

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0685 160

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 26 1978
DATE ENTERED SEP 14 1978

**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 Mount Baker Theatre

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

106 North Commercial Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bellingham

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF 2nd

Lloyd Meeds

STATE

Washington

CODE 83

COUNTY Whatcom

CODE 073

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Don Rosebourne, Hy's of Canada, Ltd. ✓

STREET & NUMBER

1152 Mainland Street

CITY, TOWN

Vancouver

STATE

VICINITY OF B.C., Canada V6B2T9

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Whatcom County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Bellingham

STATE

Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

October, 1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

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 type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mount Baker Theatre opened its doors to the public on April 29, 1927. It was, and still istoday Washington's largest and most elaborate movie house north of Seattle. The structure incudes a theatre with a seating capacity of 1,638 as well as shop space for sixteen retail businesses along Commercial and Champion Streets. Built of reinforced concrete, the building has ground dimensions of 130 feet by 250 feet. A 110 foot steel and stucco tower and a concrete dome 80 feet in diameter are the theatre's most outstanding structural features.

The architectural theme of the Mount Baker Theatre is Spanish in origin. The concrete and terracotta exterior wall surfaces are largely unadorned except for the occasional use of decorative tiles and simple cornice mouldings. Typical 1920's shopfronts of plate glass and terracotta contrast sharply with the arcaded, loggia-like openings of the theatre's auditorium and tower. The original marquee on Commercial Street was replaced in 1949 and again in recent years; however, the original ticket sales booth of oak remains in place. The various roof surfaces of the building are clad with red Spanish tiles. The octagonal tower is topped by a tiled dome supported on an arcaded, pilastered base. A handsome balustrade rings the dome, and a band of corbelling surrounds the shaft of the tower itself. Originally perched atop the tower was a searchlight from the battleship "Oregon" of the Spanish-American War.

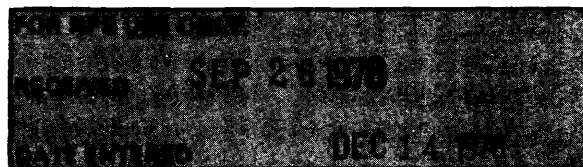
On the interior of the theatre, the Spanish theme is continued in a more flamboyant manner with elaborate surface ornament reminiscent of the Plateresque style. Plaster relief highlighted in a gold leaf contrasts with the plain, buff-colored plaster walls. In the foyer and lobby, plaster ceilings are painted to simulate stained wooden planks and beams with stencilled, heraldic motifs. From the lobby a stairway provides access to a mezzanine lounge beyond an arcaded screen of richly sculpted columns. The lounge is furnished, now sparsely, with chairs and chandeliers of Spanish inspiration. The lounge also features the simulated wooden ceiling of plaster that occurs in the lobby below.

In the main auditorium the decorative elements are many and elaborate. The ceiling is dominated by a large central dome filled with gilded, curvilinear relief and cartouche-enframed heads of kings and knights. An ornate chandelier of bronze hangs from a starburst motif at the center of the dome. The stage measures 80 feet by 30 feet with a richly articulated proscenium arch 70 feet in height. To either side of the stage are columned niches forming stage boxes, and above these are massive, ornately sculpted organ grilles. Moving back toward the theatre's single balcony are two monumental pilasters with decorative guoins. At ceiling level along each lateral wall are projecting vaulted arches with pendants and consoles. Within these cornice-like elements is a hidden passageway around the perimeter of the auditorium. Six false windows elaborately framed and pedimented occur below the vaulted cornice.

In its day the theatre was well-equipped for both movie projection and stage performances. When the facility opened in 1927 it had the most modern projection equipment, as well as elaborate lighting systems that could produce scenic effects such as rain and snow. The Mount Baker boasted a Wurlitzer pipe organ that cost \$25,000. The organ (a Hope-Jones theatre concert unit) rides on a hydraulic lift which raises and lowers it from below floor level. It is in good repair today and can still musically reproduce the sound of a thirty-piece orchestra. Nine dressing rooms and an Armstrong-Power counterweight system remains intact backstage.

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Few changes have been made to the exterior or to the interior of the Mount Baker. Carpeting, stage curtains, and some furnishings have been changed, and 35 MM.- carbon arc Simplex projectors were installed in 1953. Accoustical tiles were applied to the rear wall of the auditorium and other walls have been repainted in recent years. On the whole, however, the lavish interior of the theatre is remarkably well preserved.

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

1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

R.C. Reamer, Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mount Baker Theatre is important to the city of Bellingham and the region which surround it as the last of the area's large and ornate movie palaces of the 1920's. This theatre and retail shop complex was designed by the architect R. C. Reamer of Seattle and constructed by the firm of A.W. Quist at a cost of \$425,000. Opened in 1927, the Mount Baker was fully equipped for live stage performances as well as for the showing of moving pictures. Architecturally and mechanically, it is an excellent example of the era's extravagant response to the splendor of Hollywood.

Robert C. Reamer was amongst the most innovative of architects to settle in the Northwest. His Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone Park (completed in 1903) won national acclaim and became a prototype for rustic lodges built throughout America's National Park system. Reamer's 700-room Canyon Hotel (1911), also in Yellowstone, was as sophisticated as Frank Lloyd Wright's Tokyo Hotel, although it was built several years earlier.

Largely because of his work in Yellowstone Park, Reamer was hired as chief architect for the Metropolitan Building Company in Seattle in 1921. This firm played a major role in shaping a new and distinctive skyline for the city's downtown business center. Reamer's buildings remain prestigious Seattle addresses today. They include the Skinner Building (1925) of which the flamboyant Fifth Avenue Theatre is a part, the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building and the Great Northern Building (1927-1929), the Seattle Time's Building (1931-1932). In addition to the Mount Baker and the Fifth Avenue Theatres, Reamer is credited with the art deco Fox Theatre in Spokane.

The essentially intact interior decorative scheme of the Mount Baker is the most significant aspect of its architecture. The ornament is typical of period movie houses in that its reference to a Spanish revival style is casual at most. Although a Spanish inspiration is apparent, the theme is freely interpreted. The architect's intent was clearly to dazzle the audience through total immersion in an ambience of color, texture, and sparkle. Today the gilt and polychrome plasterwork has somewhat dulled and the richness of the carpets, curtains and upholstery has faded, but the Mount Baker's interior remains an impressive and magical experience. The experience is heightened by original and very early features such as the Wurlitzer organ and its operational lift, the elaborate lighting and counter-weight systems and a complete assemblage of 1940's carbon-arc projectors.

Except during a brief interval in recent years, the Mount Baker has been well-maintained. Relatively new owners have rehired the theatre's manager of over 25 years, and the old level of maintenance and repair has been returned to the operation. The new management intends to restore and refurbish the theatre, removing the few recent, incompatible elements and retaining the spacious and opulent auditorium.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bellingham Herald Articles on the opening of the Mount Baker, April 29&30, 1927.
 Interviews with Roy Dastner, Manager of Mount Baker since 1951 - June 1978
 Office of Urban Conservation, Seattle, Washington
 National Register Nomination for the "Fifth Avenue Theatre - Skinner Building"
 March, 1978.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	5,3,8	4,7,0	5,3,9,9	8,1,0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies the southwest one-half of the block bounded by Commercial Unity, Flora and Champion Streets in Bellingham, Washington.

*Lots 15-20 Block 1 central Whatcom plat
 200' X 150' w.r.l. 12/11/78*

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Vanerway, Education Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Whatcom Museum of History and Art

May 6, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

121 Prospect Street

(206) 676-6981

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Bellingham

Washington

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

James M. [Signature]

TITLE

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

September 18, 1978

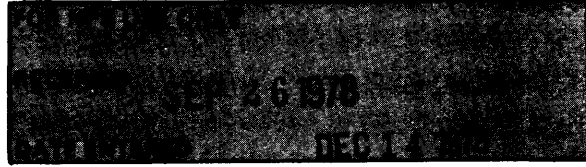
FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

<p><i>[Signature]</i></p> <p>DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION</p>		<p>DATE <u>12/14/78</u></p>
<p>ATTEST: <i>W. [Signature]</i></p> <p>KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER</p>		<p>DATE <u>12/13/78</u></p>

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Edited by: Florence K. Lentz, Historic Preservation Specialist
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
111 West 21st Avenue
Olympia, Washington 98504
June 1978
(206) 753-1707