

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 26 1977

DATE ENTERED JAN 3 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Tampa Theater and Office Building

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

711 Franklin Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tampa

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th

VICINITY OF

STATE

Florida

CODE

12

COUNTY

Hillsborough

CODE

057

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Tampa

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Tampa

VICINITY OF

STATE

Florida

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hillsborough County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tampa

STATE

Florida

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Florida Master Site File

DATE

1973

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Archives, History, & Records Management

CITY, TOWN

Tallahassee,

STATE

Florida

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tampa Theater is a ten story brick and tile movie theater and office building designed by John Ebersson and constructed in 1925. The main (west) facade is a blend of ornamental brickwork and terra cotta detailing. Six bays of one-over-one double hung sash compose the third through the eighth floors. The bays at either end of the facade are set off from the central four bays by large expanses of brick. Each of these two exterior bays forms the base of a tower which extends above the tenth floor. The only detailing on floors three through eight is decorative brick.

In contrast to the simple decoration of the middle floors, the ninth and tenth floors are highly ornamented with brickwork and terra cotta trim reminiscent of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance. The two floors are a composite design with a 4 bay arcade between dissimilar towers. The north tower is topped by a stepped parapet with scrolled buttressing. Below this parapet is a large panel with dark brick diapering. At the intersection of the diagonals are hexagonal terra cotta medallions. Narrow terra cotta pilasters divide the brick panels into thirds. A large circular medallion in mezzo-relievo is centered in the top portion of the central panel. Shield-shaped cartouches are attached to the upper portions of the outer panels. Below the ornamental brickwork is a frieze of medallion and scroll features. A round arch penetrates the frieze and extends downward terminating in a semi-circular balconet of concrete and terra cotta at the tenth floor sill line. At the ninth floor level underneath the balconet is an eight-over-eight double hung sash set in ornamental terra cotta surrounds. Projecting from this window is a balcony with terra cotta detailing supported on scrolled terra cotta brackets.

The south tower is higher than the north one and contains the cistern which supplies the building's water. While in the same style, there are several decorative differences between this tower and its counterpart on the north. The difference in height is obviously due to the presence of the cistern. A decorative balustrade of open work and cresting above a simple entablature combine to form a parapet to conceal the flat slab roof of the building. Below the cornice is a terra cotta frieze consisting of alternating panels of floral and winged human figure motifs. The face of the tower is diapered in the same pattern as that found on the north tower. Centered in the upper portion is a bullseye window with elaborate terra cotta trim. This replaces the medallion, cartouches and panels of the north tower. Below the brickwork the arch and balcony treatment is the same as on the north tower.

Set between the twin towers is a four bay, two story arcade of one-over-one double hung sash. These openings are set back from the main facade of the building. Above these windows is an entablature and balustrade similar to that on the south tower and also concealing a flat roof. The window openings are separated by ornamental terra cotta

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1925-26

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Eberson, John; Chicago, Ill.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tampa Theater is an extremely well preserved example of atmospheric theater design and one of two which survive in Florida. John Eberson was the originator of atmospheric theaters and his concept was a reaction to the more standard designs common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While this standard approach to theater design was indeed extravagant, Eberson felt that these theaters overwhelmed the patrons. In his early practice, Eberson himself designed a number of majestic opera houses which were typical of the standard approach which utilized an eclectic theme rarely concentrating on a unified whole. By the early 1920's Eberson became disenchanted with his designs and began to develop an equally eclectic and overpowering concept. This new idea emphasized the use of a central architectural theme which created the illusion of being in "a magnificent amphitheater under a glorious moonlit sky..." thus the name atmospheric theater (Hall pp. 95-98). Eberson summarized his concept in commenting on the Tampa Theater: "The thought of creating the new type of theater . . . was to allow the patron to feel that he is participating in the performance, and to provide rest and relaxation. . ."

The Tampa Theater was designed by John Eberson in 1925 and was a very successful interpretation of his ideas. It was built shortly after the Olympia in Miami, also by Eberson. It is quite fitting that two atmospheric theaters should appear in Florida since Eberson himself insisted that the idea for his designs originated in Florida. In his own words Eberson described how Florida influenced his theories.

My idea for the atmospheric theater was born in Florida. I saw the value of putting nature to work and so have borrowed the color and design that are found in the flowers and the trees. The inhabitants of Spain and southern Italy live under the sun and enjoy the happiness nature affords them. So I decided their architecture probably would provide the firm foundation for a theater" (Tampa Tribune, October 15, 1926).

Designed for Consolidated Amusements Corporation, the Tampa Theater was probably at the time the most exciting and elaborate piece of architecture to be built in Tampa since the Tampa Bay Hotel was constructed in the 1890's. The theater was a movie palace which was housed in a ten story office building and was a dominant element of Tampa's 1920's skyline. The opening took place on October 15, 1926 with the showing of

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

see index 100-22 116 12-18-77

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY LT 1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	3,5,6,4,8,0	3,0,9,2,3,4,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

THEATRE BUILDING OCCUPIES LOT #1 OF BLOCK 37, GENERAL MAP OF TAMPA AE RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 1, PAGE 7; PUBLIC RECORDS OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, TAMPA, FL. OFFICE BUILDING INCLUDING LOBBY OF THEATRE OCCUPIES THE SOUTH 2 1/16 FEET OF LOT #2 AND THE NORTH 37 FEET OF LOT #3 OF BLOCK 37 OF THE GENERAL MAP OF TAMPA. (LOCALLY GIVEN ON PLAT 11-17-77 - J. Blinn)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

(See continuation sheet)

ORGANIZATION	DATE
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
CITY OR TOWN	STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

L. Ross Morrell L. Ross Morrell

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 9-8-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

<i>Wm. H. ...</i>	DATE 1-3-78
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
ATTEST <i>Charles ...</i>	DATE 1-3-78
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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pilasters with Corinthian capitals and floral patterned terra cotta spandrels. The two story arcade is divided by a decorative panel belt-line. A classical balustrade of terra cotta extends across the principle facade between the towers and anterior to the arcade. Below this and extending across the entire facade is a rinceau.

The first two floors of the building are a single composition utilizing Italian Renaissance Revival features. The exterior fabric is granite blocks with decorative terra cotta horizontal joints. An entablature extends across the building at the second floor ceiling level and includes a mezzo-relievo frieze of human heads. The end bays of the second floor contain eight-over-eight double hung sash with granite surrounds and a decorative terra cotta lintel. There is a central four bay arcade of semi-circular arches containing human faces in mezzo-relievo. The first floor has a store front on either side of the entrance to the theater which is offset and in antis. The plate glass windows of the shop fronts are trimmed in copper and the entrance to the theater is framed in cast iron elements and an elaborately decorated terra cotta ceiling. Across the whole facade and above the first floor is an electrified marquee with copper trim.

The remaining three sides of the theater are very plain, painted brick. They are of irregular fenestration and totally void of decoration. While the offices of the upper floors are very plain and unimportant, the interior of the theater is a masterpiece in eclectic theater design.

The theater is contained in a two story wing which extends to the north of the building. Eberson's rationale behind the design of this and other Atmospheric Theaters was to generate in the patron the "illusion of an outdoor atmosphere surrounded by picturesque facades of old world places. . .and the audience itself is part of the alluring picture." This is accomplished very well in the Tampa Theater. The movie house is a very intense and rich series of architectural studies of the Spanish Renaissance placing the viewer in an imaginary garden of an idealized Spanish Villa. The ceiling, painted dark blue with fleecy white clouds, accentuates the sensation of being outdoors. Small twinkling lights placed behind holes in the ceiling give the illusion of stars.

At the north end of the auditorium is the screen in the center of the proscenium. It is the focus of the architectural surroundings of the interior. The proscenium arch is composed of scalloped ornamental plaster work (plaster is used throughout the interior as the decorative vehicle) with polychromatic highlighting. Extending out from the arch is a small semi-circular stage which can be removed to accommodate a small orchestra.

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The spandrel of the proscenium is finished in a floral motif with es-cutcheons at the corners. Above the spandrel is a stepped plaster molding, the center of which contains decorative scrollwork which supports a cartouche. This molding separates the upper and lower portions of the proscenium. The upper part is dominated by a three bay balcony with balustrade supported by decorative brackets. Resting on the piers of the balustrade are plaster, urn-shaped finials which are wired for electrical lights. Immediately behind and above the balcony is a semi-circular headed arch with ornate scalloping similar to that in the proscenium arch. A shaped gable parapet above the arch is topped by finial of plaster. A reproduction plaster sculpture of a figure is located in the arch. To either side of this arch are two bays of small window openings set in ornamental surrounds and also backlighted. Separating each of these windows is a decorative pilaster of floral motif. To either side of the proscenium and the balcony are three tiers of niches set in elaborate surrounds. A variety of engaged columns featuring Corinthian capitals, twisted shafts, decorative panels, and medallions flank each arch. The niches at each level are matched. The most striking are the third level niches which are visually connected to the center balcony through the use of a curved balconet and balustrade resting on circular corbelling. Each backlighted niche contains a plaster reproduction of a classical sculpture. Across the top of the proscenium screen is an entablature with finials containing a freize which incorporates a rinceau. The curved ceiling of the auditorium continues down behind the proscenium and creates a backdrop to the architectural details.

To either side of this facade are two compositions containing additional arches and niches. These flanking facades were designed as an organ screen, although the theater organ has since been removed.

The facade to the west of the proscenium is dominated by a double tier of arches centered under a shaped gable. The lower tier has a semi-circular headed arch with the scalloped motif as in the proscenium arch. A decorative panel fills the tympanum. The second tier is the dominant arch of this facade. This shaped arch is spanned by a large wooden grill which is divided into three vertical parts by decorative wooden posts which terminate at the springing lines. A curved wrought iron balcony trimmed with brass protrudes from the base and is covered with decorative drapery placed over the railing. Behind the wooden screen hangs a large red curtain which originally shielded the organ pipes from view. Directly above this arch and in the center of the shaped gable is a small round arch with decorative trim. As in the main facade the arches of the west organ screen facade are flanked by tiers of niches

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with large engaged columns of composite orders. This facade has two tiers of niches, each housing sculpture.

The east facade, also an organ screen, is similar to the west except that the main arch at the second level is bell shaped. The flanking niches, of which there are three tiers, are consistent with the other niches in the theater, utilizing various decorative elements and composite orders. The spandrels, however, are much more elaborate than the ones on the west facade. This facade is capped by a coping with lighted urns.

While the three facades which are described above are the most elaborate features of the auditorium, the use of building facades as a decorative element is maintained around the remaining spaces of the interior. At the sides of the auditorium are triple arcades set in decorative plaster walls with tile shed roofs. On the second level a balcony stretches across the rear of the theater, its rail containing highly ornamented panels. Across the rear of the theater and above the balcony is a tile shed roof, supported by a corbelled cornice and pierced by decorative windows. To add to the realistic outdoor feeling of the theater, artificial foliage has been positioned above the walls and draped over the roofs.

The Spanish and Italian Renaissance themes are not confined to the auditorium alone. The remaining areas of the theater are decorated with heavily sculptured plaster--walls with decorative cornices, friezes and entablatures and tiles finishing the themes. Several reproduced tapestries are hung on the walls. The original furnishings, all of which remain in the theater, are of Spanish and Italian Renaissance designs of heavily carved and decorative wood.

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The Ace of Cads starring Adolf Menjou. A sellout audience of 1600 attended what must have been a major social event of the year. In addition to the feature movie, Florida's governor, John W. Martin, spoke along with Tampa mayor, Perry G. Wall, and Jacksonville mayor, John S. Alsop. The 20 piece theater orchestra performed special music as did the organist who played a large double manual Wurlitzer Theater organ (Tampa Tribune, October 15, 1926).

The opening was a success and marked the beginning of the era of the movie palace in Tampa which is romantically remembered by nearly every old timer in the city. It was an event representative of most medium-sized communities in the country which found the movie palace to be the major entertainment outlet for everyone. The Tampa Theater then is a monument of architecture in Tampa and Florida but also a remnant of an era in American entertainment history which is gone forever and can live on only in the buildings which were, in many cases, more important than many of the movies themselves.

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Eberson, John (Architect). "Tampa Theater and Office Building, Tampa, Florida for Consolidated Amusements, Inc." Plans, October 13, 1925. Job # 571. Chicago, Illinois: John Eberson, Architect. Copies in possession of City of Tampa.

Hall, Benn. The Golden Age of the Movie Palace: The Best Remaining Seats. Crown. pp. 95-98.

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Sharp, Dennis. The Picture Palace.

Tampa Tribune, October 15, 1926; October 16, 1926.

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Diane D. Greer, Historic Sites Specialist
Division of Archives, History, & Records Management
Department of State, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida

August, 1973

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Division of Archives, History, & Records Management
Department of State, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida

August, 1977
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