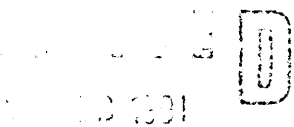


United States Department of the Interior,
National Park Service



JUL 09 1991
OHP

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: State Theatre
other name/site number: State Theater

2. Location

street & number: 1489 Myers Street
city/town: Oroville
state: CA county: Butte code: 007 zip code: 95965
not for publication: N/A
vicinity: N/A

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing Noncontributing

__1__	buildings	_____
_____	sites	_____
_____	structures	_____
_____	objects	_____
__1__	Total	__0__

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: __0__

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. 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. See continuation sheet.

 Stacy R. Casco August 7, 1991
Signature of certifying official Date

 California 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.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

~~entered in the~~
~~National Register~~

- entered in the National Register George M. Papsley 9/13/91
 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

6. Function or Use

Historic: Recreation and Culture _____ Sub: Theater _____
Commerce/Trade _____ Specialty Store/Professional _____
Current: Recreation and Culture _____ Sub: Theater _____
Commerce/Trade _____ Specialty Store/Professional _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late 19th and Early
20th Century Revivals

Other Description: Spanish Colonial Revival/Moorish Revival

Materials: foundation Reinforced concrete roof Tile _____
walls Stucco _____ other Ceramic tile entry

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in
relation to other properties: at the local level .

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): _____

Areas of Significance: Architecture _____
Community Development _____
Entertainment _____

Period(s) of Significance: 1928-1932

Significant Dates: 1928

Significant Person(s): N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation: N/A _____

Architect/Builder: Pflueger, Timothy _____

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

X See continuation sheet.

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Sited on the northeast corner of Myers (formerly spelled Meyers) and Robinson Streets in Oroville, California, the State Theatre is a Spanish Colonial Revival style building, with its principal façade on Myers Street. The Myers Street façade rises two stories, with a corner entrance to the box office and lobby. The design of the structure provided first floor shops along Myers Street, with office space on the second floor, reached by a separate entrance and stairs at the northwest corner of the building. Set back from the principal façade, the auditorium rises to three-story height, while the "flies" above the stage reach four stories. Given the changes in theater marketing and technology which have occurred in the past 25 years, the State Theatre retains a remarkably high degree of integrity. Though the building has suffered alterations, the skill and handiwork of its architect and the craftsmen who built it continue to shine through on both exterior and interior.

The building is of reinforced concrete construction. The exterior exhibits Plateresque detailing typical of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. On the Myers Street façade the architect used this ornate detailing to divide the second story to form end pavilions flanking a central arcade, giving the building a very restrained Baroque massing. In fact, however, the façade is relatively mono-planar, with the second story office windows and their surrounding detail slightly recessed from the plane of the façade.

All the office windows feature a similar treatment: a decorated spandrel panel with a central scallop shell motif, flanked by acanthus-leaf volutes. From the spandrel panel, highly decorated pilasters rise to a string course; above the string course the pilasters continue to the cornice line, where an acanthus-leaf entablature wraps around to form the pilaster capitals. Below the string course, masks of drama adorn each pilaster.

At the windows in the end pavilions, the spandrel panel is carried on an acanthus-leaf base moulding, while at cornice level the cornice moulding rises in a semi-espadaña form, with a forward-projecting parapet volute. The pilasters at this level flank a shield with the superposed letters "T" and "D", the logo of T. and D. Jr. Enterprises (hereinafter T&D), original owners and operators of the theater. Above the band of windows in the central arcade are octagonal panels with stylized masks of drama. The parapet is crowned by a Mission tile coping, two courses high with a ridge course.

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The second story detailing wraps around onto the Robinson Street façade.

At first floor level, the original shop fronts have been altered by infill of the upper portion of the original stepped-bracketed openings. New glass and aluminum shop fronts have replaced the originals, while an aluminum marquee provides weather protection for the shop entrances below. The piers separating the shops, originally clad in cement stucco, are now faced with artificial flagstone, as is the corner pillar and box office wainscot. In spite of these changes, the basic rhythm of the first floor of the building remains as designed, and the infill of the upper portion of the arches is easily reversible, as surface cracks in the stucco clearly define the original fenestration, and the original transom windows remain intact behind the stucco infill.

At the entrance, while aluminum-framed glass doors have replaced the originals, the recessed entry still sports its tile cladding: green tiles with blue trim, and a Greek key trim course in false perspective. The original free-standing ticket booth is gone, replaced by a booth set into the entrance wall.

A number of secondary doors and windows on the south (Robinson Street) façade have been infilled and "blinded." The original double-hung wood sash windows on the second floor have been replaced by single-hung sash in anodized aluminum frames, without alteration to the fenestration. A large painted wall sign, flanked by painted oranges and olives--historically, local crops of importance--advertising the State Theatre as "Home of the Best Entertainment," adorns the north wall of the auditorium at the level of the "flies."

Entering the lobby, a broad hall aligned roughly west-east leads theatergoers to the entrances to the auditorium. At the immediate left of the entrance, a "U"-shaped staircase leads to the second floor lobby, giving entrance to the loges and balcony (currently not in use due to inadequate emergency egress). The staircase features an elaborate metal balustrade. On the main floor of the auditorium, the original seats, now upholstered in fabric rather than leather, have been refurbished; in the loges and balcony, the seats--some still in original leather upholstery--have been removed, and are in storage in the former second floor office space.

The auditorium walls, originally highly decorated in polychromatic paints, currently are painted in a monochromatic red scheme. However, the existence of the original paint scheme, somewhat faded and deteriorated, on the face of the balcony causes these researchers to

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believe that the wall treatment has simply been overpainted, and could easily be determined and restored. The balcony face bears what appears to be orange poppies on an aqua ground, gold butterflies, white flowers, and a scrolled vine motif (see also the period description under Significance). The proscenium arch--18 feet high and 39 feet 10 inches wide--is surmounted and surrounded by an immense Moorish Revival cast plaster grillework, which continues around the walls at balcony level.

The original Art Deco style lighting fixtures have been removed, but are stored intact in the former second floor office space, along with some of the original carbon-arc projectors and other original stage lighting equipment.

The orchestra pit remains intact in front of the stage. In the basement level below the stage, the original dressing rooms remain in use. Though the original HVAC system has been replaced, one of the original built-in vacuum cleaning system units remains in place in a corner of the basement.

The second floor along the Myers Street façade, now used exclusively for storage, once housed tenants in six or seven separate offices. The original partition walls have been removed and a wooden stud shear wall

now divides the space longitudinally. This, and two cross-beams, are the result of seismic retrofit of the building following the 1975 Oroville earthquake. Original office doors stored in the area bear the signs "Tailoring and Alterations," "Henrici's Laboratory," "W.M. Savage, Attorney at Law," "R.F. Marcozzi, Mfg. Jeweler," and "Private, 4."

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The State Theatre building appears to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: under Criterion C as representing a type, period, and method of construction; and under Criterion A as a key structure defining the late 1920s/early 1930s building boom in Oroville engendered by the pending construction of the Feather River Highway; and as a key structure for local and regional entertainment, as the first theater in Oroville designed specifically for motion pictures. The building is the work of San Francisco architect, Timothy Pflueger, designer of many theaters throughout California during this period. Designed in 1927 and built in 1927-28, the State Theatre stands as Oroville's first Spanish Colonial Revival style building, one of only two high examples of the style in the city, and appears to have set a stylistic tone for both new construction and remodelings during its period of significance. From its opening in 1928 and through the period of significance, it was the focus of local and regional entertainment, and special holiday events inextricably linked it to life of the community. It was one of a number of small local theaters owned and operated by the T&D chain throughout California, a number of which Pflueger designed for the company.

The late 1920s were a period of prosperity in Oroville, reflected in a number of major building commissions. Butte County agriculture was in a period of expansion, particularly in citrus farming (hence the oranges on the Theatre's wall sign). The Western Pacific Railroad, serving Oroville, was making improvements to better serve this expansion, and newspapers regularly reported the number of carloads of local oranges being shipped to Eastern markets. Gold dredging was especially active in the area, and would continue to support Oroville's economy during the early years of the Great Depression, allowing a continuation of building activity into the early 1930s. In addition, the twenty-year debate regarding the location of the proposed Feather River Highway, an all-weather route across the Sierra Nevadas, was about to end with the State Highway Commission's location decision. Construction of this road was anticipated to mean much to the local economy: jobs for workers, equipment and supply sales, and repair work. Completion of the highway was expected to bring throngs of visitors and vacationers, requiring new hotels and entertainment centers.

This same period also saw much theater-building activity in many California communities; Oroville was no exception. With motion pictures coming to the forefront of the entertainment field, older buildings were modified and modernized, and new theaters were erected. In mid-1927, the old Rex Theatre in Oroville re-opened after refurbishing, replete with sloping floor for improved motion picture sight lines, a decorative indirect lighting system, and new

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projectors; new carpet, drapes, and an organ were slated to follow. Some theater-building activity was the result of the combination of older wood-frame theater buildings, highly flammable celluloid films, and carbon-arc projectors which led to a number of theater fires. One of these fires gutted Oroville's Gardella Theatre.

On July 11, 1927, just nine days after the refurbished Rex Theatre had re-opened, fire broke out in the Gardella's projection room when the film caught fire. Flames spread through a flue in the ceiling, meant to exhaust heat from the projector's carbon-arc light, and ignited the attic. Though the stage's asbestos fire curtain saved the screen and some scenery, the building was essentially gutted. Both the Rex and the Gardella had recently been bought by Harry Seipel and A.B.C. Chamberlain, who also operated theaters in Palo Alto and Crockett. Seipel put the Gardella's loss at \$15,000, evenly divided between building and equipment. The next day, Mrs. L.A. Waldren of nearby Thermalito, representing the Gardella estate, announced a new 1,200-seat theater of modern design, clearly intended to be the focus of entertainment in Oroville, to be operated by Seipel and Chamberlain.

The contract for construction of the new theater had been let by August 1, 1927, on which date the building permit was taken out. But for reasons which remain unclear, the Gardella Estate and Seipel & Chamberlain were no longer in the picture. The Estate had sold the property to T&D who would build, own, and operate the new theater. T&D took its name from its founders, two men from Antioch named Turner and Dahnken, who had started less than ten years earlier with a small theater in Paso Robles. By the time the State Theatre was completed, T&D owned eighteen theaters around the state, and operated several others. With Messrs. Turner and Dahnken seemingly out of active participation by this time, President Michael A. Naify and Vice-President William Nasser ran the company, which also had ties to West Coast Theaters. T&D had retained San Francisco architect, Timothy Pflueger, to design Oroville's State Theatre in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the building destined to be the city's first in that mode.

Probably best remembered for his designs of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Building (1925) and the Stock Exchange Building (1930), both in San Francisco, Timothy Pflueger must rank among the most important, and most prolific, of California's 20th-century architects. He is well-known for his theater designs as well, the apogee of which was Oakland's Paramount (1931). But his theater work started a decade earlier, when T&D commissioned him for the design of the Castro Theater in San

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Francisco in 1921, the first of a series of commissions for T&D, of which Oroville's State Theatre was one of the later. Pflueger's designs for T&D included theaters in San Francisco, Sacramento, Chico, and Tulare, besides Oroville. In the Castro, Pflueger set the tone for what was to follow: it was a florid example of the Spanish Colonial Revival, neo-Baroque in massing, and rich with detail.

Born in 1892, Timothy Pflueger began work in the offices of architects Miller and Colmesnil while he was still in high school. In 1912, when Pflueger was 20, employer J.R. Miller gave him his first independent design work, for a Catholic church, beginning a career that would last until Pflueger's death in 1946, and also beginning a family architectural practice that continues to today. World War I interrupted his practice, and upon returning to San Francisco after the war, Pflueger became a full partner of former employer J.R. Miller, the partnership lasting until Miller's death in the early 1930s.

An artist himself, Pflueger was a friend of the arts and of artists, helping to found the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, serving as President of the San Francisco Art Association, and later as head of the Department of Fine Arts for the 1939-40 World's Fair at Treasure Island. He employed many artists by incorporating their work into his buildings, especially throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The interior of the State Theatre was to be a reflection of this practice.

It is beyond the scope of this nomination to write the history of Timothy Pflueger's entire career. Suffice it to say that he continued through the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s to shape the architectural face of California. In 1945, he was honored by the New York publisher of *Architectural Forum*; included in the awards luncheon gathering to pay him their respects were Alvar Aalto, Hugh Ferriss, Edward D. Stone, Philip Johnson, Henry Wright, George Howe, Wallace Harrison, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Such was his stature in his profession. A year later, on November 18, 1946, a heart attack claimed his life and cut short what surely would have been a much longer career. However, we must here look back to 1927.

Workers in the employ of Smith Brothers, Los Angeles contractors, broke ground on August 2, 1927. The owners anticipated completing the building in four months, using a force of 40 to 50 men. Interestingly, the same contractor was engaged in erecting the Senator Theater in nearby Chico for T&D, to a design by Timothy Pflueger; the Senator's predecessor had also burned down. However, the Oroville project was given priority, and

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though the Senator was already begun, the State was to be finished first, indicative of the relative importance of the two regional commissions. The plans provided for several stores on Myers Street, as well as for offices on the second floor. The local paper reported that Architect Pflueger was expected in Oroville on August 3.

(Eight days after ground-breaking in Oroville, disaster once more struck T&D: their State Theater in Sacramento blew up on August 10, 1927, with such force that the roof landed in the middle of K Street. While the Oroville paper did not report the cause of the explosion, it did note that the company announced immediate plans to rebuild--to a design by Timothy Pflueger.)

On August 18, 1927, a little more than two weeks after construction began, workers--now totaling 15--poured the first concrete for the foundation. Rain, however, caused the work to proceed much more slowly than anticipated; by mid-November the new estimate for completion was March 1928, some four months longer than originally thought. November 4 saw the arrival of the largest single piece of steel ever shipped to Oroville: a twenty-ton beam to be used to support the balcony required two flat cars for its handling by the Western Pacific Railroad. With 30 men now at work, structural engineer, C.H. Brown, wrapped up the steel work in November. T&D also announced that seating capacity would now be 1,600.

For the next few months, little news of the new theater appeared in the local newspaper. Instead, record-setting rains bringing flood conditions throughout Northern California, and impending route and construction decisions on the Feather River Highway dominated local news. Then, in mid-February 1928, the paper optimistically reported that the State Theatre would be completed by March 1. T&D President Michael Naify and his architect inspected the job site on the morning of February 14. They were joined by W.A. Crank, manager of T&D's operation in Chico and the man selected to superintend the opening of the State.

The inspection party found plastering complete, and finish carpenters hard at work. Workers were also busy installing the modern heating and air conditioning system. Local pride also caused the paper to note that the State would, even with the delays, still open two weeks ahead of its Chico counterpart.

But winter rains continued into spring, and a month later the theater was still incomplete. Flooding had severed road and rail connections to

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Oroville, making difficult the delivery of workers and materials. By now, however, the paper was able to print a more complete picture of the modern theater which was about to become part of the local scene, reflecting Oroville's current prosperity and bright future. Readers were told of 1,600 fully-padded, leather-upholstered seats which were about to arrive for installation. They read that the auditorium was to be comprised of main floor, loges, and balcony. And for the first time, details of the interior decor began to appear:

The decorative scheme is unusual with the Moorish note predominating. Ceilings and walls are a galaxy of colors. Colored birds and designs are placed on pastel backgrounds of green and lighter ochre shades.

Walls of the stairway leading to the balcony bear attractive figures and designs [these are within the auditorium, not the lobby]. The stair cases are to be carpet covered and carpets will be laid in the lobby and in all aisles of the lower and upper floors....

Carved figures in dominant black and gold tones feature the decoration scheme of the upper walls of the main floor. A background of colored lath will be furnished this portion of the building which is one of the most attractive in this part of the state. The general design of the interior resembles that of the Senator Theater in Sacramento.

By March 14, the pipe organ (now removed) had been installed, the orchestra pit was almost complete, and stage curtains were due to be installed as soon as scaffolding was removed. Readers were told of the under-stage dressing rooms, and of the modern HVAC plant, which would use fresh air blown through ice-cooled streams of water to cool the theater in warm summer weather, and a large furnace to warm it in the cool months. They were also informed that "[T]he furnace and projection rooms are fireproof and have the approval of the insurance companies...." There would be no repeat of the destruction of the Gardella. Patrons, they were told, would be well-served by comfortable rest and dressing rooms, and by couches in the lobbies.

Also for the first time, notice was given of the type of entertainment contemplated:

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Special care has been taken to secure a fine type of entertainment for Oroville theater-goers, Manager [Frank] Fink announced. Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyers [sic] and United Artists pictures will be featured. High class vaudeville bills will also feature the program. Programs featuring organ recitals and special orchestra music are to be given.

Finally, by the end of March 1928, several months behind schedule, the end was in sight. On March 30, management announced that the theater would open on April 7, featuring Wallace Beery and Raymond Hatton starring in "Partners in Crime," a new film which had just completed an engagement in San Francisco; Oroville clearly was on the entertainment map. Manager Frank Fink also announced plans to bring top management of T&D, the managing director of West Coast Theaters, and possibly one or two film stars (the latter did not appear).

Further information regarding the building's decor was announced:

Artists have completed the work of painting colorful designs on ceilings and walls of the theater. Butterfly designs in colors are prominent in wall decorations.

Workers were busy with last-minute installations and adjustments, laying carpets, installing leather couches, hanging stage and aisle curtains, and tuning the \$20,000 Wurlitzer organ. Projection equipment was in and ready for operation. Final plans were announced on April 6 for the opening of the \$250,000 building (Oroville's largest single building commission for 1927-28). A few last descriptive words reported on the luxurious carpets and divans, and the lighting system which fit in with the general scheme of the interior architecture and wall paintings, and which was designed to "...throw a subdued glow in all sections of the building, with beautiful vari-colored designs of birds, parrots, and flowers." It was clear that once more Pflueger had made good use of artists in the interior decor of the State Theatre. Underscoring the concern for fire-safety was the placement of fire extinguishers throughout the building.

Newspaper readers learned a few statistics about the theater: all lights were to be controlled from the projection room; there was 120,000 feet of electrical wire, and 40,000 feet of conduit in the building; stage curtains were electrically controlled from the projection room as well.

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One of the most interesting and noteworthy features of the State Theatre was its (since removed) sign: this was the first neon sign in Oroville, and was noted as such at the time.

On Saturday, April 7, 1928, the State Theatre opened to capacity crowds. While the official grand opening was scheduled for 7:00 PM, there was an afternoon matinee as well. The grand opening, however, reflected the importance of the State Theatre to the community, and set the tone for the theater's role in the life of the community during the period of significance. That evening, patrons waited in a block-long line, and the loges were filled long before ceremonies began. By 7:00 PM, all 1,528 seats were taken. Oroville Mayor, W.T. Baldwin, opened the evening with a speech congratulating the city on its latest building, and thanking T&D for their confidence in Oroville's future. Assemblyman C.H. Deuel also expressed pride in the building and stated appreciation to T&D. W.A. Crank, overseeing the ceremonies, introduced company officials, identifying President Michael Naify as the individual responsible for the building; Crank revealed that Naify had personally made the decision to build in Oroville after T&D had decided to build their Chico theater. A specially-produced souvenir program contained expressions of congratulations from many of the city's leading businesses, as well as profiles on managers, designers, and builders. Of architect Pflueger, the program stated:

The same genius who created the lofty pinnacle of progress--the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building in San Francisco, that white magic tower--has also conceived the plan from which in all its beauty, the new State Theatre has sprung.

Timothy L. Pflueger and J.R. Miller are the architects. To them must go credit for the perfection of detail, the individuality of design, the magnificence and harmony of the complete ensemble which is the New State Theatre tonight.

In this new theatre, Oroville beholds its first Spanish Theatre, the inspired result of the architectural artistry of Timothy L. Pflueger and J.R. Miller.

The souvenir program also pictured a number of other T&D theaters: the California Theater and the Cline Theater, both at Santa Rosa; the Liberty

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Theater at Susanville; the California Theater and the Mystic Theater, both at Petaluma; the Granada Theater and the Majestic Theater, both in Reno, Nevada; the California Theater in Dunsmuir; the State Theater in Martinez; the Hippodrome, the Liberty, the Godard, the California, and the State, all in Sacramento; the Strand in Alameda; the T & D Jr. in Lodi; the State in Oakland; and the Castro and the Royal in San Francisco.

Sunday evening saw a virtual repeat of the opening night, and theater management was well-pleased with their new house.

The State Theatre's importance on the local entertainment and community scene can best be appreciated by a perusal of the local newspaper during the period of significance. Consistently, the State brought the latest movies, as well as quality stage shows and revues, to the patrons in Oroville and southern Butte County. But perhaps the best reflection of the State Theatre's role in local life appears in accounts of events which took place there at Christmas time. Beginning in 1928, the year of its completion, the State hosted an annual Christmas party, which management co-sponsored with the publishers of the *Mercury-Register*. Children entering were filmed by a local movie-maker, and then had the chance to see themselves on screen by the end of the party. By the end of 1930, this event drew more than a thousand youngsters from Oroville and the sparsely-populated surrounding County environs, clearly a regional event. In 1929, following a newspaper editorial on the elderly residents of the County infirmary, the State's management hosted a special Christmas show just for those unfortunates. Local citizens turned out in such numbers to provide transportation to the theater, that there were more cars than patients. For many of the elderly, it was the first movie they had seen in ten years, and for many the first "talkie." Their tearful gratitude, expressed toward all involved, but particularly the State, spoke volumes about the relationship and importance of this building to the community.

Long after the period of significance, the theater was subsequently purchased by United Artists, eventually suffering the fate of so many of its contemporaries: the main auditorium was divided with a temporary wall, and the building was remodeled into two smaller theaters. Finally, in 1986 United Artists notified Oroville of its intent to close and sell the theater. On September 30, 1986 the city purchased the building for \$200,000, for use as a community performance center.

Renovation followed the city's purchase: removal of the center wall to restore the main auditorium space; light and sound system upgrades; asbestos abatement; and grand piano repairs. The building re-opened in

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December 1987 with a performance of "The Nutcracker" by the Theater Ballet of San Francisco.

On August 5, 1988, a fire started in the electrical panel of the theater, threatening the structure. However, the newly-installed basement sprinkler system contained the blaze. The stage floor and curtains were smoke-damaged. The next month the current interior color scheme was developed by David Thode, interior architect and professor at California State University, Chico.

Today, 63 years after its construction, the building seats 612 on the main floor, and continues to serve the community for which it was built. It remains Oroville's premier theater, and the only surviving theater of its period in Oroville.

Overall, the State Theatre retains a reasonable degree of integrity. Alterations to the Myers Street store fronts--which were not primary character-defining features of the building--are minor in nature, and are easily reversible; interior inspection reveals that the store front transoms--including glass--are intact behind the stucco infill of the upper portion of the arches. The most visual alteration is the application of artificial flagstone to the pilasters. The theater's original neon sign is gone, but its supporting marquee remains. Replacement of the second story sash resulted in no visual change. Second floor office spaces were never significant elements of the interior, and though partition walls are gone, original doors and transoms remain. Original auditorium lighting fixtures remain on-site, easily restorable. Elements of the original interior paint scheme remain exposed for interpretation, and along with interior architectural elements reflect the high artistry of Pflueger's design. The Plateresque exterior architectural details, and interior Moresque, Art Deco, and decorative painted elements continue to clearly define the building and its period.

A field survey of downtown Oroville reveals the extent of the building boom of which the State Theatre was a major element, and perusal of historical information helps define its period as 1926 to 1932. By the latter date, the effects of the Great Depression were being felt even in Oroville's reasonably healthy economy. While the building of the Feather River Highway never provided the number of jobs anticipated (the State used convict labor and relief forces from the Bay Area and Sacramento), it did nonetheless provide the impetus for the building boom. If the State Theatre defines the beginnings of the boom, then the U.S. Post Office, designed by San Francisco architect, Frederick H. Meyer, and built in 1932 defines the end. In between, the city gained a number of important buildings: the Veterans Memorial Building, a 1926 Mediterranean Revival style building executed in Roman brick;

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the Monday Club, a domestic version of Spanish Colonial Revival in brick, from ca. 1929; Saint Thomas Catholic Church, a 1929 version of restrained Italian Romanesque Revival in tapestry brick; the Oroville Inn, a Spanish Colonial Revival hotel of reinforced concrete in 1930; and the Montgomery Ward store, adjacent to the Inn, in the same style (this latter building today has experienced a complete loss of integrity, and is not recognizable for what it was). In addition, numerous small commercial buildings within Oroville's downtown were built new or remodeled in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Clearly, the main stylistic theme of the building boom, as reflected in numerous buildings drawing on Spanish and Mediterranean prototypes, was set by Pflueger's design for the State Theatre, marking it as a key element of that boom.

The State Theatre was Oroville's first building in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and it obviously influenced the design of the Oroville Inn which followed it. Its construction in reinforced concrete reflected the concern for fire safety, again echoed later by the Inn. Finally, it was Oroville's first theater specifically designed for motion pictures. None of its contemporary theaters remain, and the State has served as the hub of Oroville's entertainment for more than six decades. It remains Oroville's premier community theater space. In terms of high-style architectural design, the State Theatre and the Oroville Inn form the architectural focus of downtown Oroville of the late 1920s-early 1930s.

Finally, for the future researcher, Pflueger's choice of the Spanish Colonial Revival style for this commission, which clearly set the stylistic tone for commercial and civic buildings in Oroville during its period of significance, and his choice of building material, may prove significant. Illustrations of Pflueger's other T&D theaters, published in the State Theatre's opening program, clearly show the design of the State reflects the phase (1921-1930) of Pflueger's career during which he designed small theaters. In terms of the method of construction, Pflueger's choice of reinforced concrete for the State Theatre appears to have been a first in the local context, paving the way for the later use of the material by the designers of the Oroville Inn. It and the Inn still stand as the premier examples of the use of this material from this period in Oroville. It is possible that future surveys beyond the scope of this study--of Pflueger's small theaters, and of reinforced concrete buildings in Oroville--may develop sufficient information to support a finding that the State represents the work of a master.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government: City of Oroville Community Development Department
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: Less than one (1) acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 10 624330 4374410 B _____
C _____ D _____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ____ See continuation sheet.

The boundary of the State Theatre is shown as the perimeter of the building on the accompanying sketch map traced from the "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Oroville, California," dated April 1926, updated to December 1949.

Boundary Justification: ____ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Bonnie W. Parks, Principal; John W. Snyder, Principal _____
Organization: P.S. Preservation Services _____ Date: July 7, 1991
Street & Number: P.O. Box 191275 _____ Telephone: (916) 736-1918
City or Town: Sacramento _____ State: CA ZIP: 95819-1275 _____

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"Theatre Contract Let," *Mercury*, August 1, 1927, p.1.

"Ground Broken Today for \$250,000 Theater; Building To Be Reenforced
[sic] Concrete," *Mercury*, August 2, 1927, p.1.

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- "Explosion Rocks Sacramento; State Theater Shattered," *Mercury*, August 11, 1927, p.1.
- "New State Theater Will Be Erected," *Mercury*, August 12, 1927, p.1.
- "Pour First Concrete For Foundation of New Theater," *Mercury*, August 18, 1927, p.1.
- "20 Ton Steel Shipment Here," *Oroville Mercury-Register* (hereinafter *Register*), November 4, 1927, p.1.
- "New Theater Will Be Completed by March Is Prediction of Foreman," *Register*, November 15, 1927, p.1.
- "New Theater Here To Be Ready Soon For Its Opening," *Register*, February 14, 1928, p.1.
- "State Theatre To Be Structure of Beauty, to Open," *Register*, March 14, 1928, p.8.
- "State Theater To Open April 7 With Stars," *Register*, March 30, 1928, p.1.
- "Preparations All Made For State Opening," *Register*, April 6, 1928, p.1.
- "2 Capacity Crowds Open State Theater," *Register*, April 9, 1928, p.2.
- "State Theatre Filled With Big And Little Kids Out To Have Good Time At M-R Fete," *Register*, December 24, 1928, p.1.
- "Yuletide Party Planned For Infirmary Inmates: Many To See 1st Talkie," *Register*, December 20, 1929, p.1.
- "Christmas Party, Bag Candy, For All Kiddies In South Butte At State On Monday," *Register*, December 21, 1929, p.1.
- "Hearts of Inmates of Infirmary Gladdened By Yule Program At State," *Register*, December 26, 1929, p.1.
- "Over Thousand Kiddies Fete At State, M-R Party," *Register*, December 24, 1930, p.1.

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Miscellaneous:

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Property Name: State Theatre
Location: Oroville, California
Photographer: John W. Snyder
Date: March 30, 1990
Location of Negatives: P.S. Preservation Services
P.O. Box 191275
Sacramento, CA 95819-1275

The above information is constant for all photos; description of view will follow each photo number below.

1. Myers Street (left) and Robinson Street (right) façades, view north.
2. Oblique view of Myers Street façade, view southeast.
3. Wall sign, northwest façade, view south.
4. Myers Street façade, view northwest.
5. Detail, second story central arcade office window and surrounding elements, Myers Street façade, view east-northeast.
6. Detail, second story end pavilion office window and surrounding elements, Myers Street façade, view east-northeast.
7. Detail, second story pilaster, Myers Street façade, view east-northeast.
8. Detail, main entrance, view northeast.
9. Detail, tile at main entrance, view north.
10. Main lobby, now also used for art display, view east-northeast.
11. Detail, main staircase, view southeast.
12. Detail, lobby chandelier, view southwest.
13. Auditorium from balcony, view north-northwest to stage.
14. Auditorium, oblique view of stage from main floor, view east.
15. Detail, original decorative paint on balcony face, view east.
16. Detail, edge-lit sign, second floor lobby, view northeast.
17. Former second floor office space, shear wall at right, view north-northwest.
18. Original lights stored in former second floor office space, view northwest.
19. Original projector stored in former second floor office space, view east.
20. Original carbon-arc spotlight stored in former second floor office space, view east.
21. Copy photo, cover of 1928 Souvenir Programme.
22. Copy photo, T&D President Michael Naify, from 1928 Souvenir Programme.
23. Copy photo, architect Timothy Pflueger, from 1928 Souvenir Programme.
24. Copy photo, blueprint of Myers Street façade.

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25. Copy photo, blueprint of Robinson Street façade.
26. Copy photo, blueprint of "Longitudinal Section of Center Line."
27. Copy photo, blueprint of "Proscenium and Cross Section of Auditorium."
28. Copy photo from front page of *Oroville Mercury-Register*, April 6, 1928.

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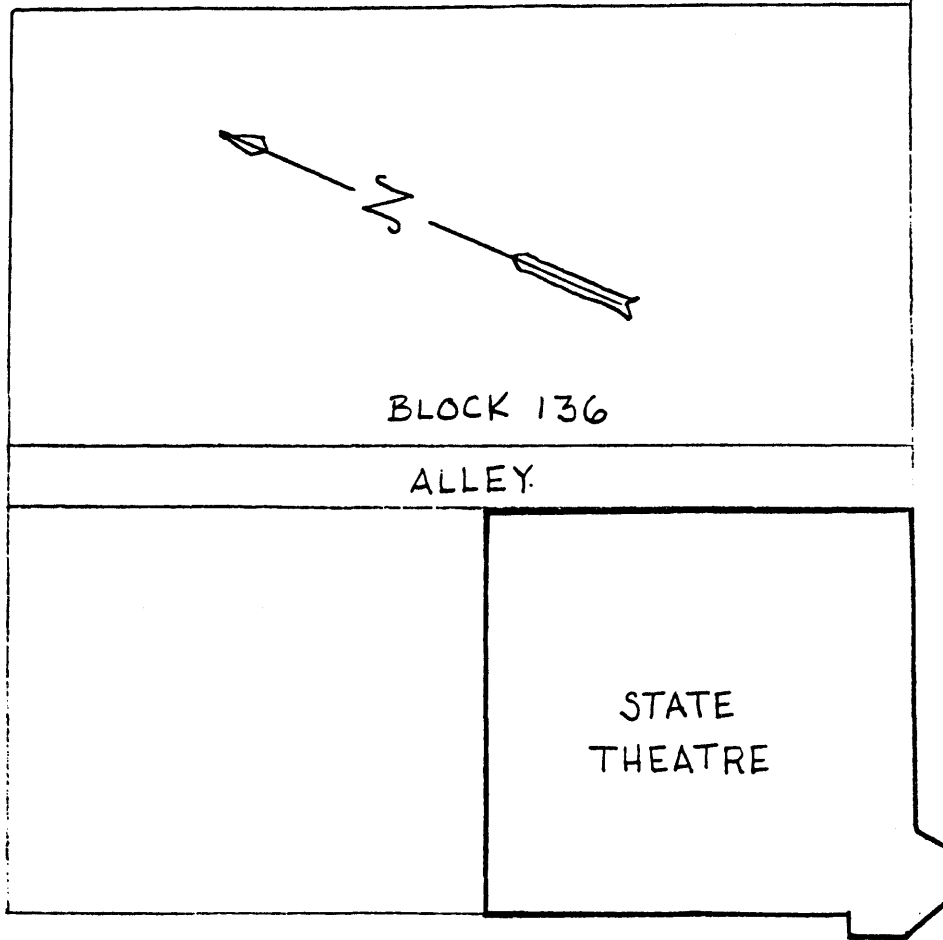
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Section number Map Page 1

1489 Myers Street

Oroville, CA (Butte County)



MEYERS

