

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

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5010-0731

**NATIONAL  
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Elberta Theatre

other names/site Capitol Theatre

**2. Location**

street & number 53 South Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Brigham City

N/A vicinity

state Utah code UT county Box Elder code 003 zip code 84302

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

No. of Resources within Property

- contributing      noncontributing  
1                \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_                buildings  
\_\_\_\_\_                sites  
\_\_\_\_\_                structures  
\_\_\_\_\_                objects

Name of related multiple property listing:

1                0 Total

Historic Resources of Brigham City

No. of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

See continuation sheet.

11/11/91  
Signature of certifying official

11-11-91  
Date

Utah Division of State History, Office of Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.   See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.

Entered in the  
National Register

10/17/91

Stelena J. Byers

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:) \_\_\_\_\_

J. J. Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## **6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture; Theater

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Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Theater

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## **7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School Style

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Materials  
(enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Concrete block

roof Asphalt

other Stone (rear wall)

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Constructed in 1917, the Elberta Theatre is a two-story brick theater with modest Prairie School styling. It has undergone several additions or remodelings over the years--most notable were those in 1933, 1941, and 1984--but still retains its overall integrity on the exterior.

The Prairie School design of the Elberta Theatre makes it unique among the city's commercial buildings. This architectural style is rare in Brigham City with the Carnegie Library and several homes being the only other examples. The theater's principal facade has been somewhat altered, but not enough to lose its historic appearance. The interior of the building has been extensively remodeled with little historic integrity left.

Constructed in 1917<sup>1</sup> of red brick and stucco, the theater is located among the row of commercial buildings on the city's main business block. The taller C.W. Knudson building flanks the theater on the south, and a smaller clothing store adjoins it on the north. Obstructing a full view of the theater is the 1928 "Welcome to Brigham" steel archway which spans Main Street.

The front of this two-story theater is a combination of horizontal with vertical elements. The overall shape of the principal facade is wider than it is tall and flat at the top with a gabled parapet at each end. Also important horizontally are a cornice 3/4 of the way up the facade, the second floor sash-style apartment windows, and the 1938 art deco marquee<sup>2</sup> with plastic sign boards. Vertical features are located mostly at the upper level. The tall protruding "Capitol" sign installed in 1934<sup>3</sup> is the dominant upright feature and it extends above the building. Inlaid light stucco areas go both directions, but are bolder up and down.

The horizontal emphasis seems to prevail in spite of changes to the 1917 facade. When the theater was called the Elberta its sign extended outward and parallel to a

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<sup>1</sup> "New Pictures House Nearly Completed." Box Elder News, Feb. 27, 1917, p. 1, col. 3. "Elberta Theatre to Open Monday," Box Elder News, March 9, 1917, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Capitol Theatre Shines Like a Million Dollars [sic]", The News-Journal, August 23, 1938, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>3</sup> "Elberta is Changed to Capitol Theatre", Box Elder News, August 31, 1934, p. 2, col. 7.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
 nationally       statewide       locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

## Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/RecreationCommerce

Period of Significance

1917-1941

Significant Dates

1917

## Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: unknown      Builder: Christensen, Richard  
(contractor), Whitaker, T.W. (general contractor)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Constructed in 1917, the Elberta Theatre is significant as the only remaining movie theatre of the half-dozen that were in operation in Brigham City during the early twentieth century. Those theaters and a majority of the commercial buildings downtown were constructed during a period of significant growth in the community. That period has been documented in the historic context "Private Commercial and Industrial Growth, 1880s-1930s," which is part of the multiple property submittal of "Historic Resources of Brigham City." The Elberta Theatre is one of approximately 15 commercial buildings from that period that are still standing and are eligible for National Register designation.

During the early twentieth century, Brigham City was a town of approximately 3,000 and served as the principal city and county seat of Box Elder County. Its central business district, though just a few blocks long, housed some 175 businesses at the turn of the century and double that number by the late 1920s.<sup>4</sup> The central business district was the commercial center for both Brigham City and the surrounding communities. The emergence of this commercial hub during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a significant phase in the development of the town. The types of businesses established in Brigham City were typical of any small town--grocery stores, banks, restaurants and saloons, clothing shops, hotels, theaters, and so forth.

The first motion pictures in Brigham City were shown shortly after the turn of the century in the Opera House, previously used for the community dramatics initiated by Lorenzo Snow in the 1850s. Several movie theatres within a two-block radius (virtually the entire business district at that time)--the Joie, the Florence, the Gem, and the Alta (later the Liberty) -- preceded the Elberta which was built by William R. Dredge and W.H. Shurtliffe in 1917.<sup>5</sup> The New Grand Theatre (later the Roxy) opened in 1932. The Elberta, however, is the only movie theatre standing

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<sup>4</sup>Gazetteer of Utah, 1900, 1928. Available in Utah State Historical Society Library.

<sup>5</sup> Yates, Sarah, "Opera House, Theatres Were Part of History", Box Elder Journal, April 15, 1976, p. 9. Abstract Records, Box Elder Courthouse.

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canopy which preceded the marquee.<sup>6</sup> The vertical 1934 "Capitol" sign was a noticeable change and so was the replacement of second-story windows. About 1941, when the interior space above the lobby was converted to a second floor apartment, the windows were altered.<sup>7</sup> A grouping of five narrow windows were replaced by four sets of similar ones. These new windows were spread out further and cut into the decorative horizontal stuccoed areas.

A major remodeling in August of 1984 completely changed the inside of the building. The original large open theater room was partitioned into two smaller showplaces one behind the other. A long hallway on the north side was created to provide access to theater #2, and the projection booth for this east end room was located in back of the screen of theater #1. Ceilings were suspended, walls were draped, new carpeting and new seats were installed.<sup>8</sup> These new interiors look like any modern theater so this part of the building has lost historic integrity.

Earlier renovations of the interior included changing the movie screen and seating from the west side to the east (1933),<sup>9</sup> and installing new seats and expanding the lobby and restrooms (1941).<sup>10</sup>

Newer materials on the back of the building indicate recent repairs. The east facade (back) was repaired with cinder block c. 1950. A 3/4 story lean-to with a shed roof is attached onto the back of the building and runs the full width. The walls of this lean-to are made of rough-cut stone and cinder block. The rough-cut stone indicates part of a pre-1900 structure.<sup>11</sup>

The Capitol Theatre's merits as a historic building will have to be judged solely by its exterior facade. Other noteworthy features are the box office and the maroon-tiled entryway, both installed in 1941, and the 1938 marquee with a clock.

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<sup>6</sup> Photograph by Mathew Compton of Brigham City's Main Street looking north c. 1930. Negative available at U.S.U. Special Collections, Merrill Library, Logan, Utah.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Marilyn Walker, current owner of the Capitol Theatre.

<sup>8</sup> "Familiar Downtown Theatre Gaining 'Split Personality'", Box Elder Journal, August 22, 1984, p. 1, col. 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> "Elberta Will Reopen Friday", The Box Elder News, August 1, 1933, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>10</sup> "Capitol Completely Renovated", The Box Elder News-Journal, April 19, 1941, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> No information has been found to verify alteration dates at the back of the Capitol Theatre. These dates have been estimated from the materials used.

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today. It was also the only one built especially for motion pictures rather than adapted from another business.

This theatre is one of the better-preserved commercial buildings on Main Street. Although the interior of the building has undergone major changes, the exterior has maintained most of its historical integrity. With the exception of the 1941 window alterations, changes to the exterior, such as the entry and box office, were made more than 50 years ago. The building is centrally located in the downtown business district of Brigham City and houses one of the longest continuous operations on Main Street.

J.E. Ryan bought the Elberta in 1921 and leased it to Vosco Call in 1932.<sup>12</sup> Call bought it in 1940 and changed the name from Elberta to Capitol Theatre. He installed a 20-foot neon sign,<sup>13</sup> and installed a modern new sound system in 1935.<sup>14</sup>

After Vosco Call's retirement, the Call family continued to operate the theatre until 1984 when it was purchased by Reed and Marilyn Walker.<sup>15</sup> In August of 1984, the Walkers partitioned the theatre into two smaller theatres, one behind (east of) the other, in order to run two movies simultaneously. The Walkers are the current proprietors.

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<sup>12</sup> Abstract Records.

<sup>13</sup> "Elberta is Changed to Capitol Theatre", The Box Elder News, August 31, 1934, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>14</sup> "Capitol Theatre to Install Wide Range System This Week", The Box Elder News, August 20, 1935, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Abstract Records.

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

Abstract Records. Box Elder County Courthouse.

Box Elder News, February 27, 1917; August 1, 1933; August 31, 1934; August 20, 1935; August 23, 1938.

Box Elder News-Journal, April 19, 1941.

Photograph of Brigham City's Main Street by Matthew Compton, c. 1930. U.S.U. Special Collections, Logan, Utah.

Yates, Sarah, "Opera House, Theatres Were Part of History", Box Elder Journal, April 15, 1976.

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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:

Brigham City Museum-Gallery

## **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property .19 acre

UTM References

A 1/2 4/1/5/3/5/0 4/5/9/5/5/8/0  
Zone Easting Northing

B / ||||| |||||  
Zone Easting Northing

C / ||||| |||||

D / ||||| |||||

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point 9.5 feet N from the SW corner of Lot 5, Block 13, Plat A, Brigham City Townsite Survey, said point being a center line of common wall between the theater building and a store building; thence E 110.3 feet to the center line of a wall common to the theater building and a store immediately west; thence N 15.15 feet, E 54.67 feet, S 60.5 feet, W 165 feet, N 45 feet to the beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

These are the present and historic boundaries of the site.

See continuation sheet

## **11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Larry Douglass, Director; Kathy Bradford, Research Specialist

organization Brigham City Museum-Gallery date May 1991

street & number 24 North 300 West/P.O. Box 583 telephone 801-723-6769

city or town Brigham City state Utah zip code 84302