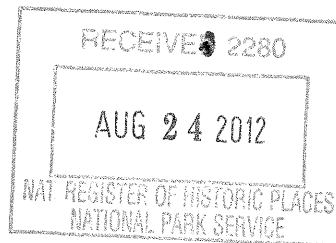


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



849

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Palmetto Theatre

other names/site number Palmetto Theater

## 2. Location

street & number 109 Lee Avenue  not for publication

city or town Hampton  vicinity

state South Carolina code SC county Hampton code 049 zip code 29924

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide X local

Elizabeth M. Johnson  
Signature of certifying official/Title

8/16/2012  
Date

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

For Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

10-9-12  
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**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ART MODERNE

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

STUCCO

CONCRETE BLOCK

roof: METAL/Aluminum

other: GLASS

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

The Palmetto Theatre in Hampton, South Carolina, is a remarkably intact example of a post-war, Art Moderne-style theater. Based in part on the Carolina Theatre in Allendale, South Carolina, the design of the Palmetto features a prominent, ornate, projecting marquee and upper central pylon with highly stylized neon lettering and geometric patterns set against inset black pigmented structural glass panels. As one of the few surviving Art Moderne theaters in South Carolina, the Palmetto retains a unusually high degree of original architectural integrity, in spite of various modifications and secondary additions completed during its 1992 renovation.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Palmetto Theatre is a two-story commercial block building constructed between August 1945 and August 1946 in the town of Hampton, South Carolina. The theater sits in a several blocks-long stretch of similar commercial buildings in the heart of Hampton's historic business district on Lee Avenue, a wide boulevard with angled parking located at the side curbs and along a median that runs the center of the street. Its Art Moderne façade features a prominent steel marquee with neon lighting projecting over a wide, recessed central entrance to the theater's lobby. The northwest (front) façade also displays an ornate pattern of black pigmented structural glass panels [most likely either Carrara glass or Vitrolite] and a prominent, Art Moderne-style central pylon, all of which is attached over the underlying concrete block (covered in places with stucco) that defines the façade of the theater, while brick walls are evident on the other three elevations of the building. The Palmetto's roof is relatively low-pitched and is clad with standing-seam metal, and its northeast elevation retains traces of the side entrances that were at one time essential to the segregated seating pattern involving the theater's interior balcony in the auditorium space.

The Palmetto makes an impressive appearance upon first glimpse, especially at night, when its original neon lighting blazes across its northwest façade. With an Art Moderne design strongly influenced by the Carolina Theatre in Allendale, South Carolina (which dates at least to the 1930s), the Palmetto Theatre features a prominent steel marquee that projects over its central entrance with flat sides and a bowed front. A large steel bracket, punctuated with a medallioned "P" in neon, occupies the center of this marquee, and pink and green neon over various Art Deco-inspired chevrons, zigzags, and other geometric patterns highlights the entirety of this marquee and its center bracket. Behind this, four nested rectangular designs of black pigmented structural glass tiles rise toward the façade's central pylon, creating a multi-dimensional visual effect and drawing the eye to the large metal sign that runs down the center of this pylon, which is adorned in neon and spells out "Palmetto" vertically, with additional geometric patterns in neon providing accents. On the perimeter of this façade, more black pigmented structural glass tiles demarcate the sides of the façade as well as the parapeted false front roofline that rises to the slightly projecting pylon previously described. Aluminum flashing (a product of the 1992 restoration) serves as a copestone for this façade. This

parapeted false front obscures the bulk of the front-gabled, standing seam aluminum roof (not original and installed in 1992 as part of renovations). The remainder of the wall surface consists of a stucco finish over concrete block. Poster windows framed in aluminum and located at the ground floor level flank either side of the marquee and entrance. The angled and recessed entryway beneath the marquee (whose soffit appears to be of plywood and contains a few recessed lighting fixtures) leads to two sets of double wooden doors with large plate glass windows, which are purported to be original but are scheduled for replacement in the near future. To the left (or northeast) of these doors along the angled wall of the entryway is a small, square ticket window with a centralized speaker device. To the right (or southwest) of these doors, the angled wall displays a much larger, wood-framed, plate glass window, which was a replacement of an aluminum poster window that is believed to have occurred during the 1992 renovations.<sup>1</sup> Along the perimeter of this recessed entryway and along the outward facing walls of the main façade plane, a narrow chair rail strip separates the stucco above from large, black pigmented structural glass panels. The floor surface of this recessed entryway is poured concrete, and there is no evidence to suggest that a more elaborate floor covering may have once existed here.

The northeast elevation, meanwhile, consists almost entirely of running bond brick painted white, with six evenly spaced pilasters of concrete block painted white dividing the wall surface. Aluminum downspouts descend from an aluminum gutter (also a 1992 addition) at less regular and even intervals along this wall. Between the slightly projecting headers of the concrete blocks making up the subsurface of the façade and the first pilaster of the northeast wall is a former first floor entrance, once used by African-American patrons to access an interior ticket booth and the interior stairwell to the balcony during the segregation era, with a substantial limestone header clearly visible above, but this entry has been filled with concrete block and is no longer in use. Beyond the first of the pilasters, a boarded over doorway cut in the brick indicates the old fire escape for the Palmetto's balcony, which was added at an unknown date after the Palmetto first opened, when changing fire codes required it. The exterior stairwell that once descended from this doorway is no longer extant.<sup>2</sup> Just beyond the fourth pilaster (heading southeasterly along this wall) is a low, one-story addition of concrete block with a flat, asphalt roof and a Greek Revival portico. This addition, known as the annex, contains the present theater's dressing rooms. A modern metal doorway located underneath this portico leads through the northeast wall of the Palmetto and into the theater, although this doorway was not original and was probably added to meet modern fire code requirements.<sup>3</sup> The annex, meanwhile, blocks off what was once a through alleyway, thus creating a brick courtyard adjacent to the northeast wall that is reached through a wrought iron fence located at the sidewalk plane of the Palmetto's façade. This brick courtyard is punctuated with various "fundraising bricks" displaying the names of donors to the 1992 restoration. Electric street lamps designed to resemble historic gaslights are spaced at regular intervals in this courtyard just below the northeast wall. These street lamps, the annex building, and the courtyard are non-contributing elements of the present configuration of the Palmetto Theater, as they all date to 1992 and interrupt the historic function of this alley as a pedestrian pass-through and the historic location of the fire escape staircase that once

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<sup>1</sup> Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 4 February 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Palmetto Theater Renovations," unsigned architectural plans, 31 October 1990, 1, Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center Archives, accessed 7 November 2011.

descended from the boarded over second floor entrance and provided emergency egress for African-American patrons from the balcony area during the era of segregation.

At the rear, or southeast elevation, of the Palmetto, the construction of the one-story, concrete block, flat-roofed annex obscures the east corner of the original theater building. As with the portion of the annex in the courtyard, this addition is non-contributing and will not be described in detail. Attached to the annex along its southwest wall, however, is the original single-story mechanical room for the Palmetto, with an added firewall between the two sections rising slightly above the uneven roofline. It retains its original shed-style roof and projecting wooden eaves with open rafter tails and has a standing-seam metal roof that was likely a replacement as part of the 1992 renovations. This mechanical room retains its original brick walls that appear to be predominantly of running bond and painted white, although occasional, irregular headers are seen to punctuate portions of the wall, perhaps as infill for old openings in the wall for pipes or other mechanicals. This southeast wall of the mechanical room can be entered through a large wooden plank doorway with a wood frame, both of which appear to be original, and is surmounted by a heavy sill of either limestone or concrete. To the left of this doorway and high on the wall are two, side-by-side, six-light, awning-style windows attached at their tops to the eaves by means of traditional hinges. A large, bulky wooden frame and sill surround these windows. A tall, brick, square chimney stack of running bond rises from the left (southwest) side of the mechanical room. Above this projecting mechanical room, the main rear (southeast) wall of the theater rises without windows to the gabled roofline, which has aluminum flashing that operates as a copestone. To the left (southwest) of the mechanical room, the main rear (southeast) wall of the theater features a windowless metal door that was a replacement of an existing door during the 1992 renovations. A metal awning hangs over this entry, obscuring a portion of a former window that was bricked over at an unknown time.

The southwest wall is similar in many respects to the northeast wall, although the one-story commercial block building that adjoins the Palmetto to the southwest obscures much of it. Present here are the pilasters, the brickwork painted white, the occasional aluminum downspout, and the aluminum gutters found on the northeast wall. No other significant features are readily apparent.

The interior of the Palmetto retains many original elements, although there are substantial alterations that occurred as part of the 1992 renovations. In the main auditorium space, renovations required the building out of a new, rectangular stage over the old semi-circular one, thereby covering over the flanking stairwells from the original stage configuration. These alterations resulted in the addition of what appears to be more than 50% more stage space as well as the creation of a new proscenium wall and the removal of the original. Yet another doorway was cut in the northeast wall to provide direct access from the stage space into the dressing rooms as well.<sup>4</sup> The stage area appears to have had additional projecting wings into the orchestra area added at an unknown date since 1992, as the flooring on these wings is not a precise match to that found on the rest of the stage. At the northeast side of the front portion of the orchestra, a simple framed-in staircase with wooden handrails rises to the exit previously described. The addition of these projecting stage wings and the emergency exit on the northeast wall appear to have resulted in the removal of several rows of seats from the two side seating sections. The remainder of the orchestra seats in these two side sections and the wide center section are not original to the theater, but they certainly appear older than the 1992 renovation would

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<sup>4</sup> "Palmetto Theater Renovations," 3.

allow and likely date to the late 1960s or early 1970s. The present owners are in possession of a single piece of aisle rail for the Palmetto's original seats, which was found under the stage during renovations. These original chair rows totaled 450 seats and had upholstered seats and backs.<sup>5</sup> Efforts are underway to design replacement seating based upon this design in the hopes of restoring the seating to an appearance closer to the original. Walls in this auditorium space are of soundproofing acoustical tiles with a plywood wainscoting and thin chair rail below. Six of the original light sconces adorn these walls (three per wall), each mimicking an ornate, Art Deco candle set into a semi-circular stand with a fluted brass base tapering to an inverted conifer form. Flooring throughout the orchestra portion of the auditorium is sloped and consists of painted poured concrete, with red runner carpets extending the entire length of each of the side aisles. At the rear (northwest end) of the theater, the aisles each terminate at a single wooden door with a diamond-shaped light at eye level. These doors lead to the lobby area of the Palmetto. Above these doors, the Palmetto's unadorned balcony projects only slightly over the orchestra by perhaps two feet. The progressively tiered ceiling throughout the auditorium space appears to be covered with soundproofing acoustical tiles set into wooden frames and painted black. Various iron rails with stage lighting fixtures hang horizontally across the theater ceiling at appropriate locations, and several boxed-in, fluorescent light fixtures provide additional lighting to the space.

The two sets of double doors at the main entrance, meanwhile, open into a foyer area of the lobby, with a single wooden door to the left marked "Storage Room," but which actually leads to the old ticket booth area on the northeast side of the building as well as the interior staircase to the balcony. On the opposite side of this foyer, a similar door marked "Office" leads to the old office and poster storage area on the southwest side of the building, which was expanded slightly in 1992 and is now used as advertised. A two-way mirror occupies the center of this door. Walls here are of painted plaster with a chair rail and dado effect below, a pattern that continues throughout the rest of the lobby area. Industrial grade carpeting fills this foyer space and the rest of the lobby. Two wide, side-by-side entryways lead from this foyer space into the rest of the lobby, where the northeast and southwest interior walls eventually curve outward in Art Moderne fashion (thus hinting at the Art Moderne influences occasionally found in the Palmetto's stylistic flourishes) and lead to the doorways to the men's and women's restrooms, respectively. The women's room space was reduced slightly and reconfigured during the 1992 restoration to provide additional space in the adjacent "Office" area. An alcove cut into the curved southwest interior wall houses an updated water fountain. The entire lobby area includes an acoustical drop ceiling that may be original.

Passing through the "Storage Room" door, one enters the irregularly shaped space that once housed the Palmetto's ticket booth, where the original ticket booth window for white patrons is still visible (facing west toward the marquee entrance). To the northeast of this window is a wide opening, which once housed the interior ticket window for African-American patrons, replete with a Dutch door to provide employee access to the interior balcony staircase. Neither the African-American ticket window nor the Dutch door survives, a change that appears to have occurred sometime after the end of the segregation era but before 1992. Instead, this new opening leads into the interior stairwell to the balcony, an alteration that likely occurred during the 1992 restoration.<sup>6</sup> Steps here are of poured

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<sup>5</sup> Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 4 February 2012.

<sup>6</sup> "Palmetto Theater Renovations," 4, indicates that this doorway was added to an "existing wall," which suggests that the old ticket window and Dutch door opening were walled over for a period, then opened up again in 1992. See also Frank

concrete, with an iron pipe handrail. At the top of the stairs, the second floor entry to the balcony from the exterior staircase (no longer extant) has been boarded over and is no longer in use. At the base of this interior staircase, the concrete blocked-in first floor exit is also still visible. A waist-level, framed-in wooden barrier with a bare wood banister surrounds this stairwell and blocks it off from the small amount of balcony seating that survives in the north corner of the balcony. A single row of identical seating is also visible at the back of the west corner of the balcony. This unadorned, original seating is bare wood and not upholstered, and it matches neither the existing orchestra seating nor the original seating aisle rail found during renovations, all of which suggests the difference in accommodations provided to white and African-American patrons.<sup>7</sup> The plywood wainscoting and chair rail from below is repeated in this space, with acoustic, soundproofing tiles above. The balcony floor, meanwhile, is sloped and consists of poured concrete. At the front of the balcony, a long bare wood banister safety rail mounted on iron footings runs the full width of the balcony and is set back about a foot from the actual balcony rail. At the center of this balcony space is the original projection booth, which repeats the wainscoting and acoustical tile motifs found elsewhere on its stage-facing (southeast) side. The interior of this fireproofed space consists of unadorned concrete block, original metal sliding projection windows with firetrap closing mechanisms, and Eprad Universal projector housings that replaced the original high-intensity arc light housings sometime in the 1970s, likely as a result of ongoing fire concerns associated with the old arc light projectors. The original RCA Brenkert projectors remain connected to this equipment, however.<sup>8</sup> Wooden doorways lead out of both the northeast and southwest sides of the projection booth.

A temporary, portable storage shed is located just to the southeast of the southeast (rear) wall of the theater and is used for storage of materials associated with ongoing dramatic productions. Due to its temporary nature, it is not included in the count of either contributing or non-contributing resources.

Taken as a whole, the Palmetto Theatre retains many of its original features and layout components, but it also reflects the changing code and functional demands of the space following its 1992 renovation. The Palmetto's façade maintains a remarkably high degree of original integrity, and great care has been taken with the annex addition and the interior renovations to retain as many original features and details as possible. While the exterior balcony staircase has disappeared, sufficient ghost elements and interior components of this configuration survive to highlight the architectural evidence of the segregation in seating that took place for many years at the Palmetto.

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McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 4 February 2012, which provides details on the configuration here during the segregation era.

<sup>7</sup> Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 4 February 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. McClure explains, "At the same time [in the mid-1970s], a new film reel apparatus was installed where film received from the distributors could be spliced together on a large, rotating platter. Under the original system, only 2,000 feet of film could be loaded into the projectors and generally every twenty minutes a 'change-over' had to be made to the next reel. This would probably require six changeovers for a two-hour movie....[T]he new system... would only require one 'change-over' for each two hour movie. Under this method, the manager could act as projectionist and one less employee was required." McClure credits Nolen Mole, the last manager of the Palmetto, with sharing this information with him.

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1946

**Significant Dates**

1946

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Freeman, Clarence L. (builder)

**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

Since the Palmetto Theatre is being nominated only under Criterion C for Architecture and it is essentially intact from its 1946 date of construction, the theater's period of significance is justified as simply 1946.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**



**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Built in 1946 by Clarence L. Freeman for its owners T. G. "Mutt" Stanley and Dr. James A. Hayne, Jr., the Palmetto Theatre is significant under Criterion C for its post-war Art Moderne architecture, which reflected the limited availability of construction materials following the war and the influence of regional theater construction. It remains as one of only a small handful of Art Moderne theaters in the state of South Carolina. The theater was restored in 1992 and retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Architecture

The Palmetto Theatre was the brainchild of T. G. "Mutt" Stanley, a one-time mayor pro tem of Hampton, and Dr. James A. Hayne, Jr., a local physician. Built in a style heavily influenced by the flourishes of the Art Deco Movement that had given birth to so many movie palaces in the larger cities of the south during the 1930s, but technically an example of Art Moderne architecture because of its age and certain architectural elements, the Palmetto might have been considered passé to more cosmopolitan observers, but its design was greeted by the residents of Hampton as "handsome in every detail of its structure and design."<sup>9</sup> Prior to deciding on a design, Stanley and Hayne toured several existing movie theaters and ultimately crafted a look that bears a striking resemblance to the Art Deco-style Carolina Theatre (ca. 1936) in nearby Allendale, South Carolina, including its rectangular mirrored glass brackets around the upper façade and its stunted central pylon (with chevron accents at the Carolina rather than the neon design found at the Palmetto).<sup>10</sup> Despite its later date, most of the Palmetto's architectural components also resemble the general massing and building materials found at three other Art Deco movie theaters in South Carolina presently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Holiday Theatre in Horry County (listed as part of the Conway Downtown Historic District), the Ritz Theater in Newberry County (listed as part of the Newberry Historic District), and the Saluda Theatre in Saluda County.

Design and construction of the building is attributed to Clarence L. Freeman of nearby Varnville. Wartime construction material delays and limited availability of project equipment meant that completion of the theater took a full year, but the Palmetto's owners waited out those delays, ensuring that they had "the best of equipment" and "an air cooled system" for the "comfort of movie goers." Unlike its inspiration, the Carolina Theatre in Allendale, the Palmetto did not have a brick front, relying instead on the more widely available and less expensive option of stucco over concrete block. This and other architectural details of the Palmetto no doubt reflected the limited availability of

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<sup>9</sup> "New Theatre to Open Monday," *Hampton County Guardian*, 7 August 1946, 1. Stanley is described as mayor pro tem in "Blue Law Jails Theater Owners," *Hampton County Guardian*, 13 September 1950, 1. David Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters* (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1987), 114, inexplicably dates the Palmetto to circa 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Frank McClure, the Palmetto's first projectionist, attributes the design influences to the Carolina. See "Palmetto Theatre History," undated typescript signed by Frank McClure, Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center Archives, accessed 7 November 2011. The Carolina dated to at least 1934. See "Carolina Theatre," advertisement, *Hampton County Guardian*, 7 March 1934.

conventional construction materials during the post-war period. It is probably for this reason that a return to the conventional Art Deco components of concrete, stucco, and glass tile that make up much of the Palmetto's façade allowed construction to move forward fairly quickly, lasting only about a year. The theater's marquee, however, must have presented significant material challenges, given its reliance on a steel frame, and this may account for at least some of the delays that Stanley and Hayne did encounter in completing the theater. It may also explain one of the most obvious oddities of the Palmetto's marquee as compared to other Art Deco and Art Moderne movie theaters of its day—it lacks an actual marquee space for the display of titles or acts, featuring instead an ornate neon display replete with chevron, zigzag, and other geometrical patterns typically associated with Art Deco masterpieces. This emphasis on neon and the inlaid structural glass tiles worked in harmony to draw attention to the theater, especially at night, and to keep lighting costs down through reflection. Like many post-war theaters, the Palmetto also did not feature a pronounced tower reaching high above the façade of the theater, as was common in Art Deco theaters of just ten years earlier, but rather a stunted pylon that kept below the roofline, heralding the theater's name in neon.<sup>11</sup>

Built at a cost of \$45,000, the theater was designed to seat 450 people, including balcony seats, and included upholstered, cushioned chairs with a red, white, and blue color scheme for the interior.<sup>12</sup> Original projection equipment included RCA-Brenkert 35mm projectors with high intensity arc lamps.<sup>13</sup> A soda shop located in an adjacent building, later known as the "Theatre Soda Shop," offered "complete fountain service, sandwiches, and soups," whether for "breakfast, dinner, or supper."<sup>14</sup>

The Palmetto's interior also suggests the strange compromises that were typical of theater construction during the immediate post-war period. While the Palmetto featured a curvilinear lobby more in keeping with newer Art Moderne influences, the jaunty angled accents of Art Deco were still in evidence in auditorium wall sconces and seating brackets that easily could have been produced at the height of the 1930s Art Deco movement. The stage and auditorium space, however, offered scant ornamentation beyond those elements already mentioned and resembled the type of performance space that might have been found in institutional architecture—most notably school performance spaces—during the immediate post-war period. With a curved, projecting stage space and stairs leading up from the orchestra area to the stage level, this stage would have been small but sufficient for the kinds of live performances that came to the Palmetto. This lack of flair was no doubt the consequence of the economics of Hampton County, which left little room for the ornate in a rural community just at the beginning of its building boom.

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<sup>11</sup> For more on the pressures of post-war construction and their influence on movie theater architecture, see Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 144-59.

<sup>12</sup> "New Theatre to Open." The "air cooled system" should not be interpreted as modern air conditioning. McClure reports that this system consisted of "a 'screen' of excelsior packing...with water spray playing on it, and a large fan drew outside air...through the water cooled 'screen' and into the auditorium. This was not satisfactory and in later years an air conditioning system was installed to replace the original cooling system." See McClure, "Palmetto Theatre History."

<sup>13</sup> McClure claims that the projectors still on site are original, but the high-intensity arc lamp housings were replaced in the 1970s for safety reasons. See McClure, "Palmetto Theatre History," and Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 7 February 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Theatre Soda Shop, advertisement, *Hampton County Democrat*, 21 April 1950, 4. The Theatre Soda Shop was owned for a time by the Palmetto, but it was also operated for many years by Haskell and Lamar Avant. See McClure, "Palmetto Theatre History."

Like many similar theaters in the south, the Palmetto's architecture also reflected the need to divide its audience space to meet the social conventions and expectations of a racially segregated community. Southern theaters accomplished this in a variety of ways. By the 1940s in Columbia, South Carolina, for example, movie theater venues were often identified as either "white" or "colored" theaters, although some divided spaces did exist in this and other southern urban areas. In smaller southern towns, though—such as Hampton—limited resources and venues meant that dividing the sole existing space became necessary. Sometimes this was accomplished through separate screenings for white and black patrons, while in some smaller venues, the same effect could be accomplished by erecting a low curtain or divider down the main center aisle, with white and black patrons on either side of the curtain viewing the same show. At the Palmetto, which featured a prominent and fairly spacious balcony, division occurred by allowing white patrons to reach the orchestra-level seats through the main entrance while black patrons entered the set aside balcony space—often called the "buzzard roost" or "peanut gallery" in South Carolina—via an exterior doorway on the northeast side that led to an interior ticket window with a Dutch door adjacent to the interior staircase that led to the balcony. At an unknown later date, the Palmetto added a second-floor emergency exit in the balcony as well as an exterior fire escape staircase to meet new fire codes requiring an emergency exit for the balcony's black patrons. This fire exit has since been boarded over and the exterior staircase removed, but the blocked-over, lower-level doorway at the base of the interior staircase still documents this segregated seating system.<sup>15</sup>

For all of these reasons, the Palmetto Theatre is a stunningly intact example of a small-town, southern, post-war movie theater whose Art Deco-influenced Art Moderne architecture reflects the social, economic, and aesthetic pressures of the period, as well as the immediate post-war transition between these two related architectural styles. Its continued use as a movie theater and live performance space to the present day, and the high degree of architectural integrity it retains, make the Palmetto Theatre highly significant at the local level under Criterion C.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

**S. Charles Lee**

While there is no direct evidence to confirm this possibility, the design decisions made by the Palmetto's owners, T. G. "Mutt" Stanley and Dr. James A. Hayne, Jr., in consultation with builder Clarence L. Freeman, about materials and the appearance of the Palmetto may also reflect the

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<sup>15</sup> For more on these different systems for racially segregating movie theaters, see Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 156-63. The interior balcony staircase leads to the back of the old ticket booth (accessed by a narrow hallway unfit for egress by large numbers of patrons) and a bricked over exit to the adjacent lot. No images have been found depicting the configuration of the exterior staircase and the upper and lower entrances, but Frank McClure confirms this configuration in Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 4 February 2012, and Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 7 February 2012. A study of segregated public spaces, including movie theaters, in Columbia, South Carolina, can be found in Ruth Bagley-Ayres, et al, *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia, South Carolina, 1880-1960*, NRHP Multiple Property Nomination, 2005.

influence of renowned movie theater architect S. Charles Lee, who was responsible for the designs of more than 250 theaters nationwide between 1920 and 1950. While Lee had no known direct connection with the design of either the Palmetto or the Carolina, Lee's innovations were heavily influential on architects outside his obvious inner circle, and they often set patterns in theater architecture that held steady until his next big idea emerged. Lee was also a master of using materials appropriate to the financial and practical limitations of the chaotic post-war period, and many of his ideas were in wide, national circulation by the end of 1945. His influence, while perhaps indirect, nevertheless seems obvious in the aesthetic of the Palmetto, especially considering how difficult it was in rural South Carolina to secure more traditional construction materials after the war. The Palmetto's designers also relied on neon and the inlaid structural glass tiles working in harmony to draw attention to the theater, especially at night, and to keep lighting costs down through reflection—another of Lee's innovations.<sup>16</sup>

### 1950 Blue Law Controversy

The arrival of the new theater in Hampton in 1946 was hailed as an auspicious improvement for the town, especially considering that the only other access to film exhibitions in Hampton prior to the Palmetto's opening had been two unsuccessful attempts at establishing a theater in the town's old armory garage.<sup>17</sup> In 1946, Hampton was still a rather rural county seat, given its population of just under 2,000 people (approximately 13% of them African-American) within the town limits, in a geographically large but sparsely populated county with roughly 20,000 residents, more than half of them African-American.<sup>18</sup> Opening night festivities on Monday, August 12, 1946, included an address by Senator George Warren to a packed house of 550 patrons, many of them sitting in additional chairs that had been set up in the aisles. Senator Warren's address was followed by a screening of *O. S. S.*<sup>19</sup> As was typical of most one-screen theaters of the day, the Palmetto offered a roster of films that changed every day or every other day, often with a news reel and/or a cartoon mixed in. Many of the films were short serials.<sup>20</sup> The Palmetto also had a full stage, which meant it was an

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<sup>16</sup> Valentine, 144-59.

<sup>17</sup> Frank McClure, hand-written note on typescript of undated newspaper article, ca. 1946, Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center Archives, accessed 7 November 2011. In Frank McClure to Eric Plaag, email communication, 7 February 2012, McClure explains, "The first, by Charles A. Harper, Jr., of Estill and owner of the Anne Theatre in Estill, began operation in the summer of 1943. This ill-fated operation ended on December 31, 1943. Later, a Mr. Robinson, of Swansea, SC, using the same equipment and seating, began the movie operation. This lasted less than a year."

<sup>18</sup> In the 1940 Census, 17,465 people were reported as living in the county, 10,095 of them black. Of these, 6,759 residents lived in Peebles Township, of which Hampton was a part, and 2,902 were black. No specific figures for the town of Hampton are available. By 1950, the town of Hampton had 2,007 residents, 261 of them black. See US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population, Part 6* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 412, and US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population, Part 40: South Carolina* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1952), 40-64.

<sup>19</sup> "Palmetto Theatre Opened Monday Night with Capacity Crowd in Attendance," *Hampton County Guardian*, 14 August 1946, 1. See also "New Theatre." Both articles credit Abe Goethe and Frank McClure, Jr., for operating the mechanical department and Mrs. Irene DeLoach with running the box office.

<sup>20</sup> The schedule for the week of August 19, 1946, for example, included *This Love of Ours*, a cartoon (*Donald Gets Drafted*), and a news reel on Monday and Tuesday; *Dick Tracy*, *Purity Squad*, *Science No. 1*, and *Scarlet Horseman*, *Serial No. 2* on Wednesday; *Spanish Main* and a news reel on Thursday and Friday; and *Badmen of the Border*, *Quiet Please*, and *Forest Ranger*, *Serial No. 2* on Saturday, with a late Saturday screening of *That Night With You*. See Palmetto

ideal venue for various live performances during its early days, including Gene Mills and His Twilight Playboys, western star Lash Larue, and even Prince Tiny, “the Hollywood wonder horse,” who appeared as part of an animal circus featuring “trained dogs, baboons, monkeys, etc.” in 1951.<sup>21</sup> In those early years, though, the Palmetto did not offer any Sunday screenings or shows, in keeping with the longstanding state Blue Law prohibiting Sunday exhibitions and entertainments.

That changed in 1950, when the Palmetto’s operators intentionally challenged the Sunday prohibitions and consequently found themselves at the center of a community firestorm. On Sunday, September 10, 1950, Stanley and Hayne were jailed “on charges of unlawful ‘operation of a moving picture theatre against the statutes in such cases provided against [for] the peace and dignity of the state.’”<sup>22</sup> This controversy did not start overnight, though, and had been brewing for weeks. The first of the scheduled Sunday showings appears to have occurred four months earlier, on May 1, 1950, although no record of what was shown on that date survives in the historical record.<sup>23</sup> The first documented Sunday screening occurred on May 14, when Stanley and Hayne offered an afternoon matinee and an evening showing of Shirley Temple and Barry Fitzgerald in *The Story of Seabiscuit*.<sup>24</sup> In most of the weeks that followed, Stanley and Hayne continued the pattern of Sunday shows, typically selecting family-appropriate fare—and even the occasional religious film—for their screenings.<sup>25</sup> Almost immediately, though, local clergy expressed their outrage at the Sunday screenings. By early June, a group of Hampton County ministers had met to discuss the changes at the Palmetto and issued “a resolution condemning the showing of Sunday motion pictures.” While the Palmetto was not named directly, it appears to have been the first in Hampton County to have Sunday screenings, with others in the county soon following suit.<sup>26</sup> A petition circulated by the

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Theatre, advertisement, *Hampton County Guardian*, 14 August 1946, 5. McClure adds, “The original format of show presentation followed the one used by most of the area movie theatres. On Monday and Tuesday, and Thursday and Friday, the better movies were shown. On Wednesday, a B or C class movie was shown, and on Saturday would be a Western theme or even a double feature. Also on Saturday was the serial or “continued pictures” as they were called locally. They were only one reel each week and usually had a “cliffhanger” ending to entice everyone to come back next week to see what happened. Usually these lasted about fifteen episodes. Normally, there were two presentations (or shows) of the same movie each night, the first “show” beginning at 7:00pm and the second “show” at 9:00pm.” See McClure, “Palmetto Theatre History.”

<sup>21</sup> Palmetto Theater, advertisement, *Hampton County Guardian*, 19 April 1950, 8; “Theatre—About the Palmetto,” undated and uncredited newspaper clipping, Hampton Museum and Visitors’ Center Archives, accessed 7 November 2011; and “To Stage Circus at Palmetto Here,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 17 January 1951, 1.

<sup>22</sup> “Hampton Buzzing After ‘Blue Law’ Arrest; Ministers’ Committee Issues Statement,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 15 Sept. 1950, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Palmetto Theatre advertisement, *Hampton County Guardian*, 10 May 1950, 8.

<sup>25</sup> A review of the *Hampton County Guardian* finds fourteen other films screened on Sundays between May 14 and the arrest of Stanley and Hayne on September 10, including *Kid From Cleveland* (May 28, billed by the operators of the Palmetto as “A Religious Movie”), *Lady Takes a Sailor* (June 11), *Always Leave Them Laughing* (June 18), *Blue Grass of Kentucky* (June 25), *Hasty Heart* (July 2), *Joe Palooka Meets Humphrey* (July 9), *Dancing in the Dark* (July 16), *Captain China* (July 16 and July 23), *Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (August 6), *Tarzan Triumphs* (August 13), *Joan of Ozark* (August 20), *Jiggs and Maggie Out West* (August 27), *Belle of Old Mexico* (September 3), and the officially offending *Wake Island* (September 10), a revival of an old World War II film from nearly eight years earlier. While most of this was pretty innocuous material usually emphasizing patriotic themes, one might easily agree with the more conservative residents of the time that at least three of these films—*Always Leave Them Laughing*, *Dancing in the Dark*, and *Belle of Old Mexico*—contained content, themes, or plot elements that could be considered questionable religious, patriotic, or social instruction for a Sunday.

<sup>26</sup> “Minister Group Protests Sunday Movie Showings,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 2 June 1950, 1.

ministers and condemning the theater screenings gathered more than 800 signatures from “persons of voting age” in the county.<sup>27</sup> Tensions culminated in September, when Reverend Lewis E. McCormick of the Hampton Baptist Church, Reverend O. S. Ulmer of the Brunson Baptist Church, and Reverend B. H. Covington of the Hampton Methodist Church swore out a warrant for the arrest of Stanley and Hayne. Once the screening of *Wake Island* began on the evening of September 10, the ministers and the local deputy sheriff accompanied the Palmetto’s owners to jail, even though the screening continued uninterrupted. Twenty minutes later, Hampton Mayor Jim Holland bailed out the two men on \$100 bond each.<sup>28</sup> The ministers then vowed to target another Hampton County theater, a drive-in venue located near Fairfax, for its Sunday screenings.<sup>29</sup>

The reaction from Stanley and Hayne was swift. Taking to the press, the Palmetto’s owners pointed out that the Blue Law under which they had been charged was ridiculously out of date, and that under these kinds of laws, the delivery of newspapers, the operation of trains, and the opening of drug stores, swimming pools, and service stations on Sundays would or at least should all be banned. The local press, meanwhile, highlighted the fact that a 1942 amendment to the state’s Blue Laws (which dated to 1633) permitted Sunday screenings “in cities with military or naval establishments in the area,” indirectly implying that the presence of an armory in town might make the Palmetto exempt. Even some local ministers of the Baptist faith refused to join the movement against the Palmetto, including Rev. T. Lunsford Heath of the Sand Hill Baptist Church, who called the arrest of Stanley and Hayne “discriminatory.” As both Stanley and Hayne had done, Heath objected to the singling out of one type of business for operating on Sunday, when others were permitted to do so.<sup>30</sup>

Within the week following the arrest, the case against Stanley and Hayne seemed to founder, both in law and in the court of public opinion. By Friday, September 15, Coy Thomas, a local magistrate, recused himself from prosecuting Stanley and Hayne, citing the fact that he had offered counsel to both the defendants and the local ministers prior to the arrests. Instead, he ordered that the case be reassigned to other nearby magistrates.<sup>31</sup> Local press began piling on, too, calling the arrests “comical” and pointing out that morality could not be legislated, noting that “the prophets and even Jesus himself taught, showed the way, and urged what they believed the right way to live and act—they never tried to force anyone to do anything.”<sup>32</sup> Locals echoed these criticisms in letters to the editor of both local papers. W. C. Mauldin, claiming to be one of the town’s oldest citizens and a

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<sup>27</sup> “Hampton Buzzing.”

<sup>28</sup> “Hampton Buzzing.”

<sup>29</sup> “Blue Law Jails Theater Owners,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 13 September 1950, 1. The article specifically names the Fairfax Drive-In as being in Hampton County, although the town of Fairfax is actually just over the county line in Allendale County.

<sup>30</sup> “Hampton Buzzing.” Many jurisdictions wrestled with the problem of Sunday screenings on military bases as early as the 1910s. Norfolk, Virginia, which had a strongly enforced Blue Law against Sunday screenings, found it acceptable for the Red Circle, a naval base movie theater, to host “illustrated talks” on Sundays following services (also held in the theater, which doubled as a chapel), but not movies per se. It was here that theaters first began experimenting with “religious films” on Sundays, which technically met the “illustrated talk” requirement but allowed for nearly any subject to be considered religious instruction. See Terry Lindvall, “Cinema Virtue, Cinema Vice: Race, Religion, and Film Exhibition in Norfolk, Virginia, 1908-1922,” *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. by Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 96-98.

<sup>31</sup> “Hampton Magistrate Will Not Try Case,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 15 September 1950, 1.

<sup>32</sup> “An Editorial,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 15 September 1950, 1.

parishioner at the Hampton Baptist Church, expressed his “shock and surprise” that “two of our best and most useful citizens had been arrested and put in jail,” then noted that Sabbath rest and recreation means different things to different people, including those the ministers had not targeted, such as folks who gambled, drank, played golf, or went fishing or hunting on Sundays.<sup>33</sup> Others expressed support for the ministers, citing scripture or religious invective to back their arguments.<sup>34</sup>

State Solicitor Randolph Murdaugh, meanwhile, clouded the picture on the Palmetto’s alleged violations further when he asked the local magistrate’s court to postpone a hearing on the case until the state’s highest court could advise on the applicability of the law to the situation at hand. Noting that the defendants would plead guilty if the law proved constitutional, Murdaugh indicated that he expected an answer within ninety days.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Sunday screenings continued at the Palmetto in the days following the arrests, with *Dreaming Outlook* (Sept. 17) and *Blossoms in the Dust* (Sept. 24), and did not relent in the six months that followed.<sup>36</sup> The publicity campaign on behalf of the Sunday screenings continued in the hands of Stanley and Hayne, too, who in early October released a statement indicating that they would be happy “to close if all types of business now operating on Sundays are closed down by law also.”<sup>37</sup> This campaign seemed to reach its pinnacle two weeks later, when enormous, full-page advertisements attributed to “Ven. Canon John R. Leatherbury,” the Rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania, ran in both Hampton papers, highlighting with four columns of half-sheet prose the reasons why Leatherbury “favor[ed] Sunday movies.”<sup>38</sup> That same week, “A Disgusted Hampton County Citizen and Taxpayer” captured what may have become the sentiment of the day when he wrote to the *Guardian* about the issue and started off by saying, “By this time everyone is probably very tired of hearing and reading about Sunday movies.” In this case, the editorialist pointed out that even the churches are a commercial establishment operating on Sundays, given that the ministers would not be paid without the collection plates making their rounds, and perhaps they, too, might be in violation of the Blue Law.<sup>39</sup>

Then, almost as quickly as the arrests of Stanley and Hayne had occurred on that Sunday in September, all mention of the Blue Law controversy vanished from the community press. Over the ensuing six months, no further mention of their impending trial or the possible consequences for the

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<sup>33</sup> W. C. Mauldin, “Letters to the Editor,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 20 September 1950, 2. Similar letters appeared in the *Hampton County Democrat*. One anonymous reader asked on September 29 whether “the ministers in Hampton think the Hamptonites are closer to Heaven with the movie doors closed on Sunday.” See A Reader, Hampton, “To the Editor,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 29 September 1950, 2.

<sup>34</sup> For two such examples, see J. M. Rivers, “Letters to the Editor,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 27 September 1950, 1, and Forest and Mae Barnes, “Applauds Ministers,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 29 September 1950, 2.

<sup>35</sup> “Solicitor Asks ‘Movie’ Trial Delay for High Court Decision,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 29 September 1950, 1.

<sup>36</sup> A review of the Palmetto Theatre advertisements in the *Hampton County Guardian* through the end of March 1951 demonstrates that Sunday screenings continued unabated.

<sup>37</sup> “Theater Will Close If Law Enforced,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 4 October 1950, 1. Stanley also wrote that week to the *Democrat* expressing these same sentiments. See T. G. Stanley, “Explains Position,” *Hampton County Democrat*, 6 October 1950, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Stanley and Hayne, who were by all accounts savvy and ruthless entrepreneurs, likely paid for the ads. Text at the bottom of the advertisements read, “Published Here As Paid Advertisement for The Palmetto Theatre, Hampton.” The text is originally credited as having appeared in the *Harrisburg [PA] Evening News* on 3 November 1947. See “Let Us Be Honest,” advertisement, *Hampton County Guardian*, 18 October 1950, 3, and “Let Us Be Honest,” advertisement, *Hampton County Democrat*, 13 October 1950, 3.

<sup>39</sup> A Disgusted Hampton County Citizen and Taxpayer, “Letters to the Editor,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 18 October 1950, 6.

Palmetto appeared in either local paper. No opinion from the Supreme Court of South Carolina appeared forthcoming. No consequences appeared in store for either Stanley or Hayne. No further impediment to the Sunday screenings surfaced, either, since they continued uninterrupted through the decades that followed.<sup>40</sup> What is clear is that the hullabaloo over Sunday screenings had erupted into a major community fight over what should and should not occur on the Sabbath, and the forces for expanded recreational opportunities ultimately won the day. In short, the decision by Stanley and Hayne to adopt Sunday screenings resulted in a small but significant social revolution for Hampton County, one that paved away for other Blue Law challenges that would come in the decades to follow.

Such battles over Sunday screenings were not uncommon in the early days of film exhibition, and they continued in much of the south throughout the mid-twentieth century. Sunday movie controversies in New York and New Jersey in the 1910s had already highlighted the intriguing social clash between celebration of the Sabbath and gate receipts that suggested Sunday was “one of the most popular filmgoing days of the week.” Courts forced to handle such cases often found technicalities on which to dismiss the charges, rather than confronting the constitutionality of the laws directly.<sup>41</sup> While sufficient evidence has not yet been found to document what ultimately happened to the case against Hayne and Stanley, what seems most significant is that Stanley and Hayne’s challenge to the existing status quo on paid entertainments and Sunday Blue Laws ultimately resulted in a rejection of those community standards and an embracement of more liberal attitudes toward Sunday entertainments in Hampton County.

### **The Palmetto in the Era of Television and Home Video**

In spite of this significant victory against the state Blue Law, in the years that followed, the advent of television in the 1950s, then home video and cable television movies by the 1980s, made it increasingly difficult for the Palmetto to remain competitive and solvent.<sup>42</sup> In 1985, the Palmetto’s manager Nolan Mole was forced to shutter its doors. What followed was a community outcry at the possibility of losing the Palmetto forever.<sup>43</sup> This ultimately culminated in 1992 with the purchase of the Palmetto Theatre by the Hampton County Arts Council. The theater reopened in 1993, following

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<sup>40</sup> A cursory review of South Carolina Supreme Court cases and legal opinions on the state’s Blue Law found no evidence that the Palmetto case was ever reviewed at the state level. It is unclear, therefore, whether the charges were just quietly dropped at a later date or whether some more formal outcome occurred that was not documented in the local press.

<sup>41</sup> James Forsher, *The Community of Cinema: How Cinema and Spectacle Transformed the American Downtown* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 58-59. Forsher highlights a case in Hudson County, New Jersey, in which the judge concluded that “thousands of people in a community like Hudson County get practically no time for recreation except on Sunday and on holidays. Such people should unquestionably be legally accorded full opportunity to get some of the pleasure in life that a healthy kind of recreation affords.” Anne Morey, in her chapter on exhibitions in Wilmington, North Carolina, notes that one Sabbatarian complained about a 1915 film (not exhibited on Sundays in Wilmington) that nevertheless functioned as an exhibition of the popular activity of spending the Sabbath on the beach, prompting Morey to wonder whether ministers opposed to Sunday screenings worried just as much about what else might be revealed about Sabbath attitudes in these films as they did about the screening itself (74, n. 58). See Anne Morey, “Early Film Exhibition in Wilmington, North Carolina,” *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, edited by Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 53-74.

<sup>42</sup> For a brief explanation of these dynamics, see Janna Jones, *The Southern Movie Palace: Rise, Fall, and Resurrection* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 32-34. McClure also blames television for the decline of the Palmetto. See McClure, “Palmetto Theatre History.”

<sup>43</sup> “Palmetto Theatre: Don’t Let It Die,” *Hampton County Guardian*, 18 December 1985, 4.



renovations to the interior and the addition of an annex building (now used as dressing rooms) and a courtyard on the northeast side. Current programming focuses on various performing arts (primarily stage drama) rather than cinema.<sup>44</sup> The Palmetto is once again the center of community entertainments and arts in Hampton.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Bagley-Ayres, Ruth, et al. *Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia, South Carolina, 1880-1960*. NRHP Multiple Property Nomination, 2005.
- Forsher, James. *The Community of Cinema: How Cinema and Spectacle Transformed the American Downtown*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.
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- "Palmetto Theater Renovations." Unsigned architectural plans. 31 October 1990. Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center Archives, Hampton, S.C.

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<sup>44</sup> Laura J. McKenzie, "The Curtain Is Rising," uncredited newspaper clipping, 18 February 1993, and uncredited typescript of notes on the Hampton County Arts Council, both located in the Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center Archives, accessed 7 November 2011.

US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population, Part 6*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1943.

US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population, Part 40: South Carolina*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1952.

Valentine, Maggie. *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Hampton Museum and Visitors' Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>489982</u>	<u>3636676</u>	3	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
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	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated boundary for the Palmetto Theatre is shown as the heavy black line on the accompanying portion of Hampton County Tax Map #119 (scale: 1 inch = approx. 15 feet), for Lot 4 of Section 7 in Block 34, as well as the adjacent alleyway, located along the building's northeast (side) elevation, and in which a small modern addition to the theater building is located.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for the Palmetto Theatre consists of the entire property parcel and adjacent alleyway, all of which contains the historic theater building and a small non-historic addition to the theater.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Eric Plaag, Ph.D.  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date August 9, 2012  
street & number 215 Rocky Creek Rd. telephone (803) 466-7050  
city or town Boone state NC zip code 28607  
e-mail ericplaag@gmail.com

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Palmetto Theatre  
City or Vicinity: Hampton  
County: Hampton County State: South Carolina  
Photographer: Eric Plaag  
Date Photographed: November 7, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 38: Northwest oblique at night, with entrance, looking east
- 2 of 38: Northwest façade at night, looking southeast
- 3 of 38: Lower marquee detail at night
- 4 of 38: Upper pylon detail at night
- 5 of 38: Northwest oblique at night, with roofline, looking south
- 6 of 38: Northwest oblique, daytime, looking east
- 7 of 38: Entrance detail, north corner of northwest façade
- 8 of 38: Entrance doors detail, northwest façade
- 9 of 38: Entrance detail, west corner of northwest façade
- 10 of 38: Northeast wall oblique, with sealed second floor entrance, looking south
- 11 of 38: North corner with sealed first floor entrance on northeast wall and projecting marquee, looking southwest
- 12 of 38: Northeast wall with later alleyway infill, looking southeast
- 13 of 38: Sealed first floor entrance associated with segregation, northeast wall, detail

- 14 of 38: South corner with southwest and southeast walls, looking north
- 15 of 38: Southeast oblique with boiler stack and temporary storage shed, looking north
- 16 of 38: Boiler room detail, looking north
- 17 of 38: Lobby area, looking south toward ladies' room
- 18 of 38: Lobby area, looking east toward men's room
- 19 of 38: Lobby area and vestibule, looking west
- 20 of 38: Original wall sconce, auditorium
- 21 of 38: Current auditorium seating
- 22 of 38: Surviving aisle bracket from original seating frame
- 23 of 38: Auditorium space, looking southeast
- 24 of 38: Auditorium seating and balcony, looking northwest
- 25 of 38: Stage wings and door to dressing room annex, looking north
- 26 of 38: Dressing room annex, looking northwest
- 27 of 38: Stage and pit area detail, looking south
- 28 of 38: Corridor to old ticket window (left) and former Dutch door area (right) leading to balcony staircase, looking northwest
- 29 of 38: Balcony area with emergency exit, looking northeast
- 30 of 38: Balcony area, looking southwest
- 31 of 38: View from balcony to stage, looking southeast
- 32 of 38: Original balcony seating in north corner
- 33 of 38: Projection booth, looking south
- 34 of 38: Projection booth, looking southwest
- 35 of 38: Projection booth windows with firetrap mechanisms, looking southeast
- 36 of 38: Projection booth, looking east
- 37 of 38: Northeast side of balcony, looking southeast
- 38 of 38: Southwest side of balcony, looking northwest

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**Property Owner:**

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

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name Hampton County Friends of the Arts, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 57 telephone (803) 943-3100

city or town Hampton state SC zip code 29924

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



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RAIL

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MAGNOLIA ST

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ALLEY  
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Palmetto Theatre

Hampton, Hampton Co

Scale: 1 inch = approx. 15 feet

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119-07-36-002.

FIRST ST



119-07-22-012.

(24.50)  
(24.50)

45.50

119-07-22-010

(39.20)

119-07-22-007.

119-07-22-007.

(39.20)

119-07-22-005.

(39.20)

119-07-22-005.

119-07-22-005.

24.07

25.90

119-07-22-004.

23.90

119-07-22-003.

119-07-22-002.

119-07-22-008

119-07-22-003.

14.50

119-07-22-011.

59.00

119-07-22-009.

LEE AVE

104.00

104.00

104.00

145.00

143.00

119-0

119-07-34-002.

119-07-34-003.

119-07-34-001.

145.90

102.00