

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

874

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Westmont Theatre  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 49 Haddon Avenue  not for publication  
city or town Haddon Township  vicinity  
state New Jersey code 034 county Camden code 007 zip code 08108

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 \_\_\_ meets x does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Amy Cradic  
Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

10-14-10

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Theatre-Cinema,  
 Movie Theatre, Playhouse

None, currently vacant.

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick, cast stone

roof Other

other Marquee: Metal panels, chrome/metal trim.

Narrative Description

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history 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**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Community Development

**Period of Significance**

1927 - 1959

**Significant Dates**

1927, 1948

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Wrifford, William, Architect, 1927 Original Construction

Supowitz, David, (1893 - 1964) Architect, 1948 remodeling

Lee, William Howard (1884 - 1971) Architect, 1948 interior decoration

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**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
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Westmont Theatre  
Name of Property

Camden County, NJ  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 0.8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>1 / 8 /</u> Zone	<u>4 / 9 / 5 / 3 / 8 / 5 / 0 /</u> Easting	<u>4 / 4 / 1 / 7 / 8 / 0 / 0 /</u> Northing
2	<u> / /</u> Zone	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Easting	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Northing
3	<u> / /</u> Zone	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Easting	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Northing
4	<u> / /</u> Zone	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Easting	<u> / / / / / / / / / /</u> Northing

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 Neighbors Celebrating the Westmont c/o Margaret Westfield, R. A.  
organization Westfield Architects & Preservation Consultants date March 2009 (Rev. July 2009)  
street & number 425 White Horse Pike telephone 856-547-0465  
city or town Haddon Heights state NJ zip code 08035-1706

**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 Camden County Improvement Authority  
street & number 1909 Route 70E, Suite 300 telephone 856-751-2242  
city or town Cherry Hill state NJ zip code 08003

**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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places

Section number 7 Page 1

---

### Architectural Description

The Westmont Theatre is a two-story, five bay building built in the Classical Revival style in 1927. The front façade features buff brick and cast stone trim, with tile and aluminum-framed glazing at the first floor level. A stepped parapet hides the shallow gable roof beyond. The side and rear elevations are laid in red brick and are mostly unfenestrated except for emergency exit door openings. Structural brick pilasters create a series of vertical bays on both the sides and the rear wall. In 1948, the front entrance and marquee were replaced in the Art Deco style as part of a comprehensive interior remodeling.

The Theatre is situated on the northeast side of Haddon Avenue in the Westmont section of Haddon Township, Camden County, New Jersey. Westmont was historically and is presently the commercial and governmental center of the Township, and the Theatre occupies a prominent place on Haddon Avenue, the primary thoroughfare in Westmont. The theatre is the largest and most architecturally elaborate building of the Westmont commercial district. A partially paved parking area is located both southwest and northwest of the building, while a vacant lot is located to the east of the building. The parcel across Haddon Avenue, once the site of theatre parking, is now the site of a strip shopping center.

The building fronts directly on the sidewalk. The southwest façade of the theatre incorporates a symmetrical Colonial Revival design and features a later Art Deco marquee, ticket office, and first story door openings (Photo 1). These elements were added during a 1948 renovation of the 1927 building. The marquee is angled outward at either side and is anchored at the front of the sidewalls of the theatre. The outer face of the marquee reads "WESTMONT" in neon letters with five flanking neon tubes arranged in the form of two concentric sideways "U"s and a central horizontal segment to emphasize its name (Photo 2). Typical of theatre marquees, the angled outer sections contained signboards visible to pedestrians and motorists, and the metal undersurface is hung with small incandescent lights. The first story contains fixed, aluminum-framed single-light windows at either side of the wall, aluminum-framed glass doors, and a projecting ticket booth with aluminum-panel kneewalls (Photo 3). The kneewall is crowned by a vertically ribbed band, and the outer face of the ticket booth contains two plate glass windows, each with an aluminum framed ticket slot. The ticket booth is crowned with a molded aluminum cornice. The molded frames of the first story openings contribute an Art Deco-inspired element to the façade. An aluminum baseboard extends along the outer bays, and the first story wall is sheathed in large, rectangular beige and maroon tiles. The four pairs of doors have a single glass pane with molded aluminum top and bottom trim. Each has a vertical rod glass handle with metal mounts at either end.

The upper façade wall is divided into five vertical bays by fluted, cast stone, Ionic pilasters. The three central bays contain compass-head tripartite windows set within fluted, cast stone, Roman-arched surrounds with ornamental keystones (Photo 4). Each of these windows is vertically divided into three parts (Photo 5). The lowest part contains a central six-light, wood-framed window, flanked by four-light, wood-framed windows.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places

Section number   7   Page   2  

---

The central part contains a nine-over-nine, double hung, wood sash window, flanked by fixed six-light, wood-framed windows. The head of the window has a central half-circle with three triangular lights, while the outer rings are divided into 12 lights.

Flanking the lower portion of the three central windows, set in the end bays of the facade, are paired, four-over-four, double hung, sash windows, set within cast stone pedimented gable surrounds (Photo 6). Cast stone plaques with raised shields and trailing braided leaves are placed above these windows. The façade is crowned by a painted sheet metal cornice featuring denticulation and modillion blocks. A stepped brick parapet with flanking bracket and marked with a central concrete plaque inscribed "Westmont Theatre" tops the façade (Photo 7).

The southeast and northwest walls illustrate the sequences of internal building heights. The front portion is a full three stories in height as is the rear portion, while the historic auditorium is lower in height. Bays are defined on the sidewalls by plain brick pilasters with angled caps. The front bay of the northwest wall is marked by the marquee anchor at the first floor ceiling level of the wall and by the cornice return high on the wall. Two openings were originally placed in this front bay: a segmental arched second story window, now bricked in, and a six-light window in the third story. The second bay has double, painted steel, two-leaf doors that provided access from the interior to a steel fire escape bolted to the wall that extends to the ground level in two flights (Photo 8). The third bay contains paired, steel doors placed in a segmental arched surround, while the fourth bay contains a bricked over opening. The rear bay of the auditorium wall has a ground floor door opening now covered by a metal plate, while two rusting, metal exhaust hoods are placed high on the wall. The rear portion of the wall, the former fly loft, has two tall first story openings topped with segmental brick arches. Both of these openings have been covered by vertical boards.

The southeast wall has a similar configuration of openings (Photo 9). A six-light, wood-framed window is placed high on the wall of the front bay. The second bay contains paired, steel doors with an adjoining steel fire escape landing. The remainder of the fire escape is missing. The third and fifth bays contain paired steel doors placed in segmental-arched brick surrounds. The seventh bay contains a single ground floor window, while the remainder of the first story wall is obscured by a flat-roofed, single-story, concrete walled extension of the building. A final second story steel door is placed in the eighth bay.

A single-story, flat-roofed concrete addition adjoins the rear of the southeast wall. The front wall of this addition contains a boarded-over window opening and double doors covered with a metal plate. HVAC equipment rises from the roof. This addition, part of the 1948 alterations, was used to store sets and provide additional dressing room space.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places

Section number 7 Page 3

---

The rear wall of the theatre is three stories in height and five bays wide (Photo 10). Bays are delineated with full-height brick pilasters. A former loading door opening in the central bay has been infilled with concrete block. HVAC equipment, added during the later years of the theatre's use in the 1990s, is on a concrete pad adjacent to the central portion of the wall. Paired tie bar ends are mounted to the wall at the approximate second story floor level. All of the side and rear walls of the theatre are crowned with terra cotta coping.

### Building Interior

Although the interior has undergone four periods of renovation, some original and older historic fabric remains. Most of the interior elements and furnishings were constructed as part of the David Supowitz and William Harold Lee remodeling in 1948.

The Outer Lobby (Room 101 – Photos 11-18, and Historic Images 4 and 6) is a carpeted space with a dropped acoustic tile ceiling. The modern ceiling obscures the decoratively painted plaster ceiling as well as the full height of the curving soffits (Historic Image 6). In the northern corner there is a curvilinear planter that echoes the lines of the soffit above. The planter is faced with maroon ceramic tile; the wall beyond is mirrored, with an etched design (Photo 16). A concession stand is placed along the southeast wall of the space (Photo 13). This stand is an enlargement of the 1948 stand, which was located in the eastern corner of the Outer Lobby beneath curving soffits. Four sets of three-panel double doors on the rear wall of the space provide entry to the Inner Lobby (Photos 12 and 18). These doors with their raised square panels with central bullseye circles and stylish vertical pulls date to the 1948 renovations. Carpeted stairs rise from either side of the Outer Lobby to provide access to the balcony (Photo 34). Restrooms (Rooms 102 and 109) are situated on either side of the outer lobby and feature ceramic tiled walls (Photo 33). Anterooms to the restrooms (Rooms 103 and 108) feature curving soffits and mirrored walls.

The Inner Lobby (Room 104) contains fabric from a variety of periods (Photos 19-21 and 32). The curving northeast wall features engaged Doric columns with a faux-marble finish and a curvilinear streamlined soffit (Photo 20). The wall, which encloses the Auditorium, dates to the 1948 renovations, while the single-light wood sash doors to Rooms 105 and 107 probably date to the 1983 twinning of the theater. Both end walls and the southwest wall of the Inner Lobby feature a series of unarticulated vertical wood panels that project forward in a gentle curve (Photo 21). These panels are trimmed with an aluminum string molding that separates the top of the panels from black and white polka-dotted tiles that cover the wall from the top of the door surrounds to the ceiling. At the intersection of each of the curving panels and the stringmold is a decorative floral flourish executed in chromed brass (Photo 21). Each door opening features a mirrored surround framed in aluminum and etched with an abstract curvilinear pattern (Photo 32). Above each opening there is an Art Deco-styled, linear, up-lighting wall sconce sign mount (Photo 32). Above the southwestern doorways to the Outer Lobby, the top

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places

Section number 7 Page 4

---

piece of the surround has been replaced with painted wood, apparently to provide enough vertical space to receive modern EXIT signs with battery back-up packs (Photos 19 and 21). Each of the paired door leaves is flush, with a half-circle push plate. When the doors are in the closed position, a full circle is created by the two push plates.

The Auditorium itself (Historic Image 5) was subdivided in 1983 into two spaces (Rooms 105 and 107) in an unsuccessful attempt to increase movie attendance. The partition wall can be easily removed, consisting only of dry-walled studs. In its last use, the left side of the Auditorium (Room 105) was converted to a cabaret with four tiered platforms for table seating (Photos 22 and 23), while the right side (Room 107) retained auditorium seating with a sound booth to the rear (Photo 28-31). The auditorium walls are finished with pleated fabric above wainscoting, and the aisles are carpeted. The 1948-49 Theatre Catalog (page 319) describes these curving walls as being upholstered in teal fabric. The ceiling was painted in teal and pink bands that curved from the outer walls. Three plaster off-sets created the transition from the auditorium walls and ceiling to the stage, framing the projection screen, which was curtained in gold damask. Artwork over the exit doors concealed HVAC ductwork with a "magnificent flourish of plaster ornamentation" (Historic Image 5). The current theatre seating was installed in the 1990s, having been salvaged from another theatre. [Investigations of the basement have revealed that at least a few of the original 1927 theatre seats are stored there.] The theatre Stage (Room 106) has been divided by the partition that separated the Auditorium and only opens to Room 107 (Photo 25). The flyloft remains intact, with painted brick walls crossed by modern HVAC ductwork (Photo 26). The proscenium was in-filled with drywall (Historic Image 5) in the 1960s during Milgram's ownership when a wider screen was placed further forward (since removed). The original dressing rooms survive to the left side and beneath the stage floor, accessed by stairs at the stage's northern rear corner (Photo 27).

Other relatively intact spaces include the main staircases (Photo 34), and the 1948 projection room (Photo 43). When the theatre was twinned in 1983, two new projection booths were built on the first floor, one for each of the new auditoriums. At the same time, the ceilings were dropped both to reduce heating costs and to hide the balcony from view (Photos 35 and 39). Above the dropped ceiling, portions of the curving plaster ceiling survive above the balcony (Photo 41). The original wood-framed balcony and upper level were removed during the 1948 renovations. The balcony was replaced by one of concrete construction with gently curving tiers for seating and wood wainscoting on the walls and railings (Photos 36-40). New second floor offices and restrooms were introduced in 1948 (Photo 42).

The roof framing is visible in the unfinished attic. A series of steel trusses, assembled on the site during the original 1927 construction, are pocketed into the masonry side walls and run the width of the building (Interior Image 22). The trusses are composed of I beams, plates, and angles. The molded components are marked "EASTERN-U.S.A." (Supplemental Interior Image 23). The top chords are triangulated to carry the roof rafters and the solid board sheathing that supports what appears to be a flat-seam metal roof above. The rafters are



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

***Westmont Theatre  
Camden County, New Jersey***

## **National Register of Historic Places**

Section number   7   Page   5  

---

bolted with angles to the top chords of the steel trusses and date to the 1927 original construction. The ceiling joists are carried by the truss bottom chords and date to the 1948 remodeling (Supplemental Interior Image 24).

United States Department of the Interior

*Westmont Theatre  
Camden County, New Jersey*

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

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### Statement of Significance

The Westmont Theatre is significant under National Register Criterion A and this theatre's full span of history, from live vaudeville stage shows to a modern first-run movie house, makes it a strong candidate. The Westmont Theatre dates to the "golden age" of movie palace construction. The "Golden Age" of movie palace construction began as the motion picture industry moved from one- or two-reel films shown in storefront nickelodeons into multiple-reel major productions with "star" value and important screenplays. In order to justify the higher admission costs needed to defray the cost of these productions, exhibition moved into larger and more majestic buildings constructed by design for entertainment: onstage, and onscreen. This was the era of major talent vaudeville concurrent with the "golden age" of the silent film, which occurred from approximately 1920-1929. The Westmont Theatre opened at the height of this period, on Labor Day, 1927. With the exception of the Broadway Theatre in Pitman, which opened in 1926, all other examples of film/vaudeville theatres in South Jersey are long gone. In fact, the Westmont is the last and final example of this period remaining in all of Camden County. In terms of seating capacity, architecture, and stage facilities, the Westmont was equal to: the Stanley Theatre in Camden (1926); the Walt Whitman Theatre in Pennsauken (1927); and the Clementon Theatre -Clementon (1927). All of these once notable theatres are now gone.

It was a natural evolution for the theatre business to incorporate motion pictures into the daily mix of entertainment, as the motion picture would provide a period of rest for the live performers, thus permitting more performances in a day. Both the vaudeville and the golden silent films were to be doomed by similar technology: the development of the vacuum tube and sound reproduction. As the major talents on the vaudeville circuits became radio stars, local circuits could no longer afford to book them. As sound motion pictures were perfected, no one wanted to see silent films and many of the important acts and names from vaudeville moved into the new "talkies!" This merger of entertainment media produced such Hollywood establishments as RKO Studios, formed from a merger of two major vaudeville circuits: Keith & Orpheum. Thus the need for elaborate stage facilities in the local theatre ended by 1930 and the magnificent theatre pipe organs quickly yielded to replacement by sound systems and sound motion pictures.

The Westmont Theatre is also emblematic of the emphasis placed on Camden County suburban development during the early twentieth century, the rise of the automobile, and the need for local public entertainment venues in the pre-television age. Over the years, this large and beautifully appointed theatre, originally constructed as a hybrid "vaudeville-movie palace," has proven adaptable and durable enough to endure the transition from live shows to movies and to continue serving its patrons with projecting films through the ensuing 60 years, closing only during the Great Depression and remaining dark throughout World War II. Finally, the Westmont is the last remaining hybrid "vaudeville-movie house" extant in Camden County—a county which once played host to numerous entertainment venues.

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

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### The Rise of Modern Theatres and the History of the Westmont Theatre

Modern large-scale theatres, often dubbed “movie palaces,” built during the “golden age” of theatre construction, usually incorporated classically elegant, exotically inspired, ornate and/or grand ornamentation elements, or a restrained but elegant classical revival vocabulary. They sported names, which made them a destination that appealed to the “common man” and his desire for a different environment to escape from his average daily life. Relatively few movie palaces remain.<sup>1</sup> Surviving theatres from this “golden age” serve as iconic reminders of the societal excesses experienced in the United States during the postwar “roaring twenties.”

Most of these grand theatres share the common fate of demolition and those that remain extant today serve a new and radically different function. Constructed in 1927, the Westmont Theatre is unique because it has never served any other purpose than live theatre and films, and it remains configured to do both. Less than a half-dozen of these hybrid “vaudeville-movie palaces,” built for both purposes, exist in southern New Jersey, with the Westmont being perhaps the best example in its integrity and scale, if not condition.

The Westmont would be among the last group of full-blown hybrids constructed on a grand scale. Within a year of its opening, a watershed event in vaudeville history occurred. The main vaudeville circuits: Benjamin Franklin Keith (Keith’s) and Edward Franklin Albee II (Albee), who merged by 1914 to become Keith-Albee, subsequently merged with Martin Beck’s Orpheum Circuit, Inc. (Orpheum) to form KAO Keith-Albee-Orpheum—a joint vaudeville and motion picture syndicate of theatres possessing an aggregate of over 1,000,000 patron seats in North America. In May 1928, vaudeville and motion pictures took one step closer to assimilation when the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), a Camden, New Jersey-based entity, acquired a controlling portion of KAO stock to form the nascent but arguably “small-major” motion picture studio Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO). Within a short time, RKO motion pictures became the primary focus of entertainment at the former KAO theaters.<sup>2</sup> The rapid transition from live stage shows to less expensive motion pictures sounded the death-knell for vaudeville, which gradually descended into oblivion over a four-year period of time. In a last-ditch effort to have this form of entertainment survive, some live acts took to the stage as an interlude for the feature film.<sup>3</sup> Historians record vaudeville’s death as occurring in 1932, not only by virtue of the fast growing popularity of radio and motion pictures, but also a casualty of the Great Depression era that dominated

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<sup>1</sup> Allen F. Hauss, *Images of America: South Jersey Movie Houses* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006); Patrick Crowley and Ross Melnick (eds.), “Cinema Treasures,” <http://cinematreasures.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Jewell and Vernon Harbin, *The RKO Story* (New York, NY: Arlington House, 1982); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 375–379.

<sup>3</sup> Charles and Louise Samuels, *Once Upon a Stage: The Merry World of Vaudeville* (New York, NY: Dodds, Mead & Co., 1974), p.266; Betty Lasky, *RKO: The Biggest Little Major of Them All* (Santa Monica, CA.: Roundtable, 1989).

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

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the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> When first finished in 1927, the Westmont could stage a standard 5-act vaudeville line-up. During the brief period of 1927-1928, the just opened theatre introduced the final acts of “real” vaudeville shows to an entirely new audience.<sup>5</sup> After the Westmont’s temporary 1932 closure during the Great Depression, vaudeville never performed there again, but by that time vaudeville had disappeared from most motion picture houses.<sup>6</sup>

The postwar 1920s building boom across the United States fueled explosive growth of vaudeville-motion houses in cities and suburban communities, particularly those located along mass transportation routes or major road corridors.<sup>7</sup> Enterprising local entrepreneurs saw the financial opportunities afforded in presenting existing vaudeville and motion pictures to new audience groups. Mirroring the national trend, the unincorporated hamlet of Westmont experienced a major building boom in the immediate area where the theatre would be built. This residential growth, coupled with the planned theatre’s strategic location near the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad’s main rail line to Atlantic City, and along Haddon Avenue, the major thoroughfare forming the community’s “Main Street,” made construction of the Westmont almost a prerequisite to provide the new residents with local entertainment. The theatre’s promoters considered it a logical choice to construct a hybrid vaudeville-movie house of significant scale, capable of seating 1,800 people.<sup>8</sup> Louis, William, and Abraham J. Rovner and realtor Morris Handle emerged from among the developers of many large south Jersey large suburban vaudeville-movie houses, including the Westmont. Abraham J. Rovner and realtor Morris Handle formed Handle & Rovner Amusements.<sup>9</sup> Early theaters and later theaters, which the two men either built or acquired, had diverse styles and façades. They built the Collingswood in 1920, employing a Spanish motif. The partners then erected the Liberty Theatre and Vineland’s The Grand Theatre in 1921, followed by the Garden (later known as the Roxy) in 1922. Handle & Rovner Amusements adopted modern designs in its theater

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<sup>4</sup> Charles and Louise Samuels, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Samuels marks 1932 as the clear point of death of big-time or mainstream vaudeville.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (Los Angeles, CA: Pantheon, 1989), p.5; Kathleen Morgan Drowne and Patrick Huber, *The 1920s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.), pp. 229-237.

<sup>6</sup> William B. Brahms, compiler, *Brent J. Donaway’s The Grand Old Lady: A Book Celebrating the Premier of the Film, the History of The Westmont Theatre and Her Supporters* (Haddonfield, NJ: Reference Desk Press, Inc., 2007), p.25.

<sup>7</sup> Felicia Hardison Londré and Daniel J. Watermeier, *The History of North American Theater* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Group, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Dennis G. Raible, *Haddon Township’s Hopkins Plantation* (Philadelphia, PA: St. Joseph’s University Press, 1990). This work includes information on Haddon Township residential development during the 1920s near the Theatre. These subdivisions comprise the “Blue Bird” or “Bluebird” section, and the section known as “Burrwood.” Much of this residential construction was the work of developer Earl R Lippincott from whom Erlton (in Cherry Hill) takes its name. Other Haddon Township developments occurred on both sides of Haddon Avenue, including adjacent areas such as “Emerald Hills” and “Crystal Lake Estates.” So much development occurred in Haddon Township at this time that in the few years of the 1920s, the township built four of the five existing elementary schools—3 of them within approximately a mile or two of the Westmont Theatre. Brahms, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> Brahms, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22. Richard Gertner and William Pay, *International Television Almanac* (New York, NY: Quigley Publishing Company, 1957), p. 237. Isadore (I. M.) Rappaport’s biographical entry in the 1957 almanac indicates that Handle-Rovner Amusements movie house empire grew to include 14 theatres. However, many of the company’s central figures were involved in ownership ventures under other names as well. Rappaport managed Handle-Rovner theaters in Camden County at the time the Westmont opened. The Westmont represents Handle-Rovner’s tenth theatre.

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

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construction work. The company acquired the classical-revival-style Lyric Theater in Camden during 1924 (originally built in 1921). The grand styling of the Lyric and the opening of the massive and famous Stanley Theater in Camden in 1926 by the Stanley Corporation of America, designed by Hoffman and Henon in a classical revival design, had a profound affect on Handle and Rovner. It appears these classical revival theater designs set a design trend for the partners, at least during the ensuing two years, culminating with the construction of the Westmont and the Clementon theatres. However, the building of The Runnemedede in a Spanish-influenced design style during 1928 signaled that the classical revival trend had ended for Handle and Rovner.<sup>10</sup>

During 1927, the year the Westmont opened, Handle & Rovner also built the Clementon and remodeled the Levoy, an established vaudevillian theater they acquired in Millville dating to 1912. The partners commissioned architect William Wrifford to design the Westmont and the Clementon. Wrifford also drafted the plans for remodeling the Levoy. A comparison of the Westmont and the Clementon indicate the two theatres featured a strikingly similar façade design. They both are classical revival: symmetrical brick façades with Ionic pilasters, very large Palladian-inspired keystone arch-top center windows, prominent but simple triangular pediments over the side eight-over-eight windows, and denticulated cornice molding. Both buildings featured a brick parapet above the cornice with an inset of cast stone incised with the theatre name.

The Westmont Theatre formally debuted at 49 Haddon Avenue on Labor Day, September 5, 1927.<sup>11</sup> On opening day an estimated 5,000 people arrived at the theatre hoping to gain entrée for the première show, many of them in the 2,000 automobiles estimated to be in town.<sup>12</sup> Patrons parked these cars near the theatre and all throughout the surrounding neighborhood. The theatre featured a 40-foot-by-35-foot stage size and projected silent “photo plays” (motion pictures) along with the live vaudeville acts. William Wrifford not only served as the building’s architect, but he also fulfilled the roles of engineer and general contractor as well. He designed many other theaters over the span of his professional practice. The Levoy Theatre in Millville (built 1912, altered 1927) features a similar facade treatment and displays Wrifford’s creative abilities for remodeling an older movie house, and is listed in the National Register.<sup>13</sup> It is the last of its kind in Cumberland County, New Jersey; however, its original owners did not construct the Levoy for movies, but rather for live shows.

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<sup>10</sup> Brahms, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22. Hauss, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Compared with the extant local Ritz Theatre located at 915 White Horse Pike (National Register: 26 December 2002, New Jersey State Register of Historic Places: 29 October 2002) in the Bettewood section of Haddon Township, which served the southern portion of Haddon Township and adjoining parts of Audubon and Oaklyn, the Westmont is ostensibly three times in size. As imposing as the Ritz is to its surrounding buildings, the Westmont is of monstrous proportions—a true “grand movie palace” constructed in a suburban community. Originally, the Westmont stood alone, as it does now, not flanked by adjoining buildings.

<sup>12</sup> *Tri-City Sun*, September 3, 1927 edition, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> The Levoy Theatre, 126-130 North High Street, Millville, Cumberland County, was listed in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places on 26 June 1998 (ID#3077) and in the National Register of Historic Places on 14 August 1998 (NR Reference #98001064).

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

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The cost of building the Westmont Theatre totaled \$400,000—an enormous sum for a building in Haddon Township at that time—comparably 100 to 200 times or more the cost of a typical residence. Many local businesses supplied goods and/or services during the theatre's construction. Andrew M. White of Camden provided all brickwork, while Collingswood contractor E. Wiglesworth handled the concrete work. The Gloucester City firm of Stinson and Dickensheets supplied the construction lumber needs, although Hitchner-Holmes Company of Camden provided the hardwood flooring and millwork. Camden furniture manufacturer and dealer J.B. Van Sciver and Company contracted to furnish the theatre. American Iron Works, Inc., of Camden fabricated the structural steelwork and Metallic Manufacturing Company of Philadelphia installed all of the sheet metal work. Uhr Electric Company provided the electric fixtures; while Chester B. Hardman of Ashland ran the electric wiring and Walton Brothers of Camden installed the plumbing. The National Radiator Company of Johnstown, Pennsylvania and Camden Heating Company put in the heating plant and the radiators and the J. Brown Company of Philadelphia completed the ventilation system. Frederick Erdbrink of Camden plastered the interior, followed by George J. Kreier of Philadelphia, who set the decorative plaster elements. Harry Brodsky painted the interior, an artisan who also provided painting services for other South Jersey theatres, including the Walt Whitman, the Victoria, the New Leader, and the Apollo, along with the Ambler Theatre in Ambler, Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia firm of Reliable Decorative Company decorated the interior with gold and old rose silk fabrics.<sup>14</sup>

Only six months elapsed from the first public announcement of the coming theatre to its opening day in 1927. The first movie to play at The Westmont was a silent film, *The Unknown*, a bizarre Tod Browning tragedy starring Lon Chaney Jr. and Joan Crawford.<sup>15</sup> The theatre also presented newsreels, organ music, and live vaudeville acts. Many prominent Haddon Township and Camden County officials spoke during the opening night ceremonies. Prior to the theatre's premier, a newspaper reporter quoted Morris Handle saying: "We are particularly fortunate in our geographic location here. With Camden as a key manufacturing city offering...more chances for employment, and a suburban section that can be classed as one of the most desirable residential sections of America, nothing can stop the growth."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Brahm, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39; "Progressive Westmont Welcomes New \$400,000 Westmont Theatre," *The (Camden) Evening Courier*, September 3, 1927 edition; "Opening of Theatre at Westmont," *The (Camden) Evening Courier*, September 3, 1927 edition; "Theatre at Westmont on Monday is Another Milestone," *Tri-City Sun*, September 3, 1927 edition.

<sup>15</sup> Another silent film shown at the Westmont was Charlie Chaplin's "The Circus" on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 1928. Billed as "The Greatest Show on Mirth," The Circus was Chaplin's last completely silent film.

<sup>16</sup> "Lon Chaney Picture First Night Feature," *(Camden) Evening Courier*, September 3, 1927 edition; "Theatre at Westmont on Monday is Another Milestone," *Tri-City Sun*, September 3, 1927 edition.

United States Department of the Interior

Westmont Theatre  
Camden County, New Jersey

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

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The Westmont Theatre represented yet another milestone in a fast-growing community. The vaudeville theatre and motion picture house served as the cornerstone of the burgeoning Westmont business section on Haddon Avenue. In June 1928, Edward W. Russell, chairman of the Haddon Township Committee (equivalent to today's mayor) published an article in *Portland Cement's Concrete Highways and Public Improvements Magazine*. One photograph in the article featured the newly built Westmont Theatre. Russell pointed out that in 1921, Westmont had a population of 4,000, but by 1927 when the Westmont was built, the population had jumped to 12,000.<sup>17</sup>

The Westmont Theatre's service as a silent-movie venue was short-lived. The movie industry introduced sound into motion pictures by the end of 1929, less than 3 years after the Westmont opened. Film historians consider *The Jazz Singer* with Al Jolson as the first "talkie." Of course, it played at the Westmont. Vaudeville held on a bit longer—about four years longer in the case of the Westmont—featuring such acts as recording artists the 7 Musical Magpies, the dance act of DeMay and Moore Revue, Lady Alice's Pets (which included talking birds—and, according to Milton Berle, was "the only act to feature a live eagle....until it ate some of the other performers"),<sup>18</sup> 9 Musical Magpies, Southland's Greatest Aggregation!, Gus King's "Melody Land, Beautiful, Laffing, Singing, Dancing Revue," and Thatcher, Devereaux, and Adams.<sup>19</sup>

Another Handle and Rover theatre, The Runnemedede, featured Red Skelton, Buddy Edsen, and Al Jolson<sup>20</sup> – it is likely they also appeared at the Westmont as part of the same circuit.

The issue of showing motion pictures on Sunday evenings generated a heated debate. Local officials called for a public meeting to be held on July 28, 1931. The discourse at this meeting resulted in the formation of a committee that later ruled against showing motion pictures on Sunday evenings at the Westmont Theatre. The Handle-Rovner management, encountering a severe financial downturn due to the national business malaise and

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<sup>17</sup> "Theatre at Westmont on Monday is Another Milestone," *The (Camden) Evening Courier*, September 3, 1927 edition; Edward W Russell, "A Township of Homes Finds Its Concrete Streets Increases Property Values," *Concrete Highways and Public Improvements Magazine*, Vol. XII, No.6 (June 1928) Portland Cement Association, Chicago, IL. Russell extols the rapid growth of Haddon Township, the improved road and curbs, and features a photograph showing the road in front of the Westmont Theatre.

<sup>18</sup> Milton Berle, *B.S. I Love You: Sixty Funny Years with the Famous and the Infamous*, [New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1987], p.33

<sup>19</sup> "Best of Vaudeville for Westmont Theatre," *Tri-City Sun*, September 3, 1927 edition; William B. Brahms, compiler, *Brent J. Donaway's The Grand Old Lady: A Book Celebrating the Premier of the Film, the History of The Westmont Theatre and Her Supports* (Haddonfield, NJ): Reference Desk Press, Inc., 2007), p.25. This book reprints seven vaudeville advertisements for the Westmont Theatre (1927-1933). The undated ads all came from two local newspapers of that era: *The Tri-City Sun* and *The Haddon Township News and Oaklyn Bulletin*, including an early 1928 ad that listed named acts, p.59. The 7 Musical Magpies, a black secular harmony group, recorded two important songs in 1924, "Calliope Song" and "Laughing Song." (Subsequently two other performers were added to the group to become the 9 Musical Magpies.) These songs are still available on CD for Victor Records (Vic Rec No. 19544). Demay and Moore, who preformed at the Westmont in 1928, went on to make a Hollywood short in 1938 and were still around to perform on *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, a television show hosted by Martin and Lewis, on 12 November 1950. (Brahms)

<sup>20</sup> William W. Leap, *The History of Runnemedede New Jersey 1626-1976*, Borough of Runnemedede, NJ 1981, p.190.

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

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the inability to show movies on Sundays for extra ticket revenue, sold the theatre to the Stanley-Warner chain, who also assumed management of the Collingswood Theatre. As a result of this sale and a short closing as the theatre ownership changed, Stanley-Warner planned a “grand-reopening” in 1932—a newspaper advertisement placed by numerous local businesses called on the community to support Jack Weinberg and the Stanley-Warner Company at the reopening.<sup>21</sup> The business owners knew quite well how much economic goodwill the theatre generated by the large crowds it attracted. The Westmont Theatre remained open during the early part of the Great Depression and continued to feature motion pictures on other days and nights, excluding Sunday. Live vaudeville presentations continued at the theatre until at least 31 March 1932.<sup>22</sup> The theatre was closed throughout the Second World War as hundreds of local citizens went off to war. Gas-rationing eliminated the commuter crowd that once occupied the large auditorium and resources became tight. However, with the war’s end and a renewed prosperity, and the explosion of postwar residential construction, precipitated by the G.I. Bill of Rights mortgage guarantees, the theatre would become a renewed staple of community entertainment.<sup>23</sup>

The theatre reopened Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1948, as part of the Varbalow chain of theatres. The same firm also acquired the Collingswood Theatre shortly after the Westmont. The Varbalow chain subsequently became the Savar Corporation.<sup>24</sup> Varbalow commissioned David Supowitz (6/19/1893-5/17/1964), a well-known Philadelphia architect, to provide modernization-remodeling designs. The Supowitz work included the modern and current marquee and the interior style changes. Supowitz specialized in theatre designs, producing the Hollywood Theatre in Atlantic City, New Jersey (1936), and the Goldman Theatre in Philadelphia (1946). He worked on dozens of Philadelphia-area theaters and reportedly prepared remodeling

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<sup>21</sup> Brahms, *op. cit.* p.59

<sup>22</sup> An advertisement for the theatre appeared in *The Haddon Township News* on that day offering “Husband’s Holiday” with Clive Brooks and “also selected program of extra attractions” on Friday night and, on Saturday, “The Unexpected Father” with Slim Summerville and “5 SIG [NATURE] ACTS VAUDEVILLE AND SELECTED SHORTS.” It is believed that the Westmont subsequently closed during the Depression, based on oral history, and lack of newspaper advertisements. Hurt by its inability to offer Sunday performances, the Westmont had stiff competition for the local audience from other nearby theatres: the Collingswood; the Crescent and Ritz in Haddon Township; The Little in Haddonfield, and the Century and Highland in Audubon, all within two miles of the Westmont. This abundance of nearby theatres also resulted in an apparent lack of Jim Crow segregation at the Westmont — the African American population of Haddon Township was concentrated in Saddlestown where the White Horse Pike theatres were the more convenient entertainment venues of choice. (Haus interview, *op. cit.*) Camden theatres also played a role in the Westmont’s closing. Camden industries began staffing up for the war effort in the late 1930s, so the population in the city grew tremendously. As a result, the numerous theatres in Camden served up all the entertainment war workers needed. Since the Westmont had ceased offering live acts by mid-1932, there was no reason for anyone to travel out to the suburbs to watch a movie when the Camden theatres offered so much more in entertainment venues.

<sup>23</sup> Donaway, *op. cit.*, interview with Allen F. Haus. Haddon Township saw a building boom from the late 1940s to early 1970s that ostensibly exhausted virtually every open parcel of buildable land, becoming a mature community. The town’s population in the 1960s hit a plateau from which there has only been minimal change.

<sup>24</sup> The Varbalows were another of the 1920s-era Camden families that developed theaters. However, the Varbalow Company was significantly larger than the Handle-Rovner operation. The Varbalows finally took the corporate name SAVAR for Sadie Varbalow, the mother of the family of developers.



United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

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designs for the Collingswood.<sup>25</sup> Supowitz collaborated with another theatre architect, William H. Lee (12/9/1884 – 2/3/1971), who handled all of the decorative elements preparatory for the Westmont Theatre's reopening, making extensive use of modern fabrics. Lee, a student of acclaimed Philadelphia architect Frank Furness and a teacher of world-renowned architect Louis I. Kahn, designed or helped redesign at least 80 documented theatres, including the renovation of the 1809 Walnut Street Theatre in 1920. Lee was known for his use of the Art Deco style to "modernize" older theatres with traditional facades, as seen at the Westmont.<sup>26</sup> The Westmont Theatre's redesign work precipitated the Paramount Decorating Company, Inc. to nominate the new interior as "outstanding."<sup>27</sup>

Samuel Varbalow's daughter, Henrietta Kravitz, became the CEO of the Savar Corporation after Sam's passing in 1954. In the early 1960s, she began to sell off the chain's assets with the most important theatres going to Milgram Theaters, Incorporated. Milgram did well with the Westmont for nearly two decades, featuring exclusive runs of "The Sound of Music," "Mash," "Funny Girl," "The Exorcist" (as the only theatre in New Jersey), and "Kramer vs. Kramer."<sup>28</sup> By 1979, ticket revenue had declined and although Milgram continued its ownership of the theatre building, the firm leased the Westmont out to Budco Theatres, Incorporated. In 1983, Budco converted the theatre into a twin in an attempt to compete with the rapidly growing number of multiplex theatres. In 1984, Budco revised its strategy for the Westmont and began showing foreign, documentary, and indie films. Both of these experiments failed. In January 1987, AMC Theatres, of Kansas City, Missouri, bought the entire chain of Budco Theaters for \$20 million. At that time, Vice-President for AMC Theatres, Northeastern Division, called the Westmont Theatre, "a tough situation." AMC did not actually move into the Westmont until April 1987 and the firm did so with plans already in-hand to close the aging theatre. AMC designated all of its twin theatres in the northeast, comprising about 20, for either expansion or closure as these movie houses could no longer compete with multiplexes like the 14-screen AMC in Pennsauken, the 10-screen AMC in Evesham, or the 8-screen AMC in Deptford (which was across from a 6-screen GCC). In 1987, AMC had captured about 40% of the Delaware Valley market. The Westmont stopped showing movies almost 60

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<sup>25</sup> Donaway, *op. cit.*, interview with Allen F. Hauss; Brahms, *op. cit.*, pp.62-64; Sandra L. Tatman, "Supowitz, David (1893-1964), Architect," *Architects and Buildings Philadelphia* (<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar-display.cfm/23985>). The only significant alteration work ever completed at the theatre was the 1948 remodeling. This included a new marquee and a mid-twentieth-century contemporary lobby more in the tradition of stylized art deco or art moderne.

<sup>26</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Lee, William Harold (1844-1971)," *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings* ([http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25624](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25624)); "Majestic Theatre — Grant Application Update — Architect Biography" ([http://cache.zoominfo.com/CachedPage/?archive\\_id=0&page\\_id=179090780&page\\_url=%2%www.majestic-theatre](http://cache.zoominfo.com/CachedPage/?archive_id=0&page_id=179090780&page_url=%2%www.majestic-theatre)); "William Harold Lee: Classic Movie Theaters designed by William Harold Lee" *Cinema Treasures* (<http://cinematreasures.org/architect/243>).

<sup>27</sup> Paul J. Greenbalch, editor, "Design and Color Blending Trends: Leading Theatre Decorators Give Their Views on the Outstanding Decorative Developments in 1948," *Theatre Catalog* (Philadelphia, PA: Jay Emanuel Publications, Inc., 1948), p. 319.

<sup>28</sup> Donaway, *op. cit.*, interview with Allen F. Hauss; Brahms, *op. cit.*, pp.65-68.

United States Department of the Interior

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

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years to the day from when the theatre first hosted its grand opening. The final films projected at the Westmont under AMC management during 1987 included *Dirty Dancing* and *The Fourth Protocol*.<sup>29</sup>

In 1992, the Living Arts Repertory Theatre (L'ART) consummated a five-year, lease with building owner Posel Management Corporation, who had acquired the Westmont from Milgram. L'ART entered the building beginning in July and opened up to the public on October 16, 1992. After five critically acclaimed seasons, L'ART received a better offer for improved theatre space on the Camden Waterfront and moved out of the Westmont.<sup>30</sup> In 1996, Haddon Township designated the theatre, along with other selected properties on Haddon Avenue, as areas in need of redevelopment, and formally approached the Camden County Improvement Authority (CCIA) to obtain aid in purchasing the property for future redevelopment and to establish a fund for building maintenance. The CCIA then sold bonds to raise the necessary funds for the township, took title to the property, and leased the theatre back to the township with the stipulation that the township maintain the property.<sup>31</sup> Since that time, the township has been making regular payments on the bonds and has had one tenant, whose plans to rehabilitate the building were thwarted by the lack of adequate parking. As of July 2009, the Westmont Theatre sits vacant and unused.

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<sup>29</sup> Brahms, *op. cit.*, p. 68. Donaway, *op. cit.*, interview with Allen F. Hauss.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Engel, "Theatre group turning on the Westmont marquee," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 6, 1992 edition; "Westmont Theatre nears its 70th on solid footing with optimism," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 1, 1997 edition. Donaway, *op. cit.*, interviews with Bill Park, Bill Esher, and Missy O'Brien. Additional information provided by Louise Esher.

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer Gonzalez, "Haddon Township Buys Theatre," *Courier Post*, September 11, 1997.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

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**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

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Section number 9 Page 2

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National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**Westmont Theatre**  
**Camden County, New Jersey**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 4

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“Westmont Chamber Proud of Theatre; Best of Vaudeville for Westmont Theatre.” *The (Camden) Evening Courier*. September 3, 1927.

“Westmont Leading Township Growth.” *The (Camden) Evening Courier* September 3, 1927.

“Westmont Theatre Nears its 70th on Solid Footing with Optimism.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. September 1, 1997.

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<http://cinematreasures.org/architect/243/>. Cited 23 March 2009.

“William Harold Lee.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Harold\\_Lee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Harold_Lee). Cited 23 March 2009.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   10   Page   1  

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Haddon Township, Block 21.10, Lot 27

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This is the legally recorded boundary of the property historically associated with the Westmont Theatre.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photos Page 1

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information applies to List of Current Photographs 1– 10:

1. Westmont Theatre
2. Camden County, New Jersey
3. Douglas C. McVarish, photographer
4. New Jersey Historic Preservation Office

## LIST OF CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1 of 10. Southwest façade toward northwest.
- 2 of 10. Marquee toward northwest.
- 3 of 10. Ticket booth toward northwest.
- 4 of 10. Windows, southwest façade, toward northeast.
- 5 of 10. Windows, southwest façade, toward northeast.
- 6 of 10. Plaque, southwest façade, toward northeast.
- 7 of 10. Parapet toward northeast.
- 8 of 10. Northwest side toward northeast.
- 9 of 10. Southeast side toward northwest.
- 10 of 10. Northeast side toward southwest.

## SUPPLEMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The following supplemental interior photographs were taken by Michael M. Westfield on July 10, 2009:

- 1 of 34. Ticket booth (Room 101A) viewed from Outer Lobby (Room 101), looking southwest.
- 2 of 34. View of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking east.
- 3 of 34. Detail in Outer Lobby (Room 101) of east corner showing refreshment stand.
- 4 of 34. View of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking northwest.
- 5 of 34. Detail of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking north.
- 6 of 34. Ceiling detail in north corner of Outer Lobby (Room 101) showing original plaster ceiling.
- 7 of 34. Detail of curved, convex ceiling plaster detail in south corner of Outer Lobby (Room 101).
- 8 of 34. Detail of door pulls in Outer Lobby (Room 101).
- 9 of 34. View of Inner Lobby (Room 104) looking southeast.
- 10 of 34. View of Inner Lobby (Room 104) looking northwest.
- 11 of 34. Detail in Inner Lobby (Room 104) of southwest wall at left jamb of entrance door to Outer Lobby (Room 101).
- 12 of 34. View of Cabaret (Room 105) looking northeast towards enclosed stage wall.
- 13 of 34. View of Cabaret (Room 105) looking south from floor level performance space towards kitchen at rear.
- 14 of 34. Detail of door between Stage (Room 106) and Cabaret (Room 105) looking west from Stage.
- 15 of 34. View of Stage (Room 106) looking northwest towards added partition.
- 16 of 34. View of Stage (Room 106) looking northwest (towards side exterior wall and dressing rooms beyond).
- 17 of 34. View into vaudeville dressing rooms from Stage left (Room 106).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Westmont Theatre*  
*Camden County, New Jersey*

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

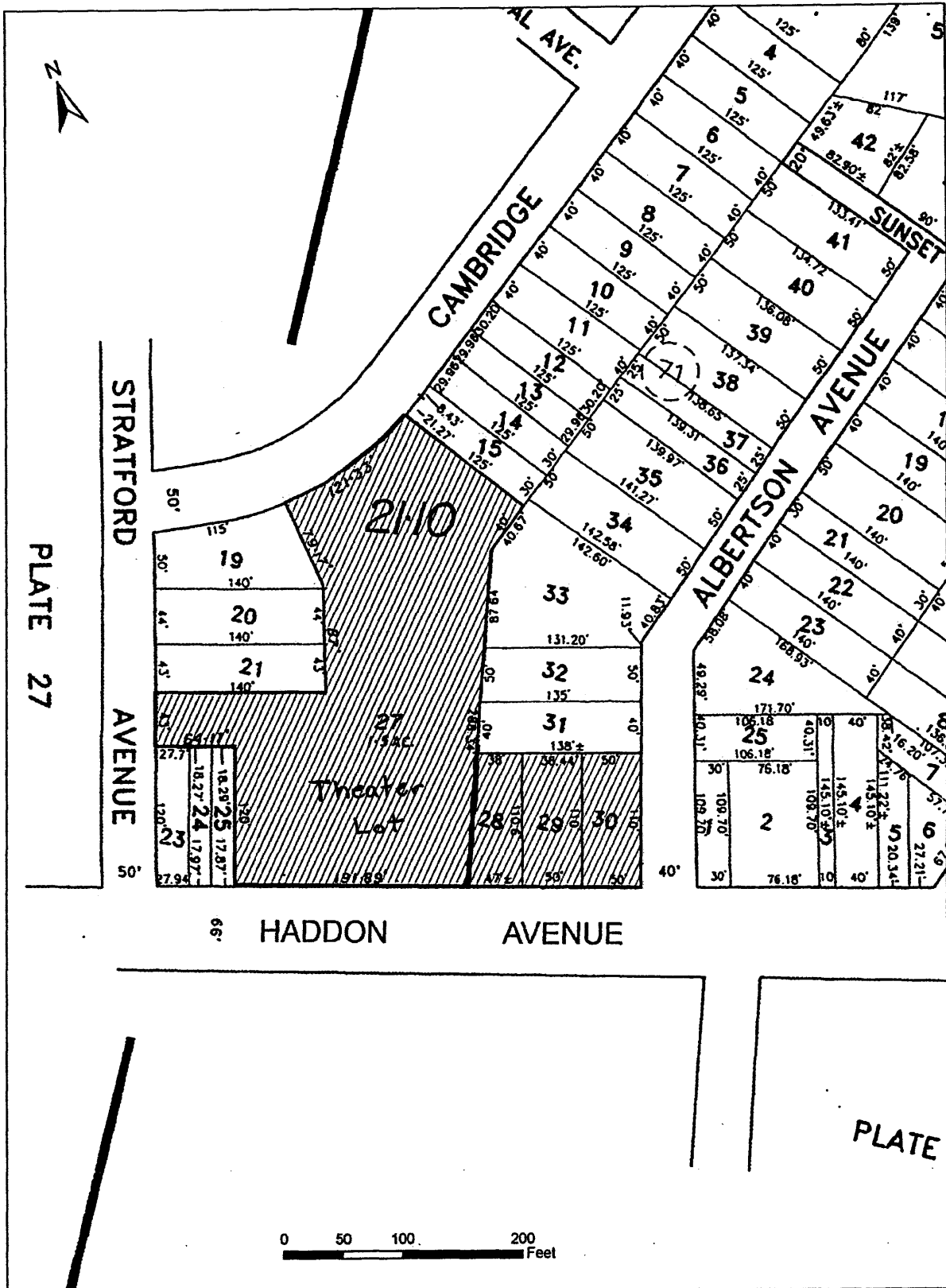
Section number photos Page 2

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- 18 of 34. View of Room 107, looking towards rear of Auditorium (southwest) from Stage (Room 106).
- 19 of 34. View towards Stage (Room 106) from Room 107, looking northeast.
- 20 of 34. View of Auditorium (Room 107) looking west towards added partition.
- 21 of 34. Detail at rear of Auditorium (Room 107), looking southeast towards side wall.
- 22 of 34. View of Doorway to Room 108 from Inner Lobby (Room 104), facing south.
- 23 of 34. View of Restroom (Room 109).
- 24 of 34. View of Stairs to Balcony, looking northwest.
- 25 of 34. View of Balcony and dropped ceiling above Cabaret (Room 105) facing northwest towards exterior wall.
- 26 of 34. Detail of Balcony Stair opening, looking west above Room 105 (Cabaret).
- 27 of 34. Detail of side Balcony wall (looking northwest above Room 105), showing curving ground from decorative plaster work above wood wainscoting.
- 28 of 34. View of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107) looking west towards added partition wall.
- 29 of 34. View of Balcony and dropped ceiling above Auditorium (Room 107), facing southeast towards exterior wall.
- 30 of 34. Detail of Fountain on northwest wall of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107).
- 31 of 34. Ceiling detail at top of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107).
- 32 of 34. View of Balcony Restroom, looking south.
- 33 of 34. View of Projection Room, looking east.
- 34 of 34. View from second floor window looking southeast at top surface of Marquee and showing modern building in original Westmont Theatre parking lot beyond.

## HISTORIC IMAGES

- 1 of 10. 1928 view of Haddon Avenue, looking southeast. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>)
- 2 of 10. 1928 image of southwest façade. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>)
- 3 of 10. 1929 photo of southwest façade. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>)
- 4 of 10. 1948 interior view of outer lobby, toward northeast. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>)
- 5 of 10. 1948 view of auditorium toward east. (From 1948-49 *Theatre Catalog*, page 319)
- 6 of 10. 1948 view of inner lobby, toward south. (From 1948-49 *Theatre Catalog*, page 319)
- 7 of 10. Circa 1960 view of southwest façade, toward northeast. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>)
- 8 of 10. Circa 1960 view of marquee, toward east. (From the collection of William B. Brahms, Haddon Township Historical Society)
- 9 of 10. Comparable theatre: The Clementon Theatre built 1927. (From *South Jersey Movie Houses*, page 34)
- 10 of 10. Comparable theatre: The Levoy Theatre, Millville, remodeled 1927. (From *South Jersey Movie Houses*, page 85)



**Legend**  
 C-1 Downtown Commercial Zone

**Haddon Township  
 Preliminary Investigation  
 Study Area "C"**

**R**  
 Remington & Vernick Engineers  
 232 Kings Highway East  
 Haddonfield, NJ 08033  
 (856) 795-9595, Fax: (856) 795-1882  
 Web Site Address: www.rve.com

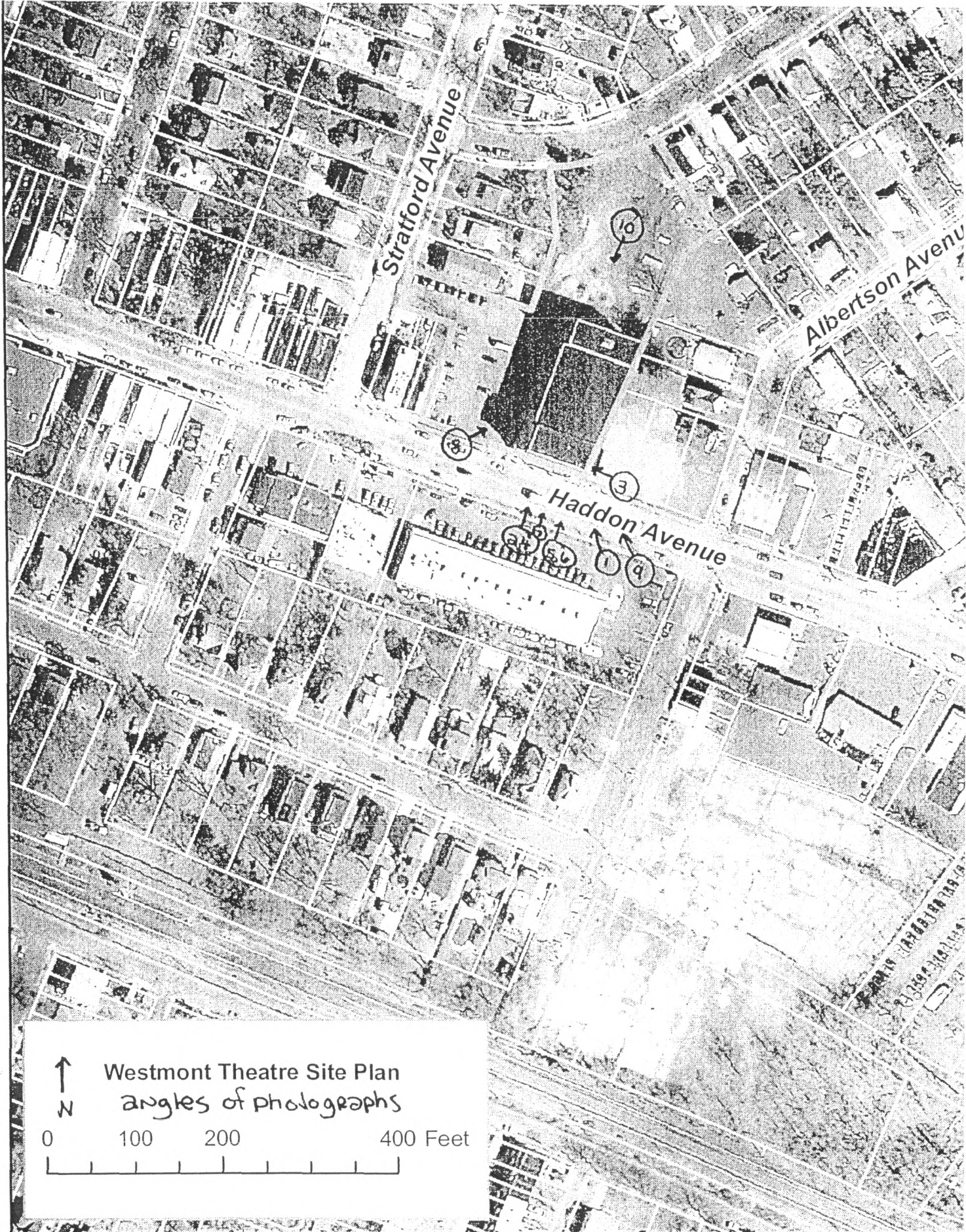
Westmont Theatre, Camden Co., NJ



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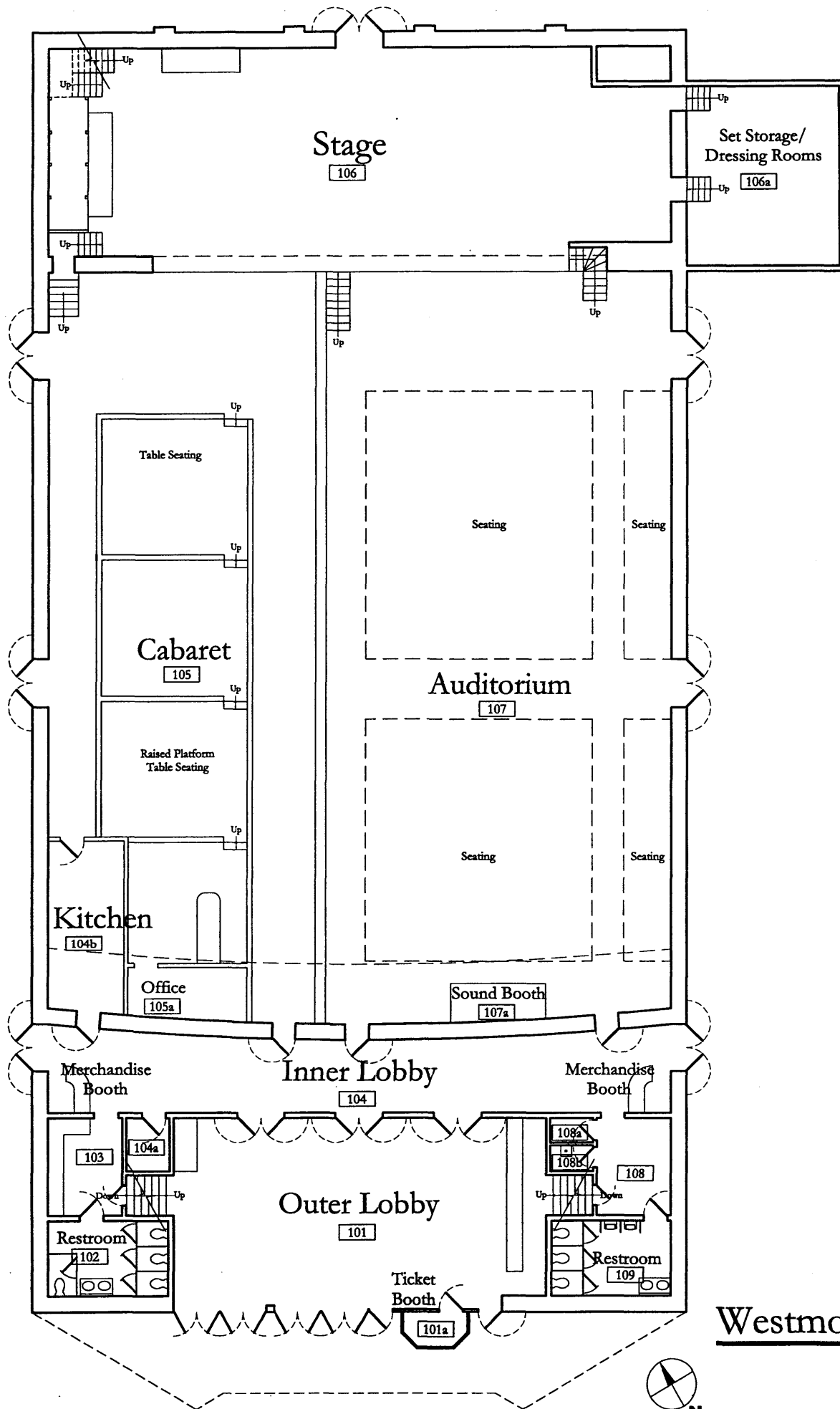
Westmont Theatre Site Plan  
 Block 2110, Lot 27

Westmont theatre, Camden Co., NJ



↑ Westmont Theatre Site Plan  
N angles of photographs  
0 100 200 400 Feet

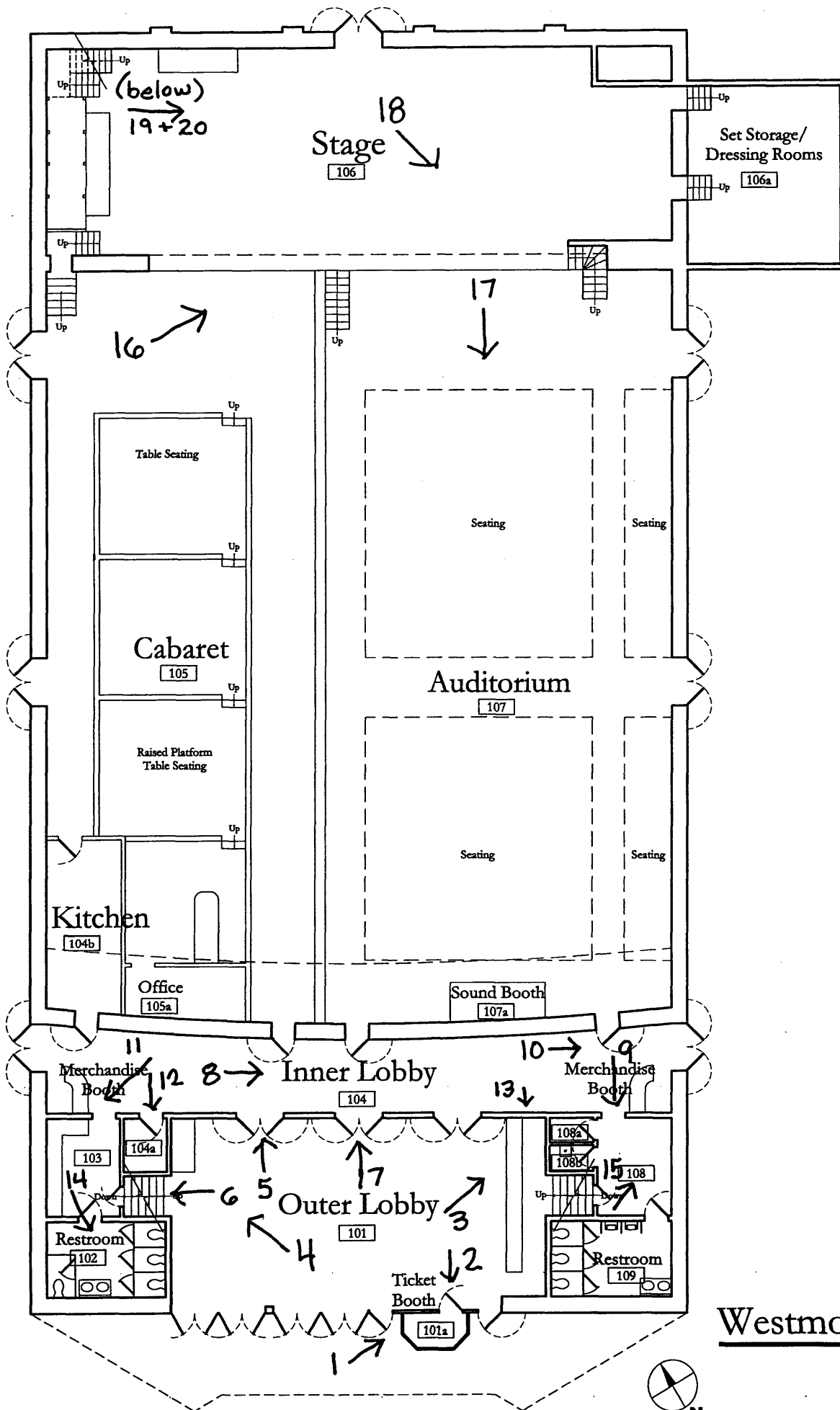
Westmont theatre, Camden Co., NJ



**Westmont Theater**  
 First Floor Plan



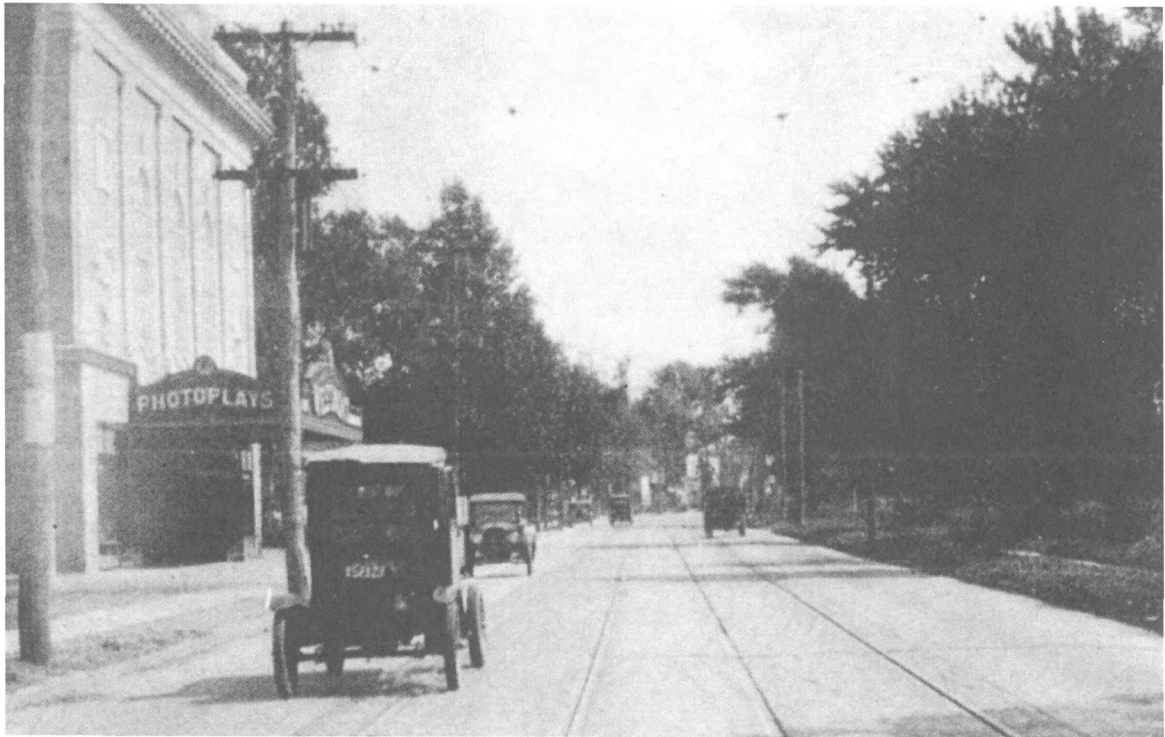
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**Westmont Theater**  
 First Floor Plan

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Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



Historic Image 1 of 10: This 1928 view of Haddon Avenue, looking east, shows the newly opened theatre at left. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>).



Historic Image 2 of 10: This April 1928 image shows the Westmont while showing Charlie Chaplin's last silent film. Note the detailing of the original marquee. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>).

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



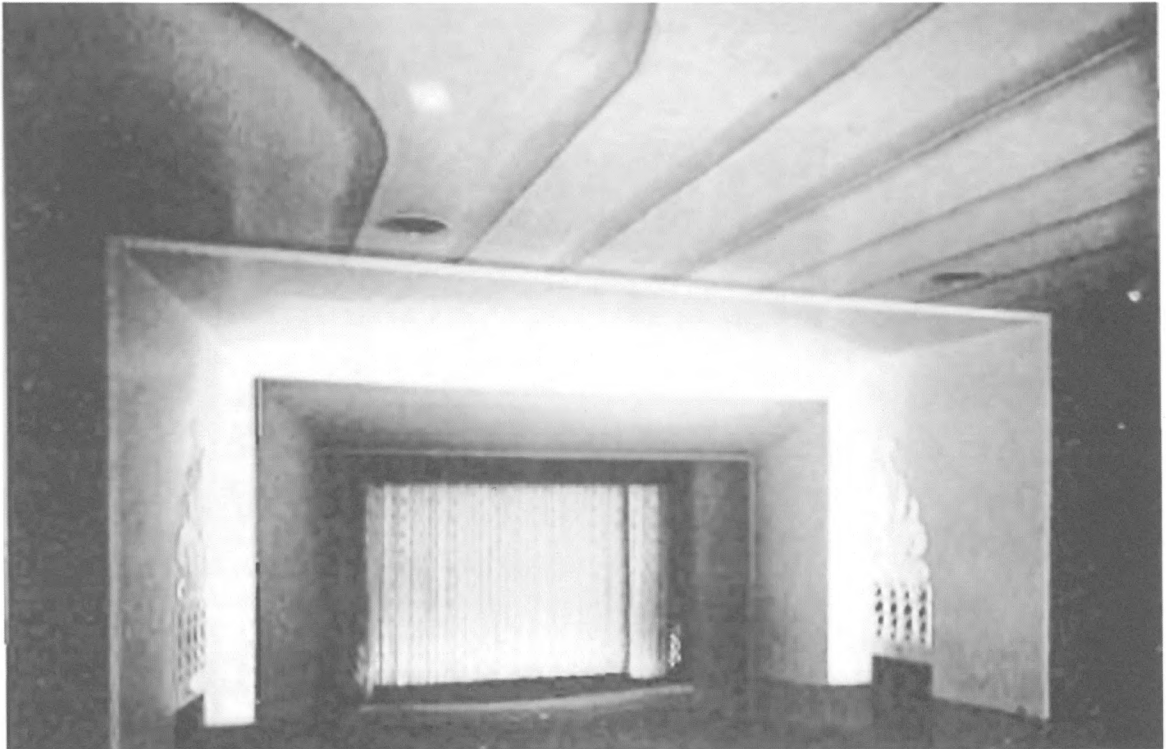
Historic Image 3 of 10: This 1929 photo shows the original door configuration beneath the 1927 marquee. Nearly identical doors survive on the 1927 Ritz Theatre on the White Horse Pike in neighboring Oaklyn (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>).



Historic Image 4 of 10: This 1948 interior view shows the Outer Lobby (Room 101), looking northeast with the ticket booth door shown right of center and the eastern balcony stairs at far left. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>).



Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



Historic Image 5 of 10: Historic view of Auditorium (Rooms 105 and 107 prior to division), looking toward proscenium and stage. Note ceiling treatment. (Image from 1948-49 *Theatre Catalog*, page 319.)

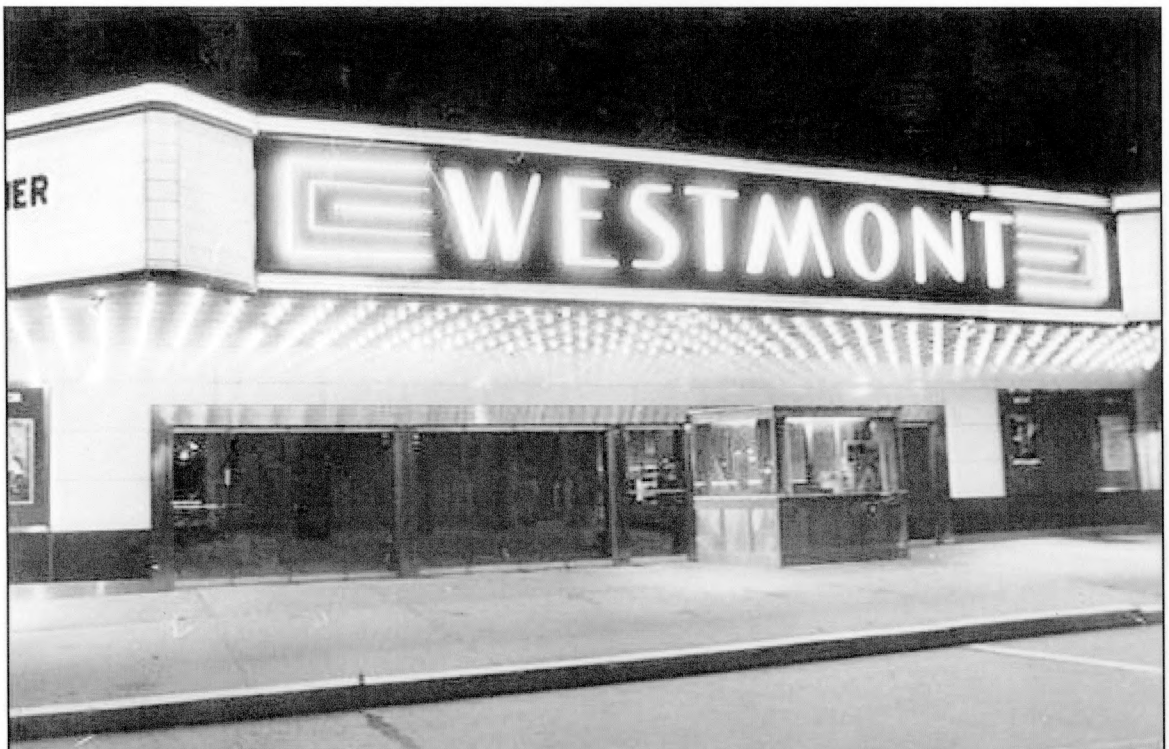


Historic Image 6 of 10: Historic view of Inner Lobby (Room 104), showing remodeled features from 1948-49 *Theatre Catalog*, page 319.

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



Historic Image 7 of 10: This c.1960 photo was taken from the theatre's parking area on the opposite side of Haddon Avenue. This area is now a strip shopping center. (From <http://westmonttheatre.wordpress.com/theatre-history/>).

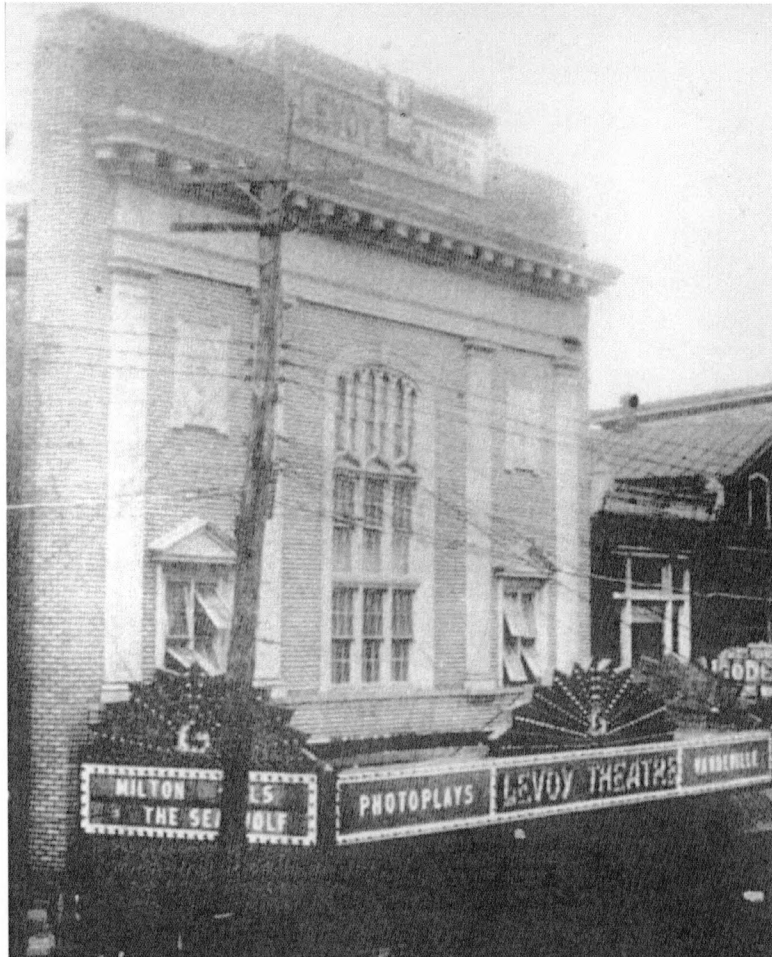


Historic Image 8 of 10: The Westmont marquee, illuminated at night, c.1960. (From the collection of William B. Brahms, Haddon Township Historical Society).



Historic Image 9 of 10: Comparable theatre: The Clementon, built by Handel and Rovner in 1927, and pictured here in 1940. This building was demolished in 1970 (From *South Jersey Movie Houses* page 34).

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



Historic Image 10 of 10: Comparable theatre: The Levoy Theatre, built in 1912, was completely remodeled by Handle and Rovner in 1927. Closed in the 1970s, the theatre is being restored by the Levoy Theatre Preservation Society. (From *South Jersey Movie Houses* page 85).

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



1  
Photo 13 of 14: Ticket booth (Room 101A) viewed from Outer Lobby (Room 101), looking southwest.

1 34



2  
Photo 14 of 14: View of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking east.

1 34

Supplemental photos

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



3

Photo 3 of 4: Detail in Outer Lobby (Room 101) of east corner showing refreshment stand.



4

Photo 4 of 4: View of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking northwest.

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



5

Photo 15 of 14: Detail of Outer Lobby (Room 101) looking north.



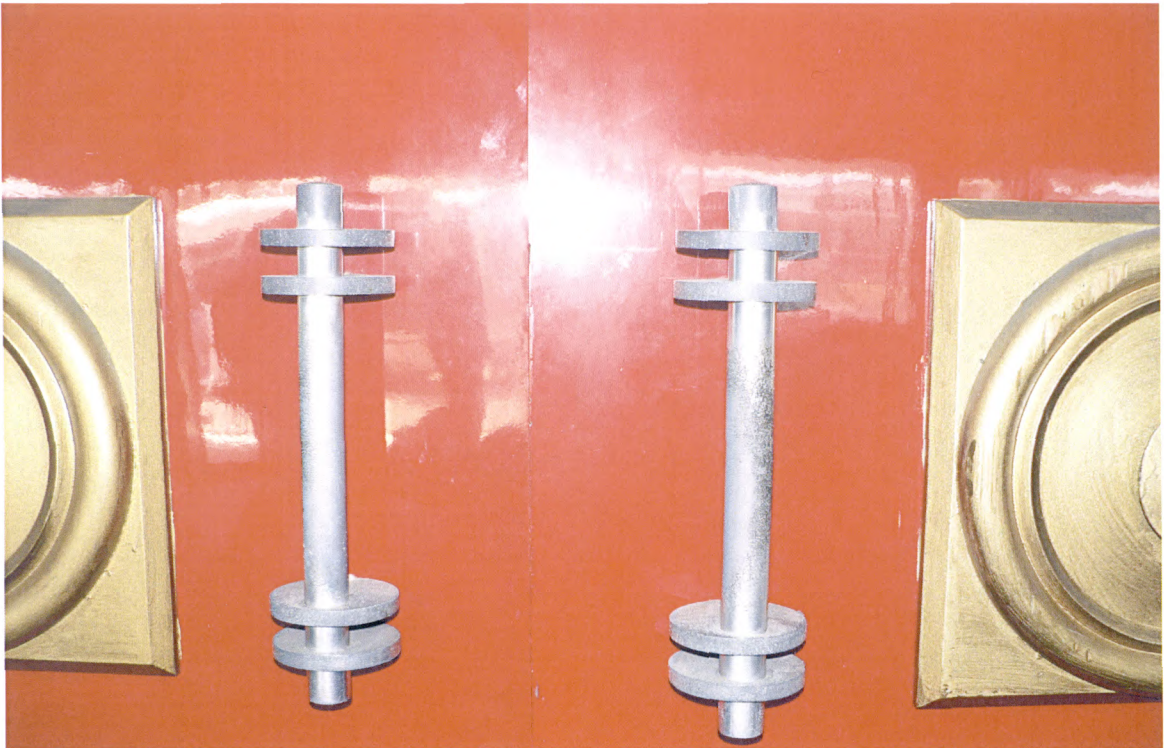
6

Photo 16 of 14: Ceiling detail in north corner of Outer Lobby (Room 101) showing original plaster ceiling and curving soffit above modern dropped ceiling.



7

Photo 17 of 14: Detail of curved, convex ceiling plaster detail in south corner of Outer Lobby (Room 101).



8

Photo 18 of 14: Detail of door pulls in Outer Lobby (Room 101).



Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



9

Photo 19 of 24: View of Inner Lobby (Room 104) looking southeast.



10

Photo 20 of 24: View of Inner Lobby (Room 104) looking northwest.



77

Photo 21 of 24: Detail in Inner Lobby (Room 104) of southwest wall at left jamb of entrance door to Outer Lobby (Room 101).

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



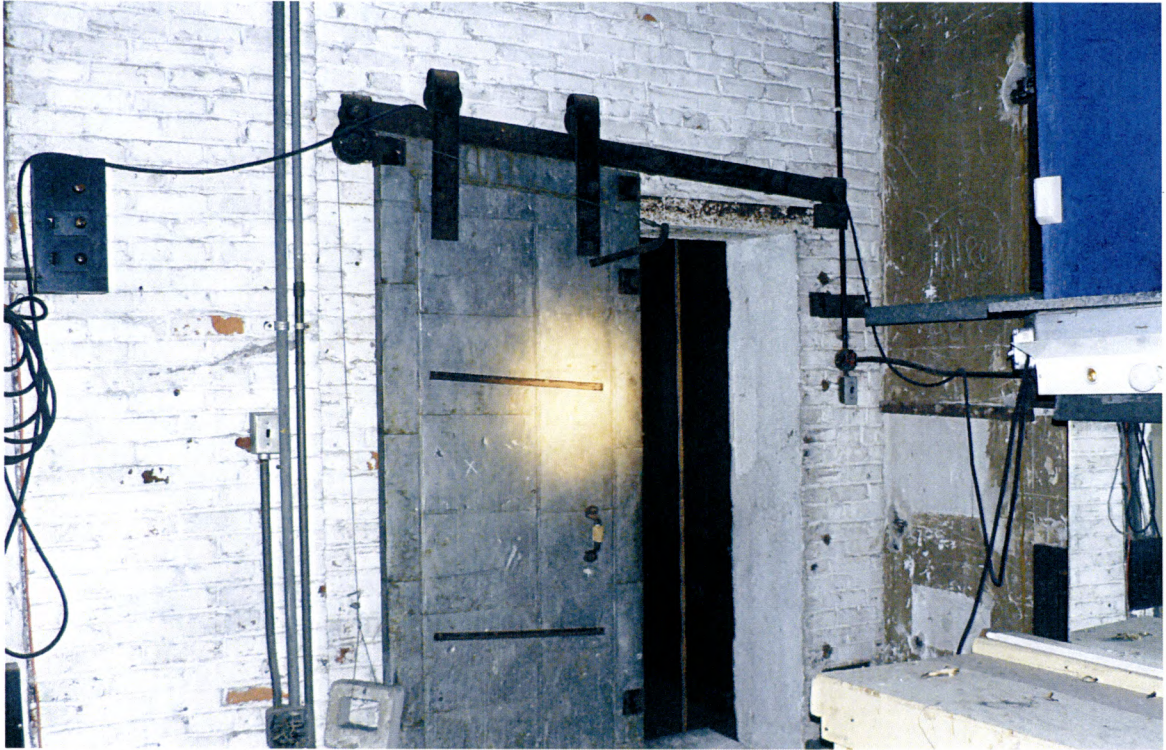
12

Photo 22 of 44: View of Cabaret (Room 105) looking northeast towards enclosed stage wall.



13

Photo 23 of 44: View of Cabaret (Room 105) looking south from floor level performance space towards kitchen at rear.



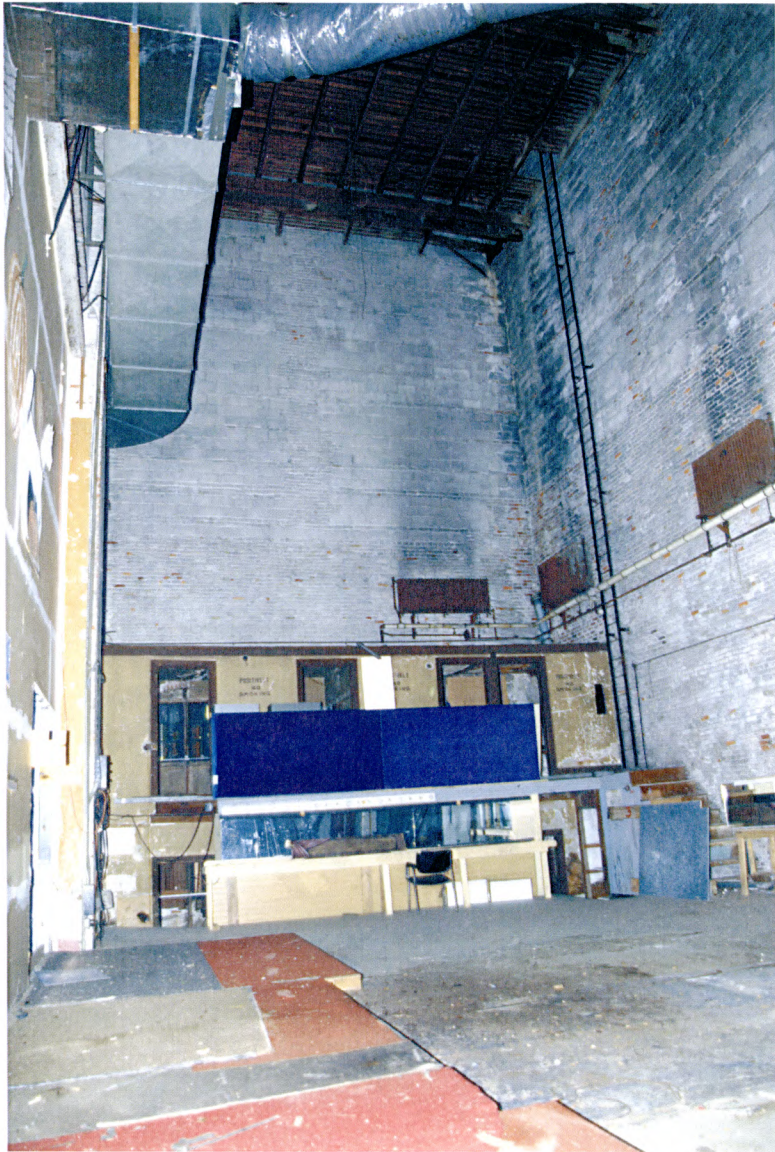
14

Photo ~~24~~ of ~~44~~: Detail of door between Stage (Room 106) and Cabaret (Room 105) looking west from Stage.



15

Photo ~~25~~ of ~~44~~: View of Stage (Room 106) looking northwest towards added partition.



16

Photo ~~28~~ of ~~44~~: View of Stage (Room 106) looking northwest (towards side exterior wall and dressing rooms beyond).



Photo ~~27~~ of ~~44~~: View into vaudeville dressing rooms from Stage left (Room 106).



Photo ~~28~~ of ~~44~~: View of Room 107, looking towards rear of Auditorium (southwest) from Stage.

Westmont Theatre, Camden County, NJ



19

Photo ~~29~~ of ~~41~~: View towards Stage (Room 106) from Room 107, looking northeast.



20

Photo ~~30~~ of ~~41~~: View of Auditorium (Room 107) looking west towards added partition.



21

Photo ~~21~~ of ~~44~~: Detail at rear of Auditorium (Room 107), looking southeast towards side wall. Added projection booth is at right.





22

Photo 32 of 44: View of Doorway to Room 108 from Inner Lobby (Room 104), facing south.



23

Photo 33 of 44: View of Restroom (Room 109).



24

Photo ~~24~~ of ~~44~~: View of Stairs to Balcony, looking northwest.



25

Photo ~~25~~ of ~~44~~: View of Balcony and dropped ceiling above Cabaret (Room 105), facing northwest towards exterior wall.



26

Photo 26 of 24: Detail of Balcony Stair opening, looking west above Room 105 (Cabaret). Note splay at base of balcony half wall.



27

Photo ~~37~~ of ~~41~~. Detail of side Balcony wall (looking northwest above Room 105), showing curving ground from decorative plaster work above wood wainscoting.



28

Photo ~~28~~ of ~~14~~: Detail of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107) looking west towards added partition wall.



29

Photo ~~29~~ of ~~14~~: View of Balcony and dropped ceiling above Auditorium (Room 107), facing southeast towards exterior wall.



36

Photo ~~46~~ of ~~44~~: Detail of Fountain on northwest wall of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107).



31

Photo ~~11~~ of ~~14~~: Ceiling detail at top of Balcony above Auditorium (Room 107).



32

Photo ~~42~~ of ~~44~~: View of Balcony Restroom, looking south.





33

Photo 33 of 44: View of Projection Room, looking east.



34

Photo 34 of 44: View from second floor window looking southeast at top surface of Marquee and modern building in original Westmont Theatre parking lot beyond.

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