

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Historic Resources of Downtown Gallup  
McKinley County, New Mexico

1. Name: Chief Theater (City Electric Shoe Shop)
2. Location: 228 West Coal Avenue  
Gallup, New Mexico
3. Classification:  
Category building  
Ownership private  
Status occupied  
Accessible yes: unrestricted  
Present Use commercial
4. Owner of Property:  
Louie Bonaguidi and Lorraine Menapace  
228 West Coal Avenue  
Gallup, NM 87301
5. Location of Legal Description:  
McKinley County Courthouse  
205-209 West Hill Street  
Gallup, New Mexico
6. Representation in Existing Surveys:  
New Mexico Historic Building Inventory  
August 1985  
New Mexico Historic Preservation Division  
228 E. Palace Avenue, Rm 101  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503
7. Description:  
Condition excellent  
altered  
original site

The present physical appearance of the City Electric Shoe Shop (formerly the Chief Theater) retains a Southwest regional Art Deco facade (regionally referred to as Pueblo Deco). The facade is characterized by a linear composition with a vertical emphasis and highlighted with stylized decoration. The facade, particularly the upper part, contains a series of

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set backs which emphasize geometric form. Hardedged zig-zag relief ornamentation is found along the string courses. This decoration, taken from Indian pottery, basket work, textiles, etc., is angular and repetitive. This string course ornament is executed in stucco, the same material as the building, and painted with coral and blue colors.

Four bays of vertical, painted metal decorative strips add emphasis to the verticality of the facade. Four flush mounted steel channel frames, painted to match the building, provide additional vertical emphasis. They were installed in 1987 in order to stabilize and save the facade which was at the point of collapsing.

A large marquee sign, enframed with a neon stripe, extends across this and the adjoining building. At street level, a double door and sidelight show windows are recessed in a series of setbacks from the street.

The original Art Deco facade, constructed in 1936 for the Chief Theater, contained a different marquee as well as a vertical neon sign located in the center of the upper facade. The old streamlined marquee extended over the sidewalk the length of the building culminating in a triangular appurtenance over a deeply recessed theater entrance. Preview windows were located on the facade at street level. Otherwise, the facade was the same as it is today: a series of setbacks emphasizing the building's verticality decorated with string course and vertical metal strip ornament. The ornament colors were also as they are today; coral and blue.

The 1936 vertical sign and marquee were lost in the 1970s when lightning struck them. The building was subsequently changed through a slip cover renovation and a reconstruction at the street level.

In 1986-87, the building was renovated restoring what remained of the original facade fabric: the upper facade and its decoration. A new street level facade was constructed emulating the Art Deco set backs, but reflecting the present time. The stabilization also occurred along with the new marquee sign. These newly constructed features reflect the present time since the original features they replaced had been previously destroyed.

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8. Significance:

Area of significance architecture  
entertainment  
Period of significance 1920 date of construction  
1936 date of remodeling  
Areas of significance A and C

This building is significant because it is the only example of the Southwest regional Art Deco style (Pueblo Deco) found in Gallup and because it was the first major motion picture theater in Gallup.

The theater was built in 1920 and was originally called the Strand Theater. The first film, a 10 reel program, was presented Tuesday evening, March 2, 1920. Until 1928 with the opening of the El Morro Theater, the Strand was one of the major sources of entertainment in the community.

Prior to the Strand, small theaters were found in Gallup. They were mostly of the nickelodeon variety. The Strand was the first major motion picture theater in the community with a banked floor, a balcony and seating capacity for hundreds of persons. It was reported in the local press that 1,000 patrons came out for its grand opening. It was here that the major films of the silent era (and later, talkies) were shown.

It was in 1936, under the ownership of R.E. Griffith (Griffith Theaters, Dallas, TX) that the building was completely rebuilt both on the interior and the exterior in the Pueblo Deco style. At that time, it became known as the Chief Theater.

Pueblo Deco style was a process of regionalization that Art Deco underwent in the Southwest. It was unique to Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Indian motifs were used in the ornament that decorated string courses, parapets, door and window openings. The City Electric Shoe Shop is the only example of this style in Gallup.

The upper facade of the building, which remains intact from its 1936 remodeling, contains a series of setbacks which emphasize geometric form found in Art Deco style. The vertical painted metal decorative strips which add emphasis to the facade also are in this style. The hardedged zig-zag relief ornamentation along the string courses is derived from Indian

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designs which emphasize angularity and repetitiveness. The repetition of the coral and blue colors in the ornamentation are historic and reflect the strong Indian design influence.

The 1986-87 remodeling which replaced those street level pieces of the facade earlier destroyed, maintain Art Deco features (setbacks, color, accent) while they are clearly part of the present time.

This building is architecturally and historically significant to the community because it represents a period in time architecturally and entertainment wise.

9. Major Bibliographical References:

"Bogie Stayed Here...", The Gallup Independent, June 19, 1982, p. 18.

"Indian Idea Used in New Playhouse", The Gallup Independent, August 21, 1936, p.1.

Whiffen, Marcus and Carla Breeze, Pueblo Deco: The Art Deco Architecture of the Southwest, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1984.

10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of the east 19.75' of Lot 20 and the west 18.35' of Lot 21, Block 30, Original Townsite.

Quadrangle Name: Gallup East

Quadrangle Scale: 7.5 minute

Acreage: less than one acre

UTM References: zone 12 Easting 704600 Northing 3933620