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DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 27 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 26 1976

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



ph
Paramount Theater Building

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

121-127 3rd Avenue S.E.; 305-307 2nd Street S.E.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids,

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Second

STATE

Iowa

CODE

19

COUNTY

Linn

CODE

113

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bezanon; plus the City of Cedar Rapids (theater part of building only)

STREET & NUMBER

Cedar River Towers

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids,

STATE

Iowa

VICINITY OF

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Cedar Rapids,

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE		CHECK ONE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED			
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED				

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The external appearance of the Paramount Theater has been little altered since the time of its opening in 1928. The large vertical theater marquees with the word "Capitol" at the 2nd Street and 3rd Avenue entrances have been removed and some small businesses located on the ground floor of the building have changed their signage and store fronts.

The theater is large, having a present capacity of over 1900 persons (1928 news accounts place the seating capacity at 2000). The interior has never been repainted and is in fairly good condition. The walls are of a pinkish beige plaster and marble with much elaborate plaster relief of a metallic gold color (no records indicate whether it is of gold leaf or gilt paint).

One enters the theater at the 3rd Avenue side of the building. The original wooden framed doors have been replaced with modern glass frameless doors and the present single person ticket booth replaces an earlier two person booth. A second set of doors leads to the "Hall of Mirrors", which is reminiscent of Versailles according to early newspaper accounts. Elaborate stained glass chandeliers that reflect light back and forth lend an air of opulence to the interior setting. At the end of this hall, the patron may turn left into the large orchestra lobby which, in conjunction with the Hall of Mirrors, can hold up to 1200 people. or one may proceed up the "grand staircase" to the balconies. Both areas were originally furnished with large carved wood arm-chairs, overstuffed sofas and chairs, tables, bronze and marble statuary and oil paintings, many of which came from Italy. The art work has since been sold, few chairs and sofas remain, and a large popcorn stand has been installed in the orchestra lobby.

In the auditorium proper, which has an intimate feeling despite its size, the side walls are graced by Corinthian columns and elegant urns. There are also niches that once contained statuary. The elaborate gold or gilt plaster relief continues from the lobbies into the theater proper and there is an elegant dome highlighted by lighting that slowly changes color from blue to red to amber to green. One either side of the room hang long draperies (not original) that cover the 1000 pipe for the magnificent Wurlitzer theater organ which has been restored. The drapery is raised and lowered for shows on a hydraulic lift.

The original stage drapery was replaced in 1966 although elaborate original draperies continue to hang in arches along the main floor side walls. Their color is burgundy and gold. The stage area itself has three stories of dressing rooms with an electric elevator to service them. The electrical switchboard, at the time of its installation, was the largest in any theater.

The theater reputedly had the first air conditioning unit in Iowa. Its machinery could produce the equivalent of 150 tons of ice per day. The air is first cleansed by being drawn through rooms containing water sprays and then is reconditioned for draft-free comfort.

3 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 1928

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Paramount Theater, originally the Capitol Theater, was probably one of the last of the opulent vaudeville movie houses to be built, and is an excellent example of its architectural style. The theater and office block is also a fine example of the idea of a public theater supported by private funds -- the office block paid for a large portion of the theater.

When it was opened on Sept. 1, 1928, the intention was that its program would be a mixture of motion pictures and stage acts. But within a year the Publix Theater chain, in part due to the Depression and partly due to technical improvements, changed the theater's programming entirely to motion pictures.

It possessed one of the early theater air conditioning systems (reputedly the first in Iowa) and the system is still functioning. The electrical switchboard for the theater was one of the largest installations around. Unlike the average theater, containing the usual single-row footlight strips comprising sixty lamps, the Paramount had a double row of footlights with a total of 180 lamps (since replaced).

The theater has presented vaudeville acts, motion pictures, elaborate shows, organ concerts, cultural performances and, reputedly, travelogues and newsreels. It is now being transformed into a city-owned performing arts center. Current patrons of the arts will have both visual and harmonic beauty to enhance their entertainment evenings.

The opening night featured Richard Dix in the movie "Warming Up" (a sound attraction). The vaudeville act featured Paul Spor, "The Prince of Pep", introducing the Capitol Jayboys. Other performers who have appeared on the stage include: Francis X. Bushman, Edgar Bergen and Ramon Novarro.

Restoration is just being organized and few changes are contemplated--some accoustical improvements, enlargement of the orchestra pit, perhaps some discreet beverage counters and cloakrooms.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cedar Rapids Gazette, August 31, 1928; December 18, 1966; November 16, 1969; December 19, 1975.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	6 1 0 4 6 0	4 6 4 7 8 3 5	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

3rd Avenue. 80 X 120 feet 2nd Street 90 X 140 feet
North West 30 feet of Lot 7 and all of lot 8 and the North East 80 feet each
lots 9 and 10, block 5.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs James J. Stickley

ORGANIZATION

DATE

January 3, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1364 Elmhurst Drive N.E.

TELEPHONE

364-7714

CITY OR TOWN

Cedar Rapids

STATE

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

Adrian A. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Div. of Historic Preservation

DATE

4-22-76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Wm. H. H. H. H.

DATE

8/26/76

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

Charles A. Adams

DATE

8-26-76

CLERK, NATIONAL REGISTER