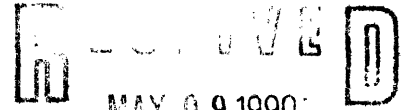


84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Lacey Street Theatre

other name/site number: AHRS Site No. FAI-207

2. Location

street & number: 504 Second Avenue

not for publication:

city/town: Fairbanks

vicinity:

state: AK county: Fairbanks North Star code: 090 zip code: 99701

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. See continuation sheet.

Judith E. Butner
Signature of certifying official

April 30, 1990
Date

Alaska
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- X entered in the National Register Autumn Lake 6/14/90
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: recreation and culture Sub: theatre

 Current: vacant/not in use Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Modern movement: Art Deco

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation concrete roof built-up on metal decking
 walls concrete other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

Lacey Street Theatre is a prominent Art Deco Style building in downtown Fairbanks. The theatre occupies Lot 23, Block 13 of the Fairbanks Townsite, bounded by First Avenue on the north, Lacey Street on the east, and Second Avenue on the south. Its western wall is a common wall shared with the 1939 Lathrop Building. The theatre is named for its Lacey Street location.

Constructed in 1939 of reinforced concrete, the building is three stories high with a basement. A shallow peaked roof is hidden behind parapet walls. Entrances are located on all facades. Overall dimensions of the structure are 53' by 143'. The original building included the theatre and a bank on the first floor, three rental offices on the second floor, and storage areas on the third floor. The capacity of the original theatre was 540. Ten seats were added, for a total of 550, when the interior was rebuilt in 1966.

Lacey Street Theatre exemplifies many typical Art Deco elements. Rectilinear emphasis, repeated low relief geometrical decoration on smooth, flat surfaces, lack of fussy detail, use of concrete, stepped back design elements, and a stressing of vertical direction are all evident in the exterior of this building.

Exterior decorations of the building consist of horizontal incised lines (a pair approximately two feet apart) marking the midpoint and upper limit of each story. Vertical incised lines between windows create a visual band and accent the horizontal detailing. Emphasis is given to entrances with recesses, canopies, vertical grooves, and the use of fluting.

The ground floor plan, which is similar to the upper floors and to the basement layout, establishes the fenestration rhythm for the three facades. The theatre auditorium, measuring 53' by 90', occupies the northern two-thirds of the area. The bank, located in the southeast portion of the floor, measures approximately 38' by 40'. A lobby containing stairs, a concessionaire stand, and a ticket booth separates the bank from the

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 8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): _____

Areas of Significance: architecture
entertainment/recreation

Period(s) of Significance: 1939-1940 _____

Significant Dates: 1939 _____

Significant Person(s): _____

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: B. Marcus Priteca
C.W. Hufeisen

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

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The Lacey Street Theatre, built in 1939 by Austin E. "Cap" Lathrop, is significant for its Art Deco architecture and for its association with entertainment in Fairbanks. It is one of only three remaining Art Deco buildings in the downtown area that maintains architectural integrity. The others are public, non-commercial structures, the Federal Building (U.S. Post Office and Courthouse) completed in 1934 (listed in the National Register), and Old Main School, built the same year (pending entry in the National Register). It is also one of the early reinforced concrete buildings constructed in Fairbanks. Lathrop's Lacey Street theatre was one of only two movie houses in Fairbanks (Lathrop also owned the other, the Empress) into the 1960s.

Austin E. "Cap" Lathrop had business interests around Alaska in shipping, transportation, and mineral extraction. These activities provided the capital for establishment of a chain of theatres and radio stations. Starting with the Empress in Cordova (1910, rebuilt 1915), Lathrop built an Empress in Anchorage in 1916, an Empress in Fairbanks in 1927, the Lacey Street Theatre in Fairbanks in 1939, and the Fourth Avenue Theatre (listed in the National Register) in Anchorage in 1947. He considered motion pictures "the most eagerly devoured form of family entertainment in the frigid northland." Lathrop delighted in bringing happiness to children, and on holidays he frequently opened his theatres free to kids. Lathrop's entertainment ventures included being president of the Alaska Motion Picture Corporation, that in 1923 produced The Last of the Cheechakos, and several radio stations (KENI Radio Station in Anchorage is listed in the National Register).

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): n/a

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 06 466065 7191083 B
C D

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Lacey Street Theatre is located on Lot 23, Block 13, Fairbanks Townsite. The northern boundary is defined by 1st Avenue, eastern boundary defined by Lacey Street, southern boundary defined by 2nd Avenue, and western boundary defined by the common wall between the theatre and adjacent Chena Building. The lot is approximately 53 feet by 90 feet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The site boundaries include the property historically occupied by the theatre.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Russell Sackett

Organization: GDM, Inc. Date: March 6, 1990

Street & Number: P.O. Box 73768 Telephone: 907-452-7213

City or Town: Fairbanks State: AK ZIP: 99707

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

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auditorium. Location of these functions can clearly be determined by the door and window placement in the exterior walls.

The second floor offices overlook Second Avenue with a public lobby aligned over the ground floor lobby. The projection room and the public bathrooms, located on the east side of the floor, are accessed from this lobby. The remainder of the floor is occupied by second story space of the auditorium.

Unlike the lower floors, the third floor does not extend the full width of the block. It is L-shaped. The building appears to contain three equal floor areas because the Second Avenue exterior wall is designed as a deep parapet or false facade and matches the overall building height. The space on this floor was used for storage.

Access to the basement is via the Lacey Street entrance stairwell. The stairs open into a hallway that runs the width of the building. An office, storeroom and utility room occupy the Second Avenue side. An unfinished space, 10' high with a dirt floor, is under the auditorium.

The front facade of the theatre faces Second Avenue. It is highlighted by a four-story stepped pylon, vertically displaying in Art Deco lettering and highlighted in neon lights, "Lacey Street." The tower is located on the building's southeast corner, the intersection of Lacey Street and Second Avenue. Incised geometrical bands accent the upper edge of each setback.

A pair of recessed doors are located on the western end of the Second Avenue facade. A marquee over this entrance displays a neon-highlighted 'totem.' The eastern half of the ground floor facade consists of storefront windows and a storefront entrance recessed diagonally into the building's southeast corner. An angular, concrete canopy protects the corner opening. Both entrances are accented by a fluted motif cut into the curved, flanking concrete walls. Seven evenly spaced sash windows provide second floor fenestration. The third floor facade is unbroken.

The east, Lacey Street, facade is dominated by the 90-foot auditorium located behind the northern section of wall. All windows and doors are located within 53 feet of the south end of the facade. A set of double doors is located in a portion of wall that extends, in two small increments, several inches from the main facade. The doors are recessed in a stepped back opening within this three story frontispiece. Vertical, diagonal, and horizontal incised grooves accentuate the rectilinear

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quality of the frontispiece. These doors provide direct access to the auditorium. Single and paired sash windows penetrate the facade at various heights. Immediately to the south of the double door entrance is a single door that enters the corridor. It is protected by a horizontal canopy. Two louvered vents are located above the double doors.

The northern portion of wall displays the paired horizontal grooves. Additional incised linework suggests the double doors and frontispiece of the southern end of this facade.

The parapet on the north, First Avenue, facade rises to a central peak. It is accented by parallel incised grooves. The first floor extends several feet beyond the face of this facade. A single door flanked by vertical linework is recessed into the center of this extended portion.

In 1966 the building was totally gutted by fire, but within three months was rebuilt and reopened. Interior spaces were left as originally designed, but finishes were changed to reflect the then-popular 1960s theatre styles: undecorated drapes, paneling and carpet. The Italian travertine marble paneled entrance lobby is the only original interior finish extant today. Although the interior was completely rebuilt, few modifications were made to the theatre's exterior: new aluminum single sash windows and storefront windows and doors replaced those destroyed by the fire. The original wood truss roof was replaced by a metal truss built-up roof of similar design to make the building more fire-proof. Two metal vents were added above the Lacey Street entrance.

Additional alterations to the interior occurred in 1970, when new seats replaced those dating from the fire, and a new snack bar replaced the existing one. The existing bathrooms were modernized for employees' use and new public bathrooms were constructed in the second floor lobby space.

The building has been vacant since 1981. Windows and doors are boarded. Lacking maintenance, the building's paint is peeling and some of the finish concrete is beginning to spall. Lacey Street Theatre, however, maintains the integrity of its original Art Deco exterior. The three remaining downtown Fairbanks Art Deco buildings exhibit different facets of the style and demonstrate its breadth. Main School is spare and simple, the Federal Building (U.S. Post Office and Courthouse) is elegant, ornate, and perhaps the purest type, and Lacey Street Theatre exemplifies a theatrical, neon-lit version.

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B. Marcus Priteca, the "dean of American theatre design" and a prominent Seattle architect, designed the theatre exterior during the winter 1938-1939. Frank Zallinger and Frank Hollineck designed the interior, and Pierce Horrocks was the engineer. Seattle builder C.W. Hufeisen constructed the building. "Buy Alaskan" and "local hire" were major community issues in Fairbanks during the 1930s, and labor and materials for construction of the theatre were all obtained locally.

Lacey Street Theatre's grand opening was the evening of January 25, 1940. Speakers included Lathrop, President of the Fairbanks Igloo of the Pioneers of Alaska, James Barback, and former Mayor E.B. Collins. Lathrop proudly stated that "although small in scale, the new theatre was the finest in the Territory and equal to the finest theatres in the West." The ceremony was carried live over Lathrop's KFAR radio station. Following the speeches, the movie Ice Follies starring Joan Crawford, James Stewart, and Lew Ayres, and Top News Reel Shots of 1939 produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer were shown.

The U.S. Quartermaster's Department leased the second floor office space in the building, and the Bank of Fairbanks--of which Lathrop was part owner--occupied the first floor. When the bank moved in the early 1940s, another financial institution rented the space and remained a tenant until 1977. At that time, a pawn shop rented the space.

On January 28, 1966, a mysterious fire broke out in the theatre that gutted the building. The fire left Fairbanks without a movie theatre because the other theatre, Lathrop's Empress, had closed in 1961. The Lathrop Company had been considering construction of a new theatre complex on the south side of town and decided to advance their time schedule for construction of the new complex. They also decided to rebuild the Lacey Street Theatre and it reopened on May 2, 1966. Rebuilding costs were \$700,000. The only visible exterior changes were to the roof, windows, and doors. A larger screen and the latest in projection and sound equipment were installed.

The building was renovated in 1970. It operated until 1981, when it no longer financially supported itself and could not compete with the new theatre complex. In 1990, the Fairbanks Development Authority became the owner of the building. Since closing, the building has been empty. It remains, however, a prominent building in downtown Fairbanks. Old Main School, the Federal Building (U.S. Post Office and Courthouse), and Lacey Street Theatre represent the Art Deco style of architecture and the 1930s reinforced concrete building period in Fairbanks.

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Section number 9

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(Fairbanks, Alaska: Tanana-Yukon Historical Society, 1977).

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(8-86)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Photograph identification

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1. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
1989
GDM, Inc., P.O. Box 73768, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
Southeast corner of the building (Second Avenue and Lacey Street).
2. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
1989
GDM, Inc., P.O. Box 73768, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
East, or Lacey Street, elevation of building.
3. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
1989
GDM, Inc., P.O. Box 73768, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
South, or Second Avenue, elevation of building.
4. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
April 1990
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska
99510
North and east elevations of building.
5. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
April 1990
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska
99510
Detail, east elevation of building.
6. Lacey Street Theatre (AHRS Site No. FAI-207)
Fairbanks, Alaska
Russell Sackett
April 1990
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska
99510
Looking north at parapet.