

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED **OCT 17 1975**  
DATE ENTERED **DEC 4 1975**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*Hotel*  
Lamar House, Bijou Theater

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

803 Gay Street, S. W.

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Tennessee

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

47

COUNTY

Knox

CODE

093

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: none

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Joseph S. Goodstein, Trustee

STREET & NUMBER

825 North Central

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Knox County Courthouse, Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville

STATE

Tennessee

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historical Buildings of Knoxville, Tennessee

DATE

April 1974

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE  COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Knoxville Heritage, Inc.

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville, Tennessee

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built on a corner lot in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee, the Lamar House-Bijou Theater is a four-story, rectangular shaped building with stone veneer front. The adjoining brick addition, the Bijou Theater auditorium, is located behind the hotel. The theater lobby runs through the mid-section of the first story to the auditorium entrance. Hotel accommodations fill the remainder of the original building.

At the Gay Street entrance, the pedestrian level features an arched theater entrance and theater marquee awning. Office and store space adjacent to the theater entrance, have modern curtain wall, glass windows and doorways.

The Lamar House Hotel-Bijou Theater has experienced more change historically than architecturally. The prime location and basically adaptive plan of the original construction has served to preserve it as one of the earliest remaining historic buildings in Knoxville.

Built as a residence, prior to 1816, the Lamar House Hotel was a three and one-half story, late Georgian or early Federal style building. The original size and location of rooms lent themselves to adaptive use as public accommodations. The square rectangular shape and flat brick walls feature consistent symmetrical elevations, horizontal and vertical alignment of bays, windows and door spacing. In 1837, the major regrading of Gay Street made it possible to open the basement story at the present pedestrian, street level.

A photograph, c. 1877, shows the style of the Lamar House represented in this earlier form. Characteristic of the style, the building featured six-over-six light, double-hung sash type windows; alternate plain and segmented style window caps; portico and balcony entrance; attic story pediment gable and standing seam tin clad gable roof; and single, brick chimney stacks.

It is evident that some of the architectural fabric had been changed before 1877. Major renovations were made c. 1900-1909. The two-over-two window sashes have been added. In 1909 the theater lobby replaced the hotel lobby and the marquee awning replaced the early balcony/portico entrance. The hotel lobby was relocated at the north end of the building. The attic story and original gable roof were replaced by a flat roof, effecting the more popular revival styles. The present veneer front, a late addition, followed the 1900's stylization. The large marquee reading "Keith Vaudeville" has been removed. Side walls of the auditorium are characterized by the exit doorways and iron fire escapes.

Many of the original theater lobby details remain unchanged. The second story lobby entrance on the north elevation was served by the second-story portico/balcony entrance.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The original shape, plan, design and construction of the theater is the same. The theater consists of a main floor and features two balconies, flanked by two tiers of box seats, framed by elaborate moldings of vigorously detailed Baroque features, columns, pediments and carved statuary. The ceiling arches consist of the same type of detail, original features and rows of lights. A large, ornate chandelier has been removed from the center, auditorium ceiling. Dressing rooms and other supportive features of the original plan remain unchanged. Motion picture sound equipment, screen and projection equipment were late additions.

The Bijou Theater is unoccupied at the present time; however it is unlikely that a building so rich in historical associations will fall by the wayside for long. Interested citizens are investigating the prospects of public acquisition, restoration and preservation of the two structures under the proposed plan for the revitalization of Knoxville's heritage in the downtown area.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the corner of Gay Street and Cumberland Avenue, the Lamar House Hotel-Bijou Theater is representative of early 19th century urban architecture of the residential type. Rich in historical association, owned by various individuals, the original building is listed as a hotel offering public accommodations c. 1823-1970. The Bijou Theater is one of the few surviving, legitimate theaters located in Tennessee.

The multi-story, brick building was constructed near the center of Knoxville's business district prior to 1816. Thomas Humes was a wealthy merchant prior to his death in 1816, and it is presumed the building was the Humes family residence originally.

Prior to 1819, the building was listed as the Knoxville Hotel. Archibald Rhea was the hotel proprietor. In 1819, Mrs. Margaret Humes advertised the building for rent. It was described as a "large and elegant building of three stories and fifteen rooms."

In 1823 the building was re-opened as the Knoxville Hotel under the management of Captain Joseph Jackson. During the 1830's it was called Jackson's Hotel. Andrew Jackson was a frequent guest there. On one of these occasions, a large reception was planned for him there. On this occasion, Jackson had just vetoed the bill to re-charter the Bank of the United States. The hotel became known as the Pickett's City Hotel in 1837. John Pickett was the new manager. At this time, the hotel became the scene of large parties, balls and receptions to include those given by East Tennessee University. During the 1850's the Pickett's City Hotel became the Coleman House. In 1856 Samson and Sterling Lanier (grandfather and uncle of Sidney Lanier) assumed the role of hotel managers. It was during this period that the name changed from Coleman to Lamar.

Colonel W. H. Sneed, owner of the adjacent property, bought the Lamar Hotel for \$38,000 in 1857.

The Sneed House and Lamar House Hotel were occupied by the military during the Civil War. General William P. Sanders died there from wounds received during the siege of Knoxville. Following the Civil War, the Lamar House continued to operate as one of the city's leading hotels. In September 1877, President Rutherford Hayes visited Knoxville and delivered a public speech from the second story portico balcony. Other famous guests at the old hotel included Presidents James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson and U. S. Grant.

*his  
South  
ton*

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

East Tennessee Historical Society, Echoes, Vol. 19, no. 4 (December 1973)  
pp. 664-65.

Knoxville Journal and Tribune, December 18, 1910.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY           .5          

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1 | 7 |    | 2 | 3 | 6 | 6 0 0 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 9 0 0 |  
  | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |  
C |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

B |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  
  | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |  
D |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

*UTM ok - WMA  
1-22-75*

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William J. McCoy, III, M.D.

May 15, 1975

ORGANIZATION

Knoxville Heritage, Inc.

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

3619 Woodland Drive

TELEPHONE

615-584-4809

CITY OR TOWN

Knoxville

STATE

Tennessee

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL   X  

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Herbert P. Hoyer*

TITLE

Acting Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

*10/14/75*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Acting*

*Herbert P. Hoyer*  
*Charles A. ...*

DATE

*12/4/75*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

*11-28-75*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Acting*

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As the north end of Gay Street began to develop, the center of commerce was relocated. The location of the new railroad stations was a primary factor for this shift in emphasis. As business fell off the hotel began to decline. Around the turn of the century the building was renovated. The brick walls were stuccoed and painted white. The hotel became known as the "White House" Hotel.

The building became the Wells Auditorium Hotel c. 1909 and it became the "finest" theater in Knoxville, featuring legitimate theater productions and concerts. Eventually the theater housed equipment for the moving picture theater and it became known more recently as the "Bijou Theater."