony rail wall carries onto the underside of the balcony as well; a rectangular border of alternating floral panels framed by rope molding defines each balcony box on the east and west sides as well as beneath the underside of the northernmost section of the balcony that extends from the southern wall. The interior of the balcony wall features utilitarian painted plaster and footlights.

The balcony visually divides the auditorium walls into upper and lower levels. The walls that form the upper level are highly embellished. Encircling the balcony space, an arcade of Roman arches forms groin vaults where they intersect with the domed ceiling. On the eastern and western walls, the interior of these arches consist of red painted flat plaster framed by gold painted ornamental plaster arches with alternating red and green painted floral accents. Gold painted plaster pilasters enhance the space between the arches. These pilasters are highly ornamented with repeating patterns of flowering vines rising from a decorative urn framed within a border of nesting triangles. The pilasters hold original brass and glass light fixtures; the upper portion features suspended globe fixtures with decorative brass chains and tassels while the lower portion holds semicircular flush mounted sconces with floriated brass tracery. The groin vaults also feature floriated plaster work; gold painted flowers and vines are set within the triangular vault with alternating green and gold chevron borders. The spandrels feature gold painted geometric patterns of circles diamonds and squares with flowers set within the shapes.

The upper level of the southern wall continues the embellished arcade of the eastern and western walls with a few exceptions. Eight double doors are set into archways as the south wall provides the main entrance to the balcony level. The doors frames are extended nearly to the springing line of the groin vaults by gold painted plaster rope columns with Corinthian capitals and Classical entablatures. Three ornamental plaster Roman arches fills the space between the top of the door and the entablature. The original light fixtures that line the east and west walls also line the southern wall; the globe fixtures are suspended from the upper levels of the pilasters while the flush mounted semi-circular sconces flank the door. Large, rectangular non-historic glazing above

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the doors visually connects the auditorium to the third floor former projection booth area. Non-historic acoustical panels have been incorporated around the doors.

Beneath the balcony, the lower walls of the auditorium form the side aisles of the lower seating space on the east and west sides of the auditorium. These are separated by ten rectangular openings that are enhanced by painted base trim, gold painted plaster rope molding around the frames, and decorative gold painted corner modillions embellished with acanthus leaves. Original flush mounted semicircular brass and glass sconces that appear on the lower portion of the balcony pilasters are mounted between openings. Beyond these openings, the side aisle walls are clad in flat plaster with painted base trim; large, rectangular gold painted heating grilles at the ceiling level are interspersed between the openings. The side aisles' plaster ceilings display non-historic light fixtures; utilitarian painted egress doors framed in gold plaster rope molding are located in the center bay of these walls.

The south wall at the ground floor level displays similar treatment as the east and west walls with a few exceptions that distinguish it as the main entry to the lower level seating area. Eight double doors framed with gold painted plaster rope molding that forms segmental arches with flowering vines embellishing the tympanum form the entrances. The original sconces that line the side aisle openings flank each entry on the southern wall. Large, rectangular heating grilles at the ceiling level are centrally located between the doors. A gold painted plaster cornice defines the ceiling that extends beneath the balcony from the southern wall. Decorative gold-painted wood ceiling panels that feature large, alternating diamonds and circles and hold some original flush-mounted ceiling light fixtures at their centers are bordered by a running pattern of floral panels.

The highly embellished ceiling crowns the entire auditorium space. The ornamental plaster ceiling incorporates a large, decorative three-tiered coffered saucer dome over the main seating space as its centerpiece with two smaller domes located near the south wall that housed the original film projection booths. The ceiling surface features scrolling vines that encircle the space which give way to spandrel panels decorated in a quatrefoil pattern that enlivens the surfaces between the main and smaller domes. Acanthus leaves ring the bases of all three domes; scalloped coves ascend from these outer rings. The main dome is further distinguished by two additional tiers. An elaborate pattern of gold painted scrolling vines, acanthus leaves and diamond shapes set within a green background rings the second tier of the dome. Another ring of acanthus leaves surrounds the inner cove which is ornamented with rectangular panels of golden urns with flowering vines. The red flowers and red and green nesting rectangles that form the borders echo the color scheme of the proscenium and balcony walls. These rectangular panels alternate with square panels decorated with golden urns. Scrolls terminate this level which rises to a coffered dome with flowering urns of green vines and red blossoms decorating the coffer panels and ribs. The oculus is filled with red glass and encircled by acanthus leaves and a pattern of circles and vines.

Stage and Backstage

The stage and backstage areas north of the Congress Theater auditorium historically served as performance space for artists and housed loading, support, and storage spaces. Organ pipe lofts

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east and west of the stage, which were never open to the public, have been heavily altered to serve as artist green room spaces. All stage and backstage interiors are highly utilitarian and feature exposed ducts, pipes, and conduits.

The low-ceilinged basement below the stage and east and west backstage blocks is highly utilitarian in character. The basement originally housed storage spaces and allowed performer access to the stage above and musician access to the orchestra pit. The space features exposed concrete floors; exposed brick, concrete, and hollow clay tile walls; and exposed concrete ceilings. Most original clay tile partition walls have either been wholly or partially demolished, or left exposed in damaged condition.

The five-story high stage area and flyspace is elevated above the auditorium floor and is accessed from the auditorium by concrete steps wrapped in a painted wood enclosure wall at each end of the proscenium opening. Beyond the proscenium, the stage has a highly worn wood floor. The stage's exposed brick enclosure walls are highly utilitarian in character and display radiator panels and stage equipment. Stage equipment to the sides of the stage and above the stage in the flyspace have been added and updated over the building's 90-year life as a performance venue. A metal circular stair is located at the northwest corner of the stage.

A one-story loading area is located just west of the stage. A non-historic metal overhead door connects the stage to the north alley. The loading area is highly utilitarian in character with concrete flooring, exposed masonry walls, exposed concrete structural ceilings, and service equipment. South of the loading area and accessed from the stage to the east and the auditorium's ramped northwest egress corridor is a highly utilitarian corridor with painted concrete floors, plaster walls with painted base trim, and plaster ceilings that access bathrooms and small loading offices. This west backstage block is served by a utilitarian stair with painted metal treads and risers, painted tube metal railings, and plaster-clad walls and ceilings. The stairs connects the stage floor up to the west organ pipe loft.

The space behind the auditorium's west organ pipe screen is accessed from the west backstage stair to the north and the second floor balcony to the south. The space has been heavily altered by previous owners and retains little to no historic fabric. Organ pipes have been removed and the space has been reconfigured as a green room space for artists with painted concrete floors, drywall walls with non-historic base trim, and drywall ceilings. The heavily damaged organ screen is hidden behind a non-historic wood casement.

East of the stage is a six-story block with a square footprint that houses storage and dressing room spaces that are highly utilitarian in character and have been heavily altered by previous owners. This east backstage block is served by a utilitarian stair with painted metal treads and risers, painted tube metal railings, and plaster-clad walls and ceilings. The stairs connects landings and corridors at each floors, each with painted concrete floors, plaster walls with base trim, and plaster ceilings. Each landing has a painted metal fire door that overlooks the multi-story stage flyspace. Each floor contains two to three dressing rooms and bathrooms with painted concrete floors, plaster walls with base trim, and plaster ceilings. All spaces have been heavily altered, including the top floor

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which has been gutted down to exposed concrete floors, brick walls, and concrete structural beams and ceiling slab.

The space behind the auditorium's east organ pipe screen is accessed from the east backstage block stair to the north. The space has been heavily altered by previous owners and retains little to no historic fabric. Organ pipes have been removed and the space has been reconfigured as a green room space for artists with non-historic tile floors, drywall walls with non-historic base trim, and drywall ceilings. The original organ screen is hidden within the space by painted wooden louvers and non-historic curtains. A two-story storage space east of the east organ pipe loft is highly utilitarian in character with exposed concrete floors, exposed masonry walls, and exposed concrete ceilings with a highly deteriorated wood stair and upper loft.

Retail Areas

The Congress Theater's three apartment blocks house vacant ground floor retail areas that have been enlarged and altered several times by several previous owners and tenants in the 90 years since the building opened. These spaces retain their original spatial layout but do not retain any historic character-defining features. Basement areas housing service, storage, and mechanical areas below the retail areas are accessed by utilitarian stairs. Existing first floor retail areas are highly utilitarian in character with deteriorated wood and tile flooring; walls and columns either clad in flat drywall or of exposed brick and concrete masonry; and ceilings either clad in flat drywall or of exposed painted concrete structure. Highly utilitarian doors and windows at the rear of retail areas overlook interior service alleys.

Apartment Block Interiors

The Congress Theater's three apartment blocks all have similar interior layouts and finishes, each with a single street-facing ground floor entrance with a small vestibule and connecting stair core providing access up to second and third floor residential floors with double loaded corridors accessing perimeter apartment units of varying condition and integrity.

Entry vestibules and stairs at Apartment Block #3 and Apartment Block #2 have historic tile floors. Historic tile flooring in the vestibule and stairs at Apartment Block #1 has either been removed and replaced or covered over with non-historic 1x1 tile. All three entry vestibules have painted plaster walls with painted (though probably originally stained) wood base and ceiling trim, and painted plaster ceilings. Non-historic apartment mailboxes are inset into vestibule walls. A painted-framed door opening with infilled side lights connects vestibules to a small stair core with painted plaster walls with painted wood base and chair rail trim, and painted plaster ceilings. Simple painted (though originally stained) wood stairs with wood treads, risers, intermediate landings, newel posts, railings, and pickets connect ground floors up to the second and third floors. The third floor top of the stair cores feature painted plaster ceilings with painted wood ceiling trim. The third floor stair ceiling of Apartment Block #1 has a skylight opening with a non-historic skylight system.

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Stair landings connect directly to double loaded second and third floor corridors. Original wood flooring has been removed from all second floor corridors in all apartment blocks, which now feature exposed concrete floors. Original wood flooring remains in poor condition at the third floor corridors in all apartment blocks, which also feature painted plaster walls with painted base and ceiling trim and plaster French molding, and painted plaster ceilings. Some corridors have original window openings with painted wood trim.

Perimeter apartments were historically accessed by two types of doorways. The typical primary apartment doorway had a lower painted single panel door and painted upper transom with an outer insect screen, all framed in painted wood trim; many original doors have been replaced with flush doors and all transoms have been painted over and fixed shut. Secondary service doorways which connected to apartment kitchens were similar to primary doorways and doors but do not have transoms; almost all service doors remain in place but are fixed shut. Each corridor terminates in a narrow return corridor with a historic doorway connecting to outdoor egress decks and stairs. These doorways have painted wood trim and non-historic painted metal doors.

The Congress Theater's perimeter apartment units had typical 1920s studio apartment configurations, usually with a single combined living/bedroom/kitchen area and small bathrooms and closets, although some had separate kitchens. Some apartment units retain their original configuration, though many have been reconfigured by previous owners. Finishes within apartment units are highly utilitarian in character. Most apartments retain original stained wood floors that are in poor condition, though some apartments have tile, vinyl, and carpet flooring. Most apartments have painted plaster or drywall walls with painted base trim and ceiling trim. Some apartments display painted French molding at some walls. Most perimeter walls display original window openings with painted wood trim. Some apartments have exposed brick perimeter and structural walls. All apartments have painted plaster ceilings. Bathrooms and kitchens no longer retain historic fixtures and finishes original to the building.

Roof

The large Congress Theater complex retains its historic roofline and has a variety of roof systems and features. The Congress Theater's primary Milwaukee Avenue façade is dominated by the four story-high theater entrance pavilion which has a pedimented south facing gable and a gabled roof extending north. North of the theater entrance pavilion is a sloped crescent-shaped roof located over the theater's long south concourses. North of this roof is the massive theater auditorium with a barrel vaulted roof set between brick-clad stepped front and rear gables. North of auditorium is the flyspace and backstage block which has a flat roof. The auditorium, flyspace, and backstage roofs are set at the far north end of the site and are mostly enclosed and hidden from street view by the four-story Milwaukee Avenue entrance pavilion and three-story apartment blocks. Flanking the gabled Milwaukee Avenue theater entrance pavilion are three three-story tall retail and apartment blocks, all with flat roofs. Apartment Building #1 at the southeast corner of the site has a one-story rear block to the north which also has a flat roof. North of this one-story block is a two-story theater restroom block, also with a flat roof.

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Integrity

The Congress Theater exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. The building retains its basic massing, fenestration pattern, and ornate decorative features and finishes. Overall, the building's interior and exterior appear much as they did historically with integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Congress Theater's exterior remains primarily intact with no additions or major alterations. Apartment windows and some retail storefronts have been replaced, although the building retains much of its original fenestration pattern. The theater's original marquee was replaced in the mid-century. Though the Congress Theater's original blade signage frame survives, the original illuminated signage letters are missing. New exterior egress stairs were added within the complex's interior courts and are not visible from the street.

Inside, the Congress Theater retains almost all of its character-defining decorative elements. The lobby with its vestibule, ticket booths, lighting fixtures stone floor, barrel vaulted ceiling and grand staircase remains almost completely intact. The first and second floor inner lobbies remain intact with their original doors, plaster decorative molding, and lighting fixtures. Though the original organ and organ pipes are missing and original seating has either been removed or replaced, the immense auditorium retains all of its original plaster work, expansive ceiling domes, large stage and orchestra pit, and lighting fixtures. The first floor retail storefronts, apartment corridors, and apartment units also retain their original spatial layouts.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926
(date of completion)

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Fridstein & Co.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The Congress Theater located at 2117-2139 North Milwaukee in Chicago is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture in that it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type,” most notably as an early twentieth century neighborhood “movie palace” popular in urban centers like Chicago. With its exuberant terra cotta façade, four-story high lobby, and auditorium that originally sat nearly 3,000 spectators, the Congress Theater is one of Chicago’s largest and most intact surviving 1920s neighborhood movie palaces. Designed by Fridstein & Co. and completed in 1926, the Congress Theater is also one of the last remaining theaters associated with Lubliner & Trinz, the prominent 1910s and 1920s Chicago movie theater chain for whom the Congress was built. For nearly nine decades the Congress Theater has served as a cultural and entertainment center for the Chicago’s Logan Square neighborhood, presenting movies, stage shows, music performances, and other special events. In 1996 the building was recognized by the Chicago Historic Resources Survey for its potential significance within the City of Chicago. The Congress Theater was officially designated a Chicago Landmark in 2002 in recognition of its significance as part of the city’s neighborhood movie palace history, as an example of important architecture both as a “theater-block” and for its lavish interior, and as a unique visual anchor within the Logan Square neighborhood.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of the Congress Theater

Designs for Lubliner & Trinz’s twenty-fifth movie house were first made public in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on February 15, 1925 in article accompanied by an elegant rendering of the proposed “Byzantine style” Logan Square cinema. The planned 3,000 seat Congress Theater was noted as part of a planned “[r]ejuvenation of more than 3,000 feet of Milwaukee [A]venue frontage,” part of a “considerable property between Western and California [Avenues].”¹ The new structure to be designed by architects Fridstein & Co. was expected to house “the big cinema, fifty kitchenette apartments and nineteen stores.” The venture was financed by the Greenebaum Sons Investment Company and was to be erected by contractors G.H. Gottschalk at an expected cost of \$2 million. Though initially planned to be completed by January 1926, the project ran nine months behind schedule.

¹ “Plan Big Movie for Milwaukee and Rockwell,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1925.

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Lubliner & Trinz's Congress Theater opened to the public on Sunday, September 5, 1926, promising "an interior of surpassing beauty and comfort... [and] a program of finest caliber, 'the utmost in entertainment.'" Originally a palatial venue exclusively housing traveling vaudeville shows and silent motion pictures, the Congress Theater was soon fitted with a Vitaphone sound system and exhibited its first "talking picture" in November of 1928. The Congress Theater joined Lubliner & Trinz's nearby Harding Theater (completed 1925, demolished 1960) and Paramount (now Logan) Theatre (completed in 1915, extant, remodeled) as their foothold grew in Chicago's Logan Square commercial and entertainment district.

In addition to its elegant lobby and auditorium, the Congress Theater property housed three separate residential blocks with a total of 17 retail storefronts and 56 upper level apartments. Combining movie theaters with leasable housing and commercial spaces into a larger "theater-block" building was a common method used by 1910s and 1920s architects and developers to increase the profitability and viability of large movie complexes.

In 1929, rival Chicago-based movie theater operators Balaban & Katz took full control of the Congress Theater from Lubliner & Trinz after three years with a controlling interest in the firm. Following the introduction of Vitaphone-Movietone sound, Balaban & Katz shifted the theater away from older movie and variety show programming to only pictures. In 1930, the Congress Theater's original Wurlitzer organ was removed and installed in Balaban & Katz's new Southtown Theater (610 West 63rd Street, Rapp & Rapp, demolished).²

In the mid-1930s, in addition to popular English-language films, the Congress Theater began showing Polish-language films and newsreels popular among the large Polish population on Chicago West Side. Films included the Polish operetta titled "Straszny Dwor" (The Haunted Castle) and a talking musical romance titled "Manewry Milosne" (Love Maneuvers), among others.³ The Congress Theater not only exhibited Polish films but also hosted Polish film stars in person, most notably actress Jadwiga Smosarska who appeared at the Congress alongside her films after she fled German-occupied Poland in early 1940.⁴ The Congress Theater was also an important gathering space for concerts, movie festivals, talent shows, and other entertainment events. In 1950, three thousand Chicago Poles gathered at the Congress Theater to hear General Wladyslaw Anders, chief of the free Polish fighting forces in London, speak at a patriotic rally sponsored by the Polish American Congress.⁵

² Konrad Schiecke, *Historic Movie Theaters in Illinois, 1883-1960*, London: McFarland & Company, 2011. 101.

³ "Movie Closeups," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1937; "Polish Heart Throb," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 28, 1937; "In Polish Movie," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 30, 1938.

⁴ "Poles' No. 1 Actress Tells of Flight to Escape War Perils," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 22, 1940; "Stars in Polish Film," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1941.

⁵ "3,000 Will Hear Speech Here by Polish General," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 16, 1950.

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The Congress closed briefly in the 1970s, then reopened as the CineMexico and again as the Teatro Azteca, showing primarily Spanish language films.⁶ Beginning in the 1990s the Congress operated primarily as a live performance venue for concerts until the theater closed permanently in 2014.⁷ The theater's remaining ground floor retail storefronts and 2nd and 3rd floor apartments have been vacant since mid-2015.

The Congress Theater was designated a local landmark by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in 2002.

Lubliner & Trinz

The Congress Theater was one of twenty-five vaudeville and movie houses operated by the Chicago-based theater chain of Lubliner & Trinz. The company's principal partners were Harry M. Lubliner (1880-1952), born in New York to German parents, and Austrian-born Joseph Trinz (1871-1926) who immigrated to America as a young man. Joseph Trinz came from a clan of successful theater operators: his older brother Henry (1860-1926) was a prominent music hall theater and manager in Chicago where he opened one of the city's first movie theaters in 1903 and later operated some of Milwaukee's largest movie houses; two of Joseph's younger brothers, Aaron (1878-1942) and Samuel (1889-1956) were also successful Milwaukee theater managers. Though Harry Lubliner and Joseph Trinz were the principal executives of the entertainment partnership, Joseph's three brothers came to play important supporting management roles as the Chicago-based Lubliner & Trinz collection of theaters grew.⁸

Harry Lubliner and Joseph Trinz first partnered in a string of downtown Chicago florist shops before entering the theater business in 1914; the two continued to sell flowers for several years until their success at theater management was secure.⁹ The first of Lubliner & Trinz's theater endeavors, the leasing of two existing theaters in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, was accompanied by their \$15,000 summer-long off-season lease of Orchestra Hall at 220 South Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago (architect Daniel Burnham, completed 1904, extant). From June through September of 1914, Lubliner & Trinz transformed the 2,577 seat auditorium into "one of the largest moving picture theaters in the country" according to the Chicago Daily Tribune, an "invasion" by exhibitors of "picture drama[s]" complete with "ticket sellers, ticket takers, ushers,... as well as lights."¹⁰

The duo's first film exhibition ventures were a success and established the business model that the

⁶ Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America, vol. 17, no. 2, Second Quarter (1985), 18; "Chicago's South-of-the-Border Cinema," Chicago Tribune, December 1, 1974; "Theaters that show Mexican-made and other Spanish-language films," Chicago Tribune, December 1, 1974.

⁷ "Medusa borrows page from 'JFK' to launch dance club in Congress Theater," Chicago Tribune, November 29, 1992.

⁸ "Henry Trinz," The Billboard (September 5, 1908), 16.

⁹ "Chicago: Notes," The American Florist (March 18, 1905), 328.

¹⁰ "Movies' Invade Orchestra Hall," Chicago Daily Tribune (April 25, 1914), 20.

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company would follow for the next decade. Lubliner & Trinz did not legally own any of the theaters they operated, instead undertaking long term – usually ten year – leases with their theaters’ legal owners. In the ground-up development of new theater complexes, they were often critical players in their elaborate designs and in the enormous financial investments needed to construct them. With only a limited investment in the ownership of their theater facilities, Lubliner & Trinz quickly expanded their collection of movie houses, at first unsuccessfully attempting to compete in Chicago’s crowded downtown destination theater market. Lubliner & Trinz did find success outside of the Loop, however, by opening smaller but no less opulent theaters where most of the movie going public lived – in the city’s many outlying North, West, and South Side neighborhoods.

Between 1915 and 1926, Lubliner & Trinz placed their moniker on dozens of movie theaters across the city. By 1918, Lubliner & Trinz operated thirteen theaters across the city, which made them the second largest chain operator in Chicago. They added several more theaters to their chain of establishments by the early 1920s, including, the 960-seat Lakeside Theater at 4730 North Sheridan Road (designed by Ralph C. Harris, 1915; the Pershing (now Davis) Theater at 4614 North Lincoln Avenue (designed by Walter W. Ahlshlager, 1918, extant; the Lamar Theater (renamed Oak Park, completed 1913, demolished); and a new large theater in East Chicago, Indiana (designed by Henry L. Newhouse, completed 1921, demolished).¹¹

Until 1918, the firm had primarily leased theater spaces in smaller, neighborhood venues with seating for fewer than 2,500. The 3,000-seat Pantheon Theater at 4642 North Sheridan Road (designed by Walter W. Ahlshlager, 1918, demolished) was the firm’s first offering in the trend towards palatial theaters, and it was the largest in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood until the extant Uptown Theater was completed in 1925.¹² Lubliner and Trinz’s circuit of theaters continued to grow through the 1920s, with 19 theaters across Chicago by 1925. At the same time, rising rival Chicago-based operating company Balaban & Katz had opened five large theaters, all within the same markets as Lubliner & Trinz’s theaters, which consequently placed the two companies in direct competition. The firms merged under the name Lubliner & Trinz Theatrical Enterprises, with each company assuming fifty percent ownership in the new corporation. With Balaban & Katz’s stake in Lubliner & Trinz’s existing theater chain, there was to be less conflict between the two companies, and consequently a greater choice of entertainment for the public.¹³

The new Lubliner & Trinz Theatrical Enterprises opened seven more theaters across the city, which were some of their largest and grandest movie palaces. In the Northwest Side’s Logan Square neighborhood, they built the Harding Theater at 2724 North Milwaukee Avenue (Fridstein &

¹¹ “\$1,000,000 Hotel on Church Site for Oak Park,” Chicago Daily Tribune (June 29, 1919), A8;

“Interesting Loan in Oak Park,” The Economist (June 11, 1921), v65, 1308; “Indiana Harbor, Indiana,” The American Contractor (August 28, 1920), 55.

¹² “Movie Theater Deal Chief of Lease Market,” Chicago Daily Tribune (November 24, 1918), E18; “Lubliner and Trinz to Take Over Pantheon,” Chicago Daily Tribune (December 23, 1917), A5; “New Movie on Sheridan Road,” Chicago

Daily Tribune (September 12, 1918), 12.

¹³ “Big Merger of Movie Theaters Announced Here,” Chicago Daily Tribune (May 9, 1925), 2.

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Company, completed 1925, demolished).¹⁴ The following year, the 4,000-seat Belmont Theater at 1635 West Belmont Avenue (designed by Walter W. Ahlschlager, façade extant), and the Congress Theater (Fridstein & Company, completed 1926) both opened to the public.¹⁵ In the city's South Side Woodlawn neighborhood, they built the \$2.2 million Tower Theatre at 1510 East 63rd Street (designed by Fridstein & Co., completed 1926, demolished) whose electric-lit steel tower was visible for miles.

At its height, Lubliner & Trinz Theatrical Enterprises operated twenty-five theaters in the Chicago area, and several more outside the city. However, as the theaters operated by Balaban & Katz increased in popularity, some of Lubliner & Trinz's similar, though less opulent, theaters began to suffer as audiences attended rival venues. Balaban & Katz launched their company nationally through lucrative deals, merging in 1926 with Hollywood's largest film studio, the Famous Players – Lasky (later Paramount Pictures), which formed a firm that produced, distributed, and exhibited films. This early partnership with film producers was only the beginning of Balaban & Katz's rise to power in the control of film distribution both in Chicago and in other cities.¹⁶ In 1927, one year after Joseph Trinz's death, Balaban & Katz acquired a majority of Lubliner & Trinz corporation stock, but they retained the Lubliner & Trinz moniker on many of its former theaters until the late 1930s. Into the 1940s and 1950s, Harry M. Lubliner and Joseph Trinz's surviving brothers along with many of their descendants remained in management roles of many of Lubliner & Trinz's former holdings.

Chicago's Logan Square Neighborhood and Milwaukee Avenue

Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood is located five miles northwest of Chicago's Loop. The neighborhood is bound by the North Branch of the Chicago River to the east, Kimball Avenue to the west, Diversey Avenue to the north and Fullerton Avenue to the south. The neighborhood is bisected by Milwaukee Avenue, one of Chicago's major commercial thoroughfares, which runs from downtown Chicago to the northwest through the community. Logan Square takes its name from the eponymous public square, named in honor of the Illinois-born Civil War general John Alexander Logan (1826-1886), located at the center of the community at the intersection of Logan Boulevard, Kedzie Avenue, and Milwaukee Avenue. Today, the densely populated area is distinguished by its ethnically and economically diverse population, historic tree-lined boulevards, greystones, and bungalow-style homes.

Development began as early as 1836 with the establishment of the first farm with continued growth due to the construction of the Northwest Plank Toll Road (originally Native American trail, currently Milwaukee Avenue) in 1848, which was used early on as a local thoroughfare for commerce and trade. The area was organized under the local government of Jefferson Township,

¹⁴ "Logan Square to have 3,000 Seat Theater," Chicago Daily Tribune (May 25, 1924), A14.

¹⁵ "Closeups," Chicago Daily Tribune (September 2, 1926), 25.

¹⁶ Michael Conant, Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 157-160.

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named after President Thomas Jefferson, and founded in 1850 as one of dozens of new independent municipal areas across the State of Illinois. Jefferson Township covered a large sparsely settled area from North Avenue on the south to Devon on the north and from Western Avenue on the east to Harlem Avenue on the west; today this area contains the majority of Chicago's northwest side. In the 1860s and 1870s, clusters of frame houses developed among farmlands, forming several small villages across the township; most subdivision and development occurred primarily along Milwaukee Avenue and the North Western Railroad line, both of which diagonally bisected the township. The area grew in the years following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 as families began to re-establish homes just outside Chicago's fire limits. In 1889, Jefferson and four other townships annexed to Chicago, increasing the city's area by 125 square miles, and its population by 225,000, making Chicago the second largest city in the country.

Chicago's boulevard system had been plotted and designed since park legislation passed in 1869, but the verdant jewel of today's Logan Square neighborhood was not completed until the 1890s. The boulevards were designed by Architect William LeBaron Jenney and refined by Landscape Architect Jens Jensen. The majority of the proposed system of parks and linking boulevards was planned for the vast reaches of unimproved land that surround the city's dense core, and was intended to attract fine residential development. The completion of Humboldt Boulevard and the extension of the Milwaukee Avenue cable car line from downtown in the 1890s, in addition to improved access to Chicago's water supply and sewer system, all contributed to the rapid development of the land around the old villages of Maplewood and Humboldt. At the same time, Chicago's third elevated train line, the Metropolitan West Side "L", opened in 1892, with a branch line extending to its terminus at Logan Square by 1895. By 1910, a dense neighborhood of greystone and brick apartment flats had woven in among older blocks of frame houses. Along the boulevards, the desired fine residences did appear. However, given the area's growing "leisure class" nature, many of the grand boulevard residences were built as multi-unit flats, which provided resident owners with additional income.

After World War I, the Logan Square neighborhood expanded even more as Poles and Russian Jews settled in greater numbers in the area. A new surge of apartment building and flat construction particularly escalated during this time, which as more residents arrived, led to greater demand for new businesses, stores, and even entertainment. Nickelodeon and vaudeville theaters opened along Milwaukee Avenue, including the Logan Square (1913) and Rose (1914) among several others, before becoming movie houses in the 1920s. During the 1920s, the Milwaukee Avenue business corridor was fully built up with a concentration of automobile showrooms and a significant entertainment district, which was home to the Congress (1926), Paramount (now Logan, 1915), and Harding (1925) theaters.

In the 1950s, Logan Square's boulevards were widened while additional land was cleared to construct Interstate-94 Northwest Highway, along the eastern edge of the neighborhood, to accommodate increasing automobile traffic in the city. By the early 1960s, Logan Square had completed a new shift in population as residents from Central and South America gradually displaced the Poles, Russian Jews, Ukrainians, and Italians that had helped develop the area at the

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turn of the century. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association, a group that has been functioning ever since to improve housing and community spirit, was formed by local residents in 1963. The area has continued to see resurgence well into the 21st century.

Many changes in development have occurred over the years contributing to the integrity of the historic fabric in the neighborhood including the expansion of the Blue Line with newly constructed stations in the 1970s. The corridor along Logan Boulevard was recognized as a National Register district in 1985 and a local landmark district in 2005 for its exemplary upper- and middle-class residential, institutional, religious, and commercial architecture during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the recent years, the Logan Square neighborhood has become home to many artists and continues to thrive as an ethnically and economically diverse community. While many larger homes along the Boulevard have been rehabilitated, many residents still occupy rental flats and smaller single family homes.

Chicago Movie Palaces and the Development of the “Theater-Block”

The American movie theater building type dates to the first decade of the 20th century when indoor exhibition spaces, usually cramped, unadorned converted storefronts, were first adapted for viewing short films. These early movie theaters, known as nickelodeons for their nickel cost of admission, were assemblies of basic unsophisticated projection equipment and makeshift seating that nonetheless flourished from 1905 to 1915. Refinement of movie production technology in this period led to an increase in the numbers, quality, and duration of early films, leading to more interest in movie going and to rapid changes in movie exhibition spaces. The first purpose-built movie theaters, larger auditoriums designed specifically to show motion pictures in addition to supporting vaudeville acts, were first completed in America’s large cities in the 1910s. Many of these theaters located in Chicago, including the Congress Theater, were built by movie chain tycoons, Lubliner & Trinz.

In the 1920s, the great demand for motion pictures and the control of film distribution and exhibition by Hollywood movie firms – which only tightened with the rise of “talking pictures” in the mid-1920s – encouraged the construction of large-scale theaters that could seat many more ticket buyers. This explosive success of the growing film industry drove the construction of a new type of movie exhibition hall, a large facility designed to accommodate larger crowds of paying moviegoers, sometimes up to 4,000 or more audience members. Dubbed “movie palaces,” these large and lavish movie theaters drew large crowds attracted not only by the films and vaudeville shows shown there but also by the majestic lobbies, immense auditoriums, and extravagant ornamentation that evoked the regality of European palaces and the glamour of newborn Hollywood.

Palatial movie theaters made the leisure activity of movie-going an experience open to all levels of society, including a burgeoning leisure class. Early nickelodeons were frequently identified as working-class venues. Their small size, cramped quarters, and ties with other establishments, such as saloons, placed them in a category of potentially disreputable venues, which included dance

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halls and cheaper variety shows. Attracting mothers and children to neighborhood storefront theaters and nickelodeons gave these venues a level of propriety and a sense of safety and respectability, which theaters accomplished by providing special matinee performances and services for mothers and children. Other theaters simply attempted to advertise their higher-class aspirations to attract a more respectable clientele.¹⁷ At the same time, new longer film formats attracted a larger leisure class public that generally did not otherwise attend theatrical productions; films with fully developed plots were an accessible format that could reach new working and leisure class audiences.

Making movie theaters attractive to a wider audience required more theatrical sleight of hand than longer films and improved storefront theaters could provide. Theater operators in the late 1910s developed new theaters where movies were the focus of a larger show. But, instead of a ticket booth and a darkened room, new palace theaters attracted audiences by delighting them with elaborately finished grand public spaces, orchestral music, lighting effects, and remarkable service. The theaters themselves could also hold thousands more patrons than storefront theaters or nickelodeons. Many of these patrons were workers willing to pay a more on occasion for a better program and the comfort of a palatial entertainment experience.¹⁸ Similarly, the growing leisure class, avoiding the seemingly disreputable storefront theater and nickelodeon, also patronized movie palaces for the chance to retreat from the working world into the world of celluloid fantasies. Exuberant architecture and movie magic helped fade class distinctions, which had been present in early storefront theaters.

Three general styles defined theaters between the 1910s through the 1940s: Classical style, which included eclectic and luxurious period-revival architecture; atmospheric, which called for lighting effects to resemble the night sky above a seating area designed to feel like an open courtyard; and Art Deco and Moderne, which was the predominant machine-age, polychromatic, streamlined style given theaters in the late 1930s and into the 1940s. The Congress Theater, with its Classical inspired design, features highly ornate Italian Renaissance Revival style features and finishes. Both the exterior and interior of the theater are adorned with exuberant period-revival details, which remain highly intact.

The elaborate four-story theater entrance is an excellent example of terra cotta ornament and craftsmanship designed in a combination of the Classical Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival styles. These two styles are exhibited on the building's exterior through the use of Corinthian pilasters, relief spandrel panels, a large decorative entablature, dentiled pediment with decorative relief figures, round-arched windows, and triangular pediment. The theater interior is made up of a grand progression of spaces, particularly noted for their high level of architectural detail. The four-story main lobby features marble wainscoting, vaulted ceilings, green and white checkboard

¹⁷ Richard Butsch, The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20-23.

¹⁸ Robert Sklar, Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012; 1975), 44-45.

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terrazzo floors, wall moldings, grand staircase, and a myriad of plaster motifs in the highly ornate auditorium. The auditorium itself retains its original gold and burgundy color scheme. It also features a grand proscenium arch and saucer dome. Highly ornate Italian Renaissance Revival style details, such as ornamental plaster surfaces, adorn the theater walls.

The design palette of prominent movie palace architects like Thomas Lamb, Rapp & Rapp, and John Eberson borrowed heavily from architecture of the majestic and exotic past. Movie palace architects often combined design elements from an assortment of periods and regions including French Baroque, Italian Renaissance, Romanesque, Gothic, Moroccan, Mediterranean, Spanish Gothic, Hindu, Babylonian, Aztec, Mayan, Moorish, Asian, and Egyptian Revival into this building type popular in big cities across the United States between 1913 and 1932. The wealth of ornament and mix of eclectic styles was not only for aesthetic effect, but also to create a fantasy environment that attracted moviegoers. Movie palace exteriors were usually clad in richly detailed terra cotta with lighted marquees, oversized electric signs, a recessed exterior vestibule, and box office. Likewise the interiors, particularly the lobbies and auditoriums, were adorned with elaborate stone and plaster work, decorative metal light fixtures, and plush seats, in addition to large orchestra pits and stages that rivaled those seen in the Europe's grand opera houses. The average American movie palace accommodated from 1,800 to 2,500 spectators.

Combining movie theaters with leasable housing and commercial spaces into a larger “theater-blocks” was a common building method used by 1910s and 1920s architects and developers to increase the profitability and viability of large movie complexes, particularly in surrounding Chicago neighborhoods. Much like the Congress Theater, these “theater-blocks,” combined movie theater space with stores, apartments, and sometimes offices. With the exception of a few known examples in Chicago—including the Chicago Theater (designed by Rapp & Rapp, completed 1921, extant, NR #79000822) and the Uptown Theater (designed by Rapp & Rapp, completed 1925, extant, NR #86003181)—very rarely were theaters built as stand alone venues. Lubliner & Trinz in particular focused their work on theater-block buildings, including the Harding Theater at 2724 North Milwaukee Avenue (Fridstein & Company, completed 1925, demolished) and the Tower Theatre at 1510 East 63rd Street (designed by Fridstein & Co., completed 1926, demolished), in addition to the Congress Theater.

By 1929, Chicagoans could visit dozens of movie palaces both downtown and in their own outlying neighborhoods, which held some of the city's most prominent theaters. Chicago's Loop business district had some of the city's largest movie theaters including the Chicago Theatre (designed by Rapp & Rapp, completed 1921, extant, NR #79000822) and the Oriental Theatre (designed by Rapp & Rapp, completed 1926, extant, NR #78003401). Some of Chicago's largest and grandest movie palaces, however, were constructed in smaller commercial districts outside the Loop, including the Uptown Theatre (designed by Rapp & Rapp, completed 1925, NR #86003181), the Avalon (later New Regal) Theater (designed by John Eberson, completed 1927, extant, designated a Chicago Landmark), the Paradise Theatre (designed by John Eberson, completed 1928, demolished) and the Congress Theater.

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The viability of such large urban movie theaters declined during the Great Depression and suffered again in the postwar period as many of Chicago's moviegoers relocated to new suburban communities where smaller, more profitable movie theaters were constructed in clustered multiplex shopping centers. After World War II, many of Chicago's 1920s movie palaces were either heavily remodeled or destroyed. The Congress Theater, however, survived as a movie and music performance venue and today serves as a rare and intact example of Chicago's early twentieth century movie palaces.

Architects Fridstein & Co.

The Congress Theater is the largest surviving 1920s movie theater designed by the Chicago-based architects Fridstein & Co. The company was led for nearly fifty years by Wisconsin-born architect Meyer Fridstein (1884-1964) who after studying structural engineering at the University of Wisconsin worked for a short period in Milwaukee before relocating to Chicago. Young Fridstein worked in the offices of architect Richard Schmidt and the prominent architectural firm of Marshall & Fox where he assisted in the design of the Blackstone Hotel at 636 South Michigan Avenue (completed 1910, extant). Founded in 1916, Fridstein & Co. became known in Chicago for its building and financing of large-scale residential and commercial projects.

Although primarily an engineering firm, Fridstein & Co. served as the architect for several buildings in the Chicago area including three hotels listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Belden-Stratford Hotel (2300 North Lincoln Park West, completed 1923, extant, NR #92000485), the Shoreland Hotel (54 South Shore Drive, extant, NR#86001201, also a designated Chicago Landmark), and the Webster Hotel (2150 North Lincoln Park West, extant). In addition to the Congress Theater, Fridstein & Co. also served as architect for Chicago's Portage Park Theater at 4042-4060 North Milwaukee Avenue (completed 1920 in conjunction with Lindley P. Rowe, extant, also a designated Chicago Landmark), the Harding Theatre (completed 1926, demolished), and the Tower Theatre (completed 1926, demolished).

Conclusion

The Congress Theater is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a distinctive early twentieth century movie palace. The theater, constructed in 1926 and designed by Fridstein & Co., is one of Chicago's largest and most intact surviving 1920s neighborhood movie palaces. Rising four stories, the large complex serves as a unique visual anchor along the major thoroughfare of North Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, boasting a decorative terra cotta façade, beautifully detailed four-story high lobby, large auditorium, storefront retail along North Milwaukee Avenue and North Rockwell Street, as well as apartment units. Originally built for the prominent movie theater chain of Lubliner & Trinz, the Congress Theater continued to serve as a focal point for culture and entertainment on the city's northwest side into the early 21st century. The theater was recognized in the 1996 Chicago Historic Resources Survey for its potential significance within the City of Chicago and was officially designated a Chicago Landmark in 2002. The building continues to exemplify its significance as both an important part

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of the neighborhood and as a distinctive and rare surviving type of architecture: the early movie palace.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Chicago Landmarks Commission
Theater Historical Society of America

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.919973 Longitude: -87.692567
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Congress Theater
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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Congress Theater fully occupies an irregularly-shaped lot at the northeast corner of North Milwaukee Avenue and North Rockwell Street, which spans one quarter of a city block in size. The building's primary façade and theater lobby entrance face southwest onto North Milwaukee Avenue which serves as a major commercial and entertainment thoroughfare for Chicago's Northwest Side. Another primary street-facing elevation with a secondary theater entrance faces west onto Rockwell Street. The building is lined along its east and north ends by narrow public alleys.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries for the Congress Theater extend the full footprint of the building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Cramer, Megan Lydon, Matt Wicklund, and Amanda Svantesson
DeGidio
organization: MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC
street & number: 53 West Jackson Blvd., Suite 1142
city or town: Chicago state: IL zip code: 60604
e-mail jcramer@mac-ha.com
telephone: 312-786-1700 x7010
date: February 5, 2016

Congress Theater
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Congress Theater

City or Vicinity: Chicago

County: Cook

State: Illinois

Photographer: John Cramer

Date Photographed: April 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 16: North Milwaukee Avenue (south) theater entrance, looking northeast

2 of 16: North Rockwell Street (west) elevation, looking northeast

3 of 16: Typical storefront detail, looking southeast

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4 of 16: South and east elevations of apartment block 1, looking northwest

5 of 16: East (alley) elevation, looking west

6 of 16: Lobby vestibule, looking northwest

7 of 16: Theater lobby, looking northeast

8 of 16: Theater lobby, looking south

9 of 16: Typical theater concourse, looking west

10 of 16: Theater auditorium, looking northwest

11 of 16: Second floor theater auditorium, looking west

12 of 16: North Rockwell Street entrance, looking northeast

13 of 16: Typical apartment block corridor

14 of 16: Typical apartment unit

15 of 16: Typical apartment unit

16 of 16: Typical apartment stair

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Figures:

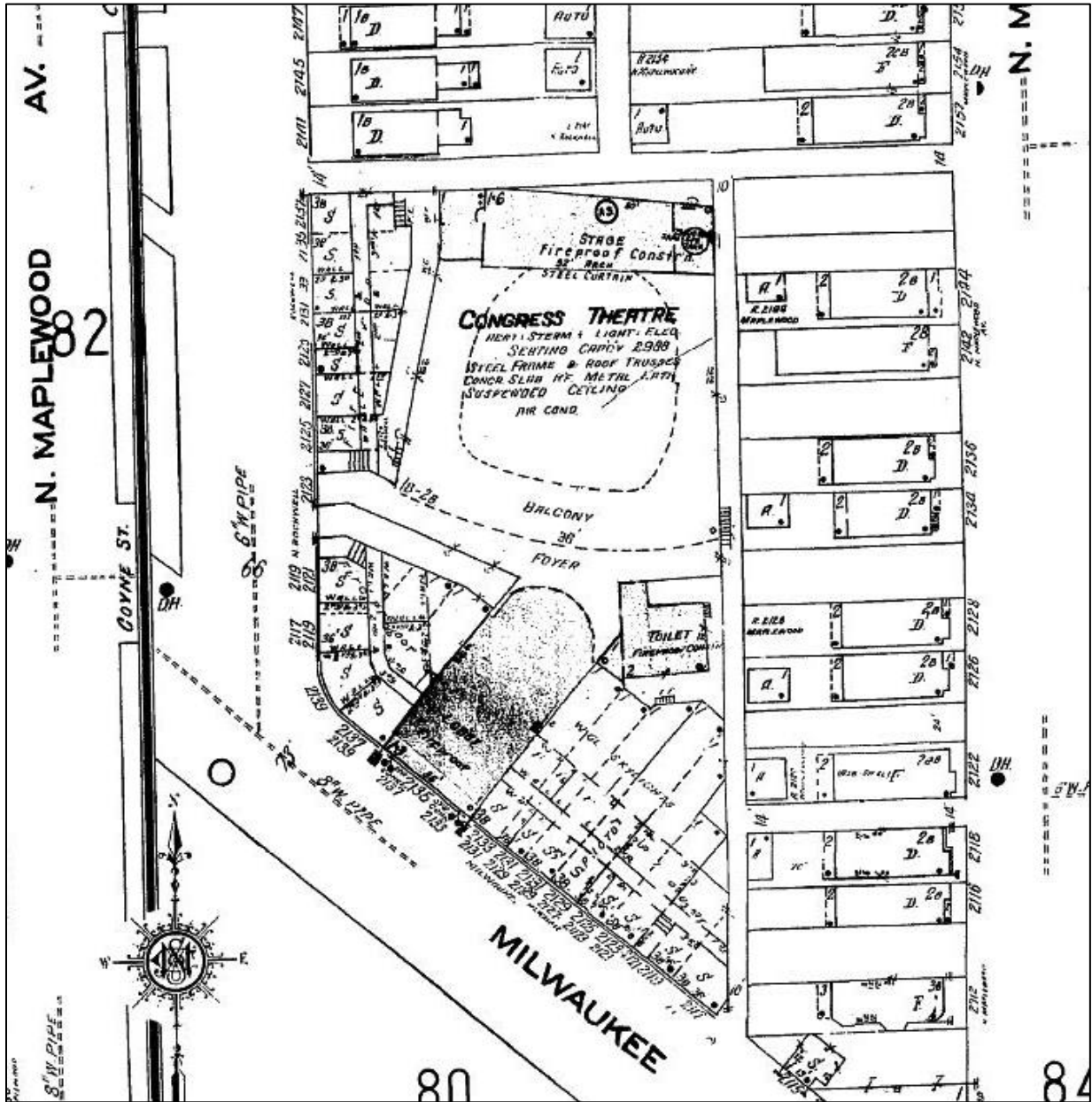


Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the Congress Theater, 1950

Congress Theater
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State

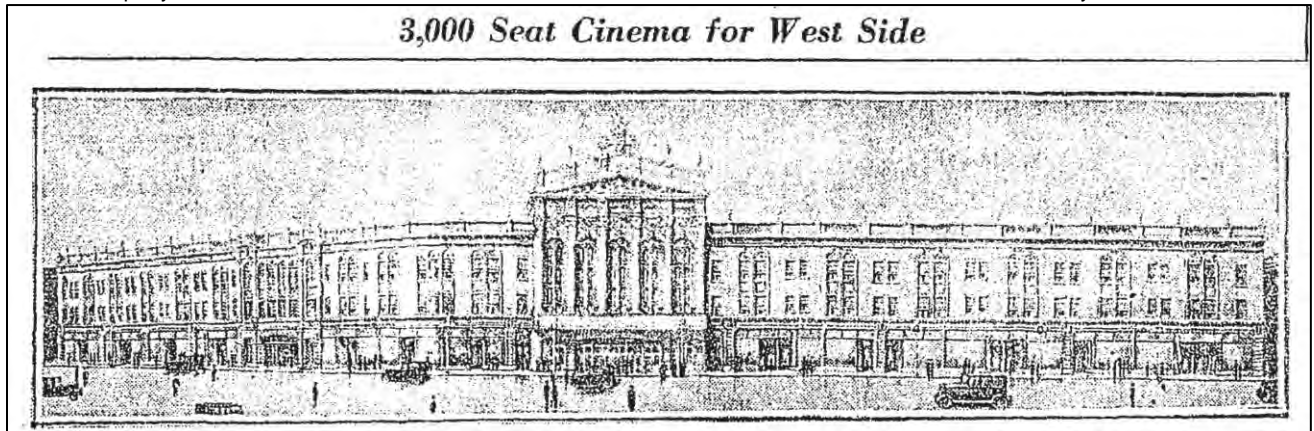


Figure 2: Rendering of the proposed Congress Theater, 1925 (Chicago Daily Tribune, February 15, 1925)



Figure 3: Announcement of the opening of the Congress Arcade, 1926 (Chicago Daily Tribune, August 31, 1926)

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Figure 4: Exterior detail view of the theater entrance (Marquee Magazine, 1992)

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Above: The lobby of the CONGRESS Theater. Note the chandeliers which were cleaned and relamped by Chicago-area THS members. (Chicago Architectural Photographing Co. Collection, THS) Left: Willy Miranda, owner of the CONGRESS/MEXICO Theater, August 1984. (Photo by Sharon Lindy)

Figure 5: Theater lobby (Marquee Magazine, 1985)

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Figure 6: Theater lobby (Marquee Magazine, 1992)

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Figure 7: Theater auditorium (Marquee Magazine, 1992)

Congress Theater
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Figure 8: Theater auditorium (Marquee Magazine, 1985, 1992)

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Name of Property

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Figure 9: Theater auditorium (Marquee Magazine, 1992)

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Figure 10: Exterior view along North Milwaukee Avenue, c. 1960 (Chicago History Museum)

Congress Theater
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State



Figure 11: Exterior view along North Milwaukee Avenue, c. 1960 (Chicago History Museum)

Congress Theater
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State



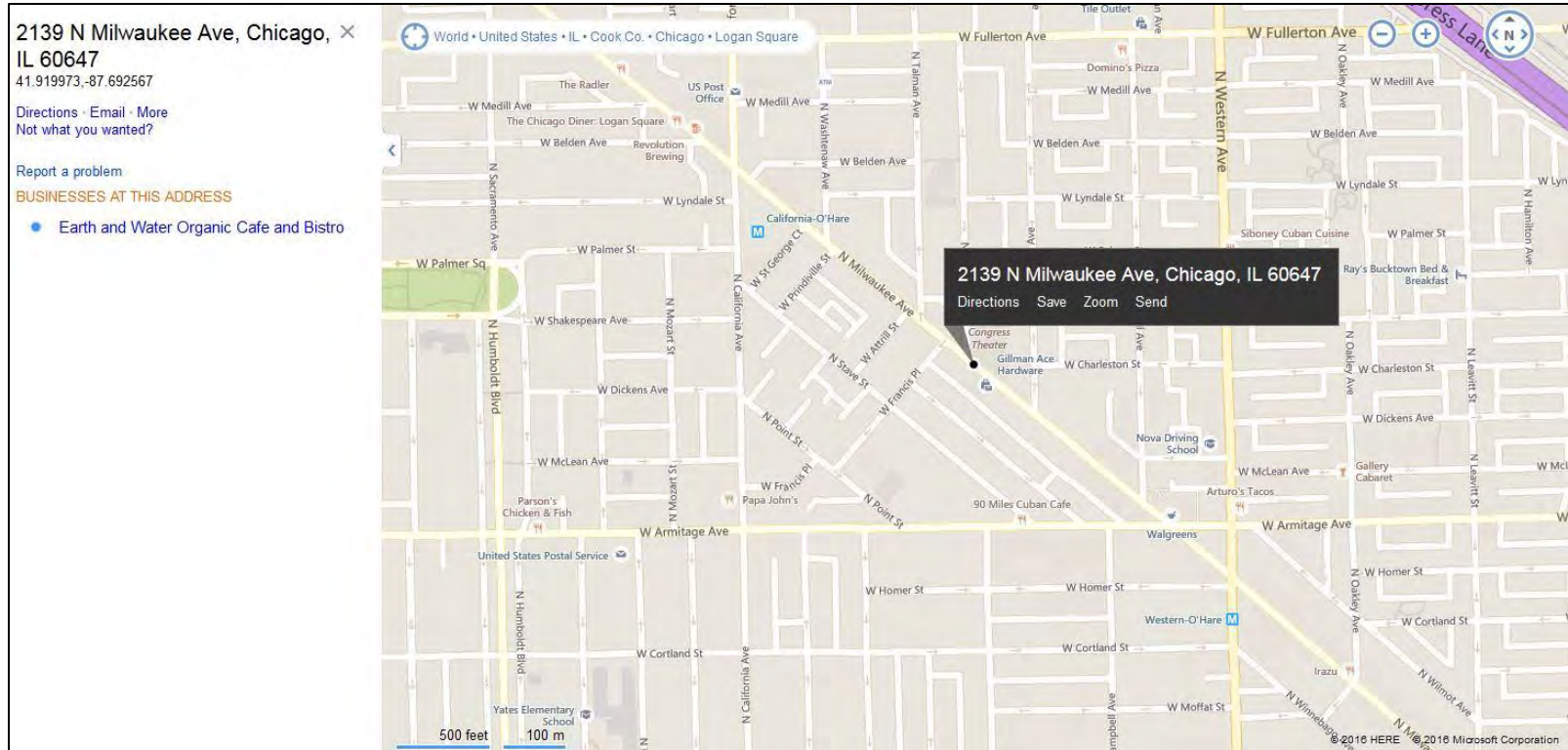
Figure 12: Exterior detail view of the theater entrance, c. 1960 (Chicago History Museum)

Congress Theater
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State

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.



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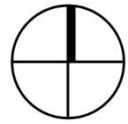
Congress Theater

2117-2139 North Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60631

Latitude: 41.919973

Longitude: -87.692567

**Coordinates based on WGS 84*



250 feet 50 m





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Congress

\$38
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COMPANY
(800) 248-6787
\$57





Progress Theater
www.congressnick.com
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GALLERY
PROVOCATEUR



ACCEPTANCE
773.252.5590

Acceptance Agency

Insurance-Travel-Notary
Seguros-Viajes-Notario

773.252.5590

2117

Handwritten graffiti: blue circles and red letters 'MBS'.





SECURITY NOTICE
NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO DRUGS
NO WEAPONS

NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO DRUGS
NO WEAPONS













STAFF ONLY









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/22/2016 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: 8/25/2016 Date of 45th Day: 2/20/2017 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

<i>Submission Type</i>	<i>Property Type</i>	<i>Problem Type</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other		<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years

Accept Return Reject 1/6/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone _____ Date _____

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

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



RECEIVED 2280

2016 JUL 21 10 53
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

July 21, 2016

Ms. Barbara Wyatt
National Register of Historic Places Program
National Park Service, Department of the Interior
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Wyatt:

Enclosed are the disks that contain the true and correct copies of the National Register nominations recommended for nomination by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council at its June 24, 2016 meeting and signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer:

Anthony Overton Elementary School, Chicago, Cook County
Congress Theater, Chicago, Cook County
Lemont Downtown Historic District, Lemont, Cook County
Bristol Congregational Church, Yorkville, Kendall County

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PACKAGE ALSO CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING:

1. Corrections for the Bridge at Thirteenth Street, St. Francisville, Lawrence County

Please contact me at 217/785-4324 if you need any additional information. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Heckenkamp, Coordinator
Survey and National Register program

enclosures

1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield IL 62701

ILLINOISHISTORY.GOV

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Congress Theater
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Cook

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/10/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/25/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/06/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000579

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:

Return:
Please see the attached
National Register Evaluation/Return Sheet
for an explanation.

RECOM./CRITERIA *C*

REVIEWER *Barbara Dwyer*

DISCIPLINE *Historian*

TELEPHONE _____

DATE *9-6-16*

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.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

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

Comments Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Congress Theater

Property Location: Chicago, Illinois

Reference Number: 16000579


Date of Return: September 6, 2016

Reason for Return

The nomination for the Congress Theater is being returned because photos were not submitted with the nomination.

This omission was not caught by your reviewer until the 44th day, which did not allow time to request the submission of photos. Otherwise, the nomination is well prepared and the property is eligible. We will hold all materials until photos are submitted.

Please call me at 202-354-2252 or send an email to barbara_wyatt@nps.gov if you have any questions.



Barbara Wyatt, Historian
National Register of Historic Places