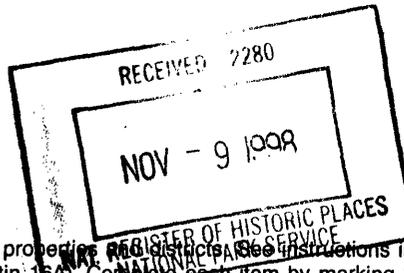


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



1492

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 15A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 State Theatre

other names/site number HD-E-278

2. Location

street & number 205 West Dixie Avenue N/A  not for publication

city or town Elizabethtown N/A  vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county Hardin code 093 zip code 42701

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

David L. Morgan, SPO and Executive Director, KHC 10-29-98

Signature of certifying official/Title Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 12/10/98

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

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

**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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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)

Architecture

Recreation/Entertainment

**Period of Significance**

1942-1948

**Significant Dates**

1942

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

T.J. Murphy & Sons, Builders

Architect unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**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

**Name of repository:**

Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 0.252 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	6 0 0 4 8 0	4 1 7 2 2 9 0	Elizabeth town Quad	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing			Zone	Easting	Northing
2					4			

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

Janet L. Johnston, Public Administration Specialist  
name/title Rebecca Proctor, Community Development Specialist

organization Lincoln Trail Area Development District date August 1, 1998

street & number P.O. Box 604 telephone (502) 769-2393

city or town Elizabethtown state KY zip code 42702

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Elizabethtown Attn: Steve Park

street & number P.O. Box 550 telephone (502) 765-6121

city or town Elizabethtown state KY zip code 42702

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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**Narrative Description**

The State Theatre is located in downtown Elizabethtown, Kentucky and is situated on U.S. Highway 31-W. The property is bounded by the highway on the north side, an alley way on the south side, and commercial structures on the east and west sides. The State Theatre was constructed in 1942 and is one of the few examples of Art Deco style architecture in Hardin County. The building is constructed of brick in a common bond pattern. Significant architectural features are the large marquee, neon signs, and stepped-roof parapet which are typical features of Art Deco theatre architecture of the 1930s and 1940s.

The front facade includes in-laid geometric designs which surround and emphasize the grand vertical marquee tower. Carrara glass accents portions of the front facade such as the ticket booth on the right of the building and the storefront style window on the left. There are two entrances into the State Theatre. One entrance is on the far right next to the ticket booth which leads directly upstairs. This entrance was used by the black patrons of the theatre. The main entrance includes two sets of wood double doors which lead into the lobby. The lobby has terrazzo flooring and another set of wood double doors which lead into the theatre.

The State Theatre contained approximately 950 two-toned cushioned metal theatre seats including the balcony area. Today there are 503 seats remaining. The ground level contains three sections of seats with two aisleways. The interior of the theatre is painted in various shades of green and burgundy. There are large murals on each side of the stage which feature Grecian goddesses who hold the masks of comedy and tragedy above their heads.

From the lobby there is a stairway on the left that leads up the balcony. The balcony is divided into two separate sections for white and black patrons. There are 277 seats in the balcony. It is carpeted in what is believed to be the original carpet. At the back of the balcony is the projection room. It still contains old preservable projectors and film reels.

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Section 8 Page 2

State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky

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**Statement of Significance**

The State Theatre meets National Register Criteria A and C. The State Theatre is historically significant within two contexts of evaluation, "Entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1930-1950" and "Commercial Architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1925-1950." The State Theatre is one of many movie theatres in the Commonwealth of Kentucky; however, it is a significant reminder of entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County in the mid-20th century. This theatre is the only remaining structure constructed solely for the purposes of showing motion pictures, and it is one of two structures in Elizabethtown-Hardin County which exhibit the Art Deco style of architecture. It is a product of the demand and needs for entertainment during World War II, and it reflects local, state, and national trends in theatre construction and Art Deco style of architecture.

The period of significance 1942-1948 is the time in which the State Theatre developed into its present-day form. The beginning date 1942 constitutes the completion of construction and opening of the State Theatre. The ending date 1948 signifies the commercial expansion of television and the beginning of the decline in movie theatre attendance. The significant date June 11, 1942 indicates the opening night of the State Theatre in downtown Elizabethtown.

**Entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1930-1950**

To evaluate the historic significance of the State Theatre and to begin to understand the role of the State Theatre in the development and growth of entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, historical documentation was reviewed. Source materials, such as *Hardin Heritage: The Historic Architecture of Hardin County, Kentucky*, *Elizabethtown and Hardin County, Kentucky: A Pictorial History, Two Centuries in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, Kentucky*, and *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*, provided information on the development and growth of entertainment in Elizabethtown, Hardin County, Kentucky, and the United States and the role of the State Theatre. The literature review included the period, 1930 to 1950, and showed that the State Theatre is the only significant reminder of the development and growth of motion picture entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County and that it provides important information about entertainment and the motion picture industry in Elizabethtown and Hardin County.

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**Section 8 Page 3**

**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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The growth and development of the motion picture industry occurred in the early 20th century and affected the types of establishments and venues throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the United States. The evolution of the movie theatre and motion pictures clearly demonstrated the progressive and vibrant nature of the nation and affected the way Americans viewed the world. According to the *United States Census of Business*, the motion picture industry thrived in the early 20th century. From the kinoscope, vaudeville, and "silents" to the "talkies," Americans witnessed innovations in motion pictures and theatre construction. Early 20th century entertainment affected commerce, industry, aesthetics, and technology.

By the 1930s, the motion picture industry had flourished. According to the 1935 *United States Census for Business*, Kentucky had 206 motion picture theatres. These Kentucky theatres had total receipts of \$4,848,000, approximately 62 percent of total amusement receipts. By the 1940s, the motion picture industry had reached its maximum development. "Movie attendance peaked in the 1940s as the public embraced messages of patriotism and romance, and theatre chains responded to the demand" (Valentine 7). By 1948, the number of motion picture theatres in Kentucky had increased to 297 motion picture theatres, and the total receipts were \$14,971,000, approximately 55 percent of total amusement receipts (U.S. Census of Business 1948). By the early 1950s, Kentucky and the United States witnessed a commercial expansion of television and experienced a reduction in movie attendance and the closing movie theatres. Throughout the mid- and late-20th century, the motion picture industry has adapted its services and establishments in order to compete with the popularity of television and other forms of entertainment.

The evolution of the motion picture theatre not only occurred in large urban areas, but it also affected small, rural communities nationwide. In the early 20th century, Elizabethtown-Hardin County became a regional entertainment center and represents the growth and development of motion picture theatres.

Created by the first Kentucky legislature in 1792, Hardin County historically has been a rural community with strong agricultural economy. However, Hardin County has experienced significant growth and development. Hardin County not only includes the county seat, Elizabethtown, but it also incorporates the Fort Knox Military Reservation and the Cities of Radcliff, Vine Grove, West Point, Sonora, and Upton. With the development of the Fort Knox Military Reservation in the early 1900s, Hardin County

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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has witnessed substantial population growth and commercial, industrial, and residential development throughout the county. Today Hardin County is Kentucky's fifth largest county in population.

Elizabethtown is the county seat of Hardin County and was incorporated in 1797. Elizabethtown was the largest city in Hardin County until World War II, when it was surpassed in population by the City of Radcliff with the growth of the Fort Knox Military Reservation. However, Elizabethtown historically has served as the county and regional commercial center. Residents of Hardin County as well as the Lincoln Trail region have travelled to Elizabethtown and recognized this city as the regional shopping, entertainment, and business center.

Located today on U.S. 31W, Elizabethtown's central business district thrived throughout the 1800s and early 1900s. Its strategic location and strong local and regional economic bases promoted the growth of commercial establishments in its downtown area. In addition to financial institutions and retail establishments, entertainment ventures were also significant contributors to Elizabethtown's thriving economy and viable downtown area.

In particular, downtown Elizabethtown became the hub for motion picture theatres in the early 20th century. Due to World War I and the Depression, local officials and residents demanded and recognized the need for enhancing the availability of theatres and amusement. In the early 20th century, Elizabethtown became a local and regional entertainment center and possessed several motion picture theatres. According to the 1948 *U.S. Census for Business*, Elizabethtown had two motion picture theatres, and three theatres were located in other areas of Hardin County. According to a local newspaper, the *Hardin County Enterprise*, on February 17, 1942, Elizabethtown was a leading city in entertainment:

Thus Elizabethtown, long known as a trading and commercial center, takes its place as one of the outstanding amusement towns in Kentucky, ranking in the seating capacity and excellence of its theatres next to Louisville, Lexington and one or two other of the larger cities.

Spacious, comfortable theatres which offer a variety of clean, wholesome entertainment are assets to any town, and are the cause of many visitors,

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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some from miles away, coming in.

One of the first motion picture theatres was located in the Masonic Temple (HD-E-48) on North Mulberry Street (U.S. 62) in downtown Elizabethtown. Constructed in 1913, the Masonic Temple (HD-E-48) included the Masonic lodge, offices, and theatre and auditorium for the showing of motion pictures and the performing of plays and pageants. According to local historians, "many of us 'old-timers' recall paying a dime for a ticket to watch the stars of the 'silent screen' -- with a pause between each reel, and the tempo of the piano music by Miss Lena Johnson reflecting the action of the show" (McGuire 547). Today this structure is utilized for offices and, consequently, has lost much of its association with the business of entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County.

To offer residents further choices in entertainment, Cresap Hays and Frank Joplin constructed a movie theatre on South Main Street in downtown Elizabethtown in 1929. Located behind the Joplin Hotel, this theatre only operated for a short time because ". . . the town wasn't large enough to support two movie houses" (McGuire 496). Due to the lack of documentation, its appearance and type are unknown. However, it is documented that this movie theatre was later converted into a grocery store and subsequently demolished.

Because of World War I, Great Depression, and onset of World War II, entertainment was an essential element in the daily lives of Americans. In Elizabethtown, developers recognized the need for entertainment and constructed two movie theatres for the local and regional citizenry. The first theatre was the Grand Theatre which opened in early 1942 and was constructed by J.M. Hobbs and Kermit C. Stengel. Located on the public square in downtown Elizabethtown, the Grand Theatre was a popular movie theatre for local citizens. According to a local resident, Carroll Gene Sherrard, "Friday nites [sic] were Grand theatre nite because they had a western, a regular feature, and a "Charly Chan" [sic] plus a continued serial with chapters 1 thru 15!" The Grand Theatre was later converted for other uses and subsequently demolished.

The State Theatre was the last movie theatre constructed in downtown Elizabethtown, and it served as a rival and alternative to the Ritz and Grand Theatres. Constructed by T.J. Murphy and Son of Bowling Green, the State Theatre was completed in 1942 ". . . before June 6, at which time all construction of amusement projects has been ordered stopped by the War Production Board" (New Theatre). Owned and operated by the

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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Kentucky Amusement Company, the State Theatre held its grand opening on Thursday, June 11, 1942 with the showing of "The Fleet's In" starring Dorothy Lamour, William Holden, and Eddie Bracken. Located on West Dixie Avenue (U.S. 31W) in downtown Elizabethtown, the State Theatre became an important establishment and landmark for the local citizenry. The *Elizabethtown News* on June 12, 1942 described the State Theatre and its opening as follows:

With a Neon [sic] sign flashing, and bright lights burning, Elizabethtown took on something of a metropolitan air last night in the opening of the new State Theatre, owned by the Kentucky Amusement Co., and situated on W. Dixie Avenue.

The *Hardin County Enterprise* described the State Theatre opening as follows:

The opening on Thursday night was attended by the largest crowd that has ever witnessed a show in Elizabethtown. All of the 1,000 seats were filled before the first show began, and hundreds waited patiently in the lobby for three hours to see the second show. Cars were lined up on both sides of West Dixie for several blocks, and when we left at 9:45 a long line of customers was standing on the sidewalk, waiting to purchase tickets.

The State Theatre operated for nearly forty years and finally closed as a motion picture theatre in 1982 with the showing of "E.T." This theatre was later converted and utilized for a country music performance hall. For the last ten years, the State Theatre has been vacant and has stood as a reminder of the growth and development of entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County. Today the State Theatre is the one of the only remaining examples of a commercial structure built solely for use as a motion picture theatre. The Joplin, Grand, and Ritz theatres no longer exist, and although the Masonic Temple still stands, this structure was not constructed solely for the showing of motion pictures.

Constructed at the beginning of World War II in the Art Deco style of architecture, the State Theatre was a modern movie theatre and represented the spirit of the city, state, and nation in the early 20th century. It featured the finest decorations and amenities. In an editorial in a 1942 edition of the *Elizabethtown News*, W.H. Marriott stated:

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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To have erected so pretentious and expensive building as the the State Theatre, which opened last night, its owners manifested a considerable degree of faith in the future of Elizabethtown. It is regarded by those familiar with the movie business as one of the top-ranking theatre buildings in Kentucky outside of Louisville.

Thus the State Theatre serves as a reminder of the modernity and artistic expression of the city, state, and nation and of the importance of entertainment. The State serves also as example of the growth and development of Elizabethtown and Hardin County in the early- and mid-20th century.

**Commercial Architecture in Elizabethtown, 1930-1950**

To evaluate the architectural significance of the State Theatre and to begin to understand the importance of the State Theatre as an example of early- and mid-20th century commercial and motion picture theatre architecture and the Art Deco style of architecture, documentation on the historic commercial architecture in Elizabethtown, Hardin County, Kentucky, and United States were reviewed. Information on early 20th century commercial architecture and Art Deco style was reviewed from source materials, such as *Hardin Heritage: The Historic Architecture of Hardin County, Kentucky*, *The Pennyryle Cultural Landscape, A Guide to Art Deco Style*, *What Style Is It?*, and *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*. Besides the literature review, an analysis of the Kentucky Historic Resources Survey for Hardin County was undertaken to understand the type of commercial architecture constructed in downtown Elizabethtown between 1930 and 1950.

***Commercial Architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1930-1950***

The literature review and survey analysis resulted in a greater understanding of growth and development of commercial and motion picture architecture in Elizabethtown, Hardin County, Kentucky, and United States. In the early 20th century, local and state commercial development was affected by the economic conditions of the nation. Due to World Wars I and II and the Depression, many local communities witnessed fluctuations in commercial growth and development. "Commercial construction fell off by the end of World War I, with the next boom following the Second World War. This subsequent expansion, however, saw an increase in crossroads stores and outlying shopping centers, all built to cater to contemporary prosperity and mobility" (Martin 254).

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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Elizabethtown and Hardin County witnessed a period of growth and development in the 1930s and 1940s. ". . . The real surge in growth and building, both residential and commercial, did not develop until late in the 1930s, during and after World War II" (McGuire 357). During the period, 1925 to 1950, Elizabethtown was comprised of an eclectic mixture of commercial architecture in its downtown business district. In the early 20th century, most of Elizabethtown's downtown district included commercial structures built in the late 19th century. However, the downtown area included prime sites for infill development. In particular, Elizabethtown witnessed significant construction of structures for public assembly and government operations.

Between 1920 and 1950, residential and commercial architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County reflected popular styles and designs. Revival styles, such as the Spanish Colonial and Tudor Revival, were popular residential styles in Elizabethtown as well as the designs and styles of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Consequently, commercial architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County often lacked applied ornamentation of the popular styles and designs of the early 20th century. Most commercial structures constructed during the period 1920-1950 were conservative and functional in ornamentation and design. However, several unique structures were constructed in Elizabethtown and Hardin County between 1920 and 1950.

The Post Office (HD-E-227) on the corner of West Dixie Avenue (U.S. 31W) and North Mulberry Street (U.S. 62) in downtown Elizabethtown was constructed in 1930 and is typical of federal post offices built in the 1930s. This brick structure is an example of Colonial Revival style of architecture. It was converted for use as the public library in 1967. Built in 1931, the Elizabethtown Grade School is also an example of early 20th century architecture. Located on South Mulberry Street (U.S. 62), this educational facility is a two-story brick structure and is an example of Art Deco style of architecture. Built in 1934, the present Hardin County courthouse is the fourth courthouse constructed in the public square. This brick government structure is the focal point of the Elizabethtown public square and is also an example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture.

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State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky

"By 1940, the Depression had affected commerce overall by cutting down on retail sales" (Martin 122). In addition, the onset of World War II and restrictions on construction projects by War Production Board adversely affected growth and development in the downtown Elizabethtown area. In 1942, the State Theatre was the last building constructed prior to the effective date of War Production Board regulations. The State Theatre represents the growth and development of commercial architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County between 1930 and 1950.

***Theatre Architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1930-1950***

"The movie theatre is a separate architectural type, distinguished by program, emphasis, imagery, and history; one must read the building as such, as an architectural type, rooted in popular culture with its own symbolic program, to appreciate the architecture" (Valentine 3). The State Theatre is an excellent example of movie theatre architecture.

To evaluate the significance of the State Theatre as an example of movie theatre architecture, a review of current literature on movie theatres and the history of theatre architecture was undertaken. One source, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*, by Maggie Valentine (1994), became the primary tool for the knowledge of history and design of American movie theatres. Valentine provides a typology of American theatres and defines the types by four factors -- period, design, location, and services.

The **arcade or parlor** was the first type of movie theatre in the United States. This theatre appeared in the late 19th and early 20th century and was often located in existing buildings. This theatre was characterized by window advertisements, ticket booth, and rows of kinetoscopes, moving picture machines.

At the turn of the century, **storefront theatres** appeared in small and rural communities throughout the United States. Movie operators adapted existing buildings for use as movie pictures. These storefront theatres were the first movie theatres in the United States and included portable film machines. "With a muslin sheet hung on the back wall, windows darkened, and a box set up in the doorway to serve as an 'office' for selling tickets, the motion picture theatre was born -- a space designed or redesigned solely for the purpose of showing movies" (22). After several years of operation, these theatres became permanent theatres with box offices, seating, and screens.

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State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
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The **air-dome** was a form of the storefront theatre. However, this movie theatre was a new building with four walls and no roof. The seating was located on the ground between the projector and screen and was the forerunner of drive-in theatres.

Between 1905 and 1914, the **nickelodean** developed and was the first theatre with nightly performances. The nickelodean often was located within existing buildings adapted for showing motion pictures or new structures. These theatres resembled storefront theatres but had a recessed lobby or vestibule with an independent box office.

**Small-time vaudeville theatres** were another type of theatre in the early 20th century. These theatres were located within adapted existing buildings and were often large with five hundred to one thousand seats (28). These theatres featured both film and live performances and included ornate decoration and amenities. The small-time vaudeville theatres were the forerunner of the modern movie palaces.

By the 1910s, significant technological changes and advances occurred in the motion picture industry. These advances and changes not only affected the means for showing and the quality of motion pictures but also affected the type of theatres. "For the first time, builders and managers gave serious consideration to safety, sight lines, maximum capacity, heating, lighting, and ventilation. Some buildings were no more than nickelodeans 'in drag' -- one-story boxlike buildings all dressed up . . . . Others were two- or three-story buildings that copied traditional theatre facades" (29). The new **moving picture theatres** were designed to accommodate the innovative machinery, technology, and equipment.

Throughout the early 1900s, the moving picture theatre changed and the more elaborate **movie palace** emerged. "In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the typical movie palace was an ornate, period revival extravaganza, with references to live theatre in its architecture and entertainment program" (34). Movie palaces often were large and contained at minimum one thousand seats and balconies or mezzanines. The exterior and interior of these movie palaces were elaborate, and these palaces were located in the downtown commercial areas. In many cases, these movie palaces featured modernistic Art Deco features.

With the emergence and expansion of television and automobiles, the movie theatre

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**State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
Hardin County, Kentucky**

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underwent considerable changes in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Movie theatre designs were more efficient, economical, and simple, and the elaborate movie palace was often adapted into simpler **neighborhood houses and palaces**.

Elizabethtown and Hardin County had several theatres; however, the State Theatre today is the only example of a movie palace. The Grand and Ritz Theatres originally located in downtown Elizabethtown no longer exist, and the State Theatre remains as a representation of theatre architecture. Besides the State Theatre, the existing Masonic Lodge (HD-E-48) also exemplifies the importance of entertainment. However, this structure was not constructed solely for use as a motion picture house but was constructed for the Masonic lodge, offices, movie theatre, and auditorium for plays and pageants.

Thus, the State Theatre is an example of the movie palace. It features the Art Deco style of architecture and interior design. This structure was designed with the recess exterior lobby and includes a separate projection room, balcony, and approximately 1000 seats. Constructed in 1942, the State Theatre is an excellent representation of the movie palace and an excellent example of movie theatre architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County between 1930 and 1950.

***Art Deco Architecture in Elizabethtown and Hardin County, 1930-1950***

While the State Theatre is an example of mid-20th century commercial and motion picture theatre architecture, it also is an example of Art Deco style of architecture. The State Theatre is one of only two examples of Art Deco style of architecture in Hardin County.

The Art Deco style of architecture was a popular style of architecture for entertainment facilities and other commercial structures in the early 20th century. "At its best, the Art Deco style produced a harmonious collaboration of effort by architects, painters, sculptors, and designers. This harmony is well illustrated in some of the great movie palaces of the 1920s and 1930s, where curtains, murals, and light fixtures bore the same Art Deco motifs as the building itself" (Poppeliers 89). The Art Deco style of architecture emphasized simplified, stylized, and streamlined forms, such as parallel straight lines, zigzags, chevrons, and floral motifs, and often incorporated futuristic effects to highlight modernity and artistic expressions. Often Art Deco structures were simple; however, these structures featured concrete, smooth-faced stone, or brick

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facades. In addition to exterior ornamentation, Art Deco structures incorporated interior decorations characteristic of Art Deco styles and designs.

The State Theatre is an excellent example of a movie palace adorned with exterior and interior Art Deco decorations. The State Theatre has significant architectural features, including a large marquee, neon signs, and a stepped-roof parapet. Its facade has includes in-laid geometric designs surrounding and emphasizing the vertical marquee tower. These geometric designs are simplified and streamlined forms which portray a futuristic effect. In addition to its exterior Art Deco adornment, this two-story, brick theatre also has interior decorations that complement the Art Deco facade. This 1000-seat theatre still retains its Art Deco decorations. During construction, a well-known New York firm, the Rambuch Art Company was commissioned to decorate the State Theatre. In addition to the green and burgandy shades, the main auditorium includes large murals of two Greek goddesses holding the masks of comedy and tragedy above their heads as well as other acoustical equipment designed in the stylized motifs characteristic of the Art Deco style.

While the Elizabethtown Grade School exemplifies Art Deco architecture, it does not serve as a true representation of the Art Deco style. The State Theatre is an example of architecture designed to represent modernity and artistic expression, to complement the machine age, and emphasize the future (Lemme 26). The design and construction of the State Theatre represented "the spirit of Art Deco" and "the spirit of the modern" (26). In the early 1940s, Elizabethtown was a rural community, and the construction of the State Theatre exemplified the future of modern Elizabethtown. The State Theatre resembles the collaboration of architects, painters, and designers, and it is an example of the harmonious collaboration of interior decoration and architecture. The State Theatre serves as the only example of Art Deco and represents the views and modernity of Elizabethtown, Hardin County, Kentucky, and United States. Recently the City of Elizabethtown has purchased the State Theatre, and through the efforts of the City and a group of concerned citizens, the nominated property will be restored to its original grandeur and utilized for cultural events and activities.

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**Integrity Considerations**

Today the State Theatre reflects the spatial organization, physical components, and historical associations originally associated with Art Deco. The historic integrity of the State Theatre was assessed, and the seven integrity factors--location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association--were examined.

The location, setting, and design of the State Theatre remain intact and represent the features of Art Deco style of architecture. The location of the State Theatre in the downtown is significant because the architectural style of Art Deco represents modernity and an artistic expression that emphasizes the future, therefore reflecting the future of modern Elizabethtown. It has an integrity of location by not having been moved and by the existence of the original right-of-way of U.S. 31W. The State Theatre retains an integrity of setting because it still reflects the visual and functional relationships. Integrity of setting is further maintained due to the fact that a majority of the original structures and configuration associated with the theatre are still intact.

The State Theatre has integrity of design through the retention of its original configuration and architectural elements relating to its original appearance. The mural of the Greek goddess painted on the interior and the architectural details on the exterior illustrate the artistic expression that characterizes the Art Deco style. Its design reflects the trend of Art Deco architecture in the early 20th century.

The State Theatre retains an integrity of materials and workmanship through the retention of original building materials which mostly consisted of brick. This material is representative of the availability of the material and technology of the time period. The architectural detail of in-laid geometric designs which surround and emphasize the grand vertical marquee tower exhibit the distinctive workmanship.

Because of the integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship have been maintained, the State Theatre evokes a sense of past time and place. Its layout and construction reflect a typical 1940s Art Deco structure. Because the property is still located on the original route of U.S. 31W, integrity of association exists.

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**Summary**

The State Theatre is an excellent example of movie theatre architecture and the Art Deco style of architecture. It is a significant reminder of the growth, development, and importance of entertainment in Elizabethtown and Hardin County in the early 20th century. The nominated property includes the one lot historically associated with the theatre, and this theatre is the only intact structure in Elizabethtown solely constructed for use as a movie palace and as a representation of modernity through the Art Deco style.

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State Theatre (HD-E-278)  
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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The State Theatre includes the following described property:

Beginning at a chiseled hole in concrete in the right-of-way line of U.S. 31W (West Dixie Avenue), said point being 105 feet west of U.S. Highway 62 (North Mulberry Street) and a corner to the Hardin County Library; thence with said right-of-way line North 56 degrees 21 minutes 54 seconds West for a distance of 52.00 feet to a chiseled hole in concrete, a corner to Pate Motor Company, Inc. (DB 187, page 507); thence with said Pate Motor line thru and along the wall of the old State Theatre North 33 degrees 54 minutes 2 seconds East for a distance of 211.42 feet to a set iron pin on the south side of Plum Alley; thence with said south side of Plum Alley South 55 degrees 54 minutes 5 seconds East for a distance of 52.00 feet to an existing utility pole, a corner to Robert N. Hubbard (DB 354, page 299); thence with said Hubbard line, then said Hardin County Library line South 33 degrees 54 minutes 2 seconds West for a distance of 211.00 feet to the beginning. Said property contains 0.252 acres per physical survey by Warren L. Clifford (KY RLS #2124), dated June 17, 1998.

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the State Theatre includes the 0.252 acre lot historically associated with the motion picture theatre. While the City of Elizabethtown has recently purchased adjoining property for parking and building additions, the nominated property only includes the 52' x 211' lot associated with the original theatre building. Although the adjoining Pate Motor Company building was demolished, the setting of the State Theatre remains intact and has maintained its historic integrity.

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**Photograph Log**

Becky Proctor took the following photographs. All negatives are at the Elizabethtown-Hardin County Heritage Council at 117 West Dixie Avenue, Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701. These photographs were taken Friday, June 19, 1998 at the Elizabethtown State Theatre.

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	This photograph shows the front facade of the State Theatre. The camera direction is north.
2	This photograph shows the left side of the marquee and building. The camera direction is north.
3	This photograph shows the left side of the State Theatre. The camera direction is north.
4	This photograph shows the right side of the State Theatre. The camera direction is northeast.
5	This photograph shows the right side of the State Theatre. The camera direction is northeast.
6	This photograph shows the main entrance of the State Theatre and the ticket booth. The camera direction is northeast.
7	This photograph is of the lobby area of the theatre. The camera direction is north.
8	This photograph is of the vestibule of the theatre. The camera direction is east.
9	This photograph is of the main floor of the theatre. The camera direction is north.
10	This photograph is of the main floor of the theatre with the balcony in the background. The camera direction is south.
11	This photograph is of the main floor of the theatre with the balcony in the background. The camera direction is south.
12	This photograph shows the mural on the right side of the stage. The camera direction is northwest.
13	This photograph shows the mural on the left side of the stage. The camera direction is northeast.
14	This photograph shows a lighting fixture on the ceiling. The camera direction is south.

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**Photograph Location/Direction Map**

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**Historic Photographs (photocopies)**

HP-1 Photograph of State Theatre facade, 1956

HP-2 Photograph of State Theatre and West Dixie Avenue (U.S. 31W), circa 1963

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**Floor Plans, Location Maps, and Architectural Drawings**

1. Existing floor plan of State Theatre
2. Location Map
3. Current deed and plat
4. Proposed floor plan and elevations for State Theatre Heritage Complex

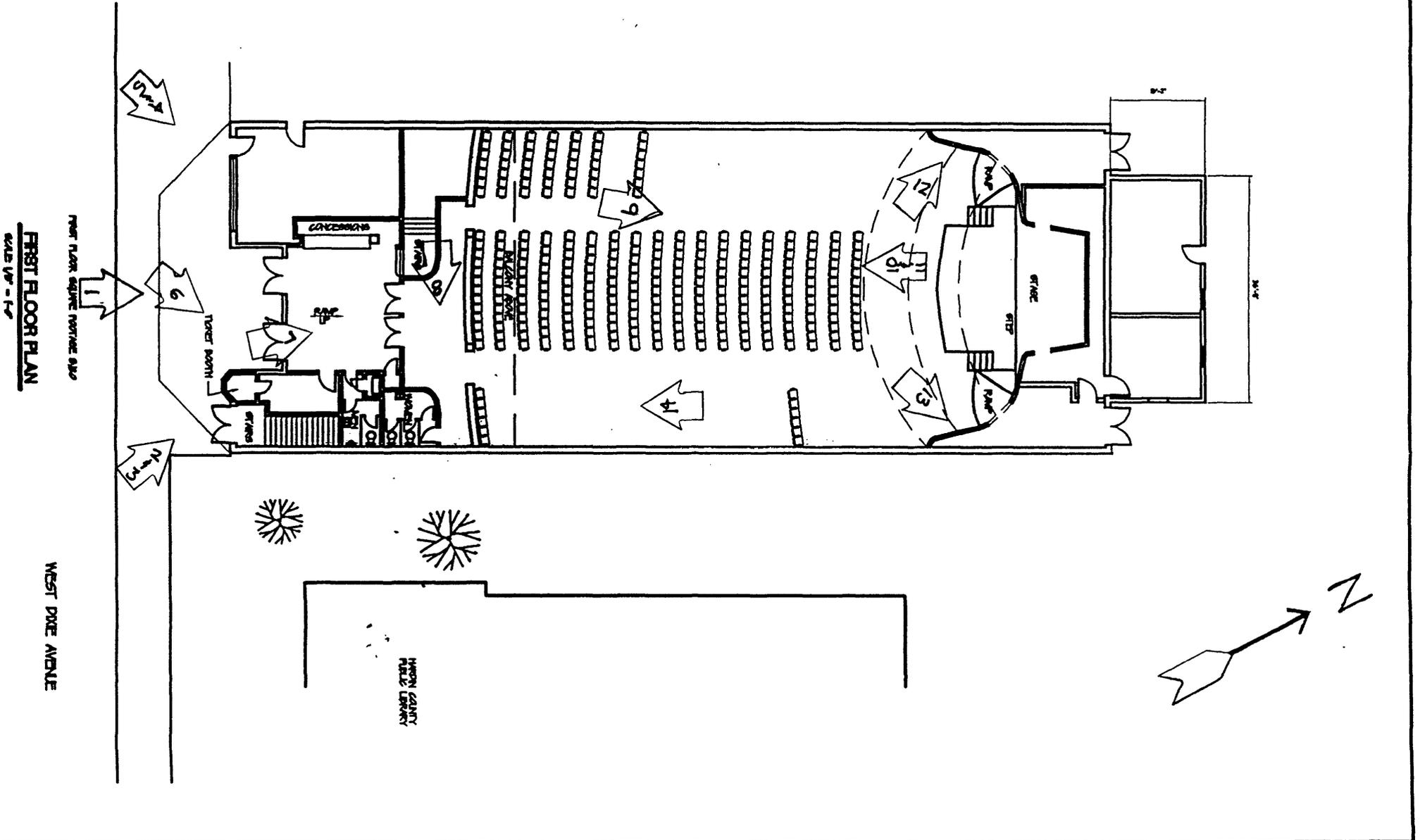


1956

STATE THEATRE (4D-E-278) #HP-1



STATE THEATRE (HD-E-278) #HR2



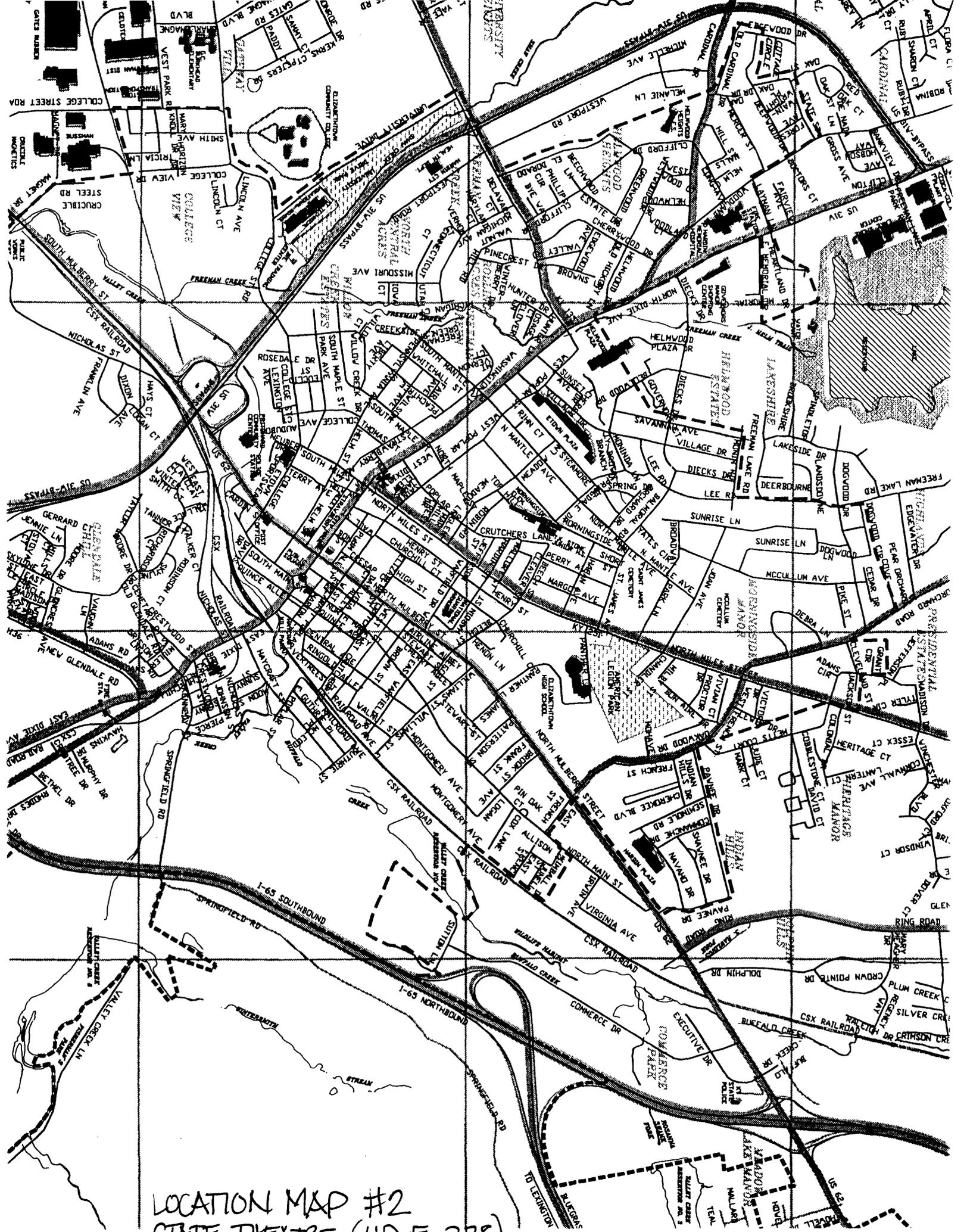
**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

WEST DIXIE AVENUE

HERON COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

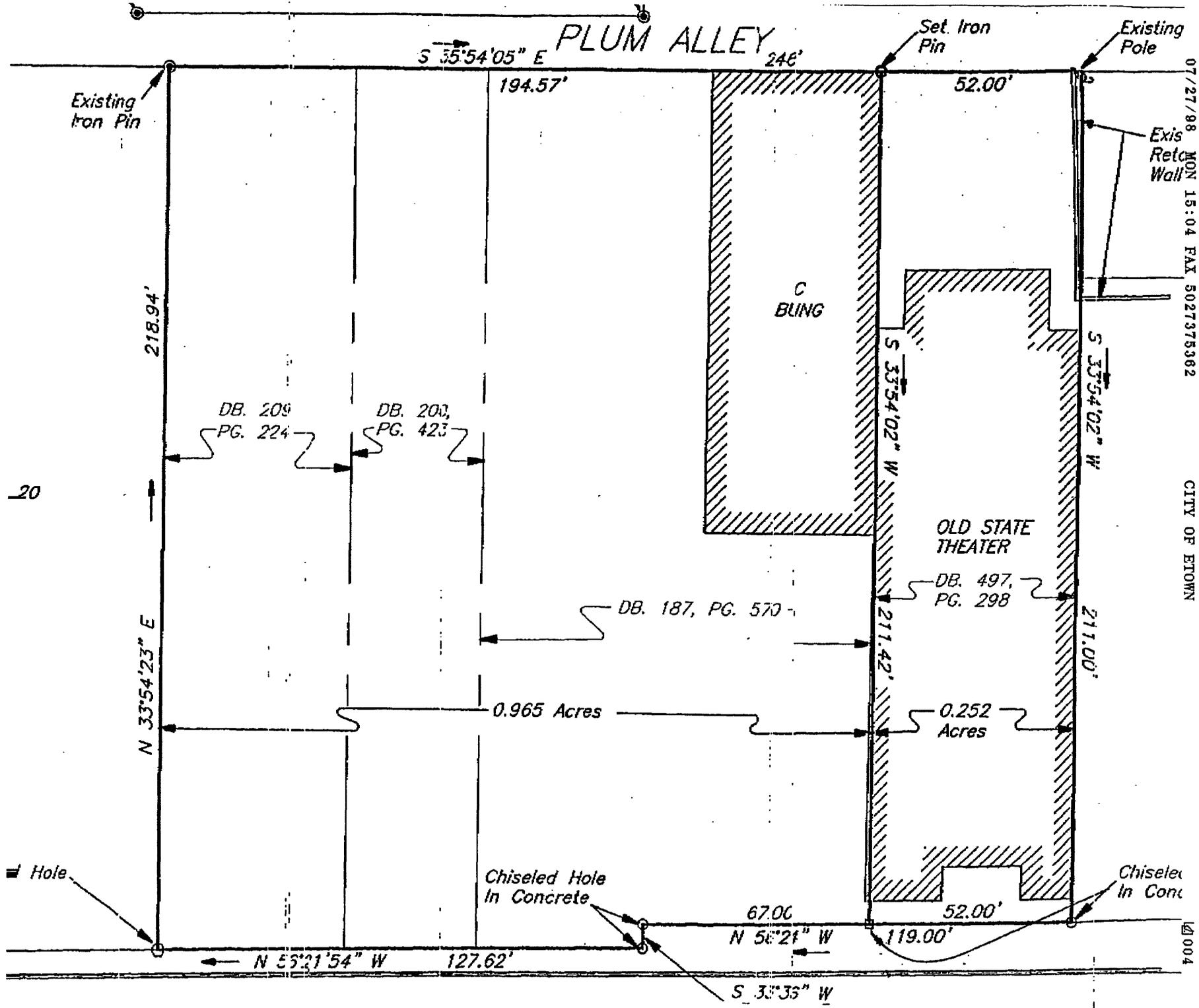
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	<p><b>RENOVATION OF STATE THEATRE</b> ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY</p>						

Photograph Log



LOCATION MAP #2  
STATE THEATRE (40-E-278)

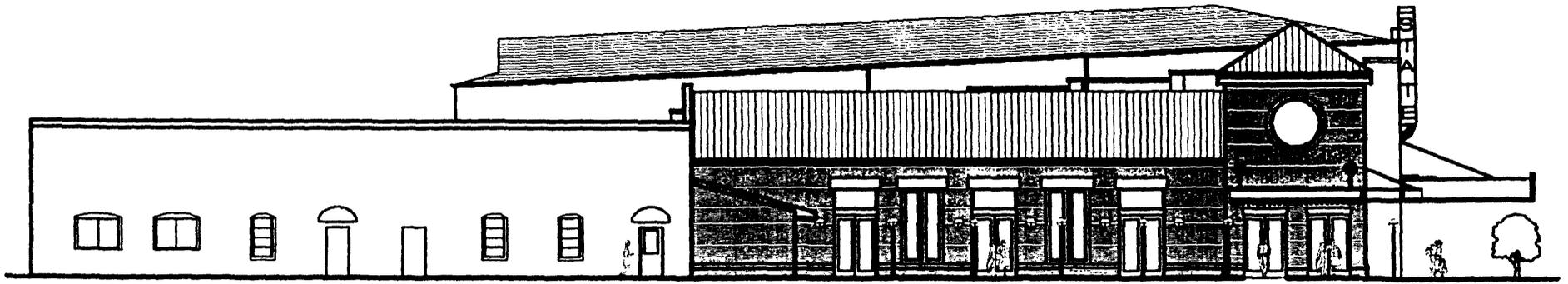
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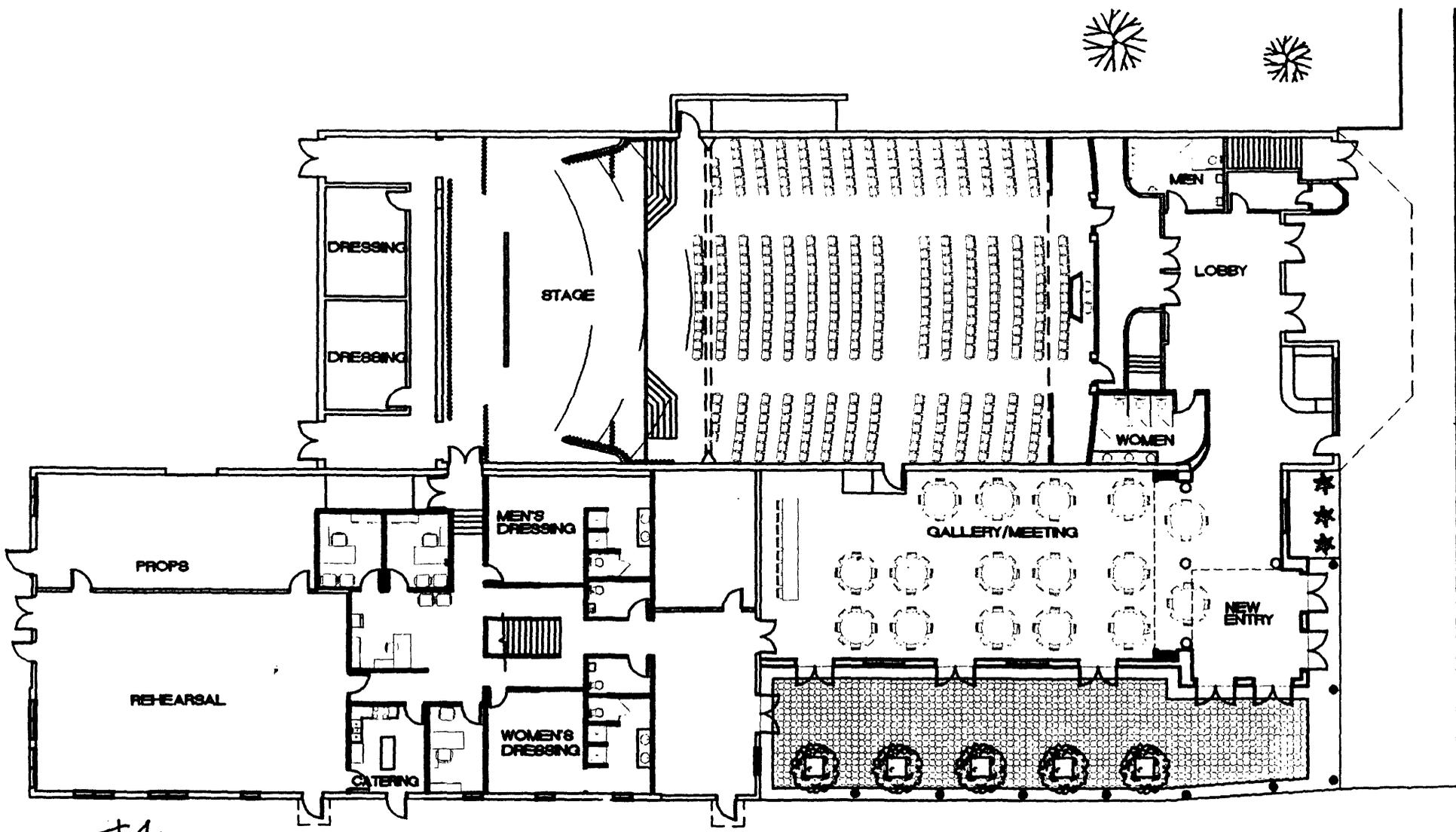
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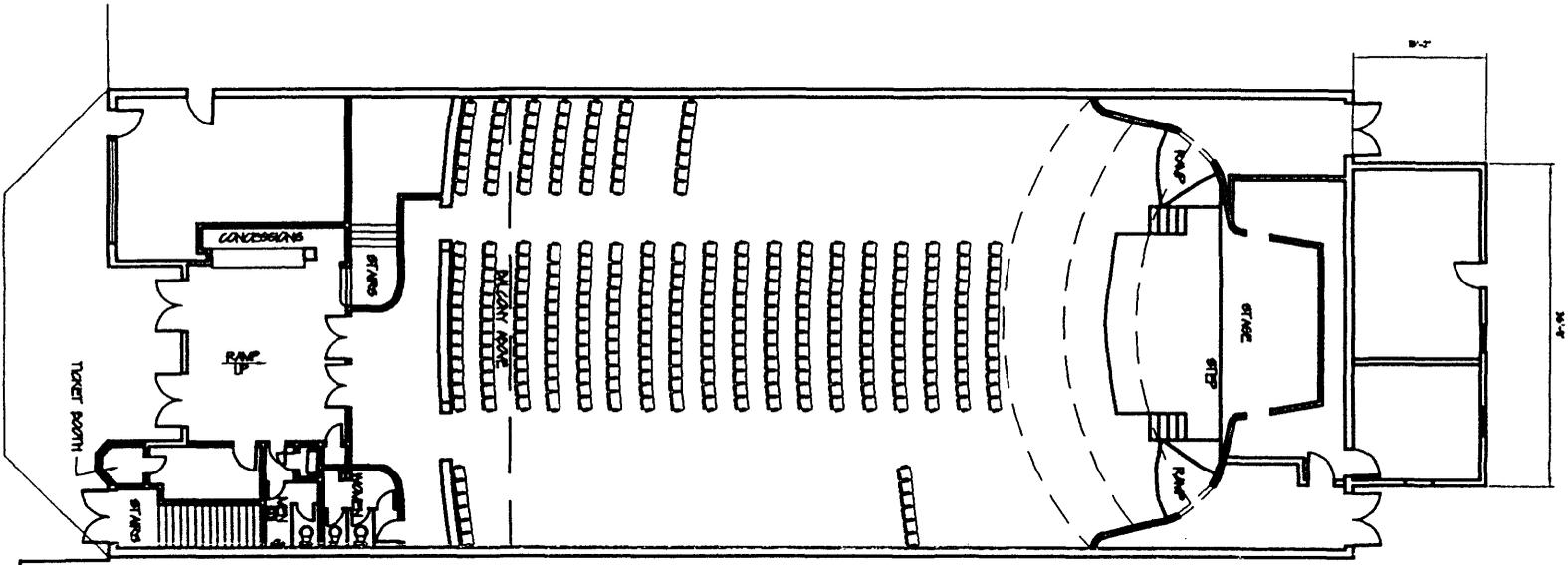


VIEW FROM BOND STREET



#4

Peck Flannery Gream Warren Inc. (40 E 818)



WEST FLOOR SQUARE FOOTAGE 8230  
**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

WEST DIXIE AVENUE

HARRIS GALLERY  
 FINE ARTS  
 LIBRARY

FLOOR PLAN - **EXISTING**  
 RENOVATION OF:  
**STATE THEATRE (40-E-278)**  
 ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY

PROJECT NO.
DATE
DRAWN BY & CHECKED
CHECKED BY
REVISION DATES
© 2001



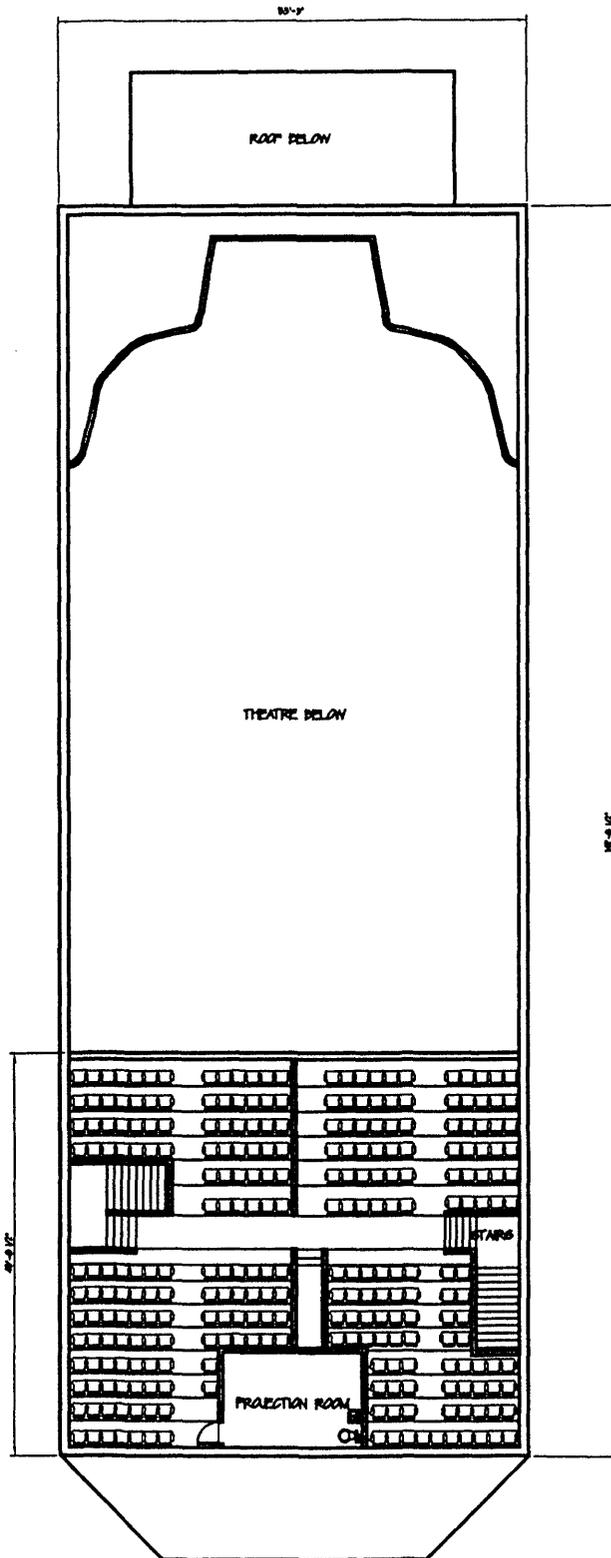
**Peck Flannery Green Warren Inc.**  
**architects**  
 P.O. Box 90 Paducah, Kentucky 42001  
 92 North Main Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701

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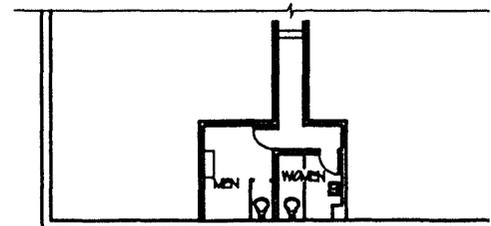
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BALCONY SQUARE FOOTAGE 3,831

**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



BALCONY RESTROOMS SQUARE FOOTAGE 150

**BALCONY RESTROOMS**  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"