



(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: State Theater
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 504 Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Clovis
STATE: New Mexico CODE: NM COUNTY: Curry CODE: 009 ZIP CODE: 88101
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lathem Stich
Signature of certifying official

27 November 2006
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

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 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):

for
Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
1.17.07

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION: CONCRETE
WALLS: BRICK
ROOF: ASPHALT
OTHER: GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION; ARCHITECTURE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1940-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1940

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: N/A

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-8).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-9).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing
 1 13 664935 3808335 (NAD83/WGS84)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots 9 and 10 of Block 21 of Original Clovis Town, Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the theater.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: David Kammer, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION: consulting historian

DATE: June, 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 521 Aliso Dr. NE

TELEPHONE: (505) 266-0586

CITY OR TOWN: Albuquerque

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 87108

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see attached *Clovis, New Mexico*, USGS quadrangle map)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-10)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: William Case

STREET & NUMBER: 1313 E. 21st Street

TELEPHONE: (505) 762-9225

CITY OR TOWN: Clovis

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 88101

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Description

Located on Main Street in downtown Clovis, the State Theater is a two-story building with a concrete foundation and a barrel roof masked by a stepped parapet. Constructed in 1940 in a modernistic style, the most striking feature of the theater is a circular glass block tower rising from above the marquee to above the parapet to which a vertical wall-mounted sign is affixed. Other modernistic details include porthole and glass block windows, decorative porcelain enamel steel and the rounded angular recessed wall of the first floor. The recessed entry was altered prior to the 1990s when anodized bronze aluminum framed fixed windows were added and the ticket booth was relocated from outside the entry to the north wall inside the entry doors. More recently, eight rows at the front of the auditorium were removed as was the screen in order to accommodate dance band performances on the stage. The alterations are reversible, however, and do not detract significantly from the exterior appearance of the façade, nor do they significantly alter the interior plan. The most richly detailed example of a modernistic style theater façade in New Mexico, the building retains a high degree of integrity as to location, setting, design, materials, workmanship and feeling.

The State Theater is located at 504 Main Street along a seven-block section of the downtown commercial district extending perpendicularly from the former Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad depot to the Curry County Courthouse. This section of Main Street is paved with red bricks, and some of the one and two-story buildings reflect the modernistic style that was popular when Clovis served as an important ranching and railroad center during the 1930s (Photo 1). Three movie theaters constructed by 1940 — the Mesa (1918) and the Lyceum (1920) Theaters as well as the State Theater — are located along these seven blocks. The wall-mounted sign of the Lyceum Theater and the glass-block tower rising above the parapet of the State Theater constitute two of the notable landmarks defining the historic downtown area.

Situated on two lots in the interior of the block with an alley onto which two fire emergency doors open at the rear, the building is two stories with a square fly tower located at the rear wall. A stepped parapet lines the red brick side and rear walls, blocking views of the barrel roof and the cooling unit located near the southwest corner of the roof.

The façade of the theater offers a notable example of modernistic design (Photo 2). The second story consists of blond brick topped with a porcelain enamel steel cap decorated with an abstract geometric design. A concave inset rising approximately seven feet above and six feet behind the parapet occupies the northern half of the second story. Consisting of stack bond brick, it is punctuated with narrow vertical concrete moldings and topped with a polychromatic porcelain steel cap that also wraps around its side walls. Within the concave space is a structural glass block tower capped with porcelain enamel steel and trimmed with circular neon tubing. Fixed to the front of the tower is a curved steel bar to which five porcelain enamel steel disks with neon tubing spelling “STATE” are attached. Other second story details include a circular glass block window with a rowlock brick surround and an eight-light metal casement window grouped with a glass block panel window.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

An irregular triangular marquee with decorative neon tubing at each angle extends over the sidewalk with the apogee of the marquee aligned with the tubular glass block tower. The rounded walls of the first floor receding from the sidewalk to the entry are faced with beige and light blue small-square tiles added in the 1970s, replacing earlier larger tiles. A series of metal framed picture boxes, also replacements, line the wall. Gouges remaining in the sidewalk recall earlier posts leading to a ticket booth located approximately midway where the anodized bronze framed storefront windows are now located. Paired commercial doors at the north side of the recessed entry open into the lobby with a ticket booth located inside the doors along the north wall.

The concession counter, located along the interior wall of the lobby, was constructed in the 1980s following a fire that gutted the lobby. When the theater first opened, only popcorn was sold from a stand located along the north wall approximately where the entry door are now located. Both of the two restrooms are located on the south side of the lobby and both retain original wall and floor tile. A stairway along the north wall of the lobby leads to the second story where the former projection room, offices and access to a ladder located within the tubular glass block tower are located.

Entries flanking the concession counter lead to the auditorium. Measuring approximately 50 by 108 ft. the auditorium has no balcony and formerly seated about 640. In the early 1990s, the front eight rows were removed as was the screen. A parquet dance floor was then added in the open space fronting the stage in order to accommodate patrons attending big band dance concerts. Lighting in the auditorium formerly consisted of overhead lights accessible from an attic above the ceiling. Sconce lighting has been added to the auditorium walls. Additional floor lights illuminate alternating red and original gold curtains lining the side walls.

The proscenium consists of rounded columns with a rounded stage projecting slightly forward from the proscenium. Passages leading to the two fire exits flank the proscenium, and stairs with six risers lead to the stage. When the stage was converted to a bandstand, risers were added to accommodate the fourteen-member band. At the same time a wide Cinemascope screen that replaced the original screen in the 1950s was removed. Additional floor lights have been added at the stage as has a revolving glitter ball suspended from above the stage.

Although alterations have occurred at the stage and in the front of the auditorium as well as at the entry, the State Theater retains a high degree of integrity. The interior plan of the interior remains largely unaltered. This architectural integrity as to materials and design is particularly apparent in the building's façade where the varied use of glass blocks, neon and decorative porcelain enamel steel bands distinguish it as the most striking modernistic theater façade in New Mexico.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Statement of Significance

Constructed during 1939 and opened in early 1940, the State Theater represented the ongoing efforts of the Hardwick family to maintain a competitive edge in the theater entertainment business in Clovis. From the time that the Hardwicks had constructed the second Lyceum Theater in 1919-20, the theater had been the leading entertainment site in Clovis both for live performances and, especially with the advent of sound, movies. While the theater retained its leading role during the 1930s, toward the end of the decade the Hardwicks felt that in order to avoid facing competition from theater chains it would be necessary to construct a new theater reflecting the changing norms of the industry. To do so they entered into a partnership with R.E. Griffith Theaters of Dallas, Texas and undertook the construction of the State Theater in 1939. The result was a new facility that was “modern in every way” (*Curry County Times* 3/30/39 1). Reflecting the prevailing interest in modernistic design, the exterior offered the most striking example of modernism incorporated into any New Mexico movie theater. Similarly the interior offered the most modern furnishings, projection and sound equipment, and heating and cooling systems available. From its opening night before a capacity crowd, the State Theater replaced the Lyceum Theater as Clovis’ leading motion picture venue, a position it would occupy until the nationwide decline in movie going in the 1960s. With its notable façade details and its historic role in providing movie entertainment in Clovis, the State Theater is eligible for listing under Criteria A and C, meeting the eligibility requirements of the *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Context

Since entering the theater business in Clovis in 1915, Eugene R. Hardwick and his sons Russell and Charles had been the leading theater entrepreneurs in Clovis. Purchasing the first Lyceum Theater, then constructing the second Lyceum Theater and gaining interest and then outright ownership of the Mesa Theater, the Hardwicks had supplied the growing city with at least three theater choices for nearly a quarter of a century. During the period, however, the coming of sound, the Great Depression, the advent of efficient air-conditioning, and changing popular tastes in theater design had resulted in the declining prestige of the Lyceum Theater. Although it remained Clovis’ leading theater, the Hardwicks recognized that in order to retain a competitive advantage it would be necessary to construct a new “main house” that would be as “new and shiny as possible” (Hardwick).

To achieve this goal, the family entered into a partnership with R.E. Griffith Theaters of Dallas, Texas. The brother of early film producer, D.W. Griffith, R.E. Griffith developed a theater chain in the Southwest, including a few theaters in eastern New Mexico. In eight theaters, including some located in West Texas, he did so in partnership with the Hardwick family. In Clovis, Griffith agreed to provide operational expertise for the new theater, likely providing its design and recommendations on contractors with whom the Griffith Company had previously worked. Familiar with the latest products available in seating and other auditorium amenities and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

experienced in current theater design, Griffith Theaters complemented the Hardwicks' familiarity with the Clovis entertainment market with its greater purchasing and booking power.

The announcement that Clovis would gain a modern theater made front page news in local newspapers in the early spring of 1939 (*Clovis News-Journal* 3/26/39 1; *Curry County Times* 3/30/39 1). Never citing an architect for the project, articles emphasized the how modern the theaters would be, noting its "streamlined nature" and the "structural glass block tower with backside florescent lighting" that would be a beacon along Main Street. New materials, such as "porcelain enamel with neonized letters," "recently patented rubber-cushioned" for seats, and a "mammoth air washer" capable of changing the air in the theater every two minutes "without noticeable draft" would result in a "deluxe 'A' theater" for Clovis. As the project moved forward, delayed by equipment and material problems, over the next nine eight months, efforts to stimulate interest in the new theater included a contest to name it, with eight contestants nominating "state."

Finally, on January 3, 1940, the State Theater opened to a capacity crowd who heard speeches and saw "Pack Up Your Troubles." Acknowledging Clovis as a good entertainment market, R.E. Griffith noted that there is "no better town" for movie interest and that the new State Theater represented the owners' efforts "to keep up with a progressive city" (*Clovis News-Journal* 1/4/40 1). Returning the compliment to the Hardwicks and their partner, a *Clovis News-Journal* editorial printed on the State's opening night noted the family's long history of having "kept step with their community's progress by supplying amusement centers adequate to serve their needs" (*Clovis News-Journal* 1/3/40). Much as the rendering of the new theater in the newspaper depicted, the back-lighted glass-block, and the generous use of neon on the marquee and wall sign resulted in the State being the brightest building on Clovis' Main Street.

Despite functioning as the city's leading movie theater for the next two decades, by the 1960s, the State Theater, like many other theaters, began to suffer from declining attendance. In the 1960s, Commonwealth Theaters purchased it, removing the ticket booth when it remodeled the entry. The upper, eye-catching portion of the façade, however, remained intact. In 1989 William Case purchased the theater and has owned it since, using it for big band and combo concerts. To meet the needs of a fourteen-piece band and its patrons, Case has removed the screen and eight rows of seats at the front of the auditorium. The interior plan of the theater is otherwise unchanged. Recognized for its unique façade and still a gathering place for entertainment in Clovis, the State Theater falls within the boundary of a current Main Street revitalization project.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 9

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Bibliography

Case, William. Interview with David Kammer, October 4, 2005. (Mr. Case is the owner of the State Theater. He and his bands, Bill Case and the Velvetones and the Bill Case Combo regularly perform at the State Theater.)

Clovis News-Journal. Various issues, 1939-1940.

Curry County Times. Various issues, 1939-1940.

Hardwick, Russell Jr. Interview with David Kammer, May 27, 2006. (The son of Russell Hardwick, Russell Hardwick Jr. worked in the family theater business in the late 1940s.)

Hughes, Karen Lee. "Theater Merchants Kept Clovis Rolling in Movies." *Clovis News-Journal*, July 4, 1976.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 10

State Theater
Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Photographic Log

Information pertaining to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

State Theater

Clovis, Curry County, New Mexico

Photographer: David Kammer

Date: December, 2005

Location of negatives: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

Photo 1 of 2

Theater and streetscape

Camera facing southwest

Photo 2 of 2

Sign, marquee and entry

Camera facing northwest