

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - ~~complete~~ complete applicable sections)

STATE: Pennsylvania
COUNTY: Philadelphia
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Walnut Street Theater

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Walnut Street Theater

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Northeast Corner, Ninth & Walnut Streets

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
3rd

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

COUNTY:
Philadelphia

CODE:
101

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 type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input 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)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Ninth and Walnut Street Corporation, Dr. Richard Dupree,
Director of the theater

STREET AND NUMBER:
Ninth and Walnut Streets

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Department of Records

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY:
1958 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress/Annex

STREET AND NUMBER:
Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D.C.

CODE:
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
Pennsylvania

COUNTY:
Philadelphia

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

CONDITION

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The dominating feature of the two-story Walnut Street Theater has always been its southern facade. Today after its latest renovation this facade has a simple neo-classical dress, patterned after Haviland's renovation of the theater in 1828. In the center of the facade is the four-door entrance. The entrance is framed by two pilasters and a lintel of gray marble, and is composed of four recessed double doors, separated by three pairs of Ionic columns also of gray marble topped with single garlands. Each of these pairs frames a wrought-iron gas light.

The first story wall on either side of the entrance is faced with smooth, grooved stone, and in the center of each flanking section there is a grounded niche. A belt course separates the first from the second story, which is plainly stuccoed, with six casement windows topped with round arches which are ornamented each with a garland. Above the windows runs a simple cornice and a parapet with alternating sections of balustrades.

The other three walls are stuccoed and virtually featureless except for stage doors.

The interior has been extensively remodeled and scant historical integrity remains.

Boundary

Beginning at the NE intersection of Ninth and Walnut Streets, proceed East 5' to the SW corner of the theater, then continue 96' East to the eastern wall of the theater, thence North along the theater wall approximately 135' to the NE corner of the theater, thence West approximately 96' to the NW corner of the theater, thence 135' to the SW corner of the theater.

These boundaries enclose the theater itself, alone.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1809**

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 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 type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theater, at Ninth and Walnut Streets, is considered the oldest surviving theater in the United States and, according to Professor Arthur H. Quinn, "quite possibly the oldest in the English-speaking world." Opened in 1809 as the Olympic Theater, the building was originally a circus, but after two years, legitimate theater was being presented on its stage. On that stage, Mrs. John Drew, and Edwin Forrest, among many others, made their theatrical debut. The Walnut has been remodeled several times, most notably in 1828 by the English-born John Haviland, and recently its facade has been restored toward that classical appearance.

History

When the Olympic Theater opened, Philadelphia already had a long established theatrical tradition, dating from the productions of Thomas Kean and Walter Murray in 1749. This was the first American theater company of which there is detailed knowledge, although there were earlier productions in the southern colonies. Several theaters in Philadelphia antedated the Walnut Street house, notably the First Chestnut Street Theater (Old Drury), but these have long since fallen victim to fire and time.

When the First Chestnut Street Theater burned in 1820, William Warren and William Wood, its joint managers, leased the theater on Walnut Street, redecorated it, and operated it for two seasons without conspicuous success. In 1828, the theater was extensively remodeled by the English-born architect, John Haviland, who had come to Philadelphia in 1816. On the Walnut's stage have been presented plays starring most of the major figures of the American stage, including; Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Sir Henry Irving, Richard Mansfield, John Drew, Maude Adams, and many others. Chauncey Olcott appeared there during the Christmas holiday season for 16 consecutive years. Despite its several remodelings, both inside and out, the basic structure of the Walnut Street Theater remains as an exceptional illustration of the story of the American theater, both past and present.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arthur Hobson Quinn, "The Theater and the Drama," in Historic Philadelphia from the Founding Until the Early Nineteenth Century, Vol. 43, Part 1, of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, 1953).

George B. Tatum, Penn's Great Town, Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Philadelphia Architecture Illustrated in Prints and Drawings (Philadelphia, 1961).

Charles E. Shedd, "The Walnut Street Theater", National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, 14/12/62.

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	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

UTM 18.486720.4421830

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than 1 acre**

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Richard E. Greenwood, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, Landmark Review DATE: 9/25/74

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name _____

Title _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date _____

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark

Designated: Dec. 29, 1962
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation date

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Boundary Certified:

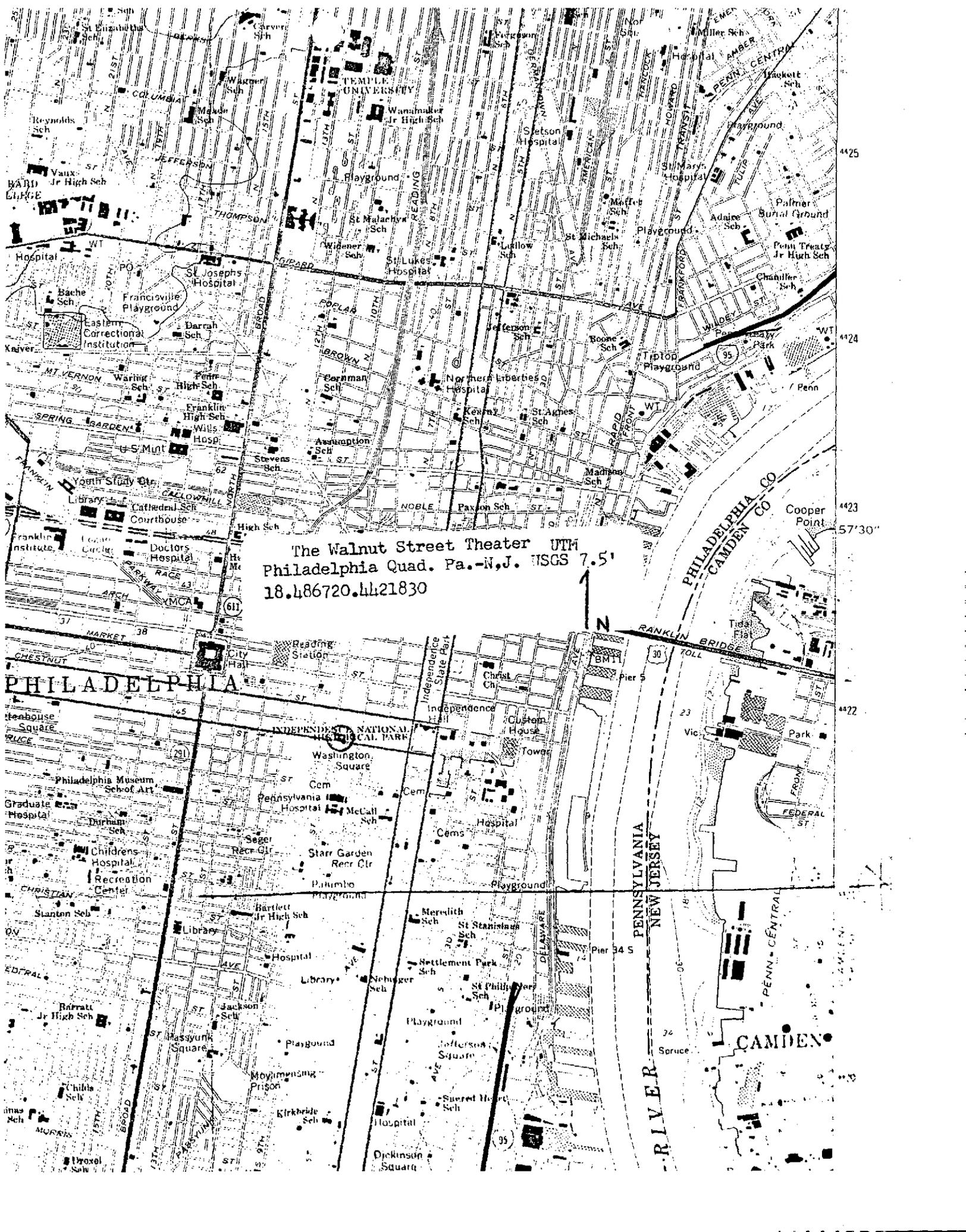
Date: June 19, 1975
Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys date

ATTEST:

Boundary Formed:

6/19/75
Keeper of The National Register date
Director, OAHIP date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



The Walnut Street Theater UTM
Philadelphia Quad. Pa.-N.J. USGS 7.5'
18.486720.4421830

PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA CO
CAMDEN CO

PENNSYLVANIA
NEW JERSEY

CAMDEN

RIVER