

ADDRESS 244-250 Tremont COR.NAME Wilbur Theatre / Ye Wilbur Theatre
present originalMAP No. 24N/12E SUB AREA TheatreDATE 1913-14 building permit 4/26/13
opening 4/19/1914
source

(Photo)

ARCHITECT Clarence H. Blackall permit
sourceBUILDER Haynes Construction Co. "
source N.E. Medical Ctr.OWNER Wilbur Theatre Realty
original Trust presentPHOTOGRAPHS 3 5/4, 3/6, 79Ward 3, Parcel #5645 UTM#19/329860/4690560TYPE (residential) single double row 2-fam. 3-deck ten apt.
(non-residential) theatreNO. OF STORIES (1st to cornice) 2 (equivalent in plus -
height to 3)ROOF flat cupola - dormers -MATERIALS (Frame) clapboards shingles stucco asphalt asbestos alum/vinyl
(Other) brick stone marble trim concrete iron/steel/alum.
(English bond)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION Symmetrical free-standing 3-bay Colonial Revival theatre. Triple entrance portals marked by fluted Greek Ionic columns set in antis and supporting pedimented entablatures. Three arched, elongated second floor windows open onto decorative iron balcony; marble semi-circular tympanums carved with theatre masks. Above, Adamesque panels and marble plaque inscribed "Wilbur Theatre" followed by leafy modillion

EXTERIOR ALTERATION minor moderate drastic cornice and roof balustrade.CONDITION good fair poor LOT AREA 10,400 sq. feetNOTEWORTHY SITE CHARACTERISTICS Small park at intersection of Tremont and Stuart directly to north; Music Hall adjacent to south and east.

(Map)

SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd on reverse) The Wilbur Theatre is significant as the best Boston example of Colonial Revival theatre design, as the work of nationally prominent theatre architect Clarence Blackall, and as the scene of several premieres and many notable performances.

The Wilbur differs from other area theatres in its free-standing plan and the simplicity of Blackall's eclectic design, a combination of Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival motifs. Fine detailing

(NRI) June, 1979

NOV 7 1980

C 9 1980

Moved; date if known _____

Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	<u>X</u>	Exploration/	_____	Science/	_____
The Arts	<u>X</u>	settlement	_____	invention	_____
Commerce	_____	Industry	_____	Social/	_____
Communication	_____	Military	_____	humanitarian	_____
Community/	_____	Political	_____	Transportation	_____
development	_____				

Significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

includes the portals, copied directly from the 1837 Thomas Bailey Aldrich house on Beacon Hill.⁶ The well-preserved interior, which seats 1000, was designed for dramatic productions rather than spectacles and was praised for its intimate atmosphere, more like a conservative club or distinguished home than a theatre. Decorators were Pennell, Gibbs and Quiring, whose senior partner, H.B. Pennell, also worked on the Colonial, Shubert and Saxon/Majestic. Ornamental plastering was by John Bowen.

Clarence Blackall (1857-1942), senior partner in the Boston firm of Blackall, Clapp and Whittemore, designed 14 Boston theatres and was considered one of the most experienced U.S. theatre architects of his day. His other buildings in the theatre area include the Colonial, Music Hall/Metropolitan, Modern, Pilgrim/Olympia, Little and White Buildings and Hotel Avery.

Premieres at the Wilbur included pre-Broadway runs of "Our Town" and "Mary, Mary." In 1947, Marlon Brando became an overnight superstar for his performance with Jessica Tandy in "A Streetcar Named Desire."⁵

The Wilbur was named for Arthur L. Wilbur (d. 1917), veteran Boston theatre manager, organizer of the Wilbur Opera Company and partner in the firm of Stair & Wilbur, which formed one of the largest U.S. theatre chains.⁷ Wilbur was associated with the Shuberts in the erection of the Wilbur Theatre, which was built on the site of the Winthrop School for Girls.

Preservation Consideration (accessibility, re-use possibilities, capacity for public use and enjoyment, protection, utilities, context)

Preservation Recommendations: Eligible for the National Register (indiv)
Recommended (with reservation) for study as Boston City Landmark

Current Status: The theatre is owned by Tufts New England Medical Center and leased to the Jujamcyn Co, which also manages the Colonial. The 10-year lease began in 1969, at which time the managers restored the building to its 1914 appearance at a cost of \$250,000. However, at the expiration of the lease the Jujamcyn Co. has decided not to renew, and Tufts has put the building up for sale.

Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

1. American Architect and Building News, vol 106, #2016, 8/12/1914 (plates and plans)
2. Boston Sunday Globe, 4/19/1914 (illus. article on theatre)
3. Boston Globe, 4/20/1914 (opening performance)
4. Boston Transcript, 4/5/1913, 4/21/1914, 5/2/1914 and 4/15/1939
5. Elliot Norton, Broadway Down East, p. 64, 68-70, 108
6. Douglass Tucci, "The Boston Rialto..." City Conservation League, 1977
7. New York Times, March 24, 1917 (obit. Arthur Wilbur)
8. Tobie Stein, unpublished manuscript on Wilbur Theatre (copy at Boston Landmarks Commission.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets, Section 9

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property see individual and area forms

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1"=25,000'

UMT References

A 19 329940 4690650
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The southern boundary of the Theatre Area starts at a point on Washington St., 520' south of the intersection of Kneeland & Washington. From this point it runs due west along an arbitrary straight line to a point on Charles St. South 442' south of Stuart Street. From thence it follows Charles St. South one block north to the intersection of Stuart St.,

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director by Pamela Fox
Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston, state MA 02108

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☒ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Patricia W. Weslowki date 10/20/80

title date

For HCRS use only

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

James W. Ray
Keeper of the National Register

date 12/9/80

Attest: Patricia W. Weslowki
Chief of Registration

date 12/4/80

Property

Boston Theatre Multiple Resource Area

State

MA, Suffolk

Working Number

11, 7, 80, 2781

DUE

1/7/81

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 11Maps 4 13

This multiple resource area is significant for the quality of its architecture and for its association with the development of the important Boston music industry and growth of the theater/movie house industry. The district's and individual buildings achieved significance between c. 1890 and the 1930's - contained in this M.R.A. are significant groups of late 19th/early 20th cent. commercial buildings, the center

HISTORIAN

accept
Patrick Andrews
12/4/80

the music industry (especially piano manufacturing) and ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN examples of every kind of theater that developed in Boston in this period. This is a good multiple resource nomination - they have included all the required categories of information.

accept all

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up

Send-back

Entered DEC 9 1990

Federal Register Entry

2.2.82

Re-submit



Wilbur Theater

Boston Theater MRA

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000272