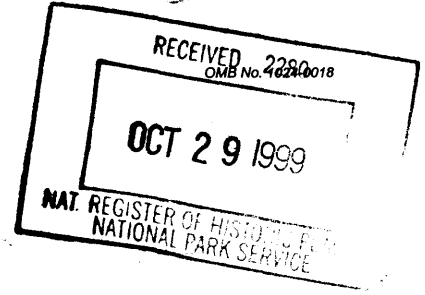


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1412



# 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 *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 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 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 Blue Fox Theatre

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 116 W. Main St. not for publication

city or town Grangeville vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Idaho code 049 zip code 83530

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Susan P. Neitzel 10/22/99  
SUSAN P. NEITZEL, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Edson R. Beall 11/30/99

Property Name Blue Fox Theatre

County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Live Performance and Motion Picture Theaters in Idaho

**6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: theatre

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE theatre

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation concrete

walls brick, stucco

\_\_\_\_\_

roof tile

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

see attached

Property Name Blue Fox Theatre

County and State Idaho County, Idaho

**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.
- 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.

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

1930-1949

1930, 1940, 1944

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

N/A

Adkison, J.R., Clarkston, WA, builder

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

see attached

Property Name Blue Fox Theatre

County and State Idaho County, Idaho

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

see attached

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

Specify repository:

Idaho Oral History Center

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

1	<u>1/1</u>	<u>5/6/8/2/9/0</u>	<u>5/0/8/5/9/4/0</u>	3	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	4	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>

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 Linda Morton-Keithley, Oral Historian

organization Idaho State Historical Society date May 27, 1998

street & number 450 N. Fourth St. telephone 208-334-3863

city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

**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 Al Wagner

street & number 821 S. Idaho telephone 208-983-1776

city or town Grangeville state ID zip code 83530

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Name of Property Blue Fox Theatre  
County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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The Blue Fox Theatre, located at 116 W. Main Street (lot 2 and north five feet of lot 11, block 4) in downtown Grangeville, Idaho, is a two-story structure in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The theatre is a free-standing building that abuts, but is separate from, a commercial structure immediately to the west. The building sits on a concrete foundation. Exterior walls are of brick with applied stucco. The flat-topped, hipped roof has red tiles arranged in a regularly laid, straight barrel pattern and features a decorative parapet, supported by simple brackets, centered over the entry area. The front facade includes a triangular marquee and tower bearing the Blue Fox name. Both marquee and tower feature neon lighting.

A recessed ticket booth is located in the center of the entry area, with double doors on each side leading to the theatre lobby. The entry area is flanked on each side by retail space, originally a ladies dress shop and a menswear shop. Both retail spaces feature a glazed display area with brick surround on each side of the central recessed doorway. The upper front facade of the building is characterized by a double arch outlined in brick located directly above the entry area. Within the space demarcated by the double arches are four narrow arched windows. Centered above each retail space is a recessed double-arched window flanked by small light fixtures.

The east elevation includes two sets of double-arched windows at the second story level, located toward the front of the building. The west elevation abuts a neighboring structure and is almost entirely obscured. The rear elevation is marked only by two emergency exit doors, one at each side of the ground floor level.

On the interior of the building, the theatre lobby includes the concession stand and, on each side immediately to the rear of the retail space, a small restroom. (The theatre restrooms are also accessible from the retail spaces.) Access to the basement is attained from a small landing adjacent to each restroom. Stairs leading to the balcony level are also located at each side of the lobby. The majority of space on the ground floor of the building is taken up by the auditorium and stage area. The basement, which contains the heating and cooling plant, workshop, and storerooms, is situated under the ground floor entry, lobby and retail areas. A crawl space extends under the theatre auditorium from the basement area toward the rear of the building.

Above the retail, entry, and lobby areas are two four-room apartments, each with a skylight. The apartments flank the balcony-level projection booth and are accessible only from the balcony. The balcony also includes additional theatre seating.

With the exception of the marquee and tower that were added to the front facade in 1940, the exterior of the Blue Fox has undergone few changes since its construction in 1930. The exterior was replastered and repainted after a disastrous fire in 1944 which nearly gutted the interior, but no structural changes were made. The interior spaces were rebuilt and newly redecorated at that same time but the basic division of space was not changed.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Name of Property Blue Fox Theatre  
County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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The Blue Fox Theatre is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role as a major entertainment center for both the town of Grangeville and the Camas Prairie area of central Idaho. The Blue Fox theatre meets all of the eligibility requirements for theatres established in the Live Performance and *Motion Picture Theater Buildings in Idaho, 1897-1949* Multiple Property Documentation Form. Opened during the early years of the Depression, the Blue Fox was built at a time when many small town silent movie houses were closing. Because of the economic climate, these older movie houses were generally not replaced with a new, "talkie" theatre such as the Blue Fox. The Blue Fox represented a major financial commitment on the part of the owner, and concurrent commitment to the needs of the local community for motion picture and live performance entertainment.

The town of Grangeville was home to several silent movie houses, including the Lyric and the Bell, both in existence by 1909, and the Bijou, which opened in 1913. In addition, moving pictures were shown on an occasional basis at the local I.O.O.F. hall as early as 1908. However, by 1928, when the Lyric was purchased by Al Wagner of Cottonwood, Idaho, it was the only movie house regularly operating in the town.

Al J. Wagner was born April 3, 1901 at Harvey, North Dakota and moved with his family to Cottonwood in 1910. Wagner attended the University of Idaho at Moscow, Idaho and eventually took employment as a bookkeeper in a Cottonwood bank. However, he also became interested in the motion picture business and operated a theatre circuit in the towns of Cottonwood, Winchester, and Craigmont. Wagner drove to each town carrying a portable movie projector and films which he then showed in a leased hall, such as the Knights of Columbus hall in Cottonwood. He continued the theatre circuit until the late 1930s.

Shortly after purchasing the Lyric, Wagner decided to build a new movie house which would feature talking pictures. Ground breaking for the building, located on a lot immediately to the west of the Lyric, occurred in November of 1929 and the facility opened to the public on May 2, 1930. (Wagner would discontinue operation of the Lyric with the opening of the Blue Fox.) J.R. Adkison of Clarkston, Washington was the building contractor; W.T. Cregan, Seattle<sup>1</sup>, was responsible for the interior design.

The local newspaper, *Idaho County Free Press*, ran frequent articles describing construction progress of the new building and on December 12, 1929, announced a contest to name the theatre. Suggestions were

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<sup>1</sup> The 1930 Seattle City Directory lists Wm. T. Cregan as a salesman for the National Theatre Supply Company.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Name of Property Blue Fox Theatre  
County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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numerous and varied, many reflecting the Spanish flavor of the building's architecture and others reminiscent of local features - Granada, Wagner, Majestic, Lone Star, Talkies Ritz, Prairie, Cordova, Del Rio, Orpheum, Mission, Buena Vista, North Idaho, Camas Globe, and Chief Joseph, among others. One suggestion was even made in verse:

Come to the "CABALLERO"  
Where you will have a cozy seat.  
The music is sweet  
And hear the voice  
Of your favorite star.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. J.H. Dickson of Lucile, Idaho submitted the winning name, earning \$10.00 and three free tickets for his effort. According to the newspaper account of the contest, Blue Fox was selected because ". . . advertising possibilities were great, and it would be the only theatre in the United States with that name."<sup>3</sup> The second prize suggestion was Balboa, followed by Alhambra, Wagnerian, and Tolo. Some months later, Wagner sent one complimentary ticket to each individual who submitted an entry for the contest.

Opening day was a major event for the small town of Grangeville. The *Idaho County Free Press* ran a "Blue Fox Theatre Special" edition with extensive descriptions of the new facility and the days' schedule. Included were messages of congratulation from local businesses and expansive descriptions of the new facility, from the sound equipment to the chairs, depicted as "beautiful American Walnut wood upholstered both seat and back in a red Spanish leather."<sup>4</sup> The opening film was *The Gold Diggers of Broadway*, featuring "Singers, dancers, glorious girls and the regal beauty of colors that turn the rainbow green with envy."<sup>5</sup>

Over the next few years, Al Wagner would aggressively promote the facility with special events such as Bank Night, dish giveaways, an occasional free show, newspaper advertisements, banners, and distribution of handbills. Al Wagner, Jr. recalls:

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<sup>2</sup> *Idaho County Free Press*, 26 December 1929, p. 8, c. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Idaho County Free Press*, 13 February 1930, p. 1, c. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Idaho County Free Press*, 24 April 1930, Sec. 2, p. 2, c. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1, c. 3-4.

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Name of Property Blue Fox Theatre

County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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Everybody that had a small town theater, had a sign painter that he had working for him. They used to build these banners, just like this, only they were all hand done. And they'd hang these banners out. . . . And then they'd put out advertising, put out these flyers and these calendars. . . . Then we'd have these, we'd call them "showboys," that'd get in the car and they'd go out and go to Harpster, Stites, [New Meadows, Riggins, Kamiah, and Elk City] and put out these programs.<sup>6</sup>

The facility was also regularly used for live entertainment activities, such as traveling vaudeville troupes, local school theatrical productions, and live music.

The building has seen some changes over its history. The existing marquee and tower, with neon lighting, were added in 1940, again with substantial newspaper coverage. In 1944, a fire which was believed to originate in the basement gutted much of the interior of the building and caused extensive smoke damage to the apartments and retail spaces. Wagner announced his intentions of immediately rebuilding the structure, despite the difficulties of obtaining necessary supplies and equipment due to World War II. He was assured by the War Productions Board that ". . . in view of the theatre here being the only entertainment house in the vicinity, that priorities will be allowed."<sup>7</sup> The theatre reopened in March, 1945, redecorated and equipped with new, modern sound and projection equipment and an improved heating and cooling system. The original chairs were refinished and reupholstered.

Today, the Blue Fox continues to serve the needs of the local movie-going population and remains the only motion picture theatre in Grangeville.

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<sup>6</sup> Wagner, Al, Jr. interviewed by Linda Morton-Keithley. (Boise: Idaho Oral History Center, May 4, 1995), p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Idaho County Free Press*, 31 August 1944, p. 1, c. 3.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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Deed Records. Idaho County Courthouse. Grangeville, Idaho.

*Idaho County Free Press* (Grangeville, Idaho).

*Polk's Seattle (Washington) City Directory*. R.L Polk & Co., 1930 ed.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps (Grangeville, Idaho), 1910 and 1941.

Wagner, Al "Port." Interviewed by Linda Morton-Keithley on May 4, 1995. Boise: Idaho Oral History Center.

\_\_\_\_\_. Personal interview. August 26, 1997.

Wagner, Eleanor. Personal interview. May 3, 1995.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Name of Property Blue Fox Theatre

County and State Idaho County, Idaho

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## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is defined as Lot 2, Block 4, and the north five feet of Lot 11, Section 19 of Township 30 North, Range 3 East, Boise Meridian, on which the building stands.

### Justification:

The nominated property includes the building and the land on which it stands.