

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Overland Theater

other names/site number Rio Theater; Kimo South; Park Cinema; Theatre for Young America

**2. Location**

street & number 7204 West 80<sup>th</sup> Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Overland Park [N/A] vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Johnson code 091 zip code 66212

**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 [ ]. )

Christy Davis Signature of certifying official/Title Christy Davis/Deputy SHPO 12/23/07 Date

Kansas State Historical Society  
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 certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
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  
See continuation sheet [ ].

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date 2/9/05

Overland Theater  
Johnson County, KS

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		1	_____ Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.**

**Name of related multiple property listing.**

Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of  
Kansas

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

RECREATION & CULTURE: Movie Theater

**Current Functions**

RECREATION & CULTURE: Movie Theater

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

**Materials**

Foundation: Concrete  
Walls: Ceramic Tile  
Roof: Asphalt  
Other: Brick;  
Metal;  
Other: Neon

**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**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**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**

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**

Architecture

Recreation and Culture

**Periods of Significance**

1946 -1955

**Significant Dates**

1946

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Boller, Robert

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographic 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: Kansas City, MO Public Library  
Johnson County (KS) Museum

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	355419	4316350			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kristen Ottesen, Architectural Historian and Elizabeth Rosin, Partner  
 organization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date June 2004  
 street & number 323 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133  
 city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105

**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 Fine Arts Theatre Group  
 street & number 10917 Winner Road telephone 816-833-2655  
 city or town Independence state MO zip code 64052

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Overland Theater  
Johnson County, Kansas

## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The Overland Theater, located at 7204 West 80<sup>th</sup> Street, Overland Park, Johnson County, Kansas, is a two-story concrete block building with a rectangular footprint. The Overland Theater exhibits the general form and configuration of the movie theater property type that was built throughout American small town commercial districts during the early twentieth century. Porcelain tile, glass block, neon lighting, and metal cover the primary (south) façade. These modern materials create a sleek, geometric appearance common to mid-twentieth century Moderne architecture. With the majority of its exterior character-defining stylistic features and many of its materials intact, the Overland Theater retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### SETTING

The Overland Theater is on the eastern edge of Overland Park's downtown commercial district and one block west of Metcalf Avenue, which is one of suburban Johnson County's primary commercial corridors. The theater is the only historic structure on the block. A strip mall set at the rear of a surface parking lot occupies the lot immediately to the west of the theater. Surface parking lots are also to the east and north of the theater. A modern "box" type commercial structure and a surface parking lot are across the street from the theater to the south.

### EXTERIOR

The Overland Theater's primary (south) façade has a symmetrical, streamlined, Moderne Style that



Rio Theater  
Originally Known as the Overland Theater

features a veneer of peach-colored porcelain ceramic tile, neon lighting, aluminum trim, and glass block. The building has three distinct bays defined by a recessed central core flanked by projecting stepped end bays. A band of corrugated aluminum runs horizontally across the façade at the roofline and above the entrance, separating the first and second stories. The upper story of the center bay features a wall of glass block punctuated by an oculus with stylized projecting rays of neon tube lighting. This design motif lends the theater a southwestern feel. A neon clock currently fills the oculus. Below the glass block is a projecting semi-hexagonal marquee that shelters the theater entrance. The banded marquee

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has a turquoise background accented by horizontal strips of neon lights. In the central panel are the words "RIO" in white. The side panels incorporate advertising space with a white background. The entrance includes a central ticket booth of glass block, flanked by pairs of double-leaf, full-paneled glass doors painted turquoise.

The side bays that flank the entrance, marquee, and glass block central bay are clad with peach-colored tile that covers the full height of these walls. Beginning at their juncture with the central bay's glass block wall, these walls project outward utilizing four equidistant vertical "steps." The area below the aluminum band course, between the first and second stories, has panels created by glass block. Inset in these panels are wall-mounted movie poster display cases surrounded by glass block and further framed by black tile and a turquoise frame. Black porcelain tile covers what would be the bulkhead area of a traditional storefront. Centered over the glass block panels containing the display cases and extending up from the aluminum band delineating the first and second stories are narrow vertical aluminum architectural elements with neon accents that project out from the primary façade, rise the height of the building, and curve over the top of the coping.

The primary facade's decorative treatment wraps around and extends a short distance to the east and west sides of the building. On both sides, flat projecting bays extend from the ground to just below the coping. Glass block fills these bays, each of which features two display cases set in the glass block walls at ground level. An aluminum band tops each bay and intersects the glass block at the same elevation as the banding that crosses the front of the building. Beige-colored stucco covers the remainder of the east, west, and north concrete block walls.

#### INTERIOR

The plan of the Overland Theater is typical of a neighborhood movie theater of its era. The interior configuration remains original, although most of the finishes and fixtures are not original. Directly inside the double-leaf entrance doors is a lobby, flanked by restrooms on the east and west ends. A concession stand is at the north wall, across from the entrance. The lobby features a vaulted ceiling, from which an art deco chandelier hangs. The chandelier originally hung at the Isis Theater in Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>1</sup>

Two single doorways on either side of the concession stand provide access to the auditorium. The floor slopes gently down to a stage and carpet covers the aisles. The single-screen auditorium contains modern upholstered seats for 281 patrons. The auditorium has a simple, streamlined décor. Painted wood wainscot adorns the plaster walls. Alternating panels extend from the floor to the ceiling, punctuated by arches just above the wainscot. The ceiling-wall junction above the arches has mounted Art Deco-style light fixtures.

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<sup>1</sup> The current owner of the building, Wade Williams, salvaged this chandelier from the Isis Theater, which was at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Troost Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri prior to its demolition in the late 1990s.

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**INTEGRITY**

The Overland Theater retains its original location and setting as well as the form, plan, proportion, scale, and massing that convey its historic function. When the current owners rehabilitated the theater in the late 1990s, they restored or recreated much of the exterior fabric that was damaged or removed in the 1960s. They used new porcelain tiles matching the appearance of the original structural glass to replace the non-historic gray ceramic tiles on the façade. The glass block ticket booth and the marquee match historic photographs and physical evidence, such as the historic footings for the ticket booth. The historic configuration of the interior (lobby, restrooms, auditorium, and stage) was retained with the renovation, but new finishes and light fixtures were added. In spite of these changes, the Overland Theater retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an example of a neighborhood movie theater developed in the mid-twentieth century.

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Overland Theater at 7204 West 80<sup>th</sup> Street in Overland Park, Johnson County, Kansas is significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of RECREATION/CULTURE and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE as documented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for "Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas." The Overland Theater has direct associations with the historic context "Historical Development of Public Entertainment in Kansas, 1854-1954," developed as part of the MPDF and meets the MPDF registration requirements. Constructed by the Dickinson Theater Group in 1946 on the eastern edge of Overland Park's downtown commercial district, The Overland Theater is an excellent example of the movie theater property type constructed in Kansas and throughout the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. The façade incorporates materials such as glass block, structural pigmented glass panels, and neon that reflect its mid-twentieth century construction date. As suggested by its name, Overland, which references the theater's location along the historic Santa Fe Trail, the Moderne design is notable for its southwestern influences. It is also a notable design created by theater architect Robert Boller toward the end of his long career. While the use and form of many similar theaters have been drastically altered for other commercial endeavors when larger, more modern movie houses open in their vicinity, the Overland Theater is intact, and continues in its original use as a movie theater. The theater's period of significance begins with its construction in 1946 and ends in 1955, the fifty-year threshold for National Register eligibility.

## PROPERTY HISTORY

In 1946, the Dickinson Theater Group commissioned renowned Midwest theater designer Robert Boller to design the Overland Theater. The theater became the thirty-eighth in the Dickinson movie theater chain, which operated in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois. Prior to the construction of the Overland Theater, Overland Park had two other movie houses. An earlier Overland Theatre showed silent movies in a building that accommodated 308 patrons. The Star Theater, which had seating for 208 patrons, was another early movie theater.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these theaters survived the economic downturn of the Great Depression. When the Overland Theatre opened in 1946, the town had been without a movie theater for ten years.

Opening on Christmas Day 1946, the brand new Overland Theater had seats for 600 patrons. On December 19, 1946, the *Johnson County Herald* wrote that the Overland Theater presented an "all glass front of pink and mirror glass, glass blocks with neon light." Patrons could buy popcorn and candy in the

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<sup>2</sup> "The Rio: Gala Opening, June 30, 2000," Program, page 7, Johnson County Museums, Shawnee Mission, Kansas.



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Johnson County, Kansas

central lobby. Men's and women's restrooms were on either side of the lobby. They planned to show three different movies each week, changing them on Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, the Dickinson Theater Group changed the name of the Overland Theater to the Kimo South and the Park Cinema. In 1977, the Theatre for Young America, a live performance group for children, bought the theater and ran it until 1987. At that time, although they sold the building to the City of Overland Park, they continued to lease it until 1993.<sup>4</sup>

In 1993, the Fine Arts Theatre Group purchased the building and began an extensive restoration campaign to return the deteriorated façade to its original condition and appearance. In a 1994 survey photograph, the theater is without its original marquee, poster cases, and glass block ticket booth and the Vitrolite panels appear to be discolored and in poor condition.

Over the next seven years, the building underwent extensive renovations. It reopened in 2000 as the Rio Theater. To match the theater's original appearance and materials, the façade received new porcelain tiles, a recreated glass block ticket booth, and rebuilt poster cases. A new marquee matched the appearance, dimensions, and neon tubing of the original, but features the name "Rio" across the front instead of the historic "Overland." The new finishes and materials added to the interior complement the historic Moderne style. The building's current owner, Wade Williams, designed the finishes in the lobby and the auditorium. The lobby chandelier, wall sconces, and lobby poster cases were originally at the Isis Theatre.<sup>5</sup> The 1949 Manly Popcorn maker and the lobby door trim were originally at the Plaza Theater in Abilene, Kansas.

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<sup>3</sup> *Johnson County Herald*, 19 December 1946, Kansas State Historical Society, Wichita, Kansas, Microfilm.

<sup>4</sup> Kathy Spears, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form "Overland Theater," 10 November 1998, Johnson County Museums, Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

<sup>5</sup> The current owner of the building, Wade Williams, salvaged these items from the Isis Theater, which was at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Troost Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri prior to its demolition in the late 1990s.

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## GEOGRAPHIC DATA

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Overland Hill resurvey, Lot 15&16 and east 12.28 of lot 17, block 2, Johnson County, Kansas

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This nomination includes the parcel of land that historically associated with the resource.

## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Photographer: Kristen Ottesen  
Date of Photographs: May 2004  
Location of Negatives: Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

### Photograph

#### Number

#### Camera View

- |    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Front (south) façade           |
| 2. | Streetscape, view to northeast |
| 3. | Streetscape, view to northwest |
| 4. | Rear (north) elevation         |
| 5. | West elevation                 |
| 6. | Ticket booth and entrance      |
| 7. | Lobby, view to west            |
| 8. | Front of Auditorium            |
| 9. | Rear of Auditorium             |