

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received APR 11 1985  
date entered MAY 9 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Fox Theatre (LN06-44)

and/or common Neville Center For The Performing Arts

2. Location

street & number 301 E. 5th

NA not for publication

city, town North Platte

NA vicinity of

state Nebraska

code 031

county Lincoln

code 111

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name North Platte Community Playhouse

street & number 705 N. Jeffers

city, town North Platte

NA vicinity of

state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Lincoln County Courthouse

street & number NE Corner 3rd and Jeffers Street

city, town North Platte

state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln

state Nebraska

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

### Check one

unaltered

altered

### Check one

original site

moved

date NA

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fox Theater is located in North Platte (1983 pop. 24,509), Nebraska, situated approximately 224 miles west of Lincoln, the State Capital. The building was constructed in 1929 and demonstrates an excellent example of Eclecticism found in theater design. Presently known as the Neville Center for the Performing Arts, the theater is owned by the North Platte Community Playhouse. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved except for minor exterior alterations and interior remodellings performed over the past years.

The Fox Theater is located near the central business district in North Platte, Nebraska, the county seat of Lincoln County. The rectangular-shaped building is constructed of brick and is three stories in height on the south, with a full fly loft on the north. The two primary facades on the south and west are clad with glazed brick and are rich in plaster and terra cotta ornamentation. The south facade is divided into seven bays, each displaying recessed decorative panels of brick, laid out in a diagonal basket weave design, with Grotesques above. Fenestration consists of recessed casement windows directly below each panel. Belt-courses, joining the panels and at the first story level, further articulate the facade. The west facade is somewhat limited in its ornamentation, showing panels and belt-courses of contrasting brick as the major decorative elements. The fire escape is still extant. The ticket booth and main entries are found at the southwest corner of the theater. This "corner" serves as the focal point of the theater, showing an abundant use of detailing, including oval medallions adorned with geometric motifs surrounded by scrollwork, curvaceous plant forms (i.e. lotus, four-leaved flowers), leaf garlands, lion heads, urns, pineapple motifs, brackets and pedestals. All rooflines are capped with an elaborate terra-cotta coping. The original marquee and "Fox" are still intact (see photo # ). The truncated triangular-arched entries are surrounded by fanciful terra cotta moldings.

The theater, designed by F. A. Henninger of Omaha, was built in 1929 by Keith Neville and Alex Beck of Omaha, representing the North Platte Realty Company of North Platte, Nebraska. Headlines in the Friday, November 22, 1929 North Platte paper welcomed the new Fox Theater with the grand opening being celebrated the following Sunday.

The building, which is owned by the North Platte Community Playhouse is presently known as the Neville Center for the Performing Arts and is utilized for opera, concerts, films, lecture programs, children's theater productions, plays, touring performances, and other special events.

The four daughters of Keith Neville donated the Fox Theater to the North Platte Community Playhouse in December, 1980. Renovation and restoration work was performed in 1981 and 1982.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1929 **Builder/Architect** Alex Beck/F. A. Henninger

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Architecturally significant, the Fox Theater represents a fine example of the "Picture Palace," a building type which was popular in America in the 1920's. A product of Eclecticism, the theater incorporates design elements from various architectural styles. Keith Neville and Alex Beck of the North Platte Realty Company financed and erected the theater. Neville was a prominent businessman and civic leader in the community, serving as Governor during the years 1917-19. Historically, the building has played an important role in the social and cultural history of North Platte, providing entertainment for the surrounding communities for over 50 years. As the only Fox Theater constructed as such in Nebraska, the building stands as an important reminder to the legacy of William Fox, a pioneer figure in the movie industry of America.

The Fox Theater is architecturally significant as a fine example of the "Picture Palace," a distinctly 20th century building type (Sharp, 1969, p. 8). A product of Eclecticism, the building incorporates decorative features from various architectural styles, including Egyptian, Georgian, Moorish, and Roman. As with most theaters, the Fox has a simple exterior appearance, except for the show facade, with back and side facades devoid of ornamentation.

In the mid 1920's, two major contending styles of theater design evolved; the hard top (or standard) and the atmospheric. The chief promoter of the standard school movement was architect Thomas W. Lamb, and was characterized by luxury and elegance in movie palace design (Sharp, 1969, p. 73), (Naylor, 1979, p. 34). Exteriors were invariably treated in the Classical manner, simulating the work of Renaissance masters with interior spaces displaying art work initially with Adamesque and later the Italian Baroque and Louis XVI styling. Architect John Ebersson, trained in Vienna and Dresden, was the originator of the atmospheric style. This "Stars and Clouds" interior relied on special lighting effects and stage props to "manufacture weather," simulating distant and exotic outdoor scenes, (Sharp, 1969, p. 74) providing for total fantasy and romanticism. Ebersson wrote: "We visualize and dream a magnificent amphitheatre, under a glorious moonlit sky in an Italian garden, in a Persian court, in a Spanish patio, or in a mystic Egyptian temple-yard, all canopied by a soft moonlit sky." (Sharp, 1969, p. 74).

The Fox Theater derives its name from William Fox, a pioneer figure in the movie industry of America. Born in Tulchva, Hungary on January 1, 1879, Fox came to the U.S. with his parents and began earning his livelihood in textiles. At the turn of the century he engaged in the arcade and nickelodeon business and became a member of Fox, Moss & Brill, an exhibition firm. Mr. Fox also established a film exchange, The Greater New York Film Rental Company, and in 1913 organized the Box Office Attractions Company, a firm which rented films to movie theaters. Fox then turned to producing, creating the Fox Film Corporation in 1915, and establishing studios in New York and Hollywood. In the following years, Fox films were involved in various financial deals and reorganizations, until in 1935 the Fox Film Corporation was merged with Twentieth

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre  
Quadrangle name North Platte West, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	4	3	5	2	2	8	5	4	5	5	5	2	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Lot 5, Block 113, original town, North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska, including all historically associated real estate.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joni Gilkerson, Preservation Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date

street & number 1500 "R" St., P.O. Box 82554 telephone (402) 471-4767

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

# 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 Moran E. Knott 3/28/85

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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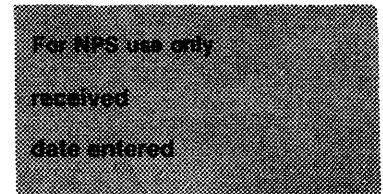
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Allure Byers Entered in the National Register date 5-9-85  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page 2

Pictures, assuming the well-known name of Twentieth Century-Fox.

The Fox West Coast Theater Corporation controlled thousands of theaters across the United States. In 1929, the corporation acquired numerous theaters in Nebraska, including those in Beatrice, Sidney, McCook, and Alliance. In towns such as these, the firm would acquire existing theater buildings and perform remodelling work, including the installation of new sound equipment marking the advent of talking pictures. Local newspapers carried advertisements of "talkies," "sound-on-film" or "all talking movie-tone."

In the November 10, 1929 issue of the Beatrice Daily Sun it states: "What is believed to herald an invasion of Nebraska by a great motion picture corporation was announced here yesterday by a statement that Fox West Coast Theaters had taken over the Ritz," and "...the theater would be closed Wednesday to permit the installation of the latest western electric sound equipment." Unlike other towns in Nebraska, the Fox Theater in North Platte was the first theater building to be constructed as a "Fox Theater."

The new show house was financed and erected by the North Platte Realty Company, headed out by Keith Neville and Alex Beck. F. A. Henninger, architect, of Omaha designed the new theater with the Alex Beck Company, also of Omaha, serving as the main contractors. Construction began when a contract to lease the building was entered into by the North Platte Realty Company and Chitwood & Glass, a theatrical company in McCook. The latter company then sold their lease to the Fox Company, who made new plans to incorporate more elaborate equipment into the movie house.

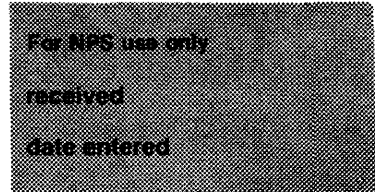
Frederick A. Henninger, born in 1865 in Albia, Iowa, received his formal training at the Chicago Art Institute. Moving to Lincoln, Nebraska, he worked for a local architect until relocating to Omaha in the early 1890's. By 1895, Henninger had established himself as an architect with the F. C. Lederbrink office and in 1896 purchased the business from Lederbrink. Henninger served as an active architect in Omaha until his retirement in 1937, at which time the firm was taken over by his son, F. A. Henninger, Jr. Henninger designed major Omaha structures, including the Securities Building, the U.S. National Bank Building, the Farm Credit Building, the West Farnam Apartments, and numerous residences.

Other companies involved in the construction of the theater include the Crawford Electric Company of North Platte, the North Platte Plumbing and Heating Company, the Simon Brothers tanners, and the Arctic, New Air System of Minneapolis.

Keith Neville was born in North Platte, Nebraska February 25, 1884. He received his education at St. John's Academy and St. John's College at Annapolis, Massachusetts, returning home after graduation to manage the family farm and ranch interests. On October 21, 1908 he was married to Mary Virginia Neill in Charlestown, West Virginia. Mr. Neville became a prominent businessman and civic leader in the North Platte community. Known as the "boy governor," Neville was only 33 years of age when he

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

SIGNIFICANCE

Item number

8

Page

3

took the Governor's office in 1917 (North Platte Telegraph, 1959, p. 1). He became president of the First National Bank in 1931, and later served as the chairman, having been a member of the Board of Directors since 1910. During his career he also served as Nebraska's NRA Director during World War II, the Director of the Platte Valley Public Power and Irrigation District, Chairman of the Nebraska Advertising Commission, president of the Nebraska Sportsmen's Association, and a long-time member of the Lincoln County Wildlife Club. Mr. Neville was also affiliated with fraternal organizations, including Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite, BPOE, Tangier Shrine, and AF &AM. Actively involved in sports, he served as the head coach of the North Platte High School Football team for many years. Having wide holdings in city and county real estate, Mr. Neville was responsible for the construction of several substantial buildings in North Platte. Along with the construction of the new theater in 1929, Neville financed the erection of the Hotel Yancey, an eight-story brick building (being nominated simultaneously to the National Register of Historic Places with Fox Theater), located across the street from the Fox. These two buildings became major landmarks in the downtown vicinity, representing the growth and prosperity of the town. The grand opening of the Yancey occurred on October 16, 1929, only weeks prior to the Fox Theater opening.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Major Bibliographical

Continuation sheet

References

Item number 9

Page 1

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