

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: South Carolina	
COUNTY: Richland	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	OCT 9 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:
Town Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
1012 Sumter Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Columbia

STATE: South Carolina CODE: 045 COUNTY: Richland CODE: 079

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Columbia Stage Company

STREET AND NUMBER:
1012 Sumter Street

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 045

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Richland County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
1508 Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 045

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
South Carolina Inventory of Historic Places

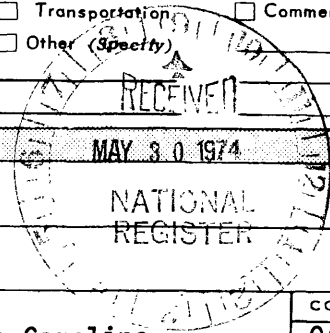
DATE OF SURVEY: 1973 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

STREET AND NUMBER:
1430 Senate

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 045

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

EXTERIOR:

Built of brick set in American bond, the facade of the Columbia Town Theatre is symmetrical and is dominated by a two-story glazed central arch, outlined by decorative brickwork. The top of the facade is raised above the main body of the structure and gives the effect of a wide brick wall broken only by this arch, two small windows, and two billboard insets. Placed to either side of the arch, these narrow windows are double sash (6/6); the poster insets are outlined with brick headers to form a border. Wrought-iron light fixtures in sycamore leaf shape are located above the two billboard insets.

The gentle curve of the arch is echoed by the main entrance's french doors and again in the roof's cornice; the heaviness of the solid brick facade is lightened by the glazed arch. The french doors and sidelights on the ground level each have eight glazed panels, while the three upper central stationary windows have twelve lights each; nine lights fill the sides of the arch. Bronze letters spelling the name of the building are attached to the brick between the arch and the roof.

Composed of two stories, the lobby and office area are divided vertically by a projecting buttress. The lower level, housing the auditorium, has three side entrances spaced between five brick buttresses. The original building is 42 feet wide and 112 feet long, with a 34-foot-high street facade. A small workshop annex constructed also of brick was built to the rear of the theatre in the 1950s.

INTERIOR:

The front section of the structure is fifteen feet deep and includes the business office, the lounges, the box office, and an enclosed stairway leading from the ground floor to the studio and lobby on the second. The lower half of the lobby wall is paneled, while the upper half is papered. Large double folding doors on the first floor lead into the auditorium, which is 72 feet long and originally seated 437 people; new seats were installed in 1952, however, and the seating capacity was reduced to 370. The interior walls of the auditorium are of hand-selected shaded Sumter brick, the ceiling is of rough plaster, and the four wrought iron chandeliers were handmade in Columbia for the original building.

The proscenium is an elliptical arch which is sixteen feet high at its center and twenty-two feet wide, with an orchestra pit beneath the front of the stage. The stage is twenty-seven feet deep and forty-nine feet wide. The workshop annex is used for the construction of flats for scenery and generally serves as dressing rooms during productions.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1924**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Columbia Town Theatre, one of the first community theatres in the United States, has made significant contributions to the arts, drama, and education in South Carolina. Originally established as the Columbia Stage Society, Town Theatre has not only enjoyed fifty-five consecutive seasons, but from the time of its founding, has brought distinguished artists, lecturers, musicians, and vocalists to the state.

THEATRE:

Columbia Town Theatre building was the first community theatre in the south to be designed and built for a theatre; it is thought to be the only community theatre in the United States to have been located in the same building for over fifty years. From its inception in 1919, Town Theatre has been one of the most ambitious and innovative community theatres in the country. Always an experimental community enterprise, Town Theatre was recognized as such by the New York Times in 1923: the little theatre where "the idea of uncommercialized drama has been carried farther than any other movement in America." (January 28, 1923) Through its open membership program, Town Theatre has always aimed to serve the community at large, rather than special interest groups; its policy of drawing actors and technicians from the local population has served to maintain a high level of interest in the community.

Early in 1919 a group of Columbia citizens under the guidance of Daniel A. Reed, an experienced actor and director stationed at Camp Jackson just outside of Columbia, formed the Columbia Stage Society. Their aim was to create a community theatre group which would produce plays incorporating local talent.

During their first season, performances were given on rented stages, but by the second season, the group had purchased and remodeled a house at 1012 Sumter Street for their use. Plans to build their own theatre were finally realized in 1924 when the present building, financed entirely by public subscription, was completed.

Throughout its history, Town Theatre has contributed significantly to the cultural life of Columbia and South Carolina. During the early years of its existence (1919-1925), many nationally and internationally recognized poets, musicians, and lecturers were brought to Columbia under

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Adger. "Columbia's Town Theatre." Sandlapper I: 11, pp. 48-52.
 Hennig, Helen Kohn, ed. Columbia, Capital City of South Carolina. 1786-1936.
 Columbia, South Carolina: R.L. Bryan Co., 1936. pp. 178, 218-220.
 Scrapbooks in the possession of Town Theatre containing newspaper clippings since 1921.

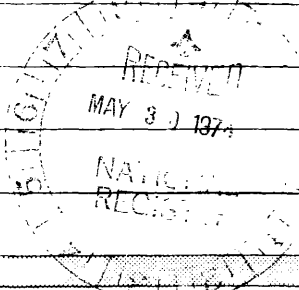
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	34	00	00	81	01	51
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/4 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

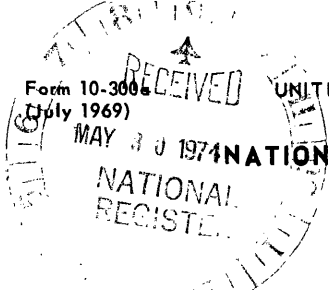
NAME AND TITLE: Claire Randall - Business Manager, Town Theatre
Betty Myers
 ORGANIZATION: S.C. Department of Archives and History DATE: 5/8/74
 STREET AND NUMBER: 1430 Senate Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 045

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:
 National State Local
 Name: Charles E. Lee
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer
 Date: May 20, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.
AR. Manteau
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date: 10/9/74
 ATTEST:
Charles E. Lee
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date: 10.8.74

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

Town Theatre
8 Significance (continued)

the auspices of the theatre -- Carl Sandburg, Padaic Collum, Harriet Monroe, Vachel Lindsay, Emil Telmanyi. This policy of inviting distinguished artists to appear at the theatre has continued to the present -- Martha Graham, DuBose Heyward, and Ruth Draper have been guests in more recent years.

With the establishment of the Junior Stage Society in 1921, which accepted members between the ages of six and sixteen, Town Theatre became one of the pioneers in children's theatre in the United States. Children's Theatre has remained an integral part of Town Theatre's priorities, and in 1971 the Columbia Youth Theatre for high-school and college students was organized. The first film festival for youth in South Carolina was sponsored by the Youth Theatre in 1973; an annual nationwide youth playwriting contest, in which Edward Albee and Steven Sondheim were judges, was initiated.

ARCHITECTURE:

The theatre's facade was designed by Harry Jenkins, a Chicago architect, and the main body of the building was planned and constructed by Arthur W. Hamby of Columbia. Built primarily of local materials, Town Theatre is representative of a stylistic type constructed in Columbia from 1900 into the 1930s. The brick used in its construction were also used for numerous commercial and domestic buildings in the city. The design of the facade reflects the trend toward rounded forms and low relief design popular in the art deco movement of the 1920s, and Town Theatre is one of the few remaining examples in Columbia of this important movement.

EDUCATION:

Since its early years, Town Theatre has been actively involved in various programs designed to stimulate interest in drama and the fine arts. Geared for both students and the general public, the Columbia Stage Society has sponsored playwriting contests, produced student plays, and taken productions on tour throughout the state. Town Theatre has provided experience and training for young actors, directors, and technical designers, many of whom have gone into the field professionally (i.e. Dan Reed, Fred Coe, and Delbert Mann).

From its inception, Columbia Town Theatre has worked in cooperation with the University of South Carolina, and in 1924, Daniel Reed (first director of Town Theatre), instituted a course in theatre production -- English 123 -- there.

The educational aspects of the Junior Stage Society have been far-reaching instructing children not only in the literary areas of drama, but also in its production and performance as well.