

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

FOX THEATRE

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

660 Peachtree Street, N.E.

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

5th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Georgia

Fulton

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT
___ BUILDING(S)
___ STRUCTURE
___ SITE
___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC
___ PRIVATE
___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS
___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
___ UNOCCUPIED
___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED
___ YES: UNRESTRICTED
___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE ___ MUSEUM
☒ COMMERCIAL ___ PARK
___ EDUCATIONAL ___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☒ ENTERTAINMENT ___ RELIGIOUS
___ GOVERNMENT ___ SCIENTIFIC
___ INDUSTRIAL ___ TRANSPORTATION
___ MILITARY ___ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Atlanta Landmarks, Inc. 30308

STREET & NUMBER

Fox Theatre Building

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1974

☒ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 architectural description is provided by Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, State Historic Preservation Office, Atlanta.

The Fox Theatre, located on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta, was designed in its Neo-Mideastern style by the Atlanta architectural firm of Marye, Alger and Vinour in 1927. This "Fabulous Fox" was indeed a dream-world capsule contained on a city block with its rhinestone curtain, labyrinth of dressing rooms, plush furnishings, plaster and gold leafed intricacies of design as well as its grandiose use of space.

From the exterior, the Fox appears not as a single structure, but as a group of several buildings tied together on a city block by the continuity of its building material--the ribbons of cream and buff brick that accent and play against the broad surfaces of exterior walls, its towers and minarets. On the Ponce de Leon side, this originally planned front facade portion is flanked by 2 square towers with a copper onion dome in the cluster. Horseshoe and lancet arched windows pierce the brick surface. Here, as elsewhere, the exterior details of the building are predominately the horizontal bands of cream and buff brick, used together with square and circular geometric brick designs along the fire stairs, tile work at the entrances, and castellated and dentiled motifs along the "cornice" edges of the building. To the left of the entrance is a gently descending exterior staircase--functionally placed for use as a fire escape from the main auditorium area. The Peachtree facade--the main theatre entrance side--is introduced at first glance by a long marquee with two minarets that rise above the long interior entrance corridor with its small, ornate kiosk that serves as the theatre ticket booth.

The main entrance approach to the theatre on Peachtree Street is by the long terrazzo paved corridor, through the six pairs of minaret shaped glazed doors into the lobby area. Along the sides of this open corridor accessway are display cases and doors that lead to small offices, stores, and on the left, to the Egyptian Ballroom, which for many years was the largest ballroom in Atlanta. This ballroom, with a large kitchen that serves it, was originally planned to be used for ceremonial activities by the Shriners. Again, along the open corridor, the ceiling is paneled with varying colors of blue, red and green on a beige field, which is reflected in the terrazzo floor beneath. A series of hanging, heavily filagreed fixtures light this open hall. From the lobby there is access to the auditorium's main floor, up two wide flights of stairs or elevators to the balcony, that also leads to the dress circle area above; down to the basement levels of dressing rooms and workshops; and also to the Ponce de Leon exit.

The theatre-auditorium, some 65,000 square feet of space, is the most outstanding "one-room" in the Fox. In design, it appears as a fortified courtyard within an ethereal city. Along each side are great castellated walls with parapets, battlements, balconies and barred windows. These side walls join the stage area, a 140-foot span from wall to wall, overhead by a gently arched bridge effect that

(continued)

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	1929	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Olivier J. Vinour. Also P. Thornton Marye and Richard W. Alger.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			

The Fox Theatre is one of the most prodigious 20th century structures in Georgia--not only as a theatre example, but also as an architectural stylistic example, and thus, justly deserving of its name, "The Fabulous Fox." This movie palace, the size of a city block, was designed in a Neo-Mideastern Eclectic Style and was one of the largest theatres even at the time of its opening on Christmas Day, 1929, during the height of the golden age of the movie palace.

The Fox was originally planned by the Yaarab Temple Building Company as a shriner's mosque for use by the approximately 5,000 members of the Yaarab Temple of the Mystic Shrine. However, apparently, at the suggestion of the movie industry magnate, William Fox, the temple was expanded into a plan that included several stores surrounding the periphery of the building and a theatre auditorium all of which were to be leased. (In these leased areas the shriners could maintain offices in the building and use the main auditorium for ceremonial and initiation purposes six times a year). The original portion of the building had its entrance on Ponce de Leon with the great onion dome above; but, when the theatre and shop additions to the plans were made, the Peachtree Street side became the primary entrance. Revenue collected from the leased auditorium and stores was used to pay for the increased one and a half million dollar building expense. According to some sources, William Fox was to pay a rental fee of approximately three million dollars over a twenty year period. (The final building and furnishing costs have been estimated from two and a half million to five million).

The design for the Fox was chosen from a group of six competing Atlanta architectural firms; the Mohammedan-inspired design submitted by the firm Marye, Alger and Vinour was selected. The building was constructed within less than three years from 1927 to 1929. It was a grand success, opening with a live, on-stage performance of "Beach Night" by Fanchon and Marco and their Sunkist Beauties. But the Depresseion forced many of the shops to give up their leases as well as the Fox theatre operations; by 1932 the Fox was closed due to unpaid taxes. In 1935 Mosque, Inc. was formed and bought the Fox. Mosque, Inc. still owns the building but its owners have changed over the years. The building's functions have also changed--the Egyptian Ballroom now serves as a ballet studio and office and the theatre shows the less-than-great movies in lieu of the live on-stage performances it was once famous for. The Metropolitan Opera no longer gives its yearly week-long presentation here, a move that was greatly lamented by opera

*(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A

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7	4	2	0	2	0
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3	7	3	9	7	8	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

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D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

1/ 28 / 76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

is lined with lanterns. Within this arch, on either side, are trefoil arched, filagree'd false "boxes" that serve as organ chambers. Several stage curtains were chosen; one a silver gray and cocomo brown design; another was a hand sewn sequined and rhinestone curtain that depicted moorish riders and a mosque in the background. Both of these were selected by Mrs. William Fox. To the rear of the auditorium are the balconies--one of which is said to be "the longest spanned theatre balcony . . ." and is designed to "give" some three inches when filled to capacity. Above the balcony and projection booths to the rear is a broad, billowing three-part red and white striped tent. This seemingly airborne, mildewed canvas is in reality a concrete and steel painted structure that acts as an acoustical foil to capture and increase the sound as it rises, further from the stage area. Above this open courtyard stretches the sky with its stars, clouds and originally with a sunrise and sunset effect. These "stars" on the vaulted ceiling are three-inch crystal pieces that project from the ceiling and are lighted from above by a series of light bulbs. The clouds, sunrise and sunset were produced by a master Brenograph machine which by use of slides, spots and various light effects could simulate fire, rain and snow as well. "The sunrise-sunset effect, no longer in working condition, although it could be restored operated across the auditorium from the left rear balcony to the right front stage area). The stars and sometimes the cloud effects are "on" at all times when the theatre is in operation. The capacity of this auditorium is presently 3,934; originally, the number approached 5,000, but in recent years the first floor seating arrangement was changed and lessened by the addition of more modern tilt-type seats. The balcony seats are original with metal end pieces cast with a central design flanked by two caryatids.

Most of the interior decor, dictated by Mrs. William Fox, is still intact and in fairly good condition. The lobby area, on both the mezzanine and dress circle levels, are lavishly furnished and decorated with heavy Egyptian and Moorish-inspired furniture, ornate lanterns and lamps, heavily swagged velvet draperies with gold leather sequined appliques and much care given to the architectural details. Most of the wall surfaces, (through the whole building as well) are plaster, whether simulated to look like wooden beams, granite blocks or gold filagree. To achieve these effects a variety of "ingredients" including cornflakes, formaldehyde and cornstarch were used by Swedish craftsmen brought from Ohio.

The first balcony's lounge is a long rectangular space with a plaster "wooden" beamed ceiling, and a ladies' and men's lounge at either end. Between the stairs that give access to the lower level is a canopied open space that permits view to the lobby below and a rear portion of the main floor seating area as well. The ladies' lounge is decorated on an Egyptian theme with colorful geometrical tile work around its columned doors and fireplace and gilded-lion decorated chairs, tall urns and profiled wall paintings. Adjoining the ladies' sitting

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

room is the bathroom and another room with a series of ornate mirrored dressing tables and stools.

The men's smoker decor is Arabic influenced, simply designed with hooded fireplace, tiled floors, built-in sofa areas and plaster simulated "wooden beams." Both of these themes are used in lounges on a lower floor but in reverse order, with an Egyptian decorated men's room and an Arabic ladies' lounge.

Above the first balcony area is the dress circle, the lobby of which is vaulted by heavy lancet-shaped arches that reach from floor to ceiling with sitting arrangements between each "rib."

All accesses from the lobby areas into the auditorium are not disconnected by doors but by wall openings, spaced hallways and slightly jogged flights of stairs to permit ease of crowd movement in and out of the auditorium.

Beside and behind the stage and in the catacomb-like basement space are--in a few areas--as many as four levels below the street level, and as many as seven levels above. This space is made up of dressing rooms (there are about thirty) workshops, originally a laundry-dry cleaners, wig room, tailor's room, paint shop, music library, librarian office, sound proof orchestra practice rooms, a small theatre for reviewing purposes, a fully equipped hospital room as well as the mechanical and storage rooms which for the most part are behind the stage area.

The mechanical system alone is a tremendous operation. It includes a 100 line telephone system, a central vacuum system, a 375-ton air-conditioning unit; gas and coal furnaces, an air circulation system, three power systems, as well as the intricate light and sound systems including most importantly the Moller organ. The electrical power comes from three different generating plants so as to minimize the possibility of failure. When this system was installed, the electrical power serving the Fox was equal to that serving all of Greenville, S.C. in 1929! On the stage there are elevators capable of raising 100 persons standing side by side and two others in the orchestra pit. The Moller organ also has its own elevator which can raise it to stage level or lower it below the stage. This organ, made by M. P. Moller Company of Hagerstown, Maryland, rivals the largest of organs, even today, in the U.S. Its system of pipes number over 3,500 and its console is undisputedly the largest with 376 stops--four keyboards and 42 ranks. The stops range from exotic animal sounds to thunder as well as a lengthy list of musical instruments including some two dozen percussion instruments. When this organ was restored recently, it took seven miles of cable to rewire it.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

The organ works on a wind pressure system. Its keyboard operates an electro-magnetic switch which in turn will open or shut ducts that trigger the particular mechanism (drums, gongs, etc.) that produces the desired sound.

The main control panel for the stage curtain, lights and sounds is comparable in size to a large garage door. There are over 400 rheostats, leavers, dials and steering mechanisms that can produce by the mere press of a button a sunrise or sunset.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

goers and the opera as well.

The architectural firm responsible for the design of the Fox Theatre had as its major partners, P. Thornton Marye, Richard W. Alger, and Ollivier J. Vinour. Vinour, the main designer for the Fox project, was a native Frenchman, born in Paris, and had studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. According to Mr. A. P. Almond, (who had assisted Mr. Vinour in researching the design), three large white leather bound books, one entitled Nubia and another, the Holy Land, were the primary reference sources for the design. Another design reference source was the collection of postcards that Mr. Sam Cooper (local Architect) brought back from a world tour. Some 50 of these were borrowed by Mr. Vinour and used in his design scheme. The design itself, although claimed to be purely Mohammedan-inspired architecture is really an eclectic Mideastern form of architecture that includes Islamic, Egyptian, Nubian and Arabic. The exterior approaches a mosque form or a collection of forms with its variety of minarets, towers, domes and horseshoe and lancet arches. The interior is more readily apparent as an eclectic work drawing especially from Egyptian and Arabic cultures for architectural and furnishing details.

Architecturally, the Fox is outstanding for its completeness, and exceptional foresight in its theatre design, its mechanical systems, and especially for its acoustics which Mr. Vinour closely figured and personally supervised. Even today the Metropolitan Opera claims it to be one of the most acoustically perfect buildings in which they have performed. The plan also acts not as one single structure, but as a group of buildings, for the Fox can stage an opera, show a movie in its theatre within a theatre, feature a broadcast by a symphony orchestra in its broadcasting studio and rehearse a musical comedy in its vast studio--all at the same time. When the Fox was constructed and its interior crafted in plaster by a group of Swedes brought from Ohio, it was designed as the theatre of the future. It was built to seat 5,000 with surrounding parking facilities to accommodate capacity audiences and its theatre of such a size so ingeniously designed that Cinemascope, stereophonic sound and other modern motion picture miracles were incorporated into its system with ease.

Because of its unique concept and design, it has outlived the passing of the golden age of the movie palace, with which have gone the famed Roxy Theatre in New York, the San Francisco Fox, and the Los Angeles Palace. The Fox in Atlanta boasts the largest curved indoor Cinemascope screen in the world, vies with Radio City Music Hall over which has the largest organ in the U.S., has an orchestra pit which requires two elevators to raise it, elaborate Mideastern interior heavily embossed with gold leaf and ornate plaster designs simulating stone and wood, and a night sky ceiling with star and cloud effects--all transporting its viewers into a dream world--a realm impervious to the passage of time.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

The Fox was selected by the Atlanta Civic Design Commission as one of Atlanta's most outstanding structures. However, presently, the Fox is only let by yearly lease; its location is in a prime downtown area and as a result the Fox's longevity is constantly endangered. Its large, useful ballroom and its theatrically grand auditorium make it an easily adaptable structure for a prosperous life again if only revived.

The above information was provided by Elizabeth Z. Macgregor of the State Historic Preservation Office in Atlanta.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Almond, A. P., (local architect that was an assistant to Vinour when he designed the Fox), interviewed by Elizabeth Macgregor, December 12, 1973.

Architectural Forum, May, 1930.

Atlanta Historical Bulletin, Vol. VII, No. 28, September, 1943.

Butcher, J., "The Fabulous Fox", Georgia Tech Engineer, January, 1957, p. 26.

City Builders, The, April, 1930.

Hedgepeth, William, "A Love Song to The Fabulous Fox", Georgia Magazine, Vol. 17, No. 3.

Macgregor, Elizabeth Z., personal inspection, December, 1973.

Patten, Joe. (volunteer Fox Theatre enthusiast; an organ restorer), interviewed by Elizabeth Z. Macgregor, December 7, 1973.

Stewart, Allen. The Technique, (series of articles on the Fox), July 20, 1973, August 3, 1973, August 17, 1973.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Fox Theatre ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Land Lot 49 of the 14th District of Fulton County, Georgia, and being more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at an iron pin marking the point of intersection of the north right-of-way line of Ponce de Leon Avenue and the east right-of-way line of West Peachtree Street and running thence north 02 degrees 38 minutes 50 seconds west a distance of 184.15 feet to an iron pin; running thence north 04 degrees 21 minutes 00 seconds west a distance of 10.06 feet to a point marked by a railroad spike; running thence north 88 degrees 58 minutes 08 seconds east a distance of 178.79 feet to a point in a metal fence post; running thence north 01 degree 07 minutes 20 seconds west a distance of 136.72 feet to an iron pin; running thence north 89 degrees 50 minutes 44 seconds east a distance of 126.00 feet to a nail located on the west right-of-way line of Cypress Street; running thence south 00 degrees 28 minutes 17 seconds east along said right-of-way line, a distance of 102.74 feet to an iron pin; running thence south 01 degree 01 minute 04 seconds east a distance of 225.53 feet to a nail marking the point of intersection of the west right-of-way line of Cypress Street and the north right-of-way line of Ponce de Leon Avenue; running thence south 88 degrees 50 minutes 40 seconds west along the north right-of-way line of Ponce de Leon Avenue, a distance of 232.22 feet to an iron pin; running thence south 88 degrees 50 minutes 55 seconds west along said right-of-way line, a distance of 65.50 feet to the iron pin at the point of beginning; as per plat showing boundary survey for "Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company," prepared by Benny L. Bruner, Georgia Registered Land Surveyor No. 1646, dated October 25, 1974, revised May 27, 1975.