

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED **OCT 16 1980**  
DATE ENTERED **NOV 21 1980**

**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  
Paramount Theater

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION** (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

STREET & NUMBER  
519 16th Street -- Main Entrance to Theater

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Denver

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Colorado

CODE

08

COUNTY

Denver

CODE

031

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

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Joseph B. Gould - Building

STREET & NUMBER  
511 16th Street, Suite 625

CITY, TOWN  
Denver

VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado 80202

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. City and County Building, Annex #1

STREET & NUMBER  
1445 Cleveland Place

CITY, TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado 80202

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE  
Ongoing  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Colorado Historical Society; 1300 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado 80203

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Paramount Theater Building, located at 1621 Glenarm Place, is an elegant example of Art Deco, an architectural as well as artistic style traceable to the Paris Exhibition of 1925. Sharing a 16th Street entryway and party wall with the earlier Kittredge Building, it is considered a double, semi-detached, unrelated structure. The Glenarm facade, once designed as an exit for the auditorium and as an entrance to the stage area, emphasizes the rectangularity of the building. Pre-cast concrete blocks enhanced by glistening white glazed terra cotta contrast with the rusticated stone of the adjacent Kittredge. Vertical, staggered, narrow rows of concrete blocks create an arrowhead pattern which crowns the ends of the building. The building consists of three main stories with the stage reaching a height of seven stories. Its facade is divided into twelve bays of paired windows with ornate moldings above window frames and on the sills in the recurrent motifs of rosettes, leaves, feathers, and fiddle-head ferns. The verticality of the glass and division of bays is offset by the horizontal lines created by the window moldings and concrete blocks. Black marble tinged with green makes up the base of store fronts and entryways on the street level and is inset above each window.

Entering the theater from 16th Street, the lobby area is articulated by plaster cast, gilded moldings of silver, gold and copper. A gold leaf barrel vault, now hidden by a false ceiling, is outlined by a double border. The side walls are decorated with shadow boxes and moldings which carry on the theme of leaves, rosettes, fiddle-head ferns and feathers. Light fixtures adorning the walls also use these motifs. The terrazzo floor with its geometric design channels theatergoers toward the mezzanine of the auditorium, while a cascading stairway lures others to the balcony. The grand double staircase has an ironwork railing in an ornate floral design. Its second landing is flanked by two massive picture frames of gilded plastercast, their contents lost over the years. Dividing into two paths, the stairs continue upward to the balcony lobby. A fountain, complete with flowers on the console table at its base, once greeted moviegoers at the top of their ascent.

The balcony and mezzanine lobbies, as well as the lower lounge areas, underwent extensive remodeling in 1953. Artificial walnut paneling from that era may hide gilded moldings around entryways. A fire in 1978 damaged the stage area of the theater, but Friends of the Paramount, a group dedicated to its restoration, have preserved the auditorium's 1930's splendor and are attempting to restore remodeled areas to their original appearance.

In the auditorium, five arrow-shaped bays, outlined with two recessed borders with the rosettes, leaf and fern motif hold Commedia del arte tapestries by Vincent Mondo. Columns, originally painted by the use of a stippling technique, are crowned with three-tiered lights which echo the feather pattern. Silver Indian figures dance above the bulbs, shimmering in their glow. Replacing the use of plaster moldings in the lobby and entry areas is the use of complex stenciling in fan shapes above light fixtures and floral motifs on the borders around the ceiling and proscenium. The auditorium ceiling is dominated by a sunburst design outfitted with miniature twinkling light bulbs that once created a starry sky above the theater audience. A chandelier, again using the familiar organza motif, hangs from the center. An overall aztec theme becomes apparent in the auditorium mixed with the Art Deco motifs. Art Deco's

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



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fondness for the octagon shape is apparent in the indirect lighting fixtures at the back of the auditorium and the platform of the large chandelier.

The theater houses a print shop above the balcony where playbills were created. There are also projectionist and spotlight rooms. A parcel room beneath the stairwell on 16th Street is intact. The basement contains the original ammonia air conditioning system outlawed soon after the theater opened. Call boxes were used by ushers to communicate the number of seats available to the box office, and its original switches are still in existence. A nurse's room, used by the head usherette, is located downstairs. The two mighty Wurlitzer organs, used as accompaniment to silent movies, rest in the basement awaiting restoration and anticipating the day when the lift will raise them again to the stage of the auditorium.

# 8 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 checked="" 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 1930 - Present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Temple H. Buell

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by Temple H. Buell, A well-known Denver architect, the Paramount Theater is significant in many ways. As a representation of the Art Deco style, the building stands as the last remaining "movie palace" in the metropolitan area. Planned during the period of silent films, and opened when sound motion pictures were becoming the rage, the theater bridges the gap between two eras in movie history. The Paramount houses the only Public One Wurlitzer organ to be equipped with twin consoles. Vincent Mondo's tapestries are of artistic merit and are representative of theater design of its era. Last, the use of terra cotta decoration manufactured in Denver gives the building added significance.

A victim of tuberculosis caused by inhaling poisonous gas during World War I, Temple Buell came to Denver in the early 1920's to regain his health. Now in his eighties, Mr. Buell's extensive works include the Nurses' Home for St. Joseph's Hospital, the annex to the New Custom's House, Horace Mann Junior High School, the Post Office Annex, modernization of the Denver Post plant, and buildings on the Colorado School of Mines, University of Colorado and Western State campuses. He also designed the first shopping center in Denver, one of the first in the country. Mr. Buell has worked in many styles over the years. The Art Deco movement, begun at the Paris Exhibition of 1925, was at a high point when work began on the Paramount in 1929. Estimated cost for the construction was \$450,000, not including the interior design work.

Buell's chose terra cotta for much of the building's decoration. The material was a popular one during the twenties and thirties, and Denver was one of the few places in the west where it was manufactured. The Denver Terra Cotta Company executed the designs of architects from all the western states. The Paramount's terra cotta work was done by Julius Peter Ambrusch of that company. Ambrusch, an Austrian born painter and sculptor, later created the Indian figures for the Colorado State Historical Society dioramas.

The design for the theater was altered to make way for the sound motion pictures. The stage area was reduced in size, and its entrance on Glenarm and plans for second-floor dressing rooms were abandoned. The magnificent splendor of 1920's movie houses, however, was not lost. Technical innovations, such as indirect lighting, a neon marquee, centralized vacuum system, heating and ammonia air conditioning were installed, adding to the wonder of the movie palace. Two original Brenographs, used to create atmospheric effects, are still in existence at the theater.

As the American public enthusiastically received sound motion pictures, the need for theater organs to create sound effects diminished. The Paramount, unable to back out of

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Englewood

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,3 5,0,1 0,0,0 4,3,9,9 2,9,0

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

L 21 & 22 EXC SWLY 1,112 FT OF L 21 BLK 174 E DENVER

L 23 to 27 INC BLK 174 E DENVER

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Colorado	08	Denver	031
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Tamra S. Ohan, Intern

ORGANIZATION

Historic Denver, Inc.

DATE

June 18, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

770 Pennsylvania

TELEPHONE

(303) 837-1858

CITY OR TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado 80203

## 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

*William C. Townsend*

Aug. 22, 80

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Barbara Lee Berger*

DATE

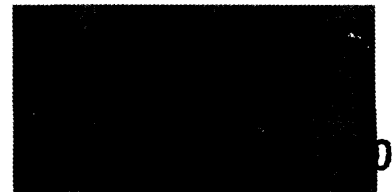
11/21/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service****National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet    Significance

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the contract, received one of a series of seventeen organs built for Publix Theaters. Famed organist, Jesse Crawford, developed its special blend of voices. More than 1,600 pipes create sounds of orchestral and percussion instruments, as well as special effects like a train whistle, horses hooves, and a doorbell. The twin consoles rise dramatically on a lift to stage level. Originally flanking an orchestra of twelve members, the organ remains as one of the largest of its kind to be installed in the Rocky Mountain area.

The tapestries by Vincent Mondo were heralded by the Rocky Mountain News of 1930 as the first silk murals in the Denver area. The Commedia del arte figures of Harlequin, Pierrot, Columbine, Pierrette, and other female characters adorn the auditorium walls. Vincent Mondo opened every Publix Theater from coast to coast, giving each new ideas and an individual design. He planned the art work of the entire theater while Mrs. Eve Fox, wife of William Fox of Twentieth Century Fox, chose the interior decorations.

The Paramount opened August 29, 1930, to a crowd of thousands. "Let's Go Native" was the feature film. The star, Jeannette MacDonald, sent fresh flowers picked that morning in Los Angeles and flown in air express. Cameramen filmed theater goers and rushed to develop the reel so first-nighters could see themselves in a motion picture. A reprint from a 1930's newspaper describes the addition of the Paramount to the metropolitan area. "All in all, the opening of the Paramount wrote a new page in Denver's theatrical history." As Denver's last remaining "movie palace," home of the twin console Wurlitzer and Vincent Mondo's tapestries, the Paramount represents an era when viewing a film was an experience second to enjoying the fantasy world created by the theater designer. The excitement of yesteryear can be captured once again with the preservation of the Paramount.







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Continuation sheet      Major Bibliographical  
References      Item number      9      Page 1

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