National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

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1. Name of P						
historic name		ero Theatre		1077(01		
other names/site	number F	Lorida Theat	re, Theatre Pl	aza/81R621		
2. Location		·····				······································
street & number	2036 14+	h Arronuo (a	lso known as 2	022-2038)	N / A	not for publication
city, town	Vero Bea		ISO KIIOWII as 2	022-2038)	<u>N/A</u> N/A	
state Flor		code FL	county Ind	ian River	code 061	zip code32961
	Iua		COUNTY THE	Ian Kiver	COUR 001	ZIP CODU 32901
3. Classificati	00					
Ownership of Pr		Cate	ory of Property	1	umber of Res	ources within Property
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public-iocal			strict		1	buildings
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Name of related	multiple pro	perty listing:		1	lumber of cont	ributing resources previously
N/A						ional Register
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4. State/Feder	rai Agency	Certification				
In my opinion	, the propert	State Histor	ges not meet the N	op Officer	criteria, 🗆 See 5 <i>HPO</i>	set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. continuation sheet. <u>3/19/92</u> Date
State or Federa				Car Resourc	28	
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Signature of co	mmenting or o	other official				Date
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5. National Pa	ark Service	Certification			Sant contro y a	
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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions) Recreation and Culture/theater Commerce/Trade/specialty store Domestic/multiple dwelling Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) Vacant

7. Description		
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (e	nter categories from instructions)
	foundation	concrete
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/	wails	terra cotta
Mediterranean Revival		stucco
	roof	asphalt
	other	

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Please see continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance		
Certifying official has considered the significance of this nationally	property in relation to other properties:	
Applicable National Register Criteria XA B X	JC D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)		
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions) Entertainment/Recreation Commerce Architecture	Period of Significance Significant Dat <u>1924-1942</u> <u>1924, 1937</u>	
	Cultural Affiliation N/A N/A	
Significant Person N/A	Architect/Builder F.HTrimble_(architect) I.HBaker_and_C.ESandison_(builders	<u> </u>

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Please see continuation sheet.

Please see continuation sheet.	
	See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested	Primary location of additional data:
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
recorded by Hietoric American Buildings	University
Survey #	Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	Specify repository: Bureau of Historic Preservation
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property Less than 1 acre	
UTM References A 1171 559260 3057165 Zone Easting Northing C 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	B
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	
City of Vero Beach P.B.S. 2/12 Lot 12 except 14, and 15 block 47, parcel 0233390000-10470000	pt for the W.75' of S.10' and lots 12, 13, 012.0
	See continuation sheet
Boundary Justification	
The boundary, which coincides with the footprin	at of the building includes the
property historically associated with the Vero	Theatre.
	incacic.
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Tulie W. Taylor, Historic Sites Special	
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation	
street & number 500 S. Bronough St.	telephone(904)_487-2333
city or town <u>Tallahassee</u>	state <u>Florida</u> zip code <u>32399</u>

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DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Vero Theatre at 2036 14th Avenue in Vero Beach, Florida is a rectangular, two-story Mediterranean Revival style commercial building. Built in 1924, it has a flat roof with parapets and is finished in textured stucco on its primary elevation. The building features arched windows, barrel tile pent roofs, quatrefoils, parapets, and a cartouche. The interior contains retail space, apartments on the second floor, and a theatre auditorium, the most significant feature of the building. With the exception of the auditorium, the Vero Theatre was rehabilitated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in 1991.

<u>Setting</u>

The Vero Theatre is located on 14th Avenue at the heart of the historic commercial and governmental district of Vero Beach, Florida. Built in 1924, it was one of many new buildings constructed in the commercial district during the 1920s. The downtown construction boom was set off by two factors: the destruction of most of the business district by fire in 1919 and the prosperity of the Florida Land Boom (c.1924 to 1926). In addition to retail establishments, hotels, apartments, and office buildings were added to the downtown during this period. Many of these buildings, like the Vero Theatre, served both residential and commercial functions.

Since World War II, most of the historic commercial buildings in downtown Vero Beach have been demolished or drastically altered. The business district has moved eastward, although the main offices for local government remain a block away from the Theatre on 14th Avenue. Today, Vero Beach has 18,000 residents, a tenfold increase in population from 1925.

Present Appearance

The overall design and many of the individual elements of the Vero Theatre embody the Mediterranean Revival style. Originally designed as an attached building, its north and south walls are set on the property lines and are attached to adjacent commercial buildings. All of the building's decorative features are located on the 14th Avenue elevation, which is the main entrance. (Photo

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1) The east or back side is finished in stucco and unadorned. (Photo 2)

The building has a rectangular ground plan and rests on a poured concrete foundation. Its structural system is steel frame with hollow clay tile walls. The roof, which features parapets, is finished with asphalt and has two levels. The front section containing the storefronts and apartments rises thirty feet, and the rear portion housing the theatre rises forty feet. Terra cotta coping terminates the parapets.

The 14th Avenue elevation contains the principal entrance and most of the decorative features of the building. The entrance is centrally placed and covered by a canopy, which sits beneath a neon theatre marquee. The entrance is flanked by symmetrically placed retail spaces with storefront windows. The upper portion of the main elevation contains most of the elements which embody the Mediterranean Revival style: arched windows and window openings, barrel tile pent roofs, quatrefoils, terra cotta coping, a centrally placed cartouche, and decorative features along the parapet.

The building's fenestration is regular. It is composed of fixed show and casement windows in a variety of light configurations. Fixed show windows are located at the first story level. On the second story level windows are regularly placed in a discernible pattern. At the extreme north and south ends of the second story are single round arched windows. Moving toward the center of the elevation are grouped, elliptically arched, multi-light casement windows with a multi-light transom above. Flanking the central pavilion of the main elevation are paired flat headed casement windows. At the center of the elevation are three arched multilight casement windows.

The interior of the building houses three distinct uses. The front portion of the first floor consists of five bays and was designed as retail space. The central bay is an arcade flanked by retail spaces. (Photo 3) It leads into a rotunda, a transitional space at the center of the building that leads into the theatre auditorium. (Photo 4) Inside the rotunda is a spiral stairway which provides access to the second floor apartments and the theatre balcony. The hand rail and balusters are constructed of cypress. A skylight above the second floor level provides natural lighting to the space. (Photo 5)

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The theatre auditorium was not rehabilitated along with the rest of the building in 1991. It is a commodious space with a seating capacity of 850. (Photos 6-9) It was designed to accommodate both motion pictures and live theatre. The auditorium floor is constructed of sloped concrete. The stage is fifty feet wide and twenty-three feet deep and contains traditional features such as flies, an orchestra pit, and dressing rooms off to the side. Above the ground level is an elliptical balcony with a projection room at the rear.

The theatre contains most of the detailing found in the interior of the building. The ceiling is coffered and finished with richly detailed pressed tin. Detailing includes quatrefoils, raised panels, and dentils in the coffers. Remnants of a plaster frieze remain above the stage. The original walls were simple plaster finishes over lathe board. They have generally been covered with acoustical tile. Wainscotting and a cornice are located at the bottom and top of the exterior walls of the theatre.

The second floor of the building houses eight apartments. They are divided equally by a central corridor which runs the length of the upstairs. (Photo 10) Stairs at the extreme north and south ends of the building access the corridor. Transom lights and simple door trim are the only significant detailing in the corridors.

Each apartment contains a living room, dressing room, closet, kitchenette, and bath room. All were originally equipped with a murphy bed. The floors in the corridor and apartments are made up of four inch wide tongue-in-groove pine board. The interior detailing of the apartments is simple. It consists of base boards and window and door trim generally connected by butt joints. (Photo 11)

<u>Alterations</u>

The Vero Theatre was rehabilitated in 1991 according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. (Photos 12-15 were taken shortly before the 1991 rehabilitation.) Photographs from the late 1930s were used to guide the reconstruction of lost details. Glass doors and steel frame windows, circa 1970, were removed from the arcade entrance and replaced by arched openings similar to the original entrance. Decorative features along the parapet of the 14th Avenue facade were reconstructed. A copy of the

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building's 1937 neon theatre sign was installed and Art Deco style details were reconstructed on the canopy.

With the exception of the auditorium, the interior of the building was also rehabilitated. Minor alterations were made to bring fire exits up to code and a few partitions were removed on the second floor. Overall the original interior plan and detailing were maintained during the rehabilitation. A decorative grate, which had been removed, was found in one of the building's storage areas. One of its four sections was missing and was replicated from the other sections. The grate was restored to its original place beneath the skylight in the rotunda.

The owner of the building plans to rehabilitate the theatre auditorium in the near future for both live performances and films.

The Vero Theatre maintains its historical integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, location, and association.

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SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Vero Theatre, Vero Beach, Florida, fulfills criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It has local significance in the areas of architecture, entertainment, and commerce. It served as the principal entertainment facility in Vero Beach from 1924 until World War II. The Vero Theatre also has architectural significance for its design and the type of building it embodies. It was the first building in Vero Beach designed and constructed as a movie theatre.

Historic Context

Florida pioneers in the 1880s were attracted to the area known today as Vero Beach by its lush vegetation, marine resources and homesteading opportunities. The Homestead Act of 1862 provided land grants for farmers and speculators in surveyed areas of the state. Located on the Indian River, Vero Beach was a convenient shipping point for the area's agricultural products. In 1891, a post office was established at the settlement known as "Vero." Henry Morrison Flagler's railroad, the Florida East Coast Railway, reached Vero in late 1893. In many practical ways the railroad stimulated the economy. Farmers could transport crops more quickly to market and tourists could reach the town easily. A train depot, which is still extant, was constructed in Vero in 1903 (NR listed 1987).

During the first decade of the 20th century, Vero grew at a moderate pace. Fewer than 100 people lived in the small settlement in 1905. By 1910, the population had reached 200. One of the most significant projects undertaken in Vero and other parts of Florida during this time was the drainage of wetlands. Land reclamation, as it was known, was promoted during the gubernatorial term of Napoleon Bonaparte Broward (1905-1909). This program created new lands for agricultural development, primarily for citrus production. It also brought about an improved road system and an influx of residents. The Indian River Farms Company, organized in 1912, drained much of the wetlands close to Vero and sold the land to farmers for citrus groves.

With the Indian River Farms Company attracting new residents, the town of Vero was platted in 1913. Numerous subdivisions were established between 1914 and 1917. A small but bustling business

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district emerged west of the railroad depot along 20th Street and 14th and 15th avenues. In 1919 with 750 residents, Vero incorporated as a city. Later that year, most of the business district burned to the ground. Over the next decade, the downtown would be rebuilt during one of the most intense periods of real estate development in the state's history.

As in other parts of Florida, the real estate boom of the 1920s brought unprecedented development and economic expansion to Vero. The population increased, transportation networks expanded, and Vero experienced its most intensive period of development. In 1920, a bridge spanning the Indian River was constructed, connecting Vero to the peninsula and allowing easy access to the beaches. In 1925, U.S. Highway 1 was paved in asphalt through Vero to Miami, which provided greater access to the area for middle-class tourists traveling by car. Vero and other coastal towns along Highway 1 became popular tourist destinations.

The population of Vero grew rapidly during the 1920s. By 1923, it had almost reached 1,500 residents. Increased construction activity resulted in the rebuilding and expansion of the downtown commercial district. In 1925, the city reincorporated as Vero Beach and the city limits were expanded to encompass nearly four square miles. The same year, Indian River County was created from St. Lucie County and Vero Beach became the county seat of government.

The real estate boom began a rapid decline in 1926 with decreased bank deposits, real estate fraud, and an FEC freight embargo. The effects of the "bust" were moderate in Vero Beach due to the community's diversified economy based on agriculture, citrus, commerce, fishing and tourism. The population of Vero Beach continued to increase, reaching 2,500 in 1929. The tourist industry helped Vero Beach through the Great Depression in the 1930s. The automobile facilitated tourism and some parts of Florida, including Indian River County, experienced increased population growth. Vero Beach recorded more than 3,000 residents in 1940.

A small naval air station was activated at Vero Beach in 1942 and the first squadrons arrived in January, 1943. After the war, the local economy reverted back to tourism, agriculture, citrus production, commercial fishing, and commerce. An increasing number of automobiles led to commercial strip development along major state highways, suburban sprawl, and the gradual erosion of the central commercial district. Today, Vero Beach has

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approximately 18,000 residents, many of whom are retirees, and its main sources of income are agriculture and tourism.

Historical Significance

The first motion pictures in Vero Beach were shown at the schoolhouse and later at a commercial building on Seminole Avenue. These facilities proved inadequate to the local demand and many residents went to Fellsmere, a small town north of Vero, where the movie house had shows twice-a-week. About 1921, William Atkin and Freeman Knight purchased the Seminole Avenue building and continued showing movies there. Atkin, a prominent businessman, civic official, and politician, later purchased Knight's interest and formed the Vero Theatre Corporation.

During the early 1920s, Vero Beach experienced an unprecedented period of growth. The commercial district expanded along 20th Street, 14th Avenue, and Dixie Highway. In response to the growing local demand for entertainment, Atkin hired Orlando architect F.H. Trimble to design a movie theatre for Vero Beach. Completed in October, 1924, it was one of the first major commercial buildings constructed in Vero Beach during the Florida Land Boom (c.1924-1926), and its opening received front page coverage in local newspapers.

Typical of other commercial buildings during this period, the Vero Theatre served several different functions. On the first floor, four commercial storefronts provided a variety of retail space. Upstairs were eight apartments, a sensible investment considering the town's burgeoning population. At the rear of the building was the theatre accessed by an attractive arcade and rotunda with a spiral staircase. Aside from the theatre auditorium, the general layout of the building was typical of local and national commercial architecture of the period: storefronts at the first floor level and offices or apartments above. The arcade was also a typical feature of commercial buildings constructed in Florida during the 1920s.

The building was intended to accommodate live theatre as well as movies and it was equipped with sets designed and constructed in New York City. The auditorium also made it a good space for public meetings. Among the more notable events held there was a presentation by Congresswoman Ruth Bryan Owen, the daughter of William Jennings Bryan, in the summer of 1929.

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As one of the area's first Mediterranean Revival style buildings, the Vero Theatre probably served as a model for numerous commercial and residential buildings constructed in Vero Beach during the next several years. Among these were the Orange Apartments, the Royal Park Arcade, and the Pocahontas Apartments. All of these were constructed in 1925 or 1926, following completion of the Vero Theatre and several similarly styled buildings in the downtown area.

The Vero Theatre played a minor role in the formation of Indian River County in 1925. At that time, Vero Beach was part of St. Lucie County. During the 1920s, the town's citizens were often in disagreement with the county government in Ft. Pierce. Distribution of tax funds, tax revenues, and the effectiveness of mosquito control were among the major issues that divided the county. After the Vero Theatre opened in late 1924, the owners proposed to open on Sundays in violation of St. Lucie County's "blue laws." Officials in Ft. Pierce immediately sent the county sheriff to enforce Sunday closing. Angered by the ongoing intervention in local affairs, businessmen, professionals, and other townspeople met and petitioned the legislature for formation of a new county. Senator A.W. Young introduced the bill and following senate approval, the governor signed it into law, creating Indian River County on June 29, 1925.

During the 1930s, the building's name was changed to the Florida Theatre. In 1937, a neon, Art Deco marquee was added to the 14th Avenue elevation. The theatre has continually served the uses for which it was designed and the building remains one of the landmark buildings in Vero Beach. It is significant as the only movie theatre in Vero Beach before World War II. Its construction marked a new era in entertainment as the general demand for movies grew. The Vero Theatre is also significant as one of the town's last remaining commercial buildings from the 1920s Florida Land Boom. The combined residential/commercial functions of the building were typical of the times. This contrasts sharply with the tendency today for single-use The Vero Theatre preserves its traditional appearance buildings. and embodies a significant part of the city's commercial and entertainment history.

Architectural Context

The roots of Mediterranean Revival style architecture in Florida can be traced to the luxury hotels developed by Henry Flagler and others in St. Augustine during the 1880s. Mediterranean

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influenced architecture was popularized during the Panama-California International Exposition at San Diego in 1915. By the 1920s, it had swept California, Florida, and other Sunbelt states. The most important early twentieth century Mediterranean Revival style building in Florida was Villa Vizcaya. Constructed between 1914 and 1916 for industrialist James Deering, Villa Vizcaya became a major influence on the popularity of Mediterranean architecture in Florida in subsequent years. One of the most significant architects associated with this architectural style was Addison Mizner, who designed a number of Mediterranean Revival buildings in Palm Beach, Boca Raton, and other Florida cities.

The Mediterranean Revival style was among the most dominant architectural influences during the 1920s Florida Land Boom and continued to be used widely into the 1930s. It was adapted for a variety of building types ranging from grandiose tourist hotels to two room residences. It was so popular that many commercial and residential buildings were renovated in the 1920s to reflect the style. Identifying features include flat (sometimes hip) roofs, usually with some form of parapet; ceramic tile roof surfacing; stuccoed facades; flat roof entrance porches, commonly with arched openings supported by square columns; casement and double-hung sash windows; and ceramic tile decorations.

Theatre Architecture in the United States

Beginning in the 1850s, the European opera house was adapted to the United States. Characteristics of the opera house form were a simple exterior; an auditorium, usually with rich decoration; horseshoe shaped balconies supported by slender columns; box seats; a painted drop curtain; and allegorical paintings and sculpture. Beyond their decorative elements, theatre designers had to satisfy a number of technical requirements. Among these were sight lines, acoustics, fire safety, lighting, ventilation, and spatial design that would accommodate the sets of a wide variety of traveling shows.

The development of motion pictures during the early twentieth century stimulated a new boom in theatre construction. As was true in Vero Beach, motion pictures were initially shown in buildings not specifically designed for their needs. To allow better viewing of the flat screen, movie theatres generally contained a single deep balcony with all seats facing forward rather than the horseshoe shaped balcony of the live theatre. They became larger and often more ornate. The motion picture

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theatre brought the world to even the most remote locales in the United States. The Vero Theatre is a fine example of this trend.

F.H. Trimble, Architect

The Vero Theatre was designed by noted Orlando architect, F.H. Trimble, who practiced in the city from at least 1916 to 1925. Frederick Homer Trimble was born in 1878 at Essex, Ontario, Canada. He studied architecture at Morning Side College, Sioux City, Iowa. In 1904 he went to China, where he provided architectural service under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He subsequently returned to Morning Side College and graduated in 1911. That same year he returned to China and served an additional three years as a missionary architect.

In 1914 Trimble moved to Florida. He initially practiced at Fellsmere in present day Indian River County and moved to Orlando in 1916. From Orlando he developed a regional architectural practice. While designing a variety of types of buildings, Trimble was principally known as a school architect. He designed Fellsmere, Okeechobee, Lake Worth, Orlando, Stuart, Gulf, and Sebring high schools. He also designed buildings at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, the Montverde Industrial School, and the Princess Martha Hotel, among other public buildings and hotels.

In Orlando Trimble designed the Memorial High School, West Central, Callahan and Delaney elementary schools; the Methodist Episcopal Church; Amherst Apartments; Fort Gatlin Hotel; Orange General Hospital; and the city fire station at the northeast corner of Main Street and Central Avenue. He was also a leader among professional architects in Orlando. He organized the Architects Club of Orlando in July, 1924. The Fellsmere High School and Vero Theatre are Trimble's only known commissions in Indian River County.

Architectural Significance

The Vero Theatre is the most complex historic building left in Vero Beach. It incorporates commercial, residential, and entertainment functions into a single building. The theatre retains its stage, balcony, overall plan, and much of its original detailing. It was the town's only motion picture theatre building before World War II and is therefore the only extant historic building of its type in Vero Beach.

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The Vero Theatre embodies the building boom that transformed the town's commercial district during the 1920s. The theatre was among the first and most important buildings constructed in Vero Beach during the era and epitomizes the Mediterranean Revival style architecture that was popular at that time. Designed by a well-known Central Florida architect, the building is a prominent feature of the town's historic commercial and governmental district.

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- 3. PAUL WEAVER
- 4. SEPTEMBER 1991
- 5. HISTORIC PROPERTY ASSOCIATES
- 6. 14TH AVENUE ELEVATION, CAMERA FACING SOUTHEAST
- 7. PHOTO 1

1. VERO THEATRE,

- 2. VERO BEACH, INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
- 3. PAUL WEAVER
- 4. JANUARY 1991
- 5. HISTORIC PROPERTY ASSOCIATES
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- 7. PHOTO 5
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