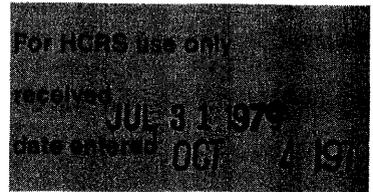


7.311

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

and/or common Movie Palaces of the Tri-Cities (Thematic) Resources

**2. Location**

street & number See continuation sheet #1 \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district \_\_\_\_\_

state New York code 036 county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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 type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple ownership (see continuation sheet #1)

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. See continuation sheet #1

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Field Services

city, town Empire State Plaza Albany state New York

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

#2

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5

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#1

#5 Location of Legal Description

~~The Albany Civic Auditorium~~/Palace Theatre  
Albany County Courthouse  
11 Eagle Street, Albany, New York

Proctor's Theatre and Arcade, Schenectady, New York  
Schenectady County Courthouse  
620 State Street Schenectady, New York

Proctor's Theatre, Troy, New York  
Rensselaer County Courthouse  
Troy, New York

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Movie Palaces of the Tri-Cities nomination is composed of the three remaining movie palaces within the city limits of the cities of Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. Each of these theatres is located on a major thoroughfare in a densely built up urban area.

Proctor's Theatre in Troy (1914) is a good example of the classical theatre construction before the popularity of the movie palaces. Most notable in this regard are the steep double balconies and the terraced loges. Also significant are the double concrete ramps which extend from the first floor to the balconies. This is a feature which would not be found in the later theatres since practicality was often sacrificed for ornateness. Thus, in the later theatres elaborate marble staircases with intricate iron railings replaced the concrete ramps.

Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady (1926) is an excellent example of Thomas Lamb's Adamesque styled single balcony theatre. Features similar to the 1914 Proctor's include the proscenium arch and the arched organ grilles, but, on the whole, the damask wall covering, crystal chandeliers, and the abundance of gold leaf work makes the Schenectady Proctor's a much more elaborate theatre. A fourth, less significant theatre, is still located in Schenectady, but is scheduled for demolition.

The Palace Theatre in Albany (1931) is the work of John Ebersson, and is in the Austrian Baroque idiom. It is the largest of the three theatres and contains detailing in every arch, cornice, and doorway. The Palace is the only one of the three which is used on a regular basis, and therefore is the best maintained.

Thus, three architectural styles reflective of movie palace design are found in these theatres; a) a classic vaudeville theatre which emphasizes the double balcony; b) the classically inspired Thomas Lamb design and c) the John Ebersson Austrian Baroque.

(see individual inventory forms for additional descriptions)

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Proctor's Theatre in Troy (1913), Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady (1926), and the Palace Theatre in Albany (1931) are monuments to the "Golden Age of the Movie Palace."<sup>1</sup> They are the products of two acknowledged masters of movie palace design, and two of the most influential financiers/owners of movie palaces in the northeast. In order to understand the role which these individuals played, it is necessary to look back into the era when "movie madness"<sup>2</sup> pervaded American society.

The movie palace era developed from the maturing of vaudeville and the creation of the motion picture. Variety entertainment (vaudeville) at the turn of the twentieth century was a respected and popular form of entertainment. Theatrical chains such as the F.F. Proctor circuit opened large playhouses dedicated exclusively to live performances. However, with the advent of the motion picture and the movie madness era, these large theatres lost much of their popularity, and thus either converted totally to film use or kept a mixture of movies and live shows (Proctor's in Troy being an example of conversion for mixed usage).

Coinciding with the maturing of vaudeville at the turn of the century was the creation of motion pictures. Thomas Edison unveiled the Vitascope in 1896, and projected a "living picture" on the screen of Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York City. From this beginning movie pictures captured the interest of the country. By 1910 most cities had opened one or more small movie houses called "nickelodeons." By the end of World War I these houses were unable to accommodate the ever increasing crowds yearning for the newest in living pictures from Hollywood.

Thus in the 1920's hundreds of large palace-like theatres were constructed, ranging in style from Roman temples to Hispano-Persian gardens. The majority of these palaces, though conceived from the onset as movie houses, were actually proper theatres containing large stages, dressing rooms, and other accommodations for live acts. This aspect of movie palace construction signified that movie palace design was an elaboration of the earlier vaudeville houses and also acknowledged the popularity of the continuous performance in which motion pictures were combined with live vaudeville acts. The movie palace's social value is described in the book The Best Remaining Seats; "In them people found escape from the ugliness of the cities, and from the crumbling boredom of life. For the movie palace architect was an escape artist. It was his mission to build new dream worlds for the disillusioned."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ben M. Hall, The Best Remaining Seats (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. 1961), p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.94.

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Thus, the house in which the show took place was a main factor in the success of this form of entertainment. Thomas W. Lamb (Proctor's in Schenectady, 1926) and John Ebersson (Palace in Albany, 1931) were the best known of the movie palace architects. They were the masters of the two standard schools of movie palace design, Lamb being the "dean of the standard school," while Ebersson was the "dean of the atmospheric school."<sup>1</sup>

The individuals who financed and originally owned the Movie Palaces of the Tri-Cities were also significant. Frederick Francis Proctor financed both the Troy Proctor's and the Schenectady Proctor's. These two houses became part of his sixteen million dollar chain. Nationally known as the "dean of vaudeville"<sup>2</sup> Proctor was the first to combine motion pictures and vaudeville in one performance. Jacob Fabian, one of the original pioneers in the motion picture industry, constructed the Palace Theatre at the cost of three million dollars.

The "Golden Era of the Movie Palace" reached its peak with the opening of the Roxy in New York City in 1927. But, with the coming of the Depression, this era of architecture, music and dreams disappeared. Many of the elaborate palaces built during this period have since been destroyed, but three excellent examples of the early twentieth century symbols of popular culture, glamour, and progress remain in the Tri-City area of Albany, Schenectady, and Troy.

<sup>1</sup>Ben M. Hall, The Best Remaining Seats (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1961), p.95.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times, Dec. 27, 1926, p.13.



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