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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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Deertrees Theatre

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Deertrees Road

not for publication

city, town Harrison

vicinity

state Maine

code ME

county Cumberland

code 005

zip code 04040

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Carol L. Fitzsimonds
Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Date

11/16/88

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Beth A. Sarge

1-5-89

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Theatre

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American

MovementsOther: Rustic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Piers

walls Wood: Log

roof Asphalt

other Exterior Formed of Vertical Half

Round Logs.

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Deertrees Theatre is a rambling rustic wooden proscenium theatre that features an expansive gabled facade and an engaged porch. Its walls are covered entirely with vertical sheathing that has been left in a natural state. The theatre occupies one grass covered corner of a rural wooded parcel.

Facing west, the building's primary elevation is dominated by the gabled wall mass. In the middle is a large round arched molding that frames a rectangular balcony window. It rises from two of the four log porch posts. Behind this porch, which is reached by full width wooden steps, are a pair of widely separated entryways that consist of two vertical board doors mounted to their frames with wooden strap hinges. Suspended above each of the entrances is a lamp whose reflective surface is made from twenty-eight pie shaped wooden panels. Additional details include the seven large knee brackets that support the broad roof overhang.

The north side contains a row of doors located about a third of the wall height from the sill. These are hinged along the top edge and used to allow light and ventilation into the auditorium. An entrance door is positioned at the east end of the row and to the left of the stage. This pattern is repeated on the south side with the addition of a shed roofed porch over the entrance. Behind the auditorium block (or in front of it as viewed from the interior) is the cross axial gabled fly loft that rises above the main hall. On both sides of the exterior, this component features attached shed roofed upper story wings that are supported on log posts and have small rectangular openings. A long gabled shop wing, added in 1938, extends to the south and contains space for set design and construction, as well as storage. It has an irregular multi-level configuration and an asymmetrical fenestration pattern that combines windows and the hinged doors as exhibited on the main block. A smaller one-level wing is attached to the south end and a shed porch

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

carries across about one-half of the front. A variety of openings are positioned on the rear elevation including a wide loading bay with large double doors. The entire building rests on log posts supported by concrete piers.

The interior displays a remarkable combination of functional design and rustic wooden detailing that has survived without alteration. Housed under the expansive main roof is the spacious auditorium with seating capacity for some 500 persons arranged in three sections on the sloping floor and in the balcony at the rear. The latter space is reached by two flights of stairs that meet at a central landing. Rustic balustrades with thin log balusters are utilized on the stairs and balcony. Throughout the auditorium the horizontal and vertical structural elements are exposed including the massive tie beams, struts, rafters, and purlins. The wooden wall surfaces are composed of the opposite face of the exterior sheathing. Further detail is provided by the six log lamp posts that are equally spaced along the sidewalls.

The stage, its apron and the five-sided proscenium arched opening punctuate the broad auditorium endwall. In keeping with the rustic design, the arch is framed with half-round logs. The orchestra pit that lies in front and below the stage features a log balustrade, and it is flanked by steps that rise to the apron. Center stage is a deep space flanked by the wings and dressing rooms and covered by the fly loft whose grids for scenery and equipment support are still in place. The shop and scenery storage facilities extend from the right rear corner of the stage. A narrow flight of steps leads to the upper level and the lighting booth containing the original electrical panel.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Performing Arts

Period of Significance

1936-1938

Significant Dates

1936

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Locke, George, Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Built in 1935-36 by local contractor George F. Locke of Bridgton, Deertrees Theatre is a remarkably intact rustic wooden building of particular architectural distinction. It was erected for opera diva Enrica Clay Dillon (1881-1946), founder of Harrison's summer theatre known as the Deertrees Players. The building meets National Register criteria A and C respectively for its intimate association with local summer theatrical programs and its unique design.

Since the turn-of-the-century Maine has witnessed the rise and decline of various summer theatrical groups whose members and performances included prominent contemporary actors or those who later attained fame. The idea for the founding of such a group in Harrison is believed to have originated with Miss Dillon who had, for an as yet undetermined number of years prior to 1935, given theatre and operatic instruction at her studio which stood near this building. As described in the October 11, 1935, edition of the Bridgton News Miss Dillon was, through her work in New York, "... in touch with some of the leading figures in the dramatic and operatic world...." She apparently intended to establish a colony similar to the one in existence at Lakewood, Maine (see Lakewood Theatre, N. R. 6/26/75) with the theatre itself acting as the symbolic and functional centerpiece.

Although tradition maintains that the building was designed by New York architect Harrison Wiesman, contemporary newspaper accounts attribute it to Locke. Whoever may have actually conceived the plan Locke was clearly the builder. Construction commenced in the fall of 1935 with the pouring of the concrete foundation piers while additional work was delayed until the following spring. It is believed that only the 93'X48' auditorium/stage was initially erected with the shop wing added in 1938. Throughout the summer of 1936 the

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bridgton Times. Bridgton, Maine. Various articles in 1935-36 pertaining to Deertrees Theatre, copies on file at Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.

New York Times. Enrica Clay Dillon Obituary. October 10, 1946.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property 6.5

UTM References

A

1	9
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3	6	6	7	6	0
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4	8	8	6	0	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property of 6.5 acres occupies the Town of Harrison tax map 44, lot 14.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property embraces the entire parcel of land historically associated with the theatre. The wooded appearance of this parcel is historically significant because it was an important feature directly utilized in the design of the building and in theatric productions.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian
organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date October 13, 1988
street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132
city or town Augusta state Maine zip code 04333

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Bridgton News continued to feature reports on the progress of construction commenting in its July 17th edition that:

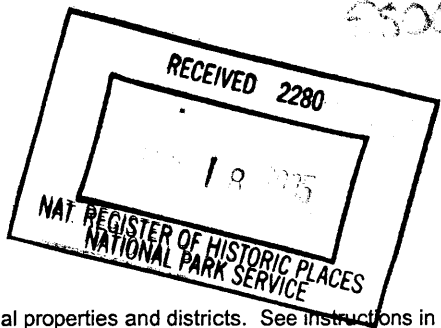
Everything in the way of a modern theatre is being and will be used to make it one of the most complete and efficient operations ever to start in this section of the state. Those who have been intimately connected with stage work have stated that the stage itself is larger and more complete than the average New York production floor, and it has the supreme advantage over those stages in that the rear of the stage can be thrown open to give a natural forest background for the players.

Deertrees was dedicated on August 15, 1936, with a performance of dramatic sketches from "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Caponsacchi", among others. Prominently featured in the billing and advance newspaper articles was the guest performance of Walter Hampden, who was hailed as "America's Greatest Actor". In what was probably the final performance of the first summer, Deertrees featured a concert with soprano Eleanor Steele, tenor Hall Clovis and pianist Frederick Bristol.

It appears that Deertrees was managed largely by Dillon until 1939 when the facility was leased to Bela Blau. The previous concentration on opera was replaced by a more diverse range of theatric productions and drew such names as Rudy Vallee, Ethel Barrymore and Tallulah Bankhead. During the war years of the 1940s the theatre remained closed, and after Dillon's death in 1946 community theatre came to dominate the annual schedule. It passed through a number of owners in the 1940s and 1960s with apparent continued success. However, in the 1970s interest faded, and despite an attempt to revive operatic productions in mid-decade, by the end of the period the theatre had closed. Although now owned by the Town of Harrison, the theatre is leased to a non-profit foundation which is attempting to restore the building and reestablish a viable production company as early as 1989.

The obvious architectural significance of this theatre derives not only from its rarity as a building type but also by virtue of its striking, unaltered design. There are no other facilities of this kind in the vicinity of Harrison and only a handful in the state. One of those, the Lakewood Theatre (N.R. 6/26/75) near Madison, has Colonial Revival style features added when a former spiritualist meeting hall turned skating rink was converted to a theatre in 1925-26. Although both share similarities in terms of their function and internal disposition of space, they exhibit a strikingly different use of materials and finish.

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1. Name of Property

historic name Deertrees Theatre (Additional Documentation)
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Deertrees Road N/A not for publication
city or town Harrison N/A vicinity
state Maine code ME county Cumberland code 005 zip code 04040

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.)
[Signature] 11/14/05
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State or 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 this 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 [Signature] Date of Action 12/29/05

Additional Documentation Accepted

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	
		_____ buildings
		_____ sites
		_____ structures
		_____ objects
		_____ Total

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

One (1)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE : THEATER

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE : THEATER

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
walls _____
roof _____
other _____

Narrative Description

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

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/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 a 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.

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):

- 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: _____

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

DEERTREES THEATRE (ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION)

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, MAINE

Section number 5, 6 Page 2

The following additional information updates and corrects the original nomination for the Deertrees Theatre, Cumberland County, Maine, submitted to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988, and listed on January 5, 1989 (NR:88003002).

SECTION 5: CLASSIFICATION

Please change the 'Ownership of Property' from 'public - local' to 'private'.

SECTION 6: FUNCTION OR USE

Please change the 'Current Functions' from 'Vacant/Not in use' to 'Recreation/Culture: Theater'.

These changes have been made in the appropriate places on the attached Registration form.