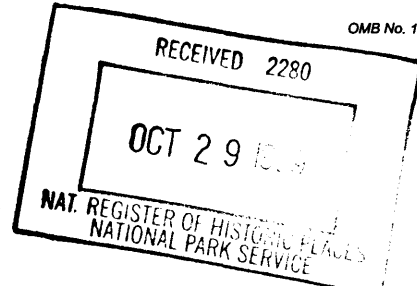


1413

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Star Theatre  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 342 State St. not for publication \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Weiser vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state Idaho code ID county Washington code 087 zip code 83672

### 3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally X statewide     locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Susan P. Neitzel 10/22/99  
SUSAN P. NEITZEL, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
✓ entered in the National Register. Edson H. Beall 11/30/99  
    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 \_\_\_\_\_

Property Name Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Live Performance and Motion Picture Theaters in Idaho

**6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: movie theatre

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: movie theatre

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation CONCRETE

\_\_\_\_\_

walls BRICK, STUCCO

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

roof SYNTHETICS

\_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

see attached

Property Name Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

**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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- 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.

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1934 - 1949

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1934, 1940

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Moore, Frank, Salt Lake City, UT, architect

Tom Shearer, San Francisco, CA, and George

Grove, Seattle, WA, architects (remodel, 1940)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)      see attached

Property Name Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location of additional data:
<input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested	<input type="checkbox"/> State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/> Local government
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____	<input type="checkbox"/> University
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
	Specify repository:
	<u>Idaho Oral History Center</u>

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than 1

UTM References							
1	<u>1/1</u>	<u>5/0/2/4/4/0</u>	<u>4/8/9/8/8/9/0</u>	3	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>	4	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)  
Block 16, portions of Lots 1-4, Original Plat, Weiser, Idaho

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)  
The above described property constitutes all the land historically associated with the Star Theatre.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title <u>Linda Morton-Keithley, Oral Historian</u>	
organization <u>Idaho State Historical Society</u>	date <u>9/30/99</u>
street & number <u>450 N. Fourth St.</u>	telephone <u>208-334-3863</u>
city or town <u>Boise</u>	state <u>ID</u> zip code <u>83702</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 black 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Madeline Wheeler

street & number P.O. Box 871 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Weiser state ID zip code 83672

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Name of Property Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

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The Star Theatre, located at 642 State Street in Weiser, Idaho, is a two-story brick building in the Art Deco style. It is a narrow proscenium style theatre with a small balcony and a full fly. The primary elevation, which houses the entrance and lobby, faces to the west on State Street. There is a small north wing at the rear of the building which provides minor frontage for exits on to Idaho Street. The building has a flat roof and sits on a concrete foundation. At the rear of the building is a raised section which houses the fly loft. To the south is a vacant lot and to the north is a commercial structure. The front facade includes a triangular marquee and Art Deco tower bearing the Star name. Both marquee and tower feature extensive neon lighting.

The building's main entry is centered on the ground floor level and is recessed beneath the marquee. A small bay, which is reflective of an earlier era when the ticket booth was in this location, is flanked by double doors leading to the theatre lobby. On each side of the entry small projections house the ticket office on the south and small restroom/janitor's closet on the north. Poster displays are affixed to both exposed sides of the north projection and the front-facing side of the south projection. A vertical tower sign rises above the marquee. The tower consists of stepped curvilinear panels which rise progressively on either side of a central curvilinear sign pylon.

Side elevations are undecorated brick, laid up in common bond.

On the interior of the building the theatre lobby includes a concession stand and stairs to the balcony level on each side wall. Under each stairway is a small storage area - the area to the south also provides access to the ticket booth and the area to the north provides access to a small restroom/janitor's closet. The auditorium features side aisles, with stadium-style seating for the rear six rows and a sloped floor for the remaining seating. Internal decorative elements are minimal, consisting of streamlined painted trim surfaces, a plain proscenium arch and Art Deco glass and chrome lighting fixtures. Green rooms, dressing rooms and service spaces are located beneath the stage at the rear of the building, There is a small wing to the north of the stage which provides access to a series of exit doors on Idaho Street. This northern street facade is also undecorated.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1Name of Property Star TheatreCounty and State Washington County, Idaho

The Star Theatre is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as an example of one of Idaho's earliest theatres that has remained in continuous use for its original purpose. It is eligible under the criteria established for this property type in the *Motion Picture Theatre Buildings in Idaho 1897-1949* Multiple Property Documentation Form. Operating over a period of some eighty years, the Star Theatre maintains its appearance from two significant remodelings - one in 1934 and the other in 1940 - and continues to be used for both motion pictures and live entertainment.

The existing Star Theatre was developed by A. C. Gordon, a brick mason who settled in Weiser about 1899 and operated a brick manufacturing business prior to entering the entertainment field. Late in 1916, Gordon purchased an existing movie theatre enterprise, also known as the Star Theatre, which was at that time operating in leased space on the ground floor of the Knights of Pythias building in Weiser. Gordon immediately announced his plans to construct a new Star Theatre, the current one, which would open to the public in July of 1917.

Several silent movie houses and an opera house had been in operation in Weiser prior to Gordon's entry into theatre management. The Wheaton Theatre, which featured live entertainment in its early years and later also showed moving pictures, was built in 1905. Silent movie houses such as the Iris and the Lyric were in operation as early as 1908. The Elk Theatre opened in 1910, as did the Star Theatre in the Knights of Pythias building location.

The new Star Theatre would be located in a remodeled and enlarged building, already owned by Gordon and his father, which had previously housed two businesses--Black's Smoke House and Nathaniel Rosenthal's haberdasher. One local newspaper stated that Frank Moore, "well-known architect of Salt Lake City,"<sup>1</sup> was drawing up plans for the new facility. Over the next few months, the newspaper would carry periodic progress reports on the construction, culminating in a lengthy advertisement promoting the gala opening night festivities. Features included a free street band concert; the film, *Sleeping Fires*, which starred Pauline Frederick; and a "Pathe news feature showing General Pershing and rejoicing in France as first expeditionary force arrives safely to take part in the great struggle for humanity."<sup>2</sup> Newspaper accounts suggest that the evening was a success.

Gordon would soon commit all of his time to the theatre business. In 1919 he purchased the rival

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<sup>1</sup>*Weiser American*, 1 March 1917, p. 1, c. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>*Weiser American*, 26 July 1917, p. 3 c. 4-6.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2Name of Property Star TheatreCounty and State Washington County, Idaho

Wheaton Theatre, which had been closed for several years and would again feature both motion pictures and live entertainment. Gordon is also reported to have been involved with several other local theatre operations for brief periods of time, including an outdoor theatre at a local amusement park and the Colonial Theatre in Weiser.<sup>3</sup> About 1930, Gordon, his wife and several of their younger offspring moved to Boise where they would operate the Rialto and Rio theatres, leaving their eldest son Howard in charge of the Star in Weiser. However, Gordon's grandson, Bruce Gordon, recalls that even at the distance of some 70 miles, A.C. continued to have a say in the management of the Star: "A.C. continued to have some hand in this over here since Dad was buying it on a contract from him. He was kind of a controlling old gentlemen and he never got very far from the bank book especially."<sup>4</sup> In 1936 the Gordons opened a second movie theatre in Weiser (the Wheaton was no longer in use by this time), the Mayfair, which was intended as a Class B movie house and was used primarily as an overflow theatre for the Star and for Saturday afternoon matinees for children. The Mayfair Theatre is no longer in operation.

Throughout their history, both the Star and Mayfair theatres were used for live entertainment and movies. Bruce Gordon recalls a variety of road shows and personal appearances by entertainers such as Will Rogers, Red Skelton and Bing Crosby. Occasional "freak" shows came to town, with such oddities as Siamese twins and the "World's Tallest Man." Other activities included fashion shows, a sex education film and program shown separately to boys and girls from the local high school, local talent shows and special Christmas programs for local youngsters.

The Gordons made regular efforts to maintain the Star Theatre as a modern, up-to-date facility. The first sound equipment for talking movies was installed in January of 1929 and was updated later that same year with equipment leased from the General Talking Equipment Corporation of New York. In 1935, the projection equipment was updated yet again. In 1934 the newspaper reported that a new ultra-modern facade, much of which remains today, ". . .different, in fact from any, not only in the state of Idaho, but in any city or town west of the Mississippi river," was to be installed.<sup>5</sup> The most substantial renovation, however, would take place in 1940.

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<sup>3</sup>Bruce Gordon recalls hearing stories of his father's and grandfather's involvement in Oregon Trail Park, an amusement park located on Mortimer Island at the confluence of the Snake and Weiser rivers which included an outdoor theatre. Regarding the Colonial Theatre, a 1930 city directory lists A.C. Gordon as proprietor of the Colonial, but nothing more is known at this time about the theatre or Gordon's involvement.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon, Bruce. interviewed by Linda Morton-Keithley. (Boise: Idaho Oral History Center, April 9, 1998), not transcribed

<sup>5</sup>*Weiser American*, 12 April 1934, p. 1 c. 3.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Name of Property Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

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According to newspaper reports, the 1940 remodel was designed by Tom Shearer and George Grove, both of the B.F. Shearer Theatre Equipment Company. The interior of the building was gutted and entirely rebuilt. The space was enlarged by pushing back the rear wall of the theatre, adding an ell which served as a fire exit and extra storage space at the ground floor level and housed the furnace at the basement level and raising the roof line to accommodate a balcony and fly. (The addition of the balcony increased seating capacity to 650.) A new stage, with dressing rooms below, was built, as were men's and women's restrooms, a business office and a make-up room and crying room for the use of parents with noisy infants, all located at the balcony level. The ground floor auditorium was sloped to improve visibility, seats were replaced and new curtain, carpeting, lighting, wall coverings, heating and cooling system, wiring and projection equipment were installed. On the exterior of the building, the ticket booth, which had been located in the center of the entry area, was moved to the south side of the entry. A local newspaper reported Howard Gordon as saying, "Everything will be new except the marquee over the front entrance on State Street."<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that at a time when most new theatres were built to exclusively house moving pictures, the remodeled Star incorporated adequate space to accommodate stage productions.

The opening night festivities for the remodeled Star Theatre were extensive. Idaho Governor C.A. Bottolfsen, one of many visiting dignitaries, dedicated the building. A variety of stage numbers were performed, including piano, vocal and accordion performances, a skit and acrobatics. The opening night film was *Blondie Has Servant Trouble*, starring Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake.

A.C. Gordon and Howard Gordon died only months apart in 1943. Velma Gordon, Howard's widow, continued to operate the Star Theatre with the help of son Bruce and several long-time staff members until the spring of 1945, when operation of the theatre passed out of the Gordon family hands. Since that time, the Star has had several different owners and operators, but with few exceptions, it has seen only minor physical changes since the 1940 remodel. The carpeting has been replaced; a concession area added in the lobby; a small bay, reminiscent of the earlier ticket booth, added to the entry area to accommodate a popcorn machine on the interior; and an earlier rectangular marquee has been replaced with a triangular marquee.

The Star Theatre continues to show moving pictures to the Weiser community and several years ago, after a lengthy absence of live entertainment, became the seasonal home of a local performance group, The Onion Skin Players.

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<sup>6</sup>*Weiser American*, 18 April 1940, p. 1 c. 2.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Name of Property Star Theatre

County and State Washington County, Idaho

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Deed Records. Washington County Courthouse. Weiser, Idaho.

Derig, Betty B. *Weiser, The Way It Was*. Weiser: Rambler Press, 1987.

Gordon, Bruce. Interviewed by Linda Morton-Keithley on April 9, 1998. Boise: Idaho Oral History Center.

Miscellaneous Records. Washington County Courthouse. Weiser, Idaho.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps (Weiser, Idaho), 1908, 1914, and 1928.

*Weiser American* (Weiser, Idaho).

*Weiser Signal* (Weiser, Idaho).