

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

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

For NPS use only  
received **MAY 18 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Princess Theatre

and/or common Princess Theatre

**2. Location**

street & number 206 N. Walnut Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bloomington N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Monroe code 105

**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"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Thomas D. Canada

street & number 3390 Snoddy Road

city, town Bloomington N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47401

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monroe County Courthouse, Recorder's Office

street & number Kirkwood Avenue

city, town Bloomington, state Indiana 47401

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Princess Theatre as it exists today came into being with the 1923 expansion and remodeling of the original structure, which was designed by John Nichols and built in 1913. The same John Nichols was hired for the expansion work. The resulting 800 seat theatre shows the influence of emerging architectural styles in its clean, white, terra cotta facade, as well as Italian influences in its decoration, both inside and outside.

The two-story structure is faced with white glazed terra cotta. Flanked by full-height pilasters, the facade has six double-hung windows across the second story above the marquee, with the words, "Princess Theatre," etched in a slightly recessed panel above them. A cornice with modillions projects beneath the parapet. The parapet is the most elaborately ornamented element on the facade.

The elevated central portion of the parapet carries the letters, "P.T." in a cartouche surrounded by sculpted floral ornamentation. The present marquee is of a later date, and the ground floor of the facade has been remodeled.

Originally, the foyer was entered through 12 beveled-glass doors. The lobby floor was finished with Resolite tiles, and ornately framed mirrors graced the walls. A crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling medallion, and moldings decorated the ceiling. The ladies' room came complete with a Hamilton Baby Grand piano.

After crossing the lobby, one entered the theatre itself. The large, 800-seat auditorium was lighted by domed ceiling lights hung from elaborate medallions, as well as wall fixtures which illuminated the ornamental plasterwork. Between pilasters on the theatre walls were 15' paintings, copied from ancient Roman art. Smaller murals of Italian gardens were located closer to the stage, inspired by original works at Versailles. Three tapestries composed from old Gobelin tapestries also decorated the auditorium. The stage itself was framed with decorative molding, and was hung with a side drape of rose velour and a draw curtain of mulberry velvet. All decorative molding was painted with gold trim.

The auditorium featured an Estey organ. The console was located below the stage, and the pipes were housed behind decorative screens and drapes on either side of the proscenium arch. The screens were trimmed with false balconies finished with elaborate moldings and brass railings. Below each "balcony" was a triple-arched box seat. Original theatre seats were upholstered in leather, and brass railings separated the front seats from those behind.

Behind the foyer, the second floor contained offices.

The present-day theatre retains much of the ornamentation which was present in 1923. The original facade exists above the ground floor. Inside, floor tiles have been replaced with carpet and the chandelier is gone, but the foyer mirrors are still in place, and ceiling molding still exists above an accoustical paneled ceiling. All original seats and light fixtures were replaced with Art Deco fixtures in the 1930s. The walls have been covered with accoustical fabric attached with furring strips, but original plaster work remains beneath it.

The organ has been removed. The decorative grills remain but the false balconies are gone. The murals and tapestries are gone, as well. All brass railings are gone, and in the 1930s the back half of the auditorium was raised 3-4 feet. The stage remains in its original condition, however, needing only new wiring and minor repairs. The original restroom facilities have been relocated to the second floor.

# 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** 1923 **Builder/Architect** John Nichols

**Statement of Significance** ~~(in one paragraph)~~

When it opened its doors in 1923, the Princess Theatre was hailed as the finest theatre for a town of its size in the United States. It is significant not only for its beauty but for its history, as well.

The Princess Theatre was designed by John Nichols, a Bloomington architect of some note, and was owned by Col. Robert H. Harris. Harris was born on "a typical southern plantation" <sup>1</sup> in Georgia. His uncle was Joel Chandler Harris, of the famous "Uncle Remus" stories. His father, Henry R. Harris, was a member of Congress.

Harris' love of the theatre led him into an acting career in his teens, and he toured the country in supporting roles for a number of years. He then traveled to England for several years where, unable to find work as an actor, he earned money as an usher, watching such greats as Sara Bernhardt perform. Upon returning to America, Harris wrote and produced his first play, "Two Americans Abroad". He formed a small touring company and toured the eastern United States extensively.

When Harris married a Bloomington girl he decided to settle there. He built two theatres in Bloomington, the Princess and the Harris Grand, as well as theatres in other small cities throughout the state. Among the famous theatrical personalities which Harris brought to Bloomington were W. C. Fields, Fred Astair, Mary Pickford, and the Barrymores. A young Hoagie Carmichael performed there, as well.

In the early 1920s Harris enlarged the Princess to its present size and furnished it to accommodate both theatrical performances and the new moving pictures, which were becoming so popular.

When the theater changed hands after Harris's death in the 1930s, it became solely a movie theater and underwent various "improvements," each of which hid just a bit more of the beauty that once was the Princess Theatre.

When the Harris Grand burned down in 1980, the Princess Theatre became Bloomington's sole remaining monument to a great civic leader, as well as to an elegant period in theater history which passed away with the emergence of the movies. A restoration is planned.

<sup>1</sup>Bloomington Daily Telephone Special, Saturday, March 1, 1923.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bloomington Daily Telephone Special, Saturday, March 10, 1923

Sunday Herald-Times, October 24, 1982.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Bloomington, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	5	4	0	3	4	0	4	3	3	4	3	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Parts of lot #229 and #230, roughly 70' x 40' in size, more particularly described as follows: (Please see continuation sheet)

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas D. Canada, Owner of Theatre

organization Princess Theatre, Inc.

date October 28, 1982

street & number 206 N. Walnut Street

telephone 812/334-1761

city or town Bloomington

state Indiana 47401

## 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. Peterson*

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date April 21, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 6/16/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
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received 5/18/83

date entered

Continuation sheet Princess Theatre

Item number 10

Page 1

Part of Inlot #229, commence at a point 52 feet north of the southwest corner of said lot; thence north 40 feet; thence east 66 feet to the east line of the lot; thence south 40 feet; thence west to the point of beginning.

Also inlot #230, except, beginning at the northwest corner; thence south 40 feet; thence east four feet; thence north 40 feet; thence west 4 feet to the point of beginning.