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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dixie Theatre

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 206 North Vienna Street N/A not for publication

city or town Ruston N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Lincoln code 061 zip code 71270

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerry Hobdy 9/9/93  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Gerry Hobdy, Date  
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
 State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Delores Byrum **Entered in the National Register** Date of Action 10/14/93

Dixie Theatre  
Name of Property

Lincoln Parish, LA  
County and State

**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	Total

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

RECREATION & CULTURE/theatre

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

RECREATION & CULTURE/music facility

**7. Description**

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

no style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
walls stucco, brick  
roof other: tar and gravel  
other

**Narrative Description**

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Dixie Theatre, Ruston, Lincoln Parish, LA

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Downtown Ruston's Dixie Theatre was built in 1928, but assumed its present appearance in a 1937 remodeling. It is a brick building with a stuccoed facade. Because its styling is low-key, the term "no style" is being used in the architectural classification section of this form. Since 1943, the end of the period of significance, the theatre has been modified twice. Nonetheless, it still adequately conveys its historical appearance.

Originally constructed in 1928 as the New Astor Theatre and later known as the Rialto, the building was taken over by the Dixie Theatre Corporation of New Orleans in 1937. It then assumed its present name and received a major remodeling which changed the entire character of both the exterior and interior. Indeed, all that remains visible from the 1928 period are the theatre's side and rear walls and probably a chandelier.

The configuration of the 1928 building is not known precisely, but after the 1937 remodeling it was as follows: The theatre's three story facade had a deep entrance loggia at the shopfront level with a free-standing box office. The loggia also had a small glass enclosed booth for popcorn sales on the south side. A set of entrance doors at the rear of the loggia opened into the lobby, a wide but not very deep space containing two sets of stairs leading to the second story. Beyond the lobby was the auditorium which featured a second story gallery with a curving front. The front corners of the auditorium were cut at an angle so as to emphasize the proscenium and the stage. Above the stage was a raised fly gallery, a feature which gave the building a distinctive side elevation. One of the noteworthy features of the auditorium was an oversize Empire style crystal chandelier which hung from the center of the otherwise unadorned ceiling. Although it is impossible to know for certain, this chandelier probably dated from the 1928 period.

As was typical of the time, the Dixie was a racially segregated facility. The second story gallery was exclusively for black patrons. They reached the gallery by means of a separate entrance on the south end of the building which had its own entrance hall and staircase.

The building's three story facade towered above the surrounding single story commercial buildings. The first story was comparatively low and, by all indications, never had much in the way of architectural adornment. By contrast, the taller second and third stories were articulated with a stucco treatment which included two huge segmentally arched panels set within larger panels with keystone shaped caps. There was also a large bas relief eagle with wings spread. The facade culminated in a shaped parapet with a large central roundel.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Dixie Theatre, Ruston, Lincoln Parish, LA

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Alterations:

Since the end of the historic period (1943), the Dixie has been renovated twice (1956 and 1968). The old entrance loggia is now enclosed and the shopfront level bricked over. All of the seating has been replaced and the walls of the auditorium have been covered with acoustical cloth. The stage has been reduced in size, raised somewhat, and a plywood paneled wall has been installed across the rear of the auditorium creating a passageway. Finally, the 1937 marquee has been replaced with a somewhat larger one.

Although these changes are unfortunate, the Dixie still retains the following historic features:

- (1) its overall massing with the distinctive fly gallery;
- (2) its conspicuous facade (minus the shopfront), which still towers above the surrounding buildings;
- (3) the separate entrance hall and staircase for blacks;
- (4) the shape and overall configuration of the auditorium as well as the auditorium's bagasse board ceiling and chandelier; and
- (5) its historic lobby. This space remains completely intact, including its Modernistic stair balustrades and lighting fixtures.

Given the above, there is no doubt that someone from the historic period (1937 to 1943) would recognize the Dixie Theatre today. Thus it retains its historic integrity for National Register purposes.

**8. 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.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance**

1937-1943

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Dixie Theatre

Name of Property

Lincoln Parish, LA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 534000 3599000
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing
4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Lots 4 & 5, Block C, Town of Ruston

Boundary Justification Boundaries follow property lines of parcel of land upon which theatre is located.

11. Form Prepared By

ASSISTED BY RUSTON MAIN ST. PROGRAM, LINDA GRAHAM, PROJECT DIRECTOR

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date July 1993

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Mr. James C. Howard (318) 255-6081

street & number P. O. Box 1086 telephone (318) 251-2590 (318) 255-0048 (home)

city or town Ruston state Louisiana zip code 71273-1086

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Dixie Theatre, Ruston, Lincoln Parish, LA

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The Dixie Theatre is of local significance in the area of entertainment/recreation because of its importance as an entertainment focal point in Ruston and vicinity. The period of significance spans from 1937, when the theatre assumed its present appearance, to 1943, the Register's fifty year cutoff. The Dixie continued in its role as an entertainment focal point past the fifty year cutoff.

It was the coming of television in the 1950s that began to displace theatres like the Dixie. Indeed, it was revealed in studies at the time that theatre attendance and public library use declined markedly when television became established in a given community. Prior to that time, theatres were major sources of entertainment. During the historic period, the Dixie was not only an entertainment mecca for the Lincoln Parish seat of Ruston, but also drew patrons from nearby communities such as Dubach and Choudrant. (Ruston was the only town in the parish of sufficient size to have a theatre.)

The Dixie was a true theatre with a fly gallery, and thus could play host to stage shows, magic shows and other forms of live entertainment. Two other theatres operated in Ruston during the historic period, but they were smaller, less pretentious and operated on an intermittent basis. Also, they were movie houses only, with no live performances. In any case, they do not survive, leaving the Dixie as the sole reminder of theatre going and the role it played in the lives of people in the Ruston area. Older residents remember it as the place to go. An employee from the historic period recalls that the Dixie "was the main attraction for the citizens of Ruston and was well attended." The Saturday night late show was "the big event of the week." This was especially important to students of nearby Louisiana Polytechnic Institute who were only allowed off campus on weekends. There were no movies on campus at the time, and thus the Dixie provided students with important entertainment opportunities. All in all, the theatre occupied an important niche in the lives of area citizens and hence merits Register listing.

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National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Dixie Theatre, Ruston, Lincoln Parish, LA

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Ruston Daily Leader, various dates, 1928-80, excerpts in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Written statements from various individuals regarding the Dixie, National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

1956 photo of the Dixie.