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nited States Department of the interior lational Park Service	RECEIVED
lational Register of Historic Places Registration Form	OCT 1 3 1993 NATIONAL
-	REGISTER
	Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, ly categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional
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. Location	
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ty or town	n/a vicinity
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Lyı	cic	Theatre	
Name	of Prop	perty	

### Martin Co., F1.

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County and State

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Res (Do not include pre	sources within Proper wiously listed resources in the	t <b>y</b> ne count.)
🖌 private	🔀 building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing	
D public-local		1	0	building
public-State public-Federal	☐ site □ structure	0	0	•
		0	2	structure
		0	0	objects
		1	0	Total
Name of related multiple p (Enter "N/A" if property is not part	roperty listing of a multiple property listing.)	Number of cor in the National	ntributing resources pr Register	reviously liste
N/A		0		
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from		-
Recreation and Culture/theater		Recreation a	and Culture/the	eater
		<u></u>		
7. Description				
Architectural Classification		Materials	instructions)	
(Enter categories from instructions) LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/		(Enter categories from instructions)		
Beaux Arts	ENTORI REFITED			
		walls <u>stucco</u>		<u> </u>
34 34 4	<b>D</b> . 1			
Mediterranean	Revival			
Mediterranean	Revival	roof <u>asphal</u>	t	

4

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### **Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- □ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- □ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### **Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

### Property is:

- □ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- □ **B** removed from its original location.
- $\Box$  **C** a birthplace or grave.
- $\Box$  **D** a cemetery.
- **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- **F** a commemorative property.
- □ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibilography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- □ 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 # \_\_\_\_\_\_

#### Martin Co., F1. County and State

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

### Period of Significance

1926-1943

**Significant Dates** 

1926

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

### Architect/Builder

Arch: John Sherwood, Mark Casto

### Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- □ Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

.....

Lyric Theatre Name of Property	Martin Co., F1. County and State
10. Geographicai Data	
Acreage of Property less than 1 acre	
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)	
1       1	3
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)	
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)	
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Donald Armstrong, Jr./Sherry Pila	nd, Historic Sites Specialist
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation	date September 1993
street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Brono	ugh telephone (904) 487-2333
city or town <u>Tallahassee</u>	
Additional Documentation	
Submit the following items with the completed form:	
Continuation Sheets	

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative biack and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner		
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)		
name		
street & number	telephone	
city or town	state zip code	

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

The Lyric Theatre, 59 S.W. Flagler Avenue, Stuart, Florida, was built in 1926. The design of the building incorporates elements of both the Mediterranean Revival and Beaux Arts styles. The rectangular building has a flat, composition roof and a concrete foundation. Structurally the building features a concrete column and beam system, cast on site, supporting concrete slab floors. The exterior walls of interlocking hollow clay tiles are surfaced with stucco.

#### SETTING

The Lyric Theatre is one of the largest buildings in the downtown commercial area of Stuart, Florida. The theatre runs the width of the block, so it has primary facades 95 feet in length, facing southwest onto Flagler Avenue and northeast onto Osceola Avenue. These two facades are joined by a lobby running through the building, which is 72 feet deep. The other two elevations abut adjacent commercial buildings. Commercial buildings are located to the northeast of this building, on the opposite side of Osceola Avenue. Across Flagler Avenue, to the southwest, are the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks and the South Dixie Highway, a major thoroughfare through Stuart.

At the time of its construction the theatre was within walking distance of the railroad station, post office, city hall, fire department and numerous businesses. By the 1970s the downtown area of Stuart was in decline. However, organizations such as Stuart Mainstreet have been successfully working, since the 1980s, to bring about downtown revitalization. Today the area is again booming with newly rehabilitated buildings and extensive streetscape improvements. Currently 400 people are employed downtown in 94 shops and offices.

#### DESCRIPTION

### Southwest Facade

The southwest facade of the Lyric Theatre, fronting onto Flagler Avenue, has a three-part division which corresponds to the three-part arrangement of the interior (photo 1). At each end of this elevation is a bay terminating in a decorated

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

parapet. A shed roof with composition shingles extends between these end bays. This roof section was originally surfaced with clay barrel tiles. Altered storefronts are at the first floor level of each end bay. Above these storefront areas are large blind arches enframing windows set in decorative surrounds consisting of engaged spiral columns supporting a scrolled pediment (photo 2). Above and appearing to rest on the pediment is a relief sculpture of a bowl of fruit supported by a pedestal (photo 3). Originally these decorative surrounds contained metal sash casement windows. They are now either removed, painted or covered with metal louvers, probably to darken the auditorium. The spandrel areas above the blind arches have a low relief tracery pattern. The parapets above the blind arches originally had a low relief molding simulating a balustrade extending between two end pillars with decorative caps. The original elements were probably destroyed in the 1928 hurricane which did extensive damage to the roof of the theatre. The original parapets have been replaced with stuccoed panels and some of the pillars and caps are missing.

The center portion of the facade originally contained the arcade entrance, two storefronts and a secondary entrance. The recessed arcade opening originally had a projecting metal marquee with the word "Lyric" in recessed letters on the front and sides. This lettering was later modernized. Presently, the arcade opening is closed off with doors to create a lobby. The marquees currently in place over each entrance are replacements based on photographs of the original.

On the upper level, above the storefronts, are two symmetrically positioned decorative window surrounds placed within recessed blind arch panels (photo 4). Plain pilasters support a decorated, scrolled pediment like that of the end bays. A balconet is at the base. Its balustrade is terminated at each end by a pillar supporting an urn (photo 5). Decorative concrete brackets support the balconet.

### Northeast Facade

The northeast facade, fronting onto Osceola Avenue, is virtually identical to the west facade (photo 6).

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

### Interior

The interior of the Lyric Theatre is divided into three major sections. The large central section contains the auditorium. North of the auditorium are a stage and stage support spaces; south of the auditorium are a lobby and lobby bar.

In the auditorium the original proscenium opening still exists in front of the stage (photo 7). Significant features of this space are two small balcony-like structures to the front of and on each side of the stage (photo 8). These impart the feeling of a courtyard to the auditorium space. The auditorium and lobby walls and ceiling are of stucco. The auditorium also retains the original ceiling coves with updated lighting fixtures. Some of the original seating exists (photo 9), although the original 900 seats have been reduced to 600. The stage apron appears to have been added at a later date. The auditorium retains the original balcony (photo 10), which is accessed through four sets of stairs (photo 11).

The lobby (photo 12) was originally an open air arcade that ran street-to-street through the building. A ticket window and concession area were in the arcade adjacent to the foyer entry. One wall of the arcade was lined with wall display cases for movie posters. One of these cases is still in place, outside one of the lobby entrances.

A retail space was originally adjacent to the arcade. A drug store, with an eleven foot long soda fountain, occupied this space. The panels that separated it from the arcade have been removed, leaving the structural columns and beam in place. The space is now used as a lobby bar (photo 13). At each end of this space is a second story mezzanine. The mezzanine areas were originally accessed by cast iron spiral stairs, only one of which still remains.

Six small retail and office spaces originally flanked the auditorium, facing the streets. These are presently used as support spaces for the theatre.

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

#### ALTERATIONS

The retail spaces flanking the auditorium have been substantially altered but retain their original shape and location. They have new wall and ceiling finishes and new lighting fixtures. The display windows of the storefronts have been replaced with awning windows, modern doors, and fixed glass panels.

In the lobby bar, the original tile floor has been covered by a wood platform. The drug store soda fountain is no longer extant and has been replaced by a Victorian-style bar and mirror.

The stage originally had a pair of stage curtains, a projection screen and curtain, and a Morton pipe organ. When movies with sound became common, a sound system and felt acoustical panels were added to the auditorium. None of the original projection equipment, curtains or organ remain. The curtains were ruined in the 1928 hurricane.

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

#### SUMMARY

The Lyric Theatre in Stuart, Florida, is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture and entertainment/recreation. The theatre represents the romantic and grandiose aspirations of Florida's 1920s building boom and the sense of grand fantasy that movie theatres all over the United States expressed during the heyday of Hollywood film-The entertainment offered by the Lyric Theatre had a making. special meaning to the citizens of Stuart, a town with limited recreational outlets. It was responsible for bringing new customers and new businesses to the growing community. The theatre was built and initially managed by John Hancock, a prominent local businessman involved in many facets of boosting the local economy, who had the building constructed. The theatre incorporates both Mediterranean Revival and Beaux Arts design elements and reflects state and national trends in architecture.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Stuart is located on the banks of the St. Lucie River, approximately 40 miles north of West Palm Beach. Settlement in the area began during the 1880s, but significant development did not occur until the Florida East Coast Railway reached the area in 1892. The original plat for the town of Stuart, then known as Potsdam, was drawn in 1897. Stuart was originally in the St. Lucie precinct of Dade County, but as the east coast of Florida developed, Palm Beach County was created in 1909 and Stuart found itself in the new county. Stuart was in the heart of Florida's pineapple belt. With the improved transportation provided by the railroad, Stuart developed into an important rail and river shipping port.

With the creation of Palm Beach County in 1909, the most populous area with the greatest number of voters was West Palm Beach. Consequently, the citizens of the less populated northern segment of the county, around Stuart, found themselves being heavily taxed for improvements to the southern portion of the county. With only one commissioner to represent them, the northern inhabitants of the county felt out-voted and outmaneuvered. The unjustness of the situation came to a head in 1925 when the Palm Beach County Board announced a \$6,000,000 road

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

bond issue with less than \$250,000 to be spent in the Stuart area. Outraged citizens quickly set up a committee to work for formation of a new county. A bill was introduced and passed by the Florida State Legislature and in May of 1925, Martin County was created out of parts of St. Lucie and Palm Beach counties. Stuart was named the county seat.

Stuart's most intensive period of development occurred during the early 1920s. This is reflected in the expansion of Stuart's population from 457 in 1910, to 778 in 1920, and to 2,000 by 1930. Stuart's initial spurt of growth occurred in the early teens and resulted in the platting of the Feroe Subdivision within which the theatre would later be built.

The second boom occurred during the state-wide economic boom which began in 1921 and ended in 1925. In Stuart, as throughout the state, bold investment was encouraged, sometimes to the point of overbuilding. Construction of the theatre began in 1925, just as the boom was beginning to fade. Large buildings, such as the France Apartments, were still being built in the town as late as 1927, so presumably, some developers were either unaware of the coming financial collapse or uninhibited by its prospects. The severe hurricane that struck Stuart and Florida in 1928 coincided with the ending of economic good times. Pineapple production ceased in 1929 because of increased competition from Cuba and because of a nematode infestation. The Great Depression resulted in half of the residents of Stuart being on relief by 1933. The Stuart Bank and Trust Company and the Stuart Farmers Bank both failed. Stuart's growth following the Depression was slow. By 1940 the population was only 2,438.

Most small towns in the United States had a movie theatre by the 1920s. The great Hollywood studios were popularizing films and studio films were widely available for leasing. In Martin County, plans were prepared for "Picture City," a film studio and subdivision to go in the southern portion of the county. In Stuart, two theatres had been managed by the Hancock family prior to construction of the Lyric Theatre and they had provided popular entertainment for the small town. The townspeople enjoyed not only films, but stage performances (sometimes featuring local persons) and concerts. The town had several bandstands, a local band, and several musical organizations, a testimony to the interest the community had in creating a

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

cultural scene. The addition of the new theatre, with a substantially larger seating capacity than earlier theatres, must have been perceived as an exciting continuation of the budding local interest in the performing arts.

The \$100,000 theatre opened in March of 1926 with an overture on the new \$15,000 organ played by Mrs. Hancock, dedicatory remarks by the president of the Civitan Club, and a performance of Scotch songs between the two feature films. The opening of the theatre boosted the local commerce. During the 1920s and 1930s it was common for workers to come into town on Saturday to shop, buy groceries, and take in a movie. The retail spaces located in the theatre building, such as the drug store with its soda fountain, were also popular. The presence of the theatre also presented some educational value to the community through the theatre's pledge to show movies with educational value and through the offering of performing arts.

The primary significance the theatre had for Stuart, however, was the recreational use it offered. The theatre was thought of as "the place to go" for entertainment. It offered two nightly shows of a main feature and short subject. The small town offered little else in the way of affordable entertainment that the whole family could enjoy. By the 1930s blacks were permitted segregated seating in the balcony, thereby extending community access to the entertainment.

The hurricane of 1928 badly damaged the Lyric Theatre and its owners began to feel the pressure of the local economic downturn. However, the Lyric Theatre was aided during the early 1930s by the coming of movies with sound, "talkies." The popularity of the "Jazz Singer" in 1928 created an interest in talkies and the Lyric adapted its projection equipment to take advantage of the new technology. Prior to the Lyric's showing of movies with sound, Martin County residents would drive to neighboring Fort Pierce to see "talkies."

The Great Depression took its toll on the Hancock Family. They were forced to sell the theatre to the bank holding the mortgage in 1936. For the next three decade, the theatre was owned by a succession of corporations who continued its used as a movie theatre. Following World War II and with the advent of television, the movie theatre business declined nationally.

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

Theatres, such as the Lyric, continued to remain in business by doing things such as capitalizing on the baby boom with Saturday matinees.

The Lyric's most memorable moment may have been in 1941 when Katherine Hepburn recited "The Harp Weavers," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, as part of the annual Kiwanis Minstrel show. Hepburn had just finished filming "The Philadelphia Story" and was vacationing in a cottage on Jupiter Island near Stuart. Because the cottage had no phone, a local resident, Vee Chambers, delivered messages to Hepburn and became acquainted with her. At Chamber's request, Hepburn agreed to appear in the Minstrel Show and had a special gown flown in to wear for her performance. The audience was reportedly spellbound by her voice.

In Stuart, as in many towns during the 1960s and 1970s, downtown theatres began to lose their audiences to multi-screen theatres in shopping centers and malls. Unable to compete economically with these new venues, the Lyric, like many of its counterparts, was converted to a performing arts auditorium and later to a church. The Lyric is currently being returned to function as a performing arts theatre.

### HANCOCK FAMILY

The Lyric Theatre was constructed by John C. "Judge" Hancock. An Illinois native, Hancock lived in Jacksonville before moving to Stuart. Hancock operated at least two theatres in Jacksonville, the Lyric and the Lyceum. He moved to Stuart in 1902 with his wife and son and was appointed justice of the peace, thus earning the nickname "Judge." Hancock also raised pineapples and ran an insurance agency and a camera shop. One of Stuart's foremost boosters, he was an active member of the Stuart Board of Trade, a forerunner to the present Chamber of Commerce, and worked to bring about the first bridge across the St. Lucie River.

When his pineapple business slumped in 1913, Hancock turned to his former occupation and built Stuart's first theatre. The present Lyric is the third location of his theatre. He managed the theatre until 1930 when his son, Fred, took over management.

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LYRIC THEATRE STUART, MARTIN CO., FL.

Mrs. Hancock was the organist and ticket seller for her husband's theatres. She had studied music in college and continued this interest in Stuart where she gave music lessons and recitals, played organ for the local Episcopal church, belonged to Stuart's Mozart Club, and helped found the Florida Federation of Music Clubs. The Hancocks sold the theatre in 1936.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

At the time of its construction, the Lyric Theatre was one of the largest structures in Martin County. It was designed by architect John N. Sherwood and his associate, Mark J. Casto. Sherwood maintained an office in Miami from 1922 to 1927. The Fort Pierce city directory of 1927-28 lists him as an architect and resident in that city and indicates that his principle office was in Fort Pierce, with offices in Miami and Stuart as well. Sherwood has been identified as the architect of several apartment buildings in Stuart, the 1924 Fort Pierce High School, and the Sunrise Theatre in Fort Pierce.

The Lyric Theatre is a good example of the grand type of 1920s movie theatre adapted to a small town. Moviegoing was an established part of American life by the mid-1920s and architects developed a unique building type to fill rather unique needs. Many early theatres were constructed with the capacity to present both live vaudevillian entertainment and films. Thus, dressing rooms and backstage equipment space were necessary. The architect also had to consider ways of attracting attention and catching the eye of the potential patron, such as lighted marquees. In addition to comfortable seating, abundant lobby space, and adequate circulation patterns, the architect also sought to impress the theatre visitor with fashionable settings and with a decor that added to the illusionism and fantasy that took place on the screen. The feeling of escape from the everyday world that the films provided was conditioned in large measure by the environment in which they were shown.

The Lyric Theatre, with its large size and attention getting facade, was and remains a key feature in the Stuart downtown area. It is expressive of the romantic allusions of South Florida boom time architecture with its references to Mediterranean courtyards by its balconets and stage balconies.

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It succeeds in capturing the spirit of its place and time. The use of restrained Beaux Arts classical decoration on the facade adds a richness and grandeur to the building. Locating the Lyric in the heart of the downtown as they did, the Hancock family, longtime boosters of their community, created a magnet attraction for the downtown that brought greater crowds of shoppers to the neighboring small businesses. The original floor plan featured retail storefronts along the street edges of the building, encouraging pedestrian activity and providing additional revenue for the owners. The accepted urban design principles of today are all found in the Lyric Theatre: enhancing urban space, encouraging pedestrian activity, and strategically locating magnet facilities.

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Interviews (by Donald E. Armstrong, Jr.):

Armstrong, Donald E. 13 May 1992

Armstrong, Frances E. 13 May 1992

Benson, Pat Hancock. 30 May 1992

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Stuart City Directory, 1941.

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10 August 1928; 18 September 1928; 29 November 1930.

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Tebeau, Charlton. <u>A History of Florida</u>. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1980.

Venturi, Robert. <u>Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture</u>. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Southerly 45 feet of lot 22 and all of lot 23, Feroe Subdivision, Range 41, Township 38, Section 5.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Lyric Theatre.

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1. Lyric Theatre 2. Stuart, Florida 3. Donald E. Armstrong, Jr. 4. September 1992 Office of Donald E. Armstrong, Jr., A.I.A., Architect 5. 6. Southwest elevation, looking northwest Photo No. 1 of 13 7. Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs Exterior detail, window bay with blind arch; looking 6. southwest Photo No. 2 of 13 7. 6. Exterior detail, decorative relief above window bays; looking southwest 7. Photo No. 3 of 13 6. Exterior detail, window bay with blind arch; looking southwest 7. Photo No. 4 of 13 6. Exterior detail, urn and balconet; looking southwest 7. Photo No. 5 of 13 6. Northeast elevation, looking southwest 7. Photo No. 6 of 13 6. Interior view, auditorium and stage; looking northwest Photo No. 7 of 13 7. Interior view, auditorium balconet; looking west 6. Photo No. 8 of 13 7. Interior detail, theatre seats; looking east 6. 7. Photo No. 9 of 13 6. Interior view, auditorium and balcony; looking southeast Photo No. 10 of 13 7. Interior view, foyer and stair; looking southwest 6. Photo No. 11 of 13 7. Interior view of lobby, looking northeast 6. 7. Photo No. 12 of 13

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Interior view, lobby bar; looking northeast
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