

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAR 12 1985

date entered APR 10 1985

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

1. Name

historic Tivoli Theater

and/or common Tivoli Theater

2. Location

street & number 3301-3325 14th Street, N.W. N/A not for publication

city, town Washington N/A vicinity of congressional district

state D.C. 20010 code 11 county District of Columbia code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development

street & number 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E.

city, town Washington N/A vicinity of state D.C.

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 6th and D Streets, N.W.

city, town Washington state D.C.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

District of Columbia  
title Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June 24, 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division  
D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

city, town Washington state D.C.

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Tivoli Theater is located at 3301-3325 14th Street, N.W., on the northeast corner of 14th Street and Park Road, N.W. Designed by architect Thomas White Lamb and built in 1923, the Tivoli retains its original Italian Renaissance facade. The structure, which contains the theater as well as shops and offices, is separated from neighboring commercial and residential buildings by two alleys.

The two street facades of the Tivoli are faced with tan stucco and aggregate concrete capped by a red tile roof with eaves overhanging a bracketed cornice. The Tivoli's principal facade--the 14th Street facade--is three stories high and is divided into bays by colossal order pilasters. The Ionic capitals are stylized and have polychrome ornaments. There are five identical bays running along the street; each of these is flanked by different but symmetrical bays. The five central bays contain ten two-story shops, two in each bay. One-story projecting metal and glass shop windows were added by 1928. Arched windows run along the facade at the second floors, above the projecting bays. Four small arched windows centered above the second floor arches define the bays on the third floor. There are two narrower bays at the north end of the facade. The end bay has a rectangular window on the first and second floors, divided by a flush metal panel similar to the shop windows. The third-story has a single arched window. The second bay has a store front flush with the facade, with a center door and flanking windows. The segmental arched window on the second floor is separated from the front by a metal panel. Two arched windows with the decorative iron balconies pierce the third floor. Only one bay flanks the south end of the 14th Street facade. It has the same proportions as the second bay on the north end of the building. The ground floor contains the theater entrance and the projecting marquee with its classical cornice and anthemions. The marquee wraps around the corner and shelters six pairs of wooden doors with large glass panes. The second floor of this bay features a blind segmental arch and the third floor has two arched windows and a projecting "Tivoli" sign. A similar arrangement of central bays flanked by additional bays runs along the Park Road facade of the building. A small marquee, similar to the main theater marquee, protects entrances on the south side of the building.

The interior of the Tivoli, done in the Adamesque style, was one of the most luxurious in the Washington area, and the local newspaper devoted numerous columns to detailed descriptions of its fabrics, materials, design, and layout. The elegant interior was magnificently appointed; the mezzanine lounges even provided writing paper and other conveniences for theater patrons. The walls were covered with plum damask from Marshall Field and Company. Thick pile carpets, ornamental iron work, mahogany paneling, elaborate plaster work, murals by A. Battisti of New York, and imported marble all contributed to the grace and splendor of the interior.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

**Specific dates** 1923 **Builder/Architect** Thomas White Lamb, architect

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

On June 24, 1983, the Joint Committee on Landmarks designated the Tivoli Theater a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Tivoli is the only theater still standing in Washington by Thomas White Lamb, the leading theater architect of the Golden Age of motion picture palaces and, as such, it is identified with the work of an architect whose work influenced the evolution of a new building type and technology, as well as a new form of architectural expression for that type within the United States.

As the grandest theater in the Crandall chain, the Tivoli is closely associated with Harry M. Crandall, an important local businessman and leading theater owner who significantly contributed to the cultural heritage and development of the District of Columbia, and embodies the usual distinguishing characteristics of the unique architectural expressions developed to fit the picture palace form.

As the grandest extant picture palace in Washington whose role in the development of the local entertainment industry exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical development of the District of Columbia, the Tivoli's imaginative design, innovative technology, and sumptuous interior embody elements of design detail, materials, building technology, and craftsmanship are significant elements in the architectural heritage of the District of Columbia.

The Tivoli Theater is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

1. The Tivoli Theater is Washington's only neighborhood theater to take the grand form of the motion picture palace otherwise confined to the downtown section of the city. It retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association and it played an important role in the development of the local entertainment industry.
2. The Tivoli, built for Harry M. Crandall, Washington's leading theater operator and important local businessman, is associated with the life of a person significant in local history.
3. The Tivoli, as a fine example of the work of Thomas White Lamb, America's premier theater architect during the early glory days of the motion picture industry, represents the work of a master (and it is the only Lamb theater still standing in Washington) and possesses high artistic value.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately .55 acres

Quadrangle name Washington West, D.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

18	32281010	41311081515
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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D 

--	--	--

E 

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F 

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G 

--	--	--

H 

--	--	--

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Tivoli Theater stands on lot 805 in Square 2837 in the northwest quadrant of Washington. The irregularly-shaped lot is 19,109 square feet in area and has a 220.06 foot frontage on 14th Street, N.W., and a 109.26 foot frontage on Park Road, N.W.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cranston Darris, Acting Chief, Historic Preservation Division

Historic Preservation Division

organization D.C. Dept. of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs date March 1985

street & number 614 H Street, N.W., Room 305 telephone (202) 727-7360

city or town Washington state D.C.

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Carol B. Thompson

title Director, Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs date 3/11/85

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

*[Signature]*

date 4/10/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The 2500-seat theater was dominated by an immense, central ceiling dome that held a magnificent chandelier. Plaster grillwork with a large oval pastoral painting formed a bridge between the dome and the proscenium arches. At the front of the auditorium, a double proscenium arch decorated with two series of ornamental plaster designs, and set off at the top by a cartouche, frames the stage. The stage was large enough to accommodate the most elaborate theatrical or operatic productions. The orchestra pit was equipped with an elevator that could raise the entire orchestra up to stage level. The giant Wurlitzer organ operated in a similar manner, on its own elevator. At the time the Tivoli was built, the \$35,000 organ was one of the largest and most expensive south of New York City. The original grills were set in the walls flanking the stage and feature designs utilizing a lyre motif. A stairway on the 14th Street side of the backstage area of the theater provides access to storage rooms and three tiers of dressing rooms.

The mechanical equipment in the theater was the most modern and best available. The projection booth was lined up directly with the screen, an innovation aimed at eliminating distortion. The booth featured fire-proof wired-glass windows, allowing patrons to view the processes necessary for the screening of a movie. The tile-lined booth was equipped with the latest power projectors, spotlight lamp, stereopticon and generator. The Tivoli was air-conditioned and heated by means of an elaborate system of fans and vents. The picture palace played a significant role in the technological development of air conditioning. By 1921, although it was possible to cool and dehumidify air, it required large expensive equipment, and thus air conditioning was only available in movie palaces which could attract the patrons and generate the revenues to bear this expense.

This combination of advanced equipment, sumptuous decor, and handsome architecture, along with the well-planned Crandall productions, made the Tivoli Theater an enormous success. The building, although vacant, remains essentially unaltered. Its architectural integrity has not been violated.

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4. The design, innovative technological features, sumptuous materials, and luxurious interior of this picture palace, the grandest remaining the District of Columbia, embody the distinctive characteristics of the Golden Age of the motion picture palace of the early decades of the twentieth century.

The Tivoli Theater at 14th Street and Park Road, N.W., one of the few remaining pre-Depression theaters in Washington, stands as a rare and magnificent reminder in the District of Columbia of the Golden Age of movie palaces. Its history, like its architecture, contributes to its significance as a Washington monument. Harry M. Crandall, the owner, was Washington's most important movie theater operator. Thomas White Lamb, who designed the building for Crandall, was the premier theater architect of his day.

The success of the motion picture led to the development of a uniquely American building type--the motion picture palace--suitable for showing films to large audiences. Widespread construction of this building type, which was characterized by new, often exotic, interpretations and applications of architectural styles and elements, occurred in the early decades of this century. Movie palaces differed from the nickelodeons and smaller theatres in several ways. They were capable of seating over a thousand patrons, were suitable for stage shows, and provided additional services for their patrons such as different price tickets, concerts for waiting customers and babysitting.

By August 1926, the industry had developed to the point where talking pictures were commercially successful. With "The Jazz Singer" (1927), starring Washingtonian, Al Jolson, "talkies" were here to stay. The first "talkie" shown in Washington was "Don Juan", with John Barrymore. The event took place at the Metropolitan Theater, a Crandall theater. Assistant manager John Payette had seen the film in Baltimore and convinced Harry Crandall, the owner of the Crandall chain, to install sound equipment in the theater.

By the time talking movies were standard fare, 14th Street, N.W., between Columbia Road and Monroe Street, had become the uptown theater center, comparable to F Street downtown. Five movie theaters and an amusement arcade were located in those blocks, including two Crandall theaters, the Savoy at 3030-3040 14th Street (1913), and the Tivoli at the corner of Park Road (1924).

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Harry M. Crandall (1879-1937), a native Washingtonian, made his fortune capitalizing on the popularity and success of the motion picture industry in its early years. Crandall began his working life in 1900 as a clerk for the Post Office. By 1905, he was running a livery stable for mail carriers. In 1907, he built his first theater, the 80-seat Casino, at 4th and East Capitol Streets, N.E. In 1910, he opened the Airdome, the first open-air theater in the area, at New York Avenue and North Capitol Street. Three years later he built the Jay at 9th and E Streets, N.W. Crandall's chain continued to grow and he became the leading movie theater owner in Washington and one of the most important theater circuit owners in the country. In the District of Columbia, the majority of the picture palaces were built by Crandall. His theaters eventually numbered eighteen, with 20,000 seats, in Washington, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Among them were the Apollo, Metropolitan Avenue Grand, Knickerbocker, and Tivoli, which was the largest and grandest of them all. Crandall eventually merged his chain with the Stanley chain, becoming the Stanley-Crandall Corporation. During the following year (1927), the theaters were sold to Warner Brothers. Crandall also owned a number of local businesses associated with the movie industry and was active in such organizations as the Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce.

Crandall's impact on the local business and entertainment scene was significant. One of the area's largest drug store chains had a stated policy of obtaining a site and opening a store as close to a Crandall theater as possible. Fourteenth Street merchants and other area businessmen used the opening of the Tivoli as the occasion to celebrate business development in Columbia Heights. On April 5, 1924, the day the Tivoli opened, a parade with over 300 cars, trucks, and floats was staged from near the White House up 14th Street to the Tivoli. Prizes were awarded for the best decorations. There was also dancing in the streets. Boy Scouts directed sidewalk traffic and spectators and celebrities abounded. City officials, cabinet members, newspaper owners and publishers, members of Congress, and movie people filled the seats to see Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, the San Carlo Grand Opera, the Tivoli Ballet Corps, and "Painted People" with Coleen Moore. The local newspapers covered the event in detail. The Washington Post reported that "the influence which the establishment of this magnificent addition to the real showplaces of the District will have upon real estate values and business development in Northwest is incalculable".

In every major city during this period, there were great downtown theaters and small neighborhood theaters. In addition, there were "metropolitan regional theaters" situated at key intersections along major streets that drew patrons from the entire section of the regional population that passed by. The Tivoli with its visibility, accessibility and grand and luxurious scale was such a theater. The Crandall organization aimed for city-wide appeal and, with the Tivoli's 2500 seats, they succeeded. Dubbed the "Temple of the Arts", the Tivoli was the only neighborhood theater in Washington, Maryland, and Virginia with the possible exception of the Byrd Theater in Richmond that could approach the size and style of the magnificent neighborhood theaters of New York, Chicago, or Milwaukee. Not only were movies shown. Weekly shows included ballet, orchestral and, concert numbers, as well as other entertainment for the first year of operation. The Tivoli orchestra was one of the most popular in the city, occasionally recording broadcasts. Tivoli programs rivaled those at the large New York and Chicago theaters and at the Grauman Theaters on the West Coast.

(Continued on NPS Form 10-900-a)

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Indeed, Crandall's productions rivaled the magnificence of his buildings. His business sense was equally good. Crandall established his own art and poster departments and made news by establishing public service and education departments within his organization.

The Tivoli Theater on the northeast corner of 14th Street and Park Road, N.W., stands as a neighborhood landmark and a handsome anchor to a prominent site. The theater was built in 1923-24 by Sol Rosenberg for Washington theater entrepreneur Harry M. Crandall. As early as 1921, Crandall had his architect, Reginald Geare, prepare plans for the theater. However, the Knickerbocker Theater disaster occurred before completion of the plans. The roof of the Knickerbocker, a Crandall theater designed by Geare, collapsed under the weight of snow from the heaviest snowfall in years. Ninety-eight people were killed and 150 were seriously injured on January 28, 1922. The District Commissioners promptly closed down all the city's theaters until the snow could be removed from their roofs. Geare's work on the Tivoli was immediately suspended. A year later Crandall contacted Thomas White Lamb about rebuilding a theater on the Knickerbocker site and about completing the Tivoli plans.

Thomas White Lamb (1871-1942) was the foremost theater architect of his day, designing for both legitimate theater and motion pictures. Born and educated in Dundee, Scotland, Lamb immigrated to the United States as a young man. He received his architectural training at Cooper Union in New York and subsequently attained national prominence as a theater designer. Lamb belonged to the "hard-top" school of theater design, as opposed to the "atmospheric" school, and the hallmark of the work of much of his career was the Adamesque detailing of his interiors. The first clearly-defined example of Lamb's Adam-inspired interiors was Loew's Palace (1918) in Washington, D.C., which is no longer standing. Lamb had a long-term professional relationship with Marcus Loew, designing many of the Loew chain's most magnificent palace theaters. He designed theaters across this country, as well as in England, Australia, North Africa, India, and Egypt. His most famous buildings are: the original Madison Square Garden and the Capitol Theater in New York, the State and the Loew's Ohio in Cleveland, the Ohio Theater in Columbus, the Orpheum Theater in Boston, the Fox in San Francisco, and the Loew's State in St. Louis.

The Tivoli is both the only Thomas Lamb theater and the finest movie palace still standing in Washington. As an important work by the premier theater architect of his day and fine example of a building type no longer being constructed, the Tivoli is a significant element in the city's architectural heritage. Its associations with Harry Crandall, a major figure in the motion picture industry in the area, give the building historical importance as well. Indeed, the Tivoli stands as a monument to an important local businessman, a major nationally-known architect, and the early years of glory of the motion picture industry.



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Original and Unpublished Sources:

Building Permits, District of Columbia, on file at the National Archives. Permit #1264, issued 13 August 1923 pertains to the erection of this building. Additional building permits which pertain to the TIVOLI include #3347 (2 Oct. 1922), #5384½ (4 Dec. 1922), and #5404 (6 Dec. 1922). Between 1928 and 1958, there are perhaps another 50-60 permits on file under Square 2837, Lots 801-803, which relate to the TIVOLI Theater Building. Most of these are for minor cosmetic changes or repairs.

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Interview with Dave Fanning, Washington, D.C., 27 Feb. 1976

Field Notes, Robert K. Headley, Jr., 28 Dec. 1976.

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(note on the TIVOLI); vol. 65 (Nov.- Dec. 1923),  
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v. 128, p. 313-314, 5 October 1925, illus.
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- Pemberton, Thomas E. "Maryland Theatre, Hagerstown, Maryland."  
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Includes Stanley Theatre, Utica, N.Y.
- "Roof-Deck Parking in New York," architect: Thomas W. Lamb, engineer:  
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July 1940. Illus., plan.
- "San Francisco Fox"...June 28, 1929; Thomas W. Lamb, architect."  
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- "Theatre Portfolio, from the THS Photo collection." Marquee.  
v. 7, p. 16-19, 3rd quarter 1975, illus.

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- "Film Spaces." Design Quarterly. no. 93, whole issue, 1974, illus., plans.
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