

PH0021997

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

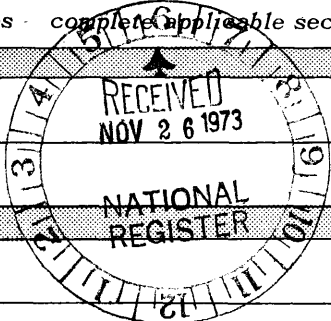
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: _____

COUNTY: _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE: **FEB 15 1974**



1. NAME

COMMON: **Howard Theatre**

AND/OR HISTORIC: _____

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **620 T Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C.**

STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11** COUNTY: **District of Columbia** CODE: **001**

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Agricultural
 Commercial
 Educational
 Entertainment
 Government
 Industrial
 Military
 Museum
 Park
 Private Residence
 Religious
 Scientific
 Transportation
 Other (Specify) Plans are in progress to restore to use as theatre.
 Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Sara Steifel Et. Al.**
c/o Martin M. Bell, Attorney for Estate of S. Steifel

STREET AND NUMBER: **1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **20036**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Recorder of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER: **6th & D Streets, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Proposed District of Columbia additions to the National Register of Historic Places recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks**

DATE OF SURVEY: **March 7, 1968, update** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **National Capital Planning Commission**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1325 G Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Howard Theatre is located at 620 T Street, N.W., south of Howard University and near LeDroit Park. Designed by architect J. Edward Storck and built in 1910, the Howard can be described as a simple, rectangular brick building with a stuccoed "boomtown" facade and a wooden marquee. The front facade is very plain, broken only at street level for the entrance door, box office, and wooden frames into which posters and advertisements can be inserted. Above street level the facade is broken only by a tripartite window, a neon sign and a plain marquee projecting at a right angle to the main facade directly over the entrance door and box office. Plans call for the entire facade to be renovated and restuccoed.

The building is approximately 126 x 96 feet and its side facades are plain brick broken only by egress doors and a sixteen window blind arcade which acts as a clerestory and which rests on a brick string course. Above this arcade are plain brick corbels which support the cornice.

The interior has been greatly altered throughout its history. The Washington Bee described the Howard as possessing a "broad and magnificent lobby leading through various balconies..." The only reminder of this era are the large supporting columns with their Corinthian capitals. Most of the remaining decoration appears to have come from the remodeling in the 1930's as is reflected in the art deco motifs and lighting fixtures. The theatre now seats about 1300 in the first floor and balcony. The interior spaces are well ordered and, when remodeled, will again provide a pleasant theatrical experience.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **Constructed 1910**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated Howard Theatre a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Howard is reputed to be one of the oldest theatres in the country which not only served black audiences but also provided a base for black performers. Designed by architect J. Edward Storck and built in 1910, the Howard for more than five decades stood in the forefront of black entertainment by providing talent and opportunities on a national as well as a local level. Segregation of theatres created barriers which made it difficult for black artists to develop and receive recognition, and the Howard thus played a very important role in the development and promotion of black talent. The Howard along with three other theatres, the Apollo in New York City, the Pearl in Philadelphia, and the Uptown in Baltimore, provided the stage on which many of the most prominent entertainers in the past half-century made their debuts.

From the sounds of Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, the Big Bands of the 30's to rock and roll and the Motown Sound, the Howard Theatre has played host to some of the biggest names in entertainment history. When the Howard Theatre opened in 1910, it was described by the Washington Bee as "the finest theatre in the city...prettiest in the country." Although the Howard in its first years was patronized mainly by the black bourgeoisie, both blacks and whites attended such performances as J. Leubrie Hill's "My Friend From Kentucky" which opened in 1913. From 1910 to the late 1920's, the attractions were vaudeville, musicals, and road shows as well as local variety programs, testimonials and church programs.

In 1931 the theatre underwent a change in emphasis under "Shep" Allen who headlined Duke Ellington in a show which heralded a new era in programming for the Howard. The Howard not only played host to the big bands but also introduced a lot of new talent in its amateur night contests. Among the more well-known winners of these contests are Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstein, and Bill "Ink Spots" Kenny.

The 40's were also good years for the Howard with Pearl Bailey, Sarah Vaughn appearing with Billy Eckstein's orchestra, Lena Horne with Noble Sissle's orchestra, comedian George Kirby and Sammy Davis, Jr. with the Will Masten Trio. Other performers of this decade included "Moms" Mabley, Louis Prima, Woody Herman and Stan Kenton. Franklin Delano Roosevelt with his wife, Eleanor, attended several of the Presidential Birthday Balls given there in his honor during the 40's.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Mr. Connie L. Drumgold, Executive Director of the Howard Theatre Foundation, Inc. provided much valuable assistance.

Thomas, Bettye and Bettye Gardner "The Cultural Impact of the Howard Theatre on the Black Community," Journal of Negro History, Vol. 50, No. 4, October 1970, pp. 253-265.

Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, "Beyond the Fireworks of '76 - A Study of Historic Sites in the District of Columbia of Special Significance to Afro-Americans," December 1972, pp. 8-11.

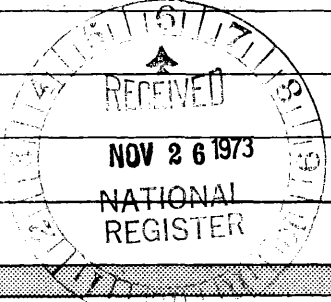
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 54' 55"	77° 01' 17"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 12,096 sq. ft. .277 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Suzanne Ganschinietz, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission DATE: August 30, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:
1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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

National State Local

Name: James S. Banks

Title: Assistant to the Mayor for Housing Programs

Date: NOV 19 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Ad Quatman
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 2/15/74

ATTEST: Dorothy Emery
Keeper of The National Register

Date: Feb 15, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance - Howard Theatre

In the 50's, rock and roll and the Motown Sound changed the character of the Howard with performances by the Platters, the Pearls, Roy Hamilton, the Oriels and the Olympics. Also appearing in the 50's and 60's were the Supremes (who made their first stage appearance at the Howard), Gladys Knight and the Pips with Smoky Robinson and the Miracles, James Brown, the Temptations, Joe Tex and Tammi Terrell. Other big names who have appeared at the Howard include Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Billie Holliday, Spyder Turner, Billy Daniels, the Young Holt Trio, comedians such as Dick Gregory, appearances by Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Sugar Ray Robinson and Sidney Poitier.

The Howard Theatre has been used by Howard University for University events, and was a focal point for students who met in April 1919 in support of the NAACP's crusade against lynching.

In the late 50's and throughout the 60's the clientele became younger, the neighborhood changed, and many black performers preferred to appear elsewhere in the city at big hotels such as the Shoreham. The riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., had an adverse effect on business, and the theatre is dark today. The Howard Theatre Foundation, Inc. has recently been formed with the purpose of reestablishing the Howard as a viable cultural institution. Acquisition of the premises and plans for rehabilitation are now in process, and the Foundation hopes to see the reopening of the Theatre early in 1974.

