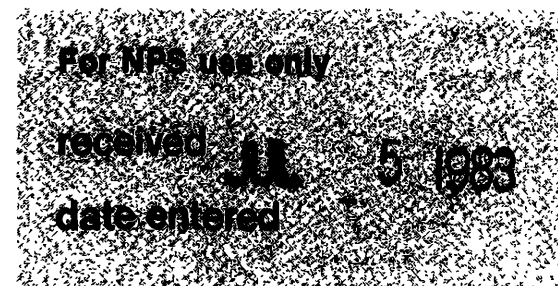


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Leroy Theatre

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 66 Broad Street

NA not for publication

city, town Pawtucket

NA vicinity of

state Rhode Island

code 44

county Providence

code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N.A.</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Leroy Center for the Cultural and Performing Arts, Inc.

street & number 66 Broad Street

city, town Pawtucket

NA vicinity of

state Rhode Island

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pawtucket City Hall

street & number 137 Roosevelt Avenue

city, town Pawtucket

state Rhode Island

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pawtucket, R.I., P-PA-2

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978

federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Leroy Theater occupies much of the interior of the block bounded by Broad, Goff, and Mason Streets in the northwestern corner of Pawtucket's downtown. Most of the red brick exterior of the building was originally hidden behind the dense array of commercial buildings which once lined Broad and Goff Streets. The removal of several of these buildings has revealed a massive and rather ungainly brick box. Only on the Mason Street side of the theater, which was originally exposed to view, is there some modest "pattern brick" decoration worked into the exterior walls. The original four-story entrance tower of molded terra cotta in the "modern classic" style was removed in 1949; the modern chrome and plastic marquee which replaced it has now been removed, as has the original ticket kiosk.

Inside the Leroy a magnificent and luxurious Adamesque-detailed interior remains virtually intact. The narrow entry vestibule, which carried audiences in from Broad Street, is lined with bronze mirrored glass set into an Adamesque arcade rising to an ornamental plaster ceiling. The vestibule opens into a spacious, two-story lobby, located at the rear of the auditorium and set underneath the single balcony. Handsome solid marble and imitation stone staircases sweep up from the ends of the lobby to a bowed, open mezzanine. A half-saucer dome with luxuriant Adamesque decoration repeats this bow at the ceiling level before meeting the longitudinal groin vaulting of the lobby and the stairwells. The auditorium contains 2400 seats on the ground floor and balcony.

The proscenium arch is carried on colossal paired Adamesque columns which also frame cantilevered balcony boxes; a shallow saucer dome with bas-relief figures is the central feature of the ceiling, which is decorated with colored lights and Adamesque details in molded plaster. Setting off these details are (possibly original) wall panels of red silk damask figured in gold. The original interior colors, now altered, are known to have been French gray, mulberry, ivory and gold with occasional touches of blue.

The Leroy was built to accommodate both cinema and live theatre. At the side of the stage are four levels of dressing rooms, with nine private rooms and a large room for the chorus. All four levels open to the stage loft through sliding doors. Equipped with rigging for multiple flies, curtains, drops and light bars, the stage area could be used to display a variety of scenery; it has a paint bridge for background work, a carpentry shop, and traps through the stage floor. A huge double door opening off Mason Street allows for the passage of props and scenery as tall as thirty feet.

At the foot of the stage, separated from the audience by a cast iron balustrade, is an orchestra pit large enough to seat twenty musicians in addition to the organist. In the center of the pit is the control console for the original organ, a Wurlitzer model H.

(See continuation sheet #1)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received
date entered

Continuation sheet

1

Item number 7

Page 2

An unusually well fire-proofed building, the Leroy is equipped with an asbestos curtain to separate the auditorium from the stage, a large fire vent in the stage fly loft roof, sprinklers throughout the stage area and separate underground boiler and fan rooms. These latter are actually outside the building and beneath an adjacent courtyard.

The original projection booth is outside the main block of the building. Resting on a cantilevered platform high on the rear wall, the booth is reached by passing through a fire door at the rear of the balcony, along a steel catwalk, and through another fire door. All projection ports are equipped with self-closing shutters in the event of fire. The extremely-flammable celluloid film in use when the Leroy was built never actually entered the building; it was delivered via a block and tackle to the projection booth from the alley below.

Structurally, the building is a steel frame of large H sections acting as columns supporting the massive roof trusses and the balcony framing. The balcony trusses are supported at the rear wall and on a massive, six-foot-deep transverse girder. The forward portion of the balcony is cantilevered out from this girder. The ornate ceiling is entirely suspended ten to thirty feet below the roof. Access to this area is provided by a series of catwalks suspended between the ceiling and roof.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

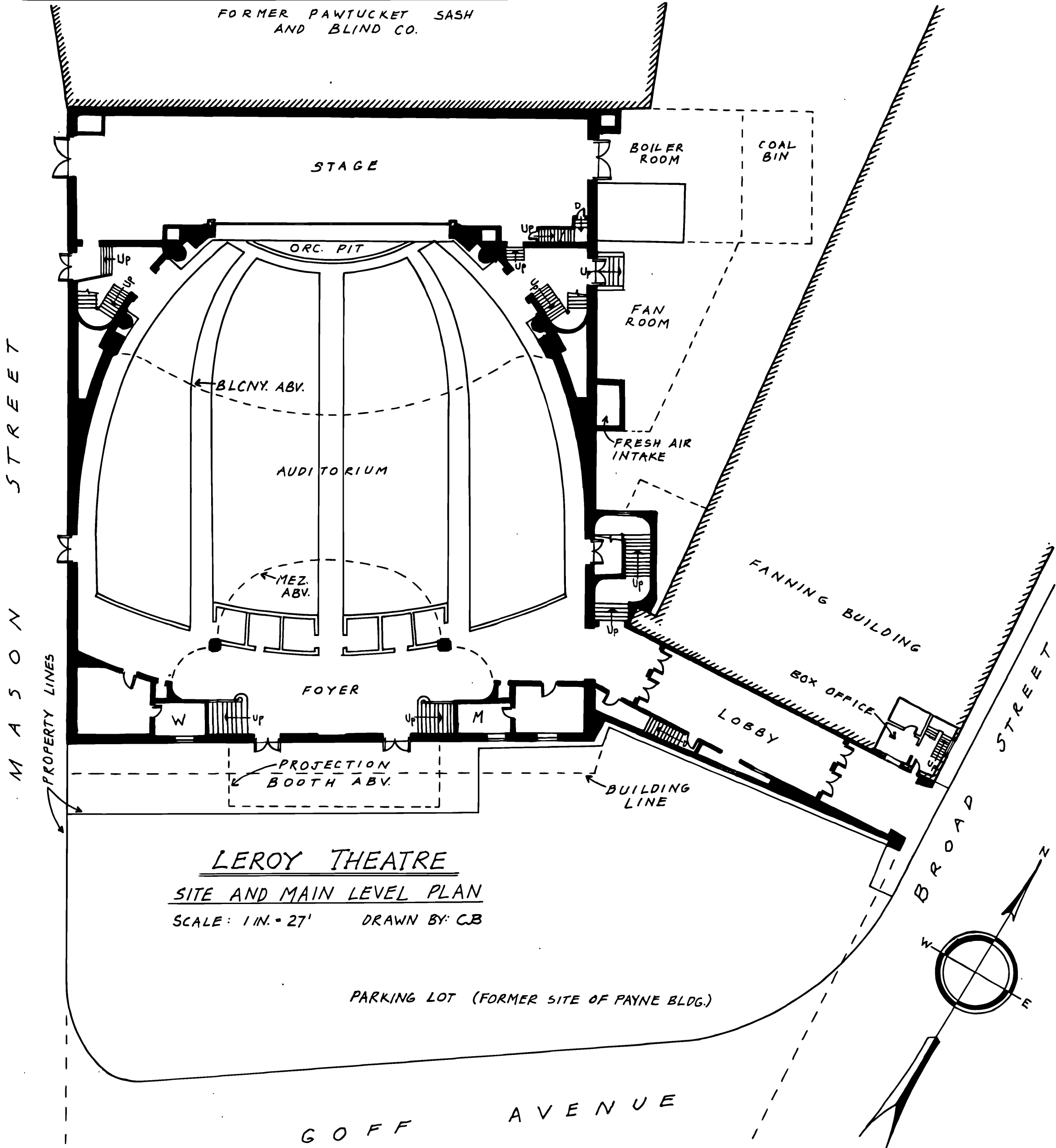
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received
date entered

Continuation sheet 3

Item number 7

Page 3



8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1922-3 **Builder/Architect** John F. O'Malley, Pawtucket, R.I.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Leroy Theater is significant architecturally for its outstanding early-twentieth-century, Adamesque-detailed interior, one of the finest and largest surviving from its period in New England. The Leroy is significant historically as the only surviving representative of the many vaudeville houses, music halls, and movie houses which once thrived in downtown Pawtucket and which contributed much to the city's character in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Leroy Theatre was constructed in 1922-23 for the Broad Street Power Company, an organization controlled by the Payne family of Pawtucket. Leroy Payne, son of the principal owner of the company, had been killed in the Argonne Forest in World War I, and the Broad Street theatre was named in his honor. The architect for the building was John F. O'Malley of Pawtucket (who later designed the Pawtucket City Hall and Pawtucket West High School), and Arthur Brounet of New York City designed the opulent decoration of the lobby. The Payne family built their theater as Pawtucket reached the peak of its industrial and civic development and building. In the years between 1885 and 1925, the city reached its zenith as a manufacturing and urban center. The business district expanded into a truly urban downtown with large commercial blocks, banks, newspaper buildings, a new city library, and post office. The Paynes are said to have spent more than a million dollars on their building and to have considered its construction as the creation of a civic amenity and an expression of their pride in this maturing city, as well as a profitable venture.

Vaudeville acts as well as motion pictures were originally featured at the Leroy and some older Pawtucket residents can still recall Will Rogers performing his famous lariat tricks on the opening night. At that time, the Leroy was in direct competition with perhaps a half-dozen other downtown Pawtucket theatres, some of which had been in operation since at least as early as the 1880s. One of these rivals, the 1700-seat Music Hall on Main Street, had long been a stopping point for most of the big stars on the vaudeville circuit; other vaudeville houses were located on Mill Street (now Roosevelt Avenue) and Main Street.

The introduction of motion pictures gave a new spur to Pawtucket's theatre business after the turn of the century: the 1915 Imperial Theatre on Times Square featured Hollywood's silent films accompanied by one of the largest organs in the country; the 1921 Strand, affiliated with Paramount Pictures, maintained its own nine-piece orchestra. For many years, the Strand and Leroy were the two major contenders for the title of premier theatre in Pawtucket, with the advantage finally going over to

(See continuation sheet #2)

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Pawtucket, Rhode Island, P-PA-2," Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1978.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .42 acres

Quadrangle name Pawtucket, R.I.-Mass.

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A

1	9	3	0	1	8	9	0	4	6	3	9	0	1	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

B

Zone		Easting				Northing									

C

Zone		Easting				Northing									

D

Zone		Easting				Northing									

E

Zone		Easting				Northing									

F

Zone		Easting				Northing									

G

Zone		Easting				Northing									

H

Zone		Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the nominated property includes lot 563, plat 44B, as shown on Pawtucket city land records. The building covers the area of the lot.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frederick R. Love, Architect

organization

date May, 1983

street & number 84 Broad Street

telephone 401-724-8125

city or town Pawtucket

state Rhode Island

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Frederick R. Love

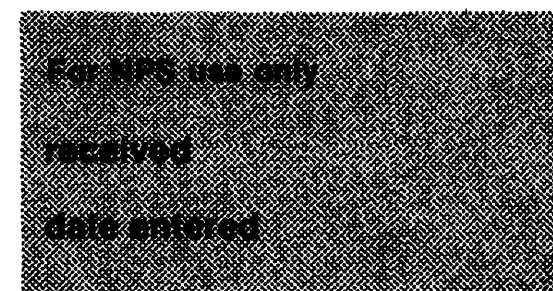
title

date 24 June 1983

For NPS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	Entered in the National Register	date <u>8/4/83</u>
<i>Frederick R. Love</i> Keeper of the National Register		
Chief of Registration		date

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 2

Item number 8 & 9

Page 2

the Leroy after the advent of the "talkies." The Strand has since been demolished, as have all other Pawtucket theatres except the Leroy.

The Leroy Theater, too, would have been torn down in recent years, except that demolition costs were prohibitive. Closed in 1963, the building stood vacant until 1976 when a local producer of pop/rock shows leased it for two years. The City did not renew the promoter's license, and the building was closed again. Today, the building remains closed, but there is some hope for a brighter future: local citizens, organized as the Leroy Center for Cultural and Performing Arts, purchased the building in 1982 and are now working toward its preservation.

Item #9 (cont.)

Meloy, Arthur S. Theater and Picture Houses. New York: Federal Printing Company, 1916. (Known to have been used as a reference by the Payne family.)

O'Malley, John F. "Construction Drawings - Job #105, May 1921 - for the construction of the Leroy Theater." (Now at the Leroy Center for the Cultural & Performing Arts.)