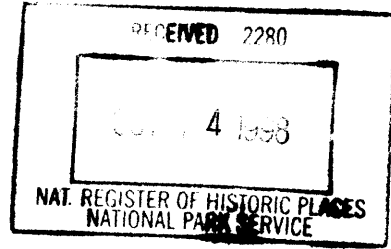


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Strand Theatre
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 432 North Main Street NA not for publication
city or town Jennings NA vicinity
state Louisiana code LA county Jefferson Davis code 053 zip code 70546

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerrit Hobdy October 9, 1998
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerrit Hobdy, Date
State Historic Preservation Officer
Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
___ 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):

Edson K. Beall Signature of Keeper Date of Action 11.12.98

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Choose as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Choose only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 1, 0.

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Recreation and Culture

Sub. Theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Recreation and Culture

Sub. Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Stucco, Brick
roof Other: Tar & Gravel
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Constructed in 1939, the Strand Theatre is a three-story brick building with a stucco-covered facade. A hesitant example of the Moderne style, the building stands within the central business district of the Jefferson Davis Parish seat of Jennings. Although it has received alterations since its construction, the theater retains its National Register eligibility.

The Strand's restrained Moderne styling is found primarily in the geometry expressed on its facade. It consists of three masses, those on each end superimposed over the edges of the third (central) block. As a result of this composition, the facade lacks an overall flat surface. Each of the two end masses features a pair of slightly recessed, vertical panels emphasized by a two-color paint treatment. Large rectangles are located below these panels. One contains a large display case for playbills; the other a double door providing access to the balcony. The central mass features two rows of windows containing three windows each. These are flanked and separated by reeded and painted pilaster-like elements which, once again, provide a vertical emphasis. The brick of the Strand's rear and side walls is laid in a manner to form horizontal bands. This effect is achieved through the use of a slightly darker and contrasting color for every sixth brick course. On one side the theater connects to a party wall block of commercial spaces, but the bands of brick are visible above the building's one-story neighbor. On the opposite side the theater is free-standing. The space between this wall and the building next door contains a fire escape.

Other features of interest on the facade include a sign (located above the central block's windows) spelling out the theater's name, a replacement marquee (located below these windows), and a recessed entrance. The latter contains a polygonal ticket booth, a playbill display case flanked by glass double doors, and a floor of terrazzo tile.

The floorplan of the theater remains very much intact. The above mentioned recessed entrance connects to a lobby containing a large concession stand at its rear. Restrooms are found on one side of this lobby; doors to the ticket booth and a narrow staircase are located on the other side. The staircase rises to the building's second floor office (located above the lobby) before continuing to the projection room on the third level. Openings on each side of the concession stand lead to a large auditorium with a stage at the opposite end of the space.

Like all theaters built during this era, the Strand provided segregated facilities for African-Americans. These patrons were expected to use the balcony, where original

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carpeting and seats survive. The balcony is reached via a stairway connecting to a small vestibule located just inside the previously mentioned double door. A second window in the ticket booth opens to this vestibule. Although the balcony has no facility for concessions, restrooms are available.

In addition to a general cleaning and cosmetic work, the following alterations were made to the Strand to facilitate its rehabilitation as the home of a community theater group:

- 1) the repair of the theater's roof and the construction of a small two-story, concrete block addition behind the stage. This space contains dressing rooms on the first floor and an area for costume storage on the second.
- 2) a major enlargement of the stage which resulted in the loss of approximately one hundred seats. A new movie screen, theatrical lighting and better sound equipment were also installed.
- 3) the remodeling of the concession booth, the remodeling and enlargement of the original first floor ladies room, and the construction of a small closet behind this restroom.
- 4) the replacement of the damaged original marquee and the installation of a new sidewalk composed of bricks inscribed with persons' names. The latter apparently served as a fund-raising endeavor.

Despite the passage of almost sixty years, the Strand's facade still strongly reflects its 1939 appearance. And the changes which have occurred on the interior have not eradicated the theater's historic character. As a result, former patrons have no difficulty in recognizing the building when they visit or drive by the site today. Thus, the theater is a strong candidate for National Register listing because of its role as an entertainment focal point for Jennings and Jefferson Davis Parish.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" next to the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations NA

(Mark "X" next to all that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1939-1948

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Favrot, Reed, and Fred Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

NA

- 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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

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The Strand Theatre is locally significant in the area of entertainment/recreation because of its importance as an entertainment focal point for Jennings and Jefferson Davis Parish. The period of significance spans from 1939, the date of construction, to 1948, the Register's fifty year cutoff. The Strand continued in its role as an entertainment focal point past the fifty year cutoff.

Although the candidate was not Jennings' first movie theater, its opening was a landmark improvement in the quality of entertainment in Jefferson Davis Parish. In fact, excitement over its July 12, 1939 debut was so great that the local newspaper gave the story its front page headline for July 11, printed an architect's rendering of the building, and provided a long description of the theater's amenities. Because the new theater quickly bested its competition, it soon became an important community entertainment focal point and the town's only theater. An older Strand (owned by the same company) closed the day before its successor opened. A second theater known as the Bruce (a small operation housed in a former store) could not compete with the new facility's air-conditioned interior.

Interviews with Jennings' residents who were teenagers or young adults when the theater opened verify the Strand's importance to the town and the surrounding parish. The theater appears to have been popular and well attended. One of its enticements was a plush interior with carpeted floors and cushioned seats. Long-time Jennings resident Joyce Stockwell, for example, remembers the previous Strand as "ratty and old" while its successor was "like a castle." "It was . . . a wonderful thing to have such a good theater, such a pretty place," Stockwell commented. "I think everyone appreciated it." Former patron Edith Seagraves agrees. "We felt like we had an 'uptown' theater when we got this one," she said, "--a city theater." In a community which had few air-conditioned buildings, the theater's cool interior was also an important factor in its success. In fact, Stockwell remembers one woman who attended the theater every afternoon simply to escape the South Louisiana heat.

Although it was open seven days a week, the Strand's most crowded times were probably Saturdays. That day's attractions included westerns with stars like Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix as well as soap opera-like serials whose cliff-hanging endings almost demanded that viewers return the following week for the next installment. Patrons also enjoyed the opportunity to sing along with an accompanist who drove from Lake Charles to play the theater's organ several times a week. Because the Strand was virtually the only place in town to socialize outside the home, church,

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school, or dance hall, dinner and a movie ranked as a "big date" for local girls. Out-of-towners also made use of the theater. Oil men visiting Jennings with their wives and children often quizzed hotel waitresses to learn what film was playing. And, although the era was one of poor roads and little money for entertainment, residents of nearby communities such as Welsh also patronized the Strand. During World War II soldiers stationed nearby used the theater for diversion, and local girls often met them there. Also during those years, the theater's newsreels helped to inform Jefferson Davis Parish residents about significant but faraway world events.

It was the coming of television in the 1950s that began to displace theaters like the Strand. Indeed, it was revealed in studies at the time that theater attendance and public library use declined markedly when television became established in a given community. This development curtailed the Strand's service to Jennings. It appears from available evidence that it operated into the 1960s, but it later closed and re-opened several times. Today the rehabilitated Strand has found a new life as the home of a community theater group, as well as a venue for other live performances.

As can be seen from the above reminiscences, the Strand ranked as the only theater in Jennings for most of the period between 1939 and 1948 and occupied a very important niche in the lives of community residents and visitors alike. Hence, it stands as a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Interview with Edith Seagraves, July 31, 1998, Jennings, Louisiana; copy in National Register file.

Interview with Alice Brady Lackey, July 31, 1998, Jennings, Louisiana; copy in National Register file.

Interview with Joyce Stockwell, July 31, 1998, Jennings, Louisiana; copy in National Register file.

Interview with Marian Patterson, July 31, 1998, Jennings, Louisiana; copy in National Register file.

Jeff Davis Parish News, July 11, 1939.

Jennings Daily News, January 21, 1993.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Boundary Description:

South 36 feet of Lot 1, North 14 feet of Lot 2, Block 4, McFarlain [Subdivision] Original Plat, Jennings, Jefferson Davis Parish, Louisiana

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow current property lines, which coincide with historic property lines.

Strand Theatre

Name of property

Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 533170 3343070

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date August 1998

street & number P.O. Box 44247 telephone (225) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS** map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Jennings Industrial Development Board, Gregory N. Marcantel, President

street & number P. O. Box 1249 telephone (318) 821-5500

city or town Jennings state LA zip code 70546

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.