

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

MAY 28 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 an 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 Egyptian Theater

other names/site number (5DT431)

2. Location

street & number 452 Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Delta N/A vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Delta code 029 zip code 81416

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James Edward Hartman May 21, 1993
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office
State of 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 the 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Beth Boland

7/10/93

Egyptian Theater
Name of Property

Delta County, CO
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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS /

OTHER: Egyptian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

STUCCO

roof ASPHALT

other _____

Narrative Description

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

Egyptian Theater

Name of Property

Delta County, CO

County and State

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.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
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.)

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1933

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

M. S. Fallis Architect Co.

Art M. Moore

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Delta County Museum

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

DESCRIPTION

The Egyptian Theater is a 2-story motion picture theater, which fronts west onto the middle section of Delta's Main Street in the downtown commercial area. It is representative of the 1920s Egyptian Revival Style. The massive walls are constructed of brick, and the foundation is concrete. The battered wall effect on the upper portion of the main facade, the second-story straight-headed windows with inclined jambs, and the large vulture and sun disk relief centered in the frieze above the entrance are all representative of the Egyptian Revival Style. Egyptian style elements which remain in the interior include another large vulture and sun disk relief, which dominates the frieze above the stage, and sixteen large Egyptian busts along the side walls.

The second story of the main facade is covered with the original smooth stucco finish, and the upper portions of the two projecting bays are inclined to give the impression of battered walls. The first story facade has been covered with blue ceramic tiles. The main entrance now consists of two sets of glass doors and a glass ticket booth, with full-length windows in between. A newer Egyptian motif neon sign and flat, rectangular marquee with inclined sides have replaced the original three-dimensional marquees. Two newer panels with hieroglyphic motifs have been placed over the two second story windows. Two glass poster cases are centered in the tile sections to either side of the entrance. They have replaced larger poster cases, which were originally in those same locations.

The interior of the theatre has been severely altered through the years, although the vulture and sun disk relief and the Egyptian busts, eight male and eight female, do remain. The walls and ceiling are punctuated by pointed arch vaults and alcoves, covered with stucco. Some evidence of water damage is evident.

In 1928, the Egyptian Theater reflected an age of glorious pageantry. At an estimated cost of \$75,000, its conceptual design was that of an Egyptian Temple. Joe Sheffler, an artist, was the decorator. This architectural gem glistened with hues of gold and blue on the ceilings. Indirect lighting was installed everywhere except on the emergency and exit areas. The 750 air-cushioned leather upholstered seats and the foyer's leather furniture came from California. J.A. Scheiblburger, drapery expert, installed over \$3000 worth of silk marquisette and gold braid with fringe drapes. The \$12,000 Robert Morgan organ was situated in a console pit which was front and center of the stage. On each side wall near the front, the organ grills gave the illusion of balconies.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

Description (continued)

The Egyptian Theater had a foyer with an ornamental drinking fountain that was lit indirectly with colored lights. Behind the seating on the second floor, three areas were built. On the right side while looking at the screen, were the "cry room" and ladies' lounge. In the center was the projection room, which could only be entered from the men's lounge, which was located on the left side.

All mechanical systems were state-of-the-art for 1928. American Radiator Company's heating system passed air through steam coils creating a 69 degree year-round temperature. American Ventilation Company ventilated air along the floor and out. The 25 x 25 foot stage had six floodlights on dimmers in front, across the top, and down the sides. Under the stage were dressing rooms, storage, and heating plant.

Unfortunately, by 1968, the Egyptian Theater had lost most of the silent screen era look and accoutrements. Gone were the fancy curtains, organ, leather upholstered seats, and the original lotus flower columns which supported the proscenium. In the 1970s, under its new owners, Stanley and Jeanne Dewsnup, the Egyptian Theatre underwent further alterations.

In 1972, the second story was closed off to moviegoers, and new restrooms were added downstairs beneath the old ones. In the lobby, the left side stairs were enclosed and a janitor closet was added. On the right side, a small snack bar in a room near the auditorium entrance was converted into the new ladies' restroom. A new snack bar was then placed across the entire rear of the lobby and finished in mosaic tile. The glass ticket booth was moved from the center of the old foyer to a spot in front of the right side stairs. These stairs still lead upstairs, but into an office where the old "cry room" used to exist. The entrance to the projection room is now through the office. The old men's lounge is now used for storage.

In 1977, the marquee, which hung perpendicular to the theater over the sidewalk, was replaced because of city codes and safety reasons. The new neon sign and marquee were specially designed with an Egyptian motif. The two painted panels were placed over the second story windows for insulation purposes, and the mosaic tiles were added to the front of the building. Although these modifications have compromised the historic fabric of the facade, the modifications have kept an Egyptian motif, and the theater remains both attractive and functional.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO,

SIGNIFICANCE

The Egyptian Theater is significant under Criterion A for its association with the motion picture theatrical promotion "Bank Night." The concept of "Bank Night," which had its beginnings here in Delta at the Egyptian Theater, went on to become a huge nationwide Depression era phenomenon.

After the removal of the Ute Indians from this region in September 1881, stock raisers, fruit growers, and others soon realized the agricultural potential of the area. The town of Delta was platted on April 6, 1882, and the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad arrived there the same year. Delta's position as both a rail center and the county seat, together with its agricultural diversity, led to its dominance of the commercial arena as well. By the turn of the century, Delta was beginning a period of prosperity, exemplified by the conversion of many Main Street buildings from frame to brick.

The city experienced another building boom on Main Street during the 1920s. Delta had expanded its economic base with the construction of the Delta County Cannery in 1918 to process the area's crops. The stability of the economy was further enhanced by the 1920 commitment of the Holly Sugar Company to build a sugar mill in the city. Both of these firms operated in Delta until the 1970s, creating jobs and a market for the area's products.

Nationwide, the 1920s was the golden age of motion picture theater construction. To further their image as palaces of entertainment, many theaters were designed in exotic architectural styles. The Egyptian Revival was one of many styles used nationally. However, in Colorado, few examples of the various exotic revivals exist, and most are basically one of a kind. The architect of this theatre, M. S. Fallis of Denver, is also known for Fox's Mayan Theatre in Denver, a well-preserved example of the Mayan Revival Style and a local landmark.

The winter of 1932-33 was one of the toughest in the history of the amusement business, and theater operators were faced with poor attendance rates, particularly on weeknights. Nationwide, about a third of all regularly operating movie houses closed by midsummer. Those that survived used all kinds of promotions to attract customers. One of the most successful was Bank Night. As historian Dixon Wecter states in his 1948 book on the Great Depression, "Begun in 1933 in the small Colorado town of Delta, it spread within five years to at least half the nation's picture theaters."¹

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

Significance (continued)

In December of 1932, Charles Yaeger, a Fox Intermountain district manager, approached the City of Delta's part-time Chamber of Commerce with the concept of "Bank Night." A 1937 Saturday Evening Post article quotes Yaeger:

I considered every giveaway I'd ever promoted. They all seemed lousy, and I dreaded to put the bee on the local merchants any longer for merchandise. I knew I was getting in their hair. Besides, most of the giveaway merchandise had questionable box-office pull. A chance to win a swell meerschaum pipe doesn't mean a thing to a woman.

The only ones we hadn't asked to ante up were the bankers. I made up my mind to try to sell the local bankers on the idea of a cash prize to be offered in return for advertising. Cash would be ideal, because the winner could buy whatever he wished with it. But I doubted if a bank would offer enough to offset our intended 'up' in prices.

Yaeger decided the theater would put up the dough, and charge any loss to advertising. "I didn't waste much time thinking up a name," admits Yaeger. 'Bank Night' seemed to tell the story. The prize money was to be deposited in the bank. ²

Advertised as "Gold Night," beginning on Thursday, March 2, 1933, \$30 in gold was given away at the Egyptian Theater every Thursday for ten weeks. On the eleventh Thursday, \$75 was given away as the grand award. Entry blanks were obtained with each twenty-five cent purchase at participating businesses, and entrants had to be present at the theater on paid admission tickets. (The previous summer a similar contest had been conducted in Delta, however Gold Night gave away amounts of far greater magnitude and continued over a longer period.)

The promotion was so successful that within two months, the Egyptian Theater headed the list of 28 Fox-Colorado theaters in five Rocky Mountain states with a percentage of 130.85 on gross business. The par for the theaters was considered 90 per cent. The giveaways continued, although the original concept of entrants having to make a purchase was redesigned because of lottery laws.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

Significance (continued)

By December of 1933, Charles Yaeger and his former boss, Frank "Rick" Ricketson, had organized Affiliated Enterprises, Inc., set up an office in Denver, patented "Bank Night" and began promoting their copyrighted plan nationwide. "At first only the small-town and neighborhood houses took it up. But before long the largest theaters of the metropolitan centers were packing 'em in with Bank Night. Thirty-five big-time circuits embraced the baby."³

Bank Night works simply. In his lobby a theatre owner places a large book. Persons who wish to do so may enter their names in the book opposite numbers corresponding to which the box office keeps a book of tickets. On Bank Night, usually Monday, when receipts are normally lowest, the tickets are placed in a drum on the stage. One number is drawn from the drum and announced. If the person whose name is entered for that number in the lobby book appears on the stage within a specified time, usually three minutes, he receives a cash prize of, say, \$150. If the winner fails to appear, the cash prize is increased to say, \$200 and the performance repeated a week later. If still unclaimed, the prize is increased and the drawing repeated. The value of Bank Night to the exhibitor is obvious: it helps fill his theatre on off nights, permits him to run cheap films to packed houses.⁴

The 1937 Saturday Evening Post article claimed, "'Bank Night' has blossomed into an American institution. In four years since it burst upon an unsuspecting public in a small town in Colorado, at least 100,000,000 persons in motion-picture audiences have participated in Bank-Night drawings. Each week more than 5000 theaters distribute almost \$1,000,000 in prizes, as high as \$3400 each."⁵ This weekly activity not only saved the motion picture industry during the depression but helped pay for mortgages, college courses, and operations.

Charles Yaeger and Rick Ricketson of Affiliated Enterprises, Inc. also profited from "Bank Night." They copyrighted the plan, as embodied in an instruction booklet available to theater managers for a weekly fee from five to fifty dollars (depending on seating capacity). "Theater owners who want to run Bank Nights can do so only by buying the right from the holders of territory franchises who have bought these from Promoter Yaeger's Affiliated Enterprises, Inc."⁶ Yaeger and Ricketson also registered the trade name "Bank Night" as well as some 1,400 variations in every state where the law provided for trademark registration. There was no standing in a bread line for these two promoters.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

Significance (continued)

Bank Night was immensely popular. Two hundred fifty theaters used the plan in New York City alone. A 1936 Time magazine said the phenomenon "is now prevalent in 4,000 of the 15,000 U.S. cinemansions."⁷ In Des Moines, police and fire departments had to be called out sometimes to control theater crowds. In 1937, it was "inconceivable that anyone in the United States doesn't know how Bank Night works."⁸ Bank Night was not without controversy, however. A number of court cases arose around the country, some of which questioned its legality, but as with the Depression era itself, "Bank Night" ran its course until the United States Post Office ruled it a lottery and illegal.

The Egyptian Theater unquestionably retains its integrity of location, setting, and association with this important Depression era phenomenon. Its basic design is still apparent, since the second story of the main facade remains structurally unaltered, the basic form of the theater is intact, and many of its significant features have been preserved. It still displays many of its original Egyptian Revival elements. Its original workmanship and materials are displayed in the vulture and sun disk reliefs and the Egyptian busts decorating both the exterior and the interior of the building. The newer marquee, sign, and painted panels on the facade all are in keeping with the spirit of the Egyptian Revival, and the theater still conveys the feeling of its period of significance.

ENDNOTES

1. Dixon Wector, The Age of the Great Depression: 1929-1941. New York: The McMillan Company, 1948, p. 241.
2. Forbes Parkhill, "Bank Night Tonight," Saturday Evening Post, 4 December 1937, p. 21.
3. Ibid.
4. "Cinema - Bank Night," Time, 3 February 1936, p. 57.
5. Forbes Parkhill, p. 20.
6. "Cinema - Bank Night," p. 58.
7. Ibid, p. 57.
8. Forbes Parkhill, p. 21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 & 10 Page 7

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Delta County Assessor's Office, "Property Assessment Cards," Block 9, Original.

Delta County Historical Society.

Delta County Tribune. "Egyptian Plans Big Prosperity Event For City," 23 February 1933.

Delta Independent. "Your Theatre Beautiful," 28 September 1928.

Denver Post. "'30's 'Bank Night' Originator - Movie-House Pioneer C.U. Yaeger Dies," 27 January 1977, p. 13.

Hodgin, Gordon. "Letter to Linda Loftis," 3 September 1992.

Knight, Carol. "'Theatre Beautiful' Boasts Proud Past." Delta County Independent, 28 September 1981.

Parkhill Forbes. "Bank Night Tonight." Saturday Evening Post, 4 December 1937, pp. 20-21, 82.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Delta, Colorado. Sanborn-Perris Map Co., Western Historical Collections, U. C. Boulder, 1919, 1931.

Time. "Cinema - Bank Night," 3 February 1936.

Verrengia, Joseph. "Estate Donates \$7 Million to Natural History Museum." Rocky Mountain News, 1989.

Wector, Dixon. The Age of the Great Depression - 1929-1941. New York: The McMillan Company, 1948.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

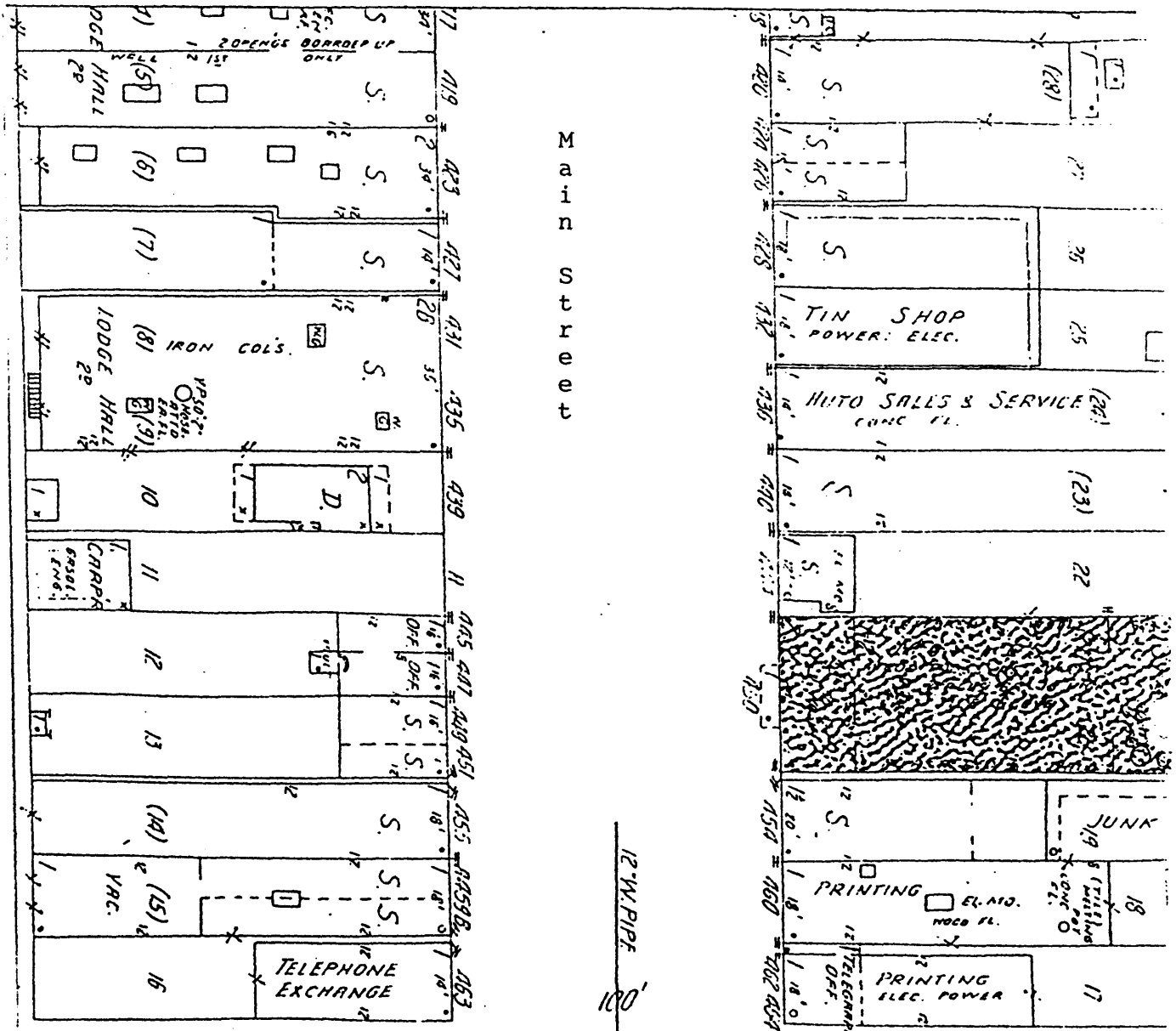
Block 9, Lots 20 & 21, Delta Original Subdivision.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the area historically associated with the Egyptian Theater.

Egyptian Theater
Delta County, CO

Sketch Map:



(Sanborn Insurance Map, 1931)

Fifth Street

key: shaded area is subject property

scale: 1 inch = 50 feet

