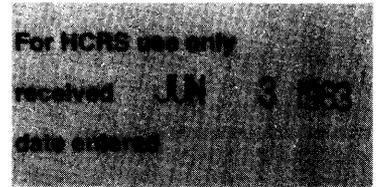


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic PALACE THEATER

and/or common Palace Theater

2. Location

street & number 86-110 East Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Waterbury N/A vicinity of congressional district 3rd

state Connecticut code 09 county New Haven code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Tempo Enterprises, Inc.

street & number 61 Field Street

city, town Waterbury N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Waterbury Town Clerk

street & number City Hall - 235 Grand Street

city, town Waterbury state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Waterbury's Palace Theater is a large movie and vaudeville theater in the Second Renaissance Revival style. Built in the years 1921 to 1922, from a design by Thomas Lamb, the Palace is constructed of steel and reinforced concrete. It presents an elaborate cast-stone facade to East Main Street, with plain brick rear and side walls (Photos 1 and 2). One of the most visually arresting buildings in the city, it is the centerpiece of a row of distinguished buildings on the south side of the street. Its neighbors include the Frederick, a 1906 Colonial Revival apartment building, and the 1889 St. Patrick's Hall, a Richardsonian Romanesque commercial building formerly used by Catholic organizations as a meeting place.

The facade features several modernized storefronts on the ground level, as well as the entrance to the theater and to the Palace Hotel, which occupies the upper floors of the theater's north end. The present marquee dates from the theater's acquisition by the Loew's chain in 1934 and is shown in a 1941 photograph (Photo 10). Over the storefronts, which extend for about 125' of frontage on East Main Street, is a cornice embellished with an egg-and-dart molding. The remaining three stories of the four-story facade are organized as eight bays. Over the second story's tier of three-part windows is a frieze with alternating rosettes and acanthus leaf clusters, with more acanthus carving below the second-story cornice. On the third and fourth stories is a series of six tall round-arched openings separated by Corinthian pilasters. The arches have carved keystones and rest on unfluted engaged Corinthian columns; the spandrels of the arches are filled with carved foliage. The two-story windows within the arches have wooden panels marking the division of stories and filling the heads of the openings.

The building's main cornice (Photo 3) consists of a frieze with an inverted fleur-de-lis over each pilaster, an enriched talon below the dentil course, an egg-and-dart molding, finely shaped modillions, and rosettes applied to the soffit or plancer. A plain brick parapet is the only significant alteration to the facade: it is a replacement for the original balustrade shown in early photographs (Photo 10).

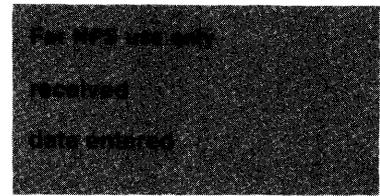
The interior of the Palace is embellished almost beyond description, with plaster-relief figures and other decoration applied to every wall and ceiling surface. Urns, festoons, cartouches, gods, goddesses, and cherubs abound. The lobby of the theater (Photo 4) has a magnificent scagliola or artificial marble stairway leading to the mezzanine level, deep red carpeting, cut-glass chandeliers, and other original lighting fixtures. Pilasters and engaged columns support the vaulted ceiling, painted with intricate designs, and archways along the walls are filled with mirrors, creating a sense of spacious extravagance.

The mezzanine level contains a second lobby behind the balcony seats. Its ceiling is taken up by a large elliptical dome lighted by a chandelier. The dome is visible from the main floor through a large opening in the ceiling of the inner lobby, an extensive space behind the seats of the auditorium. The opening is surrounded by a marble

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National Park Service**

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Palace Theater
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Existing Surveys (continued):

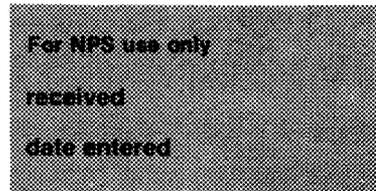
Waterbury Architectural Survey

Local - 1978

Records deposited with Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

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

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Continuation sheet Palace Theater Item number 7 Page 2
 Waterbury, CT

Description (continued):

railing with balusters similar to those of the monumental entrance stairway.

The auditorium itself (Photo 5) is dominated by the elaborate proscenium arch, which is surrounded by a wide band of plaster ornament in an interwoven foliate pattern and has a huge cartouche centered over the stage. The asbestos fire curtain has a convincing trompe l'oeil painting showing a curtain opening upon a scene from classical times, a public square with a triumphal arch. The entire ceiling of the hall is paneled and crowded with plaster ornament depicting vines, flowers and urns. On the sides of the hall are a series of boxes and at the rear is a balcony, all cantilevered out over the auditorium so as to create an unobstructed line of sight from each of the approximately 3500 seats. The theater's real organ pipes are concealed behind a baroque arrangement of decorative pipes located to either side of the stage (Photo 6). Urns, a lyre, a large cartouche, and cherubs performing a duet for horn and harp are but part of the pipes' sculptural enrichment.

High above the seats in the ceiling of the auditorium is a huge circular dome lighted by a large central chandelier and nine smaller lights along the circumference (Photo 7). The dome is richly embellished with concentric bands of stylized vines and flowers, medallions resembling colossal Roman coins, paterae, and large panels with scenes in low relief of dancers and musicians. The classical motifs found in the dome are repeated throughout the interior of the theater, and they form the dominant decorative theme. However, they are freely combined with motifs from other sources. One of the most interesting examples of this eclecticism is the frieze of American eagles below the mezzanine balustrade, visible from the inner lobby (Photo 8). In many cases, the plaster ornament has iconographical significance, as in the case of the musician-cherubs on the organ pipes, or the scene above the water fountain in the inner lobby (Photo 9), in which the central figure is attended by a servant pouring water from an urn.

The theater is still in use for concerts and other events. The interior is in remarkably good condition, though some of the paint and gilding need attention. Most of the interior decoration was found intact after a layer of whitewash was removed. A comparison of the present appearance of the theater with views from the 1940s (Photos 11 and 12) shows that very little has been added to or lost from the Palace's historic appearance.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Criteria C, A

Specific dates 1922 - built **Builder/Architect** Thomas W. Lamb, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Waterbury's Palace Theater is significant as an outstanding example of a unique architectural type, the extravagant 1920s movie theater. The Palace's large size, monumental facade, and incredibly ornate interior are all typical of the genre. Moreover, the Palace was designed by one of America's foremost theater architects, Thomas W. Lamb of New York City (Criterion C). In addition to its value as architecture, the Palace has historical significance within the local community. From the day it opened in January of 1922, the Palace was regarded as Waterbury's leading cultural facility (Criterion A), presenting high-class vaudeville and the latest in movies as well as plays by touring companies. As early advertisements proclaimed, the Palace was "not just a Theater Beautiful - - [but] a Waterbury Institution!"

The Palace was built for Silvester Z. Poli, southern New England's leading impresario. At the height of his career, Poli (1858-1937) controlled a chain of thirty theaters, the largest in the world at that time owned by a single individual. Poli was born in Italy, trained as a sculptor in Paris, and came to America in 1881. His specialty was waxworks sculpture, and he achieved his initial fame with models of the Haymarket "anarchists." In 1893 he came to New Haven, Connecticut, where in addition to exhibiting his waxworks, he promoted vaudeville shows and introduced the French cinematograph, an early form of motion picture. From New Haven he branched out to other Connecticut and New England cities, buying up theaters and offering a combination of movies and selected, family-oriented vaudeville. Poli owned three theaters in Waterbury alone.

Around 1920 Poli began replacing some of his theaters in major cities with large, sumptuous showplaces. Poli insisted upon large seating capacities, unobstructed views, and elaborate facade and interior elaboration, design requirements amply fulfilled in Waterbury's Palace. The Poli management was also conscious of providing for fire safety, so as to minimize what was referred to as "discomforting apprehensions of possible personal mishaps." In Waterbury, the Palace served as Poli's flagship theater. The most elaborate and largest theater in the city, it hosted pre-New York productions of important dramas and musicals as well as first-run movies and the best of nationally-known vaudeville acts. In 1934, when Poli finally retired, the Palace along with others in his chain was sold to Loew's Theaters, who operated under the name of Loew's-Poli.

The architect who turned Poli's idea of the perfect theater into reality was Thomas W. Lamb. Lamb (1871-1940) specialized in the design of theaters and made a lasting mark in that field of architecture. He designed several theaters for Poli, including the twin Palace and Majestic

9. Major Bibliographical References

- King, Donald C. "S.Z. Poli, From Wax to Riches," Marquee, II, no. 2 (1979), 11-28.
- "Poli, S.Z.," National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. 27, p. 474.
- "S. Z. Poli's Theatrical Enterprises," pamphlet, Hartford, c. 1908. (cont.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property c. 1.5

Quadrangle name Waterbury

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	63	4	80	4	60	20	13	10
Zone		Easting				Northing				

B

Zone		Easting				Northing				

C

Zone		Easting				Northing				

D

Zone		Easting				Northing				

E

Zone		Easting				Northing				

F

Zone		Easting				Northing				

G

Zone		Easting				Northing				

H

Zone		Easting				Northing				

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is parcel 50, Block 13, Map 274, as shown in the records of the Waterbury Assessor. It includes a rear parking lot.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette, Partner, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants date November 30, 1982

street & number 103 Mansfield Hollow Road telephone (203) 423-8903

city or town Mandfield Center state Connecticut

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



title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date May 17, 1983

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/30/83

Keeper of the National Register

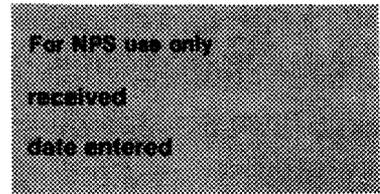
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Palace Theater

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Significance (continued):

Theaters like the Palace can be considered in part a result of the development of the American film industry, in which studios were growing larger, distribution was becoming more concentrated, and individual actors were rising to "star" status. At the same time, these trends were themselves accelerated by the existence of large first-run houses like the Palace, in which newly released films could reach an audience of 3500 people at a single showing. With suburbanization and more home-entertainment options, the age of large urban movie palaces has come to a close. Today, relatively few of these showplaces remain, and only two of S.Z. Poli's chain survive intact, of which Waterbury's Palace is the older and better preserved. The citizens of Waterbury and Connecticut have a rare opportunity to enjoy a theater which preserves the ambience of the movies' Golden Age.*

*It is fitting that film has allowed the beauty of the Palace to be enjoyed by large audiences. Recent uses of the theater include the stairway scene in the motion picture Hello Dolly and the introductory and trailing segments of PBS' series of Katherine Hepburn movies.

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received
date entered

Continuation sheet Palace Theater
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Bibliography (continued):

Waterbury American, January 28, 1922, 11-13.

Withey, Henry. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects
(Deceased), Los Angeles, 1956.