

JAN 19 1993

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Rialto Theater

other names/site number New Lyric Theater

2. Location

street & number 102 East Second Street not for publication ___
city or town Casper vicinity ___
state Wyoming code WY county Natrona code 025 zip code 82601

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 ___ statewide x locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John J. Keck SHPO 1/7/93
Signature of certifying official Date

SHPO
State or 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 or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification
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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):

Belmont Bryan 2/11/83
National Register

Signature of Keeper Date
 of action

=====
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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u> 1 </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

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6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation and culture Sub: Theater

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation and culture Sub: Theater

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation poured concrete

roof tar and gravel

walls brick

other _____

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

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8. Statement of Significance
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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)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance 1921-1942

Significant Dates 1921, 1922 remodel

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Dubois and Goodrich (remodel 1922)

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>13</u>	<u>392220</u>	<u>4744640</u>	3	_____	_____
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.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title: Eileen Starr and Dr. Michael Cassity
organization: Wyoming SHPO date: December, 1992
street & number: Barrett Building
telephone: 307-777-7697
City or town: Cheyenne state: WY zip code 82002

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Additional Documentation
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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.)

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Fred Schulte

street & number 1540 South Walnut telephone 307-235-6439

city or town Casper state WY zip code 82601
=====

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Rialto Theater
Name of property

Natrona Co., WY
County and State

The Rialto Theater is a prominent commercial structure located at the intersection of Second and Center Streets in Casper's downtown. The building, constructed during one of Casper's boom periods, illustrates the amount of capital that could be invested in a recreational structure in a thriving Wyoming city. Constructed in 1921, and remodeled in 1922, today the Rialto's tall neon sign, ornate brick work, and substantial size draw attention to the theater. The design of the Rialto is typical of a 1920's commercial-style motion picture theater located in a small but prosperous city. It is not as ornate as the movie palaces of larger cities but is typical of Wyoming movie theaters such as the Fox in Rawlins or the Grand in Lander. Although the neon sign and marquee were changed at a later date to attract the attention of automobile traffic, the appearance of the theater communicates a strong sense of feeling and association with the pre-World War II period. The appearance of the building's upper story remains intact. With the exception of the storefronts on the south side and the alteration of the marquee and signs, the exterior of the structure remains unchanged.

Originally constructed as the New Lyric Theater in 1921, the building is rectangularly shaped and measures 50' wide and 100' long. The theater was sold to new owners in 1922 who chose to remodel the building at a cost of \$50,000. The size of the building did not change over the years. The walls are brick and the first story has storefront windows on the south and west elevations. The facade is located on the south or Center Street side. The east side abuts an adjacent commercial structure and the north side is located on the alley. The building can be described as having two very tall stories; the structure actually appears taller than it is because a substantial parapet wall extends above the tar-and-gravel flat roof. The soaring or tall appearance of the facade can be found on 1920s theaters throughout the United States.

The original marquee, according to historical photographs and the architects' drawings, was rather ornate and consisted of colored glass in a metal frame that curved around and covered both public sides of the building. Centered above the main entrance, the marquee was curved and cast iron letters spelled out the word "Rialto." Leaded glass windows located above the storefronts and behind the marquee further added to the decorative details of the building. At some point the marquee was replaced and the leaded glass windows covered.

The facade on the first story has been altered to accommodate two new double doors that provide access into the theater. Stone in-fill, probably dating from the 1960s, located at the south and west corner of the building, has also altered the first story's appearance. In addition to the theater's entry, two commercial enterprises, currently a cigar and jewelry store, are located on the first floor.

The Rialto's current metal marquee with the words "Rialto" spelled out in neon dominate the first story. A newer but larger sign, placed to the south of the Rialto sign, advertises the movie that is currently playing.

The upper story has a three bay front with two different types of window units. The two larger window units are large picture windows flanked by smaller, one lite over one lite, double hung windows; these units are topped with three stationary panels. The other windows are grouped in a set of three; these windows are double hung with one lite over one lite. They are located in the middle of the facade. Decorative brickwork centered above all the windows further highlights the second story. A substantial metal primary and smaller secondary cornice with egg and dart and dentil molding as well as oversized brackets are located above the windows. Decorative brickwork in a variety of patterns draws attention to the parapet wall. The brick parapet wall extends above the cornice.

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Section 7 Page 2

Rialto Theater
Name of property

Natrona Co., WY
County and State

The metal marquee with its linear neon light extends to the west elevation for the entire length of the building. The west elevation consists of eight bays defined by the windows and contrasting brickwork on the second story. The first story is dominated by a number of doors and windows (8 windows and 4 doors), some original, some not. Currently some of the original windows are covered with corrugated plastic, others contain modern movie posters. A barbershop located at the end of the west side retains its original storefront appearance. On the upper story, six substantial contrasting inset brick panels were designed to emulate windows on the second story. Located above the windows is the metal cornice treatment that is carried around from the south side. An unusual feature of the west side is the different color brick used in the parapet wall to finish the last 2/3s of the area above the cornice. This unusual feature is not in keeping with the decorative treatment established with the rest of the building.

Although not original, the triangular neon sign spelling out the word "Rialto" located at the southwest corner is the most prominent feature found on the building. The sign extends from the marquee to above the parapet wall.

When constructed, the theater had approximately 800 seats. Originally a large interior staircase provided access to the second floor but Dubois and Goodrich had that staircase removed during the 1922 renovation. Today, the balcony is still open to the public and two identical sets of curved stairs on either side of the lobby provide access to the balcony.

According to newspaper accounts published in the Casper Herald at the grand opening in 1922 "the interior of the lower walls are paneled and furnished in oil painting colors. The walls in the foyer are stipple and glazed and the balcony walls are paneled in a silk stripe effect." According to an advertisement placed in the Casper Herald on October 17, 1922, by the painter and decorator J. E. Robbins, "Much of the exquisite beauty of the Rialto is due to the harmony of color artistically blended in the interior painting. Sixteen hundred pounds of lead and four coats of paint was required to paint the Rialto."

Although the interior has been remodeled and the 1922 decor obscured, the substantial screen and large open seating space still visually relate the buildings 1920's origins.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

Rialto Theater
Name of property

Natrona Co., WY
County and State

When the Rialto Theater opened its doors in 1922 to show silent movies, it had lots of competition from the six other theaters that also served the City of Casper. The Rialto soon became the premiere movie house in Casper with an elaborate exterior and first-run movies accompanied by a women's orchestra. Yet by 1928, the price and demand for oil had fallen and only three motion picture houses remained in operation in Casper; one of those facilities was the Rialto. Today, it is one of two movie houses in the downtown and the only historic motion picture theater with integrity that remains in Casper's commercial core. For purposes of the National Register, the Rialto is eligible under Criterion A because of the important role the theater played in the city's recreation and entertainment industry. Its association with the growth and development of Casper, through the city's boom and bust history, illustrates the role the recreation and culture played in Casper. The Rialto significantly contributed to the broad patterns of Casper's history. The Rialto, specifically constructed in response to the entertainment industry's growing market for silent movies, is significant as a twentieth century building type that evolved quickly in response to the entertainment industry's success.

Some of the first structures in the United States utilized as movie theaters were either constructed as nickelodeons or were commercial buildings adapted for use as movie houses. By the early 1930s, nearly 4000 movie theaters were constructed for the purpose of two dimensional (film) as well as live entertainment. Elegant movie theaters with elaborate terra cotta ornamentation, referred to as movie palaces, were constructed in a number of revival styles such as Denver's Mayan Theater. Wyoming's theaters were less ornate and yet played an important role in their communities.

The prosperity of the motion picture industry in the 1920s paralleled one of Casper's oil booms. The capital available for construction of the Rialto was due to the energy industry.

Originally the lot where the Rialto now stands housed an early commercial enterprise owned by Webel. Eventually the lot was sold, the mercantile destroyed, and an entrepreneur by the name of Henry Brennan constructed a movie house in 1921 based on his successful vaudeville theater located in the west-center of town. Brennan's new theater, named the New Lyric, was unsuccessful reputedly because the new location failed to attract Brennan's old clientele, patrons of the local saloons. So the property reverted back to Webel.

In 1922 businessmen purchased the property and invested over \$50,000 to remodel the existing theater. The investors were local men: E.J. Schulte, A. A. Schulte, M. H. Todd, M. S. Kenney. Their remodeling was supposedly extensive and took approximately six months. "After nearly 6 months of rebuilding, redecorating, refurnishing... at an expense of half a hundred thousand dollars, the new Rialto theater, is said to be the finest motion picture house in the Rocky Mountain section." (Casper Herald-October 17, 1922)

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Page 2

Rialto Theater
property name

Natrona Co.
County and state

Architects William Dubois and Leon Goodrich, located in the Townsend Building in Casper across the street from the Rialto, designed the renovation. The original builder of the theater remains unknown. The architectural drawings that detail the remodeling reveal changes to both the interior and exterior.

As remodeled the theater accommodated 800 people, 450 on the first floor and 250 on the second. The Rialto was one of the city's largest motion picture houses. An orchestra pit as well as other accoutrements of live or vaudeville theater were also part of the Rialto.

The Rialto theater opened on October 17, 1922 with great fanfare in the Casper Herald. Wallace Reid and Bebe Daniels starred in the movie "Nice People" which opened the theater. "Nice People" was a William De Mille Production described as "the sensational drama that broke Broadway records." The Chicago Netto Ladies Orchestra played several musical numbers, both classical and popular music, at the premiere. A short, referred to as a Mermaid Comedy entitled "Look Out below" was also featured. Admission for the silent movie cost .40 for adults while children cost .10.

Newspaper ads stated the Rialto had "every convenience and comfort for the patrons-large roomy seats, special loge seats-restrooms. The Carrier Air Washer Ventilating system installed. Used in the largest theaters, fresh air every six minutes."

In 1928 newspaper ads stated that patrons could now, "hear and see" a movie at the Rialto. As the City's premier theater, the Rialto was the first house to show talkies using a "vitaphone."

The Rialto is also important as an integral component of Casper's downtown business district. Business enterprises located in the Rialto's stores have a history all their own. The Rialto cigar store is a family owned business that has been at the same location for years.

The Rialto still shows movies in downtown Casper but the movies are not premiere releases anymore. Yet, the building's rich history as a recreational structure in the downtown continues.

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Section 9 Page 1

Rialto Theater
name of property

Natrona Co., WY
County and State

Major Bibliographical References:

Casper College Library, Western Vertical File.

Dubois and Goodrich architectural drawings, Historical Research Section, Wyoming Department of Commerce, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Mokler, Alfred J., History of Natrona County, Wyoming 1888-1922. R. R. Donnelley and Sons, Company: Chicago, 1923.

Paul, Thomas (Baltimore, Maryland: 1988), "Hollywood Grand: A Look at Wyoming's Movie Theaters between the years 1900-1950." unpublished article

Pildas, Ave. Movie Palaces. Clarkson Potter, Inc.: New York City. 1980.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Valerio, Joseph M. and Friedman, Daniel. Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse Educational Facilities Laboratories Division: New York City. 1982.

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Section 10 Page 1

Rialto Theater
name of property

Natrona Co., WY
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

The site consists of Lots 6 and 7, block 7, Casper Addition, with dimensions of 50 feet (south elevation) by 100 feet (west elevation).

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Boundary Justification

The boundary of the site has remained constant during the period of historic development of the Rialto and is indicated as such on all available documentation.