

6-21-73

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Washington
 COUNTY: Yakima
 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY DATE: APR 11 1973



1. NAME
 COMMON: Capitol Theatre
 AND/OR HISTORIC: Mercy Theatre (Later the Lowe State Theatre)

2. LOCATION
 STREET AND NUMBER: 19 South 3rd Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Yakima
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: #4 - Honorable Mike McCormack
 STATE: Washington CODE: 53 COUNTY: Yakima CODE: 077

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
 OWNER'S NAME: Junior Amusement Co.
 STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 1557
 CITY OR TOWN: Yakima STATE: Washington CODE: 53

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
 COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Yakima County Auditor's Office, Yakima County Courthouse
 STREET AND NUMBER: 120 North 2nd Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Yakima STATE: Washington CODE: 53

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
 TITLE OF SURVEY: None
 DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
 STREET AND NUMBER:
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The architectural concepts of the Capitol (Mercy) Theatre are basically refinements of earlier theatres designed for Pantages, which provided for maximum flexibility in types of presentations.

The exterior of the theatre adheres to classical architectural composition. A base is provided in terra-cotta with mitered masonry joints creating the illusion of rustication. The main wall is a facade of patterned brick corresponding to the shaft height. Upon the shaft rests a terra-cotta entablature composed of a belt course of terra-cotta and a five panel frieze capped by a classical cornice. The corners of the free-standing elevation are accented by the use of terra-cotta quoins. Five niches across the front elevation provide the central composition feature. Each niche contains windows with pediment accents over the three center windows and simple molding accents over the two outside niche windows. In all cases, the pediments and moldings are supported by brackets and flanked by continuous moldings following the outline of the niche. Over the window pediments in each niche are wreath ornamentations-each of which contains a lyre. Examination of the ornamental character of the facade shows a very close resemblance to the character of ornament used in the Italian Renaissance building Casa Scannagatti, Verona. While Priteca did not directly copy any given ornamental composition, the feeling of the ornamental relief continuously filling the niche panels resembles the use of a form of leaf ornament contrasted with patera moldings found in the pilaster panel ornament from Casa Scannagatti.

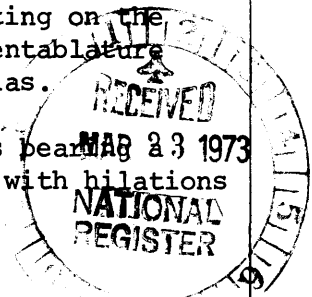
The interior of the main house auditorium is approximately square in plan, with the volume of the room initially divided by that area immediately in front of the proscenium opening. This area, termed the ante-proscenium, was approached as though it were a separately identifiable space, differentiated from the remainder of the room by a transverse beam in the ceiling-which also receives the coffered panels of the main ceiling. The balcony extends up to, and decorative balconies are hung in, the ante-proscenium area.

Interior composition is created through divisions of the wall surface vertically and horizontally. Plaster pilasters define panels which are located between the floors and all ceiling or soffit areas. A shaft proportion was used for the height of the panels from the base, with an entablature composition at the top of the wall.

The entablature was treated as an upper limit of the wall, with ceiling ornamentation and colors to represent a spanning element resting on the entablature. Exact classic proportions were used in the entablature which consists of an architrave proportioned into three fascias.

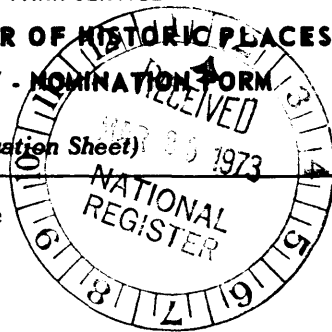
The Italian Renaissance frieze consists of rectangular panels bearing shield and grape ornamentation decorated to look like marble with hilations of gold leaf, with accents over the pilasters.

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The cornice is supported by a beadmold and dental course. A corona containing the cove lighting is then supported by brackets. The corona has antefixa spaced around the main ceiling in varying scale to emphasize corners and panels.

An exaggerated cove forms the perimeter of the main ceiling to facilitate lighting. This cove is an adaptation of a Greek ornamental pattern. Several bands of ornamentation outline the central ceiling panel, painted with murals, which was accented by a smaller panel of the same configuration. The smaller panel typically contained artglass in all early Priteca theatres, but each pattern was different (at the Capitol Theatre the leaded glass was a rectangular composition).

The use of the center glass panel and the large cove around the ceiling was a heritage from other Pantages style theatres. This technique was intentionally used to avoid the use of a central hanging chandelier. Lighting behind the cove as well as the artglass panel served as general illumination.

Torus shaped moldings, delineating the main ceiling panel and artglass centerpiece, were created to recall the grape and leaf ornamentations of the Italian Renaissance. Secondary, oval moldings encompass the larger torus moldings and are composed of Lamb's tongue, egg and dart, and bead and reel patterns - depending on the size and location.

Coving scale is controlled through the use of ribs which divide all four sides of the ceiling cove into three panels. The ribs are further reduced in scale by the use of astragal outlines of bead ornamentation.

Other elements of the interior composition are the balcony front rail, which is proportionally divided through the use of crest cartouches forming five linear panels; and the balcony fascia which is fluted with a sectional outline resembling an elongated ogee.

General balcony configuration is the result of an effort to avoid having patrons climb any greater distance than necessary prior to reaching their particular balcony seat row. This system utilized a wide balcony cross aisle (or "wide aisle") which is approached from the side stairways, along with vertical aisles up and down the balcony rows. The total climb by patrons from the entrance foyer was divided between two stairways; first, from the entrance lobby to a mezzanine landing - with restrooms and other public facilities; second, from the mezzanine level to the "wide aisle". It is notable that the balcony steepness in the Capitol Theatre is reduced considerably over the Coliseum Theatre in Seattle.

The seats closest to the stage on the lowest portion of the balcony, sometimes called the "dress circle", were in great demand for their exceptional viewing and hearing qualities. The seating in these rows was more palatially decorated.

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7. Description

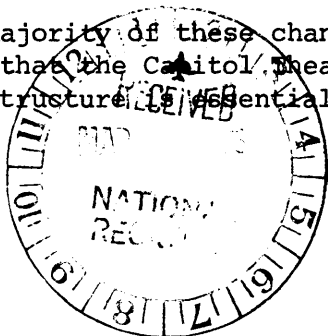
with brass railing separating the area into box seating areas, where individual velvet covered chair were located. The four rows immediately above the box seats utilized standard opera chairs for seating, but because of their location below the "wide aisle", they too were in great demand.

The last six rows of seats on the main floor, due to the overhanging balcony, would lose some acoustical quality unless reinforced by some other means. Priteca chose to accomplish this reinforcement in the Capitol Theatre, and to some extent in all later theatres, by a parabolically sectionalized soffit which focused the sound from the surfaces in the foyer and the mezzanine balustrade into the critical rows of seats, thereby actually intensifying the sounds from the stage.

Modifications which have occurred in the theatre since its construction include:

1. The closure of the acoustical reinforcement technique, because of people throwing materials off the mezzanine balustrade.
2. The "dress circle" was modified to accommodate a typical loge seating configuration.
3. The artglass in the cove was removed and a chandelier was added.
4. The upper and lower box seats have been closed.
5. With the advent of the talking motion pictures in 1925, the pipe organ was removed.
6. The projection booth was remodeled and enlarged.
7. The marquee and general seating facilities have been altered three times.
8. A ticket booth was added, replacing the ticket window.

The majority of these changes occurred between 1930-1940. It was during this span that the Capitol Theatre was leased to Lowe's Circuit. The remainder of the structure is essentially unchanged and in relatively good condition.



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Painted in three-foot high letters on an outside wall of the Capitol (Mercy) Theatre are the words: "Road Shows" and "Vaudeville"! Vaudeville no longer exists and the "legit" road shows aren't what they used to be, but the Capitol Theatre remains the historic site of Yakima's cultural events.

From its grand opening April 4, 1920, with William Norris and the 1920 Girls in "Maytime" followed by Flo-Flo and Her Perfect "36" Chorus, until the last regularly scheduled vaudeville performance in the Pacific Northwest in 1942, the Capitol Theatre presented the best performances of the Lowe and Pantages Vaudeville Circuits.

Four times a year, for the past forty years, the Capitol Theatre has been filled to capacity for Yakima's Community Concert. The list of musicians (Richard Crooks, The Trapp Family, Casadeseus, Menuhin, Helen Traubel, The Minneapolis Symphony and others) is a roll call of the world's greatest. In conjunction with the Community Concert's schedule, Yakima's Symphony Orchestra has scheduled two concerts, while anticipating its expansion to a full four-concert season in the near future.

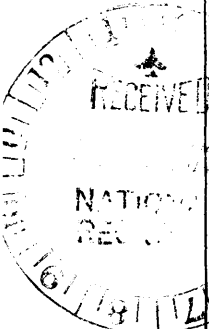
For five years, from 1960 to 1965, the Broadway Theatre League presented touring stage productions, until such companies became almost a thing of the past.

In 1966 and 1967, the Metropolitan Opera National Company performed "Madame Butterfly" and "La Boheme" under the sponsorship of the Allied Arts Council of the Yakima Valley, which a year later, in 1968, brought to the same theatre the world renowned Joffery Ballet. Artists from these companies still recall with delight the "wonderful Capitol Theatre" in Yakima, the smallest city the Metropolitan Company visited.

As the old evanesces, it is replaced by the new, and this year the Yakima Town Hall was organized, bringing outstanding lecturers to the stage of the Capitol Theatre, including Vincent Price, Kitty Carlisle, Judith Crist and the Amazing Kreskin.

Hence, the Capitol Theatre's historic role as the focal point for the growth and development of the cultural fiber and continuity in the Central Washington region, and particularly in the Yakima area, has been established.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Fetcher, Sir Banister, A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method, Seventeenth Edition, Scribners, New York, 1963.
 2. Harris, John and Jill Lever, Illustrated Glossary of Architecture 850 - 1830, Potter, New York, 1966.
 3. McCann, Richard F., A.I.A., Miscellaneous correspondence with a former associate of B. Marcus Priteca, Seattle, Washington, November and December, 1972.
- (CONTINUED ON CONTINUATION SHEET)

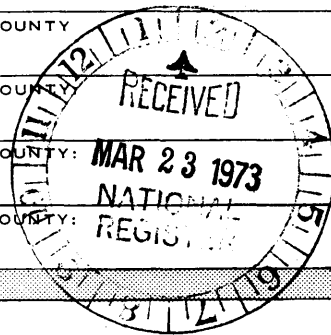
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	° ' "	°	' "
NE	° ' "	° ' "	° ' "	46	36 09.128
SE	° ' "	° ' "	° ' "	120	30 04.081
SW	° ' "	° ' "	° ' "		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

LIT 10
4/691390
5166510
CO

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: David L. Wright, Assistant Planner

ORGANIZATION: Yakima City Department of Planning & Community Devel. DATE: December, '72

STREET AND NUMBER: 117 North 2nd Street

CITY OR TOWN: Yakima STATE: Washington CODE: 98901
CODE: 53

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

National State Local

Name: Charles H. Odegaard
Charles H. Odegaard

Title: Director - Washington State
Parks & Recreation Commission

Date: March 19, 1973

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

Robert M. Utley
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 4/11/73

ATTEST: [Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

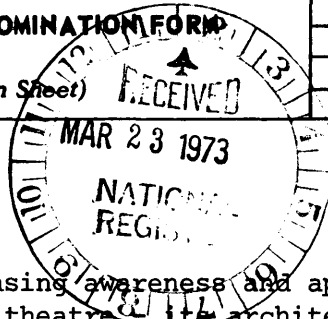
Date: 4.3.73

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8. Significance

Recently there has been an increasing awareness and appreciation of a somewhat more passive aspect of this theatre its architectural quality. In order to further develop a comprehensive awareness and enhance one's appreciation of any architecture, it is first necessary to establish an adequate frame of reference; i.e., information concerning the client and his objectives, a familiarity with the era in which the project was conceived, and an understanding of the architect and his design philosophy.

On April 5th, 1920, with the opening of the Capitol Theatre (then named the Mercy) one of Mr. Frederick Mercy's greatest dreams was realized, culminating a process which had been initiated in 1918. In that year, Mr. Mercy had commissioned B. Marcus Priteca's Seattle office to design the largest and best combination (motion picture, vaudeville, and road show) theatre in the West. This theatre was, and remains today, comparable to many of the larger houses in many major metropolitan areas.

Clients and architects, constructing theatres in the "palatial era" of American theatrical history, drew upon a wide background for design inspiration. All ornate theatre architecture during the early 20th Century shared one fundamental purpose, namely, to provide the working man a form of splendor which he could not enjoy in his routine daily life.

This approach to commercial show business created theatres which were highly embellished with gold leaf and Renaissance ornamentation, combined with splendid chandeliers and light fixtures typical of palaces and other places commonly associated with royalty and/or the wealthy. While many different examples of theatre architecture were developed for the architectural realization of these qualities, the variations can be generally classified into three main categories:

1. Architectural imagery and fantasy which treated the walls and ceiling surfaces of the main house with murals, or other two-dimensional effects of fantasy.
2. Exaggerated and massive architectural elements, which transform the interior spaces into overwhelming scale intended to shock theatre patrons into an awesome unreality.
3. A purely architectural treatment of authentic Renaissance style. Proportion and ornamentation enjoyed for the same qualities of beauty that characterize the Greek and Roman architecture.

The Capitol Theatre is best characterized by the third category and is basically a combination of Roman and Italian Renaissance styles.

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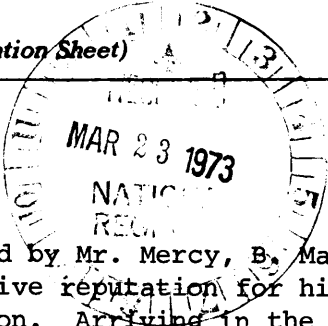
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8. Significance



Prior to his being commissioned by Mr. Mercy, B. Marcus Priteca, F.A.I.A., had already established an impressive reputation for his particular expertise in the composition of ornamentation. Arriving in the United States in 1909, Mr. Priteca had designed more than ten theatres by 1918, the majority of which were for Alexander Pantages - owner and operator of the prestigious Pantages Circuit of vaudeville houses. Mr. Priteca, who received his formal education at the Edinborough School of the Royal Academy of Arts, followed by a five-year apprenticeship, derived his greatest satisfaction for the composition of classical architecture.

Since both Mr. Priteca and Mr. Pantages were from European backgrounds, they were readily able to collaborate on the idea of using classic designs, and it was only natural that the Priteca/Pantages combination would generate a highly authentic classical architecture both in the theatres created for the Pantages Vaudeville Circuit and subsequently in the Capitol Theatre. Subsequently, the Priteca office developed and maintained full scale drawings for Greek, Roman, and Italian Renaissance plaster ornamentations.

Thus, with the Capitol Theatre representing the culminating expression of Priteca's background and experience, a review of its architecturally significant qualities would include the following:

1. An almost academic execution of classical ornamentation and design composition, making this theatre a museum of architectural style; as demonstrated by the base, shaft and cap composition of the facade with its ornamentation resembling the architectural style of the Casa Scannagatti.
2. Innovations such as the median "wide aisle" provided patrons with decreased balcony steepness and more expedient access to and from seating rows.
3. The provision of exceptionally good sight lines and acoustical qualities - maximum distance between stage and patron was eighty feet on the main floor, ninety feet on the balcony, and with the balcony soffit over the last six rows on the main floor specifically designed as an acoustical 'accelerator', insuring patrons of an enjoyable theatre experience.

In summary, the principal areas of significance commonly associated with the Capitol Theatre are, actively - its cultural role, and passively - its architectural style quality. In the opinion of many, B. Marcus Priteca was exceptionally successful in the accomplishment of those parameters established for him in 1918 by Mr. Mercy, namely, "Build the biggest and best theatre in the West".

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(Number all entries)

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#9 - Major Bibliographical References

4. Helgesen, Terry, Theatre Historian by avocation, provided photographs and miscellaneous correspondence, Los Angeles, California, December, 1972.
5. Hinds, Leonard B., Interviews with the Head Projectionist for Mercy when Capitol Theatre was opened, Yakima, Washington, November and December, 1972.
6. Janson, H.W., History of Art, Abrams and Prentice-Hall, New York, 1963.

