

ADDRESS 252-272 Tremont COR.

NAME Music Hall/ Metropolitan Theatre
present original

MAP No. 24N/12E SUB AREA Theatre
building permit 12/26/23

DATE 1923-1925 opening 10/17/1925
source

(Photo)

ARCHITECT Whittemore. Also C. Howard Crane;
Kenneth Franzheim, G. Nelson Meserve
source: 3

BUILDER Olympia Construction Co. 4
source

OWNER Tremont St. Realty/
original present
N.E. Medical Ctr. Hosp

PHOTOGRAPHS 10³/6, 3/7, 3 5/2, 5/3, 1 2./4.79

Ward 3, Parcel # 5640 UTM# 19/329860/4690520

TYPE (residential) single double row 2-fam. 3-deck ten apt.
(non-residential) theatre, offices and stores

NO. OF STORIES (1st to cornice) 14 plus -

ROOF flat cupola - dormers -

MATERIALS (Frame) clapboards shingles stucco asphalt asbestos alum/vinyl
(Other) brick stone limestone concrete iron/steel/alum.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION Irregularly-shaped Renaissance Revival "palazzo skyscraper
with symmetrical, 11-bay Tremont facade. Two-story colonnade of engaged
fluted Greek Ionic columns at level 2-3. Shaft of building organized
by rising piers, recessed spandrels and paired metal window units, with
ornament concentrated at level 4 and 5. Building terminated by two-story
colonnade of engaged Corinthian pilasters at level 12 and 13, plus dentil

EXTERIOR ALTERATION minor moderate drastic cornice and roof cresting of
palmettes and theatre masks.

CONDITION good fair poor LOT AREA 46,106 sq. feet

NOTEWORTHY SITE CHARACTERISTICS Building roughly L-shaped, wrapped around

Wilbur Theatre to north. South elevation of 6 stone bays and tan panel
brick rear entrance opening onto small triangular plaza.

(Map)

SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd on reverse) The Music Hall/
Metropolitan is highly significant as the
largest theatre in Boston history and one of
the largest in the country, as the best N.E.
example of the sumptuous "movie palace" of
the roaring twenties and as the last of
Clarence Blackall's 14 Boston theatres.

The theatre reputedly cost \$8.5m, seats
4200-4400, and is housed in a large office bldg,
first to be constructed in Boston under a
new height limit of 14 stories. Architect was
Clarence Blackall (1857-1942), one of the

NOV 7 1980

Moved; date if known _____

Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	X
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	y	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	X	Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community/ development	_____				

Significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

leading U.S. theatre architects and designer of the Colonial, Wilbur, Modern and Pilgrim/Olympia. The interior, modeled after Garnier's Paris Opera⁶ and decorated in the Louis XIV style, was appropriately advertised as "the public castle" with "a thousand and one wonders" including the grand lobby with four tiers of promenades, spacious lounges, marble doorways, rose jasper pillars, two 1800-lb. gold plated chandeliers, bronze details by the Gorham Company, and \$10,000 in gems decorating the central mural painting by Edmund Philo Kellogg.⁵

The entertainment was equally extravagant. The Met offered a combination of films and a stage show, which might feature its resident ballet corps, 100-voice chorus, 55-piece orchestra and two-console organ, all for 35¢ or 75¢ on weekend evenings. Resident producer John Murray Anderson arranged his own stage shows, headlined over the years with stars such as Rudy Vallee, Al Jolson, Burns and Allen, Jack Benny and Bob Hope.⁶ A seating board and cadre of 40 well-mannered, costumed ushers made sure that no seat remained empty long. Waiting patrons could arrange for bridge parties, lounge in comfortable chairs with the latest magazines, promenade to the music of two lobby orchestras, play ping pong, or visit the chic art deco restaurant which opened in 1932.

Since the destruction of the Boston Opera House in 1958, the Metropolitan has been used for performances by the Royal Ballet, Metropolitan Opera Company, Bolshoi, Kirov and Stuttgart Opera.⁶ Has been the "Music Hall" (leased by Sack Preservation Consideration (accessibility, re-use possibilities, capacity for public use and enjoyment, protection, utilities, context) Theatres), since 196

Preservation Recommendations: National Register (individual) and Boston City Landmark (interior)

Current Status: Present plans call for converting the Music Hall into a prime center for ballet and opera. Owners, Tufts N.E. Medical Center, have agreed to lease the bldg. to the tax-exempt Metropolitan Center, Inc. beginning in the summer of 1980, provided the group can raise \$1.75 million in cash & pledges by May, 1979, toward a projected \$3.5 m. renovation involving a new

Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's stage, theatre records, early maps, etc.) restoration & dressing rooms.⁹ (Globe 12/25)

1. American Architect and Building News, 8/5/1926, plates 181-185, 187 (exterior and interior photographs, no text)
2. G. H. Edgell, The American Architect of Today, N.Y. 1928, p. 332-335.
3. Sexton and Betts, American Theatres of Today, (1927), p. 56-59 (illustrations and plans)
4. Achievements of New England Architects and Engineers, Boston, 1927, p. 136.
5. Boston Evening Transcript, 10/6/1925
6. Tucci, Douglass, "The Boston Rialto..." City Conservation League, 1977
7. Broadway Down East by Elliot Norton, p. 23, 111
8. Boston Evening Transcript, 6/23/1923.
9. Harvard Univ. Theatre collection (Music Hall and Metropolitan files)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets, Section 9

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property see individual and area forms

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1"=25,000'

UMT References

A

1	9	3	2	9	9	4	0	4	6	9	0	6	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The southern boundary of the Theatre Area starts at a point on Washington St., 520' south of the intersection of Kneeland & Washington. From this point it runs due west along an arbitrary straight line to a point on Charles St. South 442' south of Stuart Street. From thence it follows Charles St. South one block north to the intersection of Stuart St.,

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

by Pamela Fox
Boston Landmarks Commission

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston, state MA 02108

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Patricia W. Weslowki date 10/20/80

title _____ date _____

For HCERS use only

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

John W. Ray
Keeper of the National Register

date 12/9/80

Attest: Patrick Andrews
Chief of Registration

date 12/4/80

Property Boston Theatre Multiple Resource Area

DUE
1/7/81

State MA, Suffolk Working Number 11, 7, 80, 2781

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 11
Maps 1-3

This multiple resource area is significant for the quality of its architecture and for its association with the development of the important Boston music industry and growth of the theater/movie house industry. The district's and individual buildings achieved significance between c. 1890 and the 1930's - contained in this M.R.A. are significant groups of late 19th/early 20th cent. commercial buildings, the center

HISTORIAN

accept
Patrick Andrews
2/4/80

the music industry (especially piano manufacturing) and examples of every kind of theater that developed in Boston in this period. This is a good multiple resource nomination - they have included all the required categories of information.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____
Federal Register Entry 2.2.82

Send-back _____
Re-submit _____

Entered DEC 9 1980



Metropolitan Theater

Boston Theater M.B.A.

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000272