

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAR 6 1985**
date entered **APR 4 1985**

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

1. Name

historic Paramount Theatre and Office Building

and/or common name same

2. Location

street & number 516 State Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bristol N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Sullivan code 163

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Theatre Bristol

street & number #10 Paramount Building, 522 State Street

city, town Bristol N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37620

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sullivan County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Blountville state Tennessee 37617

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

The Paramount Theatre and Office Building are located in Bristol (pop. 24,900) in northeast Tennessee at 516 State Street, a street which separates the twin cities of Bristol, Tennessee and Bristol, Virginia (pop. 18,800). Both buildings face due north to the Virginia state line. Although the theatre was built in 1930 for use primarily as a showplace for motion pictures, in its early years it was also the site of numerous vaudeville and big band performances. The office building, also constructed around the same era, is adjacent to the theatre on the west.

The two and one half story split level theatre consists of an outer lobby that is one story with a flat asphalt roof while to the south and perpendicular to the outer lobby, the rest of the theatre is two-storied. The inner lobby, lounges and auditorium floor comprise the first floor, while offices, the projection room and the tall auditorium ceiling are located on the second story. The roof over the two-story section of the theatre is a grooved-concrete tile A-frame with steel crossbeam supports.

The north (front) elevation of the theatre displays one of the finest Art Deco facades in northeast Tennessee. Dominated by a large marquee surmounted by a large vertical "Paramount" neon sign, the major materials employed are structural terra cotta and glass. The main level exterior, below the marquee, is faced with mottled ivory structural terra cotta blocks. The upper level consists of fluted vertical panels of vermillion and green terra cotta with wider bands of black carreraglass between them. The facade ornamentation crowns the upper level in a stepped pyramid pattern, with the terra cotta panels remaining vertical and the carrera glass panels tapering towards the rear of the building. This cascade effect, expressed so well in the Paramount Theatre, was a popular Art Deco motif.

Eight wood framed glass doors lead into the front outer lobby, an area highlighted by a terrazo floor, plaster walls with cloth backed wall covering and a plaster ceiling with hand painted Art Deco designs in geometric and stylized floral motifs. Also featured are eight large poster showcases and two full length mirrors. Light fixtures are stained glass in brass framings. A concession stand was added in the center of the lobby in about 1940.

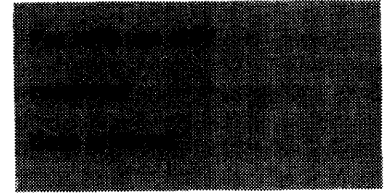
At the southern end of the outer lobby was another set of eight doors leading to an inner lobby. Identical to the front doors, this second set was removed in about 1950. Seven of the eight doors still exist and are stored in the theatre basement. The inner lobby, which was re-carpeted c. 1950, also features plaster walls with cloth-backed wallcovering. It is distinguished by a hand-painted plaster-mold cornice and water fountain, both with a stylized floral motif, and another set of stained glass and brass frame light fixtures.

The men's and ladies' lounges are parallel and to the north of the inner lobby. The tile work in the men's lounge and in the ladies' and men's rest rooms is original but the carpet in the ladies' lounge was replaced c. 1950. The unique set of brass vanities which line the north wall of the ladies' lounge are original. Both the vanities and wall covering repeat the geometric and floral theme of decor found throughout the theatre.

The auditorium itself features an arched plaster ceiling with plaster-covered support beams decorated with stylized floral plaster-mold designs. The wall panels between the support arches are adorned by six frescoes with a theatrical theme. The proscenium arch is flanked east and west by two plaster-mold parapets that are backed by cloth panels which covered the original organ pipe wells. (The organ and pipes were removed prior to 1950.) The stage area is dominated by a large Cinema Scope motion picture screen which is not original. The

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Continuation sheet Paramount Theatre and Office Building Item number 7 Page 2

auditorium seats are original, though many have been reupholstered over the years. Of the 1250 seats originally in the auditorium, approximately 30 have been removed from the front row. These are now stored in the exit halls in the south end of the auditorium. Though new carpet was placed in the auditorium concurrent with the lobby (c. 1950), the exit halls are still covered with the original carpet design. They open to an alley which lies at the southern end of the structure.

The basement of the theatre lies under the lounges and the inner lobby. It is dominated by a large coal-fired boiler (not original) which is used for heating.

Stairways from the inner lobby lead to the second floor of the theatre, which is located directly above the inner lobby, the lounges and a small section of the outer lobby. The upstairs contains several small office spaces and the projection room.

The office building adjacent to the theatre is a two story structure with multi-pane windows and a geometric pattern motif ornamenting the second story. In design and ornamentation the office building complements the more dominant theatre structure. Both buildings, but especially the theatre, have maintained a high degree of architectural integrity.

Continuation of NPS Form 10-900-a

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1930

Builder/Architect

McDonald and Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Paramount Theatre & Office Building is nominated under National Register criterion C for its importance as one of the finest remaining Art Deco style movie theaters in the northeast Tennessee region. The building retains most of its original Art Deco features including the grand marquee, brightly painted frieze moldings, light fixtures, wallpaper and frescos. No significant changes have been made to the exterior and only cosmetic alterations have been made on the interior, therefore, the Paramount Theatre retains its architectural integrity and is representative of the co-ordination of interior and exterior design found in the Art Deco style. The adjacent office building, also built by Paramount, is similar in style and age and complements the larger structure. The office building has also maintained its architectural integrity.

Designed by McDonald and Company, architects and engineers from Atlanta, Georgia and originally owned by the Bristol Theatre Corporation, the Paramount Theatre opened in February 1931, when the country was in the midst of the Great Depression. Before World War II, traveling vaudeville shows and Big Bands with leaders such as Harry James appeared on the stage at the Paramount, however the primary source of revenue was always from first run movies. Various subsidiaries of ABC Paramount leased the structure and the building operated as a movie theater until October 1979 when the Paramount Theatre closed due to increased maintenance costs and decreased traffic flow.

The Paramount Church occupied the building from 1979 until the lease ran out in 1980 and the property reverted back to the ownership of Harry Daniel, a local Bristol businessman. Mr. Daniel donated the building to Theatre Bristol in 1983. This local theatre group plans to restore the building for use as a community performing arts center.

The Paramount Theatre is a fine example of an Art Deco theatre from the late-1920s-early-1930s period. Exterior decorative elements employed include the use of structural terra cotta in ivory, vermillion and green with black carrera glass vertical panels on the upper stories of the north (front) elevation. The large marquee with a vertical neon sign is also displayed on this elevation. The interior retains many of its original features including lighting fixtures, large wood framed glass front doors, wallpaper, frescoes, and drinking fountains. The exuberance of color and pattern used on the outside and interior of this theatre make it the finest example of an Art Deco style theatre in this city if not the region.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ball, Linda. Paramount Theatre Feasibility Study. Ashland, Kentucky: Greater Ashland Area Cultural and Economic Development Foundation, 1983.
 Bristol Chamber of Commerce, 1949 Prospectus. Bristol: King Printing Co., 1947.
 Horne, Mr. Hicks, Personal Interview. June 1984.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Bristol, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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3	9	4	1	8	0
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4	0	5	0	3	7	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is rectangular in shape and is bounded on the north by State Street, on the west by Bank Street, and on the south and east by adjoining property lines. This is all the property historically associated with the Paramount Theatre and Office Building.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rick McVey/Producing Director

organization Theatre Bristol date July 13, 1984

street & number #10 Paramount Building, 522 State St. telephone (615) 968-4977

city or town Bristol state Tennessee 37620

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 National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Harper

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/19/85

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

Shelene Byers
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in USA
 National Register

date 4/4/85

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

