

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
New Hampshire
COUNTY:
Hillsborough
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE
MAY 30 1975

1. NAME

COMMON:
Athens Building (Palace Theater)
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Athens Building (Palace Theater)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
76-96 Hanover Street
CITY OR TOWN:
Manchester
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
First
STATE
New Hampshire 03101
CODE
33
COUNTY:
Hillsborough
CODE
011

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Palace Realty Co., Inc.
STREET AND NUMBER:
131 Hanover Street
CITY OR TOWN:
Manchester
STATE:
New Hampshire 03101
CODE
33

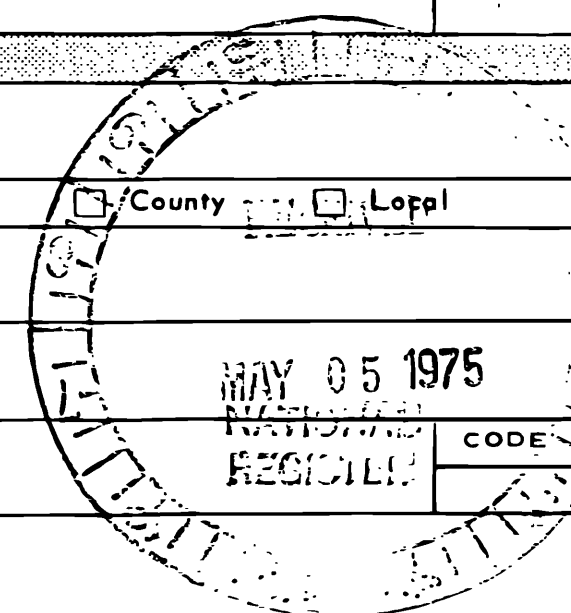
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds
STREET AND NUMBER:
Hillsborough County Courthouse
P.O. Box 370 19 Temple Street
CITY OR TOWN:
Nashua
STATE
New Hampshire 03060
CODE
011

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
None
DATE OF SURVEY:
 Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN:
STATE:
CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: New Hampshire
COUNTY: Hillsborough
ENTRY NUMBER: 30157
DATE: MAY 30 1975
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Present Physical Appearance: The Athens Building consists of two parts; the first of these is a two-story brick and stone structure with pressed metal ornamentation which has five bays facing on Hanover Street. The second part is the auditorium of the Palace Theater which stands behind the two-story section of the building and is joined to the front through a one-story connector from the western most bay of the front; this connector contains the lobby of the theater. The auditorium rises several stories above the front, is constructed of red brick on the exterior, and is without decoration on the exterior; it is not visible from the street except through a fire access alley which runs through the center bay of the front.

The street facade of the front part of the building is made up of five bays arranged symmetrically about the center bay which is slightly wider than the rest. The end bays are set off by pilasters and are topped at the roof line by a stepped, pressed metal decoration containing a rosette set in a circle which gives the effect of slightly projecting pavilions. At the street level there is space for four store units which is currently occupied by three. None of the store fronts is original; each appears to have merely been stuck on over the original lines of the building. The eastern most front (two bays in width) is of plastic imitation shingles with imitation half timbering. Moving westerly, the next store front (occupying one-half of the center bay) is of metal and plate glass. The fourth bay has a store front of brick and imitation clapboard. The fifth (and western most) bay is the entrance to the theater, consisting of three sets of double doors recessed approximately eight feet from the main line of the building's facade; they are currently boarded over and painted gray. The entrance is flanked on each side by the pilasters of the end bay which are polished black granite to a height of approximately three feet from the sidewalk above which they are banded with brick and stone, now painted gray. The ceiling is a suspended metal ceiling, covered on the street side by corrugated aluminum, while the floor is of tile with "PALACE THEATRE" set into the floor in blue and black tiles.

The second floor's entrance is located on the western side of the fire alley. The second-story facade is an almost continuous band of windows broken only by the pilasters of each end bay, and capped by stone lintels. In the center three bays the lintel is a continuous rectangular band with slight vertical projections at each side of the center bay that act as a frame for the plaque which reads "ATHENS BUILDING". The lintel also has metal projections that formerly held lighting fixtures; beneath the windows are pressed metal panels. Each end bay contains a set of three windows capped with horizontal stone lintels (the center lintel rises to a slight peak) supported by geometricized consoles.

Continued on Continuation Sheet 1

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(Continuation Sheet) 1.

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7. DESCRIPTION, continued

Present Physical Appearance, continued: Behind the presently boarded doors which provide entrance to the theater, is lobby decorated with a marble wainscot (now painted blue), columns, and a coved ceiling with plaster swags in the coving. This lobby rises several feet above the street level to enter the theater through the back of the orchestra after passing two sets of doors.

The interior of the auditorium (72'6" x 59'8") currently has no seats and has a plywood platform at the back, built ten feet into the orchestra section. The theater has space to seat 1,100 people (380 in the balcony, the remainder in the orchestra) although only the seats in the balcony remain.

Much of the original plaster detailing survives in coffers around the edge of the balcony; the arches, consoles and cartouches of the boxes (at either side of the proscenium); and in the proscenium itself which has a border of bell flowers and leaves with a cartouche at top center bearing the inscription "SINE LABORE MAGNO ARS NON EST" and classical females figures on each side; one bearing a lyre, the other a mask. The ceiling rises from the proscenium to the back of the balcony in three stages, the first is a low rising vault marked off by foliate plaster mouldings, the second is divided into panels by mouldings bearing leaves and nuts, and the third is undecorated. The sidewalls of the balcony are decorated with pilasters. The interior of the auditorium is currently painted with a beige/plum color.

Behind the stage there exists a complete original set of weights and counterbalances as well as the original electrical system of house and stage lights. The fireproof construction of the auditorium (brick, concrete and steel) is apparent in the remarkable soundness of the building after many years of neglect. Of particular interest is the projection booth at the rear of the balcony, which was included in the original plan (1914).

Original Physical Appearance: At the roofline of the center three bays of the facade there existed a slightly projecting cornice with plain modillions, which was broken in center by a pressed metal, stepped decoration (the full width of the center bay) containing a cartouche in the center. The store fronts were mainly glass with wood trim and were flush with the line of the facade. The entrance to the theater was covered by an iron and glass (trimmed) awning surmounted by a sign reading "PALACE"; the entry doors were glass and had a transom above with art glass bearing the name "PALACE".

In the lobby the original ticket booth has been replaced by a wooden one and the set of doors nearest the street has been added. In the auditorium the decoration has not been maintained, but

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(Continuation Sheet) 2.

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7. DESCRIPTION, continued from Continuation Sheet 1.

Original Physical Appearance, continued: is intact; murals and frescoes included in the original decoration are nowhere visible, nor do the the elaborate curtain hangings of the proscenium and boxes survive. The removal of the seats in the orchestra and the partial closing over of the orchestra pit represent the major physical alterations to the theater. As the distance requirements between rows is currently greater than at the time the theater was built, it is inevitable that the orchestra seats would have had to be altered if they survived; thus, there absence does not constitute a major loss.



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1914**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture: Opened on April 9, 1915 with a production of "A Modern Eve", the Palace Theater was praised by the Manchester Leader as a "metropolitan theatre; a modern and artistic playhouse" and was further praised for the murals and the rose and ivory coloring of the interior.¹ The Athens Building including the Palace Theater was built for Victor Charas, a Greek immigrant, by another Greek contractor according to plans by Leon Lampert, Son of Rochester, New York, dated June 24, 1914.² Built to accommodate both live stage performances as well as project movies, the Palace represents one of the last theaters to be built in Manchester to provide for stage productions; because of the lateness of its construction, the stage is equipped with a full system of weights and counterbalances as well as an electric lighting system in addition to being of fireproof construction. The relationship between the theater and the commercial section of the Athens Building resembles similar arrangements to those found in theaters in major cities (the Colonial Theater in Boston is another example of retail space occupying the street facade, with the auditorium concealed in the rear of the building). It seems likely that the existence of the commercial space is at least partly responsible for keeping the theater intact, for as the theater declined in Manchester, the commercial space would have provided economic support for the whole building, whereas many of the buildings that were exclusively devoted to theater lost their economic support and have either been allowed to deteriorate or have been torn down. (Some have also been extensively altered to become moviehouses.) For these reasons the Palace Theater is probably the only remaining theater in Manchester that can economically be restored for live entertainment.

Commerce: Upon completion in 1915, the Athens Building contained four store units on Hanover as well as a Chinese Restaurant which occupied the whole second floor in addition to the Palace. As previously mentioned, it is probably this

Continued on Continuation Sheet 3

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kibbee, Olie M. A Scrapbook of Manchester, New Hampshire. Manchester Public Library, New Hampshire Room, 1921), Vol. 86, p. 40, and (1928), Vol. 95, p. 231.

Lampert, Leon & Son. Plans for the Palace Theater in Manchester New Hampshire. City of Manchester, New Hampshire, Building Department, 1914.

Palace Spotlight. Manchester Public Library, New Hampshire Room, box labelled Theater Programs, April 12, 1926 and December, 1928.

Continued on Continuation Sheet 5

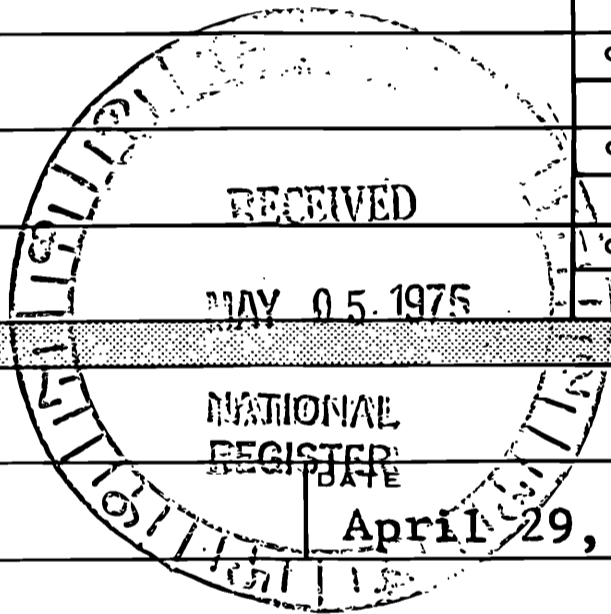
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		42 ° 58 ' 37½"	71 ° 27 ' 45 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.5 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Brian R. Pfeiffer

ORGANIZATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
135 Ivy Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Brookline** STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **02146**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: [Signature]

Title: Commissioner, DRED
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: April 30, 1975

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/30/75

ATTEST:
[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5.30.75

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8. SIGNIFICANCE, continued

Commerce, continued: utilization of valuable street frontage that would have been wasted by the blank wall of the theater's auditorium which is responsible for the survival of the whole building.

Theater: Starting with "Museum" performances in the mid-nineteenth century, Manchester developed a theater tradition that produced an opera house in 1881 as well as theaters that booked road companies in the 1890's and early 1900's with such actors as John Barrymore, Otis Skinner, and James O'Neill performing in Manchester. Between 1900 and 1917 the City Directory of Manchester lists an increase from two to twelve theaters. During this period Manchester grew from a population of 44,126 to 70,063. The establishment of Manchester's major cultural institutions and industrial growth during this period indicate that Manchester's theaters were a part of one of the city's major periods of development.

Constructed after the decline of the road companies and during vaudeville's popularity, the Palace evidently presented a variety of entertainment ranging from its opening with "A Modern Eve" to vaudeville as a member of the national Keith Vaudeville Exchange. In the late 1920's a resident company, the Palace Players, presented a different play each week for ten individual performances. In December 1928 the regular performances of the Palace Players were suspended for the world premier of "Should a Girl Marry?", the first talkie to be shown in Manchester. The Palace Players resumed their performances after one week but there is no evidence as to how long they continued in existence; however, its predominant use until its closing in the mid 1960's seems to have been as a movie theater.

At present an effort is underway by the New Hampshire Performing Arts Center to acquire and restore the theater to usage as a live theater. The Bean Foundation has granted some money for the purchase and renovation work; however, due to fire codes which require fire walls between separate properties, purchase of just the theater by the Performing Arts Center has been complicated, as this purchase would create two separate properties whose fire separations would not meet the city's standards. At present the matter is to be put before the City Council to request a waiving of part of the code, in the hope that renovation may begin in the summer of 1974.

¹ "Theater Review," The Manchester Leader, April 10, 1915.

² Leon Lampert & Son, Plans for the Palace Theater in Manchester, New Hampshire (City of Manchester, New Hampshire Building Department, 1914).

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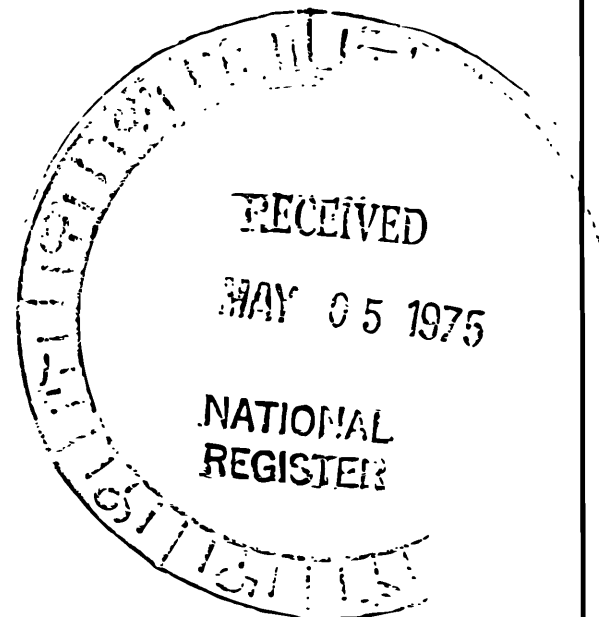
(Continuation Sheet) 4.

STATE	
New Hampshire	
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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE, continued

- 3 Olie M. Kibbee, A Scrapbook of Manchester, New Hampshire (Manchester Public Library, New Hampshire Room, 1921), Vol. 86, p. 40.
- 4 Palace Spotlight (Manchester Public Library, New Hampshire Room, in a box labelled Theater Programs, April 12, 1926 and December, 1928).
- 5 Kibbee, op.cit., p. 231.



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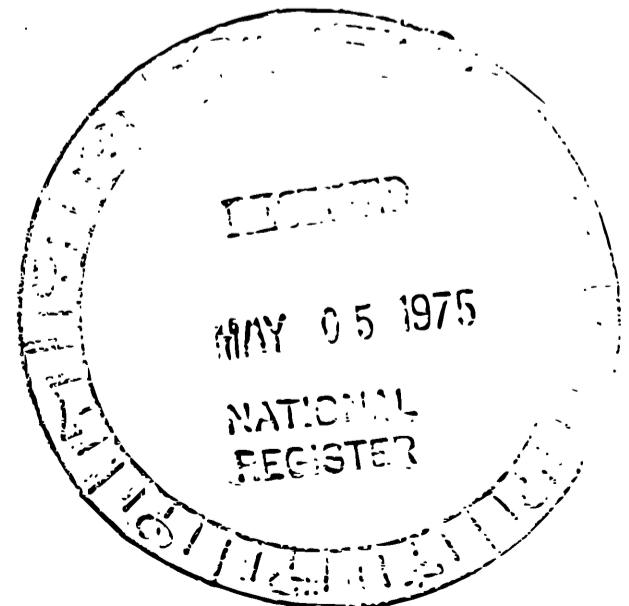
(Continuation Sheet) 5.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES, continued

"Theater Review", The Manchester Leader, (April 10, 1915).



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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, continued.

10.2 UTM References

Zone 19

Easting: 2-99-300

Northing: 47-62-560-

250 157 71

